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SOME LATIN FUNERARY FORMULAE WITH *OBITVS* AS A DIRECT OBJECT: ORIGIN, MEANING AND USE*

This paper is about several little-known Latin funerary formulae of some interest. It is also intended as an addition to the growing literature on what are now called in English 'support verbs', with special focus on *facio*.

INTRODUCTION

A funerary formula, *obitum fecit*, is cited by *TLL* under two different sub-entries of *obitus*, II.A.1 'i.q. mors, interitus, occasus' (= 'death') and II.A.3 'i.q. metonymice de sepulcro sim.' (= 'tomb'), illustrated by examples from two epitaphs each. The expression does not seem to be attested outside inscriptions. It is a curiosity that the same phrase could be used in funerary contexts with two different meanings, and it seems worthwhile to explain how the ambiguity arose.

Under *obitus* = 'death', *TLL* includes also an epigraphic funerary phrase with *obitus* as the object of another verb, *reddo*, *obitum (naturae) reddidit*. There are however no examples cited for *obitus* = 'tomb' outside the two epitaphs with *obitum fecit* in II.A.3. My search in the Clauss–Slaby Databank of Latin inscriptions (Epigraphik-Datenbank Clauss–Slaby)[1] revealed a further inscription with *obitus* = 'tomb' in the phrase *obitum fecit* (published in *Bulletin archéologique du Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques* [*BCTH*] 1954, p. 74); and I also came across an inscription with the phrase *obitum soluit* (*AE* 1992, 1928), which, as I will argue below (section 2), seems to be a precise equivalent to *obitum (naturae) reddidit* in its semantic development and use. I therefore decided to investigate further both the formula *obitum fecit* in its two uses, and its two synonymous phrases in the meaning 'died', *obitum (naturae) reddidit* and *obitum soluit*.

* I would like to thank Nigel Vincent for providing some important references to secondary literature, Harm Pinkster for allowing me access to his book on Latin syntax (which was still forthcoming at the time of writing this article), David Langslow for help with medical texts, Anna Chahoud for helping me obtain items of bibliography, John Briscoe for guiding me around The University of Manchester Library, and especially J.N. Adams for invaluable comments and ideas on various points in the article. I am also grateful to the editors of *CQ* and the anonymous referee for the journal for their helpful suggestions on improving the text.

[1] www.manfredclauss.de.

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1. *OBITVM FECIT*

1.1 Obitum fecit = *'died'*

The two inscriptions with the expression *obitum fecit* quoted by *TLL* for *obitus* = 'death' read:

ILCV 2907 (Rome): bene merenti Elio Olimpio quiescet in pace **obitum fecit** | die III Kal(en)d(as) Iulias … itemque bene merenti fili(a)e Eli(a)e Malloni(a)e quiescet | in pace **obitum fecit** die VIIII Kal(en)d(a)s Decembres …

ILCV 2907a (Rome): Lea **obitum fecit** III Kal(endas) Nouem(bres).

In the indices (vol. III) to *Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae Veteres* s.v. *obitus*, Diehl includes *obitum fecit* in these two epitaphs as the equivalent of *obiit*. And indeed, the date (of death) that follows immediately in each inscription establishes unequivocally that the phrase means 'died'. But how does *obitum facio* come to mean 'die'?

1.1.1 Obitum fecit = *'died' as a 'support-verb' phrase*

The use of *facio* in *obitum fecit* = 'died' as required by the context can be explained with the meaning 'to do, perform (the action contained or implied in the object)' given by *OLD* for *facio* with verbal nouns and sim. (*OLD* s.v. 23): *obitus* is such a verbal noun par excellence, a derivative of *obeo* 'to meet (one's death), die',[2] meaning 'the act of dying' (lit. 'the act of meeting [one's death]') (see *OLD* s.v. 2); hence *obitum fecit* 'performed the act of dying' (i.e. 'died', = *obiit*).

Facio used in this way can be described as 'support verb' (French 'verbe [du] support', Spanish 'verbo soporte', German 'Funktionsverb'), a term now commonly applied to verbs in noun–verb combinations where the idea normally expressed by a related verb is instead expressed by the noun. This is not the place to launch into a detailed discussion of support verbs.[3] However, in order to confirm the suggestion that *obitum fecit* = 'died' is a support-verb phrase, we need to look into possible criteria for distinguishing 'support' uses of *facio* from other uses of *facio* + direct object.

One criterion for identifying phrases with support verbs commonly invoked in studies on the subject is the replaceability of the phrase with a simple verb, as for example in Plaut. *Cist.* 73–4 *confidam fore* | *si medicus ueniat qui huic morbo facere medicinam potest*, where *facere medicinam* is the equivalent of *mederi*; cf. W. de Melo's (Loeb)

[2] *Obeo* 'to die' (*OLD* s.v. 8) comes from *obeo mortem/diem* 'to meet one's death/final day': see *OLD* s.v. *obeo* 7, *TLL* X.2.45.81–46.14.

[3] On support verbs in Latin see e.g. H. Rosén, *Studies in the Syntax of the Verbal Noun in Early Latin* (Munich, 1981), 132–44, with a list of examples on pp. 131–5 (for the same phenomenon described here as 'accusative-passive periphrasis' in which 'the verbal noun [is] in the accusative as object of verbs such as *facere*, *dare*, occasionally *capere*, *ferre*', with special reference to Early Latin); P. Flobert, 'Les verbes supports en latin', in A. Bammesberger and F. Heberlein (edd.), *Akten des VIII. internationalen Kolloquiums zur lateinischen Linguistik* (Heidelberg, 1995), 193–9; R. Hoffmann, 'Funktionsverbgefüge im Lateinischen', in Bammesberger and Heberlein (this note), 200–21; H. Pinkster, *The Oxford Latin Syntax*, vol. I: *The Simple Clause* (Oxford, 2015), 74–7, with further bibliography. For periphrastic phrases of this type with *facio* in particular see S. López Moreda, *Los grupos lexemáticos de 'facio' y 'ago' en el latín arcaico y clásico: studio structural* (Salamanca, 1987), 64–8 ('FACIO II').

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translation 'I trust it will [get better], if the doctor comes who can cure this illness.'[4] A revealing contrast is that between the following two instances of *facio*, both in exactly the same phrase with *odium* as object—one of which, I would suggest, is a case of a support verb and the other is not:

(i) Quint. *Inst.* 1.3.11 modus tamen sit remmissionibus, **ne** aut **odium** studiorum **faciant** negatae aut otii consuetudinem nimiae.

(ii) *Mul. Chir.* 121 (p. 39.12 Oder) spiritum crebrius agit et feni **odium faciet**, qui hoc morbo tenetur.

