

Master Claretus' Early Didactic Writings on Medicine

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Abstract: Claretus (Bartholomaeus de Solentia) is known as the author of the oldest Latin-Czech dictionaries, but the aim of the article is to introduce his didactic poems *Medicaminarius* and *Complexionarius*. Although quite a number of similar school texts were created during the Middle Ages, not many of them originated in the Czech lands. They provide an insight into medical theory as it was taught in Bohemia in the mid 14th century.

Key words: Medieval Literature, Latin Literature, Didactic Poem, Claretus, Medicine

Abstrakt: Bartoloměj z Chlumce, zvaný Klaret, je známý jako autor nejstarších latinsko-českých slovníků. Velikost jeho slovníkového díla a jeho význam pro českou a obecně slovanskou lexikografii zastiňuje Klareta jako autora dalších spisů, mimo jiné i dvou latinských didaktických básní s lékařskou tematikou: *Medicaminaria*, jehož tématem je zdravý způsob života, péče o zdraví, léky a léčba, a *Complexionaria*, který pojednává o čtyřech lidských *complexiones* (temperamentech).

V příspěvku jsou představeny oba Klaretovy texty s lékařskou tematikou jako příklad středověkých učebních textů a je poukázáno na některé jejich formální a obsahové aspekty.

Byť podobných veršovaných učebních textů, jako jsou *Medicaminarius* a *Complexionarius*, vznikla ve stejném období v Evropě řada, v českém prostředí se jich mnoho nedochovalo a obě Klaretova díla tak poskytují cenný vhled do některých oblastí medicíny v Čechách poloviny 14. století.

Introduction

Although the name Claretus is recognized among those who are interested in medieval didactic literature, in history of early Prague University or in Czech (or generally Slavic) lexicology, his writings directly related to medicine are quite unknown and for a long time his authorship was even questioned. People know him as the author of dictionaries from which we may learn a lot about the old Czech language, especially its vocabulary, and about the way of learning a language at that time. It is clear that Claretus' lexicography works overshadow his other writings. The aim of this article is to show that his other texts deserve our attention as well. Since we are in the context of medical terminology or history of medicine, it is an opportunity to publicize his didactic poems *Medicaminarius* and *Complexionarius*.

Author

We do not know much about Claretus and we have only a few clues from his works. Although there were some attempts during the 20th century to identify him with people that we know about from elsewhere (e.g. Petrus Clarificator, prior of the monastery in Roudnice nad Labem, or doctor M. Bartoloměj of Hostýň), these were

not successful.¹ In one of his works Claretus calls himself *Bartholomeus de Solencia dictus Claretus* (a neologism which means ‘famous’, derived from the verb *claresco*, *-ere* meaning ‘to become famous’).

Claretus was probably a son of an unknown clergyman in Solencia (Chlumec nad Cidlinou – town in eastern Bohemia). He became a student and teacher at the monastic school in Opatovice, later moving to Prague where he was probably one of the first Prague university graduates. Subsequently he became a teacher and even the *rector* at St. Vitus Cathedral School in Prague, which was the most important school of that type in Bohemia. As for his professional status, his commentators call him simply *Magister* (‘Master’), which means *Magister artium* (‘Master of Arts’) in this context. Most probably he was neither monk nor doctor, otherwise it would be mentioned by the commentators. He died in Prague circa 1370.²

Writings

The number of Claretus’ writings that we know about is 10. Both pieces that we focus on – *Medicaminarius* and *Complexionarius* – were written together with *Astronomicus* at the very beginning of Claretus’ career – probably before he came to Prague, already at the monastic school in Opatovice roughly in the mid 1340s.³ Not much later he composed *Secundus liber de naturalibus*, but he was already a teacher and rector of the above mentioned cathedral school in Prague when he wrote his famous dictionaries *Vocabularius*, *Bohemarius* and *Glossarius* and the other texts with the titles *Enigmaticus*, *Ortulus phizologye* and *Exemplarius auctorum* (unfinished). It is possible that some of his students or colleagues took part in writing some of Claretus’ later texts.⁴

Medicaminarius (718 verses) belongs to the genre of *regimina sanitatis* (*regimen sanitatis* – ‘rule of health’), so it contains recommendations and instructions how to stay healthy. The author writes about exercise, rest, food, remedies and medical treatment. In general: the content of *Medicaminarius* more or less covers what was already in the Galenic theory of health and disease called *res non naturales* (non-naturals): the physiological, psychological and environmental conditions that affect health (air, food and drink, motion and rest, sleep and waking, repletion and excretion, passions and emotions).⁵ Scholastic medicine adopted this concept from the old Hippocratic-

¹ Bartoš (1933: 153–157), Ryba (1943: note 4), Bartoš (1943–1944: 143–147).

