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The Culture of the  
Aristocracy in the  
Habsburg Monarchy,  
1750–1820

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## Societies of Scholars and Patronage in Late Eighteenth Century Hungary Ferenc Széchenyi as a Patron of Ádám Pálóczi Horváth\*

Ádám Pálóczi Horváth (1760-1820) was an important figure and polyhistor of the Hungarian Enlightenment. His literary career was diverse: he wrote poetry, epic poetry, dialogues, philosophical essays, and novels. He was an organizer in the Hungarian Freemasons and was first to publish a psychological treatise in Hungarian. At the beginning of his career, he had great success and an extensive network of contacts, and he was considered to be a prestigious author. From being an integral part of the cultural life, he slowly turned into a West Transdanubian hermit.

Horváth was also a lawyer, an engineer and a parliamentarian. He wrote many political notes and pamphlets about the contemporary parliament and remained an obsessive writer until the end of his life. He was a leading author in the most diverse fields: he was one of the firsts to analyze the rules of Hungarian prosody and metrics, he intended to form a society of scholars, he took steps “toward women’s rights”, and he was first to publish a study on Hungarian dialects. In music history he is mainly known for collection of songs entitled *Ötödfélszáz énekek [450 songs]*. Horváth’s poetry and song collections carry significant literary significance and create a meeting point for the oral tradition and written literature.

I do not aim to present Horváth as a canonical figure or to rediscover him as a prime author of literary history. I would rather show a possible aesthetical position, from which a part of his career can be understood. Our most important primary source of information about Horváth’s life is his correspondence with his fellow poets, Ferenc Kazinczy and Mihály

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Csokonai Vitéz. Horváth's letters and his network of contacts are much more extensive than we are currently aware, and processing this body of writings is work for the future. The fields of Aesthetics, cultural anthropology, music history, and folkloristics have a lot to find in his legacy, as does literary history.

In Horváth's case the analyses of his local connections reveal important contiguities of literary history because these were mainly friendships and professional relationships with leading intellectuals of the time. He had close friendships with intellectuals such as János Spissich, sub-lord of Zala county, Count György Festetics, Lázár Somssich, who was a royal councillor, István Sárközy, sub-lord of Somogy county, and Ferenc Széchényi, who during the Hungarian Diet tasked Horváth with creating a plan for establishing a learned society (an academy of sciences).

I interpret literary patronage as a systematic economic arrangement, a complex process based on exchange benefitting both patron and artist. Dustin Griffin interprets patronage as an exchange of significant goods and services. Using the terminology of *cultural economy*, Griffin implies that patronage was much more than money and housing for printed dedications; it was an exchange that brought social rank and honor, which ultimately defined literary culture.

Representation and publicity were granted to whomever the author referred to with gratitude, to whom the book was dedicated, showing the position of the author in light of cultural relationships and networks. When speaking about patronage, the literary text (let it be a dedication, a prologue, or a poem) and its relation to the context is incredibly important. Therefore, the cultural context cannot be defined as a background that is independent and possible to overlook, but rather it should be considered a living element thanks to which the text itself comes into being.<sup>2</sup>

My analysis starts from the relationship of Ádám Pálóczi Horváth and Ferenc Széchényi and the plan for a Hungarian language scholars' society, which seems to be a much closer collaboration than traditional patronage relationships at the time.

2 Dustin Griffin: *Literary Patronage in England, 1650–1800*, Cambridge 1996, pp. 3–14; Edward G. Andrew: *Patrons of Enlightenment*, Toronto–London 2005; Halina Beresnevičiūtė-Nosálová: *Artists and Nobility in East-Central Europe. Elite Socialization in Vilnius and Brno Newspaper Discourse in 1795–1863*, Berlin 2018; Heinz Reif: *Adel, Aristokratie, Elite. Sozialgeschichte von Oben*, Berlin–Boston 2016.

## From scholarly societies to collaborations of writers

In Hungary art and culture was financed through patronage and aristocratic sponsorship even long after the end of the eighteenth century. This kind of cultural support seems to be more traditional and feudal than what was common across Europe in the nineteenth century, although we can equally find examples of assignments and mutual collaborations.

