

Cambridge University Press

978-1-316-61993-3 - Latin and English Idiom: An Object Lesson from Livy's Preface

H. Darnley Naylor

Excerpt

[More information](#)

CHAPTER I.

I have endeavoured in Chap. III. to treat Livy as he should be treated—as a fine writer of Latin Prose. Livy is neither an ideal historian nor antiquarian nor lawyer : but he is master of his own language, and the more closely one studies him, the more one realizes how magnificently he used his instrument.

In no way can we more clearly appreciate his power than in watching him deal, as it were, with our own language ; and this has been my point of view throughout :—how would Livy put this or that into Latin or rather (I hope), how has he done it ?

Every teacher is prompt to impress upon his pupils the value of re-translation from English versions into the dead languages ; and every teacher is aware that pupils vastly prefer to put original English passages into Latin and Greek. The reason is very simple : in translating from Latin and Greek into English we adopt a totally different method from that which we use in the converse process. In the former case accuracy is made the principal, if not the sole, aim : the English is tolerably idiomatic, but any scholar of only limited experience can at once detect the form and method of the original. This is so true that one often observes in commentaries a note containing an accurate verbal rendering of some phrase ; this will be in inverted commas and passes for translation. Then the editor, somewhat naively, adds :

Cambridge University Press

978-1-316-61993-3 - Latin and English Idiom: An Object Lesson from Livy's Preface

H. Darnley Naylor

Excerpt

[More information](#)

"We say so and so." For instance on the words *ἦσθεο ἐκείνους οὐ παρόντας ἔτι ἀλλ' ἤδη πεφευγότας* your commentator may remark: "We say 'he found that the bird had flown'." As if "we say" and translation were different things. Whereas what "we say" is of all things the *English* version of the original. Unfortunately the case stands thus: if I give "he found that the bird had flown" as my rendering of the above Greek, I shall be condemned for a piece of impertinent paraphrase; on the other hand, if I am faced by the above English phrase and serve up "*ἦσθεο κ.τ.λ.*," I shall be applauded for writing idiomatic Greek. (See Sidgwick, *Lectures on Greek Prose*, p. 42, § 4.)

There is obviously something not quite sound in the conventional attitude towards paraphrase. The methods of expression found in the two dead languages are often so utterly different from those of modern times that we allow the impossibility of word-for-word renderings from English, but make no such concession when the position is reversed. Thus were I asked to put into Greek "In this way the myth was preserved," I write *οὕτως ὁ μῦθος ἐσώθη καὶ οὐκ ἀπώλετο*; but your "translator" says (Davies and Vaughan, *Plato Rep.* 621 B): "thus...the tale was preserved *and did not perish*." Yet surely it is for the commentator to tell us how the phrase "goes" literally; for the translator to say it as an Englishman would have done. The point is clearly illustrated by the following passage from a well-known translation of Cicero's *Academics*. It is a typical specimen of what is called "accurate" translation¹. For examination purposes it is, doubtless, excellent, but, just because the form of the original is so obvious, it is almost useless to the re-translator. I italicize the points of interest and give footnotes in justification of my changes for purposes of re-translation.

¹ The translator says in his Preface that "accuracy has been studied rather than finish of style."

Cambridge University Press

978-1-316-61993-3 - Latin and English Idiom: An Object Lesson from Livy's Preface

H. Darnley Naylor

Excerpt

[More information](#)

CHAP. I

3

CIC. AC. PR. 2. 1. 3.

“Consequently so *great*⁽¹⁾ a general did he become in every department of the art of *war*⁽²⁾, in battles, sieges, naval engagements, and the entire equipment of, and preparation for, *war*⁽³⁾, *that*⁽⁴⁾ the *greatest*⁽⁵⁾ prince since Alexander admitted that he had found him to be a *greater*⁽⁶⁾ leader than any one of those whose lives he had read. He also possessed *such*⁽⁷⁾ skill in the organization and administration of states, and was so *just, that*⁽⁸⁾ at the present day Asia persists in maintaining the ordinances of Lucullus and in almost following out his footsteps. But although the advantage to his country was great⁽⁹⁾, still *such*⁽¹⁰⁾ a high degree of excellence and ability was detained longer than I could wish in foreign parts, *far from the gaze of the forum and the senate.*”⁽¹¹⁾

