

**Theses of Doctoral (PhD) dissertation**

**The Forms of Commemoration in the Works of Ferenc  
Kazinczy: Archiving, Musealization, and Pantheonization**

Hajnalka Szolyka

Supervisor: Dr. Katalin Bódi



UNIVERSITY OF DEBRECEN

Doctoral School of Literary and Cultural Studies

Debrecen, 2025

## **1. Objectives of the dissertation, delimitation of the topic**

In my doctoral dissertation, I focus on the various modes of commemoration observable in the works of Ferenc Kazinczy. The scope of the study extends to both private and collective acts of remembrance.

Kazinczy's oeuvre has been investigated by numerous scholars through diverse methodological lenses. His memorial practices have likewise been the subject of earlier research. Attila Debreczeni has examined Kazinczy's self-representation, his role in shaping memorial narratives, and his compulsion to document. László Orbán, while preparing the critical edition of Pályám emlékezete ("Memoirs of My Career"), analyzed the issues of repeated rewriting and memorial manipulation, demonstrating the specific workings of remembrance in Kazinczy's texts through selected characteristic stories. Márton Szilágyi, in connection with the critical edition of Fogságom naplója ("Diary of My Captivity"), has also engaged with questions of memory when studying the narrative modes employed in recounting imprisonment.

It has become almost a commonplace that remembrance was of central importance to Kazinczy, both in his private life and in the communal context. He considered it crucial to preserve texts, objects, images, and, above all, the events of his own life. He was keenly aware that control over memory endowed the rememberer with the power of interpretation. Nevertheless, with the exception of the Arcadia trial, detailed examinations of specific cases of commemoration remain rare in the literature on Kazinczy. While many studies mention his attitude towards memory and his commemorative practices, using them as points of departure or explanatory frameworks, they seldom provide in-depth analysis of the antecedents, specific events, afterlife, and contexts of particular acts of commemoration.

In my investigation, I aim to trace the processes of commemoration across different textual genres. For each case of commemoration under scrutiny, I draw on Kazinczy's correspondence, autobiographical writings, poems, and even periodical publications. I am particularly interested in the differences, similarities, connections, and systemic patterns that emerge when stories shift from one genre or medium to another: how the narrative changes, for instance, when it moves from a private letter to an autobiography, or when it is published in a journal. I also take into account the peculiarity of Kazinczy's creative practice, namely his frequent rewriting of stories, whether prompted by changes in audience or by the natural (forgetfulness-induced) or deliberate reinterpretation of past events. For Kazinczy, writing

meant documentation, recording, preservation – but equally rewriting, reliving, and reconstructing: an interpretive process in which self-interpretation unfolds dynamically through the interpretation and reinterpretation of memories. This is why it is essential to inquire into the circumstances, methods, and motivations behind the production of Kazinczy's texts, which can also lead to the uncovering of less transparent layers of meaning.

In my dissertation, I distinguish three types of commemorative practices: archiving, musealization, and pantheonization. Archiving and musealization, in my view, belong to the basic character of Kazinczy's memorial work and can to some degree be detected in all acts of commemoration. His compulsion to document, archive, and rewrite, as well as his desire to possess the handwriting, images, and objects of eminent figures, are recurring motifs in his memory practices. His letters reveal a striking eagerness to shape stories about people and events important to him, rewriting them countless times in variations tailored to particular addressees or situations, thereby reliving them. This operated both in the sphere of private life and in the realm of public and cultural events. Musealization likewise constituted a mode of establishing a relationship with the past. For Kazinczy, this is of interest not only because of the emerging museum culture of the period: he himself acted as his own museologist, and this activity was closely connected to archiving. Moreover, as several scholars have already pointed out, a recurring pattern in his texts is the vivid encounter with works of art and the self-representation embedded in these encounters. His travel writings documenting his journeys to Vienna and Transylvania highlight his gallery experiences, making it essential to examine the aesthetic encounters integrated into his travel narratives. His art-related interests, accompanied by a passion for collecting – though ultimately limited by his financial circumstances – are visible throughout his life: he collected plaster casts, engravings, and the handwriting and letters of prominent figures.

