Conrad Celtis and the "Druid" Abbot Trithemius: An Inquiry into Patriotic Humanism

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In the second chapter of his quasi-historical *De origine, progressu et laudibus ordinis fratrum Carmelitarum* (completed 1492) the Benedictine Abbot Trithemius (1462-1516) addresses himself to a certain knotty problem which, so he believes, is of sufficient relevance to the subject at hand to warrant a brief excursus. The question posed by Trithemius is how it can be that the Holy Order of Carmelites, taking its name from the famous mountain of Carmel in Palestine where it originated, could have been founded, not by a Christian, but by the Jewish prophet Elias. For the Carmelites rightfully trace the history of their Order to a settlement of Jewish hermits who, led by Elias, took leave of the secular world well before the birth of Jesus and migrated to the mountain whose name ever since has become virtually a synonym for the *vita solitaria et contemplativa*. Inasmuch, then, as the Jew Elias "inhabited this place long before the nativity of Christ," and inasmuch as this same Elias, revered among the Jews as one of their foremost prophets, "is confirmed to have been the first and noblest Carmelite," the author of the present work feels called upon to render some kind of explanation for the paradox.¹

The relevance of this explanatory excursus for our purpose here does not reside in the abbot's effort to unravel the mystery of the Jewish origin of the Carmelites *per se*, but in a parallel he chooses to draw so as to make this mystery more comprehensible. For in his attempt to resolve this enigma Trithemius does not primarily rely, as might be expected, upon the argument of an integral Jewish-Christian affiliation based on Christ's promise to fulfil rather than abrogate Jewish law, but instead upon an analogy of the Carmel experience with another geographically much closer to the home of Teutonic Christianity. As Trithemius introduces this analogy:

You should not wonder if I have declared that there were monks in Israel before the nativity of Christ who inhabited the mountain of Carmel and nearby deserts of solitude, seeing that among the gentiles in our Belgian

Gaul existed a celebrated body of monks, the devotees of which antiquity called the Druids. Some of these dwelled in cities and villages, whereas others inhabited the mountains and forests. But all philosophized concerning the knowledge of natural things.²

The authority of the Druids, Trithemius continues his excursus, was held in the highest possible esteem by the residents of the regions in which they lived, and their slightest command received instant obedience. The Druidic way of life "was isolated from the crowd and exceedingly continent, so that no one might presume to speak anything unfavourable about them." Their prerogatives included "the power of excommunicating rebels, and again of absolving those who returned to obedience." They enjoyed complete immunity from all accusations and punishments. "For the rest, so that I do not need to bring forth many more examples," Trithemius calls to the minds of those familiar with their classical heritage, "Caesar has depicted the kind of behavior they exhibited in his *Commentaries*."³

On this note Trithemius is ready to bring into profile the favourable comparison of the Druids with the school of ascetics which has prompted their mention in the first place, the Carmelite Jews. For the solitary Jews of Carmel led by Elias just as for the solitary Druids much further to the west, "Besides their faith in and knowledge of one God, they displayed themselves in their actions as monks." It follows, then, that "if the gentile Druids lived a solitary and monastic way of life before the birth of Christ, why is it any wonder if the Jewish faithful were hermits of Carmel?" And just as a fitting source for the validation of the Druidic phenomenon can be discovered, *inter alia*, in Caesar, so can comparably ancient sources be located validating the parallel Jewish phenomenon. "If, finally," as Trithemius closes this account of the origin of the Carmelites, "you would wish to know the loftier things concerning the monks who flourished before the nativity of Christ and the nature of the men of those times, you may read and discover them in the histories of Philo of Alexandria and of Josephus of the Jerusalemite Jews."⁴

This excursus by Trithemius in his Carmelite tract may help us better appreciate the intention behind an ode addressed by one of the leading humanists of the day, Conrad Celtis (1459-1508), *ad Johannem Tritemium druidam, abbatem in Spanhaim*.⁵ If the ancient Druids can be viewed as monks before Christ, a monk like Trithemius can conversely be looked upon as a Druid resurrected in Christian clothing. Nor was Trithemius the least bit inclined to disavow Celtis's epithet, as is proven by a letter he wrote to the arch-humanist in the spring of 1495 in which he informed his correspondent of a recent visit to his cloister by their mutual acquaintance Johannes Reuchlin. Reuchlin, according to

