

Ole Peter Grell, Andrew Cunningham, and Jon Arrizabalaga, eds. *Centres of Medical Excellence? Medical Travel and Education in Europe, 1500–1789*.

The History of Medicine in Context. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2010. xiii + 335 pp. index. append. illus. tbls. \$114.95. ISBN: 978-0-7546-6699-8.

This is an engaging and insightful volume on the early modern *peregrinatio medica* (ca. 1500–1789) that is focused on both the renowned medical schools of the time (Bologna, Padua, Leiden, Montpellier, Paris, Göttingen, and Edinburgh) and the student responses to the education they received in these and other universities. As Andrew Cunningham, one of the editors of this collection of essays, explains in the opening chapter, the volume's aim is to put "the medical student and his choices at the centre of the story" (4). Then as now, students chose university programs for a number of reasons, such as up-to-date curricula, extracurricular activities, facilities (anatomical theaters, botanical gardens, and hospitals), tuition costs, the international fame of teachers, and attitudes toward religious affiliations. In her account of medical education at the University of Padua, Cynthia Klestinec argues that the history of medicine could be studied "by way of students rather than professors and their published texts" (194). Although the evidence based on student responses to university life may sometimes be scant and problematic, it is to the contributors' credit to have successfully based their accounts on fresh documentary material and a subtle reading of the student records.

Since their foundation in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, universities met the increasing demand of training elites in the fields of law, theology, and medicine. Originally, their scattered locations in various parts of Europe made them powerful poles of attraction. As a result, travelling from one university to the other became quite a common habit among students, more so than at the end of the early modern period. Travelling could establish networks of professional relationships and favor the circulation of knowledge between centers and peripheries within the European Republic of Letters. As is amply attested by the essays in this volume, in the specific field of medical education, early modern academic itinerancy depended on a wide range of causes. Some were internal to the medical profession itself (such as the need to acquire anatomical expertise and the search for a reliable training in practical and clinical medicine, qualifications that only the most advanced universities in Europe could offer). In his essay on eighteenth-century Paris, for instance, Toby Gelfand

explains that the success in attracting students derived from the availability of “hands-on training in surgical anatomy” (244). Other reasons behind the early modern *peregrinatio* depended on political, social, and religious circumstances: mounting inquisitorial persecution, centralizing plans of administrative organization, direct political interventions (such as edicts prohibiting students from attending foreign universities), family tradition, and the confessional divide between Protestant and Catholic countries. More often than not, universities’ renown derived from the peculiar symbiosis they had established between the institution and the city. In Padua, Leiden, Paris, and London, for instance, private dissection courses often competed with public lectures.

The study of early modern patterns of academic mobility sheds light on a number of important historical phenomena in the field of the history of medicine and its institutional aspects. It helps explore the often checkered relationships between municipal and central authorities, the transformation of medicine into a corporate profession, evolving from a model of local organization into guilds to a state-wide administration, and the process through which the faculty of medicine gradually acquired a level of prestige higher than law and theology. Finally, the transfer of knowledge caused by academic travelling produced its bookish counterpart in volumes of case histories, correspondences, travel journals, university textbooks, what Catrien Santing, in her essay on Pieter van Foreest (1521–97), calls embodiments of “sixteenth-century travelling medical knowledge” (150).

International movements of university students in the European medical faculties reached its peak during the seventeenth century and then declined in the course of the eighteenth century. The main reason has to do with the creation of a larger number of universities during the eighteenth century. If until the end of the sixteenth century the centers of medical excellence in Europe were only a few (Bologna, Padua, Leiden, and Paris being the most famous ones), by the mid-seventeenth century many more universities, and competitive ones, had been established. At the same time, local authorities began to put increasing pressure on students to enroll in local or regional universities. Other reasons, finally, were the gradual replacement of Latin as a lingua franca by the vernacular languages, proliferation of wars all over Europe, and the spread of nationalisms.

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