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The Pantheon Concept from the Renaissance to Romanticism

Reflections on the Background of Statues
of Csokonai by Ferenczy and Izsó

Abstract

The rise of the cult of famous people in the period of Renaissance was fostered by ancient examples, the biographies of Plutarch and Suetonius. The respect paid to contemporary poets, writers and humanists is considered as a Renaissance achievement, and the erection of ornate tombs as a typical expression of that. In Florence, the Basilica of Santa Croce has for centuries served as the burial place of great thinkers, from Leonardo Bruni to Vittorio Alfieri, and that is where Goethe, Foscolo and Stendhal paid their respect to them. In Hungary, István Széchenyi came up with the idea of the *Üdvlelde (a Salvation Park)*, a memorial park that would contain the graves of scholars who had served the nation's progress. It was up to the artists to realise the idea: István Ferenczy, who studied in Rome, created the busts of several Hungarian writers and poets, including Csokonai, as part of an imaginary national pantheon. When it commissioned a full-length statue of Csokonai from Miklós Izsó, the Debrecen Memorial Garden Committee imagined a park "where statues of great people of our homeland and science, especially of those who have made great contributions to our city, should stand [...]". The elite of the city of Debrecen thus updated an old tradition with its roots in humanism, a heritage that was still alive in the 19th century through the spirit of the Reformed College.

Keywords: statue of Csokonai, memorial park, pantheon, István Ferenczy, Miklós Izsó

10.56044/UA.2023.2.4.eng

Introduction

"When the condottiere Carlo Malatesta knocked down the statue of Virgil in Mantua in 1397, saying that statues were only for saints and not for poets, the indignant Pier Paolo Vergerio hurried to explain that the latter were as entitled to honour as saints and generals. The citizens of Arezzo did not hesitate to welcome the returning Petrarch "as if a king had come" (in the words of Leonardo Bruni) and to declare his birthplace a memorial place, a privilege hitherto reserved for saints. The study from which I took the quotation shows how the humanist pantheon of outstanding men was gradually formed, mainly through the influence of biographical collections (Klaniczay 1985, 41–58).

Contemporaries of outstanding virtues (*virtù*) were honoured by their hometowns with ornate tombs, most notably manifested in the tombs of the Franciscan church of Santa Croce in Florence. For example, Leonardo Bruni (+1444), the Florentine chancellor and historian, was buried in the ancient manner: the corpse was dressed in a long toga-like dress, a history of Florence placed in his hands and a laurel wreath placed on his head. The sarcophagus of the Chancellor in Santa Croce (1445–1451) is decorated with a Latin epitaph which says that after Bruni's passing, historiography mourns, eloquence is silent and the muses (both Greek and Latin) cannot hold back their tears. The marble tomb, carved by Bernardo Rossellino, features a number of motifs that became a permanent feature of cemetery symbolism in later centuries: a triumphal arch-like architectural frame, lion's head and paws, eagle figures, winged geniuses, puttos holding a fruit garland, a garland of laurel leaves, etc. The portrait of the deceased was described as an example of calm, noble idealisation: "the head of Bruni, tranquil and idealized, is among the noblest creations of its time" (Pope-Hennessy 2002, 146).

In the course of time, the Basilica of Santa Croce became a national pantheon, where great figures such as Michelangelo, Machiavelli and Galileo Galilei were buried. At the end of the 18th century, the shrine of the famous Italian poet Vittorio Alfieri (1749–1803) was commissioned by his widow, Countess Luisa Stolberg d'Albany (Madarász 2003, 196–210). The artist commissioned, Antonio Canova, a sculptor of great importance in his time, prepared two designs for the monument. In the first (Possagno, Gipsoteca Canoviana), Alfieri's bust was placed on a column and was mourned by an allegorical female figure of Italy, with her right arm resting on the pedestal. Accompanying the female figure is

a winged youth, the Genius of Death, holding a torch upside down in his hand. The final version, erected in Santa Croce, a three-dimensional work in a chamber, was a much more monumental than the first relief. The sarcophagus rests on a double pedestal, and the cloak of the standing female figure (Italy) who mourns him curtains the bust of the poet in relief. Alfieri's genres are symbolised by the tragic masks of the lyric on the pedestal and the sarcophagus (Koomen, 1993, 192–220).¹

