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A totalitarian state, worn down by an endless war, must be seen to crush home-grown insurgents with an iron fist. But Lom discovers Mirgorod to be more corrupted than he imagined: a murky world of secret police and revolutionaries, cabaret clubs and doomed artists.

Lom has been chosen because he is an outsider, not involved in the struggle for power within the party. And because of the sliver of angel stone implanted in his head.

Wolfhound Century Details

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From Reader Review *Wolfhound Century* for online ebook

Karl Ruben says

There's a vast, impenetrable, unknowable forest right there, brushing up against a familiar city of men. It's *right there*, and it shouldn't be.

This isn't the first of the fantastical elements we're introduced to in *Wolfhound Century*, but this is the image that stayed with me, that really sucked me into the Vlast, Peter Higgins' alternate Soviet Russia. Even with angels (or "angels", rather) and giants popping up in its first pages, the Vlast's towns and cities feel very familiar, with their muggy cafés and slush-filled streets. But when Higgins introduces the idea of the Vlast as one almost-isolated wound of civilisation carved into the untamed nature of its world, he also rings a bell of cognitive dissonance that resonates through the rest of the book. Whenever I come across an alternate-history/secondary world fantasy mash-up like this, it's always tempting to suspect authors of changing out the names and fudging the geography and history because they couldn't be bothered with the research. In a couple of disorienting, rug-pulling paragraphs, Higgins justifies the Vlast (and the rest of its world) being exactly what it is. A real fake place, and not just Russia with the serial numbers filed off.

The first two thirds of *Wolfhound Century*'s story is a fairly standard noirish thriller (one good cop up against a corrupt system), but Higgins uses the conventional structures to his advantage. Instead of trying to subvert his audience's expectations with forced twists and turns, he plays his cards face up. When Very Bad Things start happening to our one good cop (trust me, this is not a spoiler), their inevitability (and matter-of-fact foreshadowing) highlight the consequences of the protagonist's actions, instead of serving as artificial heightening of stakes and suspense.

The aforementioned unfamiliar familiarity of the world building, and Higgins' spare and beautiful prose also help augment and transform the standard issue story beats. There's an otherness to both dialogues and narration that makes this seem more like an impeccable translation, than an English-language original. And I definitely mean that as a compliment.

Even though its prose is minimalistic, the book's chief strength (one which blindsided me again and again) might be its turns into poetry. Higgins will periodically shift his tight third person narration from human players to other intelligences, whether superhuman or supernatural. More often than not, the resulting sequences are mind-blowing, awesome in the true sense of the word. Now and again, he'll also knock out a paragraph or two in the middle of the main narrative which has me near catching my breath. Like this one, where the seeds of a decidedly low-key love story are sown:

"Lom watched her walk out of the room, straight and taut and brave. He felt something break open quietly inside him. A new rawness. An empty fullness. An uncertainty that felt like sadness or hunger, but wasn't."

I was a bit disappointed not to see the story resolved by the end of the book, but if you're going to have a multi-part saga, I'd rather its individual instalments be brisk, 300 page affairs like *Wolfhound Century*, rather than thousand page monstrosities. I'm really, really excited to see where Higgins takes this next.

Milo (BOK) says

Read the Review Here: <http://thefoundingfields.com/2013/03/...>

“Very dark, very gritty and very atmospheric. Wolfhound Century is also a book free of genre constraints, allowing for a great original and entertaining read. Top Notch stuff by Peter Higgins.” ~The Founding Fields

Every so often you come across a book that is impossible to fit into a single genre, and Wolfhound Century hits that spot perfectly. It seems like a weird combination of alternate history, fantasy and the good old noir crime fiction as well – set in a world that is similar to 1940’s Russia. If you were looking for one of the most imaginative books of the year so far, then you’ve come to the right place.

"Investigator Vissarion Lom has been summoned to the capital in order to catch a terrorist — and ordered to report directly to the head of the secret police.