Balatonfüred was the location that Horváth met Ferenc Széchényi, a member of one of the greatest noble families of Transdanubia, besides the Esterházy, Batthyány, Zichy and Festetics families. Széchényi was an important figure and patron of contemporary literary life, with many writers asking for his financial support. Ádám Horváth went to Vienna in early 1789 at the Count's request. He had visited Vienna before in 1787 after finishing the prologue of his first work *Hunnias vagy Magyar Hunyadi* [*Hunnias or the Hungarian Hunyadi*], which was an epic poem about the feats of general János Hunyadi who had fought the Turks in the fifteenth century.<sup>3</sup> In the summer of 1789 Széchényi read Horváth's poem *Leg-rövidebb Nyári éjtszaka* [*The shortest summer night*] in Balatonfüred. The poem was astronomical and gave an explanation of the world and God based on Newton's theory and physico-theology.<sup>4</sup> Széchényi asked for Horváth's piece in order to "read it through gathering with a couple of good friends from Vienna".<sup>5</sup>

Horváth wrote to Kazinczy explaining that the poem was dedicated to Széchényi without naming him. And in a letter to Horváth Széchényi declared that he not only wanted to support the work of poets but also their lives.<sup>6</sup> However, he did not mention anything about publishing *Leg-rövidebb Nyári éjtszaka*. In the end Horváth dedicated the poem to Palatine Alexander Leopold. Many years later, in September 1806 Horváth wrote to Kazinczy about Széchényi: "once he was a good friend, but he became

3 Placid Olofsson: Gróf Széchényi Ferenc irodalompatrólatása [Literary Patronage of Count Ferenc Széchényi], Pannonhalma 1940, pp. 33–34.

4 Piroska Balogh: Sic itur ad astra. Válogatott csillagászati tanköltemény műfajára Szerdahely György Alajos és Pálóczi Horváth Ádám műveiből (Sic itur ad astra. Versions of the Genre of Astronomical Didactic Poem at Alajos György Szerdahely and Ádám Horváth Pálóczi), in: Rumen István Csörsz and Béla Hegedüs (eds.): Magyar Arión. Tanulmányok Pálóczi Horváth Ádám műveiről, Budapest 2011, pp. 101–112.

5 Ferenc Kazinczy: Levelezése [Correspondence], ed. by János Váczy, István Harsányi, Jenő Berlász, Margit Busa, Klára Cs. Gárdonyi, Géza Fülöp, László Orbán and István Soós, Vol. I–XXV, Budapest–Debrecen 1890–2013 (henceforward: KazLev), I, p. 330.

6 KazLev, II, p. 21.

an enemy – see what Literature did to me – see what the *Summer night* brought me that I once offered to Széchenyi”. In 1814 he also commented in a letter to Kazinczy that for Széchenyi “it remains *manet alta mente repostum* that the *Summer night* is not dedicated to him”.<sup>7</sup> It seems that Horváth was not currying favor with his patron. None of the 26 works he published during his lifetime were dedicated to Széchenyi, although they kept in touch for a long while.

The relationship between Horváth and Széchenyi, the time they spent together in Balatonfüred and their exchanges of views were not only about literary products. They also profoundly considered how to improve Hungarian literature. For several years Hungarian writers had been interested in establishing a scholar’s society, which was first brought to their attention by György Bessenyei in 1777 and which he elaborated more profoundly four years later, but could only be revealed in 1790.<sup>8</sup> However, this plan was thwarted by Ferenc Széchenyi, Ádám Horváth and József Péczeli in the summer of 1789, when they established a “society”.<sup>9</sup> In a letter to Kazinczy Horváth wrote “We planned to seek other scholars, and he [Széchenyi] will affect some good magnate friends of his to keep close contact with noble lads whose only job will be to translate German books to Hungarian [...]; Rejoice our new society [...] rejoice Széchenyi, but pray for him to live and win more souls.”<sup>10</sup>

Horváth himself suggested to the others that they should gather two to three times a year, share their works and judge and correct them. Széchenyi was not fond of this plan because he was afraid some would suspect a secret political alliance, which could create an unpleasant situation with the authorities and the censors. As a consequence, they agreed to send their works to each other in letters.<sup>11</sup> Horváth asked Kazinczy to join the society and encouraged him to visit Széchenyi in Vienna or Nagycenk. Ka-

