



"The Tsar's Scriveners": Writing Bureaucrats in Nineteenth-Century Russia

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“The Tsar's Scriveners”:
Writing bureaucrats in nineteenth-century Russia

a dissertation presented
by

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to

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ABSTRACT

After Alexander Pushkin, Nikolai Gogol', and others problematized the bureaucrat in the 1820s and 1830s, the literary bureaucrat's further contours were determined in no small part by the literary contributions of bureaucrats themselves. During the tumultuous period of reaction and reform between the 1830s and early 1870s the bureaucrat as a cultural type became a primary object of contestation between ideologies and literary schools. Investigating the strategies of literary texts authored by bureaucrats, I give special attention to representatives of the bureaucracy who were active in literature in the middle of the nineteenth-century. I examine the correspondence and private writing that lay bare the compounded difficulties of hiding literary pursuits hidden in plain sight of the censorship authorities.

Depictions of the bureaucrat evolved in ways that, I suggest, are integrally related to the politics of the Reform Era in Russia and represent an attempt to reimagine the bureaucrat as a potential agent of civic renewal, a project that ultimately failed. I explore the evolving literary image of the bureaucrat in the era following the initial euphoria of the Great Reforms, when the pendulum began to swing back towards the familiar reactionary atmosphere that had inspired earlier representations. I identify the strategies employed by authors working in the censorship division.

sion in order to meet the demands of their bureaucratic profession while continuing to write literature. Russian satirist Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin in his early cycle “Provincial Sketches” and in his later novel “The Tashkenters’ Clique” offers a particularly illuminating case study. The “bureaucrat” constitutes a more unified element in nineteenth-century Russian literary production than has heretofore been acknowledged. I conclude by proposing a new definition for this seemingly familiar Russian literary trope.

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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION: The Predicaments of Power and Pen	
.....	1
CHAPTER I: What Could Have Been - Bureaucrats Reformed	
.....	18
CHAPTER II: Making the Bureaucrat Banal Again –The Bureaucrat in the 1860s	
.....	59
CHAPTER III: Censor Recensus: Writing as a Censor	
.....	100
CHAPTER IV: Saltykov-Shchedrin: The Bureaucratic Life – Lettered	
.....	156
CONCLUSION: The Fate of the Bureaucrat	
.....	204
APPENDIX	
.....	209
BIBLIOGRAPHY	
.....	211

INTRODUCTION

The Predicaments of Power and Pen

In 2011, Vladimir Putin, speaking before the Russian Duma, relayed the following anecdote in response to an accusation of Internet censorship:

Do you know what distinguishes the TsK from the ChK? The TsK “shushes” whereas the ChK “snips.” We do not intend to “snip” anything.¹

The anecdote, as befits a joke of Soviet provenance, includes two abbreviations, which, in this case, signify two infamous institutions: the Central Committee of the Communist Party (TsK) and the Secret Police, known as the Cheka (ChK). The anecdote focuses on the homonymic qualities of two normative censorial actions, “shushing,” and “snipping,” which, in Russian are rendered by the onomatopoeiac verbs “*tsikat’*” and “*chikat’*.²” The President assures the audience that the government does not intend to “snip,” but “shushing”, it is implied, might not be out of the question. However, the heart of the joke lies in the alternative, non-standard, meaning of the word “*chikat’*,” and in the secret history of Soviet censorship.

Shushing is a rather benign activity, captured innocently in the frequent Russian gesture used to silence children, a tap of the forefingers and thumb, and a quick fricative chirp, “tsk.” To shush, then, is to softly rebuke, stabilizing the sphere of communication so as to create harmony and maintain hierarchy. Shushing, beyond

¹ “Znaete, chem otlichaetsia TsK ot ChK? TsK tsykaet, a ChK chikaet. Tak vot, my nichego

its referent in domestic and familiar space, might refer to the various methods of party discipline and favoritism deployed to model appropriate public speech in the Soviet regime.

Snipping, in contrast, is a physical as well as auditory process, and, beyond the mellifluous activity that the reader finds in standard dictionaries of Russian, the real, gritty physicality of “censoring” in Russia becomes apparent. In the parlance of *Fenia*, or the language of the Russian underworld, “*chikat*” acquired the additional meaning of “to kill, especially with a knife.”² With this double entendre, the tone of the joke changes immediately, admitting the much darker experience of political repression experienced under the Soviet Union.

The semiotic landscape of post-Soviet Russia can be confusing, as ideologists and functionaries search for a particular tincture of imperial, Soviet, and contemporary symbols that will re-inscribe the imagined glory of the past while repressing its conflicting legacies. In his anecdote, Putin has struck upon a fascinating and devious mix of Soviet codes, including two rather infamous abbreviations. The Central Committee of the Soviet Union combined under its aegis the entirety of the state apparatus, including the organs of the political, or secret, police, and to the Cheka fell the actual policing of ideologically or politically-suspect thoughts or actions in the Soviet Union.³ The pun contextualizes the political expediency of political and policing powers in the Soviet Union; while the TsK was responsible for the administra-

2 Fenia reflects the particular jargon of the Russian criminal underworld.

3 The nickname, derived from the abbreviation for “Emergency Committee,” remained even though the formal name changed several times after 1922.

tion and political life of the country, the ChK was the life-blood of the repressive state machinery, instrumental for the maintenance of one-party rule.

Putin's pun plays on authoritarian methods and on euphemisms of violence: violence to the text, violence to the author. Critics' concerns about the curtailing of press freedoms are ostensibly allayed by the jocular reference to extinct institutions. "We may silence you, but you must be thankful that we do not now pursue the harsher means available to our predecessors," Putin seems to say. The familiar tone with which Putin, himself a former *chekist* (secret police agent), recalls the institutions gives pause. Putin, in typical fashion, uses double entendre to intimate antipodal possibilities. He signals that the press may be tolerated in some measure, but nonetheless reminds his audience that more repressive options have always existed. The menace of violence against the written word and the writing body lurks silently beyond view.

It is in this pregnant silence, then, that much of Russian literature has been written over the course of history. The relationship between the Russian state and Russian writers is a largely secret history, hidden in the kinds of puns and pauses we find in Putin's joke. Russian literature is full of circumlocutions necessary to avoid both shushing and snipping, and to operate within the narrow corridor of freedom that exists between silence and entendre. Russian literature is Aesopian, a literature of hidden meaning and ellipsis.

The essential question of how a national literature can emerge when constantly threatened by the repressive machinery of an autocratic state becomes particularly relevant when one considers that a significant part of Russian literature

was produced by the civil servants who served that state. How could a writer be a bureaucrat and also write in a way that was free of the imprimatur of the bureaucracy and authority? How could an author bypass institutional restrictions and forge an individual path in literature?

A few statistics about Russian society in the nineteenth century serve to illustrate the magnitude of the phenomenon. In 1856 the total number of civil servants in the Russian Empire is estimated to have been 113,990 of which approximately 82,325 held one of the fourteen service ranks on the Table of Ranks that had defined hierarchy and status in the state service since the time of Peter the Great.⁴ When compared with statistics for literacy (which are inexact at best), this means that, assuming civil servants met the literacy requirement, a significant portion of the literate males in the Russian Empire were employed in the Civil Service.⁵ A limited supply of literate males in a country where literacy rates were extremely low, with literary production on the rise, meant that the cross tides brought an increasing number of bureaucrats to writing and writers to the bureaucracy.

Many writers were, in fact, employed in bureaucratic work. All of the authors included in this study held official positions at some point in their careers, and thou-

4 W. M. Pintner “Evolution of Civil Officialdom” in Russian Officialdom: Thethe Bureaucratization of Russian Society from the Seventeenth to the Twentieth Century, eds. Walter McKenzie Pintner and Don Karl Rowney (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), p. 192.

5 Indeed, not all state servants fell within the Table of Ranks, many simple copy clerks did not, nor did all of those with rank know how to read. Figures gathered from a survey of literacy in the Russian Empire in the 1890s places the figure for general literacy under 12%, and this at a time when school attendance was nearly 500% greater than in the 1850s. “Gramotnost’Gramatnost” in Entsiklopedicheskai Slovar’ Brokgauza i Efrona (Saint Petersburg: Semeonovskaia TypoLitografija, 1890), IXa: 537-549.

sands of other minor authors, journalists, published diarists, and scribblers were also employed in the Civil Service. What, then, were the challenges facing these Russian authors? Authors might have seen reflections of themselves or their colleagues in Gogol's literary panoply of bureaucratic nonentities. The many characterizations and tropes that accrued to the literary bureaucrat in the nineteenth century may well have influenced their writing. The divide between the public and the private, both in life and literature, was a shifting boundary that admitted a wide variety of approaches. These approaches, however, were always negotiated against a backdrop of shifting political realities and social norms.

In this study, I ask what effect this repressive history had on those authors who served in the bureaucracy, those who wrote by candlelight in the nightly pause between the endless administrative cycles of the Russian state. This study takes as its purview the mid-nineteenth century, and specifically, extends from the mid-1830s -- in the wake of the introduction of the "Little Man" character by Pushkin and others and the publication of Gogol's first collection dealing with the Petersburg bureaucracy, the *Arabesques* in 1835 -- up until the period of political retrenchment succeeding the Great Reforms in the early 1870s. The chronological scale of this dissertation takes in much of the authoritarian reign of Nicholas I and the more liberal regime of his successor Alexander II. It begins in a period marked by the reactionary impulses bred by the Decembrist Revolt of 1825 and follows the trajectory of literature through the nadir of despotic censorship in the 1840s and early 1850s through the rise of the thick journals and the liberalized censorship during the Great Reforms of the 1860s.

Writing and Bureaucracy

What did it mean to be an author within the state service? An illustration from the fateful year 1848 illustrates the situation facing these author-bureaucrats. 1848 was a year of revolutions; uprisings in Prussia and Austria threatened the existence of the monarchical system. Alexander Nikitenko, who worked in the domestic censorship, commented on Russian official measures in response to the supposed revolutionary threat: “Panicked fear has taken hold,” Nikitenko wrote after the February uprising in Paris and the March uprisings in Austro-Hungary and Germany. “While in Europe they are deciding questions of international importance, a drama is also playing out here at home, and one that is unfortunate and barbaric, pathetic for human self-worth, comical for an interested observer, but inexpressibly sad for those connected with it.”⁶ Nikitenko mentions a case in 1848 involving Vladimir Dal’, famous philologist and author, who was, as well, a functionary in the bureaucrat administration. Nikitenko writes; “Dal’ is forbidden to write. How? Dal’, the intelligent, kind, noble Dal’! Surely, he has not fallen in with the communists and socialists.”⁷ Dal’ came under suspicion for two short stories published in one of the leading thick journals of the day, *The Muscovite (Moskvitianin)*, to which he was a primary contributor. Nikitenko describes the contents of the first story, a tale about a gypsy girl who disappears in Moscow and cannot be found by the local authorities. Dmitry Buturlin, Director of the Public Library and head of the emergency commit-

⁶ Alexander V. Nikitenko, *Dnevnik v trekh tomakh* (Leningrad: Izd. Khudozhestvennaia Literatura, 1955), I:311.

⁷ Ibid., I:312.

tee formed to supplement censorship, objected to Dal's submission to the journal. In a missive to the Minister of Internal Affairs, Lev Perovskii, he complained that Dal's writing undermined the authority of the police. Dal's participation in the journal was not an uncommon phenomenon, since many bureaucrats contributed articles, reviews, and stories to the thick journals, and, even, as in the case of Alexander Nikitenko, served on editorial boards. Nikitenko describes the resulting confrontation: "Perovskii called Dal' to his office and chided him for wanting to write something besides official papers, and, in conclusion presented him the following choice: 'if you write – then don't serve; if you serve – then don't write.'"⁸ Bureaucrats' participation in the literary economy was curtailed by imperial fiat.

According to Nikitenko, Perovskii's formula asserts two types of distinct written work, one synecdochally formulated as "official documents" (*bumaga po sluzhbe*), meaning simply bureaucratic work, and the other as "writing" (*pisanie*). The former was to be assiduously practiced, the latter, avoided. The function of the bureaucracy is, in a very reductive sense, the production of official documents. These, however, serve as a direct medium through which to exercise the will of the ruler. The bureaucracy is responsible not only for producing such documents, but also for controlling their explication and application by subordinates throughout the institution.

Bureaucratic language is anti-literary, both ideologically and stylistically. Its own rules of discourse deny the possibility of double meaning. It seeks to fix mean-

⁸ Ibid.; I:313.

ing and to foreclose debate. This principle is the sine-qua-non for the production of documents that govern the administration of the state. “Writing,” however, is a different affair. Literature, typically, does not seek a direct correlation in action, and nations are not administered by literary code. In the chaos of 1848, however, such considerations were lost. Buturlin and other reactionaries in the government attributed to “writing” a power far beyond that which would otherwise be indicated by the relatively low rates of literacy and the limited circulation of the journals to which bureaucrat writers contributed. As Nikitenko went on to note in his journal, “Ideas and opinions were aflame mid-century, but at least everyone knew what was acceptable and what wasn’t.”⁹ Dal’ was censured because his depiction of the police who were unable to find the gypsy girl “instills distrust towards the government in the public.”¹⁰ The resolution followed: “reprimand the author, especially given that he is in the service.”¹¹

The charge in this case sounds particularly ominous because of its amorphous nature. The Censorship Statute of 1828 laid out several parameters for censorable expression, including “anything disrupting the sanctity of the highest autocratic power, or of respect towards the Imperial House, or anything against basic governmental rules,” or “good morals and modesty.”¹² No mention was made of any

9 Ibid., I: 314.

10 Ibid., I: 313.

11 Ibid., I: 313.

12 *Istoriia tsenzurnykh uchrezhdenii v Rossii v pervoi polovine XIX v. Komitet tsenzury Inostrannoï v Peterburge : 1828-1917 : Dokumenty i Materialy* eds. N.A. Grinchenko, et al. (Sankt-Peterburg :Rossiiskaia natsional'naia biblioteka, 2006), 15.

obligation by an author to uphold citizens' enthusiasm for and ultimate belief in the effectiveness of government as such. And a glance at the literature of the period preceding is enough to conclude that the government had come to expect criticism. Indeed, examples from Gogol's oeuvre immediately before this period prove that much more explicit criticisms of the Russian government sometimes went unpunished.¹³ "Writing" was seen as potentially subversive, but not all writing could be policed as effectively as that which flowed from the pens of Russia's civil servants. For civil servants such as Vladimir Dal' who did write, however, the path through the censorship was even more difficult.

Censorship

Censorship means to "examine in order to suppress or delete anything considered objectionable."¹⁴ In practice, censorship has come to stand for the imposition of extrinsic values on speech acts by individuals. Political authorities are typically credited with the power to censor speech when it is harmful to the community or to individuals' legal rights. In today's western societies, such limitations of free speech are typically proposed by the courts and may take the form of libel suits. Other limitations on free speech may be directly administered by the interested po-

13 Nicholas I noted the provocative nature of Gogol's play "Revizor," noting that "we have all come in for it, but I most of all."

14 "Censor" in Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/censor> (30 July 2016).

litical authorities, a situation predominant in Russia until 1906, and may take as its primary goal protecting the sanctity of political figures or systems.¹⁵

This, however, leaves a wide array of potentially censurable material and little in the way of method to answer the practical question of how a government could go about regulating all print within its borders. Little, in fact, did exist to guide the censors. The fears that lurked in the minds of the authorities were based on certain rhythms of social and intellectual resistance that threatened autocratic rule in Russia; as Holquist notes, the “essence of all censorship” was “the monologic terror of indeterminacy.”¹⁶ Such indeterminacy was rife in literature and in other practices of the everyday. As de Certeau writes:

Many everyday practices ... are tactical in character. And so are, more generally, many “ways of operating”: victories of the ‘weak’ over the ‘strong’ (whether the strength be that of powerful people or the violence of things or of an imposed order, etc.)... The Greeks called these ‘ways of operating’ metis. But they go much further back, to the im-memorial intelligence displayed in the tricks and imitations of plants and fishes in the depths of the ocean to the streets of modern mega-polises, there is a continuity in the permanence of these tactics.¹⁷

Such a description sounds much like the range of Russia’s emerging literary culture in the nineteenth century, a time rife with verbal invention and generic experimentation. Russia’s rulers so feared the cunning of its authors and intellectuals, a frac-

15 The censorship laws were changed in the wake of serious revolutionary unrest following the Russo-Japanese War. Censorship was officially ended, although certain laws pertaining to publishing material touching the person of the monarch did remain on the books.

16 Michael Holquist, “Corrupt Originals: The Paradox of Censorship” PMLA 9 (1994): 21.

17 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkely, Ca: University of California Press, 2009), xix.

tion of the literate population, which was already a tiny fraction of the country as a whole, that an entire division of the government (one of four expansive special divisions) and much bureaucratic energy were expended on surveilling it.¹⁸

In the Russian Empire, the bureaucracy demonstrated the reach of the autocrat and enforced the autocrat's vision of an orderly society.¹⁹ The point where literature was meant to touch the political order, then, was the censorship. The dominant political ideology of the Nicholaevan regime, formulated by Sergei Uvarov, the regime's chief ideologist (and minister in charge of censorship through much of Nicholas' reign), envisioned Russian identity as a seamless union of three broad tenets of the regime; Autocracy, Orthodoxy, Nationality. However, such rhetorical simplicity was undergirded by the raw political realities of imperial politics.²⁰ Nicholas' reign was bookended by the proto-revolutionary disorder of the Decembrist Uprisings at its inception and the martial chaos of the Crimean War at its eclipse. Nicholas' view of the order of things was closely attuned to the more combative political realities of the Empire. And this view trickled down through the vast bureaucratic

18 Eventually, Nicholas I grew so paranoid that he created the Buturlin Committee (also known as the Committee of 2nd April), to censor the censorship itself; "As Nicholas told Baron von Korf: 'since I cannot read all the productions of our literature, you will be able to do so for me and to convey to me your impressions, so that my dereliction in this matter will end.'" Charles Ruud, *Fighting Words: Imperial Censorship and the Russian Press, 1804-1906* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 88.

19 For a fuller discussion of the image of the Tsar among the populace in the era of Nicholas I see Richard Wortmann, "Epitomes of the Nation" Scenarios of Power (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 142 – 166.

20 For a short but detailed discussion of these concepts see Bruce Lincoln, *Nicholas I: Emperor and Autocrat of All the Russias* (Bloomington, In: Indiana University Press, 1978), 240–252.

apparatus that he oversaw. The relationship between censorship and literature was no different. Alexander Nikitenko records Nicholas' view of the relationship: "They have pencils: *these* are their scepters."²¹

The position of the censor was a microcosmic reflection of the position of the Tsar; literature existed as a vassal of the censorship. All writing must be subjugated to the censorship, as were all things subjugated to his Imperial Majesty. Confident in his own abilities to police literature, Nicholas took it upon himself to be Pushkin's personal censor, a job for which a real scepter was substituted for the pencil.

Censorship duties were replicated across a wide range of diverse government bodies, including the Imperial Court, the civilian government, the military, and the governing body of the Church, the Synod, and all supporting separate censorship bodies. The censorship committees were home to government servants whose service did not entail the policing of government revenues or servicing the administrative network of the massive empire, but consisted of reading. To be sure, "reading" in the sense that the censor practices it is a loaded term, since it entails a tendentious set of interpretative methods and punitive practices. In the protean conditions of Russia's literary institutions, all writing presented a curious challenge to a government that looked upon innovation with a wary eye. The censors were charged with monitoring all writing that existed on the territory of the Russian Empire, both of domestic and foreign provenance. Beyond the hardships imposed by the volume of the work, censorship also imposed a mounting political and social cost on Russia.

21 Nikitenko, I: 275.

This point was not lost on Vladimir Odoyevsky. As that dangerous creature, a thinking bureaucrat, Odoyevsky was in danger of being misunderstood by zealous enforcers. He realized early on that, if he were to lead a successful literary life, he might best be served by “retreat to the relative backwater of library administration.” Judging by his high rank, he did so quite successfully.²² However, Odoyevsky appears to have believed in the institution of bureaucracy (*chinovnichestvo*) – provided it worked efficiently.²³

Such was the strange relationship of this author to the bureaucracy, one that would turn out to be fairly common. Bureaucracy could be used to extinguish creative impulses but also to ignite them. The dusty halls of the ministries in which they served inspired the virtuosic descriptions of bureaucracy by Nikolai Gogol, Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin, and other authors such as Nikolai Pavlov, Ivan Goncharov, and Pyotr Butkov. Odoyevsky’s years of service, however, led him to stress an aspect of censorship that will be instructive for this study:

The censor is powerless against *the idea itself*. The widely-held belief that ideas flow from books into society is a highly dangerous optical illusion. Almost all books are just “a thermometer of ideas” already present in society: breaking the thermometer does not mean that you change the weather; you merely destroy the means of monitoring the changes. The nature of language and the skills of authors are such, fur-

22 “Senior Senator of the Eighth Department of the Government Senate, Hofmeister and Privy Councilor, the possessor of various decorations.” Neil Cornwell, *The Life, Times, and Milieu of V.F. Odoyevsky, 1804-1869* (London: Athlone Press, 1986), 205.

23 This attitude appealed to his superiors but was scorned by his peers; as literary critic Ivan Panaev (1812 – 1862) complained: “[Odoyevsky acted] in pursuit of vulgar bureaucratic formalism and at the same time insisted that he wanted to write a novel in which he would ridicule this formalism...” *Ibid.*, 205.

thermore, as to render it beyond the capability of any authorities to prevent the further transmission of ideas in published form.²⁴

Censorship, it turns out, was simply a way of delaying the inevitable, but also of inviting it. By demanding strict censorship, the government was hampering its own interests and denying itself access to the very information that was vital to its continued existence. Beyond the stream of births, deaths, marriages, acres of yield, conscriptions, import duties, and the like, the Russian bureaucracy needed a metric by which to measure opinion. In the grand scheme of the nineteenth century, censorship did not limit the Russian reader so much as it limited the ability of the government to understand the changes afoot in the country.

Indeed, in Odoyevsky's understanding, the nature of language meant that by fiercely limiting the print sphere in Russia, the government was continually engaged in a rearguard action against a growing intellectual insurgency that it was helpless to stop. The government's suppression of dissent's most literal and obvious expression created multiple registers in which the educated public could communicate ideas that the government found dangerous. The result was a coded language that authors used to subvert the existing order. "The idea itself" was more dangerous when its merit was not subjected to the court of public opinion, and its intellectual worth could not be discussed openly.

In the following chapters I examine the bureaucrat during a period of flux in Russian literature. After Alexander Pushkin's and Nikolai Gogol's treatments of bu-

24 Ibid., 200-201.

reocracy, literary epigones began to toy with their own reconfigurations of these powerful topoi. Each subsequent epoch in Russia's political life seemed to call for a re-calculation of Russian literature's relationship with its most widely abused character, the Russian bureaucrat.

Starting from the image of the bureaucrat popularized by Gogol', most comprehensively in his 1842 short story "The Overcoat" (*Shinel'*), Chapter 1 examines the fate of the literary bureaucrat over the span of the nearly two decades that followed, ending around 1859 at a unique moment of civic and political hope in Russia. The coming of the Great Reforms and the opening up of Russia's politics to public debate meant that the bureaucrat might come to be seen not as a faceless cog, but as a real agent of positive change in Russia. The civic moment was matched by the exposé movement in literature, which sought to engage with emerging narratives of reform and realignment among Russia's social classes. This moment did not last, however, and neither did the bureaucrat's place in the pantheon of Russian cultural heroes.

Chapter 2 examines how the pendulum swung back toward a more satirical Gogolian view of the bureaucrat in literature, stressing the petty and grotesque aspects of Russia's service class, now updated to suit the new realities of Russian literature and society. The literature of the bureaucrat became more straightforwardly satirical and journalistic in its comic precision. The slapstick of Koz'ma Prutkov, the most famous literary mystification of the age, and the hyperbole of Saltykov-Shchedrin's satire represented a shift towards both a broader readership and an expanded civic role for literature.

Having discussed the bureaucrat in literary representation, Chapter 3 turns to the bureaucrat and literary work. Here, I examine the conditions for literary production from within the offices of the censorship, staffed by literary men and scholars subject to two increasingly incompatible masters, literature and the state. The already difficult process of publishing in the heavily regulated print sphere was made nearly impossible by the censors' additional responsibilities of monitoring literature in all its manifestations. In this chapter we look, as well, at a literary conversation between Alexander Nikitenko and Alexander Herzen, who, separated by a thousand miles and by the interdiction of the state, enact a dialogue between the state and its banished shadow.

Chapter 4 examines the literary career of the most prominent author-bureaucrat in Russian literature, Mikhail Evgrafovich Saltykov-Shchedrin. Devotion to his bureaucratic career, tested by years of exile from the capital and the scheming of the provincial administrations that he strove to reform, led both to his excellent literary depictions of the bureaucratic machine and to his abiding disappointment with the system of government under which he labored. This chapter looks at Saltykov-Shchedrin's engagement with the bureaucracy from a period of excitement at the outset of the Great Reforms and from the vantage point of his later disillusionment following the collapse of the Reform era in the late-1860s. In re-imagining the trope of the bureaucrat, Saltykov comprehensively and purposefully updates these literary types, thereby forging a new satiric vocabulary.

This dissertation tries to pair several outstanding questions in the literary and social history of nineteenth-century Russia in a productive manner. In ap-

proaching the role of the bureaucrat not only as a character in Russian literature, but also as a participant in the creation of the very same literature, I hope to show that institutional boundaries were more permeable than one might assume. Some of the most important literary conversations of the day were shaped by the professional discourse of the bureaucracy.

CHAPTER I

WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN: BUREAUCRATS REFORMED

-Petersburg was the same – the bureaucrat had changed.

-N. F. Pavlov- "Demon"

This chapter examines the fate of the bureaucrat in fiction from Gogol's treatment in the 1830s through to the early 1860s. Against the grain of deeply ironic and even frivolous literary depictions of the bureaucrat, the literary tendencies arising in the mid-1850s and preceding the Great Reforms gave rise to the bureaucratic hero, a perhaps overzealous and premature attempt to reform the bureaucrat as a workable model for a middle-class protagonist. Could the authors engaged in this restoration impart to the bureaucrat the agency that he had so notably lacked in previous depictions? Would this project of civic re-appropriation and empowerment be met with support from the literary establishment? Finally, in the two depictions of the bureaucratic hero examined in this chapter there is a lingering tension between creativity and utility that reflects the tension between literature and service in authors' careers. Was the ultimate failure of the bureaucratic hero due to their authors' failure to resolve this larger conflict for themselves?

If there is a crux to the problem of the bureaucrat in Russian literature it is that the author was not allowed to exist without the bureaucracy. There was no element of Russian life that the bureaucracy did not touch. And one of the things that it touched most infelicitously was the pride of the Russian author. When Peter the Great established the Table of Ranks in 1722, he "explicitly linked a person's status in society to his rank in the service hierarchy,"²⁵ meaning that only one career path was open to the Russian noble, that of service to the state. No matter how far a man excelled in his "amateur" pursuits outside of the service, he could only be recognized

25 Brenda Meehan-Waters, *Autocracy and Aristocracy* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1982), 21.

for his talents in a profession chosen for him by the state. Such a situation was relieved by the old eighteenth-century system of patronage; talented authors could, by offering their services to the Tsar or to well-connected nobles, advance within the service. Indeed, for much of Catherine the Great's reign, literature was practically a branch of the state service.²⁶

When this patronage system began to fall away and in the early nineteenth-century literature moved towards professionalization, authors were left without the benefit of commensurate rank for their literary achievements. Such a situation had several effects that are important when considering the treatment of the bureaucrat in literature. Authors came into increasing conflict with the bureaucracy and came to see it as a roadblock to their creativity and literary careers. Pushkin, one of the first authors to introduce the plight of the bureaucrat into Russian literature in his narrative poem "The Bronze Horseman," perceived in the service the systematic degradation of the individual, as well as the institutional degradation of the old noble order. His poem, "My Family Tree" (*Moia rodoslovnaia*) takes on the bureaucracy from both ends, skewering both the bureaucratic culture in officialdom and the cheapening of the literary sphere through commercialization, a process he characterizes as akin to the decline of the Russian aristocracy.

With cruel laughter they, my fellows,
Russian scribblers of the mass
Call me, egads, aristocratic.

26 For a fuller discussion of this phenomenon see Irina Reyfman, *Rank and Style: Russians in State Service, Life, and Literature* (Boston, Mass.: Academic Studies Press, 2012).

Observe, would you, a farce so crass!
I am neither officer, nor assessor,
...not a newly “cross-ed” nobleman,
neither academic, nor professor,
But a simple Russian bourgeois.
-Pushkin, 1830²⁷

In the poem, written in mocking doggerel style, Pushkin collapses the Table of Ranks into a couplet that mixes the officially high and low, and by ascribing to himself only the attributes of social estate and not rank, the author is left to construct his identity outside of the established system, an outlaw of sorts who refuses to be bound by the conventions of rank. (Indeed, Pushkin remained piqued throughout his life by the low rank assigned him, as he rose only to the position of *kammerjunker*, a service position in the Imperial Household that corresponded to the rank of titular councilor in the Civil Service.)²⁸ Pushkin was indeed staking his authorial identity on his refusal to conform and such an oppositional stance meant that the identity of the author would be built, in part, around a series of antitheses. The ultimate antithesis

27 Smeias' zhestoko nad sobratom
Pisaki russkie tolpoi
Menia zovut aristokratom.
Smotri, pozhalui, vzdor kakoi!
Ne ofitser Ia, ne assessor,
Ia po krestu ne dvorianin,
Ne akademik, ne professor,
Ia prosto russkii meshchanin.

Sobranie sochinenii A.S. Pushkina v 10-i tomakh. (Moscow: izd. Pravda, 1980), 2: 330-332

28 Irina Reyzman, How Russia Learned to Write: Literature and the Imperial Table of Ranks (Madison, Wi: University of Wisconsin Press, 2016), 53.

of the man who existed outside of the system was the man who existed wholly inside of it: the bureaucrat.

It was not Pushkin, however, who elevated the character of the bureaucrat to a primary place in Russian literature. Nikolai Gogol' created the iconic Russian bureaucrat. Gogol's bureaucrat characters include Akaky Akakyevich Bashmachkin in "The Overcoat," the martyr-like copy assistant and lowly collegiate assessor, and Aksenty Ivanovich Poprishchin in "The Diary of a Madman", the lovelorn titular counselor who wishes to marry the daughter of a superior and whose descent into madness is recorded in a series of unique diary entries. In the case of Bashmachkin, the banality of his professional activity becomes an essential part of his private identity, as he continues his mindless copying in his garret apartment in the Petersburg tenements in his idle hours. The grotesque exaltation of banality and its synonymy with the characters' conception of self would come to characterize literary bureaucrats for the remainder of the century and beyond.

The banality of bureaucratic functions and the deeply ambivalent and even immoral nature of the cadres and hierarchies that surrounded them set off the Civil Service as a sort of netherworld in Russian literature. The topoi of bureaucracy seem, in some respects, to take on the fantastical and medieval qualities recognizable from religious martyrologies and saints' lives. In these stories, saints seek solace from the temptations of secular life through simple pursuits that bring the saint closer to God, or, they exemplify the faith through their imitative suffering for Christ, with some bearing the title of "fools for Christ" (*yurodivy*) and living as outcasts from society. In the bureaucratic iteration of this tradition, the bureaucrats suffer

for their professional calling or for the simplicity of purpose that they display in performing the menial tasks of their office. Some, like Akaky Akakyevich, even come to resemble martyrs in their suffering for a banal ideal.

Whatever the similarities to medieval religious conceits, Gogol's depictions of bureaucrats were a paradigmatic continuation of the "little man" theme in Russian literature. Gogol's characters are signally unfit for life outside of the bureau and away from the scrivener's stool, and they meet mostly ignominious literary ends. Indeed, Gogol's bureaucrats were dismembered in "The Nose," turned zombie in "The Overcoat," and locked in the madhouse in "The Diary of a Madman."

The monstrous bureaucracy that Nicholas had constructed from his paranoia was a factory for the literary imagination and produced all manner of phantasmagoric characters. Separated both from the aristocracy, who "feared nothing more than becoming like the official,"²⁹ and the lower classes, which distrusted the marks of bureaucratic control that seemed to perpetuate their suffering, the character that seemed to be first in line for drubbing was the bureaucrat. Any literary salvation would be tricky work.

29 Barbara Heldt Monter, *Koz'ma Prutkov: The art of parody* (The Hague: Mouton, 1972), 2.

What Might Be – the Bureaucrat as Hero in Sollogub's The Bureaucrat

In 1856 Count Vladimir Sollogub (1813-1882) wrote a one-act play titled, simply, The Bureaucrat (*Chinovnik*).³⁰ The play is a peculiar example of the various aesthetic, intellectual, and political tendencies that combined to form the short-lived and highly tendentious movement in literature known as exposé literature (*oblichitel'stvo*).³¹ Expose literature grew up in the lively polemical atmosphere that followed the stunning defeat of Russian arms in the Crimean War following the fall of Sevastopol' in 1855. Russians, reeling from the hard-fought loss, and suddenly awakened to the real scale of the developmental gap between them and the Western powers, looked to the force that the deceased Emperor Nicholas had long sought to repress, literature. Its primary polemical object was bureaucratic venality and the backwardness of Russia's agrarian society, including its continuing legal tradition of ensnared labor. Sollogub's play deals with none of these issues by name. Instead, he attempts to cultivate a new type in literature, the bureaucratic hero. Since readers were accustomed to the satirical and the comic in literary treatments of the bureaucrat, such an approach was new.

The dialectic of center versus province cuts across the play's moral argument, as the provinces are both the locus of Russian vices (the plot revolves around

30 Vladimir Sollogub belonged to a family of russified Polish gentry and worked for long periods of his career in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

31 Although frequently translated as both "investigatory" and "denunciatory"...this word is difficult to render simply in English as it combines the sense of "expose," "accuse," and "denounce"...but might most properly be rendered as the French-inflected exposé... thus, giving us exposé literature. An example of the genre outside of Russia is Honore de Balzac's 1837 novel Lost Illusions.

the venality of corrupt provincial elites) and the place where the honest cosmopolitan is shown to his greatest advantage. Unlike Gogol's hero Chichikov, a beneficiary of provincial greed, Sollogub's Nadimov becomes the instrument of reconciliation between the deep-seated *ressentiment* of the Nicholaevan era and the renewed civic hopes brought about by the promise of reform.

Sollogub's short comic play centers on a property dispute between two provincial landowners. The legal plot is supplemented, and then supplanted, by the romantic subplot. The Countess, introduced as a "rich widow," is bored with the provinces and with her litigious neighbor, and the property dispute provides an occasion for the arrival of a bureaucratic representative, Alexander Nadimov. He is a rare breed of bureaucrat, combining impeccable patriotism, civic virtue, and aristocratic poise. Nadimov gives a humble estimation of his own worth in a conversation with the Countess:

Countess: ... What is usefulness? How can one be useful? Who can think that they are useful? And you yourself, can you say to yourself with a clear conscience that you are really useful?

...
Nadimov: I have the honor to report that I am in the service. I am a civil servant.

Countess: Oh! I forgot... Yes, of course, to serve, to be a civil servant, to process long reports, -- it must be very boring, very important.

Nadimov. There are no trifling duties. One's duty is always important. By the way, service is a calling that does not require sharply positive talents, as would science or art. In the service, in more humble positions especially, one can bring real utility through negative qualities alone.

...
We need civil servants who are honest, literate, sensible, and hard working. To me all of these qualities are negative ones. I make a sizeable living, I've studied enough, I've seen enough, and I don't become distracted from my duties because there is nothing for which I am searching or for which I wish. Happiness is a thing of chance; utili-

ty is a realizable goal. I am sure that Russia needs civil servants not by virtue of title, but civil servants by virtue of action; this is why I decided on the service, not because I need it, (*spoken with pride*) but, rather, it needs me.³²

In Nadimov's estimation "negative qualities" are those qualities that are not "sharply positive," that is, those that are not particularly remarkable. This confusing metric is actually a criticism that targets the corrupt elite. The elite value status and rank above the "negative" capacities of the capable bureaucratic toiler. Negative qualities are those qualities that allow the bureaucrat to maximize his professional utility, that allow him to pass relatively unscathed through the suffocating and corrupt world of the elite that would otherwise subvert his desire to do honest service. Not only does Nadimov recommend a series of unspectacular qualities to the successful (if uncelebrated) bureaucrat, he also takes care to reduce his own, presumably positive capacities: "I make a sizeable living ... and I don't become distracted from my duties because there is nothing for which I am searching or for which I wish." Nadimov is, in other words, a tabula rasa primed for the unrelenting boredom of the service career and unimpressed by the potential rewards of rank. At the same time, he also possesses the qualities of nobility, and thus cleverly straddles the boundaries between positive and negative qualities.

Nadimov's earnest naïveté sets up the plot development and anticipates the play's stock comic element, attempted bribery. In the Gogolian plot, the bureaucrat develops through systemic misrecognition, as in the play The Government Inspector

32 Vladimir Sollogub, *Chinovnik* (St. Petersburg: tipografia E. Veimar, 1856), 14.

(*Revizor*). That play's protagonist, Khlestakov, was the happy beneficiary of a system of bribery and corruption. In this instance, society practices a willful misrecognition whereby the character assumes the role that society has created for him, becoming an agent of chaos and an accidental scourge of bureaucratic ineptitude. Indeed, in the Gogolian iteration, the absurdity of the bureaucratic system is exposed by its very inability to localize human error. All miscommunications are systemic and the resulting error is hard to localize. In Sollogub's counter-narrative, the bureaucrat is, though a naif, still a meticulously honest hero on a minor scale, whose devotion to service is bolstered by his refusal to countenance ambition to advancement or rank. The honest bureaucrat's values are a simple negation of worldly values, and the honest bureaucrat succeeds where others have failed by confining himself to the sphere of action implied by his diminutive role in state affairs.

In this version, Sollogub's ideal bureaucrat could possess the instruments of worldliness and still might, like the scientist and artist, possess positive qualities. But, the true civic hero chooses not to use these powers, instead preferring to practice a sort of bureaucratic *kenosis*, an emptying of the self in the hopes that he might be filled with the national spirit. Nadimov's patriotism is on full display in the following scene:

Countess: and whom do you love?

Nadimov: Me, Countess? Yes, I live through love, I – I am always happy in love ... Love for our fatherland, Countess, love for Russia.

