WHY TITULAR COUNCILORS?

A HISTORY OF RUSSIA'S MOST STUBBORN LITERARY TYPE

by

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Abstract

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The titular councilor plays a special role in Russian literature. Some of the most celebrated works of nineteenth-century Russian authors focus on characters who hold this particular rank within the Russian bureaucratic system of social classification called the Table of Ranks. The question of why this rank was of interest to nineteenth-century Russian writers and readers has scarcely been posed, let alone answered. This thesis aims to determine why Gogol and Dostoevsky introduced and developed the character of titular councilor in Russian literature. The analysis of the structure of Table of Ranks and related documents indicates the paradoxical nature of this rank. Those who held the rank of titular councilor were stuck just one step away from dramatically changing their social status, but this was a very difficult step to make. As a result, most titular councilors remained in this rank forever. Gogol's titular councilors reflected this social paradox of the titular councilors turning them into "eternal" bureaucratic underachievers. This interpretation of the rank is also to be found in early Dostoevsky's early works.

The mid-nineteenth-century reforms of the Table changed the significance of titular councilors both in Russian society and literature. As a result of these changes to the Table, attempts to move up the career ladder to obtain the highest status of the hereditary nobility lost

their meaning; the ranks that gave this status were fundamentally unattainable for the overwhelming majority of officials. At the same time, while still remaining a bureaucratic class bestowing personal nobility, the rank of titular councilor changed its significance. It remained liminal, but it now signaled achievement rather than underachievement since the ranks below it did not give the right to any nobility at all. This social context and resulting "eternal" liminality of the rank of titular councilor explain the fascination it held for Gogol and Dostoevsky. Whereas for Gogol and young Dostoevsky, the titular councilor character represents an endlessly frustrated pursuit of a higher order of nobility, for late Dostoevsky it is an emblem of nobility gone to rot.

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Introduction

Why in so many significant works by Gogol and Dostoevsky do we encounter not just bureaucrats or clerks, but specifically titular councilors? What did this rank represent for these authors and the many others who wrote about it in the nineteenth-century Russia? A list of the most prominent titular councilors would include Gogol's Aksentii Poprishchin from "Diary of a Madman" (*"*Zapiski sumashedshego,*"* 1835) and Akakiii Bashmachkin from "The Overcoat" ("Shinel'", 1843); Dostoevsky's Makar Devushkin (*Poor Folk; Bednye liudi*, 1846), Yakov Goliadkin (*The Double; Dvoinik,* 1846, 1866), Semyon Marmeladov (*Crime and Punishment; Prestuplenie i nakazanie,* 1866), and Fyodor Karamazov (*The Brothers Karamazov; Brat'ia Karamazovy,* 1879-1880). This essay explores the history of Russian titular councilors and indicates reasons why Gogol and Dostoevsky featured characters with this rank in several of their significant works.

Social History: Russian Nobility and the Table of Ranks

In order to understand the implications of the rank of titular councilor, it is useful to say a few words about the Russian Table of Ranks. It was introduced by Peter the Great in 1722 and was modified and amended until it was completely abolished in 1917 after the October Revolution.[1] The immediate introduction of the Table of Ranks in 1722 was preceded by preparatory work summarizing the experience of European states in this matter. For instance, among the papers of Peter I of 1713 we find the following entry: "December 18, 1713. About making extracts from foreign tables of ranks… To draw on Sweden's and others' order of degrees of all ranks, except for military ones" ("*18 Dekabria 1713. O sdelanii vypisok iz*

[1] See monographs by Blosfeldt, Shepelev Mironov, and Yablochkov.

inostrannykh tabelei o rangakh… Vypisat' iz shvedskikh i protchikh poriadok gradusov vsekh chinov, krome voinskikh"; Bychkov 273). One of the goals of introducing the Table was to streamline the hierarchy of ranks and the rules of rank promotion. The Table of Ranks of 1722, just like its subsequent editions, included three large sections describing the hierarchy of civil, military, and court ranks. Later editions of the Table of 1845 and 1856 altered the rules of promotion in rank and made some changes in the names and order of ranks, but the general content of the Table remained unchanged until its full abolition in 1917.

The very structure of the Table of Ranks, which delineated service to the state and the Emperor in the bureaucratic, military, or court fields, implied association with the nobility. Serving the country and the sovereign was perceived as the main duty of the nobles, so it is not surprising that the receipt of ranks from the Table of Ranks occurred along with the possession or acquisition of noble status. According to the code of laws for nobility in the Russian Empire, with the introduction of the Table of Ranks in 1722, nobility was divided into hereditary and personal categories. Hereditary nobility was acquired through an award from the Emperor, achievement of the eighth rank in service, receipt of a major Russian order, or, as the name suggests, through inheritance. Such nobility, in turn, had six classes: 1) granted or actual (received from the monarch) nobility; 2) military nobility (that is, acquired in military service); 3) the nobility received by attaining a rank in the civil service and for receiving an order; 4) foreign noble families; 5) families distinguished by titles (such as princes, counts, barons); 6) ancient noble families (Blosfeldt 7). Of these, titled, ancient, and titled foreign nobility were more highly valued than nobility received for civil or military service or as a result of receiving an order (Yablochkov 344-350). Thus, the structure of the hereditary nobility had its own semi-formal hierarchy.

The biographies of two outstanding nineteenth-century writers, Nikolai Gogol and Fyodor Dostoevsky, each of whom was a noble, becomes indirect evidence of the existence of such a hierarchy within hereditary nobility. If Gogol belonged to reputable hereditary nobility, whose status extended back to the old noble family of Gogols and the even more ancient family of the Yanovskys,[2] Dostoevsky could not boast a similar noble lineage. For example, we do not find at all a mention of the Dostoevsky family in the Russian genealogy book of Prince Lobanov-Rostovskii, who traces the genealogy of the Gogol family dating back six generations. Among other things, Lobanov-Rostovskii's book says that among the ancestors of Nikolai Gogol were Ioann Gogol, Bishop of Pinsk and Eustathius (Ostap) Gogol, an associate of the King of Poland Jan Sobieski, from whom he received the title of hetman (144). In turn, a bibliographic index on the history, heraldry, and genealogy of Russian nobility includes four sources confirming the noble status of the Gogol-Yanovsky family, where there is only one source confirming Dostoevsky's nobility in the same index (Savelov 117).

Nevertheless, the nobility of the Gogols, not to mention that of the Dostoevskys, was considered "petty" in comparison with the titled nobility. In the publication of the Russian genealogy book of Prince Peter Dolgorukov, which includes the families with the finest noble pedigrees, the Gogol family is briefly mentioned only in chapter 12, whereas the preceding chapters are reserved for nobility of higher status (43). Of the families associated with the civil service, Prince Dolgorukov mentions in Chapter 13 only those who existed "since the time of Peter the Great [,] in the first two classes of public service" (*"Familii, chleny koikh sluzhili, so vremeni Petra Velikogo i do nashikh dnei, v pervykh dvukh klassakh gosudarstvennoi sluzhby"*)

[2] At birth Nikolai Gogol bore the surname Gogol-Yanovsky, but he later abandoned the use of the second part of the surname, remaining just Gogol.

that is, in the highest state positions (5). Hence, it is no surprise that there is no mention of the Dostoevskys in this book. As proclaimed in the *St. Petersburg Senate Gazette (Sanktpeterburgskie Senatskie Vedomosti),* however, confirms the precise year in which Dostoevsky's father, Mikhail, attained the status of hereditary nobility, which he was able to pass down to the young Fyodor in 1827. The issue of this newspaper for April 16 cites an Imperial decree, "most mercifully bestowing," for his excellent service, the rank of collegiate assessor[3] to "titular councilor[s] … head physician with the Moscow Hospital for the Poor Dostoevsky"[4] ("*vsemilosteviishe zhaluem… Tituliarnykh sovetnikov:… Shtab-Lekaria pri Moskovskoi bol'nitse dlia bednykh Dostaevskago"*; "Po zasvidetel'stvovaniiu…" 608). Although it did not secure his family a place in major genealogical books, Dostoevsky senior's promotion from titular councilor to collegiate assessor represented a significant social elevation.

