



# Andrei Zvyagintsev’s Remediation of Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin’s Traditions. The Case of “Leviathan” and “The Golovlyov Family”

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## Abstract

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Andrei Zvyagintsev often emphasises the opinion that Russian culture originates from classic Russian literature, i.e. the works of Gogol, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Platonov etc. Treating the director’s approach (expressed in many interviews) as a kind of justification the proposed paper focuses on the interpretation of *Leviathan* from the comparative point of view, adapting the traditions of Saltykov-Shchedrin, in particular those deriving from his novel *The Golovlyov Family*. The methodological foundation of the presented case study constitute the concepts of cultural memory of Aleida Assmann, Renate Lachmann and Astrid Erll, which find their common ground in treating literature as a medium through which culture is continually rewritten, retranscribed and renegotiated. The interpretation of the selected satirical aspects of eating and drinking activities found both in Saltykov-Shchedrin’s and Zvyagintsev’s works leads to establishing a new intertextual relationship in the domain of cultural memory and to revealing areas of cultural communication between different media, based on structural and symbolic parallels revealed in the literary and cinematic text.

## Keywords

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Zvyagintsev; *Leviathan*; Saltykov-Shchedrin; *The Golovlyov Family*; Humour; Cultural Memory; Medium; Erll; Lachmann; Assmann



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## Восстановление Андреем Звягинцевым традиций Михаила Салтыкова-Щедрина. «Левиафан» и «Господа Головлёвы»

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### Аннотация

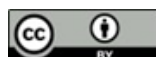
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Андрей Звягинцев часто подчеркивает идею, что русская культура берет свое начало от классической русской литературы, то есть произведений Гоголя, Достоевского, Толстого, Платонова и других. Рассматривая режиссерский подход (выраженный во многих интервью) как своего рода оправдание, предлагаемая статья делает акцент на интерпретации фильма *Левиафан* со сравнительной точки зрения, применяя традиции Салтыкова-Щедрина, в частности, следующие из его романа *Господа Головлёвы*. Методологической основой представленного тематического исследования являются концепции культурной памяти Алейды Ассманн, Ренате Лахманн и Астрид Эрлл, которые находят общий язык в трактовке литературы как средства, при помощи которого культура постоянно переписывается, заново транскрибируется и пересматривается. Интерпретация избранных сатирических аспектов питания и питья, присутствующих в работах как Салтыкова-Щедрина, так и Звягинцева, приводит к установлению новых интертекстуальных отношений в мире культурной памяти и выявлению областей культурной коммуникации между различными медиа, основанных на структурных и символических параллелях, выявленных в художественном и кинематографическом тексте.

### Ключевые слова

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Звягинцев; Левиафан; Салтыков-Щедрин; господа Головлёвы; юмор; культурная память; посредник; Эрлл; Лахманн; Ассманн



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## Introduction

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*Leviathan* (2014), the fourth feature film by Andrei Zvyagintsev, is probably one of the most often studied and reviewed works of this Russian director. Some critics perceive it as secondary in comparison with his previous films on account of rather unsurprising *emploi* of the easily recognizable actors, references to mythology and Christian values, which already appeared in *The Return* (2003) and *The Banishment* (2007), or showing the disturbing picture of everyday life in Russia (Condee, 2016, p. 566). Others describe *Leviathan* as a film-organism, a multi-layered text, skilfully joining the individual and the collective, creatively and originally updating some biblical plots (Ikonen, 2019, pp. 125-152).

