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THE CITY THROUGH A GLASS, DARKLY: USE OF THE GOTHIC IN EARLY RUSSIAN REALISM

The gothic movement swept literate Russia following the 1792 publication of Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron* in Russian translation. Before this, Russians read gothic novels imported from abroad, but the first translations published in the country made the genre more readily accessible. While the number of canonically gothic works by Russian writers remained small, foreign gothic novels—mainly in French and Russian translation—were soon in great demand.¹ The popularity of the genre continued in Russia, peaking in the 1820s and 1830s, when Russian authors produced a flurry of works inspired by British gothic novels and German fantastic tales.² In the 1840s, however, European writers such as Charles Dickens and Honoré de Balzac influenced a general shift away from the Romantic-fantastic in favour of depictions of life more grounded in reality. Additionally, in Russia, spearheaded by the critic Vissarion Belinskii, the movement initially carried with it a moral focus on social improvement.³ Literary works of this period partly represent the efforts of writers to work out new literary approaches for representing life with verisimilitude, to 'pass the facts of reality through one's imagination and endow them with new life', as Belinskii described.⁴ To achieve this

¹ Vadim Vatsuro has called this period in Russian literary history the 'gothic wave' in his article 'Iz istorii goticheskogo romana v Rossii (A. A. Bestuzhev-Marlinskii)', *Russian Literature*, 38 (1995), 207–26 (p. 209). To take one example, in 1802 seven translations of Ann Radcliffe's novels were published in Russia. At the time, Radcliffe had written only five novels! For a good overview of gothic publication history in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Russia see Alessandra Tosi, 'At the Origins of the Russian Gothic Novel: Nikolai Gnedich's *Don Corrado de Gerra* (1803)', in *The Gothic-Fantastic in Nineteenth-Century Russian Literature*, ed. by Neil Cornwell (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), pp. 59–82 (pp. 62–63). For an overview of the influx of Western gothic fiction in the Russian literary imagination see Vadim Vatsuro, *Goticheskii roman v Rossii* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2002).

² For more information about the Russian gothic generally, see Neil Cornwell, 'Russian Gothic: An Introduction', in *The Gothic-Fantastic in Nineteenth-Century Russian Literature*, ed. by Cornwell, pp. 3–23; Alessandra Tosi, *Waiting for Pushkin: Russian Fiction in the Reign of Alexander I (1801–1825)* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), pp. 320–46; and Mark S. Simpson, *The Russian Gothic Novel and its British Antecedents* (Bloomington: Slavica, 1986).

³ Julie Buckler notes that nineteenth-century Petersburg writers maintain 'a social-moral focus on city slums, a fact proudly cited by cultural chroniclers, who consider this pervasive theme a centerpiece of the literary tradition. Other vital aspects of urban life, most notably industry, however, are consigned to the literary margins.' Her discussion goes beyond the 1840s, to Vsevolod Krestovskii's novel *Petersburg Slums* (1864–67), but she addresses social concerns of 1840s writers and critics. See Julie Buckler, *Mapping St. Petersburg: Literary Text and Cityshape* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 159; for more about literary depictions of Petersburg slums see Buckler, pp. 158–59, 170–79, 209. As writers and critics of the 1840s focused on reforming these injustices, the social problems addressed by texts analysed in this article all relate to urban poverty: overcrowding, squalor, domestic violence, alcoholism, despair, illness, inequality, and other such social ills.

⁴ Vissarion Belinskii, 'A View of Russian Literature in 1847', in *Selected Philosophical Works*, trans. anon. (Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1948), pp. 413–511 (p. 422).

aim, however, writers of the new literature turned to earlier literary models, drawing on genres such as the physiological sketch and the gothic novel. Focusing on 1840s depictions of St Petersburg in Nikolai Nekrasov's edited volume *The Physiology of Petersburg* (1845) and Fedor Dostoevskii's early prose (1845–49), this article will look at how early Russian realists used and repurposed these earlier styles, especially the gothic, to develop new modes of urban representation.

The physiological sketch's prevalence as a useful canvas for 1840s realist depictions is not surprising, but the gothic's role seems peculiar as its basic conventions appear diametrically opposed to realist aims. The physiological sketch appealed to realists as an attempt to reproduce everyday life experiences in prose, describing what its narrator sees as precisely as possible. This prose mirrored, to some extent, new advances in visual representation technology developed during this period, such as photography. Physiological sketches held great promise for the new realist aesthetic, but lacked a strong narrative force, relying more on exposition than plot. On the other hand, gothic writing is typically heavily plotted and includes manifold narrative twists and turns. The gothic mode, described as 'a decadent late-eighteenth-century taste for things gloomy, macabre, and medieval',⁵ dwells on sensationalism, evoking not only the murky, sinister locales of Ann Radcliffe's or Matthew Lewis's novels, but also their resident ghosts or unsolved murders. Looking beyond the gothic's hauntings and mysteries, however, several key characteristics emerge as definitive for the genre: (1) the text must focus on the solution of a mystery: the reader is propelled to continue reading out of curiosity, anticipating horrors or terrors that are hinted at but constantly deferred; (2) the text must refer to some kind of transgression or broken taboo, the exploration of the repercussions of which informs the work as a whole; and, finally, (3) the text is preoccupied with the depiction and/or evocation of emotions such as fear, anxiety, and revulsion, and these psychologies both inform the text and attempt to evoke a strong emotional reaction from the reader.⁶

The gothic's associations and themes, as well as its focus on narrative force, proved ideal for communicating the perceived tragedy and horror of the social problems associated with urban poverty to the early realists' readers. Typically linked to a landscape characterized by crumbling castles, gloomy forests, wildernesses, and oppressive mountains, the gothic takes its descriptive cues

⁵ Terry Castle, 'Introduction', in Ann Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. vii–xxvi (p. vii).

