RETHINKING ‘HISTORICAL MYSTICISM’
IN THE AGE OF RUSSIAN REALISM

by

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Abstract

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The events of the 1850s and the early 1860s, including the Emancipation of the serfs (1861) and the Millennium celebration of Russia (1862), became a turning point in the cultural relationship between educated society and the narod. Following a wave of disturbances in the Russian countryside at that time, some Russian intellectuals came to perceive the narod as a protagonist in the political, social and cultural life of the Empire. These disturbances also revealed the narod’s tendency to interpret historical developments through a certain mythological framework. This dissertation argues that the public attention to the narod in the aftermath of these events raised educated society’s awareness of the political attitudes and historical thinking of the narod expressed through its mythology. I discuss how historians, writers and journalists such as Sergei Solovyov, Daniil Mordovtsev, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin, Mikhail Pogodin, and Lev Tolstoy reimagined and redefined the narod through its penchant for mysticism. For these thinkers, understanding the narod, its beliefs and ideals, and how it conceptualized history became a prerequisite for shaping the image of the national and ideological nucleus of the Russian Empire.

Chapter I of this dissertation examines how, under which historical circumstances, and why the interest in popular mythology among educated society emerged in the two reform decades (the 1850s-1860s); what it revealed about the political views of the narod, and how politics shaped it; which specific aspects of it were frequently utilized
and discussed in the print media and to what end; and how a new debate with the concept of the *narod* and folk mysticism as its center of gravity evolved in Russia. Chapter II discusses Lev Tolstoy’s approach to folk mysticism in his novel *War and Peace*. I argue that the novelist makes a commune of peasants, whose actions and choices are driven by profound mythological beliefs, an agent of a single collective will. Chapter III demonstrates how in his *A History of a Town*, Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin problematizes mythological beliefs that inform collective behaviour of the *narod*, considering them to be a stumbling block for the *narod’s* own historical development and that of the country. Chapter IV discusses how the mythological framework of the narrative of *The Possessed* by Fyodor Dostoevsky absorbs a popular eschatological vision and becomes instrumental for the writer to express his social critique of modernity.

This study demonstrates how in their literary works, the three authors show the existence of the *narod* not on the cultural periphery of the Russian Empire, but within the socio-political landscape, linking the *narod’s* moral image to its sacred beliefs and ideals. At the same time I argue that each of them utilizes popular mythology as an allegorical language to communicate his social and political ideas.
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Introduction: Historical Mysticism and the Narod

The narod, a key concept in this dissertation, is among the words most frequently used in Russian journalism of the second half of the nineteenth century. The concept was crucial in nineteenth-century intellectual movements of Westernism (zapadnichestvo, an ideology stressing the importance of European values in Russian cultural development), Slavophilism (slavianofil’stvo in contrast emphasised the role of Russian exceptionality retained in traditional culture, religion, and values), and its later form of Pochvennichestvo (return to the soil movement). These intellectual camps assigned a special role to the narod in their nation-building agendas and had their own visions of the narod’s historical development. The frequent circulation in the press and Russian intellectual thought notwithstanding, there is hardly any other word in Russian language more elusive and obscure than the word “narod.” The emotional appeal investing the English, French and German counterparts of the word (“the people,” “le people,” “das Volk” respectively) also imbued the Russian concept particularly in romantic thought.\(^1\) This linked the “narod” with the idea of the nation, propagating a feeling of national superiority of Russian culture along with the sense of the country’s universal mission.\(^2\)

Post-romantic discourse needed to reconcile the abstract ideal with the concrete realities of Russian life and redefine the concept within social terms. As Derek Offord has observed, the social scope of the narod presented a challenge due to the lack of unanimity on which classes the narod included and which it excluded. I agree with Offord that it is easier to define the narod by what it is not rather than what it is. Therefore, the category

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\(^{2}\) The term was often used with the descriptor “Russian” (russkii narod) that would embrace various nationalities within the Empire. See Chapter 2 for the brief discussion of how Tolstoy used the phrase “Russkii narod” in *War and Peace*. 
of the *narod*, as it is used throughout this dissertation, excludes nobility, *raznochnytsya* (non-gentry intellectuals), clergy, intelligentsia, or any other professional or commercial elite or semi-elite. At the outset of modernisation prompted by Alexander II’s reforms and with public discussions of the Emancipation of the serfs and its importance in the life of the country, the term *narod* grew more and more to designate the peasantry. This identification grew even stronger with the rise of interest in peasant rebellions (*narodnye volneniiia*) in Russia. Scholarship and journalism discussing this issue throughout the 1860s used the term “*narod*” exclusively to refer to a collective image of peasantry. In literature, however, the *narod* was never reduced merely to the peasantry. Mid nineteenth century educated society (*obshchestvo*) defined the *narod* in broad conceptual terms, as characteristic of “rural Russia,” representing not a geographic locale but a symbol of a traditional way of life unaffected by modernity and European enlightenment. They saw Russian society as fragmented, and themselves as separated from the *narod*, but nevertheless longed for union with it. However, a rapprochement and “some kind of identification,” to use Cathy Frierson’s phrasing, was sought not so much with the

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3 In Tolstoy’s usage in *War and Peace*, the phrase “Russian *narod*” would include the nobility while “the *narod*” without the descriptor is usually synonymous to the word “*prostonarod’e*” (the common people, the peasantry, the muzhiks). Offord suggests that the range of meanings of the term was extended later in the nineteenth century to include “the common people” excluded in the early nineteenth-century lexicon. Offord 242-243. For a discussion of social classes in Russia see Hugh Seton-Watson, *The Decline of Imperial Russia: 1855-1914* (London: Methuen, 1960) 5-24. Nineteenth-century writers are not always in agreement about the definition of the term “*narod*” and use it with various shades of meaning. For this reason, I will define the specific way each major writer in this study uses it.

peasantry per se as with this abstract image of traditional and authentic Russia.\(^5\) The further the rapport was sought, the more obvious the split became between the educated Russia and the *narod*. The sense of separation was particularly manifest and exacerbated by a disparate perception and experience of modernity.

The Emancipation was supposed to eliminate the last legacy of the ancient culture, but instead it became a traumatic time for the *narod*, whose conditions were not improved, contrary to their expectations. The *narod* comprehended events through a certain mythological framework, and its symbols and interpretations were deeply rooted in the ancient culture. Popular response to the Emancipation was, in a way, similar to that produced among the *narod* and Old Believers to the Petrine Reforms that set Russia on the path of Westernization at the beginning of the eighteenth century in the sense that this response revealed a tendency to interpret the socio-political transformations symbolically, translating new experiences into the language of various myths. The contrast in conceptualization of modernity in the educated society and the *narod* calls to mind Ernst Bloch’s concept of “non-synchronicity” or “nonsynchronous contradictions.” The concept draws attention to the discrepancies between experience and expectations and points to the coexistence of various temporal realities, both archaic and present moments.\(^6\) Although Bloch developed his idea of “non-synchronicity” to describe the uneven development of Germany, it is relevant in the discussion of the contradictions within the Russian society in the mid-nineteenth century.

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“Non-synchronicity” in Russia was manifested through the persistence among the narod of the conventions rooted in the past and their resistance to change. Anxiety and aspirations mingled with a certain eschatological vision of earlier epochs defined for the narod the “now” of the late 1850s and early 1860s. Aleksandr Ostrovsky artistically captures the ambivalence in experiencing modernity in his play “The Storm” (Groza) (1859) through a wanderer named Feklusha. Although the character is not characterized in a positive light and becomes an object of the author’s critique for being a propagator of superstitious thinking, Ostrovsky uses her to demonstrate that mythologizing comprises an important medium for the narod to come to terms with changing reality. City life was a strange and unfamiliar world for the overwhelming majority of the Russian population before Alexander II’s reforms. Attendant industrialisation drew much of the rural population into the city. Naturally, the carriers of knowledge of this outside world were often pilgrims and wanderers as Ostrovsky’s play illustrates. For centuries they enjoyed certain authority and respect among commoners, but the message they spread was affected by their own interpretation. Their stories would often become an oral narrative that absorbed and transfigured external reality. Ostrovsky’s fictional town of Kalinov, with a name invested with folkloric associations, may be read as a metaphor for Russia steeped in traditional culture. It comprises an enclosed space, distant from big cities, progress, and, in a way, outside of historical time. The writer artistically depicts resistance to part with the old world as well as nostalgia for the patriarchal ways that were, in a general perception, coming to an end. Feklusha narrates modernity through apocalyptic imagery. She lets it be known that the “end times” (poslednie vremena) have begun and all signs of them are exhibited in the city of Moscow where she came from, a
new Sodom, a symbolic locus of debauchery, turmoil and vanity. In the wanderer’s storytelling, the train, a nineteenth century innovation in Russia that became a symbolic divide between the old traditional way of life and the new industrial reality, becomes a fiery serpent (*ognennoi zmii*) inhabiting Russia. Since tradition generally resists modernity, Feklusha perceives the latter as a sign of the end. Through the apocalyptic nature of her tale, Ostrovsky captures the *narod’s* attitudes on the eve of the reforms and exposed the tension in their emotional response to progress.

As Norman Cohn, one of the most prominent scholars of millenarianism, states, apocalyptic attitudes and anticipations were commonplace in Europe and were particularly manifest during certain crises, but more so towards the end of a century.\(^7\) In Russia too, they were exacerbated at the turn of the seventeenth century with the Religious schism and the Reforms of Peter the Great. A large body of Old Believers’ literature and mythology with the central conviction of the “Kingdom of the Antichrist” being at hand or realized was produced at that time. A new wave of apocalyptic expectations appeared in the late eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century when the Napoleonic campaign shook the map of Europe and the Russian Empire. Apocalyptic attitudes were then common not exclusively among the *narod* and sectarians, but also in educated circles. Likewise, the end of the nineteenth century witnessed a revival of similar attitudes in the intellectual and popular culture prompted both by a sense of the end of the century as well as by social and political crises in connection with the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5 and the revolution of 1905. In the middle of the nineteenth century, however, a similar sense of the end was strongly perceived. The

Emancipation, the next most important step towards modernization after the Petrine Reforms, became a borderline between the old and the new, between the past and the present. This symbolic temporality was also reinforced by the one-thousandth anniversary of Russia (tysiacheletie Rossii) in 1862, a somewhat misleading term, marking one thousand years since the origins of Rus under the Riurik dynasty.

Hence the history of Russia has witnessed the spread of eschatological outlook and utilization of apocalyptically-coloured rhetoric across various cultural groups. Russian intellectuals appropriated a language invested with biblical allusions in their discussion of the overall meaning of the Emancipation and the one-thousandth anniversary of Russia in the journalism of the time and tended to view these events as a climactic point in history, as the beginning of the “new era,” a new millennium of the Empire.8 Mythological language of the early 1860s was inseparable from the aura of celebration of the approaching New Kingdom.

Russian radical youth of the late 1850s and early 1860s used apocalyptic mythology differently. In 1854 and 1855 there was a great amount of tension in the Russian countryside that found an outlet through a number of minor peasant disturbances. Students pinned much hope for colossal socio-political transformation on a large-scale peasant upheaval and anticipated it in 1856. For the purpose of instigating such a revolt, they produced broadsheets and pamphlets spreading the message of the approaching

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Apocalypse and circulated them in the countryside. As Victoria Frede has observed, the radical elite presented the impending revolution as “the Apocalypse, a day of reckoning on which evildoers would be destroyed and the Russian people saved,” “old, corrupt society would be swept away,” and the establishment of heaven on earth would follow. The students’ propaganda found no support in the countryside. In 1862, there was a wave of peasant uprisings. Two major cases occurred in Bezdna (Kazan province) and Kandeevka (Penza province). Although the disturbances there were fuelled by apocalyptic expectations of the narod, the radical youth played no part in instigating them. Popular discontent never turned into a large-scale revolution contrary to the anticipations of the radicals. Nevertheless, apocalyptic rhetoric continued to fashion revolutionary propaganda later on among students at Kazan University, who sympathized with the peasants killed in Bezdna. Again, the Russian countryside was not receptive to the propaganda of the students. The fact that the peasantry, generally susceptible to apocalyptic attitudes, did not respond to the rhetoric of the students suggests that popular eschatology and that of educated society were essentially distinctly different, and the message of the latter conflicted with the ideals and anticipations of the narod.

The wave of disturbances of the late 1850s and early 1860s marked the physical presence of the narod in the political life of the country and raised awareness of it within educated circles. The interest in the narod reached new heights in the years of the Crimean War (1853-56) within the cultural debates that took a social and political turn,

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10 Frede, “Atheism and Apocalypse” 153, 156.
11 Frede 153.
and was primarily encouraged by Alexander II’s aspiration to abolish serfdom. This dissertation argues that within the context of popular uprisings of the 1850s—1860s there occurred a shift of interest among historians, journalists, and writers towards the Russian narod, its system of beliefs and convictions, and its moral existence within the socio-political landscape of the Russian Empire. To understand the nature of this shift, an overview of earlier developments in the discourse surrounding the narod in the literature of that time is necessary.

An interest in the life of the narod and its beliefs proliferated in Russia thanks to the activity of ethnographers. A number of scholarly expeditions to the Russian provinces took place in late eighteenth century as well as in the 1850s and 1860s. Ethnographic inquiry led to the appearance of a large corpus of collected folklore, among which were Petr Kireevsky’s collection of Russian folk songs (published posthumously by Petr Bessonov from 1862 throughout 1874), Vladimir Dal’s collection of proverbs and sayings of the Russian people (1862), Alexander Afanasev’s collection of Russian fairy-tales (1855-1864) and his collection of Russian folk legends (1859), and Bessonov’s collection of spiritual verses known as “Kaliki perekhozhie” (1861-64) among others. The works produced as a result of the collection of the folklore materials were intended to describe the folk, their world-outlook and their way of life. This activity contributed considerably to the predominance of positive characteristics and poetic representation of

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12 Frierson 7; Offord 249.
13 Ethnography as a scholarly discipline was shaped at the end of eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century. The Russian Geographical Society, founded in 1845, greatly contributed to the study of folklore along with the Academy of Science and the Society of History and Russian Antiquities at Moscow University. For a discussion of the ethnographic school in Russian literature see A.N. Pypin, Istoriia russkoi etnografii (Sankt-Peterburg: Tipografiia M.M. Stasiulevicha, 1891). Volume 2 focuses on a discussion of nineteenth-century developments in the area of Russian ethnography. Also see A.L. Fokeev, Etnograficheskoe napravlenie v russkom literaturnom protsesse XIX veka: istoki, tendentsii, tipologii (Moskva: “Narodnyi uchitel’”, 2012).
the *narod* in literature. Ivan Turgenev’s *A Hunter’s Sketches* (*Zapiski okhotnika*) published in 1852 as well as Nikolai Leskov’s oeuvre illustrate this kind of portrayal. The *narod* in their works is often the carrier of innate moral values, and the depiction of its beliefs is usually tinted with sentimental undertones. For example, such is the literary representation of the folk beliefs in Turgenev’s story “Bezhin Meadow” (“Bezhin lug”). Having lost his way, the hunter finds a group of five boys and joins them at a campfire. Through a depiction of the conversation among the boys, Turgenev acquaints the reader with peasant superstitions, legends and folk beliefs about Trishka (the Antichrist to come), water nymphs, the living dead, and those marked to die.\(^\text{14}\) Turgenev represents these as the product of creativity and vivid folk imagination indicative of a particular poetic perception of reality among the *narod* not shared by the hunter’s educated milieu.

A different representation of the *narod* appeared in mid-nineteenth century Russian literature. With the escalation of revolutionary attitudes in the 1850s, the ethnographic sketches acquired socio-political underpinnings.\(^\text{15}\) According to Alexander Fokeev, a scholar of the ethnographic school, Nikolai Uspensky’s works signalled a break from the traditional romantic representation of the *narod* to a realistic one.\(^\text{16}\) Writers such as Nikolai Pomialovsky, Fyodor Reshetnikov, Vasily Sleptsov, Alexander Levitov, Gleb Uspensky, Sergei Maksimov, and Pavel Iakushkin sought to explore and expose the conditions of life of the *narod* on the eve and after the Emancipation. The works of these writers are often satirical. Popular myths and beliefs have their exotic

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\(^{15}\) According to Fedorov, during 1858-1860 there were 330 instances of peasant insurrection, that is, around 110 cases each year – an increasing number if compared to the statistics from the preceding fifty-seven years when the average of fourteen instances occurred annually. See V. Fedorov, *Krestianskoe dvizhenie v tsentral’noi Rossi: 1800-1860. Po materialam tsentral’no-promyshlennykh gubernii* (M.: izd-vo moskovskogo universiteta, 1980) 125.

\(^{16}\) Fokeev 114.
characteristics torn away and are used to demonstrate the superstitious character and backwardness of the narod.17

The events of the late 1850s and early 1860s became a turning point in the cultural relationship between the educated society and the narod. While the earlier scholarly ethnographic expeditions were sent to the Russian peripheries to bring back knowledge of the narod and its beliefs, the disturbances in response to the Emancipation as well as to earlier unrest in the last years of the Crimean War put the narod and concomitantly certain images and beliefs into the spotlight. Thus, what earlier had been perceived as an apolitical commune on whose behalf educated society was ready to speak, now appeared as a politically conscious actor capable of protesting the new socio-political conditions. The narod could no longer be seen, to quote Derek Offord, as “an organic community, an apolitical, moral utopia inhabited by the conservative, communal, peaceable Russian common people and permeated with the Orthodox Christian values.”18 It also became apparent that it had a certain vision of history that fused Orthodox ideals with other mystical beliefs, to which it resorted to make sense of socio-political developments, and of which the educated society lacked knowledge. Hence popular mysticism, which fuelled the unrest of the masses and turned out to be more effective

17 These two kinds of representation of the narod are consistent with the classification that Offord has proposed. According to him, in nineteenth-century Russian literature there emerged positive and negative representations of the narod. In the positive representation, the narod is respected and venerated; the qualities that are emphasized are “innate goodness, sound judgment, devotion to an ancient, autochthonous way of life, communality and aversion to private property and material things.” In the negative one, the narod is viewed as an “indeterminate, backward mass” that will progress when the “intelligentsia has brought to them from the outside the enlightenment that it has discovered in the west.” Offord has argued that these two representations “follow the lines laid down in the 1840s and 1850s by the Slavophiles and Westernisers respectively.” See Offord, “The People” 256. For a discussion of the raznochintsy-writer’s depiction of the narod outside the “pre-emancipation idealization” see also Rose Glickman, “An Alternative View of the Peasantry: the Raznochintsy Writers of the 1860s,” Slavic Review 32:4 (December 1973): 693-704. For a discussion of the depiction of the peasantry in the ethnographic sketch see Frierson 26-27.

18 Offord 245-246.
than the revolutionary propaganda, could no longer be discarded merely as superstitions and required closer examination.

Daniil Mordovtsev coined the term “historical mysticism” in his article on popular disturbances, in which he suggested that the narod tended to apply a certain mythological framework to make sense of history, and this mysticism often incited and informed the narod’s engagement in the political life of the Empire. This dissertation examines this concept in detail. My argument rests on the premise that the historical mysticism of the narod comprised an eschatological vision that absorbed various myths and beliefs and synthesized religious, sectarian, and folkloric ideals, which made it unique. I limit my inquiry only to the myths through which the narod was perceived as a politically conscious community. Hence my primary focus lies on the construction of knowledge and image of the narod by the intellectuals outside the romantic prism that characterized the Slavophiles as well as outside the thought of the Westernizers, who viewed it as an unenlightened mass, whose level of civilization had to be elevated by the educated elite.

The turn to the political mythology of the narod emerged concurrently with the other two main developments that characterized the decade of Alexander II’s rule. First, there was an increased interest in Russian historiography. The defeat in the Crimean War intensified the sense of Russia’s backwardness and the need to engage with the question of the prospects of the country’s historical development. Understanding the path Russia was taking required revisiting the past, and Alexander II’s policies allowed more room

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20 For the discussion of the Slavophiles’ and Westernizers’ conception of the people, see Offord 243-249; Frierson 102-104; Seton-Watson 22-24.
for the openness of expression than was ever possible under Nikolaean absolutism. The memory of recent disturbances in the countryside led to an inquiry into the history of Russia marked by major popular uprisings and into the role of the narod in them. Second, within the context of the Polish Uprising of 1863-64 and other ethnic unrest in the provinces, the need appeared to strengthen the image of a centralized Empire. Political mythology was utilized for this purpose. Olga Maiorova has demonstrated that nation-building projects heavily relied on mythologizing, and some key historical myths, such as the tale of the spiritual birth of the nation and the legend of the founding of Russia, were refashioned in line with nationalistic rhetoric. Appropriation of these key historical narratives, Maiorova has argued, helped Russian intellectuals set new parameters to rediscover a “national nexus.”

My dissertation argues that the interest in political mythologizing of the narod also arose within the intellectual project of nation-building. Offord has claimed that Russian nationalism (of a cultural rather than of a political variety) found expression in a more positive conception of the narod that helped the Russian intellectuals construct a sense of identity for their young nation and to formulate a role for their own social group within it. I contend that it also gave rise to a different, new, and more complex conception of the narod that cannot be categorized merely as positive or negative. This kind of representation also pertains to the construction of national identity but shifts the emphasis from educated society to the narod and the


22 Offord 256-57. Frierson has also maintained that “getting to know the peasant” was a process of “cultural self-definition.” Frierson 8.
formulation of the *narod’s* role in Russia’s historical development.\(^{23}\) Like Donald Fanger and Offord, I maintain that the *narod* as a subject of literature explicates more about educated society than about the *narod* itself.\(^{24}\) Therefore I am not concerned with accuracy of the representation of the *narod*, but rather with an intellectual attempt of some writers to understand the *narod* through its political mythology and how these writers utilize certain aspects of it in their historiosophic projects. My discussion centers on Lev Tolstoy and his *War and Peace* (*Voïna i mir*), Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin and his *A History of a Town* (*Istoriiia odnogo goroda*), and Fyodor Dostoevsky and his *The Possessed* (*Besy*). These works demonstrate their authors’ attempt to find logic behind popular mysticism, which was often discarded by many as the product of an uneducated mind.

The difference in their approach can be illustrated by the contrast in Ostrovsky’s literary representation of the train in “The Storm” and Tolstoy’s reasoning about the *narod’s* perception of railroads. Like Ostrovsky, Tolstoy captures the *narod’s* resistance to progress; however, while the former draws attention to the fact of “non-synchronicity” in the popular conception of reality, the latter attempts to rationalize it. Ostrovsky conveys his own sense and critique of the unsophisticated nature of the *narod* by placing Feklusha’s apocalyptic vision of the “fiery serpent” along with her story about a place

\(^{23}\) The intellectual process of redefining Russian national identity in the reform-era took shape as an alternative to the official ideology proposed by Uvarov, the minister of education from 1833-1849, as a conceptualized triad “Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality.”

\(^{24}\) Donald Fanger, “The Peasant in Literature” in *The Peasant in Nineteenth-Century Russia*, Ed. Wayne S. Vucinich (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968) 232-3. Offord applies Fanger’s thesis more broadly to the corpus of Russian thought, and likewise argues that the Russian *narod* constituted “a construct fashioned in the minds of the intelligentsia” rather than a clearly definable social entity. According to him, this construct was necessary for “defining the identity and mission of Russia as a nation.” Offord also states that this construct in the writings of many writers reflected a certain anxiety about the dangers of social fragmentation in the wake of Russian westernization and attendant industrialization and urbanization. Offord 241.
inhabited by dog-headed people. An imagined mythologized world is taken for granted by the locals. Ostrovsky uses Feklusha to stress the need to educate the narod. Unlike Ostrovsky, Tolstoy rationally explains the inconvenience progress entails for the masses and hence their hostility to the railroads. According to him, the welfare of the narod (the fertility of the soil, an increase in herds of cattle, an increase in the quality of grain, an increase in working power, an increase in woods and pasture) is directly affected by the railroads, and the benefits they provide are incommensurate with the disadvantages they inflict (railroads destroys woods, draw away labourers, raise the price of grain, etc.). In selected novels, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Saltykov-Shchedrin take a similar approach. They seek the logic behind the actions and beliefs of the narod, or invest it with reasoning. They all are in agreement that the logic that governs the inner life and choices of the narod is inaccessible to educated society due to the lengthy separation of these two groups. Although each of them envisions the development of the country differently, they all imbue particular importance to the narod’s role in it and treat popular mysticism as a unique feature that helps understand the narod.

In nineteenth-century Russian literature, a gallery of characters supposed to embody the collective image of the Russian narod appeared, including Dmitry Grigorovich’s peasant Anton Goremyka in “Anton Goremyka” (1847), Gerasim in Ivan Turgenev’s Mumu (1854), Platon Karataev in War and Peace, Marei in Dostoevsky’s “The Peasant Marei” (Muzhik Marei) (1876), Gerasim in Tolstoy’s later work The Death of Ivan Illich (Smert’ Ivana Il’icha) (1886). My inquiry does not focus on the literary depiction of individual characters as representative of the narod, but on the narod as it

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functions as a single organism.\textsuperscript{26} Since the historical mysticism of the \textit{narod} comprises a complex eschatological vision, naturally, eschatological and apocalyptic motifs enter the narrative of \textit{War and Peace}, \textit{A History of a Town}, and \textit{The Possessed}, and are an important subject for my analysis.

Apocalyptic myth is not uncommon in Russian literature. The Romantic writers frequently utilized images, symbols and themes from Revelations in their works to speculate about the path and role of Russia within the larger European context. The most prominent works include Aleksandr Pushkin’s “The Bronze Horseman” (\textit{Mednyi vsadnik}), Gogol’s \textit{Dead Souls (Mertvye dushi)}, “The Portrait” (\textit{Portret}), and “A Terrible Vengeance” (\textit{Strashnaia mest’}). At the end of the nineteenth century, Russian Symbolists such as Dmitry Merezhkovsky, Alexander Blok, Andrei Bely, and Vladimir Solovyov drew on the legacy of Romantic writers and produced a large body of literature that made use of the myth of end time. In the second half of the nineteenth century, there is also a turn to a symbolic narrative within Realist literature prompted by the general perception of the importance of the historic moment for the country. \textit{The Shape of Apocalypse in Modern Russian Fiction} by David Bethea – by far the most extensive study of the Russian apocalyptic novel – successfully demonstrates how the biblical plot is reworked in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Russian fiction.\textsuperscript{27} Although apocalyptic mysticism and related mythology are at core of my dissertation, it is not my objective to show how high culture recasts the myth or its elements to construct, complicate or embellish the storyline. Instead of looking into myth and its variants as a product of elitist culture, I am

\textsuperscript{26} For a discussion of the artistic representation of the common people, scholarly writings about the peasants commune, the relationship with land-owners, etc. see Offord’s chapter, particularly pp. 252-253.

interested how high culture responded to and absorbed elements of political mythology of the *narod*.

Chapter I of this dissertation discusses the historical context of the 1850s and 1860s that placed the question of the *narod* in the spotlight with the purpose of tracing the circumstances that provoked an interest among educated Russians in popular mythology as an expression of the *narod*’s political attitudes. I argue that a new social debate with the concept of the *narod* and folk mysticism as its center of gravity evolved in the aftermath of two key events in the life of the Empire – unrest in the countryside in reaction to the promulgation of the Emancipation manifesto of the Tsar and the subsequent celebration of the Millennium of Russia. To secure social stability and to avoid the spread of anti-governmental attitudes within the less stable ethnically-diverse borders of the Empire, the Millennial celebration aimed at cementing a conception of the monarchy that emphasized the exclusive nature of the relationship between the Tsar and the *narod*. Public discussions of this triggered an interest in reexamining the popular myth of the Tsar. The popular conception of monarchy comprises an ideological nucleus in the thematic framework of the novels by Dostoevsky and Saltykov-Shchedrin and is essential for Tolstoy’s discussion of the village commune in *War and Peace*. The writers’ individual understanding of this concept informs their historical thought as presented in their novels. The myth of the Tsar is just one aspect of the historical mysticism of the *narod* and is linked to other beliefs such as the Tsar-Pretender, often conceptualized as the Antichrist within the popular eschatological vision, and the Tsar-Redeemer/Deliverer. This associated mythology also enters the three novels, providing common ground for analysis. In addition, the novels indicate that their authors were rethinking and
responding to the events discussed through their artistic utilization of popular mythology. Therefore, the discussion of the popular vision of history and monarchy expressed through myth in this chapter provides a conceptual frame of reference on which my analysis of each work in the subsequent chapters relies.

Chapter II discusses folk mysticism as the expression of the narod’s collective thinking in Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*. My investigation focuses on the peasants of Bogucharovo, the carriers of this mysticism, whose actions and choices Tolstoy connects to their mythological beliefs. The Bogucharovians’ beliefs are revealed through the scene of rebellion during the Napoleonic war. I explore how Tolstoy makes use of the memories of popular disturbances at the beginning of the century to reflect on unrest in the countryside during the early 1860s and its meaning and implications for the national integrity of the Empire, as well as on the nature of the much-debated relationship between the Tsar and the narod. 28

While the Bogucharovians’ political mythology in *War and Peace* provides a key to Tolstoy’s vision of the role and participation of the narod in history and their conception of monarchy, Saltykov-Shchedrin considers historical mysticism of the narod to be a stumbling block in its and Russia’s historical development. The writer’s problematization of core popular myths in his work *A History of Town* is addressed in Chapter III. Unlike Tolstoy, who avoids rationalizing popular beliefs, Saltykov explores the reasons for the persistence of certain myths among the narod that affect its decision-making process and collective behaviour in the political life of the country. His literary

28 Maiorova has argued that during the reform era and especially after the Polish Uprising of 1863-64 a “cult of popular war” developed that led to the utilization of martial memories within the Russian nationalist project of state-building, and that the memories of 1812 were frequently used to consolidate the state. She contends that Tolstoy utilizes war as a “means of national self-definition.” Maiorova “Literary Representation of the Nation at War: From Apocalyptic Battle to Beehive,” *From the Shadow of Empire* 95-96, 130.
work suggests that the writer envisioned the successful development of civil society in Russia as contingent upon the narod rejecting mysticism as a particular form of cultural knowledge and embracing enlightenment that repudiates traditional structures.

While Tolstoy makes use of popular mysticism and Saltykov makes it an object of his critical investigation, Dostoevsky elaborates his own historical mysticism with the Russian narod at the center. Chapter IV explores how the narrative of Dostoyevsky’s novel The Possessed absorbs popular eschatological and apocalyptic beliefs, and how this mythological framework helps the writer construct a critique of modernity and shape his own historiosophic thought pertaining to Russia’s future. Fascination with apocalyptic lore in the Russian cultural context is part of a shift back towards traditional beliefs about the special role and destiny of Russia. This chapter places Dostoevsky’s nationalistic historiography in the context of the discourse of apocalyptic pan-Slavism and Russia’s redemptive role in world history.

In the writings by Tolstoy, Saltykov-Shchedrin, and Dostoevsky, the narod reappropriate the role of a protagonist in history. The authors show the existence of the narod not on Russia’s peripheries, but within the socio-political landscape of the Russian empire, linking the moral image of the narod to its sacred beliefs and ideals. Their works draw attention to a mystical world outlook as a form of the narod’s historical knowledge and thinking. At the same time, all three authors make use of myth as an allegorical language to communicate their social and political ideas.

My dissertation integrates knowledge from various scholarly disciplines such as literature, cultural studies, history, journalism, and folklore. My discussion of literary texts relies heavily on the analysis of various sources, among which are the authors’ notes.
to the novels where available, their correspondence, diary entries, and their journalistic pieces. I believe that my research will contribute to a better understanding of the development of post-emancipation Russian literature, particularly the way in which literature and journalism merged to create a new post-Romantic syncretism of mythology and ideology at the dawn of the era of reform.

In the body of my dissertation, I use traditional English spelling of well-known Russian names (e.g. Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Herzen, Solovyov). I follow a modified Library of Congress transliteration system. Russian last names ending in –ский are rendered by the commonly accepted English –sky rather than –skii throughout (e.g. Chernyshevsky instead of Chernyshevskii). Russian first names ending in –ий are rendered by –y (e.g. Dmitry instead of Dmitrii). I do not use the Russian soft sign in English renderings of Russian names. The standard Library of Congress transliteration system is used in the bibliographical references. Unless otherwise indicated, translations from the Russian are my own.
Chapter 1: A Superstitious Protagonist of History

This chapter traces the growth of educated society’s awareness of the Russian narod in the second half of the 1850s and throughout the 1860s. Interest in the narod and its place in the political, social and cultural life of imperial Russia was sparked in the context of the following events: the defeat of Russia in the Crimean War (1853-56), the public discussion of the Emancipation of the serfs (1861) and its importance for the country’s development, popular disturbances in response to the promulgation of the Tsar’s manifesto of Emancipation (1861), the celebration of the Millennium of Russia (1862), and the Polish Uprising (1863-64). I argue that within this timeframe a new cultural debate emerged that aimed to re-examine the question of the narod and its place in post-reform Russia. I position its genesis during the Millennial celebration. The public discussion of the event in the press revealed a lack of understanding of the narod and hence fostered the need to redefine it in light of earlier events (both more recent and distant) that marked its active presence in the life of the country. This line of inquiry prompted some journalists and historians to look into the political mythology of the narod as part of its historical thinking. The aim of this chapter is twofold. First, I will delineate the development of the debate to establish the circumstances and causes that generated an interest in the political mythology of the narod in post-emancipation Russia. Second, I will discuss aspects of this mythology that aided certain commentators in redefining the narod.

1. The Millennial Kingdom and the Narod

The celebration of Russia’s anniversary took place in Novgorod on September 8, 1862. It was planned as a performance for the narod to commemorate and once again
revisit the legend of the summoning of the three Varangian princes to rule over the people of Rus. To reenact the symbolic arrival of Riurik, Alexander II came to Novgorod by sailing along the river Volkhov. The audience of this performance was primarily the *narod*. The purpose was to remind it of its humble nature, devotion to the authorities and acceptance of autocracy as an expression of its own will. This was particularly necessary to alleviate social tension bred by recent disturbances in the countryside following the Emancipation. The celebration also provided Alexander II with an opportunity to distance himself from the legacy of his father Nikolai I and to promote his own self-image as a good Tsar-emancipator.¹ As Maiorova has put it, the festivities were intended “to instil a vision of the reform era that offered an antidote to the crises of insecurity and inspired hope for the nation’s further development.”²

The most important focal point of the celebration was the Millennium monument. It was conceived as a visual and concise history of Russia that illuminated and illustrated the most significant moments in the country’s development. Through its historical narrative, carefully selected and invested with new ideological semantics, it attempted to reconcile the political and cultural spheres and cement the nexus of the monarchy and the *narod* (Fig. 1).³ The rulers who were honoured with a spot on the monument were carefully chosen, and through the memory of their reforming actions, together they

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¹ Nikolai I was one of the most reactionary Russian monarchs. His rule was characterized by militancy, bureaucracy, censorship, oppression, and persecution of any expression of liberal and revolutionary ideas. According to Wortman, Alexander redefined the legacy of his father and presented emancipation as the realization of Nikolai’s intentions. See Wortman 59.
² Maiorova 63. For the discussion of the celebration of the Millennium see also Wortman 78-80.
³ I agree with Maiorova that the Millennial celebration was used to redefine the relationship between the tsar and the *narod*. Maiorova 58-91.
conveyed a sense of both progress and continuity. The monument was also populated with other figures who contributed to the development of the country. These included

Figure 1. Millennium Monument, Novgorod. Design by M. O. Mikeshin, 1862. (Picture by Vladimir Eshtokin)

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4 The monument commemorated six events from Russian history: the founding of Rus’ (862), the adoption of Christianity (989), the battle of Kulikovo (1380), the founding of the Russian state under Ivan III, the election of Mikhail Romanov (1613) as Tsar to end the Time of Troubles, and the founding of the empire under Peter the Great. Wortman 80; Maiorova 64.
saints and leaders of the church, statesmen, heroes, writers, and artists, both loyal to the official ideology as well as those who were in opposition to autocracy. The project intended to convey the idea of wholeness and create a new image of the Empire that, especially after the defeat in the Crimean War, was perceived as fragmented. The Emancipation was celebrated as a logical and historically necessary achievement that marked the end of the Millennium and the beginning of a new era. It represented the message central to the festivities about an amicable bond between the monarch and the narod, whose interests he served. However, the project had one great drawback that a few contemporaries noticed. It was conceived as a panegyric to the autocratic regime in the fashion of Nikholai Karamzin’s History of the Russian State (Istoriia gosudarstva rossiiskogo) and showed the history of Russia from the point of view of the state and not the narod. Therefore, what was intended for the narod failed to include it, which made the possibility of visually rehabilitating and strengthening the bond between the monarch and his subjects problematic. The absence of the narod from Russian history in fact and as presented on the monument served only to intensify the rupture that the monument and the scenario of the celebration intended to repair.

The millennial project provoked a wave of critical responses. Even before the actual event, after the official approval of the monument project, two articles appeared on the subject in the Russian thick journal The Russian Messenger (Russkii vestnik): “One of the Building Projects of a Monument to the Millennium of Russia” (“Odin iz proektov dlia pamiatnika tysiacheletiiu Rossii”) and “Two More Words about the Building Project of a Monument to the Millennium of Russia” (“Eshche dva slova o proekte pamiatnika

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5 Maiorova 66-67.
Both articles complained that the project excluded the narod. In his “Petersburg Life. Notes by a New Poet” (“Peterburgskaia zhizn’. Zametki novogo poeta”), Russian writer, literary critic and journalist I.I. Panaev (1812-1862) agreed with the two articles from The Russian Messenger. In his book My Leisure (Moi dosugi), philologist and folklorist Fedor Buslaev (1818-1898) wrote that the monument honoured not the narod, but the state. According to him, the idea behind a project of this scale was to function as a book for the illiterate, the way mural painting inside cathedrals and bas-relief outside replaced the Bible and saints’ lives (vitae) for people in the Middle Ages. Only when the artist expressed his ideas in a way that the audience could understand, “the granite and bronze would cease to be a dead mass (mertvaia massa) for the narod.”

For Buslaev, the monument did not convey the idea of nationality (narodnost’). This was clear from the selection of figures and the way they were represented. The narod’s ideas about Russia’s past retained primarily in oral tradition were in conflict with the official narrative of the new monument. Ivan the Terrible, for instance, so important in the collective historical memory preserved in byliny, was not even included in the project.

The way some figures were represented also did not correspond to the way the narod visualized them. This rendered the narod’s visual recognition impossible and created a “Babylonian confusion of Russian personae.”

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6 The first article appeared in Russkii vestnik No. 11 from 1859 (pp.156-163); the second in No. 2 from 1860 (pp. 157-162).
9 Maiorova suggests that Ivan the Terrible’s exclusion from the monument and from the ceremonies intended to present him as an antithesis to Alexander and his reign, defined by Wortman as a “scenario of love.” See Maiorova 70.
10 For example, Antony and Feodosy Pechersky, Sergy Radonezhsky, Mikhail Tverskoi and Aleksandr Nevsky appeared on the monument without halos, and hence, according to Buslaev, the narod would not recognize them. Buslaev 467.
The Slavophile Ivan Aksakov (1823-1886) responded in similar terms in his article “On the Occasion of the Commemoration of the Millennium of Russia” (“Po povodu prazdnovaniia tysiacheletiia Rossii”) that appeared in the newspaper The Day (Den’) on September 8, 1862. Aksakov viewed the celebration as an act of the state’s self-glorification that was not contained within the national framework of values. He claimed that the Russian people (prostonarodnaia Rossiia), whose life was defined by the “unbreakable historical succession of the narod’s spirit” (nepreryvnoe istorichesko preemstvo narodnogo dukha) was not familiar with “archaeological calculations” (ne vedet nashikh arkheologicheskikh vychislenii) and had no concern for “the Western sentimentality of jubilee celebrations” (ne prichastna zapadnoi iubileinoi sentimental’nosti).\(^{11}\) The millennial celebration, according to him, in its conception and actualization excluded the narod. Aksakov was among the first to suggest that the narod had its own idea and understanding of Russian history, and without knowing its perception of it, there could be no understanding of the narod. Hence, contrary to intention, the millennial celebration intensified the sense of social fragmentation, while providing at the same time a productive public discussion about the narod and its conceptualization of history.\(^{12}\) This discussion remained central throughout the sixties.

As a logical extension of Buslaev’s observation about the lack of correspondence of the historical figures on the monument with popular heroes, there emerged an interest

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\(^{12}\) The idiom of the nation of one organism was very popular at the time. Aksakov himself uses it to bring home the idea that Peter the Great disrupted the wholeness of social organism by means of “persecuting the people’s historical memory” that was preserved and transmitted within the walls of monasteries. See Aksavov, “Po povodu prazdnovaniia tysiacheletiia Rossii” 4. For the discussion of the idea of the “state as an organism” and its origins, see Andrei Zorin, Kormia dvuglavogo orla... Literatura i gosudarstvennaia ideologiiia v Rossii v poslednei treti XVIII- pervoi treti XIX veka (Moskva: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2001) 354-355.
in a number of individuals who had been left in the shadow or censured in the official historical sources and whom the narod respected. This signalled an important shift of focus among educated society to a version of Russian history from the narod’s point of view. Among popular subjects covered by historians were popular rebellions in Russia (bunty na Rusi) and their leaders.\(^{13}\) One of the most productive scholars to study this topic was Daniil Mordvitsev (1830-1905), a Russian and Ukrainian writer and historian. His works include “Pugachev” (1867), “One of the False Konstantins” (“Odin iz Lzhe-Konstantinov”; 1869), “Who was the Suppressor of the Pugachev Rebellion,” (“Kto byl usmiritelem Pugachevshchiny”; 1869), “The Haidamak Uprisings” (“Gaidamachchina”; 1870), and “The Political Movements of the Russian People” (“Politicheskie dvizheniia russkogo naroda”; 1871), a novel False Dmitry (“Lzhedmitry”; 1879). Scholarly interest in Russian popular uprisings was to a great extent due to the anticipation of a large-scale peasant war since the time of the last years of the Crimean War and throughout the 1860s. In fact, the discussions of Pugachev and pugachevshchina (the Pugachev Rebellion) emerged within the context of the Crimean War, and both were invested with an explosive power that agitated the minds of the landed gentry and ruling circles alike.\(^{14}\) Mikhail Pogodin (1800-1875), a Russian historian and journalist with a Slavophile inclination, was one of the first in the fifties to explore the phenomenon of Pugachev within the framework of popular beliefs. Already in 1854, he wrote the following.

Mirabeau is of no threat to us, but Emelka Pugachev is. Ledru-Rollin with all his communists will find no followers here in Russia, but every village will be agape with astonishment (razinet rot liubaia derevnia) before Nikita Pustosviat. No one

\(^{13}\) I discuss this topic in detail in Chapter II on Tolstoy.

\(^{14}\) Emelian Pugachev (1742-1775) was a pretender to the Russian throne, who proclaimed himself Emperor Peter III and led a major Cossack insurrection during the reign of Catherine the Great.
will ever side with Mazzini, but let Stepka Razin just issue a call (*lish’ klikni klich’*)! That’s where our revolution is, that’s where the danger is, that’s where our wall is vulnerable. So stop obsessing with the western wall, which is almost entirely solid, and start repairing the eastern wall, which is falling unnoticed, threatening a complete collapse!¹⁵

The passage draws attention to a rich gallery of popular leaders who enjoyed immense popularity among the *narod* and were able to stir its rebellious spirit. The legacy of Pugachev and Razin was especially threatening to the regime of their time. Pogodin juxtaposes the danger these kinds of figures present to the stability of the regime with the spirit of western revolutions much feared (unreasonably so, in Pogodin’s view) in educated circles.

