The Art of Rhetoric in Gregor Reisch’s *Margarita Philosophica* and Conrad Celtes’ *Epitome of the Two Rhetorics of Cicero*

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Gregor Reisch, sometime Master of Arts at the University of Freiburg im Breisgau, prior of the Freiburg Charterhouse from 1502 to his death in 1525, confessor to the Emperor Maximilian, first won fame with the publication of his *Margarita Philosophica*, an epitome, as he called it, of all philosophy.\(^1\) He had apparently begun the work in the early or mid 1490’s, but scattered references and dates show that he was still working on it a few months before its initial publication in July 1503.\(^2\) For instance, in the Tractate on Letter-writing in Book III, he gives as an

\(^1\) Erasmus said of him in 1516: “His views have the weight of an oracle in Germany” (P. S. Allen, *Opus Epistolarum*, II [Oxford, 1910], p. 327, No. 456, 181). For Reisch’s biography and a survey of the contents of the *Margarita Philosophica* see especially Gustav Münzel, *Der Kartäuserprior Gregor Reisch und seine Margarita Philosophica* (Freiburg i. Br., 1937), reprinted from Zeitschrift des Freiburger Geschichtesvereins 45 (1934), pp. 1-87. Cf. also Robert, Ritter von Srbik, *Die Margarita Philosophica des Gregor Reisch († 1525)*. *Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Naturwissenschaften in Deutschland*, Denkschriften, Akad. d. Wiss. in Wien, Mathnatuw. Kl., 104 (Vienna, 1941), pp. 82-205; Karl Hartfelder, “Der Karthäuserprior Gregor Reisch, Verfasser der Margarita philosophica,” *Zeitschrift f. d. Geschichte des Oberreins* 44 (1890), pp. 170-200. I have examined all eight of the authorized and unauthorized editions (below, note 4), but have used primarily the Freiburg 1503 and Basle 1508 editions for this study. Page references are given to both editions since pagination in the authorized second (1504) edition is similar to that in the first edition, and in the fourth (1517) edition to that in the third (1508).

\(^2\) On p. \(3^v\) (1503) there is a poem by Adam Werner which serves as a kind of preface to the book and urges Reisch to publish his “Epithoma” as quickly as possible. This poem is given in the second (1504) edition the date: *III Kal. Ianuarias. MCCCC. bxxvii* (30 December 1496). This date does not occur in the first edition, and was dropped for some reason (was it incorrect?) in the third edition, where the poem is placed with other
example of one way to date a letter: *vicesima Nouembris anni Millesimi quingentesimi secundi.* 3 The book appears to have been well received by university students and teachers in upper Germany. Reisch’s authorized printer, Johann Schott, and later his successor Michael Furter, found themselves engaged in a competition for this reading public with Johannes Grüninger of Strassburg. Each firm produced four editions apiece of the *Margarita* between 1503 and 1517. Ten years after Reisch’s death Conrad Resch hired Henri Petri in Basle to print a new edition revised by Oronce Fine. 4 Almost fifty years later, in 1583, the market could still support a reprint of the 1535 edition. 5

Much of this success was doubtless due to Reisch’s remarkable ability to compress a large amount of information into a small compass

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3 1503 p. e8v = 1508 p. k7r. Münzel (above, note 1), p. 6, thought this might have been the day Reisch was actually writing this part.

4 Bibliographical details in John Ferguson, “The *Margarita Philosophica* of Gregorius Reisch. A Bibliography,” *The Library,* 4th ser., 10 (1929), 194-216; cf. also Hartfelder (above, note 1), 192-200. The publication data show that Schott issued his first edition “near the feast of St. Margaret” (July 20), 1503, in Freiburg (cf. however Josef Benzing, *Die Buchdrucker des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts im deutschen Sprachgebiet* [Wiesbaden, 1963], p. 412, who mentions the problems connected with this location for the press). It evidently sold well, and a second edition was being printed for publication on March 16, 1504, when another Strassburg printer, Johannes Grüninger, hurried out a pirated edition on February 24. Schott accordingly inserted a notice to the reader informing him that only his edition was revised by the author, and “the edition of others contained foreign matter.” The third authorized edition, published by Schott and Furter in Basle in 1508, and likewise the fourth edition, published by Furter alone in 1517 in Basle, also claim additions and revisions made by Reisch and warn against the “lying stigmata” of Grüninger’s editions (Strassburg 1504, 1512, and 1515). In the absence of a critical edition of the *Margarita*, these claims cannot be easily checked. No changes, apart from the correction of typographical errors and improvements in punctuation, were made in Book III between the first and fourth editions. Grüninger replaced Reisch’s sections on Memory and on Letter-writing by a version of Peter of Ravena’s *Phoenix* (below, note 23), and by a *Modus componendi Epistolae* by Beroaldus (ascribed to Filippo Beroaldo in the British Museum Catalog). He also increased the utility of the book to students by adding several short treatises on various subjects (cf. Ferguson, pp. 208-212). These alterations are presumably his “lies”.

