

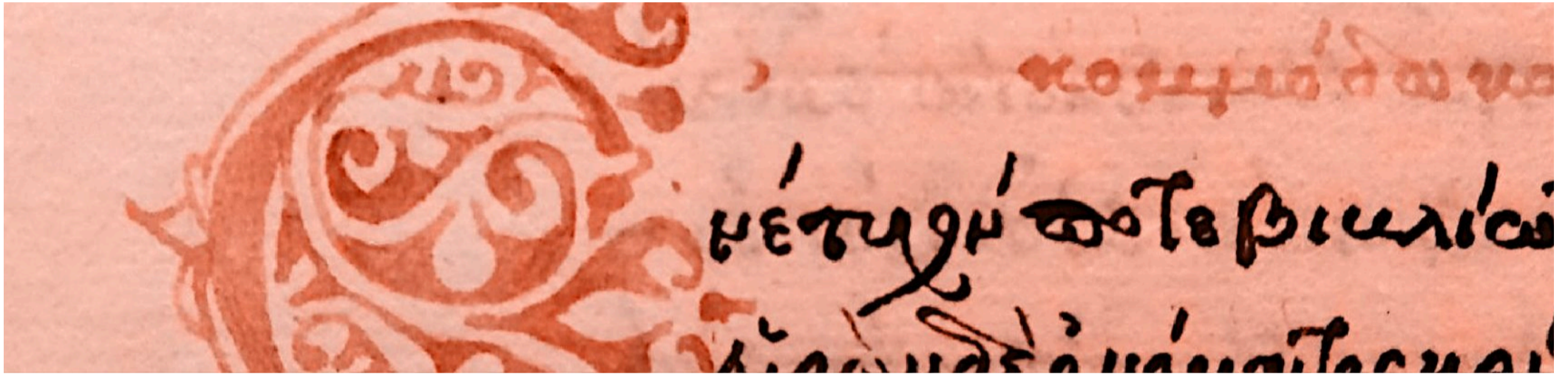


# Digital Encyclopedia of Atticism



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*PURA. Purism In Antiquity: Theories Of Language in Greek Atticist Lexica and their Legacy*



Lexicographic Entries



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## About DEA

# About us

The **Digital Encyclopedia of Atticism** is one of the research outputs of **PURA**, a five-year ERC Consolidator project (grant agreement no. 865817), which began in January 2021 at Ca' Foscari University of Venice. PURA investigates the theories of **linguistic purism** that were developed in ancient Greek culture, and the way in which they were received in later periods. The focus of our analysis is **Atticist lexica**, ancient 'dictionaries' that collect linguistic features to be cultivated or avoided in correct Greek.

DEA contributes to the three main objectives of PURA:

1. to provide a comprehensive mapping of **Atticist purism** by analyzing the linguistic theories of Atticist lexica;
2. to study the intellectual and cultural **legacy** of Atticism in antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the early modern age by charting the history both of the lexica as **books** and of their authors;
3. to make the theories of these specialist and intricate texts more approachable and **accessible** outside the traditional format of critical editions.

To fulfil these objectives, the three sections of DEA, all of which are **open-access**, collect our work on the lexicographic entries in the Atticist lexica and their linguistic history; the major scholars and works of the ancient and Byzantine Atticist debate; and the transmission of the lexica in the medieval and early modern periods. Visit [About DEA](#) for more information.

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## Lexicographic entries

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### ἀμεινότερος, ῥαότερος (Phryn. *Ecl.* 106, Phryn. *Ecl.* 382)

#### A. Main sources

(1) Phryn. *Ecl.* 106: εἰ ποιητῆς εἶπεν ἀμεινότερον, χαιρέτω· οὐδὲ γὰρ καλλιώτερον οὐδὲ κρεισσότερον ῥητέον· συγκριτικὸν γὰρ συγκριτικοῦ οὐ γίνεται. λέγε οὖν ἄμεινον.

If a poet used ἀμεινότερον, let us have nothing to do with it. For one must say neither καλλιώτερον nor κρεισσότερον since the comparative of a comparative does not exist. Therefore, say ἄμεινον.

(2) Phryn. *Ecl.* 382: ῥαότερον μὴ, ῥᾶον δὲ λέγε· συγκριτικὸν γὰρ συγκριτικοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν, οἷον εἴ τις λέγοι κρεισσότερον.

Do not say ῥαότερον, but ῥᾶον. For the comparative of a comparative does not exist, as if one said κρεισσότερον.

#### B. Other erudite sources

(1) Philox. *Gramm.* fr. 348 (= *Et.Gen.* AB s.v. πλειότερος, cf. *EM* 675.12–28): πλειότερος· [...] τὸ οὖν παρὰ Καλλιμάχῳ ὄφρα σε πλειοτέρῃ δεῦρο δέχωμαι' οὐ παρὰ τὸ πλείων πεποιήται, ἐπεὶ πλειονέστερον ἂν ἐλέγετο, ἀλλὰ παρὰ τὸ πλείος, ἀφ' οὗ καὶ Ὅμηρος 'πλείοι μέλανος θανάτοιο' καὶ τὸ 'πλείαι τοι οἴνου κλισίαι'. πλείος οὖν καὶ πλειότερος, οἷον 'φθέγγεο κυδίστη πλειοτέρῃ φάρυγι'. ἡμάρτηται δὲ ὠμολογημένως τὸ 'δεύτερον αὐτε γένος πολὺ χειρότερον' παρὰ Ἡσιόδῳ· διχῶς γὰρ ἐποίησεν. συγκριτικὸν γὰρ ὄν τὸ χειρόν συγκριτικὸν ἐποίησεν, ὅπερ ἀδύνατον. καὶ εἰ ὄλως ὠφείλεν εἰπεῖν, χειρονέστερον ἂν ἐσχημάτισεν. τί οὖν; ἴσως παρὰ τὸ χεῖρος. οὕτω Φιλόξενος Ῥηματικῶ.