7 KazLev, XI, p. 422.

8 Attila Debreczeni: *Tudós hazafiak és érzékeny emberek. Integráció és elkülönülés a XVIII. század végének magyar irodalmában* [Erudite Patriots and Sensible Persons: Integration and Separation in the Eighteenth-Century Hungarian Literature], Budapest 2009, pp. 49–73; József Simon: *Empfindung und Vernunft im Bessenyei György Társasága* (Gesellschaft György Bessenyeis, Wien 1777), in: Dieter Breuer and Gábor Tüskés (eds.): *Aufgeklärte Sozietäten, Literatur und Wissenschaft in Mitteleuropa*, Berlin–Boston 2019, pp. 161–175; Béla Hegedüs: *Was bedeutet Wissenschaft und Literatur für eine gelehrte Gesellschaft?*, in: *Ibid.*, pp. 206–215.

9 Vilmos Fraknói: *Gróf Széchenyi Ferenc, 1754–1820*, Second Edition, ed. István Soós, Budapest 2002, pp. 112–113.

10 KazLev, I, pp. 420, 436, 482.

11 *Ibid.*



zinczy followed this advice and visited Széchényi at his Nagycenk estates in November 1789.<sup>12</sup> A couple of weeks later, he declared his intention to the count: he was starting a journal titled *Orpheus*. He articulated that he was “going to send him a product that aims to push Hungarian literature in a more moral and useful direction”. Széchényi wrote back, welcoming the plan with enthusiasm.<sup>13</sup> The plan was realized, and the journal *Orpheus* existed until 1792.

In 1790 Széchényi assigned Horváth to elaborate the plans for the society. But Horváth did not start by establishing a writer’s association. Rather he wanted to organize a publishing house. The idea was that any writer would be able to send their work to the publisher and a panel of prestigious writers would decide which pieces were worth publishing. According to the plans, rich patrons would put together a thousand Hungarian forints a year for this purpose.<sup>14</sup>

To discuss the plans, a group gathered in Széchényi’s house in Pest. We know from a letter Kazinczy wrote to György Aranka – the founder of the scholars’ society in Transylvania – that those friends of the Count who participated in the event were ready to make sacrifices for the Hungarian language and literature.<sup>15</sup> The participants included Károly Esterházy, bishop of Eger, lords, regional councilors, sub-lords, and diet members. Some of them even spoke at the Diet that was held on 11-12 June to discuss Hungarian becoming the official language.<sup>16</sup> The participants of the gathering, known as *Litterarius Consessus*, were mostly members of Masonic lodges.

The Piarist scholar, Miklós Révai, and Kazinczy’s co-editor, János Batsányi, did not attend the gathering, although they had previously planned to form a similar society. However, Kazinczy, Péter Bárány (Count Széchényi’s secretary), Ádám Horváth, and János Nagyváthy, a teacher at Georgikon, a farming school in Keszthely, were present. The latter was let go by György Festetics in 1797 as a gesture to the Viennese

12 Ibid. Cf. Fraknói: Gróf Széchényi Ferenc (see fn. 8), p. 114.

13 KazLev, II, p. 8.

14 József Szinnyei: Magyar írók élete és munkái [Lives and Oeuvres of Hungarian Writers], Vol. IV, Budapest 1896, p. 1122.

15 Fraknói: Gróf Széchényi Ferenc (see fn. 8), p. 167.

16 We know that from a letter which was sent to György Aranka by Kazinczy on November 1790: KazLev, II, S. 120. “A literary meeting was held in Pest on October 3 in the house of Exc. Count Ferenc Széchényi. Count Berényi, Baron Orczy, Baron Podmaniczky, Baron Vay, Count Károly Esterházy, József Vay, Péter Balog, István Márijási, Spissics, Ádám Horváth, Nagyváti, Bárány were present, where I also appeared as an invited guest.”

court, because he was considered politically suspicious. Horváth and his companions spoke about having a smaller circle than Révai had planned, but the discussion – of which we do not have a detailed description – did not end with concrete results.

