

**The Vernacular through the Greek Lens:  
JOHN PALSGRAVE'S FRENCH GRAMMAR (1530)  
AND HIS MODEL THEODORE GAZA REVISITED**

*Résumé.* — La présente étude conteste l'idée que Jean Palsgrave, humaniste anglais et auteur de la première grammaire française (*Lesclarcissement de la langue francoyse*, 1530), ne fut guère inspiré par l'œuvre du savant byzantin Théodore Gaza. Nous tentons de démontrer que J. Palsgrave était très bien placé pour avoir une connaissance approfondie de la grammaire de Gaza grâce à ses études en Angleterre, à Paris et à Louvain, et que cette connaissance se reflète effectivement dans son *Lesclarcissement*. Cette familiarité se remarque dans son traitement de certains aspects de la langue française, principalement la prononciation, l'orthographe, les parties du discours et la variation régionale. L'analyse que propose J. Palsgrave de l'article et du passé simple français est particulièrement notable, puisqu'il offre une interprétation minutieuse et bien étayée des deux phénomènes, en s'appuyant sur des notions grammaticales d'origine grecque.

*Abstract.* — This contribution challenges the idea that the English humanist John Palsgrave, in his pioneering French grammar of 1530 (*Lesclarcissement de la langue francoyse*), was barely influenced by the work of the Byzantine scholar Theodore Gaza. I argue that Palsgrave was in an excellent position to be intimately familiar with Gaza's grammar through his studies in England, Paris, and Leuven, and that this familiarity is indeed reflected in his *Lesclarcissement*. Palsgrave's acquaintance with Greek grammar is particularly obvious in his discussion of aspects of French pronunciation, orthography, parts of speech, and regional variation. His analysis of the article and the simple past in French is especially remarkable, since he offers an accurate and well-founded interpretation of both phenomena while using Greek grammatical concepts.

**Introduction**

But farthermore/ folowyng the order of Theodorus Gaza/ in his gra[m]mer of  
the Greke tonge/ I haue also added vnto my former labours a thirde boke/  
whiche is a very co[m]ment and exposytour vnto my seconde. So that the  
accidentes/ vnto the partes of reason in the Frenche tong/ and other preceptes  
gra[m]maticall/ whiche I haue but brefely and in a generaltee touched in my  
seco[n]de boke/ and so/ as vnto an Introduction dothe suffise. In my said

thirde boke co[n]sequently & in due ordre be declared/ dilated/ & sette forthe at the length<sup>1</sup>.

In his dedicatory letter to king Henry VIII, the Englishman John Palsgrave (d. 1554) left no doubt about an important source of inspiration for his pioneering grammar of French, entitled *Lesclarcissement de la langue francoyse* (*The clarification of the French language*) and published in 1530 by Richard Pynson and John Hawkins in London. Rather atypically, Palsgrave did not refer to one of the many available Latin grammars. Instead, it was the popular Greek grammar by the Byzantine émigré Theodore Gaza (ca. 1410/1415 - ca. 1475/1476) which he explicitly cited as the model for his *Lesclarcissement*. Why did Palsgrave make this surprising decision? And how did he accommodate his description of French to concepts from Greek grammaticography? It is these questions I want to address in the present contribution for two reasons.

The first reason is scholarly. Modern researchers have thus far refrained from confronting Palsgrave's work with Greek grammatical thought in detail. This is surprising since his linguistic ideas have attracted copious attention from such researchers as Douglas A. Kibbee and especially Gabriele Stein. In her standard work on Palsgrave, Stein has suggested that the reference to Gaza "may have been less the fact that Gaza, too, had added a third book to his grammar than to impart more authority to his work", whereas Kibbee even argues that "the only direct evidence is the division of the work into three books, with the third expanding upon the morphology and syntax found in the second"<sup>2</sup>. In this paper, I want to explore whether these conclu-

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1. JOHN PALSGRAVE, *Lesclarcissement de la langue francoyse*, [London], the imprintyng fynysshed by Johan Haukyns, 1530, sig. A.iii.<sup>r</sup> (facsimile: Genève, Slatkine, 1972). See also the edition and French translation in S. BADDELEY (ed.), *John Palsgrave. L'éclaircissement de la langue française (1530). Texte anglais original. Traduction et notes* (Textes de la Renaissance, 69), Paris, Honoré Champion, 2003. An earlier edition with introduction is F. GÉNIN (ed.), *L'éclaircissement de la langue française par Jean Palsgrave, suivi de la Grammaire de Giles du Guez* (Collection de documents inédits sur l'histoire de France. Deuxième série. Histoire des lettres et des sciences), Paris, Imprimerie nationale, 1852. All early modern texts are cited in their original form. Abbreviations have been resolved between square brackets. I thank one of the anonymous reviewers for their valuable suggestions.

2. G. STEIN, *John Palsgrave as Renaissance Linguist. A Pioneer in Vernacular Language Description*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1997, particularly p. 70-72 on Gaza as a model (here p. 70); D. A. KIBBEE, *For to Speke Frenche Trewely. The French Language in England, 1000-1600. Its Status, Description and Instruction* (Studies in the History of the Language Sciences, 60), Amsterdam - Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 1991, esp. p. 199-201 (here p. 200). Cf. also S. BADDELEY, *John Palsgrave* (as in n. 1), p. 21 (n. 1): *Bien que Palsgrave se réclame de ce modèle prestigieux, il n'emprunte à la grammaire de Gaza que la disposition de l'ouvrage en trois parties.*

sions are tenable or Palsgrave's French grammar does betray a more fundamental influence from Greek grammatical tradition through Gaza.

My second reason for picking this topic is honorary. John Palsgrave took a renowned Hellenist as his model in a distinctly multilingual approach. This seems an appropriate topic to honor professor and polyglot Lambert Isebaert, who, having taught me languages as various as French, Latin, Tocharian A, and Old Church Slavonic, kindled in particular my fascination with Greek, first at KU Leuven, then at UCLouvain across the Dutch-French language border. His didactic enthusiasm and tremendous knowledge made it easy to bear the endless train rides between Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve. My paper therefore wants to honor a humanist language pedagogue of the present by investigating a kindred spirit from the past.

### 1. John Palsgrave (d. 1554), humanist language teacher<sup>3</sup>

John Palsgrave was born at some point in the 1480s either in London or in Norfolk. Of Palsgrave's youth nothing is known; it is at the university of Cambridge that we first find him in 1503, where he graduated bachelor of arts one year later. He obtained his MA in Paris, where he also learned French. This made him an excellent candidate as tutor of Princess Mary, Henry VIII's sister, who was to marry the French king Louis XII in 1514, one year after Palsgrave's appointment to this position. He joined the princess on her travel to France and acted as her secretary; the princess' correspondence with Cardinal Wolsey shows that she held her teacher in high esteem. Yet after her wedding on October 9, 1514, Palsgrave's services were no longer required, and he had the occasion to pursue further studies in Leuven. At this humanist center in Brabant, where he arrived at the very end of 1516, he studied law. More notably, his stay in the Low Countries provided him with the occasion to increase his knowledge of the classical languages, not only Latin but also Greek. The study of the latter tongue was taking root in Leuven since scholars who had studied in Paris under the polyglot humanist Girolamo Aleandro (1480-1542) established themselves in the university city in the early 1510s and began teaching the basics of the Greek language. This teaching acquired a more permanent form with the establishment of the *Collegium Trilingue* (Three Language College) in 1517 by Desiderius Erasmus, made possible by the funds of the deceased jurist

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3. Information on Palsgrave's life and work is principally based on the account in G. STEIN, "Palsgrave, John (d. 1554)", in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edition, 2004 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-21227>> (last accessed September 11, 2019). See also G. STEIN, *John Palsgrave* (as in n. 2), p. 1-36.

and humanist Hieronymus van Busleyden<sup>4</sup>. Palsgrave did not witness the foundation of the college, however, as he was back in England in the summer of 1517. Yet during the six months or so he was in Leuven, he likely did receive help from Erasmus in pursuing his studies, as requested by Thomas More in a letter to Erasmus from December 4, 1516. In this document, More also expressed his high regard of Palsgrave, whom he presented as a mutual and loyal friend delivering letters between him and Erasmus<sup>5</sup>. Back in England, Palsgrave made a career as acolyte with the help of, among others, Thomas More, and he became part of Henry VIII's entourage. In 1525, he took up the position of schoolmaster to Henry Fitzroy, the king's illegitimate son who had recently been created duke of Richmond. As he became frustrated with the endeavor of teaching Henry, Palsgrave gave up the position in 1526 and tried to make ends meet by teaching prominent young men. After acquiring the degree of bachelor of theology from Oxford university in 1532, he was ordained priest in 1533 and pursued a clerical career. This brought him wealth and as he did not object to the English Reformation, he was able to live his life in relative calm. Palsgrave died in the summer of 1554.

