The Pathos of Holy Foolishness in the Leningrad Underground

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Безвременье. Пиши хоть наобум —
воздушной сетью языка запятый,
играй во всех пяти — скворчи, юродствуй, ратуй
на холостом кресте и в каменном гробу.
—А. Миронов

Timelessness. Put thoughts aside and write—
caught in the aerial net of language,
play in all five—chirp, preach, play fool
on an emptied crucifix or in a stone tomb.
—A. Mironov

During the 1950s–70s, after Stalin's death, unofficial literature emerged and thrived in Leningrad. The majority of its representatives were young poets who came from a variety of backgrounds and did not belong to the Soviet Writers' Union. On the one hand, these writers exhibited provocative, subversive, and drunken behavior, on the other, they initiated original philosophical debates and aesthetic experiments that revived interest in religious topics. The goal of this article will be twofold. First, it will explore common tendencies in the critical approach to the question of religion in unofficial Leningrad culture of the second half of the twentieth century. Second, it will show different examples of "holy foolishness" in the behaviors and works of the poets of the "Leningrad underground." *Iurodstvovanie*, or pretending to be a fool, comprises a very important component in the culture code[1] of contemporary Russia.[2] While in the specific context of the Leningrad underground the term "holy foolery" deviates from its initial religious meaning—

[1] The concept of a cultural code and its application to the explication of the concept of *iurodstvo* is found in Iu. M. Lotman and B. A. Uspenskii, "New Aspects in the Study of Early Russian Culture," trans. N. F. C. Owen, in *The Semiotics of Russian Culture*, ed. Lotman and Uspenskii (Ann Arbor: Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, University of Michigan, 1984), 36–52.

[2] For a discussion of the concept of *iurodstvo* and its different interpretations in contemporary Russian culture, see S. A. Ivanov, *Blazhennye pokhaby: Kul'turnaia istoriia iurodstva* (Moscow: Iazyki slavianskikh kul'tur, 2005), 380.

Holy Foolishness in Russia: New Perspectives. Priscilla Hunt and Svitlana Kobets, eds. Bloomington, IN: Slavica Publishers, 2011, 337–52.

"to be an ascetic practicing holy foolishness"[3]—it acquires a figurative and broader sense of "a deliberate effort to appear like a holy fool" and a "senseless, mad, absurd action that could only be committed by a (holy) fool."[4]

The unofficial culture of 1970s Leningrad features a great number of similar "semiotic signs," which can be explained by the fact that it emerged as a response to the Soviet utopia, to its ethics and aesthetics. Yet in the literary works belonging to this era, the so-called "Bronze Age," the words *iurodivyi*, or "holy fool," and *iurodstvo*, or "holy foolishness," are hardly ever used. They rather are manifested in the behaviors of the poets who subconsciously imitate the behavioral peculiarities characteristic of the paradigm of holy foolishness. As this paradigm evolves, it finds new expression in the historical contexts of the Khrushchev "thaw" and the Brezhnev "stagnation," in the socio-cultural environment of the city "underground," as well as on the outskirts, in the yards and basements of Leningrad. Therefore, the underground literature's general orientation to the freedom of individual creative expression becomes embodied in a distinctive new form of "inner emigration."[5] At a time when "in the Soviet era the religious unconscious acquires new depth" (v sovetskuiu epokhu proiskhodit uglublenie religioznogo bessoznatel'nogo),[6] the mythologem of the alienation of "the holy foolish poet" naturally finds a special place in the intellectual and artistic practices of Leningrad nonconformist artists. The "cultural niche" of underground literature becomes occupied primarily by unofficial poets, whereas the theater of "idiocy" continues the literary tradition of the culture of absurd, popular laughter and marginality,[7] which provide a foundation for the literary use of "anti-behavior" and "scandal" in the Soviet context.[8] The aesthetics of scandal embraced by unofficial writers included disregard for the rules, self-alienation from the Soviet system, and approaching it from the outside.[9] It was this aspect of

[3] A. M. Panchenko, "Smekh kak zrelishche," in *Smekh v Drevnei Rusi*, ed. D. S. Likhachev, Panchenko, and N. V. Ponyrko (Leningrad: Nauka, 1984), 73.

[4] T. F. Efremova, ed., *Sovremennyi tolkovyi slovar' russkogo iazyka* (Moscow: Russkii iazyk, 2006); see http://www.efremova.info/word/jurodstvo.html (accessed 16 November 2010). P. I. Chernykh, *Istoriko-etimologicheskii slovar' sovremennogo russkogo iazyka*, 2 vols. (Moscow: Russkii iazyk media, 2006), 2: 461.

[5] I. V. Moteiunaite, *Vospriiatie iurodstva russkoi literaturoi XIX–XX vekov* (Pskov: n.p., 2006), 5.

[6] M. N. Epshtein, *Novoe sektantstvo: Tipy religiozno-filosofskikh umonastroenii v Rossii (1970–1980-e gody)* (Samara: Bakhrakh-M, 2005), 7.

