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«Etymologies through corruption»?
Toponyms and Personal Names in Greek Mythography*

This paper shows that the etymological practice of adding, subtracting, substituting and transposing letters within a name, attested since Plato's Cratylus, was already in use in Greek mythography. I discuss two mythographical passages, more or less coeval to the Cratylus, where the etymologies under examination involve an 'intermediary form', as words have a history of their own and may have undergone some modifications in the passage of time. These two cases of 'etymology through corruption' (κατὰ φθοράν or κατὰ παραφθοράν) are ascribed to Andron of Teos (FGrHist 802 F3) and Andron of Halicarnassus (fr. 8 EGM) respectively, and I incidentally suggest that both texts belong to Andron of Teos.

Questo articolo vuole dimostrare come l'esercizio etimologico di aggiungere, sottrarre, sostituire e trasporre singole lettere all'interno di un nome, attestato nel Cratilo di Platone, fosse in uso anche nella mitografia. A tal proposito discuto due frammenti mitografici, all'incirca contemporanei del Cratilo, nei quali si presuppone che le parole abbiano una loro evoluzione e possano pertanto essere state soggette a cambiamenti nel tempo. Questi due casi di 'etimologie per corruzione' (κατὰ φθοράν o κατὰ παραφθοράν) sono attribuiti ad Androne di Teo (FGrHist 802 F3) e Androne di Alicarnasso (fr. 8 EGM), e discuto incidentalmente la possibilità che entrambi i frammenti appartengano ad Androne di Teo.

1. The exploitation of etymologies in Greek literature as a powerful tool to disclose the words' true meaning is as old as Homer. Names of gods and heroes, if properly analysed, could well be exploited for narrative purposes, as they encapsulate the most salient features their fate: for example, Odysseus' etymological link with ὀδυσσάμενος, 'he who receives or gives hate' (Hom. *Od.* XIX 407), or Helen's with the root ἔλ-, 'destroy' (Aesch. *Ag.* 681-690). The gods' names were thus a target for etymological exercises, either with a narrative scope, as displayed also in Hesiod's *Theogony*¹, or with a religious one, like in the Derveni Papyrus some centuries later². Etymology was definitely a pervasive practice among Greek poets, a means to validate their accounts. But were the Greeks aware of the time-gap between the coinage of words and their own time? Did they acknowledge that words have their own history and that they may have undergone some modifications from the emergence of Greek language? If yes, was this awareness a preserve of some specialists or was it more far-reaching?

It has been authoritatively argued that etymological practice in antiquity paid

* Translations, unless otherwise stated, are my own. I warmly thank Robert Fowler for his suggestions on a former draft.

¹ On Hesiod's etymologies, see now the comprehensive discussion by Vergados 2020, 147-220.

² On the earliest examples of etymological thinking, see the overviews in Reitzenstein 1896, Arrighetti 1987, 13-36, Levin 2000, 13-41, O'Hara 2017², 7-18, Vergados 2020, 7-20, with further literature. For ancient etymologising and the heroes' names, see Mirto 2007.

no heed to an historical perspective when dealing with words. On the contrary, ancient scholars used to leave out the diachronic dimension and to adopt a rigorously synchronic perspective³. However, they have also sometimes acknowledged that passage of time was responsible for linguistic changes. Suffice it to mention the movement of ‘Atticism’, which aimed at restoring the correct use of language and at preventing it from evolving further⁴. Moreover, as a study of the evidence provided by the ancient grammarians (Dionysius Thrax, Apollonius Dyscolus) has shown (Lallot 2011), they did not deny they did not deny the impact of time on the Greek language, but chose not to dwell on this⁵. Albeit acknowledged more or less explicitly, diachronicity was not taken into account to explain linguistic change: the road from ‘a’ to ‘b’ was not as important as ‘a’ and ‘b’ taken singularly. A convergent perception was also displayed in etymological exercises, which brook the possibility of linguistic alterations emerged during the passage of time. This statement can be easily put to the test by looking at Plato’s *Cratylus*, the earliest text in our possession devoted to linguistic issues. Here, Socrates’ proposed etymologies bring to the fore how the names have undergone changes that hide their original form. He claims that the essence of a name (δύναμις) is the relevant element, and not its current phonetic form, which, however, does not affect the ultimate meaning (393de-394ab)⁶. To this end, Socrates shows in the course of the central section of the dialogue that two names, made up by similar syllables, can signify the same, whilst a name can contain letters and syllables that do not affect its signification at all (393de)⁷. Letters may have been taken away or added, for the

³ On this point, see the discussions by Peraki-Kyriakidou 2002, Lallot 2011, and Sluiter 2015, which all point out to the lack of a diachronic interest (but not of awareness!) in ancient etymologising. For ancient sensitivity to language corruption in the passage of time, fundamental is Müller 2003. For a more nuanced treatment that points to the a-chronic nature of ancient etymology, see the sophisticated approach by Vergados 2020, 10.

⁴ For orientation and further literature on Atticism, see Erbse 1950, Schmid 1964, Alpers 1990, Probert 2008, Kim 2010, and Matthaios 2013. On the connected topic of ‘analogy’ and linguistic norms in and outside grammarian literature, see the selection of commented texts in Dickey 2019 with further literature.

⁵ For example, Apollonius Dyscolus defines some unusual forms in Homer ἀρχαϊκώτερα (A.D. *Synt.* 2.90, 193.17 and *Pron.* 44.11-13).

⁶ On δύναμις and its technical meaning ‘to signify’, see Peraki-Kyriakidou 2002, 480 and Zanker 2016, 65-67.

