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# Janus Lascaris' Florentine Oration and the 'Reception' of Ancient Aeolism

**Abstract:** This paper reconsiders Janus Lascaris' *Florentine Oration* (1493) by analyzing its central argument that the Latin language is Greek (*Latina lingua Graeca est*). It situates Lascaris' thesis in the context of ancient ideas about the relationship between Latin and Greek (chiefly Aeolism) and their reception in later periods. Specifically, it discusses his use of etymology, indebted not only to Latin but also to Byzantine sources. Outlining a 'reconstructive' method based on etymology to trace Latin words to their alleged Greek roots, Lascaris' *Florentine Oration* not only marks an important moment in the reception history of Aeolism, but also complicates the ways in which the story of its reception has usually been told.

**Keywords:** etymology, Aeolism, paragrammatism, Janus Lascaris, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Eustathius of Thessalonica, history of ideas, history of scholarship

## Introduction

Since antiquity, it has commonly been recognized that Latin and Greek have commonalities in vocabulary, morphology, and syntax. Before the emergence of Indo-European studies in the nineteenth century, these similarities were generally not attributed to a common source language. Some regarded them as the result of conscious linguistic borrowings, and thus as a symptom of cultural Hellenism, while others explained them from the direct descent of Latin from Greek. The theory of direct descent has a long but surprisingly poorly documented history. One single sentence from the *Roman Antiquities* by the Greek historian Dionysius of Halicarnassus (d. after 7 BC) counts as the fullest expression of the idea preserved from antiquity.[1] Writing for a Greek audience under Augustus, Dionysius claimed that

> [t]he language spoken by the Romans is neither utterly barbarous nor absolutely Greek, but a mixture, as it were, of both, the greater part of which is Aeolic; and the only disadvantage

they have experienced from their intermingling with these various nations is that they do not pronounce all their sounds properly [...].[2]

In Dionysius' account, the affinity of Latin with Greek is part of his larger argument that the Romans were essentially a Greek people, both in terms of descent and in terms of culture.[3] Circa 1500 years later, in 1493, one of the most prominent Greek scholars of the Italian Renaissance, Janus Lascaris Rhyndacenus (ca. 1445–1534), resumed Dionysius' argument in a speech delivered at the Florentine 'university' (the *studium generale*), where he taught Greek.[4] In this speech, inaugurating his course on Demosthenes and the Greek Anthology, Lascaris not only argued that the 'Latin people' (*genus Latinum*) was of ancient Greek extraction but also contended that 'the Latin language [was] Greek' (*Latina lingua Graeca est*). In fact, his *Florentine Oration* is the fullest argument in favour of the Latin derivation from Greek after Dionysius' *Roman Antiquities*. Perhaps more importantly, in his speech, Lascaris elaborates the idea more fully than any other source available from antiquity through the Middle Ages. This places him at the beginning of a tradition of etymologizing thought about the relationship between Latin and Greek that lasted until well into the nineteenth century, when it was eventually replaced by the Proto-Indo-European hypothesis, tracing commonalities between Latin and Greek to a common ancestor: from then on, the two languages were generally no longer to be considered as mother and daughter, but rather as distant relatives.[5]

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**2** Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.90.1: Ῥωμαῖοι δὲ φωνὴν μὲν οὔτ' ἄκρως βάρβαρον οὔτ' ἀπηρτισμένως Ἑλλάδα φθέγγονται, μικτὴν δέ τινα ἐξ ἀμφοῖν, ἧς ἐστιν ἡ πλείων Αἰολίς, τοῦτο μόνον ἀπολαύσαντες ἐκ τῶν πολλῶν ἐπιμιξιῶν, τὸ μὴ πᾶσι τοῖς φθόγγοις ὀρθοεπεῖν [...]. Translation by Earnest Cary 1937.
**3** For Dionysius and his views on ancient Rome and Latin, see e.g. Gabba 1982 and Marin 1969.
**4** Janus Lascaris taught Greek in Florence, Paris, and Rome. He was responsible for the *editiones principes* of the Planudean Anthology (in a self-designed Greek font), Callimachus' *Hymns*, four tragedies of Euripides, Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica*, and Lucian's *Dialogues*, and translated Xenophon's *Anabasis* and parts of Polybius into Latin. Apart from his scholarly work, he also published poems in both Greek and Latin and worked as a librarian for Lorenzo de' Medici and later as a diplomat for the French king and the pope. On Janus Lascaris, see Ceresa 2004, with further references. A critical edition of his *Florentine Oration* is available in Meschini 1983. On this oration, see Lamers 2015, 166–199, with further references.
**5** See also below, p. 46. This is not to say that there were no earlier attempts to redefine the relationship of Latin and Greek. The most notable attempts to break away from the theory of direct descent were by Joseph Justus Scaliger (1540–1609), who denied any privileged relationship between the two languages, and Marcus Zuerius van Boxhorn (1612–1653), who traced them to a common 'Scythian' ancestor. On Scaliger's *matrices*-theory, see Van Hal 2010a, 141–169. On the 'Scythian theory', see Van Hal 2010b.

Although the importance of Janus Lascaris' speech for the theorization of the idea that Latin derived from Greek has incidentally been acknowledged in the scholarship,[6] his argument has not been discussed in any detail, nor has it been placed in context in order to understand its specific significance for the history of ideas. Following along the lines of Anna Meschini, Mirko Tavoni regarded Lascaris' argument as 'wholly dependent on Dionysius of Halicarnassus, apart from the usual substitution of the idea of Aeolic origin by the more generic one of Greek.'[7] While Lascaris' *Florentine Oration* indeed relies on Dionysius' history of Rome, and tacitly adopts its main argument about the Greek origin of the Romans, it also substantially expands on it, especially where its argument about the origin of Latin is concerned. This chapter therefore revisits Lascaris' argument, paying particular attention to the Greek etymologies he presented to his Florentine audience in order to show that 'the Latin language was Greek.' After discussing in some more detail Lascaris' etymologies and the way he attempted to systematize them, in the final section, I will specifically concentrate on his use of the notions of anagrammatism and paragrammatism, which he apparently adopted from Byzantine commentaries on ancient texts rather than from the classical sources themselves. Before analysing Lascaris' etymological method in more detail, however, the next section will first introduce the modern scholarly consensus regarding the ancient Aeolic theory and its reception in a critical fashion, setting the coordinates for a more differentiated reception history of the idea that Latin directly descended from Greek.[8]

# 1 Reformulations of Aeolism

The sentence from Dionysius' *Roman Antiquities*, quoted above, is the *locus classicus* for what is known as 'Aeolism' or the 'Aeolic theory': the notion that Latin

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(at least partly) derives from the Aeolic dialect of Greek. This idea was connected, as in Dionysius' account, with the presumably much older argument that the ancestors of the Romans were in fact Greeks, more specifically Aeolic-speaking Arcadians who had reportedly settled on the Italian peninsula under their king Evander.[9] The ancient evidence of Aeolism is fragmentary, and no coherent set of ideas regarding Latin's descent from Greek has been transmitted from antiquity. All the same, modern scholarship often understands Aeolism in terms of a theory or even a 'doctrine' about the Aeolic origin of Latin, which then 'survived' in later periods. It has been claimed, for instance, that, in Augustan Rome, 'we actually witness the elaboration of a theory [about] the Greek origin of Latin'[10] and that, 'from Dionysius to Quintilian, Plutarch, Servius, Macrobius and beyond [...] [the] theory was consolidated and became commonplace.'[11] Benjamin Stevens sought to bring a more nuanced position to the discussion by emphasizing that, in antiquity, Aeolism was 'never fixed or given doctrinal form, but remained a subject of debate' and thus opened the theoretical possibility of varieties of Aeolism 'with different versions and degrees of dependence between Latin and its putative source-language.'[12]

