

Márton HovÁNYI, Angelika MOLNÁR (szerk./ред.), „*Milyen nyelvet alkottam s beszéltem?*” *Nyelvi jelenlét. Tanulmányok a nyolcvanéves Kovács Árpád tiszteletére / «Язык, который я использовал и делал». Языковое присутствие: сборник научных трудов в честь 80-летия Арпада Kovácsa* (Budapest: ELTE Eötvös József Collegium, 2024), 416 o./с.<sup>1</sup>

This volume serves not only as an expression of gratitude and respect toward the Hungarian Slavist, Professor Árpád Kovács, but also as an almanac of outstanding scholarly contributions by a number of prominent literary scholars, Slavists, and Russianists from various countries. The collection was edited by Angelika Molnár and Márton Hoványi, each of whom also contributed two articles. The title of the almanac is a quotation from Dante's *Divine Comedy*, in which Adam anticipates the question the pilgrim is about to ask him. By choosing this title, the editors seem to emphasize that Árpád Kovács, in a similar manner, was often the first to articulate the very questions that would become foundational to the scholarly pursuits of many contributors to this volume.

The *Divine Comedy* has not only inspired the title of the entire volume but has also become the subject of one of the included articles. In one of his papers, Hoványi offers a detailed analysis of various interpretations of Limbo in Dante's work and examines the theological commentary of Hans Urs von Balthasar. The other article by Hoványi is devoted to a comparative analysis of the theology of desire in the writings of Gregory of Nyssa and Saint Augustine. The author argues that Augustine – who exerted a decisive influence on the Western theological tradition – understands desire primarily through the lens of original sin and sexuality, whereas Gregory of Nyssa – who shaped much of the Eastern theological tradition – develops a more affirmative conception of desire as a path to union with God. In his paper, Hoványi places particular emphasis on the lexical dimension of the topic, devoting considerable attention to the Greek and Latin terminology, as well as to the respective philosophical influences: Plato in the case of Gregory of Nyssa, and the moral philosophy of Cicero and Seneca in the case of Augustine.

In addition to the editors, commendatory remarks and congratulatory notes were offered by István Fried and Valery I. Tyupa. The latter, a Russian literary scholar, also contributed an article in which he reflects on aes-

<sup>1</sup> This review is a revised translation variant from Russian, cf. *The New Philological Bulletin*, 72, № 1, 2025, pp. 373-384, [https://eotvos.elte.hu/dstore/document/11200/Kov%C3%A1cs\\_80.pdf](https://eotvos.elte.hu/dstore/document/11200/Kov%C3%A1cs_80.pdf) (15.12.2025).

thetic issues, linking them to the devaluation of aesthetic values in the context of a consumer society. Drawing on the works of Mikhail Bakhtin and Árpád Kovács, Tyupa emphasizes the complementarity of aesthetic and metalinguistic approaches in literary studies. He draws a clear distinction between true creativity – understood in terms of *creation* and *revelation* – and craftsmanship, which, from his point of view, includes popular fiction oriented toward the production of bestsellers. According to Tyupa, the emergence of postmodernism and the consumer society has shifted the dominant paradigm from creativity to craftsmanship, distorting the very nature of aesthetic relations and values. For instance, the notion of *aesthetic pleasure* has become widespread; however, as Tyupa argues, genuine creativity is not aimed at satisfying the reader's needs but rather at addressing deeper spiritual needs, such as the need for empathy and personal self-identification. Despite their profound differences, both groups of texts are almost indistinguishable when viewed strictly from a metalinguistic perspective. It is precisely for this reason, the author states, that a return to aesthetics – while preserving the achievements of metalinguistics – has become an urgent and relevant trajectory for contemporary artistic culture.

The discussion on the special role of literature is continued by Ivan Verč in his paper *From Notes on Ethics*. In this article, the author examines the ethical function of literature in the context of the shifts that occurred in literary studies throughout the 20th century. He emphasizes that with the transition from aesthetic and cognitive functions to the analysis of textual poetics and semiotics, the question of ethics in literature was gradually relegated to the background. This shift, according to Verč, was driven by an increasing philosophical and anthropological awareness of the multiplicity of worlds and their respective linguistic models – a development he traces through the works of Árpád Kovács. According to the author, the abandonment of the search for a universal ethics was inevitable: if it is impossible to establish an all-encompassing ethical system, it is preferable to leave the question open. However, this does not imply a rejection of the study of ethical boundaries and the choices individuals must face. In Verč's view, rather than striving to define a singular "true good", scholars should investigate how ethics is manifested in literary texts and what possibilities language offers the creator in this regard.

