

THE RENAISSANCE
STUDIOLO IN EUROPE



LE STUDIOLO EN EUROPE
À LA RENAISSANCE



LO STUDIOLO
RINASCIMENTALE IN EUROPA

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CONTENTS

Foreword (<i>László L. Simon</i>)	9
Introduction (<i>Sabine Frommel</i>)	11

ESZTERGOM

MÁRIA PROKOPP

Lo studiolo dell'arcivescovo Johannes Vitéz, primate d'Ungheria e cancelliere del re Mattia Corvino a Esztergom	37
--	----

KONSTANTIN VUKOV

The Studiolo in Esztergom: Architecture and Construction Research	61
---	----

ZSUZSANNA WIERDL

La tecnica e la provenienza delle Virtù e dei dipinti murali dello Studiolo di Esztergom	67
---	----

CHRISTOPHE PONCET

Les Vertus Cardinales du Studiolo d'Esztergom et leurs modèles Nouveaux indices pour l'attribution à Botticelli	97
--	----

EDINA ZSUPÁN

Johannes Vitéz reading Pliny To the Relationship between the Descriptions of Villas at Laurentum and Hungarian Humanism (Vienna, ÖNB, Cod. 141)	119
---	-----

THE STUDIOLO IN EUROPE

CHRISTOPH L. FROMMEL La tradizione rinascimentale dello studiolo e la Stanza della Segnatura	141
MARCO FOLIN Studioli rinascimentali della Casa d'Este (secoli XV-XVI)	177
VALENTINA CONTICELLI Dallo Studiolo del Principe alla Tribuna del Granduca	195
HERVÉ MOUILLEBOUCHE Le <i>studiolo</i> dans l'espace bourguignon	211
PIERRE-GILLES GIRAULT Le <i>studiolo</i> de François I ^{er} au château de Blois et les cabinets royaux de la Renaissance en France	235
XAVIER PAGAZANI Les cabinets du roi à Anet : places, formes et fonctions	267
JEAN GUILLAUME Les trois cabinets du Roi au Louvre	297
MAURICE HOWARD The Study in Early Modern England	305
MARÍA JOSÉ REDONDO CANTERA Le <i>studiolo</i> en Espagne durant la première moitié du xvr ^e siècle	321

THEORY AND PRACTICE

NADA GRUJIĆ

Scriptore comune and scriptoreto separato (studiolo a parte)
in the Treatise of Benedetto Cotrugli (1458)

349

SABINE FROMMEL

Une recherche de Sebastiano Serlio fondée sur le double
héritage franco-italien : entre *studiolo* et cabinet de travail

365

Epilogue (*Zsuzsanna Wierdl*)

403

Acknowledgements (*Mária Prokopp*)

407

Summaries

409

Johannes Vitéz reading Pliny

To the Relationship between the Descriptions of Villas
at Laurentum and Hungarian Humanism
(Vienna, ÖNB, Cod. 141)*

1.

There is an important source group in the Vitéz philology that has not yet been thoroughly explored: the autograph marginal notes of the archbishop in his codices.¹ These notes, however small, are of special importance because they reveal something about Vitéz's way of thinking and his ideas about the world (fig. 1). In this sense, they differ from his letters and speeches still available today, as those are rather moderate documents of the words of a statesman. For example, Vitéz's individual corpus *Leveleskönyv* [Book of Letters],² arranged personally by himself, is made up almost exclusively

*The research for this paper was supported by the ELRN-NSZL Fragmenta et Codices Research Team and the research project NKFIH K 120495.

¹The *Book of Letters* is studied by Edina Zsupán on the basis of the marginalia and other notes, ZSUPÁN 2009; Edina Zsupán, "Kodikológia és irodalomtörténet: Vitéz János a humanista filológus és levélkorpusz-szerző" [Codicology and Literary History: Johannes Vitéz, a Humanist Philologist and Author of a Letter Corpus] (under publication; presented on the conference *The Power of Interpretation* of 6 April 2016, in the Institute of Literary Research of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences: <https://mtabtk.videotorium.hu/hu/recordings/12964/kodikologia-es-irodalomtortenet>).

²The fact that the Vienna Codex (Vienna, ÖNB, Cod. 431) was an original copy of the *Book of Letters* personally taken care of by Vitéz with his own hands, was proved by ZSUPÁN 2009. The edition of the *Book of Letters*: Ioannes Vitéz de Zredna, *Opera quae supersunt*, ed. by I. Boronkai, Budapest 1980 (Bibliotheca Scriptorum Medii Recentisque Aevorum, Series nova, Tomus III). The entire literature of previous research is summarized by ZSUPÁN 2008. Explicitly for the literature on the Vienna codex see: Kat. no. 34, *Epistolarium*, in FÖLDESI 2008, p. 178–179 (description of the codex by Edina Zsupán). A selected translation into Hungarian: *Vitéz János levelei*

