

Articles

ARTICLE

Servants of Francophilia: French Migrant Women as Governesses in the Bohemian Lands, between Cultural Transmission and Reproduction of Social Distinction (1750–1810)¹

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Abstract

This article shows empirical and conceptual possibilities of exploring the transcultural roles and economic situations of French migrant women who served as governesses in the noble circles of the Habsburg monarchy. It combines various research methods, employing narrative textual analysis, socioeconomic and material culture approaches, and cultural exchange perspectives. The author uses printed librettos and comparative insights to reveal broader social anxieties connected with governesses who crossed multiple borders in terms of geography, culture, language, class, and the gender order. She also draws attention to inheritance tax-related sources as evidence of these women's economic conditions. Finally, the author outlines the major shifts in attitudes toward the French language and French immigrants and shows how these affected the governesses' labor market.

Keywords: women migrants; governesses; work history; *gouvernante*; literary type; French; sociolect; cultural transmission; Bohemian Lands; early globalization

Early modern nobility has been traditionally viewed, even celebrated, as the cosmopolitan echelon whose cosmopolitanism entailed plurilingualism, travel, and a taste for imported luxurious items, among other things.² Only relatively recently it has become more pressing to inquire as to who worked behind the scenes and in the midst of these processes of increased transcultural connections and multilateral interactions and exchanges that now attract growing scholarly interest as an early phase of globalization. More specifically, we may ask who was employed in noble households to serve and assist the highborn “others” in acquiring refined language skills and manners. Historians have been drawn anew to these questions in response to dynamic developments in the fields of cultural anthropology, sociology, and gender studies that have paved the way to a better recognition of the often-neglected work in the household, including caregiving and upbringing, as “genuine work” and as an important part of both labor and migration history research.³

¹ I worked on this study while holding a visiting fellowship at Trinity Hall, University of Cambridge, in 2018/19. I am grateful to the Trinity Hall scholarly community for their hospitality and support. This article was written as a contribution to the project of Specific University Research (SVV) 2021 – 260 607 01 at the Faculty of Humanities, Charles University, Prague, Czechia. The text was finished under a long-term lockdown of archives and libraries in 2020. I wish to thank the two anonymous peer reviewers for their comments. I am also grateful to Petra Ezzeddine, my faculty colleague in sociocultural anthropology and gender studies, and to Janine Maegraith and Jan Zdichynec, two fellow historians, for their valuable feedback on the working version of this paper.

² Cf. Bianca Maria Lindorfer, “Cosmopolitan Aristocracy and the Diffusion of Baroque Culture. Cultural Transfer from Spain to Austria in the Seventeenth Century” (PhD diss., European University Institute in Florence, 2009). Lindorfer also provides plenty of references to earlier works that emphasized the cosmopolitanism of nobility.

³ See, for example, Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration, and Domestic Work* (Stanford, 2001); Antoinette Fauve-Chamoux, ed., *Domestic Service and the Formation of European Identity: Understanding the*

Moreover, individual women in migration processes have long been overlooked by historians. This article thus seeks to contribute to a shift in perspectives as it analyzes the transcultural roles and economic situations of women professionals who moved from the French-speaking parts of Europe to the Habsburg lands of the Bohemian Crown (i.e., Bohemia, Moravia, and the so-called Austrian or Bohemian part of Silesia). While Merry Wiesner-Hanks recently highlighted migration and mixed marriages as important transcultural phenomena, mainly in the Atlantic world,⁴ in this study I direct my attention further east and look at middling sorts of women migrants who joined noble households in the subaltern position of servants.⁵

The Francization that swept across European elites throughout the long eighteenth century had many roots. The cultural trend-setting role of the French court, the expansion of publishing activities of the French Huguenot migrants after 1685, and the rise in prominence of French language in diplomacy and international relations are only a few major examples. Along with the long-term appeal of new patterns of sociability, these developments turned French into a marker of upper-class identities and aspirations.⁶

This widespread Francophilia broadened professional opportunities for native French-speaking women, who were increasingly in demand as private teachers in noble families across Europe.⁷ The rather discreet presence of these women, usually described as governesses or *gouvernantes*, has long been acknowledged but surprisingly poorly researched, especially as regards the period prior to the nineteenth century.⁸ This may be the result of a double marginalization of these women, first during their lives and subsequently in archival systems. In early modern Europe, governesses faced marginalization as servants whose work was ascribed higher value than their personal lives. For example, the Prussian ambassador in Vienna, Count Friedrich Wilhelm von Schwerin (1678–1727), described family servants as “*gens de rien*” (mere nobodies), explicitly including the family physician who was

Globalization of Domestic Work, 16th–21st Centuries (Bern, 2004); Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk, Silke Neunsinger, and Dirk Hoerder, eds., *Towards a Global History of Domestic and Caregiving Workers* (Leiden, 2015).

⁴Merry Wiesner-Hanks, “Early Modern Women and the Transnational Turn,” *Early Modern Women: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 7 (2012): 191–202. This article builds on Merry Wiesner-Hanks, “Crossing Borders in Transnational Gender History,” *Journal of Global History* 6 (2011): 357–79. Central and Eastern Europe is also a blind spot in the chapter by Katharine M. Donato and Donna Gabaccia, “Gender and Early Modern Migrations, 1492–1867,” in *Gender and International Migration*, ed. Katharine M. Donato and Donna Gabaccia (New York, 2015), 55–73.

⁵Sebastian Kühn has recently pointed out that the concept of the subaltern was employed in the eighteenth century to describe a subordinate who was expected to perform their work with diligence, loyalty, and accuracy, as can be found, for example, in Johann Heinrich Zedler, *Grosses Vollständiges Universalexicon aller Wissenschaften und Künste*, vol. 40 (Halle/Leipzig, 1744), 773–74. See Sebastian Kühn, “Die Gräfin, die Gouvernante und der König, Perspektiven auf Dienstleute als Boten in einem aristokratischen Haushalt des 18. Jahrhunderts,” *Historische Anthropologie: Kultur, Gesellschaft, Alltag* 20 (2012): 59. In the first half of the twentieth century, Antonio Gramsci adapted this concept to serve as an analytical tool in the humanities and social sciences, and it was later taken up by subaltern studies. Early modern migrant women teachers fit well into the category of marginalized subaltern actors, being simultaneously subordinated and instrumental in reproducing the power system of which the nobility was the backbone. Cf. Raja Swamy, “Subaltern Studies,” in *Theory in Social and Cultural Anthropology: An Encyclopedia*, ed. R. Jon McGee and Richard L. Warms (Los Angeles, 2013), 831–34.

⁶Cf. Ivo Cerman, “La noblesse de Bohême dans l’Europe française. L’énigme du français nobiliaire,” in *Le rayonnement français en Europe centrale: Du XVII^e siècle à nos jours*, ed. Olivier Chaline, Jaroslaw Dumanowski, and Michel Figeac (Pessac, 2009), 365–85. The reasons for this cultural transfer more related to the Habsburg monarchy are summarized, for example, in Veronika Hyden-Hanscho, *Reisende, Migrante, Kulturmanager. Mittlerpersönlichkeiten zwischen Frankreich und dem Wiener Hof, 1630–1730* (Stuttgart, 2013), 17.

⁷On the role of French as a *lingua franca*, see Peter Burke, *Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2004), 85–88.

⁸For Central Europe, see the general overview by Irene Hardach-Pinke, *Die Gouvernante, Geschichte eines Frauenberufs* (Frankfurt, 1993); and more recently, Irene Hardach-Pinke, “Intercultural Education by Governesses (Seventeenth to Twentieth Century),” *Paedagogica Historica* 46, no. 6 (2010): 715–28. On governesses in service to the nobility in Great Britain at approximately the same time, most of whom were the daughters of Anglican ministers, see Sophie Loussouarn, “Governesses of the Royal Family and the Nobility in Great Britain, 1750–1815,” in *The Invisible Woman: Aspects of Women’s Work in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, ed. Isabelle Baudino, Jacques Carre, and Marie-Cecilie Revauger (London, 2016), 47–55. On governesses in Wallachia at a slightly later date, see the very recent work by Nicoleta Roman, “Educating the Other: Foreign Governesses in Wallachia in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century,” *Aspasia* 14, no. 1 (2020): 37–56.

a well-recognized scholar, royal physician, and trusted friend of his wife, Countess Schwerin.⁹ Women's work was valued and recognized even less, and thus, although governesses were relatively educated and apt to produce substantial written records, their papers and personal belongings were rarely preserved. Moreover, when relevant historical records did survive, they were seldom explicitly noted in archival inventories because the archivists did not consider them of particular interest.

The potential of these archival sources for the study of the interplay of work, gender, migration, and cultural transmission calls for careful reappraisal. The early expansion of this occupation on the European labor market is particularly deserving of closer attention. From the perspective of migration history, French-speaking female private teachers represented an important stream of female professional migrants who were dispersed across Europe. This article focuses on its often-overlooked west-east direction. Moreover, it explores the complex process of making the Central European elites Francophone, with emphasis on its subaltern female actors, their transcultural lives, social practices, and textual representations.

