

## Changing patterns of discontinuity in Latin

(ICLL Brussel 2005)

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Discontinuity (hyperbaton) in noun phrases and other complex phrases is a common phenomenon from the earliest till the late Latin texts. It is absent in the Romance languages (already in Old French and Old Occitan). Herman (1985, 2003) has observed a decrease in the frequency of discontinuity, especially in less educated forms of Latin. In this paper it will be shown that there is considerable variety in frequency throughout latinity (cf. Bolkestein 2001), and that there are also considerable differences of a qualitative nature. In the course of time the items that occur between a modifier and its head noun in the noun phrase change, and also the position in the sentence of discontinuous noun phrases changes. Discontinuity developed from a pragmatic device to emphasize certain constituents into a stylistic device to mark boundaries in the sentence.

### 1. Types of Noun Phrases

Types of Nouns: monovalent, bivalent, and trivalent nouns (*domus, amor, percursio*) > obligatory and facultative Modifiers

- (1) propter **animi multarum rerum brevi tempore** PERCURSIONEM  
(‘on account of the review of many things by the mind in a short time’, Cic. *Tusc.* 4.31)

Types of facultative Modifiers: pronouns, quantifiers, identifiers (*alius*), prepositional phrases, adverbs, adjectives, NP genitive.

Types of adjectives (and a few other Modifiers): monovalent (*albus*), bivalent (*dignus*); modifiers of adjectives (degree words, etc.)

- (2) **humano cultu digniora** loca  
(‘places more suitable for human habitation’, Liv. 21.37.5)

Modifiers may precede or follow their Head

- (3) novas quattuor legiones Liv. 22.36.2  
quattuor legiones novas Liv. 33.25.10  
legiones quattuor novas Liv. 42.31.2  
quinqueremes novas quinquaginta Liv. 35.24.8

More Modifiers with one Head: ‘Nesting’

- (4) {[statuas marmoreas] muliebres} stolas, quae caryatides dicuntur  
(‘marble statues of women wearing a *stola*, which are called caryatids’, Vit. 1.1.5)
- (5) [tunicaeque hibernae] bonae  
(‘good winter clothes’, Pl. *Mil.* 688)
- (6) secundo [Punico bello]  
(‘in the Second Punic War’, V. Max. 7.2 ext. 16)

## 2. Floating

- (7) (Verres) mittit rogatum *vasa ea quae pulcherrima* apud eum viderat.  
(‘He sent to ask for the loan of the most beautiful vessels he had seen at his house’, Cic. *Ver.* 4.63)

## 3. Discontinuity of noun phrases

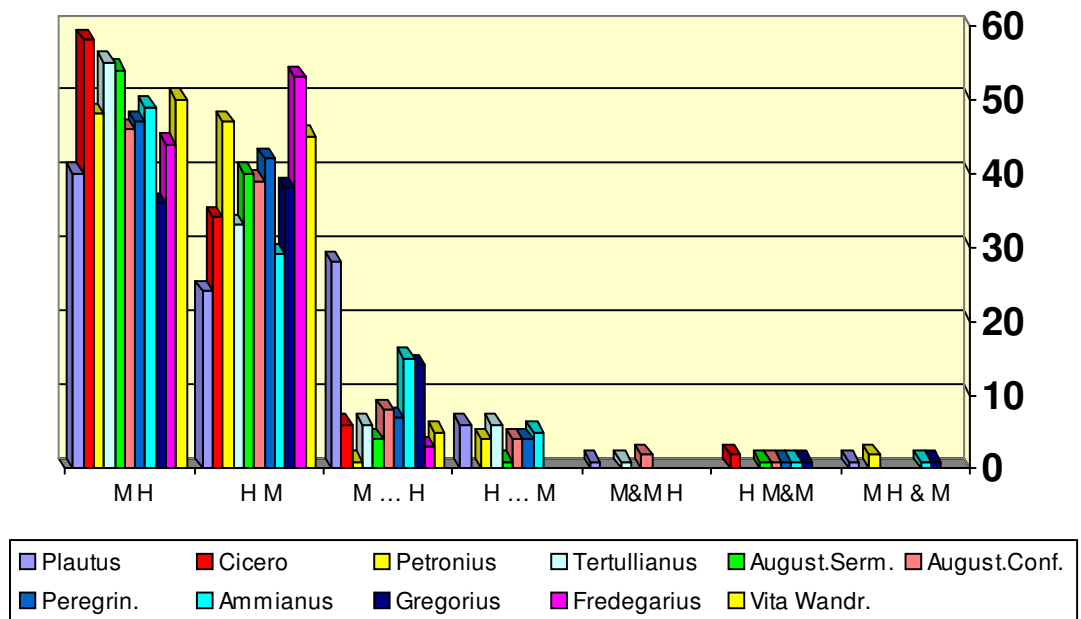
Constituents belonging to the same domain are separated by “alien” entities

