

**Discuss the impact of Renaissance values on cultural centres outside Italy.
Illustrate your answer with reference to at least TWO examples.**

The cultural movement within Europe, with regards to the values of the Renaissance, I think, happened very gradually, and by channels of communication which were utilised to transmit the Renaissance concepts readily but, outside Italy, the impact was a process of assimilation rather than a totality of emulation, and these became, in turn, the cultural centres of the Renaissance.

In terms of an enquiry, I will illustrate how the cultural centres was developed by analysing two countries: Poland and the Netherlands, with regards to their significant reception to the Renaissance period, to demonstrate the scope of their relations as “...[M]ulti-culturalism was a way of life to many of the dynasties which arose in this part of Europe in the fifteenth century [and it] is hardly surprising, therefore, that their approach to the Renaissance should have been conditioned, above all, by their profound commitment to cultural eclecticism — a process which mirrored the complex political procedures which were established to rule these multi-ethnic kingdoms...” (Cooper, AC 04/2681 2935, page 9) and how Renaissance values was a part of this geographical cultural.

For a general working definition of the cultural process of assimilation from one place to another, one turns to Peter Burke (1998, pp 6-7), who stated them as being the *impact model* whereby penetration happens regionally, as in, one region after another across a geographical area. The second model being a *cultural epidemic*, by which only parts ‘catch’ the Renaissance infection fast due to geographical proximity. And thirdly, the *commercial form*, of which happens by the trading of goods, that is, books, paintings, and metaphorically, by that of the migration of ideas via the scholars. The fourth model mentioned was the *hydraulic type*, which was the ‘spread’ of influence via communication channels, and lastly the *diffusion model* which takes into account the adaptation and rejection of a cultural movement.

Therefore, the above cultural models, could all be so easily applied to the cultural centres outside of Italy during the time of the Renaissance, and this will be discussed

further on in the essay, relating to Poland and the Netherlands, in turn, as to which ones had more likely occurred in the process of assimilation, because the transmission of cross-border cultural was open to receiving the concepts of differing values at the highest levels of society, in those particular countries, through the relationships fostered over a long period of time.

Unlike humanistic values, which stood for a persons' mind and applied intellect in society, renaissance values stood for their personified characters, that is how they portrayed themselves within their wider society such as having the taught skills which "...commonly have rules and categories, a terminology and stated standards, which are the medium through which they are teachable. These two things - the confidence in a relatively advanced and valued skill, and the availability of verbal resources associated with them - make such skills particularly susceptible to transfer in situations such as that of a man in front of a picture..." (page 131 Section two: Courts, Patrons and Poets.)

And how this personified characteristics transferred to the Renaissance man as a value is given in the example of how they conducted themselves within their occupations such as of having fraternities or even as individuals; in holding an awareness of belonging to a wider empowered public, for example "...a notion of a Quattrocento cognitive style. By this one would mean the equipment that the fifteenth century painter's public brought to complex visual stimulations like pictures..." and this transferable Renaissance value was that a "...Quattrocento man handled affairs, went to church, led a social life; from all of these activities he acquired skills relevant to his observation of painting. It is true that one man would be stronger on business skills, another on pious skills, another on polite skills; but every man had something of each of these [values] whatever the individual balance..." (page 131, Section two: Courts, Patrons and Poets.) And it was this flavour of values that gave the Renaissance period an expandable cross-over into other cultures outside of the Italian borders.

As the flood of the Renaissance values, with regard to its reception, and the context of what actually was imparted to these specific countries aforementioned, was their absorption of mostly, and what I will be discussing in detail later on to exemplify this, was literature, painting and architecture, for as stated by Peter Elmer "...in the

ethnically diverse, multi-lingual and religiously plural states of central and eastern Europe, art did imitate life, producing a rich cultural legacy which fully reflected the diversity of the region...” (Cooper, AC 04/2681 2935, page 2), of which, I think, this as being a literal Renaissance that did not *impact*, but ‘set upon’ Europe, during that time, and furthermore reflected the territorial expressions of promoting differing cultural centres, for which they most excelled at humanistically, because they were located in royal courts and universities of their hosts country.

It was during the 16th century, that Poland, being near the Baltic Sea, became a large territorial power in Europe, as the kingdom stretched from Kingdom of Lithuania, which was situated near the Black Sea, the Kingdom of Bohemia, and the Kingdom of Hungary situated near the Adriatic Sea.

