

## THE WORDS *SODES* AND *QUAESO* IN TERENTIAN USAGE

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The interjection *sodes* is a colloquialism that occurs fifteen times in Terence's comedies.<sup>1</sup> As is the case with other similar colloquial interjections, idiom seems to have restricted the range of situations in which the word could be used.<sup>2</sup> The most striking feature about Terence's use of the word is that it only occurs on the lips of *male* characters.

In one case, however, though the word is actually assigned to a male character, the *senex* Chremes, it occurs in what purports to be a direct quotation of a remark by a female character, the *meretrix* Bacchis.<sup>3</sup> The *senex*, scandalised by Bacchis' behaviour in general, singled out one remark of hers, which contains the word *sodes*, as the most striking illustration of her insolence and profligacy.<sup>4</sup> It is, then, not merely the familiarity of the appellation *pater* which Chremes finds objectionable but also the use of this word to him—a man—by a woman.

Another fact which emerges from the way Terence uses the word is that *sodes* does not seem to have been the sort of word that one respectable citizen would use to another in polite society of Terence's day: in dignified conversation it would not be used to address a social equal.<sup>5</sup> It is in fact most frequently addressed to slaves (five times)<sup>6</sup> or social inferiors (three or possibly four times).<sup>7</sup> In fact in the five instances of the word's use by a

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1. Cf. E. B. Jenkins, *Index Verborum Terentianus*, repr. 1962, 159: *Ad.* 517, 643; *An.* 85; *Hc.* 358, 753, 841, 844; *Ht.* 459, 580, 738, 770; *Ph.* 103, 741, 793 and 921. The word does not occur at all in the *Eunuchus*. On the composition of the compound see S. G. Ashmore, *The Comedies of Terence*, 1910, p. 14, n. to 1.85. Lewis & Short comment on its colloquial nature.

2. Thus *amabo*, for instance, is only used by female characters, whereas the interjection *quaeso* is another word used only by men: see n. 27 and discussion thereto.

3. *Ht.* 459. The word occurs three times as part of a quotation of what has been said on another occasion; in the other two cases both the quoter and the original speaker are male.

4. For Chremes' reaction to Bacchis, whom he denounces as *instructa pulchre ad perniciem*, cf. ll. 448–56 and 463–64. The remark in question is singled out by the words *nam ut alia omittam*: cf. ll. 457–60.

5. It is *never*, e.g., used by one *senex* to another. So the description and meaning assigned by A. Ernout et A. Meillet, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine*, 1960, t. 2, 632 (formule de politesse 'si tu veux bien, s'il te plaît') is inadequate.

6. *Ad.* 517; *An.* 85; *Hc.* 841 & 844, & *Ht.* 580.

7. At *Hc.* 753 the *senex* addresses it to the *meretrix*, at *Ph.* 741 it is used by the *senex* to the *nutrix* and at *Ph.* 921 by the *senex* to the parasite. At *Ht.* 738 the slave uses it to the *meretrix*. This may be a case where social equals are involved (on which cf. n. 11 and discussion thereto), but it should be noted that the slave in question seems to consider this *meretrix* as an inferior: ll. 598, 600 & 607 cannot be taken as evidence of this because they are part of an attitude struck to deceive the *senex*, but ll. 361 and 365–7 seem to imply disparagement. And the slave addresses to her the word *quaeso* as well as *sodes* (l. 736), which should involve some disrespect: cf. nn. 30 and 31 and discussion thereto in the text.

*senex*, it is addressed to a *servus*, a *meretrix*, a parasite, and a *nutrix*;<sup>8</sup> in eight—possibly nine—of the fifteen passages in which the word is used it is addressed to a social inferior by his superior,<sup>9</sup> and on no occasion does one *senex* use it to another *senex*, nor to a *iuvenis* and only once, and then with intentional unpleasantness, does a *senex* use it in addressing a *matrona*.<sup>10</sup> The use of the word between social equals seems to have been confined to the equivalent in Terence's day of a café society.<sup>11</sup> It is in fact most used by the 'younger set', the rôle to which the use of the word is most frequently assigned being that of the *iuvenis*.<sup>12</sup>

