

Metamodern urban experience in the anthology of topophilic prose *V Pitere zhit'*

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While the multivalent term “postmodernism” is no longer sufficient for an adequate description of contemporary aesthetic and ideological tendencies, the most established of the orismological efforts to characterize contemporaneity (e.g., hypermodernism, post-postmodernism, altermodernism) is the intentionally polysemous term *metamodernism*, as conceptualized by Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker (see 2010, 2017; Spivakovskii 2018). The radically deconstructive postmodern skepticism that denies authentic Being-valorizing meanings is outdated, as the contemporary subject seeks to valorize its subjective lived experience: the postmodern ahistorical presentism is replaced with a search for a *new historicity* which, as Ricœur’s hermeneutic phenomenology allows to express, represents a kind of modality of linguistic and temporal experience within which man is “present to himself as a being in history” ([2000] 2004, 60–61). The postmodern *depthlessness* as intentional depth-avoiding superficiality (see Jameson [1984] 1991, 8) is substituted with a search for new *depth* as the all-subverting postmodern cynical pastiche becomes replaced by a *new sincerity*.¹ Whereas *depthlessness* made the “emotional response to the world disappear [...]” (Stephanson 1988, 4), the new *affect* mediates to subject an emotional attachment to a perceived object.

However, these constructive inclinations are “hindered” by the parallel affirmation of the postmodern experience as an awareness of the constructed nature of created meanings. Thus, metamodernism, whose “meta” alludes to Plato’s *metaxis* (in-betweenness), primarily marks this current oscillation between deconstructive postmodernism as givenness and constructive modernism (in a Blochian sense) as *utopian longing* (Vermeulen and Akker 2017, 30–35); the tension between “a modern desire for *sens* and a postmodern doubt about the sense of it all” (Vermeulen and Akker 2010, 6).

This article demonstrates this oscillation in the anthology of topophilic prose *V Pitere zhit': ot Dvortsovoi do Sadovoi, ot Gangutskoi do Shpalernoï. Lichnye istorii* (To live in Petersburg: From Dvortsovaia to Sadovaia, from Gangutskaiia to Shpalernaia. Personal stories, 2017). Its commercial success was partly due to the representative inclusion of influential contemporary Russian authors (e.g. Evgenii/Eugene Vodolazkin, Tatiana Tolstaya, Dmitrii Bykov, Elena Chizhova, Elena Kolina, Andrei Astvatsat-

urov, Tatiana Moskvina, Pavel Krusanov, Valerii Popov, and Sergei Nosov). However, it was also the result of its *utmost referentiality* (Zajac 2017, 173) to St. Petersburg as an *existext* (lifeword; Plesník 2018, 40–41), which fulfills the contemporary needs of a metamodern reader. Despite the stylistic plurality of diverse authorial voices, the anthology goes concentrically beyond its textuality and constructs a homogeneous metamodern mode of “existentially valuable” perception/experience of its urban *referential reality* (36–37). Confronting the postmodern vertigo and detachment, the subject is through the topophilic affect concentrically grounded in their contemporary urban space as a signifier of a “valuable” historical temporality that mediates a life-valorizing dialogical experience of subjectivity.

EMANCIPATION OF THE AFFECTING SUBJECT

Andrei Astvatsaturov voices the outdatedness of postmodern thought whilst remembering the 1990s. When referring to an existing philosopher, he repeatedly emphasizes his ideological transfer from the then-current “postmodernism” to the contemporary “neo-Hegelianism” as a non-deconstructive paradigm (“repeated the philosopher-postmodernist”, “And at the same time, a Neo-Hegelian philosopher. He was at that time still a ‘postmodern philosopher’”; Sokolovskaia and Shubina 2017, 81, 77).² Postmodernism is thus indicated as an obsolete matter of the 1990s, as an element of the period “atmosphere” complementary to its other specific constituents such as criminality or corruption.

