

“The Bible Will Stay in the Home”: Intergenerational Transmission of Books in Early Modern Transylvania

Maria CRĂCIUN

Babeş-Bolyai University, Faculty of History and Philosophy

E-mail: maria_silvia.craciun@yahoo.com

Article history: Received 30.11.2020 Revised 15.03.2021

Accepted 10.05.2021; Available online 03.02.2022.

©2021 Studia UBB Historia. Published by Babeş-Bolyai University.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/)

Abstract: Focused on the transmission of books from one generation to another, this study explores the connection between gender and book ownership by attempting to discover whether the ‘reading lists’ inadvertently compiled by testators for their offspring were informed by gender stereotypes and by specific perceptions of masculinity and femininity. By carefully considering the nature and content of these bequests, this study will try to identify the stereotypes attached to men and women’s relation to books and, ultimately, to knowledge and consequently explore the place of books in their lives within the boundaries set by their gender in terms of social roles, access to education and involvement in the public sphere. By analysing the dynamics of bequests involving books, this study aims to explore the complex motives that impacted on testators’ decisions, including concern for tradition and heritage. By looking at men and women as both donors and recipients of books, this article would like to identify emergent and possibly gendered reading cultures. Finally, by closely examining the intricacies of bequests recorded in probate inventories, this essay aims to highlight interaction within the family, vertically between generations and horizontally within them.

Keywords: books, bequests, gender, generations, reading cultures, social roles, stereotypes.

Rezumat: „Biblia va rămâne în casă”: Transmiterea intergenerațională a cărților în Transilvania modernă timpurie. Concentrat asupra transmiterii cărților de la o generație la alta, acest studiu își propune să exploreze conexiunea dintre gen și cărți încercând să descopere dacă lecturile recomandate involuntar de testatori pentru urmașii lor erau influențate de stereotipii de gen și de percepții specifice asupra masculinității și feminității. Luând în calcul natura și conținutul acestor testamente, studiul va încerca să identifice aceste stereotipuri implicate în

relația bărbaților și femeilor cu cartea și, în cele din urmă, cu cunoașterea. El va încerca să exploreze locul cărților în viața acestor indivizi în cadrele impuse de genul lor, din perspectiva unor roluri sociale, a accesului la educație și a implicării în sfera publică. Analizând dinamica acestor testamente, studiul va reconstitui motivele complexe care au avut impact asupra deciziei testatarilor, inclusiv precuparea lor pentru tradiție și patrimoniul familiei. Luând în considerare atât bărbații cât și femeile în ipostaza de testatari și moștenitori articolul va încerca să identifice posibile culturi genizate ale lecturii. În final, examinînd cu atenție complexitățile acestor testamente, așa cum sunt ele reflectate de inventarele atașate, articolul va încerca să pună în evidență interacțiunile dintre membrii familiei, vertical între generații și orizontal în interiorul acestora.

Cuvinte cheie: carte, testament, gen, generație, cultura lecturii, roluri sociale, stereotipuri.

In 1591, Hans Crestel, described as a burgher from Bistrița (Bistritz, Beszterce), made his will and bequeathed his collection of books to his heirs. The books, however, were not equally divided between his children as his older daughter did not receive any. Instead, she received his best coat, while his son, received 'the Bible' and all the Latin books.¹ A few years earlier, in 1576, Thomas Werner and his wife Barbara, citizens of the same Transylvanian town, made separate wills in which they left their books, notably a German Bible and a Postil, to Johannes Jung, who must have been Barbara's son from a previous marriage.² Besides informing one that, by the end of the 16th century, the citizens of Transylvanian towns owned small collections of books which they bequeathed to their offspring, the two examples quoted here raise a number of questions concerning the nature of these bequests, the motives that prompted parents to leave books to their heirs and the criteria used when they decided which of their children would inherit a particular book. Taking these more general questions into account, this study will focus on one particular issue, namely gender, and ask whether bequests involving books were gender specific, or, in other words, whether certain books were deemed more suitable for men, or for women.

¹ "weiter sol man Wissen das man der grossen Tochter den bessten Mantel hingeeignet, und den knaben die Bibel, sampt den latenischen büchern alle" in István Monok, Péter Ötvös, Attila Verók (eds), *Lesestoffe der Siebenbürger sachsen 1575-1750 Bistritz, Hermannstadt, Kronstadt, Bibliotheken in Siebenbürgen IV/1* (Budapest: Országos Széchényi könyvtár/ Ungarische Széchényi Nationalbibliothek, 2004), 8.

² "Item die Deutsche Bibel und die Postil Mehr dem Johannj Jüng fl. 40 und mein teyl der Bücher, so er bey der Schule fleissig sein wirdt, und studieren." in Monok (ed.), *Lesestoffe*, 3.

Consequently, the protagonists of this study are the donors and recipients of books, individuals who, as parents and children, belonged to different generations, and, as mothers and fathers interacting with their sons and daughters, to different genders. Consequently, by looking at the recipients of the books bequeathed by various individuals through a gendered lens, this study aims to explore the reasons that lay behind testators’ decision to leave their collections of books to their sons, or to their daughters, or to divide them among their heirs of either sex. Their decision was most probably informed by prevailing patterns of inheritance but at the same time it may have been influenced by the gender of the offspring in question as well as by the gender of the testator him/herself. This may be an interesting topic to explore because decisions pertaining to inheritance highlight interaction within the family, between parents and biological children and between step-parents and step-children, as well as bonds among siblings that were biologically related, shared one parent or none at all, as they had ended up being raised by individuals with whom they had no biological connection whatsoever.³ Consequently, choosing to give specific books to one particular child and not to another may serve to highlight relations within families, the bonds created not just by bloodlines but also by circumstances.

Moreover, the wishes of the testators regarding the distribution of their books among their children are able to highlight gender stereotypes projected by the parents on future generations, but also gendered preferences and gendered reading cultures. Thus, by carefully considering the nature and content of these bequests, this study will try to identify the stereotypes attached to men and women’s relation to books and, ultimately, to knowledge and, consequently, to explore the place of books in their lives within the boundaries set by their gender in terms of social roles, access to education and involvement in the public sphere.

While the topic of books and reading cultures in early modern Transylvania has benefited from some attention in the existing literature, scholars have privileged the contents of libraries, particularly those of the ecclesiastical and secular elites, in order to explore their intellectual interests, their confessional identities and the emerging regional book culture.⁴ Thus,

³ The complexity of mixed families in early modern Europe has been highlighted by recent literature, such as Lyndal Warner (ed.), *Stepfamilies in Europe 1400-1800* (New York: Routledge, 2018). In central and eastern Europe, the articles brought together in two issues of *The Hungarian Historical Review* provide insight into these matters. *The Hungarian Historical Review* 8/4 (2019) Stepfamilies across Ethnicities and *The Hungarian Historical Review* 9/4 (2020) Family and Emotions.

⁴ Such studies have been pioneered by Friedrich Teutsch, ‘Zur Geschichte des Deutschen Buchhandels in Siebenbürgen II, Die Zeit von 1500-1700’, *Archiv für Geschichte des Deutschen Buchhandels*, V (1881). In the second half of the 20th century Gustav Gündisch and Doina Năgler

whilst scholars have been primarily interested in the bequests themselves, from a pragmatic perspective, privileging the size of the libraries amassed by various members of the elite and implicitly their intrinsic value, the particular ways in which the books were left to the heirs have mostly been ignored. For example, the collection of 889 titles amassed by the minister Matthias Hass is much appreciated by scholars who mention that it was inherited by his children, but nothing is said about the details of the bequest.⁵ In these circumstances, it comes as no surprise that little interest has been bestowed on the 'reading lists' inherently compiled by testators for young men and women, simply by choosing which books to leave them.

Consequently, by addressing the issue of gender in relation to book ownership and the transfer of these items from one generation to the next, this study can identify the books that were considered – by both men and women – suitable reading matter for either men or women and, thus highlight gender roles attributed to both sexes in Transylvanian early modern society. Through this approach, the study does not wish to privilege one gender over the other, or to distort the study of gender by focusing solely on women. The essay also wishes to avoid discussing women as the 'lesser sex' in Transylvanian early modern society and thus as the often-neglected gender in the literature dedicated to it.⁶

have painstakingly reconstructed several clerical and secular libraries. For clerical libraries, see Gustav Gündisch, 'Die Bibliothek des Damasus Dürr (1585)' in Gustav Gündisch, *Aus Geschichte und Kultur der Siebenbürger Sachsen. Ausgewählte Aufsätze und Berichte* (Köln, Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 1987), 340-350. Gustav Gündisch, 'Eine siebenbürgische Bischofsbibliothek des 16. Jahrhunderts. Die Bücherei des Lukas Unglerus' in Gündisch, *Aus Geschichte und Kultur*, 351-362. Gustav Gündisch, 'Die Bibliothek des Superintendenten der evangelischen Kirche Siebenbürgens, Matthias Schiffbäumer (1547-1611)', *Revue des Etudes Sud-Est Européennes*, XV/3 (1977), 463-478. Gustav Gündisch, Doina Nägler, 'Die Bücherei des Hermannstädter ev. Stadtpfarsens Petrus Rihelius (1648) und seiner Söhne', *Zeitschrift für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde*, 15/1 (1992), 41-62. Gustav Gündisch, Doina Nägler, 'Die Bibliothek des Hermannstädter ev. Stadtpfarsens Andreas Oltard (1660) und seiner Familie', *Zeitschrift für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde*, 17/2 (1994), 121-143. For libraries of the laity, see Gustav Gündisch, 'Die Bibliothek des Sachsengrafen Albert Huet (1537-1607)' in *Korrespondenzblatt des Arbeitskreis für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde* 4 (1974): 32-51. Gustav Gündisch, 'Die Bücherei des Hermannstädter Ratsherrn Johannes Bayer' in *Zeitschrift für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde* 13/1 (1990): 23-34. More recently, István Monok has put together an impressive edition of documents containing probate inventories (see footnote 1 for details), while András Bandi has explored regional reading cultures in his PhD thesis. András Bandi, *Lectura saşilor în secolul al XVIII-lea*, PhD thesis, Babeş-Bolyai University (2016).

⁵ Bandi, *Lectura*, 183.

⁶ Interest in the history of women and in gender studies is relatively recent in local historiography. As notable exceptions, see Şarolta Solcan, *Femeile din Moldova, Transilvania și Țara Românească în Evul Mediu* (Bucureşti: Editura Universităţii, 2005). Şarolta Solcan, 'Negustoresele din Cluj în prima jumătate a secolului al XVII-lea' in *Medievalia Transilvanica* V-VI/1-2 (2001-2002): 35-54. Julia Derzsi, "Un proces de adulter din 1585, la Reghinul Săsesc," *Historia Urbana* XXIII (2015): 141-162; Maria Crăciun, "Work and the City: The Daily Lives of

As the subject of this investigation is book ownership and, more specifically, bequests which involved books, the sources used are last wills and testaments and particularly probate inventories attached to them. From this perspective, the edition carefully compiled by István Monok proves extremely helpful as it includes data from Bistrița, Sibiu (Hermannstadt, Nagyszeben), Brașov (Kronstadt, Brassó), Sighișoara (Schäßburg, Szegesvár) and a number of smaller settlements.⁷ In order to identify examples where the heirs have been mentioned in probate inventories together with the books they had been bequeathed, this study relies on two samples from Bistrița and Sibiu, comprising respectively 215 and 473 testaments of burghers. Their most valuable trait is that they were not drawn up just for members of the urban elite, but also for the middling group of artisans, who are often mentioned by name and trade. This contributes significantly to broadening the scope of this investigation beyond the libraries of clergy and magistrates, which have been so far the main focus of scholarly attention.

Finally, one has to consider the fact that gender specific bequests have been the subject of scholarly research focused on inheritance patterns, but even when studies have dealt with the transmission of movables between generations, the bequeathing of books has not benefited from any attention.⁸ However, such studies have been important in defining inheritance as the transmission of property between and within generations and by exploring the dynamics of this process between norms and actual practice.⁹

Against this historiographical background, a survey of the available evidence suggests that cases when an entire library was bequeathed to one particular person, the widow or one of the children,

Urban Women in Late Medieval and Early Modern Transylvania,” *Colloquia. Journal for Central European History*, (2013) forthcoming. Julia Derzsi, “Aspecte și forme ale micii criminalități în orașul și scaunul Sibiu la începutul secolului al XVII-lea: Modalitățile unei cercetări empirice,” in Laurențiu Rădvan, ed., *Orașe vechi, orașe noi în spațiul românesc: Societate, economie și civilizație urbană în prag de modernitate (sec. XVI- jumătatea sec.XIX)* (Iași: Editura Universității “Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, 2014), 31-54.

⁷ See footnote 1 for the details of the edition.

⁸ Katalin Szende, ‘From Mother to Daughter, from Father to Son? Inheritance of Movables in Late Medieval Pressburg’ in Finn-Einar Eliassen, Katalin Szende (eds), *Generations in Towns: Succession and Success in Pre-Industrial Urban Societies* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 44-75, especially 54-57, 61, 66 where she mentions some gender specific bequests of clothes, linen, furniture and jewelry.