⁶ This definition is my own, building upon the work of David Punter, Fred Botting, and Muireann Maguire, as well as from reading copious numbers of gothic novels. For its underpinnings see David Punter, *The Literature of Terror: The Modern Gothic* (New York and London: Longman, 1996), p. 146; Fred Botting, *Gothic* (New York and London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 2–3; and, especially, Muireann Maguire, *Stalin's Ghosts: Gothic Themes in Early Soviet Literature* (London: Peter Lang, 2012), pp. 10–14.

from the anxieties and fears of protagonists. While, in gothic novels, ‘the city, a gloomy forest or dark labyrinth [. . .] became a site of nocturnal corruption and violence, a locus of real horror’,⁷ these locales were also used in early realist fiction as reflectors of the corruption, violence, and squalor already present in society, particularly in the Petersburg slums.⁸ The Russian reader of the 1840s, already attuned to cues from the gothic fiction read popularly for nearly fifty years, was well able to recognize gothic generic markers planted in non-gothic texts.⁹

While sometimes used parodically, or to give texts an emotionalized, humorous tone, these markers simultaneously evoked the trappings of the genre—secrets, violence, and transgressions—and suggested an underlying sense of mystery. In addition, the feelings of panic, fear, dread, and horror the gothic aroused were useful in lending a specifically charged atmosphere to settings most likely unfamiliar to the reader, such as dark alleys or decaying tenement buildings. In establishing a pervading sense of anxiety and unease in their texts through gothic markers and themes, writers were able to direct readers to a better understanding of the injustices and issues they sought to highlight. As authors took on the mammoth project of depicting St Petersburg life, they turned to the gothic to help convey a sense of the city’s unique atmosphere, ultimately embedding the gothic within the complex of tropes characteristic of what scholars call the Petersburg Text.¹⁰

Petersburg is a city particularly suited to the gothic mode. Even Belinskii,

⁷ Botting, p. 11.

⁸ Rosemary Jackson’s study *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (New York and London: Routledge, 1998) gives a general survey of non-realist strands in realist fiction, including a section on Dostoevskii’s incorporation of the fantastic, pp. 133–37. Similarly, Peter K. Garrett’s *Gothic Reflections: Narrative Force in Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003) offers a framework for interpreting the gothic mode’s appearance in later works. Ilya Vinitsky’s book *Ghostly Paradoxes: Modern Spiritualism and Russian Culture in the Age of Realism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009) also serves as a model for examining the unexpected presence of spiritualism in realist works, although the gothic is not his main focus. These works bring historical cultural context to bear on understanding realism in new ways.

⁹ This practice also emerges in texts representing rural space from this period. Several recent studies have examined gothic themes in Ivan Turgenev’s *Sketches from a Hunter’s Album* (1852). Simpson briefly examines the sketch ‘Bezhin Meadow’, pp. 85–88. Jane Costlow treats the sketch ‘Loner’ in her article ‘Who Holds the Axe? Violence and Peasants in Nineteenth-Century Depictions of the Forest’, *Slavic Review*, 68 (2009), 10–30. My own paper, ‘The Fear Factor: Exploiting the Gothic in Turgenev’s Early Sketches’, in *At the Nexus of Fear, Horror, and Terror: Contemporary Readings*, ed. by Joseph H. Campos II and Catalin Ghia (Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press, forthcoming), similarly examines this phenomenon in Turgenev’s work.

¹⁰ Roughly defined, the Petersburg Text represents a unifying metanarrative that is constructed out of specific physical and metaphysical elements. Those who incorporate St Petersburg into their works, literary and otherwise, each contribute to the overall mythopoiesis of the city’s image and, ultimately, to a better understanding—conscious or subconscious—of the Petersburg Text as such. The classic Petersburg Text critical source is Vladimir Toporov, in ‘Peterburg i “Peterburgskii tekst russkoi literatury” (Vvedenie v temu)’ and ‘Peterburgskie teksty i Peterburgskie mify (Zametki iz serii)’, both in Vladimir Toporov, *Mif. Ritual. Simvol. Obraz: issledovaniia v*

who generally champions St Petersburg in his writing, observes in the 1845 essay 'Petersburg and Moscow' that:

Petersburg was built in an instant. Things that should have taken a year were done in a month. The will of one individual triumphed over nature itself. It seemed as though fate itself, despite all right and reason, wanted to hurl the capital of the Russian Empire into this wretched region—a place where the sky is greenish white; where nature and the climate are hostile to humankind; where the plants of the north are thick grass, crawling heather, dry moss, gray tussocks, and swampy verdure; where sickly birch trees add to the pervasive monotony of prickly pines and sorrow spruce; and where the fumes from the swamp and the dampness of the air penetrate stone homes and human bones. Petersburg does not have spring or summer or winter; rather, it is host to a rotten and rainy fall which rages through the city all year long and which parodies first spring, then summer, and then winter.¹¹

Belinskii's St Petersburg description shows just how closely the city's basic features correspond to gothic landscape tropes. Correlations with the gothic exist between the natural features of the environment, such as swamps, poor weather, and gloomy light. However, the city's architecture also evokes the genre; an imported neoclassical fantasy set among artificial waterways, Petersburg houses the opulently wealthy, but is surrounded by dimly lit tenements, where residents live in squalor and destitution. Even the city's long-standing association in literature with empire—from Peter the Great's initial autocratic command to build it, to the bureaucratic Table of Ranks that defines its social interaction—evokes the gothic's preoccupation with authority and its themes of entrapment and anxiety. Perhaps the best example of this theme in the Russian literary imagination is Aleksandr Pushkin's poem 'The Bronze Horseman' (1835), which culminates with a monument to Peter the Great coming to life and chasing a hapless clerk through the capital's flooded streets. Indeed, the appearance of the gothic in 1840s depictions of St Petersburg seems an intuitive method for writers to represent a psychologically and sociologically charged urban Russian landscape.

Other depictions of urban life from this time showed gothic influence, although not on the same scale. Led by Belinskii, who considered French physiological works to be at literature's forefront at this time, Russians became enamoured with Eugène Sue's *Mysteries of Paris* (1842), which took Petersburg by storm in the 1840s. Part gothic novel, part journalism, and part romance, Sue's novel describes how a disguised nobleman, Rodolphe, encounters the city's lower classes and chooses to live among them. He is ac-

oblasti mifopoeticheskogo (Moscow: Progress, 1995). For an excellent discussion of the Petersburg Text see Buckler, pp. 17–26.