[7] Iu. M. Lotman, "'Izgoi' i 'izgoinichestvo' kak sotsial'no-psikhologicheskaia pozitsiia v russkoi kul'ture preimushchestvenno dopetrovskogo perioda ("svoe" i "chuzhoe" v istorii russkoi kul'tury)," in *Istoriia i tipologiia russkoi kul'tury* (St. Petersburg: Iskusstvo-SPb, 2002), 232.

[8] S. Savitskii, *Andegraund* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2002), 159.

[9] Nora Buks, "Skandal kak mekhanizm kul'tury," in *Semiotika skandala*, ed. Buks (Paris–Moscow: Izd-vo Evropa, 2008), 9.

underground literature that gained utmost importance. This literature returned to the pre-revolutionary culture of folklore, to the literature of the Silver Age, to Symbolism. It both resumed the spiritual quest of those movements and, relying on the legacy of the Futurists and "The Association of Real Art" (OBERIU), developed a new way of being and expressing the neo-avant-garde paradigm.[10] The cultural and artistic avant-garde is always scandalous and is "steeped in expression of the new hitherto unknown truth."[11]

In the Thaw era, unofficial writers see "holy foolishness" as a "performance,"[12] as the theatricalization of a literary action, which expresses social and aesthetic criticism. In the beginning of the 1950s, nonconformist artists begin to "fool around" thus opting to freely affirm individuality and, consequently, to stir up an apathetic society.[13] Among the poets representative of the first wave of post-Stalin unofficial culture, those belonging to "the philological school" (Krasilnikov, Eremin, Losev, Ufliand, Mikhailov, Kull, and others), Rid Grachev, the young Roald Mandel'shtam, and the "Arefevian" artists (*aref'evtsy*) stand out. The majority of them write under the influence of Maiakovskii, Khlebnikov, and Kruchenykh. At first glance, one cannot find in their texts direct examples of "holy foolishness," but many of these young writers behave in a rather strange way. They meet not only in the usual meeting places, such as communal apartments and dormitories, but also outside, in the streets, and in the auditoriums of the Philological Department at Leningrad State University. Their protest is not the usual rebellion of the young, nor is it prompted by boredom. As they denounce Soviet rule and society, these young unofficial poets provocatively strive to push the limits of creativity and of normal behavior.

As early as the beginning of the sixties, the majority of unofficial Leningrad writers fought for the status of Soviet writer,[14] which meant for them publication opportunities and a firm legal status. But Brodskii's trial immediately showed the impossibility of this path.[15] Following "the Brodskii affair" and the 1968 Prague Spring, the young Leningrad literati went significantly further in their rejection of Soviet reality. From then on they did not want to have anything to do with Soviet literature. The literati of "Malaia Sadovaia

[10] B. I. Ivanov, "Literaturnye pokoleniia v leningradskoi neofitsial'noi literature: 1950e–1980 gody," in *Samizdat Leningrada: Literaturnaia entsiklopediia*, ed. D. I. Severiukhin (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2003), 543.
[11] Vadim Rudnev, "Metafizika skandala," in Buks, ed., *Semiotika skandala,* 37.
[12] T. Maravic, "Il folle in Cristo come performer: Teatralità e performatività nel fenomeno della sacra follia a Bisanzio (secc. IV–XIV) e in Russia (secc. XI–XVII)" (Ph.D. diss., University of Bologna, 2008), 13–16.
[13] Boris Ivanov, ed., *Istoriia leningradskoi nepodtsenzurnoi literatury: 1950–1980-e gody. Sbornik statei* (St. Petersburg: Dean, 2000), 7.
[14] Ivanov, "Literaturnye pokoleniia," 549–60.
[15] Emily Lygo, *Leningrad Poetry 1953–1975: The Thaw Generation* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010), 92–93.

Street" started getting together near the Public Library; the bohemians gathered in cafe "Saigon." The participants of those gatherings cultivated a theatrical vision of the world and drew on the tradition of city folklore. According to Iuliia Valieva, for the "saigonauts," or the representatives of the "Saigon group," "It is not the text as such that is important. It is the situation that caused its birth, or the author, in celebration of whose memory it is important to preserve the energy of turbulence, 'the spirit of madness.'"[16] The "holy madness of Saigon"[17] brought together the existential poverty and spiritual wealth which characterize the underground culture. Poets such as Leonid Aronzon, Vladimir Erl', Konstantin Kuz'minskii, Aleksandr Mironov, Evgenii Venzel', and Tamara Bukovskaia sensed the imminence of the new time, the time of inner independence, and because of that behaved "freely" and "fooled around." Protest motifs in their work were nurtured not only by the Futurist legacy, but also by that of the OBERIU writers. Their works featured many analogs to the "black," absurd, and cynical humor of Kharms, Vvedenskii, and Oleinikov.[18] Examples include the debauchery of Oleg Grigoriev[19] and the dramatic shows of the Khelenuktov avant-garde group (Mironov, Erl', and others), the aesthetic sensuality of David Dar, who openly cursed and anathematized those in power, and the eccentric behavior of his student, Konstantin Kuz'minskii, who used to strip naked in the middle of the street and who often rebuked his friends: "I'm hungry. I'm poor and naked / The word is my only friend."[20] At the end of the 1960s the "obscene sage" Kuz'minskii became one of Leningrad's most active and scandalous nonconformists, while his small apartment turned into the center of "unofficial culture." Up until his emigration to the United States in 1975, extravagant literary evenings occurred there along with artistic exhibits and various *samizdat* (self-published) and *tamizdat* (published abroad) publishing projects. The most eloquent evidence of Kuz'minskii's active role in the movement was his enormous and unique publishing project, the five volumes of *The Blue Lagoon Anthology of Contemporary Poetry* (1980–86).[21]

