

Love, Magic and Illness. The Role of Witchcraft-motifs in Conrad Celtis' *Amores*

Conrad Celtis (1459–1508), often called the “Arch-humanist” of Germany, had interests that went far beyond the range of those disciplines that are now classified under the term humanities.¹ Son of his age, he had a perception of the world different from ours, and many aspects of nature that are now generally considered as occult formed integrant part of his thinking – or at least his poetical universe. Even compared to contemporary literature, numerological, magical, or – most of all – astrological ideas appeared (either in a playful or in a more serious manner) definitely frequently in his oeuvre.² This is not surprising, taken into consideration (to adopt just one perspective) that his wide correspondence included such hermeticist thinkers as Johannes Trithemius or Johannes Reuchlin, who – as Celtis himself – were heavily influenced by Ficinian Platonic ideas. Relatively few scholars have investigated so far the “occult” aspects of the Celtis-oeuvre, and these studies were rather restricted to the astrological or symbolical numerological motifs, which permeate Celtis' poetical cosmos. Motifs of magic or sorcery have important functions in some Celtis-works, and however playfully the poet treats them, the clarification of their role in the construction of meaning would be as important as in case of astrology or Pythagorean number symbolism. Hermann Wiegand made important observations on the necromantic scene in *Amores* I. 14;³ the similarly interesting

¹ For an extensive inquiry of Celtis' humanist program and its relation to his *Amores*, see Jörg Robert, *Konrad Celtis und das Projekt der deutschen Dichtung: Studien zur humanistischen Konstruktion von Poetik, Philosophie, Nation und Ich* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2003). An English Celtis-monograph has been provided by L. W. Spitz, *Conrad Celtis. The German Arch-Humanist* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957).

² For an overview of these aspects in Celtis' oeuvre, see Á. Orbán, *Solar-astral Symbolism and Poetical Self-representation in Conrad Celtis and his Humanist Circles* (PhD Dissertation, CEU, Budapest, 2017), 73–105.

³ H. Wiegand, “Konrad Celtis: Nekromant und Bruder Faustus im Geiste; zu Elegie I, 14 der ‘Amores,’” in *Iliaster. Literatur und Naturkunde in der Frühen Neuzeit. Festgabe für Joachim Telle zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. W. Kühlmann et al. (Heidelberg: Manutius, 1999), 303–319. While the poet and his master is stylized here as a necromant, many stereotypes of classical (female) witchcraft are also attached to him, since necromancy and witchcraft belonged closely together in classical literature; nevertheless, the enumeration of witchcraft-skills in this elegy fulfils a different function than in *Amores* IV. 10, analyzed below.

scenes or allusions to female witchcraft in the *Amores* have only been passingly mentioned.⁴

The *Quattor libri amorum secundum quattuor latera Germaniae* ("Four Books of Love according to the Four Sides of Germany"; briefly: *Amores*) was the main piece within a comprehensive, programmatic publication of Celtis' works, appearing in Nuremberg in 1502 with the support of Emperor Maximilian I; the publication meant to represent the new poetry of Germany.⁵ The *Amores* are basically love elegies loosely strung on a fictive⁶ narrative: Celtis wanders to four different parts of what he calls Germania, and has love adventures with four different women in four towns, each on the coast of a river or sea. The poet follows in many ways the generic traditions of the classical love elegies, but replaces the classical mythology with a cosmic-astrological and a topographical-ethnological background.⁷ The cosmic nature of the work is enhanced by a system of correspondences based on the number four: four books are devoted to four women, directions, rivers, seasons, parts of the day, elements, temperaments, qualities, zodiacal signs, ages of life, and colors. This system explicitly appears in the woodcuts of the *Amores*, though the significance of these aspects in the text itself vary greatly. Love itself functions in this poetical universe as a cosmic principle, and already the *praefatio* emphasizes the opposition between the two faces of Love: heavenly and earthly, *amor honestus* (honourable) and *amor spurcus* (filthy) or *infamis* (infamous).⁸ The didaxis of the work is primarily based on the demonstration of the different nature and value of the two kinds of Love. These ideas, together with their contemporary or classical sources (going back as far as Plato's *Symposium*), have been amply analyzed by Jörg Robert in his monograph⁹, and my study may throw light on a further aspect

of the problematics of Love: witchcraft-motifs may help a great deal to illustrate some crucial ideas of the work, the notions of love and magic, and especially *amor infamis* and sorcery.

In the time and space where Celtis mostly lived, in late fifteenth-century Germany and Austria, the issue of witchcraft emerged more and more often in private or public discussions. From the perspective of this context, one can distinguish at least three different, though overlapping, notions of witchcraft. First, late medieval trial records and narrative sources allow us to reconstruct the figure of witch in the *medieval popular tradition*.¹⁰ This witch is basically a sorceress, more often woman than man, pursuing harmful magic (*maleficia*). The most characteristic, obviously ancient, folk-beliefs attached to her, as it appears from the records of fifteenth-century Germany, are her ability to cause illnesses to man and cattle, to raise storms, to pursue love magic (mainly with potions), to steal things, or to ride wolves or other animals. Her intercourse with demons rarely appeared among the accusations, and that only at the end of the fifteenth century. There was a considerable rise of witch trials by the 1480s–1490s, and Celtis must have heard about such cases.¹¹ By this time, indeed, as early as the first half of the fifteenth century, there appeared a new, extended notion of the witch: beyond sorcery, this *diabolical witchcraft* is further characterized by diabolism (worship of Satan or other demonic creatures).¹² The witch was supposed to have physical intercourse with demons, from whom they received their evil power. A whole mythology was gradually created, with witches' Sabbath, desecration of the sacraments and so on. This modified picture of the witch was created by intellectuals: theologians, inquisitors, mainly from Italy and Germany. The treatise which accelerated the most the spread of this notion in the late fifteenth century is the *Malleus Maleficarum* ("Hammer of the Witches", 1487),¹³ which, given the approval of the pope, contributed to a great extent to the

⁴ *Ibid.*, 306; H. Grössing, "Astra inclinant? Astrologie in den 'Amores' des Konrad Celtis," in *Pharmazie in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Festgabe für Wolf-Dieter Müller-Jahncke zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. C. Friedrich (Stuttgart: Wiss. Verl.-Ges., 2009), 181–2.

