

## 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)<sup>1</sup>

The first chapter of *The Baron's Sons*<sup>2</sup> 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 Bradlay,

<sup>1</sup> *Kölcsey Antónia naplója*, 16.

<sup>2</sup> 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!<sup>3</sup>

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.<sup>4</sup>

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.”<sup>5</sup>

Marie Baradlay (who becomes the baron’s widow after this momentous hour) thinks and feels differently about the family. The difference 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.”<sup>6</sup>

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.<sup>7</sup> 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.

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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 Sabean 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.<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup>

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.<sup>10</sup> 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,<sup>11</sup> 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.<sup>12</sup> 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.<sup>13</sup>

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."<sup>14</sup> And towards the end of the month, she lamented, "I'm only happy when I can be with my mother, my siblings."<sup>15</sup>

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."<sup>16</sup>

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.<sup>17</sup>

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

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<sup>17</sup> 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.<sup>18</sup> 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.<sup>19</sup> 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.<sup>20</sup> 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 half-siblings 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?<sup>21</sup>

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

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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.<sup>22</sup>

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!  
Clariss<sup>23</sup>

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.<sup>24</sup>

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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.”<sup>25</sup> 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.”<sup>26</sup>

*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 Tänzer 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

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 27 January, 1851.

<sup>26</sup> 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 Gusztí and I promised each other to follow his words of advice.<sup>27</sup>

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 Gusztív 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 Gusztív 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 Gusztív, 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 Gusztív, opportunities which she would not have:

Another parting, and it is a hard one, a bitter one! My only brother, Gusztí, 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.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> *Kölcsey Antónia naplója*, 16.

<sup>28</sup> *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!*<sup>29</sup>

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.<sup>30</sup>

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[.]<sup>31</sup>

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!<sup>32</sup>

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.

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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."<sup>33</sup>

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

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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 correspondence<sup>34</sup> 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.