

## **Institutional Gothic in the Novels of Vladimir Sharov and Evgenii Vodolazkin**

Muireann Maguire

Affiliations: Department of Modern Languages, University of Exeter, Exeter, UK

Correspondence email: [muireann.maguire@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:muireann.maguire@exeter.ac.uk)

Orcid ID: 0000-0001-7615-6720

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### **Abstract**

Vladimir Sharov (1952-2018) and Evgenii Vodolazkin (1964-) are among the most significant and influential writers of contemporary postmodern Russian fiction. This article argues that the subgenre of institutional Gothic – defined here as Gothic plots set in mental asylums, hospital wards, and other places of involuntary confinement – is an important structural and metafictional element in their novels. It also suggests that these authors' use of the Gothic mode corresponds to the traditional function of Gothic narrative as a reaction to historical trauma. Each of the novels discussed here (Sharov's *Sled v sled (In His Footsteps)*, 1988), and Vodolazkin's *Aviator (The Aviator)*, 2016)) re-sites traditional European Gothic plots in analogous Soviet and post-Soviet institutional settings, including the clinic, the prison camp, and the mental asylum. For context, the article also discusses Gothic aspects of Sharov's later novels *Repetitsii (The Rehearsals)*, 1992) and *Do i vo vremia (Before and During)*, 1993).

Two of the first Gothic novels were set in eponymous castles, and the importance of location has never diminished in Gothic plot.<sup>1</sup> In this article, I discuss the importance of one specific subgenre of locational Gothic in recent Russian literature as a means of narrativizing historical trauma and societal injustice. This subgenre, institutional Gothic, occurs in contemporary writing across the globe, both as a modern reinvention of the traditional “haunted castle” topos and as a critique of authority. The present study is primarily concerned with novels by the Russian authors Vladimir Sharov (1952-2018) and Evgenii Vodolazkin (1964-), which engage with both aspects of this subgenre. The most recent of the novels explored here, Vodolazkin’s *Aviator* (*The Aviator*, 2016), appeared in English translation in 2018; all three of his novels have now appeared in English to considerable acclaim. By contrast, most of the late Vladimir Sharov’s major work remains untranslated, including the novel discussed in depth in this article, *Sled v sled* (*In Their Footsteps*, 1988). Only two of his novels, *Repetitsiia* (*The Rehearsals*, 1992) and *Do i vo vremia* (*Before and During*, 1993) have been rendered in English, both since 2014, lending them a misleading patina of contemporaneity for the Anglophone reader.

Vodolazkin’s *The Aviator*, and all three of these novels by Sharov, can each be interpreted as experiments in historiographic metafiction: their plots mingle fantastic events (miracles, mass hallucinations, reincarnations and resurrections) with historical occurrences, including the rise and fall of the Russian Orthodox Patriarch Nikon in the mid-seventeenth century; the hardships of the Cheka terror in the 1920s and of Stalin’s Gulags in the following decade, and the Khrushchev-era rehabilitation of surviving Gulag inmates. Such imaginative enhancement of reality serves to highlight the overlap in Russia’s recent history between absurdity and complexity, brutality and pathos. This style also typifies a strand of Russian postmodernism with which critics have identified Sharov throughout his writing career;<sup>2</sup> Alexander Etkind classes Sharov’s fiction as “magical historicism,” that is, the

reconfiguration of historical trauma in supernatural or grotesque prose imagery.<sup>3</sup> While Vodolazkin's *oeuvre* is, so far, less widely studied, he is acknowledged as a major contemporary contributor to such postmodernist modes as "new medievalism" and utopianism, especially in his previous novel, *Lavr* (*Laurus*, 2014).<sup>4</sup> Many Russian novelists, in ever-increasing numbers since the fall of the Soviet Union and the so-called "wild nineties" (*likhie devianostye*) of uncensored literary production, have produced fiction which combines elements of magic realism, science fiction, historical critique, and the Gothic; for international readers, Viktor Pelevin and Vladimir Sorokin exemplify this trend, although less well-known novelists such as Iurii Buida, Mikhail Elizarov, and Dmitrii Bykov have also helped to define magical historicism, in fiction that frequently borders on *chernukha* (dark or horrific fiction), fantasy, or direct political satire.<sup>5</sup>

What makes Sharov and Vodolazkin uniquely comparable as historical novelists within this crowded context? My answer is twofold. First, both authors, as historians of medieval Russia, share a critical and profoundly informed insight into Russian history, as their intricately rooted and contextualized plots reflect. Second, the novels discussed here all prioritize narrating the past over (re-)creating the present. While these books include typically Gothic subplots about inheritance, secrets, and guilt, their narrators are ultimately more preoccupied with the lives of their forebears – the testators, as it were, of today's troubles – than with their own, current problems. In Sharov's novels, as we will see, the narrative arc is typically cyclical, deflecting the reader's – and the multiple, nested narrators' – attention into the past. In Vodolazkin's *The Aviator*, the recent-past plotline constantly strays, via free indirect narrative, into the first three decades of the twentieth century – where its central secret can be found. Similarly, the hero of Vodolazkin's first novel, *Solov'ev i Larionov* (*Soloviev and Larionov*, 2009), the young, post-Soviet academic Solov'ev delves into archived secrets in the hope of discovering why the subject of his thesis – General Larionov –

was *not* shot by Red forces during the Russian Civil War. Lucie Armitt's commentary on the overlaps and divergences between magical realism and the Gothic in modern literary fiction is helpful for understanding what connects Vodolazkin's and Sharov's prose, since they also participate in both these genres. The main contradiction between magical realist and Gothic writing, not entirely resolved by Etkind's proposal of "magical historicism" as a uniquely Russian hybrid of both, is the fact that magical realism depicts fantastic events as continuous with ordinary, everyday life (often in great detail), while Gothic fiction prefers to focus on what is *not* readily visible: the concealed, the shadowy, and the liminal. Armitt suggests that these two modes of writing can be temporarily united by cryptonymy, defined as "intergenerational haunting," whether by spectral presences or by artefacts. Magical realism endows this haunting with cultural and political significance, while Gothic anchors it to the "sinister particularity of the nuclear family unit" – or in Sharov's case, to the no less sinister *peculiarity* of extended families.<sup>6</sup> In other words, the novels of Vodolazkin and Sharov share not only a magical historicist, or metafictional, framework; they are distinguished from the mass of other similar Russian fiction by their focus on ancestral hauntings, and upon the re-enactment or re-visiting of the past.