and still be readable. The use of the dialogue form, traditional in pedagogical works, contributed to this readability. A bright discipulus puts questions to his well-informed magister. But even more is contributed by Reisch’s literary skills. He writes a good and clear expository Latin, largely free from university barbarisms. The work is sometimes called an encyclopedia, as in the title of a poem by Jacob Locher (Philomusus) praising the book, and in the title of the 1583 edition. But it is more properly a compendium or epitome, which is what Reisch himself considered his work to be. In pursuit of this goal he digested the content of numerous works by his contemporaries and predecessors in the university world, illustrated their ideas from his own wide reading in the Bible and in classical, patristic and scholastic authors, and had the published book equipped with a wonderful array of pictures. He thus produced what Münzel calls a “Kosmos der Wissenschaften,” a summa of what every college graduate in 1500 was expected to know. There is scarcely another book of the period which so sharply exposes the intellectual, and also in many respects the everyday, world of late medieval Germany.

Though Reisch was to a considerable degree a supporter of the New Learning, the studia humanitatis occupy a comparatively small piece of territory in this world. And in the artes sermocinales of the Trivium, Rhetoric takes a distant third place in Book III, one of the shortest of the twelve books into which the Margarita is divided. In book I, on Grammatica, Reisch follows the basic outline of Donatus and Alexander’s Doctrinale, probably in keeping with the curriculum at the University of Freiburg. (Though Priscian is depicted as the representative of advanced grammar in the woodcut illustration introducing this Book, it was evidently Alexander’s book which was actually read in class.) However, Reisch seems also to have been guided by the more elementary Compendium octo partium orationis (also known as the Opusculum quintupertitum grammaticale pro pueris in lingua latina breuiter erudiendis), a textbook widely used in the lower schools in the Netherlands, where it originated, and in upper Germany and hence probably

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6In the introductory address to ingenui Adolescentes (1503, p. π 2\(^{2}\)) which becomes in 1508 the Ad lectorem auctoris conclusio (p. R7\(^{2}\)). Münzel (above, note 1), p. 52, n. 90, collects several passages where Reisch makes remarks similar to what he says to the Adolescentes — epitoma omnis philosophie: quantitate quidem parum, sed continentia immensus. Locher’s poem is on p. R8\(^{5}\) in the 1508 edition.

7Münzel (above, note 1), p. 87.

very familiar to most students. Book II is devoted to the most important subject in the Trivium, *Dialectica*, and is almost as long as the survey of grammatical knowledge. It is similarly based upon textbooks actually used for teaching logic and disputation: Aristotle (especially the *Topics* and *Sophistici Elenchi*), Peter of Spain, and Paul of Venice.

Book III, which is only one-third as long as either Book I or Book II (some 22 pages compared to their 65 to 70), consists of two Tractates. The first and larger is entitled *De partibus orationis rhetoricae*. It is divided into 23 chapters, each of which, after the introductory first chapter, is apparently to be considered a *pars*. The second and much briefer Tractate, seven chapters in a scant four pages, covers the topic *De epistolis condendis*.

A striking feature of the *Margarita* is the use of numerous woodcut illustrations. Philosophia herself, surrounded by her different kinds of knowledge, appears on the title page, and each of the seven Liberal Arts has a full-page illustration at the start of her respective book. "Rethorica" [*sic*] is presented in a pose more often associated with "Justice" (see Plate). She is sitting on a throne and wearing the Girdle of Justice. A sword and a lily emerge from her flaming mouth. Her breast is the seat of the Muses. The hem of her ornate robe proclaims *Colores, Enthymema, Exemplum*. Crowned with a laurel wreath she holds out the book of Poetry to Virgil with her right hand and the book of History to Sallust with her left. Behind her stand Justinian, holding the orb of empire and the book of Laws, Aristotle (on her right) with the book of Natural Philosophy, and Seneca (on her left) with the book of Moral Philosophy. The trial of Milo is being enacted in front of her throne with Cicero, *pater eloquentiae*, addressing the *Senatus Populus Romanus* and a regal consul (Pompey?); a *corona* of the populace