- “active” and “passive” discontinuity

- (8) <H>em, / **illoc** enim *verbo* esse me servom scio.  
(‘There you are. Talk like that shows me I’m a slave’, Pl. *Men.* 250-1)  
(2/151 hyperbaton through *enim*, also *Ps.* 137)
- (9) **Tuo** ego istaec igitur dicam illi *periculo*. / # Quid ais tu?  
(‘I’ll tell him about this, and it will be at your risk. # What do you say?’, Pl. *Bac.* 599-600)  
(2/160 – also *Cist.* 602-3 Eho tu, **quam** uos igitur *filiam* / nunc quaeritis alteram?)
- (10) **Hac** igitur *conscientia* comite proficiscar, **magno** equidem cum *dolore*, nec ...  
‘With a clear conscience then I shall depart, though the parting will cause me a bitter pang’, Cic. *Att.* 10.4.5)  
(9/237 in Cic.’s letters)
- (11) *autem*: Pl. 7/141 : Cic. *Att.* 1/4
- (12) Ego tibi argentum dedi  
et dudum adveniens extemplo symbolum servo tuo,  
eri imagine obsignatam epistulam, hic ante ostium.  
# **Meo** tu[a] epistulam dedisti *servo*? Quoi servo?  
(‘I gave you the money, and in front of this very door a while ago, when I first arrived, I gave your servant the token, a letter sealed with the likeness of my master. # You gave a letter to my slave? What slave?’, Pl. *Ps.* 1200-3)
- (13) Pro di immortales! **Tantamne** unius hominis incredibilis ac divina virtus tam brevi tempore *lucem* adferre rei publicae potuit?  
(‘By the immortal gods! Is it possible that one man, with his incredible and divine virtue, has brought so much good to this country in so little time?’, Cic. *Man.* 33)
- (14) **Tantamne** ex iniquitate iudiciorum vestris calumniis adsumpsistis *facultatem*?  
(‘Have you assumed such power for your slanders thanks to the perversions of justice?’, *Rhet. Her.* 4.22)
- (15) <Transgressio est, quae verborum perturbat ordinem perversione aut transiectione. >  
Perversione, sic : ‘hoc vobis deos immortales arbitror dedisse virtute <pro> vestra’.  
Transiectione, hoc modo: ‘**instabilis** in istum plurimum *fortuna* valuit. **Omnes** invidiose eripuit bene vivendi casus *facultates*’. Huiusmodi traiectio, quae rem non reddit obscuram, multum proderit ad continuationes, de quibus ante dictum est. In quibus oportet verba sicuti ad poeticum quendam extruere numerum, ut perfecte et perpolitissime possint esse absolutae. (*Rhet. Her.* 4.44)

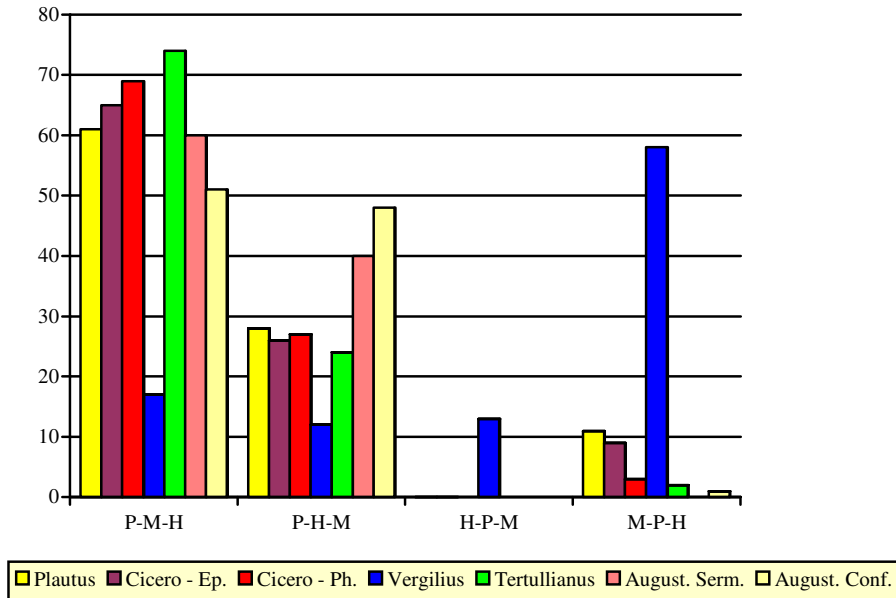
- forward and backward discontinuity
- (16) Nam cum in Graeco sermone haec ipsa quondam *rerum* nomina **novarum** † non videbantur, quae nunc consuetudo diuturna trivit; quid censes in Latino fore?  
 ('For at one time even the terms employed in Greek for its novel conceptions seemed unendurable, when they were novel, though now daily use has made them familiar; what then do you think will be the case in Latin', Cic. *Fin.* 3.15)
- (17) Septem autem illi non suo, sed *populorum* suffragio **omnium** nominati sunt.  
 ('Seven of the old received their appellation not by their own votes, but by the universal suffrage of mankind', Cic. *Fin.* 2.7)

