

Rational Scribbling: Bureaucratic Mythologies in Saltykov-Shchedrin's »The Golovlevs«

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In Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin's »The History of a Town« (1870), the worried townspeople of Glupov, faced with a less-than-friendly new governor, began to construct conspiracy theories. Most prominently,

it was said that the new governor was not a governor at all, but a werewolf [...] and at night he was said to hover over the town in the shape of an insatiable vampire and suck the blood of the sleeping inhabitants.¹

To the consternation of the townsfolk, the governor turns out to be neither of these things, but rather a kind of automaton with a removable head. Following a similar pattern, Saltykov-Shchedrin would again adopt Slavic folklore as a tool for political critique not long after in his novel »The Golovlevs« (1880). Unlike some of Saltykov-Shchedrin's other works, like »Provincial Sketches« or »The Pompadours«, his critiques of the state in »The Golovlevs« do not take centre stage in the same way. In fact, echoing many other scholars who analyze the novel, Emil Draitser suggests that in Saltykov-Shchedrin's previous work he had »levelled his main satirical attack at the two pillars of Russian society, private property and the state« and in »The Golovlevs« had instead shifted his focus to satirizing the

»third pillar« of Russian society: the family.² However, this third-pillar novel does not exclusively focus on the family, but rather recognizes the interplay of the three pillars in the context of the larger organizational changes shaping the country in the mid-to-late nineteenth century. Saltykov-Shchedrin does critique the institution of family in »The Golovlevs«, but this critique is underwritten by and dependent upon the decline of serfdom and the increasing domination of a centralized state bureaucracy.

This historical context played a major role in Saltykov-Shchedrin's own life: he worked for the state civil service between 1844 and 1868, often performing inspections in provincial towns both prior to and after the abolition of serfdom in 1861. These inspections gave Saltykov-Shchedrin a clear view of the state bureaucracy at its lowest level as he reviewed the resources available in the provinces and their upkeep and assessed the bookkeeping of the local government and its services. The professionalized bureaucracy and the system of inspections in which Saltykov-Shchedrin participated were not new to the mid-to-late nineteenth century, but the nature of state administrative procedure did start shifting in the lead-up to and after 1861. While Peter I's administration began developing what would become the state bureaucracy in the early eighteenth

century, the professional bureaucratic system did not start taking proper shape until 1802 when Alexander I created the ministries.³ These ministries were meant to better support and extend the influence of the Senate created under Peter I but, instead, they took control of the domestic administration of Russia by the 1840s.⁴ Nicholas I (1825–1855) expanded the ministerial system and began »the formation of a professional bureaucracy« in earnest.⁵ This change in the makeup of the imperial government created a class of »enlightened bureaucrats« who unified under »a common ethos, which included the demand for strict observance of the law, a worship of science, and a desire to understand the changes taking place in the West and to prepare Russia to absorb them«.⁶ In order to enact these changes, tsars sympathetic to systematized administration, like Peter I and Nicholas I, regularly sent »imperial adjutants [...] to areas suffering from famine, cholera, civil unrest, or [...] simple governmental paralysis, to collect information and report back with recommendations«.⁷ These practices, meant to establish governance based on facts and the rule of law, were put to the test during the Great Reforms era (1861–1874) when Alexander II and a select group of bureaucrats launched a series of reforms ending serfdom, restructuring Russian society, and more generally »modernizing« the country despite the complaints of the gentry and other bureaucrats.⁸ However, the imposition of system in Russian government ran parallel to increases in arbitrary authority and, while systematization seemed to promise consistent governance,

it was the combination of the ministers' senatorial pretension to system and their absolute responsibility to the tsar that rendered them more arbitrary from the point of view of Russian society than the old-time omnipotent agents had ever been.⁹

Saltykov-Shchedrin captures the reforms and their aftershocks in »The Golovlevs« and the novel is produced through the tension between Saltykov-Shchedrin's direct participation in the state bureaucracy and his critical position against this same institution as a satirical author.

Despite the changes introduced by the reforms in 1861, in »The Golovlevs«, Saltykov-Shchedrin presents

the state bureaucracy, particularly post-1861, as an arbitrary and stagnating force that mires down any hope of progress through an endless barrage of documentary chatter and over-adherence to system. In »The Golovlevs«, he caricatures the consequences of bureaucratic commitments to over-documentation and system, underlining the ways in which the arbitrary power of the system of serfdom persists into the post-emancipation era. He makes this point by casting the two authority figures of the narrative, the serf-owning matriarch Arina and her civil servant son Porfirii, as related folkloric monsters: Baba Yaga and a vampire, respectively. Both authority figures drain their family members to illness and death over the course of the novel, Arina by withholding resources and Porfirii by trapping them with a barrage of false promises and empty words until they give in to exhaustion. While Arina represents the dying institution of serfdom, Porfirii replicates the empty chatter of the urban bureaucracy, particularly in the (post-)Reforms era when bureaucratic control of the provinces expanded alongside an increasing onslaught of inspection and documentation. Both the scribbling of the bureaucracy and Porfirii's own writing and speaking take on the form of Heideggerian »idle talk« which becomes a kind of administrative gossip, an unrelenting noise that allows no real reflection on the Great Reforms project and closes off authentic forms of discourse. In Heidegger's framework, idle talk renders any understanding of one's status as being-in-the-world inauthentic, but in Saltykov-Shchedrin's assessment of the state bureaucracy, it can also snowball into a larger social and governmental network of idle talk that produces social myths and material power. By controlling the conversation, so to speak, Porfirii and the Reforms-era bureaucrats he represents control the pace, direction, and possibility of social and political change on the estate and in the empire. In presenting these characters as personifications of serfdom and state bureaucracy, I argue that Saltykov-Shchedrin both shows the ways in which the arbitrary authority of serfdom lingers in the practices of the (post-)Reforms era bureaucracy and highlights the mythical thinking driving the necessity for and expansion of this bureaucracy. Rather than producing the enlightened bureaucrats' vision of a new, »civilized« Russia that will rival the presumed cultural powers of Western Europe,

the nineteenth-century Russian bureaucracy, much like the vampiric Porfirii, instead produces a vacuum in the heart of the Russian empire.

