

Title: Deluge, Demise and Disappearance: Writing the End of St. Petersburg

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Recent scholarship on the Petersburg text has highlighted the remarkable cohesiveness of this ‘master text’ across a vast literary landscape (Toporov 16; Crone and Day 99). From Pushkin to postmodernism, artistic imaginings of the city have reproduced a series of codes (meteorological, topographical and ethnographic) through which the Petersburg “made of verses and Russian prose” (Brodsky 93) is represented as an eerie, foggy, duplicitously elegant and symmetrical city populated by foreigners and outsiders. A fourth code, the eschatological, is also deeply embedded within the tradition of the Petersburg text, and posits the inevitable apocalyptic violence that awaits Peter’s capital. One fascinating question that scholarship has recently begun to explore (Barskova 695) is how different modes of destruction have shaped the development of the Petersburg text. The proposed paper examines various strategies for enacting the end of St. Petersburg, including Pushkin’s great flood, Dostoevsky’s vanishing city and Bitov’s retracting theatre backdrop. Mandelshtam’s modernist Petersburg text *The Egyptian Stamp* (1928), in which writing itself destroys both city and text, is taken as a special case study. The concept of the end of St. Petersburg as an inscribed act is put forth as revealing of a characteristic but latent violence within the act of writing itself.

Barskova, Polina. “Piranesi in Petrograd: Sources, Strategies and Dilemmas in Modernist Depictions of the Ruins (1918-1921)” in *Slavic Review* 65:4 (Winter 2006): 694-711.

Brodsky, Joseph. “A Guide to a Renamed City” in *Less Than One, Selected Essays*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1986: 69-94.

Crone, Anna Lisa and Day, Jennifer. *My Petersburg/Myself, Mental Architecture and Imaginative Space in Modern Russian Letters*. Bloomington, Indiana: Slavica, 2004.

Toporov, V. N. “Peterburg i peterburgskii tekst russkoi literatury” in *Simvolika Peterburga i problema semiotiki goroda. Uchenye zapiski Tartuskogo universiteta. Vypusk 664. Trudy po znakovym sistemam: XVIII*. Ed. Yurii Lotman. Tartu: 1984: 4-29.