Kuz'minskii's emigration, just like that of Brodskii (1972), inflicted a heavy blow on the literary movement of the sixties. At that time, the concept

[16] Iuliia Valieva, "Ot sostavitelia," in *Sumerki "Saigona,"* ed. Valieva (St. Petersburg: Izd-vo Zamizdat, 2009), 5.
[17] Tat'iana Goricheva, "Sumerki 'Saigona,'" in Valieva, ed., *Sumerki "Saigona,"* 61.
[18] Aleksandr Kobrinskii, "Oberiuty mezhdu esteticheskim vyzovom i skandalom," in Buks, ed., *Semiotika skandala*, 416–27.
[19] E. Khvorost'ianova, *Poetika Olega Grigor'eva* (St. Petersburg: Gumanitarnaia akademiia, 2002), 6–11.
[20] Konstantin Kuz'minskii, "Chelovek podvala," in *Geroi leningradskoi kul'tury 1950–1980-e*, ed. L. Skobkina (St. Petersburg: Manezh, 2005), 74.
[21] Konstantin Kuz'minskii, ed., *Antologiia noveishei russkoi poezii "U goluboi laguny,"* 5 vols. (Newtonville, MA: Oriental Research Partners, 1980–86). See also the web site http://kkk-bluelagoon.ru/ (accessed 16 November 2010).

of alternative behavior in unofficial culture was expanding. This process began after the Prague events and grew stronger after the suicide of the poet Leonid Aronzon in October of 1970. Positioned between two generations and two poetic worldviews, Aronzon was idealized by his peers. His poetry reveals Futurist influence, but his neo-romantic worldview and proclivity for spiritual themes triggered his quest for beauty and God.[22]

It was in the 1970s that the representatives of unofficial culture moved to the "social periphery," thereby ingeniously solving the problem of creative and social independence. On the one hand, this downward movement was instigated by societal and state censorship. On the other hand, by taking the jobs of janitors, watchmen, and boiler operators, poets and artists deprived the KGB of the opportunity to lower their social status. This conscious "self-denigration" of Leningrad unofficial artists—which echoed the lowly stance of the holy fool—as well as their strange behaviors were part and parcel of their religious search. Thus, in the spiritual void of Soviet life, the underground figures searched for spiritual answers and embarked on a quest for Faith and Truth in defining human identity.

It was this "different" and alternative approach to culture that, in the beginning of the 1970s, led to the emergence in Leningrad of intellectual circles where spiritual questions were the focus of discussion. Along with spontaneous meetings that occurred in public places, the artists organized private meetings and seminars in their own apartments.[23] The Leningrad underground's growing interest in spiritual matters parallelled the stance of Silver Age intellectuals, for whom religion was the key motif both of their artistic evolution and of their personal development.[24] The famous lines by Viktor Krivulin aptly evoke this aspect of "The Second Cultural Movement" (1973):

> Like the light of the early Christian apostles, the spirit of the
> underground culture,
> Glimmers in windows, spouts from black basements.
>
> *Дух культуры подпольной, как раннеапостольский свет,*
> *брезжит в окнах, из черных клубится подвалов.*[25]

[22] Aleksandr Stepanov, "Zhivoe vse odenu slovom": Zametki o poetike Leonida Aronzona," in *Sobranie proizvedenii*, by L. L. Aronzon, 2 vols. (St. Petersburg: Izd-vo Ivana Limbakha, 2006), 1: 52–54.
[23] Lygo, *Leningrad Poetry*, 115–30.
[24] Marco Sabbatini, "Leningradskii tekst i ekzistentsializm nezavisimoi kul'tury 1970-kh godov: Seminary, samizdat i poeziia," in *Atti del convegno internazionale "Pietroburgo, capitale della cultura russa,"* ed. A. D'Amelia, 2 vols. (Salerno: Europa Orientalis, 2004), 2: 224.
[25] Viktor Krivulin, *Stikhi*, vol. 1, *Osnovnye zapisi (Uzory i kraski)* (Paris–Leningrad: Beseda, 1988), 109.