In (i), the phrase means 'to cause hatred (of studies)'; cf. D. Russell's (Loeb) translation: 'But there must be moderation in holidays: if we refuse them, the boys will hate their work; if there are too many, they will get used to being idle' (lit. 'But there must be moderation in holidays **lest they cause** either **hatred** of studies if refused, or a habit of idleness if excessive'). *Odium facere* is a standard way of expressing the idea here, and is not replaceable by a simple verb. In (ii), on the other hand, the same expression is a periphrasis of, and replaceable with, *odisse* 'to have aversion to': '[the animal] affected by this illness draws breath frequently and **will have aversion to** hay'.[5] As E. Löfstedt points out, Vegetius, drawing on the *Mulomedicina Chironis*, expresses the idea of *feni odium faciet* with a synonym of *odisse*, *fastidire* + direct object (*Mul.* 1.30 *spiritum crebrius agitat* ***faenumque fastidit***).[6] *Odium facere* in (ii) behaves as a support-verb construction, while in (i) it does not.

A similar contrast of meaning between two cases of *facio* with the same object is found in the following passages:

(iii) Cic. *Brut.* 326 itaque Hortensius utroque genere florens **clamores faciebat** adulescens.

Thus Hortensius, skilled in both manners, **won great applause** as a young man.[7]

(iv) Plaut. *Bacch.* 873–4
uis tibi ducentos nummos iam promittier,
ne clamorem hic **facies** neu conuicium?

Do you want to be promised two hundred Philippics now
on the condition that you **won't shout** around or pick an argument?[8]

In (iii), *clamores facere* means 'to cause shouts (of approval)' (*OLD* s.v. *clamor* 1c), i.e. 'to raise, win applause'. In this expression *facio*, or its synonym in the meaning 'to cause to occur, bring about' (*OLD* s.v. 2a), *efficio*, is what one would normally expect: cf. for example Cic. *De or.* 1.152 *haec sunt, quae* ***clamores*** *et admirationes in bonis oratoribus* ***efficiunt*** ('These are the things which in good orators **produce applause** and admiration', G.P. Goold, Loeb); *QFr.* 3.1.7 ***clamores efficiam*** *si eum mecum habuero otiosus* ('I **shall do wonders** if I have him by me on vacation', D.R.

[4] For *medeor* used in the same way with the dative of *morbus* cf. Cic. *De or.* 3.132: *an tu existimas … fuisse tum alios medicos, qui* ***morbis****, alios qui uulneribus, alios qui oculis* ***mederentur****?*; see further *TLL* VIII.520.78–80.

[5] For *odi* = 'to have an aversion to' see *OLD* s.v. Cf. also E. Fraenkel, *Horace* (Oxford, 1957), 263, on the 'reduced force' of *odisse* = *aspernari* or *spernere*.

[6] E. Löfstedt, *Philologischer Kommentar zur Peregrinatio Aetheriae* (Darmstadt, 1970), 164.

[7] Trans. H.M. Hubbell, Loeb.

[8] Trans. W. de Melo, Loeb.

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Shackleton Bailey, Loeb).[9] In (iv), on the other hand, *clamorem facere* is the equivalent of *clamare*, 'to shout'; cf. de Melo's translation above, and note that the phrase here picks up *quid clamas?* two lines up (872). Thus (iv) exemplifies *facio* as a support verb, while (iii) does not.

Compare likewise a third pair of passages of the same kind:

(v) Cic. *Dom.* 67 quas iste tum caedis, quas lapidationes, quas **fugas fecerit** … uidistis.

You have seen what massacres, what stonings, what stampedes he then **brought about**.[10]

(vi) Sall. *Iug.* 53.3 Numidae tantummodo remorati, dum in elephantis auxilium putant, postquam eos impeditos ramis arborum atque ita disiectos circumueniri uident, **fugam faciunt**.

The Numidians delayed only so long as they thought the elephants would help them; but, when they saw that they had been impeded by the branches of the trees and, scattered as a result, were being surrounded, they **took flight**.[11]

In (v), *fugas facere* means 'to cause, bring about stampedes', a phrase not replaceable by the transitive verb *fugare* 'to cause (someone) to flee'. In (vi), on the other hand, *fugam faciunt* is the equivalent of *fugiunt*; here again *facio* can be described as a support verb.[12]

But replaceability alone is not always a reliable guide to identifying support verbs. As is pointed out in *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language*, in which such verbs in English are discussed under the heading of 'light verbs', 'the use of a light verb and noun tends to yield a significant increase in syntactic versatility over that of the associated verb construction. Most importantly, it generally allows for dependents to be added to the noun, allowing a considerably greater range of elaboration by modifiers and determiners.'[13] Consequently, constructions with support, or light, verbs are not always replaceable by a simple verb in a way that would not alter the sense. Examples from English quoted in *The Cambridge Grammar* include, for example, *She gave him an unusually passionate kiss*, which 'is less awkward than *She kissed him unusually passionately three times*'; and 'a special case of such

[9] See Shackleton Bailey's (*Epistulae ad Quintum fratrem et M. Brutum* [Cambridge, 1980], 206–7 ad loc.) note on the *QFr.* phrase quoted here: '"I shall work wonders" ("bring the house down" T.-P. [= Tyrrell–Purser]); cf. *De orat.* 1.152 *haec sunt quae clamores et admirationes in bonis oratoribus efficiunt*.'

[10] N.H. Watt (Loeb) translates 'You have seen the carnage, the stone-throwing, and the banishments for which he was responsible', but see Robert G. Nisbet, *M. Tulli Ciceronis De domo sua ad pontifices oratio* (Oxford, 1939), 132 on *fugas*: 'not "banishments" but "stampedes" (in the streets of Rome): cf. *Pis.* 28 *lapides, fugae*'. On *fugae* in the *In Pisonem* passage just cited Robin G.M. Nisbet, *M. Tulli Ciceronis In L. Calpurnium Pisonem oratio* (Oxford, 1961), 92 says: 'the rioters scattered the populace'.

[11] Trans. A.J. Woodman, *Sallust: Catiline's War, the Jugurthine War, Histories* (London, 2007).

[12] J.M. Baños Baños, 'Verbos soportes e incorporación sintáctica en latín: el ejemplo de *ludos facere*', *Revista de Estudios Latinos* 12 (2012), 37–57, discussing another case of a *facio*-phrase with a double meaning, *ludos facere* = 'to organize/celebrate games' in Latin of all periods and *ludos facere* = 'to play a joke (on)' in the Plautine expression in which the phrase takes a second (personal) object, *ludos facere aliquem* ('to make a fool of someone', *OLD* s.v. *ludus* 4a), establishes criteria for identifying *ludos facere* = to play a joke (on)' as a support construction. However, since the subject of the article is support verbs and syntactic incorporation in Latin as exemplified by *ludos facere* + object, his categories seem mainly to be specific to support-verb phrases displaying such syntactic incorporation in particular, the replaceability criterion aside.

