Reinventing the ancient Greeks : the self-representation of Byzantine scholars in Renaissance Italy

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Chapter 5

Ancient Greece as Greco-Latin Common Ground

At the end of the fourteenth century, Manuel Chrysoloras addressed Colotius Salutati, shortly before Chrysoloras took up his teaching duties at the Florentine Studio. In the letter, he congratulated the Florentine chancellor with his Latin translations of some of Plutarch's biographies of Greek and Roman statesmen.[561] According to Chrysoloras, the ancient historian's works were particularly important because they showed so well 'how close a connection ('κοινωνία') had once existed in all respects between the people of the Hellenes and that of the Italians'. To explain this connection, Chrysoloras pointed at the sacred and secular practices Italians and Greeks had shared. He claimed that they not only celebrated the same gods, but also shared their stories (or speech) and education 'as they wanted, if possible, to merge totally' ('συμφῦναι').[562] A few years later, Manuel Kalekas used a very similar strategy in a letter to Jacopo d'Angelo da Scarperia (dated ca. 1400). Kalekas maintained that he shared a fatherland with Jacopo d'Angelo: Florence was inhabited by Romans who had also founded Constantinople, while they were originally Greeks, an idea he probably took from Dionysius of Halicarnassus.[563]

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[561] Cf. Pade (2007) 94-95, also on the dating of the letter either in 1396 or after 1397/1398.

[562] Chrysoloras in Salutati, ed. Novati (1911) 341 ll. 17-22: 'εἰ δέ τις καὶ ταῦτα ἀκριβῶς σκοποίη, οἶμαι καὶ ταῦτα εἶναι ὑπὲρ τοῦ Πλουτάρχου καίτοι παρ'ἐκείνου ἐστὶ δήπου καλῶς ἰδεῖν, ὁπόση κοινωνία πρὶν ἐν ἅπασιν ἦν τῷ τε τῶν Ἑλλήνων γένει καὶ τῷ τῶν Ἰταλῶν. τί γὰρ αὐτοῖς ἴδιον, ἀλλὰ μὴ κοινὸν ἦν, τῶν τε θείων ἁπλῶς καὶ ἀνθρωπίνων; καίτοι τί λέγω τῶν θείων καὶ τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων; οἵ γε μὴ μόνον τὰ ἀλλήλων σεμνά, λέγω γάρ οὖν τὰ ἀλλήλων, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοὺς μύθους καὶ τὰς παιδίας ἠγάσθησαν, βουλόμενοι διὰ πάντων, εἰ δυνατόν, συμφῦναι'. Note that the Greek 'μῦθοι' can mean *words* (speech, language) but also more broadly *stories*, which are both valid meanings in this context. Compare Chrysoloras in Salutati, ed. Novati (1911) 341 ll. 22-31, where the Byzantine scholar explained why some Romans preferred to write in Greek about the deceased in their families and cities.

[563] See Kalekas, ed. Loenertz (1950) 257 (nr. 64 ll. 1-5): '…ὅτι καὶ τῆς αὐτῆς … κοινωνοῦμεν πατρίδος. τῆς τε γὰρ σῆς Ἕλληνες ἐξ ἀρχῆς οἰκισταὶ Ῥωμαῖοι λέγονται γεγονέναι, τήν τε ἡμετέραν πολλοῖς ὕστερον χρόνοις τῶν αὐτῶν ἄποικον ἴσμεν' *[… that we also share the same fatherland … as the Romans (originally Greeks) became the inhabitants of your fatherland, while we know that much later our own fatherland became a colony of theirs].*

These are two early and evocative examples of how Byzantine intellectuals could use the ancient past to bridge the gap with the Italian humanists. The ancient past was a useful model to mould their relation with the Latins. It directed attention away from the military and religious conflicts of recent times towards an ancient past of mutual regard and cooperation. This usage of the ancient Greek past is different from what we have seen in the previous chapters. Bessarion fused the notions of ethnic kinship and cultural preservation to differentiate the Hellenes from other peoples (chapter 3), while George Trapezuntius created a unique place for the Greeks in providential history (chapter 4). In this chapter, I will discuss two more elaborate examples of the ways Byzantines could use the ancient Greek past as a bridge towards the Latins without, however, losing their special claim to Greek antiquity. The first example (that will cover most of the chapter) is Janus Lascaris' *Florentine Oration*, which claims that Greeks and Latins can be regarded as 'one and the same people' ('idem et unum genus'). The second example (that will be discussed in lesser detail) is Constantine Lascaris' *Vitae illustrium philosophorum Siculorum et Calabrorum*, a list with short biographies of ancient Greek philosophers associated with Sicily and Calabria. In this curious work, Constantine Lascaris reminded the Calabrian and Sicilian elites of the ancient Greek past of their regions. Although I will primarily focus on Janus Lascaris' *Florentine Oration*, a brief confrontation of the different ways Janus and Constantine Lascaris used the Greek past for similar purposes will both round off this chapter and anticipate the central topic of the next.

Almost precisely a century after Chrysoloras wrote his letter to Salutati, one of his most famous successors on the Florentine chair of Greek, Janus Lascaris, carried Chrysoloras' and Kalekas' ideas further in a long speech on the occasion of the new academic year at the Florentine Studio. As if he knew Chrysoloras' letter to Salutati and followed its precepts, Lascaris mined Plutarch's *Vitae* and Dionysius of Halicarnassus' *Antiquitates Romanae* for arguments in favour of the ethnic and cultural commonality of Greeks and Latins. This in fact boiled down to emphasising the Hellenic features of the Latins.[564] In this, he was so successful that his biographer Henri Vast felt the need to

[564] That Lascaris was familiar with the works of Plutarch and Dionysius of Halicarnassus primarily appears from the often indirect quotations and verbatim translations in his speech, carefully traced by Meschini (1983). It is also substantiated by the available inventory of Lascaris' library, drawn up by his Greek secretary Matthias Devaris, in which we find represented works of both Plutarch and Dionysius. See Nolhac (1886) 256 nr. 27, 257 nr. 53 on which see Jackson (2003b). Cf. Nolhac (1887) 154-159. The reception of Plutarch's *Lives* in fifteenth-century Italy is examined in the impressive two-volume study of Marianne Pade (2007).

warn his 'Latin' readership not to take the views and recommendations of the Byzantine professor too much at heart. 'If you lend your ear to Lascaris too willingly', he warned in 1886, 'and as you follow the Greeks, forgetful of yourselves, there could be the danger that you become unable to draw anything from yourself ever again'.[565] Despite their commonality, however, Lascaris also emphasised that the Greeks were *superior* to the Latins. He claimed that the Latins owed a debt to the Greeks, and that the Italians must welcome and safeguard the Byzantines. If the dead must be honoured, Lascaris explained, and 'if we are "remnants of the Greeks" as Caesar said to the Athenians, who were spared because of their dead, although they, living Greeks, had done much wrong, then we, who are unfortunately in the full sense pathetic remnants of the Greeks, can expect good and human assistance because of our dead'.[566] In other words, Janus Lascaris used the ancient Greek past both to mark off the Greeks from the Latins and to create a cultural common ground with them.

In my interpretation of Lascaris' *Florentine Oration*, I expound upon Anna Meschini's criticism of Henri Vast's assertion that the *Oratio* is an apolitical speech, and does not touch upon public affairs. While Anna Meschini has amply shown that the speech is full of polemical strokes and blows against the detractors of Greek studies,[567] I propose to nuance the idea that Lascaris' speech is first and foremost an aggressive polemical rebuttal of his academic rivals, or an expression of the author's 'nationalistic prejudice'.[568]

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[565] Vast (1878a) 32: 'Periculum sit, si Lascari aurem omnino praebeas, dum Graecos sequeris, tui immemor, nihil a te ipso haurire usquam possis'. Lascaris' *Florentine Oration* is discussed, or rather summarised, in Vast (1878a) 26-32.

[566] J. Lascaris, ed. Meschini (1983) 91 ll. 35-41: 'Si quis itaque vita defunctis alicubi sensus est, ut nationum consensu et sapientissimorum quorumcunque sententia autumare possumus, ac pro divinis et immortalibus meritis divinae gratiae immortalesque debentur, si nos Graecorum reliquiae, ut dixit Caesar Atheniensium populo, qui cum multa vivi delinquerent, propter mortuos servarentur, nos quoque, heu nimium vere Graecorum quisquilliae, mortuorum saltem causa bonum quodquam humanumve auxilium sperare possumus'. In order to save the structure of the sentence, I deleted a colon after 'si nos', and assume an elided 'sumus' after 'reliquiae', making 'nos' the subject of 'sumus' and considering 'Graecorum reliquiae' to be the nominal part of the predicate instead of an apposition with 'nos'. The translation would then be as follows: 'If the deceased have any consciousness left somewhere (as we can assume on the basis of the common opinion among the peoples and the judgement of the very wise) and if an equally great gratitude is due to their superhuman and immortal merits, if we are the remnants of the Greeks…'

[567] Meschini (1983) 69-86.

[568] Meschini (1983) 83-84 ('pregiudizio nazionalistico').

Although Lascaris indeed claimed that the Latins were indebted to the Greeks,[569] his speech supplemented this idea with a more emotive appeal to help members of the same *genus* or people. After providing the necessary background to Janus Lascaris' speech in the next section, I will subsequently show how he demonstrated the Greekness of the Latins and how his thesis of *idem et unum genus* relates to the purpose of his speech to promote Greek studies. After that, I will investigate how Janus Lascaris solves a major problem entailed in his representation of Greeks and Latins. How can Greeks possibly be superior to Latins if they seem to be 'one and the same people'? In this context, I will also show how the post-Byzantine scholar framed the Latin indebtedness to the Greeks as something positive so that his speech finally also tackles the problem of anti-Greek prejudice that continued to exist even among humanist philhellenists. In the final section, then, I will briefly show an alternative way of how the ancient Greek past could be used to create a Greco-Latin common ground by means of Constantine Lascaris' *Vitae*.

Janus Lascaris' Florentine Oration *as an academic speech*

Janus Lascaris delivered his *Oratio habita in gymnasio Florentino* (briefly *Oratio Florentina* or *Florentine Oration*) in October or November 1493 as the formal introduction, or *praelectio*, to his Greek course in 1493–1494.[570] In Florence, such preliminaries were held at the start of the academic year in October after the *decretista* had delivered his opening oration in the Cathedral of the city.[571] One year before his *praelectio*,[572] Lascaris had succeeded Demetrius Chalcondylas on the chair of Greek poetry and philosophy.[573] In speeches such as the *Oratio* professors generally praised the liberal arts and their teaching topic in particular (the part of the speech referred to as *laus*) in addition to exhorting and encouraging their students to take up studies and to do their best (the *cohortatio* or *exhortatio*). When one of Lascaris' other distinguished predecessors on the Florentine chair of Greek, Johannes Argyropulus, decided to skip

[569] Meschini (1983) 77.
[570] Meschini (1983) 72.
[571] Maïer (1966) 45-46.
[572] As Klecker (1994) 12 n. 2 points out, humanists did not label this kind of speech in a uniform fashion. So, we find *oratio*, *praefatio*, *praelectio* side by side with *sermo*. In the Italian secondary literature, it has become customary to speak of *prolusioni* (cf. the edition of Lascaris' speech by Anna Pontani Meschini).
[573] For a concise biographical sketch of Janus Lascaris and his activities see Grafton (1985). Important documents for his biography are brought together in Pontani (1992b),

the *laudatio* and the *exhortatio*, he explained his choice to do so, which indicates that he at least thought that his audience would expect him to deliver these parts of the oration.[574] Apart from introducing the subject, the *lectores* in their opening speeches also presented themselves, their competences and their intellectual orientations both to the students and to the scholarly community affiliated to the institute that had invited them.[575] So, the inaugural lecture served the double purpose of introducing both the subject matter and the professor to his audience. From the first lines of the *Florentine Oration*, it appears that Janus Lascaris had two objectives in mind. He aimed, first, at persuading the older and more expert men in his audience to foster Greek culture and to prevent it from becoming obsolete, and, secondly, at exhorting the younger students to take up the study of Greek by advertising its utility.[576] Both parts combine the themes of *laus* and *exhortatio*, and often the qualities praised are presented as reasons to embrace Greek studies, so that we may speak of a *protreptic laudation*.

