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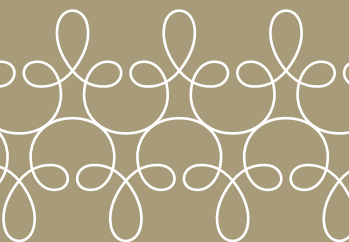
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Family and Emotions

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Family and Emotions

Gabriella Erdélyi
Special Editor of the Thematic Issue

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Negotiating Widowhood and Female Agency in Seventeenth-Century Hungary

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The case study focuses on the tactics of aristocratic women to negotiate their familial roles and identities primarily as wives and widows. By reading closely the rich family correspondence of the Várdai-Telegdi family in the first half of the seventeenth century and concentrating on the intensive negotiating period between getting widowed and remarrying the study argues that the role of the go-between and the marginal status of women in the patrilineal and patriarchal family created some space for them to maneuver. Moreover, the cultural context of female familial roles and ties (mother and daughter, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, half-sisters) was the female court, which created horizontal and intimate ties between women, which also empowered them.

Keywords: female agency, negotiating female roles, female courts, family network, half-sisters, mother-daughter relationship, emotional practices, letter exchange

My sweet beloved lady mother, I wish our Lord God had allowed me to write better news for your Grace, my beloved husband was summoned by our Lord God a week ago, leaving us, my poor [...] child and me in my present condition [i.e. she was pregnant] rather lonely, I beg your Grace for the living God that your Grace would not leave me alone, but would instead visit me.¹

In the first days of her widowhood, the 17-year old Krisztina Nyáry shared with her mother, Kata Várdai, her painful feeling of being an outsider in both of her families: after having lost her husband, she remained alone among her late husband's kin, while she also had to request support from her mother, who lived far away from her. The present article looks at the ways in which early modern aristocratic women maneuvered in their intermediate position between their natal and marital families. How did they mediate as wives, and how did they use their roles as mediators for their self-fashioning and their individual purposes? How did they negotiate their liminal status as widows to gain support and reintegrate into shifting family networks? Like births and marriages, deaths

¹ Krisztina Nyáry to Kata Várdai. Zsolnalitva (Lietava, Szlovákia), October 26, 1621. MNL OL, P 707, Missiles, no. 10699.

were followed by an intensive negotiating process among family members (on which the letter cited above touches), resulting in the reconfiguration of the family network. Therefore, in this article I focus on these periods of intensive bargaining in the life-cycles of the families to which Krisztina belonged.²

The protagonist of the following case study will be Krisztina Nyáry (1604–41), whose life, however, was fairly exceptional. Following the untimely death of her first husband, Imre Thurzó (1598–1621), his relatives pushed her aside. She was not only denied to receive the right of tutorship of her two little daughters, but, with the explicit aim of ensuring that her daughters would be raised as Lutherans (Krisztina was Calvinist), their daily care and upbringing was also entrusted to their paternal grandmother.³ This was a fairly extraordinary turn of events, since in Hungary as well as elsewhere in Europe widowed mothers were considered legitimate and capable tutors of their half-orphaned children, who were seldom separated from their mothers, especially at such a tender age. Also, instead of widowed mothers, the remarried mothers tended to be stigmatized as “cruel” and divested of the right to serve as tutors.⁴

By looking closely at this *exceptional* case, I aim to better understand *typical* contemporary concepts and everyday practices within the family.⁵ I will draw on the argument that familial roles are cultural constructs and have culturally distinct dynamics. It has been repeatedly argued that the maternal role of early modern aristocratic women was overshadowed by their role as wives in the patriarchal family. In other words, husbands expected their wives less to perform their maternal duties and more to fulfil services in the interest of their new families acquired through marriage. In short, female identity (as opposed to male identity) was more decisively shaped by the social bond created through marriages than the blood tie of maternity.⁶ How did Krisztina Nyáry, widowed in pregnancy and with an eight-month-old baby, maneuver in the spaces and gaps created by the web of familial expectations and ties? Drawing on the letters exchanged among family members, I offer a portrait of her in her natal family fulfilling the role

2 See Broomhall and Van Gent, *Gender, Power and Identity*.

3 See for example Duchonová, “Női családi szerepek.”

4 Horn, “Nemesi árvák a kora újkorban.” On the case of an elite widowed mother raising her own children, see also Balogh, “Özvegység, újraházasodás és testvéri kapcsolatok.” On how and why remarrying mothers were stigmatized as “cruel” by their children and marital family members, see: Klapisch-Zuber, “The ‘Cruel mother’.”

5 For the meaning of the concept “exceptional normal” proposed by Italian microhistorians for the problem of representativity of exceptional cases, see Peltonen, “Clues, Margins, and Monads.”

6 Chabot, “Seconde Nozze e Identita Materna,” 495–96; Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, 100, 107.

of adult daughter and sister and as daughter-in-law in her relationship with her mother-in-law, Erzsébet Czobor.⁷

In Krisztina's natal family, the head of the family was Krisztina's widowed mother, Kata Várdai (1570–1630). Kata Várdai had played this role since losing her second husband, Pál Nyáry, in 1607. In the 1610s and 1620s, she lived together with her adult daughter from her first marriage, Anna Telegdi (1589–1635), in the old Várdai-family residence, the castle of Kisvárdá in the eastern region of Habsburg Hungary, next to the Principality of Transylvania. Their unusual co-residence resulted from the fact that, in 1609, Kata Várdai had her 20-year-old daughter Anna marry her stepbrother, István Nyáry, who was the son of Kata's second husband, Pál Nyáry. The stepsibling match, as usual, promoted both the economic and emotional integration of the stepfamily.⁸ The step-siblings, Anna and István, were close to each other in age, and as they had been living together as part of the same household for a decade, they knew each other well. The newly married couple found it entirely natural to remain in "beautiful Várda," in spite of the fact that they had numerous estates to choose from.⁹ Thus, Anna's half-sister Krisztina, who was five years old at the time, got a 19-year-old surrogate mother in the person of her half-sister and a 24-year-old surrogate father in her brother-in-law. This cohabitation of the half-sisters came to an end in 1618, when Krisztina left Kisvárdá. Kata Várdai, always keeping a sharp eye out for a promising match for her daughter, managed to catch the attention of Imre Thurzó, the talented and immensely wealthy son of the late palatine. In the autumn of 1617, Imre and Krisztina, who was only 13 years old at the time, were engaged, and one year later, they were married.¹⁰ As custom dictated, Krisztina moved in with her husband's family in Biccse (today Bytča, Slovakia), which lay in the western region of Habsburg Hungary.

The asymmetry in the position of the half-sisters provides a good opportunity for a variety of observations. In the case of Anna, the fact that her natal and marital families merged and she remained in her natal home

7 Forty-eight letters written by Krisztina to her mother have survived from the years between 1618 and 1624 (MNL OL, P 707, no. 10661–10708), while all the letters written by Kata Várdai to Krisztina were lost. We know of nine letters written by Krisztina to her sister from the years between 1619 and 1633 (MNL OL, P 707, no. 9696–9704), seven of which are dated prior to 1624. All of Anna's replies are lost. On the correspondence between Krisztina Nyáry and Erzsébet Czobor, see Duchonová, "Női családi szerepek."

8 For more on the practice of stepsibling marriages, see Erdélyi, "Stepfamily Relations in Autobiographical Writings," 146–67 and Warner, "Conclusion," 239–42.

9 "Beautiful Várda": Anna Telegdi to Kata Várdai. Várda, April 4, 1622 (MNL OL, P 707, no. 10868).

10 Ipolyi, *Bedegi Nyáry Krisztina*.

as a married woman resulted in an exceptionally close and intimate but also increasingly hierarchical mother-daughter relationship, on which I have written in detail in another study.¹¹ Krisztina, in contrast, played the common mediating role of married women between their natal and marital families. The dual use of names is one of the indications of the double identities of wives.¹² Accordingly, the newlywed Krisztina signed her letters *Niari Christina*, while others referred to her as “my lady Mrs. Thurzó.” How much influence and freedom of movement did Krisztina have in the court of the Thurzó family, and how did she manage to maneuver and negotiate this space between two dominant mother figures, Kata Várdai and her mother-in-law, Erzsébet Czobor? It seems reasonable to surmise that the role of the go-between and the marginal status of women in the patrilineal family created some space for them to maneuver. Below, I examine the tactics used by the extremely young widow Krisztina, who has been depicted by historians as simple-minded,¹³ when she mediated between the two very dominant mother figures governing the two families.

The relationship of the half-sisters was asymmetrical not only in terms of their age (Anna was 14 years older than Krisztina), but also with regard to social rank and wealth due to the differences of their paternal and marital families. Historians tend to assume that differences and hierarchies between sisters and brothers, which were typical in patriarchal families at the time, led to conflicts and rivalries.¹⁴ We will thus observe whether and how, instead of or alongside the love and solidarity one would expect between sisters and half-sisters, rivalry and negative emotions found expression. It becomes clear from the family correspondence that the cultural backdrop of the mother-daughter, mother-in-law, daughter-in-law, and sister relationship was the female aristocratic court in more general terms, the female domestic community. How did these alternative female friendship and kinship ties influence women’s roles and identities as wives, widows, mothers, and daughters-in-law in the patriarchal family?

11 Erdélyi, “Anyaság a kora újkorban.”

12 On the uses of names by aristocratic women, see Péter, “Az asszony neve.” In the signatures at the ends of their letters, the women of the aristocracy usually used their Christian names and the names they had inherited from their fathers. Only rarely did they also use their husband’s names with the “né” suffix (which in Hungarian means, roughly, “woman of” and which corresponds, again roughly, to the title Mrs. in English). This use of the husband’s name with the suffix “né” was used only in exceptional cases on its own.

13 Péter, *Esterházy Miklós*.

14 Ruppel, *Verbündete Rivalen*.

Between “Two Mothers”

When Krisztina suddenly found herself with “two mothers,” the mother-daughter relationship became a triangle. In this triangle, Erzsébet Czobor also corresponded with Kata Várdai, whom she informed about her daughter’s pregnancy:

My loving daughter-in-law and my sweet little grandchild and maiden daughter are in good health [...]. I would also like to let you know that on Michaelmas my loving daughter-in-law learned of the gift bestowed by God, whom let his holy majesty allow her to bear in peace joy and bring happily into this world and with your graces reach this time in good health.¹⁵

Krisztina found herself in the role of mediator between the two mothers. She delivered greetings and letters from the one to the other. As she wrote in one letter, “My dear heart, My Lady Mother, I have given the letter which your grace wrote to my Lady her Greatness.”¹⁶ In other words, Kata Várdai put the letter she had written to Erzsébet Czobor in with the letters she had written to her daughter, and Krisztina passed this letter on to her mother-in-law. Furthermore, Krisztina knew of the letters written by her mother-in-law to her mother, and she adjusted her own letters accordingly, both from the perspective of timing¹⁷ and from the perspective of their content: “I know that My Lady her Greatness wrote of our news.”¹⁸ And as she was a member of the women’s court of Biccse, she had to adapt in many ways to this life and, first and foremost, to the head of the court, her mother-in-law. On one occasion, she felt obliged to offer an explanation as to why she had not written for two weeks:

I was given four letters from My heart, my Lady Mother to which I could not reply, I beg your grace to forgive me for not having replied,

15 Erzsébet Czobor’s letters to Kata Várdai, which, with the exception of the last two, were written while her son was still alive: MNL OL, P 707, no. 10278–10309 (1618–February, 1622). On Krisztina’s pregnancy: MNL OL, P 707, no. 10308, the end is missing (after August 9, 1621). Kata Várdai’s letters to Erzsébet Czobor: National Széchényi Library, Manuscript Collection, Fol. Hung. vol. 2638/2. (The collection of copies of letters by Hungarian women) fol. 167, 210–11, 337–38, 415 (1617–1621).

16 Krisztina Nyáry to Kata Várdai, April 28, 1620 (MNL OL, P 707, no. 10661).

17 See for example: “My sweet heart, my Lady Mother, as my Lady her Greatness sent letters to Tokaj, I too wanted to visit your grace and inquire as to your grace’s health and how your grace is faring.” Krisztina Nyáry to Kata Várdai. Zsolnalitva, January 7, 1620 (MNL OL, P 707, no. 10691).

18 Krisztina Nyáry to Kata Várdai. Zsolnalitva, October 31, 1619 (MNL OL, P 707, no. 10668).

because My Lady her Greatness and my husband his grace were undergoing purgations, and I had to busy myself with them, and this is why I could find no time to write to your Grace.¹⁹

Thus, Krisztina did not maintain an independent correspondence with her mother. She did not have anyone to deliver letters on her behalf, but rather wrote when the court messenger traveled to her mother's court. Her letters concerned news of the events which took place in the women's court of Biccse, including news of visitors, illnesses, weddings, and funerals. This kind of collective character of her letters is particularly remarkable: indeed, instead of a letter exchange between two individuals, the female court community of Biccse corresponds with that of Várda.²⁰ It is common knowledge that early modern letter-writing (the writing, circulation, and reading of letters) was a collective social practice.²¹

It is of particular interest in this case that, beyond the family network, the female court also functioned as an "epistolary community."²² At the beginning of her letters, Krisztina often addressed her half-sister and her mother, and at the end she sent her greetings,²³ and she also passed on the oral greetings from her mother-in-law, her unmarried sisters-in-law (the "misses" who were still living at home), her married sisters-in-law, who were visiting their mother,²⁴ as well as other female retainers such as the nurses and wet-nurses, and the noble maidens ("young ladies"): "My dear, my Lady Mother, Lady Erdődi is here,²⁵ and Lady

19 Krisztina Nyáry to Kata Várdai. Biccse, June 2, 1620 (MNL OL, P 707, no. 10690). Her last letter before this was written on May 16.

20 Geographically it meant a distance of circa 500 kilometers, as Biccse is situated in the northwestern region of what was Habsburg Hungary, while Várda (Kisvárda today in Hungary) was in the eastern parts. However, during these years, Várda became attached to the principality in the peace treaty of Nikolsburg (1621) as a result of the military victories of Gábor Bethlen, Prince of Transylvania (1613–1629), over Ferdinand II Habsburg, King of Hungary (1618–1637) during the Thirty Years' War.

21 Schneider, *The Culture Of Epistolarity*.

22 On this concept, see *ibid*, 22–28.

23 For instance, at the beginning of the letter written on December 13, 1620: "I hope that the good Lord keeps your graces in good health for many years, both my loving sister and my Lady." (MNL OL, P 707, no. 10662).

24 In the school which she maintained in her court in Biccse, the grandmother raised many grandchildren, boys and girls, and her married daughters often used her court in part for this reason. See Bódai, "Szülői szerepek és gondoskodás." Czobor Erzsébet Mint Anya És Mostohaanya." And Erzsébet Czobor's letters to Kata Várdai: MNL OL, P 707, no. 10278–309.

25 György Thurzó and Erzsébet Czobor's eldest daughter, Borbála Thurzó's first husband (they were married in 1612 and he died in 1620) was Kristóf Erdődy.

Vízkelety²⁶ arrived yesterday, they offer their services to your grace. Similarly, the three maidens²⁷ offer their services with great love.”²⁸

Krisztina brought the so-called “old woman” (Lady Bogáti), the head of her court, from Várda with herself, so she repeatedly asked her mother to arrange for payment of her salary: “I do now know where the payment for my old woman will come from, as here in the upper regions there are other customs, they say, and they do not want to pay her, but rather my sweet lady mother, your grace agreed with her about her payment, so I ask your grace that your grace not leave the poor thing on her own.”²⁹ She also asked her to send news of her children, “for she longs for her children so sadly, the poor thing.”³⁰ As was characteristic of her, Kata Várdai entrusted her younger daughter Krisztina’s request to her elder daughter, Anna, and Anna turned to her cousin, Erzsébet Szokoly, who took care of the children’s placement: “Your grace should bring the sons of the poor Lady Bogáti with you [...] my lady fears for their poor mother that she will grow sad, thus your grace, my sweet loving lady should act the way that it be avoided, and Lady Bogáti may serve with good heart around my sweet sister.”³¹ By the time they had come to an agreement, the “old woman” had returned to her children: “My heart, my Lady Mother, with regards to the affairs of the old woman, there is one who was brought from Léva who twirls around me quite well, but Lady Bogáti has left me, she by no means remained with us. I serve your grace’s good will, but it is already done.”³² With this, the ties which bound Krisztina to Várda and her mother were further loosened, and the ties which bound her to her new home, her new “mother,” and the women’s court of Biccse were tightened, and we are offered glimpses into the functioning of the network of pragmatic relationships among these women.

26 György Thurzó and Erzsébet Czobor’s daughter, Mária Thurzó, wife of Mihály Vízkelety (1594–1662).

27 Erzsébet Czobor’s younger, still unmarried daughters, Anna Thurzó, Katalin Thurzó, and a third who may have been named Erzsébet.

28 Krisztina Nyáry to Kata Várdai. Biccse, Saturday 1619 (MNL OL, P 707, no. 10665).

29 Krisztina Nyáry to Kata Várdai. February 10, 1619 (MNL OL, P 707, no. 10677).

30 Ibid. On April 24, she asked her mother again: “As for what concerns the affair of my old woman, indeed she would love to go and see her children, so my sweet loving soul, my Lady Mother, send to their home to find out how they are, and your grace write it to me.” (MNL OL, P 707, no. 10675.)

31 Anna Telegdi to her niece, Erzsébet Szokoly. Várda, April 20, 1619 (MNL OL, P 707, no. 9216).

32 Krisztina Nyáry to Kata Várdai. Zsolnalítva, January 15, 1620 (MNL OL, P 707, no. 10683).

With her advantageous marriage Krisztina had become the wife of a count, and thus had risen from the ranks of the barons to the ranks of the counts.³³ This had changed her position in her natal family, and this is palpable in the communication between Krisztina and her mother. For example, as opposed to her elder sister, she does not hesitate to make frequent requests to her mother, which indicates a shift towards a more equal relationship with her mother.

Some of her letters to her mother were not written in her hand. Rather, she used the services of a scribe, which was another act with which she negotiated her subordination as a daughter.³⁴ She anticipated that this act would be met with rebuke: “My sweet loving soul, my lady mother, forgive me, your grace, that I did not write your grace with my own hand, I could not write with my own hand, but after this I shall.”³⁵ Beyond the rhetoric of daughterly subordination and obedience, her use of emotional language is remarkable, as it mirrors the emotional language of her mother and thus again positions her vis-à-vis her mother on more equal terms. The newlywed young wife shared her feelings of sadness with her mother in the following words: “Even if I had no other grief, I would still lament that your grace is far from me, my sweet lord is in the camp, he writes nothing to us, our only affair is the many thoughts day and night.”³⁶ Krisztina wrote many times of the abandonment she suffered as a member of her husband’s family, and she expressed her longing for her mother’s love many times:

My sweet heart, my Lady Mother, I understand from your grace’s letter that I wrote that I am of heavy heart in my sweet Husband’s absence, were I closer to your grace, your grace would take me to her, and certainly I would have no grief were I with your grace. Your grace also wrote that your grace can show no motherly love to me, my dear heart, My Lady Mother, I believed that your grace wished me well, I have no doubt.³⁷

The way she shares her feelings suggests that mother and daughter had a confidential relationship, and it also seems expressive of a desire to maintain an emotional bond that would bridge the distance between them: “My loving heart,

33 György Thurzó invented the Hungarian title of count, drawing on the German example, and in 1606, he became the first person on whom this title was bestowed. Pálffy, “A Thurzó család.”

34 Her half-sister, Anna Telegdi wrote all her letters to their mother herself.

35 Krisztina Nyáry to Kata Várdai. Biccse, March 16, 1619 (MNL OL, P 707, no. 10676).

36 Krisztina Nyáry to Kata Várdai. Zsolnalitva, October 31, 1619 (MNL OL, P 707, no. 10668).

37 Krisztina Nyáry to Kata Várdai. Zsolnalitva, January 15, 1620 (MNL OL, P 707, no. 10683).

my Lady Mother, I also understand from your grace's letter that your grace is glad to hear of my health, even if I am so far away, I believed this, even if your grace does not write it to me."³⁸ In other words, she sensed her mother's love for her even in the absence of words.

Krisztina's sense of alienation in her husband's family's court was somewhat eased by her close ties to some of the members of the female court. She cherished a close friendship with her maiden sister-in-law, Katica Thurzó. This friendship must have inspired the rare comic tone of one of her letters, in which she used playful irony deriving from overstatement: "My dear Katica Thurzó offers her loyal, perfect, true, humble, and lifelong services to your Grace as her beloved, kind, and above all beautiful lady and sister. She asks your Grace to keep her among all your Grace's servants as the smallest dishwashing maidservant."³⁹ This letter suggests that these domestic female alternative kinship and friendship ties, including the bonds between sisters and sisters-in-law, may have made the marginal status they had in the patriarchal family more endurable for women.

Krisztina had to ask her mother, who lived a great distance from her, to send her a prayer-book for her comfort in her time of mourning, since she could not turn to her mother-in-law with her emotional, spiritual, and moral needs, as her mother-in-law did not strive to play the maternal role in emotional terms: "My dear heart, my lady mother, I ask your Grace to send me a prayer-book, a Hungarian one, I will return it to your Grace as my beloved lady mother, since the one I brought with myself, while I was lying [when she was confined to bed before giving birth] has been lost, I could never find it."⁴⁰ István Nyáry, Krisztina's half-brother and brother-in-law, escorted the mourning mother and the "body of the poor lord" from the court of Biccse to Zsolnalitva, the place of the burial. Although he wanted to calm his anxious wife (Anna, Krisztina's half-sister) by reassuring her that Krisztina was being shown due attention by her marital relations, his words seem to suggest, rather, the very uncertain place Krisztina had in her late husband's family: "Thank God my lady sister [Krisztina] is moderately well in her bitter condition due to the fact that the Old Lady her Grace [Krisztina's mother-in-law] avoids crying in front of her, since my Lady Sister is in a heavy condition [she is pregnant] and there is a great hope that Lord God will bless her Grace with a boy."⁴¹

38 Krisztina Nyáry to Kata Várdai. Biccse, Saturday 1619 (MNL OL, P 707, no. 10665).

39 Krisztina Nyáry to Anna Telegdi. Biccse, May 29, 1619 (MNL OL, P 707, no. 9696).

40 Krisztina Nyáry to Kata Várdai. Zsolnalitva, May 16, 1622 (MNL OL, P 707, no. 10704).

41 István Nyáry to Anna Telegdi. October 30, 1621 (MNL OL, P 707, no. 9679a).

Following the death of her only son, the most pressing issue for widow Erzsébet Czobor as head of the family was to secure the transfer of wealth to the next generation, if possible on the male line, so she was temporarily concerned about the health of her pregnant daughter-in-law. When Krisztina gave birth to a girl, however, her hopes were dashed. As Krisztina did not help secure the continuity of the Thurzó male line, she lost what little prestige she had had in her marital family. Consequently, the Thurzós not only refused to acknowledge her right to tutor her daughters and rejected any claim on her part to their considerable inheritance, but in order to secure their Lutheran faith in the future, their upbringing was entrusted to their paternal grandmother.⁴² This was unusual, since widowed mothers were usually deprived of their right to serve as tutors to their underage children only if they remarried, and they often could continue to provide daily care for their daughters and govern the schooling of their sons in their reconstituted families as well.⁴³ In other words, the paternal families of underage half-orphans were concerned not about the influence of widowed mothers on the transmission of wealth, but rather about the influence of their new husbands, who became the stepfathers of the children in question.⁴⁴ This kind of fear is articulated as a charge during the court trial against Krisztina's new husband, Miklós Esterházy, over the tutorship of the Thurzó daughters: "Ezterházy is eager for the estates of the orphans [...]. This title also deprives the woman of the tutorship, since she has also changed her name of her husband. And she has bound herself to a person eager to acquire the orphans' estates".⁴⁵

But what fed these strong fears of the powerful Thurzó family when the woman they were dealing with was a 17-year-old widow? It seems improbable that they were indeed worried that much about the Lutheran upbringing of the girls under the care of a Calvinist mother, which they claimed before royal judges.⁴⁶ Rather, they probably saw Krisztina as a risk factor in their campaign to receive the right of cognatic inheritance from the king, since the only tie between the two dynasties⁴⁷ had been broken with the death of Imre Thurzó, which

42 See for example: Duchonová, "Női családi szerepek."

43 For some examples, see Horn, "Nemesi árvák," 64–68.

44 On the collective fears concerning stepfathers, which found expression in law, see Warner, "Conclusion."

45 MNL OL, P 108, Repositorium 29., Fasc. B., no. 26., fols 1–7.

46 MNL OL, P 108, Rep. 29., Fasc. B., no. 28., fol. 14–18.

47 I use the concept of dynasty as an equivalent of the term *familia*, which was used at the time to denote lineages deriving from the same ancestor. Thus, I extend the meanings of the term from its narrower usage (a term for ruling families) to economically and politically powerful aristocratic family networks.

immediately turned the allied in-laws into enemies (“atyafiakból idegenek”). Repeated marriages between dynasties were remedies of the fragility of family connections and served to prevent or resolve conflicts by stabilizing alliances.⁴⁸ The marriage arranged by Kata Várdai for her 14-year-old daughter three years earlier had constituted a venturesome step: the bride had been the best possible match in the country at the time, but the Thurzós had been outsiders to the dense network of alliances among the Várdai-Telegdi-Nyáry-Szokoly-Melith-Csapy families.

As a result, following the death of her husband, Krisztina’s ties to her marital family were open to negotiation, but it seems that she did not trust her mother to come to her aid and provide support for her either. In this “liminal” moment, it was not at all evident that she belonged to her natal family. This bond was similarly open to negotiation, and in this process, in which their integration into or exclusion from the family was at stake, widows could play an active role. In the transitory period following the death of her husband, Krisztina tried to earn her mother’s support by assuming the role of the helpless and vulnerable widow:

Your Grace can see that I am a feeble woman, who can trust no one apart from God, only in your Grace. One of my supports was taken away from me by God, I am helpless on my own. [...] My beloved Lady Mother, I ask you for the living God that your Grace would come to me. The testament of my beloved husband, who now rests with the Lord, is with me, which is another reason that your Grace should visit me.⁴⁹

Her cry for help fell on deaf ears. Kata Várdai seems to have enjoyed her daughter’s defenselessness and humble plea, since she pretended not to have understood from the above letter that her daughter badly needed her help. Krisztina therefore had to repeat her request:

My heart is happy about your Grace’s reassuring words in her letter, which I will return with my services. My God has visited enough sorrow upon me, but his sacred will must be fulfilled. My beloved Lady Mother, your Grace has also asked me to write to your Grace whether your Grace’s visit was indeed necessary. My beloved Lady Mother, yes, it is absolutely necessary, since we have remained rather desolate in our present state. We do not know ourselves yet when the funeral will take

48 Spieß, *Familie und Verwandtschaft*.

49 Krisztina Nyáry to Kata Várdai. Zsolnalítva, October 26, 1621 (MNL OL, P 707, no. 10699).

place, because nothing is ready yet for it. If your Grace comes up here, we will talk about it together⁵⁰

Krisztina's mother had already refused to provide support for her on other occasions, and Krisztina had had to beg for things that adult daughters of the time would have expected from their mothers. In January 1621, she even had to remind her mother of the risks of her upcoming childbirth: "My Lady Mother, I still ask you not to spare your energy and to visit us up here, who knows whether Your Grace can ever see me again."⁵¹ She had to entice her mother the same way following her husband's death. In this case, his testament, in which he made arrangements concerning the future of his widow and their daughters, served as the bait. Krisztina mentioned it in the post script: "My beloved Lady Mother, my only beloved husband has ordered in his life that I should not show it to anyone, only your Grace, thus if your Grace refuses to visit us, we will go against his last will." Krisztina thus strove to earn her mother's support by presenting herself as vulnerable and her mother as indispensable.⁵²

For Kata Várdai, it was not self-evident that she would remain at her daughter's side when Krisztina gave birth. In October 1620, István Nyáry, her son-in-law, urged his wife Anna to send her mother to be at her younger daughter's side:

I would very much like my dear beloved soul, if my Lady her Highness [Kata Várdai] would come here by the time Mrs. Imre Thurzó needs to stay in bed [to give birth], perhaps His Majesty [the Prince of Transylvania] would also let me go in front of her Highness [Krisztina, who was approaching the last month of her pregnancy] and also home. My lord Imre Thurzó has shown me today her mother's letter, in which she writes that my sister has not got more than five or six weeks before she gives birth.⁵³

The son-in-law had to remind her of her maternal duties again, when Krisztina was close to giving birth for the second time: "With regards to your Highness's desire to leave, I do not see any possibility for your Highness's departure, since it would be very painful for my Lady Sister."⁵⁴

50 Krisztina Nyáry to Kata Várdai. Zsolnalitva, November 7, 1621 (MNL OL, P 707, no. 10700).

51 Krisztina Nyáry to Kata Várdai. Zsolnalitva, January 18, 1621 (MNL OL, P 707, no. 10696).

52 Krisztina Nyáry to Kata Várdai. Zsolnalitva, October 26, 1621, postscript (MNL OL, P 707, no. 10699).

53 István Nyáry to Anna Telegdi. Pozsony (Bratislava, Slovakia), October 21, 1620 (MNL OL, P 707, no. 9667).

54 István Nyáry to Kata Várdai. Szucsány, February 1, 1622 (MNL OL, P 707, no. 10659).

Although Kata Várdai may not have been able to satisfy her daughters' emotional needs (most probably because of her own traumas she had suffered as a child), when she felt that her authority as mother was in danger, she vehemently defended it. When she was in conflict with her younger daughter and threatened to withhold her affections if Krisztina were to give in to her husband and convert from Calvinism to Lutheranism, she essentially was making a defensive show of her own power and prestige:

I beseech your grace, my sweet heart, Lady my mother, do not be cross with me for this issue of faith, for I have come to know my God and I want to remain in the true faith, as I do this not following my own head, but because I have read the Holy Scriptures and my beliefs are in accordance with them. My sweet heart, Lady my Mother, I also understand from your letter that your grace looks on Lady Erdődi⁵⁵ as an example, Lord Erdődi, before he married her, took her hand and gave a letter of faith confirming that he would not trouble her over her faith. My sweet heart, my Lady Mother, your grace also wrote that Lady Thököly⁵⁶ also did not leave her faith, because my sweet heart, my Lady Mother, they also took care for her. Your grace also writes in her letter that I have forgotten your grace's motherly admonitions. Lord forfend that I forget your grace's motherly admonitions, but I owe this to my God, and also that as long as I live, I strive to serve your grace with a true heart.⁵⁷

According to the script for emotional blackmail, first Kata Várdai created a sense of fear in her daughter by accusing her of having defied her mother, and then she would withhold her motherly love ("do not be cross with me"). She would then try to appeal to her daughter's sense of reason or even jealousy by mentioning Krisztina's sisters-in-law (Borbála and Katalin Thurzó) as examples of women who, though they were in denominationally mixed marriages (to Kristóf Erdődy, a Catholic, and István Thököly, a Calvinist), nonetheless remained adherents of the faith they had received from their parents.⁵⁸ Then, using the typical tool at the disposal of the emotionally manipulative, she would

55 On Borbála Thurzó, see footnotes 25 and 58.

56 György Thurzó and Erzsébet Czobor's daughter Katalin Thurzó (1601–1647) married István Thököly of Késmárk in 1620.

57 Krisztina Nyáry to Kata Várdai. Biccse, April 4, 1620 (MNL OL, P 707, no. 10693).

58 Regarding Borbála Thurzó's religious belonging, we know that she converted to Catholicism during her second marriage under the influence of her second husband, János Draskovics. Her first husband, Kristóf Erdődy, was buried in the chapter church of Nagyszombat (Tyrnava, Slovakia), which means that when he died, he belonged to the Catholic Church. Furthermore, several sources indicate that Katalin

try to make her daughter feel guilty by accusing her of showing no regard for the religious upbringing she had been given (“Lord forbend that I forget your grace’s motherly admonitions”) and, in doing so, neglecting her duties as a daughter.⁵⁹

For Kata Várdai, her daughter’s religion was a question of immense importance, as her very prestige as a mother was at stake. By mentioning the Thurzó daughters, she was clearly also sending a message to Erzsébet Czobor, who may very well have had close knowledge of Krisztina’s correspondence with her mother. If her daughters had remained true to the faith into which they had been born, then Kata Várdai’s daughter clearly also should be granted the right to be left in peace on matters of religion. If Krisztina’s actual commitment to her faith had been a question of importance to her mother, Kata Várdai never would have allowed her to marry first a Calvinist and then a Catholic.

Krisztina reacted with a show of confidence to her mother’s attempts at emotional blackmail, which shows that she was not as closely dependent on her mother as her sister was and she was better able to protect herself. In order to reassure her mother, she reproduces the lesson she has probably heard many times also from her mother. Drawing on the polemical discourse of the era (and in doing so, showing herself to be resourceful and knowledgeable), she uses the only argument that was considered a legitimate explanation for the choice of faith. She claims that she has come to know the truth, which she came to know, furthermore, by reading the Scriptures. In other words, she made this decision not as the consequence of some miracle, but rather through intellectual endeavor.⁶⁰ In short, she insists that she is not abandoning the Calvinist adherence to the truth which she came to know, as a child, by reading the Bible. She closes her letter with the following words:

My sweet heart, my Lady Mother, your grace wrote that my loving husband is indeed fortunate, I believe that my God saves his grace from all evil, and anything should happen I believe my God that your grace will not withhold your motherly love from me.⁶¹

Thurzó remained Lutheran and provided support for Lutheran publications. I would like to thank Borbála Benda for this information.

59 Emotional blackmail is used to create a sense of fear, guilt, and failure to fulfill obligations and, in doing so, to sway the person targeted to give in and submit to the other person’s will instead of enduring these negative emotions. Forward and Frazier, *Emotional blackmail*.

60 This is the reasoning found in the Protestant and Catholic narratives of conversion at the time, both by women and by men. Erdélyi, “Confessional Identity.”

61 Krisztina Nyáry to Kata Várdai. Biccse, April 4, 1620 (MNL OL, P 707, no. 10693).

With this sentence, she deviates from her earlier argument according to which her free choice of faith can only be based on knowledge of the truth, and she writes instead of the influences of family ties and the conflicting pressures being put on her by her husband and her mother. In other words, here she speaks of her actual situation, although she uses the conditional mode. It is worth noting that she is actually saying the same thing here, in her own words, that she may have read in Péter Pázmány's narratives of female conversion:⁶² family compulsions stand in the way of following the truth one has realized. And while Pázmány, the Catholic archbishop and polemicist, calls on transcendent forces to help resolve this inner drama, Krisztina proposes the possibility of unconditional maternal love. At the same time asks her enraged mother (still using the conditional) to respond with unconditional love were Krisztina to defy the maternal will, or in other words were she chose to disobey her and convert.⁶³ Thus, in the seventeenth century, the idea of conditional parental (paternal) and unconditional maternal love existed side by side, and Krisztina skillfully manipulated this in her conflict with her mother to gain some room for maneuver. By referring to her duties to God ("I owe this to my God") in her confrontation with her mother, Krisztina seems to put Kata Várdai against God himself.

Krisztina's assertiveness with her mother was facilitated by her intermediate position between her two families. Her intermediate position found expression very markedly when Krisztina lost her husband, and the two families became entangled in a fierce rivalry for control over the young widow. Though her mother-in-law left Krisztina with no influence over her daughters, this did not mean that Krisztina was excluded entirely from her marital family. On the contrary, Erzsébet Czobor tried to secure the smooth intergenerational transmission of wealth by reintegrating Krisztina (and her considerable paternal and maternal inheritance) into the Thurzó dynasty. She wanted to arrange Krisztina's next marriage herself (instead of allowing her natal family to arrange it) within the circle of the Thurzó allies and in-laws. Below, I examine the stages of the rivalry between the mother and the mother-in-law, who as the heads of their families sought to strengthen their families' prestige and influence by forging a new alliance.

62 For example in his treatise entitled *Nyolc Okok*, or "Eight Reasons," which Pázmány wrote it in an effort to convert the aristocratic widow, Judit Révay. Erdélyi, "Confessional Identity," 476.

63 We do not actually know what happened, but it is possible that there was an attempt to convert Krisztina in Biccse. In the end, she converted to Catholicism in 1624 as Miklós Esterházy's wife.

The Rivalry between the Two Families for Influence over the Widow

In 1622, Kata Várdai entrusted her motherly role for her daughter and granddaughters to her daughter's mother-in-law: "My dear beloved Lady, I entrust to your to Highness's maternal care, as if to my own eyes, my beloved orphaned⁶⁴ daughter, together with her sweet children, and I ask from my heart your Highness not to withhold your Highness's motherly love and care, which your Highness has shown them so far."⁶⁵ This gesture was intended to calm the furious matriarch, who had expressed her indignation when her rival, Kata Várdai, has proposed, as if offering a compromise, that she would take her daughter home with her and the granddaughters would be sent to the Viennese court. Unsurprisingly, Erzsébet was not appeased by the offer. In January 1623, she pressed her daughter-in-law to sign an agreement in which she forfeited any claim to the right to raise her own daughters.⁶⁶

At the same time, Várdai started negotiations in the background, her intimate allies being her elder daughter and her husband. In February 1622, shortly before Krisztina gave birth to her second child, Várdai sent her son-in-law István Nyáry to meet with one of the highest dignitaries of the country. Nyáry wrote in one of his letters to her to confirm that he had received her instructions: "I have received your Highness's letter, I understand your Highness's order that I should talk and arrange my sister's affairs [Krisztina's affairs, his wife's half-sister] with my lord brother, Péter Révay. [...] I strive with all my heart to serve in all possible ways my beloved lady sister."⁶⁷ Várdai also sought to "free" her daughter from the "captivity" of the Thurzó family. In 1623, she recurrently expressed her anxiety to her elder daughter over Krisztina's plight: "My sweet daughter, I have no rest day and night in my thinking about my poor sweet orphan, your younger

64 In the patriarchal noble family, only children who had lost their fathers, the head of the family, their male superior responsible for their wellbeing were legally considered orphans. Therefore, widowed women in Hungary were similarly called "orphans," and they referred to themselves as orphans, thus emphasizing their vulnerability. For more details, see Erdélyi, *Özvegyek és árvák a régi Magyarországon*.

65 I quote the letter from the biography of Imre Thurzó, in which the author does not tell us the date of the letter. Kubinyi, *Bethlenfalvi gróf Thurzó Imre*. <https://mek.oszk.hu/05600/05613/html/>. Last accessed on 2 July, 2020.

66 "Transaction between Krisztina and Erzsébet Czobor in the castle of Trencsén, in front of Szaniszló Thurzó, about the supporting, education and caretaking of the children." MNL OL, P 108, Rep. 29., Fasc. B., no. 31, fols 23–25, and fols 26–27. The Thurzós referred back to this "agreement" during the court trial over tutorship from 1624.

