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One Instance of the Partitive Subject in Literary Latin

Plin. Ep. 10. 96. 10 again

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Summary

Passimque uenire uictimarum (Plin. ep. 10.96.10), an expression generally emended or supplemented, is upheld in its transmitted form. The genitive *uictimarum* is shown to be a partitive subject occurring in a literary Classical source (as against partitive subjects in the shape of prepositional (*de-*, *ex-*) phrases in later and Vulgar sources), a unique occurrence having ensued in the line of choosing between alternatives which belong to different registers of the Latin language.

The message in paragraph 10 of Pliny's letter 10.96 is clear: in the course of recess in exercising Christian faith and return to pagan habits, cults long interrupted are reported to be restored and sacrificial requisites claimed to be found again on the market:

certe satis constat prope iam desolata templa coepisse celebrari et sacra sollemnia diu intermissa repeti ...

There is, however, divergence as concerns the subsequent words, two lines of recension having been applied to the last part of this sentence in current editions:

- (1) *pastumque uenire uictimarum cuius adhuc rarissimus emptor inueniebatur.*

S. E. Stout, in his 1962 U. of Indiana edition, is the only one among modern editors to uphold this reading with *pastum*: "and fodder for

sacrificial animals, for which hitherto only rarely a buyer would be found, is being put up to sale.” Schuster’s 1933 and 1952 Teubner editions, (Guillemin-)Durry’s 1947 and 1964 Budé editions, Hanslik’s 1958 Teubner and Mynor’s 1963 OCT editions all read:

(2) *passimque uenire (carnem) uictimarum cuius adhuc rarissimus emptor inueniebatur*

“and meat of sacrificial animals, for which hitherto only rarely a buyer would be found, is now everywhere being put up to sale.”

The subject of consumption of sacrificial meat is brought up in various Greek and Roman sources, also in conjunction with alleged ritual cannibalism.¹⁾ Theophrastus appears even to have advanced a theory which made meat-eating in general the result of offering meat to the Gods.²⁾ That such culinary habits were conceived of by the early Christians as a grave misdemeanor is well known: mention of the inadmissibility of such procedure and of the abstinence thereof required – however leniently – is made in Christian sources, notably in I Cor. 10. 18 ff.:

Οὐχ οἱ ἐσθίωντες τὰς θυσίας κοινωνοὶ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου εἰσίν; ... ἃ θύουσιν, δαιμονίοις καὶ οὐ θεῷ θύουσιν· οὐ θέλω δὲ ὑμᾶς κοινωνοὺς τῶν δαιμονίων γίνεσθαι. οὐ δύνασθε ποτήριον κυρίου πίνειν καὶ ποτήριον δαιμονίων· οὐ δύνασθε τραπέζης κυρίου μετέχειν καὶ τραπέζης δαιμονίων. ... πᾶν τὸ ἐν μακέλλῳ πωλούμενον ἐσθίετε. ... εἴ τις καλεῖ ὑμᾶς τῶν ἀπίστων καὶ θέλετε πορεύεσθαι, πᾶν τὸ παρατιθέμενον ὑμῖν ἐσθίετε ἐὰν δέ τις ὑμῖν εἴπῃ· τοῦτο ἱερόθυτόν ἐστιν, μὴ ἐσθίετε δι’ ἐκεῖνον τὸν μηνύσαντα καὶ τὴν συνείδησιν.

Plinius words too can be shown to deal, in their transmitted shape, with this rather commonplace subject.

Victimarum of Plinius’ letter has not been upheld without emendation or supplementation, since none of the readings documented seemed to yield a sentence satisfactory either from the syntactic or from the semantic point of view;³⁾ the text had undergone quite a number of modifications in the early editions:

¹⁾ See D. Flusser, “‘Ritual Murder Libel’ against Jews in view of the commonly held Hellenistic attitudes” [in Hebrew], in *Commentationes Iudaico-Hebraicae in memoriam Iohannis Lewy*, M. Schwabe - I. Gutman edd., Jerusalem 1949, pp. 104–124.

²⁾ Flusser, *ibid.* p. 109, following J. Bernays, *Theophrastos’ Schrift über Frömmigkeit*, Berlin 1866.