⁹ Katalin Szende, Finn-Einar Eliassen, ‘The Urban Transmission. Family Cycles and Inheritance Customs in Medieval Hungarian and Early Modern Hungarian Towns’ in Mats Berglund (ed.), *City Strolls. Studies in Urban History in Honor of Lars Nilsson* (Stockholm: Stockholmia förlag, 2005), 135-165.

are rare. For example, in 1716, Johann Heilmann, a member of the council of Bistrița bequeathed his entire library to his widow, Rebecca.¹⁰ In a similar manner, in 1695, Andreas Gündisch, “Bürger in Hermannstadt” left his entire library, valued at 150 fl. to his son Michael.¹¹ Such cases are, however extremely rare. More often than not, books were divided among the heirs and examples suggest that decisions concerning bequests were not informed by the value of the books alone. Consequently, probate inventories attached to testaments, which list all the items bequeathed to each of the heirs, are the most helpful in identifying the type of books intended for the use of sons or daughters.

Unfortunately, in some cases, the inventory merely lists the items that the deceased has possessed without mentioning the names of those who were to inherit each item. To quote just one such example, in 1600, Kaspar Mesel, a citizen of Bistrița, left an impressive number of books, presumably to his heirs, but there is no mention concerning the way these were to be divided between his sons Hans and Adam and his daughters Margaretha and Catherina.¹² Such occurrences can also be encountered at a later date. Thus, in 1682, Thomas Verner, who had been a student at Jena and had become royal judge at Nocrich (Leschkirch, Újgyház), left 64 volumes, by the standards of the time a rather large library, to his wife and two daughters, without mentioning the details of the bequest.¹³ The study is thus challenging, as some of the inventories itemize the books without mentioning the individuals who were meant to inherit them,¹⁴ while others include the names of the heirs but the inventory does not mention how the books were divided among them, or they simply mention the books by size with an eye on their value, rather than their content.¹⁵ However, even in these cases, the gender and often occupation of the testator are mentioned and, consequently, such incomplete inventories are still relevant for an investigation concerning the relationship between gender and book

¹⁰ Monok (ed.), *Lesestoffe*, 107.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 240.

¹² *Ibid.*, 15.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 229-231. Bandi, *Lectura*, 125.

¹⁴ In 1653, Adam Kastenhölzer's will lists the books he bequeathed by title, but, although the existence of three children is alluded to, they are not mentioned by name. Monok (ed.), *Lesestoffe*, 43. A similar situation occurs in 1655 in the wills of Mechel Bogner, “Kerkermeister in Bistritz” and Martin Amberg, “Mitglied des Rats in Bistritz”. Monok, (ed.), *Lesestoffe*, p. 46. In 1703, the will of Samuel Gunesch, “Mitglied des Rats in Bistritz” lists the books according to size, including all the titles, it alludes to the children but does not mention them by name. Nor does it mention the books they would each receive. Monok (ed.), *Lesestoffe*, 98.

¹⁵ In 1600, the inventory attached to Johann Bawmann's will mentions his three children by name and lists the books item by item, without any mention of how they were to be divided among the heirs. Monok (ed.), *Lesestoffe*, 14-15.

ownership. Sometimes, the three or four books a woman, most often a widow, was able to bequeath, help one reconstruct an image of female book ownership. In these particular cases, recurring patterns will highlight the type of books that women were most likely to possess.

Consequently, this study will look at men and women as both donors and receivers of books. In these capacities, they assumed different roles as sons or daughters, who inherited a book, lovingly bequeathed by a parent, and as fathers or mothers, who made decisions concerning the division of books among their children. They acted as husbands, considering their wives as potential heirs of a cherished book collection, or as wives disposing of their own valued items. For example, in 1742, Gottfried Stocken, a citizen of Bistrița, bequeathed his book collection to his heirs and divided it between his widow Sophia, born Rehnerdin, and his children.¹⁶ In a similar manner, in 1746 Samuel Decani, Stadt Hahn and later senator in Bistrița, bequeathed his books to his widow Susanna and his three sons.¹⁷ Interestingly enough, Samuel Decani had a rather large collection which was listed in the probate inventory with the price of each book. Moreover, there were no provisions concerning the books intended for each heir, which suggests that the library was probably meant to be sold and the proceeds divided among them. By contrast to this perception of books as marketable goods, in 1683, Dorothea, the wife of Michael Hutter, a burgher from Sibiu bequeathed a 'German Bible in black binding'.¹⁸ As Dorothea was not a widow, one can only presume that she was disposing of a personal item. This also seems to have been true of a case mentioned in an inventory from 1740. Sophia Türkin, born Philipin, was in the position to bequeath books that were her personal possessions to her three children, one of them born in her third marriage to Georgius Türck, while the other two were the issue of previous betrothals. Consequently, the inventory uses the expression her "motherly part" when referring to the book collection she bequeathed to her offspring.¹⁹

Finally, testators sometimes acted as widowers who often had to consider both biological children and step children and as widows who, more often than not, had to deal with libraries inherited from their husbands. In the first case, Endres Scheimer bequeathed books to his stepson Laurentius, and Johannes Rot left books for his stepson Caspar,

¹⁶ Monok (ed.), *Lesestoffe*, 145-146.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 147-150.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 232.

¹⁹ Monok (ed.), *Lesestoffe*, 143.

while Endres Hentz and Valentinus Adrianus made bequests to their stepdaughters.²⁰ In the second case, for example, in 1698, Catharina Fabritiusin, born Kappin, “Bürgerin in Hermannstadt” and the wife of Georg Fabritius, made provisions that her daughters, Anna Maria and Dorothea, would inherit equal shares (estimated at 27 fl.) of the value of the library.²¹ Obviously concerned to provide for her daughters in a fair manner, Catharina Fabritiusin treated the books she must have inherited from her husband as marketable goods. Emotional attachment to the books or long-term plans for her daughters’ education did not seem to come into play. An even more relevant example is that of the widow of Martin Hartwig Krauss, a minister in Agnita (Angetheln, Szentágota). In 1794, the minister had bequeathed his library of 240 titles to his children and his widow. The latter, however, had renounced her share in favour of a set of kitchen utensils.²²

By relying on a variety of such intricate examples, this study can consequently explore not just the actual transmission of books from one generation to the next, but also the relationships within families, ties between parents and children, as well as the complex bonds between siblings and between husbands and wives.²³ Finally, the study can identify value systems and ideas concerning family tradition and heritage.

Moreover, taking into account the inconsistencies present in the inventories, this study deliberately avoids a predominantly quantitative approach to the subject of gendered transmission of books. Instead, it attempts to explore the attitudes to male and female heirs of the inhabitants of Transylvanian towns by analysing their decisions concerning the books they valued and wished to bequeath to the next generation. This qualitative approach will shift the focus away from numbers, more precisely from estimating the size of libraries, assessed in numbers of books,²⁴ to an in-

²⁰ Monok (ed.), *Lesestoffe*, 8, 19, 20, 33.

²¹ Monok (ed.), *Lesestoffe*, 245.

²² Bandi, *Lectura*, 182.

²³ Szende, ‘From Mother to Daughter. From Father to Son?’, 45, 48, has already suggested that the investigation of inheritance issues allows us to gain a better insight into the relations within and between families. By bequeathing goods to spouses, children, grandchildren, brothers, sisters, “testators outlined the circle of kin that was important to them.” Szende also stresses the value of testaments in their ability to reflect personal relations and preferences.

²⁴ This approach has been recurrent in previous literature. For instance, Bandi, *Lectura*, 124 - 125, 127 marvels at the size of some artisans’ libraries, disregarding the fact that many of the artisans who did own substantial book collections were part of the secular elite with seats in the town council or with offices in the urban magistrate. They were often representatives of the more prestigious crafts, those requiring skill and prolonged training. Among the relevant examples are Thomas Verner, royal judge at Nocrich who bequeathed 64 books to his heirs,

depth analysis of the nature of the books given to each gender. At the same time, the qualitative approach will encourage the exploration of the meaning of each particular bequest and perhaps provide a better understanding of the relationship between people and books. That is not to say that quantitative assessments will be completely ignored as, quite often, the significance of a phenomenon is highlighted by its dimension. Consequently, a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative analysis may prove to be the most fruitful in the exploration of this phenomenon. As McLeod and Thomson have pointed out, although quantitative data has the capacity to sketch a grand narrative and provide a bird's eye view of the topic under scrutiny, many significant details remain hidden. By contrast, the qualitative approach is able to provide a close-up shot and help one focus precisely on those details that render the flavour of life.²⁵

In cases where the wishes of the testator are clearly specified, books bequeathed to heirs in families who had children of both genders provide more valuable information than situations where the family had one child of either sex or several children of the same sex, either male or female. This leads one to explore the motives that persuaded a testator to favour one particular son or daughter when bequeathing the most valued items and consider the interplay of norms, rules and personal preferences. Decisions were even more complicated when couples had to deal not just with their own biological offspring but also with step children from previous marriages. In the world of the artisans, second marriages, which mostly occurred because of the death of a spouse, were frequent, bringing to the fore the issue of relations between step-parents and stepchildren.²⁶

Jacob Haimig who had 23 books in his collection, Guthard Schlosser, a watchmaker who had amassed 40 volumes and the goldsmith Friedrich Alle who left his son 55 volumes of mostly theological nature. Monok (ed.), *Lesestoffe*, 31-32, 205-206, 229-231.

²⁵ Julie McLeod, Rachel Thomson, 'Researching Social Change' in Jeanne Katz, Sheila Peace, Sue Spurr (eds.), *Adult Lives. A life course perspective* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2012), 415-425. The two authors borrow their cinematic metaphors from B. Neale, J. Flowerdew, 'Time, Texture and Childhood. The contours of longitudinal qualitative research', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 6/3 (2003): 189-199, especially 192.

²⁶ Katalin Simon, 'Remarriage Patterns and Stepfamily Formation in a German-Speaking Market Town in Eighteenth Century Hungary', *The Hungarian Historical Review* 8/4 (2019): 757-788, especially 759, 767 points out that remarriage usually occurred at the death of one of the spouses and that in 40% of the marriages one of the spouses was a widow or widower. A widow was often forced to remarry to ensure the livelihood of her family. A widower needed to remarry if he had several or very young children. Gabriella Erdélyi, 'Differences between Western and East Central European Patterns of Remarriage and Their Consequences for Children Living in Stepfamilies' in *The Hungarian Historical Review* 8/4 (2019): 657-668, especially 657-658 suggests that many widowed parents sought to rebuild broken families by remarriage, which meant that stepchildren would live with halfsiblings or stepsiblings.

Although the value of books and often their actual prices were mentioned in probate inventories and sometimes the wording of the document suggests that the books would be sold and the proceeds divided among the heirs,²⁷ the most cursory glance at these texts suggests that these books were not appreciated solely for their intrinsic value, that books were part of people's lives, invested with meaning and used in a variety of ways. Lovingly bequeathed to the next generation, these books convey messages about parenting, relationships with children and gender roles.

Thus, the analysis of the bequests will begin by attempting to answer two simple questions: who inherited books and what sort of books did heirs receive from their parents? The study will proceed by assessing whether men and women inherited different types of books and whether the choice of books to bequeath to sons or daughters was in any way linked to gender stereotypes. Finally, the study will assess the role of books in people's lives, possibly shaped by the educational intent of these bequests and the connection between suitable reading matter and gender roles attributed to offspring.

*

The evidence provided by inventories attached to testaments suggests that books were inherited by both male and female heirs within a given family. In cases when the family had only one child, that particular heir would inherit the entire book collection, regardless of their gender. For example, the list of inventories from Bistrița includes 35 men who left their books to their only son.²⁸ This custom was followed by women, although examples of widows who bequeathed books to their sons are comparatively rare. In fact, in the Bistrița sample, there is only one example, that of Catharina Lochnerin, who left her books to her son Martin.²⁹ When the family had only one child and the offspring was a daughter, books were left to her, whether the testator was the father or the mother. While this was the procedure in the wills of eighteen men,³⁰ there were only two women who left books to their daughters.³¹ Bequests made

²⁷ See for instance the inventory attached to the will of Martin Umberch which provides the price of each book. Monok (ed.), *Lesestoffe*, 32.

²⁸ Monok (ed.), *Lesestoffe*, 18-19, 34, 36, 38, 48, 52-53, 54, 58-59, 60, 62-63, 64, 65-66, 73-74, 81-82, 83, 85, 96-97, 103-104, 726, 728, 735. Quantitative estimates in the section were made based on the Bistrița sample.

²⁹ Monok (ed.), *Lesestoffe*, 88. Things look different in the Sibiu sample as there are more female testators. Out of the 473 testators, 115 of which were female, there were only 17 women who left their books to their only son, which represents roughly 3.6%. These women also represent 14.7% of the women who act as testators.

