



Компаративистика
Comparative Studies

DOI: 10.24411/2072-9316-2020-00021

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**THE TRAGEDY OF THE “DECAYING” (“*VYMOROCHNY*”) CLAN
IN “THE GOLOVLYOV FAMILY” (1880)
BY M.E. SALTYKOV-SHCHEDRIN AND
“ABSALOM, ABSALOM!” (1936) BY W. FAULKNER***

Abstract. This article attempts to analyze the artistic means by which two writers - William Faulkner and M.E. Saltykov-Shchedrin – in their novels written in the genre of the “genealogical saga”, are depicting the decay, degeneration and abolishment of a fading noble family. In addition to the natural signs of the degeneration of the noble family (such as drunkenness and in the case of Golovlyovs, the criminal sources of enrichment in the case of Sutpen, and the departure from the patriarchal canon in both cases), both writers also appeal to metaphysical reasons – in particular, such as the predestination of death, the initial doom of the noble family due to this or that sin, the “wormhole”. Faulkner and Shchedrin develop the metaphor of the noble estate as a mausoleum in which its inhabitants are imprisoned; coffin or tomb, where they rested during their lifetime; the image of the ice Dante’s hell embodied on earth in the world of a noble estate. These metaphors and images are reinforced by demonic features in the images of the main characters of the novels – Thomas Sutpen, Arina Petrovna, Iudushka, – reinforced by extensive parallelisms. Both writers create in their works a special text using all kinds of images: mythological, biblical, even fabulous; our task will be to trace their artistic identity. Moreover, as an additional task, we will try to identify the common places of the two novels and to prove that the “Golovliov Family” by M.E. Saltykov-Shchedrin could have influenced W. Faulkner and reflected on his artistic worldview during his work on the novel “Absalom, Absalom!”

Key words: Saltykov-Shchedrin; Faulkner family chronicle; genealogical novel.

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**Трагедия «выморочного» рода в романах
«Господа Головлевы» (1880) М.Е. Салтыкова-Щедрина и
«Авессалом, Авессалом!» (1936) У. Фолкнера****

Аннотация. В настоящей статье принята попытка проанализировать художе-

* The study was carried out at IWL RAS at the expense of the RSF grant no. 18-18-00129 “Russian estate in literature and culture: domestic and foreign look”.

** Исследование выполнено в ИМЛИ РАН за счет гранта Российского научного фонда № 18-18-00129 «Русская усадьба в литературе и культуре: отечественный и зарубежный взгляд».



ственные средства, при помощи которых два писателя – У. Фолкнер и М.Е. Салтыков-Щедрин – изображают в своих романах, написанных в жанре «генеалогической саги», гибель угасающего дворянского рода. Помимо естественных причин разложения дворянской семьи (таких как пьянство в случае Головлевых, преступные истоки обогащения в случае Сатпена, а также отступление от патриархального уклада в обоих случаях), оба писателя обращаются к причинам метафизическим – в частности, к предопределенности гибели, изначальной обреченности дворянского рода в силу того или иного греха, «червоточины». Фолкнер и Щедрин развивают метафору дворянской усадьбы как мавзолея, в котором заточены ее обитатели; гробницы или гроба, где они упокоились еще при жизни; образ ледяного Дантова ада, воплощенного на земле, в мире дворянской усадьбы. Эти метафоры и образы усиливаются демоническими чертами в образах главных героев романов – Томаса Сатпена, Арины Петровны, Иудушки, – усиливаемые развернутыми параллелизмами. Оба писателя в своих произведениях создают особый текст, используя для этого всевозможные образы: мифологические, библейские, даже сказочные; нашей задачей будет проследить их художественное своеобразие. В качестве дополнительной задачи мы попытаемся выявить общие места двух романов и доказать, что роман М.Е. Салтыкова-Щедрина мог оказать влияние на У. Фолкнера и отразиться на его художественном мировоззрении в период работы над романом «Авессалом, Авессалом!»

