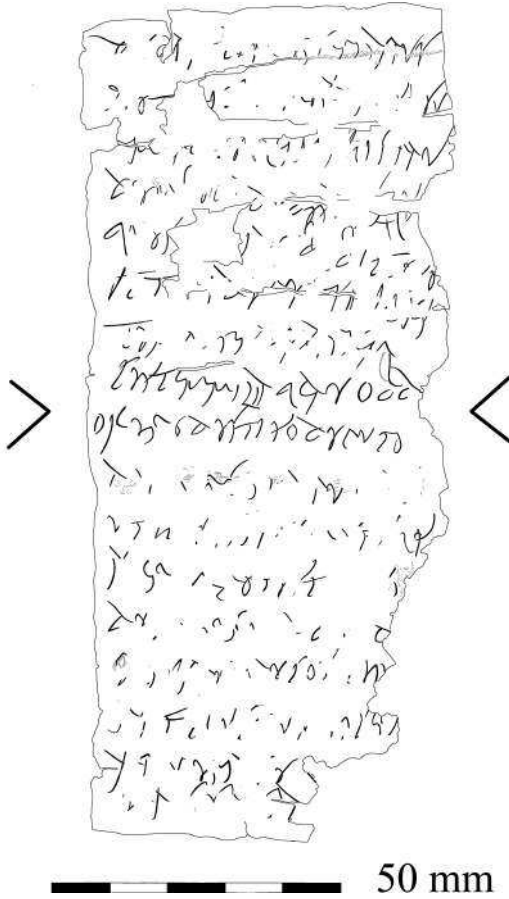


ASYNDETON AND ITS INTERPRETATION IN LATIN LITERATURE

Asyndetic coordination (omission of coordinators such as *but*, *or*, *and*) is ancient in Indo-European languages. Most commentaries on Greek and Latin texts index 'asyndeton', but wide-ranging treatments of asyndeton across a variety of literary and non-literary genres are largely lacking, and comments are often impressionistic. This book provides the most comprehensive account of asyndeton of this category in Latin ever attempted, and it also contains material from Greek and Umbrian. It analyses asyndeta in diverse genres from early Latin to the early Empire, including prayers and laws, and aims to identify types, determinants, generic variations and chronological changes. Since coordinators are easily left out or added by scribes, criteria are discussed that might be used by editors in deciding between asyndeton and coordination. External influences on Latin, such as Greek and Italic, are also considered. The book will be essential for all scholars of Latin language and literature as well as historical linguistics.

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Drawing of an unpublished curse tablet from the temple of Mercury at Uley in Gloucestershire. It contains an unusually long letter written to the god Mercury on both sides of a sheet of lead by a man who has been defrauded of a large sum of money. He ‘gives’ it to the god, to interest him in recovering it and punishing the defaulter. He represents the verb ‘to give’ by four Latin verbs in lines 8–9 of face (a) illustrated above:

..... *obd[o]*
of(f)ero destino deputo

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ASYNDETON AND ITS
INTERPRETATION IN LATIN
LITERATURE

History, Patterns, Textual Criticism

J. N. ADAMS
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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-83785-9 — Asyndeton and its Interpretation in Latin Literature
J. N. Adams
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India
79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108837859
DOI: 10.1017/9781108943284

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First published 2021

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ Books Limited, Padstow Cornwall

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-108-83785-9 Hardback

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Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-83785-9 — Asyndeton and its Interpretation in Latin Literature
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Preface

The term ‘asyndeton’ is constantly used in classical scholarship. Most commentaries on Greek and Latin texts have an entry for asyndeton in the index, often with multiple references. For example, the editions of Tacitus *Histories* 2 and *Annals* 15 by Rhiannon Ash have 68 and 46 references respectively. Few recent commentaries lack any mention of the phenomenon. Notes in commentaries often have impressionistic remarks on the function of the asyndeton in particular contexts.