Alexander Herzen (1812-1870), the Russian writer, political thinker and advocate of agrarian populism, likewise conceived a revolution in Russia along these lines but he, unlike Pogodin, hoped for it to happen in Russia. In his letter to Mazzini back in 1850, he wrote: “I don’t believe in any form of revolution in Russia other than peasant war.” Herzen envisioned the future revolution either as a religious war of peasants-sectarians or

¹⁵ This passage alludes to the disturbances in the countryside happening in 1854. They are discussed in the Introduction. Honoré Gabriel Riqueti, comte de Mirabeau (1749–1791) was a French revolutionary and politician who during the French revolution (1789-1799) advocated constitutional monarchy. Alexandre Auguste Ledru-Rollin (1807-1874) was a French politician and active participant in the French revolution of 1848. Nikita Pustosviat (real name Nikita Dobrynin) (?-1683) was one of the influential leaders of Old Believers during the Schism in the mid-17th century. He was named Pustosviat (literally “empty saint” in Russian) by the supporters of the official church under Patriarch Nikon. Pustosviat was a member of the group known as “the Circle of Pious Zealots.” Mazzini (1805-1872) was an Italian politician, journalist and activist, who promoted the idea of popular democracy. Stepan (Stenka) Razin (1630-1671) was a leader of a major Cossack and peasant uprising in Southeastern Russia in 1670-1671 against the nobility and bureaucracy. M. P. Pogodin, “O vliianii vneshnei politiki na vnutrenniiu,“ *Istoriko-politicheskie pis’ma i zapiski v prodolzhenii Krymskoi voiny: 1853-1856* (Moskva: Tipografiia V.N. Frish, 1874) 262-263.
as a new *pugachevshchina*. When Herzen wrote his letter, a decade before the manifesto of the Tsar, for him, a peasant war would be justified if it led to Emancipation: “the Pugachev Rebellion … would be dreadful, but in all honesty, if the Emancipation of the serfs cannot be gained otherwise, then it is still not that high of a cost. Atrocious crimes drag behind them atrocious consequences (*strashnye prestupleniia vlekut za soboi strashnye posledstviia*)”17. Ironically, the rhetoric of *pugachevshchina* became only stronger in post-Emancipation Russia. It was likely the main reason behind the bloodshed in two most infamous cases of nineteenth-century peasant disturbances. To a great extent, the millennial festivities wished to rectify the social trauma left after these events.

*i. Emancipated Countryside*

According to some sources, more than 1,300 cases of peasant disturbances were reported in the first five months of 1861, mostly in March, April and May.18 The government was well aware of the fact that the terms of Emancipation did not satisfy the peasants’ expectations and installed armed troops all over the empire to prevent disturbances. However, for the most part, the reaction, contrary to the anticipation of the government, was neither violent nor unified. In most cases, it consisted of a refusal to continue to work for the landed gentry on account of the belief that Emancipation abolished *barshchina* (forced labor). Partly because of the confusing language in the manifesto and the statute as well as the fact that the terms were unsatisfactory, a rumor circulated in the *narod* that the manifesto was false and that the landed gentry (*pomeschchiki*) had suppressed the true document. Peasants believed that the Tsar had

16 I.A. Elsberg, *Hertsen: zhizn’ i tvorchestvo* (Moskva: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1963), 386. Giuseppe Mazzini (1805 – 1872) was an Italian politician, journalist and activist who promoted the idea of popular democracy.
given them “complete freedom” and therefore they were susceptible to the influence of individuals who interpreted the meaning of the Emancipation by capitalizing on this belief.

The need for making sense of the social transformation underway created fertile soil for “prophetic figures.” In the provinces where such individuals appeared, the unrest followed a different scenario. The most famous case is known as the “Bezdna Affair,” named after a village in Kazan province. Confused as to the actual meaning of the manifesto, locals invited a sectarian Anton Petrov to interpret the document. Petrov claimed that the Tsar had given “complete freedom” to the narod back in 1858, encouraged them to stop working for their landlords, and declared that most of the land belonged to peasants with the exception of one-fourth of it that remained in the possession of their former masters. Around four thousand peasants gathered in Bezdna and more came every day to listen to Petrov. On April 12, troops were sent to deal with the unrest. The peasants refused to surrender their leader, thereby provoking armed intervention. A large number of peasants were killed at the scene and many more were injured.  

There was a controversy about the exact number of peasants killed in Bezdna. Different reports gave different numbers, from 51 to more than 100 killed, and from 77 to more than 350 wounded. See the detailed discussion of the discrepancy in D. Field, “Bezdna,” Rebels in the Name of the Tsar (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1976) 31-111. The most important reports discussing the Bezdna affair are collected in Krest’ianskoe dvizhenie v 1861 godu posle otmeny krest’ionogo prava (doneseniia svitsikh generalov i fligel’-ad’iutantov, guvern’ialnikh prokurorov i uezdnikh striapchikh), red. N.M. Druzhinin (Moskva: Izd-vo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1949). They are the following: “Raport #1 general-maiora A.S. Aprak’sina Aleksandru II iz s. Bezdnogo Spasskogo u. o volneniakh krestian v Spasskom u. i o rasstrel’i ikh v s. Bezdnom” (66-69); “Sententsiia voenno-sudnoi komissii po delu krest’ianina s. Bezdnogo Spasskogo u. Antona Petrova” (70-71); “Raport #2 general-maiora grafa A.S. Aprak’sina Aleksandru II iz s. Bezdnogo Spasskogo u. ob ispolnenii prigovora nad Antonom Petrovym, s dopolnitel’nymi svedeniiami o volneniakh krest’ian v Spasskom u.” (71-73); “Telegramma general-ad’iutanta I.G. Bibikova Aleksandru II iz Kazani o volneniakh krest’ian v imenii Kozina v Laishevskom u.” (73-74); “Raport #3 general-maiora grafa A.S. Aprak’sina Aleksandru II iz Kazani o panikhide po Antone Petrove i o vliianii ee na nastroenie krest’ian” (75). Aprak’s report #1 was also published in Hertzen’s newspaper Kolokol (The Bell) from 1862: 1031-1034; and his report #2 also in Kolokol from 1862: 1042-1043. Field also includes memoirs from F.A.
The second instance of popular unrest and bloodshed happened in the village of Kandeevka in Penza province on April 18. Approximately ten thousand peasants, declaring “we will die for God and the Tsar,” clashed with government troops. They refused to disperse and return to their work. 8 peasants died at the scene, 27 were wounded and 410 arrested. The “Kandeevka affair” also had its leader, a sectarian Leonty Egortsev, who, like Anton Petrov, enjoyed immense popular support.

The account of the two cases of disturbances does not seem to justify the punitive measures taken to supress them and the excessive bloodshed resulted. The approval of these measures by Tsar Alexander II who, to use Wortman’s terminology, fashioned his rule as a “scenario of love” also raises questions. “The specter of Pugachev,” to use Terence Emmons’s phrase, and apprehension about a peasant war appear the only feasible explanation to account for the military violence.

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Polovtsov, a government military adjutant, entitled “Sem’desiat let tomu nazad” written to his brother. He witnessed the events in Bezdna; and he was the one who provided Herzen’s The Bell with a copy of Apraksin’s report. See Field, “Bezdna” 49-57.


21 In his report to Alexander II, a major general A.M. Dreniakin wrote about Egortsev’s popularity. “Raport #21 general-maiora A.M. Dreniakina Aleksandru II iz Penzy” 145-146. Among the other instigators that the report mentions were a retired soldier Elizarov and a priest Fedor Pomerantsev. Elizarov’s fascinating biography offers political reasoning for his involvement in the affair. According to “Spisok ostatnykh i otpusknykh nizhnikh chinov, podvergnutykh nakazaniam za uchastie v krestianskom dvizhenii v Penzenskoi gubernii, sostavlenyi general-maiorom A.M. Dreniakiny,” Andrei Semenov Elizarov was 72, retired private (riadovoi) who participated in the campaign against the French and Polish insurgents and he was decorated for vziatie Parizha in 1814 and Warsaw in 1831. See Krest’ianskoe dvizhenie v 1861 godu posle otmeny krepostnogo prava 152.

22 Alexander approved the way Apraksin handled the situation in Bezdna and decorated the officer upon his return.

23 Emmons, “The Peasant and the Emancipation” 59. In his letter to the owner of the estate, Krylov calls the peasant reaction “pugachevshchina” a few times. See “Pismo upravljauschego imeni A.P. Ermolovoi v s. Murase Spasskogo u. N.A. Krylova vladelitsy imeniia o volneniakh krest’ian v Spasskom u. i rasstrele ikh v s. Bezdn,” Krest’ianskoe dvizhenie v 1861 godu posle otmeny krepostnogo prava 63. Krylov’s letter is valuable as it is not an official account and is not written for the review of the authorities; it includes detailed observations of the situation in Bezdna over the period of five days as well as description of the peasants’ moods and attitudes.
Despite the liberal character of Alexander’s rule, it was impossible to openly discuss the Bezdna and Kandeevka affairs in the press. However, some commentators found an indirect means to talk about them. A discussion of peasant disturbances in Kiev province in 1855 that came to be known as “Kievskie volneniia” (the Kievan disturbances) is one such example. The development of the unrest there followed a similar logic as the Bezdna and Kandeevka’s affairs. Likewise, the “agitation of the peasants’ minds” in Kiev Province started with rumor about volia (freedom). The manifesto of January 29, 1855 on the summoning of a national militia (*O prizvanii k gosudarstvennomu opolcheniiu*) at the outbreak of the Crimean War was perceived as if enlisting as Cossacks would automatically give peasants their freedom. Peasants all over Kiev Province refused to do their duties and pay taxes, and were convinced that when they became Cossacks, all the land of the gentry would belong to them. Similarly to the scenario in Bezdna and Kandeevka, on a smaller scale though, order was restored by armed forces.  

The unrest was smaller than in Bezdna or Kandeevka and never became a taboo topic in the press. However, it was never discussed until 1863, the year of the Polish Uprising. The article by a Captain Gromeka, a participant in the events, appeared in the April issue of the thick journal *The Notes of the Fatherland (Otechestvennye zapiski)* and

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24 In the village Bykova-Greblia, around 700 peasants gathered in protest. Armed troops were eventually brought in to disperse the mob. Five peasants died at the scene and four were wounded. The village Bykova-Greblia was not an isolated case. Another conflict between peasants and armed troops occurred in the village of Bereznoi; according to the report of governor-general I.I. Vasilchikov to the Secretary of the Interior, it involved 3000 peasants, 20 of whom were killed and 40 – wounded. One more report mentions disturbances involving 4000 peasants who gathered in Korsun; here 11 peasants died and 13 wounded. See *Krestianskoe dvizhenie vRossii v 1850-1856 gg.: sbornik dokumentov*, red. S.B. Okun’ (M.: Izd-vo sotsial’no-ekonomicheskoi literatury, 1962) 485-500. Also, *Otmena krepotnogo prava na Ukrainy: sbornik dokumentov i materialov* (Kiev: Izdatel’stvo Akademii Nauk Ukrainskoi SSR) 66-67.
later as a separate brochure.\textsuperscript{25} Gromeka gives a detailed account of the events in a few villages where unrest took place. In it the peasants are presented in a positive light. To emphasize their non-violent nature, Gromeka repeatedly mentions that they even bolted the tavern doors shut and abstained from alcohol during the time of the unrest. He claims that not a single case was reported of landlords harmed or unprotected property ravaged (if landlords chose to leave their estates temporarily). He concludes that the riot was not directed against landlords or caused by outside instigators – a popular opinion among some officials to account for the events. According to Gromeka, the conflict occurred as a result of a “naïve misunderstanding” of the January manifesto. He links the cause of this misunderstanding to the rumor that started in the village Fediukovo. After the priest read the manifesto on the summoning of a national militia to the people, the sexton (\textit{d'iachok}) Slatvinsky assured the people that the wrong manifesto had been read to them, and that there was a different manifesto on “summoning the \textit{narod} to enlist as Cossacks and promising complete freedom (\textit{polnaia volia}) to the enlisted.”\textsuperscript{26} Supposedly, Slavinsky showed the people a copy of this manifesto, assuring that the original document had “four golden seals” and said “freedom to peasants” (\textit{voliu krest’ianam}) on it. Gromeka clarifies that the document Slavinsky was showing came from the church archive and was a copy of a manifesto on “summoning the militia in Russia” from 1806. Slavinsky’s promise of freedom came from his incorrect interpretation of wording in this document.\textsuperscript{27} Therefore, the \textit{narod} believed that the manifesto of 1855 was fake, and that the Tsar could not send


\textsuperscript{26} Gromeka 20.

\textsuperscript{27} According to Gromeka, the document of 1806 never gave a promise of freedom to the serfs but expressed a hope for freedom of the country as a common effort of all Russian people. Gromeka 20-21.
the army to hurt his own people who wished to take an oath (priniat’ kliatvu) and die for him, and that it was not even the royal army but disguised Poles and Jews (pereodetye liakhi i zhidy). To sum up, the peasants in Kiev province refused to work for their masters (without showing them disrespect) because they all wanted to enlist as Cossacks and “to serve the Tsar to the last drop of their blood” (sluzhit’ tsariu do poslednei kapli krovi). Gromeka argued that Kievskie volneniiia testified to the loyal attitudes of the “southern narod” to the Tsar and hostility towards revolutionaries and Polish gentry. The conclusions, therefore, were written in line with the official ideology of the millennial celebration.

The appearance of Gromeka’s article provided an opportunity for Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin to enter into a public debate with Gromeka on the nature of peasant disturbances and express his own stand and at the same time that of The Notes of the Fatherland on the topic. Saltykov pointed out in his review of Gromeka’s piece that the author did not approach the subject dispassionately as a historian and, therefore, ultimately failed to reconcile his conclusions with the logic of the events he described. According to the satirist, the facts about the peasants’ dissatisfaction with their situation, their shared hostility towards the ruling elite (ekonomicheskie elity), and rumors about their belief in a different manifesto suggest socio-political reasons contrary to those proposed by Gromeka. In his review, Saltykov problematized the nature of Russian narodnost’ (nationality/the national spirit/the national ethos), which became a heated topic in discussions of the Polish rebellion. Besides, he undermined the dynamics of the

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28 Gromeka 20-22.
Tsar’s relations with the narod extolled in the Millennial festivities and suggested that the narod’s motivations and logic behind each case of disturbances need to be thoroughly examined.

Mordovtsev’s “One of the False Konstantins” is one of the most insightful and objective attempts at explaining the narod and the dynamics of relationship between it and the Tsar in the 1860s within the context of bunty na Rusi. Mordovtsev suggests that historical thinking of the narod is expressed through certain mythical beliefs, the “historical mysticism” of the people. These beliefs become apparent in the study of various cases of popular disturbances that show the narod’s recurring patterns of behaviour in response to social transformation. Although Mordovtsev’s discussion centers on the unrest in the countryside in the first half of the nineteenth century, he suggests that similar logic can bee seen at work during the post-emancipation disturbances. Some of his ideas help illuminate certain political myths of the narod that framed the unrest in Bezdna.

II. Symbolic Narrative in Bezdna

Irina Paperno has argued that the Emancipation was perceived as a symbolic event by the narod and educated society alike; and the Bezdna episode demonstrated how myth was played out in concrete actions and how cultural symbolism worked as a driving force of history.30 The effectiveness of the mythological framework within which the events unfolded was to a certain extent prepared by the ruling class’s positioning of the Emancipation as an event of mystical significance. The government intentionally invested it with religious symbolism, hoping that it would ease the tension and dissatisfaction with the actual terms of the Emancipation and possibly prevent popular

30 Paperno 417-436.
disturbances. For this reason the promulgation of the manifesto was delayed until Lent. The reading of the manifesto to peasants took place in the months of March and April and was done by local priests from church pulpits. The text of the manifesto was written by Metropolitan Filaret in archaic language and using church rhetoric that obscured the meaning of the document, allowing various interpretations.

Anton Petrov claimed that he discovered true freedom (istinnaia volia) in the text of the “Statute” and couched the reading of the manifesto within the framework of an apocalyptic battle.\(^{31}\) The narrative of the Apocalypse goes back to Old Believers’ mythology that since the schism of the seventeenth century had inseparably linked the state and the Tsar with the rule of the Antichrist. The clash between the forces of good (Christ) and evil (Antichrist/Satan) is at the core of the apocalyptic drama. Throughout the eighteenth century and likewise in the nineteenth century, messengers from the Tsar (landed gentry and government officials) were seen as imposters who spread the false manifesto, a forged document that conceals from the narod the fact of true emancipation.\(^{32}\) In a popular revision of the apocalyptic myth, the Tsar was dissociated from the forces of evil; he was rather seen as a Christ-like figure, the carrier of the principle of a higher truth (istina) and freedom. The apocalyptic myth in Bezdna gave a new symbolic meaning to the clash of the narod with the authorities and enabled interpreting it as an act of reclamation of true freedom in the name of the Tsar.

Afanasy Shchapov (1830-1876), a Russian historian and a scholar of the Old Belief, provided a valuable explanation of certain aspects of apocalyptic folk mythology. According to him, in the collective memory of the narod their enslavement was linked

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\(^{31}\) The actual manifesto accompanied seventeen legislative acts that were called Statutes Concerning Peasants Leaving Serf Dependence (Polozhenie o krest’ianakh vykhodiashchikh iz krepostnoi zavisimosti).

\(^{32}\) Paperno 429.
with the advent of the Antichrist associated with the schism and the reforms of Peter the Great. Henceforth, the narod envisioned the phenomenon of serfdom as “the ownership of souls” and the idea of freedom (volia) appeared as their “redemption” from the power of the Antichrist/devil and, at the same time, as “resurrection.”

Petrov’s apocalyptic rhetoric granted legitimacy to violent actions against pomeshchiki (“Should he enter your land, turn him out with a good word, should he disobey – lop off his head (ne poslushalsia – seki emu golovu), you’ll be rewarded by the Tsar (poluchish’ ot tsaria nagradu)).” At the same time it served to justify the upcoming bloodshed by dignifying death for a true Christian cause (“Should they threaten you with the army, don’t be afraid, no one will dare to hurt the Orthodox folk without a Tsarist order. And if the gentry bribes soldiers into shooting you, then you should also chop up those Tsarist transgressors with axes (rubite toporami tekh tsarkikh osludhnikov)).” According to Krylov’s recollections that are preserved in his letter, Petrov in a prophetic manner maintained that true emancipation would be acquired through sacrifice: “True freedom will not be achieved until much Christian blood is spilt (istinnaia volia do tekh por ne daetsia, poka ne prol’etsia mnogo krovi khristianskoi).” The mythological framework made the death of the unarmed peasants in Bezdna and “the sacrifice” of Petrov seem meaningful. By considering Anton Petrov to be a saint and a prophet, and the dead peasants to be martyrs, the collective mind translated the tragedy of bloodshed into a necessary sacrifice. Of course, this collective response was to a great

33 Paperno 423.
34 Krylov 63.
35 Krylov 63.
36 Krylov 63.
37 “They consider Anton to be a saint and the dead to be martyrs.” Krylov 65. The image of Petrov as a martyr was also construed in the press. In his comments that appeared in The Bell, Herzen fashions Anton Petrov as a peasant holy martyr. See Paperno 434.
extent intensified and justified by the funeral mass for the peasant victims organized by students of Kazan University and the Theological Academy, at which Shchapov delivered a speech dedicated to the victims of the Bezdna uprising.38

Immediately after the suppression of the rebellion and after the execution of its main instigator, Anton Petrov became depersonalized and mythologized. According to rumors that circulated right after his death, the narod was anticipating his resurrection. It was said there was a light above his grave and an angel in white clothes.39 Boris Kolonitsky has pointed out that scholars tend to disregard rumors as a phenomenon, prioritizing rather “the real events,” and in his book he successfully rehabilitates their value in socio-political life of the country at the dawn of WWI.40 Likewise, rumors around the time of the Emancipation give a good sense of the narod’s response to social and political changes. At the same time, they play an important role in the collective process of mythmaking and in the formation of the narod’s historical memory. Leaders on the left such as N. Chernyshevsky, N. Nekrasov, M. Saltykov, and N. Dobroliubov warned against treating and disregarding rumors (narodnye tolki) as a product of the uneducated illiterate peasantry and viewed them as an expression of the narod’s voice. Herzen and Ogarev considered rumors to be an accurate barometer of popular attitudes, an indicator of a crisis that the narod was collectively attempting to resolve by partaking

38 Shchapov’s speech delivered during the procession became a cultural text of incredible significance and played a major role in post-emancipation revolutionary rhetoric. He was persecuted by the authorities for it. For the speech and analyses of it, see Paperno 431 – 434. Paperno points out that Shchapov’s reading of the events brought together the symbolic conceptualizations of the events of the uprising both by the narod and by educated society. In his report to Alexander II, Apraksin maintained that the narod’s perception of Anton Petrov was greatly influenced by the students’ actions. According to him, during the execution of Petrov, peasants perceived him as a villain, but the funeral procession confirmed his status as a martyr.
39 “Raport #3 general-maiora grafa A.S. Apraksina 75.
In this form of “social journalism.”\textsuperscript{41} In a way, rumors express evolving street folklore as well as the \textit{narod’s} wishes and hopes and anxieties and fears. Right after the suppression of the revolt, rumors circulated that Anton Petrov, having been rewarded for what he had done, was taken to the Tsar; after that complete freedom would be attained: “the emancipation of the serfs in Bezdna is now over […] a Count sent by the Tsar patted the prophet Anton Petrov on the back, dressed him in golden garments and a sword and sent him to the Tsar. From there he will soon come with complete freedom.”\textsuperscript{42}

Mordovtsev maintained that rumors among the \textit{narod} replaced the actual facts of the historical past and present that were beyond its reach. Therefore the \textit{narod} created its own version of a political history of Russia based on rumors. They turned the collective mind of the \textit{narod} to a legendary domain where the \textit{narod} formulated its hopes and expectations. Popular aspirations were always deeply rooted in mythology, and the \textit{narod’s} participation in history was always in conformity with them.\textsuperscript{43} In the case of the Bezdna affair, rumors justified peasant beliefs and at the same time impelled them to act. Hence they served as an indication of social activity and at the same time as an impetus for this activity. They also reveal the utilization of myth to facilitate understanding and coming to terms with unpleasant events. Krylov reports what he heard from the people: “Thank God […] now that Christian freedom is bathed in blood, it will be easier to take it.”\textsuperscript{44} Acceptance of tragedy in Bezdna was possible precisely because violence was

\textsuperscript{41} Nikolai Ogarev (1813-1877) was a famous political activist and revolutionary. Like Herzen, Chernyshevsky and Saltykov, he was critical of the limitations of the emancipation reform. For a discussion of the role of rumors in post-emancipation revolutionary rhetoric, see V.G. Bazanov “Narodnye tolki i krest’ianskoe politicheskoe krasnorechie,” \textit{Russkie revoliutsionnye demokrati i narodoznanie} (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel, 1974) 142-175.
\textsuperscript{42} “Raport #1 general-maiora A.S. Apraksina” 69.
\textsuperscript{43} Mordovtsev 430.
\textsuperscript{44} Krylov 65.
translated into sacrifice and was consecrated as atonement within the logic of apocalyptic myth.

Rumors in Bezdna provide a valuable key to understanding the political myths or “historical mysticism” of the narod. At the core of the mythological narrative of Bezdna, which was shaped as an apocalyptic clash, there was one main belief – in a “Tsar-deliverer” – that recurrently worked as fuel in all major popular uprisings. Two particular rumors that spread in Bezdna show the legend at work and evolving in a new way: one about Konstantin, another about Nicholas I. In “One of the False Konstantins,” Mordovtsev suggested that the rebellions of 1861 just like other earlier nineteenth-century rebellions developed along the lines or even as a direct consequence of folk belief in the legend of Konstantin (after Grand Duke Konstantin Pavlovich of Russia (1779-1831), the second son of Emperor Pavel I (1754-1801)). An analysis of this legend offers valuable perspective on the narod’s worldview and their motivation, political or otherwise, to act. At the same time, the peasants’ perception of the Tsar in power, Alexander II, adds important characteristics to the legend, making it more complex.

III. **Bezdna’s version of the Konstantin Legend**

According to Shchapov, since the schism, salvation was thought by the narod to be possible through popular uprisings led by individuals who fashioned themselves as Tsar-pretenders or Christ-pretenders and who “appealed to the narod’s natural mythological frame of mind.”

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46 Paperno 423.
Kondraty Selivanov, was perceived as a herald of freedom in a mystical sense. The idea of freedom for the narod included a moral imperative. According to Shchapov, the teaching of Selivanov, who like Pugachev claimed to be Peter III, developed into a spiritual-moral movement (dukhovnonravstvennoe dvizhenie). Selivanov insisted on the importance of Emancipation not in a material but in a spiritual sense, and fashioned it as a promise of liberation of the collective spirit. Anton Petrov’s message embraced the legacy of his predecessors. This ensured his popularity and his status as a Christ-like martyr figure after his death.

Pugachev’s popularity with the narod, as Daniel Field has suggested, rested on his exploitation of the myth of the Tsar-deliverer. A Tsar who could share the narod’s sufferings, who himself was persecuted by the ruling elite, appealed to the narod. Pugachev, claiming to be Peter III, fashioned himself as the Tsar, who would sacrifice his life for the narod in order to deliver it long awaited freedom. Petrov, for obvious reasons, could not fashion himself as a Tsar-pretender/deliverer, but he made use of this legend. According to Apraksin, he spread rumors that the grand Prince Konstantin was enchained in Bezdna and expected the peasants to free him. Krylov recounts another story that he heard, according to which peasants were killing nobles when Konstantin arrived. Supposedly he approved of it and even thanked them for their service to the Tsar, adding: “Let the dogs die like dogs!” The “Konstantin text” in the Bezdna affair demonstrates the popular appeal of this figure that enabled his entrance into the lore of a “deliverer.”

47 Kondraty Selivanov (?-1832) was the leader of the sectarian movement known as skoptsy (the Castrates) that appeared in the 1760s. He claimed to be the incarnated Christ and at the same time Peter III, the Empress Catherine II’s husband.
50 “Raport #2 general maiora grafa A.S. Apraksina 72.
51 Krylov 66.
But why was the “Konstantin legend” needed in the Bezdna affair? As Field suggests, belief in the Tsar-deliverer can be politically explosive and often threatens the reigning Tsar; how then can one reconcile the circulation of this legend with the image of the “tsar’-batishka” that Alexander II supposedly enjoyed among the narod at the time? How does the legend work in light of the apocalyptic narrative of the Bezdna situation?

The legend about Konstantin took shape in 1825-26 and was inseparably connected with the Decembrist revolt, Alexander I’s sudden death, “the rightful emperor” Konstantin’s abdication of the throne, and Nicholas’s unexpected ascension to power. Nicholas’s succession to the Russian throne over Konstantin became a traumatic experience that Herzen masterfully describes in his book My Past and Thoughts (Byloe i dumy). The narod linked the death of Alexander I and Konstantin’s removal from the throne with a belief that they had wanted to free the peasants, and Nicholas prevented this from happening. Of course, there was little correspondence between Konstantin’s figure in reality, his political attitudes, and those with which he was invested with in popular imagination; but this is irrelevant in myth-making. The efficiency of a “deliverer-legend” is predicated upon the availability of individuals who personify the narod’s most sacred hopes. According to Mordovtsev, pretenders assuming the name of Konstantin began to appear in the Russian countryside around 1826. Konstantin died in 1831, but in popular legend his death, like the death of Alexander I, was not accepted. This denial is an important aspect of the deliverer legend, which allows for the appearance of pretenders.

54 Mordovtsev’s article discusses the nineteenth-century pretenders claiming to be Konstantin. See Mordovtsev “Odin iz Izhe-Konstantinov” 399-434.
55 Chistov mentions the rumors that Alexander was killed or that a soldier saved him, and Alexander fled to Kiev. See Chistov, “Konstantin” 237.
According to Mordovtsev, rumors claimed that, invisible almost to everyone, Grand Prince Konstantin “walks the soil of Russia, revealing himself only to the few until his time comes and then he will appear as a savior from all the misfortunes and predicaments in the life of the narod.”

Field suggests that the Tsar-deliverer legend was potentially threatening to the stability of the regime. In Pugachev’s case, it is clear that the royal imposter assumed the name of the Tsar, declared his royal nature based on special birth marks on his body, and, by claiming legitimacy to the throne, presented a real threat to yet another grand pretender, Catherine the Great. The historical reality of the late eighteenth century provided fruitful ground for exploiting the legend. A somewhat similar situation presented itself with Nicholas’s ascension to power that allowed a common perception of him as a usurper and of Konstantin as a legitimate heir. While it is clear why Nicholas’s rule provided productive space for the circulation of the legend that was initially shaped as anti- Nicholaean, the reasons for its outbreak under Alexander II’s reign, specifically in the Bezdna affair that unfolded under the banners of Tsar Alexander II, who granted volia to the narod and the squires concealed it, are not as obvious.

Mordovtsev resolves this contradiction, suggesting that there is certain cooperation between the monarch in power and a legendary figure, which shows a new aspect of the “deliverer legend.” Back in 1827, a pretender Konstantin appeared in Romanovka and supposedly informed the local peasants that he would soon “take them away from the landowners” (otberet ot pomeshchikov) and that “they had ‘figured it all

56 Mordovtsev 428.
57 Field distinguishes between “pretender” and “royal imposters.” According to him, “a pretender claims the throne on the basis of rules of succession different from those that the reigning monarch relies on.” Such a pretender was Catherine the Great. “An imposter, on the other hand, represents himself as a person who, under the commonly accepted rules of succession, would be the legitimate monarch.” See Field 8.
out’ with the Sovereign and would implement the Emancipation when the gentry would not be able to prevent it from happening.”

Mordovtsev’s account shows that the narod blames the gentry and not the reigning Tsar, which reveals an interesting characteristic of its collective psychology. At some point, in the collective mind of the narod, there occurs a shift from blaming the reigning monarch for the misfortunes that befall it to restoring the monarch’s authority and favourable attitudes towards him. In the Bezdna affair, the “rehabilitation” of Nikolai is supported by the rumor that he was murdered by landowners (pomeshchinki). “The rehabilitation scheme” that Saltykov attacks in his History of a Town is not a nineteenth-century development. A similar case that involved “justification of the ruler” occurred during the reign of Catherine the Great. According to Mordovstsev, during the time of the haidamak movement against the Polish nobility in right-bank Ukraine, peasants believed that Catherine II sent them knives which they were supposed to bless in holy water and then use to kill the Poles.

The rumors surrounding Konstantin may suggest certain cooperation between the “deliverer figure” and the reigning Tsar within the conspiracy scenario against the landowners. Konstantin appears as the right hand of Nikolai in their Emancipation project. According to another rumor reported by Mordovtsev, Konstantin appears also as an advisor of the Tsar, who functions as a missing link between the Tsar and the narod. Konstantin, and not the Tsar, appears in the countryside to observe conditions of life there, and he assures the peasants about the soon-to-come betterment of their lot: “You won’t work for others for long […] I have been asking the Sovereign on your behalf for a

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58 Mordovtsev 415.
60 Mordovtsev 416. The Haidamaks’ major rebellion of 1768 is known as the Koliivshchyna. The revolt received massive support from the peasantry and was suppressed by the Russian military under the order of Catherine the Great.
long time now, and I have talked him halfway into it (na polovinu uprosil). You will have your freedom soon.”\textsuperscript{61} Mordovtsev underscores that the available sources on the most famous figure of the “false-Konstantin,” who appeared in Saratov province, suggest that he called himself a brother of the acting Tsar and did not position himself in antagonistic relations with Nikolai. Chistov sees in it an important quality of the deliverer legend, a “sudden reorientation,” that is, what was initially being shaped as anti-Nikolaean became pro-Nikolaean in the end.\textsuperscript{62} A distant Tsar appears as a God-figure from the Old Testament, while Konstantin is fashioned as a Christ-like figure, who, in a self-sacrificial manner, works on behalf of the narod, delivers the news to his brother (“father figure”), and updates him on their misfortunes. Therefore, the nineteenth-century Konstantin text shows the flexible nature of the legend, its adaptability and unrestricted potential. The myth kept evolving, embracing and responding to the current situation and popular attitudes.

The Bezdna affair included a very curious case of the adaptability of the “Konstantin legend” or, rather, a certain seemingly unresolved conflict in the way it was utilized. The rumors about Konstantin were associated not with the patronymic Pavlovich but Nikolaevich, the son of Nikolai I, a figure outside the popular mythological system of coordinates. Several explanations exist among scholars who have addressed this issue. Bazanov asserts that in the time of the Emancipation the legend is redirected to the son of Nikolai, Konstantin Nikolaevich.\textsuperscript{63} Chistov, on the other hand, believes that the deliverer-legend is usually not redirected but created anew; therefore, the evidence from the Bezdna affair suggests a different logic at work. Konstantin’s appearance not to

\textsuperscript{61} Mordovtsev 429. \\
\textsuperscript{62} Chistov 236. \\
\textsuperscript{63} Chistov 246; Bazanov 165.
overthrow Alexander II but to bring the narod “true Emancipation” indicates that it is “not a deliverer-legend in its usual form but, rather, monarchist illusions.” My reading of this peculiar case is in agreement with Irina Paperno, who, contrary to Chistov, insists on the “deliver-legend” in Bezdna. She explains the confusion as a conflict in identification: “it appears that the peasants identified Grand Prince Konstantin Nikolaevich with Grand Prince Konstantin Pavlovich.” Another important aspect that Chistov has pointed out is that it is not certain whether the rumors accurately conveyed what the narod actually talked about or, rather, the way the officials understood and recorded it. In any case, the name Konstantin in the mind of the narod was inseparably linked with the idea of liberation. In the Bezdna version of the legend, both the Tsar and Konstantin figure shared the ideal of freedom. The narod’s image of the Tsar as a liberator and their refusal to see him aligned with the gentry can be explained by the phenomenon of naive monarchism or what Field calls “the myth of the Tsar”; however, the “deliverer legend” complicates the relationship prescribed by it. The psychological mechanism behind the idea of cooperation between the royal and legendary figures may be more complicated than how Mordovtsev accounted for it.

One Russian proverb says: “God is high and the Tsar is far away.” The nucleus of the phenomenon of naive monarchism is the idea of a distant Tsar, a Tsar as an abstract principle, as a product of collective imagination that synthesises folk ideals, hopes, aspirations, and beliefs. The Bezdna affair, the Pugachev Uprising, the Haidamak Uprising, Razin’s revolt, and a number of lower-scale rebellions that shook the landscape

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64 Chistov 247-248.  
65 Paperno 429. It is peculiar that there is no discussion of this discrepancy in Mordovtsev, although he, likewise, seems to identify the rumors about Konstantin in the events following the Emancipation with the figure of Konstantin Pavlovich. Mordovtsev 428.  
66 Chistov 248.
of Imperial Russia were shaped “in the name of the Tsar.” The devotion of the Russian peasants to the Russian Tsar – much celebrated by Pogodin – goes beyond any rational explanation and has acquired certain mystical characteristics. Of course, the word “mystical” is often used for convenience, to substitute for a logical explanation if the logic of it cannot be adequately explained. The political mysticism of devotion to the Tsar in the Bezdna affair requires some deconstruction.

In the discussions of popular monarchism there has been agreement that the Tsar myth proved to be a fundamental factor for social and political stability, and as long as the belief was strong (until Bloody Sunday, January 9, 1905), it guaranteed security for the autocratic regime. Of course, the myth presupposed a division of roles and rested on the distinction between the oppressors (pomeshchiki) and the oppressed (narod). The Tsarist attitudes of the narod, convenient as they may have been for the ruling Tsar, presented a real threat for those qualified as “oppressors.” As Bazanov points out, the nobility saw in the idealisation of the Tsar a certain form of “free thinking” (volnomyslie). This concern was unambiguously expressed in a letter by the marshals of the nobility of Podolsk province to the governor in their response to the outbreak of post-Emancipation insubordination in the Russian countryside. The purpose of the letter was to show the dangers that the monarchist attitudes of the narod presented for the social organization. The Tsar who “became in the eye of the narod a certain abstract principle”

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67 Pogodin emphasises the ideal union of the narod with the Tsar in a number of his writings, most importantly in his Istoriko-politicheskie pis’ma i zapiski. In his letter “Pis’mo k Gosudariu Tsesarevichu, Velikomu Kniaziu, Aleksandru Nikolaevichu (nyne tsarstvuushchemu Gosudariu Imperatoru) v 1838 godu,” he maintains that for the Russian people, the Tsar is God on earth: “When I saw you at the entrance of the Dormition Cathedral, with love and meekness in your eyes, with humility and generosity in every movement, when I heard all around me omnipotent exaltation (vsemogushchii vostorg) of the Russian narod, I dreamt about the Golden Age, about one flock and one shepherd, and sweet tears ran down my face.” See Istoriko-politicheskie pis’ma i zapiski 13-14.
68 Emmons 67; Field 20.
69 Bazanov 166.
is separated from any executive power that is seen as corrupted by the nobility. This conception of the supreme authority is particularly dangerous and capable of “incapacitating all the executive organs” in the country. In other words, the myth of the Tsar is seen as a political device employed by the narod in mass movements. In addition to expressing a concern about the dangers of the myth for the socio-political stability of the country across the class distinctions, the letter can be read as an implicit criticism of the Tsar for failing to see a larger and threatening picture behind the flattering popular sentiments directed towards his figure. The letter can be read as the nobility’s attempt to demystify the myth of the Tsar.

By undermining the mysticism of the Tsarist belief at its core, Field follows a similar line of argument. He suggests that the widely accepted notion of the “superstitious nature” of the peasants cannot serve as an explanation for why a certain superstition holds for centuries. No matter how superstitious the peasants were, how, he asks, could they maintain a belief which daily experience refuted? His assumption that may at first seem quite unorthodox is that the peasants in Bezdna were cunning, manipulative, practical, and opportunistic. He views the myth as “a necessary and unexamined ingredient in the peasants’ substitute for politics.” “The myth of the Tsar” provided them with a pretext that they otherwise lacked, which was to advance their intentions that were more mundane than mystical and that were rooted in their own material interests. If not for Apraksin’s bold decision to shoot in an unarmed crowd, the number of people killed or punished could have been quantitatively different precisely because their actions were

71 Field 18.
motivated by their “sincere devotion to the Tsar.” Hence, the myth was, in a way, their “collective insurance.” The myth of the Tsar thus can be seen as an important component in the relationship between the narod and the government that can be beneficial or otherwise for both parties. For the narod it is a guarantor of the Tsar’s protection and sympathy as long as any insubordination ends with a manifestation of devotion and repentance. For the Tsar, the myth can function as a guarantor of stability of the autocratic regime until, of course, the image of the “actual Tsar” conflicts with that of an “ideal Tsar.” History has shown that the myth can be effectively manipulated by the narod and the government alike.

Field’s argument, just as the letter from the nobility, explains the narod’s actions and motivations, making their participation in history more politically conscious. It also invites rethinking the supposed naiveté with which the narod is often associated and reading the Bezdna affair as an expression of the narod’s voice, or more precisely, free thinking (volnomyslie). Such a perspective may offer a new explanation for the “Tsar-deliverer” component of the mythical narrative in Bezdna and a new way to reconcile “Konstantin’s legend” with the image of Alexander.73

The circulation of the “deliverer legend” in Bezdna can function as the narod’s critique of the reigning Tsar and popular dissatisfaction with the way he handles or fails to handle things with “the oppressors.” This logic sees the Tsar as impotent and requiring external help, which a Konstantin-deliverer figure can offer. Freeing Konstantin for the restoration of order in the name of Alexander seems like a legitimate incentive for revolt and an efficient excuse in case of failure. The Bezdna affair unfolded “in the name of the

72 Field 210-211.
73 Field 211.
Tsar.” But in the name of which Tsar did the narod rebel? To extrapolate Field’s argument, it may be suggested that they had hopes not for the real Tsar Alexander, but for an abstract ideal Tsar (the name is irrelevant) who allowed for the idealization and projection of their hopes and aspirations, “in the name of the narod’s Tsar.” The rehabilitation of Tsar Nikolai suggests that the narod had in mind an “ideal Nicholas,” who wanted to give freedom to peasants and not the Nikolai, who gave rise to the myth of Konstantin. Thus the Tsar in whose name the narod rebelled, the true benefactor of the narod, like an abstract God-figure, was from the sphere of the ideal and not political reality. The popular mind had this one true tsar’-batiushka as its ideal, and he happened to assume the name of a reigning monarch. After the monarch’s death, the collective mind would (re)construct the memory of him, investing this figure with a new reality, thus reconciling the two (the ideal of tsar’-batiushka and the actual monarch). The rumor about Nikolai’s death in Bezdna shows well how this mechanism works. I believe it is precisely this ideal that connects to the narod’s sacred beliefs. The discrepancy between the ideal and the real (before reconciliation) worked as fuel in all the popular uprisings. Such also seems to be the line of reasoning in Mordovtsev’s article. He maintained that the ideal of a just Tsar was the product of the narod’s collective expression of their repressed yearnings. The narod pinned their hopes on imaginary figures created well before the actual individuals entered the historical scene. Therefore, before the appearance of Lzhe-Dmitry (False Dmitry), they were already creating the figure-deliverer in their collective imagination, which for them was a safe medium to deal with changing reality. When the spectre that they had created appeared, the narod

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74 Russian folklore on “tsarevich” provides a good illustration of the tension in popular attitudes. In one body of the Russian folklore he appears as a good Tsar who restores justice, in another – an evil ruler.
followed him with no hesitation.\textsuperscript{75} Likewise, before the appearance of Pugachev, the
\textit{narod} was already “creating him,” and he appeared under different disguises, in the
person of Kremnev and Bogomolov, until “all aspirations of the \textit{narod} were expressed in
one figure.”\textsuperscript{76} Thus Mordovtsev was among the first to insinuate that the popular myth of
the Tsar was more complex and could not be explained by unconditional devotion to the
monarch.

\textit{Concluding Remarks}

On the eve of and shortly after the Emancipation, the Russian empire witnessed
the \textit{narod} in action and its political mythology in the making. Just as with any
mythology, that of the \textit{narod} evolved over centuries, embracing new elements,
synthesising old and more recent historical memories. It also reflected how the \textit{narod} was
making sense of social and political transformations and hence was inseparable from its
political attitudes and, at the same time, shaped them. The events in Bezdna showed that
the \textit{narod’s} political consciousness operated within a complex mythological framework
that drew both on folk mythology and that of the Old Belief, bringing together,
synthesizing, and merging various separate myths.

Since the schism of the seventeenth century, the Old Belief mythology introduced
anti-governmental attitudes by conceptualizing the state as the Kingdom of the Antichrist.
While the main ideas remained essentially the same, in the 1860s there was a shift in the
Old Believers’ attitudes towards the Tsar. Although it differed across the various groups

\textsuperscript{75} Lzhe-Dmitry, or False Dmitry, was an impostor claiming to be the youngest son of Ivan the Terrible,
tsarevich Dmitry Ivanovich. It is generally believed that the impostor’s real name was Grigory Otrepev and
he was a runaway monk. See Chapter IV for a discussion of his legacy and Dostoevsky’s utilization of the
historical memories of the \textit{narod} in \textit{The Possessed}.

\textsuperscript{76} Mordovtsev, “Odin iz Lzhe-Konstantinov” 431. Gavrila Kremnev, a runaway soldier, was one of the first
impostors claiming to be Peter III. He first appeared in Voronezh province in 1765 and received massive
popular support. Fedot Bogomolov, a runaway peasant, claimed to be Peter III in 1772. They both were
precursors of Pugachev and enjoyed respect and support among the Cossacks.
of sectarians, a predominant tendency was no longer to see the Tsar as the Antichrist.\textsuperscript{77} This reformed view was in sync with the popular image of the Tsar as a servant of the good. The apocalyptic myth presupposes the division of roles: evil is represented by the Antichrist and the False Prophet while good is shared by God and Christ, whose Second Coming is anticipated. The events in Bezdna as well as earlier peasant disturbances suggest that the \textit{narod} was thinking in similar binary categories. The Emancipation was perceived by the \textit{narod} as the final clash of good and evil, and this evoked a hope for a large-scale transformation that was supposed to transfigure both the physical and spiritual landscape of the Russian empire. The mythology that informed the revolt in Bezdna suggests concrete embodiments of good and evil that the \textit{narod} had in mind. The gentry and the Tsar’s representatives were conceived as a collective Antichrist, while the good was shared between the Tsar (that is, a popular ideal of a \textit{Tsar-batiushka}) and a “prophet figure” represented by Konstantin. The historical mysticism of the \textit{narod} conceptualizes both as carriers of a liberation ideal and the promise of long-awaited salvation and spiritual resurrection.

