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Bulat Okudzhava:
Bard and Voice of a Waking Russian Nation

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August 2002
A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to acknowledge the support of Professor Tatiana A. Patera in the writing of this thesis.

Bulat Okudzhava:
Bard and Voice of a Waking Russian Nation

ABSTRACT

Bulat Shalvovich Okudzhava, the originator of the style of Russian bards, was the first to express his nation's disillusionment over the country's political system and government in a new and alternative way.

For this purpose, he used the direct impact of his poetry, a part of which he would sing for audiences, accompanied only by his guitar. This sort of communication between the writer and his interlocutors remained in sharp contrast with the means traditionally used by the official Soviet mass culture. The spreading of guitar poetry was impossible to control by authorities, since for popularization it used not only public gatherings, but also a new piece of technology at the time, tape recorders, a medium brilliantly used by *Magnitizdat*.

As opposed to Okudzhava's prose, the body of his poetry is largely understudied. One of the possible approaches to his poetic works may be that of classifying them according to their themes.

In the poetry of Bulat Okudzhava, several distinctive thematic categories can be distinguished. The themes that dominated the poet's creative years interpenetrate and overlap one another, as well as provide a reference for his secondary themes.

In the present thesis, the dominant themes will be analyzed from a biographical and historical angle. War will be the first major theme explored. This will be followed by a description of Okudzhava's works dealing with the cult of Stalin and the associated personal tragedy of the author, who witnessed the execution of his father and deportation of his mother. Subsequently, the themes of work, creator and creativity, poet and poetry, music and painting will be discussed. Other themes typical for Okudzhava are those of the city (especially Moscow), the street (especially the Arbat), nature, folklore, and Georgia. The body of the present thesis will conclude with the description of the basic thrusts of Okudzhava's ethics and philosophy, that are most clearly expressed in his "philosophical" verses (concerning belief, hope, love, destiny, women, friends, and man's inner world).

Since Okudzhava's poetry is heavily grounded in the historical context of the Stalin and post-Stalin era and is an alternative voice to what was imposed by official literature, it is natural and valuable to see it against the background of the Socialist Realist canon of Soviet state-controlled literary production.

Bulat Okudzhava :
Le chantre et la voix d'une nation réveillée

RÉSUMÉ

Bulat Shalvovich Okudzhava, l'auteur innovateur du style des chantres russes, fut le premier à exprimer sa désillusion de la nation vis-à-vis du système politique et du gouvernement du pays, et ce, d'une manière neuve et peu conventionnelle.

À cette fin, il se servit de l'impact direct de sa poésie, une partie de laquelle il chanterait à l'auditoire, accompagné seulement de sa guitare. Ce type de communication entre le parolier et ses interlocuteurs vint rompre nettement avec les moyens que se donnait traditionnellement la culture de masse soviétique officielle. L'engouement que suscita la poésie pour guitare fut telle que les autorités ne purent en venir à bout. Pour cet effet de popularisation, on eut non seulement recours à des rassemblements publics mais on utilisa également le nouveau matériel technologique du moment, à savoir le magnétophone à bande, un moyen d'expression dont se servit avec brio *Magnitizdat*.

Par opposition à sa prose, les textes de la poésie d'Okudzhava sont largement repris. Une des approches éventuelles à privilégier pour ses œuvres poétiques pourrait consister à les classer en fonction du thème abordé.

Dans la poésie de Bulat Okudzhava, on peut distinguer plusieurs catégories thématiques distinctes. Les thèmes qui dominent les années créatives du poète s'interpénètrent et se chevauchent mutuellement, de même qu'ils servent de référence aux thèmes secondaires.

Dans cette thèse, les thèmes dominants seront analysés à partir des points de vue biographique et historique. La guerre sera le premier thème principal exploré. Suivra ensuite une description des œuvres d'Okudzhava. Celle-ci aborde le culte de Staline et la tragédie personnelle de l'auteur qui y est associée, à savoir qu'il fut témoin de l'exécution de son père et de la déportation de sa mère. Subséquemment, les thèmes portant sur le travail, le créateur et la créativité, le poète et la poésie, la musique et la peinture seront discutés. D'autres thèmes de prédilection chers à Okudzhava concernent la ville (Moscou particulièrement), la rue (surtout l'Arbat), la nature, le folklore et la Georgie. Cette thèse se conclura par la description des idées de base sur l'éthique et la philosophie d'Okudzhava, lesquelles sont exprimées le plus clairement dans ses versets «philosophiques» (à propos de la croyance, l'espoir, l'amour, du destin, des femmes, des amis et du monde intérieur de l'homme).

Étant donné que la poésie d'Okudzhava est fortement ancrée dans le contexte historique de l'ère stalinienne et post-stalinienne et que sa poésie représente une voix parallèle à tout ce qu'imposa la littérature officielle, il est donc naturel et intéressant de

l'observer par rapport au climat qui régna à travers les règles réalistes socialistes de la production littéraire soviétique étatisée.

A NOTE ON THE TRANSLATIONS AND TRANSLITERATION

Translations of the poems and citations were done by the author of the thesis. They are not meant to be literary, but simply to render the meaning of the Russian works cited understandable to English-speaking readers.

The transliteration system follows the Romanization rules from the tables of the Modified Library of Congress and American Library Association (i.e. without the diacritical marks and ligatures).

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INTRODUCTION

...А годы проходят, как песни.
Иначе на мир я гляжу.

(...And the years pass, like songs.
And I see the world differently now.)¹

Я кланяюсь низко познания морю безбрежному,
разумный свой век, многоопытный век свой любя.

(I am bowing low before the endless sea of knowledge,
Loving my intelligent and changing times.)²

Definition:

For the purposes of the present thesis, *Russian bards*³ will be seen as representatives of a 1960s Soviet cultural reaction to the official state culture. The original English term *bard* is not linked with the notion of opposition or reaction to government⁴, and the Russian bards were not expressing the official ideology through their art, as the English meaning of the term *bard* may suggest.

On the contrary, their story reveals how post-Stalinist Soviet society embarked on a path of cultural and civil disobedience to a government that had “[assumed] the role of

¹ Bulat Okudzhava, “Arbatskii dvorik,” *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 176.

² Bulat Okudzhava, “Byloe nel’zia vorotit’, i pechalit’sia ne o chem...,” *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 284.

³ For more detailed information regarding the Russian bards, refer to *Appendix 1* at the end of the thesis.

⁴ *Among the ancient Celts a bard was a sort of official poet whose task was to celebrate national events – particularly heroic actions and victories. The bardic poets of Gaul and Britain were a distinct social class with special privileges. The ‘caste’ continued to exist in Ireland and Scotland, but nowadays /is/ more or less confined to Wales, where poetry contests and festivals, known as the Eisteddfodau, were revived in 1822 (after a lapse since Elizabethan times). In modern Welsh a bardd is a poet who has taken part in an Eisteddfod. In more common parlance the term may be half seriously applied to a distinguished poet – especially Shakespeare.* J.A. Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (Toronto: Penguin Books, 1999) 76.

an absolute spiritual leader”⁵ for the country. Contained within the sources used for this thesis was the term *minstrel*⁶, which also refers to the Russian bards.

Bulat Shalvovich Okudzhava⁷, a Russian poet whose fame began to spread at the end of the 1950s and peaked in popularity in the 1960s, was a major Russian bard who created a genuinely new genre of bard song. The title of *Russian bards* is used for him as well as B. Akhmadulina, A. Galich, Y. Kim, V. Vysotskii and others.

Limitations of the Subject Matter, Scholarship and Need for Study:

Okudzhava was arguably the most important figure in the bard movement. He created a self-sufficient system of literary works based on humanistic issues and philosophical impulses, instead of submitting to the government’s dictates for literature. It is therefore surprising that no extensive and detailed research into his poetry exists. Therefore, a thesis focusing on the works of this Russian bard will be a valuable contribution to Slavic studies. It introduces a new approach to Okudzhava’s poetry that is based on a thematic investigation of his works, focusing heavily on the shifting socio-cultural and political situation before and during the time that he produced his works. The results should be of interest to scholars specializing in modern poetry at large, to those

⁵ Rosette C. Lamont, "Horace's Heirs: Beyond Censorship in the Soviet Songs of the Magnitizdat," *World Literature Today* 53 (1979) 220.

⁶ Originally, this term referred to a medieval singer or poet: *Minstrel: 1. A medieval musician who performed songs or recited poetry with instrumental accompaniment. 2. A performer in a minstrel show. 3. Archaic or poetic: any poet, musician or singer.* Cited after: William T. McLeod, ed. *The New Collins Concise Dictionary of the English Language* (London & Glasgow: Collins, 1982) 719. For more on the oral tradition, the Spanish-American payadores, northern France trouvères and southern France troubadours, consult Cuddon 512, 617, 653 and 949.

Minstrel: One of a class of medieval musicians who sang or recited to the accompaniment of instruments. Originally the English equivalent of the French "troubadour" and the German "minnesinger". Cited after: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, *Termium. The Government of Canada Linguistic Data Bank*, CD-ROM (Ottawa: Translation Bureau, 1999).

⁷ For a detailed biography of Okudzhava, refer to *Appendix 2* at the end of the thesis.

interested in the poetry of other bards as well as to those interested in novel forms of music.

Okudzhava's poetry provides the primary sources for this thesis. Since Okudzhava was first and foremost a poet (in interviews he repeatedly stressed that he was not a guitarist or a songwriter but a poet⁸), the focus will be on his poems. The poems that will be considered are those meant to be sung as well as those meant to be read. For the sake of manageability, certain delimitations have been imposed on the scope of the verses presented. In order to investigate the greatest possible number of his varied thematic blocks while respecting the prescribed length of the thesis, poems that did not clearly fit into a given thematic group were omitted. For the same reason, the study will focus on the subject matter of Okudzhava's poetry as the unifying vehicle of his works rather than style. Since Okudzhava's prose works provide a complementary understanding of the bard, these are included as primary sources as well. Some attention to Okudzhava's prosaic works and their somewhat transitory place in the writings of Okudzhava is devoted in *Appendix 2*.

⁸ -Что касается барда, я не совсем хорошо представляю - что это значит. Это человек, поющий свои стихи, да? Да. И играющий под гитару. Ну главное, всё-таки, что я пишу стихи. Это главное. А всё остальное – это второстепенное ужё. Это средство выражения стихов: один их читает прекрасно, другой напевает под гитару. -А гитара Вам помогает? -Немножко помогает, но не во всех случаях. Нет, есть стихи, на которые я могу придумать мелодию и могу спеть, и есть стихи, на которые я не могу придумать мелодию и спеть не могу. Почему? – это тайна, я до сих пор этого понять не могу. То есть, теоретизировать на эту тему я не имею возможности. [-As for bard, I do not know exactly what this term means. It is someone singing his songs, right? Yes, to guitar music. But what is most important is that I write poems. This is the main thing. Everything else is secondary. This is a way of expressing poems: one person can read them very nicely, and another person sings them playing on a guitar. -And does the guitar help you? -It helps a bit, but not always. No, there are poems for which I can compose music and sing them, but there are also poems, for which I cannot come up with music or sing them. Why? – This is a mystery and I still don't understand it. I mean, I have no possibility of theorizing about that]. Aleksandr E. Petrakov, *Bulat Okudzhava: 'Ja nikomu nichego ne naviazyval...'* (Moscow: Knizhnyi magazin, 1997) 82-3.

The list of secondary sources includes a large number of articles regarding Okudzhava and his works. Authors of such articles include Bazhenova, Chudakova, Krylov and Rishina, among others. Additionally, other poets and bards such as Akhmadulina, Matveeva, Evtushenko and Voznesenskii also wrote about him. However, some of the secondary references cited are obsolete Soviet-era articles written with the political intent of silencing and even destroying the author's credibility with the people.

It is a common situation in the case of an undiscovered and under-studied poet that only a very limited number of books and dissertations have been written on such an author. A collection of Okudzhava's responses to questions from the public (*Булат Окуджав: Я никому ничего не навязывал...*), edited by Petrakov, provides some interesting information and will be cited in the present work. As far as dissertations are concerned, only two were found, and in both cases attention was devoted to the author's prose works⁹.

The author of the present study has not located any monographic attempt to describe the poetry of Bulat Okudzhava. The many interviews, journal and paper articles that are available only provide scattered pieces to the whole picture of who Okudzhava was and exactly what he accomplished in the field of literature. The failure of Okudzhava's poetic body of writing to attract well deserved scholarly recognition is yet another reason why the particular themes of Okudzhava's poetry, as well as some aspects of his creative laboratory, were researched. This kind of innovative work, thematically

⁹ The two works are: Liubov Arsen'evna Krechkova, "Fiction and Reality: The prose of Bulat Okudzhava," diss., U. of North Carolina, 1991 and Lorraine Aten Ranchod, "The Early Novels of Bulat Okudzhava: 'Bednyi Avrosimov' and 'Pokhozhdeniia Shipova': Political Allegory of the Period of Zastoi in the Soviet Union," diss., U. of Virginia, 1992.

discussing more than just a single volume of Okudzhava's poetry, should be useful in further research on his poetry.

The fact that Okudzhava died in 1997 and has still received so little scholarly attention provides a further reason why in-depth and extensive research into his poetry should be carried out. The lack of research on Okudzhava's poetry represents a glaring omission in the critical corpus surrounding his work. With a focus on the themes of his poetry, this thesis aims to fill in this omission.

Background:

While the Soviet public had been used to obedience and one way of thinking under the terror filled rule of Stalin¹⁰, Okudzhava's works contributed to the process of

¹⁰ [...] such writers as Bitov, Okudzhava, and Iskander seem to represent an extreme reaction against literary practices inherited from the Stalin period; the only trace of socialist realism in their works is clearly parodic. Deming Brown, *The Last Years of Soviet Russian Literature: Prose Fiction 1975-1991* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993) 60.

И вот с середины 50-х годов, с оттепели, утеплившей души и размягчившей сердца, начинается вторая фаза – и трудно подобрать ей более точное название, чем «социалистический сентиментализм». Опять критика жестких классицистических канонов, отказ от «социологизма», ставшего «вульгарным», – в пользу моральных подходов по «душе» и по «совести». В центре внимания – неповторимая человеческая личность. «Людей неинтересных в мире нет» – кредо одного из зачинателей этого нового сентиментализма Евгения Евтушенко, сравнимое по значению лишь с бессмертным карамзинским: «и крестьянки любить умеют». Снова образы «маленьких людей», портных, бухгалтеров и чулочниц вместо полководцев и работорговцев. Главное требование к литературе – искренность, личная взволнованность, исповедальность. Главное направление – «нравственные поиски», дошедшие чуть ли не до середины 80-х, впрочем, уже без надежды на обретения. А. Вознесенский, Б. Окуджава, В. Аksenov, А. Битов, Ю. Казаков, Ю. Трифонов, В. Тендряков, – все они формировались на этом главном направлении, независимо от разброса последующих путей. «Эстрадная поэзия», «исповедальная проза», «городская проза», «городской романс» – таковы были знаки и вехи «сентиментального воспитания» в нашей словесности 50-х – 60-х годов. И тут же, как второй, возмужалый период того же движения, на смену юной мечтательности приходит суровая солженицынская проповедь нравственного очищения: «жить не по лжи»... Твардовский, «Новый мир», поэтика горькой правды и мучимой совести... [And suddenly, at the beginning of the 50s, as a result of the thaw, which warmed souls and softened hearts, the second phase began – and it is difficult to find a more exact name for it than “Socialist Sentimentalism”. Once again the criticism of severe classicist canons, rejection of “sociologism”, which became “vulgar” – towards a moral approach involving “soul” and “conscience.” Unique human individuality was in the centre of attention. “There are no uninteresting people in the world” – this was the credo of one of the pioneers of this new sentimentalism, Evgenii Evtushenko. Its importance can only be compared with the eternal Karamzin’s “even peasant women can love.” Once again portraits of “small

destroying the Soviet myth, Soviet canon and the omnipresent concept of *партийность* [*Party spirit*]. Okudzhava's works romanticized the people's common life and encouraged people to seek their individual paths. Additionally, he evoked intimate feelings of empathy from the people, a dimension of personal experience that State officials had prohibited from being expressed in literature. Okudzhava also revealed the beauty and good hidden in every person and in every social situation in a new way of sharing his own feelings and he encouraged his generation to see individuals in the faceless crowd. In a chamber-like way, free of any unnecessary pathos, he spoke of war, terror, town, nature, loneliness, women, love and death. It was Okudzhava, again, who for the first time changed the ideological tone into a much more elegiac and emotionally touching one while singing about war and its impact on a single human being¹¹ as he opposed and questioned the idea of "just wars."

Okudzhava's hero is a common person full of emotions that are acknowledged and not ignored for the sake of Soviet ideals to be unfeeling as a dead corpse. Such a portrayal of the Soviet hero was in complete disagreement with the State's officially

people", tailors, accountants and stocking-makers replaced those of army commanders and fighters. The main requirement from literature was sincerity, personal involvement and confession. The overall direction – "moral quest" – continued almost into the mid-80s, but already without the hope of yielding any results. A. Voznesenskii, B. Okudzhava, V. Aksenov, A. Bitov, Iu. Kazakov, Iu. Trifonov, V. Tendriakov – all of them followed this main direction, although their paths subsequently diverged. "Stage poetry", "confession prose", "city prose", "city romance" – these were the aspects and landmarks of "sentimental education" in our literature of the 50s and 60s. And then, in the second period of the same movement, the young dreamers are phased out by Solzhenitsyn's severe forecast of moral cleansing: "live without lie"... Tvardovskii, "Novyi mir", the poetry of bitter truth and tormented conscience...] Michail Epshtein, *Postmodern v Rossii: Literatura i teoriia* (Moscow: Izdanie P. Elinina, 2000). 156.

¹¹ В песне «А как первая война» Окуджаву, как всегда, говорит не от имени народа или поколения, о чем неизменно ораторствовали казенные поэты, а – от своего имени. Свой опыт, своя мысль, своя интонация. [In the song "And the First War" Okudzhava, as always, speaks not on behalf of the nation or generation, as official poets-orators invariably used to do; instead, he speaks for himself. His own experience, own thought, own intonation.] Mark Altshuller, and Elena Dryzhakova, *Put' otrencheniia* (Tenaflly: Hermitage, 1985) 67.

blessed exemplary Soviet hero¹² of the high Stalin era production “with their crudely confident heroes, their contrived conflicts, their omniscient narrators, their uplifting sentiments and their compulsory happy endings”¹³ and with high moral values and a Stakhanovite approach to work. In contrast, Okudzhava’s characters do not live for and their actions are not governed by the high Purpose of creating the *great new world*¹⁴, or at least affirming State-sanctioned Soviet reality¹⁵.

The structure of communication between Okudzhava and his audience contrasts vividly with the structure typical of the Soviet era. Okudzhava did not relate to his readers as an omniscient sovereign distant from the common citizens. Neither did he relate to them as the initiated one who needed to lead interlocutors as though they were in need of guidance regarding the truth of the government’s actions. It was not, either, the

¹² [...] a hero [in the Socialist Realism novel] appears from among the people, he is guided and matured by the party, which tempers his ‘spontaneity’ with its ‘consciousness’, and then he leads his brethren to great victories over enemies and natural obstacles in the name of the Great Future which the party is building [...]. All these figures have, however, something in common. They know, or discover, the laws governing their social existence, and the ultimate outcome of those laws in a Great Society of the future. This is the Purpose to which everything is subordinated. The positive characters have overcome, or they learn to overcome, their personal weaknesses, anything that stands in the way of unremitting struggle on behalf of this vision. Personal and private life is strictly regulated to the requirements of these public goals. Once knowledge and self-mastery have been attained, the hero is iron-willed, resolute, resourceful, able unfailingly to sum up situations at a glance and decide exactly how to act. Geoffrey Hosking, Beyond Socialist Realism: Soviet Fiction since ‘Ivan Denisovich’ (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1980) 18-19.

¹³ Hosking, Beyond Socialist Realism: Soviet Fiction since ‘Ivan Denisovich’ 1.

¹⁴ This is how G. Hosking explains the governing position of the Purpose in Socialist realism fiction: *Above everything else towers the Purpose in whose service the narrator stands, and towards which all the characters are moving. Things and people are valued not for themselves, but for the extent to which they contribute to the Purpose or help us to see it. Reality is viewed exclusively in the light of its ‘revolutionary development’, for what it tells us about the ‘magnificent prospects’ and the ‘great new world’ that is to come.* Hosking, Beyond Socialist Realism: Soviet Fiction since ‘Ivan Denisovich’ 18-19.

¹⁵ *In the heyday of the Stalin era the literature of socialist realism was aimed towards future, tending to infuse the reader with a positive faith in a glorious future after the universal victory of communism, as well as with a confidence in the correctness of the historical path chosen by the Soviet people. Today socialist realism is a literature of affirmation. It is supposed to affirm the Soviet way of life and to justify the policies of the Communist Party and the Soviet government. Therefore one of the few requirements for Soviet art accepted by all Soviet theoreticians is that a work of literature not be anti-Soviet and that it should not question the political and ideological foundations of the established order of things.* N.N. Shneidman, Soviet Literature in the 1970s: Artistic Diversity and Ideological Conformity (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979) 13.

vertical dynamic typical of Maiakovskii or Evtushenko carried out during their mass poetry readings in huge stadiums. Instead, Okudzhava used a confessional relationship where one friend talks to another friend about the impact that the political leaders have on the personal lives of each citizen. The relation that Okudzhava used was horizontal, dialogue-like and intimate, not resembling the subjugation of an obedient servant to a flawless leader. The new dynamic between Okudzhava and his audience was one of a poet versus his nation; however, his nation consisted of clearly visible and distinguishable individuals.

Since Okudzhava not only published his poems but also sang them at poetry readings, his poetry possesses a particular quality of speech and is placed between the written and oral tradition. Both aspects of his works, the texts and the medium of musical expression to accompany his unique personal performance¹⁶, were important to him and stimulated a dynamic response¹⁷. Okudzhava acknowledged that his songs were a complex work consisting not only of separate poetic words, verses, and acoustical

¹⁶ *His performance style, a simple and modest demeanor, was a refreshing contrast to the declamatory mode of Soviet popular and mass song artists. His lyrics were poetic and personal, tragic or comic, but always authentic. Places, times, loves, and moods come alive in the realia of his verses about the Arbat, the last trolleybus, and old jacket, or the Smolensk Road. But the lyrics alone, a spoken poetry, could never replicate the response that this artist evoked with his music. "Georgian Song" (Okudzhava is half-Georgian by birth) and the "Prayer of François Villon" are among the most beautiful and singable melodies in all of Russian music. Stites, Richard. Russian Popular Culture: Entertainment and society since 1900 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992) 134-35.*

¹⁷ *-При какой аудитории вы больше всего любите выступать? -Я люблю выступать перед людьми, которые знают, на что они пришли. Наши или не наши – мне это всё равно. И в общем, мне повезло в жизни, потому что на все мои вечера 99% приходили людей, которые знали, на что они идут. Поэтому они были ко мне снисходительны и великодушны, и прощали мне ошибки и накладки всякие. А один процент – который попал случайно, Ну, может быть, и уходили. [-What is your most favorite audience? -I like to perform in front of people who know what they came for. Ours or not ours – it is the same to me. And generally, I was lucky in my life, because 99% of the people coming to my evenings knew what they were coming for. This is why they were condescending and generous to me, forgiving all sorts of mistakes or blunders. And one percent – these who were coming by chance – well, perhaps they left]. Petrakov 90.*

intonations (music)¹⁸, but there was also the meaning of each and every personal interpretation of the given song during each performance¹⁹.

Though Okudzhava's style is simple in its perfection, his poetic lexicon is also extremely rich, varying widely from poem to poem. He writes with a bewildering inspiration on the subject of war and then smoothly moves to the topics of man's inner world, city, village and folklore, easily incorporating popular consciousness into his discourse. Throughout Okudzhava's poetry, the reader will encounter a rough-and-ready quality that owes much to the expressions of everyday Russian life. Literary terms aside, he pleasures in incorporating all manner of colloquial language, big-city jargon, prosaic expressions and dialectical stylization (such as rusticisms) as well as descriptive details into his work. His form of poetical expression is no longer the formal language and schematized forms of idealistic Socialist Realist characters²⁰. Okudzhava's songs do not use Socialist Realist language and they are not abstract, either. His songs have a lyrical

¹⁸ Музыка в песнях Окуджавы – отнюдь не некий нейтральный фон, не только средство «донесения» стиха до слушателя или его, стиха, эмоциональный усилитель [...]. Музыка часто выступает как [...] партнер поэтического слова; она обволакивает его особой эмоциональной атмосферой; музыка может приподнять, романтизировать его звучание или – при помощи иронической интонации – сбалансировать, снизить неумеренно рвущееся из стиха чувство; она обогащает слово новыми красками, рождает добавочные смысловые оттенки, образуя своего рода контрапункт к движению стиха... [Music in Okudzhava's songs is not a neutral background, not only is it a means of "delivering" the poem to the listener, but also emotional amplifier for the poem. [...] Music often appears as [...] a partner of the poetic word. It surrounds the word with a particular emotional atmosphere. Music may uplift, romanticize the sounds of the words, or – with help of ironic intonation – balance and subdue the emotional feelings escaping uncontrollably from the poem; it enriches the word with new colours, creates additional shades of meaning, creating a sort of counterpoint to the movement of the poem...]. V. Frumkin, Commentary, *65 pesen*, by Bulat Okudzhava (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1980) 13.

¹⁹ Мелодия – потому что я не записываю нот, я нот не знаю, и в зависимости от настроения я варьирую мелодию в какой-то степени: от гитары зависит, от аудитории, от климата [...]. Что касается слов – есть несколько вариантов, я их пробую: иногда мне хочется петь тот вариант, иногда другой. [The melody – since I do not write down notes, I do not know notes, I change the melody to some degree depending on the mood: it depends on the guitar, audience or climate [...]. As for the words – there are several variations, and I am trying them out: sometimes I want to sing this variant, and sometimes another one.] Petrakov 73.

²⁰ This is how G. Hosking comments on the type of language used by Socialist Realist characters: *Slang, dialect, jargon, obsolete words and neologisms are rigidly shunned as unworthy of the high subject-matter being presented, a situation reminiscent of the linguistic divisions in Russian literature of the eighteenth century.* Hosking, *Beyond Socialist Realism: Soviet Fiction since 'Ivan Denisovich'* 19.

hero that tells his short story, often with a humorous twist of irony. This is why it can be said that the poet's style uses, to a certain extent, the vehicle of *skaz* [skaz].

Methodology:

The investigated elements in this thesis involve thematic groups of Okudzhava's poems. Each group consists of a number of poems that are considered as a collective unit, bound by a major common theme. The main body of the thesis is divided into five chapters and each considers one theme or a group of themes of his poetry. The specific themes that constituted the focus of Okudzhava's lyrics and that are explored include: war, the cult of Stalin, work, creativity (the poet and poetry, music, painting), the city, the street, nature, folklore, verses on man's inner world (concerning belief, hope and love). Since Okudzhava's poetry is interrelated, some poems concerned with one main theme will also touch upon other secondary theme(s).

The poetry of Okudzhava is analysed by working from the general to the specific. Based on the general theses made at the beginning of each chapter, together with a brief account of the political factors that determined and influenced the literary treatment of certain themes, a detailed analysis of the relevant works of fiction is conducted in order to prove the initial claims. The specific methods that Okudzhava employed to reach his audience and readers, such as stylistics, lexis or versification, are explored in each chapter involving a limited number of poems.

A cultural-historical and biographical²¹ approach, rather than a theoretical or critical practice, is taken in this thesis. Cultural and historical background is extremely important in comprehending and analyzing any poetry stemming from dissatisfaction with the official literary rules and political and cultural obstacles imposed by a totalitarian state, as well as from disillusionment with the system, and this is why it determines the development and organization of the present work²². Soviet literature

²¹ *The historical-biographical approach has been evolving for at least two and a half centuries. [...] This approach sees a literary work chiefly, if not exclusively, as a reflection of its author's life and times or the life and times of the characters in the work [...]. An historical novel is likely to be more meaningful when either its milieu or that of its author is understood. [...] It seems reasonable, then, to employ historical-biographical, textual-linguistic, or moral-philosophical analyses among other methods in getting at the total meaning of a literary work when the work seems to call for them [...]. It is a mistake [...] to think that poets do not concern themselves with social themes or that good poetry cannot be written about such themes. Actually, poets have from earliest times been the historians, the interpreters of contemporary culture, and the prophets of their people. Wilfred L. Guerin, Earle G. Labor, Lee Morgan, and John R. Willingham A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature (New York and London: Harper & Row Publishers, 1992) 5, 6 and 9.*

Памятник сам по себе, в своем существе является фактором истории, истории культуры, истории литературы и биографии автора [...]. Обращение к биографии и к истории в широком смысле этого слова необходимо не только для объяснения (как предполагает Г. Шпет) памятника, но в первую очередь для его понимания, - понимания эстетического в том числе. Если мы не будем знать, когда произведение составлено, не будем вносить известной доли историчности в его восприятие, - оно пропадет для своего читателя художественно. [...] Исторический подход не только объясняет нечто для нас данное, а в первую очередь расширяет наше понимание произведения [...]. Знание эпохи и жизни творца позволяет нам понять многое, что в противном случае прошло бы мимо нашего понимания. Больше того, знание эпохи позволяет нам поднять памятник над этой эпохой. Так же точно знание жизни автора поднимает его над ним самим. [...] Историзм в понимании произведения искусства прошлого обогащает это понимание. Ценность произведения литературы возрастает от того, что оно выступает в сознании читателя как явление своей эпохи. [A literary work in itself, in its essence, is an element of history, the history of culture, literature and the biography of its author [...]. Turning to biography and to history in the broad meaning of this word is necessary not only for explaining [...] the literary work, but first of all for its comprehension – including esthetic comprehension. If we do not know when a literary work was written, we cannot contribute a historical factor to its perception – and the work will be artistically lost for its reader. [...] The historical approach not only explains something that is given to us, but first of all broadens our understanding of the literary work [...]. Knowledge of the author's epoch and life permits us to comprehend many things that would otherwise be left not understood. Moreover, knowledge of the epoch allows us to raise the literary work above the epoch. In the same way, knowledge of the author's life raises the literary work above the author. [...] A historical approach enriches the understanding of works of art from the past. The value of the literary work grows if the work appears in the reader's mind as the testimony of its epoch.] D.S. Likhachev, Ocherki po filosofii khudozhestvennogo tvorchestva (Sankt-Peterburg: Russko-Baltiiskii informatsionnyi tsentr BLIC, 1999) 112-16.

²² *The thaw partially melted the icy monument into which the popular performing arts had been frozen during the last years of Stalin. Circus, standup comedy, variety show – live and on the radio – took on new life. Stites 136-37.*

cannot be approached in isolation from Soviet society, for many fictional incidents, characters and allusions are only fully explicable in relation to actual events. For this reason a historical approach, outlining relevant facts in the shifting political Soviet and post-Soviet history and the rupture between the official and underground culture²³, is very important and fruitful. The coincidence between Okudzhava's poems and major events of his personal life constitute one more reason for not separating Okudzhava's life from his works.

Common responsibilities were to be seen in a new light, disagreeing with Soviet literature, and one possibility was through the lens of Okudzhava's art.

The first overt manifestation of independent youth culture appeared while Khrushchev was pursuing his policy of "destalinisation". It was a tense period, full of ups and downs, as tentative democratisation produced anxiety and frustration, especially among young people. Relaxation of political control created conditions conducive to various cultural developments, but these were often frustrated by the rigid framework of official cultural institutions which were inadequate as forums of broad cultural expression. [...] New cultural developments had a great impact in the country; there was an unprecedented boom in poetry as the younger generation expressed its aspirations for a better future. In poets and bards, new forms of social and political consciousness found expression. Poets like Evtushenko, Voznesenskii, Akhmadulina and Bulat Okudzhava could fill indoor sports stadiums [...]. It was a poetry of new dimensions: painfully sincere and desperately optimistic. Young urban intellectuals provided the vanguard of this movement but, with the appearance of tape-recorders and more poetry publications, the entire country soon became involved. [...] The newly emerged genre of guitar ballads became popular and the famous poet, bard and satirist Bulat Okudzhava inspired a new movement. His songs were recorded and distributed unofficially, and many young people formed their own guitar-song groups. They met anywhere they could – in parks, gardens, apartments or on street corners; and they were officially frowned upon, although the authorities could do nothing to stop their activities altogether. [...] During those years, most of the institutions for official youth culture (primarily the Komsomol) became exceedingly formal and bureaucratic, endeavouring merely to implement the dominant Party ideology. [...] The younger generation turned away from them and the gap between official and unofficial youth culture grew wider all the time. Tanya Frisby, "Soviet Youth Culture," *Soviet Youth Culture*, ed. Jim Riordan (Bloomington-Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1989) 2-4.

²³ The 'thaw' was a period of uncertainty, not only in literature, but in all aspects of Soviet life, when the death of Stalin, the denunciation of the 'cult of personality', the easing of terror and the amnestying of prisoners left many questions bewilderingly open. Hosking, *Beyond Socialist Realism: Soviet Fiction since 'Ivan Denisovich'* 20.

Chapter 1

WAR

А пули?

Пули были. Били часто.
Да что о них рассказывать,— война.

(And bullets?

There were bullets. They struck often.
But why talk about them,— War.)²⁴

и скрипачи ложились к пулеметам,
и пулеметы бились на груди.
Но что поделать, что поделать, если
атаки были в моде, а не песни?

(And violinists lay down with machine-guns,
And the guns battered their chests.
But what could be done, what could be done,
If attacks were in fashion, and not songs?)²⁵

The Great Patriotic War (1941-1945) constituted a discrepant experience in the life of the Soviet Union. Paradoxically, it was a period of a relative freedom for the average citizen. The relaxation of the regime brought new hope that victory would substantially improve the quality of life for the common Soviet citizen.

Through the course of the war, censorship was less rigid, forbidden names reappeared, the widely-used form of address *товарищи* [*comrades*] was replaced by *братья и сестры* [*brothers and sisters*]²⁶, and the negative attitude towards the

²⁴ Bulat Okudzhava, "Sto raz zakat krasnel, rassvet sinel...", *Bud' zdorov, shkoliar: Stikhi* (Frankfurt-Main: Posev, 1966) 91.

²⁵ Bulat Okudzhava, "Dzhazisty," *Chaepitie na Arbate* (Moscow: Korona Print, 1998) 72.

²⁶ On 3 July /1941/, Stalin made a radiobroadcast speech, addressing the people with the words: 'Comrades! Citizens! Brothers and Sisters!'. He threatened the 'Hitlerite forces' with the fate that had overwhelmed Napoleon in Russia in 1812 [...]. In the winter of 1941-2 his words were beginning to acquire a degree of plausibility. Robert Service, *A History of Twentieth-Century Russia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1998) 263.

Orthodox church diminished²⁷. The desperate situation of the war, such as, for example, the German assault on Leningrad, delayed the process of building a great Communist nation. The widespread hatred towards the Fascist oppressors brought civilians to volunteer *en masse* for the army.

War, Okudzhava's most important theme, is developed in both his poetry and prose, and it frequently appears in conjunction with other major themes. The echoes of Okudzhava's experiences as a seventeen-year-old sergeant reverberate through most of his poetry, including those poems that initially appear to have had little to do with his all-pervasive preoccupation with war. This theme in his poetry is substantially conditioned by the discrepancies of the war period and by the incongruence of its understanding by the Intelligentsia living in the Soviet Union.

Instead of portraying the war as the most positive and romanticized experience in the nation's recent history, Okudzhava presented it in a unique way, in all of its harshness and suffering. Because of his first-hand experience on the front, war was a logical and ever-abiding theme.

This chapter will illustrate the ways in which Okudzhava's treatment of the theme of war differed from the existing official approach²⁸ in works charged with political message and literary articles that emphasized the role of patriotism in the Soviet Union²⁹.

²⁷ Stalin also somewhat moderated his rough approach to the religious faith of most Soviet citizens. At a time when he needed the maximum co-operation in the war effort, it made no sense to give unnecessary offence to such believers, and the word was put about that the authorities would no longer persecute the Russian Orthodox Church. In its turn the Church collected money for military needs and its priests blessed tank divisions on their way from the factories to the Eastern front. (Service 281-2.).

²⁸ Whereas the prose published in the Soviet Union in the early 1960s remained predominantly realist, experimentation in language and style became the province of poetry. The originality and virtuosity of such young poets as Voznesenskii and Evtushenko attested to their revulsion against the debasement of language in the Stalin era. The revival of poetry in the early 1960s reflected the growing spiritual emancipation of young Soviet people, whose enthusiasm for verse was so great that the Luzhniki sports stadium in Moscow could be packed by almost 15,000 people for a poetry recital. Stephen Lovell, and Rosalind Marsh,

Due to the available relative freedom to express ideas and opinions, Okudzhava revealed his experientially grounded, intimate views about war and for this reason many readers of his works associate a direct relationship between his poetry and the theme of the war. To them, Okudzhava is the bard whose verse, voice, and guitar express their own protest against the cruelty and inhumanity of the bloodshed they endured. In 1965, two decades after the end of the Second World War, one of his first-person lyrical heroes sums up the gruesome experience of an entire generation:

Я все забыл [...].
Я выжил. Я из пекла вышел. Там не оставил ничего.
Теперь живу посередине между войной и тишиной.

(I forgot everything [...].
I survived. I got out of hell. I left nothing behind.
Now I live mid-way between a state of war and one of silence.)³⁰

Along with the Revolution of 1917 and the reign of terror by Stalin, World War Two framed in the definitive existential matrix, social consciousness for the twentieth century Russian. Having survived the war and terror, Okudzhava through his poetry was able to fulfill two crucial missions: to appropriate justice for the victims of these events and to bear a true and telling account of the inescapable horrors and anguish created by them for future generations. Okudzhava's anti-war poems include several thematic sub-groups (lack of experience of young soldiers; feelings associated with war, such as fear, anger, confusion, loss, guilt, doubt, cruelty; leaving for the army and separation from a

"Culture and Crisis," Russian Cultural Studies: An Introduction, ed. Catriona Kelly, and David Shepherd (New York: Oxford UP, 1998) 61.

The cultural community was enlisted to popularize the major wartime themes: heroism and love of country; hate and ridicule of the invader. N.N.Shneidman, Soviet Literature in the 1970s: Artistic Diversity and Ideological Conformity (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979) 14.

²⁹ Exemplary writers of this kind of works were K. Simonov, three times awarded the Stalin Prize between 1941 and 1942, and I. Ehrenburg, a multiple laureate of the same prize, a well-known writer and propagandist (compare Wolfgang Kasack, *A Dictionary of Russian Literature Since 1917* [London: Overseas Publications Interchange, 1988] 696 and 884-85.).

³⁰ Bulat Okudzhava, "Ne pomniu zla, obid ne pomniu...", Proza i poezii (Frankfurt Main: Posev, 1968) 143.

beloved woman; tragedy of mourning women: mothers, wives and fiancées; disregard for the value of each single life, the need to return home, unpopular in those times; betrayal of wartime affairs; military leaders, and fears of a possible new war).

War survivors were often emotionally, as well as physically, handicapped for the rest of their lives. The war had forcefully weakened their morals to the crisis point where the will to further exist consumed the law to honor the lives of all people. They were forced to shoot people just like them, to be cruel and inflict pain on their fellow human beings, and often kill against their will. Okudzhava would never forget his wartime experiences and summarized that in the following statement:

Большинство стихов моих – и те, которые читаю, и те, которые пою, – на военную тему. Когда мне было 17 лет, я из девятого класса ушел на фронт. И я тогда стихов не писал, а потом, очевидно, эти впечатления юности были настолько сильны, что они до сих пор идут за мной по пятам. Вот чтоб вас не удивляло преобладание военной темы у меня. (1961) [...] И почему-то все время – до сих пор – появляются в основном военные стихи и военные песни. (1962)

(Most of my poems—both the ones I read and the ones I sing—are about war. When I was seventeen, I left the ninth grade for the front. I wrote no poems during that time, but afterward, obviously, those youthful impressions were so strong that they continue to haunt me today. This is just so you won't be surprised to see the theme of war dominating my work (1961). [...] And for some reason—even today—they mostly turn out to be poems and songs about war (1962).)³¹

Bulat Okudzhava first turned to poetry as a serious pursuit in the late 1950s. His earliest publications, a handful of anti-war poems and a short story about a young student volunteering for the army, called *Будь здоров, школяр* [*Fare You Well, Schoolboy*], 1961, evoked strong reactions upon publication and ultimately caused the author substantial difficulties:

[...] тут же стали на меня сыпаться фельетоны – это все было в “Литературной газете”. И кончилось тем, что в 62-м году меня пригласил к себе уже новый редактор Косолапов, замечательный человек, очень смущенный, очень мялся, мялся и потом мне говорит: “Вы знаете, мне все

³¹ Petrakov 8-9.

время звонят из ЦК и возмущаются, что заведует отделом поэзии гитарист. Как быть?" Я говорю: "Я уйду, чтобы вас не подводить" – и я ушел из "Литературной газеты".

([...] I was immediately bombarded with reviews—this was in the *Literaturnaia Gazeta*. The new editor, Kosolapov, ended up inviting me up to his offices in 1962. He was a fine person, very embarrassed, and he hummed and hawed before finally saying: 'You know, they constantly call me from the Central Committee to worry about the poetry section being led by a guitarist. What should we do?' I said: "Well, what should we do? I'll leave, so you won't be in danger." And I left the *Literaturnaia Gazeta*.).³²

Publishing criticism of what was now glorious Soviet history in the still censorious post-Stalin atmosphere guaranteed Okudzhava punitive treatment. Even serious literary journals continued to produce hard-line, politically conditioned pseudo-criticism, often written by people of suspicious talent and expertise. Although Khrushchev's political thaw had already begun to question Stalin's "cult of personality" and other social issues and actions previously unquestioned, the State media was still constrained to the controlling influences of Stalin's long arm, as can be seen in the following citation of a direct reaction to Okudzhava and his writings, that, as some critics proclaimed, failed to portray the politically correct point of view:

Войны не стихийные бедствия [...], а [...] социальные, имеющие свою историю в человеческом обществе – начало и, кажется, *уже не столь далекий конец*. Думать иначе – значит не только впасть в бессильный, пассивный в своей основе пацифизм, но и обеднять искусство [...]. И *справедливые войны* приносят народам большие жертвы [...]. 1941-1942 годы в нашей истории это с особой убедительностью доказывают.

(Wars are not natural disasters [...], but [...] social ones, with their roots in human society—from its beginning to its *apparently fast-approaching end*. To think otherwise means not only to fall into impotent, fundamentally passive pacifism, but also a weakening of the Arts [...]. Even *just wars* bring substantial losses upon nations [...]. Our country's experience in 1941 and 1942 proves this particularly well.)³³

What was expected of writers could be summarized in the following words:

³² Petrakov 21-22.

³³ A. Kondratovich, "Chelovek na voine: Zametki kritika," *Novyi mir* 6 (1962): 228. Unless otherwise indicated, all italics in this and subsequent quotes are my own.

свет романтики [...] первых пятилеток, свет высокой гражданственности и глубокой заинтересованности в судьбах родины, которая шла навстречу схватке с фашизмом.

(romantic world [...] of the first five-year plans, elevated civil spirit and deep interest in the fate of our country that marched to crush the fascism.)³⁴

This critic, Kondratovich, omits the fact that the sincere, young Okudzhava had easily accepted the Soviet propaganda during the 1940s, and had willingly volunteered for military service. In future interviews, the poet would speak laconically about this period:

Воевал. Был минометчиком. Рядовым, солдатом. В основном, Северо-Кавказский фронт. Ранен под Моздоком из немецкого самолета. Остался жив.

(I fought. I was a mortar man. A private, a soldier. On the North Caucasian front, mostly. I was injured by a German plane near Mozdok. I survived.)³⁵

Another example of the negative “critics” of Okudzhava is found in an article entitled “*Март великодушный*’ Б. Окуджавы”³⁶. Near the end of the article, the critic states:

У [поэзии Окуджавы] есть *еще* свой поклонник, свой слушатель. Читателя, думаю, все-таки нет.

(The [poetry of Okudzhava] is *still* admired—by its listeners. As for readers, though, there are none.)³⁷

At the time when this article was published, a “true” Soviet citizen was expected to believe in the ethical necessity of defense and victory in so-called “just wars”. As official Soviet propaganda insisted, it was necessary for the fulfillment of the Communist plans.

Okudzhava approached the war theme from different angles. He saw it first and foremost as an intimate experience of every individual. However, he did not forget to

³⁴ Kondratovich, “Chelovek na voine: Zametki kritika,” 226-7.

³⁵ Petrakov 12.

³⁶ St. Kunaev, “*Март великодушный*’ Б. Окуджавы,” *Voprosy literatury* 9 (1968): 30.

³⁷ Kunaev 30.

underscore its global meaning for his and future generations or to draw a powerful philosophical conclusion that the intrinsic nature of war is a rapacious tragedy for all humanity. By means of his writings he passes on this poetic exhortation to all posterity. The earliest works, from the story *Будь здоров, школяр* to his poems such as *Не вели старшина, чтоб была тишина...* [*Sergeant, don't order silence...*], *Тамань*, and *Первый день на передовой* [*First Day on the Front Line*], are written from the point of view of an inexperienced and fearful schoolboy who volunteered for the front. For Okudzhava initially believed the official propaganda that a war could be a “just war”. But the inescapable revelation was that all war is pure horror stripping the human spirit of its dignity. The fact that Okudzhava was among the first to raise his voice against the tragedy caused him to suffer punitive repercussions in the 1960s.

The lyrical hero of this earliest set of poems, a very naive person, was able to convince himself, just like the character of *Fare You Well, Schoolboy* (1957):

Так вот она – передовая!
 В ней ничего нет страшного.
 (So this is it—the front line!
 Nothing horrible about it.)³⁸

The implicit irony in this stanza becomes explicit in the very first phrase of the poem – *Волнения не выдавая...* [*Concealing my fear...*]. In this poem, the mask behind which the simple-minded lyrical hero hides, slowly cracks, and fear comes to dominate his childish incomprehension. Parallelism, repetition, and ever-shorter and rhythmical verses serve to heighten the emotional tension of the lyrical hero's transition from a faithful and trusting young citizen to a reflective individual. He initially believes in the

³⁸ Bulat Okudzhava, “Pervyi den' na peredovoi,” *Bud' zdorov, shkoliar: Stikhi* (Frankfurt-Main: Posev, 1966) 85.

Soviet doctrine that war must be accepted, but when he begins to witness the tragic situations of his fellow comrades, he starts to change. He is taking ownership of himself as an individual who realizes that the Soviet ideal for war does not include, nor ever reaches, the subjective experience of the earnest individual Soviet who is attempting to support Communist country ideals and their further preservation. At first the schoolboy cannot understand the seriousness of the situation, and thinks:

Звонят комары.
Звонят, звонят
возле меня.
Летят, летят —
Крови моей хотят.

(The mosquitoes are buzzing.
Buzzing and buzzing
Around me.
Flying and flying—
They want my blood.)³⁹

The inexperienced youth in the trenches mistakes the whistle of bullets for the buzz of mosquitoes, but when he witnesses the death of his friends in the battalion, he cannot believe that this state of affairs constitutes reality. Instead he proclaims this state of experience as a surrealistic rupture in the delicate web of life and turns it into a bad dream:

и вдруг попадаю в сон:

дым сражения,
окружение,
гибнет, гибнет
мой батальон.

(And suddenly I'm in a dream:
Smoke of battle,
Surrounded,
My battalion
Dies and dies.)⁴⁰

³⁹ Okudzhava, "Pervyi den' na peredovoi," Bud' zdorov, shkoliar: Stikhi 85.

⁴⁰ Okudzhava, "Pervyi den' na peredovoi," Bud' zdorov, shkoliar: Stikhi 85.

In this very moment, the reality of war crashes like a heavy mortar shell into the lyrical hero's young heart. Although he is not yet ready to accept this gruesome reality, the moment of truth must come at last. In this moment, all suffering sinks like lead into the intimate lives of each individual citizen. The government's game is to force each citizen not to look into this dimension of their being and to proclaim that each individual citizen must live out the virtue of being a "Doer" and only a "Doer". Instead, in the footsteps of Socrates, the father of all who begin to hold themselves accountable as an individual to laws greater than any demand given by any government, Okudzhava broke out of the game of being just a "Doer". He became a citizen who refused to stay away from commenting on the state of his own individual being, as he resided in the Soviet system of ordering individuals to be Soviets. Reflective, the poet faithfully proclaims the moment when the child realizes that the mosquitoes are the bearers of death who relentlessly feed off of the mortality of human being. The young soldier realizes that the mosquitoes are bringing death, and in simple, honest horror, he exclaims:

Жить хочется!
Жить хочется!
Когда же это кончится?

Мне немного лет...
гибнуть толку нет...

(I want to live!
I want to live!
When will all this end?

I'm too young...
There is no sense in dying...)⁴¹

The poem reaches its climax when the lyrical hero twice cries out "I want to live!" for it is at this point that he is gripped with the realization that the most unguarded phenomenon in human existence is the will to continue living. He realizes and exclaims

⁴¹ Okudzhava, "Pervyi den' na peredovoi," Bud' zdrav, shkoliar: Stikhi 86.

that the fundamental existential condition for the structure of human life (which is to-continue-to-live), is neither in his control nor under the control of the State. The two exclamatory lines: “I want to live! I want to live!” that follow the only other two in the entire poem (“So this is it - the front lines!” and “It’s over!”), establishes the counterpoint of this passage. By virtue of Okudzhava posing this counterpoint, he is able to convey the great emotional strain that occurs inside his personal experience as a self-conscious Soviet individual. In doing so, he establishes a point of identification with every reader who peruses his poems, and the message that he passes on to them is that war is not for individuals of any state; which includes the Soviet Union.

After the battle, the character slowly regains his composure as seen by the fact that his questions are centered on a nightmarish, surrealistic distortion of morality he and his comrades had turned to. “Thou shalt not kill”, one of the most fundamental structures in human sanity, had been transposed into “Thou shalt kill or be killed”. With the disintegration of the “not” in his fundamental structure of sanity, he again feels fear but this time it is fear of what he has had to be in order to fight, and the emotion is once again naïve and childish:

я в глаза товарищам гляжу-гляжу:
 а что, если кто-нибудь
 в том сне побывал?
 А что, если видели
 как я воевал?

(Into the eyes of my comrades I look and look:
 What if someone
 Should enter this nightmare?
 And what if they saw
 Me fight?)⁴²

The poem’s tonality and rhythm progresses through a series of changes dividing it into three sections: introduction, climax and denouement. The introduction, as well as the

⁴² Okudzhava, “Pervyi den’ na peredovoi” Bud’ zdorov, shkoliar: Stikhi 86.

denouement, consists of significantly longer lines than the climax. The introduction, as seen above, consists of the character's initial description of the front lines, "So this is it - the front lines! Nothing horrible about it." The introduction is linked to the climax by way of repetition: it plunges into the nightmare of war, where the first section ends with the words *звонят комары* [*the mosquitoes are buzzing*]; the syllabic tempo that comprises the climax picks up with a faster pace and then repeats itself for emphasis on the insanity of the situation (*звонят, звонят* - *they are buzzing and buzzing*). This iambic dimeter sets a new pace for the poem: now the action unfolds more quickly and more chaotically. This chaotic pace helps to capture the change the poet underwent when he was in the war. He changed from a human being driven by morals to treasure life for all, to a human being driven by the reversal of Nietzschean morals of the will to overwhelm, control and master at any cost. The contraction of the stanzas from a length of four or five lines to a brisker three, also adds to the momentum. Vocabulary plays a role as well, as it is evidenced in words that, placed close to each other, sound dramatic: *кровь* [*blood*], *гибнуть* [*to perish*], *кричать* [*to scream*], *хрипота* [*hoarseness*], *пропадать* [*to perish*], and *пули* [*bullets*]. In the seventh stanza, just prior to the climax, the sweating character falls at the foot of an aspen—a sign that he realizes that he is not invincible. He feels even more vulnerable, and weaker than that traditional symbol of frailty:

Кричу, обессилев,
через хрипоту:
«Пропадаю!»
И к ногам осины,
весь в поту, припадаю.

