

We tend to think of Latin sentences in the same way De Saussure thought of language as a whole: “un système où tout se tient”. Every element is supposed to have its place in the system. And while it may be true that the individual elements all have their own functions, it also has to be said that not all of them have the same status. In a simple sentence, the predicate and its arguments are obligatory constituents, whereas adverbials can be left out without the sentence becoming ungrammatical. In a more complex sentence, subject and object clauses are obligatory and adverbial clauses are non-obligatory.

Bodelot has given the book she has edited a title which is both provocative and vague. What elements of a sentence are outside the syntactic structures? It seems obvious that only non-obligatory elements can be outside, but it is unclear if all of them should be considered “éléments asyntaxiques”, and if not, which ones should. The different contributors to the volume have different views on the subject, and Bodelot is right in pointing out that a certain degree of vagueness cannot be avoided. In her introduction, she gives three pertinent examples (p. 20):

(1) *Nausea iamne plane abiit?* (Cic. *Att.* 14. 10. 2)

‘Is your sea-sickness gone completely?’

(2) *Amicos domini, eos habeat sibi amicos.* (Cato *agr.* 5. 3)

‘His master’s friends, he should consider them his own friends.’

(3) *Mercator Siculus, quoi erant gemini filii,  
ei surrupto altero mors optigit.* (Plaut. *Men.* 1-2)

‘A merchant from Sicily who had twin sons, when one of them was kidnapped, death came upon him.’