³⁰ Monok (ed.), *Lesestoffe*, 17, 21, 49-50, 55, 67, 69, 70, 72, 79, 101, 105, 107, 235, 737, 747, 749, 751.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 58-59.

to spouses when the couple had children are quite rare. For example, Hans Hetschner, a "Kürschner in Bistritz"³², bequeathed books to his widow and son Andreas,³³ Jacob Schmidt oder Wagner (coachman) left books for his widow Catharina and his stepson Merten,³⁴ while Andreas Decani did the same for his widow and son Samuel.³⁵ True to the paternal model, Samuel Decani bequeathed books to his widow and three children,³⁶ as did Andreas Nussbaumer for his widow and two stepdaughters, Sophia and Anna.³⁷ Most men, and one could mention Gerig Vogel, a goldsmith, Andreas Blasius, a cobbler, and Johann Heilmann, a city councilor, bequeathed books to their widows, in this case, Sara, Susanna and Rebecca, only when there were no other heirs.³⁸

Examples where an explicit gender bias is obvious, where sons would be given books while daughters, and sometimes widows, were bequeathed other items or money are relatively rare. The case of Hans Crestel, who left his son "the Bible" and a collection of Latin books, and his daughter a coat, has already been mentioned.³⁹ The same message is strongly highlighted by the will of Ambrosius Hendel, a "Stadtschreiber" (city clerk) in Bistrița, who left his entire library to his son Georg, although he also had two daughters, Barbara and Dorothea.⁴⁰ Other cases when daughters and widows were overlooked when it came to bequeathing the father's books are those of Andreas Dürbächer, a tanner by trade, who left a number of books to his son Paul and none to his daughter Anna or his widow Catharine,⁴¹ and Hans Riemer, who, in 1598, left his son Hans a bible and no books for his daughters.⁴² A perhaps rather extreme case is that of Andreas Drakistein, who, in 1632, made special provision that his son Georg would be the one to inherit an in-folio bible in German. Although he had a larger collection of books, none of them were meant to be inherited by his three daughters, Dorothea, Susanna and Margaret.⁴³

Generally, however, in most cases (forty-four in the Bistrița sample), when the testator had two children, male and female, they would

³² Furrier.

³³ Monok (ed.), *Lesestoffe*, 35.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 45-46.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 108-109.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 147-150.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 150-151.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 79, 87, 107.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 11.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 21.

both receive a number of books. Obviously, when there were no male heirs, female offspring would inevitably inherit the father's or mother's books. Thus, the evidence examined here suggests that both men and women inherited books from their parents and that an explicit gender bias, where daughters were not bequeathed any books, was a rare occurrence. Moreover, this question is difficult to separate from another, equally simple one, concerning testators. While both men and women bequeathed books, the men far outnumbered women as testators. It is thus noteworthy that from the 215 wills recorded in Bistrița, female testators are responsible for 23, which represents roughly 10-11%, while from the 473 wills recorded in Sibiu, only 115 belonged to women, representing roughly 24%.

Moreover, women who acted as testators were generally widows, disposing of goods left to them by their husbands. For example, in 1718, Catharina Székelyin, born Grossin, "Bürgerin in Hermannstadt" and the widow of Simon Székely, left her books, an entire library, to her son Andreas.⁴⁴ It is probably safe to assume that she had inherited the books from her husband, as there is little indication that women as a rule had private book collections of their own. One interesting example is that of Maria, born Burprigerin, from Sibiu, who, in 1718, left a library to her husband Martin and her daughter Esther.⁴⁵ Another interesting case is that of Susanna Rudolphin, the widow of Georg Rudolph, a furrier in Sibiu. She seems to have been the owner of a rather substantial library worth 19 fl., which she may have inherited from her father, a minister who had studied at the Gymnasium at Brașov and then at the University of Jena and Althof, followed by a career as a teacher in Moșna (Meschen, Muzsna), preacher at Biertan (Birthälm, Berethalom) and minister at Nemșa (Nimesch, Nemes).⁴⁶ An utterly intriguing case, however, is that of Dorothea, born Drechsler, described in the records as a 'younger woman' and a citizen of Sibiu. The daughter of a cobbler, Johannes Schuster, she was probably married to a tailor, Simon Ziegler, as he is referred to as the 'bereaved'. The amazing thing is that she left behind a very large number of books (306), which she had probably inherited from her biological father and, in the absence of any children of her own, bequeathed to Simon Ziegler.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Ibid., 322.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 323.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 274.

⁴⁷ Monok (ed.), *Lesestoffe*, 254-262. Bandi, *Lectura*, 175, comments on the size and Humanist contents of the library without questioning its provenance or its recipient. The terms of the will are ambiguous, particularly concerning the identity of Simon Ziegler. It is tempting to consider him Dorothea's husband, as her maiden name is mentioned in a way that suggests that she has changed it when she married. But she is not mentioned in the will as Zieglerin, as would have been the norm had she been married to Ziegler. Also, there is mention of a stepfather who

Interestingly enough, people left books to step children, as well as to their blood relatives. For instance, in 1576, Barbara and Thomas Werner left a German Bible and Postil to Johannes Jung, who was Barbara's son from a previous marriage.⁴⁸ Although, in Thomas Werner's case, the wording of the document suggests genuine concern for Johannes' education, as Thomas says that Johannes 'should be good in school and study', generally, bequests to step children seem to have occurred mostly when the testator in question had no biological children of his own. In such cases, he may have hoped that the stepson would assume responsibility for the preservation of family traditions. For example, in 1627, Endres Scheimer left his stepson Laurentius an in-folio copy of Luther's *Hauspostill* and an in-folio copy of Luther's Bible.⁴⁹ Although there are two cases when, possibly for want of a better solution, books were left to a stepdaughter, namely Endres Hentz's stepdaughter Christina and Valentinus Adrianus' stepdaughter Anna,⁵⁰ it was generally stepsons rather than stepdaughters who were invested with these responsibilities. Although, so far, I have not been able to find an example where a stepson was favoured over a biological daughter, there are some cases when a stepson is preferred by the testator over his widow. For example, in 1655, Jacob Schmidt oder Wagner preferred to leave Martin Luther's *Hauspostill* and a *New Testament* in Greek and Latin to his stepson Merten, rather than to his widow Catherina.⁵¹ This decision could either signal his faith in a future generation, or the fact that he preferred to pass on family tradition to a man, even if he was not his biological son. This view is further suggested by the decision of Gillis Rot oder Scherer "Mitglied des Rates (Rathgeschworene) in Bistritz",⁵² who, in 1652, made a rather interesting choice. He left Martin Luther's Bible, the *Catechism of Urbanus Regius* and the *Catechism against Arians* as well as *Psalterium Davidis* to his grandson Johann Races and not to his widow Catharina.⁵³ He may have believed that family tradition was better served when placed in the hands of a man or simply preferred to give the books a longer life in the care of a younger person.

Benevolent attitudes towards step-children are challenged by the example of an artisan couple from Bistrița. In 1596, Catharina Galle, the wife of 'Schuster Galle', presumably a cobbler by trade, left some books to

inherits the books. Consequently, Simon Ziegler may after all have been Dorothea's step father rather than her husband.

⁴⁸ Monok (ed.), *Lesestoffe*, 3.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 45-46.

⁵² Member of the council in Bistrița.

⁵³ Monok (ed.), *Lesestoffe*, 40-41.

her two children, Catharina and Martin.⁵⁴ A few years later, in 1600, Schuster Galle himself made his will and bequeathed books to his two children, Catharina and Daniel.⁵⁵ This suggests that the couple had married when both of them had children from previous relationships, Martin and Daniel respectively. This is a logical explanation for the fact that Martin is not mentioned in Schuster Galle's testament and Daniel is not mentioned in Catharina's will, although the younger Catharina, probably the couple's daughter from the new marriage features in both texts. Equally interesting is that four years after his wife's death, Schuster Galle did not see fit to bequeath any books to his stepson, but rather divided his collection between his biological children (Catharina and Daniel). In 1722, Agnetha Schindlerin, born Schwartzin, acted in a similar way. As the widow of Andreas Schindler, she had to decide between her two daughters, Sophia, the fruit of her marriage to Schindler and Agnetha Schullerin, who was her daughter from a previous marriage. Although Schindler was no longer alive, she must have respected his wishes as Sophia was the one to inherit the books.⁵⁶

Other examples that surface from the inventories suggest that a great variety of factors may have been at play when a testator decided how to divide his books among his heirs, especially if he/she had two or more children of the same sex. Thus, Matthias Bredt, a Riemer (beltmaker) gave three postils in German to one of his sons, Martin, while his other son, Georg, and his widow received no books.⁵⁷ This leaves one wondering what his reasons were for favouring Martin by entrusting these precious volumes to him. Gender was obviously not the decisive element in this case, so there must have been other motives stimulating this decision.

Although the evidence is not abundant, some of the examples suggest that the child's preferences may have played a role in the parent's decision. For example, in 1679, Andreas Gürischer, member of the city council (Mitglied des Rats), left his books of religious instruction (postils and bibles) to his son Johann, while his other son, Peter, received a book on the art of war.⁵⁸ At other times, the father seems to have favoured the son who bore his name, although it is never clear whether this was usually the eldest child. For example, in 1662, Jacob Daumitz, a Tischler (joiner), had to choose one of his three sons, Jacob, Andreas and Adam as the recipient of valuable books. He eventually chose Jacob, thus highlighting his concern

⁵⁴ Ibid., 10.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 14.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 333.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 70.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 72.

for tradition and the transmission of the family's valuable items.⁵⁹ A similar decision was made in 1707 by Andreas Fischer who also chose the son named after him as his preferred heir.⁶⁰ However, valuable/important books were not always bequeathed to the son who bore the father's name. For instance, Christian Schaller did not name any of his sons after himself and his reasons for dividing the books between them remain obscure.⁶¹ This was also true in cases where one son was named after the father, but he was not necessarily the one chosen for this important bequest. This path was chosen by Hans Zammerburger in 1684, Michael Conrad in 1655, Matthias Heidendorffer in 1662, Thomas Gellner in 1680 and Georg Böhm in 1698.⁶² Women also abided by this rule. For instance, Susanna Kleinin, widow of Caspar Klein favoured her son Georg and not the son who bore her husband's name.⁶³

Thus, by examining the evidence provided by probate inventories, one is led to believe that books were bequeathed indiscriminately to both male and female heirs and that the exclusion of young women from the family heritage occurred only rarely. This may have been largely in keeping with broader inheritance patterns prevailing in this region. As Katalin Szende has pointed out, in the towns of the Hungarian kingdom, transmission of property was placed within a range of customary regulations, complemented by local statutes and legislation observed throughout the kingdom.⁶⁴ Urban transmission of property took into account the important distinction between ancestral and acquired property and established that the latter could be disposed of on the burghers' terms. Moreover, the equal share of women in property transferred within and between families was a distinctive feature of urban society.⁶⁵ When Katalin Szende examined the transmission of movables in late medieval Bratislava (Pressburg, Pozsony), she came to the conclusion that there was no special preference between mothers and daughters and fathers and sons. The relatively more frequent occurrence of girls as recipients of movables was compensated by the real estate and tools of the trade that were bequeathed to boys. Moreover, girls tended to receive more clothes, linens and sometimes furniture as part of their dowry.⁶⁶

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 80-81.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 44-45, 53, 76-77, 85, 92.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 99.

⁶⁴ Szende, Eliassen, 'Urban Transmission', 137.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 138.

⁶⁶ Szende, 'From Mother to Daughter, from Father to Son?', 69.

As movables could also be bequeathed to spouses, one also has to consider the position of widows as recipients and then as inevitable dispensers of such goods. Examining the fate of widows, Gabriella Erdélyi has suggested that women's claims to inheritance were equal to those of men and that widows of the urban middling class inherited half of the wealth acquired together with their husbands and that it was not uncommon for widows to continue to manage the property, including shops and businesses, at least for a specific time.⁶⁷ Her remark that "a widow was considerably wealthier than unmarried women" raises the issue of maidens in relation to property inherited from their parents.⁶⁸ Although the question is not addressed directly, some answers can be gleaned from Erdélyi's discussion of the differences between biological and stepchildren. Based on her study of the German-speaking community of Bratislava, Erdélyi argues that it was uncommon to distinguish between stepchildren and biological children of remarried parents in the division of family wealth and resources. However, she does point out that there were significant differences between the opportunities afforded to sons and daughters. Thus, she ultimately suggests that differences in opportunity were determined by gender, and not by the fact that a child was born from a first or second marriage.⁶⁹ This is, however, partly contradicted by the already discussed Schindler case, where the mother discriminated between her two biological daughters (with different fathers), perhaps in response to her second husband's wishes, who was a stepfather to Agnetha Schullerin, or in accordance with rules regarding goods acquired during the marriage.

The impression that biological and step children were treated equally, given by Transylvanian probate inventories, is strengthened by the fact that sometimes the spouse who brought children into a new marriage stipulated in the marriage contract that the new partner had to treat the step children as if they were his/her own, a provision that included the right to inherit.⁷⁰ Moreover, in her study of life in an 18th-century town, Katalin Simon suggests that family ties were not contingent to biological relations, but could also be forged in the context of cohabitation and the provision of care.⁷¹ From this perspective, a particular bequest could be a reward for the care provided and became the reason why a parent would

⁶⁷ Erdélyi, 'Differences', 661.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 661.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 666-667.

⁷⁰ Simon, 'Remarriage Patterns', 766-769, 784.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 772.

favour one of the children.⁷² Consequently, the impression that wealth was randomly or haphazardly distributed among the offspring is dispelled when one probes the reasons that had triggered a specific bequest. This conclusion is supported by a less usual example, where Michael Beker, who died without heirs in 1698, left a substantial book collection, containing several interesting titles, many of them theological, to a woman he does not seem to have been related to. Because she is referred to in the inventory as "relictæ behaussung", which suggests that she may have been a widow, and also perhaps deprived of her house, and as the mother of two young girls, Barbara and Catharina, one gets the impression that this may have been an act of charity.⁷³

Having established that both men and women bequeathed and inherited books, one needs to further explore the types of books that were passed on from one generation to the next and assess whether men and women received different reading matter.