The thematization of its outdatedness is particularly topical in an anthology that is autobiographical and autofictional (see Gibbons 2017, 186). While the metamodern paradigm responds to postmodern radical anti-anthropomorphism (Jameson 1991, 31) – to the “death of the subject” and complementary neglect of affect and identity ([1988] 1992, 167) – with a contradictory radical turn to the subject (Serbinskaia 2017, 23–29), it is the current increase in production and popularity of autofiction and life writing that represents a characteristic manifestation of this counterreaction (Gibbons 2017). With the “death of the author” obsolete, he or she is centralized and “alive”. As the subtitle “Personal Stories” indicates, each prose is narrated by an autobiographical narrator recollecting a (pseudo)autobiographical moment, unified by a dominant subjective “I”: “I’ve shown this monument to many people” (2017, 46); “I saw once” (30); “I thought I would never laugh again” (92); “I am the happy exception” (103); “I went to the 182nd school” (362).³

As Alison Gibbons observes on sincerity in contemporary (Anglophone) autofiction, what is pivotal is not the “factuality” of the events described, but their correlation with the author’s presented non-ambivalent outlook and their analogous presentation without a radical (postmodern) irony (2017, 183). This paradoxical combination of unreliable authenticity and self-articulating sincerity manifests itself in prose texts with comic undertones.

Sergei Nosov emphasizes the autobiographical nature of his narrator through the textual presence of his colleague (2017, 128) and through self-reference to himself-as-author (131). In contrast to this authenticity-indicating self-referentiality, the extratextual authenticity of the key event described – the comic dialogue with

a local alcoholic – is relativized through the foregoing reference to “carnival” as to a playfully deceptive narrative mode: “The severity of the honors, [...], did not at all cancel out in the long run the possibility of carnival moods of readers and admirers” (126).⁴ Despite this relativizing device, the sincerity of the author’s affect as of expressed affinity for Bol’shaia Moskovskaia Street as a space mirroring (in the Benjaminian sense) the “aura” of Dostoevsky’s artistic world, justified by the comic dialogue as an event that “could only happen here” and “only at this place” (132),⁵ is not subjected to relativization.

Andrei Astvatsurov’s narrator is addressed by the diminutive of the author’s name (Astvatsu, 83) and like the author works as a university lecturer. However, the story evolves into a comic-scatological situation whose extravagance forces one to question its extratextual “truthfulness”: a side character threatens the narrator’s boss with urinating. The extratextual authenticity of the event is further relativized by the narrator’s absence and its presentation as a second-hand story (80–84). Nevertheless, the narrator’s concluding topophilic affect – his subjective and highly emotional-corporeal experience of urban space (“I pour myself into this swollen stream of life and feel my arms, legs, and torso fill with a strange new strength, and my head with a silly pleasant goodness”, 88)⁶ – constitutes a non-ironizing continuation of the foregoing comic scene. The city becomes emotionally-volitionally affirmed as a positive *existext* of poetically comic life.

In line with the metamodern mode, the humor of Nosov and Astvatsurov, despite its prominent presence, is not deconstructing subjectivity and sentiment and thus is not a postmodern apathetic “end in itself” (Rustad and Schwind 2017, 214). Quite the contrary, it justifies its consequential subjective affect and its “irony is kept in check by sincere undertones and overtones” (Gibbons 2017, 140).

Such I-expressing artistic visualization enables a metamodern inclination towards the *sens*. Contrary to the postmodern anti-anthropomorphic devaluation of Being into an ironic “game”, the sentient (affecting) subject and its sincerely presented emotional experience is concentrically affirmed as an object of existential value. The *existext* in the postmodern spirit refutes rational consolidation: “There are so many things, there’s no way to grasp it, neither with your mind nor with your eyes” (2017, 88); “The feeling of unreality was so immense that I was ready to believe it was all a dream” (132).⁷ However, the affective response to it forms *sens* as a centralized Being-valorizing moment: “I was stunned” (132).⁸ But the postmodern pole of metamodern oscillation inhibits this inclination towards the sentient self from eventuating into trans-subjective meanings. “Identity” does not figure as (modernistically) essential, but, despite ascribing value to “personal and interpersonal – including emotional – experiences”, it remains “a social category that is constructed by subjects and by larger structures of social power” (Gibbons 2017, 187).

Elena Chizhova’s prose is a narrative of self-formation through the social environment. The “I” is consciously constructed out of numerous recollections with Others and its constructedness is emphasized through frequent motifs of “remembering” and “not remembering”. The central formative dialogical moment is a game with children in a poor district which thematizes the social constructedness of ethnic be-

longing: “And finally, in the second walkway live the yids. No one plays with their yid. I had no idea that, according to their worldview, I’m also half yid” (2017, 216).⁹ The author becomes “writer” – “herself” as a place in society – in the process of incorporation into the collective: “My reputation was finally established and solidified when the backyard folk found out that I could tell stories. [...] Before me, this ‘vacancy of a poet’ in our little backyard area was free. [...] Apparently, my deep respect for the power of words grew out of those days” (222).¹⁰ The social environment is portrayed as the primary constituent of self-becoming. It is the change of social space that enables the narrator to lead an “authentic” (intellectual) life, “from which I [author] would probably have diverted if my family had stayed in Kupchino forever” (229).¹¹