(I scream, collapsing,
Losing my voice:
"It's over!"
And, sweating, I embrace

stating in the silence that the government's mental conditioning of not considering the importance of the individual's welfare is unacceptable. He is saying that the government is setting up each individual Soviet citizen to be fodder for the Soviet governmental machinery.

The terseness of the poem's last three lines semantically pulls together the unstated statement that Okudzhava has woven in between the preceding twenty eight lines:

умирать
 все равно, брат,
 не хочется.

(Still,
 Brother, death
 I don't want.)⁴⁸

Any words placed at the end of a line, a stanza, or an entire poem bear the full impact of that unit's semantic value; similarly, Okudzhava lends these final lines additional impact. It is by means of the last three lines that the reader can discern Okudzhava's stinging criticism of the Soviet government's propaganda that each and every Soviet citizen should be and must be happy to die for the political machinery. The reader can instantly discern which part of the poem—the shorter or the longer—represents the personal values of the author.

Okudzhava uses a variety of poetic devices to communicate the feelings of his lyrical hero. Sometimes the character is tormented by obsessive memories of war, and sometimes he asks rhetorical questions or repeats himself. This can be seen in the seven-stanza trochaic poem, *Черный 'мессер'* [*Black 'Messer'*]. Here his sentences are very pointed and critical. He is angry, out of patience, perplexed and confused with the

⁴⁸ Okudzhava, "Ne veli, starshina, chtob byla tishina....," *Bud' zdorov, shkoliar: Stikhi* 90.

traditional trochaic verse. It is spread out across six lines, singling out particular words in the process and investing them with a salient, independent value. The repetition and final ellipsis in the above-cited excerpt show how this particular construction combines to create a poetic impression of lilting timelessness.

The artist utilizes his art to express his beliefs, and Okudzhava uses his to express his rejection of all wars, regardless of the ideologies or flags for which the people are dying. He gradually elevates the experience of the war: from the intimate and personal, where the lyrical hero speaks and thinks in the first-person singular, to the universal, where the artist communicates to the world community that the experience of war is a disaster no matter what generation reads his works.

The first-person lyrical hero of the early war poems is transformed into a collective voice: boys, men, girls, women, soldiers, widows, we; timelessly, all people. In these poems the author no longer confines his attention to the individual torments of a single character. Through his new, collective communicator, Okudzhava becomes the voice of a generation united in the conviction that war is a twisted and unhappy experience. Since Okudzhava is preoccupied with human beings as individuals – as bearers of specific moral values and not as instruments of any particular social system – it can be said that his anti-war poems are not simply about the war itself, but are, more importantly, about the human being at war⁵⁰.

⁵⁰ Unfortunately, Okudzhava's desire for peace was occasionally lost on his audience. As A. Zholkovskii rightly points out in *Memuarnye vin'etki i drugie non-fictions* (Sankt-Peterburg: Urbi, 2000) 150: *Вы слышите, грохочут сапоги... ' пелось, шагало и судилось с точки зрения сапог, хотя, видит Бог, вся соль Окуджавы именно в христианизирующей смене военно-патриотической героики тихой любовью, грохочущих сапог – старым пиджаком. [Do you hear the boots stomping... was sung, walked and judged from the boots' point of view, although with God as my witness the whole essence of Okudzhava is found in the Christianising switch from Patriotic War heroics to quiet love—from stomping boots to the old coat].*

In Okudzhava's anti-war poetry, prominent use is made of departures *в час платежа* [at payment time], such as at the moment of leaving home for the army⁵¹. The ill-fated generation has a presentiment of death, but this does not prevent them from leaving their homes, stamping their boots in time into a peculiar dimension of time where all reality melts into a surrealistic nightmare where the blood flows in abundance. Such poems as: *Песенка о солдатских сапогах* [The Song of Army Boots], *Белорусский вокзал* [Belorussian Station], *До свидания, мальчики* [Farewell, Boys], *Джазисты* [Jazzmen], *Дома лучше (что скрывать?)* [It's Better at Home (Why Hide It?)], *Под Мамонтовкой жгут костры* [Near Mamontovka the fires are burning...], *Часики* [The Little Watch], *Песенка о пехоте* [The Infantry Song] and *Мы за ценой не постоим* [We are Ready to Pay the Price] share this common theme.

This group of writings is a clear departure from the official presentation on the subject of war. Often, as in the case of K. Simonov, the subject of war was presented in a romantic manner that supported it. Okudzhava's anti-war poems provoke reflection and consideration on the sufferings that war-torn families were (and are) forced to live through. Such families face long years of grief beyond the reach of words, separation beyond the reach of reunion, poverty beyond the reach of financial rescue and even the collapse of the family structure. Okudzhava's poetry proclaims with the greatest honesty that war is reality twisted inside out and can only bring personal tragedy to the lives of each individual who is sucked into its blackness.

⁵¹ Bulat Okudzhava, "Proshchanie s novogodnei iolkoi," *Chaepitie na Arbate* (Moscow: Korona Print, 1998) 224.

While Simonov's positive view and romantic tone makes his lyrical hero in the poem *Жди меня* (1941) to ask to "wait for him", the lyrical hero inhabiting Okudzhava's poetry does not even believe in the chance of a happy return home.

Okudzhava often makes use of cinematic techniques in his poems. The poems unfurl like frames on a reel of film producing a very vivid and plastic description of the situations at hand. The juxtaposition of successive still scenes contributes to the impression of a tension-filled, first-hand experience of atmosphere and place. The reader clearly sees whole columns of men, disappearing forevermore: sons, fathers, husbands, and fiancés. The women *глядят из-под руки* [*look on with shaded eyes*] and they see a single pounding human mass, not of individual people with names or faces, but of doomed *круглые затылки* [*round backs of heads*].

In *The song of army boots*, the use of syllabotonic verse evokes the rhythm of a soldiers' march, and the remaining poetic devices similarly complement the semantic layer. The sound pervading the experience of the war generation, never to fade away, is again achieved through the simple repetition of support phonemes, morphemes, words and entire phrases. Its parallelisms are intensified by an uncomplicated, rhythmic, and perfectly suited musical background in the popular recording of the poem⁵². Its regular cross rhymes also enhance its repetitiveness, as does its skillful use of tonal punctuation: four lines end in question marks, two in exclamation marks, and three in ellipses. Thus, the role of rhythm and prosodic repetitiveness (iambic accents, intonation, etc.) cannot be underestimated.

⁵² Bulat Okudzhava, "Pesenka o soldatskikh sapogakh," *Poezja spiewana*, CD (Warsaw: Polskie Radio SA, 2000).

Syntactic as well as intonational parallelism can be observed in *The song of army boots*. Compositional echoes between stanzas create additional patterns of repetition in the text, such as the repetition of the poem's opening words at the beginning of the second stanza (stanzas one and two both start with, *Вы слышите...* [*Do you hear...*]). Anaphoras continue throughout the text: stanzas three and four both begin, *А где же наше/наши...* [*But where are our...*]; the two middle lines in stanza one begin with *и* [*and*], a conjunction that also creates a breathless rush between the lines. The first three lines of final stanza six start with *и* as well. In stanza two we find the lengthy reduplication, *прощайся с ней, прощайся с ней* [*say goodbye to her, say goodbye to her*], not to mention the words *туман* [*mist*] and *ясней* [*clearer*] repeating three times in close proximity (epizeuksis, where the same words repeat two or more times in a row). This pattern reaches its extreme in stanza five, where there is a double reduplication: the first and second lines begin, *А мы...* [*And we...*]; the third and fourth lines follow with, *а по полям/пятам ...* [*And on the fields/heels...*]. Enumeration and repetitions help to recreate the never-ending experience of the rhythm of the soldiers' boots and of the stomping which remains in the memory forever.

Vocabulary is also used with the purpose of creating rhythm. Certain words are skillfully woven into the canvas of the poem and repeat several times in this short text. For example, the word *сапоги* [*boots*] and the long phrase, *и птицы ошалелые летят/и женщины глядят из-под руки* [*And mad birds fly/ And women look on with shaded eyes*] brace the poem. Additionally, the reprisal of elements from the first stanza in the last gives it a ring-like structure.

Turning to phonetic repetitions, *The Song of Army Boots* also makes use of tautophony, where the same or similar sound patterns are repeated within neighboring words. Consonants such as “g”, “r”, “b”, “v”, and “zh” [“r”, “p”, “b”, “B”, and “ж”] are often repeated together with the vowels “o” or “a” [“o” or “a”], adding to the fast-paced tension (e.g.: “gro-kho-chet ba-ra-ban”, “vo-rov-stvom”, “zhi-re-et vo-ro-nio”, “voi-na gro-cho-chet”). Alliteration is applied to lend the poem a distinct roughness of utterance: voiced consonants: “g,” “b,” “v,” “zh,” as well as “n” and “r” (“r”, “b”, “B”, “ж”, as well as “h” and “p”) accumulate throughout the poem.

As a result, the sound layer gains a significant autonomy from the semantic layer of the poem, with its own valuation independent of the meanings it vocalizes. In terms of individual words, semantic meaning may often be coupled with an enhanced phonetic value: for example, the onomatopoeic word *зрехотать* means “to rumble”, its sound reflecting and relating to its semantic sense.

The fact that this long poem is constructed using only six sentences helps to foster an impression of rushed and passing happiness. These sentences each occupy an entire stanza and are graphically paired off on the page, with the second stanza consistently indented to produce an additional sense of movement. Since each pair of stanzas demonstrates not only unity of graphic presentation but of sense and sound as well (e.g. the cross rhyme in the last stanza), the reader might choose to analyse the poem in terms of three stanzas rather than six. In addition, the unity of the poem as a whole is bolstered by the nearly perfect coincidence of its four opening and closing lines.

Okudzhava’s *В поход на чужую страну собирался король...* [*The king was off to conquer a foreign land...*] is another anti-war poem with clear allegorical and ironic

parallels between the Soviet government's disregard for the value of the individual citizen and the king's disregard for the value of the individual subject in the fictitious world created in the poem. The poem is written in the third person so that a short sad story can be used to criticize the Soviet government's reckless disregard for the value of the cornerstone of Soviet society, the individual citizen-soldier. Okudzhava constructed the poem using balanced intonation and line lengths of either fourteen or fifteen syllables.

The mood of this piece is further reinforced by the great continuity provided by the conjunction “и” [and] at the beginning of nearly every stanza: *И видит король* – “And the king sees”, *И вот отгремело* – “And a shout rang out”⁵³, etc. The third-person narrative tells the story of a king who decides to conquer a foreign country with help of his ten little soldiers (*солдатки*). As in the village setting sketched out in the poem as both fantastic and cruel at the same time, it is just as dangerous to be branded a pacifist in the Soviet village as well. Thus the queen's final advice to the king before he leaves:

Получше их бей, а не то прослывешь пацифистом,
и пряников сладких отнять у врага не забудь.

(Beat them well, for if not, you will become known as a pacifist,
And don't forget to take ginger bread from the enemy.)⁵⁴

Five sad soldiers were killed in the battle. However, the king saw them as lost causes from the outset and returned home in triumph with the remaining five happy soldiers and a sack of ginger bread in tow. There is irony in the king's unexpected lack of remorse for the lives of his men. It is an insignificant detail to the king, who is perfectly happy with the loot and the success of the war:

Минутной печали не стоит, друзья, предаваться,

⁵³ Bulat Okudzhava, “V pokhod na chuzhuiu stranu sobiralsia korol' ...,” *Proza i poeziia* (Frankfurt Main: Posev, 1968) 141.

⁵⁴ Okudzhava, “V pokhod na chuzhuiu stranu sobiralsia korol' ...,” *Proza i poeziia* 141.

ведь грустным солдатам нет смысла в живых
оставаться
и пряников, кстати, всегда не хватает для всех.

(My friends, do not grieve even for a minute,
It would be senseless for sad soldiers to
Survive
And besides, there is never enough ginger bread for all.)⁵⁵

The cruelty of these careless words reflects directly upon the Soviet government's attitude concerning the value of the common citizen. The population of the USSR has always been high and their lives have consistently been considered an expendable asset by the government⁵⁶. When the common citizen is viewed as expendable, then unnecessary losses are accepted as common practice. All a commander needed was a justified excuse to be the first to conquer a given piece of land, or a convenient reason for ordering an heroic, though imprudent attack.

As a token of the soldier's insignificance in this system, the author uses the diminutive form *солдатику* [*little soldiers*] instead of the more fully realized *солдаты* [*soldiers*]. Among avid readers of Okudzhava's writings, this word, *солдатику*, immediately brings to mind another song: *Бумажный солдатик* [*The Little Paper Soldier*]. In that song, the fragility of the soldier's life is emphasized by the epithet *бумажный* [*of paper*] and by the fact that he, like his life, *на ниточке висел* [*hung by a thread*]⁵⁷. This also resonates with the expression *оловянный солдат* [*a tin soldier*], with its own connotations of a trifling toy. Following this thread of associations and considering the necessity of poet's using Aesopian language lead to the conclusion that for the leaders, Soviet soldiers are little more than cheap children's toys.

⁵⁵ Okudzhava, "V pokhod na chuzhuiu stranu sobiralsia korol' ..., " *Proza i poeziiia* 141.

⁵⁶ *Altogether, probably some 20-25 million Soviet citizens died premature deaths between 1941 and 1945.* Hosking, *A History of the Soviet Union* 296.

⁵⁷ Bulat Okudzhava, "Bumazhnyi soldatik," *Chaepitie na Arbate* (Moscow: Korona Print, 1998) 69.

From the poet's point of view, the Soviet leaders view their own soldiers as valueless toy pawns incapable of making mature, rational decisions on their own. Okudzhava is pointing out what type of an attitude manifest those who have the power to build a destiny. His destiny would emphasize the values of peace instead of domination. The Soviet rulers viewed the common citizen as incapable of possessing the mature judgment to build a life of goodness, beauty, truth and love. The rulers viewed the common citizen as incapable of comprehending the big picture and incapable of carrying out the means to actualize the vast vision of Marx and using war as the means for willing this vision into actuality. Okudzhava is clearly expressing that he does not agree with the demeaning view of the Soviet leaders that the common citizen is a child who must be placated as a toddler and coaxed into war for the advancement of Soviet society. Okudzhava is painting a picture in words: true victory will begin by way of peace. For the government that wills the way of peace as the path to victory is the government that esteems its common citizen as a dignified human being. To be a pacifist in the Soviet design is to disagree with the pillars of the social order, such as the mandate that winning a "just" war is the means to the Communist State.

В поход на чужую страну собирался король... was banned from publication already in the 1960s in the Soviet Union for many years. The same fate was reserved for many other, largely ironic poems by Okudzhava, such as: *О войне* [*About the War*], *Бумажный солдатик, Не верь войне, мальчишка* [*Don't Believe in War, My Boy*], *Песенка о пехоте* [*The Infantry Song*], as well as *Песенка американского солдата*

[*Song of an American Soldier*]⁵⁸, the last of which had the adjective “American” added to the title on the “recommendation” of the censors.

Once again, the structure of the poem *Песенка о пехоте* clearly indicates what is to be semantically stressed in it. The poem is dominated by lines of two and four feet, but it also includes a few lines consisting of particularly significant, isolated expressions. The expressions treated in this way are *спасения нет* [*there is no release*], *не верьте* [*do not believe*], and *еще не окончены/счеты свои* [the score has not been settled yet]. Two conspicuous repetitions seem to provide the key to understanding this poem: in all, four separate stanzas open with the anaphoric command “do not believe”; moreover, the last sentence of the poem presents a near-perfect syntactical parallel to the first. What changes between the opening and closing lines is the mood, indicative in the beginning:

всегда мы уходим,
когда над землею бушует весна

(We always go away
When spring storms the earth)

then shifting to a more dramatic, desperate interrogation at the end:

Чего ж мы уходим,
когда над землею
бушует
весна?

(Why on earth do we go away,
When the spring
is storming
the earth?)⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Bulat Okudzhava, “Pesenka amerikanskogo soldata,” *Zamek nadziei* (Krakow: Wydawnictwo literackie, 1984) 168.

⁵⁹ Bulat Okudzhava, “Pesenka o pekhote,” *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 220.

Being banned from publication was also the destiny of the poem *Военный парад* [*War Parade*], where a character with an uncertain future is simply advised to live in the present, to “seize the day”:

Ведь боль, и смерть, и пушек гром —
все это будет лишь потом.
Чего ж печалиться о том,
а может, обойдется?

(You see, pain, and death, and cannon roar—
All these will only come later.
Why should you worry about it,
When we might be spared?⁶⁰)

Okudzhava uses his cinematic techniques here as well, presenting successive frames of a happy orchestra, columns of soldiers, and the unnaturally happy wives and daughters of the men marching off to war:

Не в силах радость превозмочь,
поет жена, гордится дочь.

(Not being able to restrain her happiness,
The wife is singing and the daughter is proud.)⁶¹

In this ironic panorama bursting with patriotic joy, however, there are two frames that clearly stand out from the rest, and whose conspicuity gives them substantial meaning. The first is one of a worried mother:

И только мать уходит прочь...
“Куда же ты, куда ты...?”

(And only the mother steps away...
‘Where are you going to, where?...’)⁶²

The second frame is of a trumpet player exerting every effort in pretending everything is fine. He keeps playing with his orchestra, as though he were just as happy as the others. But

мундштук трясется на губе,

⁶⁰ Bulat Okudzhava, “Voennyi parad,” *Proza i poeziia* (Frankfurt Main: Posev, 1968) 123.

⁶¹ Okudzhava, “Voennyi parad,” *Proza i poeziia* 123.

⁶² Okudzhava, “Voennyi parad,” *Proza i poeziia* 123.

трясется он, трясется...

(The mouth-piece is shaking on his lips,
It shakes and shakes...) ⁶³

These are the two sites where the poem's happy tone is weakened. In this case, Okudzhava needs only four short lines to smuggle his message across to the reader.

Mothers often figure in the war poems of Okudzhava, and are typically portrayed with a great deal of sympathy and love. They are strong-minded women who live or sacrifice themselves for their family (their children above all). When the mourning mother must say good-bye to her son(s), she cries openly, in a role reminiscent of Russian women wailing at a funeral. The mother in Okudzhava's poems knows that this will be the last time she sees her children, and so to her, the departure is tantamount to their death. The sons generally try to conceal their own fears in front of their mothers and ask them to not cry, as in *Оркестр играет боевые марши...* :

Не лейте слез, родимые мамы,
на крылья наши слез не лейте зря!

(Don't cry, dear mamas,
Don't cry over our wings for naught!) ⁶⁴

In the poem *Шла война к тому Берлину...* [*The war was approaching Berlin...*], the mother is invoked three times. In the first appeal, a soldier is asking his friend's mother not to cry: he is writing to tell her that her son is happy. In the other two, an attitude of detachment is assumed that only increases the drama:

Матушка, ударил выстрел —
покачнулся твой сынок.

(Mommy, a shot landed—
Your son swayed.) ⁶⁵

⁶³ Okudzhava, "Voennyi parad," *Proza i poeziia* 123.

⁶⁴ Bulat Okudzhava, "Orkestr igraet boevye marshi," *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 321.

⁶⁵ Bulat Okudzhava, "Shla voina k tomu Berlinu...", *Chaepitie na Arbate* (Moscow: Korona Print, 1998) 108.

The lyrical voice barely changes as it reveals that the son was killed:

Матушка, поплачь по сыну —
у тебя счастливый сын.

(Mommy, mourn your son—
You have a lucky son.)⁶⁶

Once again, the poem's great emotional tension depends largely on gradations between numerous instances of parallelism and repetition. The incongruous calmness with which the mother is informed of the tragic death of her son also contributes to the effect.

In another poem belonging to this group, *Когда мы уходим...* [*When we march away...*], the mothers' hearts are compared to warm hearths and native fields. In the poem *Вобла* [*Vobla*], "one crazy mother" will stop at nothing to save her five children from hunger. Okudzhava is one of the first authors in the Soviet Union to depict the war ravaging his nation's homes as well as the front lines. Women were left by their husbands, brothers, sons or fathers alone without the means to survive or to feed the remaining family. These poems are, therefore, a testament to the heroism of women in wartime—heroism that rarely received official recognition⁶⁷.

Okudzhava was also one of the first Soviet authors to use his poetry as a vehicle for discussing the tragedy of women,⁶⁸ many of whom were torn from their men forever. Their only option was to wait and write to their husbands or sons on the front. Okudzhava portrays the drama of the mothers, fiancées, and wives who lost their men. Their lives were all but over at the moment their men left home, or upon receiving the *pokhoronka*—

⁶⁶ Okudzhava, "Shla voina k tomu Berlinu...", *Chaepitie na Arbate* 108.

⁶⁷ For more about the situation of women aggravated by war, see Geoffrey Hosking, *A History of the Soviet Union* (London: Fontana Press/Collins, 1985) 296 and 396.

⁶⁸ Other authors discussing this theme were, for example, O. Bergolts, A. Akhmatova, L. Chukovskaia.

the notification of death on the front. In this category are the poems *Танго* [*Tango*], *Ангелы* [*Angels*], *А мы с тобой, брат, из пехоты* [*And we're from the infantry, brother*], and *Ах, оркестры духовые* [*Oh, the brass bands*]:

Провожают нас невесты,
а встречают вдовы.

(Brides bid us farewell,
And widows greet us.)⁶⁹

As in the case of the above-mentioned poems, the main sentiment evoked by the poem *Проводы у военкомата* [*Saying good-bye at the enlistment office*] is a feeling of irreversible loss, of an end to a family and its peaceful life from before the war.

In this poem, a man's inner hopes are placed in opposition to his reality. Okudzhava treats the conflict in a manner that evokes a feeling of an inevitable tragedy. The author proceeds by sharp shifts in mood to suggest the horror of a young man's farewell on his way to war. In the first stanza there are three such abrupt shifts: at the outset, the brass band is playing, and the lyrical hero finds himself enjoying the *медовый* [*honeyed*]⁷⁰ sound; suddenly he remembers why the band is there. Instantly, the music becomes *пронзительный* [*piercing*]. It is so painful that he loses all force of expression and can only exclaim: *Ах...* [*Ah...*]. Again he regains control of himself, this time as a soldier who must never show fear, no matter that he is no more than a schoolboy who has never touched a gun. At this point, the lyrical hero becomes alienated from his own conflicting emotions—as a soldier he assures himself and his loved ones that he is *молодой и бедовый* [*young and daredevil*], but as the poet his true attitude is betrayed by such expressions as *с болью в глазах* [*with pain in my eyes*] and *с черным чубчиком*

⁶⁹ Bulat Okudzhava, "Akh, orkestry dukhovye," *Posviashchaetsia vam: Stikhi* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1988) 96.

⁷⁰ Bulat Okudzhava, "Provody u voenkomata," *Chaepitie na Arbate* 332.

[*with a little black forelock*], which respectively refer to his secret burden of horror and to his undeniable immaturity and lack of training. The skillful juxtaposition of otherwise innocuous epithets increases the overall impression of terror and tragedy that fill the moment of saying farewell. This is seen in how the poet uses the following phrases: *звук медовый* [*honeyed sound*] and *с черным чубчиком* [*with a little black forelock*]. In any other context, the reader would not associate these expressions with anything horrible, but referring as they do to the lyrical hero's last, mad search for meaning, they only deepen the reader's sense of impending doom that will crash down upon innocent well-meaning schoolboys. This scene presents the first of the poem's significant semantic use of synecdoche (*pars pro toto*)—unable to grasp his function in the vast workings of the State, the lyrical hero becomes a symbol for the universal struggle of his generation to understand the unfeeling machinations of history around them.

The second stanza begins with a synecdoche on a smaller scale—*Мауым ручки* [*little hands wave*]. Distracted by his looming death, his world fragmented, the lyrical hero no longer sees his well-wishers as human. Our only clue to their identity is the use of the diminutive *ручки* for *руки* [*hands*]. The fact that these children were asked to smile for the departing soldiers only adds to the particular tragedy of the scene. In his despair, the lyrical hero rids them of their souls, their innocent outreach, their face and wide eyes. The impression of many helpless, waving hands is all that remains. It seems that only the least comforting images now register on the young soldier's mind—while the onlookers join him in his show of false bravery, it is the cries of those who cannot play their part that reach him: *крики скорбные тянутся вслед* [*mournful screams follow behind*]. This admission of human emotions in the poem interrupts its flow. It is there for the purpose

of showing an irrational pretense that is at last made explicit—they are acting of course to preserve themselves before the Leader, the *безумец из черного хора* [*lunatic from the black choir*]. The poet now uses the references, “black” and “lunatic”, to place himself squarely against Stalin’s doctrine for world domination. Additionally, Okudzhava uses these allusions to bring the poem to an emotional climax: he begins to play on the metaphoric image of the Leader as a crazed film director, deliriously deciding the script of his work for warping the personal lives of millions to his will. Each person knows their role in this well-rehearsed performance. Those who have stayed home send their children to execute their practised hand waves, and the *грядущий сюжет* [*plot to come*] is set to unfold. With each manifestation of this extended metaphor the poet’s rage soars as he symbolizes the grimly predetermined fates of the nation.

In the third stanza, the uproar of the fanfare swells to silence any dissent and the bravura music “envelops” whatever is alive, forcing all dissenters into the crazed Leader’s party line, insistently repeating that all must be united for their common destiny—which is one of destruction.

Жизнь музыкой бравурной объята-
всё о том, что судьба пополам,
и о том, что не будет возврата,
ни к любви и ни к прочим делам.

(Life is engulfed by the bravura—
It’s all about fate being split in two,
And there being no return
To love or any other thing)⁷¹

The destruction is not short in coming: everything, down to the *медные трубы* [*copper horns*], flies up in general conflagration; faces disappear into the *пламя и дым* [*fire and smoke*] for the Day of Judgement has arrived. This archetypal fire and smoke is

⁷¹ Okudzhava, “Provody u voenkomata,” *Chaepitie na Arbate* 332.

surely that of the war itself; all that can be discerned among the flames is the young soldier's impassive smile. In this juxtaposition of hellfire and inhuman calm, the poem reaches its culmination. Like the waving children, the synecdochised lyrical hero-soldier has lost his face and soul. To lose one's soul is to walk the earth as a zombie who still has a shred of humanity hanging off the bones of human existence, but to lose one's face as well is to plunge into the realm of the unimaginable. Not even a vengeful god ever drove man into such a hateful destruction. To be soulless as well as faceless is to have been turned into a piece of machinery, an opaque blackened bloodletting machine. As foreordained, the Leader has thrown his meat onto the flames at the predetermined moment. A synecdoche is effectively used in *Песенка о солдатских сапогах* as well, and to similar effect: just as in that poem the women see only the *затылки* [*backs of the heads*] of their receding sons, in *Проводы у военкомата* Okudzhava consistently pares down his images to allow new semantic layers to rise into view and to construct a complex metaphorical reflection on the destiny of his generation.

Additionally, Okudzhava reveals a special interest in a relatively unexplored theme in Soviet literature that presents the separation from a beloved woman. The author often uses the first-person singular or plural to discuss this theme that had previously received no official attention in the USSR. For example, in *Ваши благородие, госпожа разлука* [*Your Honour, Madame Separation*], *Проводы юнкеров* [*Seeing off the cadets*], *Блиндажи той войны все травой заросли ...* [*The dug-outs of that war are grown over with grass...*], *Четыре года* [*Four years*] and *А годы уходят, уходят ...* [*And the years are slipping by and by...*], the author returns to a personal, emotionally charged approach by using the first-person possessive:

Две вечных дороги –

любовь и разлука —
проходят сквозь сердце мое.

(Two endless roads,
Love and separation,
Run through *my* heart.)⁷²

These three lines are repeated as a refrain throughout a poem where the author tries to distance himself from the overwhelming experiences of the war. However:

Наша память не в силах уйти от потерь,
все с фонариком бродит в былом.

(Our memory cannot forget the losses,
Still wandering with its flashlight through the past.⁷³

Just as *The dug-outs of that war are grown over with grass...* and others, *Farewell, boys* directly blames the war for the personal tragedies of innocent people. Instead of glorifying the “just war” as writers were expected to do, Okudzhava subjects it to fierce condemnation in the following invocation:

Ах, война,
что ж ты сделала, подлая;
вместо свадеб —
разлуки и дым.

(Oh, mean war,
What have you done—
Instead of weddings
There are separations and smoke.⁷⁴

This incriminating, mournful, or angry voice can be heard even in poems that initially seem to have little to do with the war. Thus, in *Раскрываю страницы ладоней* [*I open the pages of my palms*]:

Я листаю страницы.
Маячит
пережитое.
Я как в плену.
Вот какой-то испуганный мальчик

⁷² Bulat Okudzhava, “Blindazhi toi voiny vse travoi zarosli...,” *Kapli datskogo korolia: Kinostsenarii, pesni dlia kino* (Moscow: Kinotsentr, 1991) 13.

⁷³ Okudzhava, “Blindazhi toi voiny vse travoi zarosli...,” *Kapli datskogo korolia: Kinostsenarii, pesni dlia kino* 13.

⁷⁴ Okudzhava, “Do svidaniia, mal’chiki,” *Chaepitie na Arbate* 52.

сам с собою играет в войну.

Вот какая-то женщина плачет —
очень падают слезы в цене,
и какой-то задумчивый мальчик
днем и ночью идет по войне.

(I am flipping the pages.
There looms
My past.
I am like a prisoner.
Here is some scared boy,
Playing at war alone.

Here is a woman crying—
Tears get so worthless now,
And some pensive boy
Goes through the war day and night.⁷⁵

The secondary accents in this loose anapest distance it from the model of anapestic verse, especially at the beginnings of lines; at the ends of lines the reader often observes hypercatalectic syllables. Clearly, for the purpose of underscoring the meaning of certain parts, the stanzas are irregularly constructed— some words and phrases are graphically isolated, stressing their significance. If these words were to be reintegrated into the body of the text, the resulting poem would consist of five quite regular quatrains followed by a long six-line and a short three-line stanza. The interactions between the various anaphoras, epiphoras, syntactical parallelisms, greater or lesser repetitions, as well as cross rhymes dominating throughout the poem definitely do much to organize it. Assonance (especially of “a” and “o”) and consonance (voiceless “s,” “p,” “t,” as well as “r” and “l”) add to the rhythm of the entire piece:

Кто там плачет?
Никто там не плачет...
Просто дети играют в войну!

Who is crying there?

⁷⁵ Bulat Okudzhava, “Raskryvaiu stranitsy ladonei...,” *Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1985) 70.

“Играет будничный оркестр.” Три слова из тридцати одного. [...] на мой взгляд, это [...] убедительное доказательство бессодержательности приведенной цитаты.

(In this passage there are 31 words. Of these, 23 are parenthetic words, conjunctions, prepositions, and interjections, which is to say connective elements with no independent meaning in the Russian language [...]. In all, one line is left: “The same old orchestra is playing.” Three words out of thirty one. [...] In my opinion, this is [...] conclusive *proof of the emptiness of the above passage.*)⁸⁰

Since Okudzhava was slated for painful “criticism” in the 60s, the critics were simply doing their job and fulfilling the official request. Kunaev searches for concrete imagery in the poem and inevitably blames Okudzhava for being too verbose, and producing poetry lacking in depth and meaning. Kunaev trips over his own dependence on grammar controlled by the dictates of logic.

However, a current reading of *В городском саду* will necessarily place great importance on these very “connective elements,” since aposiopesis, ellipses, interjections, and the like are vital to the full comprehension of the poem.

Okudzhava obviously did not agree with the concept of man as a soulless and faceless automaton; on the contrary, he lived to praise the positive feelings of the human being, moral standards that give man a soul and a face. He employed his poetic skills to express this highly ethical point of view. With help of multiple comparative conjunctions and adjectives, he expressed a belief in a peaceful life:

тем слаще мед огней домашних,
чем громче музыка атак.

(*The louder* the music of the attacks,
The sweeter the honey of the lights of home.)⁸¹

and

И это все у нас в крови,
хоть этому не обучали:

⁸⁰ Kunaev, “‘Mart velikodushnyi’ B. Okudzhavy,” 30.

⁸¹ Bulat Okudzhava, “Vse glushe muzyka dushi...,” *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 313.

чем выше музыка любви,
 тем громче музыка печали,
 чем громче музыка печали,
 тем чище музыка любви.

(And it runs in all our blood,
 Though no one ever taught us:
 The higher the music of love,
 The louder the music of sadness;
 The louder the music of sadness,
 The purer the music of love.)⁸²

Numerous other war-related themes are to be found in Okudzhava's poetry as well. The betrayal of short wartime affairs runs through such poems as *Аты-баты, или солдаты* [*Tum-tarum marched the soldiers*], *Медсестра Мария* [*Nurse Maria*], *Отрада* [*Happiness*], *Песенка кавалергарда* [*The horse-guardsman's song*], *До свидания, мальчики* [*Farewell, boys*], *Дальняя дорога* [*The winding road*], and *Песенка о солдатских сапогах* [*The song of soldier's boots*]. There are poems about cruelty, such as *Примета* [*A token*] and *Тамань* [*Taman'*], and those about paralyzing fear, an emotion that true Soviet soldiers were not supposed to feel or acknowledge—*Глас трубы над городами* [*The trumpet call above the towns*] and *Солнышко сияет, музыка играет* [*The sun is shining, the music is playing*]. There are also feelings of doubt, guilt, and questioning the necessity of war in poems of this group, including *Эх ты, шарик голубой* [*Come on, you, blue ball...*], *От войны войны не ищут ...* [*Don't look for another war*], *Разговор с рекой Курой* [*Conversation with the Kura river*], *Впереди идет сержант* [*The sergeant marches at the head*], *Нужны ли гусару сомнения ...* [*What are doubts to the hussar...*], *А как первая любовь — она сердце жмет ...* [*The first love squeezes the heart...*], *Вот король уехал на войну: Он Москву покинул.* [*And the king left for the war: He abandoned Moscow.*], *Земля изрыта вкрив и*

⁸² Okudzhava, "Vse glushe muzyka dushi...", *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* 313.

вкось [*The earth is dug up all over*] and Из фронтового дневника [*In a diary from the front*]. Finally, there are those poems dealing with fears of a possible new war, especially in the pessimistic *Старинная солдатская песня* [*An old soldier's song*].

Okudzhava sometimes transplants the reader from the cruel and horrible world of war to the world of children's stories (as in the poems *Оловянный солдатик моего сына* [*My son's tin soldier*] and *Бумажный солдатик* [*The little paper soldier*]). The most provocative of these stories, however, is the long-unpublished fairytale, *The Little Paper Soldier* (1959), that does not quite meet the expectations of children's world. The character in this poem is not a *богатырь* or medieval knight, but a simple soldier, different only because he is made entirely of paper. The epithet *бумажный* [*of paper*] carries with it a slew of suggested connotations: weak, fragile, unstable, flimsy, precarious, feeble, slack, loose, poor, delicate, slender, flammable, temporary. The list continues. These adjectives stand in stark contrast with the character of the hot-tempered, courageous little soldier, who is willing to risk life and limb to save his fellow man. He will not hang uselessly on the wall while the real soldiers fight and lose their lives. The little paper soldier tempts fate through his desire to be useful. He may well have slipped through the cracks, just as some potential recruits were able to find exemption from military service during the Great Patriotic War (*Великая отечественная война*). But he was young, honest and eager to volunteer— providing yet another parallel with the many naïve youths who joined the army directly from their school desks. Ultimately, the marionette-like soldier, manipulated from above, steps out and dies in a fire, his life not worth much to those around him.

The tone of the poem is ironic, and the melody written for the poem is light, funny and joyful, in contrast with the tragedy of the little soldier. However, the light-heartedness here is not at the expense of the paper soldier. It is, rather, “laughter through the tears,” an Aesopian accusation of the leaders who personally did not risk their lives, but preferred the unnecessary deaths of the Soviet youth.

Okudzhava opens a dialogue about the cruelty of each and every war. The first words of another poem, *He ver' voine, mal'chishka* [*Don't Believe in War, my Boy*], match its no less tragic ending:

ТЫ ВЕСЬ, КАК НА ЛАДОНИ,
ВСЕ ПУЛИ — В ОДНОГО.

(You are so vulnerable,
Bullets—within you.)⁸³

The use of the second-person singular in the poem places particular emphasis on the “connotative function” of the language. In this poem, as well as in many others in which Okudzhava chooses to use the second-person singular *ty* [*you*], it appears to represent a direct echo of the lyrical *я* [*I*]: the two seem to correspond smoothly. Chrzastowska and Wyslouch call this type of parallelism “‘you’ as mirror image of ‘I’.”⁸⁴

This parallelism is complicated by the fact that the “*you*” in *He ver' voine, mal'chishka* is both individualized and indeterminate. The reader may well assume that the “*you*” is equivalent to “*I*”. However, the structure and phrasing of the poem cannot confirm this correspondence and the poem may represent a genuine dialogue as well. This ambiguity proves to be a productive one. It provides both “an inner monologue of

⁸³ Bulat Okudzhava, “Ne ver' voine, mal'chishka,” *Bud' zdorov, shkoliar: Stikhi* (Frankfurt-Main: Posev, 1966) 188.

⁸⁴ Bożena Chrzastowska and Seweryna Wyslouch, *Poetyka stosowana* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, 1987) 283.

the speaker, as the expression of his/her thoughts, doubts, feelings”⁸⁵ and a dialogue with the outside world. Okudzhava is drawing a parallel between his own destiny and that of his generation, linking the fate of a single person and that of all human beings. The boundaries of time and space within which the nominal “you” undergoes its ordeals, concretely represented by the war, are pushed to the widest extreme.

A similar effect is achieved in the category of Okudzhava’s anti-war poems where the lyrical hero cannot believe his own participation in such a cruel experience. In these poems, he turns to various strategies in an attempt to evade his guilty conscience. While the negative experiences are pushed deeply into his subconscious like a bullet inside himself and not allowed to resurface, they inevitably break through by means of nightmare, conjecture, and doubt. In the following poem, the subject rationalizes his horror by suggesting that what happened to him may simply have been a horror film that he now remembers:

Ах, что-то мне не верится, что я, брат, воевал.
А может, это школьник меня нарисовал:
[...]
Ах, что-то мне не верится, что я, брат, убивал.
А может, просто вечером в кино я побывал?
[...]
Ах, что-то мне не верится, что я не пал в бою.

(Oh, somehow I cannot believe that I fought, brother.
Maybe a schoolboy drew me like this:
[...]
Oh, somehow I cannot believe that I killed, brother.
Maybe I was just at the movies one night?
[...]
Oh, somehow I cannot believe that I did not fall in the battle.)⁸⁶

The use of parallelism and repetition creates growing emotional tension throughout the poem, as the lyrical hero remains unable to come to terms with his past.

⁸⁵ Chrzastowska, and Wyslouch 284.

⁸⁶ Bulat Okudzhava, “Akh, chto-to mne ne veritsia, chto ia, brat, voeval...,” *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 296.

There is a group of Okudzhava's poems dealing with generals. With the exception of one poem [*Все утрясается мало-помалу* [*All slowly settles*], Okudzhava's portraits of generals and other military leaders are painted with a generous dose of irony. In the poem *Из окна вагона* [*From the carriage window*], the commanders are compared to psychotic theatre directors. In *Ироническое обращение к генералу* [*An ironic address to a general*], it is remarked that the general's chosen profession is to kill, and that leaders would be rendered useless in a world without war:

Пока на свете нет войны,
вы в положении дурачком.
[...]
Водителю нужна война,
разлуки, смерти и мученья
бой, а не мирные ученья,
иначе грош ему цена.

(Whenever there is no war in the world,
You look like fools.
[...]
The warrior needs war,
Separation, death and suffering,
Battle, and not peaceful teachings,
Or else he is not worth a penny.)⁸⁷

No less vivid is the poem *Дерзость, или Разговор перед боем* [*Impertinence, or a Talk before battle*], where the conflicting view points of a general and his lieutenant culminate in the former denouncing the life-loving lieutenant to the war tribunal.

Only in *Все утрясается мало-помалу* is the general a wholly positive figure. The general in question is General Dufour, immortalized by a statue in Geneva for not having lost a drop of his soldiers' blood. Here the general is compared to an angel:

Как же ты, сын кровожадного века,
бросив перчатку железной войне,
ангелом бился за жизнь человека,

⁸⁷ Bulat Okudzhava, "Ironicheskoe obrashchenie k generalu," *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 268.

Do not fail to learn
Of this necessary day!)⁹⁰

Other optimistic poems deal primarily with the past, such as *Воспоминание о Дне Победы* [*Reminiscences from the Day of Victory*]. The dominant feelings evoked by this poem are ones of happiness, love, and a wish for peaceful life on earth. In keeping with the pattern typical of Okudzhava's work, the poem turns from concrete situations of the war and victory, as experienced by the young men, to a more generalized return home from the war:

Живые бросились к живым, и было правдой это,
любили женщину одну – она звалась Победа.
[...]
Как будто нас девятый вал отныне миновал.

(The living fell into the arms of the living, and truly,
They loved one woman—her name was Victory.
[...]
It was as though the ninth wave had henceforth passed us by.)⁹¹

This poem's classification overlaps with that of two others dealing with concrete historical events from the war. Both *Песенка о Фонтанке* [*Song of the Fontanka*] and *Ленинградская элегия* [*The Leningrad elegy*] concern the siege of Leningrad and its survivors, whether they were friends of the poet or those unknown to him. The figures are suspended in a state of eternal surprise, wondering how they managed to survive:

И погибших еще снятся голоса.
Но давно уж – ни осады, ни блокады, –
только ваши удивленные глаза.

(And we still dream of the voices of the dead.
But it is long over—there is neither siege nor blockade—
Only your astonished eyes.)⁹²

⁹⁰ Bulat Okudzhava, "Eto sluchitsia," *Bud' zdorov, shkoliar: Stikhi* (Frankfurt-Main: Posev, 1966) 155.

⁹¹ Bulat Okudzhava, "Vospominanie o Dne Pobedy," *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 295.

⁹² Bulat Okudzhava, "Pesenka o Fontanke," *Mart velikodushnyi* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1967) 139.

The post-war period brings with it a feeling of repentance and hope, as in the poems *Над глубиной бездонных вод* [*Over the deep waters*] and *Песенка о ночной Москве* [*A Moscow night song*]:

Ведь что мы [...]

без покаяния и надежды?

(What are we [...]

Without repentance and hope?)⁹³

This is a time for reflection on the lesson that this generation will be leaving for its successors, as well as on the poet's obligation to communicate the fate of those who fell. These are themes featured in *Я ухожу от пули, делаю отчаянный рывок...* [*I am escaping the bullet, jumping desperately...*], *Родина* [*Motherland*], and *Поздравьте меня, дорогая: я рад, что остался в живых* [*Congratulate me, my dear, I am happy I remained alive*], the last of which provides the following lines:

И так все сошлось, дорогая: наверно, я там не сгорел,

чтоб выкрикнуть здесь, дорогая, про то, что другой не успел.

(And so it transpired, my dear: no doubt I escaped those fires

So that I might shout here, my dear, what the others had no time to shout.)⁹⁴

In conclusion, the theme of War is of the greatest importance to Okudzhava's poetry. The theme of War and its corollaries is represented time and time again throughout his works as an ethical act of proclaiming his disagreement with the party's idea that "just wars" exist. The poet's dissenting voice is manifested in themes as varied as those of the inexperienced recruits, of farewell and of loneliness at the front, in the themes of women in wartime, left behind, often forever, by their men; in the themes of fear of being killed and that of killing and cruelty; of duty and repentance; and even of

⁹³ Bulat Okudzhava, "Nad glubinoi bezdonnykh vod," *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 241.

⁹⁴ Bulat Okudzhava, "Pozdrav'te menia, dorogaia: ia rad, chto ostalsia v zhivykh," *Posviashchaetsia vam: Stikhi* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1988) 12.

hope. However, poetry as complex as Okudzhava's cannot be limited to a single thematic group, no matter how vast, and the importance of other thematic groups, such as The Legacy of the Stalin Years, must not be underestimated.

Chapter 2

THE LEGACY OF THE STALIN YEARS

Чем история богата,
тем и весь народ богат...
Нет, вы знаете, ребята,
Сталин очень виноват.

(What makes history rich
Makes the whole nation rich...
No, friends, you know,
Stalin is guilty as hell.)⁹⁵

И время отца моего молодого печальный развеяло прах,
и нету надгробья, и памяти негде над прахом склониться, рыдая.

(And time has scattered the sad ashes of my young father,
And there is no gravestone, and there is no place for memory to bow over the
ashes in tears.)⁹⁶

Okudzhava gives a scathing critique of Stalin's autocracy. As pointed out in section 1 that discussed Okudzhava's anti-war poems, Stalin was directly responsible for the deaths of millions of Soviet citizens during World War II⁹⁷.

In the poetry of Bulat Shalvovich Okudzhava there is a group of poems devoted to what has become known as the cult of personality.⁹⁸ Thematic analysis situates these poems midway between the groups of Okudzhava's anti-war poems and the poems devoted to the author's parents and to their tragedy. A further group jostling these first three is the one based on the history of Russia and the fate of the Slavs at large. This fourth group will be discussed briefly at the end of the present chapter.

⁹⁵ Bulat Okudzhava, "Stoit zadremat' nemnogo..." *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989), 59.

⁹⁶ Bulat Okudzhava, "Moi otets," *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989), 297.

⁹⁷ *Король [King], Джазисты [Jazzmen], Песенка о бумажном солдатики [Song about a Paper Soldier], Песенка о пехоте [The Infantry Song], Песенка о солдатских сапогах [The Song of Army Boots], В поход на чужую страну собирался король... [The king was off to conquer a foreign land], Шла война к тому Берлину... [The War Moved towards Berlin], Воспоминание о Дне Победы [Reminiscences from the Day of Victory], Пешеходов родословное древо [Family Tree of Passers-by].*

⁹⁸ For more about the cult of personality, see Hosking, *A History of the Soviet Union* 183-84. Also Robert Service 198-200, 237, 250, 289 and 315.

Stalin's absolute rule was responsible for atrocities⁹⁹ far surpassing even the calamities of the first year of battle and the vertiginous numbers of casualties leading up to the very end of the war. The earlier Terror, with its waves of mass arrests, torture, deportations and executions, had already reached its peak in 1937. They were the instrument of Okudzhava's family tragedies—the arrest and execution of his father, an alleged German and Japanese spy, in the same year of 1937, and his mother's ensuing seventeen years of exile for being the wife of an enemy of the nation. Okudzhava's mother returned to Moscow upon her rehabilitation only in 1955.

In the poem *Звездочет*, the lyrical hero understands that he too is responsible for the social and moral tragedy. By mentioning the number “twenty” in the poem, written just in 1988, he refers directly to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. Witness the sadness with which he refers to this tragedy: twice he explicitly uses the adverb *печально* [*sadly*]¹⁰⁰, and he refers to *память* [*memory*] with the attribute *ранима* [*wounded*]¹⁰¹. From the perspective of the year 1988, these sad words and feeling of

⁹⁹ The sources estimate the number of casualties in millions of people: “[...] it may be that the casualties of the Stalin terror totalled 15-20 million.” Hosking, *A History of the Soviet Union* 203.

¹⁰⁰ *почему так печально завишу
от чего-то бывшего во мне?*

[*Why I so sadly depend
On the past within my soul?*]

And:

Все печально, что катится мимо?
[*Whatever passes by is sad*]

Both citations come from Bulat Okudzhava, “Zvezdochet,” *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 432.

¹⁰¹ *Память, словно ребенок, ранима
и куда-то зовет и зовет...*

[*Memory, like a child, is wounded
And calls us to who knows where...*].

Citation comes from: Okudzhava, “Zvezdochet” *Stikhotvoreniia* 432.

collective guilt and responsibility may suggest that these twenty years had not brought many positive changes:

И живу я вот с этой виною
на двадцатом ее этаже.

(And here I live with this guilt
On its twentieth floor.)¹⁰²

The lyrical hero is equipped with a telescope, which may be considered a symbol of the alien Soviet-era mentality with which he is still forced to live. Through the instrument, he observes those around him, just as they have been closely observed by the Soviet state, even in their sleep. He feels detached from his times and observes the present from afar. The reality is so awful and the guilt is so overwhelming that the telescope falls from his hands. Choice of contemporary city vocabulary emphasizes the modern times (*авоськи* [*string shopping bags*], *гаражи* [*garages*], *горожане* [*city dwellers*]) and words expressing fear give it colour—the Arbat that the character sees is no longer the same as the Arbat of before the war. Its materialistic inhabitants, ready to run to the store at the hint of a midnight delivery, remain incongruously superstitious: they sleep on their right side so that the first leg to hit the floor on their rush outdoors will be the lucky right one. Seemingly unaware of or indifferent to the past, they mind only their own material status and peace and do not think of guilt. However, both the rich ones, those having “the garages”, as well the poor ones, whose only attributes are “the string shopping bags”, still feel the same fear and even sleep in a state of permanent anxiety:

Спят в постелях своих горожане,
спят с авоськами, спят с гаражами,
спят тревожно на правом боку...
Изготовилось тело к прыжку.

¹⁰² Okudzhava, “Zvezdochet,” *Stikhotvoreniia* 432.

(The city dwellers sleep in their beds,
Sleep with their string bags, and with their garages,
They sleep anxiously on the right side...
Bodies always tense for the jump.)¹⁰³

The figure of the mother returning from exile clearly belongs, however, to the past, as her attribute, *старая* [aged], will attest. In her hand, she preserves a relic of the vanished age—a plywood suitcase, which, as the lyrical hero notes, is no longer fashionable, but which contains the most precious memories of the time before the tragedy: *фотографии прежних годов* [pictures of the bygone years].

The fact that the responsibility is a collective one may have raised the issue of the guilt of each citizen and a rhetorical question: what could have been done by each single citizen to prevent the invasion. During the years of the Stalin terror¹⁰⁴ and well after, the entire nation stayed mute, becoming blind and deaf as well under the weight of its ideological burden. Animalistic fears for oneself and one's family erased personalities. People had to behave with the utmost caution, to agree or pretend to agree with the Party line, so as not to attract attention—it was the only chance at survival. No one could be trusted when the slightest sign of individual independence was choked by the collective. Charges could be found to incriminate anyone. Beneath the shadow of so much cruelty and evil, the people of the totalitarian system remained in a trance-like state, as described in the poem *Мой отец* (*My Father*):

А кто-то ж кричал: «Не убий!» - одинокий... И в это поверить легко,
но бредили кровью и мстью все прочие братья и сестры.

¹⁰³ Okudzhava, "Zvezdochet," *Stikhotvoreniia* 432.

¹⁰⁴ The years of the Soviet oppression and purges culminated between 1934 and 1938, the time of the Great Terror. However, still in "the mid-1970s there were reckoned to be about 10,000 political and religious prisoners across the Soviet Union. They were held in grievous conditions [...]. Punishments for disobedience in the camps were severe and the guards were both venal and brutal." Punitive medicine and a network of KGB informers were used as well. (Service 382). See also Hosking, *A History of the Soviet Union* 327-28, 425-29.

