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The locative alternation with intransitive verbs in Latin

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Abstract: The locative alternation with intransitive verbs, which is quite productive in English, is also shown to be attested in Latin. In the theme/figure subject variant, the location surfaces as an oblique complement: e.g. *oculis micat acribus ignis* (Verg. *Aen.* 12.102) and *Et resonet tota planctus in Aemilia* (Mart. 6.85.6). In contrast, in the location/ground subject variant, the theme is typically expressed via a nominal phrase in the ablative case (and less frequently in the genitive case): e.g. *et crebris micat ignibus aether* (Verg. *Aen.* 1.90) and *resonat magnis plangoribus aether* (Verg. *Aen.* 4.668). The two variants are shown to involve a different syntactico-semantic construal, with a different pragmatics as well. The meaning of the location subject variant is shown to go beyond the well-known “holistic effect” (i.e. its subject is “fully affected”): this variant entails theme and event abundance and so-called “dynamic texture”, whereby the events described by the verb happen simultaneously and repetitively throughout all parts of a space. Finally, we also provide a sketch of our syntactic approach to the event structure of some relevant verbs that enter into the intransitive locative alternation in Latin.

Keywords: argument structure alternation; event structure; intransitive verbs; Latin; locative alternation

1 Introduction: the intransitive locative alternation

The locative alternation with intransitive verbs, which is known as the “swarm alternation” in English (see [1a], [1b]), shows two variants where the location phrase (e.g. *the garden*) appears in alternating syntactic positions: oblique complement in (1a) and subject in (1b). The variant in (1a) is sometimes referred to as the theme/

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figure subject variant (aka “variant A” in Fried [2005]), whereas the variant in (1b) is referred to as the location/ground subject variant (aka “variant B” in Fried [2005]). Dowty (2000, 2001), in turn, calls the variant in (1a) as “A(gent)-subject form” and the variant in (1b) as “L(ocation)-subject form”. Compared to Dowty’s “A(gent)-subject form”, Fried’s (2005) more neutral term “variant A” can be useful in light of the fact that the subject in the variant in (1a) can be an agent but is a non-agentive theme-like entity in (1c). The examples in (1c) and (1d) are taken from Salkoff (1983: 322), *apud* Fried (2005: 495; ex. [11]). See Salkoff (1983) and Dowty (2001) for more discussion of this alternation in metaphorical contexts such as the one involved in (1c) and (1d).

- (1) a. *Bees are swarming in the garden.*
 b. *The garden is swarming with bees.*
 c. *Strange hypotheses swarmed in Max’s head.*
 d. *Max’s head swarmed with strange hypotheses.*

The *swarm* alternation is a linguistic phenomenon that can be found in many languages. For example, this alternation has been described for Dutch (Hoeksema 2008; Mulder 1992; i.a.), English (Dowty 2000, 2001; Levin 1993; Salkoff 1983; i.a.), French (Boons et al. 1976; Carlier et al. 2013; Haspelmath and Michaelis 2008; i.a.), German (Haspelmath and Michaelis 2008; Hole 2022; i.a.), Hebrew (Halevy 2013), Italian (Gómez-Vázquez and Mateu 2025; i.a.), Spanish (Di Tullio 2001; Gómez-Vázquez and Mateu 2025; Mayoral-Hernández 2010; i.a.), Catalan (Gómez-Vázquez and Mateu 2025), and Czech (Fried 2005, i.a.), among other languages. In contrast, as noted by Hoeksema (2008), this alternation is not found in languages such as Hindi and Bangla.

The verb usually belongs to semantic fields such as the following ones: physical movement (e.g. *crawl, flow, rumble, swarm*); sound (e.g. *buzz, echo, resonate, resound*); light emission (e.g. *blaze, flash, glow, shine*); abundance (e.g. *abound, teem, be rich/rife/rampant [with]*); smell (e.g. *reek, smell, be fragrant*), among others (see Dowty [2000, 2001]; cf. Levin [1993: 53–54]). Besides the examples in (1a), (1b), see also the ones from (2) to (5), drawn from Dowty’s (2000, 2001) works. As can be shown from these examples, the *swarm*-class alternations always involve the same two entities. What changes is the *perspective* from which their mutual relationship is presented (see Fried [2005] for a cognitive approach). Furthermore, it should be noted that not every language allows the same verb classes to participate in the alternation: for example, Czech verbs of abundance cannot enter the alternation (Fried 2005: 489).

