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Zsuzsa Török

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# Mother of Three and Widow of the Nation: The Hungarian Mrs Vachott (1828–96) as Protégé-Editor

ZSUZSA TÖRÖK

Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute for Literary Studies (Eötvös Loránd Research Network), Budapest

[torok.zsuzsa@btk.mta.hu](mailto:torok.zsuzsa@btk.mta.hu)

## ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the editorial undertakings of the Hungarian Mária Csapó (1828–96), better known as Mrs Vachott. Using her personal correspondence, memoirs, and the magazines she edited, the article traces the particularities of Mrs Vachott's career as an author and periodical editor. It does so by examining her performed identities in real life and as editor of various magazines. Furthermore, it intends to demonstrate that Mrs Vachott's professional endeavours were defined and shaped by a personal loss that eventually became her strongest symbolic capital in building up a literary career. Finally, the article suggests that Mrs Vachott's case offers valuable insights into the types of editorial roles that women inhabited during the nineteenth century.

## KEYWORDS

women editors, women's magazines, Hungary, widowhood, mentorship, Mária Csapó, Mrs Vachott

Baron József Eötvös, a distinguished Hungarian writer and statesman (in 1848 and from 1867 to 1871 he was the Minister of Religion and Education), addressed a letter to Mrs Vachott on 23 June 1863. This letter preceded the launch of *Magyar Gazdasszonyok Hetilapja* [*Magazine of Hungarian Women's Household Management*] (1863–65), a journal that would be edited by Mrs Vachott herself. The letter reads as follows:

I have been so terribly busy lately that I just could not pay you a visit. However, there is no need for me to revise the editorial program as I am convinced that you can perfectly manage it on your own. As a matter of fact, being tremendously engaged at work, I simply do not have time for every single detail. The magazine is on the move, its programme written, you can count on my editorials as well as on other contributors, not to mention my suggestions concerning your translations. For the rest, the main task lies on your shoulders. You cannot rely completely on my help during these days when due to problems on the lowland I barely have a spare minute.

[...]

I will pay you a visit as soon as I can. In the meantime, I do ask you to continue with your plans, and follow Gyulai's advice in my absence. You often mentioned being more practical than other women. You have the opportunity to prove your abilities now. Should the women in the association realize that you always seek guidance and follow advice, you will have a more difficult and inconvenient position to face than otherwise. God bless you, and please do not take my down-to-earth letter amiss. I am so busy I cannot remember my own name, and on top of it I do not feel too well. I will call on you as soon as possible, in the meantime do not wait for me, just keep on with your work.<sup>1</sup>

The rather irritated tone of the letter, written by an over-committed Eötvös, was the outcome of a protector-protégé relationship that for many years had been shaping Mrs Vachott and the baron's correspondence and casual encounters. It was Eötvös who guided and counselled Mrs Vachott in all her literary enterprises and editorial undertakings. In a letter written in 1870, Mrs Vachott herself confessed: 'I wouldn't have the courage to act or even think anything that was in opposition to your orders or your will.'<sup>2</sup>

This article argues that Mrs Vachott's editorship can only be understood in the light of her particular relationship with the baron. While nineteenth-century women authors were often surrounded by male mentors throughout their careers, Mrs Vachott took Eötvös's mentorship to an extreme. For instance, until 1871, the year of the baron's death, she subjected all her writing and editorial pursuits to Eötvös's suggestions and approval, and she never took the initiative to do anything by herself. Using her personal correspondence, especially the letters exchanged with József Eötvös, her memoirs, and the magazines she edited, I will trace the particularities of her career as an author and periodical editor, paying special attention to her performed identities in real life and

- 1 József Eötvös to Mrs Vachott, 23 June 1863, in Eötvös József, *Levelek* [*Letters*], ed. by Oltványi Ambrus (Budapest: Magyar Helikon, 1976), pp. 364–65. All translations in the article are my own. The term 'lowland' refers to the Great Hungarian Plain affected by the Great Drought in 1863. 'Gyulai' is a reference to Pál Gyulai, the greatest Hungarian critic of the nineteenth century. 'The women in the association' alludes to the members of the National Association of Hungarian Mistresses, established in 1861.
- 2 Mrs Vachott to József Eötvös, [11 October 1870], Budapest, National Széchényi Library, Manuscripts, VIII/1957.

as editor of two magazines.<sup>3</sup> It was through these performed identities that she could reach out to both a protector and a well-defined women's magazine readership. Similar to Marianne Van Remoortel's approach, my article accentuates the importance of the periodicals' relationship to lived reality — the vagaries and vicissitudes of people's lives, the social networks in which they participated and the ongoing processes of periodical publication'.<sup>4</sup> My aim is to demonstrate that Mrs Vachott as author and editor capitalized on a personal loss that not only defined and shaped her professional endeavours but eventually became her strongest symbolic asset in building up a literary career.