The academic reflection, obviously more neutral and emotionally balanced than critical film reviews, also shows a wide spectrum of opinions and approaches (Khrenov, 2011, p. 70; McGregor & Lagerberg, 2018, pp. 504-515). Zvyagintsev himself is known to emphasise in the interviews that Thomas Hobbs's philosophical treaty written in the 17th century, the biblical figure of Job as well as the lawsuit of Marvin Heemeyer of Colorado (the USA) helped him to create a universal narrative about the state and its pathological mechanisms, which should be read as a parable understandable for people in all corners of the globe, because the film exposes the case of *the little man* (*маленький человек*) fighting with the paradoxes of bureaucracy (MacFarquharjan, 2015). It is important to point out that, concentrating on the sociological and political aspects of the movie, the scholars very seldom focus on the presence of satirical elements in *Leviathan*, the special type of dark humour which tends to be close to grotesque, used by the author to show both the depravity of the whole country and its separate citizens (Sokolova, 2015). Besides, it is worth noting that the interpretations do not cover the issue of irony, which is taken advantage of in order to reveal the double moral standards of the representatives of state and church institutions (Kondyuk, 2016).

## Research problem and its justification

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The noticeable lack of studies profiled in the way mentioned above and the category of cultural memory, understood by Astrid Erll and Renate Lachmann as intertextuality, i.e. the continuous return and discussion of 'migratory topics' in culture, motivates the author to propose a thesis that *Leviathan* could be perceived as the work updating and renegotiating the literary traditions of Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin (Hendrykowski, 2017, p. 142). This proposition might be justified by the repetitive references to the name of this classic writer in the director's commentaries about his art in general (Zvyagintsev, 2020). Besides, one can find numerous similarities in the plot and thematic content of Zvyagintsev's third feature film and the novel *The Golovlyov Family* (*Господа Головлёвы*, 1875–1880), as well as overlapping stylistic strategies such as,



*inter alia*, the use of hyperbole and humour. This paper, however, is aimed to go further than the surface level of following plot associations and present the analysis of subjectively selected scenes displaying the activities of drinking and eating in *Leviathan* and *The Golovlyov Family*, turning attention to the parallel interactions between observed situations, the use of humour and the spatial organization.

In this context it is good to recall that, similarly to Zvyagintsev's perceiving his film as the universal story of the state failure and not a political film, Saltykov-Shchedrin argued with his publishers that his books should not be treated as satire describing specific rulers, facts and phenomena in the history of Russia. In the observed behaviours of individuals he rather noted the repetition of some processes, habits or procedures, typical ways of thinking, which led him to creating projects revealing the patterns and characteristic features of the collective, inscribed in a certain geographical area and tradition for ages (Saltykov-Szczedrin, 1950, p. 239). The juxtaposition of the selected texts should lead to the exposition of intertextual and intermedia relationships allowing the recognition of Zvyagintsev's strategies of building up his work on the literary canon, which becomes the medium of creating a universal film message, having an impact on the development of cultural memory.

## Methodology

The presented analysis is based on the comparative studies of the literary and cinematic texts and takes advantage of several media and memory theories, which make the close reading a possible, justified and thought-provoking intellectual experiment. On a very general level one can say that it derives from the hermeneutic process of understanding the text, in particular from Martin Heidegger's idea of *hermeneutic circle*, envisioned by him as reading a whole text through a continuous interpretation of its separate parts (Burzyńska & Markowski, 2007, p. 177). This classic approach to the process of interpretation serves here as an elementary foundation into which modern theories are enrooted, among them such concepts as the notion of cultural memory of Aleida Assmann, Renate Lachmann and Astrid Erll. All three scholars treat literature as a kind of container of cultural memory, a medium through which "culture [...] continually rewrites and retranscribes itself [...]" (Lachmann, 2008, p. 307). The basis of Assmann's interdisciplinary concept is the belief that memory constitutes the fundamental condition for the development of culture and can be even identified with it (Assmann, 2011, p. 174). In this basic aspect of her assumption, Assmann follows Boris Uspensky and Yuri Lotman's theory of culture. The application of Assmann's findings allows building up the relationship between Russian literary tradition and contemporary cinematography with the use of the categories of *storage* and *functioning memory*. Lachmann, in turn, understands the memory of culture first of all as its intertextuality (Tabaszewska, 2013, pp. 53-72). She puts the emphasis on the dynamic function of each (literary) text, which should not be treated only



