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On Renaissance Commentaries  
edited by Marianne Pade



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# On Renaissance Commentaries

edited by Marianne Pade

is raised by James Hankins at an earlier Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies course of a discussion following the paper by Anthony Grafton and including me and Ingrid Rowland. Hankins challenges Erasmus (as opposed to a medievalist) to show elements of continuity or discontinuity in a work of Renaissance pedagogy that entered the curriculum of the RSA as a text. The volume is published in Neder-

land of this volume are grateful to the editor for the opportunity to publish the

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The Venetian humanist Hermolaus Barbarus belonged to the patrician family of the Barbaro. Born in 1453 or 1454 as grandson of the famous Francesco Barbaro (1390–1454), he attended university at Padova, where he took doctoral degrees in the arts (1474) and *utriusque iuris* (1477). From 1474 he taught Aristotle (Ethics, Politics and Rhetoric) at the university for several years.<sup>1</sup> Already very early Barbaro expressed the conviction that in the study of Aristotle it was not enough to rely on the medieval translations and commentaries used at the university; to achieve a deeper understanding it was necessary to go back to the Greek sources, so as to recover the original text of the Stagirite as well as the ancient interpretive tradition. Consequently, his first published work was a Latin translation of the paraphrases of Aristotle written by the hellenistic Greek philosopher Themistius, printed in 1481. The recovery of Aristotle was not to be confined to the works of the university syllabus; not much later, in the introduction to a lecture series on Aristotle held in Venice in 1484 he announced that his course was to include “all of Aristotle”, also works that were passed over in the university curriculum.<sup>2</sup>

This attention to all the works of Aristotle may have been the starting point for Barbaro's interest in Pliny and Dioscorides and the herbal science of antiquity in general, because the *Corpus Aristotelicum* also contained two works on

<sup>1</sup> Cp. L. Panizza, “Learning the syllogisms: Byzantine visual aids in Renaissance Italy — Ermolao Barbaro (1454–93) and others,” in: *Philosophy in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries. Conversations with Aristotle*, ed. C. Blackwell and S. Kusukawa (Aldershot etc., 1999), 22–47: 22–33; and V. Cox, “Rhetoric and Humanism in Quattrocento Venice,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 56 (2003), 652–94. Fundamental for the study of Barbaro is V. Branca, “L'umanesimo veneziano alla fine del Quattrocento. Ermolao Barbaro e il suo circolo,” in: *Storia della cultura veneta 3: Dal primo quattrocento al concilio di Trento*, a cura di G. Arnaldi e M. Pastore Stocchi (Vizenca, 1980), 1, 123–75, repr. with additions as “Ermolao Barbaro e il suo circolo tra azione civile, fede religiosa, entusiasmo filologico, presperimentalismo scientifico,” in: Id., *La sapienza civile. Studi sull'Umanesimo a Venezia* (Firenze, 1998), 59–127; see also C. Griffante, “L'umanesimo a Venezia. Note critiche per un aggiornamento bibliografico del capitolo ‘Ermolao Barbaro e il suo circolo’,” in: *ibid.*, 197–216.

<sup>2</sup> If not indicated otherwise, I will quote Barbaro's works from the following editions: Ermolao Barbaro, *Epistolae, Orationes et Carmina*, ed. crit. a cura di V. Branca, 2 vols., Nuova collezione di testi umanistici inediti o rari V. VI (Firenze, 1943); *Hermolai Barbari Castigationes Plinianae et in Pomponium Melam*, ed. G. Pozzi et al., 4 vols., *Thesaurus mundi* 11, 14, 18, 19 (Patavii, 1973–1979). *Hermolai Barbari patricii Veneti et Patriarcae Aquileiensis Corollarium libris quinque absolutum* (Venetiis: Fratres Gregorii, 1517). The introductory lecture was edited as *oratio III* in Barbaro, *Epistolae*, II, 107–109 (the quotation is on p. 108; for the transmission of the lecture see vol. I p. XXXIII f.).

herbal science. One was a shortish tract *De plantis* (falsely) attributed to Aristotle, widely used in the Middle Ages<sup>3</sup> and first printed in the Latin edition of Aristotle's *opera de naturali philosophia* in 1482.<sup>4</sup> The other were the ten books of the *Enquiry into plants* by Aristotle's successor Theophrast. The Greek text of Theophrast was only printed in 1497 by Aldus in the fourth volume of Aristotle's *Opera*, whereas the Latin translation made by Theodore Gaza in the 1450s was already printed in 1482.<sup>5</sup> A further major Greek text on herbs was Dioscorides' work *Περὶ ὕλης ἰατρικῆς*, commonly cited under its Latin title *De materia medica*.<sup>6</sup> The book treated the medical simples, i. e. the basic substances of pharmacology, mainly plants, but also animals, liquids and minerals. The Greek text was translated into Latin in late antiquity and into Arabic in the ninth and tenth centuries. When the great Arabic medical authors, who quoted Dioscorides copiously (notably the *Liber aggregatus de simplicibus* of Serapion iunior), were translated into Latin, the Arabic Dioscorides entered

<sup>3</sup> Nicolaus Damascenus, *De plantis*. Five translations, ed. H.J. Drossaart Lolofs and E.L.J. Poortman. Aristoteles semitico-latinus. Verhandlungen der Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, afd. Letterkunde nieuwe reeks, deel 139 (Amsterdam, Oxford, New York, 1989), 465–561, Latin text: 515–61.

<sup>4</sup> Venetiis: Philippus Venetus, 1482, H 1682. The next print only appeared in 1496. See M. Florđ, *Incunabula classicorum*. Wiegendrucke der griechischen und römische Literatur (Amsterdam, 1973), 19f., 'Aristoteles' no. 4 and 9. Barbaro himself doubted the attribution to Aristotle (*Coroll.* 28: *si modo liber eius est qui de plantis ad autorem Aristotelem refertur*); as his (Latin) quotations show, his knowledge of the work is based on the medieval translation of the Latin text into Greek.

<sup>5</sup> See C. B. Schmitt, "Theophrastus," CTC II (Washington, 1971), 242–322: 266–68. Barbaro was familiar with both the original and Gaza's translation; and later came to use the latter as a commentary on the former. It should perhaps be added that Barbaro was not aware of Theodore Gaza's subsequent corrections, which are contained in a manuscript now in the Fondo Chigi of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (BAV, Chigi F.VIII 193); the text he quotes always follows the print.

<sup>6</sup> From the few indications available, modern scholarship has concluded that the work was probably finished between 65 and 75 AD (cp. Pedanios Dioskurides, in: *Der Neue Pauly* IX 462–65 [Alain Touwaide]), i. e., shortly before Pliny's *Natural history*, the preface of which is dated to 77. This coincides more or less with Barbaro's own view, that Dioscorides was a contemporary of Pliny or even slightly younger (*Castig. primae* 29,29 III p.988 *Dioscoridem, cuius nos volumina in latinum vertimus, Plinio aut contemporaneum aut non multo posteriorem fuisse*, cp. also 26,1 III p.923); — this was important from Barbaro's point of view, since Pliny thus could not have cited the Greek writer. Nicolò Leonicensio, on the other hand, in the *De Plinii in medicina erroribus*, expressed the belief that Dioscorides was one of the sources of Pliny (ed. L. Premuda, Milano, 1958, p. 151, quoted with corrections from the incunable, Ferrara: Laurentius de Rubeis, de Valentia, with Andreas de Grassis, de Castronovo, 18 Dec. 1492, sig. a2v, HC 10021\*): *Nam et Plinius ipse non hunc minus quam Theophrastum in hac parte secutus videtur, ut, qui utramque linguam et graecam et latinam nouerit, sententias integras Dioscoridis quasi uerbum ex uerbo a Plinio translatas agnoscat.*

occidental medical literature. In the eleventh century, the old Latin translation from the Greek was reworked into an alphabetical treatise of simples and their virtues, in which there remained only little of the Greek author. It was printed in 1478 in Tuscany,<sup>7</sup> and — even though we have so far no evidence that Barbaro was even aware of this print — certainly exemplified the desperate state of Dioscorides-scholarship at the time when Barbaro began to work on this author. The old Latin version did not completely fall into disuse either; we find it cited intermittently throughout the later Middle Ages, until its importance was reasserted by Marcello Virgilio.<sup>8</sup>

Barbaro began to translate Dioscorides into Latin very early in the 1480s.<sup>9</sup> This translation was in itself a daring project, since a Dioscorides-text translated directly from the Greek could hardly avoid showing that the Latin Dioscorides-excerpts translated from the Arabic, on which specialists relied, were woefully inadequate. It must have been in connection with the research necessary for the translation that Barbaro conceived an even more ambitious plan: to provide a *corollarium* to Dioscorides, which would altogether present an overview over pharmacological knowledge based directly on the classical Greek and Latin sources, completely bypassing accepted medieval scholarship. Barbaro worked on this project with interruptions till his death of the plague in the summer of 1493.