The designation of personal nobility conferred by the rank of titular councilor was of significantly lower prestige than the hereditary nobility of the collegiate assessor. The designation of personal nobility appeared in 1722 as a compromise between needing to attract promising and talented people to public service on the one hand and preventing the excessive growth of the privileged class of hereditary nobles on the other. Although accorded formal noble status, personal nobles were not completely noble in the eyes of their contemporaries. This was reflected both in the limited nature of their rights (primarily in the impossibility of buying land and peasants) and in the impossibility of transferring such nobility by inheritance (Mironov 82-99). Personal nobility was conveyed to the wife of the person who received it, but not to the children. The offspring of a personal nobleman could be content only with the non-noble status

[3] At that time, the rank of collegiate assessor conferred hereditary noble status.
[4] That is Mikhail Dostoevsky, Fyodor Dostoevsky's father.

of an honorary citizen, and information about personal nobility was not written down into the genealogical books. There was the possibility of the application to obtain hereditary nobility for those whose fathers and grandfathers had also acquired personal nobility through service and had a certain history of this status (Blosfeldt 9). Still, this was not the easiest way of becoming a hereditary noble. The most obvious and reliable way to obtain hereditary nobility for a civil servant was to acquire the rank of collegiate assessor (rank 8 in the Table of Ranks). This, however, required bureaucrats of non-noble origin to serve 12 years in the preceding rank of titular councilor (Shepelev 114), making the transition from rank 9 to rank 8 very difficult.

Since service to the state was considered one of the important functions of the nobility in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, even representatives of titled and ancient nobility were often to be found in both state and military service. For these persons, the sequential passage through all ranks in the corresponding lowest sections of the Table of Ranks (civil and military) was considered the norm (Petr I 493), which sometimes led to curious cases. For example, from Lyubimov's collection "Leaders of the nobility of all governorships, provinces and regions of the Russian Empire 1777-1910" ("*Predvoditeli dvorianstva vsekh nametsnichestv, gubernii i oblastei Rossiiskoi Imperii 1777-1910 g.*") we learn that in 1812-1814 the leader of the nobility in the Pskov province was titular counselor Baron Karl Adamovich von-Stackelberg. In the Poltava province in 1907 the same position was occupied by titular councilor Prince (!) Nikolai Borisovich Shcherbatov. And in the Tambov province the leader of the local nobility from 1851 to 1854 was Prince Yuri Nikolaevich Golitsyn who at that time held the meager rank of provincial secretary (rank 12 out of 14 in the Table of Ranks) (Liubimov 50-65). Such cases presented a certain challenge to the Russian system of formal address. For instance, the traditional form of addressing titular councilors, as well as smaller officials, was "Your Well

Born," while it was customary to address princes as "Your Illustrious Highness." So, which one was supposed to be used? We find the answer to this question in Shepelev's monograph. He notes that in the case of a conflict between two forms of address, the preference is given to the higher one (9). That is, titular councilors, provincial secretaries and other petty bureaucrats in princely dignity remained "Your Illustrious Highnesses." In the case of titular councilors who happened to be barons, such an issue did not arise – the address "Your Well Born" was used both in relation to officials of the 9-14th rank and as a way to address barons and other non-titled nobles.

Despite some paradoxes between the above examples, one should not forget that promotion for members of ancient noble families and titled nobility was greatly facilitated by personal connections and favors. The overwhelming majority of members of the privileged class progressed in their careers very quickly and the passage through the lower ranks remained only a formality (Ivanova and Zheltova 101). On the other hand, promotion of people of common origin was becoming more complicated after achieving each subsequent rank. The necessary requirements included fixed length of service as well as a demonstration of competence and zeal. If achieving the rank of titular councilor remained quite realistic for many officials of low origin, the promotion to collegiate assessor with the consequent elevation to hereditary nobility became a very difficult task (Shepelev 115-124). In addition to seniority requirements, level of education, service distinctions, and career success also became significant factors.[5] In other words, the same officials who could boast neither of any affiliation to a famous noble family, nor of outstanding

[5] This state of affairs continues to be represented in the late nineteenth-century Russian literature. For example, in Chekhov's story "Meliuzga" the hero, Nevyrazimov, complains that he cannot rise above the rank of titular councilor because he is uneducated ("*mne dal'she tituliarnogo ne poiti knot' tresni… Ia neobrazovannyi";* "Meliuzga" 210).

education and professional qualities often remained a "perpetual titular councilor," as per Gogol's apt remark ("*vechnyi tituliarnyi sovetnik*"; "The Overcoat" 79; "Shinel'" 141).

Gogol and Early Dostoevsky: Titular Councilor as Underachiever

It is remarkable that even though Gogol is often rightfully credited for introducing titular councilors as "perpetual" characters in Russian literature, the very first mentioning of "eternity" of this rank is found in Lermontov's *Hero of Our Time* (*Geroi nashego vremeni*, 1840). In this novel, Lermontov succinctly notes that "many people begin life thinking that they will end it like Alexander the Great or Lord Byron, and yet remain a titular counselor for the duration"[6] ("*malo li liudei, nachinaia zhizn', dumaiut konchit' ee, kak Aleksandr Velikii ili lord Bairon, a mezhdu tem tselyi vek ostaiutsia tituliarnymi sovetnikami?*"; *A Hero of Our Time* 117; *Geroi nashego vremeni* 411). Later, Gogol refers to his Akakii Bashmachkin as *vechnyi tituliarnyi sovetnik* (eternal or perpetual titular councilor) (Shinel' 141). It was Bashmachkin who became the archetypal representation of the titular councilor in Russian literature. A mediocre man, only able to copy documents, he is inherently afraid of creative work. Moreover, he is destined and doomed to forever remain a titular councilor: soon after birth, he "made a grimace, as though he foresaw that he was to be a titular councillor" ("*sdelal takuiu grimasu, kak budto by predchustvoval, chto budet tituliarnyi sovetnik*", *The Overcoat* 80; *Shinel'* 142). This Gogolian image of a failure of a bureaucrat, who is forever stuck one step away from a life-changing rank, was further developed in the works of Dostoevsky.

It should also be noted that the aforementioned quotes from Lermontov's *Hero of Our Time* and Gogol's "The Overcoat*"* emphasize not just the mediocrity of titular councilors, but

[6] The original text says *tselyi vek ostaiutsia tituliarnymi sovetnikami*, which stresses the immutable state of remaining in this rank. *Vek* (century) and *vechnost'* (eternity) are related in Russian.

also the "eternity" of existence in this rank. Still, while describing Akakii, Gogol specifically mentions that "he was what is called a perpetual titular councilor" ("*on byl to, chto nazyvaiut vechnyi tituliarnyi sovetnik*", *The Overcoat* 79; *Shinel'* 141). In other words, by adding "what is called" the author suggests that such interpretation of the "eternity" of the titular councilor is not the author's own invention, but, rather, a reflection of the perception of this rank and the bureaucrats who held it in the society of that time. Given the aforementioned facts that among the many other requirements for promotion to the rank of collegiate assessor there was 12 years of service in the rank of titular councilor alone, this expression makes a lot of sense. In fact, the rank of titular councilor indeed became "eternal" for bureaucrats of non-noble origin. For example, if for hereditary nobles, promotion from lowermost clerk positions to the lowest rank in the Table (rank 14 of collegiate registrar) required two years of service, for less privileged groups this term could have been six or even 12 years. Combined with the requirement of up to eight years in ranks 14, 12, and 10,[7] this resulted in dozens of years of service (Shepelev 122). Even promotion to the rank of titular councilor could seem like an eternity.

In fact, being a liminal rank on the way to a more significant social status, the rank of titular councilor simultaneously played the role of a "trap" that prevented many bureaucrats from going further up the career ladder. It is precisely this feature of the rank of titular counselor that has turned out to be attractive to a number of Russian authors. Due to the features described above, the very mentioning of the rank of titular councilor implied social conflict and even a personal drama of the character who held this rank. It is no coincidence that the very first well-known titular councilor in Russian literature, Aksentii Poprishchin from Gogol's "Diaries of Madman," actually becomes delusional as a result of the impossibility of realizing his ambitions

[7] Ranks 11 and 13 were still in the Table, but they were no longer conferred after 1834 (Nikolai I 659).

and moving up the career ladder (Porter 48-51; Reyfman 150-151). As Savinkov has rightly pointed out, the cause of Poprishchin's psychic break is precisely the close proximity of the rank of titular councilor to the much-desired rank of collegiate assessor, bestowing hereditary nobility, and at the same time – the impossibility of achieving this coveted rank (Savinkov 134). In other words, the choice of the rank here is not unintentional; it is dictated by its liminal essence and by the peculiarities of its position in the Table of Ranks system.