Palsgrave's pedagogical approach was in line with humanist ideals, connecting the study of language and literature with moral education. This didactic dualism is also apparent from his two main publications: his *Lesclarcissement* of 1530, on the one hand, which offers moralizing examples for linguistic phenomena, and his English translation of a Neo-Latin comedy by Willem de Volder (Fullonius; 1493-1568), published in 1540, on the other. The focus was, however, clearly on humanist language and literature studies, including not only the classical tongues, but especially the vernacular ones, both his native English and French. His *Lesclarcissement*, on which he worked for about twenty years, is a most impressive scholarly feat, aimed at bringing "the frenche tong vnder any rules certayn & precepts gra[m]maticall/ lyke as the other thre p[ar]ffite to[n]ges be", namely Latin, Greek, and Hebrew<sup>6</sup>. In more than a thousand pages the work presents the

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4. On the study of Greek at the Trilingue, see R. VAN ROOY and T. VAN HAL, "Studying Ancient Greek at the Old University of Leuven. An Outline in a European Context", in J. PAPY (ed.), *The Leuven Collegium Trilingue 1517-1797. Erasmus, Humanist Educational Practice and the New Language Institute Latin - Greek - Hebrew*, Leuven - Paris - Bristol, Peeters, 2018, p. 129-153 (particularly p. 131-133).

5. D. ERASMUS, *The Correspondence of Erasmus. Letters 446 to 593. 1516-1517*, translated by R. A. B. MYNORS and D. F. S. THOMSON, annotated by James K. MCCONICA, Toronto - Buffalo, University of Toronto Press, 1974, p. 162-163.

6. J. PALSGRAVE, *Lesclarcissement* (as in n. 1), letter to the king, sig. A.iii.v. See M. GLATIGNY, "À l'aube de la grammaire française. Sylvius et Meigret", *Histoire Épistémologie Langage* 9 (1987), p. 135-155 (here p. 138-139).

grammar and lexicon of French to English speakers in a highly detailed and organized fashion. Palsgrave based his description of French both on literary texts and colloquial speech and inserted what could be dubbed phonetic transcriptions of French texts to make his audience familiar with the sounds of this Romance language. The fact that he chose English as his metalanguage led him to pay a great amount of attention to this tongue as well, describing and analyzing it in much the same manner as he did for French. As a result, his *Lesclarcissement* can be regarded as a unique forerunner to vernacular contrastive grammar. At the same time, he developed the necessary terminology in English by borrowing and calquing terms from the Latin grammatical tradition, including *adverb* and *interjection* – and perhaps also from Greek (see section 3.4 below). However, Palsgrave's *magnum opus* did not enjoy wide recognition in its own day and age. Only one edition appeared, and it became a rare yet cherished book very soon, to be rehabilitated only by modern researchers<sup>7</sup>.

## 2. Palsgrave and Gaza

In order to understand Palsgrave's choice for Gaza, I should briefly recall the place of Gaza's grammar in the Renaissance curriculum before 1530, for which I principally rely on Paul Botley's detailed study<sup>8</sup>. Theodore Gaza, a Byzantine scholar who arrived in Italy in 1440 and is better-known for his Aristotle translations, compiled his Greek grammar book in Rome, likely in 1461-1462, even though there is some non-compelling evidence that might suggest an earlier date of composition. It is a language manual in four books, originally written in Greek. The first book is a palpable introduction to Greek grammar, treating the alphabet, article, noun, verb, participle, pronoun, preposition, adverb, and conjunction. Gaza accommodated the often complex subject matter to his Western audience, reducing the number of conjugations from thirteen, as was common in Byzantine tradition, to five. In the second book, the grammarian treated the same topics as in the first, but this time in greater depth, the approach which Palsgrave later copied. Book three concerned the thorny matter of Greek accentuation as well as orthography and prosody, whereas book four outlined Greek syntax in a notoriously obscure manner, following the likewise difficult works by Apollonius Dyscolus ('Apollonius the Difficult'), Maximus Planudes, and Michael Syncellus.

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7. D. A. KIBBEE, *For to Speke Frenche Trewely* (as in n. 2), p. 201.

8. P. BOTLEY, *Learning Greek in Western Europe, 1396-1529. Grammars, Lexica, and Classroom Texts* (Transactions of the American Philosophical Society Held at Philadelphia for Promoting Useful Knowledge, 100.2), Philadelphia, American Philosophical Society, 2010, p. 14-25.

Gaza's grammar immediately became popular after its publication in the early 1460s. It was soon used by other Byzantine teachers such as Andronicus Callistus and Demetrius Chalcondyles as well as by Italian humanists including Angelo Poliziano in the 1460s-1480s. In the late 1470s, Callistus traveled across the Alps in the company of another Byzantine scholar: the copyist and teacher George Hermonymus of Sparta, who seems to have been responsible for introducing Gaza's grammar in France and, indirectly, in England as well. Hermonymus also started copying the books of Gaza's work separately, which was possible because they were aimed at students of different levels. This possibility of copying the work in distinct parts likely stimulated its popularity. It is unclear how exactly the work reached England, but it was there in November 1484 at the latest, when the Byzantine scribe Ioannis Servopoulos produced his first dated copy of the grammar there. Servopoulos copied the work at several occasions in the following decade in Reading, and these copies may have been commissioned by the Italian professor Cornelio Vitelli, active in England in this period. It is likely that Gaza's grammar reached England in other ways, too; John Shirwood (d. 1494), for instance, was on a mission to Rome on behalf of king Edward IV in 1479, on which occasion he bought a copy of the grammar produced in the very same year, now preserved at Cambridge University Library.

In other words, Gaza's grammar was already well-known in England before its first printed edition, which came off the Aldine presses in Venice on Christmas Day 1495, together with Apollonius Dyscolus' work on syntax and a brief treatise on Greek numerals. It was a product of fine printing, but the large format must not have been very handy for users, and the combination of Gaza's difficult third and fourth books with Apollonius Dyscolus' complex treatment of Greek syntax did not make the volume an easy read, especially since the text was entirely in Greek, without Latin translation or commentary. Yet Erasmus likely used the 1495 edition in his Greek classes in Cambridge in 1512, as a copy that probably belonged to Erasmus' friend Henry Bullock (d. 1526) suggests. Other scholars from England also possessed the grammar book, including Cuthbert Tunstall (1474-1559), who studied Greek and Hebrew in Italy.

In the meantime, Gaza's grammar had also won popularity on the continent, especially in Paris in the early 1500s through the teaching of Denys Lefèvre and, particularly, Girolamo Aleandro, who had the first book of Gaza's grammar printed there in 1511, then only the second printing of the work. The availability of this print and the success of Aleandro's lectures made Erasmus switch from Manuel Chrysoloras' grammar to that of Gaza, whose star was now rising to outshine all other manuals by Byzantine

émigrés in England and elsewhere. At Corpus Christi College, Gaza's grammar was promoted as the best Greek handbook since 1516, and Richard Croke likely used it in his Cambridge classes between 1517 and 1520. In Leuven, Hellenists like Adrien Amerot (d. 1560) were studying Gaza's manual in greater depth around 1515 under the impulse of the Parisian lectures of Aleandro<sup>9</sup>. To make the grammar more accessible, parts of it were soon translated into Latin. Erasmus did so for the first book in 1516, printed by the Leuven presses of Thierry Martens in July of that year, only some months before John Palsgrave was in that city to further develop his Greek competence. Erasmus' translation of the second book appeared in 1518 in the same city, as did a reprint of the first book. Croke made a Latin version of the difficult fourth book on syntax (Leipzig, 1516), which was, however, widely considered to be rather deficient. To give an indication of the popularity of the work in the years leading up to the publication of Palsgrave's *Lesclarcissement*, I list here the known printed editions of (parts of) Gaza's grammar up to 1529: 1495 (Venice), 1511 (Paris), 1512 (Venice), 1514 (Alcalá de Henares, Strasbourg), 1515 (Florence [2]), 1516 (Basel, Florence, Leipzig, Leuven [3], Paris [2]), 1517 (Venice), 1518 (Basel, Leuven [3]), 1520 (Cologne, Florence, Paris, Tübingen), 1521 (Basel, Cologne [2], Leuven, Paris), 1523 (Basel, Cologne [2], Leuven [2]), 1524 (Leuven), 1525 (Cologne, Venice), 1526 (Florence, Paris), 1527 (Venice), and 1529 (Basel, Paris [2])<sup>10</sup>. It is especially striking that in 1516, the year in which Palsgrave was in Leuven and surroundings, continental Europe witnessed no less than eight (partial) editions of Gaza's grammar, among which three in Leuven, thus more than doubling the number of editions available until then (from seven to fifteen).

