

Dear all,

*This is an excerpt from Ch. 4, titled “The Historical Novel and the Verisimilitude of Attractions,” of my dissertation, which I am beginning to revise into a book manuscript. My book will argue that 19th-century Russian historicism matured in a close examination of the legacy of Russia’s 18th century. The material on which I base this argument encompasses both canonical and less-considered literary texts as well as an array of letters, memoirs and criticism of the period. This particular chapter treats the commercialization of historical discourses in the culture, and specifically in the novel, of the 1830s. I have asked you to read, and Miruna has kindly scanned, Alexander Pushkin’s historical novel *The Captain’s Daughter* (probably one of the shortest specimens of the genre that you can find). You will see that my analysis here pays even greater attention to another Russian historical novel, Ivan Lazhechnikov’s *The House of Ice*. This is an extremely entertaining, but lesser known, much longer and untranslated novel, so you would have to follow my chapter, instead of the original text, to make sense of it. And you can also read my esteemed discussant Elif Batuman’s New Yorker article on our trip to the modern-day House of Ice in March 2006. I have taken the liberty of including a link to this article on her website:*

<http://www.elifbatuman.com/Articles/IceRenaissance/IceRenaissance.aspx>.

I left out about 10 pages of the chapter’s beginning where I assemble some remarks by Pushkin’s contemporaries on the place of history in their daily experience and also give the Russianist reader some background information on Walter Scott’s model for the historical novel and his European reputation.

This is my first presentation of this material since I filed the dissertation in September 2006, and I am really excited to have it read by my favorite Stanford audience, the people at the CSN. So I really look forward to our discussion on January 16.

Yours,

Luba

Seeing History:

The Russian Historical Novel between Sir Walter and Les Jeunes-France

All major discussions surrounding the historical novel in the 1830s revolved around its accuracy and not around its narrative innovations. In one of the earlier Russian debates, Faddei Bulgarin, the author of the first major Russian historical novel *Dimitri Samozvanets* (*Dimitri the Pretender* (p. 1829), defends himself from the Pushkin camp by insisting on his high standard of accuracy while pointing to the epistemic limitations of an historian:

“Все исторические лица старался я изобразить точно в таком виде, как их представляет история. Роман мой можно уподобить окну, в которое современник смотрит на Россию и Польшу при начале XVII-го века: многие исторические лица видны через сие окно, но описаны они столько, сколько глаз историка мог их видеть, и по мере участия их в происшествии.”¹

The metaphor of the window exposes the way readers expected to engage with history: through vision. Inasmuch as readers insisted on a direct mimetic relationship of the text to the historical referent, the metaphor of the window made the barrier between the viewing subject (the reader) and the object (the ‘epoch’, the historical figure, etc.) transparent. The window transforms access to a past reality from a more involved matter of time travel or imaginative visualization to an act of pure sight, unbiased though fractional and delimited by a frame. The window-frame corresponds to narrative composition, which is, however, also described in terms of vision, “inasmuch as the historian’s eye could see,” and not artistry or manipulation. The recourse to the visual, which is not constructed or intentional, but rather inevitable, serves to circumvent the vexed issue of narrative construction and allows Bulgarin to reformulate his opponents’ charges of inadequate understanding as limited eyesight. The conceit did not help Bulgarin: the main objection to his novel was not that it owed too little to historical reality, but rather that it owed

¹ Quoted in Mark Al'tshuller, "Pushkin, Bulgarin, Nikolai I I Ser Val'ter Skott," in *Novye Bezdelki: Sbornik Statei K 60-Letiiu V. E. Vatsuro*, ed. S. I. Panov (Moskva: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozreniie, 1995-6), 288. “I have tried to depict all historical personages in exactly the way history represents them. My novel can be likened to a window, through which a contemporary looks at Russia and Poland of the early 17th century: many historical figures are seen through the window, yet they are described only inasmuch as the historian’s eye could see them and inasmuch as they participated in a given event.” (all translations are mine unless otherwise indicated).

suspiciously too much to Pushkin's unpublished *Boris Godunov*, which Bulgarin *had* read as a royal censor, despite his claims to the contrary. Nevertheless, Bulgarin's defense illuminated what early readers and critics required of the historical novel: not simply verisimilitude, but window-like transparency. The text was expected to make history not merely imaginable but visible. And such expectations destined the historical novel to a rather tedious realist critique.

Where did this emphasis on vision originate? Why did verisimilitude so readily index the reader's ability to *visualize* history? The contemporaries' insistence on the connection seems to go beyond mere convention (inherent in such expressions as "the mind's eye," "out of sight out of mind," "hindsight" and "foresight"). In fact, the culture of the early nineteenth century was saturated with visual representations of history. Historical painting continued to crown the academic genre hierarchy. Even more importantly, history emerged as the preferred subject for various staged representations and popular technologies of visual entertainment: historical drama, tableaux vivants, magic lanterns, and stereoscopes. Theater, and especially amateur theater like tableaux vivants, taught the viewer to decode historical narrative from static scenes of frozen movement. The newly-invented image-producing devices, which Tatiana Smoliarova in her analysis of Derzhavin's late verse has aptly labeled "the optics of history," displayed various historical events as sequences of pictures, sometimes projected through smoky or fiery screens (as in the eidophusikon, a moving panorama combined with dramatic lighting effects and music) or accompanied by "fitting" sounds or narration.² As forms of popular entertainment, these illusionistic spectacles privileged sensational subjects and titillated the viewers with their quasi-reality.

The most illusionistic, "unreal" representations were praised for their mimetic success. In his important work on the transformations in the status and function of the observer in the nineteenth century, Jonathan Crary ponders the discrepancy between these illusionistic technologies and their critics' investment in apodictic categories of evaluation:

² Tatiana Smoliarova, unpublished ... For more on the eidophusikon see part 4 of the publication of a recent exhibit at the Yale Center for British Art: Ann Bermingham, ed., *Sensation & Sensibility: Viewing Gainsborough's Cottage Door* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

Certain forms of visual experience usually uncritically categorized as “realism” are in fact bound up in “non-veridical” theories of vision that effectively annihilate a real world. Visual experience in the nineteenth century, despite all the attempts to authenticate and naturalize it, no longer has anything like the apodictic claims of the camera obscura to establish its truth.³

Although Cray does not directly address the use of these new technologies for channeling historical knowledge, his insights into nineteenth-century manipulations of vision can also shed light on nineteenth-century manipulations of history. History, by its very nature, lingers on the threshold between the verifiable and the imagined. Like no other faculty, vision matches this ambiguity because it is called to authenticate and witness while running the greatest risk of succumbing to deception. In Bestuzhev-Marlinsky’s list of commodities that feed on the new vogue for history, optical entertainments are ubiquitous, cheap, and capable of conjuring intense visions of history’s most dramatic scenes: “Spend a ten-kopec piece and you will receive in exchange the ill-starredness of the ages—Clytemnestra and Chenier, the assassination of Henry IV and Waterloo, the Berezina and St. Helena, the deluge of Petersburg and the Lisbon earthquake.”⁴ If all the commodities in the list are only tenuously related to history, the visual spectacles bought for a *grivna* (10 kopecks) are the most deceptive of all, for they create an illusion, which unlike a horse or a pastry, corresponds to no physical presence. For the viewer or reader, envisioning the past by means of illusionistic technology or novelistic construction means the comfortable pleasure of direct contact with history without the inherent dangers. To the show’s owner or the novel’s author, it makes available multiple instruments of *trompe l’oeil*. It is this illusionistic underside of the historical novel’s realist artifice that went unnoticed by most readers and critics.

³ Jonathan Cray, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990), 14.

⁴ Bestuzhev-Marlinsky, a prominent early Romantic novelist, was extensively quoted earlier in the chapter: “We live [...] in an age of history, moreover in an age of history par excellence. [...] Now history is not simply in fact, but in the memory, the mind, the hearts of men. We see it, feel it, hear it constantly [...]. It jostles us with its elbows on the promenade, worms its way between you and your lady at the cotillion. “Barin! Barin!” the street vendor shouts, “buy an *Erivanka* hat.” “Would you care to order a frock coat cut *Warsaw-style*?” asks the tailor. A horse comes aprancing—it’s a *Wellington*. Glance at a signboard—Kutuzov beckons you into an inn arousing both native pride and appetite at once. Take a pinch of snuff—the box is engraved with a likeness of Charles X [Leighton’s trans is inaccurate: “the box is auctioned off after Charles X,” that is at the time of the July Revolution]. Stamp a letter—the seal is the Emperor Franz Joseph. Plunge your fork into a sweet pastry and—its name is Napoleon! Spend a ten-kopec piece and you will receive in exchange the ill-starredness of the ages—Clytemnestra and Chenier, the assassination of Henry IV and Waterloo, the Berezina and St. Helena, the deluge of Petersburg and the Lisbon earthquake, and... I know not what all! [...] Yes sir, history is nowadays being changed into everything you could wish for, even if you don’t in the least wish it.”

Conditioned by their experiences with “the optics of history,” which many critics have classified as forerunners of the moving pictures (the main source of present-day mimetic deception), readers of historical novels expected similar visual stimulation and sense of immediacy from reading. Walter Scott portrays young Waverley as engaged in precisely this mode of reading, and the extended quotation underlines both the extent to which readers were known or expected to sustain these flights of fancy and Scott’s benevolent irony at their expense:

He would exercise for hours that internal sorcery by which past or imagined events are presented in action, as it were, to the eye of the musér. Then arose in long and fair array the splendor of the bridal feast at Waverley-Castle; the tall and emaciated form of its real lord, as he stood in his pilgrim weeds, an unnoticed spectator of the festivities as his supposed heir and intended bride; the electrical shock occasioned by the discovery; the springing of the vassals to arms; the astonishment of the bridegroom; the terror and confusion of the bride; the agony with which Wilibert observed, that her heart as well as consent was in these nuptials; the air of dignity, yet of deep feeling, with which he flung down the half-drawn sword, and turned away for ever from the house of his ancestors. Then would he change the scene, and fancy would at his wish represent Aunt Rachael’s tragedy. He saw the Lady Waverley seated in her bower, her ear strained to every sound, her heart throbbing with double agony; now listening to the decaying echo of the hoofs of the king’s horse, and when that had died away, hearing in every breeze that shook the trees of the park the noise of the remote skirmish. A distant sound is heard like the rushing of a swollen stream; it comes nearer, and Edward can plainly distinguish the galloping of horses, the cries and shouts of men, with straggling pistol-shots between, rolling forwards to the hall. The lady starts up—a terrified menial rushes in—But why pursue such a description.⁵

Ancestral chronicles inspire Waverley’s youthful daydreams; the historical imagination takes its first cues from household lore (which on the chronological axis, corresponds to the proximate eighteenth century) to produce visions that are vivid yet manifestly speculative. Through the family, history is rendered more visible yet it also more readily lends itself to mythologization. From a single line of a family record rises a swarm of romanticized characters, their agonizing hearts, their terror and confusion, their feasts and battles, all recorded by the narrator at a breathless speed. Waverley spends his youth not thinking or learning about the past, but imagining and visualizing it. His engagement with history is an illusionistic experience of image sequences (“Edward can plainly distinguish”), akin to those experienced by early-nineteenth-century public.

