Culture of Memory

in East Central Europe
in the Late Middle Ages
and the Early Modern Period

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Valentinus de Monteviridi (Grünberg) and the Art of Memory of Conrad Celtis

Thomas Klorbius, a fictional theologian of the early 16th century, is credited with a letter by the unknown publisher of the second part of the *Letters of Obscure Men* (1517), in which the art of memory is mentioned as a important element of late medieval scholastic culture, and parodied along with the typical targets of this sarcastic letter collection (scholasticism, Scotism, rudimentary knowledge of grammar): "You have recently mentioned in a letter our theologian as being well-lettered, and a Doctor of long standing, and a profound Scotist, and deeply versed in the *Book of Sentences*. You also averred that he had conned by rote the whole book of the Holy Doctor *Of Entity and Essence*, and that he knew *The Fortress of Faith* like his paternoster, and that by memorative art he had impressed the *Formalities* of Scotus upon his mind like so much wax; and finally, you alleged that he was a *member of ten universities.*"[1] Ulrich von Hutten, the most probable candidate for the authorship of the second part of the letters, considered art of memory as a characteristic accessory of scholastic learning, and his attitude can be easily paralleled to Erasmus' rejection of this technique.[2] Although the art of memory was ridiculised by the most prominent humanists of the second decade of the 16th century, still it was a popular subject that even the "German arch-humanist" Conrad Celtis deigned to put his his attention to it a few decades earlier.

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[1] *Epistolae obscurorum virorum: the Latin text with an English rendering*, ed. Francis Stokes (London: Chatto & Windus, 1925), 426. *Vos nuper scripsistis in uno dictamine de uno Magistro nostro, quod est valde doctus, et est Doctor multorum annorum, et est profundus Scotista: et est valde cursivus in libris sententiarum: etiam scit mentetenus totum librum Doctoris sancti de ente et essentia, et Fortalitium fidei est ei sicut pater noster, et per artem memorativam impressit sibi formalitates Scoti, sicut ceram, et ultimo scribitis, quod est membrum decem Universitatum.*

[2] See e.g. Paolo Rossi, *Logic and the Art of Memory. The Quest for a Universal Language*, transl. by Stephen Clucas (London: Athlone Press, 2000), 2-6.

Figure 1. Conrad Celtis: Epitoma, Ingolstadt, Kachelofen, 1492, c2r

By the end of the 15th century, the Ciceronian method of the art of memory, based on images and places, was so widely popularised by various treatises that critics appeared who tried to gain audience by formulating their own memory doctrines. One of the most interesting new treatises is contained in the *Epitoma in utramque Ciceronis rhetoricam* of Cornad Celtis, the 'German archhumanist' (figure 1).[3] As it is well known, the first published books of Celtis were practical handbooks for teaching poetry and rhetoric at university level. In 1486, he published the *Ars versificandi et carminum* in Leipzig, which was a compilation for teaching metrics based on the previous such works of Jacobus Wimpheling, Niccolò Perotti, Leonigo da Ognibene, and, to a lesser extent, on the *Doctrinale* of Alexander de Villa Dei and anonymous medieval texts.[4] When Celtis moved to the university of Cracow in 1489, he held lec-

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[3] See also Sabine Heimann-Seelbach, *Ars und scientia. Genese, Überlieferung und Funktionen der mnemotechnischen Traktatliteratur im 15. Jahrhundert. Mit Edition und Untersuchung dreier deutscher Traktate und ihrer lateinischen Vorlagen*, Frühe Neuzeit 58 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2000), 133-135.

[4] Franz Josef Worstbrock, "Die *Ars versificandi et carminum* des Konrad Celtis, Ein Lehrbuch eines deutschen Humanisten," in *Studien zum städtischen Bildungswesen des späten Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Bernd Moeller, Hans Patze, and Karl Stackmann (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983), 462-498, here 470-474.

tures at the Hungarian bursa (*in aula Hungarorum*) on the art of letter-writing, where he did not hesitate to confess in his address (*intimatio*) to the students, that the little work he had written had again been excerpted from other authors (*tractatulum ex varys illustrium scriptorum monimentis conflatum*).[5] However, he did not confess that this compilation about letter-writing was not prepared by himself, but by Flavius Guillelmus Ramundus, an Italian humanist from Agrigento, who was teaching almost the same material in Heidelberg in 1485.[6] Although the Cracovian *intimatio* to the students mentions the art of letter-writing as the only subject, we might presume that Celtis had already taught the art of memory there on the basis of a manuscript version of his teaching material from Cracow that has been discovered by Franz Josef Worstbrock in Berlin Staatsbibliothek, MS. fol. lat. 910.[7] The possibility that the entire booklet had already been conceived in Cracow is strenghtened by the poem *To the Hungarian college – about the monstruous signs that preceded the death of King Mathias*,[8] attached to the end of the volume printed in Ingolstadt. King Mathias died on April 6, 1490, when Celtis was probably still in Cracow, and such a poem would have received higher esteem only if delivered soon after the tragic event. He was teaching there at the Hungarian coetus according to the *intimatio*, thus the coetus mentioned in the poem probably refers to the Hungarian *bursa* in Cracow, and not the one in Vienna.[9] He must have returned to these Cracovian lectures in Ingolstadt in 1491/92, first as a private professor, and then, in the summer semester of 1492, as a substitute teacher of poetry and rhetoric. Then he published his *Epitoma* that includes the summary of the two Ciceronian rhetorics (i.e. the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and the *De inventione*), a *modus epistolandi utilissimus*, and the *ars memorativa*.