Theodore Gaza's grammar was, in conclusion, widely known in humanist milieus in England, France, and the Low Countries in the early 1500s, and John Palsgrave must have had numerous opportunities to study the highly popular manual, most notably in Paris and Leuven, but certainly also in England. There, it had been used in teaching since 1484 at the latest, and in particular by Palsgrave's acquaintance Erasmus at Cambridge university since 1511. If he did not read the grammar in the Greek original, he was

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9. See R. VAN ROOY, "Adrien Amerot vraagt raad aan zijn voormalige leraar, Girolamo Aleandro, over het Griekse accent", in J. PAPY (ed.), *Erasmus' droom. Het Leuvense Collegium Trilingue 1517-1797. Catalogus bij de tentoonstelling in de Leuvense Universiteitsbibliotheek, 18 oktober 2017 - 18 januari 2018*, Leuven - Paris - Bristol, Peeters, 2017, p. 345-347.

10. This list is based on P. BOTLEY, *Learning Greek in Western Europe* (as in n. 8), p. 119-154, and on a query in the Universal Short Title Catalogue (USTC), conducted in October 2019. The numbers between square brackets point to different editions in a specific city in the same year.

able to rely on the numerous Latin versions available, not least those of Erasmus.

### 3. Greek grammar in Palsgrave's *Lesclarcissement*

Clearly, Palsgrave was in a position to obtain a thorough knowledge of Gaza's grammar. Does this manifest itself in his *Lesclarcissement*? Or is it indeed the case that Palsgrave only followed Gaza on a macro-level, namely in the structure of his work, in order to meet the demands of his royal patrons, who wanted him to elaborate on certain aspects of French grammar? In this view, Palsgrave, instead of rewriting his first two books, would have opted to compose a third book treating French grammar in more detail, a *modus operandi* he wanted to grant authority by dropping the name of a scholarly authority such as Theodore Gaza. Yet several observations by Palsgrave suggest that he went far beyond mere namedropping and was influenced by Greek grammatical tradition on a more profound level when describing various aspects of the French language.

#### 3. 1. *Stress*

The first indication that Palsgrave was closely acquainted with Greek grammar occurs early in his *Lesclarcissement*, in his discussion of the French stress accent<sup>11</sup>. He noticed that Greek could have its accent only on the three last syllables and Latin only on the penultimate and sometimes antepenultimate syllables<sup>12</sup>. The French, however, preferred to put the accent on the last syllable and, exceptionally, on the penultimate syllable. Yet Palsgrave went to great lengths to demonstrate that the mystical number three, present in the Greek accent, was present in some other way in the French stress accent:

But to the intent that these thynges vsed of the frenche men in their pronouciation/ and all others concernyng the very grunde of theyr analogie/ may nat seme vtterly fortuyt and done by chaunce/ but rather by some secret mistery gyuen by maner of a syngular priuiledge vnto this most christened nation. Let vs se howe ternarius numerus/ that is to say/ the nombre of thre/ whiche of all other is most parfyte/ excellent/ and also mystycall/ dothe secretly with them/ and thorowly worke in this behalfe<sup>13</sup>.

He proceeded by treating the environments in which the French stress accent moved from the last to the penultimate syllable. This was most closely related to the nasal pronunciation of the three vowels *a*, *e*, and *o* before *m* and *n* or when the vowel *e* was in the last syllable. In other words,

11. See also G. STEIN, *John Palsgrave* (as in n. 2), p. 65-67.

12. Palsgrave did not, however, mention the original musical quality of the Greek accent.

13. J. PALSGRAVE, *Lesclarcissement* (as in n. 1), introduction, sig. B.i.<sup>R</sup>.



Palsgrave wanted to force the number three into his discussion of the French accent, perhaps not only because of its theological importance (e.g., Trinity) but also because of its central importance in the Greek accentual system. For, apart from the three possible positions for the accent in a word, the Greek language also had three different accents, namely *acutus*, *gravis*, and *circumflexus*, not mentioned by Palsgrave here. Yet he was no doubt aware of it, as it is likely that he took his information on the three-syllable rule in Greek from the second book of Gaza's grammar, where he could read which Greek accents could occupy which positions<sup>14</sup>.

### 3. 2. *Orthography and pronunciation*

In the very same passage on the Greek accent in Gaza's work, which was in fact a treatment of Greek diacritic marks in general, Palsgrave likely found information on the Greek habit of inserting an apostrophe (<'>) where vowels collided and the first one disappeared<sup>15</sup>. He noticed here another similarity between Greek and French, adding hyperbolically that the French "be more curious in the obseruyng of the figure called Apostrophe/ than the Grekes be themselfe"<sup>16</sup>. This observation on parallels in Greek and French orthography is not a unique case. Palsgrave displayed a close familiarity with Greek orthography and pronunciation elsewhere, too. Observing that French had loanwords from Greek containing the digraphs <ph> and <th>, he explained that the French pronounce the former like the Greeks do, namely as [f]. *Phantasie*, for instance, sounded like *fantasie*. Palsgrave went on to discuss the digraph <th> and its utterance in French:

As for th it is in maner agaynste the nature of theyr tonge/ to gyue hym suche sounde as the Grekes do/ no more than they can sownde the wordes of our tonge/ whiche we writte with th/ so that for *theologie*, *theorique*, *Theophile*, *mathematicque*, *diphóngue*, *orthographie*, they sounde *teologie*, *teoricque*, *Teophile*, *matematicque*, *diph tongue*, *ortographie*, soundyng t in the stede of th [...] <sup>17</sup>.

The point is that the French cannot pronounce the Greek letter <θ> and the English <th>, which sounded, and still sound, very similar as [θ]. This observation indicates that Palsgrave was familiar with the Greek pronunciation of the day and suggests that he attended Greek classes, where this

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14. See Th. GAZA, *In hoc uolumine hæc insunt. Theodori Introductiuæ gra[m]matices libri quatuor. Eiusdem de Mensibus opusculum sanequa[m] pulchru[m] [...]*, Impressum Venetiis in ædibus Aldi Romani, 1495, sig. b β v<sup>R</sup> (in the section "On accent" [Περὶ προσφθιάς]). In the present paper, I will quote from this Renaissance edition, since no reliable modern edition is available.

15. Th. GAZA, *In hoc uolumine* (as in n. 14), sig. b β v<sup>V</sup>.

16. J. PALSGRAVE, *Lesclarcissement* (as in n. 1), introduction, sig. B.i.v.

17. J. PALSGRAVE, *Lesclarcissement* (as in n. 1), book 1, fol. viii<sup>R-V</sup>.

vernacular-style Greek [θ] was omnipresent. This sound obviously reminded him of his native language.

The fact that Palsgrave discussed the three digraphs <ch>, <ph>, and <th> under one heading (“Howe ch/ ph/ and th/ be sounded in the frenche tonge”, fol. viii<sup>r-v</sup>) also suggests that he had the Greek class of aspirated voiceless plosives in mind, even though <ch> corresponded to a [ʃ] sound in French rather than to the vernacular Greek pronunciation of <χ> as [x]. Gaza also had described these three sounds together with related plosives, as most other Greek grammarians did<sup>18</sup>.

Palsgrave moreover noticed that the French had great difficulties in pronouncing the original Greek sound conveyed by the letter psi <ψ> in loan words such as *psalme* and *psaltere*, which they uttered as *salme* and *saltere*, “bycause they can nat gyue ps/ whiche is a greke letter/ his true sounde”. The French encountered similar difficulties with the “true sownde” of the Greek letter xi <ξ>, which they likewise uttered as a simple [s] at the beginning of words like *xenotrophe* and *xylobalsome*, rendered as *senotrophe* and *sylobalsome*<sup>19</sup>. Finally, Palsgrave also linked the presence of the letter <k> in French orthography to nouns of Greek as well as Dutch provenance. This letter is, in other words, imported and “the very true frenche tong of itselfe/ vseth neuer k”<sup>20</sup>.

In sum, as far as spelling and pronunciation are concerned, Palsgrave mainly stressed the differences between Greek and French; yet to be able to discern these, a thorough mastery of both languages was required.

### 3. 3. *French variation and Greek “dialecta”*

Still in his exposition of French orthography and pronunciation, Palsgrave inserted a lengthy treatment of the French <τ><sup>21</sup>. This letter had the same sound in French as it had in Latin, even though Parisians uttered it as [z] in words like “Pazis” for “Parys” (the city of Paris) and “chaize” for “chayre” (‘chair’). Erasmus had also noticed this Parisian peculiarity in his well-known dialogue on the pronunciation of Latin and Greek<sup>22</sup>. Palsgrave believed that the Parisians should not be followed in this feature, even

18. Th. GAZA, *In hoc uolumine* (as in n. 14), sig. b β v<sup>r</sup> (grouping the letters together as κ χ γ - π φ β - τ θ δ). See also already sig. α ii<sup>r</sup>.

