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Declension of the Latin present participle in connection with its syntactico-semantic use

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Abstract: This paper deals with the declension of the Latin present active participle (ppa), which shows several inconsistencies: the ablative singular for instance may end in *-e* or in *-i* (*sapiente*, *sapienti*) and the genitive plural may end in *-um* or *-ium* (*sapientum*, *sapientium*). Some grammarians, notably modern ones, assume that there are syntactico-semantic considerations or circumstances, leading to ablative *-e* ending when verbal force is intended (such as in the ablative absolute) or substantival force, and to *-i* ending when there is nominal, notably adjectival force. I have investigated whether ancient, medieval and modern grammarians treat such a phenomenon. In addition, I looked for inconsistencies in the grammarian's own ppa declension from this syntactico-semantic point of view. It turns out that ancient and medieval grammarians do not formulate declension of the ppa according to its syntactico-semantic function, with the exception of the anonymous author of the *Ars Ambrosiana*, nor do they decline their own ppa's according to a conventional rule of this kind. This calls for other explanations regarding the declensional inconsistencies observed. Some of the ppa forms may reflect a temporary phenomenon which would have disappeared in due course through diachronic evolution and paradigm leveling. Some forms may have persisted because of their frequency and idiomatic force or because of the compelling analogy with other words and phrases. But these ppa declensional variations do not appear to conform to a syntactico-semantic rule.

Keywords: present active participle, ppa, declension, grammar, syntactico-semantic function

1 Introduction

The Latin present active participle (*participium praesentis activi*; ppa) has nominal and verbal characteristics. It may act as a noun (*falsos rumores dissipatos*

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esse dicat de innocente),¹ as an adjective (*ab religioso et sapienti iudice*)² and as a participle in a strict verbal sense (*consule per Phocidem et Boeotiam exercitum ducente*).³ Ancient grammarians explain that the term *participium* highlights its derivation: it takes its gender and case from a noun and its time and meaning from a verb.⁴

Whereas the other two participles, perfect passive and future active, show a regular inflection as if they were nomina, more specifically adjectives, of the first and second declension (-us, -a, -um), the ppa seems to follow two declensional paradigms: on the one hand according to adjectives of the third declension such as *felix* and *ingens*, with endings abl.sg. -ī, gen.pl. -ium, neuter nom-acc.pl. -ia, and on the other with endings -ē, -um, -a, which are also found in *vetus*, *dives* and *pauper* and in comparatives. Are these separate paradigms of the ppa and if so, what determines which set of endings is used?

Leumann (1977) points to syntactico-semantic factors, at least with respect to the ablative singular. He writes “Bei *nt*-Partizipien ist die Verteilung von abl. -e und -ī nach der syntaktischen Verwendung geregelt, eine in der Formenlehre ziemlich singuläre Erscheinung” (Leumann 1977: 438; my emphasis).⁵ More specifically, this “rather singular phenomenon” leads to an -e ablative ending in “purely” participial-verbal use (“rein partizipialer Verwendung”), which is most obvious in the ablative absolute (*vere ineunte, me praesente*), but the ppa takes -ī ending when used attributively (*a sapienti viro*). Used as a substantive, the ending is again -e (*cum sapiente*), as well as in proper names (*Clemente*), but there are many exceptions. Is the declension paradigm of the ppa as a rule determined by the syntactico-semantic use? Classical, medieval and modern grammarians greatly differ in their treatment of this question, as I will show.

Is it possible to elucidate this matter on the basis of a corpus of transmitted texts? There are serious limitations. In the first place, most available ancient texts, apart from inscriptions, are medieval copies. And since there is no copying without editing, ppa declension rules in medieval grammars are of special

1 ‘He keeps saying that false rumours have been spread concerning the innocent man’ (*Rhet. Her.* 2.5). Translations are my own, some are inspired by other authors.

2 ‘[distinguish] from a conscientious and wise judge’ (*Cic. Font.* 23).

3 ‘as the consul lead the army through Phocis and Boeotia’ (*Liv.* 36.20).

4 Cf. e.g. *Participium quid est? Pars orationis partem capiens nominis, partem verbi; nominis genera et casus, verbi tempora et significationes, utriusque numerum et figuram* (Donatus *GL* 4.363). With *figura* Donatus points to the ppa being either *simplex* or *compositus*: e.g. *potens* versus *impotens*.

5 The gen.pl. and the neuter nom.-acc.pl. endings and their potential connection to syntactico-semantic function have attracted less attention of grammarians than the abl.sg. endings, but I will discuss these forms in Sections 3 and 4.

importance, because copyists presumably adhered to these. Scribal correction is less likely, however, where ancient grammarians explicitly discuss the various case endings and take examples from the texts of classical authors, of which they would have had the original versions at hand. Secondly, whether a particular ppa is used verbally, adjectively or substantively often cannot be fully determined (see Section 2). Thirdly, should we differentiate between ppa's used in prose and poetry? Some grammarians claim that poetry contains artificial morphological features arising from specific poetic needs, such as metrical requirements, and that the use of for instance ppa gen.pl. endings in *-um* or *-ium* therefore does not necessarily reflect the “appropriate” declension paradigm.⁶ On the other hand, an advantage of metric verse as a source of information on ppa declension is that we can be fairly sure that it has not been edited by medieval copyists, because that would introduce prosodic changes.

In Section 3 of this article I will describe how ancient, medieval and modern grammarians treat this presumed phenomenon of ppa declension according to syntactico-semantic use. For this purpose I consulted the original texts of individual grammarians, looking not only in the obvious sections such as *De participio*, but also by scanning the rest of the texts for statements on participles.⁷ In addition, I looked for examples that show how these grammarians inflected their ppa's themselves and whether any regularity might be deduced from that, i.e. did the grammarians conform to any explicit or implicit rules themselves? I did not perform a systematic search to cover all available texts, but I was especially interested in finding instances contradicting a presumed syntactico-semantic rule. The conclusion of this survey was that there is much confusion and little system.

In Section 4, I will turn to a number of modern views on morphological change that may shed new light on this question.

The ppa as such has been the subject of a number of in-depth studies, notably by Marouzeau (1910), Laughton (1964),⁸ Eklund (1970), and Piccoli (1972), and individual aspects have been treated by Adams (1973). I will deal with some of these studies in the next section, where I will start with the obvious question: what exactly is a present participle?

⁶ E.g. Ernout and Meillet (1945: 88), and Kühner and Holzweissig (1912: 340, 351, 353).

⁷ Several institutional websites offer digitalized texts that can be scanned for word endings such as *-ente*, *-ante*, *-enti*, *-anti*, *-entum*, *-entium*, *-antum*, *-antium*. I consulted www.archive.org and <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/006792843> for Keil's volumes, and www.mlat.uzh.ch/MLS/ for the other grammarians such as are contained in *Patrologia Latina* (all websites were last accessed on 23 February 2018). Of course, crucial case endings were verified in the actual text editions.

