4. Revelations of Lexicography: The Daily Learning at the Thesaurus

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ENGAGING WITH LATIN WORDS in ways demanded by composing a *TLL* article raises important questions that may not emerge in other contexts, and leads to uncovering often unexpected facts about the behavior of the language. This contribution will illustrate with examples from my time as the APA Thesaurus Fellow the type of discovery and learning that can result from the lexicographer's engagement with the material approached in chronological order, and from the process of organizing a *TLL* article.

I begin with a group of case studies that demonstrate the benefits of working with the complete material. In approaching a word familiar to most of us as *pollen, pollinis*, neuter, I was led to redefining one of a word's "basic stats": gender. Reading through the Latin grammarians, we learn from Priscian that the tradition records two versions of this noun, a feminine *pollis, pollinis*, attested by Charisius, and the neuter *pollen*, which Priscian attributes to Caesar and Probus (Prisc. *GL* 2. 250.17–18). Priscian's testimony can be verified in the case of the grammarians he refers to, and while he represents Probus accurately (Prob. *GL* 4.9.11), he makes a mistake with Charisius. Charisius reports *pollis, pollinis* several times, but the only reference to gender is a mention within a list of masculine, rather than feminine nouns (Char. p. 575 K).[1] Such inaccuracy makes the status of Priscian's report on Caesar's usage—the only surviving reference—appear uncertain.

Looking beyond the grammarians complicates the picture further. The nominative singular is attested only once outside the grammarians and the glossaria, in an inscription scratched on a piece of a metal (apparently a container label).[2] The entire text is *omni pollen*, followed by a numeral indicating the amount of flour. As the editor of the inscription suggests, *omni*

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[1] The nouns listed are masculine in Latin, but feminine in Greek.

[2] *AE* 1992 no. 531.

could either be the adjective *omne* or short for the adverb *omnino*. While this uncertainty makes little difference to the meaning of the inscription, it does render this, our only witness to the nominative neuter *pollen,* less than ideal, especially as variants such as *polles* (Gloss. 2.516.26) and *pollin* (2.551.28) are also transmitted in the glossaria. Usage outside the grammarians yields no securely attested neuter forms, while masculine and feminine, in particular the accusative singular *pollinem* and the nominative/accusative plural *pollines*, are quite common. As a result, what I began as the *pollen* article became the *pollis* article, the masculine/feminine being much better attested. Two nominative forms cited at the head of the article come from grammarians, and all three genders are present—an accurate reflection of the limited state of our knowledge. In comparison, the entry in Lewis and Short privileges the neuter, and the *OLD* opts for *pollen* as the lemma and presents an account that is not supported by the full data discussed above.[3]

Looking at the full material can also help understand an odd usage. My example is the mysterious claim of the glossaries that *popina* means *meretrix* or is the name of a specific prostitute, which, if true, could give rise to speculation about the significance of prostitution in taverns translating itself into slang.[4] The mystery is solved if one examines Juv. 11.81, *qui meminit calidae sapiat quid volva popinae.* In contrast to the admirable simplicity of the ancestors, in the debased present even a slave, punished and probably stuck in the country, is thinking back to the culinary delights of the city. What we find in the glossaries is then a result of a misunderstanding: *volva* in the Juvenal passage refers to a fast-food delicacy, a sow's uterus, not female genitalia, and *popina* has its usual meaning.

Similarly, chronological exploration of thematically continuous *corpora* can reveal changes in the language and differences in stylistic registers from author to author and from period to period. Take a comparison between the veterinary works of Chiron and Vegetius. A large part of Vegetius's reworking of Chiron's text is the formalization and elevation of the language. In the preface, in a manner reminiscent of the Greek historical tradition, he describes the character and quality of his sources: *Chiron vero et Apsyrtus diligentius cuncta rimati eloquentiae inopia ac sermonis ipsius vilitate sordescunt; praeterea indigesta et confusa sunt omnia* (*Mulom.* praef. 3–4). Thus, we can

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[3] *TLL:* **pollīs,** -inis *m. vel f. et* **pollen,** -inis *n.,* followed by testimonia and summary of usage; Lewis and Short: **pollen**, ĭnis, n., and **pollis**, ĭnis, m. and f.; *OLD:* **pollen** ~inis. … GENDER: perh. originally masc. (or fem.), later by analogy neuter; the nom. ~*is* cited by grammarians may have been coined to account for masc. or fem. acc. ~*inem.*

[4] Gloss. 5.510.48 –a: meretrix. 576.35 –a: nomen meretricis.

use the changes Vegetius made to Chiron's text to glean what was considered "proper Latin" at the end of the fourth century. One example is the verb *potiono,* used very frequently by Chiron. While some instances survive into the text of Vegetius, he usually replaces it with a paraphrase employing the noun *potio,* most frequently in the phrase *potionem dare,* a good indication that the verb belongs in the lower register of the language.

Before different passages can be used to illuminate each other, conflicting textual readings often need to be weighed. This becomes particularly important when the passage in question may contain the earliest attestation of the word overall or within one of the subgroups of meaning. A decision is likely to have considerable impact on the article's final appearance, as a change in chronology could well affect the way it is organized. For instance, the first putative attestation of *porcinus* is in a quotation that Festus attributes to Naevius (*Com.* 121). The word he is interested in is actually not *porcinus,* but rather the very unusual *petimen* (Fest. p. 209 M):

> petimina in umeris iumentorum ulcera, et vulgus appellat, et Lucilius meminit; . . . eo nomine autem et inter duos armos suis quod est aliter pectus appellari solitum, testatur Naevius in descriptione suillae, cum ait "petimine porcino qui meruerat."