In these words, the poet conveyed a special mythological atmosphere characteristic of that time, positioned on the border between mysticism and the mystification of "the catacombs culture." Thus, in his poetry Krivulin created a new type of underground intellectual and constructed a new role for the poet. The latter became a medium, whose modern idiom expressed the position of a religious believer.[26] According to Boris Ivanov, the poet became a prophet and mediator between the Christian worldview and Soviet culture. It is noteworthy that in the works of Krivulin, religious (or, as he put it, "spiritual") motifs were determined not by the canon but by aesthetics. Viktor Krivulin believed that Aleksandr Mironov, Elena Shvarts, Boris Kupriianov, Petr Cheigin, and Vasilii Filippov were the most religiously gifted Leningrad poets. In reality, these poets deviated from the traditional expression of Christian faith.[27]

Intellectual reflection on German philosophy and the French existentialism of Camus and Sartre also influenced these poets. Both their poetry and lives reflected this spiritual penchant. In poetry, the search for God manifested itself in biblical references, citations, and symbols, whereas in life it found expression in the authors' social cum political dissent and marginality. At the same time their linguistic experiments bordered on postmodernism.[28] Stratanovskii's poem "God" provides an example of the bold merging of Soviet and divine:

GOD
But God is not a golden ghost
Nor [is he] a beast, nor a starry glow
He is just a naked ball
Genderless and hollow

He's floating in the room
Right under the ceiling
From whence he downwards looks
With an invisible gaze

[26] B. I. Ivanov, "Viktor Krivulin — poet rossiiskogo Renessansa (1944–2001)," *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* 68 (2004): 270–85.

[27] Their allegiance to Christianity was both thematic and existential; it is noteworthy that in the 1970s, for the majority of the representatives of unofficial culture, the rite of baptism became the most important and deeply symbolic step toward Christianity. See Viktor Krivulin, "Spiritual'naia lirika vchera i segodnia: K istorii neofitsial'noi poezii Leningrada 60–80-kh godov," in Ivanov, ed., *Istoriia leningradskoi nepodtsenzurnoi literatury*, 105.

[28] See also Liudmila Zubova, "Svoboda iazyka i vykhod iz vremeni," in Ivanov, ed., *Istoriia leningradskoi nepodtsenzurnoi literatury*, 161; and M. Sabbatini, *Quel che si metteva in rima: Cultura e poesia underground a Leningrado* (Salerno: Europa Orientalis, 2008), 243–76.

He turned into a jail
My ink and writing table
I'll give him all I have
Remaining stark naked.[29]
(1968–72)

БОГ
А Бог — не призрак золотой
Не зверь, не звездный жар
Он только голый шар

Бесполый и пустой
Он в комнате повис
Под самым потолком
И смотрит, смотрит вниз
Невидимым зрачком

Мои чернила, стол
Он превратил в тюрьму
Я все отдам ему
А сам останусь гол.

Soviet reality kept the poet's lyrical "I" in terror, yet by ridding himself of everything—the ascetic step of the holy fool's radical non-possession—he also liberates himself from fear, thus "finding human dignity."[30] Stratanovskii's religious pathos and pathetic tone[31] stand out in the last line of this poem, "Remaining stark naked." There the poet shows the spiritual nature of the "naked underground man," which conforms to the "ideal costume of the holy fool."[32]

To further explore this topic, let us turn to Tat'iana Goricheva (a quite active philosopher in the Leningrad underground and an ex-wife of the poet

[29] S. G. Stratanovskii, *Stikhi* (St. Petersburg: Novaia literatura, 1993), 6. See also A. Kalomirov [Viktor Krivulin], "Tret'ia kniga Sergeia Stratanovskogo," *Severnaia pochta* (Leningrad), no. 4 (1979): 40 [Arkhiv "Memorial"-Sankt-Peterburg].
[30] Sergei Stratanovskii, "Izbrannye stikhi i poemy" (predislovie redaktsii), *"37"* (Leningrad), no. 7–8 (1978): 8 [Arkhiv "Memorial"-Sankt-Peterburg].
[31] According to Mikhail Gasparov, the so-called three-foot "pathetic iamb" has its own unique formal meaning in this poem. See M. L. Gasparov, *Metr i smysl* (Moscow: Izd-vo Rossiskogo gosudarstvennogo gumanitarnogo universiteta, 2000), 98–99.
[32] In his study of Russian holy foolishness Panchenko states that "the holy fool's ideal outfit is nakedness." See "Laughter as Spectacle," translated in this volume by P. Hunt, Sv. Kobets, and B. Braley, 67. See also A. M. Panchenko and D. S. Likhachev, "Iurodivye na Rusi," in *Ia emigriroval v Drevniuiu Rus'* (St. Petersburg: Zvezda, 2005), 28.