Given the scarcity of archival records and the current pioneer stage of the research, it is important to include alternative sources. In my study, I will thus first look at the print production that thematized governesses. I will draw attention to the popularity of the *gouvernante* as a common character in literary texts, and particularly in theater plays published in the Habsburg monarchy in the eighteenth century. I will show how this strong literary presence contrasts with a lack of visibility in the archival records of actual French-speaking women who moved to the region to take up positions as *gouvernantes*. Throughout the study, my primary region of focus will be the Bohemian lands, for which I have collected new, previously disregarded sources.¹⁰ I will draw attention to significant changes in the state legislature, particularly to the introduction of an inheritance tax, which seems to have increased the presence of *gouvernantes* in archival records since the late 1750s. I will then explore what these records reveal about female French émigré teachers' backgrounds, professional trajectories, economic provision, and material culture. Subsequently, I will pinpoint these women's roles as intercultural and cross-class mediators and reproducers of sociocultural patterns.¹¹ In an effort to further nuance the time frame in question (i.e., 1750–1810), I will try to capture major shifts in attitudes toward the French language and French immigrants and point out changes in the labor market for governesses in the Habsburg monarchy. The outlined approach will allow me to bridge the usual gaps between cultural and socioeconomic histories and between textualist and material culture-oriented methodologies.

Representations of Governesses and Textual Transmission

Over the course of the eighteenth century, preserved historical library collections reveal that French *gouvernante* characters became a common presence on theater stages and in printed texts in the Habsburg monarchy. Some of these texts were brought directly from French-speaking parts of Europe; others were invented, copied, or adapted (usually with little or no attention to authorial and publisher's rights and privileges). Only five years after the publication of the sentimental comedy libretto *La Gouvernante* by French playwright Pierre-Claude Nivelles de la Chaussée (1692–1754) in Paris (1747), the same work was published by the court printer Jean Pierre van Ghelen in Vienna (1752). De la Chaussée's governess is a guardian of virtue, a confidante, and a companion to her noble charge.¹²

⁹See Kühn, "Die Gräfin, die Gouvernante," 68–69.

¹⁰For the earlier state of research, see especially Milena Lenderová, "Sociální a kulturní funkce francouzštiny ve společnosti českých zemí v období 'mezi časy,'" in *Post tenebras spero lucem. Duchovní tvář českého a moravského osvícenství*, ed. Jaroslav Lorman and Daniela Tinková (Prague, 2009), 236–48.

¹¹On the role of education in the perpetuation of social hierarchies and privileges, see the classic studies: Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *The Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (London, 1990); and Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge, 1996). Bourdieu's concepts have been previously utilized and adapted to research on early modern high nobility in Bohemia by Petr Maťa, *Svět české aristokracie 1500–1700* (Prague, 2004).

¹²See Pierre-Claude Nivelles de la Chaussée, *La Gouvernante. Comédie nouvelle. En cinq actes, en vers* (Paris, 1747); and Pierre-Claude Nivelles de la Chaussée, *La Gouvernante. Comédie en cinq actes* (Vienna, 1752).

A decade later, one could repeatedly encounter the comic opera *Die Gouvernante* in the theater repertoire across Central Europe. It first appeared in 1761 on stage in Prague in a play directed by the entrepreneur Johann Joseph Kurz (1717–84) and accompanied by the music of Franz Xaver Brixi (1732–71). Shortly afterward it was reenacted in Dresden by Pietro Moretti. Soon, it was taken over by another contemporary traveling director and collaborator of Kurz, Johann Joseph Brunian (1733–81), and staged in the Moravian capital city of Brno (Brünn).¹³ These performances are well documented by librettos.¹⁴ Nonetheless, we need to bear in mind that these printed texts provide only a glimpse of the doubtless numerous creative adaptations this *opera comique* underwent. The governess was represented as an older school mistress and with a young daughter of her own (Fiameta). She taught girls and young ladies French, proper manners, and needlework. On the stage she stood for dry rigidity and was an obstacle to her daughter's love and to young peoples' freedom. She was, however, convinced to taste "*Brandwein*," became intoxicated, and thereafter was the source of much laughter.

It seems that the perceived multifaceted "otherness" of a *gouvernante* made her a broadly accepted object of mockery and ridicule in theater plays. A careful look reveals signs of misogyny and of intercultural and social tensions in the literary representations of these women. While the comic opera genre allows the limits of usual social patterns to be breached and thus enables the presentation of a *gouvernante* character who is not in the service of a noble family but is instead self-employed and a parent; it also provides a means to question the governess's independence and ability to control herself. As the governess reveals herself susceptible to alcohol, order is restored by removing her as the blocking character from the scene (she is literally dragged away in a cart). A careful reading of these literary texts can thus point to language, gender, and class anxieties concerning governesses and provide insights into the subtleties of the sociocultural tensions female foreign educators faced, which hardly ever surface in the archival records.¹⁵

One example of a play that passed from Paris to Vienna with very few changes is *La Gouvernante. Comedie en Verse et Trois Actes*, written by the French playwright Étienne-Francois Avisse (1694–1747) and published in Paris in 1731 and 1738.¹⁶ Its central character is the *gouvernante* Jacinte, a long-term servant to an elderly master named Orgon, who is surrounded by people hopeful that they will receive his inheritance; Jacinte is one of them. The play was issued in print in French in Vienna in 1765.¹⁷ As a French *gouvernante* in her homeland, Jacinte is not primarily a language teacher but rather a housekeeper and a caregiver. The play thus points to the often-overlooked historical roots of this occupation in household management.¹⁸ Moreover, it reveals the important caregiving aspect in the work of a *gouvernante*, otherwise overshadowed by teaching tasks.

In the 1780s, a native of the south Moravian town of Mikulov (Nicholsburg), Leopold Huber (1766–1842) launched a series of educational comedies for children in Vienna. The libretto of his play *New Year Gifts (Neuenjahrsgeschenke)*, published in Vienna in 1789, is situated in a noble household in which children, under the guidance of their *Hofmeister* and *gouvernante*, share their New Year's gifts with the poor, winter-stricken inhabitants of Vienna. In this play, the character of the governess is both integrated into the local context as she supports the Viennese poor and yet still marked as a foreigner by the fact that she masters French but speaks imperfect German (unlike the *Hofmeister*). This can be taken as a critical hint that she was thus unable to teach effectively by showing similarities

¹³Cf. the entries for Franz Felix Brixi, Johann Joseph Brunian, and Johann Joseph Kurz, respectively, in Alena Jakubcová and Matthias J. Pernerstorfer et al., *Theater in Böhmen, Mähren und Schlesien. Von den Anfängen bis zum Ausgang des 18. Jahrhunderts. Ein Lexikon* (Vienna, 2013), 73–75, 77–81, 373–77.

¹⁴See the Dresden version, *Die Gubernante, ein ganz neues auf französische Art eingerichtetes divertimento welches im Singen und Tanzen besteht* ([Dresden], 1761) and the exemplar from Brno, *Die Gouvernante, eine ganz neue opera comique mit einem pantomimischen ballet* (Brno, 1763). I could not access the Prague libretto cited in Alena Jakubcová and Matthias J. Pernerstorfer et al., *Theater in Böhmen*, 75.

¹⁵On both fictional and factual governesses as potentially liminal and transgressive figures in the context of the British research tradition, see the chapter "French Governesses," in Marcus Tomalin, *The French Language and British Literature, 1756–1830* (London, 2016), 116–39.

¹⁶Étienne-Francois Avisse, *La Gouvernante, Comedie en trois actes en vers* (Paris, 1738).

¹⁷Étienne-Francois Avisse, *La Gouvernante. Comedie en Verse et Trois Actes* (Vienna, 1765).

¹⁸See Sharon Kettering, "The Household Service of Early Modern French Noble Women," *French Historical Studies* 20, no. 1 (1997): 55–85.

and differences between the two languages. On the contrary, her charges explained to her the meanings of words and sentences:

- GOUVERNANTE: “Cela est charmant! Die Komtesse fang die neue Jahr an, Geld herausgeb, und die handere Leut mit Geld heinnehm.”
- MARIE: “Ja waren Sie nur da gewesen. La pauvre femme! Ihr Sohn ist gefroren.”
- GOUVERNANTE: “Comment? Hir Kind ist gefror?”
- MORITZ: “Gefror, ja so gefror, dass er nie wieder aufthauen wird.”
- GOUVERNANTE: “Je n’en comprens rien. Hik hab kein rekt Begreif von der Sak.”
- AMALIE: “Son fils est mort force de froid.”
- GOUVERNANTE: “Comment mort! O Dieu! C’est affreux! La pauvre miserable! O Sie hab rek gut gethan, hir was zu schenken.”¹⁹

The failure to understand and speak German correctly seems to have been employed as a literary tool to diminish the *gouvernante*'s subversive potential in crossing a range of boundaries and conventions. The reversal of the usual education process (in children teaching their foreign governess) and the incorrect pronunciation serve here as the source of laughter. Moreover, as I will further develop in the text that follows, at the time when this libretto was published (1789), German-speaking middle-class women were increasingly employed as governesses in the Habsburg monarchy.