19. J. PALSGRAVE, *Lesclarcissement* (as in n. 1), book 1, fol. ix<sup>r</sup>.

20. J. PALSGRAVE, *Lesclarcissement* (as in n. 1), book 1, fol. xii<sup>v</sup>.

21. J. PALSGRAVE, *Lesclarcissement* (as in n. 1), book 1, fol. xiii<sup>v</sup>.

22. See D. ERASMUS, *De recta Latini Græciq[ue] sermonis pronu[n]tiatione [...]* *Dialogus* [...], Apud inclytam Basilæam, in officina Frobeniana, 1528, p. 52, where it is paralleled with an [r]/[s] alternation among Greek dialects in words like *tharreîn* (θαρρεῖν) vs. *tharseîn* (θαρσεῖν). Notably, Erasmus also used the example of *Maria* vs. *Masia*, corresponding to Palsgrave’s *Mary* vs. *Mazy*.

though they were the linguistic model in most other respects. This observation induced him to reflect at greater length on the norm for French and its regional extent. Apart from Paris, he also looked at the speech of those

cou[n]treys that be conteygned bytwene the ryuer of Seyne and the ryuer of Loyre/ which the Romayns called somtyme Gallya Celtica: for within that space is containd the herte of Fraunce/ where the tonge is at this day moost parfyte/ and hath of moost aunycyente so contynued/ so that I thynke it but superfluous/ and vnto the lernar but a nedelesse confusyon/ to shewe the dyuersite of pronuncyacion of the other frontier countreys<sup>23</sup>.

What is more, all self-respecting authors and public officials used this Île-de-France French, wherever in France they were active. Indeed, the inhabitants of Hainaut, Romance-speaking Brabant, and neighboring areas did not use their native Walloon language in writing, but resorted to the “parfyte frenche tonge” of Paris and surroundings<sup>24</sup>. Here, Palsgrave drew attention to a notable difference between French and Greek. Whereas the Greeks used various dialects in writing for literary purposes, the French could not, he argued in the following anacoluthic sentence:

But if there were dyuersite in wrytyng amo[n]gest them of the frenche tonge/ lyke as there were so[m]tyme among the Grekes *Dialecta*/ so that euery man wrote in his owne tonge/ lyke as the grekes somtyme dyd<sup>25</sup>.

Although pointing out a mismatch between French and Greek, this passage seems to reveal a close acquaintance with Greek scholarship on Palsgrave's part. The word of Greek provenance *dialect* was in 1530 only known to a select group of Hellenists, including Erasmus, who used it either in the Greek original form *diálektos* (διάλεκτος) or – more rarely – in its Latinized form *dialectus*, exclusively in order to discuss variation in the Greek language<sup>26</sup>. What is more, Palsgrave even seems to provide the first attestation in a vernacular text thus far retrieved, even if it is in the somewhat enigmatic form “*Dialecta*”<sup>27</sup>. It is not unlikely that this is a typo for “*Dialectoi*” or “*Dialecti*”, the nominative plural of the Greek and Latin word, respectively. These nominative plural forms would fit in well with the

23. J. PALSGRAVE, *Lesclarcissement* (as in n. 1), book 1, fol. xiii.<sup>v</sup>.

24. For Palsgrave's ear for French (and English) regional variation, see G. STEIN, *John Palsgrave* (as in n. 2), especially Chapter 3.

25. J. PALSGRAVE, *Lesclarcissement* (as in n. 1), book 1, fol. xiii.<sup>v</sup>.

26. On the uncommon development of this word from antiquity to the Renaissance, see R. VAN ROOY, “Διάλεκτος, *Dialectus*, *Dialect*. A Word's Curious Journey from Ancient Greek to (Neo-)Latin and Beyond”, *Latomus. Revue d'études latines* 78 (2019), p. 733-770.

27. Palsgrave's use of “*Dialecta*” can be taken as an addition to the account in R. VAN ROOY and J. CONSIDINE, “Between Homonymy and Polysemy. The Origins and Career of the English Form *Dialect* in the Sixteenth Century”, *Anglia. Journal of English Philology* 134/4 (2016), p. 639-667.

rest of the sentence syntactically: “lyke as there were so[m]tyme among the Grekes *Dialectoi / Dialecti*”. Early attestations of the word *dialect* exhibit hesitation more often, especially in their Latin form, as it was still naturalizing as a full-fledged (Neo-)Latin word at this stage<sup>28</sup>. 1530 was, however, a turning point in the history of the Latin word *dialectus*, as it then featured for the first time prominently on the title page of a successful manual for Greek dialectal variation compiled by the Franco-Flemish Hellenist Adrien Amerot (ca. 1495-1560). What is more, during his stay in Leuven, Palsgrave might have met Amerot, who taught Greek there in private around that time and was held in high esteem by Erasmus<sup>29</sup>.

Briefly, French variation reminded Palsgrave of Greek diversity and the term *dialect* closely associated with it. He must have become familiar with the Greek dialects during his study of this classical language, a familiarity still relatively rare at that point in time. Yet he seems to have been struck more by the differences in status of French and Greek dialects, as he pointed out the lack of literary status of French varieties as opposed to their Greek counterparts. In this regard, he differed from the French humanist Geoffroy Tory (1480-1533), who chose to present Greek as a model situation for regulating French in his *Champ fleury*, published one year before Palsgrave’s *Lesclarcissement* and read by Palsgrave:

*Nostre langue est aussi facile a reigler et mettre en bon ordre, que fut iadis la langue Grecque, en la quelle ya cinq diuersites de la[n]gage, qui sont la langue Attique, la Dorique, la Aeolique, la Ionique, & la Comune, qui ont certaines differences entre elles en Declinaisons de noms, en Coniugatio[n]s de verbes, en Orthographe, en Accentz & en Pronunciation. Co[m]mme [sic] vng Aurheur [sic] Grec nomme Ioa[n]nes Gra[m]maticus, & plusieurs [sic] autres traictent & enseignent tresamplement. Tout ainsi pourrions nous bien faire, de la langue de Court & Parrhisiene, de la la[n]gue Picarde, de la Lionnoise, de la Lymosine, & de la Prouuensalle<sup>30</sup>.*

Our language is as easy to regulate and put in good order as the Greek language once was, in which there are five diversities of speech, which are the Attic language, the Doric, the Aeolic, the Ionic, and the Common; these have

28. See R. VAN ROOY, “Διάλεκτος, *Dialectus, Dialect*” (as in n. 26).

29. See R. VAN ROOY, “A Professor at Work. Hadrianus Amerotius (c. 1495-1560) and the Study of Greek in Sixteenth-Century Louvain”, in N. CONSTANTINIDOU and H. LAMERS (eds.), *Receptions of Hellenism in Early Modern Europe. 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (Brill’s Studies in Intellectual History, 303), Leiden - Boston, Brill, 2019, p. 94-112, with further references.

30. G. TORY, *Champ fleury. Au quel est contenu Lart & Science de la deue & vraye Proportio[n] des Lettres Attiques, quo[n] dit autreme[n]t Lettres Antiques, & vulgairment Lettres Romaines proportionnees selon le Corps & Visage humain*, A Paris, par Maistre Geoffroy Tory de Bourges [...] et par Giles Gourmont, 1529, fol. IV<sup>v</sup>-V<sup>r</sup>. On Palsgrave and Tory, see G. STEIN, *John Palsgrave* (as in n. 2), p. 58-59, p. 106-112, p. 114-115, p. 118, p. 142, p. 174. English translations in this paper are mine.

certain differences among them in noun declensions, verb conjugations, orthography, accents, and pronunciation, as a Greek author named John the Grammarian and several others discuss and teach in great detail. We could very well do exactly the same for the language of the court and Paris, the Picard language, the Lyonnais, the Limousin, and the Provençal.

Even though Palsgrave did not entirely agree with Tory, it is telling that both scholars intuitively linked French to Greek variation, an association encouraged by their familiarity with the Greek grammatical tradition. In Palsgrave's case, the clearest clue for his acquaintance with Greek scholarship on the dialects is his usage of the term *dialect*, in 1530 still a rare and learned word. Palsgrave no doubt encountered information on the Greek dialects in Gaza's grammar, which refers to dialect forms at various places, albeit inconsistently and while only very sporadically using the term *diálektos*<sup>31</sup>. It is therefore not excluded that Palsgrave had picked up the word elsewhere, but where? To answer this, the *Champ fleury* perhaps offers a clue: Tory was more explicit about his background as a Hellenist by referring to a well-known and widely distributed early Byzantine treatise on the Greek dialects ascribed to John the Grammarian<sup>32</sup>, which uses the term throughout and was usually printed together with two other treatises on the Greek dialects ascribed to Plutarch and Gregory of Corinth.