A totalitarian state, worn down by an endless war, must be seen to crush home-grown insurgents with an iron fist. But Lom discovers Mirgorod to be more corrupted than he imagined: a murky world of secret police and revolutionaries, cabaret clubs and doomed artists.

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The strongest aspect of Wolfhound Century is clearly Higgins’ worldbuilding. He’s captured a gritty world with one of the darkest tales that I’ve had the pleasure of reading, and I’ve read Warhammer 40,000 fiction – the setting that first coined the term grimdark. (I think). Don’t expect any heroes here, for Higgins’ characters are well developed, three-dimensional and very interesting, and Higgins has made them feel realistic enough to fit in the totalitarian state that he has created as a backdrop, and never does a character feel like he or she shouldn’t belong.

Whilst the book has a larger cast of characters than just the man mentioned on the blurb, Investigator Vissarion Lom is the story’s key man, summoned by a high ranking police official to catch a terrorist at the bequest of the head of the secret police. Lom is a great character and he manages to carry the book through the dark corners that Higgins takes us. It becomes clear that one of the main themes in this book is fear, fear of the Secret Police, and this is one of the many reasons that helps connect Wolfhound Century to its 1940’s Russia setting. The pace is fast, and if you enjoy Wolfhound Century then you won’t be able to put it down, for the chapters are almost James Patterson-level short in places, allowing that “One More Chapter” thing to really kick in even though you know you have to get off the bus soon (If my bus stop was not the last stop on my journey, I would have missed it – I was that engrossed in Wolfhound Century), allowing for a great read.

The writing style of Peter Higgins is fantastic and if Wolfhound Century is anything to go by then I will stick around to see more of what Higgins puts out – he’s a great writer and has really captured the fact that fantasy doesn’t have to be set on a completely invented world nor in our own reality to be enjoyable – alternate history/fantasy is a much under used genre that I am now wishing to explore in more depth to see if there are other books like Wolfhound Century out there.

This could very well end up being in my list of Top 25 books of 2013, and it's certainly going to be one of the weirdest novels that I've read this year - Wolfhound Century is engaging, enthralling and this is a ride that you'll want to get on board for. Fans of noir, classic spy thrillers, and fantasy fans will want to get on board on this book and whilst its dark tone may not be for everyone It comes with a high recommendation from me.

VERDICT: 4/5

unknown says

This is the China Miéville's book that was ever China Miéville by someone other than China Miéville.

Kristin (MyBookishWays Reviews) says

You may also read my review here: <http://www.mybookishways.com/2013/03/...>

Vissarion Lom of the Podchornok provincial police, has tried many times to get transferred to the capital city of the great Vlast, Mirgorod. He eventually gets his wish, but when he arrives, he finds out that he's been summoned to catch a revolutionary by the name of Josef Kantor. Kantor, an "impresario of destruction", is responsible for countless lives lost and horrendous atrocities in the name of freedom, and he's also a ghost; a legend, an enigma, and a man shrouded in mystery. It's made very clear to Lom, upon his arrival in Mirgorod, that he will be on his own in seeking Kantor, with no help from the police. He seeks out an old friend, a professor named Raku Vishnik, with whom he parted ways with when Raku went to university and Lom stayed in Podchornok to join the police. Eventually the university fired Raku after finding out about his family and his connection to artists and poets, and now he is the official historian of Mirgorod. He wanders the streets of the city with his camera, photographing the things that can't be seen, the universe underneath of Mirgorod. Raku is welcoming to Lom, and Lom settles in with his old friend to get to work in finding a terrorist. Lom soon finds out that Mirgorod is a very dangerous place, and that he's under threat by much more than just Kantor and his band of murderous revolutionaries. Amongst the death that hovers over Mirgorod like a haze is the Archangel, fallen from the stars, mired in the woods, a stone monolith with an alien intelligence... and it's awakening.

