

Lice in the Iron Cap: Holy Foolishness in Perspective

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Iurodstvo (*iurodstvo Khrista radi*), or holy foolishness for Christ's sake, is a peculiar form of Eastern Orthodox asceticism whose practitioners, *iurodivye Khrista radi* (later referred to as *iurodivye*, holy fools, fools for Christ's sake, fools in Christ),¹ feign madness in order to provide the public with spiritual guidance yet shun praise for their saintliness and attract abuse in imitation of the suffering Christ. Geographically, the origins of holy foolishness can be traced back to the early Christian ascetic and monastic communities in Egypt, Syria, Palestine, and the Middle East in general, whereas its textual prototypes² reside in the New Testament. The term and concept of holy folly stem from the Apostle Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, where he dwells on the foolishness of the cross in the eyes of the profane, spiritually blind world and deems the apostles, followers of Christ, to be fools for Christ's sake. A number of ascetic accounts embracing this ideal can be found in early Christian monastic corpora. While holy foolishness as a behavioral paradigm and hagiographic ideal evolved in Byzantium, it was in medieval and modern Russia that the holy fool's cult and impact on culture reached unprecedented scope and intensity.

The hagiographic image of the holy fool arrived in Kievan Rus' as part and parcel of the Byzantine Christian legacy, yet it took root in Rus' and Muscovy only several centuries later. In the fifteenth–sixteenth centuries, when the holy fools came to be among Russia's most popular canonized saints, the

¹ For a more detailed discussion of the terms *iurodstvo* and *iurodivyi*, see n. 1 in A. M. Panchenko, "Laughter as Spectacle," trans. P. Hunt, S. Kobets, and B. Braley, in this volume, 41–147. [English translation of A. Panchenko, "Smekh kak zrelishche," in D. S. Likhachev, A. M. Panchenko, and N. V. Ponyrko, *Smekh v Drevnei Rusi* (Leningrad: Nauka, Leningradskoe otделение, 1984), 72–154.]

² Svitalana Kobets, "The Paradigm of the Hebrew Prophet and the Russian Tradition of *Iurodstvo*," in "Canadian Contributions to the XIV International Congress of Slavists: Ohrid, Macedonia, 2008," ed. Oleh Il'nytsky, special issue, *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 50: 1–2 (2008): 1–16; Kobets, "The Prophetic Paradigms: The Fool in Christ and the Hebrew Prophet" (thesis for License in Mediaeval Studies, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, University of Toronto, 2006); Kallistos [Timothy Ware], "The Fool in Christ as Prophet and Apostle," *Sobornost*, no. 2 (1984): 6–28.

term *iurodivyi* became a byword designating a type of secular behavior, which derived its traits (e.g., presumed hidden holiness, grotesque self-humiliation, play-acting) from the behavioral paradigm of holy foolish asceticism and the model of saintliness. The secular and ascetic designation of the term have existed side by side. Such famous public figures as Tsar Ivan IV Groznyi (sixteenth c.), Archpriest Avvakum (seventeenth c.), and Grigorii Rasputin (twentieth c.), contemporary politicians such as Eduard Limonov and Vladimir Zhirinovskii as well as authors such as Fedor Dostoevsky, Vasilii Rozanov, Venedikt Erofeev, Viktor Erofeev, and Konstantin Kuz'minskii,³ to mention just a few, employed this playful cum subversive model in their behaviors, lifestyles, rhetoric, and works. So did dozens of characters from Russian belle letters who were modeled on the hagiographic holy fool or featured different aspects of the holy fool's diverse phenomenology. Among examples we find the drunken humility of Venedikt Erofeev's Venichka, the grotesque foolery of Ivan Groznyi, and the sublime stance of Vasilenko's Durochka.⁴

Because of the holy fool's intrinsic ambiguity (as the saint feigns madness and sinfulness, he cannot be distinguished from real madmen or sinners), practitioners of *iurodstvo* were rejected and mistreated on a par with real madmen and hooligans. In fact, from the very inception of the phenomenon of *iurodstvo* holy foolish ascetics existed side by side with their numerous epigones, and both were continuously persecuted and even executed as fraudulent fools for Christ. In this respect the holy fool resembles one of his models and prototypes, the Hebrew prophet,⁵ whose identity as God's mouthpiece has been traditionally questioned and challenged by people. Christianity epitomizes this typological kinship in the holy fool's imitation of Christ's Passion.⁶

The *iurodivyi* has been viewed as a religious type, as a historical reality, as a socio-cultural phenomenon (sometimes under these auspices as a mental case), and as a literary creation. The claim that the whole of Russian culture, as well as the Russian people's collective sense of self, has been markedly influenced by this phenomenon (Epstein, Lipovetskii, Sergey Ivanov, Viacheslav Ivanov, Vasilii Ivanov, Thompson, Rancour-Laferriere, Medvedev) finds support in Russian art, literature, cultural philosophy, and literary criticism.

³ See Marco Sabbatini, "The Pathos of Holy Foolishness in the Leningrad Underground," pp. 337–52 in the current volume.

⁴ See Priscilla Hunt, "Ivan IV's Personal Mythology of Kingship," *Slavic Review* 52: 4 (1993): 769–809; Viacheslav Kuritsyn, "Velikie mify i skromnye dekonstruktsii," chap. 5 in *Russkii literaturnyi postmodernizm* (Moscow: OGI, 2001), also available at <http://www.guelman.ru/slava/postmod/5.html> (accessed 17 September 2011); and Svitlana Kobets, "From Fool to Mother to Savior: The Poetics of Orthodox Christianity and Folklore in Svetlana Vasilenko's Novel-Vita Little Fool (*Durochka*)," *Slavic and East European Journal* 51: 1 (2007): 87–110.

⁵ Kobets, "Prophetic Paradigms," 1–15.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 25.

The holy fool has been within scholarly focus since the mid-nineteenth century, yet in the last several decades both scholarly and artistic interest in the phenomenology of holy foolishness has escalated and ramified. There have appeared a number of article- and book-length scholarly examinations of the phenomenon as a whole (Sergey Ivanov, Panchenko, Fedotov, Thompson, Ware, Chizevskii, Saward, Kobets), of its different aspects and individual saints (Rydén, Krueger, Moldovan, Murav, Lavrov, Vlasov, Challis, Hunt) as well as of its artistic adaptations (Kuritsyn, Børtnes, Epstein, Kobets, Vasiliï Ivanov). From its initial humble position as a highly specialized subject within Byzantine and Slavic Studies, the holy fool has risen to be the subject of numerous studies, college curricula, specialized courses, and conference panels as well as entire conferences.

As new discoveries and discussions bring forth new historical evidence, the scope of our understanding of this phenomenon, its transmutations and adaptations as well as the parameters of its research, keep widening and transforming. At the same time the number of new artistic uses of the behavioral paradigm of holy foolishness grows. New artists continue to draw on multiple adaptations and discussions of holy foolery by their predecessors and scholars. Examples of recent adaptations include Evseev's novella *Iurod* (The Holy Fool, 2000) and Shnitke's operatic (1996) adaptation of the imagery of holy foolery, subversion, and scandal inspired by Viktor Erofeev's short story "Zhizn' s idiotom" (Life with an Idiot, 1980).⁷ The latter work has recently (2010–11) been adapted by an outstanding Ukrainian artistic dissident, theater director Andrii Zholdak. In the spirit of holy foolishness, Zholdak revisits Erofeev's work as he scandalizes the public with his raw, subversive, graphic, and shocking yet mesmerizing spectacle. His avant-garde show takes Erofeev's famous text beyond its alleged role as political satire to a realm beyond two-dimensional interpretation and verbal expression altogether. These are just a few, albeit remarkable recent developments in the ever flamboyant literary and artistic life of the holy fool. Scholarly interest in the artistic applications of holy foolishness and its philosophical and theological uses is

⁷ Laura Piccolo gives an overview of recent works and authors who rely on the holy fool paradigm and discusses at length dramatic adaptations of the holy fool's stance by the creative group Sinie Nosy (Blue Noses) in her article in the current compilation (see "From Stylization to Parody: The Paradigm of Holy Foolishness [*iurodstvo*] in Contemporary Russian Performance Art," 373–89). Two other authors whose discussions of contemporary literature are included in our compilation are Marco Sabbatini ("The Pathos of Holy Foolishness in the Leningrad Underground") and Per-Arne Bodin ("Holy Foolishness and Postmodern Culture"). See also Marco Sabbatini, *Quel che si metteva in rima: Cultura e poesia underground a Leningrado* (Salerno: Europa Orientalis, 2008); I. V. Moteiunaite, *Vospriiatie iurodstva russkoi literaturoi XIX–XX vekov* (Pskov: n.p., 2006); and Per-Arne Bodin, *Language, Canonization and Holy Foolishness: Studies in Post-Soviet Russian Culture and the Orthodox Tradition* (Stockholm: Stockholm University, 2009).

equally intense. The wide thematic and methodological range of area studies scholarship is reflected in the articles published in our current compilation, which makes available to English-speaking and international audiences new scholarly responses to the artistic adaptations of the vibrant cultural paradigm of Russian holy foolishness. The present introductory article will put this new research in perspective. While this article does not claim to be comprehensive, it intends to give a broad overview of the field, its directions, tendencies and insights, its source materials and scholarly appraisals thereof.

The textual history of the Russian holy fool begins as early as the eleventh century with the Kiev Caves Paterik account of the monk Isaakii, whose holy foolishness has been continuously questioned by scholars (Challis, Sergey Ivanov, Kobets, Thompson).⁸ The heyday of the holy fool's cult falls in the fourteenth–sixteenth centuries, which yield the greatest number of canonizations. At the same time, the majority of extant vitae of holy fools of the fifteenth–seventeenth centuries have reached us in later editions.⁹

As a part of Russian Orthodoxy, the ascetic feat of holy foolishness was first described from the ecclesiastical perspective in vitae, hymns, and other hagiographic texts as well as icons and frescoes, all of which genres targeted the depiction of a stereotype rather than a living reality.

