

# Investigatio Fontium



# INVESTIGATIO FONTIUM

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## Individual Astrology as a Means of Character-building in the Poetry of Konrad Celtis

The essential role astrology (inseparable from astronomy) played in Renaissance thought has long been a commonplace in scholarly literature. Astrology permeates especially deeply the oeuvre of Konrad Celtis (1459–1508), the “Arch-Humanist” of Germany. The literature on Celtis has yielded important results in exploring this theme, still, scholars generally have not gone beyond the surface, only the most spectacular astrological text has been delved into deeply. It is all the more important to make up for this deficiency since, in my opinion, astrology is not only one aspect among many in Celtis’ poetry, but a kind of symbolic language, a conceptual framework which, together and interwoven with other conceptual frameworks (Classical mythology, Christian motifs, Platonic philosophy, and so on) helps to express a number of ideas of key importance to the poet. These ideas cannot be understood in depth and the relevant passages cannot be translated if one does not understand the expressions that incorporate the stars. Furthermore, the texts investigated below reflect, as a kind of cross-section, the general character of Celtis’ poetry: his poetic self-fashioning, his main concepts about the micro- and macrocosm, his attachment to symbolic languages, and his attitude to certain types of sources.

*Rerum causas repetere ...<sup>1</sup> singulis rebus reperire causas ...<sup>2</sup> naturae seriem rimari ...<sup>3</sup>* The reader of Celtis frequently comes across the issue of the secret causes of things. The desire to know and mentally conquer the cosmos – and possibly the farthest or most secret regions – was a natural inclination in this poet, and he propagated a sensuous poetic representation or recreation of

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<sup>1</sup> *Od.* I,20,70 (*Libri odarum quattuor, cum epodo et saeculari carmine.* ed. SCHÄFER, E. Tübingen 2012).

<sup>2</sup> *Od.* I,11,38.

<sup>3</sup> *Od.* I,1,16.

the world (and man) as early as the definition of *poetica* in his first work, the *Ars versificandi*.<sup>4</sup> Celtis has become an exemplary representative of a type of German humanism which was enthusiastic about *philosophia*, and which did not recognize a strict separation between the natural sciences and humanities, or between science and literature.<sup>5</sup> He was especially interested in the relation between the terrestrial and celestial realms, the sub- and supralunar spheres, and in the correspondences that can occur between micro- and macrocosm (an issue of key importance in the thought of the age) – and astrology provided evident examples of these relations for him and his contemporaries. Throughout his life, Celtis was surrounded by many people who were fascinated by the stars beyond the average (from different perspectives and together with other disciplines); Celtis' personal interest and his involvement in similarly interested surroundings reinforced each other. Here I survey the main components of the biographical context of this issue, which will, at the same time, exemplify the growing significance of astrology in Germany and Europe.<sup>6</sup>

In the second half of the fifteenth century, in Celtis' lifetime, astrology was gaining more and more ground in German intellectual, courtly, and daily life due to printing,<sup>7</sup> the personal achievements of astronomers (primarily the

<sup>4</sup> *Ars versificandi et carminum*. Leipzig (Martin Landsberg) ca. 1492–95. Fol. A 6v–B 1r. Analyzed by ROBERT, J.: *Konrad Celtis und das Projekt der deutschen Dichtung: Studien zur humanistischen Konstruktion von Poetik, Philosophie, Nation und Ich*. Tübingen 2003, 48–61.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. esp. WUTTKE, D.: Renaissance-Humanismus und Naturwissenschaft in Deutschland. *Gymnasium* 97 (1990), 232–254. In contrast ROBERT (n. 4) 60 calls attention to the problematic nature of the expression “integrative humanism” often used by scholars.

<sup>6</sup> The literature on European Renaissance astrology (especially in the context of intellectual history) has grown extensive by now, largely as a result of the Warburg school. About the main general monographs, collected volumes, lexicons, and the scholarship of astrology in Germany, a useful survey has been provided by REISINGER, R.: *Historische Horoskopie. Das iudicium magnum des Johannes Carion für Albrecht Dürers Patenkind*. Wiesbaden (Harrassowitz) 1997, 10–13. These I complete here only with some important items of the recent literature: NEWMAN, R. W. – GRAFTON, A. (eds.): *Secrets of Nature: Astrology and Alchemy in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge, MA and London (MIT Press) 2001; OESTMANN, G. – RUTKIN, H. D. – VON STUCKRAD, K. (eds.): *Horoscopes and Public Spheres: Essays on the History of Astrology*. Berlin and New York (Walter de Gruyter) 2005; VON STUCKRAD, K.: *Geschichte der Astrologie: Von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*. München (C.H. Beck) 2007. Nevertheless, scholars have not paid much attention to the investigation of actual horoscopes and the theoretical aspects of interpretation; in this regard, REISINGER's work is pioneering.

<sup>7</sup> In the catalogue of ZINNER (ZINNER, E.: *Geschichte und Bibliographie der astronomischen Literatur in Deutschland zur Zeit der Renaissance*. Leipzig [Hiersemann] 1941), 600(!) titles of astronomical-astrological prints fall in a period of no more than 20 years between Celtis' crowning as poet and his death.

Viennese school and Regiomontanus),<sup>8</sup> intellectual trends coming from Italy (e.g., the reception of Ficino),<sup>9</sup> economic, and geographical factors (e.g., the role of Nuremberg). Critiques of divination (partly from clerics) and debates over the effects of the stars may have just enhanced the significance of these ideas in public thought.<sup>10</sup> Celtis himself acquired the rudiments of astronomy-astrology, one of the *septem artes liberales*, no later than his studies at the university of Heidelberg.<sup>11</sup> In the two years after his graduation as a *magister artium* (October 1485) he became acquainted with two astronomers, and through them, the world of courtly astrology. In the *Ars versificandi* (1486), dedicated to Frederick the Wise, elector of Saxony, he himself refers to the intermediary role of Pollich von Mellerstadt, Frederick's physician, who taught at the university of Leipzig (just as Celtis did), and wrote several *Pronosticons* and a calendar. Johannes Canter, the astronomer of Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III, cast the horoscope of Celtis' laureation. The poet laureate started his "wandering years" in Italy where he could have seen and heard astrological ideas in many forms. Pomponio Leto's Roman and Ficino's Florentine academies had a great impact on him; astrology played an especially important role in Ficino's syncretic philosophy (the reception of Ficino is frequently debated in the literature about Celtis).<sup>12</sup> As for Latin literature in Italy, on the one hand, the genre of the astronomical-astrological didactic poem was prospering (Basini, Pontano, Bonincontri) in connection with the reception of Manilius, and, on the other

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<sup>8</sup> Cf., e.g. BYRNE, J. S.: *The stars, the moon, and the shadowed earth: Viennese astronomy in the fifteenth century*. (PhD Dissertation) Princeton University 2007.

<sup>9</sup> Summarily: STEPPICH, CHR. J.: 'Numine afflatur': *die Inspiration des Dichters im Denken der Renaissance*. Wiesbaden (Harrassowitz) 2002, 218–35.

<sup>10</sup> Pico's *Disputationes adversus astrologiam divinatricem* (1494) has to be mentioned primarily, which also caused a great stir in Germany. The debate over syphilis/the French disease (from 1496) between Pollich von Mellerstadt (Celtis' acquaintance, see below) and Simon Pistoris had astrological aspects, too. FRENCH, J. – ARRIZABALAGA, J.: *Coping with the French Disease: University practitioners' Strategies and Tactics in the Transition from the Fifteenth to the sixteenth century*. In FRENCH, R. (ed.): *Medicine from the Black Death to the French disease*. Aldershot, Hants (Ashgate) 1998, 90–96.

<sup>11</sup> In Heidelberg, where he stayed from December 1484 to October 1485, a humanist circle around Bishop Johann von Dalberg was already taking shape; it was reorganized as *Sodalitas Rhenana* at the time of Celtis' return in 1495, and it showed great interest in Platonism, cosmology-cosmography, astronomy-astrology and Kabbalah. WIEGAND, H.: *Phoebea sodalitas nostra. Die Sodalitas Litteraria Rhenana*. In WIEGAND, H.: *Der zweigipflige Musenberg. Studien zum Humanismus in Kurpfalz*. Ubstadt-Weiher (Regionalkultur) 2000, 29–49.

<sup>12</sup> About the problem cf. LUH, P.: *Kaiser Maximilian gewidmet. Die unvollendete Werkausgabe des Konrad Celtis und ihre Holzschnitte*. Frankfurt/Main u. a. 2001, 80.

hand, the reader of other poetic genres could also find scattered astrological references and topoi (frequently used, for example, by Naldo Naldi, Ficino's friend, but also by Callimaco Esperiente,<sup>13</sup> a disciple of Leto with whom Celtis was in close touch in Poland).

Between 1489 and 1491 Celtis stayed in Cracow; his travel there was certainly motivated by the opportunity to deepen his astronomical-astrological knowledge.<sup>14</sup> The university of Cracow laid greater emphasis on this discipline than any other university of the age, and the influence Albert Blar (Brudzewo; the teacher of Copernicus, for example) had on Celtis is quite demonstrable.<sup>15</sup> It is not accidental that many of Celtis' texts investigated below fall into the Polish period, for instance, addressing members of the humanist circle there. After Cracow, Celtis spent his life mostly in southern German and Austrian regions, primarily in university milieus (lecturing on Ptolemy, for instance) and as the central figure of several sodalities; the main scenes of his activity – Ingolstadt, Nuremberg and Vienna – are all significant in the history of European astronomy-astrology. In 1501 he obtained the foundation charter of *Collegium Poetarum (et Mathematicorum)* from Maximilian I,<sup>16</sup> an institute founded with the purpose of training a humanist elite; its very name demonstrates the idea of how closely the study of the stars belongs to the realm of the muses. In Vienna, Celtis got closer to Maximilian,<sup>17</sup> in whose world view – as in the view of many other Habsburg emperors – horoscopes and celestial signs played an essential role.<sup>18</sup> At the same time, Celtis stood in close relationships and had correspondence with several members of Maximilian's court who dealt with astronomy, Stabius and Grünpeck, for instance.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Filippo Buonaccorsi's original name; according to G. PAPARELLI, G.: *Callimaco Esperiente*. Salerno (Beta) 1971, 48 he may have actively practised astrology.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. e.g. SPITZ, L. W.: *Conrad Celtis. The German Arch-Humanist*. Cambridge (Harvard University Press) 1957, 15.

<sup>15</sup> MÜLLER, G. M.: *Die 'Germania generalis' des Conrad Celtis: Studien mit Edition, Übersetzung und Kommentar*. Tübingen 2001, 311 ff. demonstrates the close parallels between the *Germania Generalis* and Blar's *Theoricae novae* commentary.

<sup>16</sup> GRAF-STUHLHOFER, F.: Lateinische Dichterschule. Das Collegium poetarum des Konrad Celtis von 1501 bis 1537. *Grazer Beiträge. Zeitschrift für die Klassische Altertumswissenschaft* 22 (1998) 211–214. About the problem of its name: 211–2.

<sup>17</sup> Summarily WIENER, C.: *Et spes et ratio studiorum in Caesare tantum*. Celtis' Beziehungen zu Maximilian I. In WIENER, C. (ed.): *Amor als Topograph*. Schweinfurt 2002, 75–82.

<sup>18</sup> Treated in detail in Darin HAYTON's soon-to-appear monograph: *Astrology and Politics in the Holy Roman Empire*. I am grateful to Darin HAYTON who put his draft at my disposal.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. the three letters of Stabius between 1494–98, and Grünpeck's 1496 and 1505 letters



He maintained an even closer relationship with a number of humanists who wrote – each with a different emphasis – astronomical, astrological and poetic works at the same time, and with whom he exchanged many letters and odes of praise: Dietrich Ulsenius,<sup>20</sup> Johannes Tolhopf,<sup>21</sup> Augustinus Moravus,<sup>22</sup> and Laurentius Corvinus.<sup>23</sup> The latter praises Celtis in a letter with these words: your songs “delight me above all, since they contain an especially great amount of astrology and natural charm.”<sup>24</sup> Celtis sang odes to famous astronomers, too, praising them together with their knowledge; see his odes to Albert Blar (*Od.* I, 17) and Regiomontanus (*Od.* III, 23; *Epigr.* II, 83). Among the surviving items of Celtis’ library, one finds several works directly related to the issue of astronomy-astrology, Regiomontanus’ calendar and almanach, and three works containing *prognosticons*.<sup>25</sup> He was also welcome in the library of his Nuremberg patrician friend, Hartmann Schedel; according to the surviving catalogue, it had a considerable astronomical-astrological collection.<sup>26</sup>

The bare enumeration of biographical facts already shows how many different external sources the poet’s astrological ideas could have fed on. As regards the relevant texts by Celtis himself, the scholarly literature has discussed them in two ways: on the one hand, some general monographs in the older literature on Celtis have a subchapter-length part (or a few pages) that argue for the significance of the astrological aspect in his poetry, supporting the argument with the most evidently astrological passages (Pindter, Novotny, Spitz, Größing);<sup>27</sup> on the other hand, Jörg Robert and Kober analyze in depth the most

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(RUPPRICH, H. (ed.): *Der Briefwechsel des Konrad Celtis*. München (Beck); henceforth: *BW*); as for Stiborius, Celtis dedicated an ode to him (*Od.* II, 14).

<sup>20</sup> Correspondence between 1492 and 1497 (cf. *BW* – n. 19). Ulsenius’ ode to Celtis: on the last page of Tritonius’ *Melopoiae* (Augsburg 1507). Celtis’ ode to Ulsenius: SCHÄFER’S *Odes*-edition (n. 1), app. IV.

<sup>21</sup> Correspondence between 1492 and 1499 (cf. *BW* – n. 19). Celtis’ ode to Tolhopf: *Od.* II, 13. On the close relationship between Celtis and Tolhopf: LÜH (n. 12) 342–8.

<sup>22</sup> Correspondence between 1497 and 1505 (cf. *BW* – n. 19); Celtis’ ode to Augustinus: *Od.* IV, 6.

<sup>23</sup> Correspondence between 1499 and 1503 (cf. *BW* – n. 19).

<sup>24</sup> *BW* (n. 19) nr. 294. “Delectant enim [carmina tua] me plurimum, cum presertim astrologie et naturalis dulcedinis sint plena.” The word *astrologia* can also mean astronomy, and *naturalis* may also refer to the study of nature.

<sup>25</sup> HENKEL, N.: Die Bücher des Konrad Celtis. In ARNOLD, W. (ed.): *Bibliotheken und Bücher im Zeitalter der Renaissance*. Wiesbaden 1997, 129–165.

<sup>26</sup> STAUBER, R.: *Die Schedelsche Bibliothek. Ein Beitrag zur Ausbreitung der italienischen Renaissance, des deutschen Humanismus und der medizinischen Literatur*. Freiburg I. Br. 1908, 105–7.

<sup>27</sup> PINDTER, F.: *Die Lyrik des Conrad Celtis*. (PhD Dissertation) Vienna 1930, 144–158. NOVOTNY, E.:

important text, the very first *Amores* ode, which presents the poet's nativity;<sup>28</sup> Robert and Grössing touch on other relevant passages of the *Amores*, too.<sup>29</sup> Comprehensive research has not been conducted yet, although it is justified, at least for individual astrology.

Astrology is a heterogeneous term;<sup>30</sup> with regard to the issue here, the differentiation between the traditional types seems to be the most useful classification. According to a widely accepted medieval terminology, the stars' effects on nations, greater regions or world history belong to mundane astrology, while individual astrology investigates the stars' impact on the individual. To the latter belongs, first of all, natal astrology (*nativitates*); in most cases, catarchic (*electiones*)<sup>31</sup> and horary (*interrogationes, horaria*)<sup>32</sup> astrology also deal with the fate of the individual.<sup>33</sup> Considering all these, in Celtis' case it is worth classifying the astrological references under four categories:

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*Die Weltanschauung des Konrad Celtis.* (PhD Dissertation) Vienna 1938, 44–53. SPITZ, L. W.: The Philosophy of Conrad Celtis, German Arch-Humanist. *Studies in the Renaissance* 1 (1954) 25–7. GRÖSSING, H.: *Humanistische Naturwissenschaft: zur Geschichte der Wiener mathematischen Schulen des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts.* Baden-Baden (Koerner) 1983, 157–170.

<sup>28</sup> Birth horoscope.

<sup>29</sup> ROBERT (n. 4) 451–481; ROBERT, J.: Zum Dichter geboren: Die Astrologie in den *Amores*. In *Amor als Topograph* (n. 17) 51–60; KOBER, M.: Das Humanistenleben als Sühne. Zu Konrad Celtis' Einleitungslegie 'Amores' I. 1. *Würzburger Jahrbücher für die Altertumswissenschaft.* N.F. 23 (1999) 245–263; Helmuth GRÖSSING, H.: *Astra inclinant?* Astrologie in den *Amores* des Konrad Celtis. In FRIEDRICH, C. (ed.): *Pharmazie in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Festgabe für Wolf-Dieter Müller-Jahncke zum 65. Geburtstag.* Stuttgart (Wiss. Verl. Ges.) 2009, 167–182.

