

Euripides *Troades* 1244:
ὕμνηθημεν PV ὕμνηθεῖμεν Hermann

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The verb discussed in this note is found in the reflection Hecuba voices between the completion of the ritual decking out of her grandson's body and her handing him over for burial (1240–5). The text is not well preserved. Some parts are obviously faulty,¹ others are suspected of being so.² Still, the gist of the passage is fairly clear. In the first part (1240–42a) Hecuba expresses her conviction that the woes of Troy have been contrived by the gods, in the second (1242b–45) that the Trojans will provide future generations with themes of song.³ The sequence and the conclusion bring to mind the explanation given by Helen in the *Iliad* (6.357–8) and by Alcinoos in the *Odyssey* (8.579–80), according to which Zeus, or the gods, purposely assigned Helen and Paris, or Troy and the heroes fighting at Troy, to their doom, so that they might be sung of by men thereafter. In our passage this expectation is put in the form of the apodosis to an 'unreal' protasis, about the text and meaning of which there is no general agreement. However, agreement does not seem to be indispensable for the understanding of the main clause, of which our verb constitutes the predicate. Evidently, had divinity acted differently — done

1 E.g. the immediately preceding two verses 1238 and 1239; 1245; see also 1243 V.

2 E.g. 1240a, 1242b.

3 It may be of interest to note that R.B. Rutherford ('Tragic Form and Feeling in the *Iliad*,' *JHS* 102, 1982, 145–60, n.69 on p. 160) considers this passage to be a — the only — textual self-reference in Greek tragedy, but O. Taplin ('Fifth-century tragedy and comedy: a *synkrisis*,' *JHS* 106, 1986, 163–74, on p. 168) does not take it as such. For another alleged, and denied, self-reference see E. *Alc.* 452 with Dale's n. on *Alc.* 447 (on p. 90).

what it did not do (PV),⁴ or not done what it did (Stephanus)⁵ — the Trojans, being ἀφανείς, would not ‘have become celebrated’ by posterity. For the MSS’s ‘unreal’ indicative aorist passive of ὑμνέω Hermann conjectured a potential optative, and editors have been divided since.⁶ Hermann is likely⁷ to have taken the transmitted verbal form to refer to the past, as it were from the point of view of the playwright, while he expected the action to be imagined in the future and from the point of view of the speaker.⁸ The change may, however, not be necessary if the aorist indicative with ἄν in ‘unreal’ apodoses can be shown to indicate not only unrealized action imagined in the past or in the (instant) present, as is generally held,⁹ but also action imagined in the future and presumed to be unrealizable. I intend to defend the tradition by adducing some such examples:

- 4 See L. Parmentier, *Euripide* IV, Coll. des Univ. de France (Paris 1925) p.78 n.1 and K.H. Lee, *Euripides Troades* (Basingstoke 1976) 1242–5 n. for the defence of the manuscript tradition.
- 5 See Shirley A. Barlow, *Euripides Trojan Women* (Warminster 1986) 1242 n. on p.225 for a detailed defence of Stephanus’ emendation.
- 6 E.g. *Euripidis Fabulae* II OCT, 1913³ ed. G. Murray ὑμνήθημεν, 1981 ed. J. Diggle ὑμνηθεῖμεν.
- 7 I have not been able to find Hermann’s arguments. The conjecture is not one of those published and substantiated in his 1847 Progr. Leipzig ‘De quibusdam locis Euripidis Troadum,’ reprinted in G. Hermann’s *Opuscula* VIII, ed. Th. Fritzsche (Leipzig 1877) 202–18. The earliest evidence of its existence known to me is in A. Kirchhoff’s Berlin 1852 edition of *Euripidis Troades*, where the optative is printed in the text (v.1227), with “correxit Hermannus” in the Codicum Testimonia.
- 8 E.g. F.A. Paley, *Euripides* I (London 1872²), *Tro.*1243 n.: “Hermann’s reading ὑμνηθεῖμεν, while it suits ὕστ. βροτ. better, is less adapted to the preceding aorist indicative ἔστρεψε. Euripides was thinking only of the poets who had preceded him, and so he says ‘We should not have been (as now we are) the subjects of song’.” — The connexion between the conjectured optative and ὕστ. βροτ. is in line with Hermann’s restricting (in his ‘De particula ἄν libri IV,’ *Opuscula* IV Lipsiae 1831, 50–1) those of the aorist indicatives with ἄν that do not refer to the past to the instant present.
- 9 See W.W. Goodwin, *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses of the Greek Verb* (London 1889) §§ 410, 414; R. Kühner-B. Gerth, *Ausführliche Grammatik der griechischen Satzlehre* (Hannover 1976 = 1898³) II 468–71; E. Schwyzler, *Griechische Grammatik* (München 1953–60²) II 347–8.

