

## The Pushkin Myth and Cult in Central European Literature: Gyula Krúdy's *A vörös postakocsi* ['The Crimson Coach'] (1913)\*

Zsófia Kalavszky

**Abstract:** While the myth and cult surrounding Pushkin are phenomena unique to Russian culture, during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries both were prevalent in Central European literatures as well, albeit to a lesser extent and intensity. For example, within Central Europe Pushkin's biographical myth has generated several literary *sujects* within the literary traditions of Hungary, Poland, or Serbia, for example. Once Pushkin's works had been translated into the region's national languages, some cultic manifestations surrounding the poet also appeared. My study unravels the exciting process in which a work by the Hungarian author, Gyula Krúdy, expropriates and rewrites the Pushkin myth, thereby placing this Russian national icon into a Central European cultural, historical and linguistic context. In contrast to the analytical methods generally applied to literary cult research, I argue that examining Krúdy underscores the possibility that some literary works require an approach based on poetic analysis, a technique not generally applied to literary cult research. It is my intent to trace the influence Pushkin's cult had on Krúdy's text via cultural poetics.

**Keywords:** *Pushkin myth, literary cults, poetic analysis, Gyula Krúdy*

**Biography:** Zsófia Kalavszky is a Research Fellow at the Research Center for the Humanities, Institute for Literary Studies, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Central and Eastern European Section. She is co-editor of the newest four-volume edition of Pushkin's works in Hungarian (Európa, 2008-). She received her Ph.D. degree in literary studies at Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE). In 2015 she received the Bolyai János Research Fellowship, a three-year Research Fellowship of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. She is an editor for the journals *Helikon* and *Reciti*. [kalavszky.zsofia@btk.mta.hu](mailto:kalavszky.zsofia@btk.mta.hu)

### The Pushkin Myth and Cult in Russia

In Hungary, literary cult research developed out of the very fruitful collaboration begun many years ago among researchers from several Hungarian universities and museums as well as the Institute for Literary Studies at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. A relatively young field of study, Hungarian literary cult research was actually born with the publication of Péter Dávidházi's volume on William Shakespeare (Dávidházi 1989, English edition 1998.) With this

---

\* This paper was supported by the Bolyai János Research Scholarship of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.



New articles in this journal are licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.



This journal is published by the University Library System of the University of Pittsburgh as part of its D-Scribe Digital Publishing Program and is cosponsored by the University of Pittsburgh Press

groundbreaking work, Dávidházi shed new light on a historical phenomenon connected to literary authors. While the cultic reverence with which some authors are held had not gone unnoticed by literary historians, aspects of this phenomenon were frequently devalued or belittled. Dávidházi, on the other hand, felt this to be a field of literature worthy of analytical and descriptive research.

According to Dávidházi, literary cult research allows us to answer the question of "What cultural values were born with the help of Shakespeare's cultic reverence, and the birth of which values was made more difficult or blocked during its two-hundred-year history so far" (Dávidházi 1989: 27.). Through the detailed analysis of the two-hundred-year-old cultic following Shakespeare's work has garnered in Hungary, Dávidházi not only provided researchers with a highly detailed and persuasive case study, but also worked out a new theoretical approach and methodology for analyzing literary cults. Most importantly, Dávidházi's examination viewed the Shakespeare cult in Hungary as part of one system, rather than a set of separate circumstances.

Mainly inspired by anthropological studies, Dávidházi's holistic theoretical and methodological approach aimed to analyze various phenomena related to literary cults. While some of these phenomena originate in practice, others stem from the text itself. Dávidházi's holistic approach can be broken down to the following criteria: cultic followings are characterized by a specific *attitude*, a peculiar way of using *language*, and certain type of *ritual* (Dávidházi 1994: 31). Through his *analogy of religious cults*, Dávidházi then described the literary cult with the aim of treating the *attitudes* of fans (those *receivers* who adore an author or work) or the *texts* in which adoration is manifested (e.g. reviews, obituaries, reminiscences, commencement speeches, etc.) and *rituals* conducted in order to maintain a cult (e.g. erecting statutes, tribute nights, literary award ceremonies, etc.) as far more than "quaint" practices. Rather than employing the higher vantage point of a literary researcher, Dávidházi instead rendered these practices the objects of his analysis and treated them as part of the same system or "liturgy."

It is important to note that Hungarian literary cult research as a school fundamentally began as *historically oriented* research. This is no coincidence, as Hungarian studies initially focused on the literary cults developed in the nineteenth century, such as the cult of Shakespeare, or that which arose around the Hungarian authors Sándor Petőfi and Mór Jókai. It was only later that researchers began analyzing issues that came to characterize literary cults following the social and economic changes of the twentieth century. These characteristics include the appropriation of authorial cults by politics, the institutionalization of literary cults, or the how economic aspects can play a role in the conscious construction of a cult. In Hungary, these kinds of influences can especially be seen in the case of twentieth-century Hungarian authors such as Attila József, Endre Ady, or Albert Wass.