² Vidmanová (1980: 216, 223).

³ Vidmanová (1980: 216–217).

⁴ For basic information about Claretus and his writings see Nechutová (2007: 184–186).

⁵ *Aer, cibus et potus, somnus et vigilia, evacuatio et repletio, motus et quies, accidentia animae*. Generally about the concept *res naturales* – *res non naturales* – *res contra naturam* see e.g. King (2001: 44–52), Schmitt (1976: 17–21), Schmitt (1995, 750–752), Siraisi (1990: 100–101), Střelická (2004: 136–143).

-Galenic tradition through Arabic medical writings such as *Canon medicinae* from Avicenna, *Isagoge Iohannitii*, *Liber Pantegni* from Haly Abbas etc.

Complexionarius (944 verses), on the other hand, deals with the *res naturales* (the naturals), which are elements, humours, complexions, body parts, virtues (forces inside the body), physiological processes and a special substance called *spiritus*.⁶ The poem describes the four human *complexiones* (temperaments) and puts them into context of these *res naturales* (talks about elements, humours and complexiones). The human *complexio* is derived from the four elements (earth, water, air, fire) and can be described as a balance of basic qualities (hot, cold, moist, dry), which is determined by the amount of the elements in the human body. The four *complexiones* (temperaments) – sanguine, phlegmatic, melancholic and choleric – are presented and anatomical, physiological and behavioural features which are characteristic for them are described in detail, e.g. choleric individuals according to Claretus have usually big hearts, small heads, cold brains, warm stomachs, red or dark hair, they are tall and have light skin, they are agile, easy to upset, untruthful, talkative, passionate etc.⁷

Structure

Claretus used to compose his didactic poems in verses. Many of them survived with rich commentary in the margins. They were all meant to be school books and their practical use at school was always the main purpose for writing them. Their author had certainly experienced how hard it was for students to learn without understanding what they actually learn, so as a teacher he started writing handbooks in verses in order to make it easier for the students to memorize them and to learn. Such school-books were quite common at that time in western Europe; however, in 14th century there are few authors in the central European region whose literary production is qualitatively comparable with those in the West.

Both poems were used most probably as school texts, but the literary ambition of their author is obvious. As was usual in this genre, they were composed in so-called leonine hexameters⁸ (each hexameter with a strong *caesura penthemimeres* and an internal rhyme between a word before caesura and the word at the end of the verse). It needs to be mentioned that if we talk about hexameters or metrum, we mean their medieval form. Medieval poetry is usually *Scheinprosodie*, as it is sometimes called, because the verses were not composed with regard to the natural length of syllables

⁶ *Elementa, humores (compositiones), complexiones (commixtiones), membra, virtutes, operationes (actiones), spiritus*. See Schmitt (1995, 750), Siraisi (1990: 101).

⁷ For more characteristics see Švanda (2013, 180–182).

⁸ The name is derived from the prose rhythm associated with Pope Leo I.

(long by nature), only the positional length (long by position) was observed, so from the classical metrical system point of view the metrum seems to be corrupted.⁹

The primary purpose for composing a didactic text in hexameters was to help the readers to memorize it, and, together with other literary features, it could also reflect the author's literary ambitions. Short but distinct prologues and epilogues belong among such features in Claretus' texts, and especially the prologues were carefully composed and have a typical structure, as we see in *Medicaminarius* (verses 1–10):

Suscipe, germane, celer hoc munus, Mariane,
hoc opus electum, vario de stipite fictum.
Ex variis libris medicinam collige fibris,
qua tibi prodesse poteris multisque preesse.
Omnipotens Domine, confer regimen medicine, 5
sanans in fine, ne dentur membra ruine.
Ex causa bina cunctis prodest medicina:
prodest insanis et sanis et mage canis;
convalet infirmus, melior fit corpore firmus.
Hec data scripta lege, medicine te rege lege.¹⁰ 10

Within these 10 verses we can recognize a dedication¹¹ (v. 1–2), an exhortation (v. 3 to 4,10), an invocation (asking God for help, v. 5–6) and a part which can be called *laus medicinae* (in praise of medicine, v. 7–9).

Similar structure of the prologue can be seen in *Complexionarius* (v. 1–22): dedication (v. 1), exhortation (v. 1–2, 10, 15–16, 20–22), *laus medicinae* (v. 11–14), instead of an invocation we have rather a profession of faith in God's guidance (v. 3–9). The only difference is that there is a content outline of the subsequent text (v. 17–19), which is missing in *Medicaminarius*.