Indeed, some ancient sources voice the general idea that Latin is somehow related to Greek, and to Aeolic in particular.[13] But even then, the evidence is mostly too unspecific to draw definitive conclusions about how individual au-

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**9** This idea is attested as early as Fabius Pictor (*FGrHist* 809 F 3 = HRR fr. 1 Peter) and Cato the Elder (Funaioli 1907, 311, no. 295). The idea may also resonate in what is left of the work of Philoxenus and Varro (see also below, n. 13). Strabo (5.230–1), by contrast, calls the Arcadian origin of Rome 'legendary' (cf. Stevens 2006/2007, 126). On Roman 'Arcadism', see esp. Bayet 1920. On the supposed Arcadian origin of Rome and Latin, see Gabba 1963, Dubuisson 1984, and Stevens 2006/2007.

**10** Dubuisson 1984, 60: 'On y observe en effet l'élaboration d'une théorie, celle de l'origine grecque du latin, précisément destinée à réfuter l'opinion, courante chez les Grecs, de sa nature barbare.'

**11** Tavoni 1986, 210. See also the discussions of, among others, Dubuisson 1984, Gabba 1963, Schöpsdau 1992, 117–119, and Stevens 2006/2007.

**12** Stevens 2006/2007, 121. For the (reconstructed) contours of the debate, see Dubuisson 1984.

**13** This is not the place to revisit the ancient sources, which I plan to do elsewhere. The most important ancient sources cited in modern discussions of Aeolism are, apart from the *passus* in Dionysius, Hypsicrates of Amisa (Funaioli 1907, 107, no. 1 and 108, no. 2), cited from Varro and Aulus Gellius; Philoxenus of Alexandria (Mazzarino 1955, 396–397 = Theodoridis 1976, 240, no. 323), cited from George Choeroboscus; Tyrannion (?) (Haas 1977, 176, no. 63), cited from the *Suda*; Claudius Didymus (Mazzarino 1955, 104; Funaioli 1907, 447, no. 1; Mazzarino 1955, 107, no. 4), cited from Priscian; Varro (Funaioli 1907, 311, no. 295 and 312, no. 296), cited from John the Lydian; and Quintilian (*Inst.* 1.6.31, 1.5.58, etc.).

thors construed the relation between Latin and Greek, both historically and linguistically. This equally holds true for how ancient authors looked at the similarities in vocabulary, morphology, and syntax which they recognized to exist between Latin and Greek. Apart from the many Greek words in the Latin language, ancient grammarians note the similarity of the Latin *u* and the Aeolic digamma, the equivalence of the Greek sigmatic aorist and the sigmatic perfect in Latin, and the absence of the dual form in both Latin and Aeolic.[14] While the modern scholarship sometimes treats such comparative observations, especially in the grammarians, as linguistic arguments in favour of the Aeolist thesis, it is in most cases unclear whether or not such perceived similarities were indeed interpreted in terms of a specifically *genetic* relationship.[15]

Similar criticism can be raised against the claim that Aeolism persisted as a solid theory after the classical period.[16] Although there is some evidence to confirm that a general sense of the idea was still known after the first century AD (for example, in the work of Charisius),[17] it is impossible to induce something like a theory about the Greek origin of Latin from the comparative remarks and Greco-Latin etymologies in later grammarians such as Cassiodorus, Priscian, and Isidore of Seville.[18] Thus, the fragmentary evidence puts the 'reception' of Aeolism in later periods in a much more complex relationship with the classical heritage than has been recognized, and Lascaris' argument in the *Florentine Oration* aptly illustrates this. Without a full classical theory that can be 'received', we may wonder how we can best think about the 'reception' of Aeolism. Perhaps it is more appropriate to think in terms of traces of Aeolism (for instance, in Dionysius' *Roman Antiquities*) that were rediscovered and put to the service of the argument that Latin derived from Greek.

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**14**  For a useful overview of comparative grammar in antiquity, see Schöpsdau 1992.

**15**  *Pace* Gabba 1963, 189: 'non è difficile per noi ripercorrere le tappe di svolgimento [della teoria che il latino fosse un dialetto greco di tipo eolico].'

**16**  For example, Stevens 2006/2007, 127 suggests the possibility that there existed a continuous, mostly implicit tradition of Aeolism in the second through fifth century AD, when grammarians such as Priscian and Isidore of Seville, according to him, 'may also have repeated Aeolist notions or phrasings.' Tavoni 1986, 210, too, states that 'the idea that Latin derives from Greek had by this time [the early Middle Ages] become a commonly accepted prejudice, and as such was no longer explicitly stated.'

**17**  Keil, *Gramm. Lat.* 1.292.16–17 (with Swiggers and Wouters 1990, 12–13 and Fögen 2000, 50, n. 79).

**18**  *Pace* Tavoni 1986, 210 and Stevens 2006/2007, 127.

For the early modern and modern period, the sources are more substantial than for antiquity.[19] It seems that, from the early Renaissance onwards, the notion that Latin derived from Greek was taken up again and was given renewed significance.[20] If it is at all possible to generalize at this stage, at least two differences with what we find in the ancient sources stand out. First, as Mirko Tavoni has already suggested, the idea seems to have lost much of its original 'Aeolic' specificity.[21] Although some authors emphasized the special status of Aeolic (and also Doric) in the history of Latin, as did Gian Vincenzo Pinelli (1535–1601) and Claude Saumaise (1588–1653), many others traced Latin back to 'Greek' more generically.[22] Additionally, etymology, or the derivation of Latin words from Greek, became the principal means of revealing the Greek origins of Latin. This coincides with the changing epistemic status of etymology in the study of language that occurred during this period. Etymology had previously already played a role in various domains such as poetry and rhetoric, philosophical speculation, and biblical exegesis.[23] With humanism, it was also put to the service of historical enquiry, and thus the study of the original history of words became implicated in the passionate quest for ancient communal or 'national' origins that characterized early modern Europe.

Janus Lascaris' *Florentine Oration* comes early in the Renaissance reformulation of what is now known as Aeolism. Although there are ample sources dealing with the alleged Greek origins of Latin for the period from the sixteenth century onwards, the evidence for Lascaris' own Quattrocento is rather meagre. While, in the early 1480s, Bartolomeo Benvoglienti (d. 1486) vigorously contested the idea that Latin derived from Greek, a similar treatise in favour of the opposite position has so far not come to light.[24] On the other hand, there is strong evidence suggest-

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**19** A first and very useful exploration is by Tavoni 1986. Van Hal 2010a, *passim* also discusses the idea.

**20** The renewed interest in Aeolism coincided with the publication of Lampugnino Birago's Latin translation of Dionysius' *Roman Antiquities* (1480) and the general upsurge of interest in Greek dialects which occurred at the end of the century. On Birago's translation, see *GW* VII, nos. 8423–8424. The manuscript had been in circulation in the decades before (see Miglio 1968). On the revived interest in Greek dialects at the end of the Quattrocento, see Van Rooy 2017.