Alfieri's tomb, inaugurated on 27 September 1808, attracted many to Santa Croce: the great poet of the next generation, Ugo Foscolo, saw the tomb and paid his respects in 1812–1813, and in 1807 he already published his famous cycle of poems *Sepolcri* (The Tombs), in which the monuments of Santa Croce became symbols of transience and immortality. In his poem, Foscolo described our relationship to the dead as follows: "He who leaves no love here to inherit,/ Only his grave is sad... // For, alas, no flower/ Grows over the dead who are not praised,/ Nor honoured by a tear of love, nor of pain." According to Honour Hugh, these thoughts, that is, the grief of posterity, are visualised in the allegorical female figures on Canova's tombs (Hugh 1991, 147).

In his commentary on the poems, Foscolo explained that "Tombs that are useless to the dead are useful to the living because they awaken in them virtuous emotions left as a legacy by good men." In the case of great men and heroes, their legacy is that of the whole nation, in which the tomb of the hero develops a national awareness, a sense of belonging. Foscolo therefore encouraged Italians to worship the tombs of their fellow citizens, especially in Santa Croce, which he praised as a national pantheon: "You may be happy to keep in your church/ the past of this great people, alas, for there is no other left,/ since the chain of the Alps above does not protect you..." (Madarász 2002, 251).

Of course, it was not only Foscolo who was inspired by the tombs of Florentine great people, but others too. Madame de Stäel visited Italy in 1794, where she wrote her novel *Corinne ou l'Italie* (published in 1807), whose heroine found spiritual refuge from her love sorrow in the tombs of Santa Croce. In 1817 Lord Byron paid respect to the tombs, followed by Stendhal in the following year, and in their wake the whole of Europe came to know Santa Croce as a symbol

¹ Here I note that Alfieri's figure of Italy is continued in Ferdinand Vidra's Pannonia figure (1844, Hungarian National Gallery). Vidra studied in Rome with a state permit from 1843, and he painted the picture to express his gratitude for the scholarship (Szabó 1985, 170).

of Italy's sad fate (Koomen 1993, 215–218). At the same time, in 1791, during the French Revolution, Antoine Quatremère de Quincy, the friend of the sculptor Antonio Canova, was commissioned to turn the church of Sainte Genèviève in Paris into a national Pantheon, where French celebrities Rousseau, Voltaire and the heroes of the Revolution, Mirabeau and Marat, were buried.

The admiration for the heroes of the past fascinated the Romantics, as the diary of István Széchenyi, a leading figure of the Hungarian reform era, written in Athens (6 February 1817) shows: "Although I was all alone in Athens, and the memories of the former greatness, and the comparison of my youthful years, so ill spent, with those who had spent their lives in this holy land where I was, so gloriously, gave rise to all sorrowful thoughts – yet to part with this place I felt such a dull sorrow, such an incomprehensible protest, as if I could never again find such a serene, calm sky" (Széchenyi 1982, 96).

According to his diary, Széchenyi was familiar with the Walhalla monument in Regensburg, built between 1830 and 1842, and its designer, the Bavarian court architect Leo von Klenze, whom he met several times, and thus he could have heard the idea of the German national pantheon directly from him (Kovalovszky 1982, 32). Széchenyi himself also refers many times to the example of Valhalla when describing his thoughts on the national memorial place he called *Üdvlelde*: "...in the hills of Buda, in the centre of our country, and thus somewhat in the heart of it, we would erect a cemetery, a Salvation Park under the open sky. Let the better part of our blood be there as a reward [...] and let the brave find in this place the memorial-flowers of those left behind [...]" As he explained, regardless of religion, origin or social status, this open-air memorial place would contain the graves of those who "contributed to the glorification of the homeland and through it of humanity, and thus of the universe." In this way, following the example of Westminster Abbey in London, there could be a place for "the poet, the man of status, the champion who bled to death" as well as for "the fortunate user of steam power" (Széchenyi 1843).