Modern scholarship has often seen the work as a commentary on Dioscorides; as such it has found its place in the fourth volume of the *Catalogus Translationum et Commentariorum*.<sup>10</sup> It is the purpose of this article to question

<sup>7</sup> Johannes de Medemblick, Colle (HC \*6258).

<sup>8</sup> It is used by Simon Januensis in the *Synonyma medicinae* (finished ca. 1290) and Matthaeus Silvaticus († 1342) in his *Opus pandectarum medicinae*; see J. Ramminger, "Ne Dioscuride ne Plinio: Su alcuni testi medicinali del medioevo e il *Cornu copiae* di Niccolò Perotti," SUP 19 (1999), 104–14: 114, nn. 26 and 27, and id., "Zur Entstehungsgeschichte des *Dioskurides* von Ermolao Barbaro (1453–1493)," Neulateinisches Jahrbuch 1 (1999), 189–204: 189 n. 2. For Marcello Virgilio cp. Riddle (see n. 10), pp. 35 and 37.

<sup>9</sup> The first witness to the translation are several chapters published in Paolo Marsi's commentary on Ovid's *Fasti*, printed in 1482 (Venetiis: Baptista de Tortis, HC 12238; the colophon has the date "ANNO SALVTIS MCCCCLXXXII ... IX. CAL. IANVAR." (= 24 December 1482, according to the Venetian calendar); see G. Pozzi, "Appunti sul 'Corollarium' del Barbaro," in: Tra Latino e Volgare per Carlo Dionisotti, a c. di G. Bernardoni Trezzini et al., Medioevo e umanesimo 17–18 (Padova, 1974), 619–40: 625.

<sup>10</sup> J. Riddle, Dioscorides, CTC 4 (Washington, 1980), 1–143, on Barbaro's 'commentary': 46–48. Cp. E. Bigi, "Barbaro, Ermolao," in Dizionario biografico degli Italiani 6 (Roma, 1964), 97: "intraprende nel 1481–82 [...] il commento a Dioscoride," Pozzi, Appunti, p. 619: "Il volume (i.e. the translation) è accompagnato da un largo commento dello stesso Barbaro."

that characterization; it is hoped that a closer analysis of some of the work's features will lead to a more nuanced appreciation of the *Corollarium*.

The original manuscript of Barbaro's *Dioscorides* has perished. In the print of 1517 we first have the translation, divided into five books, but with continuous numbering of the chapters; then, separately, Barbaro's own book on the *materia medica*, with the same chapter headings as the translation. Barbaro himself sometimes calls his book on medical simples *commentatio*.<sup>11</sup> This and related terms like *commentarius*, *commentum* and the verb *commentari* from antiquity onwards had been used for 'commentary' in the modern sense as well as other kinds of scholarly discourse (see Appendix). Barbaro himself uses these terms for the whole or parts of such different works as his Themistius-translation (*commentarii*, *commentatio*, *-tiones*), Francesco Barbaro's *De re uxoria* (*-arii*), a tract in Plutarch's *Moralia* (*-arius*), the *Castigationes Pliniana* (*commentum*, *-arius*), Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (*-arii*), unspecified modern scholarship (*commentatio*) and the pseudo-Aristotelian *De plantis* (*commentatio*). Obviously *commentatio* describes only in very generic terms, how Barbaro viewed his work. Certainly structurally it is a commentary insofar as it strictly follows the structure of the text it accompanies. Further than that, the similarities with what we would expect of a commentary are not many. The most noticeable difference is the absence of lemmata, otherwise a standard feature of commentaries from antiquity onwards. For Barbaro the framework supplied by Dioscorides just serves as a point of departure for an overview over all information to be gleaned from botanical, medical and other sources. In this overview Dioscorides has a privileged place only insofar as Barbaro occasionally relates information found in Dioscorides to what other writers have to say. In all, the name of Dioscorides is mentioned about 350 times in the over thousand chapters of Barbaro's book; in many chapters there are neither explicit nor implicit references to his work. In comparison, the name of Pliny occurs over 700 times, that is twice as many, and Theophrast is named nearly as often as Dioscorides.

Barbaro regularly called his book *corollarium* to Dioscorides.<sup>12</sup> This is a term of medieval logic, where it denotes a supplementary conclusion derived from a syllogism, or a summary. At the same time *corollarium* more generally can be an

<sup>11</sup> Coroll. 134 in *commentatione post hypocisthidem proxima*.

<sup>12</sup> For the term *corollarium* in Barbaro's writing cp. J. Ramminger, "Rem latinam iuuare. Zur Funktion nichtfachlicher Zitate im *Corollarium* des Ermolao Barbaro," SUP 18 (1998), 139–55: 139 n. 2. The letter from 1489, where Barbaro first calls his book *Corollarium*, has been edited by id., "Die 'Irrtümer Perottis' von Ermolao Barbaro d. J. Ausgabe und Kommentar von Brief 135," in: WS 114 (2001), 677–700.

*additamentum*, a supplement.<sup>13</sup> Thus, when Barbaro announces the imminent publication of the “Dioscorides cum corollario nostro”,<sup>14</sup> he defines his work as a supplement to Dioscorides and a summary of related pharmacological knowledge.

How this terminology related to the work itself can be seen in an analysis of one of Barbaro's *commentationes*. As an example I have chosen the entry on *cardamomum*, not least because it is relatively short (*Coroll.* 5, interpunction and orthography modernized):

<sup>1</sup> *Cardamomum Theophrastus refert alios e Media putare, alios ex India cum amomo atque nardo et plurimis id genus aduehi.* <sup>2</sup> *Simile amomo frutice toto praedicant, semine oblongo. Quatuor eius genera. Viridissimum et pingue acutis angulis, fricanti pertinax, quod et maxime laudatur. Proximum e ruffo candicans. Tertium minutius atque nigrius. Peius uarium et friari facile odorisque parui. Id, quod uerius est, uicinius esse costo debet. Precium optimi ait Plinius in libras denarii II.*

<sup>3</sup> *Recentiores Mauritani hoc non cardamomum, sed cordumeni et syluestre caros uocant.* <sup>4</sup> *Cardamomi uero nomine genus aliud intelligunt in geminas diuisum species, alterum lentis amplitudine, alterum ciceris obnigri, in quo granum album sit, gustu mordaci. Vtrunque odoratum.* <sup>5</sup> *Quid quod officinae cardamomo utuntur alio, quam quod a Mauris et a Dioscoride perscribitur, duplicis fastigii, minus et maius appellantes?* <sup>6</sup> *Cui simile id semen sit, quod uulgo melligeta dicitur, praelatum uiribus.*

<sup>1</sup> According to Theophrast there are some who believe that cardamom is imported from Media, others who believe that it comes from India together with Nepaul cardamom and spikenard and many similiar species.<sup>2</sup> It is said to be similar to Nepaul cardamom in the overall appearance of its fruit, with longish seed. It has four varieties. One is very green and fat, with sharp points, it resists rubbing it down; it is the best liked of the four. The next one is reddish-white. The third one is smaller and darker. The worst kind is mottled, easily crumbled and with little smell. The purer it is, the nearer it is to the *costum*. The price for the best according to Pliny is two *denarii* per pound.

<sup>3</sup> The younger Mauritians call this not cardamom, but *cordumeni* and wild cumin. <sup>4</sup> By the name of cardamom they understand another sort, consisting of two species, one with the size of a lentil, the other a darkish

<sup>13</sup> See Mittellateinisches Wörterbuch, vol. 2 (München, 1997), s. v., col. 1901–1902 (Leithe-Jasper); Dictionary of Medieval Latin From British Sources, fasc. 2 (London, 1981), 494 (Latham). Cp. the definition by Perotti, *Cornu copiae* 27,3 vol. 6 p. 86 *corollarium dictum, quod significat id, quod additur praeter illud, quod est debitum*. For Perotti's own use see M. Pade, “Niccolò Perotti's *Cornu copiae*: Commentary on Martial and Encyclopedia,” in this volume, p. 53.

<sup>14</sup> Preface to the Castigationes in Melam Pomponium (III, p. 1307).

chickpea, containing a white seed, with pungent taste. Both kinds are fragrant.<sup>5</sup> But what about the apothecaries, who use a kind of cardamom different from that of the Mauritanians and Dioscorides, with two kinds, called greater and lesser?<sup>6</sup> Similar to this is the seed which is commonly called 'grains of paradise'. It is preferred because of its potency.<sup>15</sup>

Barbaro does not arrange his authorities according to the amount of material they have; such an order would have put Pliny in the first place, since everything under number 2 in the first paragraph comes from the *Naturalis historia*. Instead Barbaro chooses what is clearly a descending hierarchy of authority: First Theophrast, then Pliny, who as a source was less valuable because his information might sometimes be copied from Theophrast,<sup>16</sup> then the Mauritanians (the Arabic authors), finally the contemporary apothecaries whose information was furthest removed from the authorities of antiquity.

