



# Robert T. Clark, Jr.

Robert Thomas Clark, Jr. neither started nor finished his academic career at the University of Texas. His name, however, is preserved in the title of an essay prize that is still being given to graduate students in the department.

Clark's most famous publication is his eminent biography of Herder, *Herder: His Life and Thought* (1955). Also of significance for the region was the fact that he was President of the South Central Modern Language Association in 1948-1949.

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## A brief CV:

Born Nashville, 27 July 1906; died 27 May 1957

### EDUCATION

1927 B.A. Vanderbilt University (Phi Beta Kappa)

1928 M.A. Vanderbilt University

1928-29 University of Leipzig

1932 Ph.D. Stanford University

Dissertation: Herder and the Noble Savage

### EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

1929-1931 Instructor, German, Vanderbilt University

1931-1932 Acting Instructor, Stanford University

1932-1934 Instructor, Duke University

1933-1935 Assistant Professor, Louisiana State University

1935-1942 Associate Professor, Louisiana State University

1942-1945 Professor and Department Head, Louisiana State University

1945-1953 Professor, Department of Germanic Languages, U. of Texas at Austin

1953-1957 Professor, German Department, U. of California (Berkeley)

1954-1957 Department Chairman

### MAJOR PUBLICATIONS

"Gryphius and the Night of Time." IN: *Wächter und Hüter: Festschrift für Hermann J. Weigand zum 17. November 1957*. Ed. Cuer von Faber du Faur. New Haven, CT: Yale University, Dept. of Germanic Languages, 1957. 56-66.

*Herder: His Life and Thought*. Berkeley, CA: U of California P, 1955.

- "The Metamorphosis of Character in *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*." *Germanic Review*, 29 (1954): 243-253.
- "Presidential Address: The Humanistic Goethe." *South Central Bulletin*, 10, #1 (February 1950): 1, 7-10.
- "Personality and Society in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*." *Jordan Miscellany* (1949): 85-100.
- "The Psychological Framework of Goethe's *Werther*." *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* (Urbana, IL), 46 (1947): 273-278.
- "Herder, Cesarotti and Vico." *Studies in Philology*, 44 (1947): 645-671.
- "Herder, Percy, and the Song of Songs." *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 61, #4 (December 1946): 1087-100.
- "Hamann's Opinion of Herder's *Ursachen des Gesunkenen Geschmacks*," *Modern Language Notes*, 61, #2 (February 1946): 94-99.
- "The Fusion of Legends in Zschokke's *Prinzessin von Wolfenbüttel*." *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 42 (1943): 185-196.
- "Herder's Conception of 'Kraft.'" *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 57, #3 (September 1942): 737-52.
- "The Union of the Arts in *Die Braut von Messina*." *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 52, #4 (December 1937): 1135-46.
- "The German Liberals in New Orleans (1840-1860)." *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, 20 (1937): 137-151.
- "The New Orleans German Colony in the Civil War." *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, 20, # 4 (October 1937): 990-1015.
- "The Noble Savage and the Idea of Tolerance in Herder's *Briefe zur Beförderung der Humanität*." *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 33 (1934): 46-56.
- Editor: Hieronymus Emser (1478-1527). *Eyn deutsche Satyra; vnd Straffe des Eebruchs, vnnd in was Würden vnnd Erenn der eelich Stand vorzeiten gehalten, mit Erklärung vil schöner Historien*. [Berlin]: E. Schmidt [1956]

A report from the *Daily Texan* of 17 February 1952 indicates why an essay prize may be the ideal memorial for Dr. Clark:

**"Useless Talk Aids Laziness": Says Process Suffers**

Only about 5 per cent of human conversation is worth the expression, said Dr. Robert T. Clark, professor of Germanic languages, in an address, "Language and Out Thought Processes," Friday, sponsored by Omega Chi Epsilon, honorary chemical engineering society.

"The overwhelming mass of what we say," declared Dr. Clark, "or about 95 per cent of all verbal communication, consists merely of 'poetry' -- emotions, beliefs, clichés, and oratory." The remainder of our expressed thoughts, and in a tragic minority, he continued, is our precise, scientific terminology, which occupies itself with the informative function of language.

"It is only through the communication of information, and not emotion, that humanity will progress," he stressed. "Man, in his growing insistence on employing language's secondary (emotional) function, concerning himself with feelings and opinions rather than concrete, verifiable, informative facts, is becoming a poet," he warned, "and such dreamy-eyed unrealism is simply not the way to get things done."

Poetry, continued Dr. Clark, is self-referent; that is, refers only to the language in which it is spoken. It is inflexible, and translated only with difficulty, because of the feelings it expresses, which vary with every culture.

"It is for this reason," he said, "that the flavor of poetry is often lost in translation, and varies from nation to nation according to the variety and breadth of vocabulary of each language."

Dr. Clark believes the informative segment of our conversation, the only portion involving a thought process, is not, however, influenced by the size or variety of our vocabulary.

"A scholarly delivery of words," observed Dr. Clark, "has been proved to indicate not superior thinking ability but superior educational background. A farmer, for instance, despite the predominance of one-syllable words in his conversation, may be infinitely more intelligent than the smooth-talking traveling salesman."

"If mankind is ever to work as a unit," he said, "if we are ever to progress, it will be through the combined efforts, not of our poets, but of our thinkers."

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