

VARIETATE DELECTAMUR



LATIN VULGAIRE – LATIN TARDIF
Studies on Non-Standard and Late Latin

VOLUME 1

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Varietate delectamur:
Multifarious Approaches to
Synchronic and Diachronic
Variation in Latin

*Selected Papers from the 14th International
Colloquium on Late and Vulgar Latin (Ghent, 2022)*

Edited by

GIOVANBATTISTA GALDI

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D/2025/0095/14

ISBN 978-2-503-60679-8

e-ISBN 978-2-503-60680-4

DOI 10.1484/M.LVLT-EB.5.142508

Printed in the EU on acid-free paper.

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Preface

Varietate delectamur brings together a selection of papers presented at the 14th International Colloquium on Late and Vulgar Latin (*Latin vulgaire – latin tardif* XIV or LVL14), which was organised in Ghent by the Latin section and the DiaLing research group of the Department of Linguistics at Ghent University's Faculty of Arts and Philosophy (5-9 September 2022); the conference was graciously funded by the Research Foundation – Flanders (FWO Vlaanderen), the City of Ghent (Stad Gent), Brepols, the Henri Pirenne Institute for Medieval Studies at Ghent University and the research group 'Late Antiquity and Byzantine Studies' at the National Research School in Classical Studies in the Netherlands (OIKOS).

The LVL14 colloquium was the fourteenth gathering in a series of colloquia dedicated to all linguistic aspects of Late and Vulgar Latin (including the transition from Latin to Romance). Since the first edition, convened by the late József Herman in Pécs, Hungary in 1985 as *Colloque international sur le Latin vulgaire et latin tardif*, the LVL colloquia have been held regularly for more than three decades. After Bologna (1988), Innsbruck (1991), Caen (1994), Heidelberg (1997), Helsinki (2000), Sevilla (2003), Oxford (2006), Lyon (2009), Bergamo (2012), Oviedo (2014), Uppsala (2016) and Budapest (2018), the LVL14 colloquium was organised in Ghent in 2022, when the worst of the covid-19 pandemic had subsided. Over the course of these fourteen editions, the conference grew from only 19 papers to over a hundred.

During the week of 5-9 September 2022, 94 papers were presented in parallel sessions and specialized workshops by 112 speakers from 24 different countries. Seven additional papers were presented in plenary sessions on a variety of topics. All together, linguistic topics within the field of Late and Vulgar Latin included Morphology, Phonology, Lexicography, Syntax, Semantics, Pragmatics, Christian Latin, Grammarians, Epigraphy, (Historical) Sociolinguistics, Stilistics, Notarial and juridical Latin, and Digital approaches. These papers were presented in thematically coherent parallel sessions as well as two specific workshops, one of which was dedicated to the study of inscriptions and curse tablets, while papers in the other engaged with the work of Emeritus Professor and Honorary President of the *Comité d'honneur pour l'étude du latin vulgaire et tardif*, Gualtiero Calboli (Bologna).

The current volume is the first collection of papers from the LVL colloquia that is published by Brepols (LVL 1). Out of the 101 papers presented at the 14th edition, LVL 1 publishes 58 revised and double peer-reviewed studies that represent the various research areas the colloquia on Late and Vulgar Latin aim to address. The title chosen by volume and series editors (*Varietate delectamur*: multifarious

approaches to synchronic and diachronic variation in Latin) reflects the diversity in research topics and scientific approaches, the results of which have been grouped together in a number of sections according to a centrally shared interest among them.

For the second time, a competition was held among young scholars for the József Herman Award, which aims to inspire and reward academic excellence and innovation within the research scope of the conference series. In 2018, the prize was first established by the *Comité international pour l'étude du latin vulgaire et tardif* and József Herman's (1924-2005) widow, Marianne Bakró-Nagy. There were 9 candidates at the Ghent colloquium, out of whom Salvatore Cammisuli (Catania) was awarded the Herman Award 2022 for his paper 'Nomi di mestieri nel glossario latino-greco degli *Hermeneumata Celtis*', which is included in this volume.