¹¹ Vissarion Belinskii, 'Moskva i Peterburg', in *Fiziologičeskaja Peterburga*, ed. by N. A. Nekrasov (Moscow: Nauka, 1991), pp. 14–37 (p. 16); trans. Thomas Gaiton Marullo, *The Physiology of Petersburg* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2009), pp. 17–56 (pp. 23–24).

accompanied by an assortment of socially conscious companions. However, the power of Sue's work relies not on its characters so much as its setting, which incorporates gothic details into the Parisian cityscape. Sue sought to play upon his reader's emotions through his depiction of Paris's grimy underbelly; indeed, he was so successful at this that his novel was credited with sparking the 1848 revolution.¹² Additionally, Sue's novel directly inspired works such as Nekrasov's innovative edited volume, *The Physiology of Petersburg*.

Physiological works of the mid to late 1840s use Sue's feuilletons as a model for the portrayal of day-to-day life in Petersburg. Sue's style, in turn, drew on many low, sensationalistic genres, which encouraged a more fraught, descriptive narrative. While most physiological sketches do not have a plot *per se*, Sue infused sensational plot-turns into a predominately descriptive work, thus rendering it a compelling read. As literature became increasingly linked to movements for social awareness and reform, writers began to experiment, using Sue's newly reconceived physiological version of the feuilleton in *Mysteries of Paris* to describe lower-class life in St Petersburg. A physiological writer would in great detail note what his narrator perceived, for example, as he descended into a slum courtyard or a squalid tenement. Liberal use of sensational language was necessary in these instances to create an impression of horror for the reader. A combination of horror and pathos compelled the reader onward.

Thomas Gaiton Marullo sets *The Physiology of Petersburg* apart from other Petersburg depictions of the period in his introduction to the 2009 English translation of Nekrasov's volume:

The urban mapping-topologies in [*The Physiology of*] *Petersburg* bypass sinister melancholy, existential indifference, and 'tomb-like claustrophobia'; they also eschew yawning abysses, shadowy underworlds, and specters of death-in-life. Nowhere does the comic draw from the tragic, the melodramatic from the mundane, or the supernatural from the trivial. Nowhere is there a blurred line between the animate and inanimate, the true and false, the vulgar and sublime.¹³

Works such as Pushkin's 'The Bronze Horseman' and *Queen of Spades* (1833), and Nikolai Gogol's urban tales such as 'Nevskii Prospekt' (1835) and 'The Nose' (1836), exemplify the Romantic-fantastic meditation on St Petersburg life that Marullo contrasts with the physiological tradition, as exemplified by Nekrasov's volume. He goes on to note that: 'The writers of *Petersburg* see the northern Palmyra as the realest of real places. [. . .] Here the imperial city is hero, not antihero; here it is unity, not atmosphere. Self-conscious rationality and reality are triumphant, the order of the day.'¹⁴ Marullo's point—that these

¹² For more about Sue's reception in Europe see Berry Palmer Chevasco, *Mysterymania: The Reception of Eugene Sue in Britain, 1838–1860* (London: Peter Lang, 2003).

¹³ Thomas Gaiton Marullo, 'Introduction', in *The Physiology of Petersburg*, ed. by Nekrasov, pp. xix–xci (pp. li–lii).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. lii.

writers were crafting works distinct from the Romantic-fantastic depictions of Petersburg that came before them—is well taken, but I disagree with his assertion that no elements from the earlier Petersburg can be seen in these texts; in Nekrasov's volume writers use the gothic to capture elements of the mood created in earlier Romantic-fantastic texts. Furthermore, these gothic elements frequently emphasize the sketches' narrators' irrational fears and anxieties.

Earlier Petersburg texts created a cityscape populated by fantastic creatures: the Devil strolling along the capital's boulevards, a monument coming to life and chasing a terrified clerk, a mysterious gambling secret driving men to ruination and madness, a missing nose running amok among famous landmarks, and even the ghost of a mild-mannered copyist sneaking up behind citizens and pulling their overcoats over their heads. In addition to these extraordinary characters, however, these earlier works associated a certain mood with the city: anxiety, nervous and frenetic behaviour, violence, want, and oppression were its main characteristics. As I argue, this atmosphere persists in *The Physiology of Petersburg*, from descriptions of citizens to depictions of space. In particular, the melancholy and 'tomblike claustrophobia' already noted come to the fore again and again.¹⁵ Furthermore, the blurring of the melodramatic and the mundane, of the animate and the inanimate, of the vulgar and the sublime, are established gothic tricks employed in Nekrasov's volume.

In 'Petersburg Organ-Grinders' author Dmitrii Grigorovich concludes his pseudo-ethnographic essay on the customs of various Petersburg organ-grinders with an affecting scene. A man, overcome with melancholy because of the grim Petersburg weather, hears an organ-grinder's music and feels momentarily cheered. This scene relies on a specifically gothic tone to describe the narrator's state of mind, its relationship to the city, and project this experience onto the reader:

The high walls of homes, illuminated from time to time by the dim light of streetlamps, seem even bleaker than the sky. In places the buildings and the gray clouds merge into a single mass, and the small lights in the windows shine like moving stars. The rain falls on roofs and pavements with a monotonous tone. A cold wind blows forcefully and wails mournfully through the gates. The streets are empty. Here and there, a rather late pedestrian makes his way, or a night cabbie drags himself along, cursing the bad weather. But soon all quiets down. Now and then one can hear only the prolonged whistle of a watchtower or the creaking of a barge, swaying in the gusting wind. [. . .] A sad and uncomfortable feeling fills one's soul, and an inexpressible melancholy possesses one's entire being. One enters a remote, dark alleyway, and the heart contracts more powerfully than before [. . .] Suddenly, one hears a street organ

¹⁵ Buckler underscores this atmosphere as a key feature of Petersburg, beginning her study with the following statement: 'According to cultural mythology, Petersburg is the capital of bad weather and dark moods that give rise to a[n awe-inspiring] literary tradition' (p. 21).

amid the silence. The sounds of *Luchinushka* reach the ear, and, very shortly, the figure of the organ-grinder passes by. You somehow come to life. Your heart begins to beat strongly. The anguish momentarily disappears, and you set out cheerfully for home. The mournful sounds of *Luchinushka*, though, continue to hover over you. For a long time there flashes before you the pitiful figure of the organ-grinder.¹⁶

The vulgar songs of a street organ inspire the narrator's sublime state.¹⁷ Inanimate objects appear and disappear, or become other things altogether in this landscape. Not only is gothic narrative at work here in descriptions that incorporate mournful sounds, violent action, and mysterious objects, it also figures prominently in the narrator's 'haunting'. Like the technique of second-person narration, the gothic appears in this episode to give the reader a more personal understanding of the experience of cheerfulness in the face of abject poverty and grim daily life.