Amid numerous Gothic motifs to be found in Vodolazkin's and Sharov's novels, some of which will be briefly explored at the end of this article, I will focus in detail on the institutional Gothic elements in Sharov's *In Their Footsteps* and Vodolazkin's *The Aviator*. I suggest that this intriguing Gothic subgenre facilitates both narratives' metafictional task of collapsing the present into the past (in itself, a peculiarly Gothic function). When using this term, I have in mind Gothic narratives wholly or primarily set in a mental asylum (like Sharov's *In Their Footsteps* and *Before and During*), hospital ward (as in Vodolazkin's *The Aviator*), prison (*In Their Footsteps* and *The Aviator*), or other legally sanctioned place of (involuntary) confinement (*Before and During*). These are, inevitably, not the only Russian

writers narrativizing institutions in disturbing or fantastic ways; as Roger Luckhurst demonstrates, the fiction of “biomedical horror” is both a source of terror (what differentiates a zombie from a coma patient, given that both are types of undead?) and a source of inspiration for the “biomedical imaginary,” triggering real-life scientific advances.<sup>7</sup> In Anna Starobinets’s horror novel *Ubezishche 3/9* (*Asylum 3/9*, 2006), terrifying characters from Russian folklore (including the child-eating witch Baba Iaga) are layered onto a quite ordinary ward in a hospital for children with severe learning difficulties. The point is that, as Luckhurst has shown, the medical or biological advances that keep these children alive are in themselves horrific; despite the cleanliness and tidiness of the modern Moscow building, and the regular nappy changes for its inmates, the presence of a two-headed child in a Lion King T-shirt or of “our miracle” Katen’ka, a living child whose skull contains almost nothing but fluid, sufficiently shock the sensibilities of the mother placing her comatose son in the institution.<sup>8</sup> However Starobinets’s plot, although both magical realist and Gothic in places, is neither deeply political (if we discount some fleeting satire) nor backwards-looking. It deals in subconscious guilt and fantasy, expressed through the cultural subconscious of folklore, rather than through the historical past. Sharov’s and Vodolazkin’s plots, by contrast, interrogate the Soviet past through the framework of individual memory and experience, combining aspects of the Gothic mode with (occasionally magical) realism.

It has been argued that novels by Sharov and Vodolazkin are heterotopic, where heterotopia (following Michel Foucault) represents a site outside of normal social conditions, and which may also allow the interpenetration of past, present, and future. I suggest that heterotopia is a particularly apposite mode for post-traumatic literature because its chaotic temporal structure mimics the confused sense of reality which survivors of trauma typically experience.<sup>9</sup> The Gothic mode, however, is equally valid for the exploration of traumatic history and the expression of traumatized feelings; and the Gothic novel also typically

collapses time frames into one another by imposing the past upon the present (usually by the reiteration of past actions, or by the “return of the repressed”). In his study of the functionality of space, Henri Lefebvre draws attention to the significance of “representational spaces” – that is, real, lived spaces which become “[r]edolent with imaginary and symbolic elements” and which self-perpetuate on the artistic or literary plane.<sup>10</sup> In the Gothic context, Manuel Aguirre emphasizes the instability of Gothic spaces. Structures and doorways in Gothic fiction frequently outrage the rational spatial order by revealing rooms or buildings as bigger inside than out (he gives the example of Flat No. 50 in Mikhail Bulgakov’s *Master i Margarita* (*Master and Margarita*, 1940), or by offering passage into a different dimension or world: “Gothic space [...] exhibits different properties in different directions.”<sup>11</sup> Institutional Gothic, which transitions ethically as well as spatially between cure and punishment, escape and containment, exemplifies the paradoxical nature of Gothic space. The ultimate locus of fear in institutional Gothic, which Christy Rieger calls “the dungeon,” may move from the subterranean corridors of a gloomy hospital to the mind of a cruel vivisectionist; alternately, a building’s symbolic valence may shift from benign to malign, depending on its ownership or occupiers.<sup>12</sup> This value-shifting in contemporary civic spaces has been analyzed in early Soviet literature by Yuri Lotman and others.<sup>13</sup> In the next section, I will discuss tropes of confinement in the context of British eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Gothic fiction, in order to sketch my parameters for interpreting institutional Gothic narrative in post-Soviet fiction.

### **Gothic Predecessors: British Fictional Edifices**

In Gothic plot, the “good” hospital does not exist, nor does the “good” insane asylum or prison; all such places remain, irrespective of purpose, potential sites of deception and abuse. Much as the Enlightenment, by definition, creates its own shadow, so the well-intentioned prisons of the Enlightenment era created a more rigid and inhuman carceral

economy; Jeremy Bentham's infamous Panopticon, for instance, designed as an efficiency, appears today as a morally repugnant surveillance regime.<sup>14</sup> Aguirre reminds us that the Panopticon was "designed not merely to contain and invigilate, but equally to degrade, subdue, mold – it is both a cognitive construct *and* an affective one."<sup>15</sup> Similarly, the more efficiently a ward is run, the more its core functions of control and suppression emerge in interactions with the patients. In Daphne du Maurier's 1959 short story "The Blue Lenses," a woman on bed rest following an eye operation suddenly perceives the doctors, the nursing staff, and even her own husband with animal heads instead of their own faces; the animals – terriers, snakes, cows – express her intuition of each individual's personality. Far from enabling her in any way, these visions expose her to ridicule while reinforcing her utter vulnerability to her cheating husband's (medicalized) plot against her life.<sup>16</sup> This is a classic Female Gothic scenario, updated from Montoni's gloomy castle (the setting of Ann Radcliffe's 1794 *The Mysteries of Udolpho*) to a comfortable private room in a modern hospital. In another modern variant, the narrator of John Wyndham's 1951 novel *The Day of the Triffids* wakes up in hospital (also after eye surgery) to find himself alone in the abandoned building: the empty wards and corridors, formerly places of safety and scientific rigour, are transformed into a labyrinth of unknown terrors. In popular culture depictions, the mental asylum hardly requires a supernatural plot to inspire superstitious dread: with its multiple levels, labyrinthine corridors, and terrifying denizens, it is imaginatively continuous with the Gothic castle (and it is no coincidence that Carfax, the old mansion which, in Bram Stoker's 1897 novel, Dracula purchases as his Essex lair, is adjacent to Dr. Seward's private lunatic asylum).<sup>17</sup>

I have suggested above that the main plot function of the Gothic institution is as a place of involuntary confinement. Confinement can, of course, be unjust (to punish or suppress the righteous) or justified (to punish wrongdoing or protect the innocent). The latter

type, however, is rarely a preoccupation of Gothic plot, which as Diane Hoeveler has noticed, prefers to focus on innocent victims. Rare examples of justified confinement in Gothic narrative would include the eponymous hero of William Godwin's *Mandeville* (1817), dispatched to a suitably brutal insane asylum when his frenzies become uncontrollable, or the "zoophagous" madman R. M. Renfield in *Dracula*, who eats his way up the food chain – consuming whatever small creatures he can trap in his cell – in imitation of his blood-drinking master.<sup>18</sup> An unusually ambiguous example occurs in Nikolai Karamzin's treatment of the beautiful female captive in his 1794 tale "*Ostrov Borngol'm*" ("The Island of Bornholm"). Here, the Russian narrator describes a chance visit to a craggy island off the Danish coast, where a young woman, known only as Lila, is held in an underground prison adjacent to a decaying building which amply satisfies the criteria of Gothic architecture:

I [...] soon drew near a large Gothic building, which was encircled by a deep moat and a high wall. [...] We walked across a vast courtyard, overgrown with bushes, nettles, and wormwood, toward a huge house in which a light glowed. [...] It was gloomy and deserted everywhere. In the first hall, encircled within by a Gothic colonnade, hung a lamp and it shed a weak, dim light upon a row of gilded pillars which had begun to crumble, worn by time.<sup>19</sup>

Amid this atmosphere of desolation, both reader and narrator involuntarily sympathize with the hapless prisoner; nevertheless, we suspect that her melodramatic punishment – which Lila herself appears to accept and even welcome – may be justified by the extent of her crime (described as a "most horrible story" ("*uzhasneish[aia] istorii[a]*"),<sup>20</sup> and which is likely to be either incest or adultery; conceivably, both.<sup>21</sup> As Derek Offord has argued, Karamzin's tale relies for effect on Sentimentalist aesthetics at least as much as on Gothic detail, and its politics are predominantly conservative; the stern paternal authority that avenges Lila's mysterious crime is dramatized, but not subverted, by the narrator.<sup>22</sup>

Much institutional Gothic pertains to so-called "terror Gothic" novels, including Female Gothic narrative (which was written mainly, but not exclusively, by women authors,



and concerned with the ordeals suffered by women). Hoeveler argues that the real-life subjection of women to the oversight of “juridical institutions” (including “the prison, the school, the asylum, the confessional, and the bourgeois family”) in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries directly inspired Female Gothic narrative by, among others, Ann Radcliffe, Charlotte Dacre, Charlotte Smith and Mary Shelley.<sup>23</sup> In their novels, the heroine is variously policed, terrorized, and subjugated by various forms of patriarchal control until she manages to redeem both her person and her financial and legal independence (usually by marriage). To escape from institutional oppression, whether this be a guardian’s unwanted care or imprisonment in a madhouse, she or her helpers must prove that institutional control was wrongly applied, whether in the heroine’s case or systematically.

Most Female Gothic novels focus their critique on the particular villains targeting their heroine; a few writers in this genre highlight the social order which effectively grants villains their license to persecute women. A radical example of Female Gothic as systemic critique is Mary Wollstonecraft’s unfinished novel *Maria, Or, The Wrongs of Woman* (1798), the story of a young woman separated from her infant child and confined in an insane asylum by her libertine husband. In her opening lines, Wollstonecraft explicitly links the heroine’s place of confinement to the Radcliffesque haunted ruins already established as Gothic clichés in the popular imagination:

ABODES OF HORROR have frequently been described, and castles, filled with spectres and chimeras, conjured up by the magic spell of genius to harrow the soul, and absorb the wondering mind. But, formed of such stuff as dreams are made of, what were they to the mansion of despair, in one corner of which Maria sat, endeavouring to recall her scattered thoughts!<sup>24</sup>

Nor is any Gothic detail spared in Wollstonecraft’s description of the asylum, a stereotype of decline and isolation:

The gates opened heavily, and the sullen sound of many locks and bolts drawn back, grated on my very soul, before I was appalled by the creaking [*sic*] of the dismal

hinges, as they closed after me. The gloomy pile was before me, half in ruins; some of the aged trees of the avenue were cut down, and left to rot where they fell; and as we approached some mouldering steps, a monstrous dog darted forwards to the length of his chain, and barked and growled infernally.<sup>25</sup>

Maria's cell has a "small grated window" with a view of "a desolate garden, and of part of a huge pile of buildings, that, after having been suffered, for half a century, to fall to decay, had undergone some clumsy repairs, merely to render it habitable."<sup>26</sup> The other inhabitants of the asylum are terrifying; escape is impossible. In the words of Wollstonecraft's husband and literary executor William Godwin, Maria's narrative was written to reveal "evils that are too frequently overlooked, and to drag into light those details of oppression, of which the grosser and more insensible part of mankind make little account."<sup>27</sup> In her preface to the novel, Wollstonecraft suggests that the experiences of Maria (a strong-willed heiress with an unfortunate penchant for abusive partners) are exemplary of the cruel treatment suffered by women in wider society; the legal apparatus which allows Maria's husband to confine his wife and confiscate her assets is no fictional invention. Poorer women are not forgotten: Maria's asylum attendant Jemima also tells a story of equally tragic, gendered oppression.

Not all works in the Female Gothic vein, whether by male or female authors, are as explicit as Wollstonecraft's about society's failings. More than half a century after *Maria*, the plot of Wilkie Collins's best-selling novel *The Woman in White* (1859) also pivots on a husband's unjust confinement of his wife in a mental hospital while he exploits her fortune. But Collins's interpretation of this institution is more nuanced than Wollstonecraft's. The false imprisonment plot is complicated by the twist that Laura Fairlie, the heiress, is committed under the name of her late, illegitimate, and genuinely feeble-minded half-sister, Anne Catherick. In turn, Catherick is buried under the name of the wife, Laura. This cunning substitution casts the real identities of both women in doubt (each, for different reasons, confuses herself with the other). By staging a proleptic encounter between the hero, Walter Hartright, and Catherick at the beginning of the novel, Collins swiftly establishes an

atmosphere of febrile confusion. In her white dress, Catherick looks more like a ghost than a living woman. In fact, she has just escaped from the asylum and both attendants and police are on her trail. Hartright helps her escape and – without knowing who she is – lies to protect her. Later, he experiences “sickness” and “self-reproach” for his instinctive action: the asylum represents the same authority as the police and the courts (all of whom will later fail to protect the heroine or her true identity).<sup>28</sup>

In contrast to Wollstonecraft’s hyperbolic Gothic language in *Maria*, Collins avoids directly describing the asylum in his novel; its regime is represented as fair but not incorruptible (the director can be tricked; the nurses, bribed). Significantly, the real impetus behind the novel’s eventual restoration of justice is not the British legal system (which is all too easily manipulated by the villains) but an underground Italian fraternity. When Hartright mentions, after meeting Anne Catherick, “the idea of absolute insanity which we all associate with the very name of an Asylum,” he is suggesting that individuals are tainted by association with the madhouse.<sup>29</sup> But by the end of the novel, this taint of “absolute insanity” is shown to have corrupted many trusted institutions, including the asylum administration, Laura’s extended family, the police and the courts. No institution can be trusted to identify and expose a fiction or to uphold truth; instead, albeit unintentionally, they collude in persecuting the crime’s victims, Laura and Anne. The legal order becomes friable; justice can be served only when individuals act according to their own beliefs (which, ironically, is also the motto of the novel’s chief villain, Count Fosco). Although Collins’s moral critique focuses specifically on the fictional case of Laura Fairlie, his Gothic plot shows the vulnerability of society as a whole to criminal deception and venality.