It seems easier to trace the migration and domestication of the literary character of the French governess than it is to trace the actual trajectories of French women who moved to the Habsburg monarchy seeking paid employment as private teachers. Unlike their literary representations, archival traces of actual governesses are exceedingly fragmentary. In the following section, I will attempt to assemble these fragments into a coherent mosaic.

Private Women Teachers on the Move

When discussing the archival evidence documenting the lives of *gouvernantes*, I draw particular attention to sources produced in the aftermath of individual governesses' deaths that sought to record their possessions and bequests and to fulfill the requirements of a newly introduced state inheritance tax. In addition to egodocuments, family correspondence, and other historical records, these sources provide us with a clearer outline of the contours of governesses' lives in the early phase of their growing popularity in the Habsburg monarchy.

In a bid to raise the financial means to pay off a growing government deficit and to help fund the ongoing military conflict with Prussia, one part of what might be called the global Seven Years' War (1756–63), Empress Maria Theresa introduced a new form of taxation—the so-called inheritance tax (*Erbschaftssteuer*)—which took effect on 1 July 1759.²⁰ From that date onward, any inheritance, legacy, or gift gained from a living or deceased person other than one's parent, child, husband, or wife was subject to a 10 percent tax.

This new measure resulted in the more systematic documentation of various forms of inheritance, especially in relation to the moment of death, which was when most taxable property tended to emerge. State and local authorities collaborated to produce voluminous material, which included the originals and copies of testaments, probate inventories, quittances, and farewell letters. Many of these records, such as correspondence and last wills, fit the broader definition of so-called egodocuments and provide insights into the deceased individuals' social networks, work conditions, material standards, and personal interests (such as literary tastes).²¹

¹⁹Leopold Huber, *Die Neuenjahrgeschenke, ein Lustspiel für Kinder* (Vienna, 1789), quote at pp. 29–30. On Leopold Huber, see the brief biography at http://lithes.uni-graz.at/maezene-pdfs/bio_huber.pdf (accessed 4 Feb. 2020).

²⁰For a brief summary, see Christian d'Elvert, *Zur österreichischen Finanz-Geschichte* (Brno, 1881), 605.

²¹Discussions about the definitions, interpretational possibilities, and limits of egodocuments have been plentiful since the late 1950s, particularly in the Dutch and German historiographies. More recently, see the thematic issue: *German History* 28, no. 3 (Sept. 2010).

The inheritance tax applied to all property whose value was greater than 1,000 Rhenish florins, if donated during the donor's life (*inter vivos*), or higher than 500 florins in the case of postmortem inheritance. Upon a donor's death, all their debts—medical, administrative, and funeral expenses; pious donations; and bequests for the poor—were deducted and the remaining assets and liabilities carefully calculated to establish whether their value exceeded 500 florins and was thus subject to tax. Even holdings that were deemed just shy of the threshold of taxation were often carefully documented so as to avoid any suspicion of tax evasion.²²

This new tax significantly increased the chances that any substantial written documentation concerning a broad range of individuals would survive. I have managed to identify archival files on three French *gouvernantes* who were active in the last third of the eighteenth century and thus represent some of the earliest well-documented examples of these women professionals employed by noble families in the Bohemian lands. Their names were: Antonia de l'Espiliez (†1775), Colomba Bouquetet (†1776), and Marguerite Trognon (†1808). Moreover, these findings indicate that more systematic research into death duty-related personal records across the broader Habsburg monarchy is needed.

The circumstances in which these archival sources were produced result in them being mainly related to the last stages of the women's lives. We thus know very little about their early career decisions, processes of recruitment, and migration. The *gouvernante* career was not necessarily a professional path for childless women. Although most *gouvernantes* were called "*Mademoiselle*," Colomba Bouquetet is described strictly as "*Madame*." Prior to embracing her career as a governess, she was married and gave birth to at least one daughter, Agnes, who reached adulthood, lived in Paris, kept correspondence with her mother, and managed to have her mother's savings and selected belongings returned to Paris from the South Moravian chateau in Veselí nad Moravou through a family friend in Vienna, Catharine Clement.²³

One of the key prerequisites for gaining employment as a *gouvernante* was excellent command of refined French. Cultivated, idiomatic French served as a sociolect that distinguished the nobility from the lower social strata. Governesses were usually brought from French-speaking regions rather than chosen from the French diaspora, as contact with the authentic living language was preferred.²⁴ In the personal papers of the deceased Antonia de l'Espiliez (who is described as "*Mademoiselle*") we learn that she had seven collateral heirs, probably siblings, in various towns of the Holy Roman Empire; she likely came from one of the linguistically mixed regions of the empire, such as Alsace or Lorraine. Antonia served in the family of Prince Heinrich Paul Franz von Mansfeld (1712–80).²⁵ In the death register of St. Giles church in Prague Old Town she is described as "*Prefecta juniorum commitissarum Mansfeldianarum*" and is recorded as having died at fifty years of age. Her birthplace is not cited.²⁶

Somewhat more can be established about the origin and career of Marguerite Trognon (also described as "*Mademoiselle*"). We are fortunate that the parish priest František Herites, who buried her, entered a brief biographical note in Czech in the parish register of deaths at the parish church in Kotouň (Kotau) in western Bohemia. If we trust this parish register entry, Marguerite Trognon was born in Lorraine, close to Metz, probably around 1734, and was thus seventy-four years old when she died in 1808. The entry indicates that she educated children in several noble families in Bohemia, and her last appointment was in the family of Franz Dominik Baron Janovský of

²²See the letters patent from 6 June 1759 and subsequent letters patent on the inheritance tax. Národní archiv, Prague, Sběrka patentů, letters patent nos. 1593, 1598, 1607, 1608, 1628, 1691, and 1706.

²³Moravský zemský archiv, fond Rodinný archiv Chorynských (G 144), inv. 82, box 12, Colomba Bouquetet's inheritance papers. While the eighteenth-century historical records I work with refer to the family name as Chorinský, which became the dominant form, the Moravian Land Archives, which houses the family archival fonds, employs the older version Chorynský in reference to the family estate Choryně in eastern Moravia. I have decided to respect this double usage according to these principles so that readers can identify both the family archival fonds and scholarly literature in their searches. I also did not want to change the family name when citing archival records. The form Chorynský appears only in the footnotes.

²⁴Cf. Hardach-Pinke, *Intercultural Education by Governesses*, 719.

²⁵Národní archiv, Prague, fond Komise pro dědickou daň 1763–1789, 1795–1840 (1846), sign. 14. XII, box 36, inv. 1617, Antonie de l'Espiliez's papers regarding inheritance tax exemption.

²⁶Archiv hlavního města Prahy, Sběrka matrik, sign. JIL Z4, matrika zemřelých 1775–1779, fol. 4.

Janovice (c. 1740–1807). At the Janovský family chateau in Oselce (Woseletz) she “raised in virtue” three young ladies and received a pension in her old age. The parish priest recorded her cause of death as old age, weariness of life, and apoplexy (*Schlag*).²⁷ The emphasis on virtue in women’s education was part of a broader discourse and it recurs in the sources in various contexts.

Over the course of her long life, Marguerite Trognon seems to have adapted well to the Bohemian environment and embraced it as her home. This was probably conditioned by her lack of close relatives and by the dramatic sociocultural changes brought about by the French Revolution, which had a direct impact on the mobility and employment options of *gouvernantes*, as we will see in the following text. At approximately sixty-five years of age she accepted a lifelong pension at an outlying rural chateau belonging to the Janovský family in Oselce. Peter Burke has recently suggested that acquiring the local language was one of the tests of adaptation or assimilation.²⁸ In the case of governesses, the widespread use and prestige of French meant that they were not under heavy pressure to learn local language(s) quickly.²⁹ Moreover, Marguerite Trognon and Antonia de l’Espiliez, who came from the French-speaking regions of the Holy Roman Empire, probably arrived with prior knowledge of German, while Colomba Bouquet had a textbook of German cursive in her private library. In the eighteenth century, Czech was largely a peasant language, which declined in status after the massive post-White Mountain emigration of non-Catholic nobility and burghers.

In Marguerite Trognon’s case, her extensive charitable activities for the benefit of the local poor and other community members, her own servant (*Magd*), and other caregivers may be considered an indicator of her good adaptation to a region distant from her place of origin.³⁰ Among her belongings, Marguerite Trognon had substantial savings; her position enabled her to make choices about how to spend them, and she decided to spend them locally.

