the byt whose principles it embodies into a fantastic monstrosity:

[M]athematicians are generalizers; and be sure that the slogan of the professor's apartment 'like everyone else' is taken by them to an extreme...Having set themselves with a brittle stance in a brittle byt...the mathematicians think that the byt supporting them is the integral expression of all revolutions in consciousness to which they are so helplessly enslaved; the fact of the matter is that that the fantasy of mathematical thought has long since surpassed all fantasies. (72)

The fantastic element results, as we know, not from generalization itself, but from the resistance offered by the phenomena generalized: the private and intimate, the transient and the domestic: Anna Ivanovna's cheese sandwich.[34] We encounter another version of Čexov's "repetition of the unrepeatable" (which here, too, will eventually provide the basis for a gesture of transcendence.)[35]

The victory of the mathematicians heralds the capitulation of life in the apartment to the law of "just like everyone else" (kak u vsex) - the mechanistic derivation of every detail of daily existence from an impersonal societal norm. This law is associated with the older generation generally, not with any father in particular. In the memoirs, Belyj emphasizes that his musically gifted mother played an equal (if not greater) role in consolidating the mathematicians' dead dogmas. She is characterized impersonally as "the professor's wife":

I have never seen such a terrible, dull, uninteresting byt as the one introduced by the 'professor's wife' of the eighteen eighties...noone punished deviations from "like everyone else's" with such refined cruelty. (68)

[T]he glance I cast over this byt showed me that "the professor's wife" not only did not struggle against the manufacture of iron boots and tin jackets, but used to find that "that's the way it should be," because "that's the way it is at everyone else's house"; the terrible "just like everyone else" was beginning. (87-

88)

In The Christened Chinaman , the most extreme representative of "kak u vsex " is an outsider named Malinovskaja who penetrates the apartment and poisons its atmosphere with her pernicious influence. She is so much in the thrall of "kak u vsex " - or "tak i vse " ("that's the way it is with everything") that she adds the phrase to every piece of small talk, ensuring the inappropriate subordination of the tiniest trivia to the most bloated generalities. The effect on those around her is disunity and discord - the destruction of intimacy:

She added "That's how it is with everything " to every word...all her comments led always to discord; she would say something and a happy gathering would divide up into malicious fountain-heads of dispute:- she managed to wedge just such a fountain-head between mama and papa..."Yes, that's how it is with everything, dear...Everywhere there's always dust...that's how it is with everything.[36]

Abstraction is bound up with the depersonalization of human relations. When, in The Christened Chinaman , Kotik begins to sense the growing rift between his parents, he is particularly struck by the withering manner in which his mother dismisses his father through oblique references to "those who...." (" te kotorye ..."). What disturbs him is, once again, the forcing of what should by rights be relationships of intimate singularity ("I-Thou"; Wife-Husband) into the straightjacket of impersonal, third-person abstractions.[37]

Belyj bemoans the loss of creativity that is the price to be paid for initiation into the arbitrary symbols and abstract concepts of language. The link between language and submission to "The Law of the Father" is made clear in Kotik Letaev when the narrator

describes his first introduction to the written alphabet:

> I recall myself being a second mathematician, repudiating my early meanings and not able yet to put together for myself outside these repudiated meanings - a single meaning by which the mathematicians; my Papa, - lives. He promises to teach me: he presents me with an alphabet book:- an alphabet book is - not a bead:- a bead rolls; the alphabet book you would open - there soundlessly purples a letter: a science...- without sound! (196)

In the language of adults there is no iconic meaning. Adult language subordinates individual meanings to a set of abstract generalities according to an arbitrary system of correspondences detached from the intimacies of human exchange.[38]

The onset of abstraction leads both to linguistic competency and to the infusion of the outside world's dry impersonalism into the intimacy of the apartment. This process is coincident with the birth of byt , described as the congealment into concrete form of mathematical concepts: the average bytovoj person decomposed into an abstraction, congealing into the shape of a bug-ridden armchair (448). The crystallization of the arithmetically average (elsewhere Belyj refers to byt as a "sclerotic deposit" on life) coincides also with Kotik's discovery of chronological time and repetition. The early, "mythic" part of Kotik Letaev is narrated in a pseudo-iterative in which singular events are presented as imperfective. As the account proceeds, the word "once" insidiously infiltrates into the narration:

> And often: she would put strawberries on a linden leaf; and with a black hairpin she would stick the bright berries; she eats the berries: 'Some for me...'...Up walks the eighth-grader Shcherbinin. 'None for You...' .... Loved to go after mushrooms; under the bushes we would often see a tightpufed brown mushroom. 'Mine..' 'No, mine.' We beat each other away from it. I snatched it. Once she even wept; the basket was weighted down: orange cap boleti, bright, on black legs, pearly russulae, yellow ones, white heads sat

speckled in it and smelling of leaves. (124)

Later, in The Christened Chinaman , Belyj links the arrival of linearity with the appearance of routine. When myth (the unity of singular and eternal) fragments, perpetual recurrence (which should be immanent) must be achieved chronologically, resulting in "the humdrum". This is associated with Belyj's father, a "timemaster" who "leads in the weeks" (133-35). The establishment of "once" in Kotik's consciousness is swiftly succeeded by circularity and the everyday, which literally attaches itself to the fabric of the apartment:

I recall the days flowing away: the days - not days, but diamond holidays; the days are now - only humdrum days:-
the days flowed by in rank file into the shadows which hung down from the ceilings, out of the corners, conjoining themselves into a multi-hornedness which is no longer: a mysterious emptiness, and it is dark for me; and it is sad for me! (192)

Routine is the pointlessly infinite (i.e. humdrum) repetition of the discretely singular (i.e. trivial). True, eternal time as experienced in Kotik's earliest moments has been defeated: "We are sitting: Raisa Ivanovna's voice is not audible to me; we sit: there are no events; and there is nothing at all; the same humdrum; time is overcome in the prattle of droplets" (184).