Institutional Gothic, therefore, exposes – directly or indirectly – the permeability of social institutions to injustice, ultimately casting doubt on the reliability of collective morality. It also supplies a wealth of tropes – the asylum or hospital ward, the cruel warder,

the corrupt doctor, and so on – which facilitate the victimization of individuals by society. Institutional Gothic is a ready fit with the post-Soviet literary tendency to examine the recent past and explore the burden of individual and collective responsibility for Soviet-era atrocities. The systemic oppression of women depicted in Female Gothic finds its analogy in Soviet and post-Soviet literature describing the mass subordination of individuals to – and the active persecution of certain middle-class and intellectual elements by – the ever-expanding Soviet juridical structures. The various organs of the Soviet secret police, from the Cheka to the KGB, are reconfigured as a kind of living Panopticon, all-pervasive, all-knowing, and (in Sharov’s novels, at least), all-recording.

Much has been written about the relationship between Gothic literature and revolution; Gothic is a key literary mode for evaluating the consequences of upheaval and destruction. Joseph Crawford suggests that eighteenth-century Gothic fiction, by fictionalizing traumatic but finite historical incidents of crime, murder, rebellion, created a self-perpetuating library of tropes (including the Gothic villain, the haunted institution, and much else besides). Effectively, our “modern mythology of evil,” based on Gothic narrative, provides ready-made images of fear for type-casting suspected terrorists: bombers, spies, and government conspiracies populate the “modern demonologies” of our “supposedly demythologized age.”<sup>30</sup> We might well expect Russian fictionalizations of the Soviet historical context of the Civil War, Stalin’s Terror, and the Gulags to exploit the same tropes and conventions. I contend that they do; but, in the case of the authors studied here, with the important difference that instead of applying this mythology of terror to the present, they reflect the reader towards a deeper understanding of the past. In the following sections, therefore, I will examine how Sharov’s novel *In Their Footsteps* and Vodolazkin’s *The Aviator* use institutional Gothic tropes to explore Russia’s recent history. I will conclude by discussing other Gothic motifs used by both authors elsewhere in their fiction.

### Vladimir Sharov: the Gothic asylum

There is a rich tradition in Russian literature, exemplified most famously by Anton Chekhov's short story "*Palata nomer shest*" ("Ward No. 6," 1892), of writing about madhouses. Chekhov's story implies, as contemporary readers saw, that Russia was the real madhouse; Ward No. 6 was simply a holding-place for those minds too original or too tender to cope with society's brutality and hypocrisy. There is also a recent tradition of writers who act madness as a form of dissidence, or who are menaced with confinement in asylums as punishment for political nonconformism.<sup>31</sup> Vladimir Sharov was never sectioned, but he contributed to this literature of lunacy with several of his novels, most notably *Before and During*, described by its translator as the "[t]he outstanding Russian 'madhouse' novel of the 1990s."<sup>32</sup> In this extraordinary narrative, a coterie of fantastic characters, including the narrator (suffering from incipient dementia), inhabit a Moscow insane asylum (housed in a suitably decrepit and isolated wing of the hospital), which was formerly used as a school for geniuses and a retirement home for geriatric Party officials. As the narrator becomes involved in an ideological coup against the latter in the name of future salvation, the asylum transforms into a simulacrum, not of Russia, but of Russia's restive and dangerous intellectual elites. Although the action takes place in the late Soviet period, the reader is returned to the political context of the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>33</sup>

An asylum is also an important location in Sharov's first novel, *In Their Footsteps*. Once again, as Harry Walsh suggests, the asylum functions as a simulacrum of a particular desired reality: here, the asylum (circa 1956) is re-imagined by one inmate, Sergei Federovich Kreitsval'd, as a nineteenth-century cell of the radical Socialist Revolutionary Party (the SRs). Sergei Kreitsval'd is an heir twice deprived of his rightful heritage, both times by the same Gothic mechanism of the Soviet police. When his parents are arrested, he and his two brothers Fedor and Nikolai become criminals by association; Sergei is sent away

from home and eventually ends up in a prison for political offenders. Here he is unofficially adopted by a group of SR prisoners, who, shortly before their own executions, secretly elect him party leader. Unaware of this extraordinary legacy, Sergei serves his sentence in a labour camp and returns to one of his SR mentors' families during the Khrushchev thaw. But Sergei is unable to cope with political rehabilitation, since he has spent his entire life as an involuntary enemy of the state; he becomes depressed. Eventually, his lover commits him to a provincial mental asylum in the hope of curing his apathy. Here, he reconfigures his environment "through the prism of conspiratorial populism" and begins to thrive.<sup>34</sup> Sergei observes and learns to manipulate the asylum inmates' cyclical ritual of violence (cycles of violence are recurrent themes in Sharov's fiction); he recognizes the essential structural analogies between the SRs/inmates and the warders/police, and skilfully intrigues with both to accumulate power in his own hands; he even arranges a political assassination. After realizing that he is fully sane, yet irrevocably estranged from the world beyond the asylum, Sergei kills himself. The asylum [*psikhdom*] does not have markedly Gothic attributes, aside from a high fence (with a secret gap) that notionally separates the building's grounds from the town park. But the regime of institutionalized neglect, brutal warders, and emotional isolation is as familiar from Chekhov's novella as it is from the Gothic narratives of Wollstonecraft and others.

Sergei, like Chekhov's Dr. Ragin, is institutionalized because he cannot function in the outside world. He was previously deprived of his family's property and his freedom, like Wollstonecraft's Maria, because he was subjected to a cruel juridical system. Sharov's irony, missing from both Chekhov's story and Gothic narrative, is that Sergei fulfils his destiny within the confines of the asylum. Although unaware that he the last president of the SR Party, he effectively achieves this position among the other inmates. (Sergei's younger brother Fedor, in a final plot twist recalling Fedor Dostoevskii's *Demons* [*Besy*], also

apparently obtains oversight over a secretly distributed political network, but renounces this power and eventually destroys the evidence). Through Sharov's Gothic asylum subplot, this institution actually reunites Sergei with his rightful identity as the elected leader of an extinct faction. Yet, unlike *The Woman in White*, there will be no happy ending; Sergei's success within the asylum merely confirms his inability to survive in the present day. He belongs to a superseded history of persecution, conspiracy, and idealistic terrorism. While his first encounter with institutional Gothic – the police decree that removes him from his family – transforms him into a clichéd Gothic victim (the lost heir), his second encounter – with the asylum – turns him into a Gothic villain. His realization of his own obsolescence triggers his suicide.