While all of the texts present the subjective self-becoming as anthropocentrally valuable, there is also a backward movement toward a postmodern relativization of the experienced, most prominently in the opening and closing stories. Tatiana Tolstaya analogizes perception and activity with “dreaming” and marks the urban space as a site of a multitude of subjectivities in which one can only project her subjectivity (“dream”) onto surroundings: “No one can be helped in any way, only to live here, see their own dreams and hang them out to dry on the balcony railings in the mornings” (18).¹² The constructedness of subjective projections is emphasized through the juxtaposition of a “dream” as a metonymy for subjectivity with the motif of “constructing”: “At school they don’t tell a word [...] about the construction and multiplication of dreams” (17).¹³

The prose of Vadim Levental’, in comparison to the foregoing texts, shows a particularly hectic narration of memories that refutes an attempt at their holistic unification. However, this fragmenting narration correlates with the author’s affirmative thematization of the postmodern incomprehensibility of the impenetrable “I”, the center of which is

a grain of impenetrable darkness that I always thought had nothing to do with me; I am arranged around this darkness into which I cannot look – my memory, my hobbies, my history, everything I think (for some reason I want to put that word in brackets) is all rather precariously attached to an area within me that I can only guess about [...]; I cannot look into the eyes of whoever sits there – those seem to be the rules of the game. (516)¹⁴

The rules of this “game” implicitly govern each prose of anthology – the subject affirms their sentient self through affect that allows for construction of a subjective-emotional *sens* in lived experience – through “moments of absolute involvement in life” (517)¹⁵ – but this *sens* never reaches beyond subjective perception as the constitutive moment of the postmodern anti-essential relative self, fluctuating around “non-existing” (“несуществования”, 517).

METAMODERN GROUNDING OF A SUBJECT IN DIALOGUE AND HISTORICAL TIME

Due to the desire for self-grounding in a relative world, metamodern autofiction exhibits an emotional attachment to the empirical sites of subjectivity; “an attempt to ground the inner self in an outer reality – in time, space and corporeal being”

(Gibbons 2017, 200). The anthology meets this desire with its concentrated topophilism.¹⁶ While the plot of each prose justifies the author's affective and optimistic experience of St. Petersburg's *existext*, the reader is repeatedly encouraged to share and co-experience such a "self-grounding" topophilic affect.

Elena Kolina concludes her enumeration of numerous experiences in particular spaces with a sentimental affect articulating a sense of belonging to St. Petersburg, as well as with its extension to the reader, for whom St. Petersburg also (through the author's lens) represents a positive topography of a "valuable" emotional being:

And all of us in St. Petersburg are connected, entangled, befriended, and in every single place I laughed, kissed, married, in Port Moresby [...] it wouldn't have been like that. I don't know how to live where I didn't have a laugh in every single place. Maybe that's a good thing, I don't know. I think without Petersburg you feel naked, well, maybe not completely naked, but at least without a cap. (2017, 101)¹⁷

This "self-into-space" grounding affect is intensified through the dichotomy of "mine – alien", thematized already in the story's opening: "The world is such a big place, and you, baby, spend your whole life on a patch from Sadovaia to Rubinshtein, my boyfriend told me" (89).¹⁸ Kolina thus elaborates the theme of "alien world" vs. "my St. Petersburg" conceptualized as a topography of "my" (author's) Being and therewith affectively affirmed as subjectively more valuable ("I think", Rus. "Думаю", [101]).

Equally, Daniil Kotsiubinskii meets the metamodern desire for emotional-spatial grounding of "I" with this dichotomy: "Venice, Rome, Florence? No. Paris? Prague? No. Barcelona, Amsterdam, Tallinn? Also no. There's just 'something old.' And here it's a tremendous city in its entirety. And I only want to live in the center of St. Petersburg" (252).¹⁹ Despite the initial melancholic tonality, the poet and popular historian's prose is not lacking in topophilism, figuring as a complementary part of a solution to the dark emotional scaling. The text opens with a hyperbolic, identity-constituting self-identification with urban topos: "I have no favorite places in St. Petersburg. Nor do I have any 'favorite' places within myself. The city is me and that what made me fascinated and deceived" (241).²⁰ While the author in accord with postmodern skepticism negates the possibility of a trans-subjective postulate (namely, God), the (meta)modern desire for a valuable Being directs his sentimental affect toward an urban space as that which, though only subjectively, is nonetheless empirically present: "I guess the city was like a god to the faithful. I didn't believe in god. To hell with god. Who saw him? But I saw the city. And I remembered it" (244).²¹

Presenting an experience of existential skepticism, its "sincerity" as a correlation with the author-figure is indicated by Kotsiubinskii's self-referencing as a poet through fragmenting the prosaic text with melancholic poems. Topophilism allows the author to glimpse a positive "meaning" in existence negatively experienced as simulacrum and allowing only to "pretend that you keep on living and loving" (249)²² as well as to productively confront its meaninglessness.

