

Sven Spieker

**PSYCHOTIC POSTMODERNISM IN SOVIET PROSE:  
PUSHKIN AND THE MOTIF OF THE UNIDENTIFIED PAST  
IN ANDREI BITOV'S POETICS**

For V. N.

**1. Bitov and Postmodernism**

There appears to be a consensus among critics that the postmodern phenomenon is not confined to the West.<sup>1</sup> However, Russian postmodernism is generally associated with the innovative poetics of writers in emigration (Sasha Sokolov), with the neo-avantgardist Moscow conceptualist school and their aestheticization of official iconography (Prigov, Rubinshtein, etc.), and with the experimental prose and poetry of writers who became well-known during the late stages of the *glasnost'* period (E. Popov, Tolstaia, Viktor Erofeev, P'etsukh, etc.). Andrei Bitov remains outside all three groups. During the late-*glasnost'* period of the 1980s, the author was largely in the business of publishing texts which had been written *ν stol* during the previous decade. It is the purpose of this article to demonstrate that these writings, despite the fact that they were written during a period which has not generally been associated with postmodernism in the Soviet Union, nevertheless presuppose a postmodern epistemology. The term "epistemology," in this context, illustrates the conviction that Bitov's postmodern attitude manifests itself not predominantly on the level of style.<sup>2</sup>

Postmodern epistemology considers as axiomatic the equivalence between inside and outside, or immanence and transcendence. Present and past, fiction and fact, original and copy, image and real thing are perceived to be mutually exchangeable. In its confusion of inside with outside, postmodernism is distinguished sharply from high modernism. Modernism's attitude towards the transcendent future was characterised by the impossibility to grasp, write and live that future in the present. Conversely, modernism's attitude towards the past denies it any historical significance. Consequently, the modernist assumes that the non-historical past may be rewritten, modernised or reembodied at will (Smirnov 1990b: 525).

For postmodernism, the very opposite attitude is characteristic—the inability to live the present in a future (a transcendent, an "other") which is already in

place. With regard to the past, postmodernism conceives the modernist assumption of the non-historical past in itself as a fact of history ("historical avant-garde"). The non-historical past has already happened and, as such, has become a fact of history (Smirnov 1990b: 525). This is why the postmodernist accepts as real and historical any fictitious representation of the past. Conversely, postmodernism considers any attempt to represent history a fiction. The past, in postmodern texts, is frequently depicted as invisible. The reason for such invisibility is not (as is frequently asserted) that postmodernism, as it were, "resacralizes" the past as a transcendent outside in analogy to the modernist worship of the future. Rather, the postmodern inability to visualise the past stems from the inability to distinguish fiction from fact, image from real thing, past from present, and inside from outside.

In their levelling of these binary antagonisms on the level of their spatial, temporal, and psychological metalanguage, Andrei Bitov's recent texts belong to the postmodern paradigm. In Bitov's case, the weakened opposition between inside and outside models the changed relationship between the Soviet intellectual, on the one hand, and the State and its ideology, on the other. The author's fiction underscores the Soviet intellectual's inability to overcome the indifference of official culture and his failure to experience himself in a historical context. The system provides an officially sanctioned niche even for those intellectuals inside the Soviet Union who dare to contradict it. The stagnancy and immobility of this period find expression in the term "*vremia zastoia*."

Generally speaking, the situation of the unofficial writer and intellectual in the Soviet Union was characterised by the necessity to split his or her existence between the official realm, on the one hand, and the unofficial anti-culture, on the other. Already in the novel *Pushkinskii dom* (1978), Andrei Bitov criticises the negative comfort of this retreat with the suggestion that the assumed stability of the unofficial realm may have been an illusory one and that, in fact, the official and unofficial realms (or inside and outside) may have been one and the same from the very beginning: "Da vse, vse uzhe — sovetskie! Net ne sovetskikh. Vy zhe — za, protiv, mezhdu, — no tol'ko otnositel'no stroia" (Bitov 1978: 81).<sup>3</sup>

In *Fotografiia Pushkina*. (1799-2099),<sup>4</sup> the author takes a further step towards the postmodern assumption that any "alternative" is interchangeable with that for which it substitutes. In this text, the time-travelling hero is in search of history. However, the past remains fully invisible for the protagonist as he is unable to distinguish between present and past, fiction and fact, inside and outside, etc. In this way, *Fotografiia Pushkina* corroborates the suspicion of Leva's grandfather in *Pushkinskii dom*: "[...] esli vy sebia eksportiruete, to vy ne mozhete zakhvatit' s soboi to otnositel'no chego vy tol'ko i est' dlia sebia" (Bitov 1978: 82). Any metaposition vis-à-vis official culture which is assumed by the

Soviet intellectual remains, in truth, within the bounds of the system which it seeks to transcend. Bitov is particularly opposed to a type of dialectics which seeks to reach the utopian outside by way of negating reality from the vantage point of a higher truth. In *Pushkinskii dom*, this idea is addressed and denounced by grandfather Odoevtsev. According to this character, wherever the utopian ideal negates reality for the sake of a higher ideal, it partakes in a type of dialectic thinking which, in fact, characterises the very system it seeks to overcome:

Вы запустите либеральную фабрику по разоблачению ложных представлений, якобы ради сейчас еще запретных, но столь желанных истинных. Но пройдет лишь несколько лет — вы дорветесь и до них, до тех, что сегодня кажутся вам истинными [...]. (81)

According to this scenario, Soviet post-utopianism cannot be negated again, there is no utopia after the Soviet one.<sup>5</sup> The rejection of all attempts to transcend reality for a higher world is apparent in all of Bitov's recent writings: "Zdes' i seichas — éto imenno zdes' i seichas. Drugoi zhizni net" (95).

The assumption that in the Soviet Union there was no essential difference between official culture, on the one hand, and its unofficial, dissenting counterpart, on the other, echoes Western postmodernism and its axiomatic equivalence between immanence and transcendence. The Western postmodernist lives in a world of (media) simulations in which any grounds for the experience of difference has been lost. In the Soviet Union and in the other countries of the former Eastern Block, the immobility and indifference of the state, its agents and its ideology, create a similar atmosphere of post-utopianism and post-historicity as we find it in the postmodern Western societies.<sup>6</sup>

## 2. Post-Utopia and Psychosis

Instead of negating ideology from an illusory outside, Bitov's protagonists delight in the very failure of that operation. The source of their utopian hope is the very inadequacy of their attempts to confront reality. They no longer seek to negate existing reality with reference to a utopian society. In *Pushkinskii dom*, this inadequacy is described by the term "unpreparedness" ("negotovnost"/"otsutstvie zagotovlennosti"):

[...] умный от глупого отличается [...] не уровнем объяснений происходящего, а "неготовностью" этих объяснений перед лицом реальности. (94)

The author's heroes slip into a state of complete indifference both towards official ideology and towards the dissident underground. For them, the gap between

reality and ideal, inside and outside, fiction and fact has become irrelevant. Bitov's characters are not "ecstatic" (Baudrillard) over the lost transcendence but, instead, they are withdrawn from reality altogether. From the point of view of characters such as grandfather Odoevtsev (in *Pushkinskii dom*), this indifference means that there is, in fact, no difference between the outside, on the one hand, and immanent reality, on the other.

