

## Female learning and literacy of the Nuns of Our Lady in 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century Bratislava

Anna Tüskés

Research fellow, Institute of Literary Studies, Research Centre for the Humanities, Budapest

This study presents three new groups of sources which contribute to clarifying the circumstances of the establishment of the school of girls of the Canonesses of Saint Augustine of the Congregation of Notre Dame and its teaching from 1747 in Bratislava, capital of the Kingdom of Hungary.

### I. Introduction

The educational activities focusing on the instruction of girls of the Canonesses of Saint Augustine of the Congregation of Notre Dame (founded by Pierre Fourier (1565-1640) and Alix Le Clerc (1576-1622) at the beginning of the 17th century),<sup>1</sup> arrived in Central Europe in the middle of the 18th century. It was not the only order to take charge of the education of women: while the Ursulines founded in Lombardy by Angela Merici (1474-1540) more than half a century earlier mainly educated girls from the urban bourgeoisie, the Canonesses of Saint Augustine specialized in the education of girls from mostly aristocratic families. The Order of Saint Ursula was invited to the Kingdom of Hungary from Vienna by Archbishop György Szelepcsényi (1595-1685), they opened their first school in 1676 in Bratislava. Later, they also founded schools in other big cities.<sup>2</sup> A third order, the Congregation of Jesus (English Sisters) founded by Mary Ward (1585-1645) in 1609 at Saint-Omer to educate daughters of emigrated English Catholic families, was also present in Central Europe with the center in Munich. They were first invited to the Kingdom of Hungary in 1628 by Cardinal Péter Pázmány (1570-1637), but their first convent in Bratislava only operated for six years.<sup>3</sup> Their permanent resettlement was the work of Empress Maria Theresa.<sup>4</sup> Members of these three monastic orders transmitted

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<sup>1</sup> R. TAVENEAUX (ed.), *Saint Pierre Fourier en son temps, actes du colloque de Mirecourt*, Presses Universitaires de Nancy, Nancy 1992; R. TAVENEAUX, *La pastorale, l'éducation, l'Europe chrétienne*, Messene, Paris 1995.

<sup>2</sup> A. TÜSKÉS, "Szent Orsolya tisztelete a 18. századi Magyarországon és az orsolyita rend", in R. BAJÁKI, O. BÁTHORY (eds.), *A nők és a régi magyarországi vallásosság*, MTA-PPKE Barokk Irodalom és Lelkiség Kutatócsoport, Budapest 2015, pp. 351-361; A. TÜSKÉS, "The Cult of St Ursula in Hungary: Legend, Altars and Reliquaries", in J. CARTWRIGHT Jane (ed.), *The Cult of St Ursula and the 11,000 Virgins*, University of Wales Press, Cardiff 2016, pp. 187-204.

<sup>3</sup> Zs. KÁDÁR, "Leánynevelés jezsuita szellemben: az angolkisasszonyok pozsonyi gimnáziuma (1628–1630)", in R. BAJÁKI, O. BÁTHORY (eds.), *Lelkiség és oktatás a régi Magyarországon*, MTA-PPKE Barokk Irodalom és Lelkiség Kutatócsoport, Budapest 2018, pp. 139-146.

<sup>4</sup> F. BENCZIK, "Az angolkisasszonyok nevelési elvei a pesti iskolájuk tükrében a 18. és 19. században", in R. SZULY Rita, P. P. KRÁNITZ (eds.), *Társadalom térben és időben: Tanulmányok az új- és modernkori*

a different type of culture and knowledge to their students.<sup>5</sup> The Ursulines and the English Sisters taught in the language of the people, while the canonesses taught in French and gave a French culture of high nobility.

It is in the Holy Roman Empire that the Canonesses of Saint Augustine were first invited to found institutes outside of France:<sup>6</sup> Stadt-am-Hof, near Regensburg, was one of the first cities in Germany in this regard. Their reputation continued to spread as far as the Kingdom of Hungary, whose magnates decided to introduce the Canonesses of Notre Dame into their homeland. Six canonesses were sent to Bratislava (Pressburg, Pozsony) to establish the first (and, for a long time, only) house of Notre Dame in the Kingdom of Hungary in 1747 with the permission of the Empress Maria Theresa.<sup>7</sup>

So far, research has analysed their activities on the basis of sources kept in the City Archives of Bratislava. This study presents three new groups of sources which contribute to clarifying the circumstances of the establishment of the school and its French-language teaching: 1. the twenty-three letters written by the mother superior Anna Victoria Werschovetz to the founder, Countess Oneil,<sup>8</sup> between 1747–1753, kept in the Forgách collection of the Hungarian National Archives in Budapest, 2. the ten French manuscript books transferred from

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*Magyarország eszme-, művelődés- és társadalomtörténetéből*, Magyar Napló – Írott Szó Alapítvány, Budapest–Piliscsaba 2015, pp. 118-136.