<sup>30</sup> Its main types can be classified from different points of view. With regard to complexity, the scale ranges from a simple astrological idea (e.g. the appearance of a comet signifies the death of the king) to methods requiring complex calculations (horoscopes). The stars' effect can be restricted to the material world, or it can involve the dimension of the soul and free will; one can also differentiate between a fatalist and a non-fatalist concept of astrology. According to a typical terminology often used in the Middle Ages, the "milder" extremes of these scales belong to *astrologia naturalis*, generally accepted in that age, while the other extremes are characteristic of the often debated *astrologia superstitiosa* (Cf. LÁNG, B.: *Asztrológia a késő középkori tudományos diskurzusban.* [Astrology in the late medieval scientific discourse.] *Magyar filozófiai szemle* 43 [1999] 747–774). Naturally, the differentiation between the two is not pure; the classification according to the types discussed in the following is clearer.

<sup>31</sup> The election of a favorable date for a future event based on the planetary positions.

<sup>32</sup> One raises a question and looks for the answer in the horoscope cast for the exact time of the question.

<sup>33</sup> More about the medieval astrological terminology: BURNETT, CH.: Astrology. In MANTELLO, F. A. C. – RIGG, A. G. (eds.): *Medieval Latin: an Introduction and Bibliographical guide.* Washington (Catholic University of America Press) 1996, 372–8.

- individual astrology;
- mundane astrology;<sup>34</sup>
- the effect of the stars<sup>35</sup> or a certain planet<sup>36</sup> in general, not mentioning concrete cases;
- texts criticizing astrologers<sup>37</sup> (they also mirror Celtis' attitude to astrology, although indirectly).

This study focuses on individual astrology for more than one reason. The passages belonging to the last three categories are often short and commonplace and they may be embedded in a comprehensive train of thought during a meditation about the cosmos; for instance, they may appear in a cosmological-astronomical, Platonic or Stoic context, so they can only be treated in the framework of a comprehensive analysis of Celtis' concepts about the cosmos – which would go beyond the scope of an article. Individual astrology is more “independent”, more concrete; passages that contain complex, open or hidden, astral symbolism and require a deeper analysis generally pertain to individual astrology. These passages can often be connected to each other, all the more since the employment of this symbolic language is one of the general strategies for character-building considered effective by the poet.

During this analysis, considerations of to what extent Celtis believed in astrology or its specific branches is not the central question. Two things are clear; first, Celtis certainly believed in at least the basic astronomical-astrological teachings and the issue of the stars' effect was an essential component of his thought; second, as was typical of humanists, he viewed this discipline with a critical eye, especially with regard to the exaggerations or false divinations of certain astrologers.<sup>38</sup> Beyond this ambivalence, the assessment of the exact nature of his belief is all the more difficult since these are literary texts, mixing reality and fiction in specific ways. Celtis' characteristic irony often includes

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<sup>34</sup> *Am.* III,9,37–8 (*Quattor libri amorum*. ed. PINDTER, F. Leipzig 1934); *Am.* III,14,33; *Epigr.* I,35 (HARTFELDER, K. [ed.]: *Fünf Bücher Epigramme von Konrad Celtis*. Berlin 1881); *Epigr.* I,68,4; *Od.* II,2, 57–72.

<sup>35</sup> From among the vast number of examples, a few typical ones: *Od.* II,17,37–40; *Epigr.* I,6; *Epigr.* II,34.

<sup>36</sup> In the case of Venus e.g. *Am.* I,7,53–4; in the case of Saturn e.g. *Od.* I,18,17–19.

<sup>37</sup> E.g. *Am.* III,10,59 f., 71–8; *Epigr.* I,35; *Epigr.* I,59,1–10; *Epigr.* I,60; *Epigr.* II,73.

<sup>38</sup> Other scholars of Celtis, too, find this ambivalence: PINDTER (n.27) 144; GRÖSSING (n. 27) 165–170.

the presentation of the stars' effects, too;<sup>39</sup> one does not have to draw far-reaching conclusions from these. While the older scholarly literature treated Celtis' texts largely as pieces of real experience, quasi-biographical sources, the recent literature is more sensitive to genre-specific requirements, ways of stylization, and the author's – poetologically justified – inclination for roleplay, which are especially characteristic of his works that have a more comprehensive narrative structure, like the *Amores*.<sup>40</sup> Astrological passages were not excepted from Celtis' general attitude of *seria mixta ioci*; in these, too, he is speaking seriously and playing at the same time. The interesting question is what these texts signify, or at least suggest, what the function of individual astrology is in his poetry, and how it participates in poetic creation.

Besides his interest in the relations of micro- and macrocosm, another essential concept in Celtis' poetry is the idea of the close connection between poet and celestial powers, the idea of a kind of divine election. Since Petrarch and Boccaccio these ideas (otherwise of Classical origin) played a central role in the Renaissance discourse about poetry, they were branching out more and more and owed much to scholastic antipathies and attacks against poetry, defended in many arguments. The word has the power of creation, the poet, as ποιητής, creator of a world, follows the example of God. The deepest truths in the Bible about the world and man were already manifested, although in germ form, by pre-Christian mythical figures like Orpheus or Zoroaster, in poems: this is the tradition of *poetica theologia*. It is because of his relevant inborn abilities, his *ingenium*, that he is able to tell divine truths. His inspired state of mind was most often referred to as *furor poeticus*, the “madness” of the poet; through this “possessed” condition he can establish a direct connection to the celestial powers.<sup>41</sup> These ideas were, on the one hand, worked out in poetological, philosophical treatises, and on the other hand, the poets themselves applied them, either in elaborated trains of thought or as *topoi* (a large number of the most frequent *topoi* in Neo-Latin Poetry is involved in this ideology).<sup>42</sup> Celtis himself appears in his poetry time and again as the favorite of the gods,

<sup>39</sup> ROBERT (n. 29) 56.

<sup>40</sup> ROBERT (n. 4) e.g. 10 and 241–7.

<sup>41</sup> About all these in detail cf. STEPPICH (n. 9) part I.

<sup>42</sup> For example, the Platonic idea of *furor poeticus* (that formed part of the poetological discourse in Italy as early as the fourteenth century) was developed further by Ficino, who incorporated it in his philosophical system, connecting it to the idea of anamnesis and emphasizing its positive role. In the Neo-Latin poetry of Italy or Germany, the *furor poeticus* became a frequent *topos*. STEPPICH (n. 9) 146–197 and 300–7.

the priest of the muses, the inspired poet, the heir of the Orpheic tradition, who has an intimate relationship to the celestial powers, thus he excels above the common people. However, in Celtis' case the matter at issue is something even more: He is the first poet laureate of his nation, the bringer of the muses to the German lands, the organizer of sodalities.<sup>43</sup> Apollo, the Sun God and the leader of the muses (to mention only the most important god for Celtis) not only appears in trite commonplaces, he becomes a kind of personal god for the poet. Celtis takes revenge on the slanderers of poetry with the help of Phoebus' arrows;<sup>44</sup> he sacrifices, sings, prays to the god;<sup>45</sup> and most importantly, they meet in the framework of an epiphany several times.<sup>46</sup>

Astrological symbolism provided a means of expressing both his view about the interrelation of macro- and microcosm and a consciousness of divine election at the same time in a demonstrative and spectacular way. It is only natural that Celtis took advantage of the opportunity.

### The stars of Celtis' birth

The *Amores*, Celtis' main work, issued in Nuremberg in 1502, presents a world systematically interwoven with correspondences (already shown by its programmatic woodcuts).<sup>47</sup> These correspondences appear on many levels, ranging from celestial spheres through geographical regions ("Germania") to the world of the individual. For instance, the four books correspond to the four cardinal zodiacal signs, the four cardinal points, the four bodies of water that border Germany, the four temperaments, and so on. In the classical elegies, which provided the basic patterns for the *Amores*, the mythological sphere, the world of the gods, served as a background for the human world. In Celtis' work the mythological layer is replaced by a geographical layer (the presentation of "Germania") and an astronomical-astrological layer;<sup>48</sup> whenever possible, the Greek-Roman gods and the planets meld.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, the opening elegy

<sup>43</sup> Summarily cf. WORSTBROCK, F. J.: Konrad Celtis. Zur Konstitution des humanistischen Dichters in Deutschland. In BOECKMANN, H. (ed.): *Literatur, Musik und Kunst im Übergang vom Mittelalter zur Neuzeit*. Göttingen (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht) 1995, 9–35.

<sup>44</sup> *Od.* I,19; *Od.* II,16; *Epod.* 9; *Epigr.* I,27.

<sup>45</sup> *Od.* I,29; *Od.* III,15; *Epod.* 16 f.

<sup>46</sup> *Poema ad Fridericum* (see below); *Am.* I,3.

<sup>47</sup> The most detailed study of the *Amores*: ROBERT (n. 4).

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.* 274–5.

<sup>49</sup> This fusion, related to the Classical-medieval tradition of *allegoria physica*, is a frequent phenomenon in Neo-Latin poetry and Renaissance Platonic philosophy.

of the *Amores*, with its planetary gods and epic features, “revives”<sup>50</sup> the poet’s own birth horoscope:

Ad Fridianum Pignucium Lucensem infeliciter se ad  
amorem natum ex configuratione horoscopi sui

Sidera quae nostrae fuerint natalia vitae,  
candide Pignuci, carmine nosse cupis.  
Accipe, per Latias vates doctissimus oras  
Lucanae gentis gloria magna tuae:  
5 nox erat et Februae submerso sole Calendae  
transierant mensis februa maesta colens.  
Candidus inflexa Phoebus tunc stabat in Urna,  
proxima cui nitidae stella serena Lyrae,  
cumque Sagittiferi surgebant sidera signi  
10 horaque post medium tertia noctis erat.  
Tunc mea me genitrix reserata effudit ab alvo  
et dederat vitae stamina prima meae.  
Illa nocte Lyram nemo conspexit Olympo,  
Phoebus enim roseis hanc sibi iunxit equis  
15 plectraque pulsabat toto resonantia caelo  
et dixit: “Phoebo nascere, quisquis eris!  
Ipse meam citharam plectro gestabis eburno  
Lesboaque canes carmina blanda chely,  
seu te Germano contingat cardine nasci,  
20 sive Italo, Gallo, Sarmaticove polo,  
nam mea sunt toti communia numina mundo,  
sim licet Arctois languidior radiis.”  
Dixit et assensit Capricorni frigidus astro  
Saturnus, totiens qui mihi damna tulit,  
25 Marsque sub aestivo micuit tunc forte Leone  
et medium caeli cum love Virgo tulit.  
Lunaque fraterno capiens iam lumen ab ore  
cornua cum Capri cornibus implicuit.  
Quaque mihi nato volucris sub parte refulsit,  
30 haec eadem coepto pars orientis erat.  
Principium Maiis fuerat tunc forte Calendis,  
concepti nostrum dum pia Mater onus,  
mater centenos quae quasi impleverat annos  
et vidit quartam stirpe sua subolem.  
35 Mercuriusque suo iunxit vaga lumina Phoebus,  
ludit et ad citharam verba canora suam.  
Iamque Venus stabat Vervecis sidera lustrans  
deridens tremuli frigida membra senis,  
quam pater in quarta dum vidit adesse figura,  
40 increpat et contra talia voce refert:  
„Saeva Venus, nostro quam de genitore creavi,  
eius ut inieci secta verenda mari,  
cur mea derides venerandae membra senectae  
et falcem, quacum cuncta sub orbe meto?

To Fridianus Pighinutius of Lucca about that he was  
born for unhappy love according to the planetary  
positions of his horoscope

Radiant Pighinutius, you want to know by our song  
what the stars of my birth were. Hear then, you, the  
most learned poet in the region of Latium, the great  
glory of your Luccan nation:

It was night, and after sunset the first of February ar-  
rived (?), the month of the sorrowful expiatory sacrifice.  
Radiant Phoebus stood in the curved Urn [Aquarius],  
next to him the bright star of the brilliant Lyre, and  
when the constellation of the Archer was rising, it was  
three o’clock after midnight. It was then that my mother  
sent me forth from her opening womb, giving me the  
thread of my life. That night noone could see the Lyre in  
the heaven, since Phoebus bound it to his rose-colored  
horses. Then he plucked the strings, making all the  
heaven resound, and said:

“Be born for Phoebus, whoever you will be! You will  
take with yourself my lyre with the ivy plectrum, and  
you will sing charming songs in the style of the lyre  
of Lesbos, no matter where you will be born, under a  
German sky, or under an Italian, Gallic or Sarmatian;  
because I have the same power all over the world, even  
if my rays are weaker in the North.”

So he spoke, and cold Saturn in the constellation of  
Capricorn agreed, Saturn, who did me harm so many  
times. Mars happened to shine under the summer Lion,  
and the middle of the sky was possessed by the Maiden  
with Jupiter. The Moon, who borrowed her light from his  
brother’s face, hooked her horns together with Capricorn’s  
horns. And the grade under which the winged [planet]  
shone at my birth was the grade of the eastern horizon  
at my conception. My origin, when my good mother con-  
ceived her burden, happened to fall on the first of May;  
my mother completed her hundredth year, as it were,  
and saw me as her fourth child in the lineage. Mercury  
joined his wandering light with his Phoebus, and sang  
harmonious songs playing the lyre.

Now Venus stood there, staying in the constellation of  
Wether [Ram], and ridiculed the trembling old man’s  
cold members; when the father saw that they were in a  
quadrate, he rebuked her with these words:

“Cruel Venus, whom I helped to be born from our father,  
having thrown his cut loins in the sea, why do you ridi-  
cule the members of my honorable old age and the sickle  
with which I cut off everything under the sky?

<sup>50</sup> ROBERT (n. 4) 462–3.

45 Ipse ego iam, tecum qui inimico lumine volvor  
 et male concordi foedere semper ago,  
 efficiam: quicumque sub hac vitam accipit hora  
 sentiat immites semper amore deos.”  
 Dixit. Et auratae Veneris fera spicula fregit,(,)  
 50 plumbea sed tarda iussit abire mora.  
 Inde mihi facilem nulla est quae femina mentem  
 praebeat et stabilem servet amore fidem.  
 Testis Sarmaticis Hasilina est nata sub oris,  
 Elsula Danubio quaeque creata vago,  
 55 Ursula Rhenanis et quae vaga gloria ripis  
 adque Codoneum Barbara nota sinum  
 atque aliae multae quas fido pectore amavi,  
 quis mea deceptus munera saepe dedi,  
 munera, quae cunctas retinent in amore puellas  
 60 et validas vires semper amoris habent.<sup>51</sup>

I, revolving in an inimical aspect with you, always in a disharmonious bond with you, I am going to bring about this: whoever comes into the world in this hour, may he always feel the gods cruel with regard to love!”  
 So he spoke, and he broke the wild arrows of golden Venus, ordering that the lead arrows can only go on their way belatedly. That is why no woman is freely inclined to me, no woman is faithful in love. This is attested by Hasilina, born in the Sarmatian region, or Elsula, who came to the world by the far-flowing Danube, or Ursula, who has a far-reaching glory on the banks of the Rhine, or Barbara, known at the Codonean bay, or many other women whom I loved with a faithful heart, and for whom I often gave my gifts, though they deceived me; such gifts that keep every girl in love, and always have the great strength of love.

In the following I summarize just briefly the results of those scholars (primarily Jörg Robert) who have discussed the elegy, and I analyze the poem further paying an even greater attention to the horoscope itself, other works by Celtis, and possible Italian influences. The elegy is part of a question-answer game characterisitic of humanists. Its precedent is an ode by Pighinutius (1487)<sup>52</sup> in which he expresses his admiration for Celtis by guessing the stars of his birth: “Which star shone for you at your birth, reveal with your song!”<sup>53</sup> The replying poem, at least its core, might have been composed at about the same time, but the whole poem is only seen now in the Nuremberg manuscript of *Amores*<sup>54</sup> (1500) and in the 1502 printed edition, which contains the ode to Pighinutius in a somewhat altered version.<sup>55</sup> What literary models could Celtis have considered while composing this horoscope elegy? Classical literature could only provide patterns for a few components of the poem. The biographical *sphragis* of Propertius’ *Monobiblos* (I,22) presents the poet’s origin, and the introductory lines of the two poems<sup>56</sup> undoubtedly harmonize. Here and there the elegists complain about the erotic bondage that is due to the bad influence of the

<sup>51</sup> Punctuation after the Pindter-edition.

<sup>52</sup> Appeared in Celtis’ *Proseuticum ad diuum Fridericum tertium pro laurea Appollinari*. Nürnberg (F. Creussner) 1487. Fol. 1v–2v.

<sup>53</sup> “Quod tibi sidus micuit sub ortu.” (v. 3)

<sup>54</sup> Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg, Cent. 5 app. 3.

