

Syntax as evidence for linguistic variation: the classical versus the vulgar variety of ancient Greek

Marco Maiocco

Deviations from a linguistic standard cannot be underestimated as mere errors. Rather, they should be taken as evidence for distinct linguistic varieties. This work will try to contrast some ancient classical Greek texts to some ancient vulgar Greek texts in search of deviations in some syntactic aspects: some of these aspects are likely to depend on the same trigger (the frequency of genitive absolute constructions resumed by an anaphoric pronoun, the preference for the VO linear order, the scarcity of pronominal ellipsis outside the syntactic position of subject), whereas other aspects are independent from each other (the massive use of the historical present especially with verbs of speech, the omission of the determinative article before a definite noun followed by a genitive determiner).

These linguistic uses could seem marginal facts, but it is the acceptance or the avoidance of all of them that draws a distinction between the classical and the vulgar varieties of the ancient Greek language. Tentatively, the two varieties might be viewed as distinct languages, provided a proper definition of 'language', with its internal, individual, and intentional character. The influence of a Semitic (Jewish) substrate will be proposed as the historical cause of this distinction. Intriguing questions arise from those texts that present a peculiar syntactic behaviour in 'swinging' between the two varieties.

1. *The question*

Let us consider ancient Greek. Is it true that absolute participles are rarely resumed by anaphoric elements? Is it true that the basic word order is OV? Is it true that the repetition of pronouns referring to the same entity is downplayed? Is it true that the historical present is only a rhetorical device without syntactic or semantic constraints? Is it true that the use of the determinative article obeys only semantic and not syntactic restrictions?

The answer to these questions depends on what 'true' means. The basic assumption of this work is that any linguistic material is 'true' and worth studying in its structure. Obviously, some linguistic uses are more highly evaluated from a social viewpoint and constitute a linguistic standard. Such was also the case for ancient Greek: the language of the authors of the 5th - 4th centuries b.C. was considered the 'classical' one, the one to be imitated. But some ancient texts

also present a cluster of phenomena that draw a sharp distinction from the classical language.

Turning back to the above questions, the answer is a positive one only as far as the classical language is concerned. However, if ‘vulgar’ texts are considered, the answer has to be a negative one. Thus, I will examine ancient Greek texts with genitive absolute constructions resumed by an anaphoric pronoun, with a basic VO order, and with a frequent repetition of pronouns referring to the same entity. In these texts I will also detect a massive use of the historical present in a specific syntactic (after a past tense) and semantic (with a verb of speech) context and a syntactic constraint on the use of the determinative article.

Firstly, I will try to see if these deviations from the classical standard are related to each other and determined by a specific linguistic mechanism. I will defend this view for the first three phenomena mentioned above.

Secondly, I will try to provide a historical explanation of the way this distinction between the two types of Greek came about. I will point to the influence of a Semitic (Jewish) substrate.

Thirdly, I will try to establish how distinct these two types of Greek are. The theoretical issue is to evaluate how relevant the differences between languages can be and to determine what can produce the relevant differences between languages. I will not address such an issue on my own, rather I will rely on the proposals of linguists working within the generative framework and try to assess the validity of these proposals by means of the texts I will consider.

2. Coreferential absolute participial constructions

Most historical linguists share the assumption that absolute participial constructions (henceforth **APCs**) are ‘absolute’ because the nominal element of the construction cannot be coreferential with another phrase of the matrix clause. However, such a definition dates back only to the Middle Ages.¹ It is by and large valid for the Latin ablative absolute, but it is contradicted by the frequent disregard of this alleged constraint in the Greek genitive absolute.

On the one hand, the possibility of coreferential genitive absolute constructions has to be considered perfectly grammatical and accounted for in a formal syntactic description of the Greek genitive absolute.² On the other hand, it is patent that such coreferential APCs are more frequent in some texts than in others, which results

in a typical instance of linguistic variation.

According to traditional grammarians, APCs should be compared to conjunct participles (henceforth **CPTcs**) and the two constructions should be contrasted this way:

- (1) APCs are ‘absolute’ because the participle is attached to a nominal element that is not a phrase of the main predicate;
- (2) CPTcs are ‘conjunct’ because the participle is attached to a nominal element that is a phrase of the main predicate.

Examples of an APC, a CPTc and a coreferential APC are given below:

- (3) Heliodorus, *Aethiopica* 1.1

ἡμέρας	ἄρτι	διαγελώσης	καὶ	ἡλίου	τὰς
day:GEN	just	smiling:GEN	and	sun:GEN	the:ACC
ἀκρωρείας	καταγάζοντος	ἄνδρες (...)	τὴν	ὑποκειμένη	
hills:ACC	lightening:GEN	men:NOM	the:ACC	underlying:ACC	
θάλατταν	ὀφθαλμοῖς	ὑπῆρχοντο			
sea:ACC	with eyes:DAT	scanned			

‘as the day was just smiling and the sun was lightening the hills, some men (...) scanned the underlying sea with their eyes;
- (4) Heliodorus, *Aethiopica* 1.2

ἤδη	δὲ	αὐτοῖς	κεκινηκόσιν	ἄπωθεν	μικρὸν
already	but	them:DAT	moving:DAT	away from	a little:ACC
τῆς	νεῶς	καὶ	τῶν	κειμένων	θέαμα
the:GEN	boat:GEN	and	the:GEN	relics:GEN	sight:NOM
προσπίπτει	τῶν	προτέρων	ἀπορώτερον		
appears	than the:GEN	previous:GEN	more astonishing:NOM		

‘but a sight which was more astonishing than the previous ones appears to them that had already moved a little bit from the boat and the relic’
- (5) *Evangelium secundum Matthaeum* 1, 20

ταῦτα	δὲ	αὐτοῦ _i	ἐνθυμηθέντος (...)	ἄγγελος (...)
these:ACC	but	he:GEN	thinking:GEN	angel:NOM
ἐφάνη	αὐτῷ _i			
appeared	to him:DAT			

‘as he was thinking these things, an angel appeared to him’

The obvious similarity between these constructions is that they all contain a participle. The obvious distinction between an APC and

a CPTc is that only the latter ‘receives’ its case-mark from the main predicate: in (4), the dative *αὐτοῖς κεκινηκόσιν* is determined by the main verb *προσπίπτει* which assigns this case to one of its arguments, while in (5) the genitives *ἡμέρας ... διαγελώσης* and *ἡλίου ... καταυγάζοντος* are independent from the main verb *ὑπῆρχοντο*.

A striking feature of Greek coreferential APCs is that they can be resumed not only by an element with an inherent case but also by an element with a structural case (subjects or objects). I gave an example of the former above in (5). Here is an example of the latter:

- (6) *Evangelium secundum Matthaeum* 1,18
 μνηστευθείσης τῆς μητρός αὐτοῦ Μαρίας τῷ
 being promised:GEN the:GEN mother:GEN of him:GEN Mary:GEN to the:DAT
 Ἰωσήφ (...) *προ*₁ εὑρέθη ἐν γαστρὶ ἔχουσα ἐκ πνεύματος
 Joseph:DAT she was found in womb:DAT pregnant:NOM by Spirit:GEN
 ἁγίου
 Holy:GEN
 ‘as his mother Mary₁ had been promised to Joseph, she₁ was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit’

CPTcs linked to the subject or object were rather common in Greek and would have been expected in similar contexts, but APCs that are coreferential with subjects or objects are unequivocally attested, even when these structural elements have a full phonological realization - which results in a stronger violation of (1).

Coreferential APCs have been usually disregarded as either solecisms by ancient grammarians or rarities by modern linguists, but ever since they have been attested in almost all writers. Classen (1879:174-175) quotes several passages from the Homeric poems and Cooper (1989:158-160) adds other instances from Attic prose and drama.³ Nevertheless, even if coreferential APCs cannot be considered ungrammatical in ancient Greek, it must be explained why they are scarcely attested in texts from the classical period and widely used in texts from later ages.

With this question in mind, I surveyed some Greek texts⁴ which are representative of sociolinguistic variance. Apart from Plato’s ‘Phaedon’, taken as an example of classical prose, the earliest texts in my sample (the Gospels and the anonymous novel about the biblical characters of Joseph and Aseneth) exploit some sort of vulgar ancient Greek, whereas the latest text (the novel by Heliodorus) is an attempt to reproduce the most classical and refined Greek prose style. The two anonymous historical biographies show an intermediate stylistic level. For each text, T1 shows how many coreferential

APCs can be found and which is the case-mark of the resuming element in the main clause (be it a noun phrase or a prepositional phrase, PP).

T1

DAT	subject-NOM		object-ACC		PP-ACC	GEN	PP-GEN	DAT	P P -
	full	empty	full	empty					
pl	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
mt	0	1	2	0	1	1	0	16	0
mk	0	2	4	0	1	0	0	2	0
lk	0	0	4	0	4	3	0	12	0
jh	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	0
ep	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	4	1
jos	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
aes W	0	9	5	1	1	1	0	6	0
alex β	1	12	12	0	0	1	0	14	1

If we attempt a generalization by calculating the ratio of coreferential APCs to the total number of APCs occurring in the texts in the sample, the scale in T2 is obtained:

T2

pl	jos	hel	ep	mk	jh	alex β	aes W	lk	mt
0%	0%	1.5%	4.8%	23.1%	23.5%	24%	25.6%	36.5%	43.7%
(0/60)	(0/4)	(12/812)	(7/147)	(9/39)	(4/17)	(41/171)	(23/90)	(23/63)	(21/48)

If coreferential APCs have to be statistically significant to be considered core elements of the grammar of a given text, then two groups within the surveyed texts can be distinguished. In the first, coreferential APCs are less than 5%; in the second, they are more than 20%. The contrast is rather sharp.

What is striking is that the large use of coreferential APCs does not entail the rejection of CPTcs. CPTcs are numerous not only in the texts in which they apparently occur instead of coreferential APCs, but also in the texts with many coreferential APCs. The proportions are somewhat different but, apart from the dislike for dative conjunct

participles in the Gospel of John, participles attached to nominative (N), accusative (A), dative (D), or genitive (G) phrases seem to be a possible linguistic tool for all these texts, as shown in the table below.

T3

jos	jh	ep 1 st book	mk	alex β	mt	hel 1 st book	pl	lk	aes W
N 36	N 147	N 181	N 296	N 406	N 472	N 425	N 432	N 536	N 627
A 22	A 44	A 40	A 47	A 105	A 50	A 103	A 146	A 81	A 65
D 3	D 1	D 14	D 4	D3	D 10	D 11	D 26	D 12	D3
G 2	G 6	G 7	G 3	G 3	G 11	G 10	G 20	G 5	G 9
total 63	total 198	total 242	total 350	total 517	total 543	total 549	total 624	total 634	total 704

Whereas the ‘referential’ issue at the base of the opposition in (1-2) accounts for the distribution of APCs and CPTcs in those texts with few or no coreferential APCs, the same issue does not seem to be discriminating enough in those texts with many coreferential APCs. The actual distinction might be a matter of different characterization of APCs and CPTcs in the two groups of texts.

My tentative and preliminary suggestion is that the opposition of APCs versus CPTcs depend on the ‘referential’ issue in the former group of texts and on the ‘pragmatic-informational’ status in the latter.

My proposal stems from considerations about the preferred dislocation of APCs in the two groups of texts. Those with many coreferential APCs avoid a final dislocation after the main clause for genitive absolute constructions, whereas those with few coreferential APCs do not. In the table below, the texts are listed in order of decreasing frequency of final APCs:

T4

	before the main clause	next to: a conjunction or a relative pronoun / adverb	inside the main clause	after the main clause
hel	45	248	74	443 (54.7%)
pl	6	29	5	20 (33.3%)

alex β	4	113	16	38 (22.2%)
ep	18	67	34	28 (19%)
jh	1	10	3	3 (17.6%)
mk	1	29	5	4 (10.2%)
lk	10	43	6	4 (6.3%)
mt	7	39	0	2 (4.2%)
aes W	13	65	10	2 (2.2%)
jos	0	4	0	0 (0%)

With the exception of the ‘Life of Alexander’, the texts can be grouped by and large as they were grouped for the frequency of coreferential APCs.⁵ The group with many coreferential APCs (prototypically exemplified by the Gospel of Matthew) avoids the final dislocation of APCs after the main clause, while the other group (with Heliodorus as prototypical example) allows for both initial and final dislocation.

For lack of other (above all prosodic) clues, I propose to take the position of APCs as a relevant sign of their pragmatic-informational status. I advance an obviously simplistic assumption, namely that topicalized elements figure before the rest of the utterance. On this assumption, it seems as though APCs in the ‘coreferential’ group are more closely connected with topicalization (supposedly implying a fronted dislocation) than APCs in the other group of texts.

Combining the consideration of the referential issue and of the dislocation of APCs leads to the conclusion that not only do coreferential APCs tend to occur in some texts more than in others, but in texts with many APCs they exclusively occur with an initial dislocation. In the table below, for each text of my sample, I report the percentage and the number of coreferential APCs that surface before the matrix clause containing the element of resumption:

T5

pl	jos	alex β	hel	jh	ep	mk	mt	aes W	lk
0%	0%	9.7%	50%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
(0/0)	(0/0)	(4/41)	(6/12)	(4/4)	(7/7)	(9/9)	(21/21)	(23/23)	(23/23)

The evident conclusion is that, in the texts in which coreferential APCs are numerous (more than 20% of all the APCs),⁶ they are also topicalized. This seems to draw a clear-cut distinction between two varieties of the Greek language. The classical language of Greek artistic prose, exemplified by Heliodorus, presents few coreferential APCs and, anyway, the APCs do not often undergo topicalization. The sort of vulgar Greek, exemplified by the Gospel of Matthew, presents many coreferential APCs and a patent link between APC and topicalization.

Now, the question is which linguistic mechanism might be the base of this distinction between the two varieties of Greek. I point to a comparison with the strategies of topicalization in Romance (e.g. Italian) and Germanic (e.g. English) languages, as illustrated in Rizzi (1997:285-289; 2000) within the framework of formal generative linguistics. Examples are given below (the topicalized component is underlined):

- (7) a. Il tuo libro l' ho letto
 the your book it I have read
- (7) b. Your book I read.

As for spoken Italian, topicalized components in the left periphery have to be resumed by a clitic element within the IP-VP system (the so-called 'Clitic Left Dislocation'). On the other hand, English topicalized components only have to be dislocated to the left without any need for overt resumption.

Now, turning back to the Greek data, I propose to take the contrast between spoken Italian and English as a typological parallel of the contrast between the two varieties of Greek I am detecting. In my opinion, the texts with coreferential APCs had a strategy of topicalization similar to the Italian one, whereas the texts with few or no coreferential APCs had a strategy similar to the English one. A link between the 'absoluteness' of APCs and the pragmatic notion of 'topicality' was also pointed out by Holland (1986) and Ramat (1991). Such a

link is plausible when the data about the dislocation of APCs are considered.⁷ A broader view could be assumed, to the effect that this distinction of two varieties of the Greek language could be considered in accordance with the opposition of ‘topic-prominent’ and ‘subject-prominent’ languages along the lines of Li & Thompson (1976). However, I leave this attempt aside, also because Li & Thompson’s notion of topic is significantly different from the syntactic one I have assumed so far.