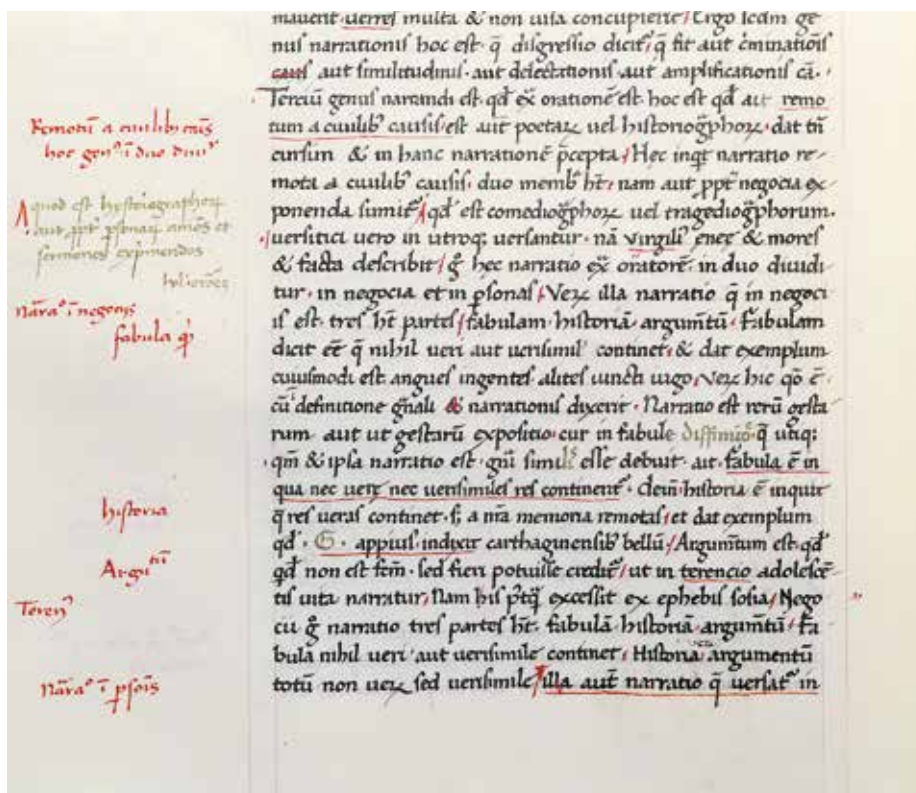


Fig. 1. Johannes Vitéz's autograph notes in the Victorinus corvina (Budapest, OSZK, Cod. Lat. 370., f. 30v (detail))

by letters that he wrote in the name of Governor János Hunyadi on political and administrative issues.

But Johannes Vitéz's thought must have been much more complex and special than that, and was complemented by a sort of sensible intuition. It probably contributed to his becoming "the first Hungarian Humanist".³ Most recent research emphasizes that the archbishop was consciously seeking how to take over the results of the new cultural trends of his time,

és politikai beszédei, transl. by Iván Boronkai, Ibolya Bellus, introduction by Iván Boronkai, Budapest 1987.

³ For Johannes Vitéz's career: FRANKÓI 1879; SZAKÁLY 1990; KUBINYI 1999; KUBINYI 2000; HEGEDŰS 2003; PÁLOSALVI 2013; C. TÓTH/HORVÁTH/NEUMANN/PÁLOSALVI 2016, p. 27, 51; C. TÓTH 2017, p. 24–25, 108; MATIĆ 2022.

Humanism and Renaissance.⁴ The present paper cannot describe the whole range of this activity. We only aim at pointing out that in the case of Vitéz, only small and sophisticated signs imply these great and conscious steps. It is often a stroke of a pen, literally, that leads us to conclusions.⁵ The marginalia we have referred to belong to this group of “sources”. Just one example: on a previous occasion, we mentioned that the archbishop encouraged the scribes in his environment to use the new Humanist writing method instead of Gothic letters. Our proof is a very early one even in European terms: it is from 1451.⁶

But now let’s focus on one specific area of Renaissance thought: the relation between man and the built environment.

Art historian Rózsa Feuer-Tóth has already proven that Matthias Hunyadi’s court historian, Antonio Bonfini partly used the terminology of Pliny the Younger for describing the Buda and Visegrád palaces and also the castle in Esztergom.⁷ More specifically, he used the Roman scholar-politician’s terminology of presenting his own Laurentine Villa in Etruria.⁸ L. B. Alberti did the same in his *De re aedificatoria* when describing the layout of a private palace and a country villa, and in addition to that, Plinian reminiscences can be detected also in his designs for the Vatican palace of Pope Nicholas V. The similarities between the Urbino palace of Federico da Montefeltro built between 1465 and 1482 and the diaeta of the Laurentine Villa have already been pointed out by Heydenreich. However, Rózsa Feuer-Tóth thinks the antique villa descriptions conveyed in her view by a Humanist scholar to the architect, served also as a theoretical background for the construction works. Her conclusions were criticized – not without recognizing the value of the basic insights about Plinian terminology – by Árpád Mikó who argued that it could not be the case. He explains that neither the presence of several Humanist works on architecture (i.e. by Alberti in two copies and Filarete)

⁴ The results of recent research are summarized in the catalogue of NSZL of its 2008 Vitéz exhibition: FÖLDESI 2008. See also: SZILÁGYI 2013; KISS 2012a; KISS 2012b; KISS 2019.

