

ON THE ATTRIBUTION OF THE *VOCABULARIUM BREVE* TO THE PADUAN HUMANIST GASPARINO BARZIZZA

W. KEITH PERCIVAL¹

The *Vocabularium breve* is a Latin etymological dictionary that appeared many times in northern Italy in the sixteenth century. To my knowledge, twenty-seven printed editions have so far been reported, ranging in date from 1509 to 1586. In these editions, the work is attributed to Gasparino Barzizza, the famous Paduan humanist who lived from *ca.* 1360 to *ca.* 1430.² A small number of manuscript copies of the work have also been reported, in some if not all of which we also find the ascription to Barzizza.³ Hitherto this attribution has not been questioned, as far as I am aware.⁴ In spite of overwhelming odds, as it were, I should like to raise that issue here. To

¹ The author may be reached at the following e-address: <percival@ku.edu>. Please address conventional mail to me at 3815 NE 89th Street, Seattle, WA 98115-3742. The present version of this paper was updated in January 2009. Since the paper has not yet been submitted for publication, please do not cite it without permission. Needless to say, comments are welcome.

² For instance, the title page of the 1519 Venice edition, printed by Alexander de Bindonis, reads as follows: “Uocabularium | Breue Magistri Gaspa- | rini Pergomensis. | In quo continentur omnia genera vocabulo- | rum: que in vsu frequenti: & quotidiana consue- | tudine versantur. Incipiens a rebus diuinis | ad res Celestes: Aereas: Maritimas: Terre | stres: Inanimatas: ac Animatas.” Begins: “Nota quod partes grammaticae principalibus partibus deseruientes sunt quattuor.” On Barzizza’s life and works, see R. G. Mercer, *The Teaching of Gasparino Barzizza, with Special Reference to his Place in Paduan Humanism*, MHRA Texts and Dissertations, 10 (London: The Modern Humanities Research Association, 1979). For a valuable collection of essays on various aspects of Barzizza’s activities, see *Gasparino Barzizza e la rinascita degli studi classici: fra continuità e rinnovamento, Atti del Seminario di studi, Napoli — Palazzo Sforza, 11 aprile 1997*, ed. Lucia Gualdo Rosa, *Annali dell’Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli* (Naples: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1999).

³ To my knowledge, six manuscripts have so far been reported: (1) Bergamo, Biblioteca Civica, Sigma II 47. Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Iter italicum* I, 7a, where we read: “Magister Gasparinus (Barzizza?), vocabularium latinum, s. XV.” Mercer, *Teaching of Gasparino Barzizza*, p. 152. (2) Como, Biblioteca Comunale, 2.1.18 (I 63). *Iter italicum* I, 46b. Mazzatinti II (1892), p. 104, note 3, ff. 118ff.: “cart. XV. Initial ... Ethimologia Magistri Gasparini (Barzizzae) de Pergamo, inc. Nota quod vocabulorum quedam.” Dated 1463? (3) Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Q 20. *Iter italicum* I, 308a: “mbr. XV. Gasp. Barzizza, vocabularium,” Mercer, *Teaching of Gasparino Barzizza*, p. 153. (4) Padua, Biblioteca Universitaria, 534. *Iter italicum* II, 13b: “misc. gramm. XV. Glossario latino-bergamasco, attributed to Gasparinus Barzizza (?),” Mercer, *Teaching of Gasparino Barzizza*, p. 154. (5) Palermo, Biblioteca Nazionale, I D 12: *Iter italicum* II, 30a “mbr. XV. 113 fols. Gasparinus Barzizza, ethimologia vocabulorum, damaged at some points and apparently incomplete at the end (ends: “imber imbris masculini generis.”) (6) Debrecen. Ref. Föiskola könyvtára, R 1368, f. 59v--101. *Iter italicum* IV, 302b. Inc.: “Incipit vocabulistum (sic) editum a Gasperino (Barzizza) de Pergamo oratorum et poetarum eximio trivialiumque professore et primo de rebus divinis, inc. Hic deus idest el dio.” Needless to say, I am sure that there must be other manuscripts containing the *Vocabularium breve* of which I am unaware.