[13] R. Huddleston and G.K. Pullam (edd.), *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language* (Cambridge, 2002), 290–6, at 291.

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dependents [which] involves quantification', as for example in *She made three very astute comments on his suggestion*, which 'is not the equivalent to *She commented three times very astutely on his suggestions*'.[14]

The scenarios illustrated by the two examples above apply to Latin as well: consider, for example, the following cases:

(vii) Cic. *Att.* 16.8.2 ei **conuicium graue fecerunt.**

(viii) Cic. *Att.* 1.14.5 hic tibi in rostra Cato aduolat, **conuicium** Pisoni consuli **mirificum facit**, si id est conuicium, uox plena grauitatis, plena auctoritatis, plena denique salutis.

Suddenly up springs Cato to the platform and gives Consul Piso a spectacular dressing down, if one can apply such a term to a most impressive, powerful, in fact wholesome speech.[15]

(ix) Columella, *Rust*. 2.10.28 tardius **messim primam** eius **facere** oportebit.

It will be best to make the first cutting rather late.[16]

In (vii), the phrase can be rewritten as *ei grauiter conuiciati sunt* without any detriment to the sense: cf. Shackleton Bailey's translation (his letter 418), '(they) booed him savagely'; for *conuicior* used thus with a dative, cf. for example Quint. *Inst.* 12.10.24 *dum illi conuiciantur*. In (viii), however, *Pisoni consuli mirifice conuiciatur* 'he scolds Piso in a remarkable manner' would not be the equivalent of *conuicium Pisoni consuli mirificum facit* 'he gives Piso a remarkable scolding': the adverb might refer to the way in which the reproach had been made (it could mean, for example, 'in a remarkably skilful manner'), while the adjective places the focus on the magnitude of that reproach (cf. Shackleton Bailey's 'spectacular'); moreover, the use of the nominal construction here allows for the parenthetical *si id est conuicium*. Similarly, in (ix) *tardius primum … metere oportebit* would not express the same idea as *tardius messim primam … facere oportebit*: it could mean 'first it will be necessary to cut (it) rather late'.

A special case in Latin is represented by passive constructions where the corresponding verb is deponent, as for example in:

(x) Cic. *Fam.* 10.16.1 cum ei magnum **conuicium fieret** cuncto a senatu

when the whole Senate gave an angry vent to its displeasure.[17]

Here, *conuicium fieret* serves as the passive of *conuicior*, which is non-existent.[18]

The examples in (vii)–(x) above demonstrate that not all support-verb constructions are subject to (straightforward) replaceability by a simple verb. It therefore seems

[14] *The Cambridge Grammar* (n. 13), 291.
[15] Trans. D.R. Shackleton Bailey, Loeb.
[16] Example quoted by Pinkster (n. 3), 74. Trans. H.B. Ash, Loeb.
[17] Trans. D.R. Shackleton Bailey (his letter 404).
[18] Another factor that could condition the non-replaceability of a support-verb phrase with a simple verb is the syntactic construction governed by the nominal phrase, which might not be possible with the related verb: see O. Spevak, *The Noun Phrase in Classical Latin Prose* (Leiden, 2014), 252–3. Spevak (253) quotes for example *spem habeo in*, where *spem habeo* would not be replaceable with *spero* as the simple verb does not take *in*.

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necessary to establish an additional criterion for identifying such constructions. I propose the following *semantic* criterion for distinguishing support-verb phrases with *facio* of the type discussed here from other cases of *facio* + direct object. As a support-verb phrase by definition indicates an action that is expressed by the noun rather than by the verb, which is thereby used just to 'support' the noun, *facio* must be used in the weakened ('supportive') meaning 'to perform (the action contained or implied in the noun)' (*OLD* s.v. *facio* 23), and not in its standard meaning as a fully fledged verb = 'to make' in the sense of 'to produce, bring forth, create' (for example, *OLD* s.v. 1–3) or 'bring about, cause' (*OLD* s.v. 11).[19] Thus in the case studies (i)–(vi) of homonymous phrases with contrasting meaning discussed earlier in this section we have *odium facere* = 'to perform the act of hating', i.e. 'to hate, shun', as opposed to *odium facere* = 'to cause hatred'; *clamorem facere* = 'to perform the act of shouting', i.e. 'to shout', as opposed to *clamorem facere* = 'to cause, raise applause'; *fugam facere* = 'to perform the act of fleeing', i.e. 'to flee', as opposed to *fugam facere* = 'to cause a flight'. We see this also for example in a phrase mentioned by J.M. Baños Baños, *uerba facere* = 'to perform the act of talking', i.e. 'to speak' (as, for example, in Sal. *Iug.* 33.4), as opposed to *uerba facere* 'to produce/form words' (e.g. Cic. *De or.* 3.154).[20] *Mutatis mutandis*, the same criterion could also be applied to homonymous phrases with some other verbs that can act both as ordinary and as support verbs. One can compare here the English phrase with 'have' quoted in *The Cambridge Grammar* as an example of exactly this type of ambiguity, *I had a bath*, where the light-verb interpretation is *I bathed (in a bath)* (with the noun–verb phrase replaceable by a simple verb), while the ordinary-verb interpretation is *I owned a bath* (with 'have' in its ordinary meaning as a fully fledged verb).[21]

To return to *obitum fecit*. We have already seen that the construction in the inscriptions discussed in this section is replaceable by a simple verb, *obiit*;[22] noun and verb share the same root, as do *medicina* and *medeor* in the Plautine example (pp. 526–7 above). *Obitum fecit* therefore meets the first criterion considered in this section. With its meaning 'performed the act of dying', it also fulfils the second, semantic, criterion. This latter criterion can also be applied to some other verbs that may behave as support verbs. Note for example the use of *habeo* in the parallel phrase *mortem habere* at Propertius 3.15.39–40, *Dirce | ducitur in multis* ***mortem habitura*** *locis* ('Dirce is drawn along to find death in many places').[23] *Habeo* here does not have its ordinary full force of 'to have', i.e. 'to possess', but like *facio* in *obitum fecit* is instead weakened to a mere support of the noun, with the phrase replaceable by a verb of the same root as *mors*, *moritura* = 'to die'.[24]

Just like the phrases *odium facere*, *clamorem facere* and *fugam facere*, *obitum facere* in a different context could potentially mean '**to cause** death', i.e. 'to kill' (= *obitum*

[19] Compare, in a similar vein, *The Cambridge Grammar* (n. 13), noting that 'the light use of … [such] verbs contrasts with their ordinary use, where they have their full semantic content, as in *She gave him an orange; I made a paper-hat; He had a Rolls-Royce; We took all we could find*' (291).

