

Librarian's Old Vocabulary

Alin Mihai GHERMAN
Faculty of History and Philology
1 Decembrie 1918 University, Alba Iulia

Keywords: dictionary, library, librarian, terminology, *bibliotaphus*

Abstract

Written in the period between 1691 and 1702, probably closer to the former date, Teodor Corbea's *Latin-Romanian Dictionary* has continuously been an inexhaustible source of research for Romanian culture ever since the late 17th century. Reclining on Albert Szenczi Molnár's *Latin-Hungarian Dictionary* as a source, as claimed by the author himself, Corbea's dictionary takes over a selected list of Latin words from Szenczi's work, translating or reworking its definitions.

The present research is only concerned with the dictionary's entries connected to books, reading, and the library, convinced that this is the first Romanian text containing references to this field of interest. In addition, the paper also examines the historical uses of an unusual word appearing in Corbea's dictionary, *bibliotaphus*.

E-mail: alinmihaigherman@yahoo.com

*

Written in the period between 1691 and 1702, probably closer to the former date,¹ Teodor Corbea's *Latin-Romanian Dictionary* has continuously been an inexhaustible source of research for Romanian culture ever since the late 17th century. Reclining on Albert Szenczi Molnár's *Latin-Hungarian Dictionary*² as a source, as claimed by the

¹ See, Teodor Corbea, *Dicționar latin—român* (Latin—Romanian dictionary), Cluj: Clusium, 2001, p. 17.

² “**Altorsium, g.n.** orașul în ținutul domnilor norim-bergheani, în care acest noriberghean svat cinsteș bogată academie au zidit în numărul anilor 1575, unde acest Lixicon l-au scris Albertus Molnar în numărul anilor 1603”; “**Argentina, g.f. et Argentoratum** tare oraș al Țarei Nemțești lângă apa Rhenus, în ținutul Alsației. Acolo ca acela înalt turn iaste și bisearecă înfrîmșetată, cît în Europa altă biseaică sau turn aseamine acestora nu iaste. Iaste iarăș acolo o academie vestită, în care de demult mulți înțelepți oameni s-au învățat, unde și eu, care această

author himself, Corbea's dictionary takes over a selected list of Latin words from Szenzi's work, translating, or most often reworking, its definitions.

The present research is only concerned with the dictionary's entries connected to books, reading, and the library, convinced that this is the first Romanian text containing references to this field of interest.

Corbea's text defines a library as a place for keeping books: "**bibliotheca, g.f.** loc de ținearea cărților"¹, being also aware of its adjectival form: "**bibliohtecalis,-e** de loc de ținearea cărților". The word is simultaneously used with "**libraria, g.f.** cămară de cărți" (a chamber for books) and "**librarium, g.n.** loc de țineare a cărților" (a place for keeping books). The word *libraria* refers back to the Middle Ages, when books were read, kept, and sold in the same place; certain modern languages (such as English in the word 'library') have maintained the original meaning of the word, while others have only taken over its meaning of "place for selling books". Modern languages have also forgotten the Latin word of Greek origin "**bibliopolium, g.n.** boltă unde să vînd cărțile" (a shop for selling books), and also the Latin "**tabularium, g.n.** casă de ținut răvașurile (cărțile)" (a house for keeping books/papers), which rather denoted an archive for keeping documents. This term was also used simultaneously with another one which proved to be more successful in time: "**archivum, g.n.** loc de-a ținearea răvașurilor orașului" (a place for keeping the documents of the city). The

carte am scris (adecă Albertus Molnaru) trei ani și jumătate am lăcuit în vremea copilăriei"; "**Theodorus, g.m.** nume de bărbați de obște; **item:** numele acestui de pă urmă, care această carte de pă letenie și ungerie o au tălmăcit rumîneaște". (Altorsium, g[enus] n[eutrum]. A little town in the land of the Nuremberg lords in which this Nuremberg lord – a clever counsel – built a wealthy academy in the year 1575, where Albertus Molnar wrote this Lexicon in the year 1603.); (Argentina, g[enus] f[emininum] et Argentoratum [Strasbourg] strong city in Germany near the river Rhine, in the region of Alsace. There in that high tower there is also an embellished church more beautiful than any other such church or tower in Europe. There is also a famous academy there, where a long time ago many wise men studied, and where I had also lived, who wrote this book (that is, Albertus Molnar), for three years and a half in my childhood.); (Theodorus, g[enus] m[asculinum]. a common name for men; item: the name of this latter one, who translated this book from Latin and Hungarian into Romanian."

