

# Broadening Horizons of Renaissance Humanism from the Antiquity to the New World

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*It is a commonplace about the Renaissance that it broadened the horizon of Medieval Europeans in more than one direction. It rediscovered the cultural and intellectual heritage of the classical Antiquity, discovered the true structure of the skies, found new geographical horizons, discovered new lands, and forged the birth of the natural sciences. There was a special intellectual group in the hub of all these changes: the humanists. Some of them were primarily scientists, others educators, or artists, but common in them was that their enthusiasm toward the classical heritage often connected with an interest in the new, the unknown, and the futuristic. The paper reflects on the long debate concerning the definition of humanism and the humanists and revisits several case studies which show the combination of philology, historical interest, and the proposition of new ideas – often inspired by a widening horizon resulting from travel.*

Keywords: Renaissance / humanism / conceptual definition / geographical discoveries / scientific discoveries / Buonaccorsi, Filippo / Celtis, Conrad / Copernicus, Nicholas / Bruno, Giordano / Hakluyt, Richard / Parmenius, Stephanus

## **Renaissance and Humanism**

It is a commonplace about the Renaissance that it opened up new horizons for the Medieval Europeans in more than one direction. Looking backward, the people of the Renaissance rediscovered the cultural and intellectual heritage of the classical Antiquity. Looking upward, they discovered the real structure of the skies, the place of the Sun and the planets. Looking forward, they found new geographical horizons and discovered new lands and new races. Moreover, even looking around themselves, they opened their eyes to new features of nature: the lower strata of the Great Chain of Being, from the minerals through plants to the animal kingdom including their bodies. All

this contributed to the revolutionary forging of the natural sciences. These discoveries resulted in the reconfiguration of science and even the arts: for example, perspectivic representation meant a new way to show three-dimensionality on two-dimensional surfaces from map-making to high Renaissance painting.

A particular intellectual layer, the humanists played a crucial role in the above-outlined developments. Not that we have a consensus who exactly were the humanists and what did they exactly do. Before starting with the main narrative, it seems useful to cast a glance at the historiography of the term and what one can see behind it.

The German educator F. J. Niethammer coined the term *Humanismus* in 1808 to express the emphasis on the Greek and Latin classics in secondary education (Kristeller, "Humanism and Scholasticism" 574). The word was then applied to those scholars of the Renaissance, who had also advocated and established the central role of the classics in the curriculum. "Humanismus" derived from the Renaissance term, "humanist," referring to professors, teachers, and students of the humanities and the student slang created such words like "umanista," "jurista," "canonista." In our case "umanista" referred to the students of the *studia humanitatis*, the liberal and literary education that had been developed by such ancient authorities as Cicero (ibid. 572–574). The first modern historian to analyze Renaissance Humanism was the German Georg Voigt (1827–1891), who in 1859 published his *Die Wiederbelebung des klassischen Altertums, oder das erste Jahrhundert of Humanismus* (*The Rebirth of Classical Antiquity, or the First Century of Humanism*).

Just a year later the Swiss scholar, Jacob Burckhardt (1818–1897), placed humanism on a broader perspective. In his *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien* (*The Culture of the Italian Renaissance*, 1860) he associated the whole Renaissance with the rise of Humanism and identified "the birth of the individuum" as the hallmark of the whole period (Burckhardt 81–103).<sup>1</sup> Burckhardt was fascinated with the individual, however, somewhat paradoxically, when describing the social interaction of those splendid individuals painted a rather gloomy picture about the brutal competition, the ruthlessness and the revived pagan morality of those people (Burckhardt 261–341). Burckhardt considered the complexities of the Renaissance as the prototype of the modern age and emphasized that the humanists not be the cause of its emergence, rather a symptom, and a realization of the new type of intellectuals.

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<sup>1</sup> Among the innumerable reflections on Burckhardt's notion of the individual see Ryszard Kasperowicz, "A Portrait of Renaissance Man in the Writings of Jakob Burckhardt," in Urban-Godziek 35–49.

Ever since his groundbreaking book was published, there were waves of anti- and pro-Burckhardian interpretations, which have not ceased even by today.<sup>2</sup>

In the early twentieth century, the most significant criticism came from medievalists who sensed that the Swiss historian was biased against medieval culture. In reply, they tried to eliminate the divide between the “Dark Ages” and the Renaissance – either arguing for medieval features in the later period or demonstrating the revival of the Antiquity in different phases of the Middle Ages. Notable examples were Huizinga’s *Waning of the Middle Ages* (1919); Charles Haskins’s *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* (1927); or Lynn Thorndyke’s *Science and Thought in the Fifteenth Century* (1929). Erwin Panofsky’s *Renaissance and Renascence* (1960) put an end to these debates by claiming that although there had been classical revivals in Europe before the fourteenth century, the Italian Renaissance distinguished itself by its self-perceptions and historical consciousness – both closely connected with the thinking of the humanists.<sup>3</sup>

The next generation of Renaissance scholars found different “blind spots” in Burckhardt’s concept of the Renaissance. Eugenio Garin (*Italian Humanism: Philosophy and Civic Life in the Renaissance*, 1947) and Hans Baron (*The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance: Civic Humanism and Republican Liberty in the Age of Classicism and Tyranny*, 1955) pointed out that – in opposition to Burckhardt’s individual humanist – *that* intellectual movement developed in close connection with the republicanism of the north-Italian city-states.

The concept of civic humanism was a significant step towards understanding the nature and the ideology of the new intelligentsia,

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<sup>2</sup> Against much postmodern criticism of Burckhardt, see what Jonathan Jones had to say in *The Guardian*, celebrating the 150th anniversary of the publication of *The Civilization of the Renaissance*: “Its greatness as a book lies in its imaginative intoxication. It is not a critique, but the supreme expression of the 19th-century fantasy of the Italian Renaissance. ... Burckhardt, like Darwin and Marx, wrote an epic of turbulence, change, transformation – he found in the Italian Renaissance the very birth of what he saw as the most striking aspects of the modern world” (10 July, 2010).

<sup>3</sup> Thorndike was particularly hostile to Burckhardt: “[T]hose devoted to the misleading conception of an Italian Renaissance. Now, writers on the so-called Renaissance have recently been described even by one in sympathy with them as ‘notoriously unscientific,’ and Burckhardt, the author of a work on the Renaissance commonly regarded as standard, frankly admitted his total ignorance of the scientific writings of the period” (Thorndike 2–3). On the historiography of the Renaissance and Humanism see Ferguson; Trinkaus; Rabil; Krays; Schiffman; Mazzocco; Nauert; Monfasani; and Raz Chen-Morris.

those people who became not only educators but also administrators in various political systems. It also highlighted the psychological anxieties of the humanists who considered themselves intellectually superior, still had to serve sometime very problematic powers, whether republican or tyrannical. Garin developed his genealogical conception in relation to this. According to him the fifteenth century was a period “that saw an evolution from active participation of humanist intellectuals like [Leonardo] Bruni in civic life to a politically quietist culture under the Medici ‘tyranny,’ dominated by metaphysics, religion, and Platonic ‘villa intellectuals.’”<sup>4</sup>

This paradoxical situation sometimes disturbed not only the humanists but their modern students, too. Baron, for example, did not want to notice that while the Florentine republican humanists were praising *libertas*, they made allowances for the imperialist expansions of Florence, for example by invading Pisa in 1406.<sup>5</sup>

Another giant scholar of that generation, Paul Oskar Kristeller found this concept too complicated, sometimes contradictory, and often intermingling with the ideological stance of the interpreters. To avoid those pitfalls, he offered a minimalist, neutral, and technical definition of Humanism that became extremely influential up to now. As of the 1940s, he repeatedly argued that Renaissance Humanism be primarily a new methodology in the *studia humanitatis*, facilitating *those* subjects, which were also present in the medieval trivium: grammar and rhetoric. To develop these fields, linguistic and literary skills were needed, especially regarding the growing interest in the heritage of antiquity. The rediscovery of the ancient authors required knowledge of the classical languages, the creation of dictionaries and grammars; their dissemination needed translation and editorial competence, while in the scholarly public arena argumentative debates assessed and propagated the old-new knowledge. The humanists specialized themselves in the mentioned areas and skills, while they did not greatly contribute to the development of Renaissance philosophy or science.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See the historiographical study of James Hankins, “Two 20th-century Interpreters of Renaissance Humanism: Eugenio Garin and Paul Oskar Kristeller,” in Hankins, *Humanism and Platonism* 579–580; also the Introduction in Mazzocco 8–17.