Parts of the information attributed to the *Mauritani* can be found in many medical manuals. It goes back to Avicenna, who treated the simples in the second book of his *Canon* (Avicenna, *Canon* 2, 159, Patavii: Johannes Herbort, de Seligenstadt, 1476; Hain 2201, sig. l<sub>3</sub>r; underlining indicates text not used by Barbaro):

*Cardamomum quid est. aliud est magnum sicut cicer nigrum. quod cum frangitur interius habet granum album mordicans linguam sicut cubebe in quo est aromaticitas. et aliud est parvum sicut lens aromaticum etiam. Natura. Calidum est et siccum in tertio. Operationes et proprietates. In ipso cum calefactione est stipticitas et proprie in illo quod habet caput et proprie in capite ipso. Membra. Nutrimenti. Confert vomitui et nausee cum aqua masticis et utriusque granati.*

As in the other cases, Barbaro takes over the information accurately; it had, however, to be reformulated entirely, since the technical language of medieval medicine was not suited to his own work.

<sup>15</sup> This translation relies (with the necessary modifications) on the English translations of Barbaro's sources, Theophrastus, *Enquiry into Plants and Minor Works on Odours and Weather Signs*, with an english translation by A. Hort, vol. 2, Loeb Classical Library 79 (Cambridge Mass./London, 1980), 249; Pliny, *Natural History*, with an english translation by H. Rackham, vol. 4, Loeb Classical Library 370 (London/Cambridge Mass., 1968), 37. The distinction between the greater and the lesser cardamom is common in later herbals. I have taken the phrase from Culpeper's (1616–1654) *Herbal*.

<sup>16</sup> Cp. *Cast. primae* 14,31 II p.739 in *Theophrasto, unde Plinius et Athenaeus mutuati sunt*; *ibid.* 16,23 p.765 *Theophrastus auctor duobus locis, unde Plinius haec ad verbum sumpsit*, *ibid.* 18,18 II p.795 *Theophrastus, unde accepit haec Plinius. Coroll. 4 ut inquit Theophrastus, unde sumpsit Plinius. ibid.* 12 *Dissentit a Dioscoride Plinius Theophrastum, ut arbitror, secutus*, *ibid.* 98 *Plinius haec de pinu a Theophrasto dicta transtulit ad laricem.*

So far I have not been able to identify a specific source for what Barbaro has to say about the *officinae*, the apothecaries. But in the course of my research I came across a shortish tract, which seemed rather typical for the kind of manual Barbaro would have had to deal with. It is the *onomasticon de simplicibus eorumque virtutibus medicis* by Galeatius de Santa Sofia (BAV, Pal. lat. 1279), which says about the *cardamomum* (fol. 32v): *Cardamo(m) est genus quoddam cuius due sunt speties est enim maius et minus*. The de Santa Sofia are a famous dynasty of professors of medicine in Padua. Galeazzo had died in Padova in 1427. His works continued to circulate: The copy of his *Simplicia* which I used was written in 1468, forty years after his death. We know that Barbaro was in contact with a later descendant of the family, Felice di Santa Sofia, to whose garden he occasionally refers.<sup>17</sup> The last piece of botanical lore, concerning the *melligeta*, I have not yet been able to trace in a contemporary source, but undoubtedly it is well founded; we find a similar, if somewhat longer note in Caspar Bauhinus' *Pinax theatri botanici*, from 1623.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, Barbaro not only gives an overview over Greek and Roman pharmacological knowledge, he also crosschecks contemporary usages against it — and usually finds the contemporaries deficient. All this contributes only incidentally to an understanding of Dioscorides. It is definitely not a commentary to the Greek author. There is a further limitation: Barbaro ignores those parts of Dioscorides' work, which dealt with the effects and uses of the various drugs. These are mentioned by Barbaro occasionally when they help to distinguish between various homonymous plants, but hardly ever otherwise. In the case of the *cardamomum*, more than half of Dioscorides' chapter is thus skipped over. As marked in the quotation from Avicenna above, Barbaro also bypasses the corresponding information from other authors. Partially this restriction may reflect a personal preference on the part of Barbaro, since it is clear from his letters that he had an enthusiastic interest in the *realia*, the reconstruction of the natural science of antiquity. In addition, it can hardly be a

<sup>17</sup> Coroll. 1, 461, 543.

<sup>18</sup> ΠΙΝΑΞ theatri botanici Caspari Bauhini, ... sive Index Theophrasti Dioscoridis Plinii et botanicorum qui a seculo scripserunt opera, Basileae, typis Ludouici Regis, 1623, in the chapter *grana paradisi et cardamomum* (p. 413): *Hoc Cardamomi minoris loco aliqui utuntur et Melegeta dicitur, propter similitudinem quam cum Melicae semine habet*. The similarity to the seed of *melica* (a kind of millet) is already emphasized earlier, cf. Simon Januensis, *Clavis sanationis*, s.v. *cobzbagne*: *Cobzbagne sic scribitur in secundo canonis Auicennae, sed in arabico chobezbaca. dixit mihi arabs quod est nunc xarch, que uulgo dicitur melegeta, eo quod gramina eius simulantur milice granis, et si hoc est, falsum est quod ibi scribitur quod portatur de sclauonia*. (I quote from the edition Mediolani: Antonius Zarotus, 3 August 1473, HCR 14747). I found the reference to *cobzbagne* in the edition of the *Clavis*, Venetiis: Guillemus de Tridino, 13 november 1486 (HC 14749\*) s.v. *melegete*. So far it has not been established which print(s) or manuscript(s) of the *Clavis* Barbaro used.

coincidence that the parts of Dioscorides Barbaro does treat, concerning the description of plants, their provenience etc., are the same as those, which had been quoted from Dioscorides in Arabic and late medieval compilations of herbal medicine.

Even though Barbaro treated a medical subject-matter, at least in part using medical literature, the work in itself was not an encyclopedia of medicines, but a work of humanist philology in the field of medicine. Thus Barbaro in general has little interest in updating the knowledge he has collected. As we have seen, when he gives prices, the prices are not contemporary ones, but taken from Pliny, expressed in *denarii*. Moreover, Barbaro pays close attention to textual problems in his sources and proposes emendations not only in Dioscorides, but also in Pliny, Aristotle, Columella, and others.<sup>19</sup> Barbaro further emphasizes the philological nature of his work by interspersing his discourse with the discussion of textual or interpretational problems taken from Latin non-technical literature.<sup>20</sup> In all I have counted about 150 references or quotations, half of them from Plautus or Vergil. This was not, or not only, an overflow of the discussion into unrelated matters, a lapse of concentration, as it were, but should be related to Barbaro's insistence on the validity of philological methods in a field which had so far been reserved for specialists hardly concerned with the historical authenticity of their texts. It connected the *material medica* with other types of texts, where the authority of the humanists had long been established.<sup>21</sup> Barbaro was aware of the fact that to the reader these discussions at first might seem extraneous.<sup>22</sup> I quote from chapter 240, *pulmones animalium* ('animals' lungs): *Pulmones agnini, suilli et ursini caeterorumque animalium ex Dioscoridis instituto referendi erant. In his quando nihil erat scitu admodum dignum, ad diuerticula multae lectionis uenimus, quae nec inutilia nec iniucunda futura sint lectoribus* ("The lungs of sheep, swine and bear had to be mentioned because they are in Dioscorides. Since, however, in these there was nothing worth knowing, we have added something from our extensive reading, which the

<sup>19</sup> Variant readings or corruptions in Dioscorides are discussed in *Coroll.* 9, 206 (*ex Columella*), 256, 385, 414, 425, 567 (*exemplaria depravata*), 625 (*graeci codices ambusti*), 628, 616, 695, 740. Emendations in Aristotle are proposed in *Coroll.* 195, 303, 543, in Columella in *Coroll.* 124, 173, 312, 314, 322, 469, 472, 562, 904.

<sup>20</sup> G. Pozzi, the main editor of the *Castigationes Plinianae*, characterized the style of discourse of the *Corollarium*: "... che l'exkursus è qui la normalità". Pozzi, ed., *Castigationes*, I, p. XLIII.

<sup>21</sup> There is a slight irony in the fact that Barbaro himself firmly rejected as unsuitable the incursion of a doctor into the field of philology. In a letter to Michele Alberto da Carrara from 1490 he criticizes a work of the latter, because, although he was a *medicus*, he had treated matters belonging to grammar or literary studies (*quamobrem aliena medico multa sis complexus et quae ad grammaticum potius et poetarum interpretem pertineant*, ep. 132, II p. 50).