As Terence Emmons has suggested, certain images and myths express the peasantry’s political psychology.\textsuperscript{78} The way the political psychology of the Russian \textit{narod} expressed itself in the two reform decades presented for the ruling elite a concern threatening the very basis of autocratic regime. The efforts of millennial festivities in restoring the bond between the Tsar and the \textit{narod} and supressing the memories of the peasant disturbances led instead to a quest within educated society for re-examining and redefining the \textit{narod} and its political myths as well as the very nature of this bond. But


\textsuperscript{78} Emmons 68.
this inquiry led not so much to answers, but to many more questions that needed to be answered. This initiated new discussions. Among them was a growing interest in the Old Belief that previously had tended to be ignored and was revived through Anton Petrov.79 As Saltykov pointed out, there was a better understanding of what was happening in Mexico than in the Old Believers’ Russia.80 This statement could also be applied to the narod, which in post-Emancipation years was perceived as an America awaiting its Columbus.

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79 Pogodin was among the first who emphasized the need to make schismatics a point of inquiry. He saw the Old Belief as a disease of Russia and warned about the dangers of “religious revolution.” See his *Istoricheskie pisma* 265-266.

80 Saltykov, “Sovremennye dvizheniia v raskole,” *Retsenzii 1863-1864gg, PSS* 5: 346-347. It is generally accepted that the number of Old Believers in 1860 comprised around 10 million people, which corresponded to 20% of the entire population. There is, however, no agreement on the exact number. The number ranges from 8 million up to 14 million. See discussion of this issue in Taranets, “Chislennost’ staroobriadtev v Rossii i zarubezhom,” *Staroobriadchestvo v Rossiiskoi Imperii* 170-176.
Chapter 2: Approaching Popular Mysticism in Tolstoy’s War and Peace

A key motif throughout War and Peace is that the patriotism of the Russian narod ensured the victory over Napoleon. The elusive “Russian narod” that reverberates throughout the epilogues symbolically designates all Russians (a collective imperial body regardless of class distinction) as united in the spirit of patriotism against a common enemy. This chapter examines those who in extant scholarship tend to be left out of this symbolic body of true Russia – the peasants of Bogucharovo. Restoring their image as a participant in history and a member of the “Russian narod” is its main objective. Gary Saul Morson made an accurate and important observation that in Tolstoy’s novel, “the unnecessary is necessary, the radically insignificant is radically significant.” Sometimes what is initially perceived as insignificant ends up fundamentally significant in the course of the author’s exhaustive and laborious intellectual work. When the span of writing a novel encompasses eight years, such transformations often can be unavoidable. The story of the Bogucharovians and their rebellion, I would argue, is a case of such transformation. Tolstoy’s characterization of them underwent substantial revision, and the way they are portrayed in the drafts and in the final text demonstrates a very similar development in the perception of another group, that of God’s people (holy fools and wanderers). Both communes transform from being an object/material to becoming a subject/participant. In the finished novel, these “non-members” grow to represent a kernel of a peculiar Russian folk mysticism that Tolstoy seemed initially to discard with irony and later learned to appreciate. Certain aspects of their mystical representation fit Tolstoy’s philosophy of history as he presents it in the novel.

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Tolstoy scholarship either pays little attention to the folk of Bogucharovo or considers them as a backdrop for the unfolding of other narratives in *War and Peace*. The few readings that exist on the Bogucharovians either are in agreement with, support, or slightly revise the canonical and most influential reading by Viktor Shklovsky in his *Material and Style in Lev Tolstoy’s Novel “War and Peace”* (*Material i stil’ v romanе L’va Tolstogo “Voina i mir”*). According to Shklovsky, Tolstoy intentionally depicts the muzhiks of Bogucharovo as a mass of people who do not think and who lack reason in their actions.\(^2\) Kathryn Feuer has argued that peasants in general play a supporting role in the novel, just “as they did in Tolstoy’s political thinking.” In her reading, Tolstoy intentionally portrays them as insensate and unreasoning, likening them to a force of nature. Feuer’s discussion excludes the peasant of Bogucharovo, however, and her reading of these particular peasants is in line with Shklovsky’s: the peasants’ behaviour is “churlish and stupid,” and “he [Tolstoy] goes on to discuss at length their ‘wildness’ and ‘mysterious undercurrents’ and ‘incomprehensibility’.”\(^3\) Both scholars agree that the scene of rebellion in Bogucharovo was created chiefly to provide a romantic setting for the meeting of Maria and Nikolai.\(^4\) R.F. Christian looks at the peasants’ rebellion as an attempt to fraternize with the enemy and to use the invasion to rebel against their landlords in order to achieve liberty.\(^5\) His reading is most likely informed by Shklovsky, who has argued that in this particular scene, Tolstoy suppressed the historical material of


\(^5\) Christian 126.
many cases when peasants sided with the French during the Napoleonic campaign. Morson has provided one of the most original discussions in his book *Hidden in Plain View: Narrative and Creative Potentials in “War and Peace.”* According to him, Tolstoy purposefully created a “not easily narratable” story of the peasants as a community that, while it is “invisible” in history, may have a decisive effect on historical events. Like other scholars, however, he excludes them from the patriotic body of Russia, suggesting that if similar rebellions had occurred elsewhere, it could have ensured Napoleon’s victory. It is very likely that in Tolstoy’s conceptualization of the scene, the rebellion was originally intended to function merely as a background, but in the final revisions, the initially simple narrative evolved, became more complex, and outgrew Tolstoy’s original intentions. This change in representation and the evolution of the writer’s attitudes to his own material reflect the change of trajectory of Tolstoy’s intellectual efforts as a novelist, thinker and artist. This chapter will attempt to reveal the story of Tolstoy’s growing intimacy with his heroes and his making them participants in history.

If the scene of rebellion is read negatively, then it is only logical that its instigators are viewed negatively as well. Oversimplification does injustice to Tolstoy. Shklovsky suggests that there was a tendency in the 1860s to depict the scenes of popular rebellion in a way that rendered them meaningless, and that Tolstoy follows it. To the contrary, I feel he undermines this tradition. Through the depiction of the uprising, Tolstoy participates in a much more complex social debate on the nature of “*russkii bunt*” (Russian rebellion) that took shape in the sixties, particularly after the wave of peasant

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7 Morson 124-125.
8 Morson 126.
9 Shklovsky does not discuss this literary tradition in much detail, but he mentions Aleksandr Pushkin (his *History of Pugachev’s Rebellion*) and Ivan Baryshnikov to be among the first writers to portray popular rebellion this way. Shklovskii 85.
disturbances following the Emancipation. Understanding Tolstoy’s insight into it is a prerequisite for understanding this section of *War and Peace*. Thus, I will address the importance of the scene apart from being a romantic space for the display of Nikolai Rostov’s heroism and his and Maria’s meeting. Instead I focus on the peasants, following closely how the scene was conceived and evolved. It grew more complex over time and more in tune with Tolstoy’s ideas on historical development.

This chapter is structurally divided into four parts. Part One argues that a close analysis of Tolstoy’s revisions of the Bogucharovian narrative, just as that of the God’s people, reveals a certain tendency towards de-psychologization. The lack of psychological perspective from the narrator makes the text problematical for analysis. Tolstoy further complicates the reading of the peasants by investing their biography with historical memories and allusions to both distant and more recent important socio-political events. Understanding the scene of rebellion necessitates understanding the peasants’ collective biography as a social group as Tolstoy devised it. Part Two indicates how the Bogucharovo text absorbs historical memories of two different epochs in the life of the Russian Empire. Part Three discusses how, through the portrayal of the rebellion, the novelist participated in two major discussions that dominated the socio-political space of post-emancipation Russia and infiltrated Russian literature and journalism of the time. These were the nature of popular uprisings, causes, and their possible threat for the integrity of the state on the one hand, and on the other, the relationship of the monarch and the narod that after the defeat of the Crimean War and the Emancipation of the serfs became a burning topic. Part Four discusses the overall meaning of the Bogucharovo text within the patriotic narrative of *War and Peace* and indicates how within the final
thematic reorientation of Tolstoy’s intellectual endeavour, the peasants’ and the God’s people texts become functionally interrelated and mutually complementary.

I. From Psychology to Mysticism

To illustrate the meaningless nature of a *ruskii bunt*, Shklovsky examines Tolstoy’s representation of Bolkonsky’s peasants from Bald Hills (*Lysye Gory*) in early drafts to show the contrast between their idealistically portrayed life and the rebellion.¹⁰ The scholar’s analysis does not distinguish between the peasants from Bogucharovo, where the rebellion took place, and those from Bald Hills. He disregards the distinctiveness of the former that is underscored both in the drafts and in the final version: “[…] the Bogucharovo peasants had quite a different character from those of Bald Hills. They differed from them in speech, dress, and disposition (*otlichalis’ govorom, odezdoi i nravami*).”¹¹ Although early drafts do not depict the life of the inhabitants of Bogucharovo as idealistic, they do suggest that Tolstoy began with an uncomplicated image of them. The reader first sees them through Pierre’s eyes when he visits Andrei’s new estate. The description of the peasants seemed to be included to create a striking contrast to the life of landlords: “Filthy, ragged muzhiks were carrying sand in wheelbarrows; barefoot peasant women scattered it under the direction of the gardener (a German). Their filth set a sharp contrast to the cleanliness and elegance of the

¹⁰ Shklovskii 76-77.
¹¹ Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy, *Voina i mir, in Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii [T-PSS]*, 90 vols. (Moscow: “Khudozhestvennaia literatura,” 1949): 11: 143 (Bk III, Part 2: ch. 9). References in Russian and all writings by Tolstoy are, unless otherwise stated, to this edition. Most references to the text of the finished novel are by volume and page, with indication of book, part, and chapter. The references to the text from the manuscripts are by volume and page. I use Richard Pevear’s and Larissa Volkonsky’s English translation, modifying it where necessary. Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace [WP]*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volkonsky (New York: Vintage Classics, 2007) 718. The reference to the original Russian work will also be provided.
yard, the façade of the house, and flowers.”

The contrast at the level of appearance suggests a deeper chasm between the world of the landlords and the muzhiks, the former being ironically the result of the labour of the latter. Such a portrayal imposes a negative image of the peasants, disallowing an alternative perception of them. Tolstoy removes this description.

Like the Bogucharovians, in the drafts much more than in the final published text, wanderers with their naïve beliefs and simplistic world outlook presented a sharp contrast to the world of rationality and enlightenment that Pierre and Andrei Bolkonsky embodied. There Tolstoy seemed to side with his noble characters in dismissing the former without much reflection. A pilgrim named Pelageiushka plays a secondary role there: she illuminates and adds subtle nuances to the characterization of Maria Bolkonky who imposes onto the wanderer her own ideal of the “clarity of vision” and “purity of love.”

Tolstoy immediately deconstructs for the reader the image of the pilgrim: on her way out, she drinks vodka, scolds the servant Mavra, and carries off a pair of boots she had stolen from Maria. The contrast between the negative description and projected idealized image of Pelageiushka reveals Maria’s inner beauty and Christian virtue of humility. Tolstoy presents his irony in the text without restraint, exposing his own attitudes in a very unambiguous way. In the final version of the novel, however,

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13 Draft #113 (manuscript #85, Bk II, Part 3: ch. 26) includes the following passage: “‘No, I will not reach it (i ne doiti mne), the princess thought, anxiously recognizing in her soul the fear before her father, or the hostility to Mademoiselle Bourienne, or that sinful recollection and impossibility of casting in her lot with Anatole or with Nicholas; she feels that the clarity of vision and purity of love that live in the heart of the wanderer who had just left are remote and unattainable to her.” T-PSS 13:744-745.
14 “May the poor, dear princess think this, let her not see or ever learn how Pelageiushka, having downed a glass of vodka, was swearing at Mavra as she left Bald Hills, snatching out of Mavra’s hands a pair of warm shoes that she supposedly received as a gift, but in truth, stole from the princess. May she never see it, but see in them only that ideal of perfection that radiates in her own self and that she transfers onto others only to make herself emulate it even more.” T-PSS 13: 744-745.
Pelageiushka is devoid of any pretentious behaviour. Tolstoy ultimately devises an entire episode of Pierre’s and Andrei’s encounter with God’s people, whom Maria hosted in her home, instead of sporadically bringing them into the text as he initially had planned to do.\(^{15}\) The draft of the episode focuses solely on Pierre’s and Maria’s first meeting and is dominated by Pierre’s, Andrei’s and old Count Bolkonsky’s discussion of Napoleon: it contains no mention of God’s people.\(^{16}\) As Tolstoy introduces them in later drafts, an analysis of variants reveals a change in style as well as in content. Tolstoy’s own attitude that dominates the portrayal in the earlier drafts gives way to a more complex and refined narration. Pelageiushka, whose behaviour is explained and who has distinct personal traits in the drafts, is turned into a type embodying characteristics of God’s people in general – unquestionable faith, piety and humility. Tolstoy completely removes his authorial voice and gives the reader no reason to question her behaviour or to suspect insincerity in her beliefs. Her weaknesses that defined her as a person are replaced with impersonal characteristics. An analysis of Tolstoy’s revisions of the God’s people narrative may suggest his rethinking of the function they were to play in the text, which manifested itself through his turn away from psychology. He replaces Pelageiushka’s individual story with that of God’s people as a collective of which she is a part.

Another interesting case of Tolstoy’s exclusion of material involves the scene of Pierre’s encounter right after the battle of Borodino with Cossacks, an old peasant and his wife, and a iurodivyi, Senia, near Mozhaisk.\(^{17}\) The description of Senia in the drafts corresponds to a traditional depiction of a nineteenth century iurodivyi, and the peasants’

\(^{15}\) T-PSS 10: 118-123 (Bk II, Part 2: ch. 13).
\(^{16}\) Draft #88 (manuscript #85, Bk II, part 2: ch. 8, 9, 15-21) in T-PSS 13: 616-643.
\(^{17}\) N. Radionov mentions that this episode appears in the second revision of Part 3 of Book III. N.S. Radionov, “Rabota L.N. Tolstogo nad rukopisami ‘Voiny i mira,’” Iasnopolianski sbornik 1955: literaturno-kriticheskie stat’i i materialy o zhizni i tvorchistve L.N. Tolstogo (Tul’skoe knizhnoe izdatel’stvo, 1955): 30. The episode can be found in T-PSS 14: 356-361 (variant #232, Bk III, Part 3: ch. 8).
treatment of him reflects an attitude prevalent towards God’s people among the narod that Tolstoy accurately reproduces.\textsuperscript{18} Unlike with Pelageiushka, there is no irony in the portrayal of Senia. The narrator refers to him with the diminutives “a little fool” (\textit{durachok}) and “a holy fool” (\textit{iurodivyi}) interchangeably, while the peasant’s wife uses the appellation “a God’s Person” (\textit{bozhyi chelovek}). Senia’s holy foolishness manifests itself through his use of language that Pierre finds incomprehensible.\textsuperscript{19} For example, Senia says to Pierre:

Boo-boo-boo, don’t go, Cossack, they killed chickens, they killed a rooster. They will kill a master (\textit{bol’shak}), boo-boo-boo. Suddenly the little fool’s face brightened up (\textit{litso prosvetlelo}) and a childish sweet smile shone (\textit{prosiiala detskaia milaia ulybka}) on his old face.\textsuperscript{20}

In the Russian cultural tradition, the unintelligible nature of the \textit{iurodivyi}’s discourse has always been symbolically and semantically loaded. Tolstoy’s choice of verbs (“\textit{prosvetlet}’” and “\textit{prosiiat}’”) is intentional, and the image of “light,” relating to reason and the Enlightenment, is not coincidental.\textsuperscript{21} Senia’s speech may be read as a prophetic warning of the dangers that await Pierre.\textsuperscript{22}

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\textsuperscript{18} Senia is described in the drafts as follows: “Some kind of weird male creature (he had a thin beard and short hair) wearing a long woman’s shirt, open on his chest.” \textit{T-PSS} 14: 357.
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\textsuperscript{20} \textit{T-PSS} 14: 357. Interestingly, in the episode Pierre spends the night next to the Iurodivyi. \textit{T-PSS} 14: 360.
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\textsuperscript{21} Tolstoy was aware of the significance of the language of \textit{iurodivye} or madmen and employed it as an artistic technique, as becomes apparent in the scene of Rastopchin’s encounter with a madman after the death of Vereshchagin. Others have observed that the lunatic’s physical appearance, his obscure symbolic discourse, his prophetic ministry all unquestionably link him with the \textit{iurodivyi} type. See Robert Louis Jackson, “Scenes from the Apocalypse in Tolstoy’s \textit{War and Peace}: The Lion of Judah,” \textit{Tolstoy Studies Journal} 15 (2003): 26. Galloway follows the interpretation of Ivan as a \textit{iurodivyi} suggested by Gabriel Shapiro and Patricia Carden. See David J. Galloway, \textit{Victim of Circumstance: Rastopchin’s Execution of Vereshchagin in Tolstoi’s “Voina i mir”} (Pittsburgh: The Carl Beck Papers, 2000) 35.
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\textsuperscript{22} Tolstoy’s sympathetic attitude towards Senia resembles the scene with Grisha from \textit{Detstvo}. Like Senia, Grisha too could barely speak. \textit{T-PSS} 1:33-35. According to Tolstoy’s late memoirs dictated by him to his
On May 14, 1868 in his letter to his publisher Barteev, Tolstoy requests that this episode be excluded. There can be several explanations for Tolstoy’s decision. It is possible that Tolstoy may not have thought it contributed to the structural unity of the text. Or that the Senka-episode attributed more power to the mysticism of iurodstvo than Tolstoy thought was warranted and he decided to make Pierre get to know the Russian narod in the prison camp through the character of Karataev with his rational, stoical message. I believe, however, that Tolstoy excluded this scene for a similar reason as to why he decided to revise Pelageiushka’s story. Despite the fact that Senka appears as a typical holy fool, Tolstoy endows him with specific psychological traits. For example, Tolstoy accentuates his kindness: he hugs and kisses Pierre’s horse, kneels before it in genuine veneration, and the horse moves very delicately so as not to hurt the holy fool. Shortly thereafter, two Cossacks mock Senka and steal Pierre’s horse from him. Witnessing this act of injustice towards the holy fool, a sensitive reader cannot help but sympathize with Senka. Emotional investment in the scene also affects our attitude to God’s people was instilled in him by his family early in his life. See T-PSS 34:395. Tolstoy’s note in his diary from as early as August 5, 1863 also suggests a certain respect Tolstoy had for holy fools: “This is the third time I have sat down to write. How terrible and absurd it is to have your happiness bound to material conditions – a wife, children, health, wealth. The holy fool was right. One can have a wife, children, health, etc., but that’s not it.” See T-PSS 48:55. In light of the above passages, I have to disagree with Irina Medzhibovskaya who has maintained that Tolstoy describes God’s people in dismissive and ironic terms, and that in general Tolstoy was impatient with the ceremonial side of faith. Of course, the character of Pelageiushka in the drafts is portrayed in dismissive terms, but there is no trace of this portrayal in the final version of the text. Early Pelageiushka could have been initially devised as an example of those “insincere” or “with weakness,” whose existence Tolstoy did not deny, which in no way is suggestive of Tolstoy’s opinion about God’s people in general. Irina Medzhibovskaya, “Belief System in War and Peace,” Tolstoy and the Religious Culture of His Time: a Biography of a Long Conversation, 1845-1887 (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publisher, 2008) 85, 87.

23 Radionov 31.
24 T-PSS 14: 358.
towards other characters. Just as with Pelageiushka, whose character in the draft added new subtleties to Maria’s portrayal, we also see Pierre from a new perspective because of Senka. He displays a lack of judgement, a certain humility (he spends the night with Senka in the same shed), and a respect both for the peasant couple (and by extension for the narod) and the holy fool.\textsuperscript{25} Hence, early Pelageiushka and Senka tell us more about other characters than generally about the theme of God’s people in \textit{War and Peace}.

Like Senia and Pelageiushka, the headman Dron, a member of the Bogucharovo community, had an individual and very interesting life story in the drafts. Twenty three years earlier he had been replaced because of his drinking problem and had gone traveling as a pilgrim to monasteries and deserts. Upon his return to Bogucharovo, he had disappeared once again for two weeks, which, as it turned out later, he had spent in a cave that he himself had dug and that he had sealed with stone and clay. He spent nine days there without food or water. Dron adopted this “holy foolish” method for saving himself. But on the ninth day, fear of death overcame him. He dug himself out and returned to Bogucharovo, and after that never drank again.\textsuperscript{26} In the final text, Dron is presented as an ideal headman, respected and feared by other muzhiks, with a perfect record of service, and no drinking problem either past or present.\textsuperscript{27} Tolstoy might have revised Dron’s biography because the earlier version projected him as a psychologically complex character. Later revisions to the Bogucharovo text suggest Tolstoy’s intention to present the peasants as a single undifferentiated (neraschlenennyi) commune. Keeping Dron as a

\textsuperscript{25} \textit{T-PSS} 14: 360.
\textsuperscript{26} \textit{T-PSS} 14:171. (draft #184, manuscript #91)
\textsuperscript{27} Shklovsky has argued that Tolstoy revised Dron’s biography because the individualized peasant would have defeated Tolstoy’s purpose of presenting the rebellion as nonsensical because it would attribute “more reality” to muzhiks. Shklovskii 82. In her book Feuer discusses how some characters had to be scaled back because they threatened to disrupt the novel’s major plot lines. See her chapter “The Opening Chapters of \textit{War and Peace}” in her \textit{Tolstoy and the Genesis of War and Peace}: 88-109.
separate individual with his own personal life story would have defeated this purpose. For the same reason he might have revised Pelageiushka’s and removed Senka’s individual stories. In the final text, in line with his revisions of the God’s people text, Tolstoy transfers Pelageiushka and Dron from the sphere of the known, understood and mundane (as presented in early drafts) into the sphere of the unknown, inexplicable and mysterious.

The revisions of both the Bogucharovo and God’s people texts mark Tolstoy’s rejection of psychology. In the final novel, Tolstoy chooses not to analyze or explain his characters’ actions and choices but instead to render them as mysterious and obscure (неясный). This is done through the use of rumors that circulate within the commune. Rumors comprise a distinctive feature of the Bogucharovians, and they often contain socio-political underpinnings. The passage below from the final published text appears in the same form in the draft (variant #184) with the exception of the rumors about the anticipated reign of Petr Fedorovich, which were added later (in bold).

Among them there were always some vague rumors (неясные толки) going around, now about enlisting them all as Cossacks, now about a new faith to which they were to be converted, now about some charters from the tsar, now about an oath to Pavel Pavlovich in 1779 (of which it was said that they had already been granted freedom then, but the landowners had taken it away), now about Pyotr Fedorovich, who was to begin to reign in seven years, and under whom everything would be free and so simple that there would be nothing at all.28

In addition to the “Petr Fedorovich” rumors, the final text includes two more passages that allude to a mystical component of the Bogucharovians’ beliefs: one points to their

28 WP 719; T-PSS 14:170 (draft #184: manuscript # 91, Bk III, part 2, ch. 8-14).
eschatological views, which functions as an interpretative framework to explain the war, another reveals a mysterious side of them as a collective, which is significant as part of their portrayal.

1. The rumors of war and Bonaparte and his invasion combined for them with equally vague notions of the Antichrist, the end of the world, and pure freedom.

2. […] in the lives of the peasants in this area there appeared, more noticeably and strongly than in others, those mysterious currents of popular Russian life the causes and meaning of which are inexplicable for contemporaries. One of those phenomena, which had manifested itself among the peasants of that locality twenty years before, was a movement to migrate to some “warm rivers.” Hundreds of peasants, Bogucharovo peasants among them, suddenly began selling their cattle and leaving with their families for somewhere in the southeast. As birds fly somewhere beyond the sea, these people, with their wives and children, made for somewhere there, in the southeast, where none of them had ever been. They made up caravans, bought themselves out one by one, ran away, and drove, and walked there, to the warm rivers. Many were punished, exiled to Siberia, many died on the road of cold and hunger, many came back of themselves, and the movement died down, just as it had begun, without any obvious reasons. But the undercurrents never ceased to flow among these people and were gathering some sort of new forces in order to manifest themselves just as strangely and unexpectedly, and at the same time as simply, naturally, and strongly. Now, in the year 1812, it was noticeable for a man living close to the people that these undercurrents were intensely at work and were close to manifesting themselves. 29

The final addition about the Bogucharovians’ mysterious behaviour and beliefs adds particular depth and complexity to their portrayal. Most likely, it led Tolstoy to revise the initial characteristics of the headman Dron: initially a sinner trying to reform himself and a psychologically complex character loses his individual story to become a witness, participant and a part of the mysterious movement of this people to “warm rivers.” Rodionov dated Tolstoy’s work on the part of the novel that includes variant #184 (the variant includes rumors about enlisting as Cossacks, a new faith, charters from the Tsar,

29 WP 719; T-PSS 11:142-143.
and an oath to Pavel Pavlovich) between the end of 1866 and September 1867.\textsuperscript{30} This means that the passage about the mysterious migration of people was added sometime between 1867 and 1869. These two timeframes (the end of 1866 – September 1867 and 1867-1869) mark two distinct developments in the characterisation of the Bogucharovians. Initially, by means of a number of historical allusions, Tolstoy devised a commune, whose collective biography rendered them as socially active. Then there was a transition to a more mysterious characterisation that was supposed to revise or complicate the logic behind their actions.

\textbf{II. The Bogucharovians within the Social Narrative of “Vol’nost’”}

In just one paragraph Tolstoy hints about the active participation of the Bogucharovians in the socio-political life of the country. This participation is introduced through a number of rumors which place them in the context of peasant disturbances of the late eighteenth, early and mid-nineteenth centuries. The events of the 1850-60s that Tolstoy witnessed (the Crimean War, the Emancipation of the serfs, the Polish uprising) resonated with some events of a similar nature at the time the novel encompasses, and the Bogucharovians’ fictional biography became a place where past and present could intersect.

In Tolstoy’s lifetime there was a major wave of peasant unrest following the proclamation of the Emancipation. As I have noted in the previous chapter, the governing circles anticipated it. In his letter to S.S. Lansky in summer 1858, discussing the project of the installation of temporary governor-generals in the provinces, Alexander II wrote: “What if when new regulations are put into effect and people will see that their expectations, that is, the freedom as they understand it did not happen, might there come

\textsuperscript{30} N.S. Rodionov, “Opisanie rukopisei i korektur, otnosiashchikhsia k ‘Voine i miru,’” \textit{T-PSS} 16:183.
a moment of disappointment for the *narod*?" This question was without a doubt on the mind of every landowner, and Tolstoy was no exception. Landlords found themselves in the most disadvantageous position because they realised that the “moment of disappointment” could potentially take violent forms, and popular discontent would be directed against them first. Their worries were well grounded in a long history of distrust among the serfs of landlords, and Tolstoy shared similar anxieties. They go back to the second half of the 1850s when the revolutionary situation was taking shape in the Russian Empire.

The anticipation of peasant unrest on his own estate made Tolstoy extremely uneasy, and he did everything possible to prevent it. In spring 1856, he convened a meeting with his serfs, at which he proposed to transfer his lands to the village commune at a nominal rent, freeing his serfs from all obligations to him. His peasants rejected the proposal, convinced that all the land would soon belong to them without any rent and that Tolstoy wanted to deceive them. Around the same time Tolstoy wrote a letter to D.N. Bludov about the urgent necessity of the emancipation: “even if it were without land, for the sake of saving the lives of landlords.” In January 1857, he wrote an entry in his diary about agitation among the *narod*: “Rumors about the ukase are nonsense, but there is a commotion among the *narod*” (tolki ob ukase vzدور, no v narode volnenie). During the same year Tolstoy transferred his peasants from barshchina to obrok as a precautionary measure to prevent an uprising in reaction to the upcoming Emancipation.

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31 *Krest’ianskoe dvizhenie v 1861 godu posle otmeny krest'nostnogo prava* 3.
32 Daniel Murphy, “Tolstoy the Teacher: A Biographic Profile,” *Tolstoy and Education* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1992) 54. For a discussion of Tolstoy’s liberal inspiration to facilitate his own peasants’ life and his disillusionment with peasants upon their suspicion of his proposal see also Feuer 138-139.
34 Gusev 138.
He talks about it in his letter to V.P. Botkin from October 21, 1857: “I spent about three months making arrangements in the village, in short, if the emancipation happens tomorrow, I won’t go to the village, and nothing will change there. The peasants pay me for the land, and my own land is cultivated by hired men (svoiu [zemliu] ia obrabatyvaiu vol’nymi).” Even such measures did not give Tolstoy peace of mind, and his correspondence with Hertzen from April 1861, right after the proclamation of the Emancipation, suggests his concern about the potential danger the situation presented for the landlords.

Tolstoy was frustrated with his own serfs due to their lack of appreciation of his best intentions at the beginning of the 1860s, and he generalized this frustration to the peasants as a whole. In 1862 it intensified even more. In May, shortly after his departure to the Samara steppes to improve his health, the police searched the house at Iasnaia Poliana, following a report from an informer that, supposedly, Tolstoy was engaged in political subversion. This episode made the peasants distrust him as a possible criminal, which greatly upset Tolstoy.

35 T-PSS 60: 233 (#94).
36 Tolstoy wrote: “I received letters from two different sources in Russia; they both say that the peasants are definitely not happy. Before they at least had the hope that everything would be fine tomorrow, but now they positively know that for the next two years it still will be bad, and it is clear for them that it won’t be any better then, and that it’s all the masters’ doing.” See Tolstoy’s letter to Herzen from April 9, 1861, T-PSS 60: 377 (#197). Tolstoy’s correspondence and diary entries well after the Emancipation suggest his anxiety about the possibility of the popular unrest and the way it could affect landlords. In May 1865, Tolstoy writes A.E. Bers a letter about the approaching famine and about potential disturbances among the peasants. Although Tolstoy’s letter is not preserved, Bers’s response speaks of Tolstoy’s worries: “Your letter really threw me into panic. God forbid that this catastrophe you write about should happen. It will be terrible, worse than what occurred under Pugachev. But I think there is no real grounds for worries, there might be some kind of local disturbances and various troubles due to the lack of crops, which may trigger some unmerited hostility towards the gentry.” Gusev 310.

37 He wrote about it in a letter to his aunt: “The peasants no longer regard me as an honest man – an opinion I had earned in the course of years – but as a criminal, an incendiary (deiatel’ fal’shivoi money), or a coiner, whose cunning alone has enabled him to escape punishment (kotoryi tol’ko po plutovatosti uvermul’sia).” Murphey 62. The original letter is in T-PSS 60: 435-439. The reason for the report was that the revolutionary ideas were held around Iasnaia Poliana, and the teachers, who taught in Tolstoy’s schools for peasants were believed to have copies of Herzen’s writings. Tolstoy himself met Herzen more than on
For Tolstoy, the general mood of peasants on the eve and shortly after the Emancipation revealed their strong desire to be free from their landlords and their equally strong distrust of their masters. The peasantry explained the unsatisfactory outcome of the long awaited Emancipation as the result of the deceitful planning of their landlords. Another event, similar both in its importance for the narod and in the way it was interpreted by them, occurred at the end of the eighteenth century when on April 5, 1797, Emperor Pavel Petrovich issued a “Three-day barshchina decree,” which stated that the landed gentry could not force their serfs to work for them more than three days a week and which prohibited any labour on Sunday. The serfs interpreted this decree as the Tsar’s granting them freedom, which their landlords did not obey. This explains Tolstoy’s allusion to “Pavel Petrovich in 1797 (“of which it was said that they had already been granted freedom then, but the landowners had taken it away”).

Tolstoy’s letter to P.I. Bartenev from March 31, 1867 suggests his increasing interest in the figure of Pavel and his legislative efforts. Very few sources on Pavel were published during the time and the letter to Bartenev makes it clear that Tolstoy’s knowledge of him came from materials published in The Russian Archive (Russkii arkhiv). However, there is no discussion of Pavel’s “three-day barshchina decree” one occasion during his stay in London. In his letter to his aunt from July 22, he admitted to have copies of The Bell. T-PSS 60: 428-429.

38 The letter shows Tolstoy’s intention to write an historical article about Pavel for The Russian Archive. See “P.I. Bartenevu,” T-PSS 61: 166.
39 Tolstoy wrote: “I know nothing except for what is in the Archive.” T-PSS 61: 166. Six articles discussing Pavel appeared in The Russian Archive before 1867: “Liubopytnye i dostopamiatnye deianiia i anekdoty gosudaria imperatora Pavla Petrovicha (Iz zapisok Bolotova)” (from 1864, p. 54); F.N. Fortunatov, “Po povodu anekdotov Bolotova ob Imperatore Pavle I” (from 1864, p. 471); “Pisma Pavla Petrovicha k Nikolaiu Petrovichu Arkharovu” (from 1864, p. 878); “Rasskazy generala Kotlubitskogo o vremenakh imperatora Pavla I” (from 1866, p. 130); [N.F. Samarin], “IU.A. Neledinskii-Meletskii. Ocherk ego zhizni po semeynym bumagam” (from 1867, p. 101); “Pis’ma vel. Kn. Pavla Petrovicha k gr. Ivanu Grigorevichu Chernyshevu (1769-1776)” (from 1867, p. 197). See T-PSS 61: 166 (f.n.). All materials from The Russina Archive, especially “Liubopytnye i dostopamiatnye deianiia i anekdoty gosudaria imperatora Pavla
there. Tolstoy may have learnt about it from a sixty-page article by M. Semevsky under the title “Sources for Russian History of the Eighteenth Century” ("Material k russkoi istorii XVIII v") that appeared in a March issue (#3) of The Herald of Europe (Vestnik Evropy) from 1867, during the same month of Tolstoy’s correspondence with Bartenev on Pavel. In addition to a short discussion of the decree, Semevsky’s piece discusses the respect the peasants had for their Tsar-batiushka. Although Pavel’s efforts failed to substantially improve the narod’s living conditions, he became symbolic in the historic memory of the narod. Peasants interpreted the decree to mean that the Tsar had granted them freedom and the landlords took it away, and it was manifested in the rumors that more than ever before circulated among the narod. According to Semevsky, Pavel unintentionally further escalated tension between peasants and landlords. Tolstoy made the Bogucharovians the bearer of these memories and a measure of the tension between landlords and peasants.

Since the revolutionary situation in the Russia Empire escalated throughout the 1860s, it was not possible to write about the causes and nature of the most recent popular disturbances openly in the press. Nevertheless, it was on the mind of many, and some (e.g. D. Mordovtsev, S. Solovyev, and M. Pogodin) used a discussion of popular uprisings from a more distant history as an indirect commentary on the current situation. One such article by Solovyev, entitled “Notes on Pretenders in Russia (and Some New Facts about the Pretenders in the Eighteenth Century)” (“Zametka o samozvantsakh v Rossii (i novye svedeniia o samozvantsakh XVIII v),” appeared in issue 2 of The Russian Archive, which was published in 1868 and discussed events of the 1780s in the Russian

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Petrovicha” present Pavel in a very positive light, and it is likely that this particular source played an important part in Tolstoy’s growing admiration for Pavel.

40 M. Semevskii, “Material k russkoi istorii XVIIIv,” Vestnik Evropy 3 (1867): 227 (f.n.).
Empire. This article focuses on the time period that frames the Bogucharovians’ biography in Tolstoy’s novel, specifically the time of their migration to “warm rivers.” Tolstoy most likely was familiar with it and may have used it as a factual source for his peasants’ collective biography.41

Solovyev analyses the nature, causes, consequences and forms of unrest among the serfs towards the end of the century. In his view, every case is linked to the phenomenon of samozvanchestvo (pretenderism). One of the manifestations of it is the circulation of rumors (tolki, slukhi) that the true Tsar is in hiding and has revealed or will reveal himself. These beliefs, according to the historian, suggest two things: the narod’s dissatisfaction with the status quo on the one hand, and its determination to act in order to change it, on the other. Although Solovyev did not see the belief in pretenders as a phenomenon unique to Russia, he argued that its Russian forms did not have counterparts in Europe.42 The circulation of the rumors among the Bogucharovo peasants, especially about the return and subsequent reign of Petr Fedorovich, may suggest the peasants’ dissatisfaction with their social conditions, the growth of agitation among them around 1812, and their readiness to accept the Tsar-pretender, who would restore order in the country.

In his Peasant Disturbances in Central Russia in 1800-1860 (Krestianskoe dvizhenie v tsentral’noi Rossii: 1800-1860), V. Fedorov mentions the growth of

41 Sergei Solov’ev, “Zametki o samozvantsakh v Rossii (i novye svedeniia o samozvantsakh XVIII v),” Russkii arkhiv 2 (1868): 265-28. Biblioteka L’va Nikolaevicha Tolstogo v Iasnoi Poliane shows that Tolstoy had in his library almost all the volumes from Solovyev’s History of Russia from the Earliest Times (IstoriiRossii s drevneishikh vremen), which suggest his interest in the historian’s works. It is therefore very plausible that Tolstoy had read this particular article by Solovyev. Valentin Bulgakov and N. N. Gusev, Biblioteka L’va Nikolaevicha Tolstogo v Iasnoi Poliane: bibliograficheskoe opisanie (Moskva: Kniga, 1972) 254-272. E. Zaidenshnur lists The Russian Archive (from 1865-1869) among the sources Tolstoy used when he was working on the novel. E.E. Zaidenshnur, “Spisok knig, kotorymi pol’zovalsia L.N. Tolstoy vo vremia pisaniia ‘Voiny i mira,’” T-PSS 16:143.

42 Solov’ev, “Zametki o samozvantsakh” 267.
disturbances among the peasantry during 1812. The scholar suggests that every large-scale political event and the rumors about vol’nost that inseparably followed would become an incentive for peasants to fight for their freedom. Mass disturbances, Fedorov claims, were even more prominent in the recently enslaved outskirts of the country.\footnote{Fedorov 79. At the end of the eighteenth century Eastern and most of Western Ukraine were absorbed by Russia under Catherine the Great following the decline of Poland and the abolishment of the Cossack Hetmanate in 1764.} Tolstoy must have come across numerous sources that discussed social unrest at the end of the eighteenth century, and he accurately makes rumors a barometer of the peasants’ attitudes.\footnote{Among the journals that discussed social unrest Fedorov mentions The Russian Archive, Russian Antiquity (Russkaia starina), Kievan Antiquity (Kievskaia starina), The Historical Messenger (Istoricheskii vestnik), The Bygone Past (Byloe), and Works of the Provincial Scholarly Archival Committees (Trudy gubernskikh uchenykh arkhivnykh komissii); see Fedorov 4.}

Solovyev also discusses the effect of rumors on the collective mind of the narod. He mentions a few about Peter III in the late eighteenth century that circulated in Voronezh province, Sloboda-Ukraine province, and other provinces. One of them concerned a fugitive soldier Mamykin, who proclaimed on his way to Astrakhan in 1769 that Peter III was alive, and that “he would regain his throne, and his rule will privilege the peasants” (primet opiat’ tsarstvie i budet l’gotit’ krestianam).\footnote{Solov’ev, “Zametki” 276.} This instance resonates with the rumor about the anticipated reign of Pyotr Fedorovich that Tolstoy inserted later into the Bogucharovo text.

Another interesting aspect of Solovyev’s article is the petition he quotes that the gentry of Kievan province (guberniia) submitted to the empress in 1783 about the mass flight of serfs to the Don Cossack villages (Donskie stanitsy), to Tavria oblast, and to Ekaterinoslavsk province. The gentry complained that their peasants had fled to find freedom as well as to avoid paying taxes. The cause of the unrest was the rumors (slukhi)
that “all the serfs had received complete freedom (sovershennaya vol’nost’) to relocate wherever they wanted.”

According to Solovyev, their flight was one reason Catherine introduced serfdom in Ukraine, and the article justifies the Empress’s actions that were highly debated in and after 1783. The concept “sovershennaya vol’nost’” mentioned by Solovyev echoes the rumors (added later in Tolstoy's text) about “chistaia volia” that circulated among the peasants of Bogucharovo. Through the choice of the phrase “chistaia volia,” which in 1860s could be read as an unequivocal allusion to the popular insurrection in the village Bezdna where the rumors circulated among the peasants about being granted complete freedom (chistaia volia) by the Tsar, that is, complete independence from the duties and responsibilities and their right to land, Tolstoy invests the Bogucharovo text with historical memories of the recent and more distant past.

Solovyev’s discussion of peasant disturbances focuses on the regions with the most unstable socio-political situations, the regions that he calls “okrainy,” predominantly covering the southwest borderlands of the Empire. His interest in the lands on the periphery of the symbolic space of the Russian heartland is linked to the question of the multiethnic composition of the Empire that was in the spotlight after the peasant

47 Kapnist’s “Ode on Slavery” (“Oda na rabstvo”) is the most prominent example of protest against Catherine’s colonialist actions towards Ukraine. For the discussion of the flight as one of the causes of serfdom in Ukraine see Solov’ev 280. In his argument, Solovyev had in mind Catherine’s decree from May 3, 1883 (section eight) that discusses the measures to be taken to prevent the mass flight of the peasants in a number of regions. See “O podatiakh s kupechestva, meshchan, krest’ian i drugikh obyvatelei gubernii Kievskoi, Chernigovskoi, Novgorodskoi-Severskoi, Khar’kovskoi, Mogilevskoi, Polotskoi, Rizhskoi, Ravel’sko i Vyborgskoi; o shore poshlin s del i s prodavaemykh nedvizhimykh imenii v Guberniakh Malorosissikh i o razprostraneni na onyia Gubernii prava vykupat nedvizhimyia imenii blizhaishym rodstvennikam, po obshchimgosudarsvennym ukazanimi,” Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiskoi Imperii tom. 21: s 1781 po 1783 (Sankt-Peterburg: Tipografiia II Otdeleniia Sobstvennoi Ego Imperatorskago Velichestva Kantseliarii, 1830) 907-908.
48 “Raport svitskogo general-maiora A.S. Apraksina Aleksandru II o volneniakh krestian v Spasskom u. i o rasstrele ikh v s. Bezdne 16 aprelia 1861g.” Krestianskoie dvizhenie v 1861 godu posle otmeny krepostnogo prava 67. The document was also published in The Bell 124 from 1862 (pp 1031-1034) where Tolstoy could have read it.
disturbances in the Kiev province in the last years of the Crimean War and also during
the Polish Uprising of 1863-1864.\textsuperscript{49} Tolstoy’s novel also participates in the discussion of
the national core of the Empire within “less Russian peripheries.” He introduces a
distinctive social organism with its own physiognomy and collective biography and
centers a single instance of the rebellion around it. Although the Bogucharovians are
represented as symbolic of the \textit{narod} as a whole, their peculiarity draws attention to the
question of cultural and ethnic homogeneity of Russia. No matter how symbolic the name
“Bogucharovo” may appear, it may have represented for Tolstoy an actual geographic
location.