⁸ Laughton does not elaborate on morphology and declension.

2 The ambiguous nature of the present participle

On superficial examination there can be no doubt as to the nature of the present participle: it is a verbal form just like the other participles.⁹ On closer examination, however, some ppa's appear to have lost their connection to a particular verb, if there ever was such a connection at all, such as *pestilens*, *potens*, *frequens* and *perelegans*. These look remarkably similar to “pure” adjectives such as *recens*, *demens*, *petulans*, *caerulans* and *intemperans*. Marouzeau (1910: 64) adds that sometimes we see a ppa gradually becoming a substantive, while the connection with the original verb is lost, such as in *cluens/cliens* from the verb *cluere*; and the ppa *sapiens* is found at the time when *sapire* is hardly used in a moral sense anymore. We may add *infans*, remotely connected to *far*, *rudens*, possibly related to *rudeo*, and *torrens* to *torreo* (Ernout and Meillet 1959: 696). The ppa's *flammans* and *animans* may not have a verbal but a nominal origin (Mellet and Joffre 1994: 287). Ernout and Meillet consider *pestilens* and *sapiens* to be derived from *pestilentia* and *sapientia*, respectively (Ernout and Meillet 1959: 502) and *comans* from *coma* (Ernout and Meillet 1959: 135). The twofold derivation of a participle, i.e. from the word class *nomen* and from the word class *verbum*, renders demarcation from other word classes difficult (Visser 2011b: 381).

Eklund defines ppa's as “words formed from present stems of verbs used in the language current at the time when the text in question was written by adding *-nt-* to the present stem” (Eklund 1970: 12).¹⁰ He classifies ppa's according to their use as “substantival,” “adjectival” and “verbal,” and distinguishes 13 criteria (Eklund 1970: 16–30).¹¹

In his selection of pre-Christian texts and Christian Latin translations, Eklund identifies 361 ppa's. Of particular importance for our investigation is that he admits that for a large group of 104 ppa's (i.e. almost 30 %) it was impossible to decide whether the ppa was nominal or verbal. He writes “[w]e cannot nowadays acquire the same feeling for the Latin language as the Romans had themselves” (Eklund 1970: 13). Piccoli has the same reserve: “Man trifft hier wiederum auf die Schranke der Subjektivität bei der Beurteilung eines formal nicht ausgedrückten semantischen Sachverhaltes, und Vorsicht ist deshalb auch hier am Platz bei der Wertung der Beispiele” (Piccoli 1972: 121). And comparing Marouzeau and Szantyr, Eklund even remarks that *sciens* is considered adjectival by the former and verbal by the latter (Eklund 1970: 45). According to Mellet and Joffre (1994:

⁹ Cf. *Participia vero semper a verbis derivantur* (Alcuinus *Grammatica* PL 101.889).

¹⁰ Eklund studied the ppa in periphrastic expressions like *erat docens*. His main interest was the influence of original Greek texts on such ppa usage in Latin.

¹¹ These criteria are not uncontroversial (Bergh 1972: 26).

291), the *nt*-form oscillates continuously between the participial and the adjectival state, depending on the intuition of the person using it, which is of course very difficult to ascertain. Adams (1973: 119, 120) explains the evolution from an attributively to a substantivally used ppa and explores the difference between a substantival ppa and a verbal author-noun such as *audiens* versus *auditor*, between which, he concludes, it is impossible to distinguish semantically.

Finally, Pinkster writes: “some participles can in a specific context denote a permanent property, thus behaving like an adjective, while in other contexts they maintain their verbal properties as denoting an action or a process that is anchored to the time of the main verb” (Pinkster 2015: 61). He distinguishes five functions which the ppa can fulfill: it can be used as a subject complement, as a substitute for a finite form in the ablative absolute, as a secondary predicate, as a modifier, and substantively (Pinkster 2015: 60). Elsewhere he states, “[i]n some cases it is difficult to decide whether a participle is still a participle or whether it has developed into a noun” (Pinkster 2015: 954), and “[i]t is not always clear whether in a given situation a present participle is substantival or a secondary predicate with the entity to which it is related to be understood from the context” (Pinkster 2015: 958), and he gives a good example of the latter: *Lacrumentem lacinia tenet lacrumans*.¹² This problem of intuition and interpretation limits the possibilities to demonstrate any relation between ppa syntactico-semantics and declension paradigm.

3 Ancient, medieval and modern grammarians on ppa declension and syntactico-semantics

A declension paradigm of the ppa according to syntactico-semantics is not an item ancient grammarians are concerned with.

Donatus (c. 350 AD; *Ars minor*; *Ars maior*) states that the abl.sg. of *legens* is *legente* or *legenti*, but he gives no specific rules, and that the neuter nom.-acc.pl. is *legentia* and the gen.pl. *legentium* (Donatus *GL* IV.364). That is all. Moreover, nowhere in his texts I have found him using separate ppa declension paradigms himself; the ablative of all his ppa’s ends in *-e* and that use is always verbal.¹³

¹² ‘While she weeps she holds him, weeping as well, by the lappet’ (Pl. *As*. 587); Pinkster’s own translation is: ‘Both are crying and she is holding him at the lappet of his cloak’.

¹³ Such as in *Tapinosis est humilitas rei magnae non id agente sententia*, ‘tapinosis [a figure of speech] is downplaying a great matter by a sentence that does not represent this [greatness]’ (Donatus *GL* IV.395).

Servius (c. 400 AD; *Commentarius in artem Donati*) writes that there is much confusion regarding the abl.sg. of the third declension in general: *ablatius uero tertiae declinationis, qui et i et e terminatur, multum confusus est* (Servius GL IV.409).¹⁴ He advises to end the abl.sg. in *-i* in all nomina which have their nom. sg. and gen.sg. both ending in *-is*, such as *docilis*. The same he advises for nouns ending in *-e* (*mare*) but for those ending in *-x* (*lex*), as well as for all participles, the ablative ending should be *-e*, such as *calente* and *furente*, quite like nomina with nom.sg. ending in *-or*, such as *doctior*, *clarior*, *minor*, *maior*, of which the abl.sg. is *doctiore*, *clariore*, *minore*, *maiore*. Then he adds *reliqua uero sic ambigua sunt, ut uix etiam auctoritate firmentur. nam et ab hac naui et ab hac naue legimus, et ab hac puppi et ab hac puppe, et ab hoc igni et ab hoc igne. in quibus omnibus meliorum auctoritas sequenda est* (GL IV.409).¹⁵ With respect to ppa's he insists on their ending in *-e*: *sed scire conuenit quod ars exigit ut e littera terminetur*,¹⁶ but he intriguingly adds: *i autem ubi fuerit terminatus ablatius huius participii, necessitas est aut metri aut euphoniae* (GL IV.417).¹⁷ Servius gives no declension rules for the gen.pl. or the neuter nom.-acc.pl. His own use of ppa's shows that he may have distinguished between the abl. endings *-e* and *-i* in a syntactico-semantic way: he wrote for instance *ab illo praesente suscepi* (GL IV.433)¹⁸ (verbal use) and *quae in praesenti tempore producta sunt* (adjectival use) (GL IV.451).¹⁹