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9Cf. Münzel (above, note 1), p. 56, n. 91. The *Compendium* incorporates almost verbatim another elementary textbook, the *Exercitium puerorum grammaticale* which likewise originated in the Netherlands and was used in the lower schools of upper Germany; cf. Johannes Müller, *Quellenschriften und Geschichte des deutschsprachlichen Unterrichts* (Gotha, 1882), pp. 241-51, 259-60. Münzel notes that the *Compendium* has close associations with Basle and the Basle Charterhouse. Reisch was prior of the nearby Buxheim Charterhouse in 1501 and may well have composed Book I during this time.


12The lettering on her breast is not completely decipherable. Grüninger's artist, in copying this woodcut, puts *Musae* here, which seems to be more or less correct.
The same woodcut is used for the editions of 1503, 1504 and 1517.
stands behind him. The artist’s conception of rhetoric certainly corresponds well with Cicero’s belief that una est eloquentia (De orat. III. 6. 22), and displays the subject of rhetoric in all its ramifications. Reisch’s presentation in words falls a good way short of this ideal. His discipulus has learned from Grammar how to express his ideas in correct language, and from Dialectic how to use arguments to elucidate the truth and falsity of this language. But, he says, in hoc ipso deficere mihi videor. quod nondum eas [sc. ratiocinationes] eo ingenio exornandas per nosco: quo rerum, de quibus sermo est conditio expostulat. Quite true, replies the magister; it is the liberal art of rhetoric which supplies this knowledge.

With this beginning we would expect to find the treatment of rhetoric centered on style and copia verborum. Instead Reisch begins chapter I in isagogic fashion with a series of questions: Quid Rhetorica: a quo primo tradita: quid rhetor: quid rhetoris officium: et quot genera causarum. The Master’s answers to the first, third and fourth of these questions come from Isidore’s Etymologiae (2. 1 ff.). He is unable to answer the second question about the inventor of rhetoric; he knows only that Demosthenes and Cicero cultivated the art brilliantly and that no learned person has ever neglected it because of the benefits which arise from it. But help is at hand. From this point on in Book III, in keeping with his stance as an epitomator, Reisch epitomizes what was

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13 The iconography goes back ultimately to the description of Rhetoric in Martianus Capella, 5. 426-29, though none of the details in the woodcut except the ornamental dress and perhaps the presence of the sword goes back directly to Capella, but this seems to be typical of the medieval renderings of the Liberal Arts; cf. Emile Mâle, L’art religieux du xiié siècle en France (Paris 1931), pp. 82-86. Donald Lemen Clark, “Rhetoric and the Literature of the English Middle Ages,” Quarterly Journal of Speech 45 (1959), pp. 19-21 (reprinted in Lionel Crocker and Paul H. Carmack, Readings in Rhetoric [Springfield, Ill., 1965], pp. 220-221), suggests that Rhetoric’s elaborate coiffure and gown in the Reisch illustration stand for beauty of style (cf. cincinnus, calamister, vestire in Cicero’s rhetorical metaphors). The frontispiece of the first and second authorized editions likewise depicts Rhetorica with flowing ringlets, which contrast with the tightly braided hair of Logica, and the partly bouffant, partly loose hair of Grammatica. Rhetorica’s emblem here is a scroll with a dangling seal, which perhaps refers to the connection with law and government suggested by the illustration in Book III. The woodcut for this frontispiece was apparently broken during the printing of the second edition and was replaced by a new cut with a completely new illustration in the 1508 edition. In the new version, Rhetorica seems to be holding a lance or sword in her left hand (or it may be the rod of office like the sceptre held in the left hand of the “consul” in the Rethorica cut). She is either pointing to this object with her right hand, or is making an oratorical gesture with this hand of the kind common in the medieval iconography of rhetoric. The imitation of the Rethorica woodcut in Grüninger’s editions is artistically feeble and less rich in suggesting the overall significance of Rhetoric.