<sup>5</sup> A. PANDULA, “Damenorden und Auszeichnungen für Frauen im Reich der Habsburger”, *Annales Universitatis Scientiarum Budapestinensis de Rolando Eötvös Nominatae, Sectio historica*, tom. 23-1983, pp. 271-290; E. KOWALSKÁ, *Státne l’udové školstvo na Slovensku na prelome 18. a 19. Storočia*, Historické štúdie, Bratislava 1987; E. KOWALSKÁ, “Horizonte der Mädchenausbildung in 18. Jahrhundert”, in V. ČIČAJ, O. PICKL (eds.), *Städtisches Alltagsleben in Mitteleuropa vom Mittelalter bis zum Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Bratislava 1998, pp. 195-204; E. KOWALSKÁ, “Dievcenské vzdelávanie v Uhorsku”, in *Žena a právo. Právne a spoločenské postavenie žien v minulosti*, Academic Electronic Press, Bratislava 2004, pp. 236-243; Zs. V. LÁSZLÓ, “Nőoktatás és könyves műveltség a 17–18. században”, in J. PAPP (ed.), *A zsolttártól a rózsaszín regényig: Fejezetek a magyar női művelődés történetéből*, Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeum, Budapest 2014, pp. 95-125.

<sup>6</sup> M. KAMENICKÝ, “Kongregácia regulovaných kanonistiek sv. Augustína rehole Notre Dame v Bratislave v 18. storočí”, in *Žena a právo. Právne a spoločenské postavenie žien v minulosti*, Academic Electronic Press, Bratislava 2004, pp. 256-266.

<sup>7</sup> Letters from Empress Maria Theresa addressed to the head of the mother of the house. Municipal Archives of Bratislava (Archív hl. mesta SR Bratislavy), Notre Dame fund. On the building complex see: K. K. BODNÁROVÁ, “Bratislavský kláštor Notre Dame: Niekoľko poznámok k stavebnej aktivite a rekonštrukčným prácam”, *Monument*, 2-2012, pp. 18-20. In the second half of the 18th century and in the 19th century several books were printed “for the use of the Young Residents of the Religious of the Congregation of Notre Dame de Presbourg” in more editions: they were not only spiritual books (Small catechism in 1769 and Daily Exercise of the Christian in 1769), but also manuals (e.g. of geography). *Petit catéchisme ou Abrégé de la doctrine chrétienne à l’usage des demoiselles pensionnaires des Religieuses de la Congrégation de Notre Dame de Presbourg*, Nouv. éd. rev. corr., Impr. du Coll., Tyrnau 1769; *Exercice journalier du chrétien à l’usage des demoiselles pensionnaires des religieuses de la Congrégation de Notre Dame de Presbourg*, Nouvelle éd. augm. corr., Impr. Acad., Tyrnau 1769.

<sup>8</sup> It is important to note that Countess Judit Antonie von Oneil supported not only the Canonesses of St. Augustine, but also the Ursulines: in 1758, the countess presented the nuns of Győr with a letter of foundation for 1,000 Rhenish forints. On her library which contained many works of French and English philosophical literature see R. DONÁTH, “Tiltott könyvek egy Mária Terézia korabeli főúri könyvtárban”, *Magyar Könyvszemle*, vol. 88, 3/4-1972, pp. 210-219.

the convent library to the Slovak National Library in Martin, 3. the four French manuscript books and the two French notebooks transferred from the convent library to the Municipal Archives of Bratislava.

## II. History of the research

The history of the first hundred years of the school was written and published by Josef Schäffer in 1888.<sup>9</sup> Eva Kowalská was the first to analyze the importance of this institution in the context of girls' education in Hungary in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>10</sup> Interest in the history of the school has increased considerably over the last thirty years.<sup>11</sup> Several types of sources are available for studying the level of French culture at the boarding school of the Augustinian canonesses of the congregation of Our Lady in Bratislava. As required by the rules of the order, the nuns kept registers of the admission of students into the boarding school from the very beginning. The book, written in French by the prefect, contains the student's date of arrival to the monastery, the age of the girls, and information on her place of residence and on her parents. Over the years, young noblewomen came to the institution of the monastery of Our Lady not only from Bratislava, Vienna and the territory of the Bishopric of Nitra, but also from all over the Habsburg Empire: from Austria, Upper Hungary, Bohemia and Moravia, Poland, Silesia, Transylvania as well as Croatia.<sup>12</sup> Sometimes from parts out of the jurisdiction of the Habsburgs; there were also, for instance, candidates from the dioceses of Mainz, Salzburg, and Graz. The nuns have also been authorized to accept students from non-Catholic families. Almost all the boarders were of noble birth, from the highest to the lowest ranks. In the boarding house, they were called "Mademoiselle". Were also called "Mademoiselle" those not of noble origin, whose parents were in the imperial service or were members of the council of a town.

