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INTENSIFYING STRATEGIES IN CURSE TEXTS

Summary: In this paper, I am going to deal with illocutionary intensification, one of the specific features of curse texts, and the role prefixes play in it. Illocutionary intensification operates at the discursive-pragmatic level, modifying the illocutive act through strengthening and modal reinforcement, and is typically applied to verbs and verbal modifiers.¹ Latin curse tablets evidence various linguistic peculiarities. They are highly formulaic and contain features related to the category of language for special purposes.² These texts often employ peculiar textual rules which reflect the magical ritual accompanying the text and are focused on the supposed effect on the curse victim. In many of these texts, we can observe various strategies of illocutionary intensification, such as word repetition, which is relatively rare in literary texts, and the use of evaluative prefixes.

Key words: illocutionary intensification, prefixes, Latin curse texts, cursing formulae, repetition, telicity

“Prefix” is a traditional descriptive notion referring to non-intrusive affixation which adds affixes to the margins of a lexical base. A prefix is an affix which is bound before the base.³ Prefixes are flexive or derivative morphemes which are very often identical to the first morpheme of the verb’s lexeme, forming a close semantic unit with the verb.⁴ Prefixation was a very productive process in all periods of Latin. The most productive prefixes have prepositional counterparts (both prefixes and preposi-

¹ FEDRIANI, CH.: Nulla sum, nulla sum: Tota, tota occidi. Repetition as a (rare) strategy of intensification in Latin. In NAPOLI, M. – RAVETTO, M. (eds): *Exploring Intensification. Synchronic, Diachronic and Cross-linguistic Perspectives*. Amsterdam 2017, 147–170, 155.

² See URBANOVÁ, D. – CUZZOLIN, P.: Some Linguistic and Pragmatic Remarks on the tabellae defixionum. *Journal of Latin Linguistics* 15.2 (2016) 313–345.

³ HALL, CH. J.: Prefixation, suffixation and circumfixation. In BOOIJ, G. – LEHMANN, CH. – MUGDAN, J. (eds) in coll. with KESSELHEIM, W. – SKOPETEAS, S.: *Morphology. An International Handbook on Inflection and Word-formation*. Vol. I [HSK 17.1]. Berlin–New York 2000, 535–545.

⁴ BOOIJ, G. – KAMENADE, A. VAN: Preverbs: An Introduction. In BOOIJ, G. – MARLE, J. VAN (eds): *Yearbook of Morphology*. Dordrecht, 2003, 1–11. See also HESLIN, T. P.: Prefixation in Latin. *Lingua* 72 (1987) 135–154.

tions being relational elements).⁵ Prefixation is a word-formation process with strong connections to lexicology, morphology, and syntax. The morphological process of attaching an affix to the left of an existing word, in this case a verb, is connected with semantic change.⁶ The question of semantics and the functions of prefixes and prefixed verbs is rather complex. In Archaic and Classical Latin, prefixation could have different effects: it could cause a shift in meaning, a change in transitivity, or a modification of actionality to acquire telicity (rendering the verb terminative).⁷ Prefixation can, but need not, have all the aforementioned effects.

Attaching a prefix to a verb is almost always connected with a semantic change – the prefix modifies the meaning of the verbal basis. This is often associated with a notion of direction or movement to express the phases of verbal process.⁸ *venio* “to come” ~ *advenio* (*ad* + *venio*) “to arrive at, to reach” ~ *convenio* (*con* + *venio*) “to assemble, meet” and so on. Semantic relationships of synonymy and antonymy are also created with prefixes⁹ (*ad-*, *in-*, *ob-* × *ab-*, *ex-*, *de-*), such as *adveho* × *abveho*; *inveho* × *exveho*. Prefixation can also make verbs transitive, as with *ire* “to go” – *inire* “to go into, enter”, *exire* “to go out”, and *transire* “to go across”. Prefixes can also cause a modification of actionality. They can render verbs terminative and emphasize the beginning or end of a process,¹⁰ as with *facio* “to do” – *perficio* “to complete, finish”, *conficio* “to accomplish”; *edo* “to eat” – *comedo* “to eat up”; *bibo* “to drink” – *ebibo* “to drink up”.

