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Conrad Celtis' visions of Rome: relocation, contestation and imitation of the Italian Renaissance in German Humanism

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CULTURAL ENCOUNTER AND IDENTITY IN THE NEO-LATIN WORLD

EDITED BY

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Cover: Albrecht Dürer's 1502 woodcut illustrates the idea of the *translatio studii* that is so central to this volume. It shows *Philosophia* sitting on a throne, surrounded by medallions with portraits of wise men from many ages and parts of the world: Ptolemy, Plato, Cicero and Vergil (in one) and Albert the Great. The poem above her says: "The Greeks call me *sophia*, the Romans *sapientia*,/ the Egyptians and the Chaldaeans invented me, the Greeks wrote me down,/ the Romans translated (or transmitted) and the Germans developed me" (from Conrad Celtis, *Amores*, Nurenberg, 1502, f. avir; source Wikimedia commons).

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Conrad Celtis's Visions of Rome
Relocation, Contestation and Imitation of the Italian Renaissance in German Humanism[1]

Susanna De Beer

Abstract

In this paper I will distinguish three alternative approaches by means of which Conrad Celtis connects the German Renaissance to the Italian Renaissance. They can be summarised as relocation, contestation, and imitation. I call these three alternative approaches "visions of Rome" because each adaptation can be understood as an alternative claim to the ancient Roman legacy. Moreover, I will argue that each of the three can be understood as an attempt not just to *reflect* or *represent* a migration of the Renaissance north, but actually to *legitimise* this movement.

To understand how this works, the article does not merely consider the literary, cultural and political manifestations of the Italian Renaissance movement to see how they are appropriated by Celtis in isolated cases; it focuses on the starting point of this enterprise on a more fundamental level. The Italian Renaissance humanists aimed to restore the greatness of ancient Rome, and they legitimised their enterprise by claiming entitlement to that illustrious past on the basis of continuity of place and the ancient scheme of *renovatio*. By contrast, Celtis argued variously both that the greatness of ancient Rome – via the *translatio imperii* and *translatio studii* – actually belonged in Germany, and that Germany revived her own ancient greatness with the same Italian methods. In addition, to make room for this alternative Renaissance, Celtis countered the claims of Rome to her own past, either by disseminating negative stereotypes of Rome and Italy or by suggesting that Rome's role was now played out. (243)

Introduction

> Caesar magnificis laudibus inclitus,
> Rex regum et dominus maxime principum.
> Si quis prisca tuis tempora saeculis
> Uel conferre uelit regna prioribus,
> Non te, crede, queunt uincere gloria. [5]
> Te uiuo redeunt aurea saecula,
> Et pax atque fides, canaque sanctitas,
> Et uitae integritas atque benignitas.
>
> Caesar, famous for magnificent deeds, king of kings, lord, prince of princes! If anyone seeks to compare times of old with yours or your reign with those of your predecessors, believe me, none of them excels yours in esteem or reputation. Under your rule the Golden Age is returning, with peace and loyalty, old-age sanctity, the integrity and goodness of life.[2]

This poem praises a certain Caesar who surpasses all of his predecessors, and under whose rule the Golden Age has returned. The imagery and words immediately call various classical poems to mind, including Virgil's fourth eclogue, the first and sixth books of the *Aeneid*, and several Horatian odes, where the poet's praise concerns, or is thought to concern, the rule of Augustus.[3]

1. This article has been sponsored by grants from the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO). I am very grateful for the feedback received from the conference organisers, participants and the anonymous reviewer. I also thank Michel den Uijl and Petrie van der Heiden, who worked with me on Celtis's works as students, and Caroline van den Oever for her careful reading.

2. Conrad Celtis, *Ode* 1.1, 1–8, in Celtis 2011. We are concerned here with the second version of this poem, which Celtis prepared for his collection of *Odes*. The first version was presented at the ceremony of his coronation as poet laureate in 1487. The title of the poem is *Ad Fridericum Caesarem pro Laurea*, *Proseutice*. Translations of this ode are adapted from Flood 2006, 86–87. Discussions of this poem in Auhagen 2000; Mertens 2000.

3. Cf. Virgil, *Eclogue* 4.6 (*redeunt Saturnia regna*) and 4.13 (*te duce*); *Aeneid* 1.292 (*cana Fides et Vesta*) and 6.792–793 (*aurea condet saecula*); Horace, *Odes* 1.2.52 (*te duce*, *Caesar*), which also returns in Celtis, *Ode* 1.1.9 (*te*, *duce*); Horace, *Ode* 4.5.19 (*pacatum*) and 4.5.20 (*fides*). *Pax* and *Fides* also appear in Horace's *Carmen Saeculare* and in his *Epistle* 2.1 to Augustus. For these reminiscences, see Auhagen 2000, 65. The formula *Rex regum et dominus* furthermore recalls the Book of Revelation 19:16, see Mertens 2000, 70.

The same imagery of a Golden Age returned lies at the heart of the Italian Renaissance, and is frequently adopted to praise and to frame the revival of classical culture in Rome and elsewhere in Italy.[4] If we just exchanged the word Caesar for another name, a poem such as this could have been addressed to any Renaissance pope or Italian prince.[5]

The specific poem reproduced above, however, praises the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III, and is addressed to him by Conrad Celtis, a leading figure in German humanism at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Celtis's poem uses the Golden Age imagery to represent a German rather than an Italian Renaissance. At first sight it seems that Celtis simply copied the Italian example and applied it to his own situation. This could even be considered a reflection of the process by means of which the Italian Renaissance migrated north at the turn of the sixteenth century.

However, things are less simple if we look more closely. What seems to be an instance of plain literary imitation in this poem can also be seen to reflect the belief that Germany is just as entitled to this new Golden Age as Italy. This, moreover, is not the only way in which Celtis represents the relationship between a German and the Italian Renaissance. Throughout his poetic and prose works we find numerous examples where, rather than copying, Celtis challenges and criticises Renaissance Italy and the way Italian humanists represented their enterprise. This has led to an inherently inconsistent image of how the German Renaissance relates to the Italian Renaissance, which at one and the same time it imitates, contests and neglects.

There is a wealth of literature about Conrad Celtis and his view of a German Renaissance, which he shaped and formulated in a great variety of works.[6] The paradoxes embodied in his views and in those of his contemporaries who held comparable ideas on a German Renaissance have also been noted several times.[7] However, so far they have mostly been taken at face value, as an inherent aspect of the migration of the Renaissance to the north. As such they have been considered mostly in isolation, as only concerning the relationship between Italy and Germany.[8]

In this article I aim to offer a more comprehensive understanding of the nature and origin of these paradoxes by considering them as part of a larger movement: one in which the specific relationship claimed by Italian Renaissance humanism with the ancient Roman past was both imitated and contested in various centres across Europe. In so doing I can build on the firm ground of current scholarship on Renaissance receptions of antiquity in general, as well as drawing on my own comparative research into the appropriation of ancient Roman legacy in humanist Latin poetry.[9]

It is my main hypothesis that the inconsistencies and paradoxes in Celtis's views follow directly from the fact that he adapted the cultural matrix of the Renaissance as it was developed by the Italian humanists, in various different ways, while staying true to the basic principles of the humanist movement. Moreover, I will argue that each of these adaptations can be understood as an attempt not just to *reflect* or *represent* a migration of the Renaissance north, but to actually *legitimise* this movement.

4. For the connection between the imagery of the Golden Age and the Renaissance, see Houghton 2010; 2014; 2015; 2018.
5. Similar allusions are found for example in the epyllion that Giovanni Michele Nagonio dedicated to Pope Julius II and several other Renaissance princes, which opens with the following lines: "Aurea cumque Fide per te nunc nascitur aetas / et soboles antiqua redit" (Now through you a Golden age is born with Faith and the ancient progeny returns), see Gwynne 2012, 236; or in Verino's *Fiammetta* 2.51.77–78: "his sacros coluit vates, hic aurea nobis / Caesaris Augusti saecla redire dedit" (This man cultivated sacred bards, this man granted to us the return of the Golden Age of Augustus Caesar), dedicated to Cosimo de' Medici, see Houghton 2014, 417.
6. On Conrad Celtis in the context of German Humanism, see especially Spitz 1957; Robert 2003. For a general overview of his life and works, see Pieper 2012; Landfester 2014; Robert 2008.
7. E.g. by Worstbrock 1974; 1995; and by Jaumann 1999, who turns it into the central topic of his article. In fact, these paradoxes not only concern the Germans' ambivalent attitude towards Italy, but also the incompatibility of the schemes of *renovatio* (renewal) and *translatio* (transfer) they adopt to understand their own time, as we shall see later.
8. E.g. in Hirschi 2005; 2012; Krebs 2011, 105–128, chapter 4 ("Formative years").
9. E.g. Enenkel & Ottenheym 2017, a book that is the result of the KNAW project "The Quest for an Appropriate Past," which specifically dealt with such issues of legitimacy on the basis of antiquity, as did Christian & de Divitiis 2018. Apart from my articles mentioned in the bibliography, I am preparing a monograph on *The Renaissance Battle for Rome* in which these arguments will be further developed.