<sup>5</sup> The ideological inconsistencies of Baron are shown by Mikael Hörnqvist’s study “The Two Myths of Civic Humanism,” published in Hankins, *Renaissance Civic Humanism* 105–143. Baron – although much earlier, in 1970 – defended his arguments provided in the *Crisis*. See Baron, *In Search* 194–211.

<sup>6</sup> See Kristeller’s articles cited above. His views were summarized in his bestseller *Renaissance Thought* (1955, since then frequently republished).

As Kristeller wrote in 1945: “Humanism thus did not represent the sum total of learning in the Italian Renaissance” (“Humanism and Scholasticism” 572–574).

While Kristeller narrowed the definition of Humanism and made sure to show its connections with the previous medieval and scholasticism-dominated era, Eugenio Garin, following Burckhardt’s original program, emphasized the pioneering role of the humanists and connected them to philosophy and the emerging modern sciences. He also emphasized the importance of the “discovery of historical time” by the humanists:

The essence of humanism is most clearly defined by its attitude to the civilization of the past ... The ‘barbarians’ were not barbarous because they had remained ignorant of the classics, but because they had failed to understand them as a historical phenomenon. The humanists, on the other hand, discovered the classics because they managed to detach themselves from them and comprehend their Latin without confusing it with their own Latin. ... For this reason one should never seek to distinguish between the humanistic discovery of antiquity and the humanistic discovery of man – for they amount to exactly the same thing. (Garin, *Italian Humanism* 14–15)<sup>7</sup>

It seems that the three fundamental concepts about Humanism – that is Kristeller’s minimalist, Garin’s maximalist, and Baron’s politically informed – have been competing ever since their formation, with only little efforts toward a compromise. There is no place here to trace the intricacies of these debates, but two quotations can illustrate the kind of demarcation lines. This is how in 1975 Charles Trinkaus compared Kristeller and Baron, finding the first more useful and realistic:

Just as Kristeller and Panofsky emphasized the distinctiveness of Renaissance classicism in art, history, and intellectual history; Baron, also of the same generation of Weimar emigrés, stressed the uniqueness of the political attitudes of the Italian humanists – or at least of those whom he was able to include in his magic circle of ‘civic’ or ‘bürgerlich’ humanists. But whereas for Kristeller and Panofsky the distinctiveness of the Renaissance is embedded in an even stronger sense of the historical continuity and connection with the ancient, medieval, and Byzantine pasts, Baron in his well-known thesis conceives of the Renaissance as a ‘crisis,’ a critical turning away from medieval culture and also a break with the regressive elements of classical culture which were regarded more favorably in the medieval period. His emphasis is forward-looking and

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<sup>7</sup> More on Garin’s concepts and their relation to other interpretations of the Renaissance see Riccardo Fubini, “Old Trends and New Perspectives in Renaissance Scholarship,” in Urban-Godziek 15–35.

definitely ‘modernizing.’ [T]he basic appeal and value of Baron’s work is that it put Italian Renaissance studies into a context of historical significance ... and as a consequence was absorbed into a notion of a declining medieval culture. Baron made Renaissance republicanism the antechamber of the eighteenth-nineteenth-twentieth-century secularist, liberal, constitutional ideal. (Trinkaus xvii)

Quite recently, Patrick Baker has still recorded the unsettled polemics about the true nature of Humanism and the Renaissance. In his introduction (Baker 1–35), he gives a well-informed historiographical survey of the debates up to the present, including post-structuralist, revisionist, and new historicist arguments. To highlight one of the fundamental divides in scholarship, he compares Kristeller and Garin as follows:

The strength of Garin’s understanding is that it places humanism within an intelligible intellectual and cultural context in European history. Its weakness is that it has great difficulty identifying the various aspects that make up a humanist profile. It is strong on ‘why,’ weak on ‘what.’ The opposite is the case for Kristeller, who developed his view largely in reaction to other schools of thought he saw as too preoccupied with the coming of modernity and with reigning ideological controversies – Burckhardt with liberalism, Baron with republicanism and the civic applicability of *Bildung*, and Garin with modern science [and] the Enlightenment. ... Kristeller can reliably tell us about many of humanism’s salient characteristics, but he cannot tell us about one of the most, if not the most, important: for what purpose did humanism come about, i.e., what did humanists strive for? (Baker 9–10)<sup>8</sup>

With the advent of New Historicism and post-structuralism, all the received concepts came under attack. The main objection has been that the analyses and definitions of the Renaissance and Humanism all tried to arrange their explanations within one grand narrative,

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<sup>8</sup> A broad spectrum evaluation of Garin, Kristeller and (to a lesser extent) Baron is offered by James Hankins, “Two Twentieth-century Interpreters of Renaissance Humanism,” in Hankins, *Humanism and Platonism* 573–590. This is how he compared Kristeller and Garin: “It is clear that Kristeller’s urge to historicize humanism had a lot to do with his distaste for modern philosophical humanisms, just as Garin’s willingness to draw analogies and make connections with modern philosophies owed much to his embrace of the Marxist humanism of Gramsci. Now that modern humanism is moribund as a religious and philosophical movement, the desire to link Renaissance humanism with its modern namesake may well become less urgent. On the other hand, Kristeller’s view, for all its merits as an empirical description of the literary evidence, is plainly static and one-sided, and modernity is a moving target” (ibid. 589).

which would account for everything and anything.<sup>9</sup> In 2005, the new understanding of the Renaissance sounded in the words of Ewan Fernie as follows:

[By] now the notion of an ultimately authoritarian Renaissance has been thoroughly revised. Taking over from an older stress on order [there] is an attention to disorder, and usurping the assumption of comfortable consensus [there] is a preference for subversion and dissidence. Consequently, the twenty-first century Renaissance has to come to be envisaged as an intensely fraught and turbulent period, in which construction of class, race, and gender were negotiated, in which doubts and anxieties freely circulated. (Fernie 1)

An even most recent collection of essays follows the same train of thought, and in its introduction, we read:

[T]he undermining of the traditional metaphysical order of things necessarily threatens basic beliefs and convictions and creates a sense of cultural dislocation and psychological anxiety. In the intellectual sphere, this shift gave rise to fundamental questions concerning the ultimate foundation of ethics and the legitimation of the political order. It is this ambiguity that characterizes humanist discourse and establishes it as the foundation of modernity itself.<sup>10</sup>

No doubt, with such an attitude, the traditional images of the Renaissance and Humanism have been shattered and many ideologically biased notions have been undermined. Also, new, exciting aspects have come under investigation, such as the body and sexuality, the constructed and fashioned self, the emphasized role of women in culture, the anxieties of political consciousness, the role of language and rhetoric in shaping reality, and the like. Despite all this, James Hankins, one of the “grand old scholars” of the Renaissance, skeptically wrote in 2002:

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<sup>9</sup> The ideological foundations of this postmodern turn was Michel Foucault’s thesis about the discontinuity of culture and Jean-François Lyotard’s *La condition postmoderne* (1979). In the latter we read: “Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity towards metanarratives” (ibid. 11).