Commentators tend to use the term without much (or any) specification of what they mean. In this book ‘asyndeton’ is used to refer to coordinations that lack explicit coordinators, by which I mean terms corresponding to English *and*, *or*, *but*. A distinction is sometimes made by linguists between coordination that is syndetic (with *and*, *or*, *but*), and that which is asyndetic. There is a tradition particularly in Greek scholarship of including under the heading ‘asyndeton’ the omission of sentence particles as well, a phenomenon that often differs from the omission of coordinators. In the juxtaposed sentences *He is hungry. He hasn't eaten for three days* it is not strictly a coordinator that is missing, but a term such as *for* or *because*. Commentators regularly refer to the absence of γάρ as asyndeton, but is that designation satisfactory? It would seem more appropriate to say that it is the equivalent of a subordinating conjunction that is lacking in the above, not a coordinator, an interesting phenomenon to be sure, but is it to be mixed up with asyndetic coordination (see e.g. Quirk et al. 1972: 552 on the ambiguous status of *for*)? The term ‘parataxis’ may sometimes be more suitable, or absence of ‘sentence connectors’.

Some importance clearly is attached to asyndeton by commentators, to judge by the frequency with which it is mentioned. We find in an overview of coordination in Latin by Torrego (2009) a statement that coordination by juxtaposition (asyndeton) was ‘almost marginal’ from the first texts (452), but the term ‘marginal’ does not seem fully appropriate once it is realised that, for example, in the *Lex Cornelia de XX quaestoribus* of Sullan

date asyndeton far outnumbers overt coordination, or that a speech put into the mouth of Catiline by Sallust has a striking accumulation of asyndetic pairs. What was Sallust's purpose? Interestingly, Cicero's speeches against Catiline also have some accumulations of asyndeta at high points. Asyndeton must have had a role of sorts in late republican political oratory.

Articles have been written on asyndeton in particular authors, but there has never been a systematic account of its use and functions in Latin, though there is a useful old dissertation by Preuss (1881). Nor does asyndetic coordination get much coverage in modern languages, as far as I can see. Eduard Fraenkel once presented an asyndetic sequence in Milton's *Paradise Lost* (2.185 *unrespited, unpitied, unreprieved*) as being imitated from (Greek) tragedy (see Chapter VI, Appendix), but certainly asyndeton (as I would define it), particularly adjectival, is used freely today in English in novels and newspapers, not least in headlines, and not least with the structure of the example in Milton. This commonplace English type, showing either sequences of privative adjectives with the prefix *un-*, or positive–negative pairs, one with the privative prefix, is paralleled widely in e.g. Greek, Latin, Vedic and Umbrian, and is likely to have been inherited. In English it occurs for example in the poetry of George Herbert (1593–1633).

There are numerous types of asyndetic coordination in Latin, phrasal, clausal, that consisting of single words, sequences short, long or with a mixture of different categories. All types receive some coverage in this book, however brief, but the book is mainly about pairs of single words, so-called 'asyndeton bimembre', and evidence for this is collected systematically from a variety of genres and analysed. Asyndeton bimembre is the most interesting type in Latin, and also the most problematic, given the ease with which scribes may omit or add a coordinator. It is ancient, and persistent. It is also a type that has been subject to generalisations deriving from a simplification of the evidence. A favourite descriptive term has been 'sacral', a term that is applicable to just a minute fraction of the evidence. The main period dealt with here spans the early Republic to the Augustan period, but for historiography I have gone beyond the latter to include Tacitus' *Histories* and *Annals*. Later legal language also has a place. The assembling of evidence is an immensely time-consuming task, resistant to technological methods of data collection (as far as I am aware). Pure statistics are not of much help unless contexts are taken into account. Textual issues come up, and analysis of phrase structure is often required. Problems of phrase structure are not eased by the unsystematic and often

inconsistent punctuation of texts to be found in many editions, a topic which is discussed in places in the book.

A two-word asyndeton and its effects cannot be assessed merely as a pair of words viewed on the written page next to each other, supposedly for example representing ‘rapidity’ or ‘excitement’ (because of the missing term). Asyndetic coordination has a place in speech too, and in speech (in modern languages) it shows variable intonation patterns, which an author will inevitably have in mind when choosing to omit a coordinator in writing. Often in speech an asyndetic pair is articulated, not with rapidity, but with a marked pause after the first element. It cannot be assumed that all such omissions will have the same motivation. Two nouns or verbs in a legal formula are likely to have differed in intonation from a pair of condemnatory adjectives placed at the end of a colon expressing a judgement, with the second word semantically stronger and preceded (in speech) by a ‘pause for thought’ to highlight the final condemnation. I have started with the assumption that asyndeton bimembre is not a single phenomenon with a single aim, and have tried to demonstrate the varieties, from the mundane to the contrived, in some detail. Although we cannot know much about Latin intonation, it is certainly possible to identify different types and functions of two-word asyndeta. There are moreover in ancient grammarians and rhetoricians some interesting comments on the articulation of asyndeta, and these are collected and discussed in the book.