πλειότερος: [...]. [In] Callimachus' 'So that I receive you here with fuller ...' (fr. 535 Pfeiffer), [πλειοτέρῃ] does not derive from πλείων, because [the comparative] should have been πλειονέστερον, but from πλείος ('full'), from which Homer too [says] 'Full (plur.) of black death' (*Od.* 12.92) and 'Tents full of wine' (*Il.* 9.71). Thus, πλείος [is



the positive] and πλειότερος [the comparative], as in ‘Speak, oh noblest, with fuller voice’ (Call. fr. 757 Pfeiffer). [In] Hesiod’s ‘Then a second, much worse race’ (*Op.* 126) [χειρότερον] is by common consent incorrect. For he made a double form: even though χείρον [already] is a comparative, [Hesiod] created a comparative [of it], which is impossible. And if he had really had to say it, he would have created [the comparative] χειρονέστερον. What then? Perhaps [χειρότερον] derives from χείρος. Thus Philoxenus in the *Rhematicon*.

(2) *Su. ε 3070*: ἔρωσ· [...] Ἀττικῶς δὲ ἀπὸ τοῦ ὁ ἔρος, τοῦ ἔρου, κλίνεται. οὕτω γὰρ καὶ αὐτοὶ τοῦτο τὸ ὄνομα γράφουσι καὶ ἐκφωνοῦσιν, ὡσπερ καὶ τὸ ἀμείνων καὶ χείρων, ἄμεινος καὶ χείρος φασίν.

ἔρωσ: [...] From ἔρος, ἔρου the Attic declension is [ἔρωσ, ἔρωτος]. For they (i.e. Attic speakers) too [like us] write and pronounce this word in this fashion, like they also say ἀμείνων and χείρων [from] ἄμεινος and χείρος.

(3) *Eust. in Il.* 1.327.24–6: τὸ δὲ χειριότερον οὐ ζηλωτὸν τοῖς πεζῶν ῥητορεύουσιν, ὡς οὐδὲ τὸ ῥηϊτερον οὐδὲ τὸ ῥαότερον οὐδὲ τὸ ‘πλειοτέρη σὺν χειρί’ οὐδ’ ὅσα ἕτερα τοιαῦτα. ποιηταῖς μέντοι χρηστά εἰσιν, ὡς πολλαχοῦ φαίνεται.

The form χειριότερον should not be imitated by those who write in prose, and neither ῥηϊτερον nor ῥαότερον nor πλειοτέρη σὺν χειρί (‘With a fuller hand’) (*Hom. Od.* 11.359) nor any other of this kind. Though, of course, they are serviceable for the poets, as it is clear to see in many places.

(4) *Eust. in Il.* 3.699.13–6: οὐ συγκριτικός δὲ ὁ σχηματισμὸς τοῦ νωϊτερον, ἀλλ’ ἀπλῶς παραγωγῆς ἐστὶ παρελκυσμός, ὁποῖον δὴ καὶ τὸ σφωϊτερος καὶ σφέτερος καὶ ἡμέτερος, ἀκολούθως δὲ καὶ τὸ χειρότερος, ὁ χείρων, καὶ ῥηϊτερον τὸ ῥᾶον, καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα εἰκῆ φαντάζει τύπον συγκριτικόν.

The formation of νωϊτερον is not like that of a comparative, but it is simply the prolongation of the derived form, like σφωϊτερος, σφέτερος, and ἡμέτερος. In conformity with this, χειρότερος, [which is the same as] χείρων, and ῥηϊτερον, [which is the same as] ῥᾶον, and any other such forms only superficially resemble the shape of a comparative.

(5) *Eust. in Il.* 4.431.24–432.2: ὄρα δὲ ἐν τούτοις καὶ τὸ ‘χειρότερος’ οὐ πρὸς ζῆλον τὸν ἐν πεζῶν λόγῳ, ἀλλὰ χάριν εἰδήσεως. τὸ μὲν γὰρ χείρων Ἀττικὴ σύγκρισις, ὡς τὸ ‘ἐγὼ δὲ σέθεν πολὺ χείρων’. τὸ δὲ χειρότερος ποιητικὴ λέξις, κειμένη πολλαχοῦ, κινήσασα συγκριτικῶς τὸ συγκριτικόν. οὐδὲν γὰρ τι σημαίνει τὸ χείρων πλεον τοῦ χειρότερος. τοιαῦτα καὶ τὸ ῥηϊτερος καὶ ‘πλειοτέρη σὺν χειρί’ καὶ τὰ ὅμοια.

In these lines take notice also of χειρότερος (‘inferior’), not to compete with [other] prose-writers, but for [your] knowledge. [The form] χείρων is an Attic comparative, like in ‘I am much inferior to you’ (*Hom. Il.* 20.434). [The form] χειρότερος is a poeticism, used in many places, which inflects the comparative with an additional comparative. For χειρότερος does not mean anything more than χείρων. Of this kind are also ῥηϊτερος and πλειοτέρη σὺν χειρί (‘With a fuller hand’) (*Hom. Od.* 11.359) and the like.

(6) *Eust. in Od.* 1.68.42–4: τὸ δὲ λωϊτερον, ἐξεφώνησεν ἐκ τοῦ λῶον τὸ προσγεγραμμένον ἰῶτα. ὡς τὸ ῥηϊτερον καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα. ποιητικὸς δὲ ὁ τοιοῦτος σχηματισμός. ὡς καὶ τὸ χειρότερον. τὸ γὰρ κοινόν, λῶον. καὶ ῥᾶον. καὶ χείρον.

[As regards] λωϊτερον, [the poet] pronounces the subscript [lit. additional] iota from λῶον. The same as ῥηϊτερον and the like. This formation is poetical. The same as χειρότερον. The common forms are λῶον, ῥᾶον, and χείρον.

(7) Iohannes Pediasimus *Scholia in Hesiodi Scutum* 616.20–4 Gaisford: ὅτι οὐ λέγομεν ὥσπερ χεῖρω καὶ χείρονα καὶ χειρότερον, οὕτω δὴ καὶ μειζότερον καὶ καλλιώτερον καὶ κρειπτότερον, ἀλλὰ μόνον χειρότερον. καὶ τοῦτο δὲ ποιηταῖς μόνοις ἀρμόδιον, ὡς καὶ τὸ χειροτέρεην γενεήν, ὃ φησιν Ἡσίοδος εἰς τὰ ἔργα καὶ τὰς ἡμέρας.

We should not use μειζότερον and καλλιώτερον and κρειπτότερον because we use χεῖρω καὶ χείρονα καὶ χειρότερον, but [of these] only χειρότερον [is acceptable]. But this form too is only fitting for the poets [to use], like ‘worse race’ (*Op.* 126) which Hesiod says in *Works and Days*.