**21** See Tavoni 1986, 214.

**22** On Pinelli, see Tavoni 1986, 227–228. On Saumaise, see Van Hal 2010a, 354. Van Rooy 2017 offers a discussion of early modern material regarding the Greek origin of Latin.

**23** For overviews of the history of etymological thought, with an emphasis on its post-antique reception, see Amsler 1989, Buridant 1998, Haßler 2009, Hummel 2007, 613–655, and Klinck 1970.

**24** For Benvoglienti's treatise, see Tavoni 1975.

ing that, by the time Lascaris delivered his speech in 1493, the idea had been re-invigorated. In addition to the scattered statements gathered by Mirko Tavoni, all testifying to the almost casual acceptance of Latin's affinity with Greek,[25] a particularly interesting trace of the idea in this early period is in Pomponio Leto's (1428–1498) commentary on Varro's *De lingua Latina*, as reflected in his students' class notes. Varro had argued that *termen* derived from τέρμων 'for Evander, who came to the Palatine, was an Arcadian from Greece' (5.21). Leto reportedly commented on this passage as follows:

> Due to bad neighbours, who were unendurable, many people left their native soil and migrated to foreign lands. And these were Achaeans, Iberians, Albanians, Sicilians, and those who make up the origin of the Romans: the Aborigines from Reate, the Pelasgians under Hercules and the Arcadians under [E]vander. From Greece it was, therefore, that the Latins took the Greek words they had, from the Pelasgians, the Argives, and the Arcadians.[26]

Although there are no such clear echoes of Dionysius' account in Leto's observation as there are in Lascaris' speech, his words resonate with Dionysius' general idea that a series of Greek arrivals on the peninsula had deeply affected Latin. Leto in this passage does not claim that Latin was essentially Greek, but rather traces an unspecified number of Latin words to specific waves of Greek migration. While the main argument of Lascaris' speech thus resonates with a more widespread notion that Latin somehow depended on Greek, the *Florentine Oration* seems to be the earliest instance of a full Renaissance reformulation of 'classical' Dionysian Aeolism, in which Dionysius' original argument for the partly Aeolic origin of Latin is transformed into an argument for an entirely Greek origin,

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**25** Tavoni 1986, 211–218.

**26** Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, *Plut.* 47.15, fol. 4ᵛ: *Propter malos vicinos qui ferri non poterant plerique mortales relicto patrio solo alio migraverunt et hi fuere Achaei, Iberi, Albani, Siculi et qui primordia fecerunt Romanis Aborigines ex agro Reatino, Pelasgi duce Hercule et Archades duce Ruandro* [sic]. *[E]x Graecia verba igitur Graeca quae habuerunt Latini accepere a Pelasgis et Argivis et Archadibus*. Compare the laconic (and rambling) note in Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, *Vat. Lat.* 3415, fol. 5ᵛ, dating to 1484: <u>Palatium</u> *Latium primi et Graeci occupaverunt, Latium duce Evandro, postea Achei et Pelasgi duce Hercule. Omnes dicuntur reliquisse patriam per malos vicinos, ut asserit Lucius Columella* (i.e., *De re rustica* 1.3.6–7), original punctuation slightly adapted. For an overview of the manuscripts of Leto's commentaries, see Brown 1980, 467–474. On various aspects of Leto's *dictata* on Varro, see the work of Maria Accame, esp. Accame 1980 (on his use of Festus in *Vat. Lat.* 3415); Accame 1998 (on his commentary on books VIII–X); Accame 2007 (on his courses on Varro more generally); Accame 2011 (on his discussion of the Scythians in his Varro notes); and Accame 2015 (on his *Vita* of Varro), all with rich bibliography.

mainly supported by etymological evidence, absent in Dionysius or any other ancient source available to Lascaris when he wrote his speech.[27]

As it resonated with the cultural concerns of both Latin humanists and Greek scholars such as Lascaris, the notion of Latin's affinity with Greek was very timely. Even if, by the end of the century, the battle over the acceptance of Greek in the humanist school curriculum was largely over,[28] Italian humanists were still very much 'concerned with the problem of relating [themselves] to the Greek heritage', especially so in the final decades of the fifteenth century.[29] While the so-called 'Hellenizers' were in favour of using Greek literature and language as a source of inspiration, others regarded Greek studies as something 'alien' to Latin culture and as a potential threat to Latin cultural autarky.[30] For Lascaris and his fellow Greek scholars who settled in Italy – for instance, George of Trebizond, Theodore Gazes, and Demetrius Chalcondylas – another problem was more urgent: how could they relate their Greek heritage to the Latin-oriented humanist culture of their hosts? For Latin 'Hellenizers' and Greek scholars alike, highlighting the perceived affinity of Latin with Greek was one way of justifying the study of Greek. Moreover, for Lascaris and his compatriots, who saw themselves as true heirs to the ancient Hellenes, the notion that Latin derived from Greek helped them to claim cultural superiority over their Latin hosts to whom they were socially and politically inferior.[31] By arguing that Latin essentially is a Greek language, Lascaris in his *Florentine Oration* makes an exceptionally bold attempt to situate Hellenism in the predominantly Latin culture of Italian humanism: he sides with the Hellenizers not only by showing the relevance of Greek to the humanist curriculum, but also by placing Greek at the heart of the humanists' self-perception: the Latin language.

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**27**  Dionysius does not cite direct linguistic evidence for his claim that Latin derives from Aeolic. Incidentally, he does derive a Latin word from Greek, as he does in *Rom. Ant*. 1.20.3, where he traces *Velia* to Greek ἔλεια, but his point there is not to prove that Latin is of Greek extraction (see Gabba 1963, 188–189).

**28**  Celenza 2009, 150–166, with references.

**29**  Tavoni 1986, 226–227.

**30**  On the conflict between 'Hellenizers' and Latin purists, exemplified by the case of Francesco Filelfo, see Lamers 2018.

**31**  Cf. Tavoni 1986, 209, 213. On the revived Hellenism of the Byzantine intelligentsia in Renaissance Italy generally, see most recently Lamers 2015.

# 2 *Latina lingua Graeca est*: Lascaris' etymological methodos

In the *Florentine Oration*, Lascaris' argument about the Greek origin of Latin is consistent with his attempt to show that the Greeks and Latins were essentially one and the same people (*idem et unum genus*). The primeval ancestors of the *genus Latinum* had been Greek settlers, and the Romans had imitated the Greeks in all relevant domains of their public and private lives, from festivals to poetry, so that, according to Lascaris, they seemed to prove the Pythagorean thesis of μετεμψύχωσις, or the transmigration of souls. If the Romans had been able to surpass the ancient Greeks, most notably in creating a more durable world empire, Lascaris explained this as the result of their successful implementation of *Greek* examples. In other domains, however, the Roman imitation of Greek examples had been less successful, most notably in language and literature. According to the Greek scholar, Latin literature was ultimately inferior to Greek, as was the Latin language. Whereas Dionysius, with a similar argument, had tried to convince the Greek-speaking population of the Roman empire that the Romans were a cognate and friendly people and not an imperialistic enemy, Lascaris argued for a *Latin* audience that it should regard the Greeks as a familiar people and embrace their (superior) culture and literature as their own, and so save it from total obliteration.[32]