¹ The words written in Latin letters were transcribed in bold script. (Note that Romanians used the Cyrillic script as late as the mid-19th century.) (The translation of the excerpts written in 17th-century Romanian wishes to suggest the difficult, laborious syntax and expressions of that language. Translator's note).

person dealing with multiplication and book trade was the “**bibliopola, g.m.** vânzători de cărți” (a book seller), while that dealing with the printing of books was a “**chalcographus, g.m.** tipăritori de cărți” (a book printer), the craft itself being called “**chalcographia, g.f.** tipărire de cărți” (book printing). However, the term “**typographus, g.m.** tipăritori de cărți” (book printer) was also known, and the two terms were also in competition with “**excusor, g.m.** tipăritori afară” (‘printers out’) and “**impressor, g.m.** împreusurători, tipăritori de cărți, călcători” (‘pressers’, book printers). Moreover, the typographic activity was also denoted by the words “**cudo,-is** batu afară, tipărescu afară” (‘to beat out’, to print out) or “**exculco,-as** calcu afară, teșescu afară” (to print out, ‘to beat out’).

The activity of writing itself is also described in the same kind of varied vocabulary: “**graphica, g.f.** meșterșug de-a scrie frumos” (the craft of nice writing), “**graphice** cu împodobire, cu frîmseațe, frumos” (ornately, beautifully, nicely), “**graphicus,-a,-um** de bună orânduială, de frumoasă rodire sau care are rodire frumoasă” (nicely ordered, ‘of nice growth, or which has nice growth’). The correct spelling of writing was expressed by “**orthographia, g.f.** scrisoare adevărată, scrisoare dereaptă” (true writing, right kind of writing). The word which had no continuation in modern languages is “**bibliopegus, g.m.** scriitori de cărți” (writer of books).

The creators of printed or copied books were called “**autores, g.m.pl.** carii cărți au scris” (who wrote books), and the word competed also with “**bibliographus, g.m.** scriitori de cărți” (writers of books), which in the 16th-17th centuries meant the person who multiplied a text of his own or of somebody else (a scribe), and it was not until much later that it acquired the sense used in modern culture.

And, since we are speaking about people who write books, one should not omit the strange nickname of a polyhistor “**Bibliolatas, g.m.** grammatical Didimos s-au numit așa pentru căce că o mie și cinci sute de cărți au scris” (the grammarian Didymus was called as such because he wrote one thousand five hundred books).

As there was no thematic classification yet, the content of the book was often referred to by its very title: “**annales, g.n.pl.** cărți de un an, înșămnarea lucrurilor din an în an, cronică” (yearbooks, the record of things from year to year, a chronicle); “**anthologica, g.f.** carte de învățarea florilor” (a book for learning embellishments); “**chorographia, g.f.** tabla, scrierea ținuturilor” (the table or writing of lands); “**chronica, g.f.** cărți scrise a lucrurilor care au fost” (books written about things that

