This chapter will try to answer several questions raised by the Greek *Donati* as translations from Latin and as grammar books used to learn Greek. First of all, Pylê a’s attribution of three manuscripts to the Byzantine scholar Maximus Planudes involves questions about the authorship of this translation and the context or the environment within which it was produced: we may wonder if the “Planudean hypothesis” is completely unfounded or contains some element of truth. Secondly, the analysis of the manuscripts of the Greek *Donati* has revealed their connections with the Venetian/Cretan environment between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; probably, then, these grammars responded to particular demands of a particular cultural milieu. Thirdly, the fact that the Greek *Donati* apparently originated at a time when the rediscovery of Greek studies in the West and several pedagogical experiments in search of the Greek textbook were taking place leads us to reflect on how they actually could be used either in schools or for the self-study of Greek.

The conclusions reached in this chapter do not claim to be final: further research on manuscripts will certainly contribute to modifying and improving these data, and thus will give us a clearer picture of the study of Greek in peripheral areas during the Renaissance.

1. *Latin in Byzantium*

Modern scholarship has emphasized that the *translatio* of Greek culture to the West during the fifteenth century was the result of a long process of mutual approach between the two sides of the Mediterranean: while in the West Greek culture was arousing more and more interest among the first humanists, the cultural élite of Byzantium were rediscovering Western culture.¹

¹ Cf. Ostrogorsky 1969² [1963³], 375: “Fate had willed that Byzantium should come into close relationship with the Western world soon after the fellowship of the
Greeks and Latins had coexisted in the Roman Empire, although they were well aware of their differences. With few exceptions (for example, Diocletian and his successors), the Romans had never made any effort to achieve linguistic unification between the two parts of the empire, which remained divided into two well-defined linguistic areas. Moreover, Latin and Greek had two distinct areas of application. Latin was the language of the administration and the army, and Greeks who wanted to pursue a military or an administrative career had to learn it. On the other hand, Romans learned Greek because it was a language of culture as well as a *lingua franca* for trade and exchanges. However, after the dissolution of this cultural unity in the seventh century, the knowledge of Greek in the West and of Latin in the East gradually vanished, except for in a few areas (South Italy), in particular environments (the imperial chancery) or among social groups (merchants) that maintained contact with the Byzantine Empire. The lack of understanding of the respective languages was just a sign of the broader political and religious gaps that divided the two worlds.

A change in the relationship between Byzantines and the Western world occurred in the eleventh century. In Byzantium, the successors of Emperor Basil II (976–1025) were unable to face the social and economic transformations that were affecting the structure of the Empire, as well as the increasing external menace from Normans, Turks, and Slavs. Thus, being open to the emerging powers of the West was a necessity rather than a choice. The influence exerted by the West culminated in the introduction of Western customs in the Byzantine court during the reign of Manuel I Comnenus (1143–1180); the Western princesses who married into the Byzantine court and Churches (which at this period included intellectual contacts) had been disrupted [with the schism between Rome and Constantinople in 1054]. Hatred and contempt were the feelings that the Byzantine and Western lands felt for each other, and closer acquaintance only strengthened this antagonism. Nevertheless, from this time onwards the influence of the West began to make itself felt in Byzantium in many ways, both culturally and politically.” After the essential study by Setton (1956), the contribution of Byzantine culture to the Renaissance has been the principal object of some important studies by Geanakoplos (1962, 1976, 1980) and Pertusi (1962, 1964, 1980–1981).

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3 On Manuel Comnenus and the West, see Gallina 2003[1980]. Regarding mar-