“*Tantus*⁽¹⁾ ergo imperator omni genere *belli*⁽²⁾ fuit, proeliis, oppugnationibus, navalibus pugnis, totiusque *belli*⁽³⁾ instrumento et apparatu, *ut*⁽⁴⁾ ille rex post Alexandrum *maximus*⁽⁵⁾ hunc a se *maiorem*⁽⁶⁾ ducem cognitum, quam quemquam eorum, quos legisset, fateretur. In eodem *tanta*⁽⁷⁾ prudentia fuit in constituendis temperandisque civitatibus, *tanta aequitas ut*⁽⁸⁾ hodie stet Asia Luculli institutis servandis et quasi vestigiis persequendis.

Sed, etsi *magna*⁽⁹⁾ cum utilitate reipublicae, tamen diutius quam vellem, *tanta*⁽¹⁰⁾ vis virtutis atque ingeni peregrinata abfuit *ab oculis et fori et curiae.*”⁽¹¹⁾

(1) (5) (9)—This repetition of “great” is not only tolerable in Latin but actually idiomatic. Witness *tantus*, *maximus*, *maiores*, *tanta* (*prudentia*), *tanta* (*aequitas*), *tanta* (*vis*). For (1) say “able”; for (5) “finer,” and the repetition is less offensive. The same criticism applies to (2) and (3). In (2) substitute “military science” for “the art of war.”

(4) (7) (8)—These long consecutive clauses are typical of Cicero, but one is enough in English. At (7) write “much” for “such,” and at (8) write “as well as fair-mindedness. Indeed...” in place of “and was so just, that....” Beginners rarely remember that

Cambridge University Press

978-1-316-61993-3 - Latin and English Idiom: An Object Lesson from Livy's Preface

H. Darnley Naylor

Excerpt

[More information](#)

such clauses (e.g. ita...ut) are often little more than equivalents for "et" combining two principal verbs. I venture to think that "stet" by its emphatic position = "stands firm." The "quasi" may well be omitted in English: the metaphor is a common-place one with us. I would therefore translate:—"Asia owes her stability to maintaining the ordinances of Lucullus and to following closely in his footsteps."

⁽¹⁰⁾—See note on ⁽¹⁾ ⁽⁵⁾ ⁽⁶⁾ ⁽⁹⁾.

⁽¹¹⁾—Here, perhaps, your translator cannot help himself. I would merely say that were one required to put into Latin: "far from our public and parliamentary life," "ab oculis et fori et curiae" would be gratefully accepted by any examiner.

Need we be surprised that the student resents being set to re-translate, and that he prefers exercising his talents on original English passages?

The fact is we *Latinize* and *Grecize* (I dare not say "paraphrase"): we do not "translate." On the other hand we are not allowed to *Anglicize*, for this would be to commit the unpardonable sin of paraphrasing. As specimens of Grecizing I take a few random instances from Sidgwick's *Lectures on Greek Prose*, p. 34, § 3, "in the agonies of death" = χαλεπῶς ἔχοντα; p. 47, § 6, "the stages of the farce having been first duly arranged" = πάντα ἐς ἀπάτην παρασκευασάμενοι; p. 48, § 7, "fell into the trap" = ἐξαπατηθεῖς etc. These are all excellent Greek; but what would be said of the candidate who dared to render this Greek into such English! And yet the English version is probably what an Englishman "would say."

