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The Moose of the Apocalypse: Andrei Bitov's Man in Landscape

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“If anyone worships the beast and its image...he also shall drink the wine of God’s wrath, poured unmixed into the cup of his anger, and he shall be tormented with fire and sulphur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.”

Revelation 14; 9-10.

In January a moose killed an elderly man on the campus of the University of Alaska.

New York Times, May 25, 1995

The Moose of the Apocalypse: Andrei Bitov’s ‘Chelovek v peizazhe’ (Man in Landscape)

Russian fiction written in the Soviet era often employs apocalyptic imagery (Bethea, 1989). The constrained writer casts himself in the role of John, alone on Patmos, persecuted by Rome, or of Daniel, captive in a hostile Babylon, bravely maintaining his religious purity against the earthly power that governs him. Both interpret the writing on the wallⁱ and purvey a vision of the higher, eternal kingdom which condemns the immorality of the temporal regime. Bitov’s ‘Chelovek v peizazhe’ belongs to this tradition.

Although early critics of Bitov’s work often paid most attention to its realist surface and apparently autobiographical nature,ⁱⁱ Bitov’s concerns are always religious. The material drawn from everyday life merely provides the visible manifestation of Bitov’s repeated examination of the relationship between man and God.

Bitov traced aspects of that relationship in his early stories published in the 1960s and early 1970s, reminding the reader that man’s life should be based in faith in a higher power by referring to the Bible in his titles and epigraphs: the title of one collection of stories, *Dni cheloveka (Days of Man)*, is drawn from the 103rd Psalm, two lines of which are used as the epigraph to one of the stories, “The Forest”; Ellen Chances has shown that the imagery of this and

the following psalm appears in 'Zhizn' v vetrenuiu pogodu' (Life in Windy Weather) as well (Chances, 1993, 87-8).

The epigraph of Bitov's *Rol'* (*The Role*), (that Bitov also gave the titles *The Lover* and *Uletaishchii Monakhov*) a "novel with ellipses" completed in the 1970s, is taken from *Revelation*: "But I have this against you: that you have abandoned the love you had at first" (2; 4). The five stories of the novel catalogue Bitov's hero's betrayals of the people he loves—his father, mother, wives, lovers. The betrayals manifest his having "abandoned the love [he] had at first"; personal loves are made in the image of love for God, but the hero is repeatedly unfaithful to them.ⁱⁱⁱ

In *The Lover* Bitov uses the idea of image to indicate the discrepancy between the real and the ideal; the middle story is entitled 'The Image' (*Obraz*) and describes the crumbling of the hero's idealized image of his beloved.

The heroes' betrayals are part of man's betrayal of his own ideal image in the eyes of God. God made man in his image, and the perfect love is love for God; each person is an image projected by his creator-author and should love and be loved accordingly. In his later works, Bitov examines man's falling away from his Godly nature more directly, minimizing the realist grounding that had predominated in the stories written in the 1960s and 70s. The women whom Bitov's lover betrays are only emblematic; in his stories of the 1980s it becomes clear that the Beloved is an image of something else.

In *The Teacher of Symmetry* (*Prepodavatel' simmetrii*) Bitov uses photographic images to discuss the effect of the ideal on the real. The stories 'View of Troy's Sky' (*Vid nebo Troia*) and 'Pushkin's Photograph' (*Fotografiia Pushkina*) (1985) are about temptation by image, and the vain pursuit of it. In 'View of Troy's Sky' a photographic image (of a woman who could become the Beloved) has been captured, but only by the devil who uses it to tempt the hero to destroy himself by trying to find the Beloved in reality. In 'Pushkin's Photograph', the hero attempts to create a photographic image of the poet, but this effort to embody genius proves equally impossible.

Only in 'Man in Landscape' (1983) does Bitov lay bare the origins of this real vs. ideal imagery and bring all the elements of his thought together explicitly.^{iv} This time the image is the icon (*obraz*), the divine ideal given physical representation. Bitov connects the religious-

philosophical inversion of man creating images of the divine to the problem of God having made man in his image, and compares God's Creation (man and nature) to man's.