⁵ The first version of the *Amores* was ready by 1494 at the latest. About the historical context of the publication see Peter Luh, *Kaiser Maximilian gewidmet. Die unvollendete Werkausgabe des Konrad Celtis und ihre Holzschnitte* (Frankfurt/Main et al.: Peter Lang, 2001); summarily: Robert, *Konrad Celtis*, 161–171. Modern edition of the *Amores* (henceforth: Am.): *Quattor libri amorum secundum quattuor latera germaniae; Germania generalis; Accedunt carmina aliorum ad libros amorum pertinentia*, ed. F. Pindter (Leipzig: Teubner, 1934).

⁶ Though the protagonist has the same name as the author of the *Amores*, the biographical basis of the work is rather thin, the elegies are partly or fully fictive.

⁷ Robert, *Konrad Celtis*, 272–280.

⁸ Am. praef. 16–18. In several elegies, too, this distinction clearly appears, e. g. Am. I. 14. 73–89.

⁹ Robert, *Konrad Celtis*, 188–228.

¹⁰ From the immense secondary literature about European witchcraft, I refer in this article only to the studies most relevant for my investigations. For late medieval popular witchcraft in Germany, see e. g. R. Kieckhefer, *European Witch Trials: Their Foundations in Popular and Learned Culture, 1300–1500* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976).

¹¹ During one of the most infamous trials in the history of European witch-hunts, the 1485 Innsbruck trial, 48 women were accused (by the same Heinrich Kramer who wrote the *Malleum Maleficarum*). Among the lesser trials, those in Nuremberg (1489) or Vienna (1498), for instance, are most likely to be heard of by Celtis. (For a catalogue of trials see Kieckhefer, *Witch Trials*.)

¹² See e. g. Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Walter Stephens, *Demon Lovers: Witchcraft, Sex, and the Crisis of Belief* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

¹³ Its one certain author is Heinrich Kramer (Institoris); the authorship of Jakob Sprenger is debated. Stephens, *Demon Lovers*, includes an in-depth analysis of this treatise.

witch craze in the later centuries. The most famous treatises from fifteenth-century Germany include J. Nider's *Formicarius* ("The Ant Colony", c. 1437) and Ulrich Molitor's *De lamiis et phytionicis mulieribus* ("Of Witches and Diviner Women", 1489).¹⁴ As will be seen later, Celtis was involved in discussions about contemporary witchcraft. However, he as a humanist also looked for classical patterns for the characters in his poetry, and the classical literature also had its own witches.¹⁵ This *classical witchcraft* was heterogeneous, too. The epic figures of Circe and Medea, the pursuers of love magic in Virgil or Horace, the cannibalistic Erichtho of Lucan – to mention just a few examples – have all different characteristics; nevertheless, one can discern stereotypic ideas that characterize most often the classical witch. They control the weather, destroy the crops, change the landscape, draw down the moon; they cause illnesses, summon the dead, collect herbs and bones, pursue erotic magic, worship Hecate, and often change shape. This study aims at demonstrating how and why the various witchcraft-motifs are inbedded in the *Amores* and help transmit its messages, and how these ideas could be related to contemporary discourses about witchcraft.

Love, as cosmic principle, as the symphatetic bond that holds the world together, was often associated with magic¹⁶ – notably by Platonic thinkers –, while magic was long considered to have two major aspects, distinguished as white and black magic, *magia naturalis* and *necromantia* and so on. This distinction was suitable to be harmonized with the above mentioned distinction between *amor honestus* and *infamis*. Drawing heavily on Ficino's *Symposion*-commentary, Beroaldo systematically drew up these parallel oppositions in his commentary of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*.¹⁷ In Beroaldo's view, the one kind of magic, associated with divine love, is "the service of gods", is "Platonic and philosophic", while the other one is "demonic" magic, *goetia* (approximately "witchcraft") or *theurgia*, associated with *amor infamis*. Celtis demonstrably knew these ideas of Beroaldo,¹⁸ and Apuleius – whose Hermetic-Pla-

tonic *De mundo* Celtis edited with a commentary¹⁹ and whose *Metamorphoses* includes witch-figures in significant roles – was one of the poet's favourite *auctores*.

On the other hand, the use of love magic – which can cause suffering in many ways – was always among the skills of the the classical witch, from Circe and Medea through, say, Horace's witches, Canidia, Sagana and others, who make love potions by necromantic means.²⁰ In the three great classical masters of love elegies, Ovid, Tibullus and Propertius²¹, there is a typical figure among the lesser characters, the *lena*, who attracted the stereotypes of classical witchcraft.²² *Lena* ("procuress, bawd, brothel-keeper"; the word has no English equivalent) is usually an old, drunken hag, who corrupts the woman loved by the poet and helps her procure another, richer lover, teaching her sexual and magical skills. By her typical activities, the figure of *lena* united several motifs of corruption and decay: harmful magic, wile, the materialistic sides of love, drunkenness. However, the *lena* remains in the background in the elegies, which focus on the lovers themselves.