Rather than merely submit to byt ' s influence, each of the Letaevs, however, constructs his or her own, inpenetrable shelter (or home within a home), a svoe to counter kak u vsex. In Kotik Letaev this is reflected in the hero's growing sense of loneliness:

Apprehensions about how in the world I became a 'second mathematician' overwhelm me...I am a sinner:

with Mama I sin against Papa; with Papa against Mama. How can I exist and: not sin? I must begin to live alone: I am not Papa's, not Mama's; but to live - is lonely...(157)

When this moment arrives, Kotik rapidly loses the ability creatively to interact with the surrounding world, which comes instead to resemble an alien being pursuing him relentlessly between rooms. Deprived of its true meaning, the familiar space of the apartment become a terrifying maze of dark, empty corridors:

The meanings of words were deceptive; and the mysterious rooms of the Cosmos showed themselves to be dark passages - of rooms, rooms and rooms ,- from which, if you enter, you will not return, and you will be seized by objects, it's still not clear by what kind, but it seems by armchairs in severe, greyish slipcovers which stick out in the deaf, musty darkness. (186)

In The Christened Chinaman , the formation of the impenetrable self comes to be associated with a particular phrase which figures as the obverse of kak u vsex : "one's own thing" (edakoe takoe svoe) - the title of a chapter in the novel. The singularity of "one's own" is a deformed singularity, cocooned within the discrete self, detached from the context of creative exchange. Rather than facilitate interactive response, it erects barriers:

From each thing "one's own" matures and grows, something that I am unable to understand: "ten" - means the raising of the fingers of both hands; and I did not respond; "one's own" is not "mine"; and "one's own" is a hidden object that someone, anyone else has, something that I don't understand. (44)

Olga Muller-Cooke perceptively interprets the sexual connotations of "one's own" as the hidden sexual organs of adults[39]. As the previous quote indicates, the phenomenon can also be given a more general application. The two meanings can be

reconciled in Kotik's father who is both the mathematicians' symbolic figurehead, and the first and most important adult male in Kotik's life. The fact that Papa is the person in whom Kotik most keenly senses the presence of "one's own" suggests another Lacanian link between the Oedipal struggle and entry into the impersonalized abstractions of language with its alienation of self from other:

Sizing me up with an unseeing look from under his brow, as though he had been asked a scholarly question, Papa leaned out of the room into the doorway so as to whisper something into the pages of his books: there everything is "one's own".

Papa has more of this "one's own" than anyone else. Because of it I shook with terror on more than one occasion. (47)

The Struggle in the Apartment

The father's ability to mark out a space in which he might "be himself" causes Belyj to perceive in him a half-hearted rebel against byt. This rebellion consisted in his čudačestvo - a quality he cultivated through his capacity for witty puns and the odd quirks in his everyday behaviour: "A revolt against byt in the form of a joke, - that's how I would characterize the vague influence of my father on me" (Na rubeže , p.89). Punning (a technique familiar to Belyj scholars) was seized upon by the young boy as a form of warfare against the rule-bound world of the professor's apartment, even if that revolt is destined to fail:

My father and Usov were punners; father was 'weak' in byt , so, too was Usov. As a result the revolution evaporated and floated somewhere above byt...I waited for any opportunity to join in the critique of what my subconscious had already rejected; every acerbic word about byt , I recall, outweighed tens and hundreds of words affirming byt . (144)

The attraction of puns is their ability to break apart the tired slogans of byt into odd idiosyncracies and hitherto unheard sounds which subvert the canons, without ever threatening their continued existence:

> The style of these puns was Leskov taken to the point of delirium...It only needed father to open his mouth, than mother would interrupt him with "There you go again with your own thing!"...This need for monstrosities was an organic buzzing which grew from the eternal juxtaposition of new, original thoughts about the world with 'little byt '...And in his puns he lived out his urge to do "what one is not supposed to do", while still following the canons of byt. (67)

Sometimes the fragmenting process is taken to such an extreme that the succession of cliches is converted into a barely coherent murmur of sounds resembling a baby's babble. This is a trick that Belyj integrates into his own art, as we find in this passage from The Christened Chinaman : "[T]hey bleated with a ram-like laughter. [Malinovskaja] stands: ga-ga-ga - ba-ba-ba - "abakra...they've been robbed (obokrali)...they're balloting (ballotirujut)....Hang your diploma on the wall...Abakra"...Ba-ba-ba - ga-ga-ga" (122).