'Man in Landscape' uses two important motifs from *Revelation* to trace the narrator's relationship to his divine origin: the reptilian beasts and the interplay of light and dark. In *Revelation* the beasts are sent as scourges to sinning mankind, while light and dark convey the opposition between divine knowledge and the abyss awaiting those who fail to attain it. These two motifs of apocalyptic animals, coupled with the hero's passages from light into darkness and from darkness into light, explicate the hero's pilgrim's progress from spiritual blindness to a life-giving epiphany.

I Apocalyptic Beasts

The deliberately disorienting story-line is picaresque; the tale outlines a seemingly disjoint and unmotivated series of events, which, as in Veniamin Erofeev's *Moskva-Petushki*, become increasingly incoherent as the protagonists get drunker and drunker. Their tracks and destination are even less determined than in *Moskva-Petushki*, so that the reader becomes as bemused as the characters; it is as hard to recount the sequence of actions on a first reading as it is to understand the meaning of the tale.^v

An outline of the tale's events shows how the hero's and the reader's initial confusion creates a background for a pattern of apocalyptic imagery. The narrative causes the reader to enact the way we and the hero fail to discern signs of transcendent meaning amid the random and subconsciously perceived details of everyday life.

It is nonetheless clear from the outset that Bitov is discussing man's attempt to capture an ideal in an image. An icon restorer, Pavel Petrovich, keeps painting a particular spot in the landscape at a place that resembles Kolomenskoe, an ancient monastery at the very edge of a stark new *mikroraion* of Moscow. That the icon restorer also does some painting underlines the idea of *obraz* as both icon and image, relating God's creation to the artist's.

The first-person narrator (who eventually turns out to be a screen writer) is walking around the monastery at dusk, contemplating the devastation that man has wrought on the landscape. He finds the one perfect spot, a place from where it is impossible to see anything man-

made. But in it sits a man painting that spot, Pavel Petrovich. The eccentric painter immediately draws the narrator into a philosophical discussion on the nature of art, in a beligerent but endearing way (rather like a conversation with Yuz Aleshkovsky, an intonational echo acknowledged by Bitov) that casts the narrator as his disciple. After a brief struggle, the narrator accepts his subordinate role, while beginning to revere Pavel Petrovich.

At the lowest point of their path up out of the ravine, the narrator ironically takes his first step down the slippery moral slope: Pavel Petrovich offers the narrator some port; the narrator refuses, saying he doesn't drink. He hasn't been drinking for a while. He doesn't drink port... "the glass appeared by itself in my hand, and the heat of his incomprehensible power overwhelmed me. 'You are a genius...' I whispered" (262/84).^{vi}

They approach the monastery, and Pavel Petrovich invites him in. They drink vodka in an underground refectory where there are stacks of icons that are being restored. They finish a bottle and go to another part of the monastery where another restorer, Semion, provides another bottle and some pickles—this cellar turns out to be a pickling operation complete with huge kegs. There they continue drinking while Pavel Petrovich discourses on the relation of God to man, and on the nature of creation.

When they leave and emerge shakily onto the street, they are accosted by two policemen; Pavel Petrovich bolts into the bushes and the narrator is taken in to the police station. He awakens there in the morning but he is not under arrest; he has lied his way out of the customary fifteen-day sentence for drunkenness and used his connection to the film industry to flatter the police chief.

The narrator leaves the police station with a sense of relief, only to find Pavel Petrovich waiting for him and again he falls under his spell. "What was this power he had acquired, even if it was only over me?" (293/124), the narrator wonders.^{vii} Pavel Petrovich takes him first to buy two bottles of the port that the narrator had earlier said he did not drink, and then to an empty store to down them. Pavel Petrovich draws the narrator along with him, first to a sporting goods store where Pavel Petrovich suddenly produces an icon which he gives to an "aging playboy" (296/128) who works there; the playboy gives them more to drink and they go on, drinking in a playground where they lose some money at a home-made roulette wheel; the end of their

wanderings takes place in an apple orchard, where Pavel Petrovich tells the narrator a creation myth.^{viii}

The narrator wakes up on a cot in a bare kitchen. He has been awakened by a strange noise. He goes to the window and is unable to tell whether it is dawn or dusk, and whether he is looking east or west out the window from a high story. As he looks, a terrified moose rushes out of the woods and towards the building.^{ix}

The narrator realizes he is in Pavel Petrovich's apartment, goes into the other room which is completely bare except that the walls are hung with painting after painting of the spot of landscape where they had met the day before. Each painting has a shadow in one corner, which the narrator realizes is Pavel Petrovich's nose, the sign of Pavel Petrovich's failure to eliminate man from landscape, his inability to catch and fix the divine in its purest form.