The asylum in which Sergei first finds his life's purpose and then ends his life is organically linked with other sites of voluntary and involuntary imprisonment in *In Their Footsteps*: the Stalinist prison camps where his parents are sent, the prison where he spends much of his childhood, even the fairground carousel which his brother Nikolai inhabits with his family, and finally the Trinity Sergius Monastery near Moscow where Sharov's complex narrative begins and ends. These institutions mark stages in the transgenerational cryptonymy of the novel, which the narrator laboriously recaptures by following paper trails and oral histories (the three Sheikeman brothers, by contrast, are surprisingly indifferent to their past). The novel repeatedly plays with the traditional Gothic trope of the found manuscripts which, in turn, reveal lost ancestors. The narrator collates and researches these manuscripts as a form of filial responsibility to his foster father, Sergei's older brother, Fedor. As the narrator expresses his task in his opening paragraph: "To unite separate memories, to fill them in wholly (here I mostly succeeded), was my duty to the deceased."<sup>35</sup>

The orphaned narrator, Sergei Petrovich Koloukhov, was adopted as a young man by his mentor, Fedor Nikolaevich Golosov, in order to help him secure accommodation in

Moscow. Some years later, following Golosov's death and burial, Koloukhov is researching religious correspondence in the archives of the Troitse-Sergieva Monastery when he finds a letter, signed a century earlier by one Petr Sheikeman, yet apparently written in Golosov's distinctive script. Stunned by this impossibility, yet unable to deny that the two scripts are identical, Koloukhov investigates his foster father's private papers. He then discovers that Fedor Nikolaevich was not born into the Golosov family, but adopted by them; that he was in fact the youngest of the Kreitsval'd brothers, and the only one to escape institutionalization after their parents' arrest. The idea, sparked by the coincidence of handwriting, that Fedor Nikolaevich might be to some degree the reincarnation of his ancestor Petr Sheikeman, evokes Nicolas Abraham's concept of intergenerational haunting, or cryptonymy: "The phantom which returns to haunt bears witness to the existence of the dead buried within the other."<sup>36</sup> In Armitt's interpretation of cryptonymy, the connection between past trauma and present haunting is often realized, or revealed, through hidden texts: inscribed paintings, palimpsests, or hidden letters. The present-day characters of *In Their Footsteps* are literally possessed by the memories and personalities of their ancestors (one son even acts out the characters of each of his imaginary brothers after his mother's phantom pregnancies have reached term). In Sharov's later novel *Before and During*, reincarnation is treated even more concretely and pragmatically: Madame de Staël repeatedly gives birth to herself, and Lev Tolstoi is reborn as his own son.<sup>37</sup> But in both these cases, the process of rebirth is forward-looking, focused on the perpetuation of self; by contrast, *In Their Footsteps* is preoccupied with returns to, and rehearsals of, the past. Moreover, the narrative is haunted by both literal and analogous adoption and its obverse, the rejection of one's true family: not only are the narrator and Fedor adopted, and Fedor's two brothers made wards of the state, but their great-grandfather Petr Sheikeman has renounced the Jewish faith in favour of an adopted Orthodoxy. Fedor, in a particularly unpleasant metaphor, thinks of his childhood associations



as a spider's web; history is the spider that would devour him alive. But he triumphs over history by outliving Stalin, and he in turn becomes a spider, weaving a web of interconnected human lives. Fedor's ultimate relief that he dies without leaving issue (discounting his adopted son, the narrator), and the many ellipses in the narrator's reconstruction of his family history, seem to demonstrate both the futility of reliving the past and of Sharov's characters' determination to achieve precisely that.

Nor do all the novel's manuscripts lead in reliable directions. The first husband of Natasha (mother to the Kreitsval'd brothers in her second marriage) was a secret police officer and even more secret novelist (whose work was praised by Valerii Briusov himself after a private reading); but OGPU colleagues confiscate the manuscript after his death, and Natasha herself never even reads it. The lost manuscript, with its hinted-at meditations on justified violence, reminds the reader of another Chekist officer with literary pretensions: *The Rehearsals*' Chelnokov, who reads the accused prisoners like books, and preserves their confessions in his archives as a library of lives. In *In Their Footsteps* Sergei Kreitsval'd busies himself, after his release from the labour camp, with visiting the surviving families of the SRs with whom he was incarcerated in order to pass on the men's farewell messages; later, befriended by one of their daughters, he sets about using library archives to write a conclusive history of the SR movement. But as we have seen, this generates another lost manuscript; his obsession leads to his re-imprisonment in the asylum, where he meets Osher and Il'ia Levin, a father-and-son team whose calligraphic skill in copying the Torah has won them posts as secretaries successively in prison camps and in the psychiatric ward. Like Sergei, the Levins are not clinically insane; they have simply become institutionalized. However, the pre-eminence of these innocent copyists in the ward's hierarchy threatens Sergei's imaginary terrorist cell; his responsibility for their murder by genuinely troubled inmates marks his transgression of the boundary between victim and villain. The ambiguity in

Sergei's status is echoed by the ambiguous role of asylums, prisons, and hospital wards as Gothic institutions; while ostensibly created as sites of sanctuary, healing, and repentance, they become sites of fear and persecution. In the majority of institutional Gothic texts the agents of fear are the warders, or clinicians. As Christy Rieger writes of Edward Berdoo's hospital Gothic tale from 1887, *St Bernard's: The Romance of a Medical Student*, the greed and aggressive insensitivity of many doctors marks a "reconfiguration of Gothic space," which transfers the "dungeon" from a physical location on the ward to the malign consciousness of the surgeon himself.<sup>38</sup> It is noteworthy, therefore, that in *In His Footsteps* the "dungeon" – the true Gothic centre – is found within the minds of Sergei and Fedor Kreitsval'd rather than in the places where they are confined, while in Vodolazkin's *The Aviator*, discussed below, the true "villain" is neither the German doctor (who by all the laws of Gothic xenophobia *should* be up to no good), nor even the sadistic camp guards who torment the imprisoned hero, but the hero himself.