The organising committee of the LVL14 colloquium was led by Giovanbattista Galdi, Professor of Latin Linguistics at Ghent University and lead editor of the current volume. The daily organisation during the colloquium was supervised by Simon Aerts, while Alessandro Papini and Kim Groothuis' efforts in the years during the global pandemic and leading up to the 2022 edition were of crucial importance to the success of the LVL14 colloquium. As conference organisers, we wish to express our gratitude also to the team of students and PhD students who took care of the various aspects of the organisation we are all too familiar with in academia; in addition, our special thanks go to the members of the *comité* for their continuous experience and support and for the time they took to evaluate the papers and presentations of the competitors for the Herman Award, as well as the many colleagues who graciously volunteered to chair any of the many sessions throughout the week. We are also immensely grateful to the City of Ghent, for allowing us the use of the beautiful Pacification Room at the City Hall, and to the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy and our Dean, for providing a venue for our closing reception. In particular, we thank also our hosts at St Bavo's House for their daily support during and in between the many academic sessions we held at their conference center. Personal thanks go to Evita Willaert, Ghent councillor for Education, Youth and Outreach, Mieke Van Herreweghe, Vice Rector of Ghent University, Gita Deneckere, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy, and Claudia Crocco, Head of the Department of Linguistics, for opening the colloquium at Ghent's City Hall and to Gualtiero Calboli, Gerd Haverling and Piera Molinelli for their contribution to a collective *In memoriam* for Maria Iliescu (1927-2020), Harm Pinkster (1942-2021) and James Noel Adams (1943-2021), all of whom dedicated a substantial part of their career to the study of Late and Vulgar Latin and had left us since the previous colloquium in 2018. A special mention goes to Marieke Van Acker, for creating the LVL14 poster and hosting an exhibition at the colloquium, combining her academic and artistic interests into her collage artwork.

As editors of the current volume, we wish to thank especially the many reviewers who contributed to the scientific rigour of the selected papers, and without whom the diversity in topics and research methodologies would never have been so well represented. Our thanks also go to the publishing team and to Tim Denecker in particular, for their continuous support and for the open communication that this first joint venture between the LVL community and Brepols required. Most of all,

we thank our colleagues, our conference participants and authors, for submitting their valued research to this volume and for their continued efforts and patience in shaping their scientific communication as part of the collection of selected papers they allowed us to publish as *Varietate delectamur*.

Giovanbattista Galdi
Simon Aerts
Alessandro Papini

Orality and Diastratic Variation

Notes on the Late Latin Accusative Absolute construction*

1. Introduction

Like many other Indo-European languages, Latin makes use of so-called absolute constructions, that is, parenthetical constructions consisting of a noun or pronoun and a modifying participle. Among the various innovative features distinguishing the Late Latin clause marking system from its Classical Latin predecessor is the co-occurrence of several formally distinct absolute constructions, notably the ablative absolute (ABL ABS) and accusative absolute (ACC ABS) as well as several so-called mixed constructions, i.e., phrases containing a noun and a modifier with divergent case marking. This paper takes a fresh look upon the ACC ABS, examining how its distribution differs from that of other absolute constructions, notably the ABL ABS, and attempting to delineate the semantic factors determining its distribution, notably its compatibility with the present active and perfect passive participle and with telic and atelic predicates, and its syntactic relation to the matrix clause. We wish to emphasize from the outset that the findings presented here are preliminary and based on a limited amount of data. Nevertheless, we believe they shed important light on the system of absolute constructions in post-classical Latin.

In Classical Latin, the ABL ABS is the predominant absolute construction. Typical examples are given in (1), illustrating the ABL ABS with perfect passive participle (1a) and with present active participle (1b):

(1a) *Expositis militibus naues eadem nocte Brundisium a Caesare remittuntur*
(CAES. Gall. 3, 8, 1)

(Once the soldiers had been set on shore, Caesar sent the ships back to Brundisium the same night)

* Eystein Dahl's contribution to this research is part of the project No. **2022/47/P/HS2/02564** co-funded by the National Science Centre and the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 945339.

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Varietate delectamur: Multifarious Approaches to Synchronic and Diachronic Variation in Latin. Selected Papers from the 14th International Colloquium on Late and Vulgar Latin (Ghent, 2022), ed. by Giovanbattista Galdi, Simon Aerts and Alessandro Papini, LVL 1 (Turnhout, 2025), pp. 451–464.

