



Kent Academic Repository

Rundle, David (2024) *Renaissance.* In: Rau, Petra and Rossiter T., William, eds. Europe in British Literature and Culture. Cambridge Themes in British Literature and Culture . Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 119-132.*

Downloaded from

<https://kar.kent.ac.uk/100694/> The University of Kent's Academic Repository KAR

The version of record is available from

<https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009425483.011>

This document version

Author's Accepted Manuscript

DOI for this version

Licence for this version

UNSPECIFIED

Additional information

Versions of research works

Versions of Record

If this version is the version of record, it is the same as the published version available on the publisher's web site. Cite as the published version.

Author Accepted Manuscripts

If this document is identified as the Author Accepted Manuscript it is the version after peer review but before type setting, copy editing or publisher branding. Cite as Surname, Initial. (Year) 'Title of article'. To be published in **Title of Journal** , Volume and issue numbers [peer-reviewed accepted version]. Available at: DOI or URL (Accessed: date).

Enquiries

If you have questions about this document contact ResearchSupport@kent.ac.uk. Please include the URL of the record in KAR. If you believe that your, or a third party's rights have been compromised through this document please see our [Take Down policy](https://www.kent.ac.uk/guides/kar-the-kent-academic-repository#policies) (available from <https://www.kent.ac.uk/guides/kar-the-kent-academic-repository#policies>).

To appear in W. Rossiter and P. Rau ed., *Europe in British Literature and Culture*
(Cambridge UP, 2023)

Chapter 7

Renaissance

David Rundle

Europe – that parte of the worlde, whyche we do inhabyte.¹

A dictionary purports to present irrefutable facts, but its dry prose is often promoting an argument. When the English diplomat and writer, Thomas Elyot (d. 1546), provided this definition, his assertion of ‘our’ association with a wider community was not necessarily commonsensical. He was certainly not the first to make such a claim: in the 1450s, Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini (1405-1464) – soon to become pope as Pius II (elected 1458) – provided a description of Europe by region, in which the British Isles were included: ‘Anglia’ (‘which the ancients called both Albion and Britannia’) and ‘Scotia’, both of which he had visited, as well as, albeit cursorily, ‘Hibernia’, that is Ireland (Wales gains no mention).² At the time that Piccolomini was writing, the concept of Europe was in formation and, in what was a more established tradition, ‘Britannia’ was seen as a place beyond: in a famous line of the classical Roman poet, Vergil, the Britons were ‘completely cut off from the whole world’.³ This was often quoted and paraphrased, including by Britons themselves; they could consider it as badge of honour that they inhabited an *alter orbis* – another world. If Brexit is the product of a mindset that emphasises British separation from mainland Europe, then it was born not as a twenty-first century reaction to the European Union, but on the ancient banks of the Tiber, long before the Treaty of Rome.

In what follows, we will be asking when and where was Europe’s Renaissance, and what it might have to do with Britain. The questions are not as simple as they appear, for there is no general agreement around the central concept: the Renaissance has been too successful for its own good; everyone wants one. It is taken to be an unremittingly positive term, like ‘beauty’ or ‘justice’. Its allure is so enticing that its usage has spread far beyond its

¹ T. Elyot, *The Dictionary* (London, [1538]), sig. [Gv^v]. Leland addresses Elyot at *Encomia*, pp. 83-84 (Sutton, poem ccxxi – see below).

² Pius II, *De Europa*, ed. A. van Heck, *Studi e Testi*, 398 (Vatican City: BAV, 2001).

³ Vergil, *Ecloga*, i . 66, in *Virgil in Two Volumes: Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid I-VI*, ed. H. Rushton Fairclough (London: Heinemann, 1916), I, p. 8. Translation author’s own.

original meaning; it has become short-hand for any cultural flowering. The term itself implies a slightly more specific sense: the French for ‘rebirth’, it became favoured in other European languages in the later eighteenth century, and, from the middle of the nineteenth, signified the revival of the perceived glories of classical (Roman) civilization. Since the early twentieth century, some scholars have objected that the ancient past needed no bringing back to life: its legacy suffused those times dismissed by intellectuals of the Renaissance as ‘the middle ages’. From our twenty-first century vantage point, we might question why an association should be cherished with the ancient Roman Empire, powered as it was by slavery, and enslaved by its thirst to subjugate others. We might wonder whether anyone should want to have a Renaissance.