In contrast to Hungarian cult analysis, Russian and Finnish cult research centers were instead established out of a need to analyze recent or *contemporary* cultural-social phenomena (cf. Alexandra Urakova's introduction to book Nadyarnyh, Maria, and Urakova, Alexandra 2011: 3–21). Within these research centers the approaches used for cult research primarily include the methodologies and viewpoints related to the sociology of literature and reading studies. For example, one of the founders of Russian cult research, Boris Dubin, primarily focuses on the rebirth of nineteenth-century, Russian *authors' cults* during the one-party state system established in the twentieth century. Dubin did not analyze texts but rather focused on

*institutions* (educational institutions, museums, media, party propaganda) in the still young Soviet Union, which contributed to establishing cults for authors deemed ideologically important by cultural policy. In other words, he analyzed how institutions elevated a given author, then continued to draw public attention to this chosen author. In order to accomplish this, the state published and disseminated large numbers of copies of those works by an author whose meaning and message met their ideological approval. This selective process naturally extended to any accepted analyses written about the selected author's texts (Dubin 2002). Dubin therefore studied what institutions could be used by a twentieth-century, Soviet cultural policy in order to popularize a nineteenth-century author for its own purposes. In his excellent study, *Classical Author – Star – Celebrity – Cultic Figure: About Strategies to Legitimate Cultural Authority*, Dubin shows how the status of the *author* has changed with the advent of mass culture and mass literature, and what the differences are between a classical author and a cultic author (Dubin 2006).

As regards the unique position Pushkin possesses in Russian culture, the Pushkin myth and cult represent distinct phenomena. Pushkin cult researchers regularly view this cult as a closely related aspect of Russia's cultural myth as well; in other words, the nature, variations, and models of the Pushkin myth are analyzed from the perspective of how communal respect is paid to the poet (cf. Debreczeny 1991, Bezrodnyj 2000, Zagidullina 2001). To date, research on the Pushkin cult therefore analyzes phenomena related to the social usage of literature, an area generally examined in literary cult studies, which generally analyzes the *applications*, reader *actions* and *attitudes* that emerge *in relation to* a literary work or an author's name. Literary cult studies is expressly *not* interested in the internal, auto-poetic workings of the literary work itself. In this paper, I argue that if literary pieces play a role in establishing cults, then it is essential to examine how these texts operate internally. In short, the aesthetic and poetic analysis of literary piece(s) must also be examined as a part of cult research. I argue that the semantic complexity of the texts belonging to the *belletristicheskaja pushkiniana* (a group of either literary texts or essays motivated by the narrative of the Pushkin myth(s) that are heterogeneous in terms of their genre, literary register, and aesthetic quality) corpus is precisely revealed by the approaches used in cult research. In other words, issues traditionally seen as beyond literary research are linked to issues immanent to literature.

The reasons for the emergence of the Pushkin myth and cult stem from aspects surrounding the Pushkin oeuvre, biography as well as the special nature of the Pushkin reception. Pushkin gained unprecedented success within a very short period of time in the modern literary institutional system of Russian literary culture, which was still emerging at the time. As Abram Rejtblat states, Pushkin managed to accomplish this not through diplomatic advancement, heroic deeds on the battlefield, or by pursuing a state career or the fame of legendary wealth, but through his works and intense presence in contemporary literary, social, and political life. (Rejtblat 2001: 55). Pushkin, it should be noted, changed his position in relation to the Tsar's power by means of ploys that often caused surprise, whether in the form of disapproval or adoration. These factors all contributed to the formation of Pushkin's *literary reputation* (see details in Abram Rejtblat's excellent study about this, Rejtblat 2001).

Literary history today views Pushkin as possessing an enormous role in ensuring that the authority of an autonomous literature be recognized independently of church and state authority. His other role was in bringing about the concept of the "manuscript accepted as a commodity" (see Pushkin's poem *Conversation of a Bookseller and Poet* (1824), and Yuri Lotman 1995:

71–72). Pushkin therefore was a force in having poetry recognized as a money-making profession, a concept that contributed a great deal to the emergence of modern Russian literature. The most intensive twenty years of this change took place between 1820 and 1840, the period frequently labeled "Pushkin's era" by Russian literary history.

Beginning in the autumn of 1835, the French military officer, Georges D'Anthès, started to court Pushkin's wife, Natalia Pushkina. Gossip surrounding their affair naturally arose as a result of this increasingly public and provocative affair. On 27 January, 1837, Pushkin fought a duel with D'Anthès in defense of his own and his wife's honor. After Pushkin was fatally wounded, the authorities kept the time and location of his funeral a secret while also forbidding the publication of any death notice. The circumstances surrounding Pushkin's death—the concealment of his private funeral, the body's speedy internment in a location far from the capital, the lack of obituaries, the conspiracy of silence surrounding the duel and the events leading up to it—all contributed to the "poet's subsequent tortuous and muddled public image" (Marcus Levitt 1989: 20). This situation became the perfect soil for generating myths. Already a highly contradictory public figure while alive, a variety of opinions therefore surround Pushkin, a circumstance that was further fed by the extreme opinions his contemporaries held of him as well as the secretive nature in which he was buried. Along with the "critical war over Pushkin" (Lewitt 1989:26) his afterlife evolved as a defense against state-enforced silence, suppression and banning due to political pressure. As of the end of the nineteenth century, this emerging cult was further expanded out of political appropriation and the well-meaning distortions created by adoring fans.