⁵ Walter Scott, *Waverley, or, 'Tis Sixty Years Since, The World's Classics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 17.

Why, indeed, “pursue such a description”? Scott’s narrator often checks himself precisely at the moments when he has laid bare his device. Every line of text, depicting valiant young men, beautiful maidens, uncouth highlanders, and the rugged countryside, was supposed to fuel corresponding illustrations in the reader’s imagination. Scott’s mildly ironic tone notwithstanding, this is precisely how many of his readers, young and old, reacted to his novels, repeatedly praising Scott’s talent at painting lively historical pictures “in a contemporary domestic manner,” as Pushkin approvingly puts it, and mesmerizing the imagination.⁶ Verisimilitude and visual stimulation were thus the historical novel’s connected merits. The verisimilitude of a historical fiction was to be sought not in its proximity to the received historical knowledge, but in its power to inspire and sustain visualization. Hence the abundance of seemingly random description that Barthes explicates as producing a “reality effect” in the historical and realist novel. The particular orientation toward vision also explains the garish jumble of costume and language that Girardin so perceptively mocks in his recipe for the historical novel.⁷ Paradoxically, the more picturable the writing the more “verisimilar,” probable, and hence ‘truthful’.

Visuality thus connoted not simply transparency as Bulgarin’s plea implies, but rather spectacle and entertainment. As a code word for vividness, verisimilitude unleashed and legitimized a multitude of novelistic “attractions,” which served to stimulate the senses. Inasmuch as they rhetorically targeted the

⁶ Pushkin, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, v 7, 535. „The main charm of Walter Scott’s novels is that we are introduced to the past, not with the enflure [pomposity, swelling] of French tragedy, —not with the primness of the sentimental novel, not with the dignité of history, but rather in a contemporary domestic manner.”

⁷ Girardin’s mocking recipe for the Scottian historical novel was also quoted earlier in the chapter: “1st. The protagonist of a historical novel needs necessarily be insignificant. The heroine can also do without any character. 2nd. Try to endow the villains of your novel with some strange virtue and give the honest men some funny and most unusual idiosyncrasy. 3rd. You always need to present one public figure with a great character. 4th. Do not forget that among the characters of your novels there also needs to be a fool whom you from time to time make pronounce mysterious phrases. 5th. Incessantly mix the comic and tragic. And since sometimes it is very hard to entertain the reader with truly comical situations, here is a method that always works: give one of your characters some word or gesture and force him to repeat either every minute; for in the historical novel, caricature is the only source of the comical, of all that can entertain the reader. 6th. As far as the authenticity of the mores, it will suffice if you can make your readers believe that you are depicting the mores of this or that century by representing your characters with a physiognomy of a century that’s not ours and if they seem alien to your reader. 7th. In your story periodically introduce phrases from ancient chronicles and occasionally color the speech of your own time with folk phrases, and mix it all together. To this end you can be guided by some of the productions of the French theater [...] where a mistress or a servant appear in the costume of 1828, while a lover or a servant wear the fashions of the 17th century; where a tail-coat, a marquise tunic, a farthingale, a galloon dress, short underwear, pantaloons appear altogether on the same stage. It is to this fortunate mixture that the style of the historical novel should aspire!” Quoted in Dolinin, *Istoriia, Odetaia V Roman*, 221. Originally appeared in *Vestnik Evropy*. 1829. 159/160, No. 15.

same public that enjoyed early illusionistic technologies, these features of historical narrative bear a resemblance to the “attractions” that Sergei Eisenstein would define a century later as “any aggressive moment in theater, that is any element of it that subjects the audience to an emotional or psychological influence, verified by experience and mathematically calculated to produce specific shocks in the spectator.”⁸ History, especially after the traumas of viewing Herculaneum and Pompeii and experiencing the French Revolution, seemed to be saturated with shocking spectacle. The historical novel seized upon history’s most striking moments of turmoil and violence in order to supply these attractions. For Eisenstein, the cinematic “montage of attractions” not only provoked the mind of the spectator by what was seen, but also encouraged it to fill the gaps—the “savage junctures” in Anne Nesbet’s apt formulation—left blank in the editing. Like theater or film, the novel used its attractions to produce an emotional response in the reader and stitch together a story based on image sequences and lacunae in addition to narration. The following section considers the components, quality, and cultural implications of the montage that the Russian historical novels of the 1830s piece together from the eighteenth century.

In the autumn of 1835, Ivan Lazhechnikov (1792-1869) ran the gauntlet of Pushkin’s by-now-predictable criticism of historical inaccuracy for his second historical novel *The House of Ice* (1835). Lazhechnikov’s great admiration for Pushkin is borne out by the number of explicit and oblique quotations in the text of his novel. Pushkin, who himself had recently turned to writing about history in fictional and historiographical genres and was at the time rethinking his *History of the Pugachev Uprising* (1833) as a historical novel, demonstrated a strong interest in the eighteenth century and must have read Lazhechnikov’s novel on the dreary reign of the Empress Anna Ioannovna with some care.

Similarly to Scott’s fashionable novels, Lazhechnikov’s thrilling and rather byzantine storyline juxtaposed recognizable historical characters—Anna Ioannovna, her much-detested favorite and grand-chamberlain Biron, the protagonist Artemii Volynskii, and the hapless poet-academician Vasilii

⁸ Quoted in Anne Nesbet, *Savage Junctures: Sergei Eisenstein and the Shape of Thinking, Kino, the Russian Cinema Series* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2003), 8.

Trediakovsky—with imaginary figures: princesses, servants, and secret agents. As in Scott's novels, Lazhechnikov's plot develops two interconnected lines: amorous (Volynskii's passion for the young Moldavian princess Marioritsa) and political (Volynskii's machinations to overthrow Biron). There are so many parallels with Scott, in fact, that later critics would often dismiss Lazhechnikov as one of the "russkie Val'ter-Skottiki." Although many of Lazhechnikov's devices undoubtedly point to Scott's patrimony, Scott's main innovation—the insertion of an invented protagonist into a well-researched historical world—does not find its way into *Ledianoi Dom*. The novel's protagonist was the well-known minister of the cabinet under Anna Ioannovna, Artemii Petrovich Volynskii (1689-1740).

The historical Volynskii, starting in the reign of Peter the Great, had been repeatedly promoted for his administrative talents and then repeatedly demoted for corruption, bribery, and physical abuse of subordinates. In an ultimate demotion in 1740, he was beheaded, after an investigation into his embezzlement of state funds and brutal beating of the poet-academician Vassilii Trediakovsky in Biron's antechamber also revealed Volynskii's supposedly central role in a conspiracy to seize the Russian throne after Anna Ioannovna's imminent death. His was the last sensational execution to take place under Anna Ioannovna, and soon came to symbolize the terrors and incongruity of her reign.

Volynskii had become a Romantic hero before Lazhechnikov's novel. The Decembrist poet Kondratii Ryleev dedicated two of his *Dumy* (*Reflections*, 1821-3), "Volynskii" and "Videnie imperatritsy Anny" ("The Vision of Empress Anna"; in Bulgarin's manuscript fittingly dubbed "The Head of Volynskii") to Anna Ioannovna's minister of the cabinet, showing him in the two states beloved by Romantic poetry: as a condemned man in prison and as a ghostly severed head that comes to haunt its killer.⁹ Volynskii, as a historical revenant, was used by Ryleev to remind his readers of their patriotic obligations. In the first poem, after expounding upon Volynskii's fortitude in the face of his unjust execution, Ryleev admonishes his readers to preserve Volynskii's memory:

⁹ More on *Dumy*, see Chapter 2. Ryleev and Tseitlin, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, 611.

В его очах при мысли сей
Сверкнула с гордостью отвага;
И бодро из тюрьмы своей
Шел друг общественного блага.
Притек...увидел палача—
И голову склонил без страха;
Сверкнуло лезвие меча—
И кровью освятилась плаха!

Сыны отечества! в слезах
Ко храму древнему Самсона!
Там за оградой, при вратах
Почиет прах врага Бирона!
Отец семейства! приведи
К могиле мученика сына:
Да закипит в его груди
Святая ревность гражданина!¹⁰ (176-7)

At this thought, his eyes / flashed with pride and courage; / and briskly from his jail / went the friend of public good. / He arrived and beheld the executioner / and fearlessly he bent his head. / The sword's blade flashed, / and blood sanctified the executioner's block! / Sons of the fatherland! In tears / come to Samson's ancient temple! [the cemetery where Volynskii was buried]/ There behind the fence, next to the gate / rest the remains of Biron's enemy! / Paterfamilias! Bring / your son to the martyr's grave! / Let his blood boil in his breast / with a citizen's sacred zeal!

Ryleev's elevated diction effaces Volynsky's individual features by portraying him as an archetypal, rather than an identifiable, hero. The event of the execution is sketched through a series of poetic clichés: the hero's pride, courage, fearlessness, the flashing blade of the executioner's sword and blood on the executioner's block. Such a formulaic representation suggests that in *Dumy* Ryleev aspired not to represent Russian historical figures with new precision, but rather to prescribe a specific attitude toward these figures. As we will see at the end of this chapter, if Ryleev was unable to summon his readers to action or even to Volynskii's grave at Samsonievsky Monastery, Lazhechnikov's novel, which was aimed at the imagination as much as at patriotism and morality, in fact brought impressionable crowds to his tomb.

In "The Vision of Empress Anna," Ryleev pushes the effacement of Volynskii's historical specificity to an extreme. We recognize Volynskii's apparition through the eyes of a sentimental moribund empress, not the most canonical portrait of corpulent and cruel Anna. Grief at Volynskii's absence is followed by dread of his transfigured presence, both clichés of Sentimental and Gothic writing

¹⁰ Ibid.,176-7.

that reveal nothing about Volynskii besides making him a hero of an easily recognizable plot. The real focus of the poem is the ghost's speech to Anna, which again effectively interprets both figures for the reader while not corresponding to any documented or probable historical event. The complex historical Volynskii is not important for Ryleev; what is exciting and important is the discovered fit between European Romantic poetics and Russian national history as well as the possibility of enlisting disparate Russian historical figures in the Romantic revolutionary cause. The force of the revolutionary message depends not on making history "present" to the eye of the reader through detail and differentiation, but on a repeated discovery of the same heroic features persisting through the ages. The poet calls for continuity, for a reincarnation of the absent heroes rather than for their "picturesque" revivification.

