BOOK REVIEW

Left Dislocation in Latin: Topics and Syntax in Republican Texts. By HILLA HALLA
AHO. Leiden, NL and Boston, MA: Brill, 2018. Pp. x + 253. Hardback, $119.00.
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Particularly within oral forms of communication, the current speaker will
want to "light up" some person, place or thing – a noun or noun phrase –
prior to saying something new about it. Here, for instance, is the first cou-
plet of the rapper Nas' "NY State of Mind" (1994):

> **Rappers**, I monkey flip 'em with the funky rhythm
> I be kicking. Musician, inflicting composition …

The singer highlights the item ("rappers") by promoting it to first position, where
the group referred to appears as a "hanging nominative," to be resumed in the
main clause with the contracted object pronoun "'em" (note the case mismatch).
Fronting "rappers" in this way raises it to topic status. These "rappers" are next –
in the main clause – contrasted with the singer (the Focus) who claims to exceed
his musical rivals in rhythmic and compositional skill.

   This fronted element stands outside of the clause and can be omitted without
disturbing the syntax of the main clause. These "Left Dislocations" (LD hence-
forth) so-called, are often further described or delimited with a relative clause.
Here is an example from Plautus:

> **plerique homines** quos cum nil refert pudet
> ubi pudendum est, ibi **eos** deserit pudor (Pl. *Epid.* 166-167)
>
> **Most people** – who feel shame when feeling shame is irrelevant – when
> it is necessary to feel it, right then and there, any sense of shame aban-
> dons **them**.

LD is widely attested across languages. A now discarded way of analyzing the construction was to judge it by the standard of written language and say that the speaker had run into planning problems which prevented him or her from producing a well-formed utterance (Miller and Weinert 1998: 238).[1] In fact, information is distributed like this, piecemeal over syntactic units, with new elements introduced into the discourse in such a way as to facilitate their uptake. The phenomenon typically features not only in conversation but in any medium where a hearer needs to comprehend another's words in real-time, such as announcements, performances of playscripts or songs (cf. Halla-aho's sensible remarks on the register of Latin LD at pages 148; 220).

To help us achieve a more fine-tuned understanding, Halla-aho applies recent thinking by linguists on how users parcel information within shorter or longer stretches of text; that is, the "Information Structure" of language, where the key ideas are: **topic** – the "given" information and **focus**, that "new" or "salient" piece of information about that topic; the item raised to topic was (a.) **Active**, that is, immediately mentioned beforehand or currently manifest to the interlocutors; (b.) **Accessible**, it had been raised at some distance further back; or (c.) **Brand New**, that is not mentioned earlier nor accessible in any other way (99-101).

After delimiting her corpus mainly to Early Latin authors (Chapter 1), Halla-aho carefully distinguishes LD from other constructions featuring relative clauses (Chapter 2), in order to arrive at a working definition of LD, a concept whose boundaries, as Halla-aho acknowledges, are necessarily fuzzy (28). The subsequent chapters of her book (3, 4, 5), examine LD in Roman Comedy (with an appendix on Lucretius); epigraphic texts (a *senatus consultum*, statutes and curse tablets *inter alia*); and Early Latin prose (with a look at some later Republican authors like M. Terentius Varro and Sallust).

Across genres, LD in Latin introduces or re-introduces an item in order to say something new about it. That is, it serves to promote topics; more rarely does it serve as a vehicle for the focus, the new information. Specifically, Halla-aho – and this is one important contribution – distinguishes its usage among genres and authors. In terms of syntax, we find a near exclusive use of LD with relative clauses in laws; on the other extreme, Cato avoids relative clauses in his Left Dislocated items (35). In terms of information structure, comic poets typically introduce Active referents into the discourse using Left Dislocation (130). Again, in comedy, although clauses that *do not* exhibit Left Dislocation can *also* promote topics,

[1] Miller, Jim and Regina Weinert. 1998. *Spontaneous Spoken Language: Syntax and Discourse.* Oxford.

Halla-aho suggests that the LD construction bears traits distinguishing it from these alternative topic-raising constructions: in particular, Brand New referents that remain topical in the subsequent discourse appear to favor LD (144-145). By contrast, the statues (*leges*) prove particularly resistant to analysis: of the relevant relative clause types analyzed "any motivation of an information-structuring or pragmatic nature seems hard to detect" (188-189). At any rate, across prose, epigraphic texts and comedy, a recurrent arrangement is a fronted nominative resumed within the main clause by an anaphor, often in a different case: *tum Saturno **filius**, qui primus natus est, **eum** necaverunt*, "then Saturn's son, his first born, they killed him" (Ennius *Euhemerus*, Vahlen fr. 3, p. 224.). A line from the *Sententia Minuciorum* of 117 BCE again illustrates this particular arrangement: ***prata*** [nominative] *quae fuerunt proxuma faeniscei … **ea prata*** [accusative] *…invitis eis niquis sicet*, "the fields which were ready for the mower … those fields, let no one cut them against their will" (*ILLRP* 517.37). This construction, says Halla-aho constitutes "a pattern of pre-classical Latin syntax, regardless of genre and context" (231).

This is a necessarily brief summary of a book replete with interesting observations and demonstrating many strengths. Among the latter, first, Halla-aho sharply parses the Latin of a wide variety of authors (see e.g. the bravura analysis of a passage from Lucretius at pages 148-149), while leaving open the possibility for alternative views. She nimbly wields the tools at her disposal and employs all the available information, including, when relevant, the extralinguistic context: in inscriptions, she examines interpuncts, indentations and so on in order to determine whether LD works hand in hand with other visual devices to mark shifts in topic.

Readers will be rewarded by working through this book, which sets a firm foundation for future scholarship on Left Dislocation, particularly in later periods of Latin; it also provides a model for how judicious use of linguistic theory can offer robust descriptions of some apparently familiar topics. I conclude with some cues for readers. It will prove useful to copy the charts at pages 41 and 50 and keep them handy for quick reference as they read; and, if needed to review some relevant terminology at Pinkster 1990 sections 1.1-1.2 (free and available online). Finally, as of this writing, the book is available as an open-access title at https://brill.com/view/title/36474, (accessed January 20, 2021).

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