⁵ As in note 1.

⁶ ZSUPÁN (under publication).

⁷ FEUERNÉ TÓTH 1990b, especially p. 138 sqq. Similarly, FEUERNÉ TÓTH 1990a, p. 99–100. The question is touched upon in the context of Visegrád by BUZÁS 2011, p. 405–406.

⁸ The two letters on the Laurentian villa by Pliny the Younger: II. 17; V.6.

in the Corvina Library nor Bonfini's terminology following Pliny can prove that the construction works in Buda, Visegrád and Esztergom were indeed carried out according to these patterns and texts.⁹

This dilemma perfectly reflects a key problem of the relation between the texts of Pliny the Younger and Renaissance architecture: the actual character and extent of Plinian influence. It is a well-known fact that the Renaissance concept of a villa was formed based upon previous images from Antiquity. And the Plinian descriptions were among the most important transmission texts.¹⁰ Their presence can be detected as early as in Leon Battista Alberti's *De re aedificatoria* (i.e. V. 14, on the villa). It remains a question though, how these influences worked in the specific cases. Ludwig Heydenreich attempted at demonstrating the conscious application of Plinian images through the activity of Leon Battista Alberti. In his opinion, there are Plinian reminiscences in the designs of Alberti for the Vatican Palace of Pope Nicholas V. And similarly, in the construction works in Pienza, where the chief constructor Bernardo Rossellino was probably backed by the same Alberti. The Plinian designs exerted strong influence on the Urbino construction works between 1465 and 1482.¹¹ It was also Heydenreich, who pointed out the possible relation between the private suite of the Urbino palace and the *di-aeta* of the Laurentine villa.¹²

The situation in Hungary, however, is completely different. The total destruction of the castles and palaces in question does not make it possible to draw the necessary comparisons, and the remains of walls and other parts of buildings unearthed during archaeological research only allow cautious assumptions. The possible relation between Bonfini's descriptions and the one-time reality is well worded by Árpád Mikó in his essay's nuanced conclusion: "The «building description» is always double layered: it either describes the real elements of a building without any allusions to Antiquity; or

⁹ MIKÓ 1989; MIKÓ 1994; MIKÓ 2011.

¹⁰ See comprehensively for instance: DE LA RUFFINIÈRE DU PREY 1994.

¹¹ It is a fact already proved by research that Alberti also played an important role in the preparation of the Urbino designs. His friendship with Federico da Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino, is proven. Originally, the architect planned to dedicate also *De re aedificatoria* to him. It was probably Alberti who recommended Luciano Laurana as a chief architect to the Archduke. See also: HERZNER 2001, p. 270–271.

¹² HEYDENREICH 1967. On this entire topic: FEUERNÉ TÓTH 1990b, p. 136–137.

uses antique terms that may or may not apply; or merely uses them as empty style elements. The functions of these terms flickering on the borderline of reality and fiction are often undefinable, but their double character can easily be felt. Bonfini essentially seeks two things: that the building is more or less recognizable (its description is authentic); and that the building is worthy of and similar to the desired Antiquity, able to «emulate it *expressis verbis*».¹³

But Pliny's letters can also be looked at from another aspect. Not only the building descriptions, but also the sentences referring to the function of the Roman politician's villas and his life in them have great importance. This is probably the point where the villa concept rooted in Antiquity, including the Plinian letters, is connected to the idea of a Renaissance ruler's residence shaped by the ideal ruler's personality and activity. A regular rhythm of *otium* and *negotium*, *vita activa* and *contemplativa* marks the days of the ruler, and defines the layout of his residence. He gains strength from the spaces of *otium* of his residence where he chisels his knowledge and virtues, and later he uses them in the hours of *negotium* for the benefit of his subordinates. This layer of the letters could influence the reader sensible to new ideas, regardless of built reality. The thought of a renaissance dwelling place based upon antique foundations with the characteristics of a villa could impregnate the imagination of a residence owner. Thus the metamorphosis of the building inevitably took place in the spiritual plane if otherwise perhaps not, or to a minimal extent, and it was independent of built reality and the construction possibilities.

The last lines could also well refer to Johannes Vitéz, the dweller of the residence on Esztergom castle hill, who spent the years between 1465 and 1472 there as archbishop, and carried out construction works.¹⁴

Thus the antique concept of villa, worded especially by Pliny, became a basic element of the Renaissance concept of a sovereign's residence. However, the most important part of it was not the practical instructions for construction work but the spiritual relation between the building as a place of

¹³ MİKÓ 1989.

¹⁴ Considerable part of the construction works attributed to Vitéz are linked by current research to his predecessor Dénes Széchy. From the abundant literature, see for example these summarizing works: HORVÁTH 2008, p. 191–201; VUKOV 2004.

refreshment for body and soul and the surrounding garden and landscape. The practical steps of construction work were only meant to follow, if possible, this essential idea.