At that time, there was also a planned association based on the Arcadian tradition. In 1791 Ferenc Kazinczy planned to fund a Hungarian Arcadia, similar to the Roman *Academia degli Arcadi*. The young Kazinczy's draft for the Hungarian-Transylvanian Literary Association remained an ideal and is only known about from his correspondence. He put himself forward as the main notary in perpetuity, and Prince Lajos Batthyány-Strattmann as the perpetual main pastor. In 1791 Kazinczy wrote to Batthyány-Strattmann to ask him to be the president and patron of the literary association he was about to form. The two circles of the society were supposed to be the Transdanubian circle and the Transylvanian circle, of which the leaders could have been János Spissich, Ádám Pálóczi Horváth, Count Ádám Teleki, and György Aranka. Kazinczy wanted to arrange the members into three classes: writers, to be named after bodies of water, would have formed the choir of “pastures”, pastors and lords, to be named after mountains, would have formed the choir of “defenders”, while women, to be named after trees and plants, would have formed the choir of the “amusing” or “delightful”.<sup>17</sup> The plan for the society reminds us of the structure of the Rosicrucian group Kazinczy had become member of when staying at Košice. The pseudonyms of the members were names of flowers, the gatherings were called walks and the mission of the Rosicrucian was the dissemination of culture, the cultivation of friendship and the education of women. Another goal was to facilitate the aesthetic and national collaboration among the aristocracy and writers.<sup>18</sup> It is interesting how many models of scholarly societies Kazinczy took when creating the plan of the society *Magyar Liget Pásztorai [Shepherds of the Hungarian Grove]*.<sup>19</sup> He was moving away from closed secret societies instead recom-

17 Katalin Hász-Fehér: A keszthelyi Helikon-ünnepség a XIX. század elején [Helikon Festivities of Keszthely in the Early Nineteenth Century], in: Zsuzsa Kalla (ed.): *Az irodalom ünnepei. Kultuszörténeti tanulmányok*, Budapest 2000, pp. 173–188, especially pp. 179–180.

18 *Ibid.*, p. 180.

19 Olga Granasztói: *Érzéketlen gazdagok? Kazinczy Ferenc kísérlete egy irodalmi társaság megalapítására Batthyány II. Lajos herceg elnökletével* [Insensitive Wealthy People? Kazinczy's Attempt to Establishing a Literary Society with the Presidency of Prince Lajos II. Batthyány], in: Katalin Bódi and Ferenc Máté Bodrogi (eds.): “Közöttünk a' Mester”. *Tanítványi köszöntőkötet a 60 éves Debreczeni Attila tiszteletére*, Debrecen 2019, pp. 131–141.

mending that events be open so the authorities would not suspect secret gatherings. For the same reason he also suggested inviting priests.<sup>20</sup>

### Writer-patron communities, visits of writers

Three parts of Horváth's compilation of his various literary works were published in his lifetime, while the fourth, entitled *Hol-mi*, remained in manuscript form.<sup>21</sup> Among his occasional works that are collected in *Hol-mi*, we can find a lot of historically interesting information about the era. The significance of these texts is illustrated in a poem in the fourth part of *Hol-mi*, in which Horváth tells of the events of the summer of 1791. He describes a day in July: his friends arrived to visit him, and after the storms over lake Balaton receded, they decided to sail out. However, Széchenyi did not go on this trip. It is worth taking a look at this gathering because many of the aristocrats who attended meetings at Széchenyi's house were present, as were some of the noble guests of the Füred meetings.

Füred, 4th of July 1791. Lake Balaton was surging all day long, but the evening brought peace for us to sail out so we embarked the boat with the Honorable Personalis, Countess Hadik, B<...> councilor, Countess Jalesinszky from Poland, Lady Szentiványi, Captain Boros, Spissich; Somsics, Péczeli and Horváth and more accompanied with music the Personalis wanted the poets to write some poems for the sudden silence of the waters - they acted upon the request and in some minutes Horváth spoke...<sup>22</sup>

This fragment entry is noteworthy for several reasons. First, it proves that Horváth participated in another social organization. The meeting was a year earlier at Széchenyi's house and this sailing trip brought together pretty much the same people. Although we do not know whether there was any discussion of founding a scholars' society, it is hard to imagine that the conversation that had begun did not continue. Second, the poets

20 Ibid.

21 It is hard to translate this Hungarian wordplay. The word *holmi* literally means 'something' or 'anything'. As Horváth wrote it with a hyphen, the word can be cut into *hol* and *mi*, which means where and what. It can be interpreted as 'bits and pieces; fits and starts, miscellanea' About the manuscript and the fourth piece of *Holmi* see Gábor Mészáros: Pálóczi Horváth Ádám Holmi-jának negyedik darabjáról [On Ádám Pálóczi Horváth's Fourth Piece of Holmi], in: Irodalomismeret 28.3 (2016), pp. 64–75.