Lom is much more than a policeman, and possibly much more than a man. Angels have been falling to earth for centuries, and humans have been taking pieces of their stone bodies and using them for "enhancements". Lom has a piece of angel stone implanted in his head (placed there as a child) and sometimes he gets glimpses of another world, one lying just beneath the one he lives in, and at times, seems to exhibit certain powers. The Pollandore is the world that might be, that hasn't been, and Kantor wants it destroyed, but he's not the only one. Laverentina Chazia, Commander of the Secret Police, also wants to see it destroyed, and she'll go to any means to do it. It's up to Lom and a young woman, Maroussia, whose past lies in the dense forests surrounding Mirgorod, to save the past, as well as a future without constant war and bloodshed.

Peter Higgins has taken an alternate Russia rife with squalid alleyways, secret police, cabarets where artists gather to discuss their forbidden work and indulge in equally forbidden behavior, and thrown in fallen angels

and pocket universes for good measure. I can't forget to mention the rusalkas (water ghosts or nymphs), giants that are used as slaves, and the Gaukh Engine, which is the machine of steel and electricity that is the heart of the city's archives. While *Wolfhound Century* tackles some pretty big ideas and themes (among them, transhumanism and cosmism), the author has cleverly wrapped these ideas up into a story about a man, and a woman, who came from nothing, but are destined for greater things, and where myth and reality are sometimes indistinguishable. Wonderfully atmospheric and alive, not unlike the verdant, sentient forest that surrounds Mirgorod, and beautifully written, *Wolfhound Century* is equal parts nightmare and dreamscape, and what a dream. If you find yourself getting confused about the role of angel flesh and how it works, don't worry, all will be revealed at the end. Speaking of the end, it'll knock your socks off, and leave you hoping for the next book very, very soon. *Wolfhound Century* is a strange, complex, earthy, sometimes violent read, and one of the best debuts I've gotten my hands on.

Nikki says

Received to review via Netgalley

There's something compelling about *Wolfhound Century*; when people talk about the beautiful style and language, they're quite right. And the comparisons to Miéville are also, I think, fair. My issue was that it was all weirdly half-familiar — sort of Russian, sort of a mystery, sort of a thriller — and I couldn't catch hold of any of it to really follow a thread through the story. Lom is okay as a character, but he feels empty, like a cipher. That doesn't really get any better for me over the course of the book, and... generally everything else gave me that same impression.

For me, there were so many bits I wanted more of — the forest creature/s — and bits I just didn't enjoy, like pretty much anything relating to the angels, because they seemed so devoid of explanation.

In the end, I have to confess I gave up and skimmed. Miéville has to catch me in the right mood, too, so I might be willing to try again some other time. But I really didn't get into it, despite wanting to and finding the writing itself compelling.

Originally posted [here](#).

Sharon Burgin says

This book has everything: giants, angels, mystery, crime; all based in a timeless world that appears to be run like Russia was in the last century. Morals abound. Strange creatures appear. Good tries to overcome evil.

Peter Higgins draws you in to the world where strange creatures are accepted as everyday occurrences. There are several subplots all neatly tied together. Inspector Vissarion Lom is hunting for a terrorist, but he uncovers something more sinister. The World he knows is about to change.

He meets up with an old childhood friend and gets drawn into something greater than a terrorist plot.

If you like Noir, Sci-Fi, thrillers, alternate history books, you'll enjoy this. A word of warning though, when you get to the last page, it isn't. This book ends as if it is the first chapter of a much greater novel. I can only

assume that book two is rapidly being written because I am dying to find out what happens next.

Monica says

Now that I have had a good taste of the speculative fiction that is to be released in 2014, I can now declare that 2014 is the year of the spectacularly original debut novel, *Wolfhound Century* by Peter Higgins being no exception. This novel is extremely hard to delegate to one genre, as it effortlessly dances the line between alternate history, fantasy, and noir crime fiction. It is set in an alternate history to 1940's Stalinist Russia, and brings more than just the physical setting to play in this novel. Higgins has filled his characters with the mindset of those times, as products of an unstable society, constantly living with fear of each other. There are not any other novels that I can think to compare this novel to, and its striking originality is one of its best qualities.