Charisius (fourth century AD; *Ars grammaticae libri V*) tries to make sense of the ppa declension based on Plinius maior *Dubii sermonis libri VIII*.²⁰ He has no syntactico-semantic considerations, but opposes ppa's as adjectives describing persons, which end in *-e*, to those describing things, which end in *-i*,²¹ and refers to Caesar's *De Analogia*.²² However, he does not apply this rule in a consequent way when he writes *imperatiua iterum praecedente ne syllaba quadrifariam exprimuntur* (Charisius GL I.259),²³ as *syllaba* represents a thing. According to

14 'But the ablative of the third declension that is marked off by *i* and *e* is very disorganized'.

15 'The remaining are so ambiguous however, that they may hardly be affirmed not even by authority. For we read "ab hac navi" and "ab hac naue", and "ab hac puppi" and "ab hac puppe", and "ab hoc igni" and "ab hoc igne". In all these cases the authority of the best should be followed'.

16 'but one should know that the [grammatical] skill requires that it is ended by the letter *e*'.

17 'if ever the ablative of this participle is ended in *i*, there is a metrical or euphonic need'.

18 'from him, being present, I received'.

19 'which [i.e. the vowels] are elongated in the present tense'.

20 Charisius GL I.120.

21 Such as in *egente*, *ab hoc egente homine*; *egenti*, *ab hac egenti re* (Charisius GL I.127).

22 Caesar (100–44) is especially interesting because he intended to standardize Latin at the end of the republic (Garcea 2012: 7; see also Garcea's table on p. 203).

23 'imperatives again which are preceded by *ne* are expressed in four ways'.

Charisius the genitive plural should end in *-ium* if the nom.sg. ends in *ns*²⁴; he does not mention neuter nom.-acc.pl. endings. It is interesting to note that Plinius himself may have had a syntactico-semantic dimension in mind, as Detlefsen (1867: 705) found that in *Naturalis Historia* the ppa's in ablative absolutes (in which verbal force may be assumed) and in substantives always end in *-e*; the ending of adjectives (for people and things) shows *-i/-e* inconsistencies.

Priscianus (c. 500 AD; *Institutionum grammaticarum libri XVIII*) states that participles always have a temporal quality: *et sciendum, quod participia sine verbis esse non possunt. si qua igitur videantur sine verbis formam habere participiorum, nomina sunt dicenda et carent temporali significatione* (Priscianus *GL* II.441).²⁵ He makes a strict distinction between noun and verb, but he writes that a participle may lose participial strength and may be turned into a noun by being compounded, such as *im-potens* and *in-doctus*: *pleraque amittentia vim participii transeunt in nomina, ut "potens impotens", "doctus indoctus"* (*GL* II.179). The declension of the ppa follows that of third declension nouns and Priscianus has no problem putting side by side *quad-rans*, *dodrans*, *infans* and *glans*, and *mens*, *parens* and *prudens* (*GL* II.319). As nouns, according to Priscianus, have no temporal value, their declension is not related to verbal semantics, not even when they are participles. Noun abl.sg. endings can be in *-i* or *-e*, or in *-i* and *-e*, but there is no clear-cut system as to when these are applied. Priscianus sighs that in the end authority of authors must prevail in this area: *ergo si qua ex his, quae debent in e per ablatium proferri, inueniamus per i prolata, auctoritati adscribimus*, and to illustrate his point he cites Virgil *aduectum Aenean classi uictosque Penates* (Verg. *A.* 8.9), where he would have liked to see *classe*, 'unless we say that the poet used a Hellenism': *nisi si dicamus hellenismo usum esse poetam* (*GL* II.348–9).²⁶ In Priscianus' views, a ppa may have verbal or nominal strength, but this does not affect its declension, which follows the third declension nominal paradigm, including the irregularities mentioned: *nam participia tam nomen quam uerborum sibi defendunt structuram* (*GL* III.159).²⁷ To clarify this, he

²⁴ *ns litteris nominatiuus singularis si terminetur, genetiuus pluralis ante um i recipiat necesse est* (Charisius *GL* I.138).

²⁵ 'It should be known that participles cannot be without verbs. If therefore some appear, without verbs, to have the appearance of participles, they should be called nouns and lack temporal meaning'.

²⁶ By "Hellenism" Priscianus means a construction according to Greek grammar (Forcellini 1965, vol 2: 645); *classi* could be taken as a dative, since in Greek the dative has the instrumental function covered by the Latin ablative.

²⁷ 'for participles claim nominal as well as verbal structure for themselves'.

gives an example with a genitive complement: *est tamen quando in nominum uim transeunt participia et genetiuo coniunguntur relictia uerborum ordinatione, ut “fugitans lites” participium est, “fugitans litium” nomen; “amans illum” similiter participium, “amans illius” nomen* (GL III.160).²⁸ With respect to the gen.pl. ending, Priscianus links it to the abl.sg. one as the base form: when the abl.sg. ends in *-i*, or in both *-i* and *-e*, the shortened *i* takes *-um* to yield the gen.pl. *-ium* ending. Thus *a cervicali cervicalium, a sapiente vel sapienti sapientium*. But a lot of these ppa’s ordinarily “syncopate” the *i* (*multa tamen per syncopam solent proferri*), i.e. “*sapientum*” pro “*sapientium*”, “*merentum*” pro “*merentium*” (GL II.351). So his system is not unambiguous. The same holds true for the neuter nom.-acc.pl.: when the abl.sg. ends in *-i*, or in both *-i* and *-e*, the shortened *i* takes *-a* to yield the *-ia* ending (GL II.350). For the gen.pl. Priscianus does not give ppa examples, but he evidently counts them among the noun examples he mentions: *mari* leads to *maria*, *cervicali* to *cervicalia*, *felice* or *felici* to *felicia*. An exception is *vetere* or *veteri* which lead to *vetera*, and *ludicri*, which leads to *ludicra* and not to *ludicria* (GL II.350). And he considers it necessary to mention *aplustre* which has an abl.sg. *aplustri*, but as nom.pl. not only *aplustra* but also *aplustria*; both these words ‘ancient authors are found to have written’ (*antiqui protulisse inueniuntur*) (GL II.351).

