

Stanford Slavic Studies

Volume 4:2

LITERATURE, CULTURE, AND SOCIETY IN THE MODERN AGE

In Honor of Joseph Frank

Part II

Stanford, 1992

**The Island and the Ocean:
Andrei Bitov and his "Allusions" to Dostoevsky.
The Significance of Dostoevsky for Bitov's Writings**

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"Dostoevsky[']s . . . influence, in general, . . . [is] impossible to deny."
(" . . . vliianie [Dostoevskogo] voobshche nevozmozhno otritsat'.")

—Andrei Bitov, "Commentary," in
*Pushkin House*¹

"I'm guilty of this 'allusion,' as it is now fashionably called, and am powerless against it." ("Ya vinovat v etoi, kak teper' modno govorit', 'alliuzii' i bessilen protiv nec.")

—Andrei Bitov, *Pushkin House*²

". . . everything is like an ocean, everything flows and comes into contact with everything else . . ."
(" . . . vse kak okean, vse techet i soprikasaetsia . . .")

—Fedor Dostoevsky, *Brothers Karamazov*³

To read Andrei Bitov is to take a walk through world culture. The ideas of medieval Arabic philosopher Avicenna are important to Bitov, as are the theories of twentieth-century Austrian ethnologist Konrad Lorenz, the film techniques of Italian film director Federico Fellini, the images in early twentieth-century Japanese poetry, the novels of Dickens, Melville, and Proust, and the architectural monuments of ancient Armenia. To explore the writings of Andrei Bitov is also to take a walk through the history of Russian and Soviet literature. Nineteenth and twentieth-century masters alike

make their presence felt in Bitov's prose. Pushkin, Gogol, Lermontov, Turgenev, Tolstoy, Chekhov, Blok, Mandelstam, Kharms, Pasternak, Zoshchenko, Nabokov, and Solzhenitsyn are all relevant to the exploration of Bitov's intellectual world. In fact, Bitov's narrator in the acclaimed novel, *Pushkin House*, refers to this novel as a "novel-museum" ("roman-muzei").⁴ Bitov explains that the table of contents of *Pushkin House* is constructed out of the titles of Russian literary works that appear on the reading syllabus in Soviet schools.

In my essay, written for Joseph Frank's *Festschrift*, it is particularly appropriate that I concentrate on the role that *Dostoevsky's* works play in Bitov's writings, and it is to the task at hand that I turn.

An investigation of Dostoevsky-Bitov links reveals two major issues that must be addressed. The first is the presence, in the contemporary Soviet writer's prose, of allusions, direct and indirect, to Dostoevsky's works. The second is the broader way in which Dostoevsky's concerns are developed by Bitov.

Bitov became a professional writer in the early 1960s. A Leningrad writer conscious of the Petersburg literary tradition, he would hearken back to that tradition, which, of course, contained Dostoevsky as an important part. During the 1960s, Bitov was one of a number of young Leningrad writers, including poets Aleksandr Kushner, Evgenii Rein, and Joseph Brodsky, who were acutely aware of the importance of preserving the distinguished Petersburg tradition. Dostoevsky, of course, was a major contributor to that tradition. From the early stories to the present writings, Bitov's works display a literary scholar's treasure trove of allusions to the nineteenth-century writer's novels.⁵ There are few Dostoevsky works that do not figure, in some way, in Bitov's stories, novels, philosophical essays, and travelogues. One section of *Pushkin House* Bitov calls "Poor Horseman" ("Bednyi vsadnik"), and the epilogue to that section he names "Bronze People" ("Mednye liudi"). He thereby fuses the titles of Dostoevsky's first novel, *Poor People* (*Bednye liudi*) and that of Pushkin's famous narrative poem, "The Bronze Horseman" ("Mednyi vsadnik"), which itself has been connected to Dostoevsky's writings by literary scholars.⁶ An epigraph to that section of the novel is taken from *Poor Folk*. Bitov had

considered *The Double* as an alternative title for his novel *The Role*. The main character of that novel is called Alexei (Alesha) Monakhov, a not-so-veiled allusion to Alesha, the Karamazov monk.

The main character of "The Idler" ("Bezdel'nik") and "Penelope" ("Penelopa") is, like Dostoevsky's *Petersburg* underground man, a young man from *Leningrad* who wanders aimlessly through the city, trapped in his own "heightened consciousness" and self-consciousness. Like the underground man, Bitov's Lobyshev, in "Penelope, Nevsky Prospect," first "adopts" a needy young woman, making futile promises of help, and then cruelly casting her aside. Like the underground man, the idler, in the story, "The Idler," cannot transcend the psychological barriers that prevent him from establishing contact with other people.