Significantly, the existential skepticism is resolved not only by grounding the self in space but also in historical time, i.e., by constructing historicity as an emotional modality "in which one can relate past, present, and future (or be in history)" (Akker 2017, 46). The postmodern paradigm conceptualizes ahistorical time distanced from

the legacies of the past; an experience of temporality not as “within” but as “beside” the observed historical time (Jameson 1991, 17–20). For pragmatic, anti-ideological reasons, Kotsiubinskii positively affirms this ahistorical presentism of contemporary experience:

Joyful – and joyful doubly so, –
The twentieth century is gone!
There’s no one to unleash hatred,
No one to come and apologize.
Time is a thief, space is a thief
And the city – a thief. (2017, 248)²³

However, the ahistorical presentism brings not only anti-ideological benefits but also negative consequences. As the last two quoted lines indicate, it breaks the “existential contact” (Jameson 1991, 284) with the “significant” historical time and therewith constitutes “timelessness” and an analogous feeling of existential emptiness: “The farther the city faded into timelessness, the more it resembled a beautiful vampire that you are enchanted to love and who gives you in return only immortal coldness and emptiness” (2017, 248).²⁴

The urban topos resolves the “empty timelessness” because it opens to the possibility of its affective and historicizing perception: it enables “an experience of [...] present as past and as history”, i.e., of emotional situatedness in linear-historical time which the postmodern paradigm excludes (Jameson 1991, 285) because, as a ubiquitous signifier of historical meanings, it invites its historicizing visualization, “suffocates with an unbearable memory that turns to you with its black stone mouth from every window oriel, from every back alley, from every step of every stairwell” (2017, 249).²⁵ City – the mediator of historicity – opens access to the antinomy of postmodern “timelessness”, which Kotsiubinskii within his topophilic affect characterizes as “eternity”, i.e., “that” which transcends the subject’s postmodern-presentist being: “And it’s beautiful. And cozy. And good. Because we are the zombies of St. Petersburg. Slaves of beauty, which we can’t save, and which killed us and gave us eternity” (251).²⁶ The postmodern pole of metamodern oscillation leaves this “eternity” ambivalent, but the narrator’s intensely emotional experience of urban history accords it a dimension of historicity. The “I” is grounded in linear-historical time precisely in the affective response to its perceived spatial presence: “What’s left to do? Wander the streets. Recite Kharmis. Curse the empire and admire its architectonic style” (249).²⁷

Alexandr Melikhov also conceptualizes urban space as situating into liner-historical time: as communicating “a message from the past” (174)²⁸ and linking the subject with the existence-valORIZING “eternity”: “For each person’s precious connection with eternity, it is extraordinarily important to feel that his life takes place in the same setting as the lives of his most significant predecessors” (174).²⁹ In line with the postmodern pole of metamodern oscillation, neither Kotsiubinskii nor Melikhov clarifies this presented ambivalent “eternity”. Though monological interpretation of “being in time” remains unachievable, an optimistic belief in its ontological value comes to the fore, as well as a belief in its attainability through a subjective-emotional

experience of time in historical space, which Melikhov in affect apotheotically marks as “holy” (173).

Correspondingly, Tatiana Mei indicates the literary and historical past as “alive” in current-contemporary space:

Everything I had read since childhood, all the characters, historical and fictional, their creators with friends and foes, came around from different directions, waved from the windows, passed me in the street. And they were often no less real than the neighbors in my house. (342)³⁰

This desire to perceive the past within the present motivates intense and apothotic intertextuality. For illustration, Valerii Popov’s narrator glimpses a Kharms-like grotesqueness in wall sculptures (360), correlates his lonely walk from Nevskii Prospekt with the experience of Bunin’s narrator of *Na Nevskom* (361), or alludes to Joseph Brodsky’s biographical text (a photo-portrait): “And in those same years, in the Muruzi house, Brodsky looked out from his balcony at the same church” (362).³¹

