

7 Under the Floorboards, Over the Door: The Gothic Corpse and Writing Fear in *The Idiot*

KATHERINE BOWERS

In August 1867 Fyodor Dostoevsky and his wife Anna Grigoryevna visited the Basel Museum and viewed Hans Holbein the Younger's painting *Body of the Dead Christ in the Tomb* (1521–2). Writing her memoirs in the 1910s, Anna Grigoryevna recalled Dostoevsky's reaction to it:

The painting had a crushing [podavliaiushchee] impact on Fyodor Mikhailovich. He stood before it as if stunned [porazhennyi]. I did not have the strength to look at it – the first impression was too difficult for me, particularly in my sickly condition – and I went into the other galleries. When I returned ... I found Fyodor Mikhailovich riveted in the same place before the painting. On his agitated [vzvolnovannom] face was a frightened [ispugannoe] expression, one I had noticed more than once during the initial moments of an epileptic seizure.¹

Anna's concern that Dostoevsky would have a seizure prompted her to lead the writer to rest in another room where he gradually calmed down, yet he "insisted on returning once more to view this astounding painting [porazivshuiu kartinu]."² Anna's 1867 diary records other details including her own reaction to the painting: "it is not at all aesthetic and only arouses disgust and some kind of horror in me" [eto vovse ne estetchno, i vo mne vzbudilo odno tol'ko otrashchenie i kakoi-to uzhas].³ Dostoevsky later incorporated *Dead Christ* into *The Idiot* [Idiot, 1869], the novel he was working on in the fall of 1867.⁴

In his study of Dostoevsky's relationship to beauty, Robert Louis Jackson writes that the painting "deeply disturbs man's moral and religious tranquility; it is the embodiment of an aesthetics of despair."⁵ Jackson likens the painting's aesthetics to atheism, a connection also made in *The Idiot* by the characters' reactions to it. In Part II Prince Myshkin famously exclaims that "that picture may cause some to lose their faith" (8:182),⁶ a

statement which articulates the central problem the painting represents within the novel, namely the challenge of believing in Christ's resurrection when faced with his apparent mortality in such an abject way. Ippolit extends this challenge outwards in Part III, asking the crucial question: "if death is so horrible and the laws of nature so powerful, how can they be overcome?" (8:339). How it is possible to believe in a higher power when confronted with brute nature as expressed in the finality of death?

Death is a point of fascination for Dostoevsky throughout *The Idiot*, more so than in any other of his works. Liza Knapp has described the novel as "a comprehensive study of death," observing: "*The Idiot* asks what we know about death and how we narrate about death."⁷ In addition to the discussions of Holbein's painting, the novel includes myriad stories of death, from Myshkin's tale of the experience of a condemned man in the beginning of Part I to the revelation of Nastasya Filippovna's corpse in the conclusion of Part IV. One such narrated death anticipates the details of Nastasya Filippovna's: the "body under the floorboards," a murder victim buried in Rogozhin's house. Nastasya Filippovna describes it in a letter in Part III: "I kept thinking that, somewhere under the floorboards, perhaps hidden there by his father, there might be a dead man wrapped in oilcloth [kleenka], just like that Moscow case, and even surrounded in the same way with bottles of Zhdanov fluid [zhdanovskaia zhidkost']" (8:380). She has imagined this murder, but its details – the oilcloth and Zhdanov fluid – link it to a real case: the July 1866 murder of the jeweller Kalmykov in Moscow. The murderer, V.F. Mazurin, used a disinfectant called Zhdanov fluid to disguise the smell of the body. Later, when Myshkin witnesses Nastasya Filippovna's death tableau, the oilcloth and Zhdanov fluid again appear, and Myshkin remarks on its similarity to the Moscow case, "As it was there... in Moscow?" (8:504). As Jacques Cateau observes, the two murders (Kalmykov's and Nastasya Filippovna's) "endlessly echo and clarify each other."⁸ Although Nastasya Filippovna's corpse is revealed only in the final scenes, Dostoevsky's hidden corpse is buried in the novel's narrative structure, remembered when objects, encounters, or dreams prompt characters to imagine Rogozhin as a murderer: for example, a silk-wrapped razor, an offhand comment that Rogozhin will slit Nastasya Filippovna's throat, or Nastasya Filippovna's fantasy of the body buried under the floorboards of Rogozhin's house.

This concealed corpse trope also links *The Idiot* to the gothic genre.⁹ Another "body under the floorboards" famously appears in Edgar Allan Poe's gothic story "The Tell-Tale Heart" (1843). Poe's story tells of a murderer who is haunted by the beating of his victim's heart from underneath the floorboards. The audible heartbeat, which only the narrator can hear, denotes his guilty conscience.¹⁰ Following Poe, the body under

the floorboards takes on this association of transgression – a theme explored in depth by Dostoevsky in *Crime and Punishment* [Prestuplenie i nakazanie] and elsewhere. Additionally, in *The Idiot*, this imagined corpse joins a series of other dead bodies: victims of execution and violence, victims of poverty and deprivation, victims of illness, and *Dead Christ*.

A copy of *Dead Christ* hangs over a doorway in Rogozhin's house. Like the body under the floorboards, the body in the painting occupies gothic space: a liminal space – a threshold – in a house associated with darkness, suffering, and a violent past and, as Catteau notes, based on Mazurin the murderer's house. The novel's philosophical core centres on two key scenes in which *Dead Christ* figures prominently, foregrounding again the centrality of the dead body to the novel: Myshkin's discussion with Rogozhin about the nature of faith and Ippolit's "Essential Explanation."¹¹ Yet the impassioned discussion of Holbein's work in Part II, or even the detailed description Ippolit provides of it in Part III, fails to capture the affective experience the painting provokes, that which Dostoevsky had when he viewed it. This chapter will examine one tool Dostoevsky used in *The Idiot* to create an affective experience within his realist art – gothic narrative force – and focus on its utility in the discussion of the novel's gothic bodies: *Dead Christ* over the door and the imagined body under the floorboards.

Dostoevsky and Holbein's Gothic Corpse

Holbein's painting depicts Christ's bruised and cut corpse laid out in the tomb following the crucifixion, but in its unique depiction of a visibly mortal and vulnerable body rather than a body obviously destined for resurrection, its subject could be any body. Whereas in *The Idiot* the characters' ekphrastic discussions clearly indicate the theological implications of depicting Christ's body in this manner, Anna Grigoryevna describes her first encounter with the painting as a visceral reaction to the realistic depiction of the corpse itself.¹²

He is depicted with an emaciated body, visible bones and ribs, arms and legs with pierced wounds, swollen and very blue, like a dead man who has already begun to rot. The face is also fearfully agonized, with half-open eyes, but already seeing nothing and expressing nothing. The nose, mouth and chin had turned blue; in general, it so closely resembles a real dead man, that, really, it seemed to me that I would not want to stay in the same room with him.¹³

She focuses on the body's features, but describes them liminally, that is, in a state of transition. The subject is like a corpse about to decompose,

yet it is animated as, in her interpretation of the painting, the face is “agonized,” as if expressing feeling, and the eyes half-open, as if they might see.