Countess: ... And only this?

Nadimov: And only! What more does one need? It seems that this feeling is enough for a lifetime, and even more...³³

33 Ibid., 15.

By subsuming romantic love to patriotic feeling, Nadimov jostles readers' expectations of genre, delaying the romantic denouement and replacing the female love interest with the object of his patriotic affection, the nation.³⁴ Nadimov's rebuff of romantic love in this exchange further develops the theme of "negative qualities." Nadimov seeks to elevate the workaday qualities of diligent service while still retaining the air of nobility, a posture that is achieved by describing his service ethic as a sort of civic asceticism. However genre expectations dictate that the resolution of the love plot must be delayed, but not cancelled altogether. The Countess's romantic instincts will ultimately conquer Nadimov's quasi-monastic bureaucratic instincts, but the resulting product will reflect a new civic purpose suitable for the times.

The development of the romantic element in the play suggests a rapprochement between two disaffected elements of society: the landed elite and the service elite. The historian Nicholas Riasanovsky describes the gradual attenuation of the intellectual and cultural affinities that developed during the Russian Enlightenment under Catherine the Great, a period during which the court at St. Petersburg was at the center of liberal thought. Riasanovsky notes, "By 1850, and even more by the time of Nicholas I's death in 1855, the simple faith in the principles of the Age of Reason and in enlightened despotism had been left far behind."³⁵ In the more strict-

34 Interestingly, the love here is figured as love for the masculine gendered "fatherland."

35 Nicholas Riasanovsky, *A parting of ways: government and the educated public in Russia, 1801-1855* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 251.

ly bureaucratic hierarchy instituted by Nicholas I, a new culture was taking precedence. In response to the heavy-handed tactics of Nicholas' secret police force, the so-called Third Division, which was tasked with rooting out intellectual opposition to the autocracy, the cultural and artistic development of the country was retarded and by the end of the period, "the political landscape was not only inhospitable to new ideas, as is usually the case in an established society, but remarkably bare of any entity from which new ideas might grow."³⁶ In this climate the old alliances between the service elite and the gentry were fraying. The intellectual component of bureaucratic service was de-emphasized and the idea of service itself became passé among the gentry.

Nadimov is depicted as a member of the elite who has chosen to take on the thankless tasks of the provincial bureaucrat. By reviving patriotic discourse and, moreover, by overlaying it on the romantic subplot, Nadimov becomes a bridge between the disaffected elite and the Russian government. Even more, in exploring how Nadimov might come to reconcile his occupation as a bureaucrat with the fact of his nobility, Sollogub is, in effect, seeking a compromise for those who, like him, sought to combine the roles in real life. Moreover, Nadimov, in devoting himself to service, has given up the potential to pursue his creative instincts and his "positive" qualities towards a career as an artist. Indeed, the countess' misrecognition of Nadimov is caused by her own failure to discern her former swashbuckling correspondent in the form of the domesticated bureaucrat. The bridge between the elite

36 Victor Ripp, "Turgenev as a Social Novelist" in *Literature and Society in Imperial Russia*, ed, William M. Todd (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1978), 254.

and the bureaucracy thus involves a choice between the creative urge, native to those with “positive qualities,” such as artists and scientists, and the responsibility to demonstrate “utility,” the true duty of the civil servant, Sollogub’s “bureaucrat by virtue of action.”

Thus, the resolution of the conflict inherent in Nadimov’s past and present is a microcosm of the moral conflict between the aristocrat and the civil servant, but also between the author and bureaucrat. Nadimov, in rejecting both his past and his positive values for the negative value of utility, makes a choice for the Civil Service and against intellectual work. The new values implicit in the bureaucratic hero are the values of “action” that is in tension with the intellectual quibbling of the author and intellectual.

What, then, would the successful literary instantiation of the new bureaucratic hero look like? Nadimov’s pre-history, very much like that of the aristocratic Sollogub, involved succumbing to Byronic wanderlust.

Countess: ... We called you a knight. I read all of your letters from Italy, from Egypt.³⁷

This pre-history also suggests certain tropes of literary self-creation present in the Romantic era and which, naturally, attached to those literary aristocrats for whom travel across the littoral was feasible. As Carl Thompson notes in relation to the trope of the “suffering traveller,” “[he]...suggests a broader, deeper knowledge of the

37 Sollogub, *Chinovnik*, 37.

world, and a broader and deeper self-knowledge, and a greater awareness of the extent of one's self-discipline and one's physical and mental hardiness."³⁸

If the additional biographical outlines of Nadimov's past are meant to bury his aristocratic credentials, they are also re-deployed as evidence of Nadimov's conversion to settled, professional adulthood. For Pushkin and Lermontov, as well as for the other authors of the Romantic period in Russian letters, Romanticism represented what Elizabeth Allen has identified as the basic conflict between, "the attractions of the simple life, with the security and affection it offers, and the ecstasies afforded by a life of liberty and adventure, beauty and passion, fantasy and vision – in a word, transcendence."³⁹ In Sollogub's variation, though, the issue is decided without the tempestuous violence present in Lermontov's *Hero of Our Time* or Pushkin's "Prisoner of the Caucasus." Travel is a pre-history that is related only as a cautionary maxim distracting from those "negative qualities" that Sollogub advocates for the honest civil servant, a decidedly, and, even intentionally, un-romantic character. In fact, as Lotman notes in his study of dandyism in Russian literature, "[A] ... characteristic sign of everyday dandyism was the pose of disappointment and ennui."⁴⁰ Furthermore, Lotman provides an example from Pushkin's correspondence with the poet Anton Delvig about Pushkin's own brother, who, after becoming involved with a married woman and finding himself saddled with large debts, went

38 Carl Thompson, *The Suffering Traveller and the Romantic Imagination* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 273.

39 Elizabeth Cherek Allen, *A Fallen Idol is Still a God* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 25.

40 Iurii M. Lotman, *Besedy o Russkoi kul'ture: byt i traditsii russkogo dvorianstvo xviii – nachalo xix veka* (Saint Petersburg: Isskustvo-Saint Petersburg, 1994), 130.

to Georgia, to “restore his wilted soul.” And yet, Sollogub’s Nadimov makes the opposite journey. The key to restoration is not a movement towards the international periphery, the unknown spaces of Empire, but, instead, towards the interior spaces of Empire, the domestic center.⁴¹ Indeed, Sollogub inverts romantic conventions after subtly activating them, thereby making an attempt to domesticate and reappropriate the romantic hero for the Civil Service.

Nadimov’s ennui does not arise from the strictures of class and service from which the earlier breed of romantic heroes fled, but is instead a consequence of that very flight, which he has rejected. If the romantic hero is made to feel, then Nadimov’s new bureaucrat suppresses feeling for the greater good. Sollogub reappropriates the productive model of the romantic anti-hero from the 1820s and 1830s, but rejects the Gogolian bureaucratic anti-hero. Sollogub’s bureaucrat is still heroic, he simply finds that service requires such heroism to be diverted to paperwork. This, perhaps, is the origin of Nadimov’s patriotic verve. Love of country replaces, or at least displaces, romantic conventions of heroism, violence, and passion, redeploying them as civic virtues directed towards the fulfillment of a greater purpose manifest in imperial service.

⁴¹ for the colonialist version against which Nadimov’s riposte is issued, see Susan Layton’s discussion of Pushkin’s construction of the romantic Orient in Susan Layton, Russian Literature and Empire: Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 15 – 35.

Pavlov's Answer

The response to Sollogub's play seems, in retrospect, indicative of the looming conflict between the radical critics of the 1860s, on the side of the nihilists, and, what the scholar Charles Moser has described as "the anti-nihilist authors," a group of authors including Aleksey Pisemsky who rejected the stance of the radical authors and represented a link to the liberal values of the earlier generation of the "men of the 1840s."⁴² Sollogub's bureaucratic heroism was countered by a man familiar with the genre, Nikolai Filipovich Pavlov (1803–1864), who, besides being a well-known author, was a civil servant in the Moscow court system. Pavlov's response to Sollogub's play came in the form of a devastatingly thorough pamphlet, published in 1857, titled "An Analysis of Count Sollogub's Play The Bureaucrat." In the pamphlet, Pavlov takes exception to the character of the bureaucrat Nadimov and, over the course of more than one hundred pages, attacks the entire edifice of exposé literature. This body of writing, more of a civico-didactic movement than a comprehensive literary genre, lacked the compelling literary force of the increasingly complex realist novel. But, exposé literature also represented a new attempt at synthesis between radical journalism and literary writing.

In an article on the development of the Russian novel in the nineteenth-century, the scholar Nikita Prutskov notes the development of the "person of non-noble rank" (*raznochinet*) as a generic character in literature, citing an example from Pavlov's 1839 story "Demon": "N.F. Pavlov was one of the first who was able to

42 For a fuller discussion of the importance of these authors see: Charles A. Moser, Antinihilism in the Russian novel of the 1860's (London: Mouton, 1964).

pierce the secret tortuous struggles of the poor man in the history of the Russian novel and short story..."⁴³ But the story's title evokes another stock character in Russian literature, the demon, and in doing so harks back to an earlier era. As Kristi Groberg writes: "The Demon had earlier entered Russian Romantic literature in the 'Demon' poems of Alexander Pushkin, who, under the influence of Goethe sought artistic expression for a profound personal experience of 'life-killing skepticism,' which was to him 'the evil demon of our age.'"⁴⁴

"Demon" begins in Andrey Ivanovich's study, a miasmic space that is described through a detailed list of its interior effects, and, secondly, through its place in Petersburg's mythic landscape. The protagonist, Andrey Ivanovich, occupies the liminal space between the microscopic and macroscopic realities of Petersburg, that is, between the microscopic sphere of fetishized objects (used to construct personality in a world where status derives from a collation of effects), and the macroscopic world of the mythos, the externally-defined monumental topography that occludes the individual and magnifies the cataclysmic forces beyond human control.

Once upon a time on the brightest night in Petersburg, on the Petersburg Side, a bureaucrat, about forty-five years of age sat at his writing desk... The small room served him as an office. It was cleaner than the office of any court clerk in the rest of Russia. Beyond this, a few items proved that their owner didn't just swim in ink, that he wasn't always busy with affairs; but that, instead, he allowed himself to enjoy life, to diversify his occupations, that he felt the necessity of enlightenment and a thirst for poetry. What struck the casual observ-

43 Nikita I. Prutskov, "Russkii Roman 40-50x godov" in *Istoria Russkogo romana v dvukh tomakh*, ed. A. S. Bushmin' (Moscow: Izd. Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1962), 110.

44. Kristi A. Groberg, "The Shade of Lucifer's Dark Wing: Satanism in Silver Age Russia" in Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 127.

er especially was that, happily, he did not read anything in a foreign language and that he fed on the works of his native soil; ergo, he found himself in the exalted state of the Turk who cannot see other men's wives. A nice little Alexander Column from bronze, a few lithographs of Russian work, an issue of some journal or other, two or three tomes of some novel and a nightingale in a cage satisfied the whims of the mind and the heart. Despite the arrangement of the room, it was impossible not to reprimand the enlightened bureaucrat. The column, the lithographs and the nightingale were, of course, purchased; the books, judging by their scattered parts, were borrowed: the patriarchal habits were preserved in all of their purity not only by the bureaucrats, but also by people more fastidious, wealthier, more spoiled by the civic vices of education: no one asked to carry your coat, and everyone jostles to read your book. I almost forgot to mention the most important decorations in the office – a pile of official papers...⁴⁵

The first description locates the reader in the typically mundane environment of the petty clerk, a well-defined *topos* that became still more over-determined in the wake of Gogol's famous series of petty clerks. Andrey Ivanovich's office contains the requisite effects of a lower-level bureaucrat, a smattering of bourgeois art objects and Russian-language books that indicate his unquestioning allegiance to the Nicholaevan status quo. The tongue-in-cheek description actually works to deconstruct the protagonist according to a different set of hackneyed Nicholaeven conventions. The dearth of foreign-language materials indicates a nativist tendency that excludes the individual from the circles of critical and intellectual thought. Pavlov considers that a Russian-heavy reading pile would produce a circumscribed worldview that, in the Nicholaevan era, reproduced the reactionary tone of the

45 Nikolay Pavlov, "Demon" in *Russkaia romanticheskia povest'*, ed. V.I. Sakharov (Moscow: izd. Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1980), 3-6.

heavily censored press appendages.⁴⁶ The bronzed memento of the Alexander Column is a mise-en-abyme of Petersburg's mythical topography; that Andrey Ivanovich chose for his pitifully small collection of art a replica of a local monument represents the myopic boundaries of his world. Andrey Ivanovich is not only insular in his Russian-ness, he is also insular because he happens to live in Petersburg, the bureaucratic capital.

But, beyond unfashionability, Andrey Ivanovich's office and his occupation reflect the stagnant tendencies of the Russian state and the bureaucracy's iterativity.

...Whose fate was being decided under the hand of some gray person, in the corner of a cheap apartment, by the light of a strange night and a bedroom candle? Where was the one who was being sought by the all-powerful bureaucratic document? On the shore of which sea, in which of Russia's snowfields? Andrey Ivanovich was *resolutely* uncertain exactly what the case was about. His sharp nose was about to assume the function of a pen; but here he came to, shook his head, put both hands against the table, lifted himself up, extinguished the candle and approached the window. On the far shore, a grand portrait flashed now dark, now light. Here one was able to stand for a long time, to shiver before the view of human power, of human wealth and of the granite of the North; one might wish to move there, to the other side of the Neva, into one of the houses that were, all of them, more spacious than the apartment of Andrey Ivanovich. But he was not concerned, he glanced out and walked away with the same expression with which he had come. He did not want to move anything, to change or correct anything, all of the buildings were in their places, everything was fine, and he didn't even want to move himself. The correct flow of life and a habituation to regularity, to formality, to lines, saved him from un-fulfillable wishes, from harmful comparisons of himself with those around him, of the Petersburg side with the Palace Embankment; in a word, from the stupid tortures of imagination.

46 A fuller picture of the Russian reading public of the era can be gleaned from Jeffrey Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read: Literature and Popular Literature 1861-1917* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1989).

The scene playfully reproduces Russia's hierarchies through written and visual metaphor. The composite citizen of the Russian state is imagined as the nameless subject of a bureaucratic file, reduced to a point on a map of a place marked for the imagination by undulating fields of snow. Indeed, if the unknown citizen exists only on the paper that records his identity, then Andrey Ivanovich himself creates the third dimension with his pen. It is only through the application of pen to paper that the contents therein take on a certain form, that geography and identity come to have any meaning. Andrey Ivanovich is accustomed to being a sort of inert prism through which the lines of power are disseminated through the pen and across Russia. It is through his application of pen to paper that the bureaucratic vision of Russia is re-constituted across its vast distances, just as the locus of power, St. Petersburg, is re-constituted in miniature in his office. Just as Russia becomes a literal extension of the body of the autocrat, its affairs are subsumed to the body of the bureaucrat.

The next scene implicates Andrey Ivanovich in the endlessly self-reflexive array of Petersburg tropes. Andrey Ivanovich, caught up in a reverie about the virtues of hierarchical stability, steps into the room of his scandalously young wife and, suddenly confused, imagines himself as an intruder threatening her virtue:

...A man was next to her, a man in her bedroom! ... This robber, who had come to sully the haven of innocence with crime, this criminal had climbed through the window in order to rob the orphan; but the wide Bukhara robe, fastened as it would be around a proper citizen, the oval of the face, approaching spherical lines, expressing goodness, vouched for the legality of his daring and the purity of his intentions. However, he stood just as if he was a condemned man, as if his conscience was tormenting him! ... Certainly not now, certainly he would not again dare to approach her? He, a knight of the livery for twenty years and a fourth-order holder of the Stanislav Cross! ... Even

if Anna had been on his neck, even if his head had been free of grey hairs, even if he had a stone house on the Prospect!⁴⁷

Andrey Ivanovich's patriarchal idyll has transformed into a crisis of identity. While his gaze directed both down towards his papers and outwards towards the city, he is constantly caught in the same distorting lens that skews the official gaze. If the subject of the bureaucratic papers lacks identity without the mark of an official pen, then Andrey Ivanovich might also lack identity without the official marks of distinction. Here begins the process of destabilization, the atomization of the self into radically incoherent parts. The atomization, in its turn, is realized as the instantaneous recognition of the barriers of class and rank that he had once taken for granted and rationalized as a "habituation to lines."

The exposure of these processes, however, leads to a severing. Therefore, Andrey Ivanovich becomes *doubled* as the certainties of his domestic domain are destabilized by the uncertainties of his status within the larger sphere of the Petersburg elite. He signals the transformation by referencing the discourse of rank and hierarchies, and, specifically, his symbolic lack of a higher mark of rank and prestige in the Civil Service, the Order of St. Anna.⁴⁸

47 Pavlov, "Demon," 6.

48 Andrey Ivanovich is the holder of the Order of Stanislav, the lowest civil service order. The rank-level of the medal, the fourth, was abolished in the same year... "In 1831 two Polish orders were incorporated into the system of Russian of honors: the Order of the White Eagle and the Order of St. Stanislav... The Order of St. Stanislav was established on May 7, 1765 by King Augustus Poniatowski. At first it consisted of four levels, but by a statute of 1839 only three were left..." G.V. Vilinbakov, *Nagrad Rossii: Ordena* (Saint Petersburg: Filologicheskii Fakultet Saint Petersburg, 2006), 68.

The plot development is consistent with both madness, and, more to the point, insubordination: two themes twinned in the bureaucratic narrative that Gogol' had popularized and that Dostoevsky and others would continue in the 1840s. As the story progresses, Andrey Ivanovich begins to imagine that his young wife has caught the eye of a high-ranking bureaucrat in his department and he begins to make obsequious pleas in the hope that he might convince the powerful bureaucrat not to pursue the affair. In the end, Andrey Ivanovich's neck is suddenly bedecked with a service medal (the Order of Saint Anna that he had imagined) and his uniform with extra stripes of office, a coincidence so apropos that the reader must assume that Andrey Ivanovich has found a way to turn the affair to his own material advantage.

Of course, Pavlov's version is dismally unpatriotic. The Russian bureaucrat is first an unremarkable automaton and then, through the potential bartering of his wife, the purveyor of salacious venality. Pavlov's vision of the rotting moral edifice of the bureaucracy does little to add to the image of the bureaucrat either as a positive character or, even, as convincing victim. Andrey Ivanovich becomes, at best, the symbol of successful subversion of the established order, and one who can use his liminal status as a character in the mold of the "little man" to his own material advantage.

Nearly twenty years after the publication of this story, Pavlov's pamphlet criticizing Sollogub's The Bureaucrat opens with a blistering indictment:

Say, why do good intentions and noble purpose fail to help write a good comedy? ... we should begin with an expression of heartfelt

thanks to the author of the comedy The Bureaucrat, released as a separate pamphlet the other day.

To this comedy we are indebted for soul-saving contemplation. We do not hide, however, that to this is added not a little pining and much regret. What a grand comedy it might have been! What a charming work we have been denied! Why was it not bought forth in that form in which it should have been christened?

And happiness was so close!⁴⁹

Sologub's theatrical farce is mixed generously with the sort of didacticism that was a feature of the emerging body of exposé in Russian literature. Sologub, a representative of the "men of the 1840s," continued to engage with radical thought.⁵⁰ However, his unconventional approach, which drew from comic tropes of the literary bureaucrat but also tried to recast the bureaucrat in a heroic mold, was bound to be unpopular with radical critics. Such authors and editors as Dmitry Pisarev, Nikolai Dobroliubov, Nikolai Nekrasov, and Nikolai Chernyshevsky, carried out polemical attacks that castigated the sort of light aristocratic humor that anchors Sologub's play. These authors were united in their criticism of the men of the 1840s and "impatient with the 'words without deeds approach,' believing that the time had come for 'definite action.'"⁵¹

Both Sologub and Pavlov seem aware of the forces pushing factions of the literary elite in different directions, and towards different genres. Pavlov indicates

49 Nikolay Pavlov "Razbor Komedii Grafa Solloguba Chinovnik" (Saint Petersburg: tip. Katkova, 1857), 5-6.

50 As Charles Moser notes, "In the 1840's the revolutionary and radical tradition, to the extent that it could exist under the pressure of Nicholas' well-established regime, was still largely in the hands of the nobility." Charles A. Moser. *Pisemsky: A Provincial Realist*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), 15.

51 Ibid., 15.

that comedy suffers from civic conceits and suggests that Sollogub has strayed from his literary antecedents in order to blow with the political winds of the Reform Era:

All of our misfortune comes from the bureaucrat Nadimov. He killed the comedy, he threw the Roman toga of Cato over it, and then he himself stepped forward, unconcernedly overshadowing the other characters. An amusing work of art, muffled by his loud oration, was deprived of its natural character and now appears before us in a mangled form. We were ready to smile a sweet smile, but we are told: I am not a joke, I am not a comedy, I am an act; I have a serious direction.⁵²

Thus, at exactly the moment that the literary men of the radical left were critiquing the effectiveness of civic role models in literature, other established literary figures were challenging any attempt to re-interpret the popular legacy of the literary bureaucrat handed down from an earlier generation. However, the picture is more complicated. Instead of simply disavowing the civic trends in *exposé* literature, Pavlov ultimately proposes a substantive critique of Nadimov's "negative qualities," engaging in the process of serious criticism of a genre that he seemed earlier to dismiss.

How does one take it for a law... that man... can bring true utility through negative qualities alone? And what are *negative qualities*? This is the fulfillment of the formal law, mandatory responsibilities dictated from without, the fulfillment under fear of punishment or inducement through retribution, and not from impulses within oneself, not from internal motivation. Neither society nor the law can demand from a person anything but negative qualities; one cannot order: Love the work that you do! Sanctify work through your internal life, add something o yourself to it! Share a piece of your own intellect, be a genius! ... You have appointed that he will pass along a worn road over a

52 Pavlov, "Razbor Komedi," 17.

certain allotted time and with a certain number of steps...and, if he passes, be satisfied.

...

No, Mr. Nadimov, on the contrary, everywhere, at every step, in all relations a person needs positive qualities, as only by these can he bring real utility...You say: write, do not judge! ... You begin to treat a person as a doll who raises its eyes and nods its head only when you pull its string, by your theory about negative qualities you kill his caprice and ... everything that is exalted, that is just, that is truly human, every feeling of freedom from his thought and from his hand. Don't busy yourself for nothing, don't say to him: don't take bribes...but he will not listen to you.⁵³

Pavlov has come a long way towards defining a positive rubric for the bureaucrat in literature. Pavlov's imaginary bureaucrat would be a character devoted to self-improvement and industry, traits not traditionally aligned with the aristocracy. Indeed, Pavlov's bureaucrat, extended to his logical limits, might even resemble the nihilistic character of Bazarov, whom Isaiah Berlin describes in an essay on Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*: "He (Bazarov) believes in strength, will-power, energy, utility, work, in ruthless criticism of all that exists."⁵⁴

Indeed, Pavlov and his implicit formulation of an ideal bureaucrat are caught between generational frictions and do not satisfy the critics; the "men of action" of the 1850s would not settle into the aesthetic of civic and political productivity that Pavlov envisions. Pavlov's critique of Sollogub for imaginatively grafting the ideals of the 1840s onto the Reform period was to be cast aside in turn, as, according to the anarchist Mikhail Bakunin's formulation, "the entire rotten structure, the corrupt

53 Ibid., 25-29.

54 Isaiah Berlin, "Turgenev and the Liberal Predicament" in Ivan S. Turgenev. Fathers and Sons. trans. Ralph Matlaw. (New York: Norton, 1989), 258.

old world, [that] must be razed to the ground, before something new can be built upon it.”⁵⁵

Pavlov’s critical engagement with the character of Nadimov and with what he sees as a dangerous and uncritical civic apoliticism compounds the literary debate. In descrying Nadimov’s character, Pavlov, despite his earlier efforts to the contrary, introduces a critical rubric by which all of the “little men” of Russian literature, including Pavlov’s own creations in “The Demon,” might participate in the new literature of the Reform era. Judged against Pavlov’s implied rubric, Sollogub’s new bureaucratic type fails on several counts. Sollogub’s Nadimov strives to operate as an honest aristocrat within the governing structure. But, any attempt to make Nadimov into a contemporary bureaucratic hero was problematic for reasons that, surprisingly, have nearly as much to do with the literary affinities of the Pushkinian dandy of the 1820s as with the nihilist revolutionary of the 1860s.

The Dandy is the hero of empty elegance. He does not strive to make a career and this itself is enough to dishearten those around him and draw attention to himself. He rises up against the rules accepted by society; in some senses he is even a revolutionary, but his revolution is the rudeness of an educated person, rudeness on the edge of the acceptable; his behavior is always a dog whistle, but an elegant dog whistle...A Dandy is an impeccable stylist, asserting his individuality by all available means...”⁵⁶

Any new civic hero would have to pass the test that the radical critics proposed for literary protagonists: that they strive to change not only the laws but the governing

55 Ibid.

56 Nonna Marchenko, *Byt i nray pushkinskogo vremeni* (Moscow: Azbuka Klassika, 2005), 77-78.

system itself, that they be a constant rebuke to the mores of a conservative society and demonstrate unwavering idealism in the pursuit of radical conceptions of justice and equality. The Alexandrinian dandy represented a threat to the old order based on his relentless individualism, and the nihilist, based on his relentless idealism. Nadimov met neither of these criteria.

Interestingly, Sollogub was a prime example of a dandy in literary circles, one whose aristocratism challenged even Pushkin and raised ire of those authors who were forced to practice their craft as working professionals.⁵⁷ As Andrey Nemzer notes, "Sollogub's most distinguishing feature was his *doubleness*: a *doubleness* in his attitude towards social norms: though outwardly ranking them very highly, Sollogub constantly showed himself to be a disturber of norms."⁵⁸ His bureaucrat, then, is almost a literary reconciliation of Sollogub's dualities, a dandy who has been reconciled to the spirit of civic duty through a philosophy of self-abnegation. However, self-abnegation in the pursuit of civic duty was not a proposition that would normally attract the dandy, that "impeccable stylist, asserting his individuality by all means," just as it would not attract the radical idealist of the era.

Nadimov's negative qualities seem to be the renunciation of an earlier individualism in the mold of the dandy, the spiritual forerunner of the nihilist. Sollogub's attempt to reconcile the processual drudgery of the bureaucracy with the

57 "Literary dilettantism is a variable historical phenomenon: isolated in one epoch and widespread in another. Sollogub's mask, oriented toward the Pushkinian era, turned out to be unnatural, manneristic, and foreign to the epoch of Belinsky and Nekrasov." Vladimir Sollogub i ego glavnaia kniga, ed. Andrei Nemzer. (Moscow: Izd-vo Kniga, 1980), 2.

58 Ibid., 2

clamoring for reform among the Russian intelligentsia is in fundamental disagreement with the direction of contemporary criticism, which demanded popular political action and not a conflating of the national interest with the prerogatives of administrative service. Pavlov is trying to integrate a different narrative into the exposé movement. His candidates for effective bureaucratic protagonists are enthusiastic about the chance to manage the reforms effectively from their stations in Russia's sprawling bureaucracy. Pavlov's language is doomed to failure because his positive qualities are meant to animate the infernal machine that the new men of literature are intent on disassembling.

Pavlov's language of action quickly becomes a language of institutional aggrandizement. The idea of positive qualities is proposed as a simple Hegelian binary resembling the master-slave dialectic. In this iteration the bureaucrat achieves consciousness when he realizes that his contribution to the state also grants him a stake in the moral outcome of its administrative duties, and therefore refuses bribes of his own volition.

The project to salvage the figure of the bureaucrat for progress and literature was doomed to failure by the developing ethos of radicalism in literature and criticism. As the scholar Evgenii Lampert writes, "They (radicals) cared little for metaphysical disputes and were prone to puncture idealism. They laughed at every kind of soulfulness, at the marvelous, the recondite, and the precious. They aimed deliberately at culture and social democratization. In every possible way...they wished to

prove that men were not rarefied spirits, but made of flesh and blood..."⁵⁹ Sollogub's Nadimov is a repurposed superfluous man, for whom disillusionment is the creative impetus to reimagine the possibilities of bureaucratic service. In the idealized vision of bureaucracy, enlightened bureaucrats could be instruments of reform who subsume the self to the greater good. However, Pavlov's depiction of the positive bureaucrat as the soul-mate of the radical intellectual in his quest for "action" was the likely object of radicals' laughter.

Pavlov does seem to sense this, and his prescience in identifying the disappearance of the "private man," the man devoted to private interests and individualism, is coupled with his irony towards Sollogub and his ethical quest for a viable bureaucratic protagonist:

The private man disappears and before us appears a new object, the public man, devoting himself to the service of Russia, a human idea, called the bureaucrat, a pitiable creature, the most limited in rights and advantages, but, all the same, the spark of greatness, world-creating light, the representative of a moral awakening, of law and truth.⁶⁰

The idea that any model could serve as the engine of top down reform of the bureaucracy was far from any program that the radicals might be willing to accept, much less that such a man might represent Russia's moral awakening. The positive

59 Evgeny Lampert. Sons Against Fathers: Studies in Russian Radicalism and Revolution (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 90.

60 Pavlov, Razbor Komedii, 45.

bureaucrat too would sink into historical oblivion until the next century and the rise of Socialist Realism.

Pisemsky the bureaucrat and his One Thousand Souls

Item from bulleting issued by Civil Service Authorities: "Collegiate Assessor Godnev, Permanent Inspector of N. Municipal School, has resigned, retaining the right to wear his uniform and receive the pension appertaining to his rank." Further on there follows: "Candidate Kalinovich appointed inspector to N. School." ... [*One Thousand Souls*, part I, chapter 1]

Broken morally and physically, Kalinovich only decided to marry again because he had nothing else to look forward to, and Nastenka... gave up acting and became the wife of a Councilor of State chiefly from a sense of duty... The Captain was the only one who really enjoyed himself, looking after the whole household and never forgetting to speak of his nephew and niece as "Their Excellencies." [*One Thousand Souls*, postscript]

In the wake of Sollogub's play and Pavlov's acerbic response, another attempt to re-imagine the bureaucrat came in the form of the 1859 novel *One Thousand Souls*, the author Aleksey Pisemsky's most famous work. It would be the most comprehensive attempt at creating a viable new literary type, and, for all intents and purposes, the last before the pendulum swung decisively back towards the Gogolian type of the literary bureaucrat.

Aleksey Pisemsky (1821 – 1881), one of the nineteenth-century's most eminent forgotten novelists, was born in the Kostroma District in the same year as Dostoevsky, his later literary rival. Pisemsky's rise to fame came about after several abortive attempts at launching a career in the Civil Service. Indeed, nearing the end of his life, in a letter to Ivan Turgenev, he reflected with bitterness on the dimming

of his literary star: "I am getting along...fairly well, though not very *highly*: to be a Councilor of the Provincial Directory at the age of 46 is no very great pleasure for one's self esteem – I had the very same rank 15 years ago. But anyway I deserve this punishment: if I hadn't put my trust in Russian Literature but had stayed in the civil service instead, I wouldn't be such an unimportant individual."⁶¹

In the meantime, Pisemsky had built a literary career for himself, the crowning heights of which were attained after the publication of *One Thousand Souls* and which lasted roughly until the publication of his 1863 "anti-nihilist" novel *Troubled Seas*, which earned the derision of the leading radical critics and resulted in a prolonged period of critical disfavor. Throughout his career Pisemsky made a point of quarreling with both radicals and conservatives and moved from journal to journal. The eclipse of his literary star necessitated his return to the bureaucracy, though not with the rank he would have preferred. He applied on several occasions for the position of censor, a move that, Moser writes, "...was clearly motivated in part by literary interests, since such a post would combine a steady income with an opportunity to supervise the literary production of the day."⁶² He served out his days, however, in the Moscow Provincial Directory, where he eventually gained the rank of Court Councilor (*Nadvorny Sovetnik* – seventh of fourteen in the Table of Ranks).

One Thousand Souls begins and ends with Imperial Russian obsession with nomenclature. The novel revolves around the tribulations of the provincial schoolmaster Kalinovich, tracing his first faltering steps as an aspiring, though ultimately

61 Moser. Pisemsky, 145.

62 Ibid., 144-145.

unsuccessful, writer, to his fraught transition to the highest ranks of the civil service. Coddled by the gentry and succored by local opinion in the provincial town where he lives as a bachelor, Kalinovich seduces and then spurns the daughter of the old schoolmaster, leading her to ruin, when she follows him on his foolhardy sojourn to forge a literary career in St. Petersburg. Then, through the machinations of a corrupt aristocrat, Kalinovich makes an advantageous though ambivalent marriage to a wealthy heiress, who promises him a dowry of fifty thousand rubles (though she has an incomparably larger estate and one thousand souls, to boot). Propelled quickly through the ranks by his newfound status as a wealthy hereditary nobleman, Kalinovich abandons his literary work and begins a quick climb up the ladder of imperial success, reaching the rank of State Councilor, and, eventually, the position of Vice-Governor in the same region where he began his career. Suddenly freed from the burden of ensuring his own material comfort, Kalinovich becomes a scourge of corruption. But, driven by inner demons and increasingly reckless, Kalinovich is finally defeated through the collusion of the local gentry and the venal bureaucracy.

The novel begins and ends with a formulation of rank, suggesting a journey narrative up the career ladder of the Civil Service. Indeed, Pisemsky's novel seems to be an installment of what has been described as an "odd sub-genre of the *Bildungsroman*," which Juliette Rogers calls *Berufsroman*, a play on the German word for career, suggesting a plot more directly concerned with careerism than with the broader arc of emotional and psychological development.⁶³ Pisemsky mixes the ex-

63 While scholarly descriptions of the *Bildungsroman* diverge, the nineteenth-century German scholar Krause briefly defined the genre thusly, "the intellectual and social develop-

coriating civic anger of Russian exposé literature with the more existential themes common in French “career novels” such as Balzac’s *The Bureaucrats*, Stendhal’s *Le Rouge et Le Noir*, or Flaubert’s *Sentimental Education*.

The novel seems almost to parody the bildungsroman. By suspending Kalinovich’s character arc between his mention in a bureaucratic missive, listed as “candidate Kalinovich,” and his final instantiation, as an already-empty bureaucratic periphrasis, “His Excellency,” the intervening development seems a simple progression along a career trajectory; Kalinovich’s moral and professional evolution has been reduced to an empty rhetorical gesture. The novel’s plot is driven by a series of wrenching moral choices, each resulting in a tragic failure, but the final denouement re-inscribes the expected generic outcome of professional success, leaving the character with the pyrrhic victory of his preeminent rank. The chasm between the outward marks of Kalinovich’s success and the author’s depiction of his ultimate moral defeat exposes the emptiness of rank as a signifier.

Defeated politically and morally exhausted by the end of the novel, Kalinovich has made several symbolic crossings. Kalinovich’s name itself suggests the potential valence of “crossing” in the novel. Whilst most likely evocative of the verb “*kalit*,” meaning “to verbally thrash, severely scold...”⁶⁴ it also carries the connotation of tempering and hardening. The name is, as well, evocative of “Kalinov Most,”

ment of a central figure who, after going out into the world and experiencing both defeats and triumphs, comes to a better understanding of self and to a generally affirmative view of the world.” Juliet Rogers, *Career Stories: Belle Époque Novels of Professional Development* (Penn State University Press, 2007), 43.

64 Tolkovoi slovar’ Russkogo iazyka v 4-kh tomakh, ed. Vladimir Dal’ (Saint Petersburg: Tip. M. O. Vol’fa, 1880—1882), II:102.

a folkloric Russian instantiation of the mythic Styx that separates the world of the living from that of the dead. Kalinovich's journey does, in some ways, seem to mirror the movement from life to death. Kalinovich's marriage-of-convenience to the heiress Polina is the occasion for the near-fulfillment of a seeming death wish. Fleeing his wedding night, Kalinovich wanders for hours through the city and finally charges recklessly into the scene of an apartment fire, saving a young woman from the flames but disappointed at his failure to die in the attempt. The next chapter opens several years later with Kalinovich raised high in the ranks and now an ambitious vice-governor and fearless crusader against provincial corruption. This is the third professional and psychological iteration of Kalinovich in the space of a novel that traces his rise from idealistic schoolmaster, through budding author and starving artist, to provincial governor and the rank of State Councillor.

Kalinovich's spirit seems to dim in inverse proportion to the material success that he achieves. Kalinovich's progressively successful climb up the professional ladder is expressed as a falling away from life; indeed, in the final scene we find Kalinovich "Like a wounded eagle."⁶⁵ As Pisemsky detailed in a contemporary letter to the poet (and, later, censor) Apollon Maikov;

I don't know if I've written you about the main idea of the novel, but in any case, here it is: whatever one might say about our age, whatever other private occurrences, its most important and distinguishing direction is a *practical* one: to make one's career, to establish one in a comfortable way, to provide for one's own existence and the existence of his progeny – these are the idols to which the hero of our time bows, - and all of this is well and good..., but, the thing is, the man who

65 Aleksey F. Pisemsky, One Thousand Souls, trans. Ivy Litvinov. (Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Press, 1969), 472.

treads this path, not glancing over his shoulder or stopping to look around, will have to kill all that is most noble within himself, all those just necessities of the heart, and then, when he has reached his goal, he almost always sees that he is striving towards empty pleasures, he sees, that for the entirety of his life up to that point, he has been a scoundrel, and for God-knows-what reason!"⁶⁶

Here, Pisemsky returns us to the question of positive and negative qualities so prevalent in the debate between Sollogub and Pavlov. In this instance positive qualities are linked to conscience and ethical action, versus negative qualities associated with careerism and greed. The path to professional success has been won at the expense of conscience. Pisemsky's conception of positive and negative qualities leads the reader along the more recognizably dialectical path of good and evil, emphasizing the moral compromises attendant on success in the beau monde of St. Petersburg, and the moral victory of modesty and honest professional anonymity. The journey nevertheless depicts a philosophical journey of self-discovery. The self-discovery, though, consists in ultimate disillusionment and the realization that worldly success is based on a rejection of conscience.