O bone germane, si poscis vivere sane,
hec precepta tene, firmans ea pectore plene:
nam Deus ipse dedit vitam, quam mens mala ledit,
pastus optando nimios, se peste gravando.
Hinc Deus in rebus vim liquit et in speciebus, 5
per quas sanatur animal, corpus medicatur.
Non tamen inpone spem rebus ea ratione,
sed magis in Cristum, quia stat mors, vita per istum:
vita resurgendo data, perdita mors moriendo.
Hunc pete, quod deditam prolongaret tibi vitam. 10

⁹ More about writing poetry in the Middle Ages see e.g. Norberg (2004: 180–186).

¹⁰ Flajšhans (1926: 244).

¹¹ Both *Medicaminarius* and *Complexionarius* are dedicated to Claretus' brother Marianus.

Flame rubet pmo pedibz frigidis abymo
 Inde supralm deponit sine pmoquo
 Sponte sua plorans morte pmoat horas
 Describit 2 mentu lenis inunct forellz
 Dentis ingrefut mafus pmoateng albet
 At tardans pulfus detens pmoat emfz
 Exardias patit fmoatens fir uote diez
 Si qz tenox dormit 2 pmoat morte 2 folm
 2 sangnis 2 vna ventris pmoat pmoat signa
 2ndor apofama uonmz dunt 2 tua signa
 Si immois dormit modmz qz tenox nigilabit
 Si ppor miffert 2 eger lato monetur
 Ars etas regio vms complexio forma
 apoz 2 fmoat nommz pmoat qz 2 acz
 hct sunt pmoat dast 2 medcaqz dadi
 Que pmoat plane rapias pmoat mananc
 2 pmoat medcauuariz collectus
 Incipimz 2 pmoat nommz
O bone fmoat si potis vme fmoat
 hct pmoat tene fmoat capte pmoat
 na 2 duoz de dicitura qz medcauola lodi
 pmoat quando mmoat se pmoat fmoat
 hmoat 2 vmebuz vmi hmoat 2 mmoat
 pmoat pmoat anal. corpus medcauol.
 no ym mmoat pmoat vme ca rone pmoat
 Sed magis mmoat qz pmoat moat vira
 Qua refurgendo dicit pmoat moat mmoat
 hmoat pmoat qz dicit pmoat tibi vira
 Optima dicit mmoat fit ad hmoat medcau
 Que corpus pmoat anme moat qz pmoat
 Que no no moat fmoat pmoat pmoat pmoat
 Na pmoat medcau te pmoat no moat pmoat
 Na pmoat no moat tibi uel pmoat
 qz te moat pmoat moat qz pmoat
 Sed dicit qz que pmoat tibi pmoat necesse
 Res dicit qz dicit qz pmoat moat
 2 namoat hmoat pmoat am 2 mmoat artes
 hct qz si no pmoat te pmoat no pmoat
 Et mala moat bona pmoat pmoat
 hct lege no pmoat moat pmoat pmoat
O ne pmoat vmi mmoat pmoat dicit dicit
 pmoat pmoat qz moat mmoat lege dicit

The Archive of the Prague Castle, Manuscripts of the Library of the Metropolitan Chapter by st. Vitus, Ms. L 52, fol. 157v

Optima doctrina cunctis fit ad hoc medicina,
 que corpus sanat, anime mores quoque planat;
 si te non noscis, frustra sanus fore poscis,
 nam spernit medicus te sepe videre pudicus. 15
 Noscito naturam nocuam tibi vel placituras;
 mox te curabis solus morbosque curabis.
 Sex debent esse, que sunt tibi scire necesse:
 res, elementa, cadens humor, complexio vadens,
 quattuor hinc partes anni cum mensibus artes. 20
 Hec quia si nosses, te solum noscere posses
 et mala vitares, bona plurima semper amares.
 Hec lege non spernens, medicinam pectore cernens.¹²

The epilogues, on the other hand, are very brief in both cases: only one verse (v. 718) in *Medicaminarius*:

Que posui plane, capias, frater Mariane!¹³

and three verses (v. 942–944) in *Complexionarius*:

Ecce scies per te, quid sit complexio certe,
 omnia cognosces sic, que discernere posces.
 Sic, pie germane, vives sanus, Mariane.¹⁴

That shows that the form of both epilogues is an exhortation to the person to whom the poems are dedicated.