By emphasizing the fact that the eyes see and express nothing, Anna Grigoryevna underscores the liminality she senses in confronting the painting. She is disoriented as she faces the ambiguous space between life and death.¹⁴ In Anna Grigoryevna’s description this space between the familiar and the unknown is a locus of fear, and, indeed, she comments that she would not like to be left alone with the painting because it resembles a real dead man. For Julia Kristeva, “the utmost of abjection” is a corpse “seen without God and outside of science”: “It is death infecting life. Abject. It is something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object. Imaginary uncanniness and real threat, it beckons to us and ends up engulfing us.”¹⁵ Anna Grigoryevna is compelled and engulfed by the portrait in the way Kristeva would later describe. Indeed, her reaction to *Dead Christ* underscores the painting’s realism. In *The Idiot* Holbein’s painting represents this fear, both in its role of *memento mori* and in its challenge to Christian faith.

Dead Christ provokes Anna Grigoryevna’s fear, and when it appears in *The Idiot*, also charged with this affect, the painting functions as a gothic corpse. Yael Shapira defines a “gothic corpse” as “an image of the dead body rendered with deliberate graphic bluntness in order to excite and entertain.”¹⁶ Shapira argues that eighteenth-century English novelists included sensationalistic descriptions of dead bodies in their fiction as part of a new trend. Eschewing earlier didactic uses of these graphic passages, the new novelists rather used them to “seize the reader’s attention and add a powerful charge to key moments in the plot.”¹⁷ While *Dead Christ* provokes strong reactions, it may seem counter-intuitive to equate the painting’s appearance in Dostoevsky’s novel with excitement and entertainment. Yet, in each scene where it specifically appears, the painting serves as a catalyst for storytelling; it sparks Myshkin’s four parables about the nature of religious faith as well as Ippolit’s “Essential Explanation.” Intriguingly, while the graphic and sensationalistic nature of corpses is bound up with Kristevan abjection, Shapira’s study instead argues that

decisions about the graphic image of the corpse function as gestures of self-definition: the very fact that the corpse is there or not there, hinted at or abruptly revealed, riddled with worms or idealized into an object of ethereal beauty – these are not only representations of the dead body itself (complete as it is with cultural connotations, fears and longings) but statements

about the intentions of the writer and the way she or he perceives fiction's relation to the reader.¹⁸

The corpse in gothic literature is thus a narrative device that a writer deliberately and consciously deploys to create an affective connection with the reader. This connection is intrinsic to the gothic as, in M.H. Abrams's formulation, the best gothic novels "[open] up to fiction the realm of the irrational and [...] perverse impulses and nightmarish terrors that lie beneath the orderly surface of the civilized mind"—for both the characters and the reader.¹⁹ *Dead Christ* assumes this function in *The Idiot*. As the gothic corpse, the painting's recurrence in the novel generates affective responses among the characters. Using *Dead Christ* as a catalyst for gothic narrative force in *The Idiot* enabled Dostoevsky the space within a realist framework to explore the nature of his characters' fear, but also his readers'.

Dostoevsky was an avid reader of gothic novels. In *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions* [Zimnie zametki o letnikh vpechatleniiax, 1863], he recalls childhood encounters with Ann Radcliffe's works.²⁰

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. (5:46)²¹

This statement suggests gothic novels' effect on the reader (or, in this case, listener). First, they revolve around the solution of a mystery. This mystery's solution, constantly anticipated and deferred, spurs both reader and gothic heroine or hero onward. The reader keeps turning the pages, filled, like Dostoevsky, with ecstasy and terror, dreading and yet looking forward to the anticipated horrors. The heroine, similarly, often imprisoned in a gloomy castle, opens door after door to discover the castle's secrets, in spite of the constant expectation of stumbling upon something dreadful. Secondly, in addition to mystery, the novels' plots revolve around some broken taboo or transgression, which is sometimes the source of the mystery and other times simply lends atmosphere. Finally, the gothic is preoccupied with the exploration of psychologies such as fear, anxiety, and dread – both in depicting the way these psychologies manifest within the work and in evoking them from the reader.²² These novels are intended to spark readers' imaginations and produce a temporary but strong affective reaction in them, as they do in the young Dostoevsky.

While Dostoevsky famously borrowed from multiple genres across his literary corpus, in *The Idiot*, a novel permeated by fear, he specifically

deployed gothic narrative much more extensively than in his other works. Several scholars have observed gothic elements in Dostoevsky's work. Leonid Grossman was the first to recognize Dostoevsky's "borrowing" from gothic novels,²³ while George Steiner extended this argument and identified a particular connection between *The Idiot* and the gothic, noting that Dostoevsky's brand of realism applied techniques "translated" from the gothic genre.²⁴ Robin Feuer Miller was the first to examine in depth Dostoevsky's use of the gothic in *The Idiot*; she identifies a gothic narrator among the novel's multiple narrative voices and maps it to an organized system of narration.²⁵ In Miller's analysis, the gothic narrator's function in *The Idiot* is twofold: to rivet the reader's attention and also to enable a fantastic reality. Building on Miller's study, my work elsewhere examines the novel's narrative debt to the gothic, arguing that Dostoevsky's emplotment incorporates gothic master plots as a means to enable the philosophical experiment he puts forth in *The Idiot*.²⁶

The present chapter is a counterpart to this work. Here I analyze the appearance of gothic narrative force in *The Idiot* to reveal a tightly interconnected and systematic exploration of the affective experience of viewing *Dead Christ*. When I refer to gothic narrative force, I mean the feeling of emotional momentum built using narrative devices common to the gothic genre in a text. The reader, encountering gothic narrative force, is plunged into a self-conscious state of anticipation characterized by affective responses such as dread, anxiety, and fear. By "the reader" here, I refer both to the actual reader and the documented effects of gothic narrative devices on readers and to the imagined reader, the reader that the author imagines as they write the literary text and that the actual reader imagines as they read it.²⁷ Peter K. Garrett describes gothic narrative force as "the force of the desire to disturb and to be disturbed that joins tellers and their audiences and the counterforces that seek to control disturbance, the force of destiny that overwhelms characters, the force of repetition that generates multiplying versions."²⁸ This gothic narrative force punctuates the novelistic fabric of *The Idiot* in three key episodes that evoke Holbein's painting: Myshkin's encounter with Rogozhin in Part II, Ippolit's "Essential Explanation" in Part III, and the discovery of Nastasya Filipovna's corpse in Part IV. The painting's religious and philosophical connotations are indelibly bound to its role as a gothic body in the text through these gothic narratives. More broadly, this network of gothic narrative episodes engages the reader on a visceral level, cultivating a feeling of terror and anxiety that comes to exist beyond the pages of the novel.