Trithemius, "remained with me here, in our Sponheim home of the Druids (*in domo nostra druidum Spanhamensi*), about the time of the Feast of All Saints."⁶

In his ode to the "Druid" Trithemius Celtis congratulates this "son of the Mosel" and "ornament" (*decus*) of the German nation for, among other things, his marvelous library and unexcelled proficiency in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew. The abbot is likened to Pythagoras who with song tamed the beasts, and again is exalted as a physician who has learned the great secrets for curing illness. Yet in spite of these admirable traits Trithemius is "modest in his countenance, and still more modest in his life." But the characteristic which above all distinguishes Trithemius from the average run of men lies in his deep immersion in the Druidic past of Germany, a tradition which even predates the Greeks and was later sung by Orpheus. Owing to the abbot's active leadership in this Druidic revival "our German nation" (*nostra pars Alemanica*) has become infused with new life and its inhabitants reinvigorated with the ancient virtues "so that it might resurge and become the full equal of the Italian and Gallic genius." Together with that other great descendant of the Druids, the bishop of Worms Johannes de Dalberg, Trithemius has helped to bring his age once more into touch with the ancient Teutonic past and especially with that revered ascetic school of *prisci theologi* which formed its spiritual center, the priestly Druids.⁷

It is understandable that German nationalists of the stamp of Celtis and Trithemius should have felt a deep sense of affinity between themselves and the ancient Druids. For the Druids represented a direct link between the present and antiquity which could entirely bypass the relatively alien Roman customs and language, thereby binding the Germans not so much with the ancient Latins among whom the Druids were occasionally mentioned as with themselves at their own source. Trithemius, moreover, had an additional incentive in his desire to revive the Druids in the Germanic memory by reason of his special preoccupation with the magical arcana of which the ancient Druids were long held to be outstanding practitioners.⁸ Trithemius is an outstanding example of how these two themes, occultism and nationalistic patriotism, could become fused by patriots intent upon establishing a mystical core for their nationalism safely tucked away from, and consequently invulnerable to, the incursions of normal rational discourse. For by focussing upon an aspect of Druidic history which was sometimes pointed up by the ancient classical writers as a cause for alarm by the Roman emperors, the attraction to subterranean medicine and magic by the strange priestly caste to the north, the German nationalists could forge the thesis of an unbreakable mystical bond between occultist theory and practice of the type allegedly embraced by the ancient Druids and their own peculiarly Teutonic aspirations.

The question remains, nevertheless, of how the Germans could persuasively claim as their own a Celtic caste which much more often was associated with their Gallic neighbours to the west, especially in light of the fact that the ancient classical authors making mention of the Druids were virtually all agreed on the Gallic domicile of these ancient Celtic priests. As a preliminary to answering this question we will do well to examine at closer hand the nature of the venerable literary legacy at the disposal of the German humanists whereby they were able to gain some authoritative knowledge of their claimed spiritual ancestors. Besides the aforesaid reference to the Druids in Caesar recalled by Trithemius, further references to the ancient Celtic caste, both favourable and unfavourable, are found in such authors as Cicero, Strabo, Suetonius, Lucan, Pliny the Elder, Tacitus, and Diogenes Laertius. Then, coming about the end of the fourth century A.D., when the word appeared several times in the poetry of Ausonius, all allusions to the Druids seem to have suddenly ceased. The next reference to the Druids appears to have cropped up only after the passage of many centuries, this time in various Irish manuscripts.⁹

Who, then, according to this learned legacy of the Greek and Roman worlds, were these "Druids" to whom Celtis and Trithemius paid their homage and with whom they were determined to establish their linear descendancy? On one thing and on one thing only were the ancient writers agreed: the Druids were the priestly class of the Celts, with the main body centred in Gaul. But when these writers began to evaluate that priestly class, both as to its contemporary worth and its impact upon successive ages, this agreement gave way to a great divergency of opinion.