14 The printed text has deficere mihi videor; an evident dittography.
already an epitome, Conrad Celtes’ *Epitoma in vtranque Ciceronis rhetoricam cum arte memoratiiua noua et modo epistolandi vitae sissimo.*

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Celtes came to the University of Ingolstadt in late 1491 to teach literature and rhetoric for one-half year as an extraordinary lecturer.\(^1^5\) The *Epitoma* is the first published product of this endeavor.\(^1^6\) As the title indicates, the work consists of a (very selective) epitome of Cicero’s *De Inventione,* and of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium,* which was still thought to be by Cicero, all in twenty pages (a2\(^v\) - b4\(^v\));\(^1^7\) an allegedly novel treatment of artificial memory (b4\(^v\) - 5\(^v\)) with an appended table of mnemonic letters and words (c2),\(^1^8\) and a Tractate on letter-writing (b5\(^v\) - c1\(^v\)). The book does not seem ever to have been reprinted in its entirety and certainly did not fulfill, at least directly, Celtes’ hopes for it: ‘Following only Cicero’s words, and almost the whole thread of his discourse, we have been brought to this hope: If someday our young men and students of the good arts imbibe this foretaste like a draught of their first milk, they can easily rise to Ciceronian eloquence and to rivalry with Italian letters.’\(^1^9\) Celtes also advances a


\(^{1^6}\)Published without indication of place, date, or printer; cf. *Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke,* 6 (Stuttgart - New York 1968), No. 6463. Celtes’ prefatory letter dedicating the book to Maximilian I is dated March 28, 1492. In addition to the Epitome of rhetoric, the book also contains four of the poems from his Polish period. I have used a microfilm of the copy in the Annenary Brown Library, Brown University.


\(^{1^8}\)Frances R. Yates does not mention Celtes in her *Art of Memory* (Chicago 1966). According to Harry Caplan, *Of Eloquence. Studies in Ancient and Mediaeval Rhetoric,* Anne King and Helen North, edd., (Ithaca, N.Y. 1970), p. 246, Celtes was the first to use letters instead of visual backgrounds in a mnemonic system. Celtes’ system combines these letters with a set of numbers and multiple series of verbal images in a rather complex way, though he claims greater simplicity for his approach compared to the “place” system.

\(^{1^9}\)Letter to Maximilian, a2\(^v\). Celtes developed his general views on the function of literature and rhetoric in university education in his *Oratio in gymnasio in Ingolstadio publice recitata,* reprinted in Rupprich (above, note 15), pp. 226-38. The *Epitoma* is reprinted with Gerardus Bucoldianus, *De Inventione et Amplificatione Oratoria: seu Vsu locorum, libri tres,* (and with some other rhetorical-dialectical writings), Strassburg: Johann Albert,
Ciceronian view of the value of rhetoric: "the composition of all history and every kind of speaking and writing arise and flow from these Ciceronian principles as from a seedbed."\(^{20}\) We do not know whether Reisch was influenced by these claims in deciding to incorporate Celtes’ treatise in his *Margarita*, or even by Celtes’ rising reputation as an author and expert in the Humanities. He was perhaps moved primarily by the book’s small scale, and the easy way it offered for digesting a subject in which he does not really appear to have much interest. Reisch was in Ingolstadt in May 1494 and probably acquired his copy of Celtes’ book there.\(^{21}\) But there is no evidence that he ever met Celtes personally or communicated in any way directly with him. Nevertheless, the first edition of the *Margarita* contains poems by Adam Werner and Dietrich Ulsen who did have such connections with Celtes. Ulsen in particular had been a member of Celtes’ later Sodalitas Litteraria Danubiana in Vienna and was, like Reisch, a Master at Freiburg (he became professor of medicine there in 1504).\(^{22}\) Whatever Reisch’s reasons were then for using Celtes’ work, he gave it an unforeseen (and anonymous) divulgation through the *Margarita Philosophica*.

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Of the twenty-one chapters constituting the body of Reisch’s *Tractatus I De partibus orationis rhetoricae* (c. 2-22), only chapter 8 (On Narration and Division) and chapter 16 (On Arranging the Parts of Speech [i.e. nouns, verbs etc. in sentences]) do not derive largely from Celtes. Likewise, chapter 23 (On Memory) stems from Celtes, though Reisch here extracts the bare essentials of Celtes’ method and omits his explanations and examples. Reisch also revised and simplified Celtes’

\(^{20}\)Letter to Maximilian, a2\(^{c}\); the confusion of metaphors is Celtes’.

\(^{21}\)He matriculated on May 9. He was probably there as the tutor of a young student placed in his charge, Franz Wolfgang, Count of Hohenzollern; cf. Münzel (above, note 1), pp. 3-4. Celtes himself returned to Ingolstadt the same month; Rupprich (above, note 15), p. 41.

