

Keys to the Bureau: Selected Stories by Gogol, Melville, and Dostoevsky (Wiseblood Classics) (Volume 3)



FROM THE INTRODUCTION: I learned that the world of men as it exists today is a bureaucracy. This is an obvious truth, of course, though it is also one the ignorance of which causes great suffering. So notes the narrator of David Foster Wallace's posthumously published, unfinished novel *The Pale King*. Inextricably bound to the mundane details that are part and parcel of life as an IRS employee, the narrator goes on to contend that the underlying bureaucratic key is the ability to deal with boredom. To function effectively in an environment that precludes everything vital and human. To breathe, so to speak, without air. The key is not, the narrator muses, interpersonal skills, or political cunning, not loyalty, not vision, not any of the qualities that the bureaucratic world calls virtues, and tests for. The key, finally, is the ability to discover the other side of the rote, the picayune, the meaningless, the repetitive, the pointlessly complex. The three stories in this collection—Gogol's *The Mantle*, Melville's *Bartleby, the Scrivener*, and Dostoevsky's *An Unpleasant Predicament*—dramatize and investigate the problems of our bureaucratized world with near-mystical, farcical realism (Gogol), philosophical-comical, doubt/faith-driven fervor (Melville), and the carnivalesque, perceptive powers of satire (Dostoevsky). Hundreds of years old, they still hold, for their subject matter is all-too-familiar to us, as David Foster Wallace's *Pale King* (2011) proves. This Wiseblood Classics release includes a short introduction by Joshua Hren, Ph.D. For more information on Wiseblood Books, visit www.wisebloodbooks.com.

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