After having argued that the Latin people was of Greek extraction, Lascaris introduces his argument that the Latin language is principally Greek as well:

> In my view, you will not only regain your learning from the Greek authors but even your very own language, so that you will not reproduce the sounds you have heard in the same way as magpies and parrots do, and that you are not ignorant of the proper signification and correctness of words, that you know what is tropical, what is figurative, and that you understand a rationale or method (μέθοδος) behind the infinite names of things and do not seem somehow to describe indivisible bits and pieces (ἀτόμους). For the Latin language is Greek, as has been said. The ancient Romans used the Greek language, but due to the proximity of the barbarians it was not entirely perfect. The epigrams they incised in bronze and

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**32** On Lascaris' wider argument in the context of fifteenth-century Florence, see Lamers 2015, 166–199.

marble with Greek words and letters may stand as evidence to this, but a better indication is the matter itself.[33]

Following Dionysius' account, Lascaris explains the perversion of 'Roman' Greek from contact with those who did not speak Greek and whom Lascaris explicitly calls barbarians (*barbari*). According to him, the Greek roots of Latin appear best from 'the matter itself' (*res ipsa*), and he fleshes out his thesis by citing more than fifty Latin words that he believed had originated in Greek, implicitly presenting them as a sample for Latin in general. However, Lascaris does not content himself with producing a set of examples of individual Latin words with Greek roots but tries to systematize them, identifying regularities behind the seemingly random relationship between the Greek and Latin words he cites.

A substantial part of the etymologies mentioned by Lascaris is attested in ancient sources, for example in the works of Varro, Festus (via Paul the Deacon's epitome, that is), and Isidore of Seville, although he does not follow one single author consistently.[34] It is difficult to say if Lascaris derived his examples directly from these sources, which he probably knew.[35] In any case, he clearly shows

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**33** Meschini 1983, 100: *Ac meo consilio non solum disciplinas a Graecis auctoribus repetes, sed et linguam ipsam tuam, ne picarum et psitacorum more audita proferas, ignores proprietatem et rectitudinem nominum, quid tropicum, quid figuratum haud quaquam intelligas, nullam rationem aut μέθοδον in infinitis rerum nominibus teneas, sed ἀτόμους quodammodo persequi videare. Nam, ut dictum est, lingua Latina Graeca est. Graeca enim veteres Romani utebantur, propter vicinitatem tamen barbarorum non adeo integra: huius indicium vel epigrammata esse possunt, quae in aere et in marmore Graecis et verbis et litteris incidebant, sed maius indicium res ipsa.* The passage from Lascaris' speech central to the discussion below is in Meschini 1983, 100–102.

**34** *nympha* < νύμφα: Serv. *Aen.* 8.336; *fama* < φάμα: Prisc. *Inst.* 2.11.21; *mala* < μᾶλα: Varro, *Ling.* 5.102, Isid. *Etym.* 11.1.44; *sus* < ὖς: Varro. *Ling.* 5.96, Isid. *Etym.* 12.1.28; *serpo* < ἕρπω: P.Fest. p. 472 Lindsay, p. 349 Müller; *nox* < νύξ: Varro *Ling.* 6.6 (cf. Charisius *Gramm.* p. 117, 17 B; Prisc. *Inst.* 2.280.3); *chorea* < χορεία: Prisc. *Inst.* 2.24.17; *fur* < φώρ: Gell. 1.18.5 (cf. Paul. *Dig.* 47.2.1; Serv. *Georg.* 3.407; Prisc. *Inst.* 2.11.21); *mus* < μῦς: Prisc. *Inst.* 2.27.21, Isid. *Etym.* 12.3.1, *id.* 12.8.11; *nemus* < νέμος: Varro *Ling.* 5.36; *nothus* < νόθος: Isid. *Etym.* 9.5.23 (cf. Quint. *Inst.* 3.6.97, Serv. *Aen.* 7.283); *taurus* < ταῦρος: Varro *Ling.* 5.96, Isid. *Etym.* 12.1.28; *polus* < πόλος: Varro *Ling.* 7.14; *ager* < ἀγρός: Varro *Ling.* 5.34, Quint. *Inst.* 1.6.38; *character* < χαρακτήρ: Isid. *Etym.* 20.16.7; *donum* < δῶρον: P.Fest. p. 60 Lindsay, p. 69 Müller; Phoenix < φοῖνιξ: Plin. *Nat.* 13.42 ('a φοῖνιξ'); *deus* < θεός: Isid. *Etym.* 7.15; *moriones* < μωραίνω: Aug. *Pecc. mer.* 1.22.32; *unguis* < ὄνυξ: Isid. *Etym.* 11.1.72; *pulcher* < πολύχρους: Scaurus, *De orthographia*, 31.3.

**35** The *editio princeps* of Isidore of Seville's *Etymologies* was printed in 1472 (Valastro Canale 2004, 28). Varro's *De lingua Latina* and Paul the Deacon's epitome of Festus were published for the first time in print in 1470/1, in the edition of Pomponio Leto (for Varro, see Brown 1980). Paul the Deacon's epitome was published again, in a separate edition, in Rome in 1475 (on this edition, see Lamers 2013).

awareness of etymologies from the Latin grammatical tradition. This becomes apparent when he explicitly contradicts them in favour of Greek etymologies. For example, he claimed that a field is not called *ager* 'because something is driven into it' (*quod in eo aliquid agatur*, a reference to ploughing), as had been suggested by Varro. Lascaris preferred the Greek etymology also suggested by Varro, which traced the word to ἀγρός (*Ling*. 5.34, cf. Quint. *Inst*. 1.6.37). Similarly, he rejected the Latin etymology of *deus* (*quia ei nihil deest*: 'because he lacks nothing'), which he could read in Paul the Deacon's epitome of Festus (Festus p. 62 Lindsay, p. 71 Müller). Instead, he preferred the alternative Greek etymology also favoured in the epitome, which related *deus* to the Greek word for god, θεός.[36]

Although a substantial part of the Greek etymologies cited by Lascaris thus circulated in the ancient and medieval sources, many of them apparently did not, and Lascaris probably invented some of them himself. While, for instance, Isidore of Seville had seen a connection between *lac* and λευκός (white, bright), Lascaris traced the word directly to the Greek word for milk, γάλα: a derivation that is, as far as I can see now, not attested elsewhere in the ancient sources.[37] Alternative Greek etymologies for Latin words that he could have found in the sources but which he did not cite are *lyra* from the Greek verb ληρεῖν (while Lascaris traced the word directly to λύρα),[38] *palaestra* 'ἀπὸ τῆς πάλης, ἀπὸ τῆς πάλλειν' (while he derived it from παλαίστρα),[39] and *malus* from μέλας (while he traced it to μὴ ὅλος, for which see below, p. 41).[40]

Lascaris did not cite these etymologies randomly. He grouped them loosely in categories in order to suggest a certain systematicity in the relationship between the Greek words and their Latin derivations. The categories he used pertain to different scholarly and literary traditions, from comparative grammar to liter-