The First Narrative: The Gloomy House, the Knife, and the Corpse

The first gothic narrative arc begins with the uncanny feeling of Rogozhin's gaze in Chapter 2 of Part II. This episode prefaces the events of the next three chapters, all marked with gothic narrative force: Myshkin's visit to Rogozhin's house in Chapter 3, the discussion of *Dead Christ* and faith in Chapter 4, and, the conclusion, Myshkin's seizure in Chapter 5. Miller has called Chapter 5 "the most extended passage in the Gothic mode" in the novel: "the whole chapter, save the last two paragraphs, is like the tale of terror in its heightened mood and in the extreme use of the technique of arbitrary disclosure by the narrator. Fears merely intimated provoke a greater effect than ones that are fully described."²⁹ Miller identifies several gothic narrative tropes, including the narrator's "air of overbearing, all-encompassing mystery," the parallel between Myshkin's sense of foreboding and an oncoming storm, strong dramatic irony, and the chapter's culmination in the shocking scene of the Prince's seizure.³⁰ However, my analysis traces the cues of gothic narrative force and reveals both that the gothic arc in Part II begins earlier and that the gothic corpse appears at its centre.

The first gothic narrative marker appears when Myshkin, arriving in St Petersburg, "suddenly" has the uncomfortable sensation that "the strange, burning gaze of someone's two eyes" (8:158) is watching him.³¹ The narrator almost immediately dismisses the feeling – "of course, he only imagined it" (8:158) – but the episode leaves the Prince with an "unpleasant impression" (8:158). While the moment seems inconsequential, the uncanny feeling of being watched by someone becomes a repeated theme in the novel, one felt by Myshkin, Ippolit, and, finally, Nastasya Filippovna. Each time a character feels this gaze, it signals the beginning of gothic narrative force in the text.

Myshkin goes to visit Rogozhin, whose house is described in strikingly gothic terms: "both inside and out the house appears somehow inhospitable and barren, everything somehow concealed and hidden" (8:170).³² As the passage continues, Dostoevsky's reader enters into the mindset of the gothic novel reader. Recognizable narrative markers identify the build-up of gothic narrative force: Rogozhin's house is "gloomy" [mrachnyi] and labyrinthine, with Myshkin forced to traverse a zig-zagging maze of corridors and shut-up rooms to reach Rogozhin (8:170). Myshkin, taking in the house and Rogozhin's "extraordinarily strange and heavy gaze," remembers "something recent, painful, gloomy," but the specific memory is not articulated (8:171). These gothic markers indicate a mystery to be solved. When Myshkin connects the gloomy gothic house with Rogozhin himself, the mystery of the house transfers to its owner and

the gothic objects it contains become clues for the reader to piece together: the soot-covered ancestral portraits, the knife, and *Dead Christ*, the gothic corpse.

When *Dead Christ* first appears, as Carol Apollonio has observed, the image is clearly divorced from any divine symbolism. It is a faded copy of unknown provenance hung above a threshold, surrounded by other faded prints, and, in Apollonio's words, "shows *an image of dead nature, not the living word*."³³ This mundane description is quickly subsumed by the image's representation of a gothic corpse and that body's effect on its viewers. As Apollonio argues, "The key is beyond the frame, in the living people facing the challenge of the image."³⁴ I would argue, the key lies in the affective response of the image's viewers. The scene in Rogozhin's house details the characters' discussion of the painting and Myshkin's response to it. Yet, strikingly, the source of these reactions remains concealed; the painting itself is not described. *Dead Christ* becomes a deferred mystery, one to be taken up later in the novel. This narrative technique, which exposes characters' reactions but does not reveal their source, is common in gothic fiction as well as in *The Idiot*, and represents another narrative link between Dostoevsky's novel and the gothic. Taking my cue from Dostoevsky and gothic novelists, I will defer the discussion of *Dead Christ* for later in this chapter and, instead, focus now on the relationship between the painting's appearance in Chapter 4 and the conclusion to the gothic narrative arc, Myshkin's epileptic fit.³⁵

Myshkin, before his fit, wanders the streets of St Petersburg while the gothic narrator describes his thoughts. Sarah J. Young links the painting and the fit as two parts of a whole: "In the Holbein and his confused mental state before his fit, Myshkin faces all the issues of how he has changed, what he has lost, and where he has failed."³⁶ During this process of self-reflection Myshkin wanders within the realm of the gothic.³⁷ Rogozhin's eyes appear again and once more Myshkin climbs a gloomy staircase. This repeated narrative structure in *The Idiot* is reminiscent of the gothic loci present in Ann Radcliffe's novels. Mark Pettus identifies a Radcliffean structure featuring circular movement between cell, scaffold, and turret as a chronotope in Dostoevsky's works.³⁸ In Pettus's analysis, climbing up to a turret – any elevated space – will lead to a shift in perspective, but does not enable escape from the cycle, as the turret itself is a space of entrapment. As Myshkin ascends this staircase, Rogozhin waits at the top with a knife, evoking the gothic objects encountered earlier – his secretive family line suggested in the sooty ancestral portraits and the garden knife concealed in a book – and represents a return of gothic narrative force. The reader anticipates the violence, waiting in suspense as Myshkin climbs the stairs. Here, Dostoevsky again uses the

gothic narrative trick of deferring a key plot point to build suspense: the anticipated attack is deferred until after Myshkin's visit to Rogozhin.

