

Title: Bourgeois Sentiment, Animal Reflex: Mikhail Zoshchenko's Explorations of Emotion
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In the preface to his 1943 semi-autobiographical work *Before Sunrise* Mikhail Zoshchenko describes a journey toward emotional healing using psychologist Ivan Pavlov's methods and terminology: "Man's behavior can and must be studied with the aid of the dog and the lancet," he writes. Zoshchenko's exploration of the connection between animal and human experience dates back to a collection of novellas called *The Sentimental Tales* (1927), where the author first asked the question whether emotions are culturally constructed or belong to the sphere of animal reflexes. Each tale chronicles the emotional unraveling of a caricatured bourgeois "artist," who cannot cope with post-revolutionary reality and is eventually reduced to an animal-like existence. While most commentators of *Sentimental Tales* have perceived the transformation from sentimental artist to animal as a negative consequence of cultural disorientation, I will argue that in Zoshchenko's larger oeuvre, the image of the animal represents liberation from the emotional suffering endemic to pre-revolutionary culture. In his writings, Zoshchenko divides human emotions into illusory, culturally constructed sentiments and visceral feelings, akin to animal reflexes. Zoshchenko suggests that it is the second type of emotional composition that is conducive to the building of a bright, Communist future. The animal-man as a successor to the pre-revolutionary intellectual represents an alternative to the figure of the machine prevalent in the writings of the author's contemporaries. Zoshchenko's "animal emotion" as a replacement for bourgeois ennui and melancholy will be discussed alongside other psychological, literary and political discourses about the inner life of the "new Soviet man" in the 1920s and 30s.