Prefixes have semantic value and we can assume that most Latin prefixed verbs were transparent, i.e. speakers could recognize the two components and their meanings.¹¹ However, some prefixed derivatives have meanings which cannot always be inferred from adding the meanings of the elements entering the compound. Thus, we speak about semantic non-transparency or opacity, as in the case of *interficere* (*inter* + *facere*). Furthermore, the prefix can be lexicalized in a particular word and then demotivated, as with *re-* in *respondere* (*re* + *spondere*) “to answer” where the semantic evolution of the prefixed verb separated it from its basis for the speech community.¹² From a diachronic point of view, various changes in the function of prefixes appear. While in Early and Classical Latin, we encounter a rich and complex system in which prefixes are used to render verbs terminative and emphasize the beginning or end of a process or render prefixed verbs transitive, in later periods some prefixes, such as

⁵ FRUYT, M.: Word-Formation in Classical Latin. In CLACKSON, J. (ed.): *A Companion to the Latin Language*. Chichester 2011, 157–175.

⁶ ONIGA, R.: Composition et préverbation en Latin: problèmes de typologie. In MOUSSY, C. (ed.): *La Composition et préverbation en Latin*. Paris 2005, 211–227.

⁷ PINKSTER, H.: *The Oxford Latin Syntax. Vol. I: The Simple Clause*. Oxford 2015.

⁸ GARCÍA-HERNÁNDEZ, B.: Les preverbes latins. Notions latives et aspectuelles. *Cahiers de l'Institut de Linguistique de Louvain* 15 (1989) 149–159.

⁹ GARCÍA-HERNÁNDEZ (n. 8) 152–155.

¹⁰ HAVERLING, G.: On Prefixes and Actionality in Classical and Late Latin. *Acta linguistica Hungarica* 50.1–2 (2003) 113–135.

¹¹ JEKL, A.: Verbal Prefixation in Classical Latin and in Italian: The Prefix *ex-*. In ONIGA, R. – IOVINO, R. – GIUSTI, G. (eds): *Formal Linguistics and Teaching of Latin. Theoretical and Applied Perspectives in Comparative Grammar*. Cambridge 2011, 204–214.

¹² FRUYT (n. 5) 171.

ex-, *in-*, and *con-*, gradually lost their terminative meaning. Moreover, the semantics and functions of some prefixed verbs became blurred over the course of time.¹³ In Vulgar Latin, we can notice a tendency to use prefixes excessively, and thus in many cases a verb's prefixed form did not have any function apart from intensifying the meaning of the non-compound word,¹⁴ as with *deponere*, *demandare*, *commendare*, *despoliare*. This may be associated with the weakening of the prefix's meaning, i.e. its desemanticization, as with the terminative verb *comedo*, which gradually began to be used similarly as the Classical Latin *edo*. In other words, it seems that the prefix *com-* gradually lost its meaning, which, in later Latin, resulted in *comedo* being used in the meaning of *edo*, that is "to eat", not "to eat up/consume". This may have led speakers to seek another expression of the verb's terminativity; thus, we may observe the redetermination or supercomposition of already prefixed verbs, as with *edo* – *comedo* – *excomedo*; *ago* – *exigo* – *perexigo*; *ligo* – *obligo* – *perobligo*. The supercomposed verbs mentioned here are attested almost exclusively in curse tablets.¹⁵

Defixiones also contain many prefixed verbs, which are used in accordance with the aforementioned development and can be regarded, in addition to or in combination with verb repetition, as a strategy to express intensity within a magical context.