22 Csokonai Vitéz Mihály Református Gimnázium Könyvtára, Csurgó [Csurgó Collage Library], K241, title: HOLMI. Tom. III. us. Pro anno 1791, pp. 18–19.

in the company made a literary performance. The “personalis”, a judge appointed by the king, possibly József Ürményi, asked the poets to complete the natural and social experience with their poems.

Horváth wrote about Ürményi in one of his poems *Két nagy hazafinak emlékezete [Memories of Two Great Patriots]*.<sup>23</sup> There is a signature under the title of the pamphlet: egy [a’ Magyar Nyelv’ művelő Társok közül one of the Participants of the Hungarian Language Scholars’ Society]”. So, it was important for Horváth to apostrophize himself in this way. One of the two verses is dated 22 September 1790, and it can be assumed that the other verse was written at the same time. Horváth was in Buda, and probably wrote the poems there. Ürményi’s name and the topic of the poem may have been generally known at that time. In April 1790, Pozsony county proposed that Joseph II’s councilors should be replaced because they had been held accountable for the unpopular decrees of the deceased ruler. The attack mainly affected the Lord Chief Justice Count Károly Zichy and “personalis” József Ürményi. Ádám Horváth’s two poems defended the two councilors against the dishonest attacks.

Those present at Lake Balaton on 4 July 1791 included Lázár Sommsich, a royal councilor known for his occasional poetry in Latin, József Péczeli, who started one of the most important Hungarian-language periodicals (*Mindenes Gyűjtemény – Miscellaneous Collection*) of the era in Komárom/Komárno, and of course Horváth himself.

Ádám Horváth wrote a poem for the getaway of Péczeli and Somssich, titled *Midőn Somsich Consil és Péczeli Füredről egyszersmind elementek [When Consil Somsich and Péczeli left Füred]*, dated 16 July 1791. The stories written in the poem illustrate well how the visits became a cultural ceremony. Towards the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century mutual visits among Hungarian authors (personal ones and social gatherings as well) are dependent of the frames of the existing classes of society. Writer’s making visits had a community building effect: it strengthened the writers’ identities and prestige and influenced the formation of literary communities and the public sphere, in which institutions were being planned and later created (publishing of books and journals, literary circles, literary societies, scholarly societies and academies).

Horváth visited Ferenc Kazinczy several times in 1789, 1790 and 1791. The news of his visit in 1789 was published in the second issue of 1790’s

23 Ádám Pálóczi Horváth: *Verses kiadványai (1787–1796) [Poetic Works]*, ed. by Barna Tóth, Budapest–Debrecen 2015, pp. 417, 832–833.

*Orpheus* entitled *Utazások. Füred* [Travels. Füred]. The travel letter gives a detailed report of how Horváth got to Tihany from Füred and continued to Szántód across Lake Balaton to his own house, where he lived as a hermit.<sup>24</sup> From the spring of 1791 Kazinczy stayed in Vienna until the end of August, with short breaks, but as he was suffering from jaundice, he travelled to Füred to recover.<sup>25</sup>

### The end of the relationship between Széchényi and Horváth

We do not know of any further works between Horváth and Széchényi, but from 1793 two longer letters have remained. In the beginning of the first one Horváth reports about a nautical job he delivered for Széchényi, and mentions a debt, begging “that your Excellence finds a way and lets me repay my loan with my two hands.”<sup>26</sup> By this he means further land surveys. Széchényi requested the surveying of his land in Kutas and Sopron, but after this we do not know of any more letters.