Despite Pisemsky's protestations, radical critics believed that any attempt to portray an enlightened bureaucrat, no matter how his character flaws are parsed, represented dangerous recidivism. Of the few post-revolutionary monographs and article-length studies that have been written about Pisemsky, most are tasked with defending him from the frequent criticism leveled at him by the then-editor of *Sovremennik* Nikolay Dobroliubov. However, Lidiia Lotman's study of *One Thousand*

66 Bushmin', *Istoriia russkago romana*, 394.

Souls focuses instead on Pisemsky's engagement with the ideas and polemics of the so-called "gradualist liberal" camp then ascendant in Russian letters. The gradualist liberals were progressives who supported incremental reform from above, as opposed to the more extreme views of both the conservative recidivists and the radical leftists. Gradualist liberal positions were represented by a wide swath of Russia's cultural elite, including Ivan Turgenev, Mikhail Saltykov, Ivan Goncharov, Lev Tolstoy, and other cultural figures who came of age in the Nicholaeven period.

As Lotman notes, in the five years over which the novel was written, not only did Pisemsky's conception of the novel's purpose as a genre change, so did the entire political edifice on which the novel's ideational content was based.⁶⁷ If the 1840s had been a time for political disengagement, the military cataclysm of the defeat in the Crimean War, which lasted from 1853 until 1856, changed the trajectory. The pressing challenge of reform in Russia and the turn towards a more liberal politics and a freer press augured a renewed impetus towards broader civic participation, not only from the position of literature, but, from positions within the government.

Given this new state of affairs, Pisemsky's desire to demonstrate the fate of a typical representative of the young intelligentsia meant turning this character away from the dream of a literary career and towards a position in the bureaucracy. As Lotman writes;

The growth of the emancipation movement, the preparation of peasant reforms, the re-structuring of the government apparatus, and also

⁶⁷ Aleksandr Mogilianskii notes the same change in narrative direction, but attributes it to Pisemsky's growing awareness and a proto-socialist awakening occurring in him sometime in 1856. A. P. Mogilianskii, Pisemsky: Zhizn' i tvorchestvo (Moscow: LIO Redaktor, 1991).

the weakening of the cudgel of censorship opened before the writer [Pisemsky] the real opportunity for the narrativization of the fate of a young man striving towards honest and prudent activity in the field of government service.⁶⁸

Pisemsky's literary striver becomes a bureaucratic striver, driven by the same creative demons that animated the literary men of the 1840s, but now repurposed and re-dedicated to the work of advancing a progressive agenda within government. Perhaps disillusioned with the political impotence of the literary men from the previous generation, Pisemsky reiterates the point by introducing Zykov, another "man of the 1840s," an overworked journal editor slowly dying of consumption.

However, even though there arose an "entire literature, advancing the honest bureaucrat as a ideal hero,"⁶⁹ such a protagonist was an uncomfortable fit with the Zeitgeist. The coming of reform proved an impetus to the pursuit of government service by university graduates. But the most vocal core of the literary elite led by the "new men" was wary of reform orchestrated by the government and believed instead in opposition and resistance. As Lotman notes, Pisemsky disappointed the radicals: "It turns out that the typical representative of the radical youth in Pisemsky's novel was not to be a revolutionary, in principle ruling out a career in the service so as not to strengthen the hated order of things, but, instead he is a careerist -

68 Lidiia M. Lotman, "Pisemsky – Romanist" in *Istoriia Russkogo romana v dvukh tomakh* ed. G. M. Fridlender (Moscow: Izd. Akademii Nauk, 1964), 2:164.

69 Included in Zubkov's article examining the spate of literary works appearing on this theme in the mid 1850s are examples from contemporary theatrical repertoire: K. Iu. Zubkov, "Roman A. F. Pisemskogo Tysiacha dush i p'esy o chinovnikakh vtoroi' poloviny 1850-kh godov" in *Russkaia Literatura* 4 (2009): 95-106.

an ‘administrator’ striving to serve honestly.”⁷⁰ The issue for the radicals seems to be related to the perception of verisimilitude in the Russian realist novel. As discussed earlier, Russian literature had reached a crossroads wherein the choice to institute a didactic realism in the service of radical social change was at hand. Nikolai Dobroliubov and the radical critics guided Russian authors towards this style, but, at what cost?

Dobroliubov was dismayed by Pisemsky’s attempt to re-imagine the “little man” character not simply as an ironic anti-hero, but as a complex and tragic protagonist. Concerned with the social types from which Pisemsky’s characters were drawn, Dobroliubov’s criticism seems aimed, implicitly, at Kalinovich’s professional loyalties. Dobroliubov was distressed that the reader of a realist novel of the 1850s could be drawn into the life of a *raznochinet* character, only to find that he eventually becomes a bureaucratic grandee. The rags-to-riches subplot, even though designed to expose the immorality of rank-worship (*chinopochitanie*) and the perils of assimilation into the ruling class, operates across a dangerous chasm, allowing the reader to “follow” Kalinovich across class and ideological divides and to identify with his struggle to reform the provincial town of “Ensk.” As the scholar Alexander Mogilianskii writes, “[Dobroliubov] saw in [A Thousand Souls] a homily to small, private reforms and improvements in the rotting edifice of the feudal monarchy and therefore related to it with open hostility.”⁷¹ The project of re-fashioning the literary bureaucrat, a task that might otherwise have been met with interest from the

70 L. Lotman, “Pisemsky – Romanist,” 154.

71 Mogilianskii, Pisemsky: Zhizn’ i tvorchestvo, 53.

literary world, was hampered by the increasingly polemical atmosphere in Russian criticism.

Pisemsky's attempt to redeem the bureaucrat from his traditional literary role as either Gogolian phantasmagoria or as lackadaisical knave was met with suspicion. It was not "small, private reforms" that Dobroliubov found threatening in themselves, it was the dangerous precedent that the emerging novel form would find a way to integrate a gradualist political ideology into its narrative structure. In Kalinovich, Dobroliubov wanted to see the character's frustration with the system and philosophical opposition to the feudal order of aristocratic Russia, but he could not believe in a character who found himself in a position to do something about it from a desk in St. Petersburg. Kalinovich's jarring triangulation into a position of power seemed believable as cynical politics. However, that such cynicism could bring about structural change in the bureaucracy seemed unlikely. Despite Pisemsky's re-working of Kalinovich's careerist trajectory to ignite a civic trend in the Russian novel, Pisemsky's protagonist failed as a model for future literary heroes. Pisemsky's attempt to recalibrate the movement towards political compromise within the Russian novel was unsuccessful, and the Russian bureaucrat was returned to his ancillary, and deeply ambivalent, role as stock enigma.

However, in the failed compromise that Pisemsky seeks between progressive social change and the structural realities of Russian society, one can glimpse the possibility of an even larger failed project. Lotman suggests that Pisemsky's novel describes a potential way forward for the *raznochintsy* from which the expanding bureaucracy was increasingly drawn. Pisemsky's treatment of Kalinovich's trans-

formation into the scourge of entrenched interests offers a way for radicals to engage with his literary project. Far from advancing a “homily of small, private reforms and improvements in the rotting edifice of the feudal monarchy,” Pisemsky’s novel instead poses a question with more far-reaching social consequences. As Moser posits, “Pisemsky [asks], is it possible for a single reformer, however wealthy and powerful, to prevail for long against the mores of a corrupt society? The answer (for Pisemsky) is clearly no.”⁷² If the answer is no, then Pisemsky’s project might have found more common ground with the radical critics, had they realized. If, as Pisemsky might have suggested, the problem of Russia stemmed from an entrenched network of corruption, then the radicals’ nervous reaction to civic literature might have been misplaced; the system would continue to blunder along towards its unhappy fate with or without a fictional array of model bureaucrats.

The three competing visions of the reformed bureaucrat treated in this chapter all posit a tepid idealism that is always determined by its proximity to power. Sollogub’s vision of “negative” agency for the bureaucrat seems an admission of the bureaucrat’s thrall to the prerogatives of hierarchical power, yet it also brings to mind the position of the writer in the wake of the censorship terror. Sollogub’s accidental philosophy of negative qualities as those unspectacular and workaday qualities void of self-expression seems almost a parody of the sort of authorial strategies that allowed them to publish in the journals of the Nicholaev period. Sollogub’s model for the successful bureaucratic servant of Russia is also the model for

72 Moser, Pisemsky, 89

the publishable author in an era of strict censorship laws and a watchful secret police.

Nikolai Pavlov's defense of individualism and positive agency reflects the thaw in Russia's censorship regime and the ephemeral turn towards reform. Pavlov's criticism of Nadimov's bureaucratism and negative qualities represents a turn against the incrementalist politics of the progressives of the previous era and suggests a search for accord with the radical critics. Pavlov's hope that the progressive moment in Russian politics might find an answer in a new sort of literary hero seems to suggest a need for a literary compromise between the conservative angst of Sollogub's bureaucratic hero and the nihilistic resistance to any sort of civic hero on the part of the radical critics; however, Pavlov produced no example of his own.

The final large-scale attempt at reimagining the bureaucrat as a workable civic hero was *One Thousand Souls*. Pisemsky's syncretic attempt to treat the disenchantment of the 1840s through the purgative of civic engagement in the 1850s resulted in a seriously flawed hero, who could not hope to contain the contradictions inherent in the combination of the bureaucrat and the author. Pisemsky upset both conservatives and radicals, and his novel signaled the end of the short rehabilitation of the literary bureaucrat.

Chapter II

MAKING THE BUREAUCRAT BANAL AGAIN:

THE 1860s-70s

88. Only in government service does one come to know the truth.
- Koz'ma Prutkov. "Aphorisms"

In 1874 the popular monthly Russian Antiquity (*Russkaia starina*) published a selection of the diaries of the long-deceased Chairman of the Foreign Censorship Committee Alexander Krasovsky.⁷³ The publication of the diaries and the peculiar introductory biographical sketch by Krasovsky's former secretary Alexei Ryzhov affirmed that the bureaucrat was the focus of intense literary and cultural negotiations with consequences not only for the direction of literature, but for bureaucrat's place in the Russian psyche.

Russian Antiquity was a journal devoted to "historical written monuments and the events of recent eras," a feature that the journal apparently highlighted to parry criticisms of political and historical prejudice.⁷⁴ However, publishing such forms of personal literature as letters, diaries, notes, and found documents of various sorts meant that, because of the material's absent context, publishing it could be tendentious *ipso facto*, even without any indication of political bent. Censorship during the reign of Nicholas I introduced such uncertainty into the literary world that all forms of literature were suspect. Even private writing was liable to detection and confiscation by the authorities, and, thus, was oftentimes marked by guarded, even Aesopian language.⁷⁵ The literary scholar Lev Losev invites us to imagine situations

73 His time in the civil service amounted to sixty-one years,

74 "Obzor pervogo trekhletia Russkaia Starina" *Russkaia Starina* 8 (September, 1873): 3-4.

75 "...An Aesopian text will make its way successfully from author to reader if what is in actual fact an Aesopian device is perceived by the censor as a lapse in the author's command of his craft (as noise outside the competence of the censorship) and by the reader as the express indication of an Aesopian text which awaits decoding. The skill of the Aesopian author lies in his ability to arrange such a successful transaction." Lev Losev, *On the Beneficence of Censorship: Aesopian Language in Modern Russian Literature* (München: O. Sagner in Kommission, 1984), 44 – 45.

“when the Author, who fully understands the system of taboos (i.e., the censorship), determines to anticipate the Censor’s intervention: dispensing with a number of direct statements in the text and with the straightforward depiction of certain details of real life, he replaces them with hints and circumlocutions.”⁷⁶ Thus, the conditions of invasive censorship might have influenced even the intimate literature of private chroniclers and correspondents.

The article provides a glimpse into the process of the literary self-creation of the bureaucracy, the writing by and about bureaucrats. But it also serves to re-arrange readers’ expectations of hierarchy and bureaucratic dignity, as it posthumously re-orders hierarchical relationships, placing the amanuensis above his master, a taboo act of insubordination that censorship was partly designed to suppress.

Alexander Krasovsky was born in 1780 and rose from the position of chancery translator for the Academy of Sciences to censor in 1821, and served as chairman of the Foreign Censorship Committee from 1832 until his death in 1857, having attained the rank of privy counselor (*tayni sovetnik*), the third highest rank on the Table.⁷⁷ Krasovsky was a member of the Academy of Sciences, and wrote several articles about the Russian Library, as well as a book about the Academy. Krasovsky’s censorial career was hopelessly mired in details and, oftentimes, his responses were caustic: “The majority of his comments and edits carry the character-

76 Ibid., 6.

77 “Krasovsky, A.I.” in *Sotrudniki Rossiiskoi Natsional’noi Biblioteki – Deiateli Nauki I Kul’tury: Bibliograficheskii Slovar’* (St. Petersburg: tip. RNB, 1995), 208.

istics of pettiness and quibbling.”⁷⁸ Beyond this, Krasovsky seems to have been largely ignored by posterity until the publication of the diaries twenty years after his death, and even now he remains a historical footnote, an arch-bureaucrat and literary caricature.⁷⁹ The entry on Krasovsky in *The Great Soviet Encyclopedia* (*Bol'shia Sovetskaia Encyclopedia*) simply re-publishes Ryzhov’s evisceration of his former employer verbatim:

A.I. Krasovsky – a child of his times, woven from a fabric that seemed to him to be in demand; this was an "official man" as it was understood in olden days, he always approached his official prey with a heightened sense that never failed him. Everything about him was there on the surface for all to see; his body and soul in a uniform; his piety, the orthodoxy of his human feeling, service – all of this was cut from an official cloth...⁸⁰

Krasovsky the man is immediately reduced to the most recognizable and grotesque version of the hapless bureaucrat, an image long ago staked out in literature by Gogol and familiar to readers. At the center of the conceit is, not accidentally, the metaphor of cloth and clothing. Possibly the most famous depiction of the Russian

78 A. I. Mansurov, “Krasovsky - Tsensor, 1823” *Russkaia Starina* 8 (1872): 584.

79 The history of interpreting the censorship has long focused on what censors delete, and not what they write, although, in many cases, their exploits in “literature” were not unknown. Krasovsky’s censorial writings had attracted attention during his lifetime, in fact. His censorial dispute with the poet Valerian Olin [1788 – 1841] over the poem “Stansy k Elize” became a sensation after the notes were spread around St. Petersburg in manuscript. Among other marginal notes addended to the censored poem, we find the following “At your feet sometimes the song of the lyre is composed” It is sinful and demeaning for a Christian to sit at a woman’s feet.” and “ “What is the opinion of man to me? Your sweet visage alone is worth more to me than the attention of all the universe.” This is an exaggeration; in the universe there are also tsars, and legitimate governments, the attention of which must be valued, as well.” A. M. Skabichevskii, *Ocherki Istorii Russkoi Tsentsury* (Moscow: Tipografia “Obshchetsvennaia Pol’za,” 1892), 179.

80 I. A. Ryzhov “Alexander Ivanovich Krasovsky” *Russkaia Starina* 4 (1874): 110.

bureaucrat is Akaky Akakyevich Bashmachkin, the poor titular-counselor and hero of Gogol's *The Overcoat*:

No matter how many directors and administrators came and went, he was always seen in the same place, in the same shape, in the same position, the same bureaucrat for correspondence, so that eventually some were convinced that he had come into the world already completely suited for this position, in an official frock-coat and with a bald spot on his head.⁸¹

For Bashmachkin, a lack of agency is the foundation of the generic character of the "little man," a character lost in the bewildering matrix of a repressive state machine and menaced by the monstrous specter of a Frankenstein-city. For Krasovsky, the lack of agency hints at the bureaucratic constant of form over substance, as well as a further contention by the biographer: namely that Krasovsky lacks an element of humanity, that Krasovsky is a vessel animated by a uniform, a synecdoche of the state. Here the role of the censorship in the literary economy of Russia is called into question. The life of the censor is reduced to moments of absurdity, approaching a Gogolian absolute.

Ryzhov's biographical sketch is replete with examples of Krasovsky's zeal for bureaucratic busywork, and of humorous (and possibly spurious) moments illustrating Krasovsky's rampant eccentricities. Each anecdote seems to follow a basic narrative pattern. Krasovsky lacks the animating interests of a private life and thus each of his habits and customs is seemingly based instead on some administrative taboo. Krasovsky's interactions involve the application of censorship to the privacy of the everyday. In one anecdote, Krasovsky discovers that a subordinate has taken

81 Ibid., 112.

on a young housekeeper, a certain Anna Kuzminishna. Since the subordinate lives in a government apartment, Krasovsky takes it upon himself to instruct the man in morality and save the government from possible scandal. While in the apartment, Krasovsky also notices a book from the censorship office taken in violation of the censorship code: "I found a book on your windowsill. On the wrapper there was a note in pencil that it was only approved with exceptions. Don't you know that according to the rules, clerks are not allowed to read any books except fully approved ones..."⁸² When the subordinate protests that he has, indeed, eliminated the offending text, and thus is reading a self-censored version, Krasovsky is satisfied, prompting the following observation from the author: "It was easy to outwit Krasovsky no matter how absurd the lie (through his own absurdity, of course, he invited it), except for matters of chastity and adultery."⁸³

Krasovsky is able to extend the boundaries of bureaucratic prerogative from the public to the private. Krasovsky's duties as a censor of books are upended by his duty as a censor of bodies and souls. The censorship violation is left unexamined, and yet, "The official matter of Anna Kuzminishna" has been, we are told, "long held in the archives of the Foreign Censorship Office." The Censorship Office becomes a repository for "official cases" dealing with censurable people and not with censurable books.

82 Ibid., 113.

83 Ibid., 114

The censor's true effectiveness lay in his ability to read between the lines, to confront the wiles of Aesopian language, that is, not to be "misled easily." In this instance, Krasovsky fails, and is not only far from an ideal censor, he is far from an ideal reader. When finally confronted with a potentially problematic text, the censor is incapable of performing his true function. It is this basic inconsistency that is repeated again and again in the biographical text: misapprehension, misidentification, and unquestioning naiveté in the pursuit of heavy-handed bureaucratic zealotry.

This article was likely lost in a sea of print: the Central Administration for Press Affairs (*Glavnoe upravlenie po delam pechaty*) approved over 500 new publications between 1865 and 1870.⁸⁴ But Krasovsky's comic debut in literature was seemingly representative of a larger trend. The bureaucrat, always a contested figure in Russian literature, had swung between comic and tragic roles. However, as the Reform Era came to the end and was supplanted by a period of reactionary retrenchment, the excitement of progressive and liberal elements in society and the press was tempered by the prospect of a return to the politics of the Nicholaeven era. The bureaucrat, long a bellwether of the attitudes of literary society towards the state, was now undergoing a further transformation. If the bureaucrat of the 1870s was identified with the repressive state machinery that increasingly recalled the Nicholaeven era of the 1840s, then it was in a qualitatively different way that reflected the dimmed enthusiasms of a public disenchanted by the pace of reforms

⁸⁴ However, in the period following this, between 1871 and 1875, the number of journals denied official approval jumped by nearly 300%. *Periodicheskaja pechat' i tzensura Rossiskoi Imperii v 1865 – 1905 gg. Sistema administrativnykh vzyskanii*, ed. M.A. Benina (Saint Petersburg: izd. "Nestor-Istoriia," 2011), 28-29.

and an intellectual class that had lost the focus that had animated it in the Age of Reform.⁸⁵ The literary characters of the new era, as the phantasmagorical Koz'ma Prutkov and the characters of Mikhail Saltykov would demonstrate, echoed those of the past, but in a faint tone denuded of the existential urgency of Gogol's characters. If the new era was an era of the banal then the bureaucrat, and all those that shared a common grammar with him, were its primary proponents.

The heady years of reform and unprecedented civic engagement in social questions primed Russian society for a newly politicized literature that moved beyond the hidden meanings and Aesopian language of the previous era. A new theme emerged in writing about bureaucrats: if bureaucrats could figure as contributors to the literary sphere, then only in terms that portrayed them as graphomaniacs, and, worse, as willing soldiers of an autocratic reaction. The era engendered a sense of banality marked by a turn to reaction, a professional tendency towards mystification reflected in an obsession with inscrutable detail and an insensibility to the larger themes and issues of the day. Two of the figures that suffered from this trend were the bureaucrat and the author, both of whom had been at the forefront of the public debates in the Age of Reform.

The twilight of the Reform Era cast a pall over all civic questions. Without the social questions introduced by the debate over serfdom, or those of press free-

85 However, it must be noted that, as Zhuk claims, "approximately from 1844 a broad "satirical effervescence" in literature made a tangible qualitative shift," noting, further, that most of the major post-Gogolian satirists came to prominence or determined their literary careers within the next five years, that is, during the heart of Nicholas' reign. Alla Aleksandrovna Zhuk, *Satira Natural'noi Shkoly*. (Saratov: Izd-vo Sarat, 1979).

dom and judicial reform that were hotly contested through the mid-1860s, civic debates lost the energetic format in which they had continued since Alexander II's invitation to open the question of serfdom to journalism in 1857.⁸⁶ Now, journalists and authors who sought to treat social questions in their writing were increasingly open to the attacks like the one that Saltykov leveled against them in his comic novel "The Diary of a Provincial in Petersburg" (*Dnevnik Provintsiala v Peterburge*); journalism, in his eyes, was becoming ever more self-referential, petty, and irrelevant, overshadowed and outmaneuvered by the reactionary political forces.

The evolving role of censorship also played a part in defining the popular image of both the bureaucracy and the journalists and authors who found themselves writing without the perverse certainties that the old system had granted them. Along with a rash of reforms, Alexander II had ushered in a new era of censorship that now placed the onus of the censorship law on the author and publisher. This system is known as "post-publication" censorship and after its adoption in 1865 violations of its letter became public record and fell under the purview of the judiciary. Under this system, journals were allowed three "administrative warnings" before the censor could issue a six month injunction against publication. Journals could see their publishing licenses revoked if subsequent legal action found that they were in violation of censorship regulations.⁸⁷

86 An event triggered by the Nazimov Rescript, discussed in chapter I.

87 For a fuller discussion of the implications of the change to the censorship laws see: *Periodicheskaiia pechat' i tzensura Rossiiskoi Imperii*. 15 – 36.

Though censorship was no less irksome, along with the old system of censorship gone were the mystique of the secret committees formed to combat literature, from the Buturlin Committee that fought the specter of radical literature in the wake of unrest in 1848, to Alexander II's maligned "Triumvirate" (*Troemuzhie*), created to corral the press with promises of official favor.⁸⁸ A review of the administrative "warnings" issued in the early 1870s provides a window into the nature of censurable material. There one can find a list of injunctions against journals that had misrepresented the work of the Forestry Administration or illegally cited Darwinism. Now subject to a predictable punitive system and competing in an ever more competitive publishing environment, editors became arguably more restrained than they had been even before the censorship reforms. As the journalist and historian Alexander Rosenberg observed when recalling the system later in the century:

In fact this turned the regular evening censorship review into a summary and hasty provisional censorship review of all the articles slated for the upcoming edition. And while the censor...did not have the right to cross out a single word, he could, however, halt the entire publication... For the editors and the writers the system of provisional censorship without the benefit of revision was a truly medieval punishment.⁸⁹

88 Alexander Nikitenko was asked to serve as secretary to this committee, which consisted of the following three members (thus the witticism originating with the poet Tiutchev): N. A. Mukhanov, A.V. Adelberg, and A.E. Timashev. Nikitenko warns that the committee was formed in the spirit of the reactionary Buturlin Committee founded by Nicholas I to tighten censorship. The committee was intended to exert government influence over press affairs, but had been, according to Niktenko, poorly chosen for the task; "If [the government] had been trying on purpose to choose the least capable people for this job, then they could not have succeeded any better." [24 December 1858] Nikitenko, *Dnevnik*, II:50

89 Periodicheskia pechat' i tzensura Rossiiskoi Imperii. 32

Through a process of reform intended to restrain it, the process of censorship might have attained what the previous decades of intellectual gendarmerie had not, a pliant press. Indeed, as the national mood shifted towards disengagement, so did the willingness of the press to actively contest questions of social and political reform. The resulting ennui in society became a topic for literary discussion, and another pretense to prod the bureaucrat in print.

Chapter 1 explored the brief moment of respite for the bureaucrat that came in the late 1850s when the moral imperative of the reform of serfdom necessitated imagining the government official as a potential positive hero. The end of the Great Reforms, however, saw the renewal of the ‘champions of Gogol,’ who were “disaffected *raznochintsy* with no sense of security in their society and no economic or cultural heritage to lose,” as both characters and authors.⁹⁰ The bureaucratic machine of the Nicholaeven era was held in contempt and the history of administrative repression of the period was now being re-hashed by those who had suffered both professionally and spiritually under it. The opening of the literary conversation to include private literature and the voices of the *raznochintsy* expanded the literary conversation and, once again, re-calibrated the bureaucrat’s place in literature. But the reevaluation of the bureaucrat proceeded apace with the reevaluation of the entire panoply of public institutions, and writers suffered along with bureaucrats.

90 Derek Offord, “Literature and Ideas after the Crimean War: The ‘Plebeian’ Writers.” in *Ideology in Russian Literature*, eds. Richard Freeborn and Jane Grayson. (London: Macmillan Press, 1990), 49.

This chapter examines the literary legacy of the fictional bureaucrat Koz'ma Prutkov, who was imbued by his authors with the accumulated vices of both the graphomaniac and the venal bureaucrat. Koz'ma Prutkov was a fanciful character, a bureaucrat who sought to make a name for himself, like so many other bureaucrats of the day, through literature. And yet, the collective team of authors who created Prutkov succeeds where the authors that they lampooned had largely failed. Prutkov's "posthumous" collected works, mostly aphorisms and hackneyed poetry, would go through multiple printings, and Prutkov continues to be one of the most quotable figures in Russian letters today. As one of the most-read literary effervesences of his time, Prutkov demonstrates the enduring popular appeal of the literary bureaucrat, but he also represents a return to the more familiar absurdist visions of the character. Prutkov's particular appeals to authority through his bureaucratic status, a matter of derision, also represent a move towards a new focus on the banality of bureaucracy in general. If Gogol' had played with the contradictions inherent in a system ruled by rank envy to create his bureaucratic protagonists, then the new bureaucrat embraced the contradictions. Prutkov's claim of authority by virtue of rank and not of rank by virtue of authority came to symbolize banalization not only of bureaucracy, but of those in positions of influence in every sphere of Russian life.

Finally, the chapter turns to Saltykov's 1872 novel *The Diary of a Provincial* (*Dnevnik Provintsiala*). In this work, Saltykov suggests that behind the drift in literary discourse stands the bureaucratic ethos of Saint Petersburg and the inexorable spread of its polluted language beyond the metropolis and into the provinces.

Graphomania spreads like the flu through the impotent intellectual combinations of the literary society of “Foamskimmers,” intent on, among other things, arguing for a legal standard regulating the duties of street sweepers. When the links between the “Foamskimmers” and “Privy Councillor Saltykov” are exposed, the farce of the “Foamskimmers” journalism becomes apparent. In recording the web-like network of relationships across the literary and administrative divide, the *Provincial* seems to have hit upon the deteriorating state of affairs in Russian letters.

Not only was the integrity of journalism and literature on the whole called into question, but the literary idiom itself came under pressure. Saltykov’s satirical compendium of *Projects*, journalistic contributions to civico-political dialogue, are couched in seemingly innocuous bureaucratese, and are an example of how bureaucratic discourse seeped conspicuously into literary forums. The rash of “projectism” displays the level of dissolution within the journalistic enterprise and serves as Saltykov’s condemnation of the state of the literary-journalistic community, which he presents as growing convinced of the great public necessity of its own banality and philosophical dithering.

The observations brought together in this chapter represent not only a continuation of earlier trends in the literary representation of the bureaucrat, but a departure from the literary norms that had heretofore guided readers’ expectations. The bureaucratic character in Russian literature was more fully articulated, spanning a range of various social and political positions. The ranks of literary bureaucrats were now filled out with high-ranking officials, literary strivers, and others. Gone was both the metaphysical conundrum of the bureaucrat as “little man” in

Gogol's work as well as the constructive yet troubled bureaucrat in the civic genre of exposéism. Here to stay was the bureaucrat as the reactionary metonym of the Russian state.

"Glory delights one" - Koz'ma Prutkov and the life of a bureaucratic mystification

The zealous man in service does not fear ignorance for he reads each new file.
--Koz'ma Prutkov⁹¹

On the evening of January 8, 1851 a play entitled *Fantasia* premiered at the Alexandrinskii Theater. The assembled beau monde included bureaucrats, aristocrats, military officers, and foreign dignitaries. Also in attendance was Tsar Nicholas I. The play, a pastiche of motifs from the popular vaudevilles of the day, was originally called a "gag-vaudeville" (*shutka-vodevil*) and involved a "blending of dramatic action with musical couplets...and a concluding moral."⁹² The play's authors, however, "Mr. Zhemchuzhnikov (A.M.) and Tolstoy (Count)," eschewed convention, adding, for example, "more actors 'without lines,' namely dogs of all sorts,"⁹³ who proceed "for the first and last time in the theater," to appear on stage without human accompaniment. The play ended on a note of confusion:

"[The protagonist] steps to the footlights and turns to the orchestra. He asks the double bass for the program, is given it, and says, 'I am very curious to see who is the author of this play'...and he wonders aloud how the management could permit such a play. He claims that

91 Koz'ma Prutkov. *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinienii Koz'my Prutkova*, ed. B. Ia. Bukhshtab (Moscow: Sov. pisatel', 1965), 188.

92 Barbara Heldt Monter, *Koz'ma Prutkov* (The Hague: Mouton, 1972), 30.

93 Ibid., 31.

the prompter kept whispering the most improper lines to him, but he refused to speak them and made up other ones. He objects to the plot and outlines several other ones which he would substitute, but the curtain falls behind him, the orchestra interrupts him, and he runs off.”⁹⁴

At this point, “many members of the audience thought that the actor...had improvised the speech, and applauded him loudly.”⁹⁵ At some point in the play, the Tsar had departed in a huff, as Aleksey Zhemchuzhnikov relates, “Hardly had the Tsar, with obvious displeasure, retired from the box before the end of the play, when the public began to raise a noise, yell, catcall, and whistle... Such a thing was never allowed before! – People have been punished for less!”⁹⁶ The play was never produced again.

This marked the first appearance of Koz’ma Prutkov on the literary scene of St. Petersburg. No one knew this at the time since the name Koz’ma Prutkov had not yet been entered in the play’s pages, nor did it appear in the playbill. The production was, instead, the first instance of literary cooperation between two of the three members of the trio responsible for “mentoring” Koz’ma Prutkov in his rise to literary prominence. Count Aleksey Konstantinovich Tol’stoy (1817–1875), playwright, poet, lyricist, and satirist, second cousin to Lev’ Nikolaevich Tol’stoy, served in many bureaucratic posts, ending with the rank of Court Councilor, the sixth grade in the Table of Ranks. Aleksey Zhemchuzhnikov (1821-1908) and his brother Vladimir

94 Ibid., 33 – 34.

95 Ibid., 34.

96 Prutkov. *Polnoe Sobranie Sochineneii*, 181.

Zhemchuzhnikov (1830-1884), also cousins to Aleksey Tol'stoy, were authors in their own right, though on a minor scale, and both also served in the bureaucracy. Aleksey served in various high posts in the Ministry of Justice, and Vladimir in the Ministry of Railroads. Their cooperation on the literary vignettes, plays, poetry, and prose that would eventually be collectively published under the nom de plume Koz'ma Prutkov began in the early 1850s.

What seemingly defines the “Prutkovian” can be teased from the lithograph portrait made of him by another Zhemchuzhnikov brother, Lev. The censors subsequently banned the portrait, “afraid that [it] might be the caricature of an official person.”⁹⁷ As Aleksey Zhemchuzhnikov describes the portrait in his “biography” of Prutkov,

Cherishing the memory of Kozma Prutkov, one must indicate those details of his appearance and clothing, the representation of which in the portrait Koz'ma is considered of great credit to the artists; namely: artfully curled and clumped chestnut hair with grey streaks; two warts: one above the right side of his forehead, and the other above the left cheekbone; a piece of a black English bandage patch on his neck under the right cheek, on a spot marked by constant razor cuts; the long, sharp edges of his shirt collar, sticking up from under a colorful scarf, wound around his neck in a broad and wide knot; a poncho with a black velvet collar, picturesquely thrown back with one end over the shoulder; the fingers of the left hand, tightly wound in a white glove of special cut, angled under the cloak, and covered with precious rings (awarded him on various occasions).⁹⁸

97 Monter, *Koz'ma Prutkov*, 24.

98 Prutkov, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, 339 – 340.

The portrait satirizes the noxious mixture of romantic and bureaucratic motifs that constituted Prutkov, but also recalls portraiture of other established literary figures, including an 1827 portrait of Alexander Pushkin by Orest Kiprensky that portrays Pushkin's penchant for florid displays of romantic individualism, most famously signaled by his long fingernails. Beyond the pseudo-romantic coiffure, the Spanish frock and "expression of proud disdain,"⁹⁹ Prutkov's clothing bears marks of his dual identity as a bureaucrat and a literary poseur.¹⁰⁰

Prutkov's biography indicates that his elevation through the ranks of the bureaucracy began after his resignation from the military service (which he claimed to have entered "only for the frock coat"¹⁰¹) and his entry into service in the Assay Office (a division of the Ministry of Finance tasked with assessing the purity of precious metals).¹⁰² Prutkov's diamond-ringed hands are a symbol of his narcissism, foppish love of ostentation, and potential venality as a public official responsible for gold deposits. Indeed, the biography recounts a dream to which Prutkov attributed his sudden departure from military service. The dream, which might be best de-

99 Monter, *Koz'ma Prutkov*, 24.

100 Zhemchuzhnikov refers to his poncho as an "almavida," a gown made famous in Rossini's *Barber of Seville*

101 Ibid., 332.

102 Prutkov's bureaucratic profession was in the Assay Office, where the lower ranks included some of the following tongue-twisting bureaucratic titles: "According to the list of lower ranks there were: kunstshteger, uriadnikov, mladshii probirshchik..." O. V. Borkhval'dt, *Slovar' zoloto promysla Rossiskoi Imperii* (Moscow:Russkii Put', 1998), 23.

duced “with the help of modern psychology (which Prutkov’s tutors obviously foresaw),” involves the young Prutkov being awakened by a naked brigadier general.¹⁰³

He saw before him a naked brigadier general in epaulettes who, having pulled him from his cot without letting him dress, led him silently along some long and dark corridors to the top of a high and sharply crowned hill, and there he began to pull out various precious materials from an ancient vault, showing them to him one after another and even putting some of them on his chilled body. With bewilderment and fear Prutkov awaited the outcome of this puzzling event; but suddenly when the most costly of these materials touched him, he felt on his whole body a strong electric shock, from which he awoke all in perspiration...¹⁰⁴

The psychosexual elements aside, the scene at the vault provides the sort of non sequitur that typically motivates Prutkov’s biography. The sexual element dominates the dream; the authority figure, the naked brigadier dressed only in epaulettes lifts a still unclothed Prutkov from his bed and leads him through corridors along and up along a vertical (“a sharply crowned hill”) to a hidden treasure, which he then applies to Prutkov’s “chilled” (a better translation is “trembling”) body.

The sexual imagery here is as thick as it is amusing, but beyond the coup of including such knavery in print, it also invites the reader to notice the larger themes implicit in such a scene. The tropes of authority here, though cloaked only in absurdity, the naked general’s epaulettes and the hint of sexual abuse, suggest the force of venality in government service. Indeed, Prutkov’s fascination with “precious materials” seems a reference to corruption. The suggestion of a psycho-sexual

103 Monter, *Koz’má Prutkov*, 53.

104 Ibid., 53.

urge associated with rank (indeed, the general is naked *except* for the sign of his rank) and with “precious materials” reduces venality and obsession with rank to an uncontrollable animal desire that, matched with Prutkov’s other aesthetic and literary interests, seems all the more satirical.

The dream, while recorded much later than the biographical material included in the Collected Works in 1884, might possibly also suggest a visual pun in the 1853 lithograph. Vladimir Zhemchuzhnikov’s description of that portrait describes Prutkov’s “precious” rings as being worn over the gloves, and, thus, one would assume, preventing the sort of “electric shock” that Prutkov experienced when such metals were applied to his “shivering” skin. The gloved layer separating Prutkov from the precious metals that adorn his hands operates as a sort of sanitary cordon, a symbolic distancing between Prutkov and the corrupting influence of “precious materials.” Prutkov must separate his hands from precious metals because of the tactile sexual shock that he experiences in his sleep. Prutkov’s resistance to gold is mediated by his sexual attraction to it, the banal manifestation of Freudian Thanatos.

Prutkov’s public image had been transformed in the beginning of the 1860s. After the success of his satirical outbursts of 1854, in which “Prutkov acted as a solely literary figure, a veritable poet ‘jack of all trades’, equally convinced of his talents as a lyricist, fabulist, dramaturge, and philosopher,”¹⁰⁵ Prutkov’s image in the 1860s

105 P. N. Berkov, *Koz'ma Prutkov, Direktor Probirnoi Palatki i Poet : k Istorii Russkoï Parodii* (Leningrad :Izd-vo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1933), 109.

was marked by the “biographical moment” when “[Prutkov] is dressed in domestic outlines, obtains a class-realist physiognomy, and from a pallidly-abstracted image, he turns into the colorful figure of a literary-bureaucrat.”¹⁰⁶ The addition of the biographical elements, the bureaucratic veneer, was the instrument by which satire could be made say “more” than seemed to be the case. The very banality of Prutkov’s biography became the occasion for his literature.