67 István Nyáry to Kata Várdai. Kassa, February 29, 1622 (MNL OL, P 707, no. 10658).

sister, and how could we rescue her from that Purgatory”⁶⁸ In another letter, she wrote “I am so very desperate about the fate of my poor orphan [...]. You could write me, my sweet daughter, what exactly they want, or we can speak about it when God brings you home. Somehow we must rescue your sweet sister from there.”⁶⁹

Meanwhile, Kata Várdai informed Krisztina that she would “try to please my relatives, which I will do by readily serving them.” The advice she gave as Krisztina’s mother may well have been a tool with which she sought to gain some time in preparation for the next battle in the war for influence over Krisztina and control of her future and for the negotiations taking place in background concerning her next marriage. By this time, Kata Várdai had a candidate for the groom, as is clear from comments made by Krisztina in one of her letters to her mother: “From your Grace’s letter I understand that your Grace anxiously takes care of me, which I fully believe, since after God I trust only your Grace. My sweet heart, my lady mother, with regards to the Kassa affair, I ask your Grace to tell me more about it.”⁷⁰ The term “Kassa affair” is a reference to Kata Várdai’s attempts in the city of Kassa (today Košice, Slovakia) at arranging Krisztina’s second marriage.

At the same time, she asked her elder daughter to procure the approval of the prince of Transylvania for the marriage between and Krisztina this man, since the man was in his service. Anna touches on this in one of her letters to her mother:

I understand your Grace’s order concerning my sweet sister, therefore I trust my God that I will be able to achieve this, especially if the assembly in Kassa took place, claiming that my husband is ill, as he is, as if he was present at the assembly in your Grace’s name [...], I would have a wonderful chance to carry out this plan. He [the groom candidate] was next to His Royalty in Tokaj as well, as Csáky says, who praises him moreover to be a good young man [...]. If only my God would allow him to become my kind brother-in-law, whom I could keep as my son.⁷¹

68 Kata Várdai to Anna Telegdi. Várda, Friday, 1623 (MNL OL, P 707, no. 9808)

69 Kata Várdai to Anna Telegdi. Várda, Tuesday, 1623 (MNL OL, P 707, no. 9811).

70 Krisztina Nyáry to Kata Várdai. Biccse, September 17, 1623 (MNL OL, P 707, no. 10705).

71 Anna Telegdi to Kata Várdai. Csicsva (Čičva, Slovakia), September 8, 1623 (MNL OL, P 707, no. 10872).

While Anna Telegdi readily attempted to carry out her mother's plans, Kata Várdai soon produced an alternative candidate: Miklós Esterházy, who at the time was the second most influential political dignitary and who soon (in 1625) would become palatine of Hungary. Talks were underway with him at the time too, and Kata Várdai was seeking the advice of her son-in-law for on final decision. István Nyáry offered her the following reply:

Your Highness commands me to write whether I prefer Eszterházy or the other man from Kassa. For many reasons Eszterházy is better, but I do not trust this and cannot imagine any way to carry out this plan. I cannot tell about Lord Csuti of the affair either, the Eszterházy affair, since he does not like Eszterházy. We could achieve this in other ways too, if only my sister has not tied herself in the meantime to elsewhere, since I know well that a servant of my Lord Eszterházy is coming to my lady Highness with whom we can arrange the affair if both God and my sister want it.

István Nyáry passed on the latest news to his wife.⁷² While the married stepsiblings may have had doubts concerning the implementation of their “mother’s” ambitious plans, they unbendingly supported her aim of getting back their sister and marrying her off again. Krisztina’s happiness may well have been an important consideration, but so was the extension of the kinship network with the addition of another powerful in-law. Krisztina meanwhile found herself faced with other pressures: her mother-in-law was mapping the marriage market with the help of her in-law, Szaniszló Thurzó, the palatine of the kingdom (it was after his death in 1625 that Miklós Esterházy would become palatine).⁷³ In the summer of 1623, they were considering having their widowed daughter-in-law marry Ferenc Liszti, the captain of Szamosújvár (Gherla, Romania) and Szaniszló’s brother-in-law.⁷⁴ In a letter to István Nyáry, Thurzó announced their intentions to the Várdai-Telegdi family, asking them to support their decision:

Last summer with my beloved wife⁷⁵ we contacted your Grace and your Grace’s beloved wife with our letters sent from Pöstyén,⁷⁶ announcing our will that we want to marry the widow of the late Count Imre

72 István Nyáry to Anna Telegdi. Kassa (Košice, Slovakia), February 12, 1624 (MNL OL, P 707, no. 9681).

73 Szaniszló Thurzó (1576–1625) was a distant cousin of György Thurzó (1567–1616), the late husband of Erzsébet Czobor.

74 The Palatine Szaniszló Thurzó’s wife was Anna Rozina Liszti, whose first cousin was Ferenc Liszti.

75 Anna Rozina Liszti.

76 Piešťany (Slovakia), one of the most spa towns of the region.

Thurzó, my Lord Brother, to my Lord brother-in-law Ferenc Liszthius and also asking your Grace to promote the case with my lady Mrs. Pál Nyáry,⁷⁷ on whose good will the issue depends. Your Grace has promised his great the support and solidarity of his kinsmen, in which we fully trust. We have written again to Mrs. Pál Nyáry about the same affair, and we assume that we will not be disappointed in our hopes, if her Highness displays her good will. Therefore, we request your Grace and your Grace's beloved wife (to whom we offer our services through your Grace) to recommend the case to my lady Mrs. Pál Nyáry so that we receive her kind answer. Your Grace should believe that we will gratefully compensate your Grace's trouble and kinsman's solidarity in all times. We recommend the affair also to the Prince of Transylvania,⁷⁸ so that his Majesty can also propose our affair to my lady Mrs. Pál Nyáry, your Grace should not let his Majesty forget the case. We expect your Graces kind answer.⁷⁹

Assuming that they were superior in power, the Thurzós make a rather extraordinary and even offensive request as if their wishes were merely the natural order of things. Finding a spouse for a woman who had been widowed was considered the responsibility of the families into which they were born, and it was only a question of decency and custom to ask the consent of the family of the deceased husband.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, as the affair between the Thurzó and Várdai-Telegdi families suggests, the search for a new spouse for a young widow was in fact a power game, during which family relations were subject to negotiation. Obviously, chances for cooperation instead of conflict must have been better in cases in which the two dynasties belonged to the same dense network of marital allies and were connected in several ways. The self-confidence of the Thurzós, reflected in their bold request, was arguably a rhetorical tool intended simply to convince the rival family that they had no say in the matter or little chance of prevailing if they attempted to defy the will of

77 Kata Várdai, the widow of Pál Nyáry.

78 Gábor Bethlen, Prince of Transylvania (1613–29).

79 Szaniszló Thurzó to István Nyáry. Vienna, February 29, 1624. (MNL OL, P 707, no. 7964). Quoted in Slovak translation by Duchoňová, *Palatín Mikuláš Esterházy*, 402. <https://veda.sav.sk/kniha/duchonovadiana-palatin-mikulas-esterhazy-dvorska-spolocnost-a-aristokraticka-kazdodennost>. Last accessed on September 22, 2020.

80 On how Erzsébet Czobor expressed her feeling of outrage at not having been asked to accept the marriage see Duchonová, “Női családi szerepek,” 51. In eighteenth-century Russia it was the right of the deceased husband's family to organize the wedding for the widow. (I would like to thank Barbara Alpern for this information.)

the Thurzó clan. But they were aware of the fact that the Várdai-Telegdi family also wielded considerable influence, and they tried to overcome this by dividing their enemies. The stepson and son-in-law István Nyáry was approached in the hopes that he would be able to sway Kata Várdai, who was the decision-making matriarch of the family.⁸¹ István's phrasing implies that Krisztina did not refuse the idea of this marriage: she preferred to be reaffirmed as a member of the more powerful Thurzó kinship network as the wife of Ferenc Liszthius than to be compelled to marry the man her mother had found for her in the meantime, the young nobleman (whom I could not identify) in the Bethlen entourage.

At that moment, Kata Várdai was definitely losing the battle. The matriarch of Várda did not respond well to challenges to her authority. At the beginning of 1624, she launched a bold, new campaign, as a result of which, in February, the new candidate for Krisztina's hand in marriage was Miklós Esterházy, the best possible match, the new rising star on the cloudy sky of the divided kingdom. In other words, respecting neither God nor secular power (Esterházy was a Catholic, and he was the leader of the Habsburg-oriented political group), she won him as her daughter's second husband. He was a widow and 20 years her senior, and he would refer to her as "my son" until his death.⁸² This was a final blow to Erzsébet Czobor. The royal fiscus was just donating the ancient Thurzó lands, given the failure to produce a male heir, to the political rival of the late Imre Thurzó, Miklós Esterházy.⁸³ And even though Esterházy was a parvenu among prestigious aristocrats like the Czobors, Thurzós and Várdais and they spoke about him among themselves with contempt,⁸⁴ mothers and widows were still locked in fierce contest for his hand. At his first wedding, in 1612, when he was still unaccustomed to the wealth he had gained through marriage, he made a cheeky show of this. Anna Telegdy, who was present for the wedding, wrote of this in a letter to her mother: "My dear lay mother, no one has presented any gifts, since Eszterházy refused to accept them, saying that he has enough wealth anyway." Anna also wrote to her mother of how she had been unable to resist the pressures put on her by the groom, and she had accepted the role of

81 István Nyáry to Anna Telegdi. Kassa, February 9, 1624 (MNL OL, P 707, no 9682).

82 Merényi, "Esterházy Miklós újabb levelei Nyáry Krisztinához," 354–86 and 481–512., *passim*.

83 Kubinyi, *Bethlenfalvi gróf Thurzó Imre*. <http://mek.niif.hu/05600/05613/html/>. Last accessed on July 9, 2020)

84 When Krisztina told her mother-in-law the news of her upcoming wedding, Erzsébet Czobor reminded her of how shocked her mother and sister had been when Esterházy had wanted to marry Zsuzsanna Erdődy. Letter quoted by Duchonová, "Női családi szerepek."

bridesmaid.⁸⁵ Kata's new son-in-law, like her, was not lacking in willpower, which he learned to assert shrewdly and delicately, thus securing the loyalty of others and avoiding uses of force. Anna wrote of his generosity in a letter to her mother written twelve years later during the preparations for Krisztina's marriage: "I have received today from my lord Eszterházy a very nice pearl necklace and a diamond ring, and we gave him a handkerchief and a chief of flowers."⁸⁶

Krisztina was apparently not disturbed by the huge age gap. She decided to go home to her mother, leaving her daughters behind in the Thurzó court only once Esterházy had become her betrothed. Thus, maneuvering between the two family matriarchs, she managed to make the decision concerning who would be her second husband. Her distancing from her marital family is reflected by her newfound ability overtly to say no to her mother-in-law's requests, which she did more than once in her letters sent from her natal home following April 1624. This constituted a shift in the language of subordination that she continued to use.⁸⁷

Erzsébet Czobor, who was also very sensitive to the smallest challenge to her authority, sought like wounded animals to the end. Anna wrote of this in a letter to her mother five days before Krisztina's wedding at their curia in requests: "Mrs. Thurzó wanted to grab my sister from us and take her to the castle of Árva,⁸⁸ only the palatine⁸⁹ could stop her from holding the wedding there and having it consummated by Krisztina and Lisztius".⁹⁰ Krisztina therefore needed to be attentively guarded: "My beloved lady mother, yesterday I sent the steward and the old woman [the head of the women's court] to Letava⁹¹ for some of my belongings, since I was not allowed to go myself."⁹² Esterházy had an entire army to escort him, and he oversaw the preparations himself.⁹³ The successful outcome of the "battle," however, remained uncertain up to the very end: "People were rather afraid that the events will take another turn, [...]. God

85 Anna Telegdi to Kata Várdai. Szentmiklós (Beregszentmiklós, Чинадїйово, Ukrajna), 1612 (MNL OL, P 707, no. 10870).

86 Anna Telegdi to Kata Várdai. Szucsány, July 16, 1624 (MNL OL, P 707, no. 10876).

87 Duchonová, "Női családi szerepek," 52.

88 Oravský hrad, in north Slovakia, another castle of the Thurzó family,

89 Szaniszló Thurzó (1576–1625), palatine (1622–25).

90 Anna Telegdi to Kata Várdai. Szucsány, July 16, 1616 (MNL OL, P 707, no. 10876).

91 Castle of Lietava (Lietavský hrad, Slovakia), a nearby castle of the Thurzó family where Krisztina held her court.

92 Krisztina Nyáry to Kata Várdai. Szucsány, July 16, 1624 (MNL OL, P 707, no. 10707).

93 See the above letter of Anna Telegdi to her mother about their arrival and reception in Szucsány. Szucsány, July 16, 1624 (MNL OL, P 707, no. 10876).

be praised, in modest silence, not blatantly, my dear lady mother, God's power is abundant and your Grace find calmness in her sweet motherly heart."⁹⁴

The Half-Sisters

Anna often played the role of caring mother not only with her mother but also with her sister. Given the large age difference between them, the elder half-sibling regularly found herself in the role of a mother. Anna seems to have played this caring role with the child (1610–1618), the wife (1618–1621), and the widow (1621–1624) Krisztina, too.⁹⁵ She worried about her little sister when Krisztina was pregnant, much as a mother might have.⁹⁶ Anna—not Kata Várdai—replaced the book of the gospels which had gone missing when Krisztina was confined to her sickbed: “What my sweet soul sister writes, I take with great joy, though they brought no money, but were I to set some aside, I will buy it for my soul. I will send the Gospels in Károly,⁹⁷ the great national crowd will be there, when we arrive.”⁹⁸ After having worked with her mother for two years on her widowed sister’s “liberation” and the task of finding her a second husband, in the end, in July of 1624, the task of tending to the preparations for the wedding also fell on her shoulders: “Our wains, my sweet lady mother, have not yet arrived, and this will be a great loss, for we do not have good vinegar. [...] Indeed, I face great difficulty, I have come not to a wedding, but rather to worry, they are dancing, drinking, I have to make a fortune from nothing.”⁹⁹ Reading these lines alongside Krisztina’s letter written the same day, one senses some disapproval of her sister in her tone, as Krisztina played the role of a child next to her elder sister and enjoyed the lack of responsibility. Krisztina wrote, “We are quite happy here, the sick girls also danced away the cold. My Sweet loving Lady Mother, I know my loving sister informed your grace of everything.”¹⁰⁰ With the unusual manner in which she indicates the place in which the letter was written (“from Szucsány,

94 Ibid.

95 In the summer of 1624, Krisztina married again. Her second husband was Miklós Esterházy, the most prominent pro-Habsburg politician of the Hungarian aristocracy.

96 See the quote above (in footnote 118) from the Anna Telegdi’s letter to Kata Várdai. February 4, 1622. (MNL OL, P 707, no. 10862).

97 The town of Nagykároly (today Carei, Romania).

98 Anna Telegdi to Kata Várdai. Nagykálló, May 29, 1621 (MNL OL, P 707, no. 10859).

99 Anna Telegdi to Kata Várdai. Szucsány, July 16, 1624 (MNL OL, P 707, no. 10876)

100 Krisztina Nyáry to Kata Várdai. Szucsány, July 16, 1624 (MNL OL, P 707, no. 10707).

with which I am bored”), Anna subtly hints to her mother that she is fed up with the motherly role she has had to play for her sister.¹⁰¹

Anna Telegdi could not openly express her negative feelings about her sister (her indignation in the passages cited above, perhaps a touch of jealousy in passages cited below) to her mother: “my sister was very happy indeed for the money your grace provided her, she will serve your grace as her loving lady mother, though thank God, she did not have great need of it, since the lady her greatness¹⁰² has given her a nice income, I cannot write your grace how pleased she was to see it.”¹⁰³ There is an enigmatic sentence in a letter she wrote in February 1622, after her husband had brought her back from Biccse and Kata Várdai had remained with Krisztina, who was soon going to give birth: “I could write your grace of something quite wondrous concerning my sister, but as God gives me life, I am not an ill-willed sibling, about whom, with your grace coming before God, I will speak amply on whom your grace will marvel.”¹⁰⁴ Anna was referring to her bewilderment at her sister’s conduct. The fact that Kata Várdai was in a position to express negative feelings while Anna was not stems from the fact (and demonstrates) that Anna was in a position of subordination to her mother. She may have felt the compulsion to use veiled references instead of open communication because she had already learned that it was not worth expressing her true feelings bluntly, as they would be ignored or, in a worse-case scenario, she might even be punished for having voiced them.¹⁰⁵

These veiled expressions of negative feelings came to the surface during the family negotiations after the death of Imre Thurzó and Krisztina’s remarriage, but even in these conflict-laden periods, gestures of support and solidarity remained dominant in the relationship between the half-sisters. After the death of her first husband, Krisztina found herself in a difficult situation. Her mother-in-law had been given guardianship over her two daughters and had essentially excluded her from the girls’ upbringing in a manner that was extraordinary. She had also tried to assume control over the issue of Krisztina’s potential remarriage. During these long two years, Anna worried a great deal about her widowed sister’s fate: “Just that my sweet Krisztina Nyáry should live, and may the Lord

101 Anna Telegdi to Kata Várdai. Nagykálló, May 29, 1621 (MNL OL, P 707, no. 10859).

102 Erzsébet Czobor, Krisztina Nyáry’s mother-in-law.

103 Anna Telegdi to Kata Várdai. Beszterce (today Banská Bystrica, Slovakia), July, 1620 (MNL OL, P 707, no. 10850).

104 Anna Telegdi to Kata Várdai. Varannó, February 9, 1622 (MNL OL, P 707, no. 10863).

105 Berne, *Games People Play*.

give her good fortune,” she wrote in a letter to her mother.¹⁰⁶ In addition, she took on numerous tasks in order to bring her sister home from the Thurzó court and ensure that she and her mother find Krisztina a second husband. Her own interests coincided with those of the family: another good match for her sister would serve to raise the social standing of every member of the family.

The rivalry and envy between the two sisters may well have been caused by the difference in their social ranks, which was a consequence of the different paternal inheritances of the maternal half-siblings and the differing statuses of their fathers’ families. The comparatively modest estates left by Pál Telegdi to his daughter, Anna, in Bereg-Zemplén could not compete with the significant estates which Pál Nyáry left his daughter, Krisztina.¹⁰⁷ The resulting inequality, however, was more or less offset by the two clever moves made by the mother, Kata Várdai, who became the head of the family as a widow. The respectable bequest left by István Báthori and the marriage between the stepsiblings, through which Anna Telegdi became István Nyáry’s wife, significantly improved Anna’s position. Krisztina’s two marriages then elevated her well above her sister in social position in principle, but the prestige the two girls enjoyed as the wives of prominent men came largely from the family of their birth, which continued to expect loyalty and service from them.¹⁰⁸ That is why, even when she was the wife of “count” Imre Thurzó and then of “count” Miklós Esterházy, Krisztina Nyáry still referred to herself as the “little sister who serves with a true heart” in her letters to her sister, which indicates her lower position in the family hierarchy. In other words, status in their relationship was determined primarily by their birth order, which typically meant a significant age difference for half-siblings. As we have seen, Krisztina became a playmate of her nephew, Ferkó, who was much closer to her in age, while her elder sister played a motherly role at her side, and she continued to play this role even after Krisztina had married. Krisztina herself associated Anna’s performances of loving concern with Anna’s role as a mother figure: “In this very hour your grace’s humble servant Kristóf Egry has arrived, and I understand from what he says that you are very worried about my sick state. Indeed, I believed him, sweet loving sister, for like my dear mother, your grace has always had such a kind heart to me.”¹⁰⁹ The letter which Krisztina wrote to her mother differ little from the letters that she wrote to her sister. She was able to

106 Anna Telegdi to Kata Várdai. Csicsva, September 14, 1623 (MNL OL, P 707 10874).

107 Benda, *Nyáry Pál és Várdai Kata levelezése*, introduction.

108 See Ruppel, *Verbiündete Rivalen*, 219.

109 Krisztina Nyáry to Anna Telegdi. Zsolnalitva, July 19, 1620 (MNL OL, P 707, no. 9697).

count on compassion and consolation when she wrote of the unpleasant feeling she had in her husband's court of being a stranger. Her sister passed on these concerns to her mother, as if it were considered self-evident that she would do so: "My sweet lady mother, as my letter will make clear to you concerning my dear sister's state, I sincerely pity her sweet soul when she writes that she had no other music than the howling of the wolf, of whom I know God has so far consoled her, because lord Thurzó [Imre Thurzó, Krisztina's husband] went home."¹¹⁰

However, the exceptional, playful, even joking tone of Krisztina's letters to Anna, which seems more the tone of an exchange between equal partners than an exchange between people in a vertical hierarchy, is a clear break from the register of a mother-daughter relationship. The following lines offer a glimpse into the moment when the hierarchy between the two sisters was suspended:

Sweet, loving, dear lady sister, I understand from your letter that your grace found Lady Mihály Czobor¹¹¹ in Pricopan,¹¹² and your grace merrily lived with her, only your grace caused sadness in my heart, when I thought of how in this merriment we cannot be together with sweet Katica Thurzó,¹¹³ I could not bear it without shedding tears. Sweet, dear lady my sister, I ask your grace, let us not be forgotten by your grace, let us be in your grace's memory, if not every time, then at least when your grace sits into the baths.¹¹⁴

Conclusion

The cultural context of the relationships discussed above between female family members (mother and daughter, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, sisters) was the domestic space, which in this case was the aristocratic female courts.

110 Anna Telegdi to Kata Várdai. Kassa, January 29, 1620 (MNL OL, P 707, no. 10843). Nine of Krisztina's letters to Anna have survived from the period between 1619 and 1633 (MNL OL, P 707, no. 9696–9704). Seven were written before 1624, and two were written in her own hand (no. 9700–01). Anna's letters to Krisztina have not survived.

111 Mihály Czobor (1575–1616) was Erzsébet Czobor's younger brother. As his second wife, he took his stepdaughter, Zsuzsanna Thurzó, who was 13 years younger than he (she was the widow of István Perényi). Thus, Zsuzsanna Thurzó was Krisztina's sister-in-law.

112 Révayfalva, or Prékopa by its Slovak name, is today part of the city of Túrócszentmárton (today Martin, Slovakia). Near this, one finds Stubnyafüüdő (today Turčianske Teplice, Slovakia), to which the author of the letter is referring.

113 Katica Thurzó, Imre Thurzó's younger sister, was Krisztina's sister-in-law at the time (she herself was still unmarried). They were close in age, and Katica was a friend of Krisztina's in the court in Biccse.

114 Krisztina Nyáry to Anna Telegdi. Biccse, May 29, 1619 (MNL OL, P 707, no. 9696).

Letter exchanges between female family members have drawn the contours of this pragmatic and intimate kinship network, which functioned alongside the hegemonic patrilineal family and which was organized and inhabited by women, their central figures being mothers and their daughters. This alternative female space and horizontal web of relations may have rendered the marginal status of women in the patriarchal family more livable, since the central role of female networks in making marriages, mediating conflicts, and forming public opinion offered them a significant form of power.¹¹⁵ Thus, I suggest that the longevity of the patriarchal family across centuries can perhaps be attributed not only to its inner “structures of mitigation,” its own flexibility, as Linda Pollock has argued, but also to these alternative female networks and the connections between sisters and sisters-in-law, cousins, and female friends, which contributed to its sustainability.¹¹⁶

We have seen Krisztina Nyáry negotiating her mediating role as wife between her two families and two “mothers,” and the letters exchanged by the sisters and their mother also offer insights into her tactics of gaining the support of her mother by painting a dramatic image of herself as a vulnerable widow. Her excessive use of a stereotypical self-representation as a vulnerable widow may indicate her lack of trust in her short-tempered mother, who was unable to provide unconditional love and predictable support for her daughters due to her narcissistic personality. We also saw how, by maneuvering shrewdly between the two dominant mother figures, Krisztina was ultimately able to make the decision concerning her second husband herself.

One of the general lessons of our case study is, therefore, that women’s in-between position between their natal and marital lineages and their marginality in the patrilineal family could be appropriated by individuals for their own purposes. How widows were reintegrated into the hegemonic family system via their remarriage (assuming that they did remarry, as most widows under the age of 40 did) depended greatly on their own choices and performances, too. Though the mother-in-law’s efforts to reintegrate her wealthy daughter-in-law into her own alliance network may seem exceptional, it was obviously possible, even if Krisztina’s natal family happened to win the rivalry in this particular case. In other words, the remarriage of widows was a negotiating process depending on power relations rather than on static norms or family structures.

115 On female authority acquired via the workings of female networks, see Herbert, *Female Alliances*, passim.

116 Pollock, “Rethinking Patriarchy.”

The elder half-sister offered gestures of maternal care not only to her mother, who often assumed the role of the child, but also to her younger sister. The structural asymmetries of their age, rank, and distance from their mother notwithstanding, the maternal half-sister bond operated on a basis of strong emotional and familial solidarity rather than rivalry. The continuity of the maternal role played by Anna Telegdi throughout Krisztina's childhood, adulthood, and widowhood suggests, moreover, that married women remained in close connection with their natal families.

The manner in which Anna consistently played a motherly role in her relationship with her sister, even during the consecutive life-cycles of Krisztina, plausibly suggests that married women continued to maintain strong bonds with their natal families. This was of particular importance for Krisztina, who was only loosely integrated into her husband's family. The intermediary role played by Krisztina between her two families and the greater spatial and emotional distance from her mother (in comparison to Anna, who lived in the same household as their mother and was thus arguably more dependent on her wishes and her goodwill) rendered her more capable of defending herself from their mother's anger and emotional abuses. The close reading of the mother-daughter debates highlights, furthermore, that in the religious climate of the seventeenth century, alongside the notion of unconditional maternal (or, more generally, parental) love, the concept of conditional love was also accepted.

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Loving Husbands, Caring Fathers, Glorious Ancestors: Male Family Roles in Early Modern Transylvania*

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The study examines how a Transylvanian nobleman, Gáspár Kornis of Göncruszka (1641–1683), created a narrative concerning four generations of his family. Though in his memoir, a patrilineal lineage scheme dominates, a close reading of scattered family documents also provides insights into the practices of horizontal bonding among relatives. The letters and last wills reflect the life cycle changes and represent emotional relationships among family members. By considering the act of writing as an emotional practice, the essay tests the claims of the memoir with the help of other archival and extratextual sources. What were the narrated roles of heroized protagonists, and what were the everyday duties of noble heads of family in the early modern period? The study depicts the transformations of the family network during crisis situations in the Transylvanian Principality.

Keywords: male family roles, kinship networks, egodocument, generational memory, orphanhood, widowhood, seventeenth-century Transylvania

This study presents a case study of family roles for men in the early modern era, drawing on the example of one of the most prestigious families in the Principality of Transylvania, the Kornis family of Göncruszka. At the time when the Kornis family was prominent, strong, dominant heads of families controlled the family networks across Europe. However, the uniqueness of the history of the Kornis family lies not in the internal system of relations of the micro-community, but in the intricate web of the relationship between the family and historical background of the region. The family was pro-Habsburg and Catholic, so it maneuvered as part of a political and religious minority in a principality with a protestant majority which itself was balanced between the Habsburg and the Ottoman Empires. The Kornis house had to endure a series of political attacks, exile, and imprisonment. In the first decade of the early seventeenth century, all

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the male members of the family were persecuted for political reasons; three of them—the father and two of his sons—fell victim to intrigues.

I interpret the family as a network of relatives and emotionally connected individuals who are able to function effectively for the benefit of family members through coordinated political and economic strategies. With the help of scarce sources scattered in the Kornis family's preserved fond in Kolozsvár (today Cluj-Napoca, Romania) and other family archives, I seek not only the answer to how men behaved as husbands and fathers and what tasks they performed as heads of families, but the case of the Kornis house also shows what happened to this individual family in the event of the murder of the head of the family and the loss of the property that would have ensured the physical survival of the family. How was the family network transformed with the loss or absence of the head of the family? Who would play the role of head of the family in such cases, and how? What kinds of bargaining processes, both in the language of power and emotions, accompanied this? What strategies, both usual and exceptional, did the head of the family use when the continuity of the lineage was compromised? These are among the questions to which I seek answers.

The Memoir of Gáspár Kornis: The “Ancestral Gallery” of the Patrilinear Line

In his short memoir, Gáspár Kornis of Göncruszka (1641–1683) presents the history of the Kornis house, beginning with his great-grandfather, also named Gáspár, and tracing the family through the patrilinear line.¹ The term “house” in the language at the time referred to the clan, the consanguineous community of brothers from one male ancestor; in this ego document, the Transylvanian branch of the Kornis brothers, whose common ancestor was the great-grandfather.² Gáspár Kornis emphasizes the public significance of the family in the portraits he offers of the heads of the families, while the microenvironments of the protagonists, the everyday family environment, the household (women and children, horizontal relationships), remain obscure. The memoir is a good

1 ANR-DJC Family fond of Kornis de Göncruszka, inv. no. 131. Memoir of Gáspár Kornis. Editions: Szilágyi, “Kornis Gáspár”; Makkai, *Haldokló Erdély*, 199–215; Bitskey, *Magyar emlékirók*, 322–42. I used the original source in my study.

2 Fügedy, *Az Elefánthyak*, 21–25.

example of the patriarchal family scheme, in which the head of the family is the dominant and representative member.³

Early modern patriarchal male identity was closely linked to the role of the family head.⁴ Gáspár Kornis put his thoughts on paper as the head of his family, keeping in mind its destiny as he envisioned it and the prosperity of his descendants. The creation of the work written between 1678 and 1683 was given concrete relevance by the positive and negative changes that took place in his private life. It was a joyous event for him that, having been widowed after his previous long, childless marriage, he now had children from his second marriage.⁵ The author's social place corresponded to the dominant model of male identity at the time: mature adult, husband, father, and member of the social elite. Gáspár Kornis offered a narrative which dwelt on the alleged powers and responsibilities of his predecessors as heads of the family while at the same time legitimizing his own role and place. His intention to create a family of descent can be interpreted as a symbolic gesture. In the glorious "ancestral gallery" of its predecessors, he depicts heroes who had worked to the last drop for their nation and family. Miklós Esterházy also used visual depictions of his living and deceased family members in accordance with his intention to found a dynasty when laying the foundations for a family portrait gallery.⁶

Over the course of four generations, generational memory as an oral tradition fades as it passes away.⁷ By offering a narrative of the grandfather's family past dating back to the time of his great-grandfather, Kornis's work brought to life a collective memory tradition, a community of memory, which became an essential element of family identity after his death.⁸ The first figure summoned

3 Werbőczy, *Hármaskönyve*, 1. rész 112. cím. 1. On the patriarchal family scheme, see Kaser, "Family"; Hendrix, "Masculinity"; Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled*. On the elder Gáspár and his sons, Boldizsár and Zsigmond, see Orgona, *Unikornisok*. On the memoir writer Gáspár, see Gábor, "Emlékezés"; Gábor, "Köszöntés a Krímből"; T. Orgona, "Csalárd mesterség."

4 Shepard, "From Anxious Patriarchs."

5 He married the daughter of Count István Csáky, the 15-year-old Mária Klára Csáky. ANR-DJC Kornis, inv. no. 131. Memoir of Gáspár Kornis, 21r–21v; Bártfai Szabó, *Oklevéltár*, 615, 751–58.

6 Erdélyi, "Inheritance and Emotions."

7 Following Maurice Halbwachs' theory of collective memory, Jan Assmann coined the concept of communicative memory for the recent past, a typical variety of which is the generational memory of recent events, the memories of three to four generations. The memory of one generation adheres to the carrier group. It is created over time, and over time (more precisely, as those who bear it pass away), it fades, giving place to new carriers. Assmann, *A kulturális emlékezet*, 49–60, 133–46; Halbwachs et al., *La mémoire collective*, 143–92; Nora, *Emlékezet és történelem között*.

8 The philosophical-social-psychological concepts of memory and oblivion, historical knowledge, experience, and the ability to narrate traumas are also used in literary and historical studies. Kónya et al.,

in his work is the founder of the Transylvanian branch of the noble family of the same name from Abaúj County, who raised the family to the top ranks of the Transylvanian elite. In the narrative from the elder Gáspár to the younger Gáspár, from great-grandfather to great-grandson, the intention seems to have been to draw a parallel: much as his ancestor had done through good marriages and skillful policies, by crafting a narrative of the family history, the narrator is at the service of the Kornis house and will become a paragon to his successors.

The Glorious Ancestor

The history of the Kornis family in Transylvania began with a good marriage. The nobleman of Abaúj County, the elder Gáspár Kornis (c. 1546–1601), married Ilona, the only daughter of and heiress to Imre Dolhay, the greatest landowner of Máramaros County (Maramureş, Romania). The advantageous marriage, combined with Gáspár's talent, resulted in a brilliant career. As a prestigious landowner in Partium (a region in the Hungarian Kingdom to the immediate west of Transylvania), Gáspár became the lord lieutenant of Máramaros County, the captain of Huszt (today Khust, Ukraine) Castle, and a member of the princely council. Four girls and one boy were born to the first marriage who survived to adulthood. Two sons were born to his marriage to Erzsébet Tholdi of Bihar, who was a daughter of an old landowner family in Partium. Gáspár then became one of the largest landowners of Transylvania with his third marriage to Anna Horváth of Zaránd, the widow of Ferenc Geszthy, general of Transylvania.

Gáspár the Elder is the first hero of the memoir of the great-grandson of the same given name. According to the memoir, he “did a lot of memorable things for his homeland.” The text highlights only two things from his career: one was that he was Captain of the castle of Huszt, and the other was that, because of his diplomatic efforts, King Rudolph sent General Giorgio Basta to help against Michael the Brave, who ruled Transylvania.⁹ The latter is not correct. Michael, the voivode of Wallachia, who occupied Transylvania, sent Gáspár to the king in August 1600,¹⁰ but although the legation immediately preceded the battle at Miriszló (Mirăslău, Romania) on September 18, it had no causal connection with

Kollektív, társas, társadalmi; Balázs and Gábor, *Emlékezet és devóció*; Gyáni, *Az elveszített múlt*; Keszei and Bögre, *Hebly, identitás, emlékezet*; Gyáni, *A történelem mint emlék(mű)*.

9 ANR-DJC Kornis, inv. no. 131. Memoir of Gáspár Kornis, 13v.

10 Szádeczky, *Erdély és Mihály vajda*, 171–75.

it.¹¹ By the erroneous logic of the “post hoc ergo propter hoc,” Gáspár (the author of the memoir) presents his great-grandfather to his descendants as an ideal patriot who fought for his nation.

The other written sources on the role of Gáspár as head of the family help explain why his great-grandson called him “of blessed memory.” He chose a new homeland, thus opening a new Transylvanian branch in the line of the Kornis family. He thus gained a foothold in the principality and, as a consequence of the gratitude shown by the Báthory princes for the services he performed, he elevated his descendants from the nobility of Abaúj county to the Transylvanian elite. He based his family’s wellbeing on a considerable stock of possessions which he acquired partly through his services and partly through his marriages. He carefully laid down the order of inheritance for his sons and daughters by taking care to preclude any subsequent family strife or litigation. Following the political attitude of their father, Gáspár’s sons also inherited his court network. The great-grandfather gave his children a Catholic education and denominational guidance. His descendants became the pillars of the Catholic Church in the principality.¹² As a family head, he also proactively organized his sons’ marriage strategy. As a result of the three marriages, the family’s network of relatives and the size of the estates concentrated in the hands of the family members increased, both in Transylvania and in the Kingdom of Hungary.

Gáspár became a supporter of the Viennese court who cherished the dream of the restoration of a unified Kingdom of Hungary, though he later fell victim to this allegiance. The mercenaries of the Romanian voivode Michael killed the pro-Habsburg Gáspár. Gáspár had thought the survival of the Transylvanian branch to be assured.¹³ He had no idea that two of his sons’ marriages would be childless, nor could he have known that the offspring of the third son would grow up without their father.

The Martyr Grandfather

After the great-grandfather, Boldizsár (c. 1577–1610), the senior son from the second marriage of the elder Gáspár, plays an important role in the memoir. Boldizsár married Katalin Keresztúry in the summer of 1600. Katalin was the only daughter of Kristóf Keresztúry, princely councilor and Captain of Kővár.

11 Basta, united with the Transylvanians and won a victory against voivode Michael at Miriszló.

12 Bailey, “Transferring Family Values,” 174–98.

13 T. Orgona, *Unikornisok*, 104–15.

According to contemporary reports, her dowry came to an impressive total of one hundred thousand forints. She inherited the Szentbenedek (Mănăstirea, Romania) Castle in Belső-Szolnok County, a famous specimen of Transylvanian Renaissance architecture.¹⁴ Unfortunately, the correspondence between the spouses did not survive. Thus, the two letters that Boldizsár wrote to his mother-in-law, Ilona Kőrösy, widow of Kristóf Keresztúry, are especially valuable.

Ilona Kőrösy took control of the estates after the death of her husband in 1599. She was also responsible for finding a husband for her only daughter. Boldizsár's first letter, dated January 22, 1600, provides information on the latter subject.¹⁵ The letter concerns the organization of the proposal, possibly the engagement, which may have been linked to two events.¹⁶ The marriage has already been agreed on between the two parties, as the prospective husband uses the term "my well-wisher lady, my beloved mother." The terms "my lady mother, my lord father" were the terms usually used by a man at the time when he wanted to address his spouse's parents.¹⁷ With this intimate form of address, Boldizsár referred to his future mother-in-law and to the planned family relationship, and using the formulae of the day, he wished her a happy, long life "with all those whom she wishes." The latter, enigmatic reference may even refer to the betrothed girl, about whom, apart from this, there is not a single word in the letter. In keeping with contemporary social norms, the text is limited to the practical details of the proposal. As usual, the groom would have set off accompanied by noble gentlemen, but they were unable to arrive at the agreed time, Tuesday, due to the prevailing conditions because of the war, so he asked the widow to wait until Sunday evening, together with the relatives who had gathered.

Although in the early modern era, the genres of fiction provided the most ample room for the expression of emotions, in this strictly practical text we observe figures of rhetoric which suggest a whole range of heightened emotions on the part of the young man. Primarily, he expresses his concern that he does not fulfill the bride's family's expectations, so the widow, he fears, will prejudice the bride against him or possibly prompt her to change her mind: "Maybe Your Grace could judge me, or could say me a shaky man." In his request, addressed

14 Radibrad Alvisi to Ungnad. In Alba Iulia, 31 July, 1600. Szádeczky, *Erdély és Mihály vajda*, 550; Horn et al., *Politika és házasság*, 192; Biró and Boros, *Erdélyi katolikus nagyok*, 28–31; Lázár, *Erdély*, 34.

