

Counterfactuals in the *Aeneid*

Revised from a paper given to the Virgil Society on 8 March 2014

This is a version of a talk on counterfactuals in the *Aeneid* I gave as a Royal Holloway PhD student. The layout is as follows. Sections (1) to (18) present views on and relevant to counterfactuals. (20) to (23) are analyses of four instances of counterfactuals in the *Aeneid* of the *if-not* type (A would have happened, if B had not prevented it). (19) presents the most dramatic of the Homeric *if-not* models on which those four instances are based (*Il.* 20.288–91). My argument is that the counterfactual at *Aen.* 2.54–56 (20), just as the one at *Il.* 20.288–91 (19), points to the possibility that the text may not exist. That works against the notion of fate as leading to current-day, Augustan Rome, the rise of which the text relates. The other three instances, at (21)–(23), I take to reinforce that message. *Aen.* 6.358–61 (21) follows the Homeric pattern but for a less momentous situation than the original, whereas *Aen.* 11.112 (22) and 12.731–33 (23) maintain some key features of the pattern, while increasingly departing from it. All four Virgilian instances also make use of a typical trait of the Homeric counterfactuals of Virgil’s contemporary Livy, which is the indicative main clause. I am interested in these *if-not* counterfactuals with indicative apodosis, because they contravene normal Latin usage, while also being relatively popular at the time the *Aeneid* was being composed. I take the indicative to emphasize the closeness between factuality and counterfactuality, and the possibility that the counterfactual alternatives presented may have become factual.¹

(1) – Counterfactuals are conditional sentences. Kaufmann defines conditionals as “complex sentences built up from two constituent clauses, called the *antecedent* and the *consequent*, or *protasis* and *apodosis*.”² Examples in English are: (1a) “If the sun comes out, Sue will go for a walk”; (1b) “If the sun came out, Sue went for a walk”; (1c) “If the sun had come out, Sue would have gone for a walk”. The first two are often called *indicative*, and the third *subjunctive*, or *counterfactual*. In Wakker’s functionalist classification, they are all *predicational* conditionals. Wakker’s three principal types are: the *propositional*: (1d) “If I am not mistaken, Peter is at home”; the *illocutionary*: (1e) “If you are thirsty, there is some beer in the fridge”, both *if*-clauses relating to the higher level of the main clause and constituting a comment

¹ Translations of the longer passages are provided (either mine or as indicated). Some of the arguments and phraseology are from my PhD dissertation (2017).

² Kaufmann (2006) 6.

on it by the speaker; and, identical with (1a), the *predicational*: (1f) “If it rains, I’ll take the umbrella”, the *if*-clause defining a domain for the main clause.³ Martín Puente, contributor to the 2009 anthology *Sintaxis del latín clásico*, which also takes a functionalist approach, thus emphasizing communication and pragmatics, identifies similar categories to Wakker for Latin conditionals which use *si*. The counterfactuals (18) to (23) are predicational.

(2) – Other expressions regarded as conditionals are: (2a) “Buy one – get one free”; (2b) “Give me £ 10 and I will fix your bike” (“paratactic conditionals”).⁴ How do we know that clauses relate conditionally to one another?

(3) – The early Stoics Philo of Megara and Diodorus Cronus asked similar questions: “If it is day, it is light; but in fact wheat is being sold in the market; therefore it is light’ ... Neither the clause ‘if it is day’ has any relevance and connexion with the clause ‘wheat is being sold in the market’, nor either of these with the clause ‘therefore it is light’, but each of them is inconsistent with the others” (Sextus, *Against the Logicians* 2.430).⁵ Chrysippus, quoted in Cicero’s *De Fato* (6.12), questioned the observations by astrologers of apparently related events: “If ... a man was born at the rising of the dogstar, he will not die at sea”.⁶ In the 20th / 21st century, “relevant” or “relevance” logic developed to examine what connection is desirable in a conditional between antecedent and consequent.

(4) – But is a counterfactual even thinkable? Stephen Barker has concluded that in a physically deterministic world, the divergence between the counterfactual and the real world results in inconsistency of natural laws. It is not possible to imagine a world which diverges from materialised history in too much detail, because the laws of nature prevent the possibility of that world. Barker supports the “*pragmatic* or *metalinguistic* approach”, which views counterfactuals as “incomplete representations of divergence, representations that never register the inconsistency”.⁷ That approach involves a game “between assertor and assessor depending on how much detail” they may want; an uncooperative audience may well ask too many questions about the precise causal path and lead to a collapse of the counterfactual.⁸ That possibly means that we can utter counterfactuals, but they are not events or states that could have ever occurred.

³ Wakker (1994) 34, 49, 59.

⁴ Haiman (1983).

⁵ trans. Bury (1935).

⁶ trans. Rackham (1942).

⁷ Barker (2011) 573.

⁸ *ibid.*

(5) – Another useful concept for dealing with conditionals and counterfactuals is *modality*. It refers to the way the speaker’s attitude toward the proposition is coded: the speaker makes a judgement which can be epistemic (expressing probability or certainty) or evaluative / deontic (expressing desirability, intent, obligation), and often both. Givón, a functional linguist, talks of a modal “shell”, or “envelope” which encases the event, as in the following examples (cases *a* to *d* illustrate the traditional “epistemic modalities”):⁹

- a) John ate the sandwich.* (Speaker takes it for granted).
- b) It’s too bad that John ate the sandwich.* (Speaker asserts strongly but expects challenge).
- c) If John eats the sandwich ...* (Speaker asserts possibility weakly; does not back up assertion; this is a CONDITIONAL).
- d) John didn’t eat the sandwich.* (Speaker strongly asserts falsity of proposition; this includes COUNTERFACTUALS).
- e) He told John that he should eat the sandwich.* (reported speech).
- f) Eat the sandwich, John!* (command).
- g) Did John eat the sandwich?* (question).

The event in all these cases is the same, but the speaker takes a different position towards it in each case. This linguist separates conditionals (case *c*) from counterfactuals (case *d*), rather than seeing the latter as a subgroup of the former.

(6) – Thompson *et al.* consider *indicative* versus *subjunctive* as the basic opposition of verbal moods.¹⁰ This view also distinguishes conditionals from counterfactuals.

(7) – But what are non-indicatives moods? They have been considered to involve “layers of past morphology”. These are markers of the past tense, such as the ending *-ed* in English; *would* has been analyzed as *woll* plus *-ed*. “If he had come ..., he would have been ...” contains a further layer of past morphology than “If he came ..., he would be ...”.¹¹ The use of past tense meanings (“temporal distance”) has been observed cross-linguistically to be closely related to conditionals, and also to perform social and epistemic distancing functions. The term “distal” has been used for past forms of modals and other auxiliaries, to include both temporal and epistemic distance.¹² The subjunctive, a non-indicative mood, refers to a world which is

⁹ Givón (2001) vol. 1, 300–02, 311–12.

¹⁰ Thompson, Longacre & Ja Hwang (2007) 102, 108–09.

¹¹ Ippolito (2002) 9.

