

MÆ e-TEXT, I

HUMANISM
IN ENGLAND
DURING THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

ROBERTO WEISS

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David Rundle & Anthony John Lappin

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(Editor's Introduction by David Rundle)

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

DAVID RUNDLE

Death does not have it all its own way. Sometimes it can claim no victory in its fight to bring an author's oeuvre to a final full-stop. Roberto Weiss – professor of Italian, Renaissance scholar and self-styled Count of the Holy Roman Empire – is a case in point.¹ When he suffered a fatal heart attack at his Henley-on-Thames home in August 1969, it was a matter of weeks before what some consider his best work, *The Renaissance Discovery of Classical Antiquity*, came off the printing-press. That was merely the first instalment in a productive posthumous publishing career. Eight years later, in 1977, the Billanovich brothers' Editrice Antenore brought out a collection of his essays, entitled *Medieval and Humanist Greek*.² It was also Antenore that, in 1989, provided an Italian edition of *Renaissance Discovery*. Now, with the advantage of digital technology, Medium Ævum Monographs can present a fourth, revised edition of Weiss' earliest work, *Humanism in England during the Fifteenth Century*, a book the Society for the Study of Medieval Languages and Literature first published in 1941.

The monograph began life as an Oxford doctoral dissertation, submitted in 1938 – an origin that the author blushed to

¹ For biographical sketches of Weiss, see the obituaries by C. Fahy in *Lettere Italiane*, xxii (1970), pp. 252 – 56 and O. Skutch in *Italian Studies*, xxv (1970), pp. 1 – 5; N. Rubinstein, 'Roberto Weiss (1906 – 69)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [ODNB] (available on-line at <http://www.oxforddnb.com/>). See also *The Times*, 14th August 1969, p. 10, and *Speculum*, xlvi (1971), pp. 574 – 75.

² The volume also opens with a bibliography of Weiss's publications which first appeared as C. Fahy and J. D. Moores, 'A List of the Publications of Roberto Weiss (1906 – 69)', *Italian Studies*, xxix (1974), pp. 1 – 11.

mention, because of 'the well-known prejudice against theses'.³ But any such prejudice manifestly did not hinder its swift transition from double-spaced typescript to formally-presented volume, and the print history of the work – re-published twice in its author's lifetime, on each occasion with the text largely unchanged but addenda included at the end of the volume – may also suggest it quickly gained canonical status. Indeed, when it first appeared, one reviewer could claim that the young Weiss's 'meticulous' scholarship had already 'long been recognised'.⁴ It is fair to say, though, that, from its reception, some brickbats were thrown along with the many garlands. Later scholarship has amended details and altered the narrative in some respects. The work, though, has endured: recent monographs touching on Weiss's subject have been divergent in most respects but united in this, that they have considered it necessary to open with a critique of a book that will soon become a septuagenarian. I myself facetiously entitled an article 'On the Difference between Virtue and Weiss' but went on to acknowledge in the first page that I could diverge from his approach precisely because he had led the way.⁵ What the late J. B. Trapp wrote twenty years ago remains true: 'for all its faults, [*Humanism in England*] is still the best general guide' to its subject.⁶ We all slumber in the shadow thrown by Weiss' overarching narrative.

³ See p. 4 below. The thesis had a very similar title to the monograph: 'Humanism in England during the Fifteenth Century up to 1485' (unpublished D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1938).

⁴ Gervase Mathew in *New Blackfriars*, xxiii (1942), pp. 370 – 71.

⁵ D. Rundle, 'On the Difference between Virtue and Weiss: humanist texts in England during the fifteenth century' in D. E. S. Dunn ed., *Courts, Counties and the Capital in the Later Middle Ages* (Stroud, 1996), pp. 181 – 203.

⁶ J. B. Trapp, 'From Guarino of Verona to John Colet' in S. Rossi & D. Savoia ed., *Italy and the English Renaissance* (Milan, 1989), pp. 45 – 53 at p. 45 [reprinted as ch. XIII in J. B. Trapp, *Essays on the Renaissance and the Classical Tradition* (Aldershot, 1990)].

The resilience of the work is all the more surprising since its presentation had become old-fashioned in the author's own lifetime. In the Anglo-Saxon world, the pre-eminent figure of post-war humanist studies was indubitably Paul Oskar Kristeller (1905 – 1999) and, however debated or ignored now are his central formulations of the concept of the *studia humanitatis* or of the nature of Marsilio Ficino's philosophy, his style of scholarship has proven enduringly influential.⁷ By his style, I mean this: a masterful blend of the intellectually incisive with the painstakingly detailed, an architecture of writing that buttressed the span of its argument with a demonstration of meticulous knowledge of the primary sources that were the subject's bedrock. The style has been repeatedly emulated, at times with great success but, in other instances, more in hope that voluminous evidence of eye-straining archival research might convince the reader also to look upon the author's analysis with sympathy. There is, in effect, a rhetoric of English-speaking Renaissance scholarship so defined by Kristeller's writings that it is nothing less than expected that a work will be provided with a detailed listing of manuscripts, or an appendix of original texts, or a bio-bibliography of relevant characters – that, in other words, however flawed the argument of the text, there will be at least continuing value in its supplementary material. Weiss sent his work out into the world without such witnesses to his laboriousness: he cites many manuscripts in *Humanism*, but there is not even an index librorum manu scriptorum; his thesis included a long appendix of transcriptions of texts at that point unpublished, but none was included in his monograph; potted biographies were not something for the end of the volume, but were the very stuff of his narrative.⁸ This is a work that, if it speaks

⁷ J. Monfasani ed., *Kristeller Reconsidered: essays on his life and scholarship* (New York, 2006); J. Woolfson ed., *Palgrave Advances in Renaissance Historiography* (London, 2005).

⁸ The list of texts that appeared in his thesis is provided as Part I of the Appendix below. This edition includes an index of manuscripts.

the language of our latter-day scholarship, does so with an alien accent.

The out-dated style of *Humanism in England* can obscure for us the work's enduring significance. We might not find it difficult to give an explanation for its lasting presence in learned footnotes: after all, no one, as yet, has cared to publish a monograph that can replace its scope. Put in uncharitable terms, continuing citation of Weiss' study might say more about the laziness of later scholarship than about the book's innate value. It could also be suggested that, by referring to Weiss, scholars are, whether they know it or not, harking back to earlier constructions of the topic, for his narrative is not a radical departure from preceding scholarship. However, the detailed research that underpinned Weiss' chapters hints at a new approach to the evidence for the subject – an approach which blossomed only in the years immediately after his death, and an approach the implications of which have not yet fully been digested. Before, though, we attempt to appreciate that influence, we should place Weiss and his work in the context of its production.

It is said that Weiss, the Italian who took British citizenship in his late twenties, signed himself 'Roberto' when in England, and 'Robert' when in Italy.⁹ It sounds like the mark of a perennial outsider, priding himself on his otherness. Some have imagined that they can detect in his *Humanism* a certain 'hauteur that continental observers traditionally reserve for manifestations of English culture'.¹⁰ What I sense is something quite different. Weiss writes his first monograph in a self-effacing manner, reflecting the common academic habit of the period of never inserting himself into the analysis. He does, however, repeatedly

⁹ This is referred to by Skutch in *Italian Studies*, xxv, p. 5, Fahy in *Lettere Italiane*, xxii, p. 253 and by Nicolai Rubinstein in *ODNB* (available online at <http://www.oxforddnb.com/>).

¹⁰ J. G. Clark, 'Humanism and Reform in Pre-Reformation Monasteries', *TRHS*, ix (2009), pp. 57 – 93 at p. 61.

talk of England as ‘this country’, situating himself within the land of his study.¹¹ And there is a revealing moment in the sentences he devotes to criticising the one contemporary work on his subject, *Der Englische Frühhumanismus* by the German scholar of English literature, Walter Schirmer (1888 – 1984). Weiss comments that Schirmer had failed ‘to appreciate the peculiar characteristics of early English humanism’, but adds that ‘such omission is not to be ascribed entirely to a foreigner’s difficulty of appreciating typically English characteristics, as one of the reviewers of this work suggested’.¹² That he alights upon this comment from a *Medium Aevum* review perhaps hints at a certain defensiveness, a fear that he too might be seen as a ‘foreigner’, ill-equipped to contextualise the evidence he has before him. There is, if anything, the anxiety to be an insider.

Even in the years of international turmoil when he was researching and preparing *Humanism* for publication, Weiss may, in his private life, have taken pride in his ambivalent cultural identity, a hybrid status which gave him a certain allure to those around him in Oxford: witness his appearance as ‘Count Bianco’ in Barbara Pym’s *roman-à-clef*, *Some Tame Gazelle*, composed in the mid-1930s.¹³ But in his academic writing, Weiss strove to avoid the role of exotic alien observing England’s tentative steps to civilisation from the vantage-point of his Italian heritage. It was not his nationality as much as two other factors that made him a surprising candidate for leading historian of England’s first contacts with humanism. There was, in the first place, the fact

¹¹ For instance, to cite examples only from the Introduction and first two Chapters, see pp. 11, 17, 19, 24, 25, 36, 41, 42, 43, 44, 47, 49, 50, 61 below.

¹² Below, p. 15, alluding to B. E. C. Davis in *Medium Aevum*, iii (1934), pp. 195 – 98.