Čudaki are people whose quirks are sanctioned by the society they (unwittingly) mock. The hilarious nature of the older Letaev's buffoonery lies in the manner in which its inabilty to overcome byt leads to an uneasy integration : "With father, this 'to be like everyone else' was integrated only after the greatest of effort; with a clumsiness which provoked laughter in "everyone else", he pierced all the bytovye canons" (Na rubeže, p.67). In artistic form, the semi-canonized quirk of the čudak resembles the Čexovian tic - irrelevant trivia repeated in infinite sequence without pattern. In The Christened Chinaman , the older Letaev enacts a litany of quirky rituals: pulling the heads off flies (112), banging a rusty nail against a handbasin in frustration at his wife's obduracy

(153), spewing out pun after pun to welcome guests at a family gathering (116-17), making forays into the kitchen - the bowels of the bytovoj hell - in order to demonstrate an idiosyncratic new method for peeling potatoes:

> He scrapes and scurries through the entire house...destroying the sense of order...His momentary forays with a pencil into the thick of household cares are irreversible...They did not understand these Aesopian entries into domestic life: to chase away prejudice with a Stoic sense composed from a curtailment of...the fraction of domestic chores and consisting of new method, for example a new method of peeling potatoes. (199)

Letaev's buffoonery is nonetheless subject to assimilation. This is evident from the first page of The Christened Chinaman, where the list of dust-laden paraphernalia tumbling from the eccentric old professor's desk is part and parcel of the byt against which his čudačestvo is directed as counter-strategy (p. 5).

Though the professor's singularity is subjected to infinite recurrence, this is repetition according to a rhythm that is entirely his. He peels potatoes by his own method - enacting a sequence of time-honored procedures that has nothing to do with the impersonal patterns of domestic routine (and for that very reason is held up to ridicule). Letaev's inscrutable eccentricity - his repetition of singular quirks in a pattern čužoj to all others - is indeed that of a Chinaman.[40] In another example of Belyi's appropriation of his father's čudačestvo in aesthetic form, the archetypally bytovoj slogan "those who..." is broken down by the narrator into staccato (Chinese-like?) sounds and typographical anomalies, then repeated at measured distances in the text of the novel in a coded pattern whose key belongs solely to the artist: ne - ko - to - ry - e - ko - to - ry - e!!...nekoto - rrr -rrr - rrr - rrr - rrr ... (150).

Rhythm is, of course, the domain of Belyj's mother. The Mathematician Letaev is at once the epitome of the bytovoj and a tireless (if ineffectual) warrior against it. The

Professor's Wife, too, serves as the chief enforcer of the bytovye canons and an (albeit temporary) temporary refuge from their horrors. The potential contained within her music does not exclude the possibility of achieving the transfiguration of the everyday to which Belyj was to aspire in his art :

> A large multitude of very interesting things detemporalize themselves at this time; lots of armchairs...the brocade on furniture; everything is so beautiful...so voiceless...sounds fly in, reform everything, and then tune (*nastroit'*)something new ...the walls are stretched out and appear to have broadened themesleves out into the summits of the ceilings; they have deepened and become impossibly transparent. (192-3)

Just as mathematics and art are not purely antitheses, nor are mother and father polar opposites. Each contributes to the alienating effects of byt , yet both, in their different ways, struggle against that alienation in an attempt to remake the cuzoj as svoj.

The Childman

The examples just cited confirm that Belyj conceived of his own art as a struggle against the influence of the everyday. They also indicate that, in struggling with the bytovoj past of which his mother and father were part, Belyj borrowed their counter strategies - eccentric buffoonery and musical rhythm. There results the mutual imbrication of "narrated" and "narration". On one hand, the narrator of Kotik Letaev and The Christened Chinaman adopts facets of the personas that are the focus of his account. On the other hand, the past "reality" that he recounts is itself a product of strategies of resistance against it; what we have is not a childhood in fictional form, but a fictional attempt to overcome childhood. Moreover, the childhood which provided the basis for the texts was not Belyj's, but that of Boris Bugaev junior. The "empirical" act

of transformation is carried out by Bugaev senior. The transforming force is that of art, the result - Kotik Letaev: Boris Bugaev made anew as Kotik Letaev through the divine energy of Andrei Belyj.[41] Belyj cannot be held to account for rationalizing in linguistic form experiences that precede both reason and language. For this is not "his" life to be rationalized, let alone that of Boris Bugaev. Rather, by applying his theurgic art to the byt that blighted the life of Boris Bugaev, Belyj facilitates a release of potential expressed in the Christ-like žizn' of Kotik Letaev. Christ, the (future) apotheosis of the (present) theurgist, Andrei Belyj, is projected back into the Bugaev childhood (past) to produce a synthetic image combining past, present and future in one - Kotik as Jesus.