### C. *Loci classici*, other relevant texts

(1) Mimn. fr. 14.9–11 West<sup>2</sup>:

οὐ γὰρ τις κείνου δηίων ἔτ' ἀμεινότερος φῶς  
ἔσκεν ἐποίχεσθαι φυλόπιδος κρατερῆς  
ἔργον [...]

For none of the enemies was better than him in going about the duty of the strenuous war-cry.

(2) Phld. *Rh.*, P.Herc. 1015/832 col. 56.9–15: οὐδὲ γυναῖκα τῶν ποητῶν φασκόντων οὕτως ἀγαθοῦ νοῦ καθυστερεῖν ὡς τὸ χερεῖον ἐλέσθαι ἀμεινοτέρων παρεόντων’.

Not even a woman, the poets say, is so much lacking in good sense ‘to choose worse things when better ones are at hand’.

(3) Ph. *De aeternitate mundi* 41 (= Arist. fr. 21 Rose = fr. 916 Gigon): ἀμώμητα δὲ καὶ ἀνεξέλεγκτα καὶ ἀνεπανόρθωτα τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ τελειοτάτη τέχνη καὶ ἐπιστήμη δημιουργηθέντα· οὐδὲ γὰρ ‘γυνή’ φασί ‘τοσσόνδε νόου ἐπιδεύεται ἐσθλοῦ, | ὥστε χερεῖον’ ἐλέσθαι ἀμεινοτέρων <παρεόντων>’.

The things which are crafted by the god with perfect craft and knowledge are blameless and free of criticism and not to be amended. For they say that ‘Not even a woman falls so short of good sense to choose worse things when better ones <are at hand>’.

(4) Ps.Callisth. *Historia Alexandri Magni (recensio α)* 2.4.6: ἀμεινότερόν ἐστιν ὑμᾶς Αἰγυπτίους ὄντας τὴν τοῦ Νείλου πλημμυρίαν καὶ τὴν τῆς γῆς γεωργίαν ἀπεργάζεσθαι ἢ τὴν τοῦ Ἄρεως τόλμην καθοπλίζεσθαι.

It is better that you, who are Egyptians, devote your work to the flooding of the Nile and to the cultivation of the land rather than arming yourselves for the daring deeds of war.

(5) Tz. *Ep.* 85.126.15–9 Leone: ἦσθην μὲν ὅτι φιλτάτου μοι τέκνου γραφὴν ἐδεξάμην, ἤλγησα δὲ ὡς ἐπινόσως ἐκ ταύτης ἀνέμαθον ἔχειν σε, κἂν εὐθέως με πάλιν τῷ ἄχθει τῆς λύπης ἐμβαρυνόμενον αὐτὴ ἀνεκούφισε, ῥαότερον ἤδη ἔχειν σε καταγγέλλουσα.

I rejoiced because I received the letter of a son who is most dear to me, but I suffered for the fact that from this [letter] I got to know that you are ill, although it (i.e. the letter) readily lifted me again, as I was oppressed by the burden of the affliction, announcing that you are already doing better.

(6) Constantinus Stilbes *Praelocutio* 35–6 Cresci: ἐφυτεύθη μὲν στέλεχος, καὶ τοῦτο ῥαότερον, ἀλλ’ ἀνέδραμε χρονιώτερον.

The trunk was planted, and this [was] quite a light matter, but it shot up rather lately.

(7) Michael Choniates *Epistulae* 100.149–51 Kolovou: νῦν δὲ, εἰ καὶ τὸ πάθος πιέζον εἰς πένθος ἐκκαλεῖται καὶ δάκρυα, ἀλλὰ καὶ εὐθυμεῖν χρὴ καὶ φέρειν ῥαότερον.

Now, although the suffering which presses hard on your pain also elicits your tears, still it is necessary to be cheerful and endure more easily.

## D. General commentary

Phrynichus’ glosses ([A.1](#), [A.2](#)) concern the double comparatives ἀμεινότερος and ῥαότερος (I derive the terminology ‘double comparatives’ from Gignac 1981, 157). Phrynichus rejects the double comparatives because of their formation. Because the comparative of a comparative does not exist, forms like ἀμεινότερος and ῥαότερος, but also καλλιώτερος and κρεισσότερος should be avoided, and the fact that ἀμεινότερος may be used in poetry does not make it any more acceptable.

To use modern terminology, double comparatives are primary comparatives that are hyper-characterised by the analogical addition of the secondary comparative suffix -τερος. This is a case of morphological double marking triggered by the fact that the secondary suffix -τερος makes them morphologically more transparent. Not only are most of these primary comparatives polythematic, but they also lack the formal clarity of the suffix -ίων (see Leumann 1945, 6). To the four double comparatives discussed by Phrynichus, we can add a few more examples (see discussion below).

Like the primary comparatives, primary superlatives too were occasionally hyper-characterised by the addition of the secondary superlative suffix -τατος (see Seiler 1950, 124). The only early and poetic occurrence is πρεσβίστατος in Nicander (*Th.* 344), while all the remaining evidence is late and in prose. Interestingly, evidence for mixing double comparatives with double superlatives is provided by the form ἐλαχιστότερος (< ἐλάχιστος), first attested in the New Testament and in Hero’s mechanical writings.

Phrynichus’ criticism of double comparatives is well-paralleled in ancient and Byzantine scholarship. The occurrence of the double comparative χειρότερον in Hesiod (*Op.* 126) (on which see below) likely sparked the interest of ancient philology. It is a famous line, and Philoxenus ([B.1](#)) describes it as ‘incorrect by common consent’. It does not require speculation to imagine that Phrynichus might have been aware of scholarly interest in double comparatives. However, unlike the other erudite sources, Phrynichus shows no real linguistic interest in these forms, and after commenting that the comparative of a comparative does not exist, he fails to provide any alternative interpretation. Nevertheless, attempts had been made by ancient philologists to provide a more convincing morphological explanation of the double comparative.

