УДК 821.161.1
ББК 83.3(2Рос=Рус)6

© 2019. Zsófia Kalavszky
Budapest, Hungary

© 2019. A. P. Urakova
Moscow, Russia

LITERARY CULT AND ITS DISCONTENTS: HUNGARIAN/RUSSIAN PERSPECTIVE (ON THE EXAMPLE OF MIKHAIL ZOSHCHENKO'S "DURING THE PUSHKIN DAYS")

Acknowledgments: This paper was supported by the Russian Foundation for Basic Research, grant no 18-512-23002 (2018–2021). Zsófia Kalavszky's research contribution was supported by János Bolyai Scholarship of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (2015–2018).

Abstract: The essay introduces and attempts to problematize the term "literary cult" that independently appeared in the literary studies of the last decades in Hungary and Russia. While the word "cult" belongs to the realm of popular media, the complex phenomenon that stands behind it deserves serious scholarly attention and reconsideration. Bearing on the theoretical works of Péter Dávidházi, Boris Dubin, Sergey Zenkin, Gábor Gyáni, Orsolya Rákai as well as on our own previous research, we show the "discontents" that scholars inevitably encounter when attempting to understand literary cult and introduce it in the literary theory. We also point at shared opinions and fundamental differences in Hungarian and Russian approaches. Hungarian notion of "cult" is broader in the sense that it incorporates official, state-inflicted cult and popular forms of cult following; Russian theoreticians tend to differentiate cult authors or texts from official national discourses or popular/populist rhetoric and thus narrow the term down. The difference is also due to different methodology. While agreeing that literary cult is a phenomenon of modernity, Hungarian scholars tend to see it primarily as a rhetoric mode or register whereas Russian researchers see it predominantly as a social phenomenon. The second part of the essay tests some of the theoretical implications on the example of Mikhail Zoshchenko's "During the Pushkin Days," a text that forms part of the so called *belletristicheskaja puskiniana* corpus. We show how Zoshchenko, in his parody of Pushkin jubilee celebrations in the Soviet Union, masterly uses and confronts the languages of cult. In our analysis of this text, we take into account the specificity of East-European (Russian and Soviet, in particular) attitudes to literary cults.

Keywords: literary cult, literary theory, East-European, Russia, Hungary, Pushkin, Zoschenko.

Information about the authors:
Zsófia Kalavszky — PhD in Philology, Researcher, Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute for Literary Studies, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Ménesi út, 11–13, 1118 Budapest, Hungary. E-mail: kalavszky.zsofia@btk.mta.hu

Alexandra P. Urakova — PhD in Philology, Senior Researcher, A. M. Gorky Institute of World Literature, Russian Academy of Sciences, Povarskaya St. 25 a, 121069 Moscow, Russia. E-mail: alexandraurakova@yandex.ru
Received: September 27, 2018
Date of publication: September 28, 2019
For citation: Kalavszky Zs., Urakova A. P. Literary cult and its discontents: Hungarian/Russian perspective (on the example of Mikhail Zoshchenko`s "During the Pushkin days". *Vestnik slavianskikh kul'tur*, 2019, vol. 53, pp. 169–180. (In English)

© 2019 г. Ж. Калавски
г. Будапешт, Венгрия

© 2019 г. А. П. Уракова
г. Москва, Россия

НЕУДОБСТВА ЛИТЕРАТУРНОГО КУЛЬТА: РОССИЙСКО-ВЕНГЕРСКАЯ ТОЧКА ЗРЕНИЯ (НА МАТЕРИАЛЕ РАССКАЗА МИХАИЛА ЗОЩЕНКО «В ПУШКИНСКИЕ ДНИ»)

Статья написана при поддержке гранта РФФИ № 18-512-23002 (2018–2021). Часть статьи, написанная Ж. Калавски, поддержана János Bolyai Scholarship of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (2015–2018)

Аннотация: В статье сделана попытка проблематизации понятия «литературный культ», которое было введено в научный оборот венгерскими и российскими учеными независимо друг от друга в последние несколько десятилетий. Несмотря на медийное происхождение и бытование жаргонизма «культ», за ним скрывается комплексный историко-культурный феномен, требующий серьезного изучения и переоценки. Опираясь на теоретические работы Петера Давидхази, Бориса Дубина, Сергея Зенкина, Габора Дани, Оршои Ракаи, а также на наши собственные исследования в этой области, мы размышляем, почему литературный культ остается «неудобным» или непростым для дефиниции явлением. Мы также указываем на общие теоретические положения и фундаментальные различия в подходах венгерских и российских ученых. Например, и венгерские, и российские исследователи сходятся в том, что литературный культ — это продукт современной эпохи. В то же время венгры понимают культ более широко; например, понятие «литературный культ» включает в себя формы официального государственного или, наоборот, массового, популярного культа. Российские теоретики, напротив, видят в культе феномен немассовости, принципиально отделяя его от официальных дискурсов и популярной/популистской риторики. Отчасти данное различие связано с методологией: венгерские ученые преимущественно рассматривают литературный культ как риторический модус или регистр, тогда как российские ученые видят в культовом авторе или тексте в первую очередь социальный/социологический феномен. Вторая часть статьи представляет собой анализ рассказа Михаила Зощенко «В пушкинские дни», который принадлежит к так называемой «беллетристической пушкиниане». Показано, как Зощенко, пародируя празднова-