<sup>10</sup> See furthermore: “This collection offers a convergence of historical perspectives by reading modernity back into Renaissance texts and simultaneously reading current philosophical problems and debates in light of Renaissance humanism. More specifically, it draws attention to the humanist attempt to contend with the contradictions and anxieties resulting from their own cultural and educational program of renewal and reform.” Raz Chen-Morris, Hanan Yoran & Gur Zak, “Introduction,” in Chen-Morris 430, 432.

The post-modernists have not (so far) contributed much to the scholarly literature on Renaissance thought, but they have reversed the moral polarities within which Renaissance thought must now be evaluated. If the epigoni of the Enlightenment and Romanticism praised the Renaissance for glimpsing the truth that Man was his own God, the acolytes of post-modernism can only see Renaissance thought, to the degree that it prepared the West for the Enlightenment, as a tool of the Devil.<sup>11</sup>

Perhaps it is more just to give voice to the post-structuralists themselves.<sup>12</sup> An excellent example of the above is Robert Black, who, although based on impressive scholarship, has been mostly investing his energies to falsify most previous opinions about Humanism. In his chapter in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, he systematically disproved the established understandings of Humanism from Burckhardt to Kristeller. He denied that the humanists borrowed their emphasis on the dignity of man entirely from the Antiquity and that all humanists were optimistically applauding the potentialities and the dignity of man. He also denied that the humanists established a new sense of history, that humanist education was radically new and different from medieval schooling, that the humanists fostered the emergence of secularization and the like. Finally, he came to the radical conclusion:

[All] types of generalization – just like Panofsky’s famous but equally false formula of the union of form and content in the Renaissance – are simply variations on the Hegelian theme of the spirit of the age; [consequently] no one will ever identify the ‘characteristic stamp’ of the Renaissance, because it exists only in the minds of Burckhardt and their followers, not in historical reality. (Black, “Humanism” 251)

He offers no solution to the difficulties of definition, skeptically declaring that “a humanist is ... someone who acts like other humanists; this is how contemporaries would have identified humanists, and such a definition, stripped of historicist paraphernalia, will work equally well for us” (ibid. 252).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Hankins, “Renaissance Philosophy between God and the Devil” (2002), in Hankins, *Humanism and Platonism* 591–617. See also his introduction in Hankins, *Renaissance Civic Humanism* 1–14.

<sup>12</sup> See Barbara Kaszowska-Wandor, “The Renaissance and Humanism in the Light of the New Historicism,” in Urban-Godziek 49–58.

<sup>13</sup> See also Black’s more recent and equally skeptical paper: “The Renaissance and the Middle Ages: Chronologies, Ideologies, Geographies,” 27–44. A strong critique of Black’s dismissal of humanism is Paul F. Grendler, “Ancient Learning, Criticism, Schools and Universities,” in Mazzocco 75–77.



Bearing all this in mind, the second, case-oriented part of this essay is going to use a hybrid or syncretic definition of Humanism<sup>14</sup> with the following components. First, respect for the classical authorities based on philological information and accuracy. Second, a syncretistic indifference toward religious or philosophical antagonisms, however, by no means ignoring religion or ideology. And third, an openness to new methodologies to “discover the World and Man” (Burckhard), that is, reconceptualizing the medieval notion of reading “The Book of Nature” (see Berkel and Vanderjagt; Killeen and Forshaw; Hawkes and Newhauser).

### **The Humanist as Traveler and the Traveler as Humanist**

The heroes of my following discussion were not “professional humanists.”<sup>15</sup> They were intellectuals active in various areas of natural philosophy or the arts, who gained important inspiration from the study of the classical authorities. However, they were also mobile individuals, traveled a lot, and were always open to complement or modify what they had learned from the classics by personal experiences and observation. Their intellectual horizon was not only widened by their reading but by their seeing new places and encountering new phenomena, whether on the earth or in the sky. That is why I find useful to borrow the title of Jonathan Haynes’s book, *The Humanist as Traveler*, although it concentrates only on one single seventeenth-century traveler, George Sandys (Haynes, *passim*).

Sandys (1577–1644) studied at Oxford, later in the Middle Temple of London, between 1610 and 1615 traveled around the Eastern Mediterranean about which he published his *Relation of a Journey Begun A. Dom. 1610: Containing the Description of the Turkish Empire, of Aegypt, of the Holy Land, of the Remote Parts of Italy, and the Islands Adjoining* (1615). Following this, he became the treasurer of the Virginia Company in the New World, but among his administrative duties, he utilized some free time translating and annotating Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (first five books 1621, complete edition 1626). Resettling back in England he continued to pursue a literary-humanist

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<sup>14</sup> For the state of affairs in East-Central European Renaissance research, see Urban-Godziek, *passim*.

<sup>15</sup> About whose exact nature has been going on a continuous debate since the propagation of the term by Baron and Garin, see Rabil 1.141–174; Hankins, “The Baron Thesis” 309–338; and Najemy 75–104.

career: he paraphrased the poetical texts of the Old Testament (the *Psalms* and the *Song of Songs: A Paraphrase upon the Divine Poems*, 1638) and translated Hugo Grotius's drama on Christ's passion (*Christ's Passion, A Tragedie*, 1640). To highlight his humanist leanings, it is worth mentioning that he was a personal acquaintance of both Grotius and Paolo Sarpi of Venice, two excellent representatives of late-Humanism.

While Haynes usefully analyzes Sandys's achievement to reflect on Renaissance modes of thinking about history and culture, one of the best books to gain a broad horizon about the relation of Humanism and travel is Justin Stagl's *A History of Curiosity: The Theory of Travel, 1550–1800* (1995).<sup>16</sup> In successive chapters, he documented how medieval travel and its accounts became infused with humanistic interests: from pilgrimage to educational journeys, from seeing the famous Christian relics to visiting ancient ruins. In addition, the travelers' handbooks, which were either very practical or fabulously fantastical, gradually allowed room for multipurpose publications, uniting empirical information, historiography, description – and all these rhetorically arranged with a purpose of *prodesse et delectare*. The emerging genre of the diary embodied the *ordo naturalis*.

Furthermore, humanist concerns were reflected in the growing demand for authenticity. In the beginning, it meant the citation of classical authorities, but later factual and experiential information gained importance. Travel also connected with Humanism through several humanist genres. The educated travelers collected ancient inscriptions and copied them in their *loci communes*. During their journeys, they met fellow humanists and wrote classical quotations in each other's *alba amicorum*. They also wrote theoretical works about how to travel, what to see, and how to record one's experiences.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> In forming the following passages, I used several modern works on early modern travel, such as Hooyikaas; Fuller; Hadfield; Rubiés; and Unger, but I am most indebted to Stagl's excellent and monumental monograph. At the same time one should not forget about Albert Rabil's multi-authored collection on Renaissance Humanism, in the third volume of which they examine the relationship between Humanism and the disciplines, not forgetting about art, music, and the sciences.