<sup>22</sup> For a discussion of the function of such digressions in another context see J. Gaisser, "Filippo Beroaldo on Apuleius: Bringing Antiquity to Life," in this volume, p. 90ff.



readers may find useful and entertaining"). Similarly Barbaro in the chapter on the *squama aeris*, the red cuprous oxide, adduces what little information he has found in Palladius and Celsus. The mention of copper, however, gives him a chance to discuss the etymology of the word *rantium* or *arantium*, the orange. In conclusion Barbaro says: *Sed vereor ne quis me alias invidiae obnoxium etiam nimio iuvandi rem latinam studio lapsum praedicet* ("I am afraid that some with their usually envy will say that I have digressed too far in an excessive zeal for the *res latina*, the Latin culture").

The emphasis on the support of Latin culture/literature (*res Latina*, *res literaria*, *lingua Latina*, *lectio Latina*, *studia humanitatis* are overlapping expressions) is rather a commonplace amongst Barbaro's contemporaries. Giorgio Merula had formulated similar aims already at the beginning of the 1470s (in the epilogue of his edition of Martial) — for himself as well as for his readers:<sup>23</sup> Not only would he like to be of use to the community of letters (*dum rei literariae prodesse cuperem*); the studious reader, too, could contribute to the *res Latina* by explaining passages of Martial's text, which were still obscure (*si varia et assidua lectione, ut fieri per studiosos solet, quid illa significant deprehenderint, juvent et ipsi rem Latinam*). Similarly, Merula's younger contemporary Marcantonio Sabellico defined the community of humanists as those, *qui recentissimis temporibus latinam linguam iuvare* ("who in our time have helped the Latin language").<sup>24</sup> Poliziano formulated the same aim for himself (*si rem iuvare Latinam studemus*, *Misc. prima* 4,3) as well as for Lorenzo de Medici (*perge a situ recipere rem Latinam*, praef. 91).<sup>25</sup>

Barbaro himself proposed already in 1481, in his first letter to Politian, to join forces with the Florentine humanist in his endeavour to rescue the *litterae et bonae artes* from their ruinous state.<sup>26</sup> He expressed a similar sentiment in a let-

<sup>23</sup> Marcus Valerius Martialis, *Epigrammatum Libri XV ex recensione Georgii Merulae Alexandrini* ... [Venice]: Vindelinius de Spira, [about 1472], H 10809\*. The *postfatio* ed. by B. Botfield, *Praefationes et epistolae editionibus principibus auctorum veterum praepositae* (Cantabrigiae, 1861), 151–53; the quotations are on pp. 151 and 152.

<sup>24</sup> Marcantonio Sabellico, *De latinae linguae reparatione*, a cura di G. Bottari, *Percorsi dei classici* 2 (Messina, 1999), 87. The catalogue of humanists, which follows in Sabellicus' work, shows that *lingua Latina* in this case includes the study of Latin literature and (written) culture. This seems to be an unusual expansion of the meaning, which otherwise relates to proficiency in Latin; cp. Tortelli *profuturus sane pro mea virili studiosis linguae latinae*, preface of *De orthographia*, ed. Rizzo, see n. 43, p. 119; Valla, *eleg.* 6 praef.: *quo prodessem aliquid linguam Latinam discere volentibus*.

<sup>25</sup> I cite the *Miscellanea prima* from the Aldina of 1498 (HC 13218\*), the numbering follows H. Katayama, ed. (Tokyo, 1981/82).

<sup>26</sup> Barbaro, *ep.* 56 (I p. 74) *litteris ... et bonis artibus, quibus ... succurrendum est ruinosis et nutantibus brevique casuris*. The letter is dated *Venetii, idibus septembris MCCCCXXXI*, quoted by V.

ter, written in February 1489, to the same: "Then I will be able to stop loving you, when you desert the study of Latin" (*Tunc amare potero desinere quom tu rem latinam deserere*, ep. 125 II p. 41). Similarly, Barbaro criticized errors contained in Perotti's *Cornu copiae, ut rei litterariae proficerem* (ep. 135,36).<sup>27</sup> Contrariwise, on account of a Plautus-supplement composed by himself Barbaro is afraid that people will think it ridiculous that he presumed "to help Latinity with some substituted baby like an extra" (*rem latinam suppositio quodam partu velut auctario iuvare*, ep. n. d. 5, II p. 89).<sup>28</sup> One of the highest ranking Latin authors was Pliny, *sine quo vix potest latina res consistere*, "without whom there would hardly be any Latin culture" (preface of the *Castigationes*);<sup>29</sup> likewise, without Pliny every hope *latinae rei constituendae* would be in vain: *alii rem latinam iuverunt, ille ipse nobis est Latium* (ep. n. d. 8, II p. 92).<sup>30</sup>

From very early on Barbaro's definition of his field of study had included natural philosophy.<sup>31</sup> Thus he formulated the aim of his future studies as follows: *ut ... naturalis philosophia cum studiis humanitatis in gratiam redeat* (letter to Gerolamo Donato, 1480, ep. 12, I p. 17). In 1483 he praised Nicoletto Vernia

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Fera, "Poliziano, Ermolao Barbaro e Plinio," in: *Una famiglia Veneziana nella storia: I Barbaro*, ed. M. Marangoni e M. Pastore Stocchi (Venezia, 1996), 193–234: 193.

<sup>27</sup> Ed. Ramminger, see n. 12, p. 690.

<sup>28</sup> Barbaro skilfully underscores his mastery of Plautinian style by expressing his anxiety in terms of Plautinian comedy: the vocabulary alludes to Plautus, *suppositicius* occurs in *Pseudolus* 1167, *auctarium* in *Mercator* 490; both are otherwise rare in classical literature (Barbaro uses *auctarium* in the same sense in ep. 108, II p. 29). The picture of baby-swapping at birth alludes to a standard ploy of comedy. The word *auctarium* seems to have been rare also in the Latin of the Middle Ages; the Dictionary of Medieval Latin From British Sources, fasc. 1 (London, 1975), 157 (Latham) has two examples, both from wordbooks; the *Mittel-lateinisches Wörterbuch*, vol. 1 (München, 1967), and J. F. Niermeyer, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus*, vol. 1 (Brill, 2002) do not have an entry. The (numerous) examples in the *Patrologia Latina* Database nearly all occur in modern additions.

<sup>29</sup> Ed. Pozzi, *Castigationes*, I p.3, earlier ed. as ep. 156, II p.80.

<sup>30</sup> Other examples in the *Castigationes* are: *Castig. primae* 9,10 (II p.604): *si pictoribus, cur non et rem latinam iuvantibus in parerga licet excurrere?* (an allusion to Vitruvius 9,8,5); *ibid.* 26,13 III p.926: *Theodorus 'herbam pirum' interpretatus est immodico ne dicam parum necessario augendi rem latinam studio*; *ibid.* postfatio ad lectores III p.1209: *malui tamen ingenuum illud propositum mecum tueri iuvandae lectionis latinae*. The expression *res latina* for 'Latin knowledge/culture' is a creation of the humanists. I have only been able to find two classical examples of the phrase (Ov. *met.* 14, 610 and Liv. 1,3,1); in both cases it denotes a political entity (i. e. Latium). Barbaro's second quotation shows, that he was aware of (and playing with) the potential ambiguity of the phrase. I would like to thank Prof. Strohm, who alerted me to the stylistic problem.

<sup>31</sup> Already in *De coelibatu* (1473) he defended his discussion of the medical complications of immoderate eating thus (3,5,79): *Plura dicerem nisi vereretur ne suum sibi munus superstitionis quorundam medicorum impudentia reddi vellet ... non timide ea omnia usurpabo quae ad rem facere videbuntur, (80): haec, tametsi medicorum erant, non tamen ut medicus sum persequutus.*

for his efforts in teaching Aristotle "with regard for the splendor of the peripatetic name as well as the general profit of the studies" (*quoad splendori peripatetici nominis cum ... communi studiorum utilitate consultum erit*, ep. 31, I p. 47). That Barbaro in the eyes of his contemporaries reached his objective, becomes clear from a passage in Politian's first *Miscellanea*: "Ermolao Barbaro, the harshest enemy of barbarity, who either polishes with a fine ear or forms newly on his anvil the weapons and linguistic equipment of Latin philosophy, so that in this *genre* we live on the same level as the Greeks".<sup>32</sup> Politian may principally have thought of Barbaro's Aristotelian studies and especially his translations; the expression *latina philosophia* would, however, not exclude Barbaro's work on Dioscorides, of which the Florentine humanist was well aware. The restoration of the language of (Latin) philosophy would include the medical lexicon; since the Middle Ages medical theory had been part of the realm of philosophy,<sup>33</sup> its theoreticians were commonly denoted as *philosophi et medici*.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> *Hermolaus Barbarus, barbariae hostis acerrimus, qui latinae philosophiae velut arma instrumentumque uerborum sic aut aure diligentissima terget aut incude noua fabricatur, ut ... in isto quidem genere ... uiuamus ex pari cum Graecis* (90,4). Fera, Poliziano, p. 194 n. 4, emends the *diligentissima* of the first print to *diligentissime*. This emendation may not be necessary, since Politian alludes to Martial, 6,1,3, *quem* (sc. *libellum*) *si terseris aure diligenti*, cp. *Thes. Ling. Lat.* I 1515,41–1518,30 *de auribus instrumento quodam iudicii ac uocum mensura* (Ihm); see also F. Grewing, Martial, Buch VI. Ein Kommentar, Hypomnemata 115 (Göttingen, 1997), 74–5 ad l. The ear as instrument of literary criticism appears also elsewhere in the *Miscellanea*, e.g. 1,13: (Cicero) *Et ut homo erat omnium — ut tum quidem uidebatur — acerrimus in disputando atque aurem, quod ait Persius* (5,86), *mordaci lotus aceto*, and 1,59: *qui tamen libri iudicio doctarum aurium sunt improbi*.