⁷ I am not going to explore all the philosophical implications of this passage. For a full-blown interpretation, see Ademollo 2011, 163-78, with discussion of previous bibliography. On specific moments of the *Cratylus*’ etymological section cf. also Sedley 1998, Sluiter 2015, 909-16, Hoenig 2019, and Hunter - Laemmle 2020, with mention of previous literature.

sake of euphony, to confer a solemn hue to the language and, as a result, names do not show their original façade any more (414cd; transl. Fowler 1921):

{ΣΩ.} ὦ μακάριε, οὐκ οἶσθ' ὅτι τὰ πρῶτα ὀνόματα τεθέντα κατακέχωστα ἤδη ὑπὸ τῶν βουλομένων τραγωδεῖν αὐτά, περιτιθέντων γράμματα καὶ ἐξαιρούντων εὐστομίας ἕνεκα καὶ πανταχῆ στροφόντων, καὶ ὑπὸ καλλωπισμοῦ καὶ ὑπὸ χρόνου [...] ἀλλὰ τοιαῦτα οἶμαι ποιοῦσιν οἱ τῆς μὲν ἀληθείας οὐδὲν φροντίζοντες, τὸ δὲ στόμα πλάττοντες, ὥστ' ἐπεμβάλλοντες πολλὰ ἐπὶ τὰ πρῶτα ὀνόματα τελευτῶντες ποιοῦσιν μὴδ' ἂν ἓνα ἀνθρώπων συνεῖναι ὅτι ποτὲ βούλεται τὸ ὄνομα.

My friend, you do not bear in mind that the original words have before now been completely buried by those who wished to dress them up, for they have added and subtracted letters for the sake of euphony and have distorted the words in every way for ornamentation or merely in the lapse of time [...] I think that sort of things is the work of people who care nothing for truth, but only for the shape of their mouths: so they keep adding to the original words until finally no human being can understand what in the world the word means.

Thus, if one wants to get to the essence of a name, reconstructing its original form becomes a paramount step. Socrates also employs differences in pronunciation as evidence of linguistic change with regard to the sound η (418c). However, it should not be erroneously inferred that the debate hosted in the *Cratylus* is about the origins of names: as Ademollo (2011, 5-6) aptly warns, the speakers agree on the fact that names were set down by someone, but they disagree on whether the 'glue' connecting names and objects is a natural or conventional criterion. As it always happens with Platonic dialogues, scholars have agonized over all the possible linguistic theories referenced there. For instance, it is generally believed that the Sophists, with their interest in the rhetorical art, played a decisive role in making etymology a systematic field of study. In addition, *Cratylus'* conversion to Heracliteanism in the course of the dialogue (437a) and the concurrent appearance of the Heraclitean 'theory of flux' (401d-402d, 411bc-440a) have suggested that Heraclitus supported the naturalistic party in this dispute. Unfortunately, in the former case linguistic inquiries seem to have taken a rather different tack, whilst in the latter there is not enough evidence for Heraclitus' own views about language⁸.

⁸ It is tempting to ascribe to the Sophists an important role in this linguistic discussion, but there is not enough evidence to claim that their etymological theories are behind Socrates' verbal engagement in the *Cratylus*. Even if Prodicus and Protagoras supposedly dealt with the ὀρθότης τῶν ὀνομάτων, 'correctness of names' (esp. with Protagoras' ὀρ-

The dispute between naturalists and conventionalists will progress in a different direction in the Hellenistic age, where the Stoics championed the etymological practice and deemed it as ontologically meaningful, especially Chrysippus (who possibly invented the term ‘etymology’). The Stoics’ preoccupation with recovering the form of the first words, which sprang out at the beginning of human history, gave life to a complex approach to etymology and to language in general. To this end, the Stoics also adopted some criteria of linguistic purity, ἀρεταὶ καὶ κακίαι λέξεως, ‘virtues and vices of speech’, probably borrowed from Theophrastus’ theory of diction⁹. By contrast, Epicurus’ views on language seem to have been more nuanced, as he maintained that names came out spontaneously and naturally, but, at a second stage, an agreement became necessary to guarantee mutual understanding (Epic. *Hdt.* 75-6: cf. also Lucr. V 1028-1096)¹⁰. An awareness of the language evolution’s incidence on etymologies is displayed also by the Derveni commentator (probably end of the fourth cent. BC): he maintains that the meaning of existing words can change as the referent changes (col. 14,6-9: Kronos did a great deed to Ouranos and he received the name Kronos after this action)¹¹. The

θεόπεια: see Corradi 2012, 166-75), they seem to have done so in a different way than in the Platonic dialogue (Ademollo 2011, 33-36). Also, Prodicus, Diagoras, and Critias were charged by Epicurus with the attempt of changing the name of the gods as they were only the result of a convention (παραγραμμίζ[ουσι] τὰ τ[ῶ]ν θεῶν [ὀνόμα]τα, in Phld. *Piet.*, P.Herc. 1077, col. 19 Obbink). On Heraclitus in the *Cratylus*, see Ademollo 2011, 15-18 (cf. also Colvin 2007). For a positive appraisal of Heraclitus’ philosophy of language, see Voigtlander 1995. It has been suggested that also Democritus’ linguistic interests are referenced in the *Cratylus*, as he considered the names as conventional (68 B 26 DK) and discussed the relation between word and thing (68 B 142 DK). Aristotle touches upon the effects of the passing of time on language very briefly in *Poet.* 1457b1-4.

⁹On this point, see D.L. VII 55-59. For orientation on the Stoic’s sophisticated etymological research, see Dawson 1992, 24-33, Long 1996, 58-84, and Allen 2005. More generally on the Stoics’ contribution to grammar, see the overview in Blank - Atherton 2003. The fact that «a Stoic, philosophical, anomalist grammar, the creation of a Pergamene ‘school’, waged war on an Alexandrian, philological, analogist grammar» (Blank - Atherton 2003, 312) is a common scholarly misunderstanding and cannot be maintained any longer.

¹⁰For Epicurean views on language and etymology, see discussion in Verlinsky 2005 and Reinhardt 2008.

