

# *Cuesta arriba e por llano: The development of “postpositions” in Spanish and Catalan\**

MANUEL PÉREZ SALDANYA  
GEMMA RIGAU

## *Abstract*

*In this article we analyze the formation of Spanish and Catalan phrases with an intransitive locative adverb preceded by a bare noun. These constructions can have a meaning of path and direction (i. e. Sp. río abajo, Cat. riu avall ‘downriver’) as well as body orientation (i. e. Sp. cara abajo, Cat. cara avall ‘face down’). A detailed analysis of the available historical documentation suggests the hypothesis that these constructions derive from more complex expressions headed by a preposition that lost its phonological properties, without losing its semantic and syntactic features. The presence of a phonologically null preposition is licensed both by the meaning of the incorporated noun and by the presence of a predicative directional adverb phrase. The case of the Catalan preposition cap ‘towards’, from the noun cap ‘head’, shows one step further in the evolution of these constructions.*

## **1. Introduction**

In Spanish and Catalan, like in other Romance languages, there are constructions consisting of a bare noun followed by a locative adverb. These are constructions of the type illustrated by Sp. *cuesta arriba* and Cat. *galtes avall*, see (1):

- (1) a. Sp. Siguió andando *cuesta arriba*  
‘S/he kept walking uphill’

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- b. Cat. Les llàgrimes li queien galtes avall  
‘tears poured down his/her cheeks’

The adverbs that participate in this type of construction have been traditionally characterized as postpositions, even though the noun phrase that precedes them is not really their complement. The goal of this paper is to trace the formation of these constructions and the changes they have undergone through the history of Spanish and Catalan. Our examples will be from Spanish for the most part, but we will also make use of Catalan data to strengthen some arguments and to point out differences between the two languages.

## 2. Descriptive or nominal adverbs

**2.1.** The adverbs that allow the usage that we have described belong to the class of the so-called “nominal place adverbs” (Plann 1986, 1988; Bosque 1989: 10.5; Pavón 1999: § 9.3.1) or “descriptive adverbs” (García-Miguel 2005: § 14.3.2).<sup>1</sup> Following Eguren (1999: § 14.4.5.1) and Pavón (1999: § 9.3.2.1), we consider that this class of adverbs is constituted by two clearly distinct subclasses: “transitive” adverbs, which have an explicit or implicit complement, as in (2), and “intransitive” adverbs, which do not allow a complement, although they may be preceded by a bare noun, as in (1) above.

- (2) a. Sp. Déjalo encima (de la cama)  
‘Leave it on top (of the bed)’  
b. Cat. És dins (l’habitació)  
‘It is inside (the room)’

These place adverbs are known as “nominal adverbs” because, for the most part, they consist of a noun preceded by a preposition: Sp.: *encima*, *arriba*; Cat.: *avall*, *damunt* (v. § 2.3). The term “descriptive adverbs”, on the other hand, refers to the fact that these adverbs establish locative oppositions that are related with different spatial axes; in particular, with binary distinctions related to the notions of verticality, horizontality or interiority. These oppositions are indicated in Table 1. On rows associated with the same locative notion, a horizontal continuous line separates binary semantic oppositions within each notion, and a discontinuous line separates synonymous variants. Finally, the symbol “†” indicates an archaic form.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> These are called “descriptive” adverbs in opposition to other types of locative adverbs, such as deictic (Sp. *aquí*, *allí*, etc.), relative (Sp. *do*, *donde*, etc.) and interrogative adverbs (Sp. *dónde*, *adonde*, etc.).

<sup>2</sup> Related to the notion of proximity, we also have the transitive adverbs *cerca* ‘near’ and *lejos* ‘far’ (Cat. *prop* and *lluny*), without an intransitive correlate. In addition, in

	Spanish		Catalan	
	transitive	intransitive	transitive	intransitive
verticality	†desuso encima	†asuso arriba	†desús damunt	†ensús amunt
	†deyuso debajo	†ayuso abajo	†dejús davall	†enjús avall
horizontality	delante	adelante	davant	avant, endavant
	detrás	atrás	†detrás darrere	†atrás arrere, enrerre, endarrere
interiority	dentro	adentro	dins	endins
	fuera	afuera	fora	enfora

Table 1: Nominal or descriptive adverbs

**2.2.** Both adverb subclasses already showed well-defined syntactic features in the medieval language.<sup>3</sup>

Transitive adverbs indicate simple localization and select a complement that indicates the place that serves as landmark for the localization. As already mentioned, this complement may be implicit if it can be deduced from the discourse context. With very few exceptions, the complement is introduced by the preposition *de* in Spanish from the very first texts, (3a), whereas in Catalan there is no preposition, (3b).<sup>4</sup>

- (3) a. OSp. *tenia vna cueua debaxo de vna peña muy fuerte* que era muy bien bastecida (*Gran conquista de Ultramar* [13th])  
 ‘It had a cave under a very strong rock, which was very well protected.’
- b. OCat. *ell se n’entrà en l’ort e començà de contemplar davall hun arbre.* (Sant Vicent, *Sermons* [15th c.], 192)  
 ‘He entered the garden and began to meditate under a tree’

In addition, these adverbs can be preceded by another deictic adverb, (4a), or by a dynamic preposition like Sp. *por, hasta, de, desde* and Cat. *per, tro* or *fins (a), de* and *des de*, (4b).

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Catalan, we have the adverbs *ençà* ‘towards here’ and *enllà* ‘towards there’, related to the notion of approximation, which can be postposed to a noun phrase.

<sup>3</sup> For a more detailed analysis of these constructions in present-day Spanish and Catalan, see Plann (1986), Bartra & Suñer (1992: 48 ff.), Pavón (1999: § 9.3.1-2), Sancho Cremades (2002: §§ 11.3.1, 11.4.1-3) and Rigau (2002: § 15.3.4.1), among others.

<sup>4</sup> In the modern language, however, the preposition *de* has been generalized in some Catalan dialects, e.g. *dins de l’habitació* ‘inside the room’ (Moll 1952: 206-207, Badia 1994: 244-245).