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**36** According to Paul the Deacon's epitome of Festus, θεός underwent phonetic modification: *aspiratione dempta, qui mos antiquis nostris frequens erat* (P.Fest. p. 62 Lindsay, p. 71 Müller). For a discussion of the passage from a modern linguistic point of view, see Szemerényi 1999, 14–15. According to another etymology offered in the epitome, which was popular in the Middle Ages, *deus* derived from δέος, meaning *fear* (see Klinck 1977, 90–97).
**37** Isid. *Etym.* 11.1.77. The derivation of *lac* from γάλα is not attested in the ancient sources (see Maltby 1991, s.v. 'lac'), although Isidore of Seville notes that 'Gallia' is so called after the whiteness of its people since γάλα is the Greek word for *lac* (milk) (*Etym.* 14.4.25). Cf. E. Forcellini, *Totius Latinitatis lexicon*, s.v. *lac*, suggesting an etymology from the Greek genitive γάλακτος (I am grateful to Giancarlo Abbamonte for this reference).
**38** Isid. *Etym.* 3.22.8.
**39** Serv. auct. *Aen.* 8.138, 8.24.
**40** Isid. *Etym.* 10.176.

ary play with letters as we find it in, for instance, ancient comedy. Lascaris, however, used these diverse categories to describe the language change that, according to him, Greek underwent when it came into contact with 'barbarian' (viz. non-Greek) languages on the Italian peninsula. In what follows, we will see how, according to Lascaris, 'the matter itself' revealed the Greek roots of Latin.

What regularities did Lascaris discern? Some of his etymologies are reformulations of phenomena that had been described in comparative grammar since antiquity.[41] According to him, there was a large group of literal transliterations of Greek words in Latin (which he called the *dictiones prolatae*).[42] Some of these had undergone slight changes of letters: from Greek υ to Latin *y* (as in *lyra* < λύρα and *nympha* < νύμφα), from ου to *u* (as in *Musa* < Μοῦσα), from αι to *ae* (as in *palaestra* < παλαίστρα), from φ to *f* (as in *fama* < φάμα), and from κ to *c* (as in *coma* < κῶμα). Lascaris does not comment upon them, probably because he regarded the Latin letters *y*, *u*, *f* and *c* and the diphthong *ae* as obvious phonetic equivalents for the Greek υ, ου, φ, κ and αι, as had been established by comparative grammar in antiquity, mainly Priscian,[43] as well as by humanists interested in the correct spelling of Greek words in Latin, most notably Tortelli, who used Priscian as one of his main sources next to Quintilian, Servius, and Gellius.[44] Lascaris' observation that the Greek aspirate in Latin had changed into a sibilant, with ὗς becoming *sus* and ἕρπω becoming *serpo* (which he calls the *spiritus in litteram mutatio*), also stems from the tradition of comparative grammar and had already been known to Varro.[45] Lascaris explicitly alludes to this grammatical tradition when he mentions the *accentuum variatio* or change in stress 'according to the rules of the grammarians' (*secundum grammaticorum regulas*) as in *phar<u>e</u>tra* < φαρέτρα, *l<u>a</u>mpas* < λαμπάς and *p<u>y</u>ra* < πυρά. Apart from such phonetic modifications, Lascaris furthermore signals permutations in noun endings when they are borrowed from Greek in Latin, which he labels the *ad Latinam terminationem redactio*. In particular, he pointed out that Greek nouns of the second declension ending in −ος and −ον, typically changed their endings to −*us* and −*um*; nouns of the first declension ending in −ης, changed to −*a*; and those of the third declension ending in

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**41** A detailed analysis of comparative Greco-Latin grammar in antiquity is available in Schöpsdau 1992.

**42** The most straightforward examples Lascaris mentions are *astrologia* < ἀστρολογία, *philosophia* < φιλοσοφία, *theologia* < θεολογία, and *mala* < μᾶλα.

**43** Most notably in Priscian's chapter on the letters. He regarded Latin *y* as an equivalent for υ (*Inst.* 2.24, 2.26, 2.36−7); *u* for the Greek diphthong ου; *ae* for Greek αι (*Inst.* 2.37); *f* for Greek φ (*Inst.* 2.11, 2.19).

**44** On Tortelli, see esp. Donati 2006.

**45** See Varro *Ling.* 6.96 and *Rust.* 2.4.9. See also Prisc. *Inst.* 3.16.

−ηρ, changed to −*er*.[46] Like the other sound variations between Latin and Greek cited by Lascaris, such patterns in Latin and Greek were known from comparative grammars such as those of Priscian.[47]

Whereas the transliteration of Greek words into Latin, the relation between aspiration and sibilant, the dissimilar stress accents in Latin and Greek, and the correspondences between Latin and Greek word endings were all well-known phenomena from the ancient grammatical tradition, in Lascaris' speech they are put into a new context. In his account, they do not merely serve to bring out the formal differences and similarities between Greek and Latin, as they would in the regular comparative grammars: Lascaris makes the perceived linguistic affinities between Latin and Greek directly subservient to his general argument about the genetic relationship between the two languages.

Where the similarities between Greek and Latin words were less obvious, Lascaris relied on the technique of adding, eliminating, transposing, and altering letters in order to connect Latin with Greek words. This technique had proven a powerful means of revealing the hidden relationships between what seemed to be unrelated idioms, and it had a long history, spanning from Greek antiquity to the Latin Middle Ages. Depending on context, the permutation of letters could serve many purposes: from literary word play to finding the *etyma*, or true origins, of words, as in philosophy and, later, biblical exegesis. In Greek linguistics, from the Alexandrian grammarian Tryphon (c. 60–10BC) to the Byzantine scholar Gregory Pardos (c. 1070–1156), the addition, elimination, transposition, and alteration of letters had moreover been used to describe and explain linguistic variations in the Greek dialects. These mutations, known as πάθη, did not follow sound laws in the modern sense but were invented *ad hoc* in order to reduce anomalous forms to the common forms (*koiné*).[48] In the Latin grammatical tradition, the principles of *permutatio litterarum*, which possibly originated in ancient stylistics, were applied to explain how Latin words had changed over time.[49] The precise relationship between the coeval theories of *permutatio litterarum* and the Alexandrian πάθη, as well as the reception of 'pathology' in Byzantine grammar,

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**46** Examples of the first group: νέμος > *nemus*, ἄντρον > *antrum*, νόθος > *nothus*, ταῦρος > *taurus*, πόλος > *polus*, ἀγρός > *ager*. Examples of the second group: ναύτης > *nauta* and αὐλητής > *auleta*. Examples of the third group: χαρακτήρ > *character* and πατήρ > *pater*.

**47** See, for instance, Prisc. *Inst.* 2.71, 2.143, 2.156.

**48** As a linguistic device, the permutation of letters is known as the theory of πάθη or *affectiones*. On the intellectual history of *pathology*, see esp. Lallot 1995 and Wackernagel 1876.

**49** Classically in Varro *Ling.* 6.2. On the tradition of *permutatio litterarum* and its reception, see esp. Cram 1999.

from where it entered early modern linguistic thought, would merit a self-standing treatment elsewhere. In any case, it is impossible to trace Lascaris' approach to one single tradition, and not only because of his lack of 'referencing' in the modern sense of the word. He used the well-tried technique of changing letters in a new context to explain how Greek words had mutated, or rather degenerated, into Latin ones.

