

*The
Andrej Belyj
Society*



Newsletter

Number 10

1991

THE ANDREJ BELYJ SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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The Andrej Belyj Society Newsletter

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Editor's Note

This will be my final issue as editor of the *Newsletter*. Although I had promised in Number 9 that the next issue would appear before Christmas, before I knew it, I was renegeing on my agreement. This time I could not claim that an electric storm had hit my word processor, nor could I blame the delay on late copy. All I can say is that a combination of factors came between me and the computer. I'm expecting a baby!

Now for a little reminiscing... Some of you may remember the 1980 AATSEEL meeting which took place in Houston, and in which several young Slavists congregated and played with the notion of starting a Belyj Society. I recall Vladimir Alexandrov, Tom Beyer, Don Barton Johnson, Sasha Woronzoff and myself exchanging ideas, wondering if a Belyj Society would work, say, on the model of the Nabokov Society. Then came the inaugural meeting at the Roosevelt Hotel in New York on December 28, 1981, when we met for the first time under the auspices of AATSEEL. Gerald Janecek and Pierre Hart served as president and vice-president respectively. That same year the first issue appeared in time for the next meeting, which took place in Chicago. Stephen Jan Parker (editor of *The Nabokovian*) and Nadine Natov (of the International Dostoevsky Society) were very kind to share their By-Laws with us.

Ten years is a long time, but it seems like yesterday, and let me say, I have truly enjoyed serving you as editor. Thank you all for helping me make this dream of a Belyj Society possible. Over the years, many of you maintained a lively

The Halcyon Quest: Andrej Belyj's Solution for a Torn Russia in *The Silver Dove*
Harold Michael Sem

L.A. Novikov, "Стилистика орнаментальной прозы
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correspondence and steadfast support. I'd like to mention just a few of those persons, without whom this would not be possible: Tom Beyer, Maria Carlson, Charlene Castellano, George Cheron, Brett Cooke, Julian Gaffy, Pierre Hart, Gerald Janecek, Katerina Kulešova and the late Ronald Peterson. I would also like to take this occasion to thank our Russian *Belovedy*, people like Aleksandr V. Lavrov and Vladimir M. Piskunov.

As many of you know, we introduced the new editor at the last annual meeting in San Francisco. He is Dr. Stephen Hutchings of the University of Rochester. Please send copy and correspondence (and your 1992 dues!) from now on to him at the Dept. of Foreign Languages, Literatures and Linguistics, 390 Dewey Hall, University of Rochester, Rochester, New York, 14627, (716) 275-4251. Dr. Hutchings looks forward to hearing from you, "and to beginning work on issue 11."

As for the present issue, a few notes should be made. In addition to the inclusion of bibliography, abstracts, reviews, reprints and short notes, etc., I would like to put in a pitch for including essays by students. Last year Martha Wessels, an undergraduate at UC-Irvine contributed to No. 9 with an essay on syphilis in *Petersburg*. Her professor of Russian, Dr. Michael Green, recommended her award-winning essay to me. This year I'm including an undergraduate essay by Harold Michael Sem of Texas A&M University. I hope this can become a regular feature of future issues. Those of you who are directing doctoral dissertations could do the same with your students. On this note, let me say "Спасибо."

Petersburg and the Language of Occultism
Abstract by Maria Carlson

Paper Presented at AAASS, November 1991

The panel on "Kant, Cult, and Occult" examined a "pluralistic conception of truth" in the literary work, one that "can permit different forms of understanding and which surrenders the need for a uniform, or even hierarchical conception of truth." (Lawrence Hatab, *Myth and Philosophy*, p. xi). Such pluralism is characteristic of the mythic, analogical mode of thought found in the works of Belyj and other major figures from the *fin-de-siècle*: Nietzsche, Ivanov, Wagner, and Jung.

At the turn of the century, there was a tremendous psychic tension created by the seemingly irreconcilable antithesis between myth and philosophy, intuition and reason, religion and science, value and fact. Post-Kantian philosophy and science seemed to have connived together at the exile of myth from the modern world. Belyj certainly sensed this tension, and his turn to the "occult sciences" represents an attempt to find some point of resolving this tension, for, if unresolved, it could lead to various negative psychic states: alienation; cultural rootlessness; the fear of technology destroying the soul; the emergence of anti-rational and even "demonic" developments.

Why did Belyj seriously consider the occult tradition, specifically Theosophy, and its Westernized offshoot, Anthroposophy, as an answer to what he saw as the crisis of contemporary culture? Its primary appeal to him was precisely its synthetic, rather than analytical, character. Theosophy denies any rift

Neo-Kantianism in Belyj's *Petersburg*
Abstract by James West
Paper Presented at AAASS, November 1991

Belyj's practice of incorporating poetic language into his philosophy and philosophy into his literary works makes each impossible to appreciate without some knowledge of the other. This paper makes some general suggestions about the form which philosophical commentary takes in Belyj's literary language, and some particular observations about the commentary on Neo-Kantianism that is embodied in *Petersburg*.