A nineteenth-century source named \textit{Urban Populations in the Russian Empire}
(\textit{Gorodskie naseleniia v Rossiiskoi Imperii}) mentions the town of Boguchar.\textsuperscript{50} Aleksandr
Afanasiev, one of the most prominent Russian folklorists of the time, was born there, but
this was probably not how Tolstoy knew about it. N. Gusev’s \textit{The Annals of Life and
Works of Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy} (\textit{Letopis’ zhizni i tvorchestva L’va Nikolaevicha
Tolstogo}) contains a section for September 1, 1862 with information on the June issue of
\textit{Iasnaia Poliana} with a piece entitled “The Boguchar School for February and March”
(\textit{Bogucharskaia shkola za Fevral’ i mart}).\textsuperscript{51} In the late 1850s and early 1860s Tolstoy
was actively engaged with the question of popular education, which later on included the
establishment of schools for peasants. A quite successful school was located in Boguchar.
The fact of Tolstoy’s physical presence in the province remains to be proved, but he most

\textsuperscript{49} For the discussion of how the ethnic question within the \textit{Zapadnyi Krai} (territories included a portion of
Ukraine, historical Lithuania and Belorussia) arose and responses to it within the context of the Polish
Question, see Maiorova, “The Polish Question and the War Topos,” and “The Polish Rebellion as Enemy
Invasion” in her \textit{From the Shadows of Empire} 96-106.

\textsuperscript{50} For the section on Boguchar see \textit{Gorodskie naseleniia v Rossiiskoi Imperii, sostavlena po prikazu

\textsuperscript{51} Gusev 272.
definitely knew about it. In 1779, Boguchar district (Bogucharsky uezd) was a part of Voronezh province. In 1802 it became a part of Sloboda-Ukrainian province (one of the four provinces Catherine II annexed into the Russian Empire in her first four years in power). And in 1803 it again became a part of Voronezh province. If we assume that Bogucharovo was based on the actual historical locality, then the fact that its geography covered the two provinces that Solovyev discussed in his article as the locus of peasant disturbances and rumors about Peter III is significant. Although Bolkonsky’s estate was already called “Bogucharovo” in early drafts, it may have acquired its more detailed and more complex biography under the influence of Solovyev’s article.

III. The Bogucharovo Rebellion within the Tradition of Portraying “Bunty na Rusi”

Shklovsky suggests that Tolstoy intentionally conceals the real reasons for the Bogucharovians’ insubordination. This “suppression of historical material” as well as his choice to make the muzhiks abstract, devoid of personal life stories, indicates Tolstoy’s participation in a literary tradition that presented peasant revolts in a way that rendered them as “senseless” (bessmyslenyi), that is, as lacking apparent logic. Although Shklovsky does not discuss this tradition in detail, he is likely to have in mind the literature produced in the aftermath of the Emancipation of the serfs and the Polish uprising when there was mass peasant unrest in the Russian countryside. Cultural and political debates that unfolded around the questions of Russian historical developments in the new post-Emancipation era infiltrated Russian literature of the 1860s, and the question of peasant insubordination was addressed differently depending on an individual author’s ideological affiliation. Authors of anti-nihilist novels often inserted in their

52 Gorodskie naseleniia v Rossiiiskoi Imperii 437-440.
53 Shklovskii 85.
works scenes of actual failed peasant unrest or failed attempts at unrest in order to attack members of revolutionary circles and their ideology. In their works, Russian *bunt* was presented as the result of instigators either native (Russian revolutionaries, often students) or foreign (Polish provocateurs) and not as an expression of the *narod’s* will. In such portrayals, the idea of dissatisfaction with the post-emancipation conditions of life is injected from outside and not originating within the community described. The rebellions are doomed to fail precisely because of the conflict between the *narod’s* true convictions and those that provocateurs impose on them. Such or similar dynamics are present in A. Pisemsky’s *Troubled Sea* (*Vzbalamuchenoe more*; 1863), V. Kliushnikov’s *Mirage* (*Marevo*; 1864), N. Leskov’s *No Way Out* (*Nekuda*; 1864), V. Krestovsky’s *Panurge’s Herd* (*Panurgovoe stado*; 1869), and F. Dostoevsky’s *The Possessed* (*Besy*; 1872) among others. The first two novels include scenes of rebellion that bear undeniable similarity with the structural composition of Tolstoy’s Bogucharovian instigation and as such invite comparative analysis.

Both Pisemsky’s *Troubled Sea* and Kliushnikov’s *Mirage* were published in Mikhail Katkov’s *Russian Messenger*, where *War and Peace* appeared. The scene of rebellion in Pisemsky is depicted in part 5, chapters 11 through 13. The action takes place after the Emancipation of the serfs. The death of their female land-owner has left the peasants under the impression that they had been freed. The protest arose as a result of a young man from Petersburg instigating the muzhiks to disobey and instilling in them the idea of freedom from the landlords. A nobleman named Varegin makes every effort to bring the muzhiks to reason in order to prevent blood from spilling as armed soldiers enter the estate to appease the rioting mob. Saltykov sums up the scene with blatant
criticism in his review “Petersburg Theatres” (“Peterburgskie teatry”), saying that the peasants behave in a very stupid manner, and the *bunt* ends with a few of them being whipped.\(^{54}\)

The locus of Kliushnikov’s novel *Mirage* is the southwestern borders of the Russian Empire before the Polish uprising of 1863. The *bunt* scene is depicted in the chapter “Mediator” (*posrednik*). On hearing about the peasant rebellion against their landlord (*pan*), the main protagonist Rusanov, without waiting for the armed force that had been summoned to intervene, tries to reason with the rioting mob to disperse. The peasants deny Rusanov’s conjecture that they have risen against the monarch and express their loyalty to the supreme authority of the Tsar. The incentive for the revolt is in fact a belief that the Tsar had granted them freedom (*volia*). A lord (*panych*) by the name of Mikolo, who is also a student (*gimnazist*), young revolutionary and an instigator of the unrest, advises the peasants not to listen to their landlords and says that the squires have rebelled against the Tsar for having emancipated the serfs. When the armed forces come to the farmstead (*khutor*), the muzhiks beg Rusanov, the novel’s protagonist, to protect them. He instructs the peasants to go home and that is how the rebellion ends without serious consequences.

In Pisemsky’s and Kliushnikov’s novels, the rebellion is resolved through the intervention of a nobleman, who, alone, is able to expose instigators and to ruin their plans. Likewise, without waiting for military help, Rostov disperses the crowd in Bogucharovo single-handedly. At Bogucharovo too, it seems there is no clear logic that motivates the peasants to rebel; instead, there is confusion and misunderstanding among them. Similarly, there is a sense of an external force intervening in the affairs: in

\(^{54}\) Saltykov, “Peterburgskie teatry,” in *S-PSS* 5:166.
Troubled Sea it is revolutionary youth, in Mirage it is the Polish party, and in War and Peace the French can be viewed this way as they spread false rumors and the promise of freedom among the peasantry. The bunt scenes in Pisemsky’s and Kliushnikov’s novels serve the single function of unmasking those behind the rebellion and are not at all concerned with the rebels per se. The two novels present what I call “a single narrative” of bunt. Muzhiks here are shown as confused, yet their devotion to the foundation of the Russian autocracy is not in doubt. On the contrary, it is reaffirmed, and the confusion is resolved with no question left unanswered. Despite undeniable structural similarity among the scenes of the three novels, Tolstoy complicates the “single narrative” of a rebellion and invests it with additional layers of meaningful content.

In War and Peace, unlike in Troubled Sea and Mirage, the tension between landlords and muzhiks is the nucleus of the scene of the rebellion. The two worlds seem to exist on two parallel planes that do not come in contact except through the mediator Dron. While Tolstoy allows the reader to closely follow Maria’s emotional perception of the development of the rebellion and to read her every thought, all that is going on in the peasants’ heads, their intentions and motivation remain completely obscure. Tolstoy deliberately distances his readers from the muzhiks, makes them see the scene not from their perspective, but from that of the landlords. This tension saturates the narrative, yet Tolstoy impregnates the Bogucharovo text with details that assist in understanding it as well as the muzhiks’ reasons for their disobedience.

The folk of Bogucharovo comprise a commune that, contrary to that of the Bald Hills, functions with relative independence from landlords. The estate is called “zaglaznoe imenie” (an estate that is run in the absence of a landlord) and by definition
suggests very little contact with the landlords. An owner of such estate would not live there and it would be run through a headman (starosta) or a steward (upravliaiushchy).\textsuperscript{55} Tolstoy emphasizes the lack of contact and thus of mutual understanding across the class divide by saying that very few landlords lived in the neighbouring villages. These isolated ways of life based on a long tradition explain the peasants’ suspicious attitude to Andrei Bolkonsky’s innovations as well as their hostile attitude towards Nikolai Rostov’s presence. Tolstoy let his own unresolved anxiety and frustration color the narrative, as he found himself in a position when his own serfs doubted their masters’ sincerity when he attempted to introduce some changes in his own estate. His diary entries show this uneasiness well, and it penetrates even more conspicuously in the draft than in the final novel.

| They differed from them in speech, dress, which was more coarse, disposition, and distrust and hostility towards the squires (i nedoveriem i nedobrozhelatel’stvom k pomeshchikam). […] Prince Andrei’s last stay in Bogucharovo, with his innovations – clinics, schools, and the reducing of the quitrent (obrok) – had not softened their disposition (nravy), but, on the contrary, had increased in them the traits of character which the old prince called wildness (dikost’).\textsuperscript{57} | They differed from them in speech, dress, and disposition. […] Prince Andrei’s last stay in Bogucharovo, with his innovations – clinics, schools, and the reducing of the quitrent (obrok) – as it always was and will be, only increased their distrust towards the squires (kak i vsegda bylo i budet, tol’ko |

The advance of the enemy provoked a different response in this “zaglaznoe imenie” than at Bald Hills. Tolstoy underscores it, alluding to a motivation for this line of behaviour. For the purpose of conveying the general atmosphere and attitudes among the peasants, the narrative relies on eyewitness account of Altapych, who communicates rumors that he heard about what was happening in the area. He records agitation among the *narod*. Contrary to what was happening in Bald Hills, where “over a forty-mile radius all the peasants were going away (leaving their villages to be devastated by the Cossacks),” the peasants in the steppe region of Bogucharovo “had communications (*snosheniia*) with the French, received some sort of leaflets that circulated among them, and were staying put (*ostavalis’ na mestakh*).” Altapych also learnt that a muzhik Karp, an influential person in the Bogucharovo community, spread the news that “the Cossacks devastated villages abandoned by their inhabitants, but that the French did not touch them.” Instead, the French advised that the peasants should not leave their houses as “no harm would be done to them,” and that the muzhiks would be paid for whatever the French would take. As a proof of the French soldiers’ honesty, another muzhik brought from a village of Visloukhovo, where the enemy was camped, a hundred roubles in banknotes for hay “not knowing they were counterfeit.”

The rebellion in Bogucharovo is not violent and is presented as the peasants’ disobedience in three instances: the refusal to give horses to Maria; the refusal to take

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57 Completed text; *WP* 718-19; *T-PSS* 11:142.
56 Draft; *T-PSS* 14:170.
58 *WP* 719-720; *T-PSS* 11: 144.
bread that Maria offers, having heard that there was a lack of provisions; and the refusal to leave Bogucharovo. This all supposedly questions the peasants’ loyalty to the Tsarist’s authority that Rostov represented. The last two aspects are most important and require some explanation that Tolstoy chose not to provide.

Shklovsky addresses the question of the peasants’ refusal to take bread, which he suggests appears unreasonable and unmotivated. He explains it as the muzhiks’ reaction to an attempt “to take the peasants off their land and turn them into those who work for bread”; that is, by refusal, they protest against a new form of economic exploitation.\textsuperscript{59} Shklovsky concludes that Tolstoy concealed the peasants’ motivation in order to present the entire rebellion scene as illogical. Although this is an oversimplification of Tolstoy’s artistic technique, Shklovsky makes an important connection of the peasants’ protest with the question of land. What the text does make clear is that the peasants refuse to accept “bread” that is offered as a guarantee for Maria’s promise to take care of them upon their abandoning Bogucharovo in anticipation of the French army’s arrival. They say to Maria: “Much obliged for your goodness, only it’s not for us to go taking the master’s grain \textit{(khleb)}.” The peasants insist that they do not need the grain and that they will not abandon their houses: “What, us abandon everything? We don’t agree. We don’t agree… We are sorry for you, but we don’t agree. You go by yourself.” And later: “See what clever teaching, follow her into bondage! Wreck your houses and go into servitude! \textit{(Vish’, nauchila lovko, za nei v krepost’ idi! Doma razori da v kabalu i stupai!)}\textsuperscript{60} The Russian word \textit{kabala} indicates a bond of obligation that put a worker in a personal or

\textsuperscript{59} Shklovsky believes that Tolstoy alludes here to the economic system of latifundia \textit{(latifundiiia)} that was supposed to replace barshchina. See Shklovskii 83. Latifundium is a large agricultural estate cultivated for high profit that uses a large number of peasants.

\textsuperscript{60} \textit{WP} 728-29; \textit{T-PSS} 11:153.
material dependency from the lender. The acceptance of “bread/grain” would imply the acceptance of economic relationship that requires the removal of peasants from their land. Thus Maria’s proposal threatens their sense of freedom and belonging. The prospect of their physical removal reinforces in them the sense of the protection of their home as their responsibility (Doma razori da v kabalu i stupai). Here again the Bogucharovians are set apart from the peasants at Bald Hills, who were “leaving their villages to be devastated by the Cossacks” (predostavliaia kazakam razoriat’ svoi derevni). The same verb “razoriat’/razorit’” (to devastate) is repeatedly used in the peasants’ argumentation to reiterate their protest against allowing their houses to be ravaged.

The final version of the text contains insinuation that abandoned estates were subjected to more damage not so much from the outside enemy as from Cossacks. Through the rumors, it is suggested that the peasants and the French had reached some kind of agreement that guaranteed safety to the peasants and their property. The refusal to leave Bogucharovo, however, is understood as treason against the Tsarist order, about which Altapych says: “No empty talk with me! His Excellency Prince Andrei Nikolaich himself has ordered me to have all these people sent away and not left to the enemy, and there’s a tsar’s order for it. And whoever stays is a traitor to the tsar.”61 Does Tolstoy hint here that the peasants’ disobedience is a manifestation of anti-Tsarist attitudes at a time of social and political instability and change? An answer to this question requires some investigation into Tolstoy’s stance in the debate about the narod’s devotion to the monarch or lack thereof.

The question of the peasants’ loyalty was brought up in discussions of the Napoleonic war. In his *Diary of Guerrilla Operations of 1812 (Dnevnik partizanskikh*  

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61 WP 721; T-PSS 11: 145.
deistvii), a work with which Tolstoy was familiar, Denis Davydov writes that the hatred of Napoleon was not unanimous among the narod, and that some peasants did not hesitate to use the situation to their own advantage and take revenge against their masters, which was often done with the help of French soldiers. The situation was even more intense on the southwestern borders of the Russian Empire. Serfdom on many of those territories had been relatively recent, and the Napoleonic invasion was associated for the narod with regaining their freedom. The official historiography celebrated the victory of the Russian people over Napoleon and tended to exclude anything that presented the country as fragmented.

The discussion of national self-liberation became particularly heated during the Polish Uprising of 1863-64. The Polish question put into perspective the multiethnic composition of the Empire. Maiorova has argued that during those years the memories of 1812 were used to consolidate the Russian nation and reinforce the bond of the Russian narod with the monarch. While externalizing the Poles into Russia’s enemy, the nationalistic press and the writers with nationalistic inclinations presented the Russian narod as a single uniform body. Such is, for example, the portrayal of the rebellious Ukrainian peasants in Kliushnikov’s Mirage. While exposing the Polish party’s participation in “confusing” the minds of the peasants, the author underscores their loyalty to the Tsar and their hostility towards both Polish and Russian agitators. Gromeka’s “Kievan Disturbances in 1855,” discussed in Chapter I, was also written in line with this rhetoric. His conclusions that “the Ukrainian people are devoted to the

62 Shklovskii 65.
63 Maiorova 106, 113.
Russian Tsar and do not want an English, French, or any other Tsar,” were supposed to have been read within the context of the Polish question.64

In light of Gromeka’s piece, especially his discussion of the narod misinterpreting the manifesto of the Tsar on the summoning of the national militia, Tolstoy’s reference in the Bogucharovians’ biography to the rumors about enlisting as Cossacks, which they understood as a certain guarantee of freedom, becomes more meaningful. Tolstoy transposes the memories of recent history onto the narrative of Bogucharovo to find an answer for himself to the question about the narod’s devotion to the Russian Tsar at the time of the Napoleonic war and if they were ready to accept the “French Tsar” in his place. Thus it is probable that the popular disturbances during the Crimean War, as well as in response to the Emancipation of the serfs, and during the Polish Uprising informed the way Tolstoy was rethinking this question through the narrative of the rebellion in Bogucharovo.

In early drafts, Tolstoy suggested in passing that for a short time the peasants were loyal to Napoleon and saw in him the promise of freedom.

They were ready to accept Napoleon, giving them freedom and paying them ten roubles for bread with counterfeit banknotes. But when they heard the words of princess Maria and Tushin, they said: “where Princess Maria goes, they’ll follow” (kuda kniazhna, tuda i oni).65

According to Shklovsky, many peasants welcomed Napoleon because they believed he would free them, and Tolstoy suppressed this fact.66 In the final version, the peasants’ readiness to accept Napoleon was replaced with the mention of rumors about the

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64 Gromeka 45.
65 T-PSS 14:83.
66 Shklovskii 76-85
Bogucharovians’ dealings (snosheniia) with the French and false banknotes that the peasants were supposedly receiving from them. Feuer has argued that because Tolstoy “could only speak indirectly on the emancipation question in War and Peace, he evidently judged it unsuitable to suggest that the peasants, even momentarily, were demanding freedom. And, at the same time, because he believed in emancipation, not as a political demand of the peasants but as a moral act of the landowner, Tolstoy must have found it unthinkable to identify the cause of freedom with Napoleon.”

The suppression of the peasants’ acceptance of Napoleon places Tolstoy’s thought in agreement with Gromeka’s argument. Gromeka was Tolstoy’s personal acquaintance, and whether or not he exerted influence on Tolstoy in this question, whether or not Tolstoy read Gromeka’s article or Saltykov’s review of it, it is likely that during their meeting in December 1858 (shortly after the disturbances in the countryside), this question made its way into their conversation. Thus, indirectly, through his novel, Tolstoy participated in a larger political debate of his own time. At the same time, Tolstoy’s own view that crystallised in this debate was likely to make him rethink the peasants’ motivations and revise his thoughts on them. The peasants’ distrust of the landlords did not reflect similar attitudes towards the Tsar and the acceptance of Napoleon conflicted with the image of the peasantry and their devotion to the monarch. Tolstoy not only suppressed historical fact of the peasants’ willingness to accept Napoleon, but he emphasised the impossibility of this acceptance being a conscious decision (and not just momentary confusion) in the final text through his later insertions.

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67 Feuer 149-150.
68 Maude mentions that in December 1858, S.S. Gromeka invited Tolstoy to a bear hunt, and Tolstoy accepted the invitation. See Maude 183.
of two rumors: one that associated Napoleon with the Antichrist, the other about the anticipated return of Petr Fedorovich.69

Afanasy Shchapov, a scholar of Old Believers and the author of *Russian schism of Old Believers* (Russkii raskol staroobriadstva; 1859), which Tolstoy owned, linked the idea of the liberation of the serfs in the mind of the *narod* with a larger conceptual framework that absorbed different myths.70 Liberation and salvation were inseparable for the mythologically-inclined popular mind and were placed within a larger end-times narrative. Through his revision, Tolstoy makes Napoleon an actor in this popular narrative in the perception of the *narod* and divorces him completely from being an agent of freedom, stressing, in this way, that the principle of liberation cannot come other than from within Russia.

Apocalyptic attitudes, evoked by the war, also characterize God’s people in the text.71 Their beliefs are linked to other occult beliefs in the novel (e.g., the banter at Anna Scherer’s in the opening scene of *War and Peace*, in which she identifies Napoleon with the Antichrist).72 Such rumors among the nobility accurately render the historical atmosphere at the beginning of the nineteenth century.73 In a more complex way the identification of the Antichrist with Napoleon is problematized through Pierre’s understanding of his mission to put an end to the rule of the beast. Pierre artificially constructs his own eschatology with his leading role in it, and, in the end, fails in his role as a saviour. The beliefs of the Bogucharovians and God’s people present a sharp contrast

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69 *WP* 719; *T-PSS* 11:142-143.
70 *Biblioteka L’va Nikolaevicha Tolstogo v Iasnoi Poliane* 482.
71 Medzhibovskaya maintains that “Maria’s holy vagrants blather about apocalypses in a mindless manner.” See Medzhiboyskaya 88.
72 *WP* 3; *T-PSS* 9: 3 (Bk I, Part 1: ch. 1).
73 For the discussion of the perception of Napoleon as the Antichrist in Europe, see Michael A. Pesenson, “Napoleon Bonaparte and Apocalyptic Discourse in Early Nineteenth-Century Russia,” *The Russian Review* 65 (July 2006): 373-392.
to the beliefs of the nobility. The latter are ideas dictated by the fashion of the day, and the former are sacred ideals. While the latter are openly satirized, the former are linked to the indigenous spirituality, rooted deeply in the narod’s collective consciousness. By briefly mentioning the Antichrist, Tolstoy interpolates a complex eschatological perception of the events in the mind of the narod, which associates the French Emperor not with the principle of liberation, but, rather, with a threat that in moments of crisis brings people together. In the narrative of the Apocalypse, confronting the Antichrist is a liberating experience, and in the popular mind, spiritual liberation is inseparable from the physical. Discussing prevailing attitudes among the narod around 1812, Fedorov has argued that “in the consciousness of the people, the emancipation was supposed to come as a logical consequence of liberation of the country from the French army and as a reward for deliverance of the country from the external enemy.”

The peasants’ anticipation of the Russian Tsar-deliverer (Petr Fedorovich), conceptualized among them as a rightful ruler bringing long-awaited freedom, only reinforces the idea of a national principle being the only possible path to liberty. Through this rumor, of course, Tolstoy alludes to what in his discussion of popular attitudes in Kievan province Pogodin calls fuel (goriuchee veshchestvo) abounding along the southwest border and that could manifest itself when the narod’s endurance comes to an end. The peasants of Bogucharovo have a complex character, and their choices are not devoid of logic, but to the contrary, are governed by it. Their rebellion is not a manifestation of a century-long class feud, although the narrative is saturated with this tension, nor it is a way out for their “goriuchee veshchestvo.” To the contrary, Tolstoy

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74 Fedorov 87.
endows the commune with a voice (although inaudible and incomprehensible for outsiders) and the ability to think independently.

The inability to understand the narod and its motivation is another important vector of the Bogucharovo narrative that makes the novel stand apart from those by Pisemsky and Kliushnikov. Without a doubt, the rebellion scene purposefully features the lack of understanding on both sides and is, to a certain degree, an outlet for Tolstoy’s personal experience with his own serfs, but it is not limited to it. There is another aspect of a rebellion discourse of the late 1850s and 1860s in which, I believe, Tolstoy partakes. Post-emancipation rebellions in the Russian countryside frightened many landlords and convinced them that the most optimal means to deal with such rebellions was through soldiers who effectively and promptly restored order and punished the insubordinate. The abuse of military power was a commonplace and became a point of criticism for writers such as Saltykov-Shchedrin, Pogodin, Herzen, and Iakushkin among others. In their writings, they question the concept of bunt and suggest giving more thought to the narod’s motivation behind each case.

Herzen addresses this question in My Past and Thoughts, in his discussion of “Potato riots” (kartofel’nye bunty), usually seen as an anti-serfdom movement from the 1830s and 1840s. The reason for protest was the forced introduction of potato cultivation in Russia by Pavel Kisilev, the Imperial Minister of State Properties. The government selected the plots from the peasants’ land with the most fertile soil and enforced brutal punishment if they did not plant potatoes in them. Potato riots became a mass protest throughout the Russian countryside and in ethnically non-Russian provinces as well and
were often suppressed by the military. Many peasants were shot as a result of such “pacification measures,” and many more were convicted and exiled to Siberia.

Herzen focuses on one such riot in the Kazan and Viatka provinces and explains the peasants’ reasoning for refusing to plant potatoes. He calls the whole process of implementation of the “ground apple” (zemlianye iabloki, the term used for potato in the eighteenth century) “potato terror” because it was imposed from above. By order of the Ministry, “central pits” were dug in the ground to serve as a natural container for the potatoes to be planted in the spring. When spring came, the peasants of these provinces refused to plant “frozen potatoes,” as it seemed nonsensical to them and was in general regarded as an insult to their labour. This refusal was perceived as a bunt, and escalated into a clash between the peasants and armed troops. Herzen justifies and explains the peasants’ actions while severely criticizing the authorities for refusing to see the actual cause of the peasants’ insubordination.76

Pogodin, like Herzen, maintains that if the cause of a bunt is not properly understood and is treated with force, it may lead to consequences that otherwise could have been avoided. Pogodin tells a story that resonates with the Bogucharovians’ biography about peasants in Kiev province, who, in order to escape serfdom, wanted to enlist as Cossacks but, instead, were punished as rebels and sent to Siberia: “To be delivered from their landlords, a few thousand peasants in Kievan province decided to enlist as Cossacks in order to die for their fatherland, and they were dispersed with

cannons, delivered to the military court, and exiled for their noble gesture to Siberia.”

Pogodin’s piece predates Gromeka’s account of “Kievan Disturbances” and is one of the first to address the question outside the frame of nationalistic narrative that took shape during the Polish Uprising.

Pavel Iakushkin (1822-1872), a Russian writer and ethnographer, was particularly interested in the question of peasant insubordination, and he wrote about it in his two best known works, both published in The Contemporary (“Sovremennik”): “Great is the God of the Russian Land” (“Velik bog zemli russkoi”; 1863) and “Rebellions in Rus” (“Bunty na Rusi”; 1866). In them, he shows the mood of the narod before and after the Emancipation and critiques the authorities for their severe punitive measures with regard to the rebels. Iakushkin’s second piece stands out among works on popular rebellions since not only does it unfold around the theme of their social nature and the Tsarist illusions about the peasants, but it also points in Aesopian language to the fact that the tension between the peasants and their landlords was to the advantage of the authorities. Although it was a taboo topic in the press for obvious reasons, the idea was shared among the nobility, including Tolstoy.

To show how the word bunt is often abused without even a precedent requiring suppressive measures, Iakushkin gives an amusing account of a Russian official (chinovnik) in the Poltava region who decided to test the narod’s “spirit” (dukh naroda) and their devotion to the Russian Tsar. Having acquired a fake passport, a man entered a

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77 Pogodin “O vliianii vneshnei politiki na vnutrenniuiu” 264.
78 “Great is the God of the Russian Land” appeared in #1-2 of The Contemporary from 1863. “Rebellions in Rus” was published in #3 of Sovremennik from 1866.
79 See my discussion of “the Letter of the Nobility of Podolsk” in Chapter I. In her book, Feuer also discusses the tension between the authorities and the gentry within the project emancipation. She mentions that Tolstoy was particularly agitated by the injustice to the gentry that was promulgated by the government in their attempt to take all the credit for the reform for which the gentry alone was preparing the way since the time of Catherine the Great. See Feuer 140-141.
tavern and introduced himself as a Pole, showing the fake document. People in the tavern met this introduction with indifference, after which the man said that he had come to rebel against the Tsar. This time, the man’s statement infuriated the muzhiks, and he was hit in the face. The man’s showing his real documents to the muzhiks only intensified their suspicion. They tied him up and brought him to the authorities in the nearest town. Iakushkin ironically concludes that as a “zealot of social order” (revnitel’ obshchestvennogo pokoia), he should have been happy with the state of “popular spirit,” but instead, he stated that “the muzhiks rebelled and beat him.” For Iakushkin, such misrepresentation of bunt was a commonplace in Russia: the gentry saw riots everywhere without understanding that the narod had only one desire – to relay their concerns or complaints to the Tsar, that is, to be heard.80

Tolstoy makes Nikolai Rostov suppress the rebellion as a soldier would. His actions are consistent with those by commanding officers in numerous accounts of suppression of peasant riots, including Gromeka’s “Kievan Disturbances.” Tolstoy leaves the Bogucharovians’ motivations to rebel obscure, letting the reader either perceive it as nonsensical or see complexities within it. Unlike Pisemsky and Kliushnikov, however, he imbeds the Bogucharovo text with the possibility of reading the rebellion differently.

IV. A Non-Single Narrative as Tolstoy’s Artistic Technique

In his “Notes on Pretenders in Russia,” Solovyev approaches the material as an historian. He studies the attitudes of serfs, analyzes their causes, locates the source of such attitudes, and provides an example to illustrate his theory about the overall nature of Russian bunt. Tolstoy does something totally different in his Bogucharovo text. He shows the attitudes of the peasantry and reveals a way for a reader to understand and interpret

the causes, while restraining his own authorial presence and silencing his own voice. This removal of the author from the text is at the core of his artistic technique.

The timeframe within which Tolstoy introduced his final revisions as well as the source of influence may shed more light on the development of Tolstoy both as a thinker and a writer. According to Boris Eikhenbaum, in the late 1860s Tolstoy closely interacted with a group of people with Slavophile leanings known as the “Tolstoyan circle.” These included S.S. Urusov, M.P. Pogodin, Iu. F. Samarin, and S.A. Iuryev.\textsuperscript{81} Tolstoy’s correspondence with Pogodin on philosophical and historical themes began in 1868. Eikhenbaum has demonstrated the influence of Pogodin’s \textit{Historical Aphorisms} (\textit{Istoricheskie aforizmy}; 1836) on Tolstoy’s philosophy of history.\textsuperscript{82} Pogodin’s aphorism about the migration of peoples is thematically and ideologically close to Tolstoy’s own thoughts on the subject.

Take a look at the river in spring just before it opens up: how calm and still are its captive waters! Suddenly the ice cracked, the water rose, and the ripped out chunks dashed in a rapid flow, one over another, to the distant mouth of the river. This is the universal movement of peoples in the fourth and fifth centuries. But who gave them that first impetus? Why did they, calm at their places until then, suddenly, like rings in an electric chain, became imbued with a single force and rushed wondering who knows where, as if out of control? And then everything settled down, calmed down! To catch moments like this is an intricate task for

\textsuperscript{82} Eikhenbaum 201.
Historians-Philosophers; to depict them is the beautiful task for the Artist-Historians.\textsuperscript{83}

Eikhenbaum notes the close correspondence between this aphorism and Tolstoy’s interpretation in the epilogues of Napoleon’s campaign as a migration of people from west to east, after which the return movement from east to west had to follow. He asserts Pogodin’s influence on the changes to the historical-philosophical side of the novel that Tolstoy introduced at a later stage of his work.

By elaborating on Eikhenbaum’s argument, an assumption can be made that the changes to the Bogucharovo episode were made at the same time (in or after 1868) under Pogodin’s influence. The peasants’ migration to “warm rivers” represents the historical moment of mass movement to the southeast and back, which fits well into ideas expressed in the epilogues. Moreover, there are ideological and stylistic parallels between Tolstoy’s passage and Pogodin’s aphorism. On the other hand, though, the passage also lexically and stylistically resembles Solovyev’s description of the peasants’ mass flight in his “Notes on Pretenders in Russia” as if the Bogucharovo text had absorbed some elements of both pieces – the historical fact of mass movement from Solovyev and the mode of artistic representation from Pogodin.

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<th>Pogodin</th>
<th>Tolstoy</th>
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<td>Why did they […] suddenly (vdrug) […]like rings in an electric chain (kak kol’tsa elektricheskoi tsepi) […] rushed wondering who knows where (ustremilis’ kuda glaza gliadeli)</td>
<td>Hundreds of peasants […] suddenly (vdrug) began selling their cattle and leaving with their families for somewhere in the southeast. […] As birds fly somewhere beyond the sea, these people, with their wives and children, made for</td>
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\textsuperscript{83} Mikhail Pogodin, \textit{Istoricheskie aforizmy} (M.: Universitetskaia tipografiia, 1836) 84-85.
In Pogodin’s idiom, Tolstoy here is both an historian-philosopher and an artist-historian. He catches a moment in the history of the people (the fact of mass flight) and strips it of factual flesh in his literary representation and weaves it into the more complex philosophical fabric of the novel. The continuous movement of peoples and the impossibility of understanding the hidden impulses that drive them occupy an important place in Tolstoy’s philosophy of history and receive extensive attention in the epilogues, in which the Napoleonic campaign is presented as a recurring historical pattern of movement “from west to east and back from east to west.” As David Welch concludes, Tolstoy never answers the question “What force moves people?,” but rather he puts it in

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84 Solov’yev 279-80.
the center of his philosophical thought. In the final version of the novel, Tolstoy also makes the folk of Bogucharovo participate in this philosophical theme. And since Tolstoy thought that the essence of this movement could not be grasped by reason or explained, he also chose to leave the Bogucharovians’ migration as a mystery of this commune.

It is likely that Tolstoy was revising both the Bogucharovo and the God’s people texts within the same timeframe and made God’s people also a part of the theme of mysterious movement. Pelageiushka, for example, mentions that she has come from Kiev, where the iurodivyi Kiriusha had reproached her for not being where she was supposed to be and had sent her to Koliazin where a miracle-working icon had been found. As is typical for the speech of iurodivye, these words are symbolic and prophetic. Kiev is an important locus of East Slavic spirituality, and the fact that the holy fool sends religious pilgrims away from it is telling. The relocation of all the pilgrims from Kiev to the center of Russia in Koliazin, which reflects a movement from the south to the north, indicates, according to Svetlana Nikolaeva, the iurodivyi’s anticipation of the historic events of 1812. Tolstoy moves the representatives of the religious mysticism geographically close to the heart of the campaign. Both the movement of God’s people and the Bogucharovians’ migration episodes epitomize the impossibility of rationally understanding the hidden inner impulses of the narod.

86 For a discussion of the symbolism of icons see S. Nikolaeva, “Iverskaia ili Smolenskaia? (Skazania ob ikonakh kak istochnik ‘Voiny i mira,,’” *Iasnopolianskii sbornik 2000: stati, materialy, publikatsii* (Tula: Izdatel’skii dom ‘Iasnaya Poliana’, 2009): 35-45. Tolstoy based Kiriusha on a real figure, who is mentioned in Tolstoy’s *Childhood* (*Detstvo*; 1852). The mother in this work defends God’s people to her husband and mentions that Kiriusha had prophesised the death of her father with precision. The episode reflects a conflict between the mother’s and father’s attitude towards iurodivye similar to that between Maria and Andrei in *War and Peace*. Lev Tolstoy, “Iurodivyi,” *Detstvo, T-PSS* 1:19.
87 Nikolaeva, “Iverskaia ili Smolenskaia?” 38.
By agglomerating various cultural texts and ideas that echo both distant eighteenth century and more recent events, Tolstoy gives the Bogucharovians their own distinctive collective identity, a complex history and also dignity. At the same time, he lets the reader remain an outsider, unable to understand those “mysterious currents of popular Russian life” that in the time of 1812 “were intensely at work and were close to manifesting themselves.”\(^8^8\) Just as their biography was becoming more complex towards the end of the writing process, so was Tolstoy’s artistic technique getting more elaborate. Tolstoy shows the progression of the rebellion from an estranged point of view, something that Gary Saul Morson calls “via negative description.”\(^8^9\) Solovyev’s reflection on the flight of peasants as a form of rebellion at the end of the eighteenth century shows the historian’s critical attitude towards the peasants and their motivation to seek freedom for themselves, which he discusses quite unambiguously. Tolstoy-the-artist approached this historical material in a different way. Unlike Solovyev, he chose not to interpret it as an historian but, rather, to suggest that no contemporary or an historian for that matter can relate and accurately understand the motivation that underlies the peasants’ actions. Tolstoy raises the important question of the impossibility of close rapport between the educated society and the narod within the social structure based on serfdom. Turgenev masterfully expressed this idea in his evaluation of Tolstoy’s “A Landlord’s Morning” (“Utro pomeshchika”).

The main moral impression of this short story (I am not talking about the artistic one) is that as long as there will be serfdom, rapport and mutual understanding on

\(^{8^8}\) *WP* 719.

\(^{8^9}\) Morson 125.
both sides is impossible, despite the most philanthropic and sincere readiness for
the rapport – and this impression is good and accurate. On the other hand, Tolstoy’s artistic method in the rebellion scene consists of purposefully concealing the motivation that would explain the peasants’ choices and actions, as well as their psychological makeup. One of the reasons for this kind of mystification is that Tolstoy himself could not or chose not to claim the knowledge of those “mysterious currents of the life of the Russian narod.”

Tolstoy’s art is inseparable from his philosophy. In the end, he makes God’s people and the peasants of Bogucharovo participants in the general movement of humankind, and for Tolstoy, the knowledge of the latter comprises the aim of history. Notably, when discussing it in a draft version of the epilogue, Tolstoy uses strikingly similar vocabulary to that, which appears in the Bogucharovo text. His explanation of the word “mysterious” (tainstvennyi), that is at core of the Bogucharovians’ collective portrait, is particularly valuable.

Variant #307 (manuscript #100, Epilogue, part. 1, chapter I-XVI):

Seven years passed. Those mysterious forces (mysterious because the laws that determine them are unknown to us) were still at work; continuously moving, nations were being created and disintegrated, the causes of fragmentation were emerging, of movement, the migration of peoples, and along with the material movement of the peoples, a human thought was evolving, directed various ways, but always coinciding with the material movement of

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[...] in the lives of the peasants in this area there appeared, more noticeably and strongly than in others, those mysterious currents of popular Russian life the causes and meaning of which are inexplicable for contemporaries. [...] But the undercurrents never ceased to flow among these people and were gathering some sort of new forces in order to manifest themselves just as strangely and unexpectedly, and at the same time as simply, naturally, and strongly. Now, in the year 1812, it was

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90 Gusev 140.
91 “The knowledge of the movement of mankind comprises the aim of history;” “Where are the laws: either a mystical movement forward, or an artistic representation of memories” (Tsel’ istorii – znanie dvizheniia chelovechestva. Gde zakony: ili misticheskoe dvizhenie vpered, ili khudozhestvennoe vosproizvedenie vospominani). See “Zapisnaia knizhka #2, 7 dekabria from 1868,” T-PSS 48:87.
the peoples; and along with the general movement there occurred that distinct movement of an individual, that had its own unique purpose, which always coincided with the common purpose... 

noticeable for a man living close to the people that these undercurrents were intensely at work and were close to manifesting themselves.

In Tolstoy’s vocabulary, “mysterious” functions as a placeholder to denote something (a phenomenon, idea, a set of beliefs, etc.) that has yet to be figured out and explained. The “mysterious currents” of the narod’s life are mysterious not because the in-group (the narod) is governed by some kind of esoteric ideas but because the out-group (non-members of the narod) lacks vocabulary to understand the reasoning behind this “mysticism.” The final revisions present the peasants from Bogucharovo as one body that functions according to laws of which those who do not live close to the narod remain ignorant. Welch contends that Tolstoy would perhaps energetically engage with the claim of modern political science that “people have collective wills of their own.” The peasants of Bogucharovo and God’s people as well become the agents of this collective will, and the force that drives them transcends each individual will. In his brief analysis, Morson observes that Tolstoy insinuates that the life, actions and beliefs of people like those from Bogucharovo often have a decisive effect on historical events, and yet historians often leave them outside written histories. The collective will of these two groups is not outside of history, but to the contrary, its manifestation comprises one cause in “a multitude of mutually interactive causes,” to quote Christian, who believes it to be the essence of history in Tolstoy’s philosophy. The peasants’ resistance against leaving Bogucharovo makes sense, and the manifestation of their will becomes valuable in light of their collective purpose.

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92 T-PSS 15: 193.
93 Welch 186.
94 Morson 125-126.
95 According to Christian, Tolstoy saw history as a multitude of mutually interactive causes, not a process directed by the will of individual men and women. See Christian 92.
of Tolstoy’s supposition that Moscow burned down because its inhabitants left it.\(^6\)

Through their rebellion, the peasants interact with other historical events unfolding in the novel, and at the same time with other major narratives like that, for example, which Elizabeth D. Samet calls a “narrative of disobedience.” Samet claims that, despite being based on historical event, *War and Peace* subverts the historical narrative of cause and effect and is concerned with what happens at a particular moment. According to Samet, the theme of disobedience operates not only in the individual, communal, military, and political spheres, but also at the level of the historiography that the novel constructs.\(^7\)

A close comparative analysis of the drafts and the final printed novel suggests that Tolstoy was painstakingly working out an appropriate language to write about the peasants, their individual story, and their choices that are revealed through their disobedience. He was not the only one who struggled with this at the time. With the proliferation of the interest in the *narod* and the literature of the 1860s that puts it in the spotlight, there arose a question of how to write about the *narod*. Rarely has a work that unfolded around the *narod* skipped Saltykov’s critical review. To a great degree, he set parameters for the faithful representation of the *narod* in his journalistic pieces. Saltykov severely criticized Pisemsky in his portrayal of rebellion for the “lack of insight” and the habit of confining oneself to what he calls “external characteristics of a fact” (*vneshnie priznaki fakta*). His representation of the riot in the countryside resembled “childish

\(^6\)“Moscow had to burn down because its inhabitants left it […] Moscow had to burn down, just as any village, any factory, any house has to burn down which has been left by its owners, and in which strangers are allowed to take over and start cooking kasha for themselves. Moscow was burnt by its inhabitants, true; but not by the inhabitants who stayed in it, but by those who left it. Occupied by the enemy, Moscow did not remain intact like Berlin, Vienna, and other cities, only because its inhabitants did not bring out bread and salt and the keys to the city for the French, but left it.” *WP* 897-98; *T-PSS* 11: 355 (Bk III, Part 3: ch. 26).

\(^7\)Elizabeth D. Samet, “The Disobedience of *War and Peace*” in Tolstoy on War: Narrative Art and Historical Truth in “War and Peace” 161-163.
nonsense” that could make a reader doubt the existence of common sense, if only the joke was not entirely on the author. Saltykov formulates his method of faithful literary representation of the narod in his review of Fedor Reshetnikov’s novel Where is a Better Place? (Gde luchshe; 1869). He praises Reshetnikov’s depiction of the narod as one non-segmented body, with an intentional lack of psychologising, and resistance to break this communal body into separate individuals. According to Saltykov, the mass, driven by the need to fight for their survival, cannot offer a variety of types because they all live as one single entity. Thus a new characteristic feature of a novel on the narod (narodnyi roman) is the representation of the entire popular milieu (narodnaia sreda) as a single hero and a type. A single story of a non-fragmented body of people surpasses individual stories of every member of this collective body. Until this commune is ready to single out and offer a heroic type, this kind of representation is the only accurate one for Saltykov. Tolstoy’s development of the story of the Bogucharovo muzhiks along the progression of his work

98 “It is enough to recall the description of the peasants’ unrest in the last novel by this author to understand what disastrous consequences can come from a lack of insight and the habit of confining oneself to external characteristics [...] the peasants showing disobedience to their land-owning lady after February 19, behave in an incredibly stupid way, and the rebellion ends after a few peasants get flogged. This results in such an immature and ridiculous nonsense that the reader can decisively doubt the existence of common sense in the world, but the fact is at his rescue that all the immature and funny side of this matter falls exclusively on the head of the author and not on the depicted subject.” See Saltykov’s “Peterburgskie teatry” 166.