I propose that the titular councilor's liminal status also made this rank especially suitable for literary works that balance between the world of the real and the fantastic, the rational and the irrational in literature. Not being able to achieve what they want according to the laws of reality, which closes off before them all prospects for career growth and raising their social status, titular councilors seem to be squeezed out of the real world. Thus, Aksentii Poprishchin and Yakov Goliadkin, unable to satisfy their ambitions by conventional methods, fall into the world of hallucinations. Akakii Bashmachkin, after death, returns in the form of a vengeful ghost. The mysterious titular councilor Stoss from the unfinished work of the same name by Lermontov, is also a half-human, half-ghost ("Shtoss" 494-497). Even Makar Devushkin, realizing the wretchedness of his existence, prefers the world of written communication to physical co-presence. In other words, a mixture of the real and the fantastic, the rational and irrational, is a distinctive feature of the titular councilor characters of the first half of the nineteenth century. It is thanks to this feature that titular councilors have become a key element in blurring the boundaries of reality and fantasy in St. Petersburg and creating the intricate genre of romantic realism[8].

[8] This phenomenon is thoroughly covered in Donald Fanger's monograph *Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism: A Study of Dostoevsky in Relation to Balzac, Dickens, and Gogol*.

The very name of the rank of titular councilor was deeply symbolic. In fact, this was the only rank in the Table of Ranks of the nineteenth century that included the name "titular." Shepelev rightly notes that the very word "titular" here conveyed the meaning of a formal, but not factual phenomenon (117). In a way, this suggested the fictitious nature of this rank (Savinkov 131-132). It is no surprise that many characters bearing the rank of titular councilor, including Gogol's Poprishchin ("Diary of a Madman") and Dostoevsky's Goliadkin (*The Double*), question their social role, status, and even the very meaning of this rank. The fact is that if the ranks 1-7 were the ranks of councilors both in form and in function, then the eighth and last of the ranks that bestowed hereditary nobility, the rank of collegiate assessor, disrupted the harmonious system of the Table. Moreover, it "ousted" the last of the councilors, the titular one, out of the most privileged group of ranks. Thus, on the one hand, we have the eighth "impostor rank," violating the logic of the Table, on the other—"fake," just *titular* councilor.

Not surprisingly, literary characters holding both of these liminal ranks are often aware of the precariousness of their social position and are faced with doubles embodying their own fears. For instance, in Gogol's "The Nose," collegiate assessor Kovalev fades into the background in the presence of a double, his own nose, who holds the very high and respected rank of state councilor (fifth rank in the Table), one of those "real and important" councilors ("Nose … is now gallivanting about town and calling itself a state councillor"; "*Nos … raz'ezhaet teper' po gorodu i nazyvaet sebia statskim sovetnikom*." "The Overcoat" 67; "Nos" 60-61). The system of doubles in Dostoevsky's *The Double* is even more complex.[9] On the one hand, the titular

[9] In general, it should be noted that the theme of doubling in Dostoevsky's *The Double* is truly comprehensive and goes beyond the text itself and the characters, many of whom are not only doubles of each other, but also heroes of other works by Gogol, Hoffmann, and other authors. The novella addresses the issues of the doubling of toponymic objects in real Petersburg and also in surnames (Zakharov 46). Moreover, it imitates the style of other authors, reaching the level of "altering" and "repeating the whole of Gogol's phrases" (Aksakov 189-190; Mochul'skii 41 - 42). Like the hero of the story, Goliadkin Sr., who is shadowed by his "doubles" State Councilor Berendeev and

councilor Goliadkin Sr. wants to imitate the "real" state councilor Berendeev to enter high society. On the other hand, he is challenged by an unappealing double, an identical titular councilor with the same name and appearance. In other words, this rank sets the stage for a drama not only of frustrated ambition, but of the elusive pursuit of the "real" by the shadowy doubles and the rank of titular councilor becomes just such a fictitious double of "real" councilors.

Thus, despite the apparent belonging to the esteemed category of councilors (ranks 1-7), the rank of titular councilor remained in the lowest group of the Table, along with registrars and secretaries (ranks from 9 to 14)[10] who were often responsible for the least prestigious work.[11]

It is no coincidence that inclination to copying documents instead of more creative work is exaggerated in the image of Gogol's Akakii Bashmachkin: "One director being a kindly man … ordered him to be given something more important than mere copying … This caused him so much toil that he was all in perspiration, rubbed his forehead, and finally said, 'No, give me rather something to copy'" ("*Odin direktor, buduchi dobryi chelovek … prikazal dat' emu chto-*

titular councilor Goliadkin Jr., Dostoevsky's *The Double* (1846) becomes a double of Gogol's "Nose" and its own revised edition (1866).

[10] Borrowing the internal logic of the Table of Ranks, Troitsky, Soviet historian and author of the authoritative monograph "Russian absolutism and nobility in the eighteenth century. Formation of bureaucracy" ("Russkii absolutizm i dvorianstvo v XVIII veke. Formirovanie biurokratii") proposed to divide all civil ranks into four categories. The first one comprised top-level bureaucrats of the first five ranks. The second category included middle-tier officials of ranks 6-8. Ranks 9-14 were included in the third category, which represented low-level clerks bearing ranks, whereas the fourth tier consisted of lowermost clerks who had no rank at all (Troitsky 170-175). It is also interesting that in this classification the rank of titular councilor was not just liminal, but was also located in the very center, on the cusp between the second and the third category. Thus, the threshold of the rank of titular councilor is confirmed by its location right in the middle of the entire bureaucratic pyramid of Russian bureaucracy, between the second and third groups of bureaucrats in Troitsky's classification. This middle position became another distinctive feature of this rank, reflected in the works of Dostoevsky and primarily in the *The Double*, which will be discussed in detail in the next part of this study.

[11] This was true in the case of bureaucrats working in St. Petersburg, although in the province things were different. Chekhov, speaking about titular councilors in his letter to A.S. Suvorin, notes that "in the provinces, all paper work is done by petty clerks for a special fee, while titulars [councilors] and [collegiate] assessors just drink vodka." ("*v provintsii vsiu pis'mennuiu rabotu nesut melkie kantseliaristy za osobuiu platu, a tituliary i asessory vodku p'iut*"; "Suvorinu A.S" 268)

nibud' povazhnee, chem obyknovennoe perepisyvan'e … Eto zadalo emu takuiu rabotu, chto on vspotel sovershenno, ter lob i nakonets skazal: "Net, luchshe daite ia perepishu chto-nibud'", "The Overcoat" 81-82; "Shinel'" 144-145). The foregoing discussion confirms the paradoxicality of the position of titular councilors—formally councilors, they, in reality, had little to do with "real" councilors and belonged to the lowest group of ranks in the Table. Despite the fact that the very title of "councilor" suggests a relationship to being an advisor, in real practice the councilor ranks (ranks 1-7 and 9) did not imply any connection to that service in a particular institution or the performance of clearly defined duties. Some clarity of the significance of these ranks is made by their comparison with the military ranks listed in the Table. The fifth rank of state councilor was a civilian analogue of the first general's rank, and the subsequent ranks of collegiate and court councilor were high staff officers (Shepelev 59-61). The very name of the rank of councilor already implied reference to the upper stratum of the bureaucracy and representatives of the hereditary nobility. The only councilor who did not conform to this rule was the titular councilor.