Indeed, Philoxenus ([B.1](#)) condemns the interpretation of these forms as ‘comparatives of comparatives’ and suggests a different solution, also paralleled in the *Suda* gloss ([B.2](#)) (implicitly) and in Orion’s *Etymologicum* (166.5–13). Forms like ἀμεινότερος, χειρότερος, and ῥαότερος are explained as the secondary comparatives of the (unattested) positive adjectives \*ἀμεινος, \*χείρος, and \*ῥαος (Orion also includes μείος and χέρειος). The motivation is clear: building on the (correct) interpretation of πλειότερος as the proper comparative of πλειός rather than the



comparative of the comparative πλείων, ancient philologists applied the same derivational pattern to the double comparatives by analogy (see further [F.1](#)). Whether the adjectives ἄμεινος, χείρος, and ῥαός actually existed was obviously a secondary problem. We should point out that modern scholars have also often attempted to postulate the existence of positive adjectives \*ἄμεινος, \*χείρος, etc. as the basis for the formation of the double comparatives, but these efforts have mostly remained unsuccessful (see Barber 2013, 179–80 and below concerning the formation of ἀρείων).

In later sources, Eustathius too is critical of double comparatives ([B.3](#), [B.4](#), [B.5](#), [B.6](#); the same content in [B.5](#) is in Eust. *in Il.* 3.761.5–8). These forms are allowable in poetry, but should be banned from prose ([B.3](#), [B.5](#)). It is at least conceivable that Eustathius might have been influenced by the kind of doctrines for which we find evidence in Philoxenus' fragment. However, not only does Eustathius still accept the interpretation of πλειότερος as a double comparative ([B.3](#), [B.5](#)), but he also establishes a comparison between the formation of double comparatives and the use of the suffix -τερος to create possessive adjectives from personal pronouns ([B.4](#)). Thus, when Eustathius writes that double comparatives are not real comparatives ([B.4](#), [B.5](#)), he means that the adjectival suffix -τερος does not always imply a comparative function.

Primary comparatives were constantly under pressure from secondary comparatives, which in turn have been a productive category throughout the history of Greek (Barber 2013, 146 comments that primary comparatives 'appear to have been moribund even from the time of the earliest alphabetic data'). Homeric poetry already testifies to a very creative use of the secondary suffix -τερος with adjectives and adverbs (see Chantraine 1958–1963 vol. 1, 258–9 § 121), and it is no surprise that the first evidence for double comparatives, too, appears in Homeric poetry. While classical Attic retained the use of primary comparatives, the only forms that remained in use in Post-classical Greek are high frequency forms such as ἀμείνων, μείζων, ἐλάσσων, etc. (the evidence is collected by Mayser, *Gramm.* vol. 1,2, 59 and Blass, Debrunner 1976, 48). In fact, the growing tendency was weighted towards replacing primary comparatives with secondary ones (see *CGMEMG* vol. 2, 820). A case in point is the creation of new secondary comparatives to replace earlier primary comparatives, such as ἀγαθώτερος in place of suppletive primary comparatives (ἀγαθώτερος too is examined and rejected by Phrynichus, see ἀγαθώτερος [↗](#)). In this context, new double comparatives were created, and while in earlier times these forms were confined to poetry, from imperial times they started to be used in prose as well.

The distribution of double comparatives in Greek is highly polarised. While several double comparatives are admitted of in archaic dactylic poetry (Homer, Hesiod, and elegy, once in Aeschylus, and later also in Hellenistic and imperial hexametrical poetry), many others are first attested centuries later in prose literature. While the occurrences in poetry are always in high-register texts, the occurrences in prose generally remain confined to low- and occasionally mid-register texts. Even more strikingly, a double comparative first attested in archaic poetry may then re-appear in later prose, though the linguistic environment is very different. Phrynichus' resistance to forms like ἀμεινότερος, καλλιώτερος, κρεισσότερος, and ῥαότερος will therefore be sufficiently clear: they are completely unattested in canonical Attic writers, and their frequency in dactylic poetry hardly makes them suitable for use by an aspiring Atticist. Even though ἀμεινότερος and ῥαότερος are the focus of Phrynichus' lemma, the highly varied distribution of double comparatives requires that some attention be devoted to the other forms as well. To do so, we shall follow a chronological criterion, investigating first the occurrences in archaic to late-antique poetry and second those in prose authors.

Double comparatives are well-attested in dactylic poetry from Homer to late antiquity. The reason is clear: the prosodic shape of many double comparatives makes them useful metrical variants. It is hard to say whether the double comparatives used in poetry were only created for metrical convenience, or whether some of them may have been real forms. The fact that in early poetry, with the partial exception of χειρότερος/χειριώτερος, double



comparatives are mostly confined to a low number of occurrences may be a sign that these forms did exist but were perceived as innovations that were only suitable for limited use. However, the popularity of these comparatives in later poetry starkly increased, as can be observed by the distribution of each form.

The evidence for ἀμεινότερος is meagre (on the problems concerning the formation of the primary comparative ἀμείνων, see Barber 2013, 179–80). The only known occurrences are found in a passage by Mimnermus ([C.1](#)) and then in an anonymous poetic quotation preserved by Philodemus ([C.2](#), not in the TLG) and Philo of Alexandria ([C.3](#)), which we cannot date. It is unclear whether the reference in Phrynichus' gloss ([A.1](#)) to the use of ἀμεινότερος in poetry is an allusion to either of these passages. It is also possible that Phrynichus may not have a specific passage in mind and may rather be contesting any attempt to say that poetic occurrences of the double comparative justify the use of such forms.

A better documented case is that of χειρότερος and χερειότερος (on the formation of χείρων and χερείων, see Barber 2013, 179). These forms have been continuously attested in hexametrical poetry, from archaic to Byzantine times: χειρότερος occurs in archaic epic poetry (2x in Homer, 1x in Hesiod and the *Homeric Hymns*, 1x in the *Scutum*), then once in Parmenides, Evenus, Aratus, and many more times in imperial and late antique poetry (especially Oppian's *Haliutica*, Quintus Smyrnaeus, and Gregory of Nazianzus). χερειότερος is attested in Homer (2x) and Moschus (2x), and then occurs several times in imperial, late antique, and Byzantine poetry (particularly Oppian's *Haliutica*, Quintus Smyrnaeus, Gregory of Nazianzus, Nonnus, Eudocia, and the epigrammatic tradition).

More similar to ἀμεινότερος is the case of ἀρειότερος, which occurs in Thgn. 1.548, and then re-surfaces in imperial and late antique poetry (Oppian, Gregory of Nazianzus, Nonnus, the epigrammatic tradition). It should be noted, though, that ἀρείων is not exactly a primary comparative, but rather a secondary derivation from the positive adjective ἄρειος, found in Hom. *Il.* 15.736 τεῖχος ἄρειον (see further Seiler 1950, 116–9, Barber 2013, 179, and Coray, Krieter-Spiro, Visser 2017, 175). Therefore, ἀρειότερος might not be a double comparative, but instead the regular secondary comparative of the positive adjective ἄρειος. However, given that the evidence for the positive adjective ἄρειος is extremely scanty, it is more appealing to suggest that ἀρειότερος is indeed a double comparative of ἀρείων and thus a more recent formation.