¹³ B. Pym, *Some Tame Gazelle* (London, 1950), but first composed soon after Pym finished Finals in 1934: H. Holt, *A Lot to Ask. A life of Barbara Pym* (London, 1990), pp. 52 – 54, 61 & 143 – 45.

that he was male, at a time when, in Oxford, the Renaissance was considered – as reported in a famous anecdote of Denys Hay's – a subject for girls.¹⁴ That was the case not only at undergraduate level; the quantity of important work being done by female graduates can be traced through Weiss's own footnotes, and one scholar deserves special mention. Rosamond Joscelyne Mitchell was later to dedicate one of her books to Roberto Weiss, thanking him for his long-standing 'ungrudging help', but the intellectual debt was certainly not one-way.¹⁵ Mitchell's articles and her biography of John Tiptoft, earl of Worcester, provided important precursors to Weiss's research.¹⁶ If Mitchell's studies are now less

¹⁴ D. Hay, 'The Place of Hans Baron in Renaissance Historiography' in id., *Renaissance Essays* (London, 1988), pp. 133 – 149 at p. 137. For discussion of the Oxford context, see B. G. Kohl, 'Cecilia M. Ady: the Edwardian Education of a Historian of Renaissance Italy' in J. E. Law & L. Østermark-Johansen ed., *Victorian and Edwardian Responses to the Italian Renaissance* (Aldershot, 2005), pp. 233 – 255 and note Edward Armstrong's role in encouraging female students of the Renaissance: D. S. Chambers, 'Edward Armstrong (1846 – 1928), Teacher of the Italian Renaissance at Oxford' in Law ed., *Victorian and Edwardian Responses*, pp. 211 – 232. For a broad overview of the position of women in the University, see J. Howarth, 'Women' in B. Harrison ed., *The Twentieth Century* [The History of the University of Oxford, viii] (Oxford, 1994), pp. 345 – 75.

¹⁵ R. J. Mitchell, *John Free. From Bristol to Rome in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1955), p. vii.

¹⁶ To the citations in Weiss's bibliography could have been added R. J. Mitchell, 'English students at Ferrara in the fifteenth century', *Italian Studies*, i (1937), pp. 75 – 82 and ead., 'A Renaissance Library: The Collection of John Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester', *The Library*, xviii (1937), pp. 67 – 83; see also the authorial and editorial addenda at pp. 46, 175 and 180 below. Her *John Tiptoft (1427 – 1470)* (London, 1938) – a now rare volume as stocks of it were destroyed during the Blitz – was positively reviewed by Cecilia Ady in *Italian Studies*, i (1938), pp. 177 – 78 (though the journal attributes the work to 'Ruth J. Mitchell'); cf. E. F. Jacob, *EHR*, liv (1939), pp. 362 – 63, A. Steel in *History*, xxiv (1939), pp. 143 – 45; A. L. Rowse in *The Spectator*, May 6, 1938, pp. 816 – 18, and [D. M. M. Morrah] in *Times Literary Supplement*, July 2, 1938, p. 445.

remembered than those of her younger male contemporary, it is in part because of the culture which they both inhabited. The winner of the Alexander Prize in 1936, she married two years later and, while she continued to gain research grants, her life as Mrs Leys took precedence over the career of R. J. Mitchell; she chose not to seek an academic post.¹⁷ It is typical that while Weiss is honoured with an entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, she finds no place there.

Weiss, in other words, was the beneficiary of a culture of Renaissance scholarship the vitality of which has been to some extent overlooked because its researchers were, more often than not, female. He contrasted with them not only in his later academic success but also in his lack of prior historical training. Weiss was, in effect, a cosmopolitan scholar passing through a History Faculty. He had originally been destined for a diplomatic career, and had come to Oxford to prepare for that by taking a law degree. What transformed his life was the time he spent after graduation as an assistant in the Bodleian's Department of Western Manuscripts. It was only after that employment that he enrolled as a doctoral student. This change of direction seems to me crucial in understanding the nature of his *Humanism in England*. There is very little attempt in his book to place the discussion within contemporary debates about the Renaissance; indeed, its outlook was, even in its day, considered by some to be outdated in its affiliation to Burckhardt's formulation of the subject.¹⁸ At the same time, there is a denigration of previous

¹⁷ Her Alexander Prize Essay was published as R. J. Mitchell, 'English students at Padua', *TRHS*, 4th ser., xix (1936), pp. 101 – 117. I owe what I know of Rosamond Mitchell's life to a conversation with now departed Prof. A. C. de la Mare.

¹⁸ See pp. xxiv - xxv below; it was later noted in reviews of Weiss's last book, *Renaissance Rediscovery*: see Anthony Molho in *Speculum*, xlvi (1971), pp. 193 – 95. For a history of the contemporary debates about the Renaissance, see C. S. Celenza, *The Lost Italian Renaissance* (Baltimore, 2004).

historical scholarship which is something more than the stock-in-trade of the thesis writer. Weiss is, once again, at his most enlightening about himself when he criticises the work he wishes to supersede, Schirmer's *Der Englische Frühhumanismus*. Weiss claimed that his rival's 'wide knowledge of printed material does not extend to manuscript sources' – an unfair swipe, considering how Schirmer's footnotes often provide transcripts of previously unpublished texts.¹⁹ What it does reveal, however, is Weiss's sense of what he believes to be distinctive about his research: he considers himself to be attending more closely to the evidence of English humanist manuscripts than anyone before him. In this self-identification, he associates himself with a bibliographical tradition which he sees as autonomous from – and superior to – historical scholarship.²⁰

Weiss's debt to the bibliographers is made apparent by his choice of epigraph: the antiquary John Leland (c. 1503 – 1552) wrote his 'Instauratio bonarum litterarum' only decades after the demise of the fifteenth-century English humanists that it celebrates.²¹ Leland gathered together in his short poem a roll-call of characters, information about whom is scattered through his notebooks and his catalogue of British writers, known as *De viris illustribus*.²² Weiss does not dissect the poem itself, and his

¹⁹ See pp. 14 – 15 below.

²⁰ On the English bibliographers, see R. Sharpe, 'The English Bibliographical Tradition from Kirkstede to Tanner' in C. Burnett & N. Mann ed., *Britannia Latina. Latin in the Culture of Great Britain from the Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century* (London, 2005), pp. 86 – 128.

²¹ On the poem, see H. Hudson, 'John Leland's list of early English humanists', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, ii (1939), pp. 301 – 304, and, for a wilful misinterpretation, H. A. Mason, *Humanism and Poetry in the Early Tudor Period* (London, 1959), pp. 27 – 31.

²² The *De viris* is receiving, at last, a scholarly edition, in the capable hands of Prof. James Carley, whose articles also do much to enlighten our understanding of Leland's life and literary career. Apart from his discussions of Leland's visits to individual libraries, see J. Carley, 'John

mentions of Leland, as of Thomas Tanner (1674 – 1735), are largely confined to footnote references.²³ There is, however, a manifest contrast between his respect for those authors – whose writings, he says, were ‘of almost equal value as contemporary authorities’ to his research – and the supercilious attitude he displays to the historians he names.²⁴ Weiss dismisses some historians as having written merely a ‘few pages’ on his topic, another for being no more than ‘superficial’.²⁵ Yet, he mentions one English historian of a previous century who had, in fact, achieved something of what Weiss was now attempting, turning the bibliographers’ listings into a readable narrative.

It seems to have been only belatedly that Weiss recognised the importance of the work of Thomas Warton (1728 – 1790). He is not mentioned in the doctoral thesis; reference to him only appears in the monograph.²⁶ It was a wise insertion: the *History of English Poetry* (1775 – 1781) certainly provided a remarkable survey of what we would call the spread of humanism. Warton’s volumes are celebrated as the first monumental ‘literary history’ of Britain, though one contemporary, the waspish Joseph Ritson, complained that the work failed to stick to its topic: ‘an injudicious farrago, a gallimawfry of things which both do and do not belong to the subject’.²⁷ We might add that the work is all the

Leland in Paris: the evidence of his poetry’, *Studies in Philology*, lxxxiii (1986), pp. 1 – 50.

²³ Weiss did return to Leland’s ‘Instauratio’, using it in his inaugural lecture as Professor of Italian at University College, London: *The Dawn of Humanism in Italy* (London, 1947), p. 3 [reprinted in *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, xlii (1969), pp. 1 – 16].

²⁴ See p. 17 below.

²⁵ See p. 14 below.

²⁶ This is the only citation in this passage of the monograph absent from Weiss, ‘Humanism in England’, p. viii.

²⁷ Quotation from [J. Ritson], *Observations on the three first volumes of the History of English Poetry* (London, 1782), p. 48. On the construction of Warton’s work, see D. Fairer, ‘The Origins of Thomas Warton’s *History of*

more engrossing for the very fact of its gallimaufical quality. One of Warton's digressions, appearing in his second volume, was on the rediscovery of ancient letters, to his mind a noble moment in human history but one which had the unfortunate effect of distracting writers from progressing their nation's tongue.²⁸ That notwithstanding, Warton gave significant space to the subject, outlining the 'revolution' as it developed in both Italy and in other European countries (from France to Hungary), and placing the English contribution within that context. He dated the revival of classical learning to the time of the fall of Constantinople in 1453, though he traced its antecedents to the early trecento and specifically to Albertino Mussato, a scholar who was going to interest Weiss later in his career.²⁹ Warton had earlier in the *History* talked of Humfrey, duke of Gloucester, and had mentioned there a fairly full listing of the Italian authors who sought his patronage.³⁰ Now, writing about the 'migration of

English Poetry, *Review of English Studies*, xxxii (1981), pp. 37 – 63, and the same author's introduction to the facsimile edition of the *History*, 4 vols (London, 1998), i, pp. 1 – 70, esp. 13 – 26.