The story follows Investigator Vissarion Lom, who has been summoned to the capitol city of Mirgorod to catch a terrorist. He has been chosen for this position because he is a complete outsider, and the head of the secret police feels that he has no one else he can trust in his search for the villain Josef Kantor. Kantor is a charismatic man who convinces many to join his cause, and as Lom searches for him, he comes to find that it feels like the whole city is working against him, including the bureaucracy and the institution that he serves. But Lom perseveres in his search, going against both the natural and the supernatural, as Mirgorod is a city built on the corpse of a fallen angel (a piece of which Lom has embedded in his body, giving him an air of the supernatural himself), and it is filled with giants, gnomes, magical forests, and other elements out of Slavic fairy tales.

This novel is not only original in its genre, but also in the way it is written. Its chapters are short, and the pacing of the plot is very fast, almost giving the book the feel of a crime drama. The writing, on the other hand, is beautiful and a bit dense, and the subject matter is very sophisticated. Even though it is paced light a pulp novel, its contents demand a sharp and discerning reader to catch all its nuances and follow the plots implications. For the average reader, I would recommend doing a quick Google search on Stalinist Russia, as I feel the echoes of this era play a large part in the capacity to fully appreciate this novel. The characters were dynamic, but it was a little hard to fully sympathize with them. A little more background foundation for Lom in particular (especially in the early part of the book) would have helped me to become a bit more engrossed in the story. Despite this, I really enjoyed this book, and will definitely be reading future works by Higgins.

I'm going to rate this book a 7.5/10.

I received a copy of this book from Netgalley and the publisher in return for an honest review.

Stefan says

I've read several novels over the last few years that were compared to China Miéville by reviewers, publishers, or both. In most cases, I thought the comparison was a stretch, to say the least. In some cases, it was simply ludicrous. Setting your fantasy novel in a grimy city where it rains a lot is not enough. Not every weird/slipstream dystopia qualifies. There is more to it than that.

When *Wolfhound Century* by Peter Higgins arrived on my doorstep, featuring a prominent quote by Richard K. Morgan that compares it to “vintage Miéville or VanderMeer”, I was understandably sceptical. Here we go again. I expected the standard mediocre descriptions of grey, rain-swept buildings. Tired, noir stylings. Grim and grimy characters without much spark.

Read the entire review on my site [Far Beyond Reality!](#)

Blodeuedd Finland says

How to describe this one? How to do it justice? In *Soviet Russia reviews* writes you! Anyway...

Yes, this book takes place in a world that is ours, or maybe it is not our world. We have a "Russia" turned "Soviet", ruled by a ruthless dictator, revolutionaries running around in the streets bombing stuff, a war with a place called The Archipelago, and that is all we learn of that. But that is only the beginning. There is a vast vast forest, there are creatures from Slavic mythology, there are Gods that left, and there was a war in the sky that broke the moon and made angels fall to earth and die. Their flesh used by scientist for their own gain, and one of those angels are still alive, huge, dark and hungry. Hey there was even "Finnish" giant. Now you might to understand that this was different.

In this fascinating world an investigator named Lom is brought to the capital to find a terrorist. Instead he finds a conspiracy bigger than anything he could have imagined. A city killing itself, earth moving beneath his feet and a world that needs to be saved.

So, it's a mystery, fantasy, alternate earth, detective story. Really different and honestly just cool.

John Cowell says

First thing you need to know about *Wolfhound Century* is: you do not talk about ...

No no, *Wolfhound Century* is a brilliant read. The prose especially is a delight--versatile and often poetic, full of imagery but also rich with full sensory experience--(you can tell Higgins is a lover of the language), but there were a few missteps along the way, where the beauty of the prose got in the way of the events being described; thank god such occurrences were few and far between, because *Wolfhound Century*, in a word, was AWESOME. (I know. I use the word too much, but hey.)