This is the very concept of the criticism Árpád Mikó expressed on the conclusions offered by Rózsa Feuerné Tóth: while Rózsa Feuerné Tóth thinks the antique villa descriptions handed over by a Humanist scholar to the architect, served as a theoretical background for the construction works, Árpád Mikó hardly believes so. He explains that neither the presence of several Humanist works on architecture (i.e. by Alberti in two copies and Filarete) in the Corvina Library nor Bonfini's terminology following Pliny can prove that the construction works in Buda, Visegrád and Esztergom were indeed carried out according to these patterns and texts.

In my opinion, however, all these phenomena, including the Plinian terminology, the presence of treatises on architecture and the real construction works, are bound together by a sort of similar world-view.

2.

Rózsa Feuerné Tóth was of the opinion that Vitéz served as an example for King Matthias also in planning his construction works according to the patterns of Antiquity. She writes: "Bonfini... at describing Johannes Vitéz's construction works in Esztergom consequently uses the characteristic architecture terminology of Pliny the Younger. Which might also mean that Johannes Vitéz, well versed in classical literature, might have read the letters of Pliny, and as a Humanist constructor he himself might have considered the Laurentum example."¹⁵ I agree with Árpád Mikó, as I do not think that Bonfini's description in itself is a proof of Vitéz having carried out his constructions according to the pattern of the Laurentum villa either. However, and regardless of that, let's look at whether Vitéz could have been familiar with the Laurentum pattern and if so, in what manner.

By the grace of accident, an exceptionally precious codex of the archbishop's library has been preserved to this day together with the letters by

¹⁵ FEUERNÉ TÓTH 1990b, 143.



Fig. 2. Johannes Vitéz's Pliny-codex (Vienna, ÖNB, Cod. 141, f. 1r)

Pliny the Younger and his Trajan panegyric¹⁶ (fig. 2). What makes it really precious is that Vitéz added a copious amount of autograph marginal notes to it. The codex was probably made in Ferrara before 1464 as, according to

¹⁶Vienna, ÖNB, Cod. 141. Codex description: Kat. no. 24, in FÖLDESI 2008, p. 147–149 (codex description by Ferenc Földesi). The new, detailed codicology description is under publication by the author of the present paper.

Vitéz's autograph note, he read it in that year.¹⁷ The illuminator was probably Guglielmo Giraldi.¹⁸ Several conclusions can be drawn from this volume about Johannes Vitéz's methods as reader, emendator and philologist, but there are especially three areas in which it offers revelation-like new pieces of information: how the scholar-priest used the margin surface, how he was related to the Greek language, and how he might have used a dictionary, an entirely new phenomenon in the Vitéz philology.

In the case of Vitéz, two margin surfaces can be distinguished: the official strip and the edge of the page as it is. On the official strip, Vitéz indicates with accurate handwriting the numbering of the letters, the leaf numbers and the header elements. The serial numbers and often also the notes of textual criticism are located close to the body text. Vitéz uses approximately the center of the margin, that is the main strip, to take down the words indicating important or interesting content. Apart from content references, these are usually words of rhetoric character. These main notes also include the most diverse nota marks. It is important to point out that only the notes in deep-red are from Vitéz, the light-red marginalia were copied by the scribe of the main text. These latter notes were usually transmitted together with the main text.

The unofficial margin is the strip of approximately 2 cm around the page, which includes also the entire interior margin. In this codex, this surface was used by Vitéz to facilitate dictionary use with the indication of what to look up in the dictionary, what are the new words and word explanations. The different character of these notes is reflected by Vitéz's own handwriting, more similar to quick note-taking, less accurate, with smaller letter size, and less pressure of the pen, resulting in lighter, extremely thin strokes. In most cases, he writes the abbreviation for the word *vocabulum* (word) or

¹⁷“Bude 1464 May 23” (f. 204v).

¹⁸Miniator from Ferrara, a leading figure of Italian Renaissance miniature art, who worked between 1445 and 1489. The two centers of his activity were the court of the Este in Ferrara, and Mantova. He also contributed with relevant works to the library of Federico da Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino. See also: TONIOLO 2004. An other codex of Johannes Vitéz with the poems by Gaspar Tribachus, a poet of Ferrara was provenly illuminated by him (Budapest, NSZL, Cod. Lat. 416.). Cf. BAUER-EBERHARDT 2008, p. 114. In the case of the present codex, the Giraldi attribution is raised by the facial elaboration of the putti and the form of the bianchi girari. A very close paralle to both is the Tribachus codex, certainly decorated by Giraldi.