²⁸ T. Warton, *History of English Poetry*, vol. ii (London, 1778), pp. 407 – 432. On the significance of this within Warton's work, see J. M. Levine, *Humanism and History: origins of modern English historiography* (Ithaca, 1987), pp. 190 – 213.

²⁹ Warton's dating of the spread of Greek is shared by Samuel Johnson in his 1761 *Life of Ascham*, on-line at <http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/Texts/ascham.html> [accessed 2nd March 2010]; see J. Lynch, *The Age of Elizabeth in the Age of Johnson* (Cambridge, 2003), esp. pp. 48 – 51, and, for the origin of this dating, see H. Weisinger, 'The Study of the Revival of Learning in England from Bacon to Hallam', *Philological Quarterly*, xxv (1946), pp. 221 – 247. Gibbon provided a more nuanced narrative in the last volume of *Decline and Fall* which appeared ten years after Warton's discussion: E. Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 6 vols (London, 1994), vi, pp. 428 – 443. Weiss's interest in Mussato and the 'pre-humanists' is first demonstrated in *The Dawn of Humanism in Italy*; this was followed by his *Il primo secolo dell'umanesimo: studi e testi* (Rome, 1949).

³⁰ Warton, *History*, ii, pp. 44 – 50.

letters', he concentrated his attention on those Englishmen he believed to have mastered eloquence in the fifteenth century, by which he meant being learned in the two classical languages of Greek and Latin. Many of the names he mentions are familiar to us from later histories, but he does include one – Thomas Millyng, abbot of Westminster and bishop of Hereford (d. 1492) – who has all but disappeared for want of surviving evidence.³¹ For information about him, and the other characters he mentioned, Warton's main source was John Leland, on whom Weiss also was to rely. Warton can with justice be described as the first historian of England's bibliography.

Not all historians were as respectful of the bibliographical tradition as Warton. In the same decades as the publication of the *History of English Poetry*, Robert Henry produced his *History of Great Britain*.³² In its fifth volume, he deplored the 'profound darkness' of learning in the fifteenth century, adding:

it is true, that Leland, Bale, Pits, Cave, and Tanner, the writers of our literary history, give us the names of many authors who flourished in this period, with the title of their works, and assure us, according to their custom, that they were all wonderfully learned. But these boasted authors were, for the most part, obscure monks, knavish or deluded alchymists or astrologers, whose works have deservedly sunk into oblivion...³³

³¹ Warton, *History*, ii, p. 421, citing Leland without a full reference: see J. Leland, *De viris illustribus*, ed. J. Carley (forthcoming), pp. 788 & 810. Weiss confines reference to Millyng's learning to a footnote: see p. 231, n. 29 below.

³² R. Henry, *The History of Great Britain*, 6 vols (Edinburgh, 1771 – 93), on which I have found stimulating M. S. Phillips, *Society and Sentiment. Genres of historical writing in Britain, 1740 – 1820* (Princeton, 2000), esp. pp. 1 – 6.

³³ Henry, *History of Great Britain*, v (Edinburgh, 1785), p. 416.

Henry berated England's late medieval authors for their 'total want of taste' but, in this passage, he also disparaged the bibliographers who had claimed so much for them.³⁴ His formulation was influential: one of the few British early nineteenth-century contributions to scholarship on the Renaissance, William Shepherd's biography of Poggio Bracciolini, repeated Henry's phrasing nearly verbatim when describing the poor state of literature that the humanist purportedly found when he visited England.³⁵ A similarly dismissive tone was struck by Henry Hallam in his panoramic view of late medieval and early modern literature:

Of classical learning in England, we can tell no favourable story. The Latin writers of the fifteenth century, few in number, are still more insignificant in value.³⁶

Hallam did, it must be said, acknowledge positively some of the references in Leland to Guarino's English pupils, but only to echo Henry's dismissive response.³⁷ It was the dominance of such an outlook – the British historians' rejection of the bibliographers – that allowed Weiss to claim that his subject had been 'very much

³⁴ Henry, *History*, v, p. 407. For one Latin work which particularly received his censure, see D. Rundle, 'The Unoriginality of Tito Livio Frulovisi's *Vita Henrici Quinti*', *EHR*, cxxiii (2008), pp. 1109 – 1131 at p. 1111.

³⁵ W. Shepherd, *The Life of Poggio Bracciolini* (Liverpool, 1802), p. 113; cf. the Italian translation by Tommaso Tonelli, *La Vita di M. Poggio*, 2 vols (Florence, 1825), i, p. 111. On Shepherd's work, see D. Rundle, 'Un amico del Roscoe: William Shepherd and the *Life of Poggio Bracciolini* (1802)' in S. Fletcher ed., *Roscoe and Italy: the reception of Italian Renaissance History and Culture in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Britain* (forthcoming).

³⁶ H. Hallam, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe in the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries*, 4 vols (London, 1837 – 1839), i, pp. 145 – 46.

³⁷ Hallam, *Literature of Europe*, i, p. 226 (with marginal note describing theme as 'slight signs of literature in England').

neglected'.³⁸ For a nineteenth-century formulation of the revival of letters which incorporated the English contribution, Weiss had to turn to continental traditions of scholarship and to a work now not as much read as it deserves: Georg Voigt's *Die Wiederbelebung des classischen Alterthums*, first published in 1859 (a year before Burckhardt's *Die Kultur der Renaissance*), and supplemented by the 'giunte e correzioni' of Giuseppe Zippel that accompanied its Italian translation.³⁹

Voigt's depiction of 'humanismus' is one that remains recognisable to scholars a century and a half later: a product of various Italian locales which had, from the first, a cosmopolitan element and whose reception beyond the Alps was conditioned by national circumstances. The sixth book of his work was devoted to the discussion of the propagation of humanism to those nations, with the first to be reviewed being England. Voigt understandably was not as conversant with the British bibliographical tradition as Warton had been; he cited Leland's contemporary John Bale (1495 – 1563) on a few occasions but he relied more heavily on Italian sources, both the *Vite* of Vespasiano da Bisticci (first published by the learned Vatican Librarian, Angelo Mai, in 1839) and the humanists' own letters. The result was a collection of references that overlap in some instances with Warton but which introduces men like Nicholas Bildeston and Richard Petworth, mentioned in the letters of Poggio, and gives prominence, for example, to Adam Moleyns because he was praised for his Latin by Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini.⁴⁰

³⁸ See below, p. 14.

³⁹ It is not clear which version Weiss was alluding to when he mentioned Voigt. For a synopsis of the work and a discussion of its influence, see P. Grendler, 'Georg Voigt: historian of humanism' in C. S. Celenza & K. Gouwens, *Humanism and Creativity in the Renaissance. Essays in Honor of Ronald G. Witt* (Leiden, 2006), pp. 295 – 325.

⁴⁰ Warton had not mentioned Moleyns (or Mulins in Voigt), though there is reference to him in J. Leland, *De viris illustribus*, ed. J. Carley (forthcoming), p. 762. For comment on Voigt's deficiencies when

Later writers in English worked within the range of reference defined by Voigt's work. Bishop Mandel Creighton's 1895 Rede Lecture, 'Early Renaissance in England' probably can claim to be the first piece dedicated solely to giving an overview of English interest in humanism before the Reformation; in its structure, its debt to Voigt is manifest.⁴¹ In turn, Creighton as well as Voigt, along with recent periodical articles, informed the relevant section of Sir John Edwin Sandys' *History of Classical Scholarship*.⁴² Sandys also cites another recent work, written at some remove from the developments in British scholarship: *The Italian Renaissance in England* was the ambitious work of a young American and future diplomat, Lewis Einstein.⁴³ Weiss echoed the critical scholarly response when he said that the opening pages of Einstein's volume provided a 'short and superficial survey' of the fifteenth century (such shortcomings, though, did not dent the work's popularity); Weiss might also have mentioned that, once again, the narrative is a recapitulation of information gathered by Voigt, with the addition of some manuscript references and citations to the recently-published Register of the University of Oxford.⁴⁴

discussing the English contribution to the revival of letters, see R. L. Poole's brief review in *EHR*, ix (1894), pp. 765 – 66.

⁴¹ M. Creighton, *The Early Renaissance in England* (Cambridge, 1895), reprinted in id., *Historical Lectures*, ed. L. Creighton (London, 1903), pp. 188 – 212.

⁴² J. E. Sandys, *A History of Classical Scholarship*, 3 vols (London, 1903 – 08), vol. ii (1908), pp. 219 – 226. He cites Voigt from the third German edition. Sandys also briefly mentions English humanist interests of the later fifteenth century in the precursor to his *History*, his *Harvard Lectures on the Revival of Learning* (Cambridge, 1905), pp. 197 – 200.

⁴³ L. Einstein, *The Italian Renaissance in England. Studies* (New York, 1902), reviewed at length and destructively by G. L. Hamilton, *Modern Language Notes*, xx (1905), pp. 56 – 63; see also S. B. Harding in *American Historical Review*, viii (1902), pp. 124 – 26. Einstein's work was reprinted in 1903, 1907, 1913, 1935 etc.