Prutkov’s “A Project for the Introduction of Thought Consensus in Russia” (*Proekt o vvedenii edinomyslia v Rossii*) outlines his comprehensive instructions on the administration of Russia. Probably written in response to the 1862 founding of the official journal of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, *The Northern Post* (*Severnaia Pochta*), Prutkov’s *Project* outlines his views on “official propaganda.”¹⁰⁷ His *Project* is divided into a “preamble” (*pristup*), a “treatise” (*traktat*), and a “conclusion” (*zakliuchenie*), imposing an academic structure usually reserved for hefty treatises onto a short and abstract sketch. Prutkov’s parody relies on a patent opposition between form and content:

Preamble. Instruct the public. Here it goes. Youth; science; immaturity! ... Nonsense! ... Conviction. Disrespect for the opinion of one’s elders. Anarchy. “Personal” opinion! ... Can there be such a thing as a personal opinion among people who haven’t gained the trust of the authorities?!? Where would such a thing come from? On what is it based? If writers knew anything, they would be called to the Civil Service. If one isn’t in the service, it means: he’s not worthy; therefore,

106 Ibid., 109.

107 Meshcherskii is parodied here (“ne mozhet byt’ v Rossii dvizhenie nazad potomu shto dvizhenie vpered obiavleno vsenarodnim...”). His journal *Grazhdanin* received official government subsidies. Refer to *Dnevnik Provintsiala* in Mikhail E. Saltykov, *Sobranie Sochineneii M.S. Saltykova-Shchedrina v 20 tomakh* (Moscow: Khudozh. literatura, 1965-1977), X:740.

there's no reason to listen to him. From this side no one has come along to shake the credibility of our writers: Me myself – I am the first. (Reiterating that I'm first. This might help my career. From here on out develop this, but in other expressions, stronger and with greater detail.)¹⁰⁸

Lomonosov wrote about the genre of the preamble, “it is the personal part of the rhetorical introduction, which the rhetorician prepares the listener or the reader to the following discourse, so that they would listen or read it studiously and with understanding.”¹⁰⁹ But far from encouraging the reader to “read...studiously” or respecting the rhetorical occasion of the preamble, Prutkov bends the traditional rhetorical structure to match his whim; the preamble acts not as an integral structural component of the larger thesis, not as a preamble argument, but to thought itself.

The relative “anarchy” of the preamble mirrors the anarchy that Prutkov seems to twin with “personal opinion.” The nearly incomprehensible logic linking his words is reflected by the scattered use of punctuation, creating a veritable “anarchy” on the page. Prutkov’s paltry statement of purpose (“teach the public”) is accompanied by a meta-textual cue, the colloquial “here it goes” (*zaneslos’*), a sign that Prutkov’s approach to the public responsibility of authorship is haphazard. The final lines give the lie to the supposed civic purpose of the project and, instead, emphasize the potential for self-aggrandizement in publishing, countering the civic impulse with both the hint of bureaucratic venality and with the profit motive increas-

108 Prutkov, *Polnoe Sobranie*, 336 – 347.

109 *Literaturnaia Entsiklopedia*, eds. V. M. Friche, A. V. Lunacharskogo. (Moscow: Izd. Kommunisticheskoi academia, 1929—1939). 11:104.

ingly evident in the literary economy. Prutkov's insistence that he is the first bureaucrat to "shake [authors'] credibility" is not based on any literary achievement, but on his identification with the bureaucracy, a point that he feels needs to be expanded upon in print.

The "Prutkopian" style was intended to be a sort of maligning echo recognizable through comic misapprehension of audience, genre, style, or a combination of all three. However, in the *Project* the voice we hear can claim indisputable professional precedence by virtue of his official rank. Even though the comic element of Prutkov's literary persona is based on his complete lack of literary skill, when writing about public affairs, Prutkov's biographical antecedents provide a sort of authority. Prutkov is a predictably bad poet whose constant point of reference is his bureaucratic station, so it stands to reason that, despite the guffaws of readers, he may yet have something important to say upon the topic of bureaucracy. When Prutkov does speak, both the form and the content betray him as a perennial naïf, but they also implicate the bureaucratic mindset that belies Prutkov's literary persona.

The first collection of Prutkopian material, under the heading "Kozma Prutkov's Leisure" (*Dosugy Koz'my Prutkova*), was published in 1854 in the humoristic supplement to The Contemporary (*Sovremennik*) called A Literary Patchwork (*Literaturnogo eralasha*). This collection of parodies, poems, and epigrams would largely come to characterize Prutkov among his Russian readership. Six years passed between this appearance and Prutkov's second literary period. His re-appearance corresponded with the appearance of the satirical journal, The Whistle

(*Svistok*), which was published as a supplement to The Contemporary.¹¹⁰ The Whistle was issued a total of nine times, beginning with its appearance in 1859 until its demise in 1863, and includes the bulk of the material for which Prutkov is famous among Russian readers. The farce of the service career and the professional dissonance present in Prutkov's amusing biography served to distinguish him from the other literary confabulations that were popular among readers and which frequently featured in journalistic satire. (Dobroliubov, the editor of The Whistle had himself trotted out a satirical nom-de-plume, without the rococo biographical detail of Prutkov, in his character the poet Konrad Lilienshvager).¹¹¹

The biographical surplus also seemed to present one way in which humor could radically disrupt hierarchies. As the scholar I. M. Sukiasova claims, satire undercuts authority by separating and estranging the elements of the text: "Comic effect and uniqueness of this type of imitation are achieved through imitation of the parodied work, which, in turn, effects a contrast between form and content."¹¹² Such a contrast worked by confounding readers' expectations of genre. In a society as rigidly hierarchical and class-bound as Russia, form often implied content, and parody focused attention precisely on the chasm between the formulaic pronounce-

110 Prutkov's works also found their way into another satirical journal The Spark (*Iskra*), published between 1859 and 1873 by the satirist V. C. Kurochkin and the caricaturist N. A. Stepanov, although the primary venue remained The Whistle (*Svistok*).

111 This character was almost certainly meant as a mocking reference to the poet Mikhail Rozenheim, a popular poet of the era of exposé literature that Dobroliubov considered disingenuous.

112 I.M. Sukiasova, *Iazyk i stil' parodii Koz'my Prutkova: leksiko-stilisticheskii analiz* (Tbilisi: Izd. Akademii Nauk Gruzinskoi SSR, 1961), 13.

ments and the vacuity of content.¹¹³ Here was exposed the radical divergence of imperial form from imperial content, the insistence of the imperial regime that its words not be subject to scrutiny by the press or the people.¹¹⁴ But satire provided an opportunity to expose the basic fallacies of any political language that exalted form at the expense of content. Indeed, as Dobroliubov wrote in the program to be sent to the censorship body tasked with approving the publication of his satirical supplement The Whistle:

[There are two categories of people deserving of the lash of satire....]...*Routinists*, loyal to their old mistakes and sins and hateful of everything that is new – and *Progressives*, shouting about the modern success of civilization, about truth, freedom, and honor, without the necessary adoption of the self-evident foundations of enlightenment and humanity... Heretofore, all have parodied the *routinists*; but Svistok proposes for its purpose not to spare the *Progressives*, either, since, by false logic and ill-planned applications they can harm the cause of public enlightenment just as much as the most backward and ignorant.”¹¹⁵

Here we might posit that Dobroliubov has reorganized his journalistic priorities in order to cater to the censors. However, in this argument, we see the grounds for the failure of the new bureaucrat of exposé literature, the progressive bureaucrat that

113 See a further discussion of this phenomenon in Alexei Yurchak. *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 77 - 125. Yurchak addresses the prevalence of the “poetic function,” the function “focused on the aesthetic form of language...on the message for its own sake...on how it says it and not necessarily what it says.” Formulaic, ideological pronouncements were prevalent in public discourse and language became fixed. Meaning was made, then, in the varied public responses to formulaic language, often in the form of anecdotes (*anekdoty*).

114 For a discussion of rank and nomenclature see “Chiny i Zvanye” in Leonid E. Shepelev, *Chinovny Mir Rossii : XVIII-Nachalo XX veka* (Sankt-Peterburg: Iskusstvo-SpB, 1999), 131 - 191.

115 *Istoriia russkoi zhurnalistiki XVIII-XIX vekov*, ed. V.G. Berezina, et al. (Moskva: izd. Vyshaia shkola, 1963), 353.

might have grown in the tradition of Pisemsky's Kalinovich. It is this failure, as well as radical critics' preference for clarity and uncomplicated moral paradigms, that led to the entrenchment of the bureaucrat's unenviable place in literature. As the scholar Boris Bukhshtab claims, "the battle with the mania of exposéism, widely spread in print after the Crimean War, was one of the reasons for Svistok. The loud denunciation of private and usually completely unimportant facts [in exposéism] took attention away from the deep ulcers both of the public and the official order and created the impression that such private failings could be rooted out without breaking the system, the very product of which they were."¹¹⁶ The bureaucrat had to be simultaneously banal and powerful to fulfill the reactionary political function that the radicals ascribed to him. In other words, characters' private failings could not overshadow the problems inherent in the system, of which the bureaucrat was an inalienable part. Koz'ma Prutkov's performance of banality was nonpareil. Yet, how could writers harness the darker vision of the bureaucrat to carry out Dobroliubov's vision for radical literature? Saltykov-Shchedrin's comic appropriation of a semi-bureaucratic genre might provide a model.

116 B. Ia. Bukhshtab, *Russkie Poetry: Tiutchev, Fet, Koz'ma Prutkov, Dobroliubov* (Leningrad: Khudozh. literatura, 1970), 231.

The Diary of a Provincial in St. Petersburg

Why, however, do they destroy, abnegate, prohibit, and not expand, establish, permit?

--Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin¹¹⁷

In the 1872 novel, *The Diary of a Provincial in St. Petersburg* (*Dnevnik Provintsiala v Peterburge*), Saltykov-Shchedrin introduces projects satirizing the rash of civic initiatives in various progressive newspapers. One project, "On the Firing Squad and its Beneficial Effects," details the case for allowing death by shooting to accommodate a wider range of crimes.¹¹⁸ The resulting mix of literary and bureaucratic language is meant to imitate the increasingly reactionary mood in Russian civil society. It also, surprisingly, reflects Saltykov's annoyance not with the ascendancy of the conservative reaction, but with the enfeeblement of the liberal intelligentsia, unready to offer any real alternative to a dominant reactionary discourse and, instead, content to write within the journalistic range allowed by the censors, making sure not to upset the authorities.¹¹⁹

117 Saltykov-Shchedrin, *Sobranie Sochinenii*, X:322.

118 The project seems to be a tongue-in-cheek response to the renewed debate about the death penalty in Russia (the novel dates from the period of the Nechaev case). The Nechaev Case was a case involving a socialist cabal and a murder, a cause célèbre that was the basis for Dostoevsky's novel *Demons*.

119 During his period as Vice-Governor in Tver' Province, Saltykov became associated with a group of progressive landowners who were vocal in their attempts to advance the cause of Emancipation and other liberal reforms. Among the leaders of the group was Saltykov's friend Aleksey Mikhailovich Unkovskii, the Marshall of Nobility in Tver' until his resignation and exile to Viatka in 1860. S. A. Makashin, *Saltykov-Shchedrin Na Rubezhe 1850-1860 Godov* (Moscow: "Khudozh. lit.", 1972).

The novel is composed as a series of diaristic reflections on a year spent in St Petersburg by a provincial noble. The Provincial travels to the capital in the company of landowners seeking various “concessions” from the government. However, the Provincial himself is travelling without any particular purpose in mind and soon settles comfortably into a seemingly endless succession of lavish meals and various entertainments. Exhausted by the onset of gout, the author turns his attention to the profession that he deems suited to men of leisure: journalism.

The Provincial’s exposure to journalism comes through the auspices of his friend and witness to the literary exploits of his youth, Menandr Prelestnov. Prelestnov is an editor of the journal The Foamskimmer Messenger (*Vestnik Penkosmania*).¹²⁰ The Society of Foamskimmers is a moderate-liberal group that seeks to build on the consensus of the Reform Era without realizing that a new reactionary environment has grown up in its place. The tempo of reaction is spurred by liberal journalists’ acquiescence to the wishes of the government. Hopelessly adrift in the insipid political environment succeeding the end of the Reform era, the journalists are engaged in a fierce battle to tame ideological and political orthodoxies within their grouping and are involved in various battles of principle over, among other things, re-scheduling the official deadline for public tax collection by three days.

120 Menander Prelestnov was a satirical take on the editor of the editor of The Saint Petersburg News (Sankt-Peterburgskie Vedomosti), Valentin Korsh. The Saint Petersburg News was the oldest continuously published newspaper in Russia and, by the 1870s, was a well-known journalistic organ of the gradualist-liberal opposition. Saltykov-Shchedrin, Sobraniie Sochinienii, X:752.

The banality of the journalistic cabals seems, nevertheless, harmless, until a whispered conversation brings an old literary specter back into view.

A guest at a literary salon organized by the “Foamskimmers,” the Provincial overhears a whispered conversation on the likelihood of the adoption of two platforms advocated by the liberally minded members:

The thing is simple. There are two projects: one is about destruction, the other about abolition. As it stands now, the question is which of these two projects will pass.

Everyone looked around at each other in quiet annoyance. Suddenly it occurred to someone:

“But what about Privy Councillor Kuz’ma Prutkov!! Surely he won’t let it come to that!”

“That’s exactly who I’ve just come from seeing!”

“And did you speak with him?”

“Yes; and he told me directly: ‘My dear friend! ... with God’s help, I will be able to pass the project on abolition and put “destruction” in motion!’

“But this will already be a smashing success!”

Of course. But he (Prutkov) added didn’t stop there: in any case...I can only pledge to you its success if our journalists will behave with *particular* reserve. The old man even underlined the word *particular*.

This news had a general effect on the group.

“And I posit,” ... “that there is nothing left to do than follow his quite sensible advice.”¹²¹

The inter-textual allusion here points both to the literary lineage of Koz’ma Prutkov, alive and well in the Foamskimmers’ publications, and to the precedent for collusion between the government and literary men. Prutkov’s eminent quotability had kept his literary fame alive among the reading public and his reappearance in “The Diary of a Provincial in St. Petersburg” as a mediator between journalists and the govern-

121 Saltykov-Shchedrin, XII: 406

ment is an indication of Saltykov's distrust of the bonds that linked the two professions. Prutkov, styled as a bureaucrat who was given to fits of literary mania, acted as a symbol of the nexus of literary and official worlds. Prutkov imagined that these boundaries could easily traversed in one direction by those bureaucrats wishing to try to their hands at publishing (although he was less sure of writers wishing to try their luck at a sinecure in the government). The comic interpolation of bureaucratic values onto literary ones was meant to highlight the absurdity of bureaucratic discourse and expose the pretensions of the service class to general laughter. However, Saltykov finds a different use for it while still activating its earlier valence, and thus Prutkov's presence takes on darker overtones. Prutkov now not only touts his bureaucratic blandishments as proof of literary prowess, but also uses his position to intimidate and cajole the journalists. Prutkov has taken on some functions of the censorship and of the old and feared Third Division. He is now using his literary connections to advocate the government's position to a pliant press.

The reference also recalls Prutkov's tradition of "project-ism," since the pretext for the meeting with the "Foamskimmers" had been their concern over the fate of a project championed by their society. Paralells exist, as well, in the composition of Prutkov's project and the projects found in the various literary organs of the "Foamskimmer's Society." In Prutkov's earlier "Project," his paratactic rhetoric became a sort of *reductio ad absurdum*. With his reliance on classical form through the inclusion of traditional rhetorical divisions Prutkov sought to underline the loftiness of his literary endeavor, only to display utter incompetence in execution (Prutkov's text is variously misspelled, and parenthesized, meta-textual notations are inter-

spersed in the body of the *preamble* and *thesis*). The “Foamskimmer’s” satirical project displays less of the jaunty disregard for syntax, instead coopting the somber language of humanitarian societies to provide Saltykov’s schemers with the necessary cloak of verisimilitude, while still veering into the absurd.

“Why does all of this happen?” – of course, from a lack of preventative severity. If, for example, there had been recourse to death by shooting, then society would have been saved...”

... “*young people, carried away by an arduousness of temper and by corrupting influences, are rushing headlong into the abyss, and, since such headlong rushing is not allowed in our fatherland, these unhappy youths see their existence snuffed out at its very beginning*” [at this point, I swear, I shed a tear] ... “*Let us reach out our hands to save those who are drowning! Let us lend a hand in help to these way-faring youths!..*”.

...
“And thus we propose it to be beneficial that the following people are to be subject to death by shooting:

Firstly, all non-conformist thinkers.

Secondly, all those whose behavior displays some marks of furtiveness and a lack of good will.

Thirdly, all those whose gloomy contours dismay the hearts of well-meaning citizens.

*Fourthly, pranksters and newsmen.*¹²²

“On the Firing Squad and its Beneficial Effects” channels its most effective language in evoking emotional response. (Saltykov marks the moment of maximal pathos and satirical effect in a parenthetic comment about the reader, a satirical stage direction calling for tears.) The subtlety of the parody revolves around the effective rhetorical guise of the jeremiad, leading the reader through the standard civic discourse on the fecklessness of youth, framed by the Christian metaphors of

122 Saltykov-Shchedrin, XII: 311 – 312.

grace and redemption. Indeed, the question posed by the author “*Why does all of this happen?*” seems a mocking echo of the rhetorical “*Where are we going?*” a question repeated by the fictional “Society for those Hoping for the Troubling of the Waters” (*Obshchestvo chaiushchikh dvizheniia vody*) in a humorous re-interpolation of the biblical “*Quo vadis?*” and one that was often heard, in all seriousness, in the contemporary press.¹²³

This discourse quickly devolves, however, into political recrimination. The author’s thesis is suddenly exposed as a mere rhetorical illusion; the real targets of the benevolent genocide are the usual suspects, the radicals. The list of eligible victims of judicial murder includes no recognizable category of inveterate crime or criminal turpitude; instead, the author identifies the traits of contrarian intellectualism and even relatively insouciant political dissent as the primary social ills of the Russian Empire. The firing squad is intended not only for contrarians of all stripes but for the errant journalists who disregard the “Foamskimmers,” as well.

The hyperbole seems to be designed to lampoon not only “the bacchanalia of conservative scheming (*proektorstvo*),” but also to expose a particularly cynical direction in public discourse.¹²⁴ Indeed, Saltykov’s biographer Sergey Makashin suggests that the string of schemes lampooned in *The Diary of a Provincial in St. Petersburg* can be best understood against the backdrop of education reform in the imperial administration. A widely debated attempt to reform secondary education was

123 Maria S. Goriachkina, *Satira Saltykova-Shchedrina* (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 1965), 76.

124 Saltykov-Shchedrin, X: 718.

afoot at the time of the novel's composition. The Minister of Education, Count Tolstoy, was attempting to carry out a proposal that was the brainchild of the conservative publicist Mikhail Katkov and the Moscow academic Pavel Leont'iev, this combination itself representing a rather shocking new pairing of the power of the press, the gown, and the bureaucracy to make policy. The proposal involved radically transforming the entrance requirements for secondary gymnasias, schools that were open more widely to the children of the raznochintsy and lower classes.¹²⁵ The new requirements would make prior knowledge of classical languages mandatory for all students. Since such classical education was more typical of the lyceums popular among the upper classes, the move was widely seen as an attempt to limit the access of the lower classes to education.¹²⁶ As Nikitenko remarked, "Is it not madness to think about the establishment of a conservative thought aristocracy ... by means of the Greek and Latin languages?"¹²⁷ Nikitenko guessed that the real scheme lay in excluding "nihilists" from the upper echelons of the intellectual workforce, thereby suspending the social mobility experienced mid-century. As Makashin writes,

The tendency to maximally limit the number of educated offspring of the people, the diminishment of professorial privilege, the

125 For a detailed discussion of the reforms to the gymnasias, see "Reforma Gimnazii 1871 goda" in I. A. Aleshintsev, *Gimnazicheskago obrazovaniia v Rossii - XVIII i XIX veka* (Saint Petersburg: izd. O. Bogdanovoi, 1912), 285-318.

126 The reforms were also directed against medical and science education in Russia, fearing that such faculties were bastions of "materialism," or nihilism, symptomatic of Bazarov in Turgenev's Fathers and Sons. Saltykov continues his attack on this policy in his 1874 novel Gospoda Molchaliny. In a scene where the eponymous protagonist discusses his son's future in medical school, Aleksey Molchalini's bureaucratic colleague remarks, "Why didn't you let him into the classical division? In that school he wouldn't have gotten it in his head that people come from monkeys!" Saltykov-Shchedrin, XII:31.

127 Nikitenko, *Dnevnik*, III:346.

preference occasioned to bureaucratic careerists over the flower of the Russian intelligentsia, the mandatory attendance of the lectures of known dullards, the monstrous “classical” reforms of secondary education carried out in 1871 - all of this catastrophically complicated the development of the country. Not without reason did contemporaries sharply compare this politics of “enlightenment” with the murder of Israeli infants by a new Herod, fearing that from the ranks of educated youth would rise a “composite antichrist.”¹²⁸

Given the nature of such projects being advanced in the area of education, “On the Firing Squad and its Beneficial Effects” seems, if hyperbolic, then at least logically constructed. As Nikitenko noted, the imperial elite seemed to be covertly using education for widespread retrograde social engineering; the official bureaucracy was attempting to replicate its current conservative makeup by determining the potential applicant pool for future bureaucratic posts. Since the government required that upper-level administrators were the recipients of higher education, restricting the flow of candidates to those who had received a classical education automatically denied an administrative career path to the other students. Indeed, such students were now relegated to technical specialties.¹²⁹

Thus, we can identify a subtle diversionary tactic in the imbalance of form and content; the hyperbolic disjunction between cause and effect. “On the Firing Squad” employs a satirical pathos that mocks genre expectations, using the language of social reform and religious feeling to posit radically punitive measures. The appeal to parental instinct leads, by satirical degrees, to totalitarian instinct, an inter-

128 Saltykov-Shchedrin, X:718.

129 As Nikitenko further notes in his diary, the reforms were targeted against those receiving an education in the sciences, a distinction that had ideological undertones. Nikitenko, III:311.

pulation of generational conflict within the larger ideological conflict between liberals and conservatives. By a similar measure, the program of education reform posits children as the occasion for a political vendetta that is, Saltykov contests, really between radicals and conservatives. If the answer to the problem of liberal bureaucrats was mandatory Latin in secondary schools, then the answer to the problem of wayward youth could just as well be the execution of journalists.

The world of Saltykov and Prutkov is one of non sequitur and illogic. The projects are a particular type of parodic interpretation of bureaucracy, a sort of fanciful arabesque that invites the reader to consider the essential bureaucratic ethos by chronicling and aestheticizing its processes. The project, then, is a useful literary forum for such an endeavor, as its literary occasion, the social question, provided a set of ready-made generic rubrics. The literary terms of such public discourse were, like journalism, closer generically to what we might call the literary practices of bureaucracy. Such crossbred literary phenomena as the typical reform-era *Project*, then, provided the opportunity for an aesthetic blend of bureaucratic formalism and literary creativity.

One of the potential literary values of the bureaucracy might be the reproducibility, or nearly limitless proliferation, of its written output. Prutkov's parodic biography works through the subversion of popular tropes of bureaucracy, such that Prutkov's foray into polemical discourse would be read as a riposte to the flurry of "schemes." Prutkov is a ready-made double, an epigone whose second-rate quality is simply assumed and requires no polemical evaluation. Whatever Prutkov touched was tainted with the imprimatur of reaction and lackeyism. Even though

the period after the Reforms continued to demonstrate the increasing professionalization of literature and bureaucracy, the two were not necessarily growing apart. As Saltykov demonstrates, cooperation and communication was always possible. Even if the author could not make a good bureaucrat and the bureaucrat, similarly, did not have a future as an author, the old professional curiosity seemed to remain. Authors and journalists, such as Saltykov's "Foamskimmers," never completely freed themselves from their fascination with the inner-workings of the bureaucracy and the influence that it had on questions of social importance. Similarly, bureaucrats, represented by the fictional Prutkov, never stopped imagining themselves as writers with something to say beyond chancery pronouncements. When Saltykov playful places Prutkov on the scene of 1870s Petersburg, he is, thus, employing a sort of cultural shorthand to accuse the journalistic clique of "Foamskimmers" of the same literary malfeasance that Prutkov represented.

The appearance of Koz'ma Prutkov, then, is of peculiar interest in that it is one of the few moments when Saltykov reveals the sinews connecting the literary establishment with the bureaucracy, and, moreover, describing the methods by which the government had long continued to influence the literary and journalistic establishment. That Saltykov believed such a collusion to be a primary factor in the erasure of boundaries separating government interests from those of journalists is evidenced by an allusion to Koz'ma Prutkov and his friendly advice to the members of the "Foamskimmers" that they conduct their journalistic affairs with "*particular* reserve."

The spread of journals and the newly hardened battle lines between liberals and reactionaries, and between radicals and liberals, meant that the journalistic battles over the direction of Russia would continue unabated. However, the era was also one in which journalists and powerful editors began to take an interest in realizing the *projects* that their journals featured. The case of the journalist and editor Mikhail Katkov's cooperation with the Ministry of Education in navigating sweeping reforms to primary education being among those that bothered Saltykov, in particular. Now the bureaucrat and the author might not only jump between professional activities, but, instead might participate in the professional affairs of one institution or the other without giving up the particular prerogatives of either office or pen. It was in this newly permeable atmosphere of professional dualities that the author and the bureaucrat might finally be thought to have merged into a single, unscrupulous entity, capable of maneuvering the prerogatives of the press in the direction that the governing elite might find either beneficial to the priorities of the regime. The following exchange illustrates Saltykov's suspicions of journalistic intrigues that were slowly eroding the independence of the press:

It is possible that (the “Foamskimmers”) are getting information from places that...literary propriety does not allow us to name.

If I may! ... You are getting information from Privy Councilor Kuz'ma Prutkov himself!

Ah, my dear man, how intemperate you are! This is, of course, impossible! ... Koz'ma Prutkov! You know, he's really the most

liberal of the men of our age! It's even possible that he would get three "official warnings" at once!¹³⁰

Getting into the details of all of these secrets is not allowed us... But we have found in ourselves enough civic courage to allow us to say to our opponents: "Your excellency! You have been misled!" And we do this with the great satisfaction that we sincerely respect this jolly and brave opponent...¹³¹

Prutkov's proneness to censorial utterance is appended as a badge of honor.

However, the particular compliment is telling, as it mixes the punitive codes applied to authors and bureaucrats. Koz'ma Prutkov's own credentials as a liberal are buffered by a loose boast about his potential censurability. In the conditions of distrust and duress that the new system of pre-publication censorship imposed upon struggling liberal journals and newspapers, allies could be identified not through philosophical or intellectual commonalities, but through the common application of penalties. In such an incongruous system, the old values uniting the literary community were lost or traded for new values that placed a higher trust in one's ability to successfully avoid or invite punishment. In such a system, Prutkov's real service was not his liability under the law, but his ability to keep others from it with the proper application of his rank and status.

Another comic trope seems manifest in the tendency of bureaucratic rhetoric to monopolize the discourse of public welfare. Saltykov's satirical "Project" is, ostensibly, a project to save wayward youth from the social ills affecting their generation.

130 This refers to the system of administrative warnings issued to journals that have run afoul of the censorship. Three administrative warnings equaled an automatic revoking of a journal's print license for six months.

131 Saltykov-Shchedrin, XII: 412

However, the resultant plan of political action amounts to a reactionary scheme for the re-introduction of the death penalty in Russia.¹³² Saltykov seems to be using hyperbole here to estrange the seemingly innocuous political rhetoric of the period from the highly malicious political content underneath. Contrasts of all kinds, but especially those between form and content, were highlights of the satirical genre among the earlier Natural School of Russian literature. The scholar Alla Zhuk notes that such contrasts between the private and the public (which she formulates as a problem of “secrets”), and those between the everyday and the highbrow, were the engines of satire in the era.¹³³ The projects satirized in *The Diary of a Provincial in St. Petersburg* compound the hyperbolic surplus by mocking the expectations of the reader expecting to find a modicum of constructive public discourse in the journals of the day. The complete disruption of logical sequence, the satirical misalignment of the conclusion with the thesis, the inapplicability of the means to the stated problem, all parody bureaucratic reasoning. Saltykov points to the cynical attempts of the contemporary bureaucratic authorities to mask the reactionary aims of government policies. Saltykov’s cynical rendering of the “Foamskimmers” reinforces this tendency by highlighting the nonsensical journalistic obsession with litigating political minutiae in print.

132 The death penalty had been suspended under Elizaveta Petrovna in 1754, but was used in certain cases, such as the execution of Pugachev in 1775 and several of the leading Decembrists in 1826.

133 Alla Aleksandrovna Zhuk, *Satira natural'noi shkoly* (Saratov: Izd. Saratov. Uni, 1979), 62-108.

The long digression about the literary life in the capital, with its inter-textual allusions to Koz'ma Prutkov and its lacerating depictions of liberal journalism, do not directly implicate the bureaucrat. Saltykov, nonetheless, spreads the culpability for the sad state of affairs in literature and journalism across a wide array of institutions. His deployment of Prutkov is a not-so-subtle joke aimed at the nexus between the literary establishment and the bureaucracy. Saltykov's depiction of the life of the cosmopolitan flâneur in the person of a visiting provincial savant provides the author the narrative distance in which to explore the familiar world of the capital's literary salons, theater boxes, and private clubs without assuming the too familiar tone of one of the literary denizens of the city. However, Saltykov's narrative trick also allows the protagonist to move fluidly through the various professional and social layers that permeate Petersburg society. The Provincial poseur can claim friends from the bureaucracy, from journalism and literature, and from the landed gentry, and, in doing so, can demonstrate the seamlessness of these communities.

Although far from being a genre reserved strictly for bureaucrats, the *project* is a successful expression of the bureaucratic impulse in literature; the content is drawn from the pressing social and political issues of the day. But, unlike the bureaucratic forums in which such issues were usually addressed, the author is invited to engage his fancy, bringing him a measure of power denied him through repressive censorship, and by a reading public increasingly detached from the disappointing political realities of the Post-Reform era. It is telling, then, that the satirical *projects* explored in this chapter are so effusively reactionary. The basic contours allow for both the creative instinct present in the writer, and the abnegating instinct of

submission and subordination, expressed in the ultimate preference for violence and punishment. As Saltykov-Shchedrin suggests, any desire to create must be couched in the natural language of “abnegation,” and must be a cascading series of prohibitions and limitations.¹³⁴ The *project*, thus, is a fitting coda for an era in which the bureaucrat and the journalist came to be seen as broadly evocative of a similar trend, the trend towards the *abnegation* of the social question in literature.¹³⁵

Compare the literature of the 1840s, which didn’t take a single step without general principles, with contemporary literature, which is busy playing pick-up sticks; compare the Menandr of the past, expounding...in exaltation on the service of the uppermost interests of art and truth, with the Menandr of the present, with the same exaltation intoning on the Aurora Borealis that he has seen in Ekaterinoslav.... What a impossible chasm there is between these two comparisons.

I do not say that it would be useful and wise to return to the 1840s with its singular service to an entire range of abstractions, but neither their abstractions nor any others are dear to me, it is, instead, the temperament and the direction of literature. No one would have dared to shout then: “Ours is not a time of expansive tasks!”¹³⁶

The writer and journalist had moved away from the certainties of the 1840s. The new era saw him moving neither forwards nor backwards, but, instead, towards the ossification of a range of practices and philosophies that no longer reflected the real-

134 “Why, however, do they destroy, abnegate, prohibit, and not expand, establish, permit? The secret of this condition again consists in an overly-passionate desire to “live,” in the belief combined with that word, and in the inability to sate that belief by means other than those which have been deeded to us by our ancestors. Both in happiness and in unhappiness we are all the same illogical and folly-bound.” Saltykov-Shchedrin, XII: 373

135 Saltykov’s choice for the true representative figure of the era is the “predator” (khishnik), the spirit of capitalism and unbridled autocratic power, behind which the “foamskimmer” dependably follows. Saltykov-Shchedrin, XII: 552-553

136 Saltykov-Shchedrin, XII: 430

ity of the society around him. Instead of taking on the bureaucratic order, the writer took to the bureaucratic medium and produced literary versions of the kinds of projects that, as Saltykov suggests, were reminiscent of the very programs that were, even then, moving Russian society further from the goals of the recent past.

CHAPTER III

CENSOR RECENSUS: WRITING AS A CENSOR

They have pencils: *these* are their scepters.

-Nicholas

An Introduction: Glinka's Private Act of Publicity

Censorship in the nineteenth century was a rather ambiguous and, certainly, a perfidious undertaking, both for the censors and the censored. A shifting array of laws and decrees made for uncertain administration. However, in addition to the official censorship organs (and there were several), Nicholas' main contribution to the policing powers of the autocracy was the so-called Third Division, a secret police force with highly-placed informants throughout the empire, answerable directly to the Tsar through his hand-picked chief gendarme, Alexander Benckendorff (1781 – 1844).¹³⁷

The Third Division followed the activities of what might today be referred to as the fifth column, potential enemies of the state in word and thought, those whose private activities might lead to the sort of “free thinking” (*vol’nodumie*) that Nicholas I distrusted. The Third Division, much like its successor in the next century, the Cheka, chased after potentially criminal thought through reams of correspondence and dossiers. One of Benckendorff’s self-proclaimed duties was to censor the censors, to follow the course of censorship material through the stages of its redaction, and, in the case of its inconsistency, to strike at a person or institution thought to

137 For a fuller discussion of the Third Section, see Sidney Monas, *The Third Section: Police and Society in Russia under Nicholas I* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961).

have suspect loyalties.¹³⁸ As Sergei Glinka's memoirs show, such doubts were not unfounded...

In the September 1865 edition of The Contemporary, Nekrasov and the editors published a nearly complete excerpt from the archival manuscripts of the late Russian poet and sometime censor Sergei Nikolaevich Glinka (1775-1841). The manuscript exists today in Glinka's personal file in the manuscript division of the Russian National Library.¹³⁹ Given the subject matter, however, and the standards of acceptable decorum in the Nicholaeven era, it must be assumed that the manuscript was written for the drawer, where it remained until after the poet's death. This pithy document details several events from the author's short and unfortunate censorship career.

Glinka had many disagreements with the censorship authorities during his tenure there from 1828 until 1832. Earlier correspondence indicates his frustration with a long-running and costly legal battle over a scurrilous poem that he had passed through the censorship. Glinka carefully tallied his supposed losses in his correspondence with the Minister of Public Education, charging into recriminations where his more careful colleagues might have paused to consider the traditional categories of rank and hierarchy. Glinka's unguarded public language is on fuller

138 For a discussion of the Third Division and espionage activities directed against literary society, see Ruud, Fighting Words, 87-89.

139 The manuscript is accompanied by the following note: "the date of the accession of the document is not established. All that is known is that the manuscript of S. N. Glinka "My Censorship" came earlier. Q. XIII, N. 12, Sergei N. Glinka, Rossisskaia Natsional'naia Biblioteka, Saint Petersburg.

display in a curious autobiographical piece written in 1832, at the end of his censorship career. The manuscript details the justification for Glinka's entry into the censorship, a professional path that regularly buffets his conscience:

The whole year I fought back against the strict codex [the «Iron Codex» of 1826]...Then I wrote to the Assistant to the Minister of Public Education, D. N. Bludov, asking: would it not be possible to give me the position of a travelling inspector of private schools? Mr. Bludov responded... that if I did not agree to be a censor, then there was no other position... He who is sinking will grasp even for a razor.¹⁴⁰

Glinka's perennial financial worries, when coupled with his fortunate contacts among the old Alexandrinian elite, left him expecting a sinecure that might suit his literary bent. However, the office of censor, while oftentimes entrusted to literary men, was increasingly reserved for university professors owing their entire subsistence to their professional position within state-run education. Glinka was awarded the position of "tertiary" censor without the rights of academicians to claim a prestigious position on the Moscow Censorship Committee. This fact, which Glinka regarded as a demotion given his literary antecedents, would lead to altercations like the following:

"...It is a good thing that God gave me a strong spirit. People in similar situations come to blows, which is what happened... Excited by the "most serene" fists of the minister and, having run out onto the street, I yelled back that from the tyranny of ministers "*Fourteenth of Decembers* would break out every day..."¹⁴¹

140 "Iz zapisok Sergeia Nikolaevicha Glinky" *Sovremennik* 9 (1865): 222.

141 The reference here is to the Decembrist Revolt on December 14, 1825. *Ibid.*, 228.

Yet, Glinka saves his most potent words for the Tsar himself. Fast upon his dismissal for quarrelsomeness in 1832, Sergey Glinka penned a personal memoir about his unhappy time in the Censorship, a dangerous measure given that it was written during the first years of the Nicholaevan reaction. The memoir, recorded on parchment and bound together in a leather booklet, purports to be a record of Glinka's principled battles with a tyrannical censorship, casting himself as a martyr for the cause of free speech in a corrupt society. Thirty-three years later, noting Glinka's seemingly "inadmissible acerbity" for the era and lauding the author's perversity in the face of challenging political circumstances, The Contemporary transcribed and printed nearly the entire manuscript. However, a significant section near the end of the unfinished memoirs remained unpublished and unattested, marked only by ellipsis.

The excerpt in The Contemporary runs faithfully for six printed pages until the line, "I asked V. V. Izmailov to censor my manuscript under the title "The History of the Life of Alexander the First," after which the manuscript and the posthumous article diverge significantly, the manuscript version follows:¹⁴²

In the second half of 1818, I reminded him, Alexander had promised that the same constitution that had given the Poles a kingdom [would come] ... to Russia. To my great surprise, my Censor rumbled at me with the question: "dare we speak of a constitution after the 14th of December?" ... I staggered and threw the gauntlet back before him "If you suppose, my good sir," I countered, "that after the 14th of December it is forbidden to talk about a constitution, then inform on me. And I contest that it is shameful ... to think that the Tsar has disgraced himself with a lie before the entire world. ... And really, what meaning does life have where one is afraid to repeat that which comes from the

142 Sergey N. Glinka "Moe Tsenzorstvo" Fond 191, Sergei N. Glinka, Rossisskaia Natsional'naia Biblioteka, Saint Petersburg.

mouth of the Tsar himself! I do not value life: inform on me, even the death penalty does not frighten me. ...¹⁴³

Since the treasonous manuscript was not published, Glinka's hoped-for martyrdom was not realized, and he died peacefully in 1847, fifteen years after penning these lines. However, here is an example both of the politically-charged rhetoric that sounded behind closed doors in Nicholaevan Russia and the censorial presence that kept political discussion cordoned, out of the book shops and lending libraries.

Glinka's manuscript was an example of the kind of *lèse-majesté* that had become risky in the climate of reaction that settled over Russia in the wake of the Decembrist revolt. But in this dramatic exchange between author and censor we have encapsulated the complexities of the censorship in the nineteenth century. Glinka is caught in the teeth of the censorship and responds using the very language that he is tasked with excising from Russia's vocabulary. The exchange, though testing the balance between authoritarianism and emergent liberalism, is actually between two civil servants tasked with enforcing a top-down version of authoritarian discourse. Glinka, the censor, presents his problematic manuscript for censorship review, only to have the offending passages excised and forever lost to the potential reader. However, his treasonous opinion never reached the Tsar, either. Such was the tradeoff implicit in literature in the nineteenth century.