Visual sources, including icons, book illuminations, and needlework supply abundant and important source material for the study of holy foolery. Scholars have continuously drawn on this source, yet on the whole this area of research is still at its inception. The most extensive work in this area belongs to a Russian scholar, V. M. Sorokatyi, whose article “The Image of Prokopii of Ustiug in Iconography” explores the full range of Prokopii of Ustiug's imagery—both individual and collective—in its socio-historical setting.¹⁰ A. S. Preobrazhenskii published a comparative study of two iconic types, the holy fool and the monk, as presented in Russian iconography of the low Middle Ages.¹¹ Bubnov explores the holy foolish imagery found in a unique and formerly unexplored source, the Old Believers' illuminated manuscripts of the *Vita of St. Andrew the Fool*. Our compilation features his most recent exploration of this subject area, an article entitled “Illustrations to the *Vita of Andrew the Fool of Constantinople* in the Tradition of Russian Old

⁸ See my discussion of Isaakii's vita in this volume, 245–68.

⁹ See examples and relevant discussions in articles by Sergey A. Ivanov, Bubnov, and Kobets in the present compilation.

¹⁰ V. M. Sorokatyi, “Obraz Prokopiia Ustiuzhskogo v ikone,” in *Zhitie sviatogo pravednogo Prokopiia: Khrista radi iurodivogo chudotvortsa*, ed. S. V. Zavadskaia (Moscow: Pamiatniki istoricheskoi mysli, 2003), 123–92.

¹¹ A. S. Preobrazhenskii, “Inok i iurodivyi: Sopostavlenie dvukh tipov sviatosti v russkoi ikonografii pozdnego Srednevekov'ia,” in *Ikony Russkogo Severa: Dvinskaia zemlia, Onega, Kargopol'e, Pomor'e*, ed. E. S. Smirnova (Moscow: Severnyi palomnik, 2005), 171–203.

Believers," which will become the first English-language contribution to the discussion of the visual representations of the holy fool's phenomenology.

The vitae of holy fools and other hagiographic texts (e.g., homilies, liturgies), which comprise invaluable and by far the most abundant source material, have received the most scholarly attention. Traditionally, abridged and shorter versions of hagiographic accounts were included in prologues, menologies, calendars, and many other popular compilations,¹² which significantly outnumbered unabridged vitae. In the late nineteenth–early twentieth centuries several Russian scholarly societies, in an effort to recover and preserve the Russian historiographical, including hagiographical, legacy started a publishing campaign that embraced both medieval compilations and individual vitae. One of the most notable reprints was Makarii's Menology,¹³ which included the vitae of a number of holy fools. Individual hagiographic projects included Shliapin's publication of Prokopii of Ustiug's vita,¹⁴ which was undertaken within the series *Obshchestvo Liubitelei Drevnerusskoi Pis'mennosti*. Father Aleksei Kuznetsov's 1910 book *Sviatye blazhennye Vasilii i Ioann Khrista radi moskovskie chudotvortsy* (Blessed Holy Fools of Moscow Vasilii and Ioann), sponsored by the Archeological Committee (*Arkheologicheskaiia Komissiiia*), was another remarkable publication.¹⁵ To this day it remains the only publication of a variety of hagiographic materials dedicated to these two most popular canonized medieval Moscow saints, Vasilii the Blessed and Ioann the Big Cap. Despite the tendentiousness of Kuznetsov's comments and discussions and the editorial shortcomings of this publication, it remains among the most important published texts of the holy fool's vitae, although copies are few and not readily accessible. In the beginning of the twentieth century there also appeared publications of the *Vita of Avraamii of Smolensk* by Rozanov¹⁶ and Dmytro Abramovych's academic addition of the Kiev Caves Paterik,¹⁷ which contained the tale of Isaakii and the *Vita of St. Feodosii of the Kiev Caves Monastery*. Adrianova-Perets published the texts and a textual study of the versed Prologue version of the *Vita of Aleksii the Man of God*,¹⁸

¹² See Vakareliyska's article in the present compilation, 225–44.

¹³ Makarii, comp., *Velikie Minei Chet'i*, 8 vols. in 16 pts. (St. Petersburg, 1868–1915).

¹⁴ V. P. Shliapin, ed., *Zhitie prepodobnogo Prokopiiia Ustiuzhskogo* (St. Petersburg: Obshchestvo Liubitelei Drevnerusskoi Pis'mennosti, 1893).

¹⁵ I. I. Kuznetsov, *Sviatye blazhennye Vasilii i Ioann, Khrista radi Moskovskie chudotvortsy*, *Zapiski moskovskogo arkheologicheskogo instituta* 8 (Moscow: Tip. A. Snegirevoi, 1910).

¹⁶ S. P. Rozanov, ed., *Zhitiia prepodobnogo Avraamiia Smolenskogo i sluzhby emu* (St. Petersburg, 1912).

¹⁷ Dmytro Abramovych, *Kyievo-Pechers'kyi paterik* (Kyiv: Vseukrains'ka Akademiia nauk, 1930; repr., Kyiv: Chas, 1991).

¹⁸ V. P. Adrianova-Perets, *Zhitie Alekseia cheloveka Bozhiia v drevnei russkoi literature I narodnoi slovesnosti* (St. Petersburg: Ia. Bashmakov, 1917).

who is yet another popular representative of holy foolish phenomenology.¹⁹ Non-academic publications on nineteenth-century holy fools can be found in Poselianin's collection²⁰ of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century saints' vitae. One such holy fool is Ivan Iakovlevich Koreish(a), supposedly the most famous nineteenth-century Russian *iurodivyi*, whose personality was discussed and image adapted in the works of such renowned writers as Nikolai Leskov, Aleksandr Ostrovskii, Lev Tolstoy, and Dostoevsky.²¹ Koreisha was denounced by the great opponent of holy foolishness I. G. Pryzhov²² and lauded in the vita produced by Kireev.²³ Pre-revolutionary and early twentieth-century Russian hagiography publication endeavors ended with the advent of the Soviet era. The next academic edition of a holy fool's vita to appear in print, the *Vita of Michael the Fool of Klopsko Monastery*,²⁴ was published only several decades later.

The post-Soviet era began with the canonization of St. Kseniia of St. Petersburg, the most famous twentieth-century holy fool and the first female representative of the paradigm to be sainted, and with the publication of her official vita (1986).²⁵ A virtual flood of church-sponsored hagiographic publications followed. Popular publications of life stories of canonized and locally worshiped saints, including holy fools, began to be printed and reprinted on a par with such publications as Dmitrii Rostovskii's *Menology*. Ieromonakh Damaskin's (Orlovskii) compilation entitled *Martyrs and Saints of the Russian Orthodox Church of the Twentieth Century (Mucheniki, ispovedniki i podvizhniki blagochestiiia Rossiiskoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi XX stoletiiia; 1992)*²⁶ provided a contemporary hagiographic source for research into the modern history of the holy fool. It contains numerous accounts of twentieth-century fools in Christ along with the stories of their persecution and martyrdom.

¹⁹ See Sergey A. Ivanov's discussion of this vita within the paradigm of holy foolishness in Ivanov, *Holy Fools in Byzantium and Beyond*, trans. Simon Franklin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 81–90.

²⁰ E. Poselianin, *Russkie podvizhniki 19-go veka* (St. Petersburg: Izdanie I. L. Tuzova, 1901).

²¹ Vladimir Mel'nik, *Ivan Iakovlevich Koreisha v zhizni i literature*, <http://rusk.ru/st.php?idar=104534> (accessed 8 September 2011).

²² I. G. Pryzhov, *Zhitie Ivana Iakovlevicha izvestnogo proroka v Moskve* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia N. L. Tiblea, 1860).

²³ A. F. Kireev, *Student khladnykh vod: Ioann Iakovlevich Koreisha* (Moscow: Lestvitsa, 1889).

²⁴ L. A. Dmitriev, *Povesti o Zhitii Mikhaila Klopskogo* (Moscow–Leningrad: Izd-vo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1958).

²⁵ In 1978 St. Kseniia was canonized by the Russian Orthodox Church in Exile.

²⁶ Ieromonakh Damaskin (Orlovskii), *Mucheniki, ispovedniki i podvizhniki blagochestiiia Rossiiskoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi XX stoletiiia: Zhizneopisaniia i materialy k nim* (Tver': Izd-vo "Bulat," 1992).

The Russian Orthodox Church sponsored the 2003 publication of the *Vita of St. Prokopii the Fool for Christ's Sake of Ustiug*, which was translated (by L. I. Shchegoleva), edited, and outfitted with textual studies and commentaries by the leading Russian medievalists A. N. Vlasov and A. A. Turilov.²⁷ The most recent contribution to the study of holy foolishness is Moldovan's academic edition and textological study of the vita of St. Andrew, *Zhitie Andreia Iurodivogo*.²⁸ It presents this text, seminal in the history of Russian culture, in a variety of versions and editions and is thus a unique source for the study of holy foolishness. Moldovan's vita of St. Andrew appeared concurrently with the new Russian translation published in the Byzantine Library series (*Vizantiiskaia biblioteka*).²⁹ Among the most recent publications of the important primary sources is Krys'ko's critical edition of the earliest Slavic-Russian translation of the Greek Synaxarion, *Prolog*.³⁰ This widely circulated and accessible compilation served throughout the Middle Ages as a source of information both for aspiring holy fools and for their hagiographers.³¹

Regrettably, academic editions of either Russian or Slavic translations of another seminal vita representative of Byzantine holy foolishness, the vita of Symeon of Emesa, have not yet been published. Although deemed crucial for understanding holy foolishness in general and Russian *iurodstvo* in particular, Slavic versions of this vita are available only in abbreviated Menology editions. Its Russian translation, published by Poliakova, is of no academic value,³² yet it has been widely used by scholars as the only available Russian edition of this vita. At the same time, Greek-language versions of St. Symeon's vita have long been scrutinized by European scholars. It has also been available in German and French translations.³³ Linguistic aspects of the Sla-

²⁷ Sorokatyi, ed., *Zhitie sviatogo pravednogo Prokopii: Khrista radi iurodivogo Ustiuzhskogo chudotvortsia*.