Despite living in rural western Bohemia, Trognon had ties to Vienna, where her uncle made a bequest for her. As the seat of the imperial court, Vienna seems to have served as a convenient hub not only for the governesses but also for those who sought to hire them. The center of the Habsburg monarchy abounded with French-speaking migrants, including tutors and governesses, and featured a broad spectrum of members of the French diaspora, such as goldsmiths, merchants, musicians, dancers, decorators, tailors, and hat and wig makers.³¹

The central role of Vienna and other provincial capitals (*Landeshauptstädte*) as communication nodes in governesses’ hiring and the role of noble families’ recommendations in shaping the career trajectories of private migrant women teachers are clearly promising topics for further research. Recommendations seem to have been essential for the *gouvernantes*’ career dynamics. For example, the letters written by Colomba Bouquet’s noble patrons upon her death reveal that she had served first for the Skrbenský family and then for the Chorinský family; these two families were related, and we may assume she was recommended personally.³² A similar pattern is well known in the careers of male private teachers.

Governesses are important examples of migrant women who were not “followers” of their husbands. Traditional migration research long focused on pioneer men, who would be followed by women.³³ The study of private women teachers enables us to nuance the view and explore how

²⁷Státní oblastní archiv Plzeň, Sběrka matrik západních Čech, sign. Kotouň 08, římskokatolická matrika zemřelých (1784–1817), 60.

²⁸Peter Burke, *Exiles and Expatriates in the History of Knowledge, 1500–2000* (Waltham, MA, 2017), 78.

²⁹“The spread of French throughout Europe in the seventeenth century, like the spread of English throughout the world today, discouraged the exiles from learning the language of their host country, whether it was German, Dutch, or English.” Burke, *Exiles and Expatriates*, 76–77.

³⁰Státní oblastní archiv Plzeň, fond Velkostatek Oselce, box 35, papers of the deceased Marguerite Trognon, uninventoried. The death register entry also confirms her support of local community members, namely “*Armeninstitut*” inmates.

³¹See Hyden-Hanscho, *Reisende, Migrante, Kulturmanager*, 340–78.

³²See a letter from 7 Feb. 1777 and a letter extract from 21 Mar. 1777. Moravský zemský archiv, Brno, fond Rodinný archiv Chorynských (G 144), inv. 82, box 12.

³³See Christiane Timmerman, Maria Lucinda Fonseca, Lore Van Praag, and Sónia Pereira, “Introduction,” in *Gender and Migration: A Gender-Sensitive Approach to Migration Dynamics*, ed. Christiane Timmerman, Maria Lucinda Fonseca, Lore Van Praag, and Sónia Pereira (Leuven, 2018), 7.

they pursued one of the few professional career opportunities available to contemporary women of middling status. At the same time, governesses usually followed the families they worked for as they moved between residences, especially between town palaces and rural chateaux, observing seasonal mobility patterns.

While the archival material related to the inheritance tax enables us to learn about the lives of *gouvernantes* who do not feature prominently in other historical records, these death duty sources also entail certain limits. From the perspective of migration history, they omit women who did not die as governesses or retired governesses at their noble patrons' residences; for example, women who perhaps re-migrated later in life, returning to their own relatives. From the sociocultural history viewpoint, these sources reveal almost nothing about their teaching activities as such. However, for this purpose we can resort to an example previously studied by Ivo Cerman. He drew attention to a governess with the surname Jenamy and an unknown first name who came from a French-speaking, presumably Catholic region, as she received her education in a convent. Around 1774 this young woman was hired by Marie Christine, Countess Dietrichstein, to serve as a governess to her five-year-old daughter Maria Theresia (1768–1821). The countess composed an instruction (*Plan ou observation*) that was influenced by contemporary principles of Enlightenment pedagogy and emphasized the “natural” talents and passions of a child. Primarily, the governess was expected to help the little girl to master French, but she was also to teach her Czech, which presupposes that she must have learned Czech herself and thus can be interpreted as an example of cultural hybridity and local adaptation. From the instruction it is clear that the governess also fulfilled the role of a caregiver (along with lower servants). She was present throughout the girl's daily schedule, which consisted of her reading, writing, and activities to prevent idleness. Not least of all, the governess was also responsible for the constant supervision of the girl's behavior, which was to be dutifully reported to her mother.³⁴

The instruction, particularly its last section, indicates that Countess Dietrichstein drafted it because she was dissatisfied with the young governess's performance, emphasizing that the governess had to yet gain the trust and respect of her daughter. The *gouvernante* was ordered to get to know her charge better and to show friendliness and patience.³⁵ The instruction thus demonstrates that although the nobility in the Habsburg monarchy significantly relied on middle-class, native French-speakers to reproduce social distinction, there was a subversive aspect in the role of the governess. As social actors of nonnoble background, governesses could clearly bring into their educational and caregiving work new aspects that were not always welcomed by their employers (although they may have gone unnoticed). The *gouvernantes* thus did not only reproduce social distinction in the strict sense but also subtly reshaped it.

Valuable complementary evidence on the mobility of governesses between the centers and provinces of the Habsburg monarchy can be found in the diarial family records written by the Silesian noblewoman Gabriela von Spens-Booden (1773–1808), which I coedited.³⁶ Gabriela noted down two consecutive stays of governesses at their family chateau in Kačice (Katschitz) in the Silesian duchy of Teschen. In the late stages of pregnancy with her seventh child, Gabriela entrusted her daughters to a governess named Franziska Falkenstein. As we can see, with the revival of the vernacular languages and literatures at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, French *gouvernantes* were joined by German- and, increasingly, English-speaking governesses, who either took turns or—in wealthier families—were employed simultaneously.³⁷ The diary entry by Gabriela von Spens-Booden reveals that “On 1 December 1805, *Freile* Franzl Falkenstein arrived to serve as a

³⁴See Ivo Cerman, *Habsburgischer Adel und Aufklärung. Bildungsverhalten des Wiener Hofadels im achtzehnten Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart, 2010), 357–65. I wish to thank Ivo Cerman for kindly sharing his text with me. Unfortunately, the Regional Museum in Mikulov in south Moravia considers the manuscript of a governess instruction by Marie Christine of Dietrichstein to have been lost from its collections and it does not possess a copy.

³⁵See Cerman, *Habsburgischer Adel und Aufklärung*, 362–65.

³⁶Veronika Čapská and Veronika Marková, eds., *Gabriela Sobková z Kornic, provdaná ze Spens-Booden. Denkové rodinné záznamy (1785–1808)*, (Prague, 2009).

³⁷See Hardach-Pinke, “Intercultural Education,” 721.

Gouvernante to our daughters; on 10 September 1806, she left for Ratibor.”³⁸ The day before Franziska Falkenstein’s departure, a new governess arrived from Vienna. This time it was a woman with a French-sounding name, Jeanette Satur, and she was hired along with a cleric who served as *Hofmeister*: “On 9 September 1806, the *Gouvernante* from Vienna, *Freile* Jeanette Satur, joined us. On the same day *Pater* Joseph Kaul arrived from across the Prussian border; he left again on 14 February 1808 because he did not like the weather here in *Katschitz*. *Freile* Satur left on 16 March 1808.”³⁹

During the Napoleonic Wars, the Spens-Booden’s financial situation was troubled, which may help to explain why these family employees stayed only for relatively short periods, and, ultimately, why Gabriela decided to act as governess herself to her two older daughters, Zoe and Gabrielle, which she announced in her diary: “On 17 March 1808, I took up the office of *Gouvernante* for my girls, Zoe and Gabrielle; may God help me raise them to our joy.”⁴⁰

Gabriela von Spens-Booden was born as Sobková of Kornice, a member of high nobility, and she married below her status. The very fact that she described herself as a governess is indicative of positive appreciation of this relatively new and independent female profession, which seems to have coexisted with critical attitudes toward *gouvernantes*. Gabriela might have been influenced in her approach by the turn-of-the-century sentimental ideal of engaged motherhood. Moreover, at that time she was suffering from advanced tuberculosis and probably wished to spend more time with her daughters. She died seven months later, on 22 October 1808.

The death of a parent might well bring about changes in a family’s strategies in regard to women’s education. The widowed Emanuel von Spens-Booden hired a governess, Theresa Platz, who became his lifelong partner. Along with his debts, Emanuel’s cohabitation with a governess damaged his reputation among his relatives and beyond. Gabriela’s daughters were sent to the convent school of Notre Dame sisters in Pressburg (present-day Bratislava), which was very popular among the nobility, not least because the convent published textbooks and spiritual literature in French in Pressburg and Trnava (Tyrnau) and several native French-speaking nuns were always present.⁴¹ The stays of Zoe, Gabrielle, and Marie at the convent school were financed by stipends that Gabriela’s great aunt funded for noblewomen in need from the duchy of Teschen.⁴²

Governess Theresa Platz’s officially unrecognized position as a long-term partner to her widowed noble patron points to ambiguities and tensions connected with the social status of the *gouvernante* as both a lady free from manual labor and also an employee. The paid employment of governesses is situated on the borderline between domestic service and a professional career; their work as educators was also closely connected with looking after children. The governesses’ education and the high status of French language and culture distinguished them from other servants. Governesses lived in close contact with their employers’ families, despite not being relatives. They were often not only teachers but also intimate companions to their charges, yet they depended on the goodwill of their employers. These circumstances created potential conflicts of social roles.