were); “**commentarium, g.n.** carte de tâlcuit (care tâlcuiăște lucrurile altii cărți)” (a book of commentary, which explains the things of other books); “**cosmographia, g.f.** învățătură pentru scrierea lumii” (learning for the description of the world); “**ephemeris,-idis, g.f.** carte de înșămnat în toate zilele” (a daily book of record); “**geographia, g.f.** scrierea pământului” (the writing of the earth); “**geometrica, g.n.pl.** cărți scrise de măsurarea pământului” (books written on the measurement of the earth); “**georgica, g.n.pl.** scriere de lucrarea pământului” (writing about the working of the earth); “**halicutica, g.n.pl.** cărți scrise de năravurile peștilor” (books written on the habits of fish); “**hodoeporicum, g.n.** scrierea umblărei pre cale” (writing about walking on the road); “**ichnographia, g.f.** scrierea și înșămnarea casei în ce chip să-i tribuie a fi” (the writing and marking of the house for what it should look like); “**ithinerarium, g.n.** scrierea umblării pă drum” (writing about journeys); “**lexis, g.f.** grai, cuvînt; hinc: lexicon carte tâlcuitoare de cuvinte, lixicon” (speech, word; from here: **lexicon**: a book which explains words, a lexicon); “**miscellanea, g.n.pl.** cartea ca aceea în care cu amestecare de fealiuri de fealiuri de lucruri usebite iaste scrisă” (a book like that in which all kinds of various things are written), “**pandectae,-arum, g.f.pl.** carte ca aceea în care tot lucrul de obște iaste” (a book like that in which there are all kinds of common things); “**periegesia, g.f.** carte de ocolul ceștii lumi” (a book about going round this world); **pontificia, g.n.pl.** cărți scrise de țeremoniile popilor” (books written about the ceremonies of Popes); “**regesta, g.n.pl.** catastif” (a register); “**rhetorica,-orum, g.n.pl.** cărți scrise de graiul împodobit” (books written about embellished speech). The term “**cynegetica, g.f.** carte scrisă de vînat” (a book written about hunting) has special significance for Romanian culture; there were several books on cynegetics in the Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance period as well, a tradition which lay at the basis of Alexandru Odobescu’s masterpiece entitled *Pseudo-kynegetikos*, and of which the learned author, being well acquainted with Greek and Roman culture, was very much aware.

Of these Latin terms, many have been taken over by modern culture, usually with specific meanings; however, some of them have become even names of disciplines.

On some occasions the initial sense of Latin words underwent unexpected transformations; such is the case of the groups of words derived from the verb “**circumscribo,-is** împrejur scriu, amăgeăscu” (‘to write round’ [circumscribe], to tempt”: “**circumscripse** împrejur închieiat, pă scurt” (‘to end round’, in short); “**circumscripfitio, g.f.**

împrejur scriere, înlăuntru închieiare” (‘writing round’, ‘ending inside’); “**circumscriptor, g.m.** împrejur scriitori, înșelători” (‘writers round’, cheater); “**circumscriptus,-a,-um** împrejur scris,-ă, hotărît,-ă” (‘written round’, determined), all expressing meanings which were lost in modern languages.

Corbea knew, from his personal experience, or from classical Greek and Latin literature, several kinds of supports for writing, of which we now mention: parchment: “**membrana, g.f.** peliță, țîpă, pergamen care deaca scrii, poți șterge” (a membrane, a film, a parchment which, if you write on, you can erase); “**membranaceus,-a,-um** de pergamen, vezi: pergamentum” (of parchment, see: pergamentum); “**membranarius,-a,-um** făcători de pergamenturi” (makers of parchment); “**membraneus,-a,-um** de peliță, de pergamen” (of membrane, of parchment); “**membranula, g.f.** pergamen mic, hîrtioară mică pă care, deaca scrii, poț și șterge” (a small parchment, a small paper on which, if you write on it, you can also erase); “**pergamentum, g.n.** hîrtie care să șterge de scri-soare, care s-au găsit în orașul Pergamum” (a paper which can be erased of writing, which was found in the city of Pergamon); papyrus: “**papyrus, g.f.** tufă roditoare în Eghipet în chipul trestiei pre care în chip de hîrtie au scris și de aicea chiemăm hîrtiia papyrus” (a kind of shrub growing in Egypt such as a reed, on which they wrote as on paper, and therefore we call the paper papyrus), of which derives “**papyraceus,-a,-um** de hîrtie” (of paper), while the plant itself is also known under its Greek name (“**biblos, g.m.** un lemn din Eghipet, pă cojile a căruia în chip de hîrtie au scris, din lemn-u corăbii au făcut” (a kind of wood from Egypt on the bark of which they wrote as on paper, and of the wood they made ships), and paper: “**charta, g.f.** hîrtie” (paper); “**chartula, g.f.** hîrtioară” (small paper); “**chartaceus,-a,-um** de hîrtie” (of paper), and a large family of derived terms: „**chartarius, g.m.** hîrtiari, făcători de hîrtie” (paper makers); „**chartiaticum, g.n.** plată pentru hîrtie” (payment for paper); „**chartophylacium, g.n.** casă pentru ținutul hîrtiei; ladă pentru ținerea hîrtiei” (a house for keeping paper; a chest for keeping paper); „**chartophylax, g.m.** păzitori de hîrtie” (paper guards); „**chartularius, g.m.** scriitori pă hîrtie” (writer on paper), etc.