Bitov's "Notes from around the Corner" ("Zapiski iz-za ugla")⁷ share features, including a similar title,⁸ with Dostoevsky's *Notes from the Underground* ("Zapiski iz podpol'ia"). Each is composed of fragments.⁹ Each contains the image of ants. Each stars a first-person narrator whose self-conscious and hyperconscious musings focus on, among other topics, deception and self-deception; lying to others and lying to oneself. Dostoevsky's "Notes" focus on the state of a human being who is battling against anti-individualist theories and ideas of mid-nineteenth-century Russian radical thinkers. Bitov's "Notes" focus on the state of being a writer who battles the "literature of the idea" ("literatura mysli") in the USSR of the 1960s, a writer who prefers "feelings and sensations" ("chuvstvistvishki da oshchushchen'itsa").¹⁰ The result Dostoevsky sees in Chernyshevsky-like thought is abstract-idea-carrying automatons who care little about the individual feelings of love and compassion. The result that Bitov sees in literature and society "of the idea" is a society whose consciousness dies.

Dostoevsky uses the image of the prostitute, Liza, in order to convey some of the major points he makes about the existence of compassion and love in life. Bitov, on one level, is speaking about the realities of writing in the Soviet Union during the early 1960s. He speaks about the prostitution of writers. The narrator sees through the veils of hypocrisy. He sees his own behavior and places it under a stark examining light. The end of Bitov's "Notes," with

its discussion of salvation through suffering, is reminiscent of the major message of Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*.

A scene in Bitov's "Idler" contains parallels to *Crime and Punishment* that literary scholars have found unmistakable. A horse is beaten, and the major protagonist, like Raskolnikov at other points in *Crime and Punishment*, decides whether or not he should help a human being in distress. When asked about the similarity, Bitov responded that he had not had that scene in mind as he wrote his story. "It's funny, everyone asks about that horse," he declared.¹¹ But the similarities between the horse scenes, even in vocabulary, are striking.¹²

In Bitov's "The Gamble" ("Azart"), the main protagonist/narrator, a journalist, contemplates writing a literary work whose major protagonist he would call Karamyshev, a name that bears some resemblance to a cross between Karamazov and Myshkin. More importantly, Bitov has chosen here a topic, gambling, that wends its way through Russian literature. From Germann, the gambler in Pushkin's "Queen of Spades," to Pechorin in "The Fatalist" ("Fatalist") section of Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time*, to Dostoevsky's Alexei Ivanovich in "The Gambler" ("Igrok") and beyond, Russian nineteenth-century writers pitted their protagonists' fate, in gambling escapades, against the Fates. Bitov fits squarely in the tradition of Russian literary gambling gambols. Interestingly, for our purposes, he builds upon that tradition, too. Instead of battling the Fates, as did Pechorin; instead of tapping, like Germann, into Romantic mysteries like magnetism and alchemical secrets conjured up by Pushkin's countess; instead of exploring the psychological symptoms of the compulsive gambling addiction to gambling, as did Dostoevsky's Alexei Ivanovich, Bitov's narrator introduces us to a different aspect of the gambling world. What the contemporary Soviet author does, therefore, is to fasten upon Dostoevsky's pattern of intense psychological dissection and, at the same time, to present the psychological investigation from a different perspective than does Dostoevsky. Bitov's narrator alerts the reader to the psychological game of power that is transpiring between the gambler (the narrator) and the croupier in the game of Italian lottery in which he is engaged. The issues the narrator raises are familiar to

the readers of Dostoevsky's novels. Bitov's narrator notes, for instance, the attraction he has to the croupier because the croupier is an authority figure. The narrator notices that he is losing — not the *game* — but that he, one person, is losing to another more powerful *person* (the croupier), and that the power of the authority figure is what attracts him. The narrator notes that this pattern replicates that in real life, when people act in ways that go against their own self-interest. Earlier in "the Gamble," Bitov has noted that his major protagonist acted against his own self-interest, as he accepted a writing assignment in Uzbekistan instead of staying in Leningrad with his lover, which is what he had wanted to do.¹³

We, the readers, note that the pattern described by Bitov replicates a pattern that is present in Dostoevsky works. Nastasya Filippovna throws herself into the arms of Rogozhin even though she is aware, perhaps unconsciously, that choosing to be with Rogozhin is a self-destructive act, that allying herself with Myshkin would be more in her own self-interest. *Notes from Underground* plots the story of the underground man, who is consistently acting against his own self-interest. He forces himself on a group of people, Zverkov and friends, whose company he does not even enjoy. Having first encouraged Liza to trust him, he destroys the possibility of a loving relationship as he plays his sadistic games with her when she comes to pay him a visit in his squalid living quarters.