Given, on the one hand, the didactic aim of Celtis – pronounced in the *praefatio* of the *Amores* – to demonstrate the nature of love, on the other hand the above mentioned association of love and magic, it is not surprising that Celtis took up the idea of witchcraft from the classical elegies. He does not draw such explicit and systematic parallels as Beroaldo did;²³ however, the close affinity of love and magic in general, and *amor spurcus* and witchcraft in particular, lurks in the background of the *Amores*-narrative. Indeed, contrary to the classical elegies, in the *Amores* even a central figure can behave as a witch, if the use of these motifs fits the narrative. This is the case in certain elegies of book IV, as will be seen; however, allusions to witchcraft occur in the other parts as well.²⁴ A typical example occurs in elegy 7 of Book I – the Book dedicated to Poland and Hasilina – in a context of love as a force that corrupts, coerces, makes man captive. After the well-known topoi of complaining about the lover's fraudulent nature and the poet's own suffering from love, Apollo warns him of the *docta meretrix* ("educated / cunning courtesan"), "because – believe me – she transforms you into a thousand shapes, as the offspring of the

¹⁴ Both works, just as the *Malleus Maleficarum* (henceforth: *Malleus*), were published several times in Germany, both in Latin and German.

¹⁵ See e. g. G. Luck, *Hexen und Zauberei in der Römischen Dichtung* (Zürich: Artemis, 1962); D. Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds: A Sourcebook*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

¹⁶ This age-old association gained various new forms especially in the Renaissance; the idea that love, as a magical phenomenon, was prone to black magic, gained new significance, too. R. Kemper, "Zwischen schwarzer Magie und Vergötterung: Zur Liebe in der frühen Neuzeit", in: *Literatur, Artes und Philosophie*, ed. Haug, W. et al. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1992), 141.

¹⁷ F. Beroaldo, *L. Apuleii Madaurensis philosophi Platonici Opera, quae quidem extant, omnia* (Venice, 1500).

¹⁸ Robert, *Konrad Celtis*, 211–9.

¹⁹ *L. Apulei Platonici et Aristotelici philosophi Epitoma divinum de mundo Seu Cosmographia ductu Conradi Celtis* (Vienna: J. Winterburg, 1497/98).

²⁰ Hor. Sat. I. 8; Epod. 5; Epod. 17.

²¹ Within the elegiac trinity, Celtis drew on Propertius the most in his *Amores*: cf. Robert, *Konrad Celtis*.

²² Tib. I. 5; Prop. IV. 5; Ov. Am. I. 8.

²³ Namely, between divine love and natural magic on the one hand, and infamous love and black magic on the other.

²⁴ E. g. Am. I. 14. 61–72 (see note 3), II. 7. 1–10 (see below), II. 11. 47–48.

Circean waters [Circe] was used to do".²⁵ To be sure, Circe's transformative power can be taken allegorically: love potentially lowers man to an animalistic level of existence.

In Book IV, Celtis arrives at Lübeck and meets Barbara Cimbrica, a mature woman, who takes a great effect on the poet. By this time, the poet has grown old, but at their first meeting (elegy 2) Barbara manages to kindle his love for her, and to pour new strength in him by means of a *carmen* (song / incantation).²⁶ from this the reader can already suspect that Barbara may have magical powers. In elegy 5, Celtis is ill (with French disease?²⁷), but Barbara cures him, giving him not only healthy foods, but also healing ointments, and medicinal herbs, used in a bath:

*Iuscula nunc miscens ferventi et iure polentas,
Radices, succos, poma et odora dabas.
Nec mihi defuerat granosum cortice pomum
Extinguens aestus, Barbara cara, meos,
Nec mihi defuerat pullus, capus, altis, oryx,
Omnia sollicito larga favore dabas.
Unguentisque tuis variis mea membra fovebas
Restituens vires, Barbara cara, meas.
Balnea cum variis herbis mihi saepe struebas,
Δυναμεία²⁸ tibi cognita tota fuit.²⁹*

You often fed me broth and hot mush, and then roots, juices, fruits, and aromatic spices. I never lacked the shelled pomegranate, which soothed my fever, dear Barbara; I never lacked the meat of chicken, capon, fowl, wild goat; you, generously and with dedicated care, used to give all these to me. With your ointments you kept taking care of my body, thus restoring my strength, my dear Barbara. You often prepared for me herbal baths of many kinds; for you have acquired all the learning concerning the healing power of plants.³⁰

Herbal bath and ointments may or may not be magical; these methods, taken together with the praise of her expertise in medicine, remind one of the powers of Medea, perhaps the most stereotypical witch of the classical love elegies.³¹ Celtis just plays with the idea, but the allusions are quite clear. The passage has several

²⁵ Am. I. 7. 77–78. *Nam te transformet (mihi crede) in mille figuras, / Ut mea Circaeis nata solebat aquis.*

²⁶ Am. IV. 2. 46.

²⁷ The real Celtis suffered from French disease from at least 1498: cf. *Der Briefwechsel des Konrad Celtis*, ed. Hans Rupprich (Munich: Beck, 1934), p. 350 (letter from Stabius) and other letters.

²⁸ *Dinamidia* is a medieval expression, used for books about medicinal herbs; see e. g. Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae* IV. 10. 3.

²⁹ Am. IV. 5. 13–22.

³⁰ The English translations of the Latin passages in this article are mine.

³¹ One of the classical elegies that could serve as a model for the scene is in Tibullus (Tib. I. 5. 9–16), where the poet reminds his lover, Delia, how he and a crone skilful in magic cured her of a serious illness by magical means.

common expressions with a passage in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*³², where the poet describes the powers of Medea, who is going to raise Aison from the dead (*succus, radices, unguens, herbis*; the phrase *nec mihi defuerat*). Furthermore, Celtis had already explicitly alluded to this Medea-passage in Book II: the irremediable love of Elsula reminded the poet of Medea's love magic.³³ In the Barbara-passage, too, sexuality lurks in the background: pomegranate (v. 15) is one of its symbols. One can conclude that, while on the surface layer of interpretation the poet's recovery was due to natural methods, the intertextual environment of the passage, both within (Barbara's sexual behaviour, incantations, witch-roles in other elegies of Book IV) and beyond the *Amores* (the Medea-motifs) reveal that Barbara's sexual and magical skills could also contribute to this recovery. Magic is ambivalent, it can be both bless and curse, can both heal and kill, just as the herbs and ointments of Medea could be both medicine and poison. Here one could see the bright face of Barbara, in accordance with their harmonic love relationship at this phase of the narrative; however, the motifs of magic and witchcraft here and earlier in the *Amores* already suggest for the reader that later on Barbara may show her dark face, too.