Bureaucratic Scribbling

By the period in which Saltykov-Shchedrin began working in the civil service, the system of bureaucracy had become largely professionalized and the ministries were well-established. However, each of the state ministries were primarily responsible to their own offices in St. Petersburg and as such, never reached full cohesion, often suffering from infighting and miscommunication.¹⁰ Thus, their supposedly systematic form of governance relied on arbitrary authority both at the local and state level. Before the reforms, the ministries were impelled to intervene in local administration in the provinces, but their orders were »often not enforced or even published« in the countryside and the central government had no clear understanding of local governance but still made decisions pertaining to provincial administration. They attempted to rectify this situation by sending out more administrators, but mainly allowed villages to apply their own solutions or ignored ongoing problems and blamed older forms of government or corruption for their inability to address provincial issues.¹¹ After the reforms, similar problems continued and even worsened given that, as George Yaney suggests, the experimental nature of the reform system often called for arbitrary decision making which was leveraged paradoxically for the purpose of upholding system.¹² The Liberation Statute, the piece of legislation that abolished serfdom, created self-governing peasant villages and counties [*volosti*] while the *zemstvo* statute of 1864 created assemblies of elected delegates [*zemstva*], ostensibly representing all classes, with the intention of creating a space for local agency.¹³ These changes did not effectively give more political power to the peasants: the *volosti* never achieved administrative authority during the century and the *zemstva* remained almost completely separate from peasant life.¹⁴ The *volosti* in particular had to rely on peasant customs when administering, creating gaps between the administration of the peasants and the legal system of the central government.¹⁵ These

issues were then compounded by the excessive drive for documentation and system that flourished after 1861. During this period, ministers »had a propensity for forming committees, gathering materials, drafting projects, and then enacting nothing«.¹⁶ It is this propensity to write with no end and to no purpose that served as both the point of creation of the systematized state bureaucracy and its undoing.

Through his civil service career, Saltykov-Shchedrin often found not only that the inspections meant to inform fact-based law were not fully achievable but were essentially impossible. Although the reformers of the 1860s had high hopes for increased public education both within urban centres and in the provinces, the problem of illiteracy had improved little even by the early 1880s. After inspections in 1880 and 1881, a

*broader study conducted by the Ministry of Internal Affairs showed that there were more than four times as many illiterate village elders as there were literate ones, and only a few more volost' elders who could read than could not.*¹⁷

This lack of education created problems at the level of local government which, in turn, created problems for the *zemstva* and the central bureaucracy. The failure to ensure that members of local administrative organs received the proper resources and education undermined the entire project of addressing local problems through systematic inspection. Even at the outset of the Great Reforms era, Saltykov-Shchedrin experienced the results of this lack of public services. In an 1861 report on a county courthouse in the Tver' province, Saltykov-Shchedrin complains not only about slow processing, a common issue in his inspections, but also that the resolutions written by administrators for the courthouse are »[ungrammatical] to the extreme and many are deprived of any meaning«.¹⁸ The fact that Saltykov-Shchedrin is faced with documents that he cannot read hinders his ability to carry out the job he was sent to do. Often these hindrances came about merely from inconsistent paperwork or not following protocol. In his notes from 1861 on the Ves'egonskii *zemstvo* court, Saltykov-Shchedrin comments on his inspection, claiming:

In fact, it is rather difficult to judge the status of these zemstvo court cases by an audit of the paperwork, as nearly all of the original cases are located with the district police officers, and, consequently, the only auditing that remains is to watch the report register for more or less speed in the movement of the papers.¹⁹

Due to the lack of properly filed paperwork, he is left to merely examine efficiency. That is, he is reporting on an efficiency for efficiency's sake as he does not actually have access to the contents of the archive. This is an indecipherability wrought by opacity and a lack of organization rather than poor grammar, but one that nevertheless empties the bureaucratic archive of its content even while it produces more content that merely replicates the lacunae produced by missing or illegible documentation. In essence, inspectors created an archive full of empty documents by replicating the lack of content in the documents they examined.

That is, inspectors and other state bureaucrats participated in a form of Heideggerian idle talk, in this case a »scribbling« that communicated by »*passing the word along*« throughout the empire in the form of paperwork until it took »on an authoritative character.«²⁰ Even as their scribbling produced empty documents that essentially communicated nothing, it presented the state and the public with a sense that the administration »understands everything« and created a situation in which »the average understanding of the reader will *never be able* to decide what has been drawn from primordial sources [...], and how much is just gossip.«²¹ That is, these kinds of documents purported to present a clear picture of what was happening in the empire when, in fact, often the information at the heart of these documents could not be accurately filled in or traced back to its source. While these »empty« documents and the reports about them could not provide any further meaning or information, they were still treated as necessary for understanding the realities of local governance and for successfully carrying out the requirements of the inspector position. Between the gaps in the government archive and its sheer size, the continued production of documents becomes less a systematic effort to rationally address the empire's problems and more an emotional commitment to

going through the motions of a system that uncovers the irrationality inherent in that same commitment. Instead of creating a well-ordered system that allows any government entity to trace the problems of the empire back to the evidence supplied by the inspectors, the documents they produce become groundless and empty, closing off »the foundation of what is being talked about«²² and taking what has been passed along at face value despite a lack of true understanding of the problems under investigation and the actual effects of bureaucratization on the empire.

These unintelligible documents, then, threatened to topple the entire bureaucratic enterprise and promised Great Reforms. The reliance on collecting and reviewing local information became a core element of the Russian bureaucracy in the mid-nineteenth century and any lacuna in the archive wrought by the unintelligible thus derails the whole system. This derailment is only exacerbated by the documentary practices required to get even the smallest task accomplished. W. Bruce Lincoln recalls, for example, a governor-general who had to wait for the processing of twenty-four reports in order to get his office flue fixed, to say nothing of the »no fewer than 135 separate documents« required »whenever a nobleman decided to sell a parcel of land.«²³ This extensive system of administrative chatter made for a nonsensical conversation between the central government and the provinces that took place exclusively in paper and ink. If the strategy for addressing inconsistency, corruption, and ignorance in the bureaucratic ranks relied on obtaining all the information necessary to make an informed decision, then the lacunae in the archive automatically undermined any »informed« decision by rendering it that much less informed. Despite the representation of the state bureaucracy, particularly by enlightened bureaucrats, as a rational, systematic way for uncovering the truth of what changes needed to be made to improve conditions in Russia, in the way that it functions »it presumes it has understood« the needs of the empire and so suppresses »any new questioning and discussion« that might disrupt the stream of empty documents produced through bureaucratic labour.²⁴ The replicated indecipherability of bureaucratic documents renders these documents mere chatter, a form of administrative »noise«, foreclosing on any real

reflection on or understanding of how the developing administrative system failed to support its stated goals and ensuring that the circulation of documents required for the system to function continued by rendering documentation indispensable. By presenting bureaucratic documentation as mere »idle talk«, a surface-level passing along of questionable details about the far reaches of the empire, Saltykov-Shchedrin suggests that the Great Reforms bureaucracy was not solving any of the empire's actual problems because its methodology made such an improvement impossible: the state administration was incapable of reticence and so, incapable of the authentic discourse needed to properly make sense out of the state of affairs in the empire.

In »The Golovlevs«, this bureaucratic idle talk and its effects become personified in the figure of Porfirii, the head of the family estate post-1861, who replicates them in the estate after retiring from his civil service post. While the reader is not privy to Porfirii's position within the bureaucracy,²⁵ Saltykov-Shchedrin makes it clear that Porfirii's career did have a noticeable effect on his behaviour. After »having spent more than thirty years in the dim atmosphere of a government office, «Porfirii» had acquired all the habits and cherished aspirations of the confirmed bureaucrat who requires that every minute of his life should be filled with some futile activity«.²⁶ Porfirii's administrative habits, the same forms of scribbling that Saltykov-Shchedrin attributes to the real Russian civil service, became his strategies for estate management as well. As he quickly realizes, the »world of bureaucratic futility is sufficiently mobile to be transferred without difficulty to any place you wish«.²⁷ However, Porfirii has spent so long within the idle talk of bureaucracy that he cannot see its problems; instead of offering a useful tool for managing Golovlevo, the family estate, Porfirii creates an overwhelming wall of scribbling to lend authority and power to the spoken chatter with which he assaults his family.