Marriage was an economic transaction, which was not easily attainable;⁴³ at the same time, it provided the only acceptable place for sexual contact. While governesses participated in the sociocultural

³⁸See “Den 1ten Dezember 1805 kam die Freile Franzl Falkenstein zu unsern Töchtern, als *Gouvernante*; und den 10 September 1806 gieng sie fort; nach *Ratibor*.” Čapská and Marková, eds., *Gabriela Sobková*, 166.

³⁹See “Den 9ten September 1806 ist die *Gouvernante* von *Vienne* Freile *Jeanette Satur* zu uns gekommen. Auch denselben Tag der Hofmeister *Pater Joseph Kaul* aus dem Preußischen; welcher wieder abgieng, weil ihm hier in *Katschitz* die Luft nicht anschlug den 14ten Februar 1808 und die Freile *Satur* gieng ab den 16ten März 1808.” Čapská and Marková, eds., *Gabriela Sobková*, 168.

⁴⁰See “Den 17ten März [1]808 trat ich das Amt als *Gouvernante* bei meinen Mädln an; *Zoë* u[n]d *Gabrielle*; Gott helfe mir, dass ich sie zu unserer Freude erziehe.” Čapská and Marková, eds., *Gabriela Sobková*, 174.

⁴¹On the Notre Dame educational practices in this context cf., for example, Veronika Čapská, “Between Revival and Uncertainty—Female Religious Life in Central Europe in the Long Eighteenth Century,” in *Between Revival and Uncertainty. Monastic and Secular Female Communities in Central Europe in the Long Eighteenth Century*, ed. Veronika Čapská, Ellinor Forster, Janina Maegraith, and Christine Schneider (Opava, 2012), 22–24.

⁴²See Čapská and Marková, eds., *Gabriela Sobková*, 62 and 103–6.

⁴³In the context of the history of work, Maria Agren characterizes early modern marriage as a privilege that conferred certain benefits (such as access to resources and authority) and was not available to everybody. See Maria Agren, “Conclusion,” in *Making a Living, Making a Difference: Gender and Work in Early Modern European Society* (Oxford, 2017), 213–15.

world of the nobility, they could not enter into formally recognized marital union with members of the noble household. However, historical records occasionally suggest that these formal expectations were circumvented in practice.

Women who embraced the profession of a governess were often expected to move across long distances between their consecutive employments and sometimes between family residences. They were occasionally asked to accompany noble families on their travels. For example, in 1711 Wenzel Anton Count Chotek (1674–1754) took his daughters on a female version of a *grand tour* to Lorraine, during which a French governess accompanied them.⁴⁴

To be willing to take up employment in a distant region, far away from their former social structures, governesses had to be appropriately motivated. The lure of joining a noble household and thus of getting closer to the pleasures of high society may well have been at play but was not sufficient in itself. Economic provision was of key importance for the women, who hoped to gain economic independence by pursuing this professional path.

In the future, more material will certainly be needed to better appraise governesses' economic situations during their careers and in retirement. Here, I attempt to draft the first preliminary contours. Governesses received an annual wage, which differed according to family standing, regions, the governess's competencies, and other variables; this and its development over time are of major importance, but very little can so far be asserted about them. As a certain hint we may mention that in the last third of the seventeenth century, Ferdinand Bonaventura, Count Harrach (1636–1706), hired a *gouvernante* for his daughter(s) at the sum of 100 florins per year.⁴⁵ In terms of provision, the board and lodging that came with the position was an important factor.⁴⁶

Documents related to Marguerite Trognon's retirement and death provide us with a very good overview of her incomes and living standards. There is no information on her wages because the documents focus on her actual recent situation. In the report on her assets made one day after her death (*Nachlassenschaftsprotokoll*), three sources of income are described on the basis of her papers: two of these were from the family by which she was last employed, and one was provided by her deceased uncle Johann Trognon.⁴⁷

On 24 October 1799, Baron Franz Dominik Janovský of Janovice and his three daughters, Marie, Agnes, and Christine, all probably former charges of Marguerite Trognon, secured a lifelong pension for their *gouvernante*, which consisted of 40 florins yearly and further support in kind: five *Klafter* of firewood and the usage of a flat with a kitchen and chamber. Three years later, the oldest daughter, Baroness Maria von Collard, née Janovský, provided Trognon with 60 florins yearly, divided into two installments to be paid on St. Gallus's and St. George's days. Baroness von Collard obliged her heirs to observe this duty and employed the rhetoric of gratitude as she explained the support was meant to "somewhat recompense and appreciate the attachment, loyalty, and affection the maiden Marguerite Trognon has always efficiently shown to me since my youth on."⁴⁸

As her third source of income, Marguerite Trognon had the use of a testamentary bequest by her uncle, Johann Trognon, which came into effect on 22 January 1799. Johann Trognon secured the sum of 3,500 florins in the so-called Scottish Abbey of the Benedictines in Vienna, and his niece was to receive interest regularly upon quittance. A letter of authorization shows she had an agent

⁴⁴See Ivo Cerman, *Chotkové. Příběh úřednické šlechty* (Prague, 2008), 65.

⁴⁵See Susanne Claudine Pils, "Gender/Spiel/Räume. Zur Konstruktion weiblicher und männlicher Rollen in der frühen Neuzeit," *Opera historica* 11 (2006): 455.

⁴⁶See Deborah Simonton, *A History of European Women's Work: 1700 to the Present* (New York, 2003), 65: "Many also needed the accommodation which governessing provided. Virtually no training existed, the only requisite qualities being literacy and some gentility."

⁴⁷Státní oblastní archiv Plzeň, fond Velkostatek Oselce, box 35, papers of the deceased Marguerite Trognon.

⁴⁸"Für das mir von meiner Jugend an, stätts werkhätig erwiesene *Attachement*, Ergebenheit, und Zuneigung erkenntlich zu bezeigen und dieselbe einigermaßen dafür zu belohnen." Státní oblastní archiv Plzeň, fond Velkostatek Oselce, box 35, papers of the deceased Marguerite Trognon, instruction on behalf of Marguerite Trognon, Prague, 16 Oct. 1802.

(*Sachwalter*) in Vienna, Ferdinand Gemel von Flischbach, who was responsible for collecting her money regularly.⁴⁹

From Marguerite Trognon's last will, which is preserved in both French and German, we can deduce that she had a chambermaid whom she paid and who was to be awarded the equivalent of six months' wages upon her death ("ses gage pour 6 mois"). She donated some of her belongings to her maid and her friends, so the inventory of her flat at the chateau in Oselce provides a somewhat limited insight into her material standard. It was furnished with a table, four chairs, two wash basin cabinets, one copper engraving, one bench, one chandelier, and one bed, which her maid was to receive upon her death. The interior was equipped with plenty of *linge blanc* (mainly chemises, kerchiefs, and napkins) and with remnants of *garderobe*, which were to be distributed to the poor.⁵⁰

We may conclude that Marguerite Trognon enjoyed comfortable conditions in her old age; this is supported by the fact that she left a broad spectrum of generous offerings to members of the local elites, such as the parish priest František Herites (to whom she bequeathed her pocket watch), and to the poor.⁵¹ Marguerite Trognon seems to have followed closely what was expected of a good governess who taught not only a foreign language but also good manners, because she left a thank you letter to her patron, Baroness Maria Collard, whom she addresses as "my angel and the most beloved of my heart" (*mon Ange et la plus aimée de mon Coeur*). Beyond the conventional language of sentimentality, we may discern in her choice of words that she drew a certain degree of satisfaction from her profession and life path: "Your entire worthy family has contributed to making my life sweeter."⁵²

Marguerite Trognon was well provided for. In fact, the cash found in her flat before it was locked and sealed amounted to 1,125 florins and 13 kreutzer, which was above the taxable sum of 500 florins. However, after substantial funeral, juridical, and administrative expenses and Marguerite's donations to local community had been deducted, the amount remaining was significantly reduced and exempt from taxation.⁵³

Antonia de l'Espiliez's inheritance tax inspection papers, though quite brief, enable a few valuable comparisons. Antonia left 549 florins and 30 kreutzer in cash. Moreover, she owned gold and silver—possibly in jewelry, which would be appropriate at the court of the prince of Mannsfeld—the value of which was estimated at 355 florins and 5 kreutzer. Overall, once again, the resulting sum of 904 florins and 35 kreutzer was above the taxable minimum. Funeral, juridical, administrative, and medical costs were carefully documented and deducted from the initial sum, along with a donation to the pious foundation for one hundred memorial masses. The remaining 426 florins and 45 kreutzer were exempt from inheritance tax and could be divided among Antonia's collateral heirs.⁵⁴

The economic situations of Marguerite Trognon and Antonia de l'Espiliez thus do not seem to have been very distant from those of the prosperous subjects that were the primary targets of the inheritance tax ordinance. The papers relating to Colomba Bouquetet reflect a somewhat different situation. It turned out she had direct heirs (although her employer was unsure of this at first). As a consequence, her property was not subject to any inheritance tax inspection. The meticulous documentation was undertaken, among other things, with regard to her relatives. The inventory of her belongings is quite detailed and was sent to her daughter Agnes Vachez in Paris.⁵⁵

Colomba Bouquetet died on 9 October 1776, after dispatching a letter to her daughter, and she was buried three days later in the south Moravian town of Veselí. The parish priest recorded her age in the

⁴⁹Cf. an undated draft of the letter of authorization for Ferdinand Gemel von Flischbach. Státní oblastní archiv Plzeň, fond Velkostatek Oselce, box 35, papers of the deceased Marguerite Trognon.