- (4) a. OSp. E estauan *alli debaxo* seguros como so vna peña (*Gran conquista de Ultramar* [13th c.])  
‘And they were down there safe as under a rock’
- b. OSp. E aquel rio viene *por debaxo de tierra* (Mandevilla, Libro de las Maravillas del mundo [14th c.])  
‘And that river flows underground’

Intransitive adverbs, because of their incorporated preposition, indicate direction or orientation and do not allow complements, (5a), although they themselves can function as complements of a directional preposition, (5b). On the other hand, these adverbs allow comparative quantification and, in this context, can be accompanied by a phrase introduced by *de*, (5c).

- (5) a. OSp. & por que era el solo tornose *abaxo* (*Gran conquista de Ultramar* [13th c.])  
‘And, because he was alone, he went back down’
- b. OSp. cubrio se del escudo & la espada decendio *hazia abaxo* (*Gran conquista de Ultramar* [13th c.])  
‘He protected himself with his shield and sword and went on downwards’
- c. OSp. y sy la piedra fuere *mas abaxo del lugar dicho* en las vias vritides: sea atrayda a las partes debaxo con vaños dilatantes y mollificantes (Gutiérrez de Toledo, *Cura de la piedra* [15th c.])  
‘And if the stone were lower than said place, in the urinary tracts, it should be attracted to the lower parts with dilating and soothing baths’

Finally, intransitive adverbs can be postposed to a noun phrase with or without a preposition (6a-b) or, as mentioned, to a bare noun (6c).

- (6) a. OSp. a diestro & a siniestro esta cercada la cibdad de buenos muros fuertes que descendian *por la cuesta ayuso* hasta el rio de todas partes (*Gran conquista de Ultramar* [13th c.])  
‘On right and left, the city is surrounded by good, strong walls that went downhill all the way to the river on all sides’
- b. OSp. el Çid diziendo esto uieron uenir *la cuesta ayuso* los poderes de los francos (Alfonso X, *Estoria de España II* [13th c.])  
‘When El Cid said this, they saw the troops of the Franks coming down the hill’
- c. OSp. E las que son altas de tras e baxas delante corren mucho *cuesta ayuso* e *cuesta arriba* e por llano. (*Moamyn, Libro de las animalias* [13th c.])  
‘And those that are tall in the back and short in the front run very fast downhill, and uphill, and on flat terrain’

In Old Catalan we find exactly the same situation: intransitive adverbs can occur in the three postnominal structures that we have mentioned for Spanish:

- (7) a. OCat. Com los turchs veren tan grans flames de foch *per lo riu avall*, tots se tengueren per perduts. (Martorell, *Tirant* [15th c.], 591)  
 ‘When the Turks saw such great flames of fire downriver, they all thought they were lost’
- b. OCat. hi d’un vell guall, / *lo riu avall* / la cabuçaren / he la llançaren. (Roig, *Spill* [15th c.], 1420-6)  
 ‘And from an old ford, downriver, they capsized it and sent it away’
- c. OCat. E deligat lo vexel, ab la corrent anaren *riu avall* (Martorell, *Tirant* [15th c.], 591)  
 ‘And having untied the boat, they went downstream with the current’

**2.3.** The two classes of descriptive (or nominal) adverbs show clear formal differences which are parallel to the aforementioned syntactic differences. As pointed out in § 2.1, in most cases, descriptive adverbs derive from the fusion of older prepositional phrases through the incorporation of the nominal element to the preposition, as in the Spanish examples in (8) and the Catalan examples in (9).<sup>5</sup>

- (8) a. IN CYMA ‘on top’ > encima ‘on top’  
 a’. AD RIPAM ‘towards the riverbank’ > arriba ‘on top, above’  
 b. DE + \*BASSIU ‘of + low’ > debajo ‘under, below’  
 b’. AD + \*BASSIU ‘towards + low’ > abajo ‘under’
- (9) a. DE MONTEM ‘of (near) the mountain’ > damunt ‘on top’  
 a’. AD MONTEM ‘towards the mountain’ > amunt ‘on top’  
 b. DE VALLEM ‘of (near) the valley’ > davall ‘under, below’  
 b’. AD VALLEM ‘towards the valle’ > avall ‘under, below’

In most cases, transitive and intransitive adverbs share the element that originally functioned as complement of the preposition, and differ in the preposition. Intransitive adverbs in Spanish have *a-* as their first constituent, whereas in Catalan we find either *a-* or *en-*. These elements derive from the

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<sup>5</sup> The complement of the original preposition may be a geographical term, as in (8a, a’) and (9), another adverb (like TRANS, whence Sp./Cat. *atrás/atràs* and *detrás/detràs*) or an adverbial adjective (\*BASSIU > *bajo*, whence Sp. *abajo* and *debajo*). The creation of locative prepositions and adverbs through the grammaticalization of constructions with nouns referring to geographical features is a very common process in the languages of the world (Heine 1997: chap. 3).

Latin prepositions AD and IN, a fact which explains the directional value of these adverbs.<sup>6</sup> Most transitive adverbs, on the other hand, have *de-* as initial element. This is from the Latin preposition DE, which gives the adverb a locative value. There is, nevertheless, one case with *en*, from Latin IN and there are also some case with the same value but with a single formative.

### 3. Constructions with a postposed adverb

As just mentioned, constructions of the type Sp. *cuesta arriba* and Cat. *galtes avall* in (1) have traditionally been analyzed as structures containing a noun and a postposition. From a historical point of view, this analysis could be valid for examples where the adverb is preceded by a noun phrase, as in (6b) and (7b), or by a bare noun, as in (6c) and (7c), but it would not account for cases where the noun phrase is selected by a preposition, as in (6a) and (7a). Notice that in these cases it is not possible to postulate that a noun phrase is selected both by a preposition and a postposition.