Priscianus does not give explicit rules that point to ppa declension depending on syntactico-semantic function. But did he himself apply such a declension paradigm in his works? I have not exhaustively examined his texts,²⁹ but I found an indication that he did. For instance, in the sentence *de ... generalibus regulis ad omnem uerbi declinationem pertinentibus latius in sequenti libro disseremus* (GL II.447),³⁰ *sequenti* shows adjectival force and ends in *-i*, whereas in *L quacumque consonante sequente potest antecedentem terminare syllabam, sequente* shows verbal force and ends in *-e* (GL II.49).³¹

Ancient grammars are usually based on the system of eight word classes, in which the participle constitutes a separate class (noun, verb, participle, pronoun,

²⁸ ‘yet sometimes it happens that participles cross over to nominal strength and are connected to a genitive, leaving the pattern of verbs, as e.g. “fugitans lites” is a participle and “fugitans litium” is a noun’.

²⁹ It would be interesting to collect all Priscianus’ declined ppa’s in order to allow a quantitative judgment, but as I was merely interested in finding evidence of twofold declension at all, I searched for some frequent ppa’s such as *sequens*, and concluded my search as soon as I found examples which in my view contradicted declension according to a syntactico-semantic dimension.

³⁰ ‘on the general rules applying to any declension of the verb we will elaborate extensively in the following book’.

³¹ ‘L following any consonant may end the preceding syllable’.

adverb, preposition, conjunction, and interjection). How to discern between these classes is an important topic in these grammars. In order to distinguish a noun from a participle the criterion of comparison can be used: a noun can have a comparative (*amantior*), a participle cannot (**docentior*). The first grammarian to use ppa semantics as a distinguishing criterion is Pseudo-Sergius (c. 500 AD; *Explanationes in artes Donati libri II*) (Visser 2010: 102): *deinde et sensus facit discretionem, ut si dicas “visi sunt mihi homines deambulare in foro”, visi participium est; si autem dicas “occurri visibus tuis”, intellegis nomen esse* (Pseudo-Sergius *GL IV.515*).³² According to Pseudo-Sergius all case endings depend on the abl.sg. His rule is that the abl.sg. ends in *-e* only when it concerns a noun derived from a verb, as is the case with *lector*, or with a likeness to such verbal derivation, such as *auctor*, or when it is a participle, such as *legens*: *tunc e tantum terminatur, cum nomen fuerit uerbale, ut lector, aut simile uerbali, ut auctor, aut participium fuerit, ut legens* (*GL IV.497*). He is aware that ancient authors doubted if the ending should be in *-e* or *-i*: *de ablatiuo singulari participii temporis praesentis dubitauerunt ueteres, utrum in i exeat, an in e: Cicero in i misit, aqua denique **feruenti** a Rubrio ipse perfunditur, Vergilius in e, et **candente** fauilla. et scire nos debemus regulam hanc esse, ut in e exeat: participia enim in e debent desinere, non in i. auctores tamen euphoniā secuti sunt, ut, quod suaue auribus uidebatur, hoc dicerent* (*GL IV.513*).³³

The anonymous writer of the *Ars Ambrosiana* (sixth/seventh century AD; Visser 2011a: 10), a commentary on Donatus, appears to be the first to state that a noun ending in *-ens* has an abl.sg. in *-i*, but a participle in *-e*.³⁴ In his chapter *De participio* he writes

De ablatiuo participii dubitat utrum in e an in i debet exire et datur haec regula: Vt si purum sit participium in e exeat; purum autem dico participium, quod conparationem non habeat, ut ab hoc legente. Quod si sit participium illud, quod et nomen sit, ut est potens, quod conparationem recipit ut nomina, ablatiuo in i debeat exire, ut ab hoc potenti. Tamen hoc ueteres confunderunt, ut Iuuenalis semper que ardente camino; et idem rursus nec ardenti decoxit <aeno>. “Ardens” nomen est atque participium; ergo, ut supra diximus, necesse est purum participium in e ablatiuum mittere; inde duplicem habet ablatiuum: a

32 ‘In addition the meaning also constitutes a distinction, such as when you say “to me men are seen walking in the forum”, *visi* is a participle; but when you say “I came before your sights”, you understand it is a noun’.

33 ‘Regarding the abl.sg. of the ppa the ancients doubted whether it should end in *i* or in *e*: Cicero ends it in *i* “finally he himself has boiling water poured over him by Rubrius” (Cic. *Ver.* 2.1.67), but Virgil in *e* “and by burning ashes” (Verg. *A.* 3.573). And we must know that this is the rule, that it ends in *e*: for participia should end in *e*, not in *i*. Yet the authors have pursued agreeable sound in order that they might say what appears to be pleasing to the ears.’

34 *si nomen, “ab hoc parenti” dices, si participium, “ab hoc parente”* (*Ars Ambrosiana, de nomine*, line 466) (Löfstedt 1982: 69).

participio in e, a nomine in i. Illa uero nomina, quae faciem participiorum habent et quendam colorem, neque sunt tamen participia, ut est amens, in i prorsus debent exire, ut ab hoc amenti. (Ars Ambrosiana, De participio, lines 73–85)³⁵

With respect to the gen.pl. this anonymous writer adds that, in his view, many people want ppa's to end in *-ium* and nouns in *-um*, “but authority disturbs this”.³⁶ He does not elaborate on the neuter nom.-acc.pl. endings.

Donatus Ortigraphus, a ninth-century grammarian (*Ars grammatica*; a compilation of earlier works), has almost the same lines, also distinguishing between the abl.sg. ending in “pure” participles and in participles with a noun “colour” (Chittenden 1982: 178).

To Alcuinus (730–804; *De orthographia*; *Grammatica*; *De dialectica*), the main Carolingian grammarian, who incorporated Donatus and Priscianus (Law 1997: 83), “a participle is always derived from a verb, and cannot have a comparative. If participles are compared, they move across to nouns, such as *amans* comes from the verb *amo*. If you make *amans*, *amantior*, *amantissimus*, it is a noun, lacking temporal value” (Alcuinus PL 101, 889).³⁷ “How do I know if such an expression is a noun or a participle?”, asks Franco, one of Alcuinus’ pupils. The answer is

Ex casuum circumstantia. Nam participium casum sui verbi sequitur, ut, amo illum, amans illum. Nomen vero si fiet, casum verbalis nominis sequitur, ut, amator illius, sic dicimus: amans illius. Vides quod participium accusativo, nomen genitivo iungitur. Sed et participia tempus significant. (PL 101, 889)³⁸

35 ‘Regarding the participle’s ablative, he [Donatus] doubts whether it should end in *e* or in *i*, and this rule is given, that when the participle is pure, it should end in *e*; now I call a participle pure which does not have a comparative, such as *ab hoc legente*. But if it is a participle that is a noun as well, like *potens* is, which takes a comparative just like nouns, the ablative must end in *i*, like *ab hoc potenti*. Yet the old writers brought this into disorder, like Iuvenalis *semperque ardente camino* (“and the furnace always burning”); and the same one again *nec ardenti decoxit <aeno>* (“nor did [the mob] boil [him] down in a pot”) (Juv. 15.81). “Ardens” is a noun and a participle; therefore, as we said before, it is necessary that as a pure participle it ends the ablative in *e*; hence it has a double ablative: from a participle in *e*, from a noun in *i*. But these nouns, which have the appearance of participles and a certain colour, and nevertheless are not participles, such as *amens*, must certainly end their ablative in *i*, such as *ab hoc amenti*” (Löfstedt 1982: 146).

