

# *“Pro Iuppiter!”* Oaths in Roman Comedy

## Olivia Puekert Stock

### Introduction

#### Topic and Material

All human beings have a need for assertions and promises in order to feel persuaded and assured, just as all people have ways of expressing themselves interjectionally: for instance, out of joy, frustration or grief. What these two phenomena have in common is the ambiguous term *swearing*. To swear originally meant “to affirm with an oath”,<sup>1</sup> which often was – and sometimes still is – connected to religious actions, for instance swearing by a god or something equivalently sacred. In many languages, original oaths degenerate into interjectional expressions, for instance the English “by God!”.

Oath-taking was not an uncommon practice during ancient Roman times, on state and individual levels, formally and informally, seriously and casually. Individual swearing is the *topos* of this article, which is an excerpt from the chapter on oaths in the MA-thesis “*Pro Iuppiter*”: A Study of the Use of Oaths, Curses, and Prayers in Roman Comedy’.<sup>2</sup> To reveal some notions on how the Romans utilized this phenomenon, with an emphasis on informal use, is thusly the aim and purpose of this article. Fairly few studies exist about this topic<sup>3</sup> and there is certainly a research gap to fill, which was the outset of this project. In extension, the study aims at illuminating hints of the Romans’ attitude toward their gods and goddesses. Hence, only religious-associated expressions are researched. Oaths in comedy have not previously been examined from this perspective, making this analysis an innovation offered by this study. Additionally, this research contributes to the diachronic knowledge of Latin

---

<sup>1</sup> Skeat 2013, 621.

<sup>2</sup> Find link to the thesis under ‘References’.

<sup>3</sup> E.g., Gagnér 1920; Müller 1997, Ch. 5.

swearing regarding perjury-infliction, since it has a strong focus on degenerated short-forms of previously real oaths.

How the ordinary Romans of antiquity spoke has been quite the riddle for Classical scholars, because little textual evidence of colloquial speech exists. However, one place where day-to-day speech is preserved is in Roman comedy, since it is meant to portray – more or less – daily situations. Scholars are not unanimous regarding the extent to which the comedies reflect the spoken language at the time of their composition; however, it is undeniably a colloquial-style Latin, which differs immensely from other genres.

The works of two Roman comedy playwrights are preserved: twenty-one plays by Titus Maccius Plautus and six by Publius Terentius Afer. Plautus wrote in a more vivid, playful, and ‘cheeky’ style than Terence, whose style was more ordinary and constrained.<sup>4</sup> As the intention of this study was to research how ordinary Romans used religious-rooted expressions in everyday situations, Terence’s works were thus the most appropriate for this endeavor. Naturally, we cannot know if the Romans preferred the excessiveness of speech found in Plautus’ comedies. Indeed, it would have been the most representative to include the works of both authors, but unfortunately it was deemed too great an undertaking for the scale of a master’s project. Hence, the six plays, all *fabulae palliatae*, by Terence – *Andria*, *Hecyra*, *Heauton timorumenos*, *Eunuchus*, *Phormio*, and *Adelphoe* – constitute the foundation of this investigation, thus meaning that the results cover the middle of the second century BC.<sup>5</sup>

## Methodology

The study was performed using a triangulation of both qualitative and quantitative methods, in order to provide a large number of perspectives on the ways in which Romans used oaths.

---

<sup>4</sup> Conte 1994, 97. For a detailed review of the scholarship of Terentian language, see Karakasis 2005, 4-12.

<sup>5</sup> For the Latin texts the Oxford edition by Lindsay & Kauer (1926) was used.

Discourse analysis and hermeneutics were utilized. Due to the broadness of the study, two definitions of *discourse* were used. The first definition is the more pragmatic one – “language-in-use” or “situational context of language use”, which aims to reveal meaning from the specific context of an utterance.<sup>6</sup> The second, a sociological definition by Foucault, who wrote that discourses are “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak”, was used to cover the question regarding the Romans’ religious attitude.<sup>7</sup> Thereafter, the analyzation process was structured around hermeneutics: an “interpretative philosophical reflection” spiraling from the result of a qualitative study of particulars to a generalized, quantitative picture.<sup>8</sup>

The study relies upon two operative methods: corpus analysis and an adaption of the ancient *septem circumstantiae*. The former, corpus analysis, is a quantitative analysis of a closed collection of texts<sup>9</sup> and was used both manually – as all six comedies, the corpus of the study, were closely read and all instances of oaths excerpted – and in electronic form since searches for parallels to the Terentian expressions were made in online databases for the sake of nuance and comparison. The latter method, the so-called *septem circumstantiae* (“seven circumstances”), is a set of seven questions originating from rhetoric with the purpose of aiding investigation, determination, and representation of a case of any kind and has been utilized in vastly different ways during antiquity, the Middle Ages, and modern times. Traditionally, they are ascribed to the Greek rhetorician Hermagoras, although quite recently it has been suggested that their inventor is Aristotle.<sup>10</sup> Following in the Greeks’ footsteps, Cicero developed his own Roman version in *De Inventione Rhetorica*, where he arranged the circumstances, or *certa praecepta* or *loci* as he calls them, into statements that

---

<sup>6</sup> Gee 2014, 19; Fairclough 1992, 3.

<sup>7</sup> Foucault 1972, 42.

<sup>8</sup> Babich 2017, 1.

<sup>9</sup> Baker 2010, 93.

<sup>10</sup> Robertson 1946, 8-9; Sloan 2010.

serve to check or build a strong argument.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, he holds that arguments are supported by two kinds of attributes (*attributae*): that of persons (*personae*) and that of actions (*negotia*).<sup>12</sup> The attributes of persons include “name, nature, manner of life, fortune, habit, feeling, interests, purposes, achievements, accidents, and speeches made”. The attributes of actions are comprised of “a brief summary of the whole action comprising the sum of the matter”, an “inquiry [...] as to the reason for this whole matter, i.e. by what means, and why, and for what purpose the act was done”, as well as an inquiry of “what happened before the event [...]; then what was done in the performance of the act, and [...] what was done afterwards”, followed by inquiries of “place, time, occasion, manner, and facilities”, as well as of the “adjunct of an action” (“genus”, “species” or “result”), and finally “the consequence”.<sup>13</sup>

This study’s methodological adaption was developed upon these attributes of Cicero’s, which were condensed by Thomas Aquinas into the neat hexameter verse “*quis, quid, ubi, quibus auxiliis, cur, quomodo, quando*” (“who, what, where, by what aids, why, how, when”).<sup>14</sup> This resulted in a method with the hexameter verse serving as a spine, to which specific sub-questions – inspired by Cicero’s attributes – were provided. In order to equally determine the contexts in which the oaths were spoken in Terence’s comedies, all instances were examined using the aforementioned questions in the following, newly adapted manner:

---

<sup>11</sup> Cic. *Inv. rhet.* 1.34, 1.44.