BREPOLS  PUBLISHERS

DOI 10.1484/M.LVLT-EB.5.143317

(1b) *ac nullo hoste prohibente aut iter demorante incolumem legionem in Nantuates, inde in Allobroges perduxit ibique hiemavit* (CAES. Gall. 3, 6, 4)

(And with no enemy hindering or delaying the march, he brought the legion uninjured to the Nantuates, then to the Allobroges and made winter camp there)

Helttula (1987) noted that the ABL ABS was bound by a general constraint that did not allow its nominal constituent to occur in the main clause.¹ In ABL ABS with perfect passive participles the agent of the absolute is regularly left implicit but often shows co-reference with the subject of the main clause, as illustrated in (1a), (2a) and (2b):

(2a) *uictores uictis hostibus legiones reueniunt domum* (PLAVT. Amph. 188)

(The enemies defeated, the victorious legions return home)

Example (2b) illustrates that the co-occurrence constraint just mentioned is violable in Classical Latin.

(2b) [*Vercingetorix ...*] *conuocatis suis clientibus facile incendit [eos]* (CAES. Gall. 7, 4, 1)

([*Vercingetorix ...*], having summoned his own dependents, easily fired their spirit)

Apart from the predominant ABL ABS construction, absolute constructions with nominative and accusative case marking are also found; however, they mainly appear in post-classical Latin. For example, the nominative absolute (NOM ABS) construction is illustrated in (3).²

(3) *et benedicens nos episcopus profecti sumus* (PEREGR. Aeth. 16, 7)

(and with the bishop blessing us we set out)

The ACC ABS construction is a characteristic feature of Late Latin, becoming more frequent from the mid-fourth century onwards, although some rare and possible examples are attested earlier as well.³ A typical example of the ACC ABS that selects perfect passive participles, as will be dealt with later on, is given in (4):

(4) *et ablatam ei omnem potestatem a rebus ecclesiae, artum ei uictum et tenuem relinquentes, ad summam eum contumeliam redigerunt* (GREG. TVR. Franc. 2, 23)

(and all authority over the affairs of the church having been taken away from him, leaving him a narrow and thin life, they reduced him to the utmost insult)

1 Helttula (1987, 16).

2 Note that it characteristically selects an active present participle. For an analysis of this construction, we refer to Galdi (2017) and Galdi and De Decker (2022).

3 Helttula (1987, 18-19) notes that there are some occurrences of constructions resembling the ACC ABS already in the first century BC, e.g., VARRO rust. *Narrat ... quondam deprensus tesserulas coicentem in loculum, eum ad consulem tractum a fautoribus competitorum.*

Beside the constructions just described there are the so-called mixed absolute constructions in which the participial element has ablative case marking, but does not show case agreement with the nominal element, which appears in the nominative or accusative such as (5):

(5) *Omnia commixtis et crebrellatis [...] cataplasmam coques* (CHIRON. 594)

(All things mixed together and spread out [...] you cook a poultice)

In the following section, we briefly review the most important previous works dealing with absolute constructions in Latin, restricting our attention to works dealing with the ACC ABS construction.⁴

1.1. *State of the art*

While the ABL ABS construction tendentially is thoroughly dealt with in standard grammars and handbooks, the ACC ABS has mostly received less attention.⁵ Here, we briefly summarize the main claims and observations made in previous works, most of which have been concerned with the origin of the ACC ABS construction.

In an early contribution, Bonnet (1890) suggested that the ACC ABS arose because the accusative became a default case category in Late Latin, being used in all types of oblique functions. An important piece of evidence in favor of this assumption is that nominal forms in modern Romance languages tend to originate from accusative forms.⁶ On the other hand, this hypothesis fails to account for the fact that the ACC ABS preferentially selects the perfect participle.⁷

Analogously, Horn (1918) connects the rise of the ACC ABS to cases where the ABL ABS selects an accusative-marked object argument, as in cases like *Hunnorum rex Attila, iunctis secum Gepidas cum Ardarico [...] omnem Illyricum [...] populatum est* (IORD. Rom. 331) (Attila, the king of the Huns, having joined Gepidas with Ardaricus, invaded all Illyricum). Biese (1928) notes that this assumption raises several further issues.⁸ In our view, his most important point concerns the fact that mixed constructions of this kind are attested at a relatively late stage, at a time when the ACC ABS was well established. It is therefore dubious whether the mixed construction type represents a pre-stage of the ACC ABS.