<sup>55</sup> As regards astronomy-astrology, the changes – probably due to Celtis himself – are not significant, although the later version lays emphasis on the hour of his birth: “Aut tibi Maiae fidibus lyraeque / Filii natalicia sub hora / Fulsit.” (v. 21–23)

<sup>56</sup> V. 1–2 both in Propertius and Celtis.

stars.<sup>57</sup> The motif of favorable birth due to the gods appears in Classical works on a general level.<sup>58</sup> In the astrological literature, Firmicus Maternus mentions examples of poets' nativities, for instance, that of Homer.<sup>59</sup> The models provided by contemporary poetry, dealing with actual elements of horoscopes, are more important than the Classical preliminaries. Pontano mentions the constellation that determined his or his relatives' fates in several of his poems.<sup>60</sup> More significant is Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's poem entitled *Excusatio quod amet*,<sup>61</sup> which provides a parallel for Celtis' elegy in its topic and function. Pico describes his nativity by making a circle around the signs and he explains and justifies his erotic addiction with the power of the stars.<sup>62</sup>

Some other patterns can be added to those enumerated by Robert. As already mentioned by Hübner,<sup>63</sup> in the *sphragis* of the *Apotelesmatica*, a work attributed to Manetho, the poet demonstrates his exceptionally lucky birth by summarizing his nativity.<sup>64</sup> Four planets, the traditionally most favorable planets at that (Jupiter, Sun, Venus, Mercury), stay in the same sign (the Twins), and one can find the Κενταύρος in the MC.<sup>65</sup> This text, just like that of Pico, shows some parallels with Celtis' elegy;<sup>66</sup> however, since one cannot find exact textual agreements and the manuscript tradition is too unexplored (the work did not appear in print in the fifteenth century), one can only speculate about a possible influence on Celtis. As for contemporary Neo-Latin poetry in Italy, several astrological topoi show up that could have provided patterns for the relevant aspects of Celtis' poem. Complaints were often made about the unfavorable position and strongly

<sup>57</sup> E.g. Ov. *Epist.* XV,15,81 f; *Trist.* V,3,27.

<sup>58</sup> E.g. Horace's *Ode to Melpomene* (IV,3,1f).

<sup>59</sup> *Mathesis* VI,30,23 ff.

<sup>60</sup> HÜBNER, W.: Die Rezeption des astrologischen Lehrgedichts des Manilius in der italienischen Renaissance. In KRAFFT, F. – SCHMILZ, R. (eds.): *Humanismus und Naturwissenschaften*. Boppard 1980, 55f.

<sup>61</sup> *Carm.* 2 (ed. SPEYER, W. Leiden [Brill] 1964).

<sup>62</sup> About Pighinutius' ode and the sources see ROBERT (n. 4) 451–461.

<sup>63</sup> *Neue Pauly* XIV, 534.

<sup>64</sup> KÖCHLY, A. (ed.): *Manethonis Apotelesmaticorum qui feruntur libri VI*. Leipzig (Teubner) 1858, v. 738–750.

<sup>65</sup> According to NEUGEBAUER, O.: *Greek Horoscopes*. Philadelphia (American Philosophical Soc.) 1959, 92 the last position refers to Centaurus (and not the Archer); the horoscope was cast for 28 May 80 AD (2 hours after sunset).

<sup>66</sup> Compared to Pico, Pseudo-Manetho analyses his nativity more briefly, but he emphasizes the MC (and a Centaur-like constellation) just as Celtis did; Pseudo-Manetho wrote about favorable birth, Pico about the love problem, and in Celtis' elegy both topics are equally important.



negative effects of Saturn.<sup>67</sup> Celtis' friend, Callimaco, suspects the harmful stars with his lasting "love servitude".<sup>68</sup> The lucky planetary positions in Celtis' nativity are at least as important for him as the Saturn-Venus problem., and one often reads about favorable stars of birth in Italian poems; for instance, when they describe how the gods assist in the birth of the patron, god and planet merge, and the actual elements of horoscopes are also referred to.<sup>69</sup> Pighinutius' ode, too, is based on a topos; it provides an example for that sort of *rogatio* where the poet guesses which planetary position could have brought about the birth of such an excellent patron or friend.<sup>70</sup> Pighinutius may have not been interested in Celtis' actual horoscope; he seems to have simply expressed his admiration for his fellow poet, adjusting to contemporary literary norms and maybe Celtis' interest. However, the poet laureate grasped the opportunity and answered, and the symbolism of his poems indicates, among other things, such as an "Orpheic" identity and calling that reminds one of Ficino's assessment of his own nativity: in a letter he assumed the role of the restorer of ancient wisdom in the framework of *poetica theologia*.<sup>71</sup> With regard to all these Italian patterns, one cannot and need not know what exactly Celtis heard or read; here it is enough to know that almost all the important components of his elegy had Italian Renaissance (or, to a lesser extent, Classical) precursors. However, he composed by a "*mirifica*

<sup>67</sup> See examples below, note 129.

<sup>68</sup> *Carm. 2 Ad Bassum* (SCA, Fr. [ed.]: *Callimachi Experientis Carmina*. Neaples [F. Conte] 1981), v. 1–20: "Liber eram nullosque mihi meditabar amores, / Contentus casto vivere posse thoro: / Ast amor abruptit pacte mihi federa pacis / Et iubet assueto reddere colla iugo. / Prima peregrinis faculis mea pectora doris / Attigit et mentis sedit in arce mee, / Dura sed inceptas fregerunt sidera curas / Et periit subito vix bene natus amor. (...) Sive hanc nascenti legem dedit hora maligna / Fitque meum molli sidere pectus iners; / Sive aliquid natura iubet me semper amare / Inque tuis castris signa tenere, Venus; / Sive adamanteo fuso fatalia nentes / Hanc curam filis implicuere meis: / Ardor inest menti tecum gerere arma, Cupido, / Nec licet a signis me procul esse tuis."

<sup>69</sup> Amerigo Corsini, *Compendium in vitam Cosmi Medicis* 1,39–69 (JUHÁSZ, L. [ed.]: *Compendium in vitam Cosmi Medicis ad Laurentium Medicem*. Leipzig [Teubner] 1934); Naldi, *Epigr.* 181 (*Ad Laurentium Medicem*) (PEROSA, A. [ed.]: *Epigrammaton liber*. Budapest [K. M. Egyetemi Nyomda] 1943). Alessandro Cortesi refers to concrete planetary positions in the nativity of Matthias of Hungary: *Laudes Bellicae Matthiae Corvini Hungariae regis* 198–200. In ÁBEL, J. (ed.): *Olaszországi XV. századbeli írónak Mátyás királyt dicsőítő művei* [Fifteenth-century Italian authors' works praising Matthias of Hungary]. Budapest (MTA) 1890, 307.

<sup>70</sup> Another example in Janus Pannonius' panegyric to Lodovico Gonzaga: TELEKI, S. – KOVÁCSZNAI, S. (eds.): *Iani Pannonii Poemata quae uspiam reperiri potuerunt omnia*. Utrecht (Wild) 1784, I, 238.

<sup>71</sup> Ficino, *Epist.* VIII,19 (to J. Pannonius, 902) (*Epistolarum libri*, in KRISTELLER, P. O. – et al. (eds.): *Opera omnia*. Torino [Bottega d'Erasmio, repr.] 1962; I, 637–922). Ficino's correspondence was published by Koberger in Nuremberg in 1497.

*permixtio*” of these components a relatively original poem with few commonplaces and it found followers in the later Neo-Latin poetry of Germany.<sup>72</sup>

Focusing on the elegy itself, first the problem of the date of birth should be clarified. In several of his poems (*Am.* II,10,3f; *Am.* I,9,5; ode to Höltzl, 1–7<sup>73</sup>) Celtis unambiguously refers to his birth on the *Calendae* of February, that is, 1 February (1459). The older scholarly literature has accepted this, Dieter Wuttke, for instance, who highlighted the symbolic significance of 1 February and 1 May, the date of his conception (cf. *Am.* I,1,31–32): “these moments, just as that of his death, tie him to the great circulation of Nature, whose investigation he propagated emphatically and in an exemplary way.”<sup>74</sup> Nevertheless, in the horoscope elegy itself he uses a problematic expression. In lines 5–6, where he speaks about his birth, the expression *februae* (...) *Calendae transierant* itself can be translated as “1 February elapsed;” therefore, the more recent scholarship (Kober, Robert, Mertens) argues that it was the night of 1–2 February when 3 o’clock fell on 2 February.<sup>75</sup> Thus Celtis would have told a *Datumslüge* (Kober, “a lie about the date”), contradicting his other statements that referred to 1 February.

In the Nuremberg manuscript, one finds the nativity itself attached to the elegy (Fig. 1a) in two forms, sketchy and elaborate. The elaborate form was the customary way representing horoscopes in that age.<sup>76</sup> The drawings may go back to Rosenperger, Celtis’ scribe, or even to Celtis himself;<sup>77</sup> who cast the charts is not known.<sup>78</sup> What does the nativity reveal on the question of the date? The date stands in the middle of the elaborate chart: *1459. 1 Feb: 3 horae mane*, this must mean: 1 February, 3 o’clock in the morning. Computer-aided<sup>79</sup> investigation of the real planetary positions on this date reveals that the results correspond quite well to the horoscope data of the Nuremberg

<sup>72</sup> ROBERT (n. 4) 460–1.

<sup>73</sup> *Libri odarum*. SCHÄFER (n. 1) app. 1.

<sup>74</sup> WUTTKE, D.: Conradus Celtis Protucius. In FÜSSEL, S. (ed.): *Deutsche Dichter der frühen Neuzeit (1450 – 1600): ihr Leben und Werk*. Berlin (Schmidt) 1993, 173.

<sup>75</sup> KOBER (n. 29) 254; ROBERT (n. 29) 56; MERTENS, D.: Die Dichterkrönung des Konrad Celtis: Ritual und Programm. In FUCHS, F. (ed.): *Konrad Celtis und Nürnberg*. Wiesbaden (Harrassowitz) 2004, 35.

<sup>76</sup> MS: Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg, Cent. 5 app. 3.

<sup>77</sup> WIENER, in *Amor als Topograph* (n. 17) 61.

<sup>78</sup> It is improbable that Celtis himself cast the horoscope: he might have looked up the planetary positions of the given date from any almanak/ephemerids, but establishing the house cusps required more complex calculations and Celtis was not an astrologer.

<sup>79</sup> ZET 8 Lite.

manuscript, except that in reality the MC fell to the Scales (the horoscopes can be compared with the help of Figs. 1 b–c).<sup>80</sup> However, the planetary positions on 2 February at 3 o'clock show more significant differences from the Nuremberg nativity,<sup>81</sup> for instance, it strikes the eye that the Moon was then in Aquarius (5°). Since contemporary astrologers were able to cast quite exact horoscopes for a given date,<sup>82</sup> it is improbable that this nativity was intended for 2 February. Based on the inscription in the chart and the comparison of recorded and real horoscope data, this is clearly a horoscope cast for 1 February 3 o'clock. Celtis regarded this as his nativity and refers to the numerical data in several of his poems (see below).

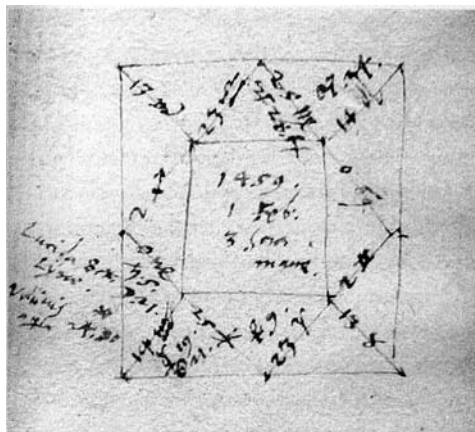


Fig. 1a. Celtis' nativity in the Nuremberg manuscript

<sup>80</sup> In modern charts (horoscopes represented in modern fashion) the aspects between the planets are indicated, too (I followed the contemporary astrological rules for determining the aspects): straight lines indicate positive aspects and broken lines negative aspects. The aspect mentioned in Celtis' poem is indicated by a thicker line. Nativity 1c. is calculated for Würzburg because Celtis was born in Wipfeld, near Würzburg.

<sup>81</sup> KOBER also points this out (n. 29) 248.

<sup>82</sup> BOLLÓK, J.: *Asztrális misztika és asztrológia Janus Pannonius költészetében*. [Astral Mysticism and Astrology in the Poetry of Janus Pannonius.] Budapest (Argumentum) 2003, 52 ff. My own experience, too, shows that the fifteenth-century learned astrologers determined the planetary positions with generally no more than 1–2° deviance; the cusp data (calculated with the method of unequal houses) show a greater deviance, but rarely more than 5°.

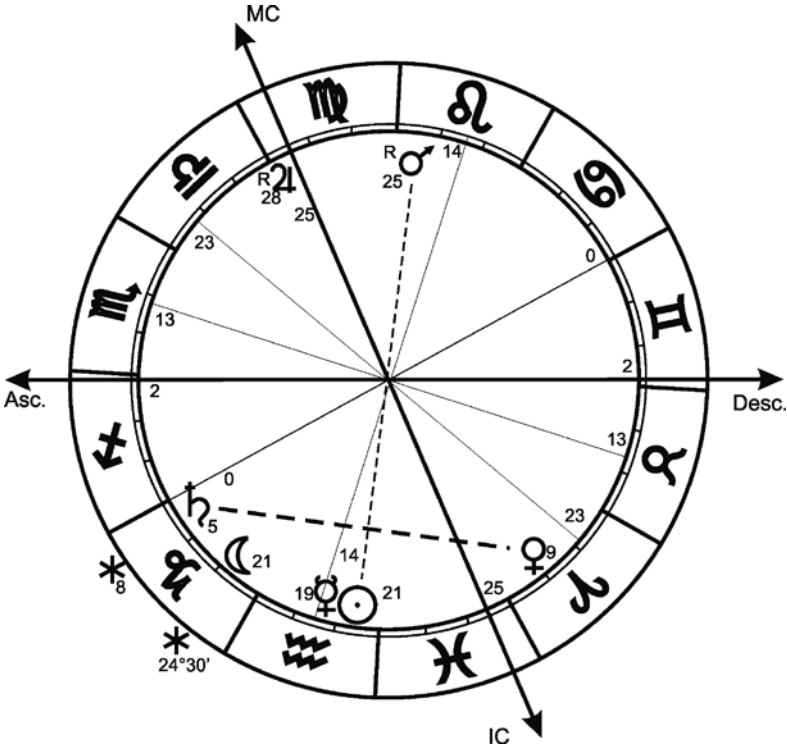


Fig. 1b. Celtis' nativity in modern form, after the Nuremberg manuscript

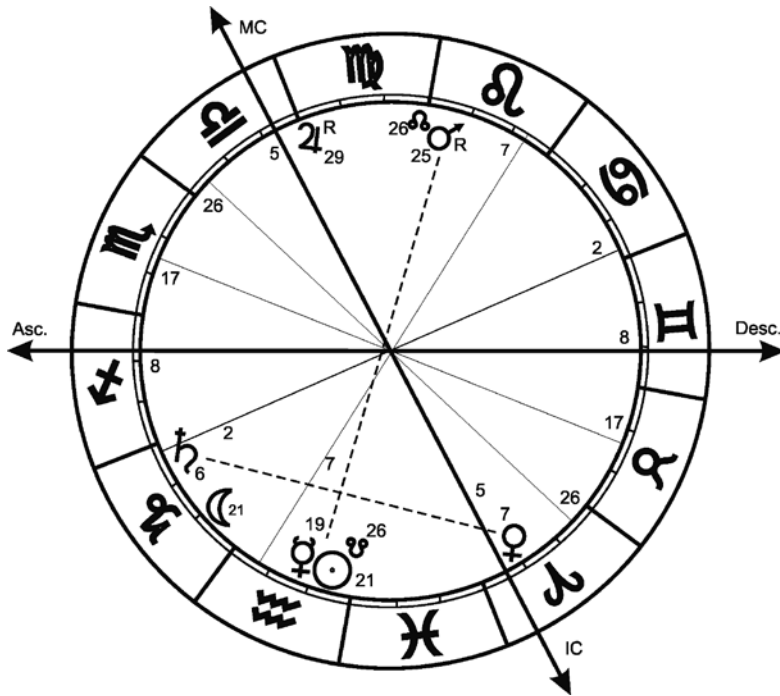


Fig. 1c. Celtis' nativity in modern calculations, based on the given date  
(01.02.1459, 03:00, Würzburg)

What then does the sentence in lines 5–6 mean? The lack of punctuation in the original text renders its clarification even more difficult. Some translations interpret *mensis februa maesta colens* by taking *colens* for a participle belonging to *mensis* and the latter for an apposition belonging to the previous clause;<sup>83</sup> indeed, there seems to be no better solution. Thus, if *Calendae transierant* were translated as “the first (of February) elapsed”, it would also involve the passing of the *mensis* (the apposition of *Calendae*); however, the text is only suggesting the arrival of the month. The two clauses only fit together

<sup>83</sup> KÜHLMANN, W. in KÜHLMANN, W – SIEDEL, R. – WIEGAND, H. (eds.): *Humanistische Lyrik des 16. Jahrhunderts. Lateinisch und deutsch*. Frankfurt am Main 1997, 73; ROBERT (n. 4) 465.

if *transierant* means “arrived.” Taking into account the primary meaning of *transeo* – “to go over, cross, turn over” (used in these meanings by Celtis in other texts),<sup>84</sup> also referring to time,<sup>85</sup> the author may have intended to say: “the time turned over, 1 February and thus February itself arrived.” Naturally, the translation of *transierant* as “arrived” – which Kober<sup>86</sup> raises as an option – is grammatically problematic, too, since it is in fact the time that “turns over,” not the first of February, but this is not the only case where Celtis uses a verb irregularly with regard to the subject.<sup>87</sup> After all, this interpretation seems to be a better solution than to suppose that the author contradicts himself in a spectacular and incomprehensible way, emphasizing two birth dates at the same time. As will be seen below, Kober’s argument for 2 February is not justified either.