By contrast to Ryleev's elegiac consideration of absence which effaces Volynskii even as it commemorates him, Lazhechnikov's innovation is to fashion a vivid image of Volynskii, not through the cliché of his execution (the best-remembered moment of his life), but by making him a living Romantic hero. We learn to recognize the hero's tall frame and seductive gaze (his sex appeal and virility are repeatedly noted) before we discover Volynskii's name:

Посреди залы, в богатых креслах, сидит статный мужчина, привлекательной наружности, в шелковом светло-фиолетовом кафтане французского покроя. Это хозяин дома, Артемий Петрович Волинской. Он слывет при дворе и в народе одним из красивейших мужчин.¹¹

Before zooming in on Volynskii, the narrator first carefully stages the scene: servants, windows, columns, vases and tiled stoves line the circumference of the room, while the only figure in the center is Artemii Volynskii himself. This organization of space is in fact typical of the contemporary staging practices. According to Richard Schoch, "a distinguishing feature of early- and mid-nineteenth-century performance was the disjunction between actors and scenery. [...] The audience's gaze could move back and forth between downstage actors and upstage scenery, but it most likely did not include both elements at

¹¹ I. I. Lazhechnikov, *Ledianoi Dom*, ed. S. A. Vengerov, 6 vols., vol. 4, *Sobranie Sochinenii* (Moskva: Mozhaisk-Terra, 1994), 8. „In the middle of the room, in a splendid armchair, sits a stately man of an attractive appearance, in a silk, light-purple caftan of a French cut. This is the owner of the house, Artemii Petrovich Volynskii. He is famed at the court and among the people as one of the handsomest men.”

once.”¹² Lazhechnikov’s *mise en scene* is quite clearly arranged to be visualized by the mind’s eye rather than only read as a text; its separation between figure and ground, between actor and decorations, or between upstage and downstage animates and then satisfies the reader’s scopic desire for history. Seeing means believing.

Volynskii is a hero with a fiery temper who often sacrifices his political interests for his unbridled passions. Matters of politics vie with matters of the heart for dominance in the plotline, but both conspire to bring the hero to his bloody demise. Volynskii falls in love with a young Moldavian (or as it turns out Gypsy) Princess raised first in a harem and later at Anna Ioannovna’s court and, forgetting his obligations to his wife and just political cause, exposes himself to Biron’s ubiquitous spies and fatally compromises his clandestine campaign against the favorite. As in Ryleev’s poem, for Lazhechnikov, too, Volynskii is clearly Biron’s honorable and heroic victim and a Romantic icon of martyrdom. However, Lazhechnikov fills this Romantic portrayal with details purportedly founded upon historical research.

It is the discrepancy between the novel and its supposed documentary base that Pushkin questions in his otherwise enthusiastic response:

Истина историческая в нем [в Ледяном доме] не соблюдена, и это со временем, когда дело Волынского будет обнародовано, конечно, повредит вашему созданию; но поэзия останется всегда поэзией и многие страницы вашего романа будут жить доколе не забудется русский язык. [...] За Василия Тредьяковского, признаюсь, я готов с вами поспорить. [...] О Бироне можно бы также потолковать.¹³

Like most of his contemporaries, in his critique Pushkin treats historical and stylistic precision as the novel’s autonomous building blocks. Even as the short-lived historical value of Lazhechnikov’s fiction jeopardizes its chances at survival, his inspired writing—“poetry”—arrests the novel’s extinction. As a commodity, read for its membership to a genre (much like detective fiction or romance novels today), the

¹² Schoch, R. (1999). “We Do Nothing But Enact History”: Thomas Carlyle Stages the Past.” *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 54(1): 27-52

¹³ “The historical truth is not observed in [The House of Ice], and this with time, when Volynskii’s case becomes public will no doubt impair your creation; but poetry always remains poetry, and many pages of your novel will live so long as the Russian language itself is not forgotten. [...] I confess that I am prepared to argue with you about Trediakovsky. [...] And we could have a talk about Biron, too.” Pushkin, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, v X

historical novel had only a fleeting appeal. Along with poetic merits, historical accuracy, if one extrapolates from Pushkin's critique, could confer to the historical novel some measure of longevity.

Pushkin's prediction of the novel's temporary success underscores both the flux of all historical knowledge and the new exhilarating pace at which historical discoveries were made in his time despite the government's protective attitude toward the history of the ruling dynasty. It also displays Pushkin's new fascination with archival and in fact all written historical sources, which characterized his approach to prose-writing in the 1830s.¹⁴ Research was supposed to safeguard historical fiction from devaluation. No one realized better than Pushkin the fickle commercial fortunes of historical prose. In his correspondence of the 1830s, he repeatedly places his hopes for a financial recovery on his historical writing, yet these hopes are almost invariably frustrated. As I conjecture in my analysis of *The Captain's Daughter*, it was in part precisely the painstaking reliance on research that thwarted the commercial success of Pushkin's historical fiction.

Pushkin's criticism piqued Lazhechnikov who continued to defend his novel decades after his most illustrious critic had died. In his first response two weeks later, Lazhechnikov dutifully invoked his novel's patriotic and lyrical worth (a defense that could have sufficed for Ryleev). More significantly, Lazhechnikov cast doubt on the reliability of the very historical documents Pushkin invited him to heed.

В письме своем от 3-го ноября Вы упрекаете меня в несоблюдении исторической верности и говорите, что со временем, когда дело Волынского будет обнародовано, это повредит моему Л.<едяному> Дому. Дело Волынского?... В нынешнее время скептицизма и строгих исторических исследований примут ли это дело безусловно, как акт, на который можно положиться историку, потому только, что он лежал в Государственном архиве? Рассудок спросит сначала, кто были его составители.¹⁵

¹⁴ Lazhechnikov helped him in this pursuit by sending him the manuscript of the scholar Rychkov, indispensable for the History of the Pugachev Uprising. Finally, Pushkin's response also suggests a pessimistic view of the short life-span of historical fiction.

¹⁵ "In your letter of 3 November you reproach me for not observing historical truth, and say that with time when the Volynskii case becomes public, this will harm my House of Ice?.. In the present age of skepticism and strict historical research will this case really be received unreservedly, as an act on which a historian can rely simply because it was lying around in the State Archive? Reason would ask first who compiled the case." G. G. Ariel-Zalesskaia was first to conjecture that Pushkin had read the Volynskii case while working on the Pugachev uprising. G. G. Ariel-Zalesskaia, "K Izucheniu Istorii Biblioteki A. S. Pushkina," in *Pushkin: Issledovaniia I Materialy* (Moskva, Leningrad: AN SSSR, 1958), 341-2. N. Petrunina seconds this hypothesis, showing that in 1836, months before his death, Pushkin was preparing documents from the Volynskii case for publication in his journal *The*

This radical skepticism about the integrity of archival sources implies that they too had to be read with the same apparatus of doubt used to criticize the historical novel, and gives the novelist license to interpret the “sacred” sources according to his intuitions. In his seminal *Metahistory*, Hayden White exposes the great works of nineteenth-century historiography as products of narrative construction and analyzes the techniques that history-writing shares with belles-lettres.¹⁶ Lazhechnikov’s retort to Pushkin goes even further in unveiling narrative construction in the very documents which were supposed to ground historical research and fiction. Even the state archives, those guardians of “reliable” access to history upon which Pushkin depended for his own historical studies, could, according to Lazhechnikov, contain untrustworthy sources. Where writing was involved, there was a biased writer.

Whereas a post-modernist reader would be tempted to construe Lazhechnikov’s retort as a declaration of the instability of all historical knowledge, Lazhechnikov does not altogether reject the tenet of accuracy. Verisimilitude is still the main objective of any historical narrative, but it is no longer predicated solely upon documentary evidence. The writer’s general sense of the epoch overrides the authority of individual documents. This is an attempt to place the synthesis of the novelistic vision, the novelistic truth, on a par with—or perhaps even higher than—the truth of historical documents. In “Znakomstvo moe s Pushkinym” (“My acquaintance with Pushkin,” 1856), a brief memoir almost entirely dedicated to the debate over *The House of Ice*, Lazhechnikov recycles the vocabulary of the 1830s discussions: “truth,” “accuracy,” “research,” “painting,” “epoch.” Repetitious and assertive, this passage is clearly an instance of professing to much:

Я крепко защищал в нем [в романе] историческую истину, которую оспаривает Пушкин. Прежде чем писать мои романы, я долго изучал эпоху и людей того времени, особенно главные исторические лица, которые изображал. [...] добросовестно изучил я главные лица моего «Ледяного дома» на исторических данных и достоверных преданиях. [...] Мое дело было нарисовать верно картину эпохи, которую я взялся изобразить.¹⁷

Contemporary (Sovremennik). N. Petrunina, "Dva Zamysla Pushkina Dlia "Sovremennika" (K Sporu Mezhdru Pushkinym I Lazhechnikovym Po Povodu "Ledianogo Doma)," *Russkaia Literatura*, no. 4 (1966).

¹⁶ Hayden V. White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973).

¹⁷ I. I. Lazhechnikov and S. A. Vengerov, *Sobranie Sochinenii*, 6 vols., vol. 6 (Moskva: Mozhaisk-Terra, 1994), 288-91. “I strongly defended in my novel the historical truth challenged by Pushkin. Before writing my novels, I

Lazhechnikov pens this rationalization long after the Scottish fashion had subsided all across Europe and he himself had abandoned historical novels. Even though historical novels assumed a permanent place in the inventory of lowbrow and children's novelistic genres, their heyday had long passed. Framed as a memoir, this later vindication is markedly more conservative than the challenge of 1835; it uncritically restates all the stock arguments about the historical novel, presenting the writer as a scholar and a realist painter. The release of Volynskii's case in 1858 disclosed evidence, which, as Pushkin had predicted, was at variance with Lazhechnikov's romanticized "historical truth."¹⁸ However, readers of historical novels seemed to react favorably to other features beside documentary validity; *The House of Ice* went through multiple editions both in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, eventually relocating, as most historical novels did, from the drawing-room to the nursery, to use Alexander Dolinin's apt formulation.¹⁹

While Lazhechnikov is invested in presenting himself as a scholar to his critics, the narratorial presence he creates for his novel is far from scholarly. Like many of Scott's storytellers, the narrator in *The House of Ice* is chatty and at times even importunate; his speech abounds in colloquialisms, apostrophes and rhetorical questions. The novel's beginning could not be farther away from a historical treatise. Instead of imparting instructive clarity to the mind, it disorients and baffles the senses:

Боже мой! Что за шум, что за веселье на дворе у кабинет-министра и обер-егермейстера Волынского? Бывало, при блаженной памяти Петре Великом не сделали бы такого вопроса, потому что веселье не считалось диковинкой. [...] А ныне, хоть мы только и в четвертом дне святок (заметьте, 1739 года), ныне весь Петербург молчит тишиною келий, где осужденный на затворничество читает и молитвы свои шепотом. После того как не спросить, что за разгулье в одном доме Волынского? [...] Вот, сказали мы, идет народ домой из церкви, грустный, скучный, как с похорон; а в одном углу Петербурга тешатся себе нараспашку и шумят до того, что в ушах трещит. Вскипает и переливается пестрая толпа на дворе. Каких одежд и наречий тут нет? Конечно, все народы, обитающие в России, прислали сюда по чете своих представителей. [...] Настоящий шабаш сатаны! Православные, идущие мимо этой бесовской потехи, плюньте и

spent a long time studying the epoch and people of that period, especially the main historical figures whom I depict. I religiously investigated the main heroes of my *House of Ice* in historical documents and trustworthy legends. It was my task to accurately paint a picture of the epoch which I had set out to depict."