In particular there seems to have been a decisive shift in attitude toward the Druids between the first century B.C. and the first century A.D. In the time of Cicero and Caesar the Druids were viewed chiefly as public figures. Their duties as envisaged by those adhering to this so-called "Posidonian" tradition of interpretation (named after Cicero's famed Stoical teacher Posidonius) were held to have included leading nation-wide assemblies, carrying out sacrifices, and acting as judges in both personal and group disputes. Then, soon after the advent of the imperial era coinciding with the birth of Christ and the apostolic age, the emphasis of the ancient classical writers appears to have fairly suddenly changed from the *public* and *manifest* activities of the Druids to their *private* and *secret* activities, with their influence increasingly being placed in a more unfavourable light.¹⁰

In contradistinction to the earlier "Posidonian" tradition this second conception of the Druids is generally identified as the "Plinian" tradition, for it was the naturalist Pliny the Elder who bequeathed the most famous account of these secret activities to posterity. But Pliny's unflat-

tering version of the Druids was far from being an isolated one. Tacitus and Lucan considered the Druidic rites to be savage and barbaric, and for Suetonius the beliefs of the Druids constituted a "religion of fearful cruelty" (*religio dirae immanitatis*). Thus in his similar view Pliny was no more than reiterating an ever more widely vociferous denigration of the Druids, though in his detestation of the Celtic caste going even further than most of its detractors by charging it not only with the crime of human sacrifice, but also, since the Druidic priests allegedly nourished themselves with the flesh of their sacrificial victims, with that most repugnant crime of all known as cannibalism. Eventually, Pliny was brought to acknowledge, this dreadful state of affairs was finally brought to a halt in its Gallic locale, though to no credit of the Druids themselves. The credit rather owes to an internal decline of the Druidic class, coupled with the civilizing influence of the Roman schools established by Augustus, first at Autun (= *Augustodunum*) and then at various other educational centres throughout the north.¹¹

Inasmuch, accordingly, as Pliny in his assessment of the ancient Druids laid his main accent upon their secretive or occult side as distinct from their more civic-minded side stressed within the previous "Posidonian" tradition, it is within this same "Plinian" tradition that we must locate the views of Celtis and Trithemius. At the same time, however, we should note that the negative connotations placed upon the recourse of the Druids to occultism (Pliny cited magic and medicine as the two principal subjects in which they excelled) needed to become transformed into positive connotations before Celtis's designation of Trithemius as a "Druidic abbot" and of Trithemius' depiction of his cloister as "our Sponheim home of the Druids" could assume the commendatory meanings obviously intended by their spokesmen. Even more important for the purpose of our present query, the appeal of the occult-minded and solitude-loving Druids portrayed by Pliny to German humanists like Celtis and Trithemius can be attributed to their specifically *northern* credentials, and more particularly, if we allow ourselves to be carried away by the more outspoken of the German patriots, to their peculiarly Teutonic credentials. Indeed, we may with justice assume that not a minor motive of the Emperor Augustus in discouraging the Druidic influences, symbolized by his foundation of the school at Autun to help counteract them, lay in his determination to suppress an indigenous nationalistic force representing a potential danger to the claims of Roman universalism. The same of course goes for Augustus' less secure imperial successors.¹²

As a stage on the way to the outright outlawry of Druidism within the boundaries of the Roman Empire, we may learn from the first century sources, Augustus only forbade Roman "citizens" from taking

part in Druidic activities. But a more thoroughgoing assault upon the Druidic threat by the Roman emperors was in the offing. In A.D. 16, for example, all *mathematici* (viz., astrologers) and *magi* were ordered to leave Italian soil, an edict which, though principally aimed at the Pythagoreans, also covered the propagators of the Druidic rites in Italy. In A.D. 21 a general revolt in Gaul, rising from resentment over taxation, was popularly believed by the Romans to have been encouraged by the Druids. At last, according to Pliny's version of the conflict, Emperor Tiberius decreed an official end altogether to "this class of prophets and physicians known as the Druids." But this culminating act of the anti-Druidic policies of the emperors, Pliny also shows, only drove the Druids underground and induced them to become more secretive and "magical" in their practices. Or if we are to believe Suetonius and Aurelius Victor instead of Pliny, it was the Emperor Claudius coming after Tiberius who, in A.D. 54, "completely abolished the detestable and inhumane religion of the Druids among the Gauls which under Augustus was merely forbidden to citizens."¹³

Here, then, is the classical view of the Druids and of their unhappy fate at the hands of the Roman emperors from which the German humanists took their point of departure. To account for a separate Druidic link with Germany (with, in Trithemius' terms, *francia orientalis* or *regnum francorum orientalius sive regnum germanicum* as distinct from *francia occidentalis* or *regnum francorum occidentaliu seu etiam gallicanum* with which soil the Druids have been customarily associated by the ancient Latin writers) humanistic patriots of the temper of Celtis and Trithemius have liberally gone beyond the strict letter of their ancient sources by upholding the thesis that after being expelled from Gaul the main body of the Druids retired to the opposite side of the Rhine situated in Germany. The classic statement of this peculiarly Teutonic twist to the phenomenon known as Druidism was provided by the German chronicler Johannes Aventinus (=Johannes Turmair, d. 1534), a disciple of Celtis, in his Bavarian annals appearing in 1521: "The Druids, the philosophers of Gaul, after they were expelled by Tiberius migrated to Germany."¹⁴