Let us first consider those constructions that contain a preposition and an adverb. Following a long tradition in the study of prepositions, Hale & Keyser (2002: 8, 213) consider that prepositions are bi-relational elements; that is, predicates that relate two arguments: a complement and a specifier. The same would apply to intransitive adverbs, with the proviso that, in this case, the complement has been historically incorporated to the preposition and, therefore, there is only a specifier.

Consider the sentence *Los soldados se fueron por el río abajo* ‘the soldiers went downriver’, which is parallel to the examples in (6a) and (7a). The locative preposition *por* expresses a dynamic relation between its complement, *el río*, and the noun phrase *los soldados*. At the same time, the descriptive adverbial phrase *abajo*, which we assume to be adjoined to the prepositional phrase, adds a new predication, which can be paraphrased as *el río hacia abajo*.<sup>7</sup> Taking into account the characteristics of the preposition and

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<sup>6</sup> As is well known, the Latin prepositions AD and IN could express both direction and location. Whereas AD expressed proximity, IN expressed interiorization. In medieval Catalan both prepositions retain the value of direction and, for this reason, Catalan intransitive adverbs contain elements derived from both prepositions, *a-* in the older forms and *en-* in more recent formations. In Spanish, on the other hand, *a* became specialized with the value of direction and *en*, of location, although the opposite usage is also attested (see Álvar & Pottier 1983: 287 ff., García-Miguel 2005: 14.5). Because of this early specialization, in Spanish intransitive adverbs contain *a* and the transitive form *encima* has *en*.

<sup>7</sup> It is a case of locative apposition, parallel to *Trabaja [en Oviedo, en la universidad]* ‘s/he works in Oviedo, at the university’. Between the two locative elements there is a relation of inclusion or belonging. This relation is also found in the case of *por el río abajo* ‘down river’ (the low part in *abajo* can only refer to the river). Bartra & Suñer (1992: 68 ff.) offer a different account. They analyze [*el río abajo*] as a small clause or verbless predicative structure.

the noun phrase, we can distinguish three types of constructions with a directional adverb, as shown in (10) for Spanish (first column) and Catalan (second column):

- (10) a. [PP [por [el río]] abajo] / [PP [pe(r) [(e)l riu]] avall]  
by the river down 'downriver'  
b. [PP [de [la torre]] abajo] / [PP [de [la torre]] avall]  
of the tower down 'down from the tower'  
c. [PP [de [cara]] arriba] / [PP [de [cara]] amunt]  
of face up 'facing up'

As we shall see in more detail later on, the first two constructions illustrated in (10) have a dynamic locative value, whereas the third one has a modal character and indicates simple orientation. Starting from these constructions, we will try to explain why in the case of (10a, c) there was a historical process of structural simplification as schematized in (11):

- (11) a. por el río abajo → el río abajo → río abajo (Sp.)  
pel riu avall → el riu avall → riu avall (Cat.)  
b. de cara arriba → cara arriba (Sp.)  
de cara amunt → cara amunt (Cat.)

#### 4. Dynamic constructions

##### 4.1. Prepositional constructions

Dynamic constructions can be preceded by the prepositions *por* and *de* in Spanish and *per* and *de* in Catalan. In both cases, the construction makes reference to the trajectory and direction of movement and, as a rule, is combined with a verb that indicates displacement of the subject (*ir(se)* 'go, leave', *venir* 'come', *descender* 'go down', *entrar* 'enter', *navegar* 'sail', *correr* 'run', etc.) or of the object (*lanzar*, *tirar*, *echar* 'throw', etc.), as can be seen in the Old Spanish examples in (12):

- (12) a. E yendo *por la mar adentro* pora alla; leuantosse le uiento contrario  
(Alfonso X, *Estoria de España I* [13th c.])  
'And going there in the high seas, the wind started blowing against him'  
b. entrando ellos subien tres ninnos *por aquella escalera arriba*.  
(Alfonso X, *General Estoria IV* [13th c.])  
'As they went in, three children were going up those stairs'  
c. & echaron les *de la torre ayuso* (Alfonso X, *Estoria de España, II* [13th c.], p. 375)  
'And they threw them down from the tower'

- d. Et sy gannado entro *de los moiones adentro* en la heredad sobre dicha puede lo prender el sennor del heredamiento (Alfonso X, *Fuero real* [13th c.])  
 ‘And if any cattle gets inside the land beyond the limits, the owner of the land can take them’

The two constructions, however, have many syntactic and semantic differences, which are conditioned by the properties of the two prepositions, as we will now show with Spanish examples.

a) From a semantic point of view, the preposition *por* refers to the path or trajectory of a movement, whereas the preposition *de* merely indicates the localization of the point of origin. In constructions with *por*, consequently, the idea of path or trajectory is expressed by the preposition and that of destination or goal, by the intransitive adverb. In constructions with *de*, on the other hand, the meaning of trajectory derives from the combination of the preposition of origin with the descriptive adverb, which, as mentioned, contains a preposition of goal.

b) Because of its “path” value, the preposition *por* combines with nouns that designate entities that are compatible with this value and are also compatible with the orientation of the adverb (mostly ‘top’, ‘bottom’ and ‘front’). For this reason, this preposition generally appears with nouns that refer to places, such as *cuesta* ‘slope’, *montaña* ‘mountain’, *loma* ‘hill’, *cerro* ‘hill’, *valle* ‘valley’, *camino* ‘road’, *senda* ‘trail’, *río* ‘river’, *arroyo* ‘creek’, *agua* ‘water’, *escalera(s)* ‘stairs’, *mar* ‘sea’, *cueva* ‘cave’, etc. It is, however, also found with other nouns whose referent can be conceptualized as a path, such as those that refer to certain body parts (*codo* ‘elbow’, *brazo* ‘arm’, *pierna* ‘leg’, *pecho* ‘chest, breast’, etc.):

- (13) a. *Por el cobdo ayuso* la sangre destellando (*Poema del Mio Cid* [13th c.])  
 ‘The blood glistening down his elbow’  
 b. e yuaselle la sangre *por los pechos ayuso* muy fuerte e a desmesura (*Historia Troyana* [14th c.])  
 ‘And his blood was running down his chest heavily and without measure’  
 c. la cabeza cubierta *por* unas greñas muy alborotadas, que se iban en vicio *por las sienes y la frente abajo* (Pereda, *Tipos y paisajes* [19th c.])  
 ‘The head was covered by disheveled hair that tumbled without order over his temples and down from his forehead’

The preposition *de*, on the other hand, does not have these restrictions and can appear with any kind of noun that refers to a point that can be interpreted as the origin of a movement. For this reason, it is perfectly compatible with deictic adverbs, as shown in (14).