The phenomenon of pantheonization in Kazinczy's age has been studied by Tibor Porkoláb in his work *Nagyjainknak pantheonja épül* ("The Pantheon of Our Great Figures is Being Built"), whose insights I have also drawn upon in my dissertation. He interprets the pantheon, the "temple of glory" as a sacral space marked by archival qualities: names and stories inscribed in stone serve to secure the permanence of merit. At the same time, the pantheon bears a museum-like character: a virtual gallery of the nation's great figures. The aspiration to highlight eminent individuals was clearly there in Kazinczy, as evidenced by his numerous monument plans: beyond Csokonai's memorial, he envisioned monuments for the poet Zrínyi, the heroes of Zemplén, and Baron Miklós Wesselényi the Elder, among others.

He showed a strong interest in portraits, and the English garden in Hotkóc – with its numerous gravestones and monuments – captivated him, prompting him to engage in theoretical reflections on garden art. His pantheonizing activity manifested not only in designating and idealizing great national figures through memorials and poems but also in creating monuments. The person fulfilling the role of master of ceremonies in pantheonization, mediating between *virtus* and *gloria*, could also secure entry into the temple of merit. Recognizing this opportunity, Kazinczy thus erected memorials not only to those he considered eminent but also to himself, engaging in self-pantheonization. In his network of relationships, he linked himself to the nation's foremost figures, with their friendship and esteem serving as proof of his own elevated status. In the personal sphere, he likewise exalted himself: when speaking of himself as a father, whether directly or through sharing stories of his children's upbringing, he glorified his paternal role – furthermore, he sets examples for himself in fatherhood whom he considers worthy of entry into the Pantheon. Kazinczy's passion for collecting portraits can also be understood as a gesture toward founding a national Pantheon. His collection contained nearly 500 images by 1807, when the Patak College purchased it, and he continued collecting thereafter. He considered István Ferenczy the most suitable sculptor to lay the foundations of the Pantheon through the medium of sculpture, and Ferenczy indeed created a portrait series necessary for a national sculptural pantheon. Although the plan was never realized, many of his works are linked to pantheon-building efforts, which Kazinczy consistently encouraged, thereby also shaping the national Pantheon.

In my research, I touch only briefly on the outcomes and consequences of pantheonization – that is, whether Kazinczy succeeded in securing pantheonized status for the figures he deemed important, as judged from the perspective of posterity. My focus lies rather on the contemporary impact of these endeavors, above all on their actual realization and the theoretical and cultural considerations underlying them. What unites pantheonization with the associated archival and musealizing impulses is the manifestation of remembrance and the intention to commemorate. The nature and modes of remembrance, the entanglements of individual and collective memory, are topics on which the study of Kazinczy's texts can provide essential insights. The shifting perception of history in the early nineteenth century, its new forms of historical consciousness, its quests for origins, and the emergence of museum culture all appear in miniature within Kazinczy's oeuvre—and conversely, my key concepts allow us to observe this heterogeneous and multifaceted corpus from a distinctly delineated perspective.

My main research questions concern how the theme of commemoration appears in Kazinczy's oeuvre, what reflections he offers on his own commemorative practices, how he designates those deemed worthy of commemoration, and how he associates himself with them. I also examine the networks of relationships underlying particular acts of remembrance, seeking to map the factors influencing the fluctuating intensity of commemorative projects, why some were activated while others faded. Part of my objective is to undertake a complex investigation of commemoration, incorporating all related textual genres and media, and considering both personal and collective perspectives.

## 2. Methodology

To achieve my objectives, I have found discourse analysis to be the most suitable method. The linguistic turn represents a shift away from the conception of language as a neutral, transparent tool that mirrors reality in an instrumental manner; instead, it emphasizes how the world is constructed from the meanings conveyed through language. More precisely, discourse analysis investigates how different discourses are formed through the selection, rearrangement, and interconnection of meanings.

Discourse is not a mere imprint of reality but an interpretation of it, since the verifiability of an “objective reality” would only be possible from a position outside language – something to which we have no access. Different discourses thus create divergent interpretations of the world, competing with one another; their effectiveness depends heavily on the degree of power held by those who construct them. Discourse analysis, therefore, does not seek “truth” in itself but rather asks: who claims to possess the truth, and how do they attempt to justify this claim through overt or covert power narratives? What rhetorical tools are employed to maintain their position?

The concept and study of discourse is closely tied to the name of Michel Foucault, who examined the order of discourses primarily on a broader socio-political level. In choosing the methodological framework for my dissertation, the work of Terrell Carver was also significant, particularly his insights into how discourses are constructed through the processes of selecting, rearranging, and interlinking meanings conveyed by language. Furthermore, the studies of Rita Glózer provided valuable guidance for the practical application of discourse analysis.