¹⁸ In 1860, still during Lazhechnikov's lifetime, the historian I. I. Shishkin published a revisionist historical account of the Volynskii affair based on the newly released archival files. *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 1860

¹⁹ Several generations of Russian writers around the turn of the twentieth century have read Ledianoi Dom as part of their childhood reading and revisited its themes in their adult lives. Most notably, in 1928 Viktor Shklovsky wrote a movie script based on *The House of Ice*. For an intriguing interpretation of the 20th-century fate of Lazhechnikov's novel, see Polina Barskova, "Enchanted by the Spectacle of Death: Forms of the End in Leningrad Culture (1917-1934)" (University of California at Berkeley, 2006).

перекреститесь! Но мы, грешные, войдем на двор к Волынскому, продеремся сквозь толпу и узнаем в самом доме причину такого разгульного смешения языков.²⁰

The narrator's very first words brim over with excitement about the anticipated spectacle: "*Bozhe moi!*" ("My God!"); the tense is an energetic present ("*nynе*"), the narrative voice is the first-person plural ("*my*"), implicating the reader in a shared historical spectatorship. On view, incidentally, is the Russian Empire: dancing couples in national costumes representing all of the great Empire's nations. The style of the opening resembles scripts, which were commonly used in the nineteenth century to attract crowds to sensationalist visual spectacles at street-fairs: "Come on in and see history unfold before your eyes!" One is reminded again of the colorful historical scenes that could be purchased for a *grivna* in Marlinsky's history-saturated urban space. Even though the covenant between Lazhechnikov's reader and narrator is not sealed by any direct monetary exchange, the transaction is similar. At first, the reader finds himself outside of the main spectacle, but gradually becoming aware of its unique appeal (outside Volynskii's house, everything is anemic with fear), he buys entry into the house by acknowledging his transgressive desire ("sinners that we are") to see history. The very first paragraphs place Lazhechnikov's reader in a familiar role, that of a spectator. The narrator's chatty voice and colloquial forms of address (*pravoslavnye, greshnye*) obliterates the social boundaries between the aristocratic theatergoing reader and the lowbrow street-fair patron. This projected reader, furthermore, is made strikingly aware of his own somatic presence in the novel (and hence in the historical world): first, he hears and sees and is patently perturbed; later, as in a street-fair, he achieves access to the spectacular space by "squeezing"

²⁰ Lazhechnikov, *Ledianoi Dom*, 5-6. "My God! What's all that clamor and merriment at the court of the cabinet minister and überjägermeister (?) Volynskii? During the rule of Peter the Great, blessed be his memory, one wouldn't ask this question because no one wondered at gaiety. [...] But now, even though we are only in the fourth day of Christmas-tide (note in the year 1739), now all Petersburg is quiet with the silence of a cell where the condemned reads even his prayers in a whisper. How can you not ask, then, about the revelry in Volynskii's house alone? [...] Here, we have said, people are going home from the church, sorrowful, cheerless, as if from a funeral, and only in one corner of Petersburg, people are amusing themselves openly and make so much noise that one's head is ready to split. The crowd wells up and overflows. There is not a costume or dialect missing! Of course all the peoples inhabiting Russia have each sent here a pair of representatives. [...] This is truly a Satan's Sabbath! You the orthodox, walking by this devilish revelry, spit and cross yourselves! But let us, sinners that we are, enter Volynskii's court, force our way through the crowd and find out in the house itself the occasion for such a wild commingling of languages."

through the crowd of onlookers. The novel thus pretends to effect in 1835 physical contact with the crowd of 1739.

The dynamic opening paragraphs set up the terms on which history would be reenacted in the novel. The narrator is a friendly guide to the reader and almost a puppeteer to the novel's characters. Much of the novel exploits extreme contrasts between noise and silence, commotion and arrested movement, and, as we shall soon learn, beauty and disfigurement, and ultimately good and evil. There is also a characteristic jumble of dress and dialect. In her recent *New Yorker* article, Elif Batuman wittily sums up the incongruity of this jumble: "The House of Ice" [...] is a cloak-and-dagger romance in which the ice palace serves as the hub of a vast political conspiracy linking various historical and fictional personages, including a diminutive black secretary who reads aloud from his translation of Machiavelli."²¹ In short, Lazhechnikov's style achieves in novelistic form what Eisenstein would later accomplish in film with his "montage of attractions." Lazhechnikov's is a poetics of constant agitation.

Along with some innocuous novelistic attractions, such as polarized nationalist descriptions, a romantic valorization of the protagonist, and a parade of nations that constituted the Russian Empire, the novel flaunted a titillating love plot replete with shockingly—for a mainstream novel of the period—erotic scenes, showcased torture and mutilation, mobilized an extensive cast of sinister jesters and spies, and constructed a very dark image of the Petersburg cityscape.²² Several critics, such as Apollon Grigoriev and later Viktor Vinogradov, connect this phantasmagorical display to the influence of the French frenetic school, which was all the rage precisely in the 1830s.²³ Grigoriev evocatively depicts the impressionable Russian reading public of the period:

²¹ Elif Batuman, "The Ice Renaissance: Empress Anna's Frozen Palace Revisited," *The New Yorker*, May 29 2006, 44.

²² See Dan Ungurianu, "Ledianoi Dom Lazhechnikova I Peterburgskii Kanon (K Voprosu O Genezise Peterburgskogo Teksta)," *Russian Literature* LI (2002). For an alternative interpretation, see Barskova's excursus on the connection between the topoi of winter and the Gothic genre in the "Petersburg text." Barskova, "Enchanted by the Spectacle of Death", 45-6.

²³ See Grigoriev's influential "Vzgliad na russkuiu literaturu so smerti Pushkina" in translation: Apollon Aleksandrovich Grigor'ev, *The Works of Apollon Grigoriev, Classics in Art and Literary Criticism* (New York, N.Y.: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1970), V. V. Vinogradov, *Evolutsiia Russkogo Naturalizma; Gogol' I Dostoevskii* (Leningrad: Academia, 1929), 162, Viktor Vladimirovich Vinogradov, *Etiudy O Stile Gogolia* (1926), 38-9. Grigoriev thus concludes his laudatory review of *Ledianoi dom*: "Как ни оригинально создан тип Вольнского,

Публика охладела на время к Пушкину, с жаром читала Марлинского, добродушно принимала за правду и настоящее дело разные исторические романы, появлявшиеся дюжинами в месяц, с тайной тревогою прислушивалась к соблазнительным отголоскам юной французской словесности в рассказах барона Брамбеуса и под рукою почитывала переводные романы Поль де Кока.²⁴

The “young French literature” was the school of the so-called “frenetic” writers allied through their fascination with various sensationalist themes and devices in portraying history and contemporaneity. Alfred de Vigny, Victor Hugo, Jules Janin, Honoré de Balzac, Eugene Sue, and Alexandre Dumas (père), the frenetic writers wildly popular in the period, codified the poetics of graphic imagery, shocking detail (referred to in Russian criticism as *golaia natura* –naked nature), and the comic and grotesque as a counterpoint to a terrible, tragic, or melodramatic main plot. All these features resurface in *The House of Ice*, and Lazhechnikov’s achievement is in part to have exploded the congealed realm of Russian national history with freneticist fireworks.

Compare, for instance, these scenes of sexual reverie from Victor Hugo’s *Notre Dame de Paris*, the single-most influential “freneticist” novel (which Hugo prudently warned against calling “historical”), and Lazhechnikov’s *The House of Ice*. Here is Claude Frollo, the licentious priest, re-envisioning Esmeralda, the innocent, supposedly Gypsy young girl, whom he obsessively pursues throughout the novel:

Chaque nuit, son imagination délirante lui représentait la Esmeralda dans toutes les attitudes qui avaient le plus fait bouillir ses veines. Il la voyait étendue sur le capitaine poignardé, les yeux fermés, sa belle gorge nue couverte du sang de Phoebus, à ce moment de délice où l'archidiacre avait imprimé sur ses lèvres pâles ce baiser dont la malheureuse, quoique à demi morte, avait senti la brûlure. Il la revoyait déshabillée par les mains sauvages des tortionnaires, laissant mettre à nu et embooter dans le brodequin aux vis de fer son petit pied, sa jambe fine et ronde, son genou souple et blanc. Il revoyait encore ce genou d'ivoire resté seul en dehors de l'horrible appareil de Torterue. Il se figurait enfin la jeune fille en

целый роман навеян романтическим веянием, и именно веянием романтизма юной французской словесности.” (“Original as the creation of the Volynskii type is, the novel in its entirety is influenced by the Romantic movement of the young French literature.”) Grigoriev, *Vzgliad*, 114 See also an excellent overview of the Russian reception of freneticism in Robert L. Busch, “N. A. Polevoj's *Moskovskij Telegraf* and the Critical Debate over 'Junaja Francija',” *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* 1, no. 2 (1974), Robert L. Busch, “Russian Freneticism,” *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 14, no. 2 (1980).

²⁴ Grigoriev, v. 2, p. 50. “The public then had temporarily lost interest in Pushkin, fervently perused Marlinsky, genially accepted for a fact all sorts of historical novels, which appeared a dozen every month, listened in secret alarm to the tempting echoes of the young French literature in the stories by Baron Brambeus [the penname of Osip Senkovsky, 1800-1858] and now and then abashedly read translations of Paul de Kock’s [1793-1871] novels.”

chemise, la corde au cou, épaules nues, pieds nus, presque nue, comme il l'avait vue le dernier jour. Ces images de volupté faisaient crisper ses poings et courir un frisson le long de ses vertèbres.²⁵

And here, on his way to the royal palace, is Artemii Volynskii transported by his lustful fantasies of Marioritsa, the innocent (as it turns out, half-Gypsy) Moldavian princess who unwittingly distracts the minister of the cabinet from his political efforts:

Он погрузился в одну мысль о Мариорице. Вся душа его, весь он – как будто разогретая влажная стихия, в которой Мариорица купает свои прелести. Как эта стихия, он обхватил ее горячей мечтой, сбегает струею по ее округленным плечам, плещет жаркою пеною по лебединой шее, подкатывается волною под грудь, замирающую сладким восторгом; он липнет летучею брызгою к горячим устам ее, и черные кудри целует, и впивается в них, и весь, напитанный ее существом, ластится около нее тонким, благовонным паром.²⁶

Both scenes find the protagonists at points of utmost frustration when possession can only be achieved through a mental rather than physical act. However sensuous the images—and for this once Lazhechnikov certainly surpasses Hugo in conjuring masculine desire that is on the verge of a compromising eruption—they are still just images: not simply because the reader is barred access by the printed page, but because the protagonists themselves are always at best voyeurs and more often dreamers. Unlike contemporary romance fiction which frames pornographic scenes in randomly selected historical settings, the sensual vignettes in Hugo and Lazhechnikov, as in other historical novels of the period, try the protagonists' and readers' imaginative capacities, hinting at a likeness between the erotic and the historical. In the previous chapter we have pondered the erotic valence of the past and the ultimate obstruction of access to the secrets of history and the Countess's body that drive Hermann to madness. Much more aggressively in the

²⁵ “Each night his delirious imagination depicted la Esmeralda to him in all the attitudes which had most set fire coursing through his veins. He saw stretched out over the captain after the stabbing, her lovely bare breast covered in Phoebus' blood, at that moment of ecstasy when the archdeacon had printed on those pale lips that kiss, which the unfortunate girl, although half dead, had felt searing her. He saw her again, undressed by the brutal hands of the torturers, letting them strip and then fix in the iron-screwed boot her little foot, her slender, shapely leg, her supple, white knee. He saw once more that ivory knee, alone remaining outside Torterue's horrible apparatus. Finally he pictured to himself the girl wearing a shift, a rope round her neck, shoulders bare, feet bare, almost naked, as he had seen her on that last day. These sensual images made him clench his fists and sent a shiver down his spine.” Victor Hugo and John Sturrock, *Notre-Dame of Paris* (Harmondsworth; New York: Penguin, 1978), 410.