Gothic tropes reappear throughout the rest of the collection. In Vladimir Dal's 'The Petersburg Yardkeeper' Grigorii, the yardkeeper in question, delights in the squalor of his filthy basement apartment. The narrator describes the space evocatively: 'Go down about half a dozen steps, stop, and blow away the heavy air and clouds of steam. If, by the third step, you have not fainted from the sour and rancid fumes, you will catch a glimpse of the various objects lying amid the endless gloom of the cellar.'¹⁸ Dal' wants us to understand his yardkeeper's character, an Everyman of Petersburg yardkeepers, and, by extension, his motivations, choices, and secret pleasures. While the yardkeeper's life is hard, he remains in good spirits. However, Dal' adds small gothic elements: the gloomy basement, a twisted hag who stops by the yard, the yardkeeper's secret financial transactions, characters that smell of mould and rot. The elements juxtaposed with Dal's cheerful yardkeeper's day-to-day business create the impression of lingering transgression.

Evgenii Grebenka's vibrant 'Petersburg Quarter' uses this same gothic mode more overtly than other sketches. It celebrates the various lives that make up the city's Petersburg Quarter region. While discussing theatres and other entertainments in the area, Grebenka breaks the work's cheerful overall tone to observe an abandoned wooden arcade:

The building [. . .] still stands to this day. It is surrounded by a colonnade and still preserves its grandeur from the outside. The building, however, gives one a sad feeling. It stands (or better to say, is collapsing) amid small hovels and dirty streets. Everything in it is dead and black. The windows and doors have darkened terribly and look like the socket hollows of a dead skull. Inside it is terribly blackened, run down, and

¹⁶ Dmitrii Grigorovich, 'Peterburgskie sharmanshchiki', ed. by Nekrasov, pp. 51–70 (pp. 69–70); trans. Marullo, pp. 71–100 (p. 98).

¹⁷ Marullo himself describes them as vulgar in his analysis of Grigorovich's piece. According to Marullo, Grigorovich's sketch is a prime example of Bakhtin's carnival (Marullo, pp. lxxxii–lxxxvi).

¹⁸ Vladimir Dal', 'Peterburgskii dvornik', ed. by Nekrasov, pp. 38–50 (p. 42); trans. Marullo, pp. 57–70 (p. 61).

stripped to the frame. One finds neither life nor sound in these ruins. Sometimes, however, when the wind passes through, one will hear a cautious breathing or a quiet rustling. Sometimes, from behind a door, a girl in tatters appears, stealthily pulling out a half-rotten plank or log; or, from under a floorboard, a dog begins to bark at a passerby.¹⁹

This strange interlude emerges between a lengthy description of theatre history in the Petersburg Quarter and a discussion of the neighbourhood's carriages and cabs. The *memento mori* suggests a bleak outlook for the little girl's future, as does the evocative image of the dog barking under the floorboards, reminiscent of Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Tell-Tale Heart' (1843).²⁰ Here, again, just as elsewhere in the volume, the gothic exposes the sad state of life among the lower classes for the sympathetic reader.

The centrepiece of *The Physiology of Petersburg* is Nekrasov's own offering, 'Petersburg Corners'.²¹ Nekrasov plunges readers into the dark and seamy underworld of a Petersburg tenement, introducing a host of desperate characters. The lives of these people may be the main focus, but certain details describing place clearly establish a gothic-inspired setting. As the narrator descends into the tenement, he compares the space to a tomb in his description. He writes: 'The room was about three and a half arshins in height and had its own special air, the likes of which is met with only in wine cellars and burial vaults.'²² Gothic exaggeration comes to the fore as the narrator absurdly describes the marks on the walls as human blood stains:

The chief adornment, however, was neither the decorations nor the remnants of plaster but the oblong, bloody (but innocent) stains that bore the traces of fingerprints as well as the thin and brittle shells of sacrifices that had perished long ago. Thick spiderwebs hung in curtains and garlands about the room. Their strands went out in all directions, entangling my face and even getting into my mouth.²³

¹⁹ Evgenii Grebenka, 'Peterburgskaia storona', ed. by Nekrasov, pp. 71–92 (p. 85); trans. Marullo, pp. 101–30 (p. 121).

²⁰ While Grebenka's trope does evoke Poe's 'The Tell-Tale Heart', it seems unlikely that Grebenka would have read the tale. Early essays about Poe's works were just beginning to emerge in French literary journals, spearheaded by Charles Baudelaire, in the mid-1840s. It was not until the 1860s and later that Poe's Russian influence became (relatively) widespread. However, the emergence of sounds from beneath the floorboards is a common gothic trope that appears in many works (e.g. *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, *The Monk*, etc.). I mention Poe's story here as it is the most famous example of this trope. For more information about Poe's reception in Russia see Joan Delaney Grossman, *Edgar Allan Poe in Russia: A Study in Legend and Literary Influence* (Würzburg: Jal-Verlag, 1973).

²¹ A fragment from Nekrasov's unfinished novel in the style of Sue the full work would have depicted members of Petersburg's lower classes who had descended into a nightmare world of physical abusiveness, suicidal tendencies, alcoholism, and neglect. The sketch was so controversial in its depiction of St Petersburg life that Nekrasov had to seek special permission from the censors to publish it in the collection.

²² Nikolai Nekrasov, 'Peterburgskie ugly', in *Fiziologiii*, ed. by Nekrasov, pp. 93–111 (p. 95); my translation.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 261–62; trans. Marullo, pp. 131–58 (p. 134).

Only after this first impression does the narrator reveal that the stains are, in fact, the remains of dead flies. The cobwebs decorating the room further add to the atmosphere, suggesting death and decay. While the narrator pokes fun at these gothic clichés, they serve to set the scene, emphasizing the more subtle anxiety built by the narrative as the piece continues.