as the storage medium or the representation of memories, but rather as a preserving and modifying phenomenon which is able to simultaneously (re)create and interpret the existing cultural content. This intertextual capacity of literature is called by Lachmann its *model of participation* and could be connected to the function of the *cue* as defined by Erll (Lachmann, 2008, pp. 301-308; Tabaszewska, 2013, pp. 53-72). She linked it with the ability of the literary text of bringing about associations, which could be treated in a way as the parallel of Pierre Nora's concept of *lieux de mémoire*, generating live memories (Nora, 2011, p. 25). In Erll's vision, the memory of literature is understood in two ways. Firstly, similarly to Lachmann, Kristeva and Bakhtin, as its intertextuality meaning the memory about itself, and secondly, as the literary canon existing due to the phenomenon of the social, institutional and collective memory (Erll, 2011, pp. 144-160).

Over the last decade, the conviction has grown that culture is intrinsically related to memory. Jurij Lotman and Boris Uspenskij have defined culture as "the memory of a society that is not genetically transmitted" but, we may add, by external symbols (Lotman & Uspenskij, 1984, p. 3). Through culture, humans create a temporal framework that transcends the individual life span relating past, present, and future. Cultures create a contract between the living, the dead, and the not yet living. In recalling, iterating, reading, commenting, criticizing, discussing what was deposited in the remote or recent past, humans participate in extended horizons of meaning-production. They do not have to start anew in every generation because they are standing on the shoulders of giants whose knowledge they can reuse and reinterpret. As the Internet creates a framework for communication across wide distances in space, cultural memory creates a framework for communication across the abyss of time (Assmann, 2008, p. 97).

According to Magdalena Saryusz-Wolska, literature appears to be a particularly good and flexible sample material in the field of theoretical memory and media studies because the literature-focused concepts can be easily adapted as metatheories allowing the extension of the observations to the other media and areas of culture, especially to visual arts, film or photography (2009, p. 184). This suggestion could be also supported by the studies of Marek Hendrykowski, who treats migratory themes as the constituents of the memory of cinema. In his approach he is against making a special list of recurring problems in cinematography, and his commentaries seem to be associated with the theories deriving from Lotman-Uspensky propositions, treating culture as a continuous and open process of negotiation, assimilation and mediation (2017, p. 143).

### **Food consumption in *The Golovlyov Family***

The novel *The Golovlyov Family*, which serves as the key for "reopening" Zvyagintsev's text, obviously shocks the recipient with the high number of rituals of consumption, none of which brings about good mood or peaceful atmosphere, necessary to solve family problems. On the contrary, sitting at the table, instead of developing communication, triggers mutual irritation and frustration, constitutes





the symbol of family degradation, treated both as a whole unit and its individual members. Besides, the quality of the food served there is very bad, the sausages are dry, hard as stones, and salty as salt itself. Eating a dead cat is mentioned in a conversation about tasting experiences in the past, the meal being the result of a bet with an Englishman.

Stepan Vladimiryich took a drink, and then attacked the sausage, which happened to be as salty as salt itself and as hard as stone, so that he had to use the point of his knife to pierce it.

— Some whitefish would taste good now, — he remarked.

— Excuse me, sir, I clean forgot about the whitefish. All morning I kept saying to my wife: 'Be sure to remind me of the whitefish.' I am very sorry.

— Oh, it doesn't matter. The sausage is good enough for me. When we were on the campaign, we ate worse things. Father used to tell that two Englishmen made a bet. One of them was to eat a dead cat, and he ate it.

— You don't say!

— He did. And he was as sick as a dog afterwards. He cured himself with rum. He guzzled two bottles as fast as he could, and that set him right at once. Another Englishman made a bet that he would live a whole year on nothing but sugar. (Saltykov-Shchedrin, 1875-1880)<sup>1</sup>.