The text itself is divided into chapters: *Medicaminarius* has 22 and *Complexionarius* 21 chapters. The beginning of each chapter is signaled only by a large initial letter. Originally there were no titles for individual chapters, the text within chapters was not structured by any subtitles, marginal notes, graphic features or even by leaving a larger space.

Sources

We do not know what sources were actually used by the author. When he refers to Aristotle (called usually Philosophus), Avicenna or Arnaldus de Villa Nova, he probably knows them only indirectly from florilegies (compilations of excerpts from the writings of popular authorities) that circulated in many versions throughout Europe and were commonly used by many authors.

¹² Flajšhans (1926: 207).

¹³ Flajšhans (1926: 270).

¹⁴ Flajšhans (1926: 240).

officium cum vno EADE autē sup. Dorsu vobis p̄ne
t vobis sanas veneni p̄git et q̄ sunt / ap̄tulis libeat
et p̄suar ita est qui p̄nor in sompno nōs nō polluit. Et sic dō.
tatis q̄ d̄i ē re cur hō barbēat. mēo calidū q̄ areat
maius in hōia Si sic castus nō fit pilus hōi natus
p̄uote q̄ d̄i p̄suar q̄dā sit pollutus pus. hōi sit t̄ne p̄suar
p̄ico p̄ d̄at q̄ q̄u nōq̄ barbatus ca d̄ido can v̄ndi q̄ d̄us
mōre m̄m̄ t̄ncū f̄ridus p̄e p̄nor barba caēat ē p̄
q̄ sūt t̄ d̄p̄atē d̄ardior ē m̄t̄ q̄ f̄arda falsa f̄rayē
t̄ m̄rē sedat q̄ cur gen? ē n̄ilo m̄uloz. nos̄ico vere
p̄e anēat v̄m̄oā Semā n̄aq̄ sūa sibi p̄p̄ia sūm̄p̄a
t̄ p̄rida p̄m̄ḡat Ex afma ut equo unius b̄n̄ n̄as̄iō illo
t̄ sanat q̄ d̄i at q̄ d̄ p̄iles sūt m̄lce m̄liarē.
p̄ulus alq̄ q̄ b̄m̄ causa t̄n̄ sūma fit cūct̄ ip̄a sūp̄ia
sūp̄ p̄ ar q̄ d̄ac Colicā nat̄ia p̄p̄e q̄ nō d̄aba plurā
cū aut alio cū Sūt in finice cause que rare vite
atqua nō possūt poni popus n̄re. rōm̄
fontis Existis alia. potis cōgnosce d̄ya
om̄ne Quāuis sūt pauca m̄a fiet n̄q̄ autē
dolens bonē ḡm̄anc si possit viūe sanē
loni h̄ p̄cepta tene. f̄m̄as captōe plene
curie n̄a d̄s ip̄e dedit v̄cāq̄ m̄co n̄lale
folio d̄andū h̄mc d̄s in r̄obus vim liquit t̄ p̄obno
aut ē ne cotidie p̄quas sanat̄ at̄al̄. corpus medicat̄m̄.
in cibū q̄ sūctur nō t̄n̄ impone p̄e vobis cā rōne
q̄ m̄lām̄ odis nōq̄ h̄c p̄ete q̄ dedit̄ p̄taḡat̄ ē v̄cām̄
t̄ si capilli ad d̄at̄ op̄tima doct̄na cūctis fit ad h̄m̄ medicat̄a
fac̄ laxiūm̄ d̄e que corp̄ sanat̄ at̄e morē q̄ planat̄
t̄nc̄ finī colubī si teno nos̄is f̄usta sanus fore possit
t̄ lant̄ apt̄ q̄ p̄e n̄a s̄m̄it̄ medicat̄o te sepe vid̄e p̄udicis
Cinis finī cap̄m̄i nōs̄ico n̄az n̄ocūā t̄ul̄ p̄lac̄icūā
cū oleo t̄unctus q̄ ex te d̄v̄bis solus. mor̄os q̄ fugabis
m̄lap̄lūt̄ c̄a d̄ex d̄bet̄ c̄e que s̄t̄ ē s̄are n̄c̄esse
p̄ilos q̄ p̄a d̄s d̄es dem̄at̄ cad̄no h̄uoz cōplexiō uad̄no
t̄nc̄ m̄d̄m̄s Erant̄ t̄unctus capillat̄ quāt̄ t̄
t̄ep̄ in ato sanat̄ id̄m̄ fac̄ t̄sta c̄iq̄. q̄ b̄m̄t̄ q̄
lat̄ afine s̄unc dem̄ḡnat̄ capillos q̄ p̄anc
ordoy cū sale q̄ b̄m̄e t̄ cū an̄onḡia v̄s̄i m̄s̄e
t̄ v̄ngē t̄ v̄bic̄oz volūis n̄as̄enēūm̄ p̄ili q̄ t̄anc̄
ap̄t̄ cū v̄nct̄ can̄d̄ t̄ nō h̄icē c̄ellūm̄ q̄ s̄
33