⁵⁰Státní oblastní archiv Plzeň, fond Velkostatek Oselce, box 35, papers of the deceased Marguerite Trognon.

⁵¹*Ibid.*

⁵²This expression of gratitude is formulated in French and German as follows: "toutes Votre Illustres Familles ont beaucoup contribuez a me rendre la vie douce," and "ihre ganze würdige Familie haben viel beigetragen um mir das Leben zu versüssen." *Ibid.*

⁵³*Ibid.*

⁵⁴Národní archiv, Prague, fond Komise pro dědickou daň 1763–1789, 1795–1840 (1846), sign. 14. XII, box 36, inv. 1617, papers of Antonie de l'Espiliez regarding inheritance tax exemption.

⁵⁵Moravský zemský archiv, fond Rodinný archiv Chorvnských (G 144), inv. 82, box 12, *Inventarium*.

register of deaths as fifty-two years and her profession as “informatrix illustris juvenus Excellentissimi Domini Domini Comitis Francisci Chorinsky.”⁵⁶ Inheritance-related letters from her former employers describe her as “the old governess.”⁵⁷

Upon Colomba’s death, it turned out that her employers at the time, the Chorinský family, did not have any reliable information about her relatives. Thus, although Colomba had maintained private correspondence ties, the personal aspects of her life were apparently not of much importance to her employer. Count Franz Johann Chorinský inquired of his brother, Ignaz Dominick, about the matter, and he in turn asked another nobleman, Karl Traugott, Baron von Skrbenský; these connections seem to indicate Colomba Bouquetet’s previous service trajectory. Baron Skrbenský mediated contact with Catharine Clement, who had kept correspondence with Colomba and served in the household of Gabriele von Thurn, born Countess von Reischach, in Vienna. In summer 1777, Count Chorinský took the suitcase containing Colomba’s personal possessions in which her daughter had expressed interest to Vienna and had Catharine Clement confirm in a written acknowledgment bearing her personal seal that she had received a sealed suitcase and the sum of 148 florins for Colomba’s daughter.⁵⁸

The preserved inventory of Colomba’s possessions, encompassing clothing, textiles, and books, among other things, is extensive but probably not exhaustive. For example, we cannot exclude the possibility that she had supported her daughter, Agnes, and her family during the course of her life. It was also a common occurrence for people to appreciate the caregivers and medical specialists who assisted them in their last days. For example, the inheritance tax inspection papers for the Mannsfeld family’s *gouvernante* Antonia de l’Espiliez reveal liabilities for a nurse and a surgeon. Colomba Bouquetet’s inventory lists her remaining cash as 67 florins, 5 kreutzer, and 2 denarii. Moreover, at the time of her death, her employer owed her a further 81 florins and 15 kreutzer. This was the wage due to her “*bis ad diem mortis*,” but we do not know whether she received her wages on a monthly basis or what the yearly sum was.⁵⁹

Colomba Bouquetet owned a gilded silver pendant with an image of the Bohemian saint John of Nepomuk and a string of artificial pearls, known as “Wachsperte,” which were made using a technique invented by the Jacquin family rosary merchants in Paris in 1656 that involved filling hollow glass beads with wax and then coating them with pearl essence.⁶⁰ Her inventory further shows that she had a varied collection of clothing, lingerie, bonnets, and accessories (such as a pair of leather gloves and a straw hat). Moreover, three packets containing pieces of cloth, such as flax and silk, with ribbons and fine needlework, suggest that Colomba had been actively engaged in handicraft, specifically in sewing, mending, and embroidery.

The inventory further provides a rare glimpse into a governess’s personal library. Colomba Bouquetet’s collection of books consisted of seventeen titles, sixteen in French and one in German, namely *Lehr Büchel Teutsche Schrift zu erlernen*. While one of the French books was published in Paris, *Etrennes Spirituelle dédiées aux Dames* (1758), most of the other French titles were published in Vienna. The majority of the Viennese prints are librettos of comedies, tragedies, and operas staged in Vienna in the 1750s and 1760s. This substantial collection of librettos might have been connected with the use of theater as a time-proven teaching method, capable of engaging children of various ages. In addition to cultivating language skills, theater performances provided the opportunity to invite guests and thus enabled young members of the nobility to socialize and practice acquired norms of behavior from an early age. In the second half of the eighteenth century, staging theater plays for private noble company was a much sought-after pastime. Franz Johann Chorinský’s brother Ignaz Dominick Chorinský, who may have been Colomba’s previous employer, had a private theater built

⁵⁶Moravský zemský archiv, Brno, Sbírková matrik, sign. 5938, matrika zemřelých Veselí nad Moravou (1714–1784), 545.

⁵⁷Moravský zemský archiv, Brno, fond Rodinný archiv Chorinských (G 144), inv. 82, box 12.

⁵⁸Moravský zemský archiv, Brno, fond Rodinný archiv Chorinských (G 144), inv. 82, box 12, the receipt dated 20 July 1777.

⁵⁹Moravský zemský archiv, Brno, fond Rodinný archiv Chorinských (G 144), inv. 82, box 12, *Inventarium*.

⁶⁰On this technique, see Burga Krüll and Ulla Neumayer, “Perlen und Edelsteine im 17. Jahrhundert,” in *Liselotte von der Pfalz: Madame am Hofe des Sonnenkönigs*, ed. Hélène Alexander Adda and Sigrun Paas (Heidelberg, 1996), 200.

at his chateau in Velké Hoštice (Gross Hoschütz) on the Moravian-Silesian border and had his own orchestra.⁶¹

Theater plays were performed both in these rural chateaux and in the urban palaces where the nobility spent the winter months. Gabriela von Spens-Booden (mentioned previously) noted in her diary that on 12 February 1795 she was invited to the then Sprinzenstein palais in Opava (Troppau) to see the comedy *The Lost Son (Der Verlorene Sohn)* with the following actors and company: “count Sprinzenstein, both his little sons, baron Luzello, baron Franz Beretzko, Herr von Schmidt, Herr Sommer and the count Sprinzenstein’ clerk; the attending ladies were both comtesse Nandl and comtesse Jenny Chorinský; and Freile Claire von Toepffer.”⁶² The host, Count Joseph Sprinzenstein (1755–1807), was married to Marie Anna Chorinský (1757–1852), the daughter of Ignaz Dominick Chorinský. Maria Anna might well have been one of Colomba Bouquet’s former charges, and they certainly moved in intertwined social circles. While governesses probably had some sort of access to the libraries of their employers, it was undoubtedly handy for them to have at least a modest selection of theater play librettos on their own bookshelves.

About one-quarter of Colomba Bouquet’s library was made up of religious titles. In addition to *Etrennes Spirituelle*, there was a Bible and a catechism. Moreover, one of the titles was an exclusive prayer book representative of the contemporary ideals of raising young noblewomen in the Habsburg monarchy, *La journée chretienne de demoiselles pensionnaires de la Visitation S. Marie de Vienne*.⁶³

In its title and foreword, this book refers to the authorial participation of the widowed Empress Wilhelmine Amalia of Brunswick-Lüneburg (1673–1742), who founded in 1717 the convent of the Order of the Visitation in Vienna, an important center of Francophone education and socialization for noblewomen.⁶⁴ The presence of this book in the collection of a governess shows the close interconnection between the two major education models available to young noblewomen and embodied by convents and private teachers. The French prayer book closely associated with the pious dowager empress was clearly appreciated as distinguished reading well beyond the convent walls, as documented by Colomba’s book inventory and many other preserved exemplars of the book.⁶⁵

Among Colomba Bouquet’s books we can further find two epistolary works by renowned female writers: the novel *Lettres de Madame Du Montier* by the French writer and governess Jeanne-Marie LePrince de Beaumont (1711–80) and the French translation of the letters of Mary Wortley Montagu, an English noble lady and traveler (1689–1762). There is also a sentimental novel, *L’orpheline angloise ou Histoire de Charlotte Summers*, a French translation of a work usually, though not securely, attributed to the English writer Sarah Fielding (1710–68), novelist Henry Fielding’s sister. This popular novel can further be detected in the library at the Skrbenský family’s Silesian chateau in Hošťálkovo (Gotschdorf), where Colomba had most likely served earlier in her career. However, the books in these two collections had different bindings (the Skrbenský exemplar had four parts bound in two volumes, whereas the list of works owned by Colomba Bouquet registers three volumes out of four, with one missing).⁶⁶ Religious works, sentimental novels, epistolary works, and theater

⁶¹See, for example, Lubomír Slavíček, “Mit solchen Männern, wie Sie sind, haben S’ Excellenz mein Hochgräfl: gnädiger Herr Principal gerne zu thun.’ Hrabě Ignác Dominik Chorinský z Ledské a jeho umělci František Antonín Sebastini, Ignác Raab, František Vavřinec Korompay, Ondřej Schweigl, David Roentgen et alii,” *Opuscula Historiae Artium* 62 (2013): 180–211.