To understand how this works, I believe that we should move beyond consideration of the literary, cultural and political manifestations of the Italian Renaissance movement and their appropriation in isolated cases, to focus on the starting point of this enterprise on a more fundamental level. To this purpose the concept of *metadiscourse*, understood by this current project as the way humanists theorised about and reflected on their own work, is very useful.[10] For if we can distinguish the metadiscourse from the discourse of Italian Renaissance humanism, we can begin to see more clearly how this metadiscourse helped humanists outside Italy – like Celtis – to create their own distinctive Renaissance discourse.

Accordingly, in the following I will first briefly sketch the contours of the metadiscourse of Italian Renaissance humanism. Applying insights from heritage studies and imagology, I will, furthermore, explore how the specific rhetorical power of this metadiscourse could be employed to grant legitimacy to the literary, cultural or political ambitions of such diverse groups of people. This same approach will at the same time help to us to understand the inherently inconsistent, competitive and dynamic nature of all manifestations of this metadiscourse, of which the German Renaissance is an extremely rich, but not in itself unique example.

Then, at the heart of the article, I will discuss various examples taken from Celtis's Latin poetry to show how he adopted this metadiscourse to cater for his own and his patron's specific needs. I will distinguish three alternative approaches by means of which he connects the German Renaissance to the Italian Renaissance. These can be summarised as relocation, contestation, and imitation. I call these alternative approaches "visions of Rome", because – as we will see – each adaptation can be understood as an alternative claim to the ancient Roman legacy.

The metadiscourse of Italian Renaissance humanism

How did Italian humanists frame their project, and how did they envisage the cultural matrix of the Italian Renaissance in the context of their enterprise? These are of course notoriously difficult questions, impossible to answer in just a few paragraphs, if at all. For one thing, much of this is implicit, only to be deduced from evidence scattered across the work of numerous humanists. Moreover, the specifically *Italian* contours of the metadiscourse are not always visible in the work of the Italian humanists, but come into focus only when considered from the outside, for example in the light of German humanists' conceptions of Italian humanism. What I therefore consider to be the metadiscourse is actually better conceived of as a reconstruction based on common elements in the discourses of both Italian and other humanists.[11]

At the heart of the humanist enterprise lies the restoration and revival of ancient learning and literature. Humanists "restored" the Latin language, composed literary works according to ancient genres and models, studied all kinds of aspects of antiquity, and reformed the educational system to support and spread their idea(l)s. Although this restoration had a very practical side to it, which consisted of studying Latin literature and rhetoric, it was not just for its own sake that most humanists adhered to the restoration of the Latin language. They believed that it had wider cultural and political implications and would form the basic condition for a restoration of ancient greatness in general. Their intellectual enterprise thus went hand in hand with, and promoted and restored, the cultural and political prestige of antiquity as well. This may partly explain the appeal of the humanist enterprise to people in powerful places – popes and princes alike – and the support it found among them.

10. Cf. den Haan 2016, in which she hypothesises that the metadiscourse of Italian Renaissance humanism functioned as an internal driver of the spread of humanism north, because it added to the construction of a common humanist identity, functioned as an indicator of familiarity with the cultural matrix, and enabled discussions of ancient literary genres to become part of broader ideological debates.
11. For this purpose I have benefited greatly from the reconstruction of the self-image of Italian humanism in the recent book by Patrick Baker (2017), especially chapter 5 ("Humanism in the mirror") and from Caspar Hirschi's works (2005 and 2012), especially 2005, 177–249, chapter 3 ("Der italienische Humanismus"), in which he introduces the "diskursive Konstruktion des kollektiv Eigenen und Fremden" (177) of Italian humanism to compare it with the German self-image in chapter 4 ("Humanistischer Nationalismus in Deutschland"), 253–379.

Moreover, the humanists did not simply consider their enterprise as a matter of imitating antiquity and copying ancient literary models; they also legitimised their ideals and pursuits by pointing to their inherent entitlement to ancient greatness. Although there was by no means an exact idea of which aspect or time period of antiquity was to be restored, humanists generally considered ancient Rome – that is, the literature and culture of the ancient Roman empire – to be the main point of reference. Accordingly, the Italian humanists considered it to be completely natural that ancient greatness would be restored at the same location: that is, in Italy.

This type of reasoning, in which entitlement to the past plays a crucial role, can be understood in the terms developed by heritage studies.[12] Heritage studies analyse the strategies that are commonly applied in the use of the past to explain or legitimise a certain status quo in the present.[13] To support heritage claims – in order, that is, to use the past in such a way – a privileged link with that past is a prerequisite.[14] Such links can take various forms, but continuity of place is generally considered a very powerful link. Thus, to understand the assumptions implicit in the metadiscourse of Italian humanism in heritage terms, continuity of place served as a privileged link with the ancient Roman past, claimed by the Italian humanists in order to build prestige for their present enterprise.

What added further to this prestige was the fact that Rome was already in antiquity ascribed a unique position in world history. Its foundation and development had been considered part of a larger divine plan, and its empire was thought to be eternal. In the course of Western history these ancient views were upheld and merged with prophecies from biblical literature to support the legitimacy and continuation of Rome's unique character and position.[15] Thus, in agreement with this divine plan, most humanists on the Italian peninsula argued that the prestige and authority associated with the ancient Roman empire naturally belonged in Italy, and that they, as successors to the ancient Romans living in this same realm, were especially entitled to this legacy. In other words, they framed their enterprise as forming part of an authoritative and itself ancient theory of history.

However, in arguing for their place in this version of history, the Italian humanists faced a reality that was in many ways far removed from the ideal. In fact, the continuation or "belonging" of the ancient Roman empire in the Italian realm was by no means undisputed. On the contrary: the seat of the empire had already in antiquity been transferred from Rome to Constantinople. The same prophecies were used to legitimise the *renovatio Romae* by Charlemagne and the transfer to the Holy Roman Empire. The popes had been exiled to Avignon. The centre of learning had shifted to Paris. The city of Rome itself was turned into a ruin. Italy was politically divided. Rome had turned from a real place into an "idea".[16]

To overcome these difficulties, the Italian humanists emphasised that periods of decline and subsequent renewal had always been inherent in the history of Rome. In other words, the present discontinuity was encapsulated in a larger historical continuity. To this end they effectively appropriated the Augustan propaganda of a new Golden Age. This imagery legitimised the *renovatio* that was now claimed to have been set in motion by the humanists, and that forms the basis for the Renaissance as a cultural matrix.[17] To put this in heritage terms again: to consolidate the privileged link between the ancient Roman past and Renaissance Italy, one that had

12. I have explained in greater depth the benefits of a heritage approach for the analysis of humanist Latin poetry about Rome in de Beer 2020a.
13. Groundbreaking work in the field of heritage studies has been done by Lowenthal 1985; 1998. Graham & Howards 2008, 5–6, provide a good summary of what Lowenthal regards as heritage: "The combined outcome of these traits (i.e. of heritage) is to see a past that, once translated into heritage, in terms of identity, provides familiarity and guidance, enrichment and escape. Also, and perhaps more potently, it provides a point of validation or legitimation for the present in which actions and policies are justified by continuing references to representations and narratives of the past that are, at least in part, encapsulated through manifestations of tangible and intangible heritage."
14. See Lowenthal 1998, especially chapters 8 and 9, which deal with the arguments of priority and rootedness to back up claims to the past.
15. Hardie 2014, especially chapter 6 ("*Imperium Sine Fine*; The *Aeneid* and Christianity"), which explains how the *Imperium Christianum* was considered a continuation of the *Imperium Romanum*.
16. Cf. Kytzler 1993; Disselkamp *et al*. 2006; de Beer 2014.
17. Cf. n. 4.

been severely weakened in the intermediate period, the Italian humanists framed their own times in terms of a *renovatio*. This *renovatio* was in turn legitimised as being part and parcel of the divine plan concerning Rome. The resulting cultural matrix of the Renaissance served both to explain the period of cultural darkness and politico-religious struggles that they wished to leave behind, and to legitimise the renewal–restoration they advocated.[18]