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[5] Lewis W. Spitz, *Conrad Celtis. The German Arch-Humanist* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), 124; Franz Josef Worstbrock, "Die Brieflehre des Konrad Celtis. Textgeschichte und Autorschaft," in *Philologie als Kulturwissenschaft. Festschrift Karl Stackmann*, ed. Ludger Grenzmann and others (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), 242-269, here 254.

[6] Worstbrock, "Die Brieflehre des Konrad Celtis," 257.

[7] The volume is described in Agostino Sottili, "Codici del Petrarca nella Germania occidentale VII," *Italia medievale e umanistica* 18 (1975): 30. See Worstbrock, "Die Brieflehre des Konrad Celtis," 251-252.

[8] *Ad coetum Hungarorum de monstris quae praecessarunt mortem Mathiae regis* (published later in a different version as *Ad sodalitatem litterariam Vngarorum de situ Budae et de monstris...*, Od. II, 2). Three other poems in the 1492 volume are also directed to Cracovian personalities, to the poet Crispus Clogomura (perhaps Johannes Glogoviensis? – cf. Antonina Jelicz, *Konrad Celtis na tle wczesnego renesansu w Polsce* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1956), 54), to the mayor Georgius Morinus (Morsteyn) and Mirica, i.e. Jan Heydecke, the notary of Cracow. Cf. Tibor Klaniczay, A *magyarországi akadémiai mozgalom előtörténete* [The Prehistory of the Academic Movement in Hungary] (Budapest: Balassi, 1993), 48. However, Klaniczay's suggestion that *coetus* would mean a *sodalitas* already in the first version of the poem seems mistaken to me. It is rather that Celtis revised the poem that he had written at the Hungarian *bursa*, the place of his lectures in Cracow, to please the members of the *sodalitas Danubiana* later, after 1497.

[9] This also explains why there is no resentment in the poem against King Matthias, whose reign in Vienna was heavily deplored by the Austrian inhabitants of the city. See e.g. the diary of the Viennese doctor, Johannes Tichtel, where the death of the tyrannic Matthias is celebrated as a divine reward for the penitence of the people: *Sed quia populi princeps est ad populi bonitatem, itaque, cum universus populus mundatus fuisset in quadragesima, abstulit in die palmarum regem mathiam, cuius corpus et anima quo pervenerit, nescitur. Quapropter dedit populo deus omnipotens sua gracia iustissimum, castissimum strenuissimum, bellicosissimum Maximilianum...* (Johannes Tichtel, *Tagebuch von 1477-1495*, ed. Theodor G. von Karajan, Fontes rerum Austriacarum, Abt. I /Scriptores/, 1 (Wien, 1845), 53.)

While both the handbook of rhetoric and the letter-writing treatise are mere excerpts and compilations of earlier works, the *ars memorativa* of Celtis seems to be unprecedented until that time. In this relatively short (2-page long) treatise, he derides earlier memory teachers and calls their work inane:

> They have transmitted this art with long and complicated rules about the useless invention of places and images, discussing in detail in which places and in what order the images should be located. They stated that one has to take a lot of care of keeping the order of the places, that can be in the sky, various regions, cities, villages, houses, columns, dark or light rooms, wide or narrow ones, and also pay attention that every fifth place should be marked with an imaginary sign or character to avoid any confusion in the order. I keep silent about their endless doctrines how to invent, find, and collect images, so that they should resemble to a thing or a word, and that we should invent an image that is wonderful, incredible, brutal, cruel, new, rare, unheard of, miserable, dirty and obscene, because these types of images last longer in the memory. Others have imagined arms and instruments that would express the forms of letters and similar things that attract the attention of novices, but actually are not useful at all – while their only intention is to make this art more complicated.[10]

The criticism of Celtis turns against the entire tradition of 15th century art of memory, but particularly against the teachings of Jacobus Publicius,[11] whose *Oratoriae artis epitomata* he had excerpted both in his summary of the Ciceronian rhetoric and the treatise on letter writing. This critical relationship is all the more clear when Celtis says that "they [the bad teachers] distribute these letters to the West and East, or to the South, as if it belonged to the art."[12] Publicius, the Spanish wandering humanist, devoted a long chapter to the art of memory in the 1482 edition of his book that eventually became even longer due to some additions in the second, 1485 edition. His doctrine that the most important initial letters of our speech should be memorised by instruments and objects that resemble these letters was successful and reappeared not only in his own treatise that was republished twice in Germany,[13] but also in other contemporary treatises, such as the work of Jan Szklarek.[14]

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[10] *hanc [artem] plerique tradidere magnis et difficillimis preceptis inani quadam locorum imaginumque inuentione quibus locis et quo ordine numeroue ille collocande forent varie diffuseque disserentes. in locorum enim ratione seruanda esse que in celo in regionibus vrbibus villis edibus intercolumnijs cubilibus obscuris et lucis capacibus angustis vel amplis multum intendere debere vtque ex ordine quintum quemque locum imaginato signo vel caractere numerum distinguente: ne ordinis perturbatio fieret docuerant. Transeo infinitam quandam preceptionem de inueniendis comparandis colligandisque imaginibus veluti cuique rei vocique similem inueniremus imaginem miram incredibilem trucem crudelem nouam raram inauditam flebilem, sordidam et obscenam illa memorie plurimum conferre dixerunt. Alii pro singulis elementis confingendis vt difficilior ars foret: arma instrumentaque effinxerant que figuras litterarum et formas exprimerent et infinita talia que admirationem magis nouiciis quam precium opere persoluunt.* Conrad Celtis, *Epitoma in vtramque Ciceronis rhetoricam...*, ([Ingolstadt]: [Johann Kachelofen], 1492), 13v. (I used the copy of the University Library of Budapest, Inc. 444).