And what of the third gothic object, the *Dead Christ*? *Dead Christ* manifests in the epileptic fit that strikes Myshkin, saving him from Rogozhin. Epilepsy, for Myshkin, is both a curse and salvation. Both times Myshkin suffers an epileptic fit in the novel, he feels confusion, anxiety, and dread as it approaches. This feeling is intrinsically linked to gothic narrative in Chapter 5 as the gothic narrator describes Myshkin's pre-epileptic thoughts in what Miller calls a "deliberately mysterious" way, connecting the oncoming fit with a premonition of Rogozhin's attack: "'something' pursues Myshkin, a 'demon' has attached itself to him."³⁹ When the fit strikes, however, Myshkin feels "an intense inner light" and is transfigured. The fits bring clarity of mind and new insights, but they are described, in both cases, in language that evokes horror. Myshkin's first fit saves him from Rogozhin's knife, but his experience is no less horrifying than the threat of swift murder: "he clearly and consciously remembered the beginning, the very first sound of his fearful scream, which tore out of his chest and which he could not have stopped with any force. In an instant his consciousness was extinguished and then complete darkness" (8:195). Written from Myshkin's perspective, this account of a fit resembles an out-of-body experience, as the prince hears himself scream. A more clinical description of a seizure follows:

The face is suddenly, horribly distorted, especially the gaze. Convulsions and spasms overwhelm the whole body and all the facial features. A fearful, incomprehensible scream unlike anything else tears out of the chest; in that scream suddenly everything human seems to vanish and it is impossible, or at least very difficult, for the witness to comprehend and admit that the same person is screaming. One even imagines that someone else is screaming, someone inside this person ... For many, the sight of a man having a seizure fills them with decided and impossible horror, in which there is even something mystical. (8:195)

This first fit instills in the reader the idea of seizures as violent, unnatural, and painful experiences. Myshkin's sublime transfiguration is quickly lost in the description of the fit that follows. The supernatural seems present, but the "mystical" horror of the onlookers watching the seizure and Myshkin's violent experience contrast sharply with the "extraordinary *inner light*" the prince feels (*italics in original*). Following his fit, Myshkin lies on the ground, unconscious, and bruised. In this he resembles the Holbein painting. Before the fit, the image of the gothic body was implied but deferred when *Dead Christ* was discussed but not described.

The description of Myshkin's seizure, then, fulfils the narrative arc; the anticipated gothic body appears in the end and the deferred mystery is revealed.

The Second Narrative: The Nightmare, the Monster, and the Death Sentence

The second gothic narrative arc occurs in Part III in the long section detailing Ippolit's "Essential Explanation." As in the first, Rogozhin's uncanny gaze signals the advent of gothic narrative force and the gothic corpse appears centrally in the discussion of *Dead Christ*. The "Explanation" is set apart from the rest of the novel by two events; it begins with Ippolit's account of Rogozhin's appearance in his room at night and concludes with his suicide attempt. The signal of Rogozhin's eyes indelibly links this gothic narrative arc with the first. The first gothic narrative arc introduced a gothic setting and objects, transferring the affective experience of fear onto Rogozhin. This second arc builds on the first, exploring the nuances of fear, dread, and anxiety through a first-person confession narrative similar to gothic novels such as James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824). The contrast between Rogozhin's gaze in the beginning of each passage illustrates this difference. In the first scene, Myshkin feels an unknown gaze upon him and it makes an unpleasant lingering impression, while in the second Ippolit describes a gothic cliché: a midnight intruder, possibly supernatural, who voyeuristically watches the sleeping subject. Ippolit's experience of this gothic trope results in visceral fear, described in terms of physiological response: shivering, trembling, and breathlessness. In this sense, fear becomes a more palpable actor in the second gothic arc. In the first, *Dead Christ* acted as a catalyst for storytelling; in the second, the gothic conventions of Rogozhin's voyeurism spark Ippolit's "Essential Explanation," but Holbein's gothic body is nonetheless embedded in Ippolit's text.

Prompted by a gothic nightmare cliché, the "Explanation"'s encoded terrors take the form of monsters. The narrative begins with a horrible creature that haunts Ippolit's dreams. Described very precisely and yet unlike any identifiable animal, this monster has a tortoise shell and long tail, paws wriggling like snakes, and an excess of whiskers. As it runs about the bedroom Ippolit remarks that he "was terribly afraid" it would sting him, but that he was most tormented by these questions: who had sent it into his room, what they had meant to do to him, and "what was its secret?" (8:324). Ippolit's dead dog, Norma, similarly fears the monster, but musters her courage to stand up to it and even grab it between her teeth. The disgusting image of the chewed-up creature spewing white

fluid onto Norma's tongue concludes the dream. This nightmare sets the tone for the rest of Ippolit's "Explanation," which heavily incorporates elements of fear, mystery, and sensation into its narrative.

Dead Christ again appears centrally, but this time Ippolit supplies a detailed description of its subject:

It's the face of a man, *only just* taken down from the cross, that is, still preserving much that is alive, warm; nothing has stiffened yet, such that suffering even appears on the face of the dead man, as if he were still sensate ... In the painting this face has been fearfully beaten with blows, is swelling, and is covered with fearful, swollen and bloodstained bruises, the eyes are open, the pupils have rolled to the side: the large broad whites of the eyes glint with a sort of dead, glassy reflection. (8:339)

Here Ippolit fixates on the pain and suffering that Christ must have endured as he died, dwelling on each wound. In this scene, the gothic corpse takes on a new layer of meaning because of this graphic description. Whereas earlier the corpse served to fulfil the role of mystery, here there is no mystery; suffering and death are laid bare along with the ravages of natural processes. Ippolit goes on to liken these processes to a monster, "nature appears in the guise of an enormous, relentless, and mute beast [zveria], or, more accurately... in the guise of some kind of huge machine of modern construction, which senselessly caught, crushed, and devoured, deaf and insensible, a great and priceless being" (8:339).

Ippolit's horrified description is similar to Anna Grigoryevna's diary account in that both view the gothic body in terms of projected suffering and pain.⁴⁰ Like the uncanny sensation of disembodied eyes gazing at a subject, the gothic body too carries an uncanny feeling for its viewer. Steven Bruhm connects this sensation, through Freud's essay on "The Uncanny," with the return of the repressed: "repressed violence returns, and the body – afflicted, severed, cut – proclaims its primacy, its irrepressibility, its material existence."⁴¹ In Bruhm's study of the gothic body in Romantic fiction, the visibly vulnerable and mortal gothic body stands in opposition to "transcendent Romantic consciousness,"⁴² a situation that parallels the role of *Dead Christ* in *The Idiot* vis-à-vis religious faith. In this sense, in addition to its religious implications, as a gothic body, *Dead Christ* represents a *memento mori*, a reminder of our mortality, a locus for repressed terror. The image of the dead Christ, like the creature that haunts Ippolit's dreams, becomes a manifestation of the pain and uncertainty of death, of Ippolit's own fears, but he cannot yet accept the unknown and, with it, his own mortality. Death becomes monstrous.

When Ippolit asks how to imagine an image that has no image, his answer comes in the form of other monsters: a giant tarantula first, and then Rogozhin.

Echoing his prefatory appearance in Ippolit's "Essential Explanation," Rogozhin appears again as a gothic harbinger. After the first narrative arc's conclusion, the reader anticipates the voyeuristic bedroom scene, already guessing its outcome. However, whereas in the first narrative arc Rogozhin is a source of gothic fear, the gothic villain wielding the knife in the shadows, in the second Ippolit identifies him as a manifestation of gothic fear, an apparition that, like the monsters in his nightmares, could be fantasy. In the confession, Ippolit's thoughts seem to have slowed down, as if the process of feeling fear were dragging them out.