Instead of recognising the lie for what it is, Bitov's protagonists numbly accept everything as both true *and* false. In this way, utopia, to them, becomes a place with no dimensions, a "nowhere" and a "nothing," a space which neither seeks to negate nor to endorse Soviet reality: "— Um — nul'. Da, da, imenno nul' umen. Pustota, otsutstvie pamiati, zagotovlennosti" (Bitov 1978: 94). It would be a mistake to interpret such indifference towards reality as a gesture of resignation. Bitov's characters, on the contrary, view their own indifference as the only adequate response to an official culture which denies them any possibility to be genuinely different. Bitov's post-utopia is empty and cannot be articulated. The post-utopian indifference of the author's protagonists has its equivalence, among other things, in states of (alcoholic) intoxication. Bitov participates in the paradigm of "alcoholic prose" which has played an important role in Soviet literature of the last few decades. In *Pushkinskii dom*, being drunk and being sober swap places as indifference replaces the dream of the outside: "Vobshche, trezvyi chelovek — na samom dele, p'ianyi, a kogda p'et — trezveet" (Bitov 1978: 95).

On a psycho-pathological level, the inability to distinguish between inside and outside makes itself felt, in Bitov's prose, in a type of behaviour which, with Freud, we will describe as psychotic. For Freud, the two most fundamental psychopathologies are neurosis and psychosis.<sup>7</sup> Both are symptomatic of the constraints placed upon the ego both by outside reality and by the demands of the id (Freud XIII, 388). In both cases, the ego is unwilling to satisfy a (morally, ethically, emotionally) inadmissible demand from the id. In seeking to resolve this conflict, the neurotic and the psychotic differ considerably from each other. The neurotic contents himself with the repression of the impermissible urge and with the concomitant denial of its reality. He renounces the real object and shifts his libidinal desire, firstly, to an imaginary substitute, and then, secondly, back to a repressed object. The neurotic becomes a master at avoiding that part of reality which is unbearable to him.

By contrast, the psychotic individual replaces outside reality altogether and constructs for himself an alternative reality according to the demands of the id.<sup>8</sup> In this way, the psychotic fundamentally alters the relations between the inside (the ego), on the one hand, and outside reality, on the other.<sup>9</sup> While the neurotic merely seeks to muffle the influence of the id (remaining otherwise faithful to the super-ego and outside reality), the psychotic loses any contact with the real

world and lives on the inside of his own psyche as if it were the outside. Neurosis as well as psychosis are symptomatic of the patient's attempt to bring about a *restitutio ad integrum*, an effort to restore the former equilibrium between id and ego, inside world and outside reality, by returning to an archaic *Urzustand*. In this sense, the symptoms of neurosis and psychosis are indicative of an attempt at self-healing through regression.<sup>10</sup>

We see in Freud's definition of psychosis a homology to the postmodern equivalence between inside and outside. It might be added that literary critics have frequently interpreted (and celebrated) the psychotic's withdrawal into an other world as an act of (joyous) liberation from the (political, economic, cultural, linguistic) constraints of reality.<sup>11</sup> This appropriation of psychosis for the study of literature has tended to weaken the concept's Freudian roots. For Freud, psychosis is always accompanied by an acute experience of suffering due to the loss of reality. This aspect of psychosis is also highly accentuated in *Fotografiia Pushkina*.

### 3. Psychosis and Postmodernism in *Fotografiia Pushkina*. (1799-2099)<sup>12</sup>

#### 3.1. The Outside in the Frame Narrative

This substitution of inside for outside plays an integral part in Andrei Bitov's texts. The author's protagonists in *Pushkinskii dom*, *Fotografiia Pushkina* and other texts live in reality as if in an "other" world. In *Fotografiia Pushkina* psychotic confusion has a particularly high profile.<sup>13</sup> In the introductory frame, Bitov tells the story of a writer (Bitov's *alter ego*) who has left the capital in order to join his family in his country cottage and to resume writing. The main narrative focuses upon one of the fictitious writer's many unfinished texts. It involves a young philologist being sent from the year 2099 into the Pushkinian era. His mission in travelling to the distant past is to produce a photographic image of the live Pushkin. However, that mission fails. The representatives of past high culture, and most notably Pushkin himself, withdraw into obscurity whenever the hero activates his recording equipment, leaving the protagonist in a state of constant emotional confusion.

In the introductory frame, the equivalence between inside and outside models both relations in space and the psychology of the fictitious writer. The latter has to realise that an invisible ecological disaster has rendered meaningless any attempt to escape from the centre (the city) to the periphery (the countryside). Furthermore, a stranger informs him that his own house may, in fact, not belong to him. For both of Bitov's protagonists in *Fotografiia Pushkina*, the opposition between inside and outside is no longer productive. Both the village and the

countryside have lost their status as niches which afford the writer-heroes the pleasure of a metaposition *vis-à-vis* official culture.<sup>14</sup>

In Bitov's early texts, by contrast, a preserving, "ecological" attitude towards the outside is dominant. Here, as in the writings of other Soviet writers of his generation, nature or the non-urban space of the countryside exist as an extraterritorial "other" world, a realm which directly opposes the ideological space of the city and its false signs. Therefore, Bitov's concern for preservation of the outside as a natural environment, which plays a role, for example, in *Ptitsa ili novye zvedeniia o cheloveke* (1976), is by no means coincidental. In these texts, inside and outside oppose each other without any possibility for sublation.

In *Fotografiia Pushkina*, Bitov's fictitious writer evidently leaves the city in order to reestablish a proper distinction between inside and outside, or image and real thing (*veshch'*; *delo*). In the following segment, the deictics "*tam*" and "*zdes'*" indicate his desire for a strong delineation of city and countryside. The countryside represents that realm where inside and outside may once more be experienced as separate. The city, by contrast, is characterised by a semiotic practise in which signs substitute for absent referents, obliterating separation and distance amidst the proliferation of technologies of communication:

А я здесь пытаюсь сделать вещь, хоть какую, хоть такую, потому что там, откуда я, уже никакой вещи не сделаешь из-за связи с миром, не с делом, а со всем миром, с теле-миром: - фоном и - визором. (451)

In its emphasis upon communication and the way in which urban space renders irrelevant the crossing of spatial boundaries, Bitov's analysis appears strikingly "postmodern." Bitov's fictitious writer, however, believes that he can escape the effects of this development. He endorses the traditional semanticization of city (official space) and countryside (inofficial metaspace) in Soviet fiction. Here, the city appears as a place of constraint and captivity, whereas rural life offers a niche which restores to the individual a sense of freedom. In the countryside, Bitov's alter ego seeks to assume a position of negativity towards the city and its ideology. The attic which serves as his workplace illustrates that position. A well-known literary *topos* for the writer's negative stance towards reality,<sup>15</sup> the attic represents the author's desire to assume a metaposition towards reality from where he can exercise his craft as an outside observer: "Ia — na svoi cherdachok-s. U menia tvorcheskii protsess-s" (419).

Watching the outside world through the window of his attic, Bitov's writer establishes a relationship with the outside which restores to the latter the quality of a horizon of transcendence. Sitting on his veranda, he muses upon the waning day: "[...] budto vse, chto risovala nam zhizn' za den', iz oblakov, tenei, trav i zaborov, vse teper' naproch' sterla, razmazav svoei rezinkoi: ne poluchilos'"

(417). In this description, a transcendent, immaterial essence manifests itself in the transient phenomena of the material world *[zhizn']*. Epistemological and perceptual obscurity characterise the outside for Bitov's writer throughout: "Razve vid iz okoshka, v kotoryi raz, ne sumet' opisat'" (419). At this stage, Bitov's writer is far from that state of indifference towards in and out which has such a prominent place in Bitov's recent writings.