(And someone screamed: "Do not kill!"—all alone... And it is easy to believe it,
Yet his all other brothers and sisters were raving about the blood and revenge.)¹⁰⁵

The same theme is broached in *Песенка про Черного кота* [*Song about the Black Cat*], a poem which never saw publication in the Soviet Union and which was only sung during some literary evenings and distributed in manuscript copies. A musical recital of the poem attracted the attention of the KGB¹⁰⁶, who ordered Okudzhava to come to their offices and explain his words. To questions as to whether the Black Cat represented the figure of Stalin and why he does not catch the mouse, the surprised Okudzhava could only repeat his denial, saying a cat is a cat and, moreover, it is well-fed by the tenants. It was difficult to explain his motivations for portraying the large-moustached Cat¹⁰⁷, described as silent yet dangerous in the fifth verse, as so self-assured about his own power and superiority, as completely safe from being evicted from his important position in the house, and as the recipient of silent tribute after silent tribute from the house's forcefully devoted inhabitants:

Он не требует, не просит, —
желтый глаз его горит, —
каждый сам ему выносит
И "спасибо" говорит.

(He does not demand, he does not beg—
His yellow eye is burning—
Each one offers his own outpourings
Each one utters "thank you.")¹⁰⁸

The straightforward answer was dangerous to Okudzhava. The irony contained in poems such as these was the only vehicle for expressing the truth of the totalitarian

¹⁰⁵ Okudzhava, "Moi otets," *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* 297.

¹⁰⁶ K.D. Seemann, "Bulat Okudzavas 'Cernyj kot' als antistalinistische Parodie," *Welt der Slaven-Halbjahresschrift für Slavistik* 31.1 (1986): 139.

¹⁰⁷ Petrakov 261. For more citations from Okudzhava about Stalin and the legacy of the Stalin Times, see: Petrakov 262-3.

¹⁰⁸ Bulat Okudzhava, "Pesenka pro Chornogo kota", *Chaepitie na Arbate* (Moscow: Korona Print, 1998) 63.

system.¹⁰⁹ K.D. Seeman even sees the poem as a parody of the praise song *Садовник* [*Gardener*] by Lebedev-Kumach¹¹⁰:

[Okudzhava's] poem is completely identical with Lebedev-Kumach's poem with respect to stanza, rhythm and rhyme. Thus it can for example also be sung to the melody that N. Bogoslovskii chose for the musical arrangement of "Sadovnik".¹¹¹

The fact of unseen similarity between the two above-mentioned poems may incline the reader further towards the parodic and ironic interpretation of the poem.

In the poem *Давайте, придумаем деспота* [*Let's Invent a Tyrant*] the collective, "nobody's" responsibility is openly blamed for the existence of the totalitarian system. The interlocutor is addressed in the first person plural, *мы* ("we"), and from the poem it is clear that by this pronoun the lyrical hero understands himself and his fellow citizens (for example, from the fact that the "we" would unanimously vote "yes" for a certain person in elections). Here, the author presents the reader with this ethically tricky proposition and makes him reflect on individual responsibility for one's own acts in a totalitarian state:

Давайте придумаем деспота,
[...]
Потом будет спрашивать не с кого,
коль вместе его создадим.

¹⁰⁹ There has been ongoing critical discussion of what or whom the tom-cat represents. The most obvious interpretation, suggested in 1964 by A. Flegon, points to Stalin. N. Tarasova draws a parallel between the Black Cat and Soviet Power, and in 1992 Mezakov-Koriakin saw the tom-cat as the representation of a devious petty bourgeois (Seemann, "Bulat Okudzhava's 'Cernyj kot' als antistalinistische Parodie" 140). These plain-faced allusions to attributes typically reserved for Stalin support Flegon's interpretation, and they likewise emphasize the connection between Okudzhava's poem and Mandelstam's *Мы живем, под собою не чуя страны...* [*We live, not feeling the country under our feet...*], where we find the following description of Stalin: *Его толстые пальцы, как черви, жирны* [*His thick fingers are fat as worms*], *Тараканы смеются усища и сияют его голенища* [*The cockroach's moustache is smiling and his shins are shining*].

¹¹⁰ For more on Vasilii Ivanovich Lebedev-Kumach (1898-1946): Wolfgang Kazak. *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar' russkoi literatury s 1917 goda* (London: Overseas Publications Interchange Ltd., 1988) 418-19. Similar of songs were written, for example, by Dunaevskii ("Oi, tsvetot kalina", "Kakim ty byl"), Aleksandrov ("Sviashchennaia voina"), Zakharov ("Cheremukha", "I kto ego znaet"), Blanter ("Katiusha", "Letiat perelotnye ptitsy"), Solov'ov-Sedoi ("Solov'i", "Podmoskovnye vechera"), Zakharov, Novikov.

¹¹¹ Seemann 143.

И пусть он над нами куражится
и пальцем грозит из тьмы,
пока наконец окажется,
что сами им созданы мы.

(Let's think up a despot,
[...]
Then there won't be a single person responsible,
So long as we create him together.

And let him bully us
And shake his finger at us from darkness,
Until in the end it becomes obvious
That *we* are his creations as well.)¹¹²

The totalitarian leader in the poem shares some physical features with Stalin: his moustache and his predatory eyes. In this particular poem, he is not named directly, just with help of typical attributes. The leader has been absolutely dependent on his creators, but as soon as he comes to life, he begins to threaten and abuse his people. The reader observes a transfer of the attribute of passivity away from the marionette-like leader to his now paralysed creators.

In the works of Okudzhava, there are number of poems in which Stalin is mentioned by name (as in *Сталин Пушкина листал...* [*Stalin was browsing thorough Pushkin...*] or *Стоит задремать немного...* [*It is enough to doze off for a while...*]), or, as in the above example, by mentioning the typical attributes of Stalin or his links with terror, war and bloodshed (*Я, рожденный в империи страха [...]* *Я, рожденный в империи крови* [*I was born in the empire of fear [...]* *I was born in the empire of blood*), as in the poem *Я живу в ожидании краха...*, (“*I live waiting for a crash...*”). The picture of Stalin is consistently formed with help of the following attributes: *убийца* (*killer*), *усы* (*moustache*), *усатый сокол* (*the moustached falcon*), *усатый брандмайор* (*the*

¹¹² Bulat Okudzhava, “Davaite pridumaem despota...,” *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 180.

moustached chief of the fire brigade), *десном* (*despot*), *маленький* (*small*), *немытый* (*dirty*), *рябой* (*rock-marked*), *горец* (*highlander*), *грубый человек* (*rude man*), *генералиссимус* (*generalissimo*), *силуэт [...] с низким лбом* (*silhouette [...] with the low forehead*), *хищные глаза* (*predatory eyes*), *Самый* (*The One*), *вождь* (*the leader*), *черный орел горный* (*the black mountain eagle*), *черный кот* (*the black cat*), *желтый глаз* (*yellow eye*). The Stalinist period is characterised as *страшная пора* (*horrible times*), *травля, плетение сетей* (*hunting, netting*), *вели к стенке* (*they led /people to be shot/ to the wall*), *время немоты, зла и лжи* (*time of silence, evil and lies*), *кровавый след* (*the bloody path*). The Soviet country is seen as *трагическая* (*tragic*) and *не весел дом, в котором мы живем* (*the home, which we inhabit, is not a happy one*). It is not a cozy place, but one where terror, arrests, exiles and censorship rule: *в нашем доме - сквозняки* (*there are draughts in our home*).

Even as individual freedoms were stripped away and constitutional rights disregarded, the majority of people were, however, reluctant to blame themselves or any other specific person for creating such a *home* (system). Millions shared responsibility for the situation, proudly claiming that they had placed the common good above their own pleasure and gratification. The poet makes this the subject of *Письмо к маме* [*Letter to Mom*], a poem directed to the mother of the lyrical hero, a generalized victim of the labour camps, exile and Soviet prisons. Here the representation of the mother assumes a degree of melancholy unseen in any of Okudzhava's war poetry. The mother in this poem, unlike the mothers in the anti-war group of poems, has no cause to fight for, no person to wait for, no goals and no hope. She was arrested during the purges. Her vigour is completely suppressed, and she is passive, resigned to her lot, in a prison, *на нарах*

*посреди Москвы [on a bunk in Moscow]*¹¹³. Tragedy has wrecked their previous family life forever:

На окне – намордник, воля – за стеной,
ниточка порвалась меж тобой и мной.

(On the window-sill is a muzzle, freedom is behind the wall,
The thread is broken between you and me.)¹¹⁴

The lyrical hero, who personally had not been arrested and exiled, and whose perspective on the family drama is necessarily different, is separated from his mother by history, but tries to approach her with his compassion. Guided by the lyrical hero, the reader relives the terror period, the mother's journey, from the moment when the escort took her from their home until her return many years later. Again, the poet uses a cinematic reel of separate frames to tell her story.¹¹⁵

The reader sees the prison scene:

За железной дверью топчется солдат [...],
(Behind the iron door a soldier is stamping [...])¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Bulat Okudzhava, "Pis'mo k mame," *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 280.

¹¹⁴ Okudzhava, "Pis'mo k mame" *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* 280.

¹¹⁵ Reading Okudzhava's poetry as a series of film frames is especially productive given his familiarity with the cinema. His opus includes three screenplays: he co-authored the movies *Верность* [*Fidelity*] and *Женя, Женечка, 'Катюша'* [*Zhenia, Zhenechka, 'Katiusha'*], as well as the script for *Мы любили Мельпомену...* [*We Loved Melpomena...*], which was published but never saw production. Poetry and cinema also overlap where Okudzhava's songs are featured on sound tracks to films, whether the songs were written with that purpose in mind or whether they were later chosen from his repertoire. Noteworthy among these is Okudzhava's performance of *Песня о последнем автобусе* [*Song of the Last Bus*] in *Ценная реакция* [*Chain Reaction*], written in 1958. See: V. I. Bosenko, Afterword, *Kapli datskogo korolia: Kinostsenarii, pesni dlia kino*, by Bulat Okudzhava (Moscow: Kinotsentr, 1991) 244-51. Over the years Okudzhava entertained the idea of writing a screenplay independent of co-authors, but eventually he came to admit that his primary vocation was as a poet: *Понимаете, киносценарии – для этого нужно быть драматургом. Я не драматург. То, что я написал и что реализовалось, – это благодаря режиссерам, с которыми я писал: они в этом хорошо понимают, и я был просто литературным деятелем при них, так сказать. Мне очень хочется написать киносценарий, а особенно пьесу. Но я однажды понял, что я не гожусь для этого. [You understand that for screenplays, you have to be a dramatist. I am no dramatist. What I wrote and created was thanks to the directors I was writing with: they have a real understanding of this, and I was just a literary worker for them, so to speak. I'd really like to write a screenplay, or especially a play. But I realised one day that I wasn't made for that.]* (Petrakov 153). The following pages in this book provide an excellent insight into Okudzhava's relationship with the cinema: Petrakov 152-70.

¹¹⁶ Okudzhava, "Pis'mo k mame," *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* 280.

Interrogation:

Следователь юный машет кулаком.
(A young investigator is shaking his fist.)¹¹⁷

Exile:

Чуть за Красноярском – твой лесоповал.
Конвоир на фронте сроду не бывал.

(Just past Krasnoiarsk is your clearing in the woods.
The escort has never been to the front.)¹¹⁸

And eventually the Kremlin itself:

Вождь укрылся в башне у Москвы-реки.
[...]
Он не доверяет больше никому,
словно сам построил для себя тюрьму.

(The leader is hiding in a tower on the Moscow River.
[...]
He no longer trusts anyone,
As though he built a prison for himself.)¹¹⁹

Pawns of the totalitarian system, both creator and his followers became embittered and merciless, all of them guilty for the sufferings and deaths of their fellow-citizens. Nevertheless, the son maintains his faith in kindness and the impossibility of voluntarily inflicting this pain. He believes that his nation was hypnotized into silence, and this is why he repeats his excuse for the actions of all the oppressors:

Прости его, мама: он не виноват,
он себе на душу греха не берет –
он не за себя ведь – он за весь народ.

(Mother, forgive him: he is not guilty,
He does not acknowledge his sins—
He did it not for himself—but for the whole nation.)¹²⁰

The words from the last line are repeated four times, at the end of each stanza, and thus serve to emphasize the sarcastic meaning of the poem at large. They even influence the stanza about Stalin—not the strong and merciless “generalissimo,” but a leader

¹¹⁷ Okudzhava, “Pis'mo k mame,” 280.

¹¹⁸ Okudzhava, “Pis'mo k mame,” 280.

¹¹⁹ Okudzhava, “Pis'mo k mame,” 280.

¹²⁰ Okudzhava, “Pis'mo k mame,” 280.

fearing everything down to his own shadow, never satisfied with his cruelties, because even he believes that *он не за себя ведь – он за весь народ* [*he does not do it for himself—but for the whole nation*].¹²¹ The repetition also indicates the equal responsibility that every group of people shared: the same words end stanzas about a prison guard, a persecutor, an escort and the leader, respectively. The poem can be, therefore, be interpreted as a sarcastic and ironic parody of the commonly heard excuse for the atrocities.

The poem *Новое утро* [*New Morning*], in which the author takes up the theme of reconciliation, possible only in the post-Stalin years, is yet another example of delicate words directed to an aged mother persecuted by the system:

Мама, белая голубушка,
утро новое горит.
[...]
Все оно смывает начисто,
все разглаживает вновь...
Отступает одиночество,
возвращается любовь.

(Mother, my dear,
A new morning is dawning.
[...]
It washes everything clean,
It irons everything new...
Loneliness is leaving,
And love is coming back.)¹²²

According to Okudzhava's positive philosophy, comforting for himself and for others, and heavily based on the notions of hope, belief and love¹²³, it is still possible to build normal lives in the ruins of the shattered society, to live out a fractured life in the warmth of one's own home. His poetry offers a lesson in forgiveness and love for one's

¹²¹ Okudzhava, "Pis'mo k mame," 280.

¹²² Bulat Okudzhava, "Novoe utro," *Veselyi barabanshchik* (London: Flegon Press, 1966) 85.

¹²³ This aspect of Okudzhava's writings will be explored in more detail in the chapter "Man's Inner World" of the present thesis.

fellow human being, innocent and oppressors alike, as in the poem *Прощание с осенью* [*Farewell to Autumn*]:

Прощаю всех, что не были убиты
тогда, перед лицом грехов своих.

[...]

Сосуд добра до дна не исчерпать.

(I forgive all who were not killed
Then, face to face with their own sins.

[...]

The vessel of Good will can never be drained.)¹²⁴

The issues of Goodness and Hope become the central idea in the above poem, where the alternation of the nouns *прощание* [*farewell*] and *прощение* [*forgiveness*] and their associated verbs becomes an invocation of a humane spirit. As early as the first stanza, the mood of farewell is established with the image of a *пирог с грибами* [*mushroom pie*], prepared for someone leaving home, and, moreover, by the *калитки шорох* [*creak of the wicket-gate*]. This is not a mother seeing off her sons, however—the family is all the more shaken because the roles are reversed. Here, this vivid depiction of parting is not a reference to young soldiers but to the lyrical hero's mother figure:

Короткое, как вздох:
«Прощай, прощай...»

(Short, like a breath:
“Goodbye, goodbye...”)¹²⁵

The lyrical hero must decide if he wants to and is able to forgive:

Да я и так прощаю
все, что простить возможно,
обещаю
и то простить, чего нельзя простить.

(I forgive just like that
Every evil that can be forgiven,
I promise
To forgive even what cannot be forgiven)¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Bulat Okudzhava, “Proshchanie s osen'iu,” *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 125.

¹²⁵ Okudzhava, “Proshchanie s osen'iu,” *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* 125.

Okudzhava sees that the desire for revenge, which would come so naturally to most, is a closed circle, leading nowhere. The only way to break this cycle is to be stronger than the oppressors, to forgive them even for the sufferings that they inflicted on his mother:

горести моей прекрасной мамы
прощаю я [...]

(For the sorrows of my beautiful mother
I forgive you [...])¹²⁷

The moment of forgiving the sorrows and pains suffered by the lyrical hero's loved ones is the most intense in the entire poem. In his staunch belief that good must prevail, the lyrical hero states with a dose of bitterness and irony:

Великодушным я обязан быть.

(I must be generous.)¹²⁸

The lyrical hero succeeds in his forgiveness, but realizes that his moral imperative will not be understood or forgiven in turn by others:

Знать, мне лишь не простится одному.

(So, only I won't be forgiven.)¹²⁹

The duty of forgiveness must always remain a struggle for the poet as he contends with his reality. However, we also find some poems written in a more aggressive voice.

In *Собрался к маме – умерла...*, the lyrical hero has been deprived of his childhood because of his parents' arrest. He bitterly asks:

спросить-то позабыли,
верша великие дела:
отец и мать нужны мне были?...

¹²⁶ Okudzhava, "Proshchanie s osen'iu," *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* 125.

¹²⁷ Okudzhava, "Proshchanie s osen'iu," *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* 125.

¹²⁸ Okudzhava, "Proshchanie s osen'iu," *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* 125.

¹²⁹ Okudzhava, "Proshchanie s osen'iu," *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* 125.

(They forgot to ask me,
 Busy with their important work:
 Maybe I needed my father and mother?...)¹³⁰

This reproach is directed by an individual to the collective *они* [*they*]: authorities and his fellow-citizens. For him, every active and passive person is guilty. The helplessness and exasperation of the lyrical hero are stressed by an almost exact repetition of the poem's opening lines in the third and final stanza:

Собрался к маме – умерла,
 к отцу хотел/подался – а он расстрелян/застрелили...

(I was about to see my mom—but she died,
 I wanted to see/I went to see my father—but he was shot/they shot him...)¹³¹

The poem is dominated by the image of the lost, confused child in need of his parents. The lyrical hero refers to his mother using the familiar, diminutive *мама* [*mom*] instead of the more neutral *мать* [*mother*], and strikes the reader with the harsh *умерла* that follows immediately.

Okudzhava also reveals an interest in the psychology of the oppressors. He explores this theme in the poems *He слишком-то изыскан вид за окнами* [*The view outside the window is not very refined*] and *Убили моего отца* [*They killed my father*]. Here the oppressor is a *стрелок*¹³² [*rifleman*], who is able to return home without remorse, caressing his grandchildren in the first poem and, in the other, taking his children for a stroll. He lives next door:

То в парке, то на рынке, то в трамвае
 как равноправный дышит за спиной.
 И зла ему никто не поминает
 и даже не обходят стороной.

(In a park, in the market, in a tram

¹³⁰ Bulat Okudzhava, "Sobral'sia k mame – umerla...", *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 283.

¹³¹ Okudzhava, "Sobral'sia k mame – umerla...", *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* 283.

¹³² Bulat Okudzhava, "Ne slishkom-to izyskan vid za oknami," *Chaepitie na Arbate* (Moscow: Korona Print, 1998) 268.

As an equal he breathes at our backs.
 And nobody reminds of him the evil
 And nobody even avoids him.)¹³³

The horrific juxtaposition of the executioner at work and then at home with his children is accentuated in the last line of *He слишком-то изыскан вид за окнами*, where he looks at the *круглые затылочки внукам* [*backs of his grandchildren's round heads*] in exactly the same way as he had earlier observed the backs of the heads of his victims.

The same feeling of disgust, that this kind of person is faithful to the system, that he has not understood anything and that he has not learnt anything, is explored in the poem *Убили моего отца*. The tragic irony is to live next door to him and to know him on a daily basis:

Он – соотечественник мой
 и брат по племени людей.
 [...]
 друг друга братьями зовем
 и с ним в обнимку мы живем.

(He is my compatriot
 And brother in the family of man,
 [...]
 We call each other brothers
 And we live in an embrace.)¹³⁴

In the bleakest moments doubts will emerge concerning the weakness of humanity, and poems can be found even where Okudzhava negates his own positive attitude and his attempts to forgive and forget. In the poem *Ну что, генералиссимус прекрасный...* [*Well, my fine generalissimo...*], every stanza begins with a mocking address to Stalin:

Ну что, генералиссимус прекрасный?
 Лежишь в земле на площади на Красной...
 Уж не от крови ль красная она,

¹³³ Okudzhava, "Ne slishkom-to izyskan vid za oknami," *Chaepitie na Arbate* 268.

¹³⁴ Bulat Okudzhava, "Ubili moego ottsa," *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 137.

которую ты пригоршнями пролил?

(So what, my fine generalissimo?
You are lying in the ground on Red Square...
Maybe it turned red from all the blood
That you shed by the handful?)¹³⁵

Even though the tyrant is dead, the lyrical hero, moderate in his retribution, still remembers the years of terror and committed crimes:

Я счета не веду былым потерям,
но, пусть в своем возмездье и умерен,
я не прощаю, помня о былом.

(I am not counting past losses,
But although my retributions are modest,
I cannot forgive when I remember the past.)¹³⁶

This poem is also eloquent concerning the Soviets' disparate recollections of the Stalin era. Some of them had been so deeply awed that even after Stalin's death they continued their praises of their leader, down to considering the possibility of his resurrection:

Одни тебя мордуют и поносят,
другие все малюют, и возносят,
и молятся, и жаждут воскресить.

(Some beat and abuse you,
Some paint and praise you,
And pray, and try to resurrect you.)¹³⁷

Stalin's legacy is confronted in another striking poem, *Стоит задремать немного...* [It is enough to doze off for a while...], addressed to Okudzhava's contemporaries. Here, Stalin is depicted as an *усатый сокол* [moustached falcon], merciless, drunken and severe. The lyrical hero attempts to find the balance between forgiveness and vengeance:

Нет, ребята, хоть упрямы

¹³⁵ Bulat Okudzhava, "Nu chto, generalissimus prekrasnyi...", *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 284.

¹³⁶ Okudzhava, "Nu chto, generalissimus prekrasnyi...", *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* 284.

¹³⁷ Okudzhava, "Nu chto, generalissimus prekrasnyi...", *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* 284.

демонстрации любви,
но следы минувшей драмы
все равно у нас в крови.

(No, my friends, even though
Shows of love persist,
The marks of the past drama
Still remain in our blood.)¹³⁸

In this poem the lyrical hero accuses his generation of being too quick to forgive past crimes, when everybody is well aware of the truth of the final, climactic verse: *Сталин очень виноват [Stalin is guilty as hell]*¹³⁹.

In Okudzhava's world, there are those who manage to forgive exile or the death of a parent, and there are those who will never be able to forgive and forget. We must conclude that a golden mean can be found—a state where crimes are remembered, but without bitterness. Through the various types of poems, Okudzhava tends to persuade the victims to seek this balance. This approach is the only way to face life, not hunched up or depressed, but tolerating the fact that *былое нельзя воротить [there is no going back to the past]*¹⁴⁰.

The artist's continuing task is to discuss the tragedy of the twentieth century. This is one of the reasons why Okudzhava continuously returns to this theme. For example, through his lyrical hero he often talks about his personal drama. Not only it is a catharsis for the author himself, but it helps new generations understand their own history. Among the most intense poems in this group are intimate ones addressed to the poet's son *Арбатское вдохновение, или воспоминание о детстве [The Arbat inspiration or a memory of childhood]* and late father: *О чем ты успел передумать, отец расстрелянный мой [What did you have time to rethink, my shot father]*, *Мой отец [My*

¹³⁸ Okudzhava, "Stoit zadremat' nemnogo...", *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* 59.

¹³⁹ Okudzhava, "Stoit zadremat' nemnogo...", *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* 59.

¹⁴⁰ Okudzhava, "Byloe nel'zia vorotit', i pechalit'sia ne o chem...", *Stikhotvoreniia* 284.

Father], *Житель Хевсуретии и белый корабль* [*The Inhabitant of Khevsuretia and the white ship*] and *Много ли нужно человеку...* [*Does man need a lot...*]. The above-mentioned poems stand out because of their extreme degree of emotional tension. The loss of the father at the age of thirteen was the saddest event in Okudzhava's life, and as such it carries special meaning.

In the poem *Арбатское вдохновение, или воспоминания о детстве*, the poet creates an ironic juxtaposition between a potter and the image of Stalin:

И льну душой к заветному Кремлю,
и усача кремлевского люблю,
и самого себя люблю за это.

Он там сидит, изогнутый в дугу,
и глину разминает на кругу, [...]

(And I cling to the cherished Kremlin,
And I love the Kremlin moustached man,
And I love myself for that.

He sits there, bent over,
Kneading clay on the potting wheel [...])¹⁴¹

The poem's lyrical hero describes how the system misled the people. Through official slogans it forged an image of the leader as a devoted father-figure, a potter bent over his clay, working his material and forming pieces of art, or perhaps like a sovereign, making the Soviet man. The two concluding verse lines re-state Okudzhava's belief that the new generation, including the poet's son, has learnt from their parents' lives, never to repeat their mistakes:

И то, что я потерял,
он в воздухе арбатском обнаружил.

(What I once had lost,
He found again in the Arbat air)¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Bulat Okudzhava, "Arbatskoe vdokhnovenie, ili vospominania o detstve," *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 384.

¹⁴² Okudzhava, "Arbatskoe vdokhnovenie, ili vospominania o detstve" *Stikhotvoreniia* 384.

The poem's dedication to Okudzhava's son Anton makes this affirmation all the more affecting.

In *Много ли нужно человеку...*, dedicated to his father, Okudzhava revisits the theme of farewell. The father is arrested and driven away from home:

А с тобою за калитку тянется
за околицу —
далеко, далеко —
женское распевное
“до свиданья”,
теплое,
как парное молоко.

(The women's singing
“Good bye”,
Warm
As fresh milk.
With you beyond the gate it stretches out,
Beyond the outskirts—
Far, far away.)¹⁴³

With the long, calm lines of the poem *Мой отец*, the reader is carried along on thoughts of the father, the execution, and the crime of the investigators and executioners and the guilt of fellow citizens:

Он так и запомнился мне на прощание, к порогу лицо обратив,
а жизнь быстротечна, да вот бесконечной ему почему-то казалась.
Его расстреляли на майском рассвете [...]
А те, что виновны в убийстве, и сами давно уже все в небесах.

(It is how I remember him saying goodbye, face turned to the doorstep,
And life is fast-flowing, but for some reason he thought never-ending.
He was shot at dawn in May [...]
But all those who are responsible for his murder are already in heaven.)¹⁴⁴

In the penultimate line, the lyrical hero decides that the past cannot be revived or undone. He cries and once again comes to the conclusion that it is necessary to talk and write about the tragedy, and never allow it to be forgotten:

И нам остается, пока суд да дело, не грезить, а плакать и петь.

¹⁴³ Bulat Okudzhava, “Mnogo li nuzhno cheloveku...,” *Bud' zdorov, shkoliar: Stikhi* (Frankfurt-Main: Posev, 1966) 73.

¹⁴⁴ Okudzhava, “Moi otets,” *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* 297.

(And we are left, while things drag on, not to dream, but to cry and sing.)¹⁴⁵

As time goes on, the image of the father in the memory of Okudzhava's characters fades away. Eventually the father is present only as an idea, his face vague, as if he were on board a parting ship sent adrift by Stalin's hand:

Сядет твой отец убитый в тот корабль живой.
Капитан команду вскрикнет. И на утре раннем
побегут барашки белые
над самой головой
вслед надеждам,
вслед тревогам,
вслед воспоминаниям...

(Your murdered father will embark on this living ship.
The captain will yell an order. And in the early morning
Clouds will course
Above his head
Following hopes,
Following anxieties,
Following memories...) ¹⁴⁶

Strongly associated with the group of poems about Stalin's legacy and directly linked to the personal tragedy of the author are the poems dominated by exile: examples include *Палачи брата моего Гиви* [*The executioners of my brother Givi*] and *He успел на жизнь обидеться* [*He had no time to get hurt by life*], dedicated to Y. Daniel.

И по шучьему велению,
по лесам и по морям
шло народонаселение
к магаданским лагерям.

(And as if by magic,
Through forest and sea
The population marched
Towards the Magadan camps.) ¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ Okudzhava, "Moi otets," *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* 297.

¹⁴⁶ Bulat Okudzhava, "Zhitel' Khevsuretii i belyi korabl'," *Mart velikodushnyi* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1967) 52.

¹⁴⁷ Bulat Okudzhava, "Ne успел na zhizn' obidet'sia," *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 270.

The mother figure is present in this group of poems as well. As opposed to *Звездочет*, which dealt with her homecoming, here she is on her way out. She */отправляется/ удивленным неудачником в те богатые края* [*leaves/, like a surprised unlucky person to those rich lands*]¹⁴⁸.

The name of the bloody leader is widely known, and now the people need to know and remember the names of the millions who were executed and victimized by him in prisons, exile and labour camps:

Он и нынче [...] .
похоронен и отпет, —
усмехается с экрана,
а тебя в помине нет.

Even now, he [...] .
Is buried and the service is over—
He smiles from the screen,
And you are no more.¹⁴⁹

The burdensome economical and political situation, coupled with exiles, arrests and omnipresent censorship, were the reasons for the so-called third wave of the emigration¹⁵⁰ Those who did not decide or manage to leave the USSR at the end of the war, were often to be found reflecting upon emigration in later years. Okudzhava expressed his point about this issue in discussions with the public during literary

¹⁴⁸ Okudzhava, "Ne uspel na zhizn' obidetsia" *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* 270.

¹⁴⁹ Bulat Okudzhava, "Palachi brata moego Givi," *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 232.

¹⁵⁰ The first main wave of emigration (1-2 million people) took place after the Civil War and culminated in the 1920s. The second wave, between 1943 and 1945, was directly caused by the sudden possibility of leaving the Soviet Union as German troops backed up from its territory all the way to Berlin. After the end of the war, many Soviet citizens remained in Western Germany. The third wave of emigration, the result of disappointment among intellectuals and artists, mainly caused by the end of Khrushchev's Thaw, culminated in the 1970s. (Compare Wolfgang Kazak, *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar' russkoi literatury s 1917 goda* (London: Overseas Publications Interchange Ltd., 1988) 878-82. See also Service 88.

evenings¹⁵¹, as well as in two poems, *Анкара, Анкара!* [*Ankara, Ankara!*] and *Родина* [*Motherland*], where the lyrical hero turns directly to his native country:

Значит, нужен тебе я и важен,
[...]
Мои руки – они твои слуги,
не мои они слуги – твои.

(It means you need me and I am important to you,
[...]
My hands – are your servants,
Not my servants – but yours.)¹⁵²

Okudzhava's philosophy manifests itself as a romantic patriotism in these poems.

The country, traditionally compared to an image of a mother, cannot simply be abandoned at a difficult pass:

Пусть она горькая,
[...]
но она ведь – матушка...

(She may be bitter,
[...]
But she is a mother...)¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ While the narrator's aversion to abandoning his country must in some measure be seen as a reflection of Okudzhava's personal beliefs, the author does not appear to have expected those around him to adhere to his own strict standards. Okudzhava's travels abroad (to Poland, Yugoslavia, Hungary, France, Germany, Australia, Indonesia and the USA) left him with no interest in emigration, yet he refused to judge the desire of others to emigrate, provided that this inflicted no harm upon others. Petrakov quotes him saying: *Нормальное состояние общественной жизни определяет перемещение человека по маленькому земному шару – в зависимости от его желания и потребности. И кинорежиссер, который уехал на Запад и снимает там фильм, если он хорошо снимает этот фильм – это все равно в нашу копилку. Я не осуждаю никого. Но вот это другое дело, как уехал ваш господин Анатолий, бывший Кузнецов. Это другое дело. Это мне неприятно. А вообще, когда уезжают, чтобы работать на Западе, – ну что ж. Все ведь зависит от характера деятельности, а не от перемещения в пространстве. [In civilian life it is normal for people to travel [...] according to their wants and needs. The director who goes to the West and films a movie there, if he does this well—this is still our heritage. I am not judging anybody. But the emigration of your Mr. Anatol', the former Kuznetsov, is an entirely different affair. It is entirely different. I find it unpleasant. In general, though, when people leave to work in the West—what can you do. It all depends on the quality of their work, not on their movements in space.]* (Petrakov 258). For more on Okudzhava's travels, see Petrakov 248-261. For the story of A. Kuznetsov, who entered the KGB and informed against such writers as Evtushenko in order to pave the way for his escape from the USSR, see Kazak, *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar' russkoi literatury s 1917 goda* 407-08.

¹⁵² Bulat Okudzhava, "Rodina," *Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1985) 57.

¹⁵³ Bulat Okudzhava, "Ankara, Ankara!," *Veselyi barabanshchik* (London: Flegon Press, 1966) 21.

The theme of history or perhaps the discussion of historical events as a foil for current Soviet reality, does not find as strong a representation in the poetry of Okudzhava as in his prose. As V. Iverni noticed in one of her articles¹⁵⁴, the author had been mostly attracted to nineteenth-century romanticism.

Among the few poems touching upon the historical past, where the historical parallels are used as a typical masking literary device, the reader finds *Восемнадцатый век из античности...* [*The eighteenth century from antiquity...*], *Из стихов генерала Опочинина 1812 года* [*From the 1812 poems of General Opochinin*], *Грибоедов в Цинандали* [*Griboedov in Tsinandali*], *Как я сидел в кресле царя* [*How I was Sitting on the Tsar's Throne*], *Читаю мемуары разных лиц...* [*I read the memoirs of various persons...*] and the above-mentioned *Анкара, Анкара!*. In these poems, history is used as a counterpoint for the poet's present realities, establishing a continuity of tradition and succession of fates. Okudzhava stays within the borders of his own country when he turns to historical themes. Despite what its opening words would suggest, *Восемнадцатый век из античности...* is actually a reflection on the present times. Through a succession

¹⁵⁴ Он вообще любит девятнадцатый век – отдаленный от нас ровно настолько, чтобы уже не видны были его пыльные углы и отсутствие разнообразных удобств, зато романтическая приподнятость в отношениях, нравах и языке выступает на первый план и вызывает ностальгическую грусть. Век, слишком близкий, чтобы стать смешным, и слишком далекий, чтобы из сегодняшнего дня его можно было изображать реалистически. Для Окуджавы как для художника – идеальное временное расстояние за легкой импрессионистической дымкой: пламя свечей, качающиеся на стенах тени, женские профили в локонах, эпoletы, гусиные перья, маленькая война, в которой не считают еще десятками и сотнями тысяч, где каждого погибшего есть время оплакать... Благородный отсвет старого серебра... Легкая старомодность в речи – как раз настолько, чтобы соединилась с этим музыкально-пластическим фоном. Почти стилизация. [He generally likes the nineteenth century, which is exactly far enough away for us not see its dusty corners and lack of sundry comforts, and yet a romantic exaltation of relations, manners and language come to the fore and elicit a nostalgic sadness. That century is too near to be bizarre, and too distant to be realistically understood from today's perspective. For Okudzhava the artist, it is the ideal length of separation, behind its thin impressionistic haze: candlelight, shadows rocking on the wall, women showed with their locks, epaulettes, quill pens, and petty wars that do not yet involve tens and hundreds of thousands, but where everyone has the time to be grieved ... the precious lustre of old silver ... slightly anachronistic speech—just enough so it fits this graceful, musical background. Almost a stylization.] Violetta Iverni, “Kogda dvigaetes’, staraiteis’ nikogo ne tolknut’...”, *Kontinent* 24 (1980) 362–3.

of fates, preoccupations and cruelties, it argues that the author's contemporaries do not vary dramatically from members of past generations. The present generations, juxtaposed with the past ones, are defined as *грешные* [sinful] and the twentieth century is portrayed as a tragic time. Because of this, the poet concludes, there is much to be learnt from the past:

Восемнадцатый век из античности
в назидање нам, грешным, извлек
культ любви, обаяние личности,
наслаждения сладкий урок.

[...]

Невеселую карточку вынули
наше время и наша судьба.

[...]

Палаши, извлеченные наголо,
и без устали – свой своего...

(The eighteenth century from antiquity
For our edification taught us, sinners,
The cult of love, charm of individuality,
The sweet lesson of pleasure.

[...]

Our time and our destiny
Pulled an unlucky card,

[...]

Bare broadswords are pulled out,
And endlessly kill each other...)¹⁵⁵

The poem *Из стихов генерала Опоchinина 1812 года* treats the universal tragedy of war, regardless of century, location or victor. Historical perspective sheds light on the repositioning of values that it occasions:

И юношеские года,
и лет покойных череда –
все кажется минутным вздором.

(Both the years of youth,
And the procession of peaceful years -
All seems to be a momentary nonsense.)¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ Bulat Okudzhava, "Vosemnadtsatyi vek iz antichnosti..." *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 447.

¹⁵⁶ Bulat Okudzhava, "Iz stikhov generala Opochinina 1812 goda," *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 324.

The tragic death of Aleksander S. Griboedov in Tehran on January 30, 1829 is a historical event that prompted Okudzhava's poem, *Грибоедов в Цинандали*.¹⁵⁷ This event inclined the poet to reflect upon the fate of a defenceless man in an uneven fight. In the face of an extreme and frightening situation, the character is able to voice his appeal for love:

прокричать про любовь [...]
 прямо в рожу орущей толпе!...

(To scream about love [...]
 Directly in the face of the screaming crowd!...) ¹⁵⁸

In the poem, the character faces a crowd alone and is dying, but is seen to be winning because of his moral superiority, causing him to be above death. Clearly this injustice was not limited to the nineteenth century—the poem links the past and present. The personal tragedy of the man and the desperation of his widow match the grief of the wives and mothers of the young men lost at war, in the labour camps, or in exile.

The character of the poem *Как я сидел в кресле царя...* introduces himself:

Век восемнадцатый.	Актеры
играют прямо на траве.	
Я – Павел Первый,	тот, который
сидит России во главе.	
(The eighteenth century.	
	Actors
Play right on the grass.	
I am Paul I,	The one who
Rules Russia.) ¹⁵⁹	

¹⁵⁷ In 1828, Griboedov was nominated resident minister in Tehran, Persia. A crowd of people attacked the Russian consulate in order to express their dissatisfaction with Russian policy. One of the victims of this attack was Griboedov. See also Iurii N. Tynianov, "Смерть Вазир-Мухтара" (1927-28)

¹⁵⁸ Bulat Okudzhava, "Griboedov v Tsinandali," *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 144.

¹⁵⁹ Bulat Okudzhava, "Kak ia sidel v kresle tsaria...", *Chaepitie na Arbate* (Moscow: Korona Print, 1998) 134.

In this poem, Okudzhava's forgiveness and humanity are operating again. The attempt to understand the feelings of the historical tsar and, in this way, Stalin, is tempered by artistic stylization. The Tsar in the poem is unhappy with a reign limited by official codes of behaviour, and he dreams of a revolt. But three times his sense of duty gives him pause, and, with a slight sigh each time, he convinces himself to maintain the status quo:

Но нет, нельзя,
я ж – Павел Первый.
Мне бунт устраивать нельзя.

(But no, I can't,
I am Pavel the First.
I cannot incite a revolt.)¹⁶⁰

The reader is expected to feel sorrow for the inner drama of the tsar. The situation achieved is absurd: the figure of the ruling man, this symbol of omnipotent power, is, in fact, a very vague one, scared of any changes and wishing to maintain the far from perfect *status quo* at any cost.

Finally, the poems dealing with the fate of the Slavs find their place alongside those dominated by the cult of Stalin and the history of Russia. In this group, repetitions and patterns are distributed across geographical terrain instead of the temporal, as it is in the case of the History, Personal Drama and Cult of Stalin poems. These poems include: *Прощание с Польшей* [*Farewell to Poland*], *Путешествие по ночной Варшаве в дрожках* [*A Carriage Ride through Warsaw at Night*], *Шестидесятники Варшавы* [*The Warsaw Generation of the Sixties*], *Вроцлав: Лиловые сумерки...* [*Wroclaw: Violet dusk...*], *Мнение pana Ольбрыхского* [*Opinion of Mr. Olbrychski*] and *Поверь мне, Агнешка, грядут перемены...* [*Believe me, Agnieszka, changes will come...*]. Other

¹⁶⁰ Okudzhava, "Kak ia sidel v kresle tsaria..." *Chaepitie na Arbate* 134.

poems on Poland will be discussed in other groups of Okudzhava's poetry, as they are primarily concerned with topics of friendship, the inner world or love (for example, *Украшение жизни моей...* [*Adornment of my life...*] and *По Польше елочки бегут. Над Польшей птицы пролетают...*" [*Through Poland, the spruce trees run. Above Poland the birds fly...*]). The two nations are linked by their desire for political and moral independence and freedom, as well as for suppressed civil liberties.

Прощание с Польшей plays with familiar repetitions: it makes extensive use of the twin words, *прощание* and *прощение*, seen earlier in relation to *Прощание с осенью*. The poem exists in two variants¹⁶¹. In one of them, where the poem's third stanza (starting from *Прошу я прощения [...]* – *I ask for forgiveness [...]*) is replaced by two stanzas (beginning *Свобода – бить посуду? [...]* – *Is it freedom to break plates? [...]* and *Кого возьмем с собою? [...]* – *Whom will we take with us? [...]*), we find Okudzhava taking up the word *свобода* [*freedom*] and repeating it in a steady rhythm:

Свобода – бить посуду? Не спать всю ночь – свобода?
Свобода – выбирать поезд и презирать коней?...

(Is it freedom to break plates? Can staying up all night be freedom?
Is it freedom to choose the train and despise the horses?...)¹⁶²

These rhetorical questions force the reader to reflect upon the true meaning of the noun *свобода*. In one of the variants of the poem, the lyrical hero claims that the two nations, Poland and Russia, follow the *highest freedom* [*высшая свобода*], leaving the reader to ponder over the wide possibility of what the *highest freedom* might mean. An answer is suggested, at least, by comparing the two variants of the poem. The stanza

¹⁶¹ Bulat Okudzhava, "Proshchanie s Pol'shei," *Zamek nadziei* (Krakow: Wydawnictwo literackie, 1984) 234. Compare with the variant Bulat Okudzhava, "Proshchanie s Pol'shei," *Zamek nadziei* (Krakow: Wydawnictwo literackie, 1984) 236.

¹⁶² Okudzhava, "Proshchanie s Pol'shei," *Zamek nadziei* 234.

concerning the *highest freedom* in Variant 1 is replaced by a stanza asking for forgiveness for a *long silence* [долгое молчание] in Variant 2. A likely conclusion is that the author of *Прощание с Польшей* equates the capacity for forgiveness with the heights of freedom. Yet another possibility suggested by this comparison would be that the highest freedom is the release from the long State-imposed silence, or the liberty to express one's ideas without the ever-present fear of persecution and censorship. This interpretation may prove especially fruitful, when Okudzhava's own struggles with censorship and persecution are taken into consideration.

The concept of freedom of speech is also discussed in the poem *Путешествие по ночной Варшаве в дрожках*:

Пройдут недолгие века — напишут школьники в тетрадке
про все, что нам не позволяет писать дрожащая рука.

Not many years will pass—and the schoolchildren will write in their exercise
books
Everything that our shaking hands wouldn't allow us to.¹⁶³

The material covered in this chapter is a testimony to the importance of several related themes within Okudzhava's work. The bard's own struggles with his family's tragedy leads directly to his need to find peace with Stalin's personality cult. These more personal themes are then found sublimated in the poems inquiring into the history of Russia and the fate of the Slavic people. The theme of work and creative act of the poet will be explored in the following chapter, for just as the great themes of war and personal and social history pervade the art of Okudzhava, he has also left a legacy of inquiry into the motivations that first bring him to take up the pen, and that, indeed, make a bard of the socially-conscious man.

¹⁶³Bulat Okudzhava, "Puteshestvie po nochnoi Varshave v drozhkakh," *Chaepitie na Arbate* (Moscow: Korona Print, 1998) 233.

Chapter 3

WORK AND THE CREATIVE ACT

Два кузнечика зеленых пишут белые стихи.
Они перышки макают в облака и молоко,
чтобы белые их строчки было видно далеко,
и в затылках дружно чешут, каждый лапкой шевелит,
но заглядывать в работу
один другому не велит.

(Two green grasshoppers write poems in white.
They dip their pens in clouds and milk
So their blank verses can be seen far away,
And they scratch their heads, each moves his little paw,
But they never let each other
Peek at what they write.)¹⁶⁴

Вымысел – не есть обман.
Замысел – еще не точка.
Дайте дописать роман
до последнего листочка.

(Fantasy is no deceit.
The idea isn't yet the point.
Let me write out the novel
To the very last page.)¹⁶⁵

The themes of work and the creative act, of the creator and his art, are far from under-represented in the poetry of Bulat Okudzhava. His primary interest lies in the act of writing and this is why, towards the end of this chapter, the words “writer” and “poet” will be used in favour of the words “master”, “creator” and “artist”. Okudzhava’s other topics, falling within the thematic limits of this chapter, include music, painting, and the ways in which the audience perceives art. He portrays every kind of creation as a mysterious process whose ultimate quality manifests itself according to the atmosphere of the moment. The quantity of this art, on the other hand, is dismissed as the mistaken emphasis of Soviet times. The masters who inhabit Okudzhava’s poems are not

¹⁶⁴ Bulat Okudzhava, “O kuznechikakh,” *Veselyi barabanshchik* (London: Flegon Press, 1966) 53.

¹⁶⁵ Bulat Okudzhava, “Ja pishu istoricheskii roman,” *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 185.

participants in some Stakhanovite movement¹⁶⁶, but the countless silent creators who continued to aspire to perfection – cobblers and poets alike. They are the ones whose art is meant for the enjoyment of their audience, and is created as well to express their own beliefs, not for the wealth of the totalitarian state. Their music is neither the pompous Soviet marches nor the patriotic songs of the Red Army choir. Even though Okudzhava's poems are strewn with guitars and street organs – his fellow bards – and the classical music of a bygone age, it is relevant at this point to discuss the state control of writers. In this way, the specific character of Okudzhava's poems as those opposing the socialist-realist influence, will become clear.

All manner of everyday masters appear in Okudzhava's poetry.¹⁶⁷ The trait they share is the passion of the true master. According to Okudzhava, passionate self-expression is the true source and reason of art. However, Okudzhava also claims that art is born only when the public is interested in it.¹⁶⁸ This is why the audience's perception of art will be discussed in this chapter.

Some of the poems focus on other qualities which a true master should possess: cherishing one's own work with pride, which is surprisingly linked with modesty; self-sufficiency, which does not cancel certain needs for recognition, forgiveness and the generosity of making art for the enjoyment and improvement of others and to help in their suffering. Okudzhava's masters are never automata, endlessly repeating senseless

¹⁶⁶ For more on Aleksei Stakhanov and the Stakhanovite movement, see Robert Service 217 and 244.

¹⁶⁷ The portrayed professions include: shoemakers (*Сапожник* [*The Shoemaker*]), laundresses (*Искала прачка клад* [*How the Washerwoman Searched for Treasure*]), tailors (*Военные портняжки* [*War Tailors*] and *Старый пиджак* [*The Old Coat*]), farmers (*Колумбы* [*Columbuses*]), construction workers (*Строитель, возведи мне дом...* [*Builder, build me a home...*]), and potters (*Фрески* [*Frescoes*]).

¹⁶⁸ *Поэзия – это средство выражения себя самого. [...] Если вам это интересно – большое счастье: рождение искусства. Если вам это неинтересно, значит, я потерпел поражение. [Poetry is a means of self-expression. [...] If you are interested in (a piece of) art – it means happiness: the art is born. If you are not interested in it – it means, that I am defeated.]*: Petrakov 63.

motions on the assembly line and aiming for the occasional record of productivity. They are set apart from their peers because they alone understand the serious and irreproducible nature of art: the masters appearing in Okudzhava's poetry perform every part of the creative act with their own hands, and apply the finishing touches themselves. They despise the principles of mass production, which devalues the old masters and alienates them from their beloved creation to the extent that they themselves begin to feel useless. Witness the nostalgic *Сапожник* [*The Shoemaker*], where the old master is asked to retire. He will be replaced by factory workers and his skills are not needed for the modern-day mass production:

Кузьма Иванович, ступай на пенсию;
есть фабрики – военных обошьют.

(Kuz'ma Ivanovich, it's time to retire;
There are factories that will sew for the soldiers.)¹⁶⁹

To create his works of beauty, every master must choose his own tools—the poet has chosen words as his medium, and bestowed them with inestimable value:

Я жду из тишины
[...]
каких-то слов, которым нет цены.

(I await from the darkness
[...]
A few words, priceless beyond measure.)¹⁷⁰

When these words come in droves, the master is forced to choose only the most suitable from a group of equally tempting ones. Sometimes the choices may be intoxicating:

Есть разные красивые слова:
слушаешь –
кружится голова.

¹⁶⁹ Bulat Okudzhava, "Sapozhnik," *Bud' zdorov, shkoliar: Stikhi* (Frankfurt-Main: Posev, 1966) 137.

¹⁷⁰ Bulat Okudzhava, "Na belyi bal berez ne soberu....," *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 15.

(There are so many beautiful words:
Just listen—
And your head will spin.)¹⁷¹

In a poem entitled *Рифмы, милые мои...* [*My dear rhymes...*], the master claims that he is a *богач* [*rich person*] while his rhythms are with him. They are a necessary component of his art and, therefore, they are treated with respect, reserved for the master's tools. With a certain degree of trepidation, he asks:

Рифмы, милые мои
[...]
Вам-то
хорошо ль
со мною?

(Rhymes, my dear rhymes
[...]
Do you
Enjoy
Being with me?)¹⁷²

Out of a deep respect for his various tools, the master treats them as human beings. In the poem *Есть разные красивые слова...* [*There are many nice words...*], the words are personified and described as soldiers getting ready for battle, or else *silent* [*тихие*] and feeling *cramped* [*слова тесно*],¹⁷³ like those that *глядят, не говоря, из словаря, как из монастыря* [*look wordlessly from the dictionary, as from a monastery*]. Okudzhava relates the power of words to the sublime: the allusion to monks elevates the words to the level of the divine.

Personified work-worn tools receive their own life and understand the great importance of their role. Using a similar device, Okudzhava bestows the qualities of a bird on the hammer in the following poem:

[...] черный молоток его, как ласточка,

¹⁷¹ Bulat Okudzhava, "Est' raznyie krasivye slova...", *Bud' zdorov, shkoliar: Stikhi* (Frankfurt-Main: Posev, 1966) 77.

¹⁷² Bulat Okudzhava, "Rifmy, milye moi...", *Veselyi barabanshchik* (London: Flegon Press, 1966) 53.

¹⁷³ Okudzhava, "Est' raznyie krasivye slova...", *Bud' zdorov, shkoliar: Stikhi* 77.

хвостом своим раздвоенным качает.
Он занят целый день поклонами,
тот молоток.

([...] Like a swallow, his black hammer
Swings its split tail.
It busies itself all day with bowing,
That hammer.)¹⁷⁴

From these personified tools it is a short jump to a favourite anthropomorphism of Okudzhava's: a great number of his poems use grasshoppers as an allegory for the poet. These insects populate such poems as *О кузнечиках* [*About the Grasshoppers*], *Ну чем тебе потрафить, мой кузнечик?...* [*So how can I please you, my grasshopper?...*] and *В детстве мне встретился как-то кузнечик...* [*In my childhood, I once met a grasshopper...*]. In the context of Russian literature, introducing grasshoppers or crickets in poems about work and the creative act proves to be particularly in place: one should remember, that in his Arzamas years A. S. Pushkin's nickname was *сверчок* [*cricket*].¹⁷⁵ Okudzhava's grasshoppers are consistently portrayed as hardworking and well focussed. The distractions he strews in their path, however, are not the socialist realist clichés of German or Japanese spies, or of sabotage acts or enemies of the state. Rather, they are troubled only by the vagaries of nature: snow, hot weather or rain. The lyrical hero relates the daily cares of the grasshopper and his minuscule household with all the respect due to a human artist:

Ты тоже из когорты стихотворной,
[...]
Кричи и плачь. Авось твой труд упорный
потомки не оценят свысока.

(You are also of the poetic cohort,
[...]
Scream and cry. Perhaps your stubborn effort

¹⁷⁴ Okudzhava, "Sapozhnik," *Bud' zdorov, shkoliar: Stikhi* 137.

¹⁷⁵ Iurii Lotman, *Pushkin* (Sankt-Peterburg: Iskusstvo-SPB, 1995) 45 and 189.

Will not be judged too harshly.)¹⁷⁶

In the poem *Ну чем тебе потрафить, мой кузнечик?...*, the poet-grasshopper is thanked for his efforts:

Поэту настоящему спасибо,
руке его, безумию его
и голосу [...].