In the present study, the emphasis is on discourses influenced and shaped by the figure of Ferenc Kazinczy, considered within their social embeddedness and their narrower as well as broader communal dimensions. I approach Kazinczy’s texts and the discursive orders they create with an analytical attitude concerned not only with what the texts “say,” but also with why and how they say it. The stakes of interpreting the discourses at play lie in uncovering how Kazinczy employed language – and, together with it, his intellectual, material resources and social capital – to record, arrange, and rearrange the events of his past and present, as well as the eminent figures of importance to him.

Particularly relevant here is the Foucauldian understanding of discourse as a form of power: Kazinczy compels events, oeuvres, and individuals into discursive order. In the very

act of commemoration, he simultaneously strives for narrative dominance. Such discursive construction is itself a form of exercising power: a struggle for control over remembrance.

### 3. Results

Beyond the introduction, my dissertation is divided into three major chapters. The first chapter focuses on Kazinczy's discourse on his children. Both in relation to his children and to his own role as a father, he employed strategies of idealization and commemoration. A central event here is the death of his daughter Iphigenia at the age of one, and the parallel processes of composing her epitaph and designing her tombstone, which unfold simultaneously with the development of the so-called Arcadia Trial. Yet the chapter does not stop at the themes of death aesthetics and mourning. The influence of Iphigenia is observable in later writings as well: in Kazinczy's descriptions of his subsequently born children, the first-born daughter serves as a recurring point of comparison. I also examine the acts of idealization connected to his children: in his correspondence, Kazinczy reports on them in the context of extraordinary birth stories, physical and intellectual development, talents, and education. He selects exemplary figures – such as Baron Miklós Wesselényi the Elder and Count József Dessewffy – as models for paternal duties, and presents himself with equal eagerness in the paternal role. In this context, the child appears both as an instrument and as a bearer of commemoration: Kazinczy repeatedly remarks that after his death, he will be remembered and cherished through his children. Consequently, the type of upbringing they receive and the paternal imprint he leaves upon them are of special significance.

The second chapter highlights selected examples of Kazinczy's efforts at pantheonization, demonstrating through them the intertwining of individual and communal motivations in the practices of commemoration. The first example is the Arcadia Trial, which I analyze from the perspective of Kazinczy's attempt to commemorate Csokonai. Due to its strong commemorative character and its exemplary significance, the Arcadia Trial is indispensable to this study; yet, as it has already been interpreted in great depth and from multiple perspectives in the secondary literature, my focus lies on its importance as an early instance of pantheonization. It represents the first of such cases chronologically and serves as both model and training ground for Kazinczy's later commemorative practices. Within it, one can observe the majority of the features that would characterize his subsequent acts of commemoration:

1. Kazinczy presents himself as the bearer of counter-memory. Acts of commemoration are often conflicts with groups of dissenting individuals, during which camps form on either side; one element of self-definition is whether one

stands with the “good,” the neologues, the “true interpreters” of Kazinczy, or with their opponents.

2. He strives to be the primary mediator, preserver, and interpreter of notable events (death, battle), ideally the sole authority, seeking collaborators only to serve to amplify his voice rather than compete with it.
3. His commemorative collaborators are typically those who support him financially and accept his ideas for the physical realization of pantheonization.
4. In the process, he uses exemplary figures from antiquity who allow for multiple interpretations. In idealizing Wesselényi the Elder, for instance, he compares him to Brutus, stressing the perspective of Plutarch’s Brutus.
5. Related to this is his deliberate play with ambiguity: Kazinczy often chooses contested or polyvalent models in pantheonization, reinforcing the idea that both his poetry and his commemorative practices can only be fully understood by those who “speak his language.”
6. He consistently seeks the material realization of commemoration: beyond textual memorials, he works on creating physical forms of remembrance and cherishes his own personal relics connected to those he pantheonizes.
7. His practices exhibit medial diversity: images, letters, journal publications, inscriptions, statues, and monuments collectively create the contexts of remembrance.
8. He continually provides explanations and annotations. In the case of Csokonai, this reaches extreme proportions, yet similar tendencies appear in other commemorative endeavors as well. Typically, Kazinczy creates camps of those who understand him and those who do not; hence, he supplements his texts and projects with interpretive notes.