This “co-being” with the signs of the past conveys a sense of “being in history”. The metamodern narrator combines historicizing and emotional perception to experience his spatial contemporaneity as coexistent with Bunin, Brodsky, or Dostoevsky, thus situating himself in a linear, historical and therewith “valuable” urban time:

At one end of it [the bridge], as Dostoevsky confessed, he experienced the happiest moment of his life when he left Belinskii, who praised him / And I experienced my happiest moment at the other end of the bridge, [...] when I saw a pretty girl reading aloud to a boy a funny story from my first book, and them both laughing. (364)³²

Evgenii Vodolazkin conceptualizes Zhdanovskaia naberezhnaia as a space encompassing historical-linear time primarily through its appearance in Alexei Tolstoy’s *Aelita* (1923). His concluding topophilic affect meets the metamodern desire for linear-historical temporality by conceptualizing contemporary space as an intense container of history – the past in it (through the author’s lens) “does not disappear”:

Try not to worry when the world is so small. When even on one small promenade so many events – fictional and real, so many people, addresses and times – are connected to each other. Everything is connected in one chain, and one link pulls in another. And nothing disappears. (113)³³

Desire for self-grounding in historical time-space manifests itself also in the repeated rejection of ahistorical space as its dichotomous opposition. While Melikhov characterizes the presently constructed space as a “bubble without lineage” that “sends us no signals either about our time or country [...]” (154),³⁴ in Pavel Krusanov’s prose we read:

Until space is saturated with the vivid lives, sacrificial deaths, talents, and dreams of its inhabitants, it will not come to life, will not be animated, will remain simply a stone, a street, an object without any metaphysics or inner fire, [...] like a random nonsense, like a thing without an eidos. (449)³⁵

The history-non-signifying space motivates the metamodern narrator to move into a historical space in which his being valorizes “a haven of swamp demons: the shad-

ows of Pushkin, Gogol, Dostoevsky, and Bely intermingled with the shadows of their characters: the restless chimeras of Karakozov, Perovskaia, Zhelezniak, and Dybenko” (449).³⁶ This space of “stone spirituality, imperial versatility, and historical memory” (450)³⁷ mediates a subjective self-experiencing within the historical time and therefore offers (through the author’s lens) an anaesthetic for the postmodern feeling of emptiness. However, the postmodern pole of metamodern oscillation hinders this (meta)modern inclination towards *sens* with emphasis that the experience of significance does not transcend beyond the “fantasy” as a metonymy for subjectivity:

since all beings, having once felt existential terror in their hearts (I am small and insignificant, and the universe is grandiose and totally indifferent to me, my fate is to perish in the cold of its indifference without a trace), run from there [from ahistorical space], trying at least for a while, at least in fantasies to nestle into that which even if does not promises physical immortality, at least offers a longevity of memory. (450)³⁸

In opposition to the postmodern anti-hierarchical denial of the “depth” of culturally iconic texts (Jameson 1991, 392), all of the texts in the collection affirm the city’s literary heritage as one of eminent existential relevance: For Mei, “[d]ead and eternally alive poets are indeed all over the place” (2017, 348),³⁹ while Nosov suggests that “[i]t’s not like Dostoevsky is ‘our everything,’ but now he’s for us like we ourselves” (125).⁴⁰ This numerous apothecotic intertextuality correlates with metamodern empathy for the sentient subject – it directs him toward a subjective *sens* within his in-betweenness between the *sens* and *doubt*.

Pavel Krusanov does not condemn an ahistorical space of a newly built district but employs it to ascribe an existential value to unique lives of individuals who transform a negatively presentist space into a space of historicity: their activity (in the existential sense) constitutes “work on humanization” and fills it with “the newest mythology” (450).⁴¹ His concluding affect “grounds the subject in space” precisely by encouraging an emotional experience of one’s participation in their spatial situatedness – in contrast to the postmodern devaluation of the subject, the individual is here conceptualized as valuable because not only the actions of “Pushkin, Gogol, Dostoevsky, Bely” (449)⁴² but also their activity is co-participant in the creation of a spatial *existext* that, in spite of its initial ahistoricity, “has become a generator of new myths, [...] a place of attraction for dreams. These palaces and streets are worthy of love and despair – may the power of those who have given them their lifeblood be with them” (458).⁴³

Alexandra Iarko appositely points out that the anthology differs from the tradition of the Petersburg text and its characteristic “nonhumanity” by “the utmost humanness” (Iarko 2019, 26). St. Petersburg is simultaneously thematized not only as a city of historical-cultural figures but also as a city of contemporary acting and feeling subjects.