[11] Jacobus Publicius, *Oratoriae artis Epitomata* (Venice: Erhard Ratdolt, 1482); ibid., 1485.

[12] "Eas autem litteras tamquam ex arte nunc in ortum et occasum, nunc in meridiem disparciunt," Celtis, *Epitoma in vtramque*, 13v.

[13] Augsburg, Ratdolt, 1490; Reutlingen, Michael Greyff, 1492-1493. See Heimann-Seelbach, *Ars und scientia*, 117.

[14] See Rafał Wójcik, *Opusculum de arte memorativa Jana Szklarka. Bernardyński traktat mnemotechniczny z 1504 roku* (Poznań: Biblioteka Uniwersytecka, Wydawnictwo Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne, 2006).

In the second part of his memory treatise, he describes a movable memory table in which each letter is ordered towards East, West, South or North, a system that must have particularly evoked Celtis' disliking.[15]

Instead of the method of Publicius, Celtis advises his readers to memorise things with the aid of the alphabet, because by "keeping the natural order" of the letters (*servata earundem naturali ordine*), the elements or members of our material can be easily retained by memory. According to the ideas presented by Celtis, under each letter of the alphabet one should memorise five words that begin with the same letter, and these could be the images that belong to the locus, i.e. to the letter itself. This practice is not entirely new, as already the *Memoria fecunda...* text, one of the earliest and most popular treatises (written in Bologna, 1425), suggests that the students of the art of memory should remember a hexametric poem by heart, in which each line represents a chamber (as a *locus*) and these words should be located in the chambers maintained for each letter.[16] Unlike in the earlier anonymous treatise, Celtis did not order these into a hexameter, but he used five vowels as organising force of this structure: each consonant has five words starting with the same consonant but the second letter has a vowel in the alphabetical order: a, e, i, o, u. Thus, the letter B has five images, b-a--lneator, b-e-gutta, b-i-bulus, b-o-ssequus, b-u-ccinator, followed by the letter C, which also contains five words according to the same pattern, etc. The only exception is the letter A, which appears in the list – unlike the other vowels – and contains five words beginning with the five vowels: a – abbas (abbot), e – eques (knight), i – institor (tax-collector), o – officialis (ecclesiastical judge), and u – usurarius (usurer). Thus, if we memorise this alphabet that consists of 20 letters,[17] together with the five words attached to each letter, we have a mnemonic palace with exactly hundred places in it, which we can fill up with any material and the alphabetic order of the images (i.e. the words) would lessen the likelihood of mistakes. Similar lists of 100 words had been in circulation well before Celtis, however, those were not alphabetically designed.[18] The other novelty of the treatise is that the practioner has to attach fixed meanings to each image (or word), so the image of the abbot should always recall religious matters to us, the knight should remind us of justice, the tax-collector of cheating ("as the tax--collector mainly deals with cheating"), litigation should be associated with the ecclesiastic judge, and financial problems with the usurer.[19] Celtis offers only two further

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[15] Publicius, *Oratoriae artis Epitomata*, 1485, H4r. The practical advantage of this system is not very clear, see Heimann-Seelbach, *Ars und scientia*, 119-120.

[16] Roger A. Pack, "An Ars memorativa from the late Middle Ages," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge* 54 (1979): 234. *Asperges, agnus, anulus, alembicus, arcus,/ Bombix, bacile...* etc. Thus, the equipment of the first chamber (letter A) is an aspersorium, a lamb, a ring, an alembic and a bow.

[17] The list excludes all the vowels, with the exception of A ("because it naturally appears on the top of the list"), and I, enlisted as Y, "because it seems to a consonant" (Celtis' treatise in the version of Valentinus de Monteviridi, see later).

[18] Similar lists of 100 words had been in circulation well before Celtis, however, those were not alphabetically desgined.

[19] Konrad Celtis, *Epitoma in utramque Ciceronis rhetoricam cum arte memoratiua noua, et modo epistolandi utilissimo* (Ingolstadt: [s.n.], 1492), 14r-v. EK Inc. 444.

examples of these associations – we should think of the *b-a-lneator*, a bather, if we want to memorise dirty people, and remember a *b-e-gutta*, *a* beguine, if we think of superstition – as everybody should find out these associations by himself. Although the vowels, which make out the first five places, do not retain this signification in their compound forms (in b-a, c-a, etc.), in some instances we can discover the social stereo-types of the age of Celtis in the images: the second images for the letter Y should be Jesus (*Y-e-sus*), where E could easily stand for justice, while the fifth image of the same letter is a Jew, *y-u-deus¸* where the vowel u might remind us of usury.

