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While phonology may not be among the most frequently addressed fields in Latin linguistics, the interest in establishing Latin phonological inventory and formalizing the phonological processes that characterized the Latin language has consistently persisted within the scholarly tradition, with varying approaches and theoretical perspectives over time (see most recently Sen, 2015). In this vein, Cser's monograph, a mature and finely argued synthesis of decades of the author's research, offers a comprehensive and well-organized exploration of the synchronic phonology of Classical Latin.

The work immediately stands out for its systematic and logical structure, ensuring easy reference for the reader. A prerequisite for readers, however, is a solid understanding of theoretical phonology paradigms and the primary challenges of Latin phonology. The introductory chapter outlines the work's objectives and the examined corpus. Subsequently, six central chapters sequentially address various levels of phonological analysis. These include, respectively: the segmental inventory (Chapter 2), the phonotactics of simplex forms and resyllabification (Chapter 3), the phonological processes involving consonants (Chapter 4), those involving vowels (Chapter 5), the interaction between phonology and inflectional morphology (Chapter 6), and the phonology of prefixed forms (Chapter 7). A concluding chapter provides a synopsis of the discussed and formalized phonological rules from preceding chapters. The detailed appendix, featuring data from the analyzed corpus, enhances scientific transparency, substantiating the analyses and conclusions presented in earlier chapters.

The unraveling of the structure reveals two key features. Firstly, a rule-based theoretical framework, focused on segmental phonological processes and their interaction with morphology (i.e., the phonological conditioning in the choice of allomorphs and the phonological consequences of morphological operations, p. 8). Secondly, a corpus-based analysis, which is a necessary corollary of the previous point. Indeed, the inherent challenge posed by a dead language, i.e., the inability to access the internalized language, and subsequently, the issues in applying rule-based models, necessitate the utilization of an extensive and representative corpus. Accordingly, the author has meticulously worked with a substantial corpus of texts by classical authors spanning from the 1st century BC to 400 AD, compiled in volume 1 of the Brepols Corpus (totaling more than 47 million words). Despite the inevitable arbitrariness in this selection, coupled with the exclusion of other sources (e.g., inscriptions) that could offer in-depth insights into Latin phonology and the disregard for the dimension of variation, the perspective and the theoretical framework do impose such abstraction. Consequently, the focus naturally falls on Classical Latin – a variety crystallized since the 1st century BC and a perpetuated literary and pedagogical model over the centuries.

Chapter 2 sets out the segmental inventory of Classical Latin based on surface contrastivity and phonological behavior. The constant reference to the spelling dimension, which, in a phonology-oriented orthographic tradition such as that of Latin, is an essential benchmark in this regard, is very commendable. The closing section then establishes the structure of phonological representation, conceptualized according to the feature geometry model, and, in particular, according to the model which organizes place features of consonants and vowels under two different nodes (Hall, 2007). In defining the segmental inventory, it is relevant the problematization of the status of glides, which is tied to other knotty issues, addressed in the following pages, namely the status of labiovelar stops and diphthongs.

As the author observes, there is a tradition that tends to regard [j] and [w] as positional variants of the respective high vowels; however, while in many cases their distribution is predictable, nevertheless cases