Surviving sources of the monastery of Our Lady of Bratislava, now kept in the City Archives, provide numerous remarkable pieces of information that can be studied.<sup>13</sup> Ingrid Vávrová-Štibraná wrote her theses in 1998 on the artistic aspects, the daily life of the boarding school of Our Lady and the pedagogical principles that were followed in the second half of the

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<sup>9</sup> J. SCHÄFFER, *Die Augustiner-Canonissinnen-Congregation de Notre-Dame, ihr Entstehen und ihr Wirken in Pressburg*, C. Angermayer's Buchdruckerei, Pressburg 1888.

<sup>10</sup> KOWALSKÁ 1987; KOWALSKÁ 1998; KOWALSKÁ 2004.

<sup>11</sup> K. MINÁRIKOVÁ, *Dejiny Školských sestier de Notre Dame na Slovensku*, thesis, Univerzita Mateja Bela, 2005, Supervisor: PhDr. Rastislav Kožíak.

<sup>12</sup> List of registrants from 1747 to 1903. Municipal Archives of Bratislava, Notre Dame IV.B.4.b/1.2.

<sup>13</sup> To the attention of church musicians p.e. *Antifonarium. In festo purificationis B. Marie virginis ad processionem*. Manuscript book of 42 fol. of parchment binding, completed March 12, 1656 with instructions in Hungarian. Note from inside the first page of the cover: Soror Iohanna Helena Szalay, Soror Clara Morocz. City Archives of Bratislava, Notre Dame IV.B.4.b/1.1.

18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>14</sup> Fourteen portraits of students, completed in the third quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, give us an idea of the elegance of the internal school: it is a series of portraits of young girls in blue (“Gros de Tours” silk fabric), known as the “blue ladies”, painted by Daniel Schmiddeli and offered as a gift by the girl’s family.<sup>15</sup> These portraits served as models for the young students: the young aristocratic women are represented with items for different subjects, such as pianos or scores for music on two paintings, a globe or map for geography on three paintings, a distaff or a wheel for spinning on two images. These portraits are now scattered across a variety of museums in central Europe. Today, we know the portraits of fourteen girls with their names mentioned in the sources, but only eleven are known to researchers, and the location of three is unknown. Most of the portraits (eight) are kept in the museum of the castle of Cerveny Kamen, where they were placed with other images of the monastery of Our Lady of Bratislava after its dissolution in 1950. Three other portraits are kept in the current permanent exhibition of the Bratislava City Museum in the former town hall, in the Hungarian National Gallery in Budapest, and in Buchlovice Castle in Moravia, in the same colour and type of clothing as the others in the series, and in a similar format. Since Vávrová-Štibraná’s study, a portrait has been found again: it is that of Jeanne-Nepomucene Walderode, which was sold from a private collection in the Mirbachov Palace to the Galeria Mesta Bratislava in 2018.<sup>16</sup>

Michal Benedik has analyzed the educational concept of the congregation of Our Lady. According to his research, the teaching of the subjects was similar to that of boys’ schooling, being completed with professional subjects, everyday housework and crafts, which were also taught in the “work schools” for girls.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, the young noblewomen learned drawing, painting, music and the French language. Learning the language was also made possible for the poorest students on condition that they obtain excellent school results, which would give rise to hope that they would later succeed as governesses for noble families. The subjects taught

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<sup>14</sup> I. VÁVROVÁ, *Portréty slachtických chovaniak rehole Notre Dame v Bratislave z tretej štvrtiny 18. storočia*, thesis, Bratislava, Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Komenského, 1998; I. VÁVROVÁ, *Cerveny Kameú: Modré dámy*, Komárno 1999.

<sup>15</sup> I. VÁVROVÁ-ŠTIBRANÁ, “A pozsonyi Notre Dame-zárda nemesi növendékeinek portréi a 18. század harmadik negyedéből”, *Művészettörténeti Értesítő*, vol. 51, 1/2-2002, pp. 51-68; I. VÁVROVÁ-ŠTIBRANÁ, “Podobizne absolventiek šľachtického vzdelávacieho inštitútu Notre Dame v Bratislave (Katalóg doposiaľ známych portrétov „uniformovaných“ i „neuniformovaných“ chovaniak z druhej polovice 18. storočia)”, *Časopis ARS*, vol. 36, 2-2003, pp. 122-144; J. PAPP (ed.), *A zsolnártól a rózsaszín regényig: Fejezetek a magyar női művelődés történetéből*, Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeum, Budapest 2014, pp. 280-281.