In Poland, the renaissance took off during the reign of Sigismund I the Old (1467-1548), and this was a Jagiellonian monarchy, that is, it were a royal dynasty originating from Lithuanian, and were simultaneously Grand Dukes of Lithuania as well as Kings of Poland. To consolidated this power within Europe, as the Jagiellonian dynasty also sought the crown of the Holy Roman Empire, Sigismund I the Old, married Bona Sforza of Milan from Italy, and they had a son, Sigismund II Augustus, and thus they all were influenced by the Italian Renaissance, as to the extent of commissioned patronage to artists, sculptors and architects to employ the best from Northern Europe to carry out works in Poland, as well as the encouragement of the arts and promotion of humanist scholars within the court life of Poland.

However, there were those academics who give a specific time of this occurring as “...[w]ith due regard for proportion and the relative importance of events, the year 1501 is such a date in the history of Polish civilisation. To Poland it outweighs even the great dates in the wars fought during this period, for in that year the Renaissance style came to Poland and in consequence, the tastes and habits of a whole nation underwent complete change...” (Estreicher, 1945, page 1) and this transition was given the royal approval, through a cultural initiative and the growing ambitions by the Polish kings to develop a civilization.

The royal capital was Cracow, and this was an important merchant city, and in Europe, the city lies geographically in the very center of continental Europe, and Cracow is located 950 kilometres from Florence in Italy. The area spread of the city of Cracow is 326.8 square kilometres and covers both bank of the River Vistula.

Also during the Renaissance the city of Cracow was a centre of learning, as *Cracow Academy* had been founded in 1364 by Casimir III the Great, but it was the Jagiellonian kings that had established it as a university, with learning "...as [to] the importance of Latin as an international language in such a culturally diverse city gave a vital impetus to a humanist education. Particularly important in the development of humanism were wealthy clerics: bishops and canons who built town houses in the new style..." (Cooper, VC/04/1109, p.3) teaching philosophy, law and medicine, also "it rapidly established a reputation as an important centre of humanist studies attracting students from all over Europe. The University was particularly renowned for mathematics and astronomy..." (Cooper, VC/04/1109, p. 4) and this gave rise to understanding the Renaissance values in Poland.



One of the responses in Poland was done architecturally, that is, as Sigismund I instigated patronage to a number of architectural buildings in Poland, of the most significant was the Wawel Castle. The castle is

situated on a hill top overlooking the city, Wawel Hill (*see Plate 1*) and the royal residence was built there since the 11th century, which I can only describe as a castle in the architectural term of "massing" meaning a unified composition of shapes and volume that has or gives the impression of weight, density and bulk.

But its also Wawel Castle's courtyard that illustrates, I believe, a fine example of the type of renaissance values conveyed in its importance to the commercial and culture city of Cracow when foreign diplomats come to call, as given by the castle's sheer size and decorative details within the courtyard structure and the outside exterior of the architecture, because they all demonstrate a principle of design based on the

Italian Quattrocento as to establish an interdependence among the elements of architecture that encourages consistency but discouraged any type of flexibility to be over fanciful as to retain its intend purpose: to impress and the reception to be made explicit and this is emphasized by the formal renaissance portal.

The gatehouse has two small entrances to the far left and right hand, called a postern, which is a private or side entrance, as one for pedestrians but is decoratively only different at its frieze, but the rest is similar to the main entrance which is the porte-cochère. The porte-cochère is a vehicular passage-way, leading through a building in this case the gate-house, into the interior of a courtyard such as at Wawel Castle.

The porte-cochère entrance it is of the Composite order which is a classical feature popular since the beginning of the Renaissance but invented by the ancient Romans in which the Corinthian order is modified by superimposing four diagonally set ionic volutes on a bell of Corinthian acanthus leaves. And this can be view clearly on the main entrance at the Wawel Castle Gatehouse, as it starts off with on either side an composite order of pilasters followed with fillet columns with acanthus details (an ornament of toothed leaves of a Mediterranean plant of the same name) under the composite capitals.

On top of this is an architrave, which is the lowermost division of a classical entablature, resting directly on the column capitals and supporting the frieze, which is the horizontal part of a classical entablature between the cornice and architrave that is often decorated with sculpture in a low relief, but here at the Wawel Castle Gatehouse its has a Latin inscription instead. This is enclosed by the dentil which is a series of closely spaced, small rectangular blocks forming a projecting beneath the composite cornices, and this decorative element is finished off with egg and dart, which is a ornamental motif for enriching an ovolo or echinus, consisting of a closely set, alternating series of oval and pointed forms and sometimes called an 'egg and tongue' all finished off with the plain cornice, which is the uppermost member of the classical entablature, consisting within itself a cymatium and a corona which is a projecting slab-like member of the classical cornice.