<sup>17</sup> E.g. Hieronymus Turler (1520–1602), *De peregrinatione et agro Neapolitano* (Strassburg, 1574; English translation: *The Travailer*, London, 1575). Contents: 1. Definition of travel; 2. Who are fit to travel? 3. How to travel successfully and the profits of travel; 4. The characterization of the four chief nations of Europe [German, French, Italian and Spanish]; 5. What to observe while travelling? 6. Be selective in your observations...; 7. Examples of famous travelling lords; 8. Defence of travel against warnings and accusations; 9. The praise of travel. See also: Hilarius Pyrckmair,

**An Clippo Buonaccorsi = Callimachus Experiens**

The mobility of the humanists had essential implications in our region, the Central European countries. It is well known how Italian intellectuals, like Francesco Bandini (?–1490), Antonio Bonfini (1434–1502), Galeotto Marzio (1427–1497), and Pietro Ransano (1428–1492) contributed to the Renaissance revival at the Hungarian court of Matthias Corvinus (see Feuer-Tóth; Klaniczay and Jankovics; Farbaký). One of the fascinating humanists was Filippo Buonaccorsi (1437–1496) who helped shape the budding Polish Humanism. His early life in Italy is equally fascinating.<sup>18</sup>

He descended from a wealthy Tuscan family in San Gimignano, between 1460 and 1462 studied in Venice, mainly Greek, and became expert in astrology and other occult sciences. In 1462, he ended up in Rome and soon became a member of the infamous Accademia Romana, established by the noted Humanist, Pomponius Leto. As Segel characterizes, the Accademia had a distinctively elitist and hedonistic character:

Its members spent most of their time in the rustic mansion on the Esquilino discussing poetry, art, philosophy, philology, and archaeology. A regular feature of their routine was the renewal of ancient Roman religious rites. No doubt also in the spirit of ancient Rome, an undeniable libertine atmosphere prevailed, permeated with a distinct Epicureanism. Women and drink were frequent companions at academy functions, and homosexuality and bisexuality are believed to have been practiced freely. (Segel 38)<sup>19</sup>

Among Buonaccorsi's Humanist friends and patrons were Bartolomeo Sacchi, better known as Platina, who became the first Vatican papal librarian nominated by Sixtus IV; and Cardinal Roverella, whose secretary Buonaccorsi became. In 1468, a scandal broke out when the Accademia was accused of organizing a conspiracy to murder Paul II,

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*Commentariolus de arte apodemica seu vera peregrinandi ratione* (Ingolstadt, 1577) and his *De arte peregrinandi* (Nürnberg, 1591). Hugo Blotius (1534–1608) compiled a *Tabula peregrinationis* (published in Paul Hentzer's *Itinerarium Germaniae, Galliae, Angliae, Italiae*, Nürnberg, 1629), in which he offered 117 questions to describe a city. – On the *alba amicorum* see Fechner; Ryantová; Spadafora; and Losert.

<sup>18</sup> A comprehensive study is Segel 36–83, based on the monographs of Gioacchino Paparelli, *Callimacho Experiens (Filippo Buonaccorsi)*, published in Salerno in 1971, and Joanna Olkiewicz, *Kallimach Doświadczony*, published in Warsaw in 1981.

<sup>19</sup> On the Accademia, see also John F. D'Amico's account ("Humanism in Rome") in Rabil 1.274–279.

the anti-humanist pope. Leto at that time was teaching in Venice (and soon arrested for pederasty), and it seems that the head of the conspiracy was Buonaccorsi.<sup>20</sup> Under interrogation, Leto named him as the instigator and wrote in his *Defensio*:

Callimachus [Buonaccorsi], whom I wish I had never met, when he came to Rome because of his desire to pursue the study of literature was received by me hospitably. From the moment his extravagance and wickedness became known to me, I immediately became an enemy instead of a friend. I began to view him not as a man and to hate his perverse ways, which were so different from my own. I always loved frugality, thriftiness, and sobriety. He, on the contrary, threw himself into gluttony, drunkenness, and intemperance in all things, valuing all people but himself for little.<sup>21</sup>

Interestingly, Platina at the time of the interrogation confessed similarly. However, when he regained favor under Sixtus and wrote the history of the popes, he referred to Buonaccorsi as entirely inapt to lead a conspiracy, because he had no resources and was “more drowsy than P. Lentulus and more sluggish than Lucius Crassus weighted down by his fat” (Segel 41).<sup>22</sup>

With the conspiracy uncovered, Callimachus swiftly fled and managed to avoid arrest. He went to Bari, and then traveled in the eastern Mediterranean, including Crete, Cyprus, Chios, where he got involved with another conspiracy to deliver that island in possession of Genova to the Turks. This scheme was again aborted, Filippo managed to escape, but his friend from Rome, Marco Francheschini was hanged. The humanist poet then broke out of the fugitive; he wrote a Latin elegy *In obitu clarissimi viri Marci Antonii Romani* (Segel 45).

A longer stay followed in Constantinople, where Callimachus met an Italian merchant who resided in Poland. This may have inspired him to try his fortune in Cracow. To his demise, the Papal legate demanded his extradition from the Polish Sejm, so in 1470 he finally ended up at the court of Gregory of Sanok, the first significant Polish humanist and archbishop of Lwów.

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<sup>20</sup> A detailed documentation of the conspiracy can be found in the historicist two-volume monograph by Vladimiro Zagubhin, *Giulio Pomponio Leto, Saggio critico* (Rome 1909–1910). Segel also cites Giorgio Agosti's *Un politico italiano alta Corte polacca nel secolo XV (II “Consilium Callimachi”)*, published in Turin in 1930, 10–11. See also Palermio 117–155.

<sup>21</sup> Quoted by Zabughin, *Pomponio Leto* 1.121; Agosti, *Politico italiano* 10; and Segel 40.

<sup>22</sup> See also D'Amico in Rabil 1.275.

His first humanist writing in Poland was an *apologia pro vita sua* in which he called absurd to think he could have instigated a plot against the pope. Then he claimed to have come to Poland, not as a fugitive, but as somebody to be attracted by the splendor of Poland and offer his services to this proud nation. With the accession of Sixtus IV in Rome, Buonaccorsi was cleared of the charges and could have returned to Italy. However, he decided to stay in Poland and start a new career. He seems to have also lost his heart to a Polish maid – just as his fellow humanist, Conrad Celtis a few years later.<sup>23</sup> This woman may have been just a tavern girl. However, the courting Filippo could convince Gregory of Sanok to invite her into his palace. Buonaccorsi praised “Fannia Swentocha” in beautiful neo-Latin poetry and thanked his patron for his hospitality in warm panegyrics. An impelling motive in this love poetry is the legend of Pyramus and Thisbe that Shakespeare made immortal in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.<sup>24</sup>

By 1472, his services were accepted on the highest level: Callimachus became secretary to the king, and soon a leading diplomat sent on various missions to Constantinople, Buda, Venice, Vienna, and Rome. While the Vatican expected Poland to participate in a planned crusade against the Ottomans, Callimachus represented Polish interests in Central Europe, to which the most significant threat seemed to be the power of Matthias Corvinus. In some Latin treatises, he argued against a Turkish war (e.g., *De his quae a Venetis tentata sunt Pérsis ac Tartaris contra Turcos movendis*, Venice, 1479) and tried to turn the Venetians against Hungary and to support the Jagiellonian claim for the Bohemian throne.

In 1483–1484, he visited Buda and was impressed by the Renaissance art and humanist culture of the Hungarian capital. On this occasion, he wrote some poems to Matthias and other courtly members: *Ad Petrum Garazdam Hungarum*, *Pro Regina Beatrice*, *De corvo Matthie Regis et aquila Cesarea*. After 1485, when Matthias besieged Vienna, Callimachus again turned against the Hungarians. During a diplomatic mission in Venice, he decided to write a biography of Attila the Hun,

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<sup>23</sup> See Celtis’s *Quattuor libri amorum secundum quattuor latera Germaniae* (1502). Brepols published modern edition in 2010.