¹¹The Derveni commentator employs the etymological tool especially for names that describe the gods, as they are not just set by convention (col. 22,7-8). See, for instance, the proposed etymology for Kronos, κρούω, ‘to strike’ + νοῦς, ‘mind’ (col. 14,2-14). On the sensitivity to language issues displayed by the Derveni commentator, see Henry 1986 and Obbink 2003. Anceschi 2007 has compared the divine etymologies in the papyrus with those in the *Cratylus*, arguing that they provide the key to Plato’s attitude towards etymology.

Roman world shared a frame of references similar to the Greek one, as Varro's *De Lingua Latina* attests: the original roots of words could be difficult to detect, as during the lapse of time letters were subtracted, added or transposed (V 3; V 5-6; VI 1). As a consequence, Varro aims at uncovering the *voluntas impositoris*, the will of the early makers of names (VIII 1-2)¹².

Even though in antiquity there were manifold positions on language in general and on etymology in particular, they all seem to agree on one major point, namely that each investigation on words had to go back to an 'original' phase in order to bear significance, as we have seen. Within this frame, the earliest phases of the language history are hailed as the repository of truth, whereas the current stages are inevitably affected by a 'deterioration', a 'decay', a corruption. Socrates in the *Cratylus* (414cd), the Stoics, and Varro in *De Lingua Latina* referred to phonetical corruptions that have disguised an original word, by adding, subtracting, transmuting or transposing letters (*quadripertita ratio* according to Quint. *inst.* I 5,38). This kind of approach was further developed and 'systematised' in grammatical speculation and it goes under the name of 'pathology', i.e. the study and justification of linguistic variation on the basis of rational, recognized rules (πάθη). We find examples of this practice, for example, in Apollonius (see e.g. *Synt.* 107.18), Herodian (e.g. μον. λεξ. 909.12), and possibly in Didymus of Alexandria, who composed a (now lost) work *Περὶ παθῶν*. Deviation from the norm is thus explained with the πάθη, and dialectal forms can be normalized¹³. Furthermore, the awareness of such linguistic 'deterioration' was not a preserve of language specialists, but it was more widespread than one could imagine at first sight. Even illiterate men and women could detect the presence of words in the epics, in songs, and magical formulas that belonged to archaic language and were not comprehensible any longer. The effects of language deterioration were under ordinary people's eyes and could affect the sphere of everyday life. As reported in a speech by Lysias (10,20; transl. by Lamb 1930):

Προσέχετε τὸν νοῦν. τὸ μὲν πεφασμένως ἐστὶ φανερώς, πολεῖσθαι δὲ βαδίζειν, τὸ δὲ οἰκῆος θεράποντος. Πολλὰ δὲ τοιαῦτα καὶ ἄλλα ἐστίν, ὧ ἄνδρες δικασταί. ἄλλ' εἰ μὴ σιδηροῦς ἐστίν, οἴομαι αὐτὸν ἔννοον γεγόνενα ὅτι τὰ

¹²On Varro's etymological method, see Romano 2003, 113-17, Blank 2005, and Piras 2017.

¹³Scholars see pathology as inspired by the Stoics and their ethical theory of διαστροφή: men can fall from a state a rationality and harmony when they are misled by external appearances. As a result, πάθη are in charge of their behaviour and not the rational. For an appraisal of how Stoic ethics affected pathology, see Sluiter 1990, 18-21. *Contra*, Wackernagel 1876, who, by contrast, denies any link with the Stoa and argues that pathology was invented by Trypho. For pathology in general, see also Blank 1992, 41-51, Lallot 1995, 114-118, Brucale 2003, 21-44, Nifadopoulos 2003, and Pontani 2011, 99-101.

μὲν πράγματα ταῦτά ἐστι νῦν τε καὶ πάλαι, τῶν δὲ ὀνομάτων ἐνίοις οὐ τοῖς αὐτοῖς χρώμεθα νῦν τε καὶ πρότερον.

Pay attention: ‘overtly’ is ‘openly’, ‘ply about’ is ‘walk about’, and a ‘varlet’ is a ‘servant’. We have many other instances of the sort, gentlemen. But if he is not a numskull, I suppose he has realized that things are the same now as they were of old, but that in some cases we do not use the same terms now as we did formerly.

These lines claim that words have evolved whereas things have not – in judicial speech it could well have been the case that new institutions were implemented in the course of time. Even in this case, the solution to the problem does not change: the true meaning of the word does not fall away, it is only disguised behind some phonetic mutations.

This article presents two mythographical passages, more or less coeval with the *Cratylus*, which have not yet received scholarly attention and which showcase a similar process in a positive way, i.e. to make an etiological point. But before presenting this case-study, some words on the use of etymologies in mythographical discourse, from its emergence to its peak, are in order.

2. As already stated, etymological games have been employed as narrative devices since Homer, as they serve to disclose the essence of their referents’ names. Therefore, it does not come as a surprise to see it at play in the prose counterpart of the epics, namely mythography. From the emergence of the genre in the sixth cent. BC to the later developments, genealogists and mythographers anchored their accounts to the interpretation of names and words. The validation provided by etymologies was needed since several competing accounts were available, either in poetry or in prose: a well-crafted etymology concurred in proving that the story told was worthwhile. From an anthropological viewpoint, etymology and genealogy have a lot in common, both in their past and present forms. In antiquity, they both served as ‘anchoring practices’: that means that individuals used them as a map to understand the current state of things. Etymology describes the meaning of a word among a given set of words, and so does genealogy by pointing to the position of an individual within society¹⁴. In modern times, this relationship is even stronger, as, all in all, etymologies are nothing else than families of words. As for ancient times, despite a shared obvious preoccupation with the past that inevitably informs them, etymologies and genealogies are fully effective with

¹⁴ Sluiter 2015, 900. Anthropological debate on genealogies as social charters is especially vast: see Varto 2015 for modern literature on the subject.

regard to the present. In their anchoring action between two dimensions, the past and the present in the first case, and the *explanans* and the *explanandum* in the second, the point of arrival is a given and is relevant, whilst the point of departure is subjected to speculation. Etymology decrypts how our reality works by focusing on the language that we use to describe it, and so are family genealogies. Especially in preliterate societies, it has become widely appreciated, as Goody – Watt 1963 say, that the individual has a little perception of the past as it is, but s/he tends to consider it in relationship to the present. Consequently, in what has been successfully called «genealogical thinking» (Fowler 1999), one faces a «form of reverse engineering that will make it possible to read off that meaning from the surface of the word» (Sluiter 2015, 904).

