

Re: The first thing he having done being...

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Source: <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.lang/2008-10/msg00420.html>

- *From:* "Brian M. Scott" <b.scott@xxxxxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* Fri, 10 Oct 2008 10:38:58 -0400
-

On Thu, 9 Oct 2008 23:04:58 -0700 (PDT),
"benlizro@xxxxxxxxxxx" <benlizro@xxxxxxxxxxx> wrote in
<news:1990d3ed-7555-428a-89b7-2b20dc42e56e@xx>
in sci.lang:

On Oct 10, 5:51 pm, "Brian M. Scott" <b.sc...@xxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

On Thu, 9 Oct 2008 21:09:58 -0700 (PDT),
"benli...@xxxxxxxxxxx" <benli...@xxxxxxxxxxx> wrote in
<news:fc031b2b-fc85-4244-850f-d72e715f99fb@xx>
in sci.lang:

On Oct 10, 4:04 pm, "Peter T. Daniels"
<gramma...@xxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

On Oct 9, 5:53 pm, "benli...@xxxxxxxxxxx"
<benli...@xxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

On Oct 10, 10:15 am, "Peter
T. Daniels"
<gramma...@xxxxxxxxxxx>
wrote:

On Oct 9,
4:57 pm,
"benli...@xxxxxxxxxxx"
<benli...@xxxxxxxxxxx>
wrote:

On
Oct
10,
4:27
am,
António
Marques

Re: The first thing he having done being...

<m...@xxxxxxx>

wrote:

'One,
of
course,
is
the
great
Private
Park,
and,
of
course,
the
greatest
thing
about
it
is
that
it's
no
longer
private:
the
first
thing
which
the
King-Emperor
having
done,
upon
succeeding
the
reclusive
Mazzimilian
the
Mad
on
the
throne,
being
to
throw
open
the
Private
Park
to

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the
polic.'
--
Avram
Davidson,
_Polly
Charms,
the
Sleeping
Woman_

[...]

I thought it would be obvious that I was referring to the main verb of the remainder of the sentence, a rather unwieldy structure which the writer has attempted to attach to the above by means of a participial (absolute) construction.

A simple example from Trask to illustrate this kind of thing:
[The day being cloudy,] we decided to stay home.

Exactly.

The bracketed stuff is the participial–absolute. Understood "was" (main verb of the participial structure) is replaced by "being", indicating that this is the explanation or reason for the main clause. Now if you have subordinate clauses within your participial structure, at least in my English, you do _not_ want to participialize the verbs in them. So

[The day we had planned to go for a walk being cloudy], we decided to stay home.

Replacing any of those by "having", "planning", "going", or any combination thereof, just makes a mess. And that's what Davidson has done.

Re: The first thing he having done being...

But that's not the same construction.

? What's the difference you see?

Here's one that
actually is analogous and lacks the extra bits:

We did not get wet, the first thing our mother having
done upon leaving the house being to put up the
umbrella.

This is postposed rather than preposed, but I don't see why that
should make a difference. It's otherwise parallel to my example in
that the main verb is BE, and the subject contains a relative clause
whose verb you want to participialize and I don't.

How do you convert it to something analogous to this?

[The day we had planned to go for a walk being cloudy], we
decided to stay home.

Do you mean this?

We did not get wet, the first thing our mother did upon
leaving the house having been to put up the umbrella.

Hm, maybe you do. I just realized that what makes it sound
a bit off to me is that the second 'did' initially suggests
a comma-spliced sentence. Let's flip it around:

The first thing our mother did upon leaving the house
having been to put up the umbrella, we did not get wet.

Okay, that works and may be the best of the lot. But I
still don't like the flipped version very much.

I don't like 'being', though I can tolerate it.

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As a reader, that is.

My version is:

We did not get wet, the first thing our mother having done upon leaving the house having been to put up the umbrella.

But my backbrain is a bit fanatical about parallelism.

Nope, still doesn't work for me. "(having) been" is essential in the above, and "having done" is wrong.

I don't actually **like** it, but I don't much care for

We did not get wet, the first thing our mother did upon leaving the house having been to put up the umbrella.

either.

I guess we have to admit we're talking about different grammars.

Probably, though I'd be interested to know whether yours feels any difference between the two orders.

Poor António must be very confused by now.

I suspect that Davidson would be amused by it all if he were still alive.

Brian

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