- (2) a. *Music resounded in the hall.*
 b. *The hall resounded with music.*
- (3) a. *Fireflies glowed in the field.*
 b. *The field glowed with fireflies.*

- (4) a. *Fish abound in the pond.*
b. *The pond abounds with fish.*
- (5) a. *Garlic reeked on his breath.*
b. *His breath reeked with garlic.*

As shown in the next section, Latin has a locative alternation with intransitive verbs similar to the ones in (2), (3), and (4) but, like Spanish (Gómez-Vázquez and Mateu 2025), appears to lack this alternation with verbs of smell such as (5). It should be clear that the main goal of the present paper is to show that the locative alternation with intransitive verbs is also attested in Latin. We are not aware of any other work that specifically addresses this alternation in this classical language. For reasons of space, a detailed study of the productivity of this alternation in Latin is left for future research.

In this paper, we show that Latin provides evidence for Dowty's (2000, 2001) proposal that each variant of the intransitive locative alternation has its own meaning. The organization of the present article is as follows: in Section 2 we deal with the locative alternation with intransitive verbs in Latin from a descriptive perspective, which is heavily based on Dowty's insights. Section 3 offers a brief sketch of a non-derivational syntactic account of this argument structure alternation in Latin by using Ramchand's (2008, 2014) formal approach to event structure. Finally, Section 4 contains some concluding remarks.

2 Some remarks on the locative alternation with intransitive verbs in Latin: a Dowtyian descriptive perspective

In Latin, as in many languages such as the ones mentioned in Section 1, the locative alternation with intransitive verbs (e.g. see [6a], [6b]) can be put in correspondence with the alternation with transitive verbs (e.g. see [7a], [7b]).¹ As for the Latin language, there are some works that have already dealt with the transitive locative

¹ According to Levin (1993: 50), in English the transitive “*spray/load*-alternation” and the intransitive “*swarm*-alternation” can be viewed as a single alternation if intransitive *swarm*-verbs are analyzed as unaccusative verbs, i.e. if the subject of these intransitive verbs is seen as playing the role that the object plays in the transitive form of the alternation. But see Gómez-Vázquez and Mateu (2025) for a more complex picture when dealing with Romance languages.

alternation (e.g. see Acedo-Matellán 2010, 2016; Acedo-Matellán and Mateu 2013, 2015; Álvarez-Huerta 2025; de la Villa [this volume]; Lemaire 1983; Zanchi et al. [this volume]; i.a.). In contrast, the locative alternation with intransitive verbs has been far less studied, whereby we concentrate on this type of alternation in the present work.

- (6) a. *oculis micat acribus ignis* (Verg. *Aen.* 12.102)
 ‘a fire flashes in/from his fierce eyes’
 b. *et crebris micat ignibus aether* (Verg. *Aen.* 1.90)
 ‘and the sky flashes with frequent lightning’
- (7) a. *(medicamina) apteque lini per corpora possint* (Ov. *medic.* 81)
 ‘(the makeup) ... in order that this may be smeared easily over the body.’
 b. *omnia vipereo spicula felle linunt* (Ov. *Pont.* 1.2.16)
 ‘they smear all their arrowheads with viper venom.’

Two relevant features are shared by the variant B of the intransitive and transitive locative alternations: on the one hand, it is often said that the so-called “holistic effect” (Anderson 1971; Levin 1993; i.a.) is typically found in both the location subject variant (e.g. *aether* ‘the sky’ in [6b] is fully affected by the verbal predicate) and the location object variant (e.g. *omnia spicula* ‘all the arrowheads’ in [7b] are also completely affected by the action). In contrast, the location does not necessarily have to receive such an interpretation when this constituent is expressed, for example, in the ablative case (e.g. *oculis acribus* ‘in/from his fierce eyes’ in [6a]) or in a prepositional phrase (e.g. *per corpora* ‘through the bodies’ in [7a]). On the other hand, it is also worth pointing out that the so-called “background theme” (Haspelmath and Michaelis 2008) is marked with the ablative case in intransitive and transitive types of locative alternation: see *crebris ignibus* ‘with frequent lightning’ in (6b) and *vipereo felle* ‘with viper venom’ in (7b), respectively.