In 1798 Horváth welcomed Ferenc Széchényi at the border of the county. He was made a lord of Somogy County on the 6 April. The ceremony took place on the 4 July and several prominent poets greeted him, including Mihály Csokonai Vitéz, who had just become a teacher at the Lyceum of Csurgó, which was supported by György Festetics. Csokonai, one of the greatest poets of his day not only wrote occasional poems dedicated to Lord Széchényi, but also celebrated Széchényi’s wife in a special poem as well. In one of his letters Csokonai wrote that Ferenc Széchényi and his wife were the first to give him strength and encourage him to create. So, he asked for Széchényi’s support when he wanted to take on the *Mindenes Gyűjtemény* [Miscellaneous Collection] after the death of József Péczeli.<sup>27</sup> When he wrote this on the 13 February from Komárom he also declared that he wanted to publish a Hungarian translation of Ewald Christian von Kleist’s *Der Frühling* and dedicate it to the Countess for her name day.<sup>28</sup>

Ádám Horváth translated *The Choice of Hercules* by Robert Lowth and dedicated to one of Széchényi’s sons on the day of his birth. He also dedicated

24 Ibid., pp. 399–400.

25 Ferenc Kazinczy: Pályám emlékezete [Memoires] ed. by László Orbán, Debrecen 2009, p. 322. See *ibid.*, p. 176; *KazLev*, II, p. 222.

26 Fraknói: Gróf Széchényi Ferenc (see fn. 8), p. 172.

27 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 173.

28 Mihály Csokonai Vitéz, *Levelezés* [Correspondence], ed. by Attila Debreczeni, Budapest 1999, pp. 164–166.

an occasional poem, *Öröm Somogyban* [*Joy in Somogy*] to Countess Julianna Festetics, Széchényi's wife. None of these poems went on to be published.

The reason Ádám Horváth and Széchényi drifted apart is a piquant story related to the devastation of Horváth's house. Their relationship finally ended around 1800, which points to the issue of insurrection as well. During the insurrection in Somogy in 1800, farmers scraped together to form a company of foot soldiers that rebelled at Nagybjom and killed their German leaders, harrying residents and looting houses in the neighborhood. Horváth's house was plundered, and he asked for compensation from Széchényi, but his request went unanswered. There was no contact between them after this.<sup>29</sup>

### Participation and representation at Helikon

As part of the Helikon festivities five literary gatherings were organized between the 12 February 1817 and 16 of February 1819, which were always organized around the birthday of Francis II (12 of February), and in May, around the Georgikon exams. These events were attended by nobles and the literary community, including those from György Festetics's circles. Poets doing readings in Keszthely, including Dániel Berzsenyi, Sándor Kisfaludy, Judit Dukai Takács and, of course, Ádám Horváth formed the basis of the literary section of the Helikon festivities. All these poets lived around Keszthely, and all wrote poems to match aristocratic tastes and indeed sent them to Festetics, who offered financial support in return.

This mechanism is far away from modern patronage and is reminiscent of the traditional patronage system. After such a close scholar-patron collaboration as the Litterarius Consensus, classical representation still held prestige. The Helikon celebrations were appropriate occasions for Transdanubian writers to show off about their cultural relationships as authors. Even Ferenc Kazinczy – who openly refused in his letters to participate in the festivities because of his different tastes and disapproval of gestures toward the ruler – finally sent a poem about György Festetics to

29 See: Gábor Mészáros: *Fut a nemes. Pálóczi Horváth Ádám privát és nyilvános reakciói az insurrekcióról és a somogyi inszurgens lázadásról* [The Noblemen Fleed. Private and Public Reactions by Ádám Pálóczi Horváth on insurrection in Somogy], in: Rumen István Csórsz (ed.): *Doromb. Közköltészeti tanulmányok* 6, Budapest 2018, pp. 151–167.

Festetics in Keszthely in 1819.<sup>30</sup> However, before he did that he couldn't resist making fun of the participants calling them "Puppenspiel" and the Helikon festivities "burlesque".

Long after the eighteenth-century support of literature remained patronage based; therefore, it was limited to the grants from nobles and aristocrats. A significant structural change was the establishment of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. The relationship between Horváth and Széchényi and the organization of a scholarly society with Péczeli alludes to a less formal collaboration. Further than these individual cases – mainly because of the collapse of the initiatives to fund societies and a lack of independent financial sources and literary scholarships – until 1825 the support of culture could not move away from classical aristocratic patronage.

30 The invitation of Kazinczy to the Helikon celebrations and the message of the sent poem are also an important part of the story. Cf. Hász-Fehér: A keszthelyi Helikon-ünnepség (see fn. 16), pp. 181–185.