ние пушкинского юбилея в Советском Союзе, мастерски использует и сталкивает друг с другом языки культа. При анализе учитывается специфика восточноевропейского (прежде всего, советского и российского) отношения к литературному культу.

Ключевые слова: литературный культ, литературная теория, восточноевропейское, Россия, Венгрия, Пушкин, Зощенко.

Информация об авторах:
Жофия Калавски — PhD in Philology, научный сотрудник, Научно-исследовательский центр гуманитарных наук, Институт литературоведения Венгерской академии наук, ул. Менеши 11–13, 1118 г. Будапешт, Венгрия. E-mail: kalavszky.zsofia@btk.mta.hu
Александра Павловна Уракова — кандидат филологических наук, старший научный сотрудник, Институт мировой литературы им. А. М. Горького Российской академии наук, ул. Поварская, д. 25 а, 121069 г. Москва, Россия. E-mail: alexandraurakova@yandex.ru

Дата поступления статьи: 27.09.2018
Дата публикации: 28.09.2019
Для цитирования: *Калавски Ж., Уракова А. П.* Неудобства литературного культа: российско-венгерская точка зрения (на материале рассказа Михаила Зощенко «В Пушкинские дни») // Вестник славянских культур. 2019. Т. 53. С. 169–180.

First of all, we would like to emphasize that literary cult is a cultural representation or a cultural template of a broader social phenomenon that is in itself a place of intersection for different disciplines — sociology, religious studies, political science, anthropology, and intellectual history among others. Many parallels may be drawn and many similarities may be found in the areas that go beyond the literary sphere but we will focus on literary phenomena in the present essay. Second, in our discussion of literary cults, we will be relying on the results of Hungarian and Russian research in this area that has eloped since late 1980s in Hungary and since 2000s in Russia respectively. The essay consists of two parts. In the first part, we will give a theoretical outline of the problem, with an emphasis on the East European specificity of cultic practices. We will speak about how Hungarian and Russian scholars approach the study of literary cults, what is in common and what is fundamentally different in these approaches. The second part presents a case study from Russian literary history. We will show how a state-inflicted cult — individual and collective celebration of the centennial anniversary of Pushkin's death in 1937 — was parodied and subverted in Mikhail Zoshchenko's "During the Pushkin Days", a text that forms part of the so called *belletristicheskaja puskiniana* corpus.

I

The word 'discontents' in the title of our essay is not casual. Most scholars working in cult studies recognize discontents caused by the terminological obscurity of the word "cult" in relation to literature. The word "cult" in such combinations as cult author, cult book, or cult figure has invaded contemporary media for over a decade (this is of course equally true for cult films or cult music). Albeit charged or even overcharged with different connotations, primarily those to religious and sacred sphere but also, especially in the 20th century context, with connotations that are "likely to evoke animosity" [11, p. 31], the word operates almost as a floating signifier in the terms of Lévi-Strauss. To borrow the terminology of Russian structuralists, Yuri Lotman and Boris Uspensky, we observe "mythological" rather

than "descriptive" logic of representation in commercial or media usage of the word "cult," meaning that in order to recognize or identify the phenomenon, it is sufficient or easier to refer to the proper name rather than give a concise definition [4, p. 526].

An example of such logic may be found in numerous guides and companions to cult fiction issued in the 1990s and 2000s. These popular editions usually contain lists of numerous "cultic" names and titles — lists that in the absence of rigid selection criteria or references to authoritative institutions, may be continued ad infinitum: one may always find a missing, overlooked figure. All forms of cultural canonization are certainly arbitrary but in this case, arbitrariness becomes the ruling principle. At the same time, paradoxically, when presenting short biographies of the authors or summarizing the content of the books instead of describing actual circumstances of cult following, the mentioned editions tacitly imply that cult-ness is intrinsic quality of these authors and books.