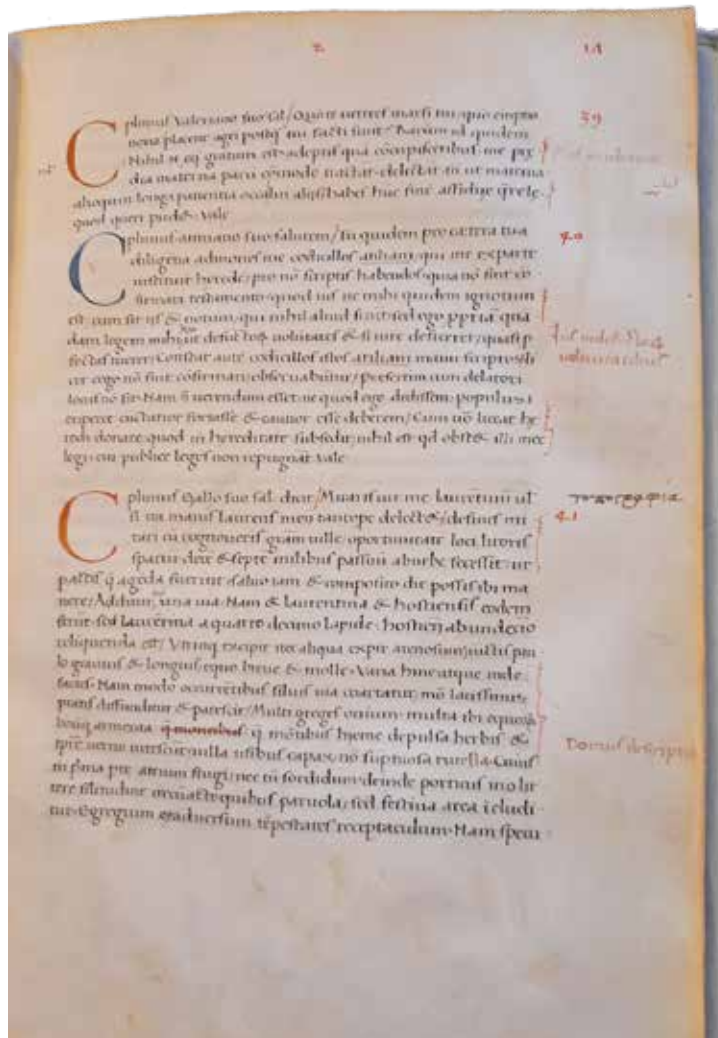


Fig. 3. Johannes Vitéz's autograph notes in his Pliny codex (Vienna, ÖNB, Cod. 141, f. 17^r)

vocabularium (dictionary) next to the line that contains a new, unknown term¹⁹ (fig. 3, 4). Between the lines, however, only very rarely does he indicate which exactly the new word is. Sometimes he extracts new words

¹⁹“Vocabulum” or “vocabularium” is really just a suggestion to resolve the abbreviation in question. I have not yet encountered this abbreviation in other codices of Vitéz. The thought also occurred to me that the prelate might not have used it to de-

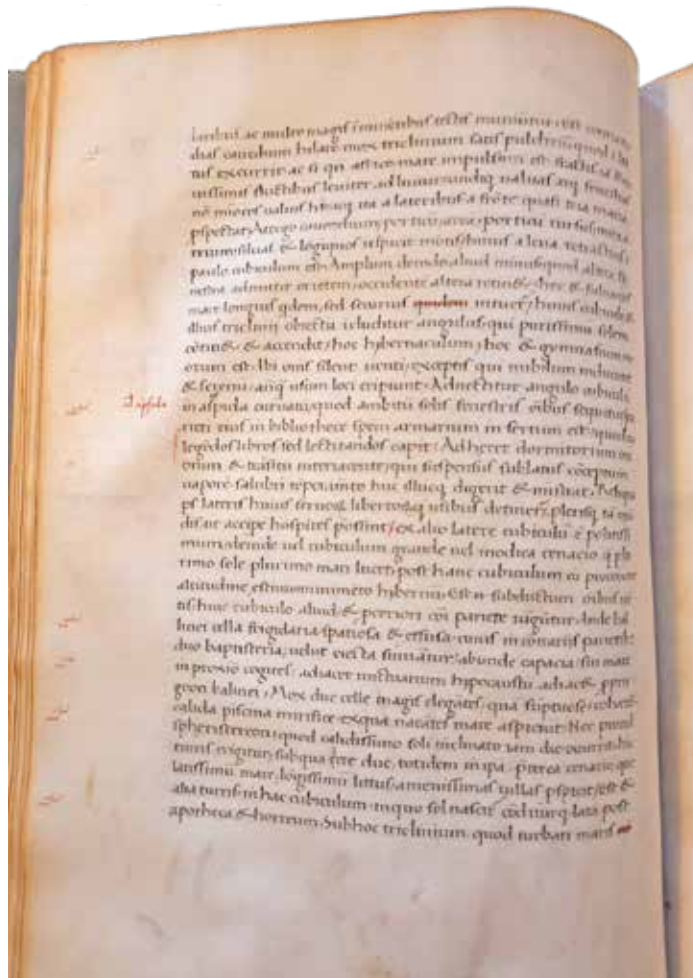


Fig. 4. Johannes Vitéz's autograph notes in his Pliny codex
(Vienna, ÖNB, Cod. 141, f. 17v)

from the text for further dictionary use, writing them on the margin. On one occasion, he wrote out a Greek word from the text on the lower margin and indicated its meaning in Latin (“receptor munerum”, “he who accepts the present”, that is “the one who is bribed”). And on another occasion, he

note unknown words in the classical sense, but may have designated new terms for the purpose of compiling a glossary, primarily perhaps from the field of architecture.

wrote the Hungarian equivalent of an unknown word (“*graeculus magister*” “fencing master of gladiators”): “*harsolo*” (f. 82r).