It is understood that those we think of as having lived through the Renaissance had no recourse to that term, though – as we are about to see – there was talk of ‘revivals’ in a more limited sense. We are about to consider the construction of renewal, for which our entry-point will be the poems of one sixteenth-century English author, writing in the shared learned language of Western Europe, Latin. Before we do that, however, we need to understand how the nineteenth century fabricated its sense of the Renaissance, a perception of a new epoch which, despite all criticisms, has refused to die.

The Birth of the Renaissance

The word Renaissance has of late years received a more extended significance than that which is implied in our English equivalent – the Revival of Learning. We use it to denote the whole transition from the Middles Ages to the Modern World.⁴

John Addington Symonds (1840-1893) was not the first to employ in English the idea of ‘Renaissance’ but he stands out for his ability to popularise a new conception of it at length to an audience which could read only his native language. That conception was created elsewhere in Europe and, indeed, it could with some simplification be said that the Anglophone perception of the ‘Renaissance’ was shaped by an accident of translation. Two major German works appeared in consecutive years. The second of these is Jacob

⁴ J. A. Symonds, *Renaissance in Italy*, 7 vols (London : Murray, 1875-1886), I (1875), p. 1.

Burckhardt's better-known *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien* (1860).⁵ An English translation of it, by a young scholar called S. G. C. Middlemore, was published in 1878, three years after the first volume of Symonds's *Renaissance in Italy*; it remains, whatever its faults, the version still in print. Burckhardt intended his conception of the transformation of all elements of society through the 'genius' of the Italian people to be a reaction against a longer tradition of scholarship. This is alluded to in Symonds's words, and he was aware of an important witness to that tradition which appeared the year before Burckhardt's relatively short work: the two volumes of Georg Voigt's *Die Wiederbelebung des classischen Alterthums, oder das erste Jahrhundert des Humanismus* (*The Revival of the Classical Antiquity, or the first Century of Humanism*). Voigt's subject was 'the revival of learning', the attempt to emulate the literary skills and range of learning of classical Rome. The heart of this pursuit was achieving a renewed 'purity' of Latin expression — speaking as the ancients did — and cleansing the language employed across Western Europe as the language of learning and international communication of its 'medievalisms'. Voigt's study would later be translated into Italian (1888 and 1897) and French (1894) but has never received an English version, even though Voigt had British predecessors: Edward Gibbon (1737-1794), for instance, had devoted the last part of his *Decline and Fall*, which appeared in 1788, to this 'revival'.

As Symonds explains, 'Renaissance' had been used as a synonym for the revival of learning but his work, and that of Burckhardt's, was also informed by another 'rebirth', that claimed for the arts of painting, sculpture and architecture. The foundational text for this 'rinascita' was the work now known in English as *The Lives of the Artists* by Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574). First published in Italian in 1550 and, in an enlarged edition in 1568, it received its first full English translation only in 1850-51 by Eliza Foster; a second followed by Gaston de Vere in 1912-15.⁶ Vasari delineated a revival of art which focussed on Florence, beginning with Giotto (d. 1337), and culminated with his own contemporary, the 'divine' Michelangelo (1475-1564). Burckhardt's chronology was a little more limited: his attention concentrated on the early sixteenth century but moved back to the fifteenth. Meanwhile, Voigt's 'first hundred years' began in the late fourteenth century. In contrast, Symonds's

⁵ *Die Kultur* is now available in the critical edition by M. Mangold, K. Hara and H. Numata (Munich: Beck, 2018). On the work, see now S. Bauer and S. Ditchfield (eds), *A Renaissance Reclaimed: Jacob Burckhardt's Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy Reconsidered* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).

⁶ A partial translation had appeared in William Aglionby's *Painting Illustrated in three Dialogues* (London: John Gain for the Author 1685). On Foster, see the brief online article by P. Rubin in *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 28 (2019), doi: <https://doi.org/10.16995/ntn.864>.

claim for a ‘whole transition’ of the world required a yet more expansive time period, so that it could include Galileo (1564-1642). The Renaissance became diffuse.

