

This paper examines the three most important Latin dictionaries of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries: Niccolò Perotti's *Cornu copiae* (1489), Ambrogio Calepino's *Dictionarium* (1502), and the third edition of Robert Estienne's *Latinae linguae thesaurus* (1543). I intend to show that in the half century or so that separates the publication of the first from that of the last at least three significant developments take place in the theory and practice of Latin lexicography:

1. shift from linguistic miscellany to systematic lexicon (with striking awareness of historical development, etymological affinity, and generic difference);
2. greater precision in attribution of ancient usage and in knowledge of semantic nuance;
3. simultaneous engagement with classical past, Christian heritage, and contemporary learning.

In the main, I shall evaluate the arguments of John Considine in *Dictionaries in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge 2008, Ch. 2 "Philology and lexicography," 19-55) on the basis of the comparative analysis of individual words that appear in all three dictionaries.

To start, Niccolò Perotti's highly original *Cornu copiae*, an encyclopedic commentary on Martial with much lexicographical material (critical ed.: J.-L. Charlet et al., 8 vols., Sassoferato 1989-98), moves the art of dictionary-writing out of the shadow of Isidore and past the reliance on medieval glossaries to meet the needs of an increasingly sophisticated class of Latin readers and writers (and to complement the author's own best-selling grammar, *Rudimenta Grammatices* (1473)). Even as it embraces the Renaissance's newfound philological principals aimed at recovering the language and style of ancient authors, Perotti's work still belongs to the medieval world of pre-printed texts, at home with etymological *lusoria* and unconcerned with comprehensiveness (cf. M. Furno, *Le Cornu Copiae de Niccolò Perotti*, Geneva 1995). In 1502, Ambrogio Calepino published the first edition of his synthesis of the lexicographical information in the *Cornu copiae* and what he was able to glean from the now more widely disseminated printed editions of classical authors. Ultimately, Calepino's work came to be known as the *Dictionarium*, though its distribution was so widespread—printed in 211 editions between 1502 and 1779 and in as many as eleven different languages (e.g. *Ambrosii Calepini dictionarium undecim linguarum*, Basle 1590)—that the very word "calepino/calepine" became synonymous with "dictionary" in the vernacular languages of Europe. Although called by one historian of Latin lexicography "the prototype of the modern Latin dictionary" (D. Krömer, "Lateinische Lexikographie," in F. Hausmann et al., *Wörterbücher*, Berlin—New York 1989: 1715), Calepino's dictionary was nevertheless deficient in the accuracy of its citation—sometimes an author alone with no work was cited—and the subtlety of its definitions. By the third edition of his *Linguae latinae thesaurus*—the title is important: *Treasury of the Latin Language*—in 1543, Robert Estienne had vastly improved upon Calepino's text and established himself as the Renaissance's greatest Latin lexicographer. In keeping with the Renaissance ideal of *copia*, his work offers a comprehensive and accurate account of ancient authors, often accompanied by the commentary of his predecessors, Perotti and Calepino, and of contemporary scholars such as Erasmus and Budé. The result is a more systematic and precise lexicon, organized according to etymologically linked families of words and aware of semantic nuance from author to author and from genre to genre. For these reasons, Estienne's *Linguae latinae thesaurus* was not only crucial to the subsequent development of the art of dictionary writing (in Latin), but a veritable "treasure" of its own age.