99 “People who share a common interest such as a struggle for survival cannot offer a large variety of types precisely because of this. They all, or at least the majority lives like a single man. And here is a new characteristic feature of the popular novel (narodnyi roman) – the entire popular milieu (narodnaia sreda) becomes the main character and the main type [...] Who makes the impossible happen that affects so dramatically the fate of a common man (prostoliudin)? It will be done by a crowd of ‘unknown,’ this totality of the indivisible, within which everyone has his individual story, but at the same time everyone is so involved in the life of everyone else, that no personal drama can be as important as the communal drama. And precisely this inextricable connection can be felt on every page of Reshetnikov’s novel, and we come to think that until the commune of people (narodnye massy) is able to separate out individual heroic characters, this is the only accurate manner of artistic representation of the popular life.” See Saltykov, T-PSS 8: 352-353.
on the novel; his restraint from psychologising and breaking the commune into types; his choice of simplifying Pelageiushka, of discarding Dron’s individual story; of rewriting the story of the commune; and of presenting it as an un-segmented whole well illustrates Saltykov’s ideal of artistic representation of the *narod*. The peasants of Bogucharovo are an integral part of the Russian people, fighting against Russia’s enemy. Tolstoy invites his reader to look at the Bogucharovo folk as being a carrier of an organic, dynamic force capable in its own way of setting the wheels of history in motion. The Bogucharovo text is a part of the overall narrative of patriotism that is not asserted through fire, blood, and sacrifice, but through determination to stand for what is considered sacred, moral, and right, and through determination to think and act independently, but as a group, not as individuals.
Chapter 3: Political Mythology in Saltykov’s *A History of a Town*

On the eve of the Emancipation it became clear that the old ways of living and the patriarchal order were becoming obsolete. For the *narod* it was the end of the world they knew, and they perceived it through a certain mythological frame, which Ostrovsky masterfully illustrates in *The Storm*.¹ Saltykov’s first important work *Provincial Notes* (*Gubernskie ocherki*; 1856-57) symbolically ends with the scene of a funeral cortege where “old days are being buried” (*proshlye vremena khoroniat*).² The closure was intended to signify the dying patriarchal order in the village and to suggest anticipation of a new life. In the late 1850s, Saltykov had much hope for Alexander II’s reformist policies and viewed them as an efficient way for renewal (*obnovlenie*) of Russian society. The state of affairs after the Emancipation and throughout the 1860s proved him wrong, and he revised his preliminary conclusions. His work *A History of a Town* (further referred to in abbreviated form as *A History*), written in 1869-1870, comprises his artistic assertion that the old days (*proshlye vremena*) were never buried and the long awaited future that promised renewal turned into a reassertion of the old structures. The past continued to define the present and resist progress and change, and the Emancipation never became a divide between the old and the new. “Who is to blame?” and “What is to be done?,” the two crucial questions in nineteenth century Russian intellectual thought, needed to be asked and answered once again in a new social and political context.

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¹ Through the character of a wanderer, Feklusha, Ostrovsky expresses some prevalent folk beliefs. Feklusha’s eschatological interpretation of the “last days” makes some advocates of the patriarchal order such as Kabanova reflect on the fact that their world and what it represented was coming to an end.

In Saltykov’s historiosophic project that culminated in *A History*, the *narod* occupied a central place, and the transformation of Russian society was contingent upon its development. The work embraces the complexities of the author’s thought on the *narod* and its role in the life of the Empire. Saltykov inquires into the reasons for the persistence of the old forms of life that sustained the autocratic regime and hindered the country’s historical development. He links this persistence to the people’s superstitious mind that embraces various medieval beliefs and, when facing reality, resorts to them as some sort of sense-making paradigm. Unlike many writers who utilized popular folklore and mythology in their works as a characteristic feature of a collective portrait of the *narod*, Saltykov is interested in how and why mysticism affects the people’s thought and decision-making processes as well as their collective behaviour in the political life of the country, and why certain beliefs have a very strong grip over the people. He articulates his methodology in a passage on the belief in the Baba-Yaga figure, suggesting that instead of describing a belief, one has to inquire why the folk imagination created it in the first place. Saltykov’s approach is in accord with Mordovtsev’s historical method that insisted on a close analysis of purely folk sources (myths, beliefs, rumors). Mordovtsev argued that the *narod* used them to compose its own version of political history of Russia that was incompatible with the accepted official one. Understanding the *narod*, its social

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3 In Saltykov’s vocabulary, the *narod* designates the peasantry as a substantial part of the population of the Russian Empire directly affected (historically, socially, economically, and mentally) by the institution of serfdom.

4 In a number of his reviews, Saltykov critiqued the ability of other writers (such as Pisemsky and Melnikov among others) to write about the *narod*. In principle his criticism covered a few essential points: a) the writers do not know the subject, and this often leads to erroneous and simplistic representation; b) they use artificial language to talk to and about the *narod*, often “borrowing it from Dal,” which only creates a distance between them and educated society; and c) they position themselves above the people. See Saltykov’s review on the poetry of Kol’tsov “Aleksei Kol’tsov,” in *Stat’i 1856-1857, S-PSS* 5:25; “Peterburgskie teatry,” in *Sovremennik 1863-1864, S-PSS* 5:164-5; “Skazanie o tom, chto est’, i chto byla Rossiiia, kto v nei tsarstvoval, i chto ona proishkhodila. Kniazia V.V. L’vova,” in *Sovremennik 1863-1864, PSS* 5: 334, 336; “O russkoi pravde i pol’skoi krivde,” in *Sovremennik 1863-1864, S-PSS* 5: 343-6.

behaviour, and the way it thinks necessitated acquainting oneself with its vision of Russia’s past.⁶

Saltykov and Mordovtsev seem to be in agreement about the people’s fusing the actual and the legendary in comprehending surrounding reality. Like Tolstoy, Saltykov believed that as a result of lengthy separation, the peculiar mythical form of knowledge and language of the narod became inaccessible to educated society.⁷ He realized the need for educating the masses, but for him, effective enlightenment was contingent on the educators first getting to know the narod and its historically developed habits.⁸ Therefore, A History includes a study of the language of myth as a key to knowing the narod. In the same way as a social psychologist, Saltykov explores mythical structures to understand the social behaviour of the narod whom he sees as an actor in history.

In the manner of a quasi-biblical story, A History tells the fictional tale of the town of Glupov, a non-existent periphery that is supposed to symbolically embody all Russia, from its creation until its apocalyptic demise. The work has an intricate structure and mode of narration. The subtitle reads: “edited from original documents by M.E. Saltykov (Shchedrin).”⁹ At the outset, Saltykov positions himself not as the author, but as an editor. In the opening section, the editor reports that, while browsing through the archives of the town of Glupov, he came across a few copy-books tied together and entitled “The Chronicle of Glupov.” “The Chronicle” was supposedly written by four of the town archivists from 1731-1825. Hence, the narrative is a combination of a written

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⁸ See Saltykov, “Povesti Kokhanovskoi,” in Retenzii 1863 g., PSS 5: 315. Despite differences in their approaches to popular education, Saltykov and Tolstoy were in agreement that an educator first needs to get to know the people. For Tolstoy’s discussion, see his “Komu u kogo uchit’sia pisat’, krest’ianskim rebiatam u nas ili nam u krestianskikh rebiat.”
account by archivists-chroniclers (arkhivarius-letopisets) and interspersed editor’s commentaries in the footnotes and wherever there are digressions in the narrative. The book includes “A Schedule of the Governors” (Opis’ gradonachal’nikam). This section lists twenty-two governors, who ruled Glupov from 1731 till 1826; a short description follows each name. The content of the “Chronicle,” and hence the main body of A History, consists of selected biographies of the governors with “the description of their most notable actions,” as the editor puts it.

Documented by the archivists, this is a version of history from the perspective of the narod, in which historical events are translated into a language that fuses mythical and mystical beliefs. At the time during a renewed interest in revisiting the past to free it from the constraints of official historiography, Saltykov’s endeavour stood out as novel in its exposure of some patterns that in an unresolved manner kept repeating themselves as well as in its diagnosis of some “existing sores” (iazy obshchestva) in the societal organism. The quasi-historical narrative incorporates in a twisted and fabulized form a number of facts from the distant and more recent life of the empire. Although Saltykov explored historical continuity to understand how the legacy of the old mode of life encroached on the way his society and country was developing, the mythical structure of the work made the events described appear removed from the writer’s actual socio-political reality. Such an approach to history made some of Saltykov’s contemporaries...

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10 A History 3-5; S-SS 8: 265-267. Saltykov’s choice of a chronicler for a narrator is interesting in view of his definition of the chronicler as a “collector of facts” (sobirateli faktov) rather than an interpreter or historian. Therefore, it can be assumed that interpretation of the events in A History is coming from the editor, which should be equated with authorial voice. See Saltykov, “‘Kievskie volneniia v 1855 godu’ S.S. Gromeki,” S-PSS 5: 339.
11 A History 3; S-SS 8: 265.
12 The editor acknowledges the fantastic nature of the events described in the “Chronicle” that would have little credibility in the “enlightened age” but which he decided to retain. A History 4; S-SS 8: 266-267.
13 In thick journals, medical terminology such as “iazya obshchestva,” “obshchestvennyi organizm” was commonly used at the time in discussions of socio-political matters.
see the work as an historic satire, and some read it as a mockery of the narod (glumlenie nad narodom). In response, the satirist wrote two pieces that contained important authorial commentaries to the text: “M. E. Saltykov’s Letter to the Editorial Staff of The Herald of Europe” (“Pis’mo M.E. Saltykova v redaktsiiu zhurnala ‘Vestnik Evropy’”) and “Saltykov’s Letter to A.N. Pypin” (“Pis’mo Saltykova k A.N. Pypinu”). In the former, he clearly objected to defining his work as “historic satire,” arguing that his voice was directed against the present state of things.

The relationship of the narod and the monarch appeared frequently in the cultural debate of the time in the context of the Emancipation, the Millennial celebration of Russia, and the Polish Rebellion, all discussed above in chapter one. A History, too, problematizes the nature of this relationship. The work features the life of Glupov and its inhabitants under twenty-two governors and yet it is not the history of rulers but the ruled. The work reflects the agenda of The Notes of the Fatherland of the late 1860s that aimed at revisiting the history of Russia as the history of mass political movements, in which the leading role belonged mostly to the peasantry, in other words, as a civil history of the Russian narod rather than a history of the Tsars. The historical timeline of Glupov’s history has little resemblance to the periodization of Russia’s history. Saltykov shuffles key events like a deck of cards, creating a totally new linearity that makes sense (while sometimes it does not) within the framework of the invented world and which

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14 For the discussion of reception of A History following its publication, including Suvorin’s commentary, see G.V Ivanov, “Primechania: ‘Istoriia odnogo goroda,’” in S-SS 8: 536-539.
resists any definitive parallels with Russia’s official history. Moreover, the unfolding history does not always conform to the official periodization contained in “A Schedule of the Governors.” The main body of the text focuses on the life of the people under those governors whose rule brought about most misfortunes (satirically referred by the editor as “the description of their (the governors’) most notable actions”). Moreover, the chapter “The Tale of Six Town-Governesses” (Skazanie o shesti gradonachal’nitsakh) brings into the picture women governors whose names are not even mentioned in the “Schedule” and yet whose appearance in the socio-political arena became engraved in the historical memory of the Glupovites and hence entered in the “Chronicle.” These inconsistencies may suggest the lack of coordination in the accounts of the four archivists. But more likely, Saltykov uses these inconsistencies to point to the fact that the life of Glupov, and consequently the periodization of the town’s history for the narod, is punctuated by evils and crises that befall it. Saltykov’s approach to the history of Glupov is in accord with Mordovtsev’s method of historical research, formulated in “One of the False Konstantins.” Given the fact that this piece appeared at the time when Saltykov began to work on A History, that it was published in the journal where Saltykov was one of its main contributors, and that its subject matter appealed to Saltykov’s journalistic interests, he no doubt knew Mordovtsev’s argument.

Mordovtsev concluded that periodization of Russian history by the narod differed considerably from that proposed by the historians. He called it “periodization by misfortunes” (delenie po bedam). The people, in his view, had their own history, and it

18 A History 3, S-SS 8: 265.
was contained within their popular world-view.\textsuperscript{19} He also insisted that the \textit{narod} had its favourite collective actions, through which it expressed protest against the existing order or against historical developments that it found unbearable.\textsuperscript{20} Saltykov artistically unfolds these two points. In addition, he shows how every large-scale catastrophe or crisis is translated into the language of symbols and signs, and how the synthesized meaning (re)defines the people’s relationship with the governors.

The language of myth is not only an object of Saltykov’s inquiry but also a tool Saltykov himself uses to unleash his critique against the autocratic regime. His mythologizing becomes an allegorical language, or what Henriëtte Alida Menting calls “political Aesopian language,” to communicate his social and political ideas in a manner that would pass censorship.\textsuperscript{21} The study of this double functionality of the myth is central to this chapter. It will examine how Saltykov researches the mysticism of the \textit{narod} as a conceptual paradigm. This paradigm is reflective of the \textit{narod’s} collective thinking and helps understand the people’s functioning and participation in history. Also, I will demonstrate how the conclusions he draws sustain his political critique and inform his own ideas about Russia’s historical development as he presents it in \textit{A History}. The analysis of Saltykov’s views on the \textit{narod’s} question in this work and in his journalistic pieces of the early 1860s suggests that Saltykov substantially revised some of his earlier assumptions during the time when he worked on \textit{A History} (1869-1870). This chapter will trace the trajectory of Saltykov’s thought.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{19} Mordovtsev 399-400.  
\textsuperscript{20} Mordovtsev 400.  
\textsuperscript{22} In my reading, Saltykov uses the genre of satire as a tool to formulate his social critique in a way that would pass censorship. Therefore, it is not the aim of this study to analyze the generic characteristics and satirical devices used to produce various effects in \textit{A History} as far as the narrative is concerned. Instead,
I. The “Myth of the Tsar” and the Economy of Salvation

As Michael Cherniavsky has asserted, the eschatology of Russian political theory reinforced the myth of the Tsar. In the eyes of the narod, the salvation of Russia depended on the personal piety of the monarch, which, in turn, ensured the salvation of the individual and the commune. Impious Tsars presented a quandary to these dynamics, and the popular mind had to come to terms with the conflict this created within the overarching scheme of deliverance. Peter the Great became the epitome of impiety in Russian history. The cultural innovations he introduced were seen by the pious as evidence of the Tsar’s ungodliness, and the traditional religious worldview conceptualized him as the prototype of evil, an embodiment of the Antichrist. Every appearance of a pretender in Russian history was an indicator of the narod’s shared distrust of the ruling monarch; but it also suggested their need to have a legitimate and righteous Tsar. This need is rooted in the concept of “folk tsarism” also known as “popular monarchism” or “the myth of the Tsar” that is based on an analogy between the Tsar and God. The monarch’s exalted role is well exemplified in the saying “God is in heaven, the Tsar on earth.” Additionally, the narod’s ideal of “Tsar-batiushka” invites

my task is to uncover the voice of Saltykov (not so much Saltykov as a writer and a master of narrative but as Saltykov as a social thinker, journalist, and historiographer), his thought and insight into the shortcomings of Russian life formulated via satirical representation. For a comprehensive study of satirical devices and their comic effects in Saltykov’s oeuvre, including A History of a Town, see Emil A. Draitser, Techniques of Satire: the Case of Saltykov-Ščedrin (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1994). For an analysis of narrative devices in Saltykov, see also Dmitrii Nikolaev, Smekh Shchedrina: ocherki satiricheskoi poetiki (Moskva: Sovetskii pisatel’, 1988). For a discussion of Saltykov’s use of various genres and his narrative technique in his works, see Aleksei Bushmin, Khudozhestvennyi mir Saltykova-Shchedrina (Leningrad: Izdatel’stvo Nauka, 1987).

24 These innovations were forced upon Russian society; they included wearing foreign clothes, smoking tobacco, shaving beards, etc. Wearing beards was strictly outlawed under Peter and only later the law was modified: a man could have a beard provided he paid a heavy tax. A.A. Kara-Murza, L.V. Poliakov, “Kontekst,” Petr Velikii: pro at contra. Lichnost’ i deiania Petra I v otsenke russkikh mysliatei i issledovatelei (Sankt-Peterburg: Izdatel’stvo Khristianskogo gumanitarnogo instituta, 2003) 808.
identification of the monarch with the father figure, which is illustrated in the saying “without the Tsar, Russia is a widow, the narod is an orphan (bez tsaria Rus’ vdova, narod sirota).”²⁵ Petr Chaadaev pointed out in the 1850s that in Russia, familial relations were always superimposed on social relations.

It is well known that the family is the basis of our social structure. This is why the Russian narod sees nothing other in the powers that be than paternal authority, employed with greater or lesser severity. This is it. Every monarch, no matter how good or bad he is, is a beloved father (batiushka) to the people.²⁶

In Saltykov’s conception of the historical mysticism of the narod, the Tsar-myth occupies a central place. The relations of the Governors with Glupovites are representative of the relations of the Tsar with the narod, and the analogy of governors with paternal authority and God is preserved. The belief in communal salvation defines this relationship. With each crisis, Glupovites relive apocalyptic expectations, looking for signs that suggest the approaching and inevitable end. Among the populace, crises trigger distrust of the governor as God’s appointee, and a psychological mechanism is set into motion that removes him from the sacred role of a savior and projects him as demonic figure. This projection becomes a reoccurring pattern in the life of the Glupovites. With the dethronement of their authoritative figure, however, the Glupovites disintegrate into a complete state of chaos. Dementy Varlamovich Brudasty, the governor from 1762, fails in his role of “batiushka” and, as a consequence, the entire social organism degrades.

In the late evening [...] the town was completely dead. Hungry dogs had the streets to themselves, and even they did not bark, but indulged (in the most orderly manner) in degenerate, dissolute practices. The streets and houses were in total darkness, and only in a window of the governor's apartment did an ominous light glimmer deep into the night. [...]

Ugly rumors began to circulate. It was said that the new governor was not a governor at all, but a werewolf [...] and at night he was said to hover over the town in the shape of an insatiable vampire and suck the blood of the sleeping inhabitants.27

Saltykov carefully chooses the language to render the people’s gloomy forebodings. The general decline in morals becomes one of the common markers and signs of premonition. The depiction accentuates darkness (mrak) as a symbol of the confused state of mind and social turmoil in which people find themselves when left alone. For the people, the governor holds a monopoly on light and they accept it as a given, yet “light” acquires a demonic attribute – “zloveshchii.” Human misery and degradation is further emphasized: “there were a number of murders,” “drunkenness was increasing,” “justice was disappearing from the courts.”28 Popular discontent and the attributes of folk demonology suggest the people degrading Brudasty to the role of a pretender, an unlawful ruler. A similar perception is produced with regard to the women-rulers, described in the section “The Tale of Six Town-Governesses.” The people demonize and de-feminize Dunka and Matrenka, investing them with attributes of demonic possession and klikushestvo.29

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27 A History 26; S-SS 8: 283.
28 A History 32; S-SS 8: 289.
29 Ivanits suggests that the phenomenon of klikushestvo (from klikat’ –“to cry/call out”) was inseparable from sorcery and was widespread in prerevolutionary Russia. She defines klikushestvo as a woman’s
They went into the streets and punched up the passers-by, they went to the taverns and single-handedly smashed them to pieces, they captured young men and hid them in cellars, they ate babies, cut off women’s breasts and ate them too. With their hair flying loose in the wind, wearing only the clothes they had got up in, they ran through the town like women possessed, spitting, biting and mouthing obsenities.\(^{30}\)

Just as with Brudasty, with women governors Glupov again descends into complete chaos, in which the total decay of morals and a lack of common sense among its population rules.

Saltykov illustrates how categories of morality often change in times of crisis. People tend to perceive misfortunes as punishment and endow natural disasters with biblical symbolism.\(^{31}\) When they occur, the Glupovites focus on the governor as the cause for the punishment, explaining all natural catastrophes (flood, fire, and drought) as retribution for the governor’s sins, for which they must atone. Social relations are perceived in familial terms, and such a “sin atonement mechanism” echoes a folk belief that parental sins affect the lives of children and they must repent for them. The chapters “The Hungry Town” (Golodnyi gorod) and “The Town of Straw” (Solomennyi gorod) exemplify these dynamics. At first, harmony in nature seems to reflect the harmonic relations between the ruler and his subjects. Petr Petrovich Ferdyschchenko, the governor from 1772 till 1779, was an exemplary ruler for six years as the chronicler records: “For

\(^{30}\) A History 45; S-SS 8-301.

\(^{31}\) E.g., In the section “The Tale of Six Town-Governesses,” there is an allusion to the biblical flood: “Towards evening it rained so heavily that for hours the streets of the town were impassable (neprokhodimye).” A History 42; S-SS 8: 298.
six years the town had suffered neither fire nor famine, epidemic nor cattle-plague.”

There is no indication of general well-being among the populace, instead, the emphasis is placed on the lack of any negatives. The absence of misfortunes is good enough as it provides a sense of security. Hence the ruler is not expected to assure prosperity but to guarantee security. Fear of a negative outcome is behind this kind of social contract. The compromise based on low expectations but with a necessary assurance of stability is beneficial for both the ruler and the people. When natural disasters occur, they intensify the sense of discord in the social body. In the Glupovites’ cosmologic view of the word, God uses nature as a tool to reveal the sinfulness of the population or the ruler. In accordance with the responsibility-transference scheme of Glupov, the drought and fire that befell the town signify for the inhabitants that it is the governor’s fault: “But in the seventh year of his rule Ferdyshchenko was possessed by a devil” (Na sed’mom godu pravleniia Ferdyshchenku smutil bes). The description of the first catastrophe abounds in apocalyptic imagery: “the sky became burning hot (nebo raskalilos’) and breathed down a torrent of heat on every living thing;” “the air appeared to quiver;” “the ground cracked and was hard as stone (zemlia treskalas’ i sdelalas’ tverda kak kamen’);” “the grass and young vegetables withered;” “the churches overflowed with coffins, and corpses of the common people lay uncollected in the streets.”

As the tragedy unfolds, the image of the brigadier acquires bestial characteristics: at one point it is recorded that he “continued to weave his net (plel da plel svoiu set’), until little by little he had the whole town entangled in it;” at another point, it is recorded

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32 A History 51; S-SS 8: 306.
33 A History 52; S-SS 8: 307.
34 A History 55, 58; S-SS 8: 310, 313.
that not many managed to escape “the brigadier’s clutches.” Two images allude to the apocalyptic beast and unlimited destructive power with which the popular imagination endows him.

A second catastrophe shortly follows the drought. The town is on fire for two days, and on the third day, the dehumanization and the demonization of the brigadier is complete with him demoted to just a demon, a less awe-inspiring figure in the demonic hierarchy. A chronicler records that he “twirled his tail and said it was not for him to go against the will of God” (vertel khvostom i govoril, chto emu s bogom sporit' ne prikhoditsia).

Vasilisk Semenovich Borodavkin is the governor whose association with the apocalyptic beast is even more prominent. Saltykov utilizes Old Believers’ mythology and popular beliefs to construct his image.

A preacher appeared there [in the Musketeers’ quarter (streletskaia sloboda)] who had transposed the name ‘Borodavkin’ into numbers and proved that if you missed out the letter ‘r’, you would have 666, that is, the number of the Prince of Darkness. Polemical works passed from hand to hand, which explained that mustard was a plant that had grown from the body of a dissolute girl of notorious profligacy (devka-bludnitsa), from whose name the word ‘mustard’ was derived.
Verses were even composed which went so far as to mention the town-governor’s mother and refer to her in very unfavourable terms.\textsuperscript{38}

The mention of the Musketeers (\textit{strel’tsy}) hints at the time of the reign of Peter the Great.\textsuperscript{39} During his reign, Old Believers computed the number of the beast from the numeric values of letters in the title \textit{Imperator} that Peter assumed as a replacement for the traditional “Tsar.” In Russian history, as Tolstoy’s \textit{War and Peace} demonstrates, Napoleon’s name was also read numerically.\textsuperscript{40} David Bethea observes that “disconfirmation makes it possible for later generations to recalculate and retranslate the numbers and signs into their own ‘chosen’ status.”\textsuperscript{41} Borodavkin, just like his historic predecessors, becomes an object of popular mythologizing. In this passage, Saltykov also embeds a common belief about the alleged mother of the Antichrist.\textsuperscript{42} In the gallery of the Glupovites’ governors, Borodavkin is not only demonized, but is directly and unequivocally associated with the apocalyptic beast.

With Brudasty, Ferdyshchenko, women-governors, and Borodavkin, it becomes evident that social discontent affects the relations between the \textit{narod} and their ruler. As a result, a “default sacred image” of the ruler undergoes demonization. Saltykov is interested in how and why it happens; but he all the more seeks to understand the reason why after every dethroned governor the \textit{narod} is ready to either restore the governor’s

\textsuperscript{38} \textit{A History} 87; S-SS 8: 340.
\textsuperscript{39} The \textit{Strel’tsy} were a unit of Russian infantry created by Ivan the Terrible and disbanded by Peter the Great in 1698. They participated in a number of armed revolts and were seen as a threat to Peter’s rule.
\textsuperscript{40} \textit{T-PSS} 11: 79 (Bk III, Part 1: ch. 19).
\textsuperscript{41} David M. Bethea, “Introduction: Myth, History, Plot, Steed,” \textit{The Shape of Apocalypse in Modern Russian Fiction} 11.
\textsuperscript{42} Linking the mother of the Antichrist with a “whore” (bludnitsa) was commonplace in Russia. Probably the Old Believer Avvakum exerted the most influence and popularized this belief in the Russian tradition. He maintained that the Antichrist will be of Jewish origin and would be conceived in lechery from a “Jewess” and Satan. Protopop Avvakum, “Iz knigi tolkovani,” “\textit{Pamiatniki literatury drevnei Rusi},” red. L.A. Dmitrieva, D.S. Likhacheva, vol. 2 (Moskva: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1978) 428.
initial image or accept the next one as “batiushka.” This mechanism can be called a 3D-pattern (deification—disappointment—demonization) with every endpoint (demonization) relapsing into the point of origin (deification). The Tsar-myth does not negate these dynamics, but to the contrary, it allows it as long as the pattern remains unbroken and the initial premise is not threatened too much. Two questions “why does it never breaks?” and “what preconditions are necessary for it to break?” are at the core of Saltykov’s historiosophic project in *A History*. He addresses the first question by investigating the nature of the Glupovites’ resistance as a form of discontent.

The history of Glupov has shown that its inhabitants stop functioning when the position that an authoritative figure has to occupy is vacant. Under such conditions the people of Glupov descend into anarchy. The governor Brudasty, who had a “music-box” (*organchik*) in his head playing two simple pieces “I’ll break you!” (*razoriu*) and “I will not have it!” (*ne poterpliu*), had to refrain from performing his duties as a result of the malfunctioning of the instrument.43 While the officials were anticipating a replacement for the music-box with a new head to be delivered from Saint-Petersburg, the governor was kept locked in his office for several days.44 The absence of Brudasty became a catalyst for public unrest. The Glupovites’ patience “was exhausted,” and it led to “anti-social elements” (*protivoobschestvennye elementy*) coming to the surface with “terrifying suddenness.”45 The disturbances were immediately suppressed at the moment the governor reappears. However a certain confusion with the replacement occurred. Shortly after the reappearance of the governor, a carriage approached with “a second

43 *A History* 31-35; S-SS 8: 287-291.
44 In the fantastic world of Glupov, the head can be detached from and subsequently reattached to the governor.
45 *A History* 33; S-SS 8: 290.
town-governor,” identical in every way to the first one with the exception of a birthmark that, as the chronicler reports, was on the wrong cheek. The two pretenders met in front of the crowd. Despite the fact that both governors were revealed as pretenders, the Glupovites accepted this and the mob dispersed in silence (tolpa medlenno i v molchanii razoshlas’).46

A different development takes place with women-pretenders in patriarchal Glupov. They are never accepted and their legitimacy is questioned from the beginning. However, all the attempts to overthrow the illegitimate usurper of power turn out unsuccessful because of a lack of unity. A different method of resistance is employed with Ferdyshchenko. The Glupovites decide to set the governor on the right path and choose Evseech, “the oldest man in the whole town” to go to tempt (iskusit’) him three times.47 The allusion to the three temptations of Christ satirically renders the association of the governor with divine authority in the mind of the narod without necessarily projecting Evseech as a demonic figure. Grotesquely playing with biblical allusions, Saltykov compares Evseech to the apocalyptic symbol of the “Lamb’s wife,” only to deconstruct the sanctity of the image by the presence of two old militiamen and to resolve the conflict in a non-apocalyptic fashion: “Evseich was dressed in convict’s garb and, ‘like a bride going to meet her bridegroom,’ (podobno neveste, navstrechu zhenikha griadushchei) was led off to gaol by two antiquated militiamen.”48

The idea of the ruler as God’s appointee takes a firm grip on the mind of the narod and persists even if the ruler fails in his salvific mission. The scene when the public redirects the blame for their misfortunes from Ferdyshchenko to his lover Alenka,
translating their anger and discontent into killing her as a witch in a medieval manner illustrates this idea. With Ferdyshchenko, the text shows how easily the mechanism of demonization can be reversed into restoration of the sacred image. In a Christian fashion, the narod will readily forgive their master the minute he shows repentance. For Saltykov, this Christian willingness to extend unconditional forgiveness to oppressors has a destructive character and backfires on the narod, because the authorities do not hesitate to manipulate this quality to their own advantage.

Even when a governor is not vindicated, the resistance, which naturally should be the voice of the people, collapses into silence (bezmolvie). The Musketeers, a potentially viable revolutionary force, were defeated the minute Borodavkin with his army of little tin soldiers (oloviannye soldatiki) entered the sloboda: “But the quarter was as silent (sloboda bezmolstvovala) as the dead.” Both the Musketeers and the Glupovites fall under one critique that Saltykov terms the “force of inaction” (energia bezdeistviia). The word “force” or “energy” that presupposes a capacity for a certain activity, when collocated with the word “bezdeistvie,” in an intentionally oxymoronic fashion, masterfully renders the satirist’s critique of the submissiveness of the commune, which is nevertheless viewed as being potentially capable of action. The two capacities coexist in the Glupovites and define them as a collective.

With great presence of mind they countered the force of action by the force of inaction. […] A curious phenomenon results when these two opposing sources meet. There is no rebellion as such, nor is there any real obedience. It is

49 A History 63; S-SS 8: 318.
50 A History 93; S-SS 8: 345.
something between the two. We used to see examples of it in the old days of serfdom.\textsuperscript{51}

The editor’s digression and the mention of serfdom add historical validity to his discussion and de-fictionalizes the Glupovites, suggesting identification with the \textit{narod} in general. When every impetus to act is suppressed by the “force of inaction,” the commune continuously relapses into some kind of existential loop. One reason that can explain the persistence of the “force of inaction” is the fact that the Glupovites (and by extension the \textit{narod}) consider themselves an object rather than a subject of history and, therefore, assume a passive role in it. In this frame of mind, every evil is accepted as a part of a predetermined plan and hence a historical necessity: “What if this was all according to plan?” (\textit{a chto, esli eto tak i nado?}); or “It is evident from his [chronicler’s] account that the Glupovites submitted to the caprices of history without murmur (\textit{besprekoslovno}).”\textsuperscript{52} In his works of journalism, Saltykov repeatedly brings up these fatalistic tendencies among the \textit{narod} that he sees one of the major obstacles in their historical development. In his review of Koltsov’s poetry, Saltykov considers the \textit{narod’s} “fatalistic reliance on help from outside” their habit and instinct that characterizes a commune in its “state of infancy.”\textsuperscript{53} Infancy is unquestionable reliance on parental authority and denial of independent thought. In the world of Glupov, the authoritative figure and God comprise this “outside source.” The people’s predeterministic tendencies, their proclivity for silence and disengagement in the political sphere link them to Old Believers. Saltykov believed that the sectarians’ ascetic way of life that denied active participation in world affairs reinforced the force of inaction. For him, the functioning of

\textsuperscript{51} \textit{A History} 86; \textit{S-SS} 8: 338.
\textsuperscript{52} \textit{A History} 26, 121; \textit{S-SS} 8: 283, 371.
\textsuperscript{53} Saltykov, “Aleksei Kol’tsov” 26-27, 28.
civil society was predicated on the active involvement of all its members, and he was deeply concerned about the influence of the Old Believers on the narod. He viewed them as a source of “anti-social consciousness” (protivoobshchestvennoe soznanie) and regarded asceticism as a medieval form of life that prevented the necessary escape of the commune from a state of infancy and, therefore, not applicable to the development of a civil society.\textsuperscript{54} The Glupovites’ lack of social involvement, manifested through the lack of or passive form of resistance, ensures the stability of the regime and allows for a long succession of evil governors. A different form of resistance and a shift in reoccurring 3-D pattern occurs with Ugrium Burcheev, under whose rule the Tsar-myth is subverted. The analysis of circumstances under which this occurs will help illuminate certain ideals and expectations that Saltykov projected onto his own society.

\textbf{II. Ugrium Burcheev: the Rule of the Beast}

\textit{i. Initial Perception}

Association of the ruler with the apocalyptic beast reaches its apogee in Ugrium Burcheev. In the “Schedule of the Governors,” there are only two sentences about him: “Former regimental punishment-orderly (byvyi prokhvost). Destroyed the old town and built a new one in a different place.”\textsuperscript{55} However, a substantial part of the “Chronicle” is devoted to the discussion of Burcheev. His rule becomes climactic in the historical and symbolic timeline of Glupov. The last chapter “Repentance Confirmed. Conclusion” (Podtverzhdenie pokaianiia. Zakliuchenie) describes his destruction of the old and creation of the new with a focus on how the Glupovites perceived him. He appears before the public in the final scene of the chapter “The Warship of Mammon – the Repentance”

\textsuperscript{54} Saltykov, “Skazanie o stranstvii Inoka Parfenia” 58, 72.
\textsuperscript{55} A History 22; S-SS 8: 280.
(Poklonenye mamone i pokoianie) that precedes “Repentance Confirmed”: “At the main entrance stood Ugrium-Burcheev, piercing the assembly with a withering look (i vperial v tolpu tsepeniashchii vzor)… And what a look it was! … Lord, what a look!.” The use of ellipses invites the reader to pause and reflect on this distinctive feature of the governor. The perception of his gaze as satanic is accentuated further.

The man on whom this gaze was fixed could not withstand it. He experienced a unique sensation, the main part of which was not so much the instinct of self-preservation as a feeling of apprehension for human nature in general. This vague feeling of apprehension mingled with all kinds of presentiments about mysterious and insuperable dangers that were to come. You felt that the heavens would fall in (nebo obrushitsia), that the earth would open up beneath your feet (zemlia razverznetsia pod nogami), that a whirlwind would come and swallow everything in a moment ….

From now on the premonition of the eschaton is inseparably linked with the figure of Burcheev. The Glupovites intuitively associate him with the agent of destruction of biblical proportions, Satan himself. Unable to rationalise this association, they are left with the overpowering impression described above, and a superstitious fear instilled in them after a single mention of the governor. The chronicler sets him apart from other rulers, emphasizing his instinct for destruction and the lack of any logical motivation for his actions and decisions. He is likened to an irrational force of nature that sweeps

56 A History 147; S-SS 8: 397. It is possible that Nikolai I, who was known to have a very distinctive gaze, was the prototype for Ugrium Burcheev. In his My Past and Thoughts, Herzen likened him to the mythical Medusa, and his eyes had a rattlesnake’s effect of freezing blood in veins. See Herzen, My Past and Thoughts 39-40.
57 A History 148; S-SS 8: 397.
everything in its way.\textsuperscript{58} Unlike other governors, he is dehumanized from the outset, and his humanity is reduced to an image in his portrait that best reflects his lifeless being. The portrait accentuates the wooden expression of his face, the absence on it of any emotions, and well-developed jaws, capable of crushing anything. The background against which his figure appears in the portrait is a desert with a prison in the middle of it and a grey soldier’s overcoat instead of the sky.\textsuperscript{59} His portrayal invites close association with the mystical Antichrist figure from Gogol’s \textit{Portrait}, who represents a cosmological threat and is a messenger of chaos and destruction. The background is an important part of the portrayal of Burcheev. The governor’s association with a father is supplanted by the image of a military figure. The sky in the background, which is supposed to be symbolic of the affinity of the monarch with God and a reminder of the possibility of the people’s salvation attainable through the monarch, is replaced by the soldier’s overcoat. The ideal of paradise, or the Kingdom on Earth, to which the monarch as a shepherd is supposed to lead his flock, is subverted through the image of the prison. Burcheev is the epitome of pettiness and an unsophisticated mind that, with unlimited access to power, acquires threatening forms. When unlimited destructiveness and utter unsophistication are combined together in one person, it produces a conflict in perception. On the one hand, his portrait echoes the chronicler’s description of a painting of the “Enemy of Mankind” in one of the churches in Glupov. Satan is depicted “standing on the upper step of the throne to Hell,” with an imperiously outstretched hand, and “gazing dully in space (\textit{s mutnym vzorom}).” The figure does not show any passion for torture but an utter disregard

\textsuperscript{58} \textit{A History} 149; S-SS 8: 398.
\textsuperscript{59} \textit{A History} 150; S-SS 8: 399.
for the human condition. On the other hand, the association with an idiot runs through the text. In a hyperbolic manner, the text emphasizes the dangers such an authoritative figure presents for society. The complete lack of any reasoning and restraint makes him dangerous. While an ordinary idiot presents no threat to others but himself, an idiot with power puts society at risk because he performs his deeds “completely without any hindrance” (vpolne besprepiatstvenno). In Saltykov’s artistic vision, the activity of an idiot with authority can transform the world.

If through the concentrated efforts of his idiocy the whole world were turned into a desert, even that would not daunt the idiot. Who knows, perhaps a desert is what he regards as the ideal setting for the communal life of man (ideal chelovecheskogo obshchezhitia)?

The passage completes the portrayal of Ugrium Burcheev, once again evoking his portrait in the desert as an ideal of a new social organization, his dystopian vision of a New Kingdom comprised of military barracks where the spirit of the governor hovers over the city keeping vigilant watch on the sleep of the inhabitants (zorko sterezhet obyvatel’skii son) and where, in an apocalyptic manner, there is “no past and no future.” Saltykov redefines the common semantics of the desert within the Christian tradition and especially in Old Believers’ mythology that had a significant impact on popular beliefs. In his writings, the desert is perceived negatively as a space that cannot offer fertile soil either for the inner perfection of an individual or for the effective development of

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60 A History 149; S-SS 8: 398-9.
61 A History 151; S-SS 8: 399-400.
62 A History 151; S-SS 8: 400.
63 A History 157, 155; S-SS 8: 406, 404.
society.⁶⁴ The desert is the ultimate kingdom, into which the actions of Burcheev-like rulers can transform the country.

In one of his reviews, Saltykov develops the concept of “orly” (eagles) that closely corresponds to Burcheev’s characteristics. The discussion of “orly” as predators impeding the development of civil society also provides a good interpretative context for Saltykov’s perception of the desert. He concludes that the abundance of eagles may transform the world into a desert. The narod, driven by fear, unintentionally supports the rule of tyranny and violence. This results in a vicious circle, in which the people are capable only of suffering and unable to stop it. They look for the reasons of suffering elsewhere without realizing that the sole cause is in the “abundance of eagles” (obilie orlov).⁶⁵

**ii. Burcheev’s Two “Exploits”**

Every act of the governor’s arbitrariness (proizvol) exposes the narod’s seemingly unlimited endurance. The governor-autocrats encourage this obedience and humility and exploit them as fuel for the machinery of tyranny they operate. The unlimited reservoir of “unique destructiveness” that Ugrium-Burcheev planned to unleash upon the town makes him stand out among all other governors. His reformatory aspirations are manifested in two endeavours: the demolition of the town and the attempted destruction of the river.

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⁶⁴ For the critique of the Old Believer’s concept of the desert, see “Skazanie o stranstvii Inoka Parfeniia.” In this piece, Saltykov expresses his concern about the influence of the Old Believers’ on the narod: “It is clear that in popular imagination, the desert acquires a very special meaning, and in this concept the Russian man finds satisfaction for all his mystical aspirations.” Saltykov, “Skazanie o stranstvii Inoka Parfeniia” 49.

⁶⁵ See his review of “Mandarin: Roman N.D. Akhsharumova (1870),” in PSS 8: 431-432. Although possible, there is no evidence to suggest that “the eagles” in Saltykov’s thought might be an allusion to the eagle as a symbol of the Russian state.
Saltykov invests both “exploits” with meaningful symbolic context, and these two acts of the governor become crucial for the narod’s historical development.

In post-emancipation Russian literature, Burcheev’s vision of a new city as a militaristic and fantastic new world, a satirical and distorted version of the New Kingdom, occupies a place next to Shigalev’s ideal in The Possessed. Burcheev’s imagined city resembles an enclosed theatrical space where the stage ends with a dark curtain symbolizing the end of the world and negating every possibility of transcendence. The physical laws of time do not apply in the city, which again resembles theatrical temporality. The governor’s vision of “delirium” is described as follows: a square in the middle, with streets running off from its radius. Further away from the center, the streets are intersected by boulevards, which run “a double belt around the town” and serve as a defence against external enemies. Beyond that point there would be “the outer town, an earthen rampart, and a dark curtain, which would be the end of the world.” Burcheev did not envision any river, stream gully or hillock in his town because they would obstruct his “free movement on foot.”

The physiognomy of Glupov with its asymmetric streets, chaotically scattered houses and, most importantly, the river did not correspond to Burcheev’s militaristic ideal. Similarly to Verkhovensky’s revolutionary eschatology, Burcheev’s “creative instincts” excluded rebuilding, renovation, and reformation, and were grounded solely in methods of total destruction. The text describes what it means for people like Burcheev “to create” as follows: “‘To create’ means to imagine yourself in a virgin forest; it means to take an axe in your hand and advance resolutely in whichever direction you happen to

66 A History 155; S-SS 8: 404-405.
face, brandishing this instrument of creation right and left as you go.” Destruction becomes a method and an aim in itself. Here Saltykov’s critique participates in a discussion of reformatory activity (and the forms it acquires) that was shaped in two different contexts. First, through Burcheev’s methods, Saltykov engaged with the social debates at the end of the sixties regarding the case of Nechaev and Bakunin that preoccupied all Russian intellectuals at the time and became the basis for Dostoevsky’s novel. Second, the image of an axe alludes to the reformatory activity of Peter the Great and his violent methods for transforming Russia into a civilized state. Like Dostoevsky and his critique of Peter, Saltykov locates the reason for the split in Russian society as well as for a state of “eternal revolution” (vechnaia revolutsiia) in Petrine policies. Both historical allusions contain Saltykov’s critique of unjustified violence that comprises an end in itself. He engages with the topic of violence to show the effect it has on the narod and to reveal their lack of any defence against being manipulated into becoming a tool of the figure in power.

On the second day of the feast of Sts. Paul and Peter, Burcheev, with an axe in his hands, launches the demolition of the town, and the Glupovites, without questioning his authority in their usual manner, take part in it. Through Burcheev’s act, the author reveals his critique of serfdom in general and tries to understand the reasons for the narod’s obedience under circumstances that should provoke insubordination. Time and

67 A History 158; S-SS 8: 407.
68 Saltykov also closely followed the unfolding of the Nechaev case. He wrote “The so-called Nechaev Case and the Treatment of it in the Russian Journalism” (“Tak-nazyvaemoe ‘Nechaevskoe delo’ i otnochenie k nemu russkoi zhurnalistikii”) where he practically collected all the main arguments on the case from various journals. PSS 8: 239-71.
69 Saltykov formulated his opinion of Peter in his letter to I.V. Pavlov from 1857. There he calls Peter “the greatest despot of his time” (velichaishii samodur svoego vremeni), who “condemned Russian society to eternal slavery and revolution.” Saltykov considers the revolutionary events and attitudes of the late fifties to be a logical consequence of the Petrine reforms. See S-SS 18:183-184.
70 A History 162; S-SS 8: 411.
again, he finds the cause in the narod’s fatalistic eschatologically inclined mind. “The end had come” appears repeatedly in the text. The governor is once again associated with the beast, and the “low grumbling” (tikhoe rychanie) coming from his innards validates the Glupovites’ gloomy foreboding. The belief that “the end had come” transfers them into a mystical sphere where the past and future cease to exist, and where life and death is no longer of any concern. The demolition is accepted as a long predetermined tragedy that overshadows any individual interests or aspirations, rendering them superfluous. In the apocalyptic drama unfolding within the symbolic boundaries of Burcheev’s theatrical space, the narod assume the role of marionettes by their own accord. Saltykov observes that the anticipation of the end punctuates the Glupovites’ history and affects their collective behaviour. Every large-scale tragedy evokes a similar emotional response – the “thirst for silence” (zhazhda bezmolviia) and acceptance. Aleksandr Pushkin’s famous “narod bezmolstvuet” reverberates throughout A History and becomes a characteristic feature of the Glupovites and a stumbling block in their historical development.