⁴⁴ The quotation from Weiss appears at p. 14 below. Oxford University's Register F, which covers much of the fifteenth century, had been

There were, therefore, two major traditions available to British scholars to describe England's early engagement with the classicising interests of the Italian quattrocento: an indigenous bibliographical tradition turned into a narrative of the revival of learning by Warton in the late eighteenth century, and a more recent historical approach to humanism given classic statement by Voigt and naturalised at the turn of the century by the likes of Creighton and Sandys. This is not to suggest that the two traditions were entirely separate – Voigt, as I have mentioned, cites Bale, and Sandys shows some acquaintance to Leland's *De viris illustribus* – but there remained a need to mesh them together into a more complete portrayal of the subject. The first to attempt that was Walter Schirmer in the work that preceded and was, in turn, superseded by Weiss. Schirmer's intellectual odyssey had led him back from early modern literature to the fifteenth century; he was later to become best-known in the English-speaking world for his biography of John Lydgate.⁴⁵ Published ten years before *Humanism in England*, and written in the author's early forties, *Der Englische Frühhumanismus* demonstrates a close acquaintance with recent British writings and the two traditions which underpinned them. Schirmer acknowledges a debt to Voigt, to Creighton and to Sandys, but he also garners his information from the bibliographers – from Leland predominantly, but also from Thomas Tanner and (some would say more often than was wise) John Pits (1560 – 1616); Bale, from whom Pits is habitually accused of plagiarising, is much less often cited. *Der Englische Frühhumanismus* does not only marry together previous learning, enriched by wide reference to the range of original sources brought into print in the late nineteenth and early twentieth

published as H. Anstey ed., *Epistolae Academicae Oxon.*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1898) [Oxford Historical Society, xxxv & xxxvi].

⁴⁵ W. F. Schirmer, *John Lydgate: a study in the culture of the XVth century* (London, 1961), translated from the German, first published in 1952.

centuries; it also knots them together into a narrative of the development of English engagement with humanism.

Schirmer organises his subject by dividing the fifteenth century into three stages. He talks first of 'die Epoche des Mäzenatentums', an age of patronage in which the pre-eminent figures were those political rivals, Cardinal Beaufort and Humfrey, duke of Gloucester, but in which Schirmer also includes John Whethamstede, abbot of St Albans, and Thomas Bekynton, bishop of Bath of Wells. The careers of these last two figures overlapped with Schirmer's second stage, a period of seekers for humanism, characterised by the Italian travels of the likes of Andrew Holes, John Tiptoft, William Gray, John Free and Robert Flemmyng. In neither of these stages, however, on Schirmer's analysis, did there develop a 'native humanism', which was the work of the third stage, when William Sellyng transposed his Latin and Greek learning to his Canterbury cloister and when Thomas Linacre and William Grocyn produced scholarship worthy to be praised by Erasmus. And that native humanism did not share the Italian fascination with the antique in its aesthetic sense – this humanism was more English in being more practical.

It could be commented that both Schirmer's narrative structure and his depiction of England as a nation where what mattered was what proved useful had been adumbrated by Mandel Creighton in the short space of his lecture. Over the greater extent of his monograph, Schirmer provided such an interpretation with a learned depth and a sense of its wider implications. The most frequent response of the book's first readers can be summed up as grateful relief that an obscure field had been comprehensively surveyed. One reviewer went so far as to predict:

The study is so full of detail, so scholarly and exact, that no one but a student as well informed as its author – if

such a one could be found – would be competent to correct or find fault with it.⁴⁶

Roberto Weiss patently considered himself to be just that student.

Weiss found fault with *Der Englische Frühhumanismus* on several counts, as he explained in the Introduction to his own work. His critique can be said to fall into two categories, both of which we have already had cause to mention. The more significant is the methodological: Weiss berates Schirmer for ‘his neglect of evidence afforded by calligraphy, the copying of humanistic manuscripts, and fashions in style’.⁴⁷ This is precisely where Weiss claims novelty. Schirmer may have been the first to create a detailed synthesis of the two traditions of writing on the subject but, to the ambitious graduate student, he had not gone far enough. What Weiss perceived as necessary was a fuller return not only to Leland but to the manuscripts the antiquary himself had perused and described. Weiss nods to Voigt, Creighton and Sandys in his Introduction, but none of them finds any harbour in his footnotes. The resultant monograph is not so much a rapprochement, as it were, between Voigt and Leland as a victory for the bibliographers. It also involves a shift of attention within Leland’s oeuvre: Schirmer tended to cite *De viris illustribus*, Leland’s encyclopaedia of English writers, while Weiss more

⁴⁶ M. W. Croll in *Modern Language Notes*, xlvi (1931), pp. 561 – 62. C. W. Previt -Orton is similarly positive of the work, though dismissive of the subject: *EHR*, xlvii (1932), p. 330; B. E. C. Davis reviewed it twice – *Modern Language Review*, xxx (1935), pp. 225 – 26, and *Medium Aevum*, iii (1934), pp. 195 – 98 – being more cautious in his praise in the latter, which was the review cited by Weiss (see p. x above). The second edition of *Der Englische Frühhumanismus* (Tübingen, 1963) also received reviews: D. Bush, *Archiv für das Studium der neuen Sprachen und Literaturen*, cci (1965), pp. 207 – 8; J. A. van Dorsten in *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, lxiv (1965), pp. 166 – 67; Germain Marc’hadour in *Anglia*, lxxxiii (1966), pp. 236 – 39; E. G. Stanley in *Bibliothèque de humanisme et Renaissance*, xxvii (1965), pp. 723 – 24.

⁴⁷ See p. 15 below.

frequently refers to the *Collectanea*, the set of notebooks including the bibliographer's records of his many library visits in the 1530s. The contrast reflects Weiss's interest in the manuscript sources themselves, plentifully mentioned in his notes. There is, though, a concomitant lacuna: Weiss is less concerned with what American academics call philology, with the nature of the Latin used.⁴⁸ Unlike Schirmer, he does not provide readers of his monograph any passages from British attempts at Ciceronian prose. This creates a gap in Weiss's argument: he makes claims for English engagement with the humanist reform of language, in particular celebrating the role of Thomas Bekynton, but does not provide the detail to substantiate claims which are, in truth, highly suspect.⁴⁹ Weiss might berate Schirmer for not appreciating 'fashions in style', but his own work is open to the same complaint.

It is not only in that particular aspect that some could consider Weiss guilty of the very charges he makes against Schirmer; this is more blatantly so with his second category of criticism, the conceptual. So, Weiss took Schirmer to task for, as he put it, over-emphasising a divide between 'humanistic and medieval learning, thus creating an artificial standard of values'; but *Humanism in England* was, in turn, accused of the same fault. In a generally positive review, the American scholar of William Lily, Father Vincent Flynn (1901 – 1956), bemoaned the presence in the monograph of passages 'reminiscent of Burckhardt, suggesting ... too great a break between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance'.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ On the contrasting uses of the term 'philology' see A. Morpurgo Davies, *Nineteenth-Century Linguistics* (London, 1998), p. 22 (n. 8).

⁴⁹ See p. 15 below.

⁵⁰ V. J. Flynn in *Modern Philology*, xl (1943), pp. 354 – 57. Flynn was also the author of a significant article on fifteenth-century English humanist interest, published in the year that Weiss submitted his doctorate, and alerting the world to the interest of the register of the English Hospice in Rome: V. J. Flynn, 'Englishmen in Rome during the Renaissance', *Modern Philology*, xxxvi (1938), pp. 121 – 38.

In a work that, as the same reviewer noted, defined humanism as ‘a new intellectual system displacing or revising all the conceptions of the Middle Ages’, it is not clear that the young doctor of philosophy had healed himself of the malady he diagnosed in others.⁵¹ In Weiss’s defence, it might be said that the definition, taken from his Conclusion, was intended to describe humanism in Italy, rather than its English manifestation. This brings us to the second conceptual criticism Weiss has of Schirmer: he had, it was said, failed ‘to appreciate the peculiar characteristics of early English humanism’. Yet, what those peculiarities might have been was not necessarily immediately apparent to the first readers of Weiss’s work. What reviewers did appreciate was Weiss’s mention of an English ‘utilitarianism’ that reserved interest for the ‘practical potentialities’ of humanism, rather than clutching in a close embrace classicism for its own sake.⁵² Most remarked on it approvingly, though Father Flynn provided (once again) perspicacious comment, remarking that many of the Italian humanists themselves could, by the definition used, also be called ‘utilitarian’. For the majority, a characterisation of the English response to humanism as pragmatic surely afforded the comfort of familiarity. After all, it was not original to Weiss; it was there in

⁵¹ See p. 271 below.

⁵² Quotation from Weiss: see p. 272 below. The full list of the reviews of the first edition that I have been able to consult is: C. Ady in *Medium Aevum*, x (1941), pp. 173 – 175; J. W. H. Atkins in *The Modern Language Review*, xxxviii (1943), pp. 353 – 354; C. W. Brodribb, *TLS*, 6th July 1941, p. 278; D. Bush in *Speculum*, xvii (1942), pp. 149 – 50; V. J. Flynn in *Modern Philology*, xl (1943), pp. 354 – 57; S. Gaselee, ‘Latin Humanism in Fifteenth-Century England’, *The Classical Review*, lvi (1942), pp. 47 – 48; G. Mathew, in *New Blackfriars*, xxiii (1942), pp. 370 – 71; C. H. Williams, *History*, xxviii (1943), pp. 93 – 94. The war may have limited the number of reviews, both here and on the continent; it was because of the journal’s inability to comment on the monograph when it first appeared that the second edition was reviewed at length by N. Rubinstein in *Italian Studies*, xiii (1958), pp. 93 – 98; cf. K. Brunner in *Historische Zeitschrift*, clxxxvi (1958), pp. 408 – 409.