of contrast are too numerous to be left out, and the following examples are presented: «*bel*[u]*a* 'beast' vs. *sil*[w]*a* 'forest', *q*[w]*i* 'who/which' vs. *c*[u]*i* 'to whom/which', *ling*[w]*a* 'tongue' vs. *exig*[u]*a* 'small', *co*[i]*t* '(s)he meets' vs. *co*[j]*tus* 'meeting', or *aq*[w]*a* 'water' vs. *ac*[u]*at* '(s)he should sharpen'» (pp. 14-15). By some of these examples, it is implicit that labiovelar stops are considered as clusters or bi-phonemic sequences. On this point, in fact, the author next meticulously reviews all the traditionally known arguments in favor of the mono- and bi-phonemic interpretation of <qu> and <gu>, to embrace in a probabilistic key the second interpretation. However, as the scholar admits, «the question cannot be settled definitively» (p. 20), since there is no conclusive evidence in either direction, as Devine and Stephens (1977) already noted in their seminal study on the issue («the argument that have been, or might be, advanced on both sides can be nullified by counterarguments», p. 85; cf. also Marotta, 1982; 1999). Since, in a structural perspective, the phonemic status of /w/ does not raise major difficulties on the basis of a traditional distributional and functional analysis (e.g., it is possible to commute [w] with other segments, including [u], and with Ø, cf. *cauo* ~ *cano*, *uia* ~ *pia*, *corpus* ~ *coruus*, *seruum* ~ *sertum* ~ *serum*, cf. the rich arguments in Marotta, 1981), I wonder if perhaps it would not have been preferable to proceed with a more detailed examination of such cases before resorting to examples, inevitably circular, that presuppose the interpretation of labiovelar stops as clusters. However, the definition of cases of contrast of the palatal glide remains problematic. Of course, traditional instances such as *iam* ~ *nam*, *iactans* ~ *mactans*, *rosa*[j] ~ *rosas* may imply the realization of the positional variant of /i/, but the only example of surface contrastivity that is presented, namely *co*[i]*t* vs. *co*[j]*tus* (*coetus*), does not seem entirely indisputable: *co*[j]*tus* may in fact represent an isolated phenomenon of resyllabification of /i/, unlike comparable prefixed forms such as *cŏĭtiō* and *intrŏĭtus*, a fact that moreover would seem to confirm the allophonic realization of /i/ as [j] when it occurs in syllable coda.

As for the status of diphthongs, the author argues that the sequences traditionally referred to as diphthongs are VC sequences and do not represent a phonological unit. This stance is further argued

with good points and bibliographic relevance (to which we may add Marotta, 1981 in support of the bi-phonemic status of diphthongs). In particular, <ae>, <au> and <oe> are never followed by a tautosyllabic sonorant, therefore, since a syllable coda can support at most one sonorant, they should be considered as coda-sonorant sequences (i.e., *caedit ca*[j]*dit* would be equivalent to *pandit*, p. 42). Accordingly, there is not distinction between ante- and post-consonantal glides, whose phonetic differences (which are inferable from Vulgar Latin and Romance outcomes) are to be interpreted as cases of allophony.

The analysis then introduces segments that are not represented in the script, namely the placeless nasal and nasal vowels. The placeless nasal, similar to the moraic nasal of Japanese (cf., among the references provided by the author, Itô and Mester, 1993), is «a further nasal segment that manifests itself sometimes as a nasal consonant ([m], [n] or [ŋ]), sometimes as nasalization and length on a vowel, and is sometimes deleted, all depending on phonological environment. This segment is a placeless nasal consonant which is not interpretable in itself and thus needs to undergo either phonological modification via assimilation or merger with the preceding vowel, or deletion» (pp. 32-33). The placeless nasal seems to present the advantage of the *reductio ad unum* of several cases that are not unambiguously ascribable to underlying /n/ or /m/, namely: 1) the segment, in some cases lexically given, that is derived from /n/ as a result of the loss of its place node before the fricatives [s] and [f] (cf. epigraphic spellings such as <COSVL> and <IFERVS>); 2) the nasal segment at the end of the prefix *con*, which cannot be traced back to underlying /n/ or /m/ because of the behavior it assumes, in prefixation, before /n/ and vowels (e.g. *cōnectere*, *coarguere*). The placeless nasal would justify both a variable realization of a nasal segment based on place assimilation (i.e., [m], [n], [ŋ]) as well as the deletion before vowels (since consonants cannot acquire the place features of vowels) and coronal nasals (since the placeless nasal cannot assimilate to a coronal nasal); 3) the nasal element that characterizes the morpheme of the accusative singular, which sometimes is not realized, sometimes goes through place assimilation in compounds with clitics (cf.

e[ã:] <eam> vs. *eandem*). Consequently, the author assumes that Latin surface-contrastive set of vowels also included long nasal vowels, which however are supposed to be non-lexical, derived from the coalescence between the placeless nasal and the preceding vowel.