Scholars claim the opposite: we cannot speak of literary cults without considering specific cultural and historical circumstances or facts of their existence in every particular case. In his 1989 studies of the 200-year-old history of Shakespeare cult in Hungary [12] and the cult of a Hungarian poet Sándor Petőfi [10], a founder of cult research in Hungary Péter Dávidházi claimed that in all likelihood *there is no single model* that is valid for all literary cults. While religious-aesthetic model prevails in Hungarian cult of Shakespeare, Petőfi's cult expands the model of cult research towards *politics* and *nation*. According to Dávidházi, in Petőfi's cults (as opposed to those of Shakespeare), political, artistic, and religious spheres are intermingled [10, pp. 354, 356]. Dávidházi claims that it makes a difference whether we discuss a Hungarian cult of a foreign author or the local cult of a Hungarian, "patriotic" poet and concludes that the approach of literary cults may differ substantially depending on their object and characteristics [12, pp. 304, 311]. The same applies to the cults of the authors from the past — whether national heroes or obscure and forgotten classics returned to the literary scene — that would be different from those of contemporary, living authors. Thus, one of the main premises of cult studies, both in Hungary and Russia, is the relativity of literary cults, their contingency on highly specific cases of cult following — cases that should be described, systematized, and analyzed individually. "Followers make leaders" ("Korolya igraet svita"): Boris Dubin uses this aphorism to underline the constructiveness of literary cult as a cultural mechanism [1, p. 324].

There is, however, a risk of falling into another kind of solipsism: the next step would be to suggest that anyone or anything may become cultic. Perhaps, there is some truth in it and yet since literary cult is confined within certain chronological frameworks rather than being some abstract, universal category, we may still speak of cult authors or cult texts in potentia, as of historically and culturally embedded templates and types. Therefore, in each specific case we may speculate why and how a particular author or book becomes cultic and which mechanisms this process enables. Dávidházi's threefold working definition of the literary cult based on a specific *attitude*, a certain *ritual* and a peculiar way of using *language* is particularly helpful here [11, p. 31]. The Hungarian scholar recommends 1) to use a holistic methodological principle for the analysis of cults because the different properties of literary cult (attitude, ritual, language) are "the interlinked elements of a unified paradigm" [11, pp. 16–17]; 2) to stand at the position of an empathetic outsider, or compassionate agnostic when analyzing cult-related literary and para-literary material [12, pp. 21–22]. Russian theoreticians of literary cults likewise speak of specific ways to distinguish cultic authors or texts from the common run. Dubin, for example, proposes to differentiate among "classical author", "popular author", "celebrity", and "cultic author" as social models or masks of the so

called literary authorities [1]. Sergey Zenkin claims that cultic texts have a different function in culture than classical texts: for example, they prompt sequels and prequels rather than imitations and have performative effect on the life of their readers — from fashion following to cases of suicide [3].

Another important premise that lets scholars speak of literary cult in broad strokes and use it as a term as opposite to its slang usage is the shared assumption that literary cult is a relatively modern phenomenon, a product of formative socio-historical processes and shifts that took place at the turn of the 18th and the 19th centuries. One of such processes or shifts that happened to be formative for cult phenomena was secularization that started in the Enlightenment and was followed by almost immediate counter-reaction or counter-movement: a transfer of religious, sacred meanings onto cultural objects, with literature playing the leading role for at least the entire 19th century. A well-known French sociologist Paul Bénichou notes that Romantic literature "proposed a new substitute to religious faith, closer to it; a doubtful substitute, deprived of any official doctrinal sanction, open to doubt and blasphemy, but whose defects, to ways of thinking current then, were so many virtues" [9, p. 181]. Romanticism sharing "a dangerous desire to invent a new mythology" that would substitute demystified religion in the words of Jean Starobinsky [6, p. 107], provided us with stock characters of literary geniuses, prophets, and outcasts, future "poètes maudits". Around this time, we encounter such phenomenon as literary pilgrimage to the memorable places and graves of the poets and writers of the time; the cult of relics belonging to the poets — like hair or personal items or letters. This new tendency was at once pseudo-religious and anti- or counter-religious in the sense that it was considered blasphemous from the point of view of orthodox religiosity. But misrepresentation was enticing. With the advent of sentimentalism ("the religion of feeling"), literary works were becoming, on a pair with the bible or in the place of the bible, life style guides or manuals. Reading revolution and the development of new technologies of cultural reproduction played a crucial role in the development of this tendency.

Scholars agree that literary cult is a product of liberal, democratic state of culture (we are dealing with many different cults in the place of one religious cult); its development and expansion coincided with that of the literary market substituting earlier forms of literary patronage. It may be argued that religious aspects of cult connoting mystery, worship and ritual, confer upon select cultural works and objects a surplus value. Operating with surpluses, cult is a practice of over-valorization epitomizing a counter-expansive, counter-mainstream and therefore counter-market tendency. However, the market so easily and eagerly appropriates and commercializes literary cults precisely because they are contingent on its value and exchange system. Eventually, the spread of literary cults can be seen as complimentary and yet in the opposition to another modern process — national canon building. Gábor Gyáni, for example, specifically discusses a relationship between cults, modern myths, nationalism, and the current national image [13, p. 35]. Cults often run counter classical recognition and often transgress national as well as chronological boundaries. American author Edgar Allan Poe became an object of cult in 19th century France and his cult was inseparable from the anti-americanism of his French followers. Literary cult in similar cases performs as a form of symbolic appropriation: consecration and piety alternate with kinship and imaginary fraternity, distance with intimacy.