There are two letters in this corpus about the Laurentine villa in Etruria. The first letter to Gallus (II.17),²⁰ is the rhetorically proper presentation of a given place, as indicated also by the marginal note of the codex in Greek “*topografia*”, in this case a house that forms integral part of its environment. The second letter, to Apollinaris (V.6),²¹ was written especially to demonstrate the professional methods of rhetoric. Pliny the Younger, a conscious practitioner of the art of writing, wanted to illustrate this way that any object can be described with as much detail as necessary without becoming wordy or boring, if the author spares inappropriate derivations. And indeed, this small piece of art can be read as eagerly as a crime story.

As a matter of fact, the second letter is better written in terms of aesthetics and rhetorics, and Johannes Vitéz might have felt the same: he highlighted almost the entire text with a vertical red wavy line on one side as an important lecture worth to remember.

And here we arrive at an important point. We have to inquire about the specific nature of the archbishop’s interest in these texts, the description of the Laurentum villa. Let’s see what the marginal notes tell us.

We can see basically two types of indications by Johannes Vitéz next to the texts: the vertical wavy line on the margin highlighting the parts he considered important, and the frequent abbreviation of “*vocabulum*” (“word”) or “*vocabularium*” (“dictionary”).

In fact, it was precisely the study of these letters that helped me during my research to propose a solution to the abbreviation for “*vocabulum*” or “*vocabularium*” unclear for a long time. This abbreviation appears next to Pliny’s letters in question with remarkable frequency, probably because there are many rare words and special architecture terms in them. As Vitéz usually did not indicate the concrete words and phrases within the line, we can only guess which they are, but based upon peculiarity and rareness, the following list can be made up:

²⁰ In the codex: ff. 17r–18v, Letter no. 41 according to Vitéz’s numbering.

²¹ In the codex: ff. 41v–44r, Letter no. 101 according to Vitéz’s numbering.

In the first letter (II.17):

Cavaedium hilare: “a lovely small place”.²² “Apsida”: which appears in the form of “aspida” in the codex. Vitéz remarks on the margin that “elsewhere it is aspida” (fig. 4). In the text, this word is part of the phrase “cubiculum in hapsida curvatum”, that is “a semicircle shaped room”. “Ballinei cella frigida-ria”: “cold water bathroom”. In the next line, Vitéz might refer to the word “unctuarium” or “hypocaustum”, the first meaning the “unction room”, the second the heating room of a bath. “Sphaeristerion”: “ball game room”. In a following line it is perhaps the meaning of the word “apotheca” or “horreum” that is unknown or interesting for him. In Pliny’s text, the first is the term for “wine storage room”, and the second is for “room for cereal storage”. The next unknown word might be “gestatio” (“a path for walk”) and perhaps “buxus” (“boxwood”). In the next section, Vitéz might refer to the word “zeta” which is a version of “diaeta” (room), and means the same. For this reason, the later editions correct it to “diaeta”. However, in the Pliny-codices circulating in 15th century Italy, the “zeta” form was probably common. That is why Bonfini also uses it in his foreword of the Averulinus-translation at a place whose source is undoubtedly the text by Pliny.²³ Then Vitéz indicates “helio-caminus” (“room with a southern location”) and “andron” (“lobby”)

In the second letter (V.6), Vitéz finds the following unknown or interesting words: “heliodromi nemus” – a corrupted phrase corrected by the editions to “hippodromi nemus”; it means “the woods of the hippodrome”; “sipunculi” – “tubes” (conducting spring water into a pool). Vitéz marks the word “ypodyterium” corrected in later editions to “apodyterium”, meaning

²² For an interpretation of Pliny’s villa descriptions from an architectural point of view, see: FÖRTSCH 1993.

²³ Describing the royal palace of Visegrád: “Ad haec auratae porticus et amoenissima ezetae, marmorei fontes magno sumptu absoluti, fenestrae superbissimae et crate factae, iocunda sphaeristeria, munitissima eque regalis gazae apothecae, elata item subdivalia marmore isornata fontibus. Neque horti desunt et xisti violis odorati amoenaque gestationes buxetis undique conviridantes. Ad haec frigidariae atque caldariae cellae; item hypocaustum et cum unctuario baptisterium. Nonnullae zeteculae specularibus et velis obductae sunt, et necubi religio cesset, aedícula ornatissima.” Antonio Bonfini, *Praefatio in traductionem Architecturae Antonii Verulini*, in *Analecta nova ad historiam renascentium in Hungaria litterarum spectantia*, ed. Eugenius Abel, Stephanus Hegedüs, Budapest, 1903, p. 52–58, 56.

dressing room. “Metulae” – “bars”. Then he might have marked “acanthus” and then “stibadium” which means “bank”.