Chapter 3 analyzes the phonotactic distribution of non-nuclear segments. After defining in methodological rigor all possible cluster configurations, summarized in a detailed table (pp. 52-58), syllable boundaries are established on the basis of metrical evidence. The analysis allows outlining a general syllable template, with some interesting generalizations in relation to the Sonority Sequencing Principle and the interaction between sonority, place of articulation and syllable contact. In general, the coda-onset clusters in simplex forms comply with the Syllable Contact Law, being C_1 of higher sonority than C_2. Word-internally, the coda-position is generally linked to sonorants or non-coronal and voiceless obstruents; whereas in word-final position coda-consonants are mainly coronal. Moreover, obstruent+obstruent sequences, thus including stop+stop and sibilant+stop clusters (i.e., /p.t/, /k.t/, /p.s/, /k.s/, /s.p/, /s.t/, /s.k/), are always heterosyllabic. As for the relation between sonority and place of articulation, the author notices that heterosyllabic clusters whose segments show consonantal place nodes of (near-)equal sonority are well-formed, regardless of the sonority relations, if C_1 is non-coronal and C_2 is coronal (i.e., /pt/, /kt/, /ps/, /ks/, /mn/, /ŋn/). We may add that this evidence seems to comply with the special status which is acknowledged to coronals in Latin phonology, as thoroughly discussed in a pivotal study by Marotta (1993). In all other cases, instead, the author notices that only sonority relations are decisive (i.e., /sp/, /sk/, and all liquid+stop, liquid+/s/, liquid+nasal and homorganic nasal+stop clusters). Besides, a complex onset always consists of an obstruent and a non-nasal sonorant, thus including the *muta cum liquida* sequence. However, the poetic corpus examined shows that the *muta cum liquida* cluster presents a heterogeneous behavior, for the syllable boundary often precedes such cluster, but sometimes, especially as for /br/, /dr/, /fr/, it can also exhibit a heterosyllabic scansion, according to a behavior that had already been highlighted by Timpanaro (1965).

The insights into the *s impurum* cluster are of relevance. The analysis enables the interpretation of cases of *s impurum* in word-medial position as coda-onset clusters (cf. on this point also Marotta, 1999). Epigraphic spellings of the type <AVGVS/TVS> (CIL V, 1784), collected in Dennison (1906), to which the author also refers, turn out to be particularly relevant on this point. However, the definition of the behavior of *s impurum* in word-initial position appears to be more challenging. While in Vulgar Latin we may rely on the resyllabification which is evidenced by spellings with a prosthetic vowel (e.g., <IS·PE·RA·BI>, CIL X 8189), evidence for Classical Latin must be based on more subtle arguments. The author distinguishes cases in which stem-initial sC is involved in left-oriented morphological processes or is at word-boundary. In the former case, strong hints of extra-syllabicity may be represented by: 1) the reduplicated forms of the perfects *steti, spopondi, scicidi*, in which the reduplication only copies the stop portion of the cluster (i.e., *steti* as opposed to ***stesti*); 2) the degemination in compounds of the type *suspirare* < *sus.spirare*, which would confirm the impossibility of syllabification of the type [sus.spi][1]; 3) leftward resyllabification of /s/ as coda of the preceding syllable, when a vowel-ending prefix is added to a stem beginning with *s impurum* (e.g., *res.tant* always scans as two heavy syllables, unlike cases such as *re.trahere*). Leftward resyllabification, as the scholar observes, would seem to contradict the general rule whereby syllabification cannot override the syllable structure that is created within morphological boundaries (i.e., *re+stant* vs. *res.tant*), but in this case extrasyllabic [s] is assumed not to be incorporated into the syllable structure of the stem. We may add a further reflection on this issue: interestingly, Vulgar Latin seems to show a spelling strategy aimed at aligning the syllabic scansion with the morphological boundary, for in-

[1] But see, on this issue, the intriguing debate among ancient grammarians, cf. CASSIOD. *Orth.* X: «dispicio*, uerbum compositum, quaeritur utrum per duo* ss *an per unum scribi debeat et utrum ita diuidi,* dis *et* spicio*, et diuisionis quidem eius facilis ratio est, quoniam omnes praepositiones integrae separandae sunt* [...] *per duo autem* ss *scribendum est, non per unum, quoniam ex praepositione et uerbo constat esse compositum, quemadmodum est* conspicio*,* aspicio*,* despicio*; ac per hoc per duo* ss disspicio *scribi debet et ita diuidi:* dis *et* spicio*. nonnulli uero* dispicio *per unum* s *scribendum putant, quod praepositio interdum litteram perdat, ut est* diduco*,* diuido*,* diiudico*. sed melius est per duo* ss *scribi* disspicio».

scriptions and other direct sources sometimes display spellings such as <RESSCRIBERE> (*Tab. Vindol.* 645). In this case, leftward resyllabification is counterbalanced by the restoration of the stem-initial sibilant. Even though /s/, from a strictly theoretical point of view, can be interpreted as an extrasyllabic segment, nevertheless it is conceivable that a morpho-lexical principle (which can also be found in grammarians' prescriptions about syllable division) imposed that a stem beginning with /sC/ remained cohesive (cf. Sampson, 2010: 71-72).