Csokonai bust by István Ferenczy

According to his testimony, it was a trip to Greece that first made István Széchenyi receptive to the idea of the national pantheon, the *Üdvlelde*: "[...] I had long been carrying the idea of the Salvation Park in my mind, when all those years ago, around the old ruins of Ilion, and on the battlefield of glorious Marathon

and among the flowery meadows of heroic Sparta, not just one memorial pile, which I visited, was the object of my envy, because it covered so many noble corpses of people burned for the fatherland and honoured with final respect..." (Széchenyi 1843, 132).

Around the same time as Széchenyi's diary in Greece was written, in October 1819, a young sculptor living in Rome described the following vision to his brother István Ferenczy: "I saw myself in a quiet dream, and surrounded by a legion, all of them with a majestic look, but tired and trembling with much work, and covered with a veil, began to approach me, calling me by name and calling me son [...] One of the them, leaning towards me and lowering his head on his right shoulder, said in a smiling, quiet voice: 'Do you not know your ancestors? [...] I recognise the great Hunyadi himself, Zrínyi, Adam Horváth, Gyöngyössi, and others. They all cried out in one voice: Don't let me die. I promised to do my utmost to show myself worthy of those holy shadows. [...] Csokonai spoke more with his feelings and his eyes than with his mouth. He thanked me for the marble-carved bust I made [...]" (Wallentinyi 1912, 123).

The vision shows the young sculptor's literary sensibility: it is similar to the illustration Pálóczi made for Ádám Horváth's *Hunniás* in 1820, depicting János Hunyadi in the captivity of Dracula and visited by his family (Cifka 1978, 494–495). There is also a suggestive parallel with "*Osszián keservei*" (*The Sorrows of Ossian*), painted by Károly Kisfaludy around 1822 (Sisa 2018, 202–203), in which the legendary Celtic bard is illuminated by the moonlight and the figures of the legendary past appear to inspire the poet to perform his work.

István Ferenczy was staying in Rome, the Eternal City, at the time of the letter and illustration, on a scholarship from Palatine József. Having been rejected by Canova, the young sculptor, born in Rimaszombat and from a family of Debrecen, was accepted into the workshop of the Danish Bertel Thorwaldsen, probably because of his Protestantism. Here, after some minor works, he started in August 1818 to make a *bust of Mihály Csokonai Vitéz*, perhaps encouraged by his poet friend József Mátyásy (today in the Reformed College in Debrecen, *picture 1.*). Ferenczy may have come across Csokonai's name earlier, during his stay in Vienna (1814–1818), as he was in contact with the first publisher of the poet's poems, József Márton (Cifka 1978, 481). On the first page of that volume, published in 1816, was published the only known portrait of Csokonai, a dotted engraving by Friedrich John, which was based on a lost drawing by the poet's friend János Erős (Rózsa 1957, 151–152).

As he was noted, Ferenczy presented Csokonai's features in an idealised manner: 'he proportioned and regularised the details in such a way that "the pitiable puffball grown on horse's manure" finally approaches the ideally and geometrically regular head of the ancient statues of the gods. [...] This taste is also shown in the head posture: it is moved sideways and upwards only enough in relation to the shoulder to express not only the disciplined calmness of the mood but also the alert readiness of the spirit' (Cifka 1978, 485). Kazinczy wrote about the statue in 1824: "It is not Csokonai, and that is not necessary. [...] The plastica did not aim at similarity, but at beautification" (Csatkai 1983; Bódi 2021). The sculptor wrote in his letter to his brother: "[...] I made the breast of Csokonai in white marble, in the nice Hungarian robe" (Wallentinyi 1912, 117). The Hungarian attire thus became an expression of the identity of the sculptor and his model in the international context.

