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INTRODUCTION
CONCEPTS AND STRATEGIES

This collection of essays is in part the result of an international research project "Revisiting the Renaissance: Poland and the Low Countries in Early Modern Europe—The Culture of Self-Deception", which was carried out by the British and Commonwealth Department of the University of Lodz in Poland and the Vakgroep Nederlandse Literatur en Alegemene Literatuuretenschap of the University of Ghent in Belgium (2009-2012). The goal of this project was to validate the ongoing debate on the Renaissance by looking at its significance in European civilization through the prism of marginalized cultures. As the essays presented in this volume demonstrate, the scope of our interest has grown over time so that issues such as literature, religion, diplomacy, politics, and arts are seen not only from Polish and Netherland perspectives, but also from the vistas of other European countries. These varied frames of reference present an intercultural impact upon early modern civilization.

Once the project began, our attention became occupied with the question of terminology. Although "Renaissance" was the initial term we applied to the period of our interest, with time we also included the term "Early Modern" in our discussion. After all, the word "Renaissance" (it. "rinascita"), which appeared for the first time in Giorgio Vasari's *Le Vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori, ed architettori* [*Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*] in the sixteenth century, has somehow lost its initial meaning. This was the result of its popularization through the works of two historians, Jules Michelet

(1798-1874), a Frenchman, and Jacob Burckhardt (1818-1897), a Swiss. Both scholars, working independently, used the term to mean rediscovery, or rebirth, of ancient learning and knowledge, as well as the employment of this renewal in the arts and sciences. They also extended the meaning to signal the restoration of European culture in general through the resumption and appropriation of ancient texts.

The other concern, which made us re-examine the term "Renaissance" results from its literal meaning. The term introduces the idea of optimism and well-being in that it announces restoration and renewal, while at the same time discounting and/or ignoring innumerable cultural phenomena, such as the prevalence of poverty, the emerging concepts of sex, gender and national identity, the existence of *lusus naturae,* and questions of print and authorship. In addition, the word "Renaissance" implies fracture or even rupture: before something is reborn, it first must die. In this perspective, the study of "Renaissance" or "Rebirth" is inseparable from appraisement, and the appraisement reveals a hierarchy of values, placing epochs preceding the "Renaissance" in an inferior position.

The term "Early Modern" has a shorter history. It appeared only in the twentieth century in the works of École des Annales*,* mainly in his periodical *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale*, which was published for the first time in 1929. As the title of this periodical shows, the historians, also called the "annalists", used social sciences methodology in their studies. Furthermore, they departed from the research apparatus of classical political history, concentrating on the processes of, as they called it, "long continuation". "Long continuation" meant taking lengthy time perspectives as the subject of their studies. Instigating research on those aspects of civilization, which are usually marginalized or even ignored, this approach extends the boundaries on time periods researched and spans the centuries between the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. In other words, the term "Early Modern" covers the period from the late fifteenth century to the late eighteenth century.

Since its inception, the "Early Modern" approach has drawn attention to the significance of interdisciplinary studies. For example, in the study of literary texts, the methodological achievements of history, arts, politics, religion, architecture, anthropology, linguistics, philosophy or even sciences do not assume an auxiliary function; they are as important as the theory of literary studies. Their inclusion helps with not only discovering, but also interpreting the meaning and civilizational significance of the literary works under study and places them

in a wide interdisciplinary context. Moreover, texts coming from various disciplines are regularly studied with the methodological literary theory apparatuses, usually postmodern. In this way, the term "Early Modern" contributes to blurring the boundaries between disciplines and indicates new research perspectives on facts and processes that in the past were limited by the homogeneity of the research tools.

As this collection of essays demonstrates, in our research we have included the "Early Modern" multi-faced cultural/civilizational approach, studying texts coming from history, theatre, religion, politics, linguistics, literature and art with the use of the postmodern literary apparatus. As a whole, it embraces the current vogue of "microhistory", a term that freely encourages critique of the "master Narrative" of the rise of modernity and the Western civilization. The "Early Modern" galvanizes, for example, the shift of interest from great men as Leonardo da Vinci, Martin Luther or Shakespeare to common people, sometimes anonymous. After all, who "canonized" these great personages, burying in the vaults of oblivion such eminent personages as Klemens Bolesławiusz, Joost van den Vondel, Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski, Jan Kochanowski and Giovanni della Casa, the men whose achievements our essays describe?

Yet, while developing our ideas, we soon realized that we could not discard the term "Renaissance." As it is reflected in the many publications surveyed by Alex Davis (2011: 22-23 and 145-150), currently "Early Modern" is frequently used as a substitute for the term "Renaissance", and vice versa. After all, on a daily basis we see that the meanings of terms such as "modern," "modernism," "postmodernism," "modernity," "postmodernity" are also inconclusive. Although the studies of the centre, which focus on some of the most vibrant and internationally known cultural facts, processes and eminent personages, definitely occupy an important position in the genealogy of humanistic ideas as found in Europe, our studies also attempt to reclaim some space for the edges of early modernity as seen in Poland, the Netherlands, Sicily, and Britain. It is this space that we bring to the center of cultural debate.

It is a cliché in contemporary cultural criticism to say that the margins should be treated with caution because they have a potential capacity to change/reform the centre. Nevertheless, we believe that in our collection of essays, the center is enriched by receiving this new dimension. After all, reexamination of the centre does not mean simply telling the stories of the "others," usually discounted by the Western humanistic discursive practices. Instead, it is to re-define the centre, to see how it has been re-shaped by its encounters with cultural

marginalization. We hope that our collection of essays will join the debate over the politics of culture, stressing the contingent play between constantly shifting centres and margins at individual, group, and societal levels.