In so-called direct curse formulae¹⁶ with predicates of cursing or committal, there are usually two illocutionary acts as postulated by Searle: first, there are declaratives (which transform the world to make it conform to the propositional content) expressed by such verbs as 'bless', 'curse', 'dedicate', or 'nominate'. Second, there are directives, which make the addressee do something, with such verbs as 'order', 'request', 'command', or 'implore'.¹⁷

The texts below show the use of both declarative and directive predicates in a direct curse formula in the 1st pers. sg. present, including the prefixed verbs (1) *execro*, (2) *demando*, and (3) *obligo*, where the original meaning is weakened and the prefix serves to intensify the verbs.¹⁸

- (1) Bath, dfx. 3.2/78; 4th cent. CE: *Execro (eum) qui involaverit, quod Deomiorix de hospitio suo perdiderit...*

I curse [him] who has stolen, who has robbed Deomiorix from his house.¹⁹

¹³ HAVERLING (n. 10) 114. VÄÄNÄNEN, V.: *Introduzione al latino volgare*. Bologna 1982, 172–173.

¹⁴ VÄÄNÄNEN (n. 13) 172–173.

¹⁵ See *TheDeMa* = *Thesaurus Defixionum Magdeburgensis*. <http://www-e.uni-magdeburg.de/defigo/wordpress/> (last accessed 12 October 2018). No. 654 (*excomedo*); No. 101 (*perexigo*); No. 96 (*perobligo*).

¹⁶ See KROPP, A.: How does Magical Language Work? The Spells and *Formulae* of the Latin *Defixionum Tabellae*. In GORDON, R. L. – MARCO SIMÓN, F. (eds): *Magical Practice in the Latin West*. Leiden 2010, 357–380. See also URBANOVÁ, D.: *Latin Curse Tablets of the Roman Empire*. Innsbruck 2018, 102–123.

¹⁷ SEARLE, J. R. A.: Classification of Illocutionary Acts. *Language in Society* 5.1 (1976) 1–23.

¹⁸ The curse tablets are cited herein according to KROPP, A.: *Defixiones. Ein aktuelles Corpus lateinischer Fluchtafeln*. Speyer 2008, abbreviated as dfx., if not mentioned otherwise.

¹⁹ The texts are stated here in emended form. For (1) see TOMLIN, R. S. O.: The Curse Tablets. In CUNLIFFE, B. (ed.): *The Temple of Sulis Minerva at Bath. Vol. 2: The Finds from the Sacred Spring*. Oxford 1988, 59–270, No. 99. For the whole original texts and discussion, see URBANOVÁ (n. 16) – (1): No. 277, (2): No. 183 and (3): No. 131. See also *TheDeMa* (n. 15) – (1): No. 655, (2): No. 838, (3): 94.

- (2) Constantine, Africa, dfx. 11.3.1/1; 4th cent. CE: ...demando tibi, ut acceptum habeas Silvanum, ...ut facias illum mortuum...
... I commend you to take Silvanus ...[and] to arrange for his death...
- (3) Carthage, dfx. 11.1.1/23; 3rd cent. CE: ...Obligo (et) inplico et tibi trado ...ut facias vulneratos, cruentatos de anpiteatro exire in die muneris filios Aemiliani...
... I bind and entwine [them with spells] and commend [them] to you ...to make the sons of Aemilianus leave the amphitheatre injured and stained with blood on the day of the games...

Directives, a class of illocutionary acts aiming to make the addressee do something, are the most frequently attested class in defixiones. They correspond mainly to invoking formulae expressing an invocation in a broader sense, meaning a plea, command, or wish through the imperative or subjunctive potentially extended by a complement clause with a final value. The following texts display invoking formula in subjunctive and imperative moods, including prefixed verbs and escalating repetition (4) and a verbal tricolon (5).