The cult of literary greats, the pantheon-idea, was a lively preoccupation of Ferenczy's contemporaries, including Ferenc Kazinczy, who was in correspondence with the sculptor. In a letter addressed to Ferenczy in January 1823, Kazinczy inquired whether the sculptor had a suitable book on Hungarian history in which he could find material on the deeds of the great Hungarian heroes. (Cifka 1978, 486). Kazinczy's conception of the portrait was characterised by a fluctuation between idealisation and emphasis on the typical characteristic features. Before describing the portrait of *Lőrinc Orczy*, he thus explained his views: "He who wishes to paint a portrait of a Great Man, in order to make it known for the future, must guard against two opposites: one is that he should not omit from the painting any trifling features for fear that they will damage the dignity of the picture; for it is precisely these trifling features which give



Picture 1. István Ferenczy: Bust of Mihály Csokonai Vitéz

Debrecen, Reformed Collection | Photo: Debrecen, Déri Múzeum

such portraits their greatest interest: and the other is that he should not add more to the picture than he ought, or the great man whom he has sought to make the object of public honour will become like one of us, and they will ask, why it was necessary to paint such an ordinary picture? " (Bódi 2021, 255–256).

It is also worth quoting Gábor Döbrentei, who also published a biography of Ferenczy in the 1815 booklet of the *Erdélyi Múzeum (Transylvanian Museum)*, who wrote that "the main purpose of biography is to make human nature known in its greatness and weakness; its use is to awaken to the good by noble examples and to frighten away from error" (Bódi 2021, 239). Similar thoughts, then, as we have seen from István Széchenyi's reflections on *Üdvlelde*: posterity should visit the graves of great ancestors in order to gather strength from their example and to follow the good.²

The tomb of Csokonai and the cult developing around it

The spirit of Antonio Canova's shrines was a fundamental influence on the tastes of István Ferenczy, who studied in Rome, and of his contemporaries. Kazinczy was enthusiastic about Canova's sculptures, inspired by his epigram *Psyché* with butterflies (1825), Dánielné Vay Eszter Wartensleben commissioned him to make a *relief* (now in the Reformed church in Gyömrő), and in 1805 the Italian sculptor was a guest of the Esterházy's in Kismarton (Eisenstadt, Austria); they also commissioned statues from him, as did István Széchenyi, who commissioned a *female herm* for Nagycenk in 1819, and Archbishop János László Pyrker of Eger, who owned a statue of *Keresztelő Szent János (St. John the Baptist)* by Canova (Csatkai 1925, 131–133). István Ferenczy could not escape Canova's influence either: in 1829 he made a *shrine of István Kultsár*, the editor of the Hungarian Reports, based on the great master's steles (Budapest, parish church in the city centre, *picture 2.*, Sisa 2018, 234–235).

2 Due to lack of space, I will not discuss the equestrian statue of Mátyás Hunyadi by István Ferenczy returning to Hungary and the memorial to be placed in it, which was indeed ambitious, but due to the circumstances was doomed to failure. (See Kovalovszky 1982; Sisa 2018, 218–220; 408–413, 422–424; Szerdahelyi–Borovi 2022, 30–31, 43–46).