With respect to my proposal, there seem to be two ‘odd’ facts that remain to be explained: coreferential APCs in Heliodorus and topicalized (coreferential) CPTcs in the Gospel of Matthew.

As for the relatively few coreferential APCs in a stylistically refined author such as Heliodorus, they cannot be a surprise, as they have been attested since Homer;⁸ neither can topicalized coreferential CPTcs in the Gospel of Matthew. In fact, in texts with a topicalization strategy similar to the Romance ‘Clitic Left Dislocation’, my prediction is that any element (subordinate participial predications included) can only surface in the left periphery as a topicalized item if it is resumed by a pronoun within the matrix clause. Thus, it is no wonder that, in the prototypical text of the group (the Gospel of Matthew), dative topicalized (= fronted) CPTcs be resumed by a coreferential pronoun within the matrix clause. On the contrary, dative non-topicalized (= non-fronted) CPTcs lack coreferential resumption altogether. Here are two relevant examples:

- (8) a. *Evangelium secundum Matthaeum* 8,23⁹
 καὶ ἐμβάντι αὐτῷ_i εἰς τὸ πλοῖον
 and boarding:DAT him:DAT into the:ACC ship:ACC
 ἠκολούθησαν αὐτῷ_i οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ
 followed him:DAT the:NOM disciples:NOM of him:GEN
 ‘and as he boarded the ship his disciples followed him’;
- b. *Evangelium secundum Matthaeum* 11, 16¹⁰
 ὅμοιά ἐστὶν παιδίοις καθημένοις ἐν ταῖς ἀγοραῖς
 similar:NOM is to children:DAT sitting:DAT in the:DAT squares:DAT
 ‘it is similar to children sitting in the squares’.

What seems to be implied in the opposition between these two varieties of the Greek language goes far beyond mere stylistic propensities. If we consider other linguistic phenomena that cluster with the one illustrated here, it will become particularly evident that linguistic ‘habits’ that lie well below the level of conscious manipulation of the language seem to be involved.

3. Linear order

Ancient Indo-European languages display a rather free word order thanks to their rich flexional morphology. The problem has been dealt with using different approaches, which are summarized in Corver & van Riemsdijk (1994). Haider (2000) provides a recent evaluation of the various proposals.

I examined the linear order of the same texts I considered for coreferential APCs. I looked at finite transitive verbs, APCs displaying a direct object and another internal argument (or an adjunct), and infinitives with at least a direct object. I disregarded all the sentences in which the subject or the object or the internal argument/adjunct were relative or interrogative pronouns requiring an initial dislocation on its own (instances of what is called A'-movement in the generative framework). The possible logical combinations of these syntactic components are the following (S = subject; V = verb; D = direct object; I = other components, namely both NPs, PPs and AdvPs that are either internal arguments or adjuncts):

- (9) - initial verb: VSDI, VSID, VDIS, VIDS, VDSI, VISD, VDI, VID;
- internal verb: SVDI, SVID, DVSI, IVSD, DVIS, IVDS, SDVI, SIVD, DSVI, DIVS, IDVS, ISVD, DVI, IVD;
- final verb: SDIV, SIDV, DSIV, ISDV, DISV, IDSV, DIV, IDV.

All the combinations in (9) are attested. This means that there are no restrictions a priori, which is not the case for all the languages that are usually examined for variability in word order.

APCs with transitive verbs displaying a direct object as well as another internal argument or adjunct are not very numerous. Those which can be found, however, display evident variability in linear order, as half of the combinations are exploited.

T6

	pl	hel 1 st book	ep 1 st book	aes W	alex β	mt	mk	lk	jh	jos
VSDI								1		
VIDS		1								
DVSI					1					
SDVI					1				1	
DSVI		1				1				
ISVD					1					

DVI				1		1				
IVD		1								
SDIV		11								
SIDV		7		1						
DSIV		4		2						
ISDV		2		1						
IDSV		2								
DIV		6	1		2					
IDV		4								

The first impression is that the text of Heliodorus and the anonymous biographies display greater variability with APCs, but the explanation lies in the syntactic richness of APCs. The texts with more coreferential APCs actually have simpler APCs mainly consisting in nothing more than the NP and the participial VP. Thus, these data about APCs are not the best kind of evidence for linear order.

Greater syntactic complexity is found with finite verbs, as shown in the table below:

T7

	pl	hel 1 st book	ep 1 st book	aes W	alex β	mt	mk	lk	jh	jos
VSDI	1		2	2	1	2	2	1	3	6
VSID	1	1	1		4	1		2	2	
VDIS		3			1		1		1	1
VIDS		3						1		
VDSI	1				4	2	1	3	6	7
VISD	1			3	1		2	1	1	
VDI	10	10	15	25	38	72	49	92	45	89
VID	6	28	13	51	28	52	27	25	23	25
SVDI			2	13	11	20	10	12	17	11
SVID	2	3	2	16	8	9	2	7	14	5
DVSI	3	1	1	2		4			5	
IVSD	2	2			4	3	1		4	2
DVIS	1	1	1						2	1
IVDS		5	2		2	3		1	6	1
SDVI	3	6	2	5	6	1	4	7	10	2
SIVD		10	9	7	2	7	5	8	2	

DSVI	3		2	2				1	2	
DIVS	3	5	1							1
IDVS	2	3	1		2					
ISVD	2	5	1	3	2	4	1	1	1	
DVI	7	14	10	14	21	29	14	17	40	13
IVD	10	25	14	21	16	21	18	25	19	12
SDIV	8	13	4	4	1				2	
SIDV	2	19	8	18	3	2	5		3	1
DSIV	3	8	2	1		1		2		
ISDV	4	8	1	3		2	3		1	
DISV	2	8		11						
IDSV		5	2	17						
DIV	17	55	20	24	18	11	4	7	7	1
IDV	30	38	23	45	17	12	16	5	6	

It is evident that some combinations are rather rare; for instance both DIVS and IDVS are attested only a couple of times and only in four texts. It is not difficult to understand why a linear order with the syntactic subject at the end is uncommon if one thinks of the usual overlap between the syntactic position of subject and the pragmatic category of topic. However, even these uncommon options are available in Greek when it is necessary for discourse strategies.

Now, the position of the verbal head with respect to the other components of the sentence can be either initial (before all the other components – V...), final (after all the components - ...V), or internal (the other components surface on both sides of the verb - ...V...). The table below provides the data about the frequency of these various dislocations of the verb.

T8

	pl	hel 1 st book	ep 1 st book	aes W	alex β	mt	mk	lk	jh	jos
V...	19	46	31	78	79	130	80	126	81	129
...V	66	122	60	32	35	26	23	14	14	1
...V...	38	112	48	174	78	103	60	79	127	49

The statistical preference for final (verbal) heads in Plato and Heliodorus and for initial (verbal) heads in ‘Joseph and Aseneth’ (with only one instance of final verb, the preference is almost categ-

orical) is undeniable. All the Gospels tend to have initial (verbal) heads, whereas the two anonymous historical biographies ('Life of Aesop' and 'Life of Alexander') tend to dislocate the verbal head between its arguments. But a closer look at the instances of internal verbal head will lead to a clearer picture concerning these biographies. The table below deals with the dislocation of the direct object with respect to the verb in clauses with the verb surfacing between its arguments:

T9

	pl	hel 1 st book	ep 1 st book	aes W	alex β	mt	mk	lk	jh	jos
...DV...	15	63	18	112	37	35	24	25	63	20
...VD...	6	49	30	62	41	68	36	54	64	29
% of VD out of ...V...	15.8%	43.7%	62.5%	35.6%	52.6%	66%	60%	68.3%	50.4%	59.2%

All the other texts do not display differences between the position of direct objects and that of other components with respect to the verb. In the two biographies, on the contrary, only the dislocation of direct objects reveals a prevalent orientation. The interesting conclusion is that head-final is the privileged linearization in the 'Life of Aesop' (only 35.6% of the clauses with internal verbal head present the direct object after the verb, which means that 64.4% of these clauses present the direct object before the verb), along the lines of Plato and Heliodorus, whereas the 'Life of Alexander' seems to be more head-initial (52.6% of the clauses with internal verbal head present the direct object after the verb). If all the sentences with both a direct object and another internal argument/adjunct are considered, we obtain a recapitulating viewpoint by counting the number and the percentage of sentences in which the direct object follows the verb.

T10

	pl	hel 1 st book	ep 1 st book	aes W	alex β	mt	mk	lk	jh	jos
n. of VD out of all finite clauses with D + I	35/123	95/280	61/139	140/284	120/192	98/259	116/163	180/219	145/222	158/179
% of VD out of all finite clauses with D + I	28.4%	33.9%	43.9%	49.3%	62.5%	76.4%	71.2%	57.5%	65.3%	88.3%

A doubt might arise from the consideration of the rich verbal inflection of Greek. It could be assumed that verbs always leave their base-generated position in order to reach the functional head(s) where their inflection is checked. This also holds for infinitives, which present inflection for voice and tense in Greek (they can be active or middle or passive, as well as present, future, aorist or perfect). Nevertheless, it can be helpful to consider the linear dispositions of internal arguments (direct objects and other internal arguments or adjuncts) with infinitives too:

T11

	pl	hel 1 st book	ep 1 st book	aes W	alex β	mt	mk	lk	jh	jos
VDI	3	4	5	5		10	3	14	1	12
VID	6	1	5	6	2	5		8	2	3
DIV	21	5	7	2	10	1	1		1	
IDV	20	1	4	9	3		1	2		
DVI	8		7	2	5	4		3	3	
IVD	5	1	14	3	3	1	1	2	1	

In order to detect general tendencies, it would be helpful to look at the data in T11 in another way, considering also those infinitives which govern only a direct object.

T12

	pl	hel 1 st book	ep 1 st book	aes W	alex β	mt	mk	lk	jh	jos
..DV...	73	37	62	68	39	23	19	25	26	1
..VD...	38	30	49	55	41	53	26	68	28	30
% of VD out of all infinitives with a D	29.9%	44.8%	47.7%	44.7%	51.2%	69.7%	57.8%	73.1%	51.8%	96.8%

If one disregards pragmatic factors and assumes that an order which occurs more than half of the times is 'privileged' or 'unmarked', it becomes clear how to group these texts: Plato, Heliodorus, Epictetus and the 'Life of Aesop' are on one side, the 'Life of Alexander', the Gospels and 'Joseph and Aseneth' on the other. The data in T10 lead to the same conclusion.

The evident link with the issue of APCs lies in the fact that the grouping of texts that result from T2 (percentage of coreferential APCs) coincides with the one resulting from T10 and T12 (percentage of initial verbal head in finite and infinitive verbs), as if the two groups of texts represented two different varieties of the Greek language. It can hardly be mere chance that the same texts that display a specific orientation in one respect (use or avoidance of coreferential APCs) display a significant preference for another feature (linear order).

There are only two apparent exceptions. Firstly, the Jewish novel ‘Joseph and Aseneth’ seems to match Heliodorus’ avoidance of coreferential APCs. But if one considers that it only contains 4 (more or less stereotypical) APCs, the relevant feature appears to be the avoidance of subordination altogether, in the typical Jewish style. Secondly, it is not a surprise to find so many coreferential APCs in the ‘Life of Alexander’ contrary to the tendency of Heliodorus and of the ‘Life of Aesop’. The data on linear order suggest its intermediate (between the two varieties) and fluctuating (the preference for final heads is clear only with infinitives) status.

Thus, as for linear order, these texts can be distributed along the following scale. If one bears in mind the reason for the two exceptions (‘Joseph and Aseneth’ and the ‘Life of Alexander’), the overlap with the scale relative to coreferential APCs (repeated here as T13b below) is evident.

T13a

	pl	hel 1 st book	ep 1 st book	aes W	alex β	jh	mk	mt	lk	jos
number of sentences with VD	87	125	134	195	161	173	142	251	248	188
total n. of sentences (fin. clauses with D+I and infinitive clauses with D)	297	347	292	407	272	276	208	335	312	210
% of VD on the total	29.3%	36%	45.9%	47.9%	59.2%	62.7%	68.3%	74.9%	79.5%	89.5%

T13b

pl	jos	hel	ep	mk	jh	alex β	aes W	lk	mt
0%	0%	1.5%	4.8%	23.1%	23.5%	24%	25.6%	36.5%	43.7%
(0/60)	(0/4)	(12/812)	(7/147)	(9/39)	(4/17)	(41/171)	(23/90)	(23/63)	(21/48)

4. (Pro)nominal ellipsis

Another structural feature that might be relevant to confirm the idea that the surveyed texts belong to two different varieties of the Greek language is the use or avoidance of nominal ellipses. This topic is usually dealt with when null subjects are considered. However, null subjects are not the relevant point here, because Greek is a so-called pro-drop language, being a typical system with a rich verbal inflection (both for number and person and for mood, tense/aspect and voice). What I need to consider, instead, is another sort of null component, namely direct objects and other internal arguments or adjuncts.¹¹

I made a survey of this feature in the same texts that I had already examined for APCs and linear order. I considered structures with two verbal phrases, either two finite verbs, or two participles agreeing with the sentential subject, or a nominative CPtc and a finite verb. The requirement was that each verbal phrase had to display an argument/adjunct coreferential with another argument/adjunct of the co-occurring verb. The possibilities that I took into consideration are the following nine:

(10)

- A A nominative participle and a finite verb displaying coreferentiality between:
 - A.1 their direct objects;
 - A.2 the direct object of one of them and an internal argument/adjunct of the other;
 - A.3 their internal arguments/adjuncts.

- B Two finite verbs displaying coreferentiality between:
 - B.1 their direct objects;
 - B.2 the direct object of one of them and an internal argument/adjunct of the other;
 - B.3 their internal arguments/adjuncts.

- C Two participles agreeing with the sentential subject displaying coreferentiality between:
 - C.1 their direct objects;
 - C.2 the direct object of one of them and an internal argument/adjunct of the other;
 - C.3 their internal arguments/adjuncts.

