

Dávid Rozsnyai's "Orphans": A Stepfamily through Divorce in Seventeenth-Century Transylvania¹

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My paper examines the documents pertaining to the life of a stepfamily made through divorce in seventeenth-century Transylvania. The focus is on the interfamilial relationships before and after the divorce. I examine the ways in which the attitude of the father, Dávid Rozsnyai, toward his first wife and children changed during the divorce and after formation of a new family. I also consider how the appearance of the new family members (second wife, half-siblings) affected the equilibrium within the family. My analysis shows that in Early Modern Transylvania there were social and personal customs involving the assignment of social positions to both adult and child members of a family broken by divorce, which facilitated the integration of these families into the community. The scattered family documents and witness hearings show that the divorced father ensured, through his testament and other documents, that the two sons from the two different marriages would share inherited wealth equally. In their turn, the stepbrothers worked together to pay off their father's debts.

Keywords: stepfamily, divorce, Transylvania, children, remarriage, inheritance, stepsiblings, half-siblings, orphans

Introduction

In recent years, there has been a growing interest among historians in the lives of Early Modern stepfamilies.² This has involved a shift from the study of patterns of remarriage to relations within the new family unit formed by remarriage, such as the relationship between stepparents and stepchildren,³ stepsiblings living in

1 The research enjoyed support provided by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences' (HAS) Domus Hungarica Program and the HAS Momentum "Integrating Families" Research Group.

2 The earliest major work on the subject is Laslett, "Parental Deprivation," in the 1990s Collins, "British Stepfamily Relationships," Collins, "Reason, Nature and Order," Roderick, "Stepfamilies." The latest contributions on this subject are Warner, "Stepfamilies in Early Modern Europe" and Warner, *Stepfamilies in Europe*.

3 Erdélyi, "Stepfamily relationships." Niekus Moore, "Stepfamilies." Guerson and Wessell Lightfoot, "Jewish families." Stretton, "Stepmothers."

the same household,⁴ and illegitimate children living within the family.⁵ This new perspective has led many scholars to argue that in pre-Modern Europe, the nuclear family was more of an exception than the norm. Due to high mortality rates, men and women were very often widowed, and they often remarried. Consequently, children born in consecutive marriages often lived within a blended family, developing bonds which crossed over blood ties, both within the stepfamily group and among friends, the neighborhood, and the community.⁶

A big part of today's societies also lives within blended families, often established through divorce,⁷ but studies have shown that, in earlier generations, stepfamilies were mostly composed of widows or widowers and considerably less often of divorced or abandoned spouses.⁸

The Early Modern stepfamily on which I focus in this article is the Rozsnyai family, which is a distinctive case, as it wasn't created in the "usual way" presented above (through the death of a spouse), but rather through divorce. Family egodocuments, complaints, petitions, and witness hearings which have survived⁹ offer glimpses into an Early Modern protestant family's transformation from a nuclear family, broken by divorce, into a stepfamily with the arrival of a new spouse and more children. The documentary evidence provides insights into the relationship between the half-siblings after their father's death. The problems which emerged among the members of this stepfamily before and after the father's death confirmed that the grant of a divorce in the protestant Churches not only annulled the bond between the spouses, but also had emotional and economic consequences.¹⁰

4 Perrier, "Coresidence of Siblings." Bastress-Dukehart, "Sibling Conflict Within Early Modern Germany."

5 Bellavitis, "Stepfamilies and Inclusive Families." Coolidge "Virtual Stepfamilies."

6 Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage*; Chaytor, "Household and Kinship." Tadmor, *Family and friends*, Fehér, "Család és élettörténetek."

7 Pill, "Stepfamilies," 186; Coleman and Ganong, "Remarriage and Stepfamily," 926–27; Ihinger-Tallman, "Research on Stepfamilies," 27–29.

8 Warner, "Introduction," 3–4; Bellavitis, "Stepfamilies," 56–57.

9 Most of the family archive from Udvarfalva (Curteni) was destroyed, except the documents that were preserved by József Koncz, teacher at the Calvinist College from Marosvásárhely. Today, these documents are in the Mureş County Branch of the Romanian National Archives in the former collection of the Calvinist College. Presumably, the personal archive of József Koncz might contain other documents from the Rozsnyai family archive, but unfortunately, this archive located in the Cluj County Branch of the Romanian National Archives is not processed and cannot be accessed.

10 Safley, "Civic Morality," 178–79.

Families which underwent changes as a result of divorce and remarriage constitute the least documented and least investigated slice of Early Modern stepfamilies. The lack of scholarly interest and the dearth of secondary literature can be explained through the sparsity of the documentary sources and the isolated nature of the cases, encountered in a relatively small geographical area of the larger pool of Early Modern Europe's protestant communities.

Sociological research distinguishes multiple forms of stepfamilies formed through divorce based on the dynamic of the divorcee's remarriage and decisions reached concerning child custody.¹¹ It could be argued that a stepfamily has been created only when the parent who has custody of the child or children remarries. As the Early Modern family was built only through the cohabitation of husband and wife, but also through a network of kinship bonds which transcended the household environment, when children who were not living with their remarried parent were parts of this kinship connection, they can also be considered members of the stepfamily.

Dávid Rozsnyai and His Families

The main character of this story is Dávid Rozsnyai, known as the last Turkish scribe.¹² He was born in Marosvásárhely (today Târgu Mureș, Romania) in 1641 to a family of the Transylvanian petty nobility.¹³ He was 34 when he married for the first time to Anna Nagy Nyerges. This comparatively late marriage may have been the consequence in part of the fact that he frequently traveled and spend time abroad. He may also have waited until he had acquired a position and accumulated wealth to start a family.¹⁴ The wedding was held at the princely court of Radnót (Iernut) in September 1675, under the auspices of the prince.¹⁵

11 Allan, Crow and Hawker, *Stepfamilies*, 14–15.

12 On Transylvanian Turkish scribes, see Kármán, “Az erdélyi,” and Kármán, *A Seventeenth*.

13 On his family, see Szilágyi, “Rozsnyai Dávid,” 170.

14 After finishing his education, Rozsnyai moved in 1664 to Segesvár (today Sighișoara, Romania) in order to obtain a position in the service of Prince Mihály Apafi. He was helped in his endeavors by Mihály Csepregi, the former envoy to the Ottoman Sublime Porte, who was a close friend of Gáspár Veresmarti, Reformed bishop and Rozsnyai's brother-in-law. Csepregi recommended Rozsnyai to the Transylvanian Princely Court as Turkish scribe. After he learned to read and write in Turkish, he had a successful career as a diplomat, and he even translated in front of the sultan in 1667. Szilágyi, *Rozsnyai Dávid*.