### 3. 4. *The parts of speech: The Greek and French article*

Partes of reason/ if we shall here in take example of the Romayns/ they haue thrise.iii.for besydes the.viii.partes of speche co[m]men betwene them and the latines/ that is to say/ Nowne/ pronowne/ verbe/ participle/ preposytion/ aduerbe/ coniunction/ and interiection/ they haue also a nynth part ofreason whiche I call article/ borowyng the name of the Grekes<sup>33</sup>.

Palsgrave took over the eight traditional parts of speech from Roman grammar, which was an adaptation, however slight, of the Alexandrian Greek system. The Romans had discarded the article category in favor of the interjection – or in Quintilian's (1, 4, 19) words: “our speech does not require articles, which is why they are distributed among the other parts of speech, but the interjection is added to the abovementioned ones”<sup>34</sup>. Palsgrave felt that French did require the article and included it on the au-

31. See e.g. Th. GAZA, *In hoc uolumine* (as in n. 14), sig. d δ viii<sup>v</sup>.

32. On the distribution of John the Grammarian's treatise and other Byzantine works on the Greek dialects in the Renaissance, see P. TROVATO, “‘Dialecto’ e sinonimi (‘idioma’, ‘proprietà’, ‘lingua’) nella terminologia linguistica quattro- e cinquecentesca (con un'appendice sulla tradizione a stampa dei trattatelli dialettologici bizantini)”, *Rivista di letteratura italiana* 2 (1984), p. 205-236.

33. J. PALSGRAVE, *Lesclarissement* (as in n. 1), introduction, sig. B.iii.<sup>v</sup>.

34. *Noster sermo articulos non desiderat ideoque in alias partes orationis sparguntur, sed accedit superioribus interiectio.*

thority of the Greek language and grammaticographic tradition<sup>35</sup>. As a result, he surpassed the traditional number of parts of speech, just like, for instance, Antonio de Nebrija had already done in his 1492 grammar of Castilian Spanish, the first of a vernacular language to appear in print<sup>36</sup>.

In his introduction, Palsgrave apparently presented the French article as being poorer in terms of form and accidents<sup>37</sup>. He seems to have implied that whereas Greek had an entire declension for the article with numerous forms and three accidents (case, gender, and number), French only had two forms *un* and *le*, which had two accidents: gender and number<sup>38</sup>. With the benefit of hindsight, it might seem strange that Palsgrave saw these two forms as a sign of poverty, while, in fact, he had correctly distinguished between the definite article *le* and the indefinite article *un*<sup>39</sup>. This feeling of estrangement grows when one considers that he did not point to the fact that Greek lacked an indefinite article like French *un(e)* and English *a(n)*.

In the second book, Palsgrave treated the French parts of speech. Notably, his discussion started with the article. Even though he did not mention his indebtedness to Greek tradition here, he was no doubt inspired by Greek grammar books like Gaza's, in which the article was also usually described as the first part of speech<sup>40</sup>. This was an innovation vis-à-vis Ancient Greek and Byzantine tradition and likely to be explained by the fact that Latin grammars lacked a separate discussion of this part of speech, even though it was marginally present in them<sup>41</sup>. Whereas in the grammar of Gaza and other Byzantine scholars the article was still listed in its traditional fourth position, Palsgrave put it before the traditional eight Latin ones at the very beginning of the second book of his *Lesclarcissement* and included it among the declined parts of speech together with the noun, pronoun, verb, and par-

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35. On Palsgrave's division into parts of speech, see, e.g., also J. JULIEN, "La terminologie française des parties du discours et de leurs sous-classes au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle", *Langages* 23/92 (1988), p. 65-78 (*passim*); G. STEIN, *John Palsgrave* (as in n. 2), p. 71-72.

36. A. DE NEBRIJA, [...] *Gramatica [...] sobre la lengua castellana* [...], En la muy noble ciudad de Salamanca, s.n., 1492, sig. .d.v.<sup>R</sup>.

37. J. PALSGRAVE, *Lesclarcissement* (as in n. 1), introduction, sig. B.iii.<sup>V</sup>: "Articles they haue but twayne/ Vng/ and Le/ & they haue but two accidentes/ as I declare in the begynnyng of the seconde boke."

38. Cf. M. GLATIGNY, "À l'aube de la grammaire française" (as in n. 6), p. 139.

39. Cf. G. STEIN, *John Palsgrave* (as in n. 2), p. 71.

40. See Th. GAZA, *In hoc uolumine* (as in n. 14), sig. a ii<sup>R-V</sup>.

41. On this innovation in early Renaissance Greek grammars, see Robert H. ROBINS, *The Byzantine Grammarians. Their Place in History*, Berlin - New York, Mouton de Gruyter, 1993, p. 238. On the article in Latin tradition, see the recent discussion by T. DENECKER and P. SWIGGERS, "The *articulus* According to Latin Grammarians up to the Early Middle Ages. The Complex Interplay of Tradition and Innovation in Grammatical Doctrine", *Glotta* 94 (2018), p. 127-152.

ticiple<sup>42</sup>. He went on to offer the declension of the article on the same page. This morphological overview shows that he did not blindly follow what he found in Greek grammar books, as he excluded case from the accidents of the article. What is more, he refrained from taking over the rather clumsy distinction between prepositive and postpositive article made in Greek tradition to refer to the Greek definite article and the Greek relative pronoun, respectively. It seems probable that he correctly recognized the postpositive article as a relative pronoun, as other humanists had before him, including, for instance, the Italian humanist Urbano Bolzanio<sup>43</sup>. He does seem to have followed Greek tradition in noticing the congruence between the article and the noun which it accompanies.

Palsgrave's most interesting comment on the French article, however, appeared in an unexpected context, when he explained that certain French conjunctions were prone to elide their final vowel before a word beginning with a vowel. Palsgrave added that a similar process takes place with the articles *le* and *la*, even though this word class did not derive from Latin tradition, unlike the conjunction. In fact, he consciously opposed French to Latin here and aligned it with English and Greek, an observation worth quoting in full:

Besydes these wordes aboue rehersed/ the[re] be two other whiche haue the same propertie: That is to saye/ *Le* and *la*, whiche I haue nat rehersed vnder any of the.viii.partes of speche/ of the latyn tonge: for the latyns haue no suche wordes/ but we in our tonge haue wordes of lyke signification/ whiche is this worde/ The: as where they saye in frenche/ *Le máistre la dáme*, we say in our tonge/ the mayster the lady: So that this worde/ the/ with vs/ counter vayleth bothe *le* and *la*. And therefore sythe the latyn tonge hath no suche wordes/ and that the frenche tong hath certayne other that be of lyke sorte/ I shall in the seconde boke whe[re] I make rehersall of the partes of speche in the frenche tonge call them articles/ borowyng a name for them of the grekes/ whiche also haue wordes of lyke signification and propertie in their tonge [...] <sup>44</sup>.

Without offering an exact definition, Palsgrave seems to have arrived at a very accurate conception of what constituted a definite article by comparing French *le* to English *the* and to the Greek definite article *ho* (ὁ), which

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42. J. PALSGRAVE, *Lesclarcissement* (as in n. 1), book 2, fol. xxxi.<sup>r</sup>: "In the frenche tong be .ix. partes of speche/ article/ nowne/ pronowne/ verbe/ participle/ aduerbe/ preposition/ coniunction/ and interiection.of whiche .v. be declined/ that is to say/ varie their last letters/ article/ nowne/ pronowne/ verbe/ & participle.and the other.iiii.be vndeclined/ that is to say/ remayne unuaried in their last letters for all maners of spekyng."

43. U. BOLZANIO, *Institutiones Graecae grammatices*, Venetiis, in aedibus Aldi Manutii, 1497, sig. b i<sup>r</sup>.

44. J. PALSGRAVE, *Lesclarcissement* (as in n. 1), book 1, fol. xvli.<sup>r</sup>.

is, however, not explicitly mentioned<sup>45</sup>. What is more, he motivated his choice for *article*, an Anglicized term from Greek grammar (*árthron* / ἄρθρον) through Latin *articulus*, because the Greeks had words with similar meaning and features. Even though he could have known the *articulus* category and concept through Latin tradition, he deliberately chose to tie the French (and English) definite article to its Greek equivalent. He did not, however, go so far as to posit a close genealogical kinship between French and Greek, as several sixteenth-century French scholars did<sup>46</sup>. It seems that he conceived the similarities between French, English, and Greek in the first place as a kind of typological correspondences rather than as traces of a historical relationship, which his choice for the English verb *to counter vayne* appears to confirm.