Ключевые слова: Салтыков-Щедрин; Фолкнер; семейная хроника; генеалогическая сага.

The end of the 19th and the first half of the 20th century were marked in European literature by the heyday of the genre of the family saga, or family chronicle, as well as its many varieties. Despite the fact that the genre of saga itself is considered to be very ancient, and in the 18th century the prototypes of family chronicles appeared in the Far East (cf., for example, “Dream of the Red Chamber” by Cao Xueqin, published in 1791), in Europe and USA its first representatives appeared in 1840–1850s, for example, “The Wuthering Heights” (1846) by Emily Bronte and “The House of the Seven Gables” (1851) by Nathaniel Hawthorne; in Russian literature the first example is of this genre is considered to be the “Family Chronicle” (1857), semi-autobiographical novel, written by S. T. Aksakov.

One of the most famous and popular variations of the family saga genre in European literature of the late 19th – early 20th centuries is the subgenre of genealogical novel. According to Croatian literary critic A. Flaker, in this type of fiction the novelist “captures the characters from succeeding generations of the same family as well as the analysis of social or biological reasons of their downfall” [Oklopčić 2014, 58]. Speaking about the origins of this subgenre, Flaker calls the name of Emil Zola and his cycle-chronicle “Les Rougon-Macquart” (1871–1893), and among the most famous genealogical novels names “The Buddenbrooks” (1896–1901) by Thomas Mann, “The Forsyte Saga” (1906–1921) by John Galsworthy, “The Thibault Family” (1922–1940) by Roger Martin du Gard and some et al. [Oklopčić 2014, 58]. Considering the history of



nascent, living and dying noble families, some writers were drawing attention to the physical, and even medical, causes of decay and degeneration, while others addressed metaphysical reasons, in addition to physical ones. It is such an emphasis that is made in the two works we analyze in our article – “The Golovlyov Family” (1880) by Mikhail Yevgafovich Saltykov-Shchedrin (1826–1889) and “Absalom, Absalom!” (1936) by William Faulkner (1897–1962).

At first glance, the similarity between the novels is possible only at the typological level.

However, in spite of a little knowledge of the issue and the absence of revealed links between Faulkner’s and Saltykov-Schedrin’s works, it is impossible to exclude the fact that the author of “Absalom, Absalom!” could have been reading “The Golovlyov Family”. As Faulkner admitted himself, Russian literature of the 19th century (and above all – classical Russian novel) had a tremendous influence on his formation as a writer and novelist. Answering on the question from a student at the University of Mississippi (where he came with lectures in 1947), what are the greatest novels of the 19th century ever written, Faulkner said: “Probably Russian – I remember more Russian names than any others”; among his favorite writers he named Chekhov, Tolstoy, Turgenev, Gogol, Artsybashev – and especially Dosotoevsky, whose ideas had an enormous influence on his own philosophy and creative work [Inge 1984, 183].

So far, we are able to make a suggestion, that Faulkner, in the course of his reading, could get acquainted with one of the greatest of Saltykov-Shchedrin’s novels – especially since he had a number of the translations available.

In our days there are currently seven translations of Saltykov-Shchedrin’s novel into English; but at the time of Faulkner’s writing “Absalom, Absalom!” there had been only three. The first of them was implemented by Athelstan Ridgeway and printed in London in 1916. A year later appeared the first American version, made by Abraham Yarmolinsky (1890–1975), a literary critic and translator, who had been born in Odessa and emigrated to the United States in 1910s. The translation, entitled “A Family of Noblemen,” was printed in New York by “Boni & Liveright” publishers, and for nearly 50 years it remained the only American translation of Shchedrin’s novel. Further in our article we will quote the translation of A. Yarmolinsky, albeit not entirely accurate, but precisely the most likely with which W. Faulkner could be acquainted.