15 See the wedding invitation sent by Mihály Apafi to Bethlen Farkas' counselor, Szilágyi, Szilágyi, *Török-magyarok*, 352. On the Early Modern Transylvanian wedding ceremonies, see Fehér, “The Role of Family, Kin and Friends.” On marriage customs, see Szabó, “Betrothal and Wedding”

From their marriage, three children reached the age of adulthood: a boy named András and two girls, Rebeka and Zsuzsanna.

Dávid Rozsnyai professional work and career as an interpreter and an envoy to the Ottoman Empire and his service to Prince Mihály Apafi's court are well-known from his ego-documents. There are a number of biographies focused on his diplomatic career. Fragments of his journal (1660–1670, 1705) have survived, as have fragments of his autobiography (1663, 1669–1673), the list of his services to the Prince written in November 1667, and a number of diaries (1663, 1665–1674). But these ego-documents are from his highly dynamic earlier life and his work in the service of the state prior to his marriage in 1675, so they provide no information about his private and family life.¹⁶ Among his writings there are also 13 annotated pocket calendars which contain Rozsnyai's notes from the years 1668, 1680, 1681, 1684, 1702, 1708, 1709, 1710, 1711, 1712, 1715, 1716, and 1717.¹⁷ If we compare these yearly calendars with the dates of the other ego-documents, there is only one year that overlaps, 1668. We do not know whether, for the missing years, there were also journals or parts of his autobiography that did not survive, but from the numbering of the calendars, we can assume that some volumes are missing.¹⁸

The first insight we have into the life of the Rozsnyai family is provided by the documents that were created when the paterfamilias was imprisoned. In 1678, upon returning from another delegation to the Sublime Porte, Rozsnyai was accused of supporting Pál Béli's conspiracy¹⁹ against the prince and was consequently imprisoned. He was held captive in Görgény (today Gurghiu, Romania) and Szamosújvár (today Gherla, Romania) until 1682. During his captivity, he sent letters and instructions to his wife which offer some indication of the relationship between them at the time, while some fragments also show

16 Published in Szilágyi, *Rozsnyai Dávid*.

17 Some of the annotations have been published in Simonfi, "Rozsnyai Dávid," 112–26. The Teleki-Bolyai Library in Marosvásárhely holds the collection of calendars, including the ones annotated by Rozsnyai and his sons.

18 On the back of the calendar from 1668 we can read "from '57 to '68," and on the 1680 calendar one finds "from '80 to '89." Thus, he started writing in the calendars when he began his schooling. These annotations could be the source on the basis of which the journals and autobiographies were written later on. There was a common practice among the Transylvanian memoir writers of expanding their brief notes in the calendars into proper autobiographies or memoirs. We can see this in the case of Mihály Cserei, and Miklós Bethlen also refers to this practice in his memoir. Tóth, "Műfaj vs. íráshasználat?" 362–70.

19 Pál Béli, Székely, aristocrat, counselor to Prince Mihály Apafi, who was accused of treason and imprisoned between 1676–1677. After his release, he sought refuge in the Ottoman Empire, where he was imprisoned and died.

how Rozsnyai represented himself as a father and what his attitude was towards his children. We do not know the exact birthdates of the children from his first marriage, but at the time of his captivity, their son András and at least one of their daughters had already been born.

Their marriage lasted only 12 years. In 1687, at Rozsnyai's request, they divorced. Their statements during the divorce proceedings show not only the deterioration of the relationship between them, but also the way in which Early Modern spouses tried to get rid of each other.²⁰

In the first year after the divorce, Rozsnyai was permitted to remarry, and in 1688, at the age of 47, he married Rebeka Fogarasi.

From Rozsnyai's second marriage, three children were born who survived into adulthood: a boy, Sámuel, born in 1698, and two girls, Anna and Klára. The calendars of the elderly Rozsnyai contain details about more family members. He had at least three more children from this second marriage who died at a young age, and he recorded the dates of their deaths. In 1698, he wrote about the death of a daughter named Ráchel. We do not know how old she was, but she was not a newborn, as Sámuel was also born that year. In 1709, Rozsnyai made a record of the death of his 18-year-old daughter, Sára. Her death and funeral were commemorated in his later calendars, too. She was probably his first child from the second marriage. In 1712, he recorded the death of a second child named Ráchel, a newborn, who was buried near her sisters. The two other girls are totally absent in the family ego-documents, and their existence was confirmed by the aforementioned József Koncz, who made a detailed family tree.

Rozsnyai and his new family moved from Marosvásárhely to Fogaras (today Făgăraș, Romania), as he probably wanted to keep his ties to the princely court. But the family became poorer and poor, as Rozsnyai did not receive the wages due for his services to the Court. He pawned more and more of his belongings, and had debts to several noble families. His oldest son, András, helped him deal with these financial problems. He died at Fogaras in 1718 at the age of 77.

After the divorce, the children from his first marriage remained with their mother, but Rozsnyai promised to support them financially at the divorce hearing and in his letter to his ex-wife.

20 The documents of his divorce trial were preserved in the protocols of the Partial Synod of the Maros Diocese. Marosi egyházmegye levéltára, prot. I/1. Series *causarum*, published: Sipos, "Rozsnyai Dávid," 303–5.

The divorced parents were obliged by law to feed and educate their children and to ensure and provide for their future. The children remained legal heirs to their parents after the divorce, too, as they kept all their innate rights and their positions.²¹ The children from different wives of a divorced father inherited their father's wealth and belongings together,²² as the mother's wealth and belongings were inherited only by her children.²³ In terms of inheritance, there was a difference between male and female heirs. Only sons born within marriage inherited the their father's accumulated wealth. Female heirs, in accordance with the so-called *Tripartitum* (a manual of customary law which had been in use in Hungary to varying extents since it was published in 1517), had no claim to their father's estates. They received the so-called filial quarter, which was usually money, equally shared between the daughters, thus preventing the alienation of the families' estates. The family archive was kept by the eldest son, even if he had older sisters or if they concerned the girls' inheritance.²⁴ The paternal house was usually inherited by the youngest son.²⁵

The goods in the Rozsnyai family were mostly divided according to the *Tripartitum*, too. András inherited the family archive, while the house in Fogaras remained in Sámuel's possession, and the father stipulated in his will that his sons would equally share his other belongings, but he omitted his daughters from his testament.