One might object that the fact that Palsgrave did not mention any word form of the Greek definite article can suggest that he did not know Greek, or at least not very well. However, it seems at least as likely that he wanted to avoid confusing his audience of English speakers who wanted to learn French, not Greek, especially since other passages of his grammar do point to a thorough acquaintance with this ancient language and its grammatico-graphic tradition.

### 3. 5. “*Curious as the Grekes be*”: *The dual and French*

In his discussion of the second accident of nouns, namely number, Palsgrave once again tied French to Greek. Indeed, setting apart these two tongues from Latin, he granted them a third number next to singular and plural, namely the dual, a number designating natural pairs, such as eyes and feet. Even though this category could have been known to Palsgrave through Latin grammar, where it slumbered as a kind of phantom concept, it is clear that he was drawing on his acquaintance with Greek grammar. Indeed, traditional Latin grammars, for instance that of Donatus, did not always connect the dual prominently with the Greeks, in contrast to Palsgrave, who in other respects followed the Donatian model of Latin grammar<sup>47</sup>. What examples did the Englishman provide for French dual

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45. Cf. G. A. PADLEY, *Grammatical Theory in Western Europe 1500-1700. Trends in Vernacular Grammar II*, Cambridge, University Press, 1988, p. 425 & 427.

46. See, e.g., L. GIARD, “L’entrée en lice des vernaculaires”, in S. AUROUX (ed.), *Histoire des idées linguistiques*, vol. 2: *Le développement de la grammaire occidentale*, Liège, Mardaga, 1992, p. 206-225 (here p. 209-210).

47. See, most recently, T. DENECKER, “Ambo legēre? The ‘Dual Number’ in Latin Grammaticography up to the Early Medieval *artes*”, *Glotta* 95 (2019), p. 101-134. On Palsgrave and Donatus, see G. STEIN, *John Palsgrave* (as in n. 2), p. 71. Cf. also M. GLATIGNY, “À l’aube de la grammaire française” (as in n. 6), p. 136.



forms? Understanding the nature of the dual correctly, he interpreted it as referring to things that come in pairs, including pants and glasses:

Nombres if we shulde herin be curyous as the Grekes be/ they haue also thre/ for besydes the syngular nombre and the plurell commyn betwene them and the latines/ they vse to expresse all suche substanyues as we in our tong circu[m]locute by payres/ by one onely worde in the plurel letter/ as for a payre of hosen/ a payre of tong[es]/ a payre of spectacles/ they say Vnes chauce/ vnes tenailles/ vnes lunettes [...] <sup>48</sup>.

In sum, Palsgrave interpreted phrases such as *unes lunettes* as Greek-style duals in the introduction to his grammar, in which case he was likely inspired by his reading of Gaza's handbook, which teems with references to the Greek dual. Already on the very first page, in his discussion of the accidents of the Greek article, the Byzantine scholar mentioned the dual number<sup>49</sup>. In the third book, however, Palsgrave followed more in Latin tradition by designating these words as *pluralia tantum*, words that only appear in the plural, rather than as dual forms<sup>50</sup>. This tension remains unresolved, and the reader is left to wonder how these two viewpoints are to be reconciled. Apparently, Palsgrave was working with multiple models, making *ad hoc* decisions about which to implement when.

About gender, another accident of the category of the noun, Palsgrave noted that French observed it as perfectly as the three revered languages Greek, Hebrew, and Latin, even if the printers of his day were utterly careless in rendering this quality of French also in printing<sup>51</sup>. Remarkably, Palsgrave named Greek rather than Hebrew first when listing the three so-called sacred languages. This might also suggest a predilection for this tongue on the grammarian's part. What is more, Greek tradition might resonate in Palsgrave's other observations on gender in French. As noted by Gabriele Stein, he innovated by introducing the category of "doubtful gender" when discussing French nouns<sup>52</sup>. This also might echo his Greek grammar studies, as manuals for the Greek language usually distinguished several extra genders next to the three traditional ones commonly found in Latin tradition: masculine, feminine, neuter. These extra classes included a

48. J. PALSGRAVE, *Lesclarcissement* (as in n. 1), introduction, sig. B.iv.<sup>R</sup>.

49. Th. GAZA, *In hoc uolumine* (as in n. 14), sig. α ii.<sup>R</sup>.

50. J. PALSGRAVE, *Lesclarcissement* (as in n. 1), book 3, fol. xii.<sup>R</sup>.

51. See J. PALSGRAVE, *Lesclarcissement* (as in n. 1), book 3, fol. v.<sup>R</sup>: "[...] I wolde therby gyue the frenchmen occasion to regarde and value of ryght/ the parfection of their owne tonge/ in whiche I fynde as constant agrement/ concernyng their genders/ as I do in any of the thre tonges parfite/ Greke/ Hebriew/ or latyn: And to thentent also/ that the printers in Fraunce might vse more dilygence/ that the bokes of their owne tonge shulde nat by their ouersight be so vnparfite".

52. G. STEIN, *John Palsgrave* (as in n. 2), p. 75.

“common” and, especially, a “supercommon” one: κοινός (*koinós*) / *communis* versus ἐπίκοινος (*epikoinos*) / *supercommunis*, respectively. The former contained nouns which could be both of masculine and feminine gender, depending on the article preceding them, whereas the latter referred to nouns which had both genders at the same time. This is again information which Palsgrave could have easily found in Gaza’s grammar and which could have inspired him to posit “common” and “doutfull” gender classes for French<sup>53</sup>. Especially in proposing the class of “doutfull genre”, Palsgrave was likely inspired by Greek scholarship and encouraged by his reading of French authors, who, he noticed, used six words “incertainly/ sometyne as masculynes/ sometyne as femynines: and therefore I calle theym of the doutfull genre”. Yet it must be granted that he might also have been inspired by Donatian tradition<sup>54</sup>. On the neuter gender, Palsgrave insightfully observed that French lacked it, “resemblyng therin the Hebrew tonge”<sup>55</sup>. In conclusion, Palsgrave’s introduction of extra gender classes suggests that the influence of Greek grammatical tradition could work more latently as well, without acknowledgement. A closer investigation of Palsgrave’s extensive work might reveal more such implicit currents of influence.

### 3. 6. *Past tenses in Greek and French: Between aorist and augment*

I will finish my overview by treating a case in which influence of the Greek grammatical tradition is undeniable, namely Palsgrave’s account of certain features of the French verbal system. Most remarkably, the English grammarian appropriated and adapted the Greek aorist concept to French. In his notes on the French verb, he inserted a paragraph carrying the following title:

To knowe therefore howe and whan the frenche men vse their preter imparfyte tence/ and whan their indiffynyte tence/ whiche name I borowe of the grekes/ for they haue a tence whiche they call *Aoristus*, that is to say *indifinitus*, whiche moche resembleth this tence in [the] frenche tonge<sup>56</sup>.

In this section, Palsgrave developed a remarkable account of the French usage of the so-called *passé simple* versus the *imparfait*. Today, the *passé simple* (‘simple past’) is traditionally taken as an exclusively literary verb form used to describe past actions, conceived as completed, at the fore-

53. Th. GAZA, *In hoc uolumine* (as in n. 14), sig. b β vi<sup>r</sup>.

54. See, e.g., Sedulius Scotus, *In Donati artem maiorem* (ed. B. LÖFSTEDT [1977]), part 2, p. 110.

55. J. PALSgrave, *Lesclarcissement* (as in n. 1), book 2, fol. xxxi<sup>v</sup>.

56. J. PALSgrave, *Lesclarcissement* (as in n. 1), book 3, fol. C.xxii<sup>r</sup>. In this section, I aim to complete and nuance the very brief remarks of G. A. PADLEY, *Grammatical Theory in Western Europe 1500-1700* (as in n. 45), p. 465.

ground of the main thread. The *imparfait* ('imperfect'), in contrast, is considered a past tense marking actions setting the stage for the main thread, the duration of which is often emphasized. The distinction between both tenses is, in other words, largely narrative and pragmatic with aspectual implications. The *passé simple* marks punctual events which move the action forward (the pragmatic focus), whereas the *imparfait* sketches longer-lasting contextual events (topic)<sup>57</sup>. Palsgrave already intuitively grasped this structural opposition in the French verbal system:

Whan the frenche men write an hystory or make rehersall of any acte or mater that is passed/ intendency to declare the cyrcumstances or maners howe the same hystorye or acte was done/ haue chefely their conyderacion vpon the tyme whiche was present whan the same actes were in doynge. And all suche partyculer dedes as aboute that tyme were begon/ and incontynently aboute the same present tyme ended and ouer passed/ all suche maner of dedes expresse they by their indyfynte tence/ and all suche dedes as at the same tyme were in doynge and had contynuaunce after the same present tyme/ all suche actes expresse they by their preter imparfyte tence. So that their preter imparfyte tence serueth to expresse [the] chefe actes that they wyll speke of and their indyfynte tence to declare [the] partyculer actes and cyrcu[m]stances whiche ouerpassed in [the] meane whyle/ as if I wolde shewe one [that] I was yesterday at yorke/ & what thynges chaunced me in [the] meane season [that] I was there/ as I met there with a man whiche salued me & talked with me of many thynges/ they say/ *le estoys hier a Yorke la ie recontraý vng homme qui me salua et men parla de plusieurs choses*<sup>58</sup>.

