Kent Academic Repository

Full text document (pdf)

Citation for published version

Rundle, David, Revest, Clemence and Caby, Cecile (2020) Pour un humanisme ‘europolite’ (autour de The Renaissance Reform of the Book and Britain). Diasporas, xxxv . pp. 25-37. ISSN 1637-5823.

DOI

Link to record in KAR

https://kar.kent.ac.uk/91965/

Document Version

Author's Accepted Manuscript

Copyright & reuse
Content in the Kent Academic Repository is made available for research purposes. Unless otherwise stated all content is protected by copyright and in the absence of an open licence (eg Creative Commons), permissions for further reuse of content should be sought from the publisher, author or other copyright holder.

Versions of research
The version in the Kent Academic Repository may differ from the final published version.
Users are advised to check **http://kar.kent.ac.uk** for the status of the paper. **Users should always cite the published version of record.**

Enquiries
For any further enquiries regarding the licence status of this document, please contact:
researchsupport@kent.ac.uk

If you believe this document infringes copyright then please contact the KAR admin team with the take-down information provided at **http://kar.kent.ac.uk/contact.html**

KAR Kent Academic Repository

University of Kent

The article below provides an interview with David Rundle by Cécile Caby and Clémence Revest which appeared in French as 'Pour un humanisme « europolite » (autour de *The Renaissance Reform of the Book and Britain*)', *Diasporas*, xxxv (2020), pp. 25-37, available online at: https://journals.openedition.org/diasporas/4754

Revue Diasporas-2020

Numéro spécial : *Les parcours de l'humanisme / The Paths of Humanism*

David Rundle (Université de Kent, Centre for Medieval and Early Modern Studies) est un historien de la Renaissance, spécialisé dans l'étude paléographique et codicologique des manuscrits. Ses travaux portent en particulier sur l'expansion de l'humanisme en Europe au XVe siècle, notamment en Angleterre. Suivant un fil directeur original et stimulant, il étudie la circulation et l'évolution des pratiques graphiques pour analyser, en termes socio-culturels, les vecteurs de la fabrication et de l'adoption collective de la culture humaniste, dans une perspective internationale. Son dernier ouvrage, *The Renaissance Reform of the Book and Britain : The English Quattrocento* (Cambridge University Press, 2019), présente les résultats d'une vaste enquête qui, non seulement, met en lumière la participation des scribes et des élites anglaises à l'essor des écritures humanistiques dès les années 1430, mais remet aussi en cause une vision diffusioniste et italo-centrée de l'histoire de l'humanisme, en s'intéressant à la fois aux dynamiques de collaborations et de réappropriations cosmopolites qui ont produit la *littera antiqua* et aux parcours migratoires qui en ont été le vecteur[1].

Ce dossier consacré aux parcours de l'humanisme est l'occasion de revenir avec l'auteur sur les méthodes et les concepts qui ont guidé son approche.

Questions

1 - *Cher David Rundle, votre travail tend à mettre en pleine lumière la présence de la culture humaniste en Angleterre dès les premières décennies du XVe siècle, dans le sillage des premiers éléments mis au jour par Roberto Weiss dans les années 1940, puis Albinia de la Mare dans les années 1970. Mais vous entendez, plus profondément, proposer la vision nouvelle d'un « Quattrocento anglais » longtemps passé sous silence au profit d'un récit centré autour de l'âge d'or élisabéthain. Pouvez-vous nous expliquer en quoi ce regard posé sur le siècle antérieur constitue un changement de paradigme historiographique ?*

Thank you for this opportunity to explain the context and some of the purpose of my recent monograph. There are three comments to be made in response to this opening question. First,

[1] Voir également parmi ses publications récentes : D. Rundle (dir.), *Humanism in Fifteenth-Century Europe*, Oxford, 2012 ; D. Rundle, « The circulation and use of humanist 'miscellanies' in England », *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome – Moyen Âge*, 128/1, 2016 ; *id.*, « La Renaissance de la *littera antiqua* : une entreprise cosmopolite », dans Crouzet D., Crouzet-Pavan É., Desan P. et Revest C.(dir.). *L'humanisme à l'épreuve de l'Europe. Histoire d'une transmutation culturelle (XVe-XVIe s.)*, Ceyzérieu, Champ Vallon, 2019, p. 97-111 ; D. Rundle, « Corpus before Erasmus, or the English Humanist Tradition and Greek before the Trojans », dans *History of Universities*, XXXII/1-2, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2019, p. 103-127.