Alongside the Arcadia Trial, the second subchapter surveys Kazinczy’s assumption of control over the legacy of Gábor Dayka, an example of the successful and nearly total domination of commemorative authority.

The third subchapter examines Kazinczy's commemoration of Baron Miklós Wesselényi the Elder, contextualized within a network of personal relations. Here, I demonstrate how Kazinczy's image of Wesselényi was shaped by the shared experience of imprisonment, by personal encounters, by the practice of patronage, and by the necessity of countering the baron's negative reputation after his death. Commissioned by the family, but with complete autonomy, Kazinczy juxtaposed his own representation of Wesselényi with a contemporaneous but less flattering portrait. His commemorative work in this case is multifaceted: he composed an epigram, designed a memorial booklet, and planned a tomb.

The fourth subchapter, situated within an epistolary-historical overview, investigates two of Kazinczy's early epistles written with pantheonizing intent: one addressed to the younger Miklós Wesselényi and the other to Farkas Cserey. The idealization of the younger Wesselényi began already in his childhood, likely motivated by Kazinczy's relationship with the father. Cserey, by contrast, was a longstanding correspondent, entrusted with intimate details of Kazinczy's private life and among the first to receive his writings. Cserey's importance lies partly in his contribution to Kazinczy's autograph collection, of which the epistle itself is a record. This subchapter emphasizes the materialization of memory: the unrealized plan for Wesselényi the Elder's monument, the wax horse gifted by the younger Wesselényi in childhood, and the expanding manuscript collection—all exemplify commemoration reinforced through physical objects.

The fifth subchapter concerns Kazinczy's project of designing a memorial for the Zemplén warriors, a commemorative endeavor carried out at the request of others in collaboration with József Dessewffy. I reconstruct the process of designing the monument, its related journal publication, and Kazinczy's effort to involve his children in the act of remembrance: he took two of his sons to the completed monument in the hope that they would preserve in memory his attempt to engage them in a practice of communal remembrance.

The third major chapter centers on the motif of the journey – both the literal journey and the metaphorical journey of the career. The first subchapter explores the narrative construction of Kazinczy's early career through the analysis of anecdotal stories, examining how the image of his vocation as a writer was shaped through acts of self-representation and retrospectively interpreted in his autobiographical works. The second subchapter addresses the commemorative practices embedded in the Transylvanian Letters, while also considering the reception of Kazinczy's other autobiographical writings. Here, the concepts of

musealization and pantheonization guide my analysis of epigrams related to travel, including those concerning the Teleki Library and the collection of Samuel von Brukenthal published in the Scientific Repository, as well as Kazinczy's visit to Farkas Cserey. These three selected episodes—an epigram, a journal article, and a travel account—illustrate the diversity of forms through which experiences of his Transylvanian journey were commemorated.

In addition to the indispensable bibliography and list of sources, I provide tabular summaries of the principal textual sources, related journal publications, and visual materials discussed in each chapter. In this way, I aim to demonstrate the wide range of surfaces and media through which Kazinczy's commemorative activity was realized.

Commemoration in Kazinczy's oeuvre is so deeply embedded that it cannot simply be described as a practice but must rather be understood as a mode of existence. The constant interplay of writing and rewriting, of recording and reliving, of sustaining memory both of self and of distinguished others—these constitute the fundamental character of Kazinczy's work. The chapters of my dissertation seek to present this mode of remembering in its complexity, and to trace its presence and transformations across different phases of his career.

Amidst the diversity of Kazinczy's commemorative practices and autobiographical writings, one recurrent feature connects all—whether personal or communal, commissioned or self-motivated, directed toward himself or toward distinguished contemporaries. This feature is the dual nature of commemoration: in remembering someone or something, Kazinczy simultaneously commemorates himself. By recording his children's talents, he represents himself as a caring, supportive father. In mourning his daughter and designing her monument, he provides a model for the sublimation of grief through art. In offering an alternative to the people of Debrecen in commemorating Csokonai, he reinforces his general ideological distinctiveness. In remembering Baron Wesselényi the Elder, he again presents counter-memory, emphasizing both the sense of solidarity born from shared captivity in Kufstein and the baron's exemplary role. By idealizing Wesselényi's son from an early age, he strengthens this connection and binds himself to the nation's most eminent figures.