In elegies 8–9, Barbara sees Celtis to a curious cellar, where people feast, drink, and make love: in fact, an orgy seems to take place there. Celtis would abstain from being involved, but Barbara, who quickly gets drunk, eventually seduces him successfully. The scene has an underworldly, dionysiac atmosphere: the similes refer to the dead in the underworld,³⁴ or to the Bacchantes.³⁵ The beer which Barbara drinks is metaphorically called a *venenum* ("philtre", but also "poison"),³⁶ because it helps arouse sexual desire – which leads to decay? The preparing of *venena* are characteristic activities of Medea and other witches. While these are only indirect references to witchcraft, the scene prepares with its atmosphere the next elegy, where Barbara really speaks as a witch. Underworld, excessive sex, drunkenness: this is the world of *amor spurcus* or *infamis*.

³² *Ov. Met. VII. 264–272.*

³³ Am. II. 7. 1–10: *Herbarum vires nec amoris pocula coxi / Nec strigis aut ranae viscera rupta mihi / Et neque servavi, dederam ut tibi munera, caelum, / Tristia depinxi nec simulacra poli, / Ossa nec in vacuis collegi sparsa sepulcris, / In cruce nec furis secta verenda tuli. / Nec mihi mactata est volucris pellita per alas, / Artibus Aeaeis nec tibi pectus ago / Nec tibi Thessalico lymphavi carmine mentem, / Elsula, nec magicis cantibus ipse premo...*

³⁴ E.g. Am. IV. 8. 35–36.

³⁵ E.g. Am. IV. 9. 15.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

It is in elegy 10 that Barbara explicitly assumes the role of a witch. While she used her positive, healing powers in elegies 2 and 5, here we can see her destructive face: if not in reality, at least in words. Barbara apprehends Celtis making love with her servant, *Lamia*... and vents her rage on both of them. In detailing the various modes of her revenge, she actually gives a catalogue of *maleficia*. Practically all the enumerated skills are extraordinary, magical spells, harmful to health. For the sake of convenience, I enumerated in the right column the spells in short, marking whether they can be found in the classical (italics), medieval (underlined) or both (expanded words) witchcraft-traditions.

Huic ego perfodiam candentia lumina frontis
Putrescentque sibi femina carminibus!
Tuque refrigescens nostrumque perosus amorem,
Efficiam veretor vulnera saeva tuo
Afficiamque tuas ferenti bile medullas
Te cupidum tento ramice posse nihil!
Tunc tremulo incedes curvatus poplite in urbe
Infamisque mei fabula amoris eris.
An nescis succos me noscere, semina et herbas?
Femina nulla magis docta veneficiis!
Arte mea Codonus furiosas elevat undas
Carminibusque meis, fluctibus astra ferit;
Arte mea possum lunam deducere caelo
Atque gelare vagas doctaque sistere aquas;
Arte mea laetas ferio cum grandine fruges
Et Bacchum nostris aufero carminibus;
Arte mea sculptus sub certo est annulus astro
Crystallusque mihi abscondita quaeque canit;
Arte mea scriptus nuper mihi forte character,
Qua Moses Pharium meraserat arte ducem;
Arte mea expressa est, qua pectora dura liquescunt,
cera et vesano concoquit igne viros;
Arte mea tumidis mihi lac subducitur agnis
Aspectuque meo fascino, quaeque volo;
Arte mea possum sanis inducere morbos,
Poenarum et quicquid sub Styge Pluto tenet;
Arte mea possum superas revocare sub auras
Manes et Furiis impero docta tribus;
Arte mea invidiam durum converto in amorem
Affectusque meo carmine quosque rego.³⁷

Pierce through the eyes
 make the loins rot by incantation
 inflict cruel wounds on his penis
 turn him insatiable, yet impotent...

...by herbs, poisons

raise storms at sea

charm the moon down from the sky
make the running water freeze and halt its
course; raise hailstorms and thereby des-
troys the crops and the vineyards
fashion a ring with astral powers
by means of a crystal have insight into
hidden things
write down magical characters
arouse love by means of a wax figure

steal milk from sheep
cast an evil eye on whomever she pleases
 inflict illnesses on healthy people, and
 infernal pains

conjure up the dead and the furies
 turn any emotion into its opposite

This passage has been called a catalogue of *classical* sorcery.³⁸ Truly, this is primarily classical witchcraft. One finds here most of the witchcraft-stereotypes that

³⁷ *Am. IV. 10. 19–48.*

³⁸ Wiegand, "Nekromant," 306.

appear in the classical elegies and other classical literary works.³⁹ The recurring *arte mea* ("by my art" or "skill") is a frequent idiom in Ovid and other love poets (e. g. in the above mentioned Medea-scene of the *Metamorphoses*⁴⁰), it usually refers to the power of *carmina*. Furthermore, the witchcraft-stereotypes appear in the frameworks of curse or menace in the classical elegies, too (though there it is the poet who curses the bawd-witch, so Celtis turned the roles in his *Amores*); in Seneca's tragedy, it is Medea herself who delivers a revenge-speech.⁴¹ However, as can be seen from the above passage, several *maleficia* are also characteristic of medieval witchcraft,⁴² and there are non-classical ones as well. Stealing milk was a typical accusation in witch trials in Germany⁴³ and in folk beliefs as collected in 19–20th century. Astral ring, divination through a crystal ball or mirror, magical letters⁴⁴ are accessories of late medieval magic in general, not just of witchcraft.⁴⁵ Here I highlight just one of them, the making of a magical ring under certain astrological conditions. Such astral magical objects did occur in late medieval or Renaissance magic, for instance in Ficino's theories.⁴⁶ In Celtis, too, an astral object is mentioned in *Amores* II. 7,⁴⁷ when the poet enumerates 'Medean' methods of love

³⁹ Beyond the elegiac trinity of Ovid, Tibullus and Propertius, Virgil has to be mentioned in the first place: it is mostly with these authors that the similarity of motifs also appears on the level of textual *similia*, e. g. *lunam deducere* (v. 31) cf. Verg. ecl. 8. 69; *cera... liquescunt* (v. 39–40) cf. Verg. ecl. 8. 80.