So it was very definitely *not* the done thing for a *meretrix* to address the word *sodes* to a *senex*, and Chremes' indignation against Bacchis becomes still more understandable. This passage apart—and the word is clearly used in a most exceptional way here—four passages call for comment. These fall into two categories. In the first, which comprises one instance only, the word is used by a respectable character—a *senex*—to his social equal, a *matrona* who is wife to another *senex*. In the second, which consists of three instances, the word is paradoxically used by an inferior to his social superior.<sup>13</sup>

That the word is thus used for deliberate dramatic effect is perhaps most readily observable in the sole instance of the use of the word in the first category cited above. Here a *senex* cuts short a tirade directed against his brother by the latter's virago wife, whom both brothers detest, each knowing the other to do so.<sup>14</sup> The use of the word under these circumstances is clearly meant to be curt, if not downright impolite, and to indicate that the *senex* in question wishes to bring this particular conversation to an end.<sup>15</sup> However, the use of the word involves a certain wry humour in this passage:

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8. Respectively *An.* 85; *Hc.* 753; *Ph.* 921 and 741. *Ht.* 459 cannot be included in this count because the *senex* is quoting, not addressing, the *meretrix*.

9. *Ad.* 517; *An.* 85; *Hc.* 753, 841, 844; *Ht.* 580; *Ph.* 741 and 921; on *Ht.* 738, cf. n. 7. Thus the lower orders—*servus*, *nutrix*, *meretrix* and parasite—comprise nine of those addressed by the word. Others are the *senex* (thrice), *matrona* (twice) and *iuvenis* (once).

10. *Ph.* 793; on the intentional rudeness involved in this passage cf. nn. 14–16 and discussion thereto in the text.

11. The young blades of *Ph.* 103 are a case in point; possibly the *servus-meretrix* exchange at *Ht.* 738 is another, but on this cf. n. 7.

12. The *iuvenis* uses it seven times: *Ad.* 517, 643; *Hc.* 358, 841, 844 and *Ht.* 580. It is used by other inhabitants of the young man's world at *Ht.* 459, 738 and 770, making a total of 10 of its 15 occurrences. This is significant, because the *iuvenis* and the inhabitants of his world have fewer social inferiors than the *senex* and less opportunity to use the word as a consequence. Comparison with the use of *quæso* is illuminating: the *senex* employs it 22 times, the *iuvenis* 11, the slave nine and the parasite and *miles* group six.

13. Category 1: *Ph.* 793; category 2: *Ad.* 643, *Hc.* 358 and *Ht.* 770.

14. Cf. ll. 587–8 and 745.

15. Cf. R. H. Martin, *Terence: Phormio*, 1959, 155, n. to l. 793. The word is used with a similar aim at *Hc.* 358; cf. n. 18 and discussion thereto in text. Thus, in speaking of Demipho's 'deference' on p. 154, Martin misinterprets the spirit of the Demipho-Nausistrata conversation: cf. nn. 30 and 32 below and discussion thereto in the text.

in the lines immediately preceding it the *matrona* roundly proclaims a wish that she were a man;<sup>16</sup> the *senex* proceeds to take her at her word, using this word to her as one man might speak to another.

This use of *sodes* curtly to cut short a conversation with a *matrona* (who was bound to be offended by being so improperly addressed) is evident in another passage also. In this case it is used by her son.<sup>17</sup> In this passage, the son, overcome with grief and worried to the point of distraction by an unexpected discovery he has just made, is plied by his mother with question after question. His curt replies hint that he does not wish to discuss his troubles. For humorous effect, Terence depicts the mother as oblivious to this, her wordy questions contrasting strikingly with her son's terse rejoinders. The son eventually resorts to the rudeness of using this word to his mother. Its effect on her is startling: her enquiries cease forthwith; she mutters a subdued reply (one word, in contrast to her previous prolixity), and quits the scene.<sup>18</sup> When next she appears, it is to inform her son that she is aware that he does not think well of her and that she proposes to leave home.<sup>19</sup> All this accords very well with the force elsewhere associated with the word when used by an inferior to a social superior.

Two cases remain. In one of them a rather spoilt son uses the word to his father.<sup>20</sup> The son is in a most embarrassing predicament: he has met his father, who is on the point of leaving the house which the son is in process of entering. The house is that of the girl who has borne the *iuvenis* a child and whom the *iuvenis* proposes to marry—both of these facts being, he thinks, unknown to his father. The young man is beside himself with shame<sup>21</sup> but desperately worried in case some untoward event is threatening his beloved. Terence puts the word into his mouth, addressed to his father to indicate the youth's confusion and loss of self-control. He 'does not know what he's saying', as this slip in addressing his father shows. Finally, there is one case in which a *servus* uses the word to address a *senex*. As one would imagine, a very unusual relationship exists between this pair. The *senex*, Chremes, as a subterfuge to trick the slave, has incited the latter to conspire to deceive another *senex*, Menedemus. The passage in which the word is used is that of a scene in which the slave is recounting to Chremes

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16. At ll. 792-3.

