La interpretación del preverbio latino au- (aufero y aufugiō) que acepta la mayoría de manuales modernos (<*h₂eu, ‘fuera’) debe ser descartada. Tanto los datos de la epigráfía latina como la distribución de alomorfos de ab- en la lengua clásica demuestran que au- debe considerarse el reflejo regular de ab- en frente de f-.

Most of the handbooks derive Latin au- (in aufero and aufugiō) from PIE *h₂eu ‘away, off’, but this must be rejected. Inscriptional evidence as well as the distribution of the allomorphs of ab- in Classical Latin show that au- must be regarded as the regular reflex of ab- in front of f-.

Una praepositio est af quae nunc tantum in accepti tabulis manet ac ne his quidem omnium, in reliquo sermone mutata est; nam amovit dicimus et abegit et abstulit, ut iam nescias a’ne verum sit an ab <an> abs. Quid, quod etiam abfugit turpe visum est et aber noluerunt, aufugit et aufer maluerunt? Quae praepositio praeter haec duo verba nullo alio in verbo reperietur.

“The same preposition is of, which now exists only in acknowledgements of receipt and not even in all of them; in other usage it has changed. For we say amovit and abegit and abstulit, so that you do not know whether a is true or ab or abs. And what is more, even abfugit seemed ugly and no one wanted abfer, that is why everybody prefers aufugit and aufer. Except for these two words, this preposition is not found in any other word.”

Cicero, Orator 158 (text according to Kroll 1913)
The Latin preverb *au-* ‘away’ only occurs in *auferō* ‘to carry away’ and *aufugiō* ‘to flee’, both attested from Plautus onwards. None of the other Italic languages have a prefix which goes back to Italic *au-*. In many handbooks, *au-* is regarded as the regular reflex of PIE *h₂eu* ‘away, off’, and cognate with Greek αὖ ‘again, on the other hand’, Old Church Slavic u- ‘away’, Old Prussian aumīsnan ‘ablation’ and Old Irish ó, iā ‘away, from’. Thus, e.g., in Sommer 1914: 263, Walde-Hoffmann 1938 I: 79, Pokorny 1959: 72, Ernout-Meillet 1959: 2, Sommer-Pfister 1977: 194, Leumann 1977: 61. It seems likely that this PIE word is indeed contained in Latin aut ‘or’, Oscan aut, avt ‘but, or’ < *au-te-li.\(^1\) Latin autem ‘on the other hand’ probably represents a more recent formation of aut plus *-em (cf. item, idem, quidem). The speakers of Latin, however, could not deduce an element au- from aut or autem. We thus observe that auferre and aufugiō are completely isolated within Italic, and also, that there is no semantic difference within Latin with the very frequent preverb *ab(s)*. These data suffice to doubt the identity of *au-* with PIE *h₂eu*, and they feed the suspicion that *au-* derives from *ab-*.

In fact, the idea that *au-* is a phonetic variant of *ab-* is anything but new. It was proposed by Wöllflin (1892: 506) and, independently it seems, by Bréal (1894: 48). However, in his influential introduction, Brugmann (1911: 810) writes: ‘Im historischen Latein nur noch au-fero, au-fugio. Diese Formen zeigen, dass sich hier ab- auf Kosten von au- ausgebreitet hat. Jene Komposita behaupten sich, weil aff- = *ab-f- oder *abs-f- zweideutig geworden war (vgl. affero = ad-fero.” In 1920, the Dutch classicist Muller discusses the problem from all angles, and —to my mind— convincingly shows that *au-* must indeed have developed from *ab-*, and is unlikely to be a descendant of PIE *h₂eu*. After his article, one would expect the issue to have been closed, and his conclusions adopted by the handbooks. Such was not the case, however. In 1923: 205f., Eduard Hermann briefly mentions *au-* in his book on Silbenbildung, claiming that Muller was wrong about the descent from *ab-*. Hermann only spends a few lines on the complex of forms which took Muller five pages, and it is clear from his discussion that he has misunderstood the Dutchman. Hermann lays the assumption that auff- derives from *abs-f- at Muller’s door, but this is exactly what Muller had not claimed. Muller (p. 113) assumes that *apsfero* would have yielded *asfero* (admittedly, a doubtful view), and that *abs-tuli* and ablātum suggest earlier *abfero.\(^2\)* Hermann’s short-hand dismissal of Muller’s conclusions appears to

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\(^1\) The source of *-tīē* is uncertain. Final *-tī* could have been taken from *ati* (> Lat. at ‘but’) or *eti* (> Lat. et ‘and’); final *-te* may be connected with Skt. uṭī ‘and’ (less clear is Gr. αὖτε ‘again’, which may have PIE *-kē(e)*). O. auī, U. uīe, *ote* ‘or’ cannot be derived from *-ti*, but must have had a longer vowel in the auslaut, *-i* or *-ei* (Untermann 2000: 137).