It also became about diffusion. Burckhardt’s broad thematic coverage came, as his title shows, with geographical limits, but he saw his focus as the centre-point: he perceived the Italian people to be ‘the first-born among the sons of modern Europe’. As Vasari had claimed, Florence led and other parts of Italy followed, so the assumption arose of an export of the Renaissance out of Italy. As Burckhardt’s translator, Middlemore, put it in his own writings on art history, the ‘great movement first developed in Italy, but [...] afterwards spread to France, Germany and England’.⁷ This, though, was in contrast to how the ‘revival of learning’ was described: Voigt certainly centred his discussion on the Italian peninsula, but, in his second volume, his purview was Europe-wide, and he found representatives of the ‘revival’ within his chosen century in England and elsewhere. The differences between the narratives formulated in the mid-nineteenth century should make us ask how ‘the Renaissance’ was perceived *avant la lettre*, before the influence of Burckhardt, and instead when ‘renaissance’ signified the rebirth of ‘good letters’.

The Revival of Learning: the English Contribution

The nineteenth-century construction of Renaissance Europe as having a Mediterranean fulcrum and its peripheries in the north reworked and rationalised what we have already seen as a long-standing trope. ‘Britannia’, in particular, was axiomatically distant – and to be distant might result in becoming less significant. So, at the start of the fifteenth century, some Italians complained about how the English, with their outlandish – indeed hellish – names were infecting Italy with their barbarous learning.⁸ Florentine scholars led by Leonardo Bruni (1370-1444) fashioned a rhetorical position in which the English were the intellectual enemy, whose representatives were not distant enough but, instead, formed a phalanx of barbarians threatening the very centre of civilization. Italy was that centre because it was home to the heritage of ancient Rome, which deserved to be saved and, indeed, resurrected. What became known as the revival of learning began with a bout of anti-British xenophobia.

This, though, could also be turned on its head. At times, it was not only those beyond the Channel who were seen from the perspective of the Italian peninsula as barbarians: it was

⁷ S. G. C. Middlemore, *The Great Age of Italian Painting* (London: Simpkin, 1889), p. 4.

⁸ David Rundle, ‘Humanist Eloquence among the Barbarians in fifteenth-century England’ in C. Burnett & N. Mann (eds), *Britannia Latina* (London & Turin: Warburg Institute, 2005), pp. 68-85.

a term that could be applied to all who were lived beyond the Alps. According to Lorenzo Valla (1405-1457), himself born in Rome, any patina of civilization these foreign peoples had was due to their good fortune in being subjugated to ancient Roman rule – it was by becoming colonised by the imperial overlords that they learnt the importance of letters and all the benefits that could flow from them.⁹ Mid-century technological change, however, shifted intellectual outlook: the invention of printing by moveable metal type (in which Europe did not realise it was a latecomer compared with Korea and China) could not but be acknowledged as a German innovation. German ‘genius’ was celebrated but, along with it, so too was what was claimed to be the new-found eloquence of other northern peoples. So, among the products of the Venetian press of the most celebrated of early Italian printers, Aldus Manutius (d. 1515), there was an astronomical text, translated from Greek into Latin by the Englishman, Thomas Linacre.¹⁰ When introducing it, Aldus adduced it as evidence that Britain, whose barbarous and unlearned writings had once invaded Italy, could now send south learned works ‘so that it may be healed by the same spear as gave the wound’.¹¹ On the page following his own words, Aldus presented those of another English scholar, William Grocyn, in which he thanked the printer for his gift to civilisation and, in particular, to Britons who, he said, were ‘cut off from the whole world’.¹² Grocyn takes the Vergilian commonplace and turns it into a demonstration of how, despite distance, Britain (by which he means England) can now participate in good learning.

An exemplary expression of this nexus of ideas – and more besides – comes from the pen of a man who knew Linacre and was friends with Thomas Elyot, John Leland (d. 1552). Born in London soon after the start of the sixteenth century, he was educated at Cambridge and Paris, and for some time based in Oxford but is best remembered as a traveller around England, making copious notes on what he saw. In particular, he was witness to – and supporter of – the Dissolution of the Monasteries, and attempted to undo something of the

⁹ L. Valla, *De linguae Latinae elegantia*, ed. S. López Moreda., 2 vols (Cáceres: Univ. de Extremadura, 1999), II, p. 56, on which see J. Fisher, ‘The Project of Humanism and Valla’s Imperial Metaphor’, *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 23 (1993): 301–22, and David Rundle, ‘Divided by a common language? Being eloquent versus being understood in fifteenth-century Latin’, *Eranos – Acta philologica Suecana*, 112 (2021): 73–97.

