

New College, Oxford, holds unique fragments of an elementary Latin school grammar, the

Janua

same edition is located

date of printing, but are known to have been printed in Westminster and are assigned by BMC

XI to the year [1489-90].¹

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The fragments in question bear the shelfmark MS 391, Folder 4, f. 13, and comprise four strips from two conjoined leaves. They were discovered by Robert Proctor in 1893, in the binding of an unknown volume where they were probably used as quire-sewing reinforcements.² It was evidently their material, vellum, that made them useful for the bookbinder. The cut-down strips run laterally so we have no height dimension, but the widest page width is 195 mm, with the text area occupying around 120 mm; there are portions of lines of text on either side of each strip. What proves to be the first strip is from the opening leaf of a quire and has the beginning of the *Janua* on its recto in the form of three lines of printed text. The verso of this strip holds the top three lines from the following page. A second strip preserves most of the text contained in the top three lines (recto and verso) of what is the last leaf of the same quire. The other two fragments preserve another eight to nine lines, recto and verso, from further down the same two leaves. No more than one or two lines

¹ *Catalogue of Books Printed in the XVth Century Now in the British Library. England.* Ed. Lotte Hellinga (The

are missing from the end of each page. In all cases the lines are in register on the recto and
e2nd

The fragment of the *Janua* located in New College, Oxford, preserves the beginning of the treatise where the discussion of the grammatical rules is preceded by a proemium of which three distichs still survive. On the basis of the first word of this verse prologue, the grammar was christened *Janua* by the Italian scholar Remigio Sabbadini in 1896.⁵ The lines of the proemium read:

ĴAnua sum rudibus primam cupientibus artem/ |

Nec sine me quisquam rite perit<u>s erit. |

Nam g<e>nus et casum. speciem numerum que figuram: |⁶

A close examination of the Caxton fragments and a comparison of their text with the *Ars minor* shows that the *Janua* can be identified as a grammar different from that of Donatus, which was a grammar aimed at native speakers of Latin. Though the *Janua* is written in question-and-answer form, it includes additional subject-matter not contained in the *Ars minor* and uses a different approach to the material. Un-*Janua* teaches Latin as a foreign language. By printing and then reprinting the *Janua*, the earliest English printer, William Caxton, and one of his immediate successors, Richard Pynson, were responding to a demand for school texts in English grammar schools at the end of the fifteenth century.⁷

Remigio Sabbadini, *La Scuola e gli studi di Guarino Guarini Veronese* (Catania: Tip. Francesco Galati, 1896), pp. 35, 42-

ein Beitrag zur lateinischen Schulgrammatik

Beiträge zur Inkunabelkunde. Dritte Folge 4 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1969), pp. 43-80, esp. 53-54, 73-74.

⁶

Janua

beginners desiring the first art. And nobody without me will be duly learned. Because gender and case, species, numb

⁷ A forthcoming article by the same author will deal with these fragments in more detail.

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