Schirmer's book and in Creighton's lecture. What is more, it fitted snugly with the wider discourse of English identity as practical-minded.⁵³ Yet, the term 'utilitarian' was so current that its application was not confined to one nation: to provide one relevant example, Oliphant Smeaton, writing at the beginning of the twentieth century, had taken it to be the defining characteristic of German humanism.⁵⁴ Within this wider discussion, there may, indeed, be something unusual in Weiss's use of 'utilitarianism', for, unlike, the other authors just mentioned, he does not attempt to present it as an essential element of some national genius; he is more interested in delineating the English response to the *studia humanitatis* rather than attempting to identify 'English humanism'. For sure, he makes use of the term 'English humanism' in his Introduction and Conclusion but the grand statements there are not developed in, or supported by, the intervening chapters. The very title of Weiss's monograph hints at its difference from earlier studies: it is about humanism *in* England, rather than the supposed humanism *of* a nation. Those Italianists who commented on the book praised it for being the first work adequately to place events north of the channel in the context of the intellectual novelties south of the Alps, though, it should be added, they talked in national terms of 'Italian humanism'.⁵⁵ Perhaps even Weiss himself was not fully conscious of the significance of the choice of wording in his title; undeniably, he later presented a narrative of the 'spread' of humanism on the basis that 'everywhere the impact of Italian

⁵³ On this wider discourse, see S. Collini, *Absent Minds. Intellectuals in Britain* (Oxford, 2006), with pp. 69 – 72 being especially relevant to our time-span; for examples of its earlier expression, see P. Langford, *Englishness Identified. Manners and Character 1650 – 1850* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 73 – 82.

⁵⁴ O. Smeaton, *The Medici and the Italian Renaissance* (Edinburgh, 1901), pp. 226 – 27.

⁵⁵ See C. Fahy in his obituary of Weiss in *Lettere Italiane*, xxii, p. 254; cf. N. Rubinstein in *Italian Studies*, xiii (1958), pp. 93 – 98 at p. 94.

humanism on Western Europe led to the development in each country of a national humanism with special features of its own'.⁵⁶ But, in his first monograph, such assumptions rarely intrude; he assessed the activities he describes not by some national measurement but against a universal of 'humane standards'.⁵⁷

It must be said that Weiss seems to have considered those 'standards' so universal or so objective that they did not require clear definition. It is also the case that, taking those standards as the yard-stick by which to measure participation in humanism, he usually found his Englishmen wanting. He cold-shoulders some for failing 'to capture the spirit of humanism'; he casts a mournful eye on others who did not manage to become professional humanists; and he pats a few on the head for holding the 'right ideas' about Latin composition.⁵⁸ His reviewers took such comments to heart; indeed, several of them felt it appropriate to praise the book but to disparage its subject. It was, as one put it, a tale of 'not full but rather half humanists'; another commented: 'I am afraid that we must admit that Latin humanism in England in the fifteenth century is of little importance'.⁵⁹ Some later scholars

⁵⁶ R. Weiss, *The Spread of Italian Humanism* (London, 1964), p. 95; cf. id., 'Italian Humanism in Western Europe' in E. F. Jacob ed., *Italian Renaissance Studies. A tribute to the late Cecilia M. Ady* (London, 1960), pp. 69 – 93; id., 'Learning and Education in Western Europe from 1470 to 1520' in *New Cambridge Modern History*, i (Cambridge, 1957), pp. 95 – 126, and id. 'Scholarship from Petrarch to Erasmus' in D. Hay ed., *The Age of the Renaissance* (London, 1967), pp. 111 – 122.

⁵⁷ 'Humane standards' appears to be Weiss's preferred expression in *Humanism in England*: see pp. 63, 116, 161, 178, 181 below (and cf. pp. 116, 201 where 'modern standards' is the term used).

⁵⁸ See pp. 61, 193, 113 etc below.

⁵⁹ Quotations from Charles William Brodribb in *Times Literary Supplement*, 6th July 1941, p. 278; S. Gaselee, *The Classical Review*, lvi (1942), pp. 47 – 48. Contrast the more recent critique of Weiss for an italo-centric view: e.g., Saygin, *Humphrey, duke of Gloucester (1390 – 1447) and the Italian humanists* (Leiden, 2002), pp. 2 & 10 - 11; A. Petrina, *Cultural Politics in*

have worried away at that conclusion, wondering why the humanists of the sixteenth century, studied by the likes of Douglas Bush, James McConica and Alistair Fox, had no forerunners.⁶⁰ Admittedly, many overviews of Tudor intellectual life have contented themselves with noting the fifteenth-century past in a dismissive sentence, like: 'Humanism spread north from Italy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries but did not have widespread influence in England until the sixteenth'.⁶¹ Others, though, have been concerned to ascertain why this should be so. Denys Hay opened an influential essay that first appeared in 1975 with the question:

By the end of the fifteenth century we have in Thomas More (born 1478) the finest 'humanist' produced in England. Why had he no predecessor of stature?⁶²

Hay's essay was published in a festschrift to Paul Oskar Kristeller and the answer he provided to the query he had posed for himself was an attempt to use Kristeller's work to re-interpret the evidence presented by Weiss.

Hay, who had earlier produced a successful lecture series on *The Italian Renaissance in its Historical Background*, proposed to do

Fifteenth-Century England: the case of Humphrey, duke of Gloucester (Leiden, 2004), p. 35.

⁶⁰ D. Bush, *The Renaissance and English Humanism* (Toronto, 1939); J. McConica, *English Humanists and Reformation Politics under Henry VIII and Edward VI* (Oxford, 1965); A. Fox & J. Guy, *Reassessing the Henrician Age: humanism, politics and reform, 1500 – 1550* (Oxford, 1986).

⁶¹ M. T. Crane, 'Early Tudor Humanism' in M. Hattaway ed., *A Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 13 – 26 at p. 15 (cf. p. 18).

⁶² D. Hay, 'England and the Humanities in the Fifteenth Century' H. A. Oberman & T. A. Brady ed., *Itinerarium Italicum* (Leiden, 1975), pp. 305 – 67 at p. 305 [reprinted in id., *Renaissance Essays* (London, 1988), pp. 169 – 231].

something similar for England in his article.⁶³ He does so by taking Kristeller's definition of a *humanista* as a teacher of a particular curriculum and traced the development of an educational change which was best symbolised by Colet's St Paul's.⁶⁴ These changes may not have created an army of Thomas Mores but they did, in Hay's analysis, turn the humanities native. He mocked the 'somewhat fly-blown foreigners who had failed to make a career at home' and who graced England's shores for a while; he identified the 1520s as the decade by which 'the humanities in England had reached the point of "take-off"', when their study became 'self-supporting, and no longer needed to be propped up by royal or other high-level patronage'.⁶⁵ This was a chronology with which Weiss would have had little issue, as he himself had described the early Tudor period as the moment when humanism's status moved 'from that of amateur [to] that of professional'.⁶⁶ However, Hay presents his article as a riposte to Weiss, in which the evidence is stripped of 'confused assumptions' about humanism as a vaguely-defined cultural movement, and the individuals discussed by Weiss are placed into a broader social context.⁶⁷ His intervention was, quite consciously, the historians' revenge on those literary types who, he considered, had dominated the study of the Renaissance in England.⁶⁸

⁶³ D. Hay, *The Italian Renaissance in its Historical Background* (Cambridge, 1966); the book originated as the 1960 Wiles Lectures.

⁶⁴ These changes have received closer study in the works of Nicholas Orme: see addendum B to p. 256 below.

⁶⁵ Hay, 'England and the Humanities', *Renaissance Essays*, pp. 224, 230.

⁶⁶ See p. 18 below.

⁶⁷ Hay, 'England and the Humanities', *Renaissance Essays*, p. 170.

⁶⁸ This sense of the faculty divide is most explicitly stated in D. Hay, 'The Early Renaissance in England' in C. H. Carter ed., *From the Renaissance to the Counter-Reformation: essays in honor of Garrett Mattingley* (New York, 1965), pp. 113 – 44 [reprinted in id., *Renaissance Essays*, pp. 150 – 67.

For their part, scholars of literature – specifically, those of the English vernacular that came to be increasingly the means of cultural expression in the sixteenth century – have had a different question to set Weiss's information. They have been less concerned to ask how the 'drab age' transformed into the English Renaissance and more interested in comparing the phenomena Weiss presented with contemporaneous literary activities in their preferred tongue. The most notable exponent of this approach is Douglas Gray who has written on the subject on several occasions.⁶⁹ With recourse to R. W. Southern's polemical coinage (minted for a different context), Gray has argued that the reception of Italian quattrocento innovations were conditioned by an indigenous 'medieval humanism'.⁷⁰ For Gray, that term signifies a tradition of reading ancient authors – precisely the type of classical interest that the humanists themselves dismissed as superficial or wrong-headed. What Gray has identified is a 'pattern ... of cautious acceptance, appropriation and transformation' that made the new influences fit into an older structure of reading.⁷¹ It is an approach that implicitly tackles both the conceptual criticisms made of Schirmer by Weiss and of Weiss by others: it has smoothed away the distinction between 'medieval' and 'Renaissance' and, in doing so, has tried to construct an identity for 'English humanism'. It brings, though, its own problems: by eliding together different definitions of what

⁶⁹ D. Gray, 'Humanism and Humanisms in the literature of late medieval England' in Rossi & Savoia ed., *Italy and the English Renaissance*, pp. 25 – 44; id., 'Some Pre-Elizabethan Examples of an Elizabethan Art' in E. Chaney & P. Mack ed., *England and the Continental Renaissance. Essays in honour of J. B. Trapp* (Woodbridge, 1990), pp. 23 – 36; id., *Later Medieval English Literature* (Oxford, 2008), esp. pp. 73 – 90. See also J. Simpson, *Reform and Cultural Revolution* (Oxford, 2002), e.g. pp. 50 – 52.