The writer seeks to resolve the conflict between the invisible outside, on the one hand, and the impossibility of its representation, on the other, in a pseudo-Romantic dynamism. His continuous (if failing) attempts to represent the outside (his attic is filled with his fragmentary writings) seem to offset his inability to participate mimetically in it. The writer develops a "myth of beginning" which compensates him for the outside's inaccessibility: "Zhivoi chelovek vsegda tol'ko nachal zhit'" (420). In this sense, the many fragmentary beginnings which surround the protagonist ("[U]zhasna éta papka zabroshennykh nachal i nabroskov" [420]) represent not so much "failures" as authentic reminders of the outside's ontological autonomy. What we see at work here is a negative dialectic whose comfort consists in the total opposition of inside and outside. Even where the outside may not be positively known nor depicted, it still exists as a negative counterposition to the immanent here and now.

Increasingly, however, Bitov exposes his alter ego to instances which undermine the latter's confidence in the comforting negativity of his position. These instances suggest that the writer's assumption of a strict separation of inside and outside or city and countryside may have been an illusion. For the writer, this development has the character of a revelation, an apocalypse. For example, a stranger appears in the writer's country home and announces that a "war" (*voina*) has broken out. Having intruded into the writer's privacy, he then proceeds to claim ownership of the latter's cottage. The writer's creative crisis intensifies. He has to realise that the countryside is subject to the same (invisible) pollution as the city and that no "escape" is possible from its destructive effects.

The destruction which the stranger describes to the writer represents an aggression and an apocalypse which can no longer be identified as such because it inhabits the inside itself. In this way, it constitutes a serious threat to the integrity of the borderline between inside and outside. It is not by coincidence that the writer describes the destruction affecting the countryside in terms which recall that most postmodern of disasters, the nuclear one. Because of the absence of an identifiable aggressor, the nuclear catastrophe destroys any faith in the possibility that the inside may be defended at all. While the outside appears visibly intact, its interior has, in fact, been destroyed once and for all: "[...] budto neitronnuiu bombu imenno zdes' ispytali" (451). The nuclear disaster is threatening to Bitov's protagonist because it refutes his binary, vertical view of the world. Instead, the writer lives in a postmodern world where any "alter-

native" space (the village, the countryside) has been levelled: "Potomu chto zdes' voina uzhe budto i byla" (450). The very first sentence of Bitov's text announces the paradoxical nature of the aggression. Here, the "war" has broken out without having begun ("eshche nikakoi net"). Furthermore, the war is unaccounted for in the centre (the writer heard nothing about it in the capital), but widely known on the periphery ("odnako v trekh dvorakh nashikh s udvitol'nym spokoistviem podverzhdaют: da, bylo delo — teper' voina [...]." [419]).

A further blow to the protagonist's confidence in the tenability of the difference between in and out is the stranger's claim that he, the writer, is, in fact, living in his, the visitor's own, house: "Ty menia ne znaesh', a znaesh' li ty, chto ty v MOEM dome sidish'?" (419) The stranger's announcement reacquaints the writer with the possibility of a historical past. In Bitov's recent texts, however, history is never recognised for what it is. In this case, too, the writer does not know the history of his house: "Istoriu pokupki izby moim testem ia znal smutno [...]" (419).

The name which the writer gives to the possibility of a confusion between name and object or outside and inside is that of a generalised Text ("tekst"). The immobile Text threatens the dynamism of beginning anew and, consequently, the negative knowledge of the fictitious author's fragmentary writings: "Vot i ia seichas nachnu, no s chego? S etogo ili s togo? [...] Zhelteet bumaga, vytsvetaet tekst, a ni s mesta" (420).<sup>16</sup> The dissolution of oppositions such as in and out within the general metaphor of the "text" is axiomatic in postmodern thinking.

Bitov's writer reacts to the confusion between inside and outside with bouts of schizoid delusion. He appears to see himself from a distance: "[...] budto pogliadyvaiia na sebia sverkhu" (417). In another instance, he is incapable of telling present from past, or fact from fiction:

[...] эти часы до сих пор позванивают в прошлом времени  
 [...] как-то напоминают мне — и я уже запутался, в какую  
 сторону смотрю из своей посредственно-временной точки  
 модели «Адлер» [...]. (421)

Later on, his confusion leads the writer to abandon any attempt to control his own writing: "[...] bolee sinkhronizirovat' sobytia uzhe ne mogu" (428). The inability to experience time in a historical sequence is, as we shall see, one of the most characteristic traits of psychosis.

### 3.2. The Invisible Past: Psychosis in the Centre Narrative

The central narrative repeats the major motifs from the frame story: the "weak" sujet (Igor's journey from the present into the past cannot be marked as an event in time and space) and the hero's inability to participate mimetically in

the outside (all of Igor's attempts to take a photographic picture of the live Pushkin fail). Both the macroworld of official culture which launches Igor' Odoevtsev on his trip and the microcosm of the hero's individual psyche are modelled in accordance with the psychotic attempt to restore psychological balance by replacing the reality principle (consciousness, the outer world) with the subconscious (the inner world).

The conflict at the bottom of the psychotic imbalance in *Fotografiia Pushkina* is the death of the father. The lost father, in *Fotografiia Pushkina*, is none other than the father of Russian post-Petrine culture, Alexander Pushkin. Under Stalin (especially during the massive celebrations of the year 1937),<sup>17</sup> Pushkin was canonised as the true progenitor of Soviet art. These celebrations serve as the historical precedent of the poet's "300th anniversary" in Bitov's narrative. The question as to how to mourn the death of Pushkin represents one of the most painful issues in Russian intellectual history of the 19th and 20th centuries. In *Fotografiia Pushkina*, both the official culture which sends Igor' on his trip and the latter himself compensate the loss of Pushkin with the construction of an alternative reality in which the poet is still alive.

For Bitov's protagonist, Pushkin's death represents an unbearable reality. The following segment illustrates the traumatic loss of identity in which it results: "On ne mog, chto ego bol'she ne bylo. Bez Pushkina i ego samogo bol'she ne stalo" (441). The regular process of mourning a lost object or person involves the gradual withdrawal of libido from everything that was once connected with that object (Freud X, 430). In some cases, however, the understandable resistance against such forgetting is so intense that the bereaved person loses any sense of reality and denies the death of the loved one. In these cases, the process of mourning is interrupted and replaced by psychotic hallucination (X, 430). Such is precisely the case with Igor' Odoevtsev. The latter creates for himself a substitute reality in which the unbearable loss never occurred in the first place. In Igor's phantasy world, Pushkin is not dead and the possibility of forestalling his death is real. Several times, the hero seeks to reverse the poet's tragic demise: "U nego byla ni s chem ne sravnimaia vozmozhnost' popravliat' predyushchieshibki" (443). In the year 1837, Igor' seeks to intercept Pushkin on his way to the fatal duel with d'Anthès with a box of penicillin.<sup>18</sup>

As was the case with the fictitious writer, Igor' Odoevtsev, too, cannot recognise history for what it is. To him, the past is reduced to an indifferent grey blur where real and false, image and object cannot be distinguished. Igor's behaviour during his journey into the Pushkinian past exemplifies the psychotic urge to treat the sign as if it were the real thing. Like any psychotic, he lives in a world in which he finds a code, but no message.<sup>19</sup> Bitov's protagonist suffers from an inability to relate to things as meaningful signs pointing to a referent beyond themselves. While the neurotic lives in a fully semiotised world where every-

thing refers to everything else (the neurotic suspiciously anticipates the opinions of other individuals), the psychotic, by contrast, refers to signs as if they were real objects, a confusion which precludes any possibility for real communication.<sup>20</sup> The psychotic experiences the overturning of the usual link between the word, on the one hand, and the object which it denotes, on the other: "If we ask ourselves what it is that gives the character of strangeness to the [...] symptom in schizophrenia, we eventually come to realise that it is the predominance of what has to do with words over what has to do with things" (Freud X, 299). In psychosis, the words themselves are treated as if they were things, not signs: "[T]he thing – the object in all its reality – has been lost, leaving only the word to be clung to" (Frosh, 157).