³⁾ See A. Sherwin-White, *The letters of Pliny, A Historical and Social Commentary* (Oxford 1966) ad locum (p. 709 f.).

Against *uenire uictimarum cuius* of the Avantius edition of 1502 and its revisions by Beroaldus (1503) and Cataneus (1506), The Aldina of 1508 and Cataneus' second 1518 edition have *uenire uictimas quarum*; the same Cataneus edition retained Aldus' *passimque uenire*, while the Avantiana had had *passumque* (?), and Beroaldus' 1503 and 1506 copies, as well as Budaeus in a marginal note to his original *passimque uenire*, furnish us with *pastumque* ("fodder for the animals") *uenire*, which S. E. Stout adopted and vigorously defended at various instances.⁴⁾ The various modern emendations are all directed at supplying a substantival phrase-head to *uictimarum* suited to serve as antecedent of *cuius*: after A. Körte had rejected *pastumque* (following Ed. Meyer's objections) and supplemented *passimque uenire uictimarum* with *carnem*⁵⁾, W. Schmid advanced instead a hypothesis of *passim* being a corruptela of *proscium* or *prosciem*, "a cut of portion (of a sacrificial animal)"⁶⁾, while L. Wickert took in, for the sake of stylistic balance, both *passimque* and *prosciem*⁷⁾.

However, the text calls for no such emendation. Provided the genitive *uictimarum* is taken as an independent partitive form, we can establish the text of the lost Parisinus (from which both the Aldina and the Avantiana derive) as

passimque uenire uictimarum cuius adhuc rarissimus emptor inueniebatur

"and sacrificial animals for which hitherto only rarely a buyer would be found, are being put up to sale everywhere". *Cuius*, although certainly not common with an antecedent in the plural, is supported by some instances of similar structure, e.g., *seruitia* ("[bands of] slaves") *repudiabat, cuius initio ad eum magnae copiae concurrebant* (Sall. Cat. 56.5).⁸⁾ Such text would have given rise to two *lectiones faciliores*: (1) *passimque uenire uictimas quarum* (Aldus, with his usual readiness to polish his author's text⁹⁾, in our case by way of changing

⁴⁾ *TAPA* 86 (1955), p.246f. and in his critical edition of Pliny's letters (Bloomington 1962).

⁵⁾ *Hermes* 63 (1928), 481-84.

⁶⁾ Substantiated by Varro's (ap. Non. 220.22) *prosciem extorum* and Paulus ex Festo (225M) *proscium*, *Vigiliae Christianae* 7 (1953), 75-78.

⁷⁾ *RhM* 100 (1957), 100.

⁸⁾ Similar, although less cogent, examples of pronouns in the singular referring to appellatives in the plural in Varro RR 2.3.9, 3.7.9, Cic. fin. 2.61, Liv. 2.60.2. See Gildersleeve, *Latin Grammar*, p.150, and for a somewhat different interpretation of these passages Kühner-Stegmann I, p.64 (§18.4b).

⁹⁾ Cf. S. E. Stout, *Scribe and Critic at Work in Pliny's Letters*, Bloomington 1954, especially pp.71-75.

the case-form of *uictimarum* so as to become a regular subject-form to *uenire* and accommodating strange *cuius* thereto); (2) *passumque* (and *pastumque*) *uenire uictimarum cuius* (Avantius and Beroaldus, by way of supplying a *regens* to *uictimarum*).