It is worth noting that the thematic scope of the volume is remarkably diverse, making the creation of a unified review text an unattainable task. At the same time, the body of scholarly articles included in the almanac can be roughly divided into several thematic groups – roughly, because some contributions could justifiably belong to more than one category. Continuing the tradition

set by the editors in their choice of the volume's title, the present review also underscores, through its subheadings, the defining role of Kovács's professional activity across a wide range of fields within literary studies.

### *Theoretical Questions*

Árpád Kovács's many years of professional work in the field of literary studies and literary theory laid the foundation for a new scholarly approach, a new academic school, provided direction for numerous researchers, and served as an inspiration for many of the articles included in this volume. For instance, in his paper, Gábor Kovács seeks to broaden the conceptual scope of subjective constructions generated by fictional prose texts. His research focuses on two key areas: the discursive poetics of the textual subject concept, and the work of Zsigmond Kemény, who proposed that the central medium of the subject as presented through narrative is the so-called sphere of "alien features". Building on this, Gábor Kovács formulates the following hypothesis: "gradually, alien traits are absorbed into our essence, becoming an organic part of one's character" (p. 36). At the same time, he observes how this process is reversed in fictional prose, that is, how "alien features", initially perceived as minor details or objects, are transformed into metaphorical signs of the subject through figurative naming procedures. In this context, Gábor Kovács refers to Árpád Kovács, asserting that the written operations of prose fiction enact and reveal "a personal text-formation through which everyday triviality is transformed into a symbol of a meaningful mode of action" (p. 36). The results of his study are illustrated through an analysis of *Roman Tales* by Alberto Moravia.

Two additional contributions continue the theoretical section of the volume. In his article, István Ladányi addresses narratological issues, examining them through the works of Danilo Kiš. Ladányi argues that storytelling is, in theory, a therapeutic process – yet in practice, it is doomed to fail. This failure manifests not only in the narrator's inability to fully process their traumatic experience, but also in their pursuit of accuracy, commitment to historical fact, detailed documentation, and discursive precision. Such reconstructed exactitude and historicity are ultimately incapable of penetrating the narrator's personal dimension. Moreover, narrative tools can convey events only within the limits of their own expressive capacity. The "failure" also lies in the fact that a narrative that appeals to the past cannot fully reject it, cannot undo trauma, redeem loss, eliminate the absence of the other, or restore bodily presence. According to Ladányi, the poetics of Danilo Kiš is marked by the frequent embed-

ding of the act of narration within the text itself, drawing attention to narrative techniques, to the constructed nature of the story, and to its distance from the events it depicts. The author shifts the reader's focus beyond the content of the stories, arguing that Ki's works represent variations of narrative experimentation – from memory to documentary forms. While each of these experiments represents its subject in a distinct way, together they reveal and emphasize a fundamental truth: every representation reflects only its own nature, not the nature of the object it seeks to depict. As such, they remain signs of absence and can never become the presence of what is missing (p. 347). Katalin Kroó examines binary oppositions in the process of literary sign formation. In her article, she outlines a wide context of approaches to the postulation and interpretation of binary oppositions in literary traditions (romanticism, mythopoetics, 19th-century Russian literature – with numerous illustrations from the œuvre of Pushkin, Gogol, Turgenev, and Dostoevsky) and cultural texts (myth), taking into consideration some relevant points of research achievements offered by Russian Formalism, the Prague Linguistic Circle, Andrey Bely, Yuri Lotman, Boris Uspensky, Algirdas Julien Greimas, Jacques Derrida. The article pays attention to the semiotic operations of converting binary oppositions to pluralised meaning perspectives through particular processes of "drawing analogy" – "semantic amplification" – "shift of referentiality" – "opening up undefined referentiality". The author also clarifies the function of oxymorons and monodualistic antinomies (with their semantic capacity of integration) in creating the semiotic conditions for the transformation of binary oppositions, linked to the problem of text-hierarchisation and metacodes. At a point, the semiotic pattern of integration is projected upon the definition of the basic motif structure in Dostoevsky's novel specified by Árpád Kovács in 1980s as the "novel of awakening". In a brief case study, Lermontov's poem *The Demon* is interpreted from the point of view of the raised theoretical issue of the paper.