- (4) Carthage, dfx. 11.1.1/25; mid 4th cent. CE: *Βαχαχυχ, qui es in Egypto magnus daemon, obliges, perobliges Maurussum venatorem*...²⁰
- (5) Carthage, Africa, dfx. 11.1.1/22; 2nd/3rd cent. CE: ...occidite, exterminate, vulnerate Gallicum, quem peperit Prima in ista hora in amphitheatri corona...
... kill, destroy, hurt Gallicus, whom Prima bore, at that hour during the games in the amphitheatre...²¹

So-called wish formulae also appear in relation to directive illocutionary acts in defixiones using a verb in the 3rd pers. sg./pl. pres. subjunctive in which the action's agent is unexpressed. These hedging directives²² are, from a pragmatic point of view, associated with the author employing protective tactics. The following texts display verbs in a tricolon (6) and a combination of a prefixed and a non-prefixed verb reinforcing the writer's wish (7).

- (6) Hadrumetum, dfx. 11.2.1/36; 3rd cent. CE: ...insaniens, ...insaniens, vigilans, uratur, comburatur, ardeat ...spiritus amore et ...desiderio meo...
...may she be mad ...mad, may she be unable to sleep, may her [soul] be consumed, burnt, and be consumed by love and ...desire for me.²³

²⁰ For the translation, see text (11) below, see also ThedeMa (n. 15) No. 96.

²¹ For the whole text and discussion, see URBANOVÁ (n. 16) – (5): No. 130.

²² See KROPP (n. 16) 366-370.

²³ For the whole text and discussion, see URBANOVÁ (n. 16) – (6): No. 175, (7): No. 121, see also TheDeMa (n. 15) No. 835 and No. 804.

- (7) Carthage, dfx. 11.1.1/13; 2nd/3rd cent. CE: *Uratur Successa aduratur amore vel desiderio Successi.*

May Successa burn, may she be set on fire with love and desire for Successus.

Generally, curse texts contain significantly more prefixed verbs than verbs without prefixes. This phenomenon matches the tendencies of Vulgar Latin development. In the case of cursing formulae, which make use of a more or less limited number of verbs, prefixed predicates appear three times as often²⁴ as non-prefixed ones do: *mando* (8) – *demando* (14) – *commendo* (16); *voveo* (2) – *devovo* (9); *pono* (2) – *depono* (8). The most striking ratio can be seen in the case of *ligo* and its prefixed counterparts in every kind of formula, with 16 occurrences of *ligare* compared to 62 prefixed derivatives of *ligo*: *ligo* (16) – *alligo* (15) – *colligo* (9) – *deligo* (3) – *obligo* (30) – *perobligo* (4) – *religo* (1) – *recolligo* (1), i.e. with nearly four times as many prefixed counterparts. In these texts, however, the prefixes' meanings are in most cases already weakened or very similar to one another, as with *ligo* – “bind, fasten”; *deligo* “tie up, fasten”; *colligo* “to tie up, put in bonds”; *alligo* “to tie, bind, fasten”; *obligo* “to tie up (retain in position)”; and *recolligo* “to tie down”. These prefixes serve as a means of intensification to reinforce the meaning of the non-prefixed words (sometimes also lexicalized, as perhaps with *defigo* in defixiones, as the ratio *figo* (1) – *defigo* (21) – *perfigo* (1) – *exconfigo* (1?) suggests). Some verbs, such as *describo* and *desacrifico*, convey the meaning of cursing only in defixiones. In curse texts, the intensifying strategy of repeating cursing verbs with prefixes seems to be influenced by the magical context or ritual nature of curses as well as religious prayers. Various ritual formulae generally tend to be repetitive and use tricolons of words with similar meanings to intensify a prayer addressed to gods and ensure its efficacy or prevent the curse's failure by applying more alternative possibilities. For the magical ritual and cursing procedure, the prefixes' function might be also described as preemptive²⁵ to make the curse's effect irreversible or impossible to change.²⁶

The repetition strategy for intensification in curses occurs in four variants:

- the use of 2–4 verbs with similar meanings (prefixed or not): ...*occidite, exterminate, vulnerate Galicum* (5); *cadant, frangant, disiungantur*;²⁷ *pereat, intereat, extabescat* (13);
- the use of 2–3 verbs with a single prefix: *demando, devoveo* (8); *oblige, obture*;²⁸ *diripiatis, dilaceratis* (13);

²⁴ Statistical data are based on *TheDeMa* (n. 15).