The relevant issue is that all these combinations can have phon-

ological realization of both coreferential components (without any ellipsis) or of only one of them (with consequent ellipsis). For all the combinations I provide an example of uses with and without ellipsis (11 – ‘e’ stands for the elliptical element – and 12, respectively):

- (11) a. A1 (*Evangelium secundum Matthaeum* 8,28)
καὶ κρατήσας αὐτὸν_i ἔπνιγεν e_i
and seizing:NOM him:ACC he choked him
‘and seizing him he choked him’
- b. A2 (*Evangelium secundum Matthaeum* 12,2)
οἱ δὲ Φαρισαῖοι ἰδόντες e_i εἶπαν αὐτῷ_i
the:NOM but Pharisees:NOM seeing:NOM him spoke to him:DAT
‘but the Pharisees seeing him spoke to him’
- c. A3 (*Evangelium secundum Matthaeum* 13,10)
καὶ προσελθόντες (e_i) οἱ μαθηταὶ εἶπαν
and approaching:NOM (him) the:NOM disciples:NOM spoke
αὐτῷ_i
to him:DAT
‘and the disciples approaching (him) spoke to him’
- d. B1 (*Evangelium secundum Matthaeum* 23,4)
δεσμεύουσι δὲ φορτία_i βαρέα καὶ δυσβάστακτα καὶ
they bind but burdens:ACC heavy:ACC and tiresome:ACC and
ἐπιτιθέασιν e_i ἐπὶ τοὺς ὄμους τῶν ἀνθρώπων
they put them on the:ACC shoulders:ACC of the:GEN men:GEN
‘but they bind heavy and tiresome burdens and they put them on the shoulders of men’
- e. B2 (*Evangelium secundum Lucam* 21,12)
ἐπιβαλοῦσι ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς_i τὰς χεῖρας αὐτῶν καὶ
they will raise on you:ACC the:ACC hands:ACC their:GEN and
διώξουσιν e_i
they will prosecute you
‘they will lay their hands on you and they will prosecute you’
- f. B3 (*Evangelium secundum Matthaeum* 19,13)
ἵνα τὰς χεῖρας ἐπιθῇ αὐτοῖς_i καὶ προσεύξεται (e_i)
so that the:ACC hands:ACC he puts on them:DAT and he blesses (them)
‘... so that he puts his hands on them and blesses them’
- g. C1 (*Evangelium secundum Marcum* 15,36)
καὶ γεμίσας σπόγγον_i ὄξους ἐπιθεῖς e_i καλάμῳ
and filling:NOM a sponge:ACC with vinegar:GEN putting it on a reed:DAT

ἐπότιζεν αὐτόν
 he made drink him:ACC
 ‘and filling a sponge with vinegar and putting it on a reed he made him drink’

h. C2 (*Evangelium secundum Lucam* 10,30)

οἱ καὶ ἐκδύσαντες αὐτόν_i καὶ πηλῆγας
 they:NOM also undressing:NOM him:ACC and wounds:ACC
 ἐπιθέντες (e_i) ἀπῆλθον
 inflicting:NOM (to him) they went away
 ‘they also went away after undressing him and inflicting wounds to him’

i. C3 (*Evangelium secundum Lucam* 23,36)

ἐνέπαιζαν δὲ αὐτῷ καὶ οἱ στρατιῶται προσερχόμενοι,
 teased but him:DAT also the:NOM soldiers:NOM passing by:NOM
 ὄξος προσφέροντες αὐτῷ_i καὶ λέγοντες (e_i)
 vinegar:ACC bringing:NOM to him:DAT and speaking:NOM (to him)
 ‘also the soldiers who were passing by teased him, bringing vinegar to him and speaking to him’

(12) a. A1 (*Evangelium secundum Marcum* 10,17)

καὶ γονυπετήσας αὐτόν_i ἐπηρώτα αὐτόν_i
 and kneeling:NOM before him:ACC he asked him:ACC
 ‘and kneeling before him he asked him’

b. A2 (*Evangelium secundum Mattheum* 17,14)

προσῆλθεν αὐτῷ_i ἄνθρωπος γονυπετῶν αὐτόν_i
 approached him:DAT a man:NOM kneeling:NOM before him:ACC
 ‘a man approached him kneeling before him’,

c. A3 (*Evangelium secundum Matthaeum* 27,55)

γυναῖκες (...) αἵτινες ἠκολούθησαν τῷ Ἰησοῦ (...)
 women:NOM who:NOM followed the:DAT Jesus:DAT
 διακονοῦσαι αὐτῷ_i
 caring:NOM for him:DAT
 ‘women (...) who followed Jesus caring for him’

d. B1 (*Evangelium secundum Matthaeum* 4,5)

τότε παραλαμβάνει αὐτόν_i ὁ διάβολος εἰς τὴν
 then takes him:ACC the:NOM devil:NOM to the:ACC
 ἁγίαν πόλιν καὶ ἔστησεν αὐτόν_i ἐπὶ τὸ πτερύγιον
 holy:ACC city:ACC and set him:ACC on the:ACC pinnacle:ACC
 τοῦ ἱεροῦ
 of the:GEN temple:GEN
 ‘then the devil takes him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple’

- e. B2 (*Evangelium secundum Matthaeum* 4,8)
 πάλιν παραλαμβάνει αὐτὸν_i ὁ διάβολος εἰς ὄρος
 again takes him:ACC the:NOM devil:NOM to mountain:ACC
 ὑψηλὸν λίαν καὶ δείκνυσιν αὐτῷ_i πάσας τὰς βασιλείας
 high:ACC very and shows to him:DAT all:ACC the:ACC kingdoms:ACC
 ‘the devil takes him again to a very high mountain and shows
 him all the kingdoms’
- f. B3 (*Evangelium secundum Matthaeum* 14,31)
 ἐπέλαβετο αὐτοῦ_i καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ_i
 he seized him:GEN and he speaks to him:DAT
 ‘he seized him and speaks to him’
- g. C1 (*Josephus Flavius, Bellum Iudaicum* 1.10.5)¹²
 καταλαβὼν οὖν Ἐζεκίαν_i τὸν ἀρχιληστήν (...)
 capturing:NOM thus Ezekiah:ACC the:ACC leader of the gangsters:ACC
 αὐτόν_i τε συλλαβὼν ἀποκτείνει
 him:ACC and seizing:NOM he kills
 ‘thus, capturing Ezekiah the leader of the gangsters (...) and
 seizing him, he kills him’
- h. C2 (*Evangelium secundum Marcum* 14,67)
 καὶ ἰδοῦσα τὸν Πέτρον_i θερμαινόμενον ἐμβλέψασα
 and seeing:NOM the:ACC Peter:ACC warming himself:ACC staring:NOM
 αὐτῷ_i λέγει
 at him:DAT she says
 ‘and seeing Peter warming himself, staring at him, she says’
- i. C3 (*Evangelium secundum Iohannem* 11,32)
 ἰδοῦσα αὐτὸν_i ἔπεσεν αὐτοῦ_i πρὸς τοὺς πόδας
 seeing:NOM him:ACC she fell his:GEN at the:ACC feet:ACC
 λέγουσα αὐτῷ_i
 telling:NOM him:DAT
 ‘seeing him, she fell at his feet, telling him’

The same texts that I considered above as examples of different varieties of Greek (with respect to the use of APCs and the unmarked linear order) show different degrees of acceptability of (pro)nominal ellipsis outside the syntactic position of subject. The data are presented in the table below; for each text, the upper row shows the number of instances of ellipsis (e) and the lower the number of instances of phonological realization of both components (PR).

T14

		A1	A2	A3	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	C3	total	% of PR
pl	e	5			12	4	1	2			24	25%
	PR		1	1	1	3			2		8	
hel 1 st book	e	10	15	6	11	2	1	1	1		47	19%
	PR	2	1	1	1	2	1		1	2	11	
ep 1 st book	e	3			17	1	7				28	33.3%
	PR	1	1	2	4	1	2	1		2	14	
aes W	e	34	13	16	18	8	6	4	1	1	47	14.4%
	PR	3	6	2	5	1					17	
alex β	e	11	5	8	6	1	1	1			33	55.4%
	PR	6	6	11	4	9	2		1	2	41	
mt	e	15	25	82	10	2	5		4	1	144	31.7%
	PR	3	16	3	16	25	4				67	
mk	e	13	17	26	11	3	4		1		75	58.6%
	PR	6	18	3	22	37	16		4		106	
lk	e	23	23	57	18	5	3	5	3	1	138	35.5%
	PR	5	15	3	18	22	12		1		76	
jh	e	4	6	10	14	4	34				72	55.5%
	PR	2	6	1	29	31	20		1		90	
jos	e		1	5	7	6	2				21	73.4%
	PR		2		22	21	12			1	58	

The resulting picture is rather puzzling. One might perceive a general trend in the texts with few or no coreferential APCs and with final verbal heads (Plato, Heliodorus, the ‘Life of Aesop’) to use ellipsis more than the texts with many coreferential APCs and with initial verbal heads (the Gospels, the ‘Life of Alexander’, ‘Joseph and Aseneth’). However, not only is the ‘Life of Alexander’ in the usual intermediate position, but some of the Gospels (Matthew and Luke) also show an unexpected frequency of ellipses.

Not all the figures have the same relevance, however. Direct objects are ‘more obligatory’ than other arguments, because of the conceptual semantic necessity for verbal heads to have a closer link with their objects than with other arguments. This reason explains why it is possible to argue for the virtual necessity of a direct object in most cases (except for verbs displaying both transitive and intransitive uses), whereas it is not easy to establish whether a dummy component which is not a direct object is only elliptical or is really

missing. This means that the configurations implying a direct object (firstly A1, B1, C1 and then A2, B2, C2) are a more reliable test for the detection of pronominal ellipsis.

Thus, as a starting point, it is useful to consider the use or avoidance of elliptical objects with two transitive verbs. The data on the configuration that was labelled B1 above lead to a scale compatible with those considered in T13a and T13b. The percentages (and the ratios) of the instances in which both coreferential objects are realized are as follows:

T15

pl	hel 1 st book	ep 1 st book	aes W	alex β	lk	mt	mk	jh	jos
7.7%	8.3%	19%	23.8%	42.8%	52.9%	61.5%	66.6%	67.4%	75.9%
(1/13)	(1/12)	(4/21)	(5/21)	(3/7)	(18/34)	(16/26)	(22/33)	(29/43)	(22/29)

The picture is slightly different when also participles are considered. In fact, the corresponding data on the configuration A1 show that all the texts have a preference for elliptical coreferential objects. Nevertheless, the phonological realization of both objects is slightly more widely attested for at least some of the texts displaying coreferential APCs and initial verbal heads ('Joseph and Aseneth' does not present any instance of coreferential objects between a participle and a verb).

T16

pl	hel 1 st book	ep 1 st book	aes W	alex β	lk	mt	mk	jh	jos
0%	8.8%	16.6%	18.1%	19.2%	25%	31.5%	35.3%	40%	–
(0/5)	(3/34)	(3/18)	(2/11)	(5/26)	(1/4)	(6/19)	(6/17)	(2/5)	(0/0)

It is not difficult to argue for ellipsis when direct (= necessary) objects are considered, hence the reliable data in T15 and T16. But these tables also show that elliptical objects were nevertheless possible in all these texts. The different rates in T15 for those that more and more look like distinct varieties of the Greek language seem to point to a trend which cannot be mere chance, even despite the disregard of other interfering factors (pragmatic need for repetition, focusing) which have not been taken into account.

The opposite situation occurs with coreferential arguments different from objects or with adjuncts, in the configurations A3, B3, C3. Both adjuncts and optional arguments have no conceptual necessity, making it impossible to use an objective criterion to determine whether they are missing altogether or are an instance of ellipsis. Thus, I counted only the number of predicates with coreferential arguments/adjuncts that are phonologically realized within each VP. The resulting scale does not overlap with the one in T15, but it shows a preference for ‘repetition’ of coreferential components (= avoidance of ellipsis) in the same texts that show ‘repetition’ of coreferential objects.

T17

	pl	hel 1 st book	aes W	mt	jos	ep 1 st book	alex β	lk	mk	jh
A3	1	1	2	3		2	11	3	3	1
B3		1		4	12	9	2	12	16	20
C3		2	2			2				
total	1	4	4	7	12	13	13	15	19	21

Turning now to structures where coreferentiality holds between direct objects and other components, a caveat is in order. Only for objects is it possible to argue for an instance of ellipsis. When the missing element is another internal argument/adjunct, the chances for real ellipsis depend on the degree of optionality. However, this is not a reliable criterion. In the table T18 below, I consider only the instances where a transitive verb occurs without any overt object and a coordinated intransitive verb occurs with a phonologically realized argument/adjunct coreferential with the null object of the transitive verb. Differently from T14, I disregard those instances where only optional arguments/adjuncts can be considered elliptical, listing their number after the diacritic ‘-’. Moreover, I signal those instances where both verbs have dummy arguments (the necessary referential information is available from the context of the discourse): I list these figures after the diacritic ‘+’.

T18

		A2	B2	C2	real total	% of PR
pl	E		3 -1		3	66.6%
	PR	1	3	2	6	
ep 1 st book	E		1		1	66.6%
	PR	1	1		2	
hel 1 st book	E	6 +1 -8	1 -1		8	38.5%
	PR	1	2	2	5	
aes W	E	1 +4 -8	3 -5	+1	9	43.7%
	PR	6	1		7	
alex β	E	1 -4	-1		1	94%
	PR	6	9	2	17	
mt	E	1 -24	1 -1	-1	2	93.5%
	PR	16	25		41	
mk	E	1 -16	2 -1		3	94.8%
	PR	18	37		55	
lk	E	3 +1 -19	2 -3		6	86%
	PR	15	22		37	
jh	E	-6	1 -3		1	96.4%
	PR	6	21		27	
jos	E	-1	1 -5		1	96%
	PR	2	21	1	24	

Thus, the puzzling trend detectable in T14 becomes clearer when finer details (T15, T16, T18) are considered. If one bears in mind that covert arguments (instances of double ellipsis listed after ‘+’) occur only in Heliodorus and in the ‘Life of Aesop’ (apart from one example in the Gospel of Luke), the claim for two different varieties of Greek appears to be confirmed.

5. Intermediate conclusions

It is not unlikely to cluster together all the three phenomena I have considered so far: coreferentiality between APCs and other phrases of the matrix clause, preference for the VO linear order, avoidance of pronominal ellipsis. My suggestion is to seek a single trigger for these three phenomena: namely, the so-called ‘head-parameter’. I do not attempt any theoretical speculation as to the precise nature of this alleged linguistic entity. Be it whatever it may

be, by the term ‘head-parameter’ I only refer to the linguistic mechanism that is responsible for the fact that pragmatically unmarked utterances (those that can be a suitable answer to a question about the whole of the sentential predication) consistently display a preference for either an OV- or a VO-linearization in a given linguistic system, provided that the data and the relevant syntactic and pragmatic factors are carefully considered. Indeed, the respective position of verbs and objects can be a good clue for this head-parameter (initial versus final heads) and this parameter might be related to parsing procedures and to the way phrasal boundaries are determined.¹³

Here, I try to provide an explanation of the possible connection of the three phenomena within the theoretical framework of generative linguistics. In particular, I refer to the proposal of Neeleman & Weerman (1999: chapter 2) which argues for different strategies of definition of phrasal boundaries in accordance to the head-parameter. Initial-head (VO) languages only need phonological information in order to establish where a phrase ends: in such languages, in fact, adjacency is respected and all the complements surface immediately after their head. On the other hand, final-head (OV) languages have to resort to syntactic information for the definition of phrasal boundaries because of the greater variability in word-order.¹⁴ The former is the more economic option, as phrasal boundaries are a matter relevant at the level of the so-called Phonological Form (the alleged interface between the conceptual and the sensory-motor apparatus). On the other hand, the latter option is a sort of marked one in that it necessarily implies memorization and delay of the interpretative task, until a proper head is detected and interpretation is thus made possible. The languages that have this ‘marked’ parametrization, however, have other advantages as for economy of production: they usually display a more flexible word order (as a consequence of the wider domains wherein heads can govern their selected complements) and allow ellipses.

