

Gout, Taverns, and God's Scale
Thesaurus Linguae Latinae 2004-2005

I arrived in Munich in the beginning of July 2004. Not quite over my jet-lag, and not entirely sure what to expect, I headed over to the Akademie. Two questions loomed large: what will my first word be? and what will my colleagues be like? I was about to spend a year working in a new environment, in a country whose language I knew very imperfectly, engaged with words that would be magically assigned to me. Knowing the time span covered by the Thesaurus, up to the year 600, I knew that I would face many a challenge: my Latin home has always been safely within the “before Apuleius” period; the later Latin, especially Christian Latin did, as expected, turn out to be a major challenge. But so did many other types of technical Latin I was not worrying about that Friday afternoon.

My first word was *podagricus*, and right away I was out of my “comfort zone”. As you would expect, the majority of attestations were from medical texts, most of them quite late, and, with rare exceptions, entirely new to me. Learning about new authors and constructing my first article was not easy. An additional challenge was presented by having to format things “just so”: who knew that there are people in the world who can see if a space is cursive! Luckily for me, the *dispositio* for this word was fairly straightforward, but it provided a perfect opportunity to learn about the kinds of issues that are treated in the *Kopf* of an article, such as alternate spellings.

Yet after all the medical speak *popina* was something of a relief, presenting me with largely classical and, for the most part, very entertaining collection of material. The *dispositio* was again not terribly complicated, but among the highlights was understanding where two puzzling glossary entries originated. This is how my conclusion appears in the article: IVV. 11, 81 meminit, calidae sapiat quid volva *suina* -ae (*inde inepte* GLOSS. V 510, 48 -a: meretrix. 576, 35 -a: nomen meretricis). The claim by the glossaries that *popina* means prostitute, which has made it into the literature, is a result of a misunderstanding: *volva* in the Juvenal passage refers to a fast-food delicacy, not female genitalia.

Having written an adjective and a noun, I was next assigned a verb, *pondero*, and the adjective and adverb derived from it. This word presented real difficulties in terms of producing an accurate *dispositio* and assigning the material to appropriate groups. Given my limited experience with Christian literature, I found it especially difficult to decide whether god's weighting of things was meant *proprie*, *in imagine* or *translate* in each individual case. This article led to some very illuminating discussions about semantics with my editor. In the end, it is, I think, a good example of a Thesaurus article: the chronology and the semantic development

cooperate, and the *dispositio* does read like *pondero*'s life story. My next word was introduced to me as *pomarius*, so I was expecting an adjective. In the end, however, the material I received contained only four examples of the adjective, and produced four distinct articles: the adjective, the two substantives, very frequent neuter, and less frequent masculine, and the lone *pomararius* from Pompeian graffiti. In the course of working on the article, it became clear that there was a certain amount of confusion in the manuscripts between *pomarium* and *pomerium*. When this happens, it is advisable for the same person to write both words, so as to cover the confusion thoroughly. Thus, I wrote *pomerium* as well, which proved to be quite interesting: looking at the material for the two words together made it clear that this was more than a simple formal confusion: given the fact that the area immediately outside of the city walls was often a site of extensive market agriculture, the space thought of as *pomerium/pomeria* was often planted with *pomaria*, orchards. As a result, many of the late writers, as well as some of the glossaries, do not distinguish between the two concepts, and write *pomerium* for both. Given this fact, the manuscript confusion in the text of, e.g., Horace, appears rather mild.

Popularis was possibly the most complex article I worked on. I enjoyed working with the material: after all, a good quarter of the passages came from Cicero, so I was in my element, and it was great to see how he played with many of the word's meanings in the same passages. Of course, that was also one of the things that made it difficult to assign words to their places within the *dispositio*. Arriving at a *dispositio* itself was complicated, especially since it was my first encounter with a word the meanings of which can be divided by more than one important criterion. With *popularis*, the dividing principle could be the syntactical relationship to *populus* (done by, available to, pleasing to, etc.) or the question of what is meant by *populus* in each case (*populus Romanus*, common people, civilians as opposed to soldiers, laymen as opposed to clergy). I had to learn how to accommodate both of these within one article, which was a valuable experience,

Other words followed, each memorable in its own way. *Pleroma*, a tiny word that had me learning about Gnosticism; *pol*, a very exciting chance to explore the Plautine corpus and think about the shades of meaning that exclamation can convey in different situations; *politicus*, which had me thinking about bilingualism and the different degrees of incorporation of a foreign word into a language. Finally, *pugno* will not be passed over: I spent nearly half of my time with it, a good portion of that with Livy. I experienced both the satisfaction of working on a word of interest to all readers of Latin and the frustrations and difficulties of being focused on this one word for many months. As the Thesaurus team begins working on *N*, I stand in awe of those who will write *nemo*, *namque* and *nihil*. Not to speak of *ne* and *non*.

Before I conclude, I need to come back to the second question I was asking myself, about my future colleagues, and express my sincere gratitude to the Thesauristen. With infinite kindness, these wonderful people open up their lives and welcome their transient guests, some little able to communicate with them in the official language of the project (not to mention the country). Patiently they introduce the newcomers to the work they do, the language they speak, and, what is a mystery to most American Classicists, life in a collaborative long-term research project. I have learned a tremendous amount, especially from my very patient editor, Nigel Holmes. But as much as the tragic and disturbing history of the textual tradition of Fronto, I will remember lunches and dinners, trips to the opera, and hiking though the snow towards somewhere with delicious Bavarian food.

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