Authors stood at the forefront of public opinion, ready to express the mood of the country. Pushkin, Lermontov, Gogol', and Dostoevsky all challenged the status

143 Ibid.

quo by contesting the bounds of acceptable discourse in the intellectually repressive conditions of the autocratic state. But behind the glory of their literary fame, there are stories of repressive tactics, overzealous censorship, police surveillance, imprisonment, and exile. Nicholas built an efficient police state that was ready to counter emerging liberal ideologies through violence, to swiftly punish and repress. The censorship often mediated such perilous encounters. Glinka's "gauntlet" was meant to land at the feet of the authorities, but it flew no further than his colleague in the censorship, Izmailov. How many such gauntlets fell short of their mark? How many words, spoken against the authority of the Tsar, the bureaucracy, serfdom, aristocratic privilege, missed their mark and flew no further than a censor's desk?

The nineteenth century was a time of intellectual debates, great philosophical ferment, social upheaval, and foreshortened political reformation. However, we may not actually know how much of what was said in the heat of these contests, in anger, in passion, did not end up in print. The censorship that was built to protect the elites from authors also protected the authors from the elites.

This chapter examines how bureaucrats sought to engage with the public sphere not only through state service, but also through literary endeavor. The double life that such activity implied exposed the censor-author to professional obstacles and, in the still protean conditions of Russia's literary economy, did not leave much room for maneuver when the author-censor ran afoul of the government. We begin by looking at the compromises implicit in balancing literary influence with professional obligations. In particular, I examine the struggle of three Russian author-censors to obtain permission to publish a literary journal in the early days of

Nicholas I's reign. Vladimir Izamilov, Sergey Glinka (the author of the manuscript excerpts above), and Sergey Aksakov came face to face with the intransigence of a regime that sought increasing control over the entirety of the process of literary creation, from the act of inscription on paper to the publication and dissemination of literature and journalism across the empire. The particular twists of logic that led author and censor, citizen and official, in opposite directions for the remainder of the imperial era, are on display here. The development of a literary market and economy, which had previously been patron to those of its servitors involved in literature, could now begin. By juxtaposing the expectations of literary men raised under the patronage system of the previous era with the increasingly reactionary attitudes of Nicholas' bureaucracy, the correspondence provides a window onto the tensions that would define the two camps throughout the rest of the imperial era.

The chapter then moves to the case of Alexander Nikitenko, whose fraught career as a censor came often at the expense of his respected position as a scholar and critic. His professional activity was always shadowed by his serf origins. Serfdom and the long-running battle over the right to debate it led directly to the evolution of journalism and political thought that shook the foundations of the censorship regime. Nikitenko's recollections of the mid-nineteenth century literary world provide a prism through which to view the development of both literature and censorship, two Russian institutions that were symbiotic. Nikitenko's personal acquaintances and colleagues were members of the literary elite. He records many personal conversations with such figures such as Gogol', Pushkin, Zhukovsky, and Turgenev, and was a close personal friend of Ivan Goncharov, also a censor, with whom he

journeyed to Europe on multiple occasions. But Nikitenko was not alone in his conflicted service to the state instruments of censorship, and could count as colleagues Fyodor Tiutchev, Apollon Maikov, Sergei Aksakov, and others.

The differing attitudes about the limits of public speech spurred by debates over serfdom are, in turn, concisely illustrated by the divergent approaches to censored speech held by Nikitenko as opposed to another former bureaucrat, the radical critic in exile, Alexander Herzen. Nikitenko's aversion to Herzen's polemical style centers around issues of rhetoric, and illustrates the ways in which censorial attitudes filtered not only into editorial decisions, but into the private thought of even the most enlightened sector of the service intelligentsia.

Censor Recensus: Writing as a Censor

But poems are not an officer's affair, for this we have poets; for a bureaucrat, no matter what he sets out to write, it always comes out as a petition.

-N. F. Pavlov's "Demon"¹⁴⁴

On August 9, 1829 Ivan Dvigubskii, a member of the Moscow Censorship Committee, which was a division of the Ministry of Public Education, dictated the following missive to Adjunct Secretary Shchedritskii:¹⁴⁵

To the Central Censorship Administration

144. N. F. Pavlov, "Demon" http://az.lib.ru/p/pawlow_n_f/text_0020.html (July 2, 2016)

145 Both Ivan Alekseevich Dvigubsky (1771 – 1839) and Izmail Alekseevich Schedritsky (1792 – 1869) were professors at Moscow University.

Major Vladimir Vladimirovich Izmailov came to this committee with a petition for an application to print a journal in the year 1830 under the name of The Contemporary, and has submitted a prospectus for said journal. The Committee, having found nothing in contravention of censorship, on the basis of the Censorship Code, has the honor of forwarding this application and the prospectus for confirmation by the Central Censorship Administration.¹⁴⁶

The letter was issued from the Moscow Censorship Committee, as indicated by the cursive script underlining the florid mark of the Ministry of Public Education.

The letter was marked “Case (*Delo*) 133,” and was duly sent to its intended recipient, the Central Censorship Committee in St. Petersburg and the Minister of Public Education himself, Count Lieven.

The records detailing the entire process of the formal “request” (*proshchenie*) from the moment of its submission to the orderly to its acceptance by a minister have not been left to posterity. What is probable is that the entire process of negotiating the manifold bureaucracy of the Empire was impossibly confusing. The author Vladimir Giliarovskii (1855 – 1935) records an experience with the bureaucracy of the Censorship Committee in St. Petersburg:

I was advised to submit my application to the Chairman of the Central Administration Feoktistov.

“Submit it...to clear your conscience...Only, the thing is...tomorrow at 2 o’clock submit it personally to the Chairman.”

146 [I. A]. Dvigubskii, “O dozvolenii Maioru Izmailovu izdavat’ v Moskve Zhurnal pod nazvaniem Sovremennika: nachato 20. August 1829,” Pis’mo v Glavnoe Upravleniie Tsentsury, 20 August 1829, 1:156, 1829, Delo 174, Fond 772, RGIA, St. Petersburg.

“I arrived the next day at 2 o’clock with the application about reviewing and approving the book. I asked the courier to announce me, slipping him a paper ruble to knock him down a peg.”

“I’ll announce you now... Only, his excellency is not himself today... wait a moment.”

They announced me. I entered. A heavy-set official paced around his office alone. He saw me and bowed his head. He approached. Having presented myself, I handed him the petition.

“What is this? A petition?”

“Yes.”

He took it. He examined it.

“And the stamps? Where are the stamps!?!?”

“I’ll paste on the stamps... Only, please, don’t refuse to hear me out.”

“Petitions aren’t presented without stamps... Be so good as to paste on the stamps”... I stood confused and sullen...

...]...¹⁴⁷

Given that bureaucratic petitioning was nothing short of an industry in imperial Russia, attempts to assist petitioners were necessary. One such pamphlet, “A Guide to the Clear Study of the Administrative Schedule of the Processing of Documents in Russia” (*Rukovodstvo k nagliadnomu uziucheniiu administrativnogo poriadka techeniie bumag v Rossii*), published in Moscow in 1858, gives the reader a sense of the complications that a case file might meet on its way to the desk of an official empowered to make decisions.

The pamphlet was published with a full-color folding plate in the insert that featured an expansive flow chart filled with color keys and overlaying vectors. The chart demonstrated how petitions would loop through the bureaucratic machine

147 Arlen Blium, *Russkie pisateli o tsenury i tsentsurakh: ot Radishcheva do nashikh dnei 1790 – 1990* (Moscow: Poligraf, 2011), 198.

over and over again, each time gaining a new coat of ink. All told, a petition addressed to a minister was entered into the register at the Chancellery and then, upon determination of the proper departmental avenue, could expect to complete no less than thirty-one, and no more than thirty-five, steps before being reported back to the petitioner.

In the Department the flow of documents goes according to the following order:

1. The Attendant, having signed for the receipt of the packet of documents, passes them to,
2. The Chancellery Officer, who, having opened the packet, presents the documents to,
3. The Director, and the Director returns them to,
4. The Chancellery Officer, for dispatch to,
5. The Main Journalist, who records them in the Receipt Journal, numbers them and sign them over to
6. The Desk Officer, who presents them to
7. His assistant for entry into the Table registry and, thereupon, their return to the aforementioned,
8. Desk Officer for presentation to,
9. The Division Chief for their verbal presentation to
10. The Director and a solicitation of him on his orders as to the further course of the documents.
11. The Division Chief prepares these himself or delegates to,
12. The Desk Officer to prepare the report, which
13. The Division Chief reviews and passes to,
14. The Desk Officer for transmission to,
15. The Scrivener, who, having copied it, gives it for tabulation to

And so on until, finally it is passed back to...

32. The Attendant; and he, noting the packet in the Attendant or Deliver book, sends the packet according to its address by Courier.¹⁴⁸

148 Unattributed, "Rukovodstvo k nagliadnomu uziucheniiu administrativnogo poriadka tcheniie bumag v Rossii" (Moscow: tip. Katkova, 1858), 3-7.

The bureaucratic route passed through the “Desk Officer” nine times, the “Department Chief” six times, the “Scrivener” twice, and so on. The path, while circuitous, describes the workings of a bureaucracy reliably producing output according to its binary criteria, “accepted” (*priniato*) or “declined” (*otkloneno*).

The marks of the machine, the dozens of stations through which all petitions passed, are nearly invisible in this set of documents and are inscribed only by the series of numbers for the various registers in which all transactions were recorded. However, the matter seems to have been handled fairly quickly and with some efficiency. In the aftermath of the Decembrist Revolt, Nicholas' advisers paid special attention to the role of the press in his empire, revising the entire censorship code twice in two years and appointing certain extraordinary powers for his designated deputies, particularly in the Third Division. The Third Division, in turn, quickly shut down publications that they found politically suspicious. Thus, matters of the pen were likely to receive unwanted attention from the bureaucratic functionaries tasked with monitoring them.

Case 133 was an application by the writer and censor Vladimir Izmailov (1773-1830), requesting approval to begin publication of a new journal The Contemporary (*Sovremennik*).¹⁴⁹ Not appended to the bureaucratic dépêche was the name of the other author who would form the editorial board of the new journal,

149 In 1836 Pushkin published a journal by the same name, but in St. Petersburg.

Sergey Glinka.¹⁵⁰ Vladimir Izmailov was an acolyte of Nikolai Karamzin, and his most famous work remains a travelogue of Russia, Travels in Southern Russia (*Puteshestvie v poldenniu Rossii*), a work “completely in the style of [Karamzin’s] Letters of a Russian Traveller (*Pis’ma russkogo puteshestvennika*).”¹⁵¹ The rest of Izmailov’s literary career was spent editing a string of journals and almanacs. Although serving in a civilian post with attendant civilian ranks, Izmailov had also served in the military and thus possessed the military rank of Major, the appellation he receives in the letter.¹⁵² Izmailov had, according to biographical sources, found that the pension Karamzin had won for him had become insufficient, and he was forced to accept a position as censor.

Along with Izmailov, Sergey Glinka, mentioned above, and Sergey Aksakov, later the author of *A Family Chronicle* (*Semeinnaia khronika*), were all members of the Moscow Censorship Committee and were considered “tertiary censors” (*storonnye tsensory*); as V. V. Danilov details in an examination of these three author-censors:

By the Censorship State of 1828, the censorship was considered almost exclusively in the hands of professors, the only appointed members of the censorship committees, since in the opinions gathered during the re-working of questions on the foundation of the censorship, it was constantly pointed out that the position of censor required higher education. Aiding the professors were “tertiary” censors appointed

150 A. A. Polovtsov. Russki bibliograficheskii slovar’ <http://www.rulex.ru/vol5> (May 21, 2016), 290-7.

151 Brockhaus and Efron Encyclopedic Dictionary, т. XIIa. <http://www.vehi.net/brokgauz/index.html> (May 21, 2016), 853.

152 A phenomenon attributable to the fact that military ranks always outweighed their analogous civilian counterparts.

from those who did not belong to the ranks of professors. Upon the enactment of the new codex, the former censors were supposed to have been cashiered, and only a few of these could have hoped to receive an appointment as a tertiary censor.¹⁵³

These “tertiary” censors, as they were known, did not occupy academic positions, but were considered to possess the necessary skills to perform censorship duties. Danilov characterizes this condition of academy-based censorship by alluding to the idea that “enlightened or educated” practitioners should perform censorial duties.¹⁵⁴ However, the move to consolidate censorship duties among academicians may have also been meant to alleviate certain other problems, that is, it may have been intended to exclude commercial authors from the censorship organs. That this was a problem is illustrated by exchanges between Count Lieven’, the departmental Minister, and both Izmailov and Glinka.

Contemporaries described Glinka as “unbalanced, hot-tempered, and direct... and making waves as a censor,” meaning that he was, perhaps, ill suited to consistently enforcing censorship standards.¹⁵⁵ After a time-consuming administrative and legal battle with a publisher whose work he had censored, Glinka turned to Lieven’ with an effusive plea for additional financial support, citing not only the additional strains that his censorship duties were causing, but also providing a list of literary consignments that he had yet to complete in light of recent professional troubles.

153 V. V. Danilov, “S. T. Aksakov, S. N. Glinka, I V. V. Izmailov v Moskovskom tsentsurnom komitete.” in *Izvestiia po russkomu iazyku i slovesnosti* 1 (1928): 518.

154 Ibid., 508.

155 “unhinged, angry, and stubborn... and making waves as a censor.” Vadim Vatsuro, *Skvoz’ umstvennoi plotiny: O knigakh i presse Pushkinskoi pory* (Moscow: Izd. Kniga, 1986), 151.

His literary work is listed first, but was likely not the main source of income. This, it would seem, was not only a plea for additional wages, but also an early example of a claim for literary activity as a legitimate professional pursuit in line with a service career.

Not having...anything besides my allowance for feeding my family, I must necessarily earn something every day, fifteen rubles at the least. My possessions consist solely of my time and my work: a noble soul will know the price of these commodities. My current labor towards the attainment of the aforementioned is as follows:

- 1) For the bookseller Loginova I am working on "A Panorama of the Universe", and "A Historical and Political Picture of the Sublime Porte".
- 2) For the bookseller M. P. Glazunova I am contributing to the "Encyclopedia for Youth" the history section, and also "Anecdotes of Peter the First."
- 3) For the bookseller Khrustalev I am composing a book under the title: "On Biblical Rhetoric and the Spiritual in Relation to General Literacy: with a Concordance to Instructional Passages from Biblical History from Bousset,¹⁵⁶ Dmitriy Rostovsky,¹⁵⁷ and Metropolitan Filaret.¹⁵⁸

The circumstances arising as a result of the petition of the State Council and Cavalier Kachenosvkii...distracted me from my daily labors, which had sustained my family. I suffered losses of more than four hundred rubles; and therefore, may it please your honor, order that I may be given an allowance from the equity as restitution for the losses I have suffered?¹⁵⁹

Here is the rather bold assumption that independent (not patron-based) literary pursuits could cohabit with other obligations. Literary work had become a marketable commodity not only with an implicit value derived from its prestige, but with a

156 Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet (1627 – 1704): French theologian and orator.

157 Saint Dmitriy of Rostov (1709 – 1757): Russian churchman, educator, and religious reformer.

158 Patriarch Filaret of Moscow (1553 – 1633): Metropolitan and progenitor of the Romanov dynasty.

159 Danilov, "S.T. Aksakov...v tsenzurnom komitete," 515.

real sum that could be precisely estimated against losses. This was a striking change that had arrived very recently with the nascent literary economy.

The new professionalism championed by Pushkin and commoditized by Bulgarin, Grech', Senkovsky, and others now meant that a writer could aspire to make a living as an author. Glinka's request for remuneration hints at the transitional period in the literary economy and exposes the contradiction in Glinka's expectation of patronage (or, at a minimum, continued reliance on government largesse), itself quickly becoming antiquated in the conditions of an emerging capitalist literary market.¹⁶⁰ This comes as little surprise, since Glinka had been a beneficiary of Alexander I's patronage. Nevertheless, Glinka's boldness seems to challenge Lieven's expectation that state service would take ultimate professional precedence in Russia. A new world of relative values was emerging that allowed other professional callings not only to displace state service, but also provide the economic logic by which such a new system of values could emerge as a sustained alternative to the existing order.¹⁶¹

This change and its intrusion into the calculus of bureaucratic work, seems however, still unwelcome to the minister to whom this petition was addressed, Count Lieven'.

160 For a discussion of tandem bureaucratic/literary patronage in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries see Walter J. Gleason. *Moral Idealists, Bureaucracy, and Catherine the Great* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1981), 5-6.

161 For a discussion of the rise of professional literature see "Daite nam pischu v otechestvennoi literature, i my otkazhemsha ot inostrannoi: Formirovane chitatel'skoi auditorii" in A. I. Reitblat. *Kak Pushkin vyshel v genii: Istoriko-sotsiologicheskie ocherki o knizhnoi kul'ture Pushkinskoi epokhi* (Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2001), 14-29.

I consider the pretensions of Mr. Glinka unfounded: since everyone is presented with the freedom of choice as to the means of their existence that they will consider the most lucrative and if anyone enters into government service, then he takes on the attendant duties to devote all of his time to it, and to fulfill all of the duties attendant upon it, taking advantage of those benefits connected to the position; for pursuits private and literary he may use only that time which is left free to him...¹⁶²

Such an argument seems rational and inoffensive enough. However, when pressed, Lieven's views about the matter were stronger. Hinting at his annoyance that increasing specialization and professionalization in the Russian economy was re-ordering the hierarchy that privileged service careers, Lieven' demonstrates that his objections to literary activity were more far-reaching. When Case 133 reached Count Lieven', his answer was direct:

I cannot deem it proper that a bureaucrat, placed by the government for surveillance of publications by other citizens, would enter into equal relations with them, making himself the editor of a syndicated publication, and, thus, would lay open himself to the critiques and judgments, even those that are made unjustly, on the part of those whom he had been placed in judgment...¹⁶³

Lieven', in fact, seems to have considered the request itself a breach of policy, and threatened to send the affair to "the highest authority," a reference either to the Tsar or the State Council. The rebuke threatened to eviscerate the two features of service that made it, still, the sine qua non of public life in Russia: rank and salary.

With the full respect of the Central Censorship Administration we have not found it possible to grant permission to your proposed pub-

162 Danilov, "S.T. Aksakov...v tsenzurnom komitete," 517.

163 Ibid., 518.

lication, and I consider it necessary to report your activity to more senior authorities...not, however, resorting to such presentations as might depend your continuation in the service in the position that you currently occupy...¹⁶⁴

Izmailov's response, dated two weeks later provides a fascinating glimpse into the logic that writers would use to negotiate and reconcile their literary careers with the strict ideological and political demands of state service. Izmailov's mentor Karamzin himself was both one of the last great beneficiary of the patronage system, and one of the first notable financial successes in Russian literature, due to the mass-selling phenomenon of *The History of the Russian State*.¹⁶⁵ Izmailov, however, was reliant on state service as a source of gainful employment.¹⁶⁶

Whereas earlier regimes had depended on writers to serve a relatively small group of courtly readers, the government now relied both on informants in the publishing industry and on the strengthened capacities of its censorship institutions to curtail oppositional messages. The author-censor was now actively participating in

164 [Kniaz'] Karl Lieven', "O dozvolenii Maioru Izmailovu izdavat' v Moskve Zhurnal pod nazvaniem Sovremennika: nachato 20. august 1829." Pis'mo Izmailovu, 29 August 1829. 1:156, 1829. Delo 174, Fond 772. RGIA. St. Petersburg.

165 I. U. Lotman, Karamzin (St. Petersburg; Izd. Isskustvo, 1997).

166 of the three candidates for an opening in the ranks of "tertiary" censors created by the death of Izmailov, a position eventually filled by Glinka, there was the same Izmail Shchedritsky whose signature appears as the undersigned in Dvigubskii's letter to Lieven (cited above), an "adjunct of Moscow University and a Secretary to the Moscow Censorship Committee" and Alexander Abramovich Volkov. Volkov listed on his application to the post various literary blandishments and works credited to his name; "Volkov inserted literary rights in the place of censorship, pointing to his literary form, in which was numbered the epic poem "The Liberation of Moscow," "Zoak" a tragedie in five-acts with choir, the tragedy "Pari," a translation from Casimir Delavigne...and "a mass of other articles both poetic and prosaic, spread across all of the Moscow and St. Petersburg journals." Danilov, 511.

a new system that concentrated privileges among a clique of publishers, who, in turn, determined the value of honoraria paid to contributing authors.¹⁶⁷

In this situation, the author was fully engaged, even if unwittingly, in the process of institutional renegotiation that marked the transition to modern literature. Glinka seemed unable to make out the contours of the new landscape, only vaguely recognizing that he was participating in two now fully separate economies: the literary and the official. Izmailov, in his turn, though beating a retreat from his own plans to publish a journal (amounting to an admission of dependency on the regime), still took time to lay out a suitable case for the coincidence of service and literature. Izmailov seems to recognize that in order to succeed he must produce a vision of literary production that is complementary to his career in the censorship.

Eminent Prince,

Merciful Master,

I consider it my duty to bring to your eminence my most dutiful thanks for the letter with which you graced me, and that I have the honor of answering. It seemed to me that, having been deigned the trust of the government and the important duty to stand as a guard over men's thoughts, I might more quickly gain their honor, guide their opinions, and give their minds direction in the capacity of journalist, I might better guess at their intentions, and fill-in in the views of the government, I might, finally, with the experience of a literary man, be of use to the language, which is being ruined by young writers, and to classicism, that is neglected by the ultra-romantics...¹⁶⁸

167 V. V. Izmailov, "O dozvolenii Maioru Izmailovu izdavat' v Moskve Zhurnal pod nazvaniem Sovremennika: nachato 20. august 1829." pis'mo P. P. Viazemskому v Moskvu, 3 June 1829, 1:156, 1829, Delo 174, Fond 772. RGIA. St. Petersburg.

168 Ibid.

From the outset, Izmailov ties his literary claims to his ability to serve the government. Izmailov's literary activities become an extension of his activity as a censor, formulated as a sort of "guardianship."¹⁶⁹ Izmailov has been entrusted with an important prophylactic function in the intellectual life of the empire; why should he not, then, be allowed to create in the didactic spirit of that institution? The cynical reader may sense legerdemain; an attempt at placating the authorities, a redeploying of the language of the regime, or, of surreptitiously colonizing literary discourse with the language of authority.

And yet, while Izmailov's principle argument skews obligingly towards the coded rhetoric of the censorship, his language is guarded enough to call into question his intention to act as a proxy for the regime. He appeals first to the "trust" that the regime has placed in his powers of discretion as an implicit manager of public opinion. Izmailov suggests that journalistic activity be suffused with sympathy for officialdom and for the regime, but not with fanatical or censorial loyalty. The sympathetic duties that he envisions in his role, to "guide [journalists'] opinions," and "to give direction to their minds," are more in line with the didactic principles practiced by journals of his time. Izmailov goes on to provide further examples of his didactic concerns for literary matters of language, citing his desire to be "useful" in correcting harmful deficiencies in language and in attempting to stop the spread of

¹⁶⁹ The word can have darker connotations...a quick check of Ozhegov's dictionary indicates that the phrase "standing guard" (*na strazhe*), cited in a then-contemporary context, contained not only the metaphorical meaning which is apparently replicated here, but in the literal sense of "armed watch" or of "warding prisoners."

ultra-romanticism.¹⁷⁰ Furthermore, “guessing at [journalists’] intentions,” and “filling-in the views of the government,” suggest goals that are a far cry from promoting militant ideological solidarity with the regime. Izmailov’s suggestion that the goals of the regime might be advanced by advocating a particular literary school or by the stricter enforcement of literary standards in printed language seems particularly quaint in the charged context of post-Decembrist Russia.¹⁷¹

You are right, your eminence, I would be subject to the judgments of those over whom I have been placed in judgment. But, as a writer, can I really choose my literary judge without finally refusing the pen and the public for whom I have labored over 30 years, and for whom I still labor as my years and my strength allow? I venture to note that authorial *responses* can be subject to a much stricter judge than those found in *journals*;¹⁷² and the censor isn’t deprived of his right to write, translate, and publish. It also seemed to me that my literary life, my weak but, from the point of view of morality, spotless compositions, the three journals of which I was editor, and my connections with two of the best writers of that time: with Karamzin and I. I. Dmitriev, were sufficient to vouch as to the nature of my thinking and to the rules to which I would follow in my periodical publications. This is what I thought as I prepared to enter into journalism...¹⁷³

170 As an ageing author of the sentimentalist generation who faced the expectant rise of a new generation of young authors in the tradition of Byron his defense of classicism might be expected.

171 This view is an echo of the semi-official literary cabal “The Lovers of the Russian Word,” organized by Derzhavin and Shishkov, the latter of which would later be responsible for authoring the famous censorship code, the so-called Iron Code, in 1826, which, incidentally, gave censors the right to correct for grammatical and “proper” Russian.

172 Glinka’s choice of the word “otvety” (answers or responses) creates a problem in translating the sense of his logic... Here, I have chosen to interpret Glinka’s implication as a nod to the authority of the censorship to regulate journalistic discourse. Glinka’s statement, thus, is an interesting, if rather occluded, reference to a phenomenon referred to later as the “two systems of censorship” in Russia: the vituperative attacks of literary critics who considered themselves the guardians of taste, and the tsarist censorship regime. For a fuller discussion of the development of this phenomenon see Moser. Antinihilism in the Russian novel of the 1860’s.

173 V. V. Izmailov. “O dozvolenii Maioru Izmailovu izdavat’ v Moskve.”

Izmailov has laid out a vision for his journal that mimics the goals of the censorship. By relying on his status as a censor he seems to suggest that his journalistic endeavor is really an extension of his duty “to stand guard over men’s thoughts.” This seems a practical attempt to literalize the regime’s vision of the public sphere as a space where subjects meet to receive the enlightened opinion of elites who have created and legislated the scenarios that these subjects consider to be, pro forma, legitimate and just.¹⁷⁴

However, in the following paragraph, Izmailov turns from his didactic recapitulation to official principles to a spirited defense of his own rights as an author and as a civil servant. He takes up the major criticism contained in Lieven’s rejection of his application on the grounds that, as a censor responsible for the monitoring of other journals, his right to publish his own could be seen as an affront. Izmailov points out that his choice to become a censor, or a “literary judge” as he defines it, should not entail that he recuse himself from his work as an author. Izmailov claims that his unimpeachable record as an author (in questions of moral judgments), and his equally unimpeachable taste in literary acquaintances (with Karamzin and Dmitriev) qualifies the initial judgment in favor of his journalistic enterprise.

But when your eminence, along with the Central Censorship Administration, denies permission to my undertaking, then I definitely recuse myself from it, and I ask you, Beneficent Sir, not to present this case to the highest instance since from such action might depend, as your eminence says, my continuing in service in the position that I current-

174 For a fuller discussion of the concept of the Public Sphere, see Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991).

ly occupy. For me it is dear and important to preserve this place, the sole means of my existence. I will not hide from your eminence that, having a family, and having need in extra means of their support, I undertook this journal not only from love of literacy and of utility for my countrymen, but also for material benefit, for the provision of my living for which the allowance of a censor alone is insufficient. This case gives me the boldness to beg your eminence that you would present to our common and beneficent Imperial Majesty a petition from myself [Izmailov] and M[ssr.] Glinka, S. N., for a residential allowance. Merciful Sir, relieve our fate and by your representations gain new thanks from two literary men pressed by fortune.¹⁷⁵

Their “fate” was not relieved and the permission to publish a journal was not granted. Izmailov’s and Glinka’s literary careers were effectively over. While Glinka’s service in the censorship would last another two years, Izmailov would die within the year, still, presumably, convinced that the impeccable eighteenth-century manners of his literary mentors were the best antidote to an increasingly restrictive regime.

There were, however, other paths to successful intellectual rapprochement between censor and state. Of these paths, that of Alexander Nikitenko may have been the most interesting.

175 Izmailov. “O dozvolenii Maioru Izmailovu izdavat’ v Moskve.”

Alexander Nikitenko: A Life in Aesopian Language

Alexander Vasilievich Nikitenko was born into a family of serfs belonging to one of the most powerful grandes of the Russia Empire, Count Dmitry Sheremet'ev. The Sheremet'ev family ruled their vast estates from the family's urban palace on the Fontanka Canal in St. Petersburg, a site that impresses today with its baroque splendor, and which certainly impressed the young Alexander Nikitenko when he saw the seat of his master.¹⁷⁶

As Russia grew to cover increasingly vast distances over steppe and forest, the ancient boyar families and the more recent service vassals of Muscovy found their estates enlarged. The estates of some grandes, like the Sheremet'evs, were spread piecemeal over thousands of miles. The peasant's life and his experiences with government and power were linked to his master, a member of the landed gentry of greater or smaller stature.¹⁷⁷ Many communitues of peasants worked on estates that resembled a microcosm of the growing Russian state with many of the essential institutions reproduced in miniature, including a small estate bureaucracy. Each estate, in turn, strove to replicate the model of the autocracy, with the local noble acting as autocrat, collecting tribute and dispensing justice through a basic bureaucracy. As the importance of culture grew in the emerging empire, the gentry

176 for a fuller discussion of serfdom and its political significance in the decades before its Abolition in 1861, see Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *A Parting of Ways: Government and the Educated Public in Russia: 1801-1855* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 262-265.

177 Terrance Emmons, *The Russian Landed Gentry and the Peasant Emancipation of 1861* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

also sought to reproduce the conditions of court life by culling talent from their estates. Nikitenko's father was both a beneficiary and a victim of this trend. A serf by birth, he was chosen from among the youths of Sheremet'ev's estates to serve in the court choir. As Priscilla Roosevelt shows in her work on the noble estate, such cases were not rare.¹⁷⁸ Because of the elder Nikitenko's status as a literate serf, he found work in the estate chancery as a scribe. The elder Nikitenko's rudimentary education along with his lowly official service were both instrumental in his unhappy fate and in the determined struggle of his son towards the freedom, and, potentially, the contradictory impulses towards political accommodation that marked his career.

To wit, Valerii Nikitenko became the victim of the yawning contradictions implicit in post-Petrine Russian society. As the aristocracy made steps towards westernization and a period of cultural (if not political) Enlightenment, the lack of middle class institutions meant that men like Vasilii Nikitenko who were recruited to the ranks of cultural and civic servitors crossed significant boundaries of rank and class. Thus, members of the lowest caste of Russia's hierarchical pyramid, the peasantry, were exposed to the exotic world and habits of the upper class and were, by necessity, also educated in the trades and arts that were hitherto inaccessible to the peasantry.

Such exposure could lead to unfounded expectations of improvements in Russia's civic situation. Specifically, in Vasilii Nikitenko's case, his prematurely nur-

178 "Regiments of Artificers: Serf Artisans and Artists" in Priscilla Roosevelt, *Life on the Russian Country Estate* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 245 – 268.

tured sense of civic responsibility and justice led to tragic clashes not only with elders in the peasant community, but with a gentry elite actively engaged in deterring social improvement and innovation on their estates. After becoming embroiled in a scandal resulting from his attempts to expose corruption in the local system of peasant military recruitment, the elder Nikitenko fell victim to local intrigues. As Alexander Nikitenko notes in his reminiscences of his father:

He was one of those personalities who were fated to battle the surrounding disorder over the course of their entire lives and who, in the end, became its victim. As I said, he, to a large degree, educated himself, and, to his misfortune, mentally and morally completely isolated himself from those people with whom he had to live and whom he depended on. His education was accidental, without any system and utterly unsuited to his future. Deprived of practical sense, it only fired his imagination and filled his head with ideas that did not agree with the surrounding reality and, thus, could not guide him along the chasms and over the muck through which he was fated to pass. His education constituted a shining, unexpected, but, all the same, a dangerous feature of his fate.

My father did not understand his situation in the least... He was acquainted only with the heroes of histories and novels and not with the life and characters of his world. Only valuing that, which he found either in the highest spheres of action or in his or others' fantastical additions to it, from the first steps in his life he raced towards the phantoms of valor, the names of which weren't familiar not only in those provincial corners, but in other, much more respectable places of the empire. Having assumed his career, he was soon convinced that rude power and wealth, and not humanity and justice, control the affairs and fates of men.¹⁷⁹

In this criticism of his father we see not only the brutal reality of serfdom in Russia, but also the core of the son Nikitenko's philosophical justification of his service in a repressive state organ. The rest of Nikitenko's childhood reads like an exposé of the

179 Nikitenko, Dnevnik, I:13-14.

cruelty of serfdom in the Russian Empire. Forced into internal exile on another far-flung estate during the longer and shorter periods of his father's imprisonment, Nikitenko developed both a distrust of authority and a facility in dealing with its personalities that made him, perhaps, an ideal candidate for the high bureaucratic service.¹⁸⁰

In holding his father's haphazard education up as a contributing factor in his failure, Nikitenko subtly highlights the depth of his father's achievement in spite of the natural adversity of the environment. It is not the elder Nikitenko's fanciful expectations of humanity that are at fault here, but rather the indolence and conservatism of the world he was born into. The serf milieu and the institutional deformities serfdom caused in Russia betray the noble principles that his father had drawn from novels.

Nikitenko's veiled criticisms of the regime and status quo in Russia belie his own philosophical identification with the gradualist or moderate-liberal camp (*umeren-no-liberal'nye*), including the large reserve of pro-monarchist and moderate reformers who would become the linchpin of reform in Russia. These men were then the seat of opposition to radicalism and the real progenitors of bourgeois public opinion as it constituted itself in the late-Imperial moment.¹⁸¹ That a former serf would be one of the most prominent chroniclers of the Russia that enserfed his family, of

180 A story that reads like one of the objects of a novel from the period of exposé literature that would mark the journalistic landscape of the 1840s and 1850s.

181 Saltykov-Shchedrin would largely base his more radical turn on his disagreements with this camp... ostensibly his allies in the earlier period of his literary career and the seat of reformist opinion in the first decade of Alexander II's reign.

course, is an ironic detail of history. And yet, it is Nikitenko's caste identity that allows us to see how such opinion worked in its psychological depths, and thus, to examine the political choices available to both the literary and bureaucratic class, two professional identities that often overlapped and challenged one another.

Nikitenko's first-hand knowledge of the power that the aristocracy exercised led to a series of political and personal decisions that can be examined in his contemporary diary of events. Nikitenko's personal feelings are often filtered through the hard-bitten political realities of the imperial autocratic moment. Nikitenko as a bureaucrat, albeit with intellectual sympathies that dictate against the established order, seems to come down firmly on the side of authority, even in conditions that evidently try his philosophical and creative values.

This tendency is often missed in commentaries on Nikitenko. In the introduction to the standard Soviet version of Nikitenko's *Diary*, the editor notes the following:

Therefore it is not coincidental that in the diaries three themes are constantly varied:

- 1) Contempt for the ancestral nobility, possessing enserfed people simply by birthright.
- 2) A critical relationship to bureaucratic circles that defended serfdom, were given to misappropriation, to the persecution of Enlightenment, and who advocated for immoderate severity in censorship.
- 3) Deep respect for the common people, for the lower and middle classes of people (opposing these to the aristocracy), and pride that he himself 'came from the ranks of the people.'¹⁸²

182 G.V. Zhirkova, U Mysli stoia Na Chasakh: tsenzory Rossii i tsenzura (Sankt-Peterburg: Izd-vo Sankt-Peterburgskogo universiteta, 2000), 62.

This critical paradigm illustrates the conventional approach to the diaries, heavily mediated by the political resonance that Nikitenko's serf identity lent his biography to the generation of revolutionaries, including, famously, Lenin, and then Soviet readers. In this interpretive mode, the diaries became a chronicle of the nascent class-consciousness beginning to develop in the Empire. A nuanced look at the diaries indicates a more complicated picture of Nikitenko's thematics; here his relationship to his father seems an occasion to dispute the position adopted by those who see him as a principled victim of Russia's class-bound system. Instead, Nikitenko's biographical diversion seems to provide evidence of a strategic hedging.

Nikitenko, writing well into his career as a respected academic and a high official on the St. Petersburg Censorship Committee, recounts his father's literary interests as resistance to the reductive social calculus that determined the horizon of possibilities for even the most educated serf. Nikitenko, as noted, employs a particular conceit that turns the criticism of his father into a sort of muted praise, and, indeed, Nikitenko's own story of struggle for freedom precluded any interpretation suggesting that Nikitenko was opposed to liberal education for the peasantry. (Nikitenko was quite adamant in his personal opposition to a measure advanced by Uvarov and Benkendorff that proposed limiting peasant education to necessary subjects "befitting their station.")¹⁸³

183 Nikitenko, II:126.

Nikitenko's backhanded compliments seem to belie his position vis-à-vis a government that once counted him as the personal property of another human being. Nikitenko is careful to take into account the sensibilities of those under whom he had served and made a career. In fact, Nikitenko's freedom as well as his career had developed through his cultivation of elite opinion. Nikitenko's manumission from serfdom was successfully argued by a coalition of influential cosmopolitans impressed by the brilliant young serf. The young Count Sheremet'ev could not continue to hold Nikitenko in thrall because of the proliferation of progressive discourse in St. Petersburg society. Sheremet'ev's own ability to enjoy his "property" was subject to the opinions of the patronage, private, and professional networks that constituted Petersburg society.

Nikitenko's first experience in the capital came about at a moment of liberal ferment that fired the dream of a new order that could bypass autocratic prerogative. As the historian Marc Raeff explains, there was hope that this "avant-garde of civil society," might be able to continue the work of "collaboration and common commitment" that existed before the end of the Napoleonic Wars.¹⁸⁴ These were the conditions that led to Nikitenko's freedom and characterized his first chaotic year in the capital. Ironically, the denouement of the liberal movement that freed him came about just as Nikitenko was entering upon his new life, and in exactly the spot where his new life was beginning, the Petersburg apartment of his friend, mentor, and landlord, the Decembrist poet Kondraty Ryleev.

184 Marc Raeff, *Understanding Imperial Russia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 141.

This association would haunt him throughout his career. Nikitenko would burn all diary record of his life in that fateful year 1825, and would never again record any details of his acquaintance with the conspirators.¹⁸⁵ In 1848, in the aftermath of another phantom revolution, Nikitenko would be forced from his position as editor of a popular thick journal because of his questionable proximity to some of the Decembrists. Charles Ruud records the scurrilous letter that Bulgarin sends regarding Nikitenko's involvement in the Decembrist plot: "[Bulgarin] approached the Third Section to prove his loyalty. He did so in a letter of 6 April [1825] linking Nikitenko, the 'most dangerous man' in Russia, with a hanged Decembrist and a 'party of communists.'"¹⁸⁶

Nikitenko would spend his career engaging with important members of Petersburg society, and, given his personal story, would have been approached with a curiosity that informed his strategies of self-presentation. While Nikitenko is never shy about voicing criticism of high-ranking bureaucratic functionaries, his direct political criticisms are oftentimes displaced onto Europe. In particular, he deflects criticism by using comparative frames of reference such as France, a place that often serves him as a distant mirror for Russia.