In the reform age, people were aware that one of the focal points of the cult of a great personality was their shrine, where posterity could pay respect. The erection of the shrine of *Csokonai*, who died in 1805 at the age of 31, and its inscription, was the subject of an interesting debate in the columns of the *Hazai Tudósítások* (*Hungarian Reports*) (Pál 1988, 158–169; Bódi 2021, 168–215), initiated by Ferenc Kazinczy, who, in his August 1806 article, suggested that the inscription “Et in Arcadia ego!” and the butterfly as a symbol of rebirth should have been engraved on the shrine. However, Kazinczy’s interpretation of the Latin phrase differed from that of Mihály Fazekas and Imré Kiss of Debrecen. While the latter drew attention to the negative connotation of the name Arcadia in the Greek tradition (desolate land), the former was concerned about the baroque symbolism of death in the motto. Kazinczy, following the example of contemporary French writers, went beyond the skull symbol hidden as a memento mori among the shepherds of Arcadia and interpreted the motto as follows: “I have been to Arcadia too.” This motto reminded Kazinczy of his favourite painter Poussin, as well as of his beloved fellow writers Schiller and others. His writings, which represent an optimistic reading of the motto, also contain the idea of patriotism, as Kazinczy’s lines show: “The rest of the world justly respects the pool of the song-poet, whom the muses themselves ordained as priests to teach the world morality and integrity. [...] And let this be said in place of all encouragement to those who love the nation and desire its increase in all that is good, good and true” (Paul 1988, 160).



Picture 2. István Ferenczy: Shrine of István Kultsár (1829-1832)

Budapest, parish church in the city centre | Photo: Márk Szerdahelyi

By the time the shrine of Csokonai (1836) was completed, based on a design by Pál Beregszászi, the college teacher of drawing, circumstances had changed. (picture 3.) The poet's popularity with the new generation was also fuelled by his expulsion from college, his disciplinary inspections, i.e., his defiant defiance of the norm. This type of respect for Csokonai was intensified by the *biography* published by Márton Domby (1817), which can itself be regarded as a cult object (Keresztesné 2000, 191). The respect for individuality and the cult of genius gave a new impetus to the respect for Csokonai among writers-poets who wanted something new, who urged a departure from the rigid, classicist tradition. This is why the representative of the old ideas, Pál Sárvári, the rector of Debrecen, was so puzzled by the design for a monument to Csokonai, and why the college's history teacher, József Péczely, supported the collection started by the students. Thus, in the 1830s and 1840s, a new literary canon was sanctioned with Csokonai's name (Lakner 2005, 21–23).

The tradition of Csokonai as a raving, amorous, wine-drinking man continued among the students and the wider public, and had a decisive influence on the poet's later life. Ferenc Toldy, in particular, was sympathetic to the popular Csokonai's personality and oeuvre. He considered popularity to be the hallmark of national literature, so his aesthetic perception differed from that of Kazinczy. For Toldy, the community-forming power of literature was more important than conformity to certain aesthetic standards. He was aware of the fact that, also because of the Arcadia case, a cult had been organised around the figure of Csokonai, which seemed to justify the importance of his life's work and its merit for inclusion in the *Nemzeti Könyvtár (National Library)* series. According to Toldy, writers and poets become celebrated heroes because they are educators of their people, but their life's work can only have an impact



Picture 3. Pál Beregszászi: Shrine of Mihály Csokonai Vitéz

if they have an audience that understands it. "The cult of poets, which is based on their educational role and their genius, can only become a reality through their audience" (Lakner 2014, 195).

The figure of the national poet: the statue of Csokonai by Miklós Izsó

Sándor Petőfi and his friend, the painter Soma Orlay Petrics, visited the statue of Csokonai six years after its erection in Beregszász, recalling the visit as follows: "Our journey through the dirty villages and agricultural towns of the plain offered nothing worth mentioning, except for the boundless dust that plagued us all the way to Debrecen, and if it had not been for the visit to the college and Csokonai's tomb, we would have had to be content with the pleasure we had already enjoyed on the journey. After the library and collections of the college had been willingly shown to us by an old student, we went out to Csokonai's iron pyramid tomb" (Keresztesné 2000, 191). Petőfi himself described his later visit (14 May 1847) as follows: "We arrived in Debrecen close to the evening. We passed the cemetery where Csokonai rests. The mist of twilight hung like an ash-coloured veil on the black iron statue of the poet; my eyes were fixed on it, and I thought deeply if any other traveller would think like that beside my grave" (Keresztesné 2000, 191).