accepted assumptions take a long time to die. There is, in British scholarship, a continuing commitment to a periodisation which sees a divide between 'medieval' and 'early modern' falling either with Richard III at Bosworth in August 1485 or perhaps with the moves against the old religion in the 1530s. Particularly for students of English vernacular literature, the term 'Renaissance' conjures images of the last decades of the sixteenth century and the first of the seventeenth. This, of course, is out of step with perceptions of the Renaissance in mainland Europe where its heyday is acknowledged as the fifteenth century. The implication — often unstated but no less forceful for that — is that the British Isles came late to this cultural flower-show: in other words, that there was a low seepage of Renaissance creativity from the Mediterranean to the distant lands across the Channel. It is against this construction of the Renaissance that I take aim. I have a suspicion that the reason why this construction is so resilient is less to do with any intellectual validity than a function of institutional structures: British university departments, both in History and English, arrange themselves around the Big Divide of c.1500 and so create institutional resistance to reconceptualising our imposed periodisation. As a coinage, the 'English Quattrocento' is intended as a challenge to those traditions; if it encourages others to engage or even to justify with more clarity and precision how the turn of the half-millennium was the pre-eminent moment of cultural change, then it will have served its purpose.

At the same time — and this is my second point — by no means can I claim to I have presented in this one book a full picture of English engagement with the Quattrocento. Its remit was to concentrate on one element of the humanist agenda (one, which as we will discuss below, I propose was essential to its success). For a broader discussion of the role of England as a market for humanist works, as a source of influences on the Italian humanists and as a location for their creativity, we will have to wait for my next book, provisionally entitled *England and the Identity of Italian Renaissance Humanism*. Even that, though, will not cover all the cultural phenomena which we usually consider constitute the Quattrocento. The interactions in terms of the arts — from architecture to music — require a yet wider canvas and other participants. What I will say is that my sense is that each cultural activity has its own history of transmission. We should not assume that there is a single unified theory for the diffusion of the Renaissance for this denies how each cultural activity has its own narrative. I express this briefly in the book under discussion: 'the Renaissance was not one package that could be despatched for a single delivery' [p. 276].

I will offer a third suggestion for consideration. Whichever of the elements of 'the Renaissance' we consider, I question whether the basic building block for cultural expression is the nation. It might be natural, when studying the history of a vernacular literature, to think at the national level, though even in that sphere the late medieval success of London English, or the differences in approach to the volgare between, say, Machiavelli and Pietro Bembo should give us pause for thought. For a literary agenda which focused primarily on Western Christendom's premier language of Latin, as humanism did in the Quattrocento, the nation has limited significance. The engines of cultural production are both more local and more international — and this brings us to your next question.

2 - *D'une manière plus générale, vous placez au centre de l'attention – dans ce livre comme dans plusieurs de vos publications récentes – l'internationalisation très précoce et rapide de l'humanisme, à partir de son berceau italien. Vous vous intéressez en ce sens autant aux humanistes italiens qui ont voyagé en Angleterre qu'aux scribes et aux lettrés non-italiens (britanniques, mais aussi allemands ou néerlandais notamment) qui ont passé une partie de leur vie en Italie. Cette approche vous conduit à remettre en cause les modèles d'explication diffusionnistes, par dissémination et réception progressives du centre vers les périphéries, qui prévalent le plus souvent dans l'histoire culturelle, pour faire du « cosmopolitisme » un thème-clé de votre réflexion. Qu'entendez-vous précisément par « cosmopolitisme » et comment ce concept peut-il nous aider à mieux cerner les processus de développement d'un mouvement culturel ?*

I am sure that we all, as authors, have those moments when, a work having been sent off to the printers, we want to shout 'stop the presses', call it back and rewrite the text. It is our curse that we cannot stop thinking about a topic when the book has been irrevocably turned into the final object. This is one of the areas in which I would now finesse what I have said. I would not be the only medievalist to employ the term 'cosmopolitanism' in a sense which is distant from that intended by sociologists and, indeed, historians of the twentieth century. Nor, indeed, can I claim my work plays a major role in the 'global middle ages' or 'global Renaissance'. It does touch on how humanist scribes could look beyond their own cultural heritage and be both informed and humbled by what existed beyond that. A small example of that from my research is the way one Dutch scribe active in England, Theoderic Werken, employed pseudo-kufic lettering when the text he was transcribing moved from Latin to the volgare, thus signifying (I like to think) his own perplexity. For the most part, however, the topic of this book sits within a single tradition, shared across Europe, and we might better call it 'Europolitanism'. Whichever term we use, I mean to draw attention to the network of intellectual links that bound together western Christendom. It is a matter of mobility, both physical and social. Most of the characters I described moved back and forth across Europe, not without danger from shipwreck, from robbers and from illness, and rarely throughout their whole career but their travels left an indelible imprint on their cultural awareness. These men (I have not yet found a relevant female scribe) were a tiny proportion of the population and they were certainly a clerical élite. Most, however, were not of noble birth (William Gray and John Tiptoft — both collectors rather than copyists — are the exceptions in my story) and their achievements also reflects social mobility. At the same time, they were a small part of the movement of humans across Christendom and I am very conscious that what sits beneath this phenomenon is a deeper Europolitanism which is primarily commercial. It might be argued that without the journeys of the Genoese carracks and the Venetian galleys, and the international trade it allowed, humanism could not have had its movement.