[20] Baños Baños (n. 12), 50.

[21] *The Cambridge Grammar* (n. 13), 291.

[22] Above, p. 526. For *obeo* = 'to die' in funerary inscriptions see e.g. Diehl's indices to *ILCV* (vol. III) s.v.

[23] Trans. G.P. Goold, Loeb.

[24] In his OCT edition of Propertius, S. Heyworth prints *mortem* ***obitura***; this, as explained in the apparatus, is Heinsius's emendation for the MS *mortem habitura* (as accepted in earlier editions).

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facere as a non-support-verb phrase); however, this use, to the best of my knowledge, is not attested in either literary or inscriptional sources.

1.1.2 Obitum fecit *and other* facio*-phrases: register, chronology, use*

The use of periphrastic phrases with *facio* of the type discussed above as support-verb constructions has traditionally been described as belonging to the *Umgangssprache*.[25] Outside texts displaying colloquial features, it is also found in didactic works, for example medical texts, where the passive of *facio*, *fio*, is commonly used thus (as, for example, in *purgatio fiat* for *purgetur*).[26] D.R. Langslow looks at this feature in medical writings from an angle different from that found in discussions of support verbs. He relates it to the phenomenon of 'alteration of a finite verb-form with its nominalization', i.e. 'the alteration (or replacement) of the structure [*subject* (or object) + *finite verb*] (e.g. *nerui resoluuntur*) with [*genitive* + *verbal noun*] (e.g. *neruorum resolutio*)'. The 'nominalization' 'behaves syntactically, of course, as a noun, and appears either *with a semantically uninteresting verb* (*est*, *fit*, *oritur*, *nascitur*) or in a prepositional phrase (*ad neruorum resolutionem*)'.[27] In considering the frequency of 'nominalizations' in medical and other didactic works of different periods and register, Langslow expresses doubts as to the validity of any general statements about the register of this phenomenon: 'Probably, the question is misplaced and it is quite misguided to attempt to characterize nominalization as in and of itself either literary or colloquial',[28] and concludes: 'I am inclined to apply to our medical authors the judgement of Hofmann and Szantyr (1965: 742) [(n. 25 here)] on the great number of nominalizations in agricultural works, from Cato onwards, and in the anonymous *Ad Herennium* and Vitruvius, and to conclude that their prominence is a feature "more technical than vulgar"':[29] the popularity of 'nominalizations', he points out, fits in with certain pragmatic tendencies of technical writing, namely 'syntactic simplicity', 'listability' and 'concreteness'.[30]

Whether described as 'support-verb' phrases or 'nominalizations' with an auxiliary verb, the use of *facio*-phrases of the type discussed here goes back to Early Latin, where they are particularly common in comedy (especially Plautus), but are found

[25] Thus W. Kroll, 'Die Sprache des Sallust', *Glotta* 15 (1927), 280–305, at 302, on *fugam faciunt* in Sal. *Iug.* 53.3; cf. also J.B. Hofmann and A. Szantyr, *Lateinische Syntax und Stilistik* (Munich, 1965), 755–6.

[26] In medical writings, see e.g. Caelius Aurelianus, *Celeres passiones* 1.77, p. 66.8–9 Bendz *ut sanguinis detractio fiat* (cf. *detrahere sanguinem* at *Tardae passiones* 1.49, 1.141, 5.23, pp. 456.25, 514.6, 868.4 Bendz), 1.111, p. 84.17 Bendz *si ... fuerit facta humoris detractio* (cf. 2.74, p. 176.2–3 Bendz *humore ... detracto*), 3.68, p. 332.21 Bendz *infusi et destillati liquoris in os recursio per nares fiet* (cf. 2.46, p. 158.15 Bendz *accurrere materiam ac deinde ad caput recurrere*; *Tardae passiones* 2.185, p. 656.27–8 Bendz *recurrens ex bracchio ... sanguis*), etc. For the (rarer) active use of *facio* in this way in medical texts cf. e.g. *Celeres passiones* 3.164, p. 388.21 Bendz *facere dirumptionem intestinorum*; Cassius Felix XVIII.5 Fraisse *incisuram facies*, XXXVII.1 Fraisse *siquidem* (*passio*) *ad pulmonem faciat decursum* (the last two examples are quoted by D.R. Langslow, *Medical Latin in the Roman Empire* [Oxford, 2000], 387, as 27.14 and 81.18 [Rose]).

[27] Langslow (n. 26), 383–4 (my emphasis).

[28] Langslow (n. 26), 412.

[29] Langslow (n. 26), 415.

[30] Langslow (n. 26), 415–16. On 'nominalizations' of the type *sanguinis detractio*, *emissio*, *missio* as characteristic of medical writers and contexts, and an explanation for this, see also D.R. Langslow, 'The doctor, his actions, and the terminology', in F. Gaide and F. Biville (edd.), *Manus medica* (Aix-en-Provence, 2003), 25–35, esp. 27–8.

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also in more 'serious' genres such as didactic literature and historiography.[31] During the Classical period, there is clearly a negative attitude to such phrases, as seen at Cic. *Phil.* 3.21–2, where Cicero comments scornfully on the use by Antony of a phrase of this type, *contumeliam facere* 'to make/cause an insult'.[32] The same stance is later taken also by Quintilian, who at *Inst.* 9.3.13 refers back to this comment of Cicero.[33] And yet such phrases have crept into the writings of the critic himself: cf. for example Cic. *Fam.*13.29.1 *ut primum per aetatem* ***iudicium facere*** *potueris quanti quisque tibi faciendus esset* (= *iudicare*); *Sen.* 63 (Lysander) *cuius modo* ***feci mentionem*** (= *quem … commemoraui*); *Nat. D.* 1.63 *Protagoras, cuius a te modo* ***mentio facta est*** (= *qui a te … commemoratus est*); *Div.* 2.65 *de passerculis* ***coniecturam facit*** (= *coniecit*); *Att.* 16.8.2 *ei conuicium graue fecerunt* (see [vii] above, with discussion; for *conuicium facere* = *conuiciare* in Cicero cf. also *Att.* 1.14.5, *Clu.* 74, *Fam.* 10.16.1 [in the passive]).[34] Cicero was clearly being either inconsistent, or otherwise biased, in mocking his arch-enemy Antony for the use of a turn of phrase to which he himself was not immune. No one can be trusted in making judgements about his native language. People often have a negative attitude to a usage without being conscious that they employ it themselves.