However, an important question remains unanswered in Celtis' treatise: how exactly are we supposed to memorise longer texts and create a series of *loci*? If we keep the order of the images in the alphabetical order, our speech may follow only the strict line of thought given by the words and their associated meanings. On the other hand, if we build up a memory place using the associated meanings of the words, we lose the alphabetic order, which is supposed to help us in remembering the sequence of the ele-ments. This problem could be the reason why all later authors who copied the treatise of Celtis abandoned the associated meanings of the words, and concentrated on the alphabetical order of the images. In the *Ars memorandi noua secretissima*, published in 1500 or 1501,[20] Jodocus Weczdorff de Triptis (Weimar) inserted an alphabetical list of words, similar to that of Celtis, but he simply suggested that it could be used as a memory house without any scope for our private associations. Moreover, the alphabetic table of Celtis was included in the famous *Margarita philosophica nova* of Gregor Reisch, which was probably the most popular handbook of the *artes* scholars in the first two decades of the 16th century. The compiler of the *Margarita* simplifies the system of Celtis, too: the thematic connection between the signifier and the signi-fied, the memory image and the thing to be memorised disappears. Instead of the con-notative association, we find a double alphabetical order here, which includes the five vowels, as well.[21] Thus, the subject we would like to remember has to be connected to the image, which begins with the same two initial letters, eg. the word '*fa*cultas' has to remembered with '*fa*ber', while the bather (*ba*lneator) of Celtis (which recalled dirty people there) refers to words starting with *ba-* here.[22]

At least one more testimony of the popularity of Celtis' treatise survives in the manuscript 734/I of the Ossolineum Library in Wrocław,[23] which contains a four folio long treatise on the art of memory (168r-171v), copied in Vác (German: Waitzen) in

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[20] s.l., s.a., 2r. (VD16 ZV 15509, Reutlingen, Michael Greiff, 1500; but also recorded as Strasbourg, Johann Grüninger, 1500). See Heimann-Seelbach, *Ars und scientia*, 135-138.

[21] Gregor Reisch, *Margarita philosophica* (Strassburg: Johannes Grüninger, 1508), sig. Q3v-Q4v. Georgius Sibutus also suggests in his *Ars memorativa* that such series of words (he mentions *barbitonsor--bellator-bibulus-bovicida-bursarius* as an example) could be used as memory places (Cologne: Quentell, 1505, sig. A3r).

[22] For a detailed comparison of the two treatises see John J. Bateman, "The Art of Rhetoric in Gregor Reisch's Margarita Philosophica and Conrad Celtes' Epitome of the Two Rhetorics of Cicero," *Illinois Classical Studies* 8 (1983): 137-154.

[23] Heimann-Seelbach mentions the text of Jacobus Publicius' art in this manuscript (*Ars und scientia*, 117), but Rafał Wójcik was the first to call attention to the other mnemonic treatise in the same volume (Wójcik, *Opusculum de arte memorativa*, 65-66).

1504 according the explicit of the text (*1504 Wacie in profesto trinitatis*). The copist and the owner of the manuscript was a certain Valentinus Werner de Grünperg/de Monte Viridi (now Zielona Góra in Silesia), who copied three memory treatises and several memory images and cards in this manuscript in the period between 1478 and 1505, mostly in Cracow. According to the matricula of the Cracow university, Valentinus became a bachelor in 1478, and received the master's degree in 1493 at the same place.[24] The manuscript offers further details: he copied various texts into it at the Cracow university respectively in 1478, 1493-94 and 1505.[25] In the first edition of the *Verfasserlexikon*, he was identified with an Augustinian monk, Bruder Valentin, who prepared astrological prognostica around Wrocaw at the end of the 15th century, but the new edition of the same lexicon calls attention to the fact that he started to call himself a bachelor of arts only from 1496/97 onwards, thus he cannot be identified with our Valentinus of Grünberg, who had become a master already in 1493.[26] Valentinus of Grünberg is known only from one source otherwise, an astrological *Practica* published in 1502, in which he claimed to be a canon of Vác (*canonicus Vaciensis*).[27] Thus, he must have spent at least some time in Vác at least between 1502, i.e. the publication of the *Practica*, and 1504, the copying of the memory treatise, and was a canon of the bishopric under bishop Nicholas Báthory. Nicholas Báthory (around 1435-1506) was one of the prominent humanists of the second half of the reign of King Mathias, who studied under Galeotto Marzio in Bologna between 1464 and 1469, and was in contact with several Italian humanists including Marsilio Ficino, Battista Guarino and Sebastiano Salvini.[28] Having become a bishop of Vác, he founded a "gymnasium

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[24] Wójcik, *Opusculum de arte memorativa*, 65.

[25] *Katalog rękopisów Biblioteki Zakładu Nar. Im. Ossolińskich*, ed. Wojciech Kętrzyński, vol. 3 (Lwów: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1898), 231-232. The contents of the manuscript: f. 1r-31v: Liber de causis, 31v-60r: Liber sapientis David Iudaeorum rabi. (copied in Cracow, 1505); 62r-79r: Memoriale rerum naturalium difficilium (= Liber Alexandri de intelligentiis; in studio Cracoviensi, 1493); 81r-95r: Tractatus de esse et essentia per Iohannem de Nova domo compilatus (in studio Cracoviensi, 1494); 98r-110r: Libri duo de intellectu et intelligibili; 111r-132r: Liber de esse et essentia ("In bursa philosophorum studii Cracoviensis sub anno Domini 1478"); 135r-142r: Conclusio qua ipse Bohetius suas concludit hebdomadas (1502); 143r-164r: De angelis; 168r-171r: De memoria artificiali; 174r-200r: Iacobi Publicii Florentini ars memoriae; 200v-207r: De arte iuvandi memoriam, De literis et numeris, Chartae lusoriae, Modi et tempora verborum.

[26] Ld. *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon*, ed. Karl Langosch, vol. 4, (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & CO., 1953), 668; and Francis B. Brévart, Franz Josef Worstbrock, "Bruder Valentin OESA," in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon*, ed. Burghart Wachinger and others, vol. 10, (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1999), Sp. 155-156.