²⁵ A preemptive method of an action is done before other people can act, especially to prevent them from doing something else. See the Cambridge Dictionary online <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/pre-emptive>; (in the case of defixiones, the author asks the divinities for recourse to ensure the highest efficacy for the curse).

²⁶ I thank P. L. Cuzzolin and G. Calboli and J. Mikulová for valuable comments and suggestions regarding this contribution.

²⁷ This verbal tricolon is typical of the agonistic curse series against race horses from Hadrumentum, see, e.g., *TheDeMa* (n. 15) Nos 25, 26, 30.

²⁸ See *TheDeMa* (n. 15) No. 93.

- the use of a single verbal base with various prefixes: *absumatis, desumatis, consumatis; oblige, peroblige; defigite, perfigite* (4) = (11); *alligo, deligo* (9);
- the variation of prefixed and non-prefixed verbs: *) tere, contere, confringe et trade morti...*(10); *luctent, deluctent ... vincant evincant* (12).

Intensification in direct curse formulae is achieved mainly through the repetition of either synonyms with a single prefix or a single primary verb with different prefixes; in some cases, non-prefixed and prefixed verbs are combined. In the following text from Italy aimed at Quintus Letinius Lupus, the use of three synonymic cursing verbs with the same intensifying²⁹ prefix *de-* (*desacrifico* as a hapax) instead of a single *defigo* clearly indicates the author's effort to intensify the utterance. Moreover, the author proceeds in the same way when expressing the plea's core – using two synonyms with the same prefix: *inter-*.

- (8) Arezzo, Italy, dfx. 1.1.1/1; 2nd cent. CE: *Quintum Letinium Lupum, qui et vocatur Caucadio, qui est filius Sallustiae Veneries sive Venerioses, hunc ego apud vestrum numen demando, devoveo, desacrifico, uti vos Aquae ferventes, sive vos Nymphae, sive quo alio nomine vultis appellari, uti vos eum interimatis, interficiatis intra annum istum.*

I commend, devote, and sacrifice to your power Quintus Letinius Lupus, who is also called Caucasian, who is the son of Sallustia Veneria or Veneriosa, may you, boiling Waters, or you, the Nymphs, or whatever other name you want to be called, destroy him, and kill him in this year.

Legal tablets from Carthage show another intensification strategy. They try to “bind the tongue” of adversaries, meaning silencing them so they cannot speak against the author in court. In text (9), a single verb with different prefixes serves to intensify the act of binding.

- (9) Carthage, Africa, dfx. 11.1.1/3; 2nd/3rd cent. CE: *...lingua ne contra me nec dicere nec facere valeant nisi quod ego voluero; alligo, deligo linguas...*
[I bind] the tongue so that they cannot speak nor act against me, unless [they speak] what I wish them to; I bind and tie up the tongues...³⁰

As for directive utterances with the use of imperatives or subjunctives in the 2nd person, we may observe a tendency to reinforce the curse formulation aiming at an action's

²⁹ BRACHET, J.-P.: *Recherches sur les préverbes de et ex du latin*. Bruxelles 2000, 215ff, who supposes in these cases the spatial meaning upside down for the *de-*prefixed verbs. See also UNCETA GÓMEZ, L.: Esquemas descendentes: a propósito de algunas aplicaciones del preverbo *de-* en el léxico mágico-religioso latino. *Revista de Estudios Latinos* 6 (2006) 55–72, who claims that the prefix *de-* in the Latin technical vocabulary of religion and magic might have had an additional negative connotation associated with the underworld, which my analysis seems to confirm.