It should be noted that the existence of the holistic effect in the location/ground subject variant does not mean that full affectedness of the location cannot be expressed in the theme/figure subject variant. For example, this meaning can be obtained by including an explicit adjectival quantifier like *tota* ‘entire’ in (8a). However, the holistic effect is expected to be the default one in the location subject variant: e.g. the subject *aether* ‘the sky’ can be naturally interpreted as a fully affected location in (8b).

- (8) a. *Et resonet tota planctus in Aemilia*² (Mart. 6.85.6)
 ‘and let lamentation be loud over all Aemilia’ (transl. by C. A. Ker, Loeb)
- b. *lamentis gemituque et femineo ululatu tecta fremunt, resonat magnis
 plangoribus aether* (Verg. *Aen.* 4.667–668)
 ‘The palace rings with lamentation, with sobbing and women’s shrieks,
 and heaven echoes with loud wails’ (transl. by H. R. Fairclough, Loeb).

Following Dowty (2000), it is important to point out that the meaning of the location subject variant (e.g. [6b] and [8b]) can be claimed to go beyond the well-known holistic effect: examples like (6b) and (8b) entail theme and event abundance and what Dowty called “dynamic texture”, whereby the events described by the verb in the location subject variant happen simultaneously and repetitively throughout all parts of a space, i.e. *aether* ‘the sky’ in (6b) and (8b). The cluster of activities is so encompassing that it creates a “texture of movement” on the surface as a whole. The perception of a certain kind of movement-texture in the surface/space can be said to be more salient than the perception of the individuals (see Dowty [2000] for further discussion on this point).

Furthermore, when dealing with the English location subject variant in (1b) to (5b), Dowty (2000) claims that this form is typically more acceptable when the nature of verb and *with*-phrase permits the interpretation that an indefinite number of distinct events takes place involving the *with*-phrase denotation. This observation can also be claimed to hold for the location subject variant in Latin, where the *with*-phrase is expressed in the ablative case. Again, the location subject variant exemplified in (6b) and (8b) provides a nice instantiation of this descriptive remark made by Dowty: in these examples an indefinite number of distinct events

2 It is worth noting that the oblique complement in the theme/figure subject variant can take different forms (cf. [8a] with [ia] and [ib]), which can be claimed to be related to its adjunct status. Cf. also the bare ablative *oculis acribus* in (6a) with the prepositional variant in (ii). See below for more discussion on this point.

- (i) a. *eque sacra resonant examina quercu*. (Verg. *ec.* 7.13)
 ‘and from the hallowed oak swarm humming bees’ (transl. by H. R. Fairclough, Loeb)
- b. *ah quotiens vestras resonant mea verba sub umbras, scribitur et teneris Cynthia
 corticibus!* (Prop. 1.18.21–22)
 ‘Ah, how often my words echo beneath your shade, and Cynthia’s name is written on
 your delicate bark!’ (transl. by G. P. Goold, Loeb)
- (ii) *et ex oculis micat acrius ardor* (Lucr. 3.289)
 ‘heat flashes more keenly from his eyes’

takes place involving the denotation of the constituent in the ablative case (i.e. *crebris ignibus* ‘with frequent lightning’ in [6b] and *magnis plangoribus* ‘with loud wails’ in [8b]).

As for lexical aspect, Dowty (2000) shows that the English verbs that appear in the location subject variant of locative alternation can express either processes or states. The same can be exemplified for Latin: for example, (6b) and (8b) are aspectually interpreted as processes, whereas (9) and (10) express states.