Gogol was able to demonstrate not just the disadvantageous role of "eternal titular councilor[s]" in the bureaucratic hierarchy, but also what happened to a person who was able to make a very difficult step from rank 9 to rank 8 and become a collegiate assessor. Major[12] Kovalyov, the main character in "The Nose," similar to Gogol himself and his father, bears the rank of collegiate assessor (Stepanov 11). This was a coveted eighth rank that at the time when the story was written granted hereditary nobility and a number of privileges. These privileges

[12] Kovalyov tries to give himself even more significance by calling himself major instead of collegiate assessor, which is the military counterpart to the civil rank of 8. In the Russian Empire there was always an idolization of the military and military ranks were valued more than civil ones (Fedosyuk 98-99). According to Shepelev, even after Nicholas I, many top-level civil bureaucrats "ordered servants to call them generals" (Shepelev 115). This fact explains why there are so many generals performing civil duties in nineteenth-century Russian literature.

were unavailable to personal nobles, ranks 9-14 in the Table (Mironov 88-90). Apart from that, a titular councilor (rank 9) just like all other lower ranks was supposed to be addressed as "Your Well Born," (*Vashe blagorodie*) whereas if a titular councilor or any other person of a lower rank addressed a collegiate assessor, he was supposed to use another, more respectful form of address, "Your High Well Born" (*Vashe vysokoblagorodie;* Shepelev 142-143). This, of course, bolstered Kovalyov's feeling of self-importance and exceptionality. Not surprisingly, after achieving the rank of collegiate assessor and, hence, hereditary nobility, Kovalyov became preoccupied with advantageous marriage. Unlike a titular councilor, who was merely a personal noble typically receiving a meager salary, a collegiate assessor, even though still not very well off financially, was considered a member of high society. Indeed, a titular councilor was a bad match for any woman of high social status. This idea was reflected in a popular romance of the time by Dargomyzhsky and Weinberg (1859):[13]

He was a titular councilor,
She was a general's daughter;
He humbly declared his love to her,
But she just chased him away.
Then went the titular councilor
To a bar and drank all night long,
But in alcoholic delirium
Still saw he the girl he longed for.[14]

[13] The romance, like the original verses by Weinberg does not have a title and is just referred to as "He was a titular councilor…" ("*On byl tituliarnyi sovetnik…*").

[14] The translation of the romance is mine, S.M.

Он был титулярный советник,

Она — генеральская дочь;

Он робко в любви объяснился,

Она прогнала его прочь.

Пошёл титулярный советник

И пьянствовал с горя всю ночь,

И в винном тумане носилась

Пред ним генеральская дочь. (Yampolsky 182-183).

Despite the fact that these verses were written after extensive changes to the Table of Ranks in 1845 and 1856, discussed below, they very accurately reflect the drama of the titular councilors of the first half of the nineteenth century as unfortunates in service and private life. As Yampolsky notes, in general, this poem "was written in the spirit of the natural school—Gogol's 'The Overcoat' and Dostoevsky's *Poor Folk*" (180), thus incorporating the classical image of the titular councilor as both a professional and romantic failure. The above-mentioned verse is a revealing example of the social disparity in nineteenth-century Russia. Even a personal noble bearing the highest rank among those granted personal nobility (9) could not dream of marrying a woman belonging to hereditary nobility[15].

[15] It should be noted, that after the reforms of the Table of Ranks of 1845 and 1856, the depiction of titular councilors in Russian literature started to evolve. For example, Chekhov's works and personal letters clearly demonstrate two parallel approaches. On the one hand, many characters of his short stories reflect the contemporary sociohistorical essence of this rank. Instead of being traditional "eternal losers," in a number of instances, Chekhov depicts this rank as an achievement. For instance, in in the story "Dacha Rules" ("Dachnye pravila"; 1884) it is recommended in plain text that "persons below the titular [councilor] keep themselves at a decent distance from the daughters of persons of at least rank five." ("*chtoby osoby nizhe tituliarnogo derzhali sebia na prilichnoi distantsii ot docherei osob ne nizhe V klassa*."; "Dachnye pravila" 22). Still, Chekhov does not forsake the traditional image of the titular councilor as underachiever. In his letter to E. Shavrova (1892), Chekhov gives her the following advice: "in my opinion, you have to go through all the steps before becoming a literary countess. Do not be ashamed to be a titular councilor in a cloak, drinking coffee grounds instead of coffee in the morning." ("*po-moemu, nado proiti vse stupeni, prezhde chem stat' literaturnoi grafinei. Ne stydites' byt' tituliarnoi sovetnitsei v salope, p'iushchei po utram vmesto kofe – kofeinuiu gushchu*"; "Shavrovoi E.M." 35). Thus, if the first approach aims at depicting the real

It might seem that there was just one step between the titular councilor (rank 9) and the collegiate assessor (rank 8), but in fact this was a very complicated step to make. Few of the numerous titular councilors were able to make it to the eighth rank and its long-coveted privileges and status (Fedosiuk 96-97). The fact that the rank of titular councilor, despite its special position in the Table of Ranks, was not considered particularly significant, is also confirmed by statistical studies of bureaucracy in the nineteenth century. In his monograph addressing this issue, Zaionchkovskii provides detailed information on the number of Russian bureaucrats by their ranks. Referring to archival documents, he indicates the exact number of officials of each rank of the Table from the first to the eighth. In turn, the rank of titular councilor just like the ranks following it does not receive a separate mention anywhere in the official sources. For instance, in 1796 there were 1,524 eighth grade officials in the Russian Empire and in 1847—4671. In total, the officials of ranks 1-8 totaled 3,941 and 10,671 in 1847. The statistics for individual ranks of the 9^{th}-14^{th} grades were not kept at all. For 1796, there is no exact information on the total number of bureaucrats belonging to ranks 9-14, and for 1847 their overall number amounted to 50,877 people (Zaionchkovskii 66-67). In fact, there were almost 11 officials in the rank of 9 and below for one eight-grade official or five bureaucrats of ranks 9-14 for every official belonging to ranks 1-8. These numbers demonstrate how difficult it was for low-level clerks to even make it even to rank 8, not to mention higher ranks, and support Fedosiuk's conclusion that most titular councilors remained in this rank forever (Fedosiuk 96).

Moreover, there was another obstacle on the way to the rank of collegiate assessor, probably even more insurmountable. A person with elementary or secondary education could

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position of titular councilors in contemporary Russian society, the second one transforms the traditional image of the titular councilor into a metaphor, which instead of reflecting the reality, claims the right to interpret it.

face extreme difficulties with promotion after rank 9, whereas a bureaucrat with higher education could be promoted by two ranks at once. Apart from that, well-educated individuals enjoyed lower requirements for length of service in a certain rank in order to be promoted, compared to their lower educated colleagues (Shepelev 120-123). Hence, it is no coincidence that many titular councilors as well as their literary counterparts remained "eternal titular councilors"— they simply did not have access to quality education. To get a better understanding of how serious this problem was, it is useful to consider the level of education of Russian officials in general and titular councilors in particular.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the education of Russian bureaucrats was minimal. The reasons for this, on the one hand, were the absence of a developed network of higher, secondary, and lower educational institutions, and on the other hand—limited financial security of the lower bureaucracy, leaving them unable to afford their own and their children's education at reputable schools (Snezhnevskii 46; Zaionchkovskii 29). As Zaionchkovskii notes, the main type of education was elementary home education, which amounted to basic knowledge of grammar and arithmetic. Despite the absence of comprehensive statistical data on the educational qualification of Russian bureaucracy, according to indirect data on bringing officials of various levels to trial in the middle of the nineteenth century, Zaionchkovskii provides some approximate numbers. Of the officials of ranks 10-14, 3.2% had a higher education, 11.3% had a secondary education, and 85.5% a lower education. The situation was slightly better in the group of officials of ranks 5-8. Among them 6.4% had a higher education, 26% had a secondary education, and 67.6% a lower education (29-34). It is not entirely clear why Zaionchkovskii disregards the ninth rank of the titular councilor in his statistics. However, given the ratio of the educational level of lower and higher ranks, one can assume titular councilors had a very low

level of education as well. A glaring example of the ignorance of a titular councilor was noted in law 4342 of February 10, 1831 "About the instruction that people who cannot read and write not be assigned to state affairs" ("*O nabliudenii, chtoby k statskim delam ne byli opredeliaemy liudi, neumeiushchie gramote*"). The Ruling Senate, considering the case of then-in-service "Titular Counselor Fedorov, who does not know how to read and write,"[16] ordered to avoid "such a disorder of admitting illiterate people to state affairs ... and allowing them to be promoted to class ranks,"[17] and to strengthen local control by bringing this decision to all public places ("*Tituliarnom Sovetnike Fedorove, neumeiushchem gramote"; "daby na budushchee ne moglo vkrastsia podobnago besporiadka v opredelenii k statskim delam liudei bezgramotnykh i v predstavlenii ikh v proizvodstve v klassnye chiny*"; Nikolai I 147). Despite the fact that the above curious example was an isolated case, it should be noted that on the whole the educational level of the lower and middle levels of the Russian bureaucracy was relatively unimpressive, which eventually negatively affected promotion of low-level officials.