The book is not only about Latin. There is a detailed account of asyndeton in Umbrian (Iguvine Tables), and Vedic is dealt with (thanks to Elizabeth Tucker of the Oriental Institute, Oxford) in the chapter on negative adjectives. Greek is cited throughout, and not only in the sections in which the term occurs in a heading. An obvious question is whether Greek had much influence on the use of asyndeta bimembria in Latin. Greek may have been influential, for example, in the use of juxtaposed asyndetic pairs of opposites in philosophy, and Virgil was certainly influenced by Homer, but some similarities between Latin and Greek may reflect rather inherited patterns. This point is made in the chapter on alpha- and *in*-privatives, in which semantic differences emerge between the two languages in the use of such pairings. There are comparisons in the book between for example Virgil and Homer, Plautus and Menander, and Horace’s *Odes* and Pindar.

A few old or formulaic pairs exist that are always or almost always asyndetic, but the majority of terms attested in asyndeton are also attested with explicit coordination, a point that is illustrated throughout the literary

chapters. Wölfflin's extensive collection (1933) of alliterative pairs has full details of the forms of coordination, asyndetic or syndetic, found with each pair. An Umbrian pair attested both with and without a coordinator is noted at Chapter XXII.4. Editors of texts sometimes eliminate an asyndeton on the grounds that the pairing is elsewhere attested with coordinators. That is an unsatisfactory methodology, because many asyndetic pairs are isolated or rare, and if majority usage were to be used as a main criterion in judging an asyndeton much of Latin literature would have to be extensively rewritten. A major aim therefore has been to identify determinants of the omission of coordinators in Latin. Many asyndetic pairs are located in what are called here 'accumulations', which are defined and extensively discussed. Their relevance to textual problems is illustrated. These structural patterns are the most influential determinant of asyndeton bimembre in the Latin of the periods covered here. For example, the legal pair *emptio uenditio*, regularly used as a technical term in modern textbooks of Roman law and given the meaning 'sale', in Latin texts almost always has a coordinator (*et*), unless it is in an accumulation (thus *emptio et uenditio*, but *emptio uenditio, locatio conductio*). Genre, context and addressees come into it too. Asyndeta bimembra, particularly of several types that are given separate chapters, are extremely common in republican laws, but rare in early prayers (despite the use of the term 'sacral' to characterise asyndeton), in which the coordinator *-que* is preferred. Cicero uses asyndeton bimembre infrequently when writing to Atticus, but has it often in certain of his letters *Ad familiares*, notably those addressed to persons with whom his connection was distant or cold. In some historians asyndeta accumulate in speeches. Certain parts of speech or types of terms attract asyndeton, particularly imperatives addressed to subordinates, and judgemental adjectives placed at the end of cola and containing at least one *in-*privative. In both these cases patterns of intonation probably lie behind the omission of the coordinator. In various parts of the book semantic categories that seem to favour asyndeta are identified too. The chapter on Caesar, *Bellum ciuile* (XXVIII), which makes use of the recent critical edition by Cynthia Damon, is not only about asyndeton or its absence in that work, but discusses methodologies that may be used by editors faced with choosing between an asyndeton and an overt coordination. This topic comes up in other chapters too, such as III.3, XIX.2 and XXI.