³⁰ For the whole text and discussion, see URBANOVÁ (n. 16)–(9): No. 113, see also *TheDeMa* (n. 15) No. 784.

completion by repeating two or three prefixed synonyms or combining non-prefixed and prefixed verbs. The prefixes express the action's terminativity, as we can see in curse (10) against Praesenticius from Rome, where the author intensifies the order by repeating verbs in a sort of gradation. The aim is to destroy an adversary, which is the completion of an action.

- (10) Rome dff. 1.4.4/4; 2nd/3rd cent.–second half of the 4th cent.: ...tere, contere, confringe et ...trade morti, filium Asseles, Praesenticium ... perturba eum ...praefocato eum ...vince, peroccide... Praesenticium...
...take hold of/crush, destroy, bring to naught and ...commit to death Praesenticius, son of Assela..., stir him up, suffocate him, overcome him, kill him thoroughly...³¹

Another example of the intensification procedure can be seen in a curse against Maurus (11) where we encounter four prefixed verbs in the imperative, by which the author orders daemons to press Maurus down, pierce him, transfix and consume him – meaning destroy him definitively and totally – the verbal action is intensified to the highest possible level through repetition and the use of prefixed verbs – various synonyms and variations on prefixes are used: *depremite*, *defigite*, *perfigite*, *consumite* (see the final lines). That text also includes invoking formulae with the subjunctive mood using about 20 verbs. In this case, too, the author requests and expresses the terminativity and fulfilment of the verbal action. The same means as in the previous cases are used to reinforce the expressions aiming at the total completion of the action and an absolute preemptive effect. Intensification is achieved through various prefixes with a single verbal base (*obligo*, *perobligo*) and a clear directional meaning for prefixes in verbs of motion implying terminativity and a change in state (*adducas*, *perducas*, *auferas*). Furthermore, prefixed and non-prefixed verbs alternate and usually conclude with a prefixed one, emphasizing the action's completion and keeping the adverbial meaning (*transis*, *pertranseas*). As for the use of a single verbal base with various prefixes, *absumo* “to consume, devour” works rather as a synonym of *consumo* “to destroy, wear away, to kill” and thus provides intensification in the sense of terminativity. It seems that only *desumo* may have a slightly different meaning (“to choose, pick out”) but in this context the tricolon may also be a consequence of the magical repetition of three prefixes in a preemptive way.

- (11) = (4) Βαχαρχ, qui es in Egypto magnus daemon, obliges, perobliges Maurussum venatorem, quem peperit Felicitas. Ιεχι, auferas somnum, non dormiat Marussus, quem peperit Felicitas. Παρπαζιν, deus omnipotens, adducas ad domus infernas Maurussum, quem peperit Felicitas. Νοκτουκιτ, qui possides tractus Italiae et Campaniae, qui tractus es per Acherusium lacum, perducas ad domos Tartareas Maurussum, quem peperit Felicitas intra dies septem. Βυτοβαρχ,

³¹ For the whole text and discussion, see URBANOVA (n. 16) – (10): No. 18; , see also *TheDeMa* (n. 15) No. 529 .

*daemon qui possides Hispaniam et Africam, qui solus per mare transis, pertrans-eas animam et spiritum Maurussi, quem peperit Felicitas. Pertranseas omne remedium et omne phylacterium et omne tutamentum et omne oleum libutorium et perducatis, obligetis, perobligetis, obligetis, absumatis, desumatis, consuma-tis cor, membra, viscera, interania Maurussi venatoris, quem peperit Felicitas [...] exiat Maurussus quem peperit Felicitas desub ampitiatri corona facies ad terram [...], cito depremite, defigite, perfigite, consumite Maurussum quem pe-perit Felicitas.*³²