These are then, I contend, the rough contours of the metadiscourse of Italian Renaissance humanism. The Italian humanists aimed to restore the greatness of ancient Rome and legitimised their enterprise by claiming entitlement to this illustrious past on the basis of the continuity of place and the ancient scheme of *renovatio*. This metadiscourse was very powerful, because it could legitimise all kinds of enterprises by means of the authority associated with antiquity. Moreover, this discourse only became more authoritative over time, as these ideals began to encounter reality and both the literary legacy and the physical cityscape of Rome were restored and in bloom again.[19]

The Latin literature that the humanists produced is as much a manifestation of this metadiscourse as its vehicle. The works are themselves examples of the restoration of ancient prestige: the embodiment of the ideals of a cultural and intellectual revival in the Latin language. It is also in this corpus of literature that the ideals are expressed, whether implicitly or explicitly. At the same time the humanists used their literature to promote and shape not only their own entitlement to ancient greatness, but also that of those in powerful places to whom they were attached by patronage.[20] To this end they appropriated especially those literary models from ancient literature that had promoted such prestige in the past, especially in Augustan Rome.[21] What is crucial in all this, is that ancient Roman literature not only formed the main model for the humanists' literary discourse, but offered the building blocks for their metadiscourse as well: a repertoire of arguments, historical schemes and images of Rome that could serve as legitimisation for their enterprise.[22] Therefore the numerous intertextual references to the ancient discourse of Rome provide ample clues as to how the humanists aim to appropriate this legacy.

German Humanism meets the Italian Renaissance

What happens when German humanists encounter this metadiscourse within the framework of the cultural matrix of the Italian Renaissance? What happens when they are confronted with this kind of reasoning when they travel to Italy, or in their readings of literary works by the Italian humanists? To understand this, let us now move back to Conrad Celtis, and take his example as a test case.[23] Celtis, who had studied in Heidelberg with Rudolf Agricola and travelled to Italy in 1487 to visit several important humanist centres, was clearly attracted to the humanist enterprise. Like the Italian humanists, he was a great enthusiast for Latin literature, for the study of antiquity, and for the restoration of ancient greatness. He was inspired to promote these humanist ideals in his home country, and found the support there of several people in power, whom he encouraged and praised for acting as patrons of the arts in general and the humanist movement in particular. In return he legitimised their quest for ancient prestige, and together they shaped and created a kind of German Renaissance.

However, Celtis could not apply the metadiscourse of Italian humanism in completely unaltered form to serve as legitimation for a German Renaissance. The main problem was its Rome-centredness, in combination with its emphasis on the continuity of place for entitlement to the ancient past: this practically excluded foreigners from claiming the ancient Roman past.

18. For the combination of both *translatio* and *renovatio*, continuity and discontinuity, linear and circular concepts of time in both ancient and Renaissance thought, see among others Hardie 2014, especially chapter 5 ("Empire and Nation"), which focuses on the inclusion in the *Aeneid* of both the *translatio* from Troy and the *renovatio* of Saturnus's reign. See also Schlobach 1980; Stierle 2001; and Jaumann 1999, especially applied to Celtis.
19. McCahill 2013; Temple 2011.
20. Cf. de Beer 2013.
21. Cf. de Beer 2020b.
22. For the ancient literary discourse of Rome see Edwards 1996, and for its flexibility to serve various purposes Hardie 1992.
23. For Celtis's life and works, cf. n. 6.

A second problem was the idea of a new Golden Age after a long period of political and cultural darkness: as we will see later, this template was not altogether compatible with how the Germans viewed their past. In the following we will consider three of Celtis's distinct approaches to the metadiscourse of Italian Renaissance humanism, each of which can be understood as an attempt to solve these problems and to adapt it to argue for a German Renaissance in the Holy Roman Empire.

Relocation of the Italian Renaissance: translatio imperii *and* translatio studii

If continuity of place was one of the pillars on which the legitimisation of the Italian Renaissance was built, how could Celtis argue for a Renaissance on German soil? In some respects, this turned out to be relatively easy. To claim that the Holy Roman Empire was also or even more entitled to ancient Roman greatness than Italy, Celtis could build on the idea that the ancient Roman empire had in fact already moved to Germany in the past on the basis of the so-called *translatio imperii*.[24] Seen from that perspective, the suggestion was justified that the return of the Golden Age, the *renovatio* of ancient Roman greatness comparable to that heralded by Augustus in the past, would take place in the current location of the Holy Roman Empire. This argument seems so obvious that Celtis does not even bother to make the point explicit in the poem with which we opened this article. In fact, the title of *Caesar* says it all.

However, Celtis proceeds differently once the revival of ancient Roman literature and culture is concerned. Whereas the *translatio imperii* was only implied and perhaps even taken for granted in the opening lines of his poem to Frederick III, in the lines reproduced below he explicitly includes the imagery of transfer to explain and advocate the revival of literature witnessed in Germany at the time:

Conrad Celtis, *Ode* 1.1.19–20 & 35–9

Te uiuo, Latiis gloria litteris
Antiquumque decus iam redit artibus […]
Hoc Grai studio nomen ad aethera [35]
Fuderunt, Italis deinde sequacibus,
Et nos nunc facili tenuia barbito
Illorum celeres dum sequimur pedes,
Caelo sub rigido carmina spargimus.

In your lifetime glory returns to the Latin letters, and the old splendour returns to the arts. Because of these studies the Greeks have extended their reputation to the stars, and the Italians followed them. And now we, with the soft lyre, following in their swift footsteps, scatter delicate songs under a rough sky.[25]

If we compare this passage to the beginning of the poem discussed at the start of this article, two things stand out. First, the Golden Age under Frederick's rule is now narrowed down to the revival of Latin literature. This is also suggested by the ancient model that Celtis follows in this poem: Horace's first Ode to Maecenas.[26] In this way Celtis likens Frederick not only to Augustus, but also to Maecenas.[27] In addition to the imagery of return (*redit*), the passage uses the imagery of succession and imitation (*sequacibus*, *sequimur*) to convey how literary culture and renown moved from the Greeks to the Romans in the past and how it now moves from the Romans to the Germans (*nunc*). This scheme is even more explicitly activated in Celtis's famous *Ode to Apollo*:

Conrad Celtis, *Ode* 4.5.17–24

Tu celer uastum poteras per aequor
Laetus a Graecis Latium uidere,

24. The *translatio imperii* is a historical–theological concept that from antiquity onwards has served to explain and interpret the succession of empires in the course of world history. On this concept see Goez 1958; Thomas 1997; Renger & Wiesehöfer 2006. For how it was specifically applied to the Holy Roman Empire, see Kunst 2006. For how it was interpreted by Celtis, see, among others, Stadtwald 1993; Hirschi 2012, 160. Celtis referred to the *translatio imperii* himself for example in his inaugural lecture at the University of Ingolstadt in 1492, par. 5.1: "Sed ad vos ego iam, nobiles viri et adolescentes generosi, orationem converto, ad quos avita virtute et Germano illo invicto robore Italiae imperium commigravit [. . .]" (But I now turn to you, celebrated men and well-born youths, to whom by the virtue of our ancestors and by that invincible German strength the Italian Empire has migrated [. . .]). We will return to the importance of virtue later on. For the oration, see Celtis 2003, 16–40. Translation adapted from Collins 2012. The oration is also discussed in Robert 2003, 128–152.
25. Cf. n. 2.
26. Cf. Horace, *Odes* 1.1.1–2 ("Maecenas atauis edite regibus / o et praesidium et dulce decus meum"). For all similarities between both odes, see Schäfer 1976, 10.
27. De Beer 2020b.

Inuehens musas, uoluisti gratas
Pandere et artes. [20]
Sic uelis nostras rogitamus oras
Italas ceu quondam aditare terras,
Barbarus sermo fugiatque, ut atrum
Subruat omne.

You it was who deigned to leave Greece, passing swiftly and gladly over the wide sea to visit Latium with the Muses in your train; your pleasure it was to reveal the arts you love. So now we pray you: come to us as you came to Italy. Let barbarian speech be driven out and the whole fabric of darkness collapse.[28]

In his hope for a literary revival in Germany, Celtis builds on the ancient transfer of Greek culture and literature to Rome, as represented for example in Horace's *Epistle* 2.1: "Greece, the captive, made her savage victor captive, and brought the arts to rustic Latium. Thus the stream of that rude Saturnian measure ran dry and good taste banished the offensive poison".[29] This ancient scheme of culture moving to another location in order to banish barbarism and bring civilisation – the so-called *translatio studii* – is followed and further extrapolated by Conrad Celtis to ask Apollo and the Muses to come to Germany.[30]

The ideal that Celtis evokes, and the past that he claims in so doing, is, once again, the glory of Augustan Rome. What is more, he uses the same template as Augustan authors used to understand and propagate the cultural primacy of Rome in their time. Interestingly, however, the *translatio studii* does not follow the exact same template as the *translatio imperii*. In other words, in Celtis's view, power and learning do not follow the same route from Rome to Germany. Whereas the imperial power of the Holy Roman Emperor, inherited by Germany from Rome, is essentially still the same power and can be considered as a true continuity based on ancient prophecies, it is on the basis of an ancient analogy that learning moves from Greece to Rome to Germany.