Old food is a visible sign of mental stagnation, storing is not a proof of good planning and resourcefulness but rather the evidence of miserliness and the lack of imagination. Pickled products are rotten, which means that they do not constitute a source of good healthy bacteria enriching the diet but bring about the odour of destruction and death. In this case it is obviously not the symbolic death as Olga Freudenberg put it in her book *Poetics of Plot and Genre* (*Поэтика сюжета и жанра*) (1997, pp. 50-111), leading to the renewal of life energy and metaphorical resurrection, but yet another stage in the cycle of the development of the family virus of mutual destruction.

The spiritual degradation of Golovlevo's members visualised in the habit of eating bad food can be also linked to the metaphor of a tomb or a grave in Saltykov-Shchedrin's novel, which helps to find its equivalent in the symbol of the catafalque in Zvyagintsev's film. It is worth mentioning that in both works it is easy to note the presence of well-stocked cellars or pantries, however it is very hard to identify

1 Выпивши, Степан Влади́мирыч принимается за колбасу, которая оказывается твердою, как камень, соленою, как сама соль, и облеченную в такой прочный пузырь, что нужно прибегнуть к острому концу ножа, чтобы проткнуть его.

— Белорыбицы бы теперь хорошо, — говорит он.

— Уж извините, сударь, совсем из памяти вон. Все утро помнил, даже жене говорил: беспрерывно напомни об белорыбице — и вот, словно грех случился!

— Ничего, и колбасы поедим. Походом шли — не то едали. Вот папенька рассказывал: англичанин с англичанином об заклад побился, что дохлую кошку съест — и съел!

— Тсс... съел?

— Съел. Только тошнило его после! Ромом вылечился. Две бутылки залпом выпил — как рукой сняло. А то еще один англичанин об заклад бился, что целый год одним сахаром питаться будет (Saltykov-Shchedrin, 1875-1880).



the occasions when taking advantage of the resources brings satisfaction, joy and happiness of the household members. Saltykov-Shchedrin's text astounds the reader with the images of the house which resembles a prison or a stronghold ruled by mysterious silence, in which a careful listener can differentiate a lot of sounds such as banging, barking, wind blowing, someone's brushing the face, shadows' walking voicelessly.

A mysterious quiet reigned all around, a quiet in which the delicate ear could distinguish a multitude of sounds. Now something crackled somewhere, now a whining was audible, now it seemed as if somebody were walking through the corridor, now a puff of wind swept through the room and even touched her face. The ikon lamp burned in front of an image, and the light gave the objects in the room a kind of elusiveness, as if they were not actual things, but only the contours of things. Another bit of light strayed from the open door of the adjacent room, where four or five ikon lamps were burning before the image case. A mouse squeaked behind the wall paper. "Sh-sh-sh, you nasty thing," said Arina Petrovna, and all was silent again. And shadows again, whisperings again coming from no one knew where (Saltykov-Shchedrin, 1875-1880)<sup>1</sup>.

When Stepan Vladimirovich, the eldest son, returns to Golovlevo, he is given his old father's bathrobe and underclothes. After he puts these garments on, the door to "the tomb" is opened, he is let in and the manor is closed again. Stillness both outside and inside the house brings associations with death and terror, the world is seen as a coffin, which serves only as a pretext for Porfirii's chatter. As a consequence, one can say that there is a huge contrast between the visible and the audible in the foreground, which means stillness and silence, and the activities in the background, which means the activities of Porfirii's mind, continuously intriguing against his relatives. As a result one could metaphorically say that the protagonist's mind is the sphere of intensive and permanent activity of putrefactive bacteria. In a way his mind could gain the status of a splitting field because it is a place where the process of gradual decomposition of family remnants is initiated, similarly to a coffin. Consequently, the interpretation profiled in this way enables reading the spiritual numbness, characterising the Golovlevo household members, using an organic key of motivation, which means that it turns attention to the multi-layer connection between life and death functioning in the novel, emphasizing the strategy of exaggeration of the missing element of the Rabelaisian provenance.