<sup>33</sup> See W. A. Wallace, "Traditional natural philosophy," *Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. Ch. B. Schmitt et al. (Cambridge, 1988), 201–35: 205.

<sup>34</sup> Without claiming to be exhaustive or even representative, I have noted the following examples. Ermolao Barbaro himself addresses a letter to Antonio Piropilo "ἱατρῶ καὶ φιλοσόφῳ" (ep. n. d. 10, II p. 93); in another letter he recommends somebody well versed in philosophy, dialectics and medicine (27, I p. 42). It is hardly a coincidence, that the 1532–edition of Leonicensio's *De Plinii erroribus* has the title *Nicolai Leonicensi Vicentini, philosophi et medici clarissimi, opuscula*. Conversely, Leonicensio drew the ire of his fellow humanists by categorizing Pliny in *numero grammaticorum uel oratorum, non autem philosophorum aut medicorum* (ed. Premuda, p. 152). Similarly, according to Leonicensio, the Arabs had given up *omne philosophiae ac medicinae studium* on religious grounds (p. 180). Pietro de Abano's *Conciliator*, a standard text of medieval medicine, was commonly printed with the title *Conciliator differentiarum philosophorum et praecipue medicorum* (first ed. Venetiis: Gabriele di Pietro, for Thomas de Tarvisio, [after 5 Mar.] 1476; H 2); Petrarca, *Contra medicum quendam* 3, 10 *quid te vetat ... ut philosophum et medicum, sic oratorem esse* (ed. in *Opere latine*, a cura di A. Bufano, vol. 2, Torino, 1975, 934). Francesco Barbaro writes letters to Pietro Tomasi *illustri philosopho et medico* (Francesco Barbaro, *Epistolario*, vol. 2: *La raccolta canonica delle Epistole*, a cura di C. Griggio (Firenze, 1999), no. 278 (from 1448), and *claro philosopho et medico* (no. 344, 1449), and in a letter to Gerolamo Leonardi mentions his friendship *cum prestantissimo philosopho et medico Nicolao patre tuo* (no. 293, 1447). Giorgio Valla publishes in 1488 a translation of *Ale-*

Barbaro took this categorization for granted, as we see in the discussion of a linguistic problem common to the lexica of medicine and philosophy in the *Castigationes Plinianae*: *Operatio et operari pro eo quod est rem divinam facere aut agrum colere compertum omnibus; recentiores philosophi et medici pro eo quod Graeci energian vocant usurpavere, melius facturi si functiones et opera dixissent* ("operatio and operare for the performance of a religious rite are commonly in use. Recent philosophers and doctors have used them for what the Greeks call *energia*; it would have been better, if they had used the expressions *functio* and *opus*").<sup>35</sup>

Within the reconstruction of that part of "philosophy and medicine", which was the *res latina*, i.e. the knowledge of antiquity in Latin, Barbaro successfully focused on those aspects of the *materia medica* where the methods of humanist scholarship were most applicable and could yield the best results. After his premature death in 1493 the results of his research, as far as they were not contained in the *Castigationes Plinianae*, remained inaccessible. The situation only changed after the publication of the Dioscorides—translation by Jean Ruel in Paris in 1516. The next year Barbaro's *Dioscorides* was printed with the declared intent to vindicate the priority of Dioscorides—studies for the Italians.<sup>36</sup> And, even though the *Supplement to Dioscorides* may neither have been intended as a commentary to Dioscorides nor as a work of practical pharmacology, in the end Barbaro contributed to both fields. The *Corollarium* was instantly received into subsequent commentaries on Dioscorides and the many works on herbal medicine deriving from them. The period of intensive scholarly activity which now began culminated in the *Dioscorides* of Pier Andrea Mattioli, consisting of translation and commentary, which first appeared in Italian in 1544. Its Latin version (1554) became the probably most-read scientific book of the sixteenth century.<sup>37</sup> Now Barbaro was appreciated as the first of those *viri doc-*

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*xandri Aphrodisi philosophi ac medici praestantissimi Problemata* (quoted by E. Cranz, "Alexander Aphrodisiensis," CTC I, Washington, 1960, 131).

<sup>35</sup> The quotation is taken from the *Glossemata*, an alphabetical explanation of difficult words of Pliny's Natural history, O 14, from: Hermolaus Barbarus, *Castigationes Plinianae et Pomponii Melae*, Rome: Eucharius Silber, 24 Nov. 1492, 13 Feb. 1493; HC 2421\*; vol. II, sig. c7v; the text is edited with a slight difference in ed. Pozzi, III, p. 1417.

<sup>36</sup> The print is dated *Kal. Februariis .MCCCC.XVI*. This led Riddle (see n. 10), p. 27–29, to the mistaken assumption that Barbaro's print predated Ruel's (*octavo Calendas Maias. Anno domini MDXVI*). There can, however, be no doubt that Barbaro's book is dated according to the Venetian calendar which began the year on the first of march, and thus printed nine months after Ruel's; Ruel's translation is discussed in some detail in the brief commentary added to Barbaro's translation by the editor, Battista Egnazio. Cp. Pozzi, Appunti, p. 620.

<sup>37</sup> *Pedacii Dioscoridis Anazarbei de materi medica libri sex, innumeris locis ab Andrea Matthiolo emendati ac restituti*. Lugduni, apud Antonium Vicentinum, 1554; cp. P. Findlen, "The Formation of a Scientific Community: Natural History in Sixteenth-Century Italy," in: *Natural Particulars. Nature and the Disciplines in Renaissance Europe*, edited by A. Grafton and N. Siraisi

*tissimi* who, in the words of Pier Andrea Mattioli, "had pulled the *materia medica* out of the darkness, and restored it to the light of day."<sup>38</sup>

APPENDIX: *Commentarius*, *commentatio*, *commentum*, *commentari* in the late Quattrocento.<sup>39</sup>

With the following discussion of these words commonly used in the Quattrocento to designate scholarly literature of various kinds, I hope to supply the semantic basis for a closer understanding of Barbaro's own usage of these words. My discussion is based on a limited corpus of texts available to me in printed or electronic form, and therefore necessarily incomplete.

### *Commentarius*

According to the "Thesaurus linguae Latinae"<sup>40</sup> the original meaning seems to have been *collectio comminiscendi causa facta*; this definition encompasses a variety of journals and note-books, mainly produced by the public administration, to a lesser extent by private individuals. Thence the word is used for *doctrinae vel artis expositio*, with two sub-groups which comprise firstly *artis cuiuslibet doctrina* generally, including *rerum gestarum memoria litteris mandata* (Caesar's *commentarii* appear in this group), secondly specifically *interpretatio scriptorum*, the modern 'commentary'. The word is used frequently from the earliest inscriptions on; in literature it gains currency with Cicero (40 instances). As far as can be ascertained, the word is mainly used in the masculine; the neuter occurs from Cicero (*Brutus* 164) onwards, but rarely. In Medieval Latin the word is used mainly for 'commentary', 'summary, abridgment', and 'register'.<sup>41</sup>

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(Cambridge, Mass., 1999), 369–400: 390. A useful overview over botany in the sixteenth century can be found in F. N. Egerton, "A History of the Ecological Sciences, Part 10: Botany during the Italian Renaissance and Beginnings of the Scientific Revolution," *Bulletin of the Ecological Society of America*, 84–3, July 2003, 130–37 (the article contains, however, some errors in the dating of earlier works).

<sup>38</sup> *Petri Andreae Matthioli Commentarii* (Lugduni 1562, sig. [\*4] r) *complures aetatis nostrae clarissimi viri et rei medicae diligentissimi indagatores, Latini et Graeci sermonis peritissimi, Hermolaus Barbarus, Nicolaus Leoniceus, ... et alii strenuam nauarunt operam, ut discussa superioris seculi caligine, medicam materiam è tenebris eriperent, et suae luci restituerent.*

<sup>39</sup> I would like to thank F. Konstanciak, Munich, who commented upon an earlier draft of the appendix.