Genealogical and, more generally, mythographical discourse has been especially keen on incorporating etymology as an aetiological device. For instance, one of the earliest prose-writers, Hecataeus of Miletus (fr. 22 *EGM*) claimed that Mycenae got its name after the cap of Perseus' scabbard, μύκης, that the hero lost there. Such etymological practice, however, reaches its peak in the fifth cent. BC. As Fowler notes (1996, 72), the master of this practice was without doubt Hellanicus of Lesbos, for whom adventurous etymologies became an actual «weapon of choice». To mention but one instance, according to Hellanicus, the Idaean Dactyloi were named this way because, when they met Rhea on Mount Ida and greeted her, they touched her fingers (fr. 89 *EGM*)¹⁵. From the two examples just quoted, it emerges how etymologies could well be the kernel of a mythographical account: at the same time, they inform and encapsulate a related story regarding a character or a toponym. Of course, the same name could call for multiple explanations. In this respect, the case of the Spartoi is emblematic: the etymological link with σπείρω could lead to both 'scattered' and 'sown' (see Conon 37.23-6; Androt. *FGrHist* 324 F60b; Palaeph. *Incred.* 3; Diod. Sic. XIX 53.4; Heracl. *Incred.* 19). But, as the *Cratylus* teaches us, for example in the section devoted to Apollo's etymology (405a-406a), multiple etymologies can be true at the same time and cooperate in decrypting the real meaning.

Moreover, etymology and genealogy can also cooperate to give birth to a twice-stronger anchoring practice. To this end, etymologies mainly involve personal names and toponyms. Quite interestingly, Hecataeus (fr. 15 *EGM*) displayed an uncommon sensitivity to the evolution of Greek language, when he maintained that the Aetolian hero Oeneus was named after the ancient denomination for the grape, οἴνη (fr. 15 *EGM* = Athen. *Deipn.* II 35ab):

¹⁵ Full list of occurrences in early prose writers is in Fowler 1996, 72-73.

Ἑκαταῖος δ' ὁ Μιλήσιος τὴν ἄμπελον ἐν Αἰτωλία λέγων εὐρεθῆναι φησι καὶ τάδε· «Ὀρεσθεὺς ὁ Δευκαλίωνος ἦλθεν εἰς Αἰτωλίαν ἐπὶ βασιλεία, καὶ κύνων αὐτοῦ στέλεχος ἔτεκε, καὶ ὃς ἐκέλευσεν αὐτὸ κατορυχθῆναι, καὶ ἐξ αὐτοῦ ἔφν ἄμπελος πολυστάφυλος· διὸ καὶ τὸν αὐτοῦ παῖδα Φύτιον ἐκάλεσε. Τούτου δ' Οἰνεὺς ἐγένετο, κληθεὶς ἀπὸ τῶν ἀμπέλων (οἱ γὰρ παλαιοί, φησιν, Ἕλληνες οἶνας ἐκάλουν τὰς ἀμπέλους)· Οἰνέως δ' ἐγένετο Αἰτωλός».

Hecataeus of Miletus states that the vine was discovered in Aetolia and adds this: «Orestheus, the son of Deucalion, came to Aetolia to obtain the kingship, and his bitch gave birth to a stump. He ordered it to be buried and from it a vine covered in grapes grew. For this reason, he named his son Phytios. Oeneus was his son, and he was named from the vines - for the ancient Greeks, he says, used to call the vines *oinai*. Aetolus was Oeneus' son».

From this example already, it emerges how etymology actually anchors a character to something that informs his/her identity. In Oeneus' case, the proposed etymology shows that *a*) he must have had something to do with grapes – and indeed he has, because he was king in an area famous for that – and that *b*) he lived in a remote time, where the noun οἶνη meant 'grape'. Therefore, Oeneus is a 'speaking' name alluding to plants, as it is his father's, Phytios¹⁶. In one move, Hecataeus anchored his story both to a given space, Aetolia, and to a time in history, that of the Calydonian boar hunt, which predates the Greek expedition against Troy (Hom. *Il.* IX 529-599). Without an awareness of how the past linguistic usages were in comparison to the current ones, his proposed etymology for the name Oeneus would not be tenable¹⁷. A partially similar approach to myth-telling informed by vocabulary is displayed again in fr. 17 *EGM*: according to Pausanias, Hecataeus' description of Cerberus as a most terrible snake was not at odds with Homer's κύων Ἄϊδαο, as it did not necessarily mean 'hell-hound', but simply 'guardian'.

From the Hellenistic age onwards, the relationship between etymology and

¹⁶ For the narrative importance of such speaking names in the epics (and consequently in mythology) see Kanavou 2015, 17-23.