⁴⁰ *Ov. Met. VII. 176.*

⁴¹ The beginning speech in Seneca's *Medea*.

⁴² Beyond the common witchcraft-motifs (indicated with expanded words), some of the classical ones (indicated with italics) or variations of these might also occur in early modern or later folklore as characteristics of witches; nevertheless, Celtis has most probably taken all these from the classical elegies, his primary models in the *Amores*.

⁴³ It is mostly in Germany that such accusations occurred in the trials (see Kieckhefer, *Magic*, 63 note 109); stealing milk occurs in witchcraft-treatises, too (*Malleus*, II. 1. 1).

⁴⁴ Magical letters or runes from part of different magical traditions, but since Celtis mentions them here in a Biblical context (v. 38: "by which skill Moses had sunk the Egyptian leader"), one may think of the influence of Reuchlin or Trithemius, Celtis' friends, in whose magical theories the Hebrew alphabet played a crucial role. About Trithemius and Reuchlin's *De verbo mirifico*, see more below.

⁴⁵ The last two also appears in the "catalogue" of magical beliefs in Celtis' *Oden, Epoden, Jahrhundertlied. Libri odarum quattuor, cum epodo et saeculari carmine*, ed., tr. Eckart Schäfer (Tübingen: Narr, 2012; henceforth: Od.) III. 19 (see below).

⁴⁶ See e. g. D. P. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella* (London: The Warburg Institute, 1958), 12–25. The most important source-book for learned astral magic was the high medieval *Picatrix*.

⁴⁷ *Am. II. 7. 4: Tristia depinxi nec simulacra poli.*

magic; furthermore, there is a Celtis-epigram titled *De annulo* ("On a ring")⁴⁸, which speaks about a golden ring with a "bloody stone" (a carbuncle?), made to coerce a "girl" to love; the similes with the Gorgo-head and Deianeira's fatal philtre (v. 5–6) bring in the atmosphere of classical witchcraft. Since the text appears among epigrams about Hasilina and Poland, probably Hasilina is meant under the "girl", and the words *sub certo sidere sculptus*⁴⁹ ("engraved under definite constellations"), a phrase identical with the one in v. 35 of the above passage, also connect the epigram to the *Amores*. The astral ring as a love magical object seems to be firmly associated to witchcraft in Celtis' mind.

Celtis apparently merged classical and medieval traditions in his catalogue of witchcraft-methods: Barbara is not simply stylized as a stereotypical classical witch. Thus she could appear more alive for contemporary readers, and fitted better the setting of the narrative, the northern scenes of Book IV. Barbara's witch-characteristics have a macro-structural function as well: it is not by chance that it is the last Book of the *Amores* where the witchcraft-motifs blossom out. In the system of correspondences, the Fourth Book is of the darkest, most sinister character: it is the Book of winter, Capricorn, night, melancholy, old age. In addition to Celtis, Barbara, too, seems to be quite old, like the bawd-witches of the classical elegies. Melancholy and Saturn (the planet astrologically belonging to Capricorn) had a far-reaching symbolism around 1500 in Europe.⁵⁰ I cannot discuss here the relation of the *Amores* to this symbolism, but Celtis drew on at least one set of ideas, the late medieval popular layer of melancholy-traditions, in fashioning the figure of Barbara as an old woman: in elegy 12, for instance, she is portrayed as a cantankerous, misanthropic, greedy, lustful, *furious*⁵¹ crone. There is one more possibly witch-like figure that has to be highlighted here. Barbara's servant was called *Lamia*: originally, in classical folk-belief, *lamiae* were female demons who devour child, then this word came to denote "witch" in general,

⁴⁸ Epigr. I. 11 in Hartfelder's edition of epigrams (*Fünf Bücher Epigramme von Konrad Celtis*, Berlin: S. Calvary, 1881) corrected by D. Wuttke, "Supplement zu Hartfelders Edition der Celtis-Epigramme," in *Renatae Litterae: Studien zum Nachleben der Antike und zur europäischen Renaissance: August Buck zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. K. Heitmann und E. Schroeder (Frankfurt: Athenäum, 1973): *Annule sanguineum qui stringis in orbe lapillum, / Quique auri puri non leve pondus habes, / I, precor, et durum coge in mea vota puellam, / Nam mihi sub certo sidere sculptus eras. / Perseus gorgoneo mutavit corpora vultu, / Et love comminuit Deianira satum.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, v. 4.

⁵⁰ See, first of all, R. Klibansky – E. Panofsky – F. Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy* (London: Nelson, 1964).