### *Questions and Perspectives of Dostoevsky Studies*

An important place in the volume, as well as in Kovács's scholarly legacy, is occupied by issues related to the works of F. M. Dostoevsky, which are examined here from a variety of perspectives. First of all, it is impossible to overlook Dostoevsky's poetics: this theme has become a central focus in the papers of Csaba Horváth and Géza S. Horváth. In his article, Csaba Horváth argues that polyphonic structure and the theory of carnival are not only connected but mutually presuppose each other. The author refers to the Bulgarian-French philoso-

pher Julia Kristeva, who posits that carnival is dialogic in nature, founded on the coexistence of non-exclusive opposites. Dostoevsky's polyphonic novel operates in the same manner: it is dialectical, and its oppositions represent paradoxes through which truth emerges; the persuasiveness of this truth diminishes in monologues but is strengthened in dialogues (p. 178). Géza S. Horváth's scholarly domain includes Dostoevsky's complex, multilayered novels, in which digressions and deviations are governed not by plot but by language. Eventfulness extends to the characters' speech, and language assumes a formative, structuring role. However, the written word has attracted relatively little attention from scholars, although it appears to be equally significant as a literary problem in Dostoevsky's works. Árpád Kovács, developing the concept of writing as an action imbued with the meaning of a deed, identified this new problematic domain in Dostoevsky's prose and regarded the act of writing as part of a new ontology of action rooted in literature. Influenced by this approach, the author of the article examines the protagonist's struggle with the act of writing in *The Adolescent* and, to some extent, in *Humiliated and Insulted*, interpreting it as a central event in these works. For the present volume, Géza S. Horváth attempts, using *The Idiot* as a case study, to outline a problematic of writing that, in his view, emerges in this novel.

Another approach to studying Dostoevsky's work is connected with ideas central to the Russian writer regarding the salvation of the world through beauty and the "tears of a child". Gergely Solti contrasts Dostoevsky as a publicist with Dostoevsky as a writer, demonstrating that in his journalistic texts Dostoevsky adopts a different stance than in his fictional works. Solti frames his study around the aphorism "beauty will save the world" and attempts to interpret the motif of beauty as it appears in these "two Dostoevskys". The author argues that Dostoevsky explores the motif of beauty differently in his journalistic and literary works: mutually reinterpreted meanings of beauty emerge across genres. Ultimately, Solti concludes that Dostoevsky lacks a fixed or static definition of this concept. Konstantin A. Barsht, in his turn, analyzes the key idea in *The Brothers Karamazov* concerning the impossibility of happiness founded on violence, linking it to the ideas of Belinsky, who expressed them in a letter to Botkin in 1841. While acknowledging the absence of direct evidence that Dostoevsky was acquainted with this letter, Barsht argues that Belinsky's influence on Dostoevsky in this matter is highly plausible. First, Belinsky did not hesitate to repeatedly exploit themes and ideas he admired, as confirmed by contemporaneous testimonies. Second, Barsht points to Dostoevsky's reflection on Belinsky's ideas in *A Writer's Diary* and contends that Dostoevsky responded to some of these ideas in his literary work, for example, in *The Idiot*. Finally,

Barsht emphasizes that Belinsky's idea of intolerance toward evil is also reflected in his well-known letter to Gogol – which profoundly affected Dostoevsky's fate – where the critic develops a thought initially expressed in his early letter to Botkin. Thus, despite the title of his article – *On an Allusion That Cannot Be Proven* – Barsht convincingly demonstrates that Belinsky's influence in this instance is more than plausible.