These columns are set above the central arch, which leads into the courtyard. There are three parts to an arch column, that is, the impost, the uppermost part of the column, which is often in the form of a capital from that the arch springs. Then this is followed by the haunch, that is either side of an arch curving down from the crown to the impost. Then lastly, the crown, which is the highest part or point of a convex construction of an arch.

The arch is set within a spandrel, that is, a triangular-shaped, sometimes ornamented area between the extrados, that is the left and right hand extrados of an arch and the rectangular framework surrounding it. The extrados are the exterior curve projecting surface, or boundary of the visible face of an arch, sometimes called a 'back', which has also a archivolt, that is a band on the face of the arch following the curve of the intrados, which is the inner curve of the arch forming a concave underside. What also can be seen on the Wawel Castle Gatehouse arch is the motif keystone, which is the embellished voussoir at the crown of an arch, serving to lock the other voussoirs in place, voussoirs being the wedged shaped masonry stones the converge to the centre of the arch. This arch is set on the spring, which is the point at which the arch rises from its support. This arch is typical of being classical Roman because of the semi-circular intrados.

With all this taken into consideration that gives the impression of humbleness through the smooth stucco finished surface, muntin window panes with head flashing, that is the projection from the masonry wall to protect the window underneath, and its gable of this gatehouse, this is no modest portal, as its been give a stately architectural treatment.



Whilst on the opposite side of Gatehouse, the courtyard interior façade is dressed simpler in architectural design (see plate 3), with the doorway being aesthetically pleasing to provide a stateliness and to the top floor the stairway itself provides a degree of style for this most princely of manner to

overlook the whole courtyard from such a height that it may only be reached by the very acmé of grandeur, which was applicable for the palatial character of the architecture.

As the courtyard is made up of arcades and loggia structures, which was "...a direct borrowing from 15th century Tuscan architecture. These arched loggias with their uniform rhythm harmonised the irregular plan of the medieval courtyard. However this most Italianate feature has had to be adapted to meet the customs of this Northern court..." (Cooper, VC/04/1109, p.5) but most importantly too, is that the Wawel Castle courtyard had all the splendour of grandeur as the original "...columns were painted purple, the capitals gilded and all the roofs covered in rich patterns of coloured tiles, it would have presented a magnificent sight..." (Cooper, VC/04/1109, p.7) which would have been needed to entertain guests of the royal Polish court. As the "...courtyard, which acted occasionally as a jousting area was far larger than any found in an Italian Renaissance palace. Given its military usage it is surprising that the ground floor capitals are Ionic not the simple Tuscan or Doric order which Vitruvius deemed appropriate. However, the Composite capitals on the first floor are a more suitable embellishment for the balcony from which women watched the tournaments below..." (Cooper, VC/04/1109, p.7) if they so pleased.

This was because the Tuscan order was considered to be most appropriate in military architecture, it seems rightly so in this instance as the court ceremonies took place on this top floor, but the balcony above the entrance is ornamented which reveals its important status to the visitor to the Polish King's royal palace influenced by the Renaissance values to its sense of culture and promotion of humanism during this period.

This could also be illustrated by another culture centre in Europe, the Netherlands. As the court of this regional power was rather complex — geographically speaking — for "...the northern Netherlands, the territories we now know as The Netherlands, and the southern Netherlands, modern Belgium, were part of the Spanish Hapsburg territory. However the northern Netherlands, under the leadership of the German Prince of the House of Orange, who were the rulers of the Province of Holland, were in revolt

against their Spanish overlords....” (page 6, Cooper, AC/01/01/2678, 1999) therefore looking for overt Renaissance values would be difficult, but not impossible.

As illustrated by the Court Philip of Burgundy, who was the illegitimate son of Philip the Good, was also an admiral of the Burgundian-Habsburg fleet, as well as Bishop of Utrecht, and Lord of Utrecht from 1517 onwards, as “[d]ynastic alignments were based on territorial holdings, claims and ambitions. The Hapsburg power owed much more to their possession of lands as out and out rulers than did their occupation of the throne of the Holy Roman Empire...” (page 7, Cooper, AC/01/01/2678, 1999) and his royal residence was Souburg Castle firstly then later Duurstede Castle, and that of the Habsburg royal court of Philip of Burgundy who kept his court “...based on the Italian model...” (page 10, Sluijter). Therefore, as to the reception of Renaissance values in the Netherlands, during that time, it had an added dimension of transferring back to Italy in a reciprocal manner those same cultural values, and this can be illustrated in the Netherlands contribution to the Renaissance via the exchange of artistic endeavors, even though this left the Netherlands the freedom to pursue its own cultural agenda with Italy.