In Petőfi's poem *Csokonai*, too, the figure of the wine-drinking, merry poet wonderer, perpetuated by student tradition, is reflected and has become iconic. It was Petőfi who influenced the poems of the Debrecen *Csokonai lapok* (*Csokonai journals*), which were launched in 1850, about Csokonai in an anachronistic spirit (Lakner 2014, 201). However, the canonisation of the figure of the folk poet is due to Pál Gyulai, who wrote the following in a work in 1855: "With Csokonai, the folk spirit spoke, unconsciously and shyly, yet giving a strong sign of life. [...] Born as a Hungarian folk poet, he had to submit to Greek, Latin, then German and Italian schools, and instead of speaking to the people, and being a servant of the folk spirit of which he was born, he had to sing at the parties of the aristocrats [...] so he sinned in secret, when he sacrificed to his ideal... from Dorottya and her folk songs, which are her best works, we can guess what he should have become and what direction he was destined to take" (Lakner 2014, 202).

Gyulai's characterisation of Csokonai is somewhat reminiscent of that of the sculptor Miklós Izsó, who was born in Disznóshorvát in Borsod in 1831 and whose career start was greatly influenced by István Ferenczy, who had retired to Rimaszombat. In the 1850s, the young Izsó became acquainted with the classicist tradition alongside the elderly Ferenczy, and continued his studies in Vienna and Munich (from 1859). The young Izsó also saw his task in capturing the great figures of the expanding national pantheon; he sent home a portrait of István Széchenyi from Munich in 1860 in response to a tender of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.³

During the period of authoritarian rule, decisive steps were taken to create a national pantheon: the *Nemzeti Képcsarnok (National Picture Gallery)* (1846, 1851) was established within the National Museum, which in 1868 boasted 115 works, including many portraits of "men who served their country" (Keserü 1985, 130-159). In the garden of the National Museum, a statue park was also established, which served as a memorial site: in 1860, a statue of *Dániel Berzsenyi* was erected there, followed by a statue of Ferenc Kazinczy in the following year. At the same time, in front of the old National Theatre, there were statues of *József Katona* (1857) and *Márton Lendvay* (1860).⁴ At the same time, the Dunakorzó gradually became a national memorial site, thanks to the statue of István Széchenyi, erected after much fuss, followed by those of *Ferenc Deák* and *József Eötvös* (Keserü 1985).

The erection of the statue of *István Széchenyi* was accompanied by enormous press coverage and tense attention. The President of the Academy, Emil Dessewffy, launched a collection for the statue, intended to be erected in front of the MTA, in 1861, the design contest was published in 1865, and the sketches were presented at an exhibition the following year. Twenty entries were received from fifteen sculptors, but none was deemed suitable for execution by the jury. The three winners: József Engel, Miklós Izsó, Miklós Vay and József Faragó were invited to submit new entries in a second round. Izsó, feeling offended by the procedure, did not participate in the second round, which was finally won by

3 The bust of István Széchenyi was modelled in 1858 by the Viennese sculptor Hans Gasser, who had a large group of Hungarian friends (Hungarian National Gallery), and Miklós Izsó, who was a student of Gassner, also made a copy of its (Szerdahelyi–Borovi 2022, 91–93).

4 After the demolition of the old National Theatre building, the statue of Lendvay, the work of László Dunaiszky, was moved to the Buda Castle, in Ország utca, where it can still be seen today (Szerdahelyi–Borovi 2022, 222–223).

József Engel, but the work with an academic approach was not unveiled until much later in 1880 (!). Engel's work was the subject of numerous criticisms, which, when read, clearly showed that his conception of the work was already outdated in the eyes of the public (Szerdahelyi–Borovi, 2022, 57–58).