One more source of influence on Dostoevsky is discussed by Slobodanka Vladiv-Glover, who analyzes the genre-specific characteristics of *Notes from the House of the Dead* as a fictional narrative based on autobiographical material, within the context of Hegelian ideas – particularly those articulated in *Philosophy of Right*. These ideas, according to Vladiv-Glover, may serve as a hermeneutic tool for new interpretations of the Russian writer's works. The article examines Dostoevsky's critique of the Russian penal system as depicted in the novella, emphasizing that the State – represented in *Notes* as an institution of punishment – stands in stark contrast to the ideal State envisioned in Hegel's philosophy of history. Moreover, the study explores how the novella addresses the issues of personality and individuality through the lens of private property and the notion of the “universal”, both central concepts in Hegel's thought. Finally, attention is given to the narrative structure of *Notes from the House of the Dead*, which is characterized as “conceptualist” rather than strictly realist. This, too, is linked to the legacy of the German philosopher, as the article argues that Dostoevsky's conceptualist aesthetics – as interpreted through Hegel's framework – embodies a form of universality.

The European reception of Dostoevsky is examined in the articles by Erzsébet Cs. Jónás and Antonella d'Amelia. The Hungarian scholar is actively engaged in both theoretical and practical issues of translation, with particular emphasis on the topic of retranslation. In her article, she analyzes the most recent Hungarian translation of Dostoevsky's novel *Crime and Punishment*, completed by András Soproni in 2015, and, so to speak, offers a defense of it. The greatest public response to this translation was provoked by the issue of the novel's title – or more precisely, the absence of a new translation of the title (a matter explored in greater detail in Zsuzsanna Hetényi's article *The Sin and Deed of Translations*). However, Cs. Jónás provides a professional justification for this decision. Beyond the title, she examines the translation as a whole, offering examples from the original text and comparing them with the most widely known Hungarian versions by Imre Görög, Margit G. Beke, and András Soproni. At the beginning of the article, the author also briefly mentions Erzsébet Vári's 2004 translation, though it is not included in the detailed comparative analysis. Antonella d'Amelia's article is devoted to stage adaptations of Dosto-

evsky's novels in 20th-century Italy. Among the article's clear strengths are its coherent structure and detailed attention to various productions of *The Brothers Karamazov* and *Crime and Punishment*, where particular significance is given to the spatial arrangement of stage sets – such as the staircase as a symbol of liminality and the path to redemption – their richness and symbolism (as in the productions of Luchino Visconti), or, conversely, their austerity (as in Luca Ronconi's work), which underscores the poverty of the provincial world depicted in the novels. By citing contemporary reviews of the 1927 play of *Crime and Punishment* directed by Tatiana Pavlova, d'Amelia highlights a difficulty that many other Italian directors would later face: the challenge of adapting Dostoevsky's prose narratives and philosophical ideas into the format of theatrical drama. The richness of theatrical forms and the diversity of interpretations testify not only to the inexhaustible depth of Dostoevsky's oeuvre, but also to the strength and audacity of the Italian stage in the 20th century – a theatre that, while navigating the political and social upheavals of the past century, succeeded in maintaining a balance between aesthetic innovation and a sensitive engagement with the original literary work.

### *Questions of Russian Prose and Dramaturgy*

Naturally, Kovács's scholarly interests extend far beyond the study of Dostoevsky alone. This is reflected, in part, in the thematic diversity of other contributions to the volume, which focus on various issues related to Russian literature from the 19th to the 21st century. For example, Mikhail V. Otradin's article takes as its point of departure Vissarion Belinsky's assessment of the epilogue to Goncharov's novel *A Common Story*, which Belinsky described as *faulty* or *spoiled* («испорченный»). Otradin returns to Chapter VI of the novel's second part, demonstrating that Goncharov deliberately constructs the narrative in such a way that the reader's expectations are sharply contradicted by the outcome of the protagonist's story. The final section of the novel is interpreted through the lens of the Gospel parable of the Prodigal Son and the motif of "wandering", with special attention given to the dual nature of the ending, which fuses the realities of both the novelistic and the parabolic. The author also places significant emphasis on the elegiac mode – rare in Goncharov's work – and on the letters of the younger Aduyev, which are treated as a form of literary confession. Particular attention is paid to the stylistic contrast between the protagonist's verbal discourse in the Petersburg section of the novel and his later expressions. According to Otradin, the aesthetic effect of the epilogue de-

rives from the fact that the character's metamorphosis – spanning four years – is revealed to the reader "suddenly", whereas the authorial intent has led the reader to expect a different resolution. The protagonist's spiritual path ultimately leads not to career success or a favorable marriage, but to the realization that an external force, that is, fate, governs human life. Otradin concludes that the compromises made by the Aduyevs are driven by both external and internal factors, and that the problem of "inadequate relations between the soul and reality" will become a central theme in Goncharov's subsequent novels.