15 Boldizsár Kornis to Ilona Kőrösy. In Radnót, January 22, 1600. ANR-DJC Colecția generală

16 Weichart, *Keresztelő, házasság és temetés*, 14–30; Szabó, "Betrothal and Wedding."

17 Jankovics and Kőszeghy, "Szeretők és házastársak."

nominally to the bride's mother but actually to the entire family, he expresses the desire to get to know of his future relatives: "I desire above everything the acquaintance of their graces." He uses exaggeration to emphasize his wish: "it's imperative to wait for us, your grace," "above all I beg your grace." He assures his future mother-in-law of his commitment to her: "Whatever I could do, believe your grace that I would be your grace's willing servant." Last but not least, he expresses his feelings for the bride with the following metaphor: "God knows I would fly, if I could, which I know your grace also would believe."¹⁸

After the assassination of Boldizsár's father, Boldizsár took over as the head of the family. Although he was not the oldest brother, he still managed to expand his power horizontally. In the patriarchal family, the principle of seniority prevailed, but just as the firstborn was not distinguished in the inheritance of property, the principle of equal inheritance was followed according to the law, so in the transfer of authority, it was not only age that mattered, but also suitability for the position of leadership.¹⁹ In the present case, the sources do not permit us to draw a nuanced picture of the power and emotional relations between the brothers, but the relationships among them were marked by both the ability to unite and rivalry and jealousy.²⁰

In Transylvania, the period marked by the rule of general Basta (from the summer of 1602 to the autumn of 1604) were calm, prosperous years for Boldizsár Kornis and his family. The head of the family became one of the most prominent politicians of the principality. He became the general of the Transylvanian armies and the lord lieutenant of Belső-Szolnok county. The short storm of this sunny period came in the spring of 1603, when Mózes Székely launched an attack. Boldizsár had his family flee to the castle in Görgény, and he himself, as the general of the country, confronted the claimant to the throne at Basta's side. The other letter to his mother-in-law, which was written at the time, survived in the archives of the Kornis family. In the letter, Boldizsár, who was away and involved in the campaign, informed his mother-in-law, whom

18 Boldizsár Kornis to Ilona Kőrösy. In Radnót, 22 January, 1600. ANR-DJC, Colecția generală.

19 Erdélyi: "Inheritance and Emotions."

20 The rivalry between György and Boldizsár is indicated by the missile in which the latter, as a member of the General Governing Council of Basta, who ruled Transylvania, asked Emperor Rudolf to exclude his half-brother from his paternal inheritance because he had sided with Bocskai, thereby sinning infidelity. (Request of Boldizsár Kornis to Emperor Rudolf, 17 August 1604. MTA KK Kornis II. 736–739.) However, the division between the half-brothers could only be temporary. As the property affairs between the three of them prove, they formed a strong community of interests and later acted together to achieve their common religious and political goals. See also Bastress-Dukehart: "Family, Property, and Feeling."

he addresses as “my lady my mother in love,” of his health and the military movements. The main motive for writing the letter seems to have been his concern for the fate of the goods and belongings evacuated from Transylvania. He shared his fears with Ilona Kőrösy, the head of the women’s household that remained at home, that if their belongings were taken out of the Szatmár (Satu Mare, Romania) castle, which was full of German guards, they would fall prey to robbing armies. As a good owner, Boldizsár even writes about the importance of ventilation in the spring and cleaning the clothes stored in the chest: “The clothes are now all blown by the wind, we clean them and don them on Monday, no damage has been put them up yet.”²¹

During the Bocskai uprising (1604–1605), Boldizsár lived in exile in Prague, away from his family, as a political refugee. During his absence, he took care of his loved ones by assigning a reliable male supporter to his mother’s household in the person of Zsigmond Sarmasághy, a Catholic nobleman who was involved in family communication.²² The relationship between the widow and the friend reflects the dynamics of male-female cooperation. The good friend managed property matters, and he reassured the worried woman that the passing army had done little damage to the vineyard and that the crops had already been harvested. During his stay in Kolozsvár, he collected information about István Bocskai’s plans and the movement of the troops, and he reported on all this in detail.

From a decade of marriage between Boldizsár and Katalin, only the letters described above, addressed to Ilona Kőrösy (the mother-in-law), have survived. Unfortunately, we do not have direct data on the age of the wife, but we assume that, like aristocratic coevals, Katalin married at the age of 14 or 15, so she was young and inexperienced.²³ Because of the burden of expecting and having children, it was not she but her mother who was at the top of the hierarchy in

21 Boldizsár Kornis to Ilona Kőrösy. In Rozsály, 23 May, 1603. ANR-DJC Kornis, inv. no. 250. no. 6.

22 Zsigmond Sarmasághy of Kövesd was a humanist Catholic clerk. Through his marriage to Borbála Füzy, the widow of István Jósika, who was related to the Báthory family, he acquired the right to manage the most important estate of the county of Torda and the title of Lord Lieutenant of Torda County. In 1604, he was arrested by general Basta on charges of promoting the principality of Gábor Bethlen. During his five-month captivity, Boldizsár Kornis was his main patron and the person who provided the most support for Sarmasághy’s wife in managing property issues. Sarmasághy was released from captivity with the help of Boldizsár Kornis. Sarmasághy sided with István Bocskai in October 1604, thus the Kornis family also found a helper on the enemy side. T. Orgona, *Unikornisok*, 129–30; Lázár, *Erdély főispánjai*, 109–12; Dáné, “A Torda vármegyei elit.”

23 Péter, *Házasság*, 56–58.

the home. Because of her age and her authority, Ilona Kőrösi was, presumably, the one who set the direction for the days, helping her son-in-law manage the home and the estate.

Although it was completely common for the aristocrat husbands in the early modern era to be at home relatively infrequently, as a head of the family, Boldizsár may have felt excluded when his wife had a child in the autumn of 1604 and he didn't remain at home and couldn't see the child.²⁴ The existence of several children who survived to adulthood is indicated by the charter received from King Rudolph in 1606 in recognition of his services to the Holy Crown, his captivity, and his exile.²⁵

After several months of absence, Boldizsár returned home to his family in the summer of 1606 with an amnesty granted in accordance with the treaty of Vienna. Giovanni Argenti, the Jesuit rector of Kolozsvár, who himself had been expelled from Transylvania, captured the scene of family reunification that took place in Nagybánya (today Baia Mare, Romania): the husband, wife and mother-in-law celebrated the reunion with holy communion.²⁶ Once the fate of the family seemed to be consolidated, we have gaps in knowledge about the birth of three children. We know from a later source, the statement made by Katalin Keresztúry (Boldizsár's widow) in 1612 in front of the Pozsony (today Bratislava, Slovakia) chapter, that Ferenc was born around 1607 and István was born in 1609.²⁷ Boldizsár's third child, Borbála, was born at the end of 1610, but by this time, Boldizsár had already been killed. In 1610, together with his half-brother György, he became involved in a conspiracy against Prince Gábor Báthory. During a raid in Szék (today Sic, Romania) on the night of March 24, the prince's men killed György and wounded and captured Boldizsár, who was beheaded in Kolozsvár six months later, in early July, after having confessed under torture.²⁸ The event came to be known as "the assassination in Szék." As

24 The letter of the imperial commissioner György Hoffmann to Ilona Kőrösi informed her of the birth of the child. Kolozsvár, November 1, 1604. Torma, "Okiratok," 258–59.

25 King Rudolph I to Boldizsár Kornis. Prague, August 26, 1606. ANR-DJC Kornis 644. no. 4; MNL OL A 57 Libri regii, vol. V. 769–770. Published Szilágyi, *Erdélyi Országgyűlési Emlékek*, vol. 5, 425–27.

26 Giovanni Argenti: De Societate Jesu 1606. Balázs et al., *Jezsuita okmánytár*, 597.

27 Veress, *A Göncz-Ruszkai Kornis család*, 4.

28 Miklós Nyári to his mother, Katalin Várday. Rozgony (today Rozhanovce, Slovakia), July 10, 1610. MNL OL P 707 Zichy XXXII. no. 10709; Liber annalium raptim scriptus per Michaellem Veyss. Gross, *Chroniken und Tagebücher*, 218; "Mikó Ferenc emlékirata," in Makkai, *Bethlen Gábor*, 42; "Segesvári Bálint krónikája," in Szabó, *Erdélyi Történelmi Adatok*, 175; "Borsos Tamás emlékirata," in Kemény and Nagyajtai, *Erdélyország Történelmi Tára*, 38.

noted above, Boldizsár's daughter Borbála was born after he had been executed. In a petition to King Matthias II in 1614, Katalin referred to her as a "filia posthuma."²⁹

Although the cause of the conflict between the prince and his Catholic councilors was primarily of a sectarian and political nature, it has been narrated in historical memory as the "conspiracy of cuckold husbands."³⁰ According to this story of jealousy, which spread later through the chronicles, on his way to the diet in Beszterce (today Bistrița, Romania), the prince visited Boldizsár's castle in Radnót (today Iernut, Romania), where Boldizsár's beautiful wife caught his eye. In the absence of direct evidence, unfortunately, it is not known how much truth there is in the story. Sources left by family members immediately after the events explain the conflict for political and confessional reasons.³¹

The story of the cuckolded husband appeared decades later in generational memory. The prominent figure in the memoir by the younger Gáspár Kornis is the grandfather, Boldizsár, around whom the author constructs a martyr's story: the hero fights for his family and for his country, fails, and is killed. In telling the story of Boldizsár, the memoir remains quiet on the confessional and political causes of the conflict, explaining what happened to the husband as the consequence of his righteous commitment to protecting his family and himself. According to this interpretation, the person of the grandfather does not appear as a fallen, executed politician, but as a hero, a martyr who defended his family and country. Later, it is also clear from the text that the property which was confiscated from Boldizsár would be recovered by the Kornis family, which would continue to flourish through the Boldizsár's descendants and preserve the glorious memory of its ancestor. On the other hand, Boldizsár's opponents (the prince and his evil advisers) die as a consequence of divine justice. Their riches are scattered, and nothing is left of them apart from the memory of their treachery. The crime committed against the grandparents' house and the family honor is characterized in the memoir as a grave sin against both divine and human law, and this characterization thus explains why the grandfather

29 Katalin Keresztúry to Mathias II, April 10, 1614. MNL OL E 249 1614. no. 18. fol. 45. X 9229, microfilm no. 31491.

30 Horn, "Őnagysága merénylői"; Horn, "Báthory Gábor"; T. Orgona, *Unikornisok*, 150–56.

31 Zsigmond Kornis to Bálint Lépes. Parnó (today Parchovany, Slovakia), October 11, 1610. MTA KK Kornis vol. II. fol. 866–869. Katalin Keresztúry's request. ÖStA Finanz- und Hofkammerarchiv. Hoffinanz Ungarn r. Nr. 101. Konv. January 1612. fol. 41. Katalin Keresztúry's will. Nagyszombat (today Trnava, Slovakia), January 31, 1618. MNL OL F1 Libri Regii vol. XII. 52–53b; MNL OL E 147 fasc. 1. fol. 60–61.

(Boldizsár) would have been justified in being part of a conspiracy against the prince and thus also preserve the reputation of the family.

With the death of Boldizsár, Katalin was left a pregnant widow with two little boys. Earlier, her mother, Ilona Kőrösy, had provided support during her son-in-law's absence, but the situation had changed. Katalin had to take care of her old, sick mother, and she became the head of the family. The burden on Katalin was exacerbated by other circumstances: her husband's execution involved the confiscation of properties, and Katalin's own estates were also confiscated. This meant a complete economic collapse. The family had to flee Transylvania. Katalin's brother-in-law, Zsigmond, who fortunately had not been present when the raid had been held in Szék, also fled to Hungary with his wife, Ilona Pálffy, on hearing the bad news.

The “Seedless” Uncle

The memoir of the younger Gárpár Kornis makes some mention of Zsigmond, Boldizsár's younger brother. Zsigmond fled to Hungary after the assassination in Szék. Then, after Gábor Bethlen ascended to the throne in Transylvania, Zsigmond returned, as he had been granted an amnesty. The memoir mentions the “many glorious duties” Zsigmond fulfilled for his “sweet homeland,” for which he received, exceptionally, esteem and rewards from the princes, Gábor Bethlen and György I Rákóczi. He recovered the Kornis estates and acquired other properties. The memoir highlights Zsigmond's important family role. As a “seedless man,” he left all his goods to his nephew, Ferenc, Boldizsár's son.³² Zsigmond is the first figure of whom the narrator had personal memories and who could preserve and pass on the family tradition.

The Transylvanian branch of the Kornis family survived through the descendants of Boldizsár. There were no children from the marriages of his brothers. Zsigmond's wife, Ilona Pálffy de Erdőd,³³ struggled with a chronic disease, epilepsy, which prevented her from living the usual life of an aristocrat woman.³⁴ She presumably spent most of her time in the castle in Papmező (today Câmpani de Pomezou, Romania). The sources contain very little data concerning her life. Some letters to Zsigmond mention her: “I offer my services

32 ANR-DJC Kornis, inv. no. 131. Memoir of Gáspár Kornis, 15r.

33 Ilona Pálffy de Erdőd (†1637) was István Pálffy's daughter and Miklós Pálffy's (1552–1600) niece.

34 Gábor Perneszy to Zsigmond Forgách, July 22–23, 1616. Szilágyi, *Erdélyi Országgyűlési Emlékek*, vol. 7, 370.

to my aunt.”³⁵ When her husband mentions her in his letters, he almost always writes of her illness: “I would be as I would be, but my poor wife is still in that condition.”³⁶ Although we do not have data indicating that she was ever expecting or gave birth to a child, she may have faced additional difficulties carrying a pregnancy due to her illness.

The head of the family was responsible for the posterity of the family name, so it is not surprising that Zsigmond struggled with the thought of his childless marriage.³⁷ According to the traditional view, disease was a punishment from God. Zsigmond also regarded their situation as a punishment, and he referred to his wife’s condition as a “cross” and “God’s grave whip.”³⁸ In his letters, he suggests that he viewed himself as the sinner on whom punishment was being visited, and he expresses a sense of guilt: “It is above all bitter that I have sinned and my beloved wife is whipped instead of me.”³⁹ A passage from another letter suggests that he identified emotionally with his wife, who was experiencing mental and physical pain, a suffering he described as “so bitter that it surpassed death in many ways.”⁴⁰

Pregnancy, especially in the first months, may increase the risk of epileptic seizures. Pregnancies, naturally associated with marriage, may have exacerbated the wife’s condition and increased the husband’s sense of guilt. Zsigmond nourished his hopes of having an heir for a long time. After caring for Ilona conscientiously and devotedly for four decades, he became a widower at the age of 57 and then considered his chances of remarriage. At the time, he no longer believed he had much chance of having offspring, but he was still tempted by an image of a caring wife who would tend to the tasks of his everyday life.⁴¹ Finally, he gave up the intention to remarry and devoted his attention to his brother’s orphaned children.

35 Pál Pálffy to Zsigmond Kornis, Pozsony, November 7, 1635. MTA KK Kornis vol. II. fol. 1245.

36 Zsigmond Kornis to Pál Bornemisza, Deszni (today Dezna, Romania), September 14, 1635. MNL OL R 210 item 5. no. 170.

37 Oren-Magidor, *Infertility*; Péter, “A gyermekek,” 19–20.

38 In her will, Katalin Széchy also uses the terms “whip of God” and “cross” as an explanation for her husband’s infertility. Horn, “Nemesasszonyok,” 325–46.

39 Zsigmond Kornis to Pál Bornemisza, Papmező, August 25, 1627. ANR-DJC *Colecția József Kemény*, no. 1019.

40 Zsigmond Kornis to György Apafi, Belényes (today Beiuș, Romania), August 11, 1633. ANR-DJC *Colecția József Kemény*, no. 1018.

41 István Bethlen to Zsigmond Kornis, Huszt, March 6, 1638. MNL OL, F 12, fasc. 9. no. 6.; Zsigmond Kornis to Pál Bornemisza, Deszni, October 17, 1638. ANR-DJC *Colecția József Kemény*, no. 1019.

The strengthening of the relationship between the uncle and the nephews and niece naturally followed from the Zsigmond's "seedlessness" and the fact that Boldizsár's children were left half-orphans. The role of surrogate father strengthened the uncle's place as head of the family, and his role as guardian promised additional financial benefits. In the summer of 1613, when he was still in exile in Hungary, he took responsibility for Boldizsár's family and seized the right to control them and their properties. In the spring of 1614, after Prince Gábor Bethlen, hoping for political gain by winning the sympathies of the pro-Habsburg Catholic lord, had recalled Zsigmond to Transylvania, Zsigmond wrote a letter to the Transylvanian parliament in which he asked for the settlement of the situation of "my poor little uneducated, orphaned cousins, children of my poor lord, Boldizsár Kornis."⁴²

After the parliament abolished the proscription against the exiles, Zsigmond settled with his wife, his sister-in-law, and the three half-orphaned children on what had been Boldizsár's estate in Radnót. The ambivalent relationship between the widow and her brother-in-law was reflected in the fact that the castle and estate in Radnót (the property of Boldizsár which had been confiscated) was acquired by Zsigmond not for Boldizsár's children but for himself. Zsigmond did not completely exclude the widow and children, but in the absence of any legal foundation for a claim, Katalin could live "only thanks to the good will of Zsigmond, without any foundations."⁴³ A conflict of interest developed between the two of them. Zsigmond sought to reclaim and unite all the confiscated Kornis estates in his hands, including the former possessions of his two dead brothers. He thus placed Boldizsár's relatives in a vulnerable, dependent position. Between 1613 and 1616, there was a conflict between two families living under one roof, the widow and her brother-in-law.⁴⁴ The widow, Katalin, submitted a claim to the Viennese court for funds for the maintenance of her children and the education of her two sons. She noted that she had "not a slip of land" in Transylvania. In her applications for assistance, she used the rhetoric one would expect of a widow. She emphasized her vulnerable position and the political

42 Zsigmond Kornis's request. Gyulafehérvár, March 13, 1614. ANR-DJC Kornis, inv. no. 250. no. 3.

43 Zsigmond Kornis to Kristóf Borbély. Radnót, May 25, 1614. ANR-DJC Kornis inv. no. 37. no. 1.; Simon Péchy to Katalin Keresztúry. Kolozsvár, December 2, 1616. ANR-DJC Kornis inv. no. 37. no. 28.; Simon Péchy to Katalin Keresztúry, Várad (today Oradea, Romania), December 28, 1616. ANR-DJC Kornis inv. no. 37. no. 31.

44 Gábor Bethlen to Katalin Keresztúry, Várad, December 28, 1616. ANR-DJC Kornis inv. no. 250. no. 31.

loyalty her family had always shown: “*Humillima orphana et perpetua Servitrix, Catharina Kereszthury Magnifici quondam Balthazaris Kornyss relicta vidua.*”⁴⁵

During these years, Zsigmond’s position in the principality was also precarious. In 1616, as a result of a temporary loss of favor, he lost Radnót. Prince Gábor Bethlen donated the castle to Chancellor Simon Péchy.⁴⁶ The chancellor first offered money to the widow, who was a part-owner in Radnót, but Katalin, referring to her children, demanded not money but property in exchange for a share of Radnót.⁴⁷ The following spring, she was given Szentbenedek, which had been confiscated, as well as several other of her husband’s confiscated properties, and she left Radnót with her children. In the meantime, her sons had already grown up. They had to be sent to a higher-level school, which meant financial hardship for the family.⁴⁸

The tension between the widow and her brother-in-law was resolved by developing a new family strategy. As a result of the decision, which was presumably had been in the making for years, both parties were forced to make concessions in order to regain the economic and social influence and status of the Kornis house. Katalin Keresztúry did not remarry, leaving all the property she had inherited from her parents to her children. When her daughter turned eight years old, Katalin sent her to the Clarisses in Pozsony. Thus, Borbála did not have to be married, and her inheritance did not fall into the hands of a different family. Katalin also confirmed the children’s right to inherit by will, according to which all maternal property is divided into three parts, but if Borbála were to make an eternal vow of virginity at the age of fifteen, half of her inheritance would be given to the cloister and the other half to her brothers. Katalin Keresztúry also entered the convent, thus solving the problem of providing support for herself. To avoid further fragmentation of the estate, one of the boys was also assigned to pursue a career in the church after having completed his studies.⁴⁹

The cloister helped Katalin remedy more than her financial problems, nor can one ignore spiritual motivations. Relatives who choose the church vocation,

45 MNL OL E 249 Benigna mandata 1614. no. 18. fol. 45-46. X9229 mf. 31491.

46 Gábor Bethlen to Katalin Keresztúry, Kolozsvár, December 2, 1616. ANR-DJC Kornis inv. no. 37. no. 28.

47 Gábor Bethlen to Katalin Keresztúry, Várad, December 28, 1616. ANR-DJC Kornis inv. no. 250. no. 31.

48 Kristóf Goda to Katalin Keresztúry, Nagyszombat, July 26, 1618. MTA KK Kornis vol. II. fol. 996–997.

49 Katalin Keresztúry’s will. Nagyszombat, January 31, 1618. It was confirmed by Gábor Bethlen on April 24, 1618. MNL OL F1 Libri Regii vol. XII. fol. 52–53.b.

according to the Catholic conception, became “advocates” of family members before God, and they regularly prayed for the forgiveness of sins and for the spiritual salvation of their living or deceased relatives.⁵⁰ Last but not least, within the walls of the distant cloister, along with her daughter, Katalin found peace of mind, as she was able to flee the rumors concerning her alleged disgraceful acts and the alleged illegitimate origins of her daughter.

According to the family strategy, the other important decision had to be made by Zsigmond, who had less and less hope of having children as long as he was at his ill wife’s side, so Boldizsár’s children were the only hope for the continuation of the Transylvanian branch of the Kornis family. However, it took Zsigmond a long time to come to regard his brother’s children not as rivals but as his own heirs. The bargain between the widow and her brother-in-law took place sometime between 1618 and 1624. In 1618, Katalin still regarded her brother-in-law as the usurper of her children’s paternal inheritance, so in her will, she prohibited him from looting them any further.⁵¹ In 1624, before she went to the cloister, she wrote another will according to which she made Zsigmond the “curator” and “defender” of the estates, alongside Prince Gábor Bethlen and Governor István Bethlen.⁵²

In 1638, one year after the death of his wife, Zsigmond began writing his will, in which he named Boldizsár’s eldest son, Ferenc, as his main heir. Twenty years brought about a lot of changes in the relationship between the uncle and the half-orphans. Over the course of his long life, Zsigmond was able to follow the fates of his nephews and niece for a long time, so we can monitor changes in their relationships. Zsigmond supported Ferenc’s and István’s education at the Jesuit Academy of Nagyszombat (today Trnava, Slovakia), where they enrolled in 1618, and he also supported their studies at the Jesuit Academy of Vienna, where they enrolled in 1621.⁵³ He made sure that they would come to the attention of important figures in the princely court, and various rites and ceremonies offered occasions for him to ensure that his nephews would begin to develop contacts in a social space that would be the backdrop of their later lives as adults. The

50 The term comes from the Clarisse nun of Mária Franciska Csáky: “I remain an advocate of Your Graces before God.” Anna Franciska Csáky to Ferenc Kornis. Pozsony, November 11, 1653. MTA KK Kornis vol. III. fol. 1883.]

51 Katalin Keresztúry’s will. Nagyszombat, January 31, 1618. MNL OL F1 Libri Regii vol. XII. fol. 52–53.b.

52 Katalin Keresztúry’s will. July 8, 1624. ANR-DJC Kornis inv. no. 234. no. 2.

53 Prorogatoria super omnibus causis Francisci Kornis de Ruszka, Viennae studiis operam dantis emanatae. Alba Iulia, July 22, 1628. ANR-DJC Kornis inv. no. 646. no. 5.

two boys played an important role in the funeral of Princess Zsuzsanna Károlyi. Ferenc and István delivered an oration and elegy Latin in St. Michael's Church in Gyulafehérvár (today Alba Iulia, Romania), next to the *castrum doloris*. Their participation as adolescents constituted a significant public appearance and also carried an important message: as a manner of Baroque theatricality, it reminded the participants of the princess's deceased children, who would have been about the same age as the performers had they survived.⁵⁴

The exchange of letters between Zsigmond and Borbála, Ferenc, and István was one of the most important means of communication. This is especially true for a nun living within the walls of a distant cloister in Pozsony. Borbála Konstancia (a name she acquired after becoming a nun) regularly corresponded with her brother, Ferenc, and her uncle, Zsigmond. After the death of her mother in 1629, the practice of sending letters remained her only link to her family.⁵⁵ The letters replaced the experience of visiting one another, as indicated in one of her letters: "My Gracious Patron Lord and my sweet father [...] I did not want to pass up the good opportunity to visit Your Greatness through this little humble writing of mine."⁵⁶ The letter writer's own condition and the recipient's health were constant elements of the letters. As was typical of letters written by members of the Church, Sister Konstancia's letters began with an invocation ("Jesus Mary St. Clare"), and they also contained an indispensable intercessory prayer for family members. In an emotional letter written to her uncle just before his death, Borbála wrote the following: "I offer my poor humble divine prayer to Your Greatness as my Gracious Patron Lord, my Sweet Father. I wish from my pure heart to Your Greatness that God give you all blessed goods, good health, long life." Her words reflect concern for the health of the elderly family member: "I have heard these days of the sickness of Your Greatness, which was not a small sorrow for me, therefore I prayed to my God to console your Greatness." On the other hand, when talking about her own condition of health, illness, and near-death, she remarks almost indifferently, "I do not think I shall live long." She refers to her uncle as her "patron" and her "father," and she does professes affection for him: "I have no greater joy in the world than when

54 Mikó, "Mivel én is," 17–18., 56; Szilágyi, *Erdélyi országgyűlési emlékek*, vol. 7, 10–14.

55 Katalin Kondé to Ferenc Kornis, Pozsony, September 15, 1629. MTA KK Kornis vol. II. 1078–1079.

56 Borbála Konstancia Kornis to Zsigmond Kornis. Pozsony, September 17, 1648. ANR-DJC Colecția Sándor Mike no. 859; Borbála Konstancia Kornis to Ferenc Kornis. Pozsony, September 17, 1648. ANR-DJC Colecția Sándor Mike no. 860; About the practice of letter writing: Erdélyi, "Akarnálak levelém által"; Erdélyi, "Stepfamily relationships"; Del Lungo Camiciotti, "Letters and letter writing."

I hear of Your Greatness being healthy and I take your kind letters from Your Greatness.” Unfortunately, Zsigmond’s letter to Borbála did not survive. In his will, he addressed her as “my poor nun sister, Madam Borbála Kornis.” He left her a hundred gold coins and three hundred forints and let the nuns pray for him in the cloister.⁵⁷

We have only indirect data on the relationship between Zsigmond and his nephew, István, who was a Jesuit priest. Zsigmond was the chief patron of the Transylvanian Catholic Church, but if the stakes were to ensure succession and preserve the social status of the family, he quite certainly did not hesitate to subordinate the interests of the Church to the interests of the family. After the death of his wife Ilona, he tried to get his nephew out of the order, albeit unsuccessfully.⁵⁸ In his will, he recalled his nephew: “I want to commemorate in this testament my beloved brother and both my carnal and spiritual kinsman, who, though the Lord God has chosen for himself and is anointed with priestly dignity, yet I want His Grace to benefit from the few goods that the Lord God has entrusted to me in this mundane existence.” He left an estate for his nephew to support the Jesuit college in Szatmár.⁵⁹ However, the young priest died sooner than his elderly patron. In 1642, Zsigmond hurried István’s sickbed. As he wrote in one of his letters, he hoped “before [my nephew] dies, [to] say a few words to the poor man, even if he is a priest, yet my kinsman.”⁶⁰ István died less than a month later, and Zsigmond, unable to fulfill his promise in his will, made a donation to the Jesuits of Szatmár the following year. He stipulated that they be given a hundred forints a year, a hundred cubes of wheat, and a hundred cubes of wine.⁶¹

Undoubtedly, Zsigmond had the most personal, direct contact with Ferenc, who was a layman. After the death of his wife, Zsigmond declared in his testament that he considered his nephew to be his successor, heir, and the future head of the Kornis family. The will asks for God’s blessing on Ferenc’s life so that he may be of service to God, the Holy Catholic Church, and his sweet homeland. Zsigmond also prayed for the descendants of Ferenc and the survival of the Kornis house.

57 Zsigmond Kornis’s will. Papmező, February 2, 1641. MTA KK Kornis vol. III. fol. 1512–1520.

58 István Bethlen to Zsigmond Kornis. Huszt, February 14, 1638. MNL OL F 12 Lymbus fasc. 9. no. 4.

59 Zsigmond Kornis’s will. Papmező, February 2, 1641. MTA KK Kornis vol. III. fol. 1512–1520.

60 Zsigmond Kornis to Pál Bornemissza, Papmező, January 18, 1642. ANR-DJC Colecția József Kemény, no. 1019.

61 Letter of donation from Zsigmond Kornis to the Jesuits of Szatmár (Satu Mare, Romania). Remetemező (today Pomi, Romania), June 25, 1643. MTA KK Kornis vol. III. fol. 1680.

Zsigmond repeatedly reflected on his role as patron and head of the family. In his will, as if holding a mirror in front of himself, he apologized to his nephew, which as a kind of trope was a typical feature of the genre, and he admitted that for various reasons and shortcomings, he had been unable to help him as he would have liked, even though Ferenc's love for him and his good behavior had deserved more reciprocity. For all this, however, he gave him ample compensation by making his nephew the heir of all his possessions.⁶² There are many examples of shows of care and love in the will. The function of testamentary writing was "the duty of love for those surviving" an emotional practice, and it addressed the need to ensure care for offspring. Zsigmond's use of expressions for members of the family, to whom he referred as "my sweet cognates, the beloved who survive me," also suggest that he had embraced the role of a kind of substitute father. He asks Prince György I Rákóczi and Princess Zsuzsanna Lorántffy to "defend and protect" his heir. The request has an extremely humble style: "very humbly begging for Your Majesty." Zsigmond seeks to win the prince's support by sharing his fears and worries about his nephew. He uses diminutive words about Ferenc: "my poor orphan and my very helpless brother," although his nephew was an adult, a married man, and the lord lieutenant of Kolozs County. Zsigmond writes about Ferenc as if he were his son. As the son replaces the father after his death, so will Ferenc replace Zsigmond in the service of the prince: "Do not leave Ferenc Kornis, Your Majesty, whom I relinquish to Your Majesty instead of me."

Zsigmond's embrace of the role of the father and the willingness of the other members of the family to welcome him in this role can also be observed in the daily correspondence of the family members. Discussions of one another's health constituted an indispensable part of the letters. Ferenc worried about Zsigmond's health, and Zsigmond often worried about Ferenc's health. Although he did not call Ferenc his son, Zsigmond did refer to Ferenc's wife as his daughter-in-law, thus indicating that he either felt he was in or sought to suggest he was in an emotionally intimate relationship with his nephew's wife, Katalin Wesselényi.⁶³ Katalin, for her part, called her elderly relative "my father,"⁶⁴ and she regularly inquired about his health. During visits, he often enjoyed Kata's "housekeeping" and his hunting trips with Ferenc. The time they spent

62 Zsigmond Kornis's will. Papmező, February 2, 1641. MTA KK Kornis vol. III. fol. 1512–1520.

63 Zsigmond Kornis to Ferenc Kornis, Belényes, May 6, 1642. MTA KK Kornis vol. II. fol. 1631.

64 Katalin Wesselényi to Ferenc Kornis, Szentbenedek (today Mănăstirea, Romania), March 3, 1644. ANR-DJC Kornis, Katalin Wesselényi's letters to her husband. 1644–1649, no. 1–2.

together also provided an opportunity for Zsigmond to develop a “grandfather” relationship with Ferenc’s children. He called the younger children “The Lady Her Grace’s *cseléd*,” a somewhat literary term for servant. He thus suggested that, at that age, the children were still attached primarily to their mother. Zsigmond also used their nicknames to refer to them (Boris, Kata, and Gazsi), which would also have been understood as an expression of affection. He referred to his nephew’s only son as the “little Gáspár hussar,”⁶⁵ perhaps because he often let the little boy ride on his knees as if he were riding a horse.

Over time, he gradually went from being a caring head of the family to an increasingly old and sick person who needed the help and care of his nephew. The communication between the two of them also changed in light of this, with more and more talk about Zsigmond’s illness. For instance, in a letter written on May 6, 1642, he wrote of his own impending death:

I was so sick that I thought I was about to die, and I still wouldn’t mind if Your Grace were closer to me and your health were good, because I need Your Grace to take good care of me now, sweet brother, because it seems that I will soon embark on that very long journey, from whom the Lord God will protect Your Grace for a long time, Amen.⁶⁶

Zsigmond Kornis died on November 6, 1648 in Radnót after long illness at the age of 70. In accordance with his will, he was buried next to his wife in the chapel of the castle in Papmező. After long preparations, his successor, Ferenc, who was raised by him like his own child, arranged the last rites for his uncle with great splendor. In the invitation to Zsigmond’s funeral, he referred to the deceased as “*pater secundus*,” i.e. as his second father.⁶⁷

Summary

In this essay, I offered a case study of the male roles in a family network among the nobility in the early modern era, drawing on the example of the Kornis family. The head of the family, as the dominant and representative member of the family, had complex competences. As the head of the nuclear family, it was his duty to provide prestige, financial security, legal representation, confessional

65 Zsigmond Kornis to Ferenc Kornis, Belényes, May 6, 1642. MTA KK Kornis vol. II. fol. 1631.

66 Zsigmond Kornis to Ferenc Kornis, January 9, 1645. MTA KK Kornis vol. II. fol. 1743–1745.

67 Ferenc Kornis to Ádám Batthyány, Szentbenedek, May 8, 1649. MNL OL P 1314. Batthyány, X 27237, mf. 7435, no. 4852.

guidance, protection, and care for his wife and his children. Furthermore, it was his main, Christian duty to be a loving husband and a caring father.

As the head of the extended family, in addition providing legal-economic representation, he increased and maintained the prestige, wealth, and property of the family. All this could be achieved through skillful policies and advantageous marriages, so as a successful head of a family, he built and transmitted an extensive network of kinship relations which helped further the social integration of his offspring and gave them the opportunity to choose appropriate spouses. Family peace and agreement was served by determining the order of inheritance. The rivalry between the brothers and the struggle for control of the dynasty weakened the members of the family, individually and collectively, so the family members sought compromise and cooperation as soon as possible.

The strength of the family as a community can be measured mostly in its responses to crisis situations. In these cases, the responsibility of the head of the family to develop a crisis strategy and effectively represent and enforce group interests increases. Therefore, the loss of the head of the family itself creates a particularly serious situation. In this case, the trauma and mourning had to be left behind, as the vacant position had to be filled in order for the family to survive. With the loss of the head of the family, widows were able to perform the duties of the head of the family within the patriarchal framework to a limited extent, sometimes through an accompanying male helper. Widows were compelled to rely primarily on members of their own birth families against the male relatives of their deceased husbands, and in the absence of help, they easily found themselves in a vulnerable, submissive position against their brothers-in-law.

Among the numerous critical periods in the history of the Kornis family of Göncruszka, the two most serious periods followed the loss of the two heads of the family, first Gáspár and, a decade later, Boldizsár. Both events plunged the family into existential insecurity: voluntary or legal exile, loss of property, followed by family fragmentation. In these crisis situations, the cohesive power of the Kornis house was shown. After the murder of Gáspár, his middle son, Boldizsár, and, after Boldizsár's execution, Boldizsár's younger brother, Zsigmond, took the baton. Initially, a conflict of interest arose between Boldizsár's widow and Zsigmond over the right to supervise the orphans and their property. This conflict was later resolved by a compromise which benefited both parties. Zsigmond, who initially reclaimed the confiscated estates of his brothers, eventually made one of his nephews the heir to all his possessions. He

was thereby able to play the roles of father and grandfather, which legitimized his position as the head of the family and which he would not otherwise have had as roles, due to the infertility of his marriage.

The career, destiny, and ability of a given family member sometimes helped the family's strategy and sometimes worked against it.⁶⁸ In the Kornis family, we see examples of both. The talent and good marriages of the heads of families played an important role in the rise of the family and its survival among the Transylvanian elite. At the same time, Boldizsár's early death and György's and Zsigmond's childless marriages endangered the family's survival. The Transylvanian branch of the Kornis family of Göncruszka was characterized by demographic weakness for three generations. Boldizsár had only one son, Ferenc, who remained a layman, and Ferenc's only son to reach adulthood was the memoir-writer, Gáspár.

At the end of the seventeenth century, the younger Gáspár Kornis played the role of the head of the family with the act of writing memoirs. He characterized his ancestors as husbands and fathers who suffered as martyrs for the honor of their families and as patriots who worked for their nation to the last drop of their blood. The traumas suffered by the heads of the families because of their political views and their religion (traumas including attacks, assassinations, murders, exile, and execution) became the foundations of a collective identity. Faith, fidelity, suffering, and martyrdom became cultic threads of the family legend, enshrined as a tradition in the narrative of the memoir.

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Friends or Enemies? Sisterhood in Nineteenth-Century Hungarian Novels and Diaries

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The study examines two diaries, both written in Hungarian in the mid-nineteenth century by young female authors (Countess Anna Kornis and Antónia Kölcsey). The diaries are approached from the point of view of the interpretations of emotional bonds and relationship patterns offered by the two girls in their descriptions and portrayals of their relationships to their siblings. In the case of Anna Kornis's diary, I focus on the narrative passages concerning her relationship with her sister. Antónia Kölcsey's more conflict-ridden relationship with her brother is worth comparing with the relationship between the Kornis sisters. I examine the passages in the two diaries concerning sibling relationships against the backdrop of the paradigm shift familiar from the family history and emotional history secondary literature and the portrayals of sibling relationships in the novels of the period. What kinds of linguistic tools and rhetorical formulae were used to interpret and narrate the emotional content and dynamics of the sibling relationship?

Keywords: nineteenth-century siblinghood, sisterhood, family models, gender order, diaries and familial emotions

“There must be the sincerest friendship between siblings [...]. Thus, love each other and be honest with each other and trusting.” (Antónia Kölcsey's father, cited in her diary)¹

The first chapter of *The Baron's Sons*² by nineteenth-century Hungarian novelist Mór Jókai is probably the most famous and best-known literary framing of changing family models, at least in Hungary. The novel has been required reading for high school students in Hungary since World War II, so most people in Hungary recall that in the chapter “Sixty minutes,” the dying Baron Baradlay,

¹ *Kölcsey Antónia naplója*, 16.

² The full title of the English translation is *The Baron's Sons: A Romance of the Hungarian Revolution of 1848*. The Hungarian novel, *A kőszívű ember fiai*, was first published in installments in 1869 in the periodical *A Hon* (The Homeland). It was published as a novel in six volumes that year. The English translation was first published in 1900. It was translated by Percy Favor Bicknell.

head of an old aristocrat family, has only one hour to make his last will and testament. His wife, the mother of the three Baradlay sons, also has only one hour to reach a difficult decision: will she fulfil her husband's wishes? For the reader, the first chapter makes clear that in this fictional world, there are two divergent and even contradictory ideas of the family and ways of thinking about kinship and family relations. *The Baron's Sons* thus offers a portrayal, if admittedly in a work of fiction, of different meanings and models of the family.

For the baron, family is defined by vertical aristocratic lineage and the dynastic order. According to this model, the roles of the family members are determined by age, and the first-born son (Ödön) is the exclusive heir. Before his death, the Baron decides the careers his sons will pursue. According to his testament, Ödön will be the exclusive heir of the family estate and the position of head of the estate, and Ödön will have to maintain the continuity of lineage. The two younger sons need only support and uphold the reputation of the Baradlay family. Therefore Richard, the second son, can easily be sacrificed on the battlefield: he is given the opportunity to die a heroic death in the forthcoming European wars and, by doing so, to further the fame of the family. The baron makes this explicit when dictating his will to his wife, Marie:

His fame shall cast its glory over us all. He must never marry: a wife would only be in his way. Let his part be to promote the fortunes of his brothers. What an excellent claim for their advancement would be the heroic death of their brother on the battle-field!³

Jenő, the youngest son, is the father's favorite, but in vain, because in this traditional aristocratic family, emotions do not play a role. In fact, emotions are weaknesses which should be repressed and hidden:

My third and youngest son, Jenő, is my favourite; I don't deny that I love him best of the three; but he will never know it. I have always treated him harshly, and you too must continue so to treat him.⁴

The idea of family for Baron Baradlay means the name and the family estate, and emotions do not matter. An individual's place in the network of family member is defined by his or her role (function) in the maintenance of the family: "Three

³ Jókai, *The Baron's Sons*, 8.