Burcheev’s second exploit is the attempted destruction of the river. Unlike the Glupovites, the river resisted the governor’s tyranny, it disobeyed, “it was alive” (ona zhila): “The last house, the one nearest the river, came crushing down, the thud of the axe sounded for the last time, yet still the river kept on (reka ne unimala’). Just as before, it flowed and breathed and babbled and twisted.” Here the river is an important metaphor for life that cannot be manipulated, shaped, and filled with content by the power of an individual. It has been argued that Saltykov borrows the river symbolism from the revolutionary-democratic journalism of the time where it stood for the inner power of the

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72 A History 70; S-SS 8: 324.
73 A History 159, 163; S-SS 8: 408, 412.
narod and their indestructibility, as well as for revolution and historical progress. Nikolai Dobroliubov may have been the first to introduce river symbolism in revolutionary rhetoric. He discusses it in his “Characteristic Traits of the Russian Narod” (“Cherty dlja kharakteristiki russkogo naroda”), published in the journal The Contemporary in 1860. Before the Emancipation of the serfs, Dobroliubov contested the thought that the narod lived the way it was told to. For him, viewing people this way would imply considering them merely as a mass devoid of their own collective personality and human aspirations. Dobroliubov argued that the narod’s need to assert its freedom, if such need exists, will show itself “in the facts of popular life,” and it will be impossible to “suppress this need or to turn it your own way” because it is “the river, forcing its way through all the obstacles and unable to stop its current, as this would be contrary to its nature.” The parallels between Dobroliubov’s imagery of the river and that in Saltykov’s Glupov are apparent. However the meaning with which Dobroliubov invests the river seems to introduce a contradiction into the Glupovites’ text. In A History, the river intentionally creates a sharp contrast to the Glupovites’ lack of vitality exhibited in the act of the destruction of their hometown and their submissiveness is juxtaposed with the stubbornness of the river. Can the river suggest the vitality of the narod and a lack thereof at the same time? Or was Saltykov of the late 1860s disappointed with the narod, who, even after the Emancipation, failed to “assert its

74 See V. Kirpotin, M.E. Saltykov-Shchedrin: literaturno-kriticheskii ocherk (Moskva: Sovetskii pisatel’, 1939) 115; and Kirpotin, Mikhail Evgrofovich Saltykov-Shchedrin 304-305. Saltykov also draws on the legacy of the symbolism of the river in Pushkin. The river plays a seminal role in his “The Bronze Horseman” (“Mednyi vsadnik”), in which the river rebels against the social engineering of Peter the Great, and also “The Avalanche” (“Obval”), in which the river wears down a cliff, which can be read as an emblem of political power.

freedom” through the revolution, long expected by the radicals, and inserted the image of
the river merely as irony? Or does Saltykov’s river suggest the vitality that is intrinsic
in the Glupovites but has not yet revealed itself? In other words, what purpose did
Saltykov follow when he put an obstinate river in the middle of Glupov? The answer to
this question can be found in his journalistic pieces of the early 1860s. Some history of
the development of the theme of Glupov and the Glupovites is necessary.

Saltykov started working on A History in 1868. The work was originally
serialised in The Notes of the Fatherland from January 1869 to September 1870, and in
1870 it was published as a separate volume in a slightly revised and edited form. However, the town Glupov and its people appeared in a number of Saltykov’s earlier
satirical works, including “Literati-philistines” (“Literatory-obyvateli”; 1861), “Slander”
Debauchery” (“Glupovskoe rasputstvo”; 1862), “Satires in Prose” (Satiry v proze”; 1862),
“The Town Glupov and the Glupovites” (“Glupov i Glupovtsy”; 1862). Naturally, some questions raised in these works reverberate with certain themes and
motifs in A History. The image of the river being the twin of Glupov appears in his
“Satires in Prose”: “The life of Glupov is reflected in Glupovitsa as in an untainted mirror
(kak v nepodkupnom zerkale). […] Glupov with its river are like twins, and there is
something moving and sentimental (trogatel’noe, umiliaiushche) in their mutual
inseparability.” Likewise in A History, the natural force of the river is associated with
the inner life of the narod, and the lexical choice “it was alive” aids this purpose. From

76 Nikolai Chernyshevsky’s novel Chto delat’? includes the author’s anticipation of popular revolution in 1865, and many revolutionaries believed this would happen.
77 For the history of the publication of A History, see Ivanov 532-536.
78 “The Town Glupov and the Glupovites” and “Glupovite Debauchery” were not published in Saltykov’s lifetime for reasons of censorship.
the outset of the book, the editor explains the need to tell Glupovites’ history precisely because of their “zhivuchest’” (survivability/persistence): “the fact that, despite their life and death struggle (smertnyi boi), they go on living is sufficient testimony to their power of endurance (ustoičivost’), and worthy of the serious attention of historians.”\textsuperscript{80} The satirist expressed a similar idea about Old Believers, who, despite political persecution, continued to live according to their persuasions: “Clearly, there is something remarkable (nechto osoboe) in the essence of the schism that gives it vitality (zhivuchest’) and power.”\textsuperscript{81} Saltykov rationalized and critiqued the Old Believers’ way of living as historically out-dated and yet despite it he could not help feeling fascination for uncompromised resistance to historical development and devotion to the cause. The Glupovites are somewhat similar to the Old Believers in the way they hold on to the old structures and beliefs even when these beliefs turn out to be mostly disadvantageous. Despite this, Saltykov was confident that there existed in the narod what Dobroliubov called “the need to assert its freedom.” The river, if considered to be the twin of the Glupovites, shows the vitality and energy existent in embryonic form, suppressed for centuries by the weight of the Tsar-myth.

The river symbolism is also important because it takes its aim against autocracy. By analogy, through the “river destruction” project, the text indicates Burcheev’s lack of understanding of his subjects, his ignorance of their inner laws and impulses.

He knew nothing of the formation of the rivers, or of the laws by which they flow down and not up; he was convinced that he had only to say: “From here to here!”

\textsuperscript{80} A History 121; S-SS 8: 371.
\textsuperscript{81} Saltykov, “Skazanie o stranstvii Inoka Parfeniia” 41. Also the same idea is reiterated in his review of “Sovremennyje dvizheniia v raskole,” PSS 5: 347. This “zhivuchest’” is one of the reasons why Saltykov kept investigating the phenomenon of the schism.
and dry land would doubtless appear in the area indicated, and the river will continue to flow as before, but now on either side.\textsuperscript{82}

Burcheev’s ignorance of the laws of the river suggests the same about his knowledge of the people. His conviction that his authority cannot be compromised and that the \textit{narod} will not rebel against their governor sustains his despotism. At the same time his unrestricted exercise of absolute power prepares the right circumstances for the people’s vitality and “force of action” to emerge. This happens with Burcheev’s attempt to destroy the river that the Glupovites see as a sacrilegious act.

However oppressed (\textit{zabity}) the inhabitants were, even they were roused by this (\textit{voschuvstvovali}). So far it had been only the works of men’s hands that had been destroyed, but now it was something permanent, not man-made (\textit{teper’ zhe ochered’ dokhodila do dela izvechnogo, nerukotvornogo}).\textsuperscript{83}

The governor’s infringement on the design of God’s order can be read as his violation of the sanctity that cements the relationship between the \textit{narod} and the monarch.

\textit{iii. The Glupovites Awakening}

The Glupovites’ moment of awakening occurs after Burcheev abandons his unsuccessful efforts to destroy the river and leaves the town for a new place. He finds a “completely level plain,” very smooth like “a level table-cloth,” with no obstruction and no river.\textsuperscript{84} The new place geographically resembles his dystrophic vision of the New Kingdom. Saltykov makes the destruction of Glupov and relocation of its inhabitants to a new city necessary for the emergence of their awareness. The escape from Glupov becomes a symbolic phase in their development. The name “Glupov” implies ignorance

\textsuperscript{82} \textit{A History} 160; S-SS 8: 408. \\
\textsuperscript{83} \textit{A History} 163-4; S-SS 8: 412. \\
\textsuperscript{84} \textit{A History} 167; S-SS 8: 415.
and lack of intelligence. In addition, it is said that the town was built on a swamp. Saint Petersburg was known to have been built on a swamp, which became an important aspect in that particular city’s mythology. However, it is unlikely that Saltykov had this reference in mind when devising the origin of Glupov. In his system of allegories, “foul swamps” (gnilye bolota) has a specific meaning and is symbolic of ceremonial aspects of living that were formed historically, that resist modernity, and incapacitate any aspiration for freedom and initiative.  

Although it was not an act of the Glupovites’ own will, relocation from the swamp may suggest a necessary break with old ways and beliefs. With the abandonment of Glupov, a part of life that defined them as Glupovites ceased to exist. Their symbolic awakening starts at the moment they cast away the mystical mask from Burcheev to reveal the face of an idiot.

And he, meanwhile, lay motionless in the sun, snoring heavily. Now they could all see him, now they could examine him at liberty and see for themselves what he was—a genuine idiot, and nothing more.

When he had been destroying, battling with the elements and consigning to fire and sword, one could still conceive that he embodied something great, some all-conquering force, which, whatever its inner substance, could still capture the imagination. But now, as he lay prostate and exhausted and no one wilted before his shameless gaze, it became clear that this “great something,” this “all-conquering force” was nothing more than unbounded idiocy.

85 Saltykov talks about the meaning of a swamp as a metaphor in his review of “Zasorennye dorogi. Roman A. Mikhailova,” Retenzii, PSS 8: 312. “Foul swamps’ is an allegory. It is life in the forms bequeathed to us historically. It is a mishmash of all kinds of rituals that, despite losing their real meaning, still retain exterior crude power and because of that resolutely suppress in man any movement in the sense of initiative and independence.” 

86 A History 173; S-SS 8: 421-422. In the edition of 1870 as well as in The Notes of the Fatherland, this passage was followed by Saltykov’s extensive digression that explained the traumatic experience of the
The Glupovites’ development as an historical commune starts with their acceptance of the truth. The governor is no longer seen as an agent of a mystical evil force capable of shaping history and human lives but as an un alarming petty human being, an ordinary idiot. With the casting out the demons that they themselves had created comes relief and, in a biblical manner, self-reflection.

Exhausted, abused and crushed, The Glupovites for the first time in ages breathed freely again. They looked at each other – and were filled with a sudden sense of shame.  

The passage likens the Glupovites to Adam and Eve on the eve of their banishment from paradise for disobeying divine authority. The re-experience of original sin – tasting from the fruit of knowledge – is a necessary initiation into the world that resists being defined by abstract mystical ideas and that welcomes independent thought, which the Glupovites had historically refused themselves.

The Glupovites’ altered understanding of Burcheev points to a subversion of their system of beliefs that had been formed and preserved for generations. The text accentuates the importance of seeing with eyes as opposed to accepting imagined reality. There is a complete change of perception: what was initially seen from below is now seen from above. With the change of angle, the initial image is realized as constructed. The iconic image of the governor hovering in the sky and keeping vigilant watch on the sleep of the inhabitants is replaced with the Glupovites seeing the idiot sleeping and snoring.

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Glupovites’ awakening and yet its historical necessity and unavoidability. Saltykov insists that the shift in people’s consciousness that led to the end of tyranny and historical idiocy was not sudden but the result of lengthy inner processes, “preparatory work” (podgotovitel’naia rabota) that had long been “maturing” (zret’) until a sudden stimulus became determinant, and these processes manifested in a break. The passage was not included in the current canonical edition. Ivanov 588-589.

Kirpotin discusses the concept of “shame” (styd) in Saltykov as a manifestation of political and social self-consciousness. Kirpotin, Mikhail Evgrafovich Saltykov-Shchedrin: zhizn’ i tvorchestvo 307.
heavily on the ground. Saltykov masterfully plays with the sleep imagery to suggest that the power structure is undermined. Translating his own expectations and aspirations about the development of the narod, he makes the Glupovites take responsibility for their own lives and happiness as opposed to projecting it on the figure of authority.

III. The Apocalypse and Saltykov’s Social Critique

With the creation of the new town of Nepreklonsk there appeared “unwholesome/evil passions” (durnye strasti) and “unreliable/disloyal elements” (neblagonadezhnye elementy), the two terms used frequently in nineteenth-century journalism regarding revolutionaries.89 The tension growing among the populace after unmasking Burcheev indicates a new development in the people whose prevailing reaction always had been silence and obedience. The language is carefully chosen to indicate the escalation of revolutionary attitudes: “But Ugrium Burcheev marched on looking straight ahead, never in the least suspecting that ‘unwholesome passions’ were swarming under his very nose, or that ‘unreliable elements’ were surfacing almost before his eyes.” As irritation (razdrazhenie) increased among the people, we learn that “every minute seemed right for liberation (osvobozhdenie),” yet it also seemed premature until Burcheev, now aware of continual meetings at night and “breaches of discipline,” appointed the spies. This act of the governor happened to be “the last straw” (posledniaia kaplia, perepolnivshaia chashu) that put an end to the Glupovites’ subordination.90

89 The explanation of the word “nepriklonnyi” as insanity and absurdity, as defined in Saltykov’s fairytale “The Wild Squire,” can be applied to Burcheev’s aspiration for the creation of the new town: “is it possible that inexorability (nepreklonnost’), so cherished in his soul, translates into an ordinary idiom as sheer folly and insanity (v perevode na obyknovenyi iazyk oznachает tol’ko glupost’ i bezmie)?” Saltykov, “Dikii pomeshchik,” S-SS 16: 27.
90 A History 174-5; S-SS 8: 422-423. The phrase “nablagonadezhnye elementy” occurs regularly in Saltykov’s journalistic works in discussion of such topics as the Old Believers and especially the Polish Uprising. The idiom suggests a certain ideological threat to the stability of the social order and challenges to the status quo.
After briefly suggesting the development of independent and revolutionary thought among the Glupovites, the narrative comes to a halt (most likely for censorship reasons) before it recommences with the description of the Apocalypse, in which the history of the town ends. The chronicler explains that the copy-books containing the account of the events for one week before the great denouement went missing with the exception of one last page describing the catastrophe.91 This gap in the narrative suggests the value of the content that Saltykov chose to leave out, while drawing attention to its absence. The sequence of unresolved apocalyptic moments that have punctuated the history of the town ends with the “unprecedented sight” (neslykhanno zrelishche). We learn that the northern sky suddenly grew dark. Something similar to a whirlwind described in negative simile (ne to liven’, ne to smerch) came rushing out of dark clouds. Full of anger, “it” (ono) approached, “churning up the earth, roaring, droning and moaning, occasionally belching hollow, croaking sounds” (burovia zemliu, grokhocha, gudia, stenia i po vremenam izrygaia iz sebia kakie-to glukhie, karkaiushchie zvuki). Everything started to descend into complete chaos. “The course of time gradually slowed down” with “it” coming nearer until the “the earth quaked, and the sun grew dark” and the Glupovites “fell flat on the ground.” And when “it came,” the “history ceased its course.” Before this happened, we read that Ugrium-Burcheev disappeared as though he had “melted in the air.”92

Most likely Saltykov left out the account of the events leading to the end and encrypted the final scene of A History in order to circumvent the censors with his political message. This opened the way for different interpretations of the meaning of the

91 A History 175; S-SS 8: 423.
92 A History 175; S-SS 8: 423.
scene. In Soviet scholarship, certain readings prevailed. Some scholars viewed “it” either as the approaching rule of Nikolai I (R.V. Ivanov-Razumnik, B.M. Eikhenbaum) or a long reactionary period (V.E. Kholshchevnikov, J.P. Foote, D.P. Nikolaev). Some commentators linked “it” with an emancipating revolutionary force (V.P. Kranikhfeld) or a revolutionary uprising (V.Ia. Kirpotin). Some critics considered “it” to be retribution by history that punishes the Glupovites, who never were prepared for a mass popular uprising against autocracy (S.A. Makashin). In post-Soviet scholarship, the emphasis has shifted to the eschatological and mythical aspect of the final scene, which suggested a certain break from a traditionally revolutionary scheme. This is how Ilya Vinitsky reads it. According to him, the end is the “apocalyptic removal of human history” where “it” signifies “the flooding back of accumulated sins and mistakes,” while setting a boundary to the illusory life of the Glupovites. In *Mifopoetika M.E. Saltykova-Shchedrina*, Mikhail Nazarenko agrees with V. Krivonos that the history of Glupov ends because it “exhausted itself,” implying that there is no hope after history ends. Nazarenko believes that the final “revelation” of the Glupovites leads to catastrophe and death and not to regeneration. Viewing the history of Glupov as imaginary, he, by analogy, asserts the imaginary nature of Glupov’s apocalypse. He further suggests that the town is doomed to the eternal residence in it of the Antichrist and therefore removed from the Kingdom of

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93 My summary is based on a detailed overview provided by Ivanov in his commentary to *A History*. See Ivanov 545-547. Ivanov himself believed that “ono” represents the popular revolt that brings death to Glupov.


God. Nazarenko has demonstrated that a reading of the final scene from the point of view of the book’s mythopoetic structure enriches its artistic value. Although he is correct that myth structures the story of Glupov, Saltykov does not exclusively make use of it for his narrative structure. As I have argued in this chapter, a mythical world-outlook becomes an independent object for the satirist’s investigation, and it is necessary to reconcile the mythical and political in a reading of the town of Glupov’s Apocalypse.

My reading concurs with scholars who invest “it” (ono) with positively emancipating content. However, in addition to asking the question “What does it mean?,” I am interested in how and why the symbolic “it” becomes possible and necessary for the Glupovites, and what makes the Apocalypse the only possible ending for the history of Saltykov’s imagined commune.

Saltykov raised the question of the possibility of the Glupovites’ regeneration back in 1861 in his “Our Glupovite Matters.” He did not believe the regeneration was possible.

I suppose we can speculate about the umnovite rebirth (umnosvkoe vozrozhdenie), or buianovite (buianovskoe), because it expresses itself in something […] but to talk about the glupovite rebirth! … please, there is something impenetrable (neprokhodimoe), something completely incompatible (nesovmestimoe), that the most insolent thought becomes involuntarily paralyzed before the opaque grandeur of this endeavor (chto mysl’ samaia derzkaia nevo’no tsepeneet pered dremuchim velichiem etoi zadachi).96

Some scholars dismiss any possibility for the regeneration of Glupov based on this statement. In their commentary to the text, V.N. Baskakov and S.A. Makashin argue that Saltykov envisioned the true emancipation of the narod (as opposed to the fake one in 1861) as the joint active effort of the democratic intelligentsia (the Umnov) and the peasantry (the Buianov) for social and political reformation.

In the late 1850s and early 1860s, democratic circles put much hope in popular resistance as a means for overthrowing the autocratic regime. As I have discussed in the Introduction, the radicals’ revolutionary propaganda in the provinces in the late 1850s and early 1860s made use of apocalyptic rhetoric. Their effort was doomed to fail from the beginning, as the main premise of their apocalyptic mysticism was a conviction that a belief in God and the Tsar was a product of human fantasy. However, as Russian history has shown, even large-scale rebellions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries like the one under Pugachev never sought to overthrow autocracy in principle. To a great extent, the historical mysticism that framed these rebellions strengthened the ideological basis of the myth of the Tsar. Students failed as educators among the narod because their teaching was incompatible with popular eschatological ideals.

It is important to keep in mind that Saltykov wrote “Our Glupovite Matters,” in which he insisted on the mutual effort of the narod and intelligentsia, in 1861 when the

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97 Nazarenko relies on this statement in interpreting the finale of A History.
98 The commentators suggest that the text that follows the quote in the manuscript and that was removed from the final version makes these allusions more apparent: We all lived amicably together. The young respected the old, the old comforted the young. ‘Flesh of one’s flesh, bone of one’s bone,’ the old said. ‘I will do as you please,’ the young would say trustingly. And it went on like that, peacefully and respectably, not like somewhere overseas, in the town of Buianov, where, as they say, a son recently told his father: ‘No more fooling, old man, or I’ll punch you in your teeth’.” Later Saltykov included this passage in edited form in his “To the Reader” (“K chitateliu”). V.N. Baskakov, S.A. Makashin, “Real’no-istoricheskie kommentarii,” S-SS 3: 632-3.
99 For a discussion of how belief in the Apocalypse framed the revolutionary situation in the late 1850s-early 1860s see Frede, “Atheism and the Apocalypse” 153-181.
threat of popular uprisings in the Russian Empire was imminent. However, *A History* is separated from these events by almost a decade, during which Saltykov’s interest in the inner life of the *narod* grew, his ideas evolved, and his initial assumptions were challenged by the state of things. For nine years after the Emancipation no rebirth occurred despite the active involvement of the radical groups in social life and their continuous propaganda. Saltykov translated his own failed anticipation of the radicals’ role with regard to the *narod*’s historical development into the Glupovites’ history of a revolutionary movement. In the text, this movement is ironically called a manifestation of Glupov’s liberalism. The history of Glupov relates how several Glupovites appear as carriers of liberating ideas. One of them is Ion Kozyr under the rule of governor Borodovkin. “After prolonged wanderings in lands where the rivers flow with milk and honey,” that is, after being physically outside Glupov and after being exposed to the influences of different ideas, Kozyr brings home a book under the title “Letters to a Friend on the Establishment of Virtue upon Earth” (*Pis’ma k drugu o vodvorenii na zemle dobrodeteli*). It is possible that the prototype of Ion Kozyr was Herzen, the author of a sequence of letters under the title “From the Other Shore” (*S togo berega*). Another “liberal” lives under the rule of Negodiaev. Ivashka Farafontev, the son of a nobleman, is enchained for advocating the ideas of social equality: “The need for food is the same for all men, and he who has much should share with him who has little.” Most likely this is an allusion to Chernyshevsky, the author of *What is to be Done? (Chto delat’).* Both Chernyshevsky and Herzen were the forefathers of Russian revolutionary thought at the beginning of the 1860s. Just as in real life, despite the efforts of the two

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100 *A History* 167; *S-SS* 8: 415.
101 *A History* 171; *S-SS* 8: 419.
Glupovites, revolutionary ideas never spread among the narod. By the end of the sixties, it became clear that the solution to the narod’s historical development had to be found elsewhere.

Saltykov concludes that the only way to supersede the old mythological paradigms is to enlighten the narod. This conviction appears repeatedly in his journalistic works. The question of popular education was broadly discussed especially in post-emancipation Russia. Saltykov found the phenomenon complex and problematic, and this translates into his book. In A History, two forms of enlightenment imposed onto the narod from outside are criticized. One, as G. Ivanov has pointed out, is the enlightenment that shifts the focus to abstract ideas as shown in the case of Farafontev i Kozyr. The second is the government’s policies on popular education. Saltykov develops his critique of the latter in a very elaborate way.

“The Golden Age” of Glupov begins with Borodavkin. Under his government, there is a period known as the “wars of enlightenment” that begins with the governor riding, in an apocalyptic manner, a white horse. Under the educational policies of Mikaladze, the Glupovites “had lost all sense of shame, fur had grown all over their bodies, and they sucked their fists” (perestali stydit’sia, obrosli sherst’iu i sosali lapy).

Shortly after the governor temporarily stops the process of enlightenment, the fur “had

102 Saltykov reiterates the idea that the narod needs to be educated, but the lack of knowledge does not characterise it as a lower caste; the intelligentsia’s treatment of them as such infuriated Saltyov. See Saltykov’s review of “About What Russia Was and What It is Now” (“O tom, chto est’, i chto byla Rossiia”) 334. The same idea is reiterated in his review of “About Russian Rightness and Polish Falsehood” “O Russkoi pravde i pol’skoi krivde” 343. One of the tasks of the educators of the people, according to Saltykov, is to rouse among the latter the consciousness of their right (soznanie prava) “where there is ‘right’ but there is no awareness of it.” For Saltykov, this was supposed to be one of the main achievements of the Emancipation of the serfs. See “Izvestie iz Poltavskoi gubernii” 203.
103 Ivanov 588-9.
104 A History 86; S-SS 8: 339. Ivanov sees it as an allegory for the politics of Tsarist Russia with regard to the progress imposed by violent means from above (particularly Russia’s politics regarding the wars with Turkey, as well as its internal affairs. See Ivanov 571.
vanished completely, and the Glupovites were ashamed of their nakedness.” One month passed and they “stopped sucking their fists,” and soon thereafter the first “round dance” was held in Glupov after many years of silence (posle mnogikh let bezmolviia sostoialsia pervyi khorovod).” At some point, a new language was created: “half-human, half-monkey, but in any case quite useless for the expression of any abstract ideas.” Speech and the ability to speak is an important metaphor in Saltykov, and the inability to develop independent thinking leads to speech defects and the total dehumanisation of the Glupovites. A similar case of a loss of humanity appears in his fable “The Wild Squire” ("Dikii pomeshchik"). After completely losing his ability to reason, the landowner Ursus-Kuchum-Kaldibaev became uncivilized (odichal) and acquired some unusual characteristics: “he grew hair all over” (obros volosami), “he went about mostly on all fours,” “he even lost his ability of pronouncing articulate sounds,” among other developments.

Both in A History and in “The Wild Squire,” degradation is expressed through the inability to speak. The Glupovites’ return to a pre-Edenic state of not being ashamed of one’s nakedness under the governor’s educational policies also suggests degeneration. There is also no place for schools or education other than elementary ones in Ugrium-Burcheev’s dystopian society: “There would be no schools and no literacy (gramatnosti ne polagaetsia); mathematics would be taught on the fingers.” Saltykov condemns education that is censored in a way that allows for total control over the population. In his view, this form of enlightenment embraces and encourages popular mythology that

105 A History 104; S-SS 8: 355.
106 A History 127; S-SS 8: 377.
108 A History 155; S-SS 8: 404.
guarantees stability for the autocratic regime. Therefore this kind of enlightenment hampers the normal historical development of Glupov, breaks its linear progression, and artificially supports ancient forms and modes of life. The idea of “censored enlightenment” is very strong in *A History*. After the French revolution it became clear to everyone that “‘enlightenment’ is beneficial only when it is ‘unenlightened’ in character” (*prosveshchenie polezno tol’ko togda, kogda ono imeet kharakter neprosveshchennyi*); or later: “It cannot be denied that peoples can and should be given the opportunity to taste the fruit of the tree of knowledge, but this fruit must be held by a firm hand, and held in such a way that it can be at any time removed from lips that prove too eager.”

What Saltykov implies by “enlightenment of an unenlightened kind” can be found in his journalism. The lack of education is compensated for among the *narod* with a peculiar conceptual framework, that is, mythical ideas replace real knowledge. The mythological frame of mind is grounded in the idea of predetermination and transcendental reality that takes precedence over actual reality, as *A History* also demonstrates. Such a belief-system denies the *narod* an active role in history, defines the relationship between the monarch and the *narod*, and allows for the unrestricted control over the population by the ruling class. These dynamics are discussed in Saltykov’s review of A.K. Tolstoy’s *The Prince Serebrianny* (“*Kniaz’ Serebriannyi*”):

> If a town starts to wallow in money and luxury, then providence sends a governor there who soon proves to the residents that the key concerns of human existence should be of a heavenly and not mundane nature.

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109 *A History* 100, 132; S-SS 8: 352, 382.

Saltykov concludes that the ideal of “the other world” impels the *narod* to withdraw from social life and renders any social and political involvement futile. Therefore, transcendental ideas enable the ruling elite’s control over the *narod*. In the popular mind, the tyranny (*proizvol*) of the ruler is accepted as a part of a scheme of repentance within a larger, predetermined design. By adhering to fatalism, which replaces consciousness of rights and responsibilities, the *narod* denies itself an active role in history. At the same time, the ruling elite finds such a world outlook appealing and beneficial, and makes every effort to sustain it as a guarantor of power and control. Hence Saltykov’s critiques education with an increasing focus on abstract ideas that divert attention from real life. This is exemplified by Grustilov’s decision to appoint the holy fool Iashenka as a Professor of Philosophy. Iashenka rebuked all those “who put their hope in the Prince of this World,” and mocked everyone concerned with the “food of the flesh” and not with the “food of the spirit,” and suggested they should all leave this world and go into the wilderness. Paramosha, a school inspector, preached in his lectures that the perceptible world is “nothing but a dream sent to us by the Enemy of mankind.” Mysticism and fatalism are, in Saltykov’s thinking, medieval, and not suitable for civil society. As S. Borshchevsky points out, in Saltykov’s opinion the support of obsolete forms of social order leads to a loss of humanity that *A History* and “The Wild Squire” illustrate. Saltykov’s solution is to get the Glupovites think independently, which eventually may shake their entire belief system. He voices this idea through the account of a traveller.

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111 Saltykov also extends his critique to writers who intentionally or unintentionally support tendencies to “keep the *narod* in the dark,” and “invoke some kind of dark forces among the *narod*, so susceptible to these forces.” See Saltykov, “O russkoi pravde i polskoi krivde” 345. Also, for a discussion of Saltykov’s critique of the policies directed to sustain the superstitious beliefs of the *narod*, see S. Borschchevskii, *Shchedrin i Dostoevskii: istoriia ikh ideinoi bor’by* (Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1956) 82-3.

112 *A History* 144; S-SS 8: 394.

113 Borschchevskii 176.
If the Glupovites were allowed to think about things once, they might perhaps come to consider such questions as whether there was actually any reason why they should endure even minor disasters such as the brief, though completely senseless governship of Brudasty.\textsuperscript{114}

The passage stresses the need for the Glupovites to question what they have traditionally taken for granted. It also questions the success of enlightenment from without and suggests that the change should come from within. The Glupovites’ unmasking of Burcheev indicates the shift in their historical development.

In his response to Suvorin’s critique of \textit{A History} as a slander (\textit{kleveta}) of the narod, Saltykov distinguished between two types of the people (\textit{narod}): the historical people and the people as a carrier of the principle of democracy. The first one produces Borodavkins and Burcheevs and deserves no sympathy unless they try to escape the unconscious realm. In this case sympathy is legitimate, but its degree is conditioned according to how active their effort is on the path to consciousness.\textsuperscript{115} Supporting the narod’s mystical beliefs for various reasons — Saltykov calls it \textit{lulling the narod} (\textit{ubaiukivanie naroda}) — is detrimental to the development of its political consciousness and necessarily leads to “holding back the era of awakening.”\textsuperscript{116} The Glupovites’ demystification of Ugrium Burcheev reveals their active effort to escape the realm of lack of awareness and puts them on the path towards democracy.\textsuperscript{117}

As a journalist, Saltykov was preoccupied with the idea of society ridding itself of everything that is obsolete. He considered this to be “a matter of life and death” and a

\begin{footnotes}
\item[114] \textit{A History} 141; \textit{S-SS} 8: 391.
\item[115] “Pis’mo M.E. Saltykova v redaktsiiu zhurnala ‘Vestnik Evropy,’” in \textit{Avtorskie kommentarii k ‘Istorii odnogo goroda.”} \textit{S-SS} 8:454.
\item[116] See “Aleksei Kol’tsov” 25.
\item[117] My reading here concurs with Ivanov’s, who viewed the end as the “victory of life over death” linked to the “aspiration of the Glupovites to escape the realm of unconsciousness.” See Ivanov 544.
\end{footnotes}
task for educators of the narod and also writers of the school of Realism. In “Apparitions of Modern Times” (“Sovremennye prizraki”; 1863) Saltykov extends his idea of “apparitions/ghosts” to a particular form of life that strives to encompass something “essential, vital, and thrilling, but in reality comprises nothing but emptiness.” In his social critique, the apparitions hold such a firm grip over life that emancipation from them would involve traumatic experience, “a serious shock” (sil’noe potriasenie). For Saltykov, the phenomenon of “potriasenie” (shock, commotion, perturbation) is charged with positive apocalyptic content as it suggests a new beginning possible after complete obliteration.

When a cycle of phenomena runs its course, when the content of life is exhausted, history angrily protests against all exhortations. Like scorching lava it flows over disparaged, unbelieving, and wretched mankind, sweeping everyone, be it righteous or wrong. It devours people and apparitions alike, leaving instead bare ground. This bare ground presents an excellent opportunity for history to create a new and better foundation. A History ends precisely with this kind of “potriasenie.” Like anthromorphized history in the above passage, the mystical “it” forces its way into the life of the Glupovites to obliterate everything that is obsolete, every “apparition,” every myth, bringing the end to the era of Glupov and the Glupovites. The end does not imply the physical death of the people, rather, a transformative experience that leads to a redefinition of their self-image.

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118 He articulated this thought in “Necessary Requirements for Literature” (“Nasushchnye potrebnosti literature”). Saltykov also stresses the importance of satire as a literary genre to “take all that is obsolete into the kingdom of shadows (tsarstvo tenei).” Saltykov, review of “Novye stikhotvoeniia A.N. Maikova,” S-PSS 5:369.

119 Saltykov, “Sovremennye prizraki.” S-SS 6: 382-383. This article was not published in Saltykov’s lifetime most likely for reasons of censorship.

120 Saltykov, “Sovremennye prizraki” 394.
Transformation into a politically conscious commune necessarily involves a free-willed annihilation of characteristics that define them as “Glupovites.” The Glupovites’ apocalyptic moment marks the end of their known history and suggests the beginning of a new era outside historical time and space of Glupov.

Time is an important theme in *A History*. To tell the history of Glupov, Saltykov oftentimes subverts the idea of profane linear time. To render it mythical, he often makes use of the biblical symbolism of creation and the apocalypse, rethinking these categories and, in his usual manner, enriching them with new content. For example, the Bible says that man was created on the seventh day. This numeric biblical symbol is employed to signify a certain completion (or, more precisely, the lack thereof) and to map the temporal geography of Glupov. Repeatedly, the completion is desired but never achieved. “Beznachalie,” which literally could be read as “without a beginning” but figuratively means a flouting of authority, occurs twice and symbolically lasts for seven days. At first it happens during the reign of Brudasty. According to the “Schedule,” “in his term occurred the seven days of ruinous anarchy (*pagubnoe beznachalie*).” The second “beznachalie” marked the “era” of women-governors. In both cases, the seventh day is marked not by the (re)birth of man (through the formation of conscious independent thought), but by the arrival of a new despotic governor, who keeps his subjects and their minds on a leash. Thus, the biblical seven-day cycle of creation fails every time up until the appearance of Ugrium Burcheev. The vicious circle is resolved “on the seventh day” (after the demystification of Burcheev) with the storm as a symbol

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121 Saltykov plays with the idea of time. At one point it is said that two leap years followed in succession. In the section “The Music Box” (“Organ’chik”), Saltykov connects the mythical with the political: “The official days ceased” (oﬁsial’nye dni ischezli). *A History* 32; S-SS 8: 289 (emphasis added). The end of *A History* realizes the idea that “time shall be no more” (Rev 10:6).

122 *A History* 20; S-SS 8: 278. Initially it was supposed to be three days, and it was later changed to seven. See Ivanov 559.
of the Glupovites’ death as an historical people and their rebirth as carriers of the democratic principle. Ugrium Burcheev’s disappearance suggests completion of the transformation and a break from the old pattern. His demonization is followed by demythologization with the ultimate disappearance of the last myth, or what is designated as “prizrak” (a ghost/apparition) in Saltykov’s social critique.

In the journal The Contemporary from 1860, Saltykov published a satirical piece under the title “A Gnashing of Teeth” (“Skrezhet zubovnyi”).\(^{123}\) He wrote it in 1859 in Riazan and directed it against “liberal publicity” (galasnost’). It contains a final part entitled “The dream” (“Son”), the importance of which Saltykov stressed on more than one occasion in his correspondence.\(^ {124}\) He conceived the idea for the epilogue back in 1857 in his letter to I.V. Pavlov from August 23. It was supposed to be about Ivanushka-the Fool (a personified image of the narod), “about how he sat at the table and he started to suspect that he would be deceived, etc.” Saltykov was concerned that such a theme will not go “unpunished” (kak by ne posekli).\(^ {125}\) Later in his letter to I.S. Aksakov from December 17, 1857, he mentions this motif again:

In the epilogue, Ivanushka-the Fool enters the stage again. He lays down the law (sudit da riadit), at first timidly, and then better and better… I decided to push the thought consistently that our rebirth cannot be achieved other than by means of Ivanushka-the Fool. This thought is expressed in all my works… but here it will be even more apparent.\(^ {126}\)

\(^{123}\) See Sovremennik 1 (1860): 377-408.

\(^{124}\) “Son” (a dream) was written before the entire piece and was conceived as a part of a work The Book about the Dying (“Kniga ob umiraiushchikh”) that Saltykov never wrote. See V.N. Baskakov, S.A. Makashin 614. Despite Saltykov’s fears and to his surprise, the censors permitted “Skrezhet zubovnyi” to be published with the epilogue. See the letter to A.V. Druzhinin from 1860 in S-SS 18:227.


Saltykov makes the Glupovites a collective image of Ivanushka-the fool, whose story ends with an awakening from a long sleep that for centuries had confined the mind within mythical structures into a social reality, which he enters by rejecting the self-defining component of “the fool” in his name. In *A History*, as in Saltykov’s historiographic thought, the successful development of a civil society is contingent upon the *narod’s* rejection of mysticism as a particular form of cultural knowledge and upon embracing enlightenment that repudiates traditional structures.
Chapter 4: Dostoevsky’s Eschatological Nationalism in *The Possessed*

The events that followed the Crimean War revealed the existence of various eschatological beliefs within the *narod* and educated circles (radical and liberal). The celebration of the Millennium of Russia also intensified the sense that the Empire had entered a symbolic phase of its historical development. Mikhail Pogodin called this time apocalyptic, and such a perception was not unusual.¹ Some believed that with the Emancipation, a paradise had been established.² The revolutionaries, on the other hand, dissatisfied with the conditions of the Emancipation, anticipated a large-scale transformation of Russia and relied heavily on the support of the masses.³ They appropriated and adopted popular eschatology to fit their anti-autocratic agenda. They had a challenging task, however, to reconcile their eschatology that was supposed to culminate in the overthrow of the Tsar with the popular eschatology that evolved around the figure of the Tsar.

Popular mysticism that characterises the *narod’s* historical thinking and its involvement in social life occupies an important place in Dostoevsky’s novel *The Possessed*. Dostoevsky shaped his own historiosophic thought pertaining to Russia’s development and its place in the world through an elaborate attack on the revolutionary mythology that absorbed certain popular beliefs and ideals. This thought is eschatological in nature as it concerns the ultimate destiny of humankind and incorporates Christian teaching about the end times and the Second Coming. Dostoevsky envisions Russia as the locus of history’s grand finale and the only possible place for the New Kingdom to come.

² Saltykov criticized I. Lazhechnikov for writing in the manner as if paradise had happened in Russia. See his review of Lazhechnikov’s novel *Nemnogo let nazad* in *Retsenzii 1863 g.*, in *S-PSS* 5: 260.
His historiosophy does not transcend nationalistic barriers; to the contrary it emphasizes Russia’s exclusiveness. This Russia, however, is also Dostoevsky’s construct, a paradise on the verge of being lost that needs to be restored. It is in the restoration that Russia will reclaim its exclusivity and transform into a salvific nation. I propose that the term “eschatological nationalism” accurately expresses Dostoevsky’s historiosophic project for Russia’s historical development. The analysis of how the political, the historical, the religious, and the mythological coalesce in the novel will help investigate this notion. These categories interact and also help Dostoevsky elaborate his own historical mysticism with the Russian narod at the center.\footnote{In Dostoevsky’s usage, the narod refers to the Russian village commune, united by an uncorrupted faith in Orthodoxy and unaffected by the destructive influence of modernization.} For although it seems to be at the periphery of the narrative, the narod with its political myths is central to the novel’s design: it is paramount for the revolutionaries and for Dostoevsky himself. The former manipulate some sacred beliefs of the narod to gain its support and instigate the revolt. Dostoevsky’s conceptual framework also absorbs various myths and beliefs, and he uses them to undermine the eschatological rhetoric of the revolutionaries. I will examine how Dostoevsky uses the language of myth to unleash his critique against radicals and modernity in general and how his mythologizing becomes an allegorical language to communicate his social and political ideas.

A better understanding of Dostoevsky’s artistic creation, including numerous cultural and political allusions require an extensive analysis of his published and non-published sources such as notes to the novel, texts that influenced the author, myths, popular religious beliefs, etc. I will also read the novel against Dostoevsky’s
historiosophic and historiographic ideas expressed in his notebooks, journalistic pieces, and correspondence.\(^5\)

This chapter is divided into three parts. Part One will discuss the political mythology of Petr Verkhovensky and its reliance on the popular myth of the Tsar-Redeemer. I will show how Dostoevsky exposes Verkhovensky’s misconception of the *narod* and its role in the revolutionary scheme. Part Two concerns Dostoevsky’s artistic mythologizing that absorbs elements of apocalyptic lore in response to revolutionary eschatology and modernity. The analyses of Dostoevsky’s critique will prepare the ground for the discussion of Dostoevsky’s eschatological nationalism in Part Three.

I. Verkhovensky’s Revolutionary Mythology

The concepts of atheism, nihilism, and ideological subordination of Russian radicals to the West reside at the center of Dostoevsky’s critique in *The Possessed*. All these elements are inscribed in the character of Petr Verkhovensky, who embodies the dominant ideas of the nihilists and radical intelligentsia of the 1860s. These ideas were historically personified in Sergei Nechaev, a Russian revolutionary. In early drafts, Nechaev appears as a separate character, and in the final version, Petr Verkhovensky takes on his characteristics. Another prototype for Verkhovensky was Mikhail Bakunin, “the apostle of universal destruction,” as J. Goodwin characterizes him.\(^6\) Bakunin’s anarchist principles became a blueprint for the violent actions of Nechaev. The former’s

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agenda included complete eradication of all vestiges of the existing order so that “not a stone shall remain standing,” instigation of “popular anarchy,” and the unleashing of “evil passions,” which “must from the first day destroy, radically and totally, the state and all the state’s institutions.” Two Bakunin-Nechaev pamphlets, supposedly issued by the “Descendants of Riurik and the Noble’s Revolutionary Committee,” were intended to stir up right-wing opposition among the old nobility to the reforming Tsar. Petr Verkhovensky’s political scheme is based on similar principles. He anticipates the end of the known order by means of revolution, and his intention is to unleash a time of troubles (smuta) to transform the existing world; he says: “Listen, we are going to stir up trouble (my sdelaem smutu) […] We’ll stir up such trouble that everything will go off its foundations (vse poedet s osnov).”

The realization of Verkhovensky’s plan relies heavily on support from the masses, more precisely, on the idea of popular revolt against the Tsar. Verkhovensky assures Stavrogin of popular support: “we’ll infiltrate the people themselves (my proniknem v samyi narod).” The Russian verb “proniknut’” carries the additional semantic shade of “comprehension/insight” achieved through deliberate effort. Inciting a popular rebellion requires accurate knowledge of the narod, its needs, attitudes, beliefs, and ideals. Verkhovensky’s plan is the product of his fantasies and his own understanding of the Russian history punctuated by popular uprisings. Since every major uprising had a leader, Verkhovensky wants to appoint Stavrogin as the leader and replacement for the Tsar. Scholars have noted Dostoevsky’s use of the theme of historical imposture in the novel
and discussed its implications for the portrayal of Stavrogin, especially within the logic of demonic play. In this study, I want to show how, through references that link Stavrogin to False Dmitry, an infamous Russian impostor, Dostoevsky fuses the political and historical to reveal the core of Verkhovensky’s revolutionary project.