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1 Загадочная тишина царит вокруг — тишина, в которой настороженное ухо умеет отличить целую массу звуков. То хлопнуло где-то, то раздался вдруг вой, то словно кто-то прошел по коридору, то пролетело по комнате какое-то дуновение и даже по лицу задело. Лампадка горит перед образом и светом своим сообщает предметам какой-то обманчивый характер, точно это не предметы, а только очертания предметов. Рядом с этим сомнительным светом является другой, выходящий из растворенной двери соседней комнаты, где перед киотом зажжено четыре или пять лампад. Этот свет желтым четырехугольником лег на полу, словно врезался в мрак спальни, не сливаясь с ним. Всюду тени, колеблющиеся, беззвучно движущиеся. Вот мышь заскреблась за обоями; «шт, паскудная!» — крикнет на нее Арина Петровна, и опять все смолкнет. Опять тени, опять неизвестно откуда берущийся шепот (Saltykov-Shchedrin, 1875-1880).



## Behaviour excess in *Leviathan* versus body supression in *The Golovlyov Family*

The commentaries mentioned above allow noting a much wider amplitude of sounds in the film *Leviathan*, in which the situations of drinking alcohol can be associated, first of all, with the raised voice of the participating parties. In spite of this difference Zvyagintsev also takes advantage of the potential of the hyperbole, building up the pictures of pathological behaviour on the foundation of the organic materiality of the human body. It is interesting to turn attention to the scene which seems to be compatible with the metaphoric images in the text of Saltykov-Shchedrin discussed above. I mean here the arrival of the mayor at the Nicolay's property, which takes place after the final verdict is announced in court and the civil servant friendly meets the Orthodox clergyman. The illegal trespassing of the mayor triggers the conversation, which is based on mutual contempt expressed with the use of vulgar vocabulary. However, the language – as it is in Rabelais's *The Life of Gargantua and of Pantagruel* – is not a tool helping to create the distance to the world through shocking laughter but, rather, on the contrary, it is the sign of the breakdown of communication with the world and the Other, the destructive misunderstanding of the relationship between the subject and the object deriving from the obduracy and the desire to retaliate against each other. If we recall the mayor's infamous phrase, which is shouted out then: "You are all insects. [...] You don't want to be nice, so you drown in shit" (Zvyagintsev & Negin, 2020, p. 224) – it is easy to associate it with the symbolic sphere of dirt, the sphere of contact with the work of the devil<sup>1</sup>. Kolya is humiliated and degraded to the level of an insect, a worm drowning in the extremities, which is obviously the proof of going way too far and breaking the rules of conduct by the civil servant. The use of language which deprives the citizen of the sense of dignity could be related to Kolya's earlier remark directed towards Vadim Sheleviat: "Take it. Will it fit in your hearse?" (Zvyagintsev & Negin, 2020, p. 223), which in turn can be read as the strategy of reification, treating the mayor as an object, "an alive corpse", "a coffin sitting on a catafalque", "a body being transported"<sup>2</sup>.

The negative image of the body – as it is only limited to the process of its material destruction and decomposition – makes the recipient aware of the inability of coming to terms with this sphere by the characters of *Leviathan*, which is noticeable in the scenes exposing everyday drunkenness and moral debauchery prevailing in the life of almost everybody. Adulteries and alcoholism do not help to soothe the pain of existence and build up the sense of community as it sometimes occurs in contemporary French films, such as *Sils Maria* (2014) or *Doubles Vies* (2019) by Olivier Assayas, which emphasise the intimate atmosphere, the interactions of sensibility and joy associated with improper behaviour. In the selected Russian film the litres of pouring vodka are a kind of excess which could be considered

1 «Вы все насекомые. [...] Вот не хотите вы по-хорошему, поэтому и тоните в говне»

2 «Забирай. Помещится в катафалк твой?»





as the equivalent of the unsatisfied needs presented in *The Golovlyov Family*. The novel exposes the habits of suppressing emotions and feelings under the governance of Porfirii, which is encoded in the metaphorical gesture of giving 'the stone' (i.e. blessings and good words) instead of 'bread' (i.e. money or other necessary goods). At this point it is good to note the consequences of consumption of alcohol in *Leviathan*, which are usually arguments and domestic violence, emphasised by the exposures of the images of the grotesque body. In this case it is the body described by exaggeration, a swollen face and serious problems with keeping balance, which often evokes smiles or even laughter of the recipients of the film.

