

JOHANNES REUCHLIN (1455-1522), *Vocabularius breviloquus*

In Latin and German, decorated manuscript on paper

Southern Germany, Upper Rhine (near Basel?), c. 1480-1490 (?)

i (medieval parchment) + 288 + i (medieval parchment) folios on paper, two watermarks: "unicorn, standing/striding with front leg raised, facing left" (unidentified, cf. "Licorne, types italiens" Briquet 9948-9978, somewhat similar to Piccard DE1335-PO-124364, Brunswick, 1426, also similar to versions in Southern Germany; see Online Resources), and "sword with an adjoining small circle," similar to Piccard DE5580-Clm3874_257, Southern Germany, first half of the fifteenth century, modern foliation in pencil, 1-288, complete (collation i-xxiv¹²), parchment strips for reinforcement in the middle of the quires, no catchwords or signatures, ruled in brown ink (justification c. 168-172 x c. 105 mm.), written probably by one scribe in brown ink in gothic cursive bookhand in single column (in two columns on ff. 169-180v; column width c. 50-53 mm.) on 28-38 lines, decoration on ff. 1-96v: rubrics underlined mostly in red, occasionally in blue, capitals touched mostly in red, occasionally in blue, incipit on f. 1 written on two lines fully in red, 2-line initials in red, except the first on f. 1 in blue, no decoration on ff. 97-288v (although spaces were left for initials), marginalia on both front and back pastedowns and f. 288v, minor stains and some wormholes, in overall very good condition. Bound in original or contemporary brown sheepskin over wooden boards, four raised bands on the spine, leather stained and very worn, several wormholes, otherwise in good condition, inside pastedown inscribed "5 safe 1" in pencil, front and back flyleaves are reused double manuscript leaves (bifolia) containing texts from the chapter "De fallaciis" (On fallacies) from the *Summulae logicales*, a textbook on logic composed around 1240 by Petrus Hispanus, a Portuguese scholar and physician who later became Pope John XXI, these leaves probably date from around 1300. Dimensions 220 x 144 mm.

This manuscript contains Reuchlin's Latin-German lexicon, one of the most popular dictionaries used by clerics and university students at the end of the fifteenth century, as the expansive transmission of the work in print demonstrates. Our manuscript is especially important because it appears to be a unique composition rather than a copy of an exemplar: it draws from Reuchlin in some entries and from the *Vocabularium ex quo* in others. It was probably made in the Upper Rhine region, near Basel where Reuchlin was teaching, soon after its composition and first appearance in print.

PROVENANCE

1. The paper, script, and the text suggest that the manuscript was made in the Upper Rhine region soon after around 1478, probably by a student or scholar.
2. Modern inscription in black ink in the top margin on f. 1: "Ms. 18."

TEXT

ff. 1-273v, Johannes Reuchlin, *Vocabularius breviloquus*, incipit, "A A a domine nescio loqui quia puer ego sum. Jeremie. A A A domine nescio ... zoicus ca cum idest vitalis"; ff. 274-276, blank;

First printed by Johann Amerbach in Basel around 1478 when Reuchlin himself was teaching in Basel at the time; for comparison with printed editions, see Online Resources especially for

Amerbach's reprint of 1482 (the first edition is digitized by the Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes, but appears not to be available online);

ff. 277-285v, excerpts from the *Mammotrectus super Bibliam*, incipit, "Primo dierum etc. corporibus ... et mereantur introire paradysum translati in requiem de labore amen";

A Franciscan manual for clergy on biblical exegesis, written around 1280-1290 by Johannes Marchesinus from Imola; see Online Resources for a digitized copy; the excerpts copied here come from the last part on liturgy, with the sections copied here dealing with hymns;

ff. 285v-286, a treatise on the physiognomy of man, an excerpt from the anonymous fourteenth-century medical compendium, *Melleus liquor physicae artis*, incipit, "Nota homo...";

Likely of Bavarian or Austrian origin, which was formerly attributed to Alexander Hispanus, who is now thought to be a fictional persona (cf. Sudhoff, 1937, pp. 289-312, 1938, pp. 1-25, and Zachová, 2013, pp. 208-214);

f. 286v, recipes for bloodletting in rhyme, incipit, "Luna ascendente";

The first paragraph probably comes from the *Practica* of Bartholomew of Salerno (active c. 1150-1170) and the second from *Flos medicinae* ("The Flower of Medicine"), better known as *Regimen Sanitatis Salernitanum*; Both works originate in the famous School of Salerno, Schola Medica Salernitana, the most influential medical center in medieval Europe (cf. Renzi 1852, vol. I, p. 493);

ff. 287-288, unidentified treatise about the nature of blood, incipit, "Tripliciter indicatur sanguis...";

f. 288, a recipe for making a plaster against ulcers from an unidentified source, incipit, "Emplastrum optimum ponendum ... istud Emplastrum ut supra.";

These last two texts probably also derive from *Regimen Sanitatis Salernitanum*.