Figure –2 The order of noun phrases in a number of texts



Plautus <i>Am.</i> 1-152	N = 85
Cicero <i>Ver.</i> 5.86-94	N = 108
Petronius freedmen 37-9; 43-44	N = 111
Tertullianus <i>de Anima</i>	N = 105
Augustinus <i>Serm.</i> II	N = 112
Augustinus <i>Conf.</i> VIII	N = 103
<i>Peregrinatio Egeriae</i> 1-3	N = 133
Ammianus 25.1.1-9	N = 115
Gregorius T. 2	N = 126
Fredegarius <i>Chron.</i> 2.57	N = 133
<i>Vita Wandregiseli</i> 1-4	N = 112

**Figure 2** The order of prepositions, modifiers, and heads in a number of texts



- (18) Ut vos in **vostris** voltis *mercimoniis* / ... (Pl. Am. 1)
- (19) et uti **bonis** vos vestrosque omnes *nuntiis* / me adficere voltis ... (Pl. Am. 8)
- (20) **Huius autem praeclari imperatoris** ita erat severa domi *disciplina* ut .... (Cic. Ver. 5.93)
- (21) Et **quot** putas illum *annos* secum tulisse? (Petr. 43.7 – Phileros speaking)
- (22) **Plurimi** hoc signo *scholastici* nascuntur et arietilli. (Petr. 39.5 – Trimalchio speaking)
- (23) Cuius, cum prope venisset, moenia favillis oppleta collustrans flebat cum gemitu reputans, **quales** miseranda civitas pertulerat *clades*. (Amm. 21.11.5)
- (24) Abraham pater noster *homo* erat illis temporibus **fidelis**, credens deo ... (Aug. Sermones. 2. line 174)
- (25) **Hic** autem *locus* ... (Peregr. 1.1)
- (26) ... ut per **medium** transversaremus *caput* illius vallis et // ... (Peregr. 2.4)
- (27) **tanta** in eum amplectentes *amorem* (Fredeg. Chron. 2.57 [p. 79.1])
- (28) **Hereticorum tunc** maximus **habebatur** *assertor* (Greg. T. 2.3)
- (29) cum summis parentibus **quadam** committens *tempore* (Wandr. 14.3)

	Pl.	Cic.	Petr.	Amm.	Aug.	<i>Peregr.</i>	Greg. T.	Fred.	<i>Wandr.</i>
Number discount.	23	5	2	23	5	14	18	4	6
verbal hyperbaton	22	2	1	16	2	3	14	3	5
synt. boundary	2	-	1	14	2	-	14	2	5

## 9. Old French and Old Occitan

(‘Disruption of Close-Knit Syntactical Structures’, Jensen 1990: 543, cf. 1994: 367-9)

- (30) *la hautece* i sera **tote de mon empire**  
 (‘all the high-ranking people of my empire will be there’, Dole 3486)
- (31) *Na Beatrix*, cui jois guida, **d’Est**  
 (‘lady Beatrice of Est, whom joy guides’, A. de Peguilhan 16.53)
- (32) il rompirent les *verax de fer* qui molt estoient fort **et les flaiiaus**  
 (‘they broke the iron bolts, which were very strong, and the flails’, Clari 78.8)
- (33) de la *justicia*, que **grant** áig a mandar, no·t servii bé  
 (‘I did not serve you well with the great legal power I have at my disposal’, Boeci: Appel 105.86)

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