On the other hand, the author points out that instances of resyllabification at word boundary are scarcely documented in the poetic corpus examined. In fact, the incidence of word-beginning sC in non-neutral position, i.e., after a word ending in short vowel, is very low (48 out of 10,217 occurrences), and resyllabification does not always occur (e.g., *unde.sciat* = – UU, Lucretius *De rerum nat.* 4.475; p. 73). The author attributes this fact to a conflict between two principles, namely: (i) resyllabification normally proceeds to the right; (ii) an extrasyllabic segment cannot be adjacent to a nucleus. Accordingly, it seems that the second principle has priority over the first word-internally, so that leftward resyllabification can occur (*res.tare*, *nes.cire*), unlike what is recorded at word-boundary. Ultimately, the data discussed by the author seem to indicate that in Latin word-boundaries were relatively strong, and therefore resyllabification processes were not favored.

In Chapters 4 and 5 segmental phonological processes affecting consonants and vowels are analyzed, respectively. Among consonant processes, ten processes are explored overall, in order: (i) contact voice assimilation; (ii) total assimilation of [t] to [s]; (iii) rhotacism; (iv) degemination; (v) nasal place loss before fricatives; (vi) epenthesis after [m]; (vii) place assimilation; (viii) dark and clear [l]; (ix) final stop deletion; (x) liquid dissimilation. These are in most cases, processes affecting adjacent segments. Each of these processes is examined in detail, and feeding and counterfeeding relations are highlighted. We present a few examples of such relations.

The contact voice assimilation (i) involves regressive devoicing with the spreading of the Laryngeal node [-voice], whenever two obstruents, with C_1 being voiced and C_2 voiceless, come into contact, both in sim-

plex and derived forms (e.g., *scripsi*, *scriptus* as well as phenomena of regressive assimilation in prefixed forms, e.g., *optinere*, which are well-represented also in epigraphic spellings and reported by ancient grammarians, to whom the author refers as well). The process (i) may feed, whenever there is an underlying [d] as C_1, the assimilation of [t] to [s] (e.g., *cessus* < *cetsus* < *cedsus*, that parallels *quassus* < *quatsus*) (ii), which is the result of a phonological rule that operated diachronically, yielding to a synchronic phonotactic rule whereby there are not simplex forms with [t] adjacent to [s] (cf. on this issue also Marotta, 1993; 1997). This rule is governed by the Syllable Contact Law word-internally and by a constraint regulating that extrasyllabic [s] can be preceded only by the non-coronal stops [p] and [k] word-finally (as in the sigmatic nominative of dental stems, *miles* < *miless* < *milets* as opposed to *plebs* / *pleps*). The process (ii), i.e., total assimilation of [t] to [s], then, may feed degemination (iv), as can be seen from the previous example of *miles*.

Degemination (iv) is distinguished in two cases, i.e., general degemination and degemination of [ss]. The former states that in both simplex and non-simplex forms each geminate, whether underlying or derived, is shortened if it cannot be syllabified as coda-onset sequence (essentially, this degemination rule applies to geminates before a consonant which is a syllable-onset); the latter states that [ss] is degeminated after any kind of consonant or long vowel, even if syllabification would be possible. Whenever a [nt]- or [nd]-final stem comes into contact with a [s]-beginning suffix, processes (ii) and (iv) may feed the nasal place loss before fricatives (v), which consists in the loss of the C-place node by a nasal which is followed by [s] and [f], with following coalescence with the preceding vowel (e.g., *spond+sus* > *sponssus* > *sponsus* > *sp*[õ:]*sus*). As for rhotacism (iii), there is counterfeeding relation with (iv) (in fact, it precedes [ss] degemination and does not apply to *cāsus* < *cāssus*) and (v) (it also precedes the coalescence of the placeless nasal with the preceding vowel, because it does not affect cases such as *mansi*). Rhotacism is formalized as a sonority assimilation of [s] to the one adjacent vowel segment. Since this assimilation would yield a segment with incompatible featural specification, i.e., [+voice] [+cont] [-son], there is featural change from [-son] to [+son], thus re-