### **The activity of the open mouth**

Consequently, one can certainly say that opening of the mouth in Zvyagintsev's film first of all brings to mind associations with the activity of drinking, which accompanies discussions about unsolvable problems, some of them led in solitude. It is worth contrasting with the novel of the Russian classic, in which the movement of lips is almost automatically connected with the garrulousness of Porfirii related to the activity of sitting at the table. Russian scholars – for example Anastasya Pavlova in her article "Pires and feasts in Saltykov-Shchedrin's novel *The Gentlemen Golovlevs*" (Пир и застолье в романе М. Е. Салтыкова-Щедрина «Господа Головлевы») – have already established the link between the gesture of opening the mouth of the little Judas, starting the nonsense talking, and the symbolic entrance into the world of emptiness, a kind of a pit or hole, which may absorb and destroy a human being (Pavlova, 2009, pp. 5-9). In this context one could say that the word is completely devoid of its sacral function, of its potential of hidden meanings and dimensions, it becomes reduced to the level of "the food" for thought for those who are dying – physically, mentally or spiritually. As a result a reader of the book deals with the images of the deformed body, whose elementary functions and needs are neglected. "The grotesque face is actually reduced to the gaping mouth; the other features are only a frame encasing this wide-open bodily abyss" (Bakhtin, 1990, p. 351)<sup>1</sup>. The symbolism of eating is closely connected with death, "being eaten", being absorbed by nothingness, which in turn helps to note its relationship with the hidden sphere of sexual life of the Golovlevo members, the secret sphere of the consumption of the body, which is metaphorically "moved to the underground". The ways of Porfirii's finding satisfaction in this domain are yet another proof of his having double standards. His high-flown talking resembling moralistic preaching is the method of distracting attention from his inappropriate staring at women or the fact of having an illegitimate child, adding next elements to the picture of his grotesque body.

The associations with emptiness accompanying the reading of Saltykov-Shchedrin's novel help to note a very similar use of irony related to the activity of

1 «Гротескное лицо сводится, в сущности, к разинутому рту, – всё остальное только обрамление для этого рта, для этой зияющей и поглощающей телесной бездны».



talking in the film sequence taking place in court. The fast pace of the impassive reading of the verdict connected with the emotionless facial expression of the civil servants make the whole scene grotesque or even absurd, if we take into account the everyday meaning of this notion. It could be said that the visual continuation of this kind of stylistics is the presentation of a new flat to Lilya by Angela. The only possible audience's reaction in this situation is probably emotional shock, which also accompanies the protagonist. Interestingly, the director in this sequence turns attention also to the issue of the lack of food. During Lilya's visit Angela practically neglects his son's remark that he is hungry, telling him to go running outside. The only meal we have the opportunity of watching in the household of the policeman's wife is Pasha's noisy consumption of the soup, after Lilya's death, which can be interpreted as the sign of the lack of family rituals in their lives. In the screenplay of *Leviathan* there is a conversation which did not find its way into the final version of the film, giving an additional insight into the quality of their marital relationship:

Pasha shrugs his shoulders, continuing to sip borsch.

**Angela.** Yes, he can, he can. I'm telling you. [...]

Pasha, putting a piece of bread into his mouth, reaches after another.

**Angela.** Stop eating!

She takes the plate and moves it to the other edge of the table

(Zvyagintsev & Negin, 2020, p. 282)<sup>1</sup>.