As the narrator progresses further into the tenement, each knock on the door is terrible, and each new visitor mysterious. The narrator represents the other inhabitants as cruel and the tenement as crypt-like. These descriptions sharply contrast with brief mentions of the beautiful Petersburg daylight to create an overall sense of claustrophobic terror, as though these people have been driven to desperation by their unbearable surroundings. Here Nekrasov uses detail in the same way it would be used in a gothic novel: to amplify horror through setting.

Even at the structural level, we can see that gothic narrative force drives Nekrasov's 'Petersburg Corners'. First, the text revolves around the solution of a mystery plot, building on the reader's curiosity (as well as the protagonist's). Second, the text focuses on taboos and transgressions, which in this case introduce the 1840s writers' social agenda: drawing attention to the Petersburg lower classes' unspeakable poverty. Belinskii's circle viewed these poor people's plight as a transgression against human decency. Finally, the text uses urban space to emphasize the protagonist's anxious psychological state. Nekrasov anticipates readers' familiarity with gothic conventions and uses them to enhance the sketch's background in order to communicate his indictment of Russia's social ills more forcefully.

The Physiology of Petersburg marked a turning-point in Russian literature and stood as a manifesto of sorts for the burgeoning early realist movement. Writers borrowed the depiction techniques used here from French physiological models but ultimately fine-tuned them to meet the sociocultural specificities of the Russian capital. Following Sue's example, the writers who worked together on *The Physiology of Petersburg* incorporated gothic elements into their texts to establish atmosphere, engage the reader in the narrative, and communicate the urban poor's plight. Their work stands as testimony to early realist innovation.

Dostoevskii's early works present an intriguing contrast when read with reference to *The Physiology of Petersburg*. While his writing of the 1840s cannot be called physiological, his inspiration draws on the same models as the volume writers', including earlier physiological sketches and Sue's popular novel. However, Dostoevskii's works conflate the journalistic feuilleton with both Gogol's Hoffmannesque and George Sand's more tempered, socially conscious Romantic tendencies. Gothic fiction, which Dostoevskii had read

since childhood, also served as a major influence.²⁴ Those Dostoevskii works set in Petersburg from this period create a cityscape, at times fantastic and at times realistic, that underscores the psychological state of his protagonists. An examination of Dostoevskii's texts set in Petersburg from 1845–49 reveals the interplay between the concepts of city as ideological symbol and as fantastic dreamscape.

Poor Folk (1845), Dostoevskii's earliest novel, is set in the Petersburg slums and depicts daily existence in language that implies mysteries and horrors. The most overtly gothic scene maps to a rural landscape, not an urban one. Varvara writes to Devushkin on 3 September, describing her daydream:

At that time of year everything grows gloomier, the yellow leaves strew the paths along the edges of the bare woods, which turn dark blue, almost black—especially at evening, when a damp mist descends and the trees loom out of it like giants, like terrible, monstrous apparitions. I might delay in returning while out on a walk, fall behind the others, walk alone, quickening my step—it was sinister! I myself would be trembling like one of those leaves, there, I would think, at any moment some fearsome being will look out of that tree-hollow; and all the while the wind would be rushing through the woods, whistling, moaning and howling so dolefully, tearing the clusters of leaves from the withered twigs, whirling them in the air; and, in a long, wide, noisy flock, the birds hurtling after them with wild, penetrating cries, turning the sky black as they covered it across. I would grow afraid, and then I would seem to hear someone's voice whispering: 'Run, run, child, don't delay; terrible things will happen here in a moment, run, child!' A sense of horror would grip my heart, and I would run and run until my breath gave out. I would reach home, panting; there it was noisy and cheerful.²⁵

Varvara's daydream emphasizes both the experience of terror and the pleasure that can come from fear in retrospect, when one feels safe. In Dostoevskii's St Petersburg, however, safe havens are altogether absent. The city's gothic descriptions in *Poor Folk* are subtle, but serve to create a disturbing sub-text of fear and anxiety. Cramped rooms are compared to coffins. Gorshkov, Devushkin's neighbour, lives with his family in an overcrowded room, and the sound of weeping comes from behind his door. Degradation and deprivation

²⁴ In *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions* (1863) Dostoevskii reflects, 'I used to spend the long winter hours before bed listening (for I could not yet read), agape with ecstasy and terror, as my parents read aloud to me from the novels of Ann Radcliffe. Then I would rave deliriously about them in my sleep' (Fedor Dostoevskii, *Zimnie zametki o letnikh vpechatleniakh*, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridtsati tomakh* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1972–1990), v, 46; trans. David Patterson, F. M. Dostoevskii, *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1997), pp. 1–2). Leonid Grossman first examined the influence of low genres on Dostoevskii's work in his seminal study 'Kompozitsiia v romane Dostoevskogo', in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. II (Moscow, Sovremennye problemy, 1928), pp. 9–59. For more information about Dostoevskii's gothic reading habits and influence see Robin Feuer Miller, 'Dostoevsky and the Tale of Terror', in *Dostoevskii and Britain*, ed. by W. J. Leatherbarrow (Oxford: Berg, 1995), pp. 139–58. N. M. Lary also discusses Dostoevskii's British reading habits in *Dostoevsky and Dickens* (London: Routledge, 1973).

²⁵ F. M. Dostoevskii, *Bednye liudi*, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, I, 83–84; trans. David McDuff, F. M. Dostoevskii, *Poor Folk' and Other Stories* (London: Penguin, 1988), p. 96.

seem quite literally to be killing his family, beginning with the little boy and then moving on to Gorshkov himself. The anxiety Devushkin feels as he walks along, as well as his fear of public life, sketches for the reader a cityscape characterized by façades that hide secrets and horrors.²⁶ The epigraph of *Poor Folk*—from a gothic tale by Odoevskii called ‘A Live Corpse’ (1844)—suggests that one of Dostoevskii’s underlying premisses in writing the work was that the city’s poor are trapped by both circumstance and the city itself.²⁷

As we follow Dostoevskii’s series of urban texts chronologically, the city takes on a different form. It becomes almost a character in its own right in these novellas, transforming the reader’s perception of the city. One early example of this phenomenon occurs in *The Double* (1846). Here, Goliadkin, the hero, while waiting outside a house party, perceives that guests are staring at him through the windows. Instead of blaming the party guests, he begins to blame the windows for his anxiety, eventually asserting that the building itself is staring at him. A projected manifestation of his madness, Goliadkin’s uncanny Petersburg becomes a living, anthropomorphized city.