Thematically and structurally, the elegy rests on two pillars. One is the speech of Sun/Phoebus, according to which the poet to be born would belong to this god; in contrast, Saturn assures the poet in a speech that he will never find lasting happiness in love. This two-faced fate destined by the stars, this “lifelong erotic-Apollonic attachment (*Doppelbindung*, in Robert’s words),” this dialectic of *laetitia* and *tristitia* leaves its mark on the whole of the *Amores*<sup>88</sup> as already indicated in the closing part of the poem. Between the two speeches the poet enumerates the planetary positions of his nativity: first, the three planets in the spheres above the Sun (the middle planet), than the three under the Sun. With regard to the actual order of the enumeration from the Sun to Venus, Jupiter stands in the fourth, that is, middle, place – just as in the horoscope he also stands in the MC, in the “middle of the sky.” This is a well thought-out, symmetrical structure that highlights both the Sun and Jupiter.<sup>89</sup>

The positions of the stars that support a birth proper for a poet have a symbolism and intertextual context that has partly been explored by earlier scholars. The constellation *Lyra* disappears from the sky, since the Sun took it (v. 13–14).

<sup>84</sup> *Am.* III,1,27; *Am.* IV,5,35.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. e.g. *Ov. Met.* XV,200.

<sup>86</sup> KOBER (n. 29) 248.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. e.g. the use of *verto* at *Od.* I,11,31. On Celtis language and style, cf. GRUBER, J. (ed.): *Conradi Celtis Protucii Panegyris ad duces Bavariae*. Wiesbaden (Harrassowitz) 2004, LIX.

<sup>88</sup> ROBERT (n. 4) 464; 474.

<sup>89</sup> KOBER (n. 29) 248–9. However, his concept that three masculine planets are followed by three feminine planets is strained; from an astrological point of view, Mercury is neutral, and he is a masculine god in mythology; in general, it is not the gender of the planets /gods that determines the system of planetary relations in the poem.

The poet alludes here to the events falling at the beginning of February in Ovid's *Fasti*, thus he sheds a mythical light on his role as a singer, flashing up the figures of the Lyre, the Dolphin and Arion.<sup>90</sup> The lyre is the instrument of Orpheus; its rise at birth gives talent for music and poetry in Manilius (I,324–330; V,324ff).<sup>91</sup> In the elegy, too, the Lyre must be rising, since the Sun that took it is also rising; it was not a problem for Celtis that the *Lyra*, rising at 1:30, could be seen at 3 o'clock at that geographical place<sup>92</sup> and the Sun would rise only 6:30.<sup>93</sup> According to Kober, he “rendered” the *Lyra* unseen only for the sake of the erudite reminiscence on *Fasti*; however, the poet could support the proximity of the Sun and the Lyre (v. 8: *proxima cui*)<sup>94</sup> using astrological literature. Several Classical authors, including Firmicus Maternus,<sup>95</sup> place the *Lyra* in Capricorn, which is next to the Sun's sign, Aquarius. This was important for Celtis: according to the so-far-disregarded star-indications of the nativity, at Capricorn 8° one reads *Lucida Lyrae*, an expression for the brightest star of *Lyra* (*alpha Lyrae* / *Vega*), and at Capricorn 24°30' it is the second brightest star of this constellation (*Jugum/Sulafat/gamma Lyrae*).<sup>96</sup> Furthermore, the “disappearance” of the *Lyra* can be given an interpretation that makes this motif harmonize with both the self-mythification in the poem and the symbolism of rebirth, of light prevailing over darkness (this general Renaissance symbolism is especially significant in Celtis). In catasterism,<sup>97</sup> the *Lyra* goes up to the sky after Orpheus' death; in the poem, the *Lyra* returns at the birth of a new Orpheus, since Phoebus' son, Orpheus/Celtis will eventually take it.

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<sup>90</sup> KÜHLMANN (n. 83) 984; ROBERT (n. 4) 468–9. According to a passage from *Fasti*, the disappearance of the Lyre happens on the night of 1–2 February, but this cannot be used as an argument for Celtis' birth being on 2 February. The disappearance of the *Lyra* goes together with that of the *Delphinus*, which happens the next night in the *Fasti* (II,79–84). When alluding to his role as Arion the poet refers back to this whole series of motifs and exploits the date of these mythical events insofar as they fall at the beginning of February, just as the poet's birth. Furthermore, in another place the *Fasti* dates the disappearance of the Lyre to the end of January (I,653–4).

<sup>91</sup> KÜHLMANN (n. 83) 984.

<sup>92</sup> KOBER (n. 29) 250.

<sup>93</sup> Checked by the computer program *CyberSky* 3.3.1.

<sup>94</sup> *Cui* may refer both to *Phoebus* and *Urna*, but this polysemy has no significance since they are together in the horoscope.

<sup>95</sup> *Mathesis* VIII,15,3: the *Lyre* rises at Capricorn 10°. It is an exceptional case that Manilius places the *Lyra* at Scales 26° (see below).

<sup>96</sup> As a rule, individual fixed stars in significant positions are indicated in horoscopes, not constellations.

<sup>97</sup> E.g. Hyg. *Astr.* II,7.

It is also proper for a poet that the Sun stands in conjunction with Mercury (v. 35), the planet of intellect and science among other things; the two planets/gods, also found together in other works by Celtis,<sup>98</sup> complete each other well under the banner of *philosophia*. Italian examples exist for the favorable position of Mercury at birth<sup>99</sup> and the Sun-Mercury conjunction.<sup>100</sup> Line 36 connects Mercury to the symbolism of *Lyra*, with good reason, since he is the inventor of the lyre. The conjunction takes place in Aquarius (v. 7); theoretically, this is not the most favorable place for the Sun, since it is the domicile of Saturn and the Sun is in detriment there. However, Celtis renders this situation rather favorable in several of his related works. In an elegy in *Amores* he can remember exactly that the Sun stood at 22°, and he calls the Aquarius here the star of Ganymede,<sup>101</sup> who can be related to Aquarius (as early as in the Classical literature) as the cup-bearer of the gods, the pourer of *Urna*. Thus the poet puts into play an Aquarius-symbolism that could have been important for other humanists, too. In his coat-of-arms Janus Tolophus (Tolhopf), Celtis' friend, used a representation of Janus, of which several components – Janus' nudity, the jug adorned with stars, Deucalion and Parnass – originated in the iconography of Aquarius.<sup>102</sup> For both Tolhopf and Celtis the main source of the Aquarius-Ganymede identification was obviously Manilius, who sporadically speaks about him as a beautiful naked youth.<sup>103</sup> Thus, Celtis connects Aquarius to the realm of beauty. In his ode for Höltzl's birthday, also 1 February, Celtis plays with pleasure with the Sun-*Urna* combination.<sup>104</sup>

<sup>98</sup> KOBER (n. 29) 252. In *Am.* I,12,19 (see below) the poet expressly states that this conjunction gives the power of his *ingenium*.

<sup>99</sup> E.g. in one of his letters (VI,21; 823), Ficino considers the position of Mercury as “master of lyre and letters” to be crucial in the nativity.

<sup>100</sup> According to Gauricus' collection of horoscopes (*Lvcae Gavrici Geophonensis Episcopi Civitatis Tractatus Astrologicvs*. Venice [C. T. Nauò] 1552, Fol. 61r), in Petrarch's nativity Mercury stands exactly on the Ascendant in the Lion, and the Sun can be found in the first house in conjunction with him.

<sup>101</sup> *Am.* III,12,31–2. “Phoebe, bis undenas Ganymedis sidere partes / servabas, vitam ut das mihi in orbe meam.”

<sup>102</sup> LUH (n. 12) 340. Luh does not mention that Aquarius may have been important for Tolhopf (also) because of the month January, related to Janus. It is an old tradition that a month is indicated by the sign which the Sun enters in that month, e.g. the Sun enters Aquarius on 21 January.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.* The expression *inflexa... Urna* (v. 7 in Celtis' elegy) can be found in Manilius in the same way, in the same metrical feet (I,272; KÜHLMANN [n. 83] 984).

<sup>104</sup> *Libri Odarum* (SCHÄFER [n.1]), app. 1, v. 7–8, 33–36.



Ganymede was abducted by Jupiter in mythology – which leads to the most important element of the symbolism of divine poetry in the horoscope elegy, Jupiter shining in MC and in the Virgin. In Manilius, the Virgin gives an inclination, beyond eloquence, for learning, for exploring the mysteries of nature and the secret causes of things<sup>105</sup> – this is just Celtis' hobby-horse. Manilius highlights the general significance of the MC, too (II, 810f). The Virgin receiving the MC and thus the tenth house, that of *mores*, glory, career, is indeed a telling symbol of Celtis' ideology; it is not by chance that Pighinutius, too, alluded to this possibility in his ode (v. 25–6) and Celtis naturally makes the best of the opportunity (v. 26). In the words of Robert: “this [astrological] situation seems to reflect Celtis' expectation of achieving lasting fame through poetry that combines *eloquentia* and *sapientia*.”<sup>106</sup> What is more, it is just Jupiter, the *fortuna maior*, the royal planet, that can be found on the MC, moreover, Jupiter is the birth ruler because of the Archer Ascendant. In my opinion, previous interpreters have not emphasized the significance of these facts enough, although Robert enumerates several passages from Celtis where he refers to the favorable position of Jupiter.<sup>107</sup> Even the chart highlights Jupiter, by indicating his birth-ruler quality with the sign of the Archer next to the sign of the planet. Other references, too, suggest that the Jupiter of his nativity was especially dear to the poet. In an elegy in the *Amores* he describes how robbers attacked him and he grieves over not having checked in advance the position of the stars that forecast the catastrophe (this is a subsequent cat-archic astrological investigation, as it were):<sup>108</sup> the Moon opposed (the most unlucky aspect) Saturn, and the too strong Mars oppressed the good rays of the Jupiter that stood in conjunction with him. Here it is the Jupiter whom

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<sup>105</sup> Manil. IV,189–196. “At quibus Erigone dixit nascentibus aevum / ad studium ducet mores et pectora doctis / artibus instituet, nec tam compendia census / quam causas viresque dabit perquirere rerum. / illa decus linguae faciet regnumque loquendi / atque oculos mentis, qui possint cernere cuncta / quamvis occultis naturae condita causis.”

<sup>106</sup> ROBERT (n. 4) 465. About the planetary position *ibid.* 456, 465. KÜHLMANN (n. 83) 985 has previously referred to the Manilius-passage.

<sup>107</sup> E.g. *Am.* II,10,71. “Iuppiter aeternos tribuat tibi, Celtis, honores”; *Od.* I,9, 3. “et cui mite dedit sidere Iuppiter / felici, ingenium clarum et amabile.” It is ambiguous whether lines 19–22 of the ode to Höltzl (see above) also refer to Jupiter in MC. “Candidam famam placidamque vitam, / integram mentem dabis et quietam, / Iuppiter, celso residens Olympo, / rite precamur.”

<sup>108</sup> *Am.* II,12,81–88 “quod si de caelo ceu dicunt fata hominum sunt / utramque et sortem sidera celsa regunt / incautus prorsus fueram: quia sidera caeli / non cavi: infausto hoc quae micuere die / nam Luna opposito Saturnum lumine vidit / Mars luna et radio viderat opposito / conjunctusque Jovi fuerat mavortius heros / oppressisque mei fata benigna Jovis.”

the poet calls “his” planet, which brings him good fortune in general (*mei fata benigna Jovis*). In a letter, Ulsenius warns Celtis playfully about neglecting his Mercury and Jupiter (that is, the activities related to these planets) and yielding to saturnine influence.<sup>109</sup> Celtis, when alluding to horoscopes of his close acquaintances, quite often highlights the favorable Jupiter, thus reminding one of his own Jupiter. Naturally, the role of this planet as bringing luck is almost a commonplace, as Italian examples show,<sup>110</sup> but Celtis’ Jupiter in its given position seems to have been important for him indeed, at least with regard to the image of a poet favored by the heavens.

Compared to this, the Archer Ascendant, although important, seems to have less significance. It renders possible the role of Jupiter as birth ruler; furthermore, Manilius’ description of the Archer has some qualities proper for a singer: an Archer native has – among other things – sharp wits and good comprehension (IV,241 f.);<sup>111</sup> he softens tigers and tames lions (IV,235).<sup>112</sup> However, taken in its entirety, the characterization calls forth rather the image of a herdsman or a clever animal-tamer, far from the image of a *poeta doctus*; the above discussed horoscope-elements fit Celtis more clearly. Among the elements of a horoscope it is the Ascendant and the MC that wander all over the signs during a day. If Celtis (or his astrologer) defined or modified, “rectified,”<sup>113</sup> the exact date of his birth himself, he probably considered the possibility of joining the MC to the Virgin and Jupiter in the first place, and it would have come in handy that the Ascendant thus fell in the Archer, which belongs to Jupiter and can be partly included in the divine singer symbolism. It is almost certain that Celtis “chose” 3 o’clock, 1 February, as his birth date; it would have been a curious stroke of luck if the nativity, providing so much opportunity for self-mythification, had originated on the real birth date.

<sup>109</sup> Ulsenius to Celtis, 31 Oct. 1496 (*BW* [n. 19] 226). “Mercurium (...) negligis et nescio cui Saturno indulgens Iovem posthabes.”

<sup>110</sup> Naldi, *El.* 7,143–4 (GRANT, W. L. [ed.]: *Bucolica, Volaterrais, Hastiludium, Carmina varia*. Florence [Olschki] 1974) about the Jupiter standing in the Fish (its domicile); Ficino expresses his wish to be together with someone born under the Jupiter so that this person could mitigate his too strong Saturn (*Epist.* V,45; 835).

<sup>111</sup> KÜHLMANN (n. 83) 984.

<sup>112</sup> KOBER (n. 29) 250.

<sup>113</sup> The phenomenon is rather euphemistically called “rectification”, the adjustment of the date, according to which one has to find the exact birth date by taking into account the planetary positions of the period around the birth; not surprisingly, the dates thus “rectified” often provide rather favorable planetary positions.

In order to complete his astrological portrait, Celtis mentions the horoscope of his conception, too (v. 29–32). As Grössing has observed, these lines prove that Celtis knew the method called *trutina Hermetis* (the scales of Hermes) by which astrologers tried to establish the exact time of conception.<sup>114</sup> The question remains whether the poet refers to a horoscope that was actually cast. The essence of the method, generally attributed to Ptolemy, is: where the Ascendant took place in the nativity, there is the Moon in the horoscope of conception, and where the Moon was in the nativity, that will be the place of the Ascendant in the other one.<sup>115</sup> Therefore, *volucris* in line 29 can only mean the Moon (mentioned just before, in line 27), and not “winged god” (Mercury);<sup>116</sup> the Moon is “winged” because it is the fastest among the planets. Its exact position is at issue: *qua sub parte* means “on which grade”.<sup>117</sup> To be sure, it is rare to have a horoscope that equals the “reverse” of the nativity with regard to the grades, therefore, astrologers generally aimed at an exact equivalence of at least one pair of horoscope elements (e.g., the Moon of the nativity and the Ascendant of the conception), while the other pair had to fall at least into the same sign.<sup>118</sup> Calculated in this way, can Celtis’ horoscope of conception fall on 1 May? Yes, in the late spring of 1458 it occurred on just three days between 30 April and 2 May that the Moon stayed in the Archer while the Ascendant stood at Capricorn 21°.<sup>119</sup> Naturally, one can only speculate about what the poet took into account, nevertheless, since the contemporary horoscope data can be well deduced from the exact modern, computer-generated, data and a horoscope of conception was often cast beside a nativity,<sup>120</sup> it is probable that Celtis refers to an actual horoscope. If this was the case, mention of the horoscope may have been motivated by the fact that the chart of 1 May is exceptionally lucky with regard to the aspects (Fig. 2): it has six trines (the most lucky aspect) and only

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<sup>114</sup> GRÖSSING (n. 27) 167.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. e.g. *Centiloquium*, 51.

<sup>116</sup> So translated by KÜHLMANN (n. 83) 75.

<sup>117</sup> The earlier translations are imprecise and too general (KÜHLMANN [n. 83] 74: “Konstellation”; KOBER (n. 29) 247: “Teil.”)

<sup>118</sup> Cf. e.g. REISINGER (n. 6) 159.

<sup>119</sup> In the horoscope calculated (by ZET 8 Lite) for 1 May 1458, 0:15, Würzburg, the Moon stands at Archer 13°; in the equivalent horoscope of the previous day, at Archer 0°48’ (here it is possible that on account of the slight inaccuracy of contemporary calculations the Moon was placed in Scorpion); on 2 May the Moon stood at Archer 27°.

<sup>120</sup> Cf. the German examples in REISINGER (n. 6) 156–8.

one quadrate.<sup>121</sup> Kober's argument that Saturn, rising just above the horizon, features as the most significant element of the horoscope, especially important for Celtis, is by no means valid.<sup>122</sup> According to astrological thinking, Saturn would only be in a key position on the Ascendant or in the first house, but it was in the eleventh house around 1 May, in a retrograde movement, without *dignitas* at Archer 27°. It is also true that, independently of the horoscope, the symbolic value of the date itself, 1 May (a *Calendae*, that goes well with the other one, 1 February) might have been enough for Celtis to mention it. In any case, the importance of the time of conception for this poet is demonstrated, beyond the reference to the (presumed or real) horoscope, by an elegy in the *Amores* where the poet invites Barbara to celebrate the anniversary of his conception<sup>123</sup> (thus, the elegy may be regarded as a parallel to his odes inviting to birthday celebration). Naturally, they celebrate the significant anniversary with abundant love-making.