⁴ Thus, Remigio Sabbadini unhesitatingly accepts the attribution of the work to Barzizza in his monograph *Il metodo degli umanisti*, *Bibliotechina del “Saggiatore,”* 3 (Florence: F. Le Monnier, 1922), p. 33.

express the matter bluntly, did Barzizza really compose this dictionary, or could the attribution to him perhaps have been spurious at the time it was made and just happens not to have been challenged hitherto? A reasonable alternative hypothesis, in my judgment, is that at some point, perhaps already in the fifteenth century, somebody, presumably a copyist, attributed a work that had already existed to Barzizza, conceivably to lend greater authority to it or at least in recognition of Barzizza's unimpeachable scholarly reputation. We should remember, in this connection, that spurious attributions were not uncommon in the grammatical tradition during the Middle Ages and Renaissance.⁵

In discussing a problem of this kind, I am aware that it is a great deal easier to cite evidence that makes it reasonable to believe that a given author wrote a particular work than it is to prove without question that he did not do so. In this instance, regrettably, bibliographical and internal textual evidence is all we have to go on. What I offer here, therefore, is a survey of suggestive pieces of circumstantial evidence. I hope, however, that my argument will be convincing enough to stimulate others to work towards an ultimate solution to this question. If it then turns out that there are strong reasons to reject the attribution of the *Vocabularium breve* to Gasparino Barzizza, can we offer a more convincing theory as to how and when, and possibly even by whom, it was compiled?

What makes Barzizza's authorship of the *Vocabularium breve* suspect is, first of all, a negative fact, namely that the work is attested in a very small number of manuscript copies of uncertain date and a large number of sixteenth-century printed editions.⁶ Not a single fifteenth-

Compare Valeria Della Valle, "La lessicografia," *Storia della lingua italiana*, ed. Luca Serianni & Pietro Trifone, vol. 1: *I luoghi della codificazione* (Turin: Einaudi, 1993), p. 29. The most recent contribution to the question is Riccardo Gualdo, "L'uso dei glossari latino-volgari in area lombardo-veneta nel primo Quattrocento," in *Gasparino Barzizza e la rinascita degli studi classici: fra continuità e rinnovamento*, ed. Lucia Gualdo Rosa, pp. 209–246.

⁵ For instance, a seminal commentary on Priscian's Latin grammar was written in the mid-twelfth century by Petrus Helias. This work was so widely disseminated and so highly esteemed that in the following century Petrus Helias's name came to be attached to a metrical version of the first sixteen books of Priscian's grammar (the so-called *Priscian Major*), which he certainly had no hand in. On Petrus Helias's Priscian commentary, see Petrus Helias, *Summa super Priscianum*, ed. Leo Reilly, Studies and Texts, 113 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1993). I have discussed the authorship of the *Metrical Priscian Major* in my article "On the *Metrical Priscian Major*: A Methodological Dilemma," *History of Linguistics 1996, Selected Papers from the Seventh International Conference on the History of the Language Sciences (ICHoLS VII)*, Oxford, 12–17 September 1996, ed. David Cram, Andrew Linn, & Elke Nowak, Studies in the History of the Language Sciences, 95, vol. 2: *From Classical to Contemporary Linguistics* (Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1999), pp. 79–88.

⁶ A list of eighteen sixteenth-century printed editions with locations may be found in Alfredo Azzoni, "Ricerche barzizziane," *Bergomum*, 54 (1960), 15–26, esp. 20ff. To Azzoni's list I can add the following: Venice, per Alexandrum de Bindonis, 1519 (Wilson Library, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina); Venice, per Franciscum de Bindonis, 15.I.1523 (Ann Arbor, Michigan, University of Michigan Library; Berlin, Deutsche Staatsbibliothek); Venice, Bindonus, 1535 (Dresden, Sächsische Landesbibliothek); Venice, de Lenis, n.d., Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek). Robert Black adds a Venice edition of 1554; see his *Humanism and Education in Medieval and Renaissance Italy*, p. 109, fn. 295. I append to this article a list of all the editions I am aware of so far. Mercer (*Teaching of Gasparino Bar-*

century edition has so far come to light.⁷ If that is a more or less faithful reflection of the situation, Gasparino Barzizza died, therefore, three-quarters of a century before the earliest known printed edition of the *Vocabularium breve* appeared.

