

Title: The Fall of the House of Pesotsky: Chekhov's "Black Monk" as Gothic Tale  
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It seems appropriate that "The Black Monk," the most Gothic of Chekhov's late tales, traces its origin to a dream of the author. From the time of its publication in 1894 to today, critics find the story problematic both in terms of genre and content (Sukhikh). As a consequence, this story has inspired numerous divergent readings.

This paper is an exploration of the dynamic of two lines of discourse in "The Black Monk"—the positivistic scientific discourse and the romantic discourse of the gothic-horrific. The two lines intertwine and the repressed Gothic material informs the more dominant realist plane. Chekhov's use of the Gothic in "The Black Monk" connects him with a long line of writers (including realist writers) who turned to the Gothic to communicate through affect that which defies rational understanding. Early Chekhov parodies of Gothic plots (and plights), such as "A Thousand and One Terrors or a Frightening Night" (*Tysiacha odna strast' ili strashnaia noch'*) published in 1880, suggest intimate knowledge of the genre.

The most salient feature of the Gothic for this analysis is that it is written for affect—to produce a physiological response, a shudder in the face of the existential abyss. And, while in Chekhov's story, the irrational (Gothic) element is contained by the realist discourse, numerous Gothic elements described by Vijay Mishra (and others)—extreme sensibility, decay and ruins, family secrets and curses, anxiety, repression, fear/danger of violation, incest, madness, death, mysteries, mad scientists and mad creations, unearthly music and otherworldly apparitions—are abundantly present in Chekhov's text, undermining the positivistic stratum.

#### Works Cited

Mishra, Vijay. *The Gothic Sublime*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994.

Sukhikh, I. N. "Zagadochnyi chernyi monakh Chekhova." *Voprosy literatury*. (6) June 1983, 109-124.