The ending of Kotik Letaev has been dismissed for its clumsy insertion of a deus ex machina - a piece of cumbersome anthropological baggage thrust onto the shoulders of a child. In fact, something of a more dialectical nature is at work.[42]The memoirs confirm that, following his introduction to the bible, Boren'ka Bugaev did indeed begin, in his childish way, to see himself as a tormented Christ.[43] Recalled by Bugaev (the man), reworked by Belyj (the theurgist), the image is projected onto childhood, to be transfigured into Kotik Letaev (the crucified saviour).[44]

Carol Anscheutz indirectly draws attention to another instance of the complex, back and forth movement between narration and narrated when she writes that in Kotik Letaev :

> Belyi's attempt to cross the threshold of language by means of language must fail in a novel whose medium is language...[Belyi] merely transfers to the ridiculous child the attributes of the sublime. But the ridiculous is not sublimated in Kotik Letaev ; rather the sublime is ridiculed. The adult narrator sinks to the child's level...There is in fact no child in Kotik Letaev : only the caricature of a preternaturally wise child. (p. 353)

The novel does not, however, set out to reproduce a conventional child, but rather, by "spindling" the byt of Boris Bugaev to and fro between the narrative terminals of past and present, dialectically to create a new being - a childman.[45] To be sure, in overpoeticizing a mere infant's everyday experiences, Belyj sinks to the level of a child, ridiculing his adult world of anthroposophy. Equally, the attribution of a poetic sensibility to a six-year old can be seen as the elevation of a child to premature adulthood. Crucially, however, both models (child as adult; adult as child) are themselves "spindled" reworkings of memories attributed referentially to the childhood past. Thus, in both novel and memoir, Belyj's mother taunts her son with remarks about his protruding forehead and his unhealthily developed mind. Acts of buffoonery (the image of the boy crawling on all fours before his family in an infantile regression) are also common to fictional and non-fictional texts.[46]

The spindling strategy is at work in Belyj's attitude to the role of poetry. On one hand, the child in The Christened Chinaman who begins to delight in a "preternaturally overdeveloped" way in the play of word associations is a poet before his time, an adult in child's clothing. On the other hand, the adult writer is, through his attachment to poetry, returning to language in its pristine condition - to a time when meaning and form were one. The adult poeticizes (and makes ridiculous) the child. But the child is the true poet:

> [M]y little fairytales...are scientific exercises in the description and observation of impressions which are defunct in adults; these impressions live in adults too, but they live beyond the threshold of the usual panorama of consciousness. (153)

Building on (and extending) the insights of Dostoevskij, Belyj seeks a resolution to

the paradoxes of man-as-child and child-as-man, and to the question of "where" his narration is to be located (past, present, future?) in the Godman - a being whose childlike innocence is combined with freedom and reason in an adult, human embodiment. Rather than a static (and paradoxical) synthesis of child and adult, God and Man, however, the Christ figure dynamically participates through his human attributes (reason, choice, freely-chosen self-sacrifice) in the true divinity which in Orthodoxy is a dynamic motion of transcendence. God made Himself Man, that man might make himself God.[47] The state of Christ-like innocence is reachievable only by passing, via linear time, through the crucible of suffering: reason, language, and conscious, adult selfhood.[48] With his Christ image, Belyj provides the "reverse flow" (man becomes God) in the iconic process for which the corresponding movement (God becomes man) was the infant Kotik's creative myth-making. He thereby casts aside both the alienated buffoonery of the adult as child (the repetition of unintegrated selfhood) and the unnatural superimposition of artistic reasoning onto a fledgling consciousness (child as adult). [49] The crucified Letaev is to be read as pre-figuring a conscious enactment of childlike žizn' through a sacrifice freely offered by the adult self at the heart of byt:

> [H]istory is sharpening into a summit; on it will be a cross; I will put it there: it will be my last step toward the huge world; onto it I must climb; beneath my feet will be the bustle of life, the crowd...I will be taken apart in myself, with my nailed-on, torn-apart body and soul, - to direct a gaze into the tatters of my sufferings...My self-consciousness will be a husband, then, my self-consciousness as a little child still: I will be born a second time; the ice of concepts, words, meanings - is breaking: it will sprout many a meaning...I am crucifying myself. The flock of black ravens has surrounded me and is cawing. (220-221)

Outside of the narrative time separating past from present, present from future, Kotik

finds his true identity - in the transfiguration performed on the everyday life of Boris Bugaev that accomodates it to Christ's life. The metatextual Kotik Letaev - the true "I" in the discourse (the level at which the art/reality distinction evaporates) - should be considered to be the Godman at all times.[50]

However, despite its aspirations, Kotik Letaev remains a work of narrative art in the western tradition - one which fragments reality into narrating present, narrated past, and projected future. For this reason, the transfiguration must be deferred beyond the end of a plot sequence proceeding from pre-past, through past and present, and projected into the future beyond the act of narration.

The crucifixion and resurrection of Christ lies in the future, not because the event itself will come to pass in years to come, but because the iconic Childman cannot be accomodated in metaphoric art. Only the last sentence is uttered in an eternal (and impossible) present tense, spoken from the position at which this iconic meta-discourse might be located: "In Christ we die in order to rise again in the Spirit" (222). It is at this level that Belyj's project fails, not that of the contradictions entered into by attempting to give linguistic expression to pre-linguistic experience.