The interpretation of pairs of adjectives (or of adjective + participle) is especially complex and has sometimes caused problems. Two adjectives without a coordinator are not necessarily in asyndeton. In the phrase *the young criminal lawyer* the insertion of a coordinator would give the wrong

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meaning. There is ‘layering’ of the two adjectives. Not infrequently pairs of adjectives in Latin differing in this or a similar way have been falsely taken as asyndetic. A classic case is the pairing *uolens propitius*, regularly cited as the sacral asyndeton par excellence. In its earliest use it is not an asyndeton at all, though, with a change of its verbal construction later, it does become asyndetic. A superficially similar pair in Umbrian, which by contrast is a genuine asyndeton and tends to be cited as a parallel to the Latin, differs semantically from the Latin pair in a significant way. Chapter II deals with the problems of analysis that pairs of adjectives raise, and introduces some types of compounds.

The book is loosely speaking in two parts, the first typological, the second literary, this latter dealing with numerous literary genres and also with prayers and laws. The final chapter is an overview of asyndeton bimembre in Latin literature, and its types, chronology and variations.

Here are a few comments on the evidence used in the literary chapters and on its presentation.

First, I have set out to collect every case of asyndeton bimembre in the texts consulted, but inevitably some omissions will have been made. In several places in chapters in which the examples are numbered I have inserted at a later stage omitted passages that I happen to have noticed, usually keeping the original numbering and giving the added examples a number of the type (1a). It would have been out of the question to re-read the whole corpus looking systematically for missed examples, but the evidence presented is I hope tolerably complete.

Second, the chapters are not uniform in format and content. In the chapters on Plautus, Lucilius, Catullus and Horace I have collected and discussed not only asyndeta bimembria but also some other types of asyndeta and forms of explicit coordination. The chapters on long prose works, such as those of Cicero and the historians, are more restricted in scope, in that they concentrate mainly on asyndeton bimembre (though the section on the annalists in Chapter XXX is more comprehensive). As was stated above, the chapter on Caesar is specifically about asyndeton and textual criticism. Textual issues do however come up frequently in other chapters on prose works.

Third, it may seem a simple matter to identify asyndeta bimembria, but that is not always so. For example, semantically unified asyndetic pairs may be placed within much longer asyndetic sequences. If e.g. the positive–negative pair *dignus indignus* were to occur within an asyndetic series of six otherwise miscellaneous adjectives, I would usually classify it as an ‘embedded’ asyndeton bimembre. Especially hard to categorise are some

sequences that superficially are of the type *A, B and C* (cf. *bacon, lettuce and tomatoes*, with what I call ‘end-of-list’ coordination). How is one to interpret the structure of a case that has a unified pair at the start, followed by an element (attached by a coordinator) of a different semantic type? I have tended to treat such initial pairs as ‘weak’ asyndeta bimembra within a longer structure, another form of embedding. Apparent end-of-list coordination in Latin is not always what it seems.

Fourth, I have not placed commas between the two members of asyndeta bimembra if they consist of single words. This is an arbitrary decision, given that in some contexts, for example when the second term outdoes the first semantically, there may be reason to think that in speech there would have been a pause before the dramatic stronger term. An editor of a critical text may indeed decide to use variable punctuations, making explicit for example a rising emphasis by inserting a comma before the second member. If on the other hand an asyndeton bimembre consists of a single word + a phrase, or of two phrases, I have marked the division between the two members with a comma, because in some contexts it may not be immediately obvious where the division lies. Longer asyndetic sequences consisting of single words (i.e. *tricola* and longer *cola*) have also been left unpunctuated. However, some such sequences are manifestly composed of groups of semantically unified pairs, such as the two juxtaposed Ciceronian pairs of opposites, *uita mors diuitiae paupertas*. In my opinion it is unsatisfactory for an editor to fail to indicate the phrase structure by a comma (*uita mors, diuitiae paupertas*).

Finally, I am aware that anyone looking at the literary chapters is likely to be not so much reading the whole as consulting a chapter on a particular author or passage. I have decided to make each of these chapters as self-contained as possible. The conclusions scattered about within them and at their ends summarise features of the author’s use of asyndeton, and may be consulted alongside or in preference to the full collections of data. The typological chapters are in a way a separate work.

Cross references throughout consist mainly of chapter and section numbers (the former in roman numerals). Those comprising an author’s name and a number in bold (e.g. ‘Cicero 23’) refer to passages numbered in bold in the chapter devoted to that author.