As a result, all of Igor's efforts to intercept history appear futile and hallucinatory. The demise of the object is irreversible as fiction and fact, present and past, inside and outside appear hopelessly entangled. Igor's inability to accept the sign for what it is leads to his perennial confusion of words and things. His attempt at *restitutio ad integrum* is consequently doomed to failure. This failure corresponds with Freud's theory of the confusion of signifier and referent in psychosis: "These endeavours [...] set off on a path that leads to the object *via* the verbal part of it, but then find themselves obliged to be content with words instead of things" (X, 302). Instead of meeting the real Pushkin, Igor' becomes acquainted with the latter's negative doubles, "Apushkin" (432) and "Nepushkin," (433). Bitov's protagonist cannot make any distinction between history and its representations. He finds himself forced to refer to historical events as if they were present ones, and to fictions as if they were reality. Even before he is launched on his trip, Igor' is beset by schizoid delusion and a general loss of reality. This is the case especially when the protagonist is listening to the session of the "iubileinyi sovet" entrusted with the preparations for Pushkin's 300th birthday:

[...] ему казалось, что он легко, как некую насадку, снял свою голову с плеч и теперь (она сразу уменьшилась до размера яблочка, очень опрятная) поворачивал в руках [...], как не свою... [...]. (424)

Moments later, a similar incident of character split occurs. Igor' sees his own head roll away from him:

Головенка Игоря соскользнула с ладони – это блестящий подшипниковый шарик покатился по проходу и остановился у пятки друга степей. Игорь [...] страшно рос в собственных глазах. (425)

A deluded, illogical view of reality is typical of Bitov's protagonist throughout the session. Thus he loses any sense of identity with his own body: "Otvyknuv ot sebia, ot svoego tela, kotorogo davno ne chuvstvoval, on ne boialsia byt' zamchennym" (442).

The psychotic confusion of signs for things is in evidence throughout Igor's journey into the Pushkinian past. Any reality beyond these sign-things remains fully inaccessible to the hero:

Он видел лишь цитаты из того, что знал, остальное (все!) складывалось в сплошной и опасный бред совершенно иной и недоступный реальности. (426)

Like any psychotic individual, Bitov's hero turns into a projection screen for the reality which surrounds him. Bitov pays particular attention to the schizoid elements in his protagonist's behaviour. Thus, Igor' has no identity other than that of the fictional characters of *Peterburg-tekst*: "I on radostno shagnul [...], chuvstvuia sebia Oneginym, Bashmachkinym i Makarom Devushkinym odnovremennno" (434). At the end of his mission, he falls into a state of psychotic delusion. Igor' experiences the flood of 1824 as Pushkin's fictional character Evgenii from the poem *Mednyi vsadnik* which was written ten years after the historical event. The hero's insanity at the sight of his flooded home is, in fact, that of Pushkin's character. In this way, not even the psychosis of Bitov's protagonist may be referred to as belonging to "him" and defining his proper identity: "Igor' zakakhkotal i pobezhal, obezumev, kak Evgenii, bormocha stroki budushchei pushkinskoi poemy [...]" (453).

### 3.3. The Experience of History

In *Fotografiia Pushkina*, history has existence only to the extent that it excludes the spectator. The present's intervention in the past cannot in any way alter it and Igor' is unable to shoot a photographic picture of the live Pushkin. The hero's inability to produce a *Licht-bild* of the poet exemplifies the psychotic inability to exercise memory, to produce an imprint and image (*Bild*) of the past. At the same time, Bitov emphasises that the impossibility of producing Pushkin's photograph is not due to the excessive distance and elusiveness of history. Invisibility, in Bitov's psychotic world, is no longer the hallmark of the transcendent other world. On the contrary, Igor's inability to participate mimetically in history is the result of the absence of any secret, of a kind of overexposure due to the lack of any distance between the gaze of the spectator and the past. In Bitov's recent fiction, the modernist non-historicity of the past and its consequent openness to manipulation have been replaced by the conviction that any attempt to alter the past has the status of a fiction. At the same time,

however, Bitov's psychotic protagonists have lost any ability to distinguish between such fiction and the reality which they replace. Postmodernism does not deny the existence of history. Rather, it denies that it can be told, written, or indeed photographed.

In his relations with historical time, Igor', like any psychotic, suffers from an inability to relate to anything in terms other than those of the immediate present. From the point of view of psychosis, the past is post-historical rather than historical. Everything present, past, and future presents itself with the same degree of immediacy. Where the neurotic is incapable of forgetting, his psychotic counterpart is, on the contrary, unable to remember (Hansen-Löve 1992: 200). The grammatical tense which corresponds with the post-historical past is the *futurum exactum*, the "future in the past," which plays a central part in Lacan's theory of the "mirror stage." The future in the past questions the integrity of a subject whose ability to remember is grounded in the pastness of history. For Lacan, the *futurum exactum* represents "a 'time' which can never be entirely remembered, since it will never have fully taken place" (Weber 1991: 9). History can only be anticipated but never fully recovered.

For Igor', the present and past represent a paradigm of unrelated events without forming a coherent *syntagma*.<sup>21</sup> At one point in the narrative, Pushkin himself runs after Igor' while the latter hides from the poet in terror. When he finally slips into a state of persecution mania, Igor' reiterates the words of the character German from the end of Pushkin's "Pikovaia dama": "Igor' bormochet, kak German — troiku, semerku, tuza [...]" (453). History presents itself to the traveller as an invisible, vacuous space in which he does not belong. He can define his own position in the past only negatively, as one of absence or non-existence. Like any psychotic he lives in reality as if in an "other" world. The psychotic subject has at its disposal no metalanguage to positively refer to either itself or to the reality by which surrounds it. Instead, the hostile negation of identity and reality takes the place of any positive reference to it. During his stay in the Pushkinian past, Igor' continuously substitutes the figure "ne ia" / "not I" for "ia" / "I." "Zdes' ot nego NICHEGO ne bylo nuzhno. On ponial, chto otsutstvuet v etom veke [...]" (436). Negativity is the most conspicuous rhetorical and epistemological marker of the past in *Fotografiia Pushkina*. At a certain point, Igor's search for the poet becomes a consciously conceived anti-search, the attempt to trace the poet by avoiding all those places in Petersburg where he was known to have moved and by, conversely, visiting those places where he was known *not* to have been: "[...] otyskivaia NEpushkinskie mesta, gde on NE khodil, NE byval [...]" (437).

Bitov's psychotic characters may be defined only in terms of that which they are not. In that sense, *Fotografiia Pushkina* also illustrates the postmodern abolition of the subject, its usurpation by the other. Emotions of loneliness and

emptiness correspond with these impressions, "chuvstvo absoliutnogo odinochestva i zabroshennosti" (436). Analogously, blindness and the inability to comprehend are the leitmotifs of Igor's stay in the Pushkinian era. He does not so much experience the other in terms of the self but, conversely, his own self in terms of the other.