The major theoretical problem is what to do when popular culture or official propaganda retranslates cultic rhetoric or other forms of cultic veneration. It is important to point at the difference in approaches developed by Russian and Hungarian researchers.

Russian theoreticians tend to define literary cult in opposition to popular or nation-wide, state-inflicted symbolic practices. For example, developing a sociological approach, Dubin defines "cultic author as a construct (and self-construct) of groups not designed for *expansion*, mass distribution yet inviting *initiation* and consecration. A text written by a cultic author (in the semiotic meaning of the word 'text') is not so much the means of communication as its symbol, namely a symbol of 'our' community that signals: 'we are not like others, we are different'" [1, p. 328]. Zenkin draws a line between canon imposed by sanctioned institutions and cults that spring independently, within communities that have no authoritative power [3, p. 133–34]. In a word, cultic practices are those that resist mass distribution or institutionalization of any kind.

Hungarian scholars instead include state or popular cults in their discussion of literary cults claiming that all these forms share common language and often produce similar effects. In case of the official state cult, for example, the writer and his or her oeuvre become the object of a crusade of expropriation by a mainstream political group, primarily in order for the given group in power to legitimize itself. Similarly, the writer is called "our writer" where "our" refers to the country / party / nation. As a result, his or her biography and texts become targets for selection, manipulation, and mystification according to the ideological interests of the authoritative group. Interpretation of his or her texts becomes conventional, schematic, and ritualized. The reader is no longer reading fictional works *per se* but a narrative that the cultic discourse constantly replicates, spreads, and pinpoints as relevant.

Both these approaches have their strong sides and their shortcomings. Scholars who claim that literary cults *de facto* resist authoritative, power discourses risk at developing an essentialist attitude to the phenomenon that excludes its broader manifestations. Scholars who look at the cultic phenomena broadly may miss the specificity of literary cult considering all existing forms of veneration or praise as cultic. The discontents of literary cults as an object of research are thereby also due to the protean nature of the phenomenon that calls for boundaries and yet constantly exceeds them.

In the case study that follows, we will choose the broader approach not least because we are concerned with rhetorical rather than sociological implications of the theme. On the example of Zoshchenko's story, we will demonstrate how the languages of official and intimate cults may interact within a single text written as a pastiche of Soviet ideology.

II

The constellation of national, political, and cultic is particularly relevant to the history of Eastern European, Russian, Soviet, and post-Soviet literatures. In this area, literature as a social institute has been traditionally considered a portal for political and social views and often assigned itself to perform prophetic, didactic or performative functions. Therefore, the development of literary cults and their discussion commonly took place within literary and political discursive spaces simultaneously. In the 19th century, for example, religion, politics, and art equally partook in the development of personal authorial cults both in Russia and Hungary. At the same time, nation building was related to literary cults through the process of the socialization of collective memory [20].

In Russian literary history, politics and literature have been closely intertwined in the cult of such figures of the national scale as Alexander Pushkin. After Pushkin's death, there sprang two cultic attitudes to the poet: 1) intimate, personalized cult among friends and adepts[1]; 2) authorized cult of a national genius, "the sun of Russian poetry", (V. Odoyevsky)

[1] See for example a quation from letter of Fyodor Matyushkin (1799–1872), a friend of Pushkin: "Пушкин убит! Яковлев! Как ты это допустил? У какого подлеца поднялась на него рука? Яковлев! Яковлев! Как ты мог это допустить?.."

or Pushkin as "our everything" ("nashe vsyo") as famously coined by Apollon-Grigoriev, that led to his subsequent canonization and secured him a classical status. In the Soviet time, the situation grew more complicated due to the co-existence of conflicting cultic forms such as Soviet state-inflicted Pushkin cult and the cult of Pushkin among Russian émigré or Soviet underground etc. Speaking of the textual dimension of the Soviet and post-Soviet Pushkin cults, one may think of such literary phenomenon as *belletristicheskaja pushkiniana*. We associate this term with a group of fictional and non-fictional texts that are heterogeneous in terms of their genre, literary register, and aesthetic quality, yet united by the shared narrative of Pushkin myth(s) [15, p. 122]. The group is comprised of two sub-groups. The first one counts individual pieces that came to existence as a direct outcome of the institutionalized Pushkin cult. Often they were texts written at the request, call, or order of the Communist party and represent ideological pieces with low or zero aesthetic merit. The second group consists of texts that sprang as private initiative and as reaction against the state-imposed cult. These texts managed to transcend schemata and reduction dictated by the mainstream ideology, and usually do have aesthetic value. The most intriguing among them are those works that can be read as meta-comments on the official Pushkin on the level of both their language and plot; such texts offer an opportunity for self-identification with the character or the narrator in a world where self-identification is prohibited on the *individual level* while being prescribed on the *collective* level [15, p. 123].