In Tatiana Tolstaya’s prose, the “dream” as a metonymy for subjective perception relates equally to iconic classics: “Pushkin, Gogol, Dostoevsky, Bely, Blok – hung their dreams all over the city” (2017, 12),⁴⁴ as well as to every regular inhabitant: “As sleepwalkers are expected to do, St. Petersburg residents walk on the rooftops” (16, also 18).⁴⁵ As the narrator declares a dialogic intention to observe the actions resul-

ting from the Other's subjectivity: "I will sit by the window and watch other people's dreams" (14),⁴⁶ this dialogue is directed both synchronically to the present Other and diachronically to the figures of the past. The contemporary subject converges with cultural history and represents an active co-creator of an *existext* already valorized by past cultural figures.

Such *existext*-valorizing being within the historical-linear temporality is manifested in the dialogic orientation (both synchronic and diachronic) of Magda Alekseeva's narrator, who emphasizes being as co-being with others through the affirmation of Osip Mandelstam's poem. The author's optimistic life-affinity is justified by the possibility of dialogical co-existence with the historical (with the alluded-to Brodsky, Bulgakov, or Akhmatova, 280–283) as well as the contemporary Other: "But cities are not just streets and houses. They are above all people. When Mandelstam wrote 'I have your telephone numbers,' he was referring to people you can call, talk to [...] with whom you can share love, work – life" (285).⁴⁷ While dialogical co-being represents a sentimental *sens*, the postmodern pole of metamodern oscillation layers this topophilic affect with an explicit rejection of normative monologism. The urban topos as time-space which potentially situates, grounds, and interactively enriches Being, provides *sens* amidst a current world that once again collapses into the weighty meaninglessness of not post- but neo-modernist ideologies: "They [cities], as human beings, help to live in this complex world with its recurring nastiness. Twenty years ago, it seemed that with the Soviets gone was all that was pressing on the soul. And suddenly again – fifth column, foreign agents, 'Crimea is ours', war..." (286)⁴⁸

CONCLUSION

The emancipated feeling subject is grounded in urban space and historical time to initiate a subjectivity-affirming and Being-valorizing dialogue. The intense apotheosis of cultural history does not go beyond conscious subjectivity and does not eventuate into monologisms. The intense intertextuality which correlates with the subject's affect-producing movement in urban space is throughout the anthology reminiscent of labyrinth described in Ilya Boiashov's prose. The author initially grounds himself in a linear-historical time through the emotional experience of the historical chronology of the labyrinth in Peterhof (461–463) as a space that "stops time" ("останавливает время", 461) and thus intensifies self-perception "in history". But Boiashov's labyrinth, analogized with life, has no destination, as life presents "the inexorable wandering through rooms, corridors, and countless labyrinths" (466).⁴⁹ The metamodern subject "wanders" through countless "corridors" of meanings, and the moment of existential value (*sens*) is the very act of "wandering" as a performed life activity: "And yet – we are drawn to labyrinths. We can't live without labyrinths. We need labyrinths" (466).⁵⁰ This optimistic "wandering" in search for meanings, initiated by the affirmation of a historically situated and feeling subject, overlays the torment of a non-negated postmodern *doubt*: in Levental's prose, humankind fills space (Neva River) with meanings ("ghosts"), "perhaps only because thinking of it as completely void is unspeakably more terrifying" (517).⁵¹