István Nagy, in turn, writes about Marina Tsvetaeva's *The Story of Sonechka*, asserting that the text belongs to the avant-garde of 20th-century literature. The author approaches the poetics of Tsvetaeva's work through the lens of philosophical discourse, emphasizing that the text is unique within Russian literature of its time in that it is fully embedded in a philosophical-anthropological framework of values. Nagy notes that, in the words of Emmanuel Lévinas, *The Story of Sonechka* represents a "face-to-face encounter". In reading Tsvetaeva's work, we are, as it were, "reading" a face – one that functions as a metaphor for voice. The author also draws on Bettine Menke's concept of prosopographic reading, in which she describes this approach as a mode of engaging with texts. Tsvetaeva's work "gives voice" to the dead, endowing speech with a face and a mouth, and – to carry the metaphor to its conclusion – even the voice of the text acquires a face of its own. The emergence of the face, its revelation, is, in essence, the word itself (p. 288).

In her article, Natalia A. Fateeva examines the distinctive features of Boris Pasternak's poetic language as they are reflected in the prose text of the novel *Doctor Zhivago*. The author addresses the paradoxical relationship between prose and poetry, following Pasternak himself in describing these two as inseparable principles that do not exist independently of one another. Fateeva poses the question of what constitutes the poetic principle within prose: is it the presence of specific verse techniques within the structure of the prose narrative, the density of inserted poems, or rather semantic shifts in which linguistic elements and their interrelations are determined primarily by their sonic, combinatorial, and rhythmic characteristics? In other words, Fateeva emphasizes, the textual reality in *Doctor Zhivago* is shaped not by purely plot-driven devices, but by the depth of what she calls "the memory of the word". This thesis is convincingly demonstrated through an analysis of two passages from the novel that are rich in sound play and marked by the alternation of the Russian vowels *a* and *y*, showing that, in Pasternak's novel, any instance of sonic patterning can introduce additional interpretive layers into the overall composition. Beyond sound imagery, Fateeva argues, the "poeticity" of Pasternak's prose is also support-

ed by the novel's distinct cyclical structure and the recurrence of motifs that link characters across the text – for example, the leitmotifs of thunder and rain. Likewise, all the main characters are interconnected through the variety of motifs such as gunshots, snowstorms, and the image of a staircase that connects the earthly with the heavenly and serves as a symbol of love between man and woman. Thus, Fateeva concludes, the poetic dimension of the novel is grounded in the presence of a mythological substratum that lies beneath the surface narrative and generates the novel's cyclical patterns.

The works of Lev Tolstoy are the focus of articles by Zoltán Hajnády and Angelika Molnár. While Hajnády explores a theme that permeates nearly all of Tolstoy's texts – namely, the evolving mythology of transformation – Molnár offers a lexical analysis of the novella *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, paying close attention to the characters' posture and gestures. Her study ultimately points to an intertextual connection between this novella and another of Tolstoy's novels, *Anna Karenina*. In a second article, written in Russian and devoted to a 21st-century text, Molnár examines the narrative structure and discourse of Boris Akunin's novel *Pelagia and the Black Monk*. In particular, she focuses on the relationship between narrative voice and discourse, analyzing how different speech modes correspond with shifts in narrative position. The article methodically traces how, when, and for what purpose the narrator alters not only his lexical choices depending on the characters currently in focus, but also his narrative stance – shifting between extradiegetic and intradiegetic, omniscient and unreliable. Through this technique, Akunin preserves the conventions of detective narrative by preventing the reader from solving the crime before the investigator does. On a metapoetic level, however, the reader is likened to the detective from another angle: Molnár convincingly argues that for Akunin, the detective novel also serves as a narrative of linguistic unveiling, in which the reader, like the investigator, searches through classical literature for clues – clues that manifest as intertextual references and interpretive devices. To support this claim, Molnár presents examples of metaphors involving various forms of "acting" and "knitting", as well as distinctive vocabulary aligned both with the metaphorical worlds evoked and with the narrative roles of individual characters. In revealing the interplay between narration and metaphorization, Molnár draws on the ideas of Árpád Kovács: the narrated world, she emphasizes, is populated by false monks, false actors, and false scholars. Against this backdrop – resembling a theatrical stage – one can observe a metapoetic confrontation between different languages, embodied by both the characters and the narrator (p. 370).