I'd no sooner thought I was afraid, then suddenly it was as if ice ran over my entire body; I felt a cold chill in my spine and my knees shook. At that very moment, as though he precisely guessed I was afraid, Rogozhin took back the hand on which he was leaning, straightened up, and began to move his mouth, as though he was about to laugh; he stared straight at me. Such rage seized me that I decidedly wanted to attack him. (8:341)

This fear feeds into the overarching feeling of anxiety that drives the novel. Ippolit, in breaking down the specific way he feels fear, its physical reaction, and what he is psychologically seeing and experiencing, manages to channel his fear into fury.

This transformation is a gothic convention: as Miller observes, "At the heart of the gothic tradition in literature lies a metaphysical, semi-mythic, frequently religious quest in which ... an individual, often a self-divided hero, seeks to discover his relationship to the universe."⁴³ As Ippolit relives his fears by retelling them, he has a sublime moment, and comes to new understanding through this experience of sublime anxiety. Whereas earlier he felt terror at the thought of Rogozhin in his room, after the transformation of his fear he is able to dispel Rogozhin's spectre. Although shaking with fear following the reading of his "Explanation," he no longer fears death.⁴⁴ Ippolit justifies his suicide as a solution to the torment and pain inflicted upon him by the "higher powers" who have given him the "death sentence" of consumption. Whereas earlier in the text, Myshkin provides descriptions of executions, and wonders openly what a condemned man must feel in his last moments, Ippolit's gothic narrative arc examines the myriad manifestations of fear upon a condemned man. Ippolit's terror drives him to the brink of madness, but also to the justification of great transgressions such as suicide. Here Dostoevsky analyzes the power that fear wields as well as the great existential

terror felt in the face of death. Ippolit's "Explanation," with its monsters and tragedies, anxieties and mysteries, provides a much clearer psychological portrait of a condemned man than Myshkin's empathetic but distanced descriptions of beheadings. This gothic narrative gives context to the more nebulous existential anxiety that drives the novel's philosophical questioning.

The Final Narrative: Behind the Black Veil

The final gothic narrative arc in the novel is linked to the other two thematically, through gothic narrative force and through oblique references to *Dead Christ*. This narrative, like the others, is first grounded in the gothic trope of Rogozhin's uncanny gaze, the feeling of his disembodied eyes watching that so unnerved Myshkin in Part II and Ippolit in Part III. In the end of Part III Nastasya Filippovna reports feeling Rogozhin's gaze upon her, and in Part IV she seems to be haunted by his spectre, which she claims is hiding in the garden and will kill her in the night. While the narrator explains this as a mirage, Rogozhin's apparition again signals a gothic arc, accompanied by the gothic trappings associated with him: his secretive past, his knife, and *Dead Christ*.

As the marriage plan goes forward, gothic narrative force begins to shape the plot once more.⁴⁵ All seems well leading up to Nastasya Filippovna's appearance for her wedding, but when her escort to church arrives, she steps out of the house, "white as a sheet; but her large dark eyes flashed at the crowd like burning coals" (8:493). Later the escort reports that she is "pale as a corpse" (8:493). This description of the bride echoes an earlier passage, when Nastasya Filippovna, having cursed Rogozhin, chooses Myshkin: "The prince ran too, but on the threshold, he was seized by two arms. The crushed, contorted face of Nastasya Filippovna was gazing fixedly at him, and her blue lips moved" (8:475). This description, particularly the narrative severing of her parts – her limbs acting alone, her lips moving alone – recall the gothic body and, possibly, the epileptic body. Her threshold position, furthermore, suggests liminality, that she is in transition from one state of being to the next. At the church, she sees Rogozhin's eyes in the crowd, and runs to his gothic gaze, plunging the reader again into the gothic narrative mode. Here Myshkin becomes the central figure in the gothic narrative. In the first narrative Myshkin revealed the gothic body's power and in the second Ippolit learned how to depict the affective reactions associated with the gothic body. In this final gothic narrative, Nastasya Filippovna becomes the gothic body, the abject corpse that sits at the novel's centre.

Gothic narrative force colours Myshkin's search through St Petersburg's streets for Nastasya Filippovna. Searching in semi-darkness, he walks down street after street, always consumed with the most fearful dread. When Rogozhin reveals himself to the prince, confessing that he has been following him all day, Myshkin is again confronted with the gothic voyeurism of Rogozhin's uncanny gaze. Myshkin's repeated journey into Rogozhin's house and the uncanny gaze indelibly connect this gothic narrative arc with the first, but with the added anticipation of a gothic body behind one of the doors. When the pair enter Rogozhin's rooms, Myshkin is confronted by a new object to add to the inventory of gothic objects associated with the house: "a heavy green silk curtain" (8:502), which divides the room and conceals the bed.

One of the most famous passages in gothic literature also features a mystery hidden behind a curtain: the black veil scene in Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794). Travelling to Udolpho, Emily St Aubert begins to hear rumours of the mysterious portrait of a former countess. Exploring the castle, she comes upon a chamber with a mysterious black curtain that she resolves to look behind. Thwarted in her first attempt, she returns later to lift the veil:

Here again she looked round for a seat to sustain her, and perceived only a dark curtain, which, descending from the ceiling to the floor, was drawn along the whole side of the chamber. Ill as she was, the appearance of this curtain struck her, and she paused to gaze upon it, in wonder and apprehension. It seemed to conceal a recess of the chamber; she wished, yet dreaded, to lift it, and to discover what it veiled ... till, suddenly conjecturing, that it concealed the body of her murdered aunt, she seized it, in a fit of desperation, and drew it aside.⁴⁶

In another instance of gothic narrative deferral, the reader does not discover for some time after this event what the veil concealed. The narrator, however, refers to the veil constantly, but always putting off the horror of what lies behind it, and, in that sense, building up the novel's tension.

Arriving at this final tableau in Rogozhin's room, the reader of *The Idiot* has already entered the mindset of the gothic novel reader through the careful construction of the gothic narrative arcs and the novel's gothic master plot; a mystery concealed behind a curtain in a gloomy room hardly seems out of place. When the curtain finally reveals its dark secret, the reader is not surprised to discover a gothic body. Indeed, Nastasya Filippovna's death has been predicted with gothic narrative markers since the beginning of this arc. Furthermore, the gothic corpse represented by *Dead Christ* has already been located within Rogozhin's house:

[The prince's] eyes had already grown acclimated, so that he could make out the whole bed; on it someone lay in a perfectly motionless sleep; not the faintest rustle, not the slightest breath could be heard. The figure was hidden by a white sheet from the head down, but the limbs were not clearly defined somehow; all that could be seen, from the protuberances of the sheet, was that a person was lying there, stretched out. All around, messily ... discarded clothes had been thrown about; a luxurious white silk dress, flowers, ribbons ... some lace had been crumpled into a heap, and ... peeping out from under the sheet, the tip of a naked foot was revealed; it appeared as if carved out of marble and was fearfully still. The prince looked and felt, the more he looked, the more deathly still and quiet it became in the room. Suddenly, a fly that woke up began to buzz, flew over the bed, and settled by the headboard. The prince shuddered. (8:503).