<sup>24</sup> For the Latin text of the work, see Domanski 131–154; a Polish translation of the poem appears in Jelicz, *Antologia* 47–53. See Segel 267, note 19. Callimachus’s verse account of his travels from Italy are found in his Philippis Callimachus, *De his quae a Venetis tentata sunt Persis ac Tartaris contra Turcos movendis*, translated by Maria Cytowska and edited by Andreas Kempfi, with commentary by Thaddeus Kowalewski (Warsaw 1962).

a kind of political allegory about Matthias and the European politics: *Attila: Accedunt opuscula Quintili Aemiliani Cimbriaci ad Attilam pertinentia* (1486, pr. 1489). In this work, Matthias looms behind Attila, the barbarian, the “scourge of God,” who at the same time is an impressive figure. As Segel explains, Callimachus could not help admiring him, however grudgingly. “To Callimachus, Corvinus seemed the embodiment of the ideal prince (way before the work of Machiavelli), but his admiration was tempered by the reality of his position as a Polish statesman, a counselor to the kings of Poland, for whom Matthias was a dangerous opponent as well as a rival” (Segel 59).<sup>25</sup>

To come to a summary, we can say that Buonaccorsi-Callimachus started his career as a Kristellerian humanist with classical studies and literary ambitions. During his involvement with the Accademia conspiracy in Rome, he might have shown some republican civic humanist attitudes to revolt against the papal authority. Later he widened his horizon through his travels all around Europe and the Near East. He finally ended up as a political realist serving one dynasty and as a diplomat, maneuvering among popes, emperors, kings, and doges, however never entirely giving up on his literary aspirations, expressing himself in polished neo-Latin verse and prose.<sup>26</sup>

### **Humanism, Hermeticism, and Astronomy: From Copernicus to Bruno**

Following the discussion of Callimachus Experiens, it would be very convenient to talk about Conrad Celtis, the early German humanist, whose intellectual horizon and career shows significant parallels to that of the Italian. He also got under the spell of classical studies and pursued literary ambitions, while widely traveling in the Central European region – Austria, Hungary, Poland –, organized academic circles along

<sup>25</sup> On the *Attila* and Matthias Corvinus see Tibor Kardos, *Callimachus: Tanulmány Mátyás király államrezonjáról* (Budapest 1931); Jászay 151–164, esp. 158–163, and Kaposi 42–44. On Callimachus’s Hungarian connections, see further Péter Kulcsár, “Der Humanismus in Ungarn” in Stangler 58–59; Ślaski, “L’Umanesimo nella Polonia del XV secolo e l’Italia,” in Klaniczay and Jankovics 219–222; Klára Pajorin, “The First Humanists of Matthias Corvinus’ Court,” in Farbaký 139–145.

<sup>26</sup> There is no place here to discuss his infamous *Consilia*, written around 1492, in which he gave counsels to the present and future kings of Poland very much in the spirit of Machiavelli, advocating an absolutistic rule against the power of the nobility. On the philological problems of the text as well as on its reconstructed ideology see Segel 66–72; and a more detailed comparison between *Attila* and the *Consilia* see Kaposi 43–46.

his route and had a keen sense for history and geography, not to mention his interest in astrology and the occult arts.<sup>27</sup>

However, because of the lack of space in this essay, I move on to a scientist, the Polish Copernicus, whose name is associated with a revolution in astronomy. Science historians have been declaring that he had not much to do with humanistic interests,<sup>28</sup> it can be argued that his scientific achievement be at least to some extent grounded in his classical learning and inspiration from humanists, in Poland as well as in Italy.

It is two short passages in Copernicus's major work that, for several decades now, has been stirring up controversies about the nature of his thought in scholarship:

What indeed is more beautiful than heaven, which of course contains all things of beauty? This is proclaimed by its very names, 'caelum and mundus,' the latter denoting purity and ornament, the former a carving. On account of heaven's transcendent perfection most philosophers have called it a visible god. (Copernicus 7)

The phrase "visible god" reappears in Chapter 10 of Book One ("The Order of the Heavenly Spheres") when he points out the importance of the Sun and argues with the authority of Hermes Trismegistus and Sophocles:

At rest, however, in the middle of everything is the sun. For in this most beautiful temple, who would place this lamp in another or better position than that from which it can light up the whole thing at the same time? For, the sun is not inappropriately called by some people the lantern of the universe, its mind by others, and its ruler by still others. [Hermes] the Thrice Greatest labels it a visible god, and Sophocles' Electra, the all-seeing. Thus indeed, as though seated on a royal throne, the sun governs the family of planets revolving around it. (Copernicus 22)

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<sup>27</sup> On Celtis see Jelicz, *Konrad Celtis* (1956); Spitz, *Conrad Celtis* (1957); on his classical and geographical interest see Müller, "Quod si Chunradi Celtis 'Illustrata Germania' nobis obtingere potuisset, fuisset profecto susceptus iste labor et certior et facilior": Johannes Cochlaeus' Brevis Germaniae descriptio und die Bedeutung des Conrad Celtis für die humanistische Landeskunde in Deutschland," in Fuchs 140–181. On his esoteric interests: Orbán, "Individual Astrology as a Means of Character-building in the Poetry of Conrad Celtis" (2014).

<sup>28</sup> Especially Edward Rosen; see his monumental but not entirely unbiased edition of *De revolutionibus*, edited by Jerzy Dobrzycki, with translation and commentary by Edward Rosen (London 1978) and *Copernicus and His Successors* (London 1995).

Inspired by Alexander Koyré's suggestion that behind Copernicus's theory there was not only mathematical but also a theological framework, Frances Yates initiated the enthusiasm about the Polish humanist as a Hermetist philosopher. First, she pointed out that Copernicus mentioned the very same Greek authors who hypothesized the motion of the earth (Pythagoras, Philolaus, and Aristarchus),<sup>29</sup> the first two whom Ficino also listed among the genealogy of the *prisci theologi* in the *argumentum* of his translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum*. Furthermore, she added that Ficino emphasized the importance of the Sun having great religious importance among the *prisci theologi*, beginning with Hermes, the Egyptian Moses (Yates, *Giordano Bruno* 14–15, 152–153).<sup>30</sup>

Indeed, more concretely than in the age-old use of the Sun as a religious symbol, the *Corpus Hermeticum* declares:

For it is the Sun whence good energies reach not only through sky and air but even to earth and down to the nethermost deep and abyss. ... The Sun is situated in the centre of the cosmos, wearing it like a crown. ... The Sun enlivens and awakens, with becoming and change, the things that live in these regions of the cosmos. ... The father of all is god; their craftsman is the Sun; and the cosmos is the instrument of craftsmanship. Intelligible essence governs heaven; heaven governs the gods; and demons posted by the gods govern humans. This is the army of gods and demons. (CH 16.4–18; *Hermetica* 59–61)<sup>31</sup>

Based on the above-quoted passages, Yates admitted that although in his mathematics Copernicus was entirely free of Hermetic mysticism, his theological framework was not that of Thomas Aquinas, but “of the new Neoplatonism, of the *prisci theologi* with Hermes Trismegistus at their head, and of Ficino” (Yates, *Giordano Bruno* 154).

In connection with this, the following questions arise. First, what could be Copernicus's purpose of using this classical and esoteric reference in a scientific and very matter-of-fact treatise? Second, how much could he know about the *Corpus Hermeticum* and the Hermetic Renaissance? Moreover, third, to what extent was he a humanist, taken with classical literature and philosophy?

First, one should remember that before and during the years when Copernicus studied in Italy (1496–1501 in Bologna, 1501–1503 in Padua and Ferrara) an intellectual duel between Aristotelism and

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<sup>29</sup> The name of Aristarchus only appears in Copernicus's original manuscript, for the printed edition he erased this reference. See Nebelsick 224–225.

<sup>30</sup> See Ficino 1836. See also Koyré 61ff.

<sup>31</sup> Ficino did not know treatise 16, but it was published by Symphorien Champier in Lodovico Lazzarelli's Latin translation in 1507, so Copernicus could have access to it.



Platonism was taking place. Traditional university education was leaning more to the first, innovative humanist learning to the second. Moreover, due to the Florentine Neo-Platonists, especially Ficino, mystical Hermetism became an integral part of the philosophical discourse. Since the seventeenth century, we know that Ficino was mistaken in dating the hermetic writings.<sup>32</sup> However, at that time, the *Corpus Hermeticum* seemed to be as an ancient authority than the *Bible*, containing wisdom that was handed down to the Renaissance via a chain of *prisci theologi*, such as Zoroaster, Orpheus, Pythagoras, Plato etc. (Yates, *Giordano Bruno* passim).