The narrator espies Pavel Petrovich asleep, kneeling on a mattress on the floor where a hugely pregnant woman is sleeping.^x He leaves without his shoes. And although he says that he could still find Pavel Petrovich's apartment, years have passed and he has never gone back.

All this action is secondary in the reader's perception of the text. We, like the narrator, are quickly drawn in to Pavel Petrovich's philosophical disquisition, which dominates our attention both by the amount of the space it occupies and by its intensity. Pavel Petrovich is preoccupied with one particular question: why did God make man precisely in his own image? Pavel Petrovich's triumphal answer is that God is an artist, and wanted someone to appreciate his creation. From this he concludes that man can never be a creator; only God is the Creator, with the result that man can only be a re-creator. The narrator is filled with admiration for Pavel Petrovich's thinking, feels incapable of answering him adequately, accepts Pavel Petrovich's scorn at some of his mundane responses and is flattered by Pavel Petrovich's occasional bits of acknowledgment.

How are we to get beyond the spell that Pavel Petrovich casts over the narrator to an understanding of the story? The moose at the end of the story stands out even in this bizarre narrative as so unlikely that it forces us beyond a realist reading (despite its real origin). That the "marvelous rustling" (*divnyi shorokh*) and "strange live noise" (*strannyi zhivoi shum*) the moose makes in the woods should be able to wake the narrator sleeping in an apartment when, as he

says, “I was very high up” (“*Ia byl ochen’ vysoko*”), is as incredible as the narrator’s enigmatic observation: “I am not an expert or a hunter, but he was clearly young, although he had reached his full adult size” (302/135). The description reminds one of Gogol’s “adult suckling pig” that bowls over a policeman in *The Overcoat (Shinel’)*, and, as in *The Overcoat*, the animal’s appearance comes as a kind of eerie coda to the already strange events of the tale. The narrator is alone at the rosy window, lost in time (is it dawn or dusk?) and space (is he looking east or west?). He relates that “A terror which it is impossible to explain by hangover seized me. The moose raced towards me and disappeared from my view (*iz glaz moikh*)” (302/135). The language used and the moment itself is apocalyptic; stripped of everything familiar, the narrator faces the void and feels terror.

A search for more apocalyptic signs yields five earlier instances of parodic beasts of the apocalypse, four of which signify the narrator’s travesty of his own divine image, and a fifth, also involving a moose, which hints at salvation. Here is a list in order of their appearance:

1) The first beast is given the adjective “apocalyptic”, alerting us to the motif:

Pavel Petrovich claims that no one has been able to paint an animal adequately, except for Dürer’s drawing of a rhinoceros, a “brilliant, apocalyptic beast” (260/82); Pavel Petrovich says the drawing gains its greatness from the amazement Dürer felt seeing what was probably the first rhinoceros in Europe (260/81). In the context of Pavel Petrovich’s discourse, this sudden first appearance of a rhinoceros echoes God’s creation of the animals, and places Dürer as the artist-recreator, an admiring recorder of God’s works. Pavel Petrovich, however, envies God his role as Creator, and can only think about man’s place in creation. Dürer’s rhinoceros is a pure example of great art, an absolute truth that should alert the narrator to how far his admired guide falls short of this ideal.

2) When Pavel Petrovich and the narrator arrive at the monastery in the dark they are greeted by a Great Dane named Linda:

A gigantic, grey, snake-like being surged out of the darkness. I shuddered and almost screamed “Mama!”
 “Linda... Little devil (*chertiaka*)” The landscape painter affectionately thumped this devil.