⁷⁰ For a late and subtle expression of R. W. Southern's rationale for his terminology of 'humanism' see his *Scholastic Humanism and the Unification of Europe*, i (Oxford, 1995), pp. 17 – 57.

⁷¹ Gray, 'Pre-Elizabethan Examples', p. 25.

is ‘humanist’, it is in danger of failing to be able to isolate moments of influence from contemporary Italy. *Pari passu*, it could be questioned whether cautious acceptance was a response any more peculiar to the English than the utilitarianism identified by Weiss and others before him. The distilled essence of ‘English humanism’ may, in truth, still be as elusive as the philosophers’ stone, but that should not leave us inconsolable. What the work of Gray and others gives us is an appreciation of aspects of the interaction of Italian humanism with one of fifteenth-century England’s vernaculars – a story of interest in its own right, albeit necessarily a minor part of English engagement with the *studia humanitatis*.

For all the differences between professors in different faculties, what the approaches exemplified by Hay and Gray share is a span stretching across the fifteenth century. It must be said that, more generally, attention has fallen unevenly across the period covered by Weiss. The activities at the court of Humfrey, duke of Gloucester have received repeated re-interpretation, most actively in the first decade of the twenty-first century.⁷² The best of these works have been informed not only by *Humanism in England* but also by the research of A. C. de la Mare, to which we will turn in a moment. The very end of the period has benefited from the throw-back of light shed on early Tudor intellectual life, both in the history of printing and in the study of the cultural pastimes of the court of Henry VII.⁷³ Between these two periods, there

⁷² A. Sammut, *Unfredo duca di Gloucester e gli umanisti italiani* (Padua, 1980); Saygin, *Humphrey and the Italian humanists*; Petrina, *Cultural Politics in Fifteenth-Century England*.

⁷³ For printing and English humanism, see, for instance, the relevant chapters in *Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, iii, ed. L. Hellinga & J. B. Trapp (Cambridge, 1999); for the circle of the early Tudor court, see in particular, D. Carlson, *English Humanist Books. Writers and Patrons, Manuscript and Print, c. 1475 – c. 1525* (Toronto, 1993); J. B. Trapp, *Erasmus, Colet and More. The early Tudor humanists and their books* (London, 1991).

remains what was once called the 'lost decades' of English humanist interest: the later chapters of Weiss's narrative – hastily written and somewhat formulaic though they may be – cite a range of texts that, for the most part, have not received the closer investigation they deserve.⁷⁴ Some of those sources are presented in the Appendix to this fourth edition, in order to hint at the vein of evidence that is still waiting to be mined.

In the preceding paragraphs I have concentrated on scholarship's re-interpretations of the evidence presented in *Humanism in England* but, of course, research and discoveries have not stood still since its original publication. Weiss himself continued to show an interest in the topic, in the first place publishing some of the previously unprinted texts that he had presented in the closing section of his thesis but not included in the subsequent monograph.⁷⁵ In later years, he made further discoveries – for instance, the Synesius translation dedicated by John Free to Paul II – and announced other finds to the world, like Tito Livio Frulovisi's poetic attempt (an attempt that all have concluded did not succeed), the *Humfrois*.⁷⁶ These additions to knowledge were mentioned by Weiss in the addenda to the later editions of his book, along with further new information and revisions provided by other scholars, making the work in its information, if not in its interpretation, fairly up-to-date with the state of its subject at the time of its author's demise. What I wish now to consider is the research that developed from the late 1960s, providing an overview of it and suggesting the significant

⁷⁴ E. Cox-Wright, 'Continuity in fifteenth century English Humanism', *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, li (1936), pp. 370 – 76.

⁷⁵ For publication information, see Part I of the Appendix below.

⁷⁶ R. Weiss, 'New Light on Humanism in England during the Fifteenth Century', *JWCI*, xiv (1951), pp. 21 – 33 at pp. 27 – 31, and id., 'Humphrey Duke of Gloucester and Tito Livio Frulovisi' in *Fritz Saxl 1890 -1948: a volume of memorial essays from his friends in England* (London, 1957), pp. 218 – 27.

impact it should have on our understanding of the subject. It is a discussion that can most appropriately begin with an area of study that Weiss himself found congenial: the study of the manuscript sources themselves.

Weiss's writing had been indebted to the multitude of manuscript catalogues by M. R. James (1862 – 1936), sometime provost of each of Henry VI's foundations, King's, Cambridge and Eton, in succession; they had set the standard for manuscript descriptions at the start of the twentieth century.⁷⁷ Many Cambridge libraries profited from James's industry. England's older university had no contemporary equivalent to 'MRJ', but there was one Oxford college collection that received exemplary treatment in Weiss's lifetime and that was Balliol, where Humfrey, duke of Gloucester's supposed residence had left no mark but where the humanist books of an undoubted alumnus, William Gray, bishop of Ely, had found safe haven.⁷⁸ The catalogue of the college's manuscripts by the classicist R. A. B. Mynors (1903 – 1989) appeared in 1963; it was a work more succinct in its descriptions and wonderfully fuller in its introductory explication than had been the manner of James, to whom Mynors owed his first introduction, as a schoolboy, to the fascination of manuscripts.⁷⁹ Mynors' discussion of the Italian book-collecting of William Gray was informed by the researches

⁷⁷ R. W. Pfaff, *Montague Rhodes James* (London, 1980); L. Dennison, ed., *The Legacy of M. R. James* (Donington, 2001).

⁷⁸ Weiss discusses Gray's collecting at pp. 132 – 48 below.

⁷⁹ R. A. B. Mynors, *Catalogue of the Manuscripts of Balliol College Oxford* (Oxford, 1963), though it should be noted that most of the work was done in the 1930s. Berthold Ullman wrote a review concentrating on Gray's humanist manuscripts: *Renaissance News*, xviii (1965), pp. 215 – 17 (cf. Francis Wormald in *EHR*, lxxx (1965), pp. 558 – 59). For brief biographies of Mynors, see M. Winterbottom, in *Proceedings of the British Academy*, lxxx (1980), pp. 371 – 401 and R. G. M. Nisbet in *Gnomon*, lxii (1990), pp. 574 – 75 (revised for the entry in the *ODNB*, available on-line at <http://www.oxforddnb.com/>).

of a graduate student, Albinia (Tilly) de la Mare (1932 – 2001), whose mastery of palaeography was, in the following decades, to do nothing less than revolutionise scholarship's appreciation of humanist manuscripts.⁸⁰ In turn, de la Mare was instrumental in an act of *hommage* to Mynors. Then ensconced in a small office in Duke Humfrey's that, over the years would become bewilderingly cluttered, de la Mare worked with the Bodleian's Keeper of Western Manuscripts, Richard Hunt (1908 – 1979) on an exhibition, dedicated to Prof. Mynors on his retirement, entitled *Duke Humfrey and English Humanism*.⁸¹ Weiss had known of the proposal but died before the display was mounted and catalogue published in 1970. In its scope, it reflected the chronology presented in *Humanism in England*, emphasising the formative role of Humfrey, duke of Gloucester, and closing its coverage in the 1480s, with the works of Pietro Carmeliano. In the process, however, the Bodleian exhibition added significantly in details, introducing, for instance, the itinerant Italian scribe, Milo da Carraria, and shedding further light on English collectors like Robert Sherborne and John Russell. *Duke Humfrey and English Humanism* was the first formative moment in the development of our understanding of its subject following Weiss's death.

Richard Hunt and Tilly de la Mare talked of collaborating again, on a volume of English humanistic hands to be published

⁸⁰ A. C. de la Mare, 'Vespasiano da Bisticci and Gray', *JWCI*, xx (1957), pp. 174 – 76 (cited by Mynors, *Catalogue of MSS of Balliol*, p. xxxi), a first fruit of her graduate research, which culminated in ead., 'Vespasiano da Bisticci, historian and bookseller' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1966). For an autobiographical memoir, see ead., 'A Palaeography's Odyssey' in J. Onians ed., *Sight and Insight. Essays on art and culture in honour of E. H. Gombrich at 85* (London, 1994), pp. 89 – 107; see also the obituary by Nicholas Barker in *The Independent*, 3rd January 2002, available on-line at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/professor--albinia-de-la-mare-729632.html> [accessed on 9th February 2010].

⁸¹ [Bodleian Library exhibition catalogue], *Duke Humfrey and English Humanism in the Fifteenth Century* (Oxford, 1970).

by Oxford Bibliographical Society. It had not materialised by the time Hunt died in 1979, though the following year, de la Mare declared: 'I hope to finish the ... book before too long – other duties permitting'.⁸² In the struggle between hope and duties, the latter vanquished. The absence of such a work remains a lacuna.⁸³ However, de la Mare continued to research the subject, generously sharing her knowledge with others and publishing some of it herself, most notably in a later Bodleian exhibition, *Duke Humfrey's Library and the Divinity School* of 1988.⁸⁴ The centrepiece of that display was the bringing together of all the surviving manuscripts once owned by Humfrey that had been in his donations to the University (and including one which has now had to be discounted from that number), but its focus was not confined to that.⁸⁵ Much new information was presented, particularly about the manuscripts of John Tiptoft, earl of Worcester – a collection that had suffered from the malignity of time even more than Humfrey's had.