If this view is accepted, a valid explanation can be obtained for the co-occurrence of several linguistic features. Thus, it could be argued that the Gospels (and ‘Joseph and Aseneth’, given its general dislike for subordination and, consequently, for APCs) present a topicalization strategy similar to the Romance ‘Clitic Left Dislocation’, coreferential APCs, VO linear order, and avoidance of (pro)nominal ellipses because the head-parameter is consistently set on the value ‘head initial’, with all the related consequences. On the other hand, according to this view, Plato, Epictetus, and Heliodorus present a topicalization strategy that does not require any resumption, tend to

avoid coreferential APCs, prefer the OV linear order, and resort to (pro)nominal ellipses because the head-parameter is consistently set on the value 'head final', with all the related consequences. As for the 'Life of Alexander' and the 'Life of Aesop', they present a sort of 'fluctuating' orientation, in that they act as one of the two groups of texts in some respects and as the other group in other respects, without showing any evident trend. It is precisely for these two texts that the problem of linguistic variation arises and will be addressed below.

6. Additional clues

I will consider two other linguistic features, namely the use of the so-called historical present and the use of determinative articles before a noun followed by a genitive determiner. The aim is to gain a further differentiation between the two varieties of Greek that have been detected so far. These 'additional clues' cannot be considered on par with the three features considered above which may all depend on the same mechanism. The features dealt with below are independent phenomena, without any relation to the setting of the head-parameter.

They are considered here for two reasons. Firstly, because they can lead to the same conclusion, namely the existence of two different varieties of Greek. Secondly, because they can be accounted for along the same historical. I have only considered linguistic structures so far, neglecting matters of historical development. What I will propose below is that the influence of a Semitic (Jewish) substrate could have been the cause of the distinction of a variety of Greek from the classical language.

6.1. Use of the present tense

In classical Greek, the use of the present tense in narrative contexts referring to the past (historical present) was a common device to convey emphasis. However, the way it is employed in some of the texts that have been compared so far is strikingly different from what can be found in works by classical authors.

The first point to make regards frequency. I examined the number of sentences displaying only one verb inflected in the present within a narrative context referring to the past, with the following results:

T19

pl	ep 1 st book	jos	lk	hel 1 st book	alex β	mt	mk	jh	aes W
0	0	0	7	18	40	63	67	135	140

I also examined two other texts exemplifying classical Greek narrative prose, Thucydides’ ‘De bello Peloponnesiaco’ (6th book) and Lysias’ ‘Contra Eratosthenem’: they show respectively only 14 and 7 sentences with a historical present. The scale that is obtained does not coincide with those in the previous paragraphs, even if one can grasp a tendency towards a greater use of the historical present in the texts that also display coreferential APCs, prevalent VO order and avoidance of ellipses. As for this issue, both of the anonymous historical biographies cluster with three of the Gospels, whereas ‘Joseph and Aseneth’ and the Gospel of Luke have a more limited use similar to Greek classical prose (Thucydides, Lysias, Heliodorus).

Considering the mere amount, however, is not enough. One feature puts some of these texts together, namely the fact that the historical present tends to be used with verbs of speech (*λέγειν, φάναι, ἀποκρίνεσθαι*). The table below shows the number of verbs and what percentage they are of the total occurrences of the historical present:

T20

pl	ep 1 st book	jos	hel 1 st book	alex β	mk	mt	jh	aes W	lk
0%	0%	0%	11.1%	25%	67.2%	79.4%	82.2%	91.4%	100%
(0/0)	(0/0)	(0/0)	(2/18)	(10/40)	(45/67)	(50/63)	(111/135)	(128/140)	(7/7)

The 6th book of Thucydides’ ‘De bello Peloponnesiaco’ does not present any instance of historical present with a verb of speech, while only one example can be found in Lysias’ speech (out of 7 sentences). The scale in T20 makes the one in T19 more comparable with the others drawn so far, in that all the Gospels belong to the same group and the anonymous biographies reveal their fluctuating character once more (with the ‘Life of Alexander’ in an intermediate position and the ‘Life of Aesop’ clearly deviating from the classical use).

What is typical of the Gospels and of the historical biographies in the sample, however, is the use of a historical present above all in clauses linked by a copulative conjunction to other clauses with a past tense. The sentences considered in T19 and T20 are all main clauses contextually linked to other main clauses, while the matter to be

addressed here is the syntactic link between clauses with a historical present and a past tense. Examples of these patterns are given below:

(13) a. *Evangelium secundum Matthaeum* 9,36-37

ιδὼν δὲ τοὺς ὄχλους ἐσπλαγχνίσθη περὶ αὐτῶν,
 seeing:NOM but the:ACC people:ACC he had mercy:AOR on them:GEN
 ὅτι ἦσαν ἐσκυλμένοι ὡσεὶ πρόβατα μὴ ἔχοντα
 because they were:IMPF scattered:NOM as sheep:NOM not having:NOM
 ποιμένα. Τότε λέγει τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ
 shepherd:ACC Then he says:PRES to the:DAT disciples:DAT of him:GEN
 ‘but seeing the people he had mercy on them, because they were
 scattered as sheep without shepherd. Then he says to his disciples...’

b. *Evangelium secundum Matthaeum* 14,31

εὐθέως δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐκτείνας τὴν χεῖρα
 suddenly but the:NOM Jesus:NOM holding out:NOM the:ACC hand:ACC
 ἐπέλαβετο αὐτοῦ καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ
 seized:AOR him:GEN and he says:PRES to him:DAT
 ‘but suddenly, holding out his hand, Jesus seized him and says to
 him’

In (13a), it is only the context that combines the first sentence with an aorist (*ἐσπλαγχνίσθη*) with the second displaying a present (*λέγει*): both clauses are independent sentences referring to the past, and only the adverb *τότε* expresses the contextual link. On the other hand, in (13b), the former clause with an aorist (*ἐπέλαβετο*) is syntactically linked by the conjunction *καὶ* to the latter clause with a present tense (*λέγει*), proving that these two main clauses are within the same sentence. The use exemplified in (13b) is more widely attested in those texts with a greater exploitation of historical present (above all of verbs of speech). The following table provides both the number of sentences with syntactic link (coordinating conjunction) between a present and a past tense and the specification of the pattern (present tense preceding or following the past tense):

T21

	ep 1 st book	pl	lk	jos	mt	hel 1 st book	jh	aes W	alex β	mk
number of sentences	0	1	2	3	16	17	30	42	43	55
present + past	0	0	0	0	4	8	8	3	10	19
past + present	0	1	2	3	12	9	22	39	33	36

As for the two other texts, Lysias displays only 3 instances (in 2 cases the present tense is before the past tense) and Thucydides 15 (7 instances of a present before a past tense).

The distinction between these two patterns (present + past or past + present) is relevant for two reasons. Firstly, what seems to be distinctive of the texts with great use of historical present is the frequency of sentences in which a past tense is linked to a present tense which follows. Secondly, a lexical preference for verbs of speech is detectable only for the pattern displaying a historical present after a past tense. The table below gives the number of sentences where the historical present is a verb of speech:

T22

	ep 1 st book	pl	lk	jos	mt	hel 1 st book	jh	aes W	alex β	mk
present + past	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	1/4	0/8	0/8	2/3	0/10	1/19
past + present	0/0	1/1	1/2	3/3	11/12	0/9	15/22	39/39	11/33	30/36

No verbs of speech are attested in Thucydides and Lysias in those sentences where a present and a past tense are coordinated in this sequence.

Even though the data are not so clear as for the other linguistic features considered so far, the two distinct varieties of the Greek language that have been hinted at seem to display a different use of the historical present. First of all, the texts with coreferential APCs, basic VO order, and avoidance of pronominal ellipsis show a wider use of the present tense to refer to the past.¹⁵ These texts often exploit a present tense in syntactic connection with a preceding past tense in the same sentence.¹⁶ In these texts, moreover, the historical present seems to be particularly frequent when a verb of speech is involved, both in independent and in coordinated clauses.¹⁷ These features acquire relevance especially because of the contrast with Greek classical prose (exemplified in the sample by an ancient author such as Plato, by a late imitator such as Heliodorus, and by the two texts – Thucydides and Lysias – that have been examined for the issue of the historical present).

What remains to be explained is the anomalous behaviour of ‘Joseph and Aseneth’ and of the Gospel of Luke, as they seem to match classical Greek (Plato, Heliodorus, Thucydides, Lysias) rather than the texts with which they cluster together in other respects. If

attention is paid to the assumption that this use of historical present is independent from the mechanism that determines coreferentiality within APCs, linear order, and (pro)nominal ellipsis, then it should not be surprising that some texts display the same trend only for what depends on the same trigger. The selection of historical present, moreover, can be seen as an ‘epiphenomenon’, something that can be affected by conscious stylistic choices in the periphery of the language. As for an author like Luke who tried to follow the tradition of classical historiography, the avoidance of the ‘vulgar’ use of the historical present (in a massive way, with lexical preference for verbs of speech) is not astonishing. As for a text like ‘Joseph and Aseneth’, on the other hand, with a sort of hampered use of the devices of the Greek language (e.g. the scarce use of hypotaxis), the lack of a rather specific linguistic tool can be understandable. Finally, if the lexical preference for verbs of speech is taken as a distinctive feature, the general picture might result more consistent: despite the scarcity of the historical present in Luke (only 7 independent clauses) and in ‘Joseph and Aseneth’ (only 3 clauses coordinated to preceding clauses with a past tense), all the instances of historical present in these two texts prototypically display a verb of speech.

It is possible to confirm the view that these two texts do not really deviate from their general trend if another linguistic feature is taken into account: the use of finite completive clauses with null complementizer after an eventive verb. This use is totally unattested in classical Greek, where a clause subordinated to an eventive verb can only be an infinitive (at most a finite verb could be introduced by a lexical complementizer). These are examples of both the classical and the vulgar use:

(14) a. *Evangelium secundum Lucam* 3,21-22

ἐγένετο δὲ (...) ἀνεφθῆναι τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ
 it happened:IND but to be opened:INF the:ACC heaven:ACC and
 καταβῆναι τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον
 to come down:INF the:ACC Spirit:ACC the:ACC Holy:ACC
 ‘but it happened (...) that heaven opened and the Holy Spirit
 came down’

b. *Evangelium secundum Lucam* 1,59

καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ ὀγδόῃ
 and it happened:IND in the:DAT day:DAT the:DAT eighth:DAT
 ἦλθον περιτεμεῖν τὸ παιδίον
 they came:IND to circumcise:INF the:ACC child:ACC
 ‘and it happened on the eighth day (that) they came to circum-
 cise the child’

In (14a) the subordinate clause displays an infinitive (*ἀνεπαχθῆ-
ναι*) and the subject is case-marked as accusative (*τὸν οὐρανόν*); in
(14b) the subordinate clause has a finite verb (*ἦλθον*) and no comple-
mentizer is exploited (in a sort of para-hypotaxis). The former use is
the only one attested in Greek classical prose, while the latter occurs
in some of the texts in the sample. The number of instances of finite
clauses without complementizer after an eventive verb is given in the
table below:

T23

pl	ep 1 st book	hel 1 st book	alex β	jh	aes W	mk	mt	jos	lk
0	0	0	0	0	1	2	5	5	27

Neither Thucydides nor Lysias display instances of this cons-
truction. The relevant point here is the lack of such subordinate
clauses in the texts that exemplify classical Greek, on the one hand,
and the use of such subordinate clauses in some of the texts grouped
together as instances of vulgar Greek, on the other hand. In spite of
their anomalous behaviour as for historical present, ‘Joseph and
Aseneth’ and the Gospel of Luke act here as the best representatives
of this linguistic use, together with the Gospel of Matthew.

These two different features (the historical present and finite
clauses after eventive verbs) have been considered together not only
because they support each other in grouping the texts in the sample,
but also because they can be accounted for by the same historical
explanation: namely, influence of Hebrew as a substrate. The socio-
historical plausibility of this hypothesis will be dealt with below in
section 7.1. What is relevant here is only the linguistic similarity
between these Greek constructions and analogous linguistic uses in
Hebrew.

It is not the massive use of historical present in independent
clauses that points to external influence; such a use was indeed a fre-
quent rhetorical device and its usage or avoidance may well be a mat-
ter of stylistic easiness or sobriety. However, two other facts look
rather unusual for standard Greek: the frequent use of historical pres-
ent in syntactic connection with a past tense and the lexical specifica-
tion of historical present for verbs of speech. Both facts, on the con-
trary, might have a straightforward explanation if contact with
Hebrew¹⁸ is taken into account.

As in all Semitic languages, verbs in ancient Hebrew tend to

express aspect more than tense. Each verb has two distinct ‘forms’, one for the perfective aspect (the so-called perfect) and one for the imperfective aspect (the so-called imperfect or future). What is typically attested in Hebrew (and in Phoenician, but not in the other Semitic languages) is a peculiar sequence of such tenses: imperfective forms are usually followed by perfective forms introduced by the conjunction *waw*, and perfective forms are analogously linked to following imperfective forms by *waw*. In particular, in narrative texts referring to past accomplished events, it is extremely common to find a perfective form at the beginning of the sentence followed by a series of imperfective forms, all introduced by the copulative conjunction *waw* (the so-called connective or conversive *waw*)¹⁹:

(15) *Reges II* 20,1

bayyâmÆm hâhflm hâlâh Hizqiyyâhÿ lâmÿth wayyâbo’
 in days those was sick:PERF Hezekiah unto death and came:IMPF
 ’flâw Y^eπa’yâhÿ ben-’Am:s hannâbÆ wayyo’mer ’flâw
 to him Isaiah son of Amoz the prophet and said:IMPF to him
 ‘in those days Hezekiah was sick unto death and Isaiah son of
 Amoz, the prophet, came to him and said to him...’

The construction looks like a blind mechanism, unsensitive to verbal aspect: both the imperfective forms introduced by *waw* in (15) (*wayyâbo’* and *wayyo’mer*) refer to accomplished and instantaneous past events. The essential requirement seems to be merely formal, namely the close connection between the conversive *waw* and the verbal form whose aspectual value is converted²⁰. If this condition is not met, verbal forms are used in accordance with their inherent aspectual semantics:

(16) *Samuel I* 3,18

wayyagged l· ©^emÿel ’eth - kol - had^evarÆm w^el·
 and revealed:IMPF to him Samuel OBJECT PREFIX all the words and not
 kihed mimmenÿ wayyo’mer
 hid:PERF from him and said:IMPF
 ‘and Samuel revealed him all the words and did not hide anything
 from him and said ...’

All the three verbs in (16) express accomplished past events: whereas the first (*wayyagged*) and the third (*wayyo’mer*) are imperfective forms introduced by *waw* (as the other verbs in the preceding passage), the second (*kihæd*), which is separated by the negative adverb (*l·*) from the conjunction *waw*, is a perfective form.