¹⁰ For Leland’s knowledge of Linacre see *De viris*, p. 810, *Encomia*, pp. 6, 41–42 (Sutton, poems xvi, cv and cix–cx), and C. Clough, ‘Thomas Linacre, Cornelio Vitelli, and Humanistic Studies at Oxford’ in F. Maddison et al., *Linacre Studies: Essays on the Life and Work of Thomas Linacre c. 1460–1524* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 1–23 (pp. 2–4).

¹¹ The Aldine printing is ISTC if00191000, with this preface at sig. Ti^v; the text is also available in B. Botfield, *Prefaces to the first editions of the Greek and Roman classics and of the sacred scriptures* (London: Bohn, 1861), pp. 239–40.

¹² Aldine ed., sig. Tii; Botfield, *Prefaces*, p. 241.

inevitable dispersal of their books by recording what took his interest in England's libraries. The majority of his writings were unpublished at his death. Those include the notebooks on his travels, known as his *Itineraries*, and his monumental bio-bibliography of British writers, *De viris illustribus*, and most of his Latin epigrams. It is the last of these which give insight into how one author immersed in the revival of letters – what he called its 'instauration' – conceived of the history and reach of that rebirth.

One poem is entitled 'Commigratio bonarum literarum in Britanniam', 'The Migration of Good Letters into Britain'.¹³ He begins: it is everywhere said that the Muses – those goddesses of the arts – have never travelled over the Alpine snow, moving only from Greece to Rome. But this is untrue and, even if the Romans do not want to hear it, he can declare for a fact that the Muse of pure poetry has come to the Britons, cut off from the whole world. What is more, while in Rome, two languages flourished, in Britain now, three do.¹⁴

It will already be clear that Leland uses Vergil's words in a similar way to Grocyn, as a cause of praise. This, though, is only the most obvious allusion in a poem whose ten lines are a succinct masterclass in intertextuality. His opening reference to the Alpine snows is itself a Vergilian phrase; the claim that they acted as a barrier to intellectual movement was a claim already made in the previous century, but perhaps foremost in Leland's mind was a more recent tale.¹⁵ The German reformer, Philip Melanchthon (1497-1560), proclaimed that his great-uncle and mentor, Johann Reuchlin (1455-1522), who achieved fame or notoriety for his Hebrew scholarship, was so skilled also in Greek that, in Florence, the émigré Byzantine teacher, Johannes Argyropolous, declared on hearing Reuchlin that Greece had flown across the Alps ('Graecia transvolavit Alpes').¹⁶ Alongside claims by Italians that they

¹³ First printed in J. Leland, *Principum, ac illustrium aliquot & eruditorum in Anglia virorum, encomia* (London: Thomas Orwin, 1589) [STC 15447], p. 3, and reprinted in id., *De rebus Britannicis Collectanea*, ed. T. Hearne, 6 vols (London: B. White, 1770), v, pp. 82-83. Dana Sutton has provided an online edition and translation: <http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/lelandpoems/>

¹⁴ Cana bonas passim cantavit fama Camaenas
Alpinas nunquam transilijsse nives,
Ut Pandionias facundia liquit Athenas,
Venit ad Italicos Musa polita lares.
Fronte tamen salva dicam nunc, audiat ipsa
Roma licet, Musas transiliisse nives.
Nam penitus toto divisis orbe Britannis
Tersa Camaena dedit, verba rotunda loqui.
Illa vetus linguis florebat Roma duabus,
At linguis gaudet terra Britanna tribus.

¹⁵ The phrase appears in Vergil, *Eclogue*, x.47. For the Alps as a perceived barrier, see D. Rundle, 'The Structures of Contacts', in *Humanism in Fifteenth-Century Europe*, ed. David Rundle (Oxford: Society for the Study of Medieval Languages and Literature, 2012), pp. 307-335 (pp. 307-308).

¹⁶ The tale of Reuchlin first appeared in Melanchthon's oration 'de studio linguarum', given in 1533 (P. Melanchthon, *Selectae declamationes* (Zerbst, 1587), p. 492). For useful discussion, see A. Ben-Tov, *Lutheran*

had discovered northern people were not all barbarians developed an appropriation of the same trope by northerners themselves.