<sup>40</sup> *Thesaurus linguae Latinae* III (Leipzig, 1906–1912), ss. vv. *commentarius* (–um) p. 1856,3–61,41; *commentatio* p. 1861,49–62,24; *commentum* p. 1865,48–68,48; *commentor* p. 1863,64–65,40 (all by Bannier). Here and in the following I have shortened the Latin definitions given in the TLL.

<sup>41</sup> *Mittelateinisches Wörterbuch* II (München, 1974), 954 (MLW); *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources* II (London, 1981), 393 (DictBrit). See M. Teeuwen, *The Vo-*

In the Latin of the later Quattrocento the previous usage has undergone some modifications, which can best be discerned in Valla's codification of classical usage in *Elegantiae* 4,21, *Commentaria quid sint*. He distinguishes two meanings, either 'short treatment of a topic, libellus' (as opposed to *liber*), or *expositio et interpretatio auctorum*. In the first case singular and plural have neuter and masculine forms respectively, in the second both genders occur indistinctly. Valla also observes that the singular neuter form is rare in classical Latin. Examples for the first meaning discussed by Valla are numerous, although the restriction to shorter works was in practice not observed. Valla himself designates his *Elegantiae* as *commentarii* (preface to the second book): *meos hos commentarios*, the same does Angelo Decembrio regarding his *Politica litteraria* (1,1,1):<sup>42</sup> *Politicae litterariae commentarios* and 1,2,4 *praesentibus commentariis*. Tortelli, in the preface to *De orthographia*, prefers the plural, neuter form: *coeperam olim ... commentaria quaedam grammatica condere quibus omnem litterariam antiquitatem et orthographiae rationem cum oportunis historiis pro poetarum declaratione connectere conabar*.<sup>43</sup> The *De orthographia* also contains a lengthy discussion of *commentarius*, which surpasses Valla's in the breadth of the material collected, but is arranged in a less systematic way.<sup>44</sup> Perotti, *Cornu copiae* 44,9–10,<sup>45</sup> adopts Valla's doctrine with some simplifications. Whether or not Politian saw a difference in meaning between the masculine and neuter form, is difficult to ascertain. In the *Miscellanea prima* there are only six unambiguous masculine or neuter examples (all in the plural); of these two are quotations from Censorinus (58,27 and 58,35, both masc., from Cens. 17,10–11). Of the others, two are masc. (praef. 13, the *Miscellanea*, and 9,11 *grammatici commentarii*, Calderini's commentaries on Martial and Juvenal), two neuter forms (praef. 13, the Στρωματεῖς of Clemens, and 54,2 *Graeca ... Latinae commentaria*, philological works in general). Barbaro's *Castigationes* are called *commentarii* by Sabellicus.<sup>46</sup> Pico uses plural and (more

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cabulary of Intellectual Life in the Middle Ages, CIVICIMA Études sur le vocabulaire intellectuel du Moyen Age X (Turnhout, 2003), 235–26 *commentari*, *commentarius* (–ium), *commentum*, *commentator*, also for these terms.

<sup>42</sup> Ed. N. Witten, Beiträge zur Altertumskunde 169 (München–Leipzig, 2002).

<sup>43</sup> Ed. S. Rizzo, "Per una tipologia delle tradizioni manoscritte di classici latini in età umanistica," in: Formative Stages of Classical Traditions: Latin Texts from Antiquity to the Renaissance. Proceedings of a conference held at Erice, 16–22 October 1993, as the 6th Course of [sic!] International School for the Study of Written Records. ed. by Oronzo Pecere and Michael D. Reeve (Spoleto, 1995), 371–407, Appendix 402–407: 402.

<sup>44</sup> In the chapter *De syllabis desinentibus in M*; see J.–L. Charlet, Index des lemmes du *De orthographia* de Giovanni Tortelli, avec la collaboration de M. Furno (Aix, 1994).

<sup>45</sup> Vol. 6, ed. F. Stok (Sassoferrato, 1997), 247.

<sup>46</sup> In a letter dating probably from 1493, quoted by G. Mercati, "Attorno a Marco Antonio Sabellico," in *Ultimi contributi alla storia degli umanisti*, vol. II, Studi e Testi 91 (Città del Vaticano, 1939), 1–23: 7 n. 1.

rarely) singular forms for various philosophical works (e.g., in *commentariis eius* [Trapezuntii] in *Centiloquium Ptolemaei*, *Adv. astrologiam divinatricem* 8,5 p. 452; Nicolaus Oresmius ... *astrologicam superstitionem peculiari commentario ... insectatur*, *ibid.* 1 p.24). The singular form is also rare otherwise, Poliziano quotes Varro in *Latinae linguae commentario* (*Misc. prima*, 58,49; the form obviously can be both masc. and neutr.); his booklet about the Pazzi-conspiracy has the title *coniurationis commentarium*.<sup>47</sup> Ficino's book is called *Commentarium in Convivium Platonis de amore*.<sup>48</sup> Concurrently, *commentarius* is used for 'commentary'. To designate the whole book the humanists normally use the plural; examples are Calderini's *commentarii in Martialem* (1474),<sup>49</sup> and Paolo Marso's commentary to Ovid's *Fasti* (in *commentariis nostris*), where the first excerpts from Barbaro's forthcoming Dioscorides-translation are published (1482).<sup>50</sup> An example of the neuter is in a letter written by Pico to Barbaro in 1484 (*commentaria quae petebas in Aristotelem*).<sup>51</sup> It should at least be noted, that besides *commentarii* most authors use a variety of terms for 'commentary', such as *annotationes*, *enarrationes*, and verbs such as *explanare*, *interpretari*, *enarrare*, *exponere*, etc.<sup>52</sup>

Barbaro shows a marked preference for the meaning 'study', disregarding Valla's restriction to shorter works and applying *commentarius* to all kinds of humanist literature (I have not found any unambiguous *-um*). In the singular he uses *commentarius*, amongst others, for a tract in Plutarch's *Moralia* (*Plutarchus in eo commentario Πῶς ἂν τις ὑπ' ἐχθρῶν ὠφελοῖτο*, *Castig. primae* 7,15, II p. 540), an analysis of Thucydides' style (*Dionysius rhetor de phrasi Thucydidis commentarium secundum edidit, quoniam in priori ieunior et contractior fuisse videbatur, Castig. secundae*, preface, III p. 1213), and once for 'explanation' without reference to a specific work (*sed haec, quae carptim cursimque velut semina materiae difficillimae libavimus, dilato in aliud tempus pleniore commentario, sufficiant*, *Castig. Glossemata* T 6,

<sup>47</sup> Cf. A. Poliziano, *Della congiura dei Pazzi*, ed. A. Perosa, *Miscellanea erudita* III (Padova, 1958), VI and 3.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Marsil Ficini, *Commentaire sur Le banquet de Platon, De l'amour*, ed. P. Laurens (Paris, 2002), 5.

<sup>49</sup> Examples of Calderini's usage can be found in the parts of the prefaces published in F.-R. Hausmann, "Martialis, Marcus Valerius," in: *Corpus Translationum et Commentariorum* IV (Washington, 1980), 262–63.

<sup>50</sup> *Sunt tamen ... loci quidam in commentariis nostris paululum immutati, ne dixerim depravati*, Venetiis: Baptista de Tortis, 24 Dec. 1482, HC 12238, all quotations are from sig. (R/ iv) recto.

<sup>51</sup> *Ep.* 22, Basileae: ex officina Henricpetrina, 1572, 368, anast. repr. in: Joannes Picus Mirandulanus, *Opera omnia*, con una premessa di Eugenio Garin. Tomus primus: *Scripta* in editione Basilensi anno MDLXXII collecta (Torino, 1971).

<sup>52</sup> A comprehensive example is Merula's letter of dedication accompanying his Juvenal-commentary to Federigo da Montefeltro, Venetiis: per Gabrielem Petri, 1478, sig. A ii r-v (HC 11090), partially printed in E. Sanford, "Juvenalis, Decimus Junius," in: *CTC* I (Washington, 1960), 221–22.

on *talentum*, III p. 1464). With the plural *commentarii* he designates Francesco Barbaro's *De re uxoria (paterni commentarii, 1472)*<sup>53</sup> and a work on birds (*Boethus ... qui Ornithogonia, id est de avitii natura commentarios reliquit, Castig. primae 10,2,2, II p. 629*).<sup>54</sup> There is a group of examples where Barbaro applies *commentarii* to philosophical works, such as Aristotle's metaphysics (*corruptos commentarios Aristotelis, Castig. primae 5,202, II p. 433*), a manuscript with works (the Aristotle-commentaries?) of Alexander of Aphrodisias (*commentarios Alexandri tuos, ep. 123, II p. 39*),<sup>55</sup> his own Themistius-translation (*in nostris commentariis, Castig. primae 8,23, II p. 583*), and the *commentarii quos in Posteriores Analyticos iam perfecimus (ep. 115 II p. 33)*.<sup>56</sup> Comparable is Barbaro's use of *commentariolus* for his *compendium Ethicorum (ep. 2 I p. 5)*.