In addition to predicatively used partitive genitives (of the type *cedo signum si harunc Baccharum es* Pl. Mil. 1016, *ars ... earum rerum est quae sciuntur* Cic. de or. 2. 30), independent (partitive) genitives, as well as prepositional phrases (see below) are fairly common as direct objects in Latin, although not as common as in Greek.¹⁰⁾ Occurrence of partitive objects, whether dependent upon verbs of dividing, communicating, etc. or otherwise, is virtually restricted to Early (e.g., Ter. Phorm. 709f. *ante brumam autem noui negoti incipere!*) and Late Latin (e.g., Lucifer Calaritanus De S. Athanasio 1. 40 *non habere uirium ... nos ... dicis. adseris ... deum non habere tantam potentiam.*); attestations are found mainly in technical language: Cato RR 74 *panem depsticum sic facito. ... farinam in mortarium indito, aquae paulatim addito subigitoque pulchre*; often in the Mulomed. Chir., e.g., 894 *primum adicies oleum uetus, sequens acetum, deinde salis triti.*¹¹⁾ In Literary Classical Latin such partitive objects are much rarer; Sommer, in his discussion of partitive constructions,¹²⁾ mentions Case. b. civ. 3. 4. 6., where the genitive matches accusatives: *Item Macedones Thessalos ac reliquarum gentium et ciuitatum adiecerat*. The same correspondence of undetermined genitive and determined accusative is observable in Early Literary Latin (*quocum ... mensam sermonesque suos rerumque suarum ... impertit* Enn. ann. 234–236), as well as in the technical language (*farinam - aquae* in the Cato RR 74 passage above).

The case is radically different for independent genitives as subjects: as a subject-case the genitive is vanishingly attested in Latin (whereas in other Italic languages, as well as in Greek, it is a well-established feature¹³⁾), the scarce instances of genitival subjects

¹⁰⁾ For E. Nachmanson, *Partitives Subjekt im Griechischen* (Göteborg 1942), the genitival partitive object in Latin is merely sporadic, the role of the genitive having been taken over by other cases (p. 9f.).

¹¹⁾ See Ch. E. Bennett, *The Syntax of Early Latin* II 35, Szantyr 54, E. Löfstedt, *Komm.*, 107 ff., *Syntactica* I² 142–145.

¹²⁾ *Vergleichende Syntax der Schulsprachen*, Stuttgart 1931 (Darmstadt 1959), p. 25.

¹³⁾ See Nachmanson, o. c. note 11, passim, and Szantyr p. 54: “Der gen. part. ist auch in den Dialekten reich vertreten ...; er fungiert hier im Gegensatz zum lat. [my emphasis H. R.] auch als Subjektskasus, so Umbr. Va 8 *revestu ...*

being all of Late Latin and considered secondary developments, so e.g., in the case of the often cited *infunditur anacallidis tritae* (Mulomed. Chir. 293).¹⁴⁾

On the other hand, prepositional phrases—in *de* and *ex*—are noticeably more common than the genitive as subject-actants (although here, too, prepositional subjects are less frequent than prepositional objects¹⁵⁾). *De* and *ex* occur preceding nomina materiae, as well as in the role of an ‘article partitif’ with a noun in the plural; e.g., *ampullam in qua de oleo ... continebatur* (Vita Aridii, Mabill. 202), *est hic de officiis ... deorum* (Greg. Tur. glor. Mart. 40.2) – the verb in the singular; with the verb in the plural: *uenerunt autem et ex discipulis a Caesarea nobiscum* (Vulg. Act. 21.16), *dixerunt ergo ex discipulis eius ad inuicem* (Ioann. 16.17), which Einar Löfstedt attributes to a mixture of “vulgärsprachliche und gräzisierungstendenzen”.¹⁶⁾ Attestations of prepositional phrases as partitive subjects are, however, not restricted to Late Latin texts: they figure in historiographical texts, but, interestingly enough, not as subjects of finite verbs; both Nepos and Curtius Rufus exhibit prepositional phrases as subjects in absolute participial constructions: *adiunctis de suis comitibus locum tutum reliquit* (Nep. Agesil. 6.3), *ex captiuis spandonibus quis Alexander esset monstrantibus* (Curt. 3.12.17 [31]).

The instance Plin. 10.96.10 is, to my knowledge, a unique attestation in Classical Latin of a genitive functioning, analogously to the above-mentioned prepositional phrases, as subject,¹⁷⁾ and here again (as in the case of the Classical prepositional phrases) it is a subject of a non-finite form, in this case of an infinitival construction. Inciden-

eru emanantur herte ‘revisito earum accipiantur oportetne’ (s. Brugmann II² 2.567; ...)”

¹⁴⁾ See Szantyr p. 54, Löfstedt, *Komm.*, p. 108 f.