3 - *L'une des grandes originalités de* The Renaissance Reform of the Book and Britain *tient dans son usage heuristique d'un domaine d'enquête, la paléographie, traditionnellement cantonné à ses aspects techniques. Il s'agit ici d'inscrire l'examen des écritures et des mises en page dans une perspective d'histoire socio-culturelle : éclairer les formes, les supports et les enjeux de la circulation de l'humanisme à travers l'histoire de la réforme graphique.*

Pourquoi l'étude de ces choix formels est-elle, selon vous, un élément significatif (et pas seulement un symptôme) d'une adhésion au projet de redécouverte de l'Antiquité ?

This is a central question, which deserves a response of some length. Let me begin with a statement of principle: in a community that prizes literate learning, the primary form of expression is the written, the weaving of words on the page. The presentation of the letters, the words, the sentences is not a symptom of the text, it is essential to its expression. The opening discussion of *The Renaissance Reform* explains this through a comparison with an orator's performance, asserting that the page provides 'the text's body language' [p. 6]. I do not pretend that all who pen words or, indeed, type them do so consciously (how often do you choose your program's font and line spacing?), but the implication of that discussion — and of the following chapter's brief review of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century revival of humanist style in script and print — is that, in some intellectual communities, there is a hyper-awareness of how text expresses meaning through the words' intent being woven together with their visual impact.

I hypothesise that one such moment of hyper-awareness, comparable to and patently influenced by the reform of script in the reign of Charlemagne, was the promotion of a new aesthetic by the circle around Coluccio Salutati at the very start of the Quattrocento. It is a hypothesis because I read out from the evidence of the manuscripts themselves; there is not, to my knowledge, a programmatic statement by any humanist of this awareness. The closest we have is a famous letter of 1432 by Ambrogio Traversari, in which he advises on imitating 'antiquity' in writing in order to achieve *prisca puritas ac suavitas*.[2] This suggests that he had a perception that there was a beauty to handwriting as there was to well-turned phrases. The humanists, that is to say, saw themselves promoting a mise-en-page that gave expression to eloquence.

I am conscious that the metaphors I have just used — of oratory and eloquence — relate to the spoken word and that, in doing so, I follow a manoeuvre of the humanists themselves. An author like Leonardo Bruni or Poggio Bracciolini founded their reputation on the circulation of written works but these are often presented themselves as fictive moments of speech, whether it be the format of an oration as in Bruni's *Laudatio Florentinae Urbis* or a dialogue like Poggio's *De avaritia*. It is also the case that the humanists presented the value of their form of education as lying in the fostering of a persuasiveness which could influence discussions in the corridors of power. There was, in other words, an oscillation between the written and the spoken, a theme on which I touch obliquely when discussing William Caxton's post-humous refashioning of John Tiptoft, earl of Worcester [pp. 211-213]: I see Tiptoft as absorbing the humanist's privileging of the 'well-articulated page' only for Caxton to reverse the order, by expecting the words he printed to be performed orally. However far there is a tension between the two modes,

---

[2] Quoted and discussed by S. Rizzo, *Il Lessico filologico degli umanisti* (Florence, 1973), p. 143 and P. Cherubini and A. Pratesi, *Paleografia latina* (Vatican City, 2010), p. 554. For further discussion, we await the publication of the doctoral thesis of Philippa Sissis, 'Zwischen Artefakt und Produkt. Das humanistische SchriftBild in den Kopien Poggio Bracciolinis in Florenz um 1400' (University of Hamburg, 2019); I thank Dr Sissis for sharing with me a copy of her unpublished dissertation.

I see this as reinforcing the humanists' perception that the written text had to have all the accoutrements of a finely hewn and persuasively delivered speech.