And from where, we ask, did Aventinus actually acquire this interesting piece of information set forth as a brute historical fact? Our first impulse of course is to seek its source in the antecedent Bavarian chronicle of the Abbot Trithemius. Yet, surprisingly, our effort here will be in vain since, though free in propagating the myth of the Trojan provenance of the Franks, Trithemius in his chronicles seems to ignore altogether this item which could put Celtis' tribute to him as "the Druidic abbot of Sponheim" in some kind of historical perspective. The closest he will ever come in his chronicles to touching upon the alleged migration of

the Druids from Gaul to Germany is a passing reference in his later (ca. 1514) *Compendium. . . de origine regum et gentis Francorum* to the forced flight from Gaul, in many directions, of numerous rebels under the bellicose pressures of Rome's armies — but this without a single mention of the Druids who presumably accompanied the migrants.¹⁵ If we are to be successful in our search for a precedent to Aventinus' bold historical assertion we will need to look elsewhere, even though the so-called "Druidic abbot" was far from disputing the complimentary epithet directed his way by his friend Celtis or bringing into question the implications of this tribute. And what better choice can we next make as the likely source of Aventinus' declaration than the man who dubbed Trithemius with this epithet, Conrad Celtis, with whom Aventinus became acquainted at Ingolstadt in 1492, where the future poet laureate of the Empire had been teaching rhetoric, and whom he followed to Vienna in 1497 where the two men collaborated upon the projected monumental *Germania illustrata*.¹⁶ Our search, lo and behold, comes to a happy end when we consult one of the writings which was to serve as a kind of preliminary trial-run of the *Germania illustrata*, Celtis's *De situ et moribus Norimbergae*.¹⁷

The slim thread from which Celtis was to hang his theory of a separate Germanic history of the Druids lay in the statement of Tacitus in the *Germania* (28), which Celtis had edited for publication as a student text in 1500: *credibile est etiam Gallos in Germaniam transgressos*, with the Hercynian forest held as receiving the main contingent of the foreign migrants. The fact that Tacitus had qualified the supposition of a Gallic migration to Germany by the crucial words *credibile est*, and that he did not so much as drop a hint about the Druids taking part in the surmised migration to the east, did not daunt Celtis, whose sixth ode of the *De situ et moribus Norimbergae*, bearing the heading *De tractu Hercyniae silvae per Germaniam*, opens on the theme of the divine undertakings associated with the distant past of the Hercynian forest. Located within this forest, the poet informs us, are the sacred groves of the ancient Druids, the dense foliage of which once served to cover over and conceal with their protective veil and "shady silences" these dark-hooded inhabitants and the encloistered dwellings which they had built for themselves following their arrival from the opposite side of the Rhine.¹⁸ Celtis's accompanying prose exegesis of his poetic allusion runs as follows.

Proclaims Celtis: "Nothing in this [Hercynian] forest is of greater fame than the cloisters of the Druids (*Sed nihil in hac silva Druidum coenobiis illustrius est*)." And who, we ask, were these Druids? They were, Celtis replies, "a group of philosophers who lived among the Gauls in a Greek manner (*Graecanice*)." And for Celtis the word *philosophus*

as used in this context is a synonym for *propheta*. "In former times oracles were believed to stream forth from their lips," Celtis tells us, adding that once he had been blessed with the good fortune of personally witnessing certain vestiges of the bygone presence of these "interpreters, as it were, of the oracles and of the fates" while a guest of his good friend Johannes Tolophus in a cloister in the neighbourhood of Tolophus' hometown of Regensburg. As the two men were biding a time in the designated cloister, Celtis reports:

we beheld six stone images intended for the gates of a temple, all made out of very old rock which had been inserted into the cloister wall. Each was seven feet in height, and all were with bare feet, covered heads, dressed in a Greek mantle, and hooded. Their beards extended all the way to their groins, and were divided at the orifices of the nostrils. In their hands were held a book and the staff of Diogenes [*viz.*, the cynic's staff, associated with a type of ancient Greek philosopher], they displayed a severe countenance, their eyebrows were drawn up in a sorrowful manner, and their heads were inclined downward and their eyes fixed upon the earth.¹⁹