*

If one considers the type of books that parents bequeathed to their children, one comes to the conclusion that many of them were deemed suitable for religious and particularly for moral instruction. Thus, the books bequeathed to heirs included bibles, postils, handbooks, prayer books, song books, biblical commentaries, explanations of doctrine and professions of faith, theological treatises, church orders, catechisms and psalters.⁷⁴ Books designed for entertainment, such as the works of Terentius, Ovidius, Plaut and Bonfini, and practical works on medicine, pharmacy, botany,⁷⁵ arithmetic, law, Latin grammars and dictionaries were also frequent occurrences in these collections. A quantitative survey of these works suggests that members of the middling segment of urban

⁷² Ibid., 772 mentions a widow who wished to leave her inheritance to one of the sons because he had helped her administer her household.

⁷³ Monok (ed.), *Lesestoffe*, 244-245. Bandi, *Lectura*, 125 is more interested in the theological content of the library than in the details of the bequest or the reasons behind it.

⁷⁴ Bandi, *Lectura*, 109-110, mentions that Conrad Dietrich's *Institutiones Catechetice* was published by Georg Haner of Sighișoara in a three-volume edition printed at Brașov in 1697-1698. Luther's *Small Catechism* was also printed in the same town in 1656. Valentin Schmalt's *Der kleine Katechismus zu Übung der Kinder* (1620) was also available.

⁷⁵ Bandi, *Lectura*, 131, considers that the *Neu Kreuterbuch* that is occasionally mentioned in inventories is the treatise on botany of Leonhard Fuchs (Basel, 1543). This could also be the work of Hieronymus Bock, *New Kreuterbuch von Unterscheidt, Würckung und Namen der Kreuter, so in teutschen Landen wachsen* (Straßburg, 1546) or that of Jacobus Theodorus Tabernaemontanus who had produced an illustrated *Neue Kreuterbuch* (Frankfurt, 1588) mentioned in the bequest of Georg Gutsch, senator and town judge in Bistrița (1738). Monok (ed.), *Lesestoffe*, 136-141.

society inherited a significant number of religious books, when compared to other reading matter made up of texts of more mundane or pragmatic nature. While the bible was definitely the most important type of book that all individuals should own, postils, handbooks, songbooks and prayerbooks seemed to be the other household staples and eagerly consumed reading matter.⁷⁶ One other major concern seems to have been discipline and the wellbeing of the family, reflected by the penchant for medical books, botanical treatises and collections of recipes for various remedies. Books on accountancy and various trades occupy a significant, albeit small place in these collections. Having taken into account the diversity of the reading matter bequeathed by parents to offspring, one is led to attempt to identify the differences between the books considered most suitable for men and those deemed appropriate for women.

An analysis of the nature of the books left by parents to their children suggests that sometimes, albeit infrequently, parents took great care to provide their children with the same books, regardless of their gender. For example, in 1663, Leonhardt Wienholdt, a goldsmith in Bistrița, left a 'good German Bible' and a "Lüneburger Hand Büchel" for each of his two children, Georgius and Sara.⁷⁷ This wish to provide each of the children with the most useful books is highlighted to greater extent by the example of Michael Weber who, in 1682, left an in-folio copy of Martin Luther's Bible to each of his two children, Michael and Catharina.⁷⁸ With possibly similar intentions, in 1695, Johannes Decani, who had an impressive number of books to divide among his three children, made sure that each of them would receive a bible, Stephan an "Alt Bibel", Catharina, an old New Testament, and Andreas an annotated Bible.⁷⁹ Finally, in 1717, Johann Schneider, a furrier in Sibiu, left two prayer books for each of his three children, Georgius, Maria and Catharina.⁸⁰ These examples, infrequent as they may be, suggest that bibles, handbooks and prayerbooks were part of the inheritance that parents wished to leave their offspring regardless of their gender.

This intention to provide offspring with the same type of books also existed when a family had children of the same gender. Thus, in 1683, David Brichenzweig, a "Messerschmied", left a *Hauspostill* for each of his

⁷⁶ Many of these works were widely available locally. Bandi, *Lectura*, 110, mentions Valentin Radecius' *Geistlicher Gesänge* printed at Cluj.

⁷⁷ Monok (ed.), *Lesestoffe*, 57.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 320.

two daughters, Barbara and Anna.⁸¹ In the same manner, in 1745, Johann Ungar, a furrier, left a Sibiu Songbook (*Hermannstädter Gesangbuch*) to each of his two daughters, Maria and Catharina.⁸² Interestingly, women testators seem to have abided by the same set of rules. For example, in 1748, Catharina Lannin, a citizen of Sibiu and the wife of Thomas Lann, a "Maurer" (mason), left a new *Hermannstadt Gesangbuch* to each of her two daughters, Sophia and Catharina.⁸³ One striking feature of these examples is that no bibles were bequeathed to any of these women.

This makes one wonder whether the decision to provide daughters with *Hauspostills* and songbooks rather than bibles had something to do with their gender or was determined by the fact that perhaps these individuals had no bibles to bequeath. Although one cannot presume that absolutely everyone in an early modern Transylvanian town owned a bible, the evidence gleaned from probate inventories suggests that most individuals who owned books would have a copy of the bible. For example, in the town of Bistrița, out of 215 testaments of burghers, bibles were mentioned in 84, while in Sibiu, out of 473 inventories, 284 included bibles. One is consequently persuaded that, in urban environment, many individuals owned bibles, either complete editions in Latin or German, or just the New Testament. However, the sample of men and women from Bistrița examined in this study did not own the scriptures in equal numbers, as 66 bibles were inherited by men while only 39 such items were left to women.

As the bible seems to have been one of the most frequently bequeathed books, one may as well begin with an in-depth case study dedicated to the transmission of the Scriptures. One is consequently led to consider whether bequeathing a bible was a gender-specific act. As it has already been mentioned, the quantitative estimate suggests that the bible was inherited by almost twice as many men as women. This would lead one to conclude that the bible was the most frequently bequeathed book and that, more often than not, it was given to the son, especially when the item in question was what could be considered the 'family Bible'. For example, the already mentioned Hans Crestel left his son a collection of Latin books, but also "The Bible".⁸⁴ Hans Riemer and Schuster Galle both left their sons, Hans and Daniel, a bible, Endre Daniel alias Honigberger, a smith by trade, left a Latin Bible in-octavo to his son Thomas, Walentin Kraus, "Lederer" (tanner), bequeathed Martin Luther's *New Testament* to

⁸¹ Ibid., 83.

⁸² Ibid., 490.

⁸³ Ibid., 507.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 8.

his son, Martin, while, in 1716, Andreas Decani left the two bibles in his possession, *Biblia Osiandri* in-folio and *Biblia Sacra Latina*, to his son Samuel, while his widow did not inherit any books, further strengthening the impression that gender was involved in the decision.⁸⁵ Interestingly enough, Andreas may have inherited one of his books from his father, as in 1695, Johannes Decani left his son Andreas the “Osiander Biblia cum notis”.⁸⁶ This detail suggests that the *Osiander Bible* in question may have been used to record events within the family and thus used as the ‘family Bible’. Frequently, when bibles were described as being old, it probably meant that they were inherited, and thus passed on from one generation to the next.

The existence of ‘family Bibles’ is further suggested by an example from Cluj. The most significant events in his life, the history of the family, events in the town and his own particular interests, such as gardening, were recorded by Hans Jordan, a native of the southern German lands, who had settled in Cluj in 1520, in his bible.⁸⁷ Hans Jordan’s ‘family Bible’ was eventually inherited by his eldest son Thomas who, in turn, may have bequeathed it to his eldest son Karl Ludwig Jordan. Using the bible to record important events in the life of the family, births, marriages, deaths, twists of fate, seems to have been the norm in a world where writing materials were both scarce and expensive.⁸⁸ In fact, as Robert Offner has pointed out, many printers added blank pages to the bibles they produced in order to accommodate this need.⁸⁹

Gender driven motives are obscured in cases when an individual possessed more than one bible. Thus, in 1635, Andreas Diaken left a bible to his son Georg, but two of his daughters, Susanna and Dorothea also received a bible each, Susanna an in-folio and Dorothea a German bible.⁹⁰ Only the

⁸⁵ Ibid., 11, 13, 14, 58, 74.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 95.

⁸⁷ Robert Offner, ‘Handschriftliche Bibel-Einträge von Hans Jordan, Daten zur Familiengeschichte (1520-1545) und über die Klausenburger Stadtratswahlen von 1535’, *Zeitschrift für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde* 41 (2018): 42-60.

⁸⁸ William H. Sherman, *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), p. 76 points out that books were used by their owners to mark their own place in history, especially when books descended through multiple generations in a single family and that it was customary to register births, marriages and deaths. Ulinka Rublack, ‘Grapho-Relics: Lutheranism and the Materialization of the Word’, *Past and Present* Supplement 5 (2010): 144-165, especially p. 161 mentions an example of a Weimer Bible where its owner inscribed his name, place of birth, fatherland and offices in the pages of the 14th, 15th and 16th chapters of John.

⁸⁹ Offner, ‘Handschriftliche Bibel-Einträge’, 43.

⁹⁰ Monok (ed.), *Lesestoffe*, 26.

third daughter, Catherina received instead a Catechism, Gualtherus' sermons and *Psalterium Davidis*. In 1590, Georg Urischer left a bible to his son Georg and a bible, among several other books, to his daughter Margaret.⁹¹ In 1596, Catharina Galle left a bible to each of her children, Martin and Catharina, although the son was also given a *Hauspostilla* and a prayer book.⁹² In 1689, Georg Böhm, a senator in Bistrița, left a *New Testament* for his daughter Catharina, along with other less usual books, including one in Italian, while his son Georg received a history of the bible. His son Johann, however, did receive a *Biblia Germanica* in octavo.⁹³ In this case, the father had to make a decision between the two sons, as well as between the sons and the daughter. It seems likely that Johann received the 'family Bible', that is, the in-octavo bible in German, while the daughter received just the *New Testament*, possibly in a smaller format.

In fact, this difference in size may well signal different ways of using the bible and another gendered attitude. For example, in 1732, Catharina Laubin, born Christophin, from Sibiu, the wife of Weissgerbers (tawer) Friedrich Laube, left Seeligmanns Bible "in gross octav", while her husband, Friedrich Laube, bequeathed a "Biblia in folio". Perhaps not surprisingly, his will states that the in-folio bible would go to his son Friedrich, while his daughter Catharina received a New Testament in parchment.⁹⁴ This leads one to conclude that Catharina had a bible for her own devotional use, while Friedrich had inherited the 'family Bible' that he was now leaving for future generations.⁹⁵ Additional insight into this matter is provided by the probate inventory of the minister of Romos, Johann Gottschling, drawn in 1706, which stipulated that his books would be divided among his three sons and his daughter. The widow was instructed to keep the *Osiander Bible* in German and against the value of this book she was to buy a 'good hand bible' for her daughter, so that she could have it for her own use.⁹⁶ This suggests that it was considered normal for women to own bibles which they used in their private devotions, while men would be charged with safekeeping the 'family Bible'. This is further supported by the example of Leonhard Wienholdt, a

⁹¹ Ibid., 6-7.

⁹² Ibid., 10.

⁹³ Ibid., 92.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 359.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 359-360. Catharina Laubin specified that the heirs were the widower and her two biological children, Anna Catharina and Friedrich Laube. Her husband's will is more specific in terms of dividing the books between the two children.

⁹⁶ Bandi, *Lectura*, p. 212.

goldsmith in Bistrița, who gave his son Georg a Bible, in fact “Ein gutt Deutsch Bibel” while his daughter Sara received “Ein gutt Leinburger Handtbüchel”.⁹⁷ In 1679, Georg Seddert, Stadtrichter (town judge) in Sighișoara, left his son Georg the New Testament in Greek and Latin and a “Teutsch Bibel in folio”, while his daughter Catharina received a “Teutsch Bibel in quarto” and a Latin New Testament.⁹⁸ In this particular case, it seems that although both children received a bible, the son was bequeathed the ‘family Bible’, while the daughter was left a bible in a format more suited to her personal devotions. A similar logic seems to have informed Georg Schuller’s decision, because, in 1735, he left his son Valentinus a German Gospel and his daughter Catharina a *Handbibel*, while the other son, Johann received the *Creutz und Trost Buchlein* of Cyriacus Spangenberg.⁹⁹ Once again, the ‘family Bible’ seems to have been given to the, possibly, oldest son, while the daughter and the other son received devotional props. Interestingly enough, when acting as testators, women also took into account these more or less explicit rules. For example, in 1746, Maria Weissin, born Fussin, “Bürgerin in Hermannstadt” and the wife of Georg Weiss, bequeathed a bible in octavo to her son Johann and “ein nürnbergische klein Hanbibel” along with a songbook to her daughter Maria.¹⁰⁰

These examples highlight the fact that sons often inherited a bible, usually an impressive and costly item. This fairly well entrenched custom seems to suggest that fathers were concerned with family tradition and wished to bequeath a bible to their sons. For example, such an idea must have been on Martin Böhm’s mind in 1649, when he bequeathed the two bibles he owned, a German and a Latin one to his son Georg.¹⁰¹ His wish to preserve family tradition is also suggested by the fact that he named his son after his own father who had been a *Stadtrichter*. Sometimes, a person would own two bibles, a big in-folio, to use as a ‘family Bible’, and a small hand bible, to use in one’s devotions. For example, in 1746, Stephan Hintz, a Riemer, like many other people, owned a hand bible but also an old, in-folio bible.¹⁰² The latter must have been the ‘family Bible’ that he had probably inherited. In this case, the hand bible may have been an inherited item as well, because, in 1711, Michael Hintz, “Tuchscherer in

⁹⁷ Monok (ed.), *Lesestoffe*, 57.