⁴ Ibid.

such strong supports—a diplomat, a soldier, and a high government official—will uphold and preserve the work of my hands.”⁵

Marie Baradlay (who becomes the baron’s widow after this momentous hour) thinks and feels differently about the family. The different between these two main characters of the novel (the baron and his wife) can be placed in several theoretical frameworks. Their debate can be interpreted as a struggle for rival political languages (the conservative and liberal political languages); or it can be interpreted as a generational conflict, in which the young generation of the Reform Era takes over power. The debate can also be written as a gender issue. In this case, the world of masculine, patriarchal, power is replaced by the world of feminine love. Mrs. Baradlay’s first act after the death of her husband is to allow and arrange a marriage for Ödön based on love, which is obviously contrary to the interests of the family (at least to the family as the baron understood it). All her further decisions and actions build a new kinship system, in which emotional ties like love and trust are the foundation of the family (instead of name, estate, and aristocratic lineage). In later chapters, the whole nation comes to espouse this community idea based on love and emotion.

“Ödön, brother,” he cried, “I pray you forgive me! Think of our mother, think of your wife and children!”

Ödön regarded him, unmoved. “I am thinking of my mother here,” said he, stamping with his foot on the ground, “and I shall defend my wife and children yonder,” pointing toward the fortress.”⁶

The community of the revolutionary nation is the “sibling archipelago,” a notion which the Baradlay sons seem to take quite literally and which they represent and enact metaphorically. As the plot of the novel unfolds, Marie Baradlay’s decisions and acts embody the liberal, national idea, the notion of a love based on marriage, and the horizontal family model founded on emotional bonds.⁷ In *The Baron’s Sons*, Marie Baradlay’s acts have an important role not only in the 1848–49 War of Independence but also in the nineteenth-century revolution of sentiments and the family history revolution too.

5 Ibid., 9.

6 Ibid., 271.

7 On the notion that the new network of familial relationships played a major role in the process of nation building, see Sabeen and Johnson, *Sibling Relations*, 15–16.

In the new horizontal family model on which the secondary literature in the study of the family has increasingly touched, the sibling bond becomes a decisive, paradigmatic relationship. An (idealized) sibling relationship based on mutual support, close emotional ties, and the notion of shared destiny becomes an essential element of the family model, the kinship model, and even the marital relationship model.⁸ In particular, the close emotional bond between siblings of the opposite sex is usually interpreted as being based on mutual support and relative equality, and as such is an early emotional pattern of a new type of (modern) emancipatory relationship.⁹

In the discussion below, I examine two diaries in Hungarian. Both texts were written in the mid-nineteenth century, and each was penned by a female author. The first was written by Countess Anna Kornis when she was 14 and then 15 years old. The second was written by Antónia Kölcsey, who began writing the diary when she was 17 and who was 22 when the last entry was written. I examine the diaries from the point of view of the interpretations of emotional bonds and relationship patterns offered by the two girls in their descriptions and portrayals of their relationships to their siblings. In the case of Anna Kornis's diary, I focus on the narrative passages concerning her relationship with her sister, Klára Kornis, as the relationship between the two girls is one of the most important emotional topics in the diary. Antónia Kölcsey's more conflict-ridden relationship with her brother, Gusztáv Kölcsey, is worth comparing from several perspectives with the relationship between the Kornis sisters. In the case of siblings of the opposite sex, one would expect less rivalry, since they would have been expected to play complementary rather than competing social roles, while in the case of same-sex siblings, one would expect (on the basis of literary narratives and commonplaces) more competition. In the case of these two diaries, however, one finds quite the opposite.

I examine the passages in the two diaries concerning sibling relationships against the backdrop of the paradigm shift familiar from the family history and emotional history secondary literature and the portrayals of sibling relationships in the novels of the period. Like Ruth Perry, I interpret both fictional, literary sources and autobiographical sources as texts which offer insights into the prevalent notions of the time.¹⁰ The texts, which obviously are premised on different relationships to "reality," both offer impressions of what was considered

8 Ibid., 7–10.

9 Perry, *Novel Relations*, 145.

10 Ibid., 5–6.

conceivable about sibling relations in nineteenth-century Hungary. What might have been the expected or envisioned sibling relationship that one had to strive to cultivate or, perhaps, resist, or which was encumbered with expectations which were almost impossible to meet? What kinds of linguistic tools and rhetorical formulae were used to interpret and narrate the emotional content and dynamics of the sibling relationship?

The Great Ancestresses of the Family: Katalin Bethlen and Her Daughters

The notion of the family as a unit or institution based on intimate emotional bonds gradually gained ground at the time not only in the fictional worlds of literary texts or the households of bourgeois families. In her secret diary,¹¹ the 14-year-old Anna Kornis gives family emotions a decisive role and significance in a manner that resembles the prominence these bonds are given in works of fiction. At the same time, unlike Marie Baradlay, Anna Kornis cannot really be accused of liberalism or of cherishing great admiration for the national cause. In the sober life of this rule-following girl, emotions are in no way a potentially disruptive force. Anna Kornis was born in May 1836 as the fourth child (and second daughter) of Countess Katalin Bethlen and Count Mihály Kornis. Her father died before she was born, so Miklós Bánffy, her mother's second husband, became her stepfather. Two children were born to Katalin Bethlen's second marriage. At the age of 14, Anna was admitted to the Vienna institute for girls, where she primarily studied modern languages, music, and painting. Her diary, which was found by Réka Vas, was written during the six months she spent at the institute.¹² The institute had very few students, usually only three or four girls studied at the same time under the supervision of Madame Cavaliero (the preceptress), so one could contend that the institute itself created a kind of family environment. Anna very clearly expresses in her diary her respect and love for Madame Cavaliero, and they seem to have had an amicable relationship. Nonetheless, one of the recurring elements of the diary is Anna's longing to be reunited with her mother and sister. For instance, she wrote the following in an entry from early October 1850:

11 The manuscript of the diary is held in the Special Collection of the Central University Library in Cluj under Ms.1862.

12 Vas, "Kornis Anna grófnő naplója," 125–35.

I haven't seen my mother and the others since yesterday, and today my heart already ached. Whenever I see none of my Clariss and my dear mother but for the shortest of time, I am dreary and distressed. I never stop thinking about them, and the difference between being at home and among strangers.¹³

In early November, she again wrote of this yearning: "Today, my heart was craving a friend, oh! Because I haven't seen either my mother or Clariss. I was so unhappy today."¹⁴ And towards the end of the month, she lamented, "I'm only happy when I can be with my mother, my siblings."¹⁵

The entries in the diary cover a short period of five months from October 1, 1850, to February 17, 1851. Anna's mother and sister Klara (to whom she refers as Clariss in the Diary) were also in Vienna until the beginning of December, at which point they moved to Pest. When her family members were in the city, Anna spent her Sundays (and several weekday afternoons and evenings) with her mother. As of December, however, only her brothers remained in Vienna. From then on, her diary entries suggest that she began to feel increasingly lonely. She was no longer able to enjoy the gatherings with her family members, which were important to her as sources of emotional comfort.

Anna's mother and sister were the most important pillars of her emotional life. She turned to them with a powerful sense of attachment and love. In the smaller decisions (what kind of jewelry to wear, which theater to go to) and larger decisions (with whom to make friends, how eventually to get married) in her life, her mother and sister were always sources of support and guidance. There is no sign in her diary of any adolescent rebellion against the mother, nor is there any trace of rivalry with her sister. The three women were clearly bound by close emotional ties, and this found expression in the ways in which they lived their lives. A diary entry from early December suggests that the process of bidding farewell before separating was emotionally fraught for all of them: "My mother cried a great deal, Clariss too [...]. After my mother left, I cried a lot."¹⁶

The entries in the diary suggest that the female members of the family formed a kind of female inner circle within the family, whereas the brothers, the father, and the uncle (Katalin Bethlen's brother, Domokos Bethlen)

13 Kornis, Anna, diary, 3 October, 1850, Biblioteca Centrală Universitară "Lucian Blaga" Cluj.

14 Ibid., 7 November, 1850.

15 Ibid., 29 November, 1850.

16 Ibid., 5 December, 1850.

belonged to the outer circle. If one were to construct a model representing the family on the basis of the diary, the family members would form a planetary system with the mother (the sun) at the center. She organized the lives of her children, and she made smaller and larger decisions affecting the family. She also organized their daily lives and the family visits, and she managed the wider kinship ties and social relations. Klara, who was already engaged, was often at her side, so her marriage, which promised a great deal, was a top priority for the family during the months when Anna was keeping the diary. Klara and her mother were practically always together. Anna was the family member who was closest to them. Though she was physically at the girls' institute (i.e. distant from the family's everyday world), she was a member of the female inner circle, as shown by her attitude, her views, and her thoughts and emotions. This must have been one of the reasons why she found it so hard to be separated from her mother and sister, as she presumably felt that, within the family, she belonged at their side. The brothers were at a greater distance, though they were still on the horizon while Anna's stepfather only rarely appeared.

When the boys visited Anna at the institute, this was a cause of great joy for her. She enjoyed their company and was pleased to be able to spend time with them. However, this was in no way an adequate substitute for the emotional closeness and intimacy she had with her mother and Klára. Of her relationships with her immediately family members, her relationship with her stepfather was the coldest and the most distant. Indeed, there is hardly any real mention of him as a father figure in the diary. There are only two references to him, one of which is one of the very few instances in the diary in which Anna writes in a discontented, critical tone:

My father! He cares nothing for what becomes of us, and Uncle Domokos, whom I adore, loves us, but he does nothing for us. Alas, my mother is the only one who loves us and who would sacrifice everything for us.¹⁷

In other words, in the diary entries, the stepfather is either distant (physically and emotionally) or he is painted in a negative light.

¹⁷ Ibid, November 10, 1850.

Model Patterns of Sisterhood

In the new horizontal family model familiar from the secondary literature (a model which, the scholarship tells us, began to emerge in the nineteenth century), sibling relationships begin to displace the parent-child (“descent”) relationships as the dominant bond within the family.¹⁸ According to David Warren Sabean (and other historians), an (idealized) sibling relationship based on mutual support, close emotional bonds, and a shared destiny also begins to become a dominant element of the family and kinship model and even the marital relationship model.¹⁹ At the same time, in the novels of the era, one finds memorable portrayals of relationships among siblings that are rich with rivalry and strife.²⁰ If one were looking for sisters in works of literature who had close, trusting relationships, one would perhaps begin with the oeuvre of Jane Austen. Lizzy and Jane from *Pride and Prejudice* and Elinor and Marianne from *Sense and Sensibility* offer notable examples of depictions of solidarity between sisters. We find a less widely familiar (and much less emphatic) portrayal of this kind of relationship between sisters in a story by Jókai entitled *A két menyasszony* (The two brides), which is the first narrative in the collection entitled *Csataképek a magyar szabadságharcból* (Battle scenes from the Hungarian War of Independence). The story could be read as a kind of “sisters” version of *The Baron’s Sons*. Anikó és Rózsa, the two heroines of the narrative, are sisters who live in the city of Szolnok. They are eagerly waiting for their grooms to return. One of the two men is fighting as part of the Hungarian army, the other sides with the Habsburgs, and they almost kill each other in battle. The sibling bond between the two sisters, however, is far too strong for either of them to allow their grooms’ roles in the conflict to come between them:

It was a beautiful evening in spring. The sisters sat side by side at the window of their little chamber, silently watching the stars as they twinkled into light. Neither spoke, for each feared to grieve the other by expressing her hopes or fears; but their tears mingled as they sat

18 Sabean and Johnson, *Sibling Relations*, 7–9. 14.

19 Ibid, 19.

20 One could note a relevant example from Jókai’s work. The character Alfonsine Plankenhorst subjects the character Edit to sophisticated forms of torture. As is the case in the secondary literature on the era, I use a broad interpretation of the term sibling. I use the term to denote not simply the relationship between people who were siblings by blood but also to refer to relationships among family members who were of the same generation and belonged to the same household. I am thinking of cousins and the halfsiblings who often lived in mosaic families. See Freyer, “Review,” 523.

clinging to one another, each pale face seeking comfort from the other—their hands clasped, and their hearts raised in prayer. Tomorrow, one may return triumphant from the battle to lay his laurels at his bride's feet. And the other—what may be his fate?²¹

Remaining consistently supportive of each other and always refraining from giving in to their personal desires and sentiments, Anikó and Rózsa manage to survive the upheavals of the revolution. In Jókai's narrative, sisterly solidarity is stronger than romantic love or the two women's emotional bonds to their grooms.

Anna Kornis's sister Klára was two years older than she. In the winter of 1850–51 (in other words, when Anna was keeping her diary), Klára met Count Ede Károlyi, to whom she soon became engaged, and in March 1851, they were married. Thus, the (relatively short) period of the diary falls at an important time in the life of the family. For the mother and family, finding suitable spouses for daughters was a major task, much as, for the individual girl, the wedding (as the beginning of her married life) was a turning point which both offered clear proof of the prudent choices which had been made in the years leading up to it (i.e. had the girl been properly reared, had the family managed to build an adequate network of relationships which would enable their daughter to find an attractive suitor, had the family been able to rise in social status, etc.) and had a decisive impact on the years and decades to come. In this sense, the relatively brief period before a daughter was engaged and then leading up to her marriage was a critical stage in the life of the family. The most important task of a mother at the time was to ensure her daughters find suitable spouses, so a wedding was as important as an event for the mother as it was for the bride, whose life would then be largely determined by her husband and his family (and his family's social status). The bride's sister (in this case Anna Kornis) was indirectly affected by the family event: her older sister's marriage could affect her chances of later marriage, and when the older sister left the household, her younger sister would then be in the closest position to the mother.

The entries in Anna Kornis's diary suggest that, in the period following her engagement and leading up to her marriage, Klára had both her mother and her younger sister's support. One has the impression, based on the entries, that they were close not simply as siblings but also as friends. The support they provided for each other was one of the most significant forces which helped

21 Jókai, "The Two Brides," 223–24.

them achieve their interests in the complex social constellation in which they lived. Anna seemed to hold her sister almost in wonder. She referred to her as the “angelic Clariss,” who “was really made for a prince,” as she was

beautiful like a Venus, dear like an angel, innocent like a lamb, her heart free from all intriguing envy, she is also full of wit. I should not praise my sister like this, but I do not praise, I merely express what my heart feels.²²

One may have the impression at first, upon reading the diary, that the relationship between the two sisters was asymmetrical, and while Anna adored her older sister Klára, Klára was less enamored of Anna. However, the last few entries in the diary indicate that both sisters were equally adoring of each other. For Klára, Anna was the most important source of guidance and comfort, after their mother. The diary includes a letter written by Klára to Anna about her engagement:

My dearest Anna, my beloved sister! Forgive me for writing so late, but as you can imagine, I have not been in a position, these days, when a decision over my fate is being made, to gather my thoughts. But the die is already cast, and I will be Countess Károlyi [...] But Anna, my angelic sister, what do you think, am I to be happy or not? He is a very good man, he says he loves me, I love him too, and may God bless me and grant that it remain this way. [...] Oh, my angelic sister, if only I could see you, but we too might go to Vienna for a few days to have my mother order what is most urgent, and then I will see you. Oh, I the mere thought of pressing you to my heart once again brings me such joy. Who would have thought when I came here that I would be blessed by such good fortune. The wedding will be quick, already on the first day of March, [...] and after a month of amusement, we will go to Paris and for a week to London. This is the plan so far. It seems like a dream to me, and I don't even want to believe in so much happiness. [...] Your old plan will also be fulfilled, namely, that you will go to England with an aunt, and a rich lord will marry you there. I will be that aunt. My dear “Rámpirity” [a term of endearment used by Klára and Anna], will you still love me in the future? Write me, guide me, because that is what makes me happy. However, when I remember that I am leaving my mother and that the years of my merry maidenhood are over, then I still want to push away the time that will end my happiest minutes [...] and then I become sad and want to die. My letter is handed over by Alexander Károlyi, a very good boy, and he wanted to meet you.

22 Kornis, Anna, diary, 1 January, 1851, Biblioteca Centrală Universitară “Lucian Blaga” Cluj.

Eduard and I talked and resolved that should you leave Miss Cavaliero, then, my dear, you would come to me. Oh Anna, how happy I will be. God bless you, and love your true sister!
Clariss²³

The relationship between the sisters was a close friendship which rested on mutual trust and intensive contact based on close communication. The sisters formed a united front in which they moved in company, supporting and protecting each other and using their relationship as sisters to help each other assert and reach her interests. For women of their social status and age, the most important family (and personal) goal was to choose a suitable spouse, marry, and have a successful marriage. Works of literature offer narratives in which the pressures involved in achieving these goals found expression for the most part in sibling rivalry. One thinks, for instance, of Cinderella, whose stepsisters do everything they can to ensure that their stepsister will not be a rival to them. In Anna Kornis's diary, we find an example of quite the opposite strategy to ensure social benefits. The sisters support each other in every way they can, using every possible tool at their disposal, to help each other find a suitable spouse. They cooperated not simply because they loved each other as sisters, but also because they knew that a success or social rise of any individual family member would benefit the whole family. The marriage of Klára Kornis created potentially advantageous social relationships for Anna as well, so not only would rivalry have had a negative emotional impact on girls, it also would have hurt them in their efforts to acquire social capital.

The women of the Kornis family shared close bonds within the family, helping and protecting one another and providing mutual support based on trust love. The diary entries suggest that Klára Kornis's marriage, which was an immensely advantageous move for her individual and for her family members (since a count belonging to the Károlyi family was an excellent catch), also meant a painful rupture in the family for all three of them. Anna wrote of this on January 20, 1851:

I cried for a long time because I was reminded of the thought that had made me unhappy for a long time, that if I went home I would not be with my Clariss. Oh, whom I love so much, in a way beyond expression.²⁴

23 Ibid., 27 January, 1851.

24 Ibid., 20 January, 1851.

In an entry written seven days later, she noted how difficult the impending change would be for her mother: “Parting from Clariss will be the saddest for my poor mother.”²⁵ The entry contains a passage from the letter (cited earlier) from Klára to Anna, in which she writes of her anxieties concerning the upcoming marriage and the changes it will usher into their lives: “When I remember that I am leaving my mother and that the years of my merry maidenhood are over, then I want to push away the time that will end my happiest minutes [...] and then I become sad and want to die.”²⁶

Brother and Sister: Antónia Kölcsey and Gusztáv Kölcsey

Roughly a decade before Anna Kornis began keeping her diary (more precisely, between 1838 and 1844), Antónia Kölcsey, a girl of a similar age who belonged to the petty nobility, kept a diary herself. She was 17 years old when she wrote the first entry. She had just returned from the Tänzler Lilla school for girls in Pest-Buda to Szatmárcseke, the village of her birth. After having spent two years in the institute, Antónia lived in the village with her family. The small family consisted of four people who lived under one roof for the six years during which Antónia kept her diary: Antónia, her brother Gusztáv Kölcsey (or Guszti, to use his nickname, who was one year younger than she), and their parents.

The sibling relationship also figures prominently as an important bond in the network of relationships described in Antónia’s diary. The entries in Antónia’s diary suggest that the most significant emotional ties in her life included her almost fanatical respect for Miklós Wesselényi, the trusting relationships she had with her girlfriends, and her relationships with her closest family members. The impression of Antónia which emerges from the diary is of a well-behaved girl or young woman who strove in her relationships with others to meet expectations that were placed on women at the time. For example, she seems to have had a close and loving relationship with her mother, and if, from time to time, they came into conflict over something, Antónia always tried to patch things up as quickly as possible. She had great respect for her father. His views seem to have shaped her notions of acceptable social behavior and indeed to have exerted an influence on her behavior in all areas of life. Most of the time, she characterized her father as “wise,” and she relied on his guidance and advice. It is revealing, for

25 Ibid., 27 January, 1851.

26 Ibid.

instance, that when she writes about the ideal sibling relationship, she cites her father's admonitions, for instance in the following entry:

My good father spoke thusly to my brother today: "There must be the sincerest friendship between siblings [...]. I consider true, faithful friendship to be possible only between brothers and sisters. Thus, love each other and be honest with each other and trusting." My father's words are deeply moving to me, and Guszti and I promised each other to follow his words of advice.²⁷

According to Antónia's father, the sibling relationship was the purest, most sincere friendship possible. Antónia seems to have tried to live accordingly, always striving to cultivate precisely this kind of relationship with her brother.

Compared to the sibling relationship as portrayed in Anna Kornis's diary, however, the relationship between Antónia and Gusztáv seems far from symmetrical or balanced. The gender difference between them meant different opportunities and different living conditions for them. While Antónia was seen as having her proper place in the narrow space of the household and as having to learn, during the period of six years in which she kept the diary, the various tasks that would await her someday as a housewife, for her brother, the world was opening up. At least as far as Antónia's diary entries suggest, she and Gusztáv seem to have had very similar early childhoods. They had an instructor who gave them lessons at home, together. But when Antónia finished the two years at the girls' school in Pest-Buda, the gates of the world essentially slammed shut, and the narrow confines of the family household were the horizon of her existence. For Gusztáv, in contrast, the Debrecen college and institutional education were the first stages in a new life and the springboard which would launch him into the world. Antónia wrote of the sadness she felt when her brother left for Debrecen, but one could argue that there is a note, in her words, of curiosity concerning the opportunities that await Gusztáv, opportunities which she would not have:

Another parting, and it is a hard one, a bitter one! My only brother, Guszti, was taken by my parents to Debrecen today to continue his school career there. I parted from him with many tears, though I know that the separation will be good for him, that a boy must live in the noisy world, learn to know its people, survive difficulties and dangers, gain strength, courage, perseverance, and gather life wisdom in the big world, far from his father's home and his mother's breast, and his sibling's arms.²⁸

²⁷ *Kölsey Antónia naplója*, 16.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 28.

The different opportunities that Antónia and her brother had in life because of their genders were a recurring subject in her diary. She often reflected on how she, as a woman, had fewer opportunities and was compelled to move in a far narrower social space. She writes of this in a letter to Gusztáv:

The life of a boy is struggle, my dear Guszti. Far from the quiet walls of his father's house, he gathers knowledge in the noisy world which someday he will use, and he gathers strength which will enable him bravely to weather the storms of life. *But do not think, dear Guszti, that I pity you for your entrance into the world!*²⁹

The gendered expectations placed on Antónia and Gusztáv also seem to have influenced the relationship between them. When Gusztáv left their parents' home to begin his studies, Antónia wrote of the sadness she felt at having to bid her brother farewell, but she also wrote of the envy she felt, as he was able to explore the world while she had to content herself with the household tasks that awaited her as a woman.³⁰

In her monograph on the English novel at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Ruth Perry examines the various models of the relationship between siblings. She notes that the relationship between a brother and a sister (or in other words, between siblings of different genders) calls attention perhaps more clearly than anything else to the differences in the social roles assigned to women and men. After all, a boy and a girl growing up as part of the same family belonged to the same social class and moved in similar social milieus. Gender was the only social difference between them, and thus the relationship between them illustrates very vividly that the very different opportunities they had were due entirely to their social genders. As Perry writes,

29 Ibid., 40. Emphasis added.

30 In another part of the diary, Antónia Kölcsey expresses her frustrations with and objections to the limited access women had to education and culture: "Many, especially men, think reading is harmful to women, as they think it will make them daydreamers and unable to sense what is going on around them. In truth, I cannot grasp what could be harmful about reading a good book which fills one with fervor and elevates the heart. Fervor and an elevated bosom, I feel, cannot give rise to anything bad, and with what great joy does one turn to one's familiar tasks if one's spirits are raised and one's heart cheered. I once asked uncle Ferencz what he thought of women who love to read, and he replied, 'women must learn a great deal, and one can learn the most by reading, and as they play a great role in raising and teaching man, indeed in teaching the folk; but as one of the most beautiful features in a woman is modesty, let them not wish to show their knowledge, but rather strive to use it in the quiet circles of the home.'" *Kölcsey Antónia naplója*, 17.

The sister-brother relation thus foregrounded the difference that gender made in a person's station and expectations in the world. Family, lineage, class, rank, and originating economic circumstances of brothers and sisters were constant—only gender varied. Siblings started off with the same genetic gift and the same class origins but ended up in very different circumstances owing to their different opportunities for advancement[.]³¹

Perry's discussion of depictions of the sibling relationship in works of literature harmonizes with Antónia Kölcsey's narrative of her experiences and perceptions as a woman in her diary. Her entries offer insights into the expectations placed on her as a sister, expectations which found detailed and unambiguous expression in her father's words of advice and admonition and expectations which Anna strove to meet. At the same time, one discerns in the diary recurring expressions of envy for her brother, as well as frustration and discontent when she finds herself compelled to confront the ways in which, because of her gender, she must accept limitations and burdens that her brother is not expected to grapple with. She writes of this in one of her entries in comparatively unambiguous terms:

Is there any happiness greater than to cause others, many others, joy and to see how joyously they look back on us! The space is open to men, but not to us, we depend on others for everything, everything. They say we must do good in silence, without making demands, but how many times will good will, in undemanding silence, remain merely will!
What gloomy, cold, windy, and rainy weather! What a grim, bad mood I am in today!³²

Antonia's silent rebellion found expression in her diary in spite of the fact that, in her case, her diary was not a secret to those around her. At several points in the text, she points out that those around her knew that she was keeping a diary. Her quiet opposition to gender barriers and her envy for her brother's social status were expressed in the diary despite the fact that these emotions and opinions were decidedly at odds with the emotions, behaviors, and views she was expected to embrace by those around her.

31 Perry, *Novel Relations*, 111.

32 Kölcsey *Antónia naplója*, 111.

Conclusion

Anna Kornis's and Antónia Kölcsey's diaries are ego-documents which offer insights into the emotional worlds and family relationships of girls born into families in the nobility in the middle of the nineteenth century. One entry in Anna's diary suggests that she regarded the diary almost as friend and confessor: "This book is my friend because I tell her all my secrets [...] it is good to have someone with whom I can freely to share my thoughts."³³

Anna kept her diary in secret, so it is quite possible that the phrasing she used was less shaped by the expectations which were placed on her by those around her. This is true even if we bear in mind, of course, that even a source as apparently confessional as the diary does not reveal "the truth," and diaries (like works of literature) are structured texts and not transparent sources. The two diaries discussed in this article support the notion found in the scholarship on family history of a turn: in both texts, the sibling relationship is clearly depicted as being important to the authors, a relationship based on love, emotional attachment, and closeness. They seem to consider a thriving relationship between siblings as something of ethical value. At the same time, the portrayals of the sibling relationship in both diaries offer touches of nuance to the prevailing image of nineteenth-century sibling relationships and the horizontal family model. One can hardly venture far-reaching general conclusions on the basis of two texts, but each of the two diaries suggests that the difference in gender created some tensions in the relationship between siblings, as this difference also meant different social opportunities, expectations, and limitations. In the case of siblings of the same gender, in contrast, the fact they had to meet the same expectations and grapple with the same burdens made them all the more supportive of each other and allowed a relationship to develop between them which was not marked by rivalry or envy.

Both Anna Kornis and Antónia Kölcsey were forced to cope with the pain of having to separate from their siblings, though the emphasis placed on this separation is quite different in the two texts. For Antónia, Gusztáv's departure from their parents' house was a loss which warned her of the limitations she faced because of her gender. In contrast, Klara's marriage, although described in more emotional language and as a greater loss, put Anna in an advantageous position, as she was able to leave the girls' institution and return to her mother's

33 Kornis, Anna, diary, 22 October, 1850, Biblioteca Centrală Universitară "Lucian Blaga" Cluj.

side. Although Anna Kornis's diary covers a very short period of time, what has survived of her correspondence³⁴ confirms that she remained in close contact and close communication with her mother and her sister even after the two daughters had started their own families. Their relationship as sisters remained an important bond in later decades on which they drew when they needed support. Anna's diary is therefore an important document not only from the perspective of everyday history in the nineteenth century, but also for the insights it offers into the meanings of sisterhood, understood both in a narrow and a broader sense.

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34 MNL OL, P 387.B.2.k.



Impoverished by Cholera: Widows, Widowers, and Orphans after the 1873 Cholera Epidemic in Kolozsvár

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By analyzing the official sources produced during the communal management of a crisis due to the cholera epidemic, the study focuses on the official definitions of people in need of support as well as the survival strategies of ordinary widows and orphans in the city of Cluj-Napoca/Kolozsvár in the second half of the nineteenth century. Widows with children were more likely to be considered disadvantaged and receive aid than widowers. Poverty was closely related to a given individual's ability or inability to work. Remarried widows were not considered eligible for aid, regardless of the family's financial resources. The presence of small children was a strong motivating factor for remarriage: widows hoped to get financial support from a new spouse, while widowers needed a wife to care for children. The term orphan often referred not to the family position of a child, but rather to its place within the larger social network.

Keywords: cholera epidemic, orphans, poverty, widows, remarriage

The helpless widow, the abused orphan, and the cruel stepmother are stereotypical figures in both folk culture and literature. The aim of the present study is to describe the individual fates of the widows and orphans behind these stereotypes. In the summer of 1873, the cholera epidemic reached Kolozsvár (today Cluj-Napoca, Romania) and took the lives of 537 people. Censuses of the widows and orphans left behind were compiled to determine who required help. These lists thus offer insights first and foremost into the survival strategies used by widows and orphans of a lower social stratum. They shed light, furthermore, on how the elite of the town defined the concept of orphanhood and, closely connected, that of poverty.

The Legal Background of Orphanhood and Guardianship in Hungary

In every community, the tasks of raising orphaned children were the duty of the family and relatives, undertaken mostly by grandparents and uncles. In their wills, fathers often made their decisions clear as to the guardians and upbringing of their children, as well as the management of their bequests,

listing several possible variations of the latter or rewriting their wills several times in light of any changes in the circumstances of their families.¹ In nineteenth-century Hungary, only children who had lost their fathers were legally recognized as orphans. Prior to the guardianship law of 1877, the guardianship of orphans was regulated in Werbőczy's *Tripartitum*, although these regulations predominantly concerned the wealth of minors. The appointment of guardians followed the order of inheritance based on the protection of the wealth of minors, so it granted guardianship (and, at the same time, the management of wealth and property) to those who were to have a share of the inheritance. In accordance with this, guardians on the mother's side were only appointed if there were no living relatives on the father's side, as stated by Werbőczy:

If, however, the son has male relatives who are due to paternal rights, as well as the inheritance and devolution of the livestock, the inheritance and guardianship of the livestock must be granted to the male relatives and not to the mother.²

The orphan, however, was not necessarily raised by his guardian, since if the mother was still alive, she raised the child in most cases. The guardian's main duty was to manage the orphan's inheritance/estates until coming of age in the absence of the father. The mother as a natural and legal guardian could only have guardianship while she remained a widow. Complications arose if a widow remarried, as the relatives on the father's side took over the management of the wealth so that the new husband and his relatives would not benefit from it. In fear of ill treatment and the squandering of the family fortune, the father could posit in his will that, if his widowed wife were to remarry, the children would be taken from her, "lest they should be abused by the stepfather."³

In 1870 and 1871, guardianship authorities were established in counties, municipalities, and towns to deal with issues of orphanhood. The guardianship law and the responsibilities of guardianship authorities were only finalized

1 Horn, "Nemesi árvák."

2 István Werbőczy, *Tripartitum* (1514), 113/5 §. Accessed November 6, 2019. http://www.staff.u-szeged.hu/~capitul/analecta/trip_hung.htm

3 Horn, "Nemesi árvák," 54–61.

in 1877.⁴ The guardianship law basically followed the guidelines laid out by Werbőczy, but it stipulated with greater precision the responsibilities of guardians and those of guardianship authorities as institutions providing supervision. Guardianship continued to be bound to paternal authority, and the appointment of a guardian was claimed to be necessary only in the lack thereof. The order of possible guardians remained unchanged with one exception: in the absence of a will, the mother became the legal guardian of the minors, but a male guardian could still be appointed to manage the wealth. If the mother was not alive, the next possible guardians in line were the grandfathers on the mother's or the father's side or, as a final solution, the guardianship authority appointed a guardian. The guardianship of orphans of noble birth was rather advantageous to the guardian, as it involved the management of the inherited wealth; thus, conflicts among relatives over guardianship frequently led to litigation. The law included specific articles concerning the upbringing of orphans who were without property or wealth: the responsibility fell on whoever was capable of providing for these orphans or could place them in an institution until they were capable of supporting themselves by working.⁵ As opposed to the guardianship of wealthy orphans, which came with several benefits, taking care of destitute orphans was perceived as a burden, though contributions by children as a part of the labor force in the household were much needed, and children themselves were often exploited as a source of labor.

According to the guardianship law of 1877, minors were legally acknowledged as adults at the age of 24, and from that point on, they could freely dispose of their wealth. Women were regarded as adults from the moment they married, regardless of their actual age. At the same time, the law stated that orphans over the age of 14 could freely dispose of the goods and payments earned with work and service if they provided for themselves. This meant that children 14 years of age could support themselves through their work but were not considered adults.⁶ Even minors engaged in a trade individually could only be declared of full age by the guardianship authorities when they turned 18.

4 Csizmadia, *A magyar közigazgatás fejlődése*, 197–99; Act 20/1877. Accessed November 5, 2019. <https://net.jogtar.hu/getpdf?docid=87700020.TV&targetdate=&printTitle=1877.+%C3%A9vi+XX.+t%C3%B6rv%C3%A9nycikk&referer=1000ev>; Csipes, “Az árvaszék szervezete, működése és iratai.”

5 Act 20/1877, 112 §.

6 Act 20/1877, 4–5 §.

*Sources and Methods*⁷

My research is based on the documents of the Cholera Committee preserved in the archives in Kolozsvár.⁸ The committee was set up for the duration and prevention of the epidemic. The documents include detailed records on the widows and orphans of those who died as a result of cholera, compiled with the aim of providing support for the poor and those in need at the request of the Ministry of the Interior in May and June, 1874.

The number of orphans and widows are added up based on the tables, censuses, and reports found among the documents of the Cholera Committee. Some of the documents were exclusively for internal use, so they reveal how the final list of the people who were granted support was compiled. The first list was a report by assistant physician Mihály Bartha, and it included the names and addresses of 173 widows and the number of children they had. The list served as a guide for district chiefs for the detailed field surveys of districts. Reports by district chiefs also indicated the financial situation of widows, their occupations, and sources of income, as well as the number of their children, their ages, places of residence, caregivers, and sources of livelihood.⁹ The reports were used to compile the list of those recommended for financial aid, so the names of the family members found eligible for support were recorded on five further lists in different versions (lists of those supported). Based on the dates, content, and stylistic features (e.g. words crossed out), one can make inferences concerning the order in which the documents were made, and the documents themselves offer insights into the factors on the basis of which decisions concerning whether or not an individual was regarded as poor were made.

The censuses were compiled in the form of tables, and the order in which they were arranged (according to names of streets) indicates that they were indeed based on field surveys. The lists often include data which those conducting the surveys only could have learned on site, such as the place where the orphaned children were being given temporary lodging and care or the fact that they had

7 I owe a debt of thanks to Ágnes Flóra, archivist at the National Archives of Romania, Cluj County Branch, for having called my attention to and allowed me to consult the documents of the cholera committee.

8 NAR CJ, F 1 Mayor's Office, Documents related to the cholera outbreak 1872–1874.

9 The census was compiled by the following individuals working in the following parts of the city: 1. János Manitzá for the Külmonostor-Külszén district, 2. Mihály Csíki for Hídelve, 3. Gyula T. for the Külmagyar-Külközép district. In the inner city, district captain Lajos Kállai did not compile the data as a table but rather wrote separate reports for each family.

left the city. Furthermore, the word choice is not standard or neutral, which displays a certain subjectivity and uncertainty deriving presumably from the first impressions of those recoding the data: the 51-year-old widow Mrs. Borbála Fodor György Kocsárdi, for instance, who provided for her three children by working the land, was characterized as “not quite poor.”¹⁰

Identifying the families raises several methodological problems, since the records tend to be inconsistent. There are minor differences detectable concerning, for example, the numbers and ages of the children, and the name of the widow was often mistaken for that of the deceased spouse. For this reason, in this paper the records have been complemented with data from registers of deaths, thereby correcting the inconsistencies and identifying nearly 80 percent of the persons indicated on the lists.¹¹

Registers of marriages reveal the rate of cholera widows who remarried and the factors contributing to the decision to remarry or to remain a widow. The research examined widows recorded in Kolozsvár church registers of births, deaths, and marriages over the course of eight years, that is, until 1880.¹² While the censuses always indicated the names of the husbands, registers of marriages often only featured the maiden names of wives, which at times made it impossible to identify widows.

Censuses of Orphans and Widows in Kolozsvár

The huge number of children orphaned at the time of the epidemic shocked the citizens of the city. People were used to losing parents and looking after orphans, but the number of broken families fighting for their livelihood grew at an unprecedented speed in a very short period of time. Information on the total 154 families and the caregivers for and circumstances of 251 underage orphans

10 Other designations included “poor, but able to subsist,” “in the direst destitution,” and “true destitution.”

11 I used all the marriage registers in Kolozsvár, including those for the Calvinist, Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Lutheran, and Jewish communities.

12 Since I only used the registers from the city of Kolozsvár, I was only able to learn about the fates of widows and widowers who remarried in Kolozsvár. Thus, the conclusions I draw may not be applicable in any larger context but apply, rather, only to the people about whose later lives the sources offer some information.

provides a special opportunity to observe the individual life stories and survival strategies of people who belonged to the lower strata of society.¹³

The term underage orphan indicates a child who needed to be looked after and who had not yet turned 18. The age limit of eighteen was determined on the basis of laws in effect at the time and on information provided by the sources. Similar studies regard the age of 13 as the upper limit of childhood.¹⁴ The data, however, are not consistent, and it is often difficult to differentiate between adolescents and smaller children because the only information available is whether the child in question was employed or worked as an apprentice. Thus, children's precise ages cannot be determined. Children of age and married women were named separately, thus they can be identified, even if their exact ages remain unknown.

The Definition of Poverty: Designating Those in Need

After the cholera epidemic, people all over the country were encouraged to donate money to aid widows and orphans left destitute. Concerning support for the poor listed in the censuses ordered by the Ministry of Interior, the municipalities could decide whether to spend the reserves of the guardianship authorities for these purposes.¹⁵ Kolozsvár received donations from the town of Szászrégen (today Reghin, Romania) and from Switzerland for the orphans of those who died of cholera, and mayor Elek Simon gave some of these donations to the orphanage for girls.¹⁶ However, the records do not indicate when the financial aid was transferred to the orphans in the census, nor do they indicate the amounts that were given.

The censuses recorded each member of the families concerned, including several children of age. The financial circumstances of the families were classified

13 I identified a total of 193 heads of families on the lists. In the case of 17 of these heads of families, we do not know whether they had a spouse and a child or children. 22 had no children and were survived only by a widow or widower. The lists contained 396 orphans, 112 of whom had reached adulthood or were married when the lists were compiled and three of whom died. Concerning another 30 children, the sources provide no indication of their ages or their housing situations. As a result, of the total 396 orphans, the present study focuses on 251 underage orphans.

14 Bideau et al., "Orphans and their family histories"; Maddern, "Between Households."

15 *Magyar polgár*, September 24, 1873.