Celtis and his host did not need to ponder for long to guess upon whose images they were gazing. They were of those ancient monkish priest-prophets known as the Druids who in earlier times had lived among the Gauls where they were well known for seeking out solitary places in the forest regions for the unravelling of profound religious questions and "so that they might be less encumbered in their pursuance of the true causes of things (*quo expeditiores in inquirendis rerum causis essent*)."²⁰ The obvious question arises, of course, of how their vestiges should now be palpably discernible on the German side of the Rhine. Celtis's answer, though without proffering a shred of evidence to back it up, is the same answer which was also to satisfy his disciple Aventinus as to why Germany as much as France could lay claim to the ancient Druids as indigenous national prophets. According to Celtis:

After Tiberius Caesar, because of the factions whose leaders they were, had commanded them to withdraw from the Gallic regions, they migrated into Germany. Here, where they were subsequently to act as interpreters of the Christian religion under the reign of Carolus Arnolphus and the Ottonian emperors, they occupied the whole of the Hercynian forest, living in its pleasant and moist valleys from which derive the names of their cloisters. And they did so increase in their wealth and power that, as you might well believe, they were the inferiors of our kings and princes neither in their opulence nor in their arms.²¹

Unhappily, Celtis is reluctantly compelled to add, the unprecedented wealth and power accruing to the Druidic settlers after their arrival on German soil ended in working to their disadvantage, for it corrupted a large number of their members. As Celtis ruefully recalls this develop-

ment, "Many among them, while in the process of augmenting the amount of their wealth and the number of their cities, and of adding a dynasty to these things, shook off the yoke of a more austere religion and laid aside their cowls (*excusso religionis severioris iugo abiectoque cucullo*), which they had worn until this time at fixed days of the year, and began to live vulgarly in the habit of a more licentious life."²² Yet paradoxically, to follow further Celtis's version of the Druidic legacy, the very same corruptive tendencies which became encouraged by the greater wealth and arms of the Druids also assisted the Druids in rising above what had formerly been relatively barbaric practices in both behaviour and speech by making them more receptive than before to civilized Greek and Roman values. As Celtis thus reconciles these two distinct but tightly intertwined threads of his Germanic past,

Truly we must be very thankful, now and forever, to the Greeks, who though some time before finding themselves unable to subdue this fierce people by the force of arms, nevertheless succeeded in converting them by religion and the holiness of their lives toward more gentle studies and devices. In this way those who formerly had resided as wanderers in the groves and forests now assembled under the sway of a very illustrious empire in crowds and in society, so that they learned to dwell in conformity with sacred laws and according to the highest possible moral standards.²³

Here is explained, then, why Celtis felt himself to be perfectly consistent in appealing to the ancient Greek and Roman heritage even as he simultaneously circumvented that heritage by upholding an independent prophetic tradition in Druidism from which the Teutons could draw spiritual sustenance.

It was, accordingly, within a comparatively narrow nationalistic framework as well as within the wider supranational one promoted by Greek and Roman humanistic studies that the monk Trithemius and the lay figure Celtis fell into warm friendship and a meeting of their minds. Yet each expressed his nationalistic prejudice with a different focus in mind, with Trithemius concentrating upon the Trojan connection with the Germans and Celtis upon the Druidic connection. Celtis, the guiding spirit of the Rhenish sodality with which Trithemius was likewise closely affiliated, took as his model the ostensibly universalist-minded Platonic Academy founded at Florence by Marsilio Ficino. But as Celtis was well aware, the universalistic tendencies resident within Platonism by no means excluded nationalistic particularism, for which the patriotic Italian members of the Florentine Academy — Politian, Landino, Diacceto, Ficino, Pico della Mirandola, and the like — were themselves foremost witnesses. Deeply flowing below the surface of the Florentine Academy, no less than below its German imitations such as that formed

in the city of Heidelberg with Celtis its brightest luminary, were certain nationalistic currents betraying the distinctively patriotic inclinations of its members. Leon Battista Alberti, Cristoforo Landino, Lorenzo de'Medici — these are but a few of the more notable names in the list of those who, either being directly immersed in the activities of the Florentine Platonic Academy or else working around its edges, vigorously championed an elegant vulgar literary style to coincide with their equally vigorous Italian patriotism.²⁴ Just as the Italian members of the Florentine Academy could never be said to have completely shaken off their nationalistic prejudices from their Neoplatonic synthesis of learning, no less did their German counterparts to the north hold fast to a uniquely Teutonic perspective upon all matters encompassed by their humanistic vision.