(Thanks to the true poet
Thanks to his hand, his madness
And his voice [...].)¹⁷⁷

In this poem, the creative act is vested with the aura of religious confession. The importance and power of poetry is clearly stated:

[...] мой кузнечик?
Едва твой гимн пространства огласит,
прислушаться – он от скорбей излечит,
а вслушаться – из мертвых воскресит.

([...] My grasshopper?
Once your hymn is heard in space,
We listen in—and it heals our wounds.
And listening will resurrects us.)¹⁷⁸

Similarly, *О кузнечиках* compares poetry to bread and to life itself—implying that true art is vital to human existence. While the totalitarian State frequently withheld food supplies to further its political ends¹⁷⁹ and reserved artistic production for propaganda that did nothing to nourish the intellect of its people, Okudzhava now openly declares that a full life requires not only food for the body, but food for the soul. In this world-view, the unique power of the creative act is unquestionable. The master must possess not only creative aspiration, but the saintly qualities of power of will, inner peace and utter confidence in his work:

¹⁷⁶ Bulat Okudzhava, “Nu chem tebe potrafit’, moi kuznechik?...,” *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 263.

¹⁷⁷ Okudzhava, “Nu chem tebe potrafit’, moi kuznechik?...,” *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* 263.

¹⁷⁸ Okudzhava, “Nu chem tebe potrafit’, moi kuznechik?...,” *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* 263.

¹⁷⁹ For more on agricultural difficulties, famine and malnutrition, see Service 119, 184, 202, 207, 218, 285, 304-05.

- Намереваюсь! – кричал тот кузнецик.
 - Может ли быть? – усмеялся сверчок.
 [...]
 маленьких рук постоянно стремление,
 маленьких мук постоянна волна...

("I'm going to do it!" shouted the grasshopper.
 "Can it be?" smiled the cricket.
 [...]
 The constant striving of little hands,
 The constant wave of little worries...)¹⁸⁰

Some poems turn the attention of the reader to the people who will use the objects coming into being in the masters' hands. In *Военные портняжки*, for example, there are war tailors thinking of the soldiers. If they have to die in a battle, at least they will do so in fine uniforms:

И поэтому мундиры
 так кроются день и ночь,
 чтоб блистали командиры,
 уходя из жизни прочь.

(And this is why the uniforms
 Are sewn day and night,
 So the commanders will be shining
 As they leave this life.)¹⁸¹

The tailor in the poem *Старый пиджак* is sure that he will be able to bring happiness and love to man receiving the alterations on his coat. This is precisely why

[...] он пиджак
 серьезно так перешивает,
 а сам-то все переживает:
 вдруг что не так. Такой чудак.

([...] He alters
 The coat so seriously,
 And yet he falters continuously:
 What if something's amiss. Such a queer fish.)¹⁸²

The master's goal (in the above case, the happiness of his customer) is attainable through hard work and love. His motto is:

¹⁸⁰ Bulat Okudzhava, "V detstve mne vstretilsia kak-to kuznechik...", *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 280.

¹⁸¹ Bulat Okudzhava, "Voennye portniashki," *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 326.

¹⁸² Okudzhava, "Staryi pidzhak," *Stikhotvoreniia* 201.

творить,
засучив рукава.

(Create,
Rolling up the sleeves.)¹⁸³

The devoted approach to art differs in two ways from the large-scale goals set under Stalin: despite the fact that its high standards also demand a great deal of labour, it is neither unattainable nor abstract; and it requires a love and passion lacking in the totalitarian state. The master is in fact dependent on this love, working as he does

по силе чувства своего,
по сердцу,
по азарту.

(By the power of his feelings,
Of his heart
And his fervour.)¹⁸⁴

Passion is the essence of art and is the factor uniting the many kinds of masters. Just as with his cobblers and laundresses, with a dose of irony typical for him, Okudzhava portrays his poets as real masters, working passionately and persistently, even though it is not hard physical labour they are involved in:

Не словом трибуна, не тяжелой киркой
на благо родимой страны –
он все норовит заработать строкой.

(Without speeches from the tribune or heavy pickaxes,
Working for the good of the country
He is always striving to earn a living by writing poems.)¹⁸⁵

Here, as well, Okudzhava's poet makes his countrymen happy through his poetry. He is well aware that poets may be judged as not really working hard and that their profession does not lead to substantial economic profits. Perhaps because of this

¹⁸³ Bulat Okudzhava, "V nashei zhizni, prekrasnoi i strannoï ..., " *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 316.

¹⁸⁴ Bulat Okudzhava, "Stroitel', vozvedi mne dom...", *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 286.

¹⁸⁵ Bulat Okudzhava, "Dushevnyi razgovor s synom," *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 138.

awareness, his choice to work at the writer's desk, and not in the hallowed precincts of the political office or the factory floor, might be interpreted as the author's rejection of the communist system. This interpretation is backed up by the irony with which the voice states that the poet does not work "for the good of his country", as in the Soviet cliché used over and over again by the Stakhanovites. His straightforward statement can likewise be understood as a refusal of the socialist realist poetry churned out in support of the system.

After the death of the poet his work takes on a new dimension, bequeathed to all the generations to come:

Всё, что было его, - нынче ваше.
Всё для вас. Посвящается вам.

(All that was his is now yours.
All for you. Dedicated to you.)¹⁸⁶

To Okudzhava the last line was of particular importance, used as it was for the title of *Посвящается вам* [*Dedicated to You*], one of his collections of verse.

Since art is born from a need for the good and happiness of the master's fellow man¹⁸⁷, it can be assumed that another reason for the existence of art is the need to compensate humanity for its sufferings.

[...] нет печальных и больных и виноватых нет,
когда в прокуренных руках
ах, музыкант мой, музыкант,
так просто ты сжимаешь
черешневый кларнет!

¹⁸⁶ Bulat Okudzhava, "U poeta sopernikov netu...", *Posviashchaetsia vam: Stikhi* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1988) 140.

¹⁸⁷ Вообще нельзя утилитарно подходить к искусству. Но то, что искусство является противовесом злу, - это точно абсолютно. Если бы его не было, может, мы давно бы выродились. А мы существуем, да ещё полны радужных перспектив, надеемся - это нам даёт всё... Высокое отношение к жизни - это нам даёт всё поэзия, литература, искусство. Оно нас делает людьми, облагораживает нас. [We should not treat art in an utilitarian way. However, that art is counterbalancing evil - this fact is absolutely true. And if there had been no art, we would have, perhaps, degenerated. But we exist, and we are full of hope, we hope - and it drives us all... Respect for life - it all gives us the poetry, literature, art. It makes us human beings, it makes us noble.]: Petrakov 63-64.

[...] No one among us is sad, no one ill and no one guilty,
 When your pipe-stained hands So simply squeeze
 Oh musician, musician mine, Your cherry-wood clarinet!)¹⁸⁸

If a person's only goal is to earn enough money to survive, he is deprived of other dreams—and to Okudzhava, he is not a real master. In Okudzhava's poetry, even the simple tasks of a lonely washerwoman or of a housewife can be described as the unique performance of a master, who lives in and for her dreams. In *Искала прачка клад* [*Laundrywoman was Searching for a Treasure*], the laundress is creating stormy waves in her small washtub:

И билась пена о ладони —
 искала прачка клад.
 (And the soapsuds beat against her palms—
 The washerwoman was searching for the treasure.)¹⁸⁹

Five stanzas of *Кухня* [*Kitchen*], on the other hand, describe nothing more, and nothing less, than the preparation of a piece of steak:

Рождение бифштекса — само волшебство.
 (The birth of steak is magic.)¹⁹⁰

Time and again, Okudzhava transforms the humdrum objects of daily life into the very stuff of his art—as readers, we feel that if it were not for his insight, we would have overlooked their poetic qualities altogether. The lexicon of the poem leans toward the familiar and prosaic. Among all the common-language nouns (*фартук* [*apron*], *лук* [*onion*], *пар* [*steam*], *двор* [*yard*], *бифштекс* [*beefsteak*]) and colloquialisms (*пятерня* [*hand*]), we find only a few archaisms to break the pattern: *азы* [*basics*] and the poetic

¹⁸⁸ Okudzhava, "V gorodskom sadu," *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* 110-11.

¹⁸⁹ Bulat Okudzhava, "Iskala prachka klad," *Bud' zdorov, shkoliar: Stikhi* (Frankfurt-Main: Posev, 1966) 133.

¹⁹⁰ Bulat Okudzhava, "Kukhnia," *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 453.

ладья for *boat*. The cut of meat undergoes all manner of poetic alchemy—the mystery of its preparation, or in Okudzhava’s image, its birth, is ascribed to *самое волшебство* [*pure magic*]¹⁹¹. The supernatural associations pile on with help of carefully chosen epithets and similes: the woman at the oven is likened to a *рыжий черт* [*red-haired devil*], just born from the steam; the air is full of *ароматы смолы и огня* [*the aromas of tar and fire*]; and the reaction of an onlooker peeking in from the street is to admire: *какая бесовская штука* [*what a devilish thing*]. This accumulation of infernal lexicon ensures our equation of the hot, smoke-filled kitchen with the pits of hell. But lest we jump to any conclusions as to the identity of the devilish woman who presides over this domain, a simile in the third stanza invests her with at least one cherubic trait as well: *святая ее пятерня, как розовый ангел* [*her hand is holy, like a pink angel*].

The complex nature of her work is underscored by a string of verbs: *и жарит, и напум, и льет, и нечет...* [*and she roasts, and stews, and pours, and bakes...*]. The focus of all this effort is the slab of meat, secreting juices (*Брильянтовых капель без счета* [*countless diamond drops*]).

Nevertheless, the birth of the steak implies the death of the animal from which it came, yet it also suggests stability and sufficiency in the lives of those who will enjoy it. By the end of the poem, the negative connotations have prevailed: in contrast with those who can afford to eat meat, we are reminded of the *хриплые крики голодных* [*hoarse screams of the hungry*]. As the conclusion to the poem, this phrase bears considerable semantic weight, and its final word (*голодных* [*of the hungry*]) even more so—this pang of conscience reverberates against the whole poem, making of the whole an effective protest against the culture of consumption.

¹⁹¹ Okudzhava, “Kukhnia,” *Stikhotvoreniia* 453.

This type of romanticism, found in the two above-discussed poems, is a common aspect of the master's work—in the poem *Колумбы* [*Columbuses*] the poet portrays a farmer raised to the level of a master in a setting of striking similarity between the field and the sea. His wheat field is compared to a choppy sea; his combines compared to ships. The combine operator himself is a captain responsible for the lives of all his crew:

Сашка стоит у штурвала,
он хочет крикнуть: 'Земля!',
но нет земли —
кругом сплошная пшеница.

(Sashka stands at the controls
Dying to cry: 'Land ho!'
But no land in sight—
Just wheat as far as the eye can see.)¹⁹²

In contrast with the negligence commonly displayed in a totalitarian state, the masters in Okudzhava's poems assume full responsibility for their creations, following their success or the lack thereof¹⁹³. They cherish their work. They perform it slowly and with dignity, proud of each success and overcoming the obstacles and doubts they encounter. Their behaviour is so unlike that of the masses that they stand out in any crowd, as in the case of the Asian in the poem *Тбилиси* [*Tbilisi*]:

Все — музыканты.
Он один — маэстро.
Ему не полагается —
спеша.

All are musicians.
He alone—a maestro.
He cannot—
Rush.)¹⁹⁴

¹⁹² Bulat Okudzhava, "Kolumby," *Bud' zdorov, shkoliar: Stikhi* (Frankfurt-Main: Posev, 1966) 113.

¹⁹³ See *Детский рисунок* [*A Child's Drawing*], *Отчего ты печален, художник* [*Why Are You Sad, Artist*], *У поэта соперников нету* [*The Poet Has No Rivals*], *Я пишу исторический роман* [*I Am Writing a Historical Novel*].

¹⁹⁴ Bulat Okudzhava, "Tbilisi," *Mart velikodushnyi* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1967) 49.

If masters entertain doubts about their work, it is because they expect nothing less than perfection. The doubts and obstacles encountered during the creative process may be compared to those found on the path of life:

Вот я добираюсь
 до своих высот,
 и ковровую дорожку
 жизнь мне стелет...
 [...]

 Быть может, здесь я
 простой подмастерье?

(And now I am reaching
 My highest goals,
 And life rolls me out
 A red-carpet road
 [...]

 Here I am perhaps
 A mere apprentice?)¹⁹⁵

Another characteristic typical of Okudzhava's master is modesty¹⁹⁶. Therefore, the master does not strive to be famous at all costs:

Не о победе я молю: победы все надменны,
 а об удаче я молю [...].
 (I'm not praying for victory: all victories are arrogant,
 I'm praying for good fortune [...])¹⁹⁷

To him, art is a form of worship, and therefore he must perfect it to better praise his Lord:

Мне строчка новая нужна какая-нибудь построже,
 чтоб с ней предстать перед Тобой мне не было б грешно.
 (I need a new line, a stricter one,
 So I won't feel sinful when I come before You.)¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁵ Bulat Okudzhava, "...Vot ia dobiraius' do svoikh vysot...", *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 175.

¹⁹⁶ Okudzhava openly admitted that *Популярность вообще смешно ценить. [...] суетиться по поводу популярности нет смысла. [It is laughable if somebody values popularity. [...] to worry about popularity makes no sense.]* Petrakov 58.

¹⁹⁷ Bulat Okudzhava, "Stroka iz starogo stikha slyvet nenastoiashchei...", *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 414.

¹⁹⁸ Okudzhava, "Stroka iz starogo stikha slyvet nenastoiashchei...", *Stikhotvoreniia* 414.

Perhaps the same modesty causes the master to feel a strong need for recognition. As described in the poem *Работа* [*Work*], creation is a difficult occupation demanding the zealous devotion of the master. Success in this endeavour is enough to make any effort worthwhile, but the artist, unlike a socialist-realist writer who produced for the state and not for his audience, cannot achieve it entirely on his own. He recognizes the need for outside support and thus his pleas to his peers and to his Lord:

Что стоит помолиться за меня?

(Why don't you pray for me?)¹⁹⁹

The master needs his efforts acknowledged and rewarded. Money is not his recompense, rather he seeks a simple smile, respect or good word for his work. It is why the lyrical hero calls for respect for a master's work:

Все военные портняжки –
золотые мастера.
Уважайте труд их тяжкий.

(All war tailors
Are priceless masters.
Please respect their hard work.)²⁰⁰

The reader finds a similar, calling for respect in *Песенка про маляров* [*A Song About Painters*], where the artists' creative act is bounded only by the *сроки жизни человеческой* [*span of human life*]:

Уважайте маляров,
как ткачей и докторов!

(Respect painters
As you do weavers and doctors!)²⁰¹

Being modest does not mean, however, that the masters are unaware of or play down the worth of their work. They are proud of their mastery and results. They remain

¹⁹⁹ Bulat Okudzhava, "Rabota," *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 421.

²⁰⁰ Okudzhava, "Voennye portniashki," *Stikhotvoreniia* 325.

²⁰¹ Bulat Okudzhava, "Pesenka pro maliarov," *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 249.

modest, however, because they understand that their place is in the service of others. Their art depends on the presence of the many, and the few masters in the world cannot possibly influence their entire happiness. Their final grace lies in doing all they are able:

но они очень скромно садятся в углу,
извлекают
свои допотопные скрипки,
расправляют
помятые сюртучки.

(But they very modestly take places in the corner,
Pull out
Their ancient violins,
Smooth out
Their wrinkled frock-coats.)²⁰²

In the poem *В больнице медленно течет река часов...* [*In a hospital, the river of time flows slowly...*], the author uses the double meanings of the noun *искусство* [art, skill] to conclude that yet another quality, that of forgiveness, is intimately linked to the creative act:

Искусство всё простить и жажда жить —
недостижимое совершенство.

(It is a skill to forgive everything and to thirst for life—
It is an unattainable perfection.)²⁰³

The short poem *Сколько сделано руками удивительных красот!...* [*How many amazingly beautiful things were made by hand!...*] is a reflection on the meaning of aesthetics in human life. It poses the question as to why the master still strives to meet his aesthetic ideal when *рукам пока далеке до пронзительных высот* [*his hands are still so far from the highest goals*].²⁰⁴ Why does the master endure sleepless nights just to

²⁰² Bulat Okudzhava, "Stikhi bez nazvania," *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 228-9.

²⁰³ Bulat Okudzhava, "V bol'nitse medlenno techet reka chasov," *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 326.

²⁰⁴ Bulat Okudzhava, "Skol'ko sdeleno rukami udivitel'nykh krasot!," *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 252.

write another poem or create a new painting, and for that matter, why seek beauty at all? As the reader has seen, the main reason for these endeavours is to satisfy the aesthetic sense of the audience.

However, this aesthetic sense is impossible to itemize and audience appreciation alone cannot be trusted in deciding what aesthetic value is. Therefore, the definition of art remains hidden forever. The criteria for artistic beauty are intensely personal, changing dramatically between individuals and even among certain of Okudzhava's own poems. In *Сколько сделано руками удивительных красот!...*, the highest level of beauty is holy and immaculate: *божественн[ая] и вечн[ая], и нетленн[ая] красот[а], что к нам стекает с недоступной высоты* [*divine, eternal, and imperishable beauty, which steps down to us from unreachable heights*]. On the other hand, in *Детский рисунок* [*A Child's Drawing*], a child (or perhaps a primitivist) finds the highest beauty in a freshly painted purple horse, which he describes with admiration:

[...] эта зеленая грива,
как поздняя нива, густа...

([...] this green mane,
Bushy as a late summer field.)²⁰⁵

The short stanzas emphasise the uncomplicated character of both the drawing and the artist, a man-child who really likes his creation. He is receptive to its spell as only a child or artist can be. Nevertheless, whenever anyone sees his piece of art, he laughs and *хватается [...] за живот* [*clutches [...] his belly*]. Nobody likes the childishly naive vision of the violet horse that trots around with so much dignity, and so the surprised artist exclaims:

Уж если она некрасива,
что значит тогда красота?

²⁰⁵ Bulat Okudzhava, "Detskii risunok," *Mart velikodushnyi* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1967) 98.

(If she isn't beautiful,
What is beauty then?)²⁰⁶

According to the artist, *походкой своей неземною она [лошадь] потешает народ* [*the horse amuses the crowd with its unearthly gait*]. Thus, while the horse is not admired, it nevertheless fulfils its artistic function of eliciting an active response from the crowd. The idyllic life of this child is suddenly confronted with a paradox, and Okudzhava must leave the eternal question of beauty unanswered.

It may come as a surprise that among Okudzhava's poems there exists one defending the master's right to independence from the masses. In *Я пишу исторический роман* [*I am writing a historical novel*] it is suddenly the inborn talents of the writer that are stressed. Even the artistic education he may have received is denied—witness how little he owes to society:

Каждый пишет, как он слышит.
Каждый слышит, как он дышит,
Как он дышит, так и пишет,
не стараясь угодить...
Так природа захотела.
Почему?
Не наше дело.
Для чего?
Не нам судить.

(Each writes as he hears.
Each hears as he breathes,
As he breathes, so he writes,
Not trying to please...
Just as nature intended.
Why?
Not ours this affair.
What for?
Not for us to judge.)²⁰⁷

²⁰⁶ Okudzhava, "Detskii risunok," *Mart velikodushnyi* 99.

²⁰⁷ Bulat Okudzhava, "Ya пишу istoricheskii roman," *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 185-86.

The greatest waste lies in ignoring the gift of substantial talent. In one poem, the lyrical hero accuses a hidden artist of squandering his talent on endeavours unbecoming of a master:

Так плати [...]

за истертые в пальцах дрожащих

холст и краски, перо и смычок.

(So pay [...]

For the canvas and paints, the pen and bow

Worn out in your trembling hand.)²⁰⁸

When the true master is displeased with the results of his work, he must continually resume his efforts until the sublime can shine through. Giving up in the face of difficulty is not an option:

Не оставляйте стараний,

маэстро,

не убирайте ладони со лба.

(Do not give up your efforts,

Maestro,

Do not take your palm from your brow.)²⁰⁹

At first only the inspiration for the poem exists:

Хожу я и песенку слушаю -

она шевельнулась во мне.

Она еще очень неспетая.

Она зелена, как трава.

(I am walking around and listening to a song—

It has stirred within me.

It is still far from sung.

It is green, like the grass.)²¹⁰

In this poem, the first stages of the creative act are compared with pregnancy and growth. Imagery and diction work together here: the unborn song stirs within the creator like a foetus, and a word like *неспетая* [*unsung*] is strongly evocative of *неспелая*

²⁰⁸ Bulat Okudzhava, "Otchego ty pechalen, khudozhnik...", *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 234.

²⁰⁹ Bulat Okudzhava, "Pesenka o Motsarte," *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 315.

²¹⁰ Bulat Okudzhava, "Glavnaia pesenka," *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 231.

[unripe]. The author's care for his growing creations is made all the more imperative when he stops to consider that he has only a short lifetime to produce his eternal work:

Та самая главная песенка,
которую спеть я не смог.

(The same most important song,
Which I did not have the time to sing.)²¹¹

When the master's experience is not adequate to the work of art he must create, his doubts resurface, as in the poem *Я никогда не витал, не витал...* [*I never wandered, never wandered...*]:

Так что же я смею?

И что я могу?

Неужто лишь то, чего не могу?

(So what do I dare?

And what can I do?

Can it really be just what I'll fail to do?)²¹²

And yet the creative act must be consummated, the erection of the "castle of hope"²¹³ must continue. Even when the poet's world is bleak and he is tempted by the line of least resistance, he says:

Скажем спасибо и этой судьбе,
но из грехов нашей родины вечной
не сотворить бы кумира себе.

(We can praise even this destiny,
But from the sins of our eternal homeland
We should not create another idol.)²¹⁴

The visibility so necessary to the master exposes him not only to his admirers, but also to the malefactors who do not understand or do not wish to understand his work. The artist has long been a target for the censors and critics of the totalitarian regime:

²¹¹ Okudzhava, "Glavnaia pesenka," *Stikhotvoreniia* 232.

²¹² Bulat Okudzhava, "Ia nikogda ne vital, ne vital..." *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 233.

²¹³ Bulat Okudzhava, "Zamok nadezhdy," *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 224.

²¹⁴ Okudzhava, "Pesenka o Motsarte," *Stikhotvoreniia* 315.

Поэтов травили, ловили
на слове, им сети плели;
[...]
В трагическом их государстве
случалось и празднествам быть,
и всё же бунтарство с мытарством
попробуй от них отделить.

(The poets have been persecuted and taken
At their word, webs have been woven for them;
[...]
In their tragic country
There have been festivities too,
And still rebellion and hardship
Are inseparable from them.)²¹⁵

Грибоедов в Цинандали [*Griboedov in Tsinandali*] offers further words on the persecution of free-minded writers:

Острословов очкастых не любят цари —
Бог простит, а они не простят.

(The tsars have no love for bespectacled wits—
God may forgive them, but they won't.)²¹⁶

The lyrical hero of the poem *Берегите нас, поэтов...* [*Protect us, poets...*], sounds the alarm. Here there is both a warning and a pledge to help:

Берегите нас, покуда можно уберечь,
только так не берегите, чтоб костями нам лечь,
только так не берегите, как борзых — псарь,
только так не берегите, как псарей — цари.

(Protect us while we can still be protected.
Just don't protect us so we fall in battle.
Just don't protect us as the hunters do borzois,
Just don't protect us as the tsars do the hunters.)²¹⁷

Judging from the length of the seven-stanza trochaic poem's lines alone, it would seem that this is one of Okudzhava's calmer pieces. The semantic layer, on the other hand, suggests a quick, uninterrupted reading with forceful emphasis on the accented syllables, almost as if it were a fast-paced iambic poem. The firm opening trochaic

²¹⁵ Bulat Okudzhava, "Poetov travili, lovili...", *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 189.

²¹⁶ Okudzhava, "Griboedov v Tsinandali," *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* 144.

²¹⁷ Bulat Okudzhava, "Beregite nas, poetov, beregite nas...", *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 207.

accents and closing masculine rhymes, along with an accumulation of voiced consonants (“b,” “g,” “v”), combine to promote the latter, precipitous recitation. The lyrical hero’s extreme emotional tension is also complemented by an abundance of anaphora and syntactical echoes throughout the poem.

Many Soviet masters would be surrounded in life by a circle of intimate admirers, none of whom could openly express their respect. Having written “for the drawer” all his life, the artist could only find recognition and fame after he passed away:

О, как им смешны, представляю,
посмертные тосты в их честь.

(Oh, how they must laugh, I imagine,
At the posthumous toasts to their honour.)²¹⁸

To cite the example of two modern bards, official acknowledgement only came to Vysotskii and Galich many years after their deaths. Okudzhava dedicated the poem *Вечера французской песни...* [*Evenings of French song...*] to them and to Iulii Kim—he uses this forum to speak out against the fraudulent atmosphere surrounding the poets of the Soviet era. The totalitarian system prevented the outside world from learning the truth and tightly controlled the information and texts reaching Soviet readers. The following extract from Okudzhava’s dedication, concerning a play on the words *перевод/переврет* [*translation/will lie*], suggests which kind of control methods were used:

Если ж нужен перевод,
переводчик — наш молодчик —
как прикажут — переврет.

(If a translation is really needed,
Our translator, our gladiator
Will follow orders and lie.)²¹⁹

²¹⁸ Okudzhava, “Poetov travili, lovili...,” *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* 189.

²¹⁹ Bulat Okudzhava, “Vechera frantsuzskoi pesni...,” *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 308.

The poem is written as an eulogy to a French chansonnier whose works slip past the Soviet censors because they are written abroad and in a foreign language, and therefore do not influence Soviet citizens in any substantial way:

Пой, француз, ведь ты далеко,
и к тебе претензий нет.

Чем начальству ты приятен?
Тем, что текст твой непонятен.

(Sing, Frenchman, you are far away
And nobody bears a grudge against you.

Why do the authorities like you?
Because nobody understands your text.)²²⁰

Impressed by V. Vysotskii, Okudzhava wrote the poem *Мастер Гриша* [*Master Grisha*]. This poem is dedicated to three important activists of the Polish “Solidarity” movement: Adam (Michnik), Jacek (Kuron) and Karol (Modzelewski). *Master Grisha* proclaims the author’s faith in the power of a master’s skilful hands. The master’s hands can bring happiness back to the home and, by extension (through well-hidden parallelisms that, nevertheless, immediately come to the educated reader’s mind, such as “master”/“«Solidarity» activist” and “home”/“homeland”), to the entire ravaged country:

Мастер Гриша придет, рядом сядет —
две больших, две надежных руки у него —
всё наладит...

(Master Grisha will come and sit with us—
He has two big, reliable hands—
He will set everything right...) ²²¹

Как наш двор ни обижали... [*No matter how much our yard was insulted...*] is a third poem inspired by Vysotskii. It is permeated with words associated with the late bard: *Володя* [*Volodia*], *струны* [*strings*], *голос его* [*his voice*], *хрипоты его* [*his*

²²⁰ Okudzhava, “Vechera frantsuzskoi pesni...,” *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* 308.

²²¹ Bulat Okudzhava, “Master Grisha,” *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 314.

hoarseness], *Таганка* [Taganka]. In a consideration of the fate of Vysotskii's first volume of poems, *Нерв* [Nerve]²²², Okudzhava argues in multiple interviews that precisely the poems which struggle most to find an audience become most popular when they finally break through. This echoes Osip Mandel'stam's statement: *Поэзию уважают только у нас – за нее убивают. Ведь больше нигде за поэзию не убивают* [We are the only ones who respect poetry—people get killed for it here. Nowhere else do people get killed for poetry]²²³.

As a final note on the poems associated with Vysotskii, brief mention should be made of *О Володе Высоцком* [On Volodia Vysotskii]. The poem is dedicated to Vysotskii's wife, Marina Poliakova, and its epigraph is one of the few sites in all of Okudzhava's oeuvre where one can find reference to a poet's muse: *Марине Владимировне Поляковой* [to Marina Vladimirovna Poliakova]²²⁴

In *Как наш двор ни обижали...* the reader finds the following evocative image:

Ведь и песни не горят,
они в воздухе парят,
чем им делают больше – тем они сильнее.

(After all, songs do not burn,
They soar through the air,
The more pain they are dealt the stronger they become.)²²⁵

These words bear a striking resemblance to Voland's statement in "The Master and Margarita": the famous *рукописи не горят* [manuscripts do not burn]²²⁶.

²²² *Nerve*, consisting of only 130 censored poems, could only find posthumous publication in the Soviet Union, in 1981.

²²³ N.I. Mandel'shtam, *Vospominania* (New York: Izdatel'stvo imeni Chekhova, 1970) 167.

²²⁴ Bulat Okudzhava, "O Volodie Vysotskom," *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 384.

²²⁵ Bulat Okudzhava, "Chem nash dvor ni obizhali – on v klassicheskoi pore....," *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 230.

²²⁶ Mikhail Bulgakov, "Master i Margarita," *Romany* (Moscow: Sovremennik, 1988) 647.

The idea of home and hearth is an especially important antidote to the lonely imperatives of saving the world. The poet treats his home as a shelter from the evils of the world. Although this space might lie in the very midst of totalitarian chaos, here the poet is able to create a new world of his own and escape into his dreams and work, as in the poem *Мне не хочется писать* (*I don't feel like writing*):

За окном трещит мороз
дикий, оголтелый —
расцветает сад из роз
на бумаге белой.

(The frost on the window is cracking,
Wild and frenzied—
A rose garden is blooming
On the blank page.)²²⁷

Благородные жены безумных поэтов... [*The noble wives of crazy poets...*] is dedicated to all those who warm the hearts of masters, supporting them in their endeavours. It is a poetic “thank-you” to writers’ muses:

Благородных поэтов безумные жены,
[...]
ваши души сияют, как факел зажженный,
под которым блаженствуем мы.

(Noble poets’ crazy wives,
[...]
Your souls shine like burning torches,
Under which we stay in a state of bliss.)²²⁸

Painting is a second great manifestation of art in the poetry of Okudzhava. The link it creates between the creator and his audience is almost as intimate as that achieved by writing. An equally intimate link is established in music. When examining a painting, the public is able to follow the creative process as it developed. Here, colour and line

²²⁷ Bulat Okudzhava, “Mne ne khochetsia pisat’,” *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 442.

²²⁸ Bulat Okudzhava, “Blagorodnye zheny bezumnykh poetov...,” *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 243.

influence theme and atmosphere just as word and rhythm did in writing, and each of these elements often evoke the others in Okudzhava's poems on painting.

In a previous section it was already discussed how Okudzhava applies cinematic principles to his poetry. Narrative bards often use these as vehicles for dynamic description, where a flurry of action carries the scene—women waving good-bye to their men, men leaving their village, war scenes, and so on. Poems dealing with the art of painting are more static in tone, achieving a calm description of situations or people just as though the master had worked on a portrait.

A good example of this is provided by a close look at the poem *На полотне у Анны Беляковой* [*On Alla Beliakova's canvas*]²²⁹. Two paintings dominate this poem: the first is of a small house with a yellow lamp shining warmly out through the window. This picture evokes associations with home and hearth, with family happiness and safety, for just outside lies a darkened yard. A foreground frame of branches completes the scene. The second painting reveals the inside of the same house: the lamp, under a green shade as in all of Okudzhava's poems, shines from the centre of the picture. Behind his desk, the lyrical hero sits thinking. Home gives him a sense of security from unwanted intruders:

никто, никто не знает, о чем
я размышляю в данное мгновение.

(Nobody, nobody knows, what
I'm thinking at any given moment.)²³⁰

²²⁹ Alla Mikhailovna Beliakova (b. 1914), an artist and author of short stories.

²³⁰ Bulat Okudzhava, "Na polotne u Ally Beliakovoi," *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 436.

Silence prevails. Each of the objects is described with painter's eyes. The colours are carefully established and the dimensions of the objects are suggested (*домик* [*little house*], not *дом* [*house*]).

Both the title of this poem and that of *Батальное полотно* [*A Battle Canvas*] include the word *полотно* [*canvas*], which suggests that the poem might be read as a painting from the very start. In *Батальное полотно*, motionless silhouettes of horsemen are preparing for battle. The foreground and background are clearly detailed, and the reader might even recreate the composition. He would need the reds and blues of the uniforms, as with the greens and browns of the surrounding land, a darker tone for dusk behind and lustrous yellows for the gleam of the epaulettes.

Better known to the Russian public, however, are Okudzhava's *Мой карандашный портрет* [*My Pencil Portrait*], *Как научиться рисовать* [*How to Learn to Draw*], and *Живописцы* [*The Painters*]. These poems do not pretend to be paintings, but describe the creative process through which a work of art is made. Here the creative process is nothing but the process of life in miniature, the *дальняя дорога* [*long road*]²³¹ made small.

Как будет назван тот портрет?
 "Учитель",
 "Каменщик",
 "Поэт",
 "Немой свидетель века"?...
 Но мне ли верить в это?
 Я смертен. Я горю в огне.
 Он вечен в раме на стене
 и премией отмечен...

(What will this portrait be called?
 "Teacher",
 "Stonemason,"
 "Poet"
 "Mute witness of the century"?...

²³¹ Bulat Okudzhava, "Dal' niaia doroga," *Zamek nadziei* (Krakow: Wydawnictwo literackie, 1984) 224.

But is this for me to believe?
 I am mortal. I am burning up in flames.
 What is in the frame on the wall is forever
 And it won a prize...)²³²

Once again, Okudzhava insists on an art form as an eternal repository of his memories, a treasure and warning to future generations. The memories contained in paintings are immediate: immortalised scenes from history or the faces of the artist's contemporaries.

Вы, как судьи, нарисуйте наши судьбы,
 наше лето, нашу зиму и весну...
 Ничего, что мы - чужие. Вы рисуйте!

(Like judges, draw our destinies,
 Our summer, our winter and spring...
 It does not matter that we are not like you. You just draw!)²³³

The poem *Как научиться рисовать*, the last one in the group of works dealing with the visual arts, presents each phase of life as having its own colour—from white at birth to black at death—and so acts as a guide for both those learning to live and those learning to paint. The various colours are incidental to Okudzhava's main theme; however, his focus is on teaching the necessary attitude toward the creative act. To create means to invest one's soul and energy in the creation of art:

Перемешай эти краски, как страсти,
 в сердце своем, а потом
 перемешай эти краски и сердце
 с небом, с землей, а потом...
 Главное – это сгорать и, сгорая, не сокрушаться о том.

(Mix these colours like passions
 In your heart, and then
 Mix these colours and your heart
 With the sky, with the earth, and then...
 The most important thing is to burn away, and, while burning, not to grieve over it.)²³⁴

²³² Bulat Okudzhava, "Moi karandashnyi portret," *Bud' zdorov, shkoliar: Stikhi* (Frankfurt-Main: Posev, 1966) 146.

²³³ Bulat Okudzhava, "Zhivopistsy," *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 178.

²³⁴ Bulat Okudzhava, "Kak nauchit'sia risovat'," *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 276.

It is now time to turn attention to Okudzhava's poems on music. Some of these centre on orchestras or instruments as their theme, with the creation of their art again presented as a metaphor for life (e.g. *Продолжается музыка возле меня...* [*The music plays on at my side...*]). Others are those poems with words related to music in their titles, regardless of whether they discuss the art form (e.g. *баллада* [*ballad*], *Музыка* [*Music*], *музыкант* [*musician*], *песенка* [*song*], *романс* [*romance*], *Молитва* [*Prayer*], *Речитатив* [*Recitative*] and *Танго* [*Tango*]). A final category would be those poems which were sung to music, since Okudzhava the bard made great use of the guitar at his poetry evenings. In this case, however, music has a secondary function. Okudzhava repeatedly stressed that he was a poet, not a singer, and that his simple music was always written after the poem was complete:

У меня все песни – на готовые стихи. Только одна родилась наоборот, на музыку – *По Смоленской дороге*.

(All my songs are written to finished poems. Only one song was born the other way, music first— *По Смоленской дороге* [*On the Road to Smolensk*]).²³⁵

Okudzhava once said that the most important thing a song can express is human destiny. He had not liked the works of Louis Armstrong until he learnt that the jazzman sang about himself and his own life. According to Okudzhava, one of the main goals for any artist is to tell others about himself.²³⁶

Okudzhava claimed that writing his songs was *просто работа* [*just work*]²³⁷ for him. It cannot be denied that this is creative work, however, and in places he admits that he has as much to learn from his music as from a friend:

Меня же оставьте с той музыкой:
мы будем беседовать с ней.

²³⁵ Okudzhava, *65 pesen* 75.

²³⁶ Based on an interview aired on Polish television, "Z wizyta u Bulata Okudzawy," 1 TVP, 10 May 1994.

²³⁷ Okudzhava, *65 pesen* 75.

(Please, leave me with this music:
We are going have a chat.)²³⁸

Similarly, his love for his guitar caused him to refer to it as *хозяйка самая* [*the wife herself*] in the poem *Гимн уюту* [*Hymn to Cosiness*]. Like the music which comes from it, the guitar lives its own life and is depicted as singing at home in the evening while the family drinks tea. In a different poem, his instrument is portrayed as his only and surest friend:

Ты укрой меня, гитара,
от смертельного удара,
от московских наших дураков.

(Guitar, please hide me
From the fatal blow,
From our Moscow fools.)²³⁹

His personified guitar, his *спутник верный* [*faithful companion*]²⁴⁰, protects its owner elsewhere as well:

Моя гитара меня обнимет,
интеллигентно она смолчит.

(My guitar will embrace me,
It will keep a respectful silence.)²⁴¹

In the poem *Витя, сыграй на гитаре...* [*Vitia, play the guitar...*], the instrument transforms into a bouquet of flowers. Along with many others, this poem uses the theme of music to colour that of the war²⁴².

²³⁸ Bulat Okudzhava, "Vot muzyka ta, pod kotoruii....," *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 317.

²³⁹ Bulat Okudzhava, "Dama nozhhek ne zamochit....," *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 242.

²⁴⁰ Bulat Okudzhava, "Gitara," *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 223.

²⁴¹ Okudzhava, "Gitara" 223.

²⁴² The same juxtaposition may be observed in *Оркестр играет боевые марши* [*The orchestra plays war marches*], *Джазисты* [*Jazzmen*], *Песенка о ночной Москве* [*The Song about Moscow at Night*], *Все глуше музыка души...* [*The music of the soul gets quieter and quieter...*], *На полянке разминаются оркестры духовые...* [*In the field, the brass bands pass one another...*] and *Ах, оркестры духовые...* [*Ah, the brass bands...*].

Mozart and Bach also feature in Okudzhava's poems (*Песенка о Моцарте* [*Song about Mozart*], *В городском саду* [*In a City Garden*] and *Пусть скажут иные остряки...* [*Let the other wits say...*]), with the predictable effects of true masters on the listeners:

Но вышел тихий дирижер, но заиграли Баха,
и всё затихло, улеглось и обрело свой вид.

Всё стало на свои места, едва сыграли Баха...
Когда бы не было надежд – на черта белый свет?

(But the quiet conductor came out, but they began to play Bach,
And everything fell still, calmed down and became itself.

Everything fell into place, as soon as they began playing Bach...
If there were no hope—we wouldn't have needed the light.)²⁴³

As the audience of the master's creation, those listening to the music in Okudzhava's poems receive special attention, and are often seen falling speechless at the sound:

и женщина какая-то стоит,
прижав к груди стихов каких-то томик,
и на колени падает старик,
[...]
и веточка умершая

жива, жива...

[...]
...Вот сила музыки.

(And a woman stands there,
Clasping some book of poems to her chest,
And an old man falls to his knees,
[...]
And a little dry branch

Is alive, is alive...

[...]
...This is the power of music.)²⁴⁴

Many times the listener reflects upon the talent of yet another master:

[...] – я надеялся понять,
как способны эти руки эти звуки извлекать
из какой-то деревяшки [...].

²⁴³ Bulat Okudzhava, "V gorodskom sadu," *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* 110-11.

²⁴⁴ Bulat Okudzhava, "Muzyka," *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 232.

([...] – I was hoping to learn
How those hands were able to create such sounds
From a simple piece of wood [...]).²⁴⁵

The listener in this poem imagines the creative process to be especially difficult,
since

Да еще ведь надо в душу нам проникнуть
и поджечь.

(And still the master has to break through to our souls
And set them on fire.)²⁴⁶

Okudzhava regularly returns to the music of the big cities: Leningrad
Ленинградская музыка [*Leningrad Music*] and Moscow, which had always been closest
to his heart. This is a relatively simple music, but it is loved by the *московский муравей*
[*Moscow ant*]²⁴⁷. In the poem about the town of the white nights, the music of the city is
represented by a bell tolling honourably under the gold copulas. It might just as well be
the lighter music of Drum Lane (*В Барабанном переулке* [*On Drum Lane*] and *Веселый*
барабанищик [*The merry drummer*]) or the sad tune of the *шарманка-шарлатанка*
[*street organ-charlatan*]²⁴⁸ in the poems *Шарманка-шарлатанка*, *Когда затихают*
оркестры Земли... [*When the orchestras of the earth fall still...*] and *Шарманка старая*
крутилась... [*An old street organ was grinding...*]:

густую грусть шарманка городская
из глубины двора дарила мне.

The city street organ was offering me
Thick sadness from the depths of the yard.)²⁴⁹

²⁴⁵ Bulat Okudzhava, "Muzykant," *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 228.

²⁴⁶ Okudzhava, "Muzykant" *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* 228.

²⁴⁷ Bulat Okudzhava, "Moskovskii muravei," *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 200.

²⁴⁸ Bulat Okudzhava, "Sharmanka-sharlatanka," *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 208.

²⁴⁹ Bulat Okudzhava, "To padaia, to snova narastaia...", *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 128.

At the same time, big city music can also muffle the quieter music of Nature or smaller towns:

[...] полдень, суматохою пропахший,
звон трамваев и людской водоворот.

([...] The midday reeks of chaos,
Tram bells and whirls of people.)²⁵⁰

The values of Nature are different from those of the town. In those quiet places far from bustling Moscow, *гармоники лесной завидно постоянство* [*the constancy of the forest accordion is enviable*]²⁵¹. The peaceful landscape of the village and the lonely accordion in the poem *Сентябрь* [*September*] create a very different kind of music than that of the State capital or even of the market in a small city (*Над площадью базарною* [*Above the city market*], or *Синька* [*Blue*]).

These qualities of Nature, as well as the themes of town, folklore and village life, will constitute the next focus of this work. Although Okudzhava does not devote as much attention to these themes as he does to the themes of work and the creative act, they nevertheless have much to offer in our understanding of his oeuvre.

²⁵⁰ Bulat Okudzhava, "Veselyi barabanshchik," *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 139.

²⁵¹ Bulat Okudzhava, "Sentiabr'...", *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 279.

Chapter 4

TOWN, NATURE AND FOLKLORE

[...] Дороги окраинные
сливаются все
и к Арбату, представьте, ведут

([...] Outlying roads
All flow together
And, imagine, lead to the Arbat)²⁵²

Вы начали прогулку с арбатского двора,
К нему то все, как видно, и вернется.

(You walked out from your Arbat yard,
And to it all will evidently return.)²⁵³

В руиспирском духане
духанщик –
счастливый обманщик –
в десятом стакане
мои воспевают грехи.

(In the Ruispiri dukhan
The dukhan owner—
Happy deceiver—
Over his tenth cup
Sings the praises of my sins.)²⁵⁴

A survey of Okudzhava's poetry would remain hopelessly incomplete without a glimpse at his passionate portrayal of the great themes of Town, Nature and Folklore. While writers from Okudzhava's generation usually chose to write either about the Town or about Nature²⁵⁵, he bridges the two topics and reveals interest in both of them. Okudzhava presents the reader with no tired juxtaposition of Town on the one hand and

²⁵² Bulat Okudzhava, "Pesenka o belykh dvornikakh," *Stikhotvoreniia* (St. Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 256.

²⁵³ Bulat Okudzhava, "Arbatskii romans," *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 161.

²⁵⁴ Bulat Okudzhava, "Ruispiri," *Stikhotvoreniia* (St. Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 289.

²⁵⁵ *In general terms, Soviet writers dealing today with post-war Russia can be divided into two broad groups: one group depicts the life of the Soviet countryside, while the other group describes different aspects of city life.* N.N.Shneidman, *Soviet Literature in the 1970s: Artistic Diversity and Ideological Conformity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979) 16.

Nature/Folklore on the other. In his universe, the meaning of the city is self-contained, to be discovered on its own ground through a struggle between its new and old selves; in contrast, Nature and the transformations of spring and winter tend to be reserved for a particular political polemic all their own—they become yet another mask allowing the poet to explore the political realities of the post-Stalin USSR. Finally, Folklore is seen as an expressive medium with its own set of rules and particularities.

Okudzhava, who is clearly interested in all aspects of life and a broad range of phenomena, is too often and perhaps disputably labelled a “city poet”²⁵⁶. Since his attention and love, if the reader limits himself to Okudzhava urban pieces, turn mostly towards just one old Arbat street, there are some problems with this generalization. Whenever Okudzhava writes of his childhood on Moscow’s Arbat Street, his pen sings a paean to its streets and yards. The truth is that in a certain amount of poems his attention naturally gravitates toward the themes of the Town, whose streets and yards are so similar to the urban spaces of his youth. From his birth at 43 Arbat St.,²⁵⁷ he went on to bear a lifetime of witness to the more or less desirable changes affecting that Moscow artery:

“И снова – Арбат. Дом № 43 мы можем по праву назвать домом Окуджавы. Здесь в 1924 году родился, рос, “воспитывался двором” Булат Шалвович. До сих пор во дворе растут деревья, посаженные юным Булатом, а его песни об Арбате – будут всегда. Как сам Арбат.”

Back on the Arbat. We can rightfully call No. 43 Okudzhava’s home. Here Bulat Shalvovich was born in 1924, here he grew up and “was raised by the yard.” The trees planted by the young Bulat still grow in

²⁵⁶ Okudzhava’s art has been called “the folklore of the urban intelligentsia”, particularly the generation born between 1930 and 1950 (Stites 134-35).

²⁵⁷ In Bulat Okudzhava: 'Ja nikomu nichego ne naviazyval...' Aleksandr E. Petrakov quotes Okudzhava as saying: *Нет, моя родина Арбат – я родился на Арбате.* [No, my homeland is the Arbat—I was born on Arbat St.].

that yard, and his songs about the Arbat are eternal. Like the Arbat itself.²⁵⁸

The late 1930s under Stalin brought major negative changes:

С середины 30-х годов [...] вновь наступают смутные времена. Дело в том, что тихий, почти домашний Арбат вдруг неожиданно-негаданно приобрел статус архиправительственной улицы, как называли ее шепотом, “Военно-грузинской дороги”. Арбат соединял Кремль с “ближней”, кунцевской дачей Сталина. Проверялись и перепроверялись все жильцы домов, окна которых выходили на улицу. Не внушавших доверия заставляли меняться или вообще уезжать из Москвы. Если к арбатцу приезжали гости или даже на одну ночь оставался знакомый или родственник, хозяин был обязан под страхом самых суровых репрессий, вплоть до выселения, доложить по форме своему управдому. Все чердаки [...] были опечатаны и запломбированы. Я помню, женщины жаловались – негде сушить белье. Каждые 100, если не 50 метров по всему Арбату круглые сутки стояли “топтуны”, или, по-нашему, “РВК” (руки в карманах). В холодное время они заходили греться в подъезды, но в утренние и вечерние часы, когда Хозяин проезжал по улице, при любой погоде стояли на своих местах. [...] Полный порядок обеспечивался. Ни грабежей, ни квартирных краж на Арбате никогда не наблюдалось... Дарю этот факт защитникам сталинизма.

In the mid-30s the troubled times began again, in that the silent, largely residential Arbat suddenly and unexpectedly acquired the status of a supreme government street, or as the whispers had it, “the Georgian Warpath”. The Arbat linked the Kremlin to Stalin’s “closest” Kunts dacha—if you lived in a house overlooking the street, you received constant checks. Anyone deemed untrustworthy was forced to move, or more often leave Moscow entirely. If a resident of the Arbat had guests, or if a friend or family member stayed for even one night, the host had to report to his house manager in full and due form or face the harshest repression, up to and including eviction. The attics were all sealed off. I remember the women complaining there was nowhere to dry their wash. Along the entire street at one hundred- if not fifty-metre intervals, there stood round-the-clock “shufflers”, or, as we called them, “HIPS”—Hands In Pockets. When it got cold they would come to warm up in the doorways, but in the mornings and evenings, when the Boss drove down the street, they were at their posts no matter what the weather. [...] Absolute order reigned. The Arbat had no robberies or break-ins whenever it was under watch... I concede this to the defenders of Stalinism.²⁵⁹

The years following the leader’s death saw more of the profound, regrettable changes come to this part of the metropolis:

²⁵⁸ I. Levin, *Arbat: Odin kilometr Rossii* (Moscow: Galart, 1993) 150.

²⁵⁹ Levin 48.

Моя историческая родина – Арбат [...]. Арбата нет уже. Арбата нет. Это не Арбат. Он напоминает очень много западных улиц, очень много – это такой западный стандарт. Ну я думаю, что это от безвкусицы нашей [...]. Зачем было эту улицу-то разрушать? Это опять ведь все сводится к чему? Вот сидит кто-то в Моссовете, а его приятель – архитектор, ему надо проявить себя как-то. Ну договорились. А кто-то там фонари умеет делать – он свое туда внес: одна компания. А теперь мы говорим «мафия», да?

My historical homeland is the Arbat [...]. The Arbat is no more. There is no Arbat. This isn't the Arbat. It resembles so, so many Western streets—it's such a Western stereotype. But I think it's from our lack of taste [...]. Why did they destroy this street? Again, what does it all boil down to? There's somebody sitting in the "Mossovet", he has an architect friend and he needs some way to prove himself. So it's settled. And somebody else knows how to make streetlights—he brings his business in: it's all one group. Though now we say "mafia", right?²⁶⁰

Okudzhava never made his peace with the new Arbat. For an account of the new Arbat, Levin may be consulted yet again:

Никакого касательства к тому, что известно в отечественной культуре как "мир Арбата", нынешняя улица не имеет. Создается такое впечатление, что все то, что когда-то составляло дно Москвы, а потом на десятилетия затаилось, разом поднялось, возликовало и утвердило свои дикие мафиозные законы, выбрав главной жертвой именно Арбат – самый интеллигентный и потому самый незащищенный уголок города.

There is no connection between what our patrimonial culture calls "the world of the Arbat" and the street of today. One has the impression that everything which once composed Moscow's underbelly, and then went on to hide for decades, rose up at once, rejoicing and establishing its wild, mafioso laws, with the main victim being the Arbat itself—the most intelligent and thus the most defenceless corner of the city.²⁶¹

Okudzhava comments on the old and new Arbat in one of his interviews:

Я любил Москву всегда, всю жизнь. Теперь я её разлюбил – она стала слишком официальной, казённой и показной. [...] Я жил на Арбате с 24-го года по 41-й. В 41-м меня выселили. То есть, не то что выселили, а я ушёл на фронт, а когда я вернулся, квартира была занята, и мне её не вернули, потому что я числился сыном врагов народа – значит, я не мог за неё воевать. И с тех пор с Арбатом было покончено. [...] Арбат была прелестная улица – внешне. Для меня это родная улица, я очень люблю эту улицу. Но сейчас я не склонен идеализировать прошлое. Вы знаете, это была

²⁶⁰ Petrakov 217. Ultimately, Okudzhava claimed not even to recognise his old home: *Арбата больше нет: растаял словно свеченька...* [The Arbat is no more—it melted like a little candle...]. Bulat Okudzhava, "Arbata bol'she net: rastaial slovno svechen'ka...", *Stikhotvoreniia* (St. Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 482.

²⁶¹ Levin 177.