[27] Unfortunately, the volume is irretrievable, and it does not appear in the catalogue of German books published in the 16th century (VD16). However, according the reference of Karl Sudhoff (*Deutsche medizinische Inkunabeln. Bibliographisch-literarische Untersuchungen* (Leipzig: Barth, 1908), 259) he received the description of the volume from Konrad Häbler (the founder of the *Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrücke*) and Valentinus called himseld there "magister Valentinus, canonicus Vaciensis," "Valentinus de Viridi Monte" and claimed to have practiced (probably astrology) in Buda as well.

[28] Dennis A. Rhodes, "Battista Guarini and a book at Oxford," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 37 (1974): 349-353; and the studies contained in *Báthory Miklós váci püspök (1474-1506) emlékezete* [The Memory of Nicholas Báthory, Bishop of Vác], ed. Alice Horváth (Vác: Cathedral Museum, 2007). He was praised for his knowledge both by Antonio Bonfini (*Rerum Ungaricarum decades*, 1st ed., Fógel and others, vol. 1 (Leipzig: Teubner, 1936), 9), and Galeotto Marzio (*De egregie, sapienter, iocose dictis et factis regis Matthiae*, ed. Ladislaus Juhász (Leipzig: Teubner, 1934), 34-35; cap. 31).
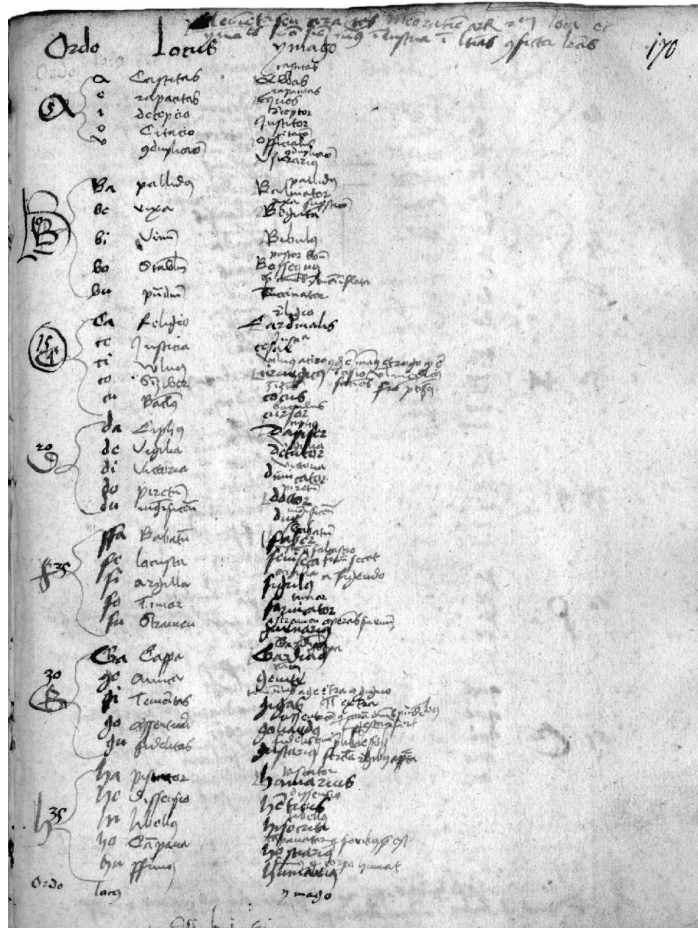
Figure 2. Conrad Celtis: Epitoma, Wrocław, Ossolineum Ms. 734/I, 170r

illustre" there, where he invited Italian professors (Francesco Negro Pescennio, Bernardino d'Udine). Francesco Pescennio Negro was called to teach as a canon at the school of Nicholas Báthory probably in 1503 or 1504,[29] thus exactly when Valentinus of Grünberg received his canonry in Vác. It is probable that he also copied the short treatise *De arte iuvandi memoriam* at the end of the manuscript (200r-) in Hungary, as he uses a Hungarian word (*bor* – wine) as an example of borrowing a memory image from a foreign language.[30]

The text copied in Vác in 1504 is a modified version of the memory treatise of Conrad Celtis (figure 2). Valentinus omits the name of the author of the treatise and inserts a short introductory paragraph to the beginning of the treatise: people generally desire

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[29] See Judith Rice Henderson, "Francesco Negro of Venice," in *Contemporaries of Erasmus*, ed. Peter G. Bietenholz and others, vol. 3 (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1987), 10-11.

[30] *Habita nonnumquam diccione latina, quae non significat rem aliquam ponderosam visibilem, capimus imaginem eius auxilio alterius linguae ut por diccione latina cum nihil significat apud latinos ponam tamen pro imagine id quod in alia lingua significat, hoc est vinum. Nam por est lingua ungarica et significat vinum.* Ms. Ossol. 734/I, 201r.