More importantly, Celtis assumes different timelines for each transfer. In his view, the empire had already migrated to Germany in the past and at this moment is now restored to its ancient glory. This renders the German Renaissance under Frederick III a true alternative to the Italian Renaissance, which – as we have seen – heralded a similar revival of the ancient Golden Age in Italy. However, Celtis presents the German revival of *literature* not so much as an alternative, but rather as a successor to the Italian Renaissance. Consider for example Celtis's use of *nunc* (Ode 1.1, 37), or the fact that he still has to plead (Ode 4.5, 21: *rogitamus*) for Apollo to come. Apparently, if we follow Celtis's line of argument, this aspect of the ancient Roman legacy did not migrate along with the rest of the empire. Only as the poet Celtis speaks – or rather, by means of his poetry – are literature and learning transferred from Italy to Germany.[31] Celtis connects the two transfers by framing the current *translatio studii* as the logical follow-up to the earlier *translatio imperii*.[32]

By "relocating" certain aspects of the Renaissance matrix from Rome to Germany, Celtis thus frames the German Renaissance as a revival of the greatness of ancient Rome on German soil. This *translatio* can be legitimised, moreover, precisely because it had been an integral part of the history and idea of Rome from antiquity onwards, both in terms of political legit-

28. Text from Celtis 2011. Translation adapted from Celtis 1948, 21. Two titles of this poem circulate: *Ad Phoebum, ut Germaniam petat* or *Ad Apollinem repertorem poetices, ut ab Italis cum lira ad Germanos ueniat*. This poem is discussed in, among others, Schäfer 1976; Jaumann 1999; Frings 2000; Robert 2003, 83–103.
29. Horace, *Epistles* 2.1.156–159 ("Graecia capta ferum uictorem cepit et artes / intulit agresti Latio; sic horridus ille / defluxit numerus Saturnius, et graue uirus / munditiae pepulere […]"). Translation adapted from Horace 1929. Cf. Robert 2003, 89. About this relationship between Greece and Rome, and how it functioned as a model in later times, see Vogt-Spira & Rommel 1999.
30. Analogous to the concept of the *translatio imperii*, the *translatio studii* (or *translatio artium*) serves to explain the transfer of culture and literature from one place to another. Cf. Jaumann 1999, 336–337. For the connection between the *translatio studii* and the Renaissance, see Stierle 1996.
31. Cf. also Horace, *Odes* 3.30 in which Horace presents himself as the one who brought the Greek lyre to Italy (3.30.13–15: "[dicar] princeps Aeolium carmen ad Italos / deduxisse modos"). In similar ways Celtis ascribes himself an important role in the *translatio studii*, cf. Robert 2003, 89. Frings 2000 singles out two more important Horatian models for this ode by Celtis (*Odes* 1.30 and 1.12), which are themselves telling examples of how Greek poetry was appropriated in Rome.
32. Cf. Flood 2012, 32, quoting from Celtis's inaugural oration in Ingolstadt (cf. n. 24), par. 5.6: "Ita et vos accepto Italorum imperio exuta foeda barbarie Romanarum artium affectatores esse debebitis" (in the same way you, who have taken over the empire of the Italians, should cast off repulsive barbarism and seek to acquire Roman culture).

imisation (the *translatio imperii*) and of cultural transfer (the *translatio studii*). However, it is important to note that Celtis and his fellow German humanists were by no means the only ones to adopt the scheme of the *translatio imperii* to claim political prestige on the basis of ancient Roman greatness during the Renaissance. How could this be?

At this point we could best return to the metadiscourse of Italian Renaissance humanism for a moment and further clarify some of its features. Even though the kind of reasoning here was often employed in a political context, it was more about generating prestige than about describing any political reality. The analogy with the ancient Roman empire was not, therefore, to be sought only by empires or "nations"; it could be developed by any kind of community on a spectrum from noble families to city states like Florence, republics like Venice or monarchies like France.[33]

This could only be done because, even if continuity of place as legitimisation strategy was crucial, it also proved malleable and could operate on different scales. The Italian humanists did indeed develop the idea of *Italia* as the most entitled to the ancient Roman legacy, but this was in many ways just a construction, invented both to create a group identity within those borders and to distinguish themselves from the "barbarians".[34] Within the borders of the newly invented Italy, the same kinds of debates arose in turn, and several cities and regions claimed to be more entitled than others to the ancient Roman legacy.[35] Even within Rome, there was no consensus about which group had the most privileged link to the glorious ancient past.[36]

The dynamics of this process can be understood if we consider that uses of the past always serve specific needs.[37] If heritage claims serve to create group identities and to distinguish between insiders and outsiders, the contours of these groups are not static, but dependent on the specific circumstances in which the claims figure.[38] As a consequence, in an international context, Rome and Florence would side together as "cultivated" Italians against the barbaric Germans; but in a national context, Florence would be regarded as an outsider by Rome just the same. Therefore, to build prestige on the basis of the ancient Roman past, Florentine humanists had recourse to the same kind of reasoning on the basis of *translatio* as the Germans.[39] In so doing, both communities benefited in a similar way from the rich and flexible repertoire of stories and images that the Roman past and Latin literature offered to legitimise their claims.

When we come to consider the *translatio studii*, however, it is crucial to understand that the group identities created on the basis of the past do not always concern geographical units, and that continuity of place is not the only privileged link with the past that can support heritage claims. If we look at the specific entitlement claimed by Italian humanists to the ancient Roman past, their connection is represented not just by their geographical origin, but also by their knowledge and expertise concerning "imaginary Rome", that is, the cultural and intellectual world it represents.[40] They shared

33. For specific examples of this process in Florence, see Houghton 2014; in Venice, see Kallendorf, 1999; in France, see Beaune 1985. For several other places, see among others Gwynne 1996; Dandelet 2014. Whereas families often relied on genealogy, i.e. they traced their roots back preferably to some famous Trojan prince, with regard to larger political entities humanists, generally speaking, found legitimisation of this historical scheme both in the *translatio imperii* from Troy to Rome as narrated in the *Aeneid* (cf. Hardie 2014, 104) and in the prophecies in the Old Testament Book of Daniel, on which the teaching of the Four Kingdoms was based (cf. Enenkel & Ottenheym 2017, 78).
34. Cf. Hirschi 2005, 177: "Italien steht im humanistischen Diskurs nicht einer Vielzahl anderer Nationen gegenüber, sonder bildet eine Insel der Zivilisation, umspühlt vom Meer der Barbarei. Der Sicht italienischer Humanisten auf die Welt ist vornehmlich bipolar, nicht multipolar."
35. Cf. Hirschi 2005, 179: "Im diplomatischen Verkehr mit den Kommunen Italiens präsentiert er (i.e. Coluccio Salutati) Florenz als Nachfolgerin der römischen Republik und Patronin der Freiheit Italiens."
36. Cf. Christian 2018.
37. Graham & Howards 2008, 1–15. See e.g. p. 2: "The contents, interpretations and representations of the heritage resource are selected according to the demands of the present and, in turn, bequeathed to an imagined future. It follows therefore, that heritage is less about tangible material artefacts or other intangible forms of the past than about the meanings placed upon them and the representations which are created from them."
38. See Graham & Howards 2008, 5: "Identity is about sameness and group membership and quite central to its conceptualisation is the Saidian discourse of the 'other', groups – both internal and external to a state – with competing, often conflicting, beliefs, values and aspirations."
39. Cf. Pieper 2008, 253.
40. Cf. Hirschi 2005, 179–80: "Die Poeten und Oratoren rücken nicht bloss Städte und Herrscher, sonder sich

this entitlement with humanists from all over Europe; the *res publica litterarum* represents the group identity created on the basis of this shared entitlement.