36 *Multi uolunt in ium participia mittere, nomina in um, sed hoc confundit auctoritas* (Ars Ambrosiana, de nomine, line 454 (Löfstedt 1982: 68).

37 *Participia uero semper a uerbis deriuantur, et comparisonem non possunt habere. Si comparantur, transeunt in nomina: ut, amans ab amo uerbo ueniens. Si facis amans, amantior, amantissimus, nomen est, carens tempore.*

38 ‘From the context. For the participle follows the case of its verb, like “I love him (*amo illum*), loving him (*amans illum*)”. But if it is turned into a noun, the verbal case follows that of a noun, like “his lover”, we consequently say “*amans illius*”. You see that the participle is connected to an accusative, the noun to a genitive. But participles designate time as well’.

A little further Franco asks how participles are declined. The reply is: *ad similitudinem nominum in ens desinentium* (PL 101, 889).³⁹ This is a little enigmatic, because Alcuinus, in the section on the declension of nouns, writes that the ablative of nouns of the third declension ends in short *-e*, such as *patre*, or in long *-i*, such as *Tiberi*, or in some nouns in *-e* and *-i*, such as *a felice et felici* (PL 101, 870). So what is it to be: *-e* or *-i*? Alcuinus gives no definitive answer. And with respect to the gen.pl. or the neuter nom.-acc.pl. of ppa's, Alcuinus does not mention any double declension either.

If Alcuinus does not give sharply defined ppa declension rules, how did he decline his own ppa's? He does not appear to comply to any "hidden" rule himself. He uses the ppa abl.sg. in *-e* whenever there is verbal force, such as in *ut Deo donante et te edocente ab inferioribus ad superiora pervenire valeamus* (my emphasis) (PL 101, 853).⁴⁰ Attributively used ppa's Alcuinus ends in *-i*, such as in *cotidie adverbium continuationis per c et o dicitur et scribitur, non per q, quia non a quota die, sed a continenti die dictum est* (GL VII.308),⁴¹ and in *id namque, quod quis concipit [Al., concepit] animo, lingua prosequenti demonstrat* (PL 101, 956).⁴² However in *A deponenti trium temporum veniunt participia* (PL 101, 891)⁴³ the ppa is used substantively, although it ends in *-i*. And what to make of the following two instances: *Ideo dixit in sequenti versu: Nisi Dominus custodierit civitatem, frustra vigilat qui custodit eam* (Alcuinus *Enchiridion* PL 100, 628),⁴⁴ and *Unde in hoc sequente psalmo dixit: Levavi oculos meos in montes, unde veniet auxilium mihi?* (Alcuinus *Enchiridion* PL 100, 621).⁴⁵ In both examples the ppa appears to be used with the same syntactico-semantic function, be it verbally or adjectively, but with different abl.sg. endings. With respect to the gen.pl. there are also discrepancies to be found: Alcuinus uses *sapientium*⁴⁶ as well as *sapientum*.⁴⁷ So just like Priscianus, Alcuinus is not consistent in his own

³⁹ 'Just like nouns ending in *ens*'.

⁴⁰ 'that we may be able, God giving and you teaching, to arrive from the lower levels at the higher ones'.

⁴¹ '*cotidie*, an adverb of prolongation, is spoken and written with *c* and *o*, not with *q*, because it is not a saying derived from *quota die* (numbered day), but from *continenti die* (next day)'.

⁴² 'for that which one has understood in the mind, he shows by a supporting tongue'.

⁴³ 'From a deponent verb participles come of three tenses'.

⁴⁴ 'Therefore he has said in the following verse: Unless the Lord shall protect the city, him who guards it is awake in vain'.

⁴⁵ 'Hence he has said in this following psalm: I have lifted up my eyes to the mountains, from where shall help come for me'.

⁴⁶ In Vulgate citations: Alcuinus *Epistolae*; *Commentaria super Ecclesiasten*; *Interpretationes nominum Hebraicorum progenitorum Domini nostri Iesu Christi* (PL 100, 449, 694, 705).

⁴⁷ In a Vulgate citation (Alcuinus PL 101, 390).

ppa declension. And just like Priscianus, Alcuinus does not specify a declension paradigm for gen.pl. and the neuter nom.-acc.pl.

To end this small survey of medieval grammars, I refer to the major work of Stotz (1998: 83) on medieval Latin, who writes that participles in *-nt* end their abl.sg. in *-nte* when they are not used adjectively, but “manche Einzelfälle mögen strittig sein; jedenfalls kommen in MA [Mittelalter] auf *-nti* ausgehende Formen **bei eindeutiger verbalem Gehalt** vor, etwa: *cum Leone originaliter procedenti de Iudaica congregatione ...* oder *venienti hora electionis*” (Stotz 1998: 83; my emphasis).⁴⁸ The *nt*-participles conform to the nom.-acc.pl. *-ia* and gen.pl. *-ium* paradigm, but gen.pl. forms in *-ntum* had been in use since long – *sapientum*, *merentum*, *nocentum* – and are to be found in poetry (Stotz 1998: 86). Stotz adds an interesting observation that the gen.pl. *gigantium* instead of *gigantum* may perhaps be molded on the example of *nt*-participles (Stotz 1998: 87), an analogy phenomenon which will be dealt with in Section 4.

Of the modern grammarians Neue and Wagener (1897: 90–91) provide a host of examples, based on which they conclude that (i) when used as epithets of things ppa's end in *-i*, but when used as epithets of people or as proper names they end in *-e*, (ii) ppa's end in *-e* when they describe the behavior (“Verhalten”, the purely verbal use) either of things or persons, (iii) when used as substantives they end in *-e*, and finally (iv) in ablative absolutes the ppa ending is in *-e* as well. But of each category Neue and Wagener also cite many exceptions. In their examples they point to a number of instances where views of editors differ regarding the abl.sg. ending of ppa's, such as in *habente* versus *habenti* and *referente* versus *referenti*.⁴⁹ They also state that the most common gen.pl. ending is in *-ium* (Neue and Wagener 1897: 136) and when *-um* is found there are usually metrical considerations; Neue and Wagener do not mention syntactico-semantic motives, nor do they mention such considerations in the neuter nom.-acc.pl. endings.