This does not exhaust the allusions Leland crams into his short poem. Its final couplet asserting that three languages now flourish in England also has an intentional echo. We might fondly hope to identify the third, alongside Greek and Latin, as the English vernacular. Leland was certainly not averse to turning his Latin to praise of countrymen who wrote poetry in the local tongue; he does so by invoking the Florentine tradition which claims their cultural richness in a succession of *volgare* poets who become known as the three crowns, *le tre corone*: Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio. Leland celebrates, on one occasion, Geoffrey Chaucer and, on another, Thomas Wyatt as England's equivalent of Dante or Petrarch (Boccaccio is both times omitted).¹⁷ Yet, it would hardly provide a boast to beat Italian bombast to claim that in one's own country a local tongue had its literature; Leland was instead referring to what was generally perceived as the third learned language, Hebrew. A few years earlier, England's role in reviving Christian knowledge of Hebrew was celebrated by the best-known of all humanists, Desiderius Erasmus (d. 1536), on the admittedly specious grounds that the new Oxford college founded by Richard Fox, bishop of Winchester – Corpus Christi – was to be a trilingual college to match that recently established at Louvain.¹⁸ Leland was certainly aware of that praise, as we know from another of his poems.¹⁹ Elsewhere in his poems, he accords Hebrew the role of being 'the splendour of everything sacred'.²⁰

If this were not evidence enough for the identification of the 'three tongues', it is made all the more certain by another poem on the same subject as the 'Commigratio'. Leland titled it 'Instauratio bonarum literarum', 'The Revival of Good Letters'.²¹ It opens with an invocation of the 'glory of reborn doctrine' through Europe's study of the three languages in which, he says, Italy, Spain and France are involved, as well as his homeland. What is most notable in this poem is not, though, its allusion to the knowledge of Hebrew but the

Humanists and Greek Antiquity: Melanchthonian Scholarship Between Universal History and Pedagogy (Leiden: Brill 2009), pp. 187-212.

¹⁷ Leland, *Encomia*, p. 80 (Sutton, poem ccxxii); id., *Naeniae in mortem Thomae Viati* (London: sl, 1542), sig. Aiii^v.

¹⁸ David Rundle, 'Corpus before Erasmus, or the English Humanist Tradition and Greek before the Trojans', *History of Universities*, 31 (2019): 103-27.

¹⁹ Not printed, but available as Sutton, poem lxxxiv, addressed to Edward Wotton, 'nomine collegium apium'; for the association of Corpus with bees, see J. Woolfson, 'Bishop Fox's Bees and the Early English Renaissance', *Reformation and Renaissance Review*, 5 (2003): 7-26.

²⁰ Leland, *Encomia*, p. 73; Sutton, poem cxvii.

²¹ Leland, *Encomia*, p. 74-75 (Sutton, poem cxviii). For discussion, see H. H. Hudson, 'John Leland's List of Early English Humanists', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 2 (1939): 301-304.

genealogy it provides of British engagement in revived learning through a list of English-born scholars who had spent time in Italy. He includes Linacre and his contemporaries but the roll of honour does not begin there, going back another couple of generations to the middle of the fifteenth century, with the names of John Tiptoft, earl of Worcester (d. 1470), his secretary, John Free (d. 1464/5), and Robert Flemyng, dean of Lincoln (d. 1483). Leland could have (as Voigt later did) taken this history back further; he does as much in his *De viris illustribus* when he writes, for example, of William Gray, the future bishop of Ely (d. 1478), turning his energies to travelling to Italy, where he arrived in 1444.²² The details matter less, however, than the wider intent. At points in his poetry, Leland could be self-serving, as in the ‘Commigratio’ with which we began, since the proof that ‘pure poetry’ is known in England sits before the reader when they enjoy that poem or the others Leland wrote. He could even be bumptious, crediting to himself the ‘restoration of British antiquity’, but, more often, he conjures a sense of a revival of learning in which he is heir to a tradition, and his countrymen have been integral to its progress for nigh on a century.²³

Leland has occasionally been presented as the harbinger of a new mode of literature but he sees himself as an inheritor, continuing and enhancing practices begun before he was born. If we were to employ Leland’s sense of a revival of good letters in answering our questions of when and where was the Renaissance, we would have to respond that it had been thriving since the fifteenth century, across western Europe, including in the British Isles. It is not that, for all the English patriotism that bristles in some of his poems, Leland accorded to his own nation the pre-eminent role in the revival. It may be that he considered that the English had a particular affinity for the learned languages. Elsewhere in his writings, he mentions the earliest stage of language in Britain, before its transformation by Roman colonisation into a Latinate tongue; he claims the pre-Roman Britons spoke by combining barbaric elements with both Greek and Hebrew.²⁴ This is a mere hint; what is an explicit message of Leland’s poetry is that, while the British Isles are geographically liminal, the British are not limited by location in their immersion in the learned revival which was now happening across Europe.

