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Advanced Latin: Republican Prose

Prose composition exercises

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Trawsnewid Addysg; Trawsnewid Bywydau
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Piso and his slaves

The slaves of Piso the orator had been ordered always to be silent, unless they were asked a question.

Servi erant Pisonis oratoris imperati, ut tacerent, nisi rogati.

- Delays the genitive description (Pisonis oratoris) until after the verb to help clarify servi = nom masc pl
- Selects impero (construed with ut) over iubeo (construed with ACI); allows me to keep servi as the subject of the the dependent clause and helps clarity
- Abbreviates the phrase 'asked a question'

Piso had ordered this because he did not want to be disturbed while working. He had said that any slave who disobeyed would be beaten.

Piso haec imperaverat, ne se interrumperent in negotiis. Dixerat...

1. ...~~servum dictis suis non obsecutum verberatum iri~~
2. ...fore ut, servum dictis suis non obsecutum verberaret.

- Sticks with impero over iubeo to allow a negative command (ne...).
- Replaces the phrase 'while working' with 'at his work' to use the word negotium, which refers to the kind of intellectual and political work an upper-class male would strive to occupy himself with.
- In the indirect speech clause, 1 and 2 vary the focus between the offending slave and Piso himself. The first option is decidedly clumsy and easily misunderstood. Future passive infinitives are comparatively infrequent unless in longer, clear ACI passages.
- 2 uses 'fore ut' and Piso as subject of verberaret. The reflexive pronoun always refers to the subject of the governing clause (subject of dixerat). The PP obsecutum allows me to indicate the temporal sequence of offense and punishment, but I'm only able to use it with active meaning because *obsequor* is deponent.

The slaves therefore only dared to respond to questions and otherwise* remained silent.

itaque solum ad interrogata respondere audebant, ceteroquin tacebant servi.

- itaque indicates consequence of previous sentence. In authors before Livy, it is placed in the initial position.
- audebant, tacebant: using imperfect to indicate habit/duration.

Once, Piso invited guests to dine with him.

Piso quondam hospites ad cenam inuitauit.

- Due to the change of subject, I spell 'Piso' out in the initial position. Quondam generally also placed in 2nd position. Cicero uses invito + ad about meals, e.g. 'ad cenam' in *Fam.* 7.9.2.

A slave having been sent to Piso's friends, only one, whose name was Clodius, declined. "I am hindered by my duties", he had answered the slave who invited him. "Uenirem, nisi negotia me detinerent." Therefore, he did not come to the dinner.

servo ad amicos misso, solum unus, cui nomen erat Clodius, negavit. 'negotia mea me detinent' servo ad cenam vocanti dixit. "Uenirem, nisi negotia me detinerent." cenae igitur non affuit.

- In the first sentence, the underlined can be separated out and represented with the ablative absolute, but the coincidence of servo (dative) in the next sentence might prompt a different construction instead. For a cum-clause, it would be preferable to switch to active, e.g. "servum ad amicos cum misisset", using Piso as the subject.
- 'who invited him' can be paraphrased 'the inviting slave', or even 'the invite'. While present participles are often expressed with cum-clauses, here, it allows us to keep focus tightly on Clodius. Both 'ad cenam vocanti' and 'invitanti' are possible.
- convivio affuit: Cicero uses adsum for 'attend as participant' with dative; varying the word for 'dinner party'.

Although the master asked the slave repeatedly to see* whether* the expected guest was approaching, he [the slave] did not tell him [Piso] what Clodius had said. Unless asked, the slave would not say that Clodius had declined the invitation.

quamquam dominus iterum iterumque servum quaesivit num hospes adveniret, servus ei non narravit quod Clodius dixisset. nisi rogatus, ei narrare noluit Clodium convivium renuisse.

- although...repeatedly: using quamquam with indicative. Alternatively, a concessive cum clause with subjunctive imperfect could be used.
- reported question construed with num (whether) and subjunctive, selecting present to express “whether the guest was on his way” in relation to the historic sequence based on narravit.
- renuo 2 used with convivium in Cic. Cael. 11.27.