¹² Dancygier & Sweetser (2005) 60–01.

further from the speaker than the indicative: the speaker of the subjunctive is not pointing at anything, *i.e.* there is no deixis. But there is continuity between indicative and subjunctive, as the use of past morphology indicates. Also, Latin subjunctive forms became future indicative, and Latin optative forms became subjunctive.¹³ Both optative and subjunctive were former past tenses or connected with the perfect aspect. Close links between past and non-indicative moods have been observed in many languages. Repeated past, for instance, is expressed in the optative in Homeric Greek subordinate clauses (*Il.* 12.268: “whenever they saw, ἴδοιεν, a man hang back from the fighting”).¹⁴

(8) – Some linguists have challenged the view that the speaker of a counterfactual believes the relevant event did not happen. The only true counterfactuals in modern English in Dancygier and Sweetser’s view are American colloquial forms which written down may be *hadda*, *woulda*, or *had’ve*, *would’ve* or *had of*, *would of*. In the protasis of “If I hadda known you were coming, I woulda stayed home”, the auxiliary is derived from the contraction of the non-occurring form *had have*. The speaker here specifically emphasises his / her belief in the non-actuality of the event.¹⁵

(9) – The position of the *if*-clause in a conditional has been the object of study. The *if*-clause will play a different role depending on its position, as illustrated in this example from a novel: “*If they had not seen him already*, they would not see him *if he remained still*”.¹⁶ The different “grounding properties” of the two cases oppose semantics to pragmatics: “A post-posed ADV-clause [adverbial clause] tends to have more local, semantic connections to its main clause”; “a pre-posed ADV-clause tends to have more global, diffuse pragmatic connections to its discourse context”. The pre-posed clause reaches “diffusely back across several preceding chains” (rifles shooting, then silence ...), whereas the post-posed clause remains fixed to the main clause, what has to happen for it to take place.¹⁷ Pre-posed adverbial clauses are “coherence bridges”, which link back to the preceding discourse and forward to the main clause.¹⁸ Further aspects of the importance of the position of the *if*-clause are explored at (10) to (13).

(10) – *Iconicity* is linked to the respective positions of the *if*-clause (or antecedent or protasis) and *then*-clause (or consequent or apodosis). It refers to the way syntax mirrors events,

¹³ See Calboli (2005b).

¹⁴ See Benveniste (1951) 17–18.

¹⁵ Dancygier & Sweetser (2005).

¹⁶ L’Amour (1962) 2; Ramsay (1987) 405.

¹⁷ Givón (2001) vol. 2, 345–46.

¹⁸ *ibid.* vol. 2, 345–47.

or perception of events. Givón thinks there is such a thing as “naturalness of grammar”.¹⁹ Chomsky’s argument that animal communication consists of signals associated with the non-linguistic, whereas human language is arbitrary and symbolic, Givón sees as a good summary of the views of Aristotle and Saussure on the arbitrariness of the sign, and of those (1920s–30s) of Leonard Bloomfield, “the father of American structuralism”.²⁰ On the opposite side, Peirce (1940), like Givón, found that most grammatical constructions contain a mixture of devices which go from the more iconic to the more arbitrary.²¹ Predictable or unimportant information is left out, whereas important information is fronted, and “the temporal order in which events occurred will be mirrored in the linguistic report of the events”.²²

(11) – It is assumed that *if*-clauses are “naturally” placed before their main clauses. ‘Universal of Word Order’ 14 by J. H. Greenberg states: “In conditional statements, the conditional clause precedes the conclusion as the normal order in all languages”.²³ There is some cross-linguistic evidence in favour of that view:²⁴ the *if*-clause temporally and logically precedes the main clause (*iconicity*); *given* information (*if*-clauses) precedes new information.²⁵

(12) – Some studies have developed Greenberg’s Universal 14, by arguing that, pragmatically speaking, *if*-clauses have a Theme or a Topic function. Themes precede the main clause, on a pattern parallel to “*My brother*, I haven’t seen him for years”.²⁶

(13) – Wakker argues that at least some Greek *if*-clauses are extra-clausal constituents which may precede, follow or interrupt their main clause, on a pattern parallel to: “*Ladies and gentlemen*, shall we start the game?” and “*The circumstances being thus*, you may go”.²⁷

(14) – Timberlake offers the interesting view that past narrative may be a record of conditions and consequences that are fulfilled, without a conditional construction being explicitly shown. He illustrates his thesis with a passage from Darwin: “On one occasion I saw two of these monsters, probably male and female, slowly swimming one after the other, within less than a stone’s throw of the shore” (Darwin, ‘Tierra del Fuego’, 22 Jan. 1833). The speaker here points to the expected, that whales do not come close to the shore, and informs the addressee that

¹⁹ *ibid.* vol. 1, 34.

²⁰ Chomsky (1968) 69–70; Givón (2001) vol. 1, 36, 5.

²¹ *ibid.* vol. 1, 34.

²² *ibid.* vol. 1, 34–35.

²³ Greenberg (1966) 84; Wakker (1994) 50.

²⁴ See Comrie (1986) 83–86.

²⁵ See Haiman (1980) 528.

²⁶ See Haiman (1978); example in Wakker (1994) 64 n.16.

²⁷ Wakker (1994) 50–103; examples, 87.

the opposite was the case: whales did come very near to the shore. The passage demonstrates that alternative courses of events are always present in language, although not fully spelled out.²⁸ Action theory makes a similar point: “Every description of an action contains, in a concealed form, a counterfactual ... When we say, *e.g.*, that an agent opened a window, we imply that, had it not been for the agent’s interference, the window would, on that occasion, have remained closed.”²⁹

(15) – Prince talks of “the *disnarrated*”, which points to possibilities mentioned in the text but unrealised: “A less truthful man might have been tempted into ... a less sane man might have believed ... but Silas was both sane and honest” (George Eliot, *Silas Marner*).³⁰ The third possibility is the only one which is realised. The disnarrated can delay the presentation of action, function as a device to add to characterisation, or show that the narrator has the power to multiply potential lines of development. But its most important function is to say why the narrative is worth telling: it is because it could have been, or it normally is, otherwise.

(16) – The disnarrated has predecessors in Shklovsky’s 1917 essay on the role of art to make the familiar look fresh, and Labov on “comparators”, such as negatives and modals, as devices for comparing unrealised with realised events: “The use of negatives ... expresses the defeat of an expectation that something would happen. Negative sentences draw upon a cognitive background considerably richer than the set of events which were observed.”³¹

(17) – Marie-Laure Ryan’s 1991 *Possible Worlds* comments on the pragmatic purpose of counterfactuals: it “is not to create alternate possible worlds for their own sake, but to make a point about the actual world.”³² Counterfactuals point out how close an event came to happening, thus commenting on the present world.

(18) – Counterfactuals can be “upward” (considering better alternatives to reality; these stimulate regret) or “downward” (considering worse alternatives; these stimulate satisfaction). People tend to regret things they did not do rather than the opposite. Much popular fiction presents worse alternatives to reality, such as a Nazi victory in World War 2, so generating satisfaction with the real world.³³

²⁸ Timberlake (2007) 321–322.

²⁹ von Wright (1967) 124.

³⁰ Prince (1992) 35.

³¹ Labov (1972) 380–81.

³² Ryan (1991) 48.

³³ Dannenberg (2008) 112–13.

(19) – Armed with this variety of concepts, we will look next at the Homeric *if-not* counterfactual at *Iliad* 20.288–91 (quoted with the following line):

ἐνθά κεν Αἰνεΐας μὲν ἐπεσσύμενον βάλε πέτρῳ
 ἢ κόρυθ' ἠὲ σάκος, τό οἱ ἤρκεσε λυγρὸν ὄλεθρον,
 τὸν δέ κε Πηλεΐδης σχεδὸν ἄορι θυμὸν ἀπηύρα,
 εἰ μὴ ἄρ' ὄξυ νόησε Ποσειδάων ἐνοσίχθων:
 αὐτίκα δ' ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖς μετὰ μῦθον ἔειπεν ...