NOTES

- ¹ New sincerity is here understood in its broadest sense as an effort to pass on “an earnest message, idea, feeling, or value to the [...] audience” (Balliro 2018, 9).
- ² “повторил философ – постмодернист”; “А заодно и философа-неогегельянца. Он тогда был еще ‘философом-постмодернистом.’” All translations of excerpts from the anthology *V Pitere zhit': ot Dvortsovoi do Sadovoi ot Gangutskoi do Shpalernoj. Lichnye istorii* into English are done by M.D.
- ³ “Я многим показывал этот памятник”; “Я однажды увидел”; “Я думала, что никогда не буду смеяться”; “Я – счастливое исключение”; “Я учился в 182-й школе.”
- ⁴ “Строгость почестей, [...] вовсе не отменяла в перспективе возможность карнавальных настроений читателей и почитателей.”
- ⁵ “могла произойти только здесь”; “только на этом месте”
- ⁶ “Я вливаюсь в этот разбухший поток жизни и чувствую, как мои руки, ноги, туловище наполняются новой странной силой, а голова – глупым приятным добродушием.”
- ⁷ “Всего так много, это никак не ухватить, ни умом, ни взглядом”; “Ощущение нереальности было столь велико, что я был готов поверить, что это всё сон.”
- ⁸ “Я был потрясен.”
- ⁹ “И наконец, во второй парадке живут жида. С их жиденком никто не играет. О том, что согласно их картине мира, я тоже на половину жиденок, я и понятия не имела.”
- ¹⁰ “Окончательно моя репутация сложилась и упрочилась, когда дворовый народ выяснил, что я умею рассказывать истории. [...] До меня на нашей маленькой дворовой зоне эта “вакансия поэта” была пуста [...] Видимо, мое глубокое уважение к силе слова выросло из тех дней.”
- ¹¹ “от траектории которой я бы наверняка уклонилась, если бы моя семья навсегда осталась в Купчино”
- ¹² “Никому ничем нельзя помочь, разве что жить здесь, видеть свои собственные сны и развешивать их по утрам на просушку на балконных перилах.”
- ¹³ “В школе не рассказывают ни слова [...] о конструировании и размножении снов.”
- ¹⁴ “зерно непроглядной тьмы, которая, как мне всегда казалось, не имеет ко мне отношения; я устроен вокруг этой тьмы, в которую не могу заглянуть, – моя память, мои увлечения, моя история, всё, что я думаю (почему-то это слово хочется взять в кавычки), – всё это довольно ненадежно прикреплено к области внутри меня, о наличии которой я могу только догадываться [...]; взглянуть в глаза тому, кто сидит там, я не могу – таковы, кажется, правила игры.”
- ¹⁵ “моменты абсолютного участия в жизни”
- ¹⁶ For a search for non-ideological and topophilic values in the context of contemporary poetry, see Barkovskaia and Grominova (2016).
- ¹⁷ “И все мы в Питере связаны, перепутаны, передружены, и в каждом любом месте я смеялась, целовалась, выходила замуж, в Порт-Морсби [...] так бы не было. Я не знаю, как жить там, где не в каждом любом месте смеялся, – может быть, и хорошо, я не знаю. Думаю, без Питера чувствуешь себя голым, ну, может быть, не совсем голым, но без шапочки.”
- ¹⁸ “Мир такой большой, а ты – детка, всю жизнь толчешься на пяточке от Садовой до Рубинштейна, – сказал мне приятель.”
- ¹⁹ “Венеция, Рим, Флоренция? Нет. Париж? Прага? Нет. Барселона. Амстердам, Таллин? Тоже нет. Там просто есть ‘что-то старенькое’. А здесь – огромный город целиком. И я хочу жить только в центре Петербурга.”
- ²⁰ “У меня нет любимых петербургских мест. Как нет ‘любимых’ мест в себе самом. Город – это я, и это то, что меня очаровало и обмануло.”
- ²¹ “Наверное, город был для меня чем-то вроде бога для верующих. Я не верил в бога. Да и черт с ним, с богом. Кто его видел? А вот город – я видел. И помнил.”
- ²² “делать вид, что продолжаешь жить и любить”
- ²³ “Радостно – и радостно вдвойне / Больше нет / Двадцатого столетья! / Некому обиды раскатыть, / Некому прийти и извиниться. / Время – тать, пространство – тать / И город – тать.”
- ²⁴ “Чем дальше город замирал в безвременье, тем больше напоминал прекрасного вампира, которого ты зачарованно любишь и который дарит тебе в ответ лишь бессмертные холод и пустоту.”