<sup>16</sup> A. VYDRA, “Oči, ktoré videli Máriu Teréziu: Rozhovor o dlho stratenom obraze, ktorý sa opäť našiel”, 19. January 2020, <https://www.tyzden.sk/kultura/61717/oci-ktore-videli-mariu-tereziu/> (consulted 17 May 2023)

<sup>17</sup> M. BENEDIK, “Edukačné koncepty Kongregácie Notre Dame”, in *Acta Culturologica, Zväzok 22 Univerzita Komenského v Bratislave Filozofická fakulta Katedra kulturológie, Kulturológia: Kreativita, kultivácia, kultúrnosť, Zborník z vedeckej konferencie s medzinárodnou účasťou venovanej kulturológičke Anne Fischerovej 15. mája 2014*, Bratislava 2014, pp. 189-197.

without payment by the nuns were religion, French and German (reading, spelling, conversation, and letter writing), as well as geography, history, arithmetic and various types of useful manual work. The compulsory subjects were taught without a fee because they were taught by nuns. On the other hand and in addition to other charges, the students paid separately for special language or art courses, since they were taught by professionals – high quality local artists. Of the Our Lady boarding house, it is known that, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it paid particular attention to the young women's musical training.<sup>18</sup> Renowned local artists such as Heinrich Klein and Johann Gottwald taught music there. Since the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, we know of local artists (such as Kaspar Stilp) who worked there as arts teachers. It is possible that Johann Schauff, who for thirty years taught drawing at the Bratislava boys' school, also taught here.

The order of Our Lady played an important role in the development of school theatre during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It paid particular attention in its boarding houses to teaching the French language that was used by the nobility throughout Europe. Performing theatre plays in French proved to be an excellent pedagogical method towards that end. However, the young noblewomen brought up in the boarding school of Our Lady always performed in a closed circle, in principle only on the occasion of major social events – the arrival in Bratislava of famous political and ecclesiastic personalities. Research has so far dated the first recorded performance by students to the year 1751, with a comedy whose author and title are both unknown. A great feast took place on the occasion of the laying of the first stone of the new monastery on 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> July 1754, which the imperial couple also attended. The second day's programme also included a theatre play prepared by the noble boarders. Two years later, in July 1756, the comedy "Philanthropus, or every man's friend" was performed, as well as a comedy: "Each man is his own torturer"; both were in French. In the 1760s, the students' repertoire included two historical plays, works by Pietro Metastasio, Viennese poet of the imperial court. The original scene of 1764 has been preserved; the same actors are listed for both performances.

There are also a number of interesting pieces of information regarding the boarders' food, ranging from the number of dishes at lunchtime to the composition of the menu.<sup>19</sup> In this respect, the book of expenses provides useful assistance. We can learn from it that oranges and

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<sup>18</sup> E. SZÓRÁDOVÁ, "Piano Culture in Bratislava, 1770 – 1830 (II)", *Musicologica Slovaca* 7 (33), 2-2016, pp. 165-221.

<sup>19</sup> Manual from 11 Nov. 1747 to 12 Dec. 1765 contains the expenses: Notre Dame IV.B.4.b/1.4. Manual from Nov. 11, 1747 to Dec. 20, 1771 contains income: Notre Dame IV.B.4.b/1.5. Manual from 11 Dec. 1765 to the end of 1785 contains the expenses: Notre Dame IV.B.4.b/1.6. Manual from 10 Dec. 1771 to the end of 1802 contains income: Notre Dame IV.B.4.b/1.3. Municipal Archives of Bratislava.

lemons – rare and expensive goods – as well as chocolate, cheese and French wine, featured on the tables of Bratislava students. The 44 bottles of Tokay wine for 3.15 Rhenish florins in March 1749 and the 50 “Tokayer Boutellien” for 3.54 Rhenish florins in February 1751 were purchased for the guests.

### **III. Sources for reconstructing the French section of the library**

The book of expenses shows that, after their arrival in Bratislava in 1747, the canonesses purchased a larger number of books, besides kitchen utensils.<sup>20</sup> These included catechisms and a variety of religious manuals, grammar books and textbooks. Among the authors of these books, I have been able to identify the Spanish Jesuit priest, master of novices and spiritual writer of high standing Pierre Fourier, Alphonse Rodriguez, the French theologian Louis Abelly, the French theologian, pedagogue and writer François Fénelon and the French Jesuit priest, professor, theologian and literary man Jean Croiset.