As a result, most of those who acquired rank 9 remained in it until retirement or death. They could not acquire the higher rank because of their low origin, lack of education or age (Shepelev 123; Fedosiuk 96). Such are Gogol's Akakii Bashmachkin ("The Overcoat") and Aksentii Poprishchin ("Diary of a Madman"). They lack noble origin and higher education and they are too old to do something about it. These characters embody the whole social stratum of "eternal titular councilors" among the Russian bureaucracy. In fact, this phenomenon had become so widespread that a number of derogatory terms were coined to specifically describe

[16] In respect to this case it is pertinent to recall a quote from Chekhov's writings: "here you are a titular counselor, and whom do you counsel? God forbid anyone from listening to your counsel" ("*vot ty tituliarnyi "sovetnik"; a komu ty sovetuesh'? Ne dai Bog nikomu tvoikh sovetov slushat*'"; "Zapisnaia knizhka I" 92).

[17]By "class ranks," Nicholas I means all ranks present in the Table as opposed to the ranks of petty bureaucrats not mentioned therein (for details, see Troitsky 170-175).

these non-achievers. They were contemptuously called *shtuliary* or *tituliashki* (Fedosiuk 96-97). In a society where the dominance of the Table of Ranks was so pervasive, the rank of titular councilor was less an honor than a verdict. Not surprisingly, starting the narration of *The Overcoat* with telling about "one department," Gogol adds that when talking about people, "with us the rank must be stated first of all" ("*u nas prezhde vsego nuzhno ob'iavit' chin*", *The Overcoat* 79; Shinel' 41). The significance of the Table is confirmed by other works of Gogol and Dostoevsky. Sometimes it seems that these authors are literally obsessed with naming all kinds of ranks and titles. Nevertheless, what may seem strange to a modern reader was familiar in the order of things in nineteenth-century Russia.).

***The Double*: A Threshold Novella**

In the literary realm, relations between high and low ranks are well depicted in Gogol's "The Overcoat" and "Nose;" however, it was Dostoevsky, who significantly developed them in *The Double*. The protagonist of this novella, titular councilor Yakov Goliadkin,[18] faces a similar problem of being frowned upon by high society due to his low rank. Unlike Gogol's titular councilors and the main character of his *Poor Folk* Makar Devushkin, Yakov Goliadkin is quite financially secure. He lives in a separate apartment, has a servant, and has decent financial savings—a striking contrast with Akakiii Bashmachkin and Makar Devushkin, who are struggling to make ends meet. At the same time, the ill-fated rank of the titular councilor does not allow Goliadkin to attain the desired status and pursue a satisfactory personal life by marrying Klara Olsufievna, his superior's daughter. However, if the above-mentioned Makar Devushkin cannot marry his beloved largely due to financial insecurity among other matters,

[18] The narrator of *The Double* calls Mr. Goliadkin "Goliadkin Sr." and his double— "Goliadkin Jr."

Yakov Goliadkin is unable to do so primarily because of low social status. Klara Olsufievna is the daughter of the hereditary nobleman Olsufii Ivanovich Berendeev. Her father, although not a general as in the aforementioned verses of Weinberg, nevertheless holds the very high fifth rank of the state councilor in the Table of Ranks. In the civil service, this rank usually opened the way to the positions of vice-governor and deputy director of the department, whereas in the military the corresponding fifth rank occupied an intermediate position between the ranks of colonel and major general (Shepelev 123). Naturally, a middle-class official who is not a hereditary nobleman would be a very unfortunate suitor for a daughter of a top-level bureaucrat and hereditary noble.

In fact, here we are dealing not only with the relationship between a superior and a subordinate, but also with the contrast between the state (rank five) and titular (rank nine) councilors, a real councilor and an unfortunate copy. Indeed, in addition to state councilor Olsufii Berendeev, whose mention occurs in the story no less often than the title of Goliadkin's own rank, we meet many other "real" councilors. These are Goliadkin's immediate superior, collegiate councilor (rank 6 in the Table) Andrei Filippovich, and a number of other "important councilors" ("*vazhnogo sovetnika*"; *Dvoinik*, 225). All of them belong to the high society and are invited to Olsufii Ivanovich's place. In contrast, the only titular councilor in the story is Goliadkin, his double Goliadkin Jr., and their numerous duplicates that "obstruct the whole town" ("*vsia stolitsa zaprudilas' nakonets sovershenno podobnymi", The Double*, 87; *Dvoinik*, 187). It is no surprise that *titular* councilor Goliadkin is the only councilor who has not been invited to the ball at Olsufii Ivanovich's place. Instead of arriving openly, he sneaks into the apartment and comes to be completely expelled from decent society as not belonging to it. If the "real" councilors occupy positions from the first to the seventh in the Table of Ranks, the titular

councilor is not even in the eighth, but in the ninth position, below the eighth rank of the collegiate assessor (not even a councilor). Thus, the titular councilor is the only failure-of-a-councilor; the first to the eighth ranks were to be occupied by hereditary nobility and, if one had not been hereditary noble, one was granted this status. Along with hereditary nobility those officials became part of high society. At the same time, the rank of the titular councilor turned out to be not only rejected by this society for having nothing to do with hereditary nobility, but also became an eternal trap for individuals like Goliadkin.

In a sense, titular councilor Goliadkin is a fake double of the "real councilors," constituting the high society of the hereditary nobility, and most importantly, the state councilor Olsufii Berendeev, whose rank Goliadkin is obsessed with mentioning. Nevertheless, being a fake councilor and not belonging to the worthy category of hereditary nobles, he lays claims to that which he has no right to claim due to his low social status. In other words, in the case of Goliadkin we have a complex conflict. From a financial standpoint[19] he no longer belongs to the very bottom of the social pyramid, but from the point of view of rank and status, he is only one of many faceless, low-level bureaucrats. Savinkov emphasizes that the main goal of Goliadkin is to highlight his own individuality and dissimilarity to others (Savinkov 129). However, here we see yet another contradiction in Goliadkin's self-determination. On the one hand, he still wants to be like everyone else: "Mr. Goliadkin … hastened to observe ... that he thought he was like every one else … he had entertainments like every one else … he had the means like every one else … he was, so far as he could see, as good as any one …" ("*gospodin Goliadkin … pospeshil*

[19] For instance, Goliadkin rents a separate apartment, has a servant, and savings of 750 rubles in banknotes. In 1840, the annual salary of a titular councilor was 75 silver rubles (*Svod zakonov* 165). In the period between 1811 and 1843, one ruble in silver equaled to 3.5 to 4 rubles in banknotes. With the exchange rate in the year 1840 of 3.5 rubles in banknotes per ruble in silver, the annual salary of the titular councilor was 262.5 rubles in banknotes (Storkh). In other words, Goliadkin's savings amounted to almost three times the annual salaries of a titular councilor.

zametit'… chto on, kak i vse … chto razvlecheniia u nego, kak i u vsekh … kak i vse, sredstva imeet … chto on, kak emu kazhetsia, ne khuzhe drugikh …" *The Double* 7; *Dvoinik* 115). And he especially wants to be like those in high society, which does not accept him, primarily because of his rank.