Iconic Logic, Re-familiarization and Plot

Despite the tensions undermining Kotik Letaev, iconic logic pervades Belyj's novels. Icons belong to the fallen world of the discrete, rational self. In the perichoresis (or "communication of divine and human idioms") that they accomplish, they must deal in the tools of reason in order to articulate the meaning whose dynamism derives from the energy generated in the attempt to overcome reason's constraining influence.[51] Iconic logic is at the root of Belyj's treatment of language - in particular his conception of the relationship between outer, Apollonian form (ergos) and inner,

Dionysian meaning (energeia). Far from rejecting form as the subjugation of myth by cold, abstract reason (or conceiving of the two as an irreconcilable antinomy), Belyj posits form as the sole means by which myth can be actualized - the shell from whose confines the cosmic must break free in order to be constituted at all.[52] Images of a bursting forth from an enclosed space are prevalent in Belyj's treatment of the pre-linguistic impressions of myth, and in his projection of the arrival of the super "I" (the "He" that is at once Vladimir Solovev and Jesus Christ) which will crown his spiritual development:

> It seemed to me - there was nothing inside: all in me - all on the outside: had sprouted, emanated - it exists, dances and spins; "I" is "not-I"....I am - with the spirit: I am in the spirit!...nowadays I would have said: my hemispheres of brains fused headlong: and like the feathers of sparkling wings, having smashes the brain-pans, they started to tremble: to blossom forth...the bird...rushed...toward me and into me: to remove my "I" and to fly away through the casement with it into endlessness...Kotik Letaev left by us was sitting grey in the dark with his littel chair...If in those moments of mine there had arisen before me a full intelligence of future days and it had illuminated that body...it would have seen...not Kotik, but an empty, deaf hole - Kotik's cranium. (204-07);
>
> The Word will flash like the sun, - this will not be here: not now. My self-consciousness will be a husband then, my self-consciousness as a little child still: I will be born a second time; the ice of concepts, words, meanings - is breaking: it will sprout in many a meaning. (227)

Meaning is a dynamic process ; space is sensed as such if its outer limits are marked by walls against which it presses with unbearable weight; žizn' is achieved solely from within byt . In Peterburg, an everyday item (a sardine can) is torn to shreds by an apocalyptic explosion; Apollon Apollonovič's head splits apart to release his mindgames .[53] The walls of the apartment in The Christened Chinaman burst open under pressure from the internal energy of the cosmic. The frequent generation of

neologistic verbs from familiar nouns in the same novel reflects the fact that the everyday phenomena described are not those of the autobiographical self (Boris Bugaev), but an everyday newly infused with a dynamic energy belonging to the self transformed.[54] As we shall see, in The Christened Chinaman, Belyj refocuses on the necessity of linear temporality and plot to iconic meaning in an attempt to provide a partial corrective to the failings in Kotik Letaev. (The "conservatism" of the later novel is, in a sense, misleading.)

The playing out of the mutual predication of singular and general, concept and meaning, consciousness and cosmos, child and adult, man and God in The Christened Chinaman explains the narrator's contradictory attitude to his father. This derives from an attempt by the son to break free of the pernicious paternal influence (to overcome the alienating abstractions of the arithmeticians), but from the inside, thus accomplishing a creative rapprochement in which there can be no self without other, no art without science, no cosmos without consciousness, no individual creativity without universality, no son without father. Here Belyj echoes Dostoevskij's (misdirected) attack on Turgenev's Fathers and Sons in The Brothers Karamazov by reaffirming the need for an accommodation of son and father (child and adult, man and God), rather than a rebellion of son against father.[55] It is appropriate, therefore, that the liminal space of the professorial apartment that provides the plot's stage should have as its chief player Kotik's father - a threshold figure who mediates between the world of self and the world of other. Belyj focuses on the homey scenes of an everyday life unsuited to literary emplotment, tackling this paradox by "singularizing" the scenes as if everything is happening for the first time, achieving the de-autonomization of anonymous bytovoj ritual and the reappropriation of the paternal for the son. This is reflected in three strategies present in Kotik Letaev, but integrated more fully in The Christened Chinaman: *i)* the narration in the perfective of scenes

which have occurred repeatedly *ii)* the narration of events barely worthy of inclusion in a plot, and *iii)* the presentation of domestic regularities as sequences of mythological drama.

An example of the first is the quarrel between mother and father which culminates in the bizarre image of Professor Letaev banging his rusty nail against a handbasin. The episode is reported as a one-time occurrence, but at the end of the chapter the narrator refers to the echo of the nail "sounding down the long chain of days" (155). Later, it is suggested that the memory of the episode (itself an event) confers on it the status of a legendary battle.The transforming act of narration integrates repetition and singularity into mythic unity:

> The picture which I saw - Papa with a nail - raises a great fragment of the past - Oh, it's been recalled!...Behind this event of recollection, I felt, resides another event - an ancient, ancient one: in the rage of the flame....the wild rages of the Scythians were recalled! (157)

Though it shares attributes with the third category, the singularization represented here derives from the idiosyncracies of Professor Letaev himself and is of a "referential" nature: Belyj singularizes the routine life of his past by reproducing the quirky patterns of everyday existence already "present" in his father.

The Christened Chinaman also contains marginal episodes lacking any obvious narrative interest, but introduced disorientingly as if of the greatest importance: "I remember two important events in the life of objects; the atlas furniture became worn through...it had been sat in too often and the dirty stuffing was protruding; at this point the upholsterer from Kuznetskii Bridge appeared...they ordered the olive color...the red fairy tale of objects had faded into green prose" (166-67). These quirky details wrench the Letaev's domestic life from the routine world, and from the anonymous collective of adults to which the narrator also belongs. In being rendered marginal and "other" to

us, it is simultaneously made " svoj " to Kotik. Everyday life is the repetition of events according to a recognizable pattern "applied across the board" and is, for that very reason, routine . In relating episodes for which that pattern has no place, Belyj negates the structure of its regularities.