Subsequently, in the course of the 20th century, there appeared several more translations of the “Golovlyov Family”. So, in 1931 was published the translation by Natalie Duddington; after the publication of the “Absalom, Absalom!” two more American translations have seen the light: versions by William E. Harkins (1961) and by Samuel D. Sjoran (1977); finally, in the late 1980s, there were published two more English translations: by I.P. Foote (1986), and by Ronald Wilks (1988).

Before proceeding to a comparison of the two novels, let us also pay attention to the word “*vymorochny*” that we have put in the title of our article.

In a letter to N.A. Nekrasov, dated by April 6/18, 1876, M.E. Saltykov-Schedrin is writing about the idea of his future novel: “I still haven’t well out-



lined the moments of the plot development; but the main theme of it is that everyone around Iudushka died and no one wants to live with him, because the dust that fills him is terrible. In this way, he becomes a decaying (*vymorochny*) man” [Салтыков-Щедрин / Saltykov-Shchedrin 1965–1977, 18(2), 284]. This unusual, even by the standards of the Russian language, adjective Saltykov-Shchedrin will subsequently put in the title of the Chapter V of the “Golovlyov Family” and also will repeatedly use in the text of the novel; cf., for example, the following description of the rooms of the Golovlyov’s manor, borrowed from Chapter VI: “There was an air of decay [In Russian original: *pakhlo vymorochnost’yu* – lit.: smelled of decay] and haunting unfriendliness about them” [Saltykov 1917, 409].

So what is the meaning of this unusual adjective? In its main definition, it denotes property that has been transferred to the state after the death of the last owner, in the absence of living heirs. Many translators (in particular A. Ridgway and I.P. Foote) followed this “legal” meaning and translated the title of the chapter as “The Entailed” and “The Escheated” respectively. A. Yarmolinsky, in his turn, acted more cautiously and offered a relatively free variation: “The Deserted Manor-House” – but perceived it, again, as relating to the house and not to the owner. However, in our opinion, such a translation seems to be incorrect in this context. According to the “Explanatory Dictionary of the Living Great Russian Language”, compiled by V.I. Dahl, adjective “*vymorochny*” (cf. the phrase “*vymorochnyy rod*” – “a decaying clan/family”, proposed in the dictionary article [Даль / Dal’ 1912–1914, 1, 737]). That is why, from our point of view, adjective “*vymorochny*” should be understood in relation to the noble family, with the meaning “dying”, “decaying” or “doomed to a rapid death”. In this regard, the most accurate in this case is the version proposed by N. Duddington – “The Derelict” (however, as we have written above, this translation was hardly accessible to W. Faulkner, and therefore in our article we will not appeal to it).

In this regard, we may speak about the first point of convergence of the two novels – namely the *predetermined* decay and abolition of the noble family. Both writers reflect about the evil fate haunting over the depicted in novels families. So does Saltykov-Shchedrin, writing that “a sinister fate pursued the Golovliovo family” [Saltykov 1917, 409]. In his turn, talking about the destruction of the Sutpen’s Hundred, Faulkner speaks not only as of action of the evil fate, but also about as an expression of the Divine will: «...why God let us lose the war that only through the blood of our men and the tears of our women could He stay that demon and efface his name and lineage from the earth» [Faulkner 1990, 6].

As the main visible reason, entailing the disintegration, decay and subsequent ruination of the noble family, in both novels are depicted the great historical events, of approximately the same period: for Saltykov-Shchedrin, it is the abolition of serfdom in Russia (1861), and for Faulkner – the Civil War (1861–1865) and its individual incidents, such as the election of President A. Lincoln (March 4, 1861) or the fall of Fort Sumpter (April 13, 1861). In both cases, the



inhabitants of the estate world find themselves dissociated from the ongoing history – and that’s why helpless in front of its heavy tread: “Arina Petrovna suddenly let go the reins of government, and for two years did nothing but exclaim from morning to night: ‘If only they’d settle it – at least we’d know where we are. But those endless parleys! It’s neither one thing nor the other’” [Saltykov 1917, 67]. Cf. Faulkner’s description of the life of Judith Satpen, who during the course of the Civil War was “whipping lace out of the raveled and hoarded string and sewing it unto garment while news came of Lincoln’s election and the fall of Sumpter and she scarce listening, hearing and losing the knell and doom of her native land between two tedious and clumsy stitches on a garment <...>” [Faulkner 1990, 61]