Bitov's emphasis in "The Gamble" had been upon the psychological and philosophical implications of living according to one's own inner voice as opposed to betraying that inner voice that tells one what is in one's own self-interest. Dostoevsky's focus, in *The Idiot*, is on the link between the psychological and the religious. While he details modes of human behavior, he fits his character depictions into a tale that depicts people's behavior in the face of a Christ-like figure being placed in their midst. In *Notes from Underground*, Dostoevsky had forged his descriptions of human behavior with his discussion of Russian political movements of the 1860s. The underground man acts in a destructive and self-destructive manner because he has been poisoned by the disease of Western European ideas.¹⁴

Bitov comes closer to that linkage of historical context and

psychology that is one of the central features of Dostoevsky's novels when he writes his major novel, *Pushkin House* (*Pushkinskii dom*), the novel that has recently been awarded prestigious literary prizes in France and in West Germany. The novel is a brilliant book that addresses historical issues — what is the legacy that Stalin has left to present-day Soviet society of the 1960s; psychological issues — what causes a person to place himself under the psychological authority of another person, despite the knowledge that that bond is a destructive one for him; contemporary cultural issues — what is the nature of Russian-Soviet culture that has suffered the crippling blows of Stalinism; philosophical problems — what is the nature of the present; universal issues of human values — what causes a person to veer away from living a life of moral courage.

Pushkin House boasts a direct genetic link with Dostoevsky's *The Devils*. Bitov has stated that he wanted to finish writing his novel in 1971 in honor of the hundredth anniversary of the "birthday of the devils" ("so dnia rozhdeniia besov"). He claims that he first intended to dedicate *Pushkin House* to the hundredth anniversary of the appearance of *The Devils*, but then changed his mind.¹⁵ He changed his mind because he believed that had he dedicated the book to the hundredth anniversary of Dostoevsky's novel, he would have thereby been acknowledging the strength of the "devils." The "devils," he writes, ". . . exist only in other people's consciousness; otherwise they don't exist. If one does not consider that they exist, this exposes them to self-annihilation." ("["Besy" — E.C.] est' tol'ko v soznanii drugikh, inache ikh net. Ni schitat', chto oni est', — eto podvergnut' ikh samoannigiliatsii.")¹⁶

Besides alluding to Dostoevsky's *The Devils* in the commentary to *Pushkin House*, Bitov points his readers to that Dostoevsky work in other ways. He uses the word "besy" ("devils") in a chapter title, "Devils Invisible to the Eye" ("Nevidimye glazom besy").¹⁷ To that same chapter he affixes three epigraphs from literary works that have as their subject matter the theme of "devils." Dostoevsky has affixed to his *Devils* an epigraph taken from Pushkin's 1830 poem "The Devils" ("Besy"). Bitov quotes that Dostoevsky novel in one of his own epigraphs, and he also quotes from the Pushkin poem, "The Devils;" he quotes two lines from Pushkin's poem that

come directly before the four lines quoted by Dostoevsky. Dostoevsky's quotation from Pushkin describes a devil that "circles" ("kruzhit"). The passage Bitov chooses to quote from Pushkin's "The Devils" describes devils circling as though they were November leaves: "Diverse devils began to go round. /As if they were November leaves . . ." ("Zakruzhilis' besy razny, /Budto list'ia v noia-bre . . .").¹⁸

The image of whirling devils, like November leaves, can be linked, in *Pushkin House*, to two of the novels' protagonists, Leva and Mitishatiev, who are like whirling devils at the beginning of the novel, as they "whirl" and fight in Leningrad's Pushkin House, during the November days of the anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution. Through this intertwining of images of devils, a reader of Bitov might conclude that Bitov implicitly suggests that the whirling devils that produced Stalin and all that followed had issued out of the November revolution.