The Archive of the Prague Castle, Manuscripts of the Library of the Metropolitan Chapter by st. Vitus, Ms. M 108, fol. 33v

In both texts, especially in *Medicaminarius*, we can find many verses that are identical or similar to those in *Regimen sanitatis Salernitanum* (*Flos medicinae scolae Salerni*, ‘Salernitan rule of health’), which is a *regimen sanitatis*, allegedly composed in Salernitan medical school, that became very popular in the 14th century. In *Medicaminarius* there are over 50 Salernitan rule of health, although there is no explicit reference to that work.¹⁵ Verses from Salernitan rule of health are not so frequent in *Complexionarius* (its genre is different after all), but whenever you come across them,¹⁶ there is usually an explicit reference, although Claretus does not name the source and refers to it only as to an unspecified *poema* (v. 454), *dicta poete* (v. 337), *versus* (v. 600), or *poetica* (v. 796).

When he borrows verses from other sources he usually adapts them so they correspond with his style and type of versification. For metric reasons he often uses periphrastic expressions or synonyms, e.g. when he gives a list of elements in *Complexionarius*, instead of more common terms *terra* and *ignis* he chooses *ops* and *rogus* (v. 28), or where we would expect *terra* and *aqua* he uses the words *tellus* and *latex* (v. 53). Similarly according to the situation he uses either *humidus*, *humens* or *madidus* for ‘moist’, *calidus* or *calens* for ‘warm’, *frigidus* or *frigans* for ‘cold’, *coleratus* or *colerans* for ‘choleric’ etc.

Manuscripts and edition

We have only two manuscripts with *Complexionarius* and one with *Medicaminarius*. They are preserved in the Library of the Metropolitan Chapter in Prague. The first one (L 52, fol. 149r–168v¹⁷) is from the first half of the 15th century and contains *Medicaminarius* as well as *Complexionarius*; the second one (M 108, fol. 33v–44r¹⁸) is older (probably already from the 1360s), but contains only *Complexionarius*. The first one is orderly, it has no commentary in the margins and it was written by one person, while the older manuscript is full of notes: the text itself was written by several different scribes, who added margin notes that make it easier for the reader to follow the text, using red ink, initial letters and even intertextual notes. The rich commentary on both margins was added much later and is not connected directly with the text. Despite the disorderly character of this manuscript we can clearly distinguish the original text from the later additions, which is important for us because we are able to recognize what the original text was and what was added later. On the contrary, in the manuscript L 52 some notes were merged with the text, which made it confusing and more difficult to understand for the reader.¹⁹

¹⁵ The parallels are listed in Švanda (2012, 222–226).

¹⁶ Verses 338–339, 455–456, 601–602, 797–798.

¹⁷ Podlaha (1922: 230–231, No 1296).

¹⁸ Podlaha (1922: 334, No 1468).

¹⁹ For codicological analysis see Vidmanová (1978: 193–207).

Medicaminarius and *Complexionarius* were published by Václav Flajšhans in 1926 together with *Vocabularius*, *Bohemarius* and *Glossarius*.²⁰ The edition was immediately strongly criticized because the critical apparatus was insufficient, there were many mistakes, few sources were identified, the structure of the text was corrupted by dividing the chapters into shorter parts (the margin notes, which were added later, were adopted as their titles, some notes even becoming a part of the text).²¹ On the other hand, the edition made the text accessible for many researchers who were not used to work with medieval manuscripts. It might be surprising that almost 90 years later we do not have a more recent edition but it is not an easy task to accomplish.

Conclusion

Claretus represents a writer whose work is a good example of the didactic literature of his time. Its literary value is not very high as Claretus was an average author in comparison with other writers of that time in western Europe, but we have few such authors in the Central European region in the 14th century. His two didactic poems allow us to take a closer look at the theory of health and disease as it was taught in Bohemia in the middle of 14th century.

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²⁰ Flajšhans (1926: 203–270).

²¹ See e.g. Vilikovský (1928: 442–453), Vidmanová (1978: 193, 197, 206).

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Bionote

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