Although by the middle of the fifteenth century Greek had generally become accepted as part of the humanist curriculum,[577] dissident voices did not vanish. So, for instance, the Dominican friar Giovanni Nanni, better known as Annius of Viterbo, argued against Greek studies in his famous *Antiquitates*, published in print some five years after Lascaris delivered his oration, in 1498.[578] Annius combined his rejection of Greek studies with an extreme form of Italian misohellenism so that his *Antiquitates* have been summarised by one modern commentator as 'one big indictment of the Greeks'.[579] In the work, Annius repeatedly undermined the idea, generally accepted by philhellenes, that Greek culture was at the basis of civilisation. As an alternative to this

[574] See Argyropulus, ed. Müllner (1970) 3-4. The speeches were delivered in 1456 and 1457. In his speech of 1457 he even called the obligatory praise of the subject under study a 'consuetudo inveterata' (Argyropulus, ed. Müllner 1970: 19).

[575] Cf. Klecker (1994) 11, who, in her discussion of Politianus' opening lectures, places such speeches justly in the realm of the 'Prunkreden' in which the teacher not only introduced his theme, but also proved his competence ('eine Probe seines Könnens').

[576] This division of objectives equally structures his speech (the first part running from line 35 until line 241, the second from 242 until 554 with a succinct recapitulation and conclusion following in lines 555 until 627).

[577] Celenza (2009) 157.

[578] In the *Antiquitates*, Annius of Viterbo published and commented upon lost writings and fragments of pre-Christian Greek and Roman authors which he claimed to have rediscovered in Mantua but which were in fact forgeries of his own hand. On his attitude towards Greece see especially Tigerstedt (1964). See also Grafton (1990a, 1990b, 1986: 76-103).

[579] Tigerstedt (1964) 303.

Greek origin myth he developed the theory that literature had flourished in Spain, France and Germany many thousand years before the Greeks,[580] and that the Greeks had derived their 'literature and learning' ('litteras et disciplinas') from the Gauls.[581] Through questioning the authority of ancient Greek authors, and Greek character in general, Annius undermined the foundations of the in his eyes dangerous new learning of humanism in favour of the Roman-Catholic faith.[582]

Speeches such as Lascaris' *Florentine Oration* were, however, not directed against men such as Annius. As they addressed an audience that was for the most part made up of students of Greek, such *praelectiones* were chiefly speeches *pro domo*. If only for this reason, they were in many respects topical and clichéd. On the other hand, there was always some reluctance to embrace Greek studies as it encroached upon the Latins' sense of cultural precedence and self-sufficiency. Perhaps the best example to illustrate the cultural anxiety of the Latins is Scipio Carteromachus' *Oratio* (see also p. 85-86). After demonstrating the *nobilitas* and the *utilitas* of the Greek language, Carteromachus emphasised that he wanted to avoid the impression that he 'as a Latin man among the Latins' would praise something alien to the detriment of something familiar.[583] By the same token, Petrus Bembus in his speech in praise of Greek also urged his Venetian audience not to condemn him as if he 'was treating the Latin language as inferior, while praising Greek and extolling it more than is right for a member of a different nation (ἀλλοφύλῳ ἀνθρώπῳ) and at that in the most beautiful region of Italy that is ours'.[584] Both Carteromachus and Bembus in the end asserted the superiority of 'their own' Latin culture. The remainder of this chapter will show how Janus Lascaris alternatively tried to reduce the cultural anxiety of his Italian students and colleagues *without* losing Greek superiority. Yet to understand Lascaris' highly innovative strategy to achieve this we must first briefly look at how his post-Byzantine colleagues advertised Greek studies in their own inaugural speeches as far as they have come down to us.

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[580] Annius (1498) fol. Iii^{v} (from his commentary on Xenophon *De aequivocis*).

[581] Annius (1498) fol. Sv^{r} (from his commentary on Berosus).

[582] Tigerstedt (1964) 306-309.

[583] Carteromachus (1517) fol. c3^{r}. To legitimise his praise of Greek letters, he then sums up a long list of ancient Latin authorities who benefitted from Greek studies in the past (Carteromachus 1517: fols. c3^{r}-c4^{r}).

[584] Bembus, ed. Wilson (2003) 66. The English translation of the Greek text is Wilson's (67). In the remainder of his speech, Bembus argued that Latin can be far grander and more remarkable than Greek, if Latins would perfect their language with a profound knowledge of Greek. See also Philelfus' emphasis on his Latinity on p. 62 with n. 211.

Mostly, the *laus Graecarum litterarum* revolved around the usefulness of Greek for learning Latin and understanding Latin literature.[585] In his *Oratio de litteris graecis*, for example, Theodore Gaza paid much attention to showing that Greek studies were indeed indispensable for acquiring Latin.[586] He added that those Italian intellectuals who decided 'to recuperate and to bring back to light Latin literature', well understood that this was impossible without knowledge of Greek.[587] 'Whoever neglects Greek literature', Gaza warned, 'will entirely lack this means of help which your ancestors used to draw from the Greek source so as to learn, preserve and amplify their literature'.[588] In support of this, he cited Cicero (calling him 'the prince of *your* language') as an example of someone who 'did not enter the forum before preparing his Latin composition in Athens by means of Attic letters'.[589] In addition to this, he alluded to the civic ideals of his audience, by pointing at the usefulness of Greek studies for fulfilling one's duties as a civilian. Also in this context, he highlighted the restoration of Latin literature. So, for instance, Gaza cited Victorinus Feltrensis whom he called 'the promoter and leader of the restoration of the Latin language'.[590] The same strategy was employed by others. Andronicus Contoblacas, for instance, equally emphasised the utility of Greek studies for understanding Latin in his *Oratio in laudem litterarum graecarum*.[591] Especially in the second redaction of his speech, he cited not a few Roman authorities (Priscian, Horace, Quintilian, Vergil, and Cato) who had all emphasised the use of Greek for the acquisition and amplification of Latin.[592] In this way, both Gaza and Contoblacas

[585] Geanakoplos (1974) 130.

[586] On Gaza' speech see also Papadimitrou (2000).

[587] See esp. paragraphs 4-8 of Gaza' oration in Gaza, ed. Mohler (1942c) 254-256.

[588] Gaza, ed. Mohler (1942c) 255 ll. 4-7: 'Qui enim graecas litteras neglexerit, is eo omni adiumento, quod ad suas litteras addiscendas, conservandas amplificandasque maiores vestri e graeco fonte haurire solebant, omnino carebit'.

[589] Gaza, ed. Mohler (1942c) 255, 14-17: 'Unde M. Tullius, linguae vestrae facilis princeps, non ante ad forum accessisse dicitur, quam Athenis orationem latinam litteris atticis struxisset, seque ad rempublicam gerendam multo ante paravisset'.

[590] Gaza, ed. Mohler (1942c) 256 ll. 17-21: 'Victorinus Feltrensis … nunc non solum propter virtutem beatus, sed *restituendae quoque latinae linguae imprimis adiutor et auctor habetur'*.

[591] See Schmitt (1971) not without Monfasani (1995).

[592] Schmitt (1971) 275-276. Although Contoblacas quoted extensively from Roman literature in his speech, his shaky knowledge of Latin not only appears from his Latin phrasing and syntax, but also from the passages he quoted to make his point. So, for instance, as evidence for Demosthenes' oratorical skills he cited a passage from Juvenal's *Satires* without realising that the point of the passage is that both Demosthenes and Cicero *died* as the result of their oratorical talents (see *Sat.* 10.114-132).

adopted the perspective of the Italian philhellenes on the Greek legacy, arguing that their Italian audience should follow the example of their Roman ancestors to study Greek to the benefit of their knowledge of Latin and Roman history.

Such an emphasis on the utility of Greek studies catered to the intellectual needs and concerns of the Italian humanists. Even so, the gap between 'we' and 'you', 'ours' and 'yours' was not bridged, but rather reified: the Greeks were in the role of teachers, the Latins in the role of students. In order to make this situation acceptable for their Italian audience, Greek professors used other strategies. Theodore Gaza and Andronicus Contoblacas, for example, tried to reconcile the Italians with their inferior position as students of Greeks by pointing out that their ancestors, the Romans, had wholeheartedly recognised their debt to the Greeks of their own time. Apart from this, some Byzantines also suggested more intensive intercultural contacts between their own forebears and the Italians' ancestors. In one of his *Paduan Orations*, for example, Lascaris' predecessor Demetrius Chalcondylas recalled that the Romans used to send their children to Athens, and urged his young audience to imitate their Roman ancestors by embracing Greek studies.[593] Finally, Byzantine scholars pointed at the linguistic affinity (*conformitas et propinquitas*) between Greek and Latin, as the same Chalcondylas did in his first *Paduan Oration*.[594]

As we shall see in the next sections, in Janus Lascaris' speech these elements recur. However, in his speech they are not incidental rhetorical comparisons and parallels, but give substance to his central argument that the Italians and Greeks can be seen as 'one and the same people' at root. They are in other words part of his over-all strategy to connect Byzantine Greeks and Latin Florentines by making Greeks out of Latins. 'If among almost all peoples it is a law that the greatest gratitude is owed to those by whom you are educated', Lascaris claimed,

> 'I would contend that someone of Latin origin will find no other foster fathers, if the Greeks are excluded; after all, the Greek and Latin peoples could be considered to be one and the same, even though the former is older and the Latin younger, because it follows from the Greek. But surely the Greeks seem to have given the ripe fruits of physical and intellectual culture to all people, and certainly to their Latin brothers. Reason alone why they must be welcomed with general benevolence'.[595]

[593] Chalcondylas, ed. Geanakoplos (1976) 303 (with English translation on pp. 263-264).
[594] Chalcondylas, ed. Geanakoplos (1976) 299.
[595] J. Lascaris, ed. Meschini (1983) 91-92 ll. 48-56: 'Si enim apud omnes fere nationes lege sancitum sit, a quibus fueris educatus his a te quam maximum deberi beneficium, quos alios quis Latini

Especially in the first part of the speech, that reads as a *laus Graecorum*, Lascaris tried to bridge the cultural gap with his Florentine audience by pointing at the different crosslinks between the Greek and Latin peoples, their culture, and their language. In the second section, which is a protreptic *laus Graecarum litterarum*, Lascaris conventionally argued in favour of the utility of learning Greek. In order to demonstrate its usefulness, he dwelt on the familiar ideas that all disciplines derive from Greek authors, that without knowledge of Greek one cannot properly learn Latin, and that Greek literature is ultimately superior to Latin.[596] In this part of the speech, the Latin derivation of Greek was most important.[597] Because Lascaris had so radically reframed the relation between the Italians and Byzantines in the first part of his oration, his idea of the instrumentality of Greek – and in particular the traditional argument of the linguistic dependency of Latin on Greek – gains new significance.

Ethnic ties and shared culture: The Greek roots of the Latins

In his letter to Jacopo d'Angelo da Scarperia Manuel Kalekas had hinted at the idea that Florentines and Byzantines were related because they shared their Greek origin. The implications of this idea were worked out by Janus Lascaris. At the beginning of his speech, Lascaris sketched for his Italian audience the long and continuous tradition of Greek dissemination of learning and civilisation. In this, he represented the Greeks as an elected people that had received their gifts from God, developed them further, and then transmitted them to the rest of the world. They moreover did so 'without envy, as they did not fear that they would make other people their equals, but rather that they would outclass the others less in humanity and kindness than in genius…'.[598] This Greek

nominis particeps, Graecis postpositis, alimentorum sibi ducat exhibitores haud quaquam inventurum contenderim, praesertim cum Graecum et id ipsum Latinum genus unum et idem existimari possit – illud quidem antiquius, Latinum, quod sit ab illo, recentius –, Graeci autem animi corporisque mitia alimenta omnibus hominibus, nedum Latinis suis, exhibuisse videantur, pro qua vel sola re sunt omnium benevolentia prosequendi'.

[596] J. Lascaris, ed. Meschini (1983) 99-110 ll. 242-261 (disciplines) ll. 262-335 (language) and ll. 336-540 (literature).

[597] J. Lascaris, ed. Meschini (1983) 102 l. 336.