It is also the case that humanists did not at all times use their new aesthetic of the page in their own handwriting, though, on the other hand, it is rare to find a humanist presentation copy that does not make some attempt to provide a text according to that canon of taste. It is certainly the case that humanist works were often transcribed in gothic lettering — with the result that what was intended as an integrated product became divided. Equally, however, there were cases of non-humanist works being given humanist treatment (I describe this in *England and the Identity* as a hinterland of humanism). Some might wish to see this as a failure to share the hyper-awareness of the page's interwoven force, but, on my reading, it was more often a conscious appropriation, grounded in a recognition of the intent of the new aesthetic. It was, thus, part of humanism's success, encouraging complicity in at least part of its proponents' agenda.

This response does not do complete justice to the richness of the question, so it is appropriate to leave the discussion open and conclude with another question. It is based on a counter-factual: how successful do we think the humanists' self-promotion would have been if it had not included as an integral element the conscious reform of the book? Were its early readers — in Italy or further afield — first struck by the rhetoric and only then noticed how the text was written with an evocative mise-en-page or was it *vice versa*?

4 - *Ce principe directeur vous conduit notamment à mettre l'accent autant sur les parcours des livres que sur ceux des hommes, et à proposer une « prosopographie paléographique » qui fait apparaître des connexions entre scribes et des milieux internationaux de production et d'échanges de compétences. Votre travail peut à cet égard être mis en parallèle avec ceux de Thomas Frenz sur l'introduction de l'écriture humanistique dans les archives pontificales et de Daniel Luger sur les pratiques graphiques à la chancellerie de l'empereur Frédéric III. S'agit-il selon vous d'une même tendance méthodologique et dans quelle mesure peut-on déceler des échos entre ces recherches ?*

There is a cluster of issues here. It is true that I endow books with agency. They undeniably travelled in greater quantity than humans. Moreover — and this may prove controversial — the presence of a book could have, in some specific regards, more potency than that of a person. It is sometimes assumed that a 'great man' could not but have an effect on those around him, wherever he was. Thus, I have heard surprise that Poggio Bracciolini's time in England (1419-23) did not inspire imitations of his humanist bookhand but what evidence we have suggests that, while he was here, he wrote in his semi-gothic script. Poggio certainly did more to promote the humanist cause to the English when he was back in Italy, sending manuscripts of his dialogues to his former colleagues north of the Alps. A book, on the other hand, could be copied and circulated, and could act as inspiration. I am thinking here most particularly of the influence its script could have on its viewers; I give examples of English scribes who never visited Italy but who developed a *littera antiqua* by studying codices available to them locally. This should make us think about how skills are transmitted: there are some skills — learning to speak another language, for instance — which (before the invention of vocal recordings) required

personal guidance; there were others which did not need such direct human intervention, and I would suggest that, for a scholar already learned in a variety of scripts, becoming adept at yet another was one of those.

'Palaeographical prosopography', then, attempts to detect the equivalent of a stemma for scripts but, as I emphasise in the book [pp. 40-41], this can only be done if we can confidently isolate specific manuscripts as possible influences on another hand. When the quantity of available prototypes moves above a certain maximum, it would become impossible to use this technique. That said, the methodology could be considered a transposition to the changed circumstances of the later Middle Ages of the established palaeographical practice of identifying manuscripts from a particular scriptorium. However problematic the concept of a scriptorium as a physical space may be even in the earlier Middle Ages, by the fifteenth century, it is not the main locus of scribal activity, which has become commercial or quasi-commercial (some of the scribes I discuss, like Thomas Candour, were of professional standard and probably made money from their copying but it was not their main source of income). It is also clear that, in this context, the ability to write several scripts was at a premium: this was a culture in which polygraphism was prized. I see this as one of the 'preconditions for the success of humanist minuscule' [p. 11].

This brings us finally to your apposite comparison with other works. It is notable that the works which you mention, to which we might add the articles of Rüth and Zimmerhackl, concentrate on the activities of chanceries, with the most significant of these — pre-eminently, that of the pope's — having strong established traditions of diplomatic which require conformity to particular cursive styles of script.[3] This does not entirely bar innovation but it usually necessitates an accommodation. At the same time, the scribes that Frenz (or Luger) discuss are often also copyists of literary texts, where they have more licence to produce a full *littera antiqua*, and so they too performed polygraphism. To these examples, the last main chapter of *Renaissance Reform* adds contemporaneous English instances, like John Farley, registrar of the University of Oxford from 1458 to 1464.

I should end this answer by acknowledging that polygraphism provides an evidential challenge: how does one detect the hand of one scribe when that person was able to shift expertly between very different scripts? This is an issue that has dogged a parallel project in English vernacular studies, where the attempt to marry documentary scripts with the hands at work in manuscripts of poetry have proven controversial.[4] This, though, should not make us recoil from what is a necessary and potentially very fruitful task.