Figure 3. The active and passive conjugation. Memory images drawn by Valentinus de Monteviridi. Wrocław, Ossolineum Ms. 734/I, f. 206v–207r

to improve their natural abilities and circumstances: peasants irrigate their land for better production, and we build houses so that rain would not fall on us. In a similar manner, memory can be improved artificially. This idea appears in a very similar form in the second paragraph of a very popular treatise on the art of memory, starting with the words *Memoria fecunda Deus Pater*. The text of Valentinus paraphrases the same ideas, and sometimes quotes word by word the sentence of this early treatise, originating from Bologna, 1425:[31]

> [N]emini dubium est naturam arte iuuari, ad quod credendum quotidiana edocemur experientia: propter enim vitae commoditatem varia artificia hominibus adinventa sunt: ob id enim (vt mille innumerabilibus[32] obmittantur exempla) agricola arte terram sulcat seminat et ipsam irrigat, vt fecundior cum fenore ager sibi fructum afferet, arte praeterea extruuntur aedificia vt mortale genus ab imbribus et celi calamitatibus esset securum. Codices insuper exarantur, vt quae a memoria nostra labili decurrunt, per eos in praesentias scientias nobis comminiscentibus devenirent, pariformiter hoc in spiritualibus reperitur, vt per quasdam ymagines loca et per inscripciones memoria potest secundaria[33] natura ipsam noster animus firmius inscripta per id in memoria potest retinere: quare naturam arte posse iuuari manifestum est.
> [U]t ergo propositum multis ambagibus exclusis prosequimur, *id sciat in primis memorari volens memoriam ipsam fore bipartitam in naturalem videlicet et artificialem*.[34]

> Sapientum tradit auctoritas – et ad experiendum nos cottidiana cogit necessitas, quod ars adiuvat naturam in corporalibus et spiritualibus, propter enim commoditatem vite corporalis tam varia artificia manualia sunt inventa, et ubi deficit natura, supplet artificium. […] Nam primo, propter cibum contra famem agricola terram sulcat arte, seminat et runkat, plantat et rigat, ut terra fructum afferat, incrementum tamen Deo dante. […] Tercio, pro tegumento nature nostre a sole et a pluvia, arte fiunt edificia et ad hominum usum varium varia instrumenta. […] Quinto, per scriptores libri manuales, tamquam quedam memorialia, nostre memorie labili, que natura non valet, arte coaptantur.[35] (*Memoria fecunda*, Bologna, 1425)

The introduction is followed by the text of Celtis' treatise with a few modifications, and Valentinus attaches a sentence and a poem to the end of the *ars* as well.[36] It seems, that Valentinus tried to put the theories of Celtis into practice as he linked his own associations to each word in the alphabet of Celtis, up to the letter M, and he even changed the meaning of those seven elements which were defined by Celtis. An abbot meant religio for Celtis, for him it is chastity (*castitas*), the just knight (*eques*) of Celtis means robbery (*rapacitas*) for him, the ecclesiastic judge (*officialis*) recalls a citation (*citacio*) in him instead of a process (*lis*). The bather becomes a pallid (*pallidus*) person instead of meaning dirty people, and the superstitious beguine is associated here

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[31] About this treatise cf. Heimann-Seelbach, *Ars und scientia*, 28-34.

[32] Instead of *innumerabilia*?

[33] Instead of "s/fecundari a"?

[34] Italics mark the beginning of the text of Celtis.

[35] Pack, *An Ars memorativa*, 229. This introduction is also transmitted in the treatise 'Attendentes nonnulli philosophie professores' (Heimann-Seelbach, i.m., 40).

[36] *Ingenuo sermone loqui versuque canoro // ludere et articulis increpuisse lyram // Nemo sine assiduo (si quid mihi creditis usu) // Nemo sine assiduo scire labore putet* (169v).

to quarelling (*rixa*). As Celtis said, "it helps the memory a great deal, if someone knows the things of the world,"[37] and Valentinus followed this advice when he refilled the table of Celtis with meanings of his own. He wrote the associations he invented next to each word, and with minute letters he repeated this over the words themselves, which suggests, that he tried to memorise them in practice. The strange words in Celtis' list got annotated, but often it is still not clear what the signification of some words was (e.g. the word *kinglios* is annotated: *prudens cancellarius hinc*).[38]

The other reason why the manuscript of Valentinus of Grünberg is of interest to us, is because of his copy of the memory treatise of Jacobus Publicius and the images that follow it. The treatise itself is annotated on the margins, and the explanator sometimes contradicts Publicius concerning the history of the art of memory (Simonides or Metrodorus). On the folios 205v-206r, six images illustrate how to remember nouns in cases (e.g. the sign for the genitive is a man with bent knees, holding a baby in a basket over his head; the dative is a man offering money; the accusative holds a goose – auca, etc.).[39] The following folios 206v-207r are occupied by the images of nude male and female figures, which is to illustrate how to remember the exact form of a conjugated verb in the active (male) and passive (female) voice (figure 3). The conjugation of the active voice is to be memorised on the body parts of a nude man, who stabs his own leg with a sword. This image is a good example of the mechanisation of the need for surprise in mnemonic images as the surprising, striking element of the image is not connected anyhow the meanings that are attributed to the body parts. Stabbing oneself with a sword is a typical 'surprise' element in 15-16th century mnemotechnics. One can find the same motif in the anonymous figurative Gospel (ca. 1470, *Figurae Evangeliorum*), e.g. in the second image of the Gospel of Marc (figure 4),[40] or in the *Logica memorativa* of Thomas Murner (1509, figure 5).[41] In the image of the

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[37] *Multo autem pro re consequenda adiumento nobis erit si humanarum rerum experienciam habuerimus.* Celtis, *Epitoma in vtramque*, 14v.

[38] Bateman says, that it is an obscene word, but he does not tell what he thinks of (Bateman, "The Art of Rhetoric," 144). In some other cases, the notes indeed help: quiscularius seems to mean fistularius (*qui sonum facit in fistulo*), xantorix is somebody, who takes a lot of care for his hair (*qui capillarum ornatui intendunt*); xisticus is "stipendiarius."