[598] J. Lascaris, ed. Meschini (1983) 92 ll. 66-75: 'Nec vero in quo primum natura indiguit divinitus accepto tam benignos se exhibuerunt, in reliquis autem, quae ingenio proprio et industria investigavere, dissimiles. Cum enim palantes homines collegerint, leges posuerint, civilitatem constituerint, disciplinas, artes omnes, quae ad vitae necessitatem spectant, quae voluptati inserviunt, aut invenerint aut inventas excoluerint et perfectiores reddiderint, omnibus hominibus sine invidia tradiderunt, utpote non metuerent, ne reliquos homines sibi aequales

cultural myth from the very start framed the relations between the Greeks and other peoples. It framed the Greeks as the benefactors, while the others benefitted. It is obvious that this division of roles sat uneasily with Latin claims to cultural precedence, as it was for example expressed by Andreas Brentius and Laurentius Valla (see chapter 2, pp. 82-83 and pp. 92-93). In his crusade speech at the court of Charles V, Lascaris stressed that all European nations were indebted to the ancient Greeks (see chapter 3, pp. 120-122). In his *Florentine Oration*, however, he argued that the Italians had a close relationship of ethnic and cultural similarity with the ancient Hellenes, just as the Byzantine Greeks. In the first half-hour of his speech, Janus Lascaris thoroughly Hellenised the Latins, from their earliest origins in the first Greek migrant peoples to their attempts to preserve their Greekness in Rome. Going far beyond the idea of intercultural contact of Greeks and Latins in the remote past, Lascaris connected both peoples by demonstrating their ancient ethnic kinship-relation and showed how they could bear upon contemporary relations between Italians and Byzantine Greeks. In order to reduce the Italians' anxiety about embracing Greek studies, Lascaris moreover showed how their Roman ancestors had achieved 'to merge totally' with the Greeks, to reuse the wording of Chrysoloras. In this way, then, he implicitly responded to Latin claims of superiority by reminding his audience that the Greeks had been first, while he at the same time recalled the Latins' close familiarity with them.

Just as all the other parts of the world the Italian peninsula had benefitted from the presence of Greek colonisers.[599] Lascaris recalled the eighty cities of Greeks founded by Pythagoras, as Porphyrius claimed.[600] Also, he referred to the colonies of the Pelasgians, the Cretans on the Italian peninsula, as well as to those of the Thessalians, and evoked how the Achaeans had settled on Roman shores after the Trojan war.[601] Yet Lascaris also established the *ethnic* kinship of Latins and Greeks in terms of origin and descent.

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redderent, sed ne minus humanitate et liberalitate quam ingenio ceteros anteirent...' *[The Greeks did not only act benignly with respect to the things which they had originally lacked and received from God, but operated similarly with respect to the other things which they had invented with their own genius and labour. After they had brought together the people who were wandering, posed laws, established civilised life, and after they had either invented or cherished and made more perfect all disciplines and arts that pertain to life's necessity, that serve man's pleasure, they transmitted them to all people without envy, as they did not fear that they would make other people their equals, but rather that they would outclass the others less in humanity and kindness than in genius…]*

[599] J. Lascaris, ed. Meschini (1983) 94 ll. 117-125.

[600] Cf. Porph. *VP* 20-21.

[601] Cf. Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.13.2 (Pelasgians and Cretans), Str. 5.2.3 (Thessalians), Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 2.49.4-5; Plut. *Rom.* 26-27 (Lacedaemonians), Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.9.2 (Achaeans).

Rephrasing Dionysius of Halicarnassus (his major source in these lines) he claimed that the Sabines (whom Lascaris apparently sees as Latins) were proud to be the descendants of the Spartans. The Aborigines (together with the Trojans often seen as a progenitorial tribe of the Latins) were Greeks from the mountains of Lyaconia in Asia Minor.[602] The Trojans and their princes, whom Lascaris called 'founders of the Romans' ('Romanorum conditores'), equally were Greeks 'by descent' ('genere').[603] Finally, the Oenotrians, whom Dionysius of Halicarnassus saw as the ancestors of the Aborigines, are also referred to as a Greek people, stemming from Arcadia.[604] On the basis of Pausanias, Lascaris added to this that it was in the memory of the Arcadian Evander (who brought the Greek pantheon, laws, and alphabet to Italy) that emperor Pius Antoninus turned Pallantium in Arcadia from a village into a city and gave its inhabitants both liberty and freedom of taxation.[605] Lascaris' treatment of Evander is illustrative of how he treated the prehistoric ancestors of his addressees. He particularly evoked the Greek origin of eponymous protagonists of the earliest history of the Italian peninsula. So, for instance, he recalled that Tyrrhenus, 'your name-giver, the origin of your excellence', descended from Heracles.[606] Also the name-givers Italus and Oenotrus were Greeks.[607] Quoting four lines from Hesiod to illustrate this point further, Lascaris stated that they were brothers:

> 'κούρη δ' ἐν μεγάροισιν ἀγαυοῦ Δευκαλίωνος
> Πανδώρη Διὶ πατρί, θεῶν σημάντορι πάντων,
> μιχθεῖσ' ἐν φιλότητι τέκε Γραῖκον μενεχάρμην
> καὶ Γραῖκος τὸν ἀδελφὸν ἐς ἄγριον εἶδὲ Λατῖνον'.[608]

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[602] J. Lascaris, ed. Meschini (1983) 94 ll. 124-126 with Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.9.2, 1.11.1-2, 1.13.2-3.
[603] J. Lascaris, ed. Meschini (1983) 96 ll. 153-155.
[604] J. Lascaris, ed. Meschini (1983) 95 l. 126 with Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.13.2, 2.1.2.
[605] J. Lascaris, ed. Meschini (1983) 95 ll. 127-130 with Paus. 8.43.1.
[606] J. Lascaris, ed. Meschini (1983) 94 ll. 123-124: '… Tyrrhenus vestri nominis auctor, vestrae nobilitatis initium, Herculis egregia et clara progenies'.
[607] J. Lascaris, ed. Meschini (1983) 95 ll. 141-142. Cf. Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.11.
[608] Cf. J. Lascaris, ed. Meschini (1983) 95, *apparatus* ad ll. 144-147. Curiously, the fourth verse occurs only here in Lascaris' text and in a codex in Madrid, once in the possession of Constantine Lascaris. Reference is to BNE, Cod. Matr. 4607 on which see Martínez Manzano (1998) 78 with n. 5 for references. Cf. Galán Vioque 2006: 42. The passage cited by Lascaris seems to be an intentional contamination of Hes. *Fr.* 4 (= *Fr.* 2 in the more recent edition of Most) and an adaptation of Hes. *Theog.* 1013 ('ἄγριον ἠδὲ Λατῖνον'). Note that both passages are cited in close association in Lydus *Mens.* 1.13. The insertion is obviously very convenient to Lascaris. Although we cannot tell whether or not the Byzantine scholar was behind it, it surely recalls the 'Athenian

And a maiden in the halls of illustrious Deucalion, Pandora, who with Zeus the father, the commander of all the gods, having mingled in love, bore Graikos who delighted in remaining standfast in battle, and Graikos gazed upon his wild brother Latinos.[609]

In this way, then, Lascaris transformed all the major pre-Roman tribes of the Italian peninsula together with their eponymous heroes – the Sabines, the Aborigines, the Oenotrians, and the Trojans – into Greeks who had not become Greek through a process of cultural Hellenisation, but were Greek originally by direct descent from Greek tribes. As Lascaris thus demonstrated how the traditional progenitors of the Romans were of Greek extraction, there was no need to demonstrate separately in any detail the ethnic kinship of Greek and Romans whose descendants the Florentines claimed to be. 'The first beginnings of the Romans stem from the heart of Greece', Lascaris boldly claimed.[610] Ethnic kinship thus united Greeks and Latins in the same ancient past.

It is important to not that Lascaris construed these kinship relations between Greeks and Romans as incentives for political choices. He claimed, for example, that the Athenians had sent auxiliaries to the Romans during their war with their neighbours because of their kinship ('cognatio', ll. 130-132). On the basis of the kinship between Greeks and Romans ('consanguinitas', l. 132), Alexander and Demetrius Poliorcetes had released pirates from Ostia, warning the Romans not to fall away from their ancestors (ll. 132-135).[611] The political use of kinship relations adds an important dimension to the argument of cultural debt. The Italians must favour the Byzantines not only 'because of their dead' – just as Caesar spared the Athenians – but also because of their own kinship relation with them. Lascaris claimed that his audience had sons, brothers, but eventually

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interpolations' in the Homeric epics (e.g. in the Catalogue where the Athenian Menestheus is worked into the narrative in *Il.* 2.522).

[609] The translation of the first three lines is after Most (2007) 45.

[610] J. Lascaris, ed. Meschini (1983) 96 ll. 157-158: 'E media Graecia sunt Romanorum primordia'.

[611] As Lascaris' source Strabo (5.3.5) recounts the story, it seems that Demetrius and not Alexander warned the Romans that even though he released the pirates due to kinship ('συγγένεια'), he 'did not deem it right for men to be sending out bands of pirates at the same time that they were in command of Italy, or to build in their Forum a temple in honour of the Dioscuri (…) and yet at the same time send to Hellas people who would plunder the native land of the Dioscuri' (translation after H.L. Jones). We find Lascaris' version of the story also in other contemporary early modern sources such as in Flavius Blondus' discussion of the city of Anzio in his *Italia illuminata*. See Blondus, ed. and trans. White (2005) 124 ll. 5-10 (§3.5 with explicit reference to Strabo). The identity of Alexander (either Alexander the Great or Alexander of Epirus) is disputed on which see Stefan Radt's commentary to Strabo (vol. 6, 71).

also parents in Greece.[612] In the *Oratio*, the study and preservation of Greek literature is not just a question of solving debts to the most legitimate heirs of a benefactor, but has become one of helping brothers and parents. This is a very different kind of cultural discourse than the more technical creditor-debtor rhetoric in the *Madrilenian Oration*. Whereas also in that speech Lascaris framed the relation between cultural creditors and debtors as one between parents and children, the elaborate ethnic connotation of his *Florentine Oration* is absent in that speech.

Apart from ethnic ties of *consanguinitas* cultural preservation or imitation could account for the close cultural relationship of *koinonia* between ancient Greeks and Latins. Whereas Dionysius of Halicarnassus served as the main source to demonstrate the prehistoric ethnic link between Latins and Greeks, Plutarch is Lascaris' main model to demonstrate that the Greeks and Latins remained closely related, even centuries after the first Greek colonisers had set foot on Italian sole, to begin with Oenotrus. According to Lascaris, it was on the basis of a Greek education, and on the basis of Greek examples, that the protagonists of Roman history achieved their successes, from Romulus to Augustus, so roughly from the founding of the city of Rome until the end of the Roman Republic and the beginning of the Principate.[613] For example, Lascaris recalled that Polybius had educated Cornelius Scipio, while 'Athenagoras' (read Athenodorus) had trained Augustus. Lascaris referred to the cultural transfer in terms of imitation (*imitari*).[614] Yet he also rhetorically claimed that not imitation (*imitatio*), but only the transmigration (*transmigratio*) of Greek souls into Roman bodies could explain the striking parallels between Greeks and Romans in the ancient past – and he jokingly added that here Pythagoreans might find proof for their thesis of the transmigration of souls ('μετεμψύχωσις').[615]

In this way, Lascaris created both ethnic and cultural common ground between the Greeks and Romans of antiquity and between the Byzantines and Italians of the present. At the same time, there were undeniable differences between both peoples. Perhaps the

[612] J. Lascaris, ed. Meschini (1983) 96 ll. 152-153: 'Idem et filii et fratres et prostremo parentes in Graecia'.

[613] J. Lascaris, ed. Meschini (1983) 97-98 ll. 186-219.

[614] Cf. J. Lascaris, ed. Meschini (1983) 97 ll. 186, 200; 98 l. 203.

[615] J. Lascaris, ed. Meschini (1983) 98 ll. 219-225. Perhaps, Lascaris' comment on the transmigration of souls was not only intended jokingly as the Pythagorean thesis had been a point of vehement discussion regarding the philosophy of Plethon (Harris 1995b: 129). As we have seen in chapter 2, Lascaris also applied the same strategy to an individual Italian humanist. Cf. Legrand (1885) 174-178 (the poem is on p. 175, see esp. ll. 10-12).

clearest marker of difference between them was their distinct languages, Greek and Latin. At the same time, there was a widespread belief that Latin had its origin in Greek. This fitted in very well with Lascaris' argument of ethnic and cultural kinship. Before showing that Lascaris used the linguistic differences between Greek and Latin also to highlight Greek superiority, the next few pages will first demonstrate how he adapted the idea that Latin had originated in Greek to his own agenda in the *Oratio*, i.e. to show the close relationship of the Greeks and the Latins.