¹⁷ For an analysis of this myth, see Fowler, *EGM* II: 135 and Andolfi 2017, 97-98. The linguistic inquiry here displayed has not been given the scholarly attention it deserved. However, it is important to acknowledge that Nenci in several works (e.g. 1951, 56-58 and 1967, 21-22) speaks of an «etymological criterion» in relation to Hecataeus' selection of one myth over the others. Nenci highlights how Hecataeus, like a modern textual critic, aimed at discerning the most ancient version of a story, for this was not affected by corruptions occurring in the course of transmission. This interpretation has had the merit of detecting a too often neglected feature, that is Hecataeus' awareness of diachronic evolution of language (and possibly of traditions and material culture).

myth intensifies, both within rationalistic and allegorical exegesis. Unsurprisingly, the Hellenistic poets were experts of etymologies, in an age when etymological studies flourished¹⁸. Etymology's power to disclose a hidden meaning could be well exploited in these two directions, as they both aim at validating an interpretation. For the rationalistic approach, the fourth-century BC mythographer Palaephatus and his work *On Incredible Things* offers plenty of evidence to consider. For instance, in its preface, Palaephatus maintains that, even though unbelievable accounts circulate, everything that has been reported must have happened somehow, because there cannot be names without any real story¹⁹. Palaephatus is very keen on using all the available etymological possibilities to detect the kernel of truth concealed in a myth. For example, in his treatment of the Sphinx's episode (§18), he resorts to a Theban local meaning for αἴνιγμα, 'ambush', or he acknowledges a twofold meaning for μῆλα, 'pome' and 'flocks' when describing the Hesperides' story. In a completely different way, allegorists too were fond of etymologies, which they exploited in a different direction to Palaephatus'. The most consistent evidence is from the first cent. CE, with the *Homeric Questions* by Heraclitus and the *Compendium of Greek Theology* by the Stoic philosopher Anneus Cornutus²⁰. Here, the god's names were subjected to a thorough analysis pointing to the undisclosed truth. Cornutus, via the etymological analysis of the names Thetis ('she who disposes everything': διατιθέναι) and Briareos ('he who raises food': αἴρειν + βρά), was able to discern the scientific message conveyed by Homer (*Epidr.* 17, p. 27,7-18 Lang). In particular, Cornutus was aware of the temporal gap between the ancient poets and the modern interpreters and of how that could affect names: Prometheus modelled the human race from the earth, he whom was given the foresight of the universal soul, προμήθεια in the Greek of that time, but πρόνοια in the Greek of his time (*Epidr.* 18, p. 31,19-32,3).

But were mythographers as well aware of how the passage of time could 'corrupt' the Greek language? Did they regard the original phases of the language history as more trustworthy and correct? The next paragraph will submit some evidence that attests to an etymological sensitivity similar to that first showcased in the *Cratylus* and then systematized in the grammatical discussion.

3. The case-study I am referring to is that of etymology 'through corruption', κατὰ φθοράν or κατὰ παραφθοράν²¹. Not only this device focuses on unveiling the

¹⁸ See the overview in O'Hara 2017², 21-42 with several examples by Callimachus, Apollonius of Rhodes, and other Hellenistic poets.

¹⁹ On Palaephatus, see Santoni 2000, 9-43, Hawes 2014, 37-92, and Hunter 2016, 245-254.

²⁰ On allegory and etymology, see Dawson 1992, 23-52

²¹ It is useful to read the definition of παραφθορά in the treatise *On the Method of Force-*

correct origin of a given word, but it also assumes that, in the light of the correct etymology, that same word must have been slightly different. Mispronunciations and misspellings, thus ‘corruptions’, have modified it, so words underwent a small phonetic change that makes it harder to detect the real meaning. The earliest use of the expression *κατὰ φθοράν* is to be found in scholia to Apollonius of Rhodes and is ascribed to Greek mythography²². The former occurrence comes from the text of the mythographer Andron of Teos, who, as far as we know, was trierarch of Alexander the Great’s Indos fleet in 326 BC, the latter to that of his homonymous Andron of Halicarnassus, who presumably lived in the first half of the fourth cent. BC.

- a. Andron of Teos *FGrHist* 802 F3 = Schol. Ap. Rh. II 946-954c, p. 196, 15 Wendel (cf. Hec. fr. 34 *EGM*)²³:

πόλις τοῦ Πόντου ἢ Σινώπη, ὠνομασμένη ἀπὸ τῆς Ἀσωποῦ θυγατρὸς Σινώπης, ἦν ἀρπάσας Ἀπόλλων ἀπὸ Ὑρίας ἐκόμισεν εἰς Πόντον, καὶ μιγείς αὐτῇ ἔσχε Σύρον, ἀφ’ οὗ οἱ Σύροι [...] ὁ δὲ Τῆιος Ἄνδρων φησὶ μίαν τῶν Ἀμαζόνων φυγοῦσαν εἰς Πόντον γήμασθαι τῷ τῶν τόπων ἐκείνων βασιλεῖ, πίνουσαν τε πλείστον οἶνον ὀνομασθῆναι Σανάπην. {ἐπειδὴ} μεταφραζόμενον <δὲ> τοῦτο σημαίνει τὴν πολλὰ πίνουσαν, ἐπειδὴ αἱ μέθυσοι σανάπαι λέγονται παρὰ Θραξίν, ἢ διαλέκτῳ χρώνται καὶ Ἀμαζόνες: <καὶ> κληθῆναι τὴν πόλιν <Σανάπην>, ἔπειτα **κατὰ φθοράν** Σινώπην. ἢ δὲ μέθυσος Ἀμαζῶν ἐκ ἴτης πόλεως παρεγένετο πρὸς Λυτίδαν, ὡς φησὶν Ἐκαταῖος.

ful Speaking ascribed to the rhetorician Hermogenes of Tarsus (second cent. AD): (3) Τὰ ἀμαρτήματα κατὰ τὴν λέξιν κατὰ δύο τρόπους γίνεται, ἀκυρίαν καὶ παραφθοράν [...] παραφθοράν δέ, οἷον, ὃ καλοῦσι διάζωμα, ἐάν τις εἴπῃ διαζώστραν ἢ τὸ αἰμωδεῖν ἀμμωδεῖν καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα. Mistakes in word choice occur in two ways: failure to use the proper word and corruption [...] it is an example of corruption if one says *diazōstra* for what they call a *diazōma* (‘girdle’) and say *ammōdein* for *haimōdein* (‘to set teeth on edge’) and the like (translation by Kennedy 2005). When it comes to effective communication, Hermogenes says, speakers’ mistakes can fall into two categories, namely impropriety of language and corruption. In Hermogenes’ use, (παρα)φθορά seem to indicate a mere trivialisation or slip of tongue, for example when one says *διαζώστρα* instead of *διάζωμα*. This is probably caused by a lack of full command of the language, but also due to a momentary lapse of concentration. See Patillon 2014, 43-46.