Viktor Krivulin),[33] who wrote that the holy fool's nakedness is "the absence of false protection from a false world."[34] An underground man in the Soviet Union did not accept any false world. He would rather be covered by sores and scabs, remain in his hearth and home to continue crying: "My Lord! Why have You forsaken me?" Leningrad underground poetry came to embrace not only the poetical but also existential "nakedness" of the *iurodivyi* as reflected in the alienation, homelessness, and asceticism of non-conformist existence.[35]

In the beginning of the seventies, religious-philosophical seminars once again re-entered Petersburg tradition. The first meetings of the famous Religious-Philosophical Seminar, which for many Leningrad underground writers was a ground-breaking event, took place in 1973. Its initiators included Goricheva and Krivulin, Stratanovskii and Evgenii Pazukhin, and its meeting place was Krivulin's apartment, number 37 (Kurliandskaia ulitsa, dom 20). Representatives of different worldviews and confessions—Orthodox, Baptist, Catholic, Krishna, Gnostics, and agnostics—met there. Topics of the papers included early Christianity and the Church Fathers (Gregory of Nazianzus, Cyril of Alexandria, Aphanasius the Great), biblical exegesis, Gnosticism, Existentialism, and Russian philosophers (Sergei Bulgakov, Pavel Florenskii, Nikolai Berdiaev, Lev Shestov, Vasilii Rozanov, Nikolai Fedorov). In addition, Goricheva offered several papers on Western philosophers: Jaspers, Kierkegaard, Barthes, Tillich, Heidegger, Camus, Russell, and others. In the spring of 1976, when apartment number 37 was targeted by the KGB, Krivulin and Goricheva put a stop to the seminars.[36] After that Goricheva assumed a more Orthodox Christian position and became an active participant

[33] It is interesting to note that initially Goricheva was more into German and French existentialism than Christianity. She carried on a secret and prolific correspondence with Martin Heidegger, who, she writes, "discovered for European thought mystical fear and nothingness." See T. Goritchéva, *Nous, convertis d'Union soviétique* (Paris: Nouvelle cite, 1983), 18: "Je lus Nietzsche a 19 ans (j'ai ignore l'Évangélique jusqu'à 26 ans), je fus éprise de lui, comme de Sartre, de Camus et de Heidegger, de leur philosophie 'existentielle' de la révolte qui m'était très proche. A l'époque, dans les années de liberalisation sous Khrouchtchev, ces penseurs étaient en partie autorises, leurs traductions circulaient en samizdat; dans les cafes et les autobus l'intelligentsia discutait du problème de l'existence absurde et nauséeuse."

[34] T. M. Goricheva, "Iurodivye ponevole," *Beseda*, no. 2 (1984): 63.

[35] For a discussion of the non-conformist position in the light of the concept of Christian asceticism, see Svitlana Kobets, "The Subtext Of Christian Asceticism in Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *One Day In The Life Of Ivan Denisovich*," *Slavic and East European Journal* 42: 4 (1998): 669.

[36] T. M. Goricheva, *Pravoslavie i postmodernizm* (Leningrad: Izd-vo Leningradskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta, 1991); see also Goricheva, *Khristianstvo i sovremennyi mir* (St. Petersburg: Aleteiia/Stupeni, 1996).

in the Leningrad feminist movement.[37] Commenting on her radical position, Kuz'minskii called her a "holy-foolish feminist."[38]

Other underground poets, such as Viktor Krivulin, Oleg Okhapkin, and Elena Shvarts, were influenced by the seminar in a rather different way. As their stylistically innovative mystical poetry shows, they turned to a "playful God-seeking." Thus, Elena Shvarts writes:

God commands a sacrifice—hurry up! Do it!
Cut up your life into pieces, boil them quickly in an aluminum pan…
(1973)[39]

Жертвы требует Бог — так скорей же ее принеси.
Жизнь на части ты режь, в алюминии быстро свари.

According to Natal'ia Efimova: "Elena Shvarts is not just a religious poet, she is a mystical one.… The world of Elena Shvarts is complete and boundless."[40] The provocative tone and visionary descriptions of these unofficial poets' works evince their "taste for the eternal."[41] They expanded spiritual experience beyond the boundaries of traditional Christianity toward the grotesque.[42]

A breach in my soul shows through
Through it the whirling eternity flies in. (1976)[43]

В моей душе сквозит пролом,
Туда, кружась, влетает вечность.

One can say that in the works of Elena Shvarts "holy foolish tones" are frequently present.[44] The poetess often embarked on fights with God like a

[37] T. M. Goricheva, *Docheri Iova: Khristianstvo i feminizm* (St. Petersburg: Alga Fond/ Stupeni, 1992).
[38] Kuz'minskii, ed., *Antologiia,* 5b. See also http://kkk-bluelagoon-2.nm.ru/tom5b/femin1.htm (accessed 16 November 2010).
[39] E. A. Shvarts, *Sochineniia*, 2 vols. (St. Petersburg: Pushkinskii fond, 2002), 1: 48.
[40] N. Efimova, "Vos'merka logosa: O poezii Eleny Shvarts," *Chasy* (Leningrad), no. 17 (1979): 156 [Arkhiv "Memorial"-Sankt-Peterburg].
[41] Krivulin, "Spiritual'naia lirika," 101.
[42] E. R. Men'shikova, *Grotesknoe soznanie: Iavlenie sovetskoi kul'tury* (St. Petersburg: Aleteiia, 2009), 257. See also Vadim Kulakov, "Bronzovyi vek russkoi poezii," in *Poeziia kak fakt* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 1999), 103.
[43] Shvarts, *Sochineniia*, 2: 140–45.
[44] T. M. Goricheva, "Tkan' serdtsa rassteliu Spasiteliu pod nogi…," *Grani*, no. 120 (1981): 201.