For comparison, let us consider Barzizza's *Orthographia*, which is without doubt a genuine work.⁸ Over seventy fifteenth-century manuscripts containing the *Orthographia* have been reported, and three printed editions have been reported, two of which appeared in the fifteenth century and a third very shortly after 1500.⁹ This is the kind of dissemination that we would expect from a work written before 1420 that retained its popularity in an unbroken tradition throughout the fifteenth century and into the early sixteenth. If Gasparino Barzizza did indeed compose the work entitled *Vocabularium breve* at about the same time, i.e. in the first or second decade of the fifteenth century, it is puzzling that it did not make its appearance in printed form until almost a century later, and it is also puzzling that few manuscript copies have so far been

zizza, pp. 152ff.) reports three manuscripts: Bergamo, Biblioteca Civica, Sigma II 47; Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Q 20 sup.; Padua, Biblioteca Universitaria, 534. Paul Oskar Kristeller, as we have seen, expressed doubts as to the attribution to Barzizza of the works transcribed in the Bergamo and Padua manuscripts. On the work itself and further secondary literature thereon, see Guido Martellotti's article on Barzizza in the *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, pp. 37a, 38b. I have consulted the manuscript in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan and two printed editions: an undated Milan edition (No. 14 in Azzoni's list, No. 21 in my list), a copy of which may be found in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana, and the Venice edition printed in 1519 by Francesco dei Bindoni (Franciscus de Bindonis), No. 8 in my list.

⁷ Neither the *Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke* (GW) nor the *Incunabula Short-Title Catalogue* lists a fifteenth-century edition of the *Vocabularium breve*. It may be noted that in a re-edition of Karl Müllner's *Reden und Briefe italienischer Humanisten* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1970), Barbara Gerl lists (p. xx) an edition of the *Vocabularium breve* that she claims appeared in Brescia in 1492. I have been unable to confirm this. Indeed, I am not aware that printing had started in Brescia as early as 1492. Gerl's statement may indicate that a printed edition appeared in Brescia at some later date; may I suggest, for example, 1592? If that were the case, it would make it a rather late edition of the work (later than any so far reported). In any case, however, we already know that four editions did appear in Brescia.

⁸ The work begins: "Quoniam recta scriptura, quam Graeca appellatione orthographiam dicimus, proxime uidetur ad oratoris officium accedere." I am quoting here from Venice, Biblioteca Marciana, Ms. Lat. XIII, 89 (=4478), f. 1^r. For information about manuscripts, see my article "The *Orthographia* of Gasparino Barzizza," *Problemi di edizione e di interpretazione nei testi grammaticali latini: Atti del Colloquio Internazionale, Napoli 10–11 dicembre 1991*, *Annali dell'Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli*, Dipartimento di Studi del Mondo Classico e del Mediterraneo Antico, Sezione Filologico-letteraria, 14 — 1992 (Rome: Gruppo Editoriale Internazionale, 1994), pp. 263–282; and Gigliola Barbero, "Appunti sui manoscritti dell'*Orthographia* di Gasparino Barzizza," in *Gasparino Barzizza e la rinascita degli studi classici: fra continuità e rinnovamento*, ed. Lucia Gualdo Rosa, pp. 153–187. On Barzizza's *Orthographia*, the following article is seminal: Remigio Sabbadini, 'L'ortografia latina del Barzizza,' in *Spogli ambrosiani latini*, (Florence: B. Seeber, 1903), pp. 362–376, and *Studi italiani di filologia classica*, 11 (1903), 362–376.