Literary and press historians have already devoted considerable attention to the elasticity of editorship. As Beth Palmer notes, thinking about women editors 'requires a relatively fluid understanding of professionalism in which the commercial and the social are interwoven'.<sup>5</sup> Thus, a series of recent studies have accentuated the multiple and shifting roles carried out by editors, and have argued, in Matthew Philpotts's words, for a more 'formalized conceptualization of the editorial role that might act as a platform for serious comparative and typological research'.<sup>6</sup> While my article seeks to situate its protagonist in the light of recent scholarship on women editors, it does not address the theoretical implications of female editorship. Rather, it aims to provide an insight into the particularities of one Hungarian woman editor's case in the Habsburg Empire during the second half of the nineteenth century.

Mrs Vachott was born Mária Csapó (1828–96) into a middle-class family in cousinship or friendship with practically all notable representatives of the Hungarian intellectuals of early-nineteenth-century Pest. In 1843, at the age of fifteen, she married Sándor Vachott, a poet and solicitor. They moved out of the capital to a nearby village, had three children, and lived a relatively quiet and happy life. The events of the Revolution and War of Independence of 1848–49 passed without major casualties affecting their family. However, in the autumn of 1852, Sándor Vachott was arrested by the Austrian police, and due to some anti-Habsburg poems found in their lodgings, charged with high

- 3 For the gendering of the editorial role as performative based on Judith Butler's formulations, see Beth Palmer, *Women's Authorship and Editorship in Victorian Culture: Sensational Strategies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 12–14.
- 4 Marianne Van Remoortel, *Women, Work and the Victorian Periodical: Living by the Press* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 5.
- 5 Beth Palmer, 'Assuming the Role of Editor', in *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Women's Writing*, ed. by Linda H. Peterson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 59–72 (p. 60).
- 6 Matthew Philpotts, 'The Role of the Periodical Editor: Literary Journals and Editorial Habitus', *Modern Language Review*, 107.1 (2012), 39–64 (p. 40). For the sensation novelist editor as respectable woman writer, see Solveig C. Robinson, 'Editing Belgravia: M. E. Braddon's Defense of "Light Literature"', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 28.2 (1995), 109–22; Jennifer Phegley, 'Domesticating the Sensation Novelist: Ellen Price Wood as Author and Editor of the *Argosy Magazine*', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 38.2 (2005), 180–98. For the woman editor as sub-editor, see Anne M. Windholz, 'The Woman Who Would be Editor: Ella D'Arcy and the *Yellow Book*', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 29.2 (1996), 116–30. For the editor as advocate, see Maria Frawley, 'The Editor as Advocate: Emily Faithfull and *The Victoria Magazine*', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 31.1 (1998), 87–104; June Sturrock, 'Establishing Identity: Editorial Correspondence from the Early Years of *The Monthly Packet*', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 39.3 (2006), 266–79. For the celebrity author-editor, see Beth Palmer, "'Chieftaness," "Great Duchess," "Editress! Mysterious Being!": Performing Editorial Identities in Florence Marryat's *London Society Magazine*', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 42.2 (2009), 136–54, and Palmer, *Women's Authorship and Editorship*, pp. 117–56. For the editor as facilitator, see Fionnuala Dillane, "'The Character of the Editress": Marian Evans at the *Westminster Review*, 1851–54', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 30.2 (2011), 269–90, and Fionnuala Dillane, *Before George Eliot: Marian Evans and the Periodical Press* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 21–63; Beth Rodgers, 'The Editor of the Period: Alice Corkran, the Girl's Realm and the Woman Editor', in *Women, Periodicals and Print Culture in Britain, 1830s–1900s: The Victorian Period*, ed. by Alexis Easley, Clare Gill, and Beth Rodgers (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), pp. 164–77. For the editor as cultural professional, see Marianne Van Remoortel, 'Women Editors and the Rise of the Illustrated Fashion Press in the Nineteenth Century', *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 39.4 (2017), 269–95.

treason and imprisoned.<sup>7</sup> During his imprisonment he suffered a nervous breakdown, and he was eventually released in the spring of 1853, but he never recovered. After a longer period of hospitalization he died in 1861.