"*The Dismissal of the Greek Envoys*—A Forgotten Trajectory Within the Web of European Renaissance" by Marta Wiszniowska-Majchrzyk takes up Jan Kochanowski's dramatic text that plays a prominent role in the history of Polish literature. Yet, as the author points out, it also evokes ambivalent feelings among critics and readers. Regarded as the first fully developed drama in Poland, *The Dismissal of the Greek Envoys* (1578) is also labelled and classified as "occasional" and pertaining to a specific historical moment. The work attempts to justify its importance by employing diverse research strategies and different perspectives, including extensive commentaries that range from traditional to postmodern.

In the essay "The Marginalization of Lucrece's Story in the Early Modern Polish Culture" Krystyna Kujawińska Courtney reflects upon the reception of the story of Lucrece, a Roman martyr who chose to commit suicide rather than to suffer disgrace after having been raped by Sextus Tarquinius. The text deconstructs the mechanism of marginalisation, which is shown as a gradual process that begins with faithful description of the actual legend, but then the story of Lucrece becomes fused with that of the implicitly more important Christian saint, Pelagia, finally existing on the outmost margins of cultural discourse. Such gradual eclipsing of Lucrece's story in Poland, as the work in question demonstrates, concurred with the increased power of Polish nobility at the expense of royal prerogatives.

The essay "Revisiting the Jacobean War of the Sexes: Righteous Anger, Patriarchal Anxiety and the Swetnam Controversy" by Natalia Brzozowska discusses a challenging moment in the history of English drama that occurred after the demise of the golden age of the Elizabethan theatre. Outright misogyny in the texts of some English writers and playwrights as well as the responses it generated among women could be considered as an attempt to renegotiate the role of gender under new circumstances. In a word, a growing cult of masculinity combined with disparaging remarks with regard to the "weaker sex" could signal the forthcoming events that would bring an abrupt change to the course of British history.

In "The Founding Rupture. From Strong to Weak Identity" Stanisław Obirek discusses the historical and contemporary situation of the Jesuit Order. The emphasis is placed on the moments of crisis when Jesuits faced both the external

threats of dissolution and internal conflicts within the structure of the Catholic Church. Such instances of the rupture in the Congregation in turn affected its unity and identity. Bringing to the fore the proceedings and postulates of the Second Vatican Council (1962), the author opens up a space for exploring new opportunities for the Order and the Church, which, however, have been largely forfeited. On that account, the contemporary position of the Society of Jesus is mainly presented from the perspective of its missionary activities, while the future of ecumenical dialogue is vested not so much in the Church, but it needs to be founded in the very fabric of society.

Paul Hulsenboom analyzes two versions of Jacobus Wallius' "Ode to Mathias Casimirus Sarbievius". By exposing substantial differences between them, he suggests that the reader deals with two de facto separate poems. In the paper "'Have the Menacing Alcaean Muses Blown the War Trumpets Again?' Two Versions of Jacobus Wallius' Ode to Mathias Casimirus Sarbievius", the author offers a broad intertextual study of the seventeenth century early modern period as the background of the texts under discussion. The thematic range of the essay extends beyond the specific locus and tempus, i. e. The Low Countries and Poland, of two Jesuits, Jacobus Wallius-the author and Casimirus Sarbievius or Maciej Kaimierz Sarbiewski-the addressee. At the same time, the semantic shift that occurs in the second version as compared to the first is significant: in the face of external threats, Europe must act in unison as one body bound by its religious and cultural heritage.

The essay "On Going to Hell. The Conception of the Underworld in "Przeraźliwe echo trąby ostatecznej" ["The Shrill Sound of the Ultimate Trumpet"] (1670) by Father *Klemens Bolesławiusz* (1625-1689), and of the Otherworld in Lucifer (1654) by Joost van den Vondel (1587-1679)" by Andrzej Wicher investigates two long poems from the Netherlands and Poland, respectively. Both texts, in one way or another, relate to the national epic of England, namely John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Despite their varied popular reception and literary renown, all the three seem to share common codes and values embedded in the broadly conceived early modern episteme. The analysis of the texts in question results in their relocation from the specifications of time, place and circumstances, to the universal qualities of European cultural discourse.

In "Giovanni Della Casa's *Galateo*: A Serious Treatise on Manners or 'Only a Joke'?", Mariusz Misztal offers a new interpretation of probably the most famous treatise on manners in history, namely Giovanni Della Casa's *Galateo* (1558). Having utilized a number of archival sources, the author points

at alternative possibilities of its reading or even different original intentions regarding the entire content and purpose of the cinquecento Italian text. In a word, the intricate narrative pattern and the choice of the interlocutors might well indicate that *Galateo* was not meant to be taken seriously and that Della Casa could in fact consider his guide to be little more than a mere joke. The veracity of this presupposition is debatable, but the essay forces the reader to ponder again whether they really "know the Galateo".

If, in literary criticism, the affective fallacy is defined as a "confusion between the poem and its results", then, by analogy, the same criteria can be applied to political systems and parliamentary representations. Two of such systems are discussed in the paper "Evolution of the Political System in the Kingdom of Sicily" by Katarzyna Kozak. It seems that the forms of governance in the Kingdom of Sicily and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth are perhaps too hastily rejected merely on account of the fact that both state formations did not stand the test of time. Yet, the text signifies more than just a rendition of historical specifications and minutia of the early modern period in Sicily and Poland: the ultimate point of reference appears to be the political situation in contemporary Europe. Possible scenarios for further alternations, improvements and ramifications do not exclude some concepts and proposals from the statutes and constitutions of the now long defunct parliaments.