⁹⁸ Monok (ed.), *Lesestoffe*, vol. 2, 757.

⁹⁹ Monok (ed.), *Lesestoffe*, 132-133.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 496.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 36.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 495. The heirs were his widow Maria, born Herrmanin and his daughter Maria.

Hermannstadt" (cloth-shearer), had bequeathed "ein deutsche Handbibel" to his son Michael and it is not outside the realm of possibility that the two were related, although perhaps not father and son.¹⁰³

Taken together, these examples suggest that sons were preferred when books had to be passed on to the next generation and that they were frequently singled out to inherit a bible. This does not mean that daughters never inherited bibles as there are examples that contradict this assumption. Having no son to bequeath it to, in 1684, Johann Schuller, goldsmith in Sibiu, left 'a good Bible', together with a *Hauspostill*, for his two daughters, Annetha and Catherina, which they were meant to share.¹⁰⁴ This shared ownership, however, does not provide any clues about the way these items were intended to be used. In a similar manner, in 1676, Johann Dürbächer, a tailor, left an impressive number of books to his daughter Christina, the Latin *Concordanz Bible* among them.¹⁰⁵ These examples lead one to conclude that, when the testator had no sons, a bible could also be given to a daughter.

The existing evidence suggests that, during the second half of the 17th century, several artisans, including goldsmiths and Seifensieders (soap-boilers), left collections of books, which included bibles, to their daughters when they happened to be the sole heirs.¹⁰⁶ More prominent citizens of Sibiu, for instance, had similar strategies. In 1688, Matthias Henning, a juris sedis judicis in Sibiu, left his daughter Margaret several bibles, a German one in-quarto, a German one in-folio and a Hungarian one, in-quarto.¹⁰⁷ In 1681, Johann Weinhold, a senator, left his daughter Sophia a 'beautiful German Bible' and a Hungarian Bible.¹⁰⁸ These two examples suggest that, in certain circumstances, particularly in the absence of a son, daughters also inherited the 'family Bible'. The evidence also suggests that when a woman had a bible to bequeath, she would also leave it to her daughter, if the daughter happened to be the only child. Thus, in 1663, Susanna Benderin, born Kretscherin, left her daughter Christine a German and a Latin bible.¹⁰⁹

The decision-making was more complicated, and other criteria came into play when the family had more than one son or more than one

¹⁰³ Ibid., 287.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 234.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 69.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 49-50, 70, 72, 79, 235, 737, 747, 751.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 235.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 228.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 58-59.

daughter and had to decide who would inherit the 'family Bible'. For example, in 1679, Andreas Gürischer, member of the city council (Mitglied des Rats), left his books to his son Johann, including an in-octavo copy of the 1588 edition of Luther's Bible printed at Wittenberg.¹¹⁰ His example is even more interesting because his other son, Peter, received a book on the art of war, which suggests that Andreas had taken into account his sons' preferences and interests when making his decision. In 1662, Jacob Daumitz, a Tischler (joiner), was in a similar situation because he had three sons, Jacob, Andreas and Adam. In this situation, he bequeathed the *Novum Testamentum Concordia* to the son who also bore his name (perhaps the eldest child), thus highlighting his concern for tradition and the transmission of the family's valuable items.¹¹¹ Other examples highlight the fact that a deliberate choice was made when entrusting the bible to one of the sons. In 1683, Christian Schaller, a Schirmacher (umbrella maker), left a *New Testament* in Greek and Latin to his son Andreas, along with other books, while his other two sons, Georg and Johann, received other items, Georg a theological treatise and Johann a *Hauspostill*, a work by Philip Melancton and *Psalterium Davidis*.¹¹² Another interesting example is that of Hans Zammerburger who, in 1684, decided to leave an in-folio copy of Martin Luther's *German Bible* to his son Martin. Two of his other sons, Hans and Michael, received monetary compensation, while Georg received a handbook and Andreas a handbook and monetary compensation.¹¹³ The dispensation of objects and money seems to suggest that the value of the books in question was taken into account when compensating the children who did not receive the prestigious and costly Luther Bible in German. This would explain why one of the sons received a handbook besides the monetary compensation.

This leaves one with the question of whether the recipients of the bible were the eldest sons or whether other criteria came into play when choosing them to inherit the Holy Writ. For example, in 1655, Michael Conrad or Botscher had three sons and a daughter. When his books were bequeathed to his offspring, it was not the son that bore his name, Michael, who received the bible, but rather his son Samuel, who may have been the youngest child, because he was mentioned last in the probate inventory.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 72.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 56.

¹¹² Ibid., 80-81.

¹¹³ Ibid., 85.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 44-45.

A similar situation occurred in 1662, when Matthias Heidendorfer left a summary of the entire bible to his son Johann, and not to the son that bore his name, who may have been the eldest offspring.¹¹⁵ In 1680, Thomas Gellner bequeathed Martin Luther's *New Testament* in German to his son Matthias, and not to the son who had inherited his name.¹¹⁶ The same is true in 1698, when Georg Böhm, a senator, left a *German Bible* in octavo to his son Johann, while his son Georg received a history of the bible.¹¹⁷ Susanna Kleinin, widow of Caspar Klein, bequeathed Erasmus' *Novum Testamentum* in Latin, in octavo to her son Georg, and not to the son who bore her husband's name, Caspar.¹¹⁸ In contrast, in 1707, Andreas Fischer left a Gospel and *Sacra Historiae* to the son named after him.¹¹⁹ As probate inventories do not mention the age of the children, it is difficult to determine whether the first born was bestowed the honour of inheriting the 'family Bible'. The idea that the first born was probably named after the father remains an, as of yet unproven, hypothesis. Moreover, in the absence of research on naming patterns in urban environment, this issue cannot be properly resolved.

Things could become even more complicated when a family had several daughters and one had to be chosen to receive a bible, perhaps the 'family Bible'. For example, in 1680, Martin Gitschen (Mitglied des Rats), who had three daughters, Christina, Anna and Margaret, bequeathed Luther's Sunday sermons from Advent to Easter to Christina, "Das Buch Willkommen" to Anna and a *New Testament* to Margaret together with Balthasar Meisner's *Meditationes Sacrae*.¹²⁰ Faced with the same problem in 1689, Mathes Berger, a Schuster, left the bible to his daughter Susanna and compensated his other offspring, Catharina, by leaving her 2 florins.¹²¹ When it came to deciding which of the daughters was the most worthy to inherit the book collection, female testators had to face the same dilemmas. In 1694, Susanna Schlunkin found it difficult to decide how her four daughters, Susanna, Margaret, Sophia and Christina would use the two books she had possessed.¹²²

Situations where decisions concerning inheritance of books had to be reached by the mother rather than the father are equally interesting and

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 53.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 76-77.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 92.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 99.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 103.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 76.

¹²¹ Ibid., 92.

¹²² Ibid., 92.

raise new and challenging questions. Sometimes, the female testator would leave the bible to her son. For example, in 1688, Catharina Lochnerin left Luther's *German Bible* printed at Lüneburg to her son Martin.¹²³ When the woman did not have any male heirs, she generally left the bible to a daughter. Thus, in 1663, Susanna Benderin, born Kretscherin, left a German and a Latin Bible to her daughter Christine.¹²⁴ In a similar manner, in 1677, Agnetha Wächterin, a citizen of Sibiu, left her daughter Catharina a *German Bible*.¹²⁵ In other cases, mothers would leave the 'family Bible' to one of the sons (perhaps the oldest, perhaps the youngest), bequeathing different books to the other children. For example, in 1703, Susanna Kleinin, widow of Caspar Klein, bequeathed Erasmus' *New Testament* in Latin, in octavo format, to her son Georg, while her other children, Caspar and Catharina, received other books.¹²⁶ One is led to speculate that Georg may have been the oldest son, but the fact that the other son bears the father's name casts some doubt on this hypothesis. In fact, examples when a female testator chose to leave a bible to the son, although she had several children, are quite numerous and include Maria Weissin (1716), Sophia Weinholdin (1717), Maria Teutschin (1721), Anna Wagnerin (1723), Sara Schemeliusin (1726), Agnetha Weberin (1738) and Catharina Wagnerin (1740).¹²⁷

At times, it was difficult for a mother to decide how to divide the books among her children. For instance, in 1742, Sophia Grossin, a Strumpfstrickerin¹²⁸, had several books to bequeath to her three children: an in-folio bible, a *Hauspostill*, two prayerbooks and a songbook. She eventually chose according to the norm, as her son Johann received an in-folio bible and a prayer book, the daughter, Catharina, who was most likely older, as she is listed as "vermählte schmiedin", which meant that she had recently married, received a Haus Postill, while the other son, who was probably very young, as he is described as "the posthumous son of the deceased Thomas", received a prayer book and songbook.¹²⁹ In less complicated cases, the mother chose to leave the more valuable bible to her son. For example, in 1746, Maria Weissin, born Fussin, the wife of Georg Weiss, left a bible in octavo for her son Johann and a Nürnberg little Handbibel for her daughter Maria, together with a Sibiu Songbook.¹³⁰ This

¹²³ Ibid., 88.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 58-59.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 226

¹²⁶ Ibid., 99.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 315, 317, 332, 335, 339, 392-393, 422.

¹²⁸ She knitted stockings for a living.

¹²⁹ Monok (ed.), *Lesestoffe*, 481.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 496.

is interesting, as the in-octavo book may have acted as the 'family Bible', while clearly the item described as a "kleine Handbibel" was more likely a personal devotional prop. This solution again suggests a gender bias: 'family Bibles' were bequeathed to sons (if there were any), while personal items, such as little 'hand bibles', more likely to be used in personal devotion, could also go to daughters.

Such seemingly workable patterns of book transmission between generations, where bibles passed from fathers to sons, are challenged by 'eccentric' cases when fathers preferred daughters as keepers of the 'family Bible'. For example, one can only be intrigued by Mechel Csikert's decision to bequeath a bible to his daughter Catharina, although he also had two sons, Michael and Franciscus. The sons, however, received a postil by Veit Dietrich and the *Haupt Artikel* of Justus Jonas.¹³¹ Mechel Csikert's example was by no means unique as, in 1683, Jacob Balck decided to bequeath two bibles to his daughter Magdalene, while his son Johann received a prayer book, "Simon Pauli's postil" and a devotional work.¹³² In 1685, Stephan Bachner's decision was equally intriguing, as he bequeathed a *New Testament* in octavo to his daughter Margaret, while his son Martin received other books useful for Christian instruction.¹³³ In a similar manner, in 1707, Andreas Fischer left a bible in German, a Nürenberg Catechism in German and an "Ordinandum examen" in German to his daughter Susanna, while his sons received other books, Johann the *Thesaurus Poeticus* and Andreas the *Book of Concord*.¹³⁴ Thus, sons seemed to be re-oriented towards poetry and ecclesiastical politics, while the daughter received the basic books of religious instruction. Finally, the oddest case highlighted by existing evidence is that of a female testator, Catharina Schneiderin, born Grüssin, who, in 1695, left 31 books to her daughter Susanna and no books at all to her son Michael.¹³⁵ Perhaps Susanna was a keen student and possibly Michael had no interest in books, or perhaps Catharina Schneiderin did not wish to break up her library. One must also consider that other goods may have been bequeathed to Michael, such as land or houses, and thus the daughter may have been chosen to inherit movables. Whatever the reasons behind Catharina's actions, her decision points to the fact that gender biases did not work unilaterally and that, occasionally, sons could be the offspring that fell out of the parents' favour.

¹³¹ Ibid., 64.

¹³² Ibid., 82.

¹³³ Ibid., 86.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 103.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 96.

Even when individuals had two or more children of the same sex, criteria other than gender were at work when deciding the nature of the books bequeathed to each of them. For instance, in 1660, Barthel Schneider divided his books between his daughters Anna and Barbara. It is obvious from the choices made that he wished to equip both of them with educational texts concerning Lutheran doctrine, particularly the Lord's Supper, devotional literature and moral instruction.¹³⁶ It is still difficult/almost impossible to assess why Anna received Paul Eber's book, while Barbara received the *Catechesis*. Or why Anna received *Bugenhagen's Passion*, while Barbara was given a songbook and the *Gebetbüchlein*. Perhaps Barbara was the youngest, or a better singer, or more devout than her sister. Perhaps Anna had a better grasp of theological subtleties or more interest in them. This case is not unique, as suggested by the example of Martin Steinkelner, who also had two daughters, Susanna and Barbara. In 1609, when he made his will, he decided that Barbara would receive his only book, an in-folio copy of Erasmus' *Latin Bible*.¹³⁷ Although we cannot guess them, he must have had his reasons for designating Barbara as the keeper of what seems to have been the 'family Bible'. Consequently, the analysis of probate inventories suggests that bibles were mostly bequeathed to sons when testators, whether male or female, had to choose between the son or the daughter. However, when testators had to choose between offspring of the same gender, the image becomes less clear and there is no discernible gendered pattern in bequests that involved the bible. One gets the impression that testators had to choose the most suitable heir for the upkeep of family tradition.