The *Vocabularius breuiloquus* (often shortened to *Brevilogus*) is a Latin dictionary of technical, scholastic, and scientific vocabulary, containing, in addition to Latin glosses, numerous German translations. Composed around 1400 by the Johannes Reuchlin (1455-1522), who edited it during his student days, around 1475-1476, and published his expansion in 1477/8. Reuchlin's version is characterized by his prologue, which is found in the present manuscript and therefore dates after 1475/6. In his preface, Reuchlin acknowledges his sources as Isidore, Papias, Brito, Alain de Lille, and many other medieval masters ("aliique quam plurimi magistri"). The work is known in at least 43 manuscripts and 22 printed editions all before 1505 (Grubmüller 1967, pp. 36-38, Grubmüller 1978, column 1033). Thus, Reuchlin's *Breviloquus* gained great success and remained in demand throughout the fifteenth century.

The dictionary is structured alphabetically, and the explanations of the words are mostly in Latin, but occasionally, and more frequently towards the end, they are supplemented in

German. There are brief etymological notes and sometimes theological or philosophical explanations. The work is divided into three sections arranged alphabetically, "triplex alphabetum": nouns, verbs, and indeclinable words that are adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections. The aim of the work is to explain rare and difficult words concisely in order to facilitate the spiritual understanding of these words.

The text in our manuscript appears to be a unique composition from different sources rather than a copy of a simple exemplar. The text cannot be matched entirely with any printed copies of the *Brevilogus*, and in some entries the scribe draws instead from the *Vocabularius Ex quo*. The *Vocabularius brevilocus* was one of the main sources for the *Vocabularius Ex quo*, which became the most commonly used late-medieval Latin-German dictionary in Germany, surviving in more than 270 manuscripts. The *Vocabularius Ex quo* was compiled in two parts, the first in 1421 by the Bechtermünz Brothers of Eltville am Rhein, and the second part in 1450 with the assistance of an aging and bankrupt Johannes Gutenberg. Indeed, the scribe of our manuscript changed the layout on ff. 169-180v to two columns, and then back to one column, further suggesting that he was not copying from a single exemplar, but at least two, one the *Brevilogus* and the other, the *Vocabularius Ex quo*.

The Franciscan manual, *Mammotrectus super Bibliam*, from which excerpts are copied on ff. 277-285v, was a basic pastoral encyclopedia for clergy who needed to prepare sermons or perform liturgy but lacked advanced schooling. According to the Schoenberg Database of Manuscripts, complete copies are rare in North America, with just two in public collections, and only two having passed through sales rooms here in the last century, TM 216 and TM 678. The *Practica* of Bartholomew of Salerno, one of the likely sources for the recipes for bloodletting on f. 286v, is a practical medical manual focusing on the treatment of diseases, which became a standard work for physicians and medical students. Characteristic of the Salerno school, it integrates Arabic, Greek, and Latin medical knowledge. The second source for these recipes, and probably also for the last two texts in the manuscript, is the *Regimen Sanitatis Salernitanum* a didactic poem on health, popular not only among doctors, but also laypeople and aristocrats.

LITERATURE

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Zeydel, E. "Johann Reuchlin and Sebastian Brant: A Study in Early German Humanism," *Studies in Philology* 67:2 (1970), pp. 117-138.

Zika, C. "Reuchlin's De Verbo Mirifico and the Magic Debate of the Late Fifteenth Century," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 39 (1976), pp. 104-138.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Johannes Reuchlin, *Vocabularius brevilocus*, Johannes Amerbach, Basel, c. 1478:

<https://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra/vocabularius-breviloquus/>

Johannes Reuchlin, *Vocabularius brevilocus*, unknown printer, Basel, 1481:

https://opendigi.ub.uni-tuebingen.de/opendigi/Cc33_fol

Johannes Reuchlin, *Vocabularius brevilocus*, Johannes Amerbach, Basel, 1482:

<https://donum.uliege.be/handle/2268.1/1050>

Johannes Reuchlin, *Vocabularius brevilocus*, Michael Greyff, Reutlingen, before 1483 (the text from f. 6 onwards corresponds with our manuscript):

<https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/en/view/bsb00038588?q=%22corbac%22&page=14,15>

Briquet Online, Licorne:

<https://memoryofpaper.eu/briquet/BR.php?IDtypes=98&lang=fr>

Mammotrectus super Bibliam, by Johannes Marchesinus (1478):

https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/sacred_leaves/176/

Unicorn watermark, Piccard DE1335-PO-124364, Brunswick, 1426:

<https://www.wasserzeichen-online.de/wzis/struktur.php?ref=DE1335-PO-124364>

Sword with an adjoining small circle watermark in Piccard:

[https://www.wasserzeichen-](https://www.wasserzeichen-online.de/WZIS/struktur.php?klassi=006002007001004&anzeigeIDMotif=5742&bildbrowser)

[online.de/WZIS/struktur.php?klassi=006002007001004&anzeigeIDMotif=5742&bildbrowser](https://www.wasserzeichen-online.de/WZIS/struktur.php?klassi=006002007001004&anzeigeIDMotif=5742&bildbrowser)
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