Yet, as in the case with the biographical addendum to his father's failures, do such critical feints also imply a particular discourse that one might label as subver-

185 For a fuller discussion of the "imperial prohibition of the Decembrists' representations (in print and portraiture)," see Ludmilla A. Trigos, *The Decembrist Myth in Russian Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 25.

186 Ruud, *Fighting Words*, 88.

sive? By using the knowledge gained through service to the state whose own laws originally consigned him to a permanent low-caste status, could Nikitenko hope to disrupt the regime?

Such questions cut close to the core of the dispute between the men of service and the men of letters. By this period authors were as likely to challenge authority as censors were to uphold it.¹⁸⁷ And yet, the censor was, intellectually and socially, related to the author. The irony of the system of censorship was that it placed the two in antagonistic positions, creating ruptures in a system of social and professional relationships that might have co-existed in broader civil society.¹⁸⁸ In censorship, the bitter intrusions of the paternalist state into the autonomous life of the intellectual economy exposes fault lines that may help us to better determine what is most essential to these two overlapping professional groups, bureaucrats and writers.

In attempting to answer whether Nikitenko's pronouncements contain an element of provocative play directed at the bureaucracy, it is necessary to identify the particular strategies that he uses to navigate the boundaries between the public and private. A glancing encounter between Alexander Nikitenko and Alexander Herzen is instructive in this regard...

187 Indeed, the creation of the Decembrist myth in Russian literature is a function of the oppositional mood among a subset of the literary establishment during this time. Pushkin deftly encoded the Decembrist Revolt into some of those works that were sent for pre-publication censorship directly through the Tsar. For a further discussion see Alexander M. Groce "Alexander Pushkin's The Captain's Daughter: A Poetics of Violence" in *Ulbandus Review* 13 (2010): 64-78.

188 for a discussion of the symbiosis of author and censor in Western Europe, see Robert Darnton, *Censors at Work: How States Shaped Literature* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2014).

Herzen and Nikitenko: 'Un'-Reading Censored Texts

Nikitenko frequently criticized Alexander Herzen (1812 – 1870), the radical critic, publicist, author, and one-time civil servant, after the latter absconded from Russia and established an émigré press in London. Nikitenko, faced with fierce opposition to Herzen's publications among the Russian elite, and from his perch in the Censorship Committee, focused his criticisms of Herzen not on the content, but instead on the tone and public effects of his journalism. In 1860, at the height of the debate surrounding serfdom, Nikitenko wrote of Herzen, whom he had once met and praised, in a tone of disappointment:

They say that in no. 25 of The Bell (*Kolokol*) Herzen spews abuse on various figures, not excluding the highly placed...this is truly unwise. In this case Herzen is not acting like a man who wishes to advance a noble purpose and who is choosing the best means for this, but like a fanatic, overcome by the demon of old renown, who shouts to his heart's content. It is unfortunate; he could be very useful. Now, thanks to his excess, he is beginning to be regarded with apathy by those who once feared him, and those who once considered him as one of the most useful of our public figures are now losing respect for him, therefore he might begin to lose his influence in Russia little by little.¹⁸⁹

Nikitenko's expectations of "utility" present an interesting problem for the reader, illumining the different approaches and expectations held by writers and censors. Indeed "utility" was as close to a mandatory category as one might get in describing the expectations that the regime had for literature. At the time when the journal The Bell was reaching the zenith of its readership and notoriety, Nikitenko was battling a

189 Nikitenko, Dnevnik, II:41-42

proposal that his friend Fyodor Tiutchev had dubbed “The Triumvirate” (*Troemu-zhie*). The idea for the proposal, as Nikitenko relates it:

Now they've thought to establish a committee that would lovingly, patriarchally and logically direct our literature, especially our journalists, towards the true path. It will enter into direct communication with them and act through short-term didacticism, and not through any functions of the censorship.¹⁹⁰

The group, as Nikitenko goes on to explain, was to be composed of three men totally unsuited for their questionable purpose: “They will direct writers, advise them, reason with them on important questions of a moral, political, and literary nature – they, who haven't either reasoned, written, or read anything! For shame!”¹⁹¹ Such thinly disguised authoritarian measures were meant to assuage Alexander II's nervous reaction to the reforms that he had initiated in 1857. Nikitenko noticed the attendant rise in administrative activities (“we are sick with committees”).¹⁹² He also saw through the government's newfound knack for innocuous paraphrase. The absurdity of *The Trio* was deepened by its lineage, as it was the obvious descendant of the notorious “Committee of the Second of April,” officially known as “The Buturlin Committee,” an extra-ministerial committee formed by members of Nicholas I's inner circle to monitor the censors, whom Nicholas had ceased to trust in the wake of the European Revolutions of 1848.¹⁹³ Alexander II had disbanded the committee

190 Ibid., II:50-51.

191 Ibid., II:50-51.

192 Ibid., II:54.

193 Ibid., I:508.

upon his ascension to the throne, and had taken other measures to loosen the controls that had threatened literature and journalism during the final years of his father's reign. Alexander II's initial reversals on censorship, though, had been followed by skittishness about the new and more liberal course.

Nikitenko notes the government's dithering on press freedom and the early turn towards renewed recidivism in a missive on the futility of progress:

The use of the word "progress" in print has been banned. In reality, this is a nonsensical word in application to the nineteenth century, a century which utopianists praise to the skies for its having birthed wonders of progress. Progress is a fine thing when Europe, among terrible political storms, through cascades of blood, made its way, finally, to Napoleon III...a great nation given up to police surveillance. And progress is a fine thing for us when the very word is banned.¹⁹⁴

In such an environment, Nikitenko worried that the "return to the past" was outpacing reform before it had even gotten underway. And, as officials undermined the message of reform that the era had promised, the foibles of the censorship seemed indicative of larger crises of government. As Tiutchev and Nikitenko discussed additional censorship reforms, Alexander II's ministers were moving to contain the initial euphoria of liberalized censorship.

Herzen is dealing with the same disappointments as Nikitenko, albeit from a different frame of reference. In fact, the debate that Nikitenko criticizes for its ad hominem attacks and its failure to engage in a useful dialogue is devoted primarily to decrying the major setbacks to censorship liberalization. Issue no. 25 was printed

194 Ibid., II:27.

in October of 1858, during a particularly disheartening string of censorship policy reversals that led Nikitenko to declare, “What a shame that things are going in such a way. They ruin the possibility of reconciliation of those who *think* in Russia with the *government*, and no matter how hard it is to adapt to bad governance, no matter how few resources we have to withstand it, it is an unavoidable evil, and a great one, at that.”¹⁹⁵ Nikitenko was reacting to the deep sense of betrayal that many moderate and liberal intellectuals felt toward the regime. Even here, however, Nikitenko maintains a civility of tone that seems to remain safely within the frame of “useful” discourse -- critical, though sufficiently diffuse. Nikitenko indicates that his own relationship to the establishment is based on utility; calling the government, in effect, a necessary “evil.” Nikitenko’s critical attitude towards government policies is unmistakable, and yet the role of “those who think in Russia” is drawn so wanly as to leave the reader in doubt as to the author’s sincerity. Nikitenko does not claim a serious role for public opinion, only a direction, “with the government,” and points out how limited such a role can be.

In contrast to Nikitenko’s efforts to preserve the tenuous harmony of the government and the intellectual class, Herzen uses the power of naming to a considerable extent in his journalism. His ad hominem attacks on figures within the ruling class are intended to express the disillusion felt by the readership of The Bell. Nikitenko characterizes his tone as scandalous, and, apparently does not go into details about the content because the primary target had been the Tsar himself. In

195 Ibid., I:60.

fact, Herzen makes political hay of the same censorship issue that Nikitenko had identified months before, the absurd semantic authoritarianism surrounding the interdiction of the word “progress” in print. Yet, while Nikitenko mentions the incident, he does not offer the details that led to the official circular in which the order was announced, and he contextualizes the issue in terms of larger geopolitical phenomena, referring to the political plight of the French under Napoleon III. As becomes evident from Herzen’s reference to internal memorandum of the government, the political figure in question was none other than Alexander II himself.

When this journal was proffered to the Tsar’s judgment, then he took it and underlined this word, by Bludov’s account, and deigned to mark out in his own hand the following note in pencil, “What is this progress!!! I ask that ‘thes’ (etot) (this is not a misspelling on my part, an ‘e’ and not an ‘i’ was written) not be used in official papers.”¹⁹⁶ Bludov reported this penciled scribble to all ministers on May 18. Since this time, we do not dare to write the word *progress* and avoid it by all means.¹⁹⁷

Herzen not only reveals the source of the infamous directive, re-doubling the illicitness of the publication by printing details gleaned from government sources, but heaps derision upon the Tsar by preserving the orthographic mistakes captured in the Tsar’s personal missives.¹⁹⁸ The resulting furor over “hurling insults” at “vari-

196 “етот” instead of the correct “этот.”

197 Kolokol : Gazeta A.I. Gertsena i N.P. Ogareva, Zheneva 1868-1869: Faksimil’noe Izdanie (Moscow: Nauka, 1979), 206.

198 Alexander II was not the only Russian leader to pay particular attention to ideological language. In his *Everything Was Forever Until It Was No More*, Alexey Yurchak details Joseph Stalin’s attention to “ideological precision” in language, and described Stalin’s position as “[the] master “external” to authoritative discourse” and thus able to critique it. He introduces Stalin’s editorial battle with avant-garde elements in literature as an example of this stance. It is interesting to note that the nature of Russian power discourses seems to have

ous persons,” as noted rather circumspectly by the usually perspicacious (and always well-read) Nikitenko, also resulted in a crackdown designed to prevent the leaking of sensitive materials to the press.¹⁹⁹ Yet, the raw political content of this attack obscures the compounding issues of language that characterize the confrontation between the government and the press, in the midst of which Alexander Nikitenko found himself.

The inclusion of the spelling mistake in the missive (‘e’ for ‘ye’) may seem like a trifling point of satire to the modern eye, but, given the political and social context of Herzen’s missive, the transgressive nature of mistaken speech here is pregnant with meaning. The act of publicity here has also become an act of correction. Indeed, if one thinks of the legal tradition of royal speech, then the attribution of mistaken speech becomes the basis for *lèse-majesté*. Herzen assaults not only the Tsar’s politics, but that which is sacred, the Tsar’s word.

The process of recognition of the mistaken text is a process of reification. Herzen raises the error from the page in a process that re-creates the conversational dissonance of the *mis*-spoken word. The effects of this reification are akin to sacrifice; Herzen is pointing to the ultimate ridiculousness not only of the Tsar’s policies, but also of the Tsar’s persona. The Tsar’s pronouncements were public record only when the Tsar’s administration permitted them to be so. An 1870 codex formalized

necessitated such concerns for linguistic intervention among the highest ranks of the autocracy beyond the example provided here. Alexey Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever Until It Was No More* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 42-47.

199 Nikitenko mentions these measures only obliquely.

the practice. Article 73 of the regulation, “On the pronouncement in print of compositions and articles affecting the person of His Imperial Highness the Emperor and members of the Imperial Family” (*Ob oglashenii v pechatи sochinenii i statei, kasaiuscheisia Osoby Gosudaria Imperatora i chlenov Imperatorskoi Familii*) follows:

Compositions and articles, both in the original and from translation, in which are described personal actions or in which are laid out the verbal expressions of his Highness the Emperor or other Members of the Imperial Family, or in which are laid out speeches directed to him, and also articles containing within them stories and judgments relating to Imperial Persons regardless of the publication, serialized and otherwise, can be printed only with the permission of the Minister of the Imperial Court...²⁰⁰

Such measures sought to limit publicity without regard to ideological bent. Herzen reacts to the official fear of publicness (Habermasian “Publizität,” or the principle of openness versus state secrecy) by violating the ban on publicity and publishing secret memoranda. But, he also violates an aspect of the Tsar’s publicity, in particular, the Tsar’s public image, thus undermining what the Russian scholar Sergei Grigor’ev refers to as “the image of the supreme powers” (*obraz verkhovnoi vlasti*), which he defines as, “the form of the reflection of the Supreme power takes in the consciousness of the subjects of the Russian Empire, understood complexly – on a visceral and an intellectual level.”²⁰¹ Grigor’ev goes on to discuss the importance of public opinion in relation to the stability of the regime,

200 S. I. Grigor’ev, *Pridvornaia tsenzura i Obraz Verkhovnoi Vlasti, 1831-1917* (Sankt-Peterburg: Aleteia, 2007), 73.

201 Ibid., 6.

In the Russian Empire ideology and politics were maximally personified. Similarly, subjects' perception of the governing ideology (and, therefore, the ideology of the supreme elite) was, to a significant degree, conditioned by the perception of the concrete representative of the supreme elite – in his ideological, political, and aesthetic components.²⁰²

Herzen's ad hominem attack, thus, is a blow to the apparatus supporting the entire framework of imperial ideology, the sacrality of the Tsar. If the Tsar can be shown to be mistaken, and, moreover, mistaken in a way that calls into question his dignity, then the larger project of publicity, which oftentimes took on the undertone of what Wortman calls, "the cult of the dynasty," was hampered.²⁰³ Herzen's quibbling with policy was one thing, and could be circumscribed within the political discourse of the day and through the limited outlets of publicity allowed by the regime. Displaying the Tsar's imperfections to the public, however, cut to the heart of the problem of an ideological and governing system controlled by a single human being. Herzen was irreverently opening the Russian system to the sort of scurrilous publicity that he could observe in contemporary London. (A quick perusal through an edition of the British satirical journal *Punch*, already in publication from 1841, gives convincing evidence of the widespread derision to which British public officials were subjected.) Such a system personified the entire system of power relations that constituted the empire, reifying the tropes of nationhood in the person of the Tsar. As Wortman points out in the case of the Russian Tsars:

202 Ibid., 6.

203 Wortman, Scnearios of Power, 149.

In this equation, the macrocosm was defined in terms of the microcosm. The emperor, his family, the dynasty, the army and state epitomized the principal qualities of Russia and represented the whole. Here we see a kinship between political and symbolic representation. Both...invoke synecdoche to describe the identity between microcosm and macrocosm...Likewise, the imagery of Nicholas' reign claimed to reflect the will of the people by making the tsar in his ceremonial appearances the representation of the whole.²⁰⁴

The Russian system of government was based on the need “to aid the development of the Supreme power that would correspond to the perfect ideal of the monarchical government.” Any attack on the Tsar’s image became, by proxy, an attack on the system itself.²⁰⁵

Alexander II’s spelling mistake is made to stand in for Herzen’s broader criticism of the Russian ruling class. The intimate exposure of Alexander’s private memoranda is useful for Herzen not only as a marker of journalistic cunning, but as a symbolic violation of royal prerogative, as well. The issue at hand in The Bell is the re-imposition of censorial control over the publishing of material related to the so-called “Peasant Question.” Herzen’s ability to publish material related not only to the issue of serfdom, but also to the Tsar, challenging the prerogative of official non-publicity, is a re-interpolation of the censorship debate.

Herzen’s ad hominem attack is an effective, if hyperbolic, display of the ineffectiveness of the censorship regime. Alexander II responded to the substantive debate on the question of Emancipation with an autocratic missive and a blanket in-

204 Ibid., 143.

205 Grigor’ev, Pridvornaia tsenzura, 11.

terdiction on public discussion. But, he also included a frivolous edict aimed at erasing particular words from the discourse. Herzen demonstrates that the boundaries of discourse are porous not only within the text and between its readers, but in the geographic space in which a text circulates, and specifically at the Russian border through which The Bell is transported illicitly. Not only can words not be banned, words can transcend the boundaries of the private milieu in which they were spoken, mysteriously landing in print, unmediated by censor or editor. Thus, we see the importance of this misspelling as a mark of uncensorability, as a demonstration of the futility of the censorship regime. Besides the activation of several negative tropes related of the aristocracy, including, potentially, the perception of “foreignness” that a linguistic error reinforces, the error inscribes the debate over publicity and censorship within a comical row over how those who control language actually use language.

In The Bell, Herzen takes on General Timashev, calling him, “The Inquisitor in a blue frock coat” (blue was the color of the Gendarmerie in the Third Division). He calls Butkov, Minister of Justice, “the God of all Petersburg Camellias [i.e., courtesans], that Government Casanova.”²⁰⁶ Name-calling, Herzen figures, and especially the kind of ad hominem in which he indulges here, can certainly perturb a system where the fate of public discourse is imagined to balance on the pinhead of a single word, “progress.”

206 Kolokol, 206.

Herzen's formulates his pugilistic engagement with the regime that has disappointed his expectations of reform as an encounter of language. While engaging in his usually ranging critique of government policy, he nevertheless reserved his most pointed attacks for the recent revisions to press censorship, an area that particularly fascinated Herzen and his friend and journalistic colleague Nikolay Ogarev. Both men were literary exiles from a repressive regime that had successfully suppressed their publications not only in Russia, but in Austria and Prussia, as well. Herzen notes recent measures by the government to ensure that advocates of serfdom received equal space in official publications geared towards the intelligentsia, and that the theme of serfdom be banished from all publications aimed at readers from lower social strata.²⁰⁷ In doing so, however, Herzen lays the blame directly at the feet of the Tsar, essentializing the autocratic structure of the Russian Empire, and bypassing the bureaucratic and aristocratic middlemen that traditionally absorbed the shocks of criticism in the closely controlled (and legal) domestic press.

... I will first ask you to pay attention to the fact that all of these orders are done in the name of the Emperor. I know well our chancellery formulars, and I can say with certainty that here the name of Alexander II is implicated not without foundation...I don't know whether he arrived to this necessity by his own intuition or whether he was led to it by the prodding of one of his acolytes. But this is all roughly the same to me. All of the paper produced in his name he has deigned to wish for: it is useful to him: along with all this he deigns to acknowledge it necessary: above all, it is pleasing to him.²⁰⁸

207 Ibid.

208 Ibid.

Having established that Alexander II is at the center of the web of power that entangles Russia, Herzen thus circumvents the strict hierarchy of conventions that legitimate communication between the various castes of Russian society. Herzen goes on in the same breath to criticize the Tsar's ministers for "slavish, demeaning courtesy" and to question whether they are capable of addressing the Tsar "without humiliation."²⁰⁹ Certainly, Herzen sees the entire "vertical of power" (to use a term from the modern Russian kleptocracy) as collusion between powerful forces bent on the manipulation of language and thus, power. The system of Russian government is built on a fallacy of the inviolability of the absolute monarch. In Herzen's witty exposure of imperial speech, the assimilation of the monarch with the language used to evince power is demonstrated; to speak in the emperor's language is to diminish the Emperor.

Thus, by challenging the Tsar, and especially by exposing him to derision in print, Herzen is challenging the entire system of tacit social and political agreements on which the system was built. Herzen's implicit connection between the Tsar and the system of censorship points to his understanding of language as essential to the fabric of the Old Order. To Herzen, censorship goes beyond a program to limit the influence of alternative discourses; it functions as a sort of sanitary cordon, meant to isolate discourses within the castes.²¹⁰ This view accounts for the following censor-

209 Ibid.

210 for a further discussion of various socio-economic factors in nineteenth-century discourse see "Bor'ba i vzaimodeistvie raznykh literaturnykh stilei v 30 – 40-e gody XIX v. Rost literaturnogo znacheniia raznochinskogo-demokraticeskogo stilei" in Viktor V. Vinogradov,

ship directive, once again illicitly printed thanks to Herzen's correspondents within the government:

...Be it resolved that judgments and articles relating anywise to the peasant question are not to be allowed in individual papers, sold now on outside and on the street corners, and also that stringent attention be paid to individual booklets published for the common folk so that nothing will be allowed that not only runs contrary to the reglements for the foundation of the peasant estate, but also nothing that might provide a reason, even if obliquely, for villainous interpretations.²¹¹

The reference here is to the published broadsheets and pamphlets that were sold in the streets, since the literary thick journals were distributed through expensive subscriptions and figured only in the intellectual clubs and lending library societies.²¹² The clear message of this official directive is the creation of a two-tiered censorship with standards determined based not on content, but on audience.

It also sheds light on another exclusionary tactic disguised as a cultural peculiarity; the adoption of French in communication between members of the upper class, a phenomenon that was thinning due to a variety of political factors, but that still persisted in many quarters of society.²¹³ Herzen notes that; "It (the potential for unrest) frightened him (the Tsar) so much so that the announcement of the Academy of Science appointing the prize for the essay in Russian on the abolition of serf-

Ocherki po istorii russkogo literaturnogo iazyka: XVII – XIX vv. (Moscow: Uchpedgiz, 1938), 329 – 375.

211 Kolokol, 205.

212 see "Knizhnye Lavki" in Marchenko, Byt i nray Pushkinskogo vremeni, 385 – 395.

213 Iurii Lotman, "Isskustvo Zhizni" in Besedy o russkoi kul'ture: byt i traditsii russkogo dvorianstva: XVIII-nachalo XIX veka (Sankt-Petersburg: "Iskusstvo-SAINT Petersburg," 1994), 188.

dom in various European states was only allowed to be printed in French in the Academy's bulletin."²¹⁴ Thus, in line after line, Herzen enumerates the transgressions of the current Tsar against not only the reading public (as it was understood at the time), but against those barred from entry into this society by language and censorship policy.

Herzen's unrelenting attacks on the Tsar were designed to break through the invidious cordon of rank, class, and language. The Bell amplified this heresy by reprinting government documents, violating another sacred tenet of government censorship policy. In fact, the right to print news of the imperial household's routine was strictly regulated. The flaunting of written rules, the publishing of governmental correspondence, and of unwritten, direct verbal engagement with the Tsar, bought the entire edifice of "slavish, demeaning courtesy" crashing down, and allowed Herzen to challenge the separation of discourses by bringing the Tsar and his government into the line of fire; Herzen sought to pierce their sacral armor and bring them into direct contact with language from below through journalism.

For Nikitenko, whose own political ideology, judging by his private writings, ran deep, belief is constantly in tension with the social effects of his own professional activity. For him, ideology must always be tempered by the concept of action, resulting in the category of "utility." It is the distinction between ideology and belief that plagues him. Nikitenko's critical attitude toward the censorship regime and government policy was mediated by his participation in the regime. Nikitenko

214 Kolokol, 205.

therefore, can be seen to have observed the formal distinctions that, as Bourdieu posits, moderate the discourse of personal opinion in a heterogeneous society.

However, if Nikitenko observes rules, then Herzen breaks them, engendering “cacophony” in the process:

...The imposition of formal ways involves observing the forms: the social world demands that you bring yourself into line with the official, by extending to the world under consideration the fundamental recognition of the official that consists in observing the forms, that is, not saying things bluntly, putting them into a poetic form, expressing them in a euphemistic way, as against the cacophony of the barbarian or blasphemer... But there is also the spoiler who refuses to be polite, who rejects the game of the obsequium: it is he whom the social world completely expels.”²¹⁵

The court was the world of strategic obsequium, executed for political ends. The censorship was dedicated to preserving the illusion of obsequium in the broader public sphere, regulating the discourse engendered beyond earshot of the court. Nikitenko’s understanding of political speech, then, was contextualized both by his understanding of obsequium as facilitating politics and by his understanding of his own role in regulating public speech. Nikitenko not only recognizes the forms inherent in the “official” mode, but is concurrently responsible for enforcing them. Thus, he perceives that Herzen is the spoiler. In fact, given Nikitenko’s rise from serfdom, he had already “transgressed the rules of the game” once to gain freedom and professional renown in St. Petersburg. For Nikitenko, then, “obsequium” is as much of a game as Herzen’s “cacophony.”

²¹⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: a Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 58.

Bourdieu's discourse on the language of power, the prerogatives and duties of language ex officio, seems to encapsulate neatly the challenges faced by Nikitenko and any other official who practiced writing. "If the theatricalization of conviction is one of the tacit conditions for exercising the profession of intellectual, if a philosophy professor must seem to believe in philosophy, it is because this is the essential homage to the official, it is what has to be paid to the official in order to be an official ..."²¹⁶

Herzen's illegal publication is in violation of the rules of semblance "essential" to the official. Herzen's language challenges the tenets of acceptable publicity that the censorship was tasked with upholding. For Nikitenko such a move was unfathomable. As much as his own critical relationship with the government is made clear in his journal, the gestures that betray the strict vertical of power are evident, as well. Nikitenko, in fact, engages in a sort of play that, when applied in literary texts, would be regarded as a form of Aesopian language (*aesopov iazyk*) that disguises its purpose. As is evident from Nikitenko's confusing paean to his father, he has learned to disguise his opinions within the structural boundaries of the social position that he is expected to occupy. For example, even though Nikitenko is a fervent opponent of serfdom, Nikitenko's language about his father's education mimics in some ways the language that Benkendorf and Korf use in advancing their opinion about the inapplicability of a humanist education for the lower strata of society, "limiting peasant education to 'necessary' subjects 'befitting their station.'" Certain-

216 Ibid., 28

ly, Nikitenko's assessment of his father's education is meant as a compliment to the latter's breadth of knowledge given the stifling conditions of serfdom, and yet Nikitenko seems to approach his father's education as a problem. The problem is that of "usefulness," a category that seems to extend beyond decorum in public dialogue and towards a more encompassing view of the function of language in the public sphere.

It is in a re-calibration of language that we can place the Nikitenko of the diary, where he acts always in tandem roles. He is an imperial censor castigating an illegal publication not for its illegality, its encroachment upon boundaries of the printed word, but for the reform-confounding inaccessibility that this illegality con-signs it to. Indeed, this vignette from the diaries is full of the contradictions to which the agents of censorship, poised between the government and the intelligentsia, were prone. Firstly, the subject of Herzen's émigré journal is introduced in Nikitenko's diary as hearsay; "it's said" ("govoriat"). There is almost comical circumspection here. Are we really expected to believe that Nikitenko, who had direct access to the journal, is not sure of the details? The journal was widely available and read in high bureaucratic, and even imperial circles.²¹⁷

More important is how Nikitenko records his experience of engagement with Herzen. Certainly, as noted, Nikitenko's critical reaction to Herzen presents a sort of

217 "Everyone, moreover, seemed to be reading *Kolokol*. Kavelin had caught the Empress with the second number in her hands as early as August 1857, and by the end of 1858 the head of the Third Department was passing copies from the tsar to Prince Menshikov." David Saunders, *Russia in the Age of Reaction and Reform: 1801 -1881* (London: Routledge, 1992), 227.

double bind. He criticizes Herzen for his inability to be integrated into a public debate about the actions of the regime, yet print journalism itself can operate only within the bounds of a legally sanctioned discourse defined by the very government it would seek to criticize. Simultaneously, Nikitenko wishes for the sort of critical response that Herzen and other radical liberals of the day offer to the debate. The two wishes are mutually exclusive. Nikitenko, a censor, was responsible for policing the print media and enforcing a narrow standard based on the preferences of the regime. And yet, as a member of the public and a politically conscious commentator, he wished also to expand the public debate to include more discussions of the issues, and in a franker spirit.

Herzen's use of name-calling against the Tsar, then, is precisely the kind of 'unuseful' language that Alexander Nikitenko decries in his diary entry. Nikitenko's version of "usefulness" seems, upon closer examination, to be a policy of euphemism and elision that would please the government and salve the conscience of dissenting progressives. He seems to implicitly agree with the content of Herzen's polemics, but never expresses his own political position; however, Nikitenko's silence can be read as content. Nikitenko's own opinions on matters of the day, especially matters dealing with the censorship, could be expressed with nearly the same intensity of dissatisfaction as Herzen. Nikitenko addresses the perceived shortcomings of his colleagues and superiors on various committees in similarly vitriolic terms. However, Nikitenko makes a distinction in his private writing between private and public opinion. It is as if Nikitenko has, over the course of his career in the censorship, assimilated the role of the censor in private thought. For Nikitenko, the intellectual

world is not split ideologically, that is, between opposing bodies of thought, but hermetically, with a strict division between public and private. For him the private world acted as the space of openness and engagement, albeit one that was increasingly dislocated from the public sphere beyond the sanitary cordon of domestic retreat.

Nikitenko brings the public sphere into his private world through the discourses of diary, interacting with the wider public world of things and events through the hidden hermeneutics of private inscription. However, public speech acts, and specifically, printed speech, is evaluated through the filter of censorship, a filter that seems to be actively engaged even in Nikitenko's private study. Nikitenko is loath to comment discursively upon the *inhaltlich* or substantive elements of forbidden public speech, commenting only on its contextual (rhetorical) elements. For Nikitenko censorship seems to have a psychological component as well as a legal one.

We might now begin to answer the question of whether Nikitenko's speech is in any way subversive. The question is and must remain primarily contextual and political, not stylistic or rhetorical, for it is grounded in the silent act of private writing and not in the public realm. Part of the answer can be teased from the posthumous plans that Nikitenko had for the diary. Nikitenko's record as a government official, an academic, and a literary critic was a matter for public record, but, according to the sparse commentary on his contributions during the last years of his life, little appreciated. Whether or not Nikitenko understood the vagaries of public opinion, his view of his legacy must have included anxiety about the extent to which his pub-

lic actions might reflect his private views. The diary serves as a sort of re-imposition of excised, or censored, material from Nikitenko's public story.

The transgressive act of private writing enacts the incursion of the private into the public. The diary is also, implicitly, a dialogue between voicedness and silence. Not only does the author cull his observations from the range of public activities in which he is involved and about which he feels the need to express private opinions, he also implicitly delineates writable experience from un-writable experience. The diary is as much pregnant with pause and silence as it is with dissent and re-negotiation. It is this public silence, complemented by private cacophony, which gives us a window onto the nature of Nikitenko's subversion.

Nikitenko's inclinations led him in opposite directions. His overriding principle for action seems to have been encapsulated by his sensitivity to "usefulness." Usefulness comes about for Nikitenko by determining desirable institutional outcomes through the leveraging of institutional status. Nikitenko's civil service career made him particularly sensitive to institutional discourses and to the possibilities of influence through the process described by Sennett as, "imposition of form and...manifesting that you respect the forms." This, it seems, as in the case of Nikitenko's tortured acceptance of a position in the propagandistic Bureau of Press Affairs in 1858, was a systematic attempt to subsume belief to ideology, the "essential homage of the official man to the official."

However, an opposing tendency was strong in Nikitenko, as well. This tendency led him to react against the forces of authority and to express his deep dissatisfaction.

isfaction with the order of things in Russia. Such expressions of dissatisfaction, practiced by the likes of Herzen, were, according to Nikitenko, decidedly un-useful. And yet, given his background, rooted in serfdom, touched by the Decembrist movement, and girded by his commitment to literature and education, Nikitenko could never simply abandon his subjectivity in favor of “essential homage.” His diaries, then, are the compromise. They are the written record of Nikitenko’s intellectual dissent, and the dam against which “unuseful” language and thoughts could break. Private writing operates as a highly mediated dialogue between versions of the self; the public self corresponds with the private self, the civil official with the writer.

In conclusion, these vignettes outline a series of stratagems by which bureaucrats could participate in the literary life of Russia. Torn between the tradition of service and the growing influence of alternative models of civic participation through literature and culture, bureaucrat authors sought to balance multiple roles. However, in the changeable political conditions of mid-nineteenth century Russia, such dualities, expressed either as professional callings or as private obsessions, oftentimes garnered the displeasure of the government. Authors from within the bureaucracy were called upon to employ various methods of persuasion and resistance in order to practice their craft without losing the livelihood and status that they often derived from their official associations rather than from their literary careers.

The literary trio of Izmailov, Glinka, and Aksakov, led by necessity to censorship careers, displayed a variety of approaches in dealing with the tensions inherent in balancing literary work with the service. Glinka's pecuniary approach, his detailed tally of literary income and his bold demands for restitution of lost wages not from his service career, but from his parallel career as an author, did little to sway the opinion of the administration. Yet, this exchange seems to portend the growing institutional divide between the literary world and the government. Glinka's demands are suspended between the era of patronage and the era of a self-sustaining literary economy. Such pleas for support were a feature of the earlier patronage system, but these requests come with a market-fixed price that patronage did not presuppose.

Izmailov's measured response to the government's refusal to allow the publication of his journal indicates a process of intense negotiation between his role as a censor and his role as an author. The resulting justifications are indicative of the journey that other authors and intellectuals would make across the chasm separating the intelligentsia from the censorship regime. Izmailov's claim that publication can achieve the goals of censorship through other means, that is, can "give [authors'] minds direction in the capacity of journalist," is a precursor to an official policy that would follow nearly twenty-five years later in the short-lived Bureau of Press Affairs, formed to cultivate a positive image of the government and its policies in the press.

Alexander Nikitenko would make a similar concession in building his nearly fifty-year career as a censor. Nikitenko strove to compensate for his official censori-

al duties by seeking accommodation with authors that would allow them to publish even in the face of official suspicion. As a literary critic and academic, Nikitenko wrote widely on Russian Romanticism, however, in the conditions of political tension that ran through the mid-nineteenth century, the quality that he seemed to value in literature and journalism was that of “utility.” Nikitenko’s diary gives us a glimpse into the fascinating private reflections of a busy figure among the literary and intellectual elite of Russia, and also displays Nikitenko’s intimate reflections upon questions of literary import that went beyond the pale of his approved censorship duties. Nikitenko’s political principles and his wary struggle to ameliorate the censorship regime collide in a moment of criticism aimed at Alexander Herzen. Nikitenko’s criticism of Herzen’s journalism focuses not on its content, with which he largely agrees, but on its stylistic aspects. Nikitenko’s critical commentary is informed by his experience as a censor; in his desire to see literature spur political reform, Nikitenko is constantly vexed by the failure of authors to indulge in the rhetorical games that the bureaucracy required of published authors.

Bureaucrats found that their access to the literary world was limited not by talent, but by their miscalculation of the ultimate incompatibility of their two pursuits. In their attempt to develop strategies to counter the mistrust of literary ventures among their peers and managers in the bureaucracy, authors tried a variety of approaches that straddled discourses. The Russian State increasingly brooked no competition for the affection of its servants. There could be, however, exceptions to this rule, and Nikitenko was one of them.

Chapter IV

SALTYKOV-SHCEDRIN: THE BUREAUCRATIC LIFE - LETTERED

"Do not forget, reader, that I have never appeared before you in my natural view,
but always somehow hobbled."

-M. E. Saltykov-Shchedrin

Mikhail Saltykov was, likely, the most committed bureaucrat to ever make a success of his literary calling. This chapter briefly examines his life and the conditions in which he wrote. The previous chapters have explored the role of the bureaucrat in Russian literature before and after the Great Reforms and examined how bureaucrats engaged with the literary sphere from within the bureaucracy. Here, we turn finally to a close analysis of several texts from the author most concentrated on the problem of the bureaucrat both in life and literature. Saltykov's bureaucratic service was coextensive with his career as an author until a final break with the service in middle age, and his stories, novels, and editorials form a compendium about bureaucratic life in the era. If Nikitenko, Izmailov, Glinka and others were focused on determining and then observing the limits of the freedom accorded the bureaucrat to engage in literary life, Saltykov seems to have been focused on transgressing the accepted limits.

In this chapter, I examine two story cycles that conveniently bookend Saltykov's period of direct engagement with the bureaucratic milieu that was, at once, his professional sphere, his bête noire, and his constant literary inspiration. Through close readings of vignettes from his story cycle *Provincial Sketches* in 1856, the year after his return from administrative exile, and from the collection *The Tashkenter's Clique* from 1869, the year after his retirement from the service, the chapter seeks to establish several overarching themes that emanate from the problematically twinned role of the administrative apparatus for Saltykov. To wit, the bureaucracy was both a creative engine for Saltykov's satirical genius and a mon-

strosity that represented the venality and oppression of Russia's unequal society. The first close reading illuminates the biographical themes stretching across Saltykov's work, tethering his literary production to the rough contours of his professional career in the bureaucracy. These themes show him claiming the authority of witness, martyr, and confidant, roles equally important in establishing the topsy-turvy satirical world that acted as a carnival mirror for Russian society in the conditions of turmoil during and after the Great Reforms.

The second close reading looks at Saltykov's repetition of archetypal characters across the span of his literary career. Such characters, revisited over the course of twenty-five years, were important in establishing not only type in the Saltykovian oeuvre, but in creating a veritable grammar that, through its reliance on tacit likeness and significant repetitions, helped Saltykov to outpace censorship control. This world of repetitions and echoes came to resemble the claustrophobic provincial bureaucratic world that he excelled in describing.

The third reading looks at Saltykov's written production at the outset of his most adversarial period. In *The Tashkenter's Clique* Saltykov hyperbolizes the earlier world of Krutogorsk in *Provincial Sketches*, and far from displacing the provincial center further to the outskirts, he instead reconfigures geography to move the vaguely threatening and largely imaginary Oriental steppe to the heart of European Russia. Saltykov's collapsing of space and reversal of colony and metropole undermine the attempt of the bureaucratic state to redirect public attention to new national projects. Saltykov's direct engagement with bureaucratic excess takes on a national and epic scope and provides the clearest example of Saltykov's pivot from

the miniature world of the provincial bureaucracy to the philosophical expanse into which his later novels would venture.

Bureaucratic Life - Lettered

Besides Saltykov, the other author bureaucrats featured in this study left the service as soon as their literary success allowed them to free themselves from official purse strings, or, alternately, came calling when literary income did not suffice. Some, like Fyodor Tiutchev, led more privileged lives abroad, parlaying his bureaucratic calling into an opportunity to live a fully Western life, free of domestic pressures like censorship and secret police. When Tiutchev returned to Russia to take his high post in the Foreign Censorship, it was with the full understanding that his stature could be used beneficially to protect the intellectual life of Russia, and not only to further the bureaucratic fiefdom that he served. Some, like Goncharov, toiled haplessly in the Censorship, chafing at government control but still able to spend most days conversing with other literary men.