Mikhail Zoshchenko's two satirical feuilletons called "During the Pushkin Days, 1937", published under a pseudonym in the 1937 issue of the magazine *Krokodil*, stand out among the texts of the *belletristicheskaja pushkiniana* corpus due to the author's brilliance in collapsing two different "selves" through the use of linguistic forms and the combination of discourses[2]. The first "self" is the apparent individual self, built on the language precedence and schemata of the collective totalitarian system, whereas the second one is the truly individual and creative "self" counterpoised to the first one. In other words, Zoshchenko deliberately mixes the slogan "our Pushkin", a symbol of the state-inflicted *expanding-unifying* cult, with the individual point of view of "my Pushkin" created in the *separating-hierarchical* creed of art. The author uses the *skaz* technique, a "stylized deadpan imitating oral speech patterns" [17], for comic purposes, and thus "creates the source of the parody in the narrator's unique language" [14, p. 271]. His character is an uneducated Soviet middle-class man, a dumb head who takes himself and his role seriously. With his help, Zoshchenko creates a parody of the ceremonial speech which is officially prescribed both in terms of content and in terms of style, due to the character's utter ignorance. He thus turns the memorial celebration, with all its rituals, into a farce. He does this while the narrator has no idea what he is narrating — as Viktor Shklovsky argues — unmasks himself [8, p. 22].

"It is with a feeling of pride that I would like to point out that our apartment building is not lagging behind recent events" [21]. In the opening sentence, the narrator is using the first person plural "our" speaking about the jubilee-related activities the building's tenants (in fact he himself) were involved. We learn that in order to remember Pushkin in a fitting way, he has acquired a plaster-of-Paris bust of Pushkin for his office, a "one-volume edition of Pushkin for general use", an "artistic portrait" which he hung next to the entrance, and, above all, has organized a meeting for the building's tenants.

The first person plural, the rhetorical "us", on the one hand, refers to the ideological, national unity with Soviet citizens, in accordance with the expectations of the cultural policy of the time. On the other hand, it refers to the community of the building's tenants, which,

[2] English translations of the Zoschenko's texts we quote from here [21].

with the chair of the housing cooperative at its helm, on a small scale mirrors the Soviet social structure and power relations, and at the same time embellishes the social injustices and ideological excesses. We know that Pushkin was one of the ideological tools of legitimizing the new Soviet state, most importantly of legitimizing Stalin at the level of cultural policy. "The word 'great' (velikii) resounded constantly. It described Pushkin, elevating him to heroic status, but they also used the same word to applaud the new Soviet state, the Jubilee, and most importantly, Stalin. A defining feature of the celebration was its emphasis on unity. This unity was expressed as the claim that everywhere in the Soviet Union *all people* would turn their attention to Pushkin" [19, p. 408]. Zoshchenko's narrator does not even try to hide the fact that Pushkin is being used as a tool. He boldly declares that the real reason for acquiring the Pushkin bust, the edited volume, and the portrait was "to remind irresponsible bill-payers about their delinquent rent payments."

In Zoshchenko's language, the slogans prescribed and replicated by the official propaganda go through a unique semantic transformation. The author beautifully demonstrates the absurdity of the 1935 party mandate, according to which every Soviet citizen, from factory workers to coal miners, had to partake in the memorial events of the 1937 Pushkin year. "Extraordinary efforts were made to mobilize Pushkin activities at collective farms and factories, where party representatives and local committees sponsored study groups, meetings, plays, readings, lectures, libraries, and trips" [16, p. 163]. In the story, the chair of the "cooperative" (housing unit) who has no training in literature is forced to make a speech about Pushkin. Zoshchenko grotesquely shows how the narrator allots official slogans that are obscure and incomprehensive for him with private meanings referring to his everyday life and activities. For the orator, the connection between the *sequence of sounds* "p-u-s-h-k-i-n" and the word *poet* has only one meaning: in the building that he manages, there lives a tenant called Tsaplin who writes poems and whose stove the former should have fixed before the Pushkin days. Tsaplin and Pushkin are brought together by the law of association. Both are poets (*same activity*); Tsaplin demands that the narrator repairs his stove before the *Pushkin days*, otherwise he cannot write his poetry. In other words, the Pushkin days serve only as a term designating time. Finally, the fact that contemporary poets are bankrupt and always behind with the rent (e.g. Tsaplin) reminds the narrator that Pushkin was often in debt (*cultural myth / cliché of the poor poet*). The orator interprets Pushkin through Tsaplin, and from this perspective Pushkin becomes a "brilliant tenant", whose stove the chair of the housing cooperative of course would have undoubtedly fixed.