Leumann (1977: 438) states that *nt*-participles are, from a linguistic-historical point of view, pure consonant stems, and therefore we expect *-e*, *-a*, *-um* declensional endings. When the function is purely participial (“rein

⁴⁸ ‘With Leo, who originally came forth from the Judaic community ... as the hour of the election was drawing near’.

⁴⁹ The editorial decision in case of conflicting manuscript testimonies is most likely determined by the grammatical instinct of the editor. Meyer (1827: 124), for instance, who is strongly in favor of letting ancient sources prevail, prepared a critical edition of Cicero's *Orator* in which he wrote *ut a me animadversum est studiose inquirenti* (‘as I noticed when I carefully investigated’; Cic. *Orat.* 56.190) and in the critical apparatus he even explains why Cicero wrote *inquirenti*, based on Pseudo-Sergius (see note 34); but modern editions, such as Teubner (Westman 1980: 65), write *inquirente*.

partizipialer Funktion”), abl.sg. ending is indeed in *-e*, but *-a* and *-um* are replaced by *-ia* and *-ium*: “doch hat sich *-um* vereinzelt gehalten” (Leumann 1977: 438). Leumann adds, as was mentioned in the introduction section, that the declension does follow syntactico-semantic use: abl.sg. in *-e* in purely participial use, especially in the ablative absolute, and in substantival use, and *-i* in adjectival use.

According to Kühner and Holzweissig (1912: 346), adjectives of the third declension are inflected following the paradigm in *-i*, *-ium*, *-ia*, and among the examples they cite are the ppa’s *amans*, *prudens*, *docens*, *sapiens*. “Im klassischen Latein haben *i* im Abl. Sing. vor Allem die Adjektiva der 3. Deklination – mit wenigen Ausnahmen – auch **infolge des Strebens**, adj. u. subst. Formation zu scheiden” (Kühner and Holzweissig 1912: 326; my emphasis), and they use *prae-stans* to illustrate their point. They apparently believe that there is an intention (“Streben”) to oppose adjectival and substantival declension, but they give no further arguments. In addition they mention syntactico-semantic issues, just as Leumann: *-e* is regular and *-i* on the contrary is rare “wenn das Wort im partizipialen Sinne aufzufassen ist; so wenn das Partizip mit einem Objecte oder andere näheren Bestimmungen verbunden ist” (Kühner and Holzweissig 1912: 351). They give examples such as *de hoc nihil cogitante* (Cic. *Sest.* 57)⁵⁰ and *loco iacente inter tumulos* (Liv. 5.48),⁵¹ respectively, but they add that even without such clues participial use can be determined. Of the examples they then give, some are not very convincing, however, such as *quam ob rem in dissentiente populo noli putare nullos fuisse quorum animos tuus ille fortis animus offenderet* (Cic. *Planc.* 104)⁵² – it escapes me why *dissentiente* must be participial rather than adjectival, to which of course some may reply that it indicates a transient quality. But Kühner and Holzweissig are sure: “Selten findet sich beim Partizip in wirklich partizipialer Bedeutung die Endung *-i*” (Kühner and Holzweissig 1912: 352). They also state that abl.sg. ending is in *-e* if the ppa is used substantively, and with respect to neuter nom.-acc.pl. they consider the ending *-a* as a striking singularity instead of *-ia* in such phrases as *silenta loca* and *pestilenta loca*.

Ernout and Meillet (1945) are also quite explicit with respect to a twofold ppa declension. They write: “La forme en *-i* est celle que prend le participe avec valeur adjective, par ex. *constanti animo*, *praesenti tempore*; la forme en *-ē* est réservée aux participes employés avec leur valeur propre *me praesente*, *nullo rogante*, *ineunte tempestate* (ablatif absolu), ou comme substantifs: *parente*, *cliente* ... Citons encore *consentum* et *adulescentum*, *animantum*, *infantum*, *parentum*, génitifs pluriels de

⁵⁰ ‘thinking nothing about this’.

⁵¹ ‘a place lying between grave mounds’.

⁵² ‘therefore do not think that among the disagreeing people there were none whose minds your strong spirit did not offend’.

participes pris substantivement” (Ernout and Meillet 1945: 95). As far as the neuter nom.-acc.pl. is concerned, they write that almost all examples end in *-ia*, there being only very few instances with ending in *-a*, such as *fluenta* and *silenta*.

The grammar of Wheelock and LaFleur (2011: 185), much used in the United States, states that the ppa has third declension forms, except that the abl.sg. sometimes ends in *-e*, and sometimes (especially when used strictly as an attributive adjective) in *-ī*. The authors do not mention declension options for the gen.pl. (it ends in *-ium*) or the neuter nom.-acc.pl. This is in accordance with *Allen and Greenough’s New Latin grammar* (Greenough et al. 1903: 53) and *Gildersleeve’s Latin grammar* (Gildersleeve and Lodge 2012: 42).

In the modern Latin grammar of Oniga (2014: 127, 302), the ppa is said to be inflected like a second-class adjective (which class comprises consonant [prototype *vetus*] and i-stems [*acer*]), but inflection related to syntactico-semantics is not mentioned, not even the abl.sg. ending in *-e* for the ablative absolute.

From these findings I conclude that a twofold declension paradigm of the ppa according to syntactico-semantic use is only mentioned in the sixth/seventh century by the anonymous author of the *Ars Ambrosiana*, but not by the ancient and the other medieval grammarians. The ancients suggested that the *-i* abl.sg. ending was for things and the *-e* ending for humans, without syntactico-semantic considerations. Often there is no explicit wish to capture the declensional inconsistencies in a grammatical system, but some, such as Priscianus, express disappointment at being dependent on “common use” and the linguistic skills of authorities instead of on rational rules in this matter. Moreover, in their own writings grammarians show ppa declensional inconsistencies.

In contrast to these findings, several influential modern grammarians (Leumann, Kühner and Holzweissig, and Ernout and Meillet) tend to postulate a formal rule stating *-i*, *-ium*, *-ia* endings in case of adjectival function, but in which the abl.sg. ending is changed into *-e* in substantival as well as verbal use – with many exceptions. Even Palmer writes “Plautus does not make the **classical distinction** in the ablative singular of *-e* for participles and *-i* for adjectives (e.g. *malevolente*)” (Palmer 1964: 84; my emphasis).

As a last example of these “exceptions” let us consider the following citations from Cicero:

- (1) (Cic. *Font.* 21)⁵³
quid mihi opus est sapiente iudice, quid aequo quaesitore, quid oratore non stulto?

53 ‘What need do I have for a wise judge, what for a just prosecuting officer, what for a non-silly public speaker?’ (Teubner edition).