- (14) a. Et mando les Jeu despeynnar las *dalli ayuso*. (*Biblia latina* [13th c.])  
 'And Jehovah ordered them to throw them over the cliff'  
 b. ¡Socorro, señores, que este loco quiere despeñarme *de aquí abajo!* (Cervantes, *Persiles* [16th c.])  
 'Help, gentlemen, this madman wants to throw me down over this cliff'

c) To the extent that in constructions with *por* the noun phrase is conceptualized as a path, it can appear with certain transitive verbs without the preposition. This is the case with verbs that allow a direct object referring to the path of a movement (such as *tomar* 'take', *subir* 'go up', *bajar* 'go down', etc.):

- (15) a. et desçende *el arroyo ayuso* (*Garci Fernández* [13th c.], 833)  
 'and it goes down the creek'  
 b. *subieron la cuesta arriba*, llegando a ellos un comendador portugués (Cieza de León, *Guerras civiles peruanas* [16th c.])  
 'they went up the hill and a Portuguese *comendador* came to them'  
 c. y seguimos *el río abajo* otras cincuenta leguas (Mármol, *La aventura del Amazonas* [18th c.])  
 'and we kept going downstream for fifty more leagues'

d) The fact that the preposition *de* imposes fewer semantic restrictions explains, finally, why it has developed meanings other than the locative one and, consequently, why it does not necessarily appear with verbs of movement. Constructions with *de*, thus, can designate a location that starts at a given point, (16a), or may refer to a period of time, (16b), or to a range in a scale, (16c).

- (16) a. Este sagitario era hombre *del ombligo arriba & del ombligo abaxo* era cauallo (*Historia Troyana* [14th c.])  
 'This Sagittarius was man from his navel up and horse from his navel down'  
 b. Et *dalli adelante* començo el pueblo delos judios a escriuir en tablas (Alfonso X, *General Estoria* V [13th c.]).  
 'And thenceforth, the Jewish people started to write on tablets'  
 c. La ley primera del titulo .xij. libro quarto del fuero dispone. que qualquier escriuano publico que fiziese carta falsa *de .c. maravedis abaxo* que le corten la mano. & *de .c. maravedis arriba* que muera por ello. (Alfonso X, *Siete partidas* [13th c.])  
 'The first law of title XII of the fourth book of the *fuero* states that a public scribe who makes a false note for less than a hundred maravedis should have his hand cut off, and if it is for more than a hundred maravedis, he must die for it.'

## 4.2. Constructions without an overt preposition

4.2.1. One of the two constructions analyzed in the previous section, that with *por*, has given rise to constructions of the type *cuesta arriba*. As shown with examples in (17a-b), *por*-constructions can be easily paraphrased with other expressions with a bare noun, whereas *de*-constructions do not allow such a paraphrase, (17c-d).

- (17) a. Fueron por el río arriba → Fueron río arriba ‘they went upriver’  
 b. Huyeron por la calle abajo → Huyeron calle abajo ‘They fled down the street’  
 c. Cayó del balcón abajo → \*Cayó balcón abajo ‘It fell down from the balcony’  
 d. Era hombre del ombligo arriba → \*Era hombre ombligo arriba ‘He was a man from the navel up’

Why these differences? Why is it that in one case, but not in the other, we can have an expression with a bare noun? To explain these differences we must take into account the meaning of the nouns that occur in each case. As mentioned, *por*-constructions have a “path” meaning and must include nouns that refer to entities with dimensions that are compatible with the concept of path. In other words, between the preposition *por* and the noun followed by an adverb there is a high degree of redundancy, since both of them refer to the same idea. Given this high redundancy degree, it is not surprising that at some point speakers started producing more synthetic constructions, by deletion of the preposition.

4.2.2. In this deletion process, a first possibility would be to simply eliminate the preposition, but keeping the noun phrase unaltered.

- (18) a. & acordaron vn día que luego que anocheciesse que embiassen todos los barcos & las naues *el río ayuso*: fasta vn lugar do auia vna yslla a ocho millas (*Gran conquista de Ultramar* [13th c.])  
 ‘And one day they decided that, at dusk, they would send all boats and vessels downriver, up to a place where there was an island, eight miles away’  
 b. los que pudian mas fuyendo escapar: entrauan *la mar a dentro*. y con la tanta turbacion del espanto / no sabian acertar en las fustas (*Crónica de Aragón* [15th c.])  
 ‘Those who were best able to escape got inside the sea and they were so frightened that they couldn’t find the wooden vessels’  
 c. E vn día el viniendo *su camino adelante* paso por vna villa que llaman torres (*Atalaya* [15th c.])  
 ‘And one day walking along his trail he went by a town that is called Torres’

- d. Y diéronle luego una cuchillada que le llevó la cabeza a cercén, y rodó el cuerpo *las escaleras abajo*. (López de Gómara, *Historia general de las Indias*, [16th c.])  
 'And then they slashed him with a knife cutting his head off, and his body went rolling down the stairs'

In cases like those in (18) above we assume that the construction still contains a prepositional phrase, but with a phonologically empty preposition, a preposition without phonetic realization but with the same syntactic behavior as the preposition *por*:<sup>8</sup>

- (19) Iban [<sub>PP</sub> [ [<sub>P</sub> Ø] el río] abajo]

On the other hand, the deletion of the preposition may have been favored by the fact that the transitive verbs exemplified in (15) also allowed a preposition, as can be seen in (20).