As a result of her husband's infirmity and unavoidable death, Mrs Vachott found herself and her children without a husband and a father to provide for the family. (Fig. 1) It appears that it was Sándor Vachott's illness and death that compelled Mrs Vachott to pursue writing and editing as a professional career. In her memoirs written in 1887 she recalled:

When I started my career as a professional writer several years ago writing was much easier. — I was a young woman then, but the disaster brought about by my husband's unfortunate fate had struck me deeply and destroyed my happiness. I could not have survived it without intellectual work, hence, I was destined to take up the pen. For my children meant everything to me, and as I was surrounded by my little boy and girls, I started to write for them.<sup>8</sup>

The prevailing ideology of domesticity in the nineteenth century deeply influenced the way Mrs Vachott perceived her new role and identity in contemporary society. She repeatedly accentuated in her letters, memoirs, and articles published in the magazines she edited that she had been compelled to take up the pen and pursue a literary career out of existential need rather than a desire to push for women's emancipation. Therefore, she consistently capitalized on the belief originating in the cult of domesticity that women were innately weaker, less capable of taking care of themselves in the public sphere, and in need of constant protection. Left alone, without her husband's protection, she started performing a role, that of the nation's widow, which was immensely appealing to contemporary Hungarian society.

As a result of the Revolution and War of Independence of 1848–49, many Hungarian upper- and middle-class women had become widows as their husbands had died on the battlefields, or had been executed in the aftermath of the uprising. With the Habsburgs as permanent pretenders to the Hungarian Crown since early modern times, the Revolution sought to re-establish the long-suppressed desire for political change, that is independence. However, the Hungarian revolutionary army was eventually defeated by the Austrians, and 'order' was restored through executions and a centralized administration that reduced freedom of the press, too. Contemporary society thus became substantially supportive towards women perceived as widows of those men who had given their lives for their country. Lower-middle-class women were often helped through voluntary aids, while upper-class widows obtained a highly symbolic position that constantly reminded the nation of their current political affairs with the Austrian government. Due to these particular historical circumstances an overpowering solidarity towards those in need defined Hungarian society in the 1850s and 1860s.

Mrs Vachott consciously relied on these historical circumstances, as well as her personal loss, when she decided to pursue a literary career. Her deceased husband, Sándor Vachott, a highly esteemed poet of the 1840s, was distinguished now as a martyr who sacrificed his life for his country. As a result, contemporary writers, Sándor Vachott's former colleagues and friends, did not hesitate to help his widow and children, motivated not only by Christian compassion but by political reasons as well. Hence, Mrs Vachott

7 For details about Sándor Vachott's arrest, see Deák Ágnes, 'Vachott Sándor elfogatásának körülményei és dokumentumai, 1852 [Circumstances of Sándor Vachott's Arrest in 1852, Based on New Documents]', *Irodalomismeret*, 27.2 (2016), 40–49.

8 Vachott Sándorné, *Rajzok a múltból: Emlékiratok [Sketches From the Past: Memoirs]*, 2 vols (Budapest: Aigner Lajos: 1887–89), I (1887), p. v.



**Vachott Sándorné.**

Fig. 1 Portrait of Mária Csapó (1828–96), better known as Mrs Vachott, as a widow, *Hazánk s a Külföld* [*Our Country and the World*], 3 February 1867. Electronic Periodicals Archive & Database, Hungarian Electronic Library

not only received annuity payments from the Hungarian Writers' Aid Association established in 1861, which had been informally operating from 1854 to help writers and their families in need, but she was also assisted in her various literary enterprises by her husband's former colleagues and friends. Of these, Baron József Eötvös would become her greatest protector, mentor, and adviser.

Eötvös uninterruptedly guided, advised, and sustained Mrs Vachott in her personal undertakings and professional endeavours, too, from 1852 to 1871, the year of his death. Mrs Vachott solicited his first intervention in 1852 while her husband was still imprisoned. Though the poet was finally released due to his illness, Eötvös continued aiding Mrs Vachott by raising money for the invalid's hospitalization and by encouraging her literary pursuits. Eötvös revised her manuscripts, oriented her towards particular thematic ideas, provided her with translations, and acted as a mediator between her and her publishers. Finally, it was again the baron who stood behind her editorial undertakings, too. As he was the Minister of Religion and Education in 1848 and again from 1867 to 1871, it was he who suggested that Mrs Vachott edit a periodical targeted at a specific female audience, that of mothers, and it was he again who assisted her in the conceptualization of its editorial programme, in practical dealings and administrative tasks with the publisher, and in purchasing articles and translations for the magazine.