(“Then would Aeneas have smitten him with the stone, as he rushed upon him, either on helm or on the shield that had [*or*: would have] warded from him woeful destruction, and the son of Peleus in close combat would with his sword have robbed Aeneas of life, **had not** Poseidon, the Shaker of Earth, been quick to see. And forthwith he spake among the immortal gods, saying: ...”).³⁴

Narrow escapes in the *Iliad* are related in this way, generally the last-minute rescue of a hero by a god or a human, or the last-minute rescue of one side in the war.³⁵ These constructions, 38 in the *Iliad* according to de Jong, present the unreal but likely alternative first (*then would Aeneas have smitten him ... and the son of Peleus ... would with his sword have robbed Aeneas of life*), and the real event in the *if-not* clause second (*had not Poseidon, the Shaker of the Earth, been quick to see*). Counterfactuals which do not qualify as *if-nots* exist in Homer, but they have a reverse order of clauses, by comparison with *if-nots*, and have fully hypothetical meaning, the factual event coming in a later main clause (rather than the protasis, as is the case in *if-nots*): *And if the course had been still longer for the two of them, / then he would have passed him by ... / But Meriones ... was a spear-cast behind glorious Menelaus ... (Il. 23.526–31)*.³⁶ The factual course of action in the negative in the protasis of an *if-not*, following the counterfactual apodosis, emphasises the clash between audience’s expectation and actuality. We saw at (16) that negatives are often used to defeat expectation. As Marouzeau commented, there is no need to say that it is not raining, unless someone thinks it is.³⁷ In this case, the negative expression conveys the actual course of events following the presentation of the one that seemed most likely at that juncture. In the light of Timberlake’s remarks, moreover, outlined at (14), on the implicit alternatives hidden in language, we can read Homer’s *if-not* constructions as manifestations of that intrinsic feature. The narrator of an *if-not* articulates

³⁴ trans. Murray (1946).

³⁵ de Jong (2004) 68–78.

³⁶ trans. Murray (1946).

³⁷ Marouzeau (1949) 185.

some of the possibilities that are generally left lurking in the text, to varying degrees invisible to the audience, but always present.

The most important feature of this particular Homeric *if-not*, as opposed to the others in the *Iliad*, is that in it Poseidon only just succeeds in stopping a course of events that would be disastrous for the text: the *Iliad* would collapse, as an actualized *Il.* 20.288–91 would oppose fate and poetic tradition.³⁸ Neither Aeneas nor Achilles can die at this juncture in the narrative: Poseidon warns Aeneas not to act against destiny shortly later (*Il.* 20.336). The remaining *if-nots* of the *Iliad* describe less dramatic situations, which do not involve the chief characters in combat with each other. The two Aiantes stop a fight between Hector and Automedon at *Il.* 17.530–31 in an *if-not*, but whether the actualization of that hypothetical sequence challenges fate is debatable. These constructions are just staple ingredients of epic, and no risk to any of the characters is ever seriously intended by the narrator beyond the level of game. The *if-not* protasis, factual and subsequent to the apodosis, just redirects the narrative.

(20) – We can now look at the counterfactual in the *Aeneid* that comes closest to the Homeric one just analysed (*Il.* 20.288–91) in sense and – perhaps less, but still to an extent – in syntax. It is spoken by Aeneas to Dido and the Carthaginian court (*Aen.* 2.54–56):

*Et, si fata deum, si mens non laeva fuisset,
impulerat ferro Argolicas foedare latebras,
Troiaque nunc staret, Priamisque arx alta maneres.*

“Had not god-given fates, divine minds (and our own) been against us,
That would have driven our swords to turn Argive lair into bloodbath,
Troy would endure to this today; you’d still stand, fortress of Priam”.³⁹

An unburnt Troy means no mission to Italy, no Rome and no Aeneas uttering the counterfactual to Dido and the Carthaginians. The apostrophe to a defunct Troy, technically the tail-end of Aeneas’ counterfactual, has a precedent in Poseidon’s soliloquy at the opening of Euripides’ *Trojan Women* (45–47):

ἀλλ’ ὦ ποτ’ εὐτυχοῦσα, χαῖρέ μοι, πόλις
ξεστόν τε πύργωμ’ : εἴ σε μὴ διώλεσεν
Παλλὰς Διὸς παῖς, ἦσθ’ ἄν ἐν βᾶθροισι ἔτι.

³⁸ See Bakker 1997 (178).

³⁹ trans. Ahl (2007).

“Farewell, O city once prosperous! farewell, you ramparts of polished stone! If Pallas, daughter of Zeus, had not decreed your ruin, you would be standing firmly still”).⁴⁰

Poseidon’s counterfactual has a negative protasis preceding the apodosis just like Aeneas’; the latter, however, has probably two protases and certainly three apodoses. Horsfall,⁴¹ following Page⁴² and against Conington’s⁴³ application of *laeva* only to *mens* (with another protasis parallel to *si fata fuissent* of 2.433), reads *non laeva fuisset* applied to both *si*-clauses; *deum* he also allocates to both members, although he does not exclude *mens*, which he reads as *mens deum*, referring also to humans (the Trojans who failed to spot the ruse). But a most important aspect of the syntax separates Aeneas’ counterfactual from both Poseidon’s in Euripides and the narrator’s in *Il.* 20.288–91: the verbal mood of the first apodosis. If we were to read only *impulerat ferro Argolicas foedare latebras*, what would we understand? An agent “had driven us to defile the Argive hiding-places with a weapon”. Aeneas’ words would seem to relate a fact, because the sentence has an indicative verb (pluperfect). In the Greek parallels, of course, the indicative produces no such effect, since with *ἄν* and *κε(ν)*, and on occasions without, it has hypothetical value. We know that *impulerat* is not factual by the preceding pluperfect subjunctive protases (*si fata deum, si mens non laeva fuisset*), and subsequent imperfect subjunctive apodoses (*Troiaque nunc staret, Priamique arx alta maneres*). The full attack on the Trojan horse (*impulerat*), therefore, is clearly only a non-actualized alternative, like the survival of Troy and Priam’s palace narrated in the two subjunctive apodoses. Aeneas moves from the technically factual though clearly hypothetical past (*impulerat*), to the fully hypothetical present (*staret, maneres*). That movement, past to present, also occurs between the pluperfect subjunctive *fuisset* and the two imperfect subjunctives *staret* and *maneres*. The consequence of a past course of action which did not materialize is conjectured by Aeneas as the possible, current survival of Troy. The *impulerat* apodosis encroaches into that with an apparent fact, but ultimately joins the counterfactual past.

Another important difference concerns the likely role of Aeneas’ counterfactual. Whereas the instance from the *Iliad* is in the narrator’s voice, *Aen.* 2.54–56 is spoken by Aeneas, as an interruption of his own story of the fall of Troy, to an audience, that of Dido and her court. We know that, as more clearly revealed in two other of Aeneas’ counterfactuals, obviously intended to defend his flight from Troy (2.291–92 and 2.431–34, not analysed here), it is vital for the hero to attempt to reassure his audiences, internal (at Carthage) and external (in Virgil’s Rome), of the blamelessness of his behaviour. Stories of Aeneas’ betrayal of Troy circulated in

⁴⁰ trans. Coleridge (1891).

⁴¹ Horsfall (2008) *ad* 2.54.

⁴² Page (1970) *ad* 2.54.

⁴³ Conington (1876) *ad* 2.54.

antiquity, as discussed by Powell:⁴⁴ it may occur to Aeneas that the Carthaginians could know them too; so could Virgil's contemporaries. Aeneas' current counterfactual, therefore, has a pragmatic function, which the Homeric model does not have. Aeneas, moreover, expresses regret that the Trojans did not destroy the wooden horse. This is an upward counterfactual, one which portrays a better alternative to a past event, and therefore a negative comment on current reality by its speaker. It conveys the thought "things could have been better", and, like the majority of its real-life counterparts, as outlined at (18), expresses regret for inaction. When witnessing upward counterfactuals, Dido and the Carthaginians will feel dissatisfied with the actual world, and may try to improve it. That is indeed what happens: Aeneas receives assistance from his interlocutors. And one of the verbal ploys Aeneas has used to bring this about is the description of a key event as both real and unreal: with *impulerat*, Aeneas has presented the beginning of an unmaterialized, better alternative world as partly materialized, and has used that ambiguity to his own advantage.

Two features make *si fata deum* and Euripides' εἰ σε μὴ διώλεσεν not Homeric *if-nots*. The main one is the initial position of the protasis, which follows Greenberg's Universal 14 (12). This protasis does not erase the action reported in an initial apodosis. *If-nots* that do are 6.358–61 (discussed next), also with indicative apodosis, and, with subjunctive apodosis, 10.324–30 (not discussed).