- (20) a. Y todos juntos descendieron *por la cuesta ayuso* a pie como estaban (Rodríguez de Montalvo, *Amadís* [15th c.], 1326)  
 'And they all together went downhill, on foot as they were'  
 b. Pasando adelante, *subiendo por la cuesta arriba* comenzó Caravajal y los suyos a dar en el fardaje del visorey (Cieza de León, *Guerras civiles peruanas* [16th c.])  
 'Going ahead, climbing up the hill, Carvajal and his men started striking the baggage of the viceroy'  
 c. Otro día siguió *por el río abajo* (García Icazbalceta, Colección de documentos para la historia de México [19th c.])  
 'He kept on going downriver for another day'

It is, therefore, understandable that the double syntactic behavior of these verbs was analogically extended to unaccusative verbs, especially when we take into account the high degree of redundancy that there is in the prepositional construction.

**4.2.3.** A second step was to use a determinerless noun, as in the examples in (21), which contain locative expressions that are parallel to those in (18) above.

<sup>8</sup> The prepositional nature of the construction explains why it can be coordinated with other locative prepositional phrases: *dexen pasar el venado por ssy por que alcançen el alano la cuesta a Riba o en el llano sy tal fuere el logar* 'Let the deer pass by, so they may reach the horse going uphill or on flat terrain as the place may be' (Alfonso XI, *Libro de la montería* [13th c.]). Catalan offers another argument in favor of the prepositional character of the phrase in (19) and (22). The clitic that agrees with the phrase is the locative adverbial *hi*, which cannot replace a noun phrase: *Van riu avall / Hi van* 'they go downriver / they go there'.

- (21) a. *ansi quedó en el agua y fuese río abajo y salió a una allanada (Incas [16th c.]*  
 ‘he thus remained in the water and went downriver and came out on flat land’
- b. *había en la mar grandísimas calmas, y por no caer en ellas no osaban engolfarse mar adentro (Garcilaso de la Vega, Comentarios [16th c.]*  
 ‘in the sea there were enormous calms and to avoid them, they did not dare go out to sea’
- c. *se encabritó la jaca. La dominó y continuó camino adelante (Trigo, Simpático [19th c.]*  
 ‘The mare got up on her hind legs. He controlled her and kept on going ahead’
- d. *Pero el sacristán, sin hacerle caso, le arrastró escaleras abajo (Rizal, Noli me tangere [19th c.]*  
 ‘But the sexton, without paying attention to him, dragged him down the stairs’

The abstract preposition of path can only be semantically recovered by a bare noun that can express a value of path. For this reason, it is not possible to have an abstract preposition of path followed by a phrase including a determiner or quantifier. This is because the nucleus of the bare noun phrase is incorporated to the abstract preposition, as schematized in (22).

- (22) [PP [<sub>PN</sub> Ø + río] abajo]

The fact that the structure of (22) is not totally fixed allows, with certain restrictions, the used of different types of nouns, as long as they can be interpreted as a path (cf. 4.1.b). Nevertheless, this construction shows a high degree of structural fixation (Bartra & Suñer 1992: 70 ff., Pavón 1999: 610 ff., Sancho Cremades 2002: 1704 ff.). Morphologically, the noun is generally in the singular, although there are also cases where it must be in the plural, if it designates multiple entities (i. e. *escaleras arriba* ‘upstairs’). Structurally, the complement of the abstract preposition is strongly constrained: it must be a bare noun, without any complements or modifiers, (23a), and the descriptive adverb is obligatory, (23b). The adverb can be omitted, on the other hand, when the path preposition is phonologically realized, (23c).<sup>9</sup>

- (23) a. \*Se fue calle *estrecha* abajo  
 b. Se fue senda \*(abajo)  
 c. Se fue por la senda (abajo)

<sup>9</sup> These constructions do not allow a degree modifier either: \**Subió senda muy arriba*. This may be because the preposition *a* (< AD) contained in an adverb such as *arriba* does not easily admit this type of modification.

Why is the presence of the descriptive adverb *abajo* necessary for the correct semantic interpretation of (22)? Arguably, the adverb crucially leads to the interpretation of (22) as a locative prepositional phrase. Since the preposition is phonologically empty, the constituent [ $\emptyset$  + *río*] by itself would not be interpretable as a path phrase (e.g. 'by the river'). It is the presence of the adjoined adverb that causes [ $\emptyset$  + *río*] to be interpreted as a locative prepositional phrase. In other words, the locative apposition consists of two locative phrases, where the first one is basic and the second one is an adjunct.<sup>10</sup> In (22), the second element in the apposition contributes to the first one being interpreted as locative. The presence of the descriptive adverb in (22) is more a semantic requirement than a syntactic one.<sup>11</sup>

Notice, furthermore, that the absence of the overt preposition makes it possible for the construction to acquire new meanings, so that it can be used, for instance, to indicate pure localization, as in (24a-b)<sup>12</sup>. It is also found in idiomatic constructions with a metaphorical value, as in *hacerse cuesta arriba* 'to become difficult', (24c).

- (24) a. llamaron a sus hombres, que se habían apartado un poco río abajo  
(Lizárraga, *La descripción de las Indias* [16th c.])  
'they called their men, who had strayed off a little downriver'
- b. donde quiera que la noche les tomaba: en llano o *cuesta arriba* o *abajo*, allí paraban y sacrificaban los carneros (Murúa, *Historia General del Perú* [16th c.])  
'wherever nightfall found them, on flat land, or uphill or downhill, there they stopped and sacrificed the rams'
- c. Y aun confesar esto *se les hace cuesta arriba*, porque el demonio no puede saber lo que está por venir, no teniendo espíritu profético. Ellos tienen por fuerte argumento (Huarte de San Juan, *Examen* [16th c.], 310)  
'And even confessing this is difficult for them, because the devil cannot know what is going to happen, not having the gift of prophesy. They take this as a strong argument.'

**4.2.4.** The chronology of the process that gave rise to abstract prepositions raises some questions. In principle, we might expect the three structures in (11a) to develop in time: first, the most complex (prepositional) structure

<sup>10</sup> The same is true of temporal appositions: [[*mañana*] a *las siete*] 'tomorrow at seven'. The presence of the adjunct prepositional phrase makes it impossible for *mañana* to be interpreted as a noun, since a time prepositional phrase can only be adjoined to another prepositional phrase or to a time adverbial phrase.