### 3.4. V. F. Odoevskii and Nabokov: Utopia and the Unidentified Past

The invisibility of the past in *Fotografiia Pushkina* represents something of a topos in postmodern Russian prose of the last three decades.<sup>22</sup> Diachronically, the motif of the invisible past refutes the modernist assumption that the past is not historical. With regard to Andrei Bitov, the motif must be traced to an author who represents something of a missing link in the sequence from Russian modernism to Soviet postmodernism, Vladimir Nabokov. For Nabokov, any attempt to represent history through semiosis has the status of a falsification. The emblem of the falsification of the past is the photography, because it partakes in a theatre of images with no original. In the novel *Priglashenie na kazn'* (1938), the author thematises the photograph without a referent in reality. The novel's protagonist is continuously deceived by photographic pictures which substitute non-existent referents. However, it is crucial to bear in mind that Nabokov's protagonists never lose the suspicion that they are being deceived. They cannot accept as real or historical the photographic images of the past. The desire to unmask the image as false, to distinguish representation and fact, past and present lies at the bottom of Tsintsinat's activity in *Priglashenie na kazn'*:

[...] и никому не было жаль прошлого, да и самое понятие «прошлого» сделалось другим.

"А может быть, — подумал Цинциннат, — я неверно толкую эти картинки. Эпохе продаю свойства ее фотографии. Это богатство теней, и потоки света [...] — все это, может быть, относится только к снимку, к особой светописи, к особым формам этого искусства и мир на самом деле вовсе не был столь изгибист [...] — точно так же, как наши нехитрые аппараты по-своему запечатлевают наш сегодняшний наскоро сколоченный и покрашенный мир". (Nabokov 1989b: 173)

For Nabokov, the death of the historical past is intimately connected to the activity of the sign. His essay "Pushkin, ili Pravda i pravdopodobie" (1937)<sup>23</sup> is one of the most pertinent pretexts for Bitov's *Fotografiia Pushkina*. Here, the representatives of the early photographic age seem to be mourning their own death at the hands of the new technique: "[...] vse znamenitosti vtoroi poloviny XIX veka prinimaiut vid dal'nikh rodstvennikov, odetykh vo vse chernoe, slovno oni nosili traur po byloj raduzhnoi zhizni [...]" (Nabokov 1989a: 529). In

his essay, Nabokov discusses at length the question of Pushkin's photograph and its relevance for our perception of the poet's life and works. He interprets the fact that no photograph was taken of Pushkin during the poet's lifetime as a guarantee of the continued historicity of the past. Pushkin continues to live in the "other world" of a pre-semiotic darkness. The past is alive but, at the same time, it may not be intercepted. The darkness (*t'ma*) of history prefigures the motif of the invisible past as we encounter it in *Fotografia Pushkina*:

Подумать только, проживи Пушкин еще 2-3 года и у нас была бы его фотография. Еще шаг, и он вышел бы из тьмы, богатой нюансами и полной живописных намеков [...]. [...] очень возможно, что придет время, когда эта эпоха упрочившейся фотографии в свою очередь нам покажется художественной ложью, обязанной чьему-то особенному вкусу [...] (531)

Where modernism manipulates the past at will, Nabokov declares all such manipulations misrepresentations. In this way, history itself becomes dark, invisible and unknowable.

Russian postmodernism appropriates the Nabokovian motif of the invisible past.<sup>24</sup> However, instead of reproducing Nabokov's exposure of the signs of history as falsifications of an unalterable yet invisible past, postmodernism assigns to these false signs the status of historical facts in themselves. For example, in Bitov's *Prepodavatel' simmetrii*, the author informs the reader that the originals of the subsequent narratives (his own translations of stories by a fictitious English writer, "E. Taird-Boffin") have been lost and that he will restore these translations from memory. In this way, the position of Taird-Boffin's original texts is taken by their copies (the author's translations), which in their turn become the originals for further copies (Bitov 1988: 309). In Bitov's recent prose, the photographic image, too, acquires the status of a real historical event. In the story "Vid neba Troi," a stranger presents the protagonist with exact photographic images of the distant, pre-photographic past, including a picture showing Shakespeare "tired, after a performance" (Bitov 1988: 320). He calls these photographs "istoricheskie podlinniki." In other cases, an existing photograph predicts a future which has already become history. Thus the hero in the same text is shown a photograph "odnogo vashego budushchego znakomogo" (319). These instances of a photograph predicting the future have a pretext in Monsieur Pierre's *fotogoroskop* in *Priglashenie na kazn'*. Monsieur Pierre has a collection of photographs which allegedly predict the life of Èmmochka (Nabokov 1989b: 240). Unlike Bitov, however, Nabokov quickly exposes the whole enterprise as a bad trick, a photographic sham consisting of a sequence of manipulated images which have no bearing upon the real course of events.

The motif of the unidentified past in *Fotografiia Pushkina* has another crucial pretext in Vladimir F. Odoevskii's utopian fragment *4338-i god. Peterburgskie pis'ma* (Odoevskii 1959).<sup>25</sup> Odoevskii's text represents a sequence of fictitious letters containing the notes of a mesmerizer who assumes the personality of a Chinese person and travels through Russia in the 44th century. At that time, Russia has evolved into a technical and scientific utopia which dominates half of the globe (the other half being dominated by China). Moscow and Petersburg have become one large urban conglomerate. The harsh Russian climate has artificially been transformed into a temperate one. This motif is taken up in *Fotografiia Pushkina* where Igor' Odoevstev is struck by the strange dryness of the Petersburg weather. In Odoevskii's utopia, a considerable part of the former Saint Petersburg is contained under the roof of the vast "*Kabinet Redkostei*," a collection of historical artefacts reminiscent of the *muzeinye tsentry* in Bitov's story (423). Odoevskii's text is based upon the premise that utopia is a place outside of historical time. As the future becomes the present, the past is progressively forgotten: "[Kh]arakteristicheskaiia cherta novykh pokolenii — zanimat'sia nastoiashchim i zabyvat' o proshedshem" (417). Since most of the (written) documents from the past have perished or turned unintelligible, the text of history is dark and impenetrable for the historians of the future. Even "two thousand dissertations" cannot reconstruct the etymology and meaning of a defunct word, such as "*nemtsy*" (426).

Odoevskii's future lives in anticipation of a return of Halley's comet in the year 4339, a year from the present of the narrative. In that year, the comet has been predicted to collide with (and presumably destroy) the earth. The mesmerizer travels to Russia specifically to study how its inhabitants live with the certainty of apocalypse (417). In psychoanalytical terms, their reaction displays all the hallmarks of neurotic repression. Unable to cope with their own fears of the comet, the Russians avoid any contact with the subject. Only in a state of hypnosis can they be moved to confess to their anxiety.<sup>26</sup>

Bitov's dialogue with Odoevskii focuses upon the question of history and the (im)possibility of its mnemonic reconstruction. In *4338-i god*, the delapidated remnants of the past (such as the Moscow Kremlin, 421) are conceived as symbols of the inscrutability of time and history. By contrast, Bitov rewrites in a psychotic key the neurotic avoidance which characterises Odoevskii's protagonists. It is not the repression of history but, on the contrary, its replacement by a new past characterises Bitov's future. Here, a (predictable) past replaces the (unpredictable) future which threatens Odoevskii's utopia. Bitov's postutopia lovingly recreates history down to the most minute detail. The past is resurrected within the *hic et nunc* of the present in the guise of monuments and decorations ("epokha torzhestva okhrany prirody i pamiatnikov" [422]). Instead of

being exposed as falsifications or manipulations (as is the case with Nabokov), the fictions of history in Bitov's text all have the status of history themselves.