The second feature that probably makes *Aen.* 2.54–56 not a Homeric *if-not* is the use of *si non* as the conditional conjunction rather than *ni* or *nisi*. There is disagreement on the distinction, or otherwise, between Latin *if-nots* with indicative and those with subjunctive apodoses, and between *si non* and *ni / nisi*. *Cum*-clauses in final position have been compared to *ni*-clauses too. Chausserie-Laprée and Mellet classify the following two examples, which stand not far apart in Livy, as similar:⁴⁵ *cedebatque inde Romanus, cum ... consul ...: Hoc iurastis, inquit, 'milites?'* ("the Romans were giving way at that point, when ... the consul ... cried: 'Was this your oath, men?'" 2.46.5)⁴⁶ and *cessissentque loco, ni consul ... rem inclinatum sustinuisset* ("they would have yielded the position, had not the other consul ... put a stop to their wavering", 2.47.3).⁴⁷ The first contains a *cum*-clause in final position, which is not a *ni*-clause, but performs a similar function: it interrupts ongoing action. The subjunctive of *cessissent*, on the other hand, as argued by Torrego,⁴⁸ makes the apodosis unreal, and therefore unlike an indicative main clause which reports a fact, such as *cedebatque inde Romanus* and *impulerat ferro Argolicas foedare latebras*, the first apodosis of Aeneas' counterfactual. Synonymy between *si non* and *ni / nisi* is also rejected by Torrego: "Je ne pense pas que ce type

⁴⁴ Powell (2011) 189–95.

⁴⁵ Chausserie-Laprée (1969) 598; Mellet (1988) 231.

⁴⁶ trans. Foster (1919).

⁴⁷ trans. *ibid.*

⁴⁸ Torrego (1999) 395 n.7.

de périodes [indicative main clause followed by subjunctive *nisi*-clause] puisse se présenter avec les autres conjonctions conditionnelles, tout au moins pas avec *si*.⁴⁹ She specifically disagrees with Kühner-Stegmann’s inclusion of the following as examples of main clause interrupted by a protasis: *si per L. Metellum licitum esset matres ... veniebant* (“If Metellus had allowed, the mothers ... would have come”, Cic. *Verr.* 2.5.129).⁵⁰ Kühner-Stegmann’s reasoning is that the mothers wanted to come, and would have come, but were not allowed. Kühner-Stegmann also list the following as instances of unfinished main clauses presented as finished, generally taking the pluperfect:⁵¹ *me truncus inlapsus cerebro sustulerat, nisi Faunum dextra levasset* (“As for me, the tree that fell on my crown would have carried me off had not Faunus lightened the blow with his hand”, Hor. *Carm.* 2.17.27–29);⁵² *Inclusam Danaën ... excubiae munierant satis ... si non Acrisium ... custodem Iuppiter et Venus risissent* (“Watchdogs would have protected the locked-up Danaë well enough ... had not Jupiter and Venus laughed at Acrisium the jailer”, Hor. *Carm.* 3.16.1–7);⁵³ and our *et, si fata deum ... impulerat ...*⁵⁴ However, even if we agree with the equivalence of *si non* and *ni / nisi*, the initial position of *et si fata deum ... fuisset* would seem to place the resulting counterfactual in a different group from the other two. The initial protasis removes the element of surprise that comes with a protasis which is final. In summary, whereas the similarity between final *cum*-clauses and final *ni*-clauses is generally acknowledged, there is no consensus on how close they are to each other, whether *si non* (and possibly *si*) and *ni / nisi* have the same value in a potential Homeric-style Latin *if-not*, whether indicative apodoses of Latin *if-nots* can be assimilated to subjunctive ones, and what role precisely in those structures is played by the respective positions of protasis and apodosis. It is, therefore, difficult to assess how far our *et, si fata deum* constitutes a Homeric *if-not*. Both *Il.* 20.288–91 and *Aen.* 2.54–56 portray the risk of the collapse of the text and both have a recognizable *if-not* construction, but a number of factors in the latter, and in particular the initial position of the protasis, would seem to rule out full Homeric status.

Orlandini’s discussion of mitigators might shed a different light on the question. Mitigators can be “bushes”, “hedges” or “shields”;⁵⁵ they convey a speaker’s distance from deixis (pointing at something), and modify the factuality of sentences by reducing the speaker’s commitment to utterances. In Latin, “bushes” are *quasi, tamquam, velut, quidam*; “hedges” are features of verbs, described below;⁵⁶ “shields” resemble “bushes”, distancing the speaker from deixis

⁴⁹ *ibid.* 395 n.6.

⁵⁰ Kühner-Stegmann’s (1955) vol. II.2, 404d.

⁵¹ *ibid.* vol. II.2, 403c.

⁵² My translation, modified from Rudd’s (2012), which has “the tree ... had carried off, had not ...”.

⁵³ My translation, rearranged from Rudd’s (2012).

⁵⁴ Horace’s two counterfactuals are probably contemporaneous with Virgil’s, the dramatic date of Horace’s *Carm.* 2 being 25–24 BC and that of *Carm.* 3 being 23 BC, according to Hutchinson (2002) 524–25, 528–29.

⁵⁵ Hare (1970); Lakoff (1973); Caffi (1999).

⁵⁶ Orlandini (2005) 621–22.

(*ego-hic-nunc*) and attributing the assertion to a different speaker. The second group of mitigators (hedges) involves tenses, moods and constructions which operate on the degree of speakers' commitment to the illocutionary act.⁵⁷ The perfect subjunctive constitutes an example of extreme non-deixis: *aliquis dixerit* has no deictic reference in the past and no deictic perspective point.⁵⁸ It can also express the speaker's opinion of improbability: *CH nescit quid faciat auro. NI Mihi dederit velim* ("CH: He doesn't know what to do with the gold. NI: I wish he would give it to me". Plaut. *Bacch.* 334).⁵⁹ Another group, "false conditionals", has non-deictic, indicative modal auxiliaries which signal a possibility (or obligation) but simultaneously its non-actualization: *At si ita esset, hac lege accusatum oportuit, qua accusatur Habitus* ("But had it been so, he ought to have been prosecuted under the same statute as Habitus is now", Cic. *Clu.* 90).⁶⁰ In false conditionals, past possible worlds are annihilated by reality: *Cato qui Sicilia tenere nullo negotio potuit et, si tenuisset, omnes boni ad eum se contulissent* ("Cato, who could have held Sicily without any difficulty (and if he had, all the honest men would have joined him)", Cic. *Att.* 10.16.3).⁶¹ The indicative enables a contrast: between the high degree of probability of actualization of the utterance, and the lack of its actualization.⁶²

In this category, Orlandini lists Latin indicative *if-nots*. The predicated event would have happened, if another circumstance had not stopped it. The tense of the apodosis is the indicative, but the apodosis is not deictic. The oldest have a perfect with *paene* or *prope*: *paene imprudentia admissum (fuit) facinus miserabile, ni utrimque praemissi equites rem exploravissent* ("a lamentable deed almost resulted from their misapprehension if horsemen sent ahead by both sides had not reconnoitered", Sall. *Iug.* 53.7).⁶³ Orlandini's Virgilian example is *Aen.* 6.358–60:⁶⁴ *iam tuta tenebam / ni gens crudelis ... invasisset* (this is analysed next). In these conditionals, there is a move towards the realization of the predication which is not carried through, despite the high probability of realization.⁶⁵ By this logic, *et, si fata deum* probably qualifies as a Homeric *if-not*. As we saw in the previous case (19), the principal feature of a Homeric *if-not* consists in the interruption of a course of action that is about to materialize, conveyed in a clause introduced by *if not* (ἐἰ μή). There is certainly a move towards the realization of the first apodosis in *et, si fata deum ... non laeva fuisset, impulerat ... latebras*, due to the use of the indicative. But in the Homeric *if-not* analyzed, the indicative *κεν ... βάλει* (*Il.* 20.288) does not produce that effect, because it has full hypothetical meaning. And what

⁵⁷ Orlandini (2005) 622.

⁵⁸ Bertinetto (1994) 796; Orlandini (2005) 623.