Mikhail Saltykov was different. Saltykov did not seek a job as a censor, nor did he consider service to be a reserve occupation that existed to fill his coffers when his literary luck ran short. Saltykov was a true believer. While harried by debt and a spendthrift mother throughout his life, Saltykov was not as pressed as some others of his day. Saltykov instead seemed to regard service as a means of bringing about the progress that was always lacking in the misanthropic and corrupted world depicted in his books. In a service career that spanned administrative

exile during the reign of Nicholas to service as a high-ranking Vice Governor in a string of important Russian regions, Saltykov toiled at his administrative career for much longer than, he later admitted, was productive. But Saltykov, one of the most pessimistic and caustic writers in the Russian language (the scholar Carl Proffer called Saltykov's masterpiece *The Golovlyev Family*, "one of world literature's most depressing books,"²¹⁸) seemed to feel a call to public service certainly on par with the likes of poet Gavril Derzhavin, one of Catherine's most trusted courtiers, the erstwhile Governor of Olonets, and the only Privy Councilor in the history of Russian letters.

Saltykov's career was not as charmed as that of Derzhavin. His path to service was marked with years of administrative exile, official displeasure, police surveillance, dislocation, and, finally, imperial censure. However, in Russia, such a record of service was not so peculiar. What was peculiar was Saltykov's prominent literary career and, even more peculiar, the way that Saltykov integrated his two pursuits almost seamlessly into the most damning political satire ever directed against the autocratic Russian state.

To begin with, civil servants were always direct and privileged observers of the process of government, as well as the largest class of literate professionals in the Empire, and they were directly implicated in the political discourse of governance. However, by the nineteenth century civil servants had also become integrated into

218 Carl R. Proffer, "Saltykov and the Russian Novel" in M. E. Saltykov-Shchedrin, *The Golovlev Family* (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1977), ix.

the literary discourse that was expanding across the Empire.²¹⁹ As we have seen in previous chapters, such opportunities also led to pitfalls. Bureaucrats tasked with administering Russia were not encouraged to write about it, and those who did could find themselves in irons, or worse.

Thus it was for Saltykov. Having run afoul of Nicholas I in 1848, he was sent to administrative exile in Vyatka, where he remained for six years. The moment of Saltykov's re-emergence onto the literary stage was the result of the fortuitous concatenation of several circumstances. The previous decades had seen the emergence of literary institutions and the piecemeal establishment of the instruments of publication and publicity, ushered in the safeguards of copyright, and witnessed ongoing bruising journalistic battles between writers and unscrupulous publishers. This period had also introduced constantly changing censorship laws and the hounding tactics of Nicholas' gendarmerie. However, much like Alexander Pushkin's ordeal of exile, it must have been a time of recalibrated expectations and hard-learned lessons about the challenges of literary life in repressive Russia. As Stephanie Sandler writes about Pushkin: "The years of exile, then, were a time that allowed him to consolidate and come to terms with his position as a writer in Russia's censored and undemocratic culture. To be Russia's national writer came to mean ... a writer

²¹⁹ See Russian Officialdom: the Bureaucratization of Russian Society from the Seventeenth to the Twentieth Century, eds. Walter McKenzie Pintner and Don Karl Rowney (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980).

working in a social and political order that was profoundly repressive and notoriously capricious.”²²⁰

For Saltykov, return from exile meant a portion of renewed faith in the relevance of government and the prospect of a reformed bureaucracy awake to the necessities of reform and justice in administration. Saltykov was, in fact, a representative of a class of authors hidden, so to speak, in plain sight. His service continued through the 1860s with a brief pause to work with Nekrasov as the new editor of The Contemporary after the untimely death of Dobroliubov and the journal’s temporary closure for censorship infractions. Saltykov saw his work in the bureaucracy during the era of the Great Reforms as his paramount contribution to Russian life. As a vice-governor in the regions of Tver’, Penza, and Tula, Saltykov struggled to implement reforms against the wishes of the largely reactionary grandes of the local nobility. Far from being the agent of progressive change that he envisioned during the heady days of the Great Reforms, Saltykov found that his preeminent position in the provincial bureaucracy placed him at the mercy of local factions. Despite Saltykov’s best hopes for modernization, the situation that he encountered in the provinces remained remarkably unchanged from the previous century. As the historian of Russian bureaucracy John LeDonne writes of the Catherinian era:

Despite the fact that the governor was such an important personage, it is impossible to find in the legislation of the period any systematic outline of his powers. [He was] the head and master (*khozian*) of his

220 Stephanie Sandler, *Distant Pleasures: Alexander Pushkin and the Writing of Exile* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989), 4-5.

province but was silent on the meaning of that term. Yet there is paradox only if one persists in looking upon the governor as a bureaucratic agent. In fact, his power derived from his status as a member of the social and political core of the ruling class and needed no restrictive definition in a legal document. His mission was to govern the dependent population of his province in his dual capacity of social leader and political boss and to maintain discipline among the junior members of the ruling class and the clerks who served under him...²²¹

The administrative picture had not changed significantly since that time and the administrative structure that served in the provinces largely followed the haphazard structure described above, which relegated provincial governance to the social calendar of the local aristocracy. Salykov's service in Ryazan' represented a two-year transfer from St. Petersburg that he embraced not only as a chance at advancement, but also as an opportunity to participate in the gathering pace of reform that would soon break upon the provinces from above. However, correspondence during his service in Ryazan' is full of his disillusionment. "We lead a life here that is most boring... affairs are conclusively crushing me."²²² Salykov could be counted on to pique his correspondents and was a reliable curmudgeon in his relationships with professional colleagues, but the outpouring of disappointment with the provinces reflects a deeply emotional bond with the non-cosmopolitan spaces of the Russian Empire. Salykov the bureaucrat seemed to feel each sting of administrative defeat in a way that only Shchedrin the author could bring to successful account.

221 John P. LeDonne, *Ruling Russia: Politics and Administration in the Age of Absolutism, 1762-1796* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1984), 42.

222 Sergey Makashin, *Salykov-Shchedrin: Seredina puti 1860-e 1870-e gody* (Moscow: Izd. Khudozhestvennaia Lit., 1984), 245.

His position in the provinces became a disappointment to him because it underutilized his professional capacities but also failed to allow him the leverage that he believed intellectual work would provide in advancing progressive reforms in Russia. Harried by his enemies in the aristocracy, Saltykov's long and useful career in public life came to an end in March of 1868 as a result of secret communication between informers in Riazan' and the secret police in Moscow. At issue was official suspicion over a journal article that Saltykov did not pen.²²³ The Tsar, who once famously ordered him to "serve as he wrote," was livid over Saltykov's criticism of the slow pace of reform and the excesses of bureaucratic administration, and Saltykov finally recused himself from public service.

Saltykov saw his two careers, the literary and bureaucratic, as intrinsically bound. Energized by the progressive promises from the administrative core of the empire, Saltykov believed in the transformative nature of his bureaucratic occupations and in the necessity of good administration to salve, if not solve, the many maladies of the Russian Empire. His professional literary activity as an author and journal editor was also linked to the progressive goals of the Russian literary realists. Saltykov would write, significantly, from the perspective of a bureaucrat, and he staged the scene of bureaucracy repeatedly in his early works. Saltykov's first

223 Ibid., 306-315.

important collection, and a major public occasion in the early days of the Great Reforms, *Provincial Sketches* is narrated by “Retired Commander” Shchedrin.²²⁴

The projected voice of Saltykov’s bureaucrat, is, especially in the early stages of reform, scathing but not yet eviscerating. His early satire aims at the heart of administrative darkness, but, as his more radical critics would charge of *Provincial Sketches*, never pierces it. Saltykov’s own hard work on the pressing issues of provincial reform, his long sojourns outside of the capital and away from the crucible of intellectual discussion and journalistic polemics, his still-strong faith in the ability of enlightened administration to tackle the ills of Russia, his own practical understanding of society and human nature, all of these things made him interested in the bureaucracy as an institution, and not only, nor even primarily, as an object of literary satire.

Russian literature had, in fact, counted on the misfortune of the bureaucrat time and again. The quintessential Russian archetype, the “little man,” was an amalgamation of the most pathetic qualities of the disenfranchised office slave, the copyist who managed to elicit sympathy while still clinging to the most venal aspirations of the status-obsessed bureaucrat. But, now, even in the mocking tones of satire, Saltykov sought to domesticate the bureaucrat and to draw the fuller outlines of his society. His descriptions of administrative life are more complete pictures, which, while valued for their dependable journalistic penchant for exposé and scandal, still

224 A later cycle of stories, Pompadours and Pompadourettes (*Pompadury i pompadurshi*) he called “Gubernatorial Stories” in jest at the rather too palpable influence of his thankless days as a regional vice-governor on his storytelling.

manage to draw the reader into the workaday world of the bureaucracy. In this way, the biting satire is a project conceived looking out from inside of the bureaucracy, rather than from the outside looking in, the traditional point of view for a literary establishment who conceived of the bureaucracy as an essential other. This in itself is an achievement of the Age of Reforms, and one that would not, or could not, be repeated after the disillusionment stemming from the failure of reform and the reaction that followed.²²⁵

The doubts of the radicals about the sincerity of the government's embrace of publicity and its commitment to further reforms, much less its ability to carry out the reforms enacted, would doom the further integration of civic roles. Saltykov would leave the bureaucracy, disenchanted. Literature, increasingly a professional calling that would brook no rivals, would become a well-managed and well-funded enterprise, lucrative enough to allow him to dispense with the rival career, finally obliging the government's interest in preventing the extra-official airing of bureaucratic opinions.

The following analyses attempt to identify and describe the broad literary-administrative bond that Saltykov manifested in his writing for the period of his civil employment. The passages to be examined are also broadly representative of how Saltykov thought about his literary career within the space of his administrative

225 "What was shortly to emerge between government and writers, however, was a harmony unmatched at any other time in the history of imperial censorship. The new emperor was to value and encourage publishing. His government was to open presses, promote advances in printing, subsidize books and journals, and produce the most liberal censorship statute ever to appear under the double-headed eagle of Imperial Russia..." Rudd. Fighting Words, 24.

ambitions, and, indeed, his ambitions for Russia. While lampooning the Empire that he served, Saltykov also sought to instruct it, a practice that would lead him away from government forever, and, eventually, into the ranks of the most vociferous critics that the Russian bureaucracy had yet seen.

Provincial Sketches: Sojourn to the Land of the Good Old Days

Saltykov's first post-exile work, *Provincial Sketches*, was widely regarded as the finest example of exposé literature and garnered him a place among the most important contemporary Russian authors. Now serving under Minister of Education Golovnin, Saltykov was singled out for advancement in the hopes that this rehabilitated political exile would be an example of the government's success in turning a page from the politically repressive era of Nicholas I. Upon his confirmation, the Tsar, aware of Saltykov's literary activity and his progressive tendencies, which were considered undesirable by the Tsar's closest advisors, had defiantly remarked; "...Let him go to serve and may he do exactly as he writes."²²⁶

The stories that had caused the furor, much like Turgenev's series of sketches of rural life in *A Sportsman's Sketches* (*Zapiski okhotnika*), did not take the path of direct confrontation with government policies but instead sought to alternate comic sketches of rural life with pointed descriptions of the abuses under corruption-ridden administrative cabals.

226 Makashin, Saltykov-Shchedrin Na Rubezhe 1850-1860 Godov, 68.

The narrator appears in these stories as “Retired Councilor Shchedrin” (‘*Ostavnoi Sovetnik Shchedrin*’), whose presence in the rural backwater of Krutogorsk closely matched Saltykov’s own enforced administrative exile to Vyatka from 1848–1856. The occluded presence of the narrator balances the rather rash act of confronting still recent history. Saltykov’s own political repression, part of the widespread political reaction that succeeded the crisis of European autocracy in 1848, was widely known and had swept Saltykov, a young star in the literary firmament, from the literary stage, but it had not blotted out his name.²²⁷ Saltykov, while choosing not to write the immediate political context into the series of sketches, still confronts his readership with the political phantoms of Nicholas’ reign.

The immediate context for the sketches is a shabby, introverted, and impoverished province of the late-Nicholaevan era. Krutogorsk, the provincial center, is, like Saltykov’s later satirical city, Glupov, an entire kingdom unto itself, deprived of lines of communication that should bring news and information from the capital, as well as roads that might bring any travellers at all. Saltykov metaphorically brackets the rural district in the foreword and epilogue as he develops a sort of poetical isolation evoked by both travel and the trope of crossing liminal space in mythology. Crossing into Krutogorsk is both a real crossing, into the semantic and linguistic space of the provinces, and a mythological one:

But more and more the fog begins to capture the horizon; the high steeples of the churches drown in the sky and seem like fantasti-

227 Dostoevsky was also caught up in the general reactionary fury that year, and exiled to hard labor in Siberia.

cal shades; the fires along the shore appear brighter and brighter... Before you is a river... The ferry did not move, and only the clatter of horse hooves against the platform and the splash of fur pulled from the water returned us to the consciousness of something real and not fantastic.

But here was the shore... you hear the muffled jingle of the hanging bells; the horses are harnessed; finally all is ready; in the tarantas appears a hat and the following is heard: "my good sirs, care to contribute?" – "Giddy-up!" – is heard from behind, and you clamber up the steep bank...."²²⁸

The scene is a familiar one for the reader used to proverbial crossings into a distinctive narrative space.²²⁹ This created space is evoked as a mirror for the real world set behind the narrator, the familiar world of the capitals and of society, the world of Saltykov's readership. Moving towards the town, Saltykov's character passes not only through the idyllic space of the Russian countryside, the nineteenth-century "picturesque" vision that Christopher Ely describes as "blending aesthetic conventions and geographical fact," but through a state of consciousness into unconsciousness, or even of life into death.²³⁰ The riders are slowly lulled to sleep by the countryside and while absorbed into a sort of "fantasy," the carriage conveys them towards a Stygian landscape of specters and shadows. The crossing is barely percep-

228 Saltykov-Shchedrin, II:3

229 in describing the "eight basic narrative units" that comprise the basic mythological topos of the "descent to the underworld," Terpening lists: "The descender arrives at a barrier... The only barrier of interest is an infernal barrier or swamp without a bridge, an obstacle varying in name and description. The obstacle's essential nature is limitation and confinement. It keeps some within and holds others outside the realm." And: "The passengers disembark at the far side. Prior to landing, the ferryman often collects his fee. Following this, the descendents take leave of the boatman, who returns for a new load." in Ronnie H. Terpening, *Charon and the Crossing: Ancient, Medieval, and Renaissance Transformations of a Myth* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1985), 11-12.

230 Christopher David Ely, *This Meager Nature : Landscape and National Identity in Imperial Russia* (DeKalb :Northern Illinois University Press, 2002), 61.

tible, described only as an interruption to a dream, and is marked only by a humorous interpolation of Charon the boatman, the “hat” that intrudes into the carriage to ask for the customary wages of the Stygian crossing.²³¹ The carriage quickly moves into a space that seems unexpectedly familiar for the narrator. The passage into the other world is figured here as a passage not into death, into the land of ghostly shades, but as a passage into the land of torpor and confusion, into a distinctively sluggish and backward place. For Saltykov, the Stygian shores of Russia are the shores of ignorance and administrative abuse.

In one of the far corners of Russia there is a city that speaks to my heart... Entering this city you feel as if your career had ended here, that there is already nothing further that you can demand from life, that the only thing that is left to you is to live in the past and to regurgitate old reminiscences.²³²

Indeed, provincial Krutogorsk, beyond the Stygian banks and the vision of a shabby Charon, is a small world cut off from its hinterlands and set against the morass that extends beyond the town. Saltykov’s own exile sounds through the description, and the passage into the shades of Krutogorsk is a journey into a sort of administrative “death,” an excommunication from the body politic. Saltykov’s own disgruntled voice can be heard in the description of the city’s isolation. The movement towards the horizon is a movement not towards a particular destination, but a

231 Another reference to Greek and Roman mythology contained in the Introduction provides a further intimation to the reader that Saltykov has the Charon myth in mind here. Saltykov mentions the Ovidian myth of Baucis and Philemon, the paragons of rural hospitality, who, saved from the destruction of their village, were twinned together in dendritic form among the swampy wastelands. See Ovid, *Metamorphoses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 8:619-728.

232 Saltykov-Shchedrin, II:2.

movement away from bounded space and into the unsettled and directionless space of the “surroundings.”

And, in reality, even the roads don’t lead any further beyond the town, as if it was the end of the world. No matter where you look to the surroundings – forests, marshes, and steppe; steppe, forests, and marshes: here and there the fanciful curve of a village...and then everything is quiet again, everything sinks into the general monotony.²³³

Krutogorsk, a toponym meaning “steep hill” in Russian, most likely alluding to the distinctive banks that buttress the Vyatka kremlin near to which Saltykov worked during his exile, is the site where civilization meets its vanishing point. It is the final grid point of a system of roads stretching out from the capital, the last station of government in the imperial network, a place where government itself, in the final instance, is rendered impotent by a distinctly un-Russian inability to expand its reach beyond the next horizon.²³⁴ The vacuous ‘monotony’ of the scene, dissolving the frenetic activity of urban life, also works to level the gradations of metropolitan life, the Russia of rank and distinction. The Russia of Krutogorsk is found in the metropolitan reader’s imagination, the Russia of vast and terrifying distance, where barren tracks lead on further into nothingness and the sounds of progress and culture die out in the winds.

Despite its suggestive verticality, the town of “Krutogorsk” delineates the leveling space of satire, which brings low the high. The irony of the town’s prominent geography works not only as an indexical marker of provincial importance, but

233 Saltykov-Shchedrin, II:3.

234 The theme of expansion, Russia always outpacing itself in an endless race to new frontiers, is taken up later in *The Tashkenters’ Clique* (*Gospoda Tashkentsy*).

also as a focusing effect for the reader's gaze.²³⁵ Amidst the flat, boring monotony of Russia, high places do serve as sites of fortification, but the high/low dichotomy that Saltykov invokes neatly divides the space of the city and the country, as it does the place of power from the place of subjugation.²³⁶

The entire Introduction is filled with oppositions, semantic and physical, that Lotman identifies as demonstrating "mirror-like relationships": "Lotman stresses spatial oppositions, owing to their capacity of modeling and transmitting various, non-spatial messages as well. Joint concepts such as "high/low," "left/right," "close/distant," "open/closed" thereby establish cultural models, that in themselves are not exclusively spatial."²³⁷ As Saltykov develops the themes of space in the Russian countryside, he rearranges the values of cosmopolitan Russia, deconstructing the corrupted spaces of power in Russia. By distancing, isolating, and "chthonicizing" the narrative space of the story, Shchedrin allows the reader room for critical reflection outside of the highly politicized polemical environment that characterized literary life in the period. The distancing effect of satire -- especially of the sort of Menippean satire that Shchedrin embarks on here where the object of satire is construed broadly at an institutional level and does not focus on any particular contem-

235 See "The Topographical Image of Russia" in Ely, 33-36.

236 See Löve's exploration of the poetics of space in Russian literature. Building off of studies of semantic space in the Tartu School (primarily of Lotman and Toporov), Löve explores spatial relations in several stories and novels primarily from nineteenth-century Russian literature. Her discussion of the oppositions of high-low, far-near, etc. are instructive for a productive reading of Saltykov-Shchedrin's use of space to create a virtual geography for his satire. Katharina Hansen Löve, *The Evolution of Space in Russian Literature: a Spatial Reading of 19-th and 20-th Century Narrative Literature* (Atlanta, GA :Rodopi, 1994).

237 Ibid., 34 – 35.

porary political personage or even on one issue -- allows the reader to disengage from the daily rigors of political life and to focus on the pleasure of the text, and the equally fulfilling pleasure of forbidden recognition.

Indeed, recognition for the informed reader followed from Shchedrin's tropic vocabulary in the Introduction. For the reader of nineteenth-century Russian satire, for which Gogol's *Dead Souls* established the paradigm, the countryside viewed from the traveller's chaise was a familiar trope. The mythological space of travel is repeated here in its Gogolian scope; for Gogol's hero Chichikov the humdrum "lorry" (*brichka*) was transformed into the infernal "bird troika" that transported him from the shambolic scene of the novel, or, as Bely figures it, a representation of life as a "terrible troika speeding into the void."²³⁸ Chichikov's metamorphosing conveyance is (like the one in *Provincial Sketches*) a dot on the vast and mute steppe. However, at the same time, Gogol' invites our gaze to linger on the vehicle; its unremarkability ensures its unimpeded movement through the otherwise fraught world of provincial society that he encounters. The transformation to symbol is complete; the quotidian means of transportation in the final scene of *Dead Souls* becomes the symbol of Russia and resolves Russia's metaphysical dilemma through a twist of magic realism. Russia was a country whose omnipresent metaphysical and spiritual capacities were defeated by its physical limitations and unconquerable in-

238 Andrei Bely, *Gogol's Artistry* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2009), 323.

terior space; the “bird troika” overcomes space by defeating its horizontal hindrance, gravity.²³⁹

For Saltykov, however, the transport is swallowed up by space, and Gogol’s microscopic lens and claustrophobic proximities are exchanged for the telescopic range. Saltykov’s conveyances “sink” in the vast distances, and the scourge of distance and space are a constant sap to the strength and vitality of the provincial community, turning Krutogorsk into the only fixable point of civilization on the vast plain, creating a nexus of administrative and political diction to help situate the reader in an otherwise vast and disorienting wasteland without words. Saltykov’s provinces are situated beyond the reach of Russian cultural life, a nonetheless layered space that owes as much to the author’s own appreciation of the isolation of exile as to the allegorizing effect of satirical geography.

As mentioned, the ‘Styx’ crossing in the story does not entail a split between the living and the dead, but rather reinforces the isolation of the provinces from the

239 David Bethea’s analysis of the “bird troika” as a mythological symbol further undergirds the argument. Drawing a link between Chichikov and Charon, Bethea’s analysis is a further recognition of both the importance of symbols of transportation in a country where the distance is so great as to be mythic and the important links present in literary representations of travel and eschatological representation. I have also suggested such a link in Saltykov-Shchedrin’s introduction. “...When he absconds into the wide-open spaces at the end of the first part of the novel and Gogol’s narrator gives himself up to lyrical ruminations of the troika and Russia’s destiny, we have entered a strange and privileged narrative space in the text. Here the horse-drawn troika (the Russian chariot) symbolizes the shift from everyday time (the provincial city) to epic time (the grand openness of Russia’s future). We are meant to experience a “crossing over” (Chichikov is indeed a kind of mock-epic Charon) and a rising out (he is also, at a higher level, a kind of Elijah) of this world. At the same time, we are exhorted by Gogol’s imperative mood to enter into the sheer nervous excitement of the ride, the combination of the pleasure and fear that the passenger feels as the troika and Russia hurtle into the future... Gogol’s folk-inspired apotheosis became another potent image of eschatological change...” David M. Bethea “Remarks on the Horse as a Space-Time Image” in *Cultural Mythologies of Russian Modernism: from the Golden Age to the Silver Age*, ed. Boris Gasparov et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 116.

capital. The city operates as a microcosm of Russian life; there is room enough there for civic institutions, social sweep, vice and crime, amidst the boredom and repetition of provincial penury.

Lord! How happy you are, how good and joyful you feel on these wooden plank sidewalks! ...There in the windows flash four figures behind a four-cornered table, betraying their inspiration to productivity from behind a card table; there, from another window a spiral of steam barrels out, exposing the happy company of office ciphers and maybe even those of higher rank gathered inside. Now from the neighboring house you hear ... resounding laughter, from which the heart in your young chest is touched, and straightaway a witticism is heard ... which you have heard many times, but which, on this evening, strikes you as being especially appealing, and you are not annoyed, and you smile at it somewhat nobly and sweetly....²⁴⁰

Saltykov's description of the town, followed by the introduction of the characters populating the provincial scene, introduces the reader to the world of laughter. The "roiling" world of Krutogorsk is where the neat social and political boundaries that order the metropolis are broken down and re-assembled in grotesque form. The world of Krutogorsk is the world of the "Good Old Days" (*Starye vremena*).

In the repeated referencing of "Good Old Days," Saltykov suggests an elision of history, the curtailment of historical distance between the "modern" reader and the "antiquated" world that exists beyond his purview. This elision is the misleading distance that the reader perceives between contemporary Russia, with modernizing political institutions and a sense of social progress, and the old Russia characterized by the endemic problems of violence against the enserfed population and administrative despotism. These problems were so threatening to the fragile consensus of

240 Saltykov-Shchedrin, II:21.

Russia in the mid-nineteenth century that the critical distance of the educated reader had grown into a nearly historical divide.

The developments, or lack of development, occurring in the distant provincial space of the countryside could be safely domesticated and re-valued through the stylizing of ideological artists in official Petersburg. The provinces became associated with the conservative, patriarchal, moral Russia, the Russia of the “Good Old Days.” The idealization of the provinces and a fetishization of historical stagnation allowed upwardly mobile members of Russia’s establishment to aestheticize the blight gnawing at the agrarian expanses of the Empire. The provinces were stuck in history, and thus, their political fate could be discussed at leisure and on the administrative timetable typical of the bureaucratic warrens of the capital.²⁴¹

The arc of *Provincial Sketches* works to de-stabilize this thinking and to re-integrate the provinces into the increasingly dominant discourse of political reform in the early days of Alexander II’s reign. Just as the introduction uses elements of the carnivalesque to frame the provincial world, the epilogue creatively reconfigures the carnival as a macabre death ritual.

Some strange, endless procession opens before me, and a wild, immoderate music assaults my ears. I stare at those participating in the procession... Humph! Yes, it seems that I have had the pleasure to see them, to live with them! It seems that these are all the primadonnas and solipsists of Krutogorsk!...

“What is the meaning of this?” – I ask myself.

241 For a discussion of the idealization of Russia’s countryside, see Christopher Ely, *This Meager Nature: Landscape and National Identity in Imperial Russia* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2002).

-- Certainly you've heard? - says to me my good friend Buerakhin, suddenly slipping from the crowd, -- And you consider yourself a model bureaucrat!

-- No, I haven't heard, I don't know...

-- Certainly you've seen, certainly you understand, that before your eyes is passing a funeral procession?

But who are they burying? Who are they burying? - I asked, exhausted by some sad premonition.

"Good Old Days" are being buried! - Buerakhin answers victoriously, but in his voice was heard the same sad, empty irony, which had previously worked so unpleasantly on my nerves.²⁴²

Saltykov was widely criticized for this scene by the radical critics for what they perceived as a conciliatory gesture towards the government of Alexander II and the reformist rumblings emanating from St. Petersburg, since, as Makashin claims, Saltykov "optimistically projected that the order that he had eviscerated was condemned to death by the government's planned reforms."²⁴³ According to the critics, such intemperate allegory threatened to tarnish Saltykov's reputation as a progressive voice in literature and to reverse the social impact of *Provincial Sketches*.

But, another explication may be possible. The language can be understood as deliberately ambivalent. The phrase 'Good Old Days' acquires a peculiar valence in the cycle. It can clearly be discounted as a useful chronological measurement, and is, instead, a seemingly qualitative marker. That the cycle ends pointedly with the funeral and burial of the allegorical past can be seen not only as a comment on the pace of political change, but also as a challenge to the sensibilities of reform-minded readers. The final words are spoken with "sad, empty irony," in contradistinction to

242 Saltykov-Shchedrin, II:468.

243 Saltykov-Shchedrin, III:509-510.

Buerakhin's "victorious tone." Indeed, the mourners, enumerated in the previous paragraphs, are not depicted as grieving so much as worrying. It is possible that the ironic tone indicates that Buerakhin expects his words to be met with understanding, that bluster veils the implicit claim that the procession is a farce. Certainly the cacophonous strains to which "Good Old Days" are played out in the final pages are a reflection of the motley and corrupt cast of antiquated vice-ridden characters that populate Saltykov's satirical world. But, the music is also an indication that the entire affair is premature, haphazard, improvised. The misplaced and alternating displays of mirth and irony, as well as the rebuke to Shchedrin, challenging his self-esteem as a "model bureaucrat," are an indication of the chaotic and uncertain state of the government. By the time the stories were published, Saltykov's coda to the collection, the late addition of a funeral scene, was appropriate. Alexander II had announced to the gentry assembled for his coronation that change was imminent, but he had, at the same time, promised not to rush towards reform without input from the serf-owning class.²⁴⁴ Such augurs of confusion and half-measures might have been palpable to Saltykov. The pace and result of the reforms would certainly become his primary complaint against the government during the following decade.

Implicit in the scene is the theme of the impossibility of progress. Shchedrin departs at the end of the cycle, leaving behind him a Krutogorsk sunk in uncertainty. But, as the bureaucrat Shchedrin leaves, he does so much as does Benjamin's angel of history,

244 see Rudd, Fighting Words, 118.

His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe, which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing in from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.²⁴⁵

The death of “Good Old Days” presages some sort of future, but it is a future that Shchedrin expects to experience only blindly, his face turned towards the farcical funeral procession that impedes his progress.

On a biographical level, the burial of “Good Old Days” was experienced as a “return” of sorts for Saltykov (and, certainly, for the character of “Reserve Councilor Shchedrin”). Saltykov could move back from the periphery only with the passing of the previous political era. Therefore, death is underlined as a cyclical process that also brings about life, just as reform is a cyclical process that can also bring about reaction, a theme that Saltykov picks up with the ambivalence of the funeral scene.

As in Saltykov’s other historical satires like *The History of a Town* (*Istoriia odnogo goroda*), the cyclical nature of history is a subject that receives humorous treatment at both the philosophical and practical levels, and is key to understanding his conception of Russia. Russia was an imperial state with clear lines of succession, and a bureaucratic system reliant on a stable and iterative system of administrative loops to integrate vast amounts of information and territory into a unitary structure.

245 Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 263.

Cyclical was also embedded in the cosmic worldview of the Russian Church, sustained by its reliance on immutable patterns and ceremonial cycles, seeing in these a model for society, and, in society, a system of endlessly inscribed divine patterns.

The death of Nicholas I in 1855, a year before the publication of *Provincial Sketches*, had reinforced the cyclical of such ceremonial and political prerogatives. The political excitement that greeted the dawning of the new era of Russian history, soon to be dubbed the era of the “Great Reforms,” might have seemed, to the careful observer of Russian society, the release of passions long pent up. Saltykov experienced the burial of “past times,” paradoxically, as a return to life, and specifically to the life of the capital city. Freed from his administrative captivity in the far-reaches of European Russia, Saltykov returned to publishing, widespread fame, and rapid administrative advancement. If taken as a rather florid euphemism for political succession, the burial can be read as a warning against complacency. Saltykov seems not to have been so much applauding the relaxation of governmental controls in areas such as censorship, as suggesting that the outward manifestations of such a transition, often attended by ceremonial and public enthusiasm, may pass quickly, and that any substantial progress for liberalism and reform would only begin with the passing of former shades.

Saltykov Schedrin and Typological Innovation

*"A man, squandering not official funds, preserving his own, and wishing not those of others."*²⁴⁶

One of the most noticeable features of Saltykov-Shchedrin's expansive oeuvre is the constant repetition of names and places from his own compositions, and from those of others. Saltykov's long career enabled him to sketch character arcs that extend across decades, and to continue to add to literary topoi established in his early years of service. Several such instances stand out.

In October of 1874 Saltykov began to serialize a new novel on the pages of *Notes of the Fatherland* (*Otechestvennye Zapiski*). The first three chapters of *The Molchalin Clique* (*Gospoda Molchaliny*) were published under the title *In the Ranks of Sobriety and Precision* (*Ekskursii v oblast' umerennosti i akkuratnosti*). However, the next installment was delayed due to other projects, and then delayed again when submitted for publication in 1875 for reasons of censorship. Only in 1877 was the entire cycle published in book form. When Saltykov finally settled on the title, he invoked the unmistakable shade of Griboedov's famous éminence grise, Stepan Molchalin.

As Sergei Makashin notes, "[throughout] the 1850s-60s Saltykov provided a packed gallery of bureaucratic types, touching the entire Table of Ranks. In this im-

246 Saltykov-Shchedrin, II: 60.

mense satirical overview of the administrative-bureaucratic sphere of the autocracy we meet separate representatives of the Molchalin type, but these are eclipsed by other types, which were generalized as “Pompadours,” “City Bosses,” and “the Tashkenters’ Clique.”²⁴⁷ *The Tashkenters’ Clique*, in particular, paid special attention to the particular milieu and education that prepared a potential Tashkenter for Russian society. In *The Diary of a Provincial* (*Dnevnik Provintsiala*), and again in *In the Ranks of Sobriety and Precision*, Saltykov fails to give the narrator a name, and the protagonist of *The Diary of a Provincial* is none other than the “Provincial,” a character whose own subjectivity and even sanity, is constantly threatened by the graphomania of Petersburg parvenus.

Perhaps the most durable character in Saltykov’s oeuvre, however, is the famous Porfiry. His first appearance was as Porfiry Petrovich in an eponymous story in the *Provincial Sketches*. Here, the character first demonstrates the negative qualities of character that would lead to Saltykov’s brilliant depiction of Porfiry Vladimirovich Golovlyev, nicknamed “Iudushka” in his late-career opus, *The Golovlyev Family* (*Gospoda Golovlyevy*). Saltykov explored the problem of the provincial bureaucrat in a series of etudes within the larger *Provincial Sketches* cycle, “My Acquaintances” (*Moi Znakomye*). Saltykov sought to expose the depth of the vice and corruption operating at the provincial level of administration. In the process, Saltykov also created a character who would grow over time into the most recognizable and psychologically rich of Saltykov’s characters.

247 Makashin, Saltykov-Shchedrin: Seredina puti, 618.

Sergei Makashin claimed that the character of Iudushka Golovlyev grew from the philosophical core of a polemic that remained unpublished during Saltykov's lifetime, "Modern Phantoms" (*Sovremennye Prizraki*). According to Makashin, the idea of "phantoms" arose from Saltykov's reading of Hegel and utopian idealists like Fourier and Considerant (both guiding lights for the new generation of Russian intellectuals). In Saltykov's formulation, "phantoms" are the ephemeral effects of each epoch, the social, political, and cultural spirits that rise and fall with each generation: "Each of the 'phantoms' possessed truth in his time, or at least a portion of it, but with time they lost it and turned into a dead form, into an "emptiness," oppressing living life."²⁴⁸ Porfiry Golovlyev would represent Saltykov's growing distress at the degree to which such phantoms aged but refused to die, and to which the worst aspects of pre-Reform Russia and its most malignant abusers in the land-owning gentry and bureaucracy still held sway.

By way of this haunting imagery, we return to Saltykov's *Provincial Sketches*. If, as critics like Dobrolyubov feared, the funeral at the close of *Provincial Sketches* signaled the confident end of the "Good Old Days," then Saltykov's reliance on "phantoms" to populate his later stories might have assuaged radicals' apprehensions. *Provincial Sketches* was the product of a different, more hopeful, period in Saltykov's development, when the passing of the most illiberal aspects of the *ancien régime* seemed to be imminent. The burial of "Good Old Days" anticipates Saltykov's idealist thinking about history, and suggests that Saltykov was on his way to estab-

248 Ibid., 432.

lishing the “phantom” as a device by which to both update and complicate his social vision. Indeed, Saltykov admits that his own literary and social views were constantly in need of updating to the reality of the changing Russia that surrounded him. Saltykov’s reliance on a metamorphosing crew of characters demonstrates as much.

The character of Porfiry Petrovich can be seen as an earlier version of Iudushka. The comparison, however, cannot be drawn too far, for Iudushka is a member of a different class and a different time, of a gentry class in its final, fallen, state, whose fear of penury is a driver for his actions. Iudushka is as much a philosophical abomination, a reflection of Russia’s deep spiritual and social poverty, as a human one. The visceral element of corruption and decay here, in its sweep and rude texture, seems to lie at the base of a whole army of such characters in Saltykov’s later pantheon. What elements of the Porfiry line of Saltykovian characters, then, are so essential?

The subversion of the fashionable genre of the bildungsroman, while not new in Russian literature, showcases several patterns in Saltykov’s writing, and might provide the reader of his later satirical realism with a window into the psychological development of his most productive character type, the venal official. “Porfiry Petrovich” details the life of a civil servant in the provincial bureaucracy whose career path as the kingpin at the center of bribery and influence peddling had led him to wealth. Saltykov maneuvers this character in and out of the larger cycle, placing Porfiry Petrovich at the card table, in the salon, and, at the final funereal scene of the book. Saltykov’s subtle repetition of characters and names creates the artful im-

pression of provincial intimacy, creating a small and stable cast of characters that dominate the readers' attention in seemingly equal measure to the prominence that they achieve in the intimate space of local conversation.

Porfiry Petrovich comes to occupy the position of figurehead in the rogue's gallery of Krutogorsk. Porfiry is a deceptively genteel master of the whist table and the salon divan, ready to accept unfortunate civil servants and merchants only if they come on bended knee. However, Saltykov masterfully wraps the portrait of social dominance into a larger, perverse, bildungsroman-like narrative of Porfiry's successful rise through the ranks of provincial bureaucracy. As with so much of the upper crust of Krutogorsk, society's love of empty social platitudes, and endless indulgence in the powers and perks of privilege and luxury mask the rot consuming Old Russia. Porfiriy Petrovich's story follows the traditional arc of success, from rags to riches, from *raznochinet*s (in this case the son of low-ranking clergy) to the successful holder of a '*mestechko*', a position within the fiscal bureaucracy that allowed him access to tax coffers while requiring little work.²⁴⁹

Porfiriy Petrovich represents the system of social advancement available to ambitious Russians for whom the wide field of government service was the best available field for personal and civic attainment in a system dominated both eco-

249 The name *raznochinet*s is a class moniker used to indicate the children of low-ranking or unranked civil servants. Given the expansion of the bureaucracy in the first half of the nineteenth century and the amelioration of standards for entrance into the lowest ranks of the Civil Service, there was a correspondent rise in the numbers of these, usually poor though educated and politically radical, young men in the capitals and district centers of Russia.

nomically and politically by the bureaucracy.²⁵⁰ But, Porfiry also represents the worst aspects of such a system and the basic inequalities produced by a government whose representatives are reliant on their ability to exploit the capacities of a systemic underclass. The bureaucrat found that the class and rank on which he was reliant for status were opposed to a system of aristocracy, whose network of hereditary gentry was freed from the chicanery of bureaucratic business. The civil servants, then, would have to resort to other measures to assume the same outsized role in society as their betters in the nobility.