Etymology and the limits of imitation

'In my opinion you will not only find back all branches of knowledge through the Greek authors, but also your own language (*lingua ipsa tua*)', Lascaris claimed, when he tried to win over the Florentine youth to Greek studies in the second part of his speech.[616] In the ancient sources, the idea that the Romans had also spoken Greek was ubiquitous, and we find it from Cato's *Origines* to Lydus' *De magistratibus*.[617] The Romans had generally accepted the idea that their language derived from the Aeolic dialect since it enabled them to associate their culture with the much admired civilisation of the Greeks.[618] It circulated in the Greek East too. It echoes, for instance, in the grammatical tract of Choeroboscus which was much used by Byzantine scholars and later also by Italian humanists.[619] Despite the wide circulation of the idea, however, the notion that Latin had originated in Greek remained almost completely undertheorised in ancient, medieval and early modern linguistic thought. Hellenising etymologies were used for literary, rhetorical, didactic or philosophical purposes, but generally not as evidence for a clear-cut genetic relation between Greek and Latin. Lascaris' Florentine speech presents a notable exception.

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[616] J. Lascaris, ed. Meschini (1983) 100 ll. 262-263: 'Ac meo consilio non solum disciplinas a Graecis auctoribus repetes, sed et linguam ipsam tuam…'.

[617] Lydus (*Mag.* 1.5) mentioned Varro and Cato among the authorities for the idea that Romulus and his contemporaries were very well acquainted with Greek – and especially Aeolic Greek – since Evander and the Arcadians had brought it to the Italian peninsula (cf. Cato *Orig.* fr. 19 and Varro *L.* fr. 45).

[618] Van Hal (2010) 38 with Schöpsdau (1992).

[619] Choeroboscus, ed. Hilgard (1889) 134 ll. 11-13: 'ἰδοὺ γὰρ οἱ Αἰολεῖς οὐκ ἔχουσι δυϊκά, ὅθεν οὐδὲ οἱ Ῥωμαῖοι ἄποικοι ὄντες τῶν Αἰολέων κέχρηνται τῷ δυϊκῷ ἀριθμῷ' [*Note that the Aeolians do not have a dual, for which reason the Romans, being colonists of the Aeolians, do not have the dual number neither*].

Although Italian humanists held the Latin language at the centre of their sense of *romanitas*,[620] they generally believed that the Latin language had its origin in Greek.[621] This insight underpinned their belief that learning Greek was instrumental to acquiring Latin. Lascaris was well aware of this and used the idea for his own purposes. In the light of his larger argument of ethnic kinship, the topic gained entirely new significance. 'The Latin language is Greek, as they say', Lascaris claimed. '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 marble with Greek words and letters may stand as evidence to this, but a better indication is the matter itself'.[622] Like the notion that Latin stemmed from Greek, Lascaris probably found the idea of linguistic kinship in Dionysius of Halicarnassus who asserted that the Romans had spoken a language that was a mixture of barbarian and Greek, chiefly Aeolic.[623]

The best way to show the proximity of Latin and Greek through 'the matter itself' was by means of etymology. In the early modern period, the precedence of one language over the other was generally demonstrated by showing that characteristics peculiar to the presupposedly more ancient language were present in the other, supposedly newer language.[624] Lascaris followed this method. In order to reveal the Greekness of Latin he traced 53 individual Latin words to Greek roots according to 15 etymological rules of language change that had to account for the transformation of Greek words into Latin ones. In addition to such obvious loanwords as Latin 'theologia' from 'θεολογία', he also cited less obvious examples such as 'fides' from 'εἴδω' and 'madidus' from 'μυδαλέος'.[625]

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[620] Pade (2012).

[621] Tavoni (1986).

[622] Lascaris, Meschini (1983) 100 ll. 267-270: '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 aes et in marmore Graecis et verbis et litteris incidebant, sed maius indicium res ipsa'. It is good to realise that Lascaris' remark about Greek inscriptions was not some imprecise topos, but rather the product of his pioneering interest in epigraphy. On Lascaris' epigraphical investigations see in most detail Pontani (1992a).

[623] Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.90.1.

[624] Dubois (1970) 84-85.

[625] For an overview of Lascaris' sample see Appendix 1 on pp. 253-260. For a concise discussion see Meschini (1983) 78-79. See Tavoni (1986) esp. 218-219 (on the etymologies in Lascaris' speech). A more systematic exploration of the Byzantine language sciences remains a desideratum. A first organised attempt into this direction is Robins (1993) but this study is confined to grammaticography.

Lascaris' rules of derivation were basically variations of the classical etymological rules of suppletion, elimination or permutation of letters.[626] Still, his Hellenising etymologies for Latin words cannot be traced to one single source. Without entering into polemics with Latin authorities, Lascaris often tacitly disagreed with the older Latin grammarians as they had usually traced the origin of Latin words to other Latin words. So, for instance, he dismissed the derivation of Latin 'forma' (form) from the verb 'informare' (to shape, inform).[627] By the same token, he dismissed the derivation of Latin 'lac' (milk) from 'liquor' (liquid).[628] In both cases, Lascaris argued that the Latin had evolved from a Greek word through 'anagrammatism', i.e. the transposition of letters with or without further alterations (such as the replacement of Greek word endings by Latin ones). According to Lascaris, 'lac' had evolved from Greek 'γάλα' (milk), while 'forma' stemmed from 'μορφή' (form).

Even if older grammarians had actually traced Latin words to Greek roots, Lascaris more than once disagreed with their analyses. He was, for example, at odds with Isidore of Seville's interpretation of the origin of Latin 'malus' (bad), which the Spanish lexicographer had related to 'black bile which the Greeks called μέλαν'.[629] Instead, Lascaris etymologically 'unfolded' the Latin word into the Greek combination 'μὴ ὅλος' ('not complete') and called this 'etymology with crasis'. Etymology disclosed the true meaning of the Latin word by unfolding it in two separate Greek words that formed a semantic unit 'prefiguring' the meaning of 'malus'. The underlying idea was that something that was 'μὴ ὅλον' amounted to something 'malum'. The 'crasis' then accounted for the phonetic change of the Greek words 'μὴ ὅλος' towards the Latin 'malus' (via a contraction like *'μῆλος').

Lascaris adduced etymological principles (such as anagrammatism) from various sources, including Byzantine commentaries by John Tzetzes and Eustathius. He used these principles in an innovative way. While ancient and medieval etymology had mainly been restricted to Latin or Greek, Lascaris used it to account for the relationship between the two languages. In his explanations of the way in which Greek had developed into Latin, he was decidedly original and in fact produced an exceptionally

[626] Cf. Copeland & Sluiter (2009) 339-340.
[627] The idea is found, e.g., in an anonymous commentary on Donatus, perhaps by Remigius of Auxerre (see Anonymus, ed. Hagen 1870: 251 ll. 18-19).
[628] Cassiod. *Ps.* 118.70 l. 1193 A.
[629] Isid. *Etym.* 10.176.

early attempt to account for the genetic relation between Greek and Latin from a more or less linguistic perspective.

In his elaborate etymological exposé, Lascaris steered away from the Aeolic theory that he knew from most of his ancient sources.[630] He explicitly adduced examples from the Doric dialect to show the close resemblances of Latin to Greek. 'You almost integrally transferred (*transtulisti*) the Doric dialect', he claimed, 'as is shown by words like νύμφα: nympha, φάμα: fama, κόμα: coma, μᾶλα: mala, and similar examples'.[631] Possibly, he had the Dorian connection of Rome in mind here, but we have no evidence that he adhered to the idea, expressed by Plethon, that the Dorians were among the first colonisers of Rome (see chapter 1, pp. 44-45). Generally, Lascaris broadened the notion of cross-linguistic impact of Greek on Latin from the Aeolic dialect to the other dialects of ancient Greek.[632] In this way, he created the impression that Latin had simply derived from Greek and not from one dialect in particular.

Lascaris' etymologies silently support his wider argument that the Latin people had Greek roots. As the ancestors of the Romans came to the Italian peninsula from Greece, it was only to be expected that they imported their language there.[633] However, the transfer of the Greek language also entailed the danger of language change and, in a purist's eyes, degeneration. While Lascaris asserted that the early Romans had spoken Greek ('Latina lingua Graeca est'), he added as in one breath that Latin was not an integral form of Greek due to the 'vicinity of the barbarians'.[634] Although the Latin

[630] Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.90.1. Cf. Meschini (1983) 77-78; Tavoni (1986) 218-219.

[631] J. Lascaris, ed. Meschini (1983) 100 ll. 275-276: 'Doricam vero integram transtulistis ut νύμφα: nympha, φάμα: fama, κόμα: coma, μᾶλα: mala et similia'. Lascaris categorised these words as Doric because of their long –α instead of Ionic and Attic –η. Historically, the long –α is shared by all dialects except for Ionic and Attic. This opens the broader question of how Renaissance humanists conceived of the dialectical diversity in ancient Greek, and on the basis of what criteria they distinguished between one dialect and the other. There is no self-standing examination of this problem, yet Raf Van Rooy is planning a research project on the topic for the Centre for the Historiography of Linguistics at the KU Leuven (to be supervised by Pierre Swiggers and Toon Van Hal).

[632] J. Lascaris, ed. Meschini (1983) 100 ll. 275-276.

[633] Also in his epigrams, Lascaris played on the ancient similarities between ancient Greek and Latin. See Lascaris, ed. Tussanus (1527) fol. cii^{v}: 'Combibia ut Graii primum, convivia deinde | Dixistis, Cicero, iudice te melius. | Ac si nulla virum vita, non ulla uoluptas | Sit, nisi quando epulis combibiisque vacent'. The text is identical to Lascaris, ed. Tussanus (1544) fol. 117^{r}.

[634] Lascaris, ed Meschini (1983) 100 ll. 267-270: 'Nam, ut dictum est, lingua Latina Graeca est. Graeca enim veteres Romani utebantur, propter vicinitatem tamen barbarorum non adeo integra'.

language indicated the close relationship of Greeks and Romans, it also marked an important difference between them. Contact with speakers of other languages (from the Greek viewpoint barbarians by definition) had troubled the Romans' imitation of the Greek language.[635]

For Lascaris, the conservation of language was apparently considerably more precarious than the imitation of ancient Greek examples in military and political pursuits. Such limits to cultural preservation and linguistic imitation colour Lascaris' over-all view of Roman culture to which I will come back in the final section of this part of the chapter. Lascaris used them as a means to maintain the cultural superiority of the Greeks despite their close relationship with the Latins. Before coming back to the way Lascaris emphasised the differences between Greeks and Latins, I will first relate his use of the ancient Greek past in the *Oratio* to the self-representational concerns of his Florentine and Latin audience.

The importance of being ancient

Just as all other Italian communities, so also Lascaris' Florentine audience was preoccupied with the construction of an ancient and honourable past. This quest for antiquity, that gave substance to claims of cultural and political precedence, and was often fuelled by competition with other city states, is an important feature of early modern communities in general (either city states, national groups, or dynasties).[636] Needless to say, the knowledge of the ancient world which the humanists claimed as their specific expertise catered to this concern for antiquity and the quest for cultural and political precedence. Humanists were conscious of the utility of their historical and literary expertise to their patrons. In his famous letter about the Roman origin of Florence, for example, Politianus proudly claimed that through his energies and efforts he had appropriately shown that the subjects of Piero De'Medici were of honourable Roman descent.[637]

By the time Lascaris delivered his oration, the Florentines had experimented with various models to shape their ancient past. In these models, the Trojans, Etruscans, and

[635] In the same way, in his treatise on the Greek alphabet, Lascaris explained that the letters of the Greeks had been deformed by the injuries of time just as the Roman characters had become disfigured due to contact with other 'nationes' (Lascaris, ed. Pontani 1992: 201-202 ll. 61-90).
[636] On the importance of the rivalry between Florence and Milan for the self-presentation of both city states with particular attention to the important contributions of Petrus Candidus Decembrius and Leonardus Brunus see Lentzen (2010) 75-90.
[637] See the second letter of the first book in Politianus, ed. Butler (2006).