(2) (Cic. *de Orat.* 2.222)⁵⁴

*dicere enim aiunt Ennium flammam a sapienti facilius ore in ardente
opprimi quam bona dicta teneat*

In (1) *sapiente* is an adjective for *iudice*, and this is further strengthened by the parallel construction in the other two members of the tricolon *aequo quaesitore* and *oratore non stulto*, but Cicero ends the ablative in *-e* instead of in *-i*. And in (2) *sapienti* is used as a substantive, but it ends in *-i* instead of in *-e*.⁵⁵ However, a thorough survey of the Cicero manuscripts citing this fragment of Ennius leaves room for both readings (Manuwald 2012: 288, 289), therefore the authenticity of *sapienti* in (2) is disputable.

4 Alternative perspectives on ppa declensional inconsistency

So far, we have been looking for arguments in grammars through the ages to link the syntactico-semantic use of the ppa to its declension paradigm, and we have come to the conclusion that there is little system and much confusion in this matter. What does this imply?

According to Piccoli (1972: 23), differentiating between verbal and nominal use of the ppa is not very meaningful in order to understand the ppa; the criteria of both functions are often contradictory or may be applied to the same word, and the word's function may change from one exemplary sentence to another. He argues that the contrast between adjective and verb is artificial when one observes the functional analogy of both, as each may be used attributively (Piccoli 1972: 11).⁵⁶ According to Eklund, “[s]uch general semantic values as quality, action/development and state are not attached to the words as lexical units but are to a great extent due to the context” (Eklund 1970: 19, note 1). Indeed, one may argue whether the same ppa is turned into a substantive by the mere fact that it is used in combination with an adjective, and into a verb by the

⁵⁴ ‘For they say that Ennius declared that a flame is more easily oppressed by a wise man in his burning mouth than that he withholds good words.’ (Teubner edition).

⁵⁵ Note also the “regular” use of the “purely participial” ppa in *ore in ardente*.

⁵⁶ Piccoli’s investigations concentrate on describing and explaining the ppa diachronically: its rather humble presence in the republic, its rise and popularity in the empire under the influence of Greek style constructions, and its near disappearance in the Romance period, when it is replaced by the ablative gerund.

mere presence of a direct object. The boundaries between the functions of noun, adjective and participle are not clear.⁵⁷

Luraghi (1998) has an interesting observation: in her view the twofold origin of these participles, i.e. verbal and nominal, makes them inherently unstable. Therefore, they are non-prototypical forms, whether verbal or nominal, and “[n]on-prototypicality in the word class affiliation implies non-prototypicality in the morphological process that generates the forms (something in between inflection and derivation)” (Luraghi 1998: 364). From this perspective, the declensional inconsistencies observed are not surprising and just a special case in the morphological discussions surrounding the third declension of substantives and adjectives in general.

This third declension brings together *i*-stem and consonant stem words, and contains more irregularities than any other declension (Risch 1977: 237), which are even found in inscriptions (Risch 1977: 238). The question of whether the abl. sg. ends in *-e* or in *-i* is not particular to the *ppa*, but to the whole of the third declension. Even basic adjectives like *fortis* and *felix* are sometimes used with *-e* instead of *-i*, especially when they are used substantively: *numquid tolletur a forte praeda aut quod captum fuerit a robusto, saluum esse poterit*.⁵⁸ Janson (1971: 138) mentions *reduc-*, *supplic-*, *artific-* and *consort-*.

Dressler (2002: *passim*) interprets inflection classes within the framework of Natural Morphology. Natural Morphology in general presupposes natural preferences with respect to morphology. These preferences are related to cognitive and semiotic features, and to iconicity and transparency (Dressler 2002: 95), they are language-specific and have been investigated in many modern languages (Dressler et al. 2006: 51). But how can we determine the “naturalness” of such preferences? As there are no native speakers, it is impossible to determine what should be considered “natural” in Latin inflection. Therefore, Dressler focuses on grammatical productivity such as can be observed in the Latin integration of loan words. He considers the way in which these are inflected as an indication of the inflectional preferences of the language. An inflectional “microclass” consists of words that share all their inflectional forms, such as *lex*, *laus* and *virtus*. Different microclasses sharing some but not all paradigmatic forms may be grouped together. Along this line, Dressler (2002: 103, 104) proposes one inflectional “macroclass” for all consonantal and *i*-stem words which has a “non-default” paradigm with endings *-i*, *-ium*, *-ia* and a “default” paradigm with *-e*,

⁵⁷ Janson (1971: 138, note 53).

⁵⁸ ‘Will booty be taken away from a strong man; or what is taken from a robust fellow, will it be safe?’ (Biblia sacra vulgata *Isaias Propheta* 49.24; Gryson 1994: 1148).

-um, -a. This brings us back to the original two declension paradigms mentioned in the introduction section.

However, which ending should be called default and which non-default is challenged by Buzássyová (2005: 18). She remarks that the gen.pl. in *-ium* is more common than expected and therefore may be a case of secondary regularization favored by preference, which would imply that *-ium* is the default ending. Irrespective of this discussion, Dressler does not elaborate on the special case of ppa declination and on whether his paradigms are linked to syntactico-semantic use.

Apart from the question of preference, there is a diachronic dimension to the ppa declensional irregularity. Marouzeau (1910: 3, 4) explains this diachronic dimension as an evolution in time towards a dominance of the *i*-stem declension, but he does not specify the period of time. He mentions that inscriptions and Plautus have the gen.pl. in *-um*, whereas Terence uses *-ium* already regularly. The nom.-acc.pl. ending quickly evolved into *-ia*. But in the abl.sg. the evolution to *i*-stem declension is not seen: the language somehow has succeeded, according to Marouzeau, in checking or regulating this ending: used as a pure participle (especially in the ablative absolute) or as a substantive the ending is in *-e* (but there are exceptions); used as adjective, the ending is in *-i* (with exceptions as well).

The diachronic point of view must take into account the phenomenon of paradigm leveling, which means the disappearance in time of paradigmatic alternations “that do not seem to signal important differences in meaning or function” (Hock and Joseph 2009: 152). From that perspective, a synchronic phase in which there are two abl.sg. endings may be seen as just a stage in the evolution of the language. Had the language been left to evolve further, one or the other declensional alternation might have taken precedence over the other.