16 *Magyar polgár*, December 12, 1873; *A kolozsvári „Mária Valéria” Árvaház évkönyve 1884*, 26.

into three categories: 1. *poor*, 2. *in adequate condition*, and 3. *in good condition*.¹⁷ The list of names in need of financial support was modified on several occasions due to subsequent clarifications. The best example of such modifications is the case of the nine-year-old Jóska Makó, the stepson of a poor army officer, who according to a report in May was “ill-treated in the hands of strangers.” The boy’s name was not featured in the final list of those eligible for support, since, as indicated by a clarification in the margins, he was in fact being raised by a relative, Mihály Makó paid by his father and thus did not need any external financial aid.

The census takers tried to determine different “levels” of poverty; for instance, they highlighted if an individual was very poor, destitute, or lived in extreme poverty. The authorities differentiated between levels of poverty in order to determine the “degree of need” of individuals in comparison to one another and depending on the amount allotted to provide aid. Those who were classified as “in adequate condition” or “in average condition” were naturally not considered in need of financial support. The financial conditions of some families were not indicated, perhaps because in their cases there was no need for support.

On the lists of those recommended for financial support 46 families can be identified, while the final list features only 35 families (22.7 percent of the families registered).¹⁸ Fully orphaned siblings (ten families) and widowed mothers and their children (18 families) were prioritized, whereas only four widowed women and three widowed fathers were granted support. Widows and their orphaned children were assured a place even on the strictest of lists, as they were unequivocally regarded as poor and disadvantaged due to the absence of the head of the family.¹⁹ Men, on the other hand, were not considered to be in a vulnerable situation owing simply to the fact that they were widowers (i.e. men). Sándor Losonczi, a widowed tailor with four children, for instance, was recorded in the census as being poor, but he did not make it onto the final list. Thus, as a widower who was capable of working, he was not considered eligible for aid, since he was still able to pursue his trade, even if, as the head of the family, he

17 Various terms are used, for instance “very poor,” “without property,” “destitute,” and “in an ordinary condition.”

18 Of the four lists, two were drawn up before May 14, 1874, when it was reported that the final statement had not yet been drawn up. The additions that were made to the third list suggest that it was made for internal use.

19 Oris and Ochiai, “Family Crisis.”

still lived under the most modest conditions. György Heuberger, on the other hand, was considered eligible for financial aid because he was physically disabled and lived in poverty with his seven-year-old daughter and eleven-year-old son. His inability to work made him poor and qualified for aid.

Mothers who remarried were not qualified for financial support either, regardless of their financial circumstances, since the new family was considered a self-sustainable economic unit. 13 of the widows of those who died of cholera (6.7 percent) were already remarried when the census was taken. Remarks by those compiling the lists did not necessarily refer to these women's livelihoods. In the newly formed families, the mother's role as caregiver and the father's role as breadwinner complemented each other nicely, so the children were seen as having a secure future and their financial circumstances were not regarded as a decisive factor.

112 of the orphans recorded in the censuses were of age, so they were not considered eligible for aid. Women were regarded as adults from the moment they married, a fact stipulated by law,²⁰ thus not a single married woman is found among those who were given financial aid. Young women who were able to work (for example in the cigar factory of Kolozsvár) or made a living of sewing or as maids, were not considered in need of aid, regardless whether they were married or not.

According to their contemporaries, the individuals featured on the lists for support were indeed all poor, and no families are found among them who lived under better circumstances and were only recommended for financial aids on the basis of biases. Nothing in the lists indicates favoritism concerning representatives of any professions either, as illustrated by the case of shoemakers. Two district chiefs among the census takers were borough council members of the Shoemaker's Association, and yet only three of the thirteen families of shoemakers were granted support.²¹ Some of these families, such as the Perdelis, were indicated as wealthy. According to the census, Károly Szathmári, who had been a member of the guild since 1869, and his two daughters were very poor;

20 Act 20/1877, 1 §; Act 23/1874. Accessed November 5, 2019. <https://net.jogtar.hu/getpdf?docid=87400023.TV&targetdate=&printTitle=1874.+%C3%A9vi+XXIII.+t%C3%B6rv%C3%A9nycikk&referer=1000ev>

21 In 1872, the Shoemaker's Guild was transformed into the Shoemaker's Association. Mihály Csíki (the chief of the Hídelve district) was a board member, and János Manitzsa (the chief of the Külmonostor-Külszén district) was the president of the association beginning in 1872. On the guilds see Kovách and Binder, *A céhes élet Erdélyben*; NAR CJ, F2 Document of the Shoemaker's Association, 52. Proceedings of the Shoemaker's Guild 1820–1899.

nevertheless, they were not recommended for support.²² This may be explained by the fact that, as suggested by the documents, the shoemakers' association appeared to be a well-operating society which provided aid for members who were struggling, so any shoemaker in need of financial support would have put the association in a bad light.

Although there are no signs of partiality in the lists of people who received financial aid, the absence of widows who lived off the land is noticeable: the final list includes only one mother who worked the land.²³ The more favorable conditions of widows of husbandmen²⁴ left alone after the epidemic may be explained by the fact that small landowner families were self-sufficient, as they could produce the food necessary for their livelihoods. Surprisingly, however, since they were seen as having a place to live and adequate food for their children, farmers' widows with several children were not eligible for financial support even if they had an infant to take care of, which obviously placed a considerable burden on their time and their ability to work.

Taking Care of Underage Orphans

A typology of the lives of underage orphans is a difficult endeavor, since their stories are rather varied.²⁵ As part of a similar research endeavor, Alain Bideau and Guy Brunet examine the possibilities orphans had after having lost their parents. Bideau and Brunet offer several individual yet indicative examples. I agree with their claim that there was no such thing as a "typical orphan," but that there was, rather, a host of different situations that had an impact on orphans' lives.²⁶ Nevertheless, based on the specifications used in the Kolozsvár census, I attempt to delineate some categories of housing and livelihood: 1. orphans raised by *relatives*; 2. orphans raised "*out of mercy*"; 3. *working orphans*; 4. orphans

22 I was able to identify six individuals from the families who had suffered deaths from cholera on the basis of an 1869 list found in the guild documents. With the exception of Károly Szathmári, according to the 1874 census, they were all adequately well-off financially.

23 The assisted widow for whom assistance was provided, Mrs. Katalin Szász József Mezei, still lived on her husband's plot at the time of the census with her two children. She married again in 1876 at the age of 35. Bodányi, *Szabad királyi Kolozsvár város*, 44.

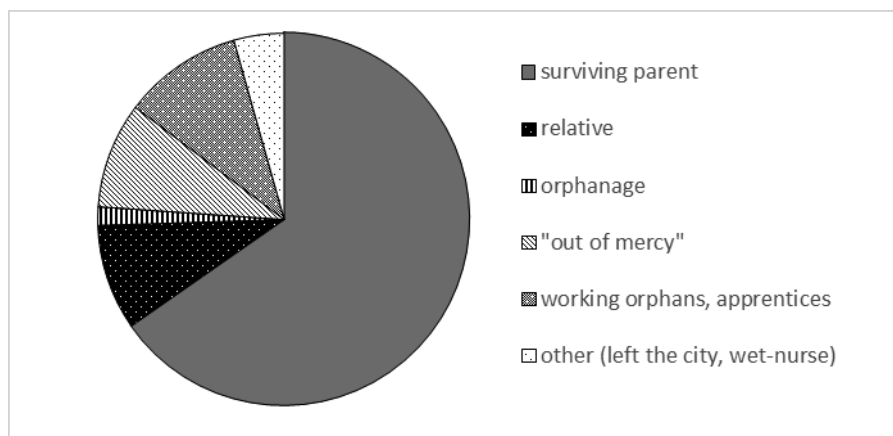
24 The inhabitants of the outskirts of the city, the so-called "hóstáti," considered themselves the urban farmers of Kolozsvár. Their community was forced to give up their land and previous lifestyle in the 1970s and 1980s, when under the communist regime the districts they inhabited were used for the construction of new housing blocks. See Pillich, *Városom éngyűrti*; Gaal, *Magyarok utcája*.

25 Bideau et al., "Orphans and their Family," 321.

26 Bideau and Brunet, "The Family, the Village and the Orphan."

raised in *institutional care*; 5. motherless or fatherless orphans raised by a *surviving parent* (Figure 1).²⁷

Figure 1. Taking care of underage orphans after the 1873 cholera epidemic in Kolozsvár



Relatives

Most of the orphans living in the households of relatives had lost both their parents. These orphans were predominantly raised by their grandparents, uncles, and aunts, who fulfilled their unwritten duties even if they were poor. To the extent that they were able, they raised an orphan or two. The nine-year-old and six-year-old daughters of János Pap, for example, were raised by the mother's sister, Mrs. Sándor Csáki, who was probably a servant living in her employer's household. A total nine of the 23 children (9.2 percent) who were able to reside with members of their families were taken care of by their uncles or aunts, three by elder siblings, five by grandparents, and six by other relatives. In the case of motherless or fatherless orphans, this situation was only temporary, until the parent who had survived could create the conditions necessary to bring up his or her children, for instance until fathers deemed unsuitable for raising their children remarried. Bideau and Brunet explained the decision reached by a few French fathers not to undertake to rear their children even after they had remarried as a consequence of financial concerns.²⁸ As my research revealed,

²⁷ In addition to the aforementioned groups, three orphans had already passed away, six were living in another city, two small children were being taken care of by a wetnurse, and one girl was attending the teachers' training institution in Kolozsvár.

²⁸ Bideau and Brunet, "The Family," 364.

after István Gombos had remarried, his three-year-old child continued to stay with the grandparents on the mother's side, who provided better conditions than the father, despite the fact that Gombos could have provided lodgings for the child.²⁹

Older children were generally taught to take care of younger ones; after the death of the parents, they frequently had to take on the responsibility of raising their younger siblings and providing for the family.³⁰ One could cite a few examples among the orphans in Kolozsvár. After the widow Mrs. Ferenc Májer passed away, her 18-year-old daughter made a living for herself and her four-year-old brother by sewing, while the 22-year-old son of Mrs. Mátyás Mózsza had to take care of his brother and sister, aged fourteen and eight.

Orphaned siblings could not always remain together, especially if there were many of them, which meant that they often had to be separated. The same thing happened when a widow could not take care of all her children alone, in which case the grandparents and uncles took on the upbringing of one or more of the children.³¹ Relatives rarely raised more than two children, as that would have been burdensome financially.³² Károly Balázs and Teréz Kremplin left behind three young children, one of whom, the five-year-old Ilona, was accepted into the Mária Valéria Orphanage with the help of the Women's Charitable Association, whereas Mari, aged two, and Aladár, aged four, continued to stay with Samu Bányai. We do not know exactly how he was related to the late parents, but he was certainly very poor himself. Mrs. Antal Prohászka's five children likewise ended up living separately. Joséfin got married, Lujza was a student at the Teachers' Training College of Kolozsvár, Károly was admitted to the Terezianum Orphanage in Nagyszeben (today Sibiu, Romania), and Ida and Emma were temporarily taken care of "thanks to the kindness of good Samaritans."

29 Bodányi, *Kolozsvár házirtokosainak névsora*, 15.

30 Deáky, *Jó kis fiúk és leánykák*, 82–85.

31 Bideau and Brunet, "The Family," 364.

32 Bideau et al., "Orphans and their Family," 315–25; Maddern, "Between Households," 72; Horn, "Nemesi árvák," 60–61.

Orphans Raised in Institutional Care

After the epidemic, altogether four children (1.6 percent) ended up in institutional care.³³ The Mária Valéria Orphanage for Girls in Kolozsvár, founded the year before, applied to the Ministry of Interior for a state subsidy of 1,500 forint per year to be able to admit children who had been orphaned by the pandemic. The application was rejected, and they were sent a single sum of 500 forint, which made it impossible for them to admit more than a small number of orphans.³⁴ At the same time, the heads of the orphanage probably knew about the financial support granted for orphans of the cholera, since the presidency and board members of the orphanage were all wives of the urban elite. In the end, the orphanage granted admission to only two girls from among the orphans, both in return for payment: Mrs. János Rhédey paid for Róza Orosz's education, and Ilona Balázs's upbringing was paid for by the Women's Charitable Association in Kolozsvár.³⁵

Róza Orosz was admitted to the orphanage in 1873, and Ilona Balázs moved in in 1874. At the time of the May 1874 census, Róza's mother, Mrs. Ferenc Orosz, made a living as a servant. When the list of widows and orphans was compiled, Ilona was being raised by a temporary caregiver in dire poverty. Both girls stayed at the institution until the age of 14. Róza then returned to live with her mother, and Ilona went to stay with her relatives.³⁶ At this point, they were both able to work, thus their upbringing did not cause financial difficulty, since they were a part of the labor force.

Two orphaned boys were granted admission to the Terezianum Orphanage in Nagyszeben. Károly Prohászka, a descendant of a farmer family, finished the eighth grade in secondary school in 1880.³⁷ Only good students were sent to the secondary grammar school. The other students were taught a craft or trade after they had completed the obligatory grades. The other orphaned boy, József

33 Also, two infants were turned over to the city wetnurse, because their father was in prison. The wetnurse was paid using funds from the city's coffers. NAR CJ, F 1 Mayor's Office, 2578/1874.

34 Transylvanian Reformed Church Archives, D3 Documents of the Kolozsvár Mária Valéria Orphanage for Girls, 1 Presidential Diary (1872–1880).

35 The association which ran the Mária Valéria Orphanage was a spinoff of the Kolozsvár Women's Charitable Association. There was considerable overlap between the two from the perspective of their members. *A kolozsvári árvaház évkönyve 1874*, 31.

36 The source does not indicate precisely how the person who took her in was related to her.

37 On the fate of the other four siblings see the subchapter entitled Relatives. *A nagyszebeni kir. kath. Terézárvaház értesítője az 1883/4 tanévről*, 11.

Butyka, was admitted to the orphanage at the age of 13. According to the register of deaths and the admission records of Karolina Hospital in Kolozsvár, József's mother, Róza Butyka, wife of comb maker Sándor (or Elek) Babos, lived in Torda (today Turda, Romania). As József bore his mother's family name, he was probably an illegitimate son. After finishing six grades of elementary school, he was sent to a saddler in Nagyszeben to learn the trade. His apprenticeship ended in 1886. Vocational education lasted for four years, during which time the apprentice was under the supervision of the master, who provided him full board, which meant accommodation, clothing, and food. The orphanage paid a certain amount of money to the master in return for taking on the apprentice and then releasing him, and it paid a final bonus to the boys when they left.³⁸

The aim of the orphanages was to provide knowledge and skills for the children in their care that would enable them to earn their own livings. In the Terezianum Orphanage in Nagyszeben, the vocational training of boys proved to be the most effective way to achieve this goal. For the heads of the Mária Valéria Orphanage for Girls, finding jobs for their girls was a much greater challenge, and they were almost only able to find employment for the girls that was connected somehow to household duties. In the institution, the girls could acquire the skills necessary for housekeeping and learn how to sew, and then they were sent to work as housemaids.³⁹

Working Orphans and Apprentices

Children were called on to do work in every family, depending on their state of development and abilities. This was considered an important part of teaching them to work and of rearing them to function as adults. Losing a parent brought significant changes in terms of children's work as well, since an orphaned child had to take over the roles of the absent family member. Orphans had more responsibilities, and the amount of work to be done increased, and orphans were often compelled to leave the family home earlier and take an active part in providing for their families. Widows were incapable of raising several children by themselves, so, if possible, the older children were sent to work as apprentices or housemaids.⁴⁰ For poor parents, sending one child away to work was a help, since they then had more food left for the children who remained in the home.

38 *A nagyszebeni 1883/4*, 14; *A nagyszebeni 1887/8*, 46.

39 A kolozsvári "Mária Valéria" 1880. Supplement. 10–11.

40 Deáky, *Gyermekek és serdülők*, 21–24; Oris and Ochiai, "Family Crisis," 55–61.

The Kolozsvár census recorded 26 orphans (10.4 percent) working for a salary or as an apprentice (most of them were 14 to 16 years old). Two of the eleven orphaned girls made a living from sewing. The others worked as maids. Seven of the boys were apprentices, and the other eight worked as servants, day laborers, or in another branch of business. None of them was supported by his or her parents. The boys were generally taken on as apprentices at the age of ten or twelve, and their master was obliged to provide them housing, food, and clothing. These young men learned their master's trade in these three to five years as apprentices.⁴¹

Corporal punishment was an everyday reality for apprentices. “The masters who were raised by the slap, the belt, and the switch still cannot break the habit of corporal punishment,” claimed the director-physician of the Kolozsvár State Children's Asylum in a report in 1912.⁴² The physician pointed out a “tradition” of corporal punishment prevalent among craftsmen, which the orphans of the 1874 census who were taken on as apprentices frequently experienced. The relationship between master and apprentices was often compared to father-son relationships, which thus meant that master had the right to discipline. Corporal punishment was certainly used for this purpose, but while at the turn of the century apprentices often lived in the cellar and their clothes were shabby, earlier the guilds made sure they were well kept. The living conditions and overwork demanded from apprentices in towns in the early 20th century was a horrible phenomenon, which may be explained by the fact that at this time the strict orders of guilds no longer regulated the treatment of apprentices, and that with the development of manufacturing industries, cheaply manufactured products meant a huge competition for the small workshops.⁴³

The right to use corporal punishment also concerned orphaned girls employed as housemaids, a practice that was regulated by the Housemaid Law of 1876. Gábor Gyáni's research⁴⁴ provides a comprehensive picture of the issue of housemaids, their social positions, and their daily lives. Despite the dangers and their vulnerable position as housemaids, it was during these years that the young girls could acquire the skills needed for housekeeping and earn the dowry necessary for starting a family, so their job played an important part in their transitions into adulthood. As a housemaid was dependent on her employer,

41 Deáky, *Gyermekek és serdülők*, 247–60.

42 *Jelentés az állami gyermekmenhelyeknek 1907–1910 évi munkásságáról*, 96.

43 Deáky, *Gyermekek és serdülők*, 247.

44 Gyáni, *Család, háztartás és a városi cselédség*.

parents usually sent their daughters to work for families they knew and who, they felt, would surely treat them well.⁴⁵ István Albert from Kolozsvár, for example, sent his daughter to work as a housemaid for a family living in the same street. Four of the orphans of the cholera epidemic worked outside of the city. The rest worked for families in Kolozsvár, so the parents could easily get news about their child's wellbeing.

Orphans Raised "Out of Mercy"

If they were without family members to provide some level of care for them, some orphans were (temporarily) taken care of by godparents, neighbors, or other acquaintances. To use the term used by the census takers, the group of orphans raised "out of mercy" consisted of 23 children (9.2 percent) who had no familial or other clear relationship to their caregivers, at least as far as one can determine on the basis of the sources. Presumably, they had no family tie whatsoever to their caregivers, since family relatives raised orphans not out of mercy but as an obligation. Whenever the census takers did not indicate a familiar relationship, they stressed that the orphans were raised *out of mercy*, which points to the voluntary and temporary nature of the act. The situation of the orphans of the Aikler family suggests uncertain housing and a frequent change of place of residence. According to the sources, the children had no permanent residence. At the time of the census, the twelve-year-old girl was living with a poor relative, and her eight-year-old brother lived "somewhere else."

Not all children taken into strangers' households were fully orphaned. Ten children had one parent who was still alive but who was incapable of taking care of the child owing to poverty or lack of employment. The children were usually sent to live with strangers in the absence or lack of the mother until someone took the role of the mother in the family, for example until the father remarried. Mrs. Julianna Szemeriay Sándor Márkus had two daughters who resided in Sándor Nagy's home while she worked as a servant. The two daughters of Ede Horváth, who was struggling to make ends meet, were taken in by Mrs. Hirlich, wife of a locomotive stoker, and taken to his station in Ung county (today Ukraine). Dániel Máté's orphans, the two-year-old Dani and the three-year-old Róza were given lodgings in the court of Count Mikó out of mercy. The father was a day

45 Deáky, *Gyermekek és serdülők*, 230.

laborer working for the count, and the children were presumably taken care of by a female member of the household.

The examples listed above prove that it was not only children who lost both their parents who could be regarded “orphans” and sent to stay with strangers. The difference between orphans and fatherless or motherless orphans has only recently been acknowledged. At the time, no distinction was made between the two. One’s “ability to raise a child” was thus often determined by the financial situation of the surviving parent. Widowed fathers were not expected to take care of their children either, so those who were incapable of raising their children were exempted from their duties by society. In this interpretation, orphanhood referred to a social situation, i.e. abandonment due to poverty. Thirty years later, in the Ordinance from 1903 completing the Child Protection Act, the definition of *abandoned child* was formulated as follows:

Children without property under the age of 15, with no relatives obliged to or capable of providing for and raising them and with no relatives, patrons, charity institutions, or organizations to provide for properly and raise them, must be regarded as abandoned.⁴⁶

It was children whose relatives were unable to raise them due to poverty that were taken into state care, much like the children who were raised “out of mercy” in 1873.

Widows and Their Orphans

The majority of the children listed in the Kolozsvár census lost one parent in the cholera epidemic, so 164 minors (65.3 percent) continued to be raised by the father (in 25 families) or the mother (in 40 families). As Bideau and Brunet note, as long as the one parent (especially the widowed mother) was alive, young children remained with him or her in the family home, but relatives (uncles, grandparents) were also present in the family’s life and provided support for the widow.⁴⁷ Still, the absence of the father always had a negative effect on the financial situation of the family, even if it did not necessarily lead to destitution or dire poverty.⁴⁸ Widows of craftsmen could continue their late husband’s occupation with the help of apprentices. Secondary literature on the topic offers several examples

46 Ordinance 1/1903 Ministry of Interior; Gyáni, “Könyörületesség, fegyelmezés,” 76–77.

47 Bideau and Brunet, “The Family,” 364–65.

48 Oris and Ochiai, “Family Crisis,” 19.

of widows engaged in their deceased husband's craft for a long time.⁴⁹ Among the widows in Kolozsvár, Mrs. Róza József Bogdán Szathmári, the widow of a shoemaker, for instance, practiced her husband's profession, though not for long. Running the business, doing the housework, and raising her one-year-old son at the same time was too much of a challenge for her, so less than 18 months later, she remarried to a bachelor of the same age. As Eleonóra Géra points out, taking on both motherly and paternal roles at the same time was a great burden, so widows with older children were more likely to be able to continue their late husband's craft or business.⁵⁰ The widowed mothers featured in the census tried to make a living predominantly from domestic service, needlework, sewing, and washing. In farmer families, widows tended to continue farming, but the male labor force proved to be indispensable in the long term, and thus if a widow did not have a son or sons of her own, she was compelled to find a new spouse or take advantage of a son-in-law as a source of labor.⁵¹

Among the women widowed during the cholera epidemic, I identified 32 individuals (16.6 percent) in the registers of marriage in Kolozsvár. Though it was difficult to identify women who had been widowed, as the names of the deceased husbands were not indicated consistently, I could find as many widowed mothers who remarried as widowed fathers. In the following, I focus on the lives of 28 widows and widowers (14.5 percent) with orphaned children (15 women and 13 men). According to secondary literature, widowers remarried at a higher rate, so the similar rate of widowed men and women remarrying is probably due to the low number of the sample.⁵² It is quite probable that a greater proportion of men found new wives from outside of the city, but there are no records of these marriages available. It seems unlikely to me that widowed mothers would have been willing or able to move to another settlement, especially if the house had been the property of the late husband. I think they took this step only in cases of dire need.

Second marriages were generally characterized by some inequality between the spouses in terms of both age and financial situation, since a second marriage was influenced by several factors. Widowed mothers primarily expected their new husbands to provide financial stability, while for widowed fathers, the tasks

49 Szende, "Craftsmen's Widows."

50 Géra, "Városi és kamarai árvák."

51 On peasant widows who managed their lands on their own, see Péter, "Paraszti özvegyek."

52 Pakot, "Megözvegyülés és újráházasodás," 76; Van Poppel, "Widows, Widowers and Remarriage"; Oris and Ochiai, "Family Crisis," 69.

involved with raising children (especially infants) constituted a major challenge and thus the main motivation for remarrying.⁵³ Many of the widows in Kolozsvár were quite young even at the time of their second marriages, sometimes the same age as unmarried women. They were also appealing as potential spouses because several of them, including some of the widows from Kolozsvár, had inherited their late husbands' lands or businesses.⁵⁴ Seven of the 16 women married a bachelor, who thus took on the upbringing of sometimes as many as three orphans (meaning children who had lost their fathers). Five of the 13 widowers married single women, who then took care of their husbands' children by their first marriages.

According to the secondary literature, widows and widowers tended to remarry relatively soon after having lost their spouses.⁵⁵ Widowers rarely undertook the task of taking care of young children alone, and the presence of a stepmother was also linked to the likelihood of a child reaching adulthood.⁵⁶ This was true among widowed parents in Kolozsvár: 21 of 29 widows and widowers remarried within a year of having lost their spouses. The motivation behind this may have been the need to provide care for children in the family. Each mother and father had underage children. The community did not expect fathers to raise young children alone, but it was the father's responsibility to find a suitable person and create the proper circumstances for childrearing.⁵⁷ Károly Kis, one of the widowed fathers in Kolozsvár, remarried as early as one month after his wife's death. The reason for the unusually short mourning period was his one-month-old child, who had been left without a mother, whom he could not take care of, so he married a 23-year-old maiden. The 27-year-old farmer Mihály Szöllősi remarried two months after his wife's death, also because he was unable to raise his small child alone.

As for marriages between a widow and widower, it can be assumed that both parties brought children to the new blended family, but only one such case can be found documented in Kolozsvár, where both the new husband and the new wife had underage children who had lost a parent. Márton Tárkányi and Júlia Engi, who lost their spouses in the cholera epidemic, both had one daughter

53 Pakot, "Megözvegyülés és újráházasodás," 22.

54 For instance, the widow of stonemason János Szabados married the stonemason Ferenc Bálint in August 1873.

55 Pakot, "Megözvegyülés és újráházasodás," 72, 81.

56 Skořepová, "Orphaned children in Bohemian rural society," 225, 229; Åkerman et al., "Survival of Orphans," 85–86, 99.

57 Oja, "Childcare and Gender," 85–86.

when they married in October 1873. They were both Calvinist farmers, so the new marriage did not bring about any changes in their lifestyles. Based on their respective addresses, one sees that, as they were neighbors, they presumably had known each other for a long time, which was probably an advantage for the children, since their new stepparent and sibling were people they knew well. Furthermore, they did not have to leave the neighborhood, as they only moved next door. The girls were roughly the same age, so one could even assume that in this case, two playmates became siblings. Unfortunately, it is impossible to determine whether any of the widowers who remarried followed the otherwise common practice of taking a close relative or the sister of the deceased spouse as the new wife, which ensured continuity between the old family and the new.

The sources reveal that most of the widowed persons in Kolozsvár *did not remarry*.⁵⁸ It cannot be determined the extent to which this phenomenon can be attributed to the decisions or preferences of the individuals involved, since in the end, the lives of widows and widowers were predominantly determined by their financial circumstances. Poverty, for example, was not an obstacle to remarriage, as several widows categorized as poor were able to find a new spouse. In contrast, widows living in destitution due to ill health could not remarry, because due to their inability to work, they could not improve their circumstances (for instance a blind mother or a widower unable to make a living for himself). In cases like these, a widow or widower had little to no chance of remarrying.

Nor are data adequate to explain the extent to which the community or the family accepted the independence of widows without children of age or, in contrast, urged them to remarry.⁵⁹ Young widows were still very much under the influence of their families. If, however, remarriage is interpreted as a survival strategy, then the possible reasons the tendency among the widows in Kolozsvár not to remarry may perhaps be explained in several different ways. If she did not have to remarry for financial reasons, a widow may have chosen to remain unmarried for personal reasons. Widows with children who had already reached adulthood or were able to work, for instance, were less likely to remarry, presumably because their children were able to help provide for the family or take over household duties from their widowed mothers so that she could focus on taking care of smaller children.⁶⁰ In families in which the presence of children

58 35 widowers and 52 widows did not remarry.

59 Pakot, "Megözvegyülés és újránházasodás," 82.

60 Oris and Ochiai, "Family Crisis," 29; Pakot, "Megözvegyülés és újránházasodás," 72, 82; Skořepová: "Orphaned children," 225, 228.

who had reached adulthood can be verified, widowed parents usually did not remarry. In the Profanter family, for instance, the two older sons were 20 and 16, and they were able to work as bricklayers, as their father had done, so they were able to contribute to the family earnings while the widowed mother was taking care of her seven-year-old and eight-month-old children.

The function of widows as heads of the household was usually only temporary, lasting only as long as they had underage children.⁶¹ In some cases, it is again difficult to determine whether a widow did not remarry as a consequence of a personal decision or simply because she had a lack of options. If she had several small children, she might have been less appealing as a potential spouse since her new husband would have to shoulder the burden of providing care for them. Mrs. Katalin Dávid József Gyulai had five children. The oldest was nine, the youngest only two months old at the time of the census, and they lived in her house with her. The widow Mrs. György Vinczi also had five children. The youngest was two weeks old, but her 16-year-old daughter and 14-year-old son were already working, so they were able to help her shoulder the burdens of providing for the family. Both women were widows of farmers. It cannot be determined whether anyone else lived in the two widows' households (such as a grandparent) or whether they perhaps relied on assistance provided by relatives living nearby, but they definitely did not remarry. It seems that both managed the households on their own and raised their underage children on their late husbands' farms. In the secondary literature, there are a number of examples of widows who did not remarry. When the mother was left a widow, the family did not fall apart. The underage children remained with their mothers, and there are also records of family members (e.g. a grandparent or sibling) who provided help or moved in.⁶² I believe this might have been the case with the two aforementioned widows from Kolozsvár. Furthermore, neither of them was featured in the list of those who received financial support. Although Mrs. György Vinczi was initially recommended for support, she was left off the final list, and, as the cadastral map reveals, compared to the other farmer, the plot with the house she inherited from her late husband was relatively large.⁶³ The census takers' assessment was probably influenced by their knowledge of widows having inherited properties, which practically meant that, in their cases, housing

61 Oris and Ochiai, "Family Crisis," 33–34; Skořepová, "Orphaned children," 229–30.

62 Bideau and Brunet, "The Family," 364–65.

63 Szabad királyi Kolozsvár város térrajza az új házszámzás szerint [The Map of Kolozsvár Free Royal City], ed. Sándor Bodányi (Kolozsvár, 1869). Dimensions of the map: 119 × 83 cm.

and livelihood were regarded as ensured, so the two widows were not considered poor, even given the responsibilities involved in raising small children.

Since widowed fathers rarely undertook the duty of raising minors alone, the relatively high number of single fathers as caregivers for small children is surprising. Unfortunately, the sources offer no information concerning the help they may have received in providing care for the children with, but based on the register of addresses in Kolozsvár, it is clear that they had relatives who lived nearby. In all likelihood, they had family members who helped more than the data recorded by the census takers would indicate. Farmer József Baga seems to have raised his six young children on his own. The youngest child was only one year old, the oldest eleven. The register of addresses indicates that his plot and the one right next to it were the properties of György Baga's heirs, which may mean that at least one sibling lived nearby. The adjacent plot also belonged to the Baga family, and in the neighboring street there lived a houseowner by the name József Baga. The addresses thus reveal a large family of farmers living in the Hídelve district, so József Baga probably did not have to take care of his children entirely on his own, but received help from female members of the family or the grandmother.⁶⁴

The case of István Albert was similar. He had six children. One of them had reached adulthood, two worked as domestic servants, and three daughters (aged six, eight, and twelve) lived with him. The elder daughter who worked as a housemaid served nearby. György Albert, presumably István's brother or perhaps older son, so again, in this case the members of the family lived nearby.⁶⁵ As for carpenter János Molnár, the explanation may lie in the fact that the eldest of his three orphaned daughters, Zsuzsa, was 21 years old, so she could do the housework and take care of her two younger sisters, aged 9 and 13.

Summary

The aim of the census recording widowed parents and orphans after the cholera epidemic was to assess the social problems caused by the epidemic and to identify and provide support for those in need. Among the beneficiaries, underage orphans and widowed mothers were prioritized. The concept of poverty was linked to the tasks involved in rearing children and a given individual's ability

64 Bodányi, *Kolozsvár házirtokosainak*, 45.

65 *Ibid.*, 15.

(or inability) to work and earn money. For the census takers, a poor person in need of financial support was someone who did not work and/or had a young child, or in other words, predominantly widowed mothers who were raising their children on their own. The lists compiled of widows and orphans of the cholera epidemic and the categories into which people were divided on these lists offer insights into the practices involved in the placement of orphans living in poverty in the nineteenth century, practices in which the family and relatives played a pivotal role. According to the census takers, who were members of the urban elite, the word orphan referred not simply to a child who had lost both his or her parents (the census takers did not even draw a distinction between children who had lost one parent and children who had lost both parents) but also to children whose parents were too poor to provide for and raise them. Orphanhood, thus, referred often not to the position of a child within a family, but rather to the child's place within the larger social network.

The loss of a parent or parents brought about several changes in the lives of young orphans. Most orphans who had lost only one parent were raised by the parent who survived, and the surviving parent was often given assistance by relatives living nearby. One-parent families consisting of a mother and a child or children were more frequent than one-parent families headed by a father, as widowed fathers with minors tended to remarry. The upbringing of children who had lost both parents (or whose parents could not provide for them) was usually undertaken by grandparents and close relatives. Providing care for orphaned children was an unwritten family duty, one which family members usually accepted, even when they were poor themselves. Some of the orphans in Kolozsvár, however, were not related to the adults who raised them, and their uncertain situations were noted by the census takers. Older children actively took part in providing for the family: as the part of the deceased parent had to be filled, they took on more tasks or contributed to the livelihood of the family with their salaries. They could ease the burdens which fell on the widowed parent by working as apprentices or housemaids so that the widowed parent would not have to provide for them. Very few orphans were admitted to orphanages: a total of two girls and two boys were placed in institutions in Kolozsvár and Nagyszeben.

After the epidemic had passed, several young women and men had been widowed, and their private lives can be traced back according to the information in the registers of marriages. The decision to remarry was determined by several factors. For women, the main motivation to remarry was to ensure a livelihood

for their family, while men mainly sought to provide security for their young orphaned children and to find a new mother to take care of them. Second marriages characteristically came rather quickly, before the end of the year of mourning. In the sample examined here, the rate of those who did not remarry is rather high, which underlines the importance of predominantly financial factors. Some were unable to find a new spouse because they were poor, while others, in contrast, were under no financial pressure to find a spouse, as they were able to subsist on their own. Alongside financial factors, help from children who had reached adulthood or a relative living nearby also decreased a widowed parent's need to remarry.

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The Stepfamily from Children's Perspectives in Pest-Buda in the 1860s

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This paper examines the distinctive aspects of children's letter-writing practices, sibling relationships, and the use of urban spaces by one of the most educated, intellectual stepfamilies in mid-nineteenth century Pest-Buda. In this bourgeois family, children grew up in an exceptionally rich intellectual atmosphere, as their mother (Júlia Szendrey) was a poet, writer and translator, their father (Árpád Horvát) was a historian, and one of their uncles (Pál Gyulai) was the most significant literary critic of the time. Consequently, reading and writing was a fun game and a source of joy for even the youngest members of the family. As a result, many of the analyzed sources were produced by children, offering us the exceptional possibility to examine stepfamily relations, emotional practices, urban and everyday life, as well as material culture from the perspective of children. The study aims to identify the practices through which the family experience and the family identity and the sense of belonging in the Szendrey-Horvát family were constructed.

Keywords: childhood, middle class household, parent-child relations, half-sibling relations, urban history, use of space, private and public spheres

On July 21, 1850, in the chapel of the parish of Lipótváros in Pest, a 21-year-old woman and a 30-year-old man were married. It turned out to be one of the most frequently mentioned marriages in nineteenth-century Hungary. The bride was Júlia Szendrey, the widow of Sándor Petőfi, who had been one of the most popular poets of the Reform Era and one of the most important figures in the Revolution and War of Independence of 1848–1849. The groom was Árpád Horvát, a historian and professor at the University of Pest. Public opinion condemned the new marriage, though it was the only escape for the young widow.

Sándor Petőfi, the first husband, died on July 31, 1849, during the defeat of the Hungarian War of Independence in one of the last battles in Transylvania.¹ His young widow was left alone with their child, who was seven months old

¹ On the military history of the Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence, see Hermann, *1848–1849, a szabadságharc hadtörténete*.

at the time. As a result of the harassment she endured at the hands of the the Austrian authorities, the uncertainty of her financial background, and malicious rumors which had been spread about her, she was in a desperate situation in which she could not take on the role of “the widow of the nation” that the public wished to give the wives of martyrs who had fallen in the war of independence. Her contemporaries did not empathize with her demanding situation, and they condemned her decision to flee to a new marriage. Her figure is still surrounded by stereotypes. This also contributed to the fact that the documents concerning Júlia Szendrey’s second marriage and the majority of her literary works from the 1850s and 1860s remained unpublished.² From a socio-historical point of view, given the abundance of relevant resources, this phase of her life is at least as exciting as the period connected to Petőfi, not only because her independent literary career unfolded during this period but also because she belonged to one of the most educated, intellectual stepfamilies of the era.

Júlia Szendrey took her 19-month-old son, Zoltán Petőfi, with her into the new marriage. She and her second husband, Árpád Horvát, had four children. Attila Horvát was born in 1851, Árpád in 1855, Viola, who died early, in 1857, and Ilona in 1859. In the resulting stepfamily, the children grew up in an exceptionally rich intellectual atmosphere, as their mother was a poet and writer, their father was a historian, and one of their uncles, Pál Gyulai, was the most significant literary critic of the time. Consequently, reading and writing was a fun game and a source of joy for even the youngest members of the family. As a result, plenty of relevant sources have survived from them, sources which are exciting not only because they concern or were created by the members of this special family, but also because the historian only rarely has, among her sources, writings which were created by children.³ The aim of the present study is to examine the distinctive aspects of the children’s perspectives, the sibling relationships, and the practices which influenced the formation of family identity through the correspondence and greeting poems of Júlia Szendrey’s sons and the floorplans made of their family home.

2 On her literary career in the context of the contemporary debates on female roles and women writers, see Gyimesi, *Hungarian female writers after the Revolution and War of Independence of 1848–1849*. I collected and published all her poems in a critical edition in 2018: Szendrey, *Szendrey Júlia összes verse*.

3 I published the previously unpublished sources in 2019: Gyimesi, *Gyermekszemmel Szendrey Júlia családjában*.

Children's Perspectives in Historiography

Although the history of childhood has a significant body of secondary literature both internationally and in Hungary, analyses of the sources created by children and the special worldview manifested in them are relatively rare in the historiography. While researchers have shown an increasing interest in the study of children's ego documents (such as children's diaries written during the 1956 Revolution and World War II) about the politically significant events of the twentieth century,⁴ this aspect of research is strikingly missing in the nineteenth-century context. One factor in this is the shortcomings of the sources, or more precisely the failure to study the relevant sources. As a result, the history of childhood has been examined primarily on the basis of sources created by adults. The beginning of research on the subject is linked to the name Philippe Ariès, who claimed in his 1960 book that, before the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the concept of childhood was unknown, children were not given particular attention, and the child-parent relationship was not characterized by sensitivity and a close bond of love.⁵ The hitherto unusual choice of topics inspired further research in this area, and several historians questioned Ariès's thesis. Linda A. Pollock, for instance, sought to refute claims about the quality of the child-parent relationship by analyzing diaries, correspondence, and autobiographies.⁶ Barbara Hanawalt also argued persuasively that adults did indeed pay particular attention to people in different stages of human life (including childhood) even in the Middle Ages, and thus they recognized the importance of childhood and adolescence.⁷

Recent research deals with the emotional relationships not only between parents and children but also among siblings. The role of siblings in the wider kin networks has been taken for granted by historians for a long time, so it has only recently been made the subject of scholarly inquiry.⁸ Leonore Davidoff has pointed out that the sibling relationship is the longest and, therefore, in a

4 The research of Gergely Kunt in this field should be highlighted: Kunt, "És a bombázások sem izgattak...", Kunt, *Kamasztűkrök*. In connection with the 1956 Revolution, the childhood diary of Gyula Csics, published by the 1956 Institute and edited by János Rainer M. on the fiftieth anniversary of the revolution, is very significant. It touches on the period between October 1956 and March 1957. Csics, *Magyar forradalom 1956 – Napló*.