In the course of my research, I have found three new groups of sources that contribute to understanding the circumstances of the founding of the school and of its teaching in the French language: 1. the twenty-three letters written between 1747 and 1753 by the mother superior Anna Victoria Werschovetz to the founder, Countess Oneil, are kept in the Forgács fonds of the Hungarian National Archives in Budapest; 2. the ten French manuscript books transferred from the convent library to the Slovak National Library in Martin; 3. the four French manuscripts and the two notebooks transferred from the convent library to the Municipal Archives in Bratislava.

#### **III.1. The letters of Anna Victoria Werschovetz to Countess Oneil**

These letters relate the preparations for the canonesses’ travels in 1747, and the events of the first years of the school.<sup>21</sup> The language of the letters is primarily French, although German is sometimes also used. The following are among the most noteworthy letters:

Statt am Hoff, 24<sup>th</sup> August 1747: the canonesses begin to make their preparations.

Regensburg, 19<sup>th</sup> September 1747: Werschovetz accepts Countess Oneil’s choice of the three young women she will bring with her and of a boarder to act as a servant to help serve the

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<sup>20</sup> Municipal Archives of Bratislava, Notre Dame IV.B.4.b/1.3. Ausgab weitehr den 11 Novembris 1747.

<sup>21</sup> Letters from Anna Victoria Werschovetz to Countess Oneil. Hungarian National Archives, Budapest, fond Forgács, P 1898-2-309 No. 1-23.

young women, “she is a 17-year-old girl whom we have brought up, who speaks very good French and can perform a variety of tasks with skill”.

Regensburg, 18<sup>th</sup> October 1747: Werschovetz awaits the consent of the Empress, they will bring with them “a good number of French books, both brochures and recently bound”.

Regensburg, 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1747: she thanks for the 300 Rhenish florins received for travel expenses, is still awaiting the Bishop’s permission to depart, and expects to leave on 11<sup>th</sup> November.

Pressburg, 10<sup>th</sup> June 1748: Werschovetz has called in the best surgeon, Monsieur Revey, to cure a girl with an aching arm.

Pressburg, 20<sup>th</sup> June 1748: she promises to fulfil Countess Oneil’s order regarding a debtor.

Pressburg, 24<sup>th</sup> June 1748: Werschovetz writes favourably about Mademoiselle Chaninel, who will have a large dowry.

Pressburg, 22 8bre [october] 1748: she describes the success of a performance on 20<sup>th</sup> August of a tragedy of which neither the author nor the title are known. This piece of information is new, since until now the first recorded performance by students was in 1751. She also mentions the members of the audience: “all of the nobility was present there, Palatine, Veschehassy [Esterházy] Iudex Curiae, Nadasti [Nádasdy], and finally all that are illustrious except the Palatine and the Iudex Curiae. Everybody was very satisfied, and it is a miracle, as we did not expect that our Children would perform so wonderfully and I must even acknowledge that our children have surpassed themselves on the 20<sup>th</sup> and that they have never done so well as on that occasion.”

Pressburg, 23 Junii 1749: Werschovetz first refers to the question of the purchase of a house for 8300 f, and then of the students: “Liserl has done wonders today at least with her idea of making the first person of a Comedy that the Children have imagined themselves by reciting grammar speeches nonetheless the views they have given themselves in little nothings and silly things have made us laugh the Haller, Lodron and Starai have dressed them, and in one word the whole was very well combined, what a pity that the child was not in the play she would surely have been its heroine.”

### **III.2. Manuscripts kept in Martin**

The book-length manuscripts transferred from their library to the Slovak National Library in Martin attest to the fact that they made available a considerable literature in French. The ten

surviving French manuscripts were created between 1735 and 1820; their authors, sources and copyists (novices, for most of them) can sometimes be identified. Two books contain sources connected with the history of the order (for instance, the correspondence of Pierre Fourier, the life of Alix Le Clerc), three include historical and geographical information often copied from several handbooks, five books contain prayers and meditations of novices connected with taking the cloth and to the renovation of the religious vows.

### **III.2.1. Books of religious ceremony**

The manuscript with the classification number M 4 with a paper binding carries the dedication “For use by our Sister Marie Bernard, Started on 30<sup>th</sup> January of the year 1735” inside the cover, it is therefore one of the books probably brought from Statt am Hoff to Bratislava. The identity of Sister Marie Bernarde cannot be specified. The book contains the description of the “Disposition of a postulant for taking the habit”, “The Ceremonies of the profession”, and the “Meditation for the evening before the retreat of the postulants” and several hymns in Latin with scores. There are two types of writing in this volume: one is very precise, well-shaped, easily readable and the other less well-shaped, done more quickly.

The book with 133 numbered pages, with the classification number M 15 and a paper binding bears the title: “Preparing with three days of retreat for the renovation of religious vows”. It contains meditations written by Pierre Fourier. This book, in all likelihood written in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, may have been in use in the 19<sup>th</sup> and even at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as witnessed by the devotional images [Andachtsbilder].