Anyway, the story is this: In an alternate-history, revolution-era Russia, Inspector Vissarion Yppolitovich Lom, a man with a piece of angel-flesh implanted in his forehead, is taken from his hometown and thrown into the murky world and deadly politics of the capital city, Mirgorod; there he is secretly tasked with apprehending the godfather of political terrorists, Josef Kantor; "secret" because Kantor is planning something ... less than desirable for the city--and his protection seems to stem from very high up.

Well as you can see, *Wolfhound Century* is a thriller, but this is the least of its parts: it is a fantasy, with giants and forest creatures, Gods, angels, and elemental beings; it is a fascinating commentary on russian politics of the time, especially as regards artists, the public, political dissention, and governmental intrusion (i.e. spying, something that has become intimately relevant of late); and it is also a story about "power"--the

want, acquiring, use and abuse of power, and relationships of dominance.

Okay, that's enough of that. As for the novel itself, it starts a little slowly, and so it took a little while for me to really get into it, not to mention the steep learning curve, but when I did: wow. As the thriller ratchets up the tension, the mystery unfolds, and as it unfolds, revelation by revelation, your excitement builds, and the book gets better and better until you're forced to sacrifice sleep in order to find out what happens next.

And then you hit the end. Huh? What?

No, it wasn't as bad as that--partly because I had a heads up, though, and partly because, looking at the percentage on my kindle (best way to read this for easy access to a **DICTIONARY**), it was clear the story arc would not climax with this book. I mean, it did work, wrapping up some threads while leaving more to look forward to come 2014, but it left me with the strange and vaguely annoyed feeling of being satisfied yet not, you know? Better than a cliff hanger, but ...

... Just playing. Here's the first five chapters:

<http://io9.com/5986051/read-the-first...>

Highly recommended.

Read it.

Mikko Saari says

Gorgeous world-building, all sorts of good stuff with the sci-fi soviet noir setting, but — and this is a huge but — there's simply no ending to the book. None. The book ends like a chapter ends. No closure whatsoever. Obviously sequel is in works, and hopefully arrives soon, because this book doesn't stand alone. I recommend waiting until a sequel is out before reading this one... I was very disappointed in the ending, but the story so far is promising.

Chris says

I have not read Gorky Park, yet. But I have seen the movie and this book reminds me of that with the added bonus of fantasy and without the unbelievable romantic sub-plot.

Daniel says

WOLFHOUND CENTURY is a promising debut novel, both well conceived and original. It's a fantasy world based on the Soviet Union under Stalin (although I noted a couple of references to Hitler as well), run on cruel magics of brute power and domination, faced off against the remnants of an older magical force apparently based on Slavic folk tales. It's an interesting and original world that I would have liked to see

explored in more depth. Higgins is also a smart enough writer to make both his hero (Vissarion Lom, a sensitive officer of the secret police in the mold of *THE LIVES OF OTHERS*) and his villain (Josef Kantor, a megalomaniac with dangerous charisma) both essentially products of the cruel system into which they were born.

But while Higgins was good at conceiving his novel, I had a couple of strong problems with his execution. First, there's a major flaw in the world-building--none of the characters, not even the secret police, seem nearly paranoid enough in their day-to-day behavior to fit a book that's supposed to evoke the Stalinist purges. The terror of the system that the characters lived under often seems notional rather than actual. Secondly, the main characters are well conceived, but their backstory isn't well integrated in their current character arcs. Kantor is established as a survivor of a gulag equivalent, but this attitude doesn't do enough to distinguish him from a standard power-mad Big Bad. His charisma also seems under-dramatized, and I would liked to see what made him appealing to other people.

While this meant that *WOLFHOUND CENTURY* never quite rose above the level of 'interesting,' I appreciated that Peter Higgins was trying for something more than standard fantasy, and I look forward to seeing if he can achieve his ambition in subsequent volumes.