Specifically, Lascaris mentioned the modification of consonants into liquids or liquids into other liquids (*consonantium aut liquidarum in liquidas mutatio*), as in θήρ > *fera*, δῶρον > *donum* and φοῖνιξ > *Phoenix*, as well as the transmutation of aspirated consonants into voiced consonants (*aspiratarum in medias mutatio*), as in θεός > *deus*.[50] Additionally, he specified that vowels may be altered into other vowels 'according to paragrammatism', which meant that, apart from being changed, the vowels could be transposed within the word as well (*vocalium in vocales mutatio κατὰ παραγραμματισμόν*). On the basis of this procedure, Lascaris explained the derivation of Latin *nox* ('night') from Greek νύξ, citing as additional examples *chorea* (< χορεία), *fur* (< φώρ), *trutina* (< τρυτάνη), *mus* (< μῦς), *domitor* (< δαμάτωρ), and *duplus* (< διπλοῦς). Apart from paragrammatism, he also mentions anagrammatism (*ἀναγραμματισμός*): the reorganization of syllables (preferably without adding, omitting, or changing letters), which reveals the original meanings (*ἐτυμολογίαι*) of words. To illustrate this kind of etymology, he cites examples from Greek such as 'ἀρετή: ἐρατή, *quod virtus desyderetur*' and '"Ηρα: ἀήρ, *quod Iuno aer sit*.' According to Lascaris, citing Horace (*Ars P.* 53), there are numerous Latin words that similarly 'descend from a Greek source with a slight deviation,' for example *frustum* (from τρύφος via *φρυστο), *lac* (from γάλα via *λαγα), *forma* (from μορφή via *φορμη), *palantes* (from πλάνητες via *π[α]λάντες), *madidus* (from μυδαλέος via *μαδ[ιδ]ος), *parvus* (from παῦρος via *παρυος), *unguis* (from ὄνυξ via *ονξυ), *ahenum* (from χόανον via *αχ[ε]νον), *meus* (from ἐμός via *μεος), and *pulcher* (from πολύχρους via *πουλχρος). Lascaris' emphatic use of the Greek terms ἀναγραμματισμός and παραγραμματισμός in this context, not attested in the ancient sources, can be traced to the Byzantine commentary tradition, and more specifically to contexts of language corruption, to which I will return in the final section of this paper.

Lascaris also found Greek words in Latin that had changed not only their letters but also their meaning. In order to co-ordinate sound change and semantic

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**50** Within Greek, similar sound variations (for example, between θ and φ and between θ and δ) were described by Eustathius (see Ahrens 1839, 42–44), whose work Lascaris knew well. These permutations of letters, however, were not generalized in terms of changing phonetic qualities such as the evolution from *aspirata* in *media*.

modification, Lascaris used more complex etymological techniques. In such cases, he supposed the original word to disclose something of the 'true meaning' of the derivative. For instance, Lascaris singled out as one specific category of derivations those words that, according to him, had not only changed an unvoiced into a voiced consonant (which was a purely formal change) but also changed their meaning (*tenuium in medias mutatio per ἐτυμολογίαν*). In such cases, the meanings of the original and the derived words could be connected associatively or, in Lascaris' own wording, 'by etymology.' He exemplified this peculiar phenomenon by deriving *bonus* from πόνος. For Lascaris, this pair illustrated the modification of an unvoiced (π) into a voiced consonant (*b*), whereas the semantically unrelated words were also connected by the moralizing maxim that 'all good things (*bona*) can be bought through work (πόνος).'

While Lascaris generally follows grammarians when he discusses sound change, he invokes the authority of 'the philosophers' when he describes composite nouns that, according to him, combined a Latin and a Greek element and were composed on the analogy of the Greek original (*a Graeca et Latina dictione composita*). The only example Lascaris cites for this extravagant category is the name of the Roman god Saturnus, which he believes is a composite of Latin *saturitas* and Greek νοῦς after the manner of Greek Κρόνος, being a creative composite of κόρος νοῦς: 'satiety of mind.' Of all categories Lascaris mentions, this is the one most difficult to imagine as in line with his general idea of language corruption implying the progressive change of Greek into Latin (unless perhaps we accept that *saturitas* is a barbarian word that replaced κόρος at some point).[51]

A final category of Greek words in Latin, discerned by Lascaris, is exemplified by Latin *malus*, which the Greek scholar derived from the Greek μὴ ὅλος by means of 'etymology with crasis' (*per ἐτυμολογίαν κατὰ κρᾶσιν*). He 'unfolded' *malus* into its alleged constituent Greek compounds: μὴ ὅλος. The meaning of these compounds ('not complete') was then interpreted as 'prefiguring' the meaning of the Latin word ('bad') since 'what is incomplete must be bad.' Thus, the 'etymological' part of the derivation explains the 'true meaning' of *malus* traditionally by unfolding it in two separate words, which together form the semantic unit that is made to account for the meaning of the resultant noun. The 'crasis' or contraction subsequently explains the phonetic transmutation of the Greek word into *malus*.

On the previous pages, it has been shown that Lascaris used the traditional means of comparative grammar and various forms of etymology and applied them in a new way in order to make them account for historical language change.

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**51** Lascaris also mentions 'indeterminate mutation' (*varia et indeterminata mutatio*), citing *fides* as a derivation from the Greek verb εἴδω ('to know').

Rhetorically, this works in two ways. First, he uses the categories as a means of *describing* how Greek changed into Latin. Secondly, he uses them to *explain* how Latin words had developed from Greek roots. In this way, Lascaris suggests the rough contours of a reconstructive method that would enable his audience to trace any Latin word to its Greek roots. Obviously, in his speech, Lascaris was not as comprehensive as Christian Becmann (1580–1638) and Gerhardus Johannes Vossius (1577–1649) later were in their treatises on Latin etymology.[52] But even so, he invited his audience to see a *methodos* or system behind the seemingly random relations between Greek and Latin words, and he did so in a way that he had not found in the ancient sources. Therefore, I would argue, his argument for the Greek origin of Latin cannot be regarded as the plain reception of a fully elaborated ancient theory. Lascaris rather adopted various elements from diverse ancient traditions and adapted them in such a way as to support the central argument of his speech. This also appears from the way in which he used terms specific to the Byzantine commentary tradition, to which we will turn in the next section.

## 3 Ana– and paragrammatism: Lascaris' use of Byzantine sources

Although it is difficult to establish the exact sources for most of the rules of derivation Lascaris mentions in his speech, two of them – anagrammatism and paragrammatism – apparently belong to the Byzantine commentary tradition.[53] Herbert Hunger has shown that, in Byzantine literature, there had been a long tradition of anagrammatism and paragrammatism, especially in relation to names in contexts of blame and praise.[54] Hunger regarded both phenomena as 'rhetorical-grammatical' devices, the functions of which could vary from mere literary play to aggressive political attack.[55] The Byzantine commentator Eustathius of Thessalonica (*c.* 1110–*c.* 1195) offers some examples of playful literary *anagrammatismoi*, and his contemporary colleague John Tzetzes (*c.* 1110–*c.* 1180)

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**52** In his *De originibus Latinae linguae* 1602, Christian Becmann defined 37 etymological rules for tracing Latin words to Greek roots. Vossius' *Etymologicon linguae Latinae* 1664 offers a list of admissible *permutationes litterarum*. See Cram 1999.