At a time when Classics are on their defence it might be well even to sacrifice "Composition" altogether, and ask our students to "Anglicize" as well as "translate" the passages set before them. I trust that Chap. III. will show how much educational value can be got from this substitute for "Proses"; a value which appears to me little inferior to the value of the old method

Cambridge University Press

978-1-316-61993-3 - Latin and English Idiom: An Object Lesson from Livy's Preface

H. Darnley Naylor

Excerpt

[More information](#)

and is certainly superior in one point—that we save all the years spent on learning to avoid vulgar errors of grammar and syntax. For to write *accurate*, as distinguished from *idiomatic*, Latin and Greek is much more a matter of continual practice and a *τριβὴ ἀλογος*, than a sign that observation has been trained and a grand educational benefit conferred upon the suffering learner.

There is a further reason for dealing thus with our authors: in these days of elaborate editions where “notes” on points of archaeology, history, philology, orthography, textual criticism etc., etc., are heaped before the unhappy examinee, there is a real danger of his missing altogether the language itself. So true is this that in examinations where “Set Books” receive any prominence, the “mere translation” tends to take a quite secondary place. In fact minutiae loom too large in modern scholarship. We dwell at inordinate length on some question of reading or antiquities (who has not groaned over the Servian Constitution?) until we forget that Livy wrote a vast amount of Latin, of which by far the greatest part is perfectly clear and straightforward. Indeed, if all disputed passages were omitted, very little would be lost to history, and a great deal gained for literature.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-316-61993-3 - Latin and English Idiom: An Object Lesson from Livy's Preface

H. Darnley Naylor

Excerpt

[More information](#)

CHAPTER II.

If I were asked :—What is *the* great feature of Livy's style? I would boldly answer : “His brilliant use of order.” I hope in Chap. III. to justify this criticism to some extent. I might have crowded my pages with hundreds of parallels in the matter of order, but mere references are, as a rule, of little value, while anything else would have caused this book to be “hampered by its own size.”

I therefore content myself with pointing out principles which any student of ordinary ability can verify, and should verify, for himself. For details I would refer him to Professor Postgate's *Sermo Latinus*, pp. 35—45, but I venture to state again these few broad rules of *normal* Latin order :

(1) Subject 1st, Object next, Verb last; or Verb 1st, Object next, Subject last.

(2) Epithets of any kind (including the genitive case) immediately follow the word to which they belong, i.e. are “post-positive.”

(3) Adjectives of number and quantity, demonstrative pronouns, and adverbs immediately precede the words to which they belong, i.e. are “prepositive.”

(4) Co-ordinate and subordinate conjunctions, relative and interrogative pronouns or adverbs come first in their clause.

(5) A Latin sentence if *constructionally* complete must *ipso facto* be at an end.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-316-61993-3 - Latin and English Idiom: An Object Lesson from Livy's Preface

H. Darnley Naylor

Excerpt

[More information](#)

CHAP. II

7

Any departure from the normal order gives stress to the word in an abnormal position, e.g. a normally postpositive word has stress by being written prepositive and has still more by being separated from the word to which it belongs.

This then must be realized once and for all : *it is departure from the normal order that makes expressive Latin.*

Livy by his abnormalities, greater or less, can, I believe, express every nuance of modern English intonation. If we were to write a piece of Latin where every word should be piously placed in accordance with the above scheme of normal order, it would be as if an Englishman should read a passage in his own language without one new inflection or one change of intonation.

In the majority of cases Rule 1 holds good, though Livy may also write in the order of the picture as it comes on the screen, irrespective of the grammatical form. This he does with graphic effect in such passages as 1. 14. 8, and 44. 5. 6.

I would strongly urge that teachers should train their students to read Latin with stress on the words abnormally placed. For instance, "e terra ne gubernaveris" should be read with upward intonation on "e terra," just as we should read the italicized words in : "one should not steer a ship *from the land.*" The immediate and complete grasp which the pupil gets of the writer's meaning will surprise those who have not made the experiment.

I hope to have shown that in almost all cases where an intelligent reader of English would use a changed intonation Livy has departed from the normal order in a greater or less degree.