However, the adult writer is himself bound by the adult world of others, and by their post-mythic notion of time in which individual occurrences and recurring patterns are separate. Many of the episodes narrated from the child's point of view, as if they were happening once and for all time, are concluded with interventions from the narrator reminding us that they were doomed to be repeated in endless succession:

> And - it's always like this...the chairs are moved back, they say goodbye...the food has been eaten up; a large quantity of dirty plates has been taken to the kitchen...everything will flow again as if there had been no Mikhailov day, but it will happen again, all this will be repeated; it has been repeated since Adam's time...
>
> (126-7)

The sudden intrusion of a perspective distinguishing "once" from "many times" converts a magical sequence of interchanges between larger-than-life creatures back into nothing more than a routine mealtime sequence.

The adult narrator of The Christened Chinaman is as conscious of his alienation from his young alter ego, as he is of Kotik's alienation from his father. What is " svoj " to Kotik Letaev is "čužoj " to Andrei Belyj. Here too, though, the spindling phenomenon comes into play. The means by which Belyj renders Kotik's experience as different from those of his chronological, adult realm are precisely those of poetry - the province of a child. Many of the "category ii" episodes are framed with indices of poeticity: pointed interspersions of the narrative with "I remember", the use of unprosaic punctuation and graphics (te - ko - to - rrrrrr - y - e), mythic allusions, and

devices explicitly foregrounding the adult artist's active role in changing the material he describes in order to communicate it.

In the third category, phenomena that are routine in both value and temporality are assimilated to the drama of "once and for all time" classical myth. Thus, when Kotik Letaev describes the role of his Aunt Dottie in the household, he does so in terms of a single emplotment of what required months (even years) to unfold:

Aunt Dottie is becoming - also, appearing at first in the mirrors of a distant room; and in majestic serenity she slowly incarnates; incarnate, she walks among us: with a carpet beater in her hand. Incarnate Aunt Dottie is becoming: Evdokiya Egorovna; she is somehow - Eternity. (47)

Another example is the section in Kotik Letaev in which the boy's daily meetings with a large, St Bernard dog in the town square are transformed into a single encounter with an awe-inspiring Lion:

Amid the strange deceptions mistily glinting at me, a most strange one appears before me: before me looms a maned leonine snout; the shouting hour has come; everything is some kind of yellow sands; out of them ragged shags calmly look at me; and the snout: there is a shout: "The Lion is Coming..." In this strange event all the sullenly flowing images were condensed for the first time....Yes, I knew it before: I was waiting for it...(27-28)

When Kotik is disavowed of his "illusion," he is made simultaneously aware of the pastness of the encounters, their plurality (there were numerous sightings instead of one encounter), and their banality (this was an ordinary dog, not a mythical Lion):

"Your lion snout is a fantasy: it belongs to a St. Bernard by the name of Lion...I lived near Dog square for a while too when I was a child....there I too saw Lion....He was a good dog; sometimes he ran out into the circle; he carried a whip in his teeth; we were afraid of him." (31)

Belyj's reappropriation of myth in The Christened Chinaman is aimed at a re-familiarization of the routine, bridging the rift separating self and generalized other and eliminating the distinction between "edakoe takoe svoe " and "kak u vsex". If the mathematicians succeeded in autonomizing the apartment's original, iconic creativity, and the de autonomizing counter strategies of Letaev father attempted to build on the resistance offered by the everyday to kak u vsex in order to reassert the rights of edakoe takoe svoe , then The Christened Chinaman looks towards a reconciliation of the two, the recreation on a new plane of the intimacy which allowed for son creatively to reaccent (my Moscow) the words of a familiar other (Moscow the city of my fathers), for singular to re-embody universal.

When adopting classical and biblical myth, Belyj is not, as in Kotik Letaev , regressing to the pre-conscious moments of his infancy. Rather, he is consciously replenishing the language of educated adults (principally his father). It is Letaev senior - the mediator between plots of the self and plots of the other - who introduces Kotik to the Old Testament story of Abraham, biblical notions of sin and the story of Christ. Kotik shows a propensity for internalizing these universal narratives and reissuing them with his singular stamp, making them his own, while keeping the original in place as the "shell" from which, icon-like, they emerge. In The Christened Chinaman, he confesses to the mundane misdemeanor of eating a herring bone from a plate without permission - a trivial lapse which, for Kotik, becomes the lapse of all lapses - a Fall into eternal solitude:

> The herring bone is the beginning of the end...The guardsman will seize me, I'll be brought in..."Look, he's been caught with a bone...Lizochka, this scoundrel will have to be..." I've been thrown out! And paradise appears between Mama and Papa: they'll go to a correction house to have the " svoe " beaten out of me with a leather...buckle. (183)

Kotik appropriates the plots of the fathers (from Abraham to the present), infusing them with his unique meanings - meanings articulated by shattering the rigidity of the very concepts by which they are contained. He thus reasserts the unity of particular with universal, and the possibility of the inner transcendence of byt (the episode is nothing if not a piece of bytovoj trivia). An image from the novel's plot comes to emblematize the principle behind the novel itself. For the reconciliation between father and son which the episode foreshadows can also be seen as a transcendence of the dichotomy between the writer's adult self and the child's identity from which it is estranged by the past tense that it must adopt.