- (9) *Metallis plumbi, ferri, aeris, argenti, auri tota ferme Hispania **scatet**, citerior et specularis lapidis, Baetica et minio.* (Plin. nat. 3.30)
 ‘Nearly the whole of Hispania is covered with mines of lead, iron, copper, silver and gold. Hither Hispania with muscovite mines also; Baetica abounds in cinnabar as well.’ (transl. by H. Rackham, Loeb)
- (10) *ita ad satietatem terra ferarum // nunc etiam **scatit** et trepido terrore repleta est // per nemora ac montes magnos silvasque profundas* (Lucr. 5.39–41)
 ‘so crammed full of wild beasts is the earth even now, so abundant in dreadful horror through woods and high mountains and deep forests’
 (transl. by M. R. Gale, OUP)

The stativity involved in the location subject variant in (9) and (10) can be compared with the eventive meaning of *scatere* ‘to bubble’ in the theme subject variant in (11) and (12):

- (11) *sic igitur per eum possunt erumpere fontem et **scatere** illa foras, (in stuppam) semina (quae cum...)* (Lucr. 6.895–896)
 ‘Just so, then, can those seeds of fire burst forth through that other fount, and bubble out.’ (transl. by W. Ellery Leonard, Dover).
- (12) *denique nota vagis silvestria templa tenebant nympharum, quibus e scibant umore fluenta lubrica proluvie larga lavere umida saxa, umida saxa, super viridi stillantia musco, et partim plano **scatere** atque erumpere campo.* (Lucr. 5.948–952)
 ‘Moreover, they would make camp in the wooded precincts of the nymphs, familiar to them in their wanderings, from which, they knew, streams of water came gliding out and bathed the wet rocks, the rocks wet with an abundant flood, dripping onto green moss, and in some places bubbled up and gushed forth from the level plain.’ (transl. by M. R. Gale, OUP)

Similarly, the verb *adfluere* ‘to (over)flow’ is interpreted as a state in the location subject variant in (13),³ in comparison with its more eventive meaning in the theme subject variant in (14):

- (13) *divitiis homines et honore et laude potentes*
adfluere... (Lucr. 6.12–13)
 ‘men were abounding in wealth and prevailing in honor and repute’ (transl. by M. Pope, CUP).
- (14) *cui ... cum domi otium atque divitiae, quae prima mortales putant, adfluerent*
 (Sall. *Catil.* 36.4)
 ‘to whom, though peace and riches, which mortals think the greatest blessings, would flow in abundance at home’

So far we have described some semantic differences between the two variants of the locative alternation with intransitive verbs. Next, we will comment on some relevant syntactic differences. As for the argumental versus adjunct status of the oblique complement in the *swarm* alternation, it is often assumed, in the literature on Germanic and Romance languages (e.g. see Mulder [1992] and Gómez-Vázquez and Mateu [2025], i.a.), that the Prepositional Phrase (PP) in the theme/figure subject variant is an adjunct (e.g. see [15a] and [16a]), whereas the PP in the location/ground subject variant is typically not optional (e.g. see [15b] and [16b]).

- (15) a. *Bees are swarming (in the garden).*
 b. *The garden is swarming *(with bees).*
- (16) a. *Els peixos de colors abunden (en aquest llac).* (Catalan)
 ‘Colored fish abound (in this lake)’
 b. *Aquest llac abunda *(en peixos de colors)*
 ‘This lake abounds *(with colored fish)’

The following Latin text in (17) is interesting since it presents the verb *abundare* ‘to abound’ as used in both variants (firstly, in the location subject form and, some verses below, in the theme subject form) and also shows that the locative complement is omitted in the second use, in line then with the pattern shown above for Catalan (cf. [16a]).

- (17) *Quod super est, umore novo mare flumina fontes*
semper abundare et latices manare perennis
nil opus est verbis: magnus decursus aquarum
undique declarat. Sed primum quicquid aquai
tollitur in summaque fit ut nil umor abundet, (Lucr. 5.261–265)

3 Another similar example of this predicate with a stative meaning is the adjectival-like one in (i):

(i) *Alter unguentis adfluens, calamistrata coma, ...* (Cic. *Sest.* 18)
 ‘Here is another one, dripping with unguents, with curled hair, ...’

‘Furthermore, there is no need of words to show that the sea, rivers, and springs are constantly being replenished with a perennial flow of water: the vast downrush of streams on every side is proof enough. But the foremost parts of the water are continually being removed, so that on balance there is no superabundance of liquid.’ (transl. by M. Ferguson Smith, Hackett).