It was a marble-white Great Dane bitch (*doginia*) of blinding terror and beauty. (264/87)

The terror he experiences at the sight of this reptilian devil should warn the narrator that he is in terrain perilous to his soul, especially if he, a writer, remembers Ivan Karamazov's description of the Devil to Aliosha:

Undress him and you will probably find a tail, long, smooth, like a Great Dane's, an arshin long, brown... (*Brothers Karamazov, Book 11, Chapter 10*)^{xi}

Pavel Petrovich boasts proudly that Linda is an actress; she is in a movie and earns 7.50 a day; this suggests the life-as-stage metaphor (used in previous works by Bitov) in which life merely parodies its ideal model. Pavel Petrovich fondly calls her a devil; she is only playing the role of dog as she awaits them at the monastery and accompanies them in. Her role as actress connects her to two images of women that appear on calendars: the singer Alla Pugacheva who appears on a calendar in the restoring workroom, and a naked Japanese woman at the playboy's store; as the only female actively present in 'Man in Landscape', Linda represents the vestigial role of woman as temptress.^{xii} Here the errors of the narrator do not directly involve betrayal of a beloved woman, although like Pavel Petrovich, he appears to be expected by an unidentified beloved at home. His error lies in his admiration for Pavel Petrovich and in his failure to recognize the signs signalling his fall. He is duped by the stage set (the monastery), and by Pavel Petrovich's apparent genius.

3) In the pickling cellar at the monastery after Pavel Petrovich and the narrator have begun drinking, Pavel Petrovich refers again to the rhinoceros: "Not one more rhinoceros!" (284/111), he says, explaining that no new species have appeared since man. Then follows a description of the cellar where the pickling kegs stand:

The dim light. The slimy grey walls, the...cement floor; in the keg swam the last huge pickle...sticking out its curious blunt nose like a crocodile. One thing became completely clear: that we were where we stood and his discourse no longer seemed to me an exaggeration. (284/113)

The crocodilic pickles have accompanied their continued drinking in this sulphurous hell, but even another reptile (Linda was "snake-like") does not sufficiently jolt the narrator out of his

willingness to be governed by Pavel Petrovich. At Pavel Petrovich's request, the narrator obediently lowers his head first into a Boschian keg in order to fish up the pickles; the two had been discussing Breughel earlier, so the image of the grotesque terrors of hell should be fresh enough in the narrator's mind to prevent his willing descent into it.

4) When the policeman chases the fleeing Pavel Petrovich into the bushes, "he rustled clumsily in the bushes, like a moose" (*gruzno shurshal v kustakh, kak los'*) (288/117).

The policeman reemerges without Pavel Petrovich and says "He's gone, the snake!" (*Ushel, gad!*) (288/118). This moose of the narrator's simile presages the live moose which also rustles in the greenery. The policeman-moose has chased away Pavel Petrovich-the snake. That there is something apocalyptic going on is signalled by the way the narrator prefaces the scene of the arrival of the policemen:

We came out into the light of the next lamppost, I tilted my head, and here revenge espied us. And I hadn't needed to crane my neck--it came not from overhead, although possibly from on high. (288/117)

This idea of revenge from on high is repeated when the narrator is released from the police station; he feels cleansed and rejoices at his feeling of youth and freshness in the early morning:

Lord! What happiness!...I felt. ...as if I hadn't had a litre yesterday... just thinking about yesterday was disgusting and terrifying... (291/121)

But then Pavel Petrovich reappears, just in time for the opening of the liquor stores, and the narrator says:

Thus was I punished, and again from on high, for the hypocrisy which had just so transformed me! (292/122)

The moose-like policeman is a legitimate government inspector; he almost rescues the narrator from Pavel Petrovich's clutches, but the narrator falls into Pavel's snares a second time despite the protective glory of the daylight and once again follows Pavel Petrovich on a drinking odyssey to an unspecified goal.

5) At the sports store, the playboy serves them caviar and vodka on the back of a gymnastic horse ("*na gimnasticheskom kone*") (296/128).

Pavel Petrovich appears to be trading in the icons he restores,^{xiii} and the store setting points to the

idea of travesty: the icon of Cyril and Methodius is placed “beneath a Japanese calendar with a photo of a naked Japanese woman, whose artistic pose concealed a certain shortness in the legs, but revealed everything else” (296/128). This is the second example of a calendar that travesties the idea that God made man in His image: when the narrator first entered Pavel Petrovich’s restoring workshop, he saw a “calendar with Alla Pugacheva” on the wall where “layer upon layer of icons” lean “like junk, like a scattered deck of cards” (265/88). In *Revelation*, John recounts his vision of “a woman sitting on a scarlet beast...holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her fornication” (17; 3-4); she is the whore of Babylon, a metaphor for “the great city [Rome] which has dominion over the kings of the earth” (17, 18). In the larger context implied by the tale, the analogy is to Moscow; on the plot level the calendar women, like Pavel Petrovich’s icons, represent a divine potential that is being misused by the all-male cast of the story. The gymnastic horse (scarlet beast) with the pin-up above it is the stage set in which the narrator drinks from the cup of abominations, and the pleasures of the body prevail over those of the spirit; there the icon is exchanged for money and alcohol.