Another interesting case is the adverb ἄσσοτέρω (Hom. *Od.* 17.572, 19.506), which is the double comparative of adverbial neuter ἄσσον (< ἄγχι). Further, the adjective ἄσσοτέρος is also attested in a prose fragment by Ion of Chios (on which see below) and then in Aratus (1.313, 1.486, 1.878; commenting on the occurrences in Aratus, Kidd 1997, 475 incorrectly calls it 'a new adjective'). Later poets avoid the adjective, though, and only use the Homeric form ἄσσοτέρω (Manetho, Gregory of Nazianzus). Oppian's ἄσσύτερος (C. 4.121, 4.202) represents a further secondary development. It depends on the interpretation of the Homeric adjective ἐπασσύτερος as a compounded double comparative (i.e. ἐπί + ἄσσύτερος) with the Aeolic change of [o] into [u] (for this interpretation see, e.g., *Epim. Hom.* vol. 2 α 288 and schol. Hom. *Il.* 1.383a; on ἐπασσύτερος and its connection with ἄγχι, ἄσσον, and related forms see Seiler 1950, 44 and n. 2 and *DELG* s.v.).

Three double comparatives appear to be post-classical innovations. ὀλιζότερος is only attested in Hellenistic and imperial hexametrical poetry (1x in Nicander, 5x in Oppian; on the vocalism in ὀλίζων and ὀλείζων, see Vessella 2006 and Barber 2013, 176). Similarly, μειότερος is first attested in Hellenistic poetry (1x in Aratus, Apollonius Rhodius, and Nicander), then only appears in imperial and Byzantine hexameter poetry (on the formation of μείων, see Barber 2013, 176–7). A more unique case is that of πλειότερος. Even though this was originally the proper secondary comparative of the positive adjective πλείος 'full', in Hellenistic times it started to be treated by analogy as the double comparative of πλείων (see [F.1](#)).

Finally, two other double comparatives are each attested once in the epigrammatic tradition: γλυκειότερος in *App.Anth.* 272.4 (= Peek, *GVI* 564 = *IGUR* 3.1304) and κακιότερος in *AP* 12.7.4. That these are later formations is also indicated by the fact that while other double comparatives used in poetry depend on primary comparatives where the suffix is not easily recognisable, γλυκειότερος and κακιότερος are based on the primary comparatives γλυκίων and κακίων, where the suffix -ίων is very apparent. Note that the prosody of these forms, with [i:], suggests that they are based on the Attic γλυκίων and κακίων, where the [i] of the suffix is long. Finally, the reading βραδιότεροι occurs in the manuscript of pseudo-Manetho's *Apotelesmatica* (2.407). The passage, however, contains other corruptions, and the double comparative was corrected into βαρδύτεροι by Axt (see De Stefani 2017, 70).

All the double comparatives that have been discussed so far are trademarks of dactylic poetry. The only two forms that derive from a different poetic genre are the *hapax* βελτιώτερος and μειζονώτερος. The former, βελτιώτερος, was apparently used by Telesilla (fr. 6 *PMG* = Hsch. β 500; the reading in the Hesychius manuscript is the nonsensical βελτιώτας, and βελτιωτέρας is Lobeck's and Dindorf's emendation, see further Cunningham *ad loc.*). Given that Telesilla's fragment is one-word long (and also that we do not know much about Telesilla's poems and language), we can hardly speculate further on her use of the double comparative. Still, it is at least conceivable that the double comparative was used in imitation of hexameter poetry. As regards the latter form, μειζονώτερος, it appears that it was used only by Aeschylus (fr. 434; on this fragment see Radt, *TrGF* vol. 3, *ad loc.* and μειζόνως<sup>⚡</sup> under **F.1**; supplementary indirect evidence for μειζονώτερος is likely to be the transmitted reading μειζονώτερον at schol. [bT] Hom. *Il.* 2.248, see Erbse *ad loc.*; see further Catrambone 2021, 31 on Aeschylean materials in the Homeric scholia). (On the Attic lengthened vocalism μειζ-, see Barber 2013, 164.) The form μειζονώτερος may have been used by Aeschylus in imitation of the double comparatives used in epic poetry, though some compromise was needed in order for this to scan in an iambo-trochaic context: of all double comparatives, μειζονώτερος is the only one where -ότερος/-ώτερος is added to the neuter nominative rather than directly to the stem (one may compare ἀμείνων > ἀμεινότερος, χείρων > χειρότερος, etc.). Not only is the imitation of Homeric language a well-known feature of Aeschylean diction, but as far as the comparatives are concerned, Aeschylus is also the only Attic dramatist known to have used the Homeric comparative μάσσων, a comparative of μακρός (on Aeschylus' use of Homeric language in general, see Sideras 1971, esp. 103 on the use of comparative μάσσων, though he does not discuss μειζονώτερος, nor does Garson 1985 in his supplement to Sideras). It may also have been purposely created by Aeschylus, whose fragment is the earliest evidence for any kind of double comparative of μείζων before μειζοτέρα, in an epigram dating to between the 1st century BCE and the 1st century CE (IK Side 3.6, at the beginning of a pentameter).

Finally, mention should be made of μαλιωτέρα. This form is only attested in Hesychius (μ 192). It is a double comparative of μάλιον, the Ionic comparative of μάλα – an alternative to the common form μάλλον (see Tyr. fr. 12.6 West, Call. fr. 67.13 Pfeiffer, Hsch. μ 187, Choer. *Orth.* AO vol. 2, 240.1–2). The Ionic derivation is also demonstrated by the lengthened vocalism -ώτερος, which presupposes Ionic -ίων with [i] as opposed to the retention of [i:] in Attic. In the manuscript of Hesychius' lexicon, the reading is μαλιώτερα, and μαλιωτέρα is Musurus' correction. If one accepts this emendation, then the nominative feminine μαλιωτέρα belongs to an adjective created from the adverb, as in the case of ἀσσότερος from ἀσσοτέρω (see above). Still, one should not rule out the possibility that μαλιώτερα might be retained as an adverbial neuter. Considering that μάλιον is an Ionicism and a poeticism, the suspicion is justified that μαλιωτέρα too occurred in a poetic source, though it remains impossible to say where Hesychius derived it from.