sparrow "who attacks Him."[45] Holy foolishness acquired more importance in her work after she wrote her famous collections *Black Easter* (*Chernaia Paskha*, 1974) and *Simple Poems for Myself and for God* (*Prostye stikhi dlia sebia i dlia Boga*, November 1976), in which she prepared poetic space for religious ecumenism. See, for example, her 1984 poem "The Struggles of the Nun Lavinia" ("Trudy monakhini Lavinii") and the post-Soviet long poem "Holy Fools' March to Kiev" ("Pokhod iurodivykh na Kiev," 1994), as well as the poem "Kseniia of Petersburg" ("Kseniia Peterburgskaia," late 1990s).

Holy Fools' March to Kiev
(Real event, see Pryzhov)

Introduction
In a vicious-merry Moscow, in a cemetery, behind the fence, fools for Christ's sake came together. They decided to repent and to go to the holy ossuaries, the catacomb relics , which are at rest in the city of Kiev.
[…]
To Kiev, with a staff in his hand,
A [holy] fool drags himself along
To holy places
Yet he does not have any clue
What is Kiev and where it is.

He burned his wits on a candle
And fed the ashes to grass.
Yet in his dark head
One last coal is still burning.

Поход юродивых на Киев
(Подлинное происшествие – см. Прыжова)

Вступление
В зло-веселой Москве, у кладбища, в ограде собрались Юроды Христа ради. Порешили они покаяться — и отправиться ко святым костям, К пещерным мощам, что покоятся в граде Киевском.
[…]
В Киев ко святым местам
Юрод бредет с клюкою
Но что этот Киев такое
И где он — не знает сам.

[45] E. A. Pazukhin, "V poiskakh utrachennogo begemota," *Beseda,* no. 2 (1984): 143.

Он разум на лучине сжег,
Пепел скормил траве,
Только в темной его голове
Тлеет еще уголек.[46]
[…]

Aleksandr Mironov can be considered another holy foolish poet. According to Krivulin, Mironov's poetry is rooted in Gnostic thought and imagery,[47] to the point of sectarianism.[48] By positioning himself as a sectarian and a heretic and by engaging Gnostic themes and reasoning, Mironov undermines Orthodox church dogma:

Oh, I understand, that a game is a game,
But it's unbearable to play with God the game of the void,
And as a punishment, your soul will shut itself
in a vicious circle of mirrors […] (1974)[49]

О, я-то понимаю, что игра – игрой,
Но с Богом в пустоту играть несносно,
И в наказание зеркальностью сплошной
Душа твоя замкнется в круге косном […]

The poet's behavior, like the holy fool's, expresses his rejection of the sinful world of Soviet reality, which violates the divine order.[50] According to Boris Uspenskii, "anti-behavior—backward, topsy-turvy behavior—both makes its practitioner a part of the other world and exposes the untruth of this one."[51]

It is also noteworthy that, as if reflecting the paradigm of holy foolishness, laughter in the poems of Mironov occupies an ambivalent position in-between the comical and serious worlds.[52] At the same time, according to

[46] Shvarts, *Sochineniia*, 1: 62.
[47] Gnostic thought and imagery are prominent in the Apocrypha and in oral traditions of a secret truth.
[48] Krivulin, "Spiritual'naia lirika," 103.
[49] Ibid., 96.
[50] Sergei Stratanovskii, "Podmigivaiushchie angely (posle vechera Aleksandra Mironova)," *Obvodnyi kanal* (Leningrad), no. 4 (1983): 261–64.
[51] This also applies to the Gnostics, whose tradition possibly influenced holy foolishness. See B. A. Uspenskii, "Antipovedenie v kul'ture drevnei Rusi," in *Izbrannye trudy*, vol. 1, *Semiotika istorii. Semiotika kul'tury* (Moscow: Gnozis, 1994), 323.
[52] On the serious nature of the holy fool's laughter, see Panchenko, "Laughter as Spectacle," 60, 106–09.

Shubinskii, in Mironov's poems, we find the utmost Russian seriousness, which is serious even in the very "holy foolish" antics. [53]

My laughter, who's a lamb and a silly angel,
Give me the wreath of immortality,
Invisible God, silver laughter,
Fair God of the dark ocean.

Demon, who laughs over my corpse,
Fiend, who tramples me with his heel,
Laughter—my ever crying lover,
[You are a] prisoner in the cell of the created world.

Laughter, suffering in the dervish dance
I'm your Judas, your thirteenth friend,
Make a hempen noose for me,
My God, my laughter, who denies me!
(1979)[54]

Смех мой, агнче, ангеле ветреный,
Подари мне венец нетления,
Бог невидимый, смех серебряный,
Светлый Бог океана темного.