Rozsnyai's First Marriage

The sources which have survived concerning his relationship with his first wife were created at moments in their marriage which may well have been among the most trying for both of them. In the fourth year of their marriage Rozsnyai was imprisoned. From the letters and instructions which he sent from prison to his wife we know that she visited him several times during his captivity and provided things he needed. In his letters, he gave strict instructions concerning the administration of the household: to control the expenditures and the servants. We also have detailed lists of instructions concerning the items he wanted while he was being held, both in Görgény and in Szamosújvár: clothing (with precise

21 Dósa, *Erdélyboni*, 55.

22 The order of inheritance in Transylvanian noble families was based on István Werbőczy's *Tripartitum*.

23 Dósa, *Erdélyboni*, 386–87.

24 *Ibid.*, 415

25 *Ibid.*, 414.

indications of material and color), buttons, sewing utensils, cookware, spices, food, drink, medicines, books, writing materials, etc. He gave specific instructions regarding the date and the route his spouse should take when visiting him: “Do not come yourself until you have sent somebody (to me first), and I will send a message through that person when you are to depart.”²⁶ Moreover, he tells her how to ensure that the household is taken care of while she is absent: “Find the optimal time for making the journey, do not saddle the poor cattle and horses in bad weather, the day the wagon departs you should also get going, but leave the things at home in good care; in order to avoid damages, secure the barn with a padlock, [making sure] that nobody wastes the cereals [...] order [the servants] not to have big fires in the fireplaces, and, especially at night, to put them out and not to let them burn, and keep the dried fruits under lock and key to ensure that they are not eaten by servants as they please, as they need to be rationed.”²⁷ He writes in a tone which suggests he saw himself (or sought to present himself) as a husband who ruled his household and all its members with an iron fist and who, even if not present, had to be informed and decide on all family issues.

The opening and closing formulas of his letters,²⁸ however, are expressive of a balanced or even loving relationship. He opens his letter from November 1679 with the formula: “God bless you my sweet wife” and closes with “Your sad-hearted imprisoned husband.” In his other letter from 1679, the phrase “my sweet wife” is changed to “my relative” or “my kin” (“*atyámfia*” in Hungarian), as in, for instance, “God bless you with a lot of goods my good relative,” but the letter in question still closes with “Your Orphan imprisoned half.” In the letter from October 1781 he used both invocations: “Bring all the written things with you, forget any of them, my good relative, God help you, sweet half.” In this letter, he still emphasizes the closeness between them as husband and wife, a bond which should not be weakened by his imprisonment.

Rozsnyai instructed his wife to provide a written account of all activities taking place in his household: “Don’t let yourself be misled when selling the cattle and horses, and afterwards take care to have everything that you sell written down [...] don’t forget, as I ordered, to note which fields have been sown, and note their type and place.”²⁹ Their relationship was based on the wife’s subordination,

26 Koncz, “Oklevelek.” 158.

27 Ibid., 157.

28 Five letters (November and December 1679, April and October 1681, April 1682) and three short-length written instructions (*memoriálé*) were preserved, they are published in Koncz, “Oklevelek.”

29 Koncz, “Oklevelek,” 156.

even when, during his captivity, Rozsnyai was entirely dependent on her support. Rozsnyai entrusted his spouse not only with household administration, but also with more special tasks. When he was moved from Görgény to Szamosújvár, he sent presents to János Toldalagi (his supervisor) and Toldalagi's wife through her. He also instructed her to send a letter to the same Toldalagi, probably composed by Rozsnyai himself: "Have this supplication nicely written, my sweet relative, and take it with you, give it to the lord, beg his wife, too, in order to obtain a good answer."³⁰ In the same letter, he asks permission to attend church service, to receive visits from his uncle from the nearby city of Kolozsvár (Cluj Napoca), to read, to practice writing in Turkish, and to translate.³¹

Rozsnyai uses several rhetorical instruments to maintain a tight grip on his wife and household. One finds expressions of concern and care, but also complaints and threats in his letters: "If you have a soul in God don't complain about having to feed me or cloth me from what is mine, to ease my misery until I have some things, and to send presents where I tell you to. These things are not more precious than me, God commiserates with me and gives us other things in return, my sweet wife."³²

In his letters, Rozsnyai frequently complains that his wife does not tend to his wishes, for instance that she does not send enough food, drink, or clothes, and he reminds her many times that what she must purchase she buys from his earnings, and she should spare no expense.

During his captivity, the burdens of tending to the family's affairs fell on his wife's shoulders, including administering the household, securing the financial means for everyday expenses including food, finding supporters for her husband's cause, and, on top of that, providing childcare. The letters written in 1681 suggest that she found it increasingly difficult to make ends meet, at least judging by the reproaches Rozsnyai makes. "It seems, my kin, that you haven't given too much care to my drinks in the past two and half years, and in my present condition I had to drink less and less, even if I always mix it [the wine] with water, now I can drink only once every two weeks, because I don't have more, and I don't have money to buy any more. I can see that if I am silent about this, you are happy to be silent, too; you can't convince me that you have no

30 Ibid., 159.

31 The short answer he received from Toldalagi tells us, that Toldalagi grants all these requests, except for writing and translating, for which he requires in his turn the prince's permission. Koncz, "Oklevelek," 161–2.

32 Ibid., 161.

money, because I gave you before instructions concerning how to make money, even if you are not able to sell [the grain], I even freed you to sell it below price, but do not force me to beg.”³³

The children are mentioned in this letters too, as Rozsnyai asked his wife to bring András to see him in 1679, but he also showed his paternal rigor by asking his wife to take care of their education: “The children should learn, they should not spend their time in vain pursuits, and they should be looked after diligently.”³⁴ He put a particular emphasis on András’ education: “The child should go to school daily, don’t let him near wells or horses.”³⁵

Unfortunately, we have no sources on the family from Rozsnyai’s release in 1682 until the divorce in 1687. Their marriage lasted 12 years, three of which Rozsnyai spent in prison (leaving his wife with three children to care for). During the five years after his release (for which we have no sources), the marriage, which had undergone the stresses of Rozsnyai’s imprisonment, may well have deteriorated further. His wife’s perspective and the details of their private life can only be observed through the documents of the divorce trial from the Partial Synod.

The Divorce

In 1687, Rozsnyai accused his wife in front of the Partial Synod³⁶ of the Maros Dioece of having left their family house which was in her care in Herepe (Oláhherepe, Hăpria) and traveled in the night to Marosvásárhely for an unknown

33 Ibid., 162

34 Ibid., 164.

35 Ibid., 165.

36 In the Principality of Transylvania, the tasks and legal work related to betrothal and marriage were under the jurisdiction of the Church, and the matrimonial cases were judged based on each confession’s own laws and canons. Both the law and the judges belonged to the same confession as the matrimonial case’s bride and groom. For later economic, successional, or criminal issues, the case was transferred to the secular authorities. The ecclesiastical laws were decided by the synods and the secular laws by the diet, where the representatives of the three nations (the nobility, most of which was Hungarian-speaking, the Saxon patricians, and the Székelys) and the Prince took part. In the Transylvanian Calvinist Church, the Holy See of the Partial Synod was primarily charged with the task of judging marital cases. Divorces among the common people and the petty nobility were discussed at the Partial Synod, and its decisions could be appealed at the General Synod; the aristocracy’s marital cases were discussed at the General Synod. Kiss, *Egyház és közösség*, 83; Kiss, “Church Discipline,” 113; Buzogány, “A kálvini etikára,” 1–10. The authority of the Partial Synod started to be limited and suppressed towards the end of the seventeenth century, and starting with the reign of Emperor Joseph II, the divorce trials were transferred from the authority of the Church to the secular courts. Kolumbán, *A törvényhozó egyház*, 120–21, 124.

reason. He also alleged that his wife did not spend the night in the house the family had in Marosvásárhely and that her whereabouts were unknown.