17. Pamphilus, speaking to Sostrata at *Hc.* 358.

18. *Hc.* 353-58; cf. the commentary of S. Stella, *P. Terenzio Afro: Hecyra*, 1962, 106-108, esp. nn. to ll. 353-355 and 357.

19. *Hc.* 576-88.

20. *Ad.* 643. For appraisals of Aeschinus' character cf. A. Sloman, *P. Terenti Adelphi*, 1955 reprint, p. xx; S. G. Ashmore, *The Adelphoe of Terence*, 1893, p. lxvi, and G. E. Duckworth, *The Nature of Roman Comedy*, 1952, pp. 242 (and n. 13) and 287.

21. This is specifically stated in the text: cf. *erubuit* of l. 643. Ashmore's note on *sodes* ('said with considerable earnestness', op. cit. p. 151) misinterprets the spirit of Aeschinus' remark and gives no real idea of the emotional tone of the exchange.

the plan to deceive Menedemus.<sup>22</sup> To further his subterfuge Chremes is treating his slave with considerable affability to encourage the informal familiarity which will give him access to the slave's conspiracy. Hence the slave is allowed to address him much as he would an equal.<sup>23</sup> Now the slave for his part is conspiring to deceive Chremes, and the device used is that of telling the latter the truth, on the assumption that he will not believe it.<sup>24</sup> Accordingly the slave states that the other *senex* has been told that the *meretrix* Bacchis is actually Chremes' son's mistress. Chremes merely says 'Good'. The slave is so surprised at Chremes' ready acceptance of this disclosure that his composure breaks down, and, forgetting himself, he asks Chremes with some vehemence what it was he has just said. There is even some humorous byplay involved in the use of the word (as at *Ph.* 793), in that Chremes takes the slave's peremptoriness to indicate that the latter feels that he, Chremes, has not been sufficiently appreciative. He therefore proceeds to accept the latter's tidings with an even greater show of approval.<sup>25</sup> As in the case where one young man used the word to another (at *Ph.* 103), its use in this passage is meant to suggest that *servus* and *dominus* are consorting as equals, a sign of this being the use of language by the slave that would be more appropriate on his master's part.

It thus appears that, in all cases where *sodes* is not used either by a social superior to his inferior or by one member of the 'smart set' to another, the break with normal usage involved is deliberate and intended to achieve a specific dramatic effect. In fact if the special overtones of significance here ascribed to the use of the word are not realised, much of the point of several of these passages, in fine those where normal usage is broken, is missed.<sup>26</sup>

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22. Incitement to deceive: *Ht.* 530–50 and 595–6; recounting of alleged scheme: ll. 759–804. The word is used at l. 770.

23. Unusual friendliness (in the master's dealings with his slave) is shown at ll. 759–63. Apart from the use of the word *sodes*, the slave addresses other pieces of familiarity at his master at ll. 776 (*vah, tardus es*), and 804 (*abi, ecfer argentum*). I. Sargeant, *Terence*, 1959 reprint (vol. 1 of the 2-vol. Loeb translation), pp. 195, 197 and 199 completely misinterprets the spirit of this exchange between slave and master by inserting into the former's conversation a series of 'Sir's for which there is no justification in the original.

24. Ll. 710–12.

25. In accordance with his plan of ll. 710–712, the slave tells the *senex* part of the truth at ll. 767–9—it appears from the former lines that he does not expect that this disclosure will be easily accepted; when it is, some consternation results (l. 770). Ashmore (*The Comedies of Terence*, p. 110, n. to l. 770) comments: 'Syrus pretends not to have heard the word of approval': this misinterprets the tone of the slave's question, as is evident from the sequel—i.e. the *senex* does not merely repeat what he has just said, he says it in a much more complimentary fashion (*probe* becoming *nimium*); moreover, it should be noted that Ashmore's hypothesis would really require a past tense—*dixi* or the like—instead of the present, *inquam*, which is actually used.

