

Carlo Vessella (Harvard University, Classics)

The Conservatism of Attic and the Atticist Lexica

Literary sources suggest that in the second century AD some educated speakers adopted a special pronunciation of Greek, which they believed to be more 'Attic'. The Atticist lexica composed in the second and third centuries AD contain glosses contrasting different pronunciations of the same word: it can be shown that the 'Attic' pronunciation they recommend tends to contrast in particular the more recent sound changes of Attic. They support the idea that in the first centuries of the Roman Empire the dialect of Athens was actually a more conservative variety of Greek, and the pronunciation of the Atticists reflected its conservatism, sometimes to the point of hypercorrection.