Abandonment was the mildest justification for divorce that was accepted, but Rozsnyai's contention that his wife had spent the night in an unknown place was in fact an accusation of infidelity. The accepted grounds for a divorce in Transylvania were similar to those in other Calvinist or Lutheran communities, but in some cases, local customs also influenced the decisions. The most accepted justification for a petition of divorce was adultery, but the sources contain mention of numerous other explanations, such as adulterous abandonment, impotence, sexually transmitted disease, marriage with a person below one's social rank without the consent of one's parents, life-threatening domestic disputes, or forced marriages.³⁷

Anna Nagy defended herself by saying that her husband had left her alone with their "orphaned" children and they had had to flee together with others in the village as enemies approached (probably a Habsburg army). She claimed that, upon reaching the house in Marosvásárhely, she had been unable to enter it, as it was locked. She and the children had had to find shelter, and they had gone to a relative's house in the city. She also insisted that her husband produce evidence in support of his accusations. As Rozsnyai did not attend the meeting, the court notified him through his representative that, until the next hearing, he should make provisions for the financial support of his children and wife and even pay for her defending representative.³⁸

At the second hearing, which took place on September 10, although his representative objected, Rozsnyai was ordered to pay his wife's trial costs too, as this was the custom both in their diocese and in the others nearby. During the hearing, it emerged that the disagreement between the spouses had worsened with time, and that Rozsnyai "did not support, feed, or clothes his wife or children, but he did provide money, food, and clothing for others, and, to further upset his spouse, he had given her clothes to another women, saying in front of his wife, "How well they fit you, darling, wear them in good health!"³⁹ His alleged failure to provide financial and emotional support was seen by his wife as the clear consequences of his loss of love for.

37 Sipos, "Református eljegyzések"; Kiss, *Egyház és közösség*, 99–145; Márton "Divorce in the Szék"; Márton, "Az egyház normáin"; Fegyveresi, "Házassági ügyek."

38 Sipos, "Rozsnyai;" Marosi Egyházmegye Levéltára, Protocollum. I/1. Series caesarum. 38–41.

39 Sipos, "Rozsnyai," 304.

These allegations illustrate not only the particular situation of this family, but also the obligations husbands had in a family in general and the various forms of recourse a wife had if her husband failed to meet his responsibilities.

Rozsnyai's wife alleged to the court that her husband had had an affair with a woman named Sára Szőcs, together with whom he had been seen sleeping on different occasions by several witnesses. His mistress, it seems, was pregnant, and Rozsnyai had even prepared a concoction intended to cause her to abort.

In a protestant family, in which the ideal of a pure, virtuous life was enforced through strict moral norms and the regulation of sexuality,⁴⁰ an allegation of infidelity against a husband was deemed very serious, and if a person were found guilty of having been naked with someone other than his or her spouse, this was a capital offence: "There are other things which indicate his greater loyalty to and love for Sára Szőcs and her mother than his love for his wife, because he bathed in the same tub with Sára, and both bathed naked."⁴¹

On the basis of these testimonies, the Partial Synod pronounced the divorce, excommunicated the adulterous husband, forbade his remarriage, and forwarded the case to the secular authorities. These were the most severe punishments the religious courts could decree.⁴²

Rozsnyai's wife requested that her testimony not be made public. We can assume that this was either to prevent retaliation from her influential ex-husband or to avoid public disgrace.⁴³

The divorce is mentioned briefly in Rozsnyai's ego-documents. A note in one of the calendars for September 1687 reads: "11 dies divorcio occidens 1687."

As is clear, Rozsnyai probably tried to get rid of his wife by accusing her of deserting her home, which was, with the exception of adultery, the most frequent cause for divorce. Presumably, he was not able to come up with a more plausible accusation that still would have carried adequate weight in the eyes of

40 Hsia, *Social Discipline*, 129; Burghartz, "Competing Logics," 177.

41 Sipos, "Rozsnyai," 305.

42 The mildest sanction was public penitence, where the guilty party was required to wear dark clothes during mass and to sit in a specially designed place or in the church's entryway. He or she had to do public penance in front of the entire congregation in order to be accepted back into the community. Additionally, the guilty spouse could also be compelled to pay a fine. A harsher punishment was excommunication, which prohibited participation in any religious event or service, including receiving the communion. The guilty spouse could not be married again for a specified period of time or until the other spouse remarried. This restriction was called "ligázás" or "ligába vetés," which is derived from the Latin verb "ligo, -are" meaning "to bind" or "to tie."

43 Marosi Egyházmegye Levéltára, Protocollum. I/1. Series causarum, 77–80.

the authorities. His wife did not accept the social stigma and, by summoning witnesses, she convinced the court of her innocence.

Wives could also petition for divorce, but they rarely attempting to seek a legal way out of the marriage.⁴⁴ Women tended to request intervention by the court when the marriage promise was not kept or when they wanted to break or enforce the marriage after having been abandoned by their husband.⁴⁵ In all likelihood, Rozsnyai's wife would not have initiated the separation from her adulterous husband if it hadn't been for his appeal to the court. Financially, the Holy See ordered that the cost of litigation be paid exclusively by the husband and that he also provide for the family for the duration of the trial. But after the divorce, the actual arrangements regarding his former wife were not specified, as this fell under the jurisdiction of the secular authorities.⁴⁶

In Early Modern Europe, most divorce requests were initiated by husbands.⁴⁷ In most cases, an accused wife found herself in a difficult position, even if the divorce wasn't her fault. After the divorce or separation, alimony was not a secure income, as it was difficult to enforce payment. As a loosely regulated amount, alimony varied based on the wealth of the former husband, on the former wife's capacity to work, and on the number and age of the children.⁴⁸ In Transylvania, child support began to be mentioned in the synodical divorce decisions in the second half of the eighteenth century. The Partial Synod usually entrusted the innocent spouse with custody of the children, but it did not specify an amount the other party had to pay. The sum was based on a mutual agreement between the parties.⁴⁹ Compared to Lindau for example, where all the family's possessions were given to the innocent spouse,⁵⁰ the consequences of adultery in Transylvania were relatively mild.

In the case of the Rozsnyai family, the Partial Synod held on April 2, 1688 (seven months after the divorce) ruled that Rozsnyai make public penance in Szentbenedek (today Mănăstirea, Romania) and, taking into account his services to the principality, the Synod lifted the interdiction on his remarriage. Rozsnyai reached his goals. He legally escaped his first wife and got off relatively lightly

44 Wiesner, *Women and Gender*, 73.

45 Wiesner, *Women and Gender*, 73; Johansen, "The History of Divorce," 46.

46 The details regarding his civil trial cannot be found: the city court's protocols from the years 1683–1698 are missing. DJAN-MS, Procesele verbale ale tribunalului, 263.