In the center of both novels is the story of the “over-human”, who decided to create an earthly paradise, entered into a confrontation with the world, God and Nature – and finally lost the battle. In “Absalom, Absalom!” it’s Thomas Sutpen, “colonel Sutpen”, who, through the lips of Rosa Coldfield, invariably appears as an offspring of hell, “fiend, blackguard and devil” [Faulkner 1990, 10], “Beelzebub” [Faulkner 1990, 145], “unbidden <...> compounded demonry” [Faulkner 1990, 144]; as a triune creature, “man-horse-demon”, which appeared “out of quiet thunderclap” and “abrupt <...> upon a scene peaceful and decorous as school-prize watercolor” [Faulkner 1990, 4]. Faulkner emphasizes his demonic and out-of-world traits, *i.e.* “faint sulphur-reek still in his hair and beard” [Faulkner 1990, 4], calls Sutpen “the light-blinded bat-like image of his own torment cast by the fierce daemoniac lantern up from beneath the earth’s crust” [Faulkner 1990, 139].

Just as supernatural by the standards of existential logic is the appearance of Arina Petrovna, who “flashed like a casual meteor through the drunken confusion” of Golovliovo family and “by her personal energy alone this woman brought the family to an unprecedented height of prosperity” [Saltykov 1917, 409]. Seeking to “increase” – or, in Shedrin’s words, to “round off” (*okruglit’*) – the Golovlyovo estate and obsessed, in her turn, with the passion for acquisition and for “supply” (*pripasaniye*), she had grown up in dislike, “without gentleness”, three sons and a daughter. “Children were to her merely a part of the preordained framework of life, against which she would have thought it wrong to rebel, though it did not stir a single chord of her inner being <...>” [Saltykov 1917, 6]. In the same way, “without gentleness”, Sutpen “began a son and a daughter”, which, as notes miss Coldfield, should have become “the pearl of his pride, the support and the comfort of his old age” [Faulkner 1990, 5].

For the “over-human” (in the Nietzschean sense) Sutpen and Arina Petrovna, people around them are often associated with animals. Arina Petrovna refers in this way to the “horrid” (*postylym*) relatives who had not found their place in life. The estate rumor keeps family tales about the uncle Mikhail Petrovich, “whom grandfather Piotr Ivanych had exiled to Golovliovo, where he had lived in the servants’ quarters and eaten out of the same dish with Trezorka, the house dog”, about aunt Vera Mikhailovna, “who had lived on the estate by her brother’s favor and died of moderate living, for Arina Petrovna had begrudged



her every mouthful at dinner and every billet of wood for the stove in her room” [Saltykov 1917, 36]. To get rid of her “hateful” son Stepan Vladimiryeh, or “Simple Simon”, as he is called in the family, Arina Petrovna “chucked [him] a piece” – just like a handout to a dog (cf. later in the novel the words of dying Pavel Vladimiryeh regarding the transfer of his estate to Iudushka: “...not to the bloodsucker! I’d rather *chuck it to the dogs* than leave it to him!” [Saltykov 1917, 36, here and in all subsequent quotations our italics]), which “was at the same time to figure his mother’s blessing” [Saltykov 1917, 8]. As a result, the characters’ passing away is often depicted as of the animals’: the body of deceased Lubinka is not entombed or inhumed, but buried (*zaryvayut*), like a dog’s one: “That same evening Lubinka’s corpse was taken into the field and buried [*zaryli* – lit.: ‘dugged into the earth’] by the roadside at Krechetov” [Saltykov 1917, 400. Cf. Russian colloquial expression “to bury like a dog” (*zaryt’ kak sobaku*) meaning “to dig someone dead into the earth without honors and ritual, as animals are usually buried”]. It is also likely that in the same way was buried the suicide Petenka – for, as notes niece Anninka to Porfiry Petrovuch: “Why, you know how they bury suicides” [Saltykov 1917, 286].