Such a use is so common that an imperfective form introduced by a conversive *waw* is also attested at the very beginning of a historical report. The Book of Numbers begins with such a form:

- (17) *Numeri* 1,1
 way^edabber JHWH 'el Mo^{te}h
 and said:IMPF the Lord to Moses
 'and the Lord said to Moses'

As for both the Gospels and the anonymous biographies in the sample, some kind of contact with the Jewish environment and with Hebrew is not implausible. The extension in the use of historical present in some Greek texts might be seen as a sort of calque on the Hebrew use of conversive *waw* with imperfective verbal forms in historical reports. In these Greek texts, not only is the historical present unattested with a negative element (in accordance with the formal requirement of the Hebrew construction), but verbs of speech are extremely frequent in this specific sequence of tenses, in accordance with a sort of lexical preference widely attested in Hebrew. In fact, the form *wayyo'mer* ('and he said': *waw* + imperfective of *'amar*) is so frequent that it often occurs also as first verb in the narration (without a preceding perfective form as in 17). The hypothesis of calque on a Hebrew construction might therefore be an explanation also for the lexical preference for verbs of speech inflected as historical present.

As for the other linguistic feature considered here (finite clause without complementizer after an eventive verb), the resemblance with an analogous common Hebrew expression is even more evident. Most sentences in Hebrew begin with an eventive expression (namely a conversive *waw* combined with the imperfective form of the verb *hayah* 'to be' – *way^eh^æ*) followed by a phrase expressing location or time and by a finite verb (perfective or imperfective):

- (18) a. *Genesis* 22,1
 way^eh^æ 'ahar had^evar^æEm ha'filleh w^eh^æ'Eloh^æEm
 niss^æh
 and it happened:IMPF after the words those and the Lord tempted:PERF
 'eth - 'Avr^æh^æm
 OBJECT PREFIX Abraham:ACC
 'and after those words it happened (that) the Lord tempted
 Abraham'

b. *Exodus* 2,11

way ^e hÆ				bayyãmÆm	hâhem	wayyigda
Моѣh						
and it happened:IMPF	in days	those	and grew:IMPF	Moses		
wayyese'	'el	'ehâw	wayyar ^e)	b ^e sivlothâm		
and went out:IMPF	towards	his brothers	and saw:IMPF	their pain		
'and it happened in those days (that) Moses grew up and went out towards his brothers and saw their pain'						

The use of *καὶ ἐγένετο* or of *ἐγένετο δὲ* followed by a finite verb in Greek appears to be a rendering of this Hebrew construction. What might seem awkward is the fact that this calque is most massively attested in the Gospel of Luke, where the use of the Hebrew-like historical present is rather limited instead. However, this fact might confirm the view that 'conscious' choices and constraints on the linguistic behaviour (e.g. Luke's tendency to imitate the style of classical Greek historians) can affect some peripheral aspects of a grammar but do not completely succeed in deleting the effects of subliminal influence.

6.2. *Construct state in Greek*

Analogous considerations hold for a peculiar use of the definite article that closely resembles the use of the article in the so-called construct state of Semitic languages (Hebrew included).²¹ In standard classical Greek, the definiteness of a noun is expressed by the definite article, regardless of the syntactic position of the noun. On the contrary, in Semitic languages, a definite article cannot precede a noun that is followed by another nominal or pronominal element that functions as its determiner. All the texts in my sample present many passages with a definite article before a noun which is followed by its determiner in the genitive case, according to the standard Greek use. Nevertheless, the same constraint that holds in Semitic languages seems to be occasionally respected in some of the Greek texts I surveyed.

I only considered countable common nouns in non-predicative position, so that their definiteness could be more easily elicited either from the context or by common sense. I examined the texts of my sample by means of the 'Thesaurus Linguae Graecae'²² and found several passages where the determined noun refers to a definite entity even if it is not preceded by a definite article. This is an example of

this phenomenon:²³

- (19) *Evangelium secundum Matthaeum* 26.6²⁴
ἐν οἰκίᾳ Σίμωνος τοῦ λεπροῦ
'in the house of Simon the leper'

What makes me suppose that an interference between Greek and a Semitic substrate might be implied here is the alternation between the respect of the Greek standard and the respect of the Semitic constraint in the same text. This alternation seems to be due to mere chance indeed and neither phonological, nor morphological, nor syntactic, nor pragmatic, nor stylistic factors are likely to provide an explanation.

Given the difficulty to accept the occurrence of distinct syntactic turns fulfilling the same function in the same linguistic system, effective optional alternations could tentatively be accounted for as the consequence of linguistic interference with a substrate.

A further support for such a view is in the spread of the preposition *εφνωπιον* in Greek. I used the electronic 'Thesaurus Linguae Graecae' again to make a calculation, finding 4138 attestations among all the Greek texts included in the 'Thesaurus'. Though *εφνωπιον* might seem a rather frequent item, it almost exclusively occurs in late Jewish or Christian authors.²⁵ Next, I checked the frequency of the item in some authors from both the classical and the late period (including the texts in my sample and some others). The list below presents these authors according to the increasing number of attestations and, subordinately, to their chronological antiquity:

(20) Thucydides	0
Xenophon	0
Lysias	0
Plato	0
Epictetus, <i>Dissertationes</i>	0
Arrianus, <i>Alexandri Anabasis</i>	0
<i>Evangelium secundum Matthaeum</i>	0
<i>Evangelium secundum Marcum</i>	0
Josephus Flavius	0
<i>Historia Alexandri</i>	0
Heliodorus, <i>Aethiopica</i>	0
<i>Evangelium secundum Iohannem</i>	1
<i>Vita Aesopi</i>	3
<i>Josephus et Aseneth</i>	10

<i>Evangelium secundum Lucam</i>	22
<i>Septuagint</i> (Exodus excluded)	562

In these attestations²⁶ ἐνώπιον is used as a preposition (meaning ‘in front of’) and followed by the genitive of either a pronoun or a definite noun (a proper name or a noun introduced by the definite article), whereas in the few attestations from texts of the archaic or classical period it is used as an adverb (meaning ‘ahead’). What appears relevant is the similarity to the Hebrew expression *b^epʾE* followed by the genitive of either a pronoun or a noun (literally ‘in the mouth (of someone)’, ‘in front (of someone)’). This is a construct state: the determined element is *pʾE* (the phonologically shortened form of *peh*) and the determiner is the following genitive form. The similarity between ἐνώπιον and *b^epʾE* involves both the semantic and the syntactic level. In fact, both prepositional locutions are made up of a preposition (ἐν in Greek and *b^e* in Hebrew, both meaning ‘in’) combined with an element referring to the ‘face’ as a bodily part (the stem *ʾw-* in Greek and the construct state of the noun *peh* in Hebrew). And, obviously, both prepositional locutions build up a construct state with their determiners.

It can hardly be mere chance that a Greek adverb closely resembling the structure and the meaning of a Hebrew preposition is used as a preposition precisely in those texts that display a Semitic substrate for (more or less plausible) independent reasons.

7. A plausible setting for this instance of variation

So far I have addressed the issue of the theoretical plausibility of the connection of some syntactic phenomena (pronominal resumption of topicalized items, coreferential APCs, preference for the VO linear order, avoidance of pronominal ellipsis) to each other and that of some other syntactic phenomena (use of the historical present and of a sort of construct state) to a Semitic linguistic substrate.

I distinguished the texts of my sample into three groups: those that accept all these phenomena; those that accept only some of these phenomena to an intermediate and fluctuating degree; those that avoid all these phenomena.

Two questions still deserve attention:

- (21) how did it come about that some ‘linguistic systems’ could share the same phonology and lexicon but present sharply different syn-

tactic features?

- (22) how was it possible for some other 'linguistic systems' to present a surprisingly odd syntactic behaviour with alternation in the (degree of) acceptance or avoidance of some uses?

7.1. *Classical versus Jewish Greek*

Before answering the question in (21), the very notion of 'linguistic system' (be it labelled I-language, grammar, text, authors' idiolect, or variety, according to the theoretical framework one prefers) has to be made as explicit as possible, with reference to the internal, individual, and intentional character of language. As Kayne (2000:3-9) expresses, no matter how many or how few the differences, two (internal, individual, intentional) grammars structured in a different way represent two distinct languages. Even if all the semantic and the phonological features (the lexicon in its perceptual-articulatory and conceptual components) of two languages were the same, these two languages should be nevertheless viewed as distinct languages, even if only a single difference were detected in the formal features of their lexicon and were reflected in a single syntactic use.

The 'miracle' of mutual comprehension has to be appraised and the social use of a language as means of communication cannot be underestimated, but the individual character of languages and grammars cannot be ignored.²⁷ This individual character depends above all on syntax. Semantics and phonology can be more easily affected by conscious processes of evaluation of the language and by the pressure of the social context, whereas syntax is the direct reflex of the mental organization of lexical items in a formal system.²⁸

Now, turning back to the question in (21), the relevant point is that the Greek linguistic systems I tried to identify present considerable differences with respect to syntax but substantially have the same lexicon and the same morphological rules. This fact could be accounted for as a consequence of a process of linguistic interference. The relevant point appears to be the same as the one advanced for the historical present and the construct state in section 6: namely, the degree of contact with the Jewish world. It must be preliminarily repeated that it is the cluster of all the linguistic uses considered so far that points to the assumption of distinct varieties. For instance, coreferential APCs are also attested in classical texts, without any suspicion of underlying Semitic influence. What deserves an explanation is the fact that more linguistic features that co-occur in some Greek texts seem to reflect uses of Hebrew.

As far as purely cultural factors are considered, the claim for a Jewish substrate is self-evident for the Gospels and for 'Joseph and Aseneth'.²⁹ Turning to the two anonymous historical biographies, one has to consider preliminarily that their texts underwent long processes of developments. In fact, both of them are attested in different versions, two for the 'Life of Aesop' and several ones for the 'Life of Alexander'.³⁰ For both of them, however, a close original connection with the Near-Eastern world is highly plausible. On the other hand, Plato and Heliodorus are alien to this environment. Both the literary taste and the language are typical of the classical tradition of Greek culture and prose-writing, so that no relevant Jewish contribution appears to be likely. The greater or smaller degree of Jewish interference could be witnessed by numerous details, but it is well beyond my purposes to describe the proper socio-historical setting for contact between Jews and Greeks in the late antiquity. My intention is simply to state that the kind of contact that may be inferred from linguistic evidence is not implausible in the light of extra-linguistic considerations.

Before turning to the specific linguistic issue, a wide-spread claim should be reconsidered. The common view about Greek texts that stem from a Jewish environment (biblical texts, some literary works, and papyri) is that their linguistic features are not specific to the Jewish environment, despite their patent cultural closeness to Judaism. Documentary papyri are usually compared to these texts and no relevant differences are detected.³¹ The conclusion is that this alleged 'Jewish Greek' was simply a form of colloquial Greek that was wide-spread in all the Near-East during the first centuries A.D.

However, it would be advisable to determine preliminarily which components of a language can be affected by linguistic interference. An appreciated model is the one proposed by Thomason & Kaufman (1988:37-45), who draw a distinction between the two processes of 'borrowing' and 'interference through shift' for several respects. The former is a rather long one, while the latter is rather sudden and may take as little as a generation. The former involves more superficial facts that can be acquired without altering the core of a language (such as the lexicon), while the latter involves more deep facts typically acquired within the so-called critical period (such as syntax). The former can also be triggered by a rather loose kind of contact and promoted by social factors such as prestige, while the latter takes place when mutual comprehension is necessarily needed because of close interaction and it is almost never determined by (more or less) conscious socio-linguistic evaluations.

The kind of linguistic contact between Jews and Greeks in areas such as Egypt and all the Greek-speaking Near-East in the Hellenistic and Imperial periods is likely to have been more similar to ‘interference through shift’ than to ‘borrowing’. It was a kind of close interaction that required a quick adaptation. What I argue for is that it should not be surprising that the alleged ‘Jewish Greek’ looks like ‘classical Greek’, if one considers more ‘macroscopic’ features that can be either easily and correctly acquired or socially evaluated and consequently rejected or appreciated. This has been the usual approach of most linguists who considered above all the lexicon or stylistic uses and did not feel the need for further distinctions between Jewish and classical Greek. Syntax, however, does not seem to fall within this scope.

Coming to the specific linguistic uses, not much can be said about participial clauses. Despite the large use of topicalization and the availability of participles in the verbal paradigm, no APCs are attested in Hebrew. This might be a tentative explanation for the surprising scarcity of APCs in a narrative text such as ‘Joseph and Aseneth’, where only 4 stereotypical APCs occur and parataxis is largely preferred to hypotaxis.

As for linear order, on the contrary, the situation is highly consistent. VSO is the prevalent linearization, and in particular VO is a very common pattern in Hebrew.³² There are, of course, exceptions such as fronted and topicalized subjects and objects, but the general trend is so evident that any Hebrew text might provide rich evidence. It is unnecessary to offer statistical figures about this point. Yet, it is highly plausible that Hebrew interference on the flexible syntactic structure of Greek might have favoured the VO order in one linguistic variety.

As for (pro)nominal gaps, the general impression is that the persistent (even cacophonous) repetition of the pronoun *αὐτός* is a feature that sets some Jewish Greek texts far apart from the classical Greek ones. Hebrew displays a clear preference for resumptive pronouns (to the extent that in relative clauses they are compulsory in Hebrew, whereas they are ungrammatical in classical Greek), also due to the fact that they are light clitic forms. Thus, interference with Hebrew might have played a crucial role in leading to such a use in some varieties of the Greek language. I tried to test this impression by surveying some biblical Hebrew texts: ‘Exodus’ (chapters 1-7), ‘Josua’ (chapters 1-7), ‘Ruth’ (all the four chapters), and ‘Iob’ (the sections in prose: chapters 1-2 and 42,7-17). The data for coreferential nominal elements (clitic pronouns or nouns) clearly show that

ellipses were altogether disadvantaged:

	Coreferentiality between elements in the following syntactic positions:									
	both genitive modifiers of NPs		genitive modifier of NP + argument of VP		both objects of VPs		direct object of VP + indirect arguments of VP		both indirect arguments of VPs	
	ellipsis	full forms	ellipsis	full forms	ellipsis	full forms	ellipsis	full forms	ellipsis	full forms
Exodus	0	17	0	14	3	16	1	16	0	11
Josua	0	20	0	29	1	15	0	8	0	19
Ruth	0	8	0	7	5	2	0	3	0	11
Iob	0	8	0	12	0	2	0	5	0	9

T24

Some variation can be argued for Hebrew as well, as for the case of ‘Ruth’ (where elliptical coreferential objects are more numerous than phonologically realized coreferential objects) or of fronted topicalized objects that are not resumed within the main VP (4 instances in ‘Exodus’, 5 in ‘Josua’, 2 in ‘Ruth’). However, the general trend against ellipses is strong enough to be considered a likely trigger in the interference process between Greek (general acceptance of ellipses) and Hebrew (general avoidance of ellipses).

Finally, considerations about the use of the historical present (and of finite clauses without overt complementizer after an eventive verb) and of the construct state in some Greek texts and in Hebrew have already been presented above.

In order to gain further evidence for the view that the Greek phenomena I considered might be explained as a result of contact with a Semitic substrate, I examined two other Greek texts: the book of ‘Exodus’ in the Septuagint version and the first book of the ‘Bellum Iudaicum’ by Josephus Flavius. Both these texts are Greek translations of a Semitic original.³³ However, the degree of their literary refinement and the readership to whom they are offered are completely different. The Septuagint clearly addresses the Jews of the Diaspora: its Greek is rich in lexical, syntactic, and stylistic Semitisms. On the contrary, Josephus Flavius sticks to the classical tradition of Greek historiography (Thucydides and Polybius are among his models): his

language closely imitates Attic traditional prose.