Bachachuch, [you] who are the great Egyptian daemon, bind and tie up Maurus-sus the hunter, whom Felicitas bore. Iechri, deprive him of sleep, may Maurus-sus, the hunter, whom Felicitas bore, not sleep. Parpaxin, the almighty god, bring Maurussus, whom Felicitas bore, to the infernal dwellings. Noktoukit, [you] who hold the territories of Italy and Campania, you who were dragged through the swamps of Acheron, lead Maurussus, whom Felicitas bore, to the infernal regions within seven days. Bytybachk, [you,] the daemon who holds the territories of Hispania and Africa, the only [daemon] who pervades across the sea, pervade the soul and spirit of Maurussus, whom Felicitas bore. Pervade through any defence, through all amulets and protective means and all protect-ing oils ... and lead [him to the Underworld]), bind [him], bind [him] fast ... ruin, destroy, consume the heart, limbs, guts, intestines of Maurussus [the hunter], whom Felicitas bore... may Maurussus, whom Felicitas bore, die with his face to the ground in the amphitheatre ... quickly press down, pierce, transfix, con-sume ... Maurussus, whom Felicitas bore.

In addition, the use of prefixed verbs in hedged directive utterances (wish formulae) is almost identical. In a curse against Plotius, whom Proserpina is supposed to afflict with fever, the author expresses the curse action's completion with more means than just intensification by interchanging prefixed and non-prefixed verbs, doing so by ex-pressing the point in time when the action is expected to be completed, see the tem-poral clause with *dum*.

- (12) Rome dfx.1.4.4/8; mid 1st cent. BCE: ...*Tradas illunc febrī quartanae, tertia-nae, cottidianae, quas cum illo luctent, deluctent, illunc evincant, vincant, usque dum animam eius eripiant.*

...Hand him over to the fourth-day, the third-day, the daily fevers, let them wrestle and tussle with him, let them conquer and overwhelm him to the point that they snatch away his soul.³³

In a curse against Caecilia Prima (13) which appeals to the entire infernal procession, the victim is supposed to die a terrible death inflicted by all invoked infernal powers

³² For the whole text and discussion, see URBANOVÁ (n. 16) : No. 132.

³³ For the whole text and discussion, see URBANOVÁ (n. 16) – (12): No. 20, and see *TheDeMa* (n. 15) No. 488.

according to their particular competences. The text contains more than twice as many prefixed verbs as non-prefixed ones (43:18). The curse demands each infernal power one by one hurt Caecilia in some way and then pass her on to the next infernal power to do the same until the victim is utterly destroyed. The writer mostly uses invoking formulae with subjunctive or hedged directives with two or three prefixed verbs aiming at total terminativity of the action. Sometimes the intensification of the directive illocutionary act is even achieved both through prefixed verbs and by marking the exact point in time with temporal clauses to express the action's completion.

- (13) Rome, TheDeMa No. 517; 1st cent. CE³⁴: [...] *rogat vos, numina deum inferum, qui superscripti estis. Eam Caeciliam Primam, sive quo alio nomine est, uti eam, Dite Pater, deprimas malisque doloribus eam adpetas, aput te abducas. Proserpina Dia, tu facias illam Caeciliam Primam [...] uti eam deprimas, adimas illae sanguinem de venis [...] corpus, calorem [...] eripias. Canes Orcini ... vos illius Caeciliae Primae exeditis iocinera pulmones, cor... medullas, eius diripiatis, dilaceretis, lumina eius [...] adripiatis. Vosque Ustores inferi, eius Caeciliae Primae peruratis lumina, stomachum [...] cetera membra omnia illius Caeciliae Primae, peruratis, aduratis, vos, neque vivere nec valere possit eamque Caeciliam Primam ad vos adducatis, tradatis [...] Ossufragis inferis [...] illae Caeciliae Primae ossum frangant, medullas exedint, iocinera pulmones dirimant. Vosque Ossufragae inferae tradatis illam [...] Aurorae, Orchi sorori. Aurora, [...] tu, illae Caeciliae Primae eripias somnum, [...] obicias illae amentiam, dolores, [...] usque donec Caecilia Prima pereat, intereat, extabescat [...], deinde tu, Aurora [...] tradas illam [...] Larvabus, [...] obiciatis metum [...] uti illa [...] ab inimicis suis prematur, opprimatur, desumatur ... Aves Harpyiae, vos, illius Caeciliae Primae exeditis cor, manus [...] obiciatis illae Caeciliae Primae [...] febres cotidianas, tertianas, quartanas, usque dum animam eius Caeciliae Primae eripiatis [...] Virga, deum inferum [...], tu efficias illae Caeciliae Primae, quem admodum tu domas, caedis uris peruris ad Inferos eos, qui ad superos omnia mala sceleraque fecerunt, sic tu Caeciliam Primam illam, Virga, uras, peruras, caedas, domes donec, tamquam ad oram egentes omnibus fortunis, mortuam ad te abducas.*