It is also worth comparing the three examples in (18), which all involve an eventive use of the theme/figure subject variant with the verb *abundare*: the oblique complement is made explicit in (18a) with the prepositional phrase *de terris* ‘from the earth’ and in (18b) with the bare nominal phrase *rebus* ‘from objects’ in the ablative case. In contrast, this oblique complement is sometimes not expressed, as shown in (18c).

- (18) a. *propterea quia quæ de terris nunc quoque **abundant** herbarum genera ac fruges arbustaque laeta non tamen inter se possunt complexa creari* (Lucr. 5.920)
 ‘for the species of plants which even now spring abundantly from the earth, and the cereal crops and fruitful trees, cannot even so be crossed with each other’ (transl. by M. R. Gale, OUP)
- b. *Praetera omnis odor fumus vapor atque aliae res consimiles ideo diffusae rebus **abundant***, (Lucr. 4.90–91)
 ‘Again, the reason why smell, smoke, heat, and other similar things invariably issue from objects diffusedly ... (transl. by M. Ferguson Smith, Hackett)
- c. *quando aqua Albana **abundasset*** (Liv. 5.15.11)
 ‘when the Alban water had overflowed’ [sc. from the (Alban) lake]

The verb *abundare* in the stative location subject variant is typically used with an explicit oblique complement in the ablative case (e.g. *porco* ‘with pork’, etc., in [19a]) but can also be found without this complement in some special contexts, e.g. in the generic statement in (19b).

- (19) a. *villaque tota locuples est, **abundat** porco, haedo, agno, gallina, lacte, caseo, melle* (Cic. *Cato* 56)
 ‘his entire farmhouse has an air of plenty and abounds with pork, goat’s meat, lamb, poultry, milk, cheese, and honey.’
- b. *Quocirca et absentes adsunt et egentes **abundant** et imbecilli valent et, quod difficilius dictu est, mortui vivunt* (Cic. *Lael.* 23)

‘Wherefore friends, though absent, are at hand; though in need, yet abound; though weak, are strong; and – harder saying still – though dead, are yet alive.’ (transl. by W. Armistead Falconer, Loeb)

Finally, it is also worth pointing out that the background theme in the location subject variant is often expressed in the ablative case (e.g. see the so-called *ablativus copiae* in [19a] and [20a]) but, less frequently (see Pinkster [2015: 110–111], i.a.), can also be expressed in the genitive case (e.g. see [20b]).⁴

- (20) a. *qui velit (...) circumfluere omnibus copiis atque in omnium rerum abundantia vivere?* (Cic. Lael. 52)
 ‘who would wish to be surrounded by unlimited wealth and to abound in every material blessing’ (transl. by W. Armistead Falconer, Loeb)
- b. *quarum et abundemus rerum et quarum indigeamus* (Lucil. 308)
 ‘of which things we have too many and of which we have too few’

It is interesting to point out that the double possibility shown in the location subject variant with the oblique complement of the Latin verb *abundare* (i.e. see [19a] and [20b] for the oblique NP in the {ablative/genitive} case, respectively) can also be found in its Catalan counterpart: e.g. see (21), where the oblique complement selected by the verb *abundat* can take either the preposition *en* ‘in’ or *de* ‘of’.⁵

4 As noted by Gaffiot (1934: 313), unlike the verb *abundare*, whose attestations of a theme/figure subject variant are not infrequent (e.g. see [18]), the verb *circumfluere* ‘to flow around, to overflow’ is more rarely attested in this variant (e.g. see [i]).

- (i) *in poculis repletis, addito umore minimo, circumfluere quod supersit* (Plin. nat. 2.69.163)
 ‘that when cups are filled to the full, put never so little more liquor thereto, the overplus will run over all about’ (transl. <https://penelope.uchicago.edu/holland/pliny2.html>; last accessed 9 June 2026)

It should also be noted that the prefixed verb *circumfluere* is also found with a transitive use (see Mare [2018] and Álvarez-Huerta [2025] for a detailed discussion of complex verbs formed with the prefix *circum-*): e.g. cf. the transitive use in (ii) with the intransitive one in (20a). On the one hand, the location object *vos* in (ii) can be compared with the location subject *PRO_i* (*qui_i*) in (20a): note that both constituents can be claimed to be “fully affected” (see above on the so-called “holistic effect”). On the other, the theme/figure subject *quae* (*secundae res*) in (ii) can be compared with the oblique complement *omnibus copiis* in (20a), which expresses the background theme.