⁵⁹ Orlandini (2005) 623–24.

⁶⁰ trans. Grose Hodge (1927).

⁶¹ trans. Shackleton Bailey (1999).

⁶² Orlandini (2005) 626.

⁶³ trans. Rolfe-Ramsey (2013); See Chausserie-Laprée (1969) 602.

⁶⁴ Orlandini (2005) 627–28.

⁶⁵ *ibid.* 628.

about the initial position of the protasis? We may ask perhaps where precisely the apodosis starts. While we know for sure where the protasis begins (*si fata*), the start of the apodosis seems somewhat diffuse. By the time we reach *si fata*, we already know of an event that belongs to the apodosis. We know that Laocoon has thrown a spear at the wooden horse: *Validis ingentem viribus hastam / in latus inque feri curvam compagibus alvum / contorsit. Stetit illa tremens, uteroque recusso / insonuere cavae gemitumque dedere cavernae* (2.50–53). The action of destroying the horse has very noticeably started. The protasis *et si ...* follows, and interrupts the continuation of the action. There is, therefore, some degree of similarity between this and Homeric *if-nots*: the protasis does reverse the logical continuation of a course of action. With *impulerat foedare* next, there is a partial repetition of the act of destroying the horse: *hastam / in latus inque feri ... alvum / contorsit* (preceding the protasis) is partly replicated by *impulerat foedare latebras* (following the protasis). A similar semantic overlap is absent, for instance, from Horace's *if-not* in *Carm.* 2.17.27–30, with second-position *ni*-clause and initial indicative apodosis, to which Austin draws attention.⁶⁶ What precedes these lines is not an earlier statement of any part of the counterfactual:

*Te Iovis impio
tutela Saturno refulgens
eripuit volucrisque Fati*

*tardavit alas, cum populus frequens
laetum theatri ter crepuit sonum;
me truncus inlapsus cerebro,
sustulerat, nisi Faunus ictum*

*dextra levasset, Mercurialium
custos virorum.*

(“In your case, the protective power of Jupiter, shining brightly in the face of the malign Saturn, snatched you away and slowed down the wings of flying Fate at the time when the crowds of people at the theatre gave three happy rounds of applause. As for me, the tree that fell on my crown would have carried me off had not Faunus, the guardian of Mercury’s men, lightened the blow with his hand”).⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Austin (1964) ad 2.55.

⁶⁷ Rudd’s translation (2012), with conditional emphasized by me (“the tree ... would have carried me off ...”; cf. n.52 above).

If the *impulerat* counterfactual qualifies as a Homeric *if-not*, the sense will be: “Laocoon would have pushed us to destroy the horse, if we and the fates had not been adverse; and Troy would now be standing”. But Virgil’s protasis in the initial position prevents that reading. No *if*-clause intervenes to reverse an almost factual main clause. Ahl’s translation, on the other hand, quoted above (“That would have driven our swords to turn Argive lair into blood-bath”), encourages the resumption of the events which precede the protasis as the immediate precursors of *impulerat*: Laocoon’s arrival, his warning against the horse, and his attack on it with the javelin (2.40–53). We can observe, finally, that the duplication of immediately pre- and immediately post-protasis material is the opposite counterpart of the splitting of Trojan responses to the arrival of the horse: Aeneas says that some favour bringing the horse in (*pars ... / ... Thymoetes*, 2.31–34), and others its destruction (*at Capys*, 2.35–38). One line summarizes that split: *scinditur incertum studia in contraria vulgus* (2.39). Two paths are open to the Trojans, and the first (allowing the wooden horse in) becomes actualized, in the poem and Rome, whereas the second (destroying the horse) becomes counterfactual.

(21) – Closer to the Homeric *if-not* outlined at (19) in syntax but not in structural significance is *Aen.* 6.358–61:

*Paulatim adnabam terrae; iam tuta tenebam,
ni gens crudelis madida cum veste gravatum
prensantemque uncis manibus capita aspera montis
ferro invasisset praedamque ignara putasset?*

(“Slowly but surely I swam towards land, I was grasping at safety,
Hooking my hands round the crags of the cliff-top. And I would have made it
Had cruel people, ignorant men, not attacked me with cold steel,
Thinking I was fair game, weighed down as I was by my wet clothes”).⁶⁸

The negative protasis (*ni gens ... ferro invasisset praedamque ignara putasset*) in this case follows the apodosis (*iam tuta tenebam*) and redirects the narrative (*nunc me fluctus habet*, 6.362), in parallel with the Homeric pattern. As in the previous instance (2.54–56), however, and differently from Homeric ones, the apodosis is apparently factual: read by itself, *iam tuta tenebam* states a fact. That is due to the indicative, imperfect in this case, of *tenebam*. This formulation is that popular among Latin historians, contemporaries of Virgil and later. Chausserie-Laprée identifies 14 indicative apodosis *if-nots* in Livy, 3 of which are perfect (2.10.2, 65.4; 22.60.17),

⁶⁸ trans. Ahl (2007).

1 pluperfect (34.29.10) and 10 imperfect (2.50.10; 3.1.4, 43.7; 4.52.5; 5.26.10; 7.14.5; 23.40.8; 28.33.5; 40.32.5; 45.19.7), plus 3 infinitive and 76 subjunctives (7 of the subjunctives have *nisi*).⁶⁹ Palinurus speaks 6.358–61 in the Underworld, where Aeneas asks his shade how he came to die. The military language, therefore, is appropriate: in a conflictual situation, as in Livy, one course of events is related as factual (*tenebam*), while another interrupts it in a *ni*-clause which reverses that factuality (*ni ... invasisset ... putasset*). There is, in Orlandini's language,⁷⁰ a step towards the realization of the predication, but that realization does not happen. Palinurus is not safe. The imperfect is fitting too, as the most widely used tense for this effect by Livy. Also the use of *iam* is typical of these constructions: *iamque haud procul iusto proelio res erat, ni celeriter diremptum certamen per centurionem esset* ("And now the mêlée was likely to end in a regular battle, had not the centurions speedily parted the combatants", Liv. 7.14.5;⁷¹ cf. 4.52.5; 40.32.5).

A second important feature of this *if-not* is the lack of a clear connection between *iam tuta tenebam* and *ni gens crudelis ... / ferro invasisset praedamque ignara putasset*. Scholars often suggest ways of filling gaps in these cases; they add a supplement to the existing apodosis, a continuation of the stated action. Austin offers "I held safety in my grasp (and would have reached it) had not ..."⁷² Tarrant finds a disconnection between main and secondary clauses which is less audacious than that of *ensis / frangitur ... deserit ... / ni fuga subsidio subeat* (12.731–33, examined below).⁷³ Horsfall suggests an infill similar to Austin's. He also observes that, in view of 6.360, *tenebam* has to be either inceptive or conative: Palinurus' reference to himself in the *ni*-clause as grabbing the cliffs signals his movement towards safety, rather than the actual state.⁷⁴ The unfinished quality of the imperfect indicative may also allow an apodosis which needs no supplement in order to make sense. In that case, the *ni*-clause would have to be read as a *cum*-clause: this presents a one-off action which redirects the narrative against the background of an ongoing process.⁷⁵ Palinurus would then claim to have been grasping at safety when enemy people struck, and would continue with a reflection on his present status as a corpse in need of burial (*nunc me fluctus habet*).

How does Virgil's *iam tuta tenebam* relate to Livy's similar constructions? Some of Livy's indicative *if-not* apodoses suggest a similar truncation to that of *Aen.* 6.358–61. How an apodosis can be extracted from a component of the grammatical protasis is shown by Foster's

⁶⁹ Chausserie-Laprée (1969) 637.

⁷⁰ Orlandini (2005) 628.

⁷¹ trans. Foster (1924).

⁷² Austin (1977) *ad* 6.358.

⁷³ Tarrant (2012) *ad* 12.733.

⁷⁴ Horsfall (2013) *ad* 6.358.