²⁶ “He sunk into a single thought of Marioritsa. His entire soul, all of him was like a warm moist element, in which Marioritsa bathes her charms. Like this element, he embraced her with his ardent dream, runs down in a stream along her round shoulders, splashes a hot foam on her swan-neck, rolls in a wave under her breast, sinking in sweet rapture; he clings to her scorching lips with a flying spray, and kisses her black curls and grips them, and his whole self, drenched in her essence, fawns upon her in a subtle, fragrant fume.” Lazhechnikov, *Ledianoi Dom*, 155.

historical novel of the freneticist kind, *eros* presents a specular image of the reader's own pursuit of history, obsessive, constantly sublimated by the imagination, and invariably frustrated.

There is thus much that is erotic about the collective and individual pursuits of history. But what is historical about sexuality in the historical novel? What function do sensual displays perform in a narrative that advertises its foundation in research and 'truth'? For, surely, to say simply "Volynskii was in love with Marioritsa" was not enough. Moreover, even Scott's understated disclosure of his protagonist's chaste affinity with the heroine no longer sufficed.²⁷ Moreover, subtle or racy, eroticism is unquestionably an "attraction," but if it were only that, discriminating readers would discard these novels as lowbrow entertainment.²⁸ History absorbs some of the shock of this sensuality by letting it belong to what supposedly happened as opposed to what was merely imagined by the author/narrator in a voyeuristic spell. Conversely, the extreme voyeurism involved in our reading of Frolo's and Volynskii's fantasies is only a heightened version, a disclosure of that voyeurism which propels our interest in history. In this sense, Lazhechnikov too surpasses Hugo by impregnating a real historical figure with a sensual dream, making the reader's encounter with history all the more intimate. Finally, sexuality is perhaps the most effective key to the psychology of historical actions, to what Lazhechnikov's contemporaries had thought of as unchanging human nature. Through sexuality—as, to a lesser extent, through dialogue—the historical novel gains reliable admittance into human psyche. Exceeding a treatise's or an archival document's promise of truth, the novel denudes bodies, desires, and the fanciful, imaginative, and titillating side of history. As a result, it is in these patently ahistorical, spectacular displays of eroticism that the reader, deluded by their verisimilitude, catches a fleeting glimpse of history. Erotic description becomes a form of knowledge.

²⁷ Each time Waverley, for instance, is about to become aware of his feelings for Flora or Rose, the novel prudishly backs off. The hero is never entirely consumed by his passion: "Even the lyric poet, who complains so feelingly of the pains of love, could not forget, that, at the same time, he was "in debt and in drink," which, doubtless, were great aggravations of his distress. There were, indeed, whole days in which Waverley thought neither of Flora nor of Rose Bradwardine, but which were spent in melancholy conjectures upon the probable state of affairs at Waverley-Honour, and the dubious issue of civil contest in which he was engaged." 257

²⁸ As explicit eroticism becomes a narrative possibility for the historical novel, the genre moves closer to the Gothic and away from the discreet Sentimental view of human nature.

Freneticists sense that knowledge in the novel derives from unexpected sources, from an incursion into and exaggeration of life's most sensational, incongruous, unattractive or sensuous features. Enormously popular in Russia, Jules Janin adopted the narrative voice of a feuilletoniste, nonchalantly reporting on the extreme scenes of city life, all witnessed through a window, much like the window of Bulgarin's historical novel. Applying similar tools of intense observation to the past, Alfred de Vigny (whom some critics posit as Lazhechnikov's model)²⁹ and Victor Hugo reinterpreted Walter Scott's domestication of history as license for an extreme intrusion into the occluded private spaces of architecture and psychology. Having traveled a long way from Scott's innocuous narratives, the historical novel became a risqué genre, always threatening to expose the reader's secret desires as well as contemporary political anxieties. Remember Grigoriev's qualification of freneticism's appeal: "the public [...] listened in secret alarm to the tempting echoes of the young French literature." Freneticism was hotly debated in the Russian criticism of the 1830s, not just for its esthetic shock-value, but for its apparent association with the July Revolution. The Russian government perceived freneticism's admirers as dangerous and closed down some publications that issued favorable reviews.³⁰ If early historical novels could be perused for education, the new frenetic novel of agitating special effects was perceived as a call for subversive action.

Significantly, in all these discussions the names of Walter Scott and the freneticists appeared together. Even in *Severnaia pchela*, the mouthpiece of Russian conservatism, the editors Faddei Bulgarin and Nikolai Grech waxed rhapsodical over the new heirs to Walter Scott's legacy:

Посмотрите, как люди с талантом принялись за дело Вальтер-Скоттовское! Поблагодарив Шотландского Романиста за создание рода, они не тронули его собственности, и на своей собственной почве, из собственных материалов и по собственному вкусу сооружают здания, которыми восхищается образованная публика целого света. Виньи, Виктор Гюго, Жанен, Бальзак,

²⁹ Dan Ungurianu, *Plotting History: The Russian Historical Novel in the Imperial Age*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007

³⁰ See Busch, "N. A. Polevoj's *Moskovskij Telegraf* and the Critical Debate over 'Junaja Francija'.", M. K. Lemke, *Nikolaevskie Zhandarmy I Literatura 1826-1855 Gg* (St. Petersburg: 1908).

Мериме, Сю и другие романисты суть оригинальные писатели в роде Вальтера Скотта и Купера, а не подражатели.³¹

The freneticists reveled in the most extreme spectacle, but were seen as the disciples of Walter Scott whose main merit was believed to be the mundanity and credibility of the historical worlds he created. This perceived connection lends support to my thesis: what passed under the aegis of verisimilitude in the historical novel was in fact novelistic and imaginative. French freneticists radicalize the novelistic strategies already in place in Scott's novels; they expose the spectacle contained in the everyday. Heightening readers' anxieties about the past, frenetic historical novels knock loose every last stronghold of security and normality. To be sure, this unsettling manner owed much to the Gothic novel, which routinely situated violence and illicit sexuality in the middle ages yet was never embarrassed by its imaginative origin. The historical novel affected a much more involved cover-up, overtly aspiring to the status of research yet stealthily complying with the most fanciful desires of the new reading public.

While Lazhechnikov never shies away from a frenetic spectacle, Pushkin criticizes this sensationalist esthetic as "slovesnost' gal'vanicheskaiia, katorzhnaia, punchevaia, krovavaia, tsigarochnaia i pr." ("the literature of galvanism, convict prisons, punch, blood, hand-rolled cigarettes and so on").³² In *The Captain's Daughter* (1836), Pushkin domesticates history à la Scott, placing a naïve and confused middling hero in the midst of a far-reaching historical drama, resolving the plot's final conflict through the intervention of a female protagonist, and portraying a central historical personage (Catherine the Great) from a character's unknowing perspective. However, in the context of the 1830s, his work could be read as a deliberate display of simplicity and transparency, distinct from Scott's exoticized nationalist narrative with its Romantic ballads, folk legends, and dialectal idiosyncrasies. Eschewing the exotic, Pushkin, as we shall see, responds to the challenge of representing interiority and violence quite

³¹ *Severnaia Pchela*, no. 182 (1832). "Look at how people with talent have taken after Walter Scott! Having thanked the Scottish novelist for the creation of the genre, they did not borrow directly from him; working on their own ground, using their own materials, and following their own taste they have raised edifices admired by the educated readership the world over. Victor Hugo, de Vigny, Janin, Balzac, Merimee, Sue and other novelists are original writers who use the genre of Scott and Cooper, but who do not copy them." Note that the article praises Scott for inventing a literary kind, lending support to our premise that historical novels were read for their membership to a genre. [this is something I discuss earlier in the chapter]

³² Busch, "Russian Freneticism," 274.

differently from Scott as well as from the freneticists with their importunate readiness to entertain. Unlike Lazhechnikov's fidgety narrator, Pushkin's narrator remains seemingly unperturbed by history's most problematical tableaux, intensifying their effect by his very aloofness.

Grinev's and the readers' expectations are frustrated by the unspectacular history:

Передо мною простиралась печальная степь. Наискось стояло несколько избушек; по улице бродило несколько куриц. Старуха, стоя на крыльце с корытом, кликала свиней, которые отвечали ей дружелюбным хрюканьем. И вот в какой стороне осужден я был проводить мою молодость!³³

How different this arrival onto the stage of history is from the beginning of *The House of Ice* with its florid invitation to enter Volynskii's carnivalesque court. The battles in *The Captain's Daughter* are also always somehow ineffectual; the reader never forgets about the fortress's inadequate size, pitiable fortifications, and its defenders' old age and lack of necessary training. The city of Orenburg does not fare any better. By contrast, in *The House of Ice*, the clashes between Volynskii's and Biron's parties are always imbued with elements of the carnivalesque. At Christmas-tide, Biron's henchmen appear at Volynskii's court costumed as his friends, and Volynskii, as if in a Shakespearean comedy of error, does not recognize them until a secret supporter informs him of their identity. To avenge himself, Volynskii dresses as a coachman and drives the impostors to a wolf-infested cemetery in the middle of a wintry night. The central conflict of Lazhechnikov's novel is also spectacularly staged on the young Petersburg's central square, where an ice palace had actually been built on Anna Ioannovna's orders in the winter of 1740. Its unveiling involved a massive pageant, tragically pitting against each other the conflicting wills of all the characters. The executions of Captain Mironov and later of Pugachev in Pushkin's novel—though easily lending themselves to a theatricalized stylization, like the executions of Volynskii in *The House of Ice* or La Esmeralda in *Notre Dame de Paris*—are shocking precisely because of their lack of spectacle. The exaggerated dullness of history is Pushkin's response to the freneticists. He lulls Grinev and the readers with mundanity, only the better to horrify them with minimal means: casualness of

³³ Before me stretched the sad steppe. Several huts stood across from me; several chickens wandered about the street. An old woman, standing on the porch with her trough, called out to the pigs, which responded to her with friendly oinking. And this is the area in which I was condemned to spend my youth!

violence and the feeling that chance can sway it either way. The fact that no one has time to be shocked by Pugachev's carnage, that the old Mironova's corpse is left naked and unburied and attracts no attention—proves a greater shock. Pushkin puts on display the seeming lack of spectacle and of novelistic mediation.³⁴

Even the resolution to Grinev's endangered fate is brought by his fiancé, an unlikely historical mediator from a markedly domestic arena. This encounter in turn domesticates Catherine II who appears anonymously in her modest morning dress. In Masha Mironova's meeting with Catherine II on a bench in Tsarskoe Selo, we of course recognize Pushkin's return to the resonant symbolic space, which we have already traversed together with Derzhavin in Chapter 1 and which Pushkin himself had revisited on many occasions as an elegiac poet-historian. In this his last visit to Tsarskoe Selo, Pushkin once again animates Vladimir Borovikovsky's portrait of the empress [Figure 1], by then a pure cliché of historical representation, an image familiar to all readers, but thrillingly unfamiliar to the heroine.