Palsgrave, however, inversed the narrative-pragmatic value of both tenses. In his view, forms in the *passé simple* expressed small-scale background events, whereas the *imparfait* marked the main acts. Yet he did correctly sense the aspectual implications of this verb form opposition. According to Palsgrave, the *passé simple* had a punctual value, expressing clearly delimited events that were rounded off; these events occurred in the time-frame constituted by *imparfait* forms, the durative character of which Palsgrave understood.

It is tempting to interpret Palsgrave's remarkable understanding of the *passé simple* - *imparfait* contrast as a result of his familiarity with the Greek language and literature. In fact, he named the French *passé simple* after the Greek aorist – "indyfynte tence/ whiche name I borowe of the grekes" – a verb stem with a predominantly aspectual value typically used to express punctual and completed events. In Greek grammar, the term for this verb

57. See, e.g., A. MOLENDIJK, *Le passé simple et l'imparfait. Une approche reichenbachienne*, Amsterdam - Atlanta, Rodopi, 1990, especially the first chapter (p. 5-60).

58. J. PALSGRAVE, *Lesclarcissement* (as in n. 1), book 3, fol. C.xxii<sup>v</sup>.

stem is *aóristos* (ἀόριστος), an adjective derived from privative alpha and the verb *horizō* (ὀρίζω), ‘to determine’. This word means ‘indefinite’ and is therefore typically rendered by Latin *indefinitus*, notably in early sixteenth-century translations of Gaza’s Greek grammar and his treatment of the aorist. Palsgrave, perhaps citing from memory, rendered *aóristos* in Latin as *indifinitus*, which resulted in English *indiffynyte* (variants: *indyfynyte*, *indiffynite*). In this form, the *de*-prefix came to be replaced by the *dis*-prefix, with assimilation to the following [f] sound. The terms *aóristos*, *indefinitus*, and *indiffynyte* reflect an age-old erroneous interpretation of the Greek verb stem still known as *aorist* today. Ever since antiquity, the aorist had been usually taken as indicating that the event described occurred at an unspecified point in the past, hence ‘indefinite’ tense. The imperfect tense, on the other hand, referred to events in the recent past that had just or almost ended<sup>59</sup>. It is surprising that Palsgrave did not adopt this dominant interpretation but rather chose to grant the French *passé simple* and, by extension, the Greek aorist, an aspectual and pragmatic-narrative value. This likely suggests that his understanding of the *passé simple* (aorist) - *imparfait* (imperfect) contrast was to a great extent usage-based, in the sense that he had read both French and Greek literary texts. In both corpora, he found a similar verb form opposition, which he did not understand in terms of determinedness, as Greek grammarians traditionally did, but rather in aspectual and functional terms. Palsgrave further exemplified his interpretation of the two verb forms by citing a paragraph from a work by Jean Lemaire de Belges (ca. 1473 - ca. 1524). He concluded by emphasizing that this distinction had the power of a general rule for the French language and by offering an example from Alain Chartier (ca. 1385-1430) in which the durative aspect of the *imparfait* was prominently present<sup>60</sup>. The fact that

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59. See J. LALLOT, “Aorist (aóristos), Ancient Theories of”, in G. K. GIANNAKIS (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Ancient Greek Language and Linguistics*, online edition, 2013 <[http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2214-448X\\_eagll\\_SIM\\_00000416](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2214-448X_eagll_SIM_00000416)> (last accessed October 22, 2019), with further references.

60. J. PALSGRAVE, *Lesclarcissement* (as in n. 1), book 3, fol. C.xxii<sup>v</sup>-C.xxiii<sup>r</sup>. It may be worthwhile to quote here in full Palsgrave’s second example and his comments on the durative aspect of the *imparfait*: “*Quant en France estoye, Je entretenoye, Seurte par voye, Par les villes quoye, Si que nulz ny meffaisoient, toutes gens alloye[n]t, quel part qui vouloyent, et ne se melloyent, ne ia ne parloyent, fors de liesse et de ioye, de gens la peuploye, la foy augmentoye, iustice gardoye, sience y mettoye, et tous en surte venoyent. Les marchans gaigneoyent, nobles voyagoyent, et chascun planté de monnoye, riche la tenoye, les bons sustenoye, honneur mayntenoye, gens y amenoye, tous estrangiers y venoient, les princes donnoyent, les grans despendoyent, pouters y parloyent, tous en amendoient, cestoyt de honneur la montioye, las trop fait memore &c.* In this place hath Alayne Chartier styll contynued the preter imparfyte tence/ for his intent is to declare that duryng the tyme that peace was honoured in Fraunce/ all

Theodore Gaza did not define the aorist in the traditional way in his grammar might have given Palsgrave the freedom to come up with an entirely new interpretation of the aorist - imperfect contrast. In fact, Gaza had given a rather obscure definition of the aorist in his notoriously difficult fourth book, regarding it as a tense pointing to an action "that is past and complete, but not distinguished as far as activeness and passiveness is concerned"<sup>61</sup>. In sum, even though modern linguistic concepts such as aspect, topic, and focus were obviously unknown to Palsgrave, the English humanist was inventive enough to describe these phenomena in an embryonic fashion by reading French – and likely also Greek – texts. In doing so, he was able to surpass the erratic interpretation of the aorist in traditional Greek grammar by looking at actual usage.

Before moving on to the conclusions, I should point out that there is one last passage in which Palsgrave showed himself to be drawing on his competence in Greek grammar. After offering the paradigms for the French verbs *parler* and *convertir*, he praised the simplicity of the French verb system in contrast to Latin and Greek, especially with regard to past tense formation:

for the frenche tonge vseth neuer augme[n]tation neyther chronical nor sillabical in theyr fyrst sillables/ as the Grekes vse to do through all theyr preterit tenses/ nor mutation from one vowell to another by reason of composicio[n]/ like as the Latins do: nor in the mean sillables any changyng of consona[n]tes/ other than the present tens hath/ as the Grekes moch vse: nor sondrie terminations of the preterit tenses/ lyke as the Latins vse: for the fyrst and mean sillables of all verbes of these.ii.coniugations remayne euer vnchanged/ saue that I fynde sixe verbes/whiche hauyng in the.iii.parsons of theyr singular no[m]bre/ in theyr present tenses/this diphthong *ev*/ change it through all the residue of theyr coniugatyng into *ov* [...] <sup>62</sup>.

This passage reveals once again Palsgrave's close acquaintance with Greek, which marked past tenses by using two types of augments, either a syllabic one *e-* (ἐ-) as in *élabon* (ἔλαβον), 'I took', or a temporal one as the *ē-* (ἦ-) in *ékousa* (ἤκουσα), 'I heard', from *akouō* (ἀκούω). As the above quote demonstrates, Palsgrave knew this, just as he knew that the Greeks had all kinds of consonantal infixes in present stems, as in *lambánō* (λαμβάνω), 'to take', the aorist stem of which is *lab-* (λαβ-).

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these actes by the meane of her were in doynge in the realme/ and by her preserued in contynuaunce so longe as she endured."

61. Th. GAZA, *In hoc uolumine* (as in n. 14), sig. i v<sup>v</sup>: Ὁ δὲ ἀόριστος, τὸ παρεληλυθὸς μὲν καὶ τέλειον, οὐ χωρισμένον δὲ τὰ περὶ τὴν ἐνέργειαν ἢ τὸ πάθος. On the notorious difficulty of his fourth book on syntax, indebted to, among others, the ancient grammarian Apollonius Dyscolus, see P. BOTLEY, *Learning Greek in Western Europe* (as in n. 8), p. 23-24.