While Ptolemy's system was mostly in harmony with Aristotle's physics, its deficiencies were known for a long time, and alternative solutions emerged from the Pythagorean-Platonist side, especially concerning the centrality of the Sun, expressed in a powerfully poetical treatise, *De sole* by Ficino. About this Angela Voss wrote: "Ficino's Orphic insight was to reach its metaphysical culmination in his anagogical meditations on the Sun and Light, short treatises which draw the reader from *episteme* to *gnosis*, to the realization that the source of knowledge and the knower are the same" (Voss 237). Indeed, in 1479, in a letter to Lotterio Neroni, "Orphica Comparatio ad Deum," Ficino wrote: "According to Orphic tradition, the whole sphere of the Sun has a life-force far excelling that of all other spheres. It is this which causes life and movement to course through the entire body of the sphere and then to pour out through everything" (Ficino, *The Letters* 5.44).<sup>33</sup>

No need to think that Copernicus ascended into such metaphysical heights. However, it is not illogical to suppose that, when he wrote about the Sun as a lamp in a temple, or even as a visible god, such a then modern and convincing theological idea could appeal to him while looking for additional, not scientific arguments.

As for his opportunities to get acquainted with Neo-Platonic Hermetism one should remember that at the University of Cracow where he studied between 1491 and 1495 he also became associated with the *Sodalitas Vistulana*, a literary-humanist circle founded initially by Callimachus Experiens as *Sodalitas Litteraria*, then reorganized by Conrad Celtis in 1490. Since Callimachus also stayed in Cracow until his death in 1496, what is more, he possessed a house in Toruń, Copernicus's hometown, there is no reason to think that they were not

<sup>32</sup> Grafton, "Protestant versus Prophet: Isaac Casaubon on Hermes Trismegistus," in Grafton 145–163.

<sup>33</sup> See also Ficino, *Liber de sole et lumine* (Florence 1493); modern Italian edition: Ficino, *Scritti sull'astrologia* 185–217.

acquaintances. Furthermore, Callimachus was also in close humanistic connection with Ficino and Pico, and, when Ficino's *De sole* appeared in 1493, he immediately sent some copies to Cracow, which could be shared among the members of the *Sodalitas*.<sup>34</sup>

Moving to Italy, Copernicus found ample opportunity to experience the spell of Pythagorean Platonism and esoteric sciences, such as astrology. Ficino's translations of Plato and the Hermetica were still widely used including his own recently published treatise, in which he declared that the Sun was the heart of the universe.<sup>35</sup> No doubt, Copernicus had teachers and acquaintances interested in Plato, esotericism, and Hermeticism: Domenico Maria Novara, Copernicus's professor of astrology in Bologna; Pellegrino Prisciano, ducal librarian and professor of astrology in Ferrara, designer of the esoteric frescoes in the Palazzo Schifanoia. He also must have been aware of the much-publicized debate in Bologna, 1492, between Ficino and Alexander Achillini, the Aristotelian, about the orbits of the planets.<sup>36</sup>

Sober historians of science argued that Copernicus be too practical to be interested in Neoplatonic philosophy and humanistic engagements. There is a fact that supports a rebuttal of this view. In 1503, when Copernicus returned to Poland, he brought with him a transcript of the moral, pastoral, and amatory letters of a seventh-century Byzantine Greek author, Theophylactos Simocattes. He eventually translated it from the Greek original into Latin and published in 1509 with the Cracow firm, Jan Haller. This book<sup>37</sup> was Copernicus's first published work, and it was the first Greek work translated and published in Poland.

This effort demonstrates Copernicus's ambition to fashion himself an accomplished humanist-philologist. It also shows that the *studia humanitatis* and scientific theorizing were not alien to each other in

<sup>34</sup> Andrzej Wróblewski, "The Cracovian Background of Copernicus," in Fiszman 147–161.

<sup>35</sup> "Physicis veteres solem cor coeli nominaverunt" (Ficino 1493, Chapter 6, unnumbered).

<sup>36</sup> Copernicus arrived in Bologna four years after the debate, and stayed there when Achilli published his *De orbibus* in 1498. Copernicus met Prisciani in Ferrara in 1503. See Nebelsick 221–222; also in detail Westman 76–105.

<sup>37</sup> A detailed relation of the story of translation and publication is given by Segel 138–161, "Copernicus: The Scientist as Humanist." The book was published with the recommendatory verses of the noted Polish humanist Laurentius Corvinus: *Theophylacti Simocatae Epistolae Morales Rurales Amatoriae Nicolao Copernico interprete: Carmen Lavrentii Corvini Regiae Urbis Wratislaviae Notarii [...] reditus* (Cracow 1509). On Simocattes see Olajos 31–57.

his mind. The references to the ancient Hermetic and classical sources (e.g., Sophocles) in his astronomical reasoning can also be explained: although the scientific revolution reached more and more distance from philology, the humanistic admiration for the ancient authorities remained a moral obligation for scholars even in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

It would come handy to discuss Giordano Bruno after Copernicus since the Italian significantly contributed to the astronomical revolution initiated by the Pole and gained inspiration from ancient sources, especially Egyptian magic and classical mysticism. At the same time, he became a fervent defender of the Copernican system, but as Frances Yates warned, not in the role of a future martyr for modern science. Instead of that, he was a forerunner of his own, Hermetic, Sun-centered religious mission, a return to a real and ancient magical tradition.<sup>38</sup> This much-debated interpretation of Yates is without doubt one-sided, but cannot be ignored when one tries to see Bruno in the light of humanist interests. He stayed in England between 1583 and 1585, and here he composed five Italian dialogues, including his most famous scientific propositions in *De la causa, principio, et uno* (*Concerning Cause, Principle, and Unity*, 1584) and *De l'infinito universo et mondi* (*On the Infinite Universe and Worlds*, 1584). However, the remaining four are intimately connected to the classical and Renaissance literary heritage. These are *La Cena de le Ceneri* (*The Ash Wednesday Supper*, 1584), *Spaccio de la Bestia Trionfante* (*The Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast*, 1584), *Cabala del cavallo Pegaseo* (*Cabal of the Horse Pegasus*, 1585), and *De gli heroici furori* (*The Heroic Frenzies*, 1585).<sup>39</sup> They were written in the dialogic form of Plato and his followers. In these, Bruno uses the Pagan mythological heritage with perfect familiarity but adds sarcasm for a subversive purpose. Overall, he was not a humanist in the original sense, but in the understanding of Garin, representing the development of Italian Humanism into a Renaissance philosophy and morality of man (see Garin, *Storia* 2.701ff). Again, the confines of this essay do not allow a detailed analysis of these works, but let us stay in England, in the years of Bruno's residence there.

<sup>38</sup> "Copernicus," in Yates, *Ideas and Ideals* 256–261.

<sup>39</sup> The standard edition is Bruno 1985. On the literary connections of his work see Bolzoni 121–145.

## Humanism and the Discovery of the New World in England

The Elizabethan Age was a period of expansion; Britain became a global sea power and planted the seeds to become a world empire. During the reign of the Virgin Queen, the economic rivalry with Spain and France and the Spanish military threat were the main catalyzers to develop the fleet and to set sail across the Atlantic Ocean. The result was the development of shipbuilding, organization of expeditions both in the North and towards the South, and, finally, a colonialist expansion, which was not free from international piracy and military victories. The literary and scholarly achievements related to these were a growing number of geographical publications as well as travel accounts.

The first major author of geography and ethnology in England was Richard Hakluyt (1553–1616). Between 1570 and 1577, he studied at Christ Church College, Oxford, then until 1583 taught geography there. In the meantime, he also graduated in divinity, but his passion remained studying the Western discoveries.<sup>40</sup>

In 1582, he published his first work, *Divers Voyages Touching the Discoverie of America and the Inlands Adjacent unto the Same, Made First of all by our Englishmen and Afterwards by the Frenchmen and Britons*. The book brought the young scholar into the attention of Sir Francis Walsingham, the Queen's foreign secretary and "spymaster," who appointed Hakluyt as a chaplain in the Paris embassy of England. The Paris years, 1583–1588, coincided with Bruno's stay in London at the house of the French ambassador, Mauvissière. Considering the diplomatic reciprocity, there is a good reason to think that Hakluyt on his visit in London in 1584 met Bruno. That year he was most active and dedicated two of his dialogues to Philip Sidney, major Renaissance poet, himself a widely traveled courtier, and Walsingham's son in law.