The third book of religious ceremony carries the classification number M 23 and has a paper binding. For the first four pages the author gives a short biography of Pierre Fourier, then starts the meditations for his 9<sup>th</sup> December feast day and for the octave of the Blessed Teacher. The volume continues with prayers and litanies for various feast days, for example in honour of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and ends with a prayer to the guardian angel.

The fourth book with a modern binding and the classification number M 92 comprises three major parts. The first (f. 1-18.) is titled “Excerpts from the Meditations of the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the year”, with the date 1787 on the first page. The second part (f. 20-43.) is titled “Postulant’s book for our sister Kletzl the year 1789”. The third (f. 44-56.) is titled “On the knowledge and the love of Jesus Christ by Father Abbot Bertrand” whose real author is the Jesuit priest and writer Jean Baptiste de Saint Jure, author of a number of religious books of Berullian spirituality, including this work first published in 1656 and still in use as a textbook



“in classe eloquentia quintus” at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A few pages are missing at the end of the book. The book contains a handwritten note on a separate paper with the name of a student, Marie Victoire Prorubsky, and the date of 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1831.

The fifth volume in this group has a modern binding and the classification number M 94. It is bilingual. The first part (f. 1-18.) is in French with the inscription “Ad maiorem dei gloriam MDCCCXX” [1820] on the first page and contains Meditations (“Retreat on the Duties of Nuns”). The name “dame Elisabethe” can be read on the drawing of a leaf at the end of the first part. The second part is in German and has the title Glaub Hoffnung und Liebe Gottgefälliges Andenken 1828, i.e., Faith, hope and love: divine memory 1828.

### III.2.2. Books on the history of the order

The binding of this manuscript with the classification number M 13 is of recycled medieval parchment and carries the dedication “For our very dear Mother of Pressburg” but its addressee cannot be identified. The book contains “the copies of the Epistles which our very saintly and blessed father teacher has deigned to write from his blessed hand to his nuns in Troyes in Champagne”, these are therefore the letters written by Pierre Fourier between 1630 and 1640. At the end of the volume is the “Copy of a fragment of letter which our blessed father [i.e., Pierre Fourier] has written in honour of our very dear and respected Mother du Plessis.” It is a collection of letters (active correspondence) by Pierre Fourier, collected and assembled by the Nuns of the Congregation of Our Lady.<sup>22</sup> It seems that many of these letters originate with the house of Nomeny (France, Meurthe et Moselle), but also from other houses. These letters were assembled and copied as manuscript volumes both as contributions to the process of beatification of Pierre Fourier and for the purpose of edification. These were read in the houses of the sisters of Our Lady, some even were valued as relics (in the case of an autograph manuscript, which does not seem to be the case here). These letters were written in the context of the Thirty Years’ War which struck the Lorraine from 1633. This context drove Pierre Fourier to address both practical and spiritual topics in his letters.<sup>23</sup> These are copies, very likely prepared by the Sisters themselves, whose date is difficult to pinpoint. The writing suggest the

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<sup>22</sup> I thank Cédric Andriot for his help with the analysis of this volume.

<sup>23</sup> C. ANDRIOT, “La correspondance comme enjeu mémoriel. Le cas de Pierre Fourier”, in Ph. MARTIN (ed.), *La correspondance, le mythe de l’individu dévoilé?*, Presses universitaires de Louvain, Louvain 2014, pp. 73-84; P. FOURIER, *Sa correspondance, 1598-1640*, 5 volumes, Presses Universitaires de Nancy, Nancy 1986-1991; L. CHÂTELLIER, “Sœur Hélène Derréal : Une source pour l’étude du renouveau religieux au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle : la correspondance de saint Pierre Fourier”, in L. CHÂTELLIER (ed.), *Les Réformes en Lorraine (1520-1620)*, Nancy, Presses universitaires de Nancy 1986, pp. 119-124.

late 17<sup>th</sup> or early 18<sup>th</sup> century. One would not be taking too much of a risk in suggesting the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, i.e., that the copying out took place between the original volumes (late 17<sup>th</sup>) and the probable arrival in Bratislava (mid-18<sup>th</sup> century).

The book with paper binding and 94 numbered pages, with the classification number M 18, bears the name “Marie Josephe Karkos” on the first page, which enables us to identify the (or one of the) owner(s): Mária Karkos was the mother superior of the congregation of Our Lady in Bratislava between 1891 and 1894. The whole volume, in a single handwriting, “here relates the Method of Mother Alix Le Clerc, for the government, which has been found in a notebook written by her hand, according to the lights given to her God, and that the nuns have seen her put into practice, drawn from page 204 of her life. The Superiors must study, as much as they can, to have a great union with God...”.