Another epigraph that Bitov affixes to his "Devils Invisible to the Eye" section is excerpted from Fedor Sologub's *Petty Demon* ("Melkii bes"), a novel that reduces the grandeur of Dostoevsky's devils to poshified parodies.¹⁹ Ronald Meyer, Sasha Sokolov, and Iu. Karabchievskii have characterized Bitov's Mitishatiev as a "devil" and have thus pointed the reader in the direction of Dostoevsky's *Devils*.¹²

In his novel, one of Bitov's central concerns is the way in which his main character, Lev Nikolaevich (in Leva's first name and patronymic, the reader sniffs a decidedly Tolstoian, rather than Dostoevskian flavor)²¹ Odoevtsev falls under the psychological sway of his personal and metaphysical rival, Mitishatiev. According to Bitov, the personal psychological damage that Leva does to himself by always choosing to fall under the sway of the wrong "authority" figures who exert a negative influence on him, who bring out the worst in him, who leave deep psychological scars on him — this personal fate is the result of the historical events that had caused present-day Soviet society to be as it is. Stalin's unleashing of evil "devils" in Soviet society has resulted in generation after generation of devils running freely and causing evil throughout the land.

The imprint of Dostoevsky's nineteenth-century Russian "Devils"

is firmly etched upon Bitov's account of mid-twentieth-century Leningrad devils. For Bitov, in *Pushkin House*, as for Dostoevsky, in *The Devils*, one of the central problems is the rotten legacy that one generation has passed on to another. For Bitov, as for Dostoevsky, that legacy has corrupted life in many, many spheres. As Joseph Frank has persuasively written in his essay, "The Masks of Stavrogin," Dostoevsky, in *The Devils*, is primarily interested in addressing the issue of the consequences of Western European influence upon Russia. For Dostoevsky, the generation of the 1830s (represented by Stavrogin), has spawned that of the Westernized liberal "fathers" of the 1840s (represented by Stepan Trofimovich Verkhovensky), which in turn has spawned the revolutionary, nihilist "sons," the Petr Verkhovenskys of the 1860s and early 1870s.²² For Dostoevsky, the chief "devil" is Western Europe, with its abstract, general laws that ignore the individual. For Dostoevsky, the chief culprit "devil" is Western European theory with its denial of Russian religiosity, its denial of Russian Orthodoxy. A Petr Verkhovensky with his terrorist circle can be successful only in a society that has lost contact with its authentic Russian roots, that has lost contact with the soil.

Everything issuing from Stavrogin and Stepan Trofimovich is tainted with falsity. Frank emphasizes the importance, for Dostoevsky, of imposters and "masks" in characterizing the diseased representatives of a Westernized Russian culture. He describes Stavrogin's influence upon other characters in the following way: ". . . everything that stems from him is . . . marked with the seal of supreme falsity and deception and leads to Death. It is a counterfeit and fraudulent facsimile of the Truth . . ." ²³

Bitov assimilates the theme for the tale of *his* devils. For Dostoevsky in *The Devils*, according to Frank, Byronism and the acquisition, by Russia, of Western culture, produced imposters rather than healthy Russian organisms. For Bitov, in *Pushkin House*, the infliction of "Stalinist culture" on Soviet society has also led to falsity — to the falsity of human relationships, to the falsity of culture, where, for example, something false is always substituted for something authentic.

Pushkin House, too, shows the way in which a terrorist 'devil,'

Stalin from the 1930s, a hundred years later, has inflicted evil upon Soviet society and the way in which that evil continues, through the 1960s, to infect generation after generation. Under Stalin, Modest Platonovich, Leva's grandfather, was arrested and sent to a concentration camp. Modest Platonovich's son, i.e., Leva's father, had lied to Leva about his grandfather, saying that he was dead when he was, in fact, eeking out his sentence in a concentration camp. Leva's father has built his career by discrediting his father's ideas. The lies that Leva's father perpetrates upon his son had been caused by the lies Stalin fed to Soviet society. Leva then reproduces the pattern of lies, by lying to Albina, a woman who loves him, but whose love is unrequited. Faina, the woman Leva loves, but whose love is unrequited, lies to Leva. Lies beget lies. Stalin infected his "children," who then "infected" their children. By the time Leva's generation has been infected, the contagious bedevilment of society is all but out of control.

Mitishatiev, Leva's schoolmate, causes psychic, physical, and metaphysical havoc in Leva's life. He represents rebellion, on the part of the nonaristocratic, jealous forces, against the likes of Leva, who is an aristocrat of an old distinguished lineage. Mitishatiev's feelings of jealousy of Leva are reminiscent of the upstart revolutionary Petr Verkhovensky's statements about the aristocrat, Stavrogin, his "sun," his "prince." Verkhovensky calls Stavrogin "prince;" Mitishatiev calls Leva "prince." Petr Verkhovensky looks up to Stavrogin; Mitishatiev, in a sick, distorted, jealous way, admires Leva.