<sup>12</sup> Cic. *Inv. rhet.* 1.34.

<sup>13</sup> Translation by Hubbel 1949: Cic. *Inv. rhet.* 1.34: “*Ac personis has res attributas putamus: nomen, naturam, victum, fortunam, habitum, affectionem, studia, consilia, facta, casus, orationes.*”. 1.37: “*Ex his prima est brevis complexio totius negoti quae summam continent facti*”; “*deinde causa eius summae per quam et qua mob rem et cuius rei causa factum sit quaeritur*”; “*deine ante gestam rem quae facta sint continenter usque ad ipsum negotium; deinde, in ipso gerendo negotio quid actum sit, deinde, quid postea factum sit.*”. 1.38: “*locus, tempus, occasio, modus, facultas.*”. 1.41: “*Adiunctum negotio*”; “*et genus et pars et eventus.*”. 1.43: “*consecutio*”.

<sup>14</sup> *S. T.* 1-2, Q7, A3. Translation by The Fathers of the English Dominican Province 1920.

Lines	QUIS: <i>nomen</i>	QUIS: <i>status/or do</i>	QUIS: <i>sexus</i>	QUIS: <i>aetas</i>	QUID: <i>factum/dictum</i>	QUID: <i>consecutio dicti</i>	UBI: <i>locus</i>	QUIBUS AUXILIIS: <i>divinitas</i>	CUR: <i>affectio</i>	CUR: <i>consilium</i>	QUOMODO: <i>compositio verborum</i>	QUANDO: <i>occasi</i>
Ad. 483	Geta	A slave, servus	Male	Senex?	"Immo <u>hercle</u> extorque, nisi ita factumst, Demea."  Interjectional/Informal oath with assertory meaning.	Demea is quite put off-guard and does not know what to answer, as he says to himself "pudet: nec quid agam nec quid huic respondeam scio." (485-486)	Near Micio's house (as Hegio and Geta arrive from the countryside, i.e. from the same direction Demea is heading).	By swearing by Hercules.	Confidence, bravery.	To make Demea believe in his and Hegio's story.	<i>Herclē</i> is an alternative for <i>Hercules</i> based on another stem.	Dialogue.

The context of an utterance can easily be examined using this table. It reveals who (*QUIS*) spoke – the person's name (*nomen*), social status (*status/ordo*), gender (*sexus*), and age (*aetas*) – as well as what (*QUID*) that person said, the consequence of this statement (*consecutio dicti*), where (*UBI*) it took place (*locus*), which aids (*QUIBUS AUXILIIS*) were utilized – in these cases which divinity (*divinitas*) was called upon – and, further, that person's triggering feeling (*affectio*) behind the utterance, its purpose (*consilium*), and, finally, some remarks upon the composition of words (*compositio verborum*) and when (*QUANDO*) the utterance was made (*occasio*).<sup>15</sup>

The hundreds of instances of oath expressions could thereby be assembled into a perspicuous catalogue, which constitutes the result basis for this investigation. In particular, the sub-questions *affectio*, *compositio verborum*, *status/ordo*, *sexus*, *aetas* and *occasio* generated intriguing information. Consequently, the study's focal point lies in its interpretation of the function of the expressions with a clear focus on triggering feelings and linguistic trait features. Accordingly, the interpretations have led to a categorization based on function and form presented below.

## Findings<sup>16</sup>

### Definitions

<sup>15</sup> Speech-act theory was considered as a method for the study, but was ruled out, since, as Raudevere (2005, 181) states, it "does not take into consideration affective relations, power relations, and shared goals", which adapting *septem circumstantiae* better allowed."

<sup>16</sup> For the statistics and numbers presented in this article I must refer to the extensive result tables in the appendix of the MA-thesis. For comprehension's sake, note that the numbers in parentheses are instances of the expressions' occurrence in Terence's six comedies.

First and foremost, it is of great importance to define what an oath is. Indubitably, there are countless perspectives on the matter; however, the stipulative definition for this study is based upon three definitions made by Sommerstein and Torrance (2014), Callaway (1990) and Echols (1951).

A so-called **formal oath** must include the following two requirements explicitly: a "*Tenor*"/"*Declaration*", a "*Call to Witness*" and an (often implicit) "*Conditional self-curse*".

- i. A "Tenor" or "Declaration" is the central part of an oath, which declares the oath's request, which could be either "*assertory*", asserting something about the present or past, or "*promissory*", promising something for the future.<sup>17</sup>
- ii. A "Call to Witness" is the "swearing by objects, divinities, and cosmic forces, as well as the calling upon of divinities and cosmic forces to act as a surety for the promise", that is, what has been stated in the "Tenor"/ "Declaration".<sup>18</sup>
- iii. A "Conditional self-curse" is the condition, added by the swearer to the divinity or cosmic force being sworn to, which is "to take effect if the assertion is false or if the promise is violated, as the case may be; that is, (s)he prays that in that event (s)he may suffer punishment from the guarantor power".<sup>19</sup> This step is often implicit and derived from the swearer's knowledge and understanding of the gods' serious punishments upon perjurers, who have sworn falsely in their name.

---

<sup>17</sup> Sommerstein & Torrance 2014, 1; Callaway 1990, 14.

<sup>18</sup> Callaway 1990, 13; cf. Sommerstein & Torrance 2014, 1.

<sup>19</sup> Sommerstein & Torrance 2014, 1.

An **informal/interjectional oath** differs from the formal oath in that it does not fulfill the three aforementioned conditions and is, therefore, “strictly speaking, no oath at all” but rather a by-product or a degenerated short-form of a real oath, often containing a marker-word (for example an interjection) and the central part, the “naming of a god”.<sup>20</sup> Although these degenerated short-forms of oaths may sometimes share the function of real oaths, that is, to assert or promise, it is not a requirement. This kind of oath and its vast diversity constitutes the focal point of the investigation.

### Informal/Interjectional Oaths

According to the *circumstantiae* analyses of all oaths in Terence, the informal/interjectional oaths could be divided into three separate groups depending on their function: the emphasizeers, *pro/o Iuppiter*, and the asseverations.