47 Watt, "Divorce in Neuchatel," 144–45.

48 Bailey, *Unquiet lives*, 181.

49 Kolumbán, *A törvényhozó egyház*, 122.

50 Shafley, "Civic Morality," 180–81.

with a mild punishment for adultery. Because of his influence and good relations, he was permitted to marry for a second time, even if he was the guilty party. He was not forced to wait until his former spouse remarried, nor was he forced to marry his mistress.⁵¹

Forging New Relations Within the Stepfamily

The surviving sources contain no information concerning Anna Nagy's life after the divorce except for the fact that the financial support provided by her husband was inconsistent. This was not an isolated case. Protestant confessions may have allowed for divorce, but the position of the women was still primarily defined through their relationship with the men in their lives: they were daughters, sisters, or wives. Divorced women were still seen by protestant society as an anomaly, as were single women.⁵² Widows were exceptions, but even they were pressured to remarry,⁵³ and poorer widows in particular tended to, as they were afraid they might become a burden to their family and have to seek the help of their relatives.⁵⁴ However, many widows who belonged to the aristocracy decided not to remarry, regardless of their marital experiences, good or bad, as they had begun to enjoy their freedom and the advantages this position provided.⁵⁵ The uncertain and vulnerable position of women coming out of a divorce is visible through the formula of address used by Rozsnyai in a letter to his former wife and children offers a clear illustration of the uncertain and vulnerable position of a divorced woman: "To orphan Anna Nagy and her orphan children."⁵⁶ Through this form of address, Rozsnyai assigned his ex-wife a conventional position within the social norms, as "orphan" in this case does not mean parentless, but "honorably abandoned," which also meant vulnerable

51 Sipos, "Rozsnyai," 305; Marosi Egyházmegye Levéltára, Protocollum. I/1. Series causarum. 92–3. Gábor Sipos, who published the divorce proceedings, also highlighted the reference to Rozsnyai's services to the Principality as a one-of-a-kind argument. But taking into account the Turkish scribe's important connections inside the prince's court and the fact that his brother-in-law was the Calvinist bishop, the fact that he used this reasoning should not come as a great surprise. We also know that the political and social role of spouses exerted a strong influence on the decisions concerning their divorce. See Kingdon, *Adultery and Divorce*.

52 Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 38; Wiesner, *Women and gender*, 76–77.

53 Schmidt, Devos and Blondé, "Single Life," 5–8.

54 Géra, *Házasság Budán*, 50–51.

55 Horn, "Nemesi árvák," 64–65; Johansen, *Widowhood in Scandinavia*, 174–75; Houlbrooke, *The English Family*, 205, 211–12.

56 Koncz, "Oklevelek," 165–66.

and defenseless. The Hungarian secondary literature first noted, in the case of Kata Bethlen, that the community assigned the divorced women the status of “orphan,” and the letters, prayer books, testaments, and autobiographies left behind by divorced women who belonged to the aristocracy (like Kata Bethlen) indicate that they accepted this designation in their textual representations of their identities. Presumably, they assumed this designation in order to align themselves with the expectations, roles, and cultural patterns of the society in which they lived. This designation or identity (“the orphan”) was formed around the image of the widow but also based on biblical references.⁵⁷ The overlap between the widow and the divorcee is not unique. In his analysis of family and household history, Peter Laslett suggested that in the census-type documents divorced wives were not distinguished from widows.⁵⁸ This explains the seemingly odd form of address used by Rozsnyai in his letter.

Gergely Fazakas offers more examples of people, both men and women, using the term “helpless orphan” for self-representation, even in cases when they were not widows, in other words they either had been abandoned or their spouses had been imprisoned, exiled, or sent away on military duties. In other words, the term was used to designate people whose social or financial security was endangered.⁵⁹ Another example of this is Rozsnyai himself, who signed his letter from October 31 with the formula “Your orphan imprisoned half.”⁶⁰

The children were referred to as “orphans” many times, both by Rozsnyai and his wife during his imprisonment and during and after the divorce due to their unfortunate and abandoned state.⁶¹ They were deprived of the presence of their father well before the divorce because of Rozsnyai’s frequent travels and his later imprisonment, so the balance in the family had already shifted, even if the children did not have to go through the loss of a parent or life with a stepparent.

After the divorce, Rozsnyai was bound by law to support his children, at least financially. His letter from June 1688 to his divorced wife reveals an ongoing conflict, as he apparently failed to meet his financial obligations to his children. He asks forgiveness for not having visited and he promises his ex-wife

57 Fazakas “Tetszett az Úristennek”; Fazakas, “Az ‘árvaság’ reprezentációja.”

58 Laslett, “Introduction,” 86–87.

59 Fazakas, “Az ‘árvaság’ reprezentációja,” 45–46.

60 Koncz, “Oklevelek,” 164.

61 “I pray you, in the name of God, to take good care of the poor orphans and educate them with the fear of God, and be blessed together with the poor children.” Koncz, “Oklevelek,” 161

that he will take care of the children, but he argues that his financial situation is dire, and he begs their patience: “I certainly wanted personally to greet my poor children, but I, too, was in a hurry, and as you were also not at home, the occasion passed. In my promises to provide for my children I don’t want to be a liar or an infidel, but we are not to be blamed if our endeavors are postponed because of helplessness, God gives where there is shortage.”⁶² His letter indicates that right after the divorce, even if he were not present in the everyday life of the family, he still sought to craft a textual image of himself as the paternal authority and the person on whom the family relied for financial support. In the following passage from this letter, for instance, he begs forgiveness while at the same time making further promises and also reproaches: “Blame me for not fulfilling my promises and doing even more if I ever get the money I have been promised. Until then, if God allows, I will help you with wine and wheat, even though I also often drink water. Before God brings in the cold, perhaps I will be able to send some fabric for children’s over-clothes, but you should not always think about what you need and how much, but about what you can do with what I provide.”⁶³

In this letter, sent barely five months after he was allowed to remarry, Rozsnyai referred to his new spouse as “my present wife.” The new spouse, Rebeka Fogarasi, sent presents through Rozsnyai to his children from his first marriage: a belt for András, ribbons and wool cloth for the girls, and a lace garland for Rebeka (the eldest daughter, as she was probably due to be married): “my wife sent a cord belt for András, light pink wool cloth for coats and some ribbon for both the girls. A golden lace garland for Rebeka. Henceforward, if God allows, she will try to do more.”⁶⁴ Rozsnyai also wrote in the letter that his new wife pledged to offer more help in the future. His new wife may have sought to gain the good will of the children and their mother, though again, the claims may have been Rozsnyai’s invention, as he may have sought, simply, to try to minimize conflicts and tensions by presenting his new wife in a favorable light. The appearance and subsequent acceptance of a new wife is always a challenge for the husband’s first family. A new spouse could influence the husband’s decisions in the partition of the patrimony,⁶⁵ shift his relationships with his children from his first marriage, and produce more children who would

62 Koncz, “Oklevelek,” 165.

63 Ibid., 166.

64 Ibid.

65 Stretton, “Stepmothers,” 98–102.

also have claims to the family inheritance. Stepmothers had a stronger influence on their husbands than stepfathers did on their wives, as, in theory, the latter could not interfere with the possessions the women brought from their previous marriage,⁶⁶ but there were also counterexamples, when a stepfather became the orphans' guardian.