In Zoshchenko's second speech (its second paragraph openly parodies, through rhetorical formulas and lexical iterations, the beginning of contemporary official, commemorative articles)[3], the narrator shows great efforts to find anyone among his relatives who could have been *in touch* with Pushkin. This way, the speaker is seeking to recreate some kind of personalized contact with the poet. The desire to be in touch with the object of cultic reverence, to have a "here and now" contact with the idol is one of the typical features of cultic attitude. Cult initiates the process of identification between the community and the individual based on the imaginary (ideological, moral) resemblance between the cultic figure and the members of posterity, or otherwise on symbolic genealogy. In Zoshchenko's text, the slogans "Pushkin, the founder of Russian literature", "Pushkin invented Russian literary language" that meant to designate cultural *heritage*, literary *genealogy*, and spiritual, intellectual *kinship* between the golden era of the 19th century and the first three decades of

[3] See "Genii velikovo naroda" in Komsomolskaia pravda, 10.02.1937 and "Bessmertnyj Pushkin" in Krasnaya gazeta, 1937.

the 20th century, are transformed into the following inquiries *based on contact* (metonymy): "Who could have cradled Pushkin?" "Which relative's cradle he could have stood next to?", and "Which relatives of the speaker could have cradled Pushkin himself?" The abstract and the collective become literalized and personalized; "our Pushkin" is replaced by "my Pushkin" of the speaker allegedly connected to his intimate family history.

Through the example of the legitimization of the caretaker's power, Zoshchenko provides an ingenious parody of the machinations of the genealogical sanctioning of Stalinist power[4]. He makes fun of the process of manipulation in which those in power mythicize Pushkin and keep repeating the expressions "spiritual ancestor" and "Pushkin's heritage" *ad nauseam* because it serves their political and ideological purposes as they seek to "use the poet to legitimize themselves" [10, p. 342].

This way, Zoshchenko not only "literalizes" Soviet slogans but also mocks an important statement of Russian formalists [2, c. 175] as well as the efforts of contemporary symbolist poets to show some kind of (putative) genealogical relationship to Pushkin, the Pushkin family, or even Pushkin character (!) [5, c. 55–59].

Zoshchenko employs a popular linguistic tool of Russian avant-garde literature, the so called "realized metaphor." Within the semantic mechanism of a "realized metaphor", the poetic image is interpreted literally. Orsolya Rákai speaks of cultic practices in terms of *deictic identification*: cult attempts to make its object "real" by calling it into being, as it were, through repetition and conjuring "talks". In other words, this kind of identification points out the symbol in which the individual and the community can recognize themselves [18, p. 155]. Zoshchenko achieves a similar goal: via the use of "realized metaphor" and *skaz* technique, he writes a meta-text of cultic functioning. This text does not describe cult but shows its linguistic precedence: in this way, the Soviet Union is represented as a total, totalitarian linguistic event, a collective-cultic language. The narrator does not stand outside the cult, nor is he within the cult; instead, he "operates" the so-called cultic discourse, speaks a hollow language. How can the narrator use the *first person singular* within the framework of a collectivist, totalitarian system? Our answer: the expression "first person singular" is deceptive. We should not think that an individual "self" is talking in Zoshchenko's text; neither is it a heroic "self" in conflict with totalitarian, monolithic thought. What we do get at the end is a fragmented, chaotic, undivided, and temporary "self" put together from directed, prefabricated clichés.

Mikhail Zoshchenko's "During the Pushkin Days" may be read as a parable of the discontents of the literary cult and its study: protean cultic language that the story recreates constantly betrays itself and makes us question whether we may indeed group different cult-related phenomena under the singular term.

СПИСОК ЛИТЕРАТУРЫ

1 *Дубин Б. В.* Классик — звезда — модное имя — культовая фигура: о стратегиях легитимизации культурного авторитета // Культ как феномен литературного процесса: автор, текст, читатель / под ред. М. Ф. Надъярных, А. П. Ураковой. М.: ИМЛИ РАН, 2011. С. 324–330.

2 *Жолковский А.* Михаил Зощенко: поэтика недоверия. М.: Школа «Языки Русской Культуры», 1999. 391 с.

3 *Зенкин С. Н.* От текста к культу // Культ как феномен литературного процесса: автор, текст, читатель / под ред. М. Ф. Надъярных, А. П. Ураковой. М.: ИМЛИ РАН, 2011. С. 133–141.

[4] See the similar rhetoric in the history of political expropriation of Hungarian poet Petőfi here [10].