This is important, because it can explain the ambivalent visions of Rome to be found within the work of most humanists, in which the political perspective often differs from the cultural or literary perspective. If humanists were politicians at all, this was not their main concern. If they voiced specific political claims – claims tied to a specific place – it was often to magnify the prestige of their patrons. Though claims of this type should not be dismissed altogether as something they did not truly believe in, these scholars also had their own individual intellectual claims to the Roman legacy, claims that defied geographical boundaries. This often led to paradoxes and inconsistencies in how they viewed and appropriated the Roman past in their work.

With this in mind we should not be surprised that Celtis, even if he advocates a Renaissance on German soil, at the same time disparaged his fellow countrymen for their lack of culture and their barbarism, praised Italian intellectuals as models, or considered Rome as the new centre of learning.[41] This also explains his specific interpretation of the *translatio studii* in the poems we have just seen, and why it differs from the *translatio imperii*. For if his claim to the ancient Roman legacy for purposes of political prestige competed with similar claims from Italy, his claims to advocate an intellectual revival did not necessarily rival the Italian claim, but rather followed it and paid tribute to it.[42]

Contestation of the Italian Renaissance

In what follows we will consider a second approach to the ancient Roman legacy – a second vision of Rome – which, while seeming at first sight fundamentally opposed to what we have seen so far, will turn out to be the other side of the same coin. We will be concerned here with Celtis's satirical epigrams, in many of which he paints quite a negative image of Renaissance Rome.[43] These are not commonly considered together with his *Odes* or his other lyrical poetry, perhaps because they seem so inconsistent with his otherwise positive imagery of Roman culture in general.[44] However, in the following I will argue that these epigrams make perfect sense in terms of competitive heritage claims.

Ridiculing Roman greatness

Let us start with two examples in which Celtis ridicules the Roman foundation myths and uses them to paint a negative image of contemporary Romans.

Conrad Celtis, *Epigram* 4.10: *De sacris Aeneae*

Fatifer Aeneas, Veneris certissima proles,
intulit ad Romam mollia sacra rudem.
hinc sacer ordo virum, Romae iam postera proles,
cum Baccho Venerem, numina prisca colit.

About the religious rites of Aeneas
Aeneas, the bearer of fate, most certainly the son of Venus, brought effeminate religious rites to unpolished Rome. Hence the holy order of men, the next progeny of Rome, honours Venus with Bacchus, her gods of old.[45]

In this epigram Celtis criticises Aeneas, the founding father of Rome, whose divine descent and success in bringing the Penates from Troy serve to explain the current immoral behaviour of the Roman clergy. Aeneas's descent from Venus, the goddess of Love, and his introduction of new religious rites, characterised as *mollia* (soft, effeminate), have now led to the Roman priests making love while drunk, the epigram suggests. In a second epigram Celtis targets

selbst im Zentrum der italienischen Zivilisation. [. . .] Lorenzo Vallas sprachgeschichtliche Studien sind dafür prototypisch. Er verankert Ruhm und Grösse Roms im Glanz seiner Sprache. [. . .]. Dies grenzt die Italiener nicht mehr systematisch von den Barbaren ab. Rom steht als abstrakte Grösse über dem Rest der Menschheit." At the same time, expertise in Latin was also employed as a means to create a specific Italian identity, as Marianne Pade has recently shown, cf. Pade 2012.

41. Cf. Hirschi 2012, 165: "Therefore, many of them (i.e. German humanists) simultaneously portrayed Germany as a civilised nation vis-à-vis foreign calumniators and as a nation in desperate need of civilisation vis-à-vis German audiences. Italy was thus treated as both an enemy and an example."
42. Jaumann 1999, 338.
43. For this genre, see de Beer *et al*. 2009.
44. They are not discussed in Robert 2003; Auhagen 2000; or Schäfer 1976, but some of them do figure in Stadtwaldt 1993; 1996, 72–77.
45. Celtis 1963, 75.

the foundation of Rome by Romulus, whom he stages speaking to the Roman people:

Conrad Celtis, *Epigram* 3.13: *Vox Romuli ad Romanos*

Vestalis mihi mater erat, rapiens lupa nutrix,
regnaque vulturibus sunt mea structa feris.
Hinc tria vos capiant speciosa flagitia cives:
stupra, gula et saevae mentis avaritia.
Nec vos fasque pium moveat, nulla ira deorum,
maximus in coelis Mars pater illa tegat.

The voice of Romulus addressing the Romans
A Vestal virgin was my mother, a greedy wolf my nurse, and my kingdom is built on wild vultures. Hence three splendid vices can take possession of you, citizens: sexual immorality, gluttony and avarice of a savage mind. And no religious law can move you, no ire of the gods, for my greatest father Mars hides these in heaven.[46]

Here Celtis highlights three aspects of the myth and interprets them as representing three Roman vices. Romulus's descent from Rhea Silvia, a Vestal virgin, is a sign of sexual licence, his being nursed by a wolf a sign of gluttony and greed, and the fact that he triumphed over Remus because he saw twelve instead of six vultures a sign of avarice and savagery. Finally, Romulus's father Mars, the god of war, represents the Romans' lack of reverence for religious laws, which explains the proliferation of these vices.

Although these epigrams differ in subject, they share the same rhetorical strategy and work towards a similar goal. Which? They counter and undermine the strategies used in Renaissance Rome to support the city's claims to the ancient Roman legacy. To understand this we will have to go back for a moment to the Renaissance metadiscourse and consider how it was used specifically in the case of the Roman papacy.

The Renaissance popes also derived their prestige from the legacy of ancient Rome. They could build on rhetorical strategies that were already in place in Late Antiquity to legitimise Rome as the centre of a Christian empire, and they benefited from the new interest in Rome's physical legacy.[47] They emphasised the divine sanction of the location of Rome as the centre of the world as embodied by the foundation myths, and they harmonised these ideas with Christian thought.[48] They further emphasised a direct and unbroken link between themselves and ancient Rome, from the time of these origins onwards. On this basis it was implied that the positive characteristics of ancient Rome, embodied in these myths, were still applicable to popes of Rome.

Foundation myths – or, in other words, origins –, can be used to fulfil two different functions. On the one hand, being able to argue for an unbroken connection to the origins of Rome automatically creates the longest possible privileged link with the ancient legacy. This is important, for when it comes to using the past, the further back a link can be traced, the better.[49] On the other hand, origins also have the capacity to function as *aetiology*: to explain how things have come to be in the present.[50] They can for example explain the specific characteristics – or image – of a people or a place. With this observation we have now entered the field of *imagology*, which studies how (stereotypical) images are created and rhetorically employed to create group identities.[51] In the case of Rome, for example, the role of *pius Aeneas* in the foundation story can serve to explain *pietas* (sense of duty) as a typically Roman characteristic.

In these terms, it is implied both that their privileged link with the origins of Rome entitles the Roman popes to the ancient Roman legacy and, further, that they still display the same characteristics as the ancient Romans. Celtis's epigrams undermine these claims, not by changing the mode of reasoning, but only by transforming the positive connotations of

46. Celtis 1963, 49. I am uncertain of the specific goal of the subjunctives here.
47. Cf. McCahill 2013; Blondin 2005; Temple 2011.
48. On this harmonisation of ancient and Christian thought, especially in the context of Renaissance Rome, see O'Malley 1968, esp. 118–138; Stinger 1985, especially chapters 5 and 6.
49. Lowenthal 1998, 176: "Being ancient makes things precious by their proximity to the dawn of time, to the earliest beginnings."
50. I have discussed elsewhere (de Beer 2020c) the importance of aetiology, especially as it concerns ancient origins, for heritage claims. Some of the examples discussed here also figure in that same article.
51. See Leerssen 2000; Beller & Leerssen 2007. So far the study of images has often been employed in the context of nationalism, but it can be applied in other contexts as well. Images are understood as particular representations of groups of people, which can be visual, but not necessarily so.

the foundation myths into negative ones. In the first poem, the Roman clergy are introduced as "the next offspring of Rome", referring to Celtis's earlier characterisation of Aeneas as "offspring of Venus". Celtis thus acknowledges that the Romans have a privileged link to the ancient Roman past. In the second epigram, "hence" provides the connection between Romulus and "you, citizens", who are introduced in the title as "Romans". This emphasises that, for Celtis, the foundation myths are to be taken as aetiologies.

However, the way Celtis interprets these links counters the positive interpretation, as he concludes that the Romans are still displaying the same immorality as embodied in the foundation myths.[52] The first epigram then adds a second layer of criticism, revealing how inappropriate it is for the Roman Church to link its prestige to the ancient Roman past in the first place. For the ultimate consequence of such reasoning is that the Roman clergy, like their ancestors, still honour the pagan gods. That the epigram concerns Venus, the goddess of Love, and Bacchus, the god of wine and ritual madness, makes the conclusion even more inappropriate in a Christian context.