²⁸ A. M. Moldovan, ed., *Zhitie Andreia Iurodivogo v slavianskoi pis'mennosti* (Moscow: Azbukovnik, 2000).

²⁹ E. V. Zheltkova, ed. and trans., *Zhitie Andreia Iurodivogo* (St. Petersburg: Aleteia, 2001).

³⁰ V. B. Krys'ko et al., eds., *Slaviano-russkii Prolog po drevneishym spiskam. Sinaksar' (zhitiiaia chast' Prologa kratkoi redaktsii) za sentiabr'-fevral'* (Moscow: Azbukovnik, 2010).

³¹ See the recent exploration of the Prolog in O. V. Loseva, *Zhitiia russkikh sviatykh v sostave drevnerusskikh prologov XII–pervoi treti XV vekov* (Moscow: Rukopisnye pamiatniki drevnei Rusi, 2009).

³² The vita of Symeon is included in the compilation *Lives of Byzantine Saints*: Sofiia Poliakova, ed. and trans., *Zhitiia vizantiiskikh sviatykh* (St. Petersburg: Corvus, 1995). Poliakova does not identify the Greek source texts.

³³ See Lennart Rydén, *Das Leben des Heiligen Narren Symeon von Leonios von Neapolis* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1963); Vincent Déroche, *Études sur Léontios de Néapolis* (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 1995); Alexander Y. Syrkin, "On the Behavior of the 'Fool For Christ's Sake,'" *History of Religions* 22: 2 (1982): 150–71; Sergey A. Ivanov, *Holy Fools*.

vonian versions of Symeon's vita have recently been discussed by the Austrian scholar Johannes Reinhart.³⁴

On the one hand, the paucity of published Slavonic and Russian vitae of holy fools has limited their availability to Western scholars. On the other hand, non-Slavic vitae and other relevant texts have also long remained unpublished (e.g., the Syriac *Book of Steps*) and unavailable in English translation. Most notably, English translations of the vitae of St. Symeon (seventh c.) and St. Andrew (tenth c.) are among rather recent additions to the corpus of translated Byzantine works. The two volumes of *The Vita of St. Andrew the Fool* (1995), edited by Lennart Rydén,³⁵ present the reader with the original Greek text, its English translation, and extensive commentaries on the text, its author, and the paradigm of the holy fool.³⁶ The discussions contained in the first volume of the book address literary, historical, chronological, cultural, and bibliographical issues related to St. Andrew's vita. An English translation of St. Symeon's vita appeared a year later as a part of Derek Krueger's monograph, *Symeon the Holy Fool: Leontius's "Life" and the Late Antique City* (1996).³⁷ In this critical study Krueger considers Symeon's vita against the backdrop of Late Antiquity and in light of the traditions of Diogenes and the Cynics. This text is of paramount importance. Not only is the vita of St. Symeon the first comprehensive exposition of the holy foolish paradigm, it also contains a unique theological explication of the exploit of holy foolishness supplied by his hagiographer, Leontius of Napolis. Rydén's and Krueger's English translations and studies of St. Symeon's and St. Andrew's vitae are invaluable contributions to the scholarship of foolishness in Christ.

There have been several recent English translations of vitae of Russian fools in Christ. *The Paterik of the Kievan Caves Monastery* (1989), translated and edited by Muriel Heppell,³⁸ contains an account of the first Russian fool in Christ, Isaak the Cave-dweller, as well as the vita of the Kiev Caves monastery's bishop Feodosii, another Eastern Slavic saint important to the history of

³⁴ Iokhanes Rainkharth [Johannes Reinhart], "Starobylgarskiiat prevod na zhitieto na Simeon Jurodivi: Tekstologija i leksika," in *Srednovekovieto v ogledaloto na edin filolog: Sbornik v chest na Svetlina Nikolova*, Kirilo-Metodievski Studii 18 (Sofia: Kirilo-Metodievski Nauchen Tsentr, 2009), 309–22.

³⁵ Lennart Rydén, ed. and trans., *The Life of St. Andrew the Fool*, 2 vols., *Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia* 4, 1–2 (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 1995).

³⁶ See also Lennart Rydén, "The Holy Fool," in *The Byzantine Saint: University of Birmingham Fourteenth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, ed. Sergei Hackel, studies supplementary to *Sobornost* 5 (London: Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius, 1981), 106–13.

³⁷ Derek Krueger, *Symeon the Holy Fool: Leontius's "Life" and the Late Antique City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

³⁸ Muriel Heppell, trans., *The Paterik of the Kievan Caves Monastery* (Cambridge, MA: Ukrainian Research Institute of Harvard University, 1989).

Russian holy foolishness.³⁹ The *Vita of St. Avraamii of Smolensk* appears in Paul Hollingsworth's *The Hagiography of Kievan Rus'* (1992).⁴⁰ *Seraphim's Seraphim: The Life of Pelagia Ivanovna Serebrennikova, Fool for Christ's Sake of the Seraphim Diveyevo Convent* (1979) and Vladimir Znosko's *Hieroschemamonk Feofil, Fool for Christ's Sake: Ascetic and Visionary of the Kievo-Pecherskaya Lavra* (1987), are translations of the vitae of the nineteenth-century holy fools Feofil and Pelagia Ivanovna Serebrennikova, which were sponsored by the Russian Orthodox Church.⁴¹

Because hagiographic sources are highly ritualized and marked by ecclesiastical bias, they allow for only a limited access to the historical reality of Russian holy foolishness.⁴² Travelogues, annals, and other non-ecclesiastical records often present the holy fool from a quite different vantage point. As utter outsiders to Russian Orthodoxy and culture, foreign travelers often express bemusement and incredulity as they describe holy fools and their high standing in Russian society. In their entries one would expect, and often encounter, some degree of unbiased, independent evaluation of holy foolishness.⁴³ Travelers invariably find holy foolishness bizarre, outlandish, and brutal (rude liberty) and provide insights unavailable through native sources. Such is Fletcher's comparison of holy fools with prophets and gymnosophists.⁴⁴ Massa's lack of understanding of Godunov's tolerance to the condemnations thrown at him by the contemporary *iurodivaia* Elena, shows the foreigner's unawareness and even resentment of the Russian cult of the holy

³⁹ See George Fedotov, *The Russian Religious Mind*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1960); Jostein Børtnes, *Visions of Glory: Studies in Early Russian Hagiography* (Oslo: Solum Forlag; Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1988); Svitlana Kobets, "Genesis and Development of Holy Foolishness as a Textual Topos in Early Russian Literature" (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2001).

⁴⁰ Paul Hollingsworth, trans., "The Life of Avraamij of Smolensk," in *The Hagiography of Kievan Rus'* (Cambridge, MA: Ukrainian Research Institute of Harvard University, 1992), 135–64.

⁴¹ Father Seraphim, trans., *Seraphim's Seraphim: The Life of Pelagia Ivanovna Serebrennikova, Fool for Christ's Sake of the Seraphim-Diveyevo Convent* (Boston: Holy Transfiguration Monastery Press, 1979); Vladimir Znosko, *Hieroschemamonk Feofil, Fool for Christ's Sake: Ascetic and Visionary of the Kievo-Pecherskaya Lavra* (Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity Monastery Press, 1987). These two vitae have been discussed in Peter Antoci's Ph.D. dissertation: Antoci, "The Hermeneutics of Scandal and Marginality: Holy Folly in the Hagiographies of Pelagia Ivanovna Serebrennikova and Feofil Andreevich Gorenkovsky" (Ph.D. diss., The Catholic University of America, 1994).

⁴² On the historical value of hagiographic sources, see V. O. Kliuchevskii, *Drevnerusskie zhitiiia sviatykh kak istoricheskii istochnik* (Moscow: Nauka, 1988).

⁴³ See my discussion of this issue in Svitlana Kobets, "Foolishness in Christ: East vs. West," *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 34: 3 (2000): 337–63.

⁴⁴ Giles Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth, 1591*, ed. R. Pipes (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), 89–91.

fools.⁴⁵ It is noteworthy that by early modern times the holy fool was just as alien to the representatives of other denominations of Eastern Orthodoxy as he was to the Westerners. Thus, the archbishop of Antioch was astounded by the respect which Nikon allotted to a holy fool.⁴⁶ At the same time, in Fletcher's account about holy fools and their cult this foreigner's opinion was hardly independent. Textual analysis shows that he relied on the information provided to him by his far from impartial Russian hosts.⁴⁷

While the sixteenth century marked the peak of the holy fool's popularity, the eighteenth century became a time of state- and at times Church-sponsored suppression of holy foolishness, when holy fools were not only criticized and reviled⁴⁸ but also hunted, branded, and exiled along with their impersonators, sectarians, vagabonds, and other representatives of marginal religiosity, the alleged targets of this campaign. If the emergence of the cult of holy fools was accompanied by their hagiographic acclaim, the era of the fool's relentless persecution supplies a wealth of quite different documents.

At that time, the very term *iurodivyi* was outlawed and virtually purged from the official language. The practitioners of holy foolishness were stripped of their saintly status as they came to be called by different by-names (*khanzha*, *bosoi*),⁴⁹ whereas the display of holy foolish attributes (chains, rags, nakedness, iron staffs and hats) and behaviors (obnoxious, erratic, impudent) led to arrest, interrogation, torture, exile, and even execution.⁵⁰ However, this onslaught did not put an end to the popular cult of holy fools, and while its continuity was compromised, it has never been broken.⁵¹ The lives of holy fools found another witness: their rather unholy versions were documented in the interrogation records of the Imperial Secret Police. For the first time these sources have been analyzed in an important recent article by Aleksandr

⁴⁵ Isaac Massa, *Kratkoe izvestie o Moskovii v nachale XVII veka* (Moscow: Gos. sotsial'no-ekonomicheskoe izd-vo, 1937); Massa, *O nachale voin i smut v Moskovii*, ed. A. Liberman and S. Shokarev (Moscow: Fond Sergeia Durova, Rita-print, 1997). The issue of the holy fool's perception by foreign travelers has been recently discussed by Sergey A. Ivanov, who addresses it in his comparative study of a number of foreign and native sources describing a famous Pskov *iurodivyi*, Nikola Salos. See Ivanov, *Holy Fools*, 294–300, 312, 313 fn. 5.