Acknowledgements

I owe a particular debt to Elizabeth Tucker, who generously supplied me with material from Sanskrit, which is used in Chapter VI. She also gave me bibliography on other topics. John Briscoe has answered many questions (usually by return mail), and has directed me around the ever-changing library of Manchester University. He also made detailed comments on the chapter on Livy. Harm Pinkster let me have a copy of the relevant chapter of his *Oxford Latin Syntax 2* before publication. Wolfgang de Melo read a draft of the whole work and made many acute comments. Roger Tomlin kindly allowed me to use the image from a Uley writing tablet (unpublished) that appears as the frontispiece, as well as providing information about certain pairs. Giuseppe Pezzini has not only given me a lot of information but has also himself produced a draft of a paper or chapter on asyndeton in Terence, which I have drawn on a little, but I have largely passed over Terence in the hope that one day that draft will be converted into an article of his own. Simon Hornblower read a chapter in considerable detail and made a number of very informative comments. Anna Chahoud has answered a multitude of questions and helped so often that I could not possibly catalogue her contributions. Others have supplied me with information, copies of articles, bibliographical information, answers to queries, or read sections of the work. An anonymous referee made some very useful points. I express here my profound gratitude to the following (well aware that I have probably forgotten others): Gualtiero Calboli, Kathleen Coleman, Tony Corbeill, Marcus Deufert, Arthur Emmett, Laurence Emmett, Wolfgang Ernst, Trevor Evans, Patrick Finglass, Adam Gitner, Christa Gray, Nigel Kay, David Langslow, Adam Ledgeway, Roland Mayer, Veronika Nikitina, Stephen Oakley, Sarah Ogilvie, Costas Panayotakis, Lucia Prauscello, Michael Reeve, Richard Thomas, Michael Winterbottom and Tony Woodman.

I would also like to thank Michael Sharp and Sarah Starkey of Cambridge University Press for their usual efficiency and, in this case, patience, and Juliet Wilberforce for her skilled and agreeable copy-editing.

I have been very fortunate to have had the generous academic support of All Souls College even well into retirement, and ready access to the excellent Manchester University Library and the John Rylands Library, Manchester.

Abbreviations

<i>CEL</i>	P. Cugusi, <i>Corpus epistolarum Latinarum papyris tabulis ostracis servatarum</i> , 3 vols. (Florence, 1992–2002).
<i>ChLA</i>	A. Bruckner, R. Marichal et al., eds, <i>Chartae Latinae antiquiores</i> (Olten, Lausanne etc., 1954–).
<i>CIL</i>	<i>Corpus inscriptionum Latinarum</i> (Berlin, 1862–).
<i>CLE</i>	F. Bücheler, A. Riese and E. Lommatzsch, <i>Carmina Latina epigraphica</i> , 3 vols. (Leipzig, 1897–1926).
<i>FRH</i>	T. J. Cornell et al., <i>The Fragments of the Roman Historians</i> , 3 vols. (Oxford, 2013).
<i>GL</i>	H. Keil (ed.), <i>Grammatici Latini</i> , 8 vols. (Leipzig, 1855–80).
<i>ILLRP</i>	A. Degrassi (ed.), <i>Inscriptiones Latinae liberae rei publicae</i> , 2 vols. (Florence, I 2nd edn 1965, II 1963).
<i>ILS</i>	H. Dessau (ed.), <i>Inscriptiones Latinae selectae</i> , 3 vols. (Berlin, 1892–1916).
Loeb	Loeb Classical Library.
LSJ	H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> (revised and augmented by H. S. Jones, with a Revised Supplement, 1996) (Oxford, 1996).
NT	New Testament.
OCT	Oxford Classical Texts.
<i>OLD</i>	<i>Oxford Latin Dictionary</i> (Oxford, 1968–82).
<i>ORF</i>	H. Malcovati, <i>Oratorum Romanorum fragmenta liberae rei publicae</i> , 4th edn (Turin, 1976).
<i>Suppl. Mag.</i>	See Daniel and Maltomini (1990–2).
<i>Tab. Ig.</i>	See Poultney (1959).
<i>TLL</i>	<i>Thesaurus linguae Latinae</i> (Leipzig, 1900–).

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-83785-9 — Asyndeton and its Interpretation in Latin Literature
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