Periphrastic phrases, or support-verb constructions, with *facio* are commonplace in Late Latin, as discussed at length by Löfstedt.[35] Some salient examples cited by Löfstedt include *aquam facere* = *aquari* (*Per. Aetheriae* 6.1 *alia die facientes aquam*),[36] *facere mansionem* = *manere* (*Per. Aetheriae* 4.8 *fecimus ibi mansionem*, cf. 3.1 *ibi ergo mansimus*), *moram facere* = *morari* (Vulg. Matt. 24:48 *moram facit dominus meus uenire*) and *odium facere* in *Mul. Chir.* 121, p. 39.12 Oder (discussed above, 1.1.1). In this regard, we can note in passing that *ILCV* 2907 and *ILCV* 2907a, the only inscriptions that I have been able to trace with the phrase *obitum fecit* in the meaning 'died', are both late (Christian), with 2907 dated precisely to 394

[31] Didactic literature: e.g. Cato, *Agr.* 30 *sementim facturus eris*; Varro, *Rust.* 1.34 *uindemiam facere*; historiography: e.g. Claudius Quadrigarius, F 6.15 Cornell (T.J. Cornell [ed.], *The Fragments of the Roman Historians*, vol. II: *Texts and Translations* [Oxford, 2013], 500) *ea congressio … facta est*.

[32] *sententiolas edicti cuiusdam memoriae mandaui, quas uidetur ille peracutas putare: ego autem qui intellegeret quid dicere uellet adhunc neminem inueni. 'nulla contumelia est, quam facit dignus.' … quid est porro facere contumeliam? quis sic loquitur?*

[33] *quae ille quidem fecerit schemata, an idem uocari possint, uidendum, quia recepta sint. nam receptis etiam uulgo auctore contenti sumus: ut nunc eualuit* ***rebus agentibus****, quod Pollio in Labieno damnat, et* ***contumeliam fecit****, quod a Cicerone reprehendi notum est.* The negative attitude persisted into later times: see J.N. Adams on the two editions of the early medieval *Annales Regni Francorum*, in the first of which 'circumlocutions comprising *facio* + object as the equivalent of a more precise verb' are frequently used (alongside some similar expressions with *habeo*), while in the second they are usually eliminated ('The vocabulary of the *Annales Regni Francorum*', *Glotta* 55 [1977], 257–82, at 278–9). The first edition is in poor Latin showing no sign of the Carolingian revival of learning. The second has been 'corrected' along classical lines, and the corrector(s) must have disapproved of *facio*-periphrases.

[34] For other examples from Classical Latin see e.g. Caes. *BGall.* 2.33.2 *deditione facta*, *BCiv.* 2.25.7 *qua pronuntione facta*; Plin. *Ep.* 8.10.1 *neptem tuam abortum fecisse*; Livy 21.50.2 *facere certamen*, 6.9.11 *magna caedes fugientium … est facta*, 26.23.8 *nominatio in lucum eius non est facta*; Vitr. 9.1.11 *cum faciant eae stellae regressus et morationes*, 9.1.15 (*canales*) *in quibus hae cogantur circinationem facere*.

[35] Löfstedt (n. 6), 162–8.

[36] J. Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels: Newly Translated with Supporting Documents and Notes* (London, 1971) translates: 'next day we renewed our supply of water'.

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by the consular date (*cons(ulibus) dd(ominis) nn(ostris) Arcadio III et Honorio II AAuu*[*gg(ustis)*]), and so fit into the picture for Late Latin as presented by Löfstedt.[37]

1.2 Obitum fecit = *'set up a tomb'*

1.2.1 *The meaning and date of the formula*

The two inscriptions with *obitum fecerunt* from Mauretania Caesariensis quoted by *TLL* for *obitus* = 'tomb' read:

CIL VIII 21539 = *ILCV* 3052a: D(is) M(anibus) s(acrum) | Iulius Iidir | uixit anni|s plus minu|s L et reces|sit in pace | su(b) die XIII Kal(endas) | Maiias cu|i fratres **o|bitum fece|runt**.

Dedicated to the *Di Manes*. Iulius Iidir. He lived about 50 years and died in peace on the thirteenth day before the May Kalends [i.e. 19 April]. His brothers **set up a tomb** for him.

CIL VIII 21540 = *ILCV* 3052b: D(is) M(anibus) s(acrum) | Iulia | Crescensa | uixsit annis plu|s minus LXV et re|cessit in pace | die octabu [= *octauo*] Kalen|das Februaria|s cui filios | et nepotes | **obitum fece|runt** in pa|cem.

Dedicated to the *Di Manes*. Iulia Crescentia.[38] She lived about 65 years and died in peace on the eighth day before the February Kalends [i.e. 25 January]. Her sons and grandchildren **set up a tomb** for her, in peace.

The context in both, with *cui* referring to the deceased as the indirect object (or dative of advantage) dependent on the verb *fecerunt* = 'made for him/her [i.e. the deceased]', rules out the meaning 'died' for *obitum fecerunt*. One might be tempted to translate *cui ... obitum fecerunt* as 'caused the death of', i.e. 'killed' (taking *cui* as dative of disadvantage). However, such a meaning is impossible in a (commemorative) funerary inscription.

The meaning of the phrase here is 'set up a tomb' (or rather, in the context, 'arranged for a tomb to be set up'), with *obitus* metonymically used for *sepulcrum*, 'tomb' or 'funerary monument' (*TLL* s.v. II.3).[39] This meaning is established by the epithet *bene merenti* in an inscription with *obitum fecerunt* which is not in *TLL*, also from Mauretania Caesariensis:

[37] A late parallel to our *obitum facere* = 'died' may possibly be seen in the funerary inscriptions on the wall of the *absis maxima* of the basilica built by the bishop Euphrasius in Parentium (modern Poreč in Croatia), *Inscriptiones Italiae* X.2 95–182 (end of sixth century). As noted by the editors (pp. 45–6), all of these inscriptions with just a few exceptions display the same form: at the beginning the day and month (of death) are indicated, followed by *obitum* (written in full in several epitaphs) or *obiit*, and the name of the deceased at the end. *TLL* (s.v. *obitus* II.A.1), quoting nos. 120, 124, 155 'et saepius', suggests that *obitum* in these epitaphs might be explained either as the object of *fecit* (understood) (*obitus* = 'death'), or as a deponent perfect participle of *obeo*, with no distinction of gender; the *TLL* is non-committal about the alternatives. The variation between *obitum* and *obiit* in the inscriptions from the basilica makes it tempting to take *obitum* there as *obitum* [*sc. fecit*], but given that *obitus* = 'dead' is common in inscriptions (see I. Mednikarova, 'The use of Θ in Latin funerary inscriptions', *ZPE* 136 [2001], 267–76, esp. 273–4 with nn. 36–9), the alternative suggestion in *TLL* cannot be ruled out either.

[38] On the form *Crescensa* for *Crescentia* see below, p. 534 with n. 47.