E.*Alc.* 121–6:¹⁰

μόνα δ' ἄν, εἰ φῶς τόδ' ἦν
 ὄμμασιν δεδορκῶς
 Φοίβου παῖς, προλιποῦσ'
 ἦλθ' ἄν ἔδρας σκοτίους
 "Αἶδα τε πύλας.

Alcestis is dying. In the preceding strophe the chorus has stated that her approaching death cannot be counteracted anymore (112–20), in this one they assert that there equally exists no possibility for her to come back from the dead; consequently they have no more hope, either this way or the other, that she may yet live (121–30). The text is problematic, but however it is emended or its oddities are explained, the chorus evidently assume that Alcestis' now inevitable crossing over to Hades' realm would not be irreversible if Asclepius were alive. Obviously her return from the world below is imagined in the future, seeing that she has not yet left this one.¹¹

E.*Alc.* 357–62:

εἰ δ' ὄρφεός μοι γλῶσσα καὶ μέλος παρῆν,
 ὥστ' ἢ κόρην Δήμητρος ἢ κείνης πόσιν
 ὕμνοισι κηλήσαντά σ' ἐξ "Αἶδου λαβεῖν,
 κατηλθόν ἄν, καί μ' οὔθ' ὁ Πλούτωνος κύων
 οὔθ' οὐπί κώπηι ψυχοπομπὸς ἄν Χάρων
 ἔσχ' ἄν, πρὶν ἐς φῶς σὸν καταστῆσαι δέμας.

Admetus describes to his dying wife how he will live after she is gone (328 ff.). He will not remarry; he will banish all merriment from his presence; her sculptured likeness will be his dear companion, his pleasure, should she appear in his dreams. Had he been endowed with Orpheus' gifts, nothing 'would have stopped' him from bringing her back from the nether world — of course in the future, after she has arrived there.¹²

10 *Euripidis Fabulae* I ed. J. Diggle (Oxford 1984).

11 A.M. Dale's (*Euripides Alcestis*, Oxford 1954, 125 n.) "The Chorus have so far despaired that they speak as if Alcestis were known to be already dead and in Hades" explains away the difficulty and makes the text suit the traditional function of aorist indicatives with ἄν (above with n.9); nonetheless, the explanation would be more satisfactory if this were the only case of such an 'irregularity.' Dale does not remark on 360–2 (our next example). See also n.12.

12 That Admetus is fully aware of the gap between the future situation which he describes and the present one is put into relief by ἐκεῖσε in the immediately following 363 ἄλλ' οὖν ἐκεῖσε προσδόκα μ(ε) (*Scil.* ἐκεῖσε ἀφικομένη / ἐπειδὴν ἐκεῖσε ἀφίκηι).

E.*Hel.* 290:¹³

εἰ μὲν γὰρ ἕζη πόσις, ἀνεγνώσθημεν ἄν

Innocent Helen who, hoping to be reunited with Menelaus (56–9), has taken refuge at the tomb of Proteus in order to escape marriage with his son and heir, learns that Menelaus has been lost at sea on his way back from Troy together with her phantom, and considers suicide. The text preceding and following our verse is corrupt, but enough of it is certain to follow Helen's argument. Not only has she lost everything of her earlier and only true life, but even if she should get back to Sparta, she would probably find the gates barred against her (287b εἰ with opt., 288a opt. with ἄν). If her husband had been alive, recognition would 'have been achieved' by tokens of proof (291)¹⁴ — a prospect which cannot materialize anymore now that he is dead.¹⁵

Pl. *Ap.* 38c5–6:

εἰ γοῦν περιμείνατε ὀλίγον χρόνον, ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτομάτου ἄν ὑμῖν τοῦτο ἐγένετο.