Another 21st-century work featured in this collection is *The Aviator* by Evgeny Vodolazkin. In his article, Roman Bobryk explores how, on a sym-

bolic level, art and creativity serve as forms of manifestation for the traumas and secrets of the human soul that remain within the realm of the “unspoken and concealed”, acting as a language and means of their expression. Bobryk draws attention to specific details in the novel, such as the format of the diaries (using days of the week instead of calendar dates, and, later, the characters’ names instead of days) and the recording instruments (pencil and notebook versus computer), which symbolically reflect the inner states of the characters and their journey from ignorance to knowledge, as well as the process of self- and other-understanding. Notably, this process occurs not only with the novel’s protagonist, Innokenty, but also with other characters, such as Dr. Geiger, who, at some point, wonders, “Who among us is the patient – Innokenty or I?” Another significant manifestation of art as a means to express the “inexpressible” is Innokenty’s drawings. First, these are linked to the use of pencil and paper: Bobryk emphasizes the importance of the fact that Innokenty is able to confess to the murder only when he returns to writing by hand, thus articulating what had remained unspoken. Second, the author notes that in Innokenty’s only two drawings, he depicts the murder weapon and its victim, demonstrating that art functions here as a form of “higher” communication. Against the backdrop of how the motif of silence (and omission) is connected in the novel to unresolved trauma and ineffable suffering, art’s role becomes that of a “mediator” between truth and the deeply hidden secrets of the human soul.

Two articles in the collection address dramatic texts, though they explore fundamentally different aspects of the subject. On one hand, Katalin H. Végh argues that Anton Chekhov elevates suffering to an act of understanding the world in his plays: in her interpretation, suffering constitutes a sequence of actions serving as proof of the supreme existence of the human being and their moral sensitivity. Chekhov conveys his views on human existence by complementing his interpretation of the world and humanity with the significance of latent text (subtext). Subtext is a hidden current where what is unsaid – or said but unrealized – holds importance. The play becomes static, yet it unfolds and narrates what could have happened. The opposition between metacommunication and verbal text plays a crucial role, imparting an ironic tone throughout (p. 250). Végh’s work focuses less on the linguistic level of action (discursivity) and more on the symbolic meaning of space and metacommunication. On the other hand, Zoltán Hermann examines the relationship between politics and dramaturgy (and more broadly, art), drawing an analogy between the pairs “Molière – Louis XIV” and “Bulgakov – Stalin.” The author asserts that “commissioned” plays reflect the disillusioning realization that the struggle

between power and the artist – their diabolical game played through staging the work, and possibly even during its composition – ultimately does not foster art and creativity, but rather destroys them. The dictator seeks not to understand art but to exploit it for political purposes. The writer can be kept in a dependent position, while political shifts in public sentiment manifest in the theatre in their most blatant form. The play itself becomes secondary to the observation of instinctive reactions within communities: constant manipulation of relationships, sympathies, and antipathies between groups, and the restructuring of social networks. This constitutes existential and psychological terror (p. 316).

### *Questions of Versification and Poetry*

When discussing Russian literature, it is of course impossible to overlook poetry, to which several articles in the collection are devoted. Igor A. Pilshchikov's article presents a thorough and detailed study of the poetic epistle as one of the key genres of Classic poetry. Distinguishing between genres such as epistle, satire, heroid, and elegy, the author carefully traces the evolution of the poetic epistle from the ancient tradition of Horace and Ovid to its transformation in the literatures of 18th- and 19th-century France, England, and Russia. Special attention is paid to the metrical and thematic characteristics of epistles and poetic letters, as well as their interrelations. Employing a broad comparative-historical approach, Pilshchikov analyzes works by Boileau, Voltaire, Pope, and Russian authors (Sumarokov, Kheraskov, Batyushkov), concluding that by encompassing a multitude of heterogeneous subgenres, the poetic epistle represented a typical “transitional form” that destabilized the literary system and contributed to the blurring of generic boundaries (p. 83). György Eismann's study focuses on the ontology and philosophical relationship between sound, light, and word. The author posits that text is the visible representation of the spoken word and explores this issue in the article through the example of Rainer Maria Rilke's *Duino Elegies*.