правительственная трасса: по этой трассе ездил Сталин, поэтому все ворота и подъезды были забиты специальными людьми. Ну тогда я этого не понимал как-то, и даже интересно было. А сейчас вспоминать об этом неприятно. Жили скученно, подавляющее большинство – в коммунальных квартирах. [...] Теперь что касается нового Арбата, я думаю, что будет замечательная новая улица с прекрасными домами поэзии, книжными магазинами, рестораниками “Мастер и Маргарита” – для иностранцев, но... Арбата не будет. Арбата не будет. Потому что выселяются арбатцы, а они составляют климат района. Вот что самое главное и самое печальное. А заселяются неизвестными людьми, для которых Арбат – только название и больше ничего.

I had always loved Moscow, my whole life. Now my love came to an end—she became too formal, bureaucratic and ostentatious. [...] I lived on the Arbat from 1924 to 1941. In 1941 I was evicted. I mean, not exactly evicted, but I went to the front, and when I came back the apartment was taken, and they didn't return it to me because I was considered the son of an Enemy of the People—meaning I couldn't go to war for her either. And from then on it was over between the Arbat and me. [...] The Arbat was a lovely street—on the surface. For me it's my home street, and I love it very much. But now I don't tend to idealize the past. You know it was a government road: Stalin used it, which is why all the gates and entrances were loaded with a particular kind of people. But at the time I didn't really understand things, and it could even be interesting. Though it's unpleasant to think back on now. The vast majority of us lived boring lives in communal flats. [...] Now as for the new Arbat, I think it will be a wonderful new street with beautiful poetry clubs, bookstores, little “Master and Margarita” restaurants for the foreigners ... but it won't be the Arbat. It won't be the Arbat. Because its real residents are moving away, and they make the area's atmosphere. That's the most important and saddest thing of all. And unknown people are moving in, for whom Arbat is a name and nothing more.²⁶²

In view of such changes, Okudzhava preferred to portray himself as an immigrant, expelled from his own home, as can be seen in the poem *Я выселен с Арбата – арбатский эмигрант...* [*I am evicted from the Arbat—an Arbat émigré...*]:

Я выселен с Арбата – арбатский эмигрант;
В Безбожном переулке хиреет мой талант.
Вокруг чужие лица, враждебные места.

(I am evicted from the Arbat—an Arbat emigrant;
My talent lies withering in Bezbozhnyi /*Godless*/ Lane.
All around are foreign faces, hostile places.)²⁶³

²⁶² Petrakov 214-15.

²⁶³ Bulat Okudzhava, “Ja vyselen s Arbata – arbatskii emigrant...,” *Sel'skaia molodezh* 2 (1983): 26.

This poem constitutes one of the strongest statements ever made by Okudzhava concerning the old and new Arbats. Here, in the first stanza, the lyrical hero has already mentioned Godless Lane—the official name of Okudzhava’s home street after the War—making this an extremely personal poem from the very beginning. Negative vocabulary is used to describe the new Arbat, which the lyrical hero left with only a rose in hand: today, the Arbat is inhabited by *оккупанты* [*invaders*], *чужеземцы* [*foreigners*] and *чужие лица* [*foreign faces*], who greet each other with *речи несердечны и холодны* [*insincere speeches and cold festivities*]. The new residents can be distinguished by their *хозяйская походка, надменные уста* [*proprietary step, arrogant lips*]. The lyrical hero’s bread is bitter, and he feels *выдворен, затерян среди чужих судеб* [*expelled, lost amidst strangers’ fates*]. At one point he goes so far as to compare his suffering with that of Christ on the cross. Unable to survive outside its usual friendly habitat on the old Arbat, his rose freezes and its petals fell away. By the final verse, the two opposing Arbats—and the poet’s affinity for the earlier one—have been made abundantly clear.

The children of the Arbat find safety not in the future, not in the present, but somewhere in the past. The *арбатский эмигрант* [*The Arbat émigré*]²⁶⁴ is devoted to Moscow with his heart and soul—but not to the modern one. He cherishes the old, vanished Moscow of the past, with its traditions and old houses. Likewise, the *дворянин с арбатского двора* [*gentleman from an Arbat courtyard*]²⁶⁵ is unable to accept any changes in the town of his childhood. In the new Moscow, a representative of the Soviet spiritual nobility, *intelligentsia*, is alone in the crowd and the trolley buses carry

²⁶⁴ Bulat Okudzhava, “Arbatskie napevy,” *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 225.

²⁶⁵ Bulat Okudzhava, “Nadpis’ na kamne,” *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 227.

померпевших в ночи крушение [*crash victims of the night*]²⁶⁶. The nobleman turns his gaze backwards and seeks help from the his beloved *арбатство* [*Arbathood*]:

Согрей нас всех и собери, арбатство.

(Arbathood, warm and gather us all.)²⁶⁷

The home that Okudzhava laments is not limited to the space of a single street, however, and the Arbat's meaning has expanded to represent the whole of bygone Moscow, all disappearing Russian cities, or the entire changing nation:

Ах, Арбат, мой Арбат,

ты – мое отечество.

(Oh, Arbat, my Arbat,

You are – my fatherland.)²⁶⁸

The street has gradually been elevated to accept the semantic and emotional burden of the country as a whole. In the first of three verses, the lyrical hero makes a following apostrophe to the Arbat: “*ты – мое призвание*” [*you are my vocation*]²⁶⁹. In the second verse a divine layer is added to the paean—“*мы – моя религия*” [*you are my religion*]²⁶⁹—and only in the third do the readers learn that “*ты – мое отечество*” [*you are my fatherland*].

Quick perusals of *Я выселен с Арбата* and *Песенка об Арбате* leave no doubt that the old Arbat represents the virtue and worth of the entire country, as Okudzhava remembers it from his childhood —his declamations against the new residents of his street are raised equally against the usurpers of the nation. His intense love for Moscow's

²⁶⁶ Bulat Okudzhava, “Polnochnyi trolleibus,” *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 140.

²⁶⁷ Okudzhava, “Nadpis' na kamne,” *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* 227.

²⁶⁸ Bulat Okudzhava, “Pesenka ob Arbate,” *Veselyi barabanshchik* (London: Flegon Press, 1966) 36.

²⁶⁹ Okudzhava, “Pesenka ob Arbate,” *Veselyi barabanshchik* 36.

old Arbat²⁷⁰ does not translate to any of his other “city poems,” however, of which there are not a few. Whether he sets these poems on some other Moscow street or in the capital in general²⁷¹, in the metropolises of distant countries (Salzburg, London, Los Angeles, Portland, New York and Manhattan, Cologne and Paris)²⁷² or (a few times) in Polish towns,²⁷³ the theme is humanistic rather than strictly urban: the city serves as the backdrop for a discussion of friendship, love, hope, nostalgia, or human destiny. Odd, then, that this “city poet” should have so few poems about city life—the bard rarely sings about the city at all, preferring to use his feelings toward one city or another as a springboard for his true interest.

²⁷⁰ Nostalgia and love for the old Arbat are expressed in the poems: *Улица моей любви* [Street of My Love], *Мы приедем туда, приедем...* [We will get there, we will...], *Раскрываю страницы ладоней...* [I open the pages of palms...], *Арбатский романс* [Arbat Romance], *Детство: Синело утро: Было рано...* [Childhood: Morning had broken: It was early...], *Арбатский дворик* [Arbat Yard], *Арбат беру с собой – без него ни на шаг...* [I take the Arbat with me—I can't take a step without it...], *Арбатское вдохновение, или воспоминания о детстве...* [The Arbat Inspiration, or Memories of Childhood], *Арбатские напевы* [Arbat Melodies], *Переулок Божественным.../назван/* [Lane.../called/ *Bozhestvennyi*], and *Чаепитие на Арбате* [Taking Tea on the Arbat].

²⁷¹ The poems in which Moscow and its streets are used just as a background are, among others: *Король* [King], *Часовые любви* [Love Guards], *Песенка о ночной Москве* [The Song about Moscow at Night], *Былое нельзя воротить...* [You can't go back...], *Как мне нравится по Пятницкой в машине проезжать!* [How I Love Driving on Piatnitskaia Street!], *Донеты все песни. И точка...* [All the songs have been sung. Period...], *Эта комната* [This Room], *Песенка о московских ополченцах* [The Song about Moscow Militiamen], *Трамвай* [Streetscars], *Полночный троллейбус* [Midnight Trolley Bus], *Московский муравей* [Moscow Ant], *Речитатив* [Recitative], *Сказка* [Tale], *Надпись на камне* [Inscription on a Stone], *Москва все строится, торопится* [Moscow Keeps Growing and Going], *Воспоминание о Дне Победы* [Memory of V-Day], *Когда затихают оркестры земли...* [When the world's orchestras fall silent...].

²⁷² *Отъезд* [Departure], *Был Лондон предо мной. А нынче вновь все не то же...* [London lay before me. And now nothing is the same...], *Я в Кельне живу. Возле Копелева...* [I live in Cologne. Next to Kopelev...], *Манхеттен* [Manhattan], *Звезда Голливуда* [Hollywood Star], *Январь в Одессе* [January in Odessa], *Детство* [Childhood], *Пиратская лирическая* [Piratical Lyrical Song], *Парижская фантазия* [Parisian Fantasy], *Париж для того, чтоб ходить по нему...* [Paris was made for walking...].

²⁷³ *Krakow* in *Прощание с Польшей* [Farewell to Poland], *Warsaw* in *Путешествие по ночной Варшаве в дрожках* [Horse Cab Trip through Warsaw at Night] and *Украшение жизни моей...* [Adornment of my life...], *Wroclaw* in *Вроцлав: Лиловые сумерки*. [Wroclaw: Purple dusk.].

In an apparent exception to this rule, Okudzhava does reserve special words for St. Petersburg and its inhabitants. In certain poems,²⁷⁴ the lyrical hero claims it as a home away from home:

Ведь я не экскурсант, Нева Петровна,
Я просто одинокий человек.
Мы снова рядом. Как я к вам привык!

(You see I'm no tourist, Neva Petrovna,
I'm just a lonely man.
We are together again. I am so used to you!)²⁷⁵

In *Ленинградская музыка* [*Leningrad Music*] and *Дом на Мойке* [*House on the Moika*], the lyrical hero makes general observations on life anchored in imagery from the modern city:

Ее мы топчем упоенно и преступаем окрыленно,
И кружимся, и кувыркаемся, и не боимся
Ни черта.
Прогуливаясь вдоль по набережной, предвидеть
Ничего нельзя.
[...]
Но род людской в прогулке той не уберется
От урона...

(We trample her in ecstasy and transgress her with inspiration,
And we whirl, and flip, and are not one bit
Afraid.
Walking along on the embankment, nothing at all can be
Foreseen.
[...]
But on this walk the human race cannot save itself
From harm...)²⁷⁶

St. Petersburg also takes centre stage in a fantastic poem called *Зной* [*Intense Heat*], built around the simple alliteration of the letter “п” (“p”), a consonant integral to

²⁷⁴ *Ночь белая: Спят взрослые, как дети...* [*White night: Adults sleep like children...*], *Плывут дома, как корабли* [*Houses Sail Like Ships*], *Нева Петровна, возле вас все львы* [*Neva Petrovna, Lions Still Stand by You*].

²⁷⁵ Bulat Okudzhava, “Neva Petrovna, vozle vas vse l’vy,” *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 137.

²⁷⁶ Bulat Okudzhava, “Dom na reke Moike,” *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 205.

the city of white nights²⁷⁷. Only nine words out of fifty one begin with a different sound: *в, за, может быть, им, в, на, и, взгляд*. The 900-day Siege of Leningrad, perhaps the most desperate battle of WWII, features in *Летний сад* [*Summer Garden*], *Проводы юнкеров* [*The Cadets' Send-off*], *Ленинградская элегия* [*Leningrad Elegy*] and *Песенка о Фонтанке* [*The Song about the Fontanka*].²⁷⁸ It is hard to know how much of these poems is an elegy to St. Petersburg, and how much a return to Okudzhava's familiar pacifist campaign. Leningrad, the second city of Empire, had a high number of casualties, but so did the rest of the country—and Okudzhava is manifestly more concerned with innocence than civic pride, reserving for Leningrad only a background role.

A survey of the St. Petersburg poems does not, in fact, reveal a single poem invested with the kind of love he reserves for the Arbat. The poems about this Moscow street are distinguished for their connection with the relative happiness of Okudzhava's childhood memories:

И мальчик с гитарой в обнимку
На этом арбатском дворе.

(And a boy embracing a guitar
In this Arbat yard.)²⁷⁹

Those early days were quiet and peaceful, as yet *без драм и расчета* [*without dramas or reckoning*]²⁸⁰. They were spent bathed in the warmth of the hearth:

Где нужно мало денег
Чтобы счастливым быть.

²⁷⁷ The letter "п" belongs, of course, to Peter, Petersburg, and the brief revolutionary name of Petrograd. It is the letter with which the name of Leningrad started before Stalin's decision to honour Lenin by naming this city after him. Chronologically, St Petersburg after the fall of the Romanovs sounded to some too German, so the town was renamed as Petrograd. After Lenin's death, Stalin decided to rename it again as Leningrad. (Compare Service 27 and 154).

²⁷⁸ For details on the August 1941–January 1949 siege, see: Service 261, 264–67, 285. Compare, as well Hosking, *A History of the Soviet Union* 200, 279–82.

²⁷⁹ Bulat Okudzhava, "Dopety vse pesni: I tochka...", *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 161.

²⁸⁰ Bulat Okudzhava, "Eta komnata," *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 95–96.

(Where not much money is needed
In order to be happy.)²⁸¹

To the poet, the Arbat encapsulates the unsullied innocence of his childhood space:

Мы слетаемся, как воробы-
Стоит только снегу стаять-
Прямо в улицу своей любви,
[...]
где воспоминания, словно просо,
соблазняют непутевых нас.

(We fly down like sparrows—
The snow needs just melt down—
Straight onto the street of our love,
[...]
Where memories, like millet,
Tempt our shiftless selves.)²⁸²

The Arbat's spell has the power to draw back all its émigrés, thirsty for innocence. It takes care of the *худосочные дети с Арбата* [*sickly children of the Arbat*]²⁸³ like a mother:

Мы приедет туда, приедем
Проедем – зови не зови-
Вот по этим каменистым,
По этим
Осыпающимся дорогам любви.

(We will come there, come
Drive by—bidden or not—
On these self-same stony,
On these
Crumbling streets of love.)²⁸⁴

Thus, the generation that weathered the maelstrom of the Terror and the War finds refuge in its earliest memories. The sad fact is that the modern-day interlopers on this street can only ever guess at the devastation that fuels phrases such as these:

²⁸¹ Okudzhava, "Eta komnata," *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* 96.

²⁸² Bulat Okudzhava, "Ulitsa moei liubvi," *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 257.

²⁸³ Bulat Okudzhava, "My priedem tuda, priedem..." *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 83.

²⁸⁴ Okudzhava, "My priedem tuda, priedem..." *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* 83.

Погода двадцатого века
Началась на арбатском дворе.

(What really counts in the twentieth century
Began in the Arbat yard.)²⁸⁵

As children they might still believe in kind fate and limitless possibility:

Еще моя походка не была смешна,
Еще подошвы не поотрывались,
За каждым поворотом, где музыка слышна,
Какие мне удачи открывались!

(My step was not yet funny,
My soles not yet coming off,
Around each music-filled corner,
What fortunes lay in wait!)²⁸⁶

From the distant future of 1982, however, the lyrical hero looks back on these youthful delusions with nostalgia:

Я тоскую, и плачу, и грежу
По святым по арбатским местам.

(I grieve, I cry, and fantasize
Over the Arbat's holy places.)²⁸⁷

A specific group of Arbat poems evokes the enchantment and mystery of the pre-war street²⁸⁸. The reader sees it through the wide eyes of a boy, whose world consists of babysitters, shabby courtyards and the deep music of church bells, who sees a janitor through a frost-covered window and imagines he is a god. The fantastic escapism of childhood lives on in the memories of those whose youth was cut short by war:

Еще далече до военных гроз.
Еще загадкой манит подворотня.
Еще я жизнь сверяю по двору

²⁸⁵ Bulat Okudzhava, "Raskryvaiu stranitsy ladonei....," *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 179.

²⁸⁶ Bulat Okudzhava, "Arbatskii romans," *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 161.

²⁸⁷ Bulat Okudzhava, "Arbatskie napevy," *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 391.

²⁸⁸ *Детство: Синело утро: Было рано...* [*Childhood: Morning Has Broken: It was early...*], *Речитатив* [*Recitative*], *Сказка* [*Tale*], *Надпись на камне* [*Inscription on a Stone*], *Арбат беру с собою – без него ни на шаг...* [*I take the Arbat with me – I can't take a step without it...*], and *Арбатское вдохновение, или воспоминания о детстве...* [*An Arbat Inspiration, or Memories of Childhood*].

И не подозреваю, что умру,
Как в том не сомневаюсь сегодня.

(The storm clouds still far away.
The threshold's mystery still beckons.
I still weigh the life in my yard
And never suspect that I will die,
Just as I have no doubt of it today.)²⁸⁹

The lyrical hero sees his old neighbours as an extended family, bound by past and future events. The streets themselves appear as relations—their names are forgotten *словно дедов имена* [*just like the names of our forefathers*]²⁹⁰. The bond of blood outlasts the march of time, however:

Живет в душе, не тая,
Пусть нелепа, да своя,
Эта звонкая, святая,
Поредевшая семья.

(In the soul, unconcealed,
Perhaps ridiculous, but our own,
Lives this ringing, holy,
Diminished family.)²⁹¹

Of course, Arbat natives are more sensitive than anyone to the contradictions that live on their modern street—at times their warm feelings are given the lie by the poor, grey lanes that surround them:

Переулок Божественным
Назван мной для чего?

(Why do I call this
Godlike Lane?)²⁹²

In reality, Okudzhava disliked the insensitive, irreligious name of his street, and would replace *Безбожный* [Godless] with *Божественный* [Godlike]²⁹³. He felt his chosen word expressed *что-то доброе, сильное* [*something good and strong*]²⁹⁴.

²⁸⁹ Bulat Okudzhava, "Arbatskoe vdokhnovenie, ili vospominaniia o detstve...", *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 103.

²⁹⁰ Bulat Okudzhava, "Gomon ploshchadi Petrovskoi...", *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 302.

²⁹¹ Okudzhava, "Gomon ploshchadi Petrovskoi...", *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* 302.

²⁹² Bulat Okudzhava, "Pereulok Bozhestvennym...", *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 304.

Years later, the survivors of Okudzhava's generation will be found sitting before the fire, blankets on their knees, reflecting upon their lives. Like the lyrical hero of *Чаети́тье на Арба́те* [*Taking Tea on the Arbat*], the shelter, food and warmth of the homes the survivors have made are infinitely superior to the front line. But they returned to a very different Moscow. Long gone are the human proportions of the small yards and simple houses that they fought to see once more; the culture of construction projects, noise and bustle took their place. The old houses that Okudzhava loved to personify are dying, and the reader enters a new group of poems—one where the cold, deathless steel of the new Moscow takes the fore²⁹⁷. It is an impersonal, industrial horror, populated more by bulldozers than men, and demanding the deferential address of *вы*, instead of the familiar *ты*.

The poem *У Спаса на кружке забыто наше детство...* [*Near Spas our childhood was forgotten...*] introduces an outstanding feature of the empty, arrogant capital. Moscow's youth had once reveled in their informal meetings, which often transformed into impromptu intellectual salons. In their place, only fearful silence remains:

Все меньше мест в Москве, где есть
о чем поспорить,
Все больше мест в Москве, где есть
о чем молчать.

(There are fewer and fewer places in Moscow with
Something to argue about,
There are more and more places in Moscow with
Something to be silent about.)²⁹⁸

²⁹⁷ *Дама ножек не замочит* [*A Lady Won't Wet Her Dainty Feet*], *Надпись на камне* [*Inscription on a Stone*], *На рассвете* [*At Dawn*], *Старый дом* [*The Old House*], *Дом: Дом предназначен на слом. Извините...* [*The House: This house is to be demolished. Sorry...*], *У Спаса на кружке забыто наше детство...* [*Near Spas our childhood was forgotten...*].

²⁹⁸ Bulat Okudzhava, "U Spasa na kruzhke zabyto nashe detstvo..." *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii projekt, 2001) 371.

And so all proportions are altered, with the old breed of man shrinking before the overwhelming dominion of machines:

Ты куда, человечек?
 Это ж царство бетона и стали!
 Вдруг бульдозер какой-нибудь,
 От злости сопя,
 В землю втопчет тебя...

(Where are you going to, little man?
 For this is the kingdom of concrete and steel!
 And what if some bulldozer,
 Heaving with rage,
 Crushed you into the ground...)²⁹⁹

As afraid as they feel of the *стальные чудовища* [*monsters of steel*]³⁰⁰, however, Okudzhava's lyrical heroes tend only to censure the humans who brought them there—at times, in fact, the machines appear to feel shame and degradation, ready to hide rather than continue their awful work:

Но перед ним ложится пространство
 и краны гнутся подобострастно,
 и бульдозеры униженно пятятся
 словно пытаются спрятаться.
 Стальные чудища,
 мне вас жалко:
 вы и слабей,
 вы и глупей...

(But space lies down before /the little man/,
 And cranes bend in servility,
 And degraded bulldozers back up,
 As if they were trying to hide.
 Steel monsters,
 I feel pity for you:
 You are both weaker
 And more stupid...)³⁰¹

The real conflict is between the two generations of Muscovites—the ones who knew and loved the old city, and the technophiles who crush them and rob them of their

²⁹⁹ Bulat Okudzhava, "Na rassvete," *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 157.

³⁰⁰ Okudzhava, "Na rassvete," *Stikhotvoreniia* 157.

³⁰¹ Okudzhava, "Na rassvete," *Stikhotvoreniia* 157.

peace. The one thing they retain is their pride, and they greet hollow sympathy with ironic grins:

[...] Старым арбатским ребятам смешны утешений слова.

([...] To the old Arbat children, words of comfort sound laughable.)³⁰²

The lyrical hero of the next poem suffers from the same split personality as so many of his neighbours, living in the present but with his heart in the past. As a strange result of this condition, he retreats into cars or metro stations to hide from the streets he can no longer bear:

Но когда я в толпе шествую по улицам Москвы,
не могу сдержать отчаяния, и боли, и тоски.
Мои тонкие запястья перед глазами скрещены,
будто мне грозят несчастья с той и с этой стороны.

(But when I parade in the crowds on Moscow streets,
I cannot hold back my despair, my pain, my melancholy.
My thin wrists crossed before my eyes,
As though misfortune threatened me on every side.)³⁰³

The Moscow underground seems safe to the lyrical hero because it, too, is a reminder of his childhood (*Песенка о московском метро* [*The Song about the Moscow Metro*]).

The poem *Трамвай* [*Streetcars*] provides yet another insight into the dynamics at work between the two Moscows. The cognitive background of the poem is easy to grasp: vast numbers of enormous, new houses are being thrown up before the reader's eyes, and Moscow is transforming as its history disappears beneath them. From the description of events, the lyrical hero can only feel uneasy about the changes—the description of the new city lacks adornment and adjectives, and he cannot even bring himself to name *старая Москва* [*Old Moscow*] until halfway through the poem. His one direct mention

³⁰² Bulat Okudzhava, "O chom ty uspel peredumat", otets rasstreliannyi moi....," *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 24.

³⁰³ Bulat Okudzhava, "Kak mne nraivitsia po Piatnitskoi v mashine proezzhat'!....," *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 298.

of the new city is not even all that direct, with oblique references to its activities taking the place of the word “new”:

Москва все строится, торопится.

(Moscow keeps growing and going.)³⁰⁴

It is a fast-paced life in the modern capital, and here its speed is expressed with the help of two consecutive verbs, used without any conjunction: *строится*, *торопится*. The chosen verbs further magnify the madness of the rush—Okudzhava uses a passive form of the verb *строиться* [*to build*] that does not even suggest the work of human hands, but rather a perverse self-construction as it propels itself into the future. The monstrous concrete city takes on its own life, with its personified brain plotting future actions regardless of the welfare of its newly dispensable inhabitants. The lowly *московские муравьи*³⁰⁵ [*Muscovite ants*] lose control of their city and of themselves.

Old Moscow’s reaction to this transformation is the subject of the remainder of the poem. The following range of adjectives and metaphors describes the disappearing past by means of its colours, smells and evocations: *трамваи красные* [*red streetcars*], like from a museum, *старые дворы* [*old yards*], *что-то дилижансовое* [*something stagecoach-like*], *старая Москва* [*old Moscow*], *старые вывески* [*old signboards*], *переулки заученные* [*well-known lanes*], *рыжая жесть* [*red-brown tin plate*], *что-то задумчивое* [*something pensive*], *что-то крендельное* [*something pretzel-like*]. A single adjective disobeys this nostalgic pattern—*белый свет* [*wide world*]³⁰⁴—but it is used in a set phrase—*[выйти] на белый свет* [*[go out] into the wide world*], and it is more than counterbalanced by the three unequivocal uses of the adjective *старый* [*old*]. For the

³⁰⁴ Bulat Okudzhava, “Tramvai,” *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 305.

³⁰⁵ Bulat Okudzhava, “Moskovskii murav’i,” *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 200.

lanes to be “*well-known*,” Old Moscow must have been a longtime home of the lyrical hero, who would have threaded his way among them with the familiarity of a schoolboy on a well-worn path to school. However, his self-confidence, expressed in this metaphor, disappears with every change in his environment.

The new Moscow intimidates and frightens the lyrical hero, but his skill with stylistic devices is able to turn this to his advantage, since the emotive function of his tender, sincere, romantic description of Old Moscow will warm the reader to his way of seeing the world. The lyrical hero’s personal, emotional point of view manifests itself through his own idiosyncratic imagery: the peaceful lanes carry old trams that seem like stagecoaches; home and hearth is omnipresent in the “pretzel-like” atmosphere of Moscow.

The dearest objects in Old Moscow are poetically bestowed with human and animal qualities. Through this device, the city’s red streetcars first *сторонятся, как лошади* [*stand aside like horses*], cowering before the oncoming changes as animals would from an approaching storm. In this simile, the old streetcars and horses are rendered equally impotent in the face of overwhelming power, be it the new constructions of man or the raw force of nature, and react submissively to their new realities, obediently stepping aside. The streetcars possess a soul and associated feelings—they know their time is past and that they were allowed to ride the rails of the old city for too long. Their personification is yet another device meant to stir the reader’s sympathies for the old city—the reader’s feelings for these inanimate objects can only grow when he is told to see them as he would good people, gentle and polite, but doomed to an unfortunate obsolescence. Like irrationally courteous senior citizens, in fact, when they

discover that everything will go on without them they simply *сходят с рельс* [*leave the rails*] and stop their work. The expression *сходят с рельс* points to the deeper trouble brewing in the city— a Russian reader will associate it with the expression *сойти с ума* [*lose one's mind*]. It becomes clear that the personified streetcars are only pretending that everything is in order, while their other actions betray their grave misgivings. Sparks fly from under their wheels just as sparks scatter from the cigarette of an old, worrying man. This metaphor allows the reader to learn that the old men/streetcars are secretly ashamed of their outmoded age (*прячут что-то дилижансовое— they are hiding something stagecoach-like*), and also wish to hide their feelings of confusion, anxiety and pride from the world. Here is where their tragedy is fully revealed: like a number of old people, they feel guilty that they are still alive, still a burden on the younger generation. Old Moscow's red streetcars have come to bear the semantic weight of the whole course of human life—its brevity, its fleeting youth and the hard fate of the elderly men and women neglected by society.

In another vein, the streetcars are compared to *жаворонки* [*larks*]. Invested with animal qualities for one brief instant more, they are released from the rails that held them during life, and run back to their familiar routes before their fatal trip to the scrapyard. They are granted a final goodbye to the old gardens slated for demolition. Here the streetcars represent Okudzhava's Arbat generation, which was never able to fall in love with the new reality.

All the useless things of society are sucked into a horrible dumping ground—at the top of the huge pile, the city's old signboards slowly die, replaced by cheap neon lights. The signboards live on in the waking death of the terminally ill, mercilessly

ejected beyond the borders of the new society. This final personification is a fitting testimonial of the very material privation and mutilation forced upon those belonging to the past, and underlines the cruelty of the generation occupying the New Moscow, where there is no longer any place for the weak or the outdated.

With its simple stylistic devices placed in the hands of the bard, the poem *Трамвай* achieves universal dimensions—and this is precisely why it has been understood by so great a circle of readers.

Just as the poem's central idea will be clear to the most casual reader, its stylistic tropes are of the most easily apprehended types as well: the adjectival epithets, the metaphors, comparisons, and similes, the inanimate objects given human and animal characteristics. Lexically, the poem is replete with prosaic nouns (*трамвай* [*streetcar*], *дворы* [*yards*], *рельсы* [*rails*], *мост* [*bridge*], *папирасы* [*cigarettes*], *вывески* [*signboards*], and *переулки* [*lanes*]) and expression (*будьте так добры!* [*would you be so kind!*]). All these elements contribute to create an atmosphere of sympathetic familiarity with the Old Moscow.

In reality, Okudzhava had one escape from the urban rush that was not available to his protagonists. He would often retreat to his dacha in Michurinets near Peredelkino, not far from Moscow, where he kept a simple, small-porched wooden house tucked away in a birch grove.³⁰⁶ The writer's love for nature was, he believed, reciprocal. In one of the two poems entitled *Подмосковье: Подмосковье, Подмосковье...* [*Moscow Outskirts: Moscow Outskirts, Moscow Outskirts...*], the lyrical hero asks:

ПОДМОСКОВЬЕ,
Что мне делать с твоей
любовью?

³⁰⁶ Interview with Vladimir Avdeichikov, September 13, 1995.

(Moscow Outskirts,
What shall I do with your
Love?)³⁰⁷

This purported city poet also makes frequent reference to Nature and natural phenomena, directly or allegorically, in poems dedicated to, or bordering upon the theme. One of the phenomena of nature, to which Okudzhava dedicated some space in his poetry, is spring³⁰⁸. Excluding the sub-group of Georgia-related poems that tend to be escapist idealistic for special reasons, and given the political overtones of his cheeriest, most affectionate Nature pieces, interpretations such as the following seem to miss the point entirely:

В стихах Окуджавы (...) образы природы отличаются романтической условностью и красочностью (...). Природа у Окуджавы добра и беззащитна, вызывает к участию и учит великодушию.

(In Okudzhava's poems (...) pictures of nature are characterized by a romantic conventionality and colorfulness (...). Okudzhava's nature is good and defenseless, encourages participation and teaches generousness.)³⁰⁹

While spring is traditionally a season of prolific rebirth, when people wake from their long winter slumber and embrace a new life of warm sun and bright colours,³¹⁰ the season took on a second, related meaning in Russian minds after Stalin's death on March 5, 1953. Evidently, it constitutes an allegorical symbol of the hope for a new life, which came after Stalin's death. The hope unleashed in the spring of that year remains

³⁰⁷ Bulat Okudzhava, "Podmoskov'e: Podmoskov'e, Podmoskov'e..." *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 132.

³⁰⁸ *Весна на Пресне* [Spring on Presna], *Чаепитие* [Tea-drinking], *Весна: Небо синее, как на картинке...* [Spring: The sky is blue as in a picture...], *Весна: вы думаете, хлынет птиц поток...* [Spring: You think, a flock of birds rushes...], *Подмосковье: Март намечается...* [Podmoskov'e: We have March in our plans...] and *Март великодушный* [Generous March].

³⁰⁹ M.N. Epshtein. *Priroda, mir, tainik vselennoi...* (Moscow: Vysshiaia shkola, 1990) 271.

³¹⁰ In traditional cultures springs are well known as symbols of the beginning of life and, in more general terms, of all beginnings, of genius, power, grace and all good fortune. Jean Chevalier, and Alain Gheerbrant, *The Penguin Dictionary of Symbols* (Toronto: Penguin Books, 1996) 911. For more on the symbolics of spring—as an image of the soul, the origin of the inner life and spiritual energy—see Chevalier, and Gheerbrant 910-12.

reinforced and inextricably tied to the promise of the world's physical renewal—wherever the primary (surface) reading of a Soviet-era poem discusses the bounty of spring, there is inevitably a parallel, secondary (under-the-surface) allegoric meaning evoking the euphoria and explosion of expectations that greeted the death of the tyrant³¹¹.

Though the most common reaction to the death of the supposedly immortal Leader was simple disbelief, some intellectuals dared hope that writers might now be freed from an oppressive State policy best summed up by Evgenii Zamiatin's term, *fantasiectomy*.³¹²

The ensuing period did indeed see some melting of the thick ideological ice that had encased the country for decades, and found a suitably spring-oriented name in the title of I. G. Erenburg's 1954 novel, *Оттепель* [*The Thaw*].

This seasonal allegorical language of political transformation is essential to understanding Okudzhava's Nature imagery. The codes it established were a fundamental means of expression at a time when total openness on the part of any writer was still far from safe.

Okudzhava took the title for a 1967 volume of poetry from one of its poems on spring—*Март великодушный* [*Magnanimous March*]. His stand against despair culminates in the final lines:

Зачем отчаиваться,	Мой дорогой?
Март намечается	великодушный!
(Why despair,	My dear?
Magnanimous March	

³¹¹ For primary and secondary meanings in allegory, compare Cuddon 20.

³¹² Compare Evgenii Zamiatin, *My*.

Is taking shape!)³¹³

The poem is full of symbols of new life, hope, and openness: Spring is manifest in the forest, whose gates are thrown open after a winter in burdensome clothes. Identifying himself with a forester, the lyrical hero integrates himself in the burgeoning scene:

У отворенных у ворот лесных,
откуда пахнет сыростью, где звуки
стекают по стволам, стоит лесник,
и у него – мои глаза и руки.

(A forester stands at the open forest gates,
From where it smells of dampness, where the sounds
Are streaming down the trunks.
He has my eyes and hands.)³¹⁴

After his long, lethargic sleep, he is eager to seize his chance at new life:

И все старается не прозевать весны

(And tries hard not to miss the spring.)³¹⁵

The poem is replete with images of birth and flowing waters—Mother Nature must strain to bear the infant month of March; the phrase *звуки стекают по стволам* [*sounds flow down the trunks*] evokes comparison with spring torrents of the thaw. The alliteration on the consonant “п” (“p”), the same that begins the Russian word *первый* [*first*], stresses the novelty of the circumstances (*И первенца принять у первой почки* [*And to deliver the first-born of the first bud*]). The vocabulary also indicates the novel challenge of the situation. However, it is not as easy to take advantage of the new opportunity:

Все снова выстроить – нелегкий срок,
Как зиму выстоять, хоть и знакома...

(Rebuilding it all will be no easy task,
Like surviving winter, familiar though it may be ...) ³¹⁶

³¹³ Bulat Okudzhava, “Mart velikodushnyi,” *Mart velikodushnyi* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel’, 1967) 7.

³¹⁴ Okudzhava, “Mart velikodushnyi,” *Mart velikodushnyi* 7.

³¹⁵ Okudzhava, “Mart velikodushnyi,” *Mart velikodushnyi* 7.

³¹⁶ Okudzhava, “Mart velikodushnyi,” *Mart velikodushnyi* 7.

The contagiously optimistic tone of “*Март великодушный*” is reflected in other poems on the post-1953 springtime, such as “*Весна на Пресне*” and “*Чаепитие*”.

The sudden changes these poems describe seem to suggest that the effects of Stalin’s death surprised the lyrical hero as much as anyone else. March, the month of the dictator’s death, is one that reinvents the world in the blink of an eye³¹⁷.

Весна на Пресне moves forward in time from March to April. Moscow residents are now opening their hearts, exchanging relieved comments about the recent past, and welcoming the new era:

Весна погуливает всласть.
Она врасплах меня застала.
[...]
Так здравствуй, день! Он петь заставил...

(Spring comes in full force.
It surprized me.]
Long live the day! It made me sing...)³¹⁸

The Muscovites wake from their long slumber and with new energy dive back in the bustle of the new day, happy that the new times are finally there.

The spring, naturally, brings optimism and hope for a better life after March 1953:

Когда полегчало кому-то
Ну просто так, ни от чего...

³¹⁷ Compare from *Чаепитие* [Tea-Drinking]:

*Эта мартовская работа
Все меняет за пять минут
[March
Changes it all in five minutes]*

And from *Весеннее* [Of Spring]:

*Наш город стал совсем неузнаваем...
[Our city became completely unrecognizable...]*

What is also interesting is that two out of the three above poems, touching upon the theme of sudden and drastic changes (*Vesna na Presne* 1959 and “*Chaepitie*” 1960), were written within several years after the February 1956 XXth Congress of the Communist Party, during which Khrushchev delivered his famous four-hours long speech on “The Cult of the Individual and its Consequences”. The third poem was born within one year of the death of Stalin.

³¹⁸ Bulat Okudzhava, “*Vesna na Presne*,” *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt) 171.

(When someone felt better
Just because, no reason why ...) ³¹⁹

And here, the lyrical hero of *Чаепитие* exhorts the warm spring to do away with all traces of winter:

Рушь, погода, сугробы! Рушь!

(Weather, bring down the snow drifts! Down!) ³²⁰

Now, he declares, is the time for song and revelry in honour of the transforming thaw.

Весеннее [*Of Spring*] portrays April in serious, sombre tones. Here, the bounty of spring is somewhat muted by a recollection of the tragedy of those who did not live long enough to see it. The poem cautiously confines its explicit sympathy to those who could not see the October Revolution long before. However, given that this is a 1954 poem, published less than a year after Stalin's death, with a spring-related title and extensive mention of the victims of Siberia—whom the lyrical hero promises to remember—the reader can only take this as a masked lament over more recent times.

Spring poems broke taboos against expressions of love among individuals—as in *Весна на Пресне* and *Весна* [*Spring*]³²¹—in a society where the highest love was to the State³²¹. Nevertheless, not only people's hearts swell, but even the hearts of objects,

³¹⁹ Okudzhava, "Vesna na Presne", *Stikhotvoreniia* 171.

³²⁰ Bulat Okudzhava, "Chaepitie," *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 197.

³²¹ Compare the following extract from Bulat Okudzhava, "Vesna" *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 554:

гипсовый круторогий олень
затрубит, призывая свою олениху.

[A round-horned plaster deer
Shall bellow, calling his doe].

And this, from Okudzhava, "Vesna na Presne" 170:

Шофер смеялся, зубы скалил,
гражданка в хохоте зашлась.
[The driver was laughing, showing his teeth,
The lady was lost in giggles].

whose personification renders them less antagonistic and less abstract. Given a soul, heavy machinery is no longer constrained to build the Soviet future:

И трактор вздрогнет,
Почувствовав запах земли.

(And the tractor will flinch
Having smelled the ground)³²²

In *Vesna*, which has the month of May and a spring morning as its background, winter is introduced as the oppressive antithesis of spring:

Все устали от долгой метели,
Раздражительны все потому...

(Everyone got tired of the long blizzard,
That's why everyone is irritable...)³²³

Okudzhava's negative portrayal of the winter season comes as something of a surprise—Russians typically have a special love for wintertime, praising its beauty throughout their literature³²⁴. Here it is nothing but torpid cruelty, with people lost and separated in a landscape of prolonged storms, deep snow and *ночь бездонная, словно тюрьма* [*fathomless night, like prison*]³²⁵. To say that winter reduces humanity to the level of a society in which everyone is *поневоле и слеп и безум...* [*against his will, blind and silent...*]³²⁶, echoes the impossibility of self-expression and free thought under Stalin.

Vesna repeals that silence, and even goes so far as to mention the name of God, so long proscribed from the official vocabulary—the lyrical hero exclaims *Слава богу*

³²² Bulat Okudzhava, "Vesna," *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 554.

³²³ Okudzhava, "Vesna," *Stikhotvoreniia* 346.

³²⁴ M.N. Epshtein *Priroda, mir, tainik vselennoi...* 169.

³²⁵ Okudzhava, "Vesna," *Stikhotvoreniia* 346.

³²⁶ Okudzhava, "Vesna," *Stikhotvoreniia* 346.

[*Praise God*!]!³²⁷ at the first signs of the new season. Suddenly he is able to breathe once more:

из самого сердца народа
вырывается долгое «ах!»

(From the very heart of the people
There breaks a long “Ah!”)³²⁸

In Okudzhava's poetics, the onset of spring constitutes the point of departure for a range of events progressing linearly into the future; autumn, in contrast, reminds of time's circularity. Fall poems have no political associations, they come without any drastic political baggage and it is, most likely, why they do not progress linearly. What happens in politically neutral autumn has no impact on events in the future. Instead, Nature's preparations for stagnation-associated winter simply prompt nostalgia for yet another passing summer.

In some poems, such as *Осень в Кахетии* [*Autumn in Kakhetia*], *Осень ранняя...* [*Early Autumn...*] and *Осень в Царском Селе* [*Autumn in Tsarskoe Selo*], the central theme does indeed make a shift from Nature to the human sphere, with falling leaves alluding to human destiny and transience. However, their tone naturally never reaches a fever pitch matching that of the spring poems, bursting with life.

Ночь прощания с летом [*Night of Farewell to Summer*], represents the relatively static nature of these fall poems, reading like a static painting complete with finishing touches. Peasant women, tired after the harvest, have set aside their sickles and sit in a tableau before a bonfire. Calm also dominates *Сентябрь* [*September*], a peaceful song in praise of country living. The urban crush is far away:

Чем дальше от Москвы, тем чище дух крестьянства.

³²⁷ Okudzhava, “Vesna,” *Stikhotvoreniia* 347.

³²⁸ Okudzhava, “Vesna,” *Stikhotvoreniia* 347.

(The further from Moscow, the purer the peasant soul.)³²⁹

Both people and nature are silent, their yearly rituals unchanged in the past and unchanging in the future.

Some of Okudzhava's Nature poems focus on geography rather than the passing seasons—the poet had a particular fascination with Georgia, which he presents as an utterly unique space in the former USSR. Okudzhava had strong connections to both Georgian and Armenian culture, language and traditions since childhood. He talks about this in one of his interviews:

Не то что стихи не могу писать, и говорить не могу [на грузинском]. Потому что в детстве, когда меня часто возили к родственникам, к бабушке в Тбилиси, я во дворе, общаясь с детьми, говорил и по-грузински и по-армянски, потому что, во-первых, были и грузины, и армяне, а во-вторых, я сам – наполовину грузин, наполовину армянин, и мне приходилось слушать и тот, и другой язык, я быстро усваивал, и я легко говорил. Но потом так сложилось – всю жизнь жил в Москве, в России, и я постепенно все это забывал. Ну так, какой-то застольный, бытовой разговор очень примитивный я понимаю, а уж стихи писать – конечно... Тут по-русски никак не получается, а вы – на грузинском...

(It isn't that I can't write poetry [in Georgian]—I can't even speak. Because during my childhood, on our frequent trips to my relatives, to my grandmother's in Tbilisi, I spoke both Georgian and Armenian when I mixed with the kids in the yard—firstly because there were both Georgians and Armenians around, and secondly because I'm half Georgian and half Armenian myself, so I happened to listen to one language, and then the other. I picked them up quickly and had no trouble speaking. But then I ended up living my whole life in Moscow, Russia, and gradually forgot all of that. So there it is—I can understand very primitive, everyday conversation around the table, but when it comes to writing poems, of course... Here I am barely making it in Russian, and you bring up Georgian...)³³⁰.

³²⁹ Bulat Okudzhava, "Sentiabr'," *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 279.

³³⁰ Petrakov 8.

The Georgian poems constitute a sub-group unto themselves³³¹, and they seem to be the only “Nature” poems that are indeed escapist, idealistic and even romantic. The reason for this kind of treatment of the Georgia-related poems may be hidden in the Georgian Okudzhava’s background, his unspoiled Georgia-related memories and his tendency to idealize the distant past and places linked with it (just as it was in the case of the Old Arbat poems). The Georgian poems include such lovely pieces as *Картли* [*Kartli*], a hymn to the beauty and strength flowing from the Kartliiskii Range just north of Tbilisi. In these hills, time flows more slowly and the people never rush:

Он один – маэстро.	
Ему не полагается-	
	спеша.
Пускай они спешат. Пускай надежды	
хватают, как одежды, не дошив.	
Он будет азиатом,	
	как и прежде...
Спешат невежды...	
	Он – нетороплив.
(He alone is the master.	
He is not meant to	
	Rush.
Let others rush. Let them grasp	
Their hopes, like clothes, unfinished.	
He will be an Asian,	
	As before...
The ignorant rush...	
	He is unhurried.) ³³²

The Georgian countryside is dotted with *dukhangs*—Caucasian pubs—and the smells of kebab and red Georgian wine hang heavy on the air.

Poems such as *Последний мангал* [*The Last Mangal*], *Храмули* [*Khramuli*] and *Руиспирѝ* [*Ruispiri*] repeatedly portray the locals in moments of festivity and relaxation. The lyrical hero of the ballad “*Руиспирѝ*” finds himself swept up in a conversation with

³³¹ Тбилиси – [Tbilisi], Последний мангал – [The Last Mangal], Утро в Тбилиси – [Morning in Tbilisi], Детство [«Я еду Тифлисом в пролетке...»] – [Childhood [«I am riding Tiflis by open carriage...»], Вывески – [Signboards], as well as the ballad Руиспирѝ – [Ruispiri].

³³² Bulat Okudzhava, “Tbilisi,” *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 285.

the *dukhan*-keeper in an eponymous Ruispiri village—the immediacy of his surroundings leaves him with no desire to return to his distant writer’s life in the city. The Georgian teaches him the profound difference between a life well lived and the one he leads back home in his town:

Учит он меня весело жить
И смеяться...

(He teaches me to live joyfully
And to laugh...) ³³³

While the writer’s creative profession will not let him accept the stiffness of the city, neither can it wholly open him to the freedom of the mountain people. In this state of limbo, his first reaction to the *dukhan*-keeper’s lessons is unthinkingly defensive:

Я пытаюсь его усмирить,
как придется,
разумнее быть
призываю...

(I am trying to calm him,
However I can,
I urge him
To be wiser...) ³³⁴

But they drink long into the night, and he has an ecstatic revelation as his urban values gradually loosen their hold. The reader sees him comparing the mountains to paradise in the following simile:

Все так правильно в этом краю,
как в раю!
Не его ли мы ищем?

(Everything is so right in these parts,
Like in heaven!
Isn’t that what we’re looking for?) ³³⁵

The Georgian’s preternatural simplicity and joy manifest themselves in a generosity entirely foreign to that of the modern world—at one point, he brings dawn to

³³³ Bulat Okudzhava, “Ruispiri,” *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 289.

³³⁴ Okudzhava, “Ruispiri,” *Stikhotvoreniia* 289.

³³⁵ Okudzhava, “Ruispiri,” *Stikhotvoreniia* 290.

the lyrical hero on a platter. In return, the lyrical hero openly admits he is unable to give a thing:

Он зарю
мне на блюде подносит,
и взамен ничего он не просит.
Я немею!...
Только сам ничего не дарю-
не умею.

(Dawn
He brings me on a platter,
And asks for nothing in return.
I am speechless!...
But I do not give anything myself—
I do not know how)³³⁶

When the *dukhan*-keeper decides to play his hand, the lyrical hero can barely respond. His feeble protests are drowned out by the Georgian's song as he plucks out his heart and soul, applies seasoning and exposes them to the healing powers of the fresh mountain wind. The lyrical hero finishes in a state of ecstasy, just as the owner makes a friendly toast to his imminent return to city life. This mysterious poem is a reminder that the most valuable gifts are not material—what matters is the ability to see oneself from another perspective, detached from the bustle of modern, civilized life.

The poems *Утро в Тбилиси*, *Детство* [«Я еду Тифлисом в пролетке...»] and *Вывески* all bring the reader spatially to the same Georgian town. They dramatize Tbilisi, but to an entirely different effect. To the three-year-old lyrical hero of *Детство*, the city is a tempting fantasyland:

[...] Всюду царит вдохновение,
и это превыше всего.

([...] Inspiration reigns everywhere,
And this is far higher than everything.)³³⁷

³³⁶ Okudzhava, "Ruispiri," *Stikhotvoreniia* 291.

³³⁷ Bulat Okudzhava, "Detstvo" [«Ja edu Tiflisom v proletke...»], *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 272.

Вывески, on the other hand, presents another panorama of young recruits on their way to the front. In this poem, confusion has intruded upon the magical Caucasian idyll, stripping the city of its incomparable spirit with threats of the equalizing horror of war. The universality of the experience is underlined by the naturalism of an anxiety and sadness that should be only too familiar to the Soviet reader. One watches a crowd of grieving women chase after the convoy of departing recruits, when suddenly the very signboards wrench their legs from their places along the street and join the women in their mad pursuit. It is all in vain—the young men are gone, life returns to its normal pace, and the signboards stand as they were before, inanimate and oblivious to the world around them. The Georgian setting affects this war-related poem: while the horror of leaving for the front is comparable with that expressed in other war poems, the physical distance of Georgia from the unfolding political events helps the inhabitants to return to their usual pace of life. Perhaps it has to do with their not fully grasping the true war horrors, with their being physically more distant from the front and living in a blessed state of semi-ignorance regarding world-shocking events.

The fantastic world of the Georgian poems contains some of the same spirit that Russians used to find in their native traditions. Far from ignoring this source of inspiration, Okudzhava constantly returns to draw from the well of his nation's folklore as well. V. Frumkin describes the result in his commentary on Okudzhava's songs:

Песни Булата Окуджавы – явление не столько книжной, сколько устной поэзии. Обращены они прежде всего к слуху, а не к зрению, и в этом смысле близки фольклору. Как в народной песне, все в них изменчиво, подвижно и текуче.

(The songs of Bulat Okudzhava are not so much a literary phenomenon as an oral, poetic one. First and foremost they address the ears, not the eyes, and in this sense they are close

to folklore. As in a folk song, everything in them is changeable, shifting and fluid.)³³⁸

If this is true of Okudzhava's poetry as a whole, how much more so for the poems that consciously reproduce folkloric preoccupations and motifs. An entire group of poems, in fact, may be identified as "Folklore" poems.

The poems that Okudzhava bases on Russian folk songs display their own variety of metrical particularities. Poems such as *Марфа, Звезды сыплются в густую траву...*, *Все ты мечешься день-деньской* and *Кольцо* [Ring] are all the spiritual descendants of traditional Russian tonic folk poetry, such as the *bylina*. The rhythmic commonalities among members of this group are as many as they are obvious. Aside from the masculine and feminine clausulas that they share with conventional written poetry, they also display a heavy share of the dactylic feminine rhymes so typical of the *bylina*. As would be expected from oral poetry, they also make far greater use of syntactical, lexical, and phonetic parallelisms and repetitions—everything from repeated verses, words and syllables to repeated consonantal strings and assonances constitutes an aid in memorization and recital.

Among the most important of the syntactical repetitions is the anaphora, as in the following example from the poem *Кольцо*:

*Посчитали версты,
пошагали оба,
радовались,
горевали вдосталь...*

(They counted the versts,
They both walked away,
They were happy,
They drowned in grief...) ³³⁹

³³⁸ Frumkin, Commentary, 65 *pesen* 13.

³³⁹ Bulat Okudzhava, "Kol'tso," *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 158.

Aside from a striking thematic unity and propensity for colloquial words and expressions³⁴⁰, they are stylized in such a way, that the reader seems to be reading a folk song that tends to exhibit traditional parallelism and refrains, often including the regular reduplication of entire successive lines. For example, eight such repetitions bind the poem *Все ты мечешься день-деньской...* [*You just rush around all day long...*] together as a perfect rhythmic whole:

Цвет голубой – у тебя под рукой. (A)
 Цвет голубой – у тебя под рукой. (A)
 А тебе почему-то нужен другой. (B)
 А тебе почему-то нужен другой. (B)

(You have the colour blue in hand.
 You have the colour blue in hand.
 And yet you need another one.
 And yet you need another one).³⁴¹

In this group of folksong/poems, the stylised chorus will often serve as a structural indicator of their folk origin rather than a condensation of some central theme.