In that year, at the request of Sir Walter Raleigh, Hakluyt compiled another treatise: *A Particuler Discourse Concerninge the Greate Necessitie and Manifold Commodities That Are Like to Growe to This Realme of Englande by the Westerne Discoveries Lately Attempted, Written in the Yere 1584*. He presented it to the Queen, strongly arguing for the foundation of colonies in America. This must have come opportunely for Raleigh. In that year, he was granted a royal charter authorizing him to explore, colonize, and rule any "remote, heathen and barbarous lands, countries, and territories, not actually possessed of any Christian Prince

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<sup>40</sup> On Hakluyt, see Hadfield; Sacks 17–55; Carey and Jowitt.

or inhabited by Christian People.” This was in return for one-fifth of all the gold and silver that might be mined there.<sup>41</sup>

In Paris Hakluyt gained essential inspirations for further work. To show his humanistic strength, together with his *Discourse* mentioned above he prepared a Latin commentary on Aristotle’s *Politics*. Furthermore, he translated René Goulaine de Laudonniere’s journal into English (*A Notable Historie Containing Foure Voyages Made by Certayne French Captaynes unto Florida*, 1587). He also prepared the edition of Peter Martyr d’Anghiera’s *De Orbe Novo*, an ethnographic account about the first contacts of Europeans and Native Americans, which was published in Paris.<sup>42</sup>

When he returned to England, he had enough energy to set to his life work: a general history of British expansionism, with a particular interest in sea navigation. The result was the monumental *The Principall Navigations, Voiages, and Discoveries of the English Nation: Made by Sea or Over Land to the Most Remote and Farthest Distant Quarters of the Earth at Any Time within the Compasse of These 1500 Years*. It was published in 1589, then greatly enlarged in the second edition between 1598 and 1600 in three volumes and sixteen books. It is the preface of this work which can illustrate the healthy combination of humanist respect for classical learning and a new, experience-based critical methodology that prevailed by the end of the Renaissance.

The first edition was dedicated to Francis Walsingham, and in it, Hakluyt recalls how he became inspired to deal with geography, then relates how he accumulated his knowledge. First, he mentions that when he was a pupil at the Queen’s Westminster School in London, his uncle, a lawyer of the Middle Temple, took him to his office. On his desk, the youth saw open books: a Bible, volumes on cosmography and geography, and a world map. The uncle explained how the map encapsulates the regions of the Earth, and then quoted from Psalm 107:

He seeing me somewhat curious in the view thereof, began to instruct my ignorance, by shewing me the division of the earth into three parts after the olde account, and then according to the latter, & better distribution, into more: he pointed with his wand to all the knowen Seas, Gulfs, Bayes, Straights, Capes, Riuers, Empires, Kingdomes, Dukedomes, and Territories of ech part, with declaration also of their speciall commodities, & particular wants, which by the benefit of traffike, & entercourse of merchants, are plentifully supplied.

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<sup>41</sup> “Charter to Sir Walter Raleigh: 1584”, available online at the Avalon Project of the Yale Law School, Lillian Goldman Law Library.

<sup>42</sup> *De orbe novo Petri Martyris Anglerii decades octo / labore & industria Richardi Hakluyti*, published in Paris, 1587.

From the Mapple he brought me to the Bible, and turning to the 107. Psalme, directed mee to the 23 & 24 verses, where I read, that they which go downe to the sea in ships, and occupy by the great waters, they see the works of the Lord, and his woonders in the deepe, &c. Which words of the Prophet together with my cousins discourse tooke in me so deepe an impression, that I constantly resolu'd, if euer I were preferred to the Vniuersity, where better time, and more convenient place might be ministred for these studies, I would by Gods assistance prosecute that knowledge. (Hakluyt, *The Principall Navigations* sig. 2, Dedication to Walsingham)

The meaning of this episode is clear: the “Christian philosopher” reads two books: the word of God and the Book of Nature, researching the intentions of the Creator in both. In the next part of the dedication, however, Hakluyt argues that reading “the Book of Nature” requires the study of the traditional authorities as well as gathering first-hand experiences:

Not long after, I was removed to Christ-church in Oxford, I fell to my intended course, and by degrees read over whatsoever printed or written discoveries and voyages I found extant either in the Greeke, Latine, Italian, Spanish, Portugall, French, or English languages, and, in my publike lectures was the first, that produced and shewed both the old imperfectly composed, and the new lately reformed Mappes, Globes, Spheares, and other instruments of this Art for demonstration in the common schooles. In continuance of time, I grew familiarly acquainted with the chieftest Captaines at sea, the greatest Merchants, and the best Manners of our nation. [... Then ...] I passed at length the narrow seas into France, where during my five years abroad I both heard in speech, and read in books other nations miraculously extolled for their discoueries and notable enterprises by sea ... (*The Principall Navigations* sig. 2, Dedication to Walsingham)

We catch the moment of a paradigm-shift in the above passage. It is clear that the author felt obliged to study the classical and recent humanist authorities. However, eventually he found them “imperfectly composed,” so he set himself to correct the old knowledge by reading contemporary first-hand accounts, and even more, pursuing the opportunity for personal interviews in ports at home and abroad with “the chieftest Captaines at sea, and the greatest Merchants.” This is how his great work became up-to-date and accurate.

In the second preface, “To the Reader,” Hakluyt provides further details about the hybrid methodology of his investigations in putting together this monumental work:

HAVING for the benefit and honour of my Countrey zealously bestowed so many yeres, so much traveile and cost, to bring Antiquities smothered and

buried in darke silence, to light, and to preserve certaine memorable exploits of late yeeres by our English nation atchieved, from the greedy and devouring iawes of oblivion. [...] By the helpe of Geographie and Chronologie (which I may call the Sunne and the Moone, the right eye and the left of all history) referred ech particular relation to the due time and place. [...] For the bringing of which into this homely and rough-hewen shape, which here thou seest; what restlesse nights, what painefull dayes, what heat, what cold I have indured; how many long & chargeable iourneys I have traveled; how many famous libraries I have searched into; what varietie of ancient and moderne writers I have perused; what a number of old records, patents, privileges, letters, &c. I have redeemed from obscuritie and perishing; into how manifold acquaintance I have entred; what expenses I have not spared ... (Hakluyt, *The Principall Navigations* 1: sig. 4, To the Reader, unnumbered)

Coming to the end of this essay, I cannot help bringing up a Hungarian connection to Hakluyt's enterprise, which will serve as the last example of the intertwining of Humanism and the new horizons of the Renaissance. In 1581, a young man from Buda, Stephanus Parmenius, arrived in Oxford and made acquaintance with Hakluyt. The geographer soon introduced him to Humphrey Gilbert who was preparing an expedition to reach Newfoundland.<sup>43</sup> The Hungarian became so enthusiastic about sea travel that he composed in Latin hexameters an encomium in praise of navigation and the discoverers (*De navigatione*).<sup>44</sup> In the end, he was admitted to participate in the expedition but unfortunately on the first island where they landed got drowned together with the sinking ship, called Delight.

However, his letter to Hakluyt about the first experiences was taken back to England and the editor published it in the third volume of the *Principall Navigations*, in Latin and his English translation:

The maner of this Countrey and people remaine now to be spoken of. But what shall I say, my good Hakluyt, when I see nothing but a very wilderness?

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<sup>43</sup> Parmenius's story was first revealed by Quinn and Cheshire, which I summarize here. See also: Gömöri 31–51; Molnár Basa 205–234; Fuller 22–25; Heale 136–158; Gömöri, "Additional Data"; Strobl, *passim*.