Yet, any revival is not merely a bringing back from the dead: Leland’s instauration claims for itself something more. The emphasis on Hebrew reflects a perception of the three

²² Leland, *De viris*, p. 774; on Gray’s time in Italy, see D. Rundle, *The Renaissance Reform of the Book and Britain* (Cambridge: CUP 2019), pp. 74, 128-130.

²³ Leland, *Encomia*, pp. 3, 52 (Sutton, poems ix and cxxxvii): ‘instauratio Britannicae antiquitatis’.

²⁴ J. Leland, *De viris illustribus*, ed. J. Carley (Toronto, 2010), p. 38.

languages of the Christian Bible which echoes the intellectual programme of Erasmus, though he repeatedly admitted that his own knowledge of Hebrew was rudimentary.²⁵ This prizing of a language did not engender pro-Semitism. Leland wrote from a country which had expelled its Jewish community over two hundred years before; in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century, the locations in Europe where Jews could live peaceably were decreasing further. Meanwhile, the holy city of Jerusalem, though it had been a destination of Catholic pilgrims, lay firmly under Muslim control. The civilization that Leland conjured in his mind was an aspiration, a Europe defined by a plurality of learned languages but drained of religious diversity.

Europe itself is a term which does not appear in Leland's epigrams. He does deploy it on occasion in his *De viris illustribus* and, strikingly, it is nearly always in phrases describing the civilisation which suffered through the barbarian invasions – it appears that 'Europa' becomes a useful term when the Roman empire could no longer provide a shared identity.²⁶ The overarching concept manifestly included 'Britannia', though Leland suffered from the delusion of many Englishmen, that 'Britain' and 'England' are synonyms. He used it in the sense of the Roman province which did not reach far into what became known as Scotland. Leland also wallows in an anti-Scottish prejudice, showing especially an animus against the historian Hector Boece (1465-1536) who, Leland said, tells so many lies that enumerating them is like counting the stars in the sky.²⁷ It must also be said that Leland also shows that propensity of the southern English to discount the north, which is noted only as lands where war is the rule.²⁸ Nor does 'Britannia' stretch across St George's Channel: 'Hibernia' or Ireland does not gain a mention.

More generally, the contemporary Europe he implicitly presents in his poetry is, as we have seen, one of nations but their names are often synecdoche for particular cities: Italy is primarily Rome, though also Venice (only rarely is Florence mentioned), France equals Paris (where Leland studied), Poland Cracow, and England mainly the cities of Westminster and London, along with the university towns Leland knew well, Oxford and Cambridge.²⁹ Yet more specifically than these urban contexts, nations are specific individuals, so that Erasmus

²⁵ See, for instance, Erasmus, *Epistolae*, ed. P. S. & H. M. Allen, 12 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1906-58), i, p. 405, ii, p. 218.

²⁶ *De viris*, pp. 176, 186, 276, 288

²⁷ Leland, *Encomia*, p. 60 (Sutton, poem clxviii).

²⁸ *Encomia*, p. 33 (Sutton, poem lxxxi).

²⁹ For Poland, see the poem in praise of Leonard Coxe, Leland, *Encomia*, p. 50 (Sutton, poem cxxvii). Cambridge is celebrated for its 'cognitio trium linguarum' in *id.*, *Encomia*, p. 31 (Sutton, poem lxxiii).

of Rotterdam is presented as the pride of ‘Germania’.³⁰ What emerges from Leland’s collection of verse is a Europe in which it is less the case that nationality defines the individual than that select individuals define their nation (by a sort of metonymy), and stand as their representatives within the wider republic of letters.³¹ Europe, though employed elsewhere by Leland as a post-Roman and so ‘medieval’ concept, becomes the stage on which the revival of learning can be performed by the *dramatis personae* he introduces.