These new words indicated are frequently located in the text-sections that Vitéz also highlighted on the margin as interesting ones. Looking at the new words and the highlighted parts together we can detect the phenomena that really drew the archbishop’s interest. These are the following:

First we find – what else? – *the library*. We are in the aforementioned semicircular room. The highlighted section reads as follows: “in the walls sort of cases are contrived, containing a collection of authors who can never be read too often”.²⁴

Vitéz finds several new words in the part where *the bathrooms* are described, but he does not highlight it to indicate special interest.

The next highlighted part is where Pliny presents *the cryptoporticus*, a covered passage with windows on both sides that open to the sea and the interior garden.²⁵ Pliny dedicates a long description to explain how pleasant this passage is for offering shadow and in the winter time giving shelter from the wind. It was especially the following characteristic of the passage that caught Vitéz’s attention: “But the portico itself is coolest just at the time when the sun is at its hottest, that is, when the rays fall directly upon the roof”.²⁶

Vitéz also was interested in *two small bedrooms*, as one of them had heating. There was a small place attached to it “furnished with pipes which supply, at a wholesome temperature, and distribute to all parts of this room, the heat they receive”.²⁷ And the other room offered perfect calm, in Pliny’s words: “I take especial pleasure in it at the feast of the Saturnalia, when, by the licence of that festive season, every other part of my house resounds

²⁴“Parieti eius in bibliotheca especie marmarium insertum est, quod non legendos libros sed lectitandos capit” (Plin. Ep. II.17.8). Source of citations: *C. Plini Caecili Secundi epistularum libri novem – Epistularum ad Traianum liber – Panegyricus*, rec. Mauritius Schuster, editionem tertiam cur. Rudolphus Hanslik, Lipsiae: Teubner 1958.

²⁵Cf. ΖΑΡΜΑΚΟΥΠΙ 2011.

²⁶“Ipsa vero cryptoporticus tum maxime caret sole, cum ardentissimus culmini eius insistit” (Plin. Ep. II.17.19).

²⁷“Applicatum est cubiculo hypocauston perexiguum, quod angusta fenestra suppositum calorem, ut ratio exigit, aut effundit aut retinet” (Plin. Ep. II.17.23).

with my servants' mirth: thus I neither interrupt their amusement nor they my studies."²⁸

There are similarly interesting points in the second letter. Vitéz once again pays attention to the description of *the bath* as indicated by the words marked, but what really catches his attention is the covered passage, *the cryptoporticus*, that he highlights the same way as we have seen before. He is once again fascinated by the climate of the passage which "enjoying in the midst of summer heats its own natural coolness, neither admits nor wants external air".²⁹

Vitéz liked very much a cottage in the woods near the hippodrome, that had a roof but was open at the sides, and entirely overshadowed by vine: "Here you may lie and fancy yourself in a wood", Pliny says.³⁰ This interesting building is decorated by marble banks, springs and creeks in artificial canals. It is a real *locus amoenus* that gives place to the perfect encounter of nature and the built environment.

A library, a bath, a covered passage, a heated room and calm studies in the first letter; a covered passage, a bath, and a wood-like garden in the second. These were the topics that caught most Johannes Vitéz's attention in these Plinian letters of crucial importance.

But to make the picture complete, it must be added that not only the material details had importance to him. As mentioned before, the importance of the letter to Apollinaris was indicated with a line on the margin from the beginning to the middle part of the text. Vitéz added the word "descriptio" (description) at the beginning of the letter and the line which can mean that the first part of the letter interested him for its rhetorical quality. He also highlighted the closing formula of the letters perhaps for the same reason: as a Humanist, a conscientious student of the art of writing he agreed with Pliny's premonition to avoid unnecessary derivations.

Returning to the material objects, however, we have to say – without supposing direct relations between the Plinian text and the construction

²⁸"In hanc ego diaetam cum me recepi, ab esse mihi etiam a villa mea videor, magnamque eius voluptatem praecipue Saturnalibus capio, cum reliqua pars tecti licentia dierum festisque clamoribus personat: nam nec ipse meorum lusibus nec illi studiis meis obstrepunt" (Plin. Ep. II.17.24).

²⁹"Sub est cryptoporticus subterraneae similis; aestate incluso frigore riget contentaque aere suo nec desiderat auras nec admittit" (Plin. Ep. V.6.30).