Here, as in Radcliffe's novel, a curtain reveals a corpse, and the description of the corpse is less important than the build-up to its discovery. However, whereas Nastasya Filippovna's corpse is not described in graphic detail, in *Udolpho* the corpse revealed resembles *Dead Christ*.

Beyond, appeared a corpse, stretched on a kind of low couch, which was crimsoned with human blood, as was the floor beneath. The features, deformed by death, were ghastly and horrible, and more than one livid wound appeared in the face. Emily, bending over the body, gazed, for a moment, with an eager, frenzied eye; but, in the next, the lamp dropped from her hand, and she fell senseless at the foot of the couch.⁴⁷

The corpse in *Udolpho* is horrifying because of the evidence of its violent death. The wounds on its face, the bright crimson of its spilled blood – the narrator recounts these shocking details, and Emily, aghast at her discovery, cannot look away. Radcliffe's use of the deferred mystery and gothic body are deliberately gruesome, fittingly shocking for the object of so much narrative tension. The description of Nastasya Filippovna's final repose deliberately avoids the graphic description that gothic horror demands, however. Dostoevsky's narrator focuses on the accessories of life that surround her. She seems to have undressed a moment ago; her dress, lace, flowers, and diamonds lay unthinkingly scattered about the room. The unnatural stillness of her foot and the silence of the room suggest death, as does the decomposition process suggested by the fly's buzzing, but the narrator avoids a lurid description of the corpse. Bruhm's Freudian discussion of gothic bodies as loci where repressed fears are confronted may shed light on this narrative choice. Nastasya Filippovna's death is ostensibly caused by Rogozhin wielding

a knife, a foretold death and one nearly experienced by Myshkin in the first gothic narrative arc.⁴⁸ In this sense, the final scene of Myshkin and Rogozhin standing over a corpse in Rogozhin's house evokes the first gothic narrative arc and the experience of looking at Holbein's *Dead Christ*.⁴⁹ In both passages, the sensationalistic, graphic aspects of the corpse are left to the reader's imagination, although the reader has since encountered Ippolit's description of the painting in the second gothic narrative.

In the Radcliffean tradition, "all gothic novels [do] eventually reveal the dreadful secrets which ... are presented to the reader as potential sources of terror. Instead of producing this promised effect of terror, however, the revelation of such secrets actually dispels the reader's emotions of anticipatory dread."⁵⁰ The feverish pace built up by the constant mentions of fear and the string of destructive acts deflates as soon as Rogozhin draws back the curtain and allows Myshkin to see the corpse. As in a gothic novel, the final mystery's solution signals the end of the narrative arc, and all that remains is the footsteps' arrival and justice to be served. When the authorities discover the pair, the narrator describes them as though from a distance. One reason this ending is particularly harrowing is because the reader becomes complicit in the scene when Myshkin begins acting as Rogozhin's accomplice. Then, the sudden break of the third-person narration from Myshkin's perspective to an outside one throws the final tableau into sharp relief, exposing not only Nastasya Filippovna's corpse, but also Rogozhin and Myshkin's disordered mental states. This distancing technique lends a heightened degree of horror to the novel's overall ending that is lacking in Nastasya Filippovna's death scene.

The three perspectives explored in this final gothic narrative arc contribute to the novel's preoccupation with the experience of death. Rogozhin's passionate but strangely casual murder of Nastasya Filippovna shows the brevity of life as well as the potential for violent crime in day-to-day life. Of all the characters in the novel, Rogozhin is the most unsympathetic. We never gain access to his thoughts and feelings unless another character narrates it. This distance serves to make Rogozhin's ability to kill more horrifying. In other novels, Dostoevsky examines the murderer's conscience, but in *The Idiot*, he never elucidates Rogozhin's psychology. Rogozhin kills without explanation, violently and senselessly. On the other hand, Myshkin's encounter with such a violent and transgressive act as well as his abject reaction to Nastasya Filippovna's corpse drives him to idiocy, although we do not observe his internal psychological process. Death, so feared and analysed throughout the novel, remains as a final mystery for the reader.

Conclusion: The Gothic Corpse as Dostoevskian Image

In Dostoevsky's notebooks for *The Idiot*, *Dead Christ* appears only once, in the fifth plan, written 1–4 November 1867. The painting is merely mentioned; the entire reference is "The story about Holbein's *Christ* in Basel" (9:184). However, *Dead Christ* appears immediately after a reference to the thoughts of a man about to be decapitated, a clear link both to Myshkin's story about the execution he witnessed in Switzerland and Dostoevsky's own experience at his mock execution in December 1849. In this sense, *Dead Christ* becomes a visual representation of existential terror, a symbol that evokes the fear grounded in the conversation Dostoevsky had with another condemned man, Speshnev, while they waited for execution in 1849. In this episode, reported in Fyodor Lvov's memoirs, Dostoevsky said to a fellow prisoner called Speshnev, "We will be together with Christ," to which Speshnev replied, "A handful of dust."⁵¹ The terror at the core of this exchange appears in *The Idiot* when Myshkin describes the thoughts of a condemned man: "Now he exists and lives, but in three minutes he will be *something else*, someone or something – but who? Where?" (8:52).

In his discussion of *Dead Christ* Ippolit asks one of the most important questions in Dostoevsky's aesthetic world: "Can one imagine as an image that which has no image?" [Mozhet li mereshchit'sia v obraze to, chto ne imeet obraza?] (8:340). Here, when Ippolit asks about the fear of the unknown – what happens after death – and the terror of the void, his question stems from the same place as the condemned man's. However, the question also stands more broadly at the forefront of Dostoevsky's artistic mission, namely in his conviction that the act of representing lived experience must include spiritual truths that challenge the boundaries of conventional realist form. This is what the writer meant when he called himself "a realist in a higher sense" (27:65). As Molly Brunson explains, "when Dostoevsky wonders whether an image will come forth from his pen, whether he will be able to fully incarnate an idea, he speaks not only of a desire to represent a Christ-like figure in a novel, but also of a desire to transfigure the materials of pen and page into a rounder, more complete realist image."⁵² Brunson views the fusion of word and image as a crucial aspect of Dostoevsky's realism, which "desires to move beyond the mimetic divide, to transfigure reality into a perfect artistic form, and thus to transcend the very border between death and life."⁵³ Knapp specifically connects the representation of death with Dostoevsky's "fantastic realism," observing that, "because death itself lies at the limit of our reality and the laws that govern it, this process requires literary forms that approach the "fantastic."⁵⁴ *Dead Christ*, for Dostoevsky, presents a model for this kind of art; for this reason, when viewing the

painting, Anna Grigoryevna remembers that he called Holbein “a great artist and poet” [zamechatel’nym khudozhnikom i poetom] who fused literary and visual aesthetics into one realist practice.⁵⁵ I would argue that the function of the gothic body in *The Idiot* further demonstrates that, for Dostoevsky, the realist depiction of spiritual truth is indelibly bound to the emotions that such experience generates, both positive and negative. Dostoevsky exploits the connection between gothic narrative and reader emotion in *The Idiot* to enable the creation of realist art that transcends the medium to exist beyond the text as palpable emotions evoked in the reader’s lived experience.