4 *Лотман Ю. М., Успенский Б. А.* Миф — имя — культура // Семиосфера. СПб.: Искусство-СПб, 2004. С. 525–542.
5 *Паперно И.* Пушкин в жизни человека Серебряного века // Современное американское пушкиноведение: сб. ст. СПб.: Академический проект, 1999. С. 42–69.
6 *Старобинский Ж.* «Мифы и мифология» в XVII и XVIII веках // Поэзия и знание: История литературы и культуры. М.: Языки славянских культур, 2002. Т. 1. 600 с.
7 *Фомичев С.* Зощенковский Пушкин // Пушкинская перспектива. М.: Знак, 2007. С. 301–314.
8 *Шкловский В.* О Зощенке и большой литературе // Михаил Зощенко / под ред. Б. В. Казанского, Ю. Н. Тынянов. Л.: Academia, 1928. С. 15–25.
9 *Benichou P.* The Consecration of the Writer, 1750–1830. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999. 454 p.
10 *Dávidházi P.* A hatalom eredetmondái Petőfi utóéletében // Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények. 1990. № 3. P. 341–359.
11 *Dávidházi P.* Cult and Criticism: Ritual in the European Reception of Shakespeare // Literature and its Cults. An Anthropological Approach / edited by Dávidházi P., Karafiáth J. Budapest: Argumentum, 1994. P. 29–47.
12 *Dávidházi P.* "Isten másodszülöttje": a magyar Shakespeare-kultusz természetrajza. Budapest: Gondolat, 1989. 377 p.
13 *Gyáni G.* Az irodalmi kultuszkutatás dilemmái // Relatív történelem. Budapest: Typotex, 2007. P. 21–36.
14 *Hetényi Zs.* Zoscsenko // Az orosz irodalom története a kezdetektől 1940-ig / edited by Zöldhelyi Z. Budapest: Nemzeti Tankönyvkiadó, 1997. P. 271–272.
15 *Kalavszky Z.* The Pushkin Myth and Cult in Central European Literature: Gyula Krúdy's A vörös postakocsi (1913) // Hung. Cult. Stud. E-J. Am. Hung. Educ. Assoc. 2017. № 10. P. 120–132.
16 *Levitt M. C.* Russian Literary Politics and the Pushkin Celebration of 1880. Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 1989. 233 p.
17 *Platt K. F. M., Brandenberger D.* Epic Revisionism. Russian History and Literature as Stalinist Propaganda. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006. 355 p.
18 *Rákai O.* Tükör által színről színre: az (ön)azonosság (f)elismerése // Utazások a fekete királynővel. Írások írásról és irodalomról. Budapest: Kijárat Kiadó, 2006. P. 153–159.
19 *Sandler S.* The Pushkin Myth in Russia // The Pushkin Handbook / edited by D. Bethea. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005. P. 403–423.
20 *Takáts J.* A nemzeti kultúra megalkotása és a kultuszok // Ismerős idegen terep. Budapest: Kijárat Kiadó, 2007. P. 152–160.
21 *Zoshchenko M.* «What I Would Like to Say about the Late Poet», Krokodil 6 (1937); «A Speech Given during the Pushkin Days at a Meeting of the Tenants» Cooperative on Malaia Perinnaia, № 7,' Krokodil 5 (1937) // The Pushkin Jubilee as Farce. Epic Revisionism: Russian History and Literature as Stalinist Propaganda / edited by K. F. M. Platt, D. Brandenberger. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006. P. 220–233.

REFERENCES

1 Dubin B. V. Klassik — zvezda — modnoe imia — kul'tovaia figura: o strategiiakh legitimizatsii kul'turnogo avtoriteta [Classic — star — fashion name — cult figure: on

the strategies of legitimization of cultural authority]. *Kul't kak fenomen literaturnogo protsessa: avtor, tekst, chitatel'* [Cult as a phenomenon of the literary process: author, text, reader], edited by M. F. Nad"iarnykh, A. P. Urakova. Moscow, IWL RAS Publ., 2011, pp. 324–330. (In Russian)

2 Zholkovskii A. *Mikhail Zoshchenko: poetika nedoveriia* [Mikhail Zoshchenko: a poetics of mistrust]. Moscow, Shkola "Iazyki Russkoi Kul'tury" Publ., 1999. 391 p. (In Russian)

3 Zenkin S. N. Ot teksta k kul'tu [From text to cult]. *Kul't kak fenomen literaturnogo protsessa: avtor, tekst, chitatel'* [Cult as a phenomenon of the literary process: author, text, reader], edited by M. F. Nad"iarnykh, A. P. Urakovoi. Moscow, IWL RAS Publ., 2011, pp. 133–141. (In Russian)

4 Lotman Iu. M., Uspenskii B. A. Mif — imia — kul'tura [Myth — name — culture]. *Semiosfera* [Semiosphere]. St. Petersburg, Iskusstvo-SPb Publ., 2004, pp. 525–542. (In Russian)