Schrijnen (1939), on the other hand, argues that the ABL ABS and the ACC ABS are syncretic forms, where the latter is characterized by a nasalized *-m* ending and attested from the *Mulomedicina Chironis* onwards. However, this hypothesis also provides no

4 We refer to Pinkster (2021, 387-402) for a recent thorough examination of the ABL ABS construction.

5 For example, Leumann, Hofmann and Szantyr (1972, 137-142, 143) briefly mention the ACC ABS construction in a half-page paragraph but devote five pages to the ABL ABS. Moreover, Pinkster (2021) discusses the ABL ABS over 15 pages (387-402), while the ACC ABS again is dealt with over c. half a page (403-404).

6 Cf., e.g., Adams (2013, 201-204).

7 Biese (1928, 60).

8 Biese (1928, 62-64).

obvious way of explaining why the ACC ABS, unlike the ABL ABS, shows a strong preference for the perfect participle. Helttula (1987) follows Biese (1928) in assuming that the ACC ABS represents an accusative-marked object that became detached from its main clause, a hypothesis which is easier to connect with the fact that the ACC ABS prefers the passive or p-oriented perfect participle to the active present participle. Finally, Müller-Lancé (1994) presents a comparative-historical analysis of absolute constructions from Old Latin to Modern French. An important finding of his work is that the ACC ABS is rather marginally attested in his Late Latin text corpus, the ABL ABS constituting *c.* 93.5% (157/168), the ACC ABS *c.* 1.2% (2/168), the NOM ABS *c.* 3.6% and mixed constructions *c.* 1.8%.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the distinction between active and mediopassive voice plays a pervasive role in the Latin system of finite verbal forms. Interestingly, however, there is no voice opposition in the participial system, with only active participles in the present and future, and only passive participles in the perfect.⁹ Since the future participle is extremely rare in absolute constructions, only the present participle active (though also rare) and the perfect participle passive are considered here.¹⁰ While the present participle generally has an active reading, the perfect participle is compatible with both passive and active readings. Already in Classical Latin, the active use of the perfect participle is seen in the ABL ABS with deponent verbs.¹¹ It is likely that the active interpretation in such contexts facilitated the introduction of accusative objects into passive ABL ABS constructions (PEREGR. Aeth. 19, 2: *factis orationibus et caetera*), or of a nominative as subject (GREG. TVR. Franc. 2, 40: *Inmissis super eum filius percussoribus*), leading to the development of mixed constructions.¹²

Some recent accounts, such as Rovai (2005, 2014), Cennamo (2009) and Adams (2013), argue that the ACC ABS involves non-agentive subjects of predicates denoting resultant states of telic events.

1.2. Theoretical preliminaries

Building on Cotticelli and Dahl (2022) and Dahl (2021, 2022), we adopt a micro-level morphosyntactic approach to analyze alignment and argument realization. In line with the mentioned works, we define different alignment types by means of the terms S, A and P, which represent the monovalent argument, the first bivalent argument and the second bivalent argument, respectively.¹³ Some recurrent alignment types are defined in Table 1.

Table 1. Some recurring alignment types (after Dahl 2021)

Accusative	Ergative	Neutral	Tripartite	Double Oblique	Semantic
A = S ≠ P	A ≠ S = P	A = S = P	A ≠ S ≠ P	A = P ≠ S	A ≠ P, A = S _A , P = S _P

9 Cf. Pinkster (2015, 60–62).

10 Cf. Pinkster (2021, 26, 403).

11 Cf. Pinkster (2021, 397–401).

12 See also Horn (1918).

13 Cf. Dahl (2021).

Throughout its recorded history, Latin predominantly shows accusative alignment in nominal, pronominal and verbal morphology, although scholars like Rovai (2014) and Cennamo (2009) have demonstrated that semantic alignment patterns also appear at various historical stages.