⁴⁶ See A. S. Lavrov, "Iurodstvo i 'reguliarnoe gosudarstvo' (konets XVII–pervaia polovina XVIII v.)," *Trudy Otdela drevnerusskoi literatury* 52 (2001): 432–33.

⁴⁷ Svitlana Kobets, "The Holy Fool in Russian Culture" (work in progress).

⁴⁸ See, for example, the opinion of Feofan Prokopovich that all holy fools (both ancient and contemporary) are but fornicators; "Delo o Feofane Prokopoviche," in *Chteniia v Obshchestve istorii i drevnostei rossiiskikh* (ChOIDR) (1862), bk.1, sec. 1, p. 5; quoted in A. S. Lavrov, *Koldovstvo i religiia v Rossii: 1700–1740 gg.* (Moscow: Drevlekhranilishche, 2000), 264.

⁴⁹ Lavrov, "Iurodstvo i 'reguliarnoe gosudarstvo,'" 436.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 438.

⁵¹ Kobets, "Genesis," 23–35.

Lavrov, "Iurodstvo i 'reguliarnoe' gosudarstvo" (Holy Foolishness and the "Regular" State) and a book chapter, entitled "Iurodivye (Holy Fools)," which was included in Lavrov's monograph *Koldovstvo i religiia v Rossii* (Sorcery and Religion in Russia).⁵² In these two pieces Lavrov turns to the data generated in the Age of Reason, which reflects the Russian state's dealings with the officially mad, including social misfits and holy fools. Lavrov explores events which largely parallel the rise of the European great asylum discussed in Michel Foucault's famous opus.⁵³ Earlier, that era's official attitudes to madness in Russia were discussed in Dix's dissertation "Madness in Russia, 1775–1864."⁵⁴ However, if Dix was interested in the state regulations of eighteenth-century Russian mental institutions, where holy fools were at times contained, Lavrov employs very different sources and gives a completely new spin to the matter. Lavrov's interest lies in interrogation records and testimonies of alleged holy fools, which offer insight into the ecclesiastical, juridical, popular, and state attitudes to holy fools, their social place, cult, and persecution.

The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries became a momentous time in the history of Russian holy foolishness. It was the time of the holy fool's rediscovery and of the renewal of his cult, of the proliferation of the holy fool's phenomenology and its expansion into Russian literature, philosophy and secular art as an image, character and narrative strategy. After a century of state repression against the Russian Church (when the formerly omnipotent patriarchate was reduced to the status of a state department and monastery property was confiscated by the authorities) the Russian Orthodox Church experienced a virtual Renaissance.⁵⁵ The revival of Russian Orthodoxy gave new life to the cult of the holy fool. At that time, new holy fools came into prominence, new hagiographies were written,⁵⁶ churches dedicated to holy fools were renovated or built anew, and new icons, frescoes, and illuminations were created.⁵⁷ Dozens, perhaps even hundreds of canonized and non-

⁵² Lavrov, *Koldovstvo i religiia v Rossii: 1700-1740 gg.*

⁵³ Michel Foucault, "The Birth of the Asylum," chap. 9 in *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. Richard Howard (London: Tavistock Publications, 1967). See also A. I. Klibanov, "Iurodstvo kak phenomenon russkoi srednevekovoi kul'tury," *Disput*, no. 1 (1992): 53–55.

⁵⁴ Kenneth Steven Dix, "Madness in Russia, 1775–1864: Official Attitudes and Institutions for Its Care" (Ph.D. diss., University of California at Los Angeles, 1977).

⁵⁵ See Margaret Ziolkowski, *Hagiography and Modern Russian Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 5, 12.

⁵⁶ As N. S. Gordienko convincingly shows through the analysis of several nineteenth-century records concerning Kseniia of St. Petersburg, this saint is a creation of the nineteenth century. See Gordienko, "Kogo i za chto kanoniziroval sobor 1988 goda: Pervaia sviataia-iurodivaia (Kseniia Peterburgskaia)," in *Novye pravoslavnye sviatye* (Kyiv: Ukraina, 1991), 235–72.

⁵⁷ See Bubnov's article in the present compilation.

canonized holy fools were venerated at that time, making the nineteenth century the time of a virtual holy fool's boom. Woody Allen does not exaggerate the pervasiveness of holy foolishness and its cult when in his cinematic parody of Russian literature, *Love and Death* (1975), he shows a crowd of fools swarming to their annual convention, which takes place under a sign reading "Welcome, idiots!"

On par with the contemporary holy fools, the medieval ones were discovered and rediscovered, depicted on icons and murals (St. Prokopii in the Vladimir Cathedral) and given new vitae (Prokopii of Ustiug), whereas the vitae of Russian fool's Byzantine predecessors were revised or translated anew. While the holy fool, as always, had his opponents (e.g., Pryzhov), his/her cult was widespread not only among common people but also among gentry. Tsar Nicholas II personally supported the cult of a medieval Novgorod holy fool, Nikola(i) Kochanov (d. 1392).

In the nineteenth century the holy fool not only becomes for the first time the subject of historical and ethnographical explorations but also enters belle lettres. Karamzin's *History of the Russian State* (*Istoriia Gosudarstva Rossiiskogo*) discusses the phenomenon of holy foolishness and offers accounts of three famous Russian fools in Christ: St. Vasilii of Moscow (d. 1552), St. Nikola Salos of Pskov (d. 1576), and St. Ioann the Big Cap of Rostov and Moscow (d. 1589).⁵⁸ First Karamzin's and then Pushkin's textualizations of the *iurodivyi* for the first time in Russian literary history brought the *iurodivyi* to the purview of an educated, secular Russian readership, and later on Musorgskii's operatic masterpiece introduced this figure to the West. Thus the three famous narratives of the Boris Godunov tale became instrumental for the *iurodivyi*'s appearance in the world cultural arena.⁵⁹

A writer as well as a historian, Karamzin supplied material and created a stereotype of the *iurodivyi* for generations of writers to emulate, reference, and appropriate for their own artistic purposes. For such authors as Pushkin and Zagoskin, Karamzin's *History* became a sourcebook that substituted for the primary sources. Generations of nineteenth-century writers drew on Karamzin, hagiography, iconography, and their own observations of the phenomenon of holy foolishness. Artistic adaptations of the holy fool's imagery and behavioral paradigm by such authors as Lev Tolstoy, Gleb Uspenskii, Melnikov-Pecherskii, Ivan Turgenev, Leskov, and Dostoevsky are idiosyncratic and versatile. They present the holy fool as a unique cultural type and at the same time endow his image with their own aesthetic and/or political agenda.

⁵⁸ N. M. Karamzin, *Istoriia Gosudarstva Rossiiskogo* (St. Petersburg: Izdanie Evgeniia Evdokimova, 1892), 9: 97–98, 10: 168–69.

⁵⁹ Svitlana Kobets, "The Russian Iurodivyi and the Drama of Boris Godunov," and Caryl Emerson, "Boris Godunov as Comedy, as Tragedy, and Why it Should Matter," papers presented at the symposium "The Many Lives of Boris Godunov," Toronto, 6 April 2002.

In the nineteenth century the holy fool also comes to the attention of learned societies, theologians, and philosophers and emerges as a subject of scholarly research. Kliuchevskii's thesis, entitled *Zhitiia sviatykh kak istoricheskii istochnik* (Saints' Vitae as a Historical Source, 1871),⁶⁰ is among the first scholarly evaluations of the historical value of hagiographical records of Russian saints, including holy fools. In 1860–65 the Russian ethnographer and historian Ivan Pryzhov published several ethnographic sketches and discussions of holy fools⁶¹ that are representative of the positivist rejection of holy fools and their cult. Pryzhov presents holy fools as hustlers and frauds, castigates their worshipers as superstitious and gullible, and opts to dismantle the cult of holy foolishness as a scam. This militant atheistic approach both follows the secular orientation of the Age of Reason and anticipates the viewpoint of Soviet scholarship regarding holy fools and their cult. For example, in his outline of the phenomenology and history of Russian *iurodstvo*, the Soviet historian I. U. Budovnits presents it as a church-sponsored conspiracy, a form of brainwashing, which contributed to the "exploitation of the working masses."⁶² The Soviet historian N. S. Gordienko's comparative study of the hagiographic tradition of Kseniia of St. Petersburg is another example of atheistic bias. So is the work of Western scholars, such as Daniel Rancour-Laferriere,⁶³ who considers the cult of holy foolishness to be further evidence of Russia's masochistic predilection for suffering.

There have been several ventures to outline the history of Russian holy foolishness, most of which are largely synoptic. The first book-length exploration of *iurodstvo*, the monograph *Iurodstvo o Khriste i Khrista radi iurodivye Vostochnoi i Russkoi Tserkvi* (Foolishness in Christ and Fools for Christ's sake of the Eastern and Russian Orthodox Churches, 1895), was written by a Russian Orthodox priest, Ioann Kovalevskii.⁶⁴ He traces the origins of foolishness in Christ to the Egyptian desert, defines it as an ascetic practice, and supplies hagiographical sketches of Byzantine and Russian holy fools based on their vitae and iconographic information. Kovalevskii's work, which is marked by an expressly religious orientation, relies solely on canonical Orthodox Christian sources and is confined to the church sanctioned, apologetic point of view. In fact, the vast majority of works about holy foolishness published at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries share that

⁶⁰ See n. 42.

⁶¹ In 1865 he published them as a monograph, which has recently been reprinted. See Ivan Pryzhov, *26 Moskovskikh prorokov, iurodivykh, dur i durakov, i drugie trudy po russkoi istorii i etnografii* (St. Petersburg: Ezro; Moscow: Intrada, 1996).

⁶² I. U. Budovnits, "Iurodivye drevnei Rusi," in *Voprosy istorii religii i ateizma*, no. 12 (1964): 170–95.

⁶³ Daniel Rancour-Laferriere, *The Slave Soul of Russia: Moral Masochism and the Cult of Suffering* (New York: New York University Press, 1995).