\(^{22}\)Cf. Hartfelder (above, note 1), pp. 178-179; Münzel pp. 11-27.
rather exotic mnemonic table. Similarly the second Tractate *De condendis epistolis* is a simplified and occasionally improved abridgement of Celtes’ *Tractatus de condendis epistolis*.

Reisch, however, was not a mere excerptor of another’s work. He had an independent knowledge of rhetoric, and a different outlook on life from Celtes. He freely modifies Celtes’ work, and here and there corrects it from his own reading of the two rhetorics. A detailed comparison is not possible here, but a few examples will illustrate both Celtes’ epitomizing and Reisch’s adaptations. In quoting these texts I have expanded abbreviations and corrected obvious typographical errors silently. Orthography and punctuation are those of the original editions.

1. On the constituent parts of Invention.


Though clearly dependent here on Celtes, Reisch has corrected and expanded Celtes’ list of the parts of invention either from his own memory or by checking its source in the *Rhet. ad Her.*

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23Yates (above, note 18), p. 112, says this chapter was taken from Peter of Ravenna’s *Phoenix, sive artificiosa memoria* (ed. pr., Venice 1491), but this was one of Grüninger’s substitutions (cf. note 4). Grüninger’s action in replacing Celtes’ treatment, like Mentzinger’s later (above, note 19), probably reflects some dissatisfaction with Celtes’ novel approach. Reisch himself replaces Celtes’ weird alphabet with a more conventional Roman one (omitted or dropped in the third edition) and also many of his image words. He seems to have felt the latter offensive in some respect. So he replaces Celtes’ *bibulus* with *binder*, *fornicator* with *fossaator*. The obscure *reccarius* is replaced by *regnina* and *testamentarius* by *testator*. A sly substitution is *poeta* for *podagrosus*. Strange words like *kakademon*, *kerkitecor*, *kinglios* (which is also obscene), *koradion* are replaced by common German ones.

24The typesetter apparently mistook the p in *apta* for p (= per) or a piece of type
2. The epichireme.


c) Reisch (el' f. = i8°): Dis[cipulus]. Quid est ratiocinatio? Magister. Est oratio ex ipsa re aliquid probabile eliciens. Eam quintupertitam inuenies. scilicet: Expositione: expositionis con-

was in the wrong place in his jobcase. Once introduced the error remains.

25 Expositio replaces propositio at I. 20. 32 and elsewhere, so Celtes' use of expositio instead of propositio is to be expected; cf. De inv. I. 37. 67: Propositio per quam locus is breviter exponitur.

26 Illus comprobationis? illata ratione? Cicero, De inv. I. 37. 67, defines this element of the epichireme as per quam id quod adsumptum est rationibus firmatur. Reisch evidently did not know what the text in Celtes meant and, following Rhet. ad Her. directly, omits it.

27 An error for expositioni, probably made by Celtes himself.
Illinois Classical Studies, VIII.1


Celtes (or his source if he is not working directly from Cicero) omits the definitions of expositionis comprobatio and of ratio, and jumps ahead to the separate topic of the appropriate omission of individual parts of the epichireme in a particular argument. He then attaches to this topic the even later topic of defects (vitia) in the different parts of the epichireme. His epitome is thus sketchy in the extreme on this subject and verges on unintelligibility. Nevertheless, Reisch follows his sequence of topics, but then backtracks to fill in the missing definitions of ratio and rationis confirmatio which he takes directly from the Rhet. ad Her. He obviously did not notice that he was repeating the definition of exornatio. He also assimilates the "form" of the epichireme to the syllogism with its major and minor premises (the discipulus having studied Dialectic can do this). This (erroneous) idea leads him into thinking the complexio is analogous to the conclusion of the syllogism. 29 Since he has looked into the Rhet. ad Her. in order to make sense of Celtes' treatment, he is then led astray by the juxtaposition of the discussions of complexio vitiosa and of conclusio there (II. 29. 46 and 30. 47); the idea that 'conclusions' are used to round off the main parts of the speech has of course nothing to do with the epichireme.


In this section of his Epitoma (b2v - 3v), Celtes follows closely the list of nineteen figures of thought in the Rhetorica ad Herennium, but omits (presumably inadvertently) contentio (no. 9 in the Auctor's

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28 Sic; he should have written comprobatione.

