

A NEGLECTED CONJECTURE AT AENEID 12.882

At Aen. 12.878–84, Juturna laments that the sorrows of immortality are poor recompense from Jupiter for the loss of her virginity, because there will now be nothing pleasurable in life, and no end to her grief over Turnus¹). Questions make up much of Juturna's speech, two of them introduced by the word *aut* (873, 882) in all modern editions. In questions, *aut* often introduces not an alternative, as it generally does elsewhere, but simply another in a series of similar questions. Austin ad Aen. 1.369 (*sed vos qui tandem? quibus aut venistis ab oris?*) explains the usage succinctly: *aut* "is not antithetical, but merely separative, introducing a second question more or less synonymous with the first: this is a feature of conversational speech, frequent in Plautus"²). Austin cites Aen. 2.285–86, *quae causa indigna serenos / foedavit vultus? aut cur haec vulnera cerno?*, where both questions basically mean, "What has happened, Hector?", and Plautus Amph. 409, *quid igitur dubito? aut cur non intro eo?*, where again the second question restates the first. Examples could easily be multiplied, and nearly all examples of *aut* introducing questions in Vergil are used to begin second questions that restate the first³).

1) On Juturna's speech generally see A. Barchiesi, *Il lamento di Giuturna*, MD 1 (1978) 99–121, Jasper Griffin, *Latin Poets and Roman Life* (Chapel Hill 1986) 130, and R. O. A. M. Lyne, *Further Voices in Vergil's Aeneid* (Oxford 1987) 86–87, 139–44.

2) Cf. Leumann–Hofmann–Szantyr, *Lateinische Syntax und Stilistik* (Munich 1965) 498–500; 498: "*aut* vielfach dazu dient, nicht scharf konträre, sondern lediglich verschiedene, oft sogar mehr oder weniger synonyme Begriffe zu trennen, so besonders in abundanten Frage der Alltagsrede wie Plt. Mil. 469 *quid iam? aut quid est?*, Poen. 994 *quo iates estis aut quo ex oppido?*;" 500: "Sonstiges *aut* = *et* ist an den eingangs erwähnten volkstümlichen Gebrauch der Verbindung synonyme Begriffe oder Sätze durch *aut* = d. *beziehungsweise* anzuknüpfen ... vgl. noch z. B. Ter. Haut. 1027 *quod peto aut volo, parentis meos ut commonstres mihi;*" OLD s. v. 4 "Introducing a question, esp. the second of two, and often not dist. from *et*."

3) All but two examples in Warwick's Vergil concordance fit this pattern; at Georg. 2.122 and Aen. 3.310–11, *aut* basically seems to mean "or".

Juturna's speech begins with two questions, the second introduced by *aut*. Here *aut* fits the pattern just described:

quid nunc te tua, Turne, potest germana iuvare?
aut quid iam durae superat mihi? (872–73)

Both questions basically mean, "What can I do now?", and the implied answer to each is "Nothing."

In lines 882–83, Juturna asks two questions, the second introduced by *aut*⁴), but here the *aut* introduces neither an alternative, nor a "second question more or less synonymous with the first":

immortalis ego? aut quicquam mihi dulce meorum
te sine, frater, erit?

To Juturna's first rhetorical question, "Am I to be immortal?", the answer must be "Yes." But to her second question, "Will anything be sweet for me without you, Turnus?", the answer must be "No". The questions are neither alternatives, nor synonymous; the second undercuts the first. The relationship of the second question to the first seems unlike that of any other example of *aut* introducing a question.

Karl Friedrich Heinrich, a student of Heyne and professor ordinarius of Classical Philology at the new-founded Bonn University (1818) who published three volumes of explanatory notes on the *Aeneid*, suggested a small emendation that would remove the unparalleled *aut* and improve the logic of the lines: change *aut* to *at* in 882⁵). This would produce *immortalis ego? at quicquam mihi dulce meorum...?*, "Shall I be immortal? Yes, but in my immortality what pleasure will there be...?" Unlike *aut*, *at* is not often used in the *Aeneid* to introduce questions, which may be why the manuscripts have *aut*, but Turnus' rhetorical question at Aen. 9.142–44 provides a suitable parallel:

quibus haec medii fiducia valli
fossarumque morae, leti discrimina parva,
dant animos; at non viderunt moenia Troiae
Neptuni fabricata manu considerare in ignis?

"Their fortifications makes them brave now, but have they not seen the walls of Troy burn?"⁶) Turnus' question undercuts the bravery attributed, however briefly or ironically, to the Trojans in his previous sentence.

4) In most manuscripts; the reading in chvy¹ is *haud*.