⁷⁵ As in Livy 2.46.5, quoted above as similar to his *ni*-counterfactual with subjunctive apodosis at 2.47.3, according to Chausserie-Laprée (1969) 598 and Mellet (1988) 231: *cedebatque inde Romanus, cum ... consul ...: 'Hoc iurastis', inquit, 'milites ...?'*

translation (1919) of Livy 2.65.4 with the perfect indicative apodosis and *prope*, which of course makes the apodosis unreal rather than inceptive:

Sic prope oneratum est sinistrum Romanis cornu, ni referentibus iam gradum consul increpando simul temeritatem, simul ignaviam, pudore metum excussisset

(“The left wing of the Romans was nearly overwhelmed, and had already begun to retreat, **when** the consul, reproaching them at once with rashness and with cowardice, succeeded in shaming them out of their fear”).

Foster transfers *referentibus iam gradum* into a second apodosis; *ni* becomes *cum* and the apodosis (“the left wing ... was nearly overwhelmed”) merely a main clause. We can see the retroactive effect of an object from the protasis which comes to modify the apodosis: *referentibus iam gradum* describes *sinistrum cornu*, just as *prensantemque uncis manibus capita aspera montis* describes the subject of *tenebam*, without however the slight contradiction that we find in the latter (the inapplicability of *iam tuta tenebam* once we know that Palinurus was not grasping at safety yet; that inapplicability, as discussed, is attenuated by the unfinished quality of the imperfect). A missing apodosis left unsupplemented can be observed in Foster’s translation (1924) of Livy’s instance cited above: “And now the mêlée was likely to end in a regular battle, had not the centurions speedily parted the combatants” (for *iamque haud procul iusto proelio res erat, ni celeriter diremptum certamen per centurionem esset*, 7.14.5). This apodosis states the direction the narrative is taking, but falls short of pinpointing the state of affairs or course of events prevented by the *ni*-clause: what precisely the centurions’ action interrupts is left unexpressed. Foster adds no material, relying rather on the future sense of “was likely to” (*haud procul*) for a continuation of the apodosis. But it is not exactly the likelihood of battle that the *ni*-clause interrupts. It is rather the next, unspoken step in the narrative: the battle taking place. For an even clearer gap between apodosis and protasis, we may consider Foster’s translation (1919) of Livy 2.50.10: “and a handful of men, with the aid of a good position, were winning the victory, when the Veientes who had been sent round by the ridge emerged upon the crest of the hill” (for *vincebatque auxilio loci paucitas, ni iugo circummissus Veiens in verticem collis evasisset*): *ni* has been translated as “when”, because no precise state of affairs or course of events is specified in the apodosis for the *ni*-clause to interrupt. The *ni*-clause has been treated as a *cum*-clause again. An alternative without “when” would have to include a continuation of the existing apodosis along the lines of “were winning the victory [and would have won] **if** the Veientes **had not** ...”.

A third aspect to note is the absence in Livy’s indicative apodoses *if-nots* of first person speakers. Most of Livy’s text is in third person narrative, only 22.60.17 featuring in a speech

(in third person). Palinurus' *iam tuta tenebam* shares more in that respect with the counterfactual of Horace's ode seen above (2.17.27–29). But there the *if-not* indicative apodosis is in the pluperfect (*sustulerat*), and so without the sense that the action is ongoing, provided by the imperfect (*tenebam*).

To conclude section (21), we can say that Palinurus' counterfactual observation to Aeneas is structured like a Homeric *if-not*, with a negative protasis truncating the action reported in a preceding apodosis, but also with that apodosis partly factual, just as we find in Livy. Aeneas' counterfactual to Dido (20), on the other hand, comes closer in meaning to the narrator's one at *Il.* 20.288–92. Both narrate the possible non-existence of the present, including the text in which they figure.

(22) – A negative protasis in end position also features in the counterfactual spoken by Aeneas to the Latin envoys, who have come to ask for a truce to bury their dead (*Aen.* 11.110–19):

*Pacem me exanimis et Martis sorte peremptis
oratis? Equidem et vivis concedere vellem.
Nec veni, nisi fata locum sedemque dedissent,
nec bellum cum gente gero; rex nostra reliquit
hospitia et Turni potius se credidit armis.
Aequius huic Turnum fuerat se opponere morti.
Si bellum finire manu, si pellere Teucros
apparat, his mecum decuit concurrere telis:
vixet cui vitam deus aut sua dextra dedisset.
Nunc ite et miseris supponite civibus ignem.*

(“Peace for the dead, for the losers in Mars’ game of chance, that’s the only Favour you beg? I’d be willing to grant the same terms to the living! I wouldn’t *be* here, if fate hadn’t granted me this place to settle. I’m not at war with your people. *Your* king walked out on the welcome We offered, choosing to hazard his fortunes on Turnus’s weapons. Turnus, not they, should have faced this death. That would have been fairer. If he’s prepared to end war with his hand, and get rid of the Teucrians, These are the weapons, and I am the man honour called him to challenge. Life would have been the survivor’s reward from a god or his own strength. [Fairclough-Goold (2001): “the one of us should have lived to whom heaven or his own right hand had granted life”] Go now, and kindle the flames beneath your poor citizens’ bodies!”)⁷⁶

⁷⁶ trans. Ahl (2007).

The clash of not only moods, but particularly of the tenses of those moods is probably the most striking aspect of the one-line counterfactual *nec veni ... dedissent* (11.112). A perfect indicative apodosis (*veni*) followed by a pluperfect subjunctive protasis (*dedissent*) is not unprecedented. In Plautus and Livy, however, there is an adverb (*paene*) to remove factuality: *paene in foveam decidi, ni hic adesses* (Plaut. *Pers.* 594–95); *pons sublicius iter paene hostibus dedit, ni unus vir fuisset, Horatius Cocles* (Liv. 2.10.2). Virgil's version, with no softening of the factuality of *veni* (except for the negative, discussed shortly), is radically different from those cases. Aeneas is not claiming that he “nearly” did not come to Italy. But, like *Il.* 20.288–91, the counterfactual portrays a state of affairs which challenges the existence of the present, thus of the text.

Another question is whether the counterfactual warrants the addition of a supplementary apodosis: we have seen that a continuation of the event or state represented in the visible apodosis is often necessary in similar constructions, if the *ni*-clause is to make sense. No addition is necessary on this occasion according to Williams, who compares the current case to 2.54–56, with *impulerat* in the apodosis (“where however the more natural pluperfect is used”).⁷⁷ Other critics are silent on the matter, perhaps because the perfect applied to *venio* designates a completed state which cannot be extended, and, more importantly, because the sense of the counterfactual is not that of a Homeric *if-not*. No course of action that the audience may reasonably expect is interrupted by the protasis. The resemblance to a Homeric *if-not*, then, is only apparent. Virgil produces no other perfect indicative *if-not* apodosis, and none of Livy's indicative *if-not* apodoses uses a perfect without de-actualizing it (*prope oneratum est ... ni ...*, 2.65.4, discussed above). Virgil, therefore, appears to be experimenting with the *if-not* format more daringly than Livy. Tacitus offers five imperfects, two pluperfects and one perfect, but with *prope* (which removes factuality: *prope in proelium exarsere, ni Valens ... admonuisset, Hist.* 1.64).⁷⁸

The perfect could also be viewed differently. As a statement by Aeneas about his current circumstances, *nec veni* conveys a sense of present. Aspect is generally acknowledged as less important in Latin than in Greek, *memini* as a fossilized perfect used as a present being a rarity, along with *novi*.⁷⁹ But Conington's observation would seem appropriate: Aeneas, “to show the sincerity of his plea, says that he **has** not come, as if the present could be annulled by the absence of a condition operating in the past”.⁸⁰ Aeneas' statement is definitely about the time of speaking, a denial of his current presence. The apodosis *nec veni* probably does share the reference to the present proper to *memini* and *novi*.

⁷⁷ Williams (1973) *ad* 11.112. The initial position of the protasis at 2.54 makes the two quite different.