[39] Cf. also L. Lupas, 'Denumirile mormîntului în latina', *Studii Clasice* 5 (1963), 111–35, at 124, 131; Diehl ad *ILCV* 3052b: 'nota *obitum* = *sepulcrum* uel *depositio*'; E. Löfstedt, *Late Latin* (Oslo, 1959), 146–7 n. 2.

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BCTH 1954, p. 74: D(is) M(anibus) s(acrum) | Antissius Victor | uicxit annis LXXV | dis(cessit) VIII Ka(lendas) Mai(as) fil(ii) Flo|rinsus et Donatus et Bo|inus frat(res) **obi(tum) fec(e)r(unt)** pat(ri) ben(e) | mer(enti) an(no) p[r](ouinciae) CCCL.

Dedicated to the *Di Manes*. Antissius Victor. He lived 75 years, died on the eighth day before the May Kalends [i.e. 24 April]. His sons, the brothers Florinsus [= Florianus? Florentius? so the note in *BCTH*], Donatus and Boinus, **set up a tomb** for their well-deserving father, in the 350th year of the province.

The brothers Donatus and Boinus can only have 'arranged for a tomb to be set up' for their 'well-deserving' (*ben(e) mer(enti)*) father in his epitaph.

Alternatively, *OLD* tentatively suggests that *obitum facere* might mean '(*app.* [= *apparently*]) to perform obsequies' (*OLD* s.v. *obitus* 2b, my emphasis). Such a meaning is not impossible, but I have not been able to find parallels for it in Latin epitaphs; on the other hand, phrases such as *monumentum*/*sepulchrum*/*memoriam* sim. *fecit*/*posuit* = 'set up a tomb' (i.e. 'arranged for a tomb to be set up') are commonplace in funerary inscriptions.

Obitus = 'tomb' would be a case of 'abstract for concrete', a category of semantic change in Latin notably discussed by Löfstedt.[40] As one special type, verbal nouns sometimes come to designate a place, especially in Late Latin: for example, *oratio* 'prayer place', i.e. 'oratory, chapel',[41] *mansio* 'staying place', i.e. 'lodgings, house'; so also *obitus* 'meeting(-death) place', alongside *dormitio* 'resting place'—hence in inscriptions 'grave', *exitus* 'departing place', i.e. the grave, tomb. As 'a striking parallel to these', Löfstedt quotes *quies*, which is sometimes used to mean 'grave', i.e. 'resting place' (for example, in *ILVC* 7961 *quies Claudiae Priscae*).[42]

Several features of the three inscriptions with *obitum fecerunt* discussed in this section suggest that they are late. *Obitus* = 'tomb' is described by Liana Lupas as Christian,[43] something that in *CIL* VIII 21540 (included by Diehl in his collection of Christian inscriptions as 3052b) is confirmed by the use of *in pace*.[44] The grammar of the epitaph, with the form *filios* clearly intended as a subject alongside *nepotes* and therefore explicable as a nominative plural in *-os*, points further to a late date (sixth century on).[45] The name of the deceased too might point in that direction: misspellings showing *s(i)* or *z(i)* for *di* or *ti* as the result of palatalisation such as here *Crescen**s**a* = *Crescen**ti**a* (cf. for example *CIL* VIII 21751 *Inocen**s**a* = *Innocen**ti**a*)[46] tend to be late.[47] Better still, the

[40] Löfstedt (n. 39), 144–56. See also Hofmann and Szantyr (n. 25), 745–51, with further bibliography.

[41] See *TLL* s.v. *oratio* 'caput alterum: cum notione precandi', C.I 'metonymice i.q. domus orationis, oratorium' (*TLL* IX.2.89.1–15).

[42] Löfstedt (n. 39), 146–7 with n. 2.

[43] Lupas (n. 39), 131.

[44] For *in pace* used as here with *fecit*, *fecerunt* sim. as a common Christian formula see Diehl in the indices to *ILCV* (vol. III) s.v. *pax* III.B ('de *pace* biblica') f, p. 380, with examples.

[45] For the nominative plural in *-os* alongside the nominative plural feminine in *-as* as a rare late feature see J.N. Adams, *Social Variation and the Latin Language* (Cambridge, 2013), 252. Cf. also F. Roval, 'L'estensione dell'accusative in latino tardo e medievale', *AGI* 90 (2005), 54–87; J. Herman, 'Les ardoises wisigothiques et le problème de la différenciation territorial du latin', in L. Callebat (ed.), *Latin vulgaire, latin tardif IV: Actes du 4e Colloque international sur le latin vulgaire et tardif, Caen, 2–5 septembre 1994* (Hildesheim, Zürich and New York, 1995), 63–76.

[46] Quoted by Adams (n. 45), 121.

[47] See Adams (n. 45), 120–3, esp. 121 n. 37, where he refers to Svennung as 'citing as the earliest example of the phenomenon *CIL* XV.2612 *Marsia(nenses)*, said to be of the third century'.

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anno prouinciae formula in *BCTH* 1954, p. 74 provides a precise date for this inscription: *anno prouinciae CCCL*, i.e. A.D. 389.

M.L. Leschi suggests that *obitum fecit* in this sense was 'calquée sur l'expression *exitum facere* qui signifie aussi faire un tombeau, donner un sépulture'.[48] He was discussing another inscription from Mauretania Caesariensis that allegedly contains a related formula, *obitum reddere* meaning 'to set up a tomb' (but see below). He did not quote any examples of *exitum facere* = 'to set up a tomb', but one can note, for example:

BCTH 1936–7, p. 44 no. 26 (Numidia) Dis Manibus | Venatilla Lu|ci f(ilia) uixit an(n)is | XXVI **exitu(m) fecit** [= **fecerunt**: see the note in *BCTH*] | Felix uir et pat|er aius [= *eius*].

CIL VIII 1213 = *CLE* 1897 (Africa proconsularis) Dis Manibus sacrum | Garcilia pia uixit | annos LXXX L. Atius | Rufinus **exitum | fecit** socr(a)e suae.

CIL X 7618 (Sardinia) M(arcus) Antonius | Apelles **exitum | fecit** Venustae | conli[b]ertae sua|e uixit ann. XI.

ICUR n.s. I 2948 = *ILCV* 3053 (Rome) Caesernius | Cyricus | Aure(l)i(us) Rufinae | coiugi | **exitum fecit**.

ILAlg II.2 4357 (Numidia) D(is) M(anibus) | Aperonius Firin|das **exitu(m) fe|cit** socrai | Cecilia(e) Fortu|n(?) uixit an(n)is | XXXXXVII.