29 Conclusio is sometimes used for complexio as in Rhet. ad Her. III. 9. 16.
treatment, *ibid. 58*) and *significatio* (no. 17, *ibid. 67*). He ends the section elegantly, if somewhat incorrectly, with *conclusio*, a figure of dictio (cf. *Rhet. ad Her.* IV. 30. 41), and illustrates it with his own conclusion to the section (though drawing on *Rhet. ad Her.* again, IV. 56. 69). Reisch who, since he is following Celtes, likewise does not have *conclusio* in its proper place omits it here too, doubtless because it is not a figure of thought. Instead he adds the two figures missing from Celtes' discussion, but in the reverse order of their occurrence in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*: first *significatio*, then *contentio*. It looks as though he went backwards through *Rhet. ad Her.* to check Celtes' accuracy and appended the two missing figures as he came to them. In place of Celtes' ending he says simply: *Hi sunt colores quibus (et si non omnibus saltem aliquibus) vti debet orator pro necessitate cause* [e5v = k4v].


Reisch again follows Celtes fairly closely in this part of his Book. But the changes he makes at certain points reveal the fundamental differences in the characters and interests of the two men. For example, Celtes divides all letters into the two major categories of *diuina* and *humana*. Letters on divine subjects are *coelestis*, *sacra* or *moralis* (b5v). He gives no examples of these types at this point, and only a brief treatment of them later on. "Divine" matters are clearly not his concern. Reisch fills the gap, drawing in part on Celtes' subsequent discussion (b6v):

_Diuinas [sc. epistolas] quidem voco: in quibus fidei mysteria, religionum ceremonie, dei cultus, morum atque virtutum seminaria exprimitur: et vitiorum radices evelluntur. vti est videre in epistolis sanctorum Pauli, Hieronymi, Augustini, Cypriani, Bernardi et Senecae philosophi moralissimi: atque aliorum plurium huius ordinis hominum [e7r f. = k6v]._

Celtes divides "human" letters into *grauia*, *consolatoria*, *amatoria*, and *amica* (that is, *familiares*); *amica* are subdivided into *commendaticia* and *hortatoria*. He gives brief definitions or descriptions of the contents of each class. We have a love letter, for instance, when *dulcia exhilarancia et exultancia ad amorem pertinencia petulant et amorosi scribimus*. Reisch follows Celtes' ordering of the classes, though he replaces the friendly letter class with its two species, elevating them in effect to separate classes. He tends to simplify the descriptions or definitions, and generally omits all the examples. Celtes' exuberant love letter

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30Reisch's revision of Celtes' *Ars Memorativa* is a good illustration of his free handling of his source, but what he does is too complicated to be analyzed satisfactorily here.
becomes, not surprisingly, simply (and sexless): amatoria: qua verbis petulantibus amorem alterius in nos concitamus. But Reisch waves a humanist flag when he adds: Preter hæc [quatuor siue quinque genera] autem multa alia sunt epistolarum genera a Mario Philelfo eloquentia preclara, ad octogenarium usque numerum digesta [e7v = k6v]. He later adds as recommended authors of letter collections the names of Gasparino Barzizza and Cicero, “the father of eloquence,” quibus te daturum operam velim quem maximam. Nihil enim in scribendo tam clarum aut promptum facit, quam diligenter legisse eos qui bene, limate terseque scripserunt. Ab aliis vero vt a labo atque pernicie ingenii fugiendum est (e8v = k7v). The last part of this sentence is taken from Celtes (b6v f.).

A major part of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century (and earlier) manuals on letter-writing is concerned with the proper address to the recipient. Celtes separates this topic from the salutation where it is usually discussed, because his recommended form of the salutation is based on the simple classical model (N. sends greetings to N.), and associates it with punctuation as something external to the content of the letter, presumably because the address goes on the back or outside of the letter. He organizes the dignitatis tituli into three major ordines (social ranks): ecclesiastics, the nobility and urban patriciate, members of the university community. Each ordo has a principal representative: pope, emperor, and theologians respectively; and three suborders in which the sundry recipients of a letter are classified by social status and appropriate titles suggested for them. The most interesting feature of this scheme is the classification of “poets,” that is, university lecturers in literature, as the first suborder under professors of theology in the university community. Needless to say, this ranking hardly corresponds to their real status. Appended at the end, like an afterthought, and

31 An edition of Giovanni Mario Filelfo’s Novum Epistularium was published by Johann Amerbach in Basle in 1495 with the title Epistolare Marii Philelfi (note Reisch’s spelling of the name). The Charterhouse at Buxheim had a copy which is now in the Huntington Library, San Marino, California (Acc. no. 93594). Reisch was prior of this house in 1500-1501 and may have seen this very copy, though its near mint condition suggests it was little if ever read by anyone. The letter-books of the two Filelli are scantily dismissed by Vives: Huic [sc. Gasparino Barzizza] succedunt ... lingua versiores [than Leonardo Aretino] Philelphi duo, pater et filius, sententias inanes et subfrigidi nec compositione satis grata (above, note 19), fol. 37b.

essentially outside the main scheme, are relatives and women.