Further discoveries continued to be made at the end of the last millennium and the start of the new one: humanist manuscripts from both Humfrey's collection and (in larger number) Tiptoft's resurfaced, comfortably stored in institutional or national libraries but previously overlooked because their marks of ownership had

⁸² [Bodleian Library exhibition catalogue], *Manuscripts at Oxford* (Oxford, 1980), p. 93.

⁸³ The idea of such a volume has been resurrected by myself, but I will not refrain from tempting fate with optimistic declarations.

⁸⁴ [Bodleian Library exhibition catalogue], *Duke Humfrey's Library and the Divinity School 1488 – 1988* (Oxford, 1988). A. C. de la Mare also wrote more detailed descriptions of the Humfrey manuscripts; two instalments of those descriptions appeared as 'Manuscripts given to the University of Oxford by Humfrey, duke of Gloucester', *Bodleian Library Record*, xiii (1988), pp. 30 – 51 & 112 – 21.

⁸⁵ The manuscript which has now to be excluded is BAV, MS. Vat. lat. 10669, on which see addendum H to p. 89 below.

not been recognised.⁸⁶ The strength of the palaeographical tradition of scholarship has not been matched by an equivalent development in the study of the prose style of the works.⁸⁷ In that sense, later generations have replicated the blind spots of Weiss's own approach, more interested in manuscript listings than in precise philological work. A notable exception has been the research of David Howlett, saving the ornate prose of John Whethamstede from conventional ridicule as a failed attempt at humanist Latin; meanwhile, just beyond the chronological confines of our period, the articles of David Carlson have enriched appreciation of the Latin of the soi-disant *grex poetarum* that gravitated to the court of the first Tudor.⁸⁸ The Maltese scholar, Alfonso Sammut, produced a much-used collection of documents relating to Humfrey, duke of Gloucester, in 1980, but his intention was to present the texts, not to analyse them.⁸⁹ There are

⁸⁶ See, for instance, D. Rundle, 'Two Unnoticed Manuscripts from the Collection of Humfrey, duke of Gloucester', *Bodleian Library Record*, xvi (1998), pp. 211 – 224 & 299 – 313, and the listing of Tiptoft's manuscripts on my website at <http://bonaelitterae.wordpress.com/david-rundles-research-projects/tiptoft/> [accessed on 23rd July 2010].

⁸⁷ Testament to that palaeographical or codicological tradition is also the work of Nico Mann on 'Petrarch MSS in the British Isles', *IMU*, xviii (1975), pp. 139 – 527; see also addendum A to p. 38 below.

⁸⁸ D. Howlett, 'Studies in the Works of John Whethamstede' (Unpublished D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1975), pp. 118 – 151; as well as D. Carlson, *English Humanist Books*, see, for instance, id., 'King Arthur and Court Poems for the Birth of Arthur Tudor in 1486', *Humanistica Lovaniensia*, xxxvi (1987), pp. 147 – 83, id., 'The Occasional Poetry of Pietro Carmeliano', *Aevum*, lxi (1987), pp. 495 – 502, and id., 'The Italian Johannes Opicius on Henry VII of England's 1492 Expedition: historical witness and antique convention', *Renaissance Studies*, xx (2006), pp. 520 – 46. I have made small contributions to this area: see 'The Unoriginality of Tito Livio Frulovisi's *Vita*' and id., 'From Greenwich to Verona: Antonio Beccaria, St Athanasius and the Translation of Orthodoxy', *Humanistica* (forthcoming). Note also J. Ijsewijn, 'Robert Flemming and Bartolomeo Platina, or the Need of Critical Editions', *Humanistica Lovaniensia*, xxxivA (1985), pp. 76–82.

⁸⁹ Sammut, *Unfredo duca di Gloucester e gli umanisti italiani*.

some signs that the philological darkness may be lightened by the research of scholars working in Italy, though their concentration is on works by Italian humanists themselves.⁹⁰ This recent development has not been paralleled, as yet, by any analysis, say, of the writings of Thomas Bekynton or the speeches of John Gunthorp. And what has certainly not yet been attempted is a fusion of the two disciplines, both taken in their broadest sense – a palaeography that incorporates codicology, and a philology that studies both textual transmission and textual style. Until that can happen, it is unlikely that a new, more comprehensive understanding of the history of humanism in fifteenth-century England will emerge.

Yet, even if that combination of expertise has not yet been achieved, we would do well to take stock of the cumulative significance of the insights provided by the last half century of research. Their impact, it seems to me, amounts to not just a lengthening of the cast-list or a quickening of the pace of action but also a fundamental challenge to the conceptual outlook that underlay the writings of Weiss and of Schirmer before him. What is emerging is a narrative of England's early engagement with the *studia humanitatis* which has four elements that can be summarised as creation, adoption, production and consumption. In the last pages of this introduction, I will very briefly describe each of these.

What I mean by creation is the fact of England, proverbially distant from Cicero's homeland, providing a locus for literary invention by the Italian humanists and their honorary colleagues, the scholarly Byzantine émigrés. Some of the texts created at this end of the world achieved an international reputation – be it in northern Europe, like the works of George Hermonymos, or by becoming humanist imports into Italy, like Antonio Beccaria's

⁹⁰ G. Albanese, 'Per la fortuna umanistica del Boccaccio', *Studi umanistici*, [Messina] ii (1991), pp. 89–150; Prof. Cristina Cocco of the University of Cagliari is producing an edition of Frulovisi's *Humfrois*.

translations of St Athanasius.⁹¹ Of course, 'inventiveness' might seem an inapposite term for some of these 'English' humanist works, since they could be highly derivative, like Tito Livio Frulovisi's *Vita Henrici Quinti*.⁹² But when, on close analysis, such a text loses its originality, it gains instead interest for bearing witness to an interaction of literary idioms, in which humanist Latin could be the ungrateful progeny of prose composed to a different aesthetic. For their part, those skilled in what we now call the 'florid style' of Anglo-Latin, like John Whethamstede, could consciously reject the brand of Ciceronianism peddled by the humanists. Others, of course, mastered that idiom and could themselves be humanist creators: John Free or John Gunthorp or, to add a Scottish example, Archibald Whitelaw.⁹³ Yet others, though, practised a partial process of adoption, comprehending the novelty of humanist expression as a cluster of literary manoeuvres or gestures, with a Thomas Bekynton or a Thomas Chaundler learning, as it were, elements of the appropriate body language.⁹⁴ When the *studia humanitatis* was unpacked in this manner, it could also leap over the real language barrier: early quattrocento humanist texts were rare enough in the *volgare*, let alone in another European vernacular, but, as Daniel Wakelin has so impressively shown, if elements could be isolated and

⁹¹ On Hermonymos, see pp. 222 – 23 below. On Beccaria's translations, see my, 'From Greenwich to Verona'.

⁹² Rundle, 'The Unoriginality of Tito Livio Frulovisi's *Vita*'.

⁹³ On Free and Gunthorp, see pp. 163 – 172 & 187 - 94 below. Whitelaw, naturally, fell beyond Weiss's purview: see his 'Oratio Scotorum ad Ricardum tertium' printed in *The Bannatyne Miscellany*, ii (Edinburgh, 1836), pp. 41 – 48.

⁹⁴ For this approach, see D. Rundle, 'Humanist Eloquence among the Barbarians in fifteenth-century England' in Burnett & Mann, *Britannia Latina*, pp. 68 – 85.

transported, then they could infiltrate into texts in another tongue.⁹⁵

One instance that Wakelin describes is the adoption, in the codices of the Middle English translation of Palladius, of a crucial element in the humanist agenda, their particular approach to *mise-en-page*. It is an example that relates to the third category of engagement I mentioned, that of production – English involvement in the making of humanist manuscripts. From the outset, the practitioners of the new script dubbed *littera antiqua* were an international crew; in Italy, they include not just French or German (in its most expansive sense) but also Scotsmen like George of Kynninmond; alongside him, there were also *Britanni* of English extraction. Some, like Thomas Candour, were active in both Rome and England: his oeuvre is of especial interest as he appears both to adapt the humanist archaising rationale by imitating insular twelfth-century models, and consciously to associate particular texts with specific variations of script.⁹⁶ This was patently not unthinking application of a vogue. Other scribes did not leave England but worked from the prototypes they found before them, like Simon Aylward, fellow of King's, Cambridge in the 1450s, seemingly imitating the distinctive script of Tito Livio Frulovisi.⁹⁷ His choice of text, the *De Ludo Scacchorum* of Jacobus de Cessolis, can stand as an example of how a style intended for classical and humanist works could (in England as in Italy) seep

⁹⁵ D. Wakelin, *Humanism, Reading and English Literature 1430 – 1530* (Oxford, 2007).

⁹⁶ On Candour (whose identity was revealed by A. C. de la Mare), see M. B. Parkes, 'Archaising Hands in English Manuscripts' in J. P. Carley & C. G. C. Tite ed., *Books and Collectors 1200 – 1700. Essays presented to Andrew Watson* (London, 1997), pp. 101 – 141, and D. Rundle, 'The Scribe Thomas Candour and the making of Poggio Bracciolini's English reputation', *English Manuscript Studies 1100 – 1700*, xii (2005), pp. 1 – 25.

⁹⁷ *Duke Humfrey & English Humanism*, pp. 54 – 55.

out and infect other texts, providing what I would call a hinterland to humanism.