His expanding autograph collection served a similar function: possessing the handwriting of prominent figures was itself prestigious but also demonstrated his expanding personal network, which enabled him to acquire such autographs. In the context of commemorating the Zemplén warriors at the request of others, he portrays himself both as a father seeking to involve his children in communal remembrance and as a reverent admirer of

the nation's anonymous heroes. In reconstructing the anecdotes of his early career, he retrospectively affirms his writerly vocation, while in recalling his travels he represents himself not only as a participant in Transylvanian intellectual life but also as a discerning traveler, observing and evaluating people and places along the way.

Every commemorative gesture – whether expressed in letters, journal publications, travel writings, or poems – can be likened to a stone in the monument that Kazinczy constructed over the course of his life. He did not entrust the shaping of his image to chance or to the goodwill of posterity, but consciously sought to determine how he would be remembered. Although, of course, even in his lifetime the carefully crafted image of himself was not the only way of interpreting Kazinczy, it is certain that his oeuvre – read as a continuous practice of self-pantheonization – stands as a monument more enduring than bronze. My dissertation thus seeks to contribute to ongoing editorial and interpretive efforts by offering yet another possible interpretation of this oeuvre.



Registry number: DEENK/493/2025.PL  
Subject: PhD Publication List

Candidate: Hajnalka Szolyka

Doctoral School: Doctoral School of Literary and Cultural Studies

MTMT ID: 10082775

### List of publications related to the dissertation

#### Hungarian book chapters (3)

1. **Szolyka, H.:** Pályakezdés-történetek Kazinczy Ferenc autobiografikus szövegeiben.  
In: Pályakezdés, karrierút, irodalomtörténet. Szerk.: Radnai Dániel Szabolcs; szerk. Rétfalvi P. Zsófia; szerk. Szolnoki Anna, Verso, Pécs, 29-40, 2021. ISBN: 9789634297833
2. **Szolyka, H.:** "Gyermekek, de emlékezni fognak": a gyermekek bevonása az emlékezésbe Kazinczynál.  
In: "Közöttünk a 'mester": Tanítványi köszöntőkötet a 60 éves Debreczeni Attila tiszteletére.. Szerk.: Bódi Katalin, Bodrogi Ferenc Máté, Debreceni Egyetem, Debrecen, 123-129, 2019. ISBN: 9789633181188
3. **Szolyka, H.:** Esményítő gesztusok Kazinczy Ferenc autobiografikus szövegeiben.  
In: Test-történetek : Tanulmányok a Történeti Kollégium konferenciájának előadásaiból. Szerk.: Barát Bence, Kovács Janka, Matolcsi Réka, Lászlófi Viola, Történeti Kollégium, Budapest, 71-88, 2018. ISBN: 9789634890034

#### Hungarian scientific articles in Hungarian journals (3)

4. **Szolyka, H.:** "Honi héroszok" - panteonizáció Kazinczy két korai episztolájában.  
*Verso. közlésre elfogadva*, [1-23], 2025. ISSN: 2630-8479.
5. **Szolyka, H.:** Az apa tekintete: a gyermek eszményítése Kazinczy Ferenc levelezésében és autobiografikus szövegeiben.  
*Juvenilia*. 7, 228-249, 2017. ISSN: 1788-6848.
6. **Szolyka, H.:** Nevelés és eszményítés a Kazinczy-levelezésben.  
*Szkholion*. 2017/2, 87-94, 2017. ISSN: 1785-0479.





## List of other publications

### Hungarian scientific articles in Hungarian journals (4)

7. **Szolyka, H.:** A siker módozatai. Béres Norbert: A klasszikus századforduló népszerű prózairodalma.  
*Debr. szle.* 32 (2), 279-282, 2024. ISSN: 1218-022X.  
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.59424/debreceniszemle/2024/32/2/279-282>
8. **Szolyka, H.:** A látómező kiterjesztése.  
*Alföld.* 73 (3), 116-119, 2022. ISSN: 0401-3174.
9. **Szolyka, H.:** Leporolt klasszikusok, aktualizáló olvasatok.  
*Verso.* 4 (1), 54-57, 2021. EISSN: 2630-8479.  
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15170/VERSO.4.2021.1.54-57>
10. **Szolyka, H.:** Nyelv, viszony, szabadság: Áfra János: A semmi nem késik.  
*Szkholion.* 2016 (1-2), 29-33, 2016. ISSN: 1785-0479.

The Candidate's publication data submitted to the Tudóstér have been validated by DEENK on the basis of the Journal Citation Report (Impact Factor) database.

27 August, 2025