⁷⁸ Cf. Chausserie-Laprée (1969) 637.

⁷⁹ See Pinkster (1990) 231.

⁸⁰ Conington (1876) *ad* 11.112.

Aeneas' *nec veni* is interesting also for other reasons. Livy's indicative *if-not* apodoses have no negatives.⁸¹ Homer has comparable cases (*Il.* 11.504–07; 12.290–93; *Od.* 5.177–79; 10.342–44; 19.343–47). *Aen.* 11.112 conceivably resembles these Homeric instances, particularly those spoken by characters (the *Odyssey* cases). The marked use of the indicative, however, clearly does not apply to Homer, and Aeneas' *nec veni* claim involves no interrupted action. The adventurousness of Aeneas' utterance perhaps underlines his reluctance to participate in the events forced upon him by fate. That is one of the clearest motifs in the poem.

Worth exploring is also the relationship of *nec veni* with the indicatives used hypothetically that follow, *fuera*t and *decu*it in the next five lines:

*Aequius huic Turnum fuerat se opponere morti.
Si bellum finire manu, si pellere Teucros
apparat, his mecum decuit concurrere telis:
vixet cui vitam deus aut sua dextra dedisset.*

(11.115–18).

In a sentence which resembles an apodosis without protasis (115), followed by a conditional with two protases and one final apodosis (116–17), and by either another apodosis or a wish (118), Aeneas proposes an alternative to war. The expressions *aequum / difficile / longum / melius / satius est* and verbs that indicate power, convenience and obligation (*possum, debeo, oportet, decet, necesse est*) are commonly expressed in the indicative also when portraying hypothetical situations.⁸² In the first case (*aequius ... morti*), *sum* takes the pluperfect indicative. One critic at least appears to have taken that literally: Conington, while acknowledging one instance of *aequius fuera*t as hypothetical in Plautus (*Trin.* 119), argues that “*fuera*t here is hardly for *fuisset*, but refers to the combat of the day before”.⁸³ As *huic morti* is acknowledged to denote the dead bodies from the battle, that temporal reference is correct. The more widespread opinion, however, is that *fuera*t is hypothetical.⁸⁴ That sense of *fuera*t is also supported by the similar use in Latinus' wish for an earlier decision in the forthcoming Latin council (*fuera*t *melius*, 11.303). In both, an alternative and preferable course of action, as estimated by the speaker, to what has happened is presented. In these constructions, the content of a protasis is in the complement framed in the infinitive: *huic Turnum se opponere morti*. Latinus' version is more clearly hypothetical, because of *ante* and the subjunctive of *vellem*, which underlines that the wished-for events did not happen: *Ante*

⁸¹ See Chausserie-Laprée (1969) 637.

⁸² See Ernout & Thomas (1953) § 264, § 375c.

⁸³ Conington (1876) *ad* 11.115.

⁸⁴ As shown, for instance, in Ahl's (2007) translation: “That would have been fairer”.

equidem summa de re statuisset, Latini, / et vellem et fuerat melius (11.302–03). If Latinus wishes something, it means it is not there now. That is also the logic of the indicatives *aequum / melius est, possum* etc, and as used in the next conditional (*decurit concurrere*): a judgment on what is desired, possible, or better generally implies that there are at least two states or courses of action, one materialized and one not. That also applies to *volo*, of course, but whereas for *volo* the subjunctive is perceived as necessary in Latin,⁸⁵ it is not for the other expressions: the speaker's estimation that there is an alternative is seen to make sense in the indicative.

Aeneas expands his wish that Turnus alone rather than his whole army had faced death with more conditional material: *si bellum finire manu, si pellere Teucros / apparat, his mecum decuit concurrere telis* (11.116–17). The present indicative *apparat* in the initial protasis suggests that the speaker considers the materialization of *apparo* possible. The perfect indicative *decurit* in the apodosis, however, refers to the past, a temporal reference confirmed by mention of the weapons of the earlier battle (*his telis*). Aeneas judges that fighting with him would have been the right thing for Turnus to do on the day before, in alternative to the fight which did take place.

Aeneas then goes on to express a further counterfactual estimation, in a pluperfect subjunctive line which extends the apodosis: *vixet cui vitam deus aut sua dextra dedisset* (11.118). This wish for a different past is interesting. Conington finds that *vixet* “has a potential or quasi imperative sense, ‘vivere debuerat’”. He also finds the alternative, divine favour and human prowess, perplexing, as Aeneas would know that both are needed for success.⁸⁶ That, and the fiction that either contender may have won, construct Aeneas as rather disingenuous. While he occupies an ontological sphere which prevents him from seeing the entire poem, for the narrator to present the privileged hero talking as if the outcome is undecided seems mischievous. That fiction perhaps imitates that operating at *Il.* 20.288–91, where the possibility of either Achilles or Aeneas being killed is presented as plausible. Aeneas' wish, then, in that respect brings us close to the Homeric narrator's threat to the text at *Il.* 20.288–91.

Aeneas' complex counterfactual plays a significant role, which is that of announcing the mechanism that will lead to the resolution: a duel. The preponderance of indicatives in the largely counterfactual region underlines that connection. The end is gradually materializing. The influence on that gradual materialization of the verbs that have a hypothetical sense though indicative has been identified by Gransden: the perfect indicative of *veni* “may perhaps be seen as an extension of the common use of the indicative of *sum, possum*, etc. in an apodosis implying possibility”. Gransden gives *Aen.* 4.18–19 as another instance of that: *si ... / si ... /*

⁸⁵ See Handford (1947) § 105, § 114–16.

⁸⁶ Conington (1876) *ad* 11.118.

forsan potui succumbere culpa;⁸⁷ the indicative used in a counterfactual apodosis coincides with the beginning of actualization (in this case, of Dido's succumbing to Aeneas).

(23) – A more extreme case of dislocation between the two components of a counterfactual, and with Homeric *if-not* syntax if not quite sense, features in the narrator's tale of the breaking of Turnus' sword (*Aen.* 12.731–41):

*Arrectaeque amborum acies: At perfidus ensis
frangitur in medioque ardentem deserit ictu,
ni fuga subsidio subeat. Fugit ocior Euro
ut capulum ignotum dextramque aspexit inermem.
Fama est praecipitem, cum prima in proelia iunctos
conscendebat equos, patrio mucrone relicto,
dum trepidat, ferrum aurigae rapuisse Metisci:
idque diu, dum terga dabant palantia Teucri,
suffecit; postquam arma dei ad Vulcania ventum est,
mortalis mucro, glacies ceu futilis, ictu
dissiluit; fulva resplendent fragmina harena.*

(“Both forces rise to their feet. The perfidious sword-blade, however, Shivers to pieces on impact, betraying its fiery owner.

Only his feet come to help. He runs faster than gusts of the east wind
Once he has glanced at the unknown hilt and his weaponless right hand.
Rumour reports he was rushed as he harnessed and mounted his horses
When battle started, and that he forgot to bring out his ancestral
Sword in his nervous excitement, grabbed that of his driver, Metiscus.
This sword, as long as the Teucrians scattered, retreated, and turned tail,
Served well enough. But against weapons forged by a deity, Vulcan,
Mortal steel was as brittle as ice and it shattered on impact:
Strewn on the tan-coloured sand, lying scattered as glistening fragments”).⁸⁸

The *if-not* consists of two main present indicative sentences: *perfidus ensis frangitur* (12.731–32), and *in medioque ardentem deserit ictu* (12.732), followed by a protasis in the present subjunctive, *ni fuga subsidio subeat* (12.732). The *ni*-clause, we may assume, either attempts the reversal of the events narrated previously, as at (21), or relates in some way to those events,

⁸⁷ Gransden (1991) ad 11.112.