Both in terms of their origins and functions, the texts belonging to the *belletristicheskaja pushkiniana* comprise a very special group of the literary and essay oeuvre belonging to nineteenth, or twentieth-century and contemporary Russian literature (see Vershinina 2004). The most intriguing of the texts contained in the Russian *belletricheskaja pushkiniana* depict a fictional world in which the cultic attitude toward Pushkin is not schematic either in its language or its characteristics. Texts such as these offer the opportunity for the hero or narrator to evolve his or her own sense of self-identification in a world where this cultic desire for identification is prohibited at an *individual level*, yet is still prescribed by authority. According to Stephanie Sandler, the attitude towards Pushkin can be described as a duality of the simultaneous presence of a *personal and communal focus/attitude* by recipients of the Pushkin's work and biography: "The magic of Pushkin's endurance in the Russian cultural imagination has come from his capacity to seem 'our' Pushkin as well as 'my' Pushkin, these two views clearly present as early as 1837, when he was mourned both as a symbol of Russia and as a beloved friend." (Sandler 2005: 403). This special capacity of the Pushkin myth already led to the emergence of a complex, institutionalized Pushkin cult by the end of the nineteenth century in tsarist Russia, resulting in a unique coexistence between Pushkin's state cult and his varied personal cults. But what happens when the Pushkin myth, which is still so productive in Russian literature today, is taken out of this national, Russian context and placed into the international context of Central Europe?

### **The Pushkin Myth and Cult in Central Europe**

Although the importance and intensity of the Pushkin myth and cult is naturally less intense in nineteenth-twentieth century Central European literatures compared to that found in Russia, Pushkin's biographical myth has generated several literary *sujets* in Central Europe as

well. In Central Europe the Pushkin biography and oeuvre partly or wholly became accessible through German and French translations and later in national languages as well. Following the translation of Pushkin's works into the national languages of the region, some cultic manifestations surrounding the poet also appeared. In examinations of Russian literary works, numerous researchers have shown how alluding to Pushkin as an icon creates a 'duel' event-element that has generated one of the most powerful *sujets* out of all the elements contained in Pushkin's biographical myth (cf. Shemetova 2009). It therefore comes as no surprise that—beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century—any poet to die by duel in Central Europe became the central theme of literary pieces as a par excellence manifestation of 'poetic fate' in the multilingual literature of the region. In works by many Central European authors, Pushkin's emergence as an icon prompted the theme of 'conflict between power and artist' to appear as an adaptation of the Russian poet's symbolic final day. Examples of this can be seen in plays by the Polish author, Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, or in works by the Hungarian author, László Németh.

Especially exciting are those works in which Pushkin's figure and biographical myth are primarily interpreted through the characters and *sujet* found in Pushkin's literary texts judged as (auto)biographical. The Hungarian author, Mór Jókai's novel *The Green Book* (1879), or Gyula Krúdy's novel *The Crimson Coach* (1913), or the Serbian author Milorad Pavić's short story *Prince Ferdinand Reads Pushkin* (1982) provide sources of this process. Rewritten as typical, Central European stories, in these works Pushkin's figure and fate was fictionalized in a unique way, for Pushkin and his protagonists' fates are projected upon one another. What is more, the act of projecting the literary characters of Aleko (*The Gypsies*), Onegin, Lensky (*Eugene Onegin*), Yevgeny (*Bronze Horseman*) onto aspects of Pushkin himself is done within a context containing events relevant to Central European historical and socio-cultural spaces, such as the great historical narratives of the Hungarian freedom fight of 1848–49, the 1914 assassination of Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo, or the fate of the urban journalist-poet of the early twentieth century. This process of "rewriting" Pushkin is therefore situated alongside the same, iconic places and characters representing the common history of the nations in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. These sites include the Danube, Budapest, Vienna, Sarajevo, or even the figure of Franz Ferdinand. Through the technique of literary *sujets*, the Russian national icon was thus able to span geographical spaces, historical eras, and languages, thereby becoming transcultural. The continuous rewriting of the Pushkin figure occurs in the center of literary *sujets* representing different national identities, at a time when the Central European existence and national identity appeared either as a late-Romantic world view (Jókai), or as modernity and Art Nouveau's yearning for a disappearing world (Krúdy), or within the ironic view of the postmodern (Pavić).

In my study I explore what happens to Pushkin, his figure and his collective of primary works as well as the secondary texts written about him (i.e. the Pushkin myth) as found in a Central European space, in its cultural, historical and linguistic environment as found in Gyula Krúdy's novel, *The Crimson Coach*. How does Krúdy rewrite and thereby extend this myth? What emphasis does the Pushkin myth (which, as a myth, is the narrative of the establishment or birth of modern Russia; Sandler 2004: 5) gain in the novel *The Crimson Coach* (1913), written by the Hungarian writer, Gyula Krúdy? To what extent is the Russian poet's fate and the plot of the Pushkin myth an *indigenous* precursor and the starting point of every Central European historical and linguistic event? Simultaneously, what can be considered *foreign* about it? Can, after all, a myth essential to Russian literature and culture become Central European as well?