³⁰"Non secusibi quam in nemore iaceas..." (Plin. Ep. V.6.39).

works in Esztergom as we know that these latter are mostly attributed in the 15th century to the previous archbishop, predecessor of Vitéz, Dénes Széchy – that these elements (the library, the covered passage, the bath, the heated room, the room for retirement and the garden) were also present in the Vitéz-related layer of the Esztergom castle. (The room with special heating was described by Galeotto Marzio, too.³¹) Whatever the case, the fact that Vitéz himself highlighted these items in the letters might offer perhaps a faint chance to suppose that during the supervision of the construction and modification works in Esztergom he remembered the image of the covered passage of the Laurentian villa and the cottage next to the hippodrome.³² (Even if he contributed only with a decorative door frame to the change of design and function of a given room.) From this point of view also the time of the reading has relevance. Vitéz completed his reading of the codex in Buda, on 23 May 1464, and Matthias was crowned with the Holy Crown two months earlier, on 29 March. Thus Vitéz was reading Pliny during the coronation, and a year later, in 1465 he became Archbishop of Esztergom. Without doubt, this inspiring text found him in a most sensitive and powerful moment, enhancing the likelihood of influence.³³

³¹“Et ne longius prosequare, paratur cena regia et in Laconico (erat enim hiems)...” Galeottus Martius Narniensis, *De egregie, sapienter, iocose dictis ac factis Mathiæ ad ducem Iohannem eius filium liber*, ed. by I. Fógel, B. Iványi, L. Juhász (Bibliotheca Scriptorum Medii Recentisque Aevorum), Lipsiae: Teubner 1934, p. 30–31: 30.11.

³²Gergely Buzás suggests a similar relation between Pliny’s texts and the constructions by Vitéz in Esztergom: Pliny could even have inspired the prelate to establish a bath there. However, the bath was built after local models, not based on ancient prototypes or that of the Italian Renaissance, adds Buzás. Cf. BUZÁS 2004, p. 58. Heydenreich is almost certain of Pliny’s influence in the case of the bath in the Urbino palace. Cf. HEYDENREICH 1967, p. 4, n. 19.

³³In this case, the Hungarian example would be one of the earliest known cases in which the villa descriptions of Pliny the Younger had an impact on the building program of a humanist. According to Heydenreich, the concept of appartamento del duca in Urbino was born in the second half of the 1460s. Cf. HEYDENREICH 1967, p. 6. Although Heydenreich also assumes the influence of Pliny in the construction of Pienza, in his opinion this influence in Urbino was more comprehensive, more sophisticated, and now included Christian elements. If we accept Pliny’s possible influence on Vitéz’s constructions in Esztergom, and assume ideological awareness in the background of these constructions, we can also encounter an intertwining of

Getting back to Bonfini, we can see that the historian enumerates the same items at describing the Vitéz-related construction works in Esztergom: the library, the covered passage, the baths, the built garden etc.³⁴ Of course, textual correspondences must be taken with caution, and Bonfini's description at the level of concrete items is entirely independent of what Vitéz may have thought of an ideal dwelling place. However, there is a common background of Bonfini's description and the attitude of Vitéz at highlighting parts of the Plinian text: ideal Humanist lifestyle. The essence of which is the almost sacred act of studying in deep concentration in an important – real and symbolic – place, the *studiolo*. In fact, not only the *studiolo* but the entire residence could express this character of the owner. The villa of the Antiquity in its quality as a place for meditation³⁵ was also part of the Humanist concept of architecture. Vitéz highlights this sentence by Pliny: “that health of body and mind I particularly enjoy in this place, both of which I keep in full swing by study and hunting”.³⁶ Bonfini sums up his description of Esztergom as follows: “It was a place really suitable for thinking and meditation.”³⁷ This remark is more about Vitéz the Humanist, than his construction works. The Esztergom castle is a worthy living place for a Humanist and a philosopher, being the macrocosm of the microcosm of his *studiolo*.

classical and Christian elements – which actually characterizes Vitéz's whole humanism.

³⁴ “Vir fuit archiepiscopatus vehementer accommodus, quippe qui triclinium in arce amplissimum erexit, prominens vero ante triclinium e rubro marmore ambulacrum com duplici podio et superbissimum extruxit. Ad triclinii caput Sybillarum sacellum e fornicato opere acuminatum statuit, ubi Sybillas omnes connumerare licet. In triclinio non modo omnes ex ordine Ungarie reges, sed et progenitores Scythicos cernere erit. Item caldarias frigidariasque cellas et hortum duplicem, quem xystis excoluit et superiore ambulacro coronavit. Inter utrunque turrim rotundam penes rupem erexit in varia triclinia cubiculaque divisam, variis supra specularibus exornatam, quam neque edicula carere voluit; hanc ipse fere semper inhabitavit, quia Danubio prominens iucundum prospectum et hortorum amenitatem afferebat; locus quidem ad philosophandum et contemplandum nimis idoneus. [...] Bibliothecam quoque utriusque lingue fecundissimam dicavit.” (Antonius de Bonfinis, *Rerum ungaricarum decades*, ed. I. Főgel, B. Iványi, L. Juhász, Tomus IV. Pars I. Decades IV. et Dimidia V. Budapest 1941, p. 47–48, IV.3.99–103.)

³⁵ D'ARMS 1979; TOMBRÄGEL 2010; O'SULLIVAN 2006.

³⁶ “Ibi animo, ibi corpore maxime valeo. Nam studiis animum, venatu corpus exerceo.” (Plin. Ep. V.6.46.)

³⁷ See note 34.

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