### **Evgenii Vodolazkin: the Gothic clinic**

The protagonist and primary narrator of Vodolazkin's *The Aviator* is a young man called Innokentii Platonov who wakes up in a private room in a hospital clinic early in the year 1999. His memories and impressions are initially confused. Gradually he remembers that he was born in 1900. Only after more than a month does he discover, by accident, the current year. Platonov is bewildered: how can he, a healthy man in his mid-thirties, be ninety-nine years old? Gradually, by writing diary entries and speaking with his German consultant, Dr. Geiger, Platonov pieces together his past. After a peaceful bourgeois upbringing in Petersburg, the outbreak of revolution killed his father, wrecked Platonov's budding artistic career and plunged his family into poverty. Sharing a communal apartment with another family in similar circumstances, Platonov fell in love with Professor Voronin's beautiful daughter Anastasia. Then, tragedy intervened: Professor Voronin was arrested by the secret

police, dying in prison. He had been denounced for no particular reason by Zaretskii, a loathsome sausage factory worker living in the same apartment. Soon afterwards, Zaretskii is found murdered; Platonov is tried for the crime, brutally interrogated, found guilty, and sentenced to the notorious Solovki prison camp on the White Sea. A few years later, near-dead from starvation, beatings, and overwork, Platonov volunteers as an experimental subject for Professor Muromtsev, a scientist exiled by Stalin but still heading a secret research project into cryofreezing humans. There follows a traumatic break of at least sixty years in Platonov's memories. He is, Dr. Geiger tells him, the only one of several of Muromtsev's volunteer-victims to be successfully revived.

The Gothic aspect of *The Aviator* does not centre upon Platonov's status as a modern-day Lazarus; nor is it produced by either of the novel's major sites of institutional Gothic, the clinics which book-end Platonov's period of suspended life. Dr. Geiger's clinic is deceptively Gothic: Platonov's initial confusion and isolation presuppose some illicit plot against his person, but in fact they stem from his extended coma. Geiger isolates his patient to allow his immune system to adjust to present-day germs. While the observant, taciturn German doctor could, as a foreigner, be a made-to-measure Gothic villain, Dr. Geiger actively befriends and protects his patient. Far from stripping Platonov's assets, Geiger sympathetically assists him to cultivate his fame and manage his interests in the consumerist chaos of post-Soviet Russian capitalism. The clinic, despite its remote and gloomy aspects, emerges as a haven of peace in contrast to the complexities of human society with which Platonov must re-engage. Similarly, although Professor Muromtsev's so-called LAZAR (which is simultaneously a play on the Russian word for "infirmary" (*lazaret*); the acronym for the clinic's full name, "Laboratory for Refrigeration and Regeneration"; and the Russian version of the name "Lazarus") inspires dread in camp inmates, the professor is a kindly man who treats his patients with consideration and respect, resisting Stalin's wishes in order to freeze them as humanely as

possible. Some time after his discharge from Dr. Geiger's clinic, Platonov develops an incurable neurodegenerative disorder. But he refuses the opportunity to be treated in a third clinic in Munich, preferring to face death on his own terms.

In short, the novel's clinics, however mysterious and dreadful they initially appear, actually provide the hero with a haven from the remorseless Gothic pattern of murder and retribution prevailing in the outside world. Their superficially Gothic aspects (the mystery and isolation of Dr. Geiger's hospital, the imminence of death in Professor Muromtsev's laboratory) suspend the reader's awareness that the *real* Gothic nightmare – the burden of repressed memory – is within individuals. As he rejoins the everyday world, beginning an affair with Anastasia's granddaughter, Nastia, Platonov grapples with precisely this problem. In addition to normal existential angst, querying the meaning of life, Platonov now asks why he has been granted a *second* life:

When a person returns – from wherever he has been – this is hardly accidental. This is a change in a decision already taken or in the natural order of events. There must be weighty reasons for any return. When a person returns not just from anywhere, but from the Other Side [*s togo sveta*], he has particular tasks. Lazarus, who returned on the fourth day, bore witness to the Lord's omnipotence.

To what do I bear witness?<sup>39</sup>

One of the core tropes of all Gothic literature is the “return of the repressed;” not just in the Freudian sense of repressed memories returning as dreams, but the actual re-appearance or repetition of individuals and actions from the past. In most Gothic literature, from *Otranto* onwards, this cycle is restitutive (the hidden message is delivered, the lost heir is identified, the heroine is restored to her fortune). But inevitably, it is also punitive: any wrongdoing – the so-called sins of the fathers – is visited on the next generation. Part of the irony of Platonov's position is that he returns upon himself, coming back intact from the dead, without understanding why. He is his own message from beyond the grave. But this anomalous return does not spare him from other typically Gothic iterations. First, his own sins may be visited

on his child: Nastia is briefly admitted to hospital to avert a miscarriage (at the end of the novel, the fate of Platonov's heir is still unclear). Second, his nervous degeneration continues, threatening to reduce him within a few months to premature senility and death, and thus reinstating the natural order of things.<sup>40</sup> And thirdly, when Nastia brings him the original statue of Themis, an Ancient Greek symbol of justice which used to belong to his parents and which her grandmother had preserved for the whole twentieth century, Platonov's repressed memory finally returns. Quite soon after awakening in Geiger's clinic he had recalled this statue, without realizing its full implications for him:

On the dresser stood a statuette of Themis, given to my father the day he graduated from the law faculty. They showed it to me when I was still at my mother's breast, saying: Themis. Then they would ask me, especially when there were guests: Where's Themis? And I would point. I did not yet know who Themis was; I thought she was just some old rubbish on the dresser. I liked everything about Themis except her scales, because they didn't rise and fall. I tolerated this until I was about seven, and then I tried to make the scales movable; I pushed them, striking with a little hammer. I was sure that they had to rise and fall; I thought they were just jammed. The scales, of course, broke off.<sup>41</sup>

Only after the statuette of Justice returns to his post-resurrection life does Platonov grasp its double significance as weapon and symbol, the secret at the heart of his history. Since so much of *The Aviator* describes the individual's subjection by a very *unjust* society – in which any resistance is as fruitless as the child Innokentiy's attempt to shift the scales of Justice with a hammer — , the reader is led to empathize with Platonov. We assume his conviction for Zaretskii's murder is wrongful. But the young Platonov is no innocent; outraged by Zaretskii's amoral betrayal of Anastasia's father, he murdered him using the small but heavy statue of Themis as a weapon.

Platonov's punishment, despite all the hardships of the camps and the death-like ellipsis he endured for most of a century, was therefore legally just. But his revenge killing of Zaretskii for denouncing Voronin was no less morally just. (Platonov's act is comparable to the Italian secret society's assassination of Count Fosco, with presumably similar

provocation, a deed which the narrator of *The Woman in White* regrets without condemning). The mechanics of Gothic plot demand that Platonov's murder of Zaretskii cannot be expiated until he has confessed; the statue of Justice, surviving the twentieth century almost as miraculously as Platonov himself, acts as an ironic reminder of his crime. The camp and the ward have punished Platonov only in an inadequate, purely legal sense; Gothic justice demands Platonov's true and final death in exchange for Zaretskii's. This interpretation makes sense of the apparently random cruelty of Platonov's neurodegenerative illness (as punishment for the crime he committed and never confessed). At the same time, however, the illness, viewed as divine punishment, renders all Platonov's legally imposed suffering futile, suggesting that Stalin-era Soviet justice was not only brutal, but meaningless. The function of institutional Gothic in *The Aviator* appears to be deliberate misdirection: like the narrative itself, the clinics divert our expectations of blame and guilt from the real source of the crime. This makes the reversal all the more acute when we realize that the Gothic villain, and the Gothic hero, are one and the same. If Collins's *The Woman in White* showed how the Gothic atmosphere of the mental asylum can pervade and taint society's cherished institutions, *The Aviator* shows how individuals can become complicit in the same process of moral corruption.