<sup>11</sup> The presence of the directional adverb makes it possible for a noun phrase like *río arriba* to appear in a peripheral position in the sentence, where it can be interpreted as a locative phrase: *Río arriba, se podía pescar* 'upriver one could fish'.

<sup>12</sup> Similarly, *por la Mancha*, which is a path expression, is interpreted as static locative in the sentence *Está por la Mancha* 's/he is somewhere around La Mancha'.

should appear; then, in a second stage, we would find the construction with a determiner but without a preposition; and, finally, the construction with a bare noun would be found. Roughly this process is what we have in Spanish in examples like *mar adentro*, *río abajo*, *camino adelante*, *escaleras ayuso/abajo* and *loma ayuso/abajo* (see tables 4-7 in the appendix). Nevertheless, in the case of *cuesta ayuso* and similar examples, all three constructions are already found in Spanish texts of the 13th century, as can be seen above in (6). Even more, the construction without a preposition is the most frequent one in old texts with nouns such as *cuesta* ‘hill, slope’ (see tables 2-3) and the same is true for Catalan *costa*, (25).

- (25) e·lls dits Bernat e Guillem *costa avayll* sí y coragueran [...] e  
salavòs lo dit Guillem ab lo dit Romanyà *costa avayll* sí coragueran  
(*Mallorquí* [14th c.], 278)  
‘The aforementioned Bernat and Guillem did run downhill [...] and  
then the aforementioned Guillem with the aforementioned  
Romanyà did run downhill’

It should be mentioned that the construction without an overt preposition is found from a very early stage not only with the common noun ‘hill’, but also with place names, as we can see in (26a), which includes examples of all three constructions we are analyzing, and in the excerpts from *Poema del Mio Cid* in (26b-c).

- (26) a. E dono vos e confirmo vos la deffessa que dizen de Cardeñuela que  
va por *Val de Loças ayuso* contra la parte de Fuente el Olmo e llega  
a la vega de Fuente el Olmo e va contra ayuso a los Llagremares,  
*Val de Moro ayuso*; e passa la vega de Cardeñuela orilla del monte  
comme va *el Valladar arriba* e allega en derecho de Val de  
Avejuela... (*Contienda* [13th c.], p. 165)  
‘And I give you and confirm you in the possession of the grazing  
grounds of Cardeñuela, which go down from Val de Loças, against  
the side of Fuente el Olmo, all the way to the valley of Fuente el  
Olmo, and go down to Llagremares, down from Val de Moro, and  
through the valley of Cardeñuela close to the mountain, up through  
Valladar, and up to the right side of Val de Avejuela’
- b. Vanse *Fenares arriba* quanto pueden andar (*Poema del Mio Cid*  
[13th c.], v. 542)  
‘They go up from Fenares, as much as they can walk’
- c. A osadas corred, que por miedo non dexedes nada, /  
*Fita ayuso* e por Guadalajara (*Poema del Mio Cid* [13th c.], v.  
445-6)  
‘Run bravely, do not leave anything behind because of fear, down  
from Fita and through Guadalajara’

What is special about these combinations? In the case of proper names, the explanation is simple. Given the fact that names are necessarily definite and are generally constructed without an article, there is no possible intermediate construction with an article and without an overt preposition. Slightly more complicated is the case of the combinations with *cuesta*. If we observe the oldest examples without a determiner, we can conclude that their early usage is related to the generic and unspecific nature of the noun, as in (24c) and (27).

- (27) a. & quando descendieren *cuesta ayuso* & los quisieren alçar, alçarlos an a colpe bien assi como que se quema (*Libro de los caballos* [13th c.], 16r)  
 ‘And when they went down the hill and they wanted to make them stand, they had to raise them by blows, as if it were burning’
- b. Esta dolencia viene al cavallo por muy grand carga que trahe o por grand jornada que faz o porque corre mucho *cuesta ayuso* (*Libro de los caballos* [13th c.], 16r)  
 ‘Horses get this pain from carrying loads that are too big, or from working long hours, or from running too fast downhill’

To the extent that a slope (*cuesta*) does not refer only to a path, but also to a specific type of path, it is frequently used with a generic and unspecific value. For this reason *cuesta* admits the deletion of the determiner more readily than other nouns. This also explains the fact that the construction can acquire the meaning of manner (type of path), as in (28). From the 15th century on, the expression *hacerse cuesta arriba* is documented with the displaced meaning ‘to become difficult’, as in (24c) above.

- (28) a. el camino es *cuesta abaxo* et cobierto de texos muy tristes (Fernández de Madrigal, *Libro de las paradojas* [15th c.] p. 18)  
 ‘The road is downhill, and it is covered with very scraggly yews’
- b. Fuerte cosa es para la flaqueza del hombre ver que el camino de sus vezinos es ancho y llano y el suyo angosto y *cuesta arriba* (Ponce de la Fuente, *Exposición* [16th c.]  
 ‘A difficult thing for the weakness of man is to see that his neighbors’ road is wide and flat and his, narrow and uphill’

Leaving aside the specific case of *cuesta*, we may conclude that in the 15th-18th centuries, when the alternation among the three constructions shows the greatest vitality, the construction without a determiner has a generic value. It is used when the referential character of the path does not need to be made explicit, (29a), or when it has displaced values, as in (28). On the other hand, the construction with a determiner, and especially that with a preposition, is more adequate to point out the referential (or specific) character of the noun

phrase and to introduce differences based on determination (*por un/aquel/el río abajo*), as in (29b-c).