Seventy years old Socrates has been sentenced to death. He tells the responsible members of the jury that the period in virtue of which they will incur the infamy of having killed him is not extensive. "If you had waited a little time, your desire would have been fulfilled in the course of nature."¹⁶

13 *Euripidis Fabulae* III, ed. G. Murray (Oxford 1913²).

14 R. Kannicht's (*Euripides Helena*, Heidelberg 1969, 291 n.) "Denn wenn mein Gemahl noch lebte, würden wir uns... *sofort* erkennen" (my emphasis) seems to be influenced by the traditional view that aorist indicatives with ἄν in apodoses which do not refer to past occurrences may refer to present instant ones (above with n.9). A totally unforeseen *anagnorisis* in which a phantom has first to be overcome is not likely to have been expected to be achieved instantly. See also n.11.

15 S. *OT* 1371–3a ἐγὼ γὰρ οὐκ οἶδ' ὄμμασιν ποίοις βλέπων / πατέρα ποτ' ἄν προσεῖδον εἰς "Αἰδοῦ μολῶν, / οὐδ' αὖ τάλαιναν μητέρα(α), taking βλέπων with Jebb to mean εἰ ἔβλεπον, is probably another such case, unless the chorus' earlier "you would be better off existing no more than alive and blind" (1368) is understood to signify "you would be better off had you committed suicide," and not, as is more likely, "self-blinding does not solve your problem; for this you have to wait for death." If it means the first, Oedipus rejects the chorus' suggestion by explaining that death would not have been any remedy as long as he was sighted, since he would have had to see his parents when he arrived in the underworld. If it means the latter, Oedipus retorts that his self-inflicted blindness guarantees that he will be exempt from looking his parents into their face when he comes to Hades' realm — whenever that happens in the future.

16 B. Jowett's translation.

In all these passages the apodosis is a future occurrence necessarily dependent, to the best of the speaker's knowledge, on the realization of a condition believed by him to be 'unreal'.¹⁷ Unlike a potential optative which would have left the realization of this occurrence an undecided possibility, the 'unreal' aorist indicative throws the speaker's certainty that the consequences of the unrealized protasis will not follow into strong relief.¹⁸ Indeed, there seems to be no other way to express this conviction.¹⁹

Thus viewed, the MSS's οὐκ ἄν ὑμνήθημεν in *E.Tro.*1244 may be interpreted as stressing Hecuba's assurance that the Trojans will become sung of ('will not not-become-sung-of'), as they would not, had the condition specified in the protasis not been an unreal one. The observation that in Attic Greek unreal past indicative protases are hardly ever followed by potential optative apodoses²⁰ is an additional reason for preferring the MSS tradition in our passage.

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- 17 Two of the examples are ironic: in *Alc.* 121–6 the chorus assumes that Alcestis' return from the dead depends solely on the intervention of Asclepius — but she will be rescued by Heracles. In *Hel.* 290–1 Helen is convinced that Menelaus is dead so that there cannot be any recognition — but he is alive. There is further irony in her assumption that, were he alive, recognition would be achieved by ξύμβολα; what in fact persuades her husband is the messenger's report of the phantom's disappearance.
- 18 This distinction is blurred by Goodwin's (n.9 above, §414) assertion that the unreal aorist indicative (in 'instant present' apodoses) "in fact does not differ much from an aorist optative with ἄν;" see also R. Bluck, *Plato's Meno* (Cambridge 1978=1961) notes on 72a7–b2 and 74b4–5.
- 19 Like all unreality, that of these future apodoses is conveyed by the past tense of the verb, see K–G (n. 9 above) II 471 on the function of "Tempusverschiebung" (explaining there the presentation of unreal present by past indicative); the aorist communicates only the verbal aspect. It follows that in apodoses of unreal conditional sentences the time referred to is not expressed and has to be inferred from the context.
- 20 Goodwin §504, K–G II 472, Schwyzer II 328 (all in n. 9 above). The rare "not strictly logical combination" is well exemplified by *E.Su.*764 φαίης ἄν, εἰ παρήσθ' ὄτ' ἡγάπα νεκρούς, where Adrastus' not having been an eyewitness is disregarded in order not to rule out the possibility of praising Theseus' pious conduct.