The first group is ‘**The Emphasizers**’, which contains the most common god-mentioning expressions *(me)hercle*, *pol*, *edepol* and *(m)ecastor*. These are so called since the investigation found that they have lost their original oath meaning – presumably due to overuse. Thus, they simply appear to enhance statements or questions similarly to other emphasizing adverbs such as “*certe*, *enim*, *profecto*, *uero*”,<sup>21</sup> as Gagnér noted and which is confirmed in this research.

“(Me)hercle”, “(by) Hercules!”, the most frequently used oath expression, occurs 104 times (102 *hercle*, 2 *mehercle*) in Terence’s six comedies. *Mehercle* is

---

<sup>20</sup> Echols 1951, 293; Sommerstein & Torrance 2014, 81, 315.

<sup>21</sup> Gagnér 1920, 45: “Particulae, quae sunt *hercle* et *pol*, *mehercle* et *mecastor* et *medi*, *medius fidius*, *ecastor* et *edi*, *edepol*, quamquam primo, ut supra demonstratum est, *(o) Hercle!* etc., *me*, *Hercle*, *iuua(to)!* etc., *me Dius Fidius iuuet! e Castor!* Etc., *e de Pol!* ualuerunt, tamen ipsae, cum in obtestando fere et affirmando adhiberentur, affirmantes paulatim factae a Plauti saltem temporibus nihil aliud atque aduerbia affirmantia, ut *certe*, *enim*, *profecto*, *uero*, significant.” /My translation: “Particles, such as *hercle*, *pol*, *mehercle*, *mecastor*, *medi*, *medius fidius*, *ecastor*, *edi*, and *edipol*, although powerful at first, as demonstrated above, *(o) Hercules!* etc., *Hercules help me!* etc., *May Dius Fidius help me! Castor!* etc. *Pollux!*, nevertheless the very same, while generally employed to call to witness and to affirm, were gradually made affirmations signifying nothing else than affirmative adverbs, such as *surely*, *indeed*, *certainly*, and *truly*, at least from the time of Plautus.”/

commonly thought to be a short-form of the full oath "*ita me Hercules iuuet*", "As (sure as) Hercules may help me", as suggested by Gagnér, although Hofmann claims that it relates to *mehercules* and that *mehercle* is a crossing between *hercle* and *mehercules*.<sup>22</sup> *Heracle* on its own is explained by Gagnér to stem from another Greek noun-stem, alternative to the more common *Hercules*.<sup>23</sup>

According to Aulus Gellius, an antiquarian active during the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, only Roman men swore by Hercules. As women never sacrificed to him, they did not swear by him.<sup>24</sup> This holds true in Terence as well, as all 104 instances of (*me*)*hercle* are spoken by males. Furthermore, the expression is uttered an equal amount of times among the lower social status groups (*servi, parasiti, lenones*: 52) and the youngsters and the old men of slightly higher social status (*domini <adulescentes + senes>*: 52). Out of them all, the slaves score highest with a count of 42 instances, followed by the younglings with 31. Male slaves, old men and male adolescents are all main characters in the comedies and share, approximately, around an equal amount of lines in the plays, so this result should not be too affected by the issue of relativity.<sup>25</sup> Hence, it can safely be claimed that *hercle* was not bound to any social status or age but used freely and liberally by all men.

*Heracle* is mostly used in an assertory manner (82), primarily emphatically like the English 'certainly' or 'really' provide a sentence with, for example: "*emori hercle satius est*" / "Really, I would rather die" (lit. "By Hercules, I would rather die").<sup>26</sup> The promissory oaths (9) work in a similar manner, although emphasizing something that is to come using a future tense, for instance: "*non*

<sup>22</sup> Gagnér 1920, 21; Hofmann 1936, 29-30.

<sup>23</sup> Gagnér 1920, 9: "*Formae igitur, de quibus supra disputavi, hoc modo ortae sunt. Ἡρακλῆς > \*Herecles > Hercoles > Hercules. \*Ἡρακλε > \*herecle > hercle > \*hercole > hercule.*" /My translation: Hence, these forms, of which I discussed above, were born in this way: [see scheme above] /

<sup>24</sup> Gell. 11.6.

<sup>25</sup> Statistics can be misleading if not seen relatively, as men have many more lines in the plays than women. The same applies to the representation of status groups, as all characters do not have an equal number of lines. This is what here is referred to as "the issue of relativity".

<sup>26</sup> *Ph.* 956.

*hercle faciet*"/ "He certainly shall not do so!" (lit. "By Hercules, he shall not do so!").<sup>27</sup> This very worn-out use of the original oath indicates a rather mild respect for the gods and, when used falsely, it indicates a nearly non-existing fear of the wrath of the gods, which was inflicted upon perjurers. The expression seems so degenerated from a real oath that the utterers did not reflect upon the fact that they swore by a divinity at all. In the cases of *pol*, *edepol*, *ecastor*, and *mecastor* the same conclusions can be drawn since they too are most commonly used in this casual manner.

It can be observed that *hercle* is mostly used in junction to clearly negative feelings (43). In addition, the negative use is further extended to situations concerning deceit or trickery (16), making the connection to negativity more apparent. In spite of this, it is noteworthy that the oath can be used to give emphasis to clearly positive feelings (16) as well. Moreover, out of all eleven instances of oaths used to emphasize sarcastic statements, *hercle* (7) on its own is employed more frequently than all other investigated expressions combined (4). This further highlights the fact that *hercle* is reduced from an old sacred oath to a degenerated, non-religious form, while the enhancement of sarcasm is far from the function of an oath.

Furthermore, *hercle* can be used in two other conspicuous ways, when combined with the key verb forms *perii* and *quaeso/obsecro*.<sup>28</sup> In Terence, we find six instances of the true expression of force and/or despair "*perii hercle*"/ lit. "By Hercules, I'm ruined!" (equivalent to the English "Goddamn it!", as beautifully translated by Barsby).<sup>29</sup> *Heracle*, when paired with *quaeso/obsecro*, either parenthetically or as a main verb, serves to strengthen a request, which can be either pleading or slightly more demanding in nature.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> *An.* 775.

<sup>28</sup> On the general use of *quaeso*, *obsecro*, and *perii*, see Müller 1997, 97-101, 134-135.

<sup>29</sup> *Ad.* 227, 637; *Eun.* 905-907, 984; *Haut.* 736-737; *Phorm.* 385-386; Barsby 2001a, 277.

<sup>30</sup> Pleading: *Eun.* 362, 466; *Ad.* 247-249. Demanding: *Ad.* 281-283; *Eun.* 562.