- (29) a. para llegar allá era menester veinte días de camino *río abajo*;  
(Villagutierre, *Historia de la conquista del Itzá* [16th c.])  
'to arrive there one needed twenty days of going downriver'
- b. anduvimos veinte leguas grandes *por aquel río abajo*. (Cortés,  
*Cartas de relación* [16th c.])  
'We marched over twenty leagues down that river'
- c. entraron *por un gran río abajo* (Garcilaso de la Vega, *Comentarios reales* [16th c.])  
'they entered by going down a great river'

The possibility of using the construction with a determiner or with determiner and preposition starts losing vitality from the 17th century on. As a matter of fact, nowadays it would be anomalous to use the construction with a determiner. One would have to employ a locative prepositional phrase in apposition: *Se fue hacia arriba por aquella senda*, *Se fue por una senda hacia arriba* 's/he went up on that trail'

## 5. The manner construction

5.1. In addition to the locative constructions that we have analyzed so far, there are, from the beginning, other constructions with an intransitive descriptive adverb, a preposition and a bare noun referring to a part of the body:

- (30) a. echosse tendido *de cara ayuso* en tierra. (Alfonso X, *Estoria de España I* [13th c.])  
'He lay face down on the ground'
- b. NICOLETE. – ¿Qué, mi vida, *de cara arriba*? LOÇANA. – Yo te lo diré después. (Delicado, *La lozana andaluza* [16th c.])  
N: 'what, my love, face up?' L: 'I'll tell you later'

These constructions are different from those analyzed above. To begin with, this is a static construction, with a verb that does not express movement, but, rather, position or orientation of the body. Secondly, the preposition *de* is not a locative preposition, but a preposition of means or manner. For this reason, the example in (30a) could be paraphrased as *se tendió con la cara abajo en tierra*.<sup>13</sup> Thirdly, as is usually the case with manner and matter

<sup>13</sup> With the preposition *de* of means, the adjunct locative phrase may be a prepositional phrase, e.g. *a la pared* in the construction *de cara a la pared* 'against the wall'. For an analysis of this type of construction in Basque, see Hualde (2002: §3).



prepositions, *de* selects a bare noun, not a noun preceded by a determiner or quantifier.<sup>14</sup>

A phonetically empty preposition (of means or matter) also arose in this case, just as happened with the locative construction with *por*. This process is documented from the beginning and produced the rapid abandonment of the construction with an overt preposition.

- (31) a. el dormir *boca arriba* es muy malo (*Sevillana medicina* [14th c.])  
 'sleeping face up is very bad'
- b. la mejor es que sse comjençe sobrel lado diestro. & desende al sinjestro. non *paparriba* njn *boca ayuso* njn *boca abierto*. por que dormjr *paparriba* apareja el cuerpo a malos morbos (*Visita y consejo de médicos* [14th c.])  
 'the best thing is to start on the righ side, and move to the left side, not face up or face down or with an open mouth; for sleeping face up exposes the body to bad airs.'
- c. si la noche las toma en el camino, ellas se echan *cara arriba* por que puedan guardar sus alas de la lluuia & del ruçio. (*Propiedades de las cosas* [15th c.])  
 'If nightfall finds them on the road, the lie face up, so they can keep their wings out of the rain and the dew'

As in the case of the constructions with *por* analyzed above, the abstract preposition of means could develop because its meaning is understood from the noun and adjoined adverb. Nouns like *cara* 'face' and *boca* 'mouth' which indicate parts of the human body, when accompanied by a directional preposition, express orientation. This meaning of orientation made it possible to use a phonologically empty preposition of means or matter.

- (32) [PP [P/N Ø + boca] abajo]

In (32), the noun *boca* 'mouth' moves from its position as a prepositional complement, attaching to the empty preposition.

**5.2.** The Catalan data corroborate our hypothesis. Next to the prepositional construction, (33a), we soon have the construction without an overt preposition, (33b):

<sup>14</sup> In our corpus we have, nevertheless, found an example with a noun phrase with a determiner: *fizo una grand laguna de agua en su casa. & mando a Drimiden que se echasse en ella & se tendiesse de la cara arriba* 'He made a great puddle of water in his house and ordered Drimiden to go inside and lie face up' (Alfonso X, *General Estoria X* [13th c.]).

- (33) a. E quan vench lo dia, ell se mès en lo llit de cendra ab lo cilici gitat  
*de cara amunt*, per tal que ves lo cel. (Sant Vicent, *Sermons* [15th  
 c.], 257)  
 ‘And when the day came, he got in the bed of ashes with the hair  
 shirt, face up, so he could see the sky’
- b. ell ha ésser assotat terriblement tot nuu, gitat en terra *boca avall*, e  
 ab nirvis de bous sechs deu pendre certs colps (Eiximenis,  
*Regiment* [14th c.], 154)  
 ‘he was terribly whipped all naked, thrown on the ground face  
 down, and had to take blows with dried cow tendons’

In Catalan, nevertheless, we have a specific evolution in the case of *cap* ‘head’, one of the nouns that appear most frequently in this construction. This noun has been reanalyzed as a directional preposition with the value of ‘toward’.

The position of the head can indicate orientation, which explains its being used with a meaning of manner, to indicate the orientation or position of the body.<sup>15</sup>

- (34) a. E axí se humiliarà, *cap avall*, en infern (Sant Vicent, *Sermons* [15th  
 c.], 102)  
 ‘And thus he will be humiliated, going down, in hell’
- b. he us penjaré *cap avall* segons de traïdor se pertany (Martorell,  
*Tirant* [15th c.], LXXII)  
 ‘and I will hang you head down, as is fit for traitors’

In constructions like those above, *cap* still functions as a noun, but it can already be interpreted as a preposition, given the fact that the lowering of the head implies being down. The change in category from noun to preposition took place in ambiguous contexts, like those in (34). Notice that the change was possible to the extent that intransitive adverbs can function as complements of a directional preposition, as indicated above in 2.2.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> As is well known, nouns referring to parts of the body, together with geographical terms, are one of the most common sources of prepositions through grammaticalization (Heine 1997: cap. 3).