**53** Cf. Meschini 1983, 77–78, 78–79.

**54** Hunger 1991–1992, 6–11.

**55** Hunger 1991–1992, 2, 5.

specifically evokes the literary anagrams of the Hellenistic poet Lycophron.[56] The notion of paragrammatism had a similar rhetorical usage. The colossal tenth-century encyclopaedia, known as the *Suda*, defines it as the change of one letter into another (ὅταν γράμμα ἀντὶ γράμματος τεθῇ), citing examples from Aristophanes's *Knights*.[57] Tzetzes, too, regarded paragrammatism as a rhetorical σχῆμα, or figure of speech.[58] In his commentary on the *Frogs*, for instance, he evoked, as an example of *paragrammatizein* how Aristophanes had called Kallias 'son of Hippobinos' ('horse-fucker'), being an obscene *paragramma* of 'Hipponikos' ('horse-victor').[59] Such purely literary notions of anagrammatism and paragrammatism obviously presuppose the *intentional manipulation* of sounds in words for comic or rhetorical effect. In Latin humanist discourse, too, the term *anagrammatismus* was sometimes used, without clear distinction from paragrammatism, to denote a rhetorical pun on someone's name by reorganizing and adding letters. This is, for instance, how Joachim du Bellay used it in a poem to Pierre de Ronsard ('In Petri Ronsardi anagrammatismum'), in which he transformed Ronsard's family name into the Greek Τέρπανδρος, thus playfully 'revealing' a parallel with the lyric poet Terpander of Antissa (7th cent. BC).[60]

It would seem, then, that Lascaris adopted a literary or rhetorical device and, irrespective of its original contexts of use, adapted it to describe and explain historical language change. This would be perfectly consistent with the changing epistemic status of etymology in the Renaissance study of languages, alluded to above (p. 32). However, in the Byzantine tradition, the meaning of paragrammatism was slightly more complex than has sometimes been assumed; it was not restricted to literary and rhetorical usage in the same way as the idea of anagrammatism apparently was. Two examples from the commentaries of Eustathius in particular illuminate this alternative usage of παραγραμματισμός. In his commentary on Homer's *Iliad*, the commentator used the term as follows:

> Orchomenos is a city in Europe, flourishing due to its wealth (be it other peoples' wealth). Since when the citadel was still secure (as is narrated in the *Odyssey*), many inhabitants of the surrounding towns trusted their money to it. [...] According to the ancient sources, there

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**56** Eustathius: 45.45–46.9 = I 74 van der Valk. Tzetzes: *Schol. Lyc.* p. 5.7 Scheer.
**57** See *Suda* s.v. 'Παραγραμματισμός' (with *schol. Ar. Eq.* ed. Jones & Wilson 1969, 59b and *schol. Ar. Eq.* ed. Jones & Wilson 1969, 79c). See also *Suda* s.v. 'Παραγραμματίζων' (with Diog. L. 3.26 and Pl. *Symp.* 185C).
**58** See Tz. *H.* 8.169.113–121, 10.319.227–242, 11.392.866–871.
**59** *Schol. Ar. Ra.* ed. Koster 1962, 428a.
**60** du Bellay 1974, 108.

were many cities called Orchomenos, as is clearly shown in Boeotia. [...] The masses now
call these places 'Charmenas', mispronouncing the name through paragrammatism.[61]

In his commentary on Dionysius Periegetes' description of the world in hexame-
ter verse (2nd–3rd cent.), Eustathius used the notion of paragrammatism in a sim-
ilar context:

> And the harbour near Byzantion was so called [Bosporion] due to paragrammatism or rather
> due to what the orators call 'corruption', while it should be called 'Phosphorion', as the
> ancients call it.[62]

In both passages from his commentaries on Homer and Dionysius Periegetes, Eu-
stathius uses the term as the very opposite of literary play with letters, although
the rhetorical usage of the term was also known to him. In the passage from his
commentary on Dionysius, he employs the term to refer to language corruption,
more specifically παραφθορά: a term commonly used by grammarians and com-
mentators to frame language variations in terms of language corruption or de-
generation.[63] Due to their lack of knowledge about the correct pronunciation of
Greek words, the masses tended to pronounce 'Orchomenos' falsely as 'Char-
menas' (by changing 'Orch-' in 'Char-', altering the word's ending, and omitting
the second syllable). Because of their lack of knowledge about the origins of
words (i.e. the etymology of Greek), some similarly wrote 'Bosporion' instead of
'Phosphorion' (transforming *ph* into the labial consonants *b* and *p*).[64] While as a
literary or rhetorical device, paragrammatism, just like anagrammatism, presup-

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**61** Eust. *Il.* 758.22–28: Ὀρχομενὸς δὲ πόλις ἐν Εὐρώπῃ, κομῶσα καὶ αὐτὴ πλούτῳ, πλὴν
ἀλλοδαπῷ. Ἐπεὶ γάρ, ὡς καὶ ἐν Ὀδυσσείᾳ ἱστόρηται, ὀχυρὸν ἦν τὸ φρούριον, πολλοὶ τῶν
περιοίκων ἐπίστευον ἐκείνῳ τὰ χρήματα. [...] Πολλοὶ δὲ κατὰ τοὺς παλαιούς, ὡς καὶ ἐν τῇ Βοιωτίᾳ
δηλοῦνται, Ὀρχομενοί. [...] Τούτους δὲ βαρβαρίζοντες νῦν οἱ πολλοὶ ἐν παραγραμματισμῷ Χαρμέ-
νας λέγουσιν.
**62** Eust. *D.P.* 142 (p. 242 l. 34–p. 243 l. 2 Müller, p. 112, ll. 11–14 Bernhardy): Καὶ ὁ περὶ τὸ Βυζάν-
τιον δὲ λιμὴν οὕτως ὕστερον ἐκλήθη κατὰ παραγραμματισμὸν ἢ μᾶλλον κατὰ τὴν παρὰ τοῖς ῥή-
τορσι λεγομένην παραφθοράν, Φωσφόριον ὀφείλων καλεῖσθαι, ὥς φασιν οἱ παλαιοί.
**63** For an overview of the use of the term παραφθορά to denote various forms of linguistic cor-
ruption in the ancient grammatical tradition and in Byzantine commentaries, see Schmidt 1854,
15–19 and Wackernagel 1876, 34–47.
**64** There are a few additional places in his commentaries where Eustathius refers to paragram-
matism in order to explain alternative names, apparently without intentional rhetorical puns.
See Eust. *D.P.* 175 (p. 246 ll. 25–28 Müller, p. 118 ll. 1–4 Bernhardy) and Eust. *D.P.* 828 (p. 363 ll.
29–34 Müller, p. 261, ll. 10–15 Bernhardy). Similar usage of the term in Herodianus' *De or-
thographia* (Lentz, *Gramm. Gr.* III, 2 p. 383), cited in the handbook of Stephanus of Byzantium.

posed subtle language skills in both user and audience, paragrammatism, understood in terms of παραφθορά, implied the opposite: the corruption of language due to linguistic ignorance.