---

[3] M. Rüth, 'Aufkommen und Verbreitung der Humanistischen Kanzleikursive in den Kommunalen Behörden der Südlichen Toskana und Umbriens', *Archiv für Diplomatik*, xxxvi & xxxvii (1990), 221–70 & 307–451; H. Zimmerhackl, 'Dokumentation Der Humanistischen Schriftentwicklung in Den Kommunalen Behörden von Bologna, Modena Und Reggio Emilia im 15. Jahrhundert', *Archiv für Diplomatik*, xlvi (2000), 325–544, and id., 'Das Eindringen Humanistischer Schriftformen in die Dokumentarschrift der Kommunalen Behörden der Emilia Romagna im 15. Jahrhundert', *Archiv für Diplomatik*, xlv (1999), 119–333.

[4] For the latest instalment in these debates, itself controversial, see L. Warner, *Chaucer's Scribes* (Oxford, 2019).

5 - *Au fil de votre enquête et des individus qui la peuple, le voyage et l'émigration sont des thèmes récurrents. Vous dressez une brève typologie de ces déplacements, à travers les figures de l'humaniste itinérant, émigré, ou ponctuellement expatrié. Pouvez-vous nous en dire plus quant à la nature de ces trajectoires et à leurs motivations, et quant au nombre d'individus concernés ? Il semble notamment que les flux universitaires aient joué un rôle essentiel (par exemple vers l'université de Padoue), de même que ceux liés aux carrières dans les milieux de cour ou, plus encore, dans l'entourage des prélats.*

The examples you have just given implicitly focuses on the movement of people towards Italy, and we should counter-balance these with travel out of Italy. There is an old article by Kristeller which provides a rich schema of the range of contacts which enabled what he called the diffusion of humanism.[5] Like your list, it concentrates on types of career; my tripartite distinction which you have quoted is intended to supplement such lists by considering them from the perspective of the individual's life cycle. Its aim is to encourage questions about how these travels can best effect cultural exchange: do short visits involving multiple stimuli briefly experienced have more impact that long residence centred on a single foreign location? Such questions could be considered in terms of network theory and the strength of the ties they forge.

This question is relevant to the role played the University of Padua, which you mention. Its importance, especially in relation to the German 'natio', has been recognised since the days of Agostino Sottili, and of course new light has recently been shed on its seminal figure, Gasparino Barzizza, by you, Clémence Revest. Padua's shifting relevance for sixteenth-century England has been highlighted by the work of Jonathan Woolfson but, for the Quattrocento, there is a notable historiographical divergence in that English-language literature has placed more significance on the school of Guarino da Verona at Ferrara.[6] I have urged some revision of that focus, noting how Guarino's international reputation was formed — with his encouragement — by his own students.[7] In making that argument, I emphasised how visiting students often took on a *peregrinatio studii*, collecting a variety of intellectual experiences, only some of which took place in a lecture hall. A good example of this is provided by John Tiptoft, earl of Worcester, to whom a chapter in *Renaissance Reform* is devoted. The implication is that we should consider the significance of Padua lying not only in its eminent university but in its civic and commercial life: to put this another way, we need to think of the likes of Sicco Polenton, the city's chancellor, alongside Barzizza.

I have already mentioned in our discussion the significance of commercial trading structures to the circulation of humanism. Kristeller noted the role of merchants and I think there is more to be done here. I may be especially conscious of this because, when I was a graduate student, Oxford's leading Renaissance historian, George Holmes (to whom I owe much), advised me against attempting to find humanist interests among Italian merchants visiting England. He may have had in mind the assumption that few who were in trade were Latinate; it was only later

[5] P. O. Kristeller, 'The European Diffusion of Humanism' in id., *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters*, 4 vols (Rome, 1956-1996), ii (1985), pp. 147-165, first printed in *Italica,* xxxix (1962), pp. 1-20.
[6] J. Woolfson, *Padua and the Tudors* **; id., '**', *Renaissance Studies*, **.
[7] D. Rundle, 'Beyond the Classroom'**.

that I came to appreciate that, while this might hold true for northern Europeans, it does not for those from Italy. After all, it was among the alien community around London's Lombard Street that, in the first decade of the fifteenth century, a volgare translation of Bruni's *Laudatio* was made. This means that a copy of the Latin original moved quickly after composition to England but — and I want to end with this caveat — it does not mean it was available to the English. This is what I call, in *England and the Identity*, the 'expat problem': the visitors in a foreign city might be themselves a cosmopolitan or Europolitan community but it does not mean they shared their interests with their hosts. Movement of individuals was of great importance but it did not, by itself, secure cultural transfer.