²² As far as *κατὰ παραφθοράν* is concerned, see Arrian. *FGrHist* 156 F25 = Steph. Byz. α 246 Billerbeck; Athen. 90b Olson; Steph. Byz. α 4, δ 10, δ 111, κ 249 Billerbeck; Schol. Dion. *Per.* 348, *GG* 248, 9-21; Schol. Dion. Byz. 68,1 p. 39 Güngerich; Eust. *in Il.* I 456.20, *Il.* II 153.3, *Il.* II 492.18, *Il.* III 354.9, *Il.* III 753.5, *Il.* III 824.3, *Il.* IV 544.20 van der Valk.

²³ I cite the text as printed by Fowler, *EGM* I, on the basis of Wendel’s edition. It is important to acknowledge that Cuypers, *BNJ*, has sometimes made different textual choices, which, however, do not affect the understanding of the passage.

Sinope is a city on the Black Sea, named after the daughter of Asopos Sinope, whom Apollo brought to the Black Sea after having abducted her from Hyria. And through intercourse with her, he had Syros, after whom the Syrians were named [...] But Andron of Teos says that one of the Amazons, having fled to the Black Sea, married the king of that region; and that because she drank a lot of wine, she was called Sanape. Since this means, metaphorically speaking, ‘she who drinks too much’, since drunk women are called *sanapai* among the Thracians, whose dialect the Amazons use as well; and (he says that) the city was called after her Sanape, then through corruption Sinope. And the hard-drinking Amazon went † from this city to Lytidas, as Hecataeus says.

- b. Andron of Halicarnassus fr. 8 *EGM* = Schol. Ap. Rh. II 711g, p. 182, 9 Wendel.

ὠνομάσθη δὲ Παρνασσὸς ἀπὸ Παρνησσοῦ τοῦ ἐγχωρίου ἥρωος, ὡς Ἑλλάνικος (fr. 196 *EGM*). Ἄνδρων δέ, ἐπεὶ προσωρμίσθη ἡ λάρναξ τοῦ Δευκαλίωνος· καὶ τὸ πρότερον Λαρνασσὸς ἐκαλεῖτο, ὕστερον δὲ **κατὰ φθορὰν** τοῦ λ στοιχείου Παρνασσός.

Mount Parnassos was named after the local hero Parnassos, according to Hellanicus. But according to Andron since the chest of Deucalion landed there. And in the past, it was named Larnassos, and later Parnassos because of the corruption of the letter L.

The analogies between the two passages are striking. According to the scholia to book 2 of Apollonius of Rhodes, Andron of Teos and Andron of Halicarnassus developed sensitivity to the corruption of toponyms. The first case, that ascribed to Andron of Teos, displays a sophisticated approach to the issue: the most straightforward explanation for the name of the city Sinope, on the Black Sea, has one of Asopus’ daughters, abducted by a the god Apollo, as a name-giver²⁴. Such an account is rejected in favour of a much more complicated and (to us) unexpected aetiological story: here the Amazon is travelling by herself, without the intervention of any Greek god, and reached the Black Sea, where she became known for her taste for wine. The Thracians, who used to speak the same language as the Amazons, started calling her *sanape*, ‘the drunk woman’, and here we can see at play the sophisticated move of Andron, who could count on his erudition and show his knowledge of a ‘mythical’ foreign language²⁵. This piece of information is partially

²⁴ See Ps. Scymn. fr. 27 Marcotte. By contrast, Sinope was Asopus’ daughter according to Eumel. fr. 31 Tsagalis (= fr. 5 *EGM*), Corin. *PMG* 654, Aristot. fr. 581 Rose, Ap. Rh. II 946-54, Diod. Sic. IV 72. Pherecydes (fr. 144 *EGM*) knew Sinope as one of Odysseus’ companions.

²⁵ Where *sana/sæn* means ‘wine’ and *pīt-* is ‘drink’ (Ivantchik 1997, 37). The interest in

supported by an Hesychian gloss (σ 158 σάναπτιν· τὴν οἰνώτην. Σκύθαι). However, despite being charming, the result of this etymology is not the one expected, because the city is normally known as Sinope and not as Sanape. And here the ‘etymology through corruption’ comes into action and works this out for Andron: Sanape was corrupted into Sinope, an easy corruption to postulate²⁶.

To be credible, such a corruption has to be phonetically limited. This is also the case of the second occurrence, the one ascribed to Andron of Halicarnassus. Here the etymology is definitely more straightforward: the mount Parnassos took its name from the substantive λάρναξ, which in Greek means ‘chest’ and refers to the chest of Deucalion, which landed there after the deluge²⁷. Of course, *larnax* is not **parnax*, and the etymology would not work this way, unless Andron has a card up his sleeve that he chooses to play, that is the corruption of the first consonant sound. In this passage, Andron (or the scholiast, we cannot say for sure) states that at the beginning the mount was indeed called Larnassos, but later on it became Parnassos, changing the first letter from L into P²⁸.