- (ii) *(secundae res) quae circumfluunt vos* (Curt. 10.2.22)
 ‘the prosperity that surrounds you’

5 See Haspelmath and Michaelis (2008) for the claim that the genitive object can be seen as expressing the “background theme” (see also Michaelis [1993]). Theme is defined by these authors in the usual way as the role of an object that undergoes movement or is in a certain position.

- (21) *Aquest riu abunda {en peixos/de peixos}* (Catalan)
 this river abunds in fish.PL/of fish.PL
 ‘This river abunds with fish.’

3 A non-derivational syntactic account of the intransitive locative alternation in Latin: a Ramchandian formal perspective

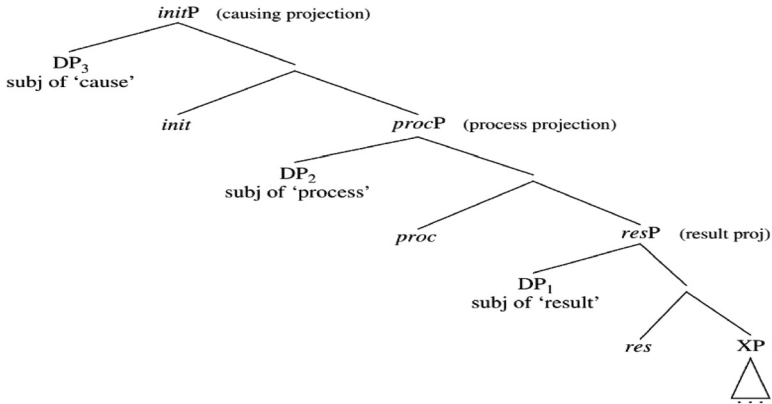
Our analysis of the intransitive locative alternation in Latin is based on Ramchand’s (2008) formal proposal that event structure is expressed in syntactic terms.⁶ For reasons of space, here we will limit ourselves to presenting some basic elements of her theoretical framework (see Ramchand [2008, 2014] for more details). The internal eventive structure of a verbal predication is argued to be maximally decomposed in her system as depicted in (22). In her proposal each category label is argued to correspond with a subeventive projection identifying the subevents of a macro-event, namely, an *initiation* subevent, a *process* subevent, and a *result* subevent. Each phrase offers a specifier position to be occupied by the participants of the subevents: in (22) the specifier positions are occupied by the Initiator/subject of ‘cause’ (specifier of *init*), Undergoer/subject of ‘process’ (specifier of *proc*), and Resultee/subject of ‘result’ (specifier of *res*).

- (22) The syntax of event structure (Ramchand 2008: 107; ex. [79])

Furthermore, an argument is claimed to be in the background if it is not construed as the primary figure (the subject) or the secondary figure (the direct object). “Background” is then not interpreted in the information-structural sense (contrasting with “focus”), but rather in Langacker’s (1991) cognitive-semantic sense, contrasting with “figure”. Accordingly, Haspelmath and Michaelis (2008) call constructions of the (ia) type “figure-theme constructions”, and constructions of the (ib) type “background-theme constructions”.

- (i) a. *Les mouches fourmillent dans le lac.* (French)
 ‘Flies are swarming in the lake.’
 b. *Le lac fourmille de mouches.*
 ‘The lake is swarming with flies.’

6 Cf. Devine and Stephens (2013) for a similar formal proposal which has also been applied to Latin.



In Ramchand's framework, processes denote an eventuality with internal change unlike states, which lack it. Only *procP* is assumed to contain an event variable, whereas *initP* and *resP* instantiate states (Ramchand 2008: 44). The interpretation of state subevents depends on its merging position; thus, the composition of argument structure is syntactically determined (see also Hale and Keyser [2002], i.a., for this basic claim). Ramchand proposes two rules to determine their interpretation: if the state precedes the process subevent, then it will be interpreted as an initiation subevent: see (23). In contrast, if it follows the process subevent, it will be taken to instantiate a result subevent (24).