Only two double comparatives already attested in archaic poetry, ἀμεινότερος and χειρότερος, are also attested in later prose. However, not only are their prose occurrences comparatively few and late, but they are generally limited to low-register texts. The first occurrence of ἀμεινότερος is in the 3rd-century CE version of the *Historia Alexandri Magni (recensio α)* (**C.4**), and the others date to Byzantine times (see **E.**). As for χειρότερος, this form is only attested in low language texts, such as Epiphanius' *Panarium* (vol. 3, 124.1; see Williams 2009, xxix) and late



antique hagiographies. The occurrence of χειρότερος in the Hippocratic treatise *De decenti habitu* (25) might at first sight provide linguistic evidence that this treatise, despite being written in Ionic, should be dated to imperial times (see Craik 2015, 59). The early use of the double comparative ἄσσοτερος in a fragment by Ion of Chios (see below) indicates that these forms did exist in Ionic prose, but the lack of any other parallel for the use of double comparatives in securely early Hippocratic writings reminds us that this isolated occurrence of χειρότερος in *De decenti habitu* should be handled with caution. Finally, a third case might be added to ἀμεινότερος and χειρότερος: after the isolated occurrence in Telesilla, the double comparative βελτιώτερος enjoyed some popularity in Byzantine sources (see [E.](#)).

Several other double comparatives are absent in poetry and only appear in prose. These forms, too, are scarcely attested before late antiquity and mostly occur in stylistically unmarked texts. However, an important and often overlooked exception complicates both these premises. The first occurrence of a double comparative in prose is ἄσσοτέρα, in a fragment of the *Epidemics* of Ion of Chios, the 5th-century BCE polymath (F 19 Federico = *FGrHist* 392 F 6). The context in which this form occurs does not appear to borrow any element of poetic language, and we might then infer that the double comparatives were allowed, at least occasionally, in prose (on the Ionicisms in Ion's *Epidemics* see Federico 2015, 70).

Another noteworthy case is μασσότερον. This form is the double comparative of μάσων, the poetic primary comparative of μακρός. The only occurrences of μασσότερον are found in a late Pythagorean writing attributed to Dius (70.10 Thesleff = Stob. 4.21a.16) and in Hesychius (μ 343) (the gloss might in fact depend on the Pythagorean text, presumably not directly, but via intermediate lexicographical sources). The fragment of Dius is ostensibly written in Doric, and this could reinforce the idea that the double comparatives were accepted in non-Attic prose, as in the case of ἄσσοτερος in Ion of Chios and χειρότερος in the Hippocratic writing *De decenti habitu* (see above). However, in these texts, the double comparatives had remarkably different functions. On the one hand, in Ion of Chios and the Hippocratic writing, the double comparatives are stylistically unmarked. On the other hand, μασσότερον is a linguistic mannerism in Dius' fragment that is meant to heighten the tone (on the highly artificial language of Dius' fragments and the presence of archaisms and poeticisms, see Thesleff 1961, 13, 90, and 110; see also Cassio 1988). Thus, one can hardly treat these three cases together.

A few other cases require some additional comments.

Phrynichus' first gloss ([A.1](#)) preserves the only occurrence of κρεισσότερος, which will only re-appear in Early Modern Greek (see [E.](#); on κρείσων as a koine form, where the typically Attic, analogically lengthened vocalism in the root co-exists with Ionic -σσ-, see Barber 2015, 249–52).

Before Byzantine writers, ῥαότερος is only attested in Phrynichus' second gloss ([A.2](#)) and as an *interpretamentum* of εὐπετέστερον ('more/rather favourable') in the epitome of the 1st-century CE Hippocratic lexicon of Erotian (66.3 Nachmanson; on the Byzantine occurrences see [E.](#)). It is worth pointing out that the isolated occurrence of ῥαότερος in the 4th-century CE writer Themistius (*Or.* 15.192a.5–7) is a corruption, and we should probably accept the emendation of οὐ ῥαότεροι to ὀρέστεροι put forward by Cobet (1860, 244–5), who convincingly recognised in this passage an allusion to the ὀρέστερος of Hom. *Il.* 22.93 (Cobet's emendation is also accepted by Maisano 1995, 99).

Regarding μειζότερος, besides the occurrence in the late Hellenistic or early imperial epigram from Side (see above), this double comparative is scarcely attested before late antiquity and confined to texts written in lower Greek, such as early Christian writings and documentary papyri (see Gignac 1981, 157; on the alternative form μειζονότερος see [E.](#)).

Similarly, καλλιώτερος is only attested in a documentary papyrus dating to 37–40 CE (P.Oxy. 14.1762 [= [TM 29025](#), 2nd–3rd century CE], καλλιοτέρα at lines 6 and 8). The lengthened thematic vowel of καλλιώτερος in Phrynichus indicates that it depends on Ionic and koine καλλίων with [i], as opposed to Attic καλλίων with [i:] (see Seiler 1950, 15 and Barber 2013, 151–2). The two examples of καλλιοτέρα in the Oxyrhynchus papyrus are more likely to be evidence of an analogical spelling, which is also well-attested in Byzantine and Medieval Greek (see [E.](#)). After an interval of several centuries, this form went on to enjoy increasing popularity in Byzantine and especially Medieval Greek (see [E.](#)).

## E. Byzantine and Modern Greek commentary

Double comparatives became progressively popular in Byzantine, Medieval Greek, and Early Modern Greek, and some have survived into Modern Greek, too. In Byzantine prose, they are generally limited to low- and mid-register texts, mostly those with religious (e.g. homiletic texts, hagiographies), technical (e.g. medical writings), or administrative content (e.g. monastic regulations, etc.). The exceptions, i.e. cases where double comparatives are used by learned authors who normally wrote in high, classicising Greek, are few. In those cases, the double comparatives may be either elements of informal language that are occasionally allowed, or they may be used as ‘morphological poeticisms’, included to heighten the tone. Byzantine erudition regarded double comparatives as forms to be avoided, and though they were permitted in poetry (a conclusion prompted by their occurring in the work of classical poets like Homer, Hesiod, Aratus, etc.), their use in prose was regarded as an unfitting embellishment ([B.3](#), [B.4](#), [B.5](#), [B.6](#), [B.7](#)). In Byzantine poetry, double comparatives are foreign to classicising poetry (e.g. hexameter poetry), while they are occasionally attested in less elevated poetic genres and are extremely common in poetry written in Medieval and Early Modern Greek.