5) Heinrich's conjecture is reported in P. Wagner's fourth edition of C. G. P. Heyne, P. Virgilii Maronis Opera 5 vols. (Leipzig 1830–41) ad loc. – Not surprisingly, *at* and *aut* are easily confused in manuscripts. *Aut* is falsely read for *at* at Verg. Georg. 1.430 by M¹, at 3.331 by F¹MPbr, at 4.103 by P, at Plaut. Cap. 747 by J, at Curc. 554 by E¹ and J, at Ter. An. 679 by P¹s², and at Eun. 272 by L. On universal errors in the text of Vergil see E. Courtney, The Formation of the Text of Vergil, BICS 28 (1981) 13–29. The corruption of *at* to *aut* is the type of error that could easily have been committed independently by two or more scribes, like the examples discussed by Courtney on p. 15.

6) Another possible parallel in the *Aeneid* is in the words of Amata at 7.361–364:

nec matris miseret, quam primo Aquilone relinquet
perfidus alta petens abducta virgine praedo?

Juturna's words at 12.882–83 and Turnus' at 9.142–44 are examples of the rhetorical figure of speech *subiectio*. *Subiectio*, as the author of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* explains, is the orator's tactic of bringing up a topic or question that might be used against him, and then supplying an answer or objection that undercuts that argument⁷). The word *at* often introduces the objection, as it does in many of the examples given in the *ad Herennium*, and in numerous examples offered by the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*⁸). Juturna is lamenting – arguing, one might say – that her position is a miserable one, and that she has been poorly rewarded by Jupiter for the loss of her virginity (*haec pro virginitate reponit?* 878). The question “Shall I be immortal?” is like the question the orator anticipates from his opponent – “but have you not been treated well by Jupiter, and given the gift of immortality?” Then the *at quicquam* sentence undercuts that objection, exposing the inadequacy of the gift of immortality with the rhetorical question, *at quicquam mihi dulce meorum te sine, frater, erit?*

The emendation of *aut* into *at* would thus replace an unparalleled usage of the former with a perfectly regular usage of the latter. Both the corruption from *at* to *aut*, and its ability to escape detection, would have been aided by the frequency with which *aut* introduces questions, and the fact that Juturna's speech begins with two questions linked by *aut*, which then might be on the scribe's mind as he copied 882. Heinrich's conjecture deserves consideration⁹).

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*at non sic Phrygius penetrat Lacedaemona pastor,
Ledaeamque Helenam Troianas vexit ad urbes?*

Here however the opposition to the previous question is weak: see Fordyce ad loc. for arguments in favor of the reading *an*.

7) Rhet. Her. 4.33: *Subiectio est cum interrogamus adversarios aut quaerimus ipsi quid ab illis aut quid contra nos dici possit; dein subicimus id quod oportet dici aut non oportet, aut nobis adiumento futurum sit aut offuturum sit idem contrario, hoc modo: “Quaero igitur unde iste tam pecuniosus factus sit. Amplum patrimonium relictum est? At patris bona venierunt . . .”* Three more examples follow, which I quote in part in the next note.

8) Cf. ThLL s. v. *at* col. 998–99. A sampling: Gracch. or. frg. (Cic. de orat. 3.214) *Quo vertam? In Capitoliumne? At fratris sanguine madet; Rhet. Her. 4.33: Amicos proferet? At nemo est qui sibi non turpe putet istius amicum nominari; 4.34: Castra relinquerem? At obsidebamur . . . Vitam militum neglegerem? At eos videbar ea accepisse condicione ut eos, quoad possem, incolumis patriae et parentibus conservarem; Cic. Catil. 1.27 f.: Quid tandem te impedit? Mosne maiorum? At persaepe etiam privati . . . perniciosos civis morte multaverunt.* The objection may be put as a question, as in Juturna's speech, although it is not always clear whether the technical term *subiectio* would apply: cf. Cic. Verr. 2.4.146 *praetor appellatur. At quis appellat? magistratus aliqui? Nemo; Cluent. 89 ad quaestionem ipse abreptus est. At quam quaestionem?; Sull. 41–42 constitui senatores, qui omnia indicum . . . responsa perscriberent. At quos viros!; Sen. Contr. 9.4.6 Tyrannum, inquit, occidi. At patrem quantulo minus quam occidisti?*

9) Macrob. Sat. 4.4.25 smooths the logic by making the answer to Juturna's first question, “Shall I be immortal?”, basically “no”, which would make both of the questions joined by *aut* say the same thing, as the parallels indicate they should: *et Iuturna cum queritur quod adiuvare fratrem prohibeatur: ‘immortalis ego?’ quid*