The reading of these two passages raises an important methodological question: is the expression κατὰ φθοράν to be referred to Andron or to the scholiast and/or his middle-source? There is no easy way to answer and no other evidence can be brought to bear. However, without a clear identification of a corruption occurring on the phonetic level, the above-described etymologies would not make any sense. So, even if one can well doubt that both Androns employed the expression κατὰ φθοράν as it stands in our texts, nevertheless they were of course aware of the fact that a phonetic change must have occurred between the first and the second form, otherwise their proposed etymologies would not have made any

foreign languages exists already in Hecataeus (fr. 22 *EGM* Δανᾶ was the Phoenician name for the heroine Danae) and, of course, in Herodotus (esp. IV 27, for the Arimaspians: *arima*, ‘one’, and *spou*, ‘eye’; and IV 110 for the Amazons, called in Greek Οἰόρπατα: *oior*, ‘man’ and *pata*, ‘kill’, so ‘those who kill men’): see discussion in Harrison 1998.

²⁶ Other later sources report the same story about the drunk Amazon, but here she was named *Sinope* since the beginning (*EtG* s.v. Σινώπη [...] ὁ δὲ ἄνδρων φησὶ μίαν τῶν Ἀμαζόνων φυγοῦσαν εἰς Πόντον παρὰ τὸν βασιλεῖα τοῦ τόπου πίνουσάν τε πλεῖστον οἶνον προσαγορευθῆναι Σινώπη· μεταφραζόμενον δὲ τοῦτο σημαίνει τὴν πολλὰ πίνουσαν).

²⁷ For the most widespread accounts of the deluge, see Fowler, *EGM* II: 114-117.

²⁸ Different is the case of Pherecydes of Athens, fr. 32c *EGM* (= 145 Dolcetti), mentioned by Dolcetti 2019, 46 n. 12 with regard to the expression κατὰ φθοράν, where Medea’s brother Apsirtus is named Axirtus (possibly to describe his young age: cf. Fowler 2013, 228). In this case, as in many others that can be found in mythographical discussions, the simple fact that a peculiar name is attested does not say anything about the awareness of (in this case) Pherecydes, who does not motivate the choice of Axirtus via an ‘etymology through corruption’.

sense. A similar instance, even if not identical, is registered again in early Greek mythography. Hellanicus (fr. 125 *EGM*) knew the Ionic festival of Apaturia with the former name Ἀπατηνόρια²⁹. Since the second denomination mirrors the actual aetiology of the festival and thus expresses the essence of the institution better – the association with ἀπάτη harks back to the ‘deceit’ performed by the Attic hero Melanthus against Xanthus, king of Boeotia – there is no proper corruption here. Unfortunately, the scholiast that has handed this text down to us did not cite Hellanicus word-for-word and, in addition, there are no references to the make-up of the previous name Ἀπατηνόρια and its meaning³⁰. However, what this text highlights is the occurrence of an intermediary form of which the mythographer is aware and that can be possibly used as part of the aetiological account.

Incidentally, I would also like to discuss briefly the possibility that texts **a** and **b** might belong to the same Andron. It is singular indeed that two prose-writers, who presumably lived in the fourth cent. BC, developed the exact same method of ‘etymology through corruption’ applied to ancient toponyms. To be more precise, I suspect that text **b**, ascribed to Andron of Halicarnassus, is better referable to his namesake Andron of Teos. In fact, in this case the scholiast mentions Andron without any further indication: modern editors have promptly ascribed the piece to Andron of Halicarnassus, but this surmise can well be challenged. When the scholiast quotes these ‘etymologies through corruption’, he refers once to Andron of Teos and once to a not-further-described Andron. The employment of the same peculiar etymological practice makes it the most economical solution to ascribe both fragments to the same author. Furthermore, a quick look at the extant fragments of both Andron of Teos and Andron of Halicarnassus provides us with other cases in which ascription to one over the other is not straightforward and are thus open to be reconsidered. Only three fragments in total (and one dubious) are ascribed to Andron of Teos, which all come from the scholia to Apollonius of Rhodes. In *FGrHist* 802 F 1 we find mention of Andron with his ethnic and his work *Περίπλους*, *Circumnavigation*, in F2 there is only Andron and the title of another work, *Περὶ Πόντου*, *About the Pont-Euxin* (which scholars have intended as a subsection of the *Periplus*), and in F3 there is mention of Andron of Teos without the title of the book. By contrast, if we consider the situation of Andron of Halicarnassus, one can reckon twenty-two fragments, of which sixteen are genuine according to Fowler’s *EGM*. In this number, only two fragments are incon-

²⁹ Schol. T+ Plat. *Symp.* 208d [...] ἐορτὴν ἄγειν, ἣν πάλαι μὲν Ἀπατηνόρια, ὕστερον δὲ Ἀπατουρία ἐκάλουν ὡς ἀπὸ τῆς γενομένης ἀπάτης.

³⁰ It has been suggested to me by one of the anonymous referees that, on the face of it, it would still be connected to ἀπάτη + ἀνήρ and that the epithet ἀπατήνωρ occurs in Euphorion (*SH* 418, 25) for Dionysus.

trovertibly ascribed to Andron of Halicarnassus. By contrast, in four cases there is mention of Andron and of works entitled Συγγένειαι / Συγγενικά, *Kinships* (x3), Ἱστορία, *Histories* (x1), and Περί τοῦ πολέμου τοῦ πρὸς βαρβάρους, *The War against the Barbarians* (x1)³¹, and, consequently, ten cases where only the name Andron figures. It is striking thus that there is not even a single occurrence of the name Andron of Halicarnassus cited together with the title of his own work.

