

Angela Dreßen / Susanne Gramatzki

Editorial



With this series of contributions concerning Renaissance teaching at universities today, we want to enliven the discussion on the relevance of Renaissance studies at undergraduate and graduate level with a comparative view of practice in different countries. The first issue concentrated mainly on the situation in Germany: „Teaching the Renaissance I“ (<http://www.kunsttexte.de/index.php?id=896>), while the second shed light on the situation in Europe: „Teaching the Renaissance II – Europe“ (<http://www.kunsttexte.de/index.php?id=897>).

With the third issue now we are expanding the discussion to well beyond Europe. When confronting our three issues, readers might notice how the relevance of Renaissance studies is diminishing in the core countries of Renaissance history, whereas the situation differs the farther away a country is. Countries like Germany, Britain, Spain, and Poland have a few strong and active centers (Munich, Edinburgh, Warwick) where Renaissance studies benefit from an active community, whereas on the whole this topic becomes in these geographical areas a dimin-

ishingly important field, mostly due to new university curricula and ever shorter years of study, a situation which leaves no space for the complex background of a period like the Renaissance. Even in Britain, for example, it is astonishing to see how core universities are leaving a big gap between the Middle Ages and modern studies (Oxford, Cambridge, St. Andrews). The trend in Europe is toward modern and contemporary studies, which mostly require a lesser preparation in linguistic and textual abilities, as well as historical auxiliaries. A few countries seem to maintain an unchanged situation (Italy, Austria), whereas other countries on the edge of Europe or bordering it experience the same effects as the European mainstream, although they themselves barely experienced a Renaissance period and if, only through exportation (Greece, Israel).

Well beyond Europe this situation changes on both issues. Students in Canada, Australia and Japan, remote from any national historical background related to the Renaissance, seem somehow to sustain a constant interest in such a quintessentially European topic as the Renaissance. Some universities even host flourishing centers, which will also guarantee its continuity. For many of these countries Renaissance studies belong to a kind of ethnological curriculum which has its own status. Students coming from mixed backgrounds, with a high interest in Renaissance studies, are offered traditional methods combined with new creative ideas and new technological features (California, Manitoba). Other countries instead have a tradition, where Renaissance studies formed part of an ideology, one of many potential instruments of comparison with a social structure like central Europe, although this situation had changed substantially by the end of the 20th century (Poland, China).

Throughout the world, teachers have often benefitted from at least part of their training in Europe and have thus a thorough knowledge of the teaching of this topic in the core countries, as well as of original material and its quali-

ties. Be it in Europe or beyond, the general tendency in the teaching of the Renaissance more and more involves an interdisciplinary approach, which better addresses the requisite (although nowadays often lacking) linguistic and textual abilities and a thorough knowledge of historical auxiliary disciplines.

Illustration

Raphael, *School of Athens*, Vatican Museums, Stanza della Segnatura (source: Wikipedia)

Title

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