⁶⁴ Ioann Kovalevskii, *Iurodstvo o Khriste i Khrista radi iurodivye vostochnoi i russkoi Tserkvi* (Moscow: Pechatnia A. I. Snegireva, 1895).

tendency, as they were written and published by Orthodox priests and monks. Among them is Hieromonk Kuznetsov's monograph *Iurodstvo i stolpnichestvo* (Holy Foolishness and Pillar-standing, 1913),⁶⁵ which discusses these two, in Kuznetsov's opinion, most challenging ascetic practices.

The Soviet era brought with it the suppression and demise of the holy fool both as living reality and as scholarly subject. If the holy fool is a marginal figure par excellence, s/he was absolutely ousted by the Soviet state. Russian cultural memory, however, preserved the image of the holy fool in literature, art, and folklore. Clandestine worship of holy foolish saints persisted,⁶⁶ and authors continued to adapt the holy fool's phenomenology, philosophy, and imagery. Boris Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* (1957) and Venedikt Erofeev's *Moskva-Petushki* (Moscow-Petushki, 1968) are among the famous examples. Several accounts of persecuted holy fools were published in the West,⁶⁷ where the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia continued to venerate fools for Christ's sake. In 1978 it canonized Kseniia of St. Petersburg, whereas a few years earlier, in 1966, it proposed a new candidate for canonization, John (Ioann) Maximovich of Shanghai and San Francisco (1896–1966). His official vita presents a holy man whose personality, like those of the Egyptian Desert Fathers and Fathers of Optina, exhibits a strong adherence to holy foolish behaviors.⁶⁸

While in Soviet Russia studies of *iurodstvo* were non-existent, Western and Russian émigré scholars continued their research and published a number of works on the subject. Benz produced a succinct and insightful overview of the history of foolishness in Christ and an in-depth analysis of the two paradigmatic Byzantine saints, Symeon and Andrew.⁶⁹ In his Russian- and English-language monographs, *The Russian Religious Mind* (1960)⁷⁰ and *Sviatye Drevnei Rusi, 10–17 st.* (The Saints of Old Russia, X–XVIII Centuries, 1959),⁷¹ George Fedotov discusses the role of holy foolishness in Russian history, spirituality, and culture. Fedotov ascribes to the *iurodivyi* a central place in Russian spirituality and culture, and claims that the holy fool appeared on the Russian socio-historical stage in order to restore Russia's spiritual balance,

⁶⁵ Aleksii Kuznetsov, *Iurodstvo i stolpnichestvo: Religiozno-psikhologicheskoe issledovanie* (St. Petersburg: Izdanie tipografii V. D. Smirnova, 1913; repr., Moscow: Izd-vo Moskovskogo podvor'ia Sviato-Troitskoi Sergievoi lavry, 2000).

⁶⁶ See Damaskin, *Mucheniki, ispovedniki i podvizhniki blagochestiia*.

⁶⁷ Ivan Andreev, *Russia's Catacomb Saints: Lives of the New Martyrs* (Platina, CA: Saint Herman of Alaska Press, 1982).

⁶⁸ See the vita of St. John Maximovich, <http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/johnmx1.htm> (accessed 17 August 2001). The holy foolish personality of Archbishop John has long been a matter of dispute. However, he was not canonized as a holy fool.

⁶⁹ E. Benz, "Heiligen Narrheit," *Kyrios* 3 (1938): 1–55.

⁷⁰ Fedotov, *The Russian Religious Mind*.

⁷¹ G. P. Fedotov, *Sviatye drevnei Rusi (X–XVIII st.)* (New York: Izdanie russkogo pravoslavnogo Bogoslovskogo Fonda, 1960).

which had been destroyed after the decline of saintly princes.⁷² Goraïnoff's monograph *Les fols en Christ dans la tradition orthodoxe* (Fools in Christ in the Orthodox Christian Tradition, 1983)⁷³ offers an overview of the phenomenology and history of Byzantine and Russian holy foolishness, and Ioann Kologrivoff's *Essai sur la sainteté russe* (Essays on the History of Russian Sanctity, 1953)⁷⁴ treats the holy fool as an important representative of Russian sanctity.

In 1980 Oxford University Press published a monograph by John Saward, *Perfect Fools*, which discusses the phenomenology of holy foolishness in the Roman Catholic world. Saward includes only a brief discussion of Byzantine and Russian holy fools, yet he does not argue in favor of the holy fool's predominance in the West. He emphasizes that only in the Orthodox East was the holy fool recognized as a saint. At the same time, by offering numerous examples from the Western Catholic tradition, Saward implicitly undermines his Slavic peers' assertion that holy foolishness was largely foreign to the Catholic West.⁷⁵ Despite its apologetic tendencies and minimal discussion of the Eastern Orthodox tradition of holy foolishness, Saward's praise of folly has long remained among the most cited English-language sources.

The popularity of Saward's monograph as an English-language study of holy foolishness was rivaled by Ewa M. Thompson's *Understanding Russia: The Holy Fool in Russian Culture* (1987),⁷⁶ an ambitious scholarly endeavor which contains a number of insightful discussions and an extensive bibliography. Thompson's scholarship, however, is based on the erroneous premise that holy foolishness is not an innately Christian phenomenon but a Russian transformation of shamanism. She correctly identifies shamanism as a cultural analogue of holy foolishness, yet she misinterprets the governing semantic codes of the phenomenon of holy foolishness and its place in the Russian cultural context.

Saward's and Thompson's monographs appeared in the wake of Panchenko's fundamental study of holy foolishness, yet while the latter drew on Panchenko's research, the Russian language made it unavailable to the former.

⁷² Ibid., 191.

⁷³ Irina Goraïnoff, *Les fols en Christ dans la tradition orthodoxe* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1983).

⁷⁴ Ioann Kologrivoff, *Essai sur la sainteté russe* (Bruges, 1953), or the Russian edition, Ieromonakh Ioann Kologrivov, *Ocherki po istorii russkoi sviatosti* (Brussels: "Zhizn' s bogom," 1961).

⁷⁵ See, for example, Panchenko, who also argues that Francis of Assisi is the only "ascetic in the Roman Catholic world who bears a hint of resemblance to the Eastern Orthodox fool for Christ" ("Laughter as Spectacle," 63–64, in the present volume). See also Sergey A. Ivanov's discussions of holy foolishness in the West in Ivanov, *Holy Fools*, 374–98.

⁷⁶ Ewa M. Thompson, *Understanding Russia: The Holy Fool in Russian Culture* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987).

In the last decades of the twentieth century the holy fool was once again put on the map of Russian scholarship when, in 1976, Dmitrii Likhachev, Aleksandr Panchenko, and Nadezhda Ponyrko published their collection *The "World of Laughter" of Ancient Rus'*.⁷⁷ It comprises Panchenko's ground-breaking study of Russian holy foolishness, "Laughter as Spectacle" ("Smekh kak zrelishche"), and Likhachev's remarkable analysis of applications of holy foolishness in the works of Ivan IV. In their contributions, both Likhachev and Panchenko explore the world of Russian laughter, of which *iurodstvo* is an important component. Yet if Likhachev discusses a variety of aspects of medieval Russia's perception of comical, nationally specific triggers of laughter and their expression in different venues (folklore, lubok, writings of Archpriest Avvakum, writings of Ivan IV), Panchenko discusses different connotations of the *iurodivyi's* cultural standing (as an actor and a spiritual mentor, a laughable figure and a figure of power) and his symbolic behaviors, bringing to the fore the uniquely Russian facets of the fool archetype. At the same time, he draws important parallels with analogous behaviors recorded in Russian folklore as well as other, both Christian and non-Christian, cultures. Panchenko thereby takes the *iurodivyi* out of the narrow niche of the ecclesiastical culture suggested by *vitae*—and also from Russian culture in general—and places him next to minstrels (*skomorokhi*) and jesters (*shuty*), Sufi dervishes and Cynics, thus significantly expanding the perspective.⁷⁸

Having shown the holy fool's phenomenological kinship with the representatives of other cultures, Panchenko underscores the Russian *iurodivyi's* uniqueness. He notes that the holy fool occupies a special place in the Russian world of mirth and laughter as he is both laughable and grim. His offensive and subversive shows evoke laughter and scorn only in sinners, while they remind the righteous ones about Christ's humiliation and suffering, the Last Judgment and divine retribution. The *iurodivyi* is believed to belong both to the profane and divine planes of existence and to mediate between them as God's trustee, a judge and a prophet. The binary sign system which positions the holy fool between the sacred and profane is, according to Likhachev and Panchenko, the most salient feature of Old Russia's culture.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ D. S. Likhachev and A. M. Panchenko, "*Smekhovoi mir*" *Drevnei Rusi*, appendices and indexes by N. V. Ponyrko (Leningrad: Nauka, 1976).

⁷⁸ See Richard W. F. Pope, "Fools and Folly in Old Russia," *Slavic Review* 39: 3 (1980): 476–81. In his review of Panchenko's work Pope pointed to the limited character of this discussion and suggested a number of Western studies that had not been accounted for. On the one hand, in the seventies, when Panchenko's work appeared in print, most of these Western sources were inaccessible to him. On the other hand, the relevance of Pope's criticism can be challenged by the fact that subsequent scholarship on the phenomenology of foolishness in Christ chose not to rely on his suggested studies either.

⁷⁹ Likhachev and Panchenko, "*Smekhovoi mir*" *Drevnei Rusi*, 6.

This approach proceeds from Bakhtin's theory of the medieval European perception of the comical and the concept of carnival, which, according to Bakhtin, is a powerful challenge on the part of its participants to the official worldview and social order. During carnival, the world reveals its dual nature, the insuperable disparity between sin and virtue, laughter and gravity, sacred and profane realms, low and high culture. It is perceived as split into two opposing parts, the serious and the laughable, which are governed correspondingly by the laws of official and unofficial ideologies. It is laughter that unifies and equalizes the participants of the carnival, overturning the official order, establishing the temporary rule of those who laugh, and promoting their power and immortality.