Alignment change sometimes arises via reanalysis of verbal nouns and adjectives, reinterpreted as fully finite verbal forms. Following Helttula (1987), the Latin ACC ABS construction arguably represents an originally attributive participial construction that was first reinterpreted as predicative and then developed into a converbal construction, a change involving reanalysis from attributive into predicative which in turn developed into an active/transitive verb. With passive/p-oriented participles, the derived subject was then reinterpreted as the patient/object of the active/transitive verb.¹⁴ With unaccusative/inagentive predicates, the underived subject remained in its original function. Consider the example from Old Latin in (6):

(6) confutauit uerbis admodum iratum senem (TER. Phorm. 477)

(He confuted the very angry old man with his words)

Although a full discussion of these matters is beyond the scope of this paper, the morphosyntactic behavior of the ACC ABS in Late Latin still reflects its origin as a patientive argument, particularly in its preference for the p-oriented/passive perfect participle. We propose a hypothesis according to which the accusative-marked noun/pronoun is reanalyzed as the syntactic object of the participial form, the syntactic subject/agent of which is co-referent with the subject/agent of the matrix clause. If this hypothesis holds, semantically independent ACC ABS constructions, lacking subject/agent co-reference with the matrix subject, would be rare or nonexistent. Similar expectations extend to ACC ABS with present participle forms, suggesting a preference for transitive predicates with telic semantics.

In Bertoldi's (2021) recent MA thesis, the distribution of present and perfect participles in the ACC ABS construction was analyzed. An important finding is that telic predicates (44 out of 55 examples in Bertoldi's work) strongly tend to select the perfect participle, whereas the present participle is only attested with atelic predicates. Interestingly, the ABL ABS seemingly shows an analogous preponderance towards the present participle. The fact that these two absolute constructions seem to be in complementary distribution in Late Latin is difficult to reconcile with the rise of hybrid constructions like the one cited in (5) above. We shall return to this problem in sections 3.2 and 3.3 below.

2. The corpus

The present investigation is based on a select corpus of mid-low register literary and non-literary sources from the fourth to sixth century AD. This enables an assessment

¹⁴ Cf. also Coticelli-Kurras, Dahl and Živojinović (2024 [2025]).

of the semantic and morphosyntactic features of the construction types under scrutiny and their development over time. We have included pertinent data from the following texts in our survey: *Mulomedicina Chironis* (4th c. AD), *Peregrinatio Aetherae* (4th c. AD), Cassiodorus' *Institutiones* (5th c. AD), the work of Gregory of Tours (6th c. AD), and the work of Jordanes (6th c. AD).

3. Survey of absolute constructions in Late Latin

A caveat is warranted as the discussion relies on a limited dataset, rendering the following observations tentative and preliminary rather than conclusive.

3.1. Data analysis

3.1.1. ABL ABS

The ABL ABS construction, as discussed earlier, initially adhered to the constraint that the subject argument in the absolute clause differed from the matrix clause's subject. In post-classical Latin, this constraint gradually relaxes. The ABL ABS construction can now choose either the present or perfect participle as its predicate, exemplified by (7a) and (7b):

(7a) *Conuenientibus autem multis ad hanc Dianae statuam, missis funibus, trahere coeperunt* (GREG. TVR. Franc. 8, 15)

(And when many people had come together to the statue of Diana, after having sent ropes, they began to drag it down)

(7b) *Illis quoque tacentibus, ablutis rex manibus, accepta a sacerdotibus benedictione, ad mensam resedit laeto uulto et hilare faciae, quasi nihil de contempto suo fuisset effatus* (GREG. TVR. Franc. 8, 2)¹⁵

(And they also being silent, the king washed his hands, received a blessing from the priests, sat down at the table with a happy countenance and a cheerful countenance, as if nothing had been made of his contempt)

These examples demonstrate that the ABL ABS construction tendentially show agent/subject coreference in Late Latin. The second example is particularly interesting because the nominative-marked noun *rex* 'king', which serves as the subject of the matrix clause, is situated within the ABL ABS construction.

3.1.2. ACC ABS

The ACC ABS construction gains prevalence in Late Latin, showing a strong preference for the perfect participle, with occasional instances of the present participle as in (8):

¹⁵ See note 3.