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<sup>121</sup> Both Saturn and Jupiter cast a trine at the Mars-Mercury conjunction; there are wide trines between Jupiter and Saturn, and between Jupiter and the Moon (a 7° deviance from the ideal case was still accepted in contemporary astrology); a negative aspect, a quadrate, can only be found between Jupiter and the Sun. The aspect relations of the horoscopes for 30 April and 2 May differ little from those of 1 May.

<sup>122</sup> KOBER (n. 29) 258.

<sup>123</sup> *Am.* IV,13. "Invitat Barbaram ad hortum, ut secum diem conceptionis suae celebret?"

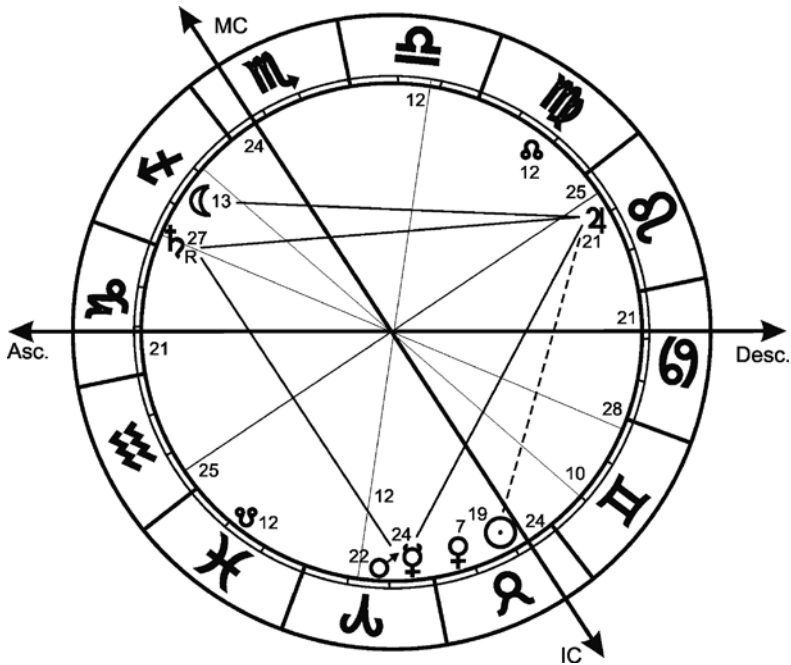


Fig. 2. Celtis' hypothetical horoscope of conception in modern calculations, based on the date 01.05.1458, 00:15, Würzburg.

However, the *ingenium* that supports an exceptional philosopher-poet is only one element of the protagonist's fate. Venus gets into conflict with Saturn, who pronounces a sentence damning the poet's future loves; Venus would take care of *amor honestus* in vain, it is rendered impossible by the cold planet of misfortune. The astrological base of this rather tragicomic scene is the square of Saturn cast on Venus, clearly indicated by the expression *quarta figura* (v. 39).<sup>124</sup> Robert has analyzed the scene and its love problem in detail in the context of Classical elegies (the opposition of *laetitia* and *tristitia*), neoplatonic

<sup>124</sup> *Quarta figura* cannot be translated as "fourth house" (KÜHLMANN [n. 83] 75). It is true that Venus stands in the fourth house, the house of the father, and the text refers to Saturn, the "father" of Venus, with the word *pater*; however, neither of the meanings of *figura* fits the concept of horoscope house; it usually means the chart itself in the astrological literature; more importantly, such a translation would make the astrological basis for the Saturn-Venus conflict disappear.

love concepts (e.g., *amor honestus* és *amor infamis*), and astrological traditions of Saturn, all this with regard to the whole of *Amores*.<sup>125</sup> Several passages he collected,<sup>126</sup> just as other texts by Celtis,<sup>127</sup> make clear what earlier scholars, too, have indicated, Ficino's positive reevaluation of Saturn; interpreting it as the planet of intellect and contemplation was not characteristic of Celtis' thinking. Kober's arguments for this interpretation cannot stand their ground (see below). In the horoscope elegy – as in general in Celtis – Saturn is definitely the negative force, the counterpole of Phoebus or Jupiter. Italian poetry – which, as suggested above, provided models for Celtis to a greater extent than was previously thought – also continues the medieval tradition by commonplace allusions to Saturn as the planet of misfortune.<sup>128</sup> Naldi presents a horoscope interpretation explaining how Saturn hinders the favorable conjunction of Mars and Venus, that is, the happy love of the poet and his beloved.<sup>129</sup>

Saturn's power manifesting itself in the elegy is justified by its astrological position; on the one hand, it is in his own domicile, Capricorn,<sup>130</sup> thus the stronger party in its quadrature relation to Venus; on the other hand, it dominates the Sun and Mercury (through his other domicile, Aquarius); moreover, it is on a house cusp. Consequently, Saturn's *assensio* (v. 23) might have an ironic note, especially when applied to the whole of the Sun's speech that elevates

<sup>125</sup> Cf. ROBERT (n. 4) esp. 471–5.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.* 473.

<sup>127</sup> An interesting example referring back to the horoscope elegy: *Am.* II,6 describes the lechery of priests, among others, and lines 87–8 read: “Hei mihi qua steterat caeli Venus aurea parte, / Praeda fuit rasis semper amata mihi.” I can only interpret these lines in the following way: “and because of the grade of the sky (the horoscope) where the golden Venus stood, my beloved always fell victim to the shaven (the priests).” Since he complains of the unfavorable position of Venus, this can only refer to the Ram 9° of his nativity, which position happens to be a quadrature-distance from Saturn, the planet that always hinders *amor honestus*.

<sup>128</sup> JUHÁSZ, J. (ed.): Naldo Naldi, *Elegiarum libri III. ad Laurentium Medicen*. Leipzig (Teubner) 1934, I,29. 45; III,7,79; Naldi, *Epigr.* 82, 26; 181,1; Campanino, *Epigr.* 4,1; *Carm.* 4 (<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu>. 2014.05.06).

<sup>129</sup> *Elegiarum libri III. ad Laurentium Medicen* I,10,55–66. “Et quid agis? Caram reprehendere, Nalde, puellam / Desine, namque tibi mitior illa foret. / Sed tua Saturnus subvertit vota malignus / Disiungens radiis astra propinqua malis. / Nam iungi poteris Marti, Cytherea, furenti, / Obstet ni veteris stella maligna dei. / Quin etiam Titan, Phrixiei velleri signi / Dum subit et Martem comprimit orbe ferum, / Efficit, ut nostri ne tu, Venus aurea, possis / Monstratrix Marti concubuisse tuo. / Nam bona Gradivus monstrat dum vota puellae, / Combustas vires perdidit ille suas.”

<sup>130</sup> Also mentioned by KOBER (n. 29) 251.

the poet;<sup>131</sup> in the consciousness of his power and his role as the Sun's enemy Saturn "agrees" or "is in line with" the Sun's words.

Irony permeates the Saturn-Venus scene, too, even deeper than the previous literature has suggested. Lines 39–44 speak openly about Uranos' mutilation and the birth of Venus,<sup>132</sup> and this kind of sexual symbolism can be expanded. Venus ridicules the "trembling old man's cold members:" the Classical elegists also used *membra* (in the plural) in the sense of "virile member,"<sup>133</sup> and Celtis exploits the polysemy of this word several times in the *Amores*.<sup>134</sup> Saturn's sexual potency is not his strength – in contrast to Venus (who takes a place in the Ram, the sign of the sexually similarly potent Mars). When the offended Saturn breaks the *fera spicula* of Venus, replacing them with lead arrows (v. 49–50), behind this deed one may feel a kind of envy and lust for revenge because of the potency problem. *Spicula* (spear, arrow) can rather clearly mean "viril member" in Celtis.<sup>135</sup>

All the results of this discussion of the elegy complete well and reinforce Robert's analysis,<sup>136</sup> the poetic *Doppelbindung*-concept; at the same time they render even more doubtful the results of Kober, who makes many good observations, although his concept – as Robert has demonstrated for the most part<sup>137</sup> – is rather shaky. Kober interprets the elegy basically in a Christian context; the poet has to do penance for his sinful loves, but he can rely on the comforting power of poetry, *philosophia*, Saturn. One group of his basic arguments is related to the date 2 February: *Calendae... transierant* (v. 5–6) means "1 February elapsed;" *mensis februa maesta colens* (v. 6), the offering of the purifying sacrifice in February should be connected to *Phoebus* (v. 7); the lyre music has a comforting, purifying effect according to Ficino, too; an ecclesiastical text, the pericope for the *Purificatio Mariae* on 2 February,<sup>138</sup> declares that the child born belongs to the Lord, and lines 11 and 16 of the elegy,

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<sup>131</sup> *Assentit* may also refer to just the last line of the Sun's speech: the *frigidus* Saturn is happy to agree that the Sun's rays are weaker in the north.

<sup>132</sup> ROBERT (n. 4) 471. Saturn is "father" in the sense that Venus owes him her birth (v. 41).

<sup>133</sup> Tib. I,4,70; Ov. *Am.* III,7,65.

<sup>134</sup> E.g. *Am* III,3,52. "si dabitur blando et membra fovere sinu." *Am.*I,9,24. "membraque adhuc Veneris non bene firma iocis."

<sup>135</sup> Cf. line 39 in the sex scene of *Am.* IV,10. "pande sinum: distende pedes: mea spicula tendo."

<sup>136</sup> Except for the issue of the birth date: see above and below, too.

<sup>137</sup> ROBERT (n. 4) esp. 476–7.

<sup>138</sup> Lk. 2,23. "quia omne masculinum adaperiens vulvam sanctum Domino vocabitur."

taken together, have a similar meaning.<sup>139</sup> Robert has already shown that the sentence selected from from the pericope has a rather different context than the lines of the elegy, furthermore, while the pericope mentions first-born children, Celtis definitely speaks about himself as the fourth child (v. 34); after all, the similarity of the two texts is atmospheric.<sup>140</sup> Kober's punctuation connecting lines 6 and 7 (*mensis... Urna*) is arbitrary, and the whole behaviour, the solemn speech of Phoebus is almost contrary to the motif of the mournful expiatory offering; *februa maesta colens* can be simply considered as a playful etymological apposition of *mensis* February, related to the *Fasti*. The symbolism behind *Phoebus* and *Lyra*, the ideology of the divine singer is well demonstrable (see above), and taking this into account it seems arbitrary to pick up the Ficinian example just to connect the lyre to the idea of comfort and expiation (nevertheless, it is true that celestial music and harmony – v. 15: *toto resonantia caelo* – remind one of the music of the spheres, a basic idea of Renaissance Platonism).<sup>141</sup> After all these considerations one can easily see the untenability of the argument that the elegy would make Phoebus/Celtis and Christ parallel, on account of the Christian associations of the birth and the Phoebean “sacrifice” that “makes us think of Christ”.<sup>142</sup> It is rather lines 33–4 that have Christian associations, but these, too, point in another direction than Kober's interpretation does.<sup>143</sup> The other pillar of Kober's argumentation is the allegedly dominant role of Saturn as the planet of intellect (see Ficino) and purification with regard to Celtis' fate.<sup>144</sup> However, as seen above, Saturn does not prove strong in the horoscope of conception and is only one of the dominant horoscope elements in the nativity. The view of Saturn as an intellectual or purifying planet is not justified in Celtis' case. Furthermore, an interpretation that makes the Saturn-Venus opposition the main conflict axis of the poem, putting down Saturn as a good planet and Venus as a bad one, contradicts the well supported concept of the elegy. Kober's many other

<sup>139</sup> KOBER (n. 29) 250–5.

<sup>140</sup> ROBERT (n. 4) 476–7.

<sup>141</sup> KOBER (n. 29) 251.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.* 255.

<sup>143</sup> Cf. ROBERT (n. 4) 477–480. Celtis adds a Christian color to his own myth (in a syncretist way typical of Renaissance Platonism) by referring to Abraham, who sired his son in his hundredth year, Sarah's old age when she bore the child, and the number four, which is discussed in Reuchlin's *De verbo mirifico* and has a central role in the *Amores*. According to the text and biographical data, Celtis was born as the fourth child, and not the fifth, as KOBER interprets it.

<sup>144</sup> KOBER (n. 29) 257–261.



arguments are based on arbitrary associations,<sup>145</sup> and more importantly, there is poor coherence among the arguments themselves, just as between the interpretation of the horoscope elegy and the whole of *Amores*. The ideas of penance, comfort, and intellectual purification blur, and the Christian reading cannot be supported by other texts from *Amores* with similar messages, contrary to the concept outlined above, according to which the horoscope elegy forecasts the dialectic and mythological-astral symbolism of the whole *Amores* (indeed, Orpheus and related motifs formed part of the discourse between Celtis and the *sodales*).<sup>146</sup>

After all, Celtis seems to have proclaimed throughout his whole oeuvre that he was born on 1 February, and he added the hour, 3 o'clock "at dawn", in the horoscope and the elegy around it; to be sure, this does not mean that he really came into the world at this time. As seen above, the position of Jupiter is too favorable not to think about a manipulated date, at least with regard to the hour. The data of the nativity that was cast for this date roughly equal the real house cusp and planet data (see fig. 1 b–c). The planetary positions of the horoscope differ by c. 1–2°, the cusp positions by a little more from the real data (e.g., the Ascendant fell to the Archer 8° in reality, not to 2°). Taking into consideration the average accuracy of the horoscopes cast in that age, one does not need to suspect an intentional distortion of facts on this level, at most in one case: interestingly, the MC "slipped" over to the Virgin, standing at a 10° distance from the real position, Scales 5°. More important is the question of what differences are on the next level: What does the comparison of the nativity and the elegy reveal? That is, how does the horoscope "interpretation" implied by the poet differ from a standard interpretation to be expected at that time?<sup>147</sup> As already seen, several important motifs of the elegy – e.g., the power of Saturn, his conflict with Venus – are based on astrological facts. It is conspicuous, however, how many facts "escaped" the poet's attention.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> E.g. KOBER associates to lines 49–50 that moment of the story of Apollo and Daphne where the laurel comforts the god (p. 253); according to the interpretation of lines 57–60 the poetry comforts Celtis because its presents (*munera*) are everlasting, and all the girls will read them (page 254). Taking into account the weakness of KOBER's argumentation (see above), it is not at all justified to force these lines of the elegy into the context of "comfort".

<sup>146</sup> ROBERT (n. 4) 469–470.

<sup>147</sup> An absolutely consistent system of rules for interpreting horoscopes did not exist in that age, but the astrologers did adjust to the main rules based on Classical astrological literature (e.g. when fixing the favorable and unfavorable aspects, the birth ruler, etc.), they were not allowed to interpret in too arbitrary a way. Cf. REISINGER (n. 6).

<sup>148</sup> Observed by ROBERT, too (n. 4) 462.

No less than four planets are in detriment: the Moon, Venus, the Sun, and Jupiter; in the elegy, the last two are supposed to support a birth proper for a poet. Jupiter is retrograde, which would carry a negative meaning. Mars stands in opposition to the Sun and Mercury<sup>149</sup> and theoretically opposition is a more powerful negative aspect than the quadrature, which alone was regarded in the elegy. The houses are not taken into account in the poem,<sup>150</sup> in contrast to standard contemporary horoscope interpretations which examine the houses one by one in order to reveal the native's character and future. Among the fixed stars, *Lyra* appeared in the nativity and the elegy, although it would have been more justified to include, for instance, *Cassiopeia*, which can be found at Aquarius 20° according to both Manilius and Firmicus Maternus, so it would belong to the Sun-Mercury conjunction in the nativity. In sum, Celtis (or his astrologer) seems to have deviated from reality on three levels: most probably in the "rectification" of his birth time; perhaps in the establishment of the horoscope data, too; and most significantly, in the poetic interpretation of his nativity. Celtis took great advantage of poetic freedom and did not take the most standard astrological authorities, Ptolemy and Firmicus Maternus, as a basis, but instead Manilius, who suited his taste the best, and who displayed his astrological knowledge in verse form. The problem of "poetry and reality" is a ticklish but important issue; it is not simply the fictitious protagonist of the *Amores* that the elegy presents. The real Celtis blurs with the Celtis of the *Amores*, and the poet noticeably intends to present his nativity as a real one, especially with regard to his "elected poet" identity, the planetary positions that support the symbolism of Phoebus, Jupiter, and Orpheus; he fashions his general image as a poet, and not just a portrait of the protagonist in the *Amores*. It is not accidental that, as will be seen below, certain elements of his nativity recur in other of his works and, indeed, also in the works of the *sodales*.

### The horoscope of laureation

On a spring day in 1487, in the castle of Nuremberg, Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III placed the laurel wreath on Konrad Celtis' head. Thus, the first German *poeta laureatus* was created, through the mediation of Frederick the Wise of Saxony who went there with his retinue to participate in the imperial assembly. The most detailed source about the laureation comes from the poet

<sup>149</sup> GRÖSSING (n. 27) 197.