Perhaps that’s the main reason both Satpen and the Golovlev landowners pass out in the absolute solitude. Sutpen dies “without regret” [Faulkner 1990, 5], being killed by his old friend and buried by his unloved and unloving daughter on the family cemetery; and in the same way departs Arina Petrovna: throughout her life she had been striving to round off and to expand the Golovlyovo’s lands – and on her death bed suddenly realized the intimacy of this aspiration only on her deathbed: “Nevertheless her labors were in vain. Not only did she not transmit any of her qualities to her children, but she herself died ensnared by idleness, empty talk and mental vacuity” [Saltykov 1917, 409].

* * *

Faulkner and Saltykov-Shchedrin often turn in their novels to the biblical text, which they both rethink in relation to the impoverished world they create. Thus, they repeatedly refer to the gospel parable of the prodigal son – and permanently present it as “turned inside out”. In the scene of the return of Arina Petrovna’s “hateful” son Simple Simon and in the episode of Petya Golovlev’s arrival to his father Iudushka. In both cases, parents do not accept their unhappy and repentant children. Moreover, Stepan Vladimiryeh himself recalls this parable, but does not count on parental mercy: “The parable of the prodigal son and his return occurred to him, but he at once rejected the idea as a bit of self-delusion” [Saltykov 1917, 37]. In a similar way is presented Henry Sutpen, who goes against his father’s will, leaves his parental home – and finally returns there for one purpose only: to commit the murder and thus to undermine the already dilapidated foundations of his own family nest.

Another metaphor drawn from the Bible is the metaphor of a building erected on the sand, ascending to the parable of Jesus Christ (Matthew, ch. 7, ls 26–27). Talking about the abolition of Satpen’s estate, Faulkner notices: “... it was now paying the price for having erected its economic edifice not on the



rock of stern morality but *on the shifting sands* of opportunism and moral brigandage” [Faulkner 1990, 209]. Besides, as notes A.V. Volodina, “the greatness of Sutpen’s Hundred and Sutpen himself is a colossus on swampy clay feet” [Володина / Volodina 2015, 74]. Iudushka of Golovlyovo also recalls this parable [Saltykov 1917, 300], and in general its influence can be traced in the entire Satlykov-Shchedrin’s novel.

Fairy-tale comparisons are also found in both novels. In “Absalom, Absalom!” Sutpen is associated with the “evil ogre” – as Rosa Coldfield had perceived him at first when she was a child: “...for twenty years [I] had looked on him <...> as an ogre, some beast out of a tale to frightened children with <...>” [Faulkner 1990, 127–128]. This “evil ogre”, says Miss Coldfield, “removed my only sister to its grim ogre-bourne and produced two half-phantom children” [Faulkner 1990, 135]. In another case, Sutpen’s estate is compared to “stronghold of an ogre or a djinn,” where the beautiful maiden Ellen languishes in captivity. In another episode of Sutpen’s Hundred is compared to Bluebeard Castle (“an edifice like Bluebeard’s”) [Faulkner 1990, 47]: Faulkner refers to the tale of Charles Perrault about the cruel husband who locked up his wives in his castle – and finally killed them (Sutpen kills her only allegorically) for one or another offense. (In one version of the tale, this character not only killed his wives, but also cooked them roast and after that ate, as it befits to the “evil ogre”).