In what follows, I provide a schematic presentation of the distribution of the double comparatives in Byzantine, Medieval, and Modern sources.

ἀμεινότερος occurs once in the mid-6th-century CE *Life of Saint Auxentius* (62.10), three times in George of Alexandria’s 7th-century CE *Life of John Chrysostom* (19.28, 35.13, 69.81), and once in a novella issued under Constantinus VII (*Novellae et Chrysobullae Imperatorum post Iustinianum. Collatio tertia* 8.7 von Lingenthal). We have no evidence that this form occurred in later texts, nor does it survive into Early Modern and Modern Greek.

βελτιώτερος is a reasonably common form in Byzantine prose. It first occurs as an *interpretamentum* in Hesychius’ lexicon (κ 3485) and then in low-register texts (pseudo-John Chrysostomus, the medical treatise *De cibis* and a later one entitled *On the capacities of food* [Περὶ τροφῶν δυνάμεως], hagiographies and chronicles, commentaries on Aristotle), but also in more formal ones (9x in Theodorus Studites’ writings, 1x in Nicolaus of Otranto’s *Disputatio contra Iudaeos*, and 1x in Manuel Calecas’ *De essentia et operatione*).

ἐλαττώτερος is well-attested in Byzantine Greek. It occurs in low- and mid-register texts (1x in Origenes, quite often in medical writings, 6x in the *Oneirocriticon* of Achmet, as well as in monastic regulations and documents). It occurs twice in the mid-register text *De ceremoniis* of Constantinus VII (662.20 and 669.8), where it is used in a list of troops. Four more occurrences are found in Michael Psellus (*De omnifaria doctrina* 20.5, 27.7, and 27.9, *Poemata* 6.138; not discussed by Renauld 1920). In the passages of *De omnifaria doctrina*, the subject is didactic, and the double comparative is probably a tolerable element of unmarked language. Likewise, in the passage of the poem *On grammar* (*Poemata* 6), the content is equally didactic (i.e. the assimilation of vowel and consonants in the presence of rough breathing). Moreover, this passage is written in stylistically low-register dodecasyllables, which



do not replicate the classical iambic trimeter (see Boeten 2021, 356–8), and this too contributes to the conclusion that ἔλαττώτερα is an element of informal (though not necessarily low) language. This form is also attested in Medieval Greek (see *CGMEMG* vol. 2, 825), but does not survive into Modern Greek.

ἡττώτερος, which is unattested in classical sources, occurs twice in mid-register Byzantine texts (Marcus Eremita *De Melchisedech* 1.21; the text known as the *Letter of the Three Patriarchs*, Cristophorus of Alexandria, Job of Antiochia, and Basilius of Jerusalem, *Epistula de imaginibus* 10.49). No other evidence has been identified, and this form does not exist in Early Modern and Modern Greek.

καλλιώτερος (also written καλλιότερος as in P.Oxy. 14.1762, see [D.](#)) is well-attested in Byzantine Greek in low- and mid-register texts (the letters of Barsanuphis and John, on whose language see Neyt, Angelis-Noah 1997, 55–61; Theodorus Studites; the anonymous *Historia imperatorum*). In Medieval Greek texts it is used in both prose and poetry, such as *Digenis Akritis* and especially the *Bellum Troianum*. It continues, with varying orthography, in Modern Greek. This increased popularity also depends on the development of a new first-class adjective κάλλιος, κάλλια, κάλλιον, created from the neuter primary comparative κάλλιον (see *CGMEMG* vol. 2, 824–5).

κρεισσότερος is unattested in classical and Byzantine texts, but we do have evidence of it in Early Modern Greek (*CGMEMG* vol. 2, 825). It does not exist in Modern Greek.

μειζότερος is extremely common, with over two hundred occurrences, and is widely attested in religious writings of various kinds (hagiographies, homilies, apophthegms, monastic regulations, etc.). It is a favourite word of mid- to low-register writers like Epiphanius (6x), pseudo-Macarius (14x), Ephraem (18x). It occasionally occurs in texts written in a slightly higher register (6x in Theodorus Studites, 3x in Constantinus VII, and even once in Michael Psellus' prose writings) and occasionally also in poetry (Romanus Melodus 16.9.2 and 73.12.3, Michael Psellus *Poemata* 2.402). It is the only double comparative attested in Byzantine hymnography. The high number of occurrences parallels the statement in John Pediasimus ([B.7](#)) that μειζότερος is the only double comparative in use, despite it being more suitable for poetry. At any rate, μειζότερος did not survive in Modern Greek. The alternative form μειζονότερος, which has no parallel in classical sources save for Aeschylus' μειζονώτερος, is attested only twice, once in Ephraem's *De conversatione fratrum* (281.9 – or is this a mistaken form of μειζότερος, given that it is so frequent in Ephraem?) and once in Ducas' 15th-century *Historia Turcobyzantina* (27.2.8).

πλειότερος (on its use as the double comparative of πλείων see [F.1](#)) is quite common in Byzantine and Medieval Greek, where it appears with the alternative spellings πλειότερος and πλεώτερος (see Gignac 1981, 158 and *CGMEMG* vol. 2, 822–3). As far as Byzantine sources are concerned, this double comparative is mostly a prerogative of low language texts (the letters of Barsanuphis and John; hagiographies, especially the *Life of Saint Pankratios of Taormina*; medical writings), though it may also occur in texts using a more formal register (once in Procopius of Caesarea' *Gothic Wars*, and quite often in Theodorus Studites). A new adjective, πλέος/πλείος, which has the same meaning as the comparative, also appears in Early Modern Greek (*CGMEMG* vol. 2, 822).