Thus, all the features ascribed to what I am envisaging as Jewish Greek (namely: use of coreferential APCs, preference of the VO order, avoidance of pronominal gaps, historical present, construct state) are widely attested in ‘Exodus’ and only marginally detectable in Josephus Flavius. The reason why I deem Josephus’ Semitisms ‘marginal’ is not related to the scarce amount of the attestations but rather to the fact that their appearance is limited to certain ‘deep’ phenomena. A glance at the data will explain this opposition between ‘shallow’ and ‘deep’ Semitisms.

As for APCs, the first book of the ‘Bellum Iudaicum’ contains 203 genitive absolute constructions, yet only 1 of them (= 0.4%) displays coreferentiality with another component of the main clause (namely with a direct object). On the other hand, of the 14 genitive absolute constructions found in the book of ‘Exodus’, 5 instances of coreferential APCs are attested (= 35.7% - 3 instances of coreferentiality with the nominative subject, 1 with the accusative object, 1 with a dative phrase).³⁴ As for the matter of their dislocation and informational status, in both texts genitive absolute constructions often occur before the main predicate to which they are related and seem to undergo topicalization; this is true for 65.5% (= 132/203) of Josephus’ genitive absolute constructions and for 50% (7/14) of those in ‘Exodus’. Moreover, whereas Josephus presents 6 attestations of the so-called accusative absolute (a literary construction which had its origin in Attic and spread between the 5th and the 4th centuries b.C.), the book of ‘Exodus’ presents 9 instances of nominative absolute.³⁵

As for linear order, both the texts display a preference for the VO order, above all with infinitives. However, whereas Josephus’ word-order is rather flexible, the preference for the VO-order in ‘Exodus’ is

	finite verbs				infinitives			
	<i>Bellum Iudaicum</i> 1 st book		<i>Exodus</i>		<i>Bellum Iudaicum</i> 1 st book		<i>Exodus</i>	
VO:linearizations								
SVDI	10	212/488	30	587/677		139/227		89/93
SVID	13	(43.4%)	21	(86.7%)		(61.2%)		(95.7%)
VSDI	3		52					
VSID	5		9					
VDI	44		280		29		32	
VID	36		93		24		8	
VDIS	2		2					

VIDS	3		3				
SIVD	16		2				
IVD	59		59		18		1
ISVD	15		4				
VDSI	4		15				
VISD	0		5				
IVDS	1		6				
IVSD	1		6				
VD					68		48
OV:linearizations							
DISV	6	276/488	1	90/677		88/227	4/93
IDSV	6	(56.5%)	0	(13.3%)		(38.8%)	(4.3%)
DIVS	10		0				
IDVS	6		0				
DIV	58		8		12		1
IDV	62		4		19		0
SDIV	15		0				
SIDV	19		0				
SDVI	19		1				
DVI	53		75		13		1
ISDV	10		0				
DSIV	6		0				
DSVI	4		0				
DVSI	0		1				
DVIS	2		0				
DV					44		2

so evident (almost categorical in the case of infinitives) that some linearizations with OV are not attested at all. The data are presented in the following table:³⁶

T25

As for (pro)nominal ellipsis, argumental null components are

		A1	A2	A3	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	C3	total	% of PR
<i>Bellum</i>	e	51	12	2	14	3	1	5	2	0	90	10.9%
	PR	1	2	1	1	1	0	1	2	2	11	
<i>Exodus</i>	e	8	4	37	22	4	2	0	0	0	77	56.5%
	PR	5	1	0	42	29	23	0	0	0	100	

attested in both texts. However, ‘Exodus’ displays a certain preference for the full realization of all coreferential components, while Josephus resorts more to ellipses.

T26³⁷

The same considerations about the different relevance of the various configurations advanced above should be taken into account here, too. If A3, B3 and C3 were neglected and if only those instances of A2, B2 and C3 with null object were considered, the ratios of phonological realization would be respectively 9% for the ‘Bellum Iudaicum’ and 68.7% for ‘Exodus’.

As for the use of historical present, Josephus surprisingly seems to exceed not only the book of ‘Exodus’ but also the rather limited use

	isolated historical present	past tense + historical present	historical present + past tense	verbs of speech
<i>Bellum Iudaicum</i>	209	58	96	2/363 (0.5%)
<i>Exodus</i>	18	3	4	15/25 (60%)

attested in classical Greek prose and verified in Thucydides and Lysias above. In this respect, the data point to a certain Semitic flavour in ‘Bellum Iudaicum’:

T27

However, whereas the lexical preference for verbs of speech is remarkable in ‘Exodus’, Josephus seems to avoid the monotonous repetition of *και; λεπει* (‘and he says’) or of similar expressions widely attested in the Gospels.

Finally, I only found one certain instance of construct state in ‘Bellum Iudaicum’, but numerous instances in ‘Exodus’.³⁸ I quote below Josephus Falvius’ instance and an example from ‘Exodus’:³⁹

(23) a. *Exodus* 14.30 and 18.8⁴⁰

ἐκ χειρὸς τῶν Αἰγυπτίων
‘from the hand of the Egyptians’

b. Josephus Flavius, *Bellum Iudaicum* 1.253⁴¹

ἡ πόλις ὅλη πλήθους τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς χώρας ἀναπίμπλαται
‘the whole city gets full of the multitude of those who (come) from the countryside’.

The occurrence of a sort of construct state is only one among other evident Semitisms that can be found in 'Exodus'. It is the case of eventive verbs followed by finite clauses without a complementizer. I found 12 instances in 'Exodus', while Josephus only uses infinitival clauses after such eventive verbs.

Such is also the case of relative clauses. In Josephus they do not present any difference from relative clauses in classical Greek, whereas in 'Exodus' there are 21 instances of anaphoric resumption of the relative element.⁴²

Another interesting phenomenon is the anaphoric resumption of topics. In 'Bellum Iudaicum' a topicalized element is assigned the case that is needed according to the syntactic articulation and simply dislocated at the beginning of the sentence, according to the Germanic-like topicalization strategy exemplified in (7b) above. In 'Exodus' most topicalized elements are not only dislocated to the left but also resumed by an anaphoric element,⁴³ according to the Romance-like topicalization strategy exemplified in (7a) above. Such a use is comparable to the resumption of the nominal element of fronted (topicalized) APCs and to the resumption of relative pronouns, on the assumption that topicalization and relativization are two kinds of the same syntactic process (A'-movement).

The presence of a Semitic substrate in these two texts is independently witnessed by their history. However, if the historical datum were disregarded for a while and the evaluation of the Semitic influence were determined only from linguistic features, the two texts would yield different conclusions. Semitisms in 'Exodus' are numerous, and they also concern such evident details that no doubt can arise about them. On the contrary, an author such as Josephus Flavius seems to be perfectly able to master 'shallow' linguistic uses: not resorting to coreferential genitive absolute constructions, making use of the flexible linearization of classical Greek, employing pronominal gaps, foregoing the use of the historical present with verbs of speech, producing infinitival clauses after an eventive verb. What reveals his Semitic substrate is a cluster of 'subtler', 'deeper' uses: he displays a certain preference for the fronting (probably topicalization) of APCs, the VO order especially with infinitives, the use of historical present in general, the insertion of parenthetical expression inside clauses. What makes such uses 'subtle' and 'deep' is the fact that they can hardly be determined by stylistic care or conscious attention. They seem to be related to the bulk of the linguistic competence acquired within the critical period of childhood, when the process of parameter setting is allegedly still active.

In conclusion, Josephus Flavius and the translator(s) of ‘Exodus’ appear to be relevant examples of the interference that I assumed between a Semitic substrate and Greek as an explanation for the linguistic features of the texts of my sample. What is interesting is not so much the (more or less) manifest character of the Semitic substrate, which is historically attested beyond any doubt, but rather the way the substrate influences abstract principles that pertain to the core of the linguistic competence.

7.2. *Greek intermediate varieties*

The question in (22) concerns two texts of my sample: the ‘Life of Alexander’ and the ‘Life of Aesop’. They seem to ‘swing’ between the classical and the Jewish variety of the Greek language. The table below provides a sketch of the behaviour of these texts with respect to the various phenomena. For each phenomenon, I report the data about the specific text in the most relevant of the tables above. I add

	alex β	aes W
% of coreferential APCs out of the total of APCs (T2)	Jewish 24%	classical? 15% ⁴⁴
% of VO out of the total of clauses with at least a verb and an object (T13a)	Jewish 59.2%	classical? 47.9%
% of phonological realization of both coreferential arguments/adjuncts out of the total of patterns with coreferential arguments/adjuncts (T14)	Jewish? 55.4%	classical 14.4%
% of verbs of speech out of the total of clauses with a historical present (T20)	classical 25%	Jewish 91.4%
% of the ‘past + present’ pattern out of the total of coordinated clauses with different tenses (T21)	Jewish 92.8%	Jewish 76.7%
number of attested construct states (19)	Jewish? 2	classical 0

(more or less reliable) labels pointing to the classical Greek-like or Jewish Greek-like behaviour of the text with respect to the average behaviour of the two varieties.

Two conclusions appear straightforward. Firstly, all the three features that are likely to depend on the same mechanism (the setting of the 'head-parameter') consistently present either a Jewish Greek-like (in the 'Life of Alexander') or a classical Greek-like (in the 'Life of Aesop') orientation. Secondly, assuming that it is easier for a Jewish Greek-like historical present than it is for a Jewish Greek-like construct state to occur in a text by chance (without any effective Semitic influence), the presence of two construct states in the 'Life of Alexander' gain relevance. The text with a setting of the 'head-parameter' somehow influenced by a Semitic substrate also presents another Semitism in an independent distinct behaviour, whereas the text without evident signs of the influence of a Semitic substrate does not. The reliability of the connection of these phenomena to each other and to the relevance of a Semitic substrate appears to be confirmed.

On the one hand, the fact that the language of these two texts presents at least a slight (Jewish Greek- or classical Greek-like) orientation reduces the role of variation inside the same linguistic system: idiolects can be different but seem to be consistent in their internal structure when 'finely grained' details are considered.⁴⁵ On the other hand, the slight degree of this (Jewish Greek- or classical Greek-like) orientation points to a really variable character of the language of these two texts.

Even if with greater awareness, we are again on the horns of a dilemma, precisely the same dilemma that has always opposed sociolinguistics against formal linguistics: the attention to the phenomenon of variation versus the attention to the homogeneity of languages, the hypothesis of variable rules versus the hypothesis of conflicting grammars.

A recent attempt to reconcile these two approaches is in Henry (2002). Evidence for intra-linguistic variation is undeniable, but the explanation of what can vary and how needs a theoretical foundation. Henry's proposal is to conceive the linguistic acquisition device as a frequency-sensitive mechanism that leads to the acquisition of a 'community grammar', with all its cohesive conceptual structures and its socially-determined flexibility. Thus, acquiring a 'community-grammar' is both a linguistic and a social task.

The 'Life of Alexander' and the 'Life of Aesop', with their intermediate ranking between historiography and 'Trivialliteratur', their

closeness to both traditional Greek cultural and the Near-Eastern (Jewish) world, and their variable linguistic register, might just be ancient examples of a ‘community grammar’.

Address of the Author

Via Chiabresa 33, 00145 Roma
< eisenach.1685@libero.it >

Notes

¹ The most ancient extant attestation of the label ‘absolute’ for a participial construction is in Albericus of Monte Cassino, a Benedictine scholar of the 11th century. For a survey of the views of ancient and mediaeval grammarians about APCs, see Scaglione (1970), Milani (2001), Maiocco (2002:§1.2).

² See Maiocco (2002: chapter 3).

³ Classen quotes 2 passages with an APC coreferential with an accusative object and 8 passages with an APC coreferential with a dative phrase. Cooper quotes 21 passages with an APC coreferential with a nominative subject, 22 passages with an APC coreferential with an accusative object, 13 passages with an APC coreferential with a dative phrase.

⁴ I chose a sample of texts in order to provide not only a diachronic outline of the linguistic features I wanted to examine but also a survey of their use in the different stylistic (tentatively, sociolinguistic) levels. These are the bibliographical data of the texts I selected, with an explanation of the abbreviations used in the tables:

- pl *Platonis Opera (Phaedon)*
ed. J. Burnet, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1935-6
- mt *Novum Testamentum Graece (Evangelium secundum Matthaeum)*
eds. E. & E. Nestle and B. & K. Aland, Stuttgart, Deutsche
Bibelgesellschaft, 1993 (27th edition)
- mk *Novum Testamentum Graece (Evangelium secundum Marcum)*
see above
- lk *Novum Testamentum Graece (Evangelium secundum Lucam)*
see above
- jh *Novum Testamentum Graece (Evangelium secundum Iohannem)*
see above
- ep Epictetus, *The discourses*
ed. W.A. Oldfather, London – New York, Heinemann – Putnam, 1926
- aes W *Aesopi Vita* (W version)
ed. B.E. Perry, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1952
- joseph *Joseph et Aséneth*
ed. M. Philonenko, Leiden, Brill, 1968
- hel Eliodoro, *Le etiopiche*,
ed. A. Colonna, Torino, UTET, 1987
- alex β *Der griechische Alexanderroman* (β version)
ed. L. Bergson, Stockholm, Almqvist & Wiksell, 1965

I was more interested in the late vulgar language than in the classical one. Thus,

most texts date back to the 1st - 2nd centuries A.D. . Moreover, these late texts are biographies, a genre that allowed the use of a relatively colloquial language. Epictetus' 'Diatribae' are something intermediate from a stylistic (sociolinguistic) viewpoint between classical and vulgar Greek. As counter-examples of a more classical type of Greek I chose a classical work dating back to the 4th century b.C. (Plato's 'Phaedon') and a late (probably dating back to the 4th century A.D.) attempt to reproduce the classical language (Heliodorus' 'Aethiopica'). For the purpose of this work, I disregarded the significant chronological gap between Plato and Heliodorus and took the late novelist as a representative example of classical Greek (despite the obvious artificial character of his language).

⁵ See T2.

⁶ See T2.

⁷ See T4 and T5. This link might be confirmed also by those passages where a conjunct nominative participle and an APC are coordinated by a copulative conjunction:

- (i) Epictetus, *Diatribae* 4.1.163
δυνάμενος διασωθῆναι καὶ τοῦ Κρίτωνος αὐτῷ λέγοντος ὅτι “ἔξελθε διὰ τὰ παιδιά” τί λέγει;
'standing a chance to be saved and Crito saying to him: "Escape for the sake of your children", what does he reply?';
- (ii) Heliodorus, *Aethiopica* 2.33
καὶ διὰ τοῦτο καιροῦ λαβόμενος καὶ ἀφορμῆς τῆς ἐκ ταῦτομάτου πως ἐνδοθείσης μακροτέρου πρὸς σε τοῦ διηγῆματος ἐδεήθη
'and therefore seizing the hour and a sudden chance being somehow given I asked you a longer account'.