(8) *Collectam, ut dixemus, Alamannorum gentem, uniuersas Gallias peruagatur* (GREG. TVR. Franc. 1, 32)

(Having collected, as we may say, the nation of the Alamanni, he wandered through all Gaul)

In some cases, the ACC ABS agent aligns with the matrix clause subject, indicated by inserting the nominative-marked matrix subject within the ACC ABS frame as in (9):

(9) *Omnesque inimicos Theodosius superatos in pace rebus humanis apud Mediolanum excessit utramque rem publicam utrisque filiis quietam relinquens* (IORD. Rom. 318)

(And after having vanquished all (his) enemies, Theodosius retired from human affairs in peace at Mediolanum, leaving the two states tranquil for each of his sons)

3.1.3. ACC ABS + ABL ABS

Finally, the ACC ABS and ABL ABS are sometimes coordinated or juxtaposed, as shown in (10):

(10a) *Qui machinis constructis omniaque genera tormentorum adhibita nec mora inuadunt civitatem* (IORD. Get. 221)

(after having made machines and prepared all kinds of artillery they invaded the city without delay)

(10b) *Fugatisque sociis ipsumque spoliatum, Gunthchramnus cum filiabus liber abscessit* (GREG. TVR. Franc. 5, 25)

(His companions having fled and himself being stripped (of his power), Gunthchramnus departed as a free man with his daughters).

Such cases highlight the parity of ACC ABS and ABL ABS in Late Latin, suggesting overlapping functions.

3.2. *The ABL ABS and ACC ABS constructions in Late Latin*

Statistics of the relative frequency of these two constructions in the work of Jordanes (*Getica*) and Gregory of Tours (Book 5-7 of *Historia Francorum*) indicate that the ABL ABS by far outnumbered the ACC ABS in these texts.¹⁶ Jordanes exhibits 404 examples of the ABL ABS against 69 cases of the ACC ABS, whereas Gregory of Tours provides 616 examples of the ABL ABS and 88 examples of the ACC ABS. Helttula also identified 34 mixed constructions in Jordanes and 29 cases in Gregory

¹⁶ Helttula (1987, 57).

of Tours, suggesting a comparable distribution.¹⁷ However, our statistical analysis (cf. note 17) reveals significant differences between the two authors. Although chronological factors are just one dimension, non-trivial distinctions emerge. Notably, most absolute constructions in both authors favor the perfect participle, as summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. The form of the verb phrase in the absolute constructions (adapted from Helttula 1987, 57)

	ABL ABS		MIXED		ACC ABS	
	Iord.	Greg.	Iord.	Greg.	Iord.	Greg.
passive participles	245 (62.2%)	361 (59.6%)	26 (76.5%)	19 (66.5%)	65 (95.6%)	84 (95.4%)
active participles	149 (37.8%)	254 (40.4%)	8 (23.5%)	10 (33.5%)	3 (4.4%)	4 (4.6%)

These data suffice to illustrate that absolute constructions preferentially select the perfect participle. Interestingly, the ABL ABS selects a present participle in about 40% of the attested cases, whereas the ACC ABS selects an active participle in slightly less than 5% of the cases. Thus, the data cited in Helttula (1987) suggest that the ABL ABS construction differs fundamentally from the mixed and ACC ABS constructions in this respect.

3.3. *The ACC ABS in Late Latin*

In this section, we examine certain aspects of the Late Latin ACC ABS, including participle diathesis predicate telicity, transitive or intransitive readings, and the syntactic relation between the absolute construction and the matrix clause. Due to unavailability of Helttula's (1987) dataset, we conducted a targeted search for ACC ABS constructions in our corpus, revealing only sporadic ACC ABS examples in the *Mulomedicina Chironis* and the *Peregrinatio Aetheriae* (both fourth century) and no examples in Cassiodorus, leading to its exclusion from the following discussion.

Table 3 gives an overview of the correlations between the ACC ABS and the perfect and present participle.

17 Interestingly, however, a chi-square test of the observed frequencies given in Table 1 yielded a p -value of 0.045, i.e. just below the conventional significance level of 0.05, and a chi-square value of 6.21 with two degrees of freedom ($\chi^2(2) = 6.21$). We also found a Cramér's V value of 0.07. The chi-squared test was performed using the `chisq.test()` function in the standard package of R (R Core Team 2023). The Cramér's V value was obtained by employing the function `assocstats()` of the R package `vcd` (Meyer et al. 2023). Our R scripts are available at <https://github.com/eystdahl/CotticelliDahlZivojinovicLVLTL/blob/main/LVLT14.R>.