- 25 “душит невыносимой памятью, которая повернута к тебе каменной черной пастью с каждого эркера, из каждой подворотни, каждой ступени каждого лестничного пролета.”
- 26 “И там красиво. И уютно. И хорошо. Потому что мы – петербургские зомби. Рабы красоты, которую не в силах сберечь и которая убила нас и даровала нам вечность.”
- 27 “Что остается? Бродить по улицам. Декламировать Хармса. Проклинать империю и любоваться ампиром.”
- 28 “послание из прошлого.”
- 29 “Для драгоценной для каждого человека связи с вечностью необыкновенно важно ощущать, что его жизнь протекает в тех же декорациях, что и жизнь самых значительных его предшественников.”
- 30 “Всё, что я читала с детства, все персонажи, исторические и выдуманные, их творцы с друзьями и врагами – обступали с разных сторон, махали из окон, обгоняли на улице. И оказывались зачастую не менее реальными, чем соседи по дому.”
- 31 “И в эти же годы, в доме Мурузи, Бродский смотрел с балкона на эту же церковь.”
- 32 “На одном его конце [моста], по признанию Достоевского, он пережил самый счастливый миг жизни, когда вышел от Белинского, который его похвалил. / А я свой самый счастливый момент пережил на другом конце моста, [...], когда увидел, как красивая девушка вслух читает парню веселый рассказ из первой моей книги, и оба смеются.”
- 33 “Попробуй тут не волноваться, когда мир настолько тесен. Когда даже на одной маленькой набережной друг с другом связано столько событий – литературных и реальных, столько людей, адресов и времен. Все соединено в одну цепочку, и одно звено тягивает за собой другое. И ничто не исчезает.”
- 34 “пузырь без роду без племени”; “не посылает нам никаких сигналов ни о времени, ни о стране”
- 35 “Пока пространство не напитается яркими жизнями, жертвенными смертями, талантами и мечтами его насельников, оно не оживёт, не одухотворится, останется просто камнем, улицей, предметом без всякой метафизики и внутреннего огня, [...] как случайная чепуха, как вещь без эйдоса.”
- 36 “прибежище болотных чертей: теней Пушкина, Гоголя, Достоевского, Белого вперемешку с тенями их персонажей: беспокойных химер Каракозова, Перовской, Железняк, Дыбенко.”
- 37 “каменной духовности, имперского многообразия и исторической памяти”
- 38 “поскольку все живое, хоть раз почувствовавшее в сердце экзистенциальный ужас (я мал и ничтожен, а мироздание грандиозно и совершенно ко мне равнодушно, моя участь – сгинуть в холоде его равнодушия без следа), бежит оттуда, стараясь хотя бы на время, хотя бы в фантазиях приткнуться к тому, что обещает пусть не физическое бессмертие, но долговечность памяти.”
- 39 “Мертвые и вечно живые поэты действительно повсюду.”
- 40 “Достоевский не то чтобы ‘наше всё’, а теперь он для нас как бы мы сами.”
- 41 “работу по одухотворению”; “новейшей мифологией”
- 42 “Пушкина, Гоголя, Достоевского, Белого”
- 43 “стал генератором новых мифов, [...] местом притяжения мечты. Эти дворцы и улицы достойны любви и отчаяния – да пребудет с ними сила тех, кто отдал им свою живицу”
- 44 “Пушкин, Гоголь, Достоевский, Белый, Блок – развесили свои сны по всему городу”
- 45 “Как и полагается лунатикам, петербуржцы гуляют по крышам.”
- 46 “сяду к окну и буду смотреть чужие сны”
- 47 “Но города – это не только улицы и дома. Это прежде всего люди. Когда Мандельштам писал: “У меня телефонов твоих номера”, он же как раз имел в виду людей, которым можно позвонить, с которыми можно поговорить [...], с которыми можно разделить любовь, работу – жизнь.”
- 48 “Они, как люди, помогают жить в этом сложном мире с его то и дело возникающей гнусностью. Двадцать лет назад казалось, что вместе с советской властью ушло то, что так давило душу. И вдруг опять – пятая колонна, иностранные агенты, ‘крымнаш’, война...”
- 49 “безвыходное блуждание в комнатах, коридорах и бесчисленных лабиринтах”

⁵⁰ “И все-таки – нас тянет в лабиринты. Мы не можем без лабиринтов. Нам нужны лабиринты.”

⁵¹ “возможно только потому, что думать о ней как об абсолютно пустой невыразимо страшнее”

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Metamodern urban experience in the anthology of toponilic prose *V Pitere zhit'*

Metamodernism. *V Pitere zhit'*. Topophilic prose. Urban prose. New historicity. New affect.

This article applies metamodernism as a new discursive practice for interpreting contemporaneity to the anthology *V Pitere zhit': ot Dvortsovoi do Sadovoi, ot Gangutskoi do Shpalernoii. Lichnye istorii* (To Live in Petersburg: From Dvortsovaia to Sadovaia, from Gangutskaia to Shpalernaia. Personal stories, 2017) edited by Natalia Sokolovskaia and Elena Shubina. It demonstrates that despite the plurality of authorial styles in the collection, it advocates a homogeneous metamodern mode of urban experience within which postmodern anti-anthropocentrism is substituted by the affirmation of the feeling (affective) subject, and the postmodern ahistorical presentism is replaced by the pursuit of self-situating into the historical time, allowing for a valorization of Being through a subjectivity-affirming dialogue with the historical and contemporary Other.

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