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Moods and tenses in Latin relative clauses: the Plautine situation

1 Fuzzy boundaries

Idealized view in traditional grammars: three types of subordinate clauses: (a) demanded by verbal valency (subject and object clauses); (b) not demanded by verbal valency and not dependent on a noun phrase (adverbial clauses); (c) not demanded by verbal valency but dependent on noun phrase (relative clause).

Messier reality:
- Should participles be treated as relative clauses? Boundary between *participium coniunctum* and adjective is often unclear.
- Obvious etymological connection between question words, indefinite pronouns, relative pronouns. Partly secondary differentiation (Plautus still uses *qui* in interrogative function, dependent on phonological context); partly secondary closeness (*sei ques esent quei*, SC de Bacchanalibus; later only *si qui*).
- Often ambiguity whether a clause should count as a relative clause or an indirect question (or, with relative adverbs, whether it should count as a relative clause or an adverbial clause).
- Semantic overlap between relative clauses and conditional clauses; relative clauses and indirect questions.

2 Quom in classical and early Latin

Origin as relative adverbial, fossilized accusative.

Classical Latin: indicative if purely temporal; subjunctive if listener has to figure out further semantic nuance (causal, concessive, etc).

Early Latin: indicative is the norm, regardless of interpretation:

(1) saluos quom peregre aduenis,
cena detur. (Bacch. 536-7)
'Since you've returned from abroad safe and sound, you'll be given a dinner.'
= causal, indicative

(2) praesagibat mi animus frustra me ire, quom exibam domo. (Aul. 178)
'I had an inkling I was going in vain when I left the house.'
Cf. Cic. div. 1.65: quom exirem domo.

(3) iam istoc probior meo quidem animo es, quom in amore temperes. (Epid. 111)
'To my mind at least you're already more honorable because you restrain yourself in your love.'

Subjunctive poorly attested and sometimes problematic (examples Bennett 1910.i: 302-3), except subjunctive by modal attraction.

3 Conditional clauses in classical and pre-classical Latin

Classical Latin: realis in the indicative, potentialis in the present or perfect subjunctive, irrealis in imperfect or pluperfect subjunctive.

Main difference:
- Classical Latin: present unreal = imperfect subjunctive, past unreal = pluperfect subjunctive.
- Before Plautus: potential and unreal not fully differentiated, present unreal = present subjunctive, past unreal = imperfect subjunctive.
- Plautus: transition period.

(4) hoc si ita fiat, mores meliores sibi
parent, pro dote quas ferant, quam nunc ferunt. (Aul. 492-3)
'If that were to happen, they'd acquire a better character for themselves, which they could bring instead of a dowry, which they are bringing now.'

(5) nam si is ualuisset, iam pridem quoquo posset mitteret. (Curc. 700)
'For if he had been well, he would have sent you where he could for a long time already.'

4 Sequence of tenses in classical Latin and in Plautus

- Rogo te, quid feceris / facias / facturus sis.
- Rogaui te, quid fecisses / faceres / facturus esses.

In subjunctival clauses:
- Stem indicates temporal relationship to superordinate clause (perfect stem = anterior, present stem = simultaneous, -urus = posterior).
- Ending based on tense in superordinate clauses: non-past or (backshifted) past.

Restrictions: -urus only possible in active, and even there only in indirect questions and quin-clauses.

Plautus:
- -urus still very rare.
- Backshift not yet obligatory (but very common, 90% of all cases).

5 Classical rules for relative clauses

Defining relative clauses normally in the indicative, except the type *neque is sum (inquit) qui grauissime ex uobis mortis periculo terrear*: 'the type of person who' = indefinite specific antecedent (traditionally and misleadingly called 'consecutive' relative clause).

Non-defining relative clauses normally in the indicative; subjunctive indicates that listeners ought to look for further nuance (causal, concessive, etc).

=> Rules for indicative / subjunctive identical to *quom*-clauses!