### **Other Gothic tropes**

The two authors compared here use many more Gothic devices than the spatial trope of the sinister institution. For example, the trope of the "found manuscript" is essential to several of Sharov's novels, as we have already seen with *In Their Footsteps*.<sup>42</sup> In *The Rehearsals*, the historian Suvorin collects Old Believer books and manuscripts from remote Siberian villages. As his student, the narrator acquires a three-hundred-year-old diary by a Breton travelling player called Jacques de Sertan. This diary (not the original, which was destroyed, but an almost equally ancient version lovingly transcribed by members of de

Sertan's troupe) proves to contain both the key to understanding a bizarre Siberian sectarian community, and the riddle of their fatidic delusion. Similarly, the common Gothic plot of the lost or estranged heir, central to Sharov's *In Their Footsteps*, reappears as a subplot of Sharov's final novel, *The Kingdom of Agamemnon* (*Tsarstvo Agamemnona*, 2018); the latter follows the adventures of the lost heir to the Romanov throne: the son of Grand Prince Mikhail, living in secret under an assumed name.<sup>43</sup>

In foundational Gothic texts such as Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron* (1778), supernatural messages and family legends are limited in their power to assert the true heir's legitimacy: the final and incontrovertible proof is the exposure of the skeleton of the heir's murdered father. Exhumation, the physical intervention of the dead, is the ultimate means of "correcting" the false version of history created by the usurper and restoring the family estate to the true heir. We can find a variation on this trope in various texts by Vodolazkin and Sharov, not unironically inspired by the "Common Task" of the Russian philosopher Nikolai Federov, who instructed his followers to physically collect and reconstitute the dust of their ancestors. (It is, of course, significant that Federov is a character in *Before and During*). Here is the climactic exhumation of the heir's murdered parent in Reeve's novel:

Edmund bade them bring shovels and remove the earth. While they were gone, he desired Oswald to repeat all that passed the night they sat up together in that apartment, which he did till the servants returned. They threw out the earth, while the by-standers in solemn silence waited the event. After some time and labour they struck against something. They proceeded till they discovered a large trunk, which with some difficulty they drew out. It had been corded round, but the cords were rotted to dust. They opened it, and found a skeleton which appeared to have been tied neck and heels together, and forced into the trunk.

"Behold," said Edmund, "the bones of him to whom I owe my birth!"

[...]

Oswald exclaimed. "Behold the day of retribution! Of triumph to the innocent, of shame and confusion to the wicked!"

The young gentlemen declared that Edmund had made good his assertions.<sup>44</sup>

Contrast this with Innokentyi Platonov's attempt to establish the veracity of his childhood memories, as well as restoring continuity between his distant pre-revolutionary youth and the present day, by opening the disturbed grave of an old family friend, Terentyi Osipovich, in St Petersburg's Nikolskii Cemetery:

Unnoticed by the others, I took a step towards the coffin and placed my hand on the half-rotten wooden lid. I felt over it. Just where the lid connected with the box there was a small crack. Slipping my fingers into this, I pulled the lid upwards with an effort.

There was no need for force; the coffin-lid rose easily. I glanced again at the others around – all of them were, as before, watching the pipe-laying. In the flickering light of the projector above, the remains of a man were visible. That man was Terentyi Osipovich. I knew him immediately.

Grey hairs, clinging close to his skull. A formal jacket, barely touched by decay. He was very much as he had been in life. His nose, it is true, was gone, and instead of his eyes there were two black gaps, but as far as the rest went, Terentyi Osipovich resembled himself. [...] [T]hen I noticed that he had no mouth.<sup>45</sup>

In both stories, the physical remains of the dead body function as proof of legitimacy. In *The Old English Baron*, they legitimate a succession and a marriage proposal; in *The Aviator*, they legitimate memory. In Reeve's novel, the position of Edmund's father's bones (which are still tied together) prove that he was murdered and subsequently hidden; Terentyi Osipovich's corpse, with its still-identifiable traits, proves that Platonov's recollections are accurate. Edmund's father's grave is found after a series of overt supernatural hints, and its opening is witnessed by an invited audience; the rediscovery of Terentyi Osipovich's grave is adventitious. Platonov opens the coffin secretly, exploiting the distraction of the workmen who disturbed it in the first place. Although the scene in the graveyard is arguably *more* Gothic than Reeve's original set-piece, precisely because it is more grotesque (the nocturnal setting, the secrecy, the detailed description of the corpse), it may owe more to Federov's philosophical aspiration to physically restore the dead than to any conscious emulation of Gothic by the author.



## Conclusion

As my interpretation suggests, the parallels between early European Gothic and post-Soviet Gothic falter when extended from the structural to the metafictional level. Gothic plots are traditionally restitutive, at least in the dominant Radcliffesque tradition (setting aside the chaotic narratives and tragic endings of novels by M.R. Lewis and E.T.A. Hoffmann): they find the hero or heroine at a point of extreme subjection, then trace his or her path to full restoration of fortune. Gothic narratives end with families reunited, losses recouped, and hope for the future. The novels by Sharov and Vodolazkin discussed above, in sharp contrast, deliberately avoid positive resolutions; the past dominates the narratives, and the future is either neutral (as in *In Their Footsteps* and *The Rehearsals*) or left in doubt by a deliberately open conclusion (*Before and During* and *The Aviator*).