A fairytale layer is traced in the “Golovlyov Family”, too. For example, Arina Petrovna is strongly associated with the hag (in Russian original: *ved’ma* – lit.: “witch”, “evil sorceress”): “The husband called the wife a *hag* and a devil <...>” [Saltykov 1917, 6]; “The ‘*hag*’ instinctively divining their occupation <...>” [Saltykov 1917, 6]. The advice on how to deal with Simple Simon, which the “obedient” son Pavel gives to his mother, is also indicative: “Of course he is guilty. Have him torn to pieces – *ground* to dust *in a mortar* <...>” [Saltykov 1917, 53].

The most terrible weapon of the witch Arina Petrovna is the maternal curse; it is he who saves as the last resort against the son of Judas: “What if I really should put a curse on him – just take and curse him?” [Saltykov 1917, 124] Petenka Golovlev also perceives the maternal curse as the only way to frighten his “fisted” father – and begs Arina Petrovna to help him in this case: “See here, granny, suppose you say to him, ‘If you don’t give him the money I’ll lay a curse on you!’ He has always been afraid of your curse, you know” [Saltykov 1917, 194]. However, in the end, the curse is powerless, and exhausted Arina Petrovna can only die – and she dies in agony, as befits a witch [Кушниренко / Kushnirenko 2010, 111–117].

Both houses – Sutpen’s Hundred and Golovlyovo manor – are strongly associated in the novels with the world of the dead. The Golovlyovo estate in Shchedrin’s novel is repeatedly called the coffin (*grob*). Thus on the home-coming Stepan Vladimirykh the view of the Golovlyovo estate “worked <...> like the vision of a Medusa head. His paternal abode seemed to be a tomb [*grob*]. ‘A tomb, tomb, tomb’ [*Grob, grob, grob*’], he repeated unconsciously” [Saltykov 1917, 37–38].



Toward the end of the novel, the boundaries of the Golovlyov's manor-coffin are expanding – and for Iudushka not only the house and outbuildings, but also “the entire world was a vast coffin [*grob*] which served him as a pretext of endless prattling” [Saltykov 1917, 187].

The image of the coffin constantly appears in “Absalom, Absalom!” – starting from the draft title. It is known that initially Faulkner planned to title the novel “The Dark House” (“Dark House”) – the peripheral naming of the “last refuge”, the tomb or the grave. Here takes place the murder of Charles Bon – and later three virgins (Judith, Rosa, Clytie) listen in the course of their sad dinner, as if in a courtyard Wash Jones and Theophilus Makkaslin are making for him a simple coffin “of boards torn from the carriage house” [Faulkner 1990, 121]. During the Civil War, Sutpen's Hundred becomes a semblance of a monastery – another metaphorical kind of tomb (cf. the expression “to die for the world”), while home-coming Thomas Sutpen appears in the guise of “madman who creates within his very *coffin walls* his fabulous immeasurable Camelots and Carcassonnes [another pair of legendary or fairytale castles]” [Faulkner 1990, 129].

A variety of this image becomes a comparison of the estate with a vault or a mausoleum – a place where not only rests the body, but are also stored the preserved memories. In the earlier quoted scene of the return of Simple Simon to the paternal estate, the Golovlyov's manor is associated with a “damp basement” (located underground, like a tomb or vault); in the next scene this image develops: “The doors of the burial *vault* had opened, let him in, and closed again” [Saltykov 1917, 39]. Towards the end of the novel, Golovlyovo also becomes a kind of mausoleum in which are buried the restless dead (translated by A. Yarmolinsky as “victims”): “It seemed that all the Golovliovo's victims were now creeping from out of the nooks and crannies of the deserted house” [Saltykov 1917, 413].