⁵¹ *Furiousity* (v. 21 of elegy 12) was the state of mind that served as a basis for the curses and menaces, the witchcraft-catalogue in elegy 10: *Vidi ego, quae furias elicere meas* (v. 2).

already in antiquity.⁵² When Barbara, just before her "catalogue" cited above, calls her servant *omnivorans bestia spurca*⁵³ ("all-devouring filthy beast"), this is an allusion both to the original meaning of *lamia* and to the *amor spurcus* Lamia previously made with the poet. Now, the servant Lamia happens to appear in elegy 7 of book IV (*Ad Lamiam ancillam...*), too. Celtis would visit Barbara at night, but Lamia doesn't let him in, she would only do it for a considerable sum of money.⁵⁴ The poet-lover gets angry, and doesn't spare the girl his curses: would that she feel the same as he feels now! And he continues:

*Rivalisque meus, cuius nunc languida amore es,
Illius hic vindex fraudis et ultor erit.
Terque quaterque tuum crudo cum verbera tergum
Pulset et increpitet virga sonora nates.
Cumque tuo dormis tanquam secunda cubili
Et placidus somnus te, malefida, tenet,
Ille superveniens baculo tua terga domabit.
Vindictet et fictos in mea vota dolos.*⁵⁵

My rival – for whose love you are now pining away –, he will be the avenger and revenger of that evil deed. He shall strike your backside three and four times with bloody blows and lash your buttocks with a whizzing cane. And while you are sleeping safely in your bed, enjoying an undisturbed sleep, o you cheater, he will come down upon you and break in your unbending back with a stick, and take revenge on you for the trickery by which you frustrated my desires.

The guardian of the mistress, who prevents the poet from getting what he wants, is a typical figure of the classical love elegies, just as the poet's rival, who is wealthier than the poet. However, in Celtis' elegy, the poet's "request" from the rival is quite curious. The rival should beat the guardian – obviously because she would not let him to her mistress either –, but why at night, while "she is sleeping"? Why "the buttocks"? Why is the girl "pining away" for this rival? There is an interpretation that would make these references clear: these *maybe* allusions to *demonic copulation*. In the new notion of the diabolic witch (see above), her physical intercourse with the demon is the key element. This role would fit the girl's name in the elegy, *Lamia*. The words denoting stick, rod or cane (*virga*, *verbera*, *baculus*) may stand for the genitals of some demon. In the treatises the demonic copulation can be both pleasant and unpleasant activity, so the "punishment" in the poem may

⁵² Also in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, e. g. I. 5. 17. In the Renaissance, the word also appears in the title of witchcraft-treatises, e. g. Ulrich Molitoris, *De lamiis et phytionicis mulieribus*.

⁵³ *Am. IV. 10. 18*

⁵⁴ Love for money – the main theme of the poem – is a typical characteristic of *amor spurcus*.

⁵⁵ *Am. IV. 7. 15–22.*

be an allegory of such a weird intercourse.⁵⁶ The motifs of beating and making love are closely connected in at least two earlier *loci* in the *Amores*, too.⁵⁷ The phrase *terque quaterque* also occurred previously in a sexual context⁵⁸; the word *super-veniens* can refer to both aggressive and sexually motivated approach. The term *malefida* harmonizes with *malefica*, the most frequent medieval term for the witch. It is because of the sexual act that the scene would take place at night, in the girl's *cubile*. To sum up, such an interpretation would explain all the puzzling circumstances of the "punishment" given by the rival: the servant's name *Lamia* (who is *malefida*), the visit at night, the pleasant-unpleasant "beats" on the backside or buttocks.

These possible "demonic" associations perhaps render the threats or insults of the angry poet more serious than they seemed at first. In the background of the elegy, basically the same idea may be present that was to be the key accusation in later witchcraft trials, and the key element of the expanding witchcraft-mythology introduced by the fifteenth-century treatises. However, beyond the fact that this is still not the time of the witch craze, the passage cited above is still a poetical play, a hidden allegory, and only one of the possible interpretations. Celtis found a spectacular way to express his lyrical subject's anger and, more generally, his condemn of *amor spurcus*. In this and the other *Amores*-elegies analyzed above, one should never forget about the fictitious-symbolical nature of the narrative, and the role of *musa iocosa* ("playful muse") in the whole work.⁵⁹

As it appears from scholarly treatises, legal sources, literary and visual artworks, there was a general concern about witchcraft in southern German territories by the end of the fifteenth century. In the following I make some suggestions about how Celtis could participate in this discourse, in what ways his environment could contribute to the presence of witchcraft-ideas in his work. He was not the type of scholar who was inclined to read through several hundred pages of difficult Latin texts; as an extroverted personality, and an active participant and organizer of literary life, he rather exchanged ideas in learned discussions, talks with friends. There is at least one piece of evidence of such a conversation. Celtis' Ode III. 19 is dedicated "To Johannes Melber of Bamberg, a philosopher⁶⁰, about all kinds of

⁵⁶ See e. g. J. Hansen, *Quellen und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Hexenwahns und der Hexenverfolgung im Mittelalter* (Bonn: C. Georgi, 1901), p. 162 or p. 198; *Malleus*, II. 1. 4.

⁵⁷ *Am.* III. 4. 51–56; *Am.* III. 8. 6 and 14. The contexts here do not involve witchcraft.

⁵⁸ *Am.* I. 10. 15–16.

⁵⁹ *Amplly analyzed by Robert, Konrad Celtis* (esp. 228–248).

⁶⁰ Naturally, the term *philosophus* was then used in a much wider sense than today, especially with Celtis, in whose humanistic program *philosophia / sapientia* included all the arts and sciences.

magic".⁶¹ Melber, about whom very little is known,⁶² speaks to Celtis about all sorts of magical activities, either popular or learned techniques: magical images, letters, chants; methods of divination, invocation, alchemy and so on. At the end of the poem, Celtis emphasizes his skeptical attitude toward all the enumerated superstitions. The second part of the magical "catalogue"⁶³, introduced as *rusticorum fama virorum* ("oral traditions of men in the countryside"), obviously reflects beliefs about witches. Most of the activities mentioned here are current late medieval popular beliefs: witches steal milk, arouse love, cause illness, ride on billy-goat, freeze rivers, throw lightning, cut the genitals of married men and shoot secret arrows.⁶⁴ Many of these motifs can be found in learned witchcraft-treatises too, notably the *Malleus maleficarum*.⁶⁵ It is probable that Melber read or heard at least the main ideas of the *Malleus* (or a similar treatise), and transmitted it to Conrad Celtis; they may have spoken about demonic copulations, too.