Porfirii's empty chatter comes in the form of an indecipherable wall of mottled, mismatched language. Draitser suggests that »Porfirii seems to be deliberately making his speech both long-winded and senseless«,²⁸ and while, on the surface, his words often seem affectionate, his chatter maliciously traps his family members, immobilizing them through an unending one-

sided conversation from which they cannot escape and to which they cannot respond because they cannot get a word in edgewise. For example, when Porfirii's brother Pavel is ill and Porfirii visits him, Pavel immediately asks him to get out, suspicious of his intentions. Porfirii responds with an unrelenting repudiation, proclaiming

»Get out! Get out!« – now how could I possibly leave you? You might want a drink – I can give you some water; the lamp there might not burn properly – I can see to it, put in a drop of olive oil. You lie there and I'll sit here, all nice and peaceful, and we won't notice how the time slips by!»²⁹

In his response, Porfirii makes a show of care with diminutives typically meant to imply affection, like »vodichka« [water,] and by building a sentence structure wherein he presents a potential problem Pavel might have (the lamp might not burn) followed by the solution he will hypothetically offer (olive oil). He also repeats Pavel's demand to »get out« [*uidi*] several times as though emphasizing that he listened to Pavel's desires. However, in his proposed solutions, he does not actually address the core of Pavel's issue—that Pavel is ill and dying and Porfirii is making it worse— and he, in fact, just uses these hypotheticals to prolong his speech so that he ultimately wears Pavel down, eventually to his death. These kinds of moments highlight the ways in which Porfirii creates a wall of chatter that immobilizes his family members by beating them down.³⁰

Furthermore, Porfirii's patterns of chatter come straight out of the kind of writing that Saltykov-Shchedrin performed in his role as inspector. Saltykov-Shchedrin's inspections of various provincial areas produced long, repetitive reports that organized each section under the name of the area and then listed which civil services were working the way they were supposed to, sources of inefficiency, unprocessed documents or court cases, and any examples that might illuminate the character of whichever local office he was examining. Two of the results of organizing this information, listing and drawing up accounts, particularly mirror the expansive strategies that Porfirii uses to prolong a conversation or hold administrative sway over family members. In Saltykov-Shchedrin's feedback on the filing of reports in a courthouse in Tver' region, he offers a lengthy list

of examples to express the inefficiency of the reporting process in this location:

The monetary accounting is in order, in the paperwork is noticed [po deloproizvodstvu zamechaetsia] a deficiency in supervision of the timely submission of accounts by the overseers and a slowness in their discerning: for example: a) an account for the estate of Sutugin was submitted on June 4th and was only submitted to the civil chamber after a month; [...] g) an account for the Krapivins' estate was submitted [predstavlen] to the chamber on June 4th, but it is not clear when it was received by the court; h) accounts for the estate of Mitropol'ska and the Chereshins have not yet been submitted [ne predstavleny], and no measures have been taken by the court to compel the overseers.³¹

While these long lists are not individually meaningless, because they are focused on passing along often incomplete and minute details, accountings of so-and-so's court case for example, and in such a high volume, the focus of the paperwork shifts to how the average citizen and bureaucrat are interacting with the administrative system rather than a reflection on what that system is accomplishing or creating. The impersonal, passive language of these reports, such as phrases like »have not yet been submitted«, contributes to this expansiveness and distances bureaucratic practices from responsibility for their results by often obscuring the agent who, for example, did not submit paperwork. These rhetorical modes are present in Porfirii's writing as well, such as in a letter he wrote to his son Petr about his trial over a gambling debt. He proclaims that:

The punishment to which you are now subjected [koemu ty podvergsia] is severe, but fully deserved by you [vpolne toboiu zasluzheno] – that is my first and foremost thought and one which you should henceforth always keep in mind in your new life.³²

His discussion of his son being »now subjected« and the punishment being »fully deserved by you« unnecessarily lengthen the sentence, distance Porfirii from his son, and obscure the forces or individuals responsible for what is happening to him. It also becomes difficult to

ascertain who *should* be doling out the punishment for Petr or undertaking the improvements implied in Saltykov-Shchedrin's paperwork, such as compelling overseers to submit accounts.

Porfirii also engages in expansive listing in his speaking, as in Saltykov-Shchedrin's reports, like when he describes a foundling home to which he sends his illegitimate son Volodka: »nice clean little cots, good healthy wet-nurses, nice white little shirts for the babies, feeding-bottles, teats, napikins – all they need«!³³ While the written language of the bureaucracy, including Porfirii's, tend to avoid personal or diminutive language, his affectively charged spoken chatter still has a similar effect to bureaucratic writing. Here, he uses diminutive endings in the original Russian version and focuses on the children's material needs to make a show of concern. Ensuring that peasants, or Volodka, have access to basic resources is a form of paternalistic care and a supposedly generous assurance that the peasant or son will develop into a successful member of society. In this sense, while Porfirii's spoken words are rhetorically different in that they have the added layer of faux affection, they mimic the tone of liberal reform in the Great Reforms era: an accounting of or promise for resources offered as an act of care that in actuality serves as a source of control. While the details he presents seem important to the question of his son's well-being, they distract from the larger question of how being separated from the family and sent to a foundling home will affect him, as does Porfirii's empty hypothesizing that Volodka could become an idyllically happy peasant or scholar due to his time there.³⁴ Primarily, the details and hypotheticals are just distracting from the larger issue at hand around Volodka's place in the world and the family.

Akin to bureaucratic paperwork, to back his overwhelming speech with administrative authority and control his declining predecessor Arina, Porfirii turns to detailed accounts like Saltykov-Shchedrin's. As a part of his inspections, for example, Saltykov-Shchedrin meticulously records the kinds of tools available in firehouses to offer a closer look at the resources of each department:

*Replacement pipes.
Large [quarters] with summer and winter passages
—— Quantity 2*

<i>Their hoses: intake</i> _____	2
<i>exchange</i> _____	6
<i>Their copper pipes</i> _____	2
[...] ³⁵	

Here Porfirii's new accounts for Golovlevo directly parallel Saltykov-Shchedrin's administrative accounts:

<i>Raspberry canes as at 18**</i>	00
<i>To which add newly planted canes</i>	00
<i>From which stock of canes fruit</i>	
<i>gathered to the amount of</i>	00 qu. 00
	lb. 00 oz.
[...]	
<i>Etc., etc.</i> ³⁶	

It is telling that, as I have done in quoting Saltykov-Shchedrin above, he cuts off Porfirii's account with »etc., etc.« rather than create an entire document. The rest of the fictional document is left in obscurity because the details are not important. Reading through Saltykov-Shchedrin's reports, it often feels as though no difference would be made either to the reality of the situation or to the useful content of the state bureaucracy's archive were he to write »etc. « rather than continuing with his detailed account. What is important is the way in which Porfirii records and wields information and the consequences of his bureaucratic strategies. As in the case of Porfirii's compulsive listing, although Saltykov-Shchedrin is reporting in part on the documentary problems of whichever location he is visiting, the writing required of him bogs down his own documentary trail. While such documentation may have offered valuable information to a central office in theory, the volume of detail necessary for providing this level of description for every locality in an empire the size of Russia would quickly produce an inscrutable archive just as Porfirii's speech quickly overwhelms his interlocutors.