The more detailed terminology of paper is also found: „**macrocolumn, g.n.** hîrtie împărătească” (‘imperial paper’); „**marginus,-a,-um** de marginea hîrtiei” (of paper margin); „**margo,-inis, g.f.** marginea fieștecăruia, iarăș mai cu asupră la hîrtie” (the margin of everything, again especially that of paper); „**pagina, g.f.** parte de amîndoao părțile a foaiei hîrtiei, coală” (a side of both sides of a sheet of

paper, a page). The same goes for various terms referring to ink: „**rubrica, g.f.** ciripie, cretă roșie, cerneală roșie, pământ, lut roșu” (pounce, red chalk, red ink, earth, red clay); „**sepia, g.f.** un pește de mare pre care când vor să-l prinzuă, negrime spurcată sloboade afară din trupu-ș, în care ca întru fum întu-necat pre sine să ascunde înaintea păscarilor; iarăș: cerneală” (a big fish which, when they want to capture it, releases a dirty blackness of its body, in which it hides itself from the fishermen as in a dark smoke; again: ink); „**tryginon, g.n.** cerneală făcută din drojdii de vin” (ink made of wine lees); „**atramentarium, g.n.** călimări, vas de cerneală” (inkwell, ink-pot), „**atramentum, g.n.** cerneală sau vâpsală înnegritoare” (blackening ink or dye), or to writing implements: „**penna, g.f.** peană” (feather/quill); „**pennarium, g.n.** tecușă, ținătoare de condeai” (a holder for pens/quills); „**calamarium, g.n.** tecuș în care să țin condeai” (a holder in which pens/quills are hold); „**calamus, g.m.** trestie, fluiet de trestie, condeai” (reed, a reed pipe, a pen); „**graphiarum, g.n.** tecușă, ținătoare de condeai” (a holder for pens); „**graphium, g.n.** condeai de hier, condeai de plumb” (an iron pen, a lead pen), etc.

However, the strangest word is „**bibliotaphi, g.m.pl.** coșigători de cărți, adecă oamini ca aceia, carii, când pot căpăta oarecare cărți bune, la nimini nu le părătescu, fără numai șie în taină-ș cetesc” (book concealers, that is, people like those who, when they receive some good books, do not share those with anyone, only read them in secret). The term is not part of classical Latin vocabulary, but it is a later formulation belonging to Oppian. What is the meaning of this term then? It was created in the age of a society which contained several elites, all incorporated into the larger circle of the *literati* (the intellectuals). Erudition was a privilege of a limited group of people, divided according to their interests into groups who often opposed each other.

One such group was that of the guardians of pagan Antiquity; whether or not they converted to Christianity, the members of this group hold ancient Greek and Roman culture as a model of stylistic and cultural perfection and refinement, but at the same time also of a world approaching its decline.