Reisch jettisons this whole business. (He also omits the treatment of punctuation, which he perhaps thought belonged to some other subject and part of the curriculum. In fact, he does not discuss punctuation anywhere in the Margarita.) He preserves, however, the social distinctions underlying Celtes' classifications; he could hardly do otherwise. He also takes over many of Celtes' proposed "titles," though he frequently revises them in the direction of simplicity and clarity. In particular, he is much less fulsome than Celtes in his adjectives and terms for the Holy Roman Emperor and the other members of the nobility. It would seem that the Carthusian monk is not much impressed by the claims and pretensions of the German aristocracy. Moreover, Reisch adds a list of epithets for ciues, a social group ignored by Celtes except for city officials and the patriciate. Reisch's suggested epithets for ordinary citizens — prudentes, sagaces, industrii, integerrimi — make a striking contrast with the adjectives suitable for knights — aurati, magnani, strenui, validi, fortis, noiles. One may surmise that Reisch put a higher value on the intellectual capacity of townsfolk than on the physical prowess of the barons, and esteemed the two groups accordingly.

As we might expect, he also puts the Poets in their proper place in the university hierarchy, after the professors of the three higher faculties, but ahead of the masters of arts or regents.33 He also adds a class of Oratores whom one can call disertissimi or facundissimi. These same epithets may also be used of poetae. Reisch seems to view university lecturers in Humanities as a single group, regardless of whether they are known officially or by their own claims as "poets" or "orators." Their defining characteristic is eloquentia. We are reminded of the unified view of literature under the dominion of Rhetorica which appears in the headpiece for Book III. On the other hand, Reisch certainly discounts much of the extravagant claims made by Celtes for the poets. Celtes' poets, who possess both knowledge and authority, are to be addressed as

vates, musarum alumni, lauro insignes, hedera decorati, Apollini sacrati, Phoebi interpretes, rerum naturae scientes, historiae patres, divini, literaturae modulatores, sacro numine aflatii, gravissimi, iucundissimi, ornatissimi, celeberrimi, eloquentissimi, facundissimi, Romanae linguae principes, humani eloquii ductores, disertissimi,

33 At Freiburg the poetae were mostly lecturers in the Faculty of Law; cf. Heath (above, note 8), p. 32. Hence they were inferior to the professors. Elsewhere they were more likely to be attached to the Faculty of Arts and consequently again lower in rank than the professors and other members of the higher faculties.
copiosissimi.

Reisch’s poets are limited to

vates, musarum alumni, lauro insignes, hedera decorati, Apollinis interpretes, ornatissimi, eloquentissimi, facundissimi.

The claim to divine inspiration, to authority in matters of language, to independent knowledge of history and natural philosophy is quietly discarded. Here we may prefer to side with Celtes, although in the context of his own times Reisch probably shows the more realistic attitude. His attitude toward this whole practice is stated simply at the end of the chapter and the Tractate on letter-writing:

Haec summarie dicta sufficiant. Nam assentandi, adulandiue causa hec omnia ita variata cernes: vt perpaucos reperire possis qui non titulos superiorum inferioribus attribuant \[f1^r = k8^r\].

Though Celtes likewise terms the practice a form of flattery and evidence of the puerile barbarism of the times \(b6^v\), the Carthusian prior’s basic view of human society differs considerably from that of the patron- and job-seeking poet.\(^{34}\)

* * *

These examples of the two authors’ approach to their common subject matter should be enough to reveal their methods, which still deserve perhaps to be investigated in further detail. These epitomes, however, are not very impressive as manuals of rhetoric. Their very scale inevitably makes them too sketchy and superficial to be truly worthwhile, much less fully instructive in the elements of the art. Probably their most significant feature is the reversal of the ranking of the generae causarum, found in both the De Inventione and the Rhetorica ad Herennium, and traditional in the whole body of classical rhetoric. In Celtes and Reisch demonstrative oratory occupies the first place and judicial oratory the last. Celtes gives as much space to demonstrative speaking as to deliberative and judicial combined. This represents no doubt the humanistic outlook of the fifteenth century, and probably corresponds to contemporary needs and practice. Demonstrative speaking and writing give the humanist orator the opportunity to display his (and sometimes her) language skills to the utmost. As Celtes observes,

\[\text{est quo nullum aliud orationis genus vberius ad dicendum: aut utilitius ciuitatibus esse possit aut in quo magis in cognitione virtutum vi-}\]