Бес, над трупом моим хохочущий,
Враг, пятой меня попирающий,
Смех — любовник мой вечно плачущий,
Узник в камере мира тварного.

Смех, страдающий в танце дервишей,
Я — Иуда твой, друг тринадцатый.
Приготовь мне петлю пеньковую,
Бог мой, смех, меня отрицающий!

The personality and poetry of Oleg Okhapkin offer another interesting example of "religious pathos" in the underground Leningrad. He stands out in the Christian context of the city as a special mythical phenomenon. Of peasant descent, he was born in one of Russia's "brutal" years (1944), at the end time of the Leningrad blockade. As David Dar puts it: "a boy of angelic beauty was born," echoing a prophesy by Father Ioann of Kronshtadt (1829–

[53] V. I. Shubinskii, "Aleksandr Mironov, *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia i poemy 1964–2000* (St. Petersburg: Inapress, 2002)," [review], *Kriticheskaia massa*, no. 1 (2003): 6–9, http://www.magazines.russ.ru/km/2003/1/ (accessed 24 March 2011).

[54] Aleksandr Mironov, *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia i poemy 1964–2000* (St. Petersburg: Inapress, 2002), 32.

1908). Before he died, Father Ioann of Kronshtadt prophesied that in Petrograd, during the most brutal year, a baby-boy of angelic beauty would be born. He will proclaim God's words to the sinful Russian people." Everything came to pass: the brutal year, the baby-boy, the angelic beauty. No one needed the newborn. His mother was sick, and his father was unknown. One of the nurses in his maternity clinic was a follower of Father Ioann. She "recognized" the boy and brought him up as her "grandson." Until the age of sixteen, Oleg Okhapkin grew up in the aura of the legend about his unusual birth and divine mission.[55] Impressed by the death of Anna Akhmatova (1966), he began to write poetry. He also painted and sang in the church choir. From the very start Okhapkin turned to religious themes. His poems often resemble prayers, and retell the biblical texts. Okhapkin recited them to his friends in an ecstatic state. His poetry, however, does not have either the tragic depth or strife and conflict of an "underground poet." It features a naive ecstasy and almost liturgical pathos, resembling those of a prophet.

And we'll have His word of judgment,
And nothing will save the liars
Before the sun of the Lord's world.
Let the words of the poet come true![56]
(1973)

И будет нам судное слово Его,
И лживых тогда не спасет ничего
Пред солнцем Господнего света.

Through his ascetic life-style—he lived as a monk-recluse on the outskirts of Leningrad or wondered as a lonely tramp—this idiosyncratic and "innocent figure" sought to imitate Christ.[57] Especially revealing are the two last stanzas of the emblematic poem "Heavy Wings" ("Tiazhelye kryl'ia," 1972):[58]

In an act of holy retribution,
My Father took away from me:
My kin, my home, my health, my youth,
And Christmas Eve and Christmas tree.

He left for me a single gift,
The one that stripped me naked.
He also gave me heavy wings, the heat of freedom,
And the fiery Word of prayer.

[55] D. Ia. Dar, "Leningrad. Sud'ba. Poet," *Grani*, no. 110 (1978): 44–51.
[56] Oleg Okhapkin, "Stikhi," *Grani*, no. 110 (1978): 56.
[57] Krivulin, "Spiritual'naia lirika," 104.
[58] O. A. Okhapkin, *Stikhi* (Paris–Leningrad: Beseda, 1989), 160.

Все отнял у меня Отец:
Семью, сочельник, елку, дом,
Здоровье, юность, наконец,
Во мщении Своем святом.

Одно еще оставил дар,
То самое, с чего я гол,
Да тяжесть крыл, свободы жар,
Молитвы огненный Глагол.

Oleg Okhapkin did not get to be published in the 1970s. Soviet publishers harshly rejected his poetry again and again. Once a Party pen pusher from The Soviet Writer (Sovetskii pisatel') publishing company said to him, "Who needs your poetry about the soul and God? Go work at a factory…."[59] A homeless beggar, Oleg Okhapkin took part in various cultural gatherings and finally was sent to a psychiatric hospital, thereby sharing the tragic fate of many other underground "prophets" and "judges" (such as Rid Grachev and Vasilii Filippov).[60] Okhapkin's poetry, like Stratanovskii's, features fear of God, which the holy fool and the prophet opt to instill in the society. In the work of these two poets, the "active side" of holy foolishness ("berating the world") occurs under the guise of self-exposure.[61] Other elements of the holy fool paradigm in their lives and poetry are the unmasking of the "proud world," extreme asceticism, self-abasement, apparent madness, and the abuse of the flesh.[62]

The use of biblical citations is one of the most salient lexical markers of 1970s underground poetry. Stratanovskii notes that "by mixing Soviet chancery jargon with biblical citations [one] linguistically recreates an atmosphere of anxiety and spiritual tension."[63] At the end of 1979 Stratanovskii published a samizdat collection of poems *In Fear and Trembling*. This biblical citation echoes Kierkegaard's "Fear and Trembling."[64] Yet if for the Danish philosopher, "fear" is a necessary condition for man's movement toward God, for the poet Stratanovskii, "fear and trembling" refer primarily to the hopelessness of human existence. Fear in Stratanovskii's poetry brings to the fore the absurdity of a commonplace man vis-à-vis history and eternity. His fate is akin to the