Stylization becomes the meaning in the poem *Звезды сыплются в густую траву...* [*The stars are falling on the thick grass...*]:

Ты пошли мне, Лазаревка, жену,
 Как ты, Лазаревка, ласковую,
 Как ты, Лазаревка, крутую в мороз,
 Как ты, Лазаревка, жаркую...

(Lazarevka, you send me a wife,
 Like yourself, Lazarevka, kind,
 Like yourself, Lazarevka, stern in the frost,
 Like yourself, Lazarevka, passionate...)³⁴²

³⁴⁰ A short list of examples: *день-деньской* [*all day long*], *звени-звени* [*ring-ring*], *тонкий-тонкий* [*slim-slim*], *баштан* [*pumpkin field*], *прыть* [*speed*], *возка* [*carriage*]; along with *кабы*, a colloquial version of “if”, *изба*, a type of peasant hut; countless bird and plant names (*чечетка* [*redpoll*], *щегол* [*goldfinch*], *ромашка* [*camomile*]); rustic diminutives such as (*девчоночки* [*little girls*] and *гармошка* [*little accordion*]); not to mention strictly folkloric expressions including *О, река...* [*Oh, river...*] and *моя радость* [*my darling*] as an invocation of the modern bogatyr’.

³⁴¹ Bulat Okudzhava, “Vse ty mechesh’sia den'-den'skoi...,” *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 166.

³⁴² Bulat Okudzhava, “Zvezdy sypliutsia v gustuiu travu...,” *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 163.

The threefold enumeration looks deceptively like a child's counting rhyme—yet Russian fairy tales revolve around endless repetitions of the number three³⁴³.

The phrase *Как ты, Лазаревка* is repeated three times, and three successive stanzas begin with *чтоб/чтобы/чтобы*. In *Марфа* the expression *что за мартом* [*what comes after March*] occurs twice, as does the line-initial word *Небо* [*Sky*]; the conjunction *и* [*and*] begins various lines as well. In fact, the consistent recurrence of the word *марта* [*of March*] in a poem entitled *Марфа* is no accident; by juxtaposing the two words, Okudzhava creates a paronomasia that inextricably binds their meanings. Thus, on a purely stylistic level, he is able to recreate the traditional folk archetype of the Earth Mother, in which a female figure is associated with Nature, when Spring's fertile soil nourishes new life. Once again the work's semantic layer finds a perfect reflection in its poetic construction.

Although Okudzhava does not show much preoccupation with the *bogatyr*', the heroic prince of the traditional *bylina* fable, he certainly lifts the related theme of the hero riding horseback on untracked roads. Witness such poems as *Все ты мечешься день-деньской...*, *Куда вы подевали моего щегла?* [*Where Did You Put my Goldfinch?*], *Сказка* [*Fairytale*], *Марфа* [*Martha*], *Лето* [*Summer*], *А месяц тонкий-тонкий* [*But*

³⁴³ The poems "Goluboi sharik" and "Raz i dva" also exhibit triple repetitions. As Grigorii Svirskii, *Na lobnom meste: Literatura nraystvennogo soprotivleniia (1946-1976 gg.)* (London: Novaia literaturnaia biblioteka, 1979) 467-69 points out: *При всей своей новизне и ультрасовременности Булат Окуджава каноничен. Это милая сердцу русская каноничность. Каноны фольклора: тройной зачин, тройная строфика [...]. И повторы, привычные народному сердцу песенные повторы. Современнейший Окуджава весь настроен на русском песенном фольклоре. В сочетании с собственными, не заемными чувствам, опытом, в сочетании с доверительностью, открытостью – каждый слушатель твой друг – фольклорный настрой придавал его песенной поэзии силу всепроникающей радиации, которая раскрепощала душу.* [*With his innovation and ultra-modernity, Bulat Okudzhava is canonical. This is heart-warming Russian canonicity. The canons of folklore: threefold openings, threefold stanzas.... And the repetitions—the singing repetitions that beat with the national heart. This modern Okudzhava is all based on Russian balladry. In conjunction with unborrowed, personal feelings and experience, in conjunction with trustfulness and candour—every listener is your friend—the folkloric mood imparts his sung poetry with an all-penetrating radiance that unshackles the soul.*].

the Moon is So, So Thin], *Под копытами снег голубой примят...* [*The blue snow is trampled under hoof...*], *В южном прифронтовом городе на рынке* [*At Market In a Southern City on the Front*], and *Ночной разговор* [*A Conversation at Night*], the last of which contains these words:

И снова он едет один
без дороги
во тьму.

(And again he rides alone
Without a road
Into the darkness.)³⁴⁴

Okudzhava's "Folklore" poems are, of course, the stylized productions of a relatively urbane artist. Okudzhava may choose to express his cultural and lifestyle ideals through the simple, naïve forms of folk art, but ultimately he is given the lie by the skilful instrumentation he applies to his work—by his use of poetic devices. Both the stylization and profundity of these poems are reminiscent of the Russian Romantic ballad—everything about them, right down to their lack of enjambment, demonstrates their intention to be sung.

This chapter can only hope to graze the surface of the Okudzhava's extensive treatment of City, Nature and Folklore. Nevertheless, these themes are minor in comparison with the author's War poems, as we have seen, or those dealing with man's inner world, his feelings, destiny and the flow of time, which are yet to come. The final chapter will attempt to sketch the contour of these last great themes as they are manifested in Okudzhava's work.

³⁴⁴ Bulat Okudzhava, "Nochnoi razgovor," *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 233.

Chapter 5

MAN'S INNER WORLD

Целый век играет музыка. Затянулся наш пикник.
 Тот пикник, где пьют и плачут,
 любят и бросают.

(Music plays through the century. Our picnic dragged on.
 That picnic of drinking and crying,
 Loving and leaving.)³⁴⁵

Когда бы любовь и надежду
 связать воедино,
 какая бы (трудно поверить)
 возникла картина!
 Какие бы нас миновали
 напрасные муки,
 а только прекрасные муки
 глядели б с чела ...

(If ever love and hope
 Were bound together,
 What a picture (though hard to believe)
 Would appear!
 What vain sufferings
 We would be spared,
 And only beautiful sufferings
 Would mark our foreheads...) ³⁴⁶

The war had a deeper impact on Okudzhava's values than any other event in his long and storied life. While its horrors filled the hearts of his contemporaries with an indelible pessimism and lack of faith in humanity, naked hate could never satisfy his constructive impulses—instead he urged his fellow citizens to forget their injuries and rebuild the nation out of devotion to the common good.

The poet's belief in good also acts as a method of self-defence. It is not simply that Okudzhava condemns all forms of aggression—he anticipates the needs of his fellow

³⁴⁵ Bulat Okudzhava, "Chudesnyi val's," *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 218.

³⁴⁶ Bulat Okudzhava, "Ia vnov' povstrechalsia s Nadezhdoi—priatnaia vstrecha...", *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 359.

man, wishing unto others what he would have them wish unto him³⁴⁷. Such is Okudzhava's life credo, spread to his neighbours through his poetry:

[...] Сто раз я нажимал курок винтовки,
а вылетали только соловьи.

([...] A hundred times I squeezed my rifle's trigger,
Only to have nightingales fly out.)³⁴⁸

Okudzhava finds the meaning of life in everyday happiness, easily obtained when one lives in harmony with Nature and a few simple moral virtues, refusing to harm one's fellow creatures. This is the goal of the ethical man. In this state, sin is easily forgiven:

Царь небесный пошлет
отпущение мне
и прощение...
а иначе зачем
на земле этой вечной живу?

(The Lord of Heaven will send me
Absolution
And pardon...
Otherwise, why would I
Be living on this eternal earth?)³⁴⁹

The poet's art is a powerful vehicle for sharing his positive philosophy with a large group of readers. The present chapter deals with the poems that suggest following

³⁴⁷ Aleksandr E. Petrakov, Bulat Okudzhava: 'la nikomu nichego ne naviazyval...' contains many references in this connection. Compare the following, from p. 51: *Я ценю людей, которые строят своё благополучие не за счёт благополучия других. Я ценю людей, которые уважают личность. Потому что коллектив уважать мы учились долго и много лет – пора начать уважать личность. [I value people whose well-being hasn't come at the expense of the well-being of others. I value people who respect the individual. Because we were taught to value the collective for so many years— now is the time to value the individual.]*

Or this, from p. 52:

А что касается кредо, ну я скажу вам – у меня есть припасённый такой вариант: нужно строить своё благополучие не за счёт благополучия других. [Well, as for my credo, I'll stick to my version -: your well-being must not come at the expense of the well-being of others.]

Or further, from p. 271:

И, самое главное, мы не должны терять человеческого достоинства – в любых ситуациях: мы должны быть людьми, мы должны уважать окружающих, не только себя. [And, most importantly, we mustn't lose our human dignity—we must remain human in all situations; we must respect those around us, not only ourselves.]

³⁴⁸ Okudzhava, "To padaia, to snova narastaia...", Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia 128.

³⁴⁹ Bulat Okudzhava, "Gruzinskaia pesnia," Stikhotvoreniia (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 312.

the simple moral virtues of Faith, Hope and Love (for both human beings and inanimate objects) and living in harmony with Nature; those representing the poet's Epicurean and Socratic, as opposed to Marxist, worldview. The chapter then focuses on poems stressing the importance of making decisions, forgiving, actively fighting for lost happiness and responsibility of building one's own and unique life path, and poems about dying. There will also be mention of poems dealing with such topics as stupidity, egoism, covetousness and slander.

Okudzhava never asserted any exclusive claim to Truth—in stark contrast to a country where such commodities were brutally monopolized. He cultivated a profound respect for the inner boundaries of each and every reader, allowing them to take from his poetry whatever they might find of interest, assistance or use:

Приходят разные люди,
По зернам уносят.
[...]
И тает мое богатство,
И мне не жалко.

(Various people come,
Each carrying off a seed...
[...]
And my richness melts away,
And I am not dismayed.)³⁵⁰

Okudzhava's message boils down to three virtues that are not easy to master: *вера* [faith]³⁵¹, *надежда* [hope] and *любовь* [love]. All three are common names for Russian women, and they naturally lend themselves to incarnation as Okudzhava's personal trinity, as in *Три сестры* [Three Sisters]:

³⁵⁰ Bulat Okudzhava, "Eshcho nichego ne pogaslo...", *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 176.

³⁵¹ Once again, Petrakov has collected Okudzhava's thoughts on the matter in *Bulat Okudzhava: 'la nikomu nichego ne naviazval...'* 270: *Вся наша жизнь состоит из крушения и возникновения надежд, потому что без надежды жить нельзя. Всё равно у меня есть надежда. У меня есть надежда. [Our whole life consists of rising and falling hopes, because life without hope is impossible. Whatever the case, I have hope. I do have hope.]*

Три сестры, три жены, три судьи милосердных
открывают бессрочный кредит для меня.

(Three sisters, three wives, three merciful judges
Extend me unlimited credit.)³⁵²

The first of the three graces, Faith, just as Hope and Love, has the power to bring about the impossible:

Просто
Нужно очень верить
Этим синим маякам,
И тогда неожиданный берег
Из тумана выйдет к вам.

(You simply
Need great faith
In this blue lighthouse,
So that the unexpected shore
Will emerge unto you from the mist.)³⁵³

This same Faith reminds people of better times even in the midst of war, when the good seems to have left the world forever (*Это случится...*).

He верю в бога и судьбу [*I Don't Believe in God and Destiny*], also stands as a testament of faith—though not of faith in God, who is here dismissed as *бессилен* [*helpless*]. For the lyrical hero, the wise use of man's own strength is all, so long as he can maintain the purity of his actions: *О, руки были бы чисты! А остальное все приложится...* [*O! That our hands were clean! And all the rest will fall into place...*].

Hope appears in many of Okudzhava's poems and songs,³⁵⁴ most often with its sisters, Faith and Love. Hope is the force that helps his heroes persevere³⁵⁵. It is

³⁵² Bulat Okudzhava, "Tri sestry," *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 184.

³⁵³ Bulat Okudzhava, "Ne brodiagi, ne propoitsy....," *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 142.

³⁵⁴ *Песенка о Моцарте* [*A Song about Mozart*], *Сентиментальный марш* [*The Sentimental March*], *Над глубиной бездонных вод* [*Above the Depths of Fathomless Waters*], *Женщины-соседки, бросьте стирку и шитье ...* [*Women-neighbours, leave laundry and sewing...*], *В больничное гляну окно, а там, за окном-Пироговка ...* [*I look through the hospital window, and there I see Pirogovka...*], *А годы уходят, уходят ...* [*And years go by and by...*], *Тиль Уленшпигель* [*Til Eulenspiegel*].

³⁵⁵ Anatoly Vishevsky, *Soviet Literary Culture in the 1970s: The Politics of Irony* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993) 57.

prominent in the titles of certain poems, such as *Я вновь повстречался с Надеждой...* (*I ran into Hope again...*); in many others, such as *Затихнет шрапнель* (*The Shrapnel will Fall Silent*), its name is mentioned briefly or not at all, yet its presence permeates the work. On the whole, titles really are no indication of the theme of hope within—*Песенка о ночной Москве* (*The Song of Moscow at Night*) is visited by nothing less than the *надежды маленький оркестрик под управлением любви* [*little orchestra of hope with love at the baton*], happily marching through the verses in time.

Hope is least evident in difficult times, yet this is precisely when it is most needed. Hope is no simple gift, but an edifice built through long, constant toil:

Я строил замок надежды. Строил-строил.
Глину месил. Холодные камни носил.
Помощи не просил.

Мир так устроен:
Была бы надежда. Пусть не хватает сил.

(I was building a castle of hope. Building and building away.
I kneaded the clay. I carried cold stones.
Help I did not seek.

Thus is built the world:
With hope, you needn't even have strength.)³⁵⁶

At times the obstacles are so great, they cause the hope of Hope herself to falter:

Фортуны верткую свою воспитываю жить открыто,
надежду — не терять надежды, доверие — проснуться вновь.

(I train my agile fortune to live openly,
And hope—lest we lose hope and trust—to wake afresh.)³⁵⁷

People have always desired what they cannot attain—and even this simple impulse is sublimated when it becomes the cause for hope:

Ведь у надежд всегда счастливый цвет,
надежный и таинственный немного,

³⁵⁶ Bulat Okudzhava, "Zamok Nadezhdy," *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 224.

³⁵⁷ Bulat Okudzhava, "Puteshestvie po nochnoi Varshave v drozhkakh," *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 313.

особенно когда глядишь с порога,
особенно когда надежды нет.

(Hopes always have a happy tint,
Reliable and a bit mysterious,
Especially when peering from the threshold,
Especially when no hope is left.)³⁵⁸

Hope keeps man's gaze fixed on higher goals. It attaches itself to those who tread
a path of unflagging self-improvement, who move on a vertical plane:

Над тревогой завсегдатаев, над ужасом невежд,
Похороненная заживо, являешься опять
Тем, кто жаждет не высиживать, а падать и взлетать

(Above the alarm of the regulars, above the horror of the ignorant,
Buried alive, you reappear
To those who long not to sit it out, but to fall and soar)³⁵⁹

The circus here is life in microcosm, its habitués cringing and base, deprived of
any hope. A few brave souls fly far above the rest, their fears counterbalanced by an
uncommon hope. It is this hope that allows them to shine, against and despite the depths
to which their hopeless peers have sunk.

When life is at its worst, hope carries the true optimist into the heavens and leaves
his hardships lying far below, as in the following fragment:

И вырастают вместо крыльев тревог
надежды крылья.

(And instead of the wings of alarm
Grow the wings of hope.)³⁶⁰

Just as no one has the right to rob another of his hope, there can be no greater gift
than the hope that a man thinks was lost forever (see *Я дарю тебе к светлому
празднику... [I Give You on This Special Occasion...]*).

³⁵⁸ Bulat Okudzhava, "Podmoskov'e («Mart namechaetsia...»)," *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 128.

³⁵⁹ Bulat Okudzhava, "Tsirk," *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 293.

³⁶⁰ Bulat Okudzhava, "Ia ukhozhu ot puli....," *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 146.

Я дарю тебе к светлому празднику... (1967) reads as an intimate confession of hope and love, an apostrophe to an indeterminate “you.” In the author’s way of thinking, to love is to give all to one’s beloved—whether or not this is in fact possible. Readers are introduced to the poem through the concrete description of a celebration in the first stanza, in which the lyrical hero alludes to the many gifts he will be giving. It soon becomes evident, however, that each gift can only be described in the negative, using the particle *не* [*not, never*]: we hear of *блюда не сготовленные вовсе* – *meals, never prepared*, windows *до сих пор не распахнутые* [*thus far unopened*], *цветы не проросшие* [*never-sprouted flowers*], the nonexistent beauty of the last item being somewhat jarringly described by the altogether objective adjectives *ароматные* [*aromatic*] and *бархатные* [*velvety*]³⁶¹. From the above-mentioned windows, the lyrical hero looks down onto a road; the road might very well be a figment of his imagination. Everything has been removed from the plane of reality, except for his promise of an exceptional gift.

The essence of *Я дарю тебе к светлому празднику...* is to be found precisely at those underdetermined sites where the reader is constrained to create meaning for himself—aposiopesis is used in the poem, drawing attention to the lyrical hero’s unrealized creation by replacing unfinished thoughts with ellipsis. The active reader must not only guess at the missing words, but at the significance of their omission in the first place; all that is clear is the divide between the wishes and the reality of the lyrical hero. If the poem had been written in the 30s, 40s or 50s, it might have been that the lyrical hero was completely disillusioned by the unreality of the Stalin era. Another possible

³⁶¹ Bulat Okudzhava, “Ja dar iu tebe k svetlomu prazdniku...,” *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 305.

interpretation in the Stalin and post-Stalin era is that the lyrical hero is simply too poor to afford any material gifts. All he can give of himself are his heart and feelings, both as ephemeral as the flowers, which have not bloomed yet. This interpretation would seem designed to bring the reader to a greater appreciation of the value of intangibles. In real life, nobody gives away a smell, a sound, or a look, but they can give at least two of the lyrical hero's gifts—the gifts of hope and love. Over the course of the stanzas, the act of giving has been removed from the material to the metaphysical level, all without recourse to any intellectual sleight of hand. The reader is brought out of the circle of usual, automatic word associations that do not demand any intellectual effort. Impossible word associations alone are enough to transform the expected enumeration of gifts into a thread of mysterious phenomena—it is Okudzhava's unexpected, innovative approach to old, familiar words that refreshes and makes of them a poem, rather than a heartless list: "I give you a lot of things: a book, some boots, a bike, some money tucked inside a card." The final message of this extended metaphor, so unexpected by the reader, seems to be that the value of a gift depends on the feelings of the giver, and not on its price tag. This poem provides an example of Okudzhava's predilection for the ineffable, where the essence of his works is merely hinted at or else elided altogether.

The theme of love pervades the whole of Okudzhava's poetry, manifesting itself in positive thinking and outpourings of passion for humanity and life. He also addresses a fair share of love poems to women, their fascinating inner and outer beauty, and very often the moment of parting³⁶². But this love is never confined to a single recipient, be it

³⁶² *Свет в окне* [*Light at the Window*], *Эта женщина! Увижу и немею...* [*This woman! I see her and go dumb...*], *Эх ты, шарик голубой* [*Oh You, Blue Ball*], *По Смоленской дороге* [*On the Road to Smolensk*], *Благодарные жены безумных поэтов* [*Thankful Wives of Crazy Poets*], *Прощание с новогодней елкой* [*Farewell to the New Year Tree*], *Надежды красная дверь* [*The Red Door of Hope*], *Дежурный по*

a wife, a parent, or even a cherished childhood street—rather, it is one facet of an all-encompassing goodwill. In *65 песен* [65 Songs], Okudzhava speaks of his desire for this transformational virtue *to take its rightful place in society*³⁶³, and accordingly devotes lines to every aspect of love, from first stirrings (for example: *А как первая любовь – она сердце жмет...* [And the first love – it squeezes your heart...]) to bitter good-byes (for example: *Дорожная песня* [A Road Song]).

All things are candidates for his outpourings: works of art; cozy rooms (think of *Эта комната* [This Room]); and certainly, as it was seen in the fourth chapter, the Arbat Street of his childhood.

In all these greater and lesser love poems, however, the poems about women are the ones that stand out. When they appeared in the 1960s, their honesty and intimacy, more than any particular poetic devices they might have employed, announced a sharp departure from prevailing mores of the Stalin era. The entire concept of womanhood had long been appropriated for Party purposes, and was rarely used in reference to individuals³⁶⁴.

апрелю [The April Duty Officer], *Часовые любви* [Love Guards], *Всю ночь кричали петухи* [The Cocks Crowed All Night], *Песенка о московском муравье* [Song about a Moscow Ant], *Мы стоим – крестами руки* [We Stand, Arms Crossed], *Раскрываю страницы ладоней* [I Open the Pages of My Palms], *Как время беспощадно...* [How merciless is Time...] and others.

³⁶³ Я бы хотел, чтобы любовь заняла в человеческом обществе надлежащее ей место. [I'd like love to take its rightful place in society.]. Okudzhava, *65 pesen* 163.

³⁶⁴ Michael Binyon explains the State's various reinventions of femininity in *Life in Russia* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1984) 51: *It is appropriate that Russians think of their country as a mother, for in few other countries do women play such a vital and predominant role. Throughout Russian history the mother has been the focus of the Russian family, and her image is that of a large, warm, strong woman, almost enveloping her family in her ample bosom. Russian women have traditionally been the backbone of the nation, bearing and rearing the younger generation, safeguarding and transmitting Russian values, culture and religion. They have also tended to do a disproportionate amount of work – toiling in the fields, digging roads, driving trams, working in heavy industry. The Russian Revolution set out to change all that. It granted women full legal equality with men, and encouraged them to join in the task of building up a new society. Women were no longer to be slaves in the kitchen or underpaid workers in sweatshops. See as well: Binyon, *Life in Russia* 117: *The experiment was Utopian, and like much else in the Revolution, quietly reversed by Stalin. Strictly enforced 'communist morality' replaced free love as the official ideal. The state could not afford to take over the job of being mother to every child, and after the appalling**

The word *love*, too, had become a term for the public, collective adoration of the State—and Okudzhava became an innovator simply by infusing it with intimate, personal feelings:

Долгое время у нас почти не пели о любви, и в самом слове «женщина» было что-то сомнительное. Из протеста против лживости и пуританского ханжества я решился впервые за много лет воспеть на русском языке женщину как святыню, пасть пред ней на колени [...] здесь мне ирония отказала. Если я и шутил, то только над собой как героем этих песен, которые изображали беспомощность и неудачи мужчин...

(For a long time, we barely sang about love here, and the very word “woman” had something dubious about it. Out of protest against falsity and puritanical hypocrisy, I decided to do something that hadn’t been done in Russian for many years, and extolled Woman as a shrine—to fall to my knees before her ... but my irony failed me here. If this was a joke, then the joke was on me, as the hero of these songs portraying the helplessness and misfortune of men...).³⁶⁵

The theme of man’s powerlessness before an idealized woman anchors such poems as *Ваше величество, женщина* [*Your Majesty, Woman*], where the unknown woman only disillusiones the lyrical hero when he learns that she *mistook the door [...], the street, the city and the century* [*перепутала дверь [...], улицу, город и век*]³⁶⁶. The fact is that Okudzhava would gladly idealize any woman as “your Majesty”: even the simple Naden’ka, in her greasy work clothes and ridiculous beret, from *Из окон корочкой несет поджаристой...* [*The smell of crusts wafts from the windows...*]; the conductress in *Нацеленный глаз одинокого лося...* [*Focused eye of a lonely elk*]; and the very young heroine of *Песенка о комсомольской богине* [*Song about a Komsomol*

slaughter of the Second World War, motherhood became the sacred duty of every Russian woman. But at the same time female labour became more and more vital in meeting the country’s ambitious economic targets. Immediately after the war women had to fill millions of jobs left vacant by the lost generation of men killed in battle. [...] ironically, the Russians are now searching for the old values of family and children. Today’s official image is not that of the bulky woman swinging a hammer to build communism, but of a domesticated mother contentedly fulfilling herself by bringing up children at home. It is the state that now wants to get women off the shopfloor and back to the hearth, while the younger generation has taken over the ideals of the early revolutionaries – free love, the smashing of traditional patterns of life.

³⁶⁵ Okudzhava, *65 pesen* 51.

³⁶⁶ Bulat Okudzhava, “Vashe Velichestvo, Zhenshchina...,” *65 pesen* 51.

Goddess]. Okudzhava's tendency to individualize the collective reaches its apex here, with a categorical symbol of officially sanctioned love—the Komsomol—joined with a quite un-Soviet *goddess*. It is a surprising stroke of irony that any member of the Komsomol might be praised and loved for her individual qualities, instead of her unconditional devotion to the State. In the above group of poems, this reverence is declared to be the product of an active, individual will—as opposed to the passive absorption of exterior cues, whether from the State or reality itself.

The lyrical hero sees beauty where he wants to see it: he gives hyperbolic praise to a woman who is *просто соседка/а/, стар/ая/ знаком/ая/* (*simply a neighbour, an old acquaintance*)³⁶⁷ and compares an unattractive woman in *ношеном, ситцевом, пестром* (*a worn, chintzy, motley dress*)³⁶⁸ dress with Aphrodite herself.

The cycle of poems titled *Стихотворения без названия* [*Poems Without a Title*], are dedicated to Okudzhava's wife Ol'ga, making numerous open professions of the following variety:

Я люблю эту женщину,
Очень люблю.

(I love this woman,
Love so much.)³⁶⁹

The cycle is also touched by a concern with departure, of the kind last seen in Okudzhava's war poetry, but which returns in full force in his love poems³⁷⁰. In

³⁶⁷ Bulat Okudzhava, "Esli spolna nadyshat'sia morskim aromatom priany...", *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 115.

³⁶⁸ Okudzhava, "Esli spolna nadyshat'sia morskim aromatom priany...", *Stikhotvoreniia* 115.

³⁶⁹ Bulat Okudzhava, "Stikhi bez nazvaniia," *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 228.

³⁷⁰ Love and parting are such close partners in Okudzhava's imagination, that it is no wonder so many tragic love poems are born from departures for the front: *До свидания, мальчики, Всему времечко свое...* [*There is a time for everything...*], *Танго* [*Tango*], *Под Мамонтовкой жгут костры* [*They Burn Fires Near Mamontovka*], *Дунайская фантазия* [*Danube Fantasy*], *Проводы юнкеров* [*The Cadets' Send-off*],

expressions evocative of *byliny*, the lyrical hero of the penultimate poem gallops off with his beloved *за десятую деревню* [*to the ends of the earth*]³⁷¹—but in the final poem of *Стихи без названия* the times and attitudes change, even though the situation is similar, yet reversed: it is the beloved woman who boards a train and leaves her man. The lyrical hero ignores the miles between them, remaining faithful and unflagging in his adoration:

И лес, и горизонт далекий,
и жизнь,
 как паровозный дым,
все—лишь к тебе,
 как те дороги,
которые
 когда-то
 в Рим.

(The woods, remote horizon,
Life itself,
 Like locomotive smoke,
All leads to you,
 Like those roads
Once
 Leading
 To Rome.)³⁷²

The ancient proverb, paraphrased in a poem that mentions modern means of transportation as well, leaves the impression that all the dramas of love have been endlessly recycled throughout the centuries, even though the times and attitudes would never be the same.

Okudzhava's allegorical *античная империя любви* [*ancient empire of love*]³⁷² has come upon unstable times—its *рекруты* [*recruits*]³⁷³ have become fickle, defending their vows only *до первого сражения своего* [*until their first battle*]³⁷⁴.

Песенка о солдатских сапогах [*The Song of Army Boots*], *Проводы у военкомата* [*Saying Good-Bye at the Enlistment Office*].

³⁷¹ Okudzhava, "Stikhi bez nazvaniia" *Stikhotvoreniia* 228.

³⁷² Bulat Okudzhava, "Iz poemy," *Veselyi barabanshchik* (London: Flegon Press, 1966) 74.

³⁷³ Okudzhava, "Iz poemy," *Veselyi barabanshchik* 74.

³⁷⁴ Okudzhava, "Iz poemy," *Veselyi barabanshchik* 74.

Deception has grown more common, and, like the third betrayal, *it is darker than night [...] worse than war* [а как третий обман – он ночи темней, [...] он войны страшней]³⁷⁵. A *furtive love* [любовь с оглядкой]³⁷⁶ replaces true love, which is now compared to a battlefield. This is how the lyrical hero talks about the issues of betrayed love and infidelity:

И для нее, как на года осады,
как против крепости, готовят здесь
и соглядатаев, и диверсантов,
и западни, и подкупы, и лесть.

(And for it /love/, as for years of siege,
As against a fortress, here they prepare
Investigators, saboteurs,
Traps, bribes and flattery.)³⁷⁷

The war did not only interrupt existing loves; it also set the scene for impossible, fleeting loves of its own. The romance in *Песенка кавалергарда* [*The Cavalry Guard's Song*] is one of these front-line affairs whose dissolution was built into its very fabric. Okudzhava's usual chimeras must bow to the poignancy of the moment:

Не обещайте деве юной
любви вечной на земле!

(Do not promise the young woman
Everlasting love on earth!)³⁷⁸

In *Медсестра Мария* [*Nurse Maria*], there is yet another description of the act of love, a subject foreign to the Soviet canon:

И Мария, раскинув руки,
плыла по этой реке.
И были черными и бездонными
голубые ее глаза.

(And Maria, arms outspread,

³⁷⁵ Bulat Okudzhava, "A kak pervaiia lubov' - ona serdtse zhmet...", *Bud' zdorov, shkoliar: Stikhi* (Frankfurt-Main: Posev, 1966) 194.

³⁷⁶ Okudzhava, "Iz poemu," *Veselyi barabanshchik* 74.

³⁷⁷ Okudzhava, "Iz poemu," *Veselyi barabanshchik* 75.

³⁷⁸ Bulat Okudzhava, "Pesenka Kavalergarda," *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 290.

Sailed on that river.
And black and fathomless
Were her blue eyes.)³⁷⁹

For Okudzhava, the end of an affair often necessitated yet further demonstrations of love. Even when it is obvious that there is nothing left to be salvaged, his lyrical hero refuses to abandon his old love or hope for it. The poem *Еще один романс* [*One More Romance*] finds the lyrical hero justifying a drought of letters from a woman who had promised to write:

Она, конечно, пишет мне, но... постарели почтальоны,
и все давно переменились адреса.

(Of course she's writing me, but ... the mailmen have grown old,
And everyone changed their address long ago.)³⁸⁰

Ironically, however, the inverse is also true—love itself necessitates parting. Parting caused by a man's leaving for the front is a very well developed love situation in Okudzhava's poetry. These poems are discussed in the "War" chapter of the present thesis. Parting is a voluntary act in peacetime, but this does not make it any easier:

[...] в разлуке невозможно жить без слез,
потому что перед ней две дороги – та и эта,
та прекрасна, но напрасна, эта, видимо, всерьез.

([...] Impossible to be separated without tears,
Because before her lie two roads: one and the other,
One beautiful, but in vain, and the other, apparently for real.)³⁸¹

For Okudzhava, love and parting are so closely intertwined that even the strongest love carries the burden of its own decay:

Две вечных подруги – любовь и разлука –
Не ходят одна без другой.

(Two everlasting friends—love and parting—

³⁷⁹ Bulat Okudzhava, "Medsestra Maria," *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 4.

³⁸⁰ Bulat Okudzhava, "Eshcho odin romans," *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 360.

³⁸¹ Bulat Okudzhava, "Ne soliutsia nikogda zimy dolgie i leta...", *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 254.

Never leave each other's side.)³⁸²

This overview of Okudzhava's "departure poems" may be concluded with the mention of the noteworthy *Снится или не снится?... [Is it a dream?...]*, *Восхищенность вашим сердцем, вашим светом... [Enchantment with your heart, your light...]*, and *Соединение сердец – старинное приспособление... [The union of hearts—an old contrivance...]*. In the last of these, the lyrical hero is unable to end a relationship philosophically, even though it is he who has lost his feelings for the other:

теряют всякое значение
все изречения мудрых книг
и умников нравоучения.

(All meaning is lost
From every wise books' maxim
And the moralizing of the learned.³⁸³

However, the lyrical hero knows that parting is a better solution than doubts and lies:

И если впрямь пришла пора,
все рассуждения напрасны:
что было – сплыло со двора...

(And if the time has really come,
All reasoning becomes useless:
What was – is not any more...)³⁸⁴

A final love poem will begin to point toward virtue's position in the context of Okudzhava's larger philosophy. In *Памяти Обуховой [In Memory of Obukhova]*³⁸⁵, the lyrical hero contemplates how much his life would have been impoverished without a certain beautiful female voice singing an old romance. To have a rich life, he concludes, each relationship, conversation and experience must be lived to the fullest:

³⁸² Bulat Okudzhava, "Dorozhnaia pesnia," *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 215.

³⁸³ Bulat Okudzhava, "Soedinenie serdets...", *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 229.

³⁸⁴ Okudzhava, "Soedinenie serdets...", *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* 229.

³⁸⁵ Nadezhda Andreevna Obukhova, the great Russian mezzo-soprano and contralto (1886-1961).

Когда б вы не спели тот старый романс,
Я умер бы, так и не зная о вас...

(If you hadn't sung this old romance,
I'd have died, without knowing of you at all...) ³⁸⁶

Okudzhava thirsted after all aspects of life, and even a long life would have seemed insufficient to him. The lyrical hero of *Давайте восклицать, друг другом восхищаться* [*Let's exclaim, let's admire each other*] urges humanity to make the most of every moment. Arguments must be replaced with spontaneous warmth, because without an open exchange of thoughts and opinions, there can be no experience, no dialogue, no life:

Высокопарных слов не стоит опасаться.
Давайте говорить друг другу комплименты—
Ведь это все любви счастливые моменты.

(It does not do to fear high-flown words.
Let us pay each other compliments—
Love's happy moments are exactly this.) ³⁸⁷

In these pieces, the reader will detect the echo of a hedonistic, Epicurean worldview. Epicurus's philosophy developed in close connection with the cult of life—if life, he believed, could unfold peacefully, without pain, illness or suffering, happiness had already been attained. Epicurus also felt the need to draw the fullest potential out of each of life's moments. The philosopher laid emphasis on “whatever makes your soul happy...”; he was known for his cult of friendship and a noble, refined life. The modest circle of friends and flowers in the garden are both examples of what was the most enjoyable aspect of life for his followers. Epicurus is quoted as saying:

So long as you do not overstep the boundaries of the law or good manners, do not sadden your neighbour, and do not lose the means for survival, you may use the wealth that life offers you as you wish. ³⁸⁸

³⁸⁶ Bulat Okudzhava, “Pamiati Obukhovoi,” *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 239.

³⁸⁷ Bulat Okudzhava, “Davaite vosklitsat', drug drugom voskhishchat'sia...,” *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 197.

In the poem *На полотне у Анны Беляковой...*, the lyrical hero refers to Socrates in what is the only direct mention of the well known Greek in Okudzhava's works:

И что-то есть, наверное, во мне
от [...] Сократа.

(And there is something, to be sure, in me
Of ... Socrates.)³⁸⁹

Okudzhava's voice can be heard in that of his first-person lyrical hero, and it seems safe to read this as a nod to another seminal influence on Okudzhava's thinking. The Athenian philosopher was the first to single out moral values and to distinguish between ethical and general knowledge—although he made no claim to extensive learning, his intuition permitted him to tell good from evil. Socratic good had nothing to do with riches or fame, but depended on the fearless, individual pursuit of virtue. For him, happiness, reason and virtue were co-extensive. While ethical intellectualism was an important tool in this struggle, the philosopher also insisted on heeding the whisperings of one's own soul, as well as the divine: a man's soul would not allow him to harm his neighbour, while the divine provided moral insight.

Just as Okudzhava's treatment of the theme of love was a sign of change in Soviet letters, his rejection of Marxism in favour of ancient, Western models demonstrates the options that had begun to open to Russian writers in the years after 1953. At one point or another, Okudzhava's work deals with virtue and reason, ethics and the divine (think of his poem *Что такое душа?* [*What Is a Soul?*]), but never in an overly critical way. Perhaps Okudzhava is most indebted to Greek philosophy for his use of Socratic irony—

³⁸⁸ Compare Wl. Tatarkiewicz, *Historia filozofii* (Warsaw: PWN, 1988) 140 (*translation mine, M.R.*).

³⁸⁹ Bulat Okudzhava, "Na polotne u Anny Belyakovoi," *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 248.

the philosopher, like the poet, would feign simplicity to lure his audience into accepting his way of thinking³⁹⁰.

The figure of Okudzhava's lyrical hero provides a particularly rich source of insight into the writer's philosophy. As a rule, Okudzhava's poems lend themselves to narration: they almost always tell a short story, describe a location and time, and give an impression of the narrator as well. Reflecting the author's own ideals, the lyrical hero usually appears as a simple man of simple means, a man who would wear the same coat year after year. Content with what little life has to offer him, his greatest wish is to experience his simple life without the intrusions of war or mundane problems.

He prizes the absence of violence so highly that he often seems to lead an exclusively internal, emotional life. His attachment to this private philosophy, in turn, guarantees that his belief in good will never falter. He prefers to remain within the depths of his own emotional world, where he can uphold the principle of harmlessness toward his fellow human beings. All of these attributes found an extremely receptive audience in the post-Stalinist Soviet Union—while this character bore a certain similarity to the poor, schematized Socialist Realist hero, he can surely be interpreted as a total negation of the thoughtless, over-achieving Stakhanovism of his day. By using this persona, at once simple and intellectual, Okudzhava was able to reach a much wider circle of readers and, by the same token, introduce his non-violent philosophy to a large part of the population. His avoidance of conventionally edifying or overly estheticised messages points to the fact that his art was born from a need for self-expression and discussion with the intended

³⁹⁰ *Socratic irony: So called after Socrates whose favourite device was to simulate ignorance in discussion, especially by asking a series of apparently innocuous questions in order to trap his interlocutor into error.* Cuddon 837.

reader, a down-to-earth intelligentsia. In Okudzhava's work, the communicative function of the language always remains in the foreground, favoured over art-for-art's-sake.

While reason would dictate that no man should inflict pain on another, real life affords ample conditions for even involuntary harm. In *Заязжий музыкант целуется с трубой...* [*A touring musician kisses his trumpet...*], the lyrical hero watches a woman pine for a musician's attentions. The trumpeter remains aloof, entirely absorbed in his music—there is no room in his heart for both his art and the woman. Out of love for the suffering woman, the lyrical hero repeatedly begs her to come to her senses, because the artist's indifference can only cause her further pain.

Ты в чем виновата?... [What are you guilty of?] also concerns a lyrical hero apostrophizing an abandoned woman. He insists that no one should ever grow so dependent as to give up the struggle for their own rights—he defends the independence and dignity that should have caused her to flee as soon as she felt the humiliation of her lover's *half-love*³⁹¹:

А КТО В ТОМ ВИНЮЮ?
А ТЫ И ВИНЮЮ:
ВСЕ ТЕНЬЮ БЫЛА
У НЕГО ЗА СПИНОЮ.

(And whose fault is this?
The fault is yours:
You were always the shadow
Behind his back.)³⁹²

Ты в чем виновата?... is a love poem built around the structure of a folk song or counting rhyme: other examples include *Лето* [*Summer*] with its neglected heroine waiting by the window for her husband, as well as *Марфа* and *Звезды сыплются в густую траву...* [*The stars are falling on the thick grass...*].

³⁹¹ Bulat Okudzhava, "Ty v chem vinovata?...", *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 78.

³⁹² Okudzhava, "Ty v chem vinovata?...", *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* 78.

While prostitution was never officially recognized under Stalin's reign of terror, Okudzhava touches on the tragic taboo of this love trade in *Эта женщина такая...* [*This woman is like this...*] and *Песенка о моряках* [*The Song about Sailors*], where *припортовые царевны к ребятам временным спешат* [*The dockside tsarevnyas hurry to temporary boyfriends*]³⁹³.

Friends and friendship are a particularly important theme for Okudzhava, as evidenced by the quantity of his writing on the subject: in addition to his tributes to friends Kim, Danel', Galich and Vysotskii, there are poems such as *Песенка Белле* [*A Song for Bella (Akhmadulina)*], where he is ready to give his friends the most impossible gifts:

Я дал бы тебе крылья,
да у меня их нет.

(I'd have given you wings,
But I don't have any.)³⁹⁴

These poems emphasise the lifetime of work and devotion that must be put into fostering each friendship:

И до последнего часа
буду я верен друзьям.

(And until my last hour
I will be faithful to my friends.)³⁹⁵

Cult of friendship and life-affirming camaraderie is central to *Чувствую: пора прощаться...* [*I feel it's time to say goodbye...*] and also to *Грузинская песня* [*Georgian Song*], which additionally evokes Caucasian hospitality. These are two poems in which

³⁹³ Bulat Okudzhava, "Pesenka o moriakakh," *Kapli datskogo korolia: Kinostsenarii, pesni dlia kino* (Moscow: Kinotsentr, 1991) 217.

³⁹⁴ Bulat Okudzhava, "Pesenka Belle," *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 299.

³⁹⁵ Bulat Okudzhava, "Vitia, sygrai na gitare," *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 250.

soil, however, it is only a matter of years before *Фотографии друзей* [*Photographs of Friends*]³⁹⁸ are the only things that survive to testify to their fading memories.

Of all Okudzhava's hymns to friendship, however, the most known is perhaps *Старинная студенческая песня* [*An Old Student Song*]. Like *Взяться за руки не я ли призывал вас, господа?...* [*Didn't I call you gentlemen to join hands?...*], it is a call to strengthen the friendships that bind people, rather than weaken them with petty disputes. The power that comes from mutual cooperation can also be seen to have larger, political implications:

Как вожделенно жаждет век
нащупать брешь у нас в цепочке...
Возьмемся за руки, друзья,
чтоб не пропасть поодиночке.

(The century craves so keenly
To detect a gap in our chain...
Let's join hands, friends,
So we don't perish one by one.)³⁹⁹

Старинная студенческая песня is built with great regularity. Since the poem's semantic layer presents a comparison of the battle for friendship with battles in wartime, it requires a strong rhythm, tension and dynamism reminiscent of the Okudzhava's war poems⁴⁰⁰.

On the other end of Okudzhava's scale of values, there are the qualities that pose a threat to man's well-being and must be eschewed. Among these is plain stupidity and

³⁹⁸ Bulat Okudzhava, "Fotografii друзей," *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 281.

³⁹⁹ Bulat Okudzhava, "Starinnaia studencheskaia pesnia," *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 310.

⁴⁰⁰ It is written in iambic tetrametre, with hypermetrical even lines producing a pattern of alternating oxytonic (masculine) and paroxytonic (feminine) rhymes. At various points in all three stanzas, the initial iamb is replaced by a trochee. This phenomenon of transaccentuation repeats in stanzas 5, 11, 18, and 22. In the final two stanzas several pyrrhic feet may be noted. The perfect rhythm is fully achieved despite the occasional half rhyme, most of which are based on assonance and consonance. The stanzas are bound together through syntactical repetition: the parallels between the last two lines of the final two stanzas are especially strong, and these both find a weaker reflection in the lines of the first stanza.

stupid people claiming that the wise people around them are the truly ignorant ones. Stupidity is the central theme in poems such as *Песенка про дураков* [*The Song about Fools*], *Дама ножек не замочит* [*A Lady Won't Wet Her Dainty Feet*] and *Антон Палыч Чехов однажды заметил...* [*Anton Palych Chekhov once remarked...*].

Another dangerous type is the rich man, who cannot grasp the following simple lesson from *Стать богатеем иной норовит...* [*Some want to be rich...*]:

[...] не покупаются-
доброе имя, талант и любовь.

([...] you can't buy
A good name, talent or love.)⁴⁰¹

Egotists also make their appearance in this rogues' gallery (*Песенка о короле и солдатах* and *Я маленький, горло в ангине* [*I am Small and My Throat is Sore*]), as do the covetous (*Счастливчик* [*Lucky Guy*]) and slanderous (*Пробралась в нашу жизнь клевета...* [*Slander stole into our life...*]). The forgiveness of the good-hearted stands out against this backdrop, as in *Встреча* [*Meeting*], but theirs is an unequal contest if they choose to fight these evils alone. Okudzhava's championing of traditional friendship makes all the more sense in this context.

The value of solitude stands not in opposition to friendship, but parallel to it. Whereas gregarious, supportive friendship makes life easier, the virtues of seclusion may seem more elusive to the lonely people waiting for a letter to break their isolation (*Мой почтальон* [*My Postman*]) or to Muscovites lost and lonely in the crowd (*Московский муравей*).

Out of his belief in active self-fulfillment (*Чего не потеряешь—того, брат, не найдешь* – *Brother, you cannot find what isn't lost*)⁴⁰² and the defense of individual

⁴⁰¹ Bulat Okudzhava, "Stat' bogateem inoi norovit...", *Kapli datского korolia: Kinostsenarii, pesni dlia kino* (Moscow: Kinotsentr, 1991) 231.

rights, Okudzhava often encourages others to embark on a personal quest to regain their lost happiness. Okudzhava cherishes an active approach to life. The point of departure is:

Чего не потеряешь – того, брат, не найдешь

(What is not lost – you won't be able to find, brother.)⁴⁰³

A model for this process can be found in *Ночной разговор* [*A Conversation at Night*], where the seeker has only his instincts to lead him to that unknown, nameless joy, yet mounts his steed and sets off anyway:

-Ты что потерял, моя радость?-

кричу я ему.

И он отвечает:

-Ах, если б я знал это сам...

("What did you lose, my dear?"

I cry to him.

And he replies:

"Oh, if only I myself knew..."⁴⁰⁴

The poet often encourages his characters to look for the happiness they have lost during their life. The path of life frequently appears in Okudzhava's poetry, as a road full of obstacles and complications⁴⁰⁵:

Осторожней:

Топор под ногами!

А дороги назад сожжены!

(Be careful:

You're walking an axe's edge!

And the roads back are burned away!)⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰² Okudzhava, "Dal'niaia doroga," *Zamek nadziei* 264.

⁴⁰³ Okudzhava, "Dal'niaia doroga," *Zamek nadziei* 264.

⁴⁰⁴ Bulat Okudzhava, "Nochnoi razgovor," *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 233.

⁴⁰⁵ *Дальняя дорога* [Long Road], *По Смоленской дороге* [On the Road to Smolensk], *В саду Нескучном тишина* – [Silence in the Neskuchnyi Garden], *Пароход прощается басом...* [The steamship will say its bass goodbye...], *Дорога* [Road], *Арбатский дворик* [Arbat Yard], *Мы приедем туда, приедем...* [We will come there, come...], *Песенка об открытой двери* [Song About an Open Door], *Вот я добираться до своих высот...* [Here I am, attaining my Heights...].

⁴⁰⁶ Bulat Okudzhava, "Osen' ranniaia...", *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 253.

Вот я добираюсь до своих высот” [*Here I am, attaining my heights*] and *Голубой человек* [*Blue Man*] are two poems where the image is developed into a complex, tiring uphill climb. Having set his mind on a goal, the lyrical hero doggedly “clammers” [*карабкается*]⁴⁰⁷ toward it through the rest of his days, ignoring the onlookers’ lack of faith. His sheer effort drowns out any doubts that his days might be numbered, his potential limited, or his destiny preordained.

The lyrical hero of *Итак, я постарею...* [*And so I will grow old...*] is afraid the next generation will elbow him right off the path. Startled, he asks:

Неужели я постарею,
кашне закручу на шею

(Will I really grow old,
And wrap a scarf around my neck)⁴⁰⁸

Luckily, Okudzhava’s lyrical hero does not require much to be happy. He finds meaning all around him, in the details of everyday life⁴⁰⁹:

И мы идем за ними. Как в плену.
За буднями.
И в этом – наше счастье.

(And we follow behind them. Like prisoners.
Behind the workaday.
And therein lies our happiness.)⁴¹⁰

The path of life sometimes presents a fork in the road. For Okudzhava, the right choice will benefit not only the person concerned, but also his environment and those around him. Expedience must never be suffered to inflict harm, yet over-deliberation is

⁴⁰⁷ Bulat Okudzhava, “Goluboi chelovek,” *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 308.

⁴⁰⁸ Bulat Okudzhava, “Itak, ia postareiu...,” *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 161.

⁴⁰⁹ *Человек стремится в простоту* [*Man Aims for Simplicity*], *А месяц тонкий-тонкий* [*But the Moon is So, So Thin*], *Жизнь охотника* [*A Hunter’s Life*] and *Сынь, вечер, звезды* [*Evening, Pour Out the Stars*].

⁴¹⁰ Bulat Okudzhava, “Syp’, vecher, zvezdy,” *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 162.

an equal peril, as it *betrays* [изменяет]⁴¹¹ our fleeting moments. Time waits for no man, spiriting away untold numbers of choices as soon as they appear:

В жизни выбора не много:
Кому – день, а кому – ночь.
Две дороги от порога:
Одна – в дом, другая – прочь.

(Life presents few choices:
Day for some, for others night.
Two roads lead from the doorstep:
One within, and one without.)⁴¹²

Man has no one but himself to blame for the things he failed to do on the path of life. As the lyrical hero of *Аисты* [Storks] puts it, he cannot blame the storks. Because of this sense of personal responsibility, it can be said that Okudzhava promotes an active approach to life.

Магическое «два». Его высоты... [Magic “two”! Its heights...] is typical of Okudzhava’s “decision” poems. Here, the choices that await a man are clearly pointed out and the importance of the moment of choosing is underscored. Man encounters a milestone where his future hangs in the balance—one chapter is closed, and a new one begins.

While man must embrace a life of active adventure and risk, he must maintain the distance—some would say scepticism—needed to ensure meaningful, well-informed choices. Blind adherence to any philosophy is detrimental when the possibilities are so complex:

Что моя жизнь? – эти краски в окне.
Сколько же в них вариантов возможных...

(What is my life? – These colours outside my window.
How many different possibilities lie within them...)⁴¹³

⁴¹¹ Bulat Okudzhava, “Vremia,” *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 236.

⁴¹² Bulat Okudzhava, “Chaepitie na Arbate,” *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 181.

Walking the path requires such diligence, that man is often blinded to the colossal efforts that keep him moving forward. The lyrical hero of *Десять тысяч дорог, и тревог, и морок пережить...* [*To survive ten thousand roads, and fears, and shadows...*] is amazed by the force residing within humans:

Ты красив, человек!
Это надо ж такое суметь!

(You, Man, are beautiful!
Such a thing can be no accident!)⁴¹⁴

Man's progress is further assisted by an amazing intuition, which surfaces when he is faced with the most difficult of choices:

[...] умудряется он, чужак,
на ярмарке
поцелуев и драк,
в славословии
и гульбе
выбирать только любовь себе!
([...]Strange bird, he contrives
At the fair
Of kisses and fights,
In the glories
And depths
He takes for himself only love!)⁴¹⁵

In *Письмо Антокольскому* [*A Letter to Antokol'ski*], the path becomes a seaway. The lyrical hero is on board a ship that *flies across the waves like an arrow* [*летит по волнам стрелой*]⁴¹⁶, on a course known only to the captain. He has entrusted his fate to the hands of the crew, who now command where he will travel and in which port he will

⁴¹³ Bulat Okudzhava, "Iz Washingtona v naznachennyi srok," *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 328.

⁴¹⁴ Bulat Okudzhava, "Desat' tysiach dorog, i trevog, i morok perezhit'...", *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 559.

⁴¹⁵ Bulat Okudzhava, "Mgnovenno slovo: Korotok vek...", *Stikhotvoreniia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001) 279.