Despite these ambiguities, the evidence examined in this section suggests that bequeathing the bible was, at least in part, a gendered act. Bibles, especially if they were valuable, in-folio items, designated as 'family Bibles', were usually bequeathed to sons, who, whether the oldest or the youngest child, the ablest or the most beloved, were invested with the mission of perpetuating family tradition. In the absence of a male heir, bibles and even 'family Bibles' were left to daughters. If all the children in a family were daughters, one of them would be chosen as the recipient of the bible and charged with safeguarding family tradition. If the testator had more than one bible to bequeath, the 'family Bible', usually an in-folio copy of a valuable edition would be left to the son, while daughters would be given 'hand bibles' in smaller format, which clearly served as devotional props. It thus seems that although informed by gender biases,

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 16.

decisions concerning the bequest of bibles were based on the importance afforded to family tradition. Outside the realm of the norm, cases where the bible was bequeathed to daughters, although there was a male heir in the picture, are difficult to explain in the absence of richer details concerning the lives of the protagonists.

Moving beyond the bible as a much-coveted item laden with symbolic meaning, one has to explore the nature of other books that were bequeathed to offspring of either sex in early modern times.

Type of book	Men	Women
Bible	66	39
Commentaries on the Scriptures	20	17
Commentaries on the Epistles	4	3
Commentaries on the Psalms	3	1
Collections of Sermons	16	6
Literature on the Book of Concord	4	0
Theological Treatises	16	11
Polemical Works	2	2
Luther's Tischreden	1	1
Postils	30	20
Handbuch	10	3
Catechisms	9	10
Professions of Faith and Discussions of Doctrine	20	13
Church Orders	1	3
Prayerbooks	7	16
Devotional literature	1	6
Songbooks	3	14
Psalters	13	4
Jesus Syrah	5	1
Literature on Marriage	3	1
Medical Books	5	3
Haus Apothek	2	0
Botanical Works	3	0
Artis Auriferae	1	0
Historical Works	3	1
Legislation	2	1
Cosmographia	0	1

Table 1: Types of books bequeathed to the citizens of Bistrița

A quantitative analysis of the type of books bequeathed to the men and women from Bistrița, featured in table 1, allows a first conclusion concerning the books considered suitable reading matter for both genders.

In most of the categories surveyed in this analysis, a greater number of men inherited the types of books considered. This is particularly obvious in the case of commentaries on the Scriptures, collections of sermons, theological treatises, Postils, Handbooks, Professions of Faith and discussions of doctrine, Psalters, Jesus Syrah, literature on marriage, medical books, books of remedies and botanical works. The number of women who inherited a certain type of book equalled or surpassed that of men only in the case of catechisms, prayerbooks, devotional literature and songbooks.

Beyond these generic quantitative estimates, one needs to look at specific cases of families with offspring of both genders to see whether different books were bequeathed to men and women based on some sort of gender bias. This may help one identify recurrent patterns in gender-specific bequests of books and even particular roles assigned to men and women with the help of these 'reading lists'. To begin with an example, in 1655, Michael Conrad oder Botscher was in a position to leave books to all of his children, three sons and a daughter, although he singled out one of the sons, Samuel as the recipient of the bible. The daughter was given a songbook and a prayerbook, perhaps considered a more suitable choice for women, able to aid her in daily devotions, while books more useful in instruction, such as catechisms and sermons, or in the practice of piety, such as psalters and songbooks were left to the two other sons, Michael and Johann.¹³⁸

The pattern of transmission suggested by this example does hint at the existence of a gender bias. Some other examples, for instance that of Georg Urischer, who, in 1590, left his son Georg a bible and his daughter Margaretha a German Catechism,¹³⁹ do signal the father's belief that the daughter was in need of more basic instruction delivered in simpler terms. In similar manner, in 1635, Andreas Diacken left his son Georg a bible and his daughter Catharina a postil and a catechism.¹⁴⁰ However, his other daughters Susanna and Dorothea did receive bibles and several theological texts, which would suggest that the father did not doubt their intellectual capabilities. Although this last example throws some doubt on the existence of gender specific bequests, there is more evidence that supports this conclusion. For instance, in 1679, Hans Führman bequeathed a bible to his son Johann and Martin Luther's catechism to his daughter Anna.¹⁴¹ Although in a slightly more subtle manner, the next example also pleads

¹³⁸ Monok (ed), *Lesestoffe*, pp, 44-45.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 24-26.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 43.

for the existence of a gender bias. In 1680, Thomas Gellner left his son Matthias a *Corpus Doctrinae Christianae*, Martin Luther's New Testament and Simon Paul's Commentaries on the Epistles. Meanwhile, his daughter Catharina received Johannes Gigas' Postil and a *Kirchenordnung*.¹⁴² Finally, in 1707, Andreas Fischer left his son John a New Testament and Sacred Histories together with the Book of Concord, while his daughter Susanna received the Nürenberg Catechism.¹⁴³ In the rest of the cases, 50 altogether, where the family had offspring of both genders, the young men and women received similar books. Besides highlighting discrepancies between results obtained through quantitative as opposed to qualitative analysis, the close-up focused on specific examples shows that men were often bequeathed bibles, while daughters were offered more basic means of religious instruction. On the other hand, men were given more books which dealt with discipline and the exercise of authority, while daughters were left literature that would help with daily household administration. Finally, daughters were bequeathed more books that were useful in daily devotional exercises. Taking all these examples and the rather ambiguous situations into account, one is left to inquire whether this choice of quite similar (religious literature) but actually very different books (bible versus catechism) was laden with gender stereotypes.

*

Different attitudes to sons and daughters are brought into sharper focus when the son received a Bible, that is, the Word of God, while the daughter received Martin Luther's *Small Catechism*.¹⁴⁴ As it has already been mentioned, this happened in 1679 in the case of Hans Führman, a Riemer, who gave the New Testament in German to his son Johann and Luther's *Small Catechism* in German to his daughter Anna.¹⁴⁵ The decision is laden with meaning and possibly with gendered stereotypes as, in this bequest, Johann was presumed capable of reading and understanding the Holy Writ, while the daughter was meant to use a catechism written for the edification of children and of the less educated laity. One should not however be too quick to draw conclusions concerning the lesser appreciation afforded to women from this particular example. In fact, an intriguing case provides evidence that would contradict such a dismal view of women's capabilities. In 1680, Thomas Gellner, a Lederer, left his

¹⁴² Ibid., 76-77.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 103.

¹⁴⁴ This obviously refers to Luther's *Small Catechism* published in 1529. This must have been widely available in Transylvania as an edition of it was printed by Honterus at Braşov in 1548. Bandi, *Lectura*, 107.

¹⁴⁵ Monok (ed.), *Lesestoffe*, 73.

son Matthias Luther's *New Testament* in German in octavo format,¹⁴⁶ together with Philip Melancthon's *Corpus Doctrinae Christianae*.¹⁴⁷ More interesting is the assortment of books he left his daughter Catharina. The postils of Johannes Gigas¹⁴⁸ are not a surprising option, but a polemical work against the papacy and the *Kirchenordnung* printed by Johannes Lufft are unusual choices.¹⁴⁹ They definitely suggest that the father did not doubt his daughter's intellectual capability.

The two cases contrasted here, together with the results of the qualitative analysis undertaken in this study highlight the ambiguities that dominated the act of bequeathing books. When attempting to determine whether men and women received different books from their parents, to the point of suggesting the existence of gendered reading cultures, one is led to conclude that the data analysed in this study paints a sometimes confusing picture. To begin with, one must note that the books that were mentioned in probate inventories fall into several categories. Literature intended for religious instruction outweighed any other category and included bibles, biblical commentaries, explanations of doctrine, postils, handbooks, catechisms, sermon collections, psalters, prayerbooks, songbooks and other devotional works, while other genres, such as history, botany, medicine, pharmacy and literature are mentioned in significantly smaller numbers. One consequently gets the impression that religious instruction had to be made available to everyone, regardless of gender.

And yet, judging from the books they tended to receive, men seem to have been perceived as more analytical, while women were deemed more pious. This conclusion is based on the content of the 'reading lists' compiled implicitly for men and women. By giving men bibles, biblical commentaries, theological treatises, postils and collections of sermons, testators seem to express expectations concerning their direct engagement

¹⁴⁶ Luther's *New Testament* was first published in German in September 1522. Luther had translated it from the Greek *New Testament* using Erasmus' 1519 edition of the *New Testament* in Greek. From the beginning it had an unusually large printing of between three and five thousand copies. As the first edition sold out, the Wittenberg publisher Melchior Lotther the Younger produced a second edition in December. Between 1422 and 1525 the *New Testament* had 43 distinct editions. Moreover, the expensive folio reprints quickly made way for smaller and less expensive quarto and octavo editions. Mark U. Edwards Jr., *Printing, Propaganda and Martin Luther* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 123.

¹⁴⁷ Philip Melancthon, *Corpus Doctrinae Christianae* (Leipzig: Ernest Vögelin, 1560).

¹⁴⁸ Johannes Gigas (1514-1581) was the author of the *Catechismus Johannis Gigantis Northusani* (Frankfurt/Oder: Johan Eichorn, 1578).

¹⁴⁹ Monok (ed.), *Lesestoffe*, 76-77. The *Kirchenordnung* may have been the one produced for the church in Wittenberg, published by Hans Lufft in 1559.

with the Word of God and abilities to understand subtler points of doctrine. At the same time, by preferring to give women catechisms, prayerbooks and songbooks, they invited them to understand the fundamental tenets of faith and to engage in daily pious exercises. The books deemed suitable for men and for women suggest that men were presumed more rational and able to understand complex issues of belief and religious practice, read commentaries on the bible and discuss the finer points of doctrine,¹⁵⁰ while women were simply considered devout, as suggested by the rich collections of prayerbooks, songbooks and devotional works in their possession.¹⁵¹

Sometimes, men were credited with greater interest in theology, whereas women were given access to distilled forms of the doctrine, such as catechisms. In support of this conclusion, one can quote the example of Johann Bawman, who gave his son Nicolaus a Psalter, his son Peter theological literature and his daughter Margaret, the Catechism of Philip Melancton and *Catechesis Religionis Christianae*.¹⁵² In 1646, Gorig Thum left his son Georg the *Psalterium Davidis* and his daughter Eva, Luther's *Tischreden*, a *Hauspostill* and a Prayerbook.¹⁵³ In 1655, Michael Conrad or Botscher bequeathed the bible to his son Samuel, the Catechism of Johannes Brentius,¹⁵⁴ a *Trawmbuch* and a songbook to his son Michael,¹⁵⁵ the Postilla of Johannes Spindler and the *Psalterium Davidis* to his son Johann, while his daughter Susanna received a songbook and a

¹⁵⁰ For example, men were bequeathed works on the Book of Concord. Compiled by Jakob Andreae and Martin Chemnitz and published in German in 1580 (Dresden) and in Latin in 1584 (Leipzig), the Book of Concord was intended to set the doctrinal standard for the Lutheran Church.

¹⁵¹ Bandi, *Lectura*, 95-97, suggests that Martin Luther's *Geistliche Lieder und Psalmen* published in 1550 was available in Transylvania, but he also draws attention to the local production of songbooks which included a *Gesang Buch* printed at Braşov in 1676, a *Gebet und Gesang Buch* printed at Braşov in 1686. The prayer book must have been Luther's *Betbüchlein* of 1522. Bandi, *Lectura*, 107, also mentions local production, for example the *Christliche Gebetbuchlein* printed at Braşov in 1625.

¹⁵² Monok, *Lesestoffe*, 14-15. The first may refer to Philip Melancthon, *Catechesis puerilis* (Wittenberg: Johannes Crato, 1552). The other Catechism may have been a local production *Catechismus religionis Christi* (Weißenburg: Typis princ. Transilvaniae, 1636). Graeme Murdock, 'Calvinist catechising and Hungarian Reformed identity', in Maria Crăciun, Ovidiu Ghitta, Graeme Murdock (eds), *Confessional Identity in East Central Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 81-98, especially p. 89 suggests that this may have been the Latin Hungarian Catechism produced by Johann Heinrich Alsted and printed at Alba Iulia in 1636. The text was in fact a short version of the Heidelberg Catechism and was widely used in Reformed schools across Transylvania, benefitting from five editions before 1660.

¹⁵³ Monok (ed.), *Lesestoffe*, 33-34.

¹⁵⁴ Johannes Brenz, *Catechismus piae et utili explicationes illustratus* (o.O.: o. D., 1558).