Moreover, the epigrams' focus on immorality is not just to generate a negative image of Rome; it actually has a great significance in the discourse about Rome's legacy on a more fundamental level. The image is especially damning for Roman claims to cultural and political primacy precisely because virtue is traditionally considered a unique feature of Rome, on which the divine sanction and thus the empire was originally based.[53] Thus in these epigrams Celtis implies that if Rome is not virtuous – if Rome and virtue are not synonymous – then Rome's claim to imperial power has never been valid.

Decline of Roman greatness

Another strategy Celtis adopts to undermine Roman claims to the ancient past is to emphasise that they are no longer entitled, by suggesting that their once-privileged connection has been broken.

Conrad Celtis, *Epigram* 3.40: *De puella Romae reperta* (1–8)

Annos mille super tumulo hoc conclusa iacebam;
haec nunc Romanis extumulata loquar:
Non veteres video Romano more Quirites,
iustitia insignes nec pietate viros.
Sed tantum magnas tristi cum mente ruinas
conspicio, veterum iam monumenta virum.
Si mihi post centum rursus revideberis annos,
nomen Romanum vix superesse reor.

About a girl discovered in Rome

More than a thousand years I have been buried in this tomb; now, having been dug up I shall say these things to the Romans: I do not see the old Quirites, with their Roman ethos, neither do I see men famous for their justice and sense of duty. But, saddened, I only see enormous ruins, now reminding us of people of the past. If I will see you again in a hundred years from now, I think the Roman name will hardly have survived.[54]

In this epigram Celtis stages an ancient Roman girl speaking. As she explains, she is newly discovered, and she now reflects on the differences between ancient and Renaissance Rome.[55] By this means Celtis targets two of Rome's claims to the ancient Roman legacy. First, he denies the Romans their traditional virtues, which the girl no longer sees. Secondly, he denies their enti-

52. *Mollitia*, interpreted as effeminacy, was generally considered a vice that was opposite to Roman morality, cf. Edwards 1993, 63–97. Often connected to Eastern influences, it was also a feature sometimes ascribed to the Trojans, e.g. in remarks by Numanus in Virgil's *Aeneid* 9.614–620. The same can be said of Bacchus and the devotees of this god, especially during the Bacchanalia, cf. Edwards 1993, 44–45 on the Bacchanalian scandal in Livy.

53. See Edwards 1996, 21–22 for this close connection between empire and moral superiority, and Edwards 1993, 19 for the city of Rome already in antiquity being a crucial reference point for Roman moralists. This reasoning on the basis of morality fits very well, is actually intertwined, with the religiously inspired anti-Roman sentiments, since virtue is also a key element of the Christian discourse. It was even part of this sentiment to consider Rome saved from her vices by her conversion to the Christian religion, cf. Stadtwald 1996, 44.

54. For this epigram, see Martínek 1982, who corrects the text found in Celtis 1963, 57. With thanks to the anonymous reviewer for this reference.

55. Celtis refers to the excavation of the well-preserved corpse of a girl on the Via Appia in 1485, about which he must have heard during his stay in Rome from 1487 to 1489, cf. Martínek 1982. Celtis is not the only poet using an ancient character coming alive to reflect on the changed face of Rome. Cristoforo Landino imagines Augustus coming alive again in *Xandra* 2.30, 21–4, cf. Pieper 2008, 252–261, and Paolo Spinoso stages the Sarcophagus of Santa Costanza speaking, cf. Bianchi 2004, 163.

tlement to ancient greatness on the basis of location. Renaissance Rome may still occupy the same location as ancient Rome in literal terms, but in its state of utter ruin it can no longer be considered what it was. Ironically given his image of the Roman ruins (vs. 6: *veterum monumenta virum*), Celtis alludes to the famous tour by Aeneas through future Rome (*Aeneid* 8.356: *reliquias veterumque vides monimenta virorum*), in which these monuments actually serve to underline the inherent importance of this location.

Unlike those discussed above, this epigram argues against Roman claims not on the basis of negative stereotypes, but on the basis of decline. The idea of decline was also part of the Roman discourse: Roman humanists also had eyes for the Roman ruins, and also signalled the moral decline of their times. In fact, the imagery of moral decline was already part of the ancient Roman discourse on virtue, and therefore itself in some ways "typically Roman".[56] The crucial difference between Roman and German discourses, however, is that the first emphasises Rome's potential for *renovation* or *reformation* and even sees this potential as typical for Rome.[57] Celtis's imagery, however, suggests that the decline is irreversible: the city is only going downhill, until nothing will be left.[58] He targets not just the arguments for Roman greatness, but also the applicability of the historical scheme on which it relied, the scheme of *renovatio*.

As with the use of the *translatio* to argue for a relocation of the Italian Renaissance, Celtis's rhetorical tools in contesting Renaissance Rome were not unique to him alone, nor indeed to the Germans. Florentine and Neapolitan humanists also focused on the ruins as evidence of Rome's lost glory; and even Roman humanists criticised the pope by referring to typically Roman immorality. All these examples were available to Celtis as ammunition in his particular debate. Especially in the context of the Pasquinate, in which internal Italian criticism on papal politics was often voiced by satirically reflecting on Roman stereotypes, Celtis found methods and images that were useful for his specifically German goals.[59] In fact, most of these methods and images were already part of the ancient discourse of Rome.

Thus to conclude. To undermine the Roman claims to ancient greatness, based on continuity of place and on Rome's inherent virtues, Celtis follows two different strategies. First, he exchanges the positive connotations of the Roman origins for negative ones, and thus argues that Rome is still immoral, which undermines her claims to the greatness associated with imperial power. Secondly, while he acknowledges that Rome was indeed magnificent and virtuous in the past, he observes that she has declined and has thus lost her entitlement to this ancient greatness.

Although these two lines of reasoning lead to the same conclusion, in taking opposing images of ancient Rome as their point of departure they are logically incompatible. Moreover, the assumptions and goals underlying these rhetorical constructs are never made explicit. It is only when we compare what Celtis does here with the larger Renaissance discourse on Rome that we can see more clearly how he takes the position of an outsider in the debate over the prestige and morality of Renaissance Rome. And it is only when we compare Celtis's arguments here with those he uses elsewhere, and when we connect these with the Renaissance humanist metadiscourse, that we can see clearly why undermining these claims was of such importance to him.

If Celtis argues elsewhere in his work for the relocation of ancient greatness to Germany, un-

56. Cf. Edwards 1993. It is especially in the works of Sallust, Lucan and Juvenal that such thought is expressed.
57. E.g. in the poem *Roma instaurata* by Janus Vitalis, which takes the image of Rome as Phoenix rising from her ashes (i.e. ruins) from Martial, *Epigrams* 5.7. Cf. Tucker 1990, 105–173 (esp. 108–109).
58. For the *nomen romanum*, itself a reference to Tibullus 2.5, 57: "Roma, tuum nomen terris fatale regendis" (Rome, your name is fated to rule the world), as crucial for the eternity of Rome, cf. the discussion in Tucker 1990, 60.
59. Cf. Stadtwald 1996, 59–70, who shows that (60) "Germans were avid collectors of pasquinades and so broadcast this important source of Roman opinion back home." The following distich (quoted by Stadtwald 1996, 63) connecting the immoral behaviour of Pope Alexander VI to the immorality of Tarquinius and Nero (who were, respectively, the sixth king and sixth emperor of Rome) can serve as but one example: "Sextus Tarquinius, Sextus Nero, Sextus et iste / Semper sub Sextis perdita Roma fuit" (Tarquinius was the sixth, Nero was the sixth, and he (sc. Alexander) is the sixth / Rome was always ruined under the sixth). For the *Pasquinate* as legitimating, more or less directly, the Protestant break, see Caravale 2013.

dermining the claims of Rome basically serves to make room for such a relocation. This can be understood in terms of heritage, if we consider that in laying claim to the past, only one party can have the most privileged link to that past and thus be most entitled to it. If Germany wishes to stake this claim, Rome cannot. Moreover, in heritage issues, continuity of place, on which Renaissance Rome has the monopoly in this case, appears so strong an argument that it requires to be undermined more strongly than other claims.[60] This may explain why so many competitors for the legacy of ancient Rome fought Renaissance Rome more fiercely than they fought other claimants to the same legacy. Finally, since the epigrams confirm that virtue is a condition for imperial greatness, they also implicitly support the relocation of that empire to a place where virtue (still) exists. This explains Celtis's portrayal of Germany as a specifically virtuous place, as we will see in the following paragraph.