### III.2.3. School books

The book with a paper binding and 314 numbered pages, classification number M 22, contains the “Abridged Method for learning universal history according to the Geographical-Historical Map, prepared for this purpose by the late Monsieur Anselme Desing, Abbot of Ensdorf in Bavaria, of the Order of Saint Benedict, 1786”. It is a handwritten copy of the textbook on “history and geography, for usage by the young and by history enthusiasts”, written by the Benedictine Anselm Desing, who taught history and geography in the Benedictine monastery of Ensdorf.<sup>24</sup>

The book with a paper binding and the classification number M 91 contains texts copied from different sources. The first excerpt bears the title “Theatre of the most famous orders of knighthood” and refers to the “Knight of the Holy Roman Empire Equites St Romani Imperii...” whose source is the article “Knight of the Holy Roman Empire” of the *New universal historical-geographical dictionary for understanding the affairs of state, the public news and conversations referring to these*.<sup>25</sup> The article is first cited word for word, then follows a conversation in the form of questions and answers on the orders of knighthood: the Teutonic order, the order of Maria Theresa and of Saint Stephen being the most modern, the order of the Knights of Saint John of the Island of Rhodes or of Malta being the most well-known. The

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<sup>24</sup> First edition: A. DESING, *Compendium eruditionis complectens Historiam Sacram, Profanámque, Politicem Geographiam, Ritus Veterum & Chronologiam. Ad Caputum Juventutis ...*, Johannes Andreae de la Haye, Ingolstadt 1728.

<sup>25</sup> *Nouveau dictionnaire historique-géographique universel pour l'intelligence des affaires d'état, des nouvelles publiques et des conversations du tems qui s'y rapportent*, En IV parties, I. R. Imhof & Fils, 1766, p. 366.

second part gives excerpts from well-known exchanges of letters of the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> and up to the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, such as the letter of the Duchess of Burgundy, princess of Savoy, to Mme de Maintenon (Correspondence of Madame de Maintenon, Thursday, 1698), of Madame de Sévigné to the Count of Grignan (In Paris, 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1670). The last text is an “Excerpt of a letter from the Spanish General Palafox to General le Febere, who has written to him to advise Palafox to submit with his army” in the summer of 1808.

The last manuscript book, with the classification number M 280, bears the name of “Csillaghy Marie” on the first page and the title “Compendium of all the sciences: Geology, Mineralogy, Cosmography, Geography”. It is, however, bilingual: pages on the left side are in German and on the right side in French. The book approaches the topic in the shape of questions and answers, for instance: what does Geology mean?, What is Mineralogy?, In which part of the world is the heat of the sun the strongest? The verbatim source of this manuscript is one of the numerous editions of the *Compendium of all the sciences, or Encyclopedia for children*, by the German ecclesiastic, educator, writer and journalist Jean Henri Samuel Formey,<sup>26</sup> who came from a family of French immigrants and preached, taught and wrote in French.

### **III.3. Manuscript books preserved in Bratislava**

The manuscript books from their library that are preserved in the Bratislava City Archives (Congregation of Our Lady 1739-1938) testify to a considerable French and German-language culture.<sup>27</sup> The six manuscript books, the two notebooks and the letter that have survived were created between 1739 and 1938. Their authors, sources and copyists (novices, for the most part), can sometimes be identified. Two books and two notebooks are written in French, two books are trilingual (French-German-Hungarian) and two books are written in German. The name of the owner of one of the two German books is known thanks to the possessor note: “Marie Raphael Huber 1832 den 13 November”.

#### **III.3.1. Meditation books**

The manuscript with 147 numbered pages and a paper binding bears the dedication “For our Sister Marie Ignace Schröderin Unworthy Novice, In the year 1739” is one of the books

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<sup>26</sup> J. H. S. Formey, *Abrégé de toutes les sciences, ou Encyclopédie des enfans*, many editions between 1764-1809.

<sup>27</sup> Manuscript books. Municipal Archives of Bratislava, Congrégation Notre-Dame 1739-1938.

probably brought from Statt am Hoff to Bratislava by the owner. The book contains twenty “Meditations for the renovation of vows” of which the source is the work titled *Meditations on the main duties of religious life* by the Benedictine Claude de Bretagne and published in several editions between 1690 and 1710.<sup>28</sup> The manuscript breaks off suddenly with an unfinished sentence, leaving a number of blank pages in the book. It contains two 18<sup>th</sup> century devotional images in copperplate engraving. One is by Jeremias Gottlob Rugendas and represents the statue of the Madona of Marianka (Mariatall), a pilgrimage site near Bratislava.<sup>29</sup> The other is an Easter greeting card by the Viennese engraver Johann Asner and represents the trinity of faith, hope and love. The composition was invented by Gottfried Bernhard Göz, painter and engraver of Augsburg rococo.<sup>30</sup>

Two manuscripts dating from the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century contain meditations on the Bible and on the life of nuns, the same texts in several languages. The left-hand pages are written in French and those on the right in German and sometimes in Hungarian. The source of one is the meditations on *The life of Our Lord Jesus Christ* published in 1880 by Constant-Henri Fouard, doctor of theology, canon of the cathedral of Rouen and member of the Bible Commission.<sup>31</sup> The German and Hungarian version is the translator’s own. I have not yet been able to identify the source of the other book.