II Darkness and Light

There are some organizing patterns to their wanderings that go together with the parodic apocalyptic beasts to emphasize the nature of Pavel Petrovich’s role in the tale. The narrator’s trajectory is traced by the contrast of light and dark. As we would expect, positive aspects of light are associated with the monastery belltower and the sun, emblematic of spiritual enlightenment:

The belltower especially showed light (*svetlela*) in the woods, and the clapper even seemed to be illuminated (*svetlilas’*) with a separate transparent light. (264/86)

Light is also connected to Semion. The narrator asks “Is he Semion or Simeon?” (“*Semen ili Semion?*” [277/1031]); in the tale the name is most frequently spelled Semion, but also spelled *Simion* (280) in order to emphasize the ambiguity of his association with the biblical Simeon of the Gospel according to Saint Luke:

Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout[...]and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord Christ. (2, 25-26)

When Semion opens the door to them, “a sharp razor of light sliced out of the chink in the doorway...” Semion’s lamp blinds them and he himself is brightly illuminated. “A fifteen-watt lightbulb was shining blindingly.” Semion and Pavel Petrovich go through the long dark cellar into another room “from which another really bright light flashed out”, where Semion is “brightly illuminated”. Yet it appears that in this room Semion and Pavel Petrovich make some transaction involving a “fresh and bright” icon, a little brush and a half-liter of vodka. Despite what would appear to be Semion’s distance from his biblical original, the narrator is ready to revere him. After all, he reveres Pavel Petrovich, and he presents Semion as “a great man...a wiseman” (277/103). What is more, Semion does not join them in their drinking--“That’s not his department” (*on ne po etoj chasti*), explains Pavel Petrovich. But the light illuminating Semion is the electric light in his cellar, which is subsequently contrasted unfavorably to the bright sparks of a worker’s welder in an even brighter doorway lit by the sun.

Pavel Petrovich leads the narrator into extreme darkness on two crucial occasions. We tend not to notice this pattern because in the first instance of the light/dark opposition, Pavel Petrovich leads the narrator out of the dark ravine upwards towards the monastery, where they admire the belltower together. And when at dusk Pavel Petrovich brings him into the restoring studio, he turns on the light and “all is illuminated” (265/88). But when the narrator is rejoicing in the warmth of the sun on emerging from the police station, Pavel Petrovich leads him into a dark empty store. A good-natured worker (the narrator is touched by his benevolent concern for them) has paused in his welding in the doorway to let them into the empty store to drink.

Here, from the darkness, the doorway was so light as if the sun were beyond it, as if right outside the door was the sky and not the street. (295/126)

When the narrator exits the store into the sunlight, he tries to protect his eyes from the sun, but is lit up around the edges; he can’t escape the sunlight.

In the darkness of the store, Pavel Petrovich claims that he did not betray the narrator when he ran away from the police; on the contrary, he is the one who has been betrayed all his life, “and you too will betray me,” he finally pronounced, quietly and powerfully, as if leaning over to Judas in the evening... I didn’t answer.. Judas, it seems, also was silent (295/126).

Although Pavel Petrovich has just been justifying his own betrayal of the narrator with fantastical

sagas of his own misfortunes and victimization, the narrator's identification with Judas is meant to be taken seriously on another level. Like Judas, he betrays Christ in allowing Pavel Petrovich to tempt him into betraying the image of God in which he is made.

Earlier Pavel Petrovich had led the narrator into darkness when going for vodka and pickles; he leads him through a tunnel of the monastery so dark that the narrator bumps into him. The narrator lifts his hand to his eyes and cannot see it, and exclaims "*I temno zhe bylo!*" Semion admits them, gives them vodka and pickles, and disappears. He reappears at a climactic moment in Pavel Petrovich's diatribe:

"The government inspector is coming! And this inspector is the Devil".