Romans all had played a role.[638] Without going into details we may just note here that, by 1493, Florence was generally understood as a Roman colony on Etruscan foundations. The Trojan origin myth of Florence, popular in the Middle Ages, had been substituted by a Roman one. Also, the idea that Florence had been founded by Caesar had been successfully replaced by the idea that Florence originally was a colony of veterans of Sulla who had left Faesulae to settle on the banks of the Arno so that Ugolinus Verinus, for example, could refer to the Florentines as 'syllana gens' in his *De illustratione urbis Florentinae* (1483).[639] A republican origin myth was obviously more consistent with the republican façade, and the image of freedom-loving people, that the Florentine elite wanted to promote. But as the political influence of De'Medici grew, and grew more openly, the republican symbolism ingrained in the Sullan founding myth of Florence became increasingly less appropriate. In his famous letter to Piero De'Medici, Politianus eventually adapted the Roman founding myth of Florence, and argued that the city was not a colony of Sulla's veterans, but dated back to the second Triumvirate. In this way, he introduced a founding myth capable of accommodating less republican forms of government.[640]

But if the Florentines were proud of their Roman roots, they had not forgotten where Florence was situated: in Tuscany, the land of the ancient Etruscans, or Tyrrhenians, who had cultivated the fertile area even before the arrival of the Romans. The idea of Florence as a Roman colony on Etruscan foundation had been promoted mainly in the first book of the *Historiarum florentini populi libri XII*, composed in parts between 1404 and 1442 by the influential Florentine chancellor Leonardus Brunus, and an obligatory read for every Florentine patrician.[641] Brunus, a leading proponent of 'civic

[638] A concise discussion of the Roman origin of Florence (and the role of translations of Plutarch in it) is in Pade (2007) 1: 105-113. On the role of the Roman past in civic identities in northern Italy in the period before the Renaissance properly speaking (1250-1350) see, most recently, Beneš (2011). On the so-called 'Etruscan myth' see the still valuable work of Cipriani (1980) together with Schoonhoven (2010) who argues that not Giovanni Villani (as Cipriani argued) but Giovanni Boccaccio first introduced the Etruscan myth in Florentine discourse.

[639] Cf. Cipriani (1980) 24-25.

[640] On Politianus' views on the origin of Florence and its principal source see particularly Rubinstein (1957).

[641] Brunus' *History of the Florentine People* was regarded and acknowledged as an official Florentine history; it was printed in an Italian translation by Donatus Acciaiolus together with Poggius Bracciolini's continuation of its narrative in Venice in 1476. Cf. Brunus, ed. Hankins (2001) XI. Brunus narrative about the Roman origin of Rome was recalled, for instance, in the

humanism' in Florence,[642] particularly stressed the republican origins of Rome, but also highlighted the Roman-Etruscan duality of the Florentine community, and represented the Roman founders of Florence as dignified successors of the Etruscans despite the military and political strife between Romans and Etruscans in the ancient past.[643]

We cannot know in what detail Lascaris was conscious of past and present debates over the origins of the Florentine people. Yet in his *Florentine Oration*, he touched upon significant elements of the complex image the Florentines had created for themselves in the century or so preceding his appointment as professor of Greek in the city. As we have seen, he touched upon pre-Roman times, and mentioned the Aborigines and the Trojans, who all had their own place on the cultural and ethnic map of the Italian peninsula. One of these pre-Roman peoples, or rather their eponymous king, Tyrrhenus, was specifically singled out as 'vestri nominis auctor, vestrae nobilitatis initium' (*your name-giver, the origin of your excellence*). Just as Leonardus Brunus had identified Tyrrhenus' people with the Etruscans, and had represented Etruscan civilisation as the political, military, and cultural mother of Rome, so Janus Lascaris here tactically played on the Etruscan background of the Florentines. As such, he accepted the story that had been refuted by his main source in this part of his speech, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, namely the story that Tyrrhenus, the son of Heracles and the Lydian Omphale, came to Italy, and chased the Pelasgians from their homes.[644]

But even though Lascaris alluded to the pre-Roman Etruscan roots of the Florentines as Tuscans, Rome is more emphatically present. Thus, he mentioned many Romans among the ancient forebears of the Florentines. His selection of names is very

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influential *Italia illuminata* by Blondus Flavius. See Blondus, ed. White (2005) 69 (§2.26). It was anticipated by Salutati on which see Ullman (1963) 75.

[642] Brunus was a 'civic humanist' in that he was a leading figure in 'the literary and educational reform movement directed at the political classes of the Italian city states' whose aim it was to improve not so much the institutions of government as the morality of leaders (see Hankins in Brunus, ed. Hankins 2006: IX).

[643] On the interrelation of Romans and Etruscans see Brunus, ed. Hankins (2006) 24-27 (§1.19-20). Note that in Brunus' account, the Etruscans are always regarded as respectable opponents, and that their final defeat was attributed to anything but their lack of courage and military skill (the presence of the Gauls, internal discord, or adverse Fate). Cf. Brunus, ed. Hankins (2006) 44-47 (§1.34). Like the Roman model, also the Etruscan myth was adaptable to the changing political climate in the second half of the Quattrocento so that the monarchical figure of Porsenna grew in popularity in the course of the fifteenth century. See Cipriani (1980) 23-36.

[644] Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.25-30. Lascaris' version is also the story told in Brunus, ed. Hankins (2006) 18-21 (§1.13). There were many other stories about Tyrrhenus circulating in Antiquity. Cf. Luciana Aigner-Foresti's useful overview article on 'Tyrrhenus' in *NP*.

inclusive, covering all phases of Roman history from its foundation by Romulus until the establishment of the Principate by Augustus. Lascaris tactically glossed over the question of whether the Florentines were the most rightful heirs to either republican or imperial Rome, but accepted and promoted the basic idea that the Florentines had descended from the Romans (therefore, he explicitly called Florence a 'Romanorum colonia', a *colony of the Romans*). His emphasis on the Greek roots of everything Trojan, Etruscan, Latin, or Roman seems to have been a novelty in Florence. In his Florentine history, for example, Brunus only recalled that Pisa's oldest origins were not native, but Greek – but he did not attach particular value to the fact.[645] In this way, Lascaris both corroborated and enriched the mnemonic tissue of the Florentine community.

Although Lascaris stressed the Greek roots of the pre-Roman peoples of Italy and the Romans themselves, he was tacit about how the different pre-Roman peoples he heaped up in his speech must be seen to relate to each other and to the Romans. As a consequence, the *genus Latinum* itself is an exceptionally inclusive and undifferentiated whole, comprising pre-Latin ancestors such as the foundational Etruscans, the Latins (traditionally seen as the union of Aborigines with Aeneas' Trojans), the Romans, and finally also the Florentines.[646] For Lascaris, what really mattered was that all these peoples were related to the ancient Greeks. Therefore, he readily manipulated his sources so as to demonstrate the Greek origin of Latin culture. For example, he tacitly repressed different versions of the origins of the Sabines in favour of the version told in Dionysius of Halicarnassus.[647] Apart from the Spartan thesis, three other competing theories regarding the origin of the Sabine people circulated in Antiquity, but they go unmentioned.[648] Lascaris did on the other hand not hesitate to disagree with his main authority, if it bolstered his central argument. As we have seen, his representation of Tyrrhenus, for example, followed a version Dionysius of Halicarnassus had refuted.

In this way, Janus Lascaris avoided being too outspoken on anything except the Greek origin of everything. This means that he did not present a coherent narrative of ethnic and cultural change from the Etruscans and Latins through the Romans to his own day as we find it, for instance, in Brunus. Rather he paraded resounding ancient names he must have recognised as somehow relevant to the sense of identity of his Florentine audience without going into much details about how these names must be

[645] Brunus, ed. Hankins (2006) 98-99 (1.78).
[646] On the traditional definition of the Latins see Gabriella Poma's article 'Latini' in *NP*.
[647] Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 2.49.4f.
[648] Cf. Gabriella Vanotti's article 'Sabini' in *NP*.

seen together. In so doing, he on the one hand tactically avoided the ongoing debates over the origin of Florence, but on the other touched upon all relevant founding peoples, making his Hellenisation of Florence as inclusive as possible. Lascaris could of course not foretell that five years after delivering his speech the misohellenist Annius of Viterbo would play havoc with the Greek roots of the Florentines. In his forgery of Myrsilus' *De origine Italiae et Turrenorum*, Annius traced the history of the Etruscan people back to the time of the Deluge, exalted the role they had played in the history of the Italian peninsula, and so fuelled Florentine pride without recourse to foreign Greek roots.[649]

On one point, however, Lascaris did not avoid disagreement or even polemics. This concerns the etymology of the very name of Florence, 'Florentia'. At the end of the first part of his oration, Lascaris once more exhorted the assembled listeners to promote Greek studies, so that later generations would not deride them for their ungratefulness. 'Especially you', Lascaris addressed the Florentines, 'seem to have approached antiquity closer than the other city states of Italy regarding your descent, language, and culture to such a degree, that you can easily discern a colony of the Romans [in Florence], if you take into account, among other things, the very name of your city, as it is in my opinion not so much derived from the river as it is from the sacred name of the City'.[650] With his last remark on the etymology of the name of Florence, Lascaris directly took up a problem also addressed by Politianus in his letter to Piero De'Medici.[651] Politianus had argued that Florence was called 'Florentia' after the sacred name of the city of Rome, 'Flora', but that the ancient inhabitants of the banks of the *flowing* Arno had accordingly

[649] Cf. Cipriani (1980) 33-36.

[650] J. Lascaris, ed. Meschini (1983) 99 ll. 236-241: '… et vos praecipue, viri Florentini, quanto et genere et lingua et civilitate prae caeteris Italiae civitatibus ad antiquitatem videmini propius accessisse, ut Romanorum coloniam facile possis dignoscere, si, praeter alia, vel nomen ipsum civitatis adverteris, quando non magis a fluvio quam a sacro urbis nomine contenderim esse denominatam'.

[651] Meschini (1983) 86 suggests that Politianus argued either in favour of the 'Flora'-etymology, or of the 'Fluentini'-etymology, but this is not the case. In fact, Politianus adduced the 'Fluentini'-etymology as an additional explanation for the fact that in some of his sources the Florentines appear as 'Fluentini'. Cf. Politianus, ed. Butler (2006) 11. See also Brunus, ed. Hankins (2006) 10-11 (1.3) who claims that 'Fluentia' was established by the veterans of Sulla leaving Faesulae, and that the name later changed into 'Florentia' ('sive corrupto ut in plerisque vocabulo sive quod miro floreret successu, pro Fluentia Florentiam dicere', *perhaps just through the ordinary process by which words are corrupted, or perhaps because of the wonderfully successful flowering of the city,* Fluentia *became* Florentia).

been called 'Fluentini'.[652] Lascaris took the opportunity to disagree with his Italian rival by completely rejecting the 'Fluentini'-etymology, preferring the idea that 'Florentia' stemmed from 'Flora'. In this way, he flattered the Florentines once more by stressing their close connection with ancient Rome.[653] Significantly, the 'Flora'-etymology enabled Lascaris to connect Florence, tacitly, both to that other New Rome sometimes called 'Anthousa' in Greek, 'Florentia' in Latin: Constantinople,[654] and to the city of Athens whose name, according to some, was not derived from that of Pallas Athena, but from 'anthos', 'flora', flower.[655] In the very name of Florence, then, Rome and Greece intimately coexisted. Against the background of Florentine preoccupations with Roman roots, Janus Lascaris' alternative exhortation to Greek studies gives substance to the idea that Byzantine scholars skilfully manipulated the deepest concerns of their Italian audience.[656]

Greek Romans – or how Greek is Greek?

The previous sections explored those aspects of Lascaris' speech that showed that the Greeks were not an *alienum genus* and that the Latins were part of the Greek tradition. Apart from an ethnic origin, the Latins also shared a common history and a language with the Greeks. Although Lascaris strategically identified Latins and Greeks, there were limits to the identity of both peoples. We have already seen that Lascaris pointed at the differences between Greek and Latin. He also noted the 'vicinity' of the barbarians who had contaminated the Greek language in Italy. Even though Lascaris claimed that Greeks and Latins could be considered to be 'one and the seem people', in practice he preferred to differentiate between 'us, Greeks' and 'you, Latins'. Such strategies of differentiation underpinned the distinctiveness of the Greeks, and especially their claim to cultural precedence, which Lascaris needed to formulate his claim of cultural debt. So,

[652] Politianus, ed. Butler (2006) 11.
[653] On 'Flora' as the hieratic name of Rome see Cairns (2010) 263.
[654] Lydus *Mens.* 4.75; Eust. *Dion. Per.* 803. Cf. Politianus, ed. Butler (2006) 11. Lascaris was in the possession of a manuscript containing excerpts of the first four books of Lydus' *De mensibus* (BAV, Barb. gr. 194) on which see Ferreri (2002). The name 'Anthusa' for Constantinople is also recorded in, for instance, Maphaeus' *Commentarii urbani*, first published in 1506 (see Maphaeus 1552: col. 245).
[655] So, for instance, Lascaris' contemporary Christophorus Landinus magnified Florence as a second Athens through this etymology in his *Comento sopra la Comedia*, ed. Procaccioli (2001) 1: 238. On Landinus' magnification of Florence in general see Lentzen (2010) 185-198.
[656] Bisaha (2004) 117.

for example, when he concluded that 'the earliest beginnings of the Romans stem from the heart of Greece', he added that the Romans

> 'were trained through the laws of the Greeks, through the customs of the Greeks. Through *our* disciplines, through *our* arts the Roman imperium was enlarged; over lands and seas Italian fame and Latin virtue reached the extreme borders of the earth through the travelling example of the Greeks'.[657]

Making Roman history dependent upon Greek successes in this way, Lascaris in fact denied and annihilated any form of positive distinctiveness for the Romans *qua* Romans.[658] Although the Romans had not acquired their power by a whim of fortune, they had done so by emulating the example of the cognate Greeks. Their main virtue was, in other words, their successful imitation of the best practices of their Greek ancestors. Where they diverged from the Greek path, they naturally erred.