<sup>44</sup> Parmenius, *De navigatione* (1582). The publication was to improve public relations for Gilbert's expedition and was financed by the dedicatee. As Mary Fuller summarized: "Parmenius announces the proposed voyage, hastily assembled and inadequately financed, as the dawn of a new empire, to be founded by the heroic scion of a just and mighty race." But she sarcastically adds: "Parmenius's poem serves as evidence that one could write encomiastic praise even of Humphrey Gilbert, a New World explorer so unfortunate that the Queen at one moment forbade him to make the second voyage...", 22–23.

Of fish here is incredible abundance, whereby great gaine growes to them, that trauell to these parts: the hooke is no sooner throwne out, but it is eftsoones drawne vp with some goodly fish. [...] We purpose by the helpe of God to passe towards the South, with so much the more hope every day, by how much the greater the things are, that are reported of those Countreys, which we go to discover. (Hakluyt 1598–1600, 3.161–162)

So, in the end, Parmenius became a traveler and explorer. However, earlier he prided himself as a humanist. Before arriving in England, he was enrolled in the universities of Wittenberg and perhaps Strasbourg or Marburg (See Gömöri, “Additional Data” 212), and acquired the general skills of the *studia humanitatis*. His first publication (already in England) was an ode written in praise of David’s psalmody: *Paean Stephani Parmenii Budeji ad psalmum Davidis CIV conformatus, & gratiarum loco, post prosperam ex suis Pannoniis in Angliam peregrinationem, Deo optimo & ter maximo seruatori consecratus* (London: Thomas Vautroullierius, 1582). It was dedicated to Sir Henry Unton, in which he gave thanks for arrival at England. His humanistically shaped *De navigatione* showed a transition toward the “modern man,” in anticipation of the Gilbert expedition to Newfoundland. It is still full of mythological and other classical references (Nereus, Neptun, and Proteus), its geographical horizon reaches from Pannonia through Germany to Britannia, and indeed his interest is in the Western perspective where discoveries are waiting for the daring explorers in the footsteps of Columbus and Cabot.<sup>45</sup>

What strange radiance is this that shines  
 So suddenly in heaven’s changing face?  
 How is that the heavy clouds dissolve  
 Into light breezes, mists disperse, and so  
 The Sun can shine more brightly, since his path  
 Is cleared, on land and the gentle sea?  
 The South wind drops, and now milder East  
 Blows once again. To this fair breeze unfurl  
 The sails which England’s Humphrey Gilbert sets  
 Towards a world of fathers did not know  
 In seas they scarcely saw. (Lines 1–11)<sup>46</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Parmenius’s knowledge about the discoverers of America could be established already in Hungary, where travel accounts, especially Peter Martyr’s *De orbe novo* were present in noble and institutional libraries as early as the last quarter of the sixteenth century. See Sz. Kristóf 443–444.

<sup>46</sup> The original Latin with this English translation is published in Quinn and Cheshire 1972.



In the conclusion of a recent paper on Parmenius, Erzsébet Strobl suggested that “the poem *De navigatione* attests to the cooperative effort of three different classes of people in Elizabethan England to promote colonization: the courtier, the scholar, and the poet” (Strobl). While the courtier-adventurer organized and financed the venture, he took advice from the scholar, Hakluyt, while Parmenius, the poet added the flavor of fame and glory.

The new horizon, the travel accounts, the descriptions of the New World and its strange inhabitants naturally inspired works of high literature, too. The origin of Shakespeare’s Caliban should not only be looked for in Montaigne’s essay but in the favorite readings or even the first-hand experiences of the playwright. In 1584, the expedition of Raleigh brought to England two Croatan Indians – Manteo and Wanchese – who were the first Native Americans to enter the British Isles.<sup>47</sup> Raleigh entrusted these aboriginals to the care of Thomas Hariot – mathematician, historian, ethnographer, and traveler – who was to be the scientific advisor of his next expedition back to Roanoke Island, i.e. “Virginia.” His task was to learn from them the aboriginal language, Algonquian, and the result was the creation of the first Native American phonetic alphabet. In 1585, the next expedition took back the Natives to their homeland, and Mateo and Hariot were the interpreters in the exchanges with the natives.<sup>48</sup> Since during the next years more and more “Indians” arrived in England (most famous among them was Pocahontas), it is only natural that the “alien other” became a subject not only in scholarly publications but in the popular imagination, too.

## Conclusion

This paper has covered a long time span and a broad geographical horizon to argue for the interconnectedness of humanistic learning and the broadening horizon of knowledge in the Renaissance. Thus, it has also argued for a less dogmatically narrow definition of Humanism. As for

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<sup>47</sup> In early summer, 1584, Raleigh’s captains, Philip Amadas and Arthur Barlowe reached Roanoke Island at the coast of today’s North Carolina, and still in that year, they returned with the two Indians mentioned.

<sup>48</sup> Hariot’s travel account, *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia of the commodities and of the nature and manners of the naturall inhabitants: Discovered by the English Colony there seated by Sir Richard Greinuile Knight In the yeere 1585* was published in 1590 – thanks to Hakluyt’s promotion – by the famous bibliophile publisher, Theodor de Bry, in Frankfurt.

the heroes of the survey, one could argue that they have been chosen accidentally, perhaps only serve the underlying ideology of the presentation. To some extent, it is true. However, one should not overlook the telling personal-biographical connections of the persons discussed. Buonaccorsi was an Italian, from the birthplace of Humanism, Tuscany. He took those seeds to Poland where he significantly contributed to the flowering of the new learning, also developing typically humanist networking with other centers (such as Matthias Corvinus's humanists in Buda, or the traveling humanist, Conrad Celtis). In Cracow, he met Copernicus who from him as well as from his studies in Italy built a humanistic framework around the new scientific concept. Half a century later, one of the most enthusiastic followers of Copernicus was another Italian, Giordano Bruno, who chose England as the most suitable place to present his syncretistic philosophy, which bound together ancient wisdom, religious reform, and the new astronomy. Moreover, it was in England where a critical approach to the classics helped a generation of scholars and explorers to draw up the contours of new geography in order "to discover the World and Man."

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## Humanizem in širitev obzorij med antiko in novim svetom

Ključne besede: renesansa / humanizem / pojmovna opredelitev / geografska odkritja / znanstvena odkritja / Callimachus, Filip / Celtis, Konrad / Kopernik, Nikolaj / Bruno, Giordano / Hakluyt, Richard / Parmenius, Stephanus

Znano je, da je renesansa razširila obzorje srednjeveških Evropejcev v več kot le eno smer. Ko so se ozrli nazaj, so tedaj ponovno odkrili kulturno in intelektualno dediščino klasične antike. Ko so se ozrli navzgor, so odkrili resnično strukturo neba ter mesto Sonca in planetov. Ko so se ozrli naprej, so odkrili nova geografska obzorja, nove dežele in nova ljudstva. In celo ko so se ozrli okoli sebe, se je njihovim očem razkrila narava spodnjih plasti velike verige bivanja, od mineralov do rastlin in živalskega kraljestva. To je povzročilo rojstvo naravoslovja. V središču vseh teh sprememb je bila posebna intelektualna skupina – humanisti. Nekateri med njimi so bili predvsem znanstveniki, drugi vzgojitelji ali umetniki, povezovalo pa jih je to, da se je njihovo navdušenje nad klasično dediščino pogosto stikalo z zanimanjem za novo, neznano in futuristično. Prispevek obravnava dolgo razpravljanje o definiciji humanizma in humanistov ter se znova posveti posameznim primerom, ki pričajo o povezavi filologije, zanimanja za zgodovino in novih idej. Te je pogosto navdihovalo širše obzorje, ki je izhajalo iz potovanja.

1.01 Izvirni znanstveni članek / Original scientific article  
UDK 130.2"14/16"  
930.85"14/16"