In fact, Porfirii goes beyond Saltykov-Shchedrin's own bureaucratic writing and into the world of the »etc.« by creating hypothetical documents. He becomes consumed by a compulsive drive to calculate fantasy accounts linked to scenarios that are absurdly unrealistic. Overwhelmed by bureaucratic scribbling and seeing firsthand what kind of control it has given him, he is tempted into a kind of tranquilized state of

»inauthentic being« which »drives [him] to uninhibited »busyness«.³⁷ In his hypotheticals, he imagines trying to sell all the timber from one of his forests and separates out each piece of the tree he could sell and for how much, counting

*in his head the price of a big shaft, the price of a smaller one, the price of a house-beam, timber runs, firewood, and trimmings. Then he adds, multiplies, drops a fraction here, adds one there« so that by the time he has written out all these calculations, »the sheet of paper becomes covered with columns of figures.*³⁸

These overly detailed administrative calculations only increase as the novel continues until Porfirii becomes completely immersed in work for work's sake, producing a kind of internal »gossip« that is unrelated to the reality of his situation. Even more so than the bureaucracy in which Porfirii learned this form of labour, Porfirii's work becomes self-perpetuating and mimics the emptiness of Saltykov-Shchedrin's administrative documents.

However, while nineteenth-century enlightened bureaucrats may not have invented hypothetical documents wholesale, the reasoning that required Saltykov-Shchedrin to report on missing or illegible documents and to produce piles of minutiae is of a kind with Porfirii's bureaucratic fiction. That is, the implication of Porfirii's fake documents is that all bureaucratic documents are to some extent »fake« because they are portraying a hypothetical reality, whether that be selling off an entire forest or upholding the false promises of system, rather than addressing problems immediately at hand. Both Porfirii and the bureaucracy at large attempt to hide behind the screen of rationality and systematization to justify documentary proliferation as not only useful but necessary. By reproducing empty or fake documents, by recording too many facts to be useful or chattering endlessly, both the bureaucracy and the monster it created, Porfirii, engage in irrational forms of meaning-making that are produced precisely by the rationality meant to eradicate them. Porfirii and the average bureaucrat in general are so busy listening to this mode of documentary chatter, which passes along details and lacunae but does not address the core issues of the empire, that they »[fail]

to hear [...] their] own self» or reflect on their states of being-in-the-world and connections to the people around them.³⁹ As such, they lose touch with their own sense of conscience, overwhelmed »by the ›noise‹ of the manifold ambiguity of everyday ›new‹ idle talk«. ⁴⁰ Part of this mode of idle talk in Porfirii's case comes from his immersion, and the empire's immersion, in the idle talk of the bureaucracy while part of it comes from his predatory nature. Idle talk may be a typical part of the everyday way of being-in-the-world to some extent, but in the hands of a flawed government or mini despot like Porfirii, producing idle talk without end becomes a tactic for drowning out reticence, for tempting the bureaucrat and the public into the groundless noise of paperwork that does not and cannot do what it claims to. In this sense, Porfirii's character reveals the ways in which idle talk can build power and block proper reflection on and discourse about what bureaucracy *does* by producing overwhelming noise. Porfirii, then, serves as a caricatured but logical end to the bureaucratic over-commitment to system and documentation that threatens to mire Russia in past forms of arbitrary power.

Folkloric Monsters and Arbitrary Power

Saltykov-Shchedrin reveals and satirizes the continuation of arbitrary power into the (post-)Reforms era by casting the authority figures in the novel, Arina and Porfirii, as folkloric monsters. Although the idle talk of bureaucracy seems firmly grounded in reality, unlike the folktale, the folktale also serves as a kind of idle talk—a passing on of groundless stories about other, unknown, people that renders the mysteries of the world already understood. Just as the folktale produces a fantastical version of the world and what it looks like to move within it, bureaucratic writing in Russia was doing something similar even if this outcome was obscured. The choice of folklore as a means for characterizing Arina and Porfirii connects Porfirii's bureaucratic labour with the act of social mythologizing and its consequences.⁴¹

Although it might appear to a contemporary reader that Arina represents a typical gentry character, her

interactions with her family reveal a deeper layer of monstrosity that is backed by a magical authoritarian whim. By presenting Arina as withholding resources and imposing strict bodily control on her family, Saltykov-Shchedrin casts her as the folkloric witch Baba Yaga. In doing so, he emphasizes the arbitrary cruelty not just of Arina, but also of the serf-owning system that she represents. The Baba Yaga figure is an old woman who lives in a hut and rides around in a mortar holding a pestle or broom. She is an ambiguous character because she can serve in one of two modes: as a donor who gives the hero a magical object that helps them through their adventure, or as an antagonist who drags children to her hut and attempts to eat them.⁴² Arina rides the line between these modes of generosity and violence and holds power over the household and its inhabitants through her control of the larder, which enacts a carnivalesque flipping of the patriarchal household, allowing her to take mastery over the estate.⁴³ While she does not harness real magic like Baba Yaga, Arina does also serve as a guardian of a »boundary of [...] other world and the entrance to it«, –the larder –and it is from this other world that she gains her power.⁴⁴ Arina controls who has access to this world and, by denying its contents to her starving family, transforms her family members into foodstuff themselves. Her first victim in the novel, Aunt Vera, »had died ›of moderation‹, because every morsel she ate at dinner and every billet of wood used to heat her room was an object of reproach from Arina«. ⁴⁵ Arina may distribute »pieces« [*kuski*] to her family out of obligation but if she feels that they have surpassed their deserved allotment, she will force them into a deadly diet like Aunt Vera's. That is, while she has the capacity to serve as a donor and aid her family by bestowing them with *kuski*, she will also try to »cook and eat« any of her lost children who »come to her hut as they wander«. ⁴⁶ When her son Stepan returns to the estate having used up all of his resources, Arina withholds the spoils of the family larder from him causing him to waste away and die. This arbitrary withholding allows Arina to maintain her power over her family members and »consum[e] them metaphorically« by hoarding their share of the food in the larder.⁴⁷ She uses each family member as a consumable resource that strengthens her control at every level of the estate. Her family members recognize this power and have become accustomed to it.

Not only do they refer to her as a «witch» multiple times, but, as he is returning to Golovlevo, Stepan lingers on the thought that «this old woman [Arina] will do for him [literally: nibble him to death]» and his father Vladimir observes that «the witch has got you in her clutches» and exclaims «she'll do for you [literally: eat you]»!⁴⁸ Pavel turns this characterization of Arina more specifically back to Baba Yaga when, asked by Arina what Stepan's punishment should be for his disobedience, he suggests that he be ground in a mortar, evoking the image of Baba Yaga's mortar and pestle.⁴⁹ Through the absoluteness of Arina's power and her folkloric qualities, her control over the estate seems magical and, as such, impossible to challenge because it appears arbitrary.