Table 3. ACC ABS and selection of participle form

	Prf. ptcp.	Prs. ptcp.	
Chiron.	6	1	N = 7
Peregr. Aeth.	1	1	N = 2
Greg. Tur.	42	0	N = 42
Iord.	52	1	N = 53

The limited examples in *Mulomedicina Chironis* and *Peregrinatio Aetherae* hinder drawing firm conclusions about ACC ABS's participle preference. Both participles are found in this construction at this stage. In contrast, in the works of Gregory of Tours and Jordanes, the ACC ABS consistently favors the perfect participle, with rare or nonexistent use of the present participle. A comparison of Tables 2 and 3 aligns with Helttula's (1987) findings and we therefore take our numbers to be representative in the following.

Table 4 gives a survey of the distribution of telic and atelic predicates in the ACC ABS construction.

Table 4. ACC ABS and telicity

	Telic	Atelic	
Chiron.	6	1	N = 7
Peregr. Aeth.	2	0	N = 2
Greg. Tur.	41	0	N = 42
Iord.	52	1	N = 53

In the present context, the distinction between telic and atelic predicates is defined on verb phrase level. Consider, for instance, the following examples:

(11a) *Halaricus rex Vesegotharum uastatam Italiam Romam ingressus est* (IORD. Rom. 323)

(Having laid Italy waste, Halaricus the king of the Visigoths entered Rome)

(11b) *in episcopium ad Acacium neminem scientem subterfugit* (IORD. Rom. 350)

(He fled to the bishopric, to Acacius, without anyone's knowing)

In example (11a), the ACC ABS *uastatam Italiam* describes a situation with a well-defined endpoint, categorizing it as telic. Conversely, in example (11b), the ACC ABS *neminem scientem* describes an unbounded situation, classifying it as atelic. Notably, the two clear examples of ACC ABS atelic predicates in our corpus also have the present participle.

Table 5 provides a survey of the correlation between the ACC ABS construction with the agent-subject coreference parameter.

Table 5. ACC ABS and Subject-Agent coreference with matrix predicate

	Agent = matrix subject	Agent ≠ matrix subject	
Chiron.	6	1	N = 7
Peregr. Aeth.	1	1	N = 2
Greg. Tur.	41	1	N = 42
Iord.	47	6	N = 53

The numbers show that the ACC ABS construction strongly tends to show agent-subject co-reference, as in (12), though (13) shows that this is not an obligatory feature.

(12) *Hic admirabiliter pene omnem Persidam uastatam nouilissimas eorum urbes occupauit Cochem et Ctesifontem* (IORD. Rom. 294)

(Having admirably laid almost all of Persia, this (man) occupied their famous cities Coche and Ktesiphon)

(13) *Donationem sacro oraculo confirmatam consentiunt Gothi hac ordinatione et ad patriam sibi traditam proficiscuntur* (IORD. Get. 153)

([Honorius] having ratified the donation with a sacred vow, the Goths agreed to this arrangement and left for their gifted homeland)

Interestingly, the proportion of the present participle *vis-à-vis* the perfect participle is consistently low in all the works considered here. Moreover, the ACC ABS construction almost exclusively appears with telic predicates.

3.4. The ACC ABS construction reconsidered

In the previous section, we observed the inclination of the Late Latin ACC ABS construction toward agent-subject co-reference, indicating its origin as an accusative object with a primarily perfect participle. In this section, we briefly review its diathesis and relation to the matrix clause, in particular regarding the matrix subject.

As a first approximation, the ACC ABS functions as a form of subordination, representing a converbial construction in Late Latin. Specifically, it is a p-oriented converbial construction, predominantly selecting the perfect participle. While the perfect participle often contributes to passive perfective forms, its compatibility with various core argument functions, illustrated in (14a-c), challenges its classification as a passive verbal adjective.¹⁸

(14a) *ego autem a patre eram deductus ad Scaeuolam* (CIC. Lael. 1)

(I had already been introduced by my father to Scaevola)

(14b) *postriduo natus sum ego* (PLAVT. Mil. 1082)

(The next day I was born)

¹⁸ Cf. Cotticelli and Dahl (2022, 79-80).