The notebook dating from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century contains texts from several sources, of which I have been able to identify the Vision of the Blessed Marguerite-Marie Alacoque. The copyist has used several styles of handwriting.

### III.3.2. Schoolbooks

The book with a paper binding and the name and title “Gatterbourg Thérèse Book I in the Noviciate of O.L.” on the first cover page contains the “Introduction to Profane History”, 28 lessons on the history of the Greeks and the beginnings of the Romans. It is a handwritten copy of the textbook *Compendium on the sciences and the arts*, written by the cartographer Jean Palairret, who worked as an agent of the French States General and taught French to the children

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<sup>28</sup> C. De Bretagne, *Méditations sur les principaux devoirs de la vie religieuse*, more editions: 1689, 1690, 1696, 1703.

<sup>29</sup> Z. SZILÁRDFY, G. TŰSKÉS, É. KNAPP, *Barokk kori kisgrafikai ábrázolások magyarországi búcsújáróhelyekről*, Budapesti Egyetemi Könyvtár, Budapest 1987, cat. nr. 213.

<sup>30</sup> E. ISPHORDING, *Gottfried Bernhard Göz 1708–1774: Ölgemälde und Zeichnungen*, 2 vols., Anton H. Konrad, Weißenhorn 1984.

<sup>31</sup> C.-H. Fouard, *La vie de Notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ*, 28 editions between 1880-1927.

of George II.<sup>32</sup> This book uses a question-and-answer format to handle its subject, for instance: what is History?, How many types of History are there?, Which is the most useful History?, Who are the founders of Rome?, and so on.

The 12-folio notebook with the possessor's name and the date "Classroom notebook belonging to the amiable Sister Louise Elisabeth Maillet done on this 8 July of the year 1781" contains the description of how to discipline students on different occasions. Signs in use in Christian Schools: the lesson (writing, arithmetic, spelling), the catechism, the corrections, the repetitions, silence. It is a handwritten copy of a chapter of the book *Conducting Christian schools*, written by the founder of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, Jean-Baptiste de La Salle, who dedicated his life to educating poor children.<sup>33</sup>

#### **IV. Conclusion**

The letters of Anna Victoria Werschovetz to Countess Oneil show both that the canonesses brought a large number of French books from Regensburg to Bratislava and that the theatre performances started in 1748, earlier than had been thought until now (1751). The manuscript books preserved in Martin and in Bratislava are surely only a small segment of the manuscripts in that language and a crumb from the whole library of the school for girls of the canonesses of Our Lady in Bratislava. These books of excerpts testify to the high level of studies, to the choice of textbooks, the importance of copying and of the question-and-answer format as a method.<sup>34</sup>

The daughters of well-to-do families could acquire an education which went beyond religious instruction and elementary subjects. Instruction in the nuns' schools was free of charge and could be completed with private tutors for special classes. The character of the girls' education went well beyond a strictly religious moral education and approached the more secular schooling of the boys. The canonesses adapted their school activities and their teaching to the educational demands of the high nobility of Central Europe: the range of subjects in the boarding school was enriched with French and geography as well as with arts subjects taught by external tutors. These innovations clearly contradicted the requirements of the order's rules but were necessary for continuing to attract students to the boarding school and to ensure significant revenues for the monastery. Various principles represented by enlightened pedagogy

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<sup>32</sup> J. Palaiet, *Abrégé sur les sciences & sur les arts*, more editions between 1731-1795.

<sup>33</sup> Jean-Baptiste de La Salle, *Conduite des écoles chrétiennes*, more editions between 1811-1856.

<sup>34</sup> É. DECULTOT (éd.), *Lire, copier, écrire : Les bibliothèques manuscrites et leurs usages au XVIIIe siècle*, CNRS Éditions, Paris 2003.

can be found in the rules of the order of the Congregation of Our Lady. The educational content was closely linked to the changing demands imposed on the nuns by modern society. They opened up to the more worldly demands of parents and schoolchildren, as well as to the pedagogical demands of the Enlightenment. The importance of this community of religious women for the education of young girls of the time in Central Europe can in particular be explained by this adaptability to the respective educational needs of the period.