sulting in [r]. Reopening a long-debated issue, which the author thoroughly examines, rhotacism is assumed to be synchronically still functioning in derived environments. In particular, the rule applies when a sibilant-ending stem is combined with a vowel-beginning affix, e.g., *mus* ~ *muris*, *ges-* → *gero* (p. 86). In contrast, rhotacism is not detected in non-derived environments (e.g., *miser*, *nisi*, *pisum*, p. 87).

Another interesting process being formalized is Place Assimilation, which is distinguished in two subcategories: 1) Place Assimilation 1, which is systematic, involves nasals or placeless nasals preceding a stop: the C-place node of the stop is linked to the Root-node of the nasal (it therefore includes cases of *in-* as well as *con-* prefixed forms followed by a stem beginning with a stop, e.g., *imbibere*, *i*[ŋ]*quirere*, *componere*, *co*[ŋ]*quirere*, *condonare*, p. 95); 2) Place Assimilation 2, which is not exceptionless at prefix-boundary, «affects all consonantal sequences where [cont] and [son] specifications do not conflict and where C_2 is non-coronal» (p. 94). Ultimately, Place Assimilation 2 consists of total regressive assimilation between stops (e.g., *appetere*, *accipere*, *occludere*, p. 95), between nasals (e.g., *immittere*, p. 95), between a placeless nasal and a non-coronal nasal (e.g, *committere*, p. 95), and between fricatives (e.g., *differre*) thus resulting in the creation of geminate consonants (as is further analyzed in Chapter 7).

Chapter 6 offers a comprehensive and systematic description of nominal and verbal synchronic inflectional system. This is probably the most complex and ambitious chapter, with relevant original results. Indeed, the allomorphies that underlie the traditional classification into four conjugations and the infectum / perfectum distinction for the verbal system on the one hand and the distinction into five declensions for the nominal system on the other are analyzed in relation to the phonological properties of the stem-final segment. The aim of the analysis is exploring the possibility that the choice of the allomorphs is phonologically conditioned, particularly in relation to the vowel sonority scale.

The reading is particularly challenging for the historical linguist accustomed to diachronic morphology and etymological segmentation. In fact, the author programmatically lays out the following

methodological issues: «In this work, stem is generally defined as the infectum and the perfectum stem for verbs and the portion preceding the case endings for nouns or adjectives [...]. My phonological specification of nominal as well as verbal infectum stems, more precisely of the stemfinal segments, will depart slightly from what is found in the descriptive literature. The phonological specification of the endings will be, at certain point, radically different from it. This is mainly because my characterisations are not etymologically based but are meant to capture synchronic patterns and alternations» (p. 125).

In the domain of verbal morphology, the author identifies some interesting patterns in allomorph choice, which appear to be sensitive to the stem final segment. In particular, the pattern governing the choice of allomorphic alternations is placed along a scale of vocalicness, on whose extremes there are consonants and non-high vowels, which select different allomorphs, and, in the middle, high vowels, which exhibit a behavior that is sometimes similar to that of consonants, sometimes to that of non-high vowels. Such a correlation had never been highlighted. For instance, both infectum and perfectum stems ending in consonant or [u]/[w] select the same allomorphs, beginning with vowels. See, for example, in the case of the infectum, the 2 sing. passive ending (e.g., *ag-ĕris*, *tribu-ĕris*) or the future-tense mark (e.g., *ag-ē-s*, *tribu-ē-s*), and, in the case of the perfectum, the affix of the infinitive (e.g., *fec-isse*, *nou-isse*). On the other hand, both infectum and perfectum stems ending in non-high vowels (including also the perfect syncopated forms), select another group of allomorphs, beginning with consonant. Returning to the above examples, see, in the case of the infectum, the 2 sing. passive ending (e.g., *uidē-ris*, *amā-ris*) or the future-tense mark (e.g., *uidē-b-is*, *amā-b-is*), and, in the case of the perfectum, the affix of the infinitive (e.g., *complē-sse*, *nō-sse*). Besides, stems ending in [i(:)] exhibit a behavior that is sometimes similar to the group of stems ending in consonant or [u]/[w] (e.g., *ferī-ē-s*, *capi-ē-s* for infectum and *abi-isse*, *audi-isse* for perfectum), sometimes to the group of stems ending in non-high vowels (e.g., *ferī-ris* for infectum and *abī-sse*, *audī-sse* for perfectum). Within nominal morphology, although it exhibits more variation in affixes than the verbal system, the