### **Gyula Krúdy: The Crimson Coach (1913)**

One of the most important topics discussed by the Hungarian writer Gyula Krúdy's (1878—1933) novels is that of literature itself. According to Hungarian Researcher Anna Fábri, Krúdy can be seen as a writer concerned with exploring *the cult of literature*. It should be mentioned that Krúdy's interest in cultic behaviorisms extends to the cult of eating, the cult of women, and the cult of Pest at the turn of the century: "The majority of Krúdy's heroes live with the constraint of duplicating the world and creating (or safeguarding) cult at the same time. This is a possible means for them to endure life: there are some who are paradoxically connected to life by this (i.e. through cult), and there are many for whom life is manifested in this (i.e. in the cult)." (Fábri 2015: 12). According to László Imre, one of the main sources of the "atmospheric", "subjective", "dreamy" and "anti-epic" nature of Krúdy's prose can be found in nineteenth century *Russian literature* (Imre 2002: 105). Analysts link the Russian *kinship* of the Krúdy texts primarily to the works of Turgenev and Pushkin (see Fábri 1978, Kozma 1981, Fried 2002). With the writer and journalist, Casimir Rezeda as its protagonist, *The Crimson Coach* offers a unique opportunity for Krúdy to describe and utilize the trappings of *a literary cult* while simultaneously representing his concept of "Russianness." Written in 1913 and set in the Pest-Buda at a time when it was a part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, this novel can also be read as a unique rewriting of the Pushkin myth as a combination of the Pushkin biography and Pushkin's *Onegin*. It is a novel in which the narrator and the heroes both ritualistically live the Pushkin cult they have created via the clothing that is worn, the duel that is fought, the letters written by characters, or the narrator's emergence as a journalist and poet. This aim is simultaneously maintained on the textual level, via continuous written and textual recollections taken from Pushkin's life as well as from experiences belonging to his heroes; in other words, the Pushkin myth and cult is "concurrently the object and environment" of this novel (Fábri 2015: 12).

*The Crimson Coach* follows the lives of unknown and poor actresses from the countryside, Clara Horváth and Sylvia Fátyol, who decided to try their luck in the city and in the hope that they would be discovered by some exceptional, wealthy men who will appreciate them. Their attraction to the exciting life in the capital exposes the reader to descriptions of the bohemian and rotten Pest night. Legends abound in the city about an elite world inaccessible to the Pest bourgeoisie, a world of enormous windfalls in cards, losses on horseraces, relationships made for money and fame, as contained in Pest's private salons. One of the main legends concerns the owner of the red stagecoach, Edward Alvinczi, who leads a mysterious life and comes from a noble family. Determined to meet Alvinczi at all costs, Clara eventually attains her goal with the help of the disillusioned journalist and poet, Casimir Rezeda, who becomes the loyal knight, partner and companion of the actresses on their walks. Through the adventures of the actresses and Rezeda there also emerges the bohemian nighttime world of operetta-singers, cabaret actors, cardsharps, coffee houses, brothels, the racetrack, lords and down-on-their-luck gentry, poets, writers, journalists, flower-girls. However, in Krúdy's so-called "Pest novel" derailed lives, poverty, hopelessness and disillusion keep cropping up from behind the spell of secrets, gloss, romance, love, wealth and the feeling of being exceptional. As Krúdy writes in the

preface to his novel: "The love about which Pushkin used to sing is not common in our town." † While Sylvia does find a partner, the same is not true for either Rezeda, who keeps posing as a variety of literary heroes, or for Clara. Rezeda loves Clara in vain, while Clara adores the inaccessible Alvinczi. Rezeda tries to kill himself when he realizes that Clara will never be his. While Clara nurtures him back to health, at the end of the novel she still says goodbye to Rezeda and travels back to the countryside to live as an actress

In *The Crimson Coach*, other than numerous references to other pieces of world literature, *Onegin* does not "only" appear as another intertext created in a foreign language—we could cite numerous examples from the novel for this type of "simple" intertext—but is a text of world literature which came into its own in the nineteenth century Hungarian translation and possessed a cultic influence on Hungarian literature in the second half of the nineteenth century. The 1866 translation by Károly Bérczy not only became an unprecedented success in the second half of the nineteenth century (Péter 1999: 6) but also inspired numerous poets and writers in a range of different genres. In short, it became the most important sources of inspiration for a new genre of nineteenth century Hungarian literature, the novel in verse [verses regény]. The *Onegin* cult—as it is referred to in the literature on the topic—therefore resulted in multiple editions, the creation of Hungarian literary works inspired by *Onegin*, and the establishment of a new genre. However, it seems that *Onegin* as a work and the cult of *Onegin*'s figure points beyond the range of literature (a difference which is important for Krúdy's novel): it is also relevant to reception and reading theory as well as cultural history. Namely, the popularity and reputation of Bérczy's *Onegin* was not only created by the novel in verse as a primarily lyrical text, but the life story of its author, Pushkin, also played a part (Gyergyai 1962: 415). The uniquely constructed image of the Russian poet's biography, which first appeared in the Hungarian press in 1837 about the circumstances of Pushkin's death and then again in the 1850s —1870s (see Kalavszky 2005), or which can be found in the biographical outline on the first pages of Bérczy's *Onegin*, endowed the Russian poet's figure with a huge appeal.