⁸⁸ trans. Ahl (2007).

as at (22). What are the events in the current instance? Neither the sword breaking nor its leaving the fiery hero can be the development thwarted by the *ni*-clause (flight bringing help). There is no relationship at all between the first two and the third. For comparison, we can look again at what is possibly the nearest case in the poem: *nec veni, nisi fata locum sedemque dedissent* (11.112). This *if-not* contains the same discrepancy between indicative apodosis and subjunctive protasis. The two clauses *nec veni, nisi ...* are however semantically consistent (“I came, the fates sent me”). But the two apodoses taken together and the protasis of *ensis ... subeat* are not. The three units sound rather like a succession of events: “the sword breaks, it leaves the fiery hero, flight brings help”. On that reading, there is no conditional involved at all. The resemblance between this counterfactual and the *nec veni* one is clearly only grammatical, each in reality constituting a case unto itself.

An added apodosis, on the other hand, may render the conditional structure more palatable. But in this case, as opposed to the three explored above, it is because there is no apodosis at all, the two main clauses, *perfidus ensis frangitur*, and *in medioque ardentem deserit ictu*, rather representing facts. The sword really broke, and it really left its user. Tarrant follows scholarly consensus in proposing an apodosis implied by *deserit*: “[he would have been helpless] if flight had not come to his aid”. He sees no need for a lacuna, however, as suggested by others, finding that “the condensed expression reflects the speed with which Turnus responds to his imminent danger”.⁸⁹ The narrator leaps ahead, so breathless is the action. Traina offers “rimarrebbe indifeso”.⁹⁰ Maguiness presents no suggestion but finds the conditional “an extreme and barely rational instance”, and supports the lacuna hypothesis.⁹¹ Virgil has clearly stretched the Homeric model quite substantially, by describing the mechanism that allows the hero to survive in a line-initial protasis which follows the apodosis, in parallel with εἰ μὴ ἄρ’ ὄξυ νόησε Πιοσειδάων ἐνοσίχθων (*Il.* 20.291; this is also line-initial), but there is no real counterfactual, because the main clause is fully factual, and does not quite relate to the *ni*-clause. The agent of rescue, *fuga*, is noteworthy too. As Tarrant comments, it appears human.⁹² The act of fleeing is not odd in itself: Hector flees, like Turnus, at *Il.* 22.136–38 (not a conditional), but Homer’s *if-not* agents are never abstract.

The identity of the sword that shatters and then abandons Turnus also deserves some attention. Left with the hilt, we learn in the following lines, Turnus discovers his sword was not his own: he had snatched his charioteer’s sword accidentally. That background information, introduced by *fama est*, makes the story uncertain; but as the narrative resumes the

⁸⁹ Tarrant (2012) *ad* 12.733.

⁹⁰ Traina (1997) on 12.733.

⁹¹ Maguiness (1953) *ad* 12.731–33.

⁹² Tarrant (2012) *ad* 12.733.

indicative, the career of the sword is related as fact: *idque diu ... / suffecit*. We know, then, that the sword which may have been Turnus' charioteer's did its job in Turnus' hand, but, when faced by Vulcan's armour, broke. Why would the sword be rumoured not to belong to Turnus? It is to avoid having both heroes using weapons made by Vulcan, according to West.⁹³ Reference to Aeneas' armour by its manufacturer's name is made twice in the poem in the heightened form *Volcania arma* (8.535 and here, *postquam arma dei ad Volcania ventum est*); that Turnus' sword was by the same smith is specified at 12.90–91 (*Volcania*). That weapon, West explains, "is never engaged in a losing battle";⁹⁴ in due course, Turnus attacks Aeneas with a stone, although his sword was returned to him (12.896–907). What are we to make of the identity of the sword? Mainly, that the two heroes are deeply intertwined, with Turnus the worse alternative. Whereas Aeneas' access to the supplier of weapons Vulcan receives wide publicity, Turnus' only gains a brief mention, and he loses use of the weapon anyway; upon retrieval, he does not use it. His attempt to retaliate by throwing a stone, which would confer Homeric status to him, also fails due to lack of strength. The two heroes are presented, here as throughout the poem, as unequal members of a couplet. This is one of the many instances of *synkrisis*, comparisons between unequal doubles, present in the poem. But the identity of the sword mentioned at this stage, just after the *frangitur ... deserit* counterfactual, also draws attention to different types of *synkrisis*: that between indicative and subjunctive, and that between factual and counterfactual states or events, the former member of each pair being the more actualized of the two, and the second the less. We have seen that the indicative apodoses of *if-nots* are both factual and counterfactual (*impulerat, tenebam, nec veni*). In the current instance (*frangitur ... deserit*), the indicative is literal: the confusing identity of the sword highlights the game played in the poem between factuality and counterfactuality, emphasized by the reversal of that game.

*

We have analysed four counterfactuals from the *Aeneid*, modelled to varying degrees on the *if-not* constructions of the *Iliad*. The four illustrate Virgil's use of the Homeric pattern combined with two features typical of Livy: the indicative apodosis, which presents a hypothetical course of action as factual, and the disconnection between apodosis and protasis; Horace, writing in the same period, also makes use of the device. In one of the four cases, the course of action expressed in the indicative is interrupted by a subsequent *ni*-clause (6.358–61), as in the Homeric pattern. In two other cases (11.112 and 12.731–33), there is no such interruption, although the Homeric syntactic pattern is recognizable; in the second of these two, 12.731–33, the apodosis remains factual after the protasis is taken into consideration.

⁹³ West (1974) 28–29.

⁹⁴ *ibid.* 29.

In the fourth case (2.54–56), the clause positions are reversed, without consequent reversal of action, and the usual Latin conditional conjunction *ni* (or *nisi*) is replaced by *si non*. That particular counterfactual, however, retains the sense of the principal Homeric *if-not* (*Il.* 20.288–91), which is that current reality, and therefore the text, risked at one time not coming into existence at all.⁹⁵

The following is a concise summary of the relevant features of the four counterfactuals and the Homeric *if-not*, with protasis underlined and (Latin) indicative apodosis in bold:

(19)

ἐνθά κεν Αἰνείας μὲν ἐπεσσύμενον βάλε πέτρῳ

...

τὸν δὲ κε Πηλεΐδης σχεδὸν ἄορι θυμὸν ἀπηύρα,

εἰ μὴ ἄρ' ὄξυ νόησε Ποσειδάων ἐνοσίχθων ...

(*Il.* 20.288–91).

(20)

et, si fata deum, si mens non laeva fuisset,

impulerat ...

(*Aen.* 2.54–56).

(21)

iam tuta tenebam,

ni gens crudelis ...

ferro invasisset praedamque ignara putasset.

(*Aen.* 6.358–61).

⁹⁵ Earlier still than the night of Troy burning is the time reference of *Aen.* 1.58–59: *ni faciat, maria ac terras caelumque profundum / quippe ferant rapidi secum verrantque per auras* (“If he did not, they would tear straight out and swirl away with them / Oceans, land, vast sky, swept off like dust upon breezes” – trans. Ahl, 2007). The subject of *ni faciat* is the guardian of the winds, Aeolus, whose constant attention is said to be necessary to keep them from escaping. The parts of the world would collapse if this counterfactual was actualized, so civilization would not have started at all, or may founder now. A related counterfactual, a Greek Homeric *if-not*, relates the duel between Zeus and Typhoeus at Hesiod *Theogony* 836–39:

καί νύ κεν ἔπλετο ἔργον ἀμήχανον ἡματι κείνῳ

καί κεν ὄ γε θνητοῖσι καὶ ἀθανάτοισιν ἀνάξεν,

εἰ μὴ ἄρ' ὄξυ νόησε πατὴρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε.

(“And truly a thing past help would have happened on that day, and he would have come to reign over mortals and immortals, had not the father of men and gods been quick to perceive it” – trans. Evelyn-White, 1914).

This conjures up the possibility that the current universe may have failed to start, or may collapse at any time (since the defeated is only imprisoned, like the winds in *ni faciat*, but may escape).

(22)

nec veni, nisi fata locum sedemque dedissent

(*Aen.* 11.112).

(23)

at perfidus ensis
frangitur ... deserit ...,
ni fuga subsidio subeat.

(*Aen.* 12.731–33).

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