### *Commentatio*

In classical Latin the word means *actio cogitandi, deliberandi*, only from Pliny onwards it can be used for *scriptum, liber*; even rarer is the meaning *interpretatio librorum*, which was cultivated by Boethius. In general the word is popular with Cicero (15 instances), but used only infrequently by other authors (40 examples in all). The word seems to be practically nonexistent in Medieval Latin.<sup>57</sup>

The humanists, too, seem to use *commentatio* infrequently, for 'commentary' as well as for 'study'. Theodore Gaza thus designates Theophrast's *De plantis: commentationem plantarum attingere nemo ausus est*.<sup>58</sup> Calderini announces his

<sup>53</sup> *De coelibatu*, praef. 3, ed. V. Branca (Firenze, 1969), 55.

<sup>54</sup> The information comes from Athenaeus, *deipn.* 9,49.

<sup>55</sup> Addressed to Baldassare Meliavacca (1488).

<sup>56</sup> The work is contained in Bologna, Bibl. Univ. 124 under the title *Hermolai Barbari in primum Posteriorum enarratio*, see Branca, see n. 1, p. 129 n.8 = (repr.) p.68 n. 10. Its methodology is discussed by Panizza, see n. 1.

<sup>57</sup> MLW has one example (*opinio*), *ibid.*, c. 954; DictBrit has none. This is confirmed by the Patrologia Latina Database, which among the Medieval authors furnishes only thirteen examples of *commentatio* (with a wide range of meanings): vol. 86 c. 1221D (*falsa c.*); 90 c. 1082B (*philosophorum vita c. mortis est*); 121 c. 519C (*fraudulosa c.*); 126 c. 460C (*praevaricatorem canonum, eisdem c.num tuarum vinculis astrictum*); 139 c. 1147B (*sapientium vita c. debeat esse mortis*; = 139 c. 1166C); 142 c. 41C (*diapsalma c.nem metri dixerunt esse*); 149 c. 101B (*verisimili c.ne*), 149 c. 0118B (*falsas c.nes*); 150 c. 1231D (*legantur ... libri Job, Tobias ... cum c.nibus*); 155 c. 1513C (*qui sacram Scripturam non putant aliud esse nisi hominum inventionem et c.nem*); 159 c. 397D (*statim omnis c. implacitandi Anselmum compressa omissa est*); 188 c. 631A (*inauditorum c.ne suppliciorum in torquendis miseris ... tripudiabat*). The Manuscripta Mediaevalia Datenbank ([www.manuscripta-mediaevalia.de](http://www.manuscripta-mediaevalia.de)) yields only 19 examples (in more than 60000 manuscripts).

<sup>58</sup> In the preface to his translation of *De plantis* (1553/54), see C. B. Schmitt, "Theophrastus," CTC II (Washington, 1971), 267.



planned *commentationes in epistulas ad Atticum*.<sup>59</sup> Poliziano calls his own *Miscellanea commentationes (nostris commentationibus, Misc. praef. 63 and 7,12)*. The word is consistently used by Pico; there, however, I have not found any example for 'commentary'. He applies it to unspecified philosophical writings in his famous letter to Barbaro from 1485: *etsi non egeant per se philosophiae commentationes amoenitate*,<sup>60</sup> and twice in the *Oratio de hominis dignitate* (1486): *Fuit enim cum ab antiquis omnibus hoc observatum, ut omne scriptorum genus euoluentes, nullas quas possent commentationes illectas preterirent* (30) and *me in primis annis, in tenera etate, per quam uix licuit ... aliorum legere commentationes, nouam afferre uelle philosophiam* (35).<sup>61</sup> Later, it is applied to Plato's and Aristotle's works, in *Adversus astrologiam divinatricem* (1492): *toto decursu suorum commentationum*.<sup>62</sup> Ficino once uses *commentatio* for the *actio* itself of explaining something (*Tommas autem Bencius Socratis diligens imitator ad socraticorum verborum commentationem libenti animo ... se contulit*).<sup>63</sup>

Barbaro's use coincides closely with Pico's; I have only found examples for *commentatio* as 'analysis', 'treatment of a topic', *Castig. primae, monitum*, (I p. 4): *si ulla commentatione cavendi sunt errores*, *ibid.* 1,7 (I p.17; explanation of the word *encyclopaedia* in *Plin. nat.* 1,14): *Aristoteles in Ethicis commentationes encyclicas intelligit*, *ibid.* 4,74 (I p.214): *Recentiores qui hunc locum ex Plinio in commentationes suas transtulere, in eundem prolapsi sunt errorem*, *Coroll.* 28 (regarding an information from the pseudo-Aristotelian *De plantis*): *Haec commentatio Graecis perierat*, *ep.* 18 (I p. 26) and 19 (I p. 29; both Themistius). *Commentatio* as opposed to *annotatio*, *ep.* 115 (II p. 33): *inibo (sc. Aristotelis opera) naturalia et divina, item rhetorica et poetica, partim commentationibus, partim annotationibus ... instruens*.<sup>64</sup>

### *Commentum*

Originally a participle of *comminisci*, in classical Latin the word means *id quod cogitamus*, mainly *cum nota figmenti, mendacii*, although there are a few instances where it means *scriptum, liber* (Martianus Capella) or *enthymema* (Quintilian). The

<sup>59</sup> In the *Epilogus* of his Statius—commentary, Brixiae: Henricus de Colonia, 1476, sig. (d7)v (HR 4244).

<sup>60</sup> *Ep.* 21,70, ed. in Ermolao Barbaro — Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Filosofia o Eloquenza?* A cura di F. Bausi, Sileni 2 (Napoli, 1998), 50.

<sup>61</sup> Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Oratio de hominis dignitate*. Rede über die Würde des Menschen. Auf der Textgrundlage der Editio princeps hg. und übers. von Gerd von der Gönna (Stuttgart, 1997), 56 and 48–50.

<sup>62</sup> Ed. E. Garin, 2 vols. (Firenze, 1946–1952), I p. 48.

<sup>63</sup> *Commentarium in Convivium Platonis* 6,1, ed. see n. 48.

<sup>64</sup> *Commentatio* here may mean a more ample treatment of a topic suggested by the text commented upon, whereas *annotatio* probably is to be understood as a commentary which accompanies the text closely. In the two other examples from Barbaro known to me, *annotatio* designates the *Castigationes Plinianae* (*Coroll.* 221 *ut in annotationibus libri undecimi docuimus*, 410 *Nos id in annotationes Plinianas distulimus*).

secondary meaning *interpretatio scriptorum* appears only late and remains rare; it is however used by Priscian to designate Donatus' Vergil-commentary and is contained in the title of Porphyrio's *commentum in Horatium Flaccum*. The word has a substantial medieval *fortuna*, which largely fits into the classical framework; the meanings 'book' and 'commentary' are well established.<sup>65</sup>

Renaissance readers must have been familiar with *commentum* as 'commentary, explanation' from the countless *commenta* transmitted in medieval manuscripts.<sup>66</sup> This meaning was noted by Valla, *Elegantiae* 4,21 (taken over by Perotti, *Cornu copiae* 44,9) and Tortelli.<sup>67</sup> Naturally the word could not be avoided, when titles of medieval works were quoted; an example is furnished by Pico in the *Conclusiones nonaginta: quod ratio Avenrois in commento ultimo primi Physicorum contra Auicennam concludat*.<sup>68</sup> Otherwise it seems relatively rare in our period (probably because of its medieval flavour). Often *commentum* is used for 'fiction, lie', the meaning codified by Perotti.<sup>69</sup>

In Barbaro *commentum* refers to the parts of the *Castigationes*, in the preface to the *Glossemata: In hoc quarto lucubrationis nostrae commento, pontifex maxime, continentur delectu quodam glossemata et expositiones* (III p.1353), in two other instances the

<sup>65</sup> MLW, *ibid.*, c.955–56; J. F. Niermeyer and C. van de Kieft, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon minus*, revised by J.W.J. Burgers, I (Leiden, 2nd ed. 2002), 284; DictBrit does not have the entry. The difficulty of any kind of generalization about Medieval Latin is illustrated by the material cited in the *Lexicon mediae et infimae latinitatis Polonorum* II (Wrocław, 1959–1967), 657–58, which nearly exclusively belongs to the groups *consilium*, *propositum (in malam partem)* or *mendacium*. The meaning 'commentary' is only documented with examples from the late 15th and 16th centuries.

