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Grendler, Paul F.: The Universities of the Italian Renaissance [Book review]

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Grendler, Paul F. *The Universities of the Italian Renaissance*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002. Pp. xvii, 592. ISBN 0-8018-6631-6. US.\$49.50.

As the 2003 Josephine Waters Bennett Lecturer for the Renaissance Society of America conference, held in 2003 in Toronto, Dr. Paul Grendler delivered a paper entitled "Universities of the Renaissance and Reformation." The presentation gave a Janus-like overview of both his recent book on universities in Renaissance Italy and his current research for a forthcoming book on universities elsewhere in Europe. It also included many interesting points of contrast between the Italian and non-Italian experiences that emphasized the unique aspects of university education in Renaissance Italy and justified a book devoted to that topic.

As an expert on education in the Italian Renaissance, Grendler, Professor Emeritus in History at the University of Toronto, is *senza pari*. And this latest offering confirms his well-deserved reputation based on his previous publications, including *Schooling in Renaissance Italy* (1989) and *Books and Schools in the Italian Renaissance* (1995), as well as many articles and essays. As the publisher's note on the inside flap correctly states, this is "the first book in any language to offer a comprehensive study of this most influential institution." Grendler has synthesized a large body of scholarship published in several languages dealing with particular institutions, types of learning, texts, individuals, and events; and throughout the book he has integrated an impressive array of new evidence, much of it extracted from archival records that have been largely neglected in the past.

The book begins with institutional histories of the sixteen universities in order of their formation, from Bologna in the late twelfth century to Parma at the dawn of the seventeenth century. This is followed by an explanation of how these various institutions, and the students and professors who peopled them, functioned as they developed over time. Grendler organizes the foundations of these universities under three successive 'waves' separated by interims of significant duration, the first wave occurring in the High Middle Ages, the second in the early Renaissance from 1343 to 1445, and the third from 1540 to 1601 during the 'Counter Reformation'. Two interesting variants are also discussed: 'incomplete foundations', such as the public lectureships at Modena from the mid-fourteenth century until the end of the sixteenth century, and 'paper universities', such as the College of Physicians in Venice, which possessed charters from popes or emperors and actually conferred degrees, but in which little or no formal instruction seems to have actually taken place.

The second section deals with curriculum, treating in succession the humanities, logic, natural philosophy (science), medicine, theology, ethics, mathematics, and law. The activities of the humanists naturally loom large in this section, as Grendler explains the process by which the literary, philosophical and linguistic subjects which constituted the *studia humanitatis* were institutionalized within the university setting beginning in about 1425, and how the institutions were themselves transformed as a result, as were the other subjects of study taught within them. Science and medicine, and anatomy in particular, which made significant

strides in this period under Italian leadership, also justly receive much attention. Legal studies are extensively treated as well, not only with reference to the famous schools at Bologna and Padua, but also at institutions of later foundation and lesser reputation, such as Pavia, Florence, and Siena, as instruction in civil law grew in importance at the expense of canon law studies.

The third and final section of the book treats the decline of the Italian Renaissance universities. Citing such factors as the growing competition from Jesuit schools, the increasing preference of both professors and students to private instruction over public lectures, financial pressures and rampant student violence, Grendler argues convincingly that the chief blame for the decline of the Italian universities in the seventeenth century lies with the princes and city councils that in previous times had been so instrumental in promoting their foundation and growth, and in helping them overcome external and internal problems. The various challenges universities faced in the seventeenth century received a weak or counterproductive response from government authorities who "failed to deal with abuses and sometimes made matters worse through neglect, provincialism and financial stringency" (508).

The text is supported by a map and several plates reproducing pages from early printed books, pamphlets and public notices, as well as a handwritten diploma issued in 1504. Eighteen tables have been integrated into the body of the book and two additional tables detailing faculty and student populations are provided in an appendix, summarizing for ease of comparison the data presented in the first section of the book. A comprehensive bibliography and useful index follow.

This book will surely stand for many years to come as the definitive study of this subject. While much still remains to be done in this field, Grendler has carefully summarized the received scholarship and contributed much important new information from his own research. For this reason, generations of scholars in this field will regard this book both as an invaluable introduction to the subject and an indispensable resource in pursuing their own research interests.

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Caponigro, Maria Adelaide. *La negazione dell'eros nell'Aminta di Torquato Tasso*. Roma: Aracne, 1997. Pp. 81. ISBN 8-8799-9163-9. L. 15.000.

Il breve testo di Maria Adelaide Caponigro si inserisce nel repertorio critico che concerne l'opera tassiana proponendo un approccio psicanalitico che l'autrice stessa immediatamente giustifica in apertura di volume, nella Premessa. La studiosa, conscia di una certa riluttanza con cui la critica letteraria guarda alla psicanalisi quando applicata alla letteratura, chiarisce immediatamente come il suo intento non sia quello di psicanalizzare il Tasso né di operare sull'opera in questione come se fosse un caso clinico, ma quello di affrontare l'*Aminta* come "esemplificazione quasi didattica e inaspettatamente attuale delle dinamiche amorose adolescenziali" (1).