<sup>150</sup> Except that the Ascendant equals the cusp of the first house, and the MC the cusp of the tenth.

himself, who gave thanks to the emperor in the *Proseuticum*, a print that appeared soon after the event and recorded, among other things, the panegyrics that he sang. The horoscope of the laureation appears at the end of the print. Mertens writes in detail about the circumstances of the event and its biographical, institutional historical, and intellectual historical preliminaries;<sup>151</sup> furthermore, the scholarly literature deals to a satisfactory extent with the laureation as a phenomenon of growing importance in the Renaissance, reflecting the relation of the *poeta laureatus* and his patron.<sup>152</sup> Here I focus on what can be further revealed by analyzing the horoscope to examine his poetic self-fashioning and assess the significance of the laureation in his thinking.

Beginning with Petrarch, more and more poets were granted a laurel wreath in the Renaissance (the act is related to contemporary graduation ceremonies;<sup>153</sup> its intellectual historical traditions go back to antiquity).<sup>154</sup> The laureation created a kind of “symbiosis of fame” between poet and ruler; the poet sang the praise of the ruler, whose patronage provided the means for the poet’s glorious career. One can imagine what the laureation meant for Celtis, who was yearning for glory and royal support or what the very fact could have meant for him that he, of peasant origin, could kneel face to face with the emperor. More than that, he contended for a leading role in literary life and he had already alluded to the laureation in the *Ars versificandi* dedicated to Frederick the Wise.<sup>155</sup> As Mertens summarizes Celtis’ ideology of the laureation: “After Petrarch, Konrad Celtis is the first to make the laureation an integrant part of his individual career and his epoch-making literary oeuvre,” so that he could be seen “as the creator of a new literary and cultural period in Germany.”<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> MERTENS (n. 75).

<sup>152</sup> A. SCHIRRMEISTER: *Triumph des Dichters. Gekrönte Intellektuelle im 16. Jahrhundert*. Köln etc. 2003. At the time of Maximilian I the alliance of ruler and poet laureate grew especially strong, and by far the most wreath-laying fell in his reign. SCHMID, A.: *Poeta et orator a Caesare laureatus*. Die Dichterkrönungen Kaiser Maximilians I. *Historisches Jahrbuch* 109 (1989) 56–108.

<sup>153</sup> The speeches and poems delivered at the celebration, the symbols of laureation (the ring, *birreta* and so on) are all related to the traditions of university graduation. In theory, the poet proved his suitability for the distinction by delivering proper speeches or poems, as if he did an *examen*.

<sup>154</sup> The motif of laureation has been kept in the cultural memory of the Middle Ages owing to such works as Horace’s famous ode to Melpomene (III,30,15 f).

<sup>155</sup> SCHIRRMEISTER (n. 152) 92.

<sup>156</sup> MERTENS (n. 75) 42. About the laureation in the context of Celtis’ ideology of “epoch-making” cf. ROBERT, J.: *Carmina Pieridum nulli celebrata priorum*. Zur Inszenierung von Epochenwende im Werk des Conrad Celtis. *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 124 (2002) 111–2.

Several of his works attest how he surrounded the laureation with a mythical aura. In an epigram he sings:

Phoebe, veni, capitique meo sacer imprime laurum, Come, Phoebus, and place the sacred laurel on my  
 Ut tibi Palladia carmina mente canam.<sup>157</sup> head, so that I can sing to you with a Palladian mind.

Phoebus may signify here the emperor,<sup>158</sup> but the emphasis is on the divine support; he receives the wreath from the god of poetry and this enables him to sing with divine wisdom. (Pallas Athene / Minerva is the goddess of *artes* and wisdom; Apollo and Minerva can be seen together in several *insignia* belonging to the *Collegium poetarum*, for instance, in the wreath itself.)<sup>159</sup> The laureation was not simply an appreciation of the poet's skills, it mediates sacred powers. In the *Proseuticum* itself the poet ends his *Ode monocolos...* with the idea that the proper praise of the emperor is difficult even for the famous singers nor is Celtis' muse able to do that until he receives the wreath.<sup>160</sup> The reworked version of this poem in the *Libri odarum*, ends thus:

dum vires dabis ac ingenium mihi,	If you give me strength and talent,
atque inculta probes si mea carmina,	an accept my rude songs,
ornans laurigeris tempora frondibus,	ornating my temples with laurel leaves,
me gustasse putem nectar Olympicum. <sup>161</sup>	then I will think I tasted the Olympic nectar.

The poet's *ingenium* is resuscitated, "reactivated", he wins divine powers, and indeed, he is reborn. Celtis' sympathy for the stars/planet gods is well known, just like his ambition; of course he would perpetuate the "moment" of his laureation by publishing its horoscope. Furthermore, one may suspect that it was a well chosen moment. Indeed, Mertens has proved that Celtis suppressed the real time of his laureation, and replaced it with a "symbolic" one.<sup>162</sup> But what is this symbolism like? Much can be revealed by the horoscope, so far not analyzed by scholars.

Earlier it had not been customary to make a horoscope of laureation, so the very fact of casting a chart already suggests (as intended by Celtis) how exceptional this event was. Nevertheless, horoscopes were often cast for significant

<sup>157</sup> *Epigr.* II,93. *Ad Phoebum et musas dedicatae.*

<sup>158</sup> The parallelism of the ruler and the Sun is an age-old idea.

<sup>159</sup> *Rhapsodia, laudes et victoria de Boemanis Maximiliani.* Augsburg 1505, Fol. B1v.

<sup>160</sup> *Ode monocolos.* 43. "dum doctis dederit premia frontibus." This is the transposition of the famous Horatian lines (*Od.* III,30,29 and. 35)

<sup>161</sup> *Od.* I,1,40–3.

<sup>162</sup> MERTENS (n. 75) 32–7.

events in general, mainly in courtly life, and the poet's idea might also have come from the practice of casting horoscopes of coronation (the possibility of making a laureation and coronation parallel is already implied by the fact that *corona* can mean both kinds of head-dress).<sup>163</sup> In the text under the chart, its maker is identified as Johannes Canter, then the astrologer of Frederick III; he must have been on friendly terms with Celtis and the humanists, if only because his brother was Jakob Canter, the famous poet with whom Celtis had a good relationship and exchanged several letters.<sup>164</sup> Celtis himself certainly had much to do with the details of the horoscope, since the final form of the chart is characteristic of him. The way of representation is special, differing from what was customary in that age (fig. 3a). It displays the four cardinal houses and the four "in-between" areas, perhaps drawing on a specific concept of some Classical astrological authorities according to whom a horoscope has to be divided to eight houses. In fact, this is a traditional horoscope with twelve houses, only the representation is unusual.<sup>165</sup> After comparing it with its modern equivalent, a computer-generated horoscope based on exact calculations (fig. 3 b–c), one can see that a relatively precise horoscope has been cast for the date (18 April 1487, 18:01:20 with equal hours). For the planets, the difference is at most 1–2°, and among the houses only the second and third differ by more than 5°. <sup>166</sup> However, the date itself seems different indeed from the real date of the laureation, since it entails a conspicuously favorable horoscope, while it remains a rather theoretical possibility that this date would have been chosen in advance by the method of catarchic astrology, and everything would have been organized so that the laureation would happen just at this moment.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> From another perspective, Celtis' idea might also have come from Martin Pollich, who was an astrologer and physician of Frederick the Wise, and paved the way for Celtis (MERTENS [n. 75] 45).

<sup>164</sup> Cf. Canter's four letters from 1492–8 in *BW* (n. 19). About the two Canters cf. also MERTENS (n. 75) 35.

<sup>165</sup> J. D. NORTH: *Horoscopes and History*. London (Warburg Inst., Univ. of London) 1986, 173–5. NORTH connects the method of 8-house division only to Manilius, although this alternative also occurs in Firmicus Maternus, *Mathesis* II,14.

<sup>166</sup> Among the planets, the greatest difference is in the case of Mars (2°); among the houses, in the case of the fifth house its cusp does not fall in the same sign as the fifth house of the real chart. These differences are not significant, in contrast to the "disappearance" of Saturn, discussed below.

<sup>167</sup> Otherwise the real date would not have been hushed up (see above).



Fig. 3a. Celtis' horoscope of laureation in the *Prosepticum*

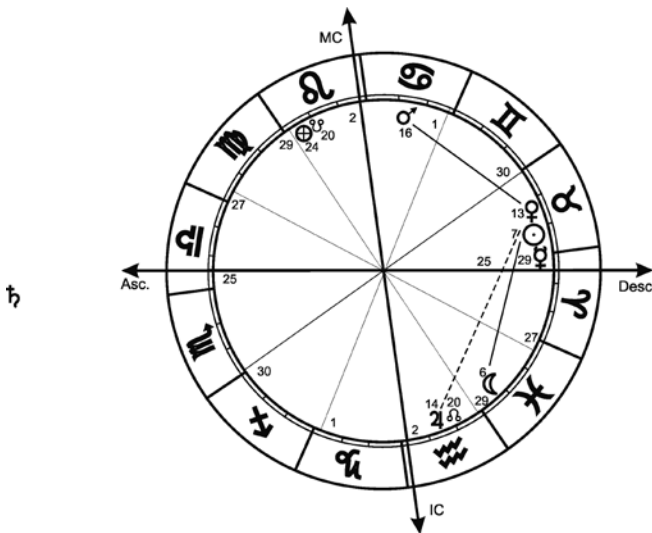


Fig. 3b Celtis' horoscope of laureation in modern form, after the horoscope in the *Prosepticum*

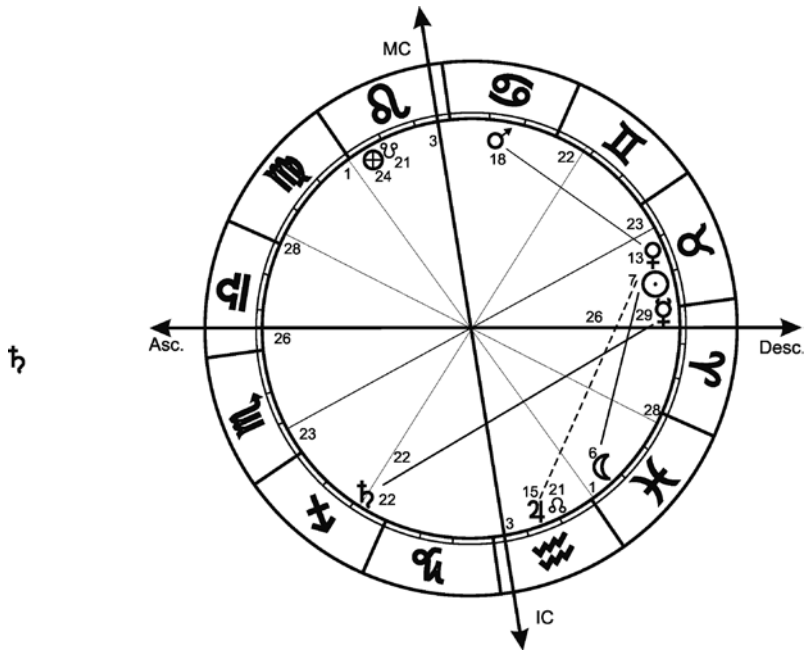


Fig. 3c. Celtis' horoscope of lauration in modern calculations, based on the given date (18.04.1487, 18:01:20, Nuremberg)

What can the contemporary reader, well-versed in astronomy-astrology, see when looking at the chart? First of all, the Mercury-Sun-Venus triple conjunction. Although it is a rather wide conjunction, the contemporary astrological practice allowed the 6–8° difference that can be seen between the planets,<sup>168</sup> Celtis and his contemporaries must have considered it to be a conjunction. When a triple conjunction occurs – a relatively rare but spectacular aspect – it is a highly significant element of the horoscope and if it contains mainly good or well situated planets such a conjunction must be desirable; it can provide excellent opportunities for a favorable interpretation. Several contemporary examples attest to this: Federigo de Montefeltro features the triple conjunction of his birth, the Mars-Jupiter-Venus trio, on his medal;<sup>169</sup> in the coronation horoscope of Matthias of Hungary, Venus, Jupiter and Saturn are in conjunction, illuminated

<sup>168</sup> REISINGER (n. 6) 66.

<sup>169</sup> WIND, E.: *Pagan mysteries in the renaissance*. London (Faber and Faber) 1968, 95.

by positive aspects.<sup>170</sup> Furthermore – to mention an example from the circles of Celtis – the nativity of Caritas Pirckheimer contains a Sun-Saturn-Venus conjunction, with Mercury in the most significant first house.<sup>171</sup> However, there is something more in Celtis' horoscope; exactly the three planets closest to the muses come together: Mercury, Phoebus, and Venus (moreover, the latter is in the Bull, her own domicile, and she is the birth ruler on account of the Scales Ascendant). To be sure, there is nothing new in assigning someone's outstanding intellectual or artistic talent to various combinations of these three planets. The greatest astrological authority, Ptolemy, while enumerating the properties of a native who profited from a favorably situated conjunction of Venus and Mercury, mentions the love of beauty, poetry, and the muses several times.<sup>172</sup> Pontano echoes this: Venus and Mercury together create poets.<sup>173</sup> In an epigram, Naldo Naldi explains to Johannes Guido, *vir doctissimus*, how much Mercury increases the strength of Jupiter and Venus by joining them or illuminating them in a positive aspect.<sup>174</sup> As for the surviving nativities of Italian poets, the chart of Battista Mantovano (*Frater Baptista Carmelita poeta*), for instance, has the Sun, Mercury, and Venus all in the first house, which determines the character of the native the most; his Mercury and Venus are in tight conjunction.<sup>175</sup> Not surprisingly, Ficino, a philosopher of beauty (in the Platonic sense) who contemplated astrology gladly and creatively, often plays with the idea of the juncture of the planets in question, especially in his letters.<sup>176</sup> Naturally, these

<sup>170</sup> ORBÁN, Á.: Judiciális asztrológia Mátyás király udvarában. [Judicial Astrology at the court of Matthias Corvinus.] In *Mikro&Makro – Fiatal kutatók konferenciája 4.* [Mikro&Makro – Conference of young scholars 4.] Pécs 2013, 202.

<sup>171</sup> FRICKE-HILGERS, A.: Horoskope für Familienangehörige. In KURRAS, L. – MACHILEK, FR. (eds.): *Caritas Pirckheimer 1467–1532 (Katalog)*. München 1982, Nr. 31; page 56.

<sup>172</sup> Ptol. *Tetr.* III,12,166 (ed. G. P. GOOLD, trans. F. E. ROBBIN. Cambridge [Harvard University Press] 1980). Ptolemy does not involve the Sun and the Moon in the discussion of planet combinations.

<sup>173</sup> *De rebus coelestibus* 6,11, page 2315; 7,4, page 2339; 7,6, page 2349 (*Opera omnia*. Basel 1519, vol. 3). HÜBNER (n. 60) 54.

<sup>174</sup> Naldi, *Epigr.* 183,1–6.

<sup>175</sup> Gaucicus, *Tractatus* fol. 63r.

<sup>176</sup> E.g. according to *Epist.* I,92 (page 681) astrologers often speak about the conjunction of the Mercury and the Venus that results in good musical skills. In *Epist.* IV,34 he sees with his mental eyes Phoebus and Mercury escorting Venus. The three planets/gods appear as an allegorical triad, too: Mercury – *veritas*, Apollo – *concordia*, Venus – *pulchritudo*; cf. C. WIENER: Der Liebhaber in vielen Gestalten. Überlegungen zum Einfluß des Neuplatonismus auf die Amores des Konrad Celtis. In *Violae solutae. Im Andenken an unseren Lehrer Prof. Dr. Hans Thurn*. Würzburg 1994, 113.



three planets' traditional association with poetry and muse-like characteristics is trivial enough, there is no need to reveal direct Italian influences on Celtis. The above examples are meant to show the intellectual climate in which it was natural for a poet to exploit a triple conjunction in his horoscope. When Celtis refers in his works to the power received from the gods, he certainly thinks of the conjunction, too, and it is also *possible* to take the three stars that feature on Celtis' shield as a reference to this conjunction.<sup>177</sup>

Many other elements of the horoscope would certainly be interpreted as favorable in contemporary astrological practice. The point of fortune (*pars fortunae*) is certainly indicated because it falls in the tenth house, so it could convey a similar message with regard to fame and career as Jupiter–MC in the nativity. The MC itself falls to the Lion, the most “royal” sign, that of the Sun. A planet's conjunction with the dragon's head (*caput draconis*, the “positive” lunar node) generally means luck,<sup>178</sup> and in this chart Jupiter, the *fortuna maior*, is in wide conjunction with the dragon's head. It is in a quadrate with Venus and the Sun, but the Sun and the Moon are connected with a favorable aspect, a sextile (see the indication under the chart to the left), just as Venus and Mars. Looking at the Ascendant, at first one can only see that it falls in the Scales, the sign of Venus. However, if one checks the data of the rising stars reported by Classical authorities, one finds in Manilius' *Astronomicon* that the *Lyra*, the constellation giving musical and literary talent, stands at Scales 26°, that is, at the Ascendant of this horoscope!<sup>179</sup> The coincidence cannot be accidental, and it connects the whole symbolism of *Lyra* in the nativity with the laureation. True, the *Lyra* falls in another sign in the nativity; his interest there was the consideration of other astrological authorities. Celtis had a selective attitude; the point is that the rise of this constellation undoubtedly suggests the rebirth of the poet, the singer. (Less importantly, the *Pleiades* standing at Bull 6° in Manilius is in conjunction with the Sun standing at Bull 7° in the horoscope; see below.) This selective attitude is even more noticeable in this horoscope than in the other; Saturn disappears from the chart, although it was only

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<sup>177</sup> The shield with the stars can be seen in several woodcuts (e.g. the one called “Autorenbild” in the *Amores* or the “Götterkonzert” of the *Melopoiae*); LANCKORONSKA, M.: Die Holzschnitte zu den *Amores* des Conrad Celtis. *Gutenberg-Jahrbuch* 46 (1971) 331 refers to the stars as “the three stars of his birth hour” (?). However, it is not the nativity that displays a well discernible triple-star group, but the horoscope of laureation with its triple conjunction. Naturally, the three stars can be interpreted in several ways.