In some instances, these scribes were also the consumers of the manuscripts they produced. The consumption of humanist books is, of course, the main story told in Weiss's monograph, traced via the listing of volumes in private and institutional libraries. In recent decades, the study of patterns of ownership has been greatly assisted by the identification of provenance through the recognition of marginalia, but there is more information those annotations can provide: they can also give us a sense, albeit necessarily incomplete, of how a manuscript was read. Similarly, the compilation of a book might hint at the thinking of its constructor and, with some English humanist miscellanies, we can garner some idea of how the humanist enterprise was perceived: for instance, the emphasis in what I have nicknamed the 'Virtue and Vice' compilation on works of moral edification for princes suggests a perception of the new writings and translations as having a particularly political relevance.⁹⁸ This could be contrasted with – to mention just one other strand of interest – the placing of humanist letters (as often by Gasparino Barzizza as by his Florentine contemporaries) within formularies where short pieces in different idioms could jostle together in the expectation of being imitated. A detailed reviewing of the information gathered by Weiss and supplemented by later scholars can also allow us to detect more precisely the peculiarities of what was available in England. So, it appears that the translations of Plutarch's *Lives* were less popular north of the Channel than they were on the Continent; at the same time, English book-collections included curiosities like the sole copy of Coluccio Salutati's *magnum opus*, the *De Laboribus Herculis*, a manuscript brought to England by the curialist Andrew Holes.⁹⁹ What, indeed, is striking is not the

⁹⁸ D. Rundle, 'Virtue and Weiss'; id., 'Humanist Eloquence among the Barbarians'.

⁹⁹ The Salutati manuscript is now BAV, MS. Urb. lat. 694, whose English provenance was first discerned by B. L. Ullman, 'Manuscripts of Duke

quantity of copies of a relevant work that circulated in England but the speed with which a text could arrive in the country: the *Panegyrici Latini*, for example, unleashed from their cloistered captivity in 1433, arrived and were transcribed in England less than ten years later.¹⁰⁰ Conventional narratives of the slow spread of humanism fail to do justice to the evidence for the uneven but relatively rapid movement of books – a phenomenon that was not created but quickened in the last third of the century by the possibilities of print.¹⁰¹

The pattern of activity that I have just described for English consumption of the *studia humanitatis* should not be taken as a template for the other elements of engagement that I have mentioned: the history of English humanist interest can not be adequately described by one single chronology. While the process of collecting and of reading is characterised by sustained interaction, the activity of creation, as I have described it, was more fitful. The literary productivity of Italian humanists in England was intermittent, their presence dependent in part on perceptions of available patronage and in part on the level of international diplomatic exchange, both defined by the shifting political fortunes of the Lancastrian and Yorkist regimes. The other element of creation – the mastering of composition in the Ciceronian idiom by Englishmen – comes fairly late in the

Humphrey of Gloucester' in id., *Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, 2nd ed. (Rome, 1973), pp. 345 – 56.

¹⁰⁰ The English fortuna of the *Panegyrici* was outlined by R. A. B. Mynors in his edition for Oxford Classical Texts (Oxford, 1964). The point I am making is emphasised, with further examples, by R. Thomson, 'The Reception of the Italian Renaissance in Fifteenth-Century Oxford: the evidence of books and book-lists', *IMU*, xlviii (2007), pp. 59 – 75.

¹⁰¹ See, for instance, M. Lowry, 'The arrival and use of continental printed books in Yorkist England' in P. Aquilon & H.-J. Martin ed., *Le Livre dans L'Europe de la Renaissance* [Actes du XXVIIIe Colloque international d'études humanistes de Tours (Histoire du livre)] (Paris, 1988), pp. 449 – 59.

century, with John Free's writings while in Italy at the end of the 1450s and start of the 1460s, and with the ambassadorial orations of his friend, John Gunthorp, written while in Yorkist service in the following decades. That trailed behind the process of adoption and adaptation that had developed – in various locales and in both Latin and, refracted and distorted, English – from the second quarter of the century. We might be able to be more exact in timing the English involvement of the production of humanist books, always accepting that the chronology is liable to be altered by further palaeographical discoveries or re-designations. Our current state of knowledge suggests that Thomas Candour learnt *littera antiqua* in Padua in the late 1430s and that he was the first Englishman to do so. Not much later, however, are the indigenous attempts at adopting that script that I mentioned earlier. I have also emphasised how those who learnt the humanist mise-en-page could shift back and forth between this and other idioms – and, that, if one is needed, would be the keynote for all these elements: a kinetic energy created through a *perpetuum mobile* oscillating between attraction and retraction. There was no simple line of 'progress', with old habits being shed as a new skin of humanism emerges. By the end of our period or, indeed, by the end of the fifteenth century, there was no outright victory for humanist styles; they, rather, had secured a place among the variety of practices available.

In comparison with the image presented by Weiss, this new interpretation is less impressionistic but arguably also less demanding. It is less impressionistic in as much as it has a more sophisticated analysis of the manuscripts and the texts that are the essential evidence for the subject. At the same time, it is less demanding, in the first place, because it engages with a more capacious corpus of humanist works: whereas for Weiss and for his generation, what was humanist was solely pagan, the patristic has now found its place within the canon; and while *Humanism in England* sounded wary of translations from Greek into Latin, since the reading of them might imply a lack of learning in the language

of Aristotle and Plato, they are eyed now with much less suspicion. The new interpretation also broadens the range of activities which could be described as humanist interest beyond what Weiss would have considered acceptable. To be classed a humanist by him, a scholar had to be just that – given to a life of learning, of writing and of teaching, not to a mundane career in, for instance, the ‘civil service’. We would now reject that definition, and we would also set less stringent requirements of interaction with the *studia humanitatis*: in particular, we would now see practices of reading as themselves a creative process. A response does not have to take the form of a literary text to be either valuable or open to study.

These, though, are not the most fundamental divergences from Weiss’s interpretation. The work of A. C. de la Mare, herself a student of Ernst Gombrich, did not engage with questions of historical philosophy but, in its mass of detail, it does have implications for what her former mentor dismissed as ‘Hegelian metaphysics’. As we have already seen, Weiss’s adherence to a Burckhardtian dichotomy between ‘medieval’ and ‘Renaissance’ was outdated in his own day: he was, as it were, out of step with the spirit of an age when concepts of the *zeitgeist* were going out of fashion. The *volksgeist*, on the other hand, has continued to enjoy international success: there remains an assumption – one which is (to put it mildly) by no means intuitive – that Latin intellectual activities can be judged at the level of the nation. The Italian humanists played their own part in promoting such an interpretation when they celebrated themselves as the firstborn inheritors of ancient Rome, marked off from the barbarians who lived beyond the Alps. Yet, what the palaeographical studies of de la Mare and others serves to demonstrate is how far the work of the humanist avant-garde was an international enterprise, sustained by producers and consumers who lay beyond the self-styled homeland of the *studia humanitatis*. Humanism, in that sense, had no need to ‘spread’, to seep slowly from Italy into alien

national cultures – it was transnational from the outset. And in that enterprise, some who described themselves as *Britanni* played their part alongside other *barbari*.

This depiction of an international enterprise is one of specific relevance to the fifteenth century. The construction of Erasmus' Europe-wide identity and the practices of his favourite printing-houses in Venice and in Basel can provide parallels in the sixteenth century. Yet, it is a commonplace that the charisma of Erasmus was made possible by his manipulation of the new technology of print; however unrevolutionary print may have been in many ways, it undeniably had an impact on the identity of humanism. It was not only the presence of the new methods of book-production that distanced humanist activities at the turn of the quattrocento and cinquecento from the *studia humanitatis* championed by the generations of Leonardo Bruni and his followers. We might equally consider the humanist engagement with education: the pioneers had promoted reform from the outside, as it were, sitting beyond the academic halls that they mocked; several decades later and humanists were creating change from the inside, with a defined curriculum that also was beginning to influence other disciplines. Or we might note the transformation of the language in which humanism was expressed: from being a Latinising agenda that gave only small space for vernacular composition, it had come to deny its origins and welcome expression in the *volgare*. Latin, of course, continued to be the first language, but it had both developed from the style moulded by Bruni or Guarino and also become fractured, as was witnessed by the debate over Ciceronianism. It is possible to develop this comparison further, but the central point should already be clear: by the last decades of the fifteenth century, humanism had created its own tradition and, in the process, transformed its character. So, when English-language poets like Wyatt and Surrey, or Latin authors such as Thomas More and Richard Pace, or even early Tudor educators from John Anwykyll to William Lily, appropriated some sorts of humanism, they were

engaging with contemporary activities, not providing an excessively delayed reaction to earlier phenomena. Likewise, fifteenth-century humanist interest should not be judged by sixteenth-century standards: it was, so to speak, conversing in real time.

These thoughts on how we may wish to conceptualise English engagement with the *studia humanitatis* of the quattrocento have taken us far from Weiss's own interpretation. Yet, it remains the case that the information most fully gathered together, to date, in his first monograph is the foundation stone on which later scholarship is built. It is also true, as I have argued, that his own approach encouraged and informed that later scholarship, which even as it replicated earlier shortcomings also magnified its strengths. Will there ever be a fifth edition of *Humanism in England*, another episode in its author's nachleben? Perhaps not, but if not, that may be a sign of its ultimate success, that it has inspired a revival of interest in its subject so that others strive to supersede what Roberto Weiss achieved.¹⁰²

¹⁰² For their criticism and encouragement, I would like to thank Prof. James Carley, Dr Kenneth P. Clarke, Dr John Law and Dr Jonathan Woolfson.