On the other hand, he wants to distance himself from the group of lower bureaucracy to which he de facto belongs through emphasizing his exclusivity with the help of external features like an expensive carriage, separate apartment, a servant, and so on. It is no coincidence that Goliadkin's worst nightmare comes true in a form of a dream, when all the streets of St. Petersburg become filled with his doubles, titular councilors: "a Mr. Goliadkin … precisely the same … there was nowhere to escape from these duplicates … a terrible multitude of duplicates … so that the whole town was obstructed at last by duplicate Goliadkins …" ("*no s kazhdym shagom ego… vyskakivalo… po takomu zhe tochno, sovershenno podobnomu… gospodinu Goliadkinu… nekuda bylo ubezhat' ot sovershenno podobnykh… narodilas' nakonets strashnaja bezdna sovershenno podobnykh… tak chto vsia stolitsa zaprudilas' nakonets sovershenno podobnymi." The Double*, 87; *Dvoinik* 392*).* Goliadkin is not only experiencing the collapse of his hopes to belong to the high society of hereditary nobility. He also gets stuck in the trap of the rank of titular councilor with concomitant loss of the right for self-assertion. He merges with the faceless mass of the lower bureaucracy, which has no right to individuality. This is the tragic result of Goliadkin's ambitious aspirations, to a certain extent reflecting the real place of titular councilors in the society of that time. The titular councilor is a fake, an impostor-of-a-councilor. And is Goliadkin Sr. real indeed given that in a society where ranks and titles matter most, his rank is in fact *titular* and thus fictitious?

Yakov Goliadkin is Dostoevsky's original reinterpretation of the titular councilor characters in Russian literature. If Makar Devushkin represents a continuation of the Gogol tradition, depicting titular councilors as inhabitants of the social bottom, then Yakov Goliadkin is Dostoevsky's own vision of the titular councilor, which highlights some new features of this rank. As Savinkov notes, the difference between Gogol's titular councilors and Dostoevsky's Goliadkin lies in the fact that if Gogol's titular councilors belong to the "axiological bottom of social life," Dostoevsky's Goliadkin is characterized by "belonging to the middle." Consequently, their goals are also different. Gogol's titular councilors are primarily concerned about not being perceived as "zeros" (Savinkov 129), while Goliadkin's goal is to assert his otherness from the mass of nondescript low-level bureaucrats. It is appropriate to recall the above statistical information on the composition of the bureaucracy in the Russian Empire, which provided accurate data on the number of bureaucrats for each class from the first to the eighth levels, inclusively. The rank of the titular councilor, despite formally belonging to the privileged group of councilors, merged with the lower stratum of bureaucracy (Zaionchkovskii 66). It joined the category of "faceless" bureaucrats of ranks 9-14 about which there is no precise information on quantity. Once again, this underlines the paradoxicality of the rank of titular councilor, and the aforementioned information about the nature of hereditary and personal nobility suggests that their nobility was also titular.

It seems that this dubious nature of nobility conferred by the rank of titular councilor, together with its threshold position in the Table of Ranks, became particularly attractive to Dostoevsky. Titular councilor characters are found in Dostoevsky from his earliest works (*Poor Folk, The Double*) to the later novels, *Crime and Punishment* and *The Brothers Karamazov*. If the titular councilor Makar Devushkin from *Poor Folk* became, to a certain extent, a continuation

of the Gogol tradition of depicting titular councilors, then the protagonist of *The Double* reveals a number of features characteristic of Dostoevsky's later work. According to Savinkov's apt remark, in Dostoevsky's work "the middle, though ambivalent, is always significant." Characters belonging to the middle are "either denied the right to change ... or, on the contrary, [the change] is imputed" (Savinkov 133). This seeming paradox is fully consistent with the nature of the rank of titular councilor. It was in the middle of the Table of Ranks, on the very watershed dividing the ranks that entailed hereditary nobility (from the first to the eighth) and the ranks that only granted personal nobility (from the ninth to the fourteenth). The need to change the social status and the simultaneous impossibility of its implementation became paradoxical traits of this rank.

Another distinguishing feature of titular councilor Goliadkin is related to his deep crisis of lack of self-determination. As noted by Bakhtin, characters finding themselves in a permanent crisis is a distinctive feature of Dostoevsky's work. With regard to the peculiarities of Dostoevsky's creative method, Bakhtin states that Dostoevsky "in fact always represents a person on *the threshold* of a final decision, at a moment of crisis, at an unfinalizable—and unpredeterminable—turning point of his soul" (Bakhtin 61). This paradoxical state of permanent instability and uncertainty is only amplified by the assignment of the character to the liminal rank of titular councilor. Being an "eternal" rank on the line between two social statuses, is the quintessence of permanent precarity. Moreover, according to Bakhtin, Dostoevsky specifically focuses on crises and turning points in the lives of his characters as if their actual lives are on the threshold (Bakhtin 73). The rank of the titular councilor was at such a turning point in the structure of the Table of Ranks. In fact, the impossibility of passing out of it due to the ever-increasing requirements for promotion deprived a significant portion of the personal nobles of the hopes of receiving hereditary nobility through service. This predetermined the role of the

threshold rank of titular councilor as a source of permanent crisis in the lives of many nineteenth century bureaucrats. It is this feature of this rank that seems to have become so appealing to Dostoevsky.

Speaking about the importance of the threshold as one of Dostoevsky's key methods, it should also be noted that it finds its expression both in internal and external manifestations. The characters' permanent internal crisis is intensified by their presence in external threshold spaces. As noted by Bakhtin, in Dostoevsky's works the action primarily occurs at threshold points such as the stairway, the threshold, the foyer, the landing, gates, squares, streets, foyers, taverns, and bridges. On the contrary, spaces distant from the threshold are rarely used by Dostoevsky for "the life that he portrays does not take place in that sort of space" (Bakhtin 169-170). It is no coincidence that the calm and stable interaction of the guests at the Olsufii Ivanovich's ball is in sharp contrast with Goliadkin's permanent crisis. State, collegiate, and other "important" councilors, who are the embodiment of calmness and contentment, are opposed to an unstable titular councilor who is constantly in a state of uncertainty and internal dialogue. Goliadkin is aware of his otherness with high society. That is why the place that befits him is the threshold. A character who is the embodiment of a permanent uncertainty, emphasized by his liminal rank of titular councilor, is not accepted by high society not only because of his formal lack of belonging to hereditary nobility, but because of his very nature. The crisis-prone nature of the character is emphasized by his internal crisis, by the externalization of this crisis outwardly in the form of a double, by his constant presence on the threshold spaces—on the threshold, at doors, on bridges, on embankments—but also by the very liminal rank of the titular councilor. In other words, if Goliadkin is the embodiment of comprehensive and eternal crisis, then the rank of titular councilor is the only rank that befits him.

As seen above, one of the important features of Dostoevsky's work is the exteriorization of the characters' inner world. Characters who are in unstable and liminal states are therefore depicted in threshold locations. The toponymy of *The Double* is especially indicative here. Yakov Goliadkin lives in Shestilavochnaya Street,[20] which got its name from a small row of shops (Grech 586) forming a mini-market of that time. Squares, markets, crossroads and even streets, according to Bakhtin, are classic threshold spaces in Dostoevsky's works (Bakhtin 169). Moreover, despite a certain level of financial security, Goliadkin lives on the outskirts, outside the boundaries of historical St. Petersburg, which was traditionally limited by the Fontanka River and its embankment (Vladimirovich and Erofeev 686). The threshold place—Shestilavochnaya Street— also historically bore the names Srednii Prospect (since 1746; *Sredniaia perspektiva*), and after 1793—Srednii Polkovoi Avenue (*Srednii polkovoi prospekt*), Srednii Avenue (*Srednii prospekt*), and Sredniaia Street (*Sredniaia ulitsa*) (390-391). In Russian *srednii* means *middle, medium, or average.* As noted above, the middle is a symbolic position for Dostoevsky, containing the paradox of the need for change and the impossibility of its implementation (Savinkov 133). The titular councilor occupying the middle position in the Table of Ranks, following the logic of Dostoevsky, simply must live in such a place. An eternal loser, the titular councilor is on the verge of receiving hereditary nobility, and with it a pass to high society, but is doomed to the perpetual impossibility of achieving that which is desired. That is why Goliadkin actually lives on the outskirts of St. Petersburg, outside the historic city fit for high society. As suggested above, the border between the two symbolic locations is the Fontanka River. Once again, toponymy becomes a reflection of the character's internal crisis. Goliadkin tries to penetrate high society (historical Petersburg), but he constantly finds himself on its outskirts.