\(^2\) More recently, Russell (1988: 168) has also noted that *au- < *ab(s)- “would make more sense” in view of the perfect *abstuli*. 
have played a decisive role in the explicit rejection by Walde-Hoffmann 1938 of the assumption ab- > au-. The authority of the most comprehensive Latin etymological dictionary was accepted without any discussion by Ernout-Meillet in their dictionary (1959), as well as by the subsequent handbooks (e.g. Leumann 1977: 157f., 561). A last echo of the opposite view was heard from Marstrander (1928: 245), who writes that “ab hat sich offenbar in au entwickelt vor einem bilabialen f, dem es sich, um von ad getrennt zu bleiben, nicht assimilierte.”

As Muller already argued in 1920, Brugmann’s reasoning that au- was retained in order to avoid the coalescence with aff- < *ad-f-, is built on quicksand. Firstly, the assimilation of *ad-f- > aff- was a relatively recent Latin development, as is shown by Oscan ad- in adfist ‘he will be present’, Umbrian affertur ‘high priest’, probably < *ad-b'erm-tor-, and Archaic Latin apurfinem ‘apud finem’ (CIL 5, 4th century BC, Lake Fucinus), arfuise ‘adfuises’ (Senatus Consultum de Bacchanalibus, 186 BC). Thus, au- would have had to survive with a recognizable meaning well into Latin times. But there are no indications that au- ever existed in Faliscan, Sabellic, or Venetic. Of course, since the other Italic languages are preserved in only a fraction of the amount of evidence for Latin, it cannot be considered proven that *au- did not exist there; but neither is it very likely. Even less so since the meaning of this au- would have been the same or nearly the same as that of ab-. Secondly, the recent date of the assimilation *ad-f- > aff- also implies that the preverb au- changed from being a semantically recognizable preverb to a nearly extinct one in a very short period of time. This cannot be completely excluded, but I would regard it as very improbable. Thirdly, au- would have been dropped everywhere but remained in front of f-, in order to disambiguate *afferō (< *ab(s)j) from afferō (< *ad). This explanation is untenable: a form cannot be preserved in order to remedy a future merger. One could only assume that au- was introduced from elsewhere to the position in front of f-, because aff- had now become ambivalent. But in view of the absence of au- from the entire remaining Latin lexicon, this is extremely unlikely. Fourthly, both Brugmann and Marstrander assume that *ab(s)f- would have phonetically yielded *aff-, but this remains to be proven. Unlike ob and especially sub, which are seen to assimilate their b to many different following consonants (yielding, e.g., oc-, of-, og-, om-, op-), no such development is attested for ab.

The basic variant of the prefix is ab-, corresponding to Umbrian ap- in apehtre ‘from outside’. The voiced word-final stop in Latin points to Proto-

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3 Maybe also to Paelignian and Oscan compounds in af-, viz. P. afofed, O. aflakus, aflukan, afstist, but the meaning and interpretation of these forms is very uncertain, cf. UNTERMANN 2000: 56-60.
Italic *ap (compare Archaic Latin feced < *fēket), 4 which must derive from PIE *hēpeo ‘away’. The absence of final *-o in Italic is problematic, but this problem does not concern us now. 5 The distribution of the allomorphs of the prefix is as follows: 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sound before</th>
<th>Allomorph</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>vowel and h-</td>
<td>ab-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>voiced dentals (d, i, l, n, r)</td>
<td>ab-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s-</td>
<td>ab-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>voiceless stops (p, t, c, qu)</td>
<td>abs-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>voiced labials (b, m, v)</td>
<td>å-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f-</td>
<td>au-; å-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l, v, m-</td>
<td>af (as a preposition)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is clear that ab- was the original variant in front of vowels, whereas abs- is always used in front of voiceless stops, apparently in order to avoid a voiceless variant ap-. The form abs is likely to be inherited, if we compare it with Gr. ak ἀκ ‘back, again’; see Russell 1988 for more evidence and a theory on the origin of preverbs and adverbs with and without *s. In front of p- and sp-, dissimilation has led to a(s)-: asporlō, aspérnor. In front of s-, we simply cannot see whether we are dealing with *ab- or with *abs-.

The interpretation of ab- in front of voiced dentals and å- in front of labials is less easy. Leumann 1940: 8 suggests an original distribution of ab- in front of vowels, abs- in front of consonants; he accordingly traces å- to *abs-. But there is no direct evidence for *s in front of the voiced obstruents; its reconstruction is motivated by the parallelsism with å- < *eks- ‘out’ as in ēurtō, ēmargō, cf. Sommer 1914: 263. If *abs- originally stood in front of voiced stops, it is unclear why *abs-d- did not yield ådd-, or *abs-n- > ånn-. One might assume that *abs- was only introduced before voiced labials, in order to avoid a collision of two labials; but nobody addresses this point.