(14c) *quas senatus sine ulla uarietate est secutus* (CIC. Catil. 3, 6)

(which the senate has followed without any exception)

Examples like *cum factum fuerit missam* (PEREGR. Aeth. 32, 2) (When the mass is over)¹⁹ highlight the perfect participle's ability to substitute nominative forms in certain contexts, suggesting a shift towards a semantic alignment pattern, especially with unaccusative predicates or passive verb forms. The evolving association of accusative case with patientive arguments indicates a departure from strict morphosyntactic relationships, suggesting a shift toward case assignment based on semantic rather than purely syntactic factors.

Against this backdrop, it's tempting to posit that the ACC ABS emerges from a reanalysis of the perfective participle as an active converb with an accusative-marked object argument. Exemplified in (15), this interpretation aligns with the ACC ABS as an active converb in Late Latin:

(15) *Interea Odoacer rex gentium omnem Italiam subiugatam, ut terrorem suum Romanis iniceret* (IORD. Get. 243)

(In the meantime, Odoacer, king of nations, subdued all Italy, so that he might inspire fear of himself among the Romans)

4. Conclusions

This paper has examined Late Latin absolute constructions, focusing on the accusative absolute (ACC ABS). From the distribution patterns seen in Tables 3-5 we conclude that the fourth-century data – from *Mulomedicina Chironis* and *Peregrinatio Aetheriae* onwards – reflect a situation where the ACC ABS construction has emerged as a marginally available clause type. Due to the low frequency of the construction, statistical significance is lacking, necessitating further exploration of fourth-century sources. The fourth-century authors in our corpus are traditionally regarded as reflecting vernacular Latin to some extent and it is therefore not surprising that the ACC ABS first show up there. In the fifth century author in our corpus, the construction is not attested, a fact that might be taken to reflect that it had not yet been included in the (written) standard language. Given that the ACC ABS construction is well established in the sixth-century authors, its absence in the preceding stage, represented here by Cassiodorus' work, provides a *terminus post quem* for its inclusion in the written standard, namely the (late) fifth century. We observe a partially overlapping distribution between ACC ABS and ablative absolute (ABL ABS), with ACC ABS primarily restricted to the perfect participle. Late Latin also features a nominative absolute and various mixed constructions. ACC ABS gradually acquires consistent features, notably a preference for telic predicates and co-reference between the agent and matrix clause subject, indicating

19 Cf. Cennamo (2009, 318).

increased integration with the matrix clause. This transformation aligns with a broader morphosyntactic rearrangement in Late Latin, influencing the neutral alignment seen in Romance languages. Future work will explore the interrelation between the ACC ABS and other, non-finite constructions both other absolute constructions and gerundial ones.

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▼ ABSTRACT It is well known that the accusative absolute construction competes with and eventually replaces the absolute ablative in Late Latin. The functional parallelism between the two constructions in Late Latin is reflected in the fact that they are sometimes iuxtaposed, cf. e.g. *Hic captiuitatem Iudaeorum relaxatam muneribusque Eleazaro pontifice Iudaeorum placato* (IORD. Rom. 74). Adams (2003, 612) mentions a number of cases in Vulgar and Late Latin where absolute constructions have a nominal element with accusative case marking and a verbal element in the ablative, cf. e.g. *iunctis secum Gepidas cum Ardarico, Gothosque cum Valamir* (IORD. Rom. 331), *nonnullis nares auresque omissis* (GREG. TVR. Franc. 10, 18). Hybrid constructions of this type are most likely motivated by the spread of the absolute accusative construction of the type *regina [...] neminem scientem subterfugit* (IORD. Rom. 350), which is attested from the third century AD onwards (cf. Biese 1928) and gradually replaced the absolute ablative construction. Väänänen (1981, 166) notes that the absolute ablative is a subordination strategy characteristic of the literary language of the classical period (cf. also Rovai 2014, 131). According to Halla-aho (2009, 104), the ablative case marking in the abovementioned hybrid constructions represents a marker of subordination rather than agreement with the participial subject argument. The aim of this research is twofold: (1) to determine the mechanisms of change in the absolute constructions and to establish a chronological order in the development of mixed and

absolute constructions with a focus on the accusative absolute; (2) to provide a better understanding of non-finite syntax and competitive structures in Late and Vulgar Latin.

▼ **KEYWORDS** Absolute constructions; syntax of participles; case marking; Late Latin; subordination strategies.