In *Fotografiia Pushkina*, the past has become totally transparent and (literally) accessible. The "present" of the year 2099 is lived on a synthetic satellite in space. Meanwhile the "old Earth" ("staraia nasha Zemlia") has been turned into a sanctuary of cultural memory (*a muzeinyi tsentr*), a conglomerate of ancient ruins and added restorations. Surrounded by large *kolpaki*, Bitov's future age has transformed the former centres of terrestrial urban culture into museum spaces: "Analogichnye kolpaki byli vozvedeny nad Parizhem i Rimom, Pekinom i Lkhassoi" (422).<sup>27</sup> Official culture, in *Fotografiia Pushkina*, creates a space where individual memory atrophies and where it is replaced by the work of the archive and its representations.

Within the post-historical museums of the future, fiction and fact, name and real thing, present and past mingle. The transcendent past is "resurrected" *in toto* within the immanence of the here and now: "My vosstanovim vsiu prezhniuiu kul'turu do mel'chaishikh podrobnostei [...]" (425). Within the archive of official culture, the past continues to exist in the form of quotations and photographs: "Bol'shoi udachei nashei nauki iavliautsia fotografii Gogolia, Chaadaeva [...]" (422). The "iubileinyi sovet" and the cultural establishment which it represents are depicted as a psychotic archive which usurps the past and subsumes it under its own representational regime: "épokha torzhestva okhrany prirody i pamiatnikov" (422). Bitov, of course, satirises the rhetoric of Soviet propaganda during the 1950s and 60s, the pathos with which it propagated the conquering of the universe. In *Fotografiia Pushkina*, official culture is eager fully to conquer time and space: "—... vsia Vselennaia voskhishchena nashimi dostizheniiami v oblasti pokoreniiia vremeni" (424). The historical sites, preserved or resurrected, represent the festive decoration for the session of the "iubileinyi sovet" devoted to the preparations for the festivities surrounding the 300th anniversary of Pushkin's birth:

Сама их идея перенести заседание юбилейного совета со Спутника Объединенных Наций (СОН) на старую нашу Землю, на которой жил Пушкин, не могла не оказаться благотворно на самой атмосфере [...] собрания. (421)

The archive of official culture in *Fotografiia Pushkina* appears as a culture of the simulacrum.<sup>28</sup> Simulation abolishes any sequentiality between the signifier and the denoted object (referent). The distinction between original and copy, or anteriority and posteriority vanishes: "[...] pod kolpakom Tauéra byl vosstanoven istoricheskii gazon" (422). As the product of painstaking effort in which "original" fragment and subsequent recreation mingle, Bitov's museum centres suspend the operation of the museum. If *Pushkinskii dom* opens with the image

of the museum fractioned into its many constituent parts, *Fotografiia Pushkina* presents the inverse vision of complete preservation and inclusiveness. The museum as a metaspace devoted to the preservation of the past has become identical with that which it exhibits. The preservative cupolas produce a virtual reality which redefines that very reality:

У Игоря першил в горле от сухости петербургского воздуха, и потомок невских наводнений – жаждет. Да, да, так все переменилось: именно – сухость.

(Bitov 1988: 423)

In this way, the museum becomes the world. The exhibits no longer appear as metonymical displacements of a larger whole. Postmodern memory does not pursue the representation of an absent past through the agency of signs. Instead, the signs themselves usurp the past. No difference can be told between present and past, representation and real thing, remembering subject and remembered object.

By recreating the past and by obliterating the difference between past and present, the official archive also deprives history of its power over the individual. Igor' Odoevtsev lives in a world where any real Oedipal conflict has been abolished. Instead, the archive itself assumes the role of the father. Like any Soviet intellectual, Igor' is faced not so much with the anxiety of influence than with the anxiety that there may not be an influence. In this context, Igor's desire to trace the steps of the father equals an effort to retrace (his own) history. His journey into the Pushkinian past represents the narratological equivalent of the Freudian primal scene desire.<sup>29</sup> Deprived of the father, Bitov's protagonist is constrained to invent his own ancestors and literary antecedents, creating for himself a past with which he can subsequently engage in a struggle of influence: "[...] on nachal pisat' [...] memuary iz dvadtsat' pervogo veka [...]" (446).<sup>30</sup> The journey into the past and the search for the live Pushkin thus also appear as the quest for Oedipal conflict.<sup>31</sup>

*Fotografiia Pushkina* graphically illustrates that Soviet official culture must be seen not so much as the refutation than as the culmination of high modernist utopianism. In its reproduction of the past in the present, Soviet culture, according to Bitov, has a postmodern disposition. For a side effect of modernism's conception of the extraterritorial transcendence of the future is its condemnation of the past. Even in such modernist texts which project the utopian future into the present, the distinction between inside and outside remains intact. Modernist (anti-)utopianism represents the future as the end of history and relegates the past, quite literally, to the former's dustheap. The past survives, in such texts, merely in the form of forbidden sanctuaries which are off-limits for the inhabitants of the future.<sup>32</sup>

In *Fotografiia Pushkina*, on the other hand, Bitov constructs a postutopia where the future has lost its transcendence by becoming reality and, thereby, history. As a result, the past itself occupies the very transcendent position which modernist utopianism had reserved for the future. The modernist Malevich had conceived of the earth as a repository of a past no longer needed and envisaged that man will settle in *arkhitektony* and *planity*, synthetic satellites and earth-substitutes taken out of the continuity of history and tradition.<sup>33</sup> In *Fotografiia Pushkina*, by contrast, the earth (as the symbol of the past) is itself portrayed as metaphysical and transcendent: "Oni smotreli na Zemliu, kak na nebo..." (422).

The sujet of Bitov's text further illustrates the equivalence between in and out, present and past, before and after. Traditionally, (time) travel represents the classic case of a narrative based upon the irreducible ontological difference between inside and outside. Travelling through time presupposes an act of transcending (the flight or journey through time) which involves the successful experience of otherness (the future or the past). In the classic narrative of time travel, the protagonist experiences the outside with the hindsight of his own time. It is this *Verfremdungsperspektive* which acts as the prerequisite for the genre's didactic potential (Montesquieu). In *Fotografiia Pushkina*, on the other hand, the secure vantage point on the outside from the stability of the inside (the hero's own present) vanishes. Thus, Igor's journey into the Pushkinian past is depicted not as a departure which could be marked as movement in time or space: "[...] on ozhidal zritel'nogo, slukhovogo shoka ot vstrechi s proshlym — tak nichego takogo ne bylo" (436). The psychotic subject is incapable of structuring its experience as a temporal sequence. The fact that the hero's journey has no palpable effect also represents a departure from the sujet of travelling in Bitov's earlier prose, where generally the move from the city to the country has a therapeutic effect on the traveller.