As Mrs Vachott herself revealed in one of the books she edited, the baron provided guidance on the path she had to follow, that of literature and education.<sup>9</sup>

By the time Mrs Vachott published the first issue of *Anyák Hetilapja* [*Mothers' Magazine*] on 1 April 1861, she had already published three novels, two annuals, and a collection of short stories. From 1861 on she focused her writing and editorial pursuits around publications aimed at a female audience assumed to be engaged in the care of their children, and responsible for their religious and moral education. By the time the first issue of the magazine was released, Emília Kánya (1830–1905), the first Hungarian female editor, had already launched her journal titled *Családi Kör* [*Family Circle*] (1860–80). This journal, discussed in Petra Bozsoki's contribution to this special issue, would dominate the female-centred periodical market for the next twenty years, and eventually became the most successful of its genre in the nineteenth-century Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. But while *Családi Kör* targeted a wider middle-class female readership, in Mrs Vachott's journal readers were addressed specifically as 'mothers', and the magazine focused its interest exclusively on the moral and spiritual aspects of mothering. Though she had already gained some experience as a novel and short story writer and as an editor of two annuals, Mrs Vachott was not familiar with existing editorial practices. Consequently, while editing her journal, she again relied consistently on József Eötvös for guidance. According to their correspondence, they met on a regular basis to discuss tasks related to the editing of the magazine. In addition to being inexperienced, Mrs Vachott could not follow previous examples of female editorial respectability. She and Emília Kánya were the first Hungarian women editors in the nineteenth century, in a publishing world almost exclusively dominated by men.

Published on a weekly basis, *Anyák Hetilapja* was serious in tone and sober in appearance, without illustrations. (Fig. 2) It offered a mix of genres such as serial fiction, poetry, translated foreign articles about female education, stories framed as autobiographical accounts by 'reliable sources' (that is, 'real' mothers), aphorisms from foreign classics, children's plays, occasionally prayers for children, portraits and short biographies of notable Hungarian women and men with a moralizing tone, and even some pieces of social and political news. Its contributors were equally male and female, and the articles were usually signed. Readers of the magazine were assumed to be engaged in the care of their children. As such, the journal located its readership in the private sphere of the woman-centred family as defined by middle-class discourse. *Anyák Hetilapja* did not reflect upon other aspects of women's lives, such as spinsterhood or widowhood.

As a consequence, while 'behind the scenes', in real life, Mrs Vachott continued to perform the role of helpless widow in need of assistance, as editor of *Anyák Hetilapja*, in print, her established identity was primarily that of a mother. She wrote many of the moralizing short stories, advice columns, and autobiographical articles, and, as was the case with many other foreign women editors, it was from her experience as a mother that she derived the authority to 'author' herself into public print.<sup>10</sup> As she stated in her editorial programme published in the first issue of *Anyák Hetilapja*, 'as my particular situation led me to writing in the publicity of print, the least I could do was to embrace topics that as a mother I was most familiar with'.<sup>11</sup> Mrs Vachott persisted in using

9 *Babérlombok báró Eötvös József műveiből* [*Bays from József Eötvös's Works*], füzte mély hálája és hódolata emlékéül [edited as a token of her gratitude and reverence by] Vachott Sándorné (Pest: Heckenast Gusztáv, 1871), p. vi.

10 Margaret Beetham, 'Thinking Back Through our Mother's Magazines: Feminism's Inheritance from Nineteenth-Century Magazines for Mothers', *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies*, 6.2 (2010) [accessed 25 October 2019].