Celtis must have had fruitful conversations about secret sciences, magical beliefs with the abbot of Sponheim (later, of Würzburg), Johannes Trithemius, a scholar famous for having combined elements of theological and magical traditions in his theories. For both Celtis and Trithemius (just as for a certain Georg Faustus⁶⁶), the University of Heidelberg and the humanist scholarly circle related to it played a crucial role in their intellectual development. In 1494 – at the time when Celtis was finishing the first version of his *Amores* – he visited Trithemius in Sponheim and used his library.⁶⁷ In the next decade, the abbot wrote his *Antipalus maleficarum*⁶⁸, which argued against the witches in a similar way as the *Malleus maleficarum* did.

Let us turn to Johannes Reuchlin (Capnion), the other famous German scholar among Celtis' friends who incorporated occult, Platonic-Hermetic traditions into his theological views. Reuchlin was a member of the *Sodalitas Rhenana* (one of the sodalities that Celtis helped organize); one sign of their friendship is an ode written

⁶¹ *Ad Ioannem Melberium Bambergensem philosophum, de omnimoda magia.*

⁶² Rupprich identifies him with Erhardus Melber, mentioned in a letter to Celtis (*Briefwechsel* No. 195, p. 325, n. 3).

⁶³ *Od.* III. 19. 33–44.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, v. 35–37.

⁶⁵ *E. g.*, about how they deprive men of the virile member: *Malleus*, II. 1. 17; about how they shoot secret arrows: I. 2. 16.

⁶⁶ F. Baron, *Doctor Faustus: From History to Legend* (Munich: W. Fink, 1978), ch. 2.

⁶⁷ N. Brann, *The Abbot Trithemius (1462–1516): The Renaissance of Monastic Humanism* (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 16.

⁶⁸ For a summary of this work, see N. Brann, *Trithemius and Magical Theology: A Chapter in the Controversy over Occult Studies in Early Modern Europe* (New York: State University, 1999).

by Reuchlin and Johannes Krachenberger that celebrates the author of the *Amores*, and that appeared before Book IV of the *Amores* in the representative 1502 publication.⁶⁹ There is at least one passage in Reuchlin's *De verbo mirifico* ("On miracle-working words", 1494) that entertains similar witchcraft-ideas as Celtis does in certain passages of his *Amores*. In the *De verbo*, the three participants of the dialogue discuss – among others – the issue indicated in the title. Arguing for the existence of the miraculous power of the word, the enthusiastic Sidonius mentions the example of Medea, and incorporates in his argument some passages from the same Aeson-chapter of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* that Celtis also drew on several times (as seen above).⁷⁰ *Quid enim non carmina possunt?*⁷¹ ("What indeed cannot the incantations do?") – cites Sidonius Ovid, and he enumerates the same stereotypical skills of the classical witch that Ovid enumerated in order to represent the power of incantation;⁷² similarly to another "power-demonstration," the *arte mea...* passage of the *Amores*. Baruchias is skeptical in his answer to Sidonius; interestingly, when he complains about the charlatans who, out of financial reasons, pretend to have such powers, he mentions as an example the old soothsayer-witch living in the countryside.⁷³ Since she becomes an exemplary figure in the debate, Charles Zika claims that the old rustic witch "fulfils an important function in the structure of" *De verbo mirifico*.⁷⁴ Naturally, Reuchlin's and Celtis' similar use (around the same time) of classical sources about witchcraft and incantation does not mean that the one took the idea from the other (though the two authors surely knew each other's works in question⁷⁵); more probably, the parallel may be due to a common intellectual climate that in the works themselves results in common patterns of

⁶⁹ Modern edition: in Appendix II of Pindter's *Amores*-edition.

⁷⁰ Reuchlin, *De verbo mirifico* (Basel, 1494), fol. b 4r-v.

⁷¹ Ov. Met. VII. 167.

⁷² *Ibid.*, v. 153–4: *verbaque ter dixit placidos facientia somnos, / quae mare turbatum, quae concita flumina sistunt*; v. 200–7: *...concussaue sisto, / stantia concutio cantu freta, nubila pello, / nubilaque induco, ventos abigoque vocoque, / vipereas rumpo verbis et carmine fauces, / vivaque saxa sua convulsaue robora terra / et silvas moveo iubeoque tremescere montis / et mugire solum manesque exire sepulcris! / Te quoque, Luna, traho.*

⁷³ Reuchlin, *De verbo*, fol. b 4v. Baruchias speaks about *demens aliqua saga* (some mad female soothsayer); the witch-stereotypes he continues with make clear that he thinks of witches.

⁷⁴ C. Zika, *Reuchlin und die okkulte Tradition der Renaissance* (Sigmaringen: J. Thorbecke, 1998), 180.

⁷⁵ I have already mentioned Reuchlin's ode that appeared in the *Amores*-publication; and it is in the *Amores* itself (Am. III. 10. 69) that Celtis alludes – ironically – to Reuchlin's *De verbo mirifico* (Robert, *Konrad Celtis*, 186).

combining ideas of classical "literary" witchcraft, medieval witchcraft and hermeticist views about the magical power of the word.