The magnitude of the idea completely bowled me over, although it should be said that we had also finished the bottle.

"I don't believe in the devil", I suddenly objected.

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Pavel Petrovich and Semion who had flown up to us from somewhere.

"That is, I believe in the creator, in Christ..." I babbled, pressed between the two wisemen...

"He doesn't believe..." Semion whispered to Pavel Petrovich in fright. "What does he believe in?"... "The whole air is teeming with them!" And Semion, like a startled rooster,^{xiv}

waved his sleeves...Pavel Petrovich treacherously nodded in agreement.

"Teeming with what?" I got angry.

"With invisible beings!" and he looked around as if in terror.

"And I don't believe in the next world!" I said stubbornly.

[...]"But since there is this world", said Semion with a voice suddenly soft and sly, "then there is the next one...Like a magnet, you can't break it in half".

"Like darkness and light!" exclaimed Pavel Petrovich.

"Like life and death!" (283/111)

III Redemption

The narrator may not believe in the devil, but the story does. The dark/light contrasts, the descent into the sulphurous cellar to drink, the hints at apocalyptic beasts and the quest for

creative perfection that would rival God's suggest that the narrator has in fact encountered the devil's representative.

From the first, Pavel Petrovich leads the narrator into temptation, causing him to break his resolution not to drink. Then, because Pavel Petrovich speaks of God, art and creation, he follows him and his diabolic Great Dane into the darkness, into a corrupted monastery, and admires the "genius" of Pavel Petrovich's religious philosophy, although it is constructed in his own too-mortal image: in his landscapes Pavel Petrovich cannot escape including his own nose. And betrayed by Pavel Petrovich, the narrator tells a string of lies to the police to get himself off a legitimate charge.

Throughout the story the narrator betrays his Creator by darkening the image of God in which he was made; in this sense Pavel Petrovich is entitled to call him Judas, and in this sense the narrator really is in need of an icon restorer, but Pavel Petrovich is not the one. On two occasions Pavel Petrovich desecrates the icons he restores when he drinks alongside them: when the two first drink in the restoring cellar, "the...bottle stood like a bell tower" and an icon of Christ stands on a third chair at the table so that "we were a threesome...: Pavel Petrovich..., me, and the darkened Savior with his face toward us, on a separate chair...Pavel Petrovich, perhaps due to his profession, saw nothing blasphemous in it, and I didn't notice it at the time either" (266/89).

This "at the time" is the saving grace; it suggests that upon reflection, indeed upon writing the story, the narrator has understood the error of his ways. He doesn't believe in the Devil, but he does believe in Christ. He ends his tale as he finishes writing it, in a country kitchen with two baby chicks warming themselves on his leg.

They...settle down on my foot as the warmest place in the kitchen, and although I'm typing away like a machine gun, nearing the cherished ending, they cheep, frightened by this banging,...but they endure it, and who will tell me now that I'm not alive, if on me, living, chicks are warming themselves, and we are all three now alive, alive and surviving, struggling, perhaps with different things, but all--with the cold? (306/140)

The chickens are part of "live and eternal life", a symbol of rebirth and a domestic variant of the dove, the antithesis of the reptilian array he encountered with Pavel Petrovich.

The narrator would be able to find his way back to Pavel Petrovich's apartment, but a long time has passed and he has never returned. He has been saved from Pavel Petrovich by two moose: first the policeman-government inspector appears "possibly from on high" and liberates the narrator from Pavel Petrovich's spell (at the eleventh hour-- the narrator leaves the police station the next day after "[t]he judge comes at eleven" [291/122]), and then the strange suburban moose awakens him literally, enabling him to flee the sleeping Pavel Petrovich's apartment.

The pattern conforms to the spiritual movement in the genre of the apocalypse. The culmination of apocalyptic works has been defined as "the triple drama of crisis-judgment-vindication, the vindication usually involving some kind of personal immortality".^{xv} This is the movement of Bitov's tale: the crisis is the narrator's descent into the inferno. The judgment is implied by the multiple animals embedded in the text; hints at apocalyptic beasts warn the narrator of his betrayal of God's intentions. The narrator had been blind to their meaning at the time he encountered them, but by the time he has completed recording his ordeal, he has passed judgment on himself (recognized God's judgment) and achieves vindication--a resurrection from darkness and death, at his typewriter at dawn in a cold kitchen.