11 Vachott Sándorné, 'A Nőkhez' [To Women], *Anyák Hetilapja* (6 April 1861), 1.

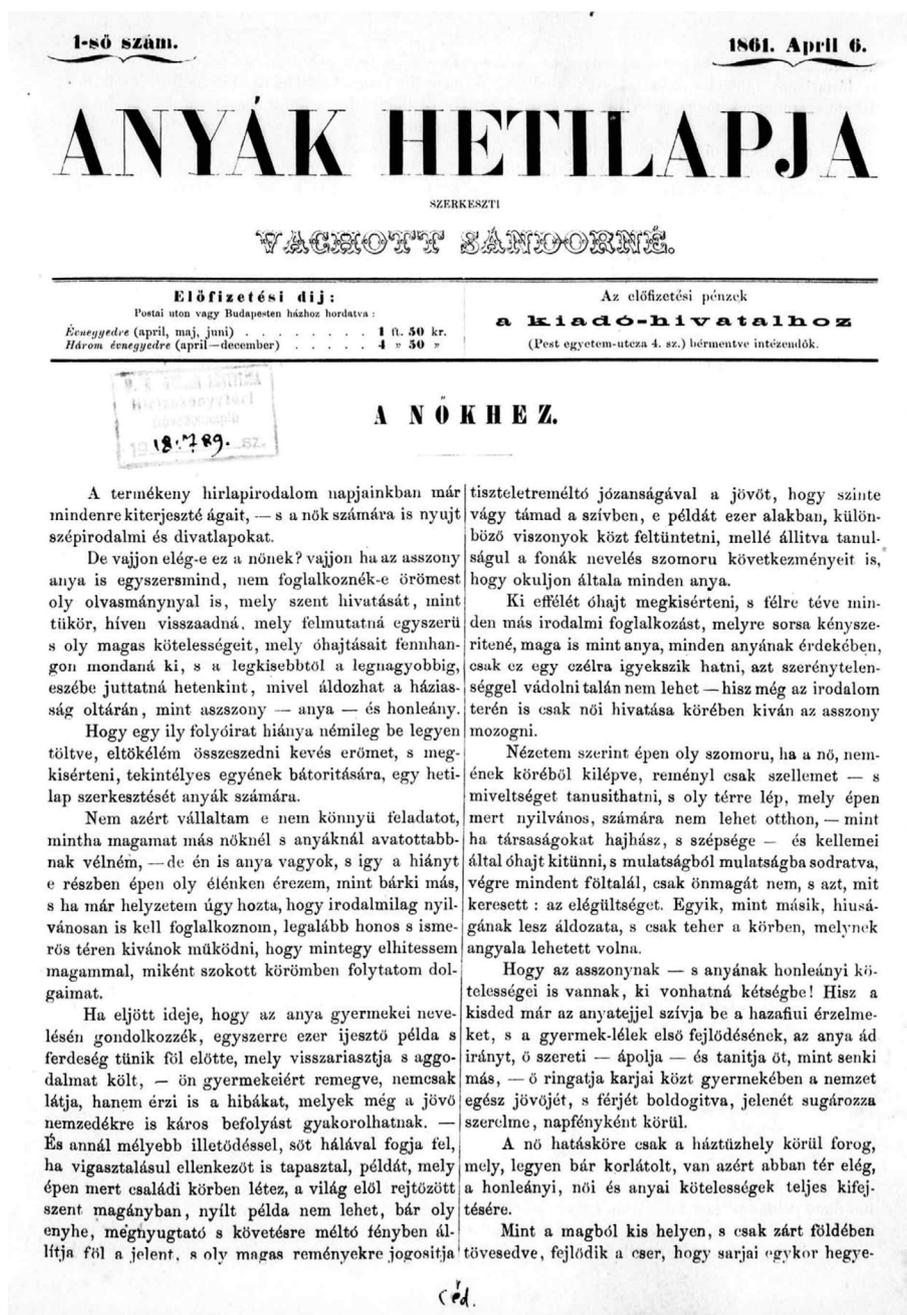


Fig. 2 Front page of the first issue of *Anyák Hetilapja* [*Mothers' Magazine*], 6 April 1861. Electronic Periodicals Archive & Database, Hungarian Electronic Library

the pen name 'Mrs Sándor Vachott' in all her writings and editorial undertakings, a signature that had a double meaning for contemporary readers.<sup>12</sup> For those who knew her well from 9 April 1861 (the date of her husband's death), it was a reference to

12 Charlotte C. Watkins calls this kind of signature a 'conservative social custom'. Charlotte C. Watkins, 'Editing a "Class Journal": Four Decades of the *Queen*', in *Innovators and Preachers: The Role of the Editor in Victorian England*, ed. by Joel H. Wiener (Westport and London: Greenwood Press, 1985), pp. 185–200 (p. 193).

her widowhood, but for a wider readership it was a signifier of her status as a married woman. It appears that introducing herself as a respectably married woman and mother of several children not only authorized her to present herself as a reliable source on mothering, but also enabled her to reinforce current gender ideologies.