5 - *Pensez-vous que votre enquête centrée sur l'Angleterre puisse être transposée dans d'autres contextes qui ont historiographiquement pâti d'une même appréhension italo-centrée de la diffusion de l'humanisme ?*

I certainly hope that what I have said so far and that *Renaissance Reform* itself makes clear my belief that the history of humanism in any locale cannot be written with attention to actors only of one national identity. In terms of the particular topic of script, this is a theme of the work of Elisabetta Caldelli on copyists in Rome where just over 50% who signed their manuscripts were non-Italians.[8] You have mentioned the work of Daniel Luger; I do not know of an equivalent for France, but we do have the valuable words of Gilbert Ouy.[9] I want to underline an implication of such studies: we tend to assume that a manuscript that looks entirely humanist is a completely a product of Italian hands working in their homeland but this is not a safe assumption. We should be alert to the possibility that some codices at present defined as 'Italian' should be re-designated.

In the domain of humanism more generally, there is ongoing work which will, I hope, challenge a simple construction of an Italian centre and transalpine peripheries. I think of the work overseen by Johannes Helmrath, or of the lively interest in, say, René of Anjou's international connexions or the cluster of humanists associated with Matthias Corvinus.[10] One observation which I would add is that, if we accept that the nation has little significance for the type of cultural communications which humanism promoted, we might want to think of European geography in more regional terms. For instance, I wonder how far the Christian countries of Iberia shared humanist filiations that were different from those fostered in northern Europe. This, however, takes into the territory of your next question.

6 - *Une question nous brûle donc les lèvres, quoiqu'on en devine toute la complexité : quelle géo-chronologie de l'histoire de l'humanisme peut être dressée à partir de votre travail ? Des lieux, des groupes, des flux, des* tempi *peuvent-ils constituer une narration d'ensemble ?*

---

[8] E. Caldelli, *Copisti a Roma nel Quattrocento* (Rome, 2006).

[9] I think, for example, of his 'Nicolas de Clamanges (ca. 1360-1437). Philologue et calligraphe' in J. Autenrieth ed., *Renaissance- und Humanistenhandschriften* (Munich, 1988).

[10] For instance, J. Helmrath, *Wege des Humanismus. Studien zu Praxis und Diffusion der Antikeleidenschaft im 15. Jahrhundert*. (Tübingen, 2013); O. Margolis, *The politics of culture in Quattrocento Europe: René of Anjou in Italy* (Oxford, 2016).

I hope that *Renaissance Reform* acts as a stimulus for us as a community of scholars to think about these very issues. I will confine myself to two comments, one on chronology which relates closely to another on geography.

As I emphasise in the book, any model of 'slow diffusion' of humanist script underestimates the speed with which specimens moved across the shared civilisation of Western Europe. There was a time delay between creation and availability but it was a matter of between two and three decades rather than the longer timespan often assumed. What is more, this was a slower pace than the circulation of texts, which (if not composed beyond the Italian peninsula) could travel within a few months or years of composition. This is certainly not universally true for all works — some authors sought solely a local audience, others wrote with the aspiration of reaching readers far away — and the quantities of copies were usually small. The main conclusion I would take from the accumulated evidence is the unevenness of circulation, meaning that individual communities constructed their understanding of the new fashions on the basis of different corpora of material.

I intend this point to be a challenge to the familiar model of centre and periphery. As I have already implied, I recognise that this may be useful for some cultural products but it has less efficacy for those which constituted the *studia humanitatis*. The conclusion of *Renaissance Reform* moots the suggestion that rather than taking 'centre' as a geographical place, we might think of it in a more disparate way, as that small minority who developed an interest in humanist pursuits which they shared sometimes face-to-face, sometimes at a distance and sometimes even without direct communication. If we were to adopt this approach, the 'periphery' would be found living cheek-by-jowl alongside the 'centre', and those who were 'central' could become 'peripheral' — and that could also work in the opposite direction. The consequences, therefore, are that we should be alert to the difference between physical distance and cultural distance, and that we should consider how we might calibrate the latter.

7 - Un autre aspect important de votre réflexion concerne « l'incorrigible pluralité » de la culture humaniste. Vous critiquez l'idée d'une imitation répétitive de modèles pour insister sur le fait que les prototypes d'écritures ont plutôt constitué un répertoire de possibles, toujours susceptible de variations et de réinventions selon les besoins et les interprétations. Comment, par conséquent, peut-on identifier une « communauté culturelle » tout en tenant compte de cette diversité ? Pouvez-vous nous donner un exemple ?