Of course rhythm must be taken into account also ; but this is scarcely within the knowledge of Moderns, and in our own versions we can only hope for the best. Most of us may reasonably despair of writing Latin Prose at all if we are compelled to obey all the dicta of Professor Zielinski concerning "Das Clauselgesetz

Cambridge University Press

978-1-316-61993-3 - Latin and English Idiom: An Object Lesson from Livy's Preface

H. Darnley Naylor

Excerpt

[More information](#)

in Cicero's Reden" (*C. R.* Vol. XIX. p. 164). Such researches will drive us all to seek refuge in the more satisfactory, because more certain, form of "composition" which I have ventured to name "Anglicizing."

The broad rules of Latin order stated above will, I trust, find ample and detailed illustration in the following chapter.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-316-61993-3 - Latin and English Idiom: An Object Lesson from Livy's Preface

H. Darnley Naylor

Excerpt

[More information](#)

CHAPTER III.

α § 1. "Whether my efforts will be repaid if I write a complete history of the Roman people from the first foundation of the city, I neither know with any certainty, nor, if I knew, would I venture to say."

"if I write a complete history of the Roman people."

β "Complete" is turned by "per" in "perscripserim"; cp. 35. 40. 1, "I have been led into a digression by this imbroglio of Greek and Roman *history*, not because the events themselves *deserved detailed treatment*, but because they brought about the war with Antiochus."

γ Cp. 31. 1. 2, *profiteri ausum perscripturum res omnis Romanas.*

Cp. *perpacare, perdomare, perpopulari, pervastare, perficere* etc.

So 1. 56. 1, "to *complete* the building of temples."

Facturusne operae pretium sim, si a primordio urbis res populi Romani perscripserim, nec satis scio, nec, si sciam, dicere ausim;

"si...res populi Romani perscripserim."

"*Abstulere me velut de spatio Graeciae res immixtae Romanis, non quia ipsas operae pretium esset perscribere, sed quia causae cum Antiocho fuerunt belli.*"

"*templa deum exaedificare.*"

Cambridge University Press

978-1-316-61993-3 - Latin and English Idiom: An Object Lesson from Livy's Preface

H. Darnley Naylor

Excerpt

[More information](#)**α** "history of the Roman people"Cp. § 3, p. 18, *α*, "the annals of a people..."§ 6, p. 36, *γ*. "The records of genuine history."§ 10, p. 52, *γ*. "Set in the conspicuous light of historic record."

22. 27. 3. "The story has no historical authority."

β 7. 21. 6. "No history but knows their names."Cic. *De Inv.* 1. 1, "when I begin to trace the events of historic narrative."Cicero uses the word "historia" but not Livy, e.g. *De Leg.* 1. 1. 5, "Herodotus, the father of history";**γ** and *Rep.* 2. 18, "the history of Rome." See Lewis and Short.See § 2, "historians = scriptores," p. 16, *α*.

"from the first foundation"

The singular is rare)(§ 7, p. 38, *δ*, *primordia*.

Note "sciam... ausim" — abnormal for "scirem... auderem," so the commentators. But there is no reason why Livy should not express it as a remote possibility.

δ The form "ausim" for "auderam" occurs only in potential clauses and almost always with a negative.§ 2. "For I notice that this is a time-honoured and frequent practice, each new historian invariably believing that in his facts *he* will introduce something better authenticated, or in his elegant

"res populi Romani."

"rerum gestarum memoria... populi."

"incorrupta rerum gestarum monumenta."

"in illustri posita monumento."

"quod (=id quod) nulla memoria habet annalium."

"per omnium annalium monumenta celebres nominibus."

"cum res...ex litterarum monumentis repetere instituo."

"Herodotum, patrem historiae."

"Romana historia."

"a primordio."

"quippe qui cum veterem tum vulgatam esse rem videam, dum novi semper scriptores aut in rebus certius aliquid adlaturus se aut scribendi arte rudem vetustatem superaturos credunt."