In “Absalom, Absalom!” with a crypt or mausoleum is associated not the Sutpen's Hundred, but another house – namely, the abode of Rosa Coldfield, which, according to Shreve, appears to be “an overpopulated mausoleum” [Faulkner 1990, 144]. Actually, it becomes the vault not only for Goodhugh Coldfield (who voluntarily walled himself up in the attic), but also for the living (in the flesh) Rosa, who “died young of outrage in 1866 one summer” [Faulkner 1990, 142]. The Coldfield dwelling is presented to the reader earlier than Sutpen's Hundred, at the very beginning of the novel, at the very beginning of the novel – and the very first lines create an atmosphere of mortality, accented by the adjective “dead”: the dialogue between miss Rosa and Quentin takes place in the “*dead* September afternoon”; specks of dust in the sunshine seem to Caulfield “flecks of the *dead* old dried paint”. This house is a repository of the past, and above all, of the memories of Colonel Sutpen, which are saved by its owner, Miss Rosa Caulfield. “There would be the dim *coffin*-smelling gloom sweet and oversweet with the twice-bloomed wisteria against the outer wall <...>” [Faulkner 1990, 4]. In this house, everything seemed to freeze and has not changed for decades: “...in the gloom of the shuttered hallway whose



air was even hotter than outside, as if there were prisoned in it like in a *tomb* all the suspiration of slow heat-laden time which had recurred during the forty three years <...>” [Faulkner 1990, 6]. The very appearance of the owner (in her mourning-dress, which she has been wearing for forty-three years) speaks of her foreignness to this world and of her isolation from the category of time. She is at the same time an old woman, a representative of a bygone world – and a small girl, sitting on a high chair with her feet “clear of the floor” [Faulkner 1990, 3]. Sitting on her high chair (which brings her closer to Pythia on a high tripod) she resembles “a crucified child”; her voice arises from “dreamy and victorious dust”. A letter of invitation from his Quentin calls “summons, out of another world almost” [Faulkner 1990, 5].

This last motif of the canned, frozen time appears in the “Golovlyov Family”. Weather here appears to be as if in a “after world” space: “...an endless succession of joyless days losing themselves in a grey yawning abyss <...>” [Saltykov 1917, 36]; “From the dawn on [the clouds] covered the heaven, hanging motionless, as if spellbound. Even after several hours they were still in the same place, without the slightest apparent change in hue or outline <...>. Clouds, clouds, nothing but clouds” [Saltykov 1917, 65]. The same events keep happening many a time and oft; so, in the chapter III, “Family Accounts Settles” it is said that Iudushka had found out about the death of Napoleon III only a year after his decease; but after that passes a great period of time (during which dies Petenka Golovlyov, after him – Arina Petrovna; Evprakseyushka conceives and gives birth to a son) – and in Chapter V, “The Deserted Manor-House” Porfiry Vladimirovich recalls this as a recent incident: “There was Napoleon, about whom the newspapers have written so much”. (A similar technique is used, for example, by Goncharov in *Oblomov* [see: Zubkov / Zubkov 2017]). Thus, Golovlyovo appears to be a space, where the time has stopped, – and is approaching in this perspective to the Christian perception of Hell.

Just like Rosa Coldfield, who “died young of outrage in 1866 one summer”, the characters of “Family Golovlevs” seem to be dead, too – not only in soul, but also in flesh, actually living corpses. In particular, they are never warmed by the sun (“The sun was high in the heavens and was ruthlessly scorching the boundless fields of Golovliovo. But Stepan Vladimirykh was growing paler and shivering with ague” [Saltykov 1917, 37]) – the fact, which allows researchers to compare Golovlyovo estate the last circle of Dante’s hell – and to remember the punishment that undergoes traitor Judas, being immersed in the belt of eternal ice [Larionova / Larionova 2011, 194–195].

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How did we manage to trace, both writers, American and Russian, create a picture of a dying noble family, using for this purpose they use numerous images – biblical, fairy-tale, mythological, *etc.* – in many ways overlapping and similar. Based on the abundance of the common places in the “Golovlyov Family” and “Absalom, Absalom!”, outlined in our article, we are able to talk about the possible influence of Saltykov-Shchedrin and analyze other parallels that



bring these two great novels together about the death of noble families generated by the expression of the will of the superman – and who died because of their incredible, invincible pride.

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