[59] Dar, "Leningrad. Sud'ba. Poet," 50.
[60] Vadim Rudnev, "Prigov — poet-parafrenik," in *Semiotika bezumiia*, ed. N. Buks (Paris–Moscow: Izd-vo Evropa, 2005), 207. See also V. F. Odoevskii, "Kto sumasshedshie?" in Buks, ed., *Semiotika bezumiia,* 262: "Poet? Poet est' pervyi sud'ia chelovechestva…"
[61] Panchenko, *Iurodivye na Rusi*, 26–41; "Laughter as Spectacle," 61.
[62] Panchenko, *Iurodivye na Rusi*, 27; "Laughter as Spectacle," 61.
[63] Stratanovskii, "Izbrannye stikhi i poemy," 7.
[64] L. V. Zubova, *Sovremennaia russkaia poeziia v kontekste istorii iazyka* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2000), 11.

spiritual and physical suffering of Job before the face of God.[65] "Maybe, God is getting through to me / as He bestows on me atoms of pain" (1978).[66]

According to E. Pazukhin, "the poet's consciousness would like to be atheistic (and know nothing about God), but it cannot, because it constantly experiences Him as a terrible, hostile reality."[67] This summarizes Stratanovskii's "poetic justification of the commonplace" (*poeticheskoe opravdanie obydennosti*).[68] The poet's conflict-ridden religious consciousness finds expression in the poem "The Dispute" ("Disput," 1979), which metaphorically stands for the religious "disputation" of that entire era and of his generation of intellectuals. There are sixteen participants, among whom we find a mystic, a mathematician, a farmer, a theologian, and a "holy foolish" alcoholic:

Once again I am bitterly drunk
    but do not judge me harshly
Give me an accordion,
    I will sing to you about God
(They give him an accordion. He sings)
When I, The sad ghost of gateways,
Was lying down on the sidewalk,
The dawn colored roofs in crimson
And I heard the voice of God.
    The Lord said to me quietly: arise
Go drink any muck you find
    Go sin with wenches all you want
Until the diamond of your soul
    Will find itself on God's palm […]

Я снова горько пьян,
    но не судите строго
Подайте мне баян,
    я вам спою про Бога
(Ему дают баян. Он поет)
Когда лежал я на панели
Печальный призрак подворотен
Зарею крыши залели
И я услышал глас Господен
  Господь сказал мне тихо: встань

[65] Viktor Krivulin, "Skvoz' prizmu boli i uzhasa," in *T'ma dnevnaia*, ed. S. G. Stratanovskii (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2000), 175–81.
[66] Stratanovskii, *Stikhi*, 97.
[67] E. Pazukhin, "V poiskakh," 142.
[68] Nikita Eliseev, "Klerk-solovei," in Ivanov, ed., *Istoriia leningradskoi nepodtsenzurnoi literatury*, 123.

Иди и пей любую дрянь
С любыми бабами греши
Пока алмаз твоей души
В ладони Божьей.[69]

To conclude: In the poetic works of the Leningrad underground literary movement of the 1970s, philosophical speculations and theological discussions addressed spiritual questions and also strongly evoked imagery of *iurodstvo*, foolishness for Christ's sake. This imagery included paradox, scandal and impersonation of insanity. It provided a vehicle for their poetic strategy of defamiliarization (*ostranenie*) that expressed their role as outsiders to Soviet reality. Their holy foolish rebellious marginality facilitated the synthesis of high "religious" eclecticism and grotesque consciousness that characterized the unique poetic output of the Leningrad underground.

Translated by Svitlana Kobets

В так называемом «бронзовом веке» русской поэзии, в социально-культурной среде городского «подполья», на окраинах, во дворах и подвалах Ленинграда, парадигма «юродивого» актуализируется как в произведениях так и в поведении (поступках, жестах) поэтов андеграунда. Мифологема отчужденности «юродствующего поэта» фактически бессознательно находит свое место в литературной практике ленинградских писателей нонконформистов, являясь ответом на утопический мир советской этики и эстетики. Опираясь на традицию авангарда и опыт театрализации поэтического произведения (перфоманс), а также на философские размышления и богословские дискуссии, подпольная литература 70-х годов провокационно ставит ряд духовных и эстетических вопросов. Автор статьи утверждает, что во второй половине XX века, в контексте неофициальной культуры советского периода, понятие «юродства» можно трактовать в переносном, расширенном и более современном значении, как художественное, намеренное старание казаться юродивым, как бессмысленный, нелепый жест, который под стать только юродивому. Он разбирает разнообразные примеры юродствования в поведении и произведениях поэтов «ленинградского подполья», а также их философскую и эстетическую подоплеку.

[69] Stratanovskii, *Stikhi*, 101–02.