[20] Literally meaning *the six-store street*; part of the modern Mayakovsky Street in St. Petersburg.

As a threshold character, Goliadkin holds a threshold rank and moves along the threshold between high society and second-class society (historical Petersburg and the suburbs). The Fontanka River serves as the frontier where the key threshold locations of the novella are located—the house of Olsufii Ivanovich at the Izmailovsky Bridge, the Semenovsky Bridge and the tavern next to it, frequented by Goliadkin. It is at the threshold location, the Fontanka embankment with twin bridges across it, where Goliadkin meets his own double, also a titular councilor. Knowing this feature of Dostoevsky's method, one can surmise the position of the key points of St. Petersburg in *The Double*. Since the "fake" titular councilor, rejected by high society, lives on the outskirts, the apartment of Olsufii Ivanovich, the "real" state councilor, should be located on the other side of the Fontanka, in the historical part of St. Petersburg.

Mature Dostoevsky: Resigned Titular Councilor

It is also noteworthy that in the middle of the nineteenth century, just about the time when Dostoevsky began to write *The Double*, the Table of Ranks, and with it the role of the rank of the titular councilor, underwent a serious revision. According to Ransel, "in response to pressure from the hereditary landed nobility to restrict entry to the class… he [Nicholas I] did not agree to end ennoblement through the Table of Ranks but only to stiffen requirements for attaining personal nobility and hereditary nobility" (Ransel 161). Although Ransel does not provide the exact dates for these amendments, this information can be found in Blosfeldt's compilation of laws on nobility. It was precisely in the decree of June 11, 1845 where Nicholas I reconsidered the requirements for becoming a nobleman with hereditary status. From then on, to become a hereditary noble, one had to acquire the fifth rank of state councilor (Blosfeldt 11), which undoubtedly resulted in ruined hopes for many low-rank bureaucrats of that time and especially titular councilors. Of course, there were officials like Bashmachkin or Devushkin,

who were seemingly satisfied with what they had and were not seeking promotion by any means possible. However, for many ambitious bureaucrats the decree of 1845 was undoubtedly a huge blow, since their financial and social status depended on the position they occupied in this bureaucratic hierarchy. We can see the reflection of this drama in the stories of Poprishchin (*Diary of a Madman*) and Goliadkin (*The Double*). These titular councilors want to attain a higher social status so badly that they literally become insane. Although these are certainly extreme cases, for many officials the aforementioned decree became a turning point. From that instant on, instead of promotion to collegiate assessors they had to achieve a much higher fifth rank, which changed the mission for a lot of them from at least theoretically feasible to almost impossible.

Both Ransel and Mironov also specify the revisions that affected titular councilors. According to Ransel, the most important changes had to do with raising qualification for individual nobility for life from rank 14 (collegiate registrar) to rank 9 (titular councilor) and that for hereditary nobility from rank 8 (collegiate assessor) to rank 5 (state councilor) (Ransel 161; Mironov 138). From then on, ranks 1-5 guaranteed hereditary nobility and ranks 6-9 granted only personal nobility, whereas ranks 10-14, instead of personal nobility, could grant only the status of personal honorary citizenship, not even nobility (Shepelev 141). This actually meant that instead of being a liminal space between personal and hereditary nobility, the rank 9 of a titular councilor became something different. It still was on the threshold, but from then on, the threshold was between personal nobility and non-nobility. Instead of a trap for many professionals, who needed just one promotion to become hereditary noblemen but could not do that either because of poor background, lack of education or merely age, the rank of titular councilor has become a desired position for those who did not have any nobility at all. Instead of

the highest position within the range of ranks that provided personal nobility (9-14), it became the lowest rank of the very same range (5-9).

Nevertheless, once one acquired the rank of titular councilor and became a personal nobleman, one would realize that the way to the hereditary status was extremely difficult if not impossible. The situation got even worse after December 9, 1856, when new amendments were adopted. From then on, the requirements for hereditary nobility were made tougher, meaning that to acquire this desired status one had to achieve rank 4 (active state councilor) instead of rank 5 (state councilor) (Blosfeldt 8; Shepelev 141). These two major changes of 1845 and 1856 undoubtedly demotivated many professionals who could no longer even dream of becoming hereditary nobles. As might be expected, if before the aforementioned changes in the Table, the titular councilor in Russian literature was an archetypal image of a failed bureaucrat, then after these changes the image of a titular councilor in literature began to evolve. It would be more accurate to say that two competing images have appeared—the old, "classic" Gogolian titular councilor-loser and the new disillusioned titular councilor, reflecting significant changes in society in the second half of the nineteenth century. It is striking that these changes actually coincided with the writing of Dostoevsky's *The Double*, where we also see a bifurcation of the archetype of the titular councilor. We cannot prove that Dostoevsky deliberately reflected these Table changes in *The Double*, however, amazingly, the thoughts and actions of the titular counterparts in the story are very different from one another. Indeed, Goliadkin Sr. is a classic titular councilor of the past, wishing to attain the rank of collegiate assessor (*Dvoinik* 160-172; 446), Goliadkin Jr. is not at all interested in this and appears content with his rank (Zakharov 40). If we extrapolate such paradoxical behavior of Goliadkin Jr. to the Table of Ranks after the changes on June 11, 1845, it turns out to not be devoid of logic. Specifically, as a result of the

Table reform, the rank of collegiate assessor lost its former appeal, as it no longer guaranteed hereditary nobility.

Despite the lack of direct evidence that Dostoevsky portrayed titular councilors before and after the reform of 1845 in the image of Goliadkin Sr. and Goliadkin Jr., it remains unquestionable that *The Double* was the last work of Dostoevsky in which we find the classic image of the titular councilor trying to obtain the rank of collegiate assessor. We find the first mention of Goliadkin in a letter sent by Dostoevsky to his brother in early September 1845. In it, speaking about his very insecure financial situation, the author says "I am now a real Goliadkin, whom, by the way, I will continue to write tomorrow" ("*Ia teper' nastoiashchii Goliadkin, kotorym ia, mezhdu prochim, zaimus' zavtra zhe*." *Pis'ma 1832-1859* 112). The above quote, first, confirms the hypothesis that Goliadkin's surname is associated with the Russian words "*gol'*" and "*goliada*," expressing the meaning of poverty and lack of possession, and secondly, it allows us to assume that the image of Goliadkin has already taken shape and "work on *The Double* has advanced significantly" (Bitiugova and Fridlender 427). In the next letter to his brother, dated October 8, 1845, Dostoevsky speaks of Goliadkin as a "terrible scoundrel," who "has now expressed himself to His Excellency and, perhaps (why not) is ready to resign" ("*strashnyi podlets … teper' uzh on ob'iasnilsia s e[go] prvoskhoditel'stvom i, pozhalui, (otchego zhe net) gotov podat' v otstavku*." *Pis'ma 1832-1859* 113). According to Bitiugova and Fridlender, this letter is evidence that by the beginning of October 1845 Dostoevsky "had already sketched the penultimate 12th chapter of *The Double*" (428), meaning the draft version of the novel was almost ready. Thus, it would not be an exaggeration to assume that the earliest stages of Dostoevsky's work on *The Double* took place in the summer or even spring of 1845. It is curious that in the draft of *The Double*, Dostoevsky openly makes it clear that Goliadkin must

eventually resign and end his career (*Pis'ma 1832-1859* 113). Consequently, on the one hand, in *The Double* we have the classic Gogolian type of titular councilor, who wants to attain the rank of collegiate assessor in order to gain access to high society, and on the other—a resigned titular councilor—a recurring image already characteristic of the late Dostoevsky. The coincidence is truly amazing. *The Double*, telling the story of two titular councilors-doubles, "senior" and "junior," becomes a landmark work, distinguishing the old and the new literary image of the titular councilor. Moreover, as shown above, Dostoevsky begins to write *The Double* about the time of the amendments to the Table of Ranks of June 1845, which radically changed the role and the meaning of the rank of titular councilor, once adopted.