5 Ariès, *Gyermek, család, halál*.

6 Pollock, *Forgotten Children*.

7 Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, 5–6.

8 Davidoff, *Thicker than Water*, 1–2.

sense, the defining relationship in a person's life, as it can generate additional kin and kinship ties (e.g. aunts, uncles, cousins). In Davidoff's concept the notion of the "long family" plays an important role which refers to the fact that in the Victorian era, exceptionally large families, often with more than ten children, were formed due to improved living standards and health care. Thus, there were at times very big age differences among siblings, as up to two or three decades could have passed between the birth of the first child and the birth of the last.⁹ Therefore, an intermediate generation was formed between the parents and the younger children, where the older children also functioned as caregivers, teachers, and playmates for the younger, and after the older siblings had married, their younger siblings, who had grown into teenagers, helped them raise their own children. Leonore Davidoff's book focuses primarily on the history of English middle-class families between 1780 and 1920, but not exclusively. The chapter on the relationships within the Freud family is significant in Central European terms.¹⁰ Based on a number of cases and a rich array of sources, Davidoff found that childhood experience, sibling relationships, and the reflections of relatives could fundamentally determine the awareness of the child's position in society and the quality of his or her political, social, and personal life, both in the nineteenth century and in the early decades of the twentieth.¹¹

In Hungary, the study of childhood was undertaken mainly from an ethnographic point of view and also from the perspectives of child labor and the history of education.¹² While the history of childhood may be of increasing interest to researchers as part of family history, in the context of the nineteenth century and earlier eras historians only rarely have sources written by children on which to draw, alongside the sources produced by adults (memoirs, autobiographies reflecting on childhood, and depictions of children in the printed press, fiction, and visual culture). Sources created by children are essential if we seek not simply to study childhood as it was understood by adults at the time but also from the viewpoints of children themselves.

Family history research has been inspired by an approach that perceives family not simply as a biologically based, timeless entity, but as a social construct that changes over time. In the present paper, I examine family relationships based on the children's letter-writing practices, the use of the house by family

9 Ibid., 78–107.

10 Ibid., 281–307.

11 Ibid., 132.

12 Deáky, "Jó kis fiúk és lányok."

members, and the use of space during their city walks. I aim to identify the practices through which the family experience and the family identity and the sense of belonging in the Szendrey-Horvát family were constructed. The correspondence of Júlia Szendrey's children is an exciting source in terms of the characteristics of the nineteenth-century stepfamily, the history of emotions, urban history, everyday life, and material culture.¹³ In the period of roughly seven years when the letters were written (1861–1868), Zoltán Petőfi was between the ages of 13 and 20, Attila Horvát between 10 and 17 years old, and the youngest son, Árpád, between 6 and 13. Thus, we can see Pest-Buda from the perspective of young boys growing from children into adolescents.

The Family Home

In the first three years of their marriage, Júlia Szendrey and Árpád Horvát lived in Lipót Street in the city center (on the southern section of today's Váci Street). In 1853, they moved to the corner of Hársfa and Király Streets, which was located in former Terézváros in a part closer to City Park. (Although today this area belongs to Erzsébetváros, in the 1850s and 1860s it was part of Terézváros. Erzsébetváros was established only in 1882, when Franz Joseph allowed the 7th district to be separated from the former Terézváros to be named after his wife.) Hársfa Street served as the main area in which the family moved for 14 years, until 1867, when the parents separated.

We can learn the exact furnishing of the apartment and the division of the rooms from a special source. In 1869, Júlia Szendrey and Árpád Horvát's eldest child, Attila Horvát, made two detailed floorplans of the former family home and its surroundings. Their home in Hársfa Street did not exist any longer at that time, since in 1867, the family broke up. The parents never divorced officially, but from then on, they lived in separate households. Júlia Szendrey moved away from her husband with her daughter, Ilona, while the boys stayed with their father, Árpád Horvát. They sold their family home in Terézváros and rented a room in the city center. After suffering from uterine cancer for a long time, Júlia Szendrey died on September 6, 1868. The floorplans showing the interior design were thus made in the period following the breakup of the family and the death of the mother. One of them marks the location of the furnishing within each room, and the other shows the wider surroundings of the house and the various

13 Gyimesi, *Gyermekszemmel Szendrey Júlia családjában*.

plants in the garden in greater detail. Attila Horvát also recorded the date of birth of his siblings, and he named each room on the floorplans from the child's point of view ("Mom's room, Dad's room," etc.). One can interpret this gesture, the creation of floorplans which record the furnishings and surroundings of the former family home with meticulous accuracy, as an expression of strong emotional attachment and the desire of the adolescent boy to preserve family memory.

According to the floorplans, the house consisted of the following rooms: entrance hall, small room, father's room, mother's room, children's room, kitchen, the pantry, the lavatory, and the soldier's room.¹⁴ The children's room opened off the hall. The presence of a children's room and the reference to this space as a children's room were by no means part of an obvious, everyday phenomenon, as even in the housing inventories of later decades there were only rarely examples of a separate children's room, even in cases in which the large number of rooms would have allowed it.¹⁵ The presence of the children's room in the bourgeois apartments was not evident even at the beginning of the following century, although the need for such a space had been emphasized more and more by then. The research of Gábor Gyáni suggests that the placement of children in bourgeois flats was often complicated and involved the use of a single space for several purposes. The beds used by older children were sometimes placed in the dining room or another room, while younger children often slept in the bedroom with their parents.¹⁶ In contrast, the children's room provided a separate space for the children of Júlia Szendrey and Árpád Horvát, which was not only nominal.¹⁷ In addition to the floorplans, the correspondence between Attila Horvát and Zoltán Petőfi also proves that the children's room provided them with a space where they could occasionally retreat from the adults.

14 As a significant proportion of soldiers were housed not in barracks but in the private homes of citizens and peasants, from the beginning of the eighteenth century the practice of maintaining a "soldier's room" gradually developed in areas where boarding was regular. There are no indications in the sources as to whether any military person actually lived in the room marked "soldier's room" on the floorplan for Júlia Szendrey's family's home. The children's correspondence suggests that maids used this room.

15 Gyáni, *Az utca és a szalon*, 144.

16 Ibid.

17 A similar example from the last third of the nineteenth century: the boys were also given a separate room in the bourgeois home of Dr. Gyula Janny's family in Koronaherczeg Street (now Petőfi Sándor Street in the fifth district of Budapest), and a part of the room was separated from the parents' bedroom for the daughter: Horváth, *A Janny és a Zlamál család otthonai és tárgyai*, 49.

The floorplan is a valuable source because it gives a list of its premises and furnishings and it shows their locations within the private spaces. On the basis of the interior design, one can make hypotheses concerning the internal relations of the family, the roles of the men and the women, and the ways in which these roles in this family differed from social conventions. One can also venture conjectures concerning the functions of some spaces of the apartment and the relationship between the private space of the home and the public spaces of social life.

In the house of Júlia Szendrey and Árpád Horvát, less emphasis was put on shows of wealth and status than in average bourgeois apartments, where usually the salon or drawing room was a space of particular importance; by contrast, in the Szendrey-Horvát family home, spaces for private, intellectual work were important. The salon, which was the most significant place in contemporary bourgeois homes as a space to welcome guests and meet social expectations, was missing from the house. The piano, which would usually have been placed in the salon as a status symbol, was in Júlia Szendrey's room, which opened onto Hársfa Street.¹⁸ The lack of a salon and the furniture in the rooms also showed that the furnishings of the house were not intended primarily for the public, but rather for everyday, private use, tailored to individual needs, and this was unusual in the home of a relatively prosperous family at the time. Both the husband and the wife did intellectual and artist work, and both demanded the private space and furnishings required for this.

It is striking that the “gentleman's room,” often referred to as the “men's room,” was not exclusively a privilege of the husband in their case. According to the apartment inventories analyzed by Gyáni, this space usually functioned as the study of the paterfamilias and often as a library.¹⁹ A desk with chairs, a bookcase, and a sofa (an indispensable accessory of the “men's room” in the later decades as well²⁰) were found not only Árpád Horvát's room but also in Júlia Szendrey's room. This is also remarkable because the wife usually did not have her own room, even though it was a woman's job to create the tasteful furnishings of the home.²¹ The presence of the necessary fixtures for artwork in Júlia Szendrey's room draws attention to the fact that the female member of the family also carried out in-depth intellectual work and regular publishing activities. All this

18 As early as 1882, Janka Wohl emphasized this norm, which fundamentally defined bourgeois domestic culture for a long time: Wohl, *Az otthon*, 59.

19 Gyáni, *Az utca és a szalon*, 143.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid., 149; Gyáni, *Identity and the Urban Experience*, 53–58.

indicates not only the literacy of the resident of the room, whose daily cultural needs included regular reading and writing, but also that she had a separate room and its furnishings did not differ from the furnishings found in her husband's room, and this was exceptional at the time. The furnishings played a prominent role in both rooms, and in its dimensions, Júlia Szendrey's room was even larger than her husband's.

The furnishings of Júlia Szendrey's room combined the functions of a bedroom, a study, and a salon, although the boundaries of the spaces with different functions were delineated relatively well within the room. The curtain bed was located in the innermost part of the room; this point of the room constituted a private space. The most important element of the bourgeois apartment, a piano, was at the opposite side of the room in front of the window, on "display," together with a rose bowl and a sofa. As a counterpoint to the private sphere, this part of the room overlooking the street was the space of representation in which objects indicated the wealth and social status of the family. The desk was around the middle forming a liminal space between the intimate, inner and the public, open parts of the room. Thus, Júlia Szendrey's room performed the functions of the bedroom, the study, and the salon, though within the room itself the borders between spaces with different functions were relatively clear.

If one compares the wife's and husband's rooms, it is also striking that the former was more spacious and, in addition to the desk (which can be interpreted as a sign of the importance of intellectual work), it was also furnished in a manner that made it suitable for representation. For instance, it had a piano, a sofa, and a bookshelf.²² In contrast, the latter (the husband's room) lacked the objects which would have been necessary as signs of social status to make the room appropriate as a space to welcome guests. It was furnished almost exclusively for solitary work. In the husband's room, a large desk stood in front of the two windows and bookcases stretched along the walls. As a result, Júlia Szendrey's room was better suited to serve as a salon, while Árpád Horvát's room was more of a study, although this was not exclusive in either case. The furnishings of the rooms suggest that the husband and wife played roles within their family that did not correspond to the more traditional roles, in which the wife was a more secondary figure to her husband. The emphatic separation of rooms and living spaces could also be understood as a sign of a cold relationship between the spouses.

22 Gyáni, "Polgári otthon és interiőr Budapestén," 46.

The Characteristics of Correspondence between Half-Siblings

When Júlia Szendrey married her second husband, she took a 19-month-old boy, Zoltán Petőfi, from her first marriage to the new marriage. From the very beginning, the young mother tried to emphasize the connection with her first husband's memory and the legacy of the name Petőfi in the child's identity.²³ However, according to the family correspondence, Zoltán had a harmonious relationship with his stepfather for a long time: in his letters he referred to him as father.²⁴ Their relationship became tense only later, after the final deterioration of the parents' marriage and the death of Julia Szendrey.²⁵ The couple's two eldest sons, Attila and Árpád, wrote several letters to their half-brother, Zoltán Petőfi, in the 1860s. The origin of the letters is due to the fact that the teenager Zoltán was no longer in Pest with his mother and stepfather's family, but in Békés county in the eastern part of the country, with his uncle and guardian, István Petőfi, who worked as a bailiff. In the nineteenth century and the earlier centuries, it was not exceptional for relatives, especially aunts and uncles, to be involved in raising children.²⁶ This, in turn, meant that children, especially in their teens, lived away from their parents' home for an extended period of time in a relative's household. Júlia Szendrey's decision to have her eldest son move and live with his uncle was a typical strategy of the era.

Writing played a particularly important role in Júlia Szendrey's family. It was important not only on a theoretical or aesthetic but also on a material level. We learn from the letters that the boys often received gifts related to writing from their parents; Attila, for example, reported that he had received "a beautiful album and inkwell, stationery, and a wallet for Christmas in 1865."²⁷ Holidays had a special role for the Horvát boys, as they gave them the opportunity or at least hope for a personal meeting with their half-brother, Zoltán Petőfi. There were several references to this in the letters. For example, on February 24, 1864, "We are also very happy that you'll come at Easter"; February 3, 1865: "You will come at Easter, well I know you'll have such a moustache and beard"; April

23 Szilágyi, *Határpontok*, 119–32.

24 OSZK Kt. VII/135.

25 After the death of Júlia Szendrey, Árpád Horvát wrote to his children about his stepson: "Only write a response to Zoltán – do not write otherwise; for not only is he behaving very disrespectfully towards me, but I can even say his manners are truly offensive; he barely raises a hat in front of me..." OSZK Kt. VII /141.

26 Davidoff, *Thicker than Water*, 165–94.

27 *Ibid.*, 151.

14, 1866: “Are you coming for Pentecost? Surely, it would be good because we haven’t seen each other for almost a year.”²⁸ There was a reference to the physical distance between the half-siblings several times in the correspondence, similarly to the one found in the last sentence cited above, i.e. the reference to the fact that they had not seen each other in a long time. By writing to each other, they seem to have wanted to bridge this physical distance and avoid growing emotionally distant.

Zoltán Petőfi’s act of sending a photo of himself to his half-siblings can be interpreted similarly. Seen alongside their correspondence, it seems to have contributed to the creation of an illusion of coexistence. Attila Horvát’s reply, written on August 25, 1866, again referred to the time that had passed since their last meeting: “We were very happy to get your photo, it’s been more than a year since I saw you; it’s a nice shot, I think.”²⁹ The latter remark refers to an intimate relationship. It implies that Attila knew Zoltán, who was only three years older, well.³⁰ Among the brothers, Attila was the most ambitious with his correspondence. On December 11, 1866, after a three-month absence, he wrote Zoltán, “We haven’t written to each other for a long time, it would be good if we resumed writing.”³¹ He expressed a desire for more frequent written contact several times. He also tried to write about topics in which his half-brother might have taken an interest or which might have affected him. In addition to the city events, he often referred to teachers and peers whom Zoltán also knew and who remembered him. The letters seem expressive of an intention to maintain common points of contact with Zoltán, both among the students in Pest as well as in the family. The latter is proved by the fact that Attila Horvát regularly reported not only about his own condition to his half-brother, but also about the condition of other family members (such as their cousins), and he reminded Zoltán of birthdays, such as his youngest sister’s birthday on July 25, 1868: “Iluska is fine; it’s her ninth birthday today. My God, how fast we all grow up!”³² The latter remark is also a good example of Attila Horvát’s view of his family as a community; his perception of himself as part of the family was an important part of his identity when he wrote with love about others. Zoltán Petőfi also frequently wrote warmly of and to his half-siblings in his letters. He referred to

28 Ibid., 156.

29 Ibid., 158.

30 Zoltán Petőfi was born on December 15, 1848, Attila Horvát was born on September 6, 1851.

31 Gyimesi, *Gyermekszemmel Szendrey Júlia családjában*, 162.

32 Ibid., 165.

Ilona, who was eleven years younger than he, as a “little angel” and as “dear little Ilona,” and he finished his sentences to Attila several times with “yes, indeed, little mischievous one.” He also used the term “my sweet siblings,” for example, when he reported on his sixteenth birthday in Csákó: “This evening, I would have liked so much to have had fun with you, my sweet brothers!”³³

The emotional language in family correspondence was so widespread in the era that its norms were included in publications of letter templates. The so-called “correspondence books” for example, the much-published *Hölgyek titkára* (The Secretary of the Ladies) and *Pesti magyar-német házi titoknok* (The Hungarian-German House Secretary of Pest) were intended to facilitate the practice of correspondence, so they offered template texts corresponding to social norms and categorizing the various life situations and occasions of letter writing.³⁴ However, in the correspondence of Júlia Szendrey’s children, several aspects prove that the loving language of the letters was not based on adherence to the norms, but rather on the emotional closeness of the brothers. The boys were connected by a number of games and jokes, and humor was an important component of the letters. For instance, in a letter written to his half-brothers on May 1, 1865, Zoltán used misspellings to imitate the voice of a child still learning to make sounds (I give the Hungarian text for those who read Hungarian): “Mit csinál a kedves kisz Ijonka, igen öjűjök neki hogy szokojtat és tisztejtet, majd ha Pestre megyek viszek neki valami szépet.” One might playfully translate this as, “What is wittle Hewwen [Helen, the English version of the Hungarian name Ilonka] dowing? When I go to Pefft I will bwing her sumfing nice.”³⁵ Ilonka, who was the youngest member of the family, was almost six years old at the time, but there are many references in the family documents to her pronunciation (presumably as a source of humor from previous years), as the eldest child, Zoltán, addressed his younger half-siblings in his writings with wit and playful kindness.

This loving attention was manifested not only in his interest in the wellbeing of those at home, but also in his colorful and enjoyable descriptions of his own experiences and local, rural peculiarities, in which he highlighted phenomena that may have been surprising, unusual, or interesting to his family members in Pest-Buda. While the experiences described by the Horvát boys are exciting sources on the urban culture of Pest-Buda in the 1860s, Zoltán Petőfi’s letters

33 Ibid., 129.

34 Típray, *Legújabb és legteljeseb pesti magyar-német házi titoknok*, Vajda, *Hölgyek titkára*.

35 Gyimesi, *Gyermekszemmel Szendrey Júlia családjában*, 138.

are valuable, among other things, because of the detailed description of rural experiences. The rhetoric of the letters is shaped by the fact that they are written by an urban boy in the countryside who was writing to his urban siblings about his experiences in the countryside. Therefore, he often describes events that would be everyday to people living in rural communities with colorful explanations. Thus, the events on which he dwells are determined in part by the specific life situation of the boys. A good example of this is an excerpt from a letter dated December 24, 1864, in which he explains the meaning of a pig slaughter to Attila. In peasant culture, pig slaughters were timed for the winter, so it is not surprising that, according to Zoltán's account, they received several invitations in the month of December: "Over the course of the past weeks, there have been several pig slaughters, one after the other. One day, I was invited to one, the next day, I was invited to another one."³⁶ Even Zoltán's sixteenth birthday was celebrated during a pig slaughter on December 15. On another occasion, he wrote about peasant weddings in details. His letters contain not only personal but also rhetorical twists imitating the print press ("my gentle questioner," "dear reader"). Travelogues, which contained descriptions of a similar nature in which their authors dwelt on different customs, were very popular in the contemporary press, and Zoltán's family members were regular newspaper readers. By bringing the rhetoric of his letter closer to newspaper articles, Zoltán also expanded the functions of his letter writing: in addition to sharing experiences and keeping in touch, he also considered it important to entertain his younger half-siblings with his writing style and personal observations.

Material Characteristics, Style, and Functions of Their Correspondence

James Daybell pointed out that the study of correspondence requires an interdisciplinary approach: social, cultural, palaeographic, gender, and literary-critical research approaches and considerations need to be interlinked, and, accordingly, it is worth noting that the researcher is not confronted with neutral, completely fiction-free historical sources, but with age-specific, gender-specific, class-specific letter writing practices.³⁷ Along with the interpretation of correspondence as a writing practice, the examination of material characteristics have come to the fore. Historians have become aware of the importance of

³⁶ Ibid., 129.

³⁷ Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers in Tudor England*, 9–10.

letters not only as documents and texts, but also as cultural products which bear meanings through their material forms, so the quality of handwriting, the letter folding technique, and the seals used must also be made subjects of scrutiny. In addition, in recent analyzes, the purpose for which the letters were created has become an important consideration, taking into account the intersections of the different categories (pragmatic, business, religious, family, literary, etc.).³⁸ Analyzing the emotional language of correspondence among brothers, Susan Broomhall and Jacqueline Van Gent found that the act of writing the letter itself, which was mostly a public, shared activity among families belonging to elite, also played a fundamental role in maintaining emotional attachments among family members. Letters often served a similar function to gifts in the context of both social obligations and emotional closeness.³⁹

In the case of the correspondence among Júlia Szendrey's children, the material characteristics also deserve attention, because in many cases, these characteristics were closely related to the content of the letters. On September 25, 1865, Attila informed Zoltán that he had received, among other things, a stamp printer from Árpád, on which his name had been engraved for his birthday. According to the surviving envelope, Attila "inaugurated" the gift (used it for the first time) the following day: the letter sent on September 26 in Pest contained a red stamp monogrammed with H. A., and Attila used the stamp on the envelopes for several subsequent letters. In addition to the seals, the letter paper also deserves attention, as in many cases, the paper on which the letters were written were embossed with inscriptions. In the upper left corner of one of Zoltán Petőfi's letters there is an embossing depicting the Hungarian coat of arms with a crown, surrounded by the first line of the national anthem as an inscription: "God bless the Hungarians." The contour of the Hungarian coat of arms was redrawn in blue ink, but the crown was not. Zoltán Petőfi was the draftsman, and presumably, by redrawing the Hungarian coat of arms but not the crown, he made clear which symbol he considered important and which he rejected. This can be interpreted as a very subtle expression of his antiroyalism, his conviction in favor of the independence and freedom of the Hungarian nation, which can be considered the spiritual heritage of his father, Sándor Petőfi.

38 Ibid., 10.

39 Broomhall and Van Gent, *Corresponding Affections*, 147.

In Zoltán's letters, several times he wrote separate messages to each of his three half-siblings (Attila, Árpád, and Ilona) on the same sheet of paper. The styles and contents of the letters written by the four half-siblings differed sharply. The wording used by the Horvát boys was usually more concise, and in one paragraph, they often presented completely different types of information (for example, in one letter, they wrote about Morzsa, their dog, in one sentence and about the parliament in the next), but as a result, they presented urban life, the contemporary press, and the events in which they took an interest in extremely varied ways. Zoltán's style was different. He wrote long sentences, and in many cases, the separate, new sentences merge, as the beginning of a new sentence is not always marked with the use of a capital letter and punctuation is often lacking. An individual letter (especially longer, newspaper-like accounts of experiences) was often about a single topic. Since Zoltán corresponded not only with his half-siblings but also with his mother, he sometimes called on Attila to read the letter written to his mother as well, because he had written on something in more details there, or vice versa, he asked his half-brothers to show the letter he had written to them to their mother because he had not sent a separate one to the "sweet good mom." In one such case, he also remarked, "and I also write my letters to you all."⁴⁰ This suggests that he considered reading letters a common, familial affair rather than a private act.

Familial Use of Space in the Children's Correspondence

In the letters, the presentation of the family's use of urban space was given a special role in the holiday descriptions. Attila Horvát and Árpád often reflected in their letters about where they went in the city and what they saw and did.⁴¹ Descriptions of such experiences have been highlighted many times in the accounts of the holidays. In the following, I examine what practices were related to the holidays in the family and how this was all related to the growing urban culture of Pest-Buda.

Attendance at Haydn concerts in contemporary Pest-Buda was closely related to the rituals of the Easter celebration. In the spring of 1865, Attila wrote to Zoltán that he and his mother had attended two concerts "at the Buda Castle Church" before Easter, where they had heard performances of *The Lamentations*

40 Gyimesi, *Gyermekszemmel Szendrey Júlia családjában*, 126.

41 They wrote about urban experiences not only in their letters, but also in their journals, which they made as a gift for their mother. Gyimesi, "Urban Space through Children's Eyes."

of *Jeremiah* and *The Seven Last Words of Christ*. Although the traditional venue for Easter Monday in Pest-Buda was Gellert Hill,⁴² the Horvát boys were taken to the bank of the Danube River and to a café called Kávéforrás by their father: “We were on the bank of the Danube and at the café with dad on Easter Monday, the Danube has risen so much; what used to be 14, 15 feet from the shore to the Danube is now only 1, 1½ feet!”⁴³

May 1, which was considered the spring holiday, the “Wedding of Nature,” and which was already celebrated in Pest-Buda in the eighteenth century, was also mentioned in the children’s correspondence. As had been the case on Easter Monday, on May 1 the boys went for a walk with their father. In a letter to Zoltán dated May 12, 1865, Attila Horvát mentioned May 1 as a day of celebration in the City Park: “Rain rarely occurs here. On May 1, there was a little rain which crushed the sea of dust in the city park, we went walking there with father and had ice coffee, hot coffee, and chocolate.”⁴⁴ As the letters indicate, the children were taken for walks on the holidays by their father, who worked mainly as a historian and university professor and spent a significant amount of time in the library.

The mention of delicacies as if they were an integral part of urban experience may be explained by the fact that the letters were written by children. The letters evoke the city as it presented itself to the senses: the senses of vision and taste played important roles in the texts, especially the experience of urban flavors (chocolate, coffee, cocoa). Consumption of chocolate was also an important indicator of the social status of the family. In the Hungarian Reform Era, confectioneries appeared in Pest-Buda as places suitable for local consumption (candy shops existed much earlier, as far back as the 1770s), and the Biedermeier furnishings were intended to suit the tastes of the emerging bourgeoisie.⁴⁵ In his book *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*, Sidney Mintz analyzed how sugar reached the lower classes of society after having become common in the households and day-to-day lives of the affluent social strata and how its symbolic meanings changed.⁴⁶ Although the consumption of chocolate was no longer the exclusive prerogative of the aristocrats in the second half of the nineteenth century, it certainly belonged to the customs of the wealthy and,

42 Zoltán, *Népi szórakozások a reformkori Pest-Budán*, 63–70.

43 Gyimesi, *Gyermekszemmel Szendrey Júlia családjában*, 137.

44 Ibid.

45 Csapó and Éliás, *Dobos és a 19. század cukrászata Magyarországon*, 15–16.

46 Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*.

more specifically, the urban elite. Attila Horvát's description also draws attention to the fact that rare delicacies were a treat with which the family marked a holiday.

The Szendrey-Horvát family spent not only May 1 but also August 20 in the City Park in Pest, which was the traditional venue of St. Stephen's Day celebrations in memory of the founder of the state, the first Hungarian king. In 1863, one day after the August 20 holiday, Júlia Szendrey wrote to Zoltán Petőfi of the day she had spent in the City Park and the disappointing, low-quality fireworks: "We came home terribly dissatisfied, regretting having spent two forints for this boredom."⁴⁷ The City Park had been used as a venue for firework shows, a much-loved form of entertainment, in the Reform Era. People who wanted to see the spectacular fireworks of Anton Stuver, Vienna's "patented Viennese fire master," who was advertised in the contemporary newspapers, gathered in the park.⁴⁸ The excerpt from Júlia Szendrey's letter cited above indicates that they had already seen firework shows, and they had been able to compare the spectacle on that day with earlier, similar experiences. Although the children's correspondence makes no mention of the August 20 celebration, the description provided by their mother is significant. First, alongside the colorful descriptions found in the boys' letters, it adds a factor which may well have been more relevant to an adult, namely the (allegedly excessive) cost of the experience. Júlia Szendrey also offers a rational characterization of the St. Stephen's Day City Park program, thus drawing even more attention to the peculiarities of the tone and perspective of the children's letters. Finally, she writes of an event when all the members of the family (apart from Zoltán) spent the day together in the City Park, which was very rare according to the children's correspondence. In their letters, the boys generally mentioned either their mother or father as their companion, and they never once wrote of joint family walks. This is not surprising if one keeps in mind that the problems in Júlia Szendrey and Árpád Horvát's marriage⁴⁹ had become so serious by the early 1860s that the idea of divorce had arisen.⁵⁰ It

47 OSZK Kt. VII/ 234.

48 Magyar, "Társalkodási kertek, promenádok, mulató- és népkertek," 197; Zoltán, *Népi szórakozások a reformkori Pest-Budán*, 95.

49 For more on the marriage, see Gyimesi, "egy nő, több mint csak asszony' Szendrey Júlia és Horvát Árpád házassága."

50 Júlia Szendrey was already considering divorce in 1861, but in the end she did not separate from her husband until 1867. She wanted to convert to Protestantism (she was a Catholic) in order to divorce from Árpád Horvát, but her death on September 6, 1868 prevented her from doing so. The reasons for the breakdown of the marriage are revealed in two letters. In one, Júlia Szendrey asked her father's permission to divorce, stressing that she had suffered a lot because of her second husband. The other letter

cannot be a coincidence that no family photo has survived depicting the two of them together, considering that studio photos of Julia Szendrey and her children were taken several times. Although they remained together until 1867, family programs were presumably not left untouched by the cold relationship between the mother and the father. The ways in which the family seems, on the basis of the sources, to have used urban spaces suggest that both the mother and father were involved in the children's lives and had close emotional relationships with them, and one can conclude, on the basis of the childrens' letters and the mention of the activities in which they engaged with each parent, that both Júlia Szendrey and Árpád Horvát devoted time to raising their children, even if they did not do this together.

The Role of Gift-Giving in the Family

In the correspondence of Júlia Szendrey's children, descriptions of the family's use of leisure time and of space in city parks were important in connection with the holidays discussed above in the spring and summer. When writing about the winter holidays (the Feast of Saint Nicholas, Christmas, New Year's Eve) and the birthdays and name days of the family members, however, the children mainly noted the gifts they had received from their parents, their relatives, and one another.

The serious change in the role of gift-giving in the family is indicated by the advertisements in the contemporary press and the mass spread of toys for children. Beginning in the 1860s, the toy trade played an important role in the economic life of Budapest.⁵¹ Children's toys were offered primarily by so-called Nuremberg ware shops named after the German trade center, Nuremberg. Although the number of specialized toy stores began to increase at the end of the nineteenth century, these types of shops remained important until the first decade of the twentieth century, selling relatively cheap consumer goods for everyday life, including a very large number and selection of toys.⁵²

The prestige of gifts became increasingly important. At the turn of the century, the dollhouse as a gift for daughters and the rocking horse as a gift

was addressed to the abandoned husband himself. This letter suggests that Árpád Horvát's violent, often threatening behavior led to the deterioration of their relationship and that they thought very differently about the roles of women and men, happiness, and sexuality.

51 Tészabó et al., "*A Babatündérhez*," 18.

52 Ibid., 19.

for sons were also important markers of a family's social status and financial situation. Toy retailers whose spatial location was close to areas that were easily accessible and popular among children (such as the Museum Garden) were able to stay in business for a long time.⁵³ Toy stores, advertisements targeting children, and shopkeepers also sparked social debates about gifts in the contemporary press. In the 1860s, when these trends were beginning to emerge, Júlia Szendrey and Árpád Horvát's son regularly wrote to their half-brother, Zoltán, of the gifts they had received. When they wrote about family Christmases, they dwelled for the most part on presents.

Christmas Júlia Szendrey's Family

Children's Christmas presents in 1863 included sweets ("Sugar fruits from Genoa") and toys ("two span perimeter rubber balls," "Porcelain figures," and boardgames). In February of the following year, the eight-year-old Árpád wrote to Zoltán in detail of the gifts he had received for Christmas. The emphasis on books in the list is particularly noteworthy: *Andersen's Fairy Tales* and *Puss in Boots* were among the titles. The copy of *Andersen's Fairy Tales* was presumably given by Júlia Szendrey, who was the first person in Hungary to publish the literary translations of the works of the Danish author through German mediation in a volume. She dedicated her well-received book, published in 1858, to her children.⁵⁴ In 1864, Attila also mentioned that he had received a copy of "Andersen" from his mother. Another member of his family had also given him a book: he had received *One Thousand and One Nights* from his aunt, Mária Szendrey, for Christmas. He was also given a "capsule pistol," a gift he had long wanted, as he had a love of military games.

The correspondence of Júlia Szendrey's children is also an exciting source from the point of view of toy history. The boys were given books and military toys, but also several spectacular pyrotechnic gifts. I managed to identify these toys, which seem both dangerous from our perspective but also special compared to the classic gifts often mentioned in connection with the nineteenth century (rocking horses, military figures, and dollhouses), by examining contemporary

53 Ibid., 23.

54 Szendrey, *Andersen meséi*.

price lists and advertisements.⁵⁵ One of the Nuremberg traders⁵⁶ who played a central role in the Hungarian toy trade was Tódor Kertész. His price lists, which included everything for sale in the shop,⁵⁷ included “harmless room fireworks.”⁵⁸ The fireworks were given fancy names, such as “Mephisto’s Shining Paper.” Readers could see the advertisement for the “room fireworks,” which were allegedly suitable for home use, in the columns of contemporary newspapers.

In the *Fővárosi Lapok* (Newspaper of the capital city), Tódor Kertész advertised the Christmas and New Year’s gifts available at his store with the following caption: “the latest room fireworks...”⁵⁹ His price lists also included magic kits,⁶⁰ “mind toys,” and “amusing boardgames.”⁶¹ The latter included boardgames that were also suitable for chess, mill, backgammon, and draughts. Árpád was surprised in 1863 when he was given one of these boardgames for Christmas by his parents.

Tódor Kertész opened his shop around Christmas in 1861, and every subsequent year, he had organized Christmas toy exhibitions.⁶² His customers included famous politicians and writers of the period (including Ferenc Deák and Mór Jókai).⁶³ As the widespread distribution of specific toy retailers can be traced back to a later date, Árpád Horvát may have obtained special gifts for his children from a Nuremberg merchant (perhaps at Tódor Kertész himself).

According to the letters, in the Szendrey-Horvát family, the children were given an equal share of educational and entertaining gifts, and in many cases, they were given gifts which served both functions. Given the games that were mentioned in the letters, it is not difficult to imagine how family members spent the Christmas holidays, but notes in the correspondence offer additional clues to this as well. In 1864, on the occasion of the first Christmas Zoltán spent away from his parents’ home, he wrote the following in a letter to his family: “When you have fun, play cards, remember me, who, though far from you, will think of

55 I would like to thank Júlia Tészabó and Irén Császi for their advice, which helped further my research on toy history.

56 For more on the Nuremberg merchandise stores and Tódor Kertész, see Tészabó et al., “*A Babatündérhez*,” 18–19, 57–58.

57 Tészabó, “A játék szerepe a gyerekek fogyasztóvá válásában,” 161.

58 The supply of goods changed relatively slowly during the era, so the price lists which survived from later decades provide a reliable point of reference for identifying toys.

59 *Fővárosi Lapok*, December 20, 1865. 1156.

60 Kertész, *Képes árjegyzék 1899*, 9.

61 Kertész, *Képes árjegyzék 1876*, 23.

62 Tészabó et al., “*A Babatündérhez*,” 9.

63 *Ibid.*, 32–33.

you on Christmas Eve.”⁶⁴ Attila’s response confirmed the imagined scene: “We were playing cards with Mr. Óváry on Christmas Eve.”⁶⁵ These two remarks also draw attention to the fact that, at the time, Christmas was not necessarily a holiday for which family members would gather, much as it had also been perfectly normal, two decades earlier, when Julia Szendrey had been a child, that a child pursuing studies somewhere far from his parents would not spend Christmas at home. Also, not only family members but also friends (in this case, József Óváry, the Horvát boys’ tutor) could join the celebration.

Family Birthdays and Name-Days

In addition to the importance of the Christmas celebration, gift giving also played a significant role in family holidays such as birthdays and name-days. Attila Horvát recorded the following about his fourteenth birthday in September 1865: “For my birthday, I received many gifts, and so I’ll list them here: a very beautiful and expensive knife and a beautiful crocheted purse from Mom. Mythology and a ‘Students’ Pocketbook’ from Dad. For the price of two forints I got some paint, a pencil, Spanish wax, and a sealer with my name engraved on it from Árpád! Ilona gave me a small bag that she crocheted herself.”⁶⁶

The list draws attention to several things. First, the gifts seem to indicate the gender of the person who gave them. Regarding Ilona, the only daughter, the brothers repeatedly noted in their letters that she was able to knit. As a result, she mostly gave crocheted or knitted gifts not only to her siblings but also to her mother (such as a garter). Not surprisingly, gifts also indicated the gender of the person who received them. Ilona, for instance, received toys considered appropriate for girls from her parents, such as “a dozen of dolls, cooking utensils.”⁶⁷ The gifts also highlight the importance of writing. The boys gave one another writing related items (pencils, Spanish wax, a sealer), and the parents were also happy to bestow such gifts. For Christmas 1865, Attila received “a beautiful album and inkwell, stationery, and a wallet,” and Árpád received paint and stationery, among other things.

The father was happy to give gifts with educational functions to help cultivate the intellectual curiosities of his sons. Elek Peregriny’s book *Mythologia*

64 Gyimesi, *Gyermekszemmel Szendrey Júlia családjában*, 129.

65 Ibid.

66 Ibid., 145.

67 Ibid., 151.

a két nembeli ifjúság használatára (Mythology for the use of youth of both sexes) discusses in various chapters the religious rites, the main gods (including their Greek and Roman names), the demigods, the mythological wars, and the morals and customs of the Greeks and Romans (including, for instance, the construction, the “palaestra exercises,” such as the topics of working out, clothing, marriage, parenting, meals, guest ceremonies, dance, funerals, and mourning).⁶⁸ He thus encouraged his children to acquaint themselves not only with the characters of mythology but also with the history of Greek and Roman culture and lifestyles.

Certain gifts seem to have been intended to strengthen his children's attachment to their Hungarian identity. On Attila's twelfth birthday, he wrote the following in a letter to Zoltán: “My birthday was good and happy, I got a big national flag from my father, which hung from his window during the revolution[.]”⁶⁹ The gifts thus had several meanings. They were not simply toys intended to entertain the children. They were also symbols of the values that the parents intended to pass on. The central role of culture, the importance of writing and reading, the value of learning and knowledge, the encouragement of activities assigned to gender roles, and the emphasis on national identity all appeared in the range of meanings represented by the gifts. In addition, gifts given by the children expressed similar values. The toy magazine, edited as a gift for their mother, bearing the title *Tarka Művek* (Multicoloured Works), and containing writings by the children, were gifts that showed the effect of the family environment on the children's interests and ways of thinking. The children seem to have considered writing a source of joy, a gift, and a game. It is no coincidence that in 1864, on Attila's thirteenth birthday, he interpreted the letter he sent as a gift: “Receive this letter from your brother as a birthday gift, who often thinks of you.”⁷⁰ Thus, the gifts that were exchanged among the members of the family can be seen as reflections of the growing consumer culture, which developed dynamically in the 1860s, but they can also be interpreted as expressions and embodiments of the values of the urban educated bourgeoisie. Parents and relatives who considered intellectual curiosity and the arts and sciences important in education were able to express this with the gifts they gave to their children, which, they presumably hoped, would help nurture these values in their children.

68 Peregriny, *Mythologia*.

69 Gyimesi, *Gyermekszemmel Szendrey Júlia családjában*, 128.

70 *Ibid.*, 126.