author identifies some parallels. For example, the choice of the genitive plural affix (*-Vrum* ~ *-um*) gathers on the one hand stems ending with *-ă*, *ŏ/ŭ*, *ē*, which select *-Vrum*, and on the other hand stems ending in *-ĭ*, *-ū/ŭ*, C, which select *-um*. Similarly, the choice of genitive singular affix ([j], [i:] ~ [s], [is]) groups on the one hand the stems ending in *-ă*, *-ŏ/ŭ*, *-ē*, which select [j], [i:], and on the other hand stems ending in *-ĭ*, *-ū/ŭ*, *-C*, which select [s] or [is].

Chapter 7 is devoted to the phonological behavior of prefixes and prefixed forms, which show some different characteristics compared to simplex forms. Such a detailed discussion of the behavior of prefixes was still lacking in the literature. Some introductory remarks are carried out on the synchronic status of prefixed forms in Latin, which can be placed on a cline ranging from highly lexicalized and phonologically opaque forms, for segmenting which a diachronic analysis is necessary (e.g., *dēgere* < *dē* + *agere*), to phonologically and semantically transparent forms (e.g., *perpolitus*). Subsequently, the various prefixes are discussed, overall 26, which are divided into 5 groups based on the final segment. More precisely: (i) vowel-ending prefixes (*dē-*, *prō-*, *sē-*, *ne-*, *re-*, *ambi-*, *ante-*, *vē-*), (ii) glide-ending prefixes (only *prae*), (iii) [r]-ending prefixes (*per-*, *super-*, *subter-*, *inter-*, *por-*), (iv) nasal-ending prefixes (*con-*, *in-*, *circum-*, *an-*), and (v) obstruent-ending prefixes (*post-*, *ex-*, *dis-*, *trans-*, *ad-*, *ab-*, *ob-*, *sub-*). The behavior of each prefix is analyzed in detail in relation to frequency, phonotactic distribution, and allomorphic realizations. In particular, the generalizations that are conducted on total assimilations at prefix-boundary are of relevance and are interesting if related to the analysis by Giannini and Marotta (1989), in which assimilation in prefixation is regarded as one of the phonological processes that synchronically most feed the inventory of geminate consonants in Latin. The author identifies three assimilatory processes, which relate to Voice Assimilation, Place Assimilation and Syllable Contact Law, respectively. (1) In the case of Voice Assimilation, which consists in the spreading of the feature specification [–voice] from C_2 to C_1, total assimilation occurs when the *ad-* prefix joins a stem beginning with [t] (e.g., *attendo*). (2) In the case of Place Assimilation, which involves in prefixation both types, the geminate outcome interests, as previously

seen, Place Assimilation 2. (3) There are then other cases of total assimilation distinct from the previous cases, with variable outcomes ranging from systematic, sporadic, isolated or undocumented total assimilation. The frequency values of such assimilations, represented in a detailed table (p. 177), seem to be sensitive to the Syllable Contact Law. That is, the lower the sonority of C_1 compared to C_2, the more likely total assimilation occurs, thus *-b* and *-d* ending prefixes (e.g., *ad-*, *ob-*, *sub-*), albeit to varying degrees, show a tendency to assimilate to fricatives, nasals and liquids (e.g., *affero*, *summoueo*, *alligo*); whereas the same does not always apply to prefixes ending in liquids, nasals or glides.

In conclusion, Cser's work stands out as an advanced and thoughtful treatise in Latin phonology, skillfully combining the expertise of the phonologist with that of the Latinist. A highly original aspect lies in the theoretical framework, as well as in the synchronic analysis conducted on an extensive corpus, exploring a broad and cohesive network of phonological and morphological processes. This originality situates the work on an eccentric plane compared to most studies in Latin phonology, often centered on diachronic approaches or, if synchronic, focused on more circumscribed phenomena. The reading is especially recommended for Latinists who are interested in theoretical phonology.

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