The passage over the Alps from the Florentine Academy to its Germanic progeny such as that at Heidelberg, accordingly, in no way necessitated a corresponding mental and emotional transition from universalistic to nationalistic aspirations, but only from one contestant for nationalistic supremacy within the universal scheme of things, the Italians, to another contestant, the Germans. In the view of Celtis a vital aid in the Teutonic claim to supremacy lay in the axiom of a Druidic migration from Gaul to the German side of the Rhine, which thereby furnished Germany with an ancient spiritual legacy radically independent of the corresponding Latin legacy. It is this revered spiritual heritage that Celtis had in mind when he flatteringly addressed as ode *ad Johannem Trithemium druidam, abbatem in Spanhaim*, a compliment which the recipient of the ode, the Abbot Trithemius, apparently accepted at its core when, in a 1495 epistle to Celtis apropos of a recent visit of their mutual friend Reuchlin, he made reference to "our Sponheim home of the Druids."

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Notes

1. Johannes Trithemius, *De origine, progressu et laudibus ordinis fratrum Carmelitarum*, lib. I, cap. 2: "Quemadmodum Helias Propheta Domini fundator extiterit ordinis Carmelitarum," in Johannes Busaeus, S.J. (ed.), *Paralipomena opusculorum Petri Blenensis et Ioannis Trithemii aliorumque*. . . (Cologne, 1624), pp. 551, 553. This sense of continuity between the Carmelites and the followers of Elias (O.T.: Elijah), officially recognized in the Order's constitutions of 1281, is to be traced from the famous Scriptural passage of I Kings. 18:17-46 in which Elias is held to have miraculously overcome 450 prophets of Baal at the site of Mount Carmel. On Trithemius see Klaus Arnold, *Johannes Trithemius (1462-1516)* (Würzburg, 1971), and on this Carmelite tract in particular, pp. 88-89.