It should be noted that if in his early works, according to a number of critics, "Dostoevsky does not leave the magic circle of Gogol's images and words" (Mochul'skii 41-42) and this imitation comes almost to the repetition of Gogol's entire phrases (Nabokov 174), in later Dostoevsky's works we find a different approach. Here we can speak not of imitation, but of a dialogue with Gogol. Dostoevsky offers his own answers to the questions posed by Gogol. This is also true of the image of the titular councilor. If Makar Devushkin seems to be Dostoevsky's rewriting of Akakii Bashmachkin, and Yakov Goliadkin Sr. still reminds us of Aksentii Poprishchin, Goliadkin Jr. is a completely different type of literary titular councilor. Moreover, the dissimilarity of the way of thinking and acting of the characters of Gogol and Dostoevsky only grows with time. The author's subsequent works still continued to include titular councilor characters, but their role and modus operandi has significantly changed.

This paradox is explained precisely by the changes to the Table of Ranks adopted in 1845. After all, the threshold for achieving hereditary nobility was raised from the eighth to the fifth rank of state councilor, and after 1856 – to the fourth, active state councilor, which was next

to impossible for an ordinary official to obtain (Shepelev). Under the circumstances, it no longer mattered whether the official was in the ninth rank of titular councilor, the eighth rank of collegiate assessor, or even in higher ranks. By the time *Notes from Underground* was written, all the ranks up to the state councilor had ceased to grant the right to hereditary nobility and only granted personal nobility (Blosfeldt 7-15). In other words, from the middle of 1845 bureaucrats, having reached the rank of titular councilor, and having become personal nobles, could forget about receiving hereditary nobility. Not surprisingly, in later works of Dostoevsky we meet a number of resigned officials, in one way or another associated with the rank of titular councilor. In the draft of The Double, titular councilor Goliadkin "is ready to resign" ("*gotov podat' v otstavku*" *Pis'ma 1832-1859* 113). The last "eternal" titular councilor of Dostoevsky, Semyon Marmeladov, quits and then returns to the service only in order to finally leave it. Even the late Fyodor Karamazov turns out to be a resigned titular councilor ("*otstavno[i] tituliarn[yi] sovetni[k]*" *Brat'ia Karamazovy* 93; *The Brothers Karamazov*, 660).

Titular councilor Marmeladov from *Crime and Punishment* is of particular interest as he becomes Dostoevsky's response to Gogol's image of the "eternal titular councilor," embodied in Akakii Bashmachkin. Bashmachkin is a short-spoken titular councilor, who enjoys his privacy and avoids conflicts, whereas Marmeladov is a different type of an "eternal titular councilor." He is an eternal source of family scandals; he seeks conflict and suffering for himself and his loved ones. Marmeladov is constantly in the threshold spaces (taverns, streets, stairs), and even his family lives in a passage room, another threshold space (Bakhtin 169-170). Marmeladov is terrified not of conflicts, but of comfort, and unlike reticent Bashmachkin he is extremely loquacious. Marmeladov even manages to transform his status of the "eternal titular councilor" in accordance with his own worldview. Being a promising official who received praise from his

superiors ("I remember your merits … without you things have gone badly for us"; "*pomnia vashi zalugi … bez vas u nas khudo poshlo*." *Crime and Punishment* 21; *Prestuplenie i nakazanie* 19), he was eventually fired for constant drunkenness. After some time, he returns to the service only to quit it again, in a symbolic gesture selling his uniform for a drink[21] ("my uniform is lying in a tavern near the Egyptian bridge"; "*vitsmundir v raspivochnoi u Egipetskogo mosta lezhit*" *Crime and Punishment* 22; *Prestuplenie i nakazanie* 20). Thus, Marmeladov is very different from the traditional "eternal titular councilor" found in Gogol's writings. He is the embodiment of eternal instability rather than eternal failure.

Moreover, as eternal source of crisis for himself and those around him, Marmeladov becomes the embodiment of the very idea of the threshold, for which the liminal rank of titular councilor becomes the most appropriate. Unlike eternal titular councilor Bashmachkin, who is loyal to the bureaucratic cause, remaining in the rank of titular councilor until his death, Marmeladov is both an "eternal titular councilor" and an "eternally-resigned titular councilor." Thus, Dostoevsky goes further in his interpretation of the threshold nature of the rank of a titular councilor. For Gogol, the threshold character of titular councilors was reduced to the impossibility of moving to a higher rank and in balancing on the point between the real and the fantastic. Dostoevsky brings the liminal character of the titular councilor to the extreme, offering the image of a resigned titular councilor. Can the resigned titular councilor even be considered an official? Constantly crossing the line between service and resigning, Marmeladov further complicates this issue, becoming the perfect embodiment of liminality. As Bakhtin notes, the hallmarks of the late Dostoevsky's artistic method are the threshold, dialogism, and uncertainty

[21] In a sense, this behavior reminds the case of the petty bureaucrat from Nizhny Novgorod province Arapovskii, who also seemed to enjoy drunkenness and suffering, and who also sold an article of clothing for a drink (Pisar'kova; Snezhnevskii 48).

(Bakhtin 61-63). The image of the "eternally resigned" titular councilor Marmeladov is typical of Dostoevsky's writing from this period.

Titular councilor Fyodor Pavlovich Karamazov is the last remarkable character in Dostoevsky's writing associated with this rank. We learn that this character is a titular councilor only at the very end of the novel during the trial for his murder. It is noteworthy that here too we are dealing with a resigned titular counselor ("the case of the murder of the retired titular councillor Fyodor Pavlovich Karamazov"; "*delo ob ubiistve otstavnogo tituliarnogo sovetnika Fedora Pavlovicha Karamazova*"; *The Brothers Karamazov* 660; *Brat'ia Karamazovy* 93). In his last novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoevsky puts an end to his dialogue with Gogol, offering the image of Fyodor Karamazov as antipode to the archetypal Akakii Akakievich Bashmachkin. Both Bashmachkin and Karamazov are noblemen and titular councilors. However, they are fundamentally different. Akakii Bashmachkin is meek and complacent; even his very name, Akakii Akakiievich, that is, "twice good-natured," confirms this. He is ascetic, not attached to either money or women, and is faithful to the service to his grave. On the other hand, Fyodor Karamazov is the complete opposite of the almost-saintly Bashmachkin. Karamazov is malicious and sometimes even spiteful, greedy, and dissolute. Bureaucratic service does not matter to him, and the status of a landowner and financial security allow him to indulge in numerous vices from crapulence to debauchery, thus becoming an emblem of nobility gone to rot. By making immoral Fyodor Karamazov a deceased resigned titular councilor, Dostoevsky draws a line that underscores the long history of titular councilors as literary characters reflecting the reality of bureaucratic Russia. On the one hand, after the changes in the Table of 1845, the rank of titular councilor lost its original dramatic value, having turned from a trap rank for "second-rate" nobles into a coveted rank, giving at least some kind of nobility to officials who

did not belong to the noble class. On the other hand, the prominence of bureaucracy both in Russian society and in literature began to wane in the second half of the nineteenth century. Nihilists, revolutionaries, and terrorists came to the fore. Explosions thundered and high dignitaries were murdered by radical revolutionaries. In such a historical context, describing issues dealing with the promotion of a petty clerk, could seem like the embodiment of philistinism and disconnection from reality.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, literary titular councilors travel a long distance from diligent and unambitious "eternal titular councilor[s]" (Gogol's "The Overcoat" and Dostoevsky's *Poor Folk*) to bureaucrats of "mad ambition" (Gogol's "Diary of a Madman" and Dostoevsky's *The Double;* Porter 46). Eventually, titular councilors become secondary characters (*Crime and Punishment* and *The Brothers Karamazov*), resigning and dying violent deaths as if the author himself has decided to put an end to them, clearing the way for new heroes. That is the dramatic path of titular councilors, bureaucrats and literary characters who became quintessential embodiments of Russian bureaucracy and the unluckiest underachievers. Nevertheless, as times change, so do literary heroes. The world of the late nineteenth century no longer needed titular councilors, and they met their demise with the abolition of all ranks by the new regime in 1917. Still, the image of the titular councilor lives on in literature, confirming Gogol's almost-prophetic words regarding their eternity.

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