⁹ The indisputably incunabular editions are GW 3691 and GW 3692, both of which appeared in France. The edition that is now assumed to have appeared shortly after 1500, most likely in Venice, is HC 2681.

found. Logically speaking, this is by no means impossible, of course, but it is somewhat unusual, and this fact alone should provoke thought.

A second reason for suspicion is the fact that, to my knowledge at least, no manuscript has so far been discovered that contains the *Vocabularium breve* together with indubitably genuine works of Barzizza's. If we could point, for example, to a manuscript copy (or preferably more than one) of the *Vocabularium breve* which attributed the work to Barzizza and also included a copy of his *Orthographia* or other genuine works, we might then conclude that the attribution of the *Vocabularium* to Barzizza had some plausibility.

Alfredo Azzoni has suggested dating the *Vocabularium breve* about 1417–1418, basing this supposition on an allusion in the preamble to that work in which the author says that this work on etymology is the first one that he intends to compose and hence by implication that he is saving other topics for later treatment (viz. in the *Orthographia*). Martellotti endorses Azzoni's view in his article on Barzizza in the *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*.¹⁰ If Azzoni and Martellotti are right, Barzizza wrote the lexicon while he was teaching in Padua, at a time when he was planning, but had not already begun to compose, his *Orthographia*.

As regards content, the *Vocabularium breve* is a Latin etymological dictionary with vernacular glosses. It begins with a preamble consisting of definitions of the four main parts of grammar (orthography, prosody, etymology, and syntax) and a brief discussion of the basic principles of etymology. The preamble is unsigned and unattributed, and there is no epistle dedicatory or other form of prefatory material that would place Barzizza's authorship beyond question. The lexicon that follows the preamble is organized not alphabetically, but by topic. The topics covered are the following: theology (*nomina rerum divinarum*), physics (*nomina rerum elementarium*), things and creatures existing in the air (*nomina rerum volatilium*), in water (*nomina rerum aquaticarum*) and on land (*nomina rerum terrestrium*), rural buildings, tools used in the country, wild and domesticated animals, buildings and tools used in the town, furniture and other objects used in houses arranged according to the rooms in which they belong, parts of the human body, and finally clothing.¹¹

Azzoni asserts that the printed editions differ from the manuscripts in containing vernacular glosses, and he says that the glosses provided in those printed editions are not always the same. This makes one suspect that the glosses may have been added to the original text. There is also no evidence, as Azzoni makes clear, that the author of the *Vocabularium breve*, whoever

¹⁰ The passage reads: "Et quia de etymologia tractare *prius* in animo est, quaedam genera vocabulorum breviter complectar . . ." (Azzoni, p. 22; italics added by me). Azzoni adds in a footnote to this sentence: "Da questo punto si ricava con sicurezza che il *Vocabularium* è anteriore alla prima redazione dell'*Orthographia*, e quindi al 1417–18." Martellotti writes: "Carattere più strettamente lessicale ha il *Vocabularium breve*, che fu composto forse nel 1417–18 ed ebbe numerose edizioni" (*Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, VII [Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 1965], p. 37). Note that the burden of Azzoni's interpretation rests on one word, viz. *prius*.

¹¹ In the manuscript to be found in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana, there then follows a section headed "De armis," containing articles on words designating different types of weapons. I have not found this section in the printed editions that I have consulted so far.

he was, originally intended the work to contain vernacular glosses. The preamble, in fact, outlines the purpose of the work, but does not mention that it will contain vernacular glosses.

Moreover, the text provided in the printed editions is incomplete. The first sentence of the text in the printed editions reads as follows: “Nota quod partes grammaticae *principalibus partibus deseruientes* sunt quattuor, videlicet orthographia, prosodia, diasintastica, ethymologia.” In other words, the parts of grammar which “serve” the principal parts are orthography, prosody, syntax, and etymology. But a reader involuntarily asks what the “principal parts” referred to here are. In the Ambrosiana manuscript, this paragraph is preceded by a passage which begins with a traditional definition of grammar:

Grammatica, ut a ueteribus definitur, est recte loquendi recteque construendi ac scribendi scientia, omnium litterarum artium siue scientiarum origo et fundamentum.