I appropriated from the poet Louis MacNiece the phrase 'incorrigibly plural' in the context of musing on how an English reader would have responded to the evidence for humanism set before them. The purpose was to draw attention to the range of styles of mise-en-page which could be designated 'humanist', so as to emphasise that our own perception of humanism is much narrower than that which could have been constructed by contemporaries. To put this another way, with what we, in our arrogance, call the benefit of hindsight, we provide humanism with an identity that is much clearer than was possible for those who lived in the Quattrocento, for whom it was much messier and self-contradictory. Let me give a specific

example: in certain circles in England but also elsewhere (in parts of Spain or in Milan) in the later 1430s and 1440s, there were probably more witnesses to the style of presentation promoted by Pier Candido Decembrio than there were of the aesthetic created by the likes of Poggio Bracciolini. Decembrio's tiny script, with some humanist letter-forms but with also a resolute refusal to engage with the orthographical reforms which saw the re-introduction of digraphs on the page, was a conscious rejection of Florentine habits and bespoke a wider challenge to the intellectual agenda promoted there. Humanism was, as you put it, a 'community', but it was one defined as much by its battle-lines as by bonds of loyalties — by invectives as much as by panegyrics. At the same time, I myself do not envisage humanism as being holistic enough to be a culture. I have a forthcoming article in which I draw attention to how Leonardo Bruni shifted his Latin style between his personal and his official correspondence: the person contemporaries acknowledged as the pre-eminent humanist did not at all times write as a humanist.[11] Beginning with Salutati's distinction between the *studia humanitatis* and the *studia divinitatis*, humanists were alert to the limits of their own agenda — limits which of course shifted across the century and into the Cinquecento when humanist method colonised disciplines beyond what had become humanism's curriculum. I would suggest that we should follow them in recognising the edges of their domain, and define its identity looking in from its borders.

8 - *Un même scribe pouvait d'ailleurs alterner entre différents registres, privilégier ou ignorer tel ou tel élément voire proposer des formes nouvelles. Ce sont là des choix graphiques délibérés dont vous soulignez les motivations sociales et culturelles en fonction du contexte : ils sont directement liés, selon vous, au capital symbolique dont furent progressivement investies les pratiques culturelles humanistes, lues et manipulées comme des instruments de distinction et de domination. Ainsi pour quelles raisons pouvait-on choisir d'employer une forme graphique humanistique dans l'Angleterre du XVe siècle et quelles accentuations spécifiques pouvaient être recherchées ? Et dans la même perspective, comment comprendre le fait que l'on ait pu copier sous cette forme des œuvres relevant d'un tout autre contexte culturel, comme nombre de vos exemples le soulignent ?*

How a scribe came to choose humanist elements is an important issue which *Renaissance Reform* does not attempt to answer in full. The monograph does provide some comment: there seem to have been some technical reasons for the success of specific humanist scribal practices: the adoption of capitals allowed a clearer expression of gradation of significance on the page than gothic majuscules allowed, and without the need for recourse to a second colour (though titles were often rubricated as well as written in capitals); what I call the g-reform, that is the use of the humanist (and caroline) **g** with its prominent neck between its two bowls is likely to have been popular because the gothic cursive **g** with its fused two bowls was often an indistinct letter-form, hindering legibility. These, though, are partial adoptions and we may want to concentrate on those cases when a scribe employs a full *littera antiqua*. I would warn, however,

[11] 'Divided by a common language? Being eloquent versus being understood in fifteenth-century Latin' in O. Margolis and G. Barrett ed., *Latinity in the Post-Classical World* (Cambridge, forthcoming).

that we have to be careful not to over-read the evidence: at times, the selection may be a matter of taste and have no deeper meaning.

That said, we should ask, as you do, about the use of humanist script for non-humanist texts, particularly as there seem to be a cluster of works that gained this treatment. One example of this is Jacobus de Cessolis's moralising tract, *De ludo scacchorum*, one of the first works to gain humanist treatment by an English scribe, but which also appears in other manuscripts alongside humanist works, all written in a gothic hand. The transfer of an earlier text into the humanist visual idiom and the compilation of a manuscript placing humanist and non-humanist texts together are — I would suggest — kindred processes. I have said elsewhere that when we find a conjunction of texts incongruous, we should see it as setting a challenge to ourselves: we must ask what similarities or associations these Quattrocento scholars found in these disparate works.[12] It is an invitation, that is to say, for us to re-imagine the contours and the boundaries of 'humanism'.