<sup>16</sup> In Gascon and in Basque (most likely because of Gascon influence), we find the same process by which the noun ‘head’ has become a preposition (a postposition in Basque): Gasc. (*de*) *cap à la casa*, Bq. *etxeari buruz* / *etxera buruz* (Hualde 2002: § 3). In the Baque case, *buru* ‘head’ is in instrumental form and *etxe* ‘house’ in the dative or allative. In Basque, on the other hand, the grammaticalization of *buruz* has been more intense, since it has acquired the abstract meaning of ‘about’.

- (35) [PP [ [P/N Ø + cap] avall] → [PP [P cap] [AdvP avall]]

Even though the change must have taken place towards the end of the Middle Ages, the only documented example is from the end of the 15th century, possibly because the use of *cap* 'head' as a preposition was felt to be vulgar.

- (36) Y ab tot que per jove no·s deja entendre, / car prou se coneix que va  
*cap avall* (*Olives* 354)  
 'And although he is young, it does not show, / because it is clear  
 enough that he is going downhill'

In this example, *cap avall* 'head down' has a metaphorical value and the sentence expresses movement. The negative idea of going downwards has been transformed into the also negative idea of losing one's physical and intellectual abilities (like Eng. *to go downhill*). The meaning of movement, even if it is only metaphorical, forces the interpretation of *cap* as a preposition.<sup>17</sup>

## 6. Conclusions

The so-called intransitive locative adverbs are part of a set of adverbs that can be characterized as descriptive, since they express spatial distinctions by reference to different spatial axes. As a rule, intransitive adverbs cannot select a complement, since they arise from the incorporation of a nominal element to a directional preposition (*arriba*, *avall*). They can, on the other hand, be postposed to a bare noun in constructions with a directional value equivalent to 'place through which' (i. e. Sp. *río abajo*, Cat. *riu avall* 'downriver') and in expressions of body orientation (i. e. Sp. *cara abajo*, Cat. *cara avall* 'face down'). A detailed analysis of the available historical documentation has led us to propose the hypothesis that these constructions arose from more complex expressions headed by a preposition that lost its phonological properties, without losing its semantic and syntactic features. The presence of an abstract or phonologically null preposition is licensed both by the meaning of the incorporated noun and by the presence of a predicative directional adverb phrase. Thus, there is no loss of semantic information.

The case of the Catalan preposition *cap* 'towards', from the noun *cap* 'head' shows one step further in the evolution of these constructions.

<sup>17</sup> In these constructions the adverb indicates direction, but it is also possible for the direction to be expressed by a prepositional phrase with *a*, as in *cap a Roma* 'headed to Rome' > 'towards Rome' (Coromines, *DECat*, II, 522a). This explains why with noun phrases the sequence *cap a*, is used, instead of only *cap*.

**Appendix: Frequency tables**

Here we include frequency tables for some of the most common directional constructions in Spanish. In the tables we indicate percentages (and, in parentheses, numbers of examples) for each century and each of the three structures that are analyzed: the construction with a noun phrase preceded by *por*, the construction with a noun phrase without preposition and the construction with a bare noun. These tables are based on the examples that appear in Mark Davies' *Corpus del Español*.

Century	<i>por</i> NP Adv	Det NP Adv	N Adv
13th		50 (1)	50 (1)
14th		66,6 (2)	33,3 (1)
15th			100 (8)
16th	23,2 (10)	25,6 (11)	51,2 (22)
17th	6,2 (1)	24 (4)	68,8 (11)
18th			100 (12)
19th	10,9 (5)		89,1 (41)
20th			100 (19)

Table 2. Frequency of *cuesta arriba/asuso* 'uphill'

century	<i>por</i> NP Adv	NP Adv	N Adv
13th	10 (1)	40 (4)	50 (5)
14th		83,3 (5)	16,7 (1)
15th	70,6 (12)	6'9 (1)	23'5 (4)
16th	46 (17)	16,2 (6)	37,8 (14)
17th		14'3 (1)	85'8 (6)
18th			100 (3)
19th	24'2 (8)	6'1 (2)	69'7 (23)
20th c.	5'3 (1)		94'7 (18)

Table 3. Frequency of *cuesta abajo/ayuso* 'downhill'

century	<i>por</i> NP Adv	NP Adv	N Adv
13th	83,3 (5)	16,7 (1)	
14th	66,7 (2)	33,3 (1)	
15th			
16th	6,7 (1)	80 (12)	13,3 (2)
17th		100 (4)	
18th			100 (3)
19th	4,2 (1)		95,8 (23)
20th			100 (7)

Table 4. Frequency of *mar adentro* 'out to sea'

century	por NP Adv	NP Adv	N Adv
13th	50 (1)	50 (1)	
14th	14,3 (1)	85,7 (6)	
15th	80 (4)	20 (1)	
16th	35,6 (52)	52,7 (77)	11,6 (17)
17th	14,5 (20)	58 (80)	27,5 (38)
18th	25 (7)	10,7 (3)	64,3 (18)
19th	27 (10)	29,7 (11)	43,2 (16)
20th			100 (37)

Table 5. Frequency of *río abajo/ayuso* 'downriver'

century	por NP Adv	SN Adv	N Adv
13th			
14th			
15th	10 (1)	90 (9)	
16th	60,9 (28)	39,1 (18)	
17th		100 (1)	
18th	100 (1)		
19th	8,3 (1)	41,7 (5)	50 (6)
20th			100 (4)

Table 6. Frequency of *camino adelante* 'along the road'

century	por NP Adv	NP Adv	N Adv
13th			
14th	100 (1)		
15th			
16th	62,5 (5)	37,5 (3)	
17th		100 (1)	
18th			
19th	8,3 (1)		91,7 (11)
20th			100 (8)

Table 7. Frequency of *escalera(s) abajo/ayuso* 'downstairs'

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<sup>18</sup> Except for the examples from *El Poema del Mio Cid*, the rest of the Spanish examples are from the online corpora of the Spanish Academy (rae.es) and Mark Davies (corpusdelespanol.org). In the examples from the RAE corpus we indicate number of page and/or paragraph.

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*Manuel Pérez Saldanya*  
Universitat de València  
saldanya@uv.es

*Gemma Rigau*  
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona  
Gemma.Rigau@uab.es