This also means that Lascaris maintained the traditional Greek contempt for Latin literature. Although the Romans had been successful in imitating the deeds of Greek politicians, they had been less successful in other domains. While he praised the important protagonists of Roman history as successful imitators of the Greeks, he did not praise the Roman authors in the same manner.[659] He praised Roman heroes such as Romulus, Numa Pompilius, Gaius Mucius Scaevola and many others for having imitated Greek examples to the point of becoming 'Greek souls in Roman bodies'.[660] However, the Roman writers were not at all successful imitators of Greek examples. Instead of this, according to Lascaris, the whole of Roman literature was a futile adaptation of Greek literature. To illustrate his point, the Greek professor in his speech unfavourably compared lines from Latin authors with verses from Greek authors in the manner of Macrobius.[661] Here, the cultural transfer from Greece to Italy is not described in terms of active and laudable imitation (*imitari, sequi*) but in the more passive vocabulary of

[657] J. Lascaris, ed. Meschini (1983) 96 ll. 157-161: 'E media Graecia sunt Romanorum primordia, Graecorum legibus, Graecorum sunt moribus instituti; nostris disciplinis, nostris artibus Romanum est ampliatum imperium; nomen Italum et virtus Latina exemplo Graecorum usa viatico per maria ac terras in extremos orbis fines penetravit'.
[658] Meschini (1983) 77: 'l'implicita negazione d'ogni specificità nazionale e autoctona romana'.
[659] On his views on Latin literature see J. Lascaris, ed. Meschini (1983) 106-110 ll. 446-540 with discussion on pp. 81-82, 85.
[660] J. Lascaris, ed. Meschini (1983) 97-98.
[661] Cf. Meschini (1983) 85.

transferral (*transferre*) or even receiving (*accipere*).[662] In this way, Lascaris clearly suggested that Roman authors only made inferior *translations* of Greek originals, but could not even begin aspiring to imitate their Greek examples and to equal them.[663]

In his *Florentine Oration* Lascaris was rather diplomatic in his attitude towards Latin literature, if we compare it to views expressed in his Latin epigrams, in which biting mockery was more appropriate than in academic orations.[664] An autograph marginal note in the Vatican codex containing Lascaris' speech reveals that, if he had the chance, he was more openly dismissive of Latin literature. Lascaris' note is an elegiac distich in which he responded to Propertius' bold claim that the bards of Rome and Greece ought to yield to Vergil's *Aeneid*, which is even better than Homer's *Iliad*.[665] Lascaris' sarcastic response is as follows:

> 'Nescio quid maius fassus nescire, Properti.
> 'Cedite!' reclamas: caedier es meritus.[666]
>
> *You admitted, Propertius, that you don't know anything greater [than the* Aeneis*]. You exclaim: 'Yield'. But you deserve a beating.*

The distich was later reprinted in the Paris-edition of Lascaris' epigrams, first published in print by Jacobus Tussanus in 1527.[667] In other epigrams of the same collection,

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[662] J. Lascaris, ed. Meschini (1983) 108-109.

[663] For example, Lascaris invites those holding the opinion that Roman literature is superior to Greek to compare two lines from Vergil's *Aeneid* with two from Sophocles' *Aias*. J. Lascaris, ed. Meschini (1983) 108 ll. 482-488: 'Percipient etiam praeter infinita Homerica utrum dilucidius et aptius: "Disce puer, uirtutem ex me uerumque laborem, | Fortunam ex aliis," an Sophocleum illud, unde hoc Vergilius transtulit: ὦ παῖ, γένοιο πατρὸς εὐτυχέστερος, τὰ δ' ἄλλ' ὅμοιος καὶ γένοι' ἂν οὐ κακός' *[Let them see (leaving aside the infinite number of Homeric borrowings) which of these passages is more lucid and apt: 'Disce puer, uirtutem ex me uerumque laborem, Fortunam ex aliis', or this passage from Sophocles, from which Vergil translated this: 'ὦ παῖ, γένοιο πατρὸς εὐτυχέστερος, τὰ δ'ἄλλ' ὅμοιος καὶ γένοι' ἂν οὐ κακός']*. The passages quoted are *Aen.* 12.435-436 and *Ai.* 550-551.

[664] IJsewijn & Sacré (1998) 112-116. It is also for this reason that in humanist culture Neo-Latin epigrams are generally regarded as a useful medium for personal attacks and slander (cf. Enenkel 2009: 8).

[665] Propertius 2.34.65-66: 'Cedite Romani scriptores, cedite Grai: | Nescio quid maius nascitur Iliade'.

[666] J. Lascaris, ed. Meschini (1983) 106, *apparatus criticus* ad. l. 439; Lascaris (1544) fol. 17^{v}. The punctuation is mine. The poem is briefly discussed by Klecker (1994) 211-212, who argues that Lascaris' epigram must be seen as an attack on Vergil rather than Propertius. Cf. Wallner (1998) 187.

Lascaris expressed contempt for both Vergil and Cicero, the two icons of ancient Latin poetry and prose. So, for instance, he openly attacked both of them for having scorned the Greeks, their habits and their language. In one epigram, he called Cicero a 'busybody' and a 'ridiculous consul' without weight.[668] In an epigram against Vergil, Lascaris moreover presented Vergil's works as a lasting monument to his 'ungrateful and degenerate mind', especially regarding the Greeks. These examples sufficiently show that he maintained Greek cultural bias against Latin literature. The Greek professor recognised the Greek origins of the Latins, and valued their political and military successes as imitations of Greek examples, but he at the same time reimposed Greek superiority. He did implicitly so in his attempt to recast Roman achievements as successful imitation of Greek examples; explicitly in his devaluation of the Latin language and Latin literature, mildly in his speech, more openly in his epigrams.

Unfortunately, no first-hand responses to Lascaris' speech have survived so that we do not know how the audience originally responded to his bold claims. As it is to be expected that the listeners were largely philhellenic, it might be that they saw it at least partly as a flattering gesture by Lascaris. At the same time, the idea that Latin literature was inferior to Latin was less likely to meet general applause. Gyraldus later commented about Lascaris that 'if he had not derided Vergil for being ignorant of his art in an epigram (…), he could have been compared with every other poet of the Greek

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[667] Lascaris, ed. Tussanus (1527) fol. cv^{r} = Lascaris, ed. Tussanus (1544) fol. 17^{v}. For the dedicatory letter of Tussanus see most recently J. Lascaris, ed. Meschini (1976) 3-4.

[668] Lascaris, ed. Tussanus (1527) fol. cii^{r}: 'In Graios, Domiti, miraris scripta Maronis: | Qui memorem, cur non de Cicerone querar, | Qui gentem toties mores linguamque lacessit | Graiugenum, verbis nec modus ullus inest. | Nil mirum, livor vatis nos aggravat; alter | Nos premit, ut libuitque, evehit ad superbos | Ῥόσκιον. haud aliter divum donum insit, et artem | Damnat, quae a Musis nobile nomen habet. Hinc inde, hic illic sedet is, residetque, vagatur. | Ardelio, consul ridiculus, levis est' *[You wonder at Maro's writings against the Greeks, Domitius: Why would I not recall Cicero here, why would I not complain about him? Cicero, the man who so many times slandered the Greek race, its customs and language, and there is no limit to his words. No wonder that the poet's hostility irritates us; the other one (i.e. Cicero) downgrades us and extols Roscius, as it pleased him, to the stars (in his speech* Q. Rosc.*). But on the other hand he condemns the art which derives its noble name from the Muses for it has not the gift of the gods in it. From here to there, and here and there, he sits, resides, and wanders. Busybody, ridiculous consul, you are futile]*. I have given 'lacessit' instead of 'lacessat' after Lascaris, ed. Tussanus (1544) fol. 15^{v}. Zielinski (1967) 353 believes that Lascaris attacks the Vergilian adagium 'timeo Danaos et dona ferentes' in these lines.

nation'.[669] For those not so well disposed towards Greek culture, Lascaris' speech must have been an outrageous provocation. Lascaris' anti-Latin epigrams against Cicero and Vergil, for instance, did not remain unnoticed to Floridus Sabinus, who castigated Lascaris for them more than forty years after he had delivered his *Oratio*. In his passionate defense of the Latin language, Floridus attacked all who, in his eyes, had derided the Latin language and its best authorities. Among Floridus' targets were Argyropulus, Marullus and Janus Lascaris, whom he all despised as 'Graeculi', or *Greeklings*. In the context of the Florentines' quest for antiquity and cultural precedence in Italy, Lascaris' Hellenisation of the Romans was a strategical move to stimulate his audience to begin or continue Greek studies. Still, Lascaris perhaps overdetermined the Italian admiration and imitation of Greek examples. Cultural appropriation does normally not imply full cultural assimilation. Just as Americans imitating European styles do generally not decline their sense of distinctive Americanness, so Italian humanists writing Greek epigrams did not reject their distinctiveness as Latins. While a Greek ancestry could of course elevate their cultural prestige vis-à-vis other groups, the Italian outlook was in the last analysis Roman and not Greek; Italian humanists viewed Greek culture through a Latin and Roman lens. Lascaris' speech on the contrary presupposed Greek precedence, while it did not recognise Latin claims to the same.

Lascaris' Oration *as a rebuttal of anti-Greek sentiment*

Notwithstanding the fact that Janus Lascaris in the end maintained Greek superiority over Latin culture, he still had to portray the Greeks in a favourable light. Apart from an alternative exhortation to Greek studies, Lascaris' argument also reads as an elaborate answer to all those humanists who saw the Byzantine Greeks still as enemies of some sort. In this context, we must realise that Lascaris emphasised that the ancient Greeks had always liberally shared their knowledge with the peoples of the world. At the very beginning of his speech, he sketched the extent of Greek colonisation for his audience, chronologically reaching back to times immemorial, and geographically comprising Europe, Asia, and Africa. The oldest examples of Greek colonisation Lascaris mentioned (those of Dionysius and Heracles) pertain to the extirpation of disorder. Lascaris first mentioned Dionysius in connection with India to mark the eastward extent of Greek

[669] Gyraldus, ed. Wotke (1894) 53: 'Hic ergo Laschares non solum Graece et Latine doctus, sed et regum et principum agendis tractandisque negotiis fuit ideoneus, et nisi Vergilium in epigrammate proscidisset ut artis ignarum (…) hic cum alio quocumque Graece nationis poeta fuisset conferendus'.

civilisation, while the 'Pillars of Heracles' symbolised its westward expansion. The southward expansion of Greek culture was symbolised by the Libyan cities of Cyrene (the birthplace of Eratosthenes) and Barce. According to Lascaris, Alexander the Great was the main protagonist in this, and also stands for the moral and ethical dimensions of the Greek mission. In a passage that is an almost literal translation of Plutarch, Lascaris explained how Alexander had civilised large parts of the world thanks to his teacher Aristotle's philosophy. He founded cities and detached Greek magistrates all over Asia, so that 'he transformed [there] wild and uncivilised into a mild and civilised life'.[670] While the Iranian Arachosians learned how to cultivate their lands as a result of Alexander's mission, Lascaris argued, the Persians discarded both their habit of matriphilia and their impious opinions.[671] In this way, Lascaris created the impression of an almost continuous *diaspora* of Greeks who disseminated their culture not so much for the advance of their own power, but for the benefit of mankind.[672] The exiled Byzantines thus took on their missionary roles in the footsteps of their ancient forebears, and Lascaris would have been pleased to hear Simos Menardos declaring about himself and other Greek expatriates in Italy that they 'performed for a second time, and with more success, the great work which their ancestors sixteen centuries before that had fulfilled in Rome'.[673]

It is important to note that the way Lascaris here represented the role of the Greeks in history counteracted the Italian prejudice that the Byzantine Greeks would be a self-satisfied clan of secretive purists. Anti-Greek sentiments were not confined to men such as Annius, who disliked the study of Greek perhaps even less than the Greeks

[670] J. Lascaris, ed. Meschini (1983) 93 ll. 84-103 (cf. ll. 94-103 with Plut. *Alex. fort.* 328e, c).