However, despite Mrs Vachott's efforts, *Anyák Hetilapja* could not avoid its ill-fated ending. Lacking a sufficient number of subscribers (it had a circulation of only 300 copies), it proved to be short-lived: the last issue of the magazine was published on 28 December of the same year it was founded, 1861. However, as seen from József Eötvös's letter quoted at the beginning of this article, two years later and after several other short-lived attempts, another possibility with different editorial principles arose for the widow. It was the editorship of a journal titled *Magyar Gazdasszonyok Hetilapja* [*Magazine of Hungarian Women's Household Management*] (1863–65). (Fig. 3)

This magazine was published by the National Association of Hungarian Mistresses established in 1861. Two prominent 'national widows' were among its initiators and board members: Mrs Lajos Batthyány and Mrs János Damjanich. The former was the widow of the first Prime Minister of Hungary in 1848, executed by a firing squad on 6 October 1849, the same day as the Thirteen Martyrs of Arad; the latter was the widow of the general of the Hungarian Revolutionary Army in 1848, who was also executed among the Martyrs of Arad. Hence, the magazine itself held strong political connotations. As a matter of fact, the initiative to establish a journal of the association originated with József Eötvös and Ferenc Deák. Deák was a prominent Hungarian statesman, too, and Minister of Justice, commonly known as 'The Wise Man of the Nation', who later took on a major role in the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, which partially re-established the sovereignty of the Kingdom of Hungary. Both Eötvös and Deák were protectors of Mrs Vachott and her family, and the baron once more obtained for her the position of editor of the magazine.<sup>13</sup>

Also published on a weekly basis, *Magyar Gazdasszonyok Hetilapja* addressed women not only as wives and mothers, but also as mistresses, heads of families in charge of the moral conduct of family members and domestic affairs, and as patriotic women with a strong national commitment. It published leading articles on women's charity work, various pieces of literature, and many articles dealing with household management issues. It also regularly informed its readers about exhibitions displaying women's domestic industry and art needlework, and about attempts to establish institutions that provided formal education for young girls in need, training them to become proper housekeepers or female domestic servants. Mrs Vachott, as mother of three children and as the only head of her family, again found through the editorship of the magazine the proper means to display a conventional nineteenth-century gendered identity. Though the journal had a higher circulation than *Anyák Hetilapja* (it maintained an average circulation of about 700 copies), it proved to be an equally unfortunate and short-lived attempt.<sup>14</sup> It ceased publication in September 1865, two years after its inception.

To conclude, the journals edited by Mrs Vachott resembled those foreign women's magazines that, as stated by Margaret Beetham, 'offered not only to pattern the reader's

13 For the role Ferenc Deák played as protector of Mrs Vachott see: Deák Ágnes, 'Deák Ferenc és Vachott Sándorné Csapó Mária [Ferenc Deák and Mrs Vachott (Mária Csapó)]', in *„Jól esik köztetek lenni...”: Női sorsok, szerepek Deák Ferenc környezetében [‘I Cherish Every Moment I Spend amongst You’: Female Destinies and Roles in Ferenc Deák's Life]*, ed. by Kiss Gábor (Zalaegerszeg: Zalaegerszegi Milleniumi Közalapítvány, Degré Alajos Zalai Honismereti Alapítvány, 2015), pp. 111–32.

14 These circulation numbers are quite insignificant compared to nineteenth-century British periodicals. *Belgravia*, for instance, had an average circulation of 15,000 copies from 1866 to 1876 (Robinson, p. 110). *London Society's* circulation in the mid-1860s was 20,000 (Palmer, *Women's Authorship and Editorship*, p. 138).

MAGYAR  
GAZDASSZONYOK HETILAPJA.

Megjelenik

több kitünő író és író nő közreműködése mellett minden csütörtökön.

<p><b>Szerkesztői szállás:</b> nádor-utca, 19. sz. hová a lapot illető kéziratok bérmentve küldendők.</p>	<p><b>Kiadó hivatal:</b> Ferenczy-utca 7-dik szám. A lap anyagi részét illető közlemények (elfizetési pénz, kiadása körüli panaszok) a kiadó-hivatalhoz küldendők.</p>	<p><b>Előfizetési díj:</b> Helyben hához hordva: Egész évre 5 frt. Félévre 2 frt 50 kr. — Posta külföldre: 6 frt. — Az előfizetési pénzek E m i c h G u s t á v kiadó-hivatalába (Barátok-tere 7. sz.) küldendők.</p>
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Harmadik évfolyam.