The surviving sources offer no indication of the previous family status of Rebeka Fogarasi, Rozsnyai's second wife, but from the number of children to whom she gave birth in the marriage we may deduce that she was much younger than her husband. Rozsnyai's decision to marry a younger bride makes his case typical, since men preferred, when they were remarrying, to marry women with no children from previous marriages.⁶⁷ Anna Nagy's demand to have the clothes she left in the former husband's home returned can be interpreted as a sign of hostility towards the new wife. Rozsnyai replies that he could send back only some of the garments she demanded, as the others no longer existed: "With regard to your writing about some of your belongings, God knows we don't have anything else besides the gloves, your lace for collar, your golden apron, and the Turkish pelisse; where they disappeared in all this I don't know. None of them is with us, as even greater men than I don't have things like these with them nowadays, but keep them some place safe. I sent you all of the above but the pelisse, I will bring instead cloth for the mantle. Don't be afraid regarding the other things, because my present wife won't use them even if you leave them here forever."⁶⁸

This reply sheds a little light on the relationship between the two women, as Rozsnyai assures his ex-wife that his new wife will never wear any of the clothes she left behind, even though we know from the divorce documents that he had clothed his mistresses in his wife's clothes. A widower's new wife could sometimes inherit the clothes of the former wife, which was a symbolic expression of her appropriation of the family role. In this case, it is possible that, by refusing to wear the former wife's clothes, Rebeka Fogarasi did not want to perform this role-switching.

66 Stretton, "Stepmothers," 103; "Perrier, "Coresidence of Siblings," 309–10. There are also counterexamples. In 1704, the Transylvanian Chancellor István Apor divided among his heirs the possessions of his third spouse, Zsuzsánna Farkas, who in her turn had inherited from her previous husband Zsigmond Korda. Zsuzsána Farkas appealed to the governor, asking that he intervene and address this injustice (DJAN Cluj, 377 Fond familial Korda, 2/XXI, 2).

67 Warner, "Introduction," 13. This was the case in Early Modern Swedish society, too: Lahtinen, "Stepfamilies in Sweden," 45.

68 Koncz, "Oklevelek," 166.

Rozsnyai, as a father, considered the intellectual and spiritual development of his children of the utmost importance. He knew from his own experience that, through learning and knowledge, one could climb the social ladder and obtain important positions. But the change in the structure of the family influenced the level of his involvement in his children's education. During the first marriage, he tracked his children's progress from afar, insisting, in his letters sent to his first wife from captivity, that she had the children study and not waste their time and also emphasizing that András should be sent to school every day.⁶⁹ After the divorce, he asked Anna Nagy to make sure the children did not abandon the church or the school, and he promised to send more money for their education: "After I finish my work here, I will go again to Jára [today Iara, Romania], if God lets me [...] then I will take care of paying the school and the master, as all I have now I need to spend on curing [the hay]. For God's sake, I warn you and ask you, the children should not to drop out of school and church, for those I am willing to give the shirt off my back."⁷⁰

But the children's later writings reveal that, later, they did not receive the promised paternal support. Probably their relationship with their father was interrupted after Rozsnyai moved to Fogaras and had children from the second marriage. This is proven by the petition sent to János Haller, the Governor of Transylvania, by Zsuzsanna (one of Rozsnyai's daughters from his first marriage) in 1748, in which she asked for her share of her father's retrieved salaries from András and András's son, József. Rebeka, the other daughter, also asked her nephew (József) in 1748 to give her a share of the recuperated salaries.

In her written complaint against her brother from 1748, Zsuzsanna suggested that she had not been given adequate care by her father: "I grew up outside my father's house with the bread of the orphans, I dressed myself of my own labor, I was married-off from a stranger's home, and, until now, I got nothing from my father's hereditament."⁷¹

András sent the Governor a reply to her sister's complaint in which he also made some remarks on concerning his youth and his education: "When she writes that she didn't receive anything of our father's belongings, that she was raised in a foreign house, I offer the following answer: regarding my education [...] I was raised by count Mihály Teleki together with Pál Teleki. I wore his clothes, as he [my father] never in my whole life spent more than one thaler on

69 Ibid., 165.

70 Ibid., 166.

71 DJAN-MS, Colegiul Reformat, fond. 96, inv. 1467/1006.

me, and even that money was given to my magister. This family [Teleki] was my father, and, after we accompanied Mihály Teleki's corpse to Görgény,⁷² I went to the court of Prince Apafi [the younger],⁷³ where my father took me back in his good graces, and I was in his service there until he left [Mihály Apafi].⁷⁴ Afterwards, I left together with Márton Sárpataki and Sigmond Toroczkaï to Sámuel Bethlen's [company], then after the latter's death, I went together with Balási to count Mikes's domicile. Why are we reproaching each other over the education we both received?"⁷⁵

In the same letter, András explained that, after the divorce, his father had paid an amount (the text is unclear on the actual sum or what was it for) to their mother, but that from that moment on, he had stopped being involved in their life. Later, when the boy went to the Princely Court, Rozsnyai took his son back under his wing: "When my father divorced my mother, he paid her what was due, I know this well, but I can also prove it under the letter M⁷⁶ (because it can be observed that they had gathered lot of debts while he was married with my mother) but, after this [the divorce], he almost never cared about me or his daughters, but I later enjoyed his paternal love while I was at the Princely Court."

He explained that the services he did for his father were the reason why he got back in his good graces: "I also gave a motive for that, because I troubled myself in helping him change his misfortune before the Princes, I also helped him in his needs [...] I served him in these matters in front of Count István Haller and General Rabutin, [intervening] through several noblemen, for which he thanked me almost crying. These are the things he took into consideration in his testament, in which he wrote that I served him and I helped him."