In the enclosed microcosm of Golovlevo and aided by the institution of serfdom, Arina mimics the autocratic powers of a tsar and harnesses her authority to maintain a deadly power structure within the estate. Like the institution of serfdom, which ran on the assumption «that the peasantry constituted a natural resource», Arina transforms human bodies into commodities that serve only to maintain her hierarchical place and her power.⁵⁰ During the early and mid-nineteenth century, «serfdom provided the nobility with a virtual monopoly of» the «control of men and goods». It was, in particular, «the coercive authority of the state» that «stood squarely behind the nobles' authority over their serfs».⁵¹ This power structure allowed Arina and her contemporaries to withhold resources from those below her in the social hierarchy; she feigns benevolence by giving out *kuski* when it suits her, but when they prove insufficient she is quick to eat up the remains of her weakened family members.

The majority of Saltykov-Shchedrin's novel, however, does not focus on Arina, but instead on the transition from Arina to her heir, Porfirii. After the first part of the novel, there is a shift from the era of serfdom to the post-serfdom system that attempted to establish increased self-governance in the provinces. At this point, Arina recognizes that Porfirii's bureaucracy becomes the force binding her power when he draws up forms for the management of the estate and she has the sinking realization that «these forms were nothing more than a »constitution« by which she was bound hand and foot».⁵² As the Liberation Statute and subsequent reform measures increasingly blurred the lines that once

separated landowners like Arina from their former serfs the line between Arina and food becomes blurred in the novel. Closer to her death, she is even described as «seen off [literally: cooked or boiled]», as though she *has* become the edible human resources she once ate.⁵³ As is typical of the version of Baba Yaga who devours children, while Arina did succeed in devouring some of her family members, she is ultimately bested and metaphorically stuffed into her own oven and cooked to death.⁵⁴ As Porfirii takes power, Arina is transformed instead of transforming and a different devouring monster takes her place.

The shift to a new folkloric monster that produces the same kind of violence as Arina through different means emphasizes the connection between the gentry and the growing bureaucracy. The connections between Arina and Porfirii and their assigned monsters are familial, suggesting that a similar kind of link exists between the gentry and the bureaucracy they represent. While the jump from witch to vampire may at first seem large, there is a close connection between witches and vampires in Slavic folklore. Vampires were often equated to dead witches in the Russian tradition,⁵⁵ and in Serbian folklore, vampires were often the children of witches or a witch's soul leaving her body.⁵⁶ Moreover, according to Afanas'ev, in the Russian Empire, the types of people thought to become vampires after death included drunkards, those cursed by their parents, and heretics.⁵⁷ Porfirii has given in to drinking, is cursed by his witch-mother, and adheres only to exhibitionist piety. As Saltykov-Shchedrin puts it, Porfirii, whom he also calls «Little Judas», «could pray and perform all the requisite motions – and at the same time be looking out of the window to see if anyone was going to the cellar without permission».⁵⁸ The folkloric link between the characters suggests that while Arina and Porfirii are different things on the surface, they come out of the same genealogy of power structures: Porfirii just has a different technique for deploying that power.

Arina's devouring, and the devouring of the Russian landowner more generally, is material—a using-up or withholding of resources to sustain their own bodily well-being and autonomy. Despite Porfirii's nickname, Bloodsucker, his method of draining his family is psychological. The violence he does to his family manifests in physical ways through their decline and

death, but Porfirii masks these physical consequences behind seemingly generous promises and gifts. When his niece Anninka returns to Golovlevo to accept an inheritance, for example, Porfirii traps her there through an incessant string of lavish meals and idle talk that endlessly delay the process and drain her of her energy until she is miraculously able to escape. While Porfirii is not literally a living corpse, the estate is described as feeling like a coffin, suggesting an image of Porfirii rising from his grave to feed. In fact, for Porfirii, «the whole world [...] is a tomb, fit only to serve as pretext for his endless prattling», the weapon that allows him to drain the people around him.⁵⁹ Like vampires in Russian folklore, Porfirii begins to »[encroach] [...] upon the vitality of his nearest relations, causing them to waste away and finally die«. ⁶⁰ Specifically, however, he takes on the form of a »psychic« vampire, someone »who feed[s] on others emotionally« through »the giving of gifts, seemingly through altruism, but in reality for the purpose of establishing a feeling of obligation« in order to feed off the victim's resulting »guilt and fear«. ⁶¹ Porfirii masks his devouring behind falsely intimate diminutives and feigning care but his family members remain suspicious. Whereas Arina maintains her power by limiting the *kuski* she is willing to dispense, Porfirii maintains his power by feigning generosity through food and conversation while simultaneously using that false generosity to drain the life out of everyone around him. Informed by his own experiences, Saltykov-Shchedrin makes monstrous the obsessive idle talk and paternalistic generosity of the civil servant through Porfirii as a psychic vampire to critique the hidden harms of a bureaucratic system that promised noble goals without the means or will to achieve them.

Despite its promises, the pre- and post-Reforms era administrations created deadly consequences just as Porfirii's vampiric chatter did. Regardless of the motivations or intentions of enlightened bureaucrats, the reduction of so many bureaucratic reports to scribbling could have significant real-world consequences for the population of the Russian Empire and these consequences only expanded with the increased control of state bureaucracy after 1861. At multiple points in his reports in Tver', Saltykov-Shchedrin mentions prisoners who have, due to bureaucratic incompetence or inefficiency, been in

limbo for long periods of time. For example, in a report from 4 October 1860, he identifies the following stalled cases in one location: »criminal – 4, civil – 6; in other places: criminal – 21, civil – 11 and administrative – 4«. ⁶² He attributes these cases to a lack of local staffing in the court, observing that »there are very often only two members in the court« and, consequently, »it is often impossible to have the court fully present, and cases must lie without movement«. ⁶³ It is a bureaucratic failure, although in this case not a malicious one, that produces miscarriages of justice. Saltykov-Shchedrin, however, ties together the compounding effects of inefficiency and blatant corruption in other places. In a report on the Ves'egonskii *zemstvo* court, he concludes that

the overall character of the functioning of the Ves'egonskii zemstvo court in closing investigatory and judicial-police cases is inexcusable slowness, the harm of which is quite often yet increased with abusive and arbitrary force. ⁶⁴

In this statement, Saltykov-Shchedrin directly addresses the material connection between corrupt policing and inefficient bureaucracy. Despite the purported role of administration in upholding the rule of law, Saltykov-Shchedrin's identifications of arbitrary power at its lowest level undermine the official image of the Great Reforms administration's progressive methodology.