Poems by Júlia Szendrey's Children as Gifts

Júlia Szendrey's children regularly wrote poems for family occasions. They mainly greeted their mother, aunt, and cousins on birthdays and name-days, but poems written for wedding anniversaries and New Year's Day also survived in their bequest. In many cases, poetry manuscripts can be found on fine, lavishly decorated letter paper. Writing greeting poems for family members and relatives for different festive occasions was such a common practice in the era that books were also published which specifically included this type of template text in order to help children with the obligation to write festive poems. Ferenc Neÿ's book *A gyermeki kegyelet tolmácsa* (The Interpreter of Children's Grace) is an example of one such book. It was published in 1851 by Gusztáv Emich. Its function and target audience were revealed by its subtitle ("Celebratory greetings, toasts, dialogues, and scenes for all kinds of family celebrations. Recommended for the youth by Neÿ Ferenc"), but even more so by a sentence from the author's foreword: "The child rarely finds words for his sweetest emotions, so in order to support their more beautiful aspirations, I am happy to offer myself as an interpreter, and they will certainly rejoice if they learn to express what they feel in their hearts. For this reason, I recommend this booklet to the youth."⁷¹ The volume included New Year's greetings, dialogue scenes for festive occasions, and name-day and birthday greetings. The various texts in the book are arranged not only by the type of holiday but also by family members: they included separate subchapters for poems to mothers, fathers, grandmothers, grandfathers, aunts, godmothers, etc.

Poems to the Mother

The greetings written by Attila, Árpád, and Ilona Horvát were influenced by this tradition. They each used the contemporary formulae with which children expressed respect, but the poems also show signs of their creativity and imagination. The texts were made personal with references to current life situations and personal greetings. In a poem written on the occasion of a name-day, Attila wished his mother not only a long and happy life but also that she have the good fortune to travel to Venice, where she had longed to go for a long

71 Neÿ, *A gyermeki kegyelet tolmácsa* (without page number.)

time: “And may you greet Venice with its gondolas this year!!”⁷² In reality, Júlia Szendrey had never been to the romantic city, although a piece of writing has survived which gives the illusion that she was writing the lines in Venice (which suggests that the city had captured her imagination). Only in the last lines of the text does it become clear that it is not an account of an actual experience, but rather merely something she wrote while she was looking at map of the city spread out on her couch.

The poems were also made personal by the fact that the children often wrote about their feelings and life situations, even if they used traditional rhetorical formulae of the genre. For example, in one such poem, they apologized for writing something that was too short, “[b]ecause the nightmare of the exam is looming.”⁷³ There are even poems the specific function of which seems to have been to serve as an apology. In one poem, Attila even explained, in lines written above the poem, why he was writing (he had made his mother angry), and he made a promise: “Well, I see I have made you angry a lot. / And my conversion is not just a scribbling.”⁷⁴

The children also wrote poems for one another. The texts of these poems offer impressions of the images of themselves that the children sought to convey, and the poetry also offered them an opportunity to compete and tease one another. For example, the younger son, Árpád, suggested to his mother that she could choose to go overseas with him in her old age, “to Haiti, Cuba / Or if you like to California / where lots of gold and diamonds can be found,” or she could choose to remain with Attila “in the boring city of Pest.”⁷⁵ Thus, the greeting poems, despite their genre, were not conventional, as the children enriched them with their own ideas and also included their own family members and relatives in the texts of the poems. Because of this, the poems reveal a lot about the authors’ self-images and their images of each other, primarily through their wishes and plans for the future.

In 1864, Attila envisioned a future like this in his mother’s birthday greeting: “When you are old, and Ilonka married, / Árpád at the sea, but me at your side.”⁷⁶ He depicted his sister as playing the traditional role of the wife and his

72 Gyimesi, *Gyermekszemmel Szendrey Júlia családjában*, 207.

73 Ibid., 204.

74 “Sokat busítottalak tégedet át látom / De ím megtérésem nem csak ákom bákóm.” Gyimesi, *Gyermekszemmel Szendrey Júlia családjában*, 205.

75 Ibid., 211.

76 Ibid., 196.

brother as pursuing the adventurous career of the seafarer, while he reserved for himself the strongest expression of a child's love and devotion to its mother. Therefore, the greeting poems can be interpreted as a creative expression of the parent-child relationship and a proud self-depiction of the author, who intended to present himself as the mother's most loving child.

In several poems, the boys wished their mother a happy grand-motherhood and happy silver and gold wedding anniversaries. For Júlia Szendrey's thirty-eighth birthday (December 29, 1866), Attila offered a vision of his mother as a grandmother surrounded by at least ten children. He also referred to his own imagined future as a professional:

I'm going to talk about fields and cows
As a farmer is entitled to do.
Little Árpád is about machines,
As is typical of a technician.⁷⁷

This is the only indication in the texts in question that Attila was preparing for a career in farming and Árpád for a career in mechanics and engineering (there were frequent references to Árpád's alleged desire to be a seafarer). As an adult Árpád, worked together with Tivadar Puskás and Ferenc Puskás, who established the first telephone network in Budapest.

Greeting poems by the Horvát boys also shed some light on the family lifestyle. When wishing Júlia Szendrey well, one of them wrote, “[h]ave a faithful maid, in addition to good spirits, / May you never be angry with the maid or with the child.”⁷⁸ The typical problem of the period, the maid issue, also affected the Szendrey-Horvát family. This is also indicated by comments in the correspondence, for example, “mom has a lot of trouble with the maids because they are hardly here for two weeks then they leave. Even today, as I write this letter, a new one is being hired.” In another letter, Attila complained that “[t] here is still a lot of trouble with the maids; about a dozen or so maids and cooks have left since you left.”⁷⁹

The children did not stop writing poems for the mother when she and her husband separated. Even in the last year of Júlia Szendrey's life, when her sons no longer lived with her but resided instead with Árpád Horvát, they still wrote

77 Ibid., 198.

78 Ibid., 213.

79 Ibid., 132.

new poems for her. They promised her a happy future, which would contrast with the sufferings of the past and present, and they wished her good health and expressed their hopes that her illness would soon be a thing of the past.” In December 1867, Árpád expressed his warmest wishes for his mother’s birthday as follows:

May you be a happy grandmother,
Have a gold wedding anniversary,
May you even forget that
you were suffering from disease.⁸⁰

Two months later, in a poem written on the occasion of his mother’s name-day in February 1868, Attila wished her a speedy recovery and wrote of the pain he felt at having to be separate from her, despite the love which bound them.⁸¹ The function of poetry writing thus expanded even further during this period. In addition to serving as a way of marking an occasion by offering festive greetings, it also contributed to maintaining a sense of a loving connection between the mother and the children, despite physical distance.

Poems for the Cousins

The visions of the future of the family that appeared in the greeting poems were intertwined with ideas about contemporary gender roles as well. This is especially noticeable in the poems addressed to their aunt, Mária Szendrey, in which good wishes are addressed not only to her, but also to the children’s cousins. Mária Szendrey (1838–1866) was the younger sister of Júlia Szendrey. In 1858, she married the prominent literary historian, Pál Gyulai. They had three children: Aranka was born in 1859, Kálmán in 1861, and Margit in 1862. Their family lived in Kolozsvár (today Cluj, Romania) between 1858 and 1862, which is why Attila Horvát portrays all of his cousins as the future prides of Transylvania. He wanted his cousins to fulfil the classic role models of women and men (housewife, patriotic girl, valiant hero, patriot): “Aranka should be a good housewife / The pride of the beautiful Transylvania”; “Aranka is a proper girl / Let her work for the benefit of the nation. / What should I tell about

80 Ibid., 199.

81 Ibid., 201.

little Kálmán / The little patriot / When he grows up he will be the most beautiful valiant knight of Transylvania.”⁸² In the visions drawn for the girl and the boy, personal deeds done for the sake of the nation are common elements. Otherwise, the ideal visions of female and male life are markedly different, as was the case in Attila’s poem for the new year of 1866, in which he predicted a marriage for Aranka and a future in literary criticism for Kálmán, following his father. A vision determined according to gender roles also appears in relation to the siblings in Attila’s poem of 1864 cited above, in which he envisions his sister, Ilona, as a wife with a husband and his brother, Árpád, as an adventurer at the sea. While the poems looking into the future usually emphasize some kind of occupation or profession (critic, sailor, technician, farmer) in the case of the boys, in the case of the texts written for the girls, they almost exclusively envision them as having become wives.

The boys’ correspondence also shows what they considered newsworthy about the girls. For example, Zoltán wrote at Christmas 1864, in response to his half-brothers’ letter: “I’ve heard that little Ilonka can already knit. Well done! Now she can compete with Aranka.” A diary entry which mentions Júlia Szendrey’s name-day also reveals that the boys followed the traditional gender roles and accordingly played no part in the kitchen preparations (baking and cooking) for the festivities. They considered the task of writing name-day greetings an adequate contribution on their behalf: “Only we boys have done as was expected, we have already handed over our poems; there isn’t anything we should do now. We can’t be used in cooking anyway.”⁸³

Júlia Szendrey’s and Mária Szendrey’s children wrote poems not only for the adults but also for one another. The poems which have survived constituted sources on their relationships as cousins. In the poems written by the older boys to the younger relatives, the practice of addressing one another by nicknames played a very prominent role. Attila called Aranka “Anka” and “Anka Bankám,” and Árpád called Kálmán “Kálmánka” or “little Kálmán” in his poems. Birthday wishes in these poems were also aligned with gender roles. Attila wrote to the three-year-old Aranka, “[m]ay she have many good children” and “[l]et her be a good patriotic girl,”⁸⁴ and on her sixth birthday he wished her “[t]reasure, happiness / a good husband and family.”⁸⁵ Árpád’s poem to Aranka also dwelt

82 Gyimesi, *Gyermekszemmel Szendrey Júlia családjában*, 219.

83 Ibid., 174.

84 Ibid., 222.

85 Ibid., 223.

on the importance of family. He wished his niece many grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and he wished her parents an extremely long life.⁸⁶ According to the vision offered by the “poet,” the four generations will sit contently around the “family fireplace” together. The boys jokingly expressed their love for their aunt and niece, too: “We love you, we love you, sweet good Marika / We will marry you if we can, sweet good Aranka.” The imaginary marriage between the male and female cousins expressed their strong togetherness and common identity.

The nieces also had good relationship with each other. They were not only relatives, but friends. Ilona Horvát and Aranka Gyulai were the same age. They were both born in the summer of 1859. Ilona called her cousin “little playmate” in her writings.⁸⁷ Among her poems, a message of her to Mária Szendrey survived which was presumably created when Aranka was visiting her cousin’s family. The girl sent greetings to her aunt, assuring her that Aranka was in good spirits.⁸⁸ In 1868, after mother’s death, Ilona moved into her uncle Pál Gyulai’s home and lived together with her cousins, who had also lost their mother. Mária Szendrey died in 1866 during the cholera epidemic. The nieces attended the same school in the 1870s: their teacher was Róza Kalocsa, who later wrote the most popular handbook of manners in Hungarian.⁸⁹ Therefore, the cousin relationships remained strong even after the parents had died.

Summary

In Júlia Szendrey’s family, the sources suggest an intermixture of pre-modern and modern forms of parenting. By “pre-modern,” I am referring to the active participation in family life of kin who fell well outside the nuclear family. By “modern,” I am referring to the participation of the father in childrearing to a larger degree than was customary at the time. Alongside Zoltán’s mother and father, his relationship with his uncle, István Petőfi, also played a crucial role in his upbringing, i.e. the family used a strategy that was widespread both at the time and in the previous centuries: the boy experienced life both in his parents’ household and in a relative’s household, and thus he discovered a second environment. Familial use of space also reveals a great deal about the husband-

86 Ibid., 228.

87 Ibid., 230.

88 Ibid., 229.

89 Ibid., 254.

wife and parent-child relationships. According to Júlia Szendrey's letters and the letters written by the boys on family events, the mother took the children for walks on weekdays and the father took them for walks on public holidays. This suggests that, despite their deteriorating relationship, the husband and wife devoted time and attention to their children. Since in the circles of nineteenth-century bourgeoisie and in the world of norms conveyed by the contemporary press, the figure of the working father and the mother raising her children at home was considered ideal (even if the rigidity in practice of the theory of "separated spaces" based on radical separation is questionable based on a number of sources), it was not evident that the father would also be involved in the children's leisure-time activities. Thus, as a father, Árpád Horvát took a very active part in the life of his children compared to the expectations and norms of the period, according to which raising children was clearly the mother's task.

The uses of urban space during the city walks and the uses of the family home can be compared from the points of view of the parents. In both cases, the spaces used by the wife and husband were strongly separated. Quite unusually at the time, Júlia Szendrey had her own room, the furnishings of which indicated that writing and creative, individual intellectual work were important to her. However, the marked separation also showed that the relationship between the spouses was not characterized by the emotional closeness shown towards their children.

The analysis of the family's uses of space also showed that the rituals associated with the holidays and routines of everyday life were considerably different. As a historian and university professor, Árpád Horvát worked on the weekdays, but he took time off from work for Easter, on May 1, and on similar holidays and spent this time with his children. The Horvát boys' descriptions of urban phenomena are especially colorful and entertaining. The boys reflected on phenomena that an adult would not necessarily notice or consider worth mentioning. At least on the basis of the letters they exchanged, the children growing up in the Szendrey-Horvát family seem to have been sensitive to visual stimuli, novelties, and the atmosphere of urban life, and they showed remarkable enthusiasm and curiosity. This suggests that the stereotypes emphasizing metropolitan passivity, insensitivity, and alienation should be rethought.⁹⁰ The examination of intersections between urban history and family history can contribute to research on urban experience

90 For critiques of the paradigm of the urban modern personality created by Georg Simmel, see Gyáni, "Térbeli fordulat" és a várostörténet," 4–12.

from the perspective of the history of emotions, with particular reference to relationships and practices which can be understood based on sources concerning the uses of space by members of stepfamilies.

Correspondence played a key role in establishing family identity and in maintaining emotional ties between family members living far apart. It is particularly important that, in his letters, Attila Horvát depicted himself as a member of the community of siblings, regularly using the term “all of us” and reporting not only on himself but also on the lives of other members of the family (such as his cousins). He constantly encouraged maintaining contact with the physically distant Zoltán Petőfi and writing about topics that would be of interest to him. The accounts of regularly shared experiences allowed the half-siblings to be part of one another's daily lives from afar. The formation of the children's family experiences and the feeling of belonging were influenced by events and practices such as writing and reading letters, giving gifts, sharing puns and jokes, teasing, and describing experiences during city walks, on weekdays, and during family celebrations. Thus, in the Szendrey-Horvát family, the family identity as strongly shaped by writing practices connected both to the little things of everyday life and the rituals of the holidays.

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Fond VII/135, 234.

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BOOK REVIEWS

IV. Iván és I. Péter mikrohistoriográfiája [A micro-historiography of Ivan IV and Peter I]. By Gyula Szvák. Edited by Gábor Klaniczay and István M. Szijártó. Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2019. 175 pp.

Volume 9 of the series *Mikrotörténelem* [Microhistory], edited by Gábor Klaniczay and István M. Szijártó, offers an overview of professor Gyula Szvák's research career on Russian historiography, a career which stretched over a period of some 40 years. The volume *IV. Iván és I. Péter mikrohistoriográfiája* [A micro-historiography of Ivan IV and Peter I] contains studies previously published in various journals and other volumes. Szvák explains the importance of publishing these papers again in a single volume in the introduction: "The present microhistory is in fact a micro-historiography, and it seeks to make claims about the entirety of Russian history through excavation. Thus, the series of micro-examinations focusing on the periods of the rule of Ivan IV and Peter I provide a picture of 200 years of Russian historical science" (p.8). As a result, the volume may catch the attention not only of those interested in Ivan IV and Peter I, but, as Szvák suggests, anyone interested in Russian historiography or history.

The introduction is followed by six papers of various lengths. The first two focus primarily on the Russian and Soviet historiography on Ivan IV, while the third discusses all the historiographical works published on Peter I in Russia. These three studies constitute the bulk of the volume (pp.19–136). Although the volume is not divided thematically, after the first section, which clearly deals with (micro)historiography, the second part, which begins with Chapter 4, focuses more on the oeuvre of a selected few historiographers. The first study discusses Russian historian Ruslan Skrynnikov and his historical conception of Ivan IV. The following chapter provides a comparison of Skrynnikov's career and the career of Hungarian historian József Perényi. The final chapter, the third thematic part of the volume, is a study on attempts to compare Ivan IV and Peter I.

As my intention with this review is to introduce a volume the studies of which have been published earlier, I will not discuss the studies themselves individually. It is worth paying attention to the introduction, however, which was written specifically for the volume. The introductory chapter consists of four smaller sections. The first one discusses a recent Russian-language anthology of

Gyula Szvák's studies, the main inspiration for the volume reviewed here. Since, according to the author, Hungarian readers are interested mainly in Ivan IV and Peter I, the Hungarian edition only contains studies written about the two rulers. Based on the decades the author has spent in the field of Russistics, this claim is supposedly justified. However, it might have been worth including at least a short list of the studies that were not selected for this volume. In the same section, we are given a brief discussion of the tenets and development of Gyula Szvák's historiographical works, as well as of his "arrival" at "micro-historiography" as a concept. In the following sections, Szvák reflects on changes in Soviet historiography and the role of Russian studies in Hungary, with special regard to Szvák's own experiences and expertise. The section provides an exciting insight into life as a historian in the period prior to the change of regimes through the eyes of Gyula Szvák and the "lens" of Russian studies in Hungary, of course. Szvák recalls limitations to academic freedom in Soviet historiography and, later, the loosening of these constraints, as compared with a more enabling Hungarian social and academic life.

The concluding thoughts of the introduction appear to be a summary of a historian's career in the context of current political events. Although Szvák does not primarily deal with Russian historiography here, he does not fully digress from it either, since as the papers in the volume shed light on the relationship of historians of the given period to the state powers of the times, the final section of the introduction likewise mentions some major conflicts concerning the academic sphere in the past few years. In the author's view, the parallel between the historical perspective of the volume and the situation report of the present time, formulated at the end of the introduction, is manifested in the tendencies of the development of an authoritarian rule and historians' relationships to these tendencies. The selected subjects of the volume (Ivan IV and Peter I) practically determine the questions of this kind, as the historical assessment of the two monarchs was never an issue to which state power could afford to be indifferent.

The first three studies present the entirety of the Russian and Soviet historiography on Ivan IV and Peter I, thus achieving the aims laid out in the introduction: they provide a comprehensive picture of 300 years of Russian and Soviet historiography. The relationship between historian and state power, emphasized in the introduction, appears as merely a minor topic next to more imposing themes, such as the use of sources, the importance of belonging to certain schools of historiography, academic discourse, and the impacts of international Russian studies, among others. The spelling of Russian names to

Hungarian can be done in several ways, and, in my assessment, Szvák is not consistent in this respect. Nevertheless, this obviously does not affect the value of the studies from the perspective of their content.

The second part of the volume foregrounds the work of historiographers Ruslan Skrynnikov and József Perényi, who have become historical figures themselves. The Soviet historiographer is mentioned in two studies, one of which discusses his works on Ivan IV. The greatest merit of the volume is this very in-depth examination: considering the previous study on the historiography of Ivan IV, the reader is given an opportunity to get to know the deeper connections and the oeuvre and mindset of the Soviet historian. At first glance, the only study which seems to fall somewhat outside of the scope of the topics of the volume is the one comparing the career of the Soviet historian and József Perényi, but the claims made in the introduction and the study on Skrynnikov's oeuvre create a logical connection between the studies. The two historians are connected not only by their works but also by the author himself, Gyula Szvák. This paves the way for the final study in the volume, *IV. Iván és I. Péter* [Ivan IV and Peter I], which is by Szvák and which offers a comparative analysis of the two monarchs. Szvák approaches the comparison from basic perspective, such as systems of historical theory, socio-political processes, autocracy, individual lives, and personality traits. It is important to mention here that, while the other studies in the volume meet the criteria of scholarly publications, the final section lacks proper references. It would have been worth spending a bit more time on correcting these oversights.

Overall, volume 9 of the series *Mikrotörténelem* offers much more than the title suggests, since, in accordance with the objectives, in addition to an (undoubtedly detailed) Russian historiography on Ivan IV and Peter I, it also provides a comprehensive picture of the entirety of historiography in Russia. It also offers insights into Gyula Szvák's oeuvre and the achievements and professional life of Hungarian scholars of Russian history and culture in the past few decades, hallmarked by Szvák's name. I recommend the volume for all those interested in the aforementioned topics.

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Érzelmek és mostohák: Mozaikcsaládok a régi Magyarországon (1500–1850) [Emotions and stepparents: Mosaic families in old Hungary, 1500–1850]. Edited by Gabriella Erdélyi. Budapest: Research Centre for the Humanities, 2019. 307 pp.

While not entirely unprecedented, it is by no means common for someone to launch her own books series when also working as an instrumental member of a research group. With the support of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the Momentum “Integrating Families” Research Group, which has been active for three years now, published both study volumes and source publications in the Hungarian Family Stories series. The fourth volume, entitled *Érzelmek és mostohák. Mozaikcsaládok a régi Magyarországon (1500–1850)* [Emotions and stepparents: Mosaic families in old Hungary, 1500–1850], was published in 2019. In 2020, the fifth volume, *Özvegyek és árvák a régi Magyarországon, 1550–1940* [Widows, widowers, and orphans in old Hungary, 1550–1940] was also published. As the titles (which at first may seem surprising) indicate, these works constitute examples of scholarship on the history of emotions, a trend in the secondary literature which is relatively new in Hungary and which promises an array of important insights and conclusions.

The title is surprising not simply from a linguistic perspective. This linking of something abstract (emotions) with a specific group (stepparents) may arouse some suspicion in the reader. The title, which begs some interpretation, may seem bold or far-reaching, while the subtitle maintains a discrete distance. The image on the cover, however, which depicts the Old Testament scene when Hagar is driven away by Abraham, offers a vivid visual portrayal of the mix of sentiments involved in this relationship, which arguably remains a less familiar part of our image repertoire even today. It also reminds us that these complex relationships were a form of cohabitation in Old Testament times. Apropos of this, one may well raise the question found on the inside cover, which can be considered the basic question of the volume: did family life actually change radically in the eighteenth century, a moment in our history at which, if one is to believe the discourses which have emerged on the subject, there was a new intimacy to the relationships among people living in the same household? The lines which follow this and the chapter by Gabriella Erdélyi, who is also the editor of the volume, make very clear that the authors focus on instances in which the family unit, understood in its classical sense, broke up and new family members

(stepparents and stepsiblings) were added to it. Their discussions examine the emotional responses among family members to these changes.

The enterprise fits well into the arc of family history that has unfolded since the 1970s, following the work of Philippe Ariès and Lawrence Stone, whose contributions constitute points of departure in the field. However, as the work of Hans Medick and David Warren Sabean, whose writings are quoted several times in the volume, shows, historical demographics, which is closely intertwined with anthropology, has been able to spring to new life from its earlier seemingly dead state precisely by adopting this multifaceted approach, so the volume seems to show a sense of the existing anticipation when it sets, as one of its aims, the goal of taking the first steps in research in Hungary on stepchildren in the early modern era (p.11). After this (and thus notably at the beginning of the book and not the end, where one might otherwise expect a summary of the conclusions of the various studies), in the introduction, Erdélyi describes the individual texts and contextualizes them in relation to one another. For a reader who is less familiar with the field and the existing secondary literature, the second half of this introduction may become more difficult to read, since it is structured according to the chapters of the book and thus does not acquaint the reader with the chains of reasoning on the basis of which the final ascertainments are made. Thus, for me, once I accepted the more complex intellectual challenge inherent in postmodern propositions, the introduction was more of a revelation when I read it a second time, after having read the volume itself. Perhaps this was the one of the editor's goals.

For the most part, the authors who contributed to the volume are researchers tied to the Research Centre for the Humanities and Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE), as well as one working at the University of Pécs and one at Central European University. Thus, one finds among them historians, art and literary historians, and an ethnographer.

The overviews of the secondary literature on the subject, which were done quite conscientiously by most of the contributors, are arguably important to research and scholarship in Hungary on the history of emotions. Dóra Mérai, Gabriella Erdélyi, Petra Bálint, and Mónika Mátay all draw on Judith Butler's theory of performativity. This is understandable, since the essence of the idea that emotions are social phenomena not only in their expression but also in and of themselves already increases the distance between the researcher and his or her topic. This notion forces the researcher to arrive at a premise which has been more scrupulously interrogated and also to ask about the place and validity of

each emotion. Thus, the secondary literature on which the individual authors draw is linked to this, necessitating a rethinking of the research questions. This is true whether one is thinking of Susan Broomhall (on whom Gabriella Erdélyi and Emese Gyimesi draw), who analyzes approaches in the study of the history of emotions emphatically from the perspective of family relationships, Richard van Dülmen (on who Eleonóra Géra draws), who specifically examines sexual sensuality, or Thomas Khuen and Simona Cerutti (on whom Mónika Mátay draws), who consider the historical aspects of flexible legal interpretation. Thus, this volume, which can and indeed should be read (also) as a bibliography of the secondary literature on the history of emotions constitutes a major contribution to the secondary literature on the subject in Hungary, a contribution which drastically enriches the available palette of works on the topic.

From the perspective of the questions raised in the book, three chapters help orient the reader. In the section entitled “Family Objects and Practices,” Orsolya Bubryák of the Research Centre for the Humanities Institute of Art History uses the last will and testament of Palatine Pál Esterházy (among other sources) to examine the extent to which the emotional relationships between a testator and his heirs and shifts in these relationships influenced hereditary strategies. Dóra Mérai of CEU draws conclusions about the emotional bonds among close family members on the basis of differences in scripts on gravestones. Dalma Bódai of ELTE examines the gifts given to the daughters of Erzsébet Czobor, who was the second wife of Palatine György Thurzó. The chapter concludes with the study by Gabriella Erdélyi of the Research Centre for the Humanities Institute of History. Drawing on the seventeenth-century correspondence among members of the Esterházy family, Erdélyi examines how family correspondence went beyond the simple exchange of information and became a discursive space for the expression of emotions.

Although the first chapter contains discussions of some arguably acute situations, the second chapter, “Discussions of Family Conflicts,” dwells even more on family relationships that were rife with tension. A micro-historical study by Eleonóra Géra’s of ELTE recounts the story of a woman who married three times. Géra situates the narrative within the interpretative framework of the history of emotions, putting emphasis on the considerations which played a role in the decisions of this woman, who married first because she was compelled to do so, but who later remarried a second and third time as a consequence of her own wishes. The study by Petra Bálint, also of ELTE, begins with a question which may appear shocking at first: “Were girls and women who committed

infanticide and child murder really evil and heartless? [...] What did they feel, or did they feel anything when they did what they did?” (p.172) Bálint’s study is interesting in part because the protagonists belonged to the lower and peripheral strata of the feudal world. Research which draws on court documents and investigates the fates of women who committed infanticide or who poisoned their husbands is a new element in the scholarship on family history in Hungary. The third author of the chapter, Mónika Mátay, also of ELTE, pursues research on middle-class families in the city of Debrecen. She draws on an array of sources in her discussion of the implications, from the perspective of family history, of the last will and testament of a pig slaughterer who, as a denizen of one of the market towns in Hungary, enjoyed essentially the same rights as a citizen of a free royal city. Mátay makes subtle and sophisticated use of the tools of legal anthropology and offers an analysis of an intricate network of relationships.

The third chapter, entitled “Family Spaces, Identities, and Roles,” offers another exciting installment in Emese Gyimesi’s research on the life of Júlia Szendrey. Gyimesi acquaints her reader with the correspondence of the widowed Szendrey’s children born from her marriage to Árpád Horvát. She strives to arrive at some impression of the image that Szendrey’s children by her second husband had of their closest family members, for instance of their half-brother Zoltán Petőfi and their aunt Mária Szendrey (the complete correspondence among the children has since been published in a volume edited by Gyimesi). Zsófia Kucserka of the University of Pécs examines the diaries and correspondence of Etelka Slachta, sources which have already been published and which have been familiar for a long time to social scientists. Kucserka considers the impacts of the texts which Slachta wrote in various genres on her private life and the roles she played in the public sphere.

Some of the authors make use of an array of different types of sources, while others use a narrower range of source types. Naturally, when available, letters constitute an excellent source for the kinds of inquiries one finds here, and not surprisingly, many of the authors draw heavily on family correspondence (Erdélyi, Gyimesi, and Kucserka, for instance). In the absence of these kinds of sources, however, researchers are sometimes refreshingly innovative. Orsolya Bubryák, Eleonóra Géra, and Mónika Mátay make seasoned use of last wills and testaments, documents from litigation, and lists pertaining to bequests, among other things. Dóra Mérai tears her reader from the world of two-dimensional sources (i.e. the written word) and bases her conclusions on a database containing

information pertaining to 314 tombstones from Transylvania. The sheer quantity of sources used by the authors and the impressive variety of sources compel the reader to be creative and open, as if reminding us that even sources which have been familiar to people in the field for a long time can show a very new face if one asks a few well-aimed questions.

I do not intend, in this review, to offer a detailed presentation of the results of the various endeavors. Rather, in conclusion, I would prefer simply to share a few thoughts. Orsolya Bubryák's article provides a very revealing example of how a nobleman from the so-called highlands (or Upper Hungary, what today is Slovakia) could treat his children very differently in his will even though he loved them equally. Mérai does a masterful job acquainting us with the tombstones on which she bases her conclusions concerning emotional bonds in the family and the community. Dalma Bódai guides her reader through the intimate exchange of information among Erzsébet Czobor and her daughters, and Gabriella Erdélyi calls attention to descriptions of body language in the letters written by members of the Esterházy family (and others), descriptions which serve as expressions of emotion and complement textual communication. Géra Eleonóra offers an enjoyable narrative of Eva Elisabetha Wittmann's three marriages, full of twists and turns, and she points out Wittmann's character flaws. Petra Bálint makes a penetrating statement when she notes that what may appear to the historian who draws on court and litigation documents as the witnesses' lack of sensitivity is more a feature of the source itself, as a type, than of the people involved. Emese Gyimesi's focused and dense text presents and analyzes the Horvát family home in Hársfa Street and, thus, the private spaces used by the family and the rooms they used as spaces in which to welcome guests and members of the public. She also presents the practices used by the children in their correspondence and the roles of family celebrations. In Kucserka's discussion of *Slachta*, writing again is given an important role both as tool and as act in the Biedermeier notion of the family and the ideal of the patriotic Hungarian woman.

In varying and arguably mutually reinforcing ways, the articles all proffer answers of a sort to the basic question. Ariès's contention concerning the process which began in the eighteenth century and which saw emotional bonds come to enjoy an increasingly prominent place in family life has now found corroboration not only in the international secondary literature, but also in the secondary literature, more narrowly, in Hungary, thus prodding further research into the history of emotions. This is not simply some closing flourish, as clearly

shown by the fact that, in 2019, a similarly monumental work was published on the subject in Hungary, *Az érzelmek története* [The history of emotions], a collection of conference papers compiled by the István Hajnal Circle and edited by Anikó Lukács and Árpád Tóth. Thus, this impressive volume edited by Gabriella Erdélyi both fills a lacuna in the secondary literature and will serve to nurture further research.

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The Fiume Crisis: Life in the Wake of the Habsburg Empire.
By Dominique Kirchner Reill. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard
University Press, 2020. 312 pp.

Dominique Reill, professor at the University of Miami, has done something that Hungarian, Croatian, and Italian historians have failed to do so far: in a coherent monograph, she has broken with a chronological, somewhat nationalist discussion of the political and diplomatic issues of the events in Fiume that followed World War I. This comes as no surprise, since Reill's thinking has been greatly influenced by the ideas and arguments of István Deák, Pieter M. Judson, and Hannah Arendt, who tended to emphasize the diversity and plurality of the Habsburg Monarchy and reconsidered nationalism, as well as the studies by William Klinger, Ivan Jeličić, and Vanni d'Alessio on Fiume, in which the authors adopted a more modern approach and dispensed with stereotypes. Although Reill does not distance herself from theoretical postmodern theories and models, instead of oversimplifying theoretical discussions and relying on convenient absolutes, she builds her Fiume-narrative on empirical, source-centered research. This means that Reill summarizes the arguments laid out in previous individual studies explicitly and shapes them into a consistent narrative, while also verifying or refuting them by adding her own examples.

The subject matter of the volume is thus neither Gabriele d'Annunzio's extravagant rule nor the career of some prominent figures or the endless disputes about where Fiume belonged. Reill is most interested in the community's and people's attitudes in various situations, as well as the continuation, gradual shift, and waning of structures of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. In other words, instead of examining "what happened when," she searches for answers concerning the reasons for the social and mental processes behind the historical events, such as why the ruling elite, which trumpeted nationalist slogans, so firmly insisted on the annexation of the Italian town when at least half of the inhabitants did not claim Italian as their mother tongue. Why did a multilingual and multiethnic small town want to insert itself into the Italian nation-state? In what ways, with what slogans, and under what conditions did it hope to do so? How compatible could nationalist and localist interests be? And finally, what was the experience of the inhabitants, living in existential uncertainty; in what forms did they experience this transitional phase?

Reill's first thesis is that the basic situation of Fiume after the war was determined by its extensive autonomy under the Dual Monarchy, its state of

being a *corpus separatum*, a “semiautonomous city-state.” As part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and, within that, the Kingdom of Hungary, the port could count on generous support by Hungarian governments, as well as the hinterland function of the entire empire: it had a large market and was part of a protective network. Without these favorable circumstances, the elites of Fiume were forced to take steps. The town councilors knew that Fiume was incapable of functioning on its own, so they looked for a new strong “protective shield,” a hinterland to replace the monarchy. Under the new circumstances, the most suitable alternative for a hinterland was Italy, regarded as the “Madrepatria” (mother country).

This leads to two other major arguments by Reill. First, the nationalization of Fiume or its transformation into “Italianissima,” as expressed at least by symbols and through statistical ratios, were justified by the abovementioned concerns. Second, although the people of Fiume did all they could to make their town part of the Kingdom of Italy, they remained localists with local interests, including the safeguarding of their privileges, even in their most nationalist moments. For them “Patria” meant their birthplace and place of residence, not Italy. This “theory of continuity” is closely linked to Reill’s fourth thesis, which queries the view that the end of World War I and Gabriele d’Annunzio’s endeavor of Fiume, ending with the Bloody Christmas of 1920, were simple and clear watersheds which divided political systems. Reill foregrounds continuities instead of breaking points, and she emphasizes the political elite’s opportunities and competencies to preserve their positions, as well as their adaptation strategies.

This firm emphasis on interests and the focus on aims could easily lead to a simplified, instrumental concept of nationalism, but that is not the case here. It enables Reill to avoid denying the residents’ zeal for and sentimental attachment to the Italian nation and to examine the local interpretations of “nationalism,” “localism,” and “autonomy” in a period which included the era of the Dual Monarchy as well. Furthermore, Reill offers a more nuanced picture and avoids banalities in part because she analyzes the transformation of structures and changes in people’s life circumstances in five large units, alongside the introductory and concluding chapter, through the dimensions of economic and financial difficulties (money), the relationship between power and autonomy (laws and independence), belonging (pertinency and citizenship), as well as internal and external manifestations of identity (symbols and propaganda), with a list of representative micro-historical examples from everyday life.

The part about the economy, for instance, begins with the example of a young legionary in Italy, who, with naïve enthusiasm, tells his fiancée about the beauty of the town and (an alleged) Italian localism, as well as the pretty, easy girls of Fiume (no doubt his purse was full of Italian lire and Hungarian/Austrian crowns). Reill, on the other hand, points out that the local inhabitants were acquainted with more currencies than these two. Borislavo Gjurić, for example, was arrested because in addition to Italian lire, he also had French francs, Serbian dinars, and Croatian-Slovenian and Fiume crowns on him. With the help of these examples, Reill illustrates how the monetary union of the empire collapsed, and by the spring of 1919, at least four different currencies and fake banknotes were circulating in Fiume. The uncontrolled circulation of money made the economic situation of both individuals and the town unstable.

Although restoring financial conditions was paramount, the elites of Fiume believed that settling currency issues was the duty of the state, so they expected the Italian government to do something about it. This gave a new impetus to the annexation program, indicated by converging Fiume crown to Italian lire, that is, gradually coordinating the economy of Fiume and Italy. Rome, however, believed that the Italian state had the exclusive right to annexation and was appalled by the town's demand to be annexed in accordance with predetermined conditions (keeping its autonomy). There were further aspects to this questioning of the relationship between power and autonomy, in no small part simply because the issue of where the port belonged was debated for long time to come, so Fiume practically had to function as an independent state for a time. This position was difficult to manage, however, mainly as a result of an economic and financial crisis, growing unemployment, and permanent coal and food shortages due to consecutive blockades and military occupations.

Reill presents one way of dealing with procurement difficulties through the failed deal between Slavko Ivančić, a “trader in comestibles” from Fiume, and Ivan Rošić, an inn owner and agricultural supplier from a Croatian village. The story may also help demonstrate the continuity of the legal system and jurisdiction of Fiume, since it clearly shows that until the fall of 1920, the denizens of the city operated in accordance with the former laws and orders. Furthermore, by offering a comparison of financial and legal conditions, Reill also points out one relevant difference: while the multi-currency system was the result of the decline of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the challenges and opportunities of multi-system jurisdiction had shaped the lives of the inhabitants of Fiume for generations.

In her discussion of the everyday conflicts of the tobacco factory and the post office, Reill identifies similar elements of continuity in terms of the issue of language use. She comes to the conclusion that although the elites of Fiume strove for the establishment of monolingual (Italian) administration, this was mainly a façade to show to the rest of the world, as internal communication continued to be multilingual. The same is true of the implementation of the regulation concerning the Italianization of names, in connection with which Reill notes that while the measure served the purpose of emphasizing the Italian character and dedication of the inhabitants, there were huge differences between theory and practice. All this indicates that these laws were either not implemented at all or only to some degree and that there were individual preferences and choices. To underlie this claim, Reill mentions two concrete examples from among the many: despite their Italian nationalist convictions, Antonio Grossich, the widely respected elderly president of the Italian National Council in Fiume, kept the name Grossich, and his ambitious secretary, Salvatore Bellasich, continued to be called Bellasich.

One of Reill's greatest merits is that she does not shy away from treating legal categories in a nuanced way. She dedicates a whole chapter to content-related and qualitative differences between concepts of citizenship and residence. This is justified by her emphasis on the continued validity of the municipal statute of 1872 regulating civic entitlement, which provided the elite of Fiume with an effective tool to enforce their rights under the shifting (and financially limited) conditions. In fact, by regulating the conditions of "Fiume pertinency" and concomitant active political participation (electoral reform), the elite of Fiume could both strengthen the support they received and their legitimacy and protect the (in a classical sense) "lawful" members of the community from competition in the form of a flood of "strangers" coming to the town. In this respect, even Gabriele d'Annunzio's soldiers could not have been exempt from the rule: like the civilian "newcomers," they could only receive the "citizenship to the Free City of Fiume," reserved for "others."

In addition to the redistribution of social, economic, and political privileges, education also served the purpose of preserving the positions and transmitting localist values. Reill proves this by pointing out that even in the fall of 1919, elementary schools in the city used traditional didactic teaching methods and Fiume-centered maps. Although the town seemed to become an "Italianissima" dressed in the Italian tricolored flag, for the locals it remained, for a long time, what it was before: the "true Patria," which everyone had to know. Thus, mapping

the district, the country, and the world could only start after one had acquired a rich knowledge of Fiume itself.