- 2 Trithemius, *De origine. . . Carmelitarum*, lib. I, cap. 2, p. 555. On the Druids in their native Gallic habitat see D.P. Walker, *The Ancient Theology* (London, 1972), esp. pp. 73 ff.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 556. For the Caesar reference see *Commentarii de bello gallico*, VI, 13, 14, 16, 18 and 21. These passages are conveniently collected and translated, together with other classical allusions to the Druids, in T.D. Kendrick, *The Druids: A Study in Celtic Prehistory* (London, 1927; second edition, 1928, 1966), pp. 77-79 and append., pp. 212-14.
- 4 *De origine. . . Carmelitarum*, lib. I, cap. 2, p. 556.
- 5 Conrad Celtis (Protucius), *Libri odarum quattuor*, no. 28, in Felicitas Pindter (ed.), *Conradus Celtis Protucius: Libri Odarum Quattuor/Liber Epodon/Carmen Saeculare* (Leipzig, 1937), pp. 92 ff. On Celtis see esp. Lewis Spitz, *Conrad Celtis: The German Arch-Humanist* (Cambridge, Mass., 1957), and *The Religious Renaissance of the German Humanists* (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), chap. 5, pp. 81 ff.
- 6 Trithemius to Celtis, Frankfurt a/M, 11 April 1495, in Celtis, *Der Briefwechsel*, ed. Hans Rupprich (München, 1934), no. 88, p. 144. On Reuchlin see Spitz, *Religious Renaissance*, ch. 4, pp. 61 ff.
- 7 Celtis, *Lib. od.*, no. 28, in Pindter (ed.), *Celtis*, pp. 92-94. On Dalberg see Karl Morneweg, *Johann von Dalberg: Ein deutscher Humanist und Bischof* (Heidelberg, 1887). A key figure in the foundation of the University of Heidelberg and subsequently bishop of Worms, Dalberg was with Celtis instrumental in the formation of the Rhenish humanist sodality. It was to Dalberg that Trithemius chose to dedicate his *Catalogus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum, sive illustrium virorum* (1492).
- 8 Arnold, *Trithemius*, pp. 180 ff. Concerning Trithemius' magical outlook see also Noel L. Brann, "The Shift from Mystical to Magical Theology in the Abbot Trithemius (1462-1516)," *Studies in Medieval Culture*, XI (Medieval Institute, Western Michigan University, 1977), 147-59.
- 9 Kendrick, *Druids*, p. 74. An extensive list of classical references to the Druids follows in translation (see above, note 3), beginning with attributions by Diogenes Laertius in his *Lives of the Philosophers* (ca. A.D. 200) to Aristotle and Sotion of Alexandria in the third and second centuries B.C. See also ch. 1: "Tradition," pp. 15-16.
- 10 Nora K. Chadwick, *The Druids* (Cardiff, Wales, 1966), pp. 69 ff. For the association of the earlier "public" view of the Druids with the Stoic Posidonius see pp. 6 ff.
- 11 Pliny the Elder, *Nat. Hist.*, XVI, 249; XXIV, 103; XXIV, 104; XXIX, 52; XXX, 13. Cf. Tacitus, *Annals*, XIV, 30 and *Histories*, IV, 54; Lucan, *Pharsalia*, I, 450-8; Suetonius, *Claudius*, 25. Also highly critical of the Druidic rites was Pomponius Mela, *De situ orbis*, III, 2, 18 and 19. Concerning Pliny's scornful approach to the Druids Kendrick, p. 88, writes, "But the salient item of his testimony is that at this period the druids had degenerated into rather disreputable magicians, still retaining certain priestly functions, perhaps, yet apparently without any vestige of the civil authority they had enjoyed in the time of Caesar."
- 12 A.D. Nock, "Religious Developments from the Close of the Republic to the Death of Nero," *Cambridge Ancient History* (Cambridge, Eng., 1934), X, ch. 15, p. 492: "With the beliefs of subject races Augustus interfered very little. If he forbade Roman Citizens to take part in Druidical worship, his purpose was political: to withdraw Gauls who had received the citizenship from a strongly nationalist influence." Concerning the later more thoroughgoing suppression of the Druids by Emperor Claudius (A.D. 41-54) Professor Nock further relates, p. 459, "He [Claudius] put down Druidism because of its political danger, and urged that the ruined temple of Venus at Eryx be restored at the cost of the Aerarium." Cf. Chadwick, *Druids*, p. 72: "We may probably regard the druids as the most formidable nationalist and anti-Roman force with which the Romans had to contend."