[39] *De casibus. Sex in singulari numero, et sex in plurali numero. Ymago nominativi singularis crato modo se habet. Ymago genitivi singularis inclinat genua et superiusque habeat puerum in ante. Ymago dativi portavit et exponat pecuniam et det. Ymago activi singularis quiescat in pectore et habeat aucam. Ymago vocativi annuet et digitis ad se vocet. Ablativus quiescit in dorso et affert res. In plurali in nominativo et obliquis ymagines cum istis gestibus duces fiunt ut numerus pluralis habet duas ymagines crato modo stantes genitivos duas inflexas ad genua etc.*

[40] *Figurae Evangeliarum* (Pforzheim: Thomas Anshelm, 1502). Modern edition: *The medieval craft of memory, An anthology of texts and pictures*, ed. Mary Carruthers and Jan M. Ziolkowski (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 277.

[41] Thomas Murner, *Logica memorativa. Chartiludium logice* (Strassburg: Schürer, 1509), sig. f2v-f3v. Already an early *Artis memorandi precepta* (Lübeck: Lukas Brandis, ca. 1478) suggests, that we should memorise verbs in the passive voice with painful things (*delectabile et mirabile activum, flebile passivum*, f. 3r). On Murner's work see Detlef Hoffmann, "Die mnemonische Kartenspiele Thomas Murners," in *Seelenmaschinen. Gattungstraditionen, Funktionen und Leistungsgrenzen der Mnemotechniken vom späten Mittelalter bis zum Beginn der Moderne*, ed. Jörg Jochen Berns and Wolfgang Neuber, Frühneuzeit-Studien, N.F. 2 (Wien: Böhlau, 2000), 585-604; Massimiliano Rossi, "'Res logicas ... sensibus ipsis palpandas prebui:' immagini della memoria, didattica e gioco nel 'Chartiludium logice' di Thomas

Figurae Evangeliorum, an immense needle is pierced through the left leg of a lion (= Marc), referring to the tenth chapter of this Gospel, the parable of the camel and the rich man and the eye of the needle. Thus the act of piercing through the leg is directly connected to the topic to be memorised, this painful image simply helps the memory. The image I quoted from Thomas Murner's treatise contains the definition of the notion of quality, which has four modes (*modi*). The third of these modes is the *passibilis qualitas*, i.e. passion. The sword pierced through the leg is a reasonable association in Murner's image as the act of piercing is directly connected to the act of (*transfixo gladio passionem vel passibilem qualitatem* [intelligas]). In comparison with these two parallels, this element seems to be a previously unconventional, but eventually a conventionalised tool to draw attention to the image in the case of picture painted by Valentin of Grünberg. The closest analogue to this nude couple can be found in the work of

Figure 4. Rationarium Evangelistarum, Pforzheim, Thomas Anshelm, 1502, 12r

Jacobus Publicius: a similar woodcut appears in the 1485 edition of his *Oratoriae artis epitoma* for the first time (figure 6).[42] However, Publicius does not explain the meaning of that image at all, a phenomenon that is restricted to this one picture in his book. The lack of explanation for these enigmatic images raised the value of the lectures of the professor and at the same time kept the secrecy of the *ars*.[43] Similar antropomorphic imagines were designed by Johannes Romberch von Host in his *Congestorium artificiosae memoriae*, published for the first time in 1520. He associated the declention of nouns to body parts: if we want remember the word "smith" in the nominative case, we should mark him with a blister on his head, in the accusative with a blister on the chest, in the vocative on the belly, etc.; the singular forms are supposed to be dressed up, while the plurals are nude.[44]

The art of memory of Celtis exerted influence on the memory culture of the Central European region well after his death. Perhaps its most interesting testimony is a treatise

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Murner," *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa, Classe di lettere e filosofia* 20 (1990): 1990, 831-877, and the study of Benedek Láng in this volume.

[42] Publicius, *Oratoriae artis Epitomata*, 1485, H1v.

[43] Explanations appear only in manuscript versions of the treatise, e.g. in Augsburg, Cod. II. 1. 2° 94, 167v. For a reproduction see Barbara Kuhn, *Gedächtniskunst im Unterricht* (München: Iudicium, 1993), 55-59.

[44] Johann Host von Romberch, *Congestorium artificiosae memoriae* (Velence: Melchior Sessa, 1533), 60v-61v. According to Romberch, Petrus Ravennas used nudity as a sign of plural, however, this idea does not appear in in those editions of the *Phoenix* of Petrus that I know.