While under serfdom the political system and its agents used serfs as expendable commodities, in the Great Reforms era, the state seemed to present the Russian people with generous offerings: the end of serfdom, the creation of local political representation, improved living conditions, and criminal justice. However, while these offerings appeared magnanimous, like Porfirii's chatter and the lavish meals that he bestows upon his victims before draining them, they often merely came down to noise. The Liberation Statute of 1861 may have freed serfs from their dehumanizing servitude, but it didn't necessarily improve their lot. After 1861, peasants »received less land than they had used before their liberation« and had to pay for its use. ⁶⁵ In 1886 the government implemented redemption payments that peasants would pay to eventually gain ownership of this land, but they were not meant to take ownership until

1931 and this date was later pushed back to the 1950s. It was only under the threat of peasant revolt in the early 1900s that »the government finally cancel[led] all redemption payments« and »by that time, a third of the peasants' land still lay fallow each year,« maintaining high levels of poverty among liberated ex-serfs and their descendants who, as such, did not gain any social mobility with their newfound freedom.⁶⁶ While the abolishment of serfdom gave peasants greater personal freedom, that freedom did not generally come with additional power or economic independence, leaving many of the problems of serfdom unaddressed or even worse than before.

The Power of Mythical Thinking

Given that bureaucracy is meant to embody rationality, it seems as though the mass of documents and failed promises of the reforms ought to have caused a change in course. By drawing on folklore to make his point, however, Saltykov-Shchedrin reveals one of the major forces driving the continuation of the Great Reforms bureaucracy despite its obvious failures: the power of myth built through bureaucratic idle talk. Saltykov-Shchedrin's point is not just that modern Russian society engages in mythical thinking, but also that »rationality« as it is valued and practiced by the bureaucracy is an example of it that generally goes overlooked. In his book on social myths, Gérard Bouchard similarly identifies mythical thinking as an active force in the (post-)modern world. As he defines it, social myth is »a collective representation that is [...] imbued with the sacred, governed by emotion more than by reason, and a vehicle of meanings, values, and ideals shaped in a given social and historical environment.«⁶⁷ In essence, these myths are shared by the larger community and cannot be questioned because there is an emotional buy-in to the narratives they present. They become so essential to a community's sense of self that questioning their value or logic becomes a kind of social heresy. These kinds of social thought patterns create major consequences for a population while hiding their influence behind their emotional pull and the noise of inauthentic discourse. When bureaucratic scribbling is mapped onto or backed by system, it creates a kind

of network of noise that cannot be interrupted to allow for »another kind of hearing« and instead becomes an unquestionable, but groundless, narrative.⁶⁸ Bouchard's model for thinking about social myths maps onto the belief of many enlightened bureaucrats in nineteenth-century Russia that held up rationality as a kind of magical, civilizational fix that would bestow upon Russia the same cultural status as Western European countries and lent power to that myth through documentation. Svetlana Boym, in fact, identifies myth as part of Russia's »tradition of extreme political, administrative, and cultural centralization« in particular, defining mythologies as »recurrent narratives that are perceived as natural in a given culture but in fact were naturalized and their historical, political, or literary origins forgotten or disguised.«⁶⁹ Just as Bouchard and Boym suggest, the Great Reforms bureaucracy in Russia is defined by these kinds of emotionally-driven myths of social progress even more so than their bureaucratic predecessors, especially the myth of rationality as the saviour of Russian culture. It is the failure to recognize these narrative vehicles and their unforeseen consequences for what they are that mires the country in a potentially deadly state of social, cultural, and economic stagnation while narrativizing this stagnation as progress.

Sending bureaucrats to the provinces to gather information carried the potential to undermine or bolster social myths about the provinces depending on what inspectors might find. It was, on its face, an attempt to rationally combat uninformed assumptions, many of which seemed to prevent Russia from making the »enlightened« changes they were seeing in Western Europe. However, rationality itself becomes transformed into a powerful social myth in Russia during this period. W. Gareth Jones points to some of the major proponents of rationality like Aleksandr Radishchev who espouses the belief that, as Jones phrases it, »freedom of the individual [...] was derived from a social contract, defined by juridical relations based on rationality and self-interest.«⁷⁰ This myth of rationality further drove enlightened bureaucrats invested in this narrative of progress to buy into other, less obvious myths specific to the bureaucracy. Yaney identifies, for example, the »power of paper« myth alongside the »future-myth of Russian capital-city society«. He attributes the »power of paper« myth to

the periods before and after the abolition of serfdom in 1861⁷¹ and the »future-myth« to the period between 1861 and 1905.⁷² The »power of paper« myth assured ambitious civil servants that while there was »no image of *who* was to carry out reforms«, the »list of instructions [...] would somehow put themselves into effect simply by being printed on paper«.⁷³ The »future-myth« suggested that enlightened bureaucrats could lead the Russian people to create an urbanized and modern Russian utopia.⁷⁴ The »future-myth« supplied the hope that a better version of Russia was possible while the »power of paper« myth ensured that it would not happen. Thus, the over adherence to rationality through excessive documentation is the exact thing that creates irrationality. It is the commitment to rationality that both makes the bureaucratic project possible and undermines it so drastically. The extensive detailed scribbling of the state bureaucracy blocked off any possibility for true reflection on the bureaucratic project by building promising myths around the Great Reforms that presented the idle talk of paperwork as the key for both physical and civilizational salvation.

Furthermore, the over adherence to system, documentation, and the myth of rationality, while rendering impossible radical reforms, also created arbitrary forms of bureaucratic power. The Liberation Statute introduced extensive regulations over peasant villages and while

*such rules were rarely enforced [...] their existence, together with their nonobservance, allowed police officials to threaten to enforce them, thereby providing a lever by which they could interfere in the volosts arbitrarily.*⁷⁵

The disconnects with the *volosti* and the *zemstva* that allowed the central government to use them as tools ensured that the ministries became solely responsible for the peasants but continued »demonstrating [their...] inability to control and direct [their] own agencies« so that while the central bureaucracy's power increased in the provinces after 1861, it remained arbitrary and difficult to control.⁷⁶ In this arbitrary wielding of power, like the threat of enforcement used to leverage peasants in the provinces, we can read a second meaning in the »power of paper« myth. It was a myth that simply

writing something on paper could bring it into being, but the constant scribbling of the bureaucracy did create power to different ends through that documentation. In the case of policies that are documented but not enforced, these rules create real power through their hypothetical existence. Because they can theoretically be invoked at any time, they become a weapon against unwilling peasants even as they remain unenforced, similar to how Porfirii can physically trap his family members at the estate armed only with chatter. Their recorded status and the invocation of this status lends them physical power. To a different end, the writing of ideas on paper that will never be enacted preserves the necessity of the bureaucracy by creating the illusion that it is doing *something*. The act of writing is the first step of creating any promised reforms, but it also traps the civil servants in the act of writing and rewriting because there is no clear means to act on that writing. This kind of writing creates power in its circulation and, through its constant circulation, justifies and preserves the power of the bureaucracy and its need to continue intervening arbitrarily in the provinces in the name of system. Porfirii enacts a microcosm of this power within Golovlevo, wherein Saltykov-Shchedrin represents the bureaucratic problems that he stands in for as a more digestible folktale about starving nobles rather than a political diatribe.