As for the topics treated in those fragments, despite his career as a navarch in Alexander's fleet, Andron of Teos displays precisely those interests typical of a bookish mythographer (Cuypers, *BNJ*, *Biographical Essay*). Fragments 1, 2, and 3 all deal with his explanation for the denomination of places on the Black Sea and the same applies to the dubious fr. 4. If Müller's (*FHG* 4.291) proposed emendation Ἄνδρωνα in this passage is correct and thus Andron's name has to be restored in the text, then we would have another case of etymologising practice in Andron of Teos, who discussed the origin for Bosphorus' name, made up by βουῦς and πόρος, 'passage for the cattle'³². As for Andron of Halicarnassus, aetiological accounts frequently occur too. Frs. 5, 7, and 12 are about genealogies; fr. 11, 14, and 16a deal with toponyms and related mythographical stories; fr. 3, 6, 13, and 16A come from extensive accounts on the most famous mythical subjects; fr. 4 and 15 are examples of Homeric exegesis. Hence, the solution adopted by the editors in presence of an ambiguous citation was to ascribe to Andron of Teos only what was directly and exclusively referable to the Black Sea, even if the other title registered for his work is Περίπλους, *Circumnavigation*, which, theoretically, suggests a much wider scope than only the Black Sea area. Bearing all this in mind, scholars should perhaps question themselves about the attribution of those fragments 'generically' ascribed to Andron, as it has already happened with other homonymous authors, who worked on similar subjects, e.g. Pherecydes of Syros and Pherecydes of Athens, Hecataeus of Miletus and Hecataeus of Abdera, Asclepiades of Myrlea and Asclepiades of Tragilus, and so forth³³. Ancient scholars

³¹ This last title appears in P.Oxy. 1802 fr. 3, ii, 18-19, for which see Schironi 2009, 91-92, and is attributed to Andron, of course without further specifications. As for the title Αἱ πρὸς Φίλιππον Θυσίαι, *The Festivals for Philippus*, the fragment that reports it (fr. 19 Dolcetti) is considered spurious by Fowler, *EGM*.

³² The transmitted text has Ἀκαρίωνα. Together with Müller's Ἄνδρωνα, scholars' proposed emendations include also other possibilities, such as Χάρωνα (Weichert), Αἰσχρίωνα (Schmidt) and Εὐφορίωνα (Reinesius).

³³ The case of the two Asclepiades is especially instructive. Asclepiades of Myrlea was a grammarian (second-first cent. BC), especially interested in Homer, but also in local history (Pagani 2007, 16-42). Asclepiades of Tragilus (fourth cent. BC) was a mythographer, known for the work *Tragoudoumena*, where he discussed the contents of Greek tragedies

like Theon of Alexandria, an acknowledged source for the scholia to Apollonius of Rhodes, but also Apollodorus of Athens, Demetrius of Scepsis, Didymus, and Callimachus, displayed interests in the origins of toponyms, and their scholarly activity may be behind Andron's quotations in scholia³⁴.

4. The etymological practice of adding, subtracting, substituting and transposing letters within a name, attested since Plato's *Cratylus* and then often employed in Hellenistic and Roman grammar, was already in use in Greek mythography. Even if most of the theoretical discussion is lost and we cannot know who boosted this kind of etymological approach and how, mythographers, as well as poets and historiographers, found it a useful weapon to be employed in foundation stories and other etiological accounts. The two cases involving 'etymology through corruption' discussed in this paper make two points worthy of further discussion. The first one is straightforward: as highlighted by Socrates in the *Cratylus*, there is no need for words to look precisely like each other to be related. Therefore, it does not matter if in the Amazons' language the word is *sanape*, and not *sinope*. Andron could not reject such a trailblazing explanation for it when it does not perfectly match the city name Sinope. To make the equation work, the *explanandum* undergoes a modification, a corruption (mispronunciations, incorrect uses, and so on) that over time became the linguistic norm. The true nature of a word cannot

in a continuous narration. The scholia to Apollonius of Rhodes cite both of them: whereas Asclepiades of Myrlea is mentioned twice and with the ethnic, Asclepiades of Tragilus is cited five times and three times without the ethnic and the title of the work. In one of these cases, however, it is in my opinion controversial which Asclepiades was cited by the scholiast, namely in Schol. Ap. Rhod. I 156-160b, 20-21 Wendel = *FGrHist* 12 F 21, as the Homeric subject (i.e. Neleus' sons) could fit also Asclepiades of Myrlea's interests. Another fragment of controversial ascription is Asclepiades of Tragilus' F 32 (Schol. Pind. *Pyth.* 3,14), for which see discussion in Pagani 2007, 24-27.

³⁴Theon of Alexandria is one of the three grammarians mentioned in the subscription to Apollonius Rhodius' scholia (together with Lucillus of Tarrha and Sophocleius). Theon is without doubt very receptive when it comes to geographical and etymological issues. He developed a peculiar etymological practice, *ex indole rerum*: see Guhl 1962, 9-11, Bongelli 2000, 287-90 and Merro 2015, 15-19. According to Wendel 1935, 1362-1364, Theon must have had access to early Greek mythography's works like Pherecydes' and Hellanicus', a statement which Cameron 2004, 43, 95 has rightly challenged. Didymus, who could certainly cite word-for-word some lines by Acusilaus of Argos (fr. 1 *EGM*), is the second most likely candidate. Callimachus nurtured similar interests in toponymy, as the titles of some works of his suggest (Ἑθνικαὶ Ὀνομασίαι, περὶ ὀρνέων, κτίσεις νήσων καὶ πόλεων καὶ μετονομασίαι, περὶ τῶν ἐν τῇ οἰκουμένην ποταμῶν): cf. Pfeiffer 1968, 123-33 and Fraser 1972, 472, 761-763.

change, but its external façade, made of material sounds, can. The second one is not less appealing: as already acknowledged since Hecataeus of Miletus, language evolves in the course of time and it does not always leave traces for succeeding generations to discover what a word used to be and to what form it should be restored. However, indirect hints can be detected in personal names, for they were given a long time ago and are thus faithful witnesses of that past time – let’s think of Oeneus in fr. 15 *EGM*, for example. In a language’s vocabulary, those names have to encapsulate the key features of a place (toponyms) or of that family narrative they belong to. Therefore, if words are related to history, they are a piece of evidence, a trace from the past that shapes a plot and that can help tell a compelling story. Approached in this way, etymology as historical evidence can be hailed as an arrow in the historians’ bow.

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