The notion of an impostor as a political device employed by various social groups has its origins in the crisis of the late sixteenth- to early seventeenth-century Muscovy. Social and political tensions became aggravated with the end of the old dynasty. False Dmitry was a central figure during the period that became known as the Time of Troubles (smutnoe vremia). In 1600, a rumor spread that the legitimate son of Ivan the Terrible was alive and had gone abroad. In 1603 the news arrived from the Polish Commonwealth that there was a person there calling himself Tsarevich Dimitry Ivanovich. He was supposedly rescued after Boris Godunov’s unsuccessful attempt at killing him. Godunov’s government accused the impostor of being renegade monk Grigory Otrepyev, and this view has generally predominated in the scholarship. Support from the peasantry and the army enabled False Dmitry to enter Moscow, to overthrow the acting Tsar (Fedor Godunov, the son of Boris Godunov), and to assume the throne for himself. Despite the outcome of Otrepyev’s actions, no other impostor claiming the throne was as successful as False Dmitry in undermining the regime in the history of Russia. The fact that Verkhovensky’s plan for Stavrogin resonates with this part of Otrepyev’s legacy cannot

be coincidental and can explain Dostoevsky’s choice of this very figure among the rich
gallery of Russian impostors.¹²

In Russia, every appearance of an impostor generated messianic expectations. The
arrival of the False Dmitry inspired the myth of the “Tsar-Saviour/Redeemer” (Tsar’-
izbavitel’).¹³ When he entered the historical scene, his name was wrapped in an aura of
mystery. The narod hoped that the “true Tsarevich” would become their saviour from the
regime of Godunov’s family. The crowd greeting him upon his first appearance reflects a
general mood of adoration: “Greetings our father, sovereign and grand prince Dmitri
Ivanovich, saved by God for our prosperity. Shine in splendour, sun of Russia.”¹⁴ The
response of adoration and reverence that Stavrogin produces from some characters links
him to False Dmitry in this respect. At the same time it makes Verkhovensky believe that
the narod would extend similar attitudes to Stavrogin, accept him as a mythical Tsar-
figure, which would enable his project of “infiltrating the narod.”¹⁵

In times of crises, the narod needs to fill the spot of the “Tsar-Redeemer” with a
person most suitable or, at least, available for the role. The dynamics of capitalizing on
the idea of messianic tsarism that provided False Dmitry with popular support becomes a
kernel in Verkhovensky’s political fantasies for Stavrogin. The myth of the “Tsar-

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¹² Among other sources, Dostoevsky could have read about False Dmitry in N.M. Karamzin’s History of
the Russian State. Chapter 4 of volume 11 discusses the rule of False Dmitry. Joseph Frank has also
observed the use of this figure in Dostoevsky’s The Double (Dvoinik) and his evocation of Pushkin’s Boris
¹³ Maureen Perrie, Pretenders and Popular Monarchism in Early Modern Russia: the False Tsars of the
115.
¹⁵ Stavrogin says to Shatov: “[…] you seem to look upon me as some sort of sun, and upon yourself as
some sort of bug compared with me;” Demons 243; D-PSS 10: 193; Lebiadkin tells Stavrogin: “I’ve been
waiting for you all week as for the sun;” Demons 266; D-PSS 10: 210; Petr says to Stavrogin: “You are a
leader (predvoditel’), you are a sun, I am your worm…” Demons 419; D-PSS 10: 324. Here I am in
agreement with Linda Ivanits who has argued that “the dominance of Maria (Lebiadkina), Fedka, and
Semen Yakovlevich in the novel’s spiritual world raises the specter that the people might accept false
teaching and leadership.” See Ivanits 116.
“Redeemer” synthesises political and religious elements. Pretence as a socio-political phenomenon capitalizes on the mythical and religious beliefs of the narod to ensure much needed support from the populace. Verkhovensky intends to create a legend of Stavrogin in a similar fashion. In his notebooks to the novel Dostoevsky writes: “the need for adoration (potrebnost’ obozhania) is inherent in human nature. […] but for adoration you need a god (a chtoby bylo obozhanie, nuzhen bog).”¹⁶ The novelist translates this insight into Verkhovensky’s intention to create the image of Stavrogin as a “deliverer” figure. For this purpose Verkhovensky contemplates exploiting the legend of a “Tsar in hiding,” who will eventually appear as a Tsar-Redeemer: “We’ll get a legend going better than the legend among the castrates.”¹⁷ In this fantasy, Stavrogin will represent a “new force” (novaia sila), which Verkhovensky is sure the narod yearns for: “And this is what’s needed, this is what the people are weeping for” (a ee-to i nado, po nei-to plachut).¹⁸ A belief in an omnipotent deity requires his physical absence and sporadic appearances to the chosen. Therefore, Verkhovensky insists that no one but very few should see Stavrogin, which would set the necessary legend-making in motion.

Listen, I won’t show you to anybody, not to anybody: it must be that way. He exists, but no one has seen him, he’s in hiding (on skryvaetsia). And, you know, it’s even possible to show you, for example to some one person out of a hundred thousand. And it will start spreading all over the earth: “We’ve seen him, we’ve seen him.” Even with Ivan Filippovich God-of-Sabaoth, they saw how he ascended to heaven in a chariot in front of the people, saw it with the ‘own’ eyes.

¹⁶ D-PSS 11: 188. The statement is ascribed to the Prince.
¹⁷ Demons 421; D-PSS 10: 325 (translation modified).
¹⁸ Demons 421; D-PSS 10: 325.
And you are no Ivan Filippovich; you are beautiful, proud as a god, seeking nothing for yourself, with a halo of a victim, ‘in hiding.’

Verkhovensky’s project includes exploiting the folk imagination and historical memory of the narod. According to K. Chistov, the recurring motifs of the substitution and concealment of royal victims are derived from “popular socio-utopian legends about a returning Tsar’/Tsarevich-Deliverer.” The narod considered every impostor as a potential liberator from the current regime. As Chester Dunning has observed, some of Pugachev’s followers regarded him as nothing less than the “second coming” of Stenka Razin, and both were seen as spiritual reincarnations of False Dmitry. Many Russians considered Razin and Pugachev, just like False Dmitry, to be immortal Christ-like deliverers of the narod from an overbearing and evil regime. The impostors were considered “resplendent suns” possessing magical powers who, even if defeated, would return again with God’s help to champion the cause of Russia’s faithful Orthodox masses.

Verkhovensky’s allusion to the beliefs in an incarnate God/Christ among the sectarians points to his conviction that the narod needs such a figure and is ready to follow him. His plan, however, is to offer a villain disguised as a saviour, and there is no

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19 Demons 422; D-PSS 10: 325-326. According to Ellis Sandoz, the legend Petr mentions is based on the account that circulated among the Skoptsy, a radical offshoot of the Khlusty, about their leader Konrad Selivanov. Selivanov insisted that he was the assassinated father of Pavel, Tsar Peter III. He was proclaimed “Christ” and worshiped as “Christ Peter III.” Ellis Sandoz, “Roots of Russian Revolutionism,” Political Apocalypse: A Study of Dostoevsky’s Grand Inquisitor (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2000) 31. “Ivan Filippovich” is made up from the combination of Danillo Filippovich, the founder of the sect of the Khlysty and his successor Ivan Timofeevich Suslov. Both leaders were seen as manifestations of God on Earth and had many followers. See Ivanits 121; Nancy K. Anderson, The Perverted Ideal in Dostoevsky’s “The Devils” (New York: Peter Lang, 1997) 55. Khlysty (or Flagellants, known for practicing self-flagellation) and Skoptsy (Castrates, known for practicing castration as part of their teaching against lust) were religious sects that appeared in Russia in the aftermath of the Russian religious Schism (raskol) of the seventeenth century. These mystical sects were offshoots of the Old Believers who separated from the official Russian Orthodox Church after the Nikonian Reforms of 1666.

20 Chistov considers these a distinctive genre of folklore Chistov, Russkaia narodnaia utopiia 453-456.

illusion about it. Unlike schismatic saviours, political impostors such as Razin or Dmitry, always provoked controversial attitudes: they were seen either as deliverers or villains. Dostoevsky achieves a similar ambivalent perception of Stavrogin through an analogy between him and Razin. Verkhovensky intends to re-enact a scenario of earlier uprisings such as the one led by Razin and later one by Pugachev, who succeeded in attracting much support from the narod. To do that, he uses pretence as a political device, which, as Perrie suggests, has a capacity “to mobilise members of all social groups under the banner of the ‘true Tsar.’” In Verkhovensky’s plan, arson, fire and mass destruction prepare the ground for the popular revolt and for the appearance of a “hidden Tsarevich”; he says:

We’ll get fires going… We’ll get legends going… […] Well, the troubles (smuta) will start! Such a heaving (raskachka) will set in as the world has never seen… Russia will be darkened with mist (zatumanitsia Rus’), the earth will weep for the old gods… Well, and then we’ll bring out … […] Ivan the Tsarevich – you, you! 

The reference to Ivan Tsarevich adds an important folkloric element to the image that Verkhovensky wants to make of Stavrogin. A legendary hero, according to Joseph Frank, symbolizes the faith of the Russian people in a just and rightful Tsar. Ivan Tsarevich is a complex folkloric figure and is open to diametrically opposed interpretations. Linda

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22 At one point it is said that Verkhovensky intends to install the figure of Razin; Stavrogin says: “He’s taken it into his head that I could play the role of Stenka Razin for them, ‘owing to my extraordinary capacity for crime’ (po neobyknovenoi sposobnosti k prestupleniu). Demons 253; D-PSS 10: 201. Ivanits suggests that radicals looked to 1870, which marked the two hundredth anniversary of the Razin uprising as the likely date of a massive popular revolt. According to the scholar, Dostoevsky, living in Western Europe and following the development of émigré radical thought, must have been aware of this timetable. See Ivanits 120.
23 Perrie 247.
24 Demons 421; D-PSS 10: 325.
Ivanits reads him as a morally neutral, passive hero of magic tales, who travels to distant kingdoms to perform a great feat.\textsuperscript{26} Milivoje Jovanović argues that Ivan Tsarevich has a dual nature in the fairy-tale tradition.\textsuperscript{27} He is often transformed into someone or something else to defeat his foes and he uses the help of sorcerers or witches to achieve his goal. In Dostoevsky’s artistic imagination, Ivan Tsarevich may be linked to the idea of a masquerade and pretence that is pivotal in the novel. The mention of “Ivan Tsarevich” triggers Stavrogin’s memory of Lebiadkina’s association of him with False Dmitry, and, through this association, the folkloric figure acquires additional connotations of an impostor, as does Stavrogin.

Verkhovensky’s revolution is impossible without the \textit{narod} and so he shapes his political mythology for the \textit{narod}. Realizing that no material wellbeing can compete with their ideal of a just Tsar, a belief that defines their collective character and behaviour, he prepares to offer them Stavrogin as this ideal. Verkhovensky’s new deity, a god-like figure, needs to embrace both religious and revolutionary ideals, and to project power and determination capable of destroying all existing socio-political forms. For Verkhovensky, this would be to immanentize the eschaton, after which a New Kingdom is possible.

The idea of a New Kingdom is complex in the novel. In Verkhovensky’s fantasies, the \textit{narod} is not the object for whom the Kingdom is to be established, but rather a means to establish it. Moreover, he is not so much preoccupied with the idea of the Kingdom, which he sees as an ideal in the future, but with the phase that precedes it. Since the \textit{narod} comprise the tool for his violence, it becomes the starting point of his project. Verkhovensky, just like Saltykov’s Ugrium-Burcheev, intends to suppress

\textsuperscript{26} Ivanits 120.
education and any need for enlightenment, and also to instil the need for obedience and spread debauchery, lechery, and moral decay.

[speaking to Stavrogin] to level the mountains is a good idea, not a ridiculous one. [...] No need for education, enough of science! There’s sufficient material even without science for a thousand years to come, but obedience must be set up. Only one thing is lacking in the world: obedience. The thirst for education is already an aristocratic thirst. As soon as there’s just a tiny bit of family or love, there is a desire for property. We’ll extinguish desire: we’ll get drinking, gossip, denunciation going; we’ll get unheard-of depravity (razvrat) going; we’ll stifle every genius in infancy.28

Through this passage, Dostoevsky renders Verkhovensky’s conception of the narod as a mob that can be easily manipulated and naturally given to drinking and violence. The revolutionary relies on their elemental dark side that, in his mind, can be incited. For Verkhovensky, Fedka Katorzhnik, whose last name indicates an imprisoned criminal, is the embodiment of these dark forces, and he sees the narod as a collective Fedka figure, uneducated, religious and violent.29 Such a perception of the narod informs Verkhovensky’s vision of the future social order that precludes freedom and equality and is based on obedience and a master-slave relationship, a complete reversal of the New Jerusalem. He contends: “Slaves must have rulers.”30 Verkhovensky’s vision is an extension of Shigalev’s ideal of paradise on earth that was initially premised on the idea.

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28 Demons 418; PSS 10: 323.
29 In the novel, Fedka is associated with robbery as well as the murder of Captain Lebiadkin and his sister. At the same time he is portrayed as a true believer, who spends nights reading the Apocalypse. My reading is in line with Ivanits, who has argued that “the deviant nature of Fedka and Maria Timofeevna’s spirituality by no means precludes insights about the mercy of God or the sanctity of the Earth.” See Ivanits 115.
30 Demons 418; D-PSS 10: 323.
of “unlimited freedom” and resolved in the affirmation of “unlimited despotism.”  

Shigalev’s scheme envisions the division of humanity into two unequal parts: one tenth enjoys freedom and unrestricted rights over the rest. The rest lose their human image and, turning into a herd, finally achieve primeval innocence. The principles of Shigalev’s scheme recall Dostoevsky’s response to Chernyshevsky’s utopian vision of future society in Notes from the Underground (Zapiski iz podpol’ia). There, Dostoevsky renders the envisioned social order as one that eliminates personality and deprives man of free will. Shigalev’s vision of the future Kingdom comprises a revision and further extrapolation of Dostoevsky’s earlier critique. Verkhovensky’s conception of the narod absorbs Shigalev’s vision of “the rest of mankind,” transformed into an object of the unrestricted will of the privileged minority.

Throughout the novel, Dostoevsky deems Verkhovensky’s conception of the narod and his understanding of its role in his scheme erroneous. The narod for Verkhovensky is an abstract notion that he invests with his own content. He takes separate myths, uproots them from a much more complex mythological framework, and interprets them in a pseudo-religious key that serves his revolutionary agenda. Through Verkhovensky, Dostoevsky shows the alienation of radicals from the realities of Russia and the incompatibility of their views with those of the narod. To exacerbate the sense of

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32 Demons 402-404; D-PSS 10: 311-12.

33 For the discussion of Dostoevsky’s critique of Chernyshevsky’s ideal of the “crystal palace” in The Notes From the Underground, see Frank’s “Notes from the Underground,” Dostoevsky: a Writer in His Time 425-8.

34 Borshchevsky suggests that in devising Shigalev’s theory of slavery, Dostoevsky alludes to Herzen’s idea of “equality of slaves” in his My Past and Thought. See Borshchevskii, Shchedrin i Dostoevskii: istoriia ikh ideinoi bor’by 232 (fn.1). R. Batchelor reads Shigalev’s scheme that endorses “universal despotism” as a critique of the Hegelian absolutist state that deprives an individual of his freedom. See his “Literature, Society and the Concept of Revolt,” European History Quarterly 5.4 (1975): 398-9.
alienation, Dostoevsky alludes to the fact that the entire project to overthrow the autocratic regime stems from the latter’s orientation towards the West that had lost its religious ideal. In his plans for the character of Nechaev in his notebooks, Dostoevsky explicitly expounds that the orchestration of the entire intrigue was framed abroad and was based on a misconception about the readiness of the *narod* to rebel.

At the heart of all these crimes was the conviction formed somewhere in Switzerland about the condition of Russia (about its readiness for the revolt, mutiny, etc.), and as a consequence, a cunning and presumptuous man (Nechaev) is sent out there to try it out.\(^35\)

In his notebooks, more explicitly than in the final printed text, Dostoevsky links the ideologies adopted by the radicals to the legacy of Peter the Great. In Dostoevsky’s historiographic thought, Peter disrupted the destiny of the Russian nation by turning it towards the West.

Dostoevsky believed that the ruling elite of every transitional period wants to change the social order but does not know how to do it and therefore often resorts to violence. Thus Peter the Great, according to Dostoevsky, despotically introduced into life not “what Russia needed.”\(^36\) He perceived the emperor as an antinational ruler who betrayed the spirit of the Russian *narod* by the despotism of his reforming methods.\(^37\) In his article “A Delicate Question” ("Shchekotlivyi vopros"), published in the journal *Time (Vremia)* in 1862, Dostoevsky calls the nihilists “tiny Peter the Greats” (*kroshechnye*

\(^{35}\) D-*PSS* 11: 276.


\(^{37}\) “Despotism is not in the spirit of our *narod*… It is too peace-loving and likes to achieve its goals peacefully, gradually. And during the day of Peter fires were burning and scaffolds were erected for people who did not support his innovations.” Dostoevsky, “Dva lageria teoretikov,” *D-PSS* in 15 vol., 11: 231.
Petry Velikie). In the early drafts, Dostoevsky links Nechaev with Peter. Appearing there both as a revolutionary and as Dostoevsky’s mouthpiece, Nechaev proclaims that “We are the consequence of Peter the Great” (My posledstvie Petra Velikogo); and, in another place, “We are an idle people (my zhe narod vakantnyi). Peter the Great relieved us of our responsibilities (nas uprazdnil ot del), and that is why we are for the great and bright idea of destruction.” A larger context of the Petrine legacy illuminates these references.

Peter the Great completed the transformation of Russia into a secular empire and, in the process, completely replaced the old, potentially destabilizing ideology with his own vision of a “well-ordered police state” based on the impersonal rule of law. He drafted the noble elite into permanent state service and imposed new military, labour, and tax burdens on the mostly peasant masses. These reforms exacerbated the gap between the nobility and the Russian narod. In a letter to A.S. Romanov (heir to the throne) from February 1873, Dostoevsky wrote that the long alienation of Russian culture from the native, original principles of Russian life had produced the social phenomenon of nihilism. For Dostoevsky, nihilists became “the last link of an historic chain” beginning with Peter’s policies. Consequently, the nobility’s betrayal of the narod, their complete separation from their national origins, and their total misconception of their true interests

39 D-PSS 11: 272. Dostoevsky uses the word “vakantnyi” as a synonym for a more Russian word “prazdnii” (empty, idle, inactive, not occupied).
40 Dunning 476.
43 D-PSS 12: 255.
and ideals were all by-products of the Petrine reforms. Dostoevsky’s article “The Two Camps of Theoreticians” (“Dva lageria teoretikov”) best encapsulates his ideas about the Petrine reforms and the Russia’s development following them: “The Petrine reforms created in Russia some sort of statum in statu. They created a so-called educated society [...] that has often betrayed the interests of the people, a society completely separated from the narod (razobshennoe s narodnoi massoi), and what is more, that has assumed a hostile attitude towards it.”

All the nihilists in the novel are Westernizers, particularly Petr Verkhovensky, whose first and last name (verkhovenstvo means “supremacy”) may suggest his close affinity with his historical predecessor Peter the Great (Velikii). The Russian Emperor built the city of stone that removed spiritual primacy from Moscow, which from the early sixteenth century had been considered the Third Rome and had assumed exceptional significance among Russian Orthodoxy. Likewise, Petr Verkhovensky conceives of the New Kingdom as an edifice of stone that would not be based on a religious ideal, although its realization requires utilization of the sacred ideals of the narod. Stone imagery is important in The Possessed: through it Dostoevsky establishes the characters’ subordination to western ideologies. For example, Verkhovensky says:

And the earth will groan a great groan (i zastonet stonom zemlia): ‘A new, just law is coming,’ and the sea will boil up and the whole showhouse will collapse (rukhnet balagan), and then we’ll see how to build up an edifice of stone (stroenie kamennoe). For the first time! We will do the building, we, we alone!”

45 Leatherbarrow links the name Peter with the hero of Russian carnival folk theatre. See Leatherbarrow, “The Devil’s Vaudeville” 290-293.
46 Demons 422; D-PSS 10: 326. Emphasis added.
Like God who created everything out of a void, with the help of Stavrogin Petr Verkhovensky wants to build a stone edifice (the New Kingdom) out of nothing in place of the old world after its complete destruction. In similar language, Karmazinov suggests that the model to be appropriated is in the West: “in Europe [...] theirs is a kingdom of stone, they still have something to lean on” (v Evrope [...] tsarstvo kamennoe, tam eshe est’ na chem operet’sia). Through the character of Karmazinov, Dostoevsky intentionally introduces a misconception that is revealed when read along with the passage from the notebooks about the actual meaning of the stone as a symbol: “Stone is God, no one believes in God, therefore – there is nothing to lean on” (Kamen’ – bog, u vsekh otsutstvuet vera v boga, i tak – ne na chto operet’sia). Dostoevsky’s critique rests on his conviction that the nihilists’ belief that the West can offer a firm foundation as a substitute for God/Christ as religious ideal is a chimera that dooms all their revolutionary aspirations. The symbolism of the stone is further explained in the notebooks through the thoughts of the Prince, who directly links it to Peter the Great.

A two-hundred-year-long disorder (shatost’) is everywhere. Our entire reform, starting with Peter, constitutes him taking a stone that was firmly placed, and contriving to put it on the tip of a corner. We are standing on this corner and trying to balance ourselves. The wind will blow, and we’ll fly away. And the farther we go, the worse it gets, because we have removed ourselves from our

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47 Demons 371; D-PSS 10: 288. Emphasis added.
48 D-PSS 11: 275. Emphasis added. The symbolism of the rock is important in the Bible. Christ said to Peter: “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Mathew 16:18 (King James Bible translation). Peter means “rock or cliff” in Greek. The choice of “Peter” by Dostoevsky for the hero’s name suggests that he is a false rock of faith. The name is also a reference to Petr I.
national origins so much already that we no longer feel the need to go back, and we don’t understand what it means and why we have to be self-sufficient.\textsuperscript{49}

The passage evokes Dostoevsky’s idea of the loss of ties to the Russian soil (\textit{pochva}), the radical youth’s lack of roots, their disconnection from the \textit{narod} as the carrier of true Russianess. Russia’s historic development, according to Dostoevsky, requires a firmer foundation than the stone laid by Peter the Great. Verkhovensky’s \textit{edifice of stone} is similar to Peter’s since it is divorced from the national core. At the same time, Dostoevsky presents it as a distorted theocracy. In the New Kingdom, one has to adopt a new pseudo-religion.

\textbf{ […] he [a sub-lieutenant] had thrown two icons belonging to his landlord out of his apartment, and chopped one of them up with an axe; and in his room he had placed the works of Vogt, Moleschot, and Buchner on stands like three lecterns, and before each lectern kept wax church candles burning.\textsuperscript{50}}

The icon is a sacred symbol of pre-Petrine Russia, the symbol of Russia’s unity within the Orthodox Church. In this passage books of natural-science replace the sacred object, as a materialist sub-lieutenant ritually canonises them as a new Bible. Desacralisation occurs through a violent act, and the violence is “sanctioned by the new truth.”\textsuperscript{51} Verkhovensky aspires to offer the \textit{narod} quasi-religious salvationism by erecting the New Kingdom founded on the equality and brotherhood of slaves. In a pseudo-utopia these slaves would enjoy quasi-freedom while submitting to the authority of a new radical elite.

\textbf{II. Dostoevsky’s Appropriation of Apocalyptic Lore}

\textsuperscript{49}\textit{D-PSS} 11: 156.
\textsuperscript{50} \textit{Demons} 346; \textit{D-PSS} 10: 269.
\textsuperscript{51} L. Saraskina, \textit{Besy-roman preduprezhdenie} (Moskva: Sovetskii Pisatel, 1990) 278.
To deconstruct or demythologize Verkhovensky’s political eschatology, Dostoevsky devises his own mythological framework with the myth of the Apocalypse at the center. Separate elements of his conceptual paradigm respond to and undermine the analog within Verkhovensky’s revolutionary scheme, creating a dialogical tension. In this mythologizing, the novelist assumes the role of a prophet speaking in the name of sacred Russia and the Russian narod. If through Verkhovensky’s political mythology, Dostoevsky showed its reliance on popular support, the writer’s own mythology serves to show that no such support is ever possible. The myth of the Antichrist becomes a convenient tool in Dostoevsky’s larger historiosophic project as it is presented in the novel.

i. Tsar-Saviour or the Antichrist?

The study of political impostors has shown that having failed to fulfil the people’s expectations of a “Tsar-Deliverer,” the impostors were often assimilated into becoming Christ’s adversary – the Antichrist.\(^52\) In the case of False Dmitry, the narod radically changed its attitude towards him when it became aware of his heresy, his “anti-behaviour,” to use Boris Uspensky’s term.\(^53\) Clerical circles in Poland, who supported False Dmitry’s ascent to the throne, converted him to Roman Catholicism, believing that the Tsar would bring Muscovy “into the bosom of the papal church.”\(^54\) Otrepyev agreed to his conversion and promised the same for Russia should he ascend to the throne. False

\(^{52}\) The seventeenth-century sources denounce the impostor as the Antichrist. E.g., the nobleman Peter Turgenev and the commoner Feodor, who arose against Otrepyev, called him the Antichrist and satan’s sycophant. See Perrie 56. Cohn mentions that “any ruler who could be regarded as a tyrant was apt to take on the features of the Antichrist, in which case hostile chronicles would give him the conventional title of rex iniquus. When such a monarch died leaving the prophecies unfulfilled, he would be degraded, just like the rex Justus, to the rank of ‘precursor,’ and the waiting would be resumed.” See Cohn 35-36.

\(^{53}\) Perrie 56

Dmitry’s marriage to a Polish noblewoman without her conversion to Orthodoxy and the admission of the Catholics into Orthodox churches – pushed the Muscovite clergy into the camp of the Tsarevich’s foes. The belief in Dmitry as the Tsar-Redeemer was shattered completely, and he was seen now as an impostor to the throne by all the strata of Russian society. Dmitry’s wedding was the final blow that outraged all of Moscow.\(^{55}\) Shortly thereafter the populace revolted, incited by the boyar conspirators – the group that, as some scholars believe, paved his way to the throne.\(^{56}\) The boyars turned against False Dmitry and exploited the pretender’s lack of commitment to the Orthodox faith.\(^{57}\)

Maria Lebiadkina’s anathematizing of Stavrogin as False Dmitry shows a similar shift in her perception of the character from positive (as the embodiment of pure good) to negative (as the embodiment of pure evil). Tension between the two opposite qualities permeates Stavrogin’s character. Scholars have pointed to the double nature that the name suggests: “Stavros” is the Greek word for a “cross,” “rog” alludes to the horned beast of Revelations, Nikolai means a “conqueror of the nations,” and Vsevolodovich means “master of all.”\(^{58}\) Richard Peace suggests that Stavrogin includes within himself both the sinner and the saint, and this is why he can implant in the minds of his two disciples (Shatov and Kirillov) two systems of ideas that seem so diametrically

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\(^{55}\) As Platonov notes, unbelievers were allowed in the Kremlin for the tsar’s wedding, but the common Muscovite populace was not. Strict marriage rites were not observed; and the day of the wedding – May 8, on the eve of Friday and St. Nicholas Day, was chosen against church regulation and custom. See Platonov 82.

\(^{56}\) Platonov 82. Platonov convincingly argues that Dmitry was the creation of the boyars from the outset, their chosen weapon in the struggle against Boris Godunov. See Platonov 66. Shubin similarly suggests that Otrepyev was a means to the Russian autocracy’s end. See Shubin, \textit{Tsars and Impostors: Russia’s Time of Troubles} 87. In view of some other historians, the pretense was orchestrated by the Poles, and the origin of the Troubles lay in the external relations of Muscovy with the Rzechpospolita, while Pierrie suggests that Otrepyev’s own actions were crucial to the development of the Troubles. See Perrie 244.

\(^{57}\) Platonov 80.

Verkhovensky recognizes Stavrogin’s disposition to evil, and it is necessary for his revolutionary scheme. At the same time Stavrogin’s skill of conviction and his potential to be admired and followed makes him an ideal candidate to be offered as a Deliverer. In the new social order that denies people freedom and free will, and that turns them into slaves, there is no place for the narod demystifying their Tsar. To undermine any possibility of association of Stavrogin with the Saviour outside of Verkhovensky’s scheme, Dostoevsky strategically renders him in a demonic key.

Both Verkhovensky and Stavrogin are manifestations of evil. Yet, time and again, Dostoevsky artistically dismisses them as pretenders, exposes them to ridicule, thereby marginalising them. Richard Pope assumes that by depicting Petr Verkhovensky as a “mediocrity, especially intellectually,” a grotesque character, a “cartoonist’s delight,” Dostoevsky launched an attack on romantization of evil in literature. In his reading, Petr’s demonic nature links him not to Satan but to “a more clownish Mephistopheles,” and “like Mephistopheles he is a demon of destruction and chaos in spite of his inherent comicalness.” Peace sees Petr Verkhovensky in a similar light, as a “caricature,” “a sinister clown,” and “the wicked spiteful doll in a puppet show.” In the novel evil is masked in parody and ridicule, to which Verklhovensky and Stavrogin are reduced. Laughter, however, plays an important psychological function and may be seen as a way to fight one’s anxieties and fears. In the Russian folkloric tradition, to laugh at the

60 Pope argues that Petr succeeds in manipulating all the characters by guile and deceit, not intelligence: “The serpent only appears wise only because of gullibility of those around it. Dostoevsky went out of his way to make it clear that intellect was not Petr’s forte. Although he has a genius for evil, Petr is no evil genius.” Richard W. Pope, “Petr Verkhovensky and the Banality of Evil,” Dostoevsky and the Twentieth Century: The Ljubliana Papers, ed Malcolm V Jones (Nottingham: Astra Press, 1993) 40-42.
61 Peace 41, 46.
demonic means to release oneself from the fear of the devil. The characters may be ridiculed, their impotence may be exposed, but despite their novelistic representations, the ideas behind them remain no less existentially threatening.

Stavrogin and Verkhovensky represent two different kinds of evil, both equally dangerous. The former is an embodiment of passive evil, evil in embryonic form, in its unlimited potential, while the latter stands for active evil. Richard Peace has observed the development of Petr “from comic to satanic,” and Pope has recognized his potential for evil: “Dostoevsky imagined Peter as an as yet undeveloped, but potentially shattering, destructive force threatening the cosmos of Holy Russia and the world, an unlimited source of evil that transcended the personal and the rational.” In Petr, Dostoevsky created a new type of villain, an embodiment of lackeystvo (lackeiship). Lackeystvo as a concept appears in Dostoevsky’s “Winter Notes about Summer Impressions” (Zimnie zametki o letnikh vpechatleniakh). He sees it as the most characteristic feature of the bourgeoisie, who consider it a virtue: “This is lackeystvo before money, and before those who possess a million. Along with lackeystvo there is a hypocrisy declaring that money is the highest virtue.” While the theme of money is more prominent in The Adolescent (Podrostok), lackeystvo is nevertheless very important in The Possessed. Maria Lebiadkina repeatedly calls her brother lakei; and Shatov locates the cause of atheism with all its false values in “lackeystvo mysli (the lackeiship of

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63 The passive evil of Stavrogin is inseparable from his insufficient belief in Christ that, in Dostoevsky’s thought, is not too different from atheism. The passage from the notebooks to the novel that discusses Stavrogin is: “But insomuch as he, in his own consciousness, has insufficient faith, he proposes his formula: ‘I believe insomuch, I believe in nothing at all’.” Fyodor Dostoevsky, The Notebooks for the Possessed, ed. Edward Wasiolek, trans. Victor Terras (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968) 373.
64 Peace 201.
65 Pope 46.
The key characteristic of lakeistvo critical for understanding the new form that evil takes is hypocrisy – which presents vice as virtue, the formula that echoes the essence of Dostoevsky’s discussion of bestiality: “the danger is not in the existence of violence per se, but when violence is exalted as a virtue” (i ne to beda, chto est’ eshche zverstvo; beda v tom, esli zverstvo vozneseno budet kak dobrodetel’). The erection of Verkhovensky’s New Kingdom secures this formula of pretence at its every level.

Dostoevsky borrows the dynamics of a power structure that regulate the relationship between Verkhovensky and Stavrogin from the apocalyptic myth, in which the False Prophet works in the name of the Beast, who, at a certain point, is physically absent, but whose “iconic” image acquires more significance than his physical presence. According to the common belief that goes back to Revelations by St. John the Divine as its primary source, the long awaited second coming of Christ will occur in the millennial era after the advent of the Antichrist. This imaginary figure is given various names and titles: the “Man of Sin” or “the Son of Perdition,” “the Lawless One,” “the King of the Babylon,” “the Prince,” “The Idol Shepherd,” “The Angel of the

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67 D-PSS 10: 111.
68 D-PSS in 15 vol., 14: 144.
69 In their discussions of some apocalyptic imagery in The Possessed, William Leatherbarrow, Lena Silard, and Rene Girard have suggested that Dostoevsky constructs the associative links of the two characters, who represent the main sources of chaos and destruction, with the Antichrist (Nikolai Stavrogin) and with the false prophet (Petr Verkhovensky). Leatherbarrow, “The Devil’s Vaudeville” 303; Lena Silard, “Svoeobrazie motivnoi struktury Besov,” Dostoevsky Studies: Journal of the International Dostoevsky Society 4 (1983): 145. In Girard’s reading of the novel, Stavrogin represents the idol, in whose image we should recognise the Antichrist; and the world of the novel is defined as the “reversed image of the Christian universe.” Noted by Jostein Boertnes, “The Last Delusion in an Infinite Series of Delusions: Stavrogin and the Symbolic Structure of The Devils,” Dostoevsky Studies: Journal of the International Dostoevsky Society 4 (1983): 57. Unlike other critics, Boertnes interprets Kirillov as the False Prophet because of his belief that he will become a man-God through his death, after which time will be frozen and a new era of human life will begin. See Boertnes 66.
70 2 Thessalonians 2:3.
71 2 Thessalonians 2:8.
72 Isaiah 14:4.
74 Zechariah 11:16-17.
Bottomless Pitt,” 75 “The Unclean Spirit,” 76 and others. In Cohn’s reading, the traditional role of the Antichrist in the Revelations is divided between the First Beast – the great red dragon with seven heads and ten horns that appears in the heavens or rises out of the sea and suffers from what appears to be a mortal wound, and the Second Beast – the beast of the earth, which exercises the same authority as the previous beast on his behalf. This second beast, commonly referred to as the false prophet, is able to perform miracles and forces people to worship the first beast. 77 Dostoevsky mentions “the beast with one of his heads wounded” repeatedly in his notebooks, which suggests the symbolic nature of this figure in Dostoevsky’s thought.

Verkhovensky cannot escape the constraints of his role of a false prophet. Without Stavrogin, he is a failure, since he needs the image of the beast, before which he will force the masses to kneel and on whose behalf he may act. Without the figure of the beast, he is nothing. Stavrogin’s refusal to assume the role of the Saviour/Beast dooms Verkhovensky’s scheme “to infiltrate the narod.” However, Dostoevsky does not leave the failure of Verkhovensky’s plan to Stavrogin’s decision alone. The novelist’s elaborate critique of the ideology Verkhovensky represents disallows any hypothetical possibility of the revolutionary’s success. The language of the myth of the Antichrist and apocalyptic imagery become in his artistic arsenal a convenient tool to expose and condemn this ideology as well as its implications for Russia’s historical development.

ii. The Prophet and The Wounded Beast

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75 Revelations 9:11.
76 Matthew 12:43.
77 Cohn 34. Cohn mentions that in Revelations, the figure of the Antichrist has merged into the figure of Satan himself.
In the Book of Daniel and Revelations, the Antichrist represents political rule and oppression. In the New Testament there is a shift in the quantitative and qualitative interpretation of the mythical figure. Matthew (24:24), Mark (13:22) and John (2:18, 4:3) speak about false Christs, false prophets, false teachers, “many antichrists,” who will rise or have appeared in the world already, to lead people astray. John’s discussion of the “Antichrist” focuses on false teaching, deception, lie, denial of Christ; and it is possible that his Biblical writings exercised an important influence on Dostoevsky in his reading of this mythical figure. In *The Possessed*, Dostoevsky synthesizes both features. The rule of the Beast can be read at the level of physical, socio-political and symbolic realities, which, moreover, interpenetrate one another. Additionally, Dostoevsky’s mythological paradigm embraces the Russian tradition that was shaped in the teaching of Old Believers. Towards the beginning of the eighteenth century, the semantic frame of the concept of the Antichrist expanded among them. Some Old Believers believed the Antichrist to be a corporeal being (*chuvstvennyi antikhrist*) while others read him as a metaphor for an invisible universal evil (*dukhovnyi antikhrist*). These two teachings led to the schism among Old Believers in 1701. Russian literature of the nineteenth century

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79 K.G. Isupov, “Russkii Antichrist: sbyvaishcheiasia antiutopiia,” *Antichrist: antologiia* (Moskva: “Vysshia shkola”, 1995) 7. Dutchak believes that Evfimy, the author of Tsvetnik and one of the forefathers of the Old Belief, created the doctrine of the divided nature of the Antichrist; the doctrine was embraced by the Old Believers. In Evfimy’s writings, the Antichrist lives in human form and at the same time he is perceived both as a power of the Fallen Rome exterior to the Christian world as well as an inner enemy whose nature is not materialistic. E.E. Dutchak, *Iz “Vavilona” v “Belovode”: adaptatsionnye vozmozhnosti taezhnykh obschestv staroverov-strannikov (vtoroiia polovina 19-nachalo 21v)*, ed. V.V. Kerova (Tomsk: Izdatel’sto Tomskogo Universiteta, 2007) 68, 84. Shchapov discusses Old Believers’ interpretation of the Antichrist in *The Land and the Schism: The Runners*. 171
that makes use of apocalyptic themes and Dostoevsky in particular seem to bring these two readings into agreement. Stavrogin and Verkhovensky are presented as false teachers (corporeal Antichrists). At the same time, the ideas and ideologies that both characters embody and that the author considers existentially threatening are also conceptualized as metaphysical evil (a spiritual Antichrist). In Dostoevsky, the former usually descends into parodic or comic representation, while the latter, suggestive of the author’s own eschatological anxieties, is present on the ideological plane of the novel.

In Dostoevsky’s apocalyptic vision, socialism falls under the category of destructive evil capable of engulfing and transforming the moral image of the world. The building block of Verkovensky’s dystopian Kingdom of equality of slaves is the teaching of socialism distorted and exalted into a new religion. Dostoevsky leaves two marginalia in his copy of Revelations that links the image of the Beast to this phenomenon. He wrote “socialism” opposite “the Beast from the Earth” (Revelations 13:11), and “Nechaev” opposite the verse: “And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed” (Revelations 13:12), to which Dostoevsky adds “i.e. socialism.”

The ideological roots of socialism go back to French socialist theories, represented by the teachings of Saint-Simon, Fourier, and Proudhon that secularized the teachings of Christ for the purpose of perfecting societal organization. In Russia, as Konstantin Mochulsky has pointed out, utopian socialism was perceived as a “continuation of Christianity,” “a

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translation of Christian Apocalypse into contemporary ‘social’ terms.”

Dostoevsky’s apocalyptic vision equates socialism with the “Beast from the earth,” that is, with the False Prophet. Verkhovensky and his dystopian vision of the future social order illustrate the author’s critique of the concept.

Verkhovensky’s Kingdom comprises a distorted and extreme version of socialism. Dostoevsky’s commentary was also initially supposed to take another form, and he devised it through Stavrogin. The character’s insufficient faith makes him a product and a disciple of what Joseph Frank calls “atheist humanism” firmly rooted in Russian intellectual thought. It emerged from the revised religious doctrine of French Christian socialists that essentially re-examined the relationship between man and the divine, shifting the emphasis from the idea of God “who in his son becomes a man” to the idea of man “who as a son of God created in his image would become God” as well as Ludwig Feuerbach’s theory of God as a “projected image of man” that completely identified man with the supreme being.

The tragedy of Stavrogin as well as Versilov in The Adolescent is in the fact that there is no place for a Russian Christ in their religious outlook. For Dostoevsky, the painting “Acis and Galatea” by Claude Lorrain emblematically portrays the tragedy of the world without the ideal of Christ and immortality. The passage describing the painting appeared in the chapter “At Tikhon’s” (“U Tikhona”) excluded from the printed version of The Possessed and, in an expanded version, included in The Adolescent. The painting shows two people embracing against

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83 For the discussion of the influence of French utopianism and Feuerbachianism on Russian intellectual thought, see Irina Paperno, Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism: A Study in the Semiotics of Behavior (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988) 196-167.
the background of the setting sun. It represents a mythical Golden Age and Versilov translates the “first happy day of European humanity” portrayed in the painting into “the last day of humankind,” where the setting sun is an important symbol.84

I picture to myself, […] that war is at an end and strife has ceased. After curses, pelting with mud, and hisses, has come a lull, and men are left alone, according to their desire: the great idea of old has left them; the great source of strength that till then had nourished and fostered them was vanishing like the majestic sun setting in Claude Lorraine’s picture, but it was somehow the last day of humanity, and men suddenly understood that they were left quite alone, and at once felt terribly orphaned (pochuvstvovali velikoe sirotstvo). […] The orphaned (osiroteshie) would begin to draw together more closely and more lovingly; they would clutch one another’s hands, realizing that thee were all that was left or one another! The great idea of immortality would have vanished.85

Versilov interprets the painting in the spirit of utopian socialism. The humanism of the doctrine rests on a Rousseauian view of human nature that suggests that when all the social conflicts are resolved, and, consequently, evil is eliminated, people will embrace each other in the spirit of brotherhood. For Dostoevsky, however, this utopian image is tragic. The setting sun symbolizes the highest moral ideal of Christ. People, who have deprived themselves of any hope for future regeneration in the light of Christian truth, will be left in their atheistic solitude in the New Kingdom that they have erected on humanistic abstractions and that they have chosen over the Kingdom of God. While Claude Lorrain’s painting depicts the world that absorbs the utopian vision of

84 D-PSS 13: 378.
brotherhood, the world of *The Possessed* comprises a dystopian version of the world that has lost its ideal. The Paradise on Earth is substituted for by the Kingdom of the Beast.

Dostoevsky’s social critique linked the loss of the ideal (Christ) to Catholicism. In Revelations, the False Prophet causes men to worship the first wounded Beast, and Dostoevsky unequivocally associates the wounded Beast with the Catholic Church. In his revolutionary mythology, Verkhovensky assigns Stavrogin the role of Pope:

> You know, I thought of handing the world to the Pope. […] The Pop on top, us around him, and under us – Shigalyovism. […] Listen, I’m dropping the Pope! To hell with Shigalyovism! To hell with the Pope! […] Listen, the Pope will be in the West, and we, we will have you!\(^{86}\)

“The Pope” and “Catholicism” become an important symbol in the novel’s conceptual framework for Verkhovensky’s idea of pyramidal power structure as well as the general hierarchy of evil.

The association of Rome with the whore of Babylon and the Pope with the Antichrist has a long history.\(^ {87}\) For Dostoevsky, the Catholic West was the kingdom of the Antichrist, with its false values and earthly kingdom. The Catholic cult of the person of the Pope, subsequent papal absolutism and the centralisation of Papal authority undermined the essence of Christ’s teaching. In a letter to Maikov from October 9/21, 1870, laying out the main themes of *The Possessed*, Dostoevsky asserts that “All the misfortune of Europe, all, all of it without exception, came as a result of its loss of Christ with the establishment of the Roman church, after which they decided that they could

\(^{86}\) *Demons* 418-419; *D-PSS* 10: 323.