The two gothic bodies in *The Idiot* and their accompanying affect function in the narrative as responses to Ippolit’s question. In Ippolit’s gothic narrative this image comes to be embodied by Rogozhin, who appears as if in answer to this question; as Young observes, “The aesthetic shock of the painting and Rogozhin, as its owner, therefore seem to be directly responsible for the scenes of violence that follow both appearances of the Holbein.”⁵⁶ Rogozhin represents the fear *Dead Christ* symbolizes in the novel: he laughs in the face of Myshkin’s fears, he manifests as the senseless machine of Ippolit’s nightmare, and he carries out Nastasya Filippovna’s death sentence. Whereas *Dead Christ*, hanging over the door, is a gothic body that carries with it the possibility of hope, Rogozhin represents its obverse: the gothic corpse under the floorboards surrounded by bottles of Zhdanov fluid and a razor wrapped in silk. The gothic body under the floorboards is an imagined victim, a stand-in for the fear of death and an affective image that generates an uncanny unease in both characters and readers.

After the first seven chapters of *The Idiot* were published in January 1868, Dostoevsky wrote to his friend Apollon Maikov to ask his impression of the novel. Maikov responded positively, particularly highlighting both the interest piqued by “personally experienced horrifying moments” [interes mnogikh lichno perezhitykh uzhasnykh momentov] and “the originality of the hero’s challenge” [original’naia zadacha v geroe].⁵⁷ The relationship between these two aspects – the challenge of the “beautiful man” [prekrasnyi chelovek] and the vividness of the experience of existential terror – was a challenging one to articulate. In a March 1868 letter to Maikov he writes, “Regarding *The Idiot*, I’m so afraid, so afraid, you can’t imagine. Even a kind of unnatural fear. It’s never been like this” (28.2:274). But what specifically is the source of Dostoevsky’s fear? Reading the gothic bodies in *The Idiot* reveals a clear connection between gothic narrative force, fear, and the existential terror that is so difficult to articulate in prose. The terror that emerges from *The Idiot* infects writer, reader, and characters and represents Dostoevsky’s own lived experience

as an image without an image, as affect generated by the two gothic bodies under the floorboards and above the door.

NOTES

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- 1 A.G. Dostoevskaia, *Vospominaniia* (Moscow: Pravda, 1987), 186. All translations in this chapter are my own unless noted otherwise.
- 2 Dostoevskaia, *Vospominaniia*, 186.
- 3 A.G. Dostoevskaia, *Dnevnik 1867 goda* (Moscow: "Nauka," 1993), 234. Robert Louis Jackson analyzes the exchange I include here in more depth, linking the conflicting reactions of Dostoevsky and his wife with aesthetics in "Once Again about Dostoevsky's Response to Hans Holbein the Younger's *Dead Body of Christ in the Tomb*," in *Dostoevsky beyond Dostoevsky: Science, Religion, Philosophy*, ed. Svetlana Evdokimova and Vladimir Golstein (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2016), 179–92.
- 4 On the incorporation of the painting into the novel's structure, see Sarah J. Young, "Holbein's *Christ in the Tomb* in the Structure of *The Idiot*," *Russian Studies in Literature* 44, no. 1 (2007): 90–102.
- 5 Robert Louis Jackson, *Dostoevsky's Quest for Form: A Study of His Philosophy of Art* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966), 67.
- 6 F.M. Dostoevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridsati tomakh*, ed. G.M. Fridlender et al. (Leningrad: "Nauka," 1972–90). Subsequent references to this edition will be indicated in the text with volume and page number(s).
- 7 Liza Knapp, *The Annihilation of Inertia: Dostoevsky and Metaphysics* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 68.
- 8 Jacques Catteau, *Dostoevsky and the Process of Literary Creation*, trans. Audrey Littlewood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 185. Catteau discusses Dostoevsky's incorporation of the Mazurin case in detail, 185–6.
- 9 On the links between gothic literature and death, see the collection *The Gothic and Death*, ed. Carol Margaret Davison (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017); my chapter in the collection, while not on Dostoevsky,

- examines the links between gothic narrative and the representation of death in Russian realism: Katherine Bowers, "Through the Opaque Veil': The Gothic and Death in Russian Realism," 157–73.
- 10 Ian Conrich and Laura Sedgwick, *Gothic Dissections in Film and Literature: The Body in Parts* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 198–200.
 - 11 Malcolm Jones identifies these discussions as the novel's "centre of gravity," and the painting as their "medium," the vehicle that enables the philosophical point of view to shift from Myshkin in Part II to Ippolit in Part III. See Malcolm Jones, *Dostoevsky and the Dynamics of Religious Experience* (London: Anthem Press, 2005), 88.
 - 12 Tatiana Kasatkina has argued that whether or not the painting depicts Christ is a matter of interpretation on the viewer's part and related to the viewer's spatial position relative to the painting (whether viewing from straight on, from above, or from below). See "After Seeing the Original," *Russian Studies in Literature* 47, no. 3 (2011): 73–97.
 - 13 Dostoevskaia, *Dnevnik 1867 goda*, 234.
 - 14 Kasatkina has analyzed the painting's liminality and argues the opposite: that the painting depicts Christ at the moment he is just coming back to life. See T.A. Kasatkina, "Posle znakomstva s podlinnikom: Kartina Gansa Gol'beina Mladshego 'Khristos v mogile' v strukture romana F.M. Dostoevskogo 'Idiot,'" *Novyi mir* 2 (2006): 154.
 - 15 Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 4.
 - 16 Yael Shapira, *Inventing the Gothic Corpse: The Thrill of Human Remains in the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 1.
 - 17 *Ibid.*, 3.
 - 18 *Ibid.*, 5–6.
 - 19 M.H. Abrams, "Gothic Novel," in *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (Boston: Thomson-Wadsworth, 2005), 118.
 - 20 Boris Tikhomirov has analyzed Dostoevsky's childhood reading and determined that he extensively read pseudo-Radcliffiana, works in the vein of Radcliffe and attributed to her, but not actually by her. See B.N. Tikhomirov, "K probleme genezisa 'ital'ianskoi mecht' Dostoevskogo: Radklif ili psevdo-Radklif?" *Dostoevskii i mirovaia kul'tura* 10, no. 2 (2020): 128–52.
 - 21 The translation is found in Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions*, trans. David Patterson (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1997), 1–2.
 - 22 This three-part definition is my own; see Katherine Bowers, "The City through a Glass, Darkly: Use of the Gothic in Early Russian Realism," *Modern Language Review* 108, no. 4 (2013): 1238. It builds upon the work of David Punter, Fred Botting, and Muireann Maguire, as well as from the experience of reading a wide range of gothic novels. For its underpinnings,