Another support comes from those passages where an APC surfaces between topicalized nominative participles:

- (iii) *Vita Aesopi* W 42
ὁ Ξάνθος οὖν θέλων εὐλόγως δαμάσαι αὐτὸν, τοῦ Αἰσώπου διὰ τινα χρειαν εἰς τὸ ταμεῖον εἰσελθόντος, λαβὼν ἀπὸ τῆς χύτρας ἓνα πόδα ἔκρυψε
'Xantus, then, wanting to make him smart, Aesop having entered the warehouse because of a certain affair, taking one foot of the pot, hid it'.

Such coordinations are only possible between items of the same type. Obviously, the coordinating link cannot depend on the 'sameness' of the syntactic structure. It probably depends on the same pragmatic status (topic) of these fronted participial constructions.

⁸ See note 3.

⁹ Also 9,27 is the same; 9,28 displays only the resuming pronoun without any NP that is linked to the participle.

¹⁰ Also 13,45.47, 21,23.43, or 23.27 can be considered. The fronted topicalized dative CPtc without pronominal resumption in 4.16 is not an exception because it is in a quotation from the Greek Old Testament.

¹¹ Null pronouns were firstly studied in the subject position (Jaeggli 1982:chapter 4; Jaeggli & Safir 1989), but they were also detected in other positions (Cole 1987; Sigurdhsson 1993) and explained as either bound variables or real *pro*'s.

¹² This is the only instance that I have been able to find in all the texts of the sample. However, it is not a clear example because it associates the configuration C1 (coreferentiality between the objects of the two participles καταλαβὼν and συλλαβὼν) with the configuration A1 (coreferentiality between the objects of the participle συλλαβὼν and of the finite verb ἀποκτείνει).

¹³ Scepticism against an unrestricted notion of 'head-parameter' is expressed by Dryer (1992): he proposes a more abstract parameter to account for the corres-

ponding linearizations of categories (not of specific items). This is not against my proposal, since the 'head-parameter' I have in mind is a rather abstract mechanism.

Another sceptical position is the one of Gaeta & Luraghi (2001). They consider verbal gapping (i.e. the leaving out of identical verbs in coordinate clauses) in classical Greek and reject any connection with the basic word-order. In fact, despite the preference for the OV order, both rightward and leftward gapping are attested in classical Greek, as well as bi-directional gapping. Their view does not contradict my proposal of connecting word-order and the use or avoidance of coreferential APCs and ellipses in coordination. What they hold is that, regardless of the basic word-order of a language, rightward gapping is preferred because of general properties of human processing, which appears to prefer anaphoric to cataphoric processes. What I notice and I try to explain here is why texts with prevalence of the OV order resort to ellipses much more than texts with prevalence of the VO order.

¹⁴ According to Neeleman & Weerman, the relevant 'syntactic' phrasal boundary is the end of the domain m-commanded by the proper head. The definition of m-command they assume is: α m-commands β iff the first maximal projection that dominates α dominates β too.

¹⁵ See T19.

¹⁶ See T21.

¹⁷ See T20 and T22 respectively.

¹⁸ Obviously, not biblical Hebrew but colloquial Aramaic of the late Hellenistic and early Roman age was the Semitic language spoken in the Near East. Assuming that linguistic contact is contact between speakers, only Aramaic (not biblical Hebrew) might be a language with which Greek speakers/writers could enter in contact. Thus, only Aramaic should be considered here, but this is far beyond the limits of this work and of my competence. Nevertheless, I chose to take biblical Hebrew into consideration not only because of the close similarities between Aramaic and Hebrew but also because of the high and undoubted prestige of biblical Hebrew (and of its consequently possible role in linguistic interference).

¹⁹ See Kautzsch (1985:§49.106.107.111) and Joüon (1923:§117).

²⁰ According to Joüon (1923:§117), the verbal forms used after a *waw* and resembling imperfective forms do not have the same origin as true imperfective forms. However, this is only an etymological hypothesis (supported by facts such as the use of imperfective forms after the negative adverb *lam* in Arabic to express the negation of a perfective form) and does not exclude at all that converted and true imperfective forms could have synchronically been perceived as the same form.

²¹ For a theoretical background see Longobardi (1996). For the construct state in Hebrew see Kautzsch (1985:§89.128) and Joüon (1923:§92).

²² I looked for all the occurrences of a genitive form of the definite article (τοῦ, τῆς, τῶν) to individuate definite determiners and to check out whether the noun determined by one of these definite determiners was preceded by a definite article or not. Obviously, I only considered those contexts in which the referential meaning of the determined noun appeared to be definite. This method of enquiry leaves aside those passages where the definite determiner is either a proper name or a pronoun: in fact, a definite article is constrained by pragmatics before proper names and ungrammatical before pronouns. I only listed some of such passages that I happened to notice.

²³ These are all the relevant passages I could find:

- (i) *Evangelium secundum Matthaeum* 2.1
ἐν ἡμέραις Ἡρώδου τοῦ βασιλέως
'in the days of Herod the king'.

To be contrasted with *Evangelium secundum Matthaeum* 11.12: ἀπὸ δὲ τῶν ἡμερῶν Ἰωάννου τοῦ βαπτιστοῦ ('from the days of John the Baptist'); and with 24.37: αἱ ἡμέραι τοῦ Νῶε ('the days of Noe'). I also used the electronic 'Thesaurus Linguae Graecae' to calculate the spread of the non-definite phrase ἐν ἡμέραις ('in days'). Among 600 historical texts of all ages, the computer only found 49 attestations, none of which is followed by a definite determiner.

- (ii) *Evangelium secundum Matthaeum* 14.6
γενεσίοις δὲ γενομένοις τοῦ Ἡρώδου
'when Herod's birthday was kept'.
Literally: 'with the birthday celebrations of Herod being kept'.
- (iii) *Evangelium secundum Matthaeum* 26.64
ἐκ δεξιῶν τῆς δυνάμεως
'on the right hand of the power'.
- (iv) *Evangelium secundum Marcum* 6.23
ἕως ἡμίσεως τῆς βασιλείας μου
'unto the half of my kingdom'.
The contrast with passages such as Thucydides 4.8.3 (τὸ ἥμισυ τοῦ στρατοῦ 'the half of the army') can confirm the view that a deviation from the Greek standard is to be recognized in this expression of the evangelist Mark.
- (v) *Evangelium secundum Lucam* 1.69
ἐν οἴκῳ Δαυίδ
'in the house of David'.
- (vi) *Evangelium secundum Lucam* 1.70
διὰ στόματος τῶν ἁγίων (...) προφητῶν αὐτοῦ
'by the mouth of his holy (...) prophets'.
- (vii) *Evangelium secundum Lucam* 1.71
ἐκ χειρὸς πάντων τῶν μισούντων ἡμᾶς
'out of the hand of all those who hate us'.
It is not mere chance that the three passages quoted here as (v, vi, vii) all occur in the poetical interlude of the 'Benedictus' (*Evangelium secundum Lucam* 1,68-79), which is rich in reminiscences from the Holy Writings. Other probable construct states in this passage are: 1.74 ἐκ χειρὸς ἐχθρῶν ('out of the hand of enemies'); 1.76 ἐτοιμάσαι ὁδοὺς αὐτοῦ ('to prepare his ways'); 1.77 ἐν ἀφέσει ἁμαρτιῶν αὐτῶν ('by the remission of their sins' with a double construct state); 1.78 διὰ σπλάγχνα ἐλέους θεοῦ ἡμῶν ('through the tenderness of the mercy of our God' with three construct states). As for the non-definite phrase ἐκ χειρὸς ('out of hand'), the electronic 'Thesaurus Linguae Graecae' found 117 attestations among the 600 historical texts in the set. The meaning is always 'at hand', 'by near' (as for the Latin *commi-nus* <*cum-manus). Only in late authors (Constantinus VII Porphyrogenitus, Josephus Genesius, Mychael Glycas, Nicetas Choniates – altogether 19 passages out of 117) the phrase is followed by a definite determiner and means 'from the hand (of someone)'.
(viii) *Evangelium secundum Lucam* 3.4
ἐν βίβλῳ λόγων Ἡσαίου τοῦ προφήτου
'in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet'.
The fact that the book of the prophet Isaiah was one and only one is also confirmed by the following passage quoted as (ix).
(ix) *Evangelium secundum Lucam* 4.17
καὶ ἐπεδόθη αὐτῷ βιβλίον τοῦ προφήτου Ἡσαίου
'and there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah'.

- (x) *Evangelium secundum Lucam* 4.18
πνεῦμα κυρίου ἐπ' ἐμέω
'the spirit of the Lord is upon me'.
This is actually a quotation from the Septuagint text of the book of the prophet Isaiah (61.1).
- (xi) *Evangelium secundum Lucam* 4.29
ἕως ὀφρύος τοῦ ὄρους
'unto the brow of the hill'.
- (xii) *Evangelium secundum Lucam* 4.38
πενθερά δὲ τοῦ Σίμωνος ἦν συνεχομένη πυρετῶ μεγάλῳ
'the mother-in-law of Simon was taken with a great fever'.
- (xiii) *Evangelium secundum Lucam* 8.14
ὑπὸ μεριμνῶν καὶ πλούτου καὶ ἡδονῶν τοῦ βίου
'with cares and riches and pleasures of this life'.
- (xiv) *Evangelium secundum Lucam* 22.69
ἐκ δεξιῶν τῆς δυνάμεως τοῦ θεοῦ
'at the right hand of the power of God'.
- (xv) *Evangelium secundum Iohannem* 4.6
ἦν δὲ ἐκεῖ πηγή τοῦ Ἰακώβ
'there was the well of Jacob'.
- (xvi) *Evangelium secundum Iohannem* 5.3
ἐν ταύταις κατέκειτο πλῆθος τῶν ἀσθενούντων, τυφλῶν, χωλῶν, ξηρῶν
'in these lay the great multitude of the weak, the blind, the lame, the withered'.
- (xvii) *Joseph et Aseneth* 2.20
ἐκ δεξιῶν τῆς ἀλύης
'at the right hand of the court'.
- (xviii) *Joseph et Aseneth* 3.7 and 3.8
ἐξ ἀγροῦ τῆς κληρονομίας αὐτῶν (3.7)/ ἡμῶν (3.8)
'from the field of their/our inheritance'.
To be contrasted with *Joseph et Aseneth*, 4.3 and 20.5 ἐκ τοῦ ἀγροῦ τῆς κληρονομίας αὐτῶν ('from the field of their inheritance'); 12.1 τὰ δὲ δώματα τῆς κληρονομίας σου ('the houses of your inheritance'); 16.2 εἰς τὸν ἀγρὸν τῆς κληρονομίας μου ('to the field of my inheritance'); 24.14 and 26.12 εἰς τὸν ἀγρὸν τῆς κληρονομίας ἡμῶν ('to the field of our inheritance').
- (xix) *Joseph et Aseneth* 5.2
ἀπὸ προσώπου τοῦ πατρὸς
'from the presence (literally 'the face') of the father'.
- (xx) *Joseph et Aseneth* 12.8
ἐκ χειρὸς τοῦ ἐχθροῦ
'out of the hand of the enemy'.
To be contrasted with *Joseph et Aseneth*, 12.10: ἐκ τῶν χειρῶν αὐτοῦ ('out of his hand'); and with 28.33: ἐκ τῶν χειρῶν τῶν ἀδελφῶν ('out of the hands of the brothers').
- (xxi) *Joseph et Aseneth* 14.2
ὁ ἀστήρ οὗτος ἀγγελος καὶ κηρύξ ἐστι φωτὸς τῆς μεγάλης ἡμέρας
'this star is the messenger and the herald of the light of the great day'.
- (xxii) *Joseph et Aseneth* 15.4
καὶ χρισθήσῃ χρίσματι τῆς ἀφθαρσίας
'and you will be anointed with the ointment of immortality'.
- (xxiii) *Historia Alexandri* (recensio b) 1.44
πρὸς μάχην τῶν ἰππέων
'to the battle of the knights'.

(xxiv) *Historia Alexandri* (recensio b) 3.31

ἐπεθύμουν γὰρ ἤδη πραγμάτων τοῦ Ἀλεξάνδρου
'in fact they already desired the powers of Alexander'.

Another probable construct state in the *Historia Alexandri* is 1.38: πῶς γὰρ τῶν ἀθανάτων θεῶν ὀνόματα εἰς φθαρτὰ σώματα κατοικοῦσι; ('in fact, how can the names of the immortal gods settle down in mortal bodies?'). However, here the determiner precedes the determined noun (τῶν ἀθανάτων θεῶν ὀνόματα).

²⁴ I used the electronic 'Thesaurus Linguae Graecae' again, to calculate the spread of the non-definite phrase ἐν οἰκίᾳ ('in house'). Among 600 historical texts of all ages, the computer only found 6 attestations, none of which is followed by a definite determiner.

²⁵ The Septuagint alone with 562 occurrences constitutes 13.6% of all the attestations.

²⁶ Among the attestations in the Septuagint, I only checked the datum for the 13 occurrences in *Exodus*. I did not consider the other attestations because of their considerable amount.

²⁷ An interesting parallel for the approach of my work is in Acquaviva 2002, who deals with the high degree of variation within the Italian-speaking community. The systematic disagreement in acceptability judgements is taken as evidence that the varieties of Italian are distinct instantiations of Universal Grammar. An intriguing evidence for such views is in the 'Life of Aesop'. Some unique linguistic features are only to be found in three chapters (50a, 77a, 77b). I particularly refer to 9 coreferential APCs out of a total of 23 and the only two nominative absolute constructions in the whole text. As there are both philological and cultural proofs of the independence of these three chapters from the rest of the novel (see Maiocco 1998), it may be the case that these chapters witness not only a different philological and cultural tradition but also a different linguistic variety.

²⁸ An attempt to account for this specific character of syntax is in the 'Inertial Theory' recently proposed by Longobardi (2001). A confirmation might also come from the different degrees of accessibility of syntax and other linguistic domains in the process of acquisition. As Henry (1998:17) says:

(i) "Canadian speakers living in England who were in the process of acquiring a new dialect (...) seem to acquire different aspects of the target dialect in a specific order. For example, gross features of vocabulary are more salient and may be adopted early. Phonological contrasts of simple nature may be acquired fairly quickly; more complex phonological structures cause more difficulty and may never be fully acquired. In general, however, core syntax contrasts of the type we are now arguing as parametric would be acquired last, if they are acquired at all."

The data are said to be taken from Chambers (1995) but no reference to this work is available in the bibliography.

²⁹ Any attempt to summarize the complex historical genesis of the Gospels is outside the scope of this work. As for the other text, its editor (M. Philonenko, *Joseph and Aseneth*, Leiden, Brill, 1968) points to the Jewish environment of the Egyptian countryside of the 2nd century A.D. A different proposal is now to be found in R. S. Kraemer (*When Aseneth met Joseph*, New York - Oxford, Oxford Un. Press, 1998), who is uncertain between a Christian and a Jewish origin and who thinks of a later age (3rd - 4th cent. A.D.).

³⁰ A historical outline of these works can be respectively found in F. Ferrari (ed.), *Romanzo di Esopo*, Milano, BUR, 1997 and in R. Merkelbach, *Die Quellen der griechischen Alexanderroman*, München, Beck, 1977.

³¹ This is the way the history of the Greek language is dealt with both in trad-

itional studies (Thumb 1901) and in modern approaches (Rydbeck 1967), just to name a couple of famous essays.