It is impossible to say definitely whether *exitum fecit* was modelled on *obitum fecit* or vice versa, especially given the limited surviving examples of both formulae. In any case, with the subject(s) of *exitum fecit* in all the inscriptions quoted above being clearly the dedicator(s), the phrase as found in them is a precise parallel to our *obitum fecit* = 'set up a tomb': we have here (a) exactly the same development from abstract ('the act of meeting death/departing from life, i.e. of dying') to concrete ('tomb') (or to 'obsequies', if one accepts *OLD*'s interpretation of *obitum facere*) that we see in *obitus*, and (b) a combination with the same verb, *facere*, to mean 'to set up a tomb' (or 'to perform obsequies', as in *OLD* [?]). Moreover, at least one of the epitaphs with *exitum fecit* (*ICUR* I 2948 = *ILCV* 3053) is Christian, and another one (*BCTH* 1936–7, p. 44 no. 26) has been dated to as late as the third century A.D.;[49] like *obitum fecit*, this formula too is clearly late.

1.2.2 Obitum reddidit: *a synonymous formula in Mauretania Caesariensis?*

Another epitaph from Mauretania Caesariensis (Altava, modern Ouled Mimoun) was first mentioned by P. Courtot in *Revue Africaine* 79 (1936), 416, where he takes OBIT as a complete word, presumably for *obi(i)t* (commenting 'Et pour la première fois à Altava, on a trouvé la formule "Obit"'). This was later interpreted by M.L. Leschi (*BCTH* [1938–40], 209–10) as *Dis Manibus s(acrum) Iulia Magdira obit(um) nat(i) red(diderunt)*, with *obit(um) nat(i) red(diderunt)* explained by referring to the expression under discussion here, *obitum fecit*. Given the provenance of the inscription, it is tempting to accept this interpretation, and treat *obitum reddere* as a variant of *obitum facere* in Mauretania Caesariensis, meaning 'her children (?) set this up'.

[48] *BCHT* (1938–40), 210.

[49] M.L. Leschi dates this inscription to the third century A.D. on the basis of the third-century date of the cemetery to which it belongs, adding that 'l'absence de toute mention de tribu sur les tombes de vétérans citoyens romains est un nouvel argument en faveur de cette époque' (*BCHT* [1936–7], 45).

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However, in a later publication (*Les inscriptions d'Altava* [Aix-en-Provence, 1968]), Jean Marcillet-Jaubert prints the text as:

IdAltava 238
DISMA*
*NIBVS*S*
*IVLIAMAGDIRA
VIXIT NXLV
OBITONATORED.

He points out that the stone has NATO and not *nat(i)*, 'which would have been very unusual' ('qui eût été bien insolite'). To judge from the photo published in the Clauss–Slaby Databank, there is indeed what looks like an O after NAT in the last line, but it is smaller than the rest of the letters—which might explain why Leschi, as pointed out by Marcillet-Jaubert (and so also Courtot before him), failed to see the *o*. As the (emended) text stands, a straightforward interpretation such as *obit(um) nato red(didit)* = 'made a tombstone for the son' would make no sense here as the deceased is a woman; and there is also no dedicator mentioned to provide a subject for *red(didit)* in this meaning. Far more plausible is Marcillet-Jaubert's interpretation, according to which NATORE forms one word, with the following D standing for (RE)D by haplography through confusion with the last syllable of the preceding noun; he therefore suggests the following reading for the inscription:

Dis Manibus s(acrum) Iulia Magdira uix(it) an(nis) xlu; obit(um) natore <re>d(didit).

Natore is then explained as an error, with *o* for *ū*, so standing for *nature* (= *naturae*). The issue of whether this is a 'phonetic fault' as suggested by Marcillet-Jaubert is not altogether straightforward. While the confusion between *u* and *o* is very common in 'Vulgar' Latin, it is normally one that affects short *u*, reflecting a development that would eventually lead to the merger in Romance languages of long *o* and short *u* as close *o*.[50] However, the spelling *-ora* for *-ūra* has some possible parallels in inscriptions.[51] Whatever the explanation for the form, the interpretation of *natore* = *naturae* here makes good sense: it produces the formula synonymous with *obitum fecit* = 'died', *obitum naturae reddidit*, as included in *TLL* s.v. *obitus* II.A.3, to which we will turn shortly (section 2 below). The fact that specifying this after *uix(it) an(nos) XLV* 'lived 45 years' is superfluous is not an obstacle to this interpretation, as inscriptions are often pleonastic: one may compare for example the symbol Θ to indicate that the dedicatee was dead at the time of setting up of the inscription, found sometimes in inscriptions in which the age of death has already been expressed by a formula such as *uixit annos/annis* or similar.[52]

[50] See e.g. V. Väänänen, *Introduction au latin vulgaire* (Paris, 1981[3]), 29–30.

[51] See O. Prinz, *De o et u vocalibus inter se permutatis in lingua Latina: quaestiones epigraphicae* (Halle an der Saale, 1932), 94, with examples.

[52] Cf. e.g. *CIL* VI 13506 (Θ *Baloniae N. l. Secundae uix(it) an(nos) XXVI*), 20947 (Θ *P. Furius P. f. Celer uix(it) a(nnos) XXI*), 23299 (Θ *C. Octauius Sp. f. Col. Paetus u(ixit) a(nnos) XVI*); also *CIL* VI 38547, XII 4487, XIII 275, etc. On the use of theta in Latin funerary inscriptions see Mednikarova (n. 37), 267–76; for Republican inscriptions in particular see P. Kruschwitz, 'Der Gebrauch von Θ in republikanischen Grabinschriften', *ZPE* 138 (2002), 109–12.

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2. OBITVM (NATVRAE) REDDIDIT = *'DIED', AND A POSSIBLE SYNONYMOUS PHRASE*

Under *obitus* = 'death' (II.A.1), *TLL* quotes *obitum naturae reddidit* in *CIL* VIII (Numidia) 2557.35 *si quis ... obitum naturae red(diderit)* and *CIL* VIII 10892.5 = *CLE* 16.15.30 (Numidia) *obit*[*um nat*]*urae red*[*didist*]*i*, with a reference also to *CIL* VIII 10893 *obitum red(didit)*. To these, we can add *IdAltava* 238 as discussed in 1.2.2 above. *TLL* offers no explanation of this phrase or its origin.

OLD s.v. *obitus*[2] 2b translates *obitum (naturae) reddere* 'to pay the debt to nature', i.e. 'to die', explaining it as catechresis, 'prob. through confusion w. *debitum naturae reddere*'. *OLD* does not quote any examples from inscriptions of the correct *debitum naturae reddere* in support of this hypothesis, but such examples are provided in the entry for *debitum* (1b), so for example *CIL* VIII 16374 (*debit(um) natur(ae) reddidit*) and, elliptically with *naturae* omitted, *CIL* VI 25617 (*debitum reddidit X K(alendas) Sept(embres)*); to these one could perhaps add also *CIL* VIII 16410, although it is quite fragmentary and the reading not certain (*tam su*[*bi*]*to debitum natur(a)e* [*cum redd*]*eret*). Moreover, this turn of phrase is also attested in literary sources: cf. for example Nep. *Reg.* 1.5 *ex his duo eodem nomine morbo* ***naturae debitum reddiderunt*** ('Of these kings the two that bore the same name **paid their debt to nature** as the result of decease').[53] Such an interpretation seems plausible, but can this development be supported with further evidence outside the few inscriptions with *obitum (naturae) reddidit*?