In Engel's defence, there were several cases of public statues where the sculptor failed to express the "idea" in an appropriate way. Rudolf Züllich's statue of *József Katona* (1859) in front of the old National Theatre and the statue of *Károly Kisfaludy* in Balatonfüred became a subject of public ridicule because of their theatrical gestures, ridiculous attributes or mismatched proportions and had to be removed, so Miklós Vay made a new statue in 1877 to replace the latter. The statue of *Márton Lendvay* (1860), modelled by László Dunaiszky, was not considered worthy of the memory of the actor who played Bánk Bán either, and was therefore moved several times (Szerdahelyi–Borovi, 2022, 214–224). Miklós Izsó was not satisfied with the commission for the statue of Petőfi in Pest, which was awarded to him in 1871, because – after an excellent portrait and figure sketches – he was unable to finish the statue due to his death, so it was left to take its final form in the hands of Adolf Huszár (Szerdahelyi–Borovi 2022, 209–210).⁵

It was difficult to find the necessary expressive power and formal language for the idea, as this was most successful when the sculptor was personally touched by the subject matter beyond the technical means. Izsó had a direct experience of Petőfi, whom he had listened to as a student in Sárospatak and whom he finally modelled with his arms raised in calling for a revolution (Soós 1956, 335–343). Izsó was also close to the figure of Csokonai, the poet who became a cult figure in the writings of Petőfi and Gyulai, presenting him as a poet of drinking songs, the son of the people. Izsó's search for a path, his disillusionment led him back to the roots of the national character, in Fülep's words, "he instinctively sought something to cling to in the domestic world" (Fülep 1953, 13–21).

This is how he found his way back to the people in the form of the *Búsuló juhász* (*The Mourning Shepherd*) and later *Táncoló parasztleány* (*The Dancing Peasant Boy*). Lajos Fülep noticed the key role of the series of clay carvings of the Dancing Herdsman in Hungarian sculpture: "The lads of the Plain,

⁵ Adolf Huszár's statue of Petőfi was unveiled in 1882 on the Oath (later known as Március 15. tér). About the unveiling: Szerdahelyi–Borovi, 2022, 209–210.

in plain costume dancing a plain dance – and what happens to the miracle of genius? Their figures, their costumes, their dances are ennobled, their forms are exalted, the bright light of an artistic tradition thought to be dead radiates from them, their naturalism breathes the spirit of true plastic idealism that means life. An eternal sculptural problem in a particular Hungarian, national form, like that of the Greeks, in a peculiarly Greek, national form – in living reality, caught by the eye of Izsó” (Fülep 1953, 13–21; Keserü 1982).

Izsó modelled the figure of the dancing peasant in Debrecen in 1867, as he did *Csokonai's statue*, that of the “folk poet.” Just as Izsó had renewed the genre with his series of Dancing Peasant Lads, he was able to breathe new life

into memorial sculpture with the statue of Csokonai. (*picture 4.*) The statue was commissioned with the creation of the Memorial Garden Association on 20 October 1861. Founded on the initiative of the wealthy merchant József Csanak, the aim of the association was to “transform the college square into a place where statues of people who had made great contributions to the country and the sciences, especially to our city, could be erected [...]” (Balogh 1953, 100). In other words, the aim of the association was to create a modern, modern, representative main square of Debrecen, a national memorial park, and the Csokonai statue was one of the central elements of this memorial site. Negotiations with Izsó began in January 1866, the sculptor moved to Debrecen in December of that year, and by September of the following year he had completed both the small model and the large-scale clay work, ready for casting.⁶



Picture 4. Miklós Izsó: Statue of Mihály Csokonai Vitéz

⁶ The casting was finally made in Munich for 4,500 forints. The sample, packed by the sculptor, arrived in Munich on 20 April 1868, and the bronze statue was received by Debrecen in July 1870. The pedestal was made by Antal Wasserburger, a master stone carver from Vienna, for 5500 Ft (Balogh 1953, 103).