³⁴ Interestingly, when they appear in *The History of the Pugachev Uprising*, the same depictions of violence are experienced as openly shocking and even out of place.



Figure 1. Vladimir Borovikovsky. Portrait of Catherine II, Empress of Russia. 1794

Unlike in the freneticist novel, which piles novelty upon novelty, the reader's surprise in *The Captain's Daughter* comes as a mere frisson of recognition. We know the benevolent middle-aged lady conversing with Masha is Catherine the Great because she looks exactly as we are accustomed to picturing her; we smile compassionately at chicken running around the fortress because we know such fortresses to exist despite the romanticized representations of towering medieval fortresses in Scott's late novels. Details like chicken in the fortress are experienced as meaningful, motivated description, as a sign of what Roland Barthes has called a "reality effect." Nothing is wonderful in Pushkin's novel, everything forcibly tethered to the verifiable.

Alexander Zholkovsky observes that in *The Captain's Daughter*, as in many of Scott's novels, fictional and historical characters continually exchange glances of recognition. These scenes provide additional glue for the fictional and historical plotlines. Zholkovsky finds a thematic explanation for these exchanges:

The paradigm of "acquaintance/vision" is enriched by the motif of "recognizing masks and roles." Towards the latter gravitate both the socio-historical situations of "imposture" and "theatricality of power," and the motif of "acting," advantageous in terms of plot development and intrinsic to rulers as well as ordinary characters.³⁵

In addition to such an immanent reading, acquaintance/vision/recognition can be seen to bring the reader into the fold of the novel, as an interpretive force, similar to the protagonists doing the recognizing. In the context of "the optics of history" which pretended to raze the barrier between the viewer and the viewed history, the eye-to-eye contact between fictional and historical characters destabilizes the theatrical fourth wall that separates the hero and the middling hero. When Grinev looks at Pugachev, the wall is broken. Similarly, the reader, overwhelmed by the excitement of recognition and participation, momentarily loses sight of the page that separates him from the "montage of attractions."

This poetics of arresting recognition is what distinguishes Pushkin's approach to the historical novel from that of his French-influenced contemporaries. It can also help evaluate the insignificance of the discrepancy between his historiographical writing on Pugachev in *Istoriia pugachevskogo bunta* (*The History of the Pugachev Uprising*, 1833) and the same subject's novelistic treatment in *The Captain's Daughter*. Andrew Wachtel has linked "intergeneric dialogue," which he sees as an important trait of Russian literary history in the nineteenth century, with the Russian writers' "indecision," in the wake of the ultimate disintegration of the classicist genre hierarchy, as to "which genre, if any, was the proper one for dealing with perhaps the most burning cultural issue of the day: the national history."³⁶ It seems to me that at least in the case of Pushkin's treatment of Pugachev, the intergeneric dialogue attests to Pushkin's experiment with the historical novel, calling it to account for what it had always promised to do: to be a

³⁵ Alexander Zholkovsky, "Ochnye Stavki S Vlastitelem: Iz Istorii Odnoi Pushkinskoi Paradigmy," in *Pushkinskaia Konferentsiia V Stanforde*, ed. A. L. Ospovat David Bethea, N. G. Okhotin, L. S. Fleishman (Moscow: OGI, 2001).

³⁶ Wachtel, *An Obsession with History*, 87.

genre, completely unlike Gothic or sentimental fiction, to be bound by its promise of historicity, to claim superior historical knowledge only through presenting the individual perspective of an ordinary participant.³⁷ The novel's poetics of recognition relies on the reader's historical knowledge. As Aleksandr Dolinin suggests: "The ideal reader that Pushkin addresses in *The Captain's Daughter* needs to know his *History of the Pugachev Uprising* and juxtapose the novelistic events that transpire in the conditional time of fiction, with their historical analogues and prototypes."³⁸ As in many of his other works, most notably in *Eugene Onegin*, in *The Captain's Daughter* Pushkin projects a culturally and historically savvy reader.

The careful juxtaposition of the individual perspective and historical research was especially important in representing recent late eighteenth-century history. Otherwise, verisimilitude could hardly be sustained in the face of the eyewitness and memoiristic evidence. Pushkin's was a fairly unusual stance for the spectacle-mongering 1830s. When the young Mikhail Lermontov took up the Pugachev theme in his unfinished early novel *Vadim* (1833-4, at about the same time Pushkin began work on his Pugachev narratives), he claimed, as one would by now expect, to couch his narrative in a careful study of the history and topography of his native province. Yet, as for Lazhechnikov, all this research did not amount to a departure from the frenetic poetics of spectacular verisimilitude. Robert Busch summarizes all of *Vadim's* freneticist excesses:

The novel's major character, Vadim, is a descendant of the Hugoean monster type – hunch-backed, bow-legged and generally repulsive; he has immense powers which he turns to destruction and avenging the wrongs done to his father by the Palitsyn family. Vadim's monomaniacal desire for revenge is attenuated only by lust for his beautiful sister. The novel is rife with graphic scenes of violence and illicit, often morbid eroticism. Darkly ominous "Rembrandtian" shading characterizes its setting.³⁹

Yet, if the Middle Ages could tolerate such sensationalist manipulations, the eighteenth century was less malleable. The 24 chapters of Lermontov's unfinished novel are strikingly unbelievable, even by verisimilitude's lax standards. Despite the Soviet critics' dutiful protestations to the contrary, the

³⁷ Incidentally, Zholkovsky remarks that the exchanges of glances, so frequent in *The Captain's Daughter*, are altogether absent from *The History of the Pugachev Uprising*.

³⁸ A. A. Dolinin, "Esche Raz O Khronologii "Kapitanskoi Dochki", in *Pushkin I Drugie: Sbornik Statei K 60-Letiu S. A. Fomicheva*, ed. V. A. Koshelev (Novgorod: NovGu, 1997), 54.

³⁹ Busch, "Russian Freneticism," 279.

historical contour is entirely marginal to Lermontov's novel, fading underneath its Gothic storyline, its limited descriptive repertoire (characters are always either diabolical or angelic), and its imprecise diction. Whereas the young Lermontov was simply not performing the freneticist tricks well, Pushkin's scheme—while outwardly transparent—was prematurely unspectacular and almost too historical.

Let us compare several scenes in which Lazhechnikov and Pushkin grapple with representing what 'non-fictional' histories routinely omit: bodily violence and interiority. These features belong to a long list of novelistic attractions offered by the historical novel and strangely do little harm to the novel's putative verisimilitude, as if forfeiting their obvious fictionality. The first pairing of scenes presents descriptions of human bodies (in particular the extreme case of maimed human bodies); the second focuses on the characters' dreams and thoughts. Both types of description are appropriate only to the novel and aimed expressly at stimulating the readers' imaginations. Equally improbable, but essential for the novel are the narrator's access to the body of the past and to the psyche.

Mutilated bodies were a privileged site of signification in the works of the freneticist school. In *The House of Ice*, a middle-aged Gypsy woman disfigures herself to erase all resemblance with her daughter, Volynskii's young beloved Marioritsa, who is wrongly believed to come from a princely Moldavian family. In the frenzy of maternal sacrifice, the gypsy pours molten lead on her face:

Боже! Что с нею?.. глаз ее поврежден... кипящий свинец режет щеку... бьется мозг в голове, будто череп сверлят... пред остальным глазом прыгают солнца... в груди тысячи ножей... И только один стон, один скрежет зубов в дань всем этим мукам.⁴⁰

In a world teeming with spies and denunciations, even one's face and its testimony are dangerous. Lazhechnikov's characters constantly retreat into dark alcoves, hide under masks, write anonymous letters and make accusations incognito. Mutilation then becomes an extreme –if ultimately unsuccessful – act of rendering one's body anonymous and unreadable. This is an important moment for the historical novel, which is constantly in search of credible points of access to history. The mutilated body is a diachronic

⁴⁰ My God! What has happened to her... her eye is injured... molten lead is rending her cheek... her brain is pulsating in her head as though her skull were being drilled... suns leap before the remaining eye... in her breast a thousand knives are turning... And only a single moan, one solitary gnashing of the teeth are her tribute to all these torments. Lazhechnikov, *Ledianoi Dom*, 121.

presence par excellence, a reminder of the time when the body was still intact, of the conditions of its disfigurement, and finally of the power of the observer to read the body's history beneath its ruins. Lazhechnikov savors the very process of mutilation and its unsettling effect on the reader who is shamelessly invited to observe. It is precisely in the depiction of this process that the novel asserts itself, for the progression of the gypsy's suffering, even if she was a real historical personage, would be inaccessible to history, which only registers the images of before and after. What is most private does not get "spun" by political chronicles. Therefore, readers interpret this scene as a climax of verisimilitude, of *golaia natura*, for it is in its shocking way even truer than history, albeit one of the most estheticized episodes in the novel.

Pushkin characteristically uses the mutilated body as a much more specific historical record. In *The Captain's Daughter*, a maimed body is identified just as it again appears on the brink of being tortured and maimed. This is the scene when the commandant of the Belozerskaia fortress interrogates his Bashkir captive:

Башкирец с трудом шагнул за порог (он был в колодке) и, сняв высокую свою шапку, остановился у дверей. Я взглянул на него и содрогнулся. Никогда не забуду этого человека. Ему казалось лет за семьдесят. У него не было ни носа, ни ушей. Голова его была выбрита; вместо бороды торчало несколько седых волос; он был малого росту, тощ и сгорблен; но узенькие глаза его сверкали ещё огнем.—«Эхе!»—сказал комендант, узнав, по страшным его приметам, одного из бунтовщиков, наказанных в 1741 году. —Да ты видно старый волк, побывал в наших капканах. Ты знать не впервой уже бунтуешь, коли у тебя так гладко выстрогана башка. [...]

And just as torture is about to commence:

Тогда башкирец застонал слабым, умоляющим голосом и, кивая головою, открыл рот, в котором вместо языка шевелился короткий обрубок.⁴¹

⁴¹ "The Bashkir stepped into the room with difficulty (he was shackled) and taking off his tall cap, stopped at the door. I glanced at him and shuddered. I will never forget this man. He seemed about seventy. He had neither nose nor ears. His head was shaved; a few gray hairs bristled instead of a beard; he was short, emaciated and hunched; but his narrow eyes still sparked with fire. —"Ehe!" said the commandant, recognizing him, by his terrifying marks as one of the rebels punished in 1741. "You, I see, are an old wolf, you've been caught in our traps before. I see you have rebelled before if your head is so closely cropped. [...] Then the Bashkir let out a weak and entreating moan and, nodding his head, opened his mouth, where in place of a tongue stirred a short stump." Pushkin, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, VI 454-5.