In this sense, in »The Golovlevs« Saltykov-Shchedrin adopts folklore to interrupt the idle talk of the bureaucracy and the social myths that talk creates and to demonstrate the ways in which the (post-)Reforms administrations simply reiterated the kinds of arbitrary power structures established under serfdom. As Vladimir Propp argues »the difference between myths and folktales is [...] a difference of social function«.⁷⁷ Folklore represents myths that, at one point, held real meaning for their cultures of origin, defined by »a sacred character«, and allowing the believer, through ritual, to act on and explain the world around them.⁷⁸ However, in Propp's schema, the myths represented in folklore have lost their significance and became »aesthetic«,⁷⁹ allowing for a more objective distance from which to interpret them. By putting folklore that has lost its real-world significance up against social myths that are creating real contemporary consequences, Saltykov-Shchedrin implies a link between the mythical thinking

required to believe in witches and vampires, and in the magical power of rationality or the paternalistic idealism of ›civilization‹.

While it is true that Saltykov-Shchedrin's focus in »The Golovlevs« falls on the institution of the family, his depiction of Porfirii demonstrates that even the small practical details of the state bureaucracy have filtered down into the lives of individual Russians in the nineteenth century. That is, Saltykov-Shchedrin cannot address the institution of the family without addressing the growing force of bureaucratic change that defines how the family will operate in the (post-)Great Reforms era. His mystification of bureaucratic rationality through references to folklore renders visible the ways in which a particular myth of rationality had been normalized through idle talk and administrative scribbling, become invisible to the average citizen, and yet continued to exercise power in the empire. That is, the scribbling of the bureaucrat is able to present the administration as omniscient when it comes to improving Russia and simultaneously authorize and empower this same scribbling through its systematization to impede this same project. Doing so turns idle talk or scribbling into a means of power and control and threatens to lull the enlightened bureaucrat and average citizen alike into seeing the state bureaucracy as a sacred, mythical power and block any further analysis of its true means and consequences of existence in the world. Saltykov-Shchedrin's choice to use folklore in his novel renders the normalized social myths of bureaucracy strange and highlights their ties to past forms of arbitrary power. As he suggests, despite its goals, the state administration only produces nothing; a nothing that is simultaneously full (of documents and words) and empty (of meaning), which will sit in state archives and the imaginations of citizens, until it drains everything away.

- 1 Mikhail Evgrafovich Saltykov-Shchedrin: *The History of a Town*, Oxford 1980, p. 26.
- 2 Emil Draitser: *Techniques of Satire. The Case of Saltykov-Shchedrin*, Berlin 1994, p. 15.
- 3 George L. Yaney: *The Systematization of Russian Government. Social Evolution in the Domestic Administration of Imperial Russia, 1711–1905*, Urbana 2006, p. 31.
- 4 Yaney: *The Systematization of Russian Government*, p. 228.
- 5 Alexander Polunov: *Russia in the Nineteenth Century. Autocracy, Reform, and Social Change, 1814–1914*, Armonk 2005, p. 42.
- 6 Polunov: *Russia in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 43.
- 7 William Bruce Lincoln: *The Great Reforms. Autocracy, Bureaucracy, and the Politics of Change in Imperial Russia*, DeKalb 1990, pp. 20–21.
- 8 Yaney: *The Systematization of Russian Government*, p. 185, »at p. 186«.
- 9 Yaney: *The Systematization of Russian Government*, p. 200.
- 10 Yaney: *The Systematization of Russian Government*, p. 242.
- 11 Yaney: *The Systematization of Russian Government*, p. 214.
- 12 Yaney: *The Systematization of Russian Government*, pp. 228–229.
- 13 Lincoln: *The Great Reforms*, pp. 176, »at p. 230«.
- 14 Yaney: *The Systematization of Russian Government*, p. 232.
- 15 Yaney: *The Systematization of Russian Government*, p. 234.
- 16 Yaney: *The Systematization of Russian Government*, p. 242.
- 17 Lincoln: *The Great Reforms*, p. 183.
- 18 N. V. Zhuravlev: M. E. Saltykov-Shchedrin – revizor, in: *Krasnyi arkhiv* 4 (1937), pp. 160–183, »at p. 172«. Unless otherwise indicated, English translations of Russian material are my own.
- 19 Zhuravlev: M. E. Saltykov-Shchedrin, p. 180.
- 20 Martin Heidegger / Joan Stambaugh: *Being and Time*, Albany 2010, p. 163.
- 21 Heidegger: *Being and Time*, p. 163.
- 22 Heidegger: *Being and Time*, p. 163.
- 23 Lincoln: *The Great Reforms*, p. 93.
- 24 Heidegger: *Being and Time*, p. 163.
- 25 Foote suggests that Porfirii had at least »attained the fourth grade in the Table of Ranks« but his exact position is unknown. Irwin Paul Foote: *Saltykov-Shchedrin's The Golovlyovs. A Critical Companion*, Evanston 1997, p. 40n.22.
- 26 Mikhail Evgrafovich Saltykov-Shchedrin / I. P. Foote: *The Golovlevs*, Oxford 1986, p. 118. The phrase »filled with some futile activity« could also be translated as »to engage in idle chatter.«
- 27 Saltykov-Shchedrin: *The Golovlevs*, p. 118.
- 28 Draitser: *Techniques of Satire*, p. 114. See also Milton Ehre: *A Classic of Russian Realism. Form and Meaning in »The Golovlyovs«*, in: *Studies in the Novel* 9/1 (1977), pp. 3–16, at p. 8 for more discussion of Porfirii's speech patterns.
- 29 Saltykov-Shchedrin: *The Golovlevs*, p. 86.
- 30 Other scholars have mapped the qualities of Porfirii's speech throughout the text including: repetition, listing, definitive statements introduced by a question, contrasting statements, contrasting propositions, and augmentation and reduction. Irwin Paul Foote: *Saltykov-Shchedrin's The Golovlyovs. A Critical Companion*, Evanston 1997, p. 99.
- 31 Zhuravlev: M. E. Saltykov-Shchedrin, pp. 170–171.
- 32 Saltykov-Shchedrin: *The Golovlevs*, p. 161.
- 33 Saltykov-Shchedrin: *The Golovlevs*, p. 230.
- 34 Saltykov-Shchedrin: *The Golovlevs*, p. 229–230.
- 35 Pushkinskii dom, »Zapiski o posledstyakh' revizii,« p. 64.
- 36 Saltykov-Shchedrin: *The Golovlevs*, pp. 68–69.
- 37 Heidegger: *Being and Time*, p. 171.
- 38 Saltykov-Shchedrin: *The Golovlevs*, p. 255.
- 39 Heidegger: *Being and Time*, p. 261.
- 40 Heidegger: *Being and Time*, p. 261.
- 41 It's worth noting that during the nineteenth century there was a renewed interest in the folktale from hobbyist collectors like Aleksandr Pushkin, to ethnographers like Aleksandr Afanas'ev and Ivan Khudiakov. See Vladimir Yakovlevich Propp: *The Russian Folktale*, Detroit 2012 for discussions of all three. Saltykov-Shchedrin appears to have been familiar with the most prolific collector of folktales during this period: Afanas'ev. In »The First of May« from »The Year Round«, he references a story from Afanas'ev's collection »Russian Fairy Tales« (1855–1864) through the phrase »give that, with no way of knowing what, go there, with no way of knowing where« which is an allusion to a story in Afanas'ev's collection of Russian folklore (which includes Baba Yaga and vampire stories): »Set Out There – Not Knowing Where, Bring That – Not Knowing What«. (Mikhail Evgrafovich Saltykov-Shchedrin: *Sobranie sochinenii v 20-i tomakh*, vol. 8., in: S. A. Makashin (ed.): Moscow 1969, p. 283). The cultural interest in folklore at this time was spurred by the Slavophile movement which »promot[ed] Russian customs and institutions« as models and »[took] an interest in Russian history, folklore, and the philosophy of the Eastern doctors of the church« and targeted anything perceived as modernizing or »Western«, like the developing urban bureaucracy. (Susanna Rabow-Edling: *Slavophile Thought and the Politics of Cultural Nationalism*, Albany 2006, p. 1). In adopting folklore, Saltykov-Shchedrin is at the very least playing into larger cultural concerns around modernization if not buying into this reactionary position himself.
- 42 Propp: *The Russian Folktale*, p. 158.
- 43 Darra Goldstein: *Domestic Porkbarreling in Nineteenth-Century Russia, or Who Holds the Keys to the Larder?*, in: Helen Goscilo / Beth Holmgren (eds.): *Russia – Women – Culture*, Bloomington 1996, pp. 125–151, »at p. 137«.
- 44 Propp: *The Russian Folktale*, p. 158.
- 45 Saltykov-Shchedrin: *The Golovlevs*, p. 27.
- 46 Propp: *The Russian Folktale*, p. 158.
- 47 Jenny Kaminer: *A Mother's Land. Arina Petrovna Golovlyova and the Economic Restructuring of the Golovlyov Family*, in: *The Slavic and East European Journal* 53/4 (2009), pp. 545–565, »at p. 556«.
- 48 Saltykov-Shchedrin: *The Golovlevs*, pp. 28–29.
- 49 Mikhail Evgrafovich Saltykov-Shchedrin: *Sobranie sochinenii v 20-i tomakh*, vol. 13, in: S. A. Makashin (ed.): Moscow 1972, p. 40; Aleksandr Nikolaevich Afanas'ev: *Baba-yaga i zhikhar'*, in: Aleksandr Nikolaevich Afanas'ev: *Narodnye russkie skazki*. Vol. 1, Moscow 1984–1985, pp. 135–136.
- 50 Yaney: *The Systematization of Russian Government*, p. 129.
- 51 Daniel Field: *The End of Serfdom. Nobility and Bureaucracy in Russia, 1855–1861*, Cambridge MA 1976, pp. 19–20.
- 52 Saltykov-Shchedrin: *The Golovlevs*, p. 69.
- 53 Saltykov-Shchedrin: *The Golovlevs*, p. 159.
- 54 Propp: *The Russian Folktale*, p. 158.
- 55 Linda J. Ivanits: *Russian Folk Belief*, Armonk NY 1992, p. 121.
- 56 Aleksandr Nikolaevich Afanas'ev: *Poetic Views of the Slavs Regarding Nature*, in: Jan Louis Perkowski: *Vampire Lore. From the Writings of Jan Louis Perkowski*, Bloomington 2006, pp. 195–211, »at pp. 198, 201«. Afanas'ev helped spread Serbian folklore to Russia with the full publication of »Poetic Views of the Slavs Regarding Nature« in 1869.
- 57 Afanas'ev: *Poetic Views*, p. 195.
- 58 Saltykov-Shchedrin: *The Golovlevs*, 144.
- 59 Saltykov-Shchedrin: *The Golovlevs*, 136.