The sentence position of the informal/interjectional oaths and if or to what extent it affects their meaning deserves attention as well. Goldberg notes that both *hercle* and *(ede)pol* are of a kind which “functions as an emphatic interjection” and that “the emphasis [is] created more by its position than its literal sense”.<sup>31</sup> The dissertation by Gagnér contains an impressive and extensive collection of the instances of *hercle/mehercle*, *ecastor/mecastor*, *pol/edepol*, *medius fidius*, *edi*, *medi* and their place of order in the sentence in Plautus and Terence.<sup>32</sup> He concludes that they in most cases, regardless of position, serve to emphasize the whole statement, although some instances seem to pertain to a single word.<sup>33</sup> Despite this, as the graph below (Fig.1.) demonstrates, there is a clear preference for placing the oath in a certain place.

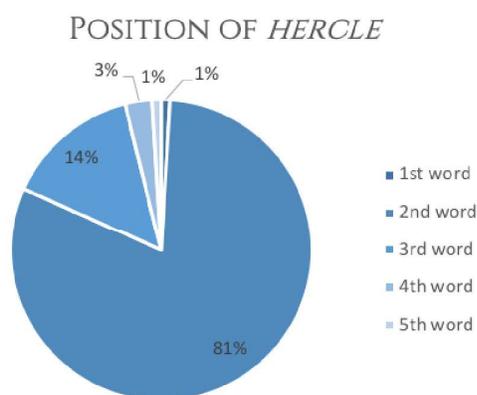


Fig.1. The position of the interjectional/informal oath *hercle*.

The aforementioned statistics (Fig.1.) make it clear that *hercle* is positioned in second place in the surrounding cluster of words four out of five times, that is, either directly after the word it wishes to emphasize (e.g. “*nescio hercle*”) or in

<sup>31</sup> Goldberg 2013, 147, 416n., 97, 58n.

<sup>32</sup> Gagnér 1920, 111–197.

<sup>33</sup> Gagnér 1920, 111: “*Nam hae particulae, quamquam nonnullis locis, uelut Ad. 638: . . . Pater hercle est. . . , Andr. 742: Puer herclest. . . , fieri potest, ut ad certa uocabula quaedam spectare videantur, tamen ubiuis ad tota enuntiata pertinent.*”

between if there are two words involved (e.g. "*non hercle arbitror*").<sup>34</sup> When positioned in third place, it is usually due to an additional adverb, interjection, conjunction, or explicitly spelled-out pronoun preceding the *hercle* and the main word(s) wished to be emphasized.<sup>35</sup> Sometimes *hercle* is placed after all main words (e.g. "*non malum hercle*"),<sup>36</sup> which deviates from the norm, as is also the case with *hercle* as fourth or fifth word.<sup>37</sup> Hypothetically, these rare deviations could be due to the complex verse meter.

The Emphasizers also include two expressions "*pol*" and "*edepol*", "(by) Pollux", originally oaths by Pollux, as well as "*ecastor*" and "*mecastor*", "(by) Castor", originally oaths by Castor. Again, Aulus Gellius provides information on the gender usage of these oaths: both sexes may swear by Pollux, while Castor is reserved for women only.<sup>38</sup> This pattern was found to be followed by the characters in Terence's comedies, although the women favor using the expressions by Pollux (*pol*: 45; *edepol*: 10) rather than Castor (7). Furthermore, the women exceed the men in the usage of *pol* (men: 10, women: 45), but the men use *edepol* more often than women (men: 13, women: 10). Despite the fact that the oaths by Pollux were available to both sexes, many scholars refer to *pol* as a "woman's oath", "female speech marker" or "female oath" in Terence.<sup>39</sup> Evidently, this is true, as it is more than four times as frequently used by women and much more so if the issue of relativity is sorted out (men – 10, women – 45 or  $\approx 346$ , if applying the Ullman method).<sup>40</sup> Ullman highlights this further, as he shows the decline in the male usage of *pol* throughout Terence's plays, while also quoting a

---

<sup>34</sup> *Eun.* 304–306, 217–218.

<sup>35</sup> *Ad.* 268-270; *Eun.* 727-729; *Haut.* 521-523, 619-621; *Hec.* 305-308, 782-783; *Phorm.* 643-644, 869-870; *An.* 336-337, 347.

<sup>36</sup> *Eun.* 273-274; cf. *Phorm.* 774-775, 1048-1049; *Eun.* 967-969, 355-356.

<sup>37</sup> *Phorm.* 163-164, 623-625; *Eun.* 67-70, 562.

<sup>38</sup> Gell. 11.6.

<sup>39</sup> Barsby 2001b, 381, footnote 32; Barsby 1999, 201, 606n.; Nicolson 1893, 101; Martin 1995, 151, 293.; Brown 2019, 198, 229n.; Adams 1984, 50.

<sup>40</sup> "Ullman's method" here refers to the rough calculation made by Ullman (1943, 88), who concludes that on average in the six Terentian plays men speak roughly 7.69 times as many lines as women and by multiplying the number of expressions uttered by women by 7.69 one obtains a comparable data for the use between the sexes.

few lines from Titinius preserved in Charisius, a contemporary of Terence, which point to the fact that *pol* (and *edepol*) was not just a woman's oath, but an effeminate oath in a man's mouth.<sup>41</sup> This is further supported by a passage from Cicero's *De Oratore*, where a man called Egilius, who is wrongfully accused of being effeminate in a slanderous remark, in turn pretends to be just that – effeminate – using *pol* to strengthen his witty comeback.<sup>42</sup> One such instance of a man using *pol* for an effeminizing effect can be found in Terence, according to Barsby's interpretation. It concerns the case when Chaerea, the youngling in *Eunuchus* who trades places with the eunuch bequeathed to a *meretrix* in order to get first-hand access to a beautiful girl living with the courtesan, tells his friend Antipho what happened after he had barred the door and was left alone with the girl of his desires, disguised as a eunuch:

“an ego occasionem mi ostendam, tantam, tam brevam, tam optatam, tam insperatam amitterem? tum pol ego is essem vero qui simulabar.”<sup>43</sup>

“Was I going to let slip the opportunity when it was offered to me, so great, so fleeting, so desired, so unexpected? If I had, I would actually have been what I pretended to be, (*putting on a female voice*) for heaven's sake.”<sup>44</sup>

Barsby's interpretation of this particular situation is fitting and certainly reminiscent of the example of the effeminate *pol* in Cicero. As always, it would have been interesting to examine if the Greek model had any specific effeminizing expression to see if it was a Greek or Roman practice. Adams raises this question, but he also concludes that Terence (and Plautus) “were of course

---

<sup>41</sup> Ullman 1943, 89: Charisius (1.198, 17K.).