In *The Landlady* (1847) Dostoevskii combines suggestions of physical horror in urban descriptions with hyperbole in the depiction of the situations and characters. Here, though, rather than serving as canvas for the story’s events, Petersburg assumes an active role. The hero, Ordynov, finds himself drawn by unknown forces to a particular area of the city—the mysterious tenement—and takes lodging there. This building simultaneously conceals and points towards the transgressions and sins that lend the work its air of mystery. As Randi Gaustad has observed, the setting bears some overt similarities to Rad-

²⁶ See Carol Apollonio’s chapter ‘The Body and the Book: *Poor Folk*’ for a reading that argues that Devushkin himself is a negative and sinister character (Carol Apollonio, *Dostoevsky’s Secrets: Reading against the Grain* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2009), pp. 13–26).

²⁷ In ‘The Live Corpse’, written in the 1830s but published only in 1844, a man dreams that he has died. However, he retains consciousness and exists in a limbo-like state, which enables him to observe all the horrible consequences of his death (for example, that his affairs are out of order, enabling his sons to steal his orphaned niece’s inheritance, ultimately leading to her being sent to prison, there to descend into madness), but trapped in the limbo-state and without the power to act on them. Furthermore, he is dismayed to realize that his friends and relations generally think poorly of him. Upon waking he is horrified by his dream and exclaims, ‘Oh, these story-tellers! They can’t write anything useful, pleasant, soothing! They have to dig up all the dirt under the sun! They ought to be forbidden to write! Well, I mean to say! You read it and let it sink in—and then all kinds of balderdash enter your head; really, they should be forbidden to write, simply forbidden altogether... Well, I mean to say! They don’t even allow a decent man to get to sleep peacefully!’ (Vladimir Odoevskii, ‘Zhivoi mertvets’, in *Povesti i rasskazy* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1988), pp. 306–31 (p. 331); trans. Neil Cornwell, Vladimir Odoevskii, ‘The Live Corpse’, in *The Salamander and Other Gothic Tales* (Bristol: Bristol University Press, 1992), pp. 66–88 (p. 88)). He blames the novel he had been reading before bed (which we understand to be in the gothic-fantastic style). Dostoevskii then uses this passage, with minor cuts, for the epigraph in *Poor Folk*. See Neil Cornwell, *Vladimir Odoevsky and Romantic Poets* (Oxford and New York: Berghahn, 1998), pp. 18–22, for more information about Odoevskii’s influence on Dostoevskii.

cliffe's castles or Lewis's monasteries.²⁸ While Gaustad's analysis focuses on the collection of gothic themes present in *The Landlady*, I mention the work briefly here as another example of Dostoevskii's evocation of a St Petersburg come to life. In this novella Dostoevskii explicitly utilizes gothic tropes to give the impression of a living city, a city acting to propel an anxious hero along his narrative arc. This use of the gothic achieves the association of St Petersburg with a sinister, fateful villain, more clearly delineating the 'individual vs. authority' theme in Dostoevskii's social fiction.

As Dostoevskii's Petersburg prose develops, the city's depiction becomes increasingly bound with the hero's psychological state and emotional experience. Dostoevskii's narratives begin to focus more on his heroes' internal reveries, drawing on both sentimental Romantic fantasies and the Kantian sublime, one of the driving narrative forces of the gothic as it manifests in a 'sublime anxiety'.²⁹ In several works from this period Dostoevskii takes as his hero a character-type called the 'dreamer'. In the fourth and final feuilleton of his 'Petersburg Chronicle' (dated 15 June 1847), for example, Dostoevskii writes of such types, describing their basic tendencies as they relate to the Petersburg topography:

Then in characters eager for activity, eager for spontaneous life, eager for reality—but weak, effeminate, gentle—there arises little by little what is called reverie, and a man becomes at length not a man but some strange creature of an intermediate sort—a *dreamer*. Do you know what a *dreamer* is, gentlemen? It is a Petersburg nightmare. It is sin personified, it is a tragedy, mute, mysterious, gloomy, savage, with all the furious horrors, with all the catastrophes, peripeties, plots and denouements—and we say this by no means in jest.³⁰

²⁸ Randi Gaustad, 'Rebuilding Gothic on Russian Soil: The Roles of Religion and Intertwining of Minds in Dostoevskii's *The Landlady*', in *Celebrating Creativity: Essays in Honor of Jostein Børtnes*, ed. by Jostein Børtnes and others (Bergen: University of Bergen, 1997), pp. 205–15.

²⁹ The phrase is taken from a 1998–99 exhibition at the University of Virginia Library Special Collections, curated by Natalie Regensburg. On the use of the sublime in gothic novels Alison Milbank notes: '[Radcliffe] grasps what is most interesting in Burke's analysis of the sublime—his recognition of the pleasure the seemingly painful can incite, and that what is most sublime is that which threatens our very sense of self-preservation' (Alison Milbank, 'Introduction', in Ann Radcliffe, *A Sicilian Romance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. ix–xxix (p. xi)). Burke's essay explains, 'Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant with terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the *sublime*; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling' (Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* [1757] (London: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 51). As Mario Praz has theorized, 'An Anxiety with no possibility of escape is the main theme of the gothic tales' (cited by Linda Dryden, *The Modern Gothic and Literary Doubles: Stevenson, Wilde and Wells* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 39). This archetypal anxiety becomes a source of the sublime in gothic fiction.

³⁰ Cited in Donald Fanger, *Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 146. For a more detailed explanation of the 'dreamer' type in Dostoevskii's Petersburg fiction and his relationship to the Romantic-fantastic see Fanger, pp. 146–47, 166–70, 178–79.

This character becomes both a symptom and a cause of Petersburg's peculiar atmosphere. Outside circumstances, both emotional and physical, compel the 'dreamer' to the peak of inspiration. His experience channels the Kantian sublime: terror and awe of the incomprehensible overwhelm him, but this feeling leads him to new understanding of the world around him.