For the heroes of *The Crimson Coach* living at the turn of the century, Pushkin's biography is of equal importance to *Eugene Onegin*'s story, and it is also a "text" that is frequently more vivid, up-to-date and open to dialogue than *Onegin*'s story. For example, while Clara Horváth is listening to the story of Edward Alvinczi's duel, in her thoughts an image of the wounded Pushkin appears. This is most apparent in the case of Casimir Rezeda, where the indirectly accessible experience of the text *Anyégin Eugén* appears explicitly. Rezeda is not a reader of the novel in verse itself, but rather of the 1866 book also containing the novel in verse, or rather that of an unchanged reprint of it. For him the reception of the poetic work of art opens up through the text written by Károly Bérczy, which summarizes Pushkin's biography: in particular, through his death as a result of the duel. The duel becomes a topos in the Russian literary piece in the same way it does with Krúdy:

In the evening Bertha (...) handed Mr Rezeda a small morocco-bound volume through the window. Its title was *Eugen Onegin*. For days the student didn't open it,

---

† Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

for he was occupied in writing his last will and testament. (...) On the third day, stretched on his bed, he opened the book and after he had read the first pages and discovered in the poet's biography that Pushkin had been shot dead in a duel by a handsome guards officer he settled down with appreciative interest to reading the rather long poem (Krúdy 1967: 162. Translation by Paul Tabori).

[*Estére, az ablakon át, Berta...egy maroquin bőrbe kötött könyvecskét adott át Rezeda úrnak. A könyv címe: Anyegin Eugén. A diák napokig bele sem nézett a könyvbe, mert ez idő tájt végrendeletét írta... Harmadnap, az ágyán heverészve, felnyitotta a könyvet, és miután a költő életrajzában (az első lapokon) azt olvasta, hogy Puszkint párviadalban agyonlőtte a szép testőrtiszt, elismerő érdeklődéssel látott hozzá a hosszúnak ígérkező költeményhez.*]

In Krúdy's novel, the book itself becomes a literary fact while one of the elements of its multiple transfers is revealed (Bérczy's interpretation), thereby showing the influences coloring how the heroes of *The Crimson Coach* interpret *Onegin*.

The reading of *Onegin* opened all at once the wonders of a new world to Mr Rezeda: he decided to choose a goal in life, to become a poet, a journalist, to become Alexander Pushkin – and all this in a single night while, with his forehead burning and his heart brimming over, he read the singing lines of the Russian poet. Next day, walking towards the old cemetery, Mr Rezeda courageously and with tears in his eyes took hold of Bertha's hand, clad in yellow gloves. 'Tatiana!' he said. (Krúdy 1967:163. Translation by Paul Tabori.)

[*Az Anyegin olvasása egyszerre új világ csodáit nyitotta meg Rezeda úr előtt: elhatározta, hogy élelcélt választ, költő lesz, hírlapíró, Puskin Sándor lesz – és mindezt egy éjszaka, midőn égő homlokkal és szinte túláradó szívvel olvasta az orosz költő összecsendülő sorait. Másnap, a régi temető felé sétáltak éppen, Rezeda úr bátran és könnyes szemmel fogta meg Berta sárga kesztyűs kezét. –Tatjana! – mondta.*]

Upon reading the novel in verse, Rezeda does not want to become *Onegin*, but rather Pushkin. He is thus "saved" from death by *Onegin*, but only temporarily: in his farewell letter in the eleventh chapter Rezeda writes that he will read excerpts of *Onegin* before committing suicide.

For young Rezeda, the postponement of death is connected to Pushkin's tragic biography, while as a mature man his list of reasons for death is connected to the verses of *Onegin*, to the "thoughts" of *Onegin's* narrator. Except for the final chapter, Rezeda is preoccupied with death in its dual aspect of either killing for love or committing suicide. At the end of his letter he chooses the work of art in which this duality manifests itself. From Rezeda's point of view, death appears doubly in the form of *Onegin* and Lensky's duel, at which time the author of the work (Pushkin) fell victim to a duel for love (see Pushkin and d'Anthès' duel). Rezeda does not point to the text locations describing Lensky's death, but to two lyrical excursions of the novel (*The ballet; Spring*) which create a theme surrounding the disillusionment connected to the narrator's



figure, dying, and remembrance (see Pushkin, chap.1.19, 7.3–4). While Onegin the hero is not touched by death either at the beginning or the end of Pushkin's novel in verse (Pushkin, chap.1.38, 8.38–39), death and a tragic fate was much more connected to *Onegin's* narrator, since Pushkin's fate reflected on him. (It is important to note that this is true of Lensky's death as well!)