(23) IF $\exists e_1, e_2$ [State(e_1) & Process(e_2) & $e_1 \rightarrow e_2$], then by definition Initiation (e_1)

(24) IF $\exists e_1, e_2$ [State(e_1) & Process(e_2) & $e_2 \rightarrow e_1$], then by definition Result (e_1)
(Ramchand 2008: 44)

It should be noted that an entity's ability to become an initiator does not depend on agentivity, but rather on its capacity to generate such event, as is the case with those internally caused verbs that enter into the intransitive locative alternation in Latin.⁷ Let us then see how the Ramchandian system allows us to provide an event structure analysis of some relevant examples of Latin that have been described in Section 2. Let us start with the alternation with the verb *micare* 'to flash' exemplified in (6), which is repeated in (25):

⁷ Internally caused verbs describe eventualities caused by the inherent properties of their single argument (e.g. see Levin and Rappaport Hovav [1995: 91–92], i.a.).

- (25) a. *oculis micat acribus ignis* (Verg. *Aen.* 12.102)
 ‘a fire flashes in/from his fierce eyes’
 b. *et crebris micat ignibus aether* (Verg. *Aen.* 1.90)
 ‘and the sky flashes with frequent lightning’

As noted above, the verb *micare* ‘to flash’ expresses a process in both variants of the locative alternation in (25), whereby the *proc* head is involved in the syntactic structure of each variant. The subject *ignis* ‘a fire’ is then interpreted in (25a) as the undergoer of such a process. Additionally, in (25a) the subject *ignis* is also interpreted as the initiator of the internally caused verb *micare*. In contrast, in (25b), the subject *aether* ‘the sky’ is solely the undergoer of the event (i.e. it occupies the specifier of Process Phrase, *procP*), as the initiator role can be claimed to be borne by *crebris ignibus* ‘with frequent lightning’ (see Gómez-Vázquez and Mateu [2025] for the claim that the oblique complement in the location subject variant is associated with the Initiation subevent). As pointed out above, the oblique complement *oculis acribus* ‘in/from his fierce eyes’ in (25a) behaves like an adjunct in the syntax (see also fn. 2), whereby similar examples can be found without such an optional constituent: e.g. *micant ignes, imbres rumpuntur* ‘fires flash, storms break out’ (Apul. *mund.* 22, 28).

Next, let us analyze the following relevant contrast with the verb *abundare*, i.e. the one between an eventive variant with a theme subject (see [18c], repeated in [26a]) and a stative variant with a location subject (see [19a], repeated in [26b]).

- (26) a. *quando aqua Albana abundasset* (Liv. 5.15.11)
 ‘when the Alban water had overflowed’ [sc. from the (Alban) lake]
 b. *villaque tota locuples est, abundat porco, haedo, agno, gallina, lacte, caeso, melle.* (Cic. *Cato* 56)
 ‘his entire farmhouse has an air of plenty and abounds with pork, goat’s meat, lamb, poultry, milk, cheese, and honey.’

In (26a), the subject *aqua Albana* ‘the Alban water’ can be claimed to assume the roles of undergoer and resultee: i.e. this nominal constituent occupies the specifier position of Process Phrase and Result Phrase, respectively. In more descriptive lexical semantic terms, the usage of the verb *abundasset* in (26a) expresses a change (process) of state (result). In contrast, the location subject of the variant in (26b), *tota villa* ‘the entire farmhouse’, is the subject of a stative predication, whereby only Initiation Phrase is projected. In (26b) *tota villa* is not the undergoer of any dynamic process, whereby no *process* head is involved. As for the oblique complement, this constituent is expected to be omitted in (26a) due to its adjunct status in this variant (see fn. 2), whereas it is usually compulsory in the stative variant in (26b) because of its argumental status.

The syntactic structure of those intransitive verbs that involve Process and Result (e.g. [26a]) is expected to be unaccusative. In contrast, the syntactic structure of those intransitive verbs that involve Initiation (e.g. [26b]) is unergative. This prediction can be claimed to be borne out in light of the auxiliary selection facts from Italian shown in (27a) and (27b), whose verbs can be compared with their Latin counterparts in (26a) and (26b), respectively: as is well-known, in Italian *essere* ‘to be’ is selected in unaccusative constructions, whereas *avere* ‘to have’ is selected in unergative (and transitive) constructions.⁸ For reasons of space, a discussion of the unergativity versus unaccusativity distinction concerning those Latin verbs that enter into the intransitive locative alternation must be left for future research (see Baños [2015] and Oniga [2014: 139, 308–309], i.e., for some preliminary evidence that supports the relevance of this grammatical distinction to Latin).