Paying attention to the sounds associated with the act of eating a bowl of soup allows noting that they belong to the sphere of activities, which can be characterised in *Leviathan* as exaggerated or inflated, next to the numerous situations of driving under influence or telling jokes, which sometimes are considered as vulgar or representing a toilet humour. I mean here the sequence of scenes showing the return from Stepanych's birthday picnic or Kolya and Roma's commentaries accompanying Dima's long stay in the lavatory. This latter scene is the source of the spontaneous laughter, very rare in the film, and at the same time serves as the anticipation of the dramatic turn of events in the family. Discussing extremities in the dialogue turns out to initiate a chain reaction bringing about more and more tragic consequences, almost automatically changing laughter into tears.

As it was said above the ritual of sitting at the table in the novel reveals the atmosphere of decay, both outside and inside the Golovlevo manor. The symbol of this state is the prevailing condition of stuffiness, too high temperature and the lack of fresh air, which can be considered as the synonyms of narrow-minded-

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1 Паша пожимает плечами, продолжая хлебать борщ.

**Ангела.** Да, может, может, я тебе говорю. [...]

Паша, отправив в рот кусок хлеба тянет руку за другим.

**Ангела.** Хватить жрать!

Она хватает тарелку, переставляет её на другой край стола (Zvyagintsev & Negin, 2020, p. 282).



ness and nonsense talking. In *Leviathan* a similar function can be attributed to alcohol which changes the image of the human body, in particular the physical appearance of the mayor Vadim Sheleviat, making him look grotesquely, bringing to mind the associations with the monstrous body of Rabelais's protagonists. It is important to note that Zvyagintsev deliberately uses the camera angles shortening the height of this civil servant, simultaneously emphasising his puffy face and stout figure. Roman Madyanov is known to be an actor of average height, all the scenes in the film, however, seem to expose some kind of exaggeration related to him, be it of a physical or emotional nature, for example short-tempereness or other negative emotions exposed in the field of gesticulation (throwing objects at the wall in his office or having a sudden idea of visiting Kolya's property). It could be said that the image of the authority created in this way justifies the thesis of its likeness to the title beast of *Leviathan*, simultaneously bringing to mind associations with other monsters, metaphors and allegories, which can be easily found in the long history of political theories and literary texts (Waligórska-Olejnyczak, 2016, pp. 253-262).

## Conclusions

The analysis of the film *Leviathan* presented above showed a number of analogies with the novel *The Goloviyov Family*, in particular in the approach to the function of the body and space organization. The similarities noted in those areas concerned, first of all, the use of hyperbole in the scenes related to all kinds of excess behaviour and gesticulation, which were observed in the activities of eating and drinking. The discussion of aesthetic solutions in the selected parts of both texts helped to emphasise also a significant role of humour, which tends to be close to the Rabelaisian grotesque. In a broader perspective the results of the studies show that *Leviathan* can be perceived as a kind of archive preserving the literary traditions of Saltykov-Shchedrin, which are recognizable for a culturally aware, engaged recipient of the text. Taking advantage of Aleida Assmann's theory one could say that the film serves as a storage medium to retain those traditions, even though they are obviously reinterpreted and rewritten by the director. These interactions are not related to the fact of the author's allusions to the source of inspirations as all texts of culture take their origin in the tradition, they are built on "the shoulders of giants whose knowledge they can reuse and reinterpret" (Assmann, 2008, p. 97). Dissemination of the knowledge, commentaries and critical studies, especially with the use of the Internet, creates these texts anew and sets recently developed objectives for the discussion. Additionally, the application of the methodologies of comparative studies situates the work of art in contrast with the other ones, motivating the broader context for the interpretation. Renate Lachmann's and Astrid Erll's findings focused on the relationship between cultural memory and intertextuality allow us also to state that *Leviathan* serves here as a memory medium enabling a better understanding of literature; it plays



a dynamic role of a model which represents, recreates and updates the cultural tradition due to its potential of linking it with the experience of new generations. Last but not least, both texts seem to reveal similar ethical values, which independently of the used media are being included in the layers of the development of cultural memory.

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