ῥαότερος initially occurs in low- and mid-register texts, such as medical and hagiographical writings, and as part of lexicographical *interpretamenta*, but later on it is also used more frequently by writers who typically use high language, like Tzetzes ([C.5](#)), Constantinus Stilbes ([C.6](#)), Nicephorus Blemmydes (*De virtute et ascesi* 13.265), and especially Michael Choniates, the author who alone uses ῥαότερος the most ([C.7](#), *Epistulae* 33.20 and 138.28 Kolovou, *Orationes* vol. 1, 3.77.28, 14.230.26, and 21.359.6 Lambros). It is very tempting to think that these learned writers made use of ῥαότερος as a linguistic embellishment, a 'morphological poeticism' of sorts (even though this specific form does not actually occur in classical poetry). Tzetzes' passage ([C.5](#)) is pathetic and written in sustained language. In the passage of Constantinus Stilbes ([C.6](#)), the evidence for sustained language is not only the metaphorical use of ἀνατρέχω (see LSJ s.v. II.3) and the presence of classical vocabulary (χρονιώτερος), but in the

next line there also occurs a very apparent Atticism, *νᾶπυ* (see Phryn. *Ecl.* 252). In relation to the passages of Michael Choniates, if we take [C.7](#) as an example, the tone is rather pathetic, and a double comparative, if it functions as a stylistically marked form, would contribute to this elevated tone further (on Michael Choniates' style, see also Kolovou 2001, 26–9). Similarly, the use of unfamiliar, poeticising vocabulary and elaborate language is a known feature of Nicephorus Blemmydes' style. The occurrences of ῥαότερος in high-register writers are expected to be compared with Eustathius' advice that prose writers should not try and embellish their style by using double comparatives (see [B.3](#), [B.5](#), and [B.6](#)). The fact that ῥαότερος seemed to have garnered special appreciation in high literature may be reinforced by observing that ῥαότερος is the only non-Homeric form mentioned by Eustathius in the passages where he condemns the use of double comparatives ([B.3](#)). Thus, Eustathius might have been conscious that ῥαότερος had gained a higher status in Byzantine prose. The use of this form by Michael Choniates, who was himself a pupil of Eustathius, would then be particularly remarkable, also considering that Eustathius massively influenced his pupil's style and language (see Kolovou 2001, 26–9). The double comparative ῥαότερος does not survive into Early Modern and Modern Greek.

χειρότερος is widely attested in Byzantine Greek. Most occurrences are in religious and hagiographical writings, though there are also several in redactions of the *Historia Alexandri Magni* and the anonymous *Historia imperatorum*. In virtually all the texts featuring χειρότερος, the language can be described as stylistically unmarked. Still, not only does the sheer number of occurrences suggest that this form was tolerated more than other double comparatives, but we even have some direct evidence that Byzantine erudition regarded it as acceptable, albeit more fitting in poetry than prose ([B.7](#)). In Byzantine poetry χειρότερος appears only in *Ptochoprodromica* (1.19 and 2.93). Today, χειρότερος is the standard comparative of κακός in Modern Greek.

## F. Commentary on individual texts and occurrences

### (1) Philox.Gramm. fr. 348 ([B.1](#))

Philoxenus contests the interpretation of πλειότερος as the double comparative of πλείων on a morphological basis: if one were to create a comparative of the comparative πλείων, this form should have been \*πλειονέστερον, like the comparatives of the other positive adjectives ending in a nasal (εὐδαίμων > εὐδαιμονέστερος, σῶφρων > σωφρονέστερος). This prompts further considerations. Hesiod's double comparative χειρότερον, Philoxenus writes, attracted general criticism: the comparative of a comparative was impossible, and if a double comparative of χεῖρον had ever existed, this too would have been \*χειρονέστερον, as in the case of \*πλειονέστερον. To escape these difficulties, considering that πλειότερος depends on the positive adjective πλείος rather than the comparative πλείων, Philoxenus tentatively suggests that χειρότερος too, rather than a double comparative of χείρων, may be the comparative of an (unattested) form \*χείρος.

Despite Philoxenus' correct conclusion that πλειότερος derives from the positive πλείος, the faulty connection between πλειότερος and πλείων must have taken place quite early on. In the Homeric πλειοτέρη σὺν χειρὶ 'with a fuller hand' (*Od.* 11.359), the comparative πλειότερος seems to have already been taken as a double comparative of πλείων by Aristophanes of Byzantium, as shown by schol. (H) Hom. *Od.* 11.359 Ἀριστοφάνης, πλειοτέρησιν χερσὶ. ὁ μετὰ πλειόνων ἀπελθὼν τοῦ ποτε ('Aristophanes [commenting on] πλειοτέρησιν χερσὶ [writes that it means] coming with more goods than then'; see also Hsch. π 2511). Second, in passages from Aratus (644, 1005, 1080), Asclepiades (*epigr.* 37.3 Sens), and Leonidas (*AP* 6.302.3), the meaning of πλειότερος is 'stronger', 'longer (time)', and 'greater' rather than 'fuller', all of which presuppose these poets' considering πλειότερος an equivalent of πλείων (see Kidd 1997, 400 and Sens 2011, 257; Nicander, like Callimachus, correctly uses πλειότερος as the comparative of πλείος in

*Th.* 119). The evidence that the Homeric πλειότερος was taken rather quickly as an equivalent of comparative πλείων foreshadows the development of an actual double comparative πλειότερος in Imperial, Late Antique, Byzantine, and Medieval Greek prose (see [D.](#) and [E.](#)).

(2) *Su. ε* 3070 ([B.2](#)), Eust. *in Il.* 4.431.24–432.2 ([B.6](#))

While discussing double comparatives, the *Suda* gloss and Eustathius agree in describing the primary comparatives ἀμείνων and χείρων as Attic comparatives. This terminology is unparalleled. They may mean that the primary comparatives, which we know are recessive, are in fact only preserved in Attic and Atticising Greek. The other possibility where the Attic dialect qualifies the use of a comparative is to indicate when the comparative or superlative take on the meaning of the positive, and vice versa (see Hsch. ν 433 and Tz. *Ex.* 1.32.14–21 Papatomopoulos).

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## ABSTRACT

This article deals with the 'double comparatives' ἀμεινότερος and ῥαότερος, discussed in the Atticist lexicon Phryn. *Ecl.* 106, Phryn. *Ecl.* 382, and with similar formations in Ancient and Medieval Greek.

## KEYWORDS

Analogy   Comparatives   Double Comparatives   Hyper-characterisation   ἀρειότερος   ἀσσότερος   βελτιώτερος   γλυκειότερος   κακίότερος   καλλιώτερος  
μαλιωτέρα   μειζονώτερος   μειότερος   ὀλιζότερος   πλειότερος   χειρότερος

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