- see David Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, vol. 2: *The Modern Gothic* (London: Longman, 1996), 146; Fred Botting, *Gothic* (London: Routledge, 1996), 2–3; and Muireann Maguire, *Stalin's Ghosts: Gothic Themes in Early Soviet Literature* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2012), 10–14.
- 23 Leonid Grossman, “Kompozitsiia v romane Dostoevskogo,” in *Poetika Dostoevskogo* (Moscow: 39-aia tip. Internatsional'naia “Mospoligraf,” 1925), 24–35.
 - 24 George Steiner, *Tolstoy or Dostoevsky: An Essay in the Old Criticism*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 210.
 - 25 Robin Feuer Miller, *Dostoevsky and The Idiot: Author, Narrator, and Reader* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 108–25.
 - 26 Katherine Bowers, *Writing Fear: Russian Realism and the Gothic* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, forthcoming), chapter 4.
 - 27 On the imagined gothic novel reader in Russia, see Katherine Bowers, “The Gothic Novel Reader Comes to Russia,” in *Reading Russia: A History of Reading in Modern Russia*, vol. 2, ed. Damiano Rebecchini and Raffaella Vassena (Milan: Ledizioni, 2020), 377–408.
 - 28 Peter K. Garrett, *Gothic Reflections: Narrative Force in Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 10.
 - 29 Miller, *Dostoevsky and The Idiot*, 116.
 - 30 *Ibid.*, 117–19.
 - 31 This episode also demonstrates the narrative mechanics related to voyeurism, sensory perception, and embodiment analyzed by Sarah J. Young in the present volume.
 - 32 Kasatkina has argued that Rogozhin’s house is a collapsed sanctuary, a symbol of blasphemy, destruction, and failure. See T.A. Kasatkina, *O tvoriashchei prirode slova: Ontologichnost' slova v tvorchestve F. M. Dostoevskogo kak osnova “realizma v vysshem smysle”* (Moscow: IMLI RAN, 2004), 380–93. The relevant chapter has also been published in English translation: Tatiana Kasatkina, “History in a Name: Myshkin and the ‘Horizontal Sanctuary,’” in *The New Russian Dostoevsky: Readings for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. and trans. Carol Apollonio et al. (Bloomington: Slavica, 2010), 145–64. In his chapter in the present volume, Vadim Shneyder discusses the way descriptions of Rogozhin and his house correspond to a broader spatial poetics within Dostoevsky’s works.
 - 33 Carol Apollonio, “The Idiot’s ‘Vertical Sanctuary’: The Holbein Christ and Ippolit’s Confession,” in *Dostoevsky’s Secrets: Reading against the Grain* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2009), 95. Italics in original.
 - 34 *Ibid.*, 97.
 - 35 On epilepsy’s connection to the gothic, see Laurence Talairach-Vielmas, *Wilkie Collins, Medicine, and the Gothic* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009), 99–105.
 - 36 Sarah J. Young, *Dostoevsky’s The Idiot and the Ethical Foundations of Narrative: Reading, Narrating, Scripting* (London: Anthem Press, 2004), 118.

- 37 Brandy Lain Schillace has studied Emily St Aubert's internal reveries in Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* as symptoms of an epileptic condition. Her analysis of Emily aligns well with Myshkin's reveries in this part of *The Idiot*. See Schillace, "'Temporary Failure of Mind': Déjà Vu and Epilepsy in Radcliffe's 'The Mysteries of Udolpho,'" *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 42, no. 2 (2009): 273–87.
- 38 Mark Pettus, "Dostoevsky's Closed Threshold in the Construction of the Existential Novel" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2009), 239–40.
- 39 Miller, *Dostoevsky and The Idiot*, 116.
- 40 I recommend Young's analysis of Ippolit's relationship with *Dead Christ*; see Young, *Dostoevsky's The Idiot*, 140–2.
- 41 Steven Bruhm, *Gothic Bodies: The Politics of Pain in Romantic Fiction* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), xv.
- 42 Bruhm, *Gothic Bodies*, xvi.
- 43 Robin Feuer Miller, *Dostoevsky's Unfinished Journey* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 134.
- 44 My gothic reading of the "Explanation" aligns with Apollonio's vertical reading of the "Explanation." See Apollonio, *Dostoevsky's Secrets*, 93–103.
- 45 On the expectations of the marriage plot in Dostoevsky's works, see Anna Berman's chapter in the present volume.
- 46 Ann Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 348.
- 47 Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, 348.
- 48 This reading aligns with Knapp's analysis of Nastasya Filippovna as a condemned woman. See Knapp, *The Annihilation of Inertia*, 77–80.
- 49 Young has observed that the two appearances of Holbein's *Dead Christ* and the scene of Myshkin and Rogozhin standing over Nastasya Filippovna's corpse are linked by virtue of the fact that these three scenes are the only one-on-one conversations between the pair. See Young, "Holbein's *Christ in the Tomb*," 94.
- 50 Chloe Chard, "Introduction," in Ann Radcliffe, *The Romance of the Forest* (Oxford University Press, 1999), viii.
- 51 See V.R. Leikina-Svirskaya, "Zapiska o dele Petrashevtshev: rukopis' F.N. L'vova s pometkami M.V. Butashevicha-Petrashevskogo," *Literaturnoe nasledstvo* 63 (1956): 188.
- 52 Molly Brunson, *Russian Realisms: Literature and Painting, 1840–1890* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2016), 163.
- 53 Brunson, *Russian Realisms*, 24–5.
- 54 Knapp, *The Annihilation of Inertia*, 68.
- 55 Dostoevskaya, *Dnevnik 1867 goda*, 234.
- 56 Young, "Holbein's *Christ in the Tomb*," 95.
- 57 A.N. Maikov, *Pis'ma k F.M. Dostoevskomu*, ed. N.T. Ashimbaeva (Moscow: Pamiatniki kul'tury, 1984), 67.