26. As is evident from the failures of commentators fully to appreciate the point of these exchanges: see nn. 5, 15, 21, 23 and 25 and discussion thereto in text. I have not attempted to translate the word, as no one translation will fit every passage in which it is used and as such colloquialisms are anyway very difficult to translate idiomatically even in a specific context. But perhaps some such turning as 'if you *don't* mind' may represent

The interjection *quaeso* differs from *sodes* in its employment by Terence in that, though it too is almost exclusively used by male characters to male characters, it can be used between high-ranking social equals. It seems in fact to be associated, in Terence's employment of it at any rate, with the upper strata of comedy's society and to have rather an authoritative tone.<sup>27</sup> In its employment when two *personae* of unequal social rank are speaking it is somewhat more frequently employed by the superior to the inferior;<sup>28</sup> the employment of the word by a social inferior to his superior usually occurs in circumstances outside the formal structure of the *familia*.<sup>29</sup> The word is *not* used, in polite conversation, in addressing a respectable woman.<sup>30</sup> Where it is in fact addressed to a *matrona*—twice in the fifty-two instances of its use by Terence—it thus involves something that borders on serious impoliteness and has to be properly dramatically motivated. Actually, both of the instances in question concern characters already discussed as having addressed the word *sodes* to these *matronae*.<sup>31</sup> In the *Heautontimoroumenos*

its force (though the expression 'do you mind?' of the contemporary idiom is closer, in that it has overtones of sarcasm and aggressiveness such that, generally speaking, a woman would not readily use the expression in the normal run of conversation).

27. Jenkins (p. 137) lists 52 occurrences; in 50 cases the word is spoken by a male character and in 46 cases the addressee also is a male character. Statistics on the distribution of the word among the various male speaking parts are as follows (in each case the bracketed figures indicate the number of times a character is addressed by the term, the other figures represent the number of times he uses it): *senex*: 22 (18); *iuvenis*: 11 (10); *servus*: 9 (5); parasite, *miles* etc.: 6 (3). As for its use by social equals in the following 11 cases it is addressed by a *senex* to a *senex*: *Ad.* 598; *Ht.* 83, 92, 163, 430, 502, 848, 1052; *Ph.* 350, 573 and 670 (possibly *Ph.* 141 should be classed here too). This only happens twice between *iuvenes*, at *Eun.* 356 and 562. It thus appears that the word is to be associated with the *dominus* group (*senex* and *iuvenis*) rather than the serving group (*servus* and parasite) of Terence's comedies: i.e. of the 48 users of the word considered here, the *dominus* group comprise 33, and of the 36 addressees considered, they make up 28.

28. If the parasite group of characters is not considered, in relation to the *miles* and *servus* (their social superiority to the latter rôles is not self-evident from the standing of their stock rôles), then within the rôles *senex:iuvenis:servus:parasite/meretrix* etc. there are 12 cases of a superior addressing the word to an inferior (*Ad.* 488; *An.* 323; *Eun.* 745, 877; *Hc.* 672, 786; *Ht.* 378, 562, 583, 718, 971; *Ph.* 790), nine of the reverse (*Ad.* 190; *An.* 204, 305; *Eun.* 307; *Hc.* 803; *Ht.* 537, 954; *Ph.* 413 and 935 (probably)). It is difficult to assess the relative standing of the parties in the following cases: *Ad.* 247; *Eun.* 431, 466; *Hc.* 588; *Ht.* 736 and *Ph.* 645.

29. E.g. at *Ad.* 190 the pimp so addresses the *iuvenis*; at *Eun.* 431 the parasite addresses the *miles*, at 466 the (*iuvenis*) slave uses it to the *miles*. At *Hc.* 803 the *iuvenis* so accosted by the slave is a stranger. The *iuvenis* is *not* the son of the *senex* to whom he addresses the word at *Ht.* 954, and at *Ph.* 413 and 935 it is the parasite who so addresses the *senex*. Within the family, the aged slave retainer could, however, on occasion risk this familiarity with his master: *An.* 204, 305; *Eun.* 307 and *Ht.* 537. But the use of the word by a son to his mother (*Hc.* 588) is something *sui generis* (cf. n. 34 and discussion thereto in the text). All of which clearly indicates that the use of the word by a social inferior to his superior was felt as an impertinence.

30. When addressed to women, the addressee is a *meretrix* on four of the six occasions when the word is so used: *Eun.* 745, 877; *Hc.* 786 and *Ht.* 736.

