

AMHERST CENTER FOR RUSSIAN CULTURE

The Victor Krivulin Papers (1970 – 2005)

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Quantity: 1 linear foot

Containers: 1 archival box

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Description of the Papers

Biography

Victor Borisovich Krivulin (1944 – 2001) was born during the Second World War in a village where a Soviet regiment was stationed and where his mother served as a physician. But all his life he lived in Leningrad/Petersburg and was a part of that city, more precisely, the Petrograd Side – the most sophisticated part of which had been constructed largely in the *style moderne* of the early 20th century. He lived and died in the same house, moving for a year or two with his wife to another residence, but then returned to this one – this, one wants to say, almost mystical, enormous communal apartment, where his parents had a large room, divided into three parts (like his contemporary Joseph Brodsky's parents). Here was his office, his world, his Petersburg.

In her article, Harvard professor Stephanie Sandler calls Krivulin's poetry (and that of several of his friends) metaphysical. That was the worldview of a group of young intellectuals, looking at reality as if seeing into it. Krivulin's contemporaries' interest in his work – his poetry, his essays and his ethical and philosophical pronouncements, and to the two literary journals which he published with his friends, never wavered. It is no accident that at the end of his life, Krivulin headed the Petersburg PEN Club.

The four-year period which these notebooks represent do not constitute Krivulin's early period – he actually began writing poetry in school. Nor can one call this his mature period – he was all of 26–30 years old. But it was the period of freedom. Krivulin had already graduated from the philosophy department of the university, he had read an enormous amount of literature, he remembered not only almost all of his own poetry but the poets of the Golden Age, the Acmeists, whose successor he counted himself among. And since he prepared high school graduates for admission to the humanities department both of the university and the Pedagogical Institute, he remembered a multitude of passages from Soviet literature.

Krivulin wrote poetry almost every day. He was the appointed leader of the Petersburg avant-garde of the late 1960s and early 1970s. He recited his poetry beautifully and was always happy to do so. He was a charismatic man and attracted a large number of diverse people who, in their turn, were necessary to him.

Series Description

The papers are organized in five series:

Series 1: Notebooks of Victor Krivulin (1971—1973).

- 1) First notebook. 88 pages mostly poems and rough drafts – all undated. Also contains Krivulin’s only prose work – the story “Tropotun-Puteshestvennik.” Also contains Krivulin’s notes on 19th and 20th century Russian literature, which he taught.
- 2) Second notebook, also no dates but probably from 1971—1972. 60 pages of poetry and rough drafts.
- 3) Third notebook. Mostly 1971. 104 pages of poetry and rough drafts. Notes on how to drive a car and how to study French.
- 4) Fourth notebook – 1973. 105 pages of poetry, rough drafts and drawings. Pp. 16—52 are drawings of an unknown artist, one of which is a portrait of Krivulin.

Series 2: 4 poems: two handwritten, 2 typed

Series 3: Letters (4) to his wife Anna (1972)

Series 4: Articles (3)/obituaries

Series 5: 16 original photographs of Krivulin (some with his wife)

Provenance

The Victor Krivulin Papers were sold by his former wife, Anna Kozhina (Katzman) of Bat Yam, Israel, and St. Petersburg, Russia. They were left to her when she and Victor divorced in 1974 and, with the exception of one folder containing obituaries, cover the years 1971—1974. Victor included almost everything, supposing that it would be better preserved with her, but she kept only what belonged to “her period.”