2. szám.

Pest, Január 12. 1865.

**A magyar gazdasszonyok hatásköre \*).**

V.

Jelen viszonyaink közt, mint honfiainknak mindenképp felett magyar gazdáknak, gazdálkodóknak (takarékos) és saját gazdaságukban egyszersmind nemzetgazdáknak, úgy honleányainknak mindenképp felett gazdasszonyoknak, magyar asszonyoknak és ugyszólván „nemzetgazdasszonyok”-nak kell lenniök, vagyis: lehetően egybe kell kapcsolniök, egyéni és családi érdekeiket a közérdekekkel, melyekhez közelebb senki sem áll, mint ők.

Századok óta nem ment oly lényeges változásokon át a magyar nemzet küls belviszonya és kivált a széles értelemben vett társas vagy polgári viszony, mint minőn most másfél évtized óta megy, menesztek a jövő évtizedekben is mennie kell, ha a másfél évtized előtt kapott löködés következtében elbukni nem akar; ha saját lábain akarja megtenni az utat, melyen Európa népeinek rohama menni kényszeríti — sorsa vonszolja vagy vezeti.

Sok részben sokat veszített az összes nemzet; sokban megfogyott hajdani gazdagságához és erejéhez képest; legtöbbet veszített azonban azon három, négyszázezer család (m. e. 800,000 lélek) melyet kiváltságos, nemes osztálynak szoktunk nevezni.

Több száz millió frt értékű volt azon urbéri munka, mit ez — bár némi kárpótlás mellett, elengedett — de ezen kárpótlás terheit önmaga is viselte és pedig oly szerencsétlenül, hogy alig adhatta el száz fős papírjait 64—65 frtért, még viszont nem csak az egész 100 frt megtérítéséhez, de az egész kár-térítési végrehajtás tetemes költségeihez, legnagyobb mérvben járult. Lemondott ezen osztály törvényes kiváltságairól, előnyeiről, melyek

\*.) E czikk folytatása Kubinyi Lajos előbbi érzékes czikkjeinek.

mentesítették az adózástól s kizárólagos képességet engedtek a hivatalok viselésére. Tehát míg egyrésztől viszályáltak a kiváltságosak előjogaiktól, melyek biztos jövedelmi forrással szolgálhattak s melyeknél fogva saját javaikat sikeresen előbb mozdították, addig másrésztől jelentékeny közterheket vállaltak magukra . . . pedig a közadókön kívül sok más hazafiai közterhek nehezültek ezen osztályra, melyeket magyar gazdasszonyaink leginkább érezhetnek; egészen új terhek, melyeknek vége, hossza nincs; honfiai, honleányi terhek, melyeket a jelenkor hozott létre és növel.

Itt van példál az irodalom, melyet fentartani — de nem elég fentartani: gyarapítani, fejleszteni kell, mert benne még óriási hézagok vannak. — Még csak most keletkeznek a nemzetgazdászati eszmék, a magyar gazdasszonyaink szereplése a nemzetgazdászati — még nincs kellő terjedelmű gazdászati s gazdasszonykodási irodalmunk. Pedig a magyar gazdasszonykodás nem csupán „próza” élet: a magyar gazdasszonyok főfeladata: „költői széppé tenni a prózai életet;” és ehez sokáig, sokoldalú olvasottság — hatalmas nagy szépirodalom kell, melynek elvei behatoljanak a családeletbe, s ott képviseltessenek minden szóban, tettben.

De nem csupán ily tehek nehezdedek reánk. Hiszen az irodalom százszorosan visszafizeti szellemileg és anyagilag a csekély költséget, melyet igényel. Oly költségek nehezdedek reánk, melyek a családok, a nemzet tökeit veszik igénybe, és hiu örömet ugyan nyújthatnak, de semmi kamatot nem hoznak, csupán vágyainkat, s az elégedetlenséget csigázzák fel.