⁴¹⁶ Bulat Okudzhava, "Pis'mo Antokol'skomu," *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 106-07.

alight. These judges seem benign, however, when compared to the neighbours he has left behind—ones who would have greeted his death with little more than hypocrisy and bile.

Sea and ship are powerful emblems of freedom, reflections of a surging world far from dry stable land and the plodding security or—worse—suffocation of home. The true wanderer on the path of life is irresistibly impelled toward the liberation and unexpected discoveries that reside in the unknown. Boats symbolize the crossings into the unknown made by both the living and the dead⁴¹⁷. The *Penguin Dictionary of Symbols* goes on to state:

Ships conjure up ideas of strength and safety in the dangers of a voyage [...]. The ship is like a star, which orbits about its pole, the earth, but under human control. It is a picture of life in which the individual must choose a goal and steer a course.⁴¹⁸

The image of the boat stands against that of the sea, which is described as follows:

“Seas and oceans are images of the primal, undifferentiated state of primeval formlessness. [...] In sum, the sea is a symbol of the dynamism of life. Everything comes from the sea and everything returns to it. It is a place of birth, transformation and rebirth. With its tides, the sea symbolizes a transitory condition between shapeless potentiality and formal reality, an ambivalent situation of uncertainty, doubt and indecision, which can end well or ill. Hence the sea is an image simultaneously of death and of life.”⁴¹⁹

And then, finally, must come death. Okudzhava sees nothing to fear in it, so long as one holds true to the path, and expires still striving for the ultimate happiness. *Песенка о бумажном солдатики* [*Song about a Paper Soldier*], *Горит пламя, не чадит* [*A Burning Flame Makes No Smoke*] and the song *Гори, огонь, гори* [*Burn, Fire, Burn*] capture the essence of this attitude, in which one's life remains active and uncompromising until the very end:

⁴¹⁷ Compare Chevalier, and Gheerbrant 106.

⁴¹⁸ Chevalier, and Gheerbrant 876.

⁴¹⁹ Chevalier, and Gheerbrant 836-38.

Прожить лета б дотла,
а там пускай ведут
за все твои дела
на самый страшный суд.

(Live your years but to the full,
And you will let them lead you
For all that you did
To the most horrible of trials.)⁴²⁰

At the same time, the poet suggests that man prepare for death by accepting his old age, conserving good memories and forgiving the wrongs committed against him. In order to reach his peace with death, man must approach it in harmony with the natural order, and with as little fear of the unknown as he had in life:

Умереть – тоже надо уметь,
Как бы жизнь ни ломала...

(You must also know how to die,
No matter how hard your life becomes...) ⁴²¹

To Okudzhava, man's last act on this earth must be to die in dignity and peace:

А последнее – Богу,
последнее – не наше,
последнее – это не в счет.

(And the last is of God,
The last is not ours,
The last is not our concern.) ⁴²²

Man cannot know whether his own forgiveness will be enough to merit God's pardon when he departs this life. All man has is hope, and a murky conjecture that those who have gone before were in fact accepted, if only because none of them has returned. Countless questions remain, however: why do the dead not share their supposed happiness with those still alive (*На смерть Боруца Багмера* [*On the Occasion of the*

⁴²⁰ Bulat Okudzhava, "Gori, ogon', gori," 65 pesen 21.

⁴²¹ Bulat Okudzhava, "Umeret' -- tozhe nado umet'...", *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 169.

⁴²² Okudzhava, "Umeret' -- tozhe nado umet'...", *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* 169.

Death of Boris Balter]) and why is man taken before he can grasp the full meaning of life (*Почему мы исчезаем... [Why do we disappear...]*).

Fear of God's judgement is among the greatest reasons to lead a moral life and to work for the common good:

Тот, кто блажен, не боится греха.

(The blessed are not afraid of sin.)⁴²³

When man looks back upon his life, he should, like the lyrical hero of *По какой реке твой корабль плывет...* [*Whichever river your ship sails down...*] be able to say he was of use to others:

Может, жизнь моя и была смешна,
Но кому-нибудь и она нужна.

(It might be that my life was laughable,
But someone had a need of it.)⁴²⁴

Песенка «Совесть, благородство и достоинство...» [The Song "*Conscience, nobility and dignity...*"] sums up all that the lyrical hero needs to guide his steps. Respect for the three titular virtues is the only requirement for a good death:

Может, и не станешь победителем,
но зато умрешь как человек.

(You may not come out a victor,
But you shall die a Man.)⁴²⁵

Okudzhava's poems about Man's inner world—whether outwardly praising the virtues of Love, Faith and Hope, promoting his belief in non-violence and compassion, or dwelling on the mysteries of the path of life—form a distinct, unified whole within his larger opus. Both the depth of his reflection and the sheer prodigality of his work on these

⁴²³ Bulat Okudzhava, "Avgust v Latvii," *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 319.

⁴²⁴ Bulat Okudzhava, "Po kakoi reke tvoi korabl' plyvet...", *Izbrannoe: Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989) 309.

⁴²⁵ Okudzhava, "Pesenka," *Stikhotvoreniia* 430.

ethical issues speak volumes about his commitment to the theme. There can be few more fitting conclusions to the body of the present thesis.

CONCLUSION

The classification of Okudzhava's poems according to their themes constituted the first step in the present thesis. The following thematic groups of poems have been identified: poems about war, those dealing with the legacy of the terror years under Stalin, with work and creative act, as well as poems about town, nature and folklore and those dealing with man's inner world. Further, each of the thematic groups was analyzed from the point of view of their author's innovation and by opposing the official literary approach to each and every of the described topics. This was a way in which the uniqueness of the author's quiet but convincing voice and peaceful worldview could be underscored to its fullest against the background of official Soviet literature. Okudzhava's voice soon became representative of a nation that had just started to awake from fear-filled and oppressive times.

Given the quantity of Okudzhava's poems and the necessary delimitations imposed on the scope of the analyzed works, the picture is still not complete. However, it is the first attempt on such a large scale to classify and analyze Okudzhava's poetic works.

Since Okudzhava's poems are strongly grounded in the historical and biographical reality of his times, it was necessary to use this rather traditional approach. There are, of course, many universal aspects of Okudzhava's poetry that are communicable without an extensive knowledge of Soviet reality. However, to understand as many semantic layers of these poems as possible, the reader has to possess a solid background in both Okudzhava's personal life and the life of his terrorized nation.

An attempt to group Okudzhava's poems according to their themes and to their author's new approach to these themes in his works is just one possibility. Many other options exist and have not been researched.

Okudzhava's poems might become an interesting topic of analysis if seen, for example, as a source of factual, every-day information about the life in the Soviet Union and Russia between the 1960s and 1990s. It would be also interesting and new to look into some symbols that appear over and over in these poems (for example, the symbolism of colors). Another option worth exploring would be the correlation between the metric system used by Okudzhava in a majority of poems belonging to a given group and this group's theme. The possibilities are limitless and, considering the largely under-studied area, each may constitute another valuable and original contribution to knowledge of Russian literature.

Hopefully, the topic of the present thesis and the fact that it focused on a bard who opened the doors to the new, intimate communication in literature after years of state-governed literary production, will serve in stirring interest among many scholars for years to come.

Appendix 1

THE PHENOMENON OF RUSSIAN BARDS

The Russian bards are a cultural phenomenon involving poets who express their opposition to injustices occurring in Soviet society, as well as their disagreement with accepting the official culture with its demand for Socialist Realism in the Soviet Union; their origins are multiple. Their songs stem from the *блатная* song (thieves' cant) and labour camp music that spread in the USSR following Khrushchev's release of the *уголовники* (criminals) from the camps after Stalin's death. In addition, the other sources of their music were the tourist song (*туристская песня*), student songs (*студенческая песня*)⁴²⁶, and stage songs (*эстрадная песня*).

⁴²⁶ A number of songs were devoted to nature and that became the new generation's idol. These songs were named tourist. Students' (*студенческая песня*) and tourist (*туристская песня*) songs were not necessarily author's songs (*авторская песня*), since some of them were written by two people (a poet and a composer) and were not sung by their authors. They can be called amateur songs (*самодельная песня*). Yet these songs were connected with the author's song in their main characteristics, intimacy and sincerity of expression. [...] The advantage of the amateur songs was that they were not accountable to the institution of censorship. As such they were not approved for publication, recording, or performance at official concerts, but they were never intended to be official. These songs were sung with the accompaniment of the seven-stringed acoustic guitar – an inexpensive, portable instrument also known for its romantic connotations (e.g., Spanish serenades, Gypsy songs). Since the songs were never recorded by the official state company, *Melodiia*, they were distributed on tape. The tape players in the early 1960s were crude, and the open-reel tape often tore, but this turned out to be the way to promote the songs. The tape players were expensive. People would save for months to buy them and immediately fill the complimentary free cassette with the songs. This form of distribution was called *magnitizdat* (*магнитуздат*). It worked like the *samizdat* (*самуздат*), the system of retyping a work using about eight carbon copies; and the *tamizdat* (*тамуздат*), the system of distributing the works published in the West. [...] The amateur songs represent a wide range of works, from semiofficial songs by professionals that made their way into the young intellectual crowd, to songs written by students and young scientists, to the author's songs. The emergence of the genre of the author's songs was influenced by the works of Berthold Brecht and of the French chansonniers Yves Montand and Georges Brassens, who were admired in the Soviet Union. In the Russian tradition, the bards are close to Aleksandr Vertinskii, the author of the mood songs and a famous pre-revolutionary cabaret author and singer who returned at the end of the 1940s to the Soviet Union from his emigration to the West, and to Yury Morfessi, a salon Gypsy singer. The author's songs are not homogenous; being intimate expressions of individual feelings, they differ as much as the personalities of their authors. Anatoly Vishevsky, *Soviet Literary Culture in the 1970s: The Politics of Irony* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993) 45-6.

Historically, the first to talk about their World War Two experiences poetically were the young poets who joined the army directly from the Moscow Institute of History, Philosophy and Literature, and who were killed on the front. They were called *поэты-фронтовики* [*poets- front-line soldiers*] and included, among others, Pavel D. Kogan (1918-42), Mikhail V. Kul'chitskii (1919-43) and Nikolai P. Maiorov (1919-42). Contrary to the boisterous official poetry of the war period, their poems were simpler, quieter and far from hyperbolic. They clearly became one of the sources of inspiration for Okudzhava's anti-war poetry.

After the war, Okudzhava, together with Evgenii M. Vinokurov, Boris A. Slutskii, and David S. Samoilov (real last name Kaufman), wrote the main body of their war poems. Andrzej Drawicz believes⁴²⁷ that, for the poets of the second *wave of war poems* (*баталистическая волна*), war was not a theme, but a prism through which they interpreted the world. Drawicz claims that the image of war is present in every poem and theme touched upon by these writers. In case of Okudzhava, this statement seems to be just partially right. It is true that the war theme dominates his poems and that the anti-war poems were perceived by readers as the most important thematic group in the works of Okudzhava. However, as can be seen from the preceding chapters, other themes remain independent from the war theme. More obvious is the stronger influence of the war theme in the poems dealing with the years of Stalin's terror.

The poets of the second *wave of war poems* viewed their work, to some extent, as a duty to be fulfilled. The other issues attracting their attention is the issue of the vocation of an artist, especially of a poet, and that of the poet's right to free speech (for which O. Mandel'shtam fought so hard in the 1930s). Together with this, another theme developed

⁴²⁷ Andrzej Drawicz, *Literatura radziecka 1917-1967. Pisarze rosyjscy* (Warszawa: PWN, 1968) 243.

by these poets was the historical one. The role of history was clearly and traditionally twofold: it was a relatively safe place to hide from present-day dangers and it provided an abundance of themes that were quite safe to explore. Besides this, historical themes traditionally served as masks for writers who, despite the strong censorship, tried to smuggle into their writings ideas about the present times (for example, historical novels by Okudzhava or volumes by D. Samoilov, such as *Второй перевал* [*The Second Passing*] and *Сухое пламя* [*Dry Fire*]).

The Russian bards as a cultural phenomenon⁴²⁸ arrived suddenly and immediately managed to capture the hearts of the public. The public demanded something new and incomparable with the production of Socialist Realism⁴²⁹, and the bards provided them that new point of view.

⁴²⁸ In the Soviet Union, bards of discontent appeared in the mid-1950s as the first wave of prisoners returned from the Siberian labor camps. [...] As thousands of Soviet citizens, bitter from years of internment in the desolate interior of the country, returned to the cities of western Russia, their grim ballads accompanied them. [...] Alexander Arkadevich Ginzburg, a grim, bald-headed man, known simply as Alexander Galich, emerged as one of the most eloquent critics of the Stalin era. Galich himself never served in a labor camp, and in fact led a career as a successful dramatist and screenwriter, but his songs of the Siberian gulag and of the Stalinist terror evoked the pain and suffering experienced by millions of Soviet citizens during the Stalin era. [...] Galich's songs, which first appeared in 1962, the same year as Alexander Solzhenitsyn's novel *A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, challenged the Stalin legacy. Timothy W. Ryback, *A History of Rock Music in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union* (New York-Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990) 43.

⁴²⁹ Socialist realism gave the public part of what it wanted: "realism", adventure, and moral guidance. Realism meant simple and readable prose and the here and now or a heroic past for the plot and setting – enterprise, factory, collective farm, research institute, and revolutionary or national battlefield. Socialism meant fantasized political personalities and a masterplot about a young person, under the tutelage of a mentor, achieving consciousness by doing battle with obstructionist forces. The masses consumed the new literature partly because no competition was permitted, but also because its characters were largely folkloric: firm and self-controlled, but loving and good and brave – people that the common reader could recognize from popular notions of how characters should act and speak. As in most popular fiction, the plots were formulaic and the writing contained the familiar complement of "furrowed brows" and "shining eyes". The descriptive lexicon was coded to exalt reason, technology, and the city and to enwrap such impulses as sex in the dark shades of chaos. The result was a peculiar variety of didactic middlebrow literature whose rules and codes quickly migrated to statuary, film, radio drama, and song. Socialist realist culture as a whole was a tortuous compromise between the art of old masters, folk culture, ideology, and some elements of popular commercial art. Its output was enormous and it embraced not only fiction, but fictionalized history, communist hagiography, travel prose, and folk materials. Stites 67.

The sixties were the “golden era” of the Russian bard song, giving rise not only to writers such as Okudzhava but many other singing poets of a different caliber⁴³⁰. Hordes of questionably talented individuals performed in the clubs and interest circles that appeared at this time⁴³¹. The songs were recorded on “Tembr” or “lauza” tape recorders – a newly introduced product in the 60s – and despite their poor quality, were an important technical novelty. The tape recorders (often of the homemade type), and the fast process of copying the tapes, made state control and persecution harder. Despite these problems, and largely with help of the Magnitizdat (a tape recorder underground distribution system), the new genre of the author’s song spread quickly. This was based on a combination of poetry, guitar accompaniment, intonation and the author’s special communicative and entertainment talents. Along with a dynamic, lively and responsive public, the songs of the bards began to take on a public voice on tapes and on the stage, against the wishes of the official Soviet critics.

The appearance of authors’ songs was preceded by another cultural phenomena: mass declamation of loud stage poetry using outstanding rhetoric. Evtushenko and Voznesenskii began this yet unseen trend of reading poetry at huge stadiums to thousands of listeners, during the time when the West influenced the Soviet Union with jazz music and the shocking sounds of the Beatles. The authors’ songs also differed from the popular Russian song (openly disliked by Okudzhava) in the number of authors who created them. While the pop song required an author for the lyrics, a composer and a performer

⁴³⁰ Next to the big names of Okudzhava, Galich or Vysotskii, there were as well N. Matveeva, I. Vizbor, Al. Sukhanov, A. Iakusheva, Iu. Kim, E. Kliachkin, Iu. Kolesnikov, Iu. Kukin, D. Sukharev, M. Ancharov, V. Berkovskii, B. Vakhniuk, L. Sergeev, S. Krylov.

⁴³¹ The romantic author song of the sixties attracted those who considered themselves young poets and singers. For example, in Leningrad in 1961, young singing performers founded at the Palace of the Workers of the Food Industry a song club, named after the spaceship which brought the first person into the Cosmos, “Vostok”. Over thirty years, through “Vostok” alone, went more than one thousand performers.

who, in most cases, required an orchestra during their performances, the author song had just one author, but could have many variants, depending on each individual performance of the author before the public. Due to the simplicity of the author's song, recording it on tape allowed it to keep its impact whereas re-recording pop music caused its impact to be lost⁴³². The pop song failed because the taped recording could not reproduce the dynamics of the musically powerful stage show accompanied by an orchestra. In contrast, the success of the author's song depended mainly on the simple combination of the author, the listener and the skill of establishing an intimate communication between them.

For example, Okudzhava's chamber-like songs present an intimate discourse, almost a confession. It is not a vocal performance of the stage type. He feels for the mothers and sisters left by the men who went to the front, points out the false morality and injustice and remembers the quiet and modest heroes of everyday life. Additionally, he sings about the forgotten feelings of love and friendship and, following in the steps of Blok and his *Прекрасная дама* [*The Beautiful Lady*], he worships woman, while taking a moment to reflect about the meaning of life.

Apart from Okudzhava, the most successful and recognized bard was Vladimir Semonovich Vysotskii – a graduate of the actors' studio of MKhAT. Since 1964 he performed in the progressive and avant-garde Taganka Theatre and, over the years, this theatre and cinema actor and poet gained an unprecedented popularity as a bard⁴³³. His characteristic hoarse voice was heard everywhere – in private homes, among his close

⁴³² See also V. Vysotskii, "Ob avtorskoi pesne," *Vospominania Vladimira Vysotskogo*, ed. A.N. Safonov (Moscow: Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1989) 120-23.

⁴³³ For more on Vysotskii's beginnings as a bard, see V. Vysotskii, "I nachalos' triumfal'noe shestvie plenok..." *Vospominania Vladimira Vysotskogo*, ed. A.N. Safonov (Moscow: Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1989) 126-27.

circle of friends, in the theater and in more than thirty films as well as on the radio⁴³⁴. The biggest tragedy of his life was that, apart from the uncensored almanac *Метрополь* [*Metropolis*] (Ann Arbor, 1979) and the journal *Третья волна* [*The Third Wave*], his texts were not published during his lifetime. Vysotskii often spoke about the importance of reaching the widest possible public⁴³⁵.

Vysotskii's literary creativity resulted in approximately two hundred poems, a thousand ballads and songs and an incomplete novel, *Роман о девочках* [*Novel about the Girls*], published in 1988 by the *Нева* [*Neva*] literary journal. In the manner of Evtushenko, Vysotskii's openness and friendly interaction with his audience during his live performances, did not please officials.

Vysotskii, just as Galich, was often attacked in the press⁴³⁶. Only one year after Vysotskii's death, a heavily censored volume of his poems, entitled *Нерв* [*Nerve*], was

⁴³⁴ His work has been called "an encyclopedia of Soviet life" because he poked fun at Semenov's detective novels, morning exercises on television, Soviet heroes, revolutionary traditions, and Russian literature; and aimed his furious guitar at inequality, privilege, official hypocrisy, the harshness of urban life, and both the joys and woes of liquor and sex. The candor of his song was enhanced by the language of the street, the army, the tent city, and the camps; and by the raucous pitch of his voice, so starkly different from the velvety and hollow sounds of mass song crooners. He was attacked in the press for his lyrics. Stites 158.

⁴³⁵ Я очень надеюсь, когда сочиняю свои песни, что они дойдут до моего слушателя. Я же ведь не для себя пишу, не только для «стола» и «корзины» - туда я тоже пишу, - но обязательно пишу аудиторию, и, когда она у меня есть, больше мне ничего не надо. Больше всего я ценю прямой контакт со слушателями. [I hope very much, when I write my poems, that they will reach my listener. I do not write for myself, for the "drawer" or "basket" - I write that too, - but of course I am seeking an audience, and, when I have it, I do not need anything else]. V. Vysotskii, *Izbrannoe* (Minsk: Mastatskaia litaratura, 1993) 573.

Compare as well: ... я всегда нуждаюсь в аудитории, которая меня слушает. И чем большему количеству людей я могу рассказать о том, что меня беспокоит и волнует, тем мне лучше. [...I always need an audience; people who would listen to me. And the more people I can tell what troubles and concerns me, the better I feel]. V. Vysotskii, "O trudnostiakh v tvorchestve," *Vospominaia Vladimira Vysotskogo* ed. A.N. Safonov (Moscow: Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1989) 129.

⁴³⁶ On June 9, 1968, the newspaper *Sovetskaia Rossiia* reported: "The epidemic of bawdy and vulgar songs copied from tape recorders is spreading faster than a flu virus." In particular, *Sovetskaia Rossiia* attacked the thirty-year-old bard Vladimir Vysotskii, who, the paper alleged, "sings in the name of and on the behalf of alcoholics, soldiers in disciplinary units and criminals, people who are depraved and have something wrong with them." Vysotskii, added *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, also disfigured "his native language beyond recognition". By the end of the 1960s, this bard of "philistinism, vulgarity, and immorality" was the best known and best loved of the underground singers. [...] Vysotskii wrote songs about emotions, events, and individuals-themes the average Russian could understand: the frustrations of standing in lines, the

published. Many great poems are missing from it and some of the published ones are shortened, comparing to the original version. *Нера* consists of only 130 poems⁴³⁷. When Vysotskii died, crowds went to the Taganka theatre where they listened to people singing Vysotskii's songs accompanied by the guitar, and reciting his poems while burning candles and leaving flowers⁴³⁸. The death of Vysotskii deeply touched literary circles, and many poets, including Okudzhava, paid honour to him by writing about him⁴³⁹ or dedicating pieces of their work to him.

Vysotskii and other bards not only sang about their own experiences or about *любовь в каменном веке* [*love in the stone age*]⁴⁴⁰, honesty or honour, but also about situations in which he had not personally participated⁴⁴¹. He was first to discuss the plight

resentment toward Russians who frequented hard-currency shops, the difficulty of finding an apartment. Vysotskii sang about soldiers, athletes, construction workers, prostitutes, thieves, and intellectuals. In one song about the Soviet airline, Aeroflot, Vysotskii alluded to the government's restrictions on foreign travel. "Aeroflot", he chided, "will take you anywhere except where you really want to go." Timothy W. Ryback, *A History of Rock Music in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union* (New York-Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990) 46-7.

⁴³⁷ A larger edition of Vysotskii's works was printed only between 1981 and 1983 in New York in two volumes, *Песни и стихи* [*Songs and Poems*]. It includes a choice of about 600 poetic texts, as well as prose. Only in the second half of the eighties, many volumes of his poems were published: *Коню приуредливые* [*Exaggerated Horses*] and *Поет Владимир Высоцкий* [*Vladimir Vysotskii Sings*] in 1987, *Четыре четверти пути* [*Four Fourths of the Path*], *Izbrannoe* [*Selected*], *Я, конечно, вернусь* [*Of Course, I will be Back*], *Не вышел из боя* [*He Did Not Come Back From the Battle*], *Клич* [*A Call*], *Стихи и песни* [*Poems and Songs*], *Стихи. Проза* [*Poems. Prose*] – all in 1988, *Ни единою буквой не лгу* [*I do not Lie with Even One Letter*] and *Поэзия и проза* [*Poetry and Prose*] in 1989. The last ten years have been witnessing enormous popularity of Vysotskii and many publications of his works.

⁴³⁸ For more, see: Stites 158.

⁴³⁹ Поет О Володе Высоцком [*On Volodia Vysotskii*], 1980.

⁴⁴⁰ Vladimir Vysotskii, "Pro liubov' v kamennom veke," *Izbrannoe* (Minsk: Mastatskaia literatura, 1993) 165.

⁴⁴¹ Меня часто спрашивают в письмах: не воевал ли я, не плавал ли, не сидел ли, не летал ли, не шоферил ли? Это потому, что почти все мои песни написаны от первого лица. Но совсем не оттого, что я все испытал на себе, все увидел и знаю. Нет, для этого надо было бы слишком много жизней. Просто я люблю слушать то, что мне говорят... А самое главное, мне хочется об этом рассказать вам, но, конечно, так, как я к этому отношусь и понимаю. Потому и рискую говорить «я». [...] People often ask me in their letters: didn't I fight, didn't I sail, didn't I do time in prison, didn't I fly, didn't I work as a driver? This is because almost all my poems are written in the first person. But this is absolutely not because I experienced everything personally, or saw and knew everything. No, too many lives would be needed for that. Simply, I like to listen to what others are telling me... And most importantly, I want to tell you about this, but, of course, in the way I perceive and understand it. This is why I risk saying "I". V. Vysotskii, "Ob avtorskoi pesne," *Vospominaia Vladimira Vysotskogo*, ed. A.N. Safonov (Moscow: Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1989) 121-22.

of *беспризорные* [*homeless children*]⁴⁴² in poetry. He enjoyed exploring the theme of extreme circumstances⁴⁴³ that revealed his values. For these purposes, apart from exploring the topics of mountain climbing⁴⁴⁴ or sports, he often turned to the theme of war. Although he did not participate in World War Two⁴⁴⁵, he often had to explain why he found this theme interesting and challenging:

⁴⁴² Another subculture of the era was that of the "homeless children" (*besprizornye*), orphaned and abandoned waifs [...]. These children, 75-80 percent of them boys, inhabited a realm of human misery marked by begging, petty crime, prostitution, hunger, and homelessness. Fiction and film often depicted the paths of their lives spent in railroad stations, cellars, caves, dumps, and heating vats. As social outcasts or self-made marginals, homeless children created their own subculture – nicknames, jargon (part of the larger and older *blatnaya muzyka* – rough music – [...]) a code of honor about group loyalty, debts, and desertion that was harshly enforced, and a cult leader (*vozhak*). All this resembled the subcultures of criminals, convicts, even robber bands of yore and street gangs of the present day. Gambling and movies were the favorite leisure pursuits of the *besprizorniki* [...]. Stites 61-2.

⁴⁴³ Compare: A. Demidova, "Kakim pomniu i liubliu," *Vospominaia Vladimira Vysotskogo*, ed. A.N. Safonov (Moscow: Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1989) 281-82.

⁴⁴⁴ Потом – «Вертикаль»: это были песни о горах. Но они были, я думаю, больше чем про горы, там была еще философия восхождения – почему люди стремятся вверх, почему им не хочется спускаться обратно на равнину, а они обязательно всегда должны спускаться... [Then – "Vertical": these were songs about mountains. But I think that they were about something more than just mountains, there was a philosophy of ascending – why people strive to climb up, why they do not want to go back down, even though they invariably have to descend.] V.Vysotskii, "I nachalos' triumfal'noe shestvie plenok..." 127.

⁴⁴⁵ Высоцкий хотел, чтобы его роли, песни и стихи воспринимались документами биографий отцов, старших братьев. О войне он писал правдивые стихи и правдиво играл, на удивление конкретно, материально, пластично, так, как будто знал на ощупь, кожей. В его стихах сражаются летчики, моряки, десантники, пехотники. В эти стихотворения вкраплены реалии, специфические для разных родов войск, характерные словечки и выражения. Брошенные поля спелых хлебов, окопы, пустынные деревни, горные ущелья, безымянные высоты, небо, госпитальная палата – «топография» смертельных схваток в этих песнях. Их сюжеты это сюжеты солдатской жизни: марш, подготовка к бою, сражение, погребение павших, ожидание писем... В них есть и тема дома – верного, любящего, и дома предавшего, изменившего. Песни Высоцкого о войне – не «воспоминания», где что-то смягчается или романтизируется, не элегия, посвященная «минувшим дням». Это нечто, живущее в человеке сегодня, как боль, глухая, но готовая в любой момент вспыхнуть. [Vysotskii wanted his stage and screen performances, songs and poems to be treated as documents from the biographies of fathers and older brothers. He wrote true poems about war and as an actor portrayed it truly, surprisingly concretely, materially, as if he knew it by heart, with his skin. Pilots, marines, paratroopers, infantrymen fight in his poems. These poems contain elements of reality – specific for the given type of armed forces – characteristic slang words and expressions. Abandoned fields of ripe grain, trenches, villages in the desert, mountain crevasses, nameless peaks, the sky, hospital tent – these songs show a "topography" of deadly battles. Their subjects are taken from soldiers' lives: marching, preparation for battle, combat, burying dead comrades, waiting for letters... They also treat the subject of home – faithful, loving but also betraying, traitorous. Vysotskii's songs about war are not "reminiscences", softening and romanticizing the reality; they do not constitute an elegy dedicated to "past days". This is something living inside a person, like pain, which is dulled but can erupt at any time.] A. Nizovtsev, "Nashi pavshie – kak chasovye," *Vospominaia Vladimira Vysotskogo*, ed. A.N. Safonov (Moscow: Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1989) 126-27.

И самое главное, я считаю, что во время войны просто есть больше возможности, больше пространства для раскрытия человека – ярче он раскрывается. Тут уж не соврешь, люди на войне всегда на грани, за секунду или за полшага от смерти. [...] Я вообще стараюсь для своих песен выбирать людей, которые находятся в самой крайней ситуации, в момент риска, [...], у которых что-то сломалось, произошло – в общем, короче говоря, людей которые «Вдоль обрыва, по-над пропастью» или кричат «Спасите наши души!» [...]. Меня совсем не интересует, когда люди сидят, едят или отдыхают – я про них не пишу, только разве комедийные песни.

(And what is most important, I think that during the war there are simply more possibilities, more space to discover a human being – who can be discovered more clearly. Here you cannot lie, people during the war are always at the limit, one second or half a step from death. [...] Generally, I try to select for my songs people who are in the most extreme situations, at the time of risk, [...], people in whom something broke, happened – generally, briefly speaking, people who are “At the edge, above an abyss” or who are crying “Save our souls!” [...] People who are sitting, eating or resting do not interest me at all – I do not write about them, except for comedy songs.)⁴⁴⁶

Using various methods, Vysotskii kept presenting the situation of a contemporary man from different points of view. With aggressive tones, he touched upon the theme of Stalin's times and that of politics. Rough humor and crude jokes, as well as lyrical and philosophical words, were brought on in balladic, more played down, tones.

Vysotskii and Okudzhava were very different and very aware of their differences. Whereas Vysotskii was always surrounded by friends and groups of people, Okudzhava preferred being alone and chose a more intimate way of speaking to the public. His unique hoarse voice and more dynamic manner of singing made Vysotskii's performances much more dramatic than Okudzhava's. Okudzhava was, to certain extent, a poet of the city, the street and the Arbat yard and his setting had an intimate character. Vysotskii was especially attracted to the beauty of nature in its wild and free state. He wrote about horses, mountains, storks and the adventures of man struggling with nature. Even though both bards wrote about the war, Okudzhava was the one who fought on the

⁴⁴⁶ Vladimir Vysotskii, *Izbrannoe* (Minsk: Mastatskaia litaratura, 1993) 572.

front and got injured, while Vysotskii never participated in it and remembered it just from his childhood.

Often Vysotskii, like Okudzhava, stressed the differences between himself and his fellow bard, as the following passage indicates:

... я не могу, как Булат, - это совсем другое дело. [...] Никогда не подражал я ни Булату, ни другим ребятам, которые в то время писали.

(... I cannot sing like Bulat, - he is a completely different story. [...] I never imitated Bulat or other guys who were writing then.)⁴⁴⁷

Nevertheless, the similarities were many; they appreciated each other's talents and recognized that they were using the same vehicle of the bard song for communicating with their respective audiences. Under Vysotskii's spell, Okudzhava wrote the poem *Мастер Гриша* [*Master Grisha*]⁴⁴⁸. They spoke a lot about the respect they had for each other in interviews and during public performances. Below are two out of the multiple statements, where the young Vysotskii talks about Okudzhava's influence on him:

Он мой духовный отец.

He is my spiritual father.⁴⁴⁹

And also:

Услышав впервые песни Булата Окуджавы, я вдруг увидел, что стихи свои, которых у меня накопилось довольно много, можно усилить музыкальной мелодией, ритмом, - он мне как бы глаза открыл. И я стал, конечно по-другому, сочинять музыку к своим стихам.

When I heard the songs of Bulat Okudzhava for the first time, I suddenly realized that I could enrich my poems, and I had quite a lot of them, with melody, rhythm – he sort of opened my eyes. And so I began, obviously in a different way, to compose music to my poems.⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁷ Vysotskii, "Izbrannoe" 546.

⁴⁴⁸ Interview with Vladimir Avdeichikov, September 13, 1995.

⁴⁴⁹ Vysotskii, "Izbrannoe" 546.

⁴⁵⁰ V. Vysotskii, "Sekret izvestnosti," *Vospominaia Vladimira Vysotskogo*, ed. A.N. Safonov (Moscow: Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1989) 131.

Okudzhava was the most famous representative of the movement, a figure who considered himself not simply a bard, but a poet-bard. Okudzhava's poetry was largely directed toward the intellectual community⁴⁵¹, outside of which this humble poet never attained the popularity of the mass-oriented Vysotskii. Neither was he as politically oriented as Galich. Nevertheless, he is considered to be the founder of the bard movement within Russian popular culture of the 1960s.

As could be seen from this short section, the bards' songs that represented the negation of the official marches and songs typified by *Утро красит нежным светом* [*Morning paints with tender light...*]⁴⁵² marked a break from the cult songs that dominated the Soviet scene until the death of Stalin.⁴⁵³

⁴⁵¹ The party and the census enumerators define the intelligentsia as meaning anyone who earns a living from mental rather than manual labour. Michael Binyon, *Life in Russia* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1984) 93.

⁴⁵² Text: Jannick Faizeev and Vasilii Lebedev-Kumach. Music: D. and M. Pokrass.

⁴⁵³ *To the end of the 1940s, the only songs permitted in the Soviet Union were the so-called mass songs. They were written by professional composers and poets employed by the state. These songs, which appeared in large quantities, were approved and often commissioned by the party and reflected party policy. The songs were always optimistic, proclaiming the happiness of the people of the Soviet Union and the advantages of the socialist system. They were openly ideological and portrayed a positive hero – the builder of communism. It would be unfair to say that all these songs were inferior – a number of talented people wrote them and many had catchy tunes and easily memorizable verse (e.g., the wartime Katyusha [Катюша]). The mass songs were in the tradition of prewar times of the 1930s; they were not only created for the masses, but also meant to be sung by choirs. These upbeat songs followed people everywhere: to music (choir) lessons from elementary school to high school, to regular Saturday labor outings (мрудовые субботники), to parades and meetings, and, through the radio, to people's apartments. The youth of the new times yearned for different songs containing different messages. The author's songs, or songs of the bards, emerged after World War II and are connected with more liberal political atmosphere in the mid 1950s. In some respects the songs that appeared at the time were in the same vein as the Young prose: romantic, hopeful, youthful, and directed toward a better future. Anatoly Vishevsky, *Soviet Literary Culture in the 1970s. The Politics of Irony* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993) 43.*

Стихи-песни Булата Окуджавы, Александра Галича, Владимира Высоцкого и других стали знаменем вольномыслия. Они спасли поэзию сопротивления от разгрома: сами были подлинной поэзией, талантливой литературой, со своей давней историей, со своими врагами и поклонниками. Юбилеи, не ведая того, усилили влияние песенной поэзии во стократ. Романовы поняли это не сразу. К счастью, не сразу дошло до них, как много значили для духовной жизни простого человека эти записанные ленты. Улица не повторяла текстов казенных песен, речей, плакатов и призывов ЦК КПСС. Ее давно захватила песенная магнитофонная революция[...]. Она началась исподволь и оказалась неуязвимой и всепроникающей. На плечах чудом выживших лагерников в жизнь вошел не только лагерный сленг, но и стихи, и песни. Дошла до нас и безыскусственная, настоящая на фольклоре песня «Воркута – Ленинград». Выжила и песня-проклятие Гулагу поэта-лагерника, погибшего в лагерях, «Ванинский порт». [Poet-songs of Bulat Okudzhava, Aleksandr Galich, Vladimir

The bards' creations were a unique vehicle that allowed Okudzhava's generation to develop an alternative way for looking at life in the USSR. By creating a musical style that was individualistic and concerned with audience interaction, the bards managed to create a new perspective on one of the important foundations of Soviet society – art. The bards demonstrated that art is more than a tool for propaganda; art is for meeting the needs of a society's spiritual and ethical, as well as political, dimensions, even for people who are caught up in a politically brain-washed collective.

Vysotskii and others epitomized free speech. They saved the poetry of resistance from crushing defeat: they constituted true poetry and talented literature, together with their long history, their enemies and sympathizers. The Yubiliade unknowingly enhanced the influence of sung poetry hundredfold. The Romanovs did not understand that immediately. Fortunately, they did not realize immediately how important these recorded tapes were for the spiritual life of simple folk. The street was not repeating the texts of official songs, speeches, posters and party slogans. It had been conquered long ago by the revolution of tape-recorded songs [...]. It started in leisurely fashion and turned out to be relentless and overwhelming. Through the miraculously surviving prisoners of camps not only did camp slang, but also poems and songs enter everyday life. We became familiar with the ingenious, folklore-based song "Vorkuta – Leningrad". Also surviving was "Vanin port", a song-curse against the Gulag by a poet-prisoner, who perished in the camps.] Grigorii Svirskii, Na lobnom meste: Literatura nraivstvennogo soprotivleniia (1946-1976 gg.) (London: Novaia literaturnaia biblioteka, 1979) 464.

Appendix 2

BULAT SHALVOVICH OKUDZHAVA

Bulat Shalvovich Okudzhava, poet, writer and bard, was born May 9, 1924 in Moscow, to parents who were ordinary people. His father was the son of a Georgian laundry woman and his mother was the daughter of an Armenian machinist⁴⁵⁴. They lived on the Arbat until 1937. At the age of four, Okudzhava began his lifelong adventure with books by getting interested in the contents of his father's extensive library. His parents introduced him to tales by Kornei Chukovskii and the adventures of Robinson Crusoe. This was followed by a lecture on *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. Bulat's musical interest was first developed at the age of five when his mother began acquainting him with the opera and theatre by taking him regularly to the *Bol'shoi* Theatre. At this point in his life his parents also bought him a gramophone and records and he listened quite often to the singing of Shaliapin.

At the age of ten, his parents began giving him books as gifts so he could start building his personal library. One of his favorite authors was Jules Verne. Okudzhava was fascinated with Verne's power of imagining exciting stories⁴⁵⁵.

With this background, Bulat was able to begin writing. In the beginning, he wrote humorous poems for the school newspaper. Then in the fifth grade, he conceived the idea of a novel about a Chinese volunteer. Each day he wrote three pages for this novel and if he got to the end of the third page and the next word would not fit, he would leave the

⁴⁵⁴ Хотя моя мама армянка, отец грузин, но я родился на Большой Молчановке и прожил свою жизнь в России. [Although my mother was Armenian and my father was Georgian, I was born in Bolshaia Molchanovka and I spent all my life in Russia.] Petrakov 6.

⁴⁵⁵ Interview with Vladimir Avdeichikov, September 13, 1995.

remaining thought unfinished until the following day. This first novel was never finished⁴⁵⁶.

The modest and relatively peaceful life of Okudzhava, in an ever-tightening atmosphere of terror and purges, was suddenly interrupted by the arrest of his father (23 February 1937), who had held a responsible post in the Communist Party. He was accused of having spied for the Germans and Japanese and was executed in Sverdlovsk (14 December 1938). Shortly after, his mother was sent to Siberia to a Karaganda labor camp from where she returned only in 1955, the year of her rehabilitation⁴⁵⁷. Okudzhava lived for some time in Nizhnii Tagil in the Ural Mountains and then came back to Moscow, where together with his brother, he studied while living at his grandmother's home. In 1940, he moved with his remaining family to Tbilisi.

Starting at the age of 14 years, he worked in a variety of jobs: first he was an extra as well as a handyman in a theatre, then he worked as a smith. At the beginning of the Second World War, he worked as a lathe operator in the defense industry.

In 1942, freshly out of the ninth grade, Okudzhava volunteered for the army. He was taken to a depot mortar battalion and after two months of training was sent to the North Caucasus Front. At the age of 18, Okudzhava was wounded near Mozdok and recovered in a military hospital⁴⁵⁸.

⁴⁵⁶ Interview with Vladimir Avdeichikov, September 13, 1995.

⁴⁵⁷ *Мой отец и моя мама были партийными работниками. Они выходцы из рабочей семьи и вступили в партию в предреволюционное и в революционное время. А в 37-м году оба пострадали: мать провела около 19 лет в лагерях, отец был расстрелян. Потом выяснилось, что ни в чём не виноват. [My father and my mother were party workers. They came from working-class families and they joined the party in pre-Revolutionary and Revolutionary times. In 1937 they both suffered: mother spent some 19 years in camps, and father was shot. Then it turned out that he was completely innocent.] Petrakov 6.*

⁴⁵⁸ *Я воевал на Северном Кавказе и был ранен под Моздоком. А потом – госпиталю, а потом, после лечения, - тяжёлая артиллерия, резерва Главного командования. И вот и всё, что мне удалось повидать. До Берлина я не дошёл. [I fought in the Northern Caucasus and was injured near Mozdok. And*

It was in 1943 that he wrote his first song, *Нам в холодных теплушках не спалось* [*We could not sleep in the cold freight cars*].

Okudzhava's first poems were published in the paper *Боец РККА* [CRRRA /Caucasus Region Red Army/ Fighter]⁴⁵⁹. To judge from the titles, it can be said that they responded to the immediate needs of wartime and of the paper where they appeared: *До свидания, сыны!...* [*Good-bye, sons!...*], *Мы встречали...* [*We would meet...*], *Девушке-солдату* [*To the Soldier Girl*], *Не позабыть жестоких дней* [*Let's not forget the cruel days*]. In 1945, Okudzhava's mortar unit was demobilized.

After completing high school, Okudzhava studied at the Philological Department of the university in Tbilisi between 1945 and 1950. It was in 1945 that his first poem was officially published⁴⁶⁰. In student years, Okudzhava became interested in the prose of

then – there were hospitals, and later, after the treatment, – Headquarters' heavy artillery reserve. That is all I managed to see. I did not reach Berlin.] Petrakov 13.

⁴⁵⁹ Впервые стихи Б. Окуджавы появились в гарнизонной газете Закавказского фронта «Боец РККА» (позднее – «Ленинское знамя») в 1945 году, сначала под псевдонимом А. Долженков. С 1953 года, работая после университетского распределения в Калужской области, он регулярно публиковался в местных газетах. Тогда же в Калуге вышла его первая книга стихов «Лирика». Сам поэт считал этот период творчества подражательным и начало своей поэтической деятельности относил ко времени возвращения в Москву и вступления в поэтическое объединение «Магистраль», руководимое Г. Левиным. С конца 50-х годов стихи Окуджавы стали появляться в столичных газетах и журналах. Первая из изданных в Москве книга стихов «Острова» вышла в 1959 году. Всего же на родине было издано двенадцать прижизненных оригинальных поэтических сборников поэта. [The poems of B. Okudzhava first appeared in 1945 in the garrison paper of the Trans-Caucasian front, CRRRA Fighter (later renamed Lenin's Banner), initially under the pseudonym of A. Dolzhenov. From 1953 on, working on a post-university assignment in the Kaluga region, he was regularly published in the local papers. His first book of poems *Lirika* was also published during that period in Kaluga. The poet considered this period of his career to be derivative and dated the beginning of his poetic career to the time when he returned to Moscow and joined a poetic association "Magistral", headed by G. Levin. At the end of the fifties, Okudzhava's poems started to appear in Moscow newspapers and journals. The first volumes of verse to be issued in Moscow, entitled *Ostrova*, was published in 1959. In total, twelve original collections of Okudzhava's poems were published in the Soviet Union during his lifetime.] A. E. Krylov, and V. Sh. Iurovskii. "Bulat Shalvovich Okudzhava: Bibliografiia," *Literaturnoe obozrenie* 3 (1998): 52-63.

⁴⁶⁰ It was published in a paper of the Trans-Caucasian War District, which asked Okudzhava to produce a poem about demobilization. Once published, Okudzhava bought fifty copies of the paper and gave them away to his friends. In later interviews Okudzhava mentioned many times that in those days he believed himself to be seriously engaged in writing poetry, while most of his writings were various imitations of other poets.

Proust, Kafka, Hemingway and the poetry of B. Pasternak, A. Akhmatova and Zabolotskii⁴⁶¹.

While at university, Okudzhava, along with some other aspiring poets, organized a literary circle named in honor of Maiakovskii. Since they often gathered at Okudzhava's place under his table lamp, it was later renamed *Соломенная лампа* [*Straw Lamp*].

In 1946, from the exposure and influence that he received, Okudzhava wrote a long and never published novel about the Great Patriotic War. In interviews, when asked about this novel, he used to ask himself how he came to write a work twice as long as *War and Peace*. It was during the Tbilisi years that Okudzhava felt a strong attraction to the genre of the student song and musical romance. He enjoyed listening to old student songs, Russian officers' songs and to Russian folk songs. He felt especially attracted to the nineteenth century, which was not yet too far back in time for relating to its ideas and dreams, but was yet mysterious enough to play on his imagination. In 1946, Okudzhava saw a performance by Aleksandr Vertynskii in Tbilisi. He managed to buy a ticket for his performance and since then his interest in Vertynskii's works grew. Among Vertynskii's songs, Okudzhava's favourite was *Прощальный ужин* [*Good-bye Dinner*]. Okudzhava believed that Vertynskii was the true creator of the genre of the author's song.

Then in 1948, Okudzhava was influenced by Boris Pasternak, who advised him to not quit the Philological Institute. Quitting was in Okudzhava's plans because he had wanted to follow a program in the Literature Institute instead.

⁴⁶¹ Throughout his life, Okudzhava was interested in poetry of the following authors: A. Pushkin, D. Samoilov, B. Akhmadulina, A. Tarkovskii, A. Kushner, as well as the Russian folk song, and in prose: again A. Pushkin, L. Tolstoi, A. Nabokov, and R. Kipling.

From the time that Okudzhava completed his studies until 1955, he worked as a teacher of the Russian language in a rural school in Shamordino in the Kaluga region and then in a Kaluga high school. In 1953, he published his poems in a Kaluga local paper⁴⁶². While in Kaluga, he collaborated with the papers *Знамя* [*Banner*] and *Молодой ленинец* [*Young Leninist*]. Later, he expressed dissatisfaction several times about the quality of poems that were published there and called them “weak”.

Then in 1956, following the twentieth Party Congress and the political exposure of the Cult of Personality, a new chapter began in the life of Okudzhava. As the result of the first rehabilitations *in the absence of corpus delicti* [за отсутствием состава преступления], exiled citizens, such as Okudzhava’s mother, started coming back from the camps and prisons⁴⁶³. Due to the return of his mother and the acceptance of Okudzhava into the Party, State officials allowed them to move back to Moscow⁴⁶⁴.

⁴⁶² Кончил университет и уехал в Калужскую область, в деревню, работать учителем. Там продолжал писать стихи, посылал их в местную газету, оттуда получал ответ, что нужно читать побольше Пушкина и Лермонтова. Ну через год приблизительно я поехал в Калугу, пришёл в местную газету. «Как ваша фамилия?» Я говорю – вот так. «О-о! Мы вас знаем – вы же нам присылали стихи?» - «Да, присылал стихи». - «Ну, заходите! Как вы поживаете?» - «Ничего». - «Привезли ли новые стихи?» - «Привёз», - сказал я и дал им старые стихи. Они сказали: «Замечательно!» - и опубликовали их. Тут я понял, какая польза от знакомства в жизни. Так как в Калуге других поэтов не было – я считался самым лучшим. У меня немножко кружилась голова от успехов. Я писал стихи ко всем праздникам, ко всем временам года, публиковал их в местной газете, получал маленький гонорар. Сомнений никаких не было. [I graduated from university and went to the Kaluga region, to a village, to work as a teacher. I continued writing poems there; I sent them to a local newspaper, received the reply that I needed to read some more Pushkin and Lermontov. About one year later I went to the editorial office of the newspaper in Kaluga. They asked, “What is your last name?” I told them. “Oh! We know you – you used to send us poems?” – “Yes, I did”. – “Please, come in! How are you doing?” – “Fine”. – “Did you bring any new poems?” – “Yes, I did”, I said and I gave them the old ones. They said: “Outstanding!”- and published them. Then I understood how useful it is in life to know someone. Since there were no other poets in Kaluga, I was considered to be the best one. I was somewhat euphoric from the success, writing poems for all festivities, all seasons of the year, and publishing them in the local paper; receiving a small honorarium. I did not have any doubts.] Petrakov 23.

⁴⁶³ One of the most vivid poems concerning the return of Okudzhava’s mother is “Pis'mo k mame”, only written only in 1975.

⁴⁶⁴ Я переехал в Москву. В Москве я попал в литературное объединение, где были молодые поэты, очень талантливые, которые не опубликовали ещё ни одной строчки. И они меня обсуждали, очень сильно меня пбили. Сначала я думал, что они это от зависти делают, но вскоре понял, что это потому, что я этого достоин. Я перестал писать стихи: несколько лет не писал совсем. Потом снова жизнь заставила, природа заставила – и я стал писать иначе. Может быть, не намного

It was about this time when he started to speak, or rather to sing, in his full voice. Also in 1956, and while still in Kaluga, Okudzhava published his first volume of poems, simply entitled *Лирика* [*Lyrics*]⁴⁶⁵. Since then, Okudzhava worked closely with a literary association *Магистраль* [*Main Line*] and published more and more in different magazines, such as *Знамя*, *Новый мир* [*New World*], *Нева* [*Neva*], *Молодая гвардия* [*Young Guards*], as well as some papers.

In 1956, Okudzhava began performing his poems, accompanied by the guitar, to a small group of friends, but by 1960 he was performing for the public⁴⁶⁶. Here is how he describes his first public appearance:

В 60-м году, в самом начале года, мне вдруг пришлось впервые публично выступить. Это было в Ленинграде, в Доме кино, в маленьком зале. Там всё очень хорошо прошло. Об этом прослышали в московском Доме кино – и меня пригласили. Был субботний вечер отдыха, пришли люди отдыхать. Показывали перед этим фильм «Осторожно, пошлость!». Потом объявили меня. И вот я вышел на эту громадную сцену, ужасно робея, встал перед каким-то повреждённым микрофоном и стал петь одну из своих песен. Так как я очень волновался, очевидно, половина слов пропадала – мне так казалось. Вдруг из зала кто-то крикнул: «Пошлость!» - и группа сидящих

лучшие, но, во всяком случае, так, как я должен был писать по своим способностям. [I came to Moscow. There I got into a literary circle with many young, but very talented, poets who had not published a single verse yet, and they judged me; they criticized me very severely. At first I thought that they were doing this out of envy, but soon I understood that this was because I deserved it. I stopped writing poems: for several years I did not write them at all. Then again life – nature made me do this; and I started to write differently; perhaps not much better, but in any case in the way I should be writing, according to my skills.] Petrakov 23.

⁴⁶⁵ В Калуге у меня вышла маленькая книжечка стихов. [In Kaluga a very small book with my poems was published] Petrakov 23.

⁴⁶⁶ This is how, with the usual dose of self-irony, he described these early attempts: Потом в университете я написал песню студенческую, написал по образцам старых грустных студенческих песен, ну такого типа, как «Быстры, как волны, дни нашей жизни, чем дальше, тем ближе к могиле наш путь...». Отталкиваясь от этой песни, я написал студенческую песню, и мы на факультете у себя её пели. А потом, в 56-м году, - вот это уже всерьёз началось дело – мне впервые захотелось вдруг некоторые свои стихи петь под аккомпанемент. Мне показали три аккорда на гитаре, и я стал придумывать мелодии и петь. [Then at the university I wrote a student song; I wrote it following the example of old, sad student songs, such as “The days of our lives are quick, like waves, the further, the sooner to the grave is our journey...”. Repulsed by this song, I wrote a student song and we sang it at our faculty. Later, in 1956, all this started seriously – for the first time I wanted to sing some of my songs to music. I was shown three chords on the guitar and I started to compose melodies and sing.] Petrakov 39.

