"SUNNY SIDE UP": CREATIVITY IN ANDREI BITOV'S 'SUN'

... Into the little windows, 
into the doors, 
going into the crack, 
the mass of sun tumbled, 
burst in; ..."

—Vladimir Maiakovskii, "The Extraordinary Adventure which Happened to Vladimir Maiakovskii During the Summer at the Dacha."¹

"Bearer of life, 
Radiant creator, 
Sun, you I sing!"

—Konstantin Balmont, "Hymn to the Sun."²

From the beginning of his writing career in the late 1950s, contemporary Soviet author Andrei Bitov has addressed the com-

plex interrelationships of life and literature. He declares that he has always striven to capture the ongoing process of life in his works. In a letter, he wrote that he highly esteems writers who place at the center of their imaginative worlds the "cognition of life in the very process of creation." The theme becomes a major concern of his in "Life in Windy Weather" ("Zhizn' v vetrenuiu pogodu") (1963-64), where he plots the creative process, which, he claims, is one and the same, whether one applies it to living or to writing.

For Bitov, there is no boundary between the laws that govern life and those that govern art. Sometimes, he speaks of the lack, in general, of boundaries between life and literature. He elucidates his positions in "Life in Windy Weather" and in other later works—in, for example, "Armenia Lessons" ("Uroki Armenii") (1967-69); "Choice of Location" ("Vybor natury") (1971-73); and Pushkin House (Pushkinskii Dom) (1964-71). The impulse to identify the methodology of the artist with other realms of life is one which is characteristic of Bitov from his earliest publications. It is to one of the early short stories, "The Sun" ("Solntse") (1959), published in Bitov's first collection of short stories, The Big Balloon (Bol'shoi shar), that I shall now turn in order to document the presence of this important theme in the very earliest stages of Bitov's writings.

The story has gone largely unnoticed in the critical literature about Bitov. The only scholars to praise the story have been German scholar Wolf Schmid, who spends a couple of pages of an earlier interview with Bitov where he quotes the story as an example of Bitov's concern with the process of creation. Schmid's praise is based on his analysis of Bitov's later work, where he sees a consistent theme of the interplay between life and art. However, the story itself is rarely discussed in detail.