This is followed by an enumeration of the so-called “principal parts of grammar,” namely letter, syllable, word, and sentence.¹² Letters are then handled in a long paragraph, and definitions of syllable, word, and sentence follow. It is at this point that the first sentence that we see in the printed editions occurs. Thus, the printed editions of the *Vocabularium breue* present us with a truncated text, at least at this point in the text. This leads one to suspect that manuscripts of the *Vocabularium breue* were probably in existence before the printers got their hands on the text.¹³

The first entry in the lexicon itself is typical (I again quote from the Ambrosiana manuscript, f. 2^v):

Deus, dei, masculini generis, a *theos* Graece, quod est *deus* Latine, a *theo*, -as, quod est *uideo*, -es, quia cuncta uidit.¹⁴ The word cited in the lemma is followed by its genitive singular and its grammatical gender. This was customary practice in dictionaries produced at that time. Its etymology is then provided: in this instance, the Greek word from which it was supposedly derived, together with an etymological explanation of the Greek word. This is the kind of etymological explanation that one might find in such works as Isidore of Seville’s *Origines*.

¹² Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Q 20 sup., f. 1^r.

¹³ Clearly, without a complete comparison of all the extant manuscripts and all the printed editions, assertions of the kind I have just made here cannot be advanced with complete confidence. It is not inconceivable that one or more manuscripts were copied entirely or in part from printed editions, a practice that was not uncommon in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. This is a question that will be profitably approached only on the basis of greater acquaintance with both the manuscripts and the printed editions of this mysterious work.

¹⁴ In the Venice edition of 1519 this definition reads: “Deus masculini generis el Deo, a theos grece quod est Deus latine. Theos idem est quod Deus, a Theoro as, quod video, quia cuncta videt” (f. A2^v).

Consider now the following entry dealing with the word *merlus* ‘blackbird’: “*Merlus, -i, masculini generis, quasi merus, id est solus, cum solus uolet, uel quia merus, id est totus niger.*”¹⁵ Here, the reader learns that the word *merlus* is derived from *merus*, meaning ‘alone.’ In other words, *merlus* is so called because (supposedly) the blackbird flies alone.¹⁶ According to the second etymological explanation given, *merlus* is derived from *merus*, with the meaning ‘completely black.’ *Merlus* (masc.) is, however, a medieval form of the word, its counterpart in classical Latin being *merula* (fem.). Is it conceivable that a humanist such as Gasparino Barzizza, who was an admirer of classical literature, would make a mistake as trivial and obvious as to attribute the form *merlus* to the kind of Latin that he was holding up for imitation?

Again, in the section devoted to birds’ names in the *Vocabularium breue*, we find a number of items which are unmistakably medieval: *alietus, asturco, gracila, grifex, nisus, qualea*. We find none of these words in the lexical portion of Barzizza’s *Orthographia*. One non-medieval item, *cothurnus* (spelled *coturnus*) is misdefined in the *Vocabularium breue* as a type of footwear used by comic poets.¹⁷ In his *Orthographia*, on the other hand, Barzizza correctly defines *cothurnus* as the shoe worn by tragic actors.¹⁸ It is facts of this kind that are difficult to explain if the *Vocabularium breue* was indeed the work of a Renaissance humanist.

The etymologies provided in the *Vocabularium breue* are similar to the ones that one finds in the encyclopedic dictionaries which circulated in the late Middle Ages, e.g., the anonymous *Papias* from the eleventh century, the *Magnae derivationes* by Hugutio of Pisa from the twelfth, and the *Catholicon* of John of Genoa, composed in the late thirteenth century. Indeed, the general impression created by the *Vocabularium breue* is of a medieval, not a humanistic, work.