Leland, then, situates the revival of learning —among the English as elsewhere in Europe — in the century preceding his own and continuing to this present day. It was, however, not only for this that he found his times praiseworthy. His poetry, in its compact verses in recondite Latin, is intended to demonstrate the height of skill now possible, but their subject-matter is not solely the revival of learning. His collection, repeatedly shifting between topics, is designed to teem with characters and objects, and thus provide a cornucopia of causes for praise. As we have just seen, Leland can look back to a constructed past but most of his epigrams concentrate on the living moment. He finds much to celebrate beyond literary writings and their producers. It is true that he does not mention architecture and he shows little interest in sculpture, but he appears to sense a particular affinity between verse and painting.³² Three artists are mentioned by name, all continental Europeans working in England: most frequently Hans Holbein the Younger (d. 1543), who had immigrated from the southern German-speaking lands, but also the Ghent-born Lucas Horenbout (d. 1544) and the Venetian Antonio Solario.³³ More generally, there is a sense of the pre-eminence of Italy in art.³⁴ Leland’s *encomia* are often constructed around the claim that the artist being discussed is the equal or superior to one of the renowned ancient Greek painters, Apelles or Zeuxis, but at no point is this described as a revival – there is no suggestion that painting had followed the same trajectory of decline and restoration as learning had.

³⁰ Not in *Encomia* but Sutton, poems cxi (and cf. poem clxxxix).

³¹ On the concept of the *res publica litterarum*, see M. Fumaroli, ‘The Republic of Letters’, *Diogenes*, 143 (1988): 134-52.

³² He discusses just one statue, that of John Colet: *Encomia*, p. 26 (Sutton, poem lxiv). For discussion of his references to artworks, see S. Foister, ‘Humanism and Art in the Early Tudor Period: John Leland’s Poetic Praise of Painting’ in J. Woolfson (ed.), *Reassessing Tudor Humanism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 129-150.

³³ Horenbout: Leland, *Encomia*, p. 101 (Sutton, poems cclvii). Solario: not printed in *Encomia* but Sutton, poem clv; for the identification of Solario’s painting, see L. Bradner, ‘Some unpublished poems by John Leland’, *Proceedings of the Modern Languages Association*, 71 (1971): 827-36 (p. 835). For Solario in England, see S. Foister, ‘The Withypool Altarpiece’ in R. Marks (ed.), *Late Gothic England: art and display* (Donington: Shaun Tyas in assoc. with V&A, 2007), pp. 94-103.

³⁴ See, in particular, the unprinted epigram which is Sutton, poem ccxxxiii.

Leland, therefore, envisages his society as in the midst of a revival of learning which enables him to do justice to contemporary cultural vitality through finely wrought encomia, but his writings do not tip over into a sense of living through a broad Renaissance: there is a rebirth of the mind, not of the spirit. He also balances his local pride in ‘Britannia’ with a perception of its place within the shared civilization of Europe. That mental map of Europe is, as we have seen, a patchwork of cities each with its addresses for specific individuals. At the same time, its contours are as uneven as the Alps themselves: there is a centre of gravity which does fall within the Italian peninsula, and the vision fades into a penumbra; Spain is named primarily as the homeland of Juan Luis Vives; central and eastern Europe are out of focus, with Cracow, Prague and Vienna – major centres of learning – receiving only fleeting mentions; the only place in France beyond Paris which receives attention is Boulogne, and that is because of its capture by English forces in 1544. We have already seen how his ‘Britannia’ is a mis-shaped place. Yet, for all these lacunae, what is striking is how united Europe appears to be, sharing in an enterprise at the very point when its unity was being shattered by the Reformation. We know from his other works that he was committed to the Protestant cause but he does not parade sectarianism here. The enemy lies not within the Europe described but at its edges: in one poem, he celebrates the failure of the Ottoman siege of Vienna in 1529.³⁵

This should remind us that for all the appearance of static certainties maps can give us, Europe’s geography has often been on the move as it is now. The boundaries of Christendom were shifting, as land was lost to Islam, to be counter-balanced only by the imposition of Christianity on new worlds beyond the continent. The success of the Ottomans in taking the lands of Greece and the Balkans meant that whatever revival occurred could not occupy the whole of what once was the Roman Empire. Instead, the identity of ‘Europa’ was being refashioned and its geography rewritten: it became not enough to acknowledge the greatness of the classical past; it was necessary also to be in a position to be party to its revival. Europe was not simply the location of ‘the Renaissance’, it was generated by it.

After the Revival

It is my suggestion, then, that John Leland was the first to provide a retrospective of that revival as it related to ‘Britannia’, but he was also writing at the last possible moment when

³⁵Leland, *Encomia*, p. 80 (Sutton, poem ccxiii).

that could be done with dispassionate disregard for the larger changes occurring. He wrote at a moment in the struggles of the religious conflict when, as it were, the cultivation of the mind was being overpowered by the fight for the soul.