An inscription published in the early 1990s, *AE* 1992, 1928 (Cherchel, Mauretania Caesariensis),[54] reads:

D(is) M(anibus) | Flauius Felix | **obitum soluit** | Datiua co(n)iux s|ua bene merent|i minimitu(m) [*sic*] fe(cit) | m(emoriae) c(ausa) u(ixit) a(nnos) XXXVI.

How are we to interpret the phrase *obitum soluit* here, and indeed the entire inscription? The answer to this question depends on whether the subject of the phrase is the dedicator of the inscription, the wife Dativa, or the deceased, Flavius Felix. If we took the subject of *obitum soluit* to be *Datiua co(n)iux*, which is not impossible given the juxtaposition of the verb and the name, we would have to interpret *obitum soluit* as a phrase referring to the setting up of the tombstone, a possible parallel for *obitum fecit* = 'set up a tomb' or sim. However, given that another verb, *fecit*, and moreover what looks like an intended *monumentum* (*minimitu*) follow the name *Datiua*, thus already giving a formula meaning 'set up a monument(?)', this interpretation seems unlikely. Furthermore, the word order does not support such an interpretation, in that (a) the subject of a verb for 'setting up' in funerary inscriptions normally comes before rather than after the verb that goes with it (cf. for example the inscriptions with *obitum fecerunt*/*exitum fecit*/*fecerunt* = 'set up a tomb' discussed in 1.2.1 above, in all of which the name[s] of the dedicator[s] precede[s] the noun–verb phrase), and (b) it is unlikely that two noun–verb phrases which have the same subject would be split so that one (*obitum soluit*) comes before and the other (*minimitu* [= *monumentu(m)*(?) *fecit*]) after its subject. Finally, unlike *facio*, *soluo* does not have a meaning that would allow it to be used in the sense 'to set up' in any straightforward way. It therefore

[53] Trans. E.S. Foster, Loeb.
[54] Originally published by P. Leveau in *BAA* 5 (1971–4), 133–4, with a photo in fig. 104.

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seems more natural to take *obitum soluit* to go with the preceding name of the deceased, *Flauius Felix*, in the meaning 'died'.

But how would *obitum soluere* have come to mean 'to die'? The explanation proposed for *obitum facere* = 'to perform the act of dying', i.e. 'to die', is not applicable here as, unlike *facio*, *soluo* cannot take on the meaning and function of a support verb. Could *obitum soluit* in our inscription be explained in the same way as *obitum reddidit* < *obitum naturae reddidit* (through ellipse) < *debitum naturae reddidit* (through catechresis) in *OLD*? This is certainly a possibility, given that the meaning 'to pay (a debt)' is standard for *soluo* (see *OLD* s.v. 18 'to acquit oneself of [a debt] by payment of it'). And indeed, the following inscriptions with *debitum naturae soluit* and its slight variation *debitum naturae persoluit* provide the missing link in this equation in the same way as *debitum naturae reddidit* does for *obitum (naturae) reddidit*:

CIL VI 37317 (Rome) D(is) M(anibus) | Caesiae Daphnes | Ti(berius) Caesius Aduena | coniugi sanctissimae et | fidelissimae … quae uix(it) ann(is) XXXXII | mens(ibus) IIII die I hor(is) III | haec … die VII … **debitum naturae soluit**.

ILAlg II.1 3377 (Numidia) AMOI(?) | **debitum | natur(a)e | soluit** uicxit | XXXXXXV.

ILCV 3302 (Rome) Renatus **dibitum** [*sic*] **naturae soluit** IIII Kal. Maias in pace Decentio et Paulo (conss.).

CIL VI 3580 (Rome) M(arco) Blossio | Q(uinti) f(ilio) Ani(ensi) Pudenti … | uix(it) an(nos) XLIX sanctissime | et prope diem | consummationis | primi pili sui **debitum | naturae persoluit** …

Thus these inscriptions provide evidence supporting the origin of *obitum soluit* in *AE* 1992, 1928, and its meaning there, as 'paid the debt to nature', i.e. 'died'; for the collocation *debitum soluere* in literary sources see, for example, Ovid, *Fast.* 5.596 *uoti debita soluit* (cf. also Cic. *Marc.* 27 *cum ... patriae quod debes solueris*, with the relative clause *quod debes* periphrastically expressing the same idea as *debitum* in our inscriptions); for a variant of *soluo*, *persoluo*, used with *debitum naturae* to mean 'die' as *debitum naturae soluit* in the inscriptions quoted above, see Hyg. *Fab.* 26.3 *si qua* [*autem*] *extra tumulum exit,* ***debitum naturae persoluit*** ('but if any [i.e. of the snakes Medea had put in her brother's tomb] comes out of the tomb, it **pays its debt to nature**', i.e. dies). Therefore, in agreement with *AE*'s publication, which prints a full stop after *obitum soluit*, I propose the following translation for *AE* 1992, 1928:

To the *Di Manes*. Flavius Felix paid the debt to nature [i.e. died]. Dativa, his wife, set up a monument (?) to [him], well-deserving, for the sake of commemoration. He lived 36 years.

Explained in this way, *obitum soluit* provides a strong parallel in support of *OLD*'s hypothesis for the origin of *obitum (naturae) reddidit* through catechresis.

CONCLUSION

Taking as its starting point the two *TLL* sub-entries under which the funerary formula *obitum facere* is quoted, *obitus* = 'death' and *obitus* = 'tomb', this article has suggested that the origin of the phrase in the sense 'died' is to be explained by relating the use of *facio* in it to the general phenomenon of 'support verbs'. In contrast with *OLD* and in accordance with *TLL*, it has been argued that the same phrase when its subject is the

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dedicator of the inscription means 'set up a tomb', rather than 'perform obsequies' as in the relevant entry in *OLD*. The curiosity that the same expression can have a different meaning has then been explained through a discussion of *obitus* = 'tomb' in the light of another common phenomenon in Latin, the development of *abstractum pro concreto*.

The phrase *obitum fecit* = 'died' should be distinguished from the other two phrases with *obitus* as a direct object discussed here, *obitum (naturae) reddidit* and the synonymous *obitum soluit*, which, as I have suggested, came to mean 'died' through a different semantic and syntactic development.

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