Here too the mutilated body as a body that is marked, shuttles between the past and present, recognizable as a sign, invariably activating the context of its mutilation, just as a branded animal, if it wanders away from its herd, can always be returned to its rightful owner. The Bashkir's appearance provides the most legitimate occasion to trigger novelistic description, for not only is he foreign and therefore limited in his communication with the Russian officers, he is also physically unable to speak for himself, and his interrogators do the speaking, just as the historian gives words to his sources. In his awe, the protagonist Grinev reads the Bashkir as a historical representation, just as he reads and is puzzled by the history embodied in Pugachev's sinewy Cossack body. The Bashkir's datable appearance is in addition a site against which to mark the progress of Enlightenment. The past is figured as distant, exotic, and barbaric. Yet, because the Bashkir is in danger of being tortured again, doubt is cast upon this alleged advancement of reason. What happened in the barbaric year 1741 threatens to happen again in the enlightened year 1774 or even in the reader's contemporary moment in the 1830s, ripe as it was with peasant unrest. The spectacle of torture, an opportunity which Lazhechnikov would never have missed, is preempted in Pushkin's novel by a prior mutilation. For Pushkin pursues knowledge and access, rather than spectacle. The Bashkir emerges as a historical cipher, a character whose life trajectory is easily gleaned by the commandant, the narrator, and the reader from his appearance. Pushkin thus denies his readers a privileged, novelistic access to the past, exposing only that which can be seen through the restrictive window of history, but this vision is directed at a particularly painful and poignant site, the tortured, tongueless, alien body.

The poetics of recognition is encoded in the Bashkir's body. Even though he cannot speak, his appearance intimates the entirety of his story, verisimilar yet unmentioned in any history of the early 1740s and Elizabeth Petrovna's tumultuous accession to the throne. Similarly, as Aleksandr Ospovat has recently demonstrated, clues pointing to this earlier history are interspersed throughout *The Captain's Daughter*: Grinev's father, for example, was most likely implicated in the Volynskii/Khrushchov case.⁴²

⁴² A. L. Ospovat, "Istoricheskii Material I Istoricheskiie Alliuizii V "Kapitanskoi Dochke"," *Tynianovskii sbornik*, no. 10 (1998): 43. Ospovat emphasizes that Pushkin was thinking about the 1740s while working on *The Captain's*

These multiple reverberations configure Russian history and specifically the eighteenth century through traces and echoes. Many critics have remarked that Pushkin's work on the Pugachev uprising coincided with the peasant unrest of the 1830s, plausibly inferring that his interest in Pugachev was grounded in contemporary concerns. If popular uprisings recurred in amorphous and ominous waves, Russian aristocratic history also had its cycles, which equally displeased the officialdom and could, therefore, be passed through the censorship only as faint traces. The poetics of recognition enabled a code by which such allusions could be understood and history imbued with unsettling coherence.

Coded historical knowledge, while setting Pushkin apart from Scott and the freneticists, more obviously stemmed from the writer's unique working situation. As a state historiographer and a writer all of whose work had to pass Nicholas I's personal censorship, Pushkin wielded a hitherto unprecedented familiarity with the documents of recent Russian history and the most limited freedom to make them public.⁴³ His primary reader was not the new mass readership that created the demand and specifications for the historical novel, but the monarch, chastising and sponsoring at his will, like an eighteenth-century patron. Nicholas I was not immune to the attractions of historical fiction, suggesting on an earlier occasion that Pushkin rework his historical drama *Boris Godunov* into a novel à la Scott. In the system of patronage historical writing was judged by its conformity to the requirements of the patron's self-presentation and, therefore, both fictional and non-fictional historical writing was scrutinized first and foremost for its informative gist. Not only does the poetics of recognition smuggle unwanted knowledge past the censor, it also thematizes the very constraints that patronage and censorship impose on representation. The maimed Bashkir speaks through his body when deprived of physical speech, and his message is not what the commandant wants to hear. Moreover, as a purely novelistic construct, a

Daughter: "Pushkin engages in epistolary polemics with the author of *The House of Ice* literally on the eve or at the moment of returning to his work on *The Captain's Daughter* [...] and precisely at that time he is introduced to Karamzin's *Memoir on Ancient and New Russia*."

⁴³ For a fascinating account of games that writers played with censorship in this period, see: V. E. Vatsuro and M. I. Gillel'son, *Skvoz' "Umstvennyye Plotiny": Ocherki O Knigakh I Presse Pushkinskoi Pory*, Izd. 2-e, dop. ed. (Moskva: "Kniga", 1986).

mutilated body is a spectacular site appearing just where the factually-minded censor forgets to look, but in Pushkin's novelistic economy every detail is potentially eloquent.

Like sexuality, violence provides a point of access to history. For Lazhechnikov, it is also an opportunity to gratify his spectacle-thirsty reader with shocking representation. For Pushkin, by contrast, it is a chance to probe the violated body for its ability to gesture at what is unsaid and unspeakable, to sneak in the fragments of unnerving but familiar history.

The comparison of how Pushkin and Lazhechnikov frame their protagonists' inner worlds yields a similar contrast. *The Captain's Daughter*, written as a first-person narrative, would seem to allow more access to Grinev's interiority. Yet, what we see is a stock character of a Bildungsroman whose childhood and early adulthood also recall the *nedorosli* ('minors') of eighteenth-century Russian comedy of manners. To add another genre parallel, the invented editor of the novel presents Grinev's tale as a memoir, which he, because of his widely advertised interest in the Pugachev Uprising, had received from Grinev's grandson. For Pushkin the historical novelist, interiority is a matter of its historical relevance. The characters' inner life is illumined inasmuch as it reflects upon history and comes out of historical sources.

Grinev's famous disturbing dream is a case in point. Troubled by the events of his first days away from home, the adolescent Grinev in his dream travels to the bedside of his ailing father, only to discover in place of the father a jolly *muzhik* with a black beard, his father by proxy as Grinev's mother assures him. It appears probable—and psychoanalytic theory would concur—that a boy who has just left his home and committed his first mistakes of adulthood, would unconsciously seek to replace his father, the familiar and menacing authority figure, with a new father, a stranger who in the course of the preceding day had spoken in an ominous code and exerted an inexplicable power over those around him. This is the first level of the dream's verisimilitude.

For the reader, the dream provokes both intense pleasure and anxiety because unlike Grinev—a participant with a limited vision—the reader recognizes Pugachev in the dream's *muzhik* and a poignant encapsulation of well-known history in Grinev's inability to escape the bloody bodies that are in the

dream piling up around him. The dream—by the 1830s also a novelistic cliché, especially the prophetic dream—is reinstated as a powerful novelistic strategy by virtue of its symbolic correlation with history. This symbolic logic is the second level of the dream’s verisimilitude. We believe the story because it substantiates both our conceptions of human psychology and our knowledge of history. Grinev’s dream is significant not simply because it is a foreshadowing or because what happens to the protagonist in the course of the novel is the realization of his inner apprehensions. The dream is the site where Pushkin succeeds in welding together the novelistic and the historical, capturing the unsettling infringement of history upon the psyche.

Just as all the other possible loci of entertainment, inner thought in *The House of Ice* is ubiquitous and even titillating, yet never bound up with history in the same disturbingly intimate way as Grinev’s dream. Sputtering excitedly over his privileged access to the historical world, Lazhechnikov’s narrator invariably stops short of penetrating the characters’ psychology beyond a spectacular surface. This superficiality seems carefully constructed and intentional, rather than accidental. Here is, for instance, Volynskii deep in thought in the beginning of the novel:

Голова его опустилась на грудь; черные длинные волосы пали в беспорядке на прекрасное, разгоревшееся лицо и образовали над ним густую сеть; в глазах начали толпиться думы; наконец, облако печали приосенило их. Долго находился он в этом положении. Никто из домашних этому не удивлялся, ибо с ним такой припадок с недавнего времени случался нередко, даже на дружеских пиршествах и придворных куртагах; действительно ли это был болезненный припадок, или прихоть вельможи, или срочная дань какому-то предчувствию, мы того сказать не можем. Все молчало в зале, боясь пошевелиться; казалось, все в один миг окаменели, как жители Помпеи под лавою, на них набежавшею. Где были тогда думы Вольнского?⁴⁴

⁴⁴ “His head tilted down onto his chest; his long black hair fell in disorder onto his handsome, flushed face and formed a thick net over it: in his eyes thoughts began to gather; finally, a cloud of sorrow overshadowed them. He remained in this attitude for a long time. No one in his household was surprised, for such fits had befallen him quite frequently of late, even at friendly feasts and court festivities; was it truly a fit of illness, or a courtier’s whim, or a reflexive response to some kind of premonition, we cannot say. All was silent in the room, afraid to stir; it seemed as if in one instant everyone had turned into stone, like the inhabitants of Pompeii beneath the lava, which overtook them. Where were Volynskii’s thoughts then?” Lazhechnikov, *Ledianoi Dom*, 14.

We know that Volynskii is thinking because we can observe him in a beautified thoughtful attitude, as if taken from a handbook on gesture for historical painters or actors.⁴⁵ The petrification of the scene, as in a historical painting or a tableau vivant, signals a moment of *visual* access to history. Inasmuch as the novel targeted visual imagination and verisimilitude was predicated upon the reader's ability to visualize, access to protagonists' inner motivations need not be allowed or even desired. Inferring them runs the danger of discrediting the historical novel as a figment of the novelistic imagination. Therefore, as in a tableau vivant, everyone freezes and the observer is invited to decode the meaning of the scene. Lazhechnikov openly evokes the progenitor of all tableaux vivants, the petrified Pompeii. Just as in the Pompeii disaster, arrested movement is shocking because the arrest comes amid great commotion. *The House of Ice* is an incredibly fast-paced novel with many participants constantly interpreting one another's every movement. However, it is in these moments of imagined petrification that the act of reading most powerfully interleaves itself, and the petrification always occurs as an external index of someone's thoughts.

The choice of the ice palace as the novel's central symbolic locale sanctions these contrasts of motion and stasis. This whimsical construction, which as Lazhechnikov repeatedly remarks, could have arisen only in the northern Russian landscape and climate, is designed as a site for the wedding of Anna Ioannovna's fool Kul'kovsky (the hapless nobleman Golitsyn in real history) and Volynskii's spying waiting woman Podachkina (in real life, Anna Ioannovna's Kalmyk, Buzheninova). Together with other elements of pageantry, the building itself was supposed to contribute to the trompe-l'oeuil effect of the wedding. Encircled by joyful movement, the house was bound to appear livable, as if in a fairy tale; yet, everyone was aware of its sinister materiality. The wedding easily betrayed its real character as punishment: the newlyweds, secured by implacable guardsmen, almost froze to death on their wedding night. This equivocation between festivity and torture made the house of ice a potent metaphor for Russian history. But Lazhechnikov hastens to protect himself against such interpretations. He emphasizes that the house of ice and the wedding were real historical events and that in the novel he had followed

⁴⁵ For theorizing on the legibility of the pictorial body, see Norman Bryson's excellent chapter "The Legible Body: LeBrun" in Norman Bryson, *Word and Image: French Painting of the Ancien Régime* (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 29-57.