⁶²“Graf Sprinzenstein seine beiden kleine Söhne; Baron Luzello, Baron Franz Beretzko; Herr von Schmidt; und Herr Sommer und der Kanzelist von der Graf Sprinzenstein; an Frauenzimmer, waren die beiden Comtessen, Nandl, und Jenny Chorinsky; und Freile Claire von Toepffer.” Čapská and Marková, eds., *Gabriela Sobková*, 130–33.

⁶³Moravský zemský archiv, Brno, fond Rodinný archiv Chorinských (G 144), inv. 82, box 12, *Inventarium*. For the book, see the anonymously authored *La journée chretienne de demoiselles pensionnaires de la Visitation S. Marie de Vienne* (Vienna, 1747).

⁶⁴On the Francophone convent schools in the Habsburg monarchy, see, for example, Čapská, *Between Revival and Uncertainty*, 20–24.

⁶⁵The National Library in Prague owns one exemplar (sign. 36 D 000304) and the Moravian Land Library in Brno two exemplars (sign. ST 1251.851 and ST1 0651.681).

⁶⁶See Moravský zemský archiv, Brno, fond Rodinný archiv Chorinských (G 144), inv. 82, box 12; Zemský archiv v Opavě, fond Velkostatek Hošťálkovo, inv. 69, sign. 26, list of books.

play librettos were standard components of contemporary noble libraries, and the governesses seem to have both shared and shaped demand for this gendered literature.⁶⁷

The outlined range of literature more or less complied with the contemporary discourse of virtue and ideas of appropriate reading for ladies. Governesses were expected to imbue their charges with virtue, but the very concept underwent considerable changes over the course of the eighteenth century. The former, primarily religious understanding of virtue was reassessed and increasingly underpinned by the search for new, more secular foundations of morality.⁶⁸ In the second half of the eighteenth century, in particular, the ideal of virtuous womanhood was broadened to accommodate guarded reading of sentimental novels and theater visits in addition to religious practices.⁶⁹ This development favored education by governesses over the model of convent education. Moreover, convent schools entailed relatively less direct parental control and potentially higher sanitary risks.⁷⁰ The private teacher model with French governesses seems to have enabled families to react more dynamically to the changing social climate, which was increasingly imbued with Enlightenment ideas, and to follow new trends in reading tastes and material culture and consumption. One can recognize this shift, for example, in the aforementioned educational plan composed in 1774 by Marie Christine, Countess Dietrichstein, for the French *gouvernante* she employed. Inspired by pedagogical principles promoted by Jean Jacques Rousseau, the countess instructed the convent-educated governess that she wished her daughter not to be raised as excessively devout (“ni une dévote, ni une bigote”) and in a rather natural way with a great deal of freedom.⁷¹

As we have seen, theater play librettos highlighted the new character of a *gouvernante* and gradually found their way into libraries belonging to governesses and to the families for whom they worked. We may hypothesize about the perceived dissonance between the literary type of a *gouvernante*, portrayed as a dry, elderly guardian of female virtues, and the rather more varied everyday experience of governesses as prolific letter writers, mothers, employers of servants, unofficial partners, and financially well-provided donors, as substantiated by the archival evidence. Governesses’ positions as independent wage earners and participants in the elite culture entailed a significant subversive aspect. As indicated in the preceding text, we may see in theater plays attempts to neutralize that subversive potential by turning the governess figure into a source of laughter. The complex intercultural and social tensions concerning governesses were not disconnected from the situation in the labor market, as I will develop in the next section.

In Demand and Under Suspicion

The examples of *gouvernantes* I have been able to recover from historical records do not come from families of court aristocracy; rather, they were connected with relatively provincial noble families and can be regarded as evidence that to hire a governess was a common occurrence in noble households with small children and adolescent women in the second half of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. We could say that governesses were in high demand. Moreover, current socioanthropological research inspires me to suggest that we might draw a parallel between present-day paid migrant

⁶⁷On the composition of contemporary noble libraries and for broader contextualization of Colomba Bouquet’s book collection, see the chapter by Veronika Čapská, “Šlechtična na venkovském sídle, knihy a sentimentální imaginace v pozdním osvícenství,” in Gabriela Sobková, ed. Čapská and Marková, 19–62.

⁶⁸On the Enlightenment search for new viable foundations of morality in the context of Bohemian lands, see Ivo Cerman, Rita Krueger, and Susan Reynolds, eds., *The Enlightenment in Bohemia: Religion, Morality and Multiculturalism* (Oxford, 2011).

⁶⁹See the diary edition and accompanying studies in Čapská and Marková, eds., *Gabriela Sobková*.

⁷⁰For example, widowed noble woman Zuzana Černínová temporarily withdrew her younger son Herman from the Jesuit college in the Prague New Town in 1646 due to the epidemics, much to the discontent of the Jesuits. See Zdeněk Kalista, ed., *Korespondence Zuzany Černínové z Harasova s jejím synem Humprechtem Janem Černínem z Chudenic* (Prague, 1941), 140. Convent education could inspire noble girls to embrace the idea of taking a veil, contrary to their parents’ plans or family strategies. This was, for example, the case of both daughters of Franz Anton Count Sporck, who lacked a male heir. He tolerated the wish of his older daughter, Maria Eleonora, to enter a convent but forced his younger daughter, Anna Katharina, to enter marriage against her will. See, for example, Veronika Čapská, “A Publishing Project of Her Own – Anna Katharina Swéerts-Sporck as a Patroness of the Servite Order and a Promoter of Devotional Literature,” *Cornova* 1, no. 1 (2011): 67–80.

⁷¹See Cerman, *Habsburgischer Adel und Aufklärung*, 357–65.

caregivers and eighteenth-century governesses, who were and are both in demand and viewed with some suspicion.

Theater play librettos allow us to discern the gender, class, and language anxieties concerning governesses who were middle-class working women and foreign language speakers who crossed the boundaries of class. In printed media these French women teachers were subject to othering and criticism.⁷² They were perceived as the source of potential bad foreign influences and disorder in noble households. One could say that governesses contributed to the elites' outward displays of social distinction, but at the same time they were also part of discourses that revealed an aspect of moral panic because they raised undue suspicion and nourished imagined threats while downplaying the subordinate status of these women.⁷³ Parallels in biased representations of French governesses can be drawn with other European regions, particularly with Great Britain.⁷⁴

The previously analyzed examples of governesses who served in the closely interconnected Chorinský, Skrbenský, and Spens-Booden noble families seem to have been indicative of the changes in employment patterns and of a certain shift from the long-term or even lifelong hiring of a French native speaker to a short-term hiring of governesses who were more locally anchored. This change cannot be sufficiently explained by the possible effects of the French Revolution, Napoleonic Wars, or economic distress. Although the fear of the spread of revolutionary ideas from France was an important sociocultural factor, signals of a shift in attitudes toward the French language and foreign teachers can be observed much earlier.

Although the French language continued to serve as an indicator of social distinction, its status somewhat declined toward the end of the eighteenth century. It was increasingly complemented by English, as the wave of Anglophilia gradually took root, and by German, which also served as the main administrative language. Certain criticisms of French private teachers in general and doubts about their competencies can be recognized, for example, in the pedagogical work of Franz Josef, Count Kinský (1739–1805), *Erinnerung über einen wichtigen Gegenstand von einem Böhmen*, which was published in Prague in 1773. Specifically, in the chapter “On Tutors” (*Von Hofmeistern*), Kinský criticized that nobles paid less attention to recruiting tutors from Paris than to ordering horses from England. He advocated that local teachers should be given precedence if they proved better qualified, especially in fields like geography or the knowledge of the homeland (*Vaterland*). His discourse occupied a fragile ground between patriotism and xenophobia and probably voiced contemporary concerns that could strike a chord with his readership.⁷⁵ Kinský devoted only his penultimate, very brief chapter to “The Upbringing of the Other Sex” (*Die Erziehung des anderen Geschlechts*). He was rather skeptical that he could find a sympathetic ear, but he suggested that many of the postulates he had outlined for the education of young noblemen could be applied to ladies' upbringing, too: “Nevertheless, one could after all also apply many of the here outlined principles to the instruction of the beauties, if one could decide to renounce certain prejudices, which have become almost rules since they were followed for so long.”⁷⁶

Formal aspects of private women's education and training of potential governesses for these purposes received increased attention beginning in the mid-1770s. Particularly, the foundation of two state-supported

⁷²See Hardach-Pinke, *Intercultural Education by Governesses*, 720.