One of the most important moments in Bitov's book is the revelation that Leva has, after having spent so much of his life allowing Mitishatiev to exert power over him: Leva realizes that Mitishatiev can exert power over him only if he, Leva, allows him to. If he refuses to play according to Mitishatiev's rules, Mitishatiev will no longer be able to bully and hurt him.²⁴

Dostoevsky describes the devastation and destruction that his Nechaev-like terrorists perpetrate upon the town's inhabitants, upon Russian society, and upon its values. The end of *The Devils* spells hope and salvation, according to Frank's interpretation of *The Devils*, as Stepan Trofimovich returns to his Russian religious roots,

in the form of the Bible seller and her Biblical lessons. Bitov describes the devastation and destruction that the Stalin-like terrorists (Stalin and his "successor," Mitishatiev) wreak upon people's lives, in Soviet society, and in culture — for instance, in the literary institute, Pushkin House, where Leva and Mitishatiev had been graduate students. The end of *Pushkin House* spells hope and salvation, as the reader reads — in the novel's final appendix, in a section that allegedly comes from Leva's grandfather's composition entitled "God Is" ("Bog est") — the message of the importance of living a life of personal integrity. For Dostoevsky, in *The Devils*, salvation lay in a return to pre-Westernization Russian religious values. For Bitov, in *Pushkin House*, salvation lay in living a life of personal ethics, morality, integrity, and authenticity. Dostoevsky meshes the historical (his description of real historical events — the murder of Ivanov; his description of Petr Verkhovensky's revolutionary cell whose political goals match those of Sergei Nechaev's "Catechism of a Revolutionary") with the religious: Russian society will be cured of its devils if it adopts Russian religious values. Bitov meshes the historical (his description of real events — the incident he describes in the literary institute, Pushkin House, at the beginning of his novel, *Pushkin House*; his description of the distortions that live in Soviet society because of Stalin's policies) with the ethical: Soviet society can be cured of its devils if each individual decides to live a life of personal integrity.

While one fruitful approach to the investigation of the Bitov/Dostoevsky connection is to listen for and to make sense of the Dostoevskian resonances in Bitov's works, other facets of the topic warrant our attention as well. How, for instance, does Bitov, the essayist, respond to Dostoevsky's writings, and what is the significance of those analytic remarks? An answer to the question emerges if we consider Bitov's "A New Robinson (On the Occasion of the One Hundred Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Publication of *Notes from the House of the Dead*)" ("Novyi Robinson [k 125-letiiu vykhoda v svet 'Zapisok iz Mertvogo doma']").²⁵

In that essay, Bitov singles out Dostoevsky's 1862 contribution to labor camp literature by explaining that the nineteenth-century author was the first Russian to write a book about the camps. Bitov

calls *Notes from the House of the Dead* a "book-door" ("kniga-dver"). "Russian society," he continues, "discovered for the first time, WHAT was behind the door." ("Russkoe obshchestvo v pervye uznalo, CHTO za dver'iu.")²⁶ While acknowledging the comparisons that have been drawn between Dostoevsky's 1862 book and Dante's depiction of the circles of hell in *The Divine Comedy*, Bitov prefers to draw a parallel between *Notes from the House of the Dead* and the English eighteenth-century writer Daniel Defoe's novel, *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, of York, Mariner*. Bitov sees a similarity between Defoe's tale of a human being isolated on an island ("ostrov") and Dostoevsky's tale of a human being isolated in a prison/fortress ("ostrog"). "'Ostrog,'" says Bitov, "is both a fortress and a prison. The 'ostrog' into which the hero of *House of the Dead* falls is conceived of as an unattainable islet in an ocean of freedom." ("Ostrog, v kotoryi popadaet geroi 'Mertvogo doma,' myslitsia nedosiagaemym ostrovkom v okeane svobody.")²⁷

The fact that Bitov would be interested in literature about a Siberian prison camp makes sense since two of the major protagonists of *Pushkin House* spent several decades in Stalin's concentration camps. Uncle Dickens, Leva's surrogate grandfather, and Modest Platonovich Odoevtsev, his real grandfather, had returned to Leningrad as a result of Khrushchev's deStalinization policies. The fact that Bitov would spotlight islands, literal or figurative, is of no surprise to the careful reader of the Soviet author's works.