Sharov's novels, in particular, always follow the hero (more rarely, the heroine) from a point in the present time of the narrator *backwards* to the period before the hero's life was disrupted. In short, Sharov writes Gothic plot in reverse; he is less interested in the hero's return to fortune, than in its original loss. There is very little forwards movement along the timeline of the main narrative (except in *Before and During*, where the main narrative advances from the narrator's committal to the false Flood). Where time does flow forwards in the many subplots, these are almost invariably self-contained flashbacks from the perspective of another narrator, and function to explain the same back-dated turning-point in the hero's fortunes. This reverse narrative flow is in fact consistent with Sharov's philosophy of history, as expressed in a 2008 essay, "*O proshlom nastoiashchego i budushchego*" ("On the Past of the Present and the Future"). With heavy irony, Sharov describes the temptations of revisionism and collective amnesia, from which not even professional historians are immune. Yet without understanding our beginnings, there is no future: "our constructions collapse

before our eyes, or turn out so crooked we can't bear to look at them."<sup>46</sup> Hence we are forced to conclude that:

[...] the shortest path to heaven, however inconvenient, lies backwards through our own footsteps [*dvoia sled*]. The problem here, of course, is that we have already erased them, whether because we feared that the Lord would come after us, or because we decided that the life we had lived was nothing to be proud of. [...]. Since there are no traces, we need reliable topographical maps, waymarks, and landmarks [...]. Our own and other nations' cataclysms, all those riots and revolutions, offer ample evidence.<sup>47</sup>

The almost ubiquitous motif of footsteps leading back on themselves in Sharov's plots and subplots – the *sledy* (footsteps) in the title of *In Their Footsteps*, the circular trails left by fleeing communities locked into self-persecuting cycles of persecution in *The Rehearsals*, all the pathways to the past taken by his narrators – emerges as a key device. Vodolazkin's *The Aviator* takes yet another trajectory in time; his narrative intersperses flashbacks to episodes in the past with linear progress in the present. But as we have seen, his narrator Platonov's present – with all its prospects of wealth, celebrity, and family – is irrevocably compromised by his past. Post-Soviet Gothic is uninterested in fantasy happy endings; instead, it scrutinizes the past, perhaps to avoid its reiteration in the future.

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<sup>1</sup> I refer, of course, to Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), and Ann Radcliffe's no less influential *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1792).

<sup>2</sup> Lipovetsky, "Literature on the Margins," 13-16; Walsh, "Microcosmography of Russian Cultural Myths."

<sup>3</sup> Etkind, *Warped Mourning*, 229-232.

<sup>4</sup> Bashkatova, "A New Mourning."

<sup>5</sup> For more on the post-Soviet "wild nineties" and after, see Lipovetsky, "Literature on the Margins;" Borenstein, *Overkill*; and Noordenbos, *Post-Soviet Literature*.

<sup>6</sup> Armitt, "Magical Realism," 519.

<sup>7</sup> Luckhurst, "Biomedical Horror," 91.

<sup>8</sup> Starobinets, *Ubezishche 3/9*, 181. My translation.

<sup>9</sup> See Maguire, "Lazarus on the Ark".

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- <sup>10</sup> Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 41.
- <sup>11</sup> Aguirre, "Geometries of Terror," 6.
- <sup>12</sup> Rieger, "St. Bernard's," 248.
- <sup>13</sup> For discussion of Gothic space in Soviet literature, see Maguire, *Stalin's Ghosts*, 43-88.
- <sup>14</sup> For an elaboration of this theme, see Castle, *The Female Thermometer*, 3-20.
- <sup>15</sup> Aguirre, "Geometries of Terror," 2.
- <sup>16</sup> See Horner and Zlosnik, "Glimpses of the Dark Side," for more discussion of Du Maurier's stories in the Gothic-fantastic context.
- <sup>17</sup> For more on the perception of insane asylums in America and elsewhere, see Haltunnen, "Gothic Mystery."
- <sup>18</sup> Stoker, *Dracula*, 60.
- <sup>19</sup> Karamzin, "The Island of Bornholm," 123-4.
- <sup>20</sup> Karamzin, "The Island of Bornholm," 131; Karamzin, "Ostrov Borngol'ma," 673.
- <sup>21</sup> Horace Walpole's 1768 play *The Mysterious Mother*, which Karamzin could conceivably have read in a pirated edition (Walpole refused to allow its public performance) offers a prototype plot of mother-son incest.
- <sup>22</sup> See Offord, "Karamzin's Gothic Tale".
- <sup>23</sup> Hoeveler, *Gothic Feminism*, xiii.
- <sup>24</sup> Wollstonecraft, "Maria," 74.
- <sup>25</sup> Wollstonecraft, "Maria," 184.
- <sup>26</sup> Wollstonecraft, "Maria," 76-7.
- <sup>27</sup> Godwin, "Conclusion," 204.
- <sup>28</sup> Collins, *The Woman in White*, 22.
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>30</sup> Crawford, *Gothic Fiction*, 191.
- <sup>31</sup> See Reich, *State of Madness*.
- <sup>32</sup> Ready, *Persisting in Folly*, 344.
- <sup>33</sup> See Ready, *Persisting in Folly*, 344-54; and Maguire, "Lazarus On The Ark," for further discussion of *Before and During* in the context of trauma and heterotopia.
- <sup>34</sup> Walsh, "Microcosmography of Russian Cultural Myths," 568.
- <sup>35</sup> Sharov, *Sled v sled*. My translation.
- <sup>36</sup> Abraham, "Notes on the Phantom," 291.
- <sup>37</sup> Sharov, *Before and During*, 50-2 (on Tolstoi and his son); 126 and *passim* (on Germaine de Staël's several rebirths).
- <sup>38</sup> Rieger, "St. Bernard's," 249.
- <sup>39</sup> Vodolazkin, *Aviator*, 286-7.
- <sup>40</sup> There is an analogy here with the advancing dementia of Sharov's narrator in *The Rehearsals*. See Maguire, "Lazarus on the Ark." The gradual annulment of any mysterious biological miracle is a common trope of biomedical Gothic. Contrast, for example, Daniel Keyes' *Flowers for Algernon* (1959), in which a mentally handicapped man gains genius-level intelligence after a radical treatment, only to predict – and experience – an inevitable relapse; or even more aptly for the present case, Stephen P. Kiernan's *The Curiosity* (2013), in which the body of an American polar explorer is recovered whole from an ice floe by modern-day researchers a century later, and successfully revived in a clinic. After briefly experiencing twenty-first-century life, the man develops an untreatable metabolic disorder, and chooses death at sea over hospitalization. Despite some plot parallels and the common Gothic theme of inevitable decline, Kiernan's novel is less polemical than Vodolazkin's; his hero has no guilty secret.
- <sup>41</sup> Vodolazkin, *Aviator*, 39.
- <sup>42</sup> In Radcliffe's *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), Adelina learns her family history after finding her late father's diary in a cellar. See Hoeveler, *Gothic Feminism*, esp. 80-4. In *Otranto* the entire narrative is presented as a "found manuscript."
- <sup>43</sup> For example, Edmund Lovel in Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron* (1778) is brought up as a peasant while his uncle usurps his estate; the monk Medardus in Hoffmann's *The Devil's Elixirs* (1815) is unaware of his family history and estranged from his half-siblings.
- <sup>44</sup> Reeve, *The Old English Baron*, 115-6.
- <sup>45</sup> Vodolazkin, *Aviator*, 325-6.
- <sup>46</sup> Sharov, "Man with Four Stomachs," 29.
- <sup>47</sup> Ibid.