Georg Wolfgang Kraft's detailed plan and description. Even the entry on Volynskii in the famous Encyclopedia of Brockhaus and Efron mentions "the mock wedding of Prince Golitsyn and the Kalmyk Buzheninova (which was historically accurately depicted by Lazhechnikov in *The House of Ice*)."

A source of infinite pleasures, verisimilitude also served to obviate subversive connotations. Unlike in Pushkin's historical work, Lazhechnikov's scientific claims successfully forestalled a critical examination of the end of Anna Ioannovna's reign. Brockhaus and Efron only reiterate the stock phrase of Lazhechnikov's reception. We will see how misplaced this evaluation sounds when we read the novel's climactic scene and its portrayal of Anna Ioannovna's interiority.

In this episode, the prospects of Volynskii's victory over Biron revolve around the construction of the palace, which was entrusted to Volynskii. The Empress loved entertainment and Volynskii was eager to cater to her desires, just as a century later, Lazhechnikov the novelist catered to his readers' desires when he created a spectacularized Empress, an object of everybody's fawning admiration, who nevertheless also possesses an interiority, which is virtually occluded, emerging only in the form of spectacle. When Anna Ioannovna visits the construction site of the palace, she is disconcerted by Biron's elusive behavior and succumbs to a reverie:

Государыня слышала, как герцог соскочил с запяток, вздрогнула, испуганная и смущенная этим движением, предвещавшим что-то необыкновенное, склонила взоры и глубоко задумалась... Наступило мертвое молчание. Самый слон замолк. Сани ее не двигались; у саней Волинский, вокруг придворные кавалеры, впереди эскадрон гусар, сзади множество экипажей, вдали толпы народные стояли на одном месте. Волшебное зрелище представлял тогда этот Ледяной дворец, один, посреди ночи, потешающийся огнями своими, эта царица, казалось, навеки усыпленная в зимнем экипаже, эти кони, воины, двор, народ около нее, на снежном полотне, убеленные морозом, все это будто в саванах, неподвижное, немое, мертвое,—и вдали кругом мрачные здания, выглядывающие с своими снежными крышами из-за ограды этой сцены!⁴⁶

⁴⁶ "The Empress, hearing the Duke [Biron] jump off the footboard, gave a start, frightened and embarrassed by his movement, presage of something extraordinary; lowered her gaze and became lost in deep thoughts. A deadening silence fell. The elephant himself [part of the spectacle] fell silent. Her sleigh stood motionless; next to the sleigh Volynskii, around it the court cavaliers, before it a hussar squadron, behind it,—a multitude of carriages, and in the distance crowds of people—all stood still. What a magical site then was this Palace of Ice, alone in the night, entertained by its own lights; this czarina who seemed to have been lulled into an eternal sleep in her winter carriage; these horses, these warriors, this court, these people around her, on a snowy canvas, white with frost, all of it as if in a shroud, motionless, mute, dead; while all around in the distance gloomy buildings with their snowy rooftops peeked from behind the fence at this scene!" Lazhechnikov, *Ledianoi Dom*, 189-90.

Instead of opening up the Empress's inner life to the reader's scrutiny, this scene forces the reader's attention onto a spectacular surface, freezes the entire scene, its foreground and background, as if in an eighteenth-century engraving for a ceremonial procession or again in a *tableau vivant* or, rather, a dramatic *tableau*. In contrast to the *tableau vivant* which usually involved an enactment of a well-known historical or genre painting, "bringing stillness to life," Martin Meisel defines the *dramatic tableau* as "the fullest expression of a pictorial dramaturgy [...] where the actors strike an expressive stance in a legible symbolic configuration that crystallizes a stage of the narrative as a situation, or summarizes and punctuates it."⁴⁷ Indeed, through this dramatic *tableau*, a passage virtually devoid of verbs, the commotion that precedes this scene and creates a temporary illusion of "being in the past" (this is a very fast-paced novel) is radically interrupted. In this way, the novel enables a distance essential for the historically-minded gaze of the reader, again placing history on display without fully dissecting it. Lazhechnikov is clearly himself aware of the theatricality of his *tableau*: it is a "magical sight," "gloomy buildings peek from behind the frame of the scene."

Anna Ioannovna's thoughts, generically off-limits to the historical novel, are approximated instead through spectacle, the spectacle which Lazhechnikov had reason to claim as the main feature of Anna Ioannovna's reign. The entire novel is built around this kind of counterpoint, in addition to the counterpoint between the tragic and the grotesque characteristic of the frenetic school. In this sense, too, Lazhechnikov accommodated the demands of his readership, whose esthetic values were shaped by the contrast of stasis and motion on stage, in historical painting, and in illusionistic technologies. Karl Briullov's famous *The Last Day of Pompeii* was on exhibit in 1834, precisely when Lazhechnikov was finishing his novel [Figure 2].

⁴⁷ Meisel, M. (1983). Realizations : narrative, pictorial, and theatrical arts in nineteenth-century England. Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press. P. 45



Figure 2. Karl Briullov. *The Last Day of Pompeii*. 1833

The painting contrasts the infinitely dynamic and glowingly red lava with the frozen, terrified figures that it is about to engulf. The painting's chiaroscuro effects split the picture plane, so that the figures' bodies in their flight are turned to the comforting darkness ahead of them, the darkness from which the viewer beholds the painting, yet their faces are illuminated by the light of the erupting volcano, the vanishing point of the canvas, whose excruciating view is obstructed from the viewer by a tumbling pantheon. The mental state of the figures, torn between their fascination with the calamity and their urge to flee, can in a painting only be depicted through exaggerated gestures and contrastive surfaces. The use of a similar technique in Lazhechnikov's novel only pinpoints the historical novelist's epistemological limitations. Linger on the surface, the reader's eye experiences history as an esthetic construct, but never approaches it in the desired "domestic manner." Characters' thinking is left up to the reader's imagination.

Lazhechnikov's readers knew how to relish the contrast between movement and stasis. A wedding, with its whimsical dances and buffoonery, a festivity that constitutes an ultimate mobilization of the

sweaty and sexualized warmth of the carnivalesque (as defined by Bakhtin), took place in an ominous cold space that threatened to arrest the carnival's participants within its icy walls (as in V. I. Jakobi's 1878 canvas based on the novel [Figure 3]).



Figure 3. V. I. Jakobi. *The House of Ice*. 1878

Similarly to the ice palace, a historical yet fantastic construction that was doomed to melt in the spring, Anna Ioannovna's interiority is externalized as a moment of temporary congealment, of a transitory yet poignant silence amid the pandemonium of the carnival. In this silence, the reader retreats into a safe critical distance, guided by the narrator and sharing in the narrator's amazement. In these scenes, understanding of history comes when access is denied, when the novel reveals its limiting spectacular esthetics.

If Pushkin's poetics of recognition was too complex to breed followers; Lazhechnikov's poetics of spectacle, while productive and indeed shared with other freneticists, pointed to the multiple limitations of historical fiction. When the novel portrayed a historical personage, its representational repertoire was restricted by the demands of verisimilitude. Volynskii's or Anna Ioannovna's true motivations, fantasies, and even individual utterances were left inaccessible. If the novelist fabricated them, he exposed himself to the criticism of misrepresentation, like that leveled by Pushkin on Lazhechnikov. If the novelist

cautiously elected to dwell on the visual glamour of history, the historical novel admitted to its failure to grant its readers more access than they had already gained through the pre-filmic visual technologies. Eventually, historical research in the novel would have to forfeit its omnipotence, and the novel would have to finally be acknowledged as a fiction, which has little or no documentary base. Fiction and history do not yet part their ways in the 1830s, but Lazhechnikov's novel is certainly a harbinger of their inevitable separation. While most criticism on the historical novel demands accuracy, research, and verisimilitude, the novel tests new and old representational techniques that can only loosely be linked with mimesis. In the 1840s the genre exhausts itself, becoming at best a staple of pulp fiction. And the attentions of more sophisticated readers turn to a new phantom of historical accuracy: published archival documents, which trade in a fragmentary history, couched in stern scholarly explanations, dismissive of all the imaginative novelistic expedients, such as romance, violence, adventure, and interiority. The readership for such documents fashions itself not as an impressionable crowd on the market for everything historical, but as refined consumers of knowledge.

This chapter has demonstrated how the historical novel performs the feat of illusionistic semblance that its audiences crave, how in turn its narrative strategies most implicated in the construction of a historical fantasy are eagerly misapprehended by readers and critics alike and placed in the service of the prized historical verisimilitude, how the spectacular is in fact liberated by the pretense to realism, and finally how the novel finds a new voice through its encounter with history and caters to the market.

Lazhechnikov's *House of Ice*, inaccurate as it had since been proven to be, continues to serve as a sole source of historical information on Anna Ioannovna's reign for many Russian readers who, as schoolchildren, avidly consume its entertaining attractions. The novel became a resonant and even symbolic text immediately after its publication. In a letter to his friend and protégé, the famous critic Vissarion Belinskii, Lazhechnikov raves about his readers' excessive reception of the novel, reminiscent of the reception of Karamzin's *Poor Liza*:

Скажу Вам как человеку, который меня любит... в Петербурге мой «Ледяной дом» имел успех, которого не имел на Руси ни один роман: у Самсоньевского кладбища, где похоронен Вольтер, а не Волынский,

был постоянный съезд карет; памятник над могилой Волынского весь исписан стихами—к счастью, как пишут, не пошлыми, и молодые люди, разбив мраморную вазу (из этого памятника), уносят кусочки как святыню.⁴⁸

Even an illusionistic, unreal novel manages to establish a place of memory for the eighteenth century, one that Lazhechnikov's 1830s consumer interprets as a display of expendable commodities. Fiction renders history so palpable, so affecting that even the material artifacts of that history—Volynskii's tombstone lovingly erected by his bereft family after his execution—are taken apart for souvenirs. Far from replicating history, the historical novel rewrites and even erases it. "The book will kill the building," as Victor Hugo prophetically claimed in *Notre Dame de Paris*. Likewise, the eighteenth century was taken to pieces by the new consumer culture of historical commodities. The voracious reading public destroyed the historical monument and upheld a fictional text in its place, powerfully demonstrating that on the literary market an imaginative text that suited popular opinion assumed a greater reality than history itself.

⁴⁸ I will tell you as someone who is fond of me... in Petersburg my *House of Ice* met with success unparalleled by that of any other novel in Russia: near the Samson cemetery where Volynskii is buried, was a constant assembly of carriages; Volynskii's tombstone is entirely covered in poems—fortunately, as they report, nothing vulgar, and young people, who have shattered a marble vase (from that tombstone), carry away pieces as relics. Lazhechnikov and Vengerov, *Sobranie Sochinenii*.