- 60 Jan Máchal: Slavic Mythology, in: Jan Louis Perkowski: Vampire Lore: From the Writings of Jan Louis Perkowski, Bloomington 2006, pp. 70–118, at p. 75.
- 61 Alan Dundes: The Vampire. A Casebook, Madison 1998, p. 173.
- 62 Zhuravlev: M. E. Saltykov-Shchedrin, p. 166.
- 63 Zhuravlev: M. E. Saltykov-Shchedrin, p. 166.
- 64 Zhuravlev: M. E. Saltykov-Shchedrin, p. 175.
- 65 Lincoln: The Great Reforms, p. 89.
- 66 Lincoln: The Great Reforms, p. 90. The plight of ex-serfs after their emancipation also came out of the economic situation in Russia at the time, but »the very structure of the 1861 reform was responsible for the gradual nature of Russia's economic development after the abolition of serfdom« (Polunov: Russia in the Nineteenth Century, p. 126). Enlightened bureaucrats subscribed to »the principles of private property, free competition, entrepreneurship, and hired labor« as a part of their reformation project and, despite some economic development, these practices often led to corruption and exploitation (Polunov: p. 125, 136). Furthermore, peasants were especially hard hit by these economic changes because the Reforms precluded them from most opportunities for economic mobility by adding restrictions around peasant labor, chaining them to inadequate land allotments, imposing redemption payments, requiring villages to pay off debts collectively, and requiring peasants to rent land from landowners which created »a modified form of the compulsory labor service that had existed under serfdom.« (Polunov: p. 126, 127).
- 67 Gérard Bouchard: Social Myths and Collective Imaginaries, Toronto 2017, p. 25.
- 68 Heidegger: Being and Time, p. 261.
- 69 Svetlana Boym: Common Places. Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia, Cambridge 1994, p. 4.
- 70 W. Gareth Jones: Russia's Eighteenth-Century Enlightenment, in: William Leatherbarrow / Derek Offord (eds.): A History of Russian Thought, Cambridge 2010, pp. 73–94, »at p. 91«.
- 71 Yaney: The Systematization of Russian Government, p. 202.
- 72 Yaney: The Systematization of Russian Government, p. 392.
- 73 Yaney: The Systematization of Russian Government, p. 202.
- 74 Yaney: The Systematization of Russian Government, p. 392.
- 75 Yaney: The Systematization of Russian Government, p. 233.
- 76 Yaney: The Systematization of Russian Government, p. 246.
- 77 Propp: The Russian Folktale, p. 24.
- 78 Propp: The Russian Folktale, p. 20.
- 79 Propp: The Russian Folktale, p. 24.

Abstract

Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin's novel »The Golovlevs« (1880) not only critiques the Russian gentry family, but also the shift from an agrarian economy to an urban bureaucracy in the period before and during the Great Reforms. Drawing on his experiences in the civil service and adopting Slavic folklore as a mirror, Saltykov-Shchedrin identifies the ways in which excessive administrative documentation snowballs into a governmental network of Heideggerian idle talk that produces social myths and arbitrary material power. In the post-Great Reforms era bureaucracy, Saltykov-Shchedrin contends that problems of irrationality and arbitrary authority persist, undermining the reforms by producing only emptiness.

About the Author

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