The other group was represented by “radical” Christians, who tried to annihilate “pagan” culture in its entirety in parallel with the instauration of the new religion. The lives of the saints are filled with acts through which the often newly baptised adepts of Christianity demonstrated their faith by the destruction of temples or merely statues, seen as idols. The destruction of “pagan” texts appeared less frequently

in hagiographical texts, but possibly such acts were just as frequent in reality. Such a deed was less spectacular than the destruction or mutilation of statues; accordingly, it has escaped historical memory which usually dwells on extraordinary facts.

The salvation and preservation of these texts could have been seen as an act of dissidence, so that one of the possible solutions was to hide them. Of these *bibliotaphi* speaks Oppian in his *Cynegetica*. A great part of ancient culture was saved in such a way, and the texts thus preserved repeatedly renewed the cultural life of the Christian world by their contact with famous models, often organized in a hierarchical Pantheon of the value of authority.¹

Nevertheless, sudden changes in history have often resulted in such destructions, some of which were unfortunately irrevocable, but also in their being saved by the heroic initiative of isolated individuals. Rebellions, revolutions, and wars have most often resulted in such situations. The French Revolution, seen in historiography as an outstandingly positive instance in the history of mankind, ended with an irreparable destruction of artworks and books. The Russian Revolution in 1917 also produced so many destructions that Lenin, a man of books and libraries, decreed that all the libraries confiscated because of the revolution should be taken to a state library. In Romania the “purging lists” of the libraries, as well as individual fear, led to the destruction and self-destruction of libraries. In addition, the activity of some *bibliotaphi* led to the preservation of books otherwise censored by the authorities of the age, who later lent them for others to read with the greatest precaution and responsibility. As a beneficiary of such kinds of libraries I cannot but bow to them in consideration for their courage and human dignity.

However, in the course of history there have been other kinds of *bibliotaphi* as well, hateful and mediocre. Those who, if they got hold of a book, refused to lend it to others, because their entire professional and scholarly career was based on it. Or if that book was found in a public library, it was permanently borrowed by them or even listed as lost. How many times have we stumbled upon such situations! I remember the example of a professor who, having obtained a scholarship in the United States, left the country as a professor of scientific socialism, and returned as a specialist of sociology, a field which, only a few years before that,

¹ See: Ernst Robert Curtius, *Literatura europeană și evul mediu latin* (European literature and the Latin Middle Ages), Bucharest: Univers, 1970, p. 63-69.

he and others like him had considered reactionary, because of a verdict which was given by one of his likes as a result of a personal conflict in 1945. Later on, he published books that we all read with great interest, but nobody had access to the literature cited, which was only available in his own personal library; then, when this secondary literature became accessible to all, it was proven that all the professor's works were poor compilations.

This category must not include personalities like Adrian Marino, who circulated via their works bibliographic information accessible for only a few in the whole country. Their endeavour can only be understood as an act of human dignity, for which we are grateful. In opposition with the other *bibliotaphus*, Adrian Marino generously offered his library for reading. Not to anybody, however. I had the chance of profiting from reading some of his books that he lent me with generosity, and which I could not have had any other chance to obtain in those times.

There is another form of the modern *bibliotaphus*: those people who, because of their position or personal circumstances (such as scholarships abroad, etc.), have access to a wider literature, and impose a completely new discipline or subject for their field. In most cases, however, they lack originality, their success is only temporary, and it vanishes together with the passing of the "fashion" they promote, or with the opening of general access to the information they have built their work on.

Generous by saving culture in the difficult times of history, and hateful by not allowing access to his own books, the *bibliotaphus* seems to be facing two different directions at the same time, like Janus, determined by the intention which lies in the background of hiding his books: saving them for others, or keeping them hidden for himself.

The *bibliotaphus*, a strange term as it is, appears in all critical times of culture. Used (and probably also created) by Oppian, it reappeared in the crisis time of Humanism, and also at the beginning of modernity, in Hobbes' works. Perhaps we should reintroduce it as well into our common vocabulary.

Translated by Emese G. Czintos