<sup>178</sup> REISINGER (n. 6) 57.

<sup>179</sup> Manil. V,337–8.

the “secondary” components like the fixed stars or the various “points” (e.g., *pars fortunae*) that could be indicated optionally in contemporary astrological practice; the planets always had to be there.<sup>180</sup> Saturn would be at the Archer 22°, in retrograde movement, but with good aspects (trine with *pars fortunae*, trine with Mercury, sextile with the Ascendant). The traditional idea of Saturn as the planet of misfortune seems to have been of greater weight.

This meets expectations; the horoscope records the divine, muse-inspired “intervention” of the heavens, thus the new powers won by the poet, and the favorable perspectives for his future. As for the selection of the date and the horoscope, two factors seem to have been of the greatest account (beyond the requirement that one must not deviate too much from the real date of the laureation): the presence of the triple conjunction (this conjunction existed between around 17 April and 4 May in the given year), and the linking of *Lyra* with the Ascendant (this is the bottle-neck, it is possible only for a short period within a day). The horoscope that was eventually cast proved a good choice with regard to the position of the MC, Venus, the point of fortune, too. The symbolism of the horoscope is comparable to that of the nativity. The poet displays his luck, glory, power, and *ingenium* received from the gods/planets, involving the *Lyra* (the instrument of Orpheus) from among the non-zodiac fixed stars. The way he considers the horoscope elements, selects among the astrological authorities – he relies mainly on Manilius – and selects the horoscope itself, is arbitrary, or from a more sanguine perspective, playful and poetic. (To be sure, the arbitrariness is characteristic of the practice of astrological interpretation in general.) While the nativity presents the birth of the talented poet, the horoscope of laureation presents his rebirth; that is why Celtis counts the years from the year of laureation in the *Codex epistolaris*.<sup>181</sup> The idea of rebirth may also be connected to the facts that the laureation fell in the spring, the conjunction was in spring signs (mainly the Bull, but also the Ram), and in the “Ode Sapphica...” of the *Proseuticum*, which beautifully describes spring and the regeneration of the world, it is April, the Sun stands in the Bull, and his rays “scorch” the *Pleiades* (which is in conjunction with him in the horoscope).<sup>182</sup>

<sup>180</sup> Saturn can only be discovered among the aspect data under the chart, to the right; it is supposed to stand in quadrate with Venus. However, this is false information, Venus stands at an angle of 140° to the real position of Saturn (Archer 22°) and Venus stands in a quadrate with Jupiter.

<sup>181</sup> MERTENS (n. 75) 49.

<sup>182</sup> V,5–8. “Taurus Arctoo propior Coluro, / oritur tecum [with Phoebus], referens tepores, / cum vagas sentit Pleiades aduri / lampade Phoebi”

## The well-matched lovers

On occasion, Celtis versified the horoscopes of his close acquaintances and these texts connect to the symbolism of his own horoscopes at many points. According to a contemporary astrological method, one could compare two charts and look for the common characteristics in them. This seems to have been less frequent in the Classical-medieval tradition than in modern astrology, which calls the method “synastry.” One use of this is to determine whether lovers are well matched. The method is rare, but known in premodern astrological literature;<sup>183</sup> other texts, however, primarily poetic, refer in a more superficial way to the harmony of two lovers’ stars.<sup>184</sup> Considering the importance of the astrological layer in the *Amores* and the *amores* itself as the main topic, it is not surprising that one finds this phenomenon in Celtis, too.

In the twelfth elegy of the first book, where the poet courts Hasilina, he intends to demonstrate by his nativity how many good properties he was granted by the heavens, especially emphasizing characteristics that are needed in a love relationship:

Septimus a primo qui dicitur angulus orbis,  
prospera (ni fallor) sidera nostra refert:  
fervidus Haemonio iuvenis mihi surgit in arcu  
et medium caeli cum Iove Virgo regit,  
quin et suscipiens Phoebum Cyllenius ignis  
ingenium vires iussit habere suas,  
nec dea cunctipotens aversa fronte resedit,  
cum numero partem per mea signa suam.<sup>185</sup>

The cardinal house that is called the seventh one reckoned from the first shows our stars to be favorable, if I am not mistaken: the hot-tempered youth with the Thessalian bow rises for me, and the middle of the sky is reigned by the Virgin with Jupiter; what is more, the Cyllenian fire [Mercury] received Phoebus, thus ordering that the [poet’s] talent would be outstanding; and the almighty goddess [Venus] did not sit there with her face turned away from me, since I reckon her house among my signs.

*Septimus angulus* means the seventh house, traditionally the house of marriage;<sup>186</sup> on the issue of a love relationship, it is natural that the poet takes this component of the horoscope into account. Two facts about Celtis’ nativity

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<sup>183</sup> E.g. Ptol. *Tetr.* IV,5,184.

<sup>184</sup> An example from medieval poetry: SCHMELLER, A. J. (ed.): *Carmina Burana*. Stuttgart 1883, Nr. 62 (page 152); cited by BOLL, FR.: *Synastrya. Sokrates* 5 (1917) 458. (“Iove cum Mercurio geminos tenente.”)

<sup>185</sup> *Am.* I,12,15–22.

<sup>186</sup> *Angulus* originally meant the main axes, the cardinal houses of a horoscope (houses 1, 4, 7, 10), so *septimus angulus* would literally mean the “seventh cardinal house”, however, it is customary in astrological literature to use such a contracted expression that refers both to the number of the house and its cardinal quality; cf., e.g. the horoscope interpretation written for Eleonore of Portugal: SCHMEIDLER, F. (ed.): *Joannis Regiomontani opera collectanea*. Osnabrück (Zeller) 1972, fol. 80r.

support the opinion that the seventh house contributes to a favorable horoscope. The ruler of the house, Mercury, stands in conjunction with the Sun and they give strength to the *ingenium*. More importantly, Jupiter casts a trine to the house cusp; the *Fortuna maior*, the birth ruler (because of the Archer Ascendant) stands in the Virgin, the sign belonging to Mercury, and casts the most favorable aspect on the house of marriage. All these planetary positions are recorded in lines 16–18, although the author does not relate them directly to the favorable seventh house mentioned just before (v. 15). Together with his own excellence, he also asserts the great ardor of his love and exploits in his rhetoric astrological facts that can be related to fire or hotness: the sign of the Archer belongs to the element of fire, and the Centaur, by which this sign is traditionally represented, features as a warlike, hot-tempered youth; Mercury is the “Cyllenian fire”, because stars are heavenly fires in poetry in general and in the Stoics in particular; the Sun may also evoke an association to fire. Lines 21–22 make sense only if the *pars* is translated as “house”:<sup>187</sup> the fourth house, where Venus stays, falls in the Fish, whose ruler is Jupiter, Celtis’ birth ruler; that is why the poet can reckon Venus as belonging to “his signs.”<sup>188</sup> The Celtis of the *Amores* makes use of his favorable stars with the aim of a love conquest and he also refers to this strategy in another elegy in the *Amores*.<sup>189</sup>

In the next book of the *Amores* the poet is courting Elsula; this time he idealizes her nativity after enumerating how many stars’ brilliance she surpasses:

Crediderim ex illis unam micuisse sub ortu,  
 Elsula, dum vitae sunt data fila tuae:  
 Taurus erat, blanda rutilat cui fronte Cupido,  
 ille tibi primo cardine fila dedit.  
 Phoebus et in nona caeli tibi parte refulgens  
 cultorem Phoebi strinxit amore tibi.  
 Iuppiter in medio stabat tunc laetus Olympo  
 et Venus in gremio luserat alma suo.  
 Hi tibi finxerunt speciosi corporis artus  
 Atque animum radiis composuere suis.<sup>190</sup>

Therefore I have to think that one [star] was shining at your birth, Elsula, when you were given the thread of your life: it was the Bull, whose loving face flushed with Cupido, he gave you the thread of life, being in the first house. And Phoebus, shining in the ninth house [or grade] of the heavens, bound the follower of Phoebus with love to you. Jupiter stood then propitiously in the middle of the heaven, and nourishing Venus played in his lap. They created the members of your beautiful body, and they fashioned your character with their rays.

<sup>187</sup> *Partem suam* in itself could be translated as “her [Venus’] grade”, that is, Ram 9°; however, there is no such division [decans, *termini* etc.] of the Ram that would allow us to connect the 9° with the Archer or the Virgin (*per mea signa*).

<sup>188</sup> *Per mea signa* is either a poetic plural or it really refers to both signs that belong to Jupiter, that is, the Archer and the Fish.

<sup>189</sup> In *Od.* I,17,53–60 he jokingly warns Albert Blar (Celtis’ most important teacher of astrology) not to misconstrue the will of the heavens (his nativity), according to which Celtis will win Hasilina.

<sup>190</sup> *Am.* II,5,71–80.

Here it is not a real horoscope that stands behind the text,<sup>191</sup> the poet mixes commonplaces with real planetary positions, outlining the main elements of an “ideal” horoscope. In the next book of *Amores* he describes Ursula’s lucky birth in a similar manner, although astrologically less detailed: Ursula’s Ascendant is the Lion, the sign of Phoebus, and she, too, has a Venus-like figure.<sup>192</sup> When applying such motifs, Celtis could use the topoi circulating in Italian poetry; Venus, Jupiter or Phoebus, separately or together, often feature as planets shining on the birth, giving beauty, luck, and perfect characteristics;<sup>193</sup> the eyes of the beloved woman may even outshine the brilliance of Venus and Jupiter.<sup>194</sup> Nevertheless, the passage about Ursula is astrologically more elaborate, and eventually a whole horoscope unfolds. Most of its elements can easily be explained; the Ascendant (*primo cardine*) is in the Bull,<sup>195</sup> so the birth ruler is Venus; Jupiter is in MC, in conjunction with Venus.<sup>196</sup> The position of the Sun can be explained in two ways. *Nona caeli parte* may mean the ninth house.<sup>197</sup> Although it is primarily the house of journeys, in Firmicus Maternus it is the house of religion and the Sun God, too,<sup>198</sup> which may be the reason why she is attracted to *Phoebi cultor*, that is, Celtis. However, the word *pars* in an astrological context more often signifies “grade” than “house”; at least three passages in Celtis can be cited where it means grade,<sup>199</sup> while it is only in the previous passage that it unambiguously means house,<sup>200</sup> and in the astrological literature, too, it means grade and not house. In a passage quoted above<sup>201</sup> Celtis actually refers back to the exact position of Venus in his nativity (Ram 9°).

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<sup>191</sup> Such a planetary combination would not have been possible in that period of the fifteenth century (checked with ZED 8 Lite)

<sup>192</sup> *Am.* III,3,13–18. “His te crediderim stellis natalibus ortam, / dum tibi ab Eoo surgeret axe Leo, / quo vagus exaltat sua fervida lumina Phoebus, / dum metit optatum falce colonus agrum. / Arte Dionaea splendet tibi corpore vultus / et rutilant niveis ora venusta regis.”

<sup>193</sup> E.g. Naldi, *Hastiludium* 96. “cui se Venus aurea protinus uni / obtulit, atque suos nascenti afflavit honores.”

<sup>194</sup> Janus Pannonius, *Epigr.* 283 and 284 to Alte (MAYER GY. et al. [ed.]: *Iani Pannonii Opera Quae Manserunt Omnia. Vol. I. Epigrammata*. Budapest [Balassi] 2006).

<sup>195</sup> It has to be observed that in Celtis the Bull may also have negative associations, as in *Od.* I,22,7, regarding Hasilina’s husband: “vel Taurus tibi Scorpiusve surgit”.

<sup>196</sup> GRÖSSING (n. 29) 180.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>198</sup> *Mathesis* II,19,10.

<sup>199</sup> *Am.* I,1,30; *Am.* III,12,31; *Am.* II,6,87.

<sup>200</sup> *Am.* I,12,22.

<sup>201</sup> Cf. note 127.

All this makes it possible for the *nona caeli parte* to signify the ninth grade reckoned from the beginning of the celestial circle, that is, Ram 9°. This would expressively explain why the words *strinxit amore* are used and why the two lovers match; in Celtis' nativity Venus, Elsula's equivalent, stands at Ram 9°, while in Elsula's nativity Phoebus, Celtis' equivalent, stands at the same grade. Both interpretations are possible, and the latter provides an original example of the literary application of synastry.

The passage about Elsula also exemplifies that Celtis is always inclined to fashion his mythical image as a poet, even when idealizing someone else. Elsula's Jupiter in MC may remind the reader of the similar position of the poet's Jupiter, and it is "the follower of Phoebus", the priest of Apollo, whom Elsula is bound to.

### The stars of friends

When Ficino explains in his letter to Marco of Venice how much they resemble each other and how similarly they feel towards each other, he attributes this to "our Mercury".<sup>202</sup> In other works, too, he praises the favorable stars of his friends and fellow writers favored by the muses and he associates the notion of friendship with with the harmonizing stars; this phenomenon occurs in other Italian Neo-Latin works as well, although not frequently.<sup>203</sup> The occurrence of this motif is not surprising in the humanist milieu, where mentions of the stars and the praise of others were both usual. In Classical literature, the idea of congeniality indicated by the stars not only occurs in the astrological literature,<sup>204</sup> but also in Celtis' most important model, Horace, who mentions actual signs of the zodiac in his ode to Maecenas before he concludes that: "both of our stars incredibly harmonized".<sup>205</sup>

<sup>202</sup> *Epist.* VIII,25 (page 905).

<sup>203</sup> WIND (n. 169) 65 points to the "cult of synastry" in Ficino's letters, but he does not mention examples. A characteristic example can be found in Ficino's letter to Bembo (*Epist.* IV,22, page 802): the twin lyres of Ficino and Marco Aurelio may have been tuned by the Mercury in the Bull or the Sun in the Twins... Among the Italian poets, cf., e.g. Landino, *Carm.* 8. 61–68 (PEROSA, A. [ed.]: *Christophori Landini carmina omnia*. Florence [Olschki] 1939, esp. v. 67–68. "Dulce loqui dulci risu ingenuoque pudore / Mercurius facili sidere, Bembe, dedit.")

<sup>204</sup> Pseudo-Ptolemy, *Centiloquium* 32.

<sup>205</sup> *Od.* II,17, 17–25. "seu Libra seu me Scorpius aspicit / formidulosus, pars violentior / natalis horae, seu tyrannus / Hesperiae Capricornus undae, / utrumque nostrum incredibili modo / consentit astrum: te Iovis impio / tutela Saturno refulgens / eripuit volucrisque Fati / tardavit alas."

Celtis was a central figure of the network of *res publica litteraria* in Germany; a “dialogical way of life”<sup>206</sup> was especially characteristic of him, and he addressed most of his works, especially the odes, directly to his friends. His ode to Höltzl, mentioned in the discussion of the nativity, provides an explicit example of attributing congeniality to similar planetary positions (among other things). Höltzl was born on 1 February, so he had the Sun of his nativity at the same grade of Aquarius as Celtis; after describing this position poetically, he concludes: “therefore, a mutual love awakes in our soul.”<sup>207</sup> In other poems our poet refers indirectly to congeniality or spiritual relationship, insofar as he praises his friends’ favorable birth stars (often similar to those of his own). He begins his ode to Salemnus (or Salamius) Delius, one of his disciples, with these lines:

Deli, purpurea quem face Cynthius irroravit amans matris ab ubere, et cui mite dedit sidere Iuppiter felici ingenium clarum et amabile. <sup>208</sup>	Delius, you whom the Cynthian [Apollo] sprinkled with his purple rays in your babyhood, and to whom grace- ful Jupiter has given bright and amiable talent by his lucky star...
---	--

Apollo, who the name of Delius (“one from Delos”) alludes to, features again as both the god of poetry and the Sun itself, while Jupiter is either God, who provides favorable stars (Celtis generally calls the one God Jupiter), or more likely the planet Jupiter. A technique typical of Celtis is to start from Classical topoi and mix a religious-mythological milieu with an astrological one, which often grows dominant.

Speaking about the favorable stars of his *sodales* he highlights the effect of Jupiter in other works as well. At the birth of the muse-beloved Graccus Pierius (Krachenberger) “Jupiter shone, providing many virtues.”<sup>209</sup> In the case of Sigismundus Fusilius, a member of Celtis’ circle in Poland (like Delius), the *sidus patrum*, the “paternal star” gave the outstanding virtues;<sup>210</sup> taking into account Jupiter’s/Zeus’ paternal role among the gods and the above examples, the expression should be interpreted primarily as the planet Jupiter.