One of the characteristics of Krúdy's prose lies in the special nature of the narrative structure. In this case the narrator acquires a special role and position by often interrupting or even distancing the plot to the background. (Fülöp 1986; Dobos 1995) On the other hand, by using this technique "a levitating narrative" is achieved, in which "the message is separated from the specific person of the speaker, and it can just as equally be part of the narrator's point of view as that of the character" (Dobos 1995: 121). Krúdy often employs this type of narration in the text of *The Crimson Coach*. However, the primary model and source for this type of text creation was Bérczy's *Onegin*, in which the narrator's voice and the part of the protagonist are virtually enmeshed. Therefore, for Krúdy the novel in verse could have been inspirational due to its presentation of a very important problem in prose poetics and narrative as exemplified by the language and point of view of the writer—narrator—hero, so uniquely entwined they are often impossible to tell apart.

Even before he had read *Onegin* and could become aware of his own textual source, Rezeda already repeated the "fate" of *Onegin's* narrator. This circumstance is indicated by the following motto found directly before the Hungarian version of the chapter entitled *Onegin*, a section that summarizes the background story:

Love passed, the Muse appeared, the weather  
of mind got clarity new-found;  
now free, I once more weave together  
emotion, thought, and magic sound;  
I write, my heart has ceased its pining,  
my thoughtless pen has stopped designing,  
beside unfinished lines, a suite  
of ladies' heads, and ladies' feet;  
dead ash sets no more sparks a-flying;  
I'm grieving still, but no more tears.

(Translation by Charles H. Johnston)

*[Прошла любовь, явилась муза,  
И прояснился темный ум.  
Свободен, вновь ищу союза  
Волшебных звуков, чувств и дум;  
Пишу, и сердце не тоскует,  
Перо, забывшись, не рисует,  
Близ неоконченных стихов,  
Ни женских ножек, ни голов;  
Погасший пепел уж не вспыхнет,  
Я всё грущу; но слез уж нет.]*

The first ten lines of verse 59 from *Onegin*'s first chapter initially appear as a motto at the beginning of the novel, therefore indicating a thematic connection not only to the authorial *Letter* [*Levél Kiss Józsefhez*] that follows, but also to the whole text of the novel. (It must be mentioned that neither the motto nor the *Letter* appears in the English edition). From the very first, the motto draws a parallel between *The Crimson Coach*'s narrator, its implicit author and *Onegin*'s narrator. When it is repeated at the beginning of chapter nine, preceding Rezeda's background story, the motto acquires a specific and simultaneously ironic meaning in the hero's case as well. Therefore, the motto has both a metapoetic and metafictional meaning, since we are reading a text (*The Crimson Coach*) that was created after love had gone, or rather at the time when love was disappearing. On the other hand, a series of events is revealed to us, in which one of the protagonists, Rezeda, recreates "the state after love is gone" at least on two occasions during the novel:

He was in love with Miss Hermina Stolcz, and he fought his first duel for this dear lady ... But the duel became known and before our conquering hero could receive his reward from Hermina (...), the severe staff expelled the duelists from the school. ... until then he had hardly read any estimable poets apart from Horace (Krúdy 1967:158. Translation by Paul Tabori).

[*Szerelmes volt Stolcz Herminbe, és első párbaját éppen e drága hölgyért vívta meg...A párviadal azonban kitudódott, és mielőtt győzelmes hősrünk Hermintől elnyerhette volna jutalmát (...), a szigorú tanári kar eltávolította a líceumból a párviadal résztvevőit ... pedig Horácon kívül érdemleges költőt még nem olvasott.*]

The professor of Hungarian history, Pál Porubszky, when he finished his brilliant discourse about the Jagiello Dynasty (...) hinted that heroes existed not only in history but also in actual life around us... (Later it was also Pál Porubszky, professor of Hungarian literature, who added to the beautiful life story of Bessenyei, the guards officer and poet, that there were poets today as well, their talent developing with us ... And the poet was again Mr Rezeda, for he had decided to choose poetry as his career after being crossed in love.) (Krúdy 1967:159. Translation by Paul Tabori.)

[*A magyar történelem tanára, Porubszky Pál, midőn befejezte tündöklő előadását a Jagellókról... célzást tett, hogy nemcsak a történelemben vannak hősök, hanem a körülöttünk zajló életben is... (Később ugyancsak Porubszky Pál, a magyar irodalom tanára, Bessenyei gárdistahadnagy gyönyörű élettörténetéhez hozzáfűzte, hogy manapság is vannak költők, velünk, mellettünk, és szemünk láttára bontakozik ki tehetségük...S a költő ismét Rezeda úr volt, mert hiszen a költői pályára óhajtott lépni miután szerelmében csalódott.)]*

In the second instance the hero, aware of his textual source by virtue of explicitly unearthing it, "reacts" to the motto in trochaic sentences in the Hungarian translation:

I confess to you, my dearest: I can no longer love. Once I was a romantic hero; now I am a bored, bad-tempered, tired gentleman. (Krúdy 1967:193. Translation by Paul Tabori.)