It was not by chance that András was raised in the court of Chancellor Mihály Teleki, where they had probably a patronage relationship,⁷⁷ because earlier Teleki had been one of Rozsnyai's protectors, who often mediated his requests to the Prince and even was his guarantor when he needed loans.⁷⁸

After Mihály Teleki's death in 1690, András went to serve the young Mihály Apafi, and then his father reconnected with him. This renewed relationship was beneficial for both father and son. András helped his father with his financial

72 Mihály Teleki died in 1690.

73 Mihály Apafi II, son of the Transylvanian Prince.

74 He was moved to Vienna to the emperor's command.

75 DJAN-MS, Colegiul Reformat fond. 96, inv. 1467/1008

76 He had a list of documents attached to his letter, but only the letter was kept in the archive.

77 On the Early Modern Transylvanian patronage relationship see Tóth, "Tango-ere."

78 On Rozsnyai's correspondence with Teleki see: Bittenbinder, "Adatok."

problems, and in return, the son was integrated into his father's family and given a claim to his hereditament. There are two letters written by Rozsnyai to his son from 1713.⁷⁹ These letters show that the boy's education paid off and that they were working together to get rid of some of the father's debts and to handle the other debts trials. Rozsnyai also gave him the deeds to his properties in Jára: "I have copied the acts of the domains from Jára and have them sent them to you. May God help you use them well."⁸⁰

András was secretary to Mihály Mikes at the time,⁸¹ whose support Rozsnyai wanted to obtain through his son in order to recover his past-due salaries and for regularize his debts to the Bethlen family. He wrote about this in both of his remaining letters. They seem to have had a good father-son relationship in this period. Rozsnyai expressed his regret for not talking to András personally, but he promised to meet him soon. One of his postscripts suggests that András was visiting him in his home: "You left 3 silver coins here, you will find them here when you return." The forms of address and closing used in the letters also suggest an intimate family bond. Rozsnyai signed his letters as "Your father who wishes you all the good from God," and on the envelope he wrote, "I wrote in a hurry to my dear sweet son, András Rozsnyai."

Though Rozsnyai had another son from his second marriage, the first born, András, was the one who became the keeper of the family archive and also inherited half of his father's possessions. To ensure this, in 1712, Rozsnyai compiled a list in front of witnesses of all the family archive's property deeds, in case he was to die. At the end of this registry, he specified that the list was made to the benefit of the two sons. He further enforced this through a curse on the family if they were to fail to provide the register and all the later archive documents to his eldest son.⁸²

Rozsnyai's involvement in the life of his son from his second marriage, Sámuel, is more constant, as from 1694, Transylvania no longer needed a Turkish scribe, and we can assume Rozsnyai spent more time with his family. He was able to forge a deeper bond with his youngest son, and he supervised his education and even taught him Turkish. In his calendar notes, his son's birthday on March 20, 1712, affectionately referring to him as "my dear Samuka." The calendars

79 DJAN-MS, Colegiul Reformat fond. 96, inv. 1467/1027, 1028.

80 DJAN-MS, Colegiul Reformat fond. 96, inv. 1467/1027.

81 Mihály Mikes, Transylvanian aristocrat, elevated to the status of earl by the Habsburg Emperor Leopold, counselor of Transylvania's governor office from 1713.

82 DJAN-MS, Colegiul Reformat, fond. 96, inv. 1467/ 994.

they shared also suggest that they had a close relationship. Sámuel began writing annotations in his father's calendars in 1708. In the first years, they both wrote notes in the calendars, but later on, Sámuel wrote his father's notes, too. At this time, he also began writing his father's letters and copying his works.⁸³ This practice of sharing or continuing the composition of an ego-document was not unique in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Transylvania. There were several cases of a son continuing his father's notes⁸⁴ or wives continuing their husbands' writings or an estate manager continuing a mistress' writings.⁸⁵ These texts were not written exclusively for the intended recipient. Rather, the authors expected their children and other family members to read them, which is why they are considered "family ego-documents."

In Rozsnyai's family from his second marriage, the father and son communicated with each other through their calendar notes, too. In January 1709, Sámuel wrote about how he had started to learn verb conjugations, and his father replied beneath, "May the Lord help you grow if this is in His liking."⁸⁶

After his father's death, Sámuel also used Rozsnyai's diaries to make some annotations at the end, drawing up an inventory of the property deeds before giving them over to his half-brother, the legal heir to the family archive.⁸⁷

Both András and Sámuel followed in their father's footsteps and became translators. Their translations appeared around the same time, which might indicate that they were in competition for their father's recognition. Sámuel notes in the calendar from 1715 that he translated a Turkish work on healing horses.⁸⁸ In 1716, András translated a collection of meditations entitled "Stimulus compunctionis" from Latin into Hungarian.⁸⁹

Neither the second spouse nor the daughters from the second marriage received the same amount of attention as the younger son. With regard to his daughters, Rozsnyai only noted the deaths of three of them in his calendars. Their deaths appear both as events and as recurring commemorations. In the calendar for 1702, he marked April 19 as the fourth anniversary of the death of

83 András Rozsnyai also has his own calendars. Two of them are still preserved in in the Teleki-Bolyai Library.

84 In the seventeenth century, Kálnoki István's diary was continued by his son, Sámuel. Papp, *Tollforgató*, 138–40.

85 Fehér, "Család és élettörténetek," 16–17.

86 Teleki Bolyai Library 22616.

87 Szilágyi, *Rozsnyai Dávid*, 310–11, the original: BCU Cluj, Ms 156.

88 Teleki Bolyai Library 22621.

89 Kelemen, "Rosnyai András," 234.

his daughter Ráchel (the first of his two daughters to whom he gave this name). In the calendar for 1709, he marked January 21 as the date of the death of his 18-year old daughter, Sára. He marked the day in February on which her coffin was sealed, and he marked the day in May on which her funeral was held, which was a common funeral, as her recently deceased 5-month-old sister, Ráchel II, was also buried. From this point onward, in each of the calendars which has survived (1710, 1711, and 1712) he marks the days on which the girls died, the days on which the funerals took place, and the location of their graves. He seems to have been deeply touched by the death of his 18-year old daughter, Sára, as with every anniversary of her passing, he added details regarding her sickness and her untimely death. These texts were written in a very neat, calligraphic handwriting, as if they were supposed to be a memorial in their honor, thus adding to the public character of the calendars.

The Half-siblings and Rozsnyai's Testament

After Rozsnyai's death, the relationship between the children from the two marriages ceased to be dependent on the authority of the father. The witnesses' testimonies kept in the family archives show that, after Rozsnyai's death in 1718, his widow sent the testament to their son, Sámuel, in Vienna, but it seems the letter got lost on the way, and the boys used a copy of their father's testament to divide the inheritance.

At this time, Sámuel worked at the Transylvanian Chancellery in Vienna, probably as a referent. He died there in 1746 without any successors (presumably he never married). His father's personal writings and books⁹⁰ probably remained first in Sámuel's possession in their home in Fogaras, but later, following Sámuel's death, they were sent to András's family, together with Sámuel's personal archive.