"Aptekarskii island" ("Aptekarskii ostrov") is the name of a story and of a collection of stories that Bitov wrote in the 1960s. It is also a real geographical location, the section of Leningrad where Bitov grew up. "Island" ("ostrov") is the title that Bitov gives to a group of stories he republished in a 1980 collection of his works.²⁸ Kurt Shaw, author of a doctoral dissertation on Bitov's early works, describes ". . . the tendency of Bitov's early heroes to psychologically 'separate' themselves from their immediate reality."²⁹ Monakhov, the last name of Bitov's major protagonist in his novel, *The Role*, besides having Dostoevskian resonances to the monk, Alesha Karamazov, also alludes to an isolated human being.³⁰

The theme of the isolated human being has been of interest to

Bitov from the outset of his writing career. His first "heroes" were the major protagonists of travelogues — i.e., were people who were isolated from their surroundings by virtue of the fact that they came from other geographical areas. The central character of "One Country" ("Oдна страна") was a Leningrad resident spending time in Uzbekistan. The hero of "Such a Long Childhood" ("Takoe dolgoe detstvo") also hailed from Leningrad and also found himself far away from his familiar Russian surroundings. Many of Bitov's works star an outsider figure, a characteristic which, of course, places Bitov within that Russian literary tradition (including Dostoevsky) that spawned specimen after specimen of superfluous man. The idler, for instance, muses, ". . . it seems to me that in a hard, transparent stone, narrow canals are etched for each person. Each person has . . . a lonely path, and one can only look with sadness and pity, as another alone-person passes by behind the transparent wall and also looks at you with sadness and pity, and we don't even stop, neither you nor she, we don't knock at the wall . . . — we walk past . . . One alone-person plus one alone-person equals two alone-people." (" . . . mne kazhetsia: v zhestkom prozrachnom kamne prorubleny uzkie kanaly dlia kazhdogo. U kazhdogo . . . odinokii put', i tol'ko mozhno vzglianut' s grust'iu i sozhaleniem, kak za prozrachnoi stenкой prokhodit drugoi odin-chelovek i tozhe smotrit na tebia s grust'iu i sozhaleniem, i dazhe ne ostanavlivaemsia, ni ty, ni ona, ne stuchim v stenkú . . . — prokhodim mimo . . . Odin-chelovek plus odin-chelovek — ravno dva odin-cheloveka.")³¹

In addition to revealing important Bitov priorities in writing fiction, his essay on Defoe and Dostoevsky demonstrates some of the broader philosophical dimensions of Bitov's works. An island can be viewed as a solitary, isolated entity, isolated from a larger land mass, isolated in an ocean — think of Bitov's characterization of the "island" in *Notes from the House of the Dead*, in an ocean of freedom. So, too, can the island be considered as a separate, but flourishing, independent, individual, self-sufficient entity, at once alone and interdependent with other of life's entities. Bitov's writings include examples of both of these approaches to the "island" phenomenon.

Boundaries, for Bitov, separate one entity from another. Human beings do live, as Bitov describes, as isolated "alone-persons." Yet Bitov also shows us other dimensions of separateness. Psychological investigations demonstrate that it is healthy, for a person to thrive, to have a strong ego boundary. In the healthy development of personality, the child separates from his/her mother and gains a growing sense of his/her independent existence. If a child does not develop that sense of self, of integrity, there is psychological danger that the personality will blur the boundaries between him/herself and other people. He/she will then be in danger of falling under other people's sway. (Woody Allen's film, "Zelig," documents an extreme, exaggerated case of such a personality.) When one does not have that sense of self, of integrity, there are decidedly unhealthy consequences for the personality. One example is Leva Odoevtsev's inability to detach himself from the noxious, destructive influence of Mitishatiev and Faina.

Bitov expands upon this idea when he applies it to the place of the human being in nature as a whole. His philosophical essay, "Birds" ("Ptitsy"),³² for example, cites the importance of the ability of one individual biological species to respect the boundaries of another. Each entity is different and separate from another, and this is a healthy situation. In his account of the narrator's visit to the Lithuanian coast, to a biological station that studies the migration pattern of birds, it is wrong, writes Bitov, for a human being to impose his/her perspective and morality upon other species, for each species has different perspectives and moral laws. It is important to the healthy ecological balance in nature for each species to respect, at once, its individuality and its interdependency with the other independent, separate entities in/of nature.

