

Thesaurus linguae Latinae Fellowship Report

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Before coming to the *Thesaurus*, I had consulted it in an amateur way when writing a dissertation on Augustine's *De civitate Dei*. I first remember seeing it quoted in a footnote by an eminent Augustine scholar. This footnote stuck in my mind, but it was only near the end of my doctoral studies that I decided to look more closely for myself. I remember taking down the large volumes off the library shelves. Everything was in Latin! The layout was baffling. I did get some notion that the resource was important, as I had been frustrated by scholars' claims that Augustine used certain words in this way or that, and I often found these claims misleading. The *Thesaurus* impressed me in a vague way, but it also mystified me. I did not really know how to use it very well, and I was racing to finish my dissertation. I cited it a few times, but used other dictionaries more often.

After a year working for the Church of England, I got a post-doc at Harvard in 2018 and was given the task of teaching late-Latin authors. Here, I realized more and more that the *Thesaurus* was going to be a crucial resource. One turning point was when Kathleen Coleman offered to let me sit in on a seminar she organized to explain how the *Thesaurus* worked. I was thoroughly impressed. What an amazing (and crazy!) project! I started to integrate the *Thesaurus* more into my teaching, partially because for late-Latin authors, it is sometimes the only form of commentary that is available. When modern commentaries do exist, they are often written in languages students cannot read. Here, the fact that the *Thesaurus* is written in Latin actually seemed more inclusive -- undergraduates might not be able to read a German or Italian commentary, but in a Latin class, they knew Latin! In using the *Thesaurus* as a teacher, I found

that the students were sometimes mystified, but also stimulated by the opportunity to practice reading articles.

When I arrived in Munich to begin my work as the SCS/NEH fellow in June 2021, I was excited to gain experience in writing articles myself. I also wanted to learn more about the process of excerption, and how late-antique authors were treated by the project in general. To explain: although the methodology of the *Thesaurus* has changed since its inception at the end of the nineteenth century, in principle the raw material comprises works in their entirety up to around A.D. 200, and then, because of the vast amount of material after this point, a sampling is made of works from A.D. 200 until approximately 600. A passage post-A.D. 200 might receive attention because it presents a novel meaning, or a way of using Latin syntax that is different from earlier authors. This makes practical sense, given the amount of late Latin to deal with, but it means that someone like Cicero is read in his entirety, and Augustine is not. True, there are exceptions: the late antique poet Prudentius, among others, is excerpted in his entirety, just like Virgil. Overall, nonetheless, something in me thought: this is not fair; late antiquity deserves just as much attention as earlier, classical material. I wondered about the methodology of sampling the late antique works, and whether sufficient care had been taken over them.

In Munich, in becoming more acquainted with the project, I was impressed in a way I had not expected. Several key moments stand out to me from that time. One was encountering the binder that contained a list for consulting Augustine's complete works. Every single work was listed -- including every one of the hundreds of sermons by Augustine and Pseudo-Augustine -- with the most up-to-date critical edition. This made it clear: O.K., these people are serious about the later authors. Another was when Marijke Ottink, one of my editors, gave me a binder with various documents. It included a handout explaining what the *Vetus Latina* and Vulgate were; it

was excellent. Manfred Flieger, the secretary, also explained to me how in the first volume of the TLL, one could find the list of the scholars who had made the excerpts. I looked it up, and found that these were famous people -- often those who had made critical editions of the works they excerpted. In writing the articles, I came to have a great respect for the process of sampling that previous generations of TLL workers had made. Their selections were logical and valuable.

In my time at the TLL, I wrote articles for *rodere*, *robigo*, *revincire*, *revomere*, and *resultare*. It is interesting what images stick in your mind for each word. For *rodere*, it was the many passages of mice nibbling on things, including metal substances. For *robigo*, it was learning about the menacing mildew-god of the Romans, *Robigo*, whose wrath, according to some, could only be placated by a sacrificed puppy. For *resultare*, it was my head spinning trying to figure out how to make my outline (“Gliederung”). The word started out simple, meaning “to echo”, but as time went on it became more and more complicated.

In writing the articles, in general, I felt much less intimidated than I had expected. The part I thought would be the most difficult -- writing in Latin -- ended up being one of the most fun. Josine Schrickx, my other editor, repeated her motto “learning by doing” in many contexts.

That leads me to two observations about the TLL staff that made an impression on me. One was that they insisted that I never work when I was sick; in this (post?) covid time, I unfortunately got sick repeatedly after arriving in Munich. The second was that, if I asked someone about a Latin passage I was struggling with, no one ever rushed to give an answer. The TLL Mitarbeiter or Redaktoren would always help point me to resources in the library, but their immediate answer was always something like “Oh. Hm ... I would have to look at it more myself.” There was no parading of learning, which would have been so easy for them.

Others have said this I'm sure, but working at the TLL feels like being in a family. There are the older generations who are now gone, epitomized by the Ur-ancestor Wölfflin, staring irenically out of his bust in the hallway outside the library. There are the current editors, as well as the former Mitarbeiter who return to consult the archive. There are other fellows like I was, fresh off a PhD dissertation. Like a family, too, there is a sense of intimacy among the colleagues. This means that in the library, you don't always have to say hello to people. I liked that -- sometimes people did talk, but you could just go in the library and be left alone, too. Like a family, there are also disagreements sometimes about methodology or priorities. Still, there is a common purpose that keeps the team together. I found it a very positive work atmosphere.

There is much more I could say about my year at the TLL, but I would like to come to a conclusion. This was a transformative year that profoundly changed my knowledge of Latin language and literature and helped me form a network of international colleagues and make many friends. Moreover, as everyone knows, Munich is a beautiful city, rivalled only in its attractiveness by the Alps, which on a clear day I could see from my office window. I shall return to Munich and the TLL as often as I can.