9 - *Le cas du développement de la cursive italique face à l'essor de l'imprimerie est particulièrement intéressant. Vous montrez que, contrairement à la promotion de la* littera antiqua *qui renvoyait à un héritage historique commun, la cursive italique fut prisée pour son italianité, son « aura d'estranéité ». Pourriez-vous revenir sur ce phénomène en apparence contradictoire ?*

If I had my time again, I would make more of this contrast. It derives from an incontrovertible observation: while *littera antiqua* consciously returns to an earlier script, what we call italic has no such resonances. For sure, italic as a formal bookhand grows out of the tradition of humanist cursive promoted by the likes of Niccolò Niccoli; moreover, its early promoters — pre-eminently Bartolomeo Sanvito — were keen to combine italic with capitals redolent of ancient epigraphy. However, the letter-forms and the flow of the script are not direct descendants of any pre-gothic bookhand; instead they conjure up, as it were, a new antiquity. I see this as critical to the different routes to success the two scripts took. On the one hand, *littera antiqua* struck learned readers with its familiarity: it exuded a return to a tradition of which all in western Europe could claim to be part. On the other, italic bespoke novelty, for which old manuscripts could provide no precedents for scribes anywhere. The result is that, while a wide community felt from its early years that they could collaborate on the promotion of *littera antiqua*, italic was more strongly associated with a particular area of Europe, as is demonstrated by the geographical designation inherent in the name used for it, since the sixteenth century, in northern Europe. In short, italic did not have the same Europolitanism as *littera antiqua* but it did achieve its own equivalent, in the world of an international book trade fostered (though not created) by print, in which specimen books of scripts and the advice of writing masters flourished. *Littera antiqua* succeeded because anywhere it went it had the scent of the local; italic succeeded because it had — for those beyond Italy — the refinement of the foreign.

---

[12] Rundle, 'Circulation', p. 96.

10 - *Malgré la dimension internationale du processus que vous décrivez, on pressent aussi le poids d'une hiérarchie imaginaire inhérente à l'humanisme, qui a sur la très longue durée opposé à la lumière originelle italienne la « barbarie » nordique ; un système de représentation face auquel les acteurs, même étrangers, de ce mouvement ont dû se positionner. Quel fut l'attitude des lettrés anglais face à cette représentation de soi ? Se considéraient-ils comme une périphérie, ont-ils entretenu une relation ambivalente ou un complexe d'infériorité vis-à-vis des Italiens ? Surtout, comment s'est construite la légitimité de la « Renaissance anglaise » ?*

It is very true that the humanist constructed a mental geography that 'othered' northern Europe and especially the British Isles as the lands of the barbarian. I see in this part of a wider attempt by some Italians to resituate their peninsula as Europe's heart after the end of the Great Schism and in the context of the economic reconstruction necessary following the dislocation caused by the Black Death. At the same time, the humanists' self-presentation as more civilised than their ultramontane colleagues did not place a brake on contact; on the contrary, it encouraged some humanists, including Leonardo Bruni, Poggio Bracciolini and Pier Candido Decembrio, to seek audiences further afield than their home cities, as a demonstration of their ability to educate even the least enlightened in Europe.

English writers' responses to these stereotypes are interesting. Some, like John Whethamstede, the abbot of St Albans, writing in 1423, could deploy the distance of England from Rome as a humility topos.[13] From the Italian side, there was some change over the century, with Ludovico Carbone in 1471 anticipating Aldus Manutius in praising the new-found eloquence of Englishmen, but this cannot compare to the change in perceptions of the Germans whose genius came to be celebrated because of the invention of printing.[14] At the same time, there were some among the English who refused to be weighed down by any sense of their own cultural inferiority. Here, once more, John Tiptoft, earl of Worcester is exemplary. It was his perception, explicitly stated in a letter to the University of Oxford of 1461, that the English could regain their own pristine eloquence and be equal to the Italians in oratory. This, in itself, was a finely wrought piece of rhetoric, alluding to the humanist commonplace and subverting it by acknowledgement of England's own role in the legacy of the Roman empire. Tiptoft spoke from a privileged standpoint: his letter to Oxford was written from Italy, during his extended stay there. In *Renaissance Reform*, I suggest that it was Tiptoft's perception that his travels on the continent did not compromise his Englishness but completed it; to be fully English, one had to envisage the world beyond its shores. Writing in January 2020, one can not but wonder how many of his latter-day countrymen appreciate that insight.

---

[13] H. T. Riley ed., *Annales Monasterii S. Albania Johanne Amundesham ... conscripti ...* [Rolls Series, xxviii] (London, 1870), p. 148.

[14] I allude to two prefaces to printed editions: Pliny's *Epistolae* (Venice: Christopher Valdarfer, 1471) [ISTC ip00804000] and Thomas Linacre's translation of Proclus's *Sphaera* (Venice: Aldus Manutius, 1499) [ISTC if00191000].