Overall, Reill offers a new interpretation of Fiume, using modern approaches and methodologies. Her volume will surely be one of the most, if not the most influential monograph on Fiume in years to come for two reasons. First, her monograph is impressive in its thoroughness, the precise use of terms, its clever methodological solutions, its welcoming style, and its use of convincing examples based on a rich and diverse collection of sources. Second, thanks to the distance Reill keeps when using theories and examining sources, she is able to see and show different phenomena in all their complexity.

Ágnes Ordasi
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Language Diversity in the Late Habsburg Empire. By Markian Prokopovych, Carl Bethke, and Tamara Scheer. Leiden: Brill, 2020. 268 pp.

This volume about linguistic issues in the late Habsburg monarchy builds on both recent work in nationalism theory and Habsburg historical sociolinguistics. The contributions vary pleasingly in their geographic and methodological focus, yet converge on a few key issues: the influence of nationalist agitation, the role of the state, multilingualism, language shift, and the social domains assigned to different varieties.

Two initial chapters contextualize the volume in various scholarly literatures. The editors' forward provides an excellent historiography while signalling an interest in the everyday practices which the volume's strongest contributions examine. With his customary eloquence, Pieter Judson then considers Habsburg multilingualism in the context of other multilingual states, problematizing traditional assumptions according to which linguistic diversity leads inevitably to national conflict.

The remaining chapters provide the case studies which give the book substance. Csilla Fedinec and István Csernicskó's study of language use in Transcarpathia is the only chapter to betray a nationalist perspective. The authors on three (!) separate occasions claim that the partition of Hungary transformed ethnic Hungarians into "a new minority" in the region (pp.161, 163, 193), even though Magyars have in fact never been Transcarpathia's majority community. Their survey of Transcarpathia's various nationalities treats each in a separate section, thus reifying sharp borders between them. They rely disproportionately on Hungarian-language sources: indeed, their discussion of Rusyns begins with two parish priests who wrote in Hungarian, and thus appear rather unrepresentative of Slavic opinion. Ultimately, the authors contradict themselves, claiming e.g. both that "Hungarian as the language of power did not become prestigious among the local Slavic speakers" (p.190) and that proficiency in Hungarian "was seen as a key to success in life" (p.175); both that "national indifference was also linguistic indifference" (p.193) and that "language has always had a key role in the self-identification process of the nation state and individuals" (p.162). The editors might have done better to have cut this chapter.

Carl Bethke examines the history of Sarajevo's German-language newspaper, the *Bosnische Post*. Bethke describes the newspaper's various editors, their editorial interests, their family lives, and their financial difficulties. Since the newspaper addressed various local constituencies and eschewed nationalism,

Bethke ultimately concludes that “the German-language ... did not ‘belong’ to one group” (p.114). While a respectable contribution to the history of Habsburg journalism, the chapter seems somewhat misplaced in this volume.

The remaining chapters, however, are not only strong, but complement each other. Anamarija Lukić emphasizes local particularism in a study of language use in Osijek, even providing lexical examples of Osijek German. By studying linguistic usage in local newspapers and the theatre, she documents the linguistic shift to Croatian without national triumphalism. Matthäus Wehowski views linguistic issues through the lens of a secondary school in Teschen, examining school yearbooks and considering student enrolments in Czech and Polish classes. Imperial loyalties and the desire for social mobility feature more prominently than nationalist agitation. Wehowski views his narrative as characteristic for borderlands generally, urging “scholars to take a closer look at the periphery” (p.217).

Marta Verginella considers the expansion of Slavic into Trieste, a town which had hitherto balanced Italian and German. Though Italian-speaking elites looked down on Slovene and sought to exclude it, Verginella’s research shows that Slavic increasingly gained ground in legal documents, such as testaments. Though her narrative follows traditional historiographic themes of discrimination and resistance, Verginella’s conclusion emphasizes “the fluidity of ... identities and the fragility of the national historiographical paradigm (p.49).”

While Irina Marin narrowly restricts her attention to four Romanian generals, she compensates for this limited breadth with depth and insight. She shows that her four generals, though loyal to the Habsburg monarch and the Empire as a whole, both formed sophisticated opinions about linguistic issues and engaged in linguistic activism. She finds that they accepted multilingualism and opposed “language hierarchies, whereby one language took precedence over and stifled another,” concluding that such opinions “did not go against the grain of their military standing, but rather were derived organically thereof” (pp.133–34).

In a fascinating study of language use at the urban level, Ágoston Berecz documents the surprising impotence of Hungary’s Magyarization policies. Considering a handful of towns in Transylvania and the Banat, Berecz shows that city governments not only continued using German and Romanian for local business, such as minute-keeping, minor court cases, public notices, and job advertisements, but did so with the tacit approval of central authorities. The surprising and well-documented narrative emphasizes estate hierarchies and social exclusions, but above all the inability of the Magyarizing parliament to

affect local use. Berecz also provocatively contrasts the relatively placid situation in Hungary, where “local governments seldom engaged in symbolic politics” (p.157), with the bitter nationalization of local politics of Cisleithania.

Rok Stergar places the military within the context of local politics, specifically examining the role of the army garrison in Ljubljana. While local patriots became involved in Slavic philological controversies and increasingly sought to promote Slavic even at the expense of German, the city council also sought good relations with the garrison, a source of income for innkeepers, tailors and so forth. Stergar shows that different actors invested linguistic acts with different symbolic meanings, grounding his general points with a variety of illuminating incidents laboriously gathered from an impressively diverse array of sources.

Jan Fellerer’s analysis of language use in Lviv also rests on concrete examples from particular events. Examining transcripts of court cases, he pieces together the linguistic backgrounds of the various litigants, persuasively surmising their various linguistic competencies, the means through which those competencies were achieved, and the social domains in which they were exercised. While a tour-de-force of painstaking and tenacious archival research, Fellerer’s chapter offers relatively meagre conclusions: it “offers glimpses of everyday multilingual practices” (p.242).

Jeroen van Drunen, finally, places his analysis of linguistic usage in Bukovina within a broader historiographical context. Problematizing both popular descriptions of Bukovinians as habitually multilingual and what he calls the “multilingualism-monolingualism dichotomy” (p.246), van Drunen documents language mixing affecting speakers of German, Romanian and Slavic. In a provocative conclusion, Drunen urges scholars to cease viewing languages “as monolithic entities without internal distinctions” (p.267).

The question of borders within languages seems most pressing for the Monarchy’s Slavs. The belief that all Slavs spoke the same language, hegemonic in the early nineteenth century, evidently persisted, since traces of Pan-Slavism appear in several chapters. Yet only Stergar alludes to a transition from “Carniolan Slavic” to “Slovene” (p.53–55). Verginella’s texts often refer to “Slavic,” but Verginella usually glosses such usage as references to “Slovene” (p.31, 34, 35, 43). Wehowski seems baffled by the designation “Czechoslavic” (p.205). Fedinec and Csernicskó mistakenly conflate Pan-Slavism with Russianism (p.194).

The various contributions thus differ widely in their geographic focus, though the volume as a whole curiously neglects Vienna, Budapest and Prague.

The contributions also consider different social domains: schools, courts, the military, journalism, theatre, and different levels of state administration. Methodologically, the articles obviously vary in sophistication, both in relationship to linguistic theory and nationalism studies, but overall the volume reaches a very high standard. This work enhances our knowledge in myriad ways, and will make a welcome contribution to scholarship.

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Intellectuals and Fascism in Interwar Romania: The Criterion

Association. By Cristina A. Bejan. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019. xxix + 323 pp.

The relationship between intellectuals and politics in interwar Romania emerged as a crucial topic after the fall of communism, and it generated cultural and often ideological debates that deeply marked the public life of the country. Attitudes ranged from an idealized rediscovery of the interwar period to a more critical approach towards what was a highly complex and controversial period in Romanian history. These debates generated an impressive amount of works, varying in size and quality, which maintain a certain level of interest in the topic even today. In this context, Cristina Bejan's well-researched book represents a welcome addition to an already very crowded field of study, providing a fresh perspective on a highly controversial topic.

As has been the case with other works on this topic, the broad intellectual drive behind this book is the search for an explanation regarding the fascist sympathies of some members of what was termed “the 1927 Generation” or “the Young Generation” of Romanian interwar intellectuals. Among representatives of this trend, one could mention Mircea Eliade, Emil Cioran, Constantin Noica, Mihail Sebastian, and Petru Comarnescu. Bejan tells the story of this generation by focusing on the Criterion Association, a cultural circle founded in 1932 which included many of the young intellectuals of the time. One of Bejan's merits is that she has provided the first book-length account on Criterion ever published in English.

While much has been written about the fascist allegiances of a sizable part of the “1927 Generation,” the fact that some of its members did not join their colleagues on the path to “rhinocerosisation” (to borrow the metaphor from Eugène Ionesco's play, *Rhinocéros*) received less attention, and Bejan's work is, in this regard, a step in the right direction.

The book is divided into nine chapters, including an introduction and a conclusion. It begins by setting the stage conceptually and historically. In the introduction, Bejan discusses the sensitive issue of the connection between intellectuals and political extremism, and she places the Young Generation in the proper cultural context by situating it among previous Romanian intellectual traditions. She also pays close attention to the historical context in which this generation was active, marked by the growth of the political extremism which ultimately affected its own existence.

The next chapter documents the beginnings of the 1927 Generation and the influence exerted by Nae Ionescu, a philosophy professor at the University of Bucharest who also became a staunch supporter of the Iron Guard. Mircea Eliade's prominence as a leading member of this generation is also presented in great detail, as well as the way in which these young intellectuals came together as a group, some being from similar backgrounds (former Bucharest high school colleagues), while others came from outside the capital city. Bejan puts particular emphasis on the importance of education abroad, especially for those who chose to study outside of Europe in places such as India (Eliade) and the United States (Comarnescu), instead of going to Western Europe.

Bejan is careful to make an important distinction in Chapter 3, aptly stating that the Young Generation and the Criterion Association did not fully overlap and should be seen as distinct manifestations of the interactions among young interwar Romanian intellectuals. In her discussion of the founding of the movement, the attention she gives to episodes regarding life in interwar Bucharest and the bohemian side of this group of young intellectuals helps further a more nuanced understanding of what brought these people together in the first place, the same way the brutal political turn from second part of the 1930s shows why this camaraderie did not suffice anymore to keep them on the same side. Bejan also points out the inner rivalries that marked Criterion's activity, thus avoiding a rosy picture that would not do justice to the diversity of the group. Another salient and seldom covered aspect of the volume is the insistence on the way in which Criterion was organized and managed by its founder, Petru Comarnescu.

The activity of the group in 1932, its first and most prolific year of existence, is detailed in Chapter 4, including the public lecture series, which was followed by debates focusing on a wide array of cultural and even political issues, with diverse topics ranging from Lenin to Mussolini, Greta Garbo to Krishnamurti, and Gandhi to Picasso. These topics reflected the desire of the group to serve as a hub which would connect the Romanian audience with the most important cultural and political trends of the day. In a way, the group became a victim of its own success. The conferences, which were held at the Royal Foundation building in the center of Bucharest, were very popular, but with success came controversy, contestation, and also violence. Accused of having a hidden communist agenda, some of Criterion's public conferences were targeted by far-right agitators, and this brought the group to the attention of the authorities.

Comarnescu's rich plans for 1933, carefully detailed by Bejan in Chapter 5, were torn apart by what in the terms of that age could be described as history

catching up with this generation. The political events of 1933, beginning with the February workers' strike in Bucharest and ending with the assassination of the liberal prime minister I. G. Duca by members of the Iron Guard in December, paralleled a troubled year for Criterionists, who could no longer hide their political allegiances. The backlash following the assassination was also felt by intellectuals close to the Iron Guard, including some of the Criterionists. The dissolution of the group, thus, became imminent. A last attempt to maintain its presence was the publication of the homonymous journal in 1934, but the Association never returned to its former glory. Bejan credits the publication of the *Criterion* journal as having been a salient moment, and she offers a close reading of the main topics discussed in the seven issues that were published. While this analysis of the "last throb" (Zigu Ornea) of the group constitutes a novel and useful enterprise, it is also true that the journal never enjoyed the fame or influence that the group promisingly started to have in 1932–1933.

The commonly accepted explanation regarding the dissolution of the Criterion Association underlines the insurmountable political differences that permeated the group following the rise of the Iron Guard. This rise was made possible in part because of the contributions of several young intellectuals, some of them members of or close to Criterion. To this already beaten explanatory path, Chapter 6 adds another possible explanation for the dissolution of the group, namely a well-known public scandal from the mid-1930s in which members of the group were accused of promoting homosexuality. Petru Comarnescu, Criterion's *factotum*, was one of the main targets of the scandal. As Bejan notes, this scandal marked the public and even personal trajectories of those involved, and Criterion would no longer be a part of their plans.

The "rhinocerosisation" of parts of the Young Generation did not come as a surprise, and it accompanied the growth of the Iron Guard. Bejan documents the paths taken by famous Criterionists who sympathized with and supported this movement, and she also focuses on those lesser-known members who did not join their colleagues down this path. Among those who became fierce Iron Guardists, Marietta Sadova's case has never been made the focus of serious scholarly discussion, and it is to Bejan's credit that she has accomplished this by using relevant information from Sadova's Securitate file, though it may be a bit of an overstatement to call Sadova the Romanian Leni Riefenstahl.

The book is at its best when it takes advantage of the rich primary sources which Bejan has diligently studied over the years in archives and libraries, bringing to light little known aspects such as those regarding the inner management and

functioning of *Criterion* in its beginnings. Her style is neither dry nor pretentious, offering instead a lively and passionate reading experience that does not come at the expense of academic rigorousness.

In a sense, the story of the *Criterion* Association matches, up to a point, the story of interwar Romania. It is to Cristina Bejan's merit that she has managed to capture the histories of this group so well, while also providing the reader with a portrait of interwar Romania in its best and worst moments. This well-documented work on a highly intriguing topic has been written in an enjoyable manner, thus making it a suitable reading for specialists and non-specialists alike.

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Sixties Europe. By Timothy Scott Brown. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020. ix+241 pp.

1968 and the “long sixties” have been at the forefront of scholarly and public interest since their rediscovery in 2008, on the 40th anniversary of perhaps the most salient year of the decade. This is true in no small part because “1968,” as a kind of shorthand, is a way to refer to the transnational and global character of contemporary culture and politics. Timothy Scott Brown, professor of history at Northeastern University, Boston, is one of the most important historians of this period, and his contributions have been paramount to dismantling the national framings of the 1960s protests and revolts and the reframing of 1968 in a global setting.¹ His new book, *Sixties Europe*, continues and revisits themes he has touched on before. This book adheres firmly to a discussion of 1968 as a range of cross-national and interconnected struggles and affirms the deeply shared, global nature of its concerns. Admitting the relevance of anti-colonial struggles, particularly, Vietnam for radicals in Europe and their connections to extra-European activists, Brown nonetheless makes an important revisionist claim that Europe was central in shaping the forms and content of 1960s activism worldwide and that 1968 was a deeply European project. In Brown’s words, Europe provided the most important pool of postmaterialist values, movements in Europe rendered ways of living and the role of culture central for any critique of society and it was the most important site of negotiating the ways of organization of societies (p.3).

Brown makes three important points when he explains why Europe was of central importance in making 1968 a global event. First, he argues that politics was the emphatic concern of the revolt of the 1960s. Second, he highlights that 1968 presumed the transformation of everyday life as a condition for political change and strove for a coalition of movements in art, ways of life, and politics proper. Third, Brown considers the European scenes as vital in transforming decolonization and the antiimperialist struggles into a genuine global issue. However, while it is impossible to cover everything in equal depth, the narrative which he presents seems to miss a few important points. It ignores the fact that one of the crucial motors of the revolt of the 1960s was a generational shift. The book also underestimates the centrality of the Third World in making 1968

1 West Germany and the Global Sixties: The Anti-Authoritarian Revolt, 1962–1978 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

a genuine political revolt. The similarity of rebellion in the West and in the East is often taken for granted too hastily. Last, violence and gender, perhaps, were more important in shaping 1968 than Brown seems to assume.

Brown explores the intensification of personal encounters of activists from various countries and the emergence of international networks. Nonetheless, as the book argues, internationalism for 1968 activists meant more than the physical crossing of national borders. As Brown convincingly shows, activists in Europe were deeply convinced that “all struggles were connected” and that their revolt in Europe against their national establishments were parallel with the anti-imperialist fights overseas. The apparently shared concerns to fight oppression and authority led activists both in the West and in the East to believe that rebellion in Paris or Prague and the war in Vietnam were interconnected, they were parts of the same struggle against imperialism outside of Europe and exploitation at home, and they also saw themselves as members of the same international army of revolution.

Social criticism (ideology) and action furthering social change (politics) went hand in hand in the 1960s. One of the book’s most original points is that these programs were sensitive to history. Brown explores how various groups and movements evoked historical antecedents of revolt, particularly the anarchist and libertarian communist traditions of Rosa Luxemburg, the Kronstadt mutiny, the Spanish Republic, or the workers’ councils in 1956 Budapest. The revival of suppressed knowledge of alternative forms of social organization provided intellectual and political ammunition in the assault against both capitalism in the West and official socialism in the East. Brown emphasizes that the politics of 1968 was inherently a politics of the left, and as such, it embraced ideas like liberation from exploitation, self-determination, and social organization based on solidarity. This left, the “New Left,” as Brown highlights, was based on knowledge suppressed both by capitalist and official socialist establishments. Hence, it represented alternative socialisms.

1968 activists had to reconcile anti-capitalism and the abrogation of private ownership of capital and means of production with the emancipation of the individual, who apparently was not alienated only amidst the soul-breaking routines of factory production in the West, but also living under the overly bureaucratic labor regimes of collectivist state ownership in the socialist dictatorships of Eastern Europe. Brown argues that such tensions explain why the question of what the left really was in this new context became inevitable for 1968. Notwithstanding the broad consensus in the East and the West that

the new left must be defined against the Stalinist type of official socialism in the East and like-minded communist parties in the West, the character of the left in the 1960s was seen as most clearly discernible in the field of culture in a broad sense. The most typical forms of organization were various movements of lifestyle, famously, the communes of K1 in West Berlin and their followers across Europe. Brown is keen to establish that 1968 activism understood political liberation from authority and oppression as a fundamental liberation of the self, which included experimentations with new forms of living, work, leisure, sexuality, and womanhood.

Brown is shrewd to note that the move beyond the conventional frames of politics was not always peaceful. Protesters in France, Italy, and Yugoslavia were not reluctant to attack police squads, party headquarters, or office buildings of the press. Brown argues that activists were prone to see their violence as defensive and as a response to the violence of oppression used by the authorities. In this perspective, they understood violence as a strategic choice of resistance: to fight against oppression and authority sustained by inherent forms of violence, one needed to become violent, too. Post-1968 terrorism in Europe should be considered in this context, Brown argues. Whereas many discovered the possibility of change in the field of everyday life when the direct political protest began to flag in the West and was clamped down in the East, some embraced clandestine urban guerrilla violence as the proper form of triggering change in an ever-narrowing field of political opposition.

Brown's discussion of violence and feminism suggests that both were conclusions to the story of 1968. Nonetheless, the story of these components as presented by Brown opens up new perspective from which to approach the history of activism in the 1960s. How important was gender in shaping the character of 1968? What were the implications of staging of the revolution as men's affair and the iconic macho image of 1968 portrayed by Cohn-Bendit, Dutschke, or Che for reconsiderations of the meanings of revolt, resistance, and protest? Similarly, how was violence important in shaping the politics of 1968? How did the legacies of revolutionary cultures which embraced the violent smashing of the system shape activists' programs and expectations? These questions suggest that both violence and gender may have been core constituents of 1968 activism, rather than elements of its outcome.

Connections with the extra-European world were crucial here. Radicals in Europe swiftly became passionate about what they perceived as the intransigent commitment to revolutionary change: wars of liberation in the extra-European

world. This, however, provided more than simple templates for the use of violence at home, and it did more than prompt global solidarities in Europe, as Brown seems to argue. Wars of liberation and anti-imperialist revolutions in Asia, Africa and Latin-America were evidence for young revisionists, new left radicals, and, in some ways, old left elites of the validity of class-based revolutionary theories and the vitality of socialism. In short, the left (in its many groupings) saw the revolutionary struggles of Europe coming to new life in the jungles of Vietnam and the mountains of Cuba. Links to the Global South were crucial to a narrative of the politics of 1968 in the language of the left. In turn, one may wonder if the demise of the left in Europe and the loss of belief in viable anti-capitalist alternatives were linked more to the dissolution of the promises of decolonization as a cradle for possibly more just and democratic states in these regions. 1968 was a global event not simply because it was made so in Europe, but rather because the extra-European world had crucial agency in making 1968 a leftist project worldwide.

Whereas the Czechoslovak and to some extent the Polish cases may fit the portrait of 1968 as painted by Brown, other societies in Eastern Europe, particularly, Hungary, Romania, and Yugoslavia, were different in many important ways. Several major concerns of the left, such as working-class autonomy, third worldism, and the power of art, helped mobilize activism in these countries, as well. But many activists were motivated by different reasons. Some activists in Hungary were keen on protecting national sovereignty and allegedly authentic, traditional village lifestyles, issues which tend to have more resonance with the populist and conservative right than with a revolutionary left. Nationalism and national self-determination were crucial concerns of the Croatian Spring movement, too. Furthermore, religious activism was important in both Hungary and Poland. This activism strove to reform Christian culture and render it more flexible and socially concerned, including Christian practices such as the introduction of beat music and modern popular culture. Thus, the groups and scenes of 1968 were connected by a solid idea and the consensus of generation, which went beyond political comradeship.

Timothy Brown's book proves that 1968, as a shorthand term for the complex process of reshaping contemporary Europe and the world, was an immensely multifaceted moment in history which cries for a plurality of approaches and interpretations. *Sixties Europe* pinpoints extremely important aspects of this history, such as the roles of politics, the global imagination, the reinterpretation of the agendas of the left, and communication across various

areas of the world. It renders this history open to contestation and also offers a persuasive illustration of the potentials of polyphonic narratives of the past. It thus constitutes a work worthy of the admiration of any historian.

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Censorship in Czech and Hungarian Academic Publishing, 1969–1989: Snakes and Ladders. By Libora Oates-Indruchová. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020. 384 pp.

In *Snakes and Ladders*, Libora Oates-Indruchová constructs a rigorous theory of censorship based on the case of normalization-era Czechoslovakia (with Hungary as an asymmetrical comparison) and offers a compelling methodological vision for the future of cultural histories of state socialism. The book has been long in the making and, as a result, is layered in its source material and analysis. Originating in late 1990s Czech Republic with the author's interest in the scholarly writing and publishing practices of her own professors before 1989, its main source base was collected in the early 2000s: twenty oral history interviews with Czech academics and eight interviews with their Hungarian peers. The interviewees were chosen from among scholars active before 1989 who still enjoyed the professional appreciation of their peers in the post-socialist period, which underscores Oates-Indruchová's case for taking knowledge produced under state socialism and the agency of scholars seriously, yet also raises the question of how the boundaries between the scholarly and the non-scholarly have shifted over the past 50 years.

By the time the interviews were done, the “archive fever” of the 1990s was being critically reviewed,¹ whereas the “ethnography of the archive” strand of research had not yet been fully articulated in studies of state socialism.² This shows in Oates-Indruchová's approach to the book's archival source base. Chapter 2 reconstructs the official policies regulating scholarly life during normalization based on officially published documents from the Czechoslovak press that were collected in the 1960s and 1970s by the Radio Free Europe Research Institute and are now held at the Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives in Budapest. The complex context of their collection, classification, and archival processing remains largely unexplored, and although this is unlikely to change the general outline of the party policy which they document, one wonders what

1 For example, Stephen Kotkin, “The State—Is It Us? Memoires, Archives, and Kremlinologists,” *Russian Review* 61, no. 1 (2002): 35–51.

2 This strand of research has picked up in the 2010s, in works such as: Cristina Vatulescu, *Police Aesthetics: Literature, Film, and the Secret Police in Soviet Times* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010); Katherine Verdery, *Secrets and Truth: Ethnography in the Archive of Romania's Secret Police* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2014); Ioana Macrea-Toma, “The Eyes of Radio Free Europe: Regimes of Visibility in the Cold War Archives,” *East Central Europe* 44, no. 1 (2017): 99–127, and her introduction to the edited issue.

Oates-Indruchová's sophisticated methodological approach to the oral history interviews would yield if it were applied to this archival source base as well. As for the archives of the Editorial Board of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, they represent the counterpart to Chapter 4, where they are carefully discussed in the footnotes. To use the author's conceptual distinction borrowed from James C. Scott, the "public transcript" of party and state institutions is thus "hidden" in what is doubtlessly Oates-Indruchová's conscious choice to put the voices of the scholars themselves center stage.

These voices form the core of the book, five chapters which weave together the interviewees' recollections on themes related to academic writing and publishing during the normalization period in Czechoslovakia: the institutional and personal strategies for surviving and navigating the constraints on academic scholarship after the Prague Spring (Chapter 3); the "highway code" of the publication process which saw a manuscript through various institutional loops (Chapter 4); censorship (including self-censorship, "friendly censorship," and post-publication censorship) and how it related to authorship and authoring, that is, the articulation of the authorial self (Chapter 5); the language of publishing, from the acceptability of various research topics to the scholarly vocabulary to the use of subversive "code" (Chapter 6); and perceptions on the past and the afterlife of state socialist scholarly practices in the narrators' present (Chapter 7). These five chapters are structured as "imagined conversations" among the Czech scholars in which Hungarian authors intervene as a counterpart to the Czech story. They consist of quotes from the oral history interviews, identified through a pseudonym (which indicates the age cohort, gender, nationality, and profession of the narrator) and ordered by the author with minimal textual interventions in her capacity of a "novice" initiated by her "mentors" in the workings of academic publishing under state socialism. This unique approach, dubbed "post-academic writing," takes inspiration from feminist methodology and literary studies. As Oates-Indruchová argues in the introduction, it seeks to "make visible the lives and experiences of my narrators, treat them ethically by allowing them to represent themselves to the greatest possible degree, make visible the power relationship of the research situation, and lay the research process bare, while not shunning the emotional and the subjective." Eight photographs placed immediately before and after the oral history chapters stand as visual representation of this fraught, usually invisible process.

The last chapter of the book is a rigorously crafted theory of academic publishing and censorship under state socialism, which (despite the fact that

the author gives her reader permission to skip it in the introduction) is likely to become the go-to text on the topic for the university classroom and for scholars of intellectual production under late socialism. Oates-Indruchová argues that although the system of ideological control tightened from 1969 onwards, there was a noticeable shift in its target from content to form, or from scholars' convictions to the appearance of loyalty. The system suffered from over-centralization, and scholars responded by developing a host of individual and institutional strategies to survive repression, the access to and experience of which were divided along generational lines. The "publish and perish" dynamics of academic publishing under state socialism meant that a manuscript's entire journey from inception to publication was fraught with danger and regulated by an intricate code which was neither transparent nor entirely predictable.

Oates-Indruchová considers who could publish, how a text was approved, how the process could be helped or hindered and through whose agency, what was considered unpublishable, and what happened when the unpublishable was published. She distinguishes between (the authors' experiences of) no censorship and preventive, post-publishing, and self-censorship, offering rich accounts of each. Most interestingly, Oates-Indruchová pairs censorship with authorship, highlighting how the pervasiveness of the first, especially in its preventive forms, contributed to the attrition of the latter. It is on the issue of censorship that the cases of Czechoslovakia and Hungary appear to diverge the most, suggesting the potential for a broader comparative analysis of the issue in the countries of East Central Europe. As a consequence of the politicization of research topics and the erosion of scholarly language, Oates-Indruchová argues, authors invested in the idea that a "code of communication" existed between them and the readers. Showing how elusive such a complex code is, she concludes that what developed was rather a vocabulary of expressions – the meanings of which were quickly lost for the post-1989 generations. The latter observation in particular leads Oates-Indruchová to explore the authors' perceptions of the past and the consequences the system had for the interviewees in the present, both in terms of a lasting ideological dualism and the practices of academic research, publishing, and employment.

Oates-Indruchová has crafted a study of censorship at a time when both the fervent debates of the 1990s over issues of coercion, collaboration, and, importantly, moral responsibility have waned and the notion of writing against the totalitarian paradigm in studies of state socialism has itself become something of a cliché. This allows her both to state carefully and to answer unequivocally the

main dilemma of the book in the introduction: why do some authors experience censorship as a set of practices which has the potential to nurture creativity while other authors experience it simply as stifling? The key is in the double effect of censorship, broadly defined, of creating (self-contained) academic communities of trust on the one hand and instilling a hyper-attentiveness to language in both authors and readers on the other. Oates-Indruchová shows that both have productive and restrictive dimensions, reflected in the authors' contradictory evaluations of the past. Ultimately, however, she concludes that the game of "snakes and ladders" to which she compares academic publishing under state socialism worked to the detriment of authors, scholarship, and readers. Oates-Indruchová's volume stands as an innovative model of how to explore a complexly mediated past through oral history and overcome legacies of dualistic thinking, overly cautious scholarship, and limited communication within and among self-contained academic communities.

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Polio Across the Iron Curtain: Hungary's Cold War with an Epidemic.
By Dóra Vargha. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018. 254 pp.

In the early spring of 2020, steps were taken by governments in the so-called West which would make what was a long-forgotten part of world history an everyday reality again. In order to slow the spread of the coronavirus pandemic, measures were introduced which compelled societies to rethink their value systems and perceptions, and even many experts in various fields had little clear sense of the long-term consequences these changes would have. The current epidemic prompted nation-state governments to implement rapid and, in some cases, comparatively effective policies. In general, in the secondary literature on epidemiological history, pandemics have been viewed as transient and clearly defined periods which begin with the first cases and end with the last. This approach has exerted a considerable influence on the communication concerning the current pandemic. In her first monograph, which was published in 2018, Dóra Vargha, a lecturer at the University of Exeter, discusses the various waves of the polio epidemic in Hungary and the fight against it in the second half of the twentieth century. Significantly from the perspective of the health crisis today, she offers an entirely different approach to the concept of a “pandemic.”

Vargha's monograph raises a question of historiographical significance when she asks whether the history of an epidemic in a given country should really be seen as coming to an end when mass illness has come to an end. This is a question with moral, biopolitical, and general implications for the writing of epidemiological history. Are we embarking down the right path, when we seek to write an epidemiological history within a “nation-state framework,” by examining a well-defined period of time? In part to investigate this question, Vargha discusses the flare-ups of polio in Hungary between 1952 and 1963 in a broader international context, and she traces the fates of survivors until the change of regimes in 1990.

The spread of polio in Hungary may serve as an appropriate empirical context for Vargha's analysis in part because the illness was a concern not because of the high number of cases or the high rate of fatalities. It was dreaded, rather, in no small part because of the serious risk of permanent bodily harm to members of a social group whose health was seen as symbolic of the country's allegedly bright future. According to the logic of the era, this group was supposed to determine the ultimate outcome of the Cold War as an ideological and socioeconomic conflict. Polio therefore could not be treated merely as a (nation) state affair. This

is precisely why Vargha raises the question of how and within what framework it was possible, ten years after the beginning of the Cold War, to organize a wide-ranging cooperative international medical and humanitarian effort to defeat an enemy “unfamiliar with the Iron Curtain.” And what were the social consequences of this cooperative endeavor in Hungary, a country which abutted the Iron Curtain and a country in which the protection of the population from biological threats (such as polio) was indeed an ideological question which cut to the heart of the emerging welfare society, but where the political changes which were underway at precisely this moment of history determined the country’s domestic and foreign policy positions?

Vargha addresses these questions, but she does a great deal more than that. She sheds light on the social status of modern, Western medical knowledge in Hungary in the 1950s, which was precarious in many ways. At times, it met with a skeptical or even hostile reception. Vargha also helps her reader understand a situation which, at first glance, seems contradictory. If the authoritarian political-social systems were never hesitant to use physical force to harass or even destroy individuals who lived under their reign when it seemed to serve their interests, how is it that, at other times, they were capable, when facing challenges similar to the challenges faced by the democratic societies of the West, sometimes to address the needs of their citizens, from certain perspectives, even more effectively?

The monograph consists of six chapters, which are arranged in chronological order, given the fundamental importance of the course of epidemics over time. The organizing thread, however, is not merely chronology. Rather, it is provided by the three major issues raised in the discussion, issues which are turned into analytical perspectives and which, with varying emphasis, run through the argument as a whole and outline the macro, meso, and micro levels of analysis. One of these issues is the problem of the global production and distribution of knowledge concerning polio in a global policy context in which the biological protection of citizens and the production of scientific knowledge in general were the basis for competition. Vargha’s analysis clearly shows something that historians of medical science in the second half of the twentieth century have been striving in recent years to emphasize in more and more empirical fields, namely that the Iron Curtain proved to be a “loosely woven fabric” when it came to the flow of scientific knowledge. The joint testing of polio vaccines which were originally developed in the United States (it is perhaps worth noting that the vaccine developed by Albert Sabin was first tested in the Soviet Union

on large populations a few years before it was used in the United States) and the polio-conferences held until the early 1960s clearly indicated wide-ranging cooperation. At the same time, an examination of the discourses in the countries involved in the fight against the epidemic also allows Vargha to identify subtle distinctions: the East-West opposition appears as a *topos* to be broken down, but one also has a clear sense of the dilemma that was created by the fragility of the trust the two sides had for each other in the Cold War, despite their shared achievements.

By adopting an approach that goes beyond the national framework, Vargha reminds us of the permeability of the Iron Curtain and the global nature of the flow of knowledge. Furthermore, she offers an alternative to the approach based on the assumption according to which the flow of scientific knowledge generally considered to be modern consistently went from West to East. She argues convincingly that the immunization campaign introduced in Hungary in 1959, the manner in which the state-organized program was administered, and the monitoring of vaccinations and complications later served as a model in Cuba and Brazil, and they were also points of departure for the global strategy adopted by the WHO to eradicate polio. Hungary, which was the first country to introduce a vaccination program on the national level, served as a prominent example in these efforts, but, as Vargha indicates, so did several other communist countries.

The meso-level of Vargha's study is her analysis of biopower intentions, which she presents mostly in the context of the fight against and prevention of epidemics in Hungary. Given her comparative approach, these phenomena can be traced, at least in part, in the context of the Soviet Union and the United States, and she shows how, due to certain historical features, similar tools available in epidemic management led, at least temporarily, to different successes in the prevention of infection. In the case of Hungary, for a health care system which had suffered catastrophic damage in World War II, the measures taken in the course of the 1956 Revolution and the offers of international assistance created the foundations for the fight against polio at the end of the decade.

In the case of Hungary, the state had a strong intention to provide care for the population, and there was, similarly, a strong demand for intervention. Nonetheless, the question of state jurisdiction over children's bodies still put the issue of the relationship between power and the individual in the foreground, as well as the question of paternalism as the fundamental stance of the socialist state. Although policy with regards to children in the modern state has tended

to see state participation in the rearing of children as essential even from the moment of birth, in order for the campaign to slow the spread of the virus to be effective, the state still needed to convince parents of the importance of its efforts and to clarify their role. Vargha shows that, at the initial stages of the epidemic, attempts by the state to insist on the urgency of protective measures appeared in the press and the narratives of health policy-makers as a common struggle by the state and parents, even if there were paternalistic motifs in the discourse. However, this rhetoric also made it possible to blame parents for the failure of the Salk vaccination in 1957.

The micro-level of the analysis concerns the discussion of the problems which arose in the everyday lives of individuals, problems which, effective international cooperation and state intervention notwithstanding, sometimes made it impossible or at least more difficult to protect the population. As Vargha's analysis shows, the epidemic was not always taken as seriously by the general population as it should have been, and compliance with state regulations fell short of expectations, as did the actual number of vaccinations. When the epidemic flared up in 1959 and caused more destruction than it had in earlier bouts, it may have been tempting to attribute this to the decisions made by parents who went against the will of the state. However, as Vargha makes clear, defiant parents were not the only cause of the flare-up. The administrative confusion of the first vaccination campaigns and the early technical uncertainties concerning inoculation with the Salk vaccine, which was used first as a prophylactic measure, created a situation in which even large-scale immunization did not provide complete protection for the population belonging to the most vulnerable age group.

Vargha offers subtle insights into the contradictory and tense relationship between the paternalistic state and society through a discussion of a pressing issue of health care policy, and she also considers the ways in which the intentions of the state and the wishes of the population diverged or collided, sometimes because of problems with implementation and sometimes simply because of individual aims or perceptions. She does a great deal more than this, however. Because she uses a conceptualization of "epidemic" which is broad both in time and space, she also incorporates into her discussion an examination of the circumstances of those who survived the pandemic, stretching all the way up to the change of regimes in 1990. Thus, she also considers phenomena which were part of the larger strategies used by individuals during the Kádár era to assert or achieve their perceived interests, and she casts light from a new angle on the

social and political dysfunctionalities which were, ultimately, the foundation on which these strategies were built.

Furthermore, since the early 1960s, the social circumstances of the individual fundamentally determined the circumstances of survivors of the polio epidemic. Since new cases of polio began to decline, polio itself no longer constituted a medical, social, or political problem. The Heine-Medin Hospital, which had been set up during Imre Nagy's second term as prime minister, was closed, and knowledge concerning the disease was less and less a part of a practicing physician's immediate repertoire. In the absence of reliable, organized state care, the quality of life for the people who had survived polio and who had been left with lasting handicaps depended on their circumstances and/or the circumstances of their families. By dwelling on this question, Vargha very justifiably suggests that, even if the epidemic was cured on the larger societal status, the Kádár regime ultimately failed to provide professional medical care, available regardless of one's social background, even though this was one of its most prominent sociopolitical aims. For survivors of polio, differences in social level were factors which had a strong influence on the individual's ability merely to exist.

Vargha makes persuasive use, in support of her various propositions, of a diverse array of sources, including archival documents, printed sources and sources from the press, an impressive body of secondary literature, and even oral history interviews done earlier with patients. Her use of the interviews allows her to present subjective perspectives on the illness and care and treatment, thus providing, to some extent, a "patient's view," or in other words, a perspective which is often seen as a worthy goal in the scholarship on medical history, but which, given the nature of the sources, is hard to provide (in the case of Vargha's book, this perspective is particularly significant in the second, fourth, and sixth chapters). The interviews also enable her to make the changes of scale which are used in the other chapters and which constitute the most exciting points of her analysis. These changes of scale vividly show the reader how the decisions that were made in the interests of protecting the population from disease (decisions which, with small changes, ultimately did provide protection) were different, during the first wave of vaccinations, on the individual level because of the administrative chaos. In other cases, the shifts in scale show how, as gradually there were no cases of new infections, the question of providing care for polio survivors was no longer an issue that could be easily integrated into the communist social vision, and thus the provision of care essentially became the

task of the families and friends who lived with or around people grappling with handicaps of various seriousness.

It is difficult to imagine a subject which could be more pertinent at the moment, considering the pandemic currently underway. But beyond its immediate relevance, given the questions she raises, the scholarship on which she draws, and the scientific and social-scientific perspectives she offers, Vargha's book will be an essential work in the international scholarship on medical history in the next few years, as well as a substantial contribution to the scholarship on state socialism in Hungary during the Kádár era.

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