<sup>42</sup> Cic. *De or.* 277.

<sup>43</sup> *Eun.* 605-606.

<sup>44</sup> Translation by Barsby 2001b, 381. See also Barsby 2001b, 381, footnote 32; Barsby 1999, 201, 606n.

drawing on genuine Latin idiom".<sup>45</sup> This reasoning goes well in hand with the notion that the Roman plays were adapted versions of the Greek originals, not mere translations, which is a widespread misconception, since they had to have an impact on the Roman audience. However, *rursus ad rem*, regarding the nine other instances of *pol* spoken by men in Terence, there is no trace of an effeminizing touch and, as far as this study is concerned, they could all have been replaced with *hercle*, a purely male oath, without any noticeable shift in meaning. For instance, when Syrus shouts after Clitipho: "*By Pollux, you better keep those hands to yourself after this!*" ("*at tu pol tibi istas posthac manus!*"),<sup>46</sup> the tone is the opposite of ridiculously effeminizing: this is a threat or warning. To conclude, in Terence, *pol* is definitely used more frequently by women than men, but for the most part there is nothing to support the claim of it being an effeminizing oath in a man's mouth, apart from one notable exception.

Again, turning to the *circumstantiae* results of the 55 instances of *pol*, 23 of *edepol*, and 7 of *(m)ecastor* in Terence, more information can be extracted. Regarding the persons behind the instances of *pol*, they are more often of lower social status (32; *meretrices, servi, ancillae, nutrices*) than higher (23; *dominae, domini* <*adulescentes + senes*>). Moreover, *pol* is, just as *hercle*, mostly uttered in sentences triggered by clearly negative feelings (28); however, it is quite commonly used to enhance clearly positive sentences as well (19). As always, there are some obscure and complicated examples, 'in-betweens' (7), which include elements of both positive and negative feelings: *schadenfreude*, to provide one example. The same applies for *edepol* as well, which is used nearly twice as often in sentences triggered by clearly negative (11) feelings than clearly positive (6) ones. Deviating from the others are *(m)ecastor*, which mostly emphasizes statements triggered by positive feelings (5/7). It is of course problematic to draw conclusions from so few examples as in this case. However,

---

<sup>45</sup> Adams 1984, 77.

<sup>46</sup> *Haut.* 590.

it is established by other scholars that Plautus favored much more the oaths by Castor and includes them 118 times in his plays.<sup>47</sup> Consequently, a similar investigation concerning the triggering feelings of *(m)ecastor*, as well as of the other expressions, would be interesting to carry out on the substantially larger corpus which Plautus' plays constitute.

After revision of the use of the informal/interjectional oaths sworn by the demigods Hercules, Pollux, and Castor in Terence, an interesting observation arises in comparison to the Greek use of informal oaths. In all of Greek comedy, according to statistics provided by Sommerstein and Torrance, Hercules (Herakles) is sworn by only five times, Castor once, and Castor and Pollux together, "The Twin Gods", an additional handful of times.<sup>48</sup> As is the case with the Romans, Hercules (Herakles) is sworn by exclusively by men among the Greeks; however, oaths by Castor and Pollux were open to both sexes in Sparta, where they were used.<sup>49</sup> Again, this indicates that it was a Roman custom to call upon these demigods so frequently. In fact, perhaps the Romans actually chose to swear by them as more casual expressions, merely serving to emphasize a statement or question, due to the fact that they were not Olympians.

Considering this, they might not have taken perjury into account at all, especially while using the short-forms of the demigods' names: *pol*, *hercle*. In fact, out of all oaths – informal as well as formal – all instances where an oath is used in junction with a false statement (perjury) Hercules is informally sworn by using *hercle* (6).<sup>50</sup> This further proves the notion that these expressions no longer carried the meaning or intention of real oaths. It might even indicate that it was considered "deaconic swearing"<sup>51</sup> and the substitute short-forms of the demigods' names were not considered proper invocations. It is noteworthy that all these six

---

<sup>47</sup> Ullman 1943, 88; Brown 2019, 236, 486n.; Nicolson 1893, 99.

<sup>48</sup> Sommerstein & Torrance 2014, 318.

<sup>49</sup> Sommerstein & Torrance 2014, 321.

<sup>50</sup> *An.* 438-442, 194; *Ph.* 623-625, 774-775; *Haut.* 550-555, 610-612.

<sup>51</sup> Echols 1979, 112: "bootleg profanity, the use of a sound-alike substitute for the genuine article, such as "Gosh darn it", ...".

instances of perjury, albeit clearly not thought of in that way, are spoken by male slaves. Indeed, this is not too surprising, since slaves in comedy are tricksters and masters of deceit. However, it could also point towards a larger religious disrespect from the males of this lower social status group. On the other hand, the customs of gender-use – males swearing by Hercules, women by Castor, and both sexes by Pollux – are thoroughly upheld, which actually indicate a persisting respect towards the practices surrounding these gods.

All in all, the act of informally swearing by demigods, truly or untruly, should be regarded as a phenomenon not merely borrowed from the Greeks, but as a distinct Roman custom. Again, it must be remembered that the audience watching Terence's comedies were Romans, not Greeks. Although the comedies are *fabulae palliatae* and set in an Attic setting, the Roman audience, which supposedly was very acquainted with Greek culture, surely would not comprehend all the nuances of Greek expressions compared to their own. Thus, it makes more sense that the author would adapt, not translate, some expressions so as not to lose the comic effect or risk a lack of comprehension from his audience. In *Heauton timorumenos* (61-66) we find an explicit example of this, where an oath to Athena in Menander's Greek original, namely "πρὸς τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς δαίμονας", "by the numen of Athena", is replaced by Terence to "*pro deum atque hominum fidem*", "by the faith of the gods!",<sup>52</sup> rather than an oath by the Roman equivalent Minerva.

The fact that these expressions are so rarely found elsewhere than in Terence and Plautus is perplexing. Conjecturally, it could be due to their colloquiality and that most preserved Latin literature is not written in such a style. Indeed, when used elsewhere, it seems that the few oath-emphasizers occur mostly in dialogues or retold dialogues, such as the example of *pol* from Cicero above, or in texts where the author is reasoning with himself, such as

---

<sup>52</sup> Brothers 1988, 167, 61ffn.

Tacitus in *Dialogus*.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, the Roman comedies are an invaluable source of everyday spoken Latin.