³² See Kautzsch (1985:§142f) and Joüon (1923:§155k).

³³ The so-called Aristeas' 'Ad Philocratem epistula' provides the legendary details about the translation of the Hebrew holy writings into Greek by seventy scholars. As for the 'Bellum Iudaicum', it is Flavius Josephus himself to declare (praefatio 1): *προυθέμην ἐγὼ τοῖς κατὰ τὴν Ῥωμαίων ἡγεμονίαν, Ἑλλάδι γλώσση μεταβαλὼν ἅ τοῖς ἄνω βαρβάρους τῆ πατρίῳ συντάξας ἀνέπεμψα πρότερον, ἀφηγήσασθαι* ('I decided to make a narration for those who are under Roman government, translating into the Greek language what I had written and published for the foreigners of the Near-East in the native language').

³⁴ I disregarded the problematic instance of a plural genitive participle referring to a singular preceding noun attested in both authors (*Bellum Iudaicum* 1.2.3 *ἐξεκρούσθη γε μὴν ὑπὸ τοῦ δήμου ταχέως δεδεγμένων ἤδη τὸν Ὑρκανόν* 'he was quickly rejected by the population [*singular*] already accepting [*plural*] Ircanus'; *Exodus* 32.17 *καὶ ἀκούσας Ἰησοῦς τῆς φωνῆς τοῦ λαοῦ κρᾶζόντων λέγει* 'and hearing the voice of the population [*singular*] screaming [*plural*], Josua says); it is probably an instance of 'concordatio ad sententiam' but it could also be viewed as an instance of postponed genitive absolute with a pro as nominal element in coreferentiality with a component of the matrix clause.

³⁵ Of the kind attested in some late vulgar texts. There also seems to be what looks like a gerund of mediaeval Greek (a non agreeing form etymologically related to the present participle, which displayed full agreement in case, gender and number instead): *Exodus* 22.4 *ἐὰν δὲ καταλημφθῆ καὶ εὐρεθῆ ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτοῦ τὸ κλέμμα (...)* ζῶντα ('if the stolen animal [*singular*] is taken and found in his hand alive [*plural*]').

³⁶ Abbreviations are as in (9) (S = subject; V = verb; D = direct object; I = other arguments or adjuncts). The figures refer to the number of attestations of each order. Blank cells are those of the orders that were disregarded (I considered neither finite clauses made up of only the verb and the direct object nor the position of the subject in infinitives).

³⁷ Abbreviations are the same as in T14.

³⁸ I detected these passages with the method of inquiry explained in the note 22.

³⁹ These are all the relevant passages I could find in the book of 'Exodus':

- (i) *Exodus* 3.9
καὶ νῦν ἰδοὺ κραυγὴ τῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ ἦκει πρὸς με
'and now, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to me'.
This passage could be contrasted with *Exodus* 6.5 (presenting the standard Greek use): *καὶ ἐγὼ εἰσήκουσα τῶν στεναγμῶν τῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ* 'and I have heard the groaning of the children of Israel'.
- (ii) *Exodus* 10.6
ἐν πάσῃ γῆ τῶν Αἰγύπτου
'in all the land of the Egyptians'.
- (iii) *Exodus* 10.15
ἐν πάσῃ γῆ Αἰγύπτου
'in all the land of Egypt'.
- (iv) *Exodus* 11.5
ἐν γῆ Αἰγύπτου
'in the land of Egypt'.
- (v) *Exodus* 12.19
ἐκ συναγωγῆς Ἰσραὴλ
'from the congregation of Israel'.
- (vi) *Exodus* 12.29

- ἀπὸ πρωτοτόκου Φαραώ τοῦ καθημένου ἐπὶ τοῦ θρόνου ἕως πρωτοτόκου τῆς αἰχμαλώτιδος (...) καὶ ἕως πρωτοτόκου παντὸς κτήνου
 'from the first-born of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the first-born of the captive (...) and all the first-born of the cattle'.
- (vii) *Exodus* 13.4 and 34.18
 ἐν μηνὶ τῶν νέων
 'in the month of the early produces'.
- (viii) *Exodus* 15.8
 καὶ διὰ πνεύματος τοῦ θυμοῦ σου
 'at the blast of your fury'.
- (ix) *Exodus* 16.9
 πάση συναγωγῇ υἱῶν Ἰσραήλ
 'to the whole congregation of the children of Israel'.
- (x) *Exodus* 18.5 and 18.8
 ἐκ χειρὸς Φαραώ
 'from the hand of Pharaoh'.
- (xi) *Exodus* 18.5
 ἐπ' ὄρους τοῦ θεοῦ
 'at the mountain of God'.
 To be contrasted with *Exodus* 24.13: εἰς τὸ ὄρος τοῦ θεοῦ 'into the mountain of God'.
- (xii) *Exodus* 19.1
 ἐκ γῆς Αἰγύπτου
 'out of the land of Egypt'.
- (xiii) *Exodus* 19.16
 φωνὴ τῆς σάλπιγγος ἤχει μέγα
 'the blast of the trumpet resounded aloud'.
 To be contrasted with *Exodus* 19.19: αἱ φωναὶ τῆς σάλπιγγος 'the blasts of the trumpet'.
- (xiv) *Exodus* 22.27
 καὶ ἄρχοντας τοῦ λαοῦ σου οὐ κακῶς ἐρεῖς
 'you will not offend the chiefs of your people'.
- (xv) *Exodus* 23.16
 καὶ ἐορτὴν θερισμοῦ πρωτογενημάτων ποιήσεις
 'you will celebrate the feast of the harvest of the early fruits'.
- (xvi) *Exodus* 23.19
 ἐν γάλακτι μητρὸς αὐτοῦ
 'in the milk of its mother'.
- (xvii) *Exodus* 27.13
 καὶ εὐρος τῆς αὐλῆς τὸ πρὸς νότον ἰστία πενήκοντα πήχεων
 'and the breadth of the court to the South will be hangings for fifty cubits'.
 The definite status of the determined noun is confirmed by the presence of a definite article before the attributive expression πρὸς νότον that refers to the noun itself. The passage can be contrasted with *Exodus* 27.12: τὸ δὲ εὐρος τῆς αὐλῆς τὸ κατὰ θάλασσαν ἰστία πενήκοντα πήχεων 'the breadth of the court to the West will be hangings of fifty cubits'.
- (xviii) *Exodus* 29.42
 εἰς γενεὰς ὑμῶν
 'throughout your generations' (literally 'throughout generations of you')
 To be contrasted with *Exodus* 30.10: εἰς τὰς γενεὰς αὐτῶν 'throughout your generations' (literally 'throughout the generations of you').
- (xix) *Exodus* 29.42

ἐπὶ θύρας τῆς σκηνῆς τοῦ μαρτυρίου
'at the door of the tent of the meeting'.

This is not a 'perfect calque' of the Semitic use, because a definite article is allowed only before a noun that is not followed by any determiner (ἐπὶ θύρας σκηνῆς τοῦ μαρτυρίου would have been a perfect calque).

(xx) *Exodus* 34.25

οὐ σφάζεις ἐπὶ ζύμη αἶμα θυσιμάτων μου
'you will not offer the blood of my sacrifices with leaven'.

(xxi) *Exodus* 34.25

οὐ κοιμηθήσεται εἰς τὸ πρωὶ θύματα τῆς ἑορτῆς τοῦ πάσχα
'the sacrifices of the feast of the Passover will not be left until the morning'.

(xxii) *Exodus* 35.30 and 37.20

ἐκ φυλῆς Ἰούδα
'of the tribe of Judah'.

(xxiii) *Exodus* 35.34

ἐκ φυλῆς Δαν
'of the tribe of Dan'.

This and the preceding passages are to be contrasted with the following ones: *Exodus* 2.1 ἐκ τῆς φυλῆς Λεβὶ 'from the tribe of Levi'; *Exodus* 37.21 ἐκ τῆς φυλῆς Δαν 'from the tribe of Dan'.

⁴⁰ To be contrasted with *Exodus* 17.9: ἐν τῇ χειρὶ μου 'in my hand' (literally 'in the hand of me').

⁴¹ Other probable construct states in the 1st book of Josephus' *Bellum Iudaicum* are: 1.82 ἤρθη δ' εὐθὺς οἰμωγὴ τῶν θεασασμένων ('the cry of those who had seen arose at once'); 1.451 περὶ θανάτου τῶν υἱῶν ('about the death of the children'); 1.483 συνοικίας ἀδελφὴν τῆς ἰδίας γυναικός ('making the/a sister of his own wife get married'). However, οἰμωγὴ and θάνατος are not necessarily countable nouns, whereas the ἀδελφὴ in the third passage might also be a sister among others.

⁴² E.g. *Exodus* 4.17: καὶ τὴν ῥάβδον ταύτην (...) λήμψη (...) ἐν ἣ ποιήσεις ἐν αὐτῇ τὰ σημεῖα ('and you will take this rod, by which you will make the miracles by it'). The resuming element only surfaces in those instances in which the relative element bears either the accusative (only one instance in 6.5) or an oblique case (in all the other 20 instances), exactly as in the Hebrew original text.

⁴³ E.g. *Exodus* 12.44: καὶ πᾶν οἰκέτην ἢ ἀργυρόνητον περιτεμεῖς αὐτὸν ('and every slave or servant, you will circumcise him') – the same also occurs in 4.17, 15.15, 16.23, 22.19.

⁴⁴ This datum seems to be in contrast with what is reported in T2 for the 'Life of Aesop', where 25% (23/90) APCs are registered as coreferential. However, as pointed out in the note 27 above, 9 of these 23 coreferential APCs occur in two chapters (77a,77b) that are likely to stem from a different philological, cultural, and, consequently, linguistic tradition. In the rest of the novel, only 14 coreferential APCs are attested, amounting to 15%. For the 'microscopic' analysis I try to pursue here, the individual (internal, and intentional) character of a language is crucial. This is why I chose to disregard the effect of these 'alien' chapters that present a Jewish Greek-like behaviour with respect to the use of coreferential APCs.

⁴⁵ See as an example of what I mean by 'finely grained details' the discussion about the prevalent linear order in the 'Life of Alexander' and in the 'Life of Aesop'. The data in T7 look rather misleading. Only a closer inspection such as the one presented in T9 reveals a clear orientation.

Bibliographical References

- ACQUAVIVA, Paolo (2002), "La grammatica italiana: il lavoro comincia adesso", *Lingua e stile* 25.2, 249-271.
- CLASSEN, Johannes (1879), *Beobachtungen über den homerischen Sprachgebrauch*, Frankfurt a. M., Winter (reprint: Heidelberg-New York, G. Olms Verlag, 1977).
- COLE, Peter (1987), "Null Objects in Universal Grammar", *Linguistic Inquiry*, 18.4, 597-612.
- COOPER, Guy L. (1989), *Attic Greek prose Syntax*, vol. 1, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press.
- CORVER, Norbert & Henk VAN RIEMSDIJK (1994), "Introduction: approaches to and properties of scrambling", in N. Corver & H. van Riemsdijk (eds.), *Studies on Scrambling*, Berlin-New York, Mouton de Gruyter, 1-15.
- DRYER, Matthew S. (1992), "The Greenbergian word order correlations", *Language*, 68.1, 81-138.
- GAETA, Livio & Silvia LURAGHI (2001), "Gapping in Classical Greek prose", *Studies in Language*, 25.1, 89-113.
- HAIDER, Hubert (2000), "Scrambling - What's the state of the art?", in Powers, Susan M. & Cornelia Hamann (eds.), *The Acquisition of Scrambling and Cliticization*, Dordrecht-Boston-London, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 19-40.
- HENRY, Alison (1998), "Parameter setting within a socially realistic linguistics", *Language in Society*, 27, 1-21.
- HENRY, Alison (2002), "Variation and Syntactic Theory", in Chambers, Jack, Peter Trudgill & Natalie Schilling-Estes (eds.), *The Handbook of Language Variation and Change*, Malden, Blackwell Publishers, 267-282.
- HOLLAND, Gary B. (1986), "Nominal Sentence and the Origin of Absolute Constructions in Indo-European", *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung*, 109, 163-193.
- JAEGGLI, Osvaldo (1982), *Topics in Romance Syntax*, Dordrecht, Foris.
- JAEGGLI, Osvaldo & Kenneth J. SAFIR (1989), "The null subject parameter and parametric theory", in Jaeggli, Osvaldo & Kenneth J. Safir (eds.), *The Null Subject Parameter*, Dordrecht, Kluwer.
- JOÜON, Paul (1923), *Grammaire de l'hébreu biblique*, Rome, Institut Biblique Pontifical.
- KAUTZSCH, Emil (1985), *Hebrew Grammar*, Oxford, Clarendon Press (28th edition).
- KAYNE, Richard S. (2000), *Parameters and Universals*, New York, Oxford

University Press.

- LI, Charles N. & Sandra A. THOMPSON (1976), "Subject and Topic: a new typology of language", in Li, Charles N. (ed.), *Subject and Topic*, New York, Academic Press, 457-489.
- LONGOBARDI, Giuseppe (1996), *The syntax of N-raising: a minimalist theory*, OTS Working Papers, month of March.
- LONGOBARDI, Giuseppe (2001), "Formal Syntax, Diachronic Minimalism and Etymology: The History of French *chez*", *Linguistic Inquiry*, 32.2, 275-302.
- MAIOCCO, Marco (1998), *Ricerche sulla stratificazione nel romanzo di Esopo*, manuscript.
- MAIOCCO, Marco (2002), *The syntax of Indo-European Absolute Participial Constructions*, doctoral dissertation, Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa.
- MILANI, Celestina (2001), "Verso una definizione di *ablativus absolutus*", in Orioles, Vincenzo (ed.), *Dal 'paradigma' alla parola. Riflessioni sul metalinguaggio della lingua*. Atti del Convegno Udine-Gorizia, 10-11 febbraio 1999, Roma, Il Calamo, 373-389.
- NEELEMAN, Ad & Fred WEERMAN (1999), *Flexible Syntax. A Theory of Case and Arguments*, Dordrecht, Kluwer.
- RAMAT, Paolo (1991), "I costrutti assoluti nelle lingue indoeuropee", *Studia linguistica amico et magistro oblata - Scritti di amici e allievi dedicati alla memoria di E. Evangelisti*, Milano, Unicopoli, 341-364.
- RIZZI, Luigi (1997), "The fine structure of the left periphery", in Haegeman, Liliane (ed.), *Elements of grammar*, Dordrecht, Kluwer, 281-337.
- RIZZI, Luigi (2000), *Comparative syntax and language acquisition*, London, Routledge.
- RYDBECK, Lars (1967), *Fachprosa vermeintliche Volkssprache und Neues Testament*, Uppsala.
- SCAGLIONE, Aldo (1970), "Ars grammatica", *Janua Linguistarum*, 77, 131-139.
- SIGURDHSSON, Halldór Á. (1993), "Argument-drop in Old Icelandic", *Lingua* 89.2/3, 247-280.
- THOMASON, Sarah G. & Terrence KAUFMAN (1988), *Language Contact, Creolization, and Genetic Linguistics*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- THUMB, Albert (1901), *Die griechische Sprache im Zeitalter des Hellenismus*, Strassburg.