These philosophical concerns of Bitov's, the interrelationship of the separate, individual part to the whole, reflect the methodological choices that Bitov makes, whether consciously or unconsciously. When Bitov talks about Dostoevsky, in "A New Robinson," he reveals, I believe, ways in which he creates his own works. Of Dostoevsky's *Notes from the House of the Dead*, he writes, "The book is in a book which is in a book. They are within one another, like spheres. They are interactive and independent." ("Kniga v knige i

eshche v knige. Oni vnutri drug druga, kak sfery. Oni vzaimny i samostoiatel'ny.")³³

This principle can be applied to Bitov's own works, for he creates one story, which stands alone, as a separate, independent work and which later becomes a part of a new, larger work/entity that Bitov creates as he places the individual works together in different combinations. The results are like the patterns that one sees when one looks through a kaleidoscope: different individual pieces of colored glass produce different larger patterns as the order in which they stand next to one another changes. It is the interconnectedness of Bitov's "ecology" that I document in my book on Bitov.

It is this sense of the interconnectedness of life that Bitov inherits, in part, from Dostoevsky. (Tolstoy emphasizes the interconnectedness of life in the philosophical, historical discussions and in the action of *War and Peace*. Levin's conclusion in *Anna Karenina*, that the miracle of life includes the acknowledgement of its complex interdependencies, fits into the discussion here, too. Other Russian thinkers would be relevant to the broader treatment of the topic that would extend beyond the parameters established for this essay, namely, Bitov's links to Dostoevsky.) Father Zosima teaches that everything in life is connected to everything else, that everything touches everything. Father Zosima's teachings form the religious foundation upon which the novel *The Brothers Karamazov* rests. For Dostoevsky, the teachings form the core of his response to the Westernizers, themselves isolated and isolating, dying "seeds" that bear no fruit. In *The Brothers Karamazov*, the message is borne out by the connections and interconnections of character with character, of action with action, of everything's touching everything else. Bitov extends Dostoevsky's method of connecting everything to everything by going beyond the boundaries of one novel or work of his, to connect his individual works with other individual works. Father Zosima states, ". . . everything is like an ocean, everything flows and comes into contact with everything else . . ." (" . . . vse kak okean, vse techet i soprikasaetsia . . .").³⁴ And it is precisely in this way that the works and ideas of the twentieth-century Soviet writer Andrei Bitov "touch" and "come into contact with" the works and ideas of the nineteenth-century Russian writer Fedor Dostoevsky.

NOTES

1. Andrei Bitov, "Kommentarii," in *Pushkinskii dom* (Moscow, 1989), p. 396.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 343.
3. F.M. Dostoevskii, "Brat'ia Karamazovy," in F.M. Dostoevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridsati tomakh* (Leningrad, 1976), XIV, p. 290.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
5. Bitov explains, in his commentary to *Pushkin House*, that Dostoevsky's influence is not narrowly confined to a literary one, for the life that he described in his novels continues to exist in present-day Soviet society. "Precisely because we have forgotten him and emerged from under his influence, it is easy to fall into the Dostoevskian mode — in our lives, our personal experience. Here in Russia people still think, still feel, as they did in Dostoevsky's works, perhaps to an even greater extent than they did in his own time." ("V Dostoevskogo legko 'popast', imenno zabыв o nem i vyidia iz-pod ego vliianiia, popast' po zhizni, po lichnomu opytu. U nas v Rossii vse eshche tak dumaiut, tak chuvstvuiut, kak u Dostoevskogo, mozhnet dazhe, v bol'shei stepeni, chem v ego vremia.") Andrei Bitov, *Pushkin House*, trans. Susan Brownsberger (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Ardis Publishers, 1990), p. 411; Andrei Bitov, *Pushkinskii dom*, p. 396.
6. See, for example, A.L. Bem, "'Pikovaia dama' v tvorchestve Dostoevskogo," in A.L. Bem, ed., *O Dostoevskom. Sbornik statei* (Prague, 1936), vol.III, pp. 37-81.
7. Andrei Bitov, "Notes from the Corner," in Andrei Bitov, *Life in Windy Weather. Short Stories*, ed. Priscilla Meyer (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Ardis Publishers, 1986), pp. 145-185; Andrei Bitov, "Zapiski iz-za ugla," *Novyi mir*, No.2, 1990, pp. 142-165. The Ardis publication of "Notes from around the Corner" is the first publication, in any language, of "Zapiski iz-za ugla." The *Novyi mir* publication of the work is the first Russian-language publication of Bitov's "Zapiski iz-za ugla."
8. There is also a resonance, for Dostoevsky and for Bitov, to "Notes of a Madman" ("Zapiski sumasshedshego"), one of Nikolai Gogol's Petersburg stories.
9. The "diary entry" structure of Bitov's "Notes" is reminiscent of the similar "diary entry" structure of Gogol's "Notes of a Madman."
10. Andrei Bitov, "Notes," Ardis, p. 169; Andrei Bitov, "Zapiski," p. 156.
11. Priscilla Meyer, "Introduction," in Andrei Bitov, *Life in Windy*

Weather. Short Stories, ed. Priscilla Meyer (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Ardis Publishers, 1986), p. 7.