The iconic emergence of the Childman (the life of Kotik from the routine existence of Bugaev) is an energy transcending the terms required for its articulation ("child" and "man"). The Kotik Letaev of The Christened Chinaman is neither the figure of a "real" child, nor the figurative projection of a "real" adult onto a childhood, nor even the pre-figuration of the Godman. He is not a figure at all, but the product of a creative force released by the sacrificial acknowledgment that immanent Godmanhood cannot after all be textualized, but that "if that were possible, it would be expressed thus...". The energy is located not in the (adult) "I" expressing, nor in the (child-like) concepts expressed, but in the doubly negating (and ultimately affirmative) "If I had been able..." - the transfigurative art of Andrej Belyj which operates on a principle analogous to that of theological apophasis - itself party to revelation.[56] Each novel ends with visions of the child as crucified Christ - Kotik offered up in sacrifice to the inhabitants of byt :

The grown-ups talk about me; Auntie Dottie and Serafima Gavrilovna are conceived of by me as very wicked: they hate the huge Word which will descend into my word...they will crucify me." (217)

"[T]hen the rhinoceros-horned [Madam] Gornung, black, huge in a dress from hell (behind her the white necks) appears stretching out her arms and cawing loudly, like black ravens: "Crucify him! Crucify

him!" (229)

In The Christened Chinaman, significantly, the crucifixion is succeeded by a vision of the resurrection, of the "reverse flow" - man becomes God in Christ - and of the tongues of fire of the Holy Gospel,"hovering in a little flame above Papa, Mama, Uncle and Aunt" (233), breathing the Word into them, enabling each to exhibit simultaneously absolute singularity and absolute commonality. This is the transforming energy of art (and of grace) in the Russian sense.[57]

The notion of the aesthetic as the inner sanctification of objectified matter is in accordance with the idea of Belyj's art as the transcendence of the everyday, and of self/other alienation. The "plot" of Kotik Letaev is no plot, since its true action takes place outside of time. If the final lines of Kotik Letaev are spoken from an eternal present, then the finale to The Christened Chinaman reaccomodates the crucial, human category of time, expanding that present and projecting it onto a number of intersecting temporal planes: backwards to childhood, forward to the time of writing (the moment of trancendence), backwards to the era of the Old Testament, forward to Time's end when Kotik becomes Christ, backward to his infancy when time's end coincided with its beginning.

The last pages of The Christened Chinaman indicate the final aspect of the father-son (adult-child) reconciliation: that of the immanent transfiguration of byt in both guises. The revelatory energy of Belyj's aesthetic enables the horrors of "kak u vsex" and "nekotorye kotorye.. " to be assimilated by the Old Testament patriarchal tradition which merges with Kotik's own papočka who, in his turn, e-merges anew from it : "Those who...! They are in Papa and they are only he: ... the patriarchy, 'those who..'. Papa is also Enoch... He 'enochized' with his nose and raised his sleeve over the china cup on the wash stand" (222). The same energy transfigures the edakoe takoe

svoe - the inscrutable, buffooning Chinaman - with Belyj's divinely inspired theurgy: " I wake up and I see in the window...nature, like an old Chinaman becoming ancient with overgrowth...Papa is the Christened Chinaman. (235)." It thus reestablishes in the Bugaev apartment (the heart of apart-ness) - the creative togetherness of an eternal Letaev Home.

NOTES

1 See Eugene Trubetskoi, Icons: Theology in Color , New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1973, p. 21; Andrei Belyi, "The Art of the Future," in Selected Essays of Andrey Bely, edited and translated by Steven Cassedy, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985, pp. 199-205 (p. 202).

2 In her introduction to a book on Russian autobiographies, Jane Gary Harris writes that "[t]he renewed and refocused interest in autobiographical discourse witnessed in twentieth-century prose...in Russia...as well as in the West, may perhaps be taken as evidence of some formidable twentieth-century phenomenon." She also reminds us of the genre's close historical ties to what is unquestionably the dominant western literary form in modern times - the novel. In this context she quotes Baxtin's references in his essay on the Chronotope to literary narrative's abiding concern with "the true laying bare of the 'internal man'...with the help of outsiders...through some means of exposing the 'internal man'"...allowing his free and suffiicient subjectivity to be perceived...through use of third person perspective." See J. Gary Harris (ed), Autobiographical Statements in Twentieth-Century Russian Literature , Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990, p. 13, pp.3-4. In autobiography the authority of these claims to "making public of the private self" is only intensified by the adoption of the first-person perspective.

3 The form most suited to this kind of cultural production is undoubtedly the increasingly popular "fly-on-the-wall" television biography of the life of the great star, in which voice-over narration is dispensed with as the voyeuristic camera allows the star's intimate daily rituals, revealing, off-the-cuff, off-the-record comments to "speak for themselves". This further confirms the central position of autobiographical discourse in twentieth century culture.