> pectus: nectos *W*   porcino *Dalecamp*: piscino codd.: Piceno *Ribbeck*   suillae: sullae *X*: syllae *W*

> The name *petimina* for sores on the shoulders of beasts of burden is both used by the common people and mentioned by Lucilius; . . . in addition, in a description of a sow Naevius attests its use for the space between the front legs of a pig, which is otherwise usually called *pectus,* when he says: "he who did his service with a pork breast."

The text is a concatenation of conjectures—all of them necessary, as the received text is clearly corrupt, yet making each other suspect by their very interdependence. *Pectus* is the most secure and convincing of the three, both in sense, as the space *inter armos,* and as a palaeographically plausible corruption. The other two, *porcino* and *suillae,* support one another and are supported by the genitive *suis. Piscino,* though printed by Lindsay in his edition of Festus, would itself be a *hapax,* and therefore hardly secure in a passage that is already manifestly corrupt. A competing conjecture, *Piceno,* was made by Ribbeck in his *apparatus,* adducing a parallel in Martial, *filia Picenae venio Lucanica porcae* (13.35.1). While an echo of early comedy in Martial is quite likely, the conjecture is not convincing: accepting *Piceno* in Festus's quotation of Naevius, and taking into account his insistence that the animal in question is a pig, we would have to conclude that *petimen* in this meaning is specific to pigs—a definition too restrictive to be defended simply by the fact that

famous pork sausage came from Picenum. This leaves *porcino* as the most likely option. In this case, luckily, quoting the passage first within the body of the article does not run the risk of distorting the chronology, as the same meaning of *porcinus* is attested twice in Naevius's contemporary, Plautus. The uncertainty is then sufficiently indicated by identifying the reading *porcinus* as a conjecture.

Some textual problems concern variation in word order, and here, too, working with the entire material can help resolve them. For example, with a word like *pol,* which often functions as an enclitic or proclitic, it is essential to know which positions the word can occupy in a sentence. In the case of a few passages in Plautus, clusters that consist of *pol,* a possessive adjective, and *quidem* show variation in word order in the manuscript tradition. Yet the evidence of the examples in Plautus in which no variation is recorded points to the order *pol* + possessive + *quidem,* and the first secure example of *pol* + *quidem* is found in Apuleius (*Met.* 1.8.1), leading to the conclusion that, in the ambiguous cases, the order overwhelmingly attested elsewhere in Plautus should be read.

Beside these purely philological skills and decisions, virtually every passage calls for an interpretive judgment, and that is what lies at the heart of the task of establishing a *dispositio*. Stubborn examples that defy easy categorization may reveal a flaw in the adopted principle of division, and thus refine one's understanding of the meaning of the word, or they may point to an author's conscious engagement with its semantic variety. This is the case with Cicero's use of *popularis*, which belongs to the category of words that present the contributor with difficult choices. The word *popularis* occurs in Cicero very often with reference to specific individuals, none more so than P. Clodius Pulcher, the hated opponent who procured Cicero's exile and then destroyed his house. The following sentence comes from *De domo sua*, the speech that Cicero delivered in front of the *pontifices* after his return from exile in an attempt to get his house back by deconsecrating the temple to Liberty that Clodius had in the meantime erected on the site. Cicero is addressing Clodius directly (*Dom.* 49): *cum tu florens ac potens per medium <forum tamquam> scortum populare volitares.* It is easy to assume that *popularis* here means primarily what it usually means when Clodius is referred to, describing his method of ingratiating himself with the people and stirring them up against the traditional aristocracy. But, if one looks at the phrase *scortum populare* in isolation, the more natural way to interpret it is in line with expressions like *cena popularis* in Plautus (*Trin.* 470), and *munus populare* (*Off.* 2.56) or *largitio popularis* (*Off.* 2.58) in Cicero: things that are made available to the *populus*.

Yet another meaning is conceivable. The political, often derogatory meaning of *popularis* that Cicero so often applies to Clodius, frequently occurring as a substantive, is so common that it spawns its own meaning, "having to do with the *populares*." Along these lines, *scortum populare* might mean "a harlot of the *populares*." As I have said, Cicero probably means all of the above. Yet the passage needs to be placed somewhere within the article, and a primary meaning must therefore be decided upon. I was inclined towards "available to the people," *populo promptus,* and that inclination received support much later in the material, in pseudo-Origen: "*ut . . . quae quondam fuerat popularis fieret unius sancti spiritus coniunx pudica*" (*Tract.* 12.10). Here, the same idea of sexual availability is expressed through the adjective *popularis*, describing the spiritual transformation of the church through the figure of Raab the prostitute in the book of Joshua. Thus, the passage from Cicero is assigned to the group entitled *populo promptus.* The other meaning, which is also present, is included by indicating that semantic play is taking place, and pointing the reader to the relevant section. The reference to the *popularis domus* of Clodia, sister of Clodius Pulcher, in *Pro Caelio* 52 can then be seen as containing the same semantic cluster, the notion of prostitution being never far from Cicero's mind whenever he speaks of her. As this example shows, there is often a real tension between the interpreter's productive engagement with a semantically multivalent usage and the lexicographer's practical need to pin down its primary meaning.

Working at the Thesaurus teaches a scholar that very little can be taken for granted. Even very common words give the newly-sensitized reader pause: which shades of meaning are most prominent in a particular passage? what previous usage is influencing the word choice? is the author working with a particular interpretation of the word's etymology? Reading in a way that is attuned to issues generated by lexicographers' concerns often leads to nuanced interpretations that provide a starting point for exploring larger literary and cultural questions.