This is not to say that Leland's writings were entirely forgotten. It is the case that most of his work was not printed in his lifetime. Some of his poems circulated in manuscript, and the collection was taken to the printing press earlier than his more substantial works: it was edited by Thomas Newton of Macclesfield (d. 1607) for publication in London in 1589. There are extant nearly a score of witnesses to the volume, suggestive of the interest in it and its place within the continuing production of neo-Latin poetry in England. At the same time, its framing of the revival of learning had become outdated. A leitmotif of these last decades of the sixteenth century was the return of the ancient goddess of justice, Astraea, whose presence on earth was said to be evidence of a renewed Golden Age.³⁶ There were precedents but the increased focus on this Greek deity, however, reveals two significant changes.³⁷ First, its emphasis on the most political of virtues suggests how the return of good order was seen to stem from how a state was ruled, with that government being, post-Break with Rome, entirely national. Leland had littered his verses with praise of his king, Henry VIII, but he never implied the revival of learning was dependent on him. For him, the revival was an autonomous cultural development; the prominence later given to Astraea suggests how the fortunes of any republic of letters was enmeshed with England's commonwealth, its 'monarchical republic'. The preference for Astraea also suggests something more: in place of perceiving a return to a definable moment in Europe's past, we have the celebration of a consciously unhistorical figure. What deserves to be revived is safely removed from being of a specific lived time and locale; this is a mythical rebirth.

The celebration of Astraea was often expressed in the English vernacular, and in this reflected too a move beyond the tradition of the revival of learning. Certainly, there was – primarily in the universities – a continued commitment to the three learned languages, even if this was very rarely achieved in Hebrew. In London and elsewhere, there was a flourishing of writing that could reach a more socially diverse audience, though one which still formed the tiny literate minority of the country, and which was confined to its shores. In its delight in a local tongue, England imitated other European countries, and one method of demonstrating

³⁶ The classic study is F. Yates, *Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975).

³⁷ For example David Rundle, 'A New Golden Age? More, Skelton and the accession verses of 1509', *Renaissance Studies*, 9 (1995): 58-76; L. B. T. Houghton, 'Astraea Revisited: the Virgilian Golden Ages of Tudor England', *Neulateinisches Jahrbuch*, 21 (2019): 135-68.

creative skill was by translation of texts written in other vernaculars. One feature of these renditions was how they grasped the opportunity to identify local genius. So, when, in 1598, Richard Haydock provided his version of Gian Paolo Lomazzo's *Trattato del' arte dell' pittura* (1584), he complimented those aristocrats who had populated their galleries 'with the excellent monuments of sundry ancient Masters, both Italian and Germane', but went on to say that England had its equal to Raphael in the miniaturist Nicholas Hilliard 'so much admired amongst strangers'.³⁸ Likewise, it was to Hilliard that John Harrington alluded when faced with translating Ludovico Ariosto's list of famous Italian artists in *Orlando furioso*; Harrington declared that he can state 'without partialitie, for the honor of my country [...] that we have with us at this day one that for limning [miniature painting] is comparable with any other of any other country'.³⁹ For all his claim to impartiality, to see one miniaturist as equivalent to a litany of leading artists sounds like special pleading.

Limning and liminality: England's peripheral position within Europe is not forgotten in these decades but it is reconfigured; it is less about being partners in a shared enterprise than about rivalry; in place of collaboration, comparison. At the same time, what is perhaps most striking in Harrington's words is another contrast with Leland. Harrington could, if he had chosen, have invoked other miniaturists to whom Hilliard was heir: he might have mentioned, as Leland did, Holbein or Horenbout, either Lucas or his sister, Susanna, or the daughter of Simon Bening, Levina Teerlinc. That he did not suggests a contrast with Leland's interest in constructing genealogies; in their place, there is what we might call a fruitful amnesia, a silence about a past which might prove awkward in preference for celebration of a present moment as if it were out of time. If this is a flowering, it is one without germination; if it is a Renaissance, it is one without rebirth.

³⁸ *A tracte containing the artes of curious paintinge caruinge buildinge...* (Oxford: Ioseph Barnes for RH, 1598), sig. [¶iv^v and v].

³⁹ *Orlando furioso in heroical verse* (London: R. Field, 1607), pp. 268 and 278.