31. The passages are *Hc.* 588 and *Ph.* 790; they concern the *matrona* Sostrata and her son the *iuvenis* Pamphilus (who addressed his mother using the word *sodes* at *Hc.* 358) and the *matrona* Nausistrata, whose husband's brother, the *senex* Demipho, is to address *sodes* to her at *Ph.* 793.

Demipho uses the interjection *quaeso* to address his brother's virago wife in a scene where, as has already been shown, he is at little pains to conceal his dislike of her.<sup>32</sup> In the other passage Pamphilus, who has already upset his mother by the use of the word *sodes* to her, explodes irritably at the news of her plan to leave home, for this will make his own position worse, did she but know it.<sup>33</sup> It is obvious that he is beside himself, but equally obvious that his outburst does little to improve the situation.<sup>34</sup>

In view of all this, the employment of *quaeso* by a female character (twice in the fifty-two instances of its occurrence) would seem to involve a breach of polite usage that requires dramatic motivation. The two passages involved have certain points in common but differ in this, that on one occasion the speaker is an *obstetrix*, on the other a *matrona*.<sup>35</sup> However, in both these passages *quaeso* is employed in connection with an invocation of the deities, and is associated with the emotional tension involved in connection with a child-birth. Now, by the conventions of comedy, the *obstetrix* is regarded as of much the same social level as a *meretrix*,<sup>36</sup> so her conversation is likely to be that of café society rather than the drawing room; consequently the impropriety is not out of character, in view of the emotionally surcharged atmosphere of the soliloquy in which it is uttered. In the case of the use of the word by the *matrona*, the latter is represented as almost completely over-wrought with worry: her (unmarried) daughter is about to give birth, and her one male slave is absent, for no clear reason, so she cannot send for a midwife or for her daughter's lover, who has been ominously irregular in his visits of late. She is a widow, with few resources and desperately worried.<sup>37</sup> Hence the use of the word to indicate her loss of womanly control is amply motivated dramatically.

Thus *quaeso*, when used as an interjection or in an invocation of the divine, seems for Terence to have quite marked emotional undertones. It conveys a suggestion of irritation or is used as a strong asseveration. Terence seems to regard it as rather a forceful idiom best suited to the language of

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32. *Ph.* 790; on Demipho's attitude cf. nn. 14–15 and discussion thereto in the text.

33. *Hc.* 588; Stella (p. 149) gives an excellent analysis of the *iuvenis*' frame of mind; his plight is indicated by Ashmore in the introductory note to Act IV, scene 2 of *The Comedies of Terence* (p. 236).

34. The mild Sostrata retorts to his outburst with a bitterness found nowhere else in her speeches in the *Hecyra* (ll. 595–600). Stella's commentary (to ll. 595–6, p. 150) states that she has her daughter-in-law in mind here. This is to fail to see the offensiveness of some of Pamphilus' remarks to his mother, especially ll. 358 and 588: cf. nn. 29 and 30 above.

35. They are respectively *An.* 487 and *Ad.* 298.

36. Cf. *An.* 229–33.

37. This much emerges directly from the scene in which the word under discussion is used: cf. *Ad.* 288–98 and Ashmore's introductory remarks to the scene (*The Comedies of Terence*, 273).

male company, and its use by or to women in his comedies is dramatically significant.<sup>38</sup>

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38. Its forcefulness hardly appears in e.g. Ernout and Meillet (op. cit. 550): 'formule de politesse . . . avec le sens de "s'il te plaît, je te prie"'. Editions generally do not comment on the word's use in the four unusual passages (*Ad.* 298, *An.* 487, *Hc.* 588 and *Ph.* 790) which have been analysed above. I have to hand Ashmore, *The Comedies of Terence and The Adelphoe of Terence*; Martin, *Terence: Phormio* and Sloman, *P. Terenti Adelphi* (already cited); there is no comment on the dramatic force of *quaeso* in any of the above passages in any of these works. Nor is comment provided in J. Bond and A. S. Walpole, *The Phormio of Terence*, 1879 and C. E. Freeman and A. Sloman, *P. Terenti Andria*, 1923<sup>a</sup>. Stella does see the need for comment on *Hc.* 588 ('Ma fammi il piacere!') he quotes from Giardelli—op. cit. p. 149); however, as n. 34 above indicates, he does not fully appreciate the significance of the word when used by a son to his mother.

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