[*Vallom önnek, drága hölgy: szeretni többé nem tudok. Egykor regényhős voltam, most unott, rosszkedvű, fáradt úriember lettem.*]

Rezeda therefore considers both Onegin and the narrator of his story as models. This is significant due to the fact that even Pushkin literature does not clearly differentiate one from the other. The hero turns out to be the alter-ego of the narrator, and this role is demonstrated at times in relation to Onegin as a character, and at other times in relation to *Onegin's* poet. In *The Crimson Coach* the narrator and Rezeda are not each other's equivalents at different points in time, but rather points of view existing at the same time: creators and the objects of creation. Linear temporality has ceased to exist, just as the border dividing the work's characters from its narrator has also disappeared. By means of intertwining Pushkin's life and that of his heroes, the separation between reality and fiction is first raised to the same level, deleted, and then used to cast refracted light upon one another. The tangled nature of these roles "culminates" in Rezeda, whose figure in the world of *The Crimson Coach* is also endowed with characteristics of Tatiana. His farewell letter contains clearly recognizable phrases taken from Tatiana's letter that have become adages; at the same time, we can find textual locations in the novel in which Rezeda identifies simultaneously with both Onegin and Tatiana's character. (See Bertha's sentence to Rezeda, after Rezeda has called her Tatiana: "I'm glad I awakened you, my boy. "But do not hurry to live, do not drive too hard your feelings..." Wait quietly. Tonight you will find the book of a new poet in my window and you will get acquainted with a new world of marvels" (Krúdy 1967:163. Translation by Paul Tabori.) [*Örülök, hogy fölébresztettem önt, fiam. "De ne siessen: élni és túlajtva ez érzést..." Várjon csendesen. Estére majd új költő könyvét találja az ablakon, és új csodavilággal ismerkedik meg.*]. The highlighted line is from the motto before *Onegin's* first chapter.: "To live, it hurries, and to feel it hastes" (Translation by Charles H. Johnston). [*И жить торопится и чувствовать спешит.*]) At the same time, Bertha's words also remind of Onegin's words to Tatiana. "but you must teach / your heart some self-restraint." (Pushkin, chap. 4. 16. Translation by Charles H. Johnston.) [*Учитесь властвовать собою.*]

In my study I have shown through the poetic analysis of a work by a Central European author that the most important literary myth found in Russian culture, the Pushkin myth, had the potential to influence Krúdy's novel, *The Crimson Coach*. In other words, Pushkin's biographical myth, which is also propagated through Pushkin's heroes and *sujets*, possesses the power to inspire works throughout different regions and cultures. In the case of Krúdy, the Pushkin myth has contributed to the blurring of the classical, rigid lines between the novel's characters and its narrator. At the same time, using Pushkin's works and cult to interpret Krúdy's novel gives the reader a unique view of how *The Crimson Coach's* protagonist "reacts" to the Pushkin cult created by the nineteenth-century Hungarian translation of *Onegin*.

## Works Cited

- Bezrodnij, Michail. 2000. "K voprosu o kul'te Pushkina na Rusi: Beglye zametki" ['To the Issue of Pushkin's Cult in Russia']. *Posle iubileia*. ['After jubilee']. Roman Timenchik and Samuel Shvartsband, eds. Jerusalem: The Center for the Study of Slavic Languages and Literatures at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. 219–217.
- Dávidházi, Péter. 1989. "Isten másodszülette". A magyar Shakespeare-kultusz természetrajza ['The "Second-Born of God": A Natural History of the Hungarian Cult of Shakespeare']. Budapest: Gondolat. (The English version: Dávidházi, Péter. 1998. *The Romantic Cult of Shakespeare: Literary Reception in Anthropological Perspective*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, London: MacMillan Press.)
- Dávidházi, Péter, and Karafiáth, Judit, eds. 1994. *Literature and its Cults. An Anthropological Approach*. Budapest: Argumentum.
- Debreczeny, Paul. 1991. "'Zhitie Aleksandra Boldinskogo': Pushkin's Elevation to Sainthood in Soviet Culture". *The South Atlantic Quarterly* V. 90. 2. Spring: 269–292.
- Dobos, István. 1995. *Alaktan és értelmezéstörténet: novellatípusok a századforduló magyar irodalmában* ['Morphology and the History of Interpretation: Types of Short Story in the Hungarian Literature of the Turn of the Century']. Debrecen: Kossuth Egyetemi Kiadó.
- Dubin, Boris. 2002. "Klassicheskoe, elitarnoe, massovoe: nachala differentsiatsii i mekhanizmy vnutrennei dinamiki v sisteme literatury" ['The Classical, the Elite, and Mass: The Beginnings of the Differentiation and Internal Dynamics of Literary Systems']. *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* 57: 6—23.
- Dubin, Boris. 2006. "Klassik – zvezda – modnoe imia – kul'tovaia figura: o strategiiakh legtimatsii kul'turnogo avtoriteta." ['Classical Author – Star – Celebrity – Cultic Figure: About Strategies to Legitimate Cultural Authority']. *Sinii Divan* 8: 100–113.
- Fábri, Anna. 1978. *Ciprus és jegenye. Sors, kaland és szerep Krúdy Gyula műveiben* ['Cypress and Poplar: Fate, Adventure, and Role in Gyula Krúdy's Works']. Budapest: Magvető.
- Fábri, Anna. 2015. "'Once upon a Time I Used to Be a Novel Hero ...' The Cult of Literature in Gyula Krúdy's Works." *The Hungarian Writer of the Lost Time: Memory and Poetical Imitation in Gyula Krúdy's Works*. Ed. Tibor Gintli, Jyväskylä: U of Jyväskylä: 11–26.
- Fried, István. 2002. "Ki beszél a „regényké”-ben? Krúdy Gyula N.N.-jének elbeszélői helyzetei" ['Who is Talking in "the Novels"? Narratorial Positions in Gyula Krúdy's N.N.']. *Tiszatáj* 5: 48–61.
- Fülöp, László. 1986. *Közelítések Krúdyhoz* ['Approaches to Krúdy']. Budapest: Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó.
- Gyergyai, Albert. 1962. *Klasszikusok: esszék* ['The Classics: Essays']. Budapest: Szépirodalmi Kiadó.
- Imre, László. 2002. *Műfaj történet és/vagy komparatiztika: irodalmi tanulmányok* ['History of Genre and/or Comparative Studies: Literary Studies']. Szeged: Tiszatáj Alapítvány.
- Kalavszky, Zsófia. 2005. "Le mariage de Pouchkine" Jókai lehetséges nyugat-európai forrásai és A. Sz. Puskin alakja a *Szabadság a hó alatt, avagy a „Zöld könyv”* című regényben" ['"Le mariage de Pouchkine" Jókai's Possible Western European Sources and A.S. Pushkin's Figure in the Novel Freedom under the Snow or the Green Book']. *Mester Jókai: A Jókai-olvasás lehetőségei az ezredfordulón* ["Master Jókai": Possible Readings of Jókai at the Turn of the Century]. Eds. Ágnes Hansági, and Zoltán Hermann. Budapest: Ráció Kiadó: 32–64.