Still, Bitov's protagonist does not return to the future empty-handed. However, the photographs and voice recordings which Igor' brings back with him from the past do not yield any insight into the past. His photographic negatives and slide recordings resist development and translation into the logical language of the real:

Слайды Игоря проявили, пленки прослушали... [...] Нет, Игоря не в чем было упрекнуть [...]. Но — только тень, как крыло птицы [...]. Поражала, однако, необыкновенная, бессмысленная красота отдельных снимков [...]: буря, предшествовавшая облачку, глядя на которое поэту пришла строчка "Последняя туча рассеянной бури..." [...] ; волны, несущие гробы... и дальше все — вода и волны.  
(Bitov 1988: 454)

The psychotic cannot escape his own phantasy world. The loss of reality as a result of its substitution by a secondary reality constructed in accordance with the demands of the id cannot be avoided. Igor's images are themselves psychotic to the extent that they oppose any distinction between in and out, fiction and fact, before and after. Their sujets are strictly peripheral and irrelevant when compared to the canonised events which they allegedly precede ("buria, predshestvovavshia [...]"). They adopt the same indifferent attitude towards reality which we found to be characteristic of grandfather Odoevtsev in *Pushkinskii dom*. Instead of a utopian outside, Igor's images visualise "nothing," emptiness and absence. Their emptiness recalls the indifferent *pustota* addressed by grandfather Odoevtsev. For Roland Barthes "history is hysterical: it is constituted only if we consider it, only if we look at it—and in order to look at it, we must be excluded from it" (Barthes 1990: 65). Bitov's psychotic heroes, alas, have lost the (neurotic) ability of looking away. They look right on and see—nothing.

#### 4. Results

1. The present paper is devoted to the postmodern epistemology which governs the spatial, temporal, and psychological metalanguage in Andrei Bitov's writings. In contradistinction to the modernist insistence upon the extraterritorial nature of the "outside" (the future, utopia, etc.), postmodernism assumes that inside and outside, present and past, fiction and fact are equivalent with each other. In Bitov's prose, this equivalence determines the relations between the Soviet intellectual, on the one hand, and the archive of official culture, the canon, school curriculum, etc., on the other.

2. In Bitov's early texts, the outside (the village, the writer's *dacha*, the countryside, etc.) is generally conceived as a niche-like refuge from the constraints of official (urban) culture and its ideology. By contrast, in more recent texts (such as *Pushkinskii dom* and *Fotografiia Pushkina*), the outside loses its autonomy as Bitov's protagonists can no longer distinguish the outside from the inside.

3. Bitov's postmodern epistemology is frequently homologous with the psychopathology of psychosis. Responding to an impermissible urge from the part of the id, the psychotic individual replaces the unbearable reality by a phantasy substitute, thereby radically altering the relations between its own ego (the inside), on the one hand, and reality (the outside), on the other.

4. In *Fotografiia Pushkina*, psychotic behaviour is characteristic both of the time-travelling hero, Igor' Odoevtsev, and of the future age which sends him on his mission. Both suffer from the inability to accept the death of Pushkin, the progenitor of Russian culture. As a result, both engage in the construction of a substitute reality in which the national poet never perished, in the first place.

Bitov's future recreates the past down to the last detail, creating a space in which the present and the past become fully interchangeable.

5. In the context of Soviet culture, the cultural practise of the future allegorises the fact that official culture deprives the Soviet intellectual of the past and, as a result, of any possibility for Oedipal conflict. Igor's quest for the father must hence also be interpreted as a quest for the struggle of influence.

6. At the same time, Bitov's characters (like any psychotic patient) suffer from the loss of reality and seek to apprehend the lost object. This desire is evident in the ambition to produce a photograph of the live Pushkin, an ambition which equals the effort to remember. However, in *Fotografia Pushkina*, Pushkin (and the past in general) turn out to be irretrievably lost as fiction and fact, image and real thing all enjoy the same status of reality. The historical past, in Bitov's fiction, remains dark, unidentified, and immemorial.

#### Notes

- 1 In a series of recent articles, Igor' Smirnov has argued for the existence of a Russian postmodernism. Smirnov distinguishes typologically between narcissistic and schizoid postmodernism (Smirnov 1990a; 1991). Like Smirnov, Eshelman 1993 investigates the psychopathology which corresponds to the postmodern paradigm in (Soviet) Russian literature of the last three decades. He argues that a postmodern epistemology is particularly characteristic of a period which appears to be least accessible to it, the so-called *vremia zastoia*.
- 2 So far, all critical attempts to claim the author for postmodernism have restricted themselves to the stylistic or metapoetic aspects of his writing. See Andreas Leitner, Andrej Bitovs "Puschkinhaus" als postmoderner Roman, *Wiener Slawistischer Almanach* 22 (1988), 213-226; German Ritz, Andrej Bitov's "Chelovek v pejzazhe." Postmoderne Lektüre eines poétologischen Textes, *Zeitschrift für slavische Philologie* 2 (1990), 337-353; Pekka Pesonen, Bitov's Text as Text: The Petersburg Text as a Context in Andrey Bitov's Prose, *Literary Tradition and Practice in Russian Culture. Papers from an International Conference on the Occasion of the Seventieth Birthday of Yury Mikhailevich Lotman. Russian Culture: Structure and Tradition*, ed. V. Polukhina, J. Andrew, R. Reid, Amsterdam 1993, 325-345.
- 3 The following quotation is taken from the same (drunken) speech by grandfather Odoevtsev. Note that in *Fotografia Pushkina* Bitov suggests that his hero Igor' Odoevtsev is an offspring of his protagonist from *Pushkinskii dom*: "O kakoi svobode vy gorovite? Gde éto slovo? Vy sami ne svobodny [...]. Vy khototite skazat' ot sebia — vy nichego ne mozhete skazat' ot sebia. Vy tol'ko ot litssa toi zhe vlasti skazat' mozhete. [...] Dlia vas uzhe nigde ne

naidetsia uslovii [...]. Vy obnaruzhite, chto bez étoi vlasti, vas-to takikh i net. Éto tol'ko zdes' vy — est'. Vy bol'she nigde ne budete" (Bitov 1978: 81).

<sup>4</sup> Cited in this paper as *Fotografiia Pushkina*.

<sup>5</sup> See especially Groys 1992: 9-10.

<sup>6</sup> Groys 1992 sees indifference as the principal hallmark of Soviet postmodernism: "[...] Eastern postutopianism is not a thinking of "difference" or the "other" but a thinking of indifference" (107).

<sup>7</sup> See Freud XIII, 387-391; Hansen-Löve 1992: 195.

<sup>8</sup> "The ego [...] creates for itself a new outside and inside world. There can be no doubt about the fact that [...] this new world is constructed in accordance with the desires of the id [...]" (XIII, 389).

<sup>9</sup> Freud reports the case of a young woman who is in love with her brother-in-law. At her sister's deathbed, the woman cannot but think of her brother-in-law who would now be free to marry her. This unforgivable thought, however, is immediately forgotten, a process which initiates the psychological pain. The neurotic reaction, in this context, is to "devalue" (*entwerten*) reality by suppressing the inadmissible urge (the love for the brother-in-law). Its psychotic counterpart would consist in the downright denial of the sister's death. See XIII, 364. See also Hansen-Löve 1992: 195.

<sup>10</sup> On this aspect of Freud's theory, see esp. Hansen-Löve 1992: 196.

<sup>11</sup> For an interpretation of psychosis as liberation, see especially Deleuze/Guattari 1972.

<sup>12</sup> Bitov 1988. The text was first published in 1987. It was included in the collection *Chelovek v peizazhe* (1988) as one of the six constituent narratives of "Prepodavatel' simmetrii" (written 1985; first published 1987, excluding *Fotografiia Pushkina*).

<sup>13</sup> Discussions of psychosis in the postmodern context have frequently suffered from the metaphorical elasticity of the term psychosis itself. It is worth noting that in *Fotografiia Pushkina*, such motifs/symptoms as the equivalence between inside and outside, the disappearance of difference, *posthistoire*, the world as a text, and, in particular, psychosis itself are directly quoted on the level of the narrated world. Bitov's text as a whole has an abstract, expository quality which gives it the quality of a metatext on Soviet postmodernism.