In 'A Weak Heart' (1848) the hero's sublime moment occurs as a sort of epilogue to the text's events. The story relates the experiences of two dear friends, clerks living together in Petersburg, Vasia and Arkadii. When Vasia announces his engagement, the friends and Vasia's fiancée plan to live happily together after the wedding. Shortly afterwards, Vasia takes some copying home with him. Although Vasia is a good worker and takes great pride in his calligraphy skills, he begins to feel anxious and a fearful dread descends upon him that he will not finish in time. Vasia suddenly goes mad and is sent to an asylum. Arkadii goes to visit Vasia's distraught fiancée. Returning from this visit, he has a vision while crossing the River Neva and the piece ends. We are left wondering: what happened?

While 'A Weak Heart' leaves this question—and many others—unanswered, the sublime 'Vision on the Neva' scene that concludes the work provides some clues.³¹ A favourite gothic technique, sublime anxiety compels characters to open door after door, exploring their prisons despite the horrors they anticipate. In the 'Vision on the Neva' Dostoevskii builds up Arkadii's sublime experience from the underlying anxiety that propels the narrative until this moment: the same anxiety that drives Vasia mad, but which Arkadii seemingly cannot comprehend.

From the passage's first sentence, we are struck with the unusually violent landscape description: 'As [Arkadii] approached the Neva he stopped for a moment and cast a penetrating glance along the river into the smoky, frost-deadened distance, which had suddenly flared with the last purple of a blood-red sunset that was burning itself out on the smudgy horizon.'³² The vivid image of the blood-coloured sunset in the smoky, dark distance transforms the cityscape into a fantastic canvas for Arkadii's transcendent vision.

The episode continues: 'Night was descending over the city, and the whole immense clearing of the Neva, which had swollen with frozen snow, was being showered, in the sun's last reflection, with infinite myriads of sparks thrown

³¹ The 'Vision on the Neva' episode from 'A Weak Heart' was republished in 1861, but without the framing narrative; Dostoevskii claimed the excerpt was an autobiographical sketch. For more information about this see the extensive discussion in Joseph Frank, *Dostoevsky: The Seeds of Revolt, 1821–1849* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), pp. 133–36, 318–22.

³² F. M. Dostoevskii, 'Slaboe serdtse', in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, II, pp. 16–48 (pp. 47–48); trans. David McDuff, F. M. Dostoevskii, *'Uncle's Dream' and Other Stories* (London: Penguin, 1989), pp. 27–70 (p. 69). All subsequent quotations are from the same passage unless specified otherwise.

down by the hoar-frost.' The natural elements of the passage here contribute to or, perhaps, emanate from Arkadii's dreamlike state. The frozen river echoes the static passage of time, which seems to stand still during Arkadii's vision. At the same time, the river shines and sparkles, suggesting the other-worldly. 'It was minus twenty degrees. Frozen steam fell heavily from horses which had been driven to death, from the people hurrying by.' Although the people are rushing along, busy with their day-to-day life, Arkadii observes this as an afterthought. Just as the smoky air and river have frozen, the steam clouds over the city have also frozen. The description of horses 'driven to death' gives rise to a morbid mood, already suggested by the 'bloody' sunset in the first line.

This transformed world gives rise to the vision of the next few lines. 'The taut air shivered at the slightest sound and, like giants, from all the roofs of both embankments columns of smoke rose into the cold sky and floated aloft, twining and untwining on their way.' Suddenly the atmosphere itself, frozen as it is, comes alive, quivering at the slightest sound. Smoke columns become like giants in the sky, rising ever upwards, away from the city, twining and untwining. These mythological creatures of epic proportions, although not quite real, usher in the brave new world of Arkadii's idealistic vision: 'it seem[ed] as though new buildings were rising above the old ones, as though a new city were being formed in the air'. As Arkadii catches a glimpse of the shining idealized city arising out of the smoky and gloomy old one, with its unaware, uncaring rushing people and its nearly dead, frozen, or static features, he begins to feel hope.

'Finally', he says, as though he has been waiting for this new city to emerge: 'It was as if, at last, this entire world, with all its inhabitants, weak and strong, and all their habitations, the shelters of the poor or the gilded palaces for the delight of the powerful of this world, resembled a fantastic, magical vision, a dream that would in its turn vanish in a trice and evanesce towards the dark-blue heavens.' The city with its problems, its vast discrepancies in wealth, its powerful and its downtrodden, disappears. It seems as though, in this moment, Arkadii has frozen with the city in his reverie, distanced himself from the rushing people, and thus become aware of a broader perspective. In this moment of distancing a gothic-inspired experience of the sublime enters the vision.

Arkadii experiences the effects of the sublime: 'A strange thought visited the forlorn companion of poor Vasia. He quivered, and his heart seemed in that instant to fill with a hot jet of blood which had suddenly boiled up from the influx of some mighty sensation hitherto unknown to him.' His heart is overwhelmed, physically by the powerful rush of warm blood, but also emotionally, as he remembers his dear friend Vasia's fate. Although we,

the readers, do not gain new understanding, we learn that Arkadii begins to understand why Vasia went mad: 'Only now did he seem to understand all the anxiety there had been and to realize why his poor Vasia had gone mad, unable to endure his happiness. His lips began to tremble, his eyes flared with light, and at that moment his eyes seemed to open on something new.' Beauty traditionally inspires sublime reveries, but here, as in *The Landlady*, Dostoevskii makes use of terror's ability to do so. Distraught over his dear friend's seemingly incomprehensible descent into madness, Arkadii begins to see the city in a new, terrifying way.

Reflected through the hero's experience, the city does not stand on its own terms, but begins to reflect a gothic mindset. Arkadii's mental state colours the sunset 'bloody' and the city murky, gloomy, and smoky. Through Arkadii's eyes, Petersburg becomes a frozen wasteland filled with uncaring people and connoting death. Arkadii's terror is evident in his widened eyes, trembling lips, and paling face. However, this same terror prompts the sublime moment and his imagined realization of a new, better city that is airy and intangible. Although Arkadii initially cannot comprehend his friend Vasia's anxiety and dread earlier, his own anxieties propel him onwards, through the sublime vision, which is both beautiful—shining, glimmering, idealized—and terrible—static, frozen, dark—to revelation. Vasia goes mad seemingly inexplicably, but Arkadii's vision implies a bleaker, more sinister cause: daily life in the city itself.