The next group contains only one expression, "*pro/o Iuppiter!*", "(by) Jupiter!", due to its peculiar usage, which is found to be strong and reactive in nature. The range of emotions it can express is broad, examples of which include the forceful anger as seen in "*pro Iuppiter, tu homo adigi' me ad insaniam!*" / "*By Jupiter, human, you are driving me insane!*", or pure despair in "*o Iuppiter, quid ego audio? actumst, siquidem haec vera praedicat.*" / "*By Jupiter, what am I hearing? It's over, if what he says is true!*", or ecstatic happiness in "*pro Iuppiter, nunc est profecto interfici quom perpeti me possum, ne hoc gaudium contamineat vita aegritudine aliqua.*" / "*By Jupiter, now is certainly [the time] when I could endure being put to death, so that life may not spoil this joy by any anguish!*".<sup>54</sup> Thus, its excessively dramatic nature can be both positive and negative, although the expression is predominantly used to enhance negative feelings (12) over positive ones (3).

Conspicuously, Gellius does not give any information about the customs of swearing by Jupiter, but in Terence it is strictly a male habit, since all sixteen instances are spoken by men. In Greek comedy, oaths by Zeus (Jupiter) were available to both men and women, although it is also noted that the female use had declined and become a rarity by the time of Menander.<sup>55</sup> Menander is the Greek comedy writer, whose plays most of Terence's comedies are based upon. Consequently, it is not too surprising that Terence constricts the oaths by Jupiter to male characters (including the asseverative oath, the curse, and the prayer to Jupiter<sup>56</sup>). Furthermore, to call upon the almighty Jupiter is not as common in Roman as in Greek comedy, where oaths by Zeus are very ubiquitously used.<sup>57</sup> For the Greeks, Zeus was the go-to god in informal oaths (he even has an aspect

---

<sup>53</sup> Tac. *Dial.* 14.4, 26.1, 26.2, 30.4.

<sup>54</sup> *Ad.* 111-112, 464-465; *Eun.* 549-552.

<sup>55</sup> Sommerstein & Torrance 2014, 320, 322.

<sup>56</sup> *Phorm.* 807-808 (see below); *Ad.* 713-714; *Eun.* 1048-1049.

<sup>57</sup> Barsby 1999, 189, 550n.; Sommerstein & Torrance 2014, 320.

named Ὀρκιός, 'the Oath-god')<sup>58</sup> and instances of casual, informal oaths to Zeus are found in dialogues outside of comedy as well.<sup>59</sup> To swear by Jupiter seems as more of an eyebrow-raising, dramatic, and more sparsely used informal oath for the Romans, according to Terence as well as the few other Latin examples of the oath, when spoken interjectionally.<sup>60</sup>

A middle-ground group of oaths is the *'Asseverations'*, of which the far most frequent expression is *"ita me di ament"*, "as (sure as) the gods may love me" (with the variant *"ita/sic me di amabunt"*, "as (sure as) the gods shall love me"). These stand out somewhat from the other interjectional oaths, since they, to an extent, still contain an asseverative element. In addition, they are more reminiscent of real oaths in form, as the full formula is contained – in opposition to, for instance, *hercle*, which originally was *"ita me Hercules iuuet"*. In a passage from Plautus, we find that an almost endless number of deities could fit within the *ita me...ament* construction:

"CHRY. **ita me** Iuppiter, Iuno, Ceres, Minerua, Lato[na], Spes, Opis, Virtus, Venus, Castor, Polluces, Mars, Mercurius, Hercules, Summanus, Sol, Saturnus dique omnes **ament**, ut ille cum illa nec cubat neque ambulat neque osculatur neque illud quod dici solet.

NIC. ut **iurat!** seruat me ille **suis periuriis.**"<sup>61</sup>

"CHRY. **As sure as** Jupiter, Juno, Ceres, Minerva, Latona, Spes, Opis, Virtus, Venus, Castor, Pollux, Mars, Mercury, Hercules, Summanus, Sol, Saturnus, and all the gods **love me**, he did neither sleep with her, walk with her, kiss her, or do with her what is usually said.

NIC. How he **swears!** May he save me from **his perjuries.**"<sup>62</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Sommerstein & Torrance 2014, 6, 318; Pau. 5.24.9-11.

<sup>59</sup> E.g., Pl. *Cri.* 43b: "Ὁὐ μὰ τὸν Δία"; 50c: "Ταῦτα νῆ Δία" / "No, by Zeus...".

<sup>60</sup> E.g., Ap. *Met.* 26; Verg. *Aen.* 4.590ff; Prudent. *Perist.* 396ff.

<sup>61</sup> Plaut. *Bacch.* 892-898.

<sup>62</sup> My translation.

From these Plautine lines it is deductible that the Romans thought of the *ita me di ament*-formula as actual swearing, following the use of the verb *iurare* ("to swear") found in the response to the long exclamation. Also noticeable is the presence of the word *periurium* ("perjury"), which reveals that the oath is not considered truthful. Conspicuously, it is used in junction with both gods and demigods, which shows that any false swearing involving Olympic gods was still considered perjury, as opposed to swearing by demigods, as discussed above.

In Terence, this asseveration is found twenty-four times, spoken by men (16) and women (8) alike in a variety of contexts. Originally, it functions to assert the truthfulness of a statement, as in this example: "*nam ita me di ament, quod me accusat nunc vir, sum extra noxiam.*" / "As sure as the gods may love me, concerning the things you accuse me of now, husband, I am without guilt."<sup>63</sup> There are, however, quite a few weaker usages of *ita me di ament* as well, which resemble the use of the emphasizees described above, as is observable in this case: "*vale, Antipho. bene, ita me di ament, factum: gaudeo.*" / "Farewell, Antipho. Very well done: I'm glad." / lit. "Farewell, Antipho. Well done, as sure as the gods may love me: I'm glad."<sup>64</sup> Here, *ita me di ament* serves no further purpose than providing emphasis and there would be no obvious shift in meaning if replaced by "*bene hercle factum*" / "very well done" / "by Hercules, well done". Considering this, one could argue both for and against a nuance-difference between these expressions. First of all, the use of *hercle*, or *pol* for that matter, is abundantly frequent, while *ita me di ament* is not as common. This could indicate, just as suggested for *o/pro Iuppiter*, that they are reserved for special occasions, which is the case with the first example, where Sostrata earnestly swears to her husband that she bears no blame. Naturally, this does not explain the weaker use demonstrated by the second example, where *ita me di ament* is interchangeable

---

<sup>63</sup> *Hec.* 276.