- 13 Chadwick, *Druids*, pp. 72-73. Cf. Arnaldo Momigliano, *Claudius: The Emperor and His Achievement* (Cambridge, Eng., 1934, 1961), ch. 2: "Religious Policy," pp. 28 ff. According to Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, XXX, 13: "Namque Tiberi Caesaris principatus sustulit Druidas eorum et hoc genus vatum medicorumque per senatus-consultum," whereas for Suetonius, *Claudius*, 25: "Druidarum religionem apud Gallos dirae immanitatis et tantum civibus sub Augusto interdictam penitus [Claudius] abolevit." The fourth century Aurelius Victor follows the latter in maintaining, *De Caesaribus*, IV, 2: "Denique bonis auctoribus compressa per eum vitia ac per Galliam Drysadarum famosae superstitiones."
- 14 Johannes Aventinus, *Annales ducum boariae*, ed. Sigmund Riezler, in *Johannes Turmair's Genannt Aventinus Sämmtliche Werke* (4 vols.: München, 1881), II, p. 16: "Druides philosophi Galliae pulsi a Tiberio caesare in Germaniam migrarunt." On Aventinus see Gerald Strauss, *Historian in an Age of Crisis: The Life and Work of Johannes Aventinus, 1477-1534* (Cambridge, Mass., 1963). For Aventinus' view of the Druids as an indigenous German spiritual force see Frank L. Borchardt, *German Antiquity in Renaissance Myth* (Baltimore/London, 1971), pp. 168 ff.
- 15 Trithemius, *Compendium... de origine regum et gentis Francorum*, xxxvii, in Marquard Freher (ed.), *Joannis Trithemii... Opera historica, quotquot hactenus reperiri potuerunt, omnia...* (2 parts; Frankfurt a/M, 1601; facs. ed., Frankfurt a/M, 1966), I, p. 27: "Anno regni sui quarto... [Richimerus] Galliam ingreditur, et omnia igne, ferroque depopulatur. Contra quem Tiberianus Romanorum praefectus, ad bellum grandem quoque suorum movit exercitum qui coniuncti manibus ad certamen diu ancipiti Marte pugnauerunt, et plures ab utraque parte ceciderunt perempti. Postremi tamen victi sunt Galli, et per fugam salutem quaerere compulsi." For the Trojan origin of the Franks see proemium, p. 1: "Qui populus ex Troianis olim profugus captans propaginem, cum adhuc inter suos esset concives, nomen Troianum habebat, dispersus post haec inter varias nationes, et vagus, saepe numero cum sedibus mutavit et nomen. Primo enim cum Troianis dicebantur Troiani, postea vero inter Scythas etiam nominati sunt Scythae: venientes autem in fines Germaniae, ad tempus vocabantur Sicambri, novissime à Franco rege suo appellati sunt Franci." On this legend, which like the corresponding legend of the Druidic migration to Germany from Gaul assists the German patriots in establishing a direct link with antiquity independent of Rome, see Borchardt, *German Antiquity*, pp. 134 ff.
- 16 Strauss, *Aventinus*, pp. 20 ff., esp. p. 25.
- 17 For the employment of this myth in Celtis see Paul Joachimsen, *Geschichtsauffassung und Geschichtsschreibung in Deutschland unter dem Einfluss des Humanismus* (Leipzig/Berlin, 1910), pp. 111-12, and Borchardt, *German Antiquity*, p. 107. Whether the legend of the Druidic migration to Germany is a complete figment of Celtis' imagination or owes to earlier sources is unclear.
- 18 Celtis, *De situ et moribus Germaniae*, vi: "De tractu Hercyniae silvae per Germaniam," 1-9, in *Opuscula*, ed. Kurt Adel (Leipzig, 1966), pp. 61-62: "Quae variis porrecta plagis nunc vasta sub Arcton/Inque eorum zephyrumque suis cum saltibus errans/Explicat immensos annoso robore lucos/Religione sacros veterique ex more verendos/Qui Druidum densae per opaca silentia silvae/Plurima magnificis servant coenobia tectis,/Quae Diti nigris operantur sacra cucullis/Vallibus irriguis constructa, ubi murmure blando/Unda sonans placidos inducit corpore somnos." On Celtis' attraction to Tacitus see Spitz, *Religious Renaissance*, pp. 84-85.
- 19 Celtis, *De Situ...*, vi, in *Opuscula*, p. 70. It was apparently during this visit with Tolophus (=Tolhopf), in 1493, that Celtis discovered in the same monastery of St. Emmeran offering up these six "Druid" reliefs six dramas of the tenth-century nun Roswitha, the codex of which he borrowed and sent to Trithemius among others for copying. See Spitz, *Celtis*, p. 42.
- 20 Celtis, *De situ...*, vi, in *Opuscula*, p. 70. Lying on the banks of the Danube, Regensburg

also lies at the edge of the Bavarian Forest, presumably one remnant of the ancient Hercynian Forest which included, besides the Black Forest, all the wooded heights of Central Germany, the Jura range and Carpathians, and the Teutoburger Forest. See Loeb edition of Tacitus' *Germania*, tr. M. Hutton, rev. R.M. Ogilvie (London, 1970), p. 136 note.

21 Celtis, *De situ*. . . , vi, in *Opuscula*, pp. 70-71.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 71.

23 *Ibid.* This oblique reference by Celtis to a military confrontation between the Greeks and the Druid-led Celts of Germany allegedly preceding a much longer-term and relatively non-violent influx of the Greek alphabet and education into the north might well at first glance puzzle us—until, that is, we remember that Alexander the Great stayed clear of the Germans in his vast conquests of the fourth century B.C. Though, to my knowledge, neither Trithemius nor Celtis brought out in their writings the motif of German *virtus* as a deterrent to Alexander, their successor in the depiction of ancient Germanic bravery, Franciscus Irenicus, did so in his *Totius Germaniae Descriptio* (also known as his *Exegesis*, 1518), as is taken note of by Borchardt, *German Antiquity*, p. 147.

24 For a concise account of this tendency in Italian humanism, culminating in Pietro Bembo's *Prose della volgar lingua* (1525), see Cecil Grayson, "Lorenzo, Machiavelli, and the Italian Language," in *Italian Renaissance Studies: A Tribute to the Late Cecilia M. Ady*, ed. E.F. Jacob (London, 1960), pp. 410-32.