While Bakhtin's theory proved to be productive both for Likhachev's study of the laughter culture of Old Rus' and for his analysis of secular applications of the holy fool's behavioral code, it is much less applicable to Panchenko's study of foolishness in Christ as a Russian cultural phenomenon. Indeed, carnival comedy and the theatrical stance of the *iurodivyi's* edifying performance—only sinners laugh at the holy fool's antics, as they see madness where the pious see holiness—are radically distinct. The points of divergence are several. First, they differ in temporal terms. Carnival—with the merry equality and liberty of its participants—is an event strictly confined to a very brief period at a particular time of the year. Conversely, the *iurodivyi* orchestrates his shows continuously, while his field of reference is the limitless eternity of the divine. Second, the holy fool's scandalous behavior (conorting with prostitutes, his nakedness) appears to be in tune with the carnal, procreative nature of carnival. Yet carnival's essentially carnality is in sharp opposition to the ascetic goals and eschatological stance of the *iurodivyi*. Third, if carnival is a collective action, where participants comprise an integral part of the whole, the holy fool is a loner. Moreover, in the *iurodivyi's* "show" there is always a borderline between the holy foolish actor and his audience. Fourth, carnival renders relative all the postulates and values of the official establishment, whereas the *iurodivyi* both targets human blindness to the divine truths and is a staunch rigorist who enforces the existing tradition. Such was the case of the holy fools who sided with the Old Belief movement. It is also noteworthy that carnival laughter promotes joy and merriment, yet the laughter evoked by the holy fool is rather grim. It is the laughter of a sinner who fails to relate to the edifying, divine message of the fool. If the laughter of the holy fool's audience is that of rejection and scorn, carnival laughter unifies and equalizes the whole festive community. Thus carnival laughter and laughter directed at a *iurodivyi* largely diverge in their connotations and fields of application.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ For a discussion of points of similarity and difference between the spirit of carnival and the stance of the holy fool, see also Iurii Mann, "Around and About Carnival," *Russian Studies in Literature* 33: 4 (1997): 5–33.

Panchenko's "Laughter as Spectacle" remains a seminal work for studies of Russian *iurodstvo*. Nor has it lost its importance for Russian studies in general. Its accessible language and engaging style made it popular and widely read by scholars and general readers alike, hence its contemporary relevance both for scholarship and as a source book for creative writers and artists. The enduring significance of Panchenko's study is reflected in its numerous reprints, including its present English edition. Not only does it offer a detailed, insightful discussion of the essential components of the holy fool's paradigm (his theatricality and his role as a public figure, his similarity with the Hebrew prophet, his affinity to folk figures and other cultural phenomena), it also raises important questions such as the distinction between congenital and voluntary *iurodstvo*, about monastic and urban types and suggested new research venues, which later on were taken by other scholars. The compilation *The World of Laughter of Ancient Rus* has yet another extraordinary merit: for the first time it brought to the reader's attention a unique source of information about holy foolishness, the farewell letters of a holy fool.⁸¹

However important, Panchenko's work has been limited to the Russian and Slavic scholarly communities and regrettably has quite often remained inaccessible to researchers in other areas of the humanities, such as anthropology, Byzantine Studies, Medieval Studies, Religious Studies, and studies of Late Antiquity. Such scholars of holy foolishness as Saward, Phan, Krueger, and others were unable to benefit from this seminal research. Our compilation will make this work available to an English-speaking scholarship and readership for the first time.

Panchenko's "Laughter as Spectacle" remained the most comprehensive study of the phenomenon of Russian foolery for Christ until 1994, when its primacy was challenged by Sergey Ivanov's monograph *Vizantiiskoe iurodstvo*,⁸² which for the first time examined the developmental history of holy foolery as phenomenon, concept, and text. Having engaged classical (mostly Greek but also Latin), medieval, and contemporary Russian and Slavic as well as Western primary and secondary sources, Ivanov brought the study of holy foolery to the next level. However, like the earlier work of Panchenko, Ivanov's study remained largely unknown in the West, where scholars continued to rely on non-Russian-language studies by scholars such as Thompson, Saward, Rydén, and Fedotov.

In 2006 Ivanov's monograph finally became available to Western readers, albeit in a new, revised and expanded form,⁸³ deservedly claiming the

⁸¹ "Smekhovoi mir" *Drevnei Rusi*, 183–91 (prepared by Ponyrko). Also see Sergey A. Ivanov's discussion of this source in Ivanov, *Holy Fools*, 408–12.

⁸² S. A. Ivanov, *Vizantiiskoe iurodstvo* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia, 1994).

⁸³ Sergey A. Ivanov, *Holy Fools in Byzantium and Beyond*. See n. 20. See also the Russian version of this book: S. A. Ivanov, *Blazhennye pokhaby: Kul'turnaia istoriia iurodstva* (Moscow: Iazyki slavianskikh kul'tur, 2005). See the discussion of these two versions

standing of the most comprehensive study of Eastern Orthodox foolery in Christ to date. Ivanov's discussion of a wide range of applications and conceptualizations of holy foolery in a variety of sources and genres contributes to the study's unprecedented richness and scope. While in his exploration of cultural meanings of *iurodstvo* Ivanov is on target, his discussion of the literary theme of secret sanctity—one of the precursors of the holy foolish paradigm—allows him to consider *iurodstvo* not as a textually limited, narrowly Eastern Orthodox phenomenon, but in the broadest, most comprehensive sense. In order to demonstrate the versatile repertoire of controversial ascetic practices that coexisted textually and phenomenologically with the early examples of holy foolishness, Ivanov includes in his discussion such related phenomena as feigned begging, the ascetic's consorting with prostitutes, social disruption, and aggression. From this discussion there emerges a complex and varied cultural phenomenon which accounts not only for the Byzantine and Russian semantics of holy foolery, but also for a variety of aspects of Christian—and not only Christian—cultures and worldviews.

Ivanov considers Leontius's vita of Symeon as the climax in the developmental history of holy foolery and elucidates the revival of holy foolery in ninth–eleventh century Byzantium through the analysis of the vita of Andrew the Fool of Constantinople as well as several previously unexamined vitae. Ivanov derives the holy fool's loss of his former venerable place in society from the overall tenth-century decline of the social status of asceticism.⁸⁴ Following in the steps of Rydén, Mango, and Krueger, Ivanov posits that the canonized Byzantine fools for Christ Symeon of Emesa, Isidora, Andrew of Constantinople, and Alexis the Man of God are purely literary creations.⁸⁵ He juxtaposes them to less controversial, in fact, quite timid holy fools, whose hagiographic portrayals in his opinion were based on real-life characters. One such holy fool, in his opinion, was Simon of Iurievets, whose vita he discusses in an article included in our volume.

If in his 1995 monograph Ivanov concentrated on Byzantine holy foolishness, the 2005 and 2006 editions have an expanded Russian section, which amounts to nothing less than an attempt to reevaluate his earlier views on the developmental path of holy foolishness. He devotes an entire chapter to buttressing the established opinion that the holy fool's defiance of the authorities is a distinct characteristic of the Russian tradition. In the chapter "The *Iurodivyi* and the Tsar" he explores the motif of interconnection between tsar and holy fool, employing to this end several versions of the famous legend about Nikola of Pskov. Ivanov traces the development of this legend from the initial

of Ivanov's monograph in my review article "Folly, Foolishness, Foolery: Sergey A. Ivanov's *Holy Fools in Byzantium and Beyond* and *Blazhennye Pokhaby*," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 50: 3–4 (2008): 491–97.

⁸⁴ Sergey A. Ivanov, *Holy Fools*, 215–16.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 147.

testimonies, which present Nikola as a wizard,⁸⁶ to the famous account of Jerome Horsey,⁸⁷ whose description evokes the essential parameters of the holy foolish paradigm. Ivanov concludes by considering hagiographic records in which the primacy of holy fool over tsar is an established motif.

Well-researched and insightful, this chapter nonetheless falls short of discussing the full range of connotations embedded in the tsar/holy fool binary pair. In fact, the tsar's position vis-à-vis the fool remains unexamined, even though Ivanov touches upon this topic in an earlier chapter, where he discusses the Byzantine Emperor Michael III's (856–67) imitation of holy foolish behavior.⁸⁸ As applied to Ivan IV, this topic had been explored previously in Priscilla Hunt's study of Ivan the Terrible's holy foolery, "Ivan IV's Personal Mythology of Kingship,"⁸⁹ where she offers a versatile and most comprehensive treatment of the issue of Ivan's orientation toward the behavioral paradigm of foolishness in Christ. Hunt analyzes the peculiarities of the tsar's abnormal behavior in the light of theological doctrines of his time and concludes that Ivan IV developed a personal mythology of kingship by which he justified his bizarre, sacrilegious, and brutal acts and of which holy foolishness was an important part. Hunt shows how Groznyi's recourse to Christian Orthodox doctrine served to justify and legitimize his blasphemies and violence and pays close attention to the place occupied by the concept of holy folly in the system of values he embraced. She convincingly shows that Ivan the Terrible consciously relied on the paradigm of holy foolishness in order to satisfy his political, expiatory, and psychological needs. Furthermore, she discusses how Ivan's personal mythology—including his self-identification with the figure of the holy fool—enabled him to reconcile his innate cruelty and maliciousness with his vision of himself as God's chosen. The holy fool's purifying function of restoring chastity through self-pollution⁹⁰ supplied Ivan with theoretical foundations for his self-perception as a vengeful and cruel yet impartial and just messenger of God, thus allowing him to view his atrocities as legitimate.⁹¹ At the same time, his foolish, blasphemous, and eccentric behavior served as a statement of his recourse to the divine power of the ostensibly sinful saint, *iurodivyi*, and as a useful means of defeating, mocking, and castigating his opponents. So did his writing style, which was saturated with holy foolish elements.⁹²

⁸⁶ Ibid., 292.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 295–96.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 134–38.

⁸⁹ Hunt, "Ivan IV's Personal Mythology of Kingship." See n. 4.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 801.

⁹¹ Ibid., 789.