Another significant example of a medieval term is *epicaustorium* ‘flue, chimney,’ which is treated as follows in the Venice edition of 1519: “el camino dal fogo: a epi quod est supra et castrum quod est supra nigrum, quia superius sit nigrum et fumosum, vel quia fumus per epicastrum sursum tendit” (f. C5^r). Although this looks like a borrowing from Greek, it is not in Giovanni Tortelli’s *De orthographia*, a dictionary of all words in common use by Latin writers of Antiquity which were thought to be Greek borrowings by the humanists of the mid-fifteenth century. On the other hand, the word can be found in the *Graecismus* of Évrard de Béthune, a

¹⁵ Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Q 20 sup., f. 5^r. Compare the reading in the Venice edition of 1519: “Merlus li masculini generis el merlo, quasi merus, idest solus, quia solus volat” (f. A4^v). Note in passing that the text of the printed edition includes the vernacular gloss (*el merlo*), while the text of the manuscript does not.

¹⁶ Compare “Merula, quod mera, id est sola, volitat” (Varro, V. 76). Varro points out that no form *merulus* was created to refer to male blackbirds (IX. 29, 55).

¹⁷ “*Coturnus, -ni, masculini generis, la scarpa alta rossa laquale usava li poeti comici; potest etiam summi per la botina*” (f. D8^v).

¹⁸ “*Cothurnus per th, et est species quaedam calciamenti quo tragici utuntur uel utebantur*” (f. 92^v).

metrical grammar and lexicon dating from about 1200 and also in John of Genoa's encyclopedic *Catholicon* (1286).¹⁹

Another significant example of the medieval character of the work is the use of the term *diasintastica* in the introductory section to refer to syntax.²⁰ Hence, regardless of its precise date of composition, the work appears to have been written in a milieu still unaffected by Renaissance humanism.

In the few cases where the *Vocabularium breve* and Barzizza's *Orthographia* provide etymologies of the same words, the etymologies are different. Thus, the word *elementum* is derived in the *Vocabularium breve* from *elevationum* 'a raising,' with an ingenious explanation to the effect that one element is raised above the other, i.e., water is above the earth, air is above the water, and fire above air.²¹ In Barzizza's *Orthographia*, on the other hand, the same word is derived from *hylementum*, a compound containing as first member the Greek word *hyle* 'first matter' ("materia prima quae de nihilo creata est, dehinc ex eo fecit elementa"). Although the etymology in Barzizza's *Orthographia* is as far-fetched as the one offered in the *Vocabularium breve*, they are different.²²

¹⁹ See Ioh. Wrobel, ed., *Eberhardi Bethuniensis Graecismus* (Breslau: Koebner, 1887), chap. IX, lines 44–45, p. 92. HC 2257, f. s8^{ra}. For a list of the lemmata in Tortelli's *De orthographia*, see Jean-Louis Charlet & Martine Furno, *Index des lemmes du De orthographia de Giovanni Tortelli*, (Aix-en-Provence: Publications de l'Université de Provence, 1994). The earlier history of the word *epicaustorium* is not clear to me. I assume that it must originally have been borrowed from Byzantine Greek. An interesting fact is that the word is cited by Tony Hunt in his *Teaching and Learning in Thirteenth-Century England*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Brewer, 1991), vol. 2, pp. 33, 79. Hence, it was in use in Anglo-Norman circles. This would seem to suggest that it was widely distributed in the Middle Ages.