However, the declensional irregularity may also persist. The two abl.sg. endings are allomorphic in nature. Especially when they are frequent, they will be learned in combination with other lexical constituents as idiomatic phrases, even if they do not conform to the morphological formation rules, and may resist change (Hackstein 2001: 15). Several factors are involved in the evolution of paradigms, and Bybee (1991: 72, 73) writes that the most frequent form has the greater chance of remaining unchanged. In general, making sentences or phrases is not the result of assembling lexical units according to grammatical rules, but it is highly dependent on the use of prefabricated idiomatic units. In fact, about 55% of any written or oral text consists of such prefabricated units (Erman and Warren 2000: 50). These units or conventionalized phrases, syntagms, often have a meaning that exceeds the meaning of the

individual lexical units, such as in *res publica* (Bonnet 2011: 361). They “do not allow syntactic manipulations in a predictable fashion, which make them difficult to account for by means of rules” (Erman and Warren 2000: 53). This is in agreement with the pragmatic view of Itkonen (1994) that there is no intralinguistic reality (apart from phonological considerations), that “the extralinguistic reality necessarily forces its way into language [...] Syntax is not autonomous, but for descriptive purposes we can pretend that it is” (Itkonen 1994: 49). With respect to inflectional morphology, both the learning of existing linguistic structures such as syntagms and the creation of new ones are based on analogy, whether conforming to rules or not. The influence of a phonetically neighboring paradigm, such as of *vehemens* or *quadrans*, may lead to analogic formation of a ppa. Ernout already remarks “l’Analogie a également introduit le génitif en *-ium* dans les thèmes consonantiques [...], si bien qu’à côté des **génitifs corrects** *dentum*, *fraudum*, *laudum*, *murum*, ont été créés *dentium*, *fraudium*, *laudium*, *murium* [...] Dans bien des cas il est impossible de reconnaître si la forme en *-ium* est ancienne ou analogique” (Ernout 1914: 84; my emphasis, indicating that Ernout had a normative perspective).

As was mentioned in the introduction, modern grammarians often exclude poetic texts as examples from their declension rules, whereas someone like Priscianus takes his examples from poetry as well as prose writers. Modern grammarians somehow think that poets bend the grammatical rules to suit their metric needs, and are therefore not reliable sources for these rules. But it may well be the other way around, i.e. that the rules simply permitted the various endings.

Is it conceivable that the declensional inconsistencies are of no consequence for the meaning of what is being said? What if the difference between *laudanti* and *laudante* was not perceived as being important? The coexistence of two declensional endings for the same case was not unfamiliar – Varro describes two endings of the gen.sg with the same meaning: *Neque enim, utrum Herculi an Herculis clauam dici oporteat, si doceat analogia, cum utrumque sit in consuetudine, non neglegendum, quod aequae sunt et breuia et aperta* (Var. L. 8.26).⁵⁹ And in for instance Livy’s *Ab urbe condita* I counted five times *insequente anno* and 15 times *insequenti anno*.⁶⁰ Bybee states that “[l]anguage does not have a structure

⁵⁹ ‘Nor is there in fact [need for analogy] if it would teach whether it is proper to say the club “of Hercules” [*Herculi*] or “of Hercules” [*Herculis*]; it [analogy] should be disregarded, as both of these are in current use, because both are equally short as well as clear’.

⁶⁰ Teubner edition: *insequente anno*: 4.12.1; 4.47.7; 4.49.7; 6.21.1; 6.22.4; *insequenti anno*: 3.10.5; 3.2.1; 4.23.1; 4.58.6; 4.61.3; 6.11.1; 6.22.1; 7.2.1; 7.9.1; 7.12.1; 7.16.1; 8.13.1; 8.38.1; 10.16.2; 27.7.5.

a priori, but rather the apparent structure emerges from the repetition of many local events (in this case speech events)” (Bybee 2006: 714). And if the semantic properties of the ppa cannot be easily determined, whether they are verbal, adjectival or substantival, and even stronger: if the exact syntactico-semantic properties are of no consequence for understanding what is being said because in the ppa verbal, adjectival and substantival meaning blend anyhow, then there is room for many exceptions to the declension “rules.”

A meaningful example suggesting the acceptability of these third declension exceptions, even if it is not a ppa example, may be found in one of Horace’s odes, where he uses *supplice* instead of the “regular” *supplici*: *unico gaudens mulier marito/prodeat iustis operata sacris/et soror clari ducis et decorae/supplice vitta/virginum matres ...* (Hor. *Carm.* 3.14).⁶¹ Would this have been perceived by the audience as incorrect language? My speculation is that it would not. Any incorrect language would have caught attention and would have deflected the minds of the audience from the real contents of the poem, i.e. Horace commemorating the safe return of Augustus from Spain and the vision of an era without civil war. With such an important matter at hand, surely Horace would not have risked being frowned at for using a wrong ablative, even if he used it for metrical reasons. I think these verses indicate that strict adherence to the “proper” ablative ending was not a matter of much weight: *supplice* simply was an optional abl.sg. ending.

Finally, the choice for a particular ablative ending may also have been triggered by aesthetic motives, to which Pseudo-Sergius points when he writes *auctores tamen euphonia secuti sunt*, as indicated in Section 3.

5 Conclusion

The inconsistent declension of the Latin present active participle may reflect the heterogeneous nature of the third declension as such, but a syntactico-semantic rule has been suggested, the most far reaching expression of which requires the endings *-i*, *-ium*, *-ia* (for abl.sg., gen.pl. and neuter nom.-acc.pl., respectively) whenever the ppa is used adjectively and *-e*, *-um*, *-a* whenever a verbal or substantival use is intended. This twofold declension finds support in arguments of Natural Morphology. My survey shows that ancient and medieval

⁶¹ ‘the woman rejoicing in her only husband, going forth as she has performed the appropriate rites, and the sister of the famous commander, and the mothers of virgins adorned with a prayer headband ...’

grammarians do not formulate a syntactico-semantic rule for the declension of the ppa.⁶² The neuter nom.-acc.pl. ending *-a* is hardly ever found and the use of *-i/-e* and *-ium/-um* endings is more variable than some grammarians would like to see. And several grammarians are not very consistent in their own ppa declension, which shows that they had no conventional rule of this kind. Famous classical authors with linguistic authority already in their times, such as Cicero and Virgil, show inconsistencies in their ppa inflection.

Therefore, we must conclude that the declension of the ppa has no syntactico-semantic dimension. Other explanations for the inconsistencies observed include diachronic changes: some of the forms may reflect a temporary phenomenon which would have disappeared through diachronic evolution and paradigm leveling if time had been given. Some forms may have persisted because of their frequency and force of syntagmatic expression or owing to the compelling analogy with other words and phrases.

However, a wish to capture the inconsistencies in ppa declension persists, which is understandable for prescriptive grammars. Some classical, medieval and modern grammarians would appear to have liked a regular system, even if this would imply having to deal with many exceptions. Some of us prefer rules with exceptions rather than no rules at all. But in my opinion we should not wish to devise strict grammatical rules for this multifaceted phenomenon to which native writers and audiences would appear not to have attached much importance.

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Abbreviations

- GL Keil, Heinisch. 1855–1880. *Grammatici Latini*. Leipzig: Teubner.
 PL Migne, Jacques-Paul. 1844–. *Patrologia Latina (Patrologiae cursus completus)*. Paris: Migne.

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⁶² With the exception of the anonymous author of the *Ars Ambrosiana* (see Section 3).

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