12. For more on this, see my comprehensive study of Bitov's writings, *The Ecology of Inspiration: The Shapes of Andrei Bitov's Prose*, forthcoming, in series, *Studies of the Harriman Institute* (Columbia University).

13. I speak about this in another context (its philosophical aspects) in my section on "The Gamble" in *The Ecology of Inspiration*.

14. For the best article on this aspect of *Notes from Underground*, the reader is referred to Joseph Frank's brilliant analysis in Joseph Frank, "Nihilism and Notes from Underground," *The Sewanee Review*, vol.69, 1961, pp. 1-33.

15. Andrei Bitov, "Kommentarii," in Andrei Bitov, *Pushkinskii dom* (Moscow, 1989), pp. 391-392.

16. *Ibid.* p. 392.

17. Pushkin's poem, "Besy," contains a form of the word "invisible being" ("nevidimkoi"). A.S. Pushkin, "Besy," in A.S. Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Leningrad, 1948), vol.3, p. 226.

18. A.S. Pushkin, "Besy," as quoted in Bitov, *Pushkinskii dom*, p. 265.

19. Ronald Meyer, in his doctoral dissertation on Bitov's *Pushkin House*, points out the way in which Bitov, in his epigraphs (about devils in Russian literature from 1828 to 1902) to the chapter "Duel," in Part Three of *Pushkin House*, places the quotations in a deliberate order that demonstrates the evolution toward ever-increasing ridiculous pettiness. Ronald Meyer, "Andrei Bitov's *Puškinskij Dom*," Dissertation, Indiana University, 1986, pp. 153-154.

20. Ronald Meyer, *op. cit.*, pp. 133, 166. Sasha Sokolov, "Untitled," Ardis archive, as quoted in Ronald Meyer, *op. cit.*, p. 230. Iu. Karabchievskii, "Tochka boli. O romane Andreiia Bitova, 'Pushkinskii dom,'" *Grani*, vol.106, 1977, p. 171.

21. "This might serve as the subject of a new story..." ("Eto moglo by sostavit' temu novogo rasskaza..."), in the words of Dostoevsky's narrator in *Crime and Punishment*. F.M. Dostoevskii, *Prestuplenie i nakazanie*, in F.M. Dostoevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol.6 (Leningrad, 1973), p. 422.

22. Joseph Frank, "The Masks of Stavrogin," *The Sewanee Review*, vol. 77, 1969, pp. 660-691.

23. Joseph Frank, "The Masks of Stavrogin," p. 665.

24. I speak in greater detail about these and related issues in my chapter, "*Pushkin House: The Riddles of Life and Literature*," in *The Ecology of Inspiration*.

25. Andrei Bitov, "Novyi Robinzon (k 125-letiiu vykhoda v svet 'Zapi-

sok iz Mertvogo doma')," *Znamia*, No.12, 1987, pp. 221-227.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 221.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 224.

28. Andrei Bitov, *Voskresnyi den'. Rasskazy, povesti, puteshestviia* (Moscow, 1980).

29. Kurt Shaw, "Chasing the Red Balloon: Psychological Separation in the Early Fiction of Andrej Bitov, 1958-1962," Dissertation, University of Kansas, 1988, p. 1.

30. The fact that Alesha Monakhov can be associated with, can refer simultaneously to a most solitary figure and to the opposite, Dostoevsky's Alesha Karamazov, who is the very essence of communion and lack of isolation, is the kind of paradox that characterizes Bitov's work and that of Dostoevsky, one of his spiritual fathers.

31. Andrei Bitov, "Bezdel'nik," in Andrei Bitov, *Aptekarskii ostrov* (Leningrad, 1968), p. 61.

32. Andrei Bitov, "Ptitsy, ili Novye svedeniia o cheloveke," in Andrei Bitov, *Dni cheloveka. Povesti* (Moscow, 1976), pp. 283-346.

33. Bitov, "Novyi Robinzon," p. 223.

34. F.M. Dostoevskii, *Brat'ia Karamazovy*, Books I-X, in F.M. Dostoevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Leningrad, 1976), XIV, p. 290.