Celtis could also draw inspiration from the fine arts: a number of witch-depictions were in circulation by the end of fifteenth century. Celtis happened to be the friend of the most famous artist of such woodcuts, Albrecht Dürer. The most renowned witch-woodcut of the Nuremberg artist-humanist, the *Witch Riding Backwards on a Goat* (fig. 1), was made around 1500,⁷⁶ in the same period that saw the closest cooperation between Dürer and Celtis.⁷⁷ Dürer or his workshop was responsible for several woodcuts of the *Amores*.⁷⁸ According to Sullivan, the witch-depictions of the type exemplified by Dürer's above mentioned woodcut have less to do with witch-persecutions (previously emphasized by some scholars) than with the revitalization of classical ideas by humanists: the *Witch Riding Backwards on a Goat* "is also appropriate as a response to humanist interests".⁷⁹ Dürer's image evokes the atmosphere of the classical satire, primarily that of Lucian: "Dürer's witch is plausible as an upside down version of the beautiful Aphrodite".⁸⁰ Many of these characteristics also fit the witch-role that Barbara assumes in *Amores* IV. 10: the inspiration gained from classical literature, the mixture of serious and playful treatment of the figure,⁸¹ the emphasis on the sphere of distorted, infamous love and sexuality. There are commonalities in the two witch-representations in the details, too. Certain general stereotypical motifs, like the hailstorm or the old age of the witch, appear both in Celtis' text and Dürer's image. The way Dürer's witch grasps the horn of the billy-goat she sits on can be taken as an allusion to her skill to render men impotent⁸² (cf. v. 22–24 in Celtis' "catalogue"). Perhaps the most intriguing issue is the association of witch and Capricorn, in both Dürer and Celtis. In Dürer's woodcut the witch's mount is elongated in a way that reminds one of the traditional Capricorn illustrations, and indeed, Capricorn (the zodiacal sign belonging to December, and to Saturn) may allude to winter, night and death, just as other motifs of the picture (e. g. the hailstorm); the close affinity of these motifs in

⁷⁶ M. Sullivan, "The Witches of Dürer and Hans Baldung Grien", *Renaissance Quarterly* 53 (2000), 357.

⁷⁷ See D. Wuttke, "Dürer und Celtis: von der Bedeutung des Jahres 1500 für den deutschen Humanismus", in *Humanismus und Reformation als kulturelle Kräfte in der deutschen Geschichte*, ed. L. Spitz (Berlin et al.: De Gruyter, 1981), 121–150.

⁷⁸ See Luh, *Kaiser*.

⁷⁹ Sullivan, 'The Witches', 357.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 359.

⁸¹ About the *seria mixta iocis* (Am. praef. 48) characteristic of the *Amores*, see Robert, *Konrad Celtis*, 241–7.

⁸² See e.g. Sullivan, 'The Witches', 341.

the *Amores*⁸³ have already been treated above. Again, the motifs of the two witch-representations do not overlap to such extent that we should necessarily assume direct exchange of the relevant ideas; nevertheless, the above observations certainly provided ample evidence that Dürer and Celtis, having worked under the same intellectual climate, entertained many similar ideas and methods of representation concerning the issue of witchcraft (too).

The foregoing discussion of the contemporary intellectual historical context of Celtis' witch-like figures was not exhaustive, the examples – with Dürer's, Melber's, Reuchlin's – and probably Trithemius' similar ideas to those of Celtis – just served to demonstrate that the issue of witchcraft formed an integral part of the humanist discourse around the "Arch-humanist". The above analyzed *Amores*-passages might have provided data for a better understanding of the history of witchcraft-ideas and their artistic appearance in the German Renaissance. More importantly, I hope that the discussion of these ideas helped to understand better the *Amores* itself, the German "Arch-humanist's" probably most significant work. Witchcraft-motifs could serve as powerful, spectacular symbolic means contributing in many ways to the construction of meaning in the *Amores*, expressing, first of all, *amor infamis*, or the ambivalent nature and the dangers of love and magic, two powers whose close affinity – otherwise an age-old idea – became an important issue in several Renaissance scholarly theories and artworks.



Fig. 1. Albrecht Dürer: *Witch Riding Backwards on a Goat*

⁸³ The above mentioned ode to Melber can also be included: this mentions the caper as the mount of witches (v. 39).

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Dr. Bogdan Edward Jastrzębski-Edwards (1860–1923), the last Praemonstrator of the Golden Dawn, and his brother Louis Stanley Jast (1868–1944), the Theosophist

While a comprehensive history of Polish esotericism is yet to be written, it is quite safe to assume that there were few major figures of European importance. The only Pole of unquestionably momentous influence was the alchemist Michał Sędziwój (Michael Sendivogius, 1566–1636), whose works enjoyed enormous success and were published in numerous editions and translations not only during the two centuries following his death, but also from the late 19th century until the present. Although it is still a matter of debate to what extent alchemy was "esoteric" and whether the particular Sendivogian brand should be counted as such, the Polish author's texts were re-read and re-interpreted by both more scientific "chymists" and clearly esoteric "adepts" of the 17th and 18th centuries. His impact on modern esotericism can be inferred from the number of modern popular translations into many languages, from that in *The Hermetic Museum*, edited by Arthur Edward Waite in 1893, to a recent version in Greek. Frequent references to Sendivogius are found in such celebrated esoteric authors as Fulcanelli or Carl Gustav Jung. Certainly no other Polish esotericist — be it a writer or an adventurer — could match the fame and magnitude of "Sarmata Anonymus", as he was called by Michael Maier. Perhaps the next in importance was Tadeusz Grabianka (1740–1807), the "King of New Israel", one of the leaders of Illuminés du Mont-Thabor or d'Avignon, who was active all over Europe, from his native Podolia, where he had an alchemical laboratory in his estate of Ostapkowce (now Ostapkiwtsi, Ukraine), through Germany, France and England, to St. Petersburg where he died in prison. The great Romantic poet Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855) and his one-time "guru" Andrzej Towiański (1799–1878) exerted some limited influence on Western European esotericists with their respective versions of Polish messianism. In the 20th century Czesław Czyński (1858–1932) was for some time the leader of the Martinist Order in Russia (nominally also a member of the O.T.O.) and Mieczysław Dymitr Sudowski (1897–1971) gained worldwide fame as Mouni Sadhu.