<sup>64</sup> *Phorm.* 883. Even the parenthetic, second-place position of *ita me...* here resembles the (here-called) emphasizees', cf. Müller 1997, 146.

with any of the emphazier oaths. One suggestion to a slight nuance here is that *ita me di ament* is used equally frequently in situations involving clearly positive (10) and negative (10) emotions,<sup>65</sup> while both *hercle* and *pol* are used predominantly negatively, perhaps thus making *ita me di ament* a safer option for enhancing a positive statement, as the case with "*bene factum*/" *well done*" above.

Furthermore, there are a couple of unique examples in the comedies reminiscent to *ita me di ament*. Firstly, there is the asseveration by Jupiter found in *Phormio*: "*vin scire? at ita me servet Iuppiter, ut propior illi quam ego sum actu homo nemost.*" / "*You wanna know? As sure as Jupiter watches over me, no human is closer [= more closely related] to her than you and I.*"<sup>66</sup> This expression serves the same purpose as the asseveration *ita me di ament* and there is no indication that they would not be interchangeable – to a man, that is, as they are the only ones allowed to swear by Jupiter.

Secondly, a slightly different formula is found in Terence, which undoubtedly keeps the same meaning as the other asseverations: "*di me, pater, omnes oderint ni mage te quam oculos nunc ego amo meos.*" / "*Father, may the gods hate me unless (it is true that) I love you more than my own eyes.*"<sup>67</sup> In comparison to examples from Greek drama and comedy presented by Echols this could be labelled as a conditional asseveration, as there is an element of a self-curse, which is to be inflicted upon the swearer in case of perjury.<sup>68</sup> With that said, it seems highly improbable that the youngling Aeschinus, who previously had deceived and plotted against his biological and adoptive father, intended to invoke a self-curse on himself. Rather, he simply wished to dramatically express his new-discovered love for his biological father, who suddenly changed his manner from ill-tempered to ingratiating.

---

<sup>65</sup> The remaining four examples are in-betweens and share traits of both positive and negative emotions.

<sup>66</sup> *Phorm.* 807-808.

<sup>67</sup> *Ad.* 700-701.

<sup>68</sup> Echols 1951, 293.

## Formal Oaths

Lastly, there are indeed some oaths labelled 'formal'. Be aware of the stipulative definition of 'formal' in this study, which merely means that the three requirements for an oath are upheld. Consequently, the situation and occasion of the oath do not necessarily have to be considered 'formal'. Additionally, worth noting is that swearing without swearing *by* anything is possible as well and several examples of this are found in Terence, mostly with a verb meaning "to swear" (e.g., *deiuro, iuro, adiuro*) or a mention of "*ius iurandum*" ("oath") or "*fidem*" (here: "word of good faith").<sup>69</sup>

In the Terentian comedies, three categories of formal oaths can be arranged: assertory oaths, oaths to strengthen requests, and oaths to strengthen commands. What differentiates a formal assertory oath from an interjectional/informal assertory oath is the presence of an 'oath-verb' (*testor, adiuro*). Further, naturally, the formal ones do not share the interjectional and/or exclamatory nature of the interjectional/informal oaths. The oaths used to enhance a request are indicated by the inclusion of a verb meaning 'to ask, request' (e.g., *obsecro, oro etc.*) followed by the oath-indicating preposition *per*, which reveals what is being sworn by. Oaths as commands are signaled by a verb in imperative mode followed by the oath-indicating preposition *per*.

Surprisingly, only two of the eight instances of formal oaths are assertory in Terence: one quite long and formal in tone, the other short and snappy. In the first example, Pamphilus (*Andria*) earnestly swears to the maid of his lover that he has not lost the love for his girl and shall never desert her, despite the fact that his father has decided upon him marrying the neighbor's daughter. At first, he swears (*adiuro*) by all the gods (*per omnis deos*) intending to make Mysis, the maid, believe his following statements.<sup>70</sup> Thereafter he concludes his passionate

---

<sup>69</sup> *Eun.* 331-333; *Hec.* 60-63, 112-114, 267-268, 402, 697, 750-752, 754-755, 870-871; *Ad.* 161-166, 306-308, 330-334, 469-477; *An.* 401-402, 462, 727-729.

<sup>70</sup> *An.* 693-695: "*Mysis, per omnis tibi adiuro deos numquam eam me deserturum, [...]*".

speech with the addition "*non Apollonis mage verum atque hoc responsumst.*" / "*Apollo's answer is not more true than this*",<sup>71</sup> referring to the famous oracle of Apollo at Delphi, which adds further credibility to his initial asseveration. The second instance is less elaborate but still serves the same function. Here Pamphilus (*Hecyra*) calls upon the gods as witnesses (*id testor deos*) to assert to his father and his wife's father that he is not to blame for the separation that has occurred.<sup>72</sup> In this case, it is about calling down the gods as witnesses directly rather than swearing by them. However, the intention is all the same: to increase credibility and assert truthfulness.

The most common formal oaths are the ones where requests are given in junction to swearing (5), either by divinities or abstract feelings, such as love and friendship, using the formula *ego per* [e.g., *deos, amicitiam, amorem*] *oro/obsecro, ut* [stating the request]. The purpose of these oaths is to make the requests more earnest, potent, and influential in order to increase the odds of an affirmative answer. Apart from making requests in this manner, it was also possible to formulate the oath as a command (1) to achieve a more serious and alarming tone: "*sed per deos atque homines meam esse hanc cave resciscat quisquam.*" / "*But, by the gods and humans, beware so that nobody finds out that she is my [daughter].*"<sup>73</sup> This instance is particularly interesting, since humans are sworn by beside the gods. In addition to this example, we find humans being sworn by in a similar, but interjectional, way in the expression *pro deum atque hominum fidem*.<sup>74</sup>

All in all, the formal oaths used in Terence are all connected to feelings of sincerity and earnestness, while many also contain a pleading nature. The persons behind the formal oaths are almost exclusively from the higher social status group (7; *domini* <*adulescentes + senes*>, *dominae*) with only one example

---

<sup>71</sup> *An.* 698.

<sup>72</sup> *Hec.* 476.

<sup>73</sup> *Phorm.* 764.

<sup>74</sup> For more on this expression, see the full thesis, 52-54.

from the lower (1; *meretrix*). Men (6) seem to use this kind of language more, as they have three times as many examples as women (2) in Terence. Besides, the two examples of female formal oaths are retold in monologues by men, strengthening that notion.