вокруг этого человека людей начали аплодировать. Я взял гитару и ушёл со сцены. Вот таким было моё первое большое публичное выступление.

At the beginning of 1960, I suddenly had to perform in public for the first time. It was in Leningrad, in a cinema, in a very small hall. Everything went very well there. They heard about this in a Moscow cinema and invited me. It was a leisurely Saturday evening, people came to relax. Before that they were showing a movie "Watch out for kitsch!". Then they announced me. And so I went out onto that large stage, I felt awfully timid, I stood in front of a broken microphone and started to sing one of my songs. Since I was very nervous, obviously, half of the words got lost – at least I thought so. Suddenly someone in the hall shouted "Kitsch!" – and a group of people sitting around started to applaud. I took the guitar and left the scene. That was my first big public performance.

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His new poem-songs: *Король*, *Полночный троллейбус* and *Московский муравей* were all written in 1957 and soon became widely known in intelligentsia circles.

Okudzhava's poem-songs coincided with the introduction of the tape recorder in the Soviet Union⁴⁶⁸. Although Okudzhava did not any gramophone records released yet, his music was already registered on tape⁴⁶⁹. As he mentioned in numerous interviews, the

⁴⁶⁷ Petrakov 30.

⁴⁶⁸ Прошло всего два-три года после первого выступления Булата Окуджавы, и его песни полонили Россию. Это был беспрецедентный прорыв сквозь цензурный бетон. Именно тогда, после хрущёвского погрома искусства в 63-64 гг., когда проза залегла, как залегают солдаты перед укреплениями, песни хлынули, как наводок, – поверх укреплений. Сперва песни Окуджавы, затем Галича. Позднее – Высоцкого и других. [Within a mere two-three years from the first performance of Bulat Okudzhava his songs captured the public in Russia. This was an unprecedented break through the rigid censorship. Exactly after Khrushchev's pogrom of art in 1963-64, the prose lied down like soldiers in the barricades, the songs poured like a flood – over the barricades. First Okudzhava's songs, then those of Galich. Later on – songs of Vysotskii and others]. Grigorii Svirskii, *Na lobnom meste. Literatura npravstvennogo soprotivlenia (1946-1976gg.)* (London: Novaia literaturnaia biblioteka, 1979) 466.

⁴⁶⁹ The Russian bard Bulat Okudzhava became the first hero of the magnitizdat. [...] Magnitizdat transformed Okudzhava's leisure-time activity into a national phenomenon. [...] During the early 1960s, Okudzhava developed a following among university students and intellectuals. [...] Okudzhava sang unabashedly about love, shattering the prudish barriers of official culture. In contrast to the glorious depictions of the Second World War promoted by the state, Okudzhava presented war as a senseless and painful experience. Timothy W. Ryback, *A History of Rock Music in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union* (New York-Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990) 45. Compare as well: Before Okudzhava, the Soviet song industry had virtually no competition from within the country. The state monopoly of songs seemed unshakable. Suddenly it was discovered that one person could compose a song and make it famous, without the Union of Composers – with its creativity section and department of propaganda – without the help of popular singers, choirs and orchestras, and without publishing houses, radio and television, film and record companies, editors and censors. It turned out that a talented poet, never having taken lessons in musical

spontaneous taping sessions usually took place in small Moscow communal flats, where the heavy-smoking and drinking intellectuals would meet⁴⁷⁰.

After 1959, Okudzhava was often published in *Юность* [Youth] and *Литературная газета* [Literary Gazette], where he became the head of the poetry section.

Despite problems with the censors, he managed to publish his first volumes of verse: *Острова* [Islands], 1959 (dedicated to his mother), *Веселый барабанищик* [Merry Drummer], 1964 and *По дороге к Тинатин* [On the Way to Tinatin], 1964. Additionally, apart from original poems, the last volume contained translations from Khuta Berulava, Medea Kakhidze, Otar Mamporiia, Mukhran Machavariani, Makvala Mrevlishvili, Shota Nishniandze and Dzhangug Charkviani. Nineteen sixty seven saw the publication of *Март великодушный* [Generous March]. In 1976, after a long period of so-called creative silence, *Арбат, мой Арбат* [Arbat, My Arbat] was published. In the early and mid-1960s, the verbal attacks on Okudzhava increased:

In December 1962, [...] Okudzhava came under attack by Leonid Illichev, Khrushchev's spokesman on ideological matters. At a meeting with 140 writers and artists in December 1962, Illichev accused Okudzhava of vulgarity and ideological inconsistency. [...] Okudzhava skirmished with government officials for the next three years. Censors demanded he delete provocative songs from his repertoire. Material from his radio broadcasts was occasionally edited. Official pressure prevented the release of his recordings. [...] Despite official harassment, Okudzhava continued to perform during the 1960s and by the end of the decade also traveled to the West to read his poetry and perform his songs. [...] In the mid-1960s, the burgeoning *magnitizdat* culture attracted the growing criticism of the Soviet press. In 1965, the conservative Soviet literary journal *October* published an article entitled "What Are They Actually Singing?". *October* rebuffed more than twenty underground bards, the most

composition, possessing only native musicality, singing and playing on the guitar, could make himself heard as no one had been heard in Russia for a long time. Frumkin, Commentary, 65 *pesen* 15.

⁴⁷⁰ In the early 1960s, Bulat Okudzhava offered young people an alternative to the hollow optimism of official songwriters [...]. Ryback, *A History of Rock Music in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union* 154.

prominent of whom were Bulat Okudzhava and Alexander Galich.⁴⁷¹

The attacks were linked to his short story, published in 1961, *Будь здоров, школяр*⁴⁷², as well as to the fact that, together with some other creative writers, he signed letters in 1966 defending Andrei Donatovich Siniavskii (Abram Terts) and Iulii Markovich Daniel (Nikolai Arzhak). *Будь здоров, школяр* was published in Paustovskii's anthology of literature, *Тарусские страницы* [*Tarussa Pages*]⁴⁷³. The

⁴⁷¹ Ryback, *A History of Rock Music in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union* 46-7.

⁴⁷² *Маленькая повесть Окуджавы была симптомом нового поворота военной темы, в которой все громче начали звучать нравственные, морально-этические ноты. А каков на самом деле человек на войне? Что он на самом деле чувствует и думает? Можно ли, нужно ли быть на войне жестоким? Имеет ли право, даже на войне, даже командир распоряжаться бездумно чужой человеческой жизнью? [Okudzhava's small story was a symptom of a new approach to the war theme, in which moral and ethical notes started to appear. And what is man at the front like? What does he actually feel and think? Can you, or do you have to be cruel in a war? Are you entitled, even in a war, even as a commander, to use other people's lives recklessly?]* Altschuller, and Dryzhakova, *Put' otrencheniia* 68.

Compare as well:

Наивное, простодушное поведение героя было показано Окуджавой как продолжение игры в войну, которой увлекались ребята перед войной, уверовав, что враг будет немедленно и легко разбит. [...] Рассказывая о буднях войны, писатель был и в них, и над ними – тому способствовала явно выраженная романтическая атмосфера повести. Факты реальности были только одним из полюсов его художественного мира – на другом была попытка понять их высший, сокрытый в течении обычной человеческой жизни смысл. [The naïve, simple-hearted conduct of the hero was presented by Okudzhava as the continuation of children playing war. It was one of the games children before the war used to play, believing that the enemy would be immediately and easily defeated. [...] Describing war experiences, the writer was at the same time in them, and above them – clearly expressed romantic atmosphere of the short story helped in this. Factual reality was just one of the poles of his artistic world – on the other, there was his attempt to understand its higher, hidden meaning during a man's life.] G. Belaia, Preface, *Izbrannye proizvedeniia v dvukh tomakh*, by Bulat Okudzhava, vol. 1 (Moscow: Sovremennik, 1989) 5.

⁴⁷³ С «Тарусских страниц» начались многие биографии поэтов и прозаиков, в том числе Булата Окуджавы. Здесь первые шаги Булата – повесть «Будь здоров, школяр!» – пронзительная правда о войне, увиденная глазами восемнадцатилетнего. Мальчишески игривый, как бы наивный запев. Он задает тон повести о школяре, которого затолкали на войну, не подготовленного к ней ни морально, ни физически, и который случайно уцелел на ней. Это была крайне важная веха в жизни Булата Окуджавы. Повесть помогла ему стать, в какой-то мере, известным, открыла для него новые возможности, новые аудитории, остальное он уже сделал сам, своими песнями... Кто знает, удалось бы ему так быстро выйти вперед – без этой, как бы легализовавшей его, публикации, которая дала ему право на внимание и сценические площадки? Во всяком случае, Константин Паустовский сделал все, что мог. [Following "Tarussa Pages" biographies of poets and prose writers, including Bulat Okudzhava's, began to appear. Bulat's first steps - the novel "Fare You Well, Schoolboy" – shows a penetratingly true picture of war as seen by an eighteen-year old. Youthful, playful and apparently naïve, it sets the tone of the story about a schoolboy who found himself in a war but was morally and physically unprepared for it, and survived by chance. This was an extremely important milestone in the life of Bulat Okudzhava. The story made him famous to some extent, opening new possibilities, new audiences to him – he did the rest himself, with his songs... Who knows, could become known so quickly without this publication, which somehow legalized him and entitled him to attention and scenic endeavors?

publication was withdrawn from circulation because Okudzhava was accused of, and attacked for, espousing egoism, offending individualism, abstract humanism, pacifism and a psychological approach, by orthodox critics⁴⁷⁴. His passive schoolboy – this anti-hero created in an age that insisted on the strict ideological orientation of every single piece of literature, together with characters created by V. Bykov and V. Nekrasov – began the new approach to literature. This new wave kept underscoring that war is not an adventure and that soldiers are not super-heroes, but rather low-key, simple people. *Будь здоров, школяр* touched upon humanistic issues, and it was far from being didactic in the Soviet style, seen, for example, in *Я призываю к ненависти* [*I Call for Hate*], 1942, by A. Tolstoi, *Дни и ночи* [*Days and Nights*], 1943-44, by K. Simonov, or *Повесть о настоящем человеке* [*The Story of a Real Man*], 1946, by B. Polevoi. In the same year, 1961, he left his day job and fully consecrated his time to creative writing.

In 1961 Okudzhava started to escape into prose. In 1963, he wrote a historical theatrical piece *Глоток свободы* [*Gulp of Freedom*], in which he turns to his favourite theme of the Decembrists and the romantic era of the nineteenth century. Two years later, in 1965, together with V. Motyl, Okudzhava wrote a short story for the cinema [киноповесть], titled *Женя, Женечка и «Катюша»* [*Zhenia, Zhenechka and "Katyusha"*]. Also in 1965, he wrote a short story for children, *Фронт приходит к нам* [*The Front Comes to Us*]. To the genre of quasi-historic novels belong *Бедный Авросимов* [*Poor Avrosimov*], 1969, *Мерси, или похождения Шипова* [*Merci, or Adventures of Shipov*], 1971, the two-volume *Путешествия дилетантов* [*Dilettantes' Travels*], 1976-78, and *Свидание с Бонапартом* [*A Meeting with Bonaparte*], 1983. The

In any case, Konstantin Paustovski did everything he could. Svirskii, *Na lobnom meste. Literatura pravstvennogo soprotivlenia (1946-1976 gg.)* 224

⁴⁷⁴ Compare: Altshuller, and Dryzhakova, *Put' otrencheniia* 72-74.

four novels constitute an allegory of the situation of the intelligentsia under the Soviets of the post-1953 years.

Okudzhava is also known for his autobiographical short stories. In them, he touches upon themes dealing with everyday life in different styles: lyrical, dramatic, or ironic. Some of his most famous short stories include: *Отдельные неудачи среди сплошных удач* [*Some Failures Among Continuous Successes*], 1978, *Искусство кройки и житья* [*The Art of Sewing and Living*], 1985, *Уроки музыки* [*Music Lessons*], 1985, *Утро красит нежным светом* [*The Morning Paints with a Tender Light*], 1975, the very personal *Девушка моей мечты* [*Girl of My Dreams*], 1985⁴⁷⁵, and *Частная жизнь Александра Пушкина, или Именительный падеж в творчестве Лермонтова* [*The Private Life of Aleksandr Pushkin, or the Nominative Case in the Works of Lermontov*], 1976. He studied history usually by referring to original documents, as he explained:

Долгие годы мы знали нашу историю в основном по пособиям, достоверность которых [...] весьма сомнительна [...]. Началась пора исторических «открытий». [...] Для литератора моего склада исторический факт, событие – всего лишь побуждающая причина. [...] Разница между человеком нынешнего и человеком века минувшего – относительна. Меняются костюмы, средства передвижения, условия существования, а физиология, психология, поведение человека остаются неизменными.

(For many years, we knew our history basically from textbooks, whose trustworthiness [...] is very doubtful [...]. The era of historical «discoveries» started [...]. For a literary man of my kind, a historical fact, an event – are only a pretext [...]. The difference between the man of today and the man of yesterday is relative. The costumes change, the ways of moving around change, the way of living change, but physiology, psychology and man's conduct remain the same.)⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷⁵ A [...] striking evocation of the Gulag is Bulat Okudzhava's story "Girl of My Dreams"; an account of the behavioral change and apparently profound psychological transformation – both touching and shocking- which his own mother underwent during her ten years as a zek. [...] the inhumanity of the Stalinist system of prison and exile had now become a standard topic of literature. D. Brown 72.

⁴⁷⁶ Iurii Boldyrev, "Minuvshee menia ob`emlet zhivo," *Voprosy literatury* 8 (1980) 126-38.

In many interviews, Okudzhava stresses the similarities between the past and present reality and that interesting historical material is another stimulus to speak about himself and his opinions:

Есть литература как способ самовыражения. На историческом ли материале, на современном ли – это уже второстепенное.

(There is literature as a way of self-expression. How this is done, if it is based on historical or modern material, this is secondary).⁴⁷⁷

Important historical figures, or events, are not of special interest to Okudzhava. He clearly prefers little, anonymous, almost anti-heroic characters. For him, this is enough:

[...] малозначительный анекдотический факт и [...] прийти к выводу, что этот анекдот – трагедия, достойная сопереживания и анализа.

[...] a not important, anecdotic fact and [...] to come to a conclusion that this anecdote is a tragedy, which one should identifying with and analyze.⁴⁷⁸

The novels of Okudzhava have a psychological concern that conditions the historical setting, the action of the story and the types of characters that dwell in his stories. These novels' historical, adventurous, or retrospective character is not the main focus of their author. History is clearly just an excuse for Okudzhava to talk about the present situation⁴⁷⁹. Typically, for a writer living in the reality of the Soviet Union's intolerance towards free creative expression (just as it was in the case of O. Forsh, V. Shishkov, A. Chapygin, or Iu. Tynianov), he used historical settings in order to express himself more precisely.

⁴⁷⁷ Boldyrev 131.

⁴⁷⁸ Boldyrev 145.

⁴⁷⁹ Compare the words of Brown, *The Last Years of Soviet Russian Literature: Prose Fiction 1975-1991* 61: *The works of Trifonov, Okudzhava, Davydov, Zalygin, Tendryakov, and Bitov are testimony to the increased interest in Russian history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries [...]. Tendryakov, Trifonov, Okudzhava, and Iskander often wrote autobiographically, interpreting historical developments through the personal experiences of themselves and their families. There is a profound sense of tragedy, usually with an unmistakably anti-bolshevist bias, in their stories.*

When considering the most detailed descriptions in his novels, the reader gets the impression that all of the feelings, emotions and characterization of the main characters also refer to him. He deeply grounds his characters not only in strange and absurd situations but also in their own subjective psychological experience. Therefore, without the first, poetic and more abstract phase of Okudzhava's creative work, there would not have been this second phase of his psychological-historical novels.

Not only did Okudzhava write his poetry and prose in the forms of short stories and novels, he also wrote songs for the theatre and cinema, articles, forewords, essays and published letters. Additionally, he was involved in interviews and discussions with listeners, explaining his work⁴⁸⁰. In 1969, Okudzhava signed a letter defending A. I. Solzhenitsyn's right to express his ideas. But in so doing, Okudzhava had to endure even more problems created by the government. They culminated in June 1972, when he was expelled from the Communist Party for having refused to condemn the publication of his works abroad⁴⁸¹. Okudzhava was re-admitted to the party when he agreed to publish a statement in *Литературная газета* (18/11/1972).

Until the late 1970s, he did not give public performances. His prose was the target of many critics and pseudo-critics. Together with his articles, where the author tried to convince the public that "*Gulp of Freedom*" *managed to confirm the heroic, to reveal the joy of the struggle* (sic!) [*«Глоток свободы» сумел утвердить героическое, показать счастье борьбы*]⁴⁸², some less ideologically-charged reactions slowly began appearing

⁴⁸⁰ For a more complete insight into Okudzhava's bibliography, please compare: A.E. Krylov, and V. Sh. Iurovskii, "Bulat Shalvovich Okudzhava: Bibliografiia," *Literaturnoe obozrenie* 3 (1998): 52-63.

⁴⁸¹ The atmosphere was definitely not positive in the case of most of the other bards, either. Vysotskii was especially persecuted in the beginning of the 1970s, while Galich, who fell in total disgrace, and was even accused of sympathising with Zionism, emigrated to France in 1974.

⁴⁸² M. Kon, "Shchast'e bor'by," *Teatr* September 1967: 47.

in the early eighties, but for a long time he remained out of favor with the Communist authorities. It was only in the late 1980s that he gained the approval of the progressive authorities and reappeared in print⁴⁸³.

Escapism into prose was a solution for Okudzhava for many years and would last well into the eighties, when in 1984, 1988 and 1989 three new volumes of his poetry were published. The volumes *Стихотворения* [*Poems*], 1984, *Посвящается вам* [*Dedicated to You*], 1988, and *Избранное: Стихотворения* [*Collected Works: Poems*], 1989 present a new, more straightforward tone and theme. Not once does the reader observe in them the allusions that exposed the Cult of Personality and contemporary issues.

A conversation with several writers on the topic of the historical novel, published in *Вопросы литературы* [*Literature Issues*], makes the reader aware of Okudzhava's decision, dating back to the 1980s, not to write more pieces for the theatre:

Не знаю, какой я прозаик, но знаю, что драматург я никакой.

(I don't know how good a prose writer I am but I am not a decent dramatist at all.)⁴⁸⁴

In the nineties, with their liberating atmosphere, readers in the Soviet Union were able to buy many new editions of the works of Okudzhava. This included the 1993 volume, entitled *Милости судьбы* [*Favours of Destiny*], as well as *Надежды маленький оркестрик* [*A Small Orchestra of Hope*], 1990, and the small volume entitled *Песенка о моей жизни* [*A Song About My Life*], 1995, as well as *Зал ожидания: Стихи* [*Waiting Room: Poems*], 1996, and *Чаепитие на Арбате: Стихи разных лет*

⁴⁸³ The post-Khrushchev period had witnessed the emigration of many controversial writers; the deaths of many others [...]; but others, such as Iskander, Bitov and Okudzhava, have apparently surmounted criticism and appeared in print again in the 1980s. Rosalind J. Marsh, *Soviet Fiction Since Stalin: Science, Politics and Literature* (Totowa: Barnes & Noble Books, 1986) 21.

⁴⁸⁴ Boldyrev 126.

[*Tea-Drinking in Arbat: Poems from Various Years*], 1996. Apart from the section entitled *21 песенок с самого начала* [21 Songs From the Very Beginning]⁴⁸⁵, some famous songs for theatre performances and movies⁴⁸⁶, and four larger cycles of songs for separate performances⁴⁸⁷, the volume *Милости судьбы* includes about eighty new pieces written between 1988 and 1992. A large portion of poems comprising this group of writings deals with man's inner world, his habits, character and path of life⁴⁸⁸, but there he also published poems about the Cult of Personality and recent history⁴⁸⁹.

Okudzhava also developed a small number of poems that compared the old and new generations from the point of view of an old, experienced man⁴⁹⁰. Until the appearance of this volume, he had not released many poems about emigration or

⁴⁸⁵ For example: *Шла война к тому Берлину* [The War Moved towards Berlin] and *Горит пламя, не чадут* [A Burning Flame Makes no Smoke].

⁴⁸⁶ For example, *А мы с тобой, брат, из пехоты* [And we're from the infantry, brother] or *Дорожная песня* [A Road Song], a stylized folk piece.

⁴⁸⁷ The four are: songs for performance *Вкус черешни* [A Taste of Cherries] and *Похождения Шипова, или Старинный водевиль* [Adventures of Shipov, or an Old Vaudeville], for the film *Соломенная шляпка* [A Little Straw Hat], and for the musical *Золотой ключик* [A Little Gold Key]. They are written in different years, have different forms and go hand in hand with the evolution of the theatre and cinema in the Soviet Union. The unity of the four cycles is clear, even if the reader just looks at the titles of their parts. In the case of the *Похождения Шипова, или Старинный водевиль* songs, the cycle starts from a *Пролог* [Prologue] and ends with an *Эпилог* [Epilogue]. The musical includes *Первая песня лягушек* [The First Song of the Frogs], *Первая песенка Буратино* [The First Song of Buratino], *Первая песенка Пьеро* [The First Song of Pierrot], followed by *Вторая песня Пьеро* [The Second Song of Pierrot], *Вторая песня лягушек* [The Second Song of the Frogs], and *Вторая песенка Буратино* [The Second Song of Buratino], and the third one. Because the cycles present an established plot and action, they have a rather narrative character. Together with the song-ballads, they create the link between Okudzhava's poems and his prose works.

⁴⁸⁸ For example: *Я вам описываю жизнь...* [I am describing the life to you...], *Не уезжай, жена моя, в лес...* [Don't drive into the forest, my wife...], *Решайте, решайте, решайте...* [Please decide, decide, decide...].

⁴⁸⁹ For example: *К старости косточки стали болеть...* [As I get older, I feel pain in my bones...], *Шестидесятники развенчивать усатого должны...* [Men of the sixties should dethrone the moustache...], *Я рад бы был покоем восхититься...* [I would love to enjoy the peace...], *Нашему дикому обществу нужен тиран во главе...* [Our wild society needs a tyrant as a leader...]

⁴⁹⁰ This is the group that may find the closest thematic link with some of the urban group poems, in which Okudzhava compares the old Moscow and the new (as, for example, in *Трамвай* [Trams]. To this small group belong *Скрипят на новый лад все перья золотые...* [In a new way the golden pens speak...], or *Дима Бобышев пишет фантазии...* [Dima Bobyshev writes fantasies...].

impressions from his trips abroad, even though he regularly toured in Poland, Hungary, ex-Yugoslavia, Austria, France, England, USA, Australia, and Indonesia⁴⁹¹.

Concerning his style in these newest poems, Okudzhava remained faithful to his old, usual poetic devices and traditional versification:

Что касается формы, я сторонник традиции. Стихи без рифмы и ритма, хоть я и понимаю и уважаю их, кажутся мне чуждыми, аморфными...

In regards to form, I prefer tradition. Poems without rhyme and rhythm, even though I understand them and have respect for them, seem to me to be alien and amorphous...⁴⁹²

Additionally, in these later years, Okudzhava started using more neologisms (for example, *компьютер* [computer], and more toponyms (for example, *Тель-авивские харчевни* [Tel-Aviv's Restaurants], *Ерусалим* [Jerusalem], *Кельн* [Cologne], and *Босфор* [Bosphorus]). The name of the city, state or country often appears immediately in the first line of the poem.

Okudzhava became actively involved in changing the cultural-political scene of the 1980s and 1990s. In 1989, the Committee of Writers in Support of Perestroika, *Апрель* [April], was formed and Okudzhava joined it⁴⁹³. In 1993, Okudzhava was a member of the jury that awarded the first Booker Novel Prize in Russia. The third Booker

⁴⁹¹ The fruits of these trips include: *Манхэттен* [Manhattan], *Жаркий полдень в Массачусетсе* [A hot midday in Massachussets], *Звезда Голливуда* [A Hollywood Star], *Американская фантазия* [An American Fantasy], *Японская фантазия* [A Japanese Fantasy], *Турецкая фантазия* [A Turkish Fantasy], *Париж для того, чтоб ходить по нему* [Paris is to be walked in], *Красный клен* [The Red Maple Tree], and other poems. In these poems, the poet again expresses a certain fear in view of progress and the deep contrast between Western prosperity and Russian poverty.

⁴⁹² Frumkin, Commentary, 65 *pesen* 23.

⁴⁹³ Compare: N.N. Shneidman, *Russian Literature, 1988-1994: The End of an Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995) 12.

Novel Prize in Russia was awarded in turn to Okudzhava on 19 December 1994⁴⁹⁴ for *Упраздненный театр* [*The Closed-Down Theatre*].⁴⁹⁵

On 30 November 1994, Okudzhava, together with A. Voznesenskii and A. Vaksberg, was chosen to be one of the three vice-presidents of the Russian *Пен-Центр* [*Pen-Center*], created in 1989.

Towards the end of his life, Okudzhava suffered from heart problems and did not participate much in public life. In the 1990s, he suffered a heart attack and underwent heart surgery in San Francisco, CA. Then on 12 June 1997, Okudzhava died at the age of 73, in the Percy Military Hospital, in Clamart, a suburb of Paris.

In 1998, the Bulat Okudzhava State Memorial Museum was opened. It is located at his dacha in the village of Michurinets near the writers' commune at Peredelkino, about twenty kilometers west of Moscow, at 11 Dovzhenko Street⁴⁹⁶. Moreover, one year after his death, an exhibition of Okudzhava's life and accomplishments was presented in an Arbat house. He is survived by his wife, Ol'ga Vladimirovna Artsimovich, a physicist, who presented the Russian Federation with the archives of Okudzhava, and his son, Bulat (Anton) Bulatovich Okudzhava, a musician and composer.

⁴⁹⁴ Compare: Shneidman, *Russian Literature, 1988-1994: The End of an Era* 51 and 53.

⁴⁹⁵ Compare: [*Uprazdnennyi teatr* tells M.R.] *the story of his childhood and family. His parents, highly placed officials in the Soviet bureaucracy, are purged, and most other relatives disappear. Life is a theatre in which every individual plays a role, but Okudzhava's childhood theatre collapses and the actors vanish into thin air. Uprazdnennyi teatr won the 1994 Booker prize. Although Okudzhava deals sensitively and perceptively in this semi-autobiographical work with the social and moral dilemmas of the intelligentsia in post-revolutionary Russia, it is in many ways inferior to his earlier works. It is possible that the Booker Prize in this instance, as seems to be the case for V. Makanin, was awarded for a lifetime contribution to Russian literature and not for the best novel of the year.* Shneidman, *Russian Literature, 1988-1994: The End of an Era* 83. The prize's amount was 10,000 pounds (\$15,000), but Okudzhava did not attend the award ceremony because of health problems. At that time, he also became a member of President Boris Yeltsin's council on culture and art.

⁴⁹⁶ See also: Akin, Melissa "Memory of Late Poet-Icon Okudzhava Kept Alive by Friends." *The St. Petersburg Times* 15.09.1998. <<http://www.sptimes.ru/archive/times/399/features/okudzhava.html>> and "Peredelkinskuiu dachu peredaiut v muzei Okudzhavy." *Lenta* 01.02.2001 <<http://www.lenta.ru/russia/1999/11/02/okudzhava.html>>

Appendix 3

LIST OF POEMS

Below is the list of Okudzhava's poems discussed or mentioned in the thesis, arranged chronologically.

- 1943 Нам в холодных теплушках не спалось [*We could not sleep in the cold freight cars*]
- 1945 До свидания, сыны!... [*Good-bye, sons!*]
- 1945 Девушке-солдату [*To the Soldier Girl*]
- 1945 Мы встречали... [*We would meet*]
- 1945 Не позабыть жестоких дней... [*Let's not forget the cruel days*]
- 1946 Гори, огонь, гори [*Burn, Fire, Burn*]
- 1950s Магическое «два». Его высоты... [*Magic "two"! Its heights*]
- 1950s Аты-баты, шли солдаты [*Tum-tarum marched the soldiers*]
- 1950s Дома лучше (что скрывать?) [*It's Better at Home (Why Hide It?)*]
- 1950s Женщины-соседки, бросьте стирку и шитье ... [*Women-neighbours, leave laundry and sewing...*]
- 1950s Песенка о Фонтанке [*Song of the Fontanka*]
- 1950s Песенка об открытой двери [*Song About an Open Door*]
- 1954 Весеннее [*Of Spring*]
- 1956 Если сполна надышаться морским ароматом пряным... [*If you fully breathe in the spicy sea aroma*]
- 1956 Журавли [*Cranes*]
- 1956 Картли [*Kartli*]
- 1956 Ночь прощания с летом [*Night of Farewell to Summer*]
- 1956-57 Подмосковье: Март намечается... [*Podmoskov'e: We have March in our plans*]
- 1957-59 Песенка про Черного кота [*Song about the Black Cat*]
- 1957-61 Песенка о московском метро [*The Song about the Moscow Metro*]
- 1957 Ангелы [*Angels*]
- 1957 Арбат беру с собою – без него ни на шаг... [*I take the Arbat with me – I can't take a step without it...*]
- 1957 Веселый барабаник [*The merry drummer*]
- 1957 Голубой шарик [*Blue Ball*]
- 1957 Король [*King*]
- 1957 Медсестра Мария [*Nurse Maria*]
- 1957 Не бродяги, не пропойцы... [*Not tramps, not drunkards*]
- 1957 Нева Петровна, возле вас все львы [*Neva Petrovna, Lions Still Stand by You*]
- 1957 Новое утро [*New Morning*]
- 1957 О чем ты успел передумать, отец расстрелянный мой [*What did you have time to rethink, my shot father*]

- 1957 Пароход попрощается басом... [The steamship will say its bass goodbye]
 1957 Первый день на передовой [First Day on the Front Line]
 1957 Песенка о солдатских сапогах [The Song of Army Boots]
 1957 Подмосковье: Подмосковье, Подмосковье... [Moscow Outskirts: Moscow Outskirts, Moscow Outskirts]
 1957 Полночный троллейбус [Midnight Trolley Bus]
 1957 Сентиментальный марш [The Sentimental March]
 1958 До свидания, мальчики [Farewell, Boys]
 1958 Из окон корочкой несет поджаристой... [The smell of crusts wafts from the windows]
 1958 Искала прачка клад [Laundrywoman was Searching for a Treasure]
 1958 Не вели старшина, чтоб была тишина... [Sergeant, don't order silence]
 1958 Песенка о комсомольской богине [Song about a Komsomol Goddess]
 1958 Сапожник [The Shoemaker]
 1958 Сто раз закат краснел, рассвет синел... [The sunset reddened one hundred times, the dusk was becoming blue]
 1958 Тамань [Taman']
 1958 Часовые любви [Love Guards]
 1958 Я ухожу от пули, делаю отчаянный рывок... [I am escaping the bullet, jumping desperately]
 1959 Эта женщина! Увижу и немею... [This woman! I see her and go dumb]
 1959 А месяц тонкий-тонкий [But the Moon is So, So Thin]
 1959 Арбатский дворик [Arbat Yard]
 1959 Бумажный солдатик [The Little Paper Soldier]
 1959 Весна на Пресне [Spring on Presna]
 1959 Вот я добираюсь до своих высот... [Here I am, attaining my Heights...]
 1959 Все ты мечешься день-деньской [You just rush around all day long...]
 1959 Детство: Синело утро: Было рано... [Childhood: Morning Has Broken: It was early...]
 1959 Джазисты [Jazzmen]
 1959 Дорога [Road]
 1959 Есть разные красивые слова... [There are many nice words]
 1959 Еще ничто не погасло... [Nothing died off yet]
 1959 Живописцы [The Painters]
 1959 Звезды сыплются в густую траву... [The stars are falling on the thick grass].
 1959 Итак, я постарею... [And so I will grow old]
 1959 Когда мы уходим... [When we march away]
 1959 Колумбы [Columbuses]
 1959 Кольцо [Ring]
 1959 Куда вы подевали моего щегла? [Where Did You Put my Goldfinch?]
 1959 Летний сад [Summer Garden]
 1959 Лето [Summer]
 1959 Марфа [Martha]
 1959 Много ли нужно человеку... [Does man need a lot]
 1959 Мы стоим – крестами руки [We Stand, Arms Crossed]
 1959 На рассвете [At Dawn]

- 1959 Не верь войне, мальчишка [*Don't Believe in War, My Boy*]
 1959 Ночь белая: Спят взрослые, как дети... [*White night: Adults sleep like children*]
 1959 Песенка об Арбате [*Song about the Arbat*]
 1959 Раскрываю страницы ладоней [*I open the pages of my palms*]
 1959 Рифмы, милые мои... [*My dear rhymes*]
 1959 Родина [*Motherland*]
 1959 Синька [*Blue*]
 1959 Сказка [*Fairytale*]
 1959 Снится или не снится?... [*Is it a dream?*]
 1959 Сыпь, вечер, звезды [*Evening, Pour Out the Stars*]
 1959 Три сестры [*Three Sisters*]
 1959 Ты в чем виновата?... [*What are you guilty of?*]
 1959 Утро в Тбилиси [*Morning in Tbilisi*]
 1959 Эта женщина такая... [*This woman is like this*]
 1960-61 Берегите нас, поэтов... [*Protect us, poets...*],
 1960-61 Земля изрыта вкрив и вкось [*The earth is dug up all over*]
 1960-61 Отрада [*Happiness*]
 1960-61 Песенка про дураков [*The Song about Fools*]
 1960-61 Поэтов травили, ловили [*Poets were persecuted, hunted for*]
 1960-61 Шарманка-шарлатанка [*Street Organ-Charlatan*]
 1960-61 Шла война к тому Берлину [*The War Moved towards Berlin*]
 1960 Весна: вы думаете, хлынет птиц поток... [*Spring: You think, a flock of birds rushes...*]
 1960 Горит пламя, не чадит [*A Burning Flame Makes No Smoke*]
 1960 Дежурный по апрелю [*The April Duty Officer*]
 1960 Московский муравей [*Moscow Ant*]
 1960 О кузнечиках [*About the Grasshoppers*]
 1960 Осень в Кахетии [*Autumn in Kakhetia*]
 1960 Песенка о московских ополченцах [*The Song about Moscow Militiamen*]
 1960 По Смоленской дороге [*On the Road to Smolensk*]
 1960 Старый пиджак [*The Old Coat*]
 1960 Чаепитие [*Tea-drinking*]
 1960 Это случится [*It will happen*]
 1960s А как первая любовь – она сердце жмет... [*And the first love – it squeezes your heart...*]
 1960s Блиндажи той войны все травой заросли ... [*The dug-outs of that war are grown over with grass...*]
 1960s В поход на чужую страну собирался король... [*The king was off to conquer a foreign land...*]
 1960s Военный парад [*War Parade*]
 1960s Из поэмы [*From the Poem*]
 1960s Не помню зла, обид не помню... [*I don't remember wrongdoing or insults*]
 1960s Посвящается вам [*Dedicated to You*]
 1960s Белорусский вокзал [*Belorussian Station*]
 1960s Военные портняжки [*War Tailors*]

- 1960s Душевный разговор с сыном
 1960s Затихнет ирапнель [The Shrapnel will Fall Silent]
 1960s Проводы юнкеров [Seeing off the cadets]
 1960s Решайте, решайте, решайте... [Please decide, decide, decide]
 1960s Скрипят на новый лад все перья золотые... [In a new way the golden pens speak]
 1960s Часики [The Little Watch]
 1960s Четыре года [Four years]
 1961 В Барабанном переулке [On Drum Lane]
 1961 Всю ночь кричали петухи [The Cocks Crowed All Night]
 1961 Гитара [Guitar]
 1961 Допеты все песни. И точка... [All the songs have been sung. Period]
 1961 Песенка о пехоте [The Infantry Song]
 1961 Продолжается музыка возле меня... [The music plays on at my side]
 1961 Черный 'мессер' [Black 'Messer']
 1961 Чудесный вальс [Wonderful Waltz]
 1962 Главная песенка [The Main Song]
 1962 Десять тысяч дорог, и тревог, и морок пережить... [To survive ten thousand roads, and fears, and shadows]
 1962 Замок надежды [Castle of Hope]
 1962 Как я сидел в кресле царя [How I was Sitting on the Tsar's Throne]
 1962 Ленинградская музыка [Leningrad Music]
 1962 Мой карандашный портрет [My Pencil Portrait]
 1962 Музыка [Music]
 1962 Ночной разговор [A Conversation at Night]
 1962 Старый дом [The Old House]
 1962 Стихи без названия [Poems without Name]
 1962 Я никогда не витал, не витал... [I never wandered, never wandered]
 1963 Аисты [Storks]
 1963 В городском саду [In a City Garden]
 1963 Время [Time]
 1963 Март великодушный [Generous March]
 1963 Молитва [Prayer]
 1963 Мы приедем туда, приедем... [We will get there, we will]
 1963 Нацеленный глаз одинокого лося... [Focused eye of a lonely elk]
 1963 Осень в Царском Селе [Autumn in Tsarskoe Selo],
 1963 Песенка о ночной Москве [The Song about Moscow at Night]
 1963 Письмо Антокольскому [A Letter to Antokol'ski]
 1963 Последний мангал [The Last Mangal]
 1963 Фрески [Frescoes]
 1963 Храмули [Khramuli]
 1963 Эта комната [This Room]
 1964 Анкара, Анкара! [Ankara, Ankara!]
 1964 Былое нельзя воротить... [You can't go back...]
 1964 В детстве мне встретился как-то кузнечик... [In my childhood, I once met a grasshopper...]

- 1964 В саду Нескучном тишина – [Silence in the Neskuchnyi Garden]
 1964 Вывески [Signboards]
 1964 Дом: Дом предназначен на слом. Извините... [The House: This house is to be demolished. Sorry...]
 1964 Зной [Intense Heat]
 1964 Из окна вагона [From the carriage window]
 1964 Как научиться рисовать [How to Learn to Draw]
 1964 Ленинградская элегия [Leningrad Elegy]
 1964 Мгновенно слово: Короток век... [Word is instantaneous: Century is short]
 1964 Не верю в бога и судьбу [I Don't Believe in God and Destiny]
 1964 Оловянный солдатик моего сына [My son's tin soldier]
 1964 Осень ранняя... [Early Autumn]
 1964 Песенка о белых дворниках [Song about White Janitors]
 1964 Песенка о Сокольниках [The Song about Sokol'niki]
 1964 Песенка про маляров [A Song About Painters],
 1964 Пешеходов родословное древо [Family Tree of Passers-by]
 1964 Плывут дома, как корабли [Houses Sail Like Ships]
 1964 Прощание с осенью [Farewell to Autumn]
 1964 Пускай твердят иные остряки... [Let the other wits say]
 1964 Разговор с рекой Курой [Conversation with the Kura River]
 1964 Свет в окне [Light at the Window]
 1964 То падая, то снова нарастая... [Once falling, once raising]
 1964 Улица моей любви [Street of My Love]
 1964 Фотографии друзей [Photographs of Friends]
 1965 Встреча [Meeting]
 1965 Грибоедов в Цинандали [Griboedov in Tsinandali]
 1965 Руиспири [Ruispiri]
 1965 Строитель, возведи мне дом... [Builder, build me a home]
 1965 Тбилиси [Tbilisi]
 1965 Цирк [Circus]
 1965 Человек стремится в простоту [Man Aims for Simplicity]
 1966 Прощание с новогодней елкой [Farewell to the New Year Tree]
 1966 Прощание с Польшей [Farewell to Poland]
 1966 Умереть – тоже надо уметь... [You also have to know how to die]
 1967 Ваше благородие, госпожа разлука [Your Honour, Madame Separation]
 1967 Голубой человек [Blue Man]
 1967 Грузинская песня [Georgian Song],
 1967 Детский рисунок [A Child's Drawing]
 1967 Житель Хевсуретии и белый корабль [The Inhabitant of Khevsuretia and the white ship]
 1967 Когда затихают оркестры земли... [When the world's orchestras fall silent]
 1967 Пробралась в нашу жизнь клевета... [Slander stole into our life]
 1967 Путешествие по ночной Варшаве в дрожках [A Carriage Ride through Warsaw at Night]
 1967 Старинная студенческая песня [An Old Student Song]
 1967 Счастливчик [Lucky Guy]

- 1967 Тиль Уленшпигель [*Til Eulenspiegel*]
 1967 Трамваи [*Streetcars*]
 1967 Я дарю тебе к светлому празднику... [*I Give You on This Special Occasion*]
 1967 Январь в Одессе [*January in Odessa*]
 1968 Мастер Гриша [*Master Grisha*]
 1969 Арбатский романс [*Arbat Romance*]
 1969 Песенка о Моцарте [*Song about Mozart*]
 1970s Дальняя дорога [*Long Road*]
 1970 Давайте, придумаем деспота [*Let's Invent a Tyrant*]
 1970 Речитатив [*Recitative*]
 1970 Я маленький, горло в ангине [*I am Small and My Throat is Sore*]
 1970s Ваше величество, женщина [*Your Majesty, Woman*],
 1970s Антон Палыч Чехов однажды заметил... [*Anton Palych Chekhov once remarked...*]
 1970s Вот король уехал на войну: Он Москву покинул. [*And the king left for the war: He abandoned Moscow.*]
 1970s Впереди идет сержант [*The sergeant marches at the head*]
 1970s Из фронтового дневника [*In a diary from the front*]
 1970s Как время беспощадно... [*How merciless is time*]
 1970s Не слишком-то изыскан вид за окнами [*The view outside the window is not very refined*]
 1970s Оркестр играет боевые марши [*The orchestra plays war marches*]
 1970s Пиратская лирическая [*Piratical Lyrical Song*]
 1970s Проводы у военкомата [*Saying good-bye at the enlistment office*]
 1970s Сентябрь [*September*]
 1970s Солнышко сияет, музыка играет [*The sun is shining, the music is playing*]
 1970s Сталин Пушкина листал... [*Stalin was browsing thorough Pushkin*]
 1970s Стоит задремать немного... [*It is enough to doze off for a while*]
 1970s У Спаса на кружке забыто наше детство... [*Near Spas our childhood was forgotten*]
 1970s Убили моего отца [*They killed my father*]
 1970s Чувствую: пора прощаться... [*I feel it's time to say goodbye*]
 1970s Шарманка старая крутилась... [*An old street organ was grinding*]
 1970s Я живу в ожидании краха..., [*I live waiting for a crash*]
 1971 Жизнь охотника [*A Hunter's Life*]
 1972 А годы уходят, уходят ... [*And the years are slipping by and by...*]
 1972 Заезжий музыкант целуется с трубой... [*A touring musician kisses his trumpet*],
 1973 Батальное полотно [*A Battle Canvas*]
 1973 Старинная солдатская песня [*An Old Soldier's Song*]
 1974 Весна: Небо синее, как на картинке... [*Spring: The sky is blue as in a picture...*]
 1974 На смерть Бориса Балтера [*On the Occasion of the Death of Boris Balter*]
 1975 А мы с тобой, брат, из пехоты [*And we're from the infantry, brother*]
 1975 Песенка кавалергарда [*The Cavalry Guard's Song*]
 1975 Чаепитие на Арбате [*Taking Tea on the Arbat*]

- 1975 Я пишу исторический роман [*I Am Writing a Historical Novel*]
 1976 Дом на Мойке [*House on the Moika*]
 1976 Соединение сердец – старинное приспособление... [*The union of hearts—an old contrivance*]
 1976 Я вновь повстречался с Надеждой... [*I ran into Hope again*]
 1979 Еще один романс [*One More Romance*]
 1980s Все поразъезжались давным-давно [*Everybody Went Off Long Ago*]
 1980 Я выселен с Арбата – арбатский эмигрант... [*I am evicted from the Arbat—an Arbat émigré*]
 1980 Арбатское вдохновение, или воспоминания о детстве... [*The Arbat Inspiration, or Memories of Childhood*]
 1980 О Володе Высоцком [*On Volodia Vysotskii*]
 1980s Арбата больше нет: растаял словно свеченька... [*The Arbat is no more—it melted like a little candle...*]
 1980s Давайте восклицать, друг другом восхищаться [*Let's exclaim, let's admire each other*]
 1980s На белый бал берез не соберу... [*I won't gather birches for this white ball*]
 1980s Стать богачем иной норовит... [*Some want to be rich*]
 1980s Чем наш двор ни обижали – он в классической норе... [*No matter how they insulted our yard – in classic times it...*]
 1980s Американская фантазия [*An American Fantasy*]
 1980s Вроцлав: Лиловые сумерки... [*Wroclaw: Violet dusk...*]
 1980s Дима Бобышев пишет фантазии... [*Dima Bobyshev writes fantasies*]
 1980s Жаркий полдень в Массачусетсе [*A hot midday in Massachussets*]
 1980s К старости косточки стали болеть... [*As I get older, I feel pain in my bones*]
 1980s Красный клен [*The Red Maple Tree*]
 1980s Не уезжай, жена моя, в лес... [*Don't drive into the forest, my wife*]
 1980s Париж для того, чтоб ходить по нему [*Paris is to be walked in*]
 1980s Раз и два [*One and two*]
 1980s Турецкая фантазия [*A Turkish Fantasy*]
 1980s Шестидесятники Варшавы [*The Warsaw Generation of the Sixties*]
 1980s Шестидесятники развенчивать усатого должны... [*Men of the sixties should dethrone the moustache*]
 1980s Я вам описываю жизнь... [*I am describing the life to you*]
 1980s Я рад бы был покоем восхититься... [*I would love to enjoy the peace*]
 1980s Японская фантазия [*A Japanese Fantasy*]
 1981 Ну что, генералиссимус прекрасный... [*Well, my fine generalissimo*]
 1982 Арбатские напевы [*Arbat Melodies*]
 1982 Глас трубы над городами [*The trumpet call above the towns*]
 1982 Всеу времечко свое... [*There is a time for everything*]
 1982 Дорожная песня [*A Road Song*]
 1982 Как наш двор ни обижали... [*No matter how much our yard was insulted*]
 1982 Надпись на камне [*Inscription on a Stone*]
 1982 Нужны ли гусару сомнения ... [*What are doubts to the hussar*]
 1982 Парижская фантазия [*Parisian Fantasy*]
 1983 Музыкант [*Musician*]

- 1983 Собрался к маме – умерла... [I was to visit my mom – she died]
- 1984 Дерзость, или Разговор перед боем [Impertinence, or a Talk before battle]
- 1984 Под Мамонтовкой жгут костры [They Burn Fires Near Mamontovka]
- 1984 Примета [A token]
- 1985 Сколько сделано руками удивительных красот!... [How many amazingly beautiful things were made by hand!]
- 1985 В нашей жизни прекрасной и странной
- 1985 Восхищенность вашим сердцем, вашим светом... [Enchantment with your heart, your light...]
- 1985 Вот музыка та, под которую... [This is the music, to which]
- 1985 Все глуше музыка души... [The music of the soul gets quieter and quieter...]
- 1985 Гимн уюту [Hymn to Cosiness].
- 1985 Гомон площади Петровской... [Hubbub of the Petrovskaja Square]
- 1985 Дунайская фантазия [Danube Fantasy]
- 1985 Мой почтальон [My Postman]
- 1985 Не сольются никогда зимы долгие и лета [Long winters and summers will never melt]
- 1985 Ну чем тебе потрафить, мой кузнечик? ... [So how can I please you, my grasshopper?]
- 1985 Памяти Обуховой [In Memory of Obukhova]
- 1985 Песенка Белле [A Song for Bella].
- 1985 Поздравьте меня, дорогая: я рад, что остался в живых [Congratulate me, my dear, I am happy I remained alive]
- 1985 Почему мы исчезаем... [Why do we disappear]
- 1985 Строка из старого стиха слывет ненастоящей... [A line from an old poem passes for artificial]
- 1985 Читаю мемуары разных лиц... [I read the memoirs of various persons...]
- 1986 Благородные жены безумных поэтов... [The noble wives of crazy poets...]
- 1986 У поэта соперников нету [The Poet Has No Rivals]
- 1987 Ах, что-то мне не верится, что я, брат, воевал...
- 1987 Мой отец [My Father]
- 1987 На полянке разминаются оркестры духовые... [In the field, the brass bands pass one another]
- 1987 Над глубиной бездонных вод [Above the Depths of Fathomless Waters]
- 1987 Над площадью базарною [Above the city market]
- 1987 Письмо к маме [Letter to Mom]
- 1987 Работа [Work]
- 1988 Как мне нравится по Пятницкой в машине проезжать! [How I Love Driving on Piatnitskaia Street!]
- 1988 Тель-авивские харчевни [Tel-Aviv's Restaurants]
- 1988 Ах, оркестры духовые [Oh, the brass bands]
- 1988 Взяться за руки не я ли призывал вас, господа? ... [Didn't I call you gentlemen to join hands?...]
- 1988 Витя, сыграй на гитаре... [Vitia, play the guitar...],
- 1988 Воспоминание о Дне Победы [Reminiscences from the Day of Victory].
- 1988 Все утрясается мало-помалу [All slowly settles]

- 1988 *Дама ножек не замочит* [*A Lady Won't Wet Her Dainty Feet*]
 1988 *Детство* [«Я еду Тифлисом в пролетке...»] [*Childhood* [«I am riding Tiflis by open carriage»]]
 1988 *Звездочет* [*Astrologer*]
 1988 *Мне не хочется писать* [*I don't feel like writing*]
 1988 *Мое поколение: Всего на одно лишь мгновение...* [*My generation, if only for a moment*]
 1988 *На полотне у Анны Беляковой* [*On Alla Beliakova's canvas*]
 1988 *От войны войны не ищут ...* [*Don't look for another war*]
 1988 *Отчего ты печален, художник* [*Why Are You Sad, Artist*]
 1988 *Переулочек Божественным...* [*Bozhestvenny Lane*]
 1988 *Песенка «Совесть, благородство и достоинство...»* [*The Song "Conscience, nobility and dignity"*]
 1988 *По какой реке твой корабль плывет...* [*Whichever river your ship sails down*]
 1989 *Август в Латвии*
 1989 *В больнице медленно течет река часов...* [*In a hospital, the river of time flows slowly...*]
 1989 *В больничное гляну окно, а там, за окном-Пироговка ...* [*I look through the hospital window, and there I see Pirogovka...*]
 1989 *Вечера французской песни...* [*Evenings of French song...*]
 1989 *Восемнадцатый век из античности...* [*The eighteenth century from antiquity...*]
 1989 *Из Вашингтона в назначенный срок* [*From Washington at agreed time*]
 1989 *Ироническое обращение к генералу* [*An ironic address to a general*],
 1989 *Кухня* [*Kitchen*]
 1989 *Надежды красная дверь* [*The Red Door of Hope*]
 1989 *Не успел на жизнь обидеться* [*He had no time to get hurt by life*]
 1989 *Из стихов генерала Опочинина 1812 года* [*From the 1812 poems of General Oporochinin*]
 1990 *По Польше елочки бегут. Над Польшей птицы пролетают...* [*Through Poland, the spruce trees run. Above Poland the birds fly*]
 1990s *Босфор* [*Bosphorus*]
 1990s *Ерусалим* [*Jerusalem*]
 1990s *Кельн* [*Cologne*]
 1990s *Поверь мне, Агнешка, грядут перемены...* [*Believe me, Agnieszka, changes will come*]
 1991 *Звезда Голливуда* [*Hollywood Star*]
 1991 *Манхэттен* [*Manhattan*]
 1991 *Нашему дикому обществу нужен тиран во главе...* [*Our wild society needs a tyrant as a leader*]
 1991 *Украшение жизни моей...* [*Adornment of my life*]
 1992 *Мнение пана Ольбрыхского* [*Opinion of Mr. Olbrychski*]
 1992 *Я в Кельне живу. Возле Копелева...* [*I live in Cologne. Next to Kopelev*]
 1993 *Под копытами снег голубой примают...* [*The blue snow is trampled under hoof*]
 1994 *Отъезд* [*Departure*]

1996 *Был Лондон предо мной. А нынче вновь все не то же... [London lay before me. And now nothing is the same...]*

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