To understand how Celtis's specific criticism of Renaissance Rome and the Roman clergy relates to his imitation – or contestation – of the Italian Renaissance matrix, we will have to go back to what we observed earlier. For one thing, the whole Renaissance metadiscourse is Rome-centred, also in its Italian manifestation.[61] So, as the Italian humanists seek to appropriate the positive features of the ancient Roman legacy to distinguish themselves from the "barbarians", the outsiders – in this case the Germans – tend to apply all negative features of Renaissance Rome to Italy at large.[62] In this way, it is suggested that any argument against the authority of Rome is also by extension an argument against the authority of Italy more generally. This process is mostly implicit, but it can be deduced, among other sources, from the rather unspecific terminology applied by Celtis to Rome or Italy.[63]

Celtis's specific criticism of the Roman clergy can also be understood as a direct attack on the Church's claims to the ancient Roman legacy as a source of universal religious power. By means of this rhetoric, "Rome" had become almost synonymous with "the Pope" or "the Church", alike in positive and negative contexts. The Germans' dissatisfaction with how they were treated in matters of the Church only deepened their general resentment of the Italians, by whom they were also belittled for their supposed barbarism.[64]

Imitation of the Italian Renaissance

A third approach to the Italian metadiscourse in Celtis's attempts to create a German Renaissance is to imitate the idea of a *renovatio* and of the continuity of place as a privileged link, but to locate the ancient or past greatness in Germany rather than Italy. Celtis does this in two distinct ways, reflecting two different options for when and where to identify the past greatness that he wishes restored. These two options go hand in hand with two distinct stereotypes that Celtis, and other German humanists along with him, apply to Renaissance Germany.[65]

On the one hand, Celtis considers the German Middle Ages to be an earlier Golden Age during which the Holy Roman Empire was powerful and Latin literature flourished in the German realm. Restoring this medieval legacy is therefore one of the objectives of German humanists including Celtis, a goal that is assumed alongside the restoration and revival of ancient Latin literature.[66] In promoting this goal, the

60. I have argued elsewhere (de Beer 2020c) that heritage claims based on the continuity of place are generally regarded as more authoritative than those based on genealogy, which explains the pains taken by competitors of Rome and Italy to attack especially this continuity. Importance of place (often referred to as sense of place or *genius loci*) for heritage claims is also discussed in Ashworth & Graham 2005; Ashworth *et al*. 2007; Schofield & Szymanski 2011. With regard to Rome, see Kennedy 1999.
61. Cf. Hirschi 2005, 178: "Die Humanisten verstehen die Zivilisationsinsel Italien nicht als autonome Einheit. Italien wird von Rom aus gedacht. Die Ruhm Italiens geht von den Taten der Römer aus."
62. Cf. Beller & Leerssen 2007, 6: "The logic is one of positive self-valorisation highlighted by representing other peoples negatively."
63. E.g. in the inaugural address at the University of Ingolstadt he refers to the empire as "Italian" (cf. n. 24), in epigram 2.2, which will be discussed below, the Pope is referred to as the "shepherd from Latium", in his *Ode to Apollo*, discussed above, he refers both to "Latium" and to the "Italian lands", whereas epigram 3.40, discussed above, refers to the clergy as "the offspring of Rome".
64. For these sentiments, see among others Stadtwald 1996, chapter 2.
65. For these two methods see Hirschi 2012, 165. See also Jaumann 1999, 348.
66. He edited the Latin works of Hrotsvit von Gandersheim and the epic poem *Ligurinus*, cf. Robert 2008, cols. 384–385. Cf. Flood 2012, 43, who interprets this enterprise as a means "to counter Italian claims that theirs was the only country favoured by the Muses."

German humanists imply that Germany, a nation that was once truly cultivated, will again become so once this legacy is restored. In imitation of the Italian Renaissance matrix, this stance allows Celtis to frame the recent past as a period of cultural darkness, and to portray the Germans of his own time as barbarians who fail to value their own cultural legacy, just as Petrarch deplored his own times as he wished for the restoration of ancient greatness.[67]

But Celtis also develops a second strategy, in which the competition with Rome comes into sharper focus. This is to suggest that Germany in antiquity – that is, in the time of the Roman empire – also witnessed a kind of Golden Age, and one that can now be restored. In making this argument, Celtis implies that Germany is a truly authentic nation: indigenous, free, and independent from its very origins. We find an excellent example of this imagery in the following passage in Celtis's poem *Germania generalis*:

Conrad Celtis, *Germania generalis*, 60–62

Indigena [sc. gens] haud alia ducens primordia gente
Sed caelo producta suo, Demogorgonis alvus
Protulerat patulas ubi cuncta creata sub auras.
Germanos vocitant Itali, Graij sed Adelphos,
Quod fratrum soleant inter se vivere more:
Nomen, nobilibus quod adhuc venerabile nostris.

An indigenous people, not deriving its origin from another people, but produced under its own heaven, when the womb of the Demogorgon had produced everything that was created under the wide skies. The Italians call them "Germans", but the Greeks "Adelphoi", because they used to live among each other as brothers: a name that is still honoured by our noblemen.[68]

In this passage the key term is "indigenous". By emphasising that the Germans have local origins, Celtis benefits from what we have already seen in the case of Rome, namely, the strong rhetorical power of heritage claims based on the continuity of place. Thus we may conclude from this passage that the German people, created indigenously from German soil, are still the same as and still display the same characteristics as their ancient ancestors, who were authentic, independent and powerful. This kind of reasoning has the advantage that it can operate independently of Rome, replacing a German Renaissance based on *translatio* with a German Renaissance properly based on *renovatio*. How this could work can be seen in the following epigram:

Conrad Celtis, *Epigram* 2.2: *Ad Germanos*

Germana solum Caesar dominatur in ora,
Sed pastor Latius pascua solus habet.
Quando tuas priscas repetes, Germania, vires,
Ut nullo externo detineare iugo?

Caesar only dominates in the German lands, while the shepherd from Latium has all the pastures under his sole care. When will you take back your ancient power, Germany, so that you will not be detained by any foreign yoke anymore?[69]

This epigram targets the delicate balance of power between the emperor and the pope, regarded by the Germans as unfair. Although the emperor reigns supreme, it is the pope who decides all church appointments in Germany, a situation that is likened to a "foreign yoke".[70] To overcome this situation – to shake off this yoke – Celtis urges Germany to renew (*repetes*) her own ancient power (*tuas priscas vires*).[71] It is exactly in this idea of "repetere" that Celtis imitates the Italian metadiscourse, which thrives on the revival of ancient glory. Here, Celtis is advocating a *renovatio* of the German past that will once again render Germany powerful and free. But Germany is to be, as it once was, not simply "free", but free from "the shepherd of Latium". Germany's independence in past and present is only relative, as the main source of pride is in its independence from "Rome".[72]

67. Jaumann 1999, 347–348. It is important to realise that large part of what we nowadays consider medieval was actually regarded as ancient by the humanists, cf. Enenkel & Ottenheym 2017, 76–88.
68. Celtis 2001, 94.
69. Celtis 1963, 23.
70. Cf. n. 63. I owe this formulation to the anonymous reviewer.
71. What Celtis means with *priscas* here is not specified. I assume that Celtis refers to antiquity, not just because *priscus* usually refers to something old and venerable and not seldom accompanies a reference to the Golden Age, but also precisely because of the independence from Rome that is suggested in the epigram.
72. Cf. Krebs 2011, 107: "It may seem paradoxical but with regard to culture this early form of German nationalism was Romanocentric." Cf. Enenkel & Ottenheym 2017, 60–61, where two main strategies to derive legitimacy

Celtis also echoes Italian humanism by taking Biondo Flavio's antiquarian works on Rome and Italy as his main model and inspiration for his own work on the German past. In particular, Biondo's *Italia illustrata* can be regarded as the starting point for Celtis's own *Germania illustrata*.[73] The poem *Germania generalis* was actually conceived as part of this larger historical project. This is an excellent example of the *translatio studii* that Celtis advocates. Just as the Italian humanists have investigated the ancient Roman past, now the German humanists are urged to investigate their own ancient past.[74]

However, just as telling of the whole enterprise is that the *Germania generalis* was first published together with Celtis's edition of Tacitus's *Germania*, for it reveals that the ancient past of the Germans is to be found exclusively in Roman sources. This presented German humanists with a further challenge in their relationship with Rome and with Italian humanism: not only was it impossible to operate truly independently, as the sources of their past were all Roman and the methods of studying them modelled by Italians, but these Roman sources were also the principal origin of all kinds of negative stereotypes about Germany. Celtis explicitly formulates this challenge in his inaugural lecture at the University of Ingolstadt in 1492, addressed to the young students:

> Tollite veterem illam apud Graecos, Latinos et Hebraeos scriptores Germanorum infamiam, qua illi nobis temulentiam, immanitatem, crudelitatem et, si quid aliud, quod bestiae et insaniae proximum est, ascribunt. Magno vobis pudori ducite Graecorum et Latinorum nescire historias et super omnem impudentiam regionis nostrae et terrae nescire situm, sidera, flumina, montes, antiquitates, nationes, denique quae peregrini homines de nobis ita scite collegere […].
>
> Wipe away the hackneyed slanders against the Germans by the Greek, Latin and Hebrew writers who ascribe to us drunkenness, savagery, barbarity and everything else brutish and deranged. Consider it shameful to be unfamiliar with the histories of the Greeks and Latins, and consider it beyond all shame to be unfamiliar with the territory, stars, rivers, mountains, antiquities and nations of our own region and our own land, and with all the things that foreign people have skilfully collected about us.[75]

Celtis urges the youth of Germany to refute the negative images of Germany in ancient literature and to privilege their own ancient past over that of Greece and Rome.[76] In practice, this means he exhorts them not only to garner from ancient sources all references to the German past, but at the same time to reinterpret this information so as to counter the negative stereotypes embodied in them. We can see how Celtis tackles this challenge in the passage from the *Germania generalis* quoted above. In claiming superiority for the Germans because they are indigenous and authentic, Celtis uses the exact same arguments once made by Tacitus to prove the Germans' barbarism: namely, that they are untainted "noble savages", the product of their peculiarly harsh climate.[77]

Celtis adopts the image of Germany created by the Roman historians, but changes the interpretation. In so doing he turns the traditional contrast between Roman virtue and German vice on its head. For Germany is, in Celtis's view, both the diametrical opposite of Italy, which he portrays as a den of immorality, and the antithesis of how it is perceived by the Italians: as a barbarous country.[78] And if not Rome,

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from the ancient past are distinguished: either to refer to a glorious past *within* the Roman empire, or to refer to a glorious past *independent from* the Roman empire.

73. Cf. the article by Marc Laureys in this volume.
74. See Borchardt 1971; Lee & MacLelland 2012.
75. For this oration (here par. 5.7–8), cf. n. 24.
76. Cf. Hirschi 2005, 180: "Die italienische Antibarbaries ruft in Deutschland ähnliche Reaktionen hervor wie in Frankreich ein Jahrhundert zuvor. Die Polarisierung nimmt aber zu. Die italienischen Humanisten formen das Gesicht des deutschen Barbaren aus einer Blütenlese antieker Texte." On the cultural competition between France and Italy, cf. Pade 2016.
77. Cf. Tacitus, *Germania* 2.1 ("ipsos Germanos indigenas crediderim"). For *caelo producta suo* (vs. 61) see Tacitus, *Germania* 2.2 ("quis porro, praeter periculum horridi et ignoti maris, Asia aut Africa aut Italia relicta Germaniam peteret, informem terris, asperam caelo, tristem cultu aspectuque nisi si patria sit?"). See also Krebs 2005; 2011. I owe the formulation of this paradox and these specific references to Tacitus to the anonymous reviewer of de Beer 2020c.
78. Cf. Hirschi 2005, 253: "Dabei wird die vertikale Opposition von Zivilization und Barbarei des italienischen Humanismus in eine horizontale Konfrontation der Nationen überführt." I agree with Hirschi here, but would add that apart from the "horizontal", that is, "geographical" opposition between Italy and Germany, the "vertical", that is, "chronological" opposition also remains valid, both in Italy and Germany. In other words, both

but Germany is the prototype of virtue, then it is only natural that the Italian empire (*Italiae imperium*) has migrated to Germany on that basis.[79]

Celtis's third approach thus reproduces two key components of the Italian metadiscourse (continuity of place and idea of *renovatio*) in order to argue for a Renaissance that is not necessarily based on the Italian or Roman past. On the one hand he presents (literary) culture as something typically German that is now restored, suggesting that Germany has been and will be again just as cultivated as Italy. In this cultural context, Italy and the ancient Roman past are thus interpreted positively. On the other hand, Celtis lays claim to independence and virtue as German characteristics that are now to be restored, suggesting that Germany has been and will be not only independent of Italy, but also virtuous, unlike Italy. In this politico-religious context, Italy is thus portrayed negatively.

Conclusions

By way of conclusion, let me briefly reconsider the four thematic components of the northern transformation of the Italian Renaissance, as introduced in the call for papers, and connect them to what we have learned from Celtis's case. These four components are the transformation itself, the role of the classical tradition, aspects of the dissemination, and, finally, the importance of metadiscourse.

I have further characterised the transformation of the Italian Renaissance in Celtis's case as a fusion of three distinct threads: relocation, contestation and imitation. These transformations were called for because the cultural matrix of the Italian Renaissance was Rome-centred, and therefore could not be adopted in unaltered form to argue for a German Renaissance. Celtis thus devised a number of rhetorical strategies to legitimise the migration of this matrix north, while keeping its fundamental elements intact.

In this process the role of the classical tradition was fundamental, both because it was central in the conceptualisation of the Italian Renaissance, and because it offered scope – by way of its flexible and malleable repertoire – for adaptation to specific German needs. The ancient discourse of Rome, on which all this reasoning was based, offered several authoritative examples of the relocation, contestation and imitation that Celtis required.

The issue of dissemination, or transfer, is part of this transformation on at least two levels. On the one hand, it can be understood as the route by which Celtis came into contact with Italian Renaissance humanism. He travelled to Italy and visited the most important Italian humanists of his day, but also came into contact with the ideas of other travellers back and forth over the Alps. At the same time, much of what was central to Italian humanism was also being disseminated in literature, which, with the spread of the printing press, was gradually moving north.

On the other hand, transfer was also central to the kind of Renaissance that Celtis envisaged for Germany. This would – at least partly – be based on a transfer of ancient greatness to German soil. Therefore this idea was also part of his rhetorical strategy, legitimised in turn by the ancient schemes of the transfer of power and of culture. Thus the transformation of Italian Renaissance humanism north of the Alps was – in Celtis's view – no coincidence, but a direct consequence of several authoritative ideas of history.

These two levels of transfer were intertwined in the sense that Celtis, in arguing for a transfer of ancient Roman greatness to Germany, could draw inspiration from the way specific claims to Rome's legacy were asserted within Italian borders, often in competition with Renaissance Rome itself. We can think of examples of anti-papalism among the Roman Pasquinate, but we can also consider the Florentine arguments for *translatio imperii,* or the widespread images of the ruins of Rome as signs of rupture. Celtis took over these rhetorical strategies largely

for Germany and Italy barbarism is located either in the past or somewhere else. Cf. Beller & Leerssen 2007, 342–344: "Since images tend to invoke generally current commonplaces and reduce the complexity of historical contingency to the invariance of ingrained topoi and clichés, they are often considered a form of stereotype. In practice, images are mobile and changeable as all discursive constructs are." For stereotyping in the Early Modern Period see Czarnecka 2010.

79. Cf. n. 24. The *translatio imperii* is here explicitly connected to Germany's *virtus* and *robor*.

from his Italian colleagues, but adapted them in such a way that he argued for cultural and political primacy *against* Italian claims.

If this at first sight appears to be paradoxical and inconsistent, applying the concept of metadiscourse allows us to see the constant factor in all this. The Italian humanists' conception of their own enterprise in a historical–theoretical sense – and their legitimisation and understanding of it by means of ancient templates and matrices – allows us to see that this remained largely unaltered when Celtis applied it to Germany. While the Italian Renaissance humanists aimed to restore the greatness of ancient Rome, legitimising their enterprise by claiming entitlement to this illustrious past on the basis of the continuity of place and the ancient scheme of *renovatio*, Celtis was arguing either that the greatness of ancient Rome – via *translatio imperii* and *translatio studii* – actually belonged in Germany, or alternatively that Germany would revive her own ancient greatness with the very same Italian methods.

Part and parcel of both strategies was that at the same time as imitating his Italian colleagues, Celtis also challenged and opposed part of their claims – whether it be by disseminating negative stereotypes of Rome and Italy, or by suggesting that the role of Rome was now played out. Distinguishing the metadiscourse from the discourse of Italian Renaissance humanism helps us to understand how Celtis, even as he employed similar methods and shared the same ideals, yet created a message that was often diametrically opposed to that of his Italian predecessors and contemporaries. It also explains why, notwithstanding the internal inconsistency of Celtis's methods and visions of Rome, his ultimate message was clear.

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