## Conclusion

This article has provided a distinct categorization of different kinds of oaths and their differing functions: the degenerated emphazier-oaths, the informal swearing by Jupiter, the asseverations, and the formal oaths.

By comparing Roman and Greek comedy, it can be established that the informal swearing by demigods was distinctly a Roman custom. This, as well as the fact that Terence's choice of oaths did not always correspond to the Greek model, supports the notion that his plays were not merely translations, but adaptations, of their Greek inspirations. Consequently, this somewhat indicates that Terence wrote in a way which actually reflected how the Romans of his time spoke.

An innovation in this study was to research the Romans' attitudes towards their gods using comedies. Regarding this, a decline in the reverence of the gods could be observed due to the bleak, casual usage of many oath expressions, especially ones containing short-forms of demigods' names. This can be concluded because of how absent the fear of perjury (which normally checks the upholding of an oath) seems to be with the swearers uttering these oaths. Simultaneously, the study clearly showed that the gender-rules for swearing were thoroughly upheld and that some cases of asseverations and formal oaths were still used as truly earnest swearing. This dubious phenomenon of individual swearing in Roman comedy has parallels in modern times. Consider, for example, how English expressions mentioning the Christian God have developed: from being taboo to speak, due to the sanctity of God's name, to now being heard daily in casual expressions like 'oh my God!', or '(by) God, no/yes!'.

The same can be said for my native language, Swedish, as well. Altogether, it indicates that the development of swearing follows a similar, perhaps even universal, pattern.

Finally, as always when working with ancient textual sources, one passionately wishes for some kind of recordings of how real native Latin-speaking Romans sounded, as to truly understand the use of these expressions. This dilemma brings to mind a wonderful anecdote about Mark Twain, who, allegedly a man of quite a liberal tongue, humorously answered his wife, when she recited all of his foul language back at him from a compiled list she had kept:

*"You've got the words, my dear, but you haven't got the tune!"<sup>75</sup>*

## References

- Adams, J.N. (1984) "Female Speech in Latin Comedy". *Antichthon* vol. 18, pp. 43-77.
- Babich, B. (2017) "Hermeneutic Philosophies of Social Science: Introduction", in: *Hermeneutic Philosophies of Social Science*. Babich, B. (ed.). Berlin: De Gruyter, pp. 1-21.
- Baker, P. (2010) "Corpus Methods in Linguistics", in: *Research Methods in Linguistics*. Litosseliti, L. (ed.). London: Continuum, pp. 93-116.
- Barsby, J. (1999) *Terence: Eunuchus*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Barsby, J. (2001a) *Terence: Phormio/ The Mother in Law/ The Brothers*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Barsby, J. (2001b) *Terence: The Woman of Andros/ The Self-Tormentor/ The Eunuch*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Brothers, A.J. (1988) *Terence: The Self-Tormentor*. Warminster: Aris & Phillips Ltd.
- Brown, P. (2019) *Terence: The Girl from Andros*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.
- Callaway, C.L. (1990) "The Oath in Epic Poetry". PhD., University of Washington.
- Conte, G.B. (1994) *Latin Literature A HISTORY*. (Translat. by Solodow, J.B.) London: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Corpus Thomisticum: Summa Theologiae*. Textum Leoninum Romae 1891 editum, accessed 2021, Feb 3<sup>rd</sup>:  
<https://www.corpusthomisticum.org/sth2006.html>

---

<sup>75</sup> Echols 1951, 292.

- De Melo, W. (2011) *Plautus: Amphitryon. The Comedy of Asses. The Bacchises. The Captives*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Echols, E.C. (1951) "The Art of Classical Swearing". *The Classical Journal* vol. 46.6, pp. 291-298.
- Echols, E.C. (1979) "*Sacra ac Profana: The Art of Swearing in Latin*". *The American Scholar* vol. 49.1, pp. 111-144.
- Fairclough, N. (1992) *Discourse and Social Change*. London: Polity Press.
- Foucault, M. (1972) *Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*. New York: Pantheon.
- Gagnér, A. (1920) *De Hercle Mehercle ceterisque id genus particulis priscae poesis Latinae Scaenicae*. Abel: Gryphiswaldae.
- Gee, J.P. (2014) *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis: Theory and Method*. (4<sup>th</sup> ed.) New York: Routledge.
- Goldberg, S.M. (2013) *Terence: Hecyra*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Hofmann, J.B. (1936) (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) *Lateinische Umgangssprache*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter.
- Hubbell, H.M. (1949) *Cicero: On Invention. The Best Kind of Orator. Topics*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Karakasis, E. (2005) *Terence and the Language of Roman Comedy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lindsay, W.M. & Kauer, R. (1926) *P. Terenti Afri Comoediae*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Martin, R.H. (1959) *Terence: Phormio*. London: Methuen & Co Ltd.
- Martin, R.H. (1976) *Terence: Adelphoe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Müller, R. (1997) *Sprechen und Sprache: Dialoglinguistische Studien zu Terenz*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter.
- Nicolson, F.W. (1893) "The Use of HERCLE (Mehercle), EDEPOL (Pol), ECASTOR (Mecastor) by Plautus and Terence". *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* vol. 4, pp. 99-103.
- Peukert Stock, O. (2021) "*Pro Iuppiter!* A Study of the Use of Oaths, Curses, and Prayers in Roman Comedy". MA-thesis, Lund University: <http://lup.lub.lu.se/student-papers/record/9057276>.
- Rackham, H. (1942) *Cicero: On the Orator Books 1-2*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Robertson D.W. (1946) "A Note on the Classical Origin of 'Circumstances' in the Medieval Confessional". *Studies in Philology* vol. 43.1, pp. 6-14.
- Rolfe, J.C. (1927) *Gellius. Attic Nights, books 6-13*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Skeat, W. W. (2013) *An Etymological Dictionary of the English Language: Dover language guides*. Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, Inc.
- Sloan, M.C. (2010) "Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics as the Original Locus for the Septem Circumstantiae". *Classical Philology* vol. 105, pp. 236–251.
- Sommerstein, A.H. & Torrance, I.C. (eds.) (2014) *Oath and Swearing in Ancient Greece*. Berlin: De Gruyter.

The Fathers of the English Dominican Province (1920) *The Summa Theologiae of Thomas Aquinas* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), accessed 2021, Jan 31<sup>st</sup>:

<https://www.newadvent.org/summa/2007.htm#article1>

Ullman, B.L. (1943) "By Castor and Pollux". *The Classical Weekly* vol. 37.8, pp. 87-