⁹² See Likhachev's discussion of Ivan IV's holy foolish behaviors in Dmitrii Likhachev, "Litsedeistvo Groznogo: K voprosu o smekhovom stile ego proizvedenii," in Likhachev and Panchenko, "Smekhovoi mir" *Drevnei Rusi*, 25–35. See also my discussion of

Likhachev initiated the discussion of the persona, humor, and narrative style of Archpriest Avvakum,⁹³ yet another important cultural figure who relied extensively on the behavioral paradigm and theology of holy foolishness. However, Panchenko was the first to draw attention to Avvakum's description in his vita of his holy foolish performance before the Council of 1666–67 and to establish its meaning and importance as a culmination of tradition.⁹⁴ Jostein Børtnes's monograph, *Visions of Glory: Studies in Early Russian Hagiography* (1988), examines the narrative structure of Avvakum's vita, including his holy foolish performance.⁹⁵ In a 2008 article Hunt analyzes the creative process that resulted in this famous scene before the council.⁹⁶ Other articles by Hunt establish Avvakum's broad embrace of Pauline holy foolishness as a behavioral and literary model for repudiating the Nikonian reforms and defending the mystical Wisdom theology that had sanctioned the state.⁹⁷ Ivanov is interested in different aspects of holy foolishness in Avvakum's vita. He discusses the dual nature of holy foolery as both an earnest following of the ascetic paradigm and as "playful foolery" that involves boundless freedom. As an example of playful foolery, Ivanov brings forth the case of sexual aggressiveness of Fedor, the famous *iurodivyi* from Avvakum's *Life*, toward Boiarynia Morozova. Ivanov views this case not as a reenactment of a hagiographic topos from the vita of Symeon of Emesa—who staged his sexual deviance in order to cover for his sanctity—but addresses its ambivalent character. He expands the context of this discussion to Christian heretical movements and questions the ascetic underpinnings of these actions altogether.⁹⁸

The holy fool has not only become an archetypal figure in Russian *belles lettres*, but holy foolish phenomenology has been continuously incorporated as

Ivan IV's applications of the holy foolish paradigm in Kobets, "Genesis and Development," 173–205.

⁹³ Dmitrii Likhachev, "Iumor Protopopa Avvakuma," in Likhachev and Panchenko, "Smekhovoi mir" *Drevnei Rusi*, 59–71.

⁹⁴ Ibid.; and Panchenko, "Laughter as Spectacle," 46, in this volume.

⁹⁵ Børtnes, *Visions of Glory*. See n. 38.

⁹⁶ Priscilla Hunt, "The Holy Foolishness in the 'Life' of the Archpriest Avvakum and the Problem of Innovation," *Russian History/Histoire russe* 35: 3–4 (2008): 275–309.

⁹⁷ Priscilla Hunt, "The Theology in Avvakum's 'Life' and His Polemic with the Nikonians," in *The New Muscovite Cultural History: A Collection in Honor of Daniel B. Rowland*, ed. M. Flier, V. Kivelson, N. S. Kollman, and K. Petrone (Bloomington, IN: Slavica, 2009), 125–40; Hunt, "Avvakum's 'Fifth Petition' to the Tsar and the Ritual Process," *Slavic and East European Journal* 46: 3 (2002): 483–510, and the revised Russian version, P. Khant, "Piataia chelobitnaia Avvakuma k tsariu i ritual'nyi protsess," *Germenevtika drevnerusskoi literatury* 14 (2010): 652–90; Hunt, "A Penitential Journey: The Life of the Archpriest Avvakum and Kenotic Tradition," in "The Church and the Religious Culture of Old Rus'," ed. Norman Ingham, special issue, *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 25: 1–4 (1991): 201–24. See also my discussion of Avvakum's narrative style and portrayals of holy fools in Kobets, "Genesis and Development," 205–49.

⁹⁸ Sergey A. Ivanov, *Holy Fools*, 338.

a theme, topos, and narrative technique. Among literary adaptations of this cultural archetype we find Dostoevsky's characters such as Prince Myshkin, Alesha Karamazov, and Father Zosima. Tolstoy's Pierre Bezukhov and Father Sergii search after God and truth and in the process come to an understanding of holy foolish kenotic self-annihilation as the ultimate virtue. Leskov modeled his holy foolish personages after real *iurodivye* and utilized for the characterization of his personages certain elements of the behavioral complex of the holy fool. Saltykov-Shchedrin, Mel'nikov-Pecherskii, Uspenskii, and Bunin drew on the paradigm of the holy fool. In the early twentieth century such writers and poets as Rozanov, Khodasevich, Voloshin, Belyi, Remizov, Khlebnikov, and Kharms explored and appropriated the paradigm of the holy fool in their fictional and non-fictional works; some of them relied on it behaviorally.

Russian and Western scholars have explored the thematic importance of the holy fool in Russian literature. In her article "The Archetype of the Fool in Russian Literature,"⁹⁹ Ewa Thompson both discusses holy foolishness as a unique Russian phenomenon and attempts to define it as a cultural archetype. She compares it to different European and Russian (e.g., Ivanushka-durachek) traditions which combine humor, mirth, defiance, and edification. She follows in the steps of Viacheslav Ivanov as she points to the affinity between holy foolishness and the gnostic tradition,¹⁰⁰ and lists several Russian writers, including Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Nekrasov, Kazakov, and Pasternak, who rely in their work on holy foolishness.¹⁰¹ When Thompson resumed her discussion of the holy fool in Russian literature, culture, and thought in her monograph, *Understanding Russia*,¹⁰² she emphasized the adverse effects of the Russian cult of the holy fool on the Russian Weltanschauung, political thought, and social aspects of life and history.

A number of scholarly works are dedicated to the oeuvre of Fedor Dostoevsky. In her monograph, *Holy Foolishness: Dostoevsky and the Poetics of*

⁹⁹ Ewa M. Thompson, "The Archetype of the Fool in Russian Literature," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 15: 3 (1973): 245–73.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 255–56.

¹⁰¹ In a chapter devoted to "neo-hagiography" Ziolkowski discusses hagiographic types of saintly monks and holy fools as well as their adaptations in nineteenth-century Russian literature. See Ziolkowski, *Hagiography and Modern Russian Literature*, 121–89. See also recently published Ph.D. dissertations by I. V. Moteiunaite and Lauren Elaine Bennett. The former discusses the role and place of holy foolishness in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Russian literature, while the latter addresses holy foolishness in the narratives of several twentieth-century authors: I. V. Moteiunaite, "Vospriiatie iurodstva russkoi literaturoi XIX–XX vekov" (Ph.D. diss., Novgorodskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, 2006); Lauren Elaine Bennett, "The Synthesis of Holy Fool and Artist in Post-Revolutionary Russian Literature" (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 2000).

¹⁰² Thompson, *Understanding Russia*.

Cultural Critique (1992),¹⁰³ Harriet Murav analyzes the writer's four novels—*Crime and Punishment*, *The Idiot*, *The Devils*, and *The Brothers Karamazov*—making use of the behavioral paradigm of foolishness in Christ, yet primarily relying on psychiatry. Overall, the scholar chooses to examine holy foolishness within the context of mental abnormality, including the issue of its perception and treatment in nineteenth-century Russia. Murav posits that when incorporated into a literary narrative, the concept of holy folly can manifest itself as a strategy for misleading, baffling, tempting, and scandalizing the reader. Thus, the holy foolish stance can be a means for the subversive presentation of reality.¹⁰⁴ The scholar shares this premise both with early twentieth-century¹⁰⁵ and contemporary Russian critics such as Khodasevich, Epstein, Kuritsyn and Malen'kikh.¹⁰⁶ At the same time, Murav not only makes an erroneous generalization when she identifies all of Dostoevsky's positive characters as holy fools, but also fails to distinguish between the popular folk view of the holy fool (as anyone who displays mental abnormality or behaves in a bizarre way) and the theological concept of holy foolish asceticism.¹⁰⁷

Vasilii Ivanov's monograph *Bezobrazie Krasoty: Dostoevskii i russkoe iurodstvo* (The Ugliness of Beauty: Dostoevsky and Russian Holy Foolishness)¹⁰⁸ provides a most insightful discussion of Dostoevsky's multifarious applications of the holy foolish phenomenology. Among Dostoevsky's characters stylized as fools for Christ Ivanov distinguishes a holy foolish jester (*iurodivyi-shut*) (Fedor Karamazov), a holy foolish hero (Father Zosima, Alesha Karamazov), those who employ holy foolish gestures (Smeshnoi chelovek, Dmitrii Karamazov) and the possessed ones (Smerdiakov, Ivan Karamazov, Mariia Lebiadkina). Ivanov points out that while the tradition of Russian holy foolishness had a profound influence on Dostoevsky's oeuvre, hagiographic

¹⁰³ Harriet Murav, *Holy Foolishness: Dostoevsky and the Poetics of Cultural Critique* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992).

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁰⁵ Vladislav Khodasevich, "O Sirine," *Vozrozhdenie*, 13 February 1937, available at <http://nabokovandko.narod.ru/hodasevich1.html> (accessed 11 August 2011).

¹⁰⁶ Mikhail Epstein, *After the Future: The Paradoxes of Postmodernism and Contemporary Russian Culture*, trans. Anesa Miller-Pogacar (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995); Viacheslav Kuritsyn, "Velikie mify i skromnye dekonstruktsii," *Oktiabr'*, no. 8 (1996): 171–87; S. I. Malen'kikh, "Popytka iurodstva kak odna iz strategii sovremennoi kul'tury," http://anthropology.ru/ru/texts/malenk/secular_13.html (accessed 18 August 2011).

¹⁰⁷ As Diane Oenning Thompson noted in her book review, "Murav reduces Dostoevsky's Christianity to little more than holy foolishness, a serious misapprehension which slights the Christological basis of his art and thought." See Diane Oenning Thompson, review of *Holy Foolishness: Dostoevsky's Novels and the Poetics of Cultural Critique*, by Harriet Murav, *Slavic Review* 52: 3 (1994): 630–31.