4 Szemerényi (1973: 59) argues that “Italic as a whole shows the development of final voiceless stops to voiced stops”, whereas Russell (1988: 151) is much more hesitant. Reconstructing Proto-Italic *ap is problematic because of the Oscan prepositions ovr ‘under’, urch, ap ‘at’, which contrast with O. 1.d < *t. The alternative explanation for Latin ò is from voicing in front of voiced anlaut, cf. Sommer 1914: 275 who gives as an example abdico < *apoldoću.

5 Proto-Italic *hēpe may have been formed next to *hēps on the example of *ek(s), cf. Sabellic *ek (O. ek, U. ek, ede, E, SPic. e) beside Latin ex, and Celtic *ek- beside *eks-; see Russell 1988. Similar problems surround sub < PIE *tįlo Pompe and oh < PIE *hologi. It has been argued that Venetic shows traces of unapocopated *op and *upo in compounds (cf. Lejeune 1974: 120-122), but the evidence consists only of names, and is therefore inconclusive.

6 The variants of the independent preposition are given by Sommer 1914: 298 for Plautus: ab usually before vowel, -r, -r; å before v, p, b, m, f, -r, -q, -g, usually also before n, stronger vacillation before r, d, l, s; abs often before t, tuh; but also abs terrā, apis quā, abs Pseudolā. See Kollmann (1976) for statistics on å, ab, abs in other authors, and (1977) for a classification according to the initial consonant of the following word.
And in any case, Latin shows no such scruples for ob and sub, which easily combine with a following labial into obb- (only in obbrulësció), off-, omn- (only in omittō; otherwise obm-), opp-, subb-, suff-, summ-, supp-.

It seems at least equally likely that ab- in front of voiced dentals reflects s-less *ab-, and that the same prefix yielded ā- in front of voiced labials. In fact, I think that the inscriptionsal evidence for the preposition af in front of labials, which can hardly reflect *ab-, confirms that we may posit *ab- in front of all voiced consonants. In addition, af shows that the development of b may have been different after a than after o and u.

The form af occurs on a few inscriptions from Rome as well as from outside town; in all cases, it concerns a preposition rather than a prefix. The attestations have been discussed by Vine 1993: 175-189, who concludes that the original locus of af was in front of l- and v- followed by a back rounded vowel: af.louco (CIL 2444, Nemus Dianæ, 3rd/2nd century BC), af.luco (CIL 2869, Ager Capenatis, ca. 200 BC), af.Luco (CIL 728, Rome), af.Lucretia (CIL VI 17780, Rome, 2nd-3rd c. AD), af.vobeis (CIL 586, Epistula ad Tiburtæ, ca. 159 BC). Vine (p. 188) infers that the bilabial stop was assimilated to the following labial(ized) continuant, and af was probably pronounced as [aβ]. In his view, this is a “non-urban” treatment of ab. It may have been the case that ab remained in use as a technical term, explaining why we also find it in some inscriptions in front of other consonants, e.g. in af.Capua (CIL 638, 132 BC, Tabula Popilliana, in Lucania), af.solo, af.speculu. af.vinieis, af.villa. Praenestian af.muro (CIL 1471) may also contain an original instance of af, since the noun also has a voiced labial plus back vowel. Finally, also the form afvolant ‘āvolant’ in Paulus Diaconus, Epitoma Festi p. 26, would be consistent with the inscriptionsal evidence for af in front of v-.

Vine’s account confirms the explanations mentioned above by Wölfflin, Bréal and Muller. Bréal assumed a chain of developments ab > af > av > au (whence auferó, auflugiō) > ā (whence āmittō, āvertō etc.). Commenting on the evidence from inscriptions (the same which Vine used, except for CIL 2444 which was published in 1931), he notes that the change of ab to af appears to be especially frequent in front of v-, that this must have been the road to āvellō and āvertō, and that the Romans probably pronounced av-vertō. If we follow Vine in interpreting written af as [aβ], we can simplify Bréal’s schema by one degree: ab > aβ > au > ā. Maybe, we can even do with three degrees: ab > aβ > au in front of f-, and ab > aβ > ā in front of b-, m-, v-.

The opposition between, on the one hand, auferō and auflugiō, and, on the other, āflūi (Pl.+) āfore (Catul.+ ‘to be absent’ and āflūō ‘to flow (away)’ (Cic.+), can hardly be explained from a different phonetic treatment of the sequence *ab-f: the presence in Plautus of both variants, and the same vowel u following on f in auflugiō and ā-flūi leaves no room for such a game. Here I adopt the solution first proposed by Wölfflin, viz. of a different chronology: whereas au- is the original phonetic outcome, ā- can be
analogical after words in $b\sim$, $m\sim$, $v\sim$. The question of why this analogy did not reach $auferō$ and $aufugiō$ must remain unanswered.

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| LATIN AU- ‘AWAY’, AN ALLOMORPH OF AB- |

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