<sup>66</sup> The on-line catalogue of the Hill Monastic Manuscript Library (URL: [www.hmml.org](http://www.hmml.org)) contains over a hundred entries with *Commentum ...*, the Manuscripta Mediaevalia Datenbank ([www.manuscripta-mediaevalia.de](http://www.manuscripta-mediaevalia.de)) has several hundred corresponding items (including modern titles).

<sup>67</sup> *ponitur etiam ab auctoribus commentarius in singulari et masculino ac neutro in plurali in alia significatione hoc est pro expositione et interpretatione auctorum ... Quidam etiam talia huiusmodi opera commentum uocauerunt ut Nigidius: Donatus: Priscianus: Alique nonnulli, De orthographia*, chapter *De syllabis desinentibus* in M, Romae: Ulrich Han (Udalricus Gallus) and Simon Nicolai Chardella, 1471, HC(+ Add) 15563.

<sup>68</sup> *Conclusiones sec. opinionem propriam* 2,43, ed. S. A. Farmer, *Syncretism in the West: Pico's 900 Theses* (1486). The Evolution of Traditional Religious and Philosophical Systems, MRTS 167 (Tempe, 1998).

<sup>69</sup> *Cornu copiae* 44,9–10, vol. 6 p. 247. Examples are Calderini in the Statius-commentary *Praxitelen exclamasse: '... atque ita Phrynen eo commento deprehendisse hoc (i. statua Cupidinis) pulcherrimum esse*, commentary on *Silv.* 2, 7, 16, Romae: A. Pannartz, 1475 (HC 14983). and Beroaldo in the *Annotationes centum* (62,1): *sicut Lacedemonii ueteres facere consueuerunt, qui, occultare uolentes litteras publice ad imperatores suos missas ne ab hostibus exceptae consilia sua reuelarent, epistolas mirando commento scriptas mittebant*, ed. in: Filippo Beroaldo the Elder, *Annotationes centum*, ed. L. A. Ciapponi, MRTS 131 (Binghamton, 1995).

word designates (insufficient) explanations: *Castig. primae* 11,32,5 (II p. 667): *alios nomen loci Calvum credere, alios praefecti custodiarum, vanissimo utrumque commento*, and *Glossemata* S 75 (III 1452) *deridicula quaedam commenta et plane sordida confinxerunt*.

### *Commentari*

In classical Latin the verb is mainly used for *meditari*, *disserere* (*apud audientes*), only in Pliny (and rarely later) for *cogitata scripto explicare*, *scribere*, and even rarer, from Suetonius onward, for *scripta explicare*. Some Christian authors also used the word for *imaginari*, *figere*. Within a wide range of meanings, Medieval Latin retains 'to treat in writing' as well as 'to write a commentary'.<sup>70</sup>

In the period in question the verb seems to have been used more sparingly than some of the nouns from the same family. The examples I have collected mainly illustrate the use for 'to discourse on a topic', so already Alberti in *De re aedificatoria* (4,1,453): *nobis, qui aedificia commentamur*.<sup>71</sup> Beroaldo the Elder uses it to designate his *Annotationes centum* (praef. 8): *nec ulli obesse uolumus detrahendo, sed pluribus prodesse cupimus commentando* (i.e. the composition of his *Annotationes*). In Bembo's *De Aetna* (ca. 1493) the verb is used for his own theorizing as opposed to what he had seen or heard from others: *si ea lege inceperis, ut nequod pulchrum praetereatur, siue uidisti aliquid, siue audiisti, siue quid es ipse commentatus*.<sup>72</sup> A similar meaning ('compose') we find in Valla, *Gesta Ferdinandi* (3,10,8): *Adversus hanc orationem, multis iam annis commentatam meditatamque ... hortabatur rex ut concordie ecclesie, ut saluti animarum, ut conscientie consuleret*.<sup>73</sup> Ficino uses *commentari* for the contents of his comparison of the sun and God (though some kind of explanation of the Greek texts he translates is clearly implicit): *Leges ergo feliciter, Phoebe princeps, quae de comparatione solis ad Deum partim Plato Dionysiusque Areopagita tractarunt partim ego interpretor atque commentor*.<sup>74</sup> A similar ambivalence may also be present in Perotti's *Cornu copiae* (41,33) *Ab hoc Pyrrhonii dicti sunt philosophi, qui a Graecis Σκεπτικοί ..., hoc est commentantes et ueluti quaestores quidam ac consideratores appellantur*.

Equally *commentari* is used for the critical study of other texts, normally written commentaries. I quote two examples. Valla, *eleg.* 2,15: *Sergius quoque commentans Donatum* (the *Explanationes* or *Comentaria in artem Donati*, the name *Sergius* is a

<sup>70</sup> MLW, *ibid.* c.955; DictBrit, *ibid.* p.393.

<sup>71</sup> L. B. Alberti, *L'Architettura* [*De re aedificatoria*], testo latino e trad. a cura di G. Orlandi, intr. e note di P. Portoghesi, 2 vols. (Milano, 1966), I, 271.

<sup>72</sup> Venetiis: Aldus Manutius Romanus, Feb. 1495/96, HC 2765\*, sig. A6r.

<sup>73</sup> *Laurentii Valle Gesta Ferdinandis Regis Aragonum*, ed. O. Besomi, *Thesaurus mundi* 10 (Pavii, 1973), 170–71.

<sup>74</sup> Ficino, letter from 1493, ed. R. Hartkamp, no. 6, published at the URL: <http://www.phil.uni-freiburg.de/SFB541/B5/Eberhard/Ficino.html>, 14. 3. 2002.

corruption for *Servius*), Sabellicus, *Reparatio: Angeli Sabini turrensis ... maior in commentando auctoritas* (Sabellicus is referring to the *Paradoxa in Iuvenalem*, [Bot-tari: 154–55]). The word exceptionally designates an oral commentary in Pe-rotti, *Cornu copiae* 31,18 (about the disciples of Pythagoras): *is autem, qui tacebat, quae dicebantur ab aliis audiebat neque percontari, si parum intellexerat, neque commen-tari, quae audierat, fas erat.*<sup>75</sup>

Barbaro uses *commentari* for a treatment of a specific topic, with reference to the *Corollarium*: *ego alias ... multa de saccharo commentatus sum* (ep. n.d. 7 II p. 91), about other discourses e.g. *Castig. primae* 1,54 (I p. 33): *Appion certe, ut Plinius testatur, de metallica medicina commentatus est, Coroll. 83: nos Plinium secuti sumus, quamquam de myrrha commentantem*. A parallel to the passage from Ficino quoted above is in ep. 17 (I p. 26, about the Themistius): *hoc genus commentandi vertendique*.

This overview could easily be enlarged through inclusion of more texts and other words.<sup>76</sup> Even the limited material presented suggests some conclusions about the Latin of the period in question and its relationship to previous phases of the same language; obviously their validity must remain confined to the words analysed here. Medieval Latin mainly seems to have had a negative impact; *commentum* for ‘commentary’ is popular in the Middle Ages, but rarely used by the humanists, even though they knew that the usage was attested in antiquity. For exclusively medieval usages such as *commentarius* for ‘register’ I have not found any examples in humanist literature. Obviously it was classical Latin which presented the norm our humanists aspired to conform to. Not in the least because the Latin of classical antiquity was not a static entity, at-tempts to reproduce it were bound to lead to wildly differing results. As we have seen, authors such as Priscian and Boethius — who in the eyes of the humanists hardly represented Latin in its purest form — coined usages that thrived in humanist Latin. Another decisive influence were the needs and preferences of the humanists themselves. As our discussion of *res latina* shows (see n. 30), the humanists themselves coined expressions, which through their appropriateness and frequent repetition became part of humanist Latin al-though they were not of classical origin. Even though Barbaro’s Latin gener-ally shows a certain independence, it may not be a coincidence that there are similarities with Pico. In all, his Latin exemplifies, what S. Rizzo recently has

<sup>75</sup> The unquestioned authority of Pythagoras’ doctrines amongst his disciples is often men-tioned in antiquity, e.g. Cic. nat. deor. 1,10, Val. Max. 8,15 ext.1, Quint. inst. 11,1,27; more material has been collected by E. F. Rice, jr., ed., *The Prefatory Epistles of Jacques Lefèvre d’Etaples and Related Texts*, New York & London 1972, 282.

<sup>76</sup> More material will be presented in my Neulateinische Wortliste, URL: <http://www.lrz-muenchen.de/~ramminger/index.htm>

called “the dialectical movement between tradition and innovation which is one of the most fascinating characteristics of humanism.”<sup>77</sup>

Johann Ramminger

Thesaurus Linguae Latinae, Munich

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<sup>77</sup> S. Rizzo, *Ricerche sul latino umanistico*, *Storia e letteratura* 213 (Roma, 2002), 149: “... di quella dialettica fra tradizione e innovazione che è tra gli aspetti più affascinanti del periodo umanistico.”