pominovenie, and *panikhida* upon his death fills two chapters of the book, as he evaluates the family's reaction to the decision as well as the public's response. During these chapters, Kolstø frequently downplays the severity of these extraordinary measures undertaken by the Synod by attributing them not to retaliation for Tolstoi's critique of Orthodoxy but to a failure of the Synod to communicate effectively, to official concern for his impact on impressionable believers, and to a campaign to return Tolstoi to the fold. The many journal articles cited by Kolstø attest to the Orthodox Church's increased visibility resulting from its engagement with Tolstoyanism, but he ultimately concludes that although Tolstoi drew upon his Orthodox heritage for key ideas like asceticism, all the same he sought to "reinterpret" rather than "rediscover" the "unadulterated doctrine" of Christ while maintaining that in Christianity lies were interwoven with truth (269).

In the final analysis, Kolstø convincingly argues that the fact that detractors applied the label of Antichrist to Tolstoi further attests to the presence of Orthodox ideas in his teachings, since a sign of the Antichrist is his resemblance to Christ, through which he leads the faithful astray. While Kolstø overlooks some of the novelist's greatest contributions to fundamental—yet not uniquely—Christian concepts like Providence in *Voina i mir* or the development of individual conscience in *Anna Karenina*, his elucidation of Tolstoi's appraisal of the two attributes Christ assigns to himself in the Gospel of John (14:6), through an identification with "the Truth and the Way," effectively demonstrates how this admirer of the *strannik* adopts this final role with little anticipation of its very public consequences (116). Despite the professor of patristics Vasilii Ekzempliarskii's defense of Tolstoi's social message and Bulgakov's censure of leadership for displaying such "zeal" in correcting Tolstoi while tolerating the "antics" of Grigorii Rasputin, Kolstø defends the Russian ecclesiastical leadership when concluding that the Russian readership, unfamiliar with Tolstoi's most extreme views because of the censor prohibiting their publication, failed to comprehend the motivations behind the *Circular Letter* (155).

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Writing Fear: Russian Realism and the Gothic. By Katherine Bowers. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022. xvi, 264 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. $65.00, hard bound.
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Should every description of a traumatic event, death, pain, or cruelty, especially directed at women, be viewed as gothic? *Writing Fear: Russian Realism and the Gothic*, an interesting interpretation of Russian realism, confronts us with this question.

Writing Fear follows the recent trend in scholarship that seeks to uncover gothic elements in realistic novels. Bowers argues that gothic fiction pervaded realism because "[r]ealist writers found the gothic's mobilization of fear within a narrative structure invaluable" (4). The term "gothic realism" is a borrowing from Mikhail Bakhtin. However, differently from Bakhtin, who explored the complex relations between realism and preceding literary forms, Bowers tends to identify realism and the Gothic by focusing on their fascination with fear. She claims that the gothic was "a key tool in the project of recreating life in prose." According to Bowers, the gothic as a genre "relies on the exaggeration of emotions such as fear, horror, and dread." Realist writers could not resist the Gothic temptation—"the affective capacity of fear"—to make their work more engaging for their audiences (4).

The book's first part, "Gothic Migrations," addresses the Russian public's encounters with the European Gothic novel, then turns, in search of gothic elements, to *Eugene Onegin* and *Dead Souls*, *Bezhin Meadow*, and "Oblomov's Dream" to exemplify gothic realism. Fedor Dostoevskii's *The Idiot* is Bowers' showcase: the novel portrays "the fall of a noble house, the implied quasi-incestuous seduction of an underage ward by her guardian, and the uncanny figure of the Idiot who unconsciously causes violence," and "constant discussions of violent death" (74–75). Those themes, the author claims, are gothic. The choice of *The Idiot* and the lack of attention to *Landlady* (mentioned only in passim in this part), *Bobok*, and *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man*, which contain similar themes, requires better justification.

The second part, "Gothic Realism," extends this concept to Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin's *The Golovelev's Family*, Ivan Aksakov's *The Family Chronicle*, Dostoevskii's *Demons*, and Ivan Bunin's *Dark Avenues*. Bowers links the gothic to social anxieties: "urban poverty, the woman question, the threat of revolutionary terrorism, and the decline of the family" (14). The choice of texts in this part is equally questionable. For example, in the chapter "Psychological Petersburg, Gothic Petersburg," the reader finds a two-sentence discussion of Dostoevskii's *The Double*, and no mention of Nikolai Gogol''s *Nevsky Prospect*, although the image of St. Petersburg plays a prominent role in shaping the psychological experiences of the protagonists in these works.

Bowers inscribes her book in the tradition that defines the Gothic as a repertoire of themes—a plot driven by a mystery, broken taboos, depictions of "fear, anxieties, and revulsion" (7), death, violence, and insanity. She pursues these tropes in Russian realism "from its beginnings . . . to its eventual merger with modernism" (11). Indeed, most of the realist novels use some motives from this list. But if their presence suffices to define *The Idiot* or *The Golovelev's Family* as "gothic realism," almost any literary work evoking fear may be called gothic. What, then, remains of realism? Or of gothic? What is the value of a concept that does not differentiate between genres?

With its overt sensationalism, the Gothic novel offered eighteenth-century readers the voyeuristic thrill of witnessing a victim's fears, entertaining a public that was tired of Classicism. As Bowers acknowledges, there was no philosophy—or moral quests—behind Gothic miracles and agonies. Contemporaries considered Romanticism a high genre because it explored the passions of extraordinary personalities, while Gothic, with its focus on deranged monsters and mysticism, was perceived as a low genre.

Focusing on the writer's goals may offer a better way of defining a genre. What determines the writer's choice to describe a dead body, death, or suicide? A desire to arouse the readers' morbid curiosity or a necessity embedded in the novel's worldview? In other words, is "writing fear" an essential instrument to express the writer's philosophical or moral inquiries, or is it a commodity?

No matter how criminal or revolting they are, Rogozhin, Smerdyakov, and Karenin are complex humans, not clichéd monsters. However problematic Dostoevskii's worldview as expressed in *The Idiot* or Lev Tolstoi's philosophy in *Anna Katerina* (which, arguably, also features the "gothic repertoire"—a victimized woman who commits suicide) may be, those realist novels seek to understand human behavior and psyche and speak about human sufferings. We may doubt that the descriptions of Nastassya Filippovna's or Anna's dead bodies were created to entertain the readers by "the affective capacity of fear."

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