4 Quoted in The New York Times Book Review , July 3, 1994, p. 13.

5 Andrej Belyj, "Symbolism as a World View, " in Cassedy, pp. 73-93 (p.78).

6 "The Emblematics of Meaning," in Cassedy, 11-199 (p. 153).

7 Inspite of the obvious similarities, Belyj's theory of autobiography makes more far-reaching claims than that embraced by Bunin's. Where the latter implies merely that a discourse of the self should be aesthetic in nature, Belyj suggests that aesthetic discourse per se must be exclusively "of the self".

8 Lazar Fleishman, for example, writes that, throughout his career, Belyj "drew on his own life for much of the material of his prose and verse," and of the "intensified autobiographical orientation of Bely's work as a whole." See Lazar Fleishman, "Bely's Memoirs," in John E. Malmstad (ed), Andrey Bely: Spirit of Symbolism , Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1987, pp. 216-42 (pp. 216-17).

9 Roger Keys, "Metafiction in Andrei Belyi's Novel Petersburg ," Forum For Modern Language Studies , Vol. 28, no. 2 (1992), 150-56 (p. 154).

10 "Emblematics of Meaning," p. 193, pp. 183-84.

11 "Emblematics of Meaning," pp. 184-85.

12 "Emblematics of Meaning," p. 193.

13 John Elsworth writes: "Belyi...envisages a massive, multi-volume work which would carry the overall title Epopee - My Life . The three works Kotik Letayev , The Baptized Chinaman and Notes of an Eccentric were all to be parts of it, although Bely's account of their precise relationship are not entirely consistent." See J. Elsworth,

Andrey Bely: A Critical Study of the Novels , Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 118. In fact, the processs outlined in the theories just cited is reproduced at the beginning of Kotik Letaev. The first part of the novel is taken up with a rendition of first, the infant's experience of the "inexpressible nonhappenings" of primal chaos, next his sensation of rhythmically pulsating images, then his attempts to "envelop" those sensations "with words," and then the arrival of the 'I', "rising up out of a coffin lid, a cave, in order to ascend some other time." See A. Belyi, Kotik Letaev (translated by Gerald Janeček), Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1971, pp.8-24. Further page references to the novel are taken from Janeček's excellent translation and are incorporated into the text in parentheses.

14 See Belyj's memoir, Vospominanija o Šteinere, ed. Frederic Kozlik, Paris: La Presse Libre, 1982, p. 220 for confirmation of this point.

15 Critics have differed in the degree to which they have emphasized the "factual" basis for the works. John Elsworth portrays Kotik Letaev as an artistic novel which takes the reader into the arcane, and ultimately idealized, unreal world of anthroposophy, "unless, that is, anthroposophy is actually true and the reader finds all the explanation pre-existing in his own mind" - a possibility Elsworth wisely treats with skepticism. See Elsworth, p. 137. Gerald Janeček steers a "middle" course, arguing that the novel is "a blend of fact and imagination." See Janeček's introduction to Kotik Letaev, p. v. Vladimir Alexandrov takes Belyj at his word and portrays Kotik Letaev as "a thinly veiled autobiography" in which (in Belyj's words) " ' it was not Andrei Bely who wrote...but Boris Bugaev who naturalistically captured what he remembered well all his life.'" See Vladimir Alexandrov, Andrei Bely: The Major Symbolist Fictions, Cambridge, Massachussets: Harvard University Press, 1985, p 153. Despite the differences, the conventional notions of art (as the subjective work of the imagination) and reality (as empirical fact) remain firmly in place. It is the mix of the two which shifts from interpretation to interpretation. Alexandrov's fine study is among those to treat the

line joining Belyi's symbolism with his autobiographical venture, but Alexandrov prefers to downplay the reformulation implicit in Belyi's symbolism of the relationship between aesthetics and ethics , art and God in favour of a focus on the ties posited between art and cognition which he justifiably equates with anthroposophy: "[A]utobiography can be seen as an outgrowth of the symbolistic epistemology that is the foundation of his art...Belyi's immersion in...Steiner's anthroposophy...could only reinforce his belief in the validity of his own theory of symbolism." See Vladimir Alexandrov, "Kotik Letaev , The Baptized Chinaman and Notes of an Eccentric," in Andrey Bely: Spirit of Symbolism, edited by J. Malmstad, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987, 145-183 (p.146).

16 Alexandrov best expresses this critical view of the contradictoriness in Belyi's project: "Bely wants nothing less than to describe an absence of self-awareness from the point of view of the ... unformed infant. But this is clearly a paradoxical desire in view of the nature of language and it leads to the striking inconsistency of referring to oneself even when that self does not exist...There is, in short, an inevitable irreconcilability between the ideas Bely wanted to express and the means available to do this." Alexandrov, Andrei Bely, p. 180.

17 It first acquires prominence in Belyj's second 'Symphony' ("The Dramatic Symphony) where much of the action takes place in the Moscow apartments of mystics and intellectuals at the turn of the century. The apartment theme can be traced through Petersburg (the deteriorating relations between Nikolaj and Apollon Apollonovic in the latter's Petersburg home), to the Moscow novels (Moskva and Maski) in which the action is centered in a thinly disguised version of the Bugaev professorial apartment.

18 As we shall see below, Belyj specifically links the underpinnings of his Symbolist conception of creativity to his early experiences, conflicts and triumphs in the Bugaev apartment.