\(^ {87}\) Cohn 80, 211, 243. For the discussion of symbolism of Rome in Old Belief, see Dutchak 58.
manage just as well without Christ.” The idea that Catholicism offers a perverted Christ (the Antichrist) is reiterated in the notebooks to the novel. The same belief linking Catholicism with the Antichrist is expressed more saliently by Myshkin in *The Idiot:* “It (Catholicism) preaches a distorted Christ, a Christ calumniated and defamed by it (*im zhe obolgannogo i porugannogo*), it preaches the opposite of Christ (*Khrista protivopolozhnogo*)! It preaches the Antichrist, I assure you, I swear!” Likewise, in his conversation with Stavrogin, Shatov expresses basically the same idea that Dostoevsky will further artistically rework and develop in his legend of “The Grand Inquisitor” in *The Brothers Karamazov.*

[… ] you believed that Roman Catholicism was no longer Christianity; you affirmed that Rome proclaimed a Christ who had succumbed to the third temptation of the devil, and that, having announced to the whole world that Christ cannot stand on earth without an earthly kingdom, Catholicism thereby proclaimed the Antichrist, thus ruining the whole Western world.

All the ideologies exposed by Dostoevsky in *The Possessed* feature a displacement of values, revealing the common ground between notions such as nihilism/atheism with Catholicism that seem mutually exclusive, but lead from one to the other. Moreover, Verkhovensky’s power paradigm brings together socialism and Catholicism as congenial notions, initially subordinating the former to the latter: “The Pope on top, us around him,

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88 *D-PSS* 29: 146.
89 “For their Christ has accepted the earthly Kingdom rejected in the desert.” *The Notebooks for the Possessed* 225-26; Prince to Shatov: “the Pope – Antichrist comes forth blessing his flock […] We Russians are bringing to the world the regeneration of their lost ideal. *The Notebooks for the Possessed* 235; “In the West Christ has become perverted and spent. The reign of the Antichrist. We have Orthodoxy” *The Notebooks for the Possessed* 235; “N.B. […] (Catholicism being the Antichrist, the Whore)” *The Notebooks for the Possessed* 237.
90 *D-PSS* 8: 450. The theme of Catholicism is also important in *The Adolescent*; in the notes for the novel, Dostoevsky repeatedly mentions Versilov’s conversion to Roman Catholicism.
91 *Demons* 249; *D-PSS* 10:197.
and under us – Shigalyovism.”92 This illustrates Dostoevsky’s thought that Russian
Westernizers, atheism, and socialism have religious and philosophical roots in
Catholicism. 93 In Dostoevsky’s critique, socialism with its emphasis on equality
inevitably results in the creation of an atomized society, replacing the commune united by
the spirit of brotherhood and a common faith in Christ.94

Verkhovensky’s ambitious plan undergoes a significant conceptual shift from
bringing Russia to the Kingdom of the Antichrist (Pope), as False Dmitry had intended to
do, to establishing His kingdom in Russia on the moral values and principles offered by
the West. Although Verkhovensky envisions the establishment of the New Kingdom in
the future, Dostoevsky artistically insists that all the radical ideologies and western views
and ideals are already transforming Russia into the Kingdom of the Beast. To escalate the
atmosphere of chaos (as socio-political confusion and a state of mind in general) within a
symbolic geography of the novel, Dostoevsky brings into the narrative a series of biblical
allusions and references associated with corrupted geography.

iii. The Kingdom of the Beast

According to Revelations, when the first of seven angels sounded his trumpet,
“hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth, burning a
third of the Earth’s flora, scorching all green grass.”95 The novel captures a similar mood,
and all events seem to lead up to a particular moment, when one-fourth of the town of
Zarechie burns down and murderous acts spread in the province, suggesting that the rule
of the Beast has arrived. At this point physical reality seems to dissolve into an

92 Demons 418; D-PSS 10: 323.
93 Dostoevsky concluded in his notebooks from 1863-64 that socialism “grew out of Catholic Christianity”
and is based on “disrespect for humanity.” D-PSS 20: 177.
94 For a discussion of socialism in connection to the theme of a fragmented society and Catholicism in
Dostoevsky, see Holland 40.
95 Revelations 8:11.
apocalyptic moment outside of quotidian time. Dostoevsky intentionally emphasises darkness (as tragic inevitability) over light (as a symbol of hope) throughout the novel. He marked a verse in the Gospel of John in his Bible that reveals the symbolic meaning of the two concepts and can explain his emphasis on darkness in the novel.

And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.

Light is symbolic of the religious ideal of Christ, as Dostoevsky’s discussion of Claude Lorrain’s painting demonstrate. In Westernized Russia it is rejected and replaced. Therefore, not only does light suggest a demonic presence, but it also draws attention to the radicals’ disconnection from values and the impossibility of salvation.

As physical time of the novel overlaps with the mythical, so mythical topography is superimposed on its geography. Scholars have noted the association of the town of Skvoreshniki with Babylon. In Revelations, Babylon is identified as “a home for demons and a haunt for every evil spirit.” In Christian consciousness, it has ceased to represent a geographical space and has become a marker of apostasy, wickedness and corruption. The mythology of Babylon includes two main symbolic images: the Tower

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96 All the main actions in the novel take place at night. The actual sun is never mentioned except for occasions when Shatov, Lebiadkin, Petr Verhovensky, Lebiadkina and Fedka compare Nikolai Stavrogin to it. Darkness often signifies Stavrogin’s presence. Dostoevsky intentionally stresses the mythic quality of time, as if physical time has stopped. E.g., after the fire Liza says: “By the calendar it ought to have been light an hour ago, and it’s still like night.” 97 John 3:19-20. Kirillova discusses Dostoevsky’s marginalia in Revelations. See Kirillova 110.
98 Leatherbarrow compares Skvoreshniki to Babylon as “the habitation of devils and cage of every unclean and hateful bird.” See Leatherbarrow, “The Demonic in Dostoevsky’s The Devils” 303. Kirillova likens the world of the novel with a spiritual desert. See Kirillova 110.
99 Revelations 18:2.
100 Dutchak 4, 25.
of Babel (the symbol of a collective sin of men against God and of earthly power, aspiring to replace heavenly authority); and the Whore of Babel (the symbol of the apocalyptic city and its demise). Old Believer mythology enriched the semantic field of Babylon. It is linked directly to the Antichrist and represents collective spiritual death, the absence among its inhabitants of the Holy Spirit, the lack of clarity of mind and consciousness, demonic possession. Dostoevsky’s critique seems to synthesize the traditional and Old Believers’ readings of the biblical symbol to map a spiritual condition of corrupted morals and perverse ideals. Furthermore, he complicates the mythical geography of The Possessed by likening it to yet another biblical city associated with sinfulness and corruption – Sodom.

In the Bible, Sodom is one of the five cities destroyed by “brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven” for the sins of their inhabitants. The city is characterized by sinfulness of its population, and is destroyed not because of any particular sins (homosexuality, inhospitality, and gross immorality), but because “the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the Lord” and abandoned Him. The values of the

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101 In Tsvetnik by Evfimy, one of the most influential texts in the Old Believers’ literary heritage, the fallen Babylon is defined as a “the plaiting of the spiritual mind, the cloudiness of reason and conscience, the non-dwelling of the Holy Spirit among its inhabitants, an immortal devil and the mutiny of the mind, the antichrist, the mutinous spirit entering the body of a lawless man” (pletenie dukhovnogo razuma, pomrachenie uma i sovesti, nepribyvanie sredi ego zhitelei Sviatogo Dukha, bestlennyi d’iavol i miatezh uma, antichrist, miatezhnyi dukh, vhodiashchii v telo bezzakonnogo cheloveka). Dutchak 72. Shchapov’s The Land and the Schism: The Runners also discusses Evfimy’s Tsvetnik and mentions the Old Believers’ interpretation of Babylon several times.

102 Dostoevsky inserts an allusion to Sodom through a retired general at the reception in Zarechie; he says: “A city, they say, cannot stand without seven righteous men (bez semi pravednikov)… seven, I think, I don’t remember the com-men-ded number. How many of these seven… indubitably righteous men of our town… have the honor of attending your ball, I don’t know, but in spite of their presence I am beginning to feel myself unsafe.” Demons 506; D-PSS 10: 388. The General alludes to the passage in Genesis where Abraham pleads with God not to destroy the city of Sodom, and God promises not to do it if there were at least ten righteous people in it. See Genesis 18:32. Dostoevsky intentionally changes the number from 10 to 7 to reflect the group of conspirators and their leaders. The number 7 also normally has positive connotations (7 days of creation, 7 heavens, etc.).

103 Genesis 19: 24-25.

radicals proliferating from their atheistic outlook made Zarechie analogous to Sodom. Zarechie means *za rekoi*, that is, “behind or on the other side of a river.” The river may suggest a boundary that separates two worlds, known and unknown, or righteous and unrighteous. In *The Possessed*, the line between right and wrong seems obliterated. The sinfulness of the city culminates in punishment, evoking an allusion to biblical eternal fire. Fire imagery is devoid of any positive connotations in the novel and is associated with the wrath of God, hell, and the Judgment Day. Through biblical imagery and allusions, Dostoevsky articulates his own artistic condemnation of a town symbolic of all Westernized Russia.

After exposing the nature of Nihilism at the reception in Skvoreshniki, Stepan Trofimovich Verkhovensky (Petr’s father), in a manner of the biblical Lot abandoning Sodom and Gomorrah to save himself, leaves the town before its destruction, condemning it as spiritually polluted: “I shake off the dust from my feet and curse you… The end… the end…” (*Otriasaiu prakh nog moikh i proklinaiu*).\(^{105}\) His words evoke another biblical image of a desecrated place. I refer to Christ’s sending his twelve disciples to people and giving them the power “against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.”

And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when you depart out of that house or city, *shake off the dust of your feet* (*otriakhnite ego pyl’ so svoikh nog*). Verily I say unto you, I shall be more

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\(^{105}\) *Demons* 487; *D-PSS* 10: 374. See the story of Lot’s flight from Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19: 24-29.
tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment, than for that city.  

Stepan Trofimovich recognizes the revolutionaries’ loss of connection to what is authentically Russian and leaves the abode of the demons in search of a “house that is worthy.” His last wandering brings him to Khatovo, the toponym derives from the word “khata” which means a “peasant house/home.” Stepan Trofimovich kneels down to the earth, washing it with his tears in an allegorical act of purification. Only by re-establishing his lost connection to “Mother Earth” can he escape the symbolic geography of an impure town.

Stepan Trofimovich initially intends his last pilgrimage to bring him to Spasov. The Russian word “spas” means “saviour” with the connotation of “salvation.” “Spas” is also the name of a typical Russian icon of the Saviour, i.e., Jesus, usually represented as “Spas nerukotvornyi” (the Saviour untouched by human hands) with the image of Jesus on the cloth used by Mary Magdalene to wipe off his face on his way to Golgotha. By mapping the character’s symbolic journey, Dostoevsky weaves into the fabric of the novel the myth of a utopian place that is supposed to shield its inhabitants from the forces of the Antichrist. The notion of a sacred land occupies a prominent place in Russian apocalyptic lore, in which it most commonly appears as “earthly paradise,” the New Jerusalem, Belovodie, the city of Kitezh (grad Kitezh), or an apocalyptic desert. All these concepts are related semantically and denote not topographical, but mythological space. The Russian religious outlook reconciles two religious spaces: in traditional

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107 Dutchak 134, 144. For the discussion of Russian socio-utopian legends about “far lands,” see Chistov 385-456. The legend of Kitezh is central to the story “Grisha” by Melnikov Pechersky, which appeared in the journal The Contemporary from 1860 where Dostoevsky certainly could have read it.
Orthodoxy, heaven and hell are situated on an axiological vertical line, while in apocryphal tradition they are located horizontally. Horizontal placement of sacred and desecrated space suggests an intention to localize values in a mundane sphere of experience. The mythology of Old Believers brings the demonic realm into everyday life in a similar way as the apocryphal tradition does. The state and state institutions become the residence of embodied evil. In their eschatological world outlook, the sacred realm is likened to the apocalyptic desert where “a true Christian could escape physically and morally during the time of the end.”

In The Possessed, Spasov is a sacred space located on the opposite side of the moral axis of Babylon/Sodom. Stepan Trofimovich’s search for it accentuates his inner conflict with the inhabitants of the demonic space and his self-determination in light of newly discovered truth. He envisions Spasov as a salvific apocalyptic desert. Dostoevsky makes use of the myth while revising its semantics according to his own convictions. The myth of the sacred desert is centered on the idea of salvation of a man contingent upon his escape from socio-political life. In Dostoevsky, individual salvation is inseparable from communal salvation. Therefore, Stepan Trofimovich never reaches the utopian space of Spasov, but finds reconciliation and re-establishes the lost connection to the soil and the Russian narod in Khatovo. Stepan Trofimovich’s journey, with its imagined and final destination, enciphers important elements of Dostoevsky’s historiosophic thought about Russia’s historical development.

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108 Dutchak 147.
109 Dutchak 147. According to Dutchak, Old Believers understood the concept of the desert in a significantly different way from its traditional interpretation. Before the schism, a monk who chose to go to the desert would expand Christian space by bringing himself closer to the world by means of prayer for it. The Old Believers’ desert separates itself from the world that is perishing under the rule of the Antichrist. Dutchak 136; E.A. Poletaeva, “‘Ukhod v Pustyniu’ v drevnerusskoi i staroobriadcheskoi traditsii (na materiale sev-russ agiografii i staroobriadchiskikh sochinenii),” Uralskii sbornik: Istoria, kultura, religiia 2 (1998): 200-201.
III. Dostoevsky’s Eschatological Nationalism

While working on the novel, Dostoevsky closely followed political events in Russia and abroad. The Franco-Prussian War, which began in July 1870, and the rise and destruction of the Paris Commune of March-May 1871 – the insurrection against the provisional government of France – marked for Dostoevsky the symbolic end of Europe.\footnote{W. J. Leatherbarrow, “The Devils in the Context of Dostoevsky’s Life and Works,” Dostoevsky’s The Devils: a Critical Companion 25; D. C. Offord “The Devils in the Context of Contemporary Russian Thought and Politics,” Dostoevsky’s “The Devils”: a Critical Companion 67.} Hence, Dostoevsky’s anxiety featured in the manuscripts has apocalyptic overtones.\footnote{“The Apocalypse, the millennial kingdom, the Roman whore […] One last subordination to Europe (posledniaia podchinennost’ Evrope), to civilization, the last condemnation of the Petrine reforms (poslednie prokliatie reformy Petrovoi). Lack of consciousness in their heads (nesoznatel’nost’ v golovakh) (socialism, communism, baseness).” D-PSS 11: 167.} At the same time, Russia and Europe (Rossia i Evropa) by Nikolai Danilevsky (a Russian naturalist, historian, and philosopher; 1822-1885), which appeared in The Dawn (Zaria) in 1869 and was reprinted as a separate book in 1871 informed some of Dostoevsky’s historiosophic views.\footnote{For a discussion of Danilevsky’s influence on Dostoevsky see Holland 42-44.} Dostoevsky sympathized with Danilevsky’s ideal of pan-Slavism that underscored Russia’s distinctiveness and the necessity to develop in its own fashion. The notes to The Possessed and several articles in the Diary of the Writer (Dnevnik pisatelia) reflect his agreement with some of Danilevsky’s ideas. However, Dostoevsky was not fully satisfied with the historian’s secular viewpoint. The future development of Russia, in Dostoevsky’s thought, was inseparable from Orthodoxy. In this respect, his view is more in sync with Pogodin’s argument formulated in his letter to Tsar Alexander II. In it Pogodin discusses the historic role of Russia and compares it to other European countries. Just as Danilevsky did three decades later, Pogodin cherished the idea of the reunification of all Slavs and argued that
it was Russia’s turn to perform a grand role in history. Unlike Danilevsky, Pogodin stressed the importance of historical development in light of Christian principle. Dostoevsky takes Pogodin’s argument further to suggest that Orthodox Russia has a messianic role to play in revealing the Russian Christ to the irreligious Catholic world. The mission of the Russian nation, according to him, was the resurrection of Europe. He developed this idea in his letter to N. Strakhov from March 18 (30), 1869.

Dostoevsky explicitly problematizes Europeanization and the loss of roots in post-Petrine Russia both in the notebooks to The Possessed as well as to The Adolescent. Western ideological influences, according to him, mislead radical youth from understanding the true mission of Russia. In his view, the West had lost Christ and the Russian people, the narod, were the carrier of the true faith; therefore, no true union was possible between the Christian people and godless Russian Europeanism, which, according to Joseph Frank, the false and unconsummated marriage between Lebiadkina (who is associated with the soil, peasantry and Mother Earth) and Stavrogin (who embodies Russian Europeanism) indicates. The mission of Russia consisted of the resurrection of Europe, and this idea is expressed in the notebooks through the character of the Prince.

113 Pogodin writes: “In history there is a succession of peoples (chreda narodov) that, one after another, comes out as if according to schedule, to serve mankind. So far only the Slavs have not been seen in this glorious sequence. Accordingly, they have to enter the arena now (oni dolzhny teper’ vystupit’ na poprishche), launch a grand mission for the sake of humanity, and reveal its noble powers.” Pogodin, “Pismo k Gosudariu Tsesarevichu, Velikomu Kniaziu, Aleksandru Nikolaevichu (nyne tsarstvuiushchemu Gosudariu Imperatoru) v 1838 godu,” Istoriko-politicheskie pis’ma i zapiski 13. Although this letter was published in 1874, Dostoevsky must have been familiar with Pogodin’s pan-slavistic ideas. Up until his death in 1875, Pogodin was the President of a Slavonic Benevolent Committee created in 1858, and both Dostoevsky and Danilevsky were members. See Walter G. Moss, A History of Russia, vol. 2 (London: Anthem Press, 2005) 76.


Europe will flow into our waters as a living stream, and the part of it which is dead and doomed to die will serve as *ethnographic material* for us. We are bringing the world the only thing we can give it, which is, however, the only thing it needs: Orthodoxy, the true and glorious, eternal creed of Christ and a full moral regeneration in his name. We are bringing the world the first paradise of the millennium. And from among us, there will appear Elias and Enoch, who will give battle to the Antichrist, i.e., the spirit of the West that will become incarnate in the West.¹¹⁶

The passage summarizes the most important elements of Dostoevsky’s eschatological thought, and he ascribed particular importance to it in his notes. According to Dostoevsky’s initial plan, these are supposed to be the Prince’s last words before his suicide in Skvoreshniki. Dostoevsky’s note follows the speech: “This is important. NB. Prepare the reader so that he can understand this speech.”¹¹⁷ In the final text of *The Possessed*, the main ideas of the passage in a slightly revised form are ascribed to Shatov. Given the importance that Dostoevsky attaches to the Prince’s message in the notebooks, Shatov’s insight cannot be disregarded as insignificant or ironic.

[…] atheism is, after all, healthier than Roman Catholicism. If a great nation *(velikii narod)* does not believe that the truth *(istina)* is in it alone (precisely in it alone, and that exclusively), if it does not believe that it alone is able and called to resurrect and save everyone with its truth, then it at once ceases to be a great nation, and at once turns into *ethnographic material* *(entograficheskii material)*

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¹¹⁶ *The Notebooks for the Possessed* 225-26. Emphasis added
¹¹⁷ *The Notebooks for the Possessed* 226.
and not a great nation. [...] I believe that the new coming (novoe prishestvie) will take place in Russia... I believe...  

The phrase “ethnographic material” appears in both passages. The author’s contemporaries would probably have no difficulty in relating the idiom to its source, which provided an important subtext for Dostoevsky. The phrase originally appeared in Danilevsky’s *Russia and Europe* in his discussion of the role of historical-cultural types in the development of history. According to Danilevsky, such types, or civilizations, can perform constructive, destructive, or a subservient role in the history of mankind. Destructive historical-cultural types (Danilevsky includes Huns, Mongols, and Turks among them) are temporal phenomena devoid of their distinctive character (*samabytnost’*). Their mission in history is often reduced to helping civilizations in decline to disappear from the face of the world. After their “destructive exploits,” they themselves “disappear into nothingness.” Some civilizations are not destined to perform either a creative or a destructive role in history. They, according to Danilevsky, never reach historical distinctiveness and “comprise merely ethnographic material, that is, the inorganic entity that is included as a compound of historic organisms, or, historical-cultural types.”  

Dostoevsky underscores his critique of the Catholic world and all Western civilization with Danilevsky’s argument, depriving them of any constructive historical value and relegating them to ethnographic material to be used by Russia, a bearer of a new civilization and a new truth. Furthermore, through the characters of Shatov in the final text and the Prince in the notebooks, Dostoevsky engages in controversy with Piotr Chaadaev, the author of *Philosophical Letters* (“Filosoficheskie

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pis’ma”), which contain a bitter critique of Russia and the praise of European civilization and Catholicism.

We are not related to any of the great human families; we belong neither to the West nor to the East [...] We are one of those nations which does not seem to form an integral part of humanity, but which exists only to provide some great lesson for the world.120

Dostoevsky reverses Chaadaev’s argument, assigning to Europe the role that Chaadaev assigned to Russia. Although Chaadaev revised his argument in terms of Russia’s distinctiveness and historic role in The Apology of a Madman (“Apologiia sumasshedshego”), Dostoevsky could not accept Chaadaev’s dismissal of Russian Orthodoxy and his advocacy of Roman Catholicism. The Polish Uprising of 1863-64 only intensified Dostoevsky’s anti-Catholic sentiments. He wrote the following in that regard: “The Polish War is the war between two Christianities (voina dvukh khristianstv), it is the beginning of the forthcoming war between Orthodoxy and Catholicism, in other words, between Slavic genius with European civilization.”121

Both Shatov and the Prince in the notebooks locate the apocalyptic drama in Russia. Shatov’s words can be easily dismissed as religious fanaticism with a touch of Slavophile exaltations if they are not read against the Prince’s speculations in the notebooks. Through Shatov, Dostoevsky expresses his own belief that the Second Coming of Christ would take place in Russia as only Orthodoxy can offer a true and not perverted Christ to the world. In the manuscripts, Dostoevsky emphatically links Russia

120 P. Chaadaev, The Philosophical Letters, in The Major Works of Peter Chaadaev, trans. Raymond T. McNally (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969) 27, 32. In his Winter Notes on Summer Impressions, Dostoevsky spoke of Chaadaev as the only person before Vissarion Belinsky who so “boldly, and sometimes blindly […] expressed his indignation about much that is our own (negodoval na mnogoe nashe rodnoe) and, evidently, despised everything that was Russian (preziral vse russkoe). D-PSS 5: 50.
121 D-PSS 20: 170.
to a “woman with child” from Revelations. In the apocalyptic myth, a woman clothed in the sun, is pursued by a dragon with seven heads and ten horns, who wants to devour her unborn child; however, the child is born to “rule the nations with an iron sceptre.”

From this perspective, the birth of a child from Mary (Shatov’s wife) is symbolic. In Dostoevsky’s revised adaptation of the myth, Mary and her son die in less than three days after his birth, which suggests that salvation is premature. As has been noted in scholarship, Mary Shatov and Maria Lebyadkina embody two opposite hypostases of the Mother of God in the novel. The former represents a westernised image, while the latter is a schismatic image of Mary. Neither of the women approaches Dostoevsky’s ideal of the Mother of God figure, and neither can give birth to Christ. The birth of the child is a promise of rebirth and regeneration, and there cannot be any regeneration for Russia from a non-Russian or not truly Russian (schismatic) ideal. In both cases, the birth of a child, actual or imagined, does not comprise a caricature of the Second Coming, rather, the author’s statement that the source of salvation needs to be found elsewhere.

Peace has observed that the parable of the Gadarene swine is the very kernel of the novel, and, as a result, the associated themes of self-destruction and madness permeate its fabric. Stepan Trofimovich becomes Dostoevsky’s mouthpiece in interpreting the epigraph.

[…] It’s exactly like our Russia. These demons who come out of a sick man and enter into swine – it’s all the sores, all the miasmas, all the uncleanness, all the

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122 In the drafts, Shatov asks if the Prince interprets the Apocalypse literally, to which the latter responds: “Listen, think for yourself: the wounded Beast, a third part of all the grass perished. The whore [...] woman who is with child – Russia. Come on, seriously, don’t you really see any correspondence?” The Notebooks for the Possessed 251.
123 Revelations 2:27.
big and little demons accumulated in our great and dear sick man, in our Russia, for centuries, for centuries! [...] But a great thought and a great will (velikaia mysľ’ i velikaia volia) will descend to her from on high, as upon that insane demoniac, and out will come all the demons, all the uncleanliness, all the abomination that is festering on the surface … and they will beg of themselves to enter into swine. And perhaps they already have! It is us, us and them, and Petrusha… […] and we will rush, insane and ragging, from the cliff down into the sea, and all be drowned […]. But the sick man will be healed and ‘sit at the feet of Jesus.’

The passage is an almost exact rendition of Dostoevsky’s idea for the novel described in a letter to Maikov from October 1870 except for one thing. In the finished novel, Stepan Trofimovich identifies the sick and then the healed man with Russia without explaining the latter. In other words, while it is clear what the possessed Russia is (and the forces that possess it), it remains not very obvious what his conception of Russia in the post-possession state will be (or if he has this conception at all). Dostoevsky’s idea of the healed Russia is explained in the letter. Dostoevsky identifies the “sick man” with the “Russian man” more specifically than with Russia.

The demons came out of the Russian man and entered into swine, that is, into Nechaevs […] (Besy vyshli iz russkogo cheloveka i voshli v stado svinei, to est’ v Nechaevykh). They drowned or will drown for sure, and the healed man, out of whom the demons came, sits at the feet of Jesus. This is the way it was supposed to be. Russia vomited all this filth with which it had been fed, and, of course, there is nothing Russian left (ne ostalos’ nichego russkogo) in these spit-out

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126 Demons 655 (translation modified); D-PSS 10: 499. Emphasis added.
scum. And take note, dear friend, those who lose their *narod* and national roots (*narodnost’*), they lose both their faith and God.\textsuperscript{127}

The “Russian man” who sits at the feet of Jesus here is equivalent to the Russian *narod*. Both the finished novel and the letter suggest that the demons have left the “Russian man”/“sick man” and entered into swine (Stepan Trofimovich says: “Perhaps they already have!”). Stepan Trofimovich’s further observation (“It is us, us and them, and Petrusha”) does not render clear whether he associates himself and the revolutionaries with the demons, who enter into the swine, or with the swine, whom the demons enter. Reading either way is legitimate. The letter, however, clearly identifies the revolutionaries with the swine. Complete dehumanization comes as a result of losing connection with what is authentically Russian, that is, to the Russian *narod*.

*The Possessed* gives two polar images of the *narod*. One is the peasant Russia as Petr Verkhovensky imagines it and on which he relies in his revolutionary eschatology. Petr claims knowledge of the *narod* on the basis of his relations with Fedka Katorzhnik as well as on the basis of his interpretation of various popular myths and legends. Linda Ivanits has argued that the novel’s accent on such characters as Maria Lebiadkina and Fedka produces the impression that religious attitudes of the people rest on superstitions.\textsuperscript{128} Furthermore, Verkhovensky’s conception of the *narod* crystallized through these characters and their relationship with Stavrogin. Maria’s initial perception of Stavrogin as the “prince” and “sun” secures Verkhovensky’s confidence that the radicals could easily “infiltrate the *narod*.” Revelations relates the story of all the unrighteous and weak who kneel before the image of the beast during his reign, and these

\textsuperscript{127} *D-PSS* 29: 145. 
\textsuperscript{128} Ivanits 117.
are the exclusive qualities that Petr ascribes to the *narod*. The scene of the violent execution of Liza may attest to the fact that Verkhovensky was not entirely wrong in relying on dark forces among the people. Dostoevsky never conceals the elemental bestiality of human nature that can be easily misdirected. At the same time, his representation does not undermine his belief in the *narod* as the carrier of true religious values. To the contrary, by means of such representations he juxtaposes two kinds of evil: the violent side of the *narod*, which will disappear with enlightenment, and the violence of Verkhovensky carried out under the disguise of righteousness, hence a much larger threat.

Besides Maria Lebiadkina, Fedka, the holy fool Semen Yakovlevich, and the Gospell seller Sofia Matveevna, the novel does not feature many characters from the *narod*. If they appear, they are minor and do not significantly contribute to the development of the plot except for, of course, the scene of Liza’s execution by the mob. Except for Sofia Matveevna, none of these characters represent Dostoevsky’s ideal of the *narod*. The absence of the *narod* in the “possessed” realm of the novel accentuates the idea of separation and a split in Russian society. Despite narratological marginalization, there is a strong conception of the *narod* counter to that of Verkhovensky’s. It is presented through Khatovo, which is located outside of contaminated Westernized

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129 In her reading of the scene of Liza’s execution, Ivanits has argued that her death results “from a struggle between an overpowering demonic force and a kindly protective one,” and that the people are convinced that she, as Stavrogin’s woman, is also responsible for the Lebiadkins’ deaths; this provokes popular retribution. See Ivanits 117.

130 The distinction between the two kinds of evil is best articulated in his *Diary of a Writer*: “Yes, there is a lot of violence (zverstvo) in the *narod*, but don’t point to it. This violence is the mire of centuries (tina vekov), it will clear out. The danger is not in the existence of violence per se, but when violence is exalted as a virtue.” *D-PSS* in 15 vol., 14: 144.
Russia, and through a peasant couple, in whose home Stepan Trofimovich attains his revelation and dies. It is, as Ivanits puts it, “a promise of Holy Russia.”

Dostoevsky wanted to believe that Russia would regain its holiness and recover from Western influences that had crippled it, and afterwards would be transformed spiritually to assert itself as a nation chosen by God for a great mission. The novel does not suggest colossal transformation, however. Stepan Trofimovich’s interpretation of the parable of the Gadarene swine suggests that the healed man will sit at the feet of Jesus after the swine (now possessed by demons) rush from the cliff down into the sea and all are drowned. Dostoevsky’s letter also implies the impossibility of a different outcome. The death of the swine, physical or metaphorical, is necessary and inevitable. In light of this interpretation, it is not surprising that all major characters who have lost connection to what Dostoevsky believes is authentic Russia end up dead. The exception, of course, is Petr Verkhovensky (with all ideologies he represents), who does not die and who indefinitely postpones the experience of healing. The pessimistic overtone of the end of the novel that lacks any real closure leaves the reader wondering if there could be hope for “the swine,” that is, if the reconnection of radical elites with the national and religious core is ever possible. The novel does not give an affirmative answer. It seems Dostoevsky allows for a small amount of hope through Stepan Trofimovich’s small-scale epiphany. The latter does not reach his salvific place of Spasov, he does not die a converted man, and neither does he rediscover the lost Christian ideal preserved uncorrupted in the narod. His revelation consists of his acknowledgement of the country’s and his own state

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131 Ivanits 132.
of possession.\footnote{Ivanits and Davidson believe that Stepan Trofimovich dies “very much his comic self.” Ivanits 132; R.M. Davidson, “Dostoevsky’s The Devils: The Role of Stepan Trofimovich Verkhovensky” Dostoevsky’s “The Devils”: a Critical Companion 128-132. In Holland’s reading, Stepan Trofimovich in a way fulfills “the epigraph’s role of the man formerly possessed by demons sitting at the feet of Jesus.” She has also argued that Stepan Trofimovich’s redemption represents the promise of reconciliation of the educated classes with the narod. Holland 64.} This occurs within the geography of peasant Russia. In light of Dostoevsky’s historiosophic thought, the character’s revelation could not occur elsewhere. Khatovo and Spasov exist outside the possessed realm of the novel, and so does the narod. This imagined commune comprises the sole carrier of the uncorrupted Christian ideal and the promise of salvation. As long as there is an ideological, cultural, religious, or spiritual disconnect between the narod and educated society, salvation is inconceivable. Educated society first has to abandon the pseudo-ideals of the West and to become assimilated into the ideal of Russia that the narod represents, which Dostoevsky imagines to be a traumatic experience. Until then mythical Spasov (symbolic of the “healed man sitting at the feet of Jesus”) remains a utopian dream.
Conclusion

This dissertation has argued that a new debate regarding the narod and its role in the development of Russia emerged in the two reform decades (the 1850s-1860s). The disturbances in the countryside of the late 1850s and early 1860s for some intellectuals marked the narod as a politically conscious commune or as a commune moving towards political consciousness. They also revealed that the language of the narod was profusely mythical. Perception of reality through mythology comprises a remnant of the old traditional culture. Thus contrary to the logic of historical progression, the era of modernization did not come in place of what Shchapov calls the “era of superstition,” but instead it reanimated its legacy.  

The renewed interest in the narod shifted towards its political attitudes expressed through various myths. Educated society’s lack of understanding of those mythical structures exacerbated the sense of rupture with the narod and signalled the need for rapprochement between the intellectual and traditional cultures. Deconstructing the mythological code behind the social behaviour of the narod required that intellectuals look past the oversimplified image of the narod as an uneducated superstitious mass and reacquaint themselves with it, its life, and its world-outlook.

An effort to understand the mythological language of the narod or, rather, to understand the narod through its language brings Tolstoy, Saltykov-Shchedrin and Dostoevsky together. None of these writers envisioned the development of the country or the regeneration of Russian society without the active involvement of the masses. Although the common folk appear on the narratological periphery in the novels by

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Dostoevsky and Tolstoy (unlike their place in the work of Saltykov-Shchedrin), their marginalization does not diminish the *narod*’s role either in the thematic and philosophic network of the novels or in the authors’ hisotriographic thought expressed through their literary endeavours. Shchapov’s discussion accurately renders the presupposition the three writers shared about the *narod* that informs their literary portrayal.

Our exclusively European thinkers and publicists keep forgetting that the *narod* is not a *tabula rasa*, on which you can write whatever you want, it’s not raw dead material, from which you can cut out whatever you want, but a living force with its own inner laws, a self-defining force, an organism that develops in and of itself, with its own natural strengths, and according to its own inner laws; they keep forgetting that the life of the people (*zhizn’ narodnaia*) is a force that drives history forward (*tvoriashchaia istoriiu*), naturally living matter, from which the forms of social order are formed by common effort.²

*War and Peace, A History of a Town,* and *The Possessed* assert and extrapolate Shchapov’s idea of the *narod* being precisely not a *tabula rasa*, but a living organism with its own inner laws and reasoning that can be accessed through their sacred myths and ideals. Hence a mythological framework becomes an entry point to the writers’ vision and corresponding portrayal of the *narod*.

The three writers position the myth of the Tsar at the center of the historical mysticism of the *narod*. Along with other related beliefs, it was manifest during the peasant unrest of the late 1850s and early 1860s, which drew attention of educated society to the popular conceptualization of monarchy. Peasant disturbances complicated the relationship between the Tsar and the *narod* by bringing up memories of Russian

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² Shchapov “Novaia era” 5.
royal impostors, who were seen as destabilizing to the autocratic regime. The conception of the *narod*, its place and role in Russian history and in the country’s development that crystallises through the works under study is to a great extent predicated upon the authors’ own understanding of monarchy within a popular vision of history.

Regardless of their divergent ideological persuasions, all these writers acknowledged the peculiar nature of the relationship between the Russian Tsar and the *narod*. An effort to understand the implications this poses to social dynamics permeates the texts. From this perspective, Dostoevsky’s and Tolstoy’s novels seem to be more in accord. Dostoevsky makes the revolutionary Verkhovensky’s aspiration to change the regime by installing his own elected replacement for the Tsar a central theme of *The Possessed*. Dostoevsky’s own conviction that denies any possibility of the *narod* rising against their Tsar-emancipator, which is unequivocally and repeatedly pronounced in his notes to the novel, dooms the eschatological revolution envisioned by the radical from the start. In *War and Peace*, despite historical accuracy, Tolstoy makes the Bogucharovians’ loyalty to the Russian Tsar the main reason for rejecting Napoleon as their emancipator. Neither the novel, nor his oeuvre in general elucidates Tolstoy’s own attitudes towards popular monarchism beyond simple acknowledgement of it. Saltykov too considers the symbolic dynamics defining the relationship between the Tsar and the *narod* a factor in the latter’s social behaviour, but he, unlike the other two writers, makes it an object of his critical investigation.

All these writers view the *narod’s* belief in the Tsar as inseparable from their eschatological vision, which links the salvation of the individual and of the nation to the monarch. Russian popular eschatology sustains the analogy between the Tsar and God, as

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3 Dostoevsky, *The Notebooks for the Possessed* 114, 140, 143-144, 351.
well as between the Tsar and the father of the family. Dostoevsky portrays an inadequate understanding by the radicals of the narod’s economy of salvation as a fatal flaw in their revolutionary plans of colossal transformation. He also draws on the legacy of the students’ failed apocalyptic rhetoric in the countryside in the late 1850s – early 1860s. Their deliberate attempt to undermine the sacred image of the Tsar and his authority by insisting, in an atheistic manner, that the Tsar, just like God in Feuerbachian thought, is an illusion, a fiction of imagination, presented a quandary. To ensure popular support, the revolutionaries of the novel (unlike their historical predecessors) aspire to capitalize on the socio-utopian folk belief about the returning Tsar-redeemer in their plan to subvert the existing political order. Dostoevsky renders their aspiration unsuccessful by implying that their conception of the narod and its ideals is profoundly flawed.

Dostoevsky’s novel succeeds in exposing the chasm between the radicals and the narod, the idea of which is central to his native soil conservatism. In his view, the separation of radical youth from national origins, which reveals through their misunderstanding of the true interests of the narod, and their erroneous vision of the country’s development, is an unfortunate consequence of the Petrine reforms. Like Dostoevsky, Saltykov locates the reason for the split in Russian society in Petrine policies. His entire project of A History of a Town was intended to demonstrate that the inaccessibility of the language of the masses stems from the lengthy separation of civilized society from the origins of traditional culture. Hence Saltykov’s work comprises a critical study of the mental processes behind historically developed habits of the narod. Through the scene of rebellion in Bogucharovo, Tolstoy accentuates the lack of contact and thus of mutual understanding across the cultural divide even more than the other two
writers. Contrary to Saltykov, who anatomizes popular mysticism, Tolstoy chooses not to rationalize the socio-political implications of folk mystical beliefs. Instead, he makes use of educated society’s incomprehensibility of the thought- and decision-making processes of the village commune to accentuate the impossibility of close rapport between the two groups. And like Saltykov, Tolstoy does not embrace folk beliefs while Dostoevsky does.

Tolstoy, Saltykov-Shchedrin, and Dostoevsky agreed that a mythological framework gave the narod perspective to think about the present historical moment. Apocalyptic myth provided a meaningful explanation of historical development that appeared to the narod as devoid of meaning or threatened its sense of security and stability.\(^4\) Century after century, people lived in the eschatological expectation of the last days, fantasising and imagining them, living on watch for the signs of the grand finale.\(^5\) The apocalyptic lore kept evolving under new social conditions that further encouraged eschatological excitation. Revelations and the Book of Daniel, generally believed to be the original sources of the apocalyptic myth, gave the narod a language to express its anxieties and hopes. The apogee of historic development and its denouement are inscribed in the last chapter with its final and ultimate clash of good and evil, the forces of Christ and the Antichrist. The Antichrist became a symbol of unavoidable but also necessary evil, and his reign was seen as a prelude to the millennial kingdom. Social anxieties evoked by the Emancipation gave rise to a wave of new apocalyptic expectations. I have argued in this dissertation that apocalyptic lore of the Russian narod absorbs some elements that pertain specifically to Russian reality. For example, the narod


\(^5\) According to Cohn, these markers included bad rulers, civil discord, war, draughts, famine, plague, comets, and increase in general sinfulness. Cohn 35-36.
conceptualized the Emancipation through the framework of an apocalyptic battle between the forces of good/Christ and evil/Antichrist/Satan. The Tsar and the Tsar-deliverer figure represented the former while the messengers from the Tsars concealing the truth embodied the latter. For the narod, personal and collective freedom and hence salvation, since physical liberation was inseparable from spiritual, was predicated upon confronting the Antichrist. This was envisioned as a liberating experience. The three writers’ conception of the narod and the future of the nation crystallises particularly through rethinking apocalyptic myth. Additionally, they utilize apocalyptic mythology in their works for a purpose like that of the narod: to rethink and problematize the time they live and write in, and also to think about the future.

In the three works, the apocalyptic narrative is inseparably connected to the idea of liberation, which is at the core of their thematic fabric. Tolstoy shows how the narod functions during the time of the Antichrist. Despite a few seemingly sporadic references, he weaves into the narrative a complex eschatological perception of the events in the popular mind, which associates the French Emperor not with the principle of liberation, but with a threat. In the time of crisis, such a threat brings the narod together and inspires its participation in the socio-political life of the Empire. For Tolstoy, the historical moment of 1812 also helped to work through anxieties associated with political transformations of his own time. As Feuer has observed, the manuscripts of the novel contain references that suggest that Tolstoy viewed Napoleon’s invasion as a metaphor for the introduction of an alien social order, the new social structure that Tolstoy thought the Emancipation would bring. Therefore certain historical discrepancies in fashioning

6 Feuer, “Rejection of the Spirit of the 1856,” Tolstoy and the Genesis of War and Peace 143.
the popular response to the intrusion of the French was most likely informed by his vision of political life of the 1860s. There is no evidence to suggest that Tolstoy believed either 1812 or 1861 represented an apocalyptic moment or that he had an eschatologically sensitive mind like Dostoevsky. He himself never embraced the language of myth the way his characters embraced it. Instead, he used it as an artistic medium to speculate about experiences and anxieties associated with the events that transform mental and physical landscapes.

Dostoevsky’s narrative absorbs specific elements of popular eschatology and expands its semantic field within his artistic vision of Russian society of the 1860s. In his novel, the Antichrist also comprises an alien force invading Russia and threatening national integrity, but he totally reshapes the myth, weaving into it his critique of modernity as well as his social and political ideas. Dostoevsky’s major attack is directed towards western influences that alienate Russian society from the national core and transform Russia from within. Apocalyptic sensitivity imbues Dostoevsky’s historiosophic thought. He sees the only path to Russia’s historical development in exorcizing the Antichrist from the body of Russia and embracing the authentic and uncorrupted Christian ideal, the carrier of which is his imagined commune of the Russian narod.

Saltykov is also preoccupied with the way the narod functions during the rule of the governor seen as the Antichrist. Despite a similar agenda, all three writers reach different conclusions, which inform their respective literary representations. If in Tolstoy, the Antichrist represents an alien force that invades the sacred space of Russia, bringing forth patriotism in the Russian people and strengthening their devotion to the Tsar,
Saltykov and Dostoevsky locate the alien force inside Russia. For Saltykov it is in the autocratic regime. He sees the Tsar-myth and the Antichrist-myth as closely interrelated, and views both not only as remnants of ancient culture, but as constructs in need of demystification. He rejects popular narratives about the Apocalypse and envisions the true liberation of the narod predicated upon casting off mystical beliefs that had for centuries supported tyranny and slavery, both of a physical and psychological nature. The legacy of the events of Bloody Sunday (1905) leading to an unrepairable breach of trust between the narod and the monarch (the moment of demystification, in the language of A History) and the collapse of the Tsarist autocracy in 1917 suggests that Saltykov was most perceptive in understanding the historical path of Russia.7 His ideas about the power of the myth of the Tsar, propagated and reinforced from below (among the narod) and manipulated from above, help explain not only the Russian autocratic regime of the past but also current political systems that continue to utilize similar mythology.

It has not been the aim of this dissertation to offer a comprehensive picture of the ways historical mysticism of the narod was appropriated in the literature of Russian Realism. Instead, it has intended to draw attention to the importance of the political mythology of the narod within the context of social and political transformations during the two reform-decades as well as to the ways some Russian thinkers reimagined the Russian narod through this mythology and fashioned their projects of national development, assigning an active role in it to their respective imagined community they called the “narod.”

7 Bloody Sunday (krovavoe voskresen’e) refers to an event when on January 9, 1905 the soldiers of the Imperial Guard fired in unarmed demonstrators to present a petition to the Tsar Nikolai II.
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