Kornélia Horváth, in turn, also engages with the philosophy of language, examining analogies such as “poetry as life”, “the word as text”, and “the word as a complete, unified work”. Horváth analyzes the life path and *ars poetica* of Osip Mandelstam, drawing on examples both from his literary works and his correspondence. The author argues that, in Mandelstam's poetic and life philosophy, the word simultaneously serves as a concentrate and bearer of cultural history, as well as a sensual, material body – a living entity capable of convey-

ing immediate trust and the everydayness of ordinary communication, while also remaining a symbol (p. 301). János Selmeczi, meanwhile, studies how writing becomes a process of self-creation and self-understanding, developing this theme through an analysis of Turgenev's *Poems in Prose*, and when addressing Turgenev's later works, also considers questions surrounding the genre itself.

### *Questions of Russian Literature in the International Dialogue*

A significant theme for the Hungarian Slavist Árpád Kovács was the mutual influence between Russian and pan-European literature, which is thoroughly examined in several articles within the volume. Leonid Geller's study is devoted to literary resonances between the works of the English writer Edward Bulwer-Lytton and the Russian modernist Fyodor Sologub. Geller takes as his starting point Sologub's assertion that he "stole from" Bulwer, interpreting this not as mere appropriation but as a fruitful intertextual dialogue and typological convergence in their poetics. The author identifies key parallels: motifs of magic, art, and science, as well as the interplay between mysticism and realism. Bulwer's character Zanoni, an occult magician and artist, prefigures Sologub's Trierodov from *The Crafted Legend*, where magic is also conceived as a practical science. Geller further emphasizes the intermedial context in which these literary works engage with painting (notably Bryulov and Martin), theater, and opera. He convincingly demonstrates that Sologub's borrowings do not constitute "theft", but rather represent a multidimensional channel of connection with Bulwer, with their dialogue serving as an exemplary model of "cross-cultural transfer" and "internalization", whose success hinges upon the presence of receptive sensibilities and the recognition of shared essential aspects of poetics and worldview.

Zsófia Szilágyi, in turn, writes about the influence of Russian literature on Hungarian writers, focusing particularly on Zsigmond Móricz. Analyzing the lesser-known short story by Móricz, *A Boring Day at the Front...*, Szilágyi carefully highlights moments where the presence of Russian literature is especially pronounced. Alongside this, the author presents examples from Móricz's diary, in which the writer expresses his admiration for certain Russian authors and works above others. Krisztián Benyovszky also examines the role of Russian literature on the international stage. Benyovszky discusses a publication titled *Ruzská Klazika*, which attempts to convey the sensory impressions and literary associations that hypothetical, unsuspecting readers might experience if, in 2017, without any prior knowledge of the work, they picked up this suspicious

book in a Slovak bookstore. The format of the edition alludes to the era of the former regime and to series of world literature where Russian classics occupied a special place. However, in this case, it is a mystification or parody, through which the project offers not the Russian classics themselves, but the stereotypes associated with them. The physical format of the edition, its cover, and linguistic wordplay on it play a significant role as well. Consequently, after analyzing the content, the author examines the cover and format of editions in different countries: the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary.

In conclusion, it is worth noting that even this brief overview of the articles demonstrates that the reader holds in their hands not merely a collection created as a gesture of gratitude to Árpád Kovács – an influential literary scholar and mentor to multiple generations of researchers. This volume constitutes a serious and profound resource for specialists across diverse fields, ranging from literary studies and literary history to philosophy and theology. The exceptionally high scholarly standard of the works gathered in this commemorative anthology undoubtedly stands as the finest expression of appreciation and respect for such an eminent scholar.

*Zsófia MAKÁDI and Dmitry A. MAZALEVSKY*