Relative clauses in the subjunctive follow the sequence rule; those in the indicative can have dependent or independent tense. Again, this makes sense: the subjunctive indicates a closer clause linkage, so we would not expect independent tense usages.

6 Some Plautine peculiarities that I am not going to look into

- • 'Attraction' of the antecedent:

(6) Naucratem, quem conuenire uolui, in naui non erat. (Amph. 1009)
'Naucrates, who I wanted to meet, was not on the ship.'

- • Head noun inside the relative clause.
- • Old ablative form qui:

(7) multa concurrunt simul
qui coniecturam hanc nunc facio. (Ter. Andr. 511-12)
'Many things are coming together whereby I am now making this guess.'

7 Plautus: indefinite specific antecedent

Subjunctive obligatory, just as in classical Latin:

(8) nec quisquam tam au<i>dax fuat homo qui obuiam opsistat mihi. (Amph. 985)
'Let no one be so bold as to stand in my way.'

(9) quid istuc est quod meos te dicam fugitare oculos, Tyndare? (Capt. 541)
'What's the matter? I wonder why you're avoiding eye-contact with me, Tyndarus?'

8 Plautus: non-defining relative clauses with further meanings

Causal, subjunctive as in classical Latin:
(10) miserior mulier me nec fiet nec fuit,
tali uiro quae nupserim. heu miserae mihi! (Merc. 700-1)
'No woman will be or has ever been more wretched than me, I who / because I married such a husband. Poor, wretched me!'

Causal, but in indicative:
(11) uox mi ad auris aduolauit. - ne ego homo infelix fui,
qui non alas interuelli. (Amph. 325-6)
'A voice has flown to my ears. - I really was an unlucky fellow, I who / because I didn't depilate my wings.'

Subjunctive and indicative roughly equally common if a causal interpretation is possible.

Adversative, indicative:
(12) scelestissume, audes mihi praedicare id,
domi te esse nunc, qui hic ades? - uera dico. (Amph. 561-2)
'You hardened criminal, you dare tell me that you, who / that even though you are here, you are at home now? - I'm telling the truth.'

In all of Plautus, I have only found two relative clauses that could be interpreted as adversative; both are in the indicative. Impossible to say if the subjunctive would have been possible.

Purpose, subjunctive:
(13) ne illi edepol si merito meo referre studeant gratiam,
aliquem hominem allegent qui mihi aduenienti os occillet probe. (Amph. 182-3)
'Seriously, if they were keen to thank me for my good turns, they'd send somebody to smash up my face properly on my arrival.'
(14) si non ubi sedeas locus est, est ubi ambules. (Capt. 12)
'If there's no room for you to sit, there's room for you to walk.'
(15) praesertim quom is me dignum quoi concrederet
habuit, me habere honorem eius ingenio decet. (Asin. 80-1)
'Especially since he considered me worthy of his confidence, it's only fair that I should respect his inclinations.'

All purpose relative clauses are in the subjunctive.

Relative clauses in the subjunctive follow the sequence rules; those in the indicative may also have independent tense.

9 Qui and quom

Since *qui* and *quom* are closely related etymologically and semantically, one might expect them to develop in tandem, but they do not. By the classical period, the endpoint of the modal usages is almost identical; the only difference concerns the subjunctive in relative clauses with an indefinite-specific antecedent, or with final meaning, since *quom*-clauses cannot be interpreted in these ways.

The subjunctive in relative clauses of purposes is obligatory because all other Latin purpose clauses also take the subjunctive. But in causal and other relative clauses, the subjunctive is only beginning to spread in Plautus, and it is likely that these then influence *quom*-clauses of similar functions.

It would be great to have a rule that predicts when exactly Plautus uses the indicative and the subjunctive in causal relative clauses. But the variation appears to be at random. It seems to me that the underlying rule is the same as in classical Latin, but that its application is more

restricted; akin to the English and Dutch future formed with *shall* / *zullen*, which has the same semantics in both languages, but is much more widespread in English. Sadly, semantics does not fully predict usage patterns.

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