¹⁵⁾ Cf. Szantyr, p. 58 s/fin., who mentions the coexistence of e.g., ‘*misit de oleo*’ and ‘*erat oleum*’ in one and the same text.

¹⁶⁾ *Syntactica* I² 147. See further examples and literature Szantyr p. 58 f.

¹⁷⁾ Unless certain aberrant nominatives were to be identified as being in reality genitive forms: Priscian 6.16 (GLII 208) “uetustissimi tamen etiam nominatum ‘haec carnis’ proferebant ... Livius Andronicus in Odyssia (36 Baehrens – Morel) Carnis ait Vinumque quod libabant anclabatur”; nothing can be surmised here as to the case of *carnis*, neither from the *Vorlage* ψ 304, nor from the Latin text, as *carnis* probably belongs with a not transmitted verb in a preceding passage, *anc(u)lare* being used with reference to serving wine. Cf. Löfstedt, *Syntactica* I², p. 144, note 1. Likewise, *carnis* of Liv. 37.3.4 (*quod Laurentibus carnis quae dari debet, data non fuerat*) is highly improbable as any other case-form than the nominative in view of the concord of *data*.

tally, a passive verb is here involved, and it should be noted that the various Latin partitive subject-forms are indeed often found as subjects to passive verb forms.¹⁸⁾ (*Venire*) *uictimarum* “sacrificial animals (being put up to sale)” is a partitive form with no *regens* to be supplemented or even a *scilicet* being implied: substantivized adjuncts of *caro*, such as *agnina*, *suina*, are derived from names of specific animals and denote kinds of meat, while *uictimarum* corresponds to *θυσίαι* in the above I Cor. 10 passage, where the vulgate has *hostiae* (10. 18 *οἱ ἐσθίωντες θυσίας—qui edunt hostias*). The synonymy of *uictima* and *hostia* is best illustrated by the two corresponding passages discussing early Gallic sacrifices Cic. pro Fonteio 21 (*humanis hostiis eorum [i. e. deorum] aras ac templa funestant*) vs. Caes. b. G. 6. 16. 2 (*pro uictimis homines immolant*).¹⁹⁾ Cf. *hostia* as ‘inner’ accusative to denominative *uictimare*: *istum maritum, ... adulterum ... condignam ... uictimamus hostiam* (Apul. met. 7. 22).

The isolated occurrence of a genitive as partitive subject in the literary language vs. the instances of *de-* and *ex-* phrases in non-literary sources ties in neatly with the known relationship of case-forms and prepositional phrases in general and their distribution in the various texts.

It is a well-known fact that *de-* and *ad-* phrases fill in for genitives and datives respectively, in all periods of Latinity. To mention but a few illustrative examples of this widespread feature:

ad: *hostis est uxor inuita quae ad uirum nuptum datur* Pl. St. 140 (vs. *non tu me argento dedisti nuptum sed uiro* *ibid.* 136 vel sim. *passim*)

argumenta dum dico ad hanc rem Pl. Most. 99 (vs. *ei rei argumenta dicam* *ibid.* 92)

praecipe quae ad patrem uis nuntiari Pl. Capt. 360 (vs. *numquid aliud uis patri nuntiari?* *ibid.* 400).

In later Latin such fluctuation occurs even between nucleus and apposition: *sicut locutus est ad patres nostros, Abrahamo et semini eius* (Luc. 1. 5); cf. E. Löfstedt *Syntactica* I² p. 192 f.

de: *spes est de argento* Pl. Most. 567 (vs. *spem ... nuptiarum* Ter. Heaut. 713) *spem de salute rei publicae* Cic. Att. 8. 2. 4

¹⁸⁾ Which differs from the current usage of the French *article partitif*.

¹⁹⁾ Both reproducing Poseidonius’ *θυσία* (in Diodorus 5. 31. 4 and Strabo 198. 5, see Flusser o. c. note 3, p. 123).