62. J. PALSGRAVE, *Lesclarcissement* (as in n. 1), book 2, fol. xl<sup>r-v</sup>.

#### 4. Conclusion

This contribution has shown that Palsgrave's dependence on Greek grammatical tradition, in general, and on Theodore Gaza's popular manual, in particular, was much greater than modern scholars have thus far maintained. He was familiar with Greek peculiarities absent from Latin and resorted to Greek grammar rather than Latin when discussing French phenomena which were difficult to tie to the Latin language, including especially the French article, its usage of the simple past, and the presence of variation in the Gallo-Romance linguistic sphere. The fact that I have had to uncover this influence through a meticulous analysis has various grounds, two of which seem to be most compelling. Firstly, there was in 1530 not yet a tradition of printing Greek typeface in England, which only developed in the last decades of the sixteenth century<sup>63</sup>. This might explain why such rare words as *dialect* did not appear in Greek font, especially since at this stage this was barely naturalized as a Latin word and was still more than three decades away from being introduced into the English lexicon<sup>64</sup>. Secondly, and more importantly, Palsgrave probably did not want to confuse his readers, native speakers of English who wanted to learn French, by overwhelming them with too much information on the particularities of Greek grammar. In fact, he seems to have avoided even Latin terminology in his grammatical exposé, even though it is not altogether absent.

It is unclear in which language Palsgrave studied Gaza's Greek grammar. It is likely that it was predominantly Latin, for instance in one of the many editions of Erasmus' translations of the first two books. His remarkably early usage of the word *dialect* – in the odd form *dialecta* – probably also suggests that he was familiar with Greek grammatical texts, especially since at his time of writing *dialectus* was not yet fully naturalized as a Latin word and many humanists used it only with hesitation. Something similar holds for his early usage of the term *aoristus* next to Latin *indifinitus* / *indefinitus*.

Could it be that Palsgrave was acquainted with Greek grammatical tradition via another way than Gaza? If so, which other grammar manuals could he have known? As can be gathered from Paul Botley's overview, Palsgrave could indeed have relied on other handbooks; the most probable candidates are the popular grammars of Gaza's compatriots Manuel Chrysoloras (ca. 1355-1412) and Constantine Lascaris (1434-1501) and that

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63. See M. LAZARUS, "Greek in Tudor England", at *George Etheridge's Encomium on Henry VIII addressed to Elizabeth I – British Library Royal MS 16 C X* <<http://hellenic-institute.uk/research/etheridge/Lazarus/Tudor-Greek.html>> (last accessed October 22, 2019).

64. See R. VAN ROOY, "Διάλεκτος, *Dialectus*, *Dialect*" (as in n. 26).

of the Italian Urbano Bolzanio (1442-1524), which were widespread before and also after humanists started to produce their own grammars locally from 1512 onwards, first in the German-speaking sphere but gradually also in France and the Low Countries<sup>65</sup>. However, since Palsgrave only mentions Gaza by name and Gaza's work seems to suffice to explain Palsgrave's debt to Greek tradition, it seems an unnecessary complication to assume that he relied on other handbooks, too. What is more, Gaza was the reference grammar for English Hellenists after Erasmus' teaching on the island and probably the only one to which Palsgrave had continuous access in the twenty years or so during which he worked on his *Lesclarcissement*. Ockham's razor, then, seems to favor Gaza as Palsgrave's number one source on Greek grammar, even if it is not entirely impossible that further research might reveal that the Englishman had a secondary access to the newfound grammatical tradition. Indeed, his usage of the term *dialecta* might already suggest that he also relied on popular Byzantine treatises on the Greek dialects such as the one by John the Grammarian, which Palsgrave's source Tory certainly knew.

It has, of course, not been my intention to claim that Palsgrave only looked at the Greek grammatical tradition in composing his *Lesclarcissement*. As previous scholars have noted, he also eagerly relied on Latin-style (Donatian) grammaticography, on the one hand, and his observation of French and his native English usage, on the other. There is even the occasional reference to Hebrew particularities, whether or not shared by French; this suggests that Palsgrave might have fulfilled the humanist ideal of the trilingual scholar – not unusual for someone with a history in Paris and Leuven, both home to trilingual colleges. Palsgrave's eclecticism is captured nicely in one of the poems by the English rhetorician Leonard Cox (ca. 1495 - ca. 1549), prefixed as a liminary piece to his *Lesclarcissement* and addressed to Geoffroy Tory:

- 1 *CAMPO QVOD toties Gefride docte  
In florente tuo cupisti, habemus.  
Nam sub legibus hic bene approbatis  
Sermo Gallicus ecce perdocetur.*
- 5 *Non rem grammaticam Palæmon ante  
Tractarat melius suis latinis,  
Quotquot floruerant ue posterorum.*

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65. P. BOTLEY, *Learning Greek in Western Europe* (as in n. 8). It seems unlikely that Palsgrave made use of manuals from the German-speaking sphere, which only gradually and scantily reached more western parts of Europe. The short compendium of Jean Chéradame (Paris, 1521) seems also improbable because of its poor diffusion (it only ran through one edition) and because it appeared when Palsgrave was already back in England.

- Nec Græcis*<sup>66</sup> *melius putato Gazam,*  
*Instruxisse suos libris politis,*  
 10 *Seu quotquot prætio*<sup>67</sup> *prius fuere,*  
*Quam nunc Gallica iste noster Tradit.*  
*Est doctus, facilis, brevisq[ue] quantum*  
*Res permittit, et inde nos ouamus,*  
*Campo quod toties GEFRIDE docte*  
 15 *In florente tuo cupisti, habentes.*

We now possess, learned Geoffroy, what you have so often wished in your *Champ fleury*. For here, by means of well-approved rules, the French tongue is taught in detail, look! [5] Neither Palaemon nor his numerous successors had treated the matter of grammar in earlier times better for their Latin audience. And do believe that Gaza did not instruct his Greeks through elegant books [10] – and the same goes for his worthy predecessors, however numerous – any better than our man here now teaches French. He is learned, straightforward, and brief, in as far as the subject matter allows it, and now we rejoice because we possess what you, learned Geoffroy, have so often [15] wished in your *Champ fleury*<sup>68</sup>.

In this hendecasyllabic poem, Cox suggested that Palsgrave did a better job describing French than the very first recorded Latin grammarian Quintus Remmius Palaemon (d. ca. 62/72 AD) and his successors and the entire Greek scholarly tradition up to Theodore Gaza, one of its very last representatives. Palsgrave, in other words, surpassed all previous work by making eclectic use of Latin and Greek grammatical tradition, a method he combined with a hands-on approach to written and spoken French and English.

I have not been able to discuss every detail in which Palsgrave might have been inspired by Greek grammatical scholarship, and I have focused on passages where he was explicit about his indebtedness to Greek tradition. It is, however, conceivable that Palsgrave relied on his knowledge of Greek grammar in other parts of his work as well, as his description of the gender classes of French nouns seems to suggest<sup>69</sup>. Whatever the case, Palsgrave's *Lesclarcissement* urges scholars to reconsider the impact of the renewed interest in the Greek heritage on Renaissance language studies, all the more so since the influence of Greek grammar is not always transparent. Antonio de Nebrija's debt to the Greek tradition, for instance, should perhaps be

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66. *Sic pro* "Græcos".

67. *Sic pro* "prætio".

68. See J. PALSGRAVE, *Lesclarcissement* (as in n. 1), verso side of the title page (= sig. A.i.v). The corrections are taken from F. GÉNIN (ed.), *L'éclaircissement* (as in n. 1), p. 1135. Génin also offers a French translation (p. 11).

69. Perhaps his account of "mean verbs" might be indebted to Greek tradition as well. See J. PALSGRAVE, *Lesclarcissement* (as in n. 1), book 2, fol. xlvi<sup>v</sup>. Cf. G. STEIN, *John Palsgrave* (as in n. 2), p. 319-320, p. 322-324.



reassessed in a similar fashion. Not only did he consciously transfer Greek concepts such as the article to Spanish in his grammar of 1492, but he probably also studied Greek by means of Theodore Gaza's grammar in Italy under Andronicus Callistus<sup>70</sup>.

In conclusion, I hope to have shown that there is a real need for a closer comparison of the study of Greek grammar and the analysis of vernacular tongues during the Renaissance, when humanists broadened their linguistic horizons and explored their descriptive possibilities to the fullest. John Palsgrave in particular looked at English, Latin, Hebrew, and – in Theodore Gaza's tracks – Greek, when laying down the rules of French, thus roaming far and wide in the early modern "garden of languages"<sup>71</sup>.

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70. P. BOTLEY, *Learning Greek in Western Europe* (as in n. 8), p. 17.

71. For this image, see T. VAN HAL, L. ISEBAERT and P. SWIGGERS (eds.), *De Tuin der Talen. Taalstudie en taalcultuur in de Lage Landen, 1450-1750*, Leuven - Paris - Walpole, Peeters, 2013.