CONCLUSIONS

In defixiones, the preference for and excessive repetition of prefixed verbs can be regarded as a strategy to express illocutionary intensification in terms of strengthening illocutionary force,³⁵ in curses also in connection with the magical ritual and its own

³⁴ For the whole text and translation, see BEVILACQUA, G.: Aurora, Orchi soror. *Parola del passato* 364 (2009) 47–70, and *TheDeMa* (n. 15) No. 517.

³⁵ See the excellent study on repetition as a strategy of intensification of Latin based on the Plautine comedies, FEDRIANI (no. 1) esp. 157–159.

rules. The manner of intensification differs based on the illocutionary act, which depends on the curse formula used.

Regarding the use of prefixed verbs in direct curse formulae, we usually find desemanticized prefixed verbs (that is, where the prefix does not change but only intensifies the original word's meaning): *exsecro*, *demando*, *describo*, *alligo*, *deligo*. In addition, prefixed verbs may emphasize terminativity, especially when prefixed and non-prefixed verbs are combined: *ligo*, *alligo*. This is very common in declarative and directive illocutionary acts with performative utterances in the 1st pers. sg. present. Thus, the effort to intensify an expression can sometimes be reflected in both repeating the same verbs with various prefixes (*alligo*, *colligo*, *deligo*) and, much more rarely, using various synonymic verbs with the same prefix: *devoveo*, *demando*, *desacrifico*.

Another tendency we may observe is the intensification of illocutionary force in formulae using directives in the 2nd pers. imperative or subjunctive or in hedged directives in the 3rd pers. expressing an exhortative meaning and highlighting the action's completion, i.e. terminativity, via repeating prefixed verbs. In these formulae, we find either prefixed and non-prefixed verbs expressing an action's completion, such as *transis* – *pertranseas*; *perducatis*, *perobligetis*; the repetition of a single prefix in practical synonyms such as *diripiatis*, *dilaceratis*; or various prefixes attached to a single verb such as *aduratis*, *peruratis*; *absumatis*, *desumatis*, *consumatis*, where the prefix is probably weakened and its function may lie in both reinforcing the terminativity (we find also temporal clauses expressing the completion of the action: (13): *Aurora, eripias somnum, soporem, obicias illae amentiam ...usque donec Caecilia Prima pereat, intereat, extabescat...*) and the author's effort to ensure the curse's efficacy via a preemptive procedure.

The large number of prefixed verbs in defixiones as well as their variations and especially repetition can doubtless largely be assigned to the magical context. Intensification strategy in curse texts concerns both declaratives and particularly directive speech acts using imperatives and subjunctives to strengthen illocutionary force with a special emphasis on the verbal action's terminativity. The repetition of various verbs with similar meanings or a single verbal base with various prefixes, which is rather very rare in literary texts, is very probably due to the magical context of the cursing ritual – the use might be preemptive and the repetition is to guarantee the curse's efficacy or perhaps reflects an emotional effort by the curse's author to emphasize the completion of the desired malevolent action.

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