<sup>14</sup> Eshelman 1993 offers a convincing description of this dissolution in a chronological perspective. His sequence runs from modernism to what he terms the "classical" postmodernism of writers such as Evgenii Popov.

<sup>15</sup> See Margret Rothe-Buddensieg, *Der Dachboden in der deutschen Prosa-literatur als Negation der gesellschaftlichen Realität*, Kronberg 1974.

<sup>16</sup> The postmodern metaphor of a generalised text which dissolves the vertical relations between sign and referent appears throughout *Fotografia Pushkina*: "Tak ia budu sidet' [...], vpriach'sia v liamku svoego cherdaka, povoloch' ego skvoz' neprokhodimyi tekst" (418).

<sup>17</sup> The 100th anniversary of Pushkin's death. Also the year when Bitov was born.

<sup>18</sup> The "Pushkin theme" in Bitov's writings is always connected to the poet's death and the difficulty of accepting it. In the essay "Vospominanie o Pushkine" (1985), Bitov reflects upon the death of Pushkin, his canonisation within the archive of culture and the question of the representation of the past in general. The author bemoans the determining influence, in public memory, of Pushkin's tragic and untimely death upon our perception of the poet's life and his works. According to Bitov, everything in Pushkin's biography is perceived from the vantage point of its end. In the same essay, Bitov discusses a paradox in the reception of the poet which is characteristic of *Fotografia Pushkina*, too. The author writes that the impression of knowing Pushkin's biography down to the most minute detail stems from the confusion of fiction and fact, or canonised history, on the one hand, and the actual past, on the other. The inability of telling Pushkin's biography from his writings produces a psychotic ambivalence which cannot distinguish between truth and fiction: "I v etom smysle ni pro odnogo cheloveka v Rossii my ne znaem stol'ko, skol'ko pro Pushkina, i ni odnogo — nastol'ko zhe ne znaem" (Bitov 1985: 195).

Bitov's argument has larger implications. For the author, in effect, charges that any act of archivisation and commemoration (not just Pushkin's) fosters and indeed presupposes the perception that the commemorated object is dead once and for all. Instead of contributing to the "resurrection" of the past, its representation in and through the archive of culture closes it. In "Vospominanie o Pushkine," Bitov uses the consecration of the famous Pushkin monument in Moscow (1880) to illustrate this point. According to the author, the monument reminds the spectator not so much of the living presence of its object but, on the contrary, of his death. When the poet's body is relegated from the epistemological darkness of the "other" world (the realm of the dead) to the public square, any hope is finally dispelled that he or his spirit might return at some unknown point in the future: "Do pamiatnika Pushkin

ostavalsia tainoi, no posle otkrytiia on stal eiu, zamurovannyi v bronzu: pamiatnik otkryt — taina zakryta" (Bitov 1985: 197). At this point, then, begins the (psychotic) invention of an alternative reality, a reality in which Pushkin's monument and the poet's death have no existence. Thus, Bitov wants to introduce an alternative view of Pushkin which reverses the effects of archive, monument, and school curriculum. Bitov seeks to forget anything which reminds him of Pushkin's death. Instead, the author proposes a psychotic reading of Pushkin's texts. He suggests that the poet's work be read in reverse chronological order, so as to avoid having to deal with the tragic event of the year 1837.

<sup>19</sup> On psychosis and its absolutization of the code, see Hansen-Löve 1992: 200.

<sup>20</sup> "In the most extreme cases of neurosis, there are only signs and no objects. In psychosis, by contrast, the objects replace the signs" (Hansen-Löve 1992: 200).

<sup>21</sup> Jameson 1992 comments on the psychotic experience of time: "With the breakdown of the signifying chain, therefore, the schizophrenic is reduced to an experience of pure material signifiers, or, in other words, a series of pure and unrelated presents in time" (27).

<sup>22</sup> See Smirnov 1990: 527.

<sup>23</sup> Like Bitov, Nabokov cannot "catch up" with the poet: "Pytaius' sledit' za nim glazami, no on ot menia postoianno ubegaet, chtoby vnov' poiavit'sia [...]" (Nabokov 1989: 530). This motif is directly cited in *Fotografia Pushkina*. Bitov's protagonist "vtianulsia v étu pogoniu. [...]" (112).

<sup>24</sup> See Smirnov 1990: 527.

<sup>25</sup> Reference to Odoevskii is already made through the name of Bitov's hero (Odoevtsev). I would like to thank Prof. Igor' Smirnov (Konstanz) for very useful comments concerning this and other pretexts.

<sup>26</sup> "Skoro nachalsia razgovor preinteresnyi: somnambuly napereryv vyskazyvali svoi samye tainye pomyshleniiia i chuvstva. 'Priznaius', — skazal odin, — khot' ia i staraius' pokazat', chto ne boius' komety, no menia ochen' pugaet ee priblizhenie" (432).

<sup>27</sup> The motif of the *kolpak* which spans the city of Petersburg links *Fotografia Pushkina* with a number of utopian pretexts in- and outside of Russian literature. Thus, in Wells' "A Story of the Days to Come" (1897), the climate is controlled under a vast roof which spans the entire city of London. Briusov's

play *Zemlia* (1904) as well as his *Respublika iuzhnogo kresta* (1905) feature cities sheltered by giant cupolas. The glass *kolpak* is also one of the sinister emblems of Zamiatin's totalitarian state in his novel *My* (1927), a structure constructed with reference both to the phantasies of Wells and to the Crystal Palace in Dostoevskii's texts: "V Operatsionnom — rabotaiut nashi luchshie i opytnieishie vrachi [...]. Tam — raznye pribory i, glavnoe, znamenityi Gazo-vyi Kolokol. Eto v sushchnosti starinnyi shkol'nyi opyt: mysh' posazhena pod stekliannyi kolpak; vozdushnym nasosom vozdukh v kolpake razrezaetsia vse bol'she..." (Zamiatin 1967: 70).

<sup>28</sup> The simulacrum has become one of the most prominent postmodern meta-concepts suggesting the blurring of the in/out distinction. For definitions of the simulacrum and its postmodern interpretation, see Baudrillard 1988a: 166-184.

<sup>29</sup> This term is used by Freud to designate a fantasy which involves one's presence at the scene of one's own conception, either in the capacity of observer or participant. See Freud XI, 383-386; Penely 1990.

<sup>30</sup> Boris Groys perceives the need to reinvent the past in order to produce Oedipal conflict as the principal characteristic of the situation of the Soviet artist, see Groys 1991: 140.

<sup>31</sup> In this way, the central narrative continues the apocalyptic theme which has such prominence in the introductory frame. In *Fotografija Pushkina*, the theme of apocalypse appears in its original meaning, as a revelation or a de-masking (of the father and origin). As Jacques Derrida has shown, the "apocalyptic tone" associates the revelation of the truth with the end of the world. The truth itself is apocalyptic and deferred as long as the end of the world itself (Derrida 1983: 69).

<sup>32</sup> See, for example, the "House of Antiquity" in Zamiatin's dystopian novel *My* (Engl. 1924).

<sup>33</sup> "Suprematism provides me with the keys to the still unperceived. My new painting does not pertain to the earth alone. The earth has been abandoned like a termite-ridden house. And man really does consciously seek space, he longs to 'break loose from the earth'" (K. Malevich, from a letter to M. Matiushin, quoted in V. Leniashin [ed.], *Soviet Art. 1920s-1930s. Russian Museum, Leningrad*, Moscow 1988: 65).

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