²⁰ The definition given here reads: "Diasintastica est scientia de constructione, a dia quod est de, et sintasis constructio, inde diasintastica idem est quod de constructione ars et scientia" (A2^r). On the form *diasintastica*, see Ch. Thurot, *Extraits de divers manuscrits latins pour servir à l'histoire des doctrines grammaticales au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Bibliothèque Royale, 1869, reprint Frankfurt am Main: Minerva, 1964), pp. 212–213, note 4. John of Genoa (Iohannes de Ianua), in his influential encyclopedic dictionary called the *Catholicon* (1286), defines the term as follows: "Diasyntastica, syntesis quod est constructio, compositum cum dia, quod est de, et dicitur diasyntasticus ca cum, id est de constructione tractans, unde et diasyntastica illa pars Prisciani dicitur ubi tractatur de constructione, et corripitur sti" (HC 2257, f. r2^{va}). *Diasintastica* was on the way out in the fifteenth century (being replaced by the Greek term *syntaxis* or its Latin equivalent *constructio*). Its survival in these sixteenth-century editions of the *Vocabularium breve* is remarkable.

²¹ "*Elementum, -ti*, neutri generis, quasi eleuamentum, quia unum sit supra aliud eleuatum, ut aqua supra terram, aer supra aquam, ignis supra aerem" (Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Q 20 sup. f. 3^v).

²² This is the version in the earlier of the two redactions of this work (see Milan, Biblioteca Braidense, A D XIV 42, f. 70^v). The second redaction reads: "Est enim *hyle* 'materia prima,' quae de nihilo adeo creata fuit, ex qua caelum, elementa, et reliqua" (Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, R 67 sup., f. 51^r). Note, however, that several etymologies of *elementum* are cited in medieval lexica and grammars. For example, in the Priscian commentary by Peter Helias (mid-12th century), we read the following: "*Elementum* secundum quosdam dicitur quasi 'elevationum' ab 'elevando', secundum alios *elementum*, quasi 'alimentum' ab 'alendo,' vel *elementum* quasi 'ylimentum' ab *yle*, quod est materia primordialis" (Petrus Helias,

A word of caution is in order at this point. Both manuscript and printed versions of the *Vocabularium breve* differ textually from each other both in the examples cited and the etymological explanations given. In this regard, it resembles many grammatical and lexicographic works of the Middle Ages, which were compilations of already existing material from various sources. This means that when we consider a particular feature in a grammatical treatise we can never be sure whether it was put there by the original author or by some subsequent copyist (or printer). Moreover, in the case of the manuscripts of the *Vocabularium breve* we do not know their chronological or genealogical relations. Nor do we know anything about the relations among the manuscripts and between the manuscripts and the printed editions.

I suggest in conclusion, therefore, that since we are dealing at this point with probabilities, not certainties, it would be as reasonable to reject as to affirm the attribution of the *Vocabularium breve* to Barzizza. In the meantime, what we can do while the question is still *sub iudice*, in my view, is at least to pronounce that attribution doubtful and under investigation.

Summa super Priscianum, ed. Leo Reilly, Studies and Texts, 113 [Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1993], p. 120). The same three etymologies are found in the *Graecismus* of Évrard de Béthune: “Diuersas hoc nomen habet partes elementa, | Nam quidam dicunt ab alo, quasi sint alimentia, | Et quidam dicunt ab yle, quasi sint ylementa, | Sunt et ab eleuo dicta, quasi sunt eleuamenta” (*Eberhardi Bethuniensis Graecismus*, ed. Ioh. Wrobel [Breslau, Koebner, 1887], XI. lines 214–217, p. 102). John of Genoa, in the *Catholicon* (1286) adds a fourth etymology: “*Elementum*: ab *ile* dicitur *elementum*, quia deus primo loco de nihilo creauit ile, et ex ile fecit elementa, et ex elementis omnia alia; uel dicitur *elementum* quasi *elicitementum*, quia omnia ex elementis elicita sunt et extracta; uel dicitur *elementum* quasi *eleuamentum*, quia unum super aliud est eleuatum, scilicet aqua super terram, aer super aquam, ignis super aerem; uel *elementum* quasi *alimentum*, quia omnia animalia aluntur in elementis, quaedam in terra, quaedam in aqua, quaedam in aere, quaedam etiam uiuentia in igne” (HC 2257, f. s4^{va}). Thus, it is at least clear that Gasparino Barzizza and the author of the *Vocabularium breve* chose different etymologies from this traditional set of alternatives.