As Dostoevskii's brand of the Petersburg Text evolves through this period, later city descriptions absorb earlier textual depictions. Accordingly, in *Netochka Nezvanova* (1849), Dostoevskii's unfinished, last work from this period, the heroine's early life story contains all the previous elements of a gothic Petersburg text. Netochka grows up in a filthy tenement, trapped in a life of poverty, as she watches her mother's abuse and exploitation at the hands of her stepfather, a drunk and failed musician with hints of madness about him. Netochka herself has a tendency towards obsession and daydreaming, frequently entering into lengthy reveries, like Dostoevskii's 'dreamer' characters. This fragmentary novel relies heavily upon the Petersburg setting to convey Netochka's emotional experiences.

As Netochka falls into a deep obsession with her stepfather, she projects her feelings onto descriptions of a house that she associates with him. Returning home, Netochka sees her stepfather waiting outside this residence. After this incident she becomes fixated on the house:

I remember that the pain in my arm grew worse and worse, making me feverish, and yet I was particularly happy because it had all turned out so well. I dreamed of the house with the red curtains throughout the night. When I woke up the following day my first thought and concern was for the house with the red curtains. As soon as

mother had gone outside I clambered up to the little window and gazed out at the house. For a long time it had fascinated my childish curiosity. I particularly liked looking at it in the evening when the street was lit up and the crimson-red curtains behind the plate-glass windows gleamed with a peculiar blood-red glow.³³

When her stepfather tells her that he will be ‘born again’ upon her mother’s death, she begins to draw associations between her mother’s death, her stepfather’s rise in fortunes, and her own move into this abode. The house with curtained windows with a blood-coloured glow represents her idyll, but also has a darker side, tied to her mother’s death.

As the fragment progresses, Netochka begins to differentiate between her ‘internal’ and ‘external’ lives. Her ‘internal’ life provides an escape for her in the first part of the fragment, allowing her to transcend the drudgery and poverty that characterize life with her mother and stepfather. When the tension within the apartment becomes overwhelming and she needs physical escape, she retreats to liminal spaces: her apartment’s corner, her tenement stairwell, her building courtyard. Like the apartment building in *The Landlady*, Netochka’s tenement resembles a dark castle in a gothic novel. It harbours places like the stairwell, an exploratory space from which Netochka overhears truths, as well as the apartment itself, a chamber characterized by hidden horrors such as, at first, the disintegration of her parents’ relationship, and then her mother’s stiffening corpse.

Her mother’s death destroys Netochka’s idyll, and signals the beginning of the girl’s isolated life with her stepfather. The nightmare she describes having while her mother lies dying becomes real, projected onto the city streets. Initially, walking through the city at night under a light snowfall with her stepfather, Netochka feels happy that their dream is coming true, but, switching her focus to the cityscape—the ice-covered canals, the dark, looming houses, and the isolation of city streets at night—she realizes that her stepfather is now fully mad and will abandon her. The scene quickly turns into the nightmare tableau: Netochka chasing her stepfather, always out of reach, down St Petersburg alleys in blind terror, afraid of returning to her mother’s corpse, but equally afraid of being left without any guardian or protector. Her frantic chase ends without resolution.

Intriguingly, Netochka comes to associate all the important moments of her early life with features of the city. First, as she grows to love her stepfather, she associates him with the house with red curtains. Then, as her stepfather’s life spins out of control, she hides, fearful, on her tenement stairs, waiting for him. The dark tenement staircase, with its shadows and hidden spaces, seems

³³ F. M. Dostoevskii, *Netochka Nezvanova*, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, II, 161–62; trans. Jane Kentish, F. M. Dostoevskii, *Netochka Nezvanova* (London: Penguin, 1985), p. 34.

to reflect her fear. Finally, when her life changes following her mother's death, the transition occurs against the city backdrop.

The fragment lacks the detailed descriptions of St Petersburg that other texts set in the city during this period incorporate, but the cityscape none the less comes to characterize Netochka's earlier life. Netochka's early life revolves around three key gothic moments: her fatal obsession with the red-curtained house, the hidden secrets of her tenement building, and the chase through streets of St Petersburg, her quarry always just out of reach. These three scenes all contribute to a depiction of life among lower classes in St Petersburg fraught with fear and anxiety.

By the late 1840s, generic gothic markers and cues that evoked claustrophobia and terror for readers were already incorporated into the metanarrative of the Petersburg Text. The gothic had grown so familiar in early realism that the mere mention of a dark and cramped tenement staircase or an icy canal sufficiently conjured up readers' expectations. This gothic dwelling on psychological states caused by anxiety or dread is ideally suited to evoke the earlier Romantic-fantastic Petersburg texts of Pushkin and Gogol' while providing a frame for more physiological depictions. The Petersburg of Pushkin's nervous *Queen of Spades* or Gogol's frenetic tales represents the anxious psychological state that pervaded society at this time. By framing their texts thus, Petersburg writers of this transitional period emphasized anxiety, fear, and dread without using the uncanny methods of Pushkin and Gogol', staying true to the new realist mode of writing, which eschewed the fantastic.

As a tool used to describe the city interiors and exteriors, the gothic mode, in this context, becomes an ideal style to appeal to readers' consciences and pathos. The genre's immediate associations with transgression and moral wrong make it an ideal backdrop to influence the dramatic scenes unfolding on its Petersburg canvas. For writers depicting Petersburg, the gothic's use was twofold; its signifiers underscored social injustices and moral wrongs, but, as a mode of writing, it also allowed Romantic depictions of Petersburg to carry over into realist texts. In accommodating the hyperbolic language and extreme moods of the gothic in their writing, these authors changed the basic setting and array of conventions, effectively translating the genre not only deeper into the Russian literary language, but, more importantly, into the realist project. In appropriating the genre for this purpose, the early realist writers evoke the sense of the gothic—its psychologies, modes, and themes—without relying upon its trappings—its settings, character types, or master plots. They, instead, use their own setting: the Russian capital. This newly exposed, gritty, gothic Petersburg signifies an important shift in Russian literary history and sets the stage for the discussions of social change to come.