¹⁵⁵ Bandi, *Lectura*, 107, mentions a *Traumbüchlein* printed at Sibiu in 1616.

prayerbook.¹⁵⁶ In this case, books intended for religious instruction were bequeathed to sons, while devotional books were given to the daughter.¹⁵⁷

Men were also considered able to implement discipline in the home and exercise authority outside it and thus received texts that praised the “heilige Ehestand” or the “Christiliche Ehe”, as well as a book on discipline in the home (*Spiegel der Hauszucht*), while being equipped with *Hauspostilla* and *Handbooks*.¹⁵⁸ They also received Psalters and Jesus Syrah.¹⁵⁹ Perceived as responsible for the wellbeing of their families, men were given medical books, tracts on home remedies and herbals. Men’s, often public, roles in urban context, membership in the town council and various offices they held, earmarked them as recipients of legislation and historical works.¹⁶⁰ Women, on the other hand, were perceived as able and competent administrators, fully equipped for the job with the *Oeconomia oder Hausbuch* as well as books on arithmetic and account keeping.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁶ Monok (ed.), *Lesestoffe*, 44-45. Bandi, *Lectura*, 136, mentions that two pages of Luther’s comments on the psalms were used to record public events. This also suggests that such comments on the psalms circulated widely in Transylvania. This was also true for Selnecker’s, *Der Gantze Psalter des königlichen Propheten David*.

¹⁵⁷ This is not always true as sometimes devotional books were also given to sons. Thus, in 1662, Andreas Gürischer left his son Andreas a songbook and his daughter Catharina the postil of Joachim Molinej. Monok (ed.). *Lesestoffe*, 51.

¹⁵⁸ *Hauspostilla* were collections of sermons covering the entire ecclesiastical year. Such works were originally intended to be consulted prior to service by pastors seeking guidance and instruction while preparing their sermons. In time, they were also meant to reach a broader audience and to be used in the household and other places by the common man. Morten Fink-Jensen, ‘Printing and Preaching after the Reformation. A Danish Pastor and his Audiences’ in Charlotte Appel, Morten Fink-Jensen (eds), *Religious Reading in the Lutheran North: Studies in Early Modern Scandinavian Book Culture* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), 15-47, especially 31-32, 36-37. Handbooks generally included sets of religious texts, biblical passages, Luther’s Small Catechism, the Passion of Christ by Johannes Bugenhagen, hymn books and prayer books, calendars, which “served as a complete companion to the faithful Lutheran subject”. Bandi, *Lectura*, 107, suggests that manuals of this type were produced locally and mentions the *Cronstädtische Kirchenmanual oder Handbuch*, printed at Braşov in 1687 and 1694.

¹⁵⁹ This was an apocryphal form of the Book of Ecclesiasts. Susan Karant Nunn, ‘Kinder, Küche, Kirche: Social Ideology in the sermons of Johannes Mathesius’ in Andrew Fix, Susan Karant Nunn (eds), *Germania Illustrata. Essays on Early Modern Germany Presented to Gerald Strauss* (Kirkville: Sixteenth Century Journal, 1992), pp. 121-140, especially 125, discusses Mathesius’ sermons on the apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus.

¹⁶⁰ They possessed *Jus Canonicum* and *Statuta Transilvaniae*. Antonio Bonfini, *Historia Pannonica: Sive Hungaricarum Rerum Decades IV*.

¹⁶¹ This may very well be Johannes Mathesius, *Oeconomia oder bericht wie sie ein Hausvater halten* sol published in 1564.

In order to discover what could be considered suitable reading matter for women, one can compare the content of Transylvanian urban book collections with libraries owned by women in other parts of Europe, particularly in the German lands. For example, Anna of Saxony's library may provide some clues in this regard. As Brian Hale has suggested, early modern libraries at this social level, among the princely elites, represented dynastic collections, as well as attempts to organize knowledge about the universe. Book collections enhanced the prestige of the ruler, displayed his wealth and sign posted social dominance, besides testifying to the prince's religious beliefs. They also served as reminders of dynastic continuity. In this milieu, a woman's collection seems to have advertised her social roles as administrator, care-taker and healer.¹⁶² Books that imparted general knowledge and those that facilitated religious instruction were definitely present on Anna's shelves. Interestingly enough, Sebastian Münster's *Cosmographia* and Veit Dietrich's *Children's Postil* present in Anna's library were also to be found among the books bequeathed to Transylvanian women.¹⁶³ Anna also owned Martin Luther's *Small Catechism* and the *Table Talk* which also feature prominently in Transylvanian book collections.¹⁶⁴ Finally, Anna's collection included songbooks by Luther and forty prayerbooks, allowing Hale to conclude that her piety was reflected by the content of her shelves.¹⁶⁵ It should not come as a surprise that Transylvanian urban women were also given prayerbooks and songbooks by their fathers and mothers. In fact, by the 18th century, bibles, prayerbooks and songbooks had become staples of female book collections. If, in support of this statement, one looks at women from Sibiu as testators, one comes to the conclusion that out of 115 women who appear alone as testators, 59 owned bibles, some of them very expensive ones, valued between 3 and 8 florins, 20 had postils, 18 possessed songbooks, 21 had prayerbooks, 18 owned handbooks, while only 6 had catechisms, 2 had Luther's *Tischreden*, 2 had Jesus Syrah, 2 possessed Psalters and only one had a collection of sermons.

Thus, suitable reading matter for women mostly included devotional literature, particularly prayerbooks and songbooks and practical books on housekeeping. At this point, one needs to assess how the messages conveyed by these books defined the social roles tailored for women.

¹⁶² Brian J. Hale, 'Anna of Saxony and Her Library' in *Early Modern Women* 9/1 (2014): 101-114, especially 103-107.

¹⁶³ Hale, 'Anna of Saxony', 105-106. Monok (ed.), *Lesestoffe*, p. 66 mentions Susanna, who was bequeathed by her father Caspar Laur an in-folio edition of Sebastian Münster, *Cosmographia oder Beschreibung Allelander*.

¹⁶⁴ Hale, 'Anna of Saxony', 107.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 108-109.

One of the books present in Anna's library is the apocryphal *Jesus Syrah* (the Book of Ecclesiasticus), which Hale calls "a misogynistic text" which instilled into children the idea that women should be married and submissive to their fathers and husbands.¹⁶⁶ Whilst discussing Mathesius' anthology of sermons on this apocryphal wisdom book, Susan Karant-Nunn suggests that reformers in Saxony made Ecclesiasticus required reading in many girls' schools.¹⁶⁷ Karant-Nunn further points out that Ecclesiasticus, especially chapters 25, 26 and 42 "contain a number of disparaging comments on women".¹⁶⁸ This is an interesting point to begin this discussion, as Mathesius was a representative of the Lutheran clerical establishment who claimed to follow Martin Luther very closely in his views on marriage and women. As Karant-Nunn has convincingly suggested, Mathesius was a "prominent articulator of an emerging Lutheran model of matrimony and the proper roles and behaviour of the sexes".¹⁶⁹ Whilst Mathesius seems to have had a positive view of marriage, which he strongly advocated as a Godly ordained institution, he held a very low opinion of women, whom he considered a threat to society. Consequently, women had to be placed under male authority and anchored in the domestic realm, tending the household and rearing the children.¹⁷⁰ The Christian woman, as defined by Mathesius, had to be pious, devout, faithful, loyal, chaste, bashful, quiet, helpful, gracious, hardworking, frugal, maternal, obedient, humble, domestic, modest, compassionate, practical, gentle, patient, submissive and clever.¹⁷¹ These messages, which defined their social role, were conveyed to women with the help of sermons, but also with the help of books, and one must remember that Mathesius' 92 sermons on marriage were not only preached but also published beginning with 1563.¹⁷² His anthology of sermons on Ecclesiasticus was extremely popular and seems to have circulated in Transylvania.¹⁷³ Other discussions of marriage were among the popular

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 106.

¹⁶⁷ Karant Nunn, 'Kinder', 125.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 125.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 126.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 128-133. For women's role in the artisan household see Lyndal Roper, *The Holy Household. Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 31.

¹⁷¹ Karant Nunn, 'Kinder', 131.

¹⁷² *Vom Ehestand und Hauswesen and Ehespiegel Mathesij das ist Christliche und Trostliche Erklerung etlicher vornehmen Spruhe altes und neues Testament vom heiligen Ehestande*. Karant Nunn, 'Kinder', 125.

¹⁷³ *Syrah Mathesij, das ist Christliche, Lehrhaffte, Trostreiche und lustige Erklerung und Auslegung des schonen Hausbuchs, soder weyse Mann Syrah zusammen gebracht und gescheiben* (Leipzig: Johann Beyer, 1589).

items in artisans' libraries, while other editions of Jesus Syrah seemed to circulate quite widely.¹⁷⁴

One must, however, note that, in Transylvania, Jesus Syrah was generally bequeathed by men to their sons (Caspar Weinrich to Martin, Jacob Balck to Johann),¹⁷⁵ but also by women to sons and daughters (Catharina Cronerin to Christoph, Martha Kralin to Anna Maria and Agnetha Sutorisin to Catharina).¹⁷⁶ Jacob Daumitz, a Tischler in Bistrița, is an interesting example, as in 1662 he bequeathed a book on marriage to his son Jacob and the *Spiegl der Hauszucht*, Jesus Syrah in folio and a *Regenten Spiegel* to his son Adam.¹⁷⁷ His choice of books reflects an interest in authority, in rules and norms, but also in discourses that shaped gender roles and behaviour. His bequest suggests that gendered discourses were not directed solely towards women, but also towards men, who had to model their own behaviour according to societal expectations. According to Karant-Nunn, a man, particularly acting as the husband, had to perceive himself as God's representative in the household and had to accept both the honour but also the responsibilities implied by this role. Among other duties, such as providing protection and sustenance, men as *Hausvaters* (heads of households) had to master their wives and discipline them if needed in order to maintain social order.¹⁷⁸

These examples highlight a few important points: there seems to have been a certain degree of consensus between mothers and fathers when they had to bequeath their books to their offspring. The 'reading lists' they compiled included deeply entrenched views on gender roles. Sons were supposed to embrace a life of responsibility, burdened by the need to care for the household and the extended family, to provide for them adequately and protect them from all manner of misfortune, while daughters were expected to be submissive and obedient and assume their complementary role in the running of the household and their principal role in the rearing of children.¹⁷⁹ Consequently, by bequeathing specific books to their offspring, testators designed desirable social roles for both genders, which the young men and women had to endeavour to fulfil.

¹⁷⁴ Erasmus Sarcerius *Ehestand, Chrsitliche Ehe buchlein*, Cyriacus Spangenberg *Ehe Spiegel*.

¹⁷⁵ Monok (ed.), *Lesestoffe*, 74, 82.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 106, 226, 338.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹⁷⁸ Karant Nunn, 'Kinder', 133-135.

¹⁷⁹ There is an increasing amount of literature dedicated to the relationship of women with work that highlights their essential albeit complementary role in the household/workshop. See for example, Merry E. Wiesner, *Working Women in Renaissance Germany* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1986). Barbara A. Hanawalt (ed.), *Women and Work in Preindustrial Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).

This analysis has been conducted so far from the perspective of the testators, i.e., the parents who bequeathed the books. If one changes the point of view from the testators to the recipients, one needs to explore the roles these books played in the lives of those who had received them. One is thus led to consider whether one can talk about gendered cultures of reading and whether books had more complex functions in the lives of ordinary citizens of Transylvanian towns.

*

In 1662, Johann Schneider, a Lederer and also a member of the city council in Bistrița, left each of his children, Johann and Catharina, a valuable book which acted as a status symbol, Martin Luther's *Tischreden* in an in-folio edition and Johannes Brenz's *Evangelia Scripta*.¹⁸⁰ His daughter Catharina also received the *Catechismus Explicationes* in quarto.¹⁸¹ Thus, true to the norm, the useful book, in more manageable format was bequeathed to the daughter. On the other hand, Martin Luther's *Tischreden* as an in-folio may have been a status symbol and that, as we have seen, was bequeathed to the son. This particular bequest highlights other reasons why books may have been passed on to the next generation and leads one to explore the meanings they were invested with by ordinary individuals.

In order to estimate the role of books in the lives of men and women in early modern Transylvania, one must return to the relevant example of the bible. If one inventories cases where burghers seem to have owned only one copy of the bible, it was likely that this copy was a valuable in-folio book. It was equally probable that the owners of such books were generally men rather than women.¹⁸² If women possessed only

¹⁸⁰ Monok (ed.), *Lesestoffe*, 51-52. The *Tischreden* are a compilation of Luther's notable words taken down by his entourage, particularly by Johannes Mathesius, but also by Veit Dietrich and Johannes Aurifaber between 1531 and 1544 and published at Eisleben in 1566.

¹⁸¹ Monok (ed.), *Lesestoffe*, 51-52. Johannes Brenz, *Catechismus piae et utili explicationes illustratus* (o.O.: o. D., 1558).