Applicatio

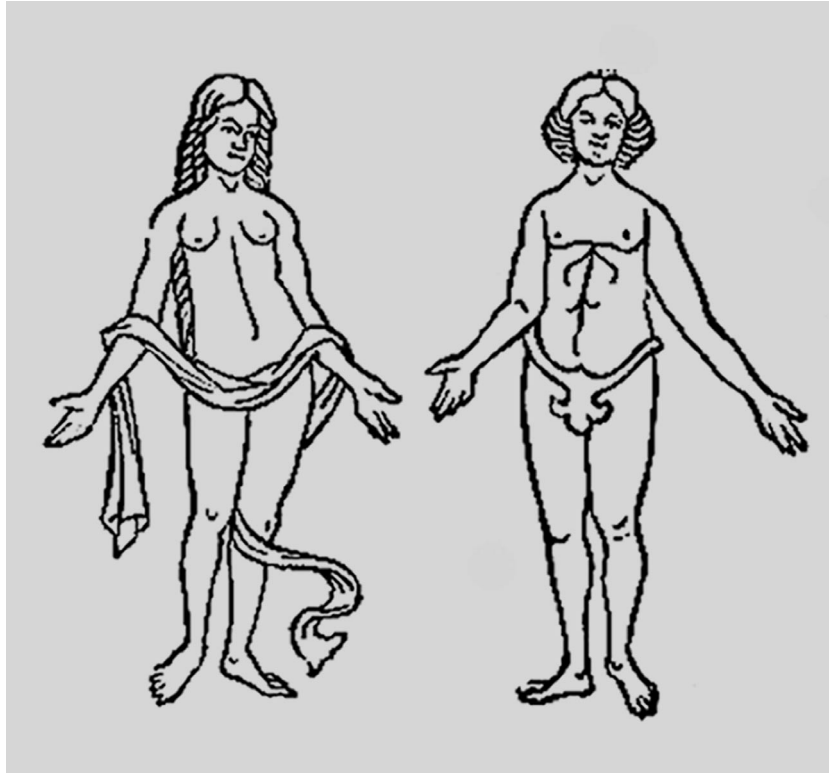Figure 5. Thomas Murner, Logica memorativa. Chartiludium logice, Strassburg, Grüninger, 1509, F3r

Figure 6. Jacobus Publicius, Oratoriae artis epitoma, Venice, Erhard Ratdolt, 1485, H1v

of Johannes Enclen de Cusa (Cusanus), the *Tractatulus artificiose memorie*, which appeared for the first time in Frankfurt a.d. Oder in 1510 and was reprinted later in Vienna at Vietor of Singrenius printing house in 1514.[45] The author was one of those wandering scholars who followed the trail of Jacobus Publicius and who earned their living in the university towns of Northern Europe by teaching the techniques of artificial memory to students. In 1529, in Cracow, probably already at the end of his carrier when he appeared in the list of the professors of the university as a "lector artificiose memorie,"[46] he confesses that he had been teaching in seven countries, at 19 different universities. A preliminary research of his career shows that he was professing this art in Cologne (1501), Zwolle (1502), Erfurt (1505), Frankfurt a.d. Oder (1510), Vienna

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[45] This rare booklet and its author is missing in most biographical lexicons, and only the Viennese edition of this booklet appears in VD 16 (ZV 4213). The only copy of the 1510 Frankfurt a.d. Oder edition (by Johannes Hanaw) is in Uppsala University Library, Ink. 31:230 (1), catalogued as Johannes Cusinus. An annotated copy of the 1514 Vienna edition: Országos Széchényi Könyvtár (Budapest), Ant. 10008. A third edition, not mentioned in VD16, was printed in Leipzig in 1519, at the printing press of J. Thanner, at the expenses of Johannes Cusanus (copies: The Hague, Konink. Bibl. 225 J 26; Oxford, Bodleian, Douce N 243).

[46] Wójcik, *Opusculum de arte memorativa*, 80. His entire name appears there as "Johannes Kusanus Petri Henklen de Kusan d. Triverensis, magister Coloniensis."

(1514), Leipzig (1519), Lübeck (1523-27), Copenhague (1524), and Cracow (1529).[47] The volume was published together with the paratexts of Hermann von dem Busche, Hermann Trebelius, Eberhard Verberius Dantiscus (Eberhard Ferber, a student of Cusanus) and it was used as a teaching aid in his course as it can be seen from the marginal notes accompanying the text in the Budapest copy of the 1514, Vienna edition. Cusanus, being a teacher in mathematics, imagines a more abstract, almost geometrical, scheme for the memory houses in which he combined the method of Publicius with the alphabet of Celtis: the images should be contained in three types of houses. The bigger houses may hold five middle size houses inside (at the four corners and in the middle), each of the middle size houses may hold five smaller houses, and the smaller houses contain the images.[48] However, he also mentions the possibility of imagining triangular houses, with three corner elements, and one in the middle, but also supports the usage of a tree with branches forking in seven directions – an idea that he might have conceived during his teaching of the *Arbor consanguinitatis*. The 1510 edition of the Tractatulus contains the woodcuts of the symbolic letters and numbers invented by Publicius.[49] Although Celtis rejected the use of such figurative letters and he promoted his own alphabetic-associative system instead, still, Cusanus copied both methods in his treatise. However, he only copies the words of the mnemonic alphabet of Celtis but not the associative method itself. The first five elements of Celtis (in the work of Cusanus: *abbas*, *eques*, *illuminator*, *organista*, *usurarius*) are not associative *topoi* anymore, but only the scheme of a ready-made mental book (*liber mentalis*).

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[47] A full account of the known data of his life and the origins of his treatise will appear in our book "The Art of Memory in Late Medieval East Central Europe (Bohemia, Hungary, Poland): An Anthology," co-written by Lucie Doležalová, Rafał Wójcik and myself.

[48] The differentiation between greater, middle size and smaller (*loci maximi*, *maiores*, *minores*) appear in earlier treatises of the 15th century (cf. Heimann-Seelbach, *Ars und scientia*, 125).

[49] The design is different from that of Publicius or Jan Szklarek. See Uppsala University Library, Ink. 31:230 (1), B3r-C7v. The symbolic letters and numbers might have been inserted into the later editions, as well, e.g. in the Watkinson Library copy (BF370.C87 1514) of the 1514 Vienna edition (Trinity College, Hartford, US; kind information of Dr. Jeffrey Kaimowitz).