Taken together, the imagery of 'Man in Landscape' suggests that Pavel Petrovich plays the role of the beast from *Revelation*:

And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months; it opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling...If anyone has an ear, let him hear. (13; 5-9)

Envyng envies God's artistry, Pavel Petrovich's interpretation of God's motives amounts to a blasphemous projection of his own frailties onto God. The narrator listens fascinated, allowing him to exercise authority during nearly two days of tormented wanderings (more like forty-two hours than the forty-two months of 13; 5), blaspheming God and his dwelling (the monastery). During the course of the story, the narrator is given numerous signs of his error. And by the end of his voyage he does have an ear to hear; even in his sleep he detects the "strange live noise" of the crazed moose from "very high up" and flees Pavel Petrovich's apartment barefoot, later to provide a record of his revelation.

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NOTES

ⁱ e.g. Fazil' Iskander's "Belshazzar's Feasts" ('Piry Baltassara', *Sandro from Chegem*), in which Sandro is a mock Daniel whose failure implies the author's role as a true Daniel.

ⁱⁱ See, for example, Deming Brown, *Soviet Russian Literature since Stalin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 192-7.

ⁱⁱⁱ Dana Joyce Schultz has demonstrated this in *The Spiritual Journey: Andrei Bitov's "The Lover: A Novel With Ellipses"* (unpublished senior thesis, Wesleyan, 1991) by tracing motifs of doors, stairways and light/darkness throughout the novel.

^{iv} 'A View of Troy's Sky', 'Pushkin's Photograph' and 'Man in Landscape' appear in *Chelovek v peizazhe* (Moscow, 1988), the first two as part of *The Teacher of Symmetry*. 'Chelovek v peizazhe' (252-306) also appears as the second of a three-story cycle in *Oglashennye* (Moscow, 1995), 55-106. *Oglashennye* appeared in English as *The Monkey Link*, trans. Susan Brownsberger (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1995).

^v Two reviewers of *The Monkey Link* were unable to make sense of the cycle. See John Banville, *New York Review of Books*, April 6, 1995, 29-31, and D. M. Thomas, *New York Times Book Review*, March 26, 1995. Banville relies heavily on the Afterword by Susan Brownsberger, whose ideas about the boundaries of the USSR are not part of the author's thinking, according to Bitov.

^{vi} I am using the English translation by Heather Hay, unpublished senior thesis, Wesleyan 1995. Page numbers refer to *Chelovek v peizazhe* (1988) (Russian) and Brownsberger, *The Monkey Link* (English), in that order.

^{vii} Compare *Revelation* 13; 4: "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?"

^{viii} The myth is attributed to the Yamana Indians of South America. Bitov recalls having read about the dying out of this tribe, but he made up the myth told by Pavel Petrovich as well as its gods, Escheguki and Nikibumatva.

^{ix} I am grateful to Matvei Yankelevich for marveling at this moose. Bitov affirms that he had actually seen a moose in a Moscow *mikroraion*. It might be more accurate, but less euphonic, to

translate *los*’ as the closely-related “elk,” since moose are native to North America. Brownsberger too uses “moose”.

^x Cf. *Revelation* 12; 1-4: “And a great portent appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; she was with child...And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bear the child, that he might devour her child when she brought it forth”. Like much else in the story, it is ambiguous whether the pregnant woman and Pavel Petrovich should be associated with the couple in *Revelation* or with Mary and Joseph.

^{xi} Translation mine. I am grateful to Susanne Fusso for making this connection.

^{xii} Bitov was acquainted with an actual Great Dane named Linda. The dog belonged to an actress friend. Thus Bitov distills autobiographical fact into fiction using Dostoevsky, and renders it more abstractly than in *The Lover*.

^{xiii} Bitov has said that this is intentionally ambiguous.

^{xiv} Peter denied Christ for the third time when the rooster crowed; Semion is associated with the rooster to signify the denial of Christ.

^{xv} Bernard McGinn, “Revelation,¹” in *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, ed. Robert Alter and Frank Kermode (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 523-541, p. 526.