[671] As we have seen in the previous chapter, the moral and religious dimensions of Alexander's Empire had been elaborated with particular force by George Trapezuntius some decades before. In his *Comparatio philosophorum*, Trapezuntius had argued that through the Greek-speaking Empire of Alexander the Great and the philosophy of his intellectual mentor Aristotle the world had been prepared for the Word of God.

[672] J. Lascaris, ed. Meschini (1983) 93 l. 89-90: '… qui non magis propagandi imperii causa quam beneficio hominum orbem peragraverunt'. Note that Lascaris' Greek culture myth is almost the exact antipode of Laurentius Valla's Roman culture myth in his preface to the *Elegantiae linguae latinae* (for which see chapter 2, p. 58). Even so, just as his Byzantine colleagues, Lascaris did not respond directly to the arguments put forward by Valla (whose main criticism of Greek had been its multiformity in contradistinction to the uniformity of Latin).

[673] Menardos (1909) 6-7. Menardos' view is indebted to Giacomo Leopardi's essay on George Gemistos Plethon, from which he cites explicitly (cf. Leopardi, ed. Ranieri 1851: 341).

themselves.[674] As a matter of fact, Lascaris' main rival at the Florentine Studio, Angelus Politianus, himself a renowned Hellenist, had expressed his bitter feelings about the Greeks of his day. Both Lascaris and Politianus taught Greek in Florence, both wrote epigrams in Greek, both were eager to gain and maintain support from De'Medici.[675] Add to this that they both fancied the learned Alessandra Scala,[676] and it is obvious that they were hardly amicable colleagues. In the very year Lascaris delivered his speech, for example, they quarreled over the relative merits of their Greek translations of a Latin poem about Hermaphroditus.[677] More significant is Politianus' harsh judgement on his Byzantine colleagues which he voiced in the very first chapter of his famous *Miscellanea*. 'It is almost inexpressible in words', he wrote there, 'how unwilling this nation (*ista natio*) is to allow us, Latin men, to participate in its language and its learning. They think that we possess the scrapings of Hellenism', he continues, 'its slices and its skin: they the fruit, the whole, and the core'.[678]

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[674] Thorn-Wickert (2006) 51-54 suggests as one possibility that in 1400 the first Byzantine professor of Greek in Italy, Manuel Chrysoloras, stopped lecturing in Florence due to such ethnic discrimination as signalled by Gaza.

[675] The table in Verde (1973) 362-364 shows that Lascaris was hired to teach 'filosofia et poetica' for 168 florins in 1492, 'quot etiam habuit Demetrius graecus cum primum fuit conductus ad eandem lecturam de anno 1475…' [*as much as the Greek Demetrius [Chalcondylas] had when he was first called to occupy the same post from the year 1475*]. For comparison, from 1491 until his death in 1494, Politianus earned 450 florins per year (Verde 1937: 26-28). A comparative table is available in Celenza (2010) 8. On Politianus' courses between 1490 and 1494, focussing on Greek philosophy, and in particular Aristotle's ethics, see Celenza (2010) 5-17. For the poetical rivalry between Lascaris and Politianus see the introduction to Politianus, ed. Pontani (2002) XLVI-XLVIII.

[676] Politianus, ed. Pontani (2002) 130.

[677] Disliking Politianus' Greek version of the poem, Lascaris produced his own, vituperating Politianus' Hellenism in another Greek epigram at that. Politianus, ed. Pontani (2002) 234-240; J. Lascaris, ed. Meschini (1976) 50-53, 82-83; Legrand (1885) CXXXVII-CXXXIX.

[678] *Misc.* 1, quoted from Politianus, ed. Maïer & Del Lungo (1971): 'Caeterum (ut homo Graecus) perquam ferebat iniquo animo nobilem illam, nec (ut Theodorus Gaza putat) importunam Marci Tullij Ciceronis exclamationem, qua Graeciam uerborum interdum inopem, quibus se putat abundare, non eloquentius fortasse, quam uerius pronunciauit. Ob id igitur subiratus latinae copiae genitori & principi Graecus magister, etiam dictitare ausus est (quod nunc quoque uix aures patiuntur) ignarum fuisse non philosophiae modo Ciceronem, sed etiam (si dijs placet) Graecarum literarum. *Vix enim dici potest, quam nos aliquando, id est, Latinos homines, in participatum suae linguae, doctrinaeque non libenter admittat ista natio. Nos enim quisquilias tenere literarum, se frugem; nos praesegmina, se corpus; nos putamina, se nucleum credit*'. Emphasis mine.

Politianus aired his opinion in the context of his criticism of his former teacher Johannes Argyropulus, which is perhaps the best known *lotta* between a Greek and a Latin.[679] Leaving aside the technical details of the quarrel,[680] it suffices to recall that, according to Politianus, Argyropulus had unjustly attacked Cicero regarding a matter of interpretation in Aristotle because the Roman philosopher had claimed that Latin was more copious than Greek.[681] It is significant that Politianus argued that Argyropulus' alleged attack on Cicero had to do with his Greek background. As he was of that nation, according to Politianus, the Byzantine could not stand the idea that the Greek language was inferior to Latin. So, since Politianus represented his former Byzantine teacher as a typical example of his nation's hermetic arrogance, his response to Argyropulus reveals how even a philhellenic humanist could exploit ethnic stereotypes in order to discredit a renowned Byzantine scholar and the Byzantine scholars (*ista natio*) in general.[682]

Lascaris explicitly argued against ethnic stereotyping of this kind in one of his Latin epigrams against Vergil. In the epigram, Lascaris' castigated the Roman poet for propagating the idea that the character of all Greeks could be known from the crimes of only one of them. In doing so, he alluded to one of the famous anti-Greek lines of Vergil's *Aeneid*: 'crimine ab uno disce omnes' (*Aen.* 2.65). 'We derive the character of one man from the many', Lascaris riposted, 'while you teach that you may know all from

[679] Sabbadini (1885) 84.

[680] The debate revolved around the question whether Aristotle attributed 'ἐνδέλεχεια' (continuity or continuous motion) or 'ἐντέλεχεια' (complete reality) to the soul, but it was also a debate about the philosophical authority of Cicero. While Cicero attributed 'ἐνδέλεχεια' to the soul (*Tusc.* 1.10.22), Aristotle spoke of 'ἐντέλεχεια' (*De an.* 412a). Either Cicero originally wrote 'ἐντέλεχεια' (which was then subsequently corrupted in the text transmission), but misunderstood the meaning of the word, or he simply misquoted Aristotle. This is not the place to elaborate on the details of the debate. For more details on it see Cammelli (1941b) 175-179 and Sabbadini (1885) 83-85. On the 'ἐντέλεχεια'-debate in particular see Garin (1937) with an exposition of Argyropulus' and Politianus' respective positions on 178-182.

[681] Cicero, *De fin.*, 1.3.10, 3.2.5. Politianus does not specify where or when Argyropulus aired this criticism, and it seems that between 1457 and 1489 such an opinion of Argyropulus did not provoke any further discussion in Florentine circles. Cf. Godman (1998) 85.

[682] It must be noted here that in other contexts, Politianus had been more hospitable to the Byzantines. In some of his epigrams, he lavishly praised not only to Argyropulus, but also Theodore Gaza and Demetrius Chalcondylas for their Greek learning. Politianus' Greek poems to the Byzantine scholars are best available with an Italian translation in Politianus, ed. Lanni & Funari (1994) 59-82. Moreover, in an elegiac poem in Latin to Bartholomaeus Fontius, Politianus favourably recalled Andronicus Callistus whose lessons he had attended. See the Latin text in Maïer (1966) 72-77 (esp. ll. 193-198). On the relation between Politianus and his Greek masters in Florence see Maïer (1966) 24-28 (Argyropulus) and 30-34 (Callistus and Chalcondylas).

one'. He criticised this line of reasoning as being both unfair (as it harms innocent members of a group) and logically incongruous (as it violates the rules of induction).[683] Lascaris' criticism can be easily transferred to Politianus' case, as he seems to do what Vergil taught his readers to do, that is to judge a group on the basis of one member's perceived attitude. Lascaris' poem is not only a rebuttal of the ancient Roman poet, but a universal criticism of all who use stereotypes to blacken the reputation of individuals. The general tenor of his *Florentine Oration* equally rejects the idea that the Greeks were a hermetic and alien people, but instead shows that they had always shared their culture liberally, as he himself would do at the Florentine Studio.

This is, of course, in line with the function of such *praelectiones*, which was not only to introduce the course subject, but also the teacher. In his speech, Janus Lascaris acknowledged the fact that in the case of Greek studies there was potential ethnic opposition not only against the subject of Greek literature, but also against the Byzantine Greeks who so often taught it. He used the opportunity of the *praefatio* to kill two birds with one stone. Apart from the traditional arguments in favour of Greek studies, he took things to a higher level by attaching the study of Greek to the ancient

[683] Lascaris, ed. Tussanus (1544) fols. 15^{r}-15^{v}: 'In gentem inveheris, spernis praecepta magistri | Parthenia: nullum deprimit ille genus, | Ne insontis laedat generis. Tu 'crimine ab uno | Discite', inquis, 'Danaos', quod nihil ad Libyas. | Praeterea a multis qualisnam, inducimus, unus. | Ex uno cunctos discere at ipse doces | Tyrrhenos, Ligures perstringis, parcere cuiquam | Nescis. Me Harpocratem quilibet esse iubet. | Cum larvis certas, 'defuncto parce', reclamant: | 'Respondere nequit, lex vetat esse reum'. | Aio: 'sed in scriptis nos elevat. Illa supersunt | Ingrati indicium degenerisque animi' *[You inveigh against my people, you despise your master's Parthenian precept. He downgrades no people lest he harm the innocent members of a race. You, however, say: 'Get to know the Greeks from the crime of one of them'* (= Verg. *Aen.* 2.65-66)*, but this is not relevant to the Libyans. We moreover derive the character of one man from the many, while you teach the Tyrrhenians how to get to know all from one, you belittle the Ligurians, and you do not know how to spare anyone. Someone advises me to be Harpocrates: 'You fight against phantoms', they protest, 'spare the dead. He cannot answer, the law forbids to accuse him'. I say: 'But in his writings he disparages us. They remain as evidence of his ungrateful and degenerate mind'].* According to Macrobius, Parthenius of Nicaea taught Vergil Greek language and literature (Macr. *Sat.* 5.17.18; cf. Gell. *NA* 13.27.1, 9.9.3). I have not been able to find a reference to such a precept as alluded to here in the surviving fragments of his works. Harpocrates is a Hellenistic deity of silence and secrecy who is depicted with a finger on his lips (after the Egyptian child god Horus). 'Be Hippocrates' is proverbial for 'keep silent'. The text of Lascaris' poem is also reprinted in Wallner (1998) 188 and Klecker (1994) 211 after the edition of Tussanus (1527) fols. ci^{v}-cii^{r} which reads 'nos docet hic' instead of 'at ipse doces', 'perstringit' instead of 'perstringis' and 'nescit' instead of 'nescis' (in which case we must understand 'quilibet' adverbially in the sense of 'quolibet'). In addition, the 1527-edition gives 'insonteis' instead of 'insontis' and 'ais' instead of 'inquis'.

Greek origins of the Florentines. This was a highly strategical move enabling him not only to valorise Greek studies at a more fundamental level for his Italian audience (namely that of communal belonging), but also to safeguard, or to maintain, the image of the Byzantine Greeks in general. Through his speech, then, Lascaris not only raised the cultural and symbolical value of Greek studies for the Florentines, he equally invalidated the suspicions of exclusivism or hermeticism, as aired for instance by his academic rival Politianus. Through his emphasis on the Roman origin of the Florentines, and the Greek origin of everything Latin, Lascaris at the same time corroborated and adapted the mnemonic tissue of the Florentine community he addressed. As Lascaris' speech reframed the mutual relations of Byzantines and Italians through this lens, it also opened new avenues for attaining an ethnically and culturally based co-operation between both groups. In this way, Lascaris' identification of Italians with Greeks and his self-representation as a Greek converge both to promote his own status as a Greek professor of Greek among the Italians, and to defend the Greeks generally against Italian prejudice.