The difference between the small-scale sketch and the finished sculpture is often highlighted: most recently, Lajos Lakner reiterated Lajos Fülep's observation that the thin garaboncias-like figure of the small sample had been transformed into a fuller sculpture of the acclaimed folk-national poet in the finished work (Lakner 2014, 223–225). In 1871, the year of the inauguration, Tamás Szana described the finished sculpture in this way, almost instinctively linking Csokonai's figure with the dancing peasant figures: "[...] the sculpture depicts Csokonai in a standing figure. His head is raised, his left hand holds a lute like a cimbalom, his right is stretched half forward, his hand is in a position as if he were about to reach for the strings. The posture of the figure is light, as is the movement in which he stands, his left foot slightly forward so that the weight is rooted to the right foot. [...] But the power of formation swells in that natural movement which pours the life of action into the mass of ore. Anyone who stands on the side facing Darabos utca will be able to appreciate the powerful beauty of the statue most clearly. From there, one can see the starting point of the sculpture's movement of action, as the right hand prepares to catch the string of the lute. There can be no doubt that this is what he intends to do, nor even that he has just withdrawn his hand from the strings, for the whole right side of the figure is accompanied by this movement, which suggests a fierceness so well suited to the occasion. [...] As for the suit, the fur cloak, then fashionable, gave all that was necessary for the folds, and the figure emerges pleasingly from the folds of the cloak. Behind the left leg, the frilled leaves of a vine can be seen, curled on a trunk. The poet of the "foal-hide flask" deserves this staffage" (Szana 1871, 372–373).

According to Lakner, the most important difference between the *Csokonai portraits* of István Ferenczy and Miklós Izsó is that while the former portrays the poet who lives beyond space and time, who is eternally alive, who is far away from us and whom we must admire, Izsó portrays the poet "enjoying, amusing and amusing life on earth". The latter was easier for everyone to identify with, and therefore the poetic figure modelled by Izsó was popularised, appearing on many different objects (Lakner 2014, 225 skk.). I can only partially agree with Lakner's characterisation. On the one hand, he himself admits that Izsó's statue was intended to be part of the national pantheon, like Ferenczy's at the time, and on the other hand, the Hungarian costume on Ferenczy's work was intended to refer explicitly to the national character, which the sculptor expressed in direct lines in the letter quoted above: "[...] I made Csokonai's bust

of white marble, in the lovely Hungarian robe." This did not exactly correspond to Kazinczy's conception, but it could just as well have corresponded to that of the people of Debrecen. That the people of Debrecen could not have identified with the statue of Ferenczy, or that it could not have made an impact, is refuted by the fancy reception given to the statue and the book of poems published in its honour, which Lakner himself describes in such detail.

In my opinion, both Ferenczy's and Izsó's statues ultimately fit into the humanist tradition of "famous people" (Lővei 2000, 507–514; Szücs 2000, 689–694), which is why it is strange that the connection of Ferenczy, who studied in Italy, to the Renaissance portrait tradition has been less mentioned in recent research. One of the first portrait galleries of humanism was established in the Basilica of Santa Croce in Florence, and, expanding over the centuries, it became a perpetuator of the nation's memory, as Ugo Foscolo's lines attest. In Debrecen, the humanist tradition lived on through the rigorous Greek-Latin studies of the Reformed College. The students there had to be familiar with the famous biographies of Plutarch, Suetonius and others, which inspired their imagination. It may be that some elements of this tradition became a restraint by the time of the Reformation, yet on the other hand they may have helped to develop the cult of national greatness, along the lines of Virgil and other ancient poets. Ferenczy's statue of Csokonai represents a successful synthesis of classical tradition and national awakening, and Izsó's statue (like later statues of Ferenc Medgyessy) explicitly showed the possibility of renewing tradition, so Debrecen was by no means left in the "captivity of Arcadia".

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