5 Paperno I. Pushkin v zhizni cheloveka Serebrianogo veka [Pushkin in the life of the Silver age man]. *Sovremennoe amerikanskoe pushkinovedenie. Sbornik statei* [Modern American Pushkin studies. Collected articles]. St. Petersburg, Akademicheskii proekt Publ., 1999, pp. 42–69. (In Russian)

6 Starobinskii Zh. "Mify i mifologiia" v XVII i XVIII vekakh ["Myths and mythology" in the 17 and 18 centuries]. *Poeziia i znanie: Istoriia literatury i kul'tury* [Poetry and knowledge: History of literature and culture]. Moscow, Iazyki slavianskikh kul'tur Publ, 2002. Vol. 1. 600 p. (In Russian)

7 Fomichev C. Zoshchenkovskii Pushkin [Zoshchenko`s Pushkin]. *Pushkinskaia perspektiva* [Pushkin's perspective]. Moscow, Znak Publ., 2007, pp. 301–314. (In Russian)

8 Shklovskii V. O Zoshchenke i bol'shoi literature [About Zoschenko and big literature]. *Mikhail Zoshchenko*, edited by B. V. Kazanskii, Iu. N. Tynianov. Leningrad, Academia Publ., 1928, pp. 15–25. (In Russian)

9 Benichou P. *The Consecration of the Writer, 1750–1830.* Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press Publ., 1999. 454 p. (In English)

10 Dávidházi P. A hatalom eredetmondái Petőfi utóéletében [The origins of power in the After Life of Petőfi]. *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények*, 1990, no 3, pp. 341–359. (In Hungarian)

11 Dávidházi P. Cult and Criticism: Ritual in the European Reception of Shakespear. *Literature and its Cults. An Anthropological Approach*, edited by Dávidházi P., Karafiáth J. Budapest, Argumentum Publ., 1994, pp. 29–47. (In English)

12 Dávidházi P. *"Isten másodszülöttje": a magyar Shakespeare-kultusz természetrajza* ["Second-born of God": the Natural History of the Hungarian Shakespeare cult]. Budapest, Gondolat Publ., 1989. 377 p. (In Hungarian)

13 Gyáni G. Az irodalmi kultuszkutatás dilemmái [Dilemmas of literary cult`s research]. *Relatív történelem* [Relative history]. Budapest, Typotex Publ., 2007, pp. 21–36. (In Hungarian)

14 Hetényi Zs. Zoscsenko. *Az orosz irodalom története a kezdetektől 1940-ig* [History of Russian literature from the beginning to 1940], edited by Zöldhelyi Z. Budapest, Nemzeti Tankönyvkiadó Publ., 1997, pp. 271–272. (In Hungarian)

15 Kalavszky Z. The Pushkin Myth and Cult in Central European Literature: Gyula Krúdy's A vörös postakocsi (1913) [The Pushkin Myth and Cult in Central European

Literature: Gyula Krúdy's red stage (1913)]. *Hung. Cult. Stud. E-J. Am. Hung. Educ. Assoc*, 2017, no 10, pp. 120–132. (In English)

16 Levitt M. C. *Russian Literary Politics and the Pushkin Celebration of 1880*. Ithaca, London, Cornell University Press Publ., 1989. 233 p. (In English)

17 Platt K. F. M., Brandenberger D. *Epic Revisionism. Russian History and Literature as Stalinist Propaganda.* Madison, University of Wisconsin Press Publ., 2006. 355 p. (In English)

18 Rákai O. Tükör által színről színre: az (ön)azonosság (f)elismerése [By Mirror color by color: recognition of (you)identity (f)]. *Utazások a fekete királynővel. Írások írásról és irodalomról* [Journeys with the Black Queen. Writings on writing and literature]. Budapest, Kijárat Kiadó Publ., 2006, pp. 153–159. (In Hungarian)

19 Sandler S. The Pushkin Myth in Russia. *The Pushkin Handbook*, edited by D. Bethea. Madison, University of Wisconsin Press Publ., 2005, pp. 403–423. (In English)

20 Takáts J. A nemzeti kultúra megalkotása és a kultuszok [Creating national culture and cults]. *Ismerős idegen terep* [Familiar alien terrain]. Budapest, Kijárat Kiadó Publ., 2007, pp. 152–160. (In Hungarian)

21 Zoshchenko M. "What I Would Like to Say about the Late Poet", Krokodil 6 (1937); "A Speech Given during the Pushkin Days at a Meeting of the Tenants" Cooperative on Malaia Perinnaia, no 7,' Krokodil 5 (1937). *The Pushkin Jubilee as Farce. Epic Revisionism: Russian History and Literature as Stalinist Propaganda*, edited by K. F. M. Platt, D. Brandenberger. Madison, University of Wisconsin Press Publ., 2006, pp. 220–233. (In English)