Matt Brady says

Inspector Vissarion Lom is a cop, an incorruptible man frustrated with the oppressive bureaucracy and hypocrisy of the institution he serves, trapped in an unimportant provincial precinct and denied the promotions he thinks he deserves. Josef Kantor is a political revolutionary and a terrorist, utterly committed to his Cause, recently released from a twenty year stint in a forced labour camp and now causing endless trouble in the capital of Mirgorod. Lom is set on Kantor's trail, hand-picked for the job because of his dogged talents but also because he is disconnected from the vicious factional politics and bureaucratic squabbles of the capital. Alone, in a strange city, Lom finds himself chasing a man who might be more dangerous than anyone thought.

For me, the setting was the real star of *Wolfhound Century*. This is a fantasy world that we so rarely see, a fresh and original creation. Comparisons to Mieville are not far off-base. Higgins has constructed a fascinating universe, a weird and warped place heavily inspired by Soviet Russia that I found myself eager to explore. The Vlast is a massive continent-wide confederation of supposedly compliant states ruled with an iron fist by the Novozhd, a Stalin-like figure whose benign, patriarchal demeanour contrasts sharply with the oppressive cruelty of his decades long rule. There's Giants, golems, mountainous angels that fall from the sky and crash to earth where their dead flesh is mined for it's wondrous properties, a moon broken in two, magical endless forests, and sleeping gods, but these fantastical elements exist comfortable alongside the mundane - run down ghettos, violent politics, street muggers, noisy shipyards, social unrest, smokey night-clubs, a dirty but distant war reminiscent of Vietnam or Afghanistan. It's a vivid and well-realised world, fantastical but grounded.

I found that the plot and the setting tended to take precedence over characterisation. This isn't a criticism, the characters are hardly bland or one-note, just an observation that they take a bit of a backseat to the action. Lom himself is an interesting twist on the classic noir anti-hero. Due to his job, he's a symbol of oppressive authority, feared and hated, but he's also shockingly naive in many ways. Despite the awful and gruesome things he's seen in the course of his work, Lom views the world fairly simple terms. For Lom, the world has good guys and bad guys, and cops? Well, they're the good guys. It isn't that Lom is a fanatic, utterly wedded

to the ideology of the State, but more that he is so removed from normal life, and so totally married to his job, that he's simply been able to ignore the horrible crimes perpetrated by the institution he loyally serves. Lom is actually surprised when, during the course of his manhunt, he encounters citizens who distrust him because of the uniform he wears. It's a neat reversal of the usual world-weary cynical detective that one usually finds in a noir story, and transforms Lom from a sinister figure (he is a member of a fascistic secret police force after all) into an innocent and strangely vulnerable hero.

The writing is fast-paced and to-the-point. Short, sharp, snappy chapters build the momentum well. Occasionally I found the writing a little too choppy, scenes and chapters cut off a little early, or felt a bit rushed, but it settled into a nice rhythm after a while. And there's no real ending. It's very much the first book in a series, and the narrative kind of just crashes to a halt, rather than hitting a climax or resolving anything. It's a bit of a shame to end such a strong debut novel on such an awkward, hanging note, but I'm willing to overlook it. It's quite a good book, all in all, the kind of thing I'd really like to see more of.

Althea Ann says

I picked this up because it was described as being very similar in style to China Mieville.

It was - but I don't think it felt derivative at all.

It was sort of like if Mieville met Martin Cruz Smith met Philip Kerr. It may sound strange, but I don't think it's a bad thing at all.

Set in an alternate Soviet state, Vissarion Lom is a 'good' cop, who sees it as an unexpected opportunity when he's called to the capital to undertake a secret investigation. But of course - he gets into far more than he expected, and ends up questioning everything he thought he knew about himself and his society.

Higgins does a great job of creating his dark and atmospheric world, and weaving in mythological and original fantasy and science-fiction elements. (And really, just some wonderfully weird and grotesque things...) I'm impressed.

I'll be picking up the sequel... and yes, it is all too obvious that there will be a sequel, but I liked it enough that I'm deducting no points for the cliffhanger-ish ending.