For example, Philip of Burgundy took an intense interest in classical antiquity and surrounded himself with humanist and artists, also his friend Philip of Cleves, Lord of Ravestein so too was interested in this field as “...both were lovers of portrayals of amorous gods and especially of mythological female nudes...” (page 11, Sluijter) and this resulted in the commission of many such painting during this Renaissance period from the artist Jan Gossaert gen. Mabuse (1478-1532) who was born in Maubeuge in Hainaut, in the Netherlands, who accompanied Philip of Burgundy to Rome to study Italian architecture and sculpture of antiquity, and it was Gossaert who was “...given the specific task of reviving antiquity through his depictions, in close collaboration with Philip himself and his young court humanist, Gerrit Geldenhouer, called Noviomagus...” (pp 12-13, Sluijter) as he was a free master of the Antwerp Guild of St. Luke in 1503, therefore was able to deliver what Philip of Burgundy wanted to be conveyed in a representation of his noble learning as Gossaert also did for similar courtly households.



One such painting from this influence of Renaissance values comes from Gossaert interpretation of the myth of Danaë, as she was a popular subject in Antiquity as "...Pliny mentions a Danaë by the renowned Nicias (ca.350-300 BC), a painter whom Pliny introduced with the statement that he concentrated on painting women in particular..." (page 12, Sluiter). The myth was that of Danaë was impregnated by Jupiter in the form of golden rain, and it is a "...moralistic and didactic interpretation of the Danaë myth, in which Danaë locked up in a tower, is an allegory of chastity..." (page 5, Sluiter) and Gossaert style of painting this mythical tale is classical.

Here it can be seen the influence of Renaissance painting, with his Flemish touch of naturalism of Danaë (1527), on panel Oak, 114.3 x 95.4cm, where she sits on a red cushion, central in the picture, framed as it were by flanks of ionic columns, which in Greek architecture symbolises feminine grace, and here in this painting it is there in abundance within the tower, and in the background more architectural symbolism exists as space is rationalised in the use of linear and atmospheric perspective by the softening to the outside view out of the window, to that of the harder marbled internal room where she sits enthroned and enraptured but untouchable.

Turning to Danaë's human form, it is alight in a golden hue, her facial expression has a realism about it, as her head is slightly angled with a gesture of defiance. And this defiance can also be seen by her legs being crossed over at the ankles and her hand in careful movement holding a piece of her robe at a further height as to show more of her thigh, not to Jupiter but to the spectator of this portrait, although Danaë's gaze is steady fixed towards the golden rain, her mouth evocatively open and her breast nipples erect, for as stated "...the breast, like her bare legs, could also be construed as sexually suggestive (without alluding to any possible consequences [and] walks a precarious tightrope between an overt erotic appeal and a transcendent canon of a

moral beauty...” (page 7, Sluijter) particularly so as she is dressed only in a blue garbed robe with a single chain to her neck; clothing her naked body.

It was said of Jan Gossaert that he was “...the first Netherlander coming from Italy to introduce the art of painting ‘historie and poesie con figure nude’ (page 14, Sluijter) and this can be seen in this Danaë painting that influence of Renaissance values from one cultural centre to another, as “...it must be stated however, that even though this connection is certain, its limits are well defined. What the Italians of the 16th century borrowed from the Flemish arts of the 15th century only concerns the form and does not go beyond the technique...” (page 294, Instances of Flemish Influences), but I would state the opinion that, the sculptural handling of Gossaert’s depiction of Danaë human form, shows clearly a concerned passion with the three-dimensional art, as did any painter during the Renaissance value of having a mature expression in their developed style and this influential link is one of importance.

As both, Poland and the Netherlands, illustrates my theory of a ‘set-upon’ model really coming to the fore, regarding Renaissance values, which is in addition to that outlined by Burke’s model aforementioned, as to what happened between the cultural centres of Europe. Ultimately, the impact as stated by Thomas Da Costa Kaufmann, which I also concur with, was that it “...may have led to ‘different results in different countries. But the underlying principle in establishing how the people and rulers of this part of Europe received the Renaissance remains fixed...” (p.9, Cooper AC/04/2681). For there was no great colliding of cultures, but a mutual imparting of a cultural norm among the elite hierarchy only, that crossed the borders readily. This was due to the Europeans wishing to endeavor to become a ‘Quattrocento Man’ within their own circular ennobled society, as there being also this public area that is, for an open reflection which went beyond to the outward presentation of individualism, which began to ‘set them apart’ from other men in society as in acquiring: values.

To conclude, I will state that never, I believe, has a concept of ‘values’ in an Age be so widely received that its reception has been set to be called a ‘renaissance’ in its own right by historians, one way or another due to its multi-cultural aspects.

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