- Kozma, Dezső. 1981. *Krúdy Gyula postakocsiján* ['On Gyula Krúdy's Stagecoach']. Kolozsvár-Napoca.
- Krúdy, Gyula. 1967. *The Crimson Coach*. Trans. Paul Tabori. Budapest: Corvina Press.
- Krúdy, Gyula. 1977. *Utazások a vörös postakocsin* ['Travels on the Crimson Coach']. Budapest: Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó.
- Levitt, Marcus. 1989. *Russian Literary Politics and the Pushkin Celebration of 1880*. Cornell UP. (Studies of the Harriman Institute.)
- Lotman, Yuri. 1995. "A. S. Pushkin. Biografii pisatelja" ['A. S. Pushkin. Biography of the Writer']. *Pushkin*. Saint-Petersburg: Isskustvo-SPb: 21–185.
- Nadyarnyh, Maria, and Urakova, Alexandra, eds. 2011. *Kul't kak fenomen literaturnogo protsessa. Avtor, tekst, chital'el'* ['The Literary Cult as a Phenomenon of Contemporary Literary Process: Author, Text, Reader.']. Moscow: Gorky Institute of World Literature Press.
- Péter, Mihály. 1999. "Pár tarka fejezet csupán...": Puskin "Jevgenyij Anyegin"-je a magyar fordítások tükrében ["This Pied Collection...": Pushkin's "Eugene Onegin" in the Light of its Hungarian Translations']. Budapest: Nemzeti Tankönyvkiadó.
- Pushkin, Alexander. 2003. *Eugene Onegin*. Trans. Charles H. Johnston, Penguin.
- Rejtő, Abram. 2001. "Kak Pushkin vyshel v genii. O literaturnoi reputatsii Pushkina" ['How Pushkin Became a Genius: About Pushkin's Literary Reputation']. *Kak Pushkin vyshel v genii. Istoriko-sotsiologicheskie ocherki knizhnoj kul'ture Pushkinskoj epokhi* ['How Pushkin Became a Genius: Historical and Sociological Essays on the Book Culture on the Times of Pushkin (Russia, the 1820s – 1840s)']. Moscow: NLO: 51–70.
- Shemetova, Tatiana. 2009. "Duel' Pushkina i Dantesa v sovremennoi belletristicheskoi pushkiniane" ['Pushkin and D'Anthès' Duel in Contemporary Belletristicheskai Pushkiniana']. *Filologicheskie nauki* 4: 56–65.
- Sandler, Stephanie. 2004. *Commemorating Pushkin: Russia's Myth of a National Poet*. Stanford UP.
- Sandler, Stephanie. 2005. "The Pushkin Myth in Russia." *The Pushkin Handbook*. Ed. David M. Bethea. U of Wisconsin Press: 403–423.
- Vershinina, Natalia, ed. 2004. *Belletristicheskai pushkiniana XIX — XXI vekov. Sovremennai nauka — vuzu i shkole: Materialy Mezhdunar. nauch. konf., 20-23 okt. 2003 g* ['19–20th-Century Belletristicheskai Pushkiniana. Proceedings of the International Conference between 20-23 October, 2003']. Pskov.
- Zagidullina, Marina. 2001. *Pushkinskii mif v kontse 20 veka* ['The Pushkin Myth at the End of the 20th Century']. Cheliabinskii gosudarstvennyi universitet. Cheliabinsk.