⁷³On the concept of moral panic, cf. for example, Sean P. Hier, ed., *Moral Panic and the Politics of Anxiety* (New York, 2011); and David Garland, “On the Concept of Moral Panic,” *Crime Media Culture* 4, no. 1 (2008): 9–30.

⁷⁴See Arden Hegele, “‘So she has been educated by a vulgar, silly, conceited French governess!’ Social Anxieties, Satirical Portraits, and the Eighteenth-Century French Instructor,” *Gender and Education* 23, no. 3 (2011): 331–43; Marcus Tomalin, “A Domestic Mischief: French Governesses in British Literature, 1796–1832,” *The Review of English Studies* 62, no. 252 (2011): 441–64.

⁷⁵See also Ivo Cerman, chapter 8, “Aristocratic Francophone Literature in Bohemia,” in *European Francophonie: The Social, Political and Cultural History of an International Prestige Language*, ed. Vladislav Rjéoutski, Gesine Argent, and Derek Offord (Oxford, 2014), 228.

⁷⁶“Indessen würde sich doch vieles von den hier geäußerten Grundsätzen, auch auf die Erziehung der Schönen anwenden lassen, wenn man sich entschliessen könnte, gewissen Vorurtheilen zu entsagen, die weil man ihnen solange gefolgt ist, dadurch beynahe Gesetze geworden sind.” Franz Joseph Kinský, *Erinnerung über einen wichtigen Gegenstand von einem Böhmen* (Prague, 1773), 276–77.

secular institutions destined to educate new governesses paved the way for looming changes in the labor market in the Habsburg monarchy. In 1775 the so-called *Offizierstöchter-Erziehungs-Institut* was established in St. Pölten, and ten years later it moved to a dissolved Pauline friary in Hernals, on the outskirts of Vienna. It provided daughters of lower officers with new possibilities to gain training as governesses. The second institution, the *Zivil-Mädchen-Pensionat*, was founded by Madame Thérèse Luzac (née Chapelain) on permission by Emperor Joseph II in 1786 to prepare daughters of civil servants for careers as private teachers.⁷⁷ *Göttingisches historisches Magazin*, issued by the University of Göttingen professors Christoph Meiners and Ludwig Timotheus von Spittler, included a paragraph about both institutions in 1790. It announced that the *Offizierstöchter-Erziehungs-Institut*, supervised by Madame Zeh, housed forty students and the “perhaps too glamorous” *pensionat* of Madame Luzac housed thirty young women.⁷⁸ These new institutions markedly added to the diversification of the governesses’ labor market. They broadened opportunities for local middle-class women and made formally trained women teachers better available for the first time in the Habsburg monarchy. The growing appreciation of German among the nobility further shaped the market for governesses, benefitting those who could speak refined German.⁷⁹

The revolutionary events in France raised a wave of emigration. Despite the initially rather moderate approach of Emperor Leopold II, the distrust toward émigrés from the regions under French rule gradually increased, and both nonnoble and noble migrants were subject to surveillance.⁸⁰ The fears of the potentially harmful thoughts and their spread by French immigrants, as well as the spread of anti-French sentiments, deepened in 1792 with the radicalization of the revolution and the onset of military conflicts with France. In 1793, Emperor Francis II prohibited instruction in French language by native speakers. The youth could be taught French only by teachers from the Habsburg monarchy. Furthermore, it was forbidden to import French books, and after January 1793, French refugees could stay only in Vienna or in provincial capitals (*Landeshauptstädte*).⁸¹

Nobles interested in hiring French *gouvernantes* and tutors faced reduced options. They could, for example, employ second generation members of the French diaspora or use the services of French teachers who had arrived prior to the revolution, more specifically before 1790. This was also the case of the previously analyzed *gouvernante* Marguerite Trognon, who entered the service of the Janovský family before the French Revolution. French private teachers in the Habsburg hereditary lands who immigrated after 1790 had to ask for permission to stay and for the renewal of their teaching license. These were not to be granted, however, and the teachers were expelled. Nonetheless, we need to take into account that the nobility was in a position to successfully negotiate exceptions.⁸²

However, the situation in the Habsburg monarchy seems to have differed from that in Britain, where the numbers of French émigré widows grew considerably after 1789 and shaped the market for governesses in yet another direction. These diverging developments deserve a closer comparative study in the future.

The historical records and literature explored here have not only allowed us to analyze a significantly earlier phase in the development of governesses’ profession than had been previously researched but they have also enabled us to capture important long-term processes and changes with respect to immigration, the labor market, and intercultural contacts and transmissions.

⁷⁷See for example David F. Good, Margarete Grandner, and Mary Jo Maynes, eds., *Austrian Women in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives* (New York, 1996), 42; Helmut Engelbrecht, *Geschichte des österreichischen Bildungswesens: Erziehung und Unterricht auf dem Boden Österreichs*, vol. 3, *Von der frühen Aufklärung bis zum Vormärz* (Vienna, 1984), 234.

⁷⁸Christoph Meiners and Ludwig Timotheus von Spittler, *Göttingisches historisches Magazin* (Hannover, 1790), 728.

⁷⁹Cf. Lenderová, “Sociální a kulturní funkce francouzštiny,” 242–45.

⁸⁰See Zdeňka Stoklásková, “Imigranti v Rakousku na konci 18. století,” in *Mezi časy... Kultura a umění v českých zemích kolem r. 1800*, ed. Zdeňk Hojda and Roman Prahel (Prague, 2000), 342, 343, 352. I wish to thank Zdeňka Stoklásková for having kindly shared her article with me.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, 343–44.

⁸²Zdeňka Stoklásková, for example, analyzed the case of a French-speaking newcomer, Abbé Peter Augustin Holley, for whom Johann Count Larisch von Männich received permission, which allowed the priest to stay at Larish estates in Austrian Silesia although he could not formally engage in teaching, upbringing, or pastoral care. See *ibid.*, 349–50, 351–53.

Conclusion

The aim of this article has been to open the study of French governesses as women migrant professionals, intercultural and cross-class mediators, and emerging literary types in the Bohemian lands of the eighteenth century, and thus to contribute to a more inclusive view of *gouvernantes* across Europe. I have approached governesses as migrant women suspended in texts (which they produced and in which they were thematized) and in certain cultural as well as socioeconomic conditions. I have asked what these texts reveal about their sociocultural roles, material standards, and imagined lives.

The exceptionally high cultural status of the French language, which steadily grew for most of the eighteenth century, and its role as a distinctive elite sociolect broadened opportunities for middle-class native French-speaking women to support themselves outside of marriage by gaining relatively stable salaries abroad. I have drawn attention to previously disregarded sources, especially the inheritance tax-related records and printed sources. I have pointed out that the governesses' own income and savings enabled them to act as patrons in local contexts (and beyond) and that the *gouvernantes* were active textual producers and donors who used their letters and gifts to build and maintain social ties, to come to terms with their transgressive experience, and to shape their memory. They employed their texts and their possessions to connect across geographic, social, and other distances and also across time. Further findings of other documents, such as letters or endowment instruments, that may have survived at other ends of communication lines would enhance our knowledge of the governesses' sociocultural practices and economic conditions and provide insights into what work and independent wages meant to these women.

The very fact that they taught foreign languages, along with certain artifacts identified in the analyzed inventories, such as the pendant of St. John of Nepomuk, German cursive textbook, or "Wachspferle," remind us that these *gouvernantes* were intercultural mediators and transcultural actors. Moreover, I argue that they need to be regarded as both educators and caregivers. They were employed to teach their charges refined language skills and manners according to their noble employers' instructions and wishes. The examined sources suggest that the *gouvernantes* contributed in this role to the processes of reproducing social and cultural distinction as well as gendered discourses and practices. However, their border crossings on multiple levels also coshaped the social spaces in which they moved. These sources further support the view that the role of the governess was far more multifaceted than teaching alone. The role of these household workers as everyday care providers in a situation in which their charges had only limited contacts with their parents and with nonnoble people is obvious, but it has long been downplayed. Sociocultural anthropologists are increasingly interested in the underestimated gendered aspects of care, and research on governesses offers promising opportunities to historicize paid and unpaid caregiving in the household environment. Further research will be needed to refine the time frame of development and changes in the governesses' labor market. This article has shown a multiplicity of approaches to exploring these long underestimated "servants of Francophilia," while also broadening the space for future comparative studies.

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