In Eustathius' commentaries, Lascaris found a notion of paragrammatism that resonated with the general argument of his speech, summarized above. As he found that, in the Italian peninsula, the Greek language had degenerated into Latin 'due to the vicinity of the barbarians', the 'Eustathian' concept of paragrammatism in particular enabled him to represent the supposed deviations from 'correct' Greek in terms of 'barbarization.'[65] Just like those who had called Orchomenos Charmenas, and Phosphorion Bosporion, the Latins had generally 'barbarized' the language of their Greek ancestors, and from this process of barbarization, Latin had emerged. Although in 1493, when Lascaris delivered his speech, the *editiones principes* of Eustathius' commentaries had not yet been printed,[66] the Greek scholar had easy access to the autograph of Eustathius' commentary on the *Iliad* as well as other manuscripts containing his works in the library of the Medici family in Florence.[67] More importantly, mainly thanks to Donald Jackson, we know Lascaris' personal copies of all of the above-mentioned commentaries, which are now in the National Library of France in Paris, some of which contain the scholar's personal notes.[68] In the Renaissance, direct knowledge of the Byzantine commentators was generally more common than it is now. Illustratively, the *paragramma* of the name 'Bosporion', discussed above, was also known to the French topographer and ichthyologist Pierre Gilles (1490–1555). In his travel letters, Gilles noted, explicitly citing Stephanus and Eustathius as his sources, that the *Bosporius portus* was not so called because of the proximity of the Bosporus but because of the 'depraved manners of the inhabitants of Byzantium, who call the harbour 'Bosporius' by changing a letter' (*immutatione literae*).[69]

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**65** Note that Eustathius also expressed the idea that the Latins had adopted both Hellenic customs and Greek (esp. Doric) words: 'even if afterwards the Hellenic nouns degenerated with time and became false' (Eust. *Od*. 1398.55–1399.10). On this passage, see Cullhed 2017, 292–295.

**66** Eustathius' commentaries, co-edited by Lascaris' former student Matthaeus Devarius (c. 1505–1581), were printed between 1542 and 1550; the commentary on Dionysius Periegetes was issued in 1547.

**67** Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, *Plut*. 59.2 and *Plut*. 59.3.

**68** Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, *Graec*. 2701 (commentary on the *Iliad*), *Graec*. 2702 (on the *Odyssey*), and *Graec*. 2695 (on Dionysius Periegetes). He also read the commentary on the Periegetes in the manuscript Paris, BnF, *Graec*. 2855 (Jackson 2003, 130) and possessed an index on Eustathius' commentaries (now *Graec*. 2704) (cf. Jackson 2003, 90).

**69** Gilles 2007, 191.

Lascaris' usage of the Byzantine sources to flesh out his expanded Dionysian notion that Latin derived from Greek demonstrates that his argument was by no means wholly dependent on Dionysius of Halicarnassus but shows a much more complex reception of previous material. As far as we are able to see now, Lascaris seems to have been one of the first – if not the first – to take the traces of Aeolism in Dionysius' *Roman Antiquities* as a starting point for his own argument that Latin derived from Greek and in so doing significantly expanded Dionysius' idea. He did so not only by replacing the chiefly Aeolic origin of Latin in Dionysius by an exclusively Greek one, as was customary at the time, but also by formulating specifically language-based arguments for his thesis, which we do not find in the sources in this form. Although most of the sources Lascaris used cannot be specified with certainty, it has become clear from what has been said that, in demonstrating the Greek origin of Latin by looking at the language itself, the Greek scholar not only relied on ancient comparative grammars but also on ancient etymological principles as well as Byzantine commentaries. He thus anticipated a tradition in which etymology would become the principal means of tracing Latin words to their putative Greek roots.

# 4 By way of conclusion

Today, Greek and Latin are no longer regarded as mother and daughter. With the rise of Indo-European studies, the similarities between *utraque lingua* have become understood in terms of common descent from an original 'Ur'-language. In 1850, one of the 'founding fathers' of Indo-European linguistics, August Schleicher (1821–1868), referred to the idea that Latin derived from Greek as 'das alte, ich hoffe endlich zu Tode gehetzte Steckenpferd der Philologen.'[70] The idea did not die out overnight, all the same. It was not restricted to antiquity, nor to the context of Italian humanism, and did in fact not lose its intellectual appeal until well into the nineteenth century. In 1814, the Scottish philologist John Jamieson (1759–1838) could still write that it was 'generally admitted that the Latin language is merely the Aeolic dialect of Greek',[71] and fifteen years later, the Italian Classicist Antonio Nodari (1790–1840), echoing Varro, claimed that 'the Latin language [was] born from and nourished by Aeolic Greek and Celtic.'[72]

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**70** Schleicher 1850, 132 (I owe this reference, with thanks, to Bas Clercx).
**71** Jamieson 1814, 148–149. My translation.
**72** Nodari 1829, 12. My translation.

Even after the institutionalization of comparative linguistics, the idea lingered on. Its last complete academic formulation by the archaeologist Ludwig Ross (1806–1859), first published in 1858, bears striking similarities to Lascaris' argument in the *Florentine Oration*. The provocative title of the book's second and revised edition (*Italiker und Gräken: Lateinisch ist Griechisch*) reads like a direct translation of Lascaris' motto 'Latina lingua Graeca est.' Although Ross did not know the *Florentine Oration*, which was first published only forty years after his death,[73] his approach was steeped in the etymological tradition of Renaissance humanism anticipated by the Greek scholar. Like Lascaris' Hellenizing etymologies, Ross' etymological approach was based on combinations of 'Umbildungen' and 'Begriffsverschiebungen', which he sought to systematize in alleged sound laws, as well as in correspondences between the Greek and Latin nominal and verbal systems.[74] To cite only one example: Ross derived *ceterus* from ἕτερος, *puer* from ἡβός, and *comes* from ὁμός, since he believed, just like Lascaris, that the Greek rough breathing could change into any Latin consonant.[75]

To trace the intellectual history of the idea that Latin derived from Greek, from the Middle Ages to the modern period, including both Lascaris' Florentine speech and Ross' eccentric book, would be a fascinating task for the future. The fact that the ancient evidence for Aeolism was as fragmentary for many of the later scholars who endorsed a variant of it as it is for us today, is a powerful reminder that humanist ideas about this issue were not so 'directly linked with the theory conceived in the Classical period' as we might think.[76] Instead, it seems that later reformulations of 'classical' Aeolism stand in a much more complex relation to the classical heritage than is often recognized. This raises questions as to how, and in what contexts, the idea re-emerged and evolved. Is it appropriate to speak of a continuous tradition, with proponents of the theory building on each other's work? Or did similar ideas about the Greek origins of Latin sometimes emerge independently in unrelated contexts? To me at least, the evidence so far strongly suggests that we have to think not so much in terms of the survival or reception of a full-fledged theory but to rethink the history of Aeolism as the recovery and reinterpretation of traces of an idea only incompletely expressed in the ancient sources as they have come down to us.

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**73** Müllner 1899. The speech had already been discussed by Vast 1878, 26–32.

**74** Ross 1859, XIII.

**75** Ross 1859, 108–16. Sometimes, Ross offers the same etymologies as Lascaris, e.g. with *lac* (Ross 1859, 42) and *madidus* (Ross 1859, 201). Elsewhere, Ross differs from Lascaris, e.g. with *pulcher*, which he derives from μελιχρός (Ross 1859, 85), or *frustum*, which he derives from θραυστός (Ross 1859, 151).

**76** Tavoni 1986, 210.

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## Abbreviations

DBI  *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*. Available at <treccani.it/biografie>.
GW  *Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke*. Available at <gesamtkatalogderwiegendrucke.de>.

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