¹⁸² 1660 Paul Russ of Sibiu, 1629 Michael Sieff, 1636 Hans Wirth, 1652 Thomas Plantz, 1654 Martin Corbel, 1669 Johann Ambruster, 1680 Sebastian Simon, 1694 Paul Wintzmann, 1697, Johann Schüller, 1698 Michael Becker, 1701 Peter Kinn, 1702 Jacob Gemmitz, 1705 Michael Briest, 1707 Michael Presser, 1707 Michael Krauss, 1709 Stephan Bibel, 1711 Johann Hern, 1718 Andreas Meschner, 1720 Valentin Mass, 1724 Johann Ressner, 1726 Valentin Klöss, 1729 Michael Kessler, 1730 Michael Diedner, 1730 Johann Eisenberger, 1732 Michael Weinrich, 1732 Johann Berner, 1735 Benedict Teutsch, 1738 Samuel Schüller, 1739 Matthias Schuster, 1739 Christian Reinhard, 1739 Peter Oreth, 1740 Georg Sontag, 1743 Daniel Ehrmann, 1744 Michael Wallich, 1745 Johann Artz all bequeathed in folio bibles. By contrast, only a handful of women could engage in the same act. 1688 Catharina Göblin, 1695 Margaretha Helvigen, 1697 Agnetha Schmidin, 1716 Maria Wessin, 1729 Maria Gibelin, 1735 Catharina Göbellin, 1735 Sophia Schullerlin, 1737 Agnetha Stadterin, 1738 Agnetha Weterin, 1742 Sophia Grossin, 1745 Sophia Hochnechten.

one bible, this was more likely to be a book in smaller format, often a so-called *Handbibel*, while wealthier women owned a *Handbibel* among various other books.¹⁸³ For example, in 1738, Agnetha Weberin bequeathed a small illustrated bible.¹⁸⁴ This was not, however, a universal principle, as sometimes women also bequeathed in-folio bibles. For example, in 1679, Sophia, the wife of senator Johann Weinhold, had "ein gross bibel in folio". Two years later, in 1681, the senator himself left his daughter Sophia "ein schone Teutsche Bibel" and "ein Ungrische Bibel".¹⁸⁵

Sometimes, these bibles are noted for being old and mentioned as "alte teutsch in folio bibel", which supports the idea that they may have been family heirlooms. The way they were described in the inventories, an *in-folio* bible, a large bible ("ein gross Bibel"), a good bible ("ein gutte Bibel"), a beautiful bible ("ein schöne Bibel" or even "ein hubsche Bibel") suggests that bibles were valued both for their content and for their intrinsic qualities, particularly since sometimes decoration was also mentioned. This is particularly striking in Theophilus Schreuer's bequest. A cobbler in Sibiu, Schreuer had several bibles to give to his heirs and all of them appear to have been extremely valuable, as they were decorated with copper or silver locks.¹⁸⁶ One can only conclude that sometimes, members of the elite owned elaborately decorated bibles. For example, Franciscus Schoebel, who was a senator in Bistrița, had a New Testament "mit Kupferstich" and a *Novum Testamentum Graecum*.¹⁸⁷

These bibles must have been perceived as valuable and cherished items, able to enhance the prestige of their owner. In this light, it becomes easier to understand the wish expressed by some testators that the 'family Bible' should remain in the homestead no matter who exercised ownership of it. In 1670, Michael Trichermacher left his daughter Anna a bible, but mentioned that the book should remain in the house.¹⁸⁸ These requests, which tied the bible to the homestead, became increasingly frequent

¹⁸³ 1723 Rosina Plantz, born Rodin, the wife of the tailor Franz Plantz had "eine kleine Handbibel"; 1724 Maria Schullerin, born Gitschin, the wife of Daniel Schuller had a Lüneburgisch Handbibel; 1726 Sara Schemeliusin, born Fleischerin had a kleine Handbibel. 1731 Maria Hermannin had a Nürenbergische Handbibel; 1740 Maria Gottschliferin, born Reinhardin had a Hallesches Handbibel; 1740 Catharine Vagnerin, born Klosserin had a Handbibel.

¹⁸⁴ Monok (ed.), *Lesestoffe*, 392.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 228.

¹⁸⁶ "ein Wittenbergische Bible in folio mit Kupferstichen, eine Leipziger Bibel in quatro mit Kupferstichen, eine Hallische Bible mit Silber beschlagene in octavo" Monok (ed.) *Lesestoffe*, 394-395.

¹⁸⁷ Monok (ed.), *Lesestoffe*, 128.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 747.

beginning with the middle of the sixteenth, throughout the seventeenth and during the 18th century. This happened in the case of Johann Schuster in 1648, Michael Pffafenburg in 1661, Martin Schinke in 1663, Georg Ackermann in 1664, Johann Schuller in 1667, Johann Paulis in 1669, Michael Trichermacher in 1670 and Michael Glatz in 1675.¹⁸⁹ In some cases, the wording of the request “die Teutsch Bibel in folio bleibt ihm bey der behaussunge”¹⁹⁰ suggests that this was probably the ‘family Bible’.¹⁹¹ The wish to keep the ‘family Bible’ in the homestead suggests yet another meaning that could be bestowed upon it. The bible as ‘fetish’, as suggested by scholars such as David Cressy, who explored the deployment of books “as magical talismans, as aides to divination, as devices of social display”.¹⁹² The bible thus served for swearing oaths, making notes, such as registering births, curing the sick, making decisions and warding off evil. In Cressy’s reading of this behaviour, the bible was used as a shield or weapon or even as a talisman.¹⁹³

In the end, one must ask how this family bible was used by Transylvanian burghers. Information gleaned from a wide variety of sources tends to suggest that these bibles were used to record the major events in the life of the family. Thus, the aforementioned Hans Jordan, who had moved to Transylvania and settled in Cluj, used a ‘family Bible’ to record his family’s history and then passed it on to his son.¹⁹⁴ Thus, bibles were appropriated as ‘family Bibles’ and became interactive objects that their owners engaged with. They were eventually inherited by children and sometimes survived for generations.¹⁹⁵ In the case of this particular Bible, that had been used by Hans Jordan to chronicle his family’s history, we only know that it was given to Thomas Jordan, who was Hans’ eldest son. It is highly likely that Thomas, in his turn, bequeathed it to his eldest son, Karl Ludwig Jordan. This process of handing down a ‘family Bible’ from one generation to the next highlights the issue of the book as an inherited item, a valued object, probably cherished by both testators and their heirs.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 726, 728, 735, 737, 741, 747, 750.

¹⁹⁰ Meaning in the dwelling or in more archaic terms, the homestead.

¹⁹¹ Monok (ed.), *Lesestoffe*, 746, 750. In 1667 Johann Wolff and in 1673 Michael Binder, Johann Schaltzer in 1681, Andreas Teutsch in 1682.

¹⁹² David Cressy, ‘Books as Totems in Seventeenth Century England and New England’ in *The Journal of Literary History* 21/1 (1986): 92-106, especially 93, suggest that the bible could be found in households where nobody could read.

¹⁹³ Cressy, ‘Books as Totems’, 94.

¹⁹⁴ Offner, ‘Handschriftliche Bibel-Einträge von Hans Jordan’, 42-43.

¹⁹⁵ Rublack, ‘Grapho-Relics’, 159 mentions Bibles that remained in the same family for generations.

This treatment afforded the bible was by no means a unique occurrence. In his thesis dedicated to cultures of reading in early modern Transylvania, András Bandi mentions a copy of a *Calendarium Sanctorum et Historiarum* printed at Leipzig in 1579 which belonged to Georg Kossak of Braşov and his son Johann, who used it to record important events in the life of the town.¹⁹⁶ In 1628, this book was used in similar ways by Simon Hartmann, a preacher in Sighişoara and later minister at Copşa Mică (Klein Kopisch, Kiskapus), Şeica Mică (Kleinschelken, Kisselyk) and Moşna. Reflecting his attachment to the book, Hartmann's statement which refers to it as 'a beloved artefact', an indispensable accessory in the construct of the intellectual, is persuasive proof of his emotional engagement with the item and the meaning he had bestowed upon it.¹⁹⁷ Bandi has also discovered the chronicle of Albert Huet's family, started by his father Georg on the birth of his first son, Johannes, in a book printed at Basel in 1522. Bandi considers that these old books were often used as a sort of notebook even when they had strong links with the Catholic past.¹⁹⁸ Thus, while their didactic role had faded, their functions as an object had come to the fore. Interaction between the owners and the book was not limited to the act of reading, but included this use of the book as a repository of family memory.

Even if books were not necessarily used in this particular way, signatures gradually became marks of ownership. For example, in 1674, when Caspar Laur, Schlosser (locksmith) in Bistriţa, bequeathed some books to his son Georg and his daughter Anna, both had signed their names on the book.¹⁹⁹ The fact that the names of the heirs already appear on the books that were eventually bequeathed to them suggests that these items had originally been bought for their use and that the testament served simply to strengthen and certify a status quo, practically confirming existing ownership. This ultimately points to an interest in collecting books, in building libraries and in investing them with symbolic not just material value. Bequeathing libraries to the next generation serves to highlight the importance of family traditions that were constructed and upkept.

Although few personal libraries have been systematically studied, both clerical and secular collections of books suggest that not all items were actually acquired by their owners, that some were inherited from their parents, while others had been received as gifts. Lucas Unglerus' library,

¹⁹⁶ Bandi, *Lectura*, 134-135.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 135, mentions that marginalia generally included statements of faith, quotes from the bible, and personal philosophical reflections.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 136.

¹⁹⁹ Monok (ed.), *Lesestoffe*, 66.

for instance, was built on a foundation of books inherited from members of his family. Albert Huet's library was inherited from his father's uncle, Martin Huet Pileus. Johannes Bayer's library was inherited from family and friends, such as Franz Salicaeus, minister at Biertan, and from his son, who was a student at Wittenberg, from Johannes Fabritius, who ran the printing press at Sibiu between 1595 and 1601, from Petrus Schirverus from Braşov, who became a teacher at Sibiu and later minister at Cristian (Grossau, Keresztény Sziget) and from Petrus Revel who left Bayer five books. Andreas Oltard inherited collections of sermons from his grandfather Johannes Oltard and three volumes from Andreas Scherer.²⁰⁰ This transmission of books between generations and among friends within the peer-group suggests that intellectual networks were built within secular and ecclesiastical elites. Meanwhile, and only partly reflecting the reading culture of the elites, the middling segments of urban society had developed a reading culture of their own, equally dependent on intergenerational transmission of books.

This article has set out to explore the reasons behind the bequeathing of books, the role played by gender in this process and the relationships it fostered among members of various families, vertically between generations and horizontally within them. The analysis of evidence gleaned from probate inventories has shown that both men and women were bequeathed books by their parents and could, in turn, transmit them to their children. As the legal framework of early modern Transylvanian towns allowed both men and women to inherit movables from their parents, personal preferences of all parties involved are highlighted by these decisions. If parents of either sex decided to exclude girls from inheriting books, this was their personal choice and not a restriction imposed by local legislation. In this sense, Transylvanian society does not seem to have been riddled by gender biases.

However, when considering the nature of these bequests, probate inventories suggest that, although both men and women were bequeathed religious literature, books on household management and other practical matters, as well as some, albeit few, books meant to entertain rather than instruct, the specific genres deemed appropriate for men and women were ultimately different and informed by gendered concerns. Thus, the 'reading lists' inadvertently compiled by parents when bequeathing books to their offspring were impacted on by gender stereotypes and by projections concerning masculinity and femininity. While men were perceived as God's representatives in the household, responsible for its

²⁰⁰ Gündisch, 'Unglerus', 354. Gündisch and Nægler, 'Oltard', p. 123. Bandi, *Lectura*, 118, 121, 122, 123, 124.

maintenance and protection and for the material and moral wellbeing of its inhabitants, engaging in the exercise of authority and the disciplining of their wives and offspring, women were constructed as pious, obedient and submissive creatures. Thus, the different types of books bequeathed to young men and women defined their social roles as heads of household (men) and essential auxiliaries to its inner workings (women). One is perfectly aware that, socially, this arrangement was closely bound to the more limited opportunities afforded women in terms of education and work. Not only was their relationship to books gendered, but also their access to knowledge. Instead of being invited to explore the depth of meaning in the Scriptures, they were encouraged to memorize the much-simplified tenets of faith encapsulated in the catechism. Instead of reflecting on important points of doctrine, they were meant to memorize and recite prayers and to join in song during the service. Consequently, through the literature at their disposal, men and women were channelled towards a gendered relationship to books and knowledge.

Finally, an in-depth study of the transmission of bibles from one generation to the next has highlighted that beyond the gendered tendency to bequeath the 'family Bible', which had already been handed down by previous generations and which was often an expensive, sometimes richly decorated in-folio copy of a significant edition, to the son, there was also a wish to endow daughters with the necessary props for their personal devotion, the little hand bibles they were generally bequeathed. In this case, however, gender sensitive motives were intertwined with concerns for family tradition. Exploring this mixture of concerns which informed the bequest of books allows one to identify the place of books in people's lives. Women who owned two or three books and who bequeathed a prayer book or hand bible to sons and daughters were clearly emotionally attached to these items. Men who carefully chose the recipient of the 'family Bible' obviously valued its symbolic meaning. Signing their names on the pages of books was not just a mark of ownership, but also one of affective involvement, while interaction with the book by recording family history and important events in the life of the town, transforming the book as artefact into a repository of memory, suggests that the book was no longer just reading matter, the object of literary endeavours, but had acquired a personality akin to that of the relic. In this capacity, the book could protect its owners and the household that enveloped it, as suggested by the insistence to link it firmly to the house.

