

**Title:** The Grotesque Body and the Late Russian Realism  
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This paper is part of a larger project on the grotesque as it appears in Russian realism 1869–1899. Notoriously difficult to define, the grotesque can be understood as a stylistic estrangement and defiance of conventional boundaries; among many things, it can lend itself to representations of hybridity through either bodily deformation or fusions of disparate realms. The grotesque, which thrives during social upheaval, was a fitting aesthetic for the tumultuous last four decades of nineteenth-century Russia. I begin with a tendentious genre inspired by nihilists, the “anti-nihilist novel,” where the nihilist’s social otherness is highlighted through grotesque exaggeration. Since nihilists were a mix of traditional social estates (*soslovie*) without belonging to any one of them, the Russian grotesque they provoked was fittingly characterized by hybridity and defiance of boundaries. I use the postcolonial concept of “hybridity” to elucidate the function of the grotesque in anti-nihilist works like Ivan Goncharov’s *The Precipice* (1869) and Nikolai Leskov’s *Cathedral Folk* (1872). In *The Location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha suggests that hybridity “represents that ambivalent ‘turn’ of the discriminated subject into the terrifying, exorbitant object of paranoid classification” (162). In both Goncharov and Leskov, the nihilist assumes the social status of outsider whose social otherness is encoded in his grotesque representation as half-man, half-animal, a hybrid creature that threatens the traditional social identity of the estates (the gentry and clergy, respectively). Border creatures in both works, nihilists are eventually expelled from the social order as traditional values prevail.