Országszerte óriási teherrel nehezedik reánk a fényűzés — pedig nincs hazai iparunk, mely ezt kielégethessen. Szükséges rossz ez oly államban, melyben sok igen gazdag család van, mert eszköz arra nézve, hogy ezektől a szegény s többnyire igen

szegény családok; értéktelen czikkkeért, melyekbe sok fáradságot fektettek, kiérdemeljék kenyertüket. De nálunk nincsenek „nagyon” gazdag családok, sem oly „igen” szegény családok, melyek valóban közhasznú munkák által ki ne érdemelhetnék kenyertüket.

Nagy csapás reánk nézve, hogy a fényűzési czikkke élvezetét megszoktuk, nélkülözhetlennek tartjuk, nem csak anyagi, hanem erkölcsi szempontból is. Öszetévesztettük ugyanis a fényűzést az izlés a kebel és szellem műveltségével, a fényűzést veszszük ezek megítélésével fő zsinormértékül s így ezek, százezrek minden áron törekednek beszerezni és élvezni a fényűzés ezikkkeit — hogy művelteknek tartassanak, ha bár bensőleg műveletlenek; vagy műveletleneknek ne tartassanak, ha már bensőleg műveltek . . . Sok elégedetlenségnek, sok boldogtalanságnak, sok oktalan gögnek forrása ez . . .

Nem szabad elhallgatnunk (bár kellemetlen dolog kimondanunk) hogy a fényűzés iránti téveszék behatoltak családeletünkbe, társaskörünkbe (melyekben már igen erős gyökereket vertek és igen is figyelmes ápolásra találnak) sőt növeléinkbe is annyira, hogy végkép háttérbe szoritandják a családiás növelés előnyeit, ha kiirtásukról nem gondoskodunk.

Természetes hivatásuk honunk leányainak, hogy a növeléinkben jó honleányokká, szóval, valódi „magyar gazdasszonyokká” képeztessenek elő — és növeléink többnyire Nyugot-európa növeléinek nyomán haladván, sokkal közelebb állnak ahhoz, hogy növeléinket jó prima-donnákká, ügyes társalgókká, s a városi élvék után kifogyhatlanul sovárgó ábrándos hölgyekké — mintsem jó magyar gazdasszonyokká képeznek, kiknek falun kell keresniök boldogságukat — ott kell költőivé tenniök az életön és családjuk számára — mert végre is : a

Fig. 3 Front page of *Magyar Gazdasszonyok Hetilapja* [*Magazine of Hungarian Women's Household Management*], 12 January 1865. National Széchényi Library, Newspaper and Periodical Collection

gendered identity but to address her desire'.<sup>15</sup> Yet while family literary magazines in general appealed to women not solely through domesticity but also through literary values that women readers could use 'to advance the cultural status of the nation', due to specific historical circumstances in nineteenth-century Hungary their nationalistic

15 Margaret Beetham, *A Magazine of Her Own? Domesticity and Desire in the Woman's Magazine, 1800-1914* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 1.

intention could take a more accentuated perspective.<sup>16</sup> For Mrs Vachott, who was compelled to take up the pen, writing and editing resulted in multiple performative strategies that she repeatedly had to balance. Overall, editorship offered her the means to reinforce gender ideologies prevalent in the nineteenth century. With József Eötvös she benefited from her performed role of helpless woman and helpless widow of the nation, and embodied a particular editorial type, that of the protégé-editor in need of continuous guidance. For her readers, too, she enacted the conventional behaviour of a mother and mistress of her household, and in the editorial role she adopted she complied with contemporary Hungarian male critics' expectations towards women writers: that is to write primarily for the education and well-being of their children. As she herself asserted in the editorial programme of *Anyák Hetilapja*, she only wished to remain within the confines of her female vocation as a writer and editor. All in all, her editorship offers valuable insight into the various roles women inhabited as editors during the nineteenth century.

**Zsuzsa Török** is a research fellow at the Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute for Literary Studies (Eötvös Loránd Research Network), Budapest. Her research interests include women's writing, periodical studies, and Hungarian-British contacts in the nineteenth century. Among her recently published articles in English are "Notorious Beyond Any Other European Woman of Her Generation: The Case of Count(ess) Sarolta/Sándor Vay", *Slavonica*, 23.1 (2018), 53–68, and 'Manuscript Culture and Nineteenth-Century Women's Life Writing: The Diaries of Baroness Jozefa Wesselényi', *Teksty Drugie*, 31.1 (2020), 79–89.

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16 Jennifer Phegley, *Educating the Proper Woman Reader: Victorian Family Literary Magazines and the Cultural Health of the Nation* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2004), p. 15.

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