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<sup>206</sup> RÜEGG, W.: *Anstösse, Aufsätze und Vorträge zur dialogischen Lebensform*. Frankfurt 1973.

<sup>207</sup> *Libri odarum* (ed. SCHÄFER [n. 1]), app. 1, v. 5–10. “Celtis et tali est generatus olim / luce, dum claro radians in orbe / fulserat Phoebus tepidaque stabat / fulgidus urna. / Mutuus nostris animis calescens / hinc amor surgit.”

<sup>208</sup> *Od.* I,9,1–4.

<sup>209</sup> *Od.* II,9,11–2. “Virtutibus multis decoro / Iuppiter ut tibi fulsit ortu.”

<sup>210</sup> *Od.* I,11,10–12. “cui dedit sidus patrum decoros / pectoris mores, et honesta sanctae / pignora mentis.”

And perhaps it is Jupiter again that hides behind the lines of the epitaph for Regiomontanus:<sup>211</sup>

Regia cui fulsit coeli clarissima stella,  
hic iacet astrorum dux, decus et patriae.  
Regius hunc genuit mons, quem mea Francia tollit,  
haud procul a ripis, inlyte Moene, tuis.<sup>211</sup>

For whom the brightest, royal star of the heaven shone,  
he lies here, the commander of the stars, the glory of the  
fatherland. A royal mountain bore him, that rises in my  
Franconia, not far from your banks, O famous Main.

Clearly he uses the expression *regia stella* because of the pun with *Regiomontanus*; the “royal star” may be associated with several actual stars, for instance with the *Regulus* (*alpha Leonis* / *Rex*), which is indeed one of the brightest stars in the sky. However, in the collection of Gauricus a surviving nativity for Regiomontanus has the Jupiter just rising.<sup>212</sup> It is not known whether Celtis knew such a nativity of Regiomontanus, but considering the astrological tradition that Jupiter provides characteristics worthy of a king, and that Celtis speaks several times about the favorable Jupiter at birth, the option of interpreting *regia stella* as Jupiter does exist.

Beyond the appreciation or eulogy of his friends’ abilities and talents, these poems always refer – directly or indirectly – to the congeniality between the poet and the addressee and the same condition of being divinely elected. These references are primarily topoi, related to Phoebus or the muses, found in the works of other humanists as well. Nevertheless, it is rather conspicuous that the actual heavenly bodies that Celtis mentions often remind one of his own nativity; he features Jupiter several times as the star “shining at birth,”<sup>213</sup> and he explicitly refers to the position of his own Sun. These texts are rather mirror-like; speaking about a friend, the poet praises himself at the same time. They enjoy the gifts of the gods, the muses, the stars together. It was typical of humanist communities that they separated themselves as the intellectual elite from non-humanist outsiders by means of various strategies and symbols; in Celtis, this endeavour took on an astrological coloring. One can observe in germ form how astrological symbols begin to assume the role of creating group identity, although this aspect does not blossom out in Celtis’ oeuvre and

<sup>211</sup> *Epigr.* II,83.

<sup>212</sup> Gauricus, *Tractatus* fol. 62v. Jupiter (at Scorpio 10°) stands by just 6° from the Ascendant (Scorpion 16°), and 2° from the dragon’s head (Scorpion 14°).

<sup>213</sup> The expression may refer both to the Ascendant and the MC, the two most significant components of a horoscope. The gifts of Jupiter mentioned in these passages – virtues, glory, etc. – fit well the MC – tenth house, but at the same time are commonplace expressions; they cannot be taken as unambiguous references to actual horoscopes.



it does not go beyond the level of commonplaces in more than a few passages. He does not draw a parallel between his and other horoscopes, if only because he assumed a leading role in the community, and he justifies his exceptional position – among others – with his exceptional horoscopes. Indeed, in the works of the *sodales Celtis*' nativity does appear as a topic. Salemnus Delius provides a characteristic example with his fragmentarily surviving ode to Celtis which contains, beyond the topoi of divine birth and education by the muses, a concrete reference to the poet's Ascendant: "the Archer shone for him in the first hour."<sup>214</sup> (Unluckily, the fragment breaks at this point.)

### Horoscopes of rulers

The *Poema ad Fridericum*, a programmatic work at the beginning of *Ars versificandi*,<sup>215</sup> elevates the poet into mythical, sacred spheres in the framework of a spectacular epiphany scene with Phoebus, propagating the *Ars versificandi* itself and a new cultural era. However, this required support from a patron and Celtis does not fail to refer to the nativity of the dedicatee, Frederick the Wise, in order to make it clear that his patron is also favored by the muses.

Te Gemini aspiciunt, vitale, Caducifer, astrum  
et Venus assurgunt; haec genitura tua est.  
per varios cantus Gemini modulataque verba,  
et gracilis calamos te, Friderice, trahunt.  
Atlantis, Tege[ae]e, nepos facundus in astro  
ingenii vires blandaque verba movet,  
et Cytherea tuos aptavit corporis artus,  
membra decora fovens, mollibus apta iocis.<sup>216</sup>

The Twins are looking at you, the life-giving star of the Caduceus-bringer [Mercury] and Venus are rising: this is your nativity. The Twins take effect on you, Frederick, by varied songs, harmonious verses and slender pipes. Atlas' eloquent grandson [Mercury], the Tegean (?) arouses, as a star (?), the powers of your talent and gives charming words, and it was the Cytherean [Venus] who fitted the members on your body, she took care of these beautiful members, suitable for soft play.

As Robert observed, the poet sets out from Manilius here, too. Characterizing the Twins, Manilius explains that this sign of Mercury provides talents for singing, music, and eloquence. Some expressions in the passage correspond word for word to the text of the *Astronomicon*.<sup>217</sup> Celtis also has Venus appear; he describes her activity in line with the relevant Venerean topoi. The phenomenon that a poet eulogized the ruler through his horoscope also occurred in

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<sup>214</sup> BEZOLD, FR.: Aus dem Freundeskreis des Konrad Celtis. *Anzeiger für Kunde der deutschen Vorzeit* N.F. 29 (1882) 61 f. V,21. "Arcifer prima sibi fulsit hora."

<sup>215</sup> Fol. A 2r–3v.

<sup>216</sup> V,91–8.

<sup>217</sup> Manil. IV,152–8; ROBERT (n. 4) 40.

contemporary Italian poetry.<sup>218</sup> Some characteristics of the passage, however, are quite typical of Celtis; he quotes from Manilius, and highlights elements of the horoscope that are related to wisdom, art, and beauty, that elevate the ruler into the empire of the muses, as if the poet wrote to a *sodalis*.

The question arises whether the astrological references are based on a real horoscope. In such a case the poet's words would have more weight – and there was a great deal at stake, the poet's later career demonstrates how important it was to gain the support of Frederick the Wise. Rulers had far more means to have their horoscopes cast and propagated than humanists did, and in most cases they used the opportunity. The birth date of Frederick is known (17 January 1463, a little before 13 o'clock),<sup>219</sup> on the grounds of which his hypothetical nativity can be cast (fig. 4); at first sight one can see that Celtis drew on this. The Ascendant is in the Twins, whose ruler, Mercury stands in conjunction with Venus.<sup>220</sup> This corresponds roughly to the text, moreover, it helps to interpret it: *aspiciunt* refers to the Ascendant; because of this rising sign the poet uses the verb *assurgunt* for the related planets. In his edition of Hrosvitha, also dedicated to Frederick the Wise, Celtis mentions again that the ruler's outstanding mental and corporal properties are the gift of the stars, "as the astrologers say".<sup>221</sup>

<sup>218</sup> See above, note 69.

<sup>219</sup> LUDOLPHY, I.: *Friedrich der Weise: Kurfürst von Sachsen*. Göttingen (Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht) 1984, 43. The place of birth is Torgau (near Leipzig).

<sup>220</sup> The horoscope contains other important planetary positions, too, but Celtis does not seem to have been interested in considering them. Jupiter, too, stands in conjunction with Mercury and Venus. Saturn in MC, in his own domicile, ruling over five planets, is outstandingly strong.

<sup>221</sup> *BW* (n. 19) 467. "Animi tui nobilissimi et corporis tui egregii, illa divina quaedam ex natalibus et sigillatis, ut genethliaci dicunt, stellis dona sunt." ROBERT (n. 4) 40.

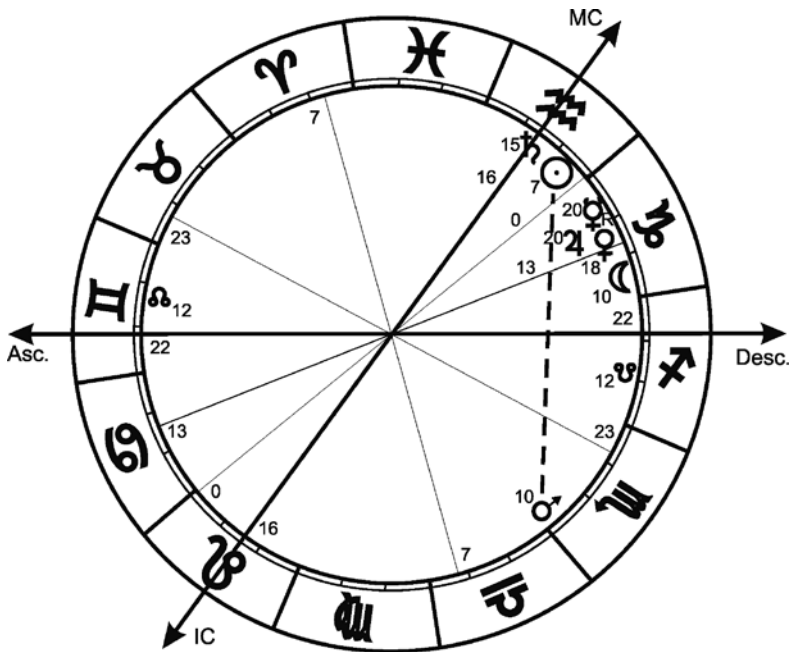


Fig. 4 The nativity of Frederick the Wise in modern calculations, based on the given date (17.01.1463, 12:55, Leipzig)

Celtis' direct informer may have been Martin Pollich von Mellerstadt, Frederick's physician and astrologer, who helped the poet later. The dedication, to be found above the *Poema ad Fridericum*, reads: "I was informed by your physician... Martin von Mellerstadt, that you are absolutely fascinated by the poets' honey-flowing songs, and that you are engrossed in this discipline, stimulated by your good nature."<sup>222</sup> The expression *natura ipsa bona* may also be associated with his birth.

After these observations, one would expect to find concrete references in Celtis to the horoscopes of Frederick III, the giver of the laurel wreath, or Maximilian I, with whom Celtis had good relations; all the more since these emperors were interested in horoscopes even beyond the average. However,

<sup>222</sup> Fol. A 2r. "Accepi (...) ex physico tuo (...) Martino Mellerstat te summe mellifluis poetarum carminibus oblectari: atque ita natura ipsa bona id studii genus amplecti."

Celtis speaks only in a commonplace manner about the favorable stars of Maximilian, in the context of royal majesty,<sup>223</sup> a victorious battle<sup>224</sup> or lucky birth in general.<sup>225</sup> The most concrete reference can be identified in a passage in the *Ode Sapphica* of the *Proseuticum*. In the description of the rebirth of the world, the golden age of Saturn and the future reign of his son, Jupiter, the two gods are clearly associated with the two emperors, and as the text reads, “antiquity elevated these [Saturn and Jupiter] above the heaven.”<sup>226</sup> In other words, they have “become” planets, and indeed, at least the connection of the Saturn to Frederick III is well established. His surviving nativity<sup>227</sup> has the MC in Aquarius, under the rule of Saturn; more importantly, he was widely held to be of a saturnine character because of his general properties.<sup>228</sup> The case of Maximilian is much less clear; although in his nativity<sup>229</sup> Jupiter (Virgin 22°) is at a distance of only 4° to the Ascendant (Virgin 26°), so its position can be interpreted as significant, still, Maximilian himself seems to have held his Mercury and Mars (and occasionally his Saturn) to be the most dominant planets.<sup>230</sup> Apart from this, Celtis may have taken the planet Jupiter as representative of Maximilian, but it is rather the well-established association of Frederick III and the Saturn which makes it possible to interpret the passage in an astrological context.

After all, there are relatively few astrological references to the emperors in Celtis and one reason might be that their nativities provided fewer opportunities for a “muse-oriented” interpretation than, for instance, the nativity of Frederick the Wise. Celtis was primarily interested in planetary positions that supported poetry and *philosophia* and created poets; furthermore, he was much more interested in his own stars than in those of others.

<sup>223</sup> *Ludus Dianae* (PINDTER, F. [ed.]: *Ludi scaenici*. Budapest 1945), v. 1. “Rex cui Maximium praestant pia sidera nomen.”

<sup>224</sup> *Rhapsodia* (in *Ludi scaenici*) v. 169. “Sed maiora tuis fieri his speramus ab astris.”

<sup>225</sup> *Am.* I, 12, 25–6. Maximilianus was born *fausto sidere*.

<sup>226</sup> V, 47–8. “quos supra caelum tulerat vetustas / laude decoros.” The later, modified version of the poem: *Od.* II, 1.

<sup>227</sup> SCHÖNER, J.: *Opera mathematica*. Nürnberg 1561, LXVI/a.

<sup>228</sup> Cf. ORBÁN, Á.: Astrology in Janus Pannonius’s Poems of Praise. *Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU* 19 (2013) 120–128.

<sup>229</sup> The nativity cast by Regiomontanus: Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, cod. lat. 5179, fol. 2v.

<sup>230</sup> Cf. HAYTON (n. 18) chapter I.

## Conclusion

After the above investigation, I can definitely assert that individual astrology was a significant aspect of Celtis' poetry, especially with regard to his poetic self-fashioning, in his image as a divinely inspired and supported poet. Some patterns for the literary application of astrological symbols were already available to Celtis, to some extent in Classical literature, to a much greater extent in fifteenth-century Italian Neo-Latin literature (e.g., in Naldo Naldi, Pico, or even Ficino). These influences seem to have been more significant than has previously been thought, however, one must not overemphasize them, either. In the relevant genres of Italian poetry astrological references are rare and scattered, almost always commonplaces and they occur most often in certain types of contexts, for instance, in praises of the ruler and in frameworks of the panegyric genre. Celtis does apply similar topoi, but he likes to develop them further, to render them more concrete. He often goes into technical details, referring to actual horoscope elements, and it is unprecedented in contemporary literature that the very first elegy, the exposition of the whole *Amores*, his main work, is entirely based on his nativity. As for astrological methods, Celtis typically takes into consideration the basic components of the horoscope (planets, signs, aspects, Ascendant, MC, sometimes non-zodiacal fixed stars) and their standard meanings. Nevertheless, in many respects he deviates from the contemporary traditions of apotelesmatics and horoscope interpretations, which is conspicuous even if one considers the difference between the poetic and "scientific" genres. While the houses were generally central and organizing factors in standard interpretations, Celtis was interested in the cardinal houses at most; he does not consider specific components (e.g., decans, *termini*, *pars amoris*, *Alchocodan* and so on). While astrologers scrutinized mainly the future in the horoscopes, Celtis lays the stress on the specification of character. He has the attitude of a poet to the horoscopes, which in any case provide a wide range of possible interpretations, and he takes advantage of the poet's freedom even to the point of breaking basic rules (see the "disappearance" of Saturn from the horoscope of laureation). As regards the reception of astrological literature, texts by Celtis show no sign of a direct use of medieval astrological works, for instance those translated from Arabic to Latin (Albumasar and so on), and among the Classical authors he draws far more frequently on Manilius' poetic *Astronomicon* than on Ptolemy or Firmicus Maternus (as astrologers in general).

Celtis used the potentialities of individual astrology primarily for fashioning of his own poetic character, his own mythification, also taking advantage of the fact that the borderline between fiction and reality is uncertain in a literary work and wide-ranging possibilities open up for “self-mystification.”<sup>231</sup> The image of the “elected” poet is reflected even when he speaks about the stars of other “elected” ones. Celtis’ role as a poet was special; he was a pioneering *vates* who made a new literary epoch as the first German poet laureate, who brought the muses to the German lands, and who owed a great deal to the celestial *numina*. From the perspective of astrology, the two pillars of this role as poet are the horoscope elegy and the horoscope of laureation; both contain exceptional positions that fit the role of poet well. The *Amores* particularly, which contains many astrological passages, mixes serious and playful attitudes, reality and fiction in a specific way. In certain astrologically relevant parts fiction dominates, as in the presentation of the idealized horoscope of the beloved woman or when he explains his love problems with the Saturn-Venus quadrature. However, the other pole of the horoscope elegy, the idea of the Orpheus-like Phoebean poet, goes well beyond the *Amores* and supports Celtis himself in the role of *vates*. The nativity, just like the horoscope of laureation, is presented as real. Horoscopes draw their power from just this “reality”, that is why they are important for Celtis; the position and characteristics he emphasized were supported by actual planetary positions and could be related to the will of the heavens. Moreover, a further reason why star symbolism has a prominent role in his arsenal is the sensual power of symbols in general; in certain circumstances, horoscope elements can be highly spectacular and more expressive than words. Planetary positions such as the Jupiter-MC-Virgin combination or the Mercury-Sun-Venus in conjunction have much to say.

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<sup>231</sup> ROBERT (n. 4) 458.

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