The fight for the inheritance could have had a powerful impact on the relationship between the stepsiblings,⁹¹ but the correspondence between Sámuel and his stepbrother's son József suggests that, even if there were tensions

90 He had a letter sent to his mother on May 23, 1725 in which he asked her to send him some books: "I wrote to you not long ago, when I asked you, if you can find a way, to send me the following books: Cúntus Curtius, Gerhardus, and another Hungarian book which is Loci Communes Theologici." DJAN-MS, Colegiul Reformat, fond. 96, inv. 1467/1003.

91 Houlbrooke, *The English family*, 218; Perrier, "Coresidence of Siblings," 309–10.

between them due to the inheritance, they worked together to pay off their father's debts and tried to recover their father's past due salaries.⁹²

András authorized his son József to represent him because of his illness. In the 1740s, while András was ill and Sámuel was in Vienna, József was the one who finally succeeded in obtaining the long overdue salaries owed to his now deceased grandfather. Three letters give an impression of the relationship between uncle and nephew. Sámuel offered to recommend his nephew for his current post in the Chancellery if he himself were to be promoted. He also ordered a belt for Jozsef, and asked if József had gotten used to his work at the Gubernium. He also expressed gratitude for his work: "your big work deserves recognition, as for myself, I won't be ungrateful." The boy even helped Sámuel recover his own salary.

After receiving news of the recovery of his father's overdue salary, Sámuel gave his nephew instructions concerning how to share it: "First, we have to pay the Bethlen family ... but we should ask for a good receipt from them, because if any of them have some other written promises made by our father, they should forfeit any other claims from us [...] then we should give the discernments you promised, but if possible, a little less than you promised everybody, invoking the fact that we have a lot of debts to our creditors. After this, I will take 200 forint for my mother's debts [...] and the rest we will divide in half, I will take half for myself, the other half [will be] for my brother."⁹³

These letters also offer an impression of the relationship between András and Sámuel. In addition to the fact that they corresponded with each other (though unfortunately they did not continue this correspondence), Sámuel offered his stepbrother advice through his son: "If God helps me to get well, I will write to my brother not to spend his share, but to buy properties, he can live from that, and his sons also after him, otherwise he will remain without money or property."⁹⁴ While recovering from an illness, he joked about his shaky handwriting: "Please greet my brother with my word and my sister-in-law, and the rest of the family. My brother should not learn my writing style, as I'm afraid he won't gain anything with that change."⁹⁵ The other suggestive thing about their relationship is the way they referred to each other. Neither of them wrote

92 DJAN-MS, Colegiul Reformat, fond. 96, inv. 1467/1003, 1032, 1033.

93 DJAN-MS, Colegiul Reformat, fond. 96, inv. 1467/1003.

94 DJAN-MS, Colegiul Reformat, fond. 96, inv. 1467/1003.

95 DJAN-MS, Colegiul Reformat, fond. 96, inv. 1467/1003.

about the other as his half-sibling, but as “my younger brother” or “my older brother.”

Rozsnyai seems to have excluded his daughters from the testament. But Rebeka and Zsuzsanna, his daughters from the first marriage, did not accept being left nothing by their father, and they attacked the procedure, arguing that the division of the property had been done on the basis of a copy and not the original testament. The succession trials dragged on to the next generation. A number of witnesses’ hearings were organized to investigate the fate of the testament and the documents on which the inheritance was divided. Their written proceedings were also kept in the family archive.⁹⁶

In 1750, after his father and uncle had died, József composed a formidable argument, citing from the documents in the family archive in support of his contention that his aunts had no claim to any part of the inheritance. This argumentation shows that in 1712, when Rozsnyai listed the family documents for his eldest son, he also asked him letter, in which András committed not to withhold anything from his brother and also to share with Sámuel anything he would recover from Rozsnyai’s overdue salaries or other goods.⁹⁷ This document also contains a fragment from Rozsnyai’s testament: “András lives in a good place, he should recommend his brother enter under count Mikes’s protection or in a position close the Gubernator, the president [of the Diet], or to the Chancellor, and they should use their services there until they are able to harvest my sweat [recover overdue salaries]. If my two sons receive the amount due, for which I have documents as proof, they have to divide it in two equal parts, and they should buy back my pawned properties, but they should also give 200 forints to my wife, Rebeka Fogarasi. My eldest son should not forget about Sámuel or my wife, and, under curse, he should not disobey any of my orders. I was being equitable when I left him out of my estates from Fogaras, and I disposed of everything freely. If both of my sons pass away without heirs, based on our law, properties these can go to my two girls or their heirs.”

The debts and pawns he left behind made the two stepbrothers work together to pay them off and secure the whole inheritance. If the curses he left in his testament and other writings to discourage them from hiding anything from each other did not worry them, the unclear situation of their inheritance brought the boys together. They were able, 27 years after his death, to recover

96 DJAN-MS, Colegiul Reformat, fond. 96, inv. 1467/1002, 1007, 1013, 1014, 1015.

97 DJAN-MS, Colegiul Reformat, fond. 96, inv. 1467/1130.

their father's overdue salaries and, up until then, they continued to manage their father's financial obligations. Therefore, it is no surprise that they didn't want to share anything with their sisters/half-sisters. As we can see, Rozsnyai used one more method to strengthen their relationship: he instructed András to help Sámuel to obtain a good position, so that they could both act for a common goal.

Conclusions

The lives of members of Early Modern stepfamilies which came into being because of divorce and the evidence of the relationships among the members of these families are rarely mentioned in the kinds of sources on which historians can draw in the study of the history of the institution of family. Nevertheless, it is important to consider these families, because they are good examples of how relationships are redefined after a divorce and how family members deal with the emotional burden of this separation. They also offer insights into how the arrival of new family members (stepparents and stepsiblings) influences the equilibrium inside the larger family.

In the case of the Rozsnyai family, the divorce disrupted the original structure of the family, but it did not cause it to disintegrate. The parent who left continued to be involved in the lives of the children, especially of his son, and as head of his second family, he ensured his firstborn's position as heir. Even our scattered sources offer insights into the husband's position towards his former wife. The appearance of the stepmother in the larger family was not a great challenge for the children, since they did not live in the same household. But interaction with her was inevitable, even if they didn't share a complex relationship. Rozsnyai attempted to establish a connection between his second wife and his children from the first marriage and, through them, with their mother.

After the divorce, the father promised to ensure financial support for his children and take care of their education, but he was only able to establish a closer emotional bond with his son from his second marriage through his continuous presence and guidance. His oldest son was already a young adult when they reconnected and the estranged son helped his father manage his financial problems by taking advantage of assistance provided by his influential supporters.

Of the relationships among the halfsiblings, we have details only about the one established between Rozsnyai's two sons, which developed in part due to the

early introduction of the eldest son into his father's financial matters and also due to the preparation of the younger son for the division of the inheritance. Through his testament, Rozsnyai also seems to have done his best to ensure that his two sons would have an amicable relationship, because he bequeathed them an equal share of his wealth.

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