¹⁰⁸ V. V. Ivanov, *Bezobrazie Krasoty: Dostoevskii i russkoe iurodstvo* (Petrozavodsk: Izd-vo Petrozavodskogo universiteta, 1993).

iurodivye had for him no discernable importance. He also notes that Dostoevsky's holy foolish types have peculiarities that are their own (defined by their time, place, position), whereas paradigmatic attributes of holy foolishness are secondary to their characterization. Positive holy foolish types reveal rootedness in time-honored traditions and archetypes of wise and/or subversive foolery. Above all, those include Russian popular and Christian traditions, which for Dostoevsky embody the highest morality and virtue. His *iurodivyi* hero plays the traditional role of intermediary between the earthly and heavenly realms, is both a catalyst of communication and a guide to the higher self, morality, and God.¹⁰⁹

Among the notable shorter pieces devoted to holy foolishness in nineteenth-century Russian literature we find Jostein Børtnes's¹¹⁰ discussion of *The Idiot* and Grigorii Amelin's discussion of *Crime and Punishment*.¹¹¹

In the last decades of the Soviet era the thematic importance of holy foolishness escalated as it yet again came to the purview of the creative elite and began to be discussed and appropriated—both artistically and behaviorally—by such poets and artists as Vladimir Shinkarev (and the creative group Mit'ki), Dmitrii Prigov, Oleg Kulik, Konstantin Kuz'min, and Elena Shvartz. In Venedikt Erofeev's masterpiece *Moskva–Petushki*¹¹² holy foolishness is both incorporated in the narrative mode and is a salient feature of the main character, Venichka. Erofeev's slim book deservedly attracted vast critical attention,¹¹³ the scope of which came close to—and to some degree rivaled—the

¹⁰⁹ See also a discussion by Carol Sue Keith, who divides Dostoevsky's fictive holy fools into two categories, the holy fool grotesque and the holy fool sublime. Keith, "The Saintly Fool Figure in the Fiction of Dostoevsky" (Ph.D. diss., The University of Texas at Arlington, 1992), vii.

¹¹⁰ Jostein Børtnes, "Dostoevsky's Idiot or the Poetics of Emptiness," *Scando-Slavica* 40 (1994): 5–14.

¹¹¹ See Grigorii Amelin, "Dostoevskii, Arto i russkoe iurodstvo," *Russkii zhurnal*, http://magazines.russ.ru/novyi_mi/filos/lec/110.html (accessed 12 August 2011).

¹¹² Venedikt Erofeev, *Moskva–Petushki* (Moscow: Zakharov, 2005). Also see Venedikt Erofeev, *Moscow, to the End of the Line*, trans. H. W. Tjalsma (New York: Taplinger Pub. Co., 1980).

¹¹³ Mikhail Epstein finds in Venichka's drunkenness the dialectics of kenotic self-humiliation. See Epstein, "Posle karnavala ili vechnyi Venichka," *Zolotoi vek*, no. 4 (1993): 84–92. Viacheslav Kuritsyn discusses *Moscow–Petushki* in "Velikie mify" and Mark Lipovetskii discusses Venedikt Erofeev's work in Lipovetskii, "Apofeoiz chastits, ili dialogi s khaosom: Zametki o klassike, Venedikte Erofeeva, poeme 'Moskva–Petushki' i russkom postmodernizme," *Znamia*, no. 8 (1992): 214–24. See an Internet collection of scholarly texts about Erofeev's *Moskva–Petushki* at <http://kirovsk.narod.ru/culture/ludi/erofeev/articles/articles.htm> (accessed 9 October 2011). See also Svetlana Gaiser-Shnitman, *Venedikt Erofeev, "Moskva–Petushki" ili "The Rest Is Silence"* (Bern: P. Lang, 1987); I. V. Fomenko, ed., *Analiz odnogo proizvedeniia: "Moskva–Petushki" Ven. Erofeeva. Sbornik nauchnykh trudov* (Tver': Tverskoi universitet, 2001); Karen Ryan-Hayes, ed., *Venedikt Erofeev's "Moscow–Petushki": Critical Perspectives* (New York: Peter Lang,

critical response to Dostoevsky's engagement of holy foolishness.¹¹⁴ Another work of the Soviet era, Viktor Erofeev's *Zhizn' s idiotom* (Life with an Idiot, 1980),¹¹⁵ continues to inspire creative artists such as Zholdak, Shnitke, and Rogozhkin.¹¹⁶ Post-Soviet literature features a great number of characters who exhibit the holy fool's positive and negative features. Recent literary works that employ holy foolishness include Svetlana Vasilenko's *Durochka* (Little-Fool, 1998), Boris Evseev's *Iurod* (The Holy Fool, 2001), Liudmila Ulitskaia's *Semero sviatykh iz derevni Briukho* (Seven Saints from the Village Briukho, 2008), and Anatolii Korolev's *Chelovek-lazyk* (Tongue-Man, 2000). The post-Soviet film auteurs, among them Tengiz Abuladze, Aleksandr Rogozhkin, and Pavel Lungin, employ holy foolishness both as a behavioral paradigm and narrative technique.¹¹⁷

In the post-Soviet era the range of interest in holy foolishness significantly expanded, as, besides its prominence in ecclesiastical, cultural, and artistic spheres holy foolishness acquired importance in postmodern theory. Literary critics and cultural philosophers alike found the phenomenology of the holy fool crucial for examining and explaining contemporary literary and cultural developments. Such scholars as Phan, Kuritsyn, Medvedev, Lipovetskii, and Epstein see the holy fool as an innately postmodern phenomenon.

In his study of Russian modernism, *After the Future*¹¹⁸ (1995), Mikhail Epstein finds the behavioral paradigm of holy foolishness productive for the analysis of Russian twentieth-century avant-garde. He relies on the concept of holy foolishness and the theological concept of kenosis to explain the early twentieth-century Russian avant-garde's deliberate aesthetized ugliness and penchant to blasphemy. Malen'kikh¹¹⁹ is another author who engages the aesthetics of ugliness (as well as the concept of the death of God) when she approaches the phenomenology and ideology of iurodstvo from the vantage point of the post-Christian sensibility.

1997); Natalia Ottovordemgentschenfelde, *Jurodstvo: Eine Studie zur Phänomenologie und Typologie des Narren in Christo. Jurodivyj in der postmodernen russischen Kunst. Venedikt Erofeev Die Reise nach Petuški, Aktionismus Aleksandr Breners und Oleg Kuliks* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2004); and Neil Stewart, "Vstan' i vspominaj": Auferstehung als Collage in Venedikt Erofeevs "Moskva-Petuški" (Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 1999).

¹¹⁴ A novel by the Russian émigré writer and artist Yuri Kuper is another example of Soviet-era artistic applications of holy foolishness. See Kuper, *The Holy Fools of Moscow*, trans. Antonina W. Bouis (New York: Quadrangle, 1974).

¹¹⁵ Viktor Erofeev, *Life with an Idiot*, trans. A. Reynolds (London: Penguin Books, 2004).

¹¹⁶ Al'fred Shnitke (composer) and Viktor Erofeev (librettist), *Zhizn' s idiotom* (1990–91), opera; Aleksandr Rogozhkin (director), *Zhizn' s idiotom* (1993), film.

¹¹⁷ Svitlana Kobets, "Iurodstvo i iurodstvovanie v post-sovetskom kino: Pokaianie (1986) Abuladze, *Taksi-Bliuz* (1990) i *Ostrov* (2006) Lungina," *Toronto Slavic Quarterly*, no. 28 (2009), <http://www.slavdom.com/index.php?id=128> (accessed 18 August 2011).

¹¹⁸ Epstein, *After the Future*.

¹¹⁹ Malen'kikh, "Popytka iurodstva kak odna iz strategii sovremennoi kul'tury."

A scholar of comparative religion, Phan coins the term and concept *sophomoria*, which is not based solely on the behavioral paradigm of holy foolishness for Christ's sake but is an umbrella term for several cultural models. Making the contemporary epistemological crisis his point of departure, the scholar claims that in the contemporary world the model of holy foolish irony and subversion, *sophomoria*, became the only option for seeing the world. A similar claim, yet about the *iurodivyi*, was earlier advanced by Goricheva, who posits that "the holy fool's grotesque behavior denies all knowledge of the divine and materializes this denial."¹²⁰

Among the latest contributions to the study of holy foolishness are two chapters devoted to holy foolishness that are included in Bodin's monograph *Language, Canonization and Holy Foolishness: Studies in Post-Soviet Russian Culture and the Orthodox Tradition*.¹²¹ While in these two chapters *iurodstvo* is examined in its own right, it is also an topic of discussion throughout the book and is considered as a part of such issues as the character of Russia's recent church canonizations and adaptations of the Orthodox tradition in contemporary Russian literary works.¹²² Bodin is interested in the discursive peculiarities of recent hagiographical narratives devoted to holy fools, which, he argues, present a blend of traditional church and Soviet discourses. This present compilation offers Bodin's most recent research into these issues.

As it is, our volume marks the bicentenary of scholarship devoted to holy foolishness, the first ventures of which go back to Karamzin and Pushkin. Ironically, when Pushkin started his research and requested from Karamzin more information about fools in Christ, Karamzin as well as Viazemskii, who served as an intermediary in this communication, discouraged Pushkin from looking for more details, claiming that hagiographic accounts of *iurodivye* were bland and uniform. In his letter of August 1825, Viazemskii wrote, "Karamzin wanted to find for you [the Life of the *iurodivyi* nick-named] Iron Cap ... [yet] Karamzin says that you will not find much in the Cap, except for maybe lice. All the holy fools are alike!" Two hundred years later, the holy fool's continuing eminence in Russian arts, culture, and scholarship has proven Prince Viazemskii wrong. The present compilation of the new scholarly forages into the phenomenology of holy foolishness bears witness to the holy fool's inexhaustible potential for renewal, his perennial appeal to the creative elite, and his continuous centrality to Russian culture.

¹²⁰ Tat'iana Goricheva, *Pravoslavie i postmodernizm* (Leningrad: Izd-vo Leningradskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta, 1991), 57, quoted in Bodin, *Language, Canonization and Holy Foolishness*, 211.

¹²¹ Bodin, *Language, Canonization and Holy Foolishness*; see n. 7.

¹²² Svitlana Kobets, review of *Language, Canonization and Holy Foolishness: Studies in Post-Soviet Russian Culture and the Orthodox Tradition*, by Per-Arne Bodin, *Russian Review* 70: 1 (2011): 166–67.