\(^{34}\)Reisch’s religious outlook appears sporadically elsewhere in Book III; cf. d7^r, d8^r, e6^r, e7^r = i6^r, i7^r, k5^v, k6^r respectively.
ciorumque versetur oratio. Consumitur autem hoc orationis genus narrandis exponendisque factis et rebus gestis. Et quoniam in hac causa omnis oratio fere ad voluptatem auditoris et ad delectionationem refertur vtendum erit verbis insignibus venustis et in ipsa verborum constructione perpolitis vt paria paribus et similia similibus referantur (a3').

Reisch, whose interests lie elsewhere and who would himself apparently think of rhetoric as useful primarily for preachers, omits all of this statement, except the sentence on narrating and expounding exploits to which he adds bonis aut malis.

The two epitomes, and especially Reisch's, have one further significance for us. They attest the low estate to which rhetoric had fallen in the universities of northern Europe, despite the powerful claims made in the iconography of this Liberal Art or the exaggerated assertions of a Celtes. There is little point in making rhetoric the seedbed of eloquence if one is not going to make the necessary effort to prepare the soil. Though Reisch is often, and to some extent rightly, praised for his humanistic bent, he is basically a scholastic, and seems unaware of or else essentially indifferent to the fundamental issues posed by the humanists. Though Celtes is ultimately responsible for the low quality of this survey of rhetoric, Reisch obviously had no desire to set his sights any higher. In this he doubtless reflected the educational views and expectations of his contemporaries, at least in upper Germany. It may not be too harsh to call these works the nadir of the classical tradition of rhetoric in northern Europe. But the very generation for which Celtes and Reisch were writing would soon change this situation.

Appendix

A list of the sections and chapter headings in Celtes' Epitoma and Reisch's Margarita shows the scope of the two works and the extent of Reisch's dependence on Celtes. Reisch numbers each section and chapter of his Book; Celtes gives only headings. In the following Appendix Celtes is cited in the left-hand column, and Reisch in the right.

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35His main interests seem to have been in mathematics, natural science, and theology. Cf. the studies cited in note 1 above.

36Cf. Heath (above, note 8), pp. 33-34.
Epitoma...cum preceptis et locis constitutionum et orationum...

Libri III. Tractatus primus De partibus orationis rhetorice.


De generibus causarum

2. De Oratione demonstratiua et a quibus locis constituenda sit.

De oratione demonstratiua constituenda et a quibus locis

3. De Oratione deliberatiua: et a quibus locis constituenda.

De oratione deliberatiua constituenda et a quibus locis


De oratione iudicali constituenda et a quibus locis

5. De Partibus orationis in genere.

De quinque partibus orationis

6. De Inuentione et eiusdem partibus.

De exordiendi narrandi confirmandique preceptis

7. De Exordio.

8. De narratione et diuisione.

De argumentatione qua circa confirmationes nostras vitimur

9. De confirmatione: confutatione: et constitutione [i.e. stasis]

De disponendi et concludendi rationibus

10. De Argumentatione.

De elocutione

11. De Conclusione.

12. De Dispositione.

13. De Elocutione
14. De Elegantia

15. De compositione litterarum syl labarum et dictionum.


17. De Dignitate orationis et ver borum exornationibus.

18. De aliis verborum exornationibus quibus non eadem verba sed verborum vis effertur.

19. De exornationibus verborum simplicioribus.

20. De reliquis verborum exornationibus sententiis admixtis.


22. De pronunciatione penultima parte orationis rhetoricalis.


Libri III. Tractatus secundus De Epistolis condendis.

1. De Epistolariurn diuisione.

2. De Partibus epistole.

3. De Salutatione.
4. De Exordio.

5. De Narratione.³⁷

6. De Conclusione

7. De Superscriptione.

[Reisch ends: Vale. et in his finem Triiuii statuendum agnosce.]

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³⁷This chapter is the heart of Celtes' treatment of letter-writing; Reisch omits almost all of it!