Another Lascaris: Greeks in Calabria and Sicily

Although Janus Lascaris tried to transform the Florentines into Latinised Hellenes, there never emerged a sustained 'Florentine Greekness' among the Florentine humanists. While they emphasised their cultural and political distinctiveness as Romans, ancient Greece remained a foreign province for most of them. This was different in Sicily and Calabria, where the quest for Greek antiquity was bound up with a desire for cultural distinctiveness and more political self-determination. What Janus Lascaris did not achieve in Florence, his relative Constantine Lascaris did in Sicily and Calabria.[684] Beginning with the *Annales omnium temporum* by Ransanus (composed in the second half of the fifteenth century) and followed by Aretius' *De situ insulae Siciliae libellus* (1537), the quest for Sicily's glorious Greek antiquity emerged as an important element in Sicilian attempts to represent the island as a culturally distinguished region. It has been suggested that in this context, Constantine Lascaris' activity in Messina from 1476 until his death in 1501 helped to shape the idea of a distinctive 'Sicilia graeca' that sought to achieve independence from its Aragonese viceroys.[685] He especially did so between

[684] For information about Constantine Lascaris' life I refer to the valuable contributions of Martínez Manzano (1994) 6-32 together with (1998) 3-28.

[685] Pietrasanta (2003) 704-709. Cf. Bianca (1988b) 473-476 ('Le *Vitae* costituivano, anch'esse in definitiva, uno "scavo nelle origini", alla ricerca e alla affermazione di quello gloriosa *traditio*

the 1470s and 1490s via a series of treatises regarding the Greek philosophers who had worked and lived in Calabria and Sicily. He probably sent his texts in different redactions to different addressees before they were finally printed in 1499.[686]

Constantine Lascaris considered the ancient Hellenes to be the common ancestors of the Byzantines and the Sicilians. When he sent Johannes Gattus a manuscript of his Sicilian biographies, for instance, he praised the bishop of Catania – a Sicilian by birth – as a descendant of the famous Hellenes.[687] This privileged connection with the ancient Greeks and their culture made Sicily and Calabria superior to other places in Italy. In a letter addressed to the Spanish philosopher and poet Juan Pardo, Lascaris even voiced pronouncedly anti-Italian sentiments as regards the other non-Greek parts of the Italian peninsula. 'I do not even want to *see* Rome, the new Babylon and the nurse of all things bad', he explained. 'I avoid hearing about ungrateful Naples: I have experienced it'.[688] For him, the decline of these cities resulted from the absence of Greeks and Greek learning. Lascaris complained that Italian sponsors were so greedy that renowned

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antiqua di vita e di potere… ') and Bianca (1988c) 152-153. On the genesis of the idea of a 'Sicilia graeca' and its political and cultural implications in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries see Pietrasanta (2003) with rich bibliographical references in the notes.

[686] The text has been transmitted in Latin, but it seems likely that it was originally composed in Greek; Martínez Manzano (1994) 152-155 conjectured that the original Greek text was translated into Latin by, or with the help of, Ludovicus Saccanus. Although a critical edition of the text is still a serious desideratum, a few Italian scholars have made valuable contributions to clarify the history and complicated context of the treatise. See in particular Bottari (1992), Bianca (1988b), Moscheo (1988), Pedivellano (1956). The *Vitae* survive in two redactions, the first comprising only Sicilian biographies, the second both Sicilian and Calabrian lives. The first redaction of the text is known from a transcription by Vito Maria Amico in a letter to Domenico Schiavo of March 18, 1756, but the text equally survives in two manuscripts (BAV, Vat. lat. 2930 and Oxon. lat. misc. ε 80, fols. 3^{v}-12^{v}). The second redaction was first printed by Wilhelm Schömberg in Messina in 1499 (Lascaris 1499), while an adapted edition by Franciscus Maurolicus appeared in 1562 (as part of the *Sicanicarum rerum compendium*). The second redaction is most easily available is Lascaris, ed. Migne (1866), following Lascaris, ed. Fabricius (1728), ultimately going back on Maurolicus' edition. Copies of Lascaris (1499) are extremely rare. Dibdin Frognall (1822) 292-293 mentioned a copy in the library collection of George John Earl Spencer (cf. Grässe 1867: 374). The only surviving copy I was able to localise is in The John Rylands University Library of Manchester University. Unfortunately, I was unable to consult it.

[687] C. Lascaris, ed. Martínez Martano (1994) 158-159 ll. 22-27 ('τῶν ἐπιφανῶν ἐκείνων Ἑλλήνων ἀπόγονος').

[688] C. Lascaris, ed. Martínez Martano (1994) 160-161 ll. 24-26: "Ρώμην μὲν τὴν νέαν Βαβυλώνα καὶ τροφὸν πάσης κακίας οὐδ' ἰδεῖν ἀξιῶ. Νεάπολιν δὲ τὴν ἀχάριστον φεύγω ἀκούων· πεπείραμαι γάρ'. A Spanish translation of the letter is in Martínez Martano (1998) 167-169.

Byzantine scholars were forced to leave Rome and Naples or the Italian peninsula. So, Theodore Gaza unworthily died in the Calabrian town of Policastro, while Andronicus Callistus and Demetrius Castrenus were forced to leave Italy: the former left for the British isles, where he expired without his friends, the latter returned to his barbarian-dominated fatherland. Even Johannes Argyropulus, once professor of Greek in the Florentine heart of Italian Hellenism, had to sell his books in Rome to anyone who paid him enough to live.[689] In Constantine Lascaris' view, the absence of Greeks and their learning had made places such as Naples and Rome inhabitable. So, for instance, he argued that the Naples of his day was 'not the colony of the Chalcideans and Athenians, the gymnasium of Hellenic letters, to which the Romans began heading. Everything has been lost and is deformed'. Sicily and Calabria, on the other hand, had a distinguished Greek past that set them apart from the rest of Italy. Although both Janus and Constantine Lascaris tried to make different parts of Italy look Greek and therefore special and different, a significant difference lurks behind this superficial similarity apart from the different contexts in which they wrote.

In his letter to the Catanian bishop Johannes Gattus, Constantine claimed that Sicily had produced more wise and ingenious men than all other islands and even the peninsula of the Peloponnesus.[690] A later redaction of this work was printed in Messina in 1499, extended with his biographies of Greek philosophers from Calabria. Constantine opened his overview of Calabrian writers and thinkers with Pythagoras, who had civilised many Calabrians, Greeks and others, and who had also founded the laws of the Greeks living in Italy.[691] In the dedicatory letter of his Calabrian lives, now addressed to Alfonso II of Naples, Duke of Calabria, Constantine Lascaris wrote in the same vein as in his letter to Gattus that

> '… Italy, Sicily and a huge part of Greece are very much indebted first to your nurse Calabria, and then to Pythagoras and his Pythagoraeans. For nine hundred years, from

[689] See C. Lascaris, ed. Martínez Martano (1994) 161 ll. 39-48. Lascaris also composed a funerary epigram for Theodore Gaza, edited by Iriarte (1769) 257, and translated into Spanish by Martínez Manzano (1998) 178. On Callistus in London see Harris (1995b) 140, 142, 146.

[690] C. Lascaris, ed. Martínez Martano (1994) 158 ll. 1-7. A Spanish translation of the Greek letter is in Martínez Martano (1998) 166-167; an Italian translation in De Stefano (1956) 287-288.

[691] C. Lascaris, ed. Migne (1866) col. 924: 'Pythagoras multos Calabros, Graecos et alios ultra quingentos reddidit doctissimos. Leges Graecis qui Italiam habitabant constituit'. Cf. Rathgeber (1866) 485. The idea that Pythagoras civilised the cities of southern Italy by establishing laws and costumes is found in Porphyrius' biography of Pythagoras (Porph. *Vit. Pyth.* 20).

> Pythagoras himself until emperor Constantine alias the Great, this very doctrine and the Pythagoraean cult flourished in the areas mentioned'.[692]

Constantine Lascaris thus removed the heartland of Hellenism from Sparta and Athens to Calabria and Sicily. This recalls Bessarion's optimism that Hellenism could survive intact also outside its original heartland, e.g., in Trebizond or Venice (see chapter 3). At the same time, Constantine Lascaris' view differs from Janus Lascaris' argument in the *Florentine Oration*. While the former allowed Calabria and Sicily to play an important role in the evolution and preservation of Hellenism, the latter argued that in Italy Greek became diluted due to the vicinity of the barbarians, and that Roman authors had created a literature that could not equal that of the Greeks.

This implies a deeper difference between their interpretations of the relation between Greek civilisation and its geographical scope. Constantine Lascaris disengaged Hellenism from the traditional Greek heartland. Instead he argued that Sicily had brought forth more wise man than the Peloponnesus, and that Greeks as well as Latins were indebted to Calabria. Janus Lascaris' narrative of colonisation and dissemination, on the other hand, suggests the dispersion of Hellenism from an only vaguely specified geographical centre to a wide periphery in the process of which it got diluted. From his speech to Charles V, cited in chapter 3, we moreover know that Janus Lascaris desired to restore the 'institutions and inventions' of the ancient Greeks to their 'rightful place and domicile'. Such differences between Janus and Constantine Lascaris in this respect point at a notable flexibility regarding the place of the Greek heartland in conceptions of Greekness and Hellenism. The territoriality of Hellenism as well as its future restoration anticipate a problem that will be central to the next chapter, where I will discuss the way in which Johannes Gemistus' for the first time territorialised even in political terms the cultural space of ancient Greece.

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[692] C. Lascaris, ed. Migne (1866) 928: 'Verum illud iterum absque rubore memorabo, Italiam, Siciliam ac magnam Graeciae nostrae partem primum Calabriae tuae altrici, deinde Pythagorae suisque Pythagoricis maxime debere. Nam per annos nongentos, ab ipso scilicet Pythagora usque ad Constantinum imperatorem cognomento Magnum, doctrina ipsa et secta Pythagorica per dictas regiones floruit'. Note that Constantine Lascaris here referred to Constantine the Great as a turning point in Hellenism. This is consistent with his idea (cited in chapter 2, p. 68) that the Latin language began to intrude Greek from the time of Constantine onwards.

As we have seen in the first chapter, Manuel Chrysoloras also stressed the Greco-Latin synergy in his *Comparison between Old and New Rome*. Just like Janus Lascaris in his *Florentine Oration*, he emphasised the Greek element in ancient Rome and the friendly attitude of the Romans towards the Greeks. Unlike Lascaris, however, Chrysoloras saw Rome as the metropolis of Constantinople, and considered himself and his addressees to be the grandsons ('νἱωνοἱ') of Old Rome.[693] In this sense, his outlook was traditionally Byzantine. Janus Lascaris, on the other hand, looked at the Latins, Romans and Florentines from the perspective of ancient Greek rather than Roman history. Glossing over Roman Byzantium, he reframed the relations between Latins and Greek Byzantines through the lens of Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Plutarch. From this perspective, Byzantium was not the daughter of Rome, but Rome the daughter of Greece, while the Byzantines were not the inheritors of Rome, but the legitimate heirs to ancient Greece. In other words, he applied a similar strategy as Gemistos Plethon had used in his memorandum for Manuel Palaeologus, but now applied it to the Romans of the West. Similarly, Constantine Lascaris looked at Sicily and Calabria from the perspective of Greek history, which ended with the traditional starting point of Byzantine or eastern Roman history, viz. the rise of Constantine the Great. Both the *Oratio* and the *Vitae* read as attempts to highlight the Greek element in Latin culture and so to solve the perceived differences between Latins and Greeks, brushing away the perceived hostile alterity of the Byzantine Greeks. Yet both Constantine and Janus Lascaris do so from a one-sidedly Greek perspective. Both in the *Oratio* and in the *Vitae* the Greeks are bringers of civilisation, while Janus Lascaris also makes the Greeks ethnically prior to the Latins. So, while for both Lascarids the spheres of Greek and Latin culture are closely related via ancient Greece, they also maintain Greek precedence and superiority over the Latins.

[693] Cf., e.g., Chrysoloras, ed. Billò (2000) 8 ll. 19-26, 10 ll. 4-12, 15 ll. 3-19, 16 ll. 3-11.