- (27) a. *Il vino è traboccato dal vaso.* (Italian)
 the wine is overflowed from.the glass
 ‘The wine overflowed from the glass.’ (ex. from Vincent [1982: 89])
- b. *Questi mari hanno sempre abbondato di pesci.*
 these seas have always abounded of fish.PL
 ‘These seas have always been abundant with fish.’

⁸ The unergative construction in (ia) can be compared with the unaccusative construction in (27a): in the unergative one the subject additionally involves an initiator role, besides the undergoer role associated to the dynamic process of *brulicare* ‘swarm’. Furthermore, Gómez-Vázquez and Mateu (2025) show that in Italian the location subject variant is only compatible with the auxiliary *avere* ‘have’, which can be taken as clear evidence for its unergative classification. Accordingly, Levin’s (1993) claim that the verb *swarm* in (1) can be unaccusative (see fn. 1) is not valid for its Italian counterpart *brulicare* ‘swarm’, which selects the auxiliary *avere* in the two variants in (ia) and (ib).

- (i) a. Variant A:
 Una grande folla ha brulicato per le strade. (Italian)
 a large crowd has swarmed through the streets
 (<https://www.yumpu.com/it/document/view/36421456/articoli-da-liberta-anno-1961-centro-di-lettura-di-rivergaro>; last accessed 9 June 2026)
- b. Variant B:
 I caruggi della città per secoli hanno brulicato
 the alleys of.the city for centuries have swarmed
 di camalli.
 of dock-workers
 (https://www.corriere.it/cook/news/22_aprile_14/sapore-libeccio-cucina-strada-che-racconta-vecchia-genova-249b96c6-8f1a-11ec-af55-d575edc6dd9d.shtml; last accessed 9 June 2026)

4 Concluding remarks

According to Dowty (2000, 2001), the two sentence types in the locative alternation with intransitive verbs can be claimed to express different semantic propositions. Following his relevant description of the perceptual properties of those verbal predicates that enter into the intransitive locative alternation, we have also found evidence in Latin for the proposal that their usage can be described as expressing a “located sensory effect of a particular kind” (Fried 2005: 489) and that the conceptual scene involves the appearance and perception of a kind of located movement, light or sound: e.g. cf. real or fictive motion with abundance, which is probably the prototypical case in Latin (see exs. [17], [18], and [19] with the verb *abundare* ‘to abound, to overflow’ or exs. [13] and [14] with the verb *adfluere* ‘to flow to, to overflow’), light (e.g. see ex. [6] with the verb *micare* ‘to flash’), and sound (e.g. see ex. [8] with the verb *resonare* ‘to resound’). In particular, the meaning of the location subject variant has been claimed to go beyond the well-known holistic effect: it entails theme and event abundance and what Dowty called “dynamic texture”, whereby the events described by the verb of the location subject variant happen simultaneously and repetitively throughout all parts of a space.

Following Ramchand (2008), the different syntactic forms of both variants of intransitive locative alternation can be shown to correlate with their different event structures. However, we have seen that it is not the case that each variant is always associated with the same event structure. For example, we have compared the syntactic event structures involved in the locative alternation with the intransitive verbs *micare* ‘to flash’ and *abundare* ‘to abound, to overflow’. On the one hand, the subject of the theme/figure subject variant with the verb *micare* has the roles of initiator and undergoer of the event, whereas the subject of the location/ground subject variant with this verb is solely the undergoer of the event, as the initiator role is borne by the oblique complement in the ablative case. On the other, the theme subject of the eventive verb *abundare* can be claimed to have the roles of undergoer and resultee, whereas the location subject of the stative variant with the same verb has the single role of initiator. Ramchand’s (2008, 2014) formal system has then been shown to be flexible enough to deal with the event structure variation found in the Latin intransitive locative alternation.

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