Having discovered the formula for one of Russia's glaring paradoxes, the jealousy that permeated the civil service and the aristocracy opposed to it, Saltykov draws the character of Porfiry Petrovich to match the limits of cynical careerism. His rise through the ranks of the local bureaucracy is attended by exactly those qualities that were the most important for an ambitious bureaucrat, deceit and venality. Porfiriy, whose mother uses sexual favors for influence peddling (and to have her husband banished), rises through the ranks as he is noted for being a pliant and diligent bureaucratic lackey in the legal bureaucracy (albeit it one with an innate instinct for leverage and extortion). Porfiry's attainment of wealth and status is marked by an allegorical re-inscription of biblical motifs:

It was sweet to see him in summer, when having safely stowed his wife and all of the little Porfiroviches and Porfirovnas that nature had granted him for the journey, he would head into the countryside to take his evening tea. Before us rises the picture of Jacob, surround-

250 It is no coincidence that Saltykov's Krutogorsk featured a caste system wholly without a merchant class; the local economy is a perverted system where commerce, as well as governance, is a unitary system emanating from above.

ed by little Reubens and Joseahs, not yet thinking about selling their brother Joseph.

There, on the fields of Mother-Earth, he sweetly rested from earthly cares, sweetly carried on little conversations with a clean conscience, sweetly thought to himself that he – was *a man, squandering not official funds, preserving his own, and wishing not those of others.*²⁵¹

Saltykov playfully upends convention by viciously parodying the readers' habituated response to both literary convention and social decorum. By relentlessly exposing Porfiry Petrovich's venal path to wealth and influence, Saltykov has created a psychological prism through which to view Krutogorsk. In the final scene, the allegory, the scene of Old Testament patriarchy, is staged to anticipate and satirize the romanticizing of patriarchal Russia and the hide-bound value system that associated authority and rank with righteousness.

Tsarist Russia, and particularly Nicholas' regime, was characterized by a surfeit of biblical analogy.²⁵² The sanctification, even deification, of authority in Nicholas' police state hearkened back to earlier Orthodox models for the imbrication of biblical themes in the contemporary state. That Porfiry Petrovich should be thus "sanctified" as a *paterfamilias* on a biblical scale underscores the artifice of the official ideological forms of Nicholas' regime, and the bankruptcy of the aristocratic-bureaucratic order in the provinces.

251 Saltykov-Shchedrin, II:73.

252 As Richard Wortman notes, "The domestic scenario, however, was more than a romantic embellishment to the image of the tsar. It made the family a central symbol of the moral purity of the autocracy... To violate the principle of autocracy became tantamount to a biblical sin against the father...") Richard Wortman, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in the Russian Monarchy from Peter the Great to the Abdication of Nicholas II* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 167.

Saltykov does not leave the allegorical claim to chance, however, and subverts the biblical inter-text by the insertion of the wrong Old Testament patriarch and offspring, as Porfiry's biblical veranda becomes the site for the re-staging of one of the greatest Old Testament betrayals, the selling of Joseph into slavery. Other elements of the story echo the biblical effect of the final passage; Porfiry's mother is likened to Bathsheba, the sinning wife of Uriah, and the official who takes her in and exiles her husband is likened to David. The tendency that Saltykov indulges here may be perceived as the satirical mixing of high and low genres, a systematic attempt to expose the similar irreconcilability of public and private morality in the ruling set, or may point to an example of allegorical naming that Saltykov would use to great effect in *Gospoda Golovlyevy*. (It seems of note here that the Old Testament story of Joseph is relevant again for Porfirii Golovlyev, whose betrayal of his brothers and his abuse of parental trust seems a further re-staging of the Joseph story.)

Saltykov-Shchedrin's world is one of constantly lurking betrayal. While Saltykov has not yet struck upon the Judas metaphor, the metaphorical substitute of the Joseph story is no less poignant. The ancient iniquity exposed in the Bible is visited upon each generation, and typological evolution is an engine of literary creativity whose precedents are as old, literally, as Methuselah.

Gospoda Tashkentsy: Colonizing Russia from the East

“He who drinks his sherry “tres vieux” considers himself the enlightener of those who drink their sherry only “vieux”²⁵³

Saltykov finished only the first in a planned series of etudes for his 1869 novel *The Tashkenter’s Clique*. The extant section details the lives and careers of a range of future ‘Tashkentsy’, but is staged entirely in Russia. In fact, only the first story deals with colonial affairs. A government purchasing agent and inveterate drinker ends up not in his expected destination of Tashkent, but in the hands of the authorities in a provincial Russian city, accused of pilfering state funds and unable to reconstruct the events leading to his unfortunate diversion. Readers’ expectations are thus foiled, and the interest piqued by the promise of a story about the Wild East turns out to be a story about the Russians themselves.

That Saltykov should find that the closest route to the reality of Russia led through the expanding Asian empire is a reflection of the mounting interest in the region and the publicity that the Orient was gaining through its exposure to the urban masses in European Russia. In the Spring of 1869, in fact, the year of the novel’s publication, the celebrated “Turkestan Exhibit” was a leading attraction in St. Pe-

253 Saltykov-Shchedrin, X:12

tersburg.²⁵⁴ “Occupying three rooms at the Ministry of State Domains on the Moika Canal for a month in spring 1869, the Turkestan exhibition displayed stuffed animals, mineral specimens, costumes, and artifacts, as well as Vereshchagin’s sketches and paintings.”²⁵⁵ As interest grew in the conquest of Central Asia, which began in 1864 and nominally lasted through the conquest of Khiva in 1873, the gears of administrative colonialism began to move more quickly, adding a new vector to Russian administration, and new displays of bureaucratic excess.²⁵⁶

The unexpected route through the provincial backwaters of Russia, however, is informative and intentional. In the introduction and prelude to the series of stories, Saltykov lays out the rubric for understanding his terminology beyond its rather limited geographic scope, as invoking the larger conundrum of Russia’s political and social system.

Morals create a Tashkent in every place; there are moments in the life of a society when Tashkent violently knocks at each door and when it stands athwart the path through which everyone is obliged to pass. This is felt especially in those ages that we agree to call transitional. Maybe it is felt especially in these moments because along with Tashkent is born something akin to citizenship, something reminding man of the possibility of freely dictating his own movements...Slowly, Good Sirs! Slowly!²⁵⁷

254 Turkestan was the colonial name for the bulk of Russian Central Asia, including the colonial capital city of Tashkent, in modern-day Uzbekistan.

255 David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, *Russian Orientalism Asia in the Russian Mind from Peter the Great to the Emigration* (New Haven, Conn:Yale University Press, 2010), 82.

256 Helene Carrere D'encausse, *Islam and the Russian Empire: Reform and Revolution in Central Asia* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co., 1988), 36-37.

257 Saltykov-Shchedrin, X:28.

The exposure of the vicious realities of military administration and the humiliating vassaldom of the subject peoples is constantly deferred and, instead, redeployed to domestic spaces where inverted colonialism is frightening but not wholly unexpected by Saltykov's readership. He parodies the domineering, parsimonious nationalism of the conquering Russians, who attempt to justify colonial rapacity in the name of "civilization." The civilizing mission of the European colonizer was a theme popular in the literature of the day (sounding a note much like Rudyard Kipling's late-imperial "white man's burden"). The Russians, expanding East along the northern limits of British imperialism, were keen to adopt and adapt the successful themes of colonial expansion that reinforced the dominant themes of pro-Russian nationalism and opened rich and expansive basins of untapped natural resources and cheap labor to Russian industry.

As Saltykov points out, the civilizing mission is carried out by the Enlightener. But "Enlightener" is a loaded term in the colonial context.

A "Tashkenter" is an enlightener. An enlightener in general, an enlightener in every place no matter what may come; and therefore an enlightener, free from science, but not embarrassed by it since enlightenment, in his opinion, is made not for the dissemination, but for the constraint of science... A "Tashkenter" sees nothing but a bothersome quibble and says straight out that halting for such a pittance means to stumble and vainly waste valuable time. He has established a special type of enlightenment activity – an *illiterate enlightenment*, which does not enrich the enlightened with knowledge, but instead gives him a more comfortable habitational form, and only supplies him with a familiar scent. He who drinks his sherry "tres vieux" considers himself the enlightener of those who drinks their sherry only "vieux"; he,

who drinks his sherry “vieux” considers himself the enlightener of those who drink only spirits and vodka.²⁵⁸

The domestic Russian “enlightener” can be conveniently placed on this gradation.

The process of enlightenment in Russia was, for Saltykov, a troubling and tragic story. The educational situation in the provinces and rural districts, where he had served before his retirement from the Civil Service, was far from ideal. Education for non-gentry children lagged and the low literacy rates meant that, far from being a judgment on colonial ignorance, “illiterate enlightenment” was practiced in places much closer to St. Petersburg than Tashkent. For Saltykov, foppishly speaking of the hierarchy of enlightenment as a drink list meant assuming the idiom of a bureaucracy dangerously unhinged from the colonial realities confronting Russians in their own homes.

The conclusion of the first story, “Tashkenters-Civilizers,” displaces the colonial discourse of Tashkent and re-denominates provincial Russia.

I remember: I was riding...

I rode, I rode, I rode...

I rode.

More than likely, along the way I peeked into some passing district or another and...

Dear Lord!

There's some sorcery or other here. An evil sorcerer turned Riazan' District into Tashkent... Was it Ryazan or Tula?!

I remember: I was drinking...²⁵⁹

Once again, Saltykov revisits the enervating prospects of Russian distance; here the provinces are splayed out in linear fashion along the rail lines that, significantly, fail

258 Saltykov-Shchedrin, X:12.

259 Saltykov-Shchedrin, X:63.

to bind the provinces to the capital in any meaningful way, and instead serve only to flatten and monotonize the intervening space. The provinces become only an impediment between the metropolis and its ever-expanding frontier. Framing the home provinces of the Russian Empire as an undifferentiated expanse anticipates the colonial space of Tashkent. Significantly, like the railroad that dissects and re-arranges the superfluous provincial appendages, the language used to describe provincial and extra-territorial Russia flows from the center. The speaker's misidentification of and general apathy towards the provinces through which he travels demonstrate that they can be rearranged or re-ordered based on the proximal utility that each enclave represents for the enclave. Indeed, the disorienting language masks the bureaucratic metaphor that underlies the hilarity of missed connections and mistaken geography.

Additionally, the "magical" repositioning of Tashkent in the central Russian provinces transforms Russia itself into a colony, and, thus, into a space ruled by the sorts of carpetbaggers and ruthless colonial administrators in newly conquered Central Asia. However, the colonial distance and the official reliance on the blunt nationalist discourse of colonial 'mission' allow Saltykov to hide effectively in the Aesopian contours of his satirical exposé.

Exposing colonial excesses might have been an acceptable enterprise; it displaced inconvenient political discussions from the center to the periphery, recycled the overarching narrative of Russian power, and reminded Russian readers about colonial military and political victories. All of this could have allowed the censors to pass over the stories by taking Saltykov's protestations at face value: these

are stories of individual excesses, of a class of vagabonds acting beyond the bounds of their authority in a still lawless land. Each character was undone by character flaws and obliged to leave Russia (where such things are not acceptable) for the colonial chaos in Asian lands.

However, Saltykov suggests that his class of officials was not nearly so far away as the colonial frame suggests. He has inverted their course, littering the roads to the border crossings with compromised bureaucrats and businessmen, shabby gentlemen of fortune who are too drunk to make it to the frontier where fortune was to be had. Instead, they are left to terrorize the provincial Russian population. The metaphorical value of Tashkent and *Tashkentism* is bared quite early in the stories, both implicitly and, through the later inclusion of the explanatory key, explicitly. Saltykov, ever the effective journalist in his satire, refocuses readers' attention on the center. The 'colonial attitude', once broached, is shown to be the attitude *de jure* in Saint Petersburg and Moscow. Russia, Saltykov implies, is a country in the grips of colonial policy and suffering from a colonial mindset.

This idea, in fact, seems to presage a twentieth-century discussion of the political "cross wiring" of colonial empires: Hannah Arendt's concept of the "boomerang effect," the idea that the practices of colonial administration can "return to the mother country from the colonies if the violence against the "subject races" spread to the imperial nation."²⁶⁰ Alexander Etkind analyzes Saltykov's admission of this phenomenon. The violence that the Russian colonizers visited upon the subjugated

260 Alexander Etkind, *Internal Colonization: Russia's Imperial Experience* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2011), 23.

peoples of Central Asia (and, in a colonizing twist, upon Poland) is imported to the center of Russia. Etkind refers obliquely here to the story “Them” “Ony zhe,” which satirizes vigilantism in St. Petersburg after Karakozov’s 1866 assassination attempt upon the Tsar. Due to problems with the censorship, the story was printed after the initial serialization and under the title “Tashkenters Turned Inward” (*Tashkentsy, obrativshchesia vnutr’*). The story exposes the display of “colonial” excesses as a political expedient inside Russia. Etkind goes on to note that, “The long-standing traditions of violence and coercion with which the Russian Empire treated its own peasantry could explain the revolution and totalitarianism as a boomerang coming home to the cities, the capitals, and the state.”²⁶¹ The “boomerang effect,” while not yet a precursor of revolutionary terror, is exposed at the very root of the problem of Russian government. If in “Them” the government uses the emotional trigger of nationalism to activate patriotic sensibilities, then the story “The Third Parallel” examines the misleading official rhetoric of public service, and the dubious system of ranks by which the Russian state instills a sense of self worth in its people.

The story opens with young Misha Nagornov poring over maps of Kazan’ province, providing another key to understanding Saltykov’s attitude towards the bureaucracy.

Thanks to this state of affairs Misha quietly learned to look upon his parent’s apartment as if it were an extension of the official department, and at his father – as upon a walking shard of the department, and even upon himself as a child of the department. – “And soon, father, I will also go to the service” – he frequently intoned to Semen

261 Ibid., 24.

Prokofievich. – “There now, little one, do your lessons, and, God willing, you’ll get to the service! Together we’ll pull you through!” – “And will they give me a uniform?” – “A uniform, and a cross... everything just as with your Pappy! Just apply yourself and be of good morals, and the management will reward you!” Listening to such speeches, Misha redoubled his passions, and, never forgetting the department, crammed knowledge into his head in a state of exaltation: “The cities along the Volga are: Rzhev, Zubtsov, Staritsa, Tver’, Korcheva, and others.” – And what is special about the city of Laishev?” – his father would quiz him from time to time. – “Laishev is a provincial town of the Kazan’ District, it sits on the banks of the Volga, it has a cathedral and fisheries.” – “Well, and the city of Sviiazhsk, for example?” – “Sviiazhsk is a provincial town of the Kazan’ District, it sits at the convergence of the rivers Volga and Sviagi, it has a cathedral and fisheries.” – “And the city of Cheboksary?” – “Cheboksary is a provincial city of the Kazan District, it sits on the river Volga, it has a cathedral and fisheries.” “That’s enough, no? You’re really beginning to speak sense!” ... Finally, Vetlugi, Mtsenski and Novosili imprinted themselves into his brain with inerasable letters.”²⁶²

Misha Nagornov’s understanding of Russia and his schoolboy’s geographical vocabulary encompass several overlapping features of both colonial and bureaucratic discourse in the Russian empire. Misha Nagornov’s cartographic vision of Russia (one can imagine him poring over a map much like Boris Godunov’s daughter in Pushkin’s famous variation) links a supra-national vision of Russia that glories in the vast spaces and distances of the Russian empire and its great variety of languages and etymologies as proof of Russia’s hegemonic scope. Misha’s conception is also a bureaucratic-commercial vision that sees the map of Russia as a communications network, an administrative patchwork, or a commodity scale. In Misha’s mind, both of these varying lexicons have free rein and are freely combinable, as they capture both the colonial character of Russian geography and its bureaucratic domesticity.

262 Saltykov-Shchedrin, X:171-172. (For a comparison of the statistical coordinates that define the lands included in “Tashkent,” see Saltykov’s description in X:27).

city. Each place has a clearly definable administrative character (a “provincial center” - *uezdny gorod*), the modicum of civic institutions necessary to ‘claim’ the city for Russia and “civilization” (it has a cathedral), and the economic purpose that completes and defines the town for the distant center (and fisheries). This tendentious schema exposes the cognitive mapping of the bureaucrat as well as another point of coincidence between the colonial discourse of the “*Tashkentets-tsivilizator*” and the discourse that defines socio-political relationships in Russia.

The language is intentionally confused. Misha Nagornov maps the domestic space of Russia in colonial terms, bringing the terrifying space of “despotism” (*proizvol*) and Tashkent back to Russia -- affirming Saltykov’s clever sleight-of-hand at the end of the first story in the cycle; “An evil sorcerer turned Riazan’ District into Tashkent... Was it Ryazan or Tula?!” It can be argued that the point of Misha’s education and the entirety of his domestic life is contained in this spatial transformation: “Thanks to this state of affairs Misha quietly learned to look upon his parent’s apartment as if it were an extension of the official department.” The bureaucratization of Russia, a phenomenon that Saltykov witnesses first hand and which informs each of his bureaucratic stories, is the tale of the continual de-contextualization of space, the attempt by administrative means to erase distance and to subsume geography to the will of the administrative center. Together with the confusion of Russian space is the Orientalizing notion of Russia, as the scholar Katya Hokanson describes it:

Allied with this sense of Russia as an Asian or Oriental country beyond the discursive reach of Europe was the notion that its spaces were vast, empty, and undifferentiated, embodying a frightening lacuna of

meaning, culture, and history. It was as if Russia was made up almost entirely of periphery...²⁶³

The mixed language of patriarchy, domesticity, colonialism, and career at this moment in Saltykov's text is deeply evocative. Misha's father is consumed by his bureaucratic career to such an extent that the family nest has become the rocky outcropping of the bureau where it trails into the Neva and flows out towards the provinces and into the colonial distance. Semeon Nagornov himself is another such "splinter" (*oskolok*), an image that deftly evokes the indeterminacy of personality separated from a professional identity.

The subordination of the individual to the department is a repetition of the dominant imperial theme. The growing network of bureaucracy, propagated under the mantra of Nicholas I's ideologist Sergei Uvarov, "Autocracy, Orthodoxy, Nationality" (*Samoderzhavie, Pravoslavie, Narodnost*), saw the expansion of the empire as the extension of the autocrat's personal dominion, imagining (through the linguistic peculiarities of royal language) the citizenry of the empire not as definite legal entities, but as mere "children" (*dety*) of "the little father" (*batiushka*) Tsar. The language of enlightenment ennobling the colonial mission was replicated at every level of the imperial administration in Russia and in its colonial spaces. Misha Nagornov is the newest generational instantiation of an entire race of "children," "illiterate" and prostrate before the will of the autocrat.

263 Katya Hokanson, *Writing at Russia's Border* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 4.

Saltykov's collection of "etudes," written over a series of years during which other literary production often took precedence, was, at least on the surface, about the influx of unscrupulous schemers, soldiers, bureaucrats, merchants, and confidence men (the usual line-up of Saltykovian characters) into the newly-conquered territories of Central Asia. As we have seen, however, Saltykov quickly dispels this notion, writing in the introduction that the neologism, "Tashkenter," is merely another name for an ancient Russian devil. And yet, Saltykov faced another ancient Russian devil in publishing these stories. The censorship committee intervened frequently in Saltykov's literary affairs, delaying or striking the publication of many of his story cycles.²⁶⁴ One instrument, used in *Gospoda Tashkentsy*, as elsewhere, was the subtle use of Aesopian language to mislead the censors.

In *Gospoda Tashkentsy*, Saltykov refers to himself simply as a "collector" of the tales presented. That Saltykov should choose such a term to characterize his literary activities is, in itself, a clever Aesopian pose. Saltykov, as was generally known, participated in the reforms of the early 1860s, and, though out of government service by the time this volume of etudes was published, would still have been read as a source of information about the inner workings of the Russian administration. Saltykov wrote on such topics with a certain amount of professional authority, which incensed the victims of his satire and worried those who saw the rise of journalism as challenge to autocratic governance in Russia. Increasingly tied to the dis-

264 Ivan Goncharov described Saltykov's "secret-hand" (tainopis') as a fundamental part of his work in this period. Using "foreign expression, aesopian disguises of thought, and "figures and look-alikes" to wiggle past censors, Saltykov's success was uneven, at best, through the mid-1860s. Saltykov-Shchedrin, VI:564

affected elements of liberal and progressive journalism, and disillusioned with the increasingly reactionary tone of Alexander's administration, Saltykov went to lengths to ensure that his message would be received, even if in code.

Saltykov plays with these possibilities in a variety of creative ways. His works were notably Aesopian; the censors themselves openly described this tendency in Saltykov's work, for example, in an official document from the censorship committee written by Ivan Goncharov in 1864: "I remembered the article in "Our Public Life," so fantastic in its confusion, impenetrability, its opacity, clearly emanating from the desire of the author to say more than the censorship allowed."²⁶⁵ The author, however, does not parse the offending passages in *The Tashkenter's Clique*; no "key" (as Goncharov called it) is provided.

Parodying the career ambitions of the future "Tashkenets" Misha Nagornov, Saltykov "relays" the following monologue, "And such roads ahead! How many occasions for worry on this road at the head of which stands some sad court typist or judge's secretary."²⁶⁶ Saltykov includes a tongue-in-cheek footnote meant to clarify and disavow remarks that could be construed as disparaging. Saltykov writes, "The author includes a caveat: that the position of court bailiff and court secretary are very honorable positions – of this there is no doubt; therefore, if they have been presented as pathetic in any way, then this is not the point of view of the author, but that of Misha Nagornov. There is no basis for an accusation of defamation in case it

265 Ibid., VI:564.

266 Ibid., X:197.

should occur to anyone to prosecute Misha Nagornov.”²⁶⁷ This instance of using marginalia to clarify, a practice Saltykov very rarely saw as part of his authorial duty, and, in fact, more likely saw as an unnecessary hindrance to the project of publication in the face of strict censorship, is marked by his equally tongue-in-cheek characterization of his role as “collector.” The occasion of the footnote refocuses the author’s refusal to write for the censor, since a footnote itself is already an indication of the presence of alternative discourses within the text.

Here, Saltykov offers a rare moment of authorial directive in assigning intention and an interpretative key. This authorial directive comes ironically amid what is otherwise a fully orchestrated act of authorial denial of culpability. That such culpability was the author’s share, of course, went without saying, but the satirist’s rather boldly intricate deceptions of the censorship committee continue here in the form of an editorial game.

Saltykov’s satirical vision of Russian life masked a deep unease with the material from which he culled. Saltykov seemed to believe that the bureaucratic milieu that he scoured in his writing reflected the society that surrounded it. This may be why Saltykov’s geography became gradually loosened from its moorings in the capital city and the provincial centers and began to drift across the great eastern spaces of the Russian Empire. Even in a country so vast as Russia, common vices united the most distinct of peoples and groups, and for Saltykov, versed in the language and

267 Ibid.

manners of the Civil Service, the common denominator of Empire was the access to a common culture of iniquity. The “civilizing mission” that many in the capital praised so warmly was a mission to corrupt all equally and establish the common practices that constituted culture in the administrative state. This is what Saltykov seems to have in mind when he speaks of “illiterate enlightenment.”

However, among these common practices, and the one that Saltykov suffered from most directly, was the practice of censorship. He was exhausted by the struggle to cope with the temperament of government censors and the byzantine processes outlined first in the censorship code and then, after Censorship Reform, in the judicial procedures that replaced pre-publication censorship. Saltykov employed strenuous circumlocutions, devastating irony, and mischievous allegory, but these authorial tricks emphasized his belief in the failure of the bureaucratic administration to answer the needs of Russian life.

In the stories examined here, the philosophical movement of Saltykov’s career is on display. In creating the microcosm of Krutogorsk, Saltykov is able at once to confront his old demons and Russia’s, and to implicate the Russian bureaucrat in an allegorical representation of original sin. Arriving at the edge of domestic space, Saltykov transports his reader into a highly symbolic space that is both edenic and satanic. The Russian metropole is far from the Stygian banks of the provincial river and, in this mythological space, biblical motifs are intentionally misaligned and identities intentionally mistaken. The venal bureaucrat becomes the image of the Old Testament father and his children, the progenitors of Hebrew slavery. The colonial spaces of Tashkent, then, act as a truer mirror than the provinces, and the sins of the

homeland are not visited upon the colonies, but instead retraced on the heart of Russia. The bureaucratic theme in these stories speaks to a national life that has given rise to a separate language and a reconfigured reality that seems, at times, like the fantastical world that Saltykov constructed for his readers.

CONCLUSION

THE FATE OF THE BUREAUCRAT

In her study *How Russia Learned to Write: Literature and the Imperial Table of Ranks*, Irina Reyfman writes that “The diminished worth of rank for mid-nineteenth-century writers of noble status reflects both the gradual fading...of the Table of Ranks’ importance as a career tool and the new view of the value of writing versus that of service.”²⁶⁸ Beyond the unmistakable pull of professional attainment and the need to achieve rank and status in the class-bound conditions of Russia, however, another consideration existed for these authors; namely, the opportunity to write about those things denied them while serving in the bureaucracy.

Mikhail Saltykov eventually made a complete break with the service, and yet, most of his literary career was spent litigating issues that he encountered there. Besides the very real financial concerns that drove him from one fraught bureaucratic assignment to the next, Saltykov was constitutionally unable to separate his administrative career from his literary one, and his literary output during his service days seems to confirm that the bureaucracy was a source of inspiration, even if often-times perverse.

Alexander Nikitenko, too, demonstrated a commitment to the service that outlasted any enthusiasm for the administrative role that he occupied. However, Nikitenko seems to have felt that his participation in the censorship was a literary

268 Reyfman, *How Russia Learned to Write*, 173.

calling in itself. Nikitenko's censorship duties allowed him to engage with the literary issues of the day and to play a role in creating, if not the literature itself, then, at least, the printed material available to Russia's reading public. Nikitenko's obvious concern for the implementation of censorship regulations and their effect on the development of literature in the Empire indicates that, again, his conception of bureaucratic service extended beyond the securing of rank and privilege, and even beyond the exercise of appointed office.

For others, like Pisemsky, Aksakov, and Glinka, bureaucratic service was never more than a potential sinecure, but it was also a position that refracted their literary interests and focused their ambitions. For Pisemsky, both literature and the bureaucracy were fields that required not only creative ambition, but an ambition for wealth and power, a scenario he demonstrated in his most famous novel *One Thousand Souls*. For Glinka, the service provided the spark of righteous indignation that animated his temper and his pen. The anger and vituperation aimed against the establishment in his autobiographical account of his time in the censorship provides a marked rhetorical contrast to the enumeration of lost wages in his official requests to the Minister.

For those perspicacious enough to examine the life of the bureaucrat through a Gogolian lens, the daily experience of servicing the machinery of empire could provide a compelling literary perspective. In the mid-nineteenth century, when the period of coincidence between practicing authors and bureaucrats most likely attained its peak, responses to bureaucracy made a significant contribution to the development of Russian literature. The indelible character of the "little man" notwithstanding,

standing, the variety of bureaucrats populating literature meant that the reader of Russian literature could glean a varied and compelling perspective on the workings of the government from the capital down to the smallest administrative outpost. However, the view from the scrivener's stand or the vice-governor's desk was often not edifying. Some literary men, beyond documenting the annals of the bureaucracy and litigating the struggles of the bureaucrat in print, looked for ways to turn their dual profession to more practical account.

Towards the height of his career as a censor and during the last heady days of the Reform Era, Alexander Nikitenko made the following entry in his diary.

This entire rotting system of bureaucratic administration isn't worth a damn; but it can't be overturned at once, but, instead, must be whittled down here and there, so that it falls of its own weight.²⁶⁹

In a way, the work of the bureaucrats examined here was to whittle down the system, to soften its bluntest edges and insulate society from its most egregious excesses. The intellectual engagement with the bureaucratic structure that bureaucrats such as Nikitenko undertook was influential in small, but effective ways. Nikitenko oftentimes found himself alone in speaking for the interests of academics, authors, and intellectuals on bureaucratic committees tasked with monitoring and controlling literary and journalistic production. In this role, if his diaries are to be believed, he did what he could to minimize the administrative impact of politically expedient and hasty decisions.

269 Nikitenko, III: 164.

Saltykov-Shchedrin, in his way, also whittled. As Vice-Governor, he interested himself in the literary affairs of the various provinces to which he was dispatched, even going so far as to found a literary and ethnographic journal in Vyatka (it suffered from a chronic lack of literary contributors). His associations with errant reformers and intellectuals constantly undermined his position in St. Petersburg, and led to the final, hasty denouement with the Imperial bureaucracy. Writing about the faults of the bureaucracy while serving in the bureaucracy may have helped the cause of reform, but it did not endear him to his employers.

Writing about the bureaucracy from Pushkin onwards always implied an intricate dance with power. Writing scurrilous things about a high-ranking bureaucrat might satisfy writers' and readers' urge to express dissatisfaction with the order of hierarchy and power in Russia. But, to write such things while serving in the bureaucracy meant to offer the imprint of authenticity to popular expressions of dissatisfaction, and was thus potentially more dangerous than protests registered from those unaffiliated with the regime and its power structure.

Nikitenko's words, if not the sentiment expressed therein, proved prophetic. The system of bureaucratic administration was whittled down and did eventually fall, along with the monarchy that it served. And yet, the system that replaced it was no less bureaucratic, and, in fact, much more so. The Soviet system of governance relied on the same mechanisms of power that Nikitenko knew, and yet, the punitive extremes to which this system acceded would stagger the imagination of the most reactionary of Nicholas' gendarmes.

Yet, writing about bureaucrats always remained an option. In the latter days of the Russian Empire, the mantle of Gogol' and Saltykov-Shchedrin was taken up by authors such as Anton Chekhov, Fyodor Sollogub, and Andrei Bely, whose novel *Petersburg* is briefly discussed in this study. After the Revolution, the pace and intensity of bureaucratic representations increased with the darkly comic work of Evgenii Zamiatin, Yuriy Olesha, Mikhail Bulgakov, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Vladimir Voinovich, and others.

But, the era of the bureaucrat in literature had largely passed, as had the era of the literary bureaucracy, a phenomenon that arose in the protean institutional conditions of early nineteenth-century Russian literature. Alexander Nikitenko, Sergei Aksakov, Aleksey Pisemsky, Fyodor Tiutchev, and Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin could not have prevailed in the conditions of Soviet Russia.

APPENDIX

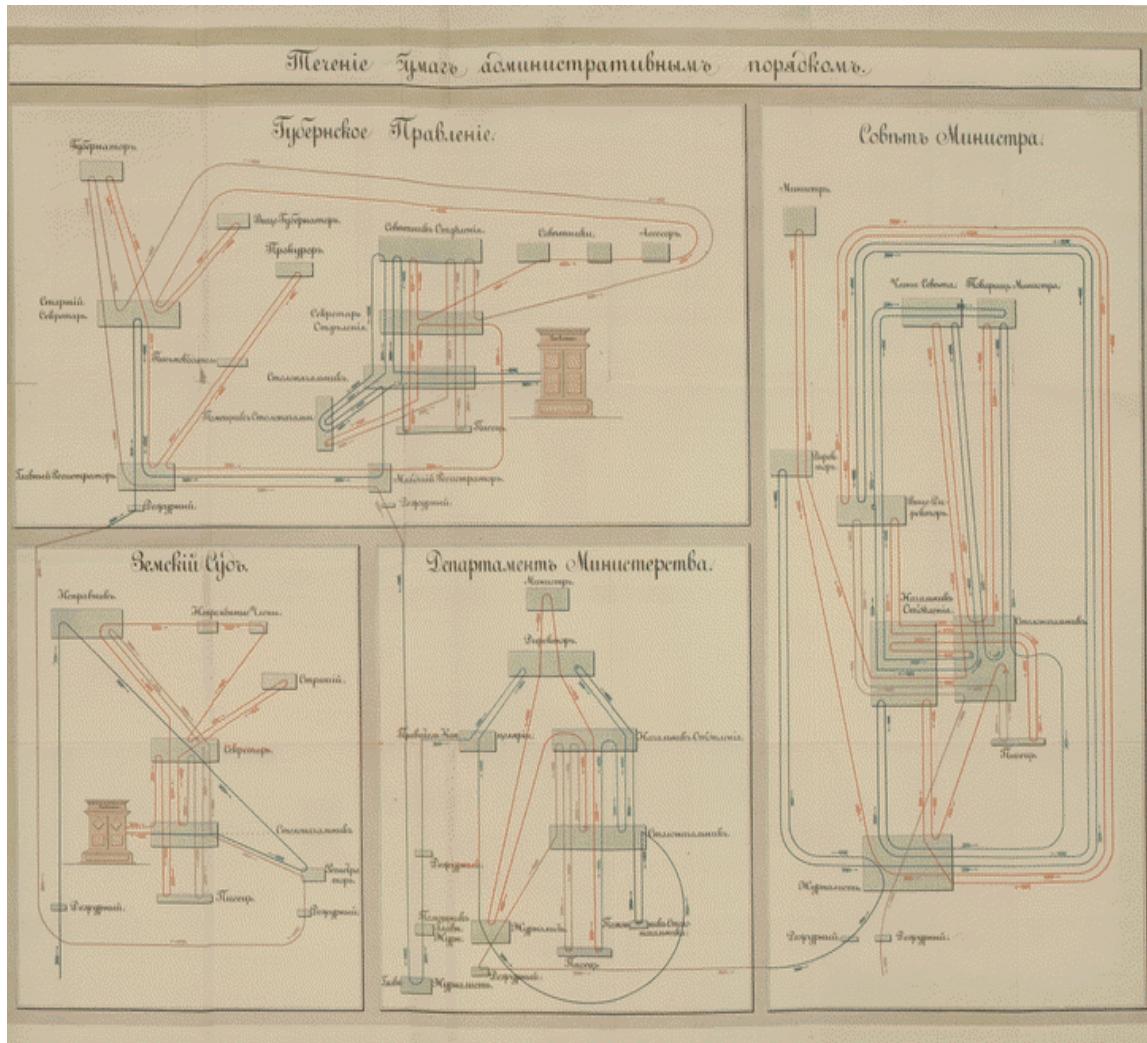


Figure 1: *The Flow of Documents in Administrative Order* (Tchenie bumag administrativnym poriadkom), in *Rukovodstvo Po Nagliadnomu Izucheniiu Administrativnogo Poriadka Tcheniiia Bumag v Rossii*. Moscow: tip. Katkova, 1858.
<http://www.knigafund.ru/books/34963>.

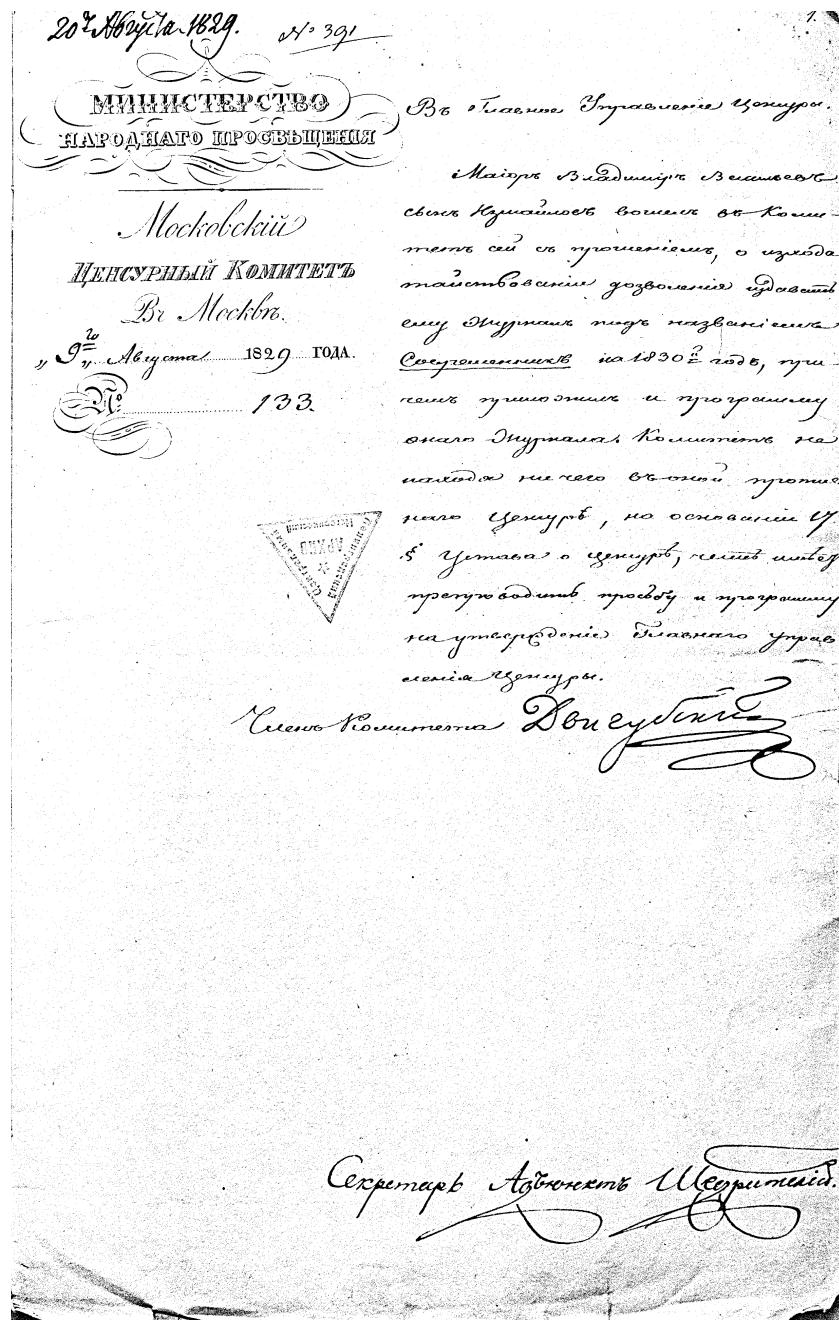


Figure 2: Archived Letter from the censor Ivan Dvigubskii to the author and censor Vladimir Izmailov. The letter indicates that the journal has passed the initial stage of censorship approval. This decision would later be overturned by the Minister of Education, Karl Lieven'. In [I. A.] Dvigubskii, "O dozvolenii Maioru Izmailovu izdavat' v Moskve Zhurnal pod nazvaniem Sovremennika: nachato 20. August 1829," Pis'mo v Glavnoe Upravlenie Tsentsury, 20 August 1829, 1:156, 1829, Delo 174, Fond 772, RGIA, St. Petersburg

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