(vs. *ecquaenam ... spes salutis relinquatur* Cic. Qu.fr. 1.4.2)

es nulla conscientia de culpa Sall. Cat. 35.2 (vs. *conscientia sceleris excitatus* Cic. Ver. 5.73)

damnare de maiestate Cic. Ver. 1.39 (vs. *damnare maiestatis* Cic. Phil. 1.23).²⁰⁾

It should be noted that, although the prepositions occur in the adnominal as well as in the adverbial position,²¹⁾ no attestation of *de*-phrases replacing 'subjective' genitives, nor strictly 'possessive' ones, is evident.

The case-form, in its turn, encroaches on the prepositional expression in some of its functions, as is common knowledge inasmuch as the dative is concerned; see Löfstedt *Syntactica* I² pp.180 ff. and 189 ff., especially on the 'dative of direction' (*it clamor caelo* Verg. Aen. 5.541, *ruit Oceano nox* ibid.2.250), and p.190 note 2 on the Tacitean *pergere ad Treueros et externae fidei* ann.1.41.

Tacitus, Pliny's contemporary, offers—due to his craving for *inconcinnitas* on all levels—attestation for this phenomenon with regard to the genitive as well: hist. 5.5 *corpora condere quam cremare e more Aegyptio, eadem cura et de infernis persuasio, caelestium contra* "(Jews and Egyptians have) the same treatment and conviction about the underworld, about (*sic!*) the deities—the inverse." The genitive following *persuasio* certainly is a different kind of adjunct than the one in, e.g., *saeuam uim morbi augebat persuasio ueneni a Pisone accepti* (ann.2.69), where the predication "that poison had been administered to Piso" is nominalized in the genitive; in hist. 5.5 the genitive constitutes the nearest approach to a *de*-phrase ("concerning ...") that Tacitus can find in his endeavor not to repeat the same construction.

Case-forms and prepositional phrases have, then, coexisted in variation all along. For Classical Latin, one should certainly be careful about generalizing from random examples and slender evidence, such as the fact that *spes de* in Cicero is attested exclusively in the Letters or that the isolated example of *conscientia de* (*ex nulla conscientia de culpa* Sall. Cat. 35.2, as against *conscientiā scelerum* Sall. Cat. 5, or. Phil. 7, *conscientiā delicti* Jug. 27) occurs in what is

²⁰⁾ See Szantyr, pp. 58 f., 220, E. Löfstedt, *Syntactica* I², 187 ff.

²¹⁾ The predicative position included (e.g., *si quae sunt de eodem genere* Cic. Tusc. 4.16).

depicted as a personal letter written by Catilina. But there can be no doubt that, stylistically-oriented artificial elaborations apart, case-forms were considered by the Romans the 'higher' variant of the two, and that datives and genitives replacing expected or 'more normal' prepositional phrases are to be dubbed, if not 'hyperurbanisms',²²⁾ at any rate urbanisms. Literary Latin was formed and crystallized by a process of choosing, by elimination of one of two coexisting doublets,²³⁾ which led to unification and resulted in imparting the chosen form a distinct character of a 'high' form.

As to partitive objects and subjects, fairly common in the form of prepositional phrases, it may well be that it is under this form that they originated: partitive construction, like prepositional phrase (as against case-form), belongs to the domain of popular style.²⁴⁾ And since the consciousness of the difference of levels between prepositional phrase (in lower language) vs. inflected case-form (in more elevated language) had become well-rooted—and hypercorrections bear witness to that—this correspondence became operative also for partitive constructions. Pliny's *uenire uictimarum* should be evaluated as a literary counterpart, or even substitute, of a prepositional partitive construction, a substitute chosen because of the stigma of colloquialism marking the prepositional phrase.

Adjectives in -osus and Latin Poetic Diction

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It used to be a generally accepted notion among commentators on Latin poetry that adjectives formed with the suffix *-osus* were principally a feature of colloquial diction. The assessment of *formosus* by B. Axelson is typical: "Wie so manche andere Bildungen auf *-osus* hatte *formosus* ein etwas triviales Gepräge, das es für die hohe Di-

²²⁾ So Löfstedt, *Syntactica* I², 191.

²³⁾ See W. Kroll, "Die Entstehung der lateinischen Schriftsprache", *Glotta* 22 (1933), pp. 1-27, especially p. 13.

²⁴⁾ See Szantyr, p. 59.