Kant bequeathed to his successors the still not satisfactorily completed task of finding a strictly logical system embracing both the world of the senses and the world of mental constructs. The Neo-Kantians discussed the question of the reality and knowability of the material world in a rigorously logical manner, and what Rickert offered in his philosophy was an intellectually rigorous alternative to the mystic's leap of faith. It is almost a natural corollary of Rickert's theory of knowledge that if we live consciously (in his sense of the word "consciousness"), then we create the life we live. Most of the Neo-Kantian thinkers on whom Belyj drew argued in one way or another that a philosophy of knowledge that gives proper recognition to the role of the senses must also address the "psychology of knowledge."

Between 1906 and about 1909 Belyj devoted much of his energy to the study of Kant and the German Neo-Kantian philosophers, especially Heinrich Rickert, and towards the end of this period he attempted to go

between myth and philosophy; Mme. Blavatsky, Theosophy's founder, even termed her "secret doctrine" -- "The Synthesis of Science, Religion, and Philosophy." This synthetic approach, striving to unite both value and fact, myth and philosophy, becomes a third, important language for Belyj.

This paper addresses only one small aspect of the immense occult vocabulary Belyj employs in *Petersburg*. The idealist notion that **Consciousness Creates Form**, a notion reformulated for the *fin-de-siècle* by Mme. Blavatsky, lies at the basis of Belyj's magical notion of theurgy. Under the influence of Annie Besant and Charles W. Leadbeater's Theosophical study, *Thought Forms* (1902), which deals with abstract forms and colors precipitated by the power of human thought on the astral plane, Belyj generates an "occultly correct" astral universe in his novel, populated by "thought-forms" (Belyj's *mysti-obrazy*): the thoughts, feelings, fears, desires, wishes, and impulses that human beings feel or think on the physical plane and that take fluid form in astral matter.

By setting his novel on the astral plane, Belyj creates a coherent and psychically real universe -- he describes quite concretely what is happening in refined astral matter, which he perceives through spiritual organs of perception, honed by Theosophical meditations. *Petersburg* can be read as a realistic novel, if one reads it on the astral plane. Regardless of that, it remains a fact that many startling, innovative, and opaque elements of the novel may become transparent to the reader who knows the language.

analytical rigor of late nineteenth-century scientific thought. Belyj had always sought a scientific (albeit in a very broad sense of the word) foundation for his theory of Symbolism. Not even his interest in the occult contradicts this assertion. At least in the period that is of interest to us, it was the occult sciences that held his attention, fact that is reflected in the puzzling references in *Peterburg* to Newton, whose intellectual interests went beyond physics and mathematics to embrace both religion and alchemy. What ultimately prevented Belyj from relying on Rickert's support was precisely Rickert's adherence to traditional critical method, which kept him from exploring what was (for Belyj) the most interesting implication of his theory of knowledge — the psychological dimension. Where Rickert seems to disparage the tendency for life to "assert its religious nature without mediation, rather than in a language with a given vocabulary and a prescribed syntax," Belyj was profoundly convinced of the inarticulably religious nature of life, and always in search of an extension of language that might none the less make it accessible.

beyond Rickert in a synthesis of Neo-Kantian and theosophical ideas. These philosophical explorations overlaid but did not supplant an abiding interest in the ideas of Friedrich Nietzsche and Vladimir Solov'ev — Belyj was eclectic, and tended to seek out in a wide variety of philosophical systems particular formulations that supported his own positions, mingling elements of different systems with a freedom that could only be exercised by a thinker who was as comfortable with analogical as with analytical modes of thought.

Peterburg belongs to the period when Belyj was concerned to establish his theory of Symbolism as distinct from the formulations of the Neo-Kantians, and the novel betrays in fact an ambiguous relationship to Neo-Kantian ideas. Such ideas as the nature of knowledge and consciousness, and the creation of reality, are presented as a philosophical and psychological burlesque in which the love-hate tension of father and son revolves around the shortcomings, as Belyj perceived them, of both the narrowly rational and materialist and the idealist world views. In addition, much of the bizarre vocabulary that punctuates the text of *Peterburg* turns out to be drawn from sometimes unexpected philosophical sources, including Rickert, but to a greater extent the Danish philosopher and psychologist Harald Høffding, who seems to have helped Belyj in his quest to go beyond Rickert.

However, the mockery of Neo-Kantian positions in *Peterburg* is expressive more of frustration than dismissal, and Rickert's thought clearly retained an appeal for Belyj, based in the combination of an idealism that had its roots in Neo-Platonism and the

Greek Myth and Religion in Belyj's Petersburg

Abstract by Mary Jo White

Paper Presented at AAASS, November 1991

The purpose of this paper is to suggest ways in which Belyj's not inconsiderable, albeit peculiar, contribution to the Russian transformation of the Greek tradition might best be explored. Its strategy is to sketch the major routes along which Belyj travelled back to the Byzantine and Greek sources that inform his theory in general and enliven his art in *Petersburg* in particular, especially as this theory---one I hold to be consistent regardless of the imagery clothing it---is expressed in such essays as "On Theurgy," "Sacred Colors," "The Apocalypse in Russian Poetry," "The Phoenix," "Friedrich Nietzsche," "The Magic of Words," and "The Emblematics of Meaning."

In the course of the paper the basic theoretical understandings that Belyj derived from Solov'ev's and Ivanov's deeply informed reconsiderations of ancient Greek philosophy, myth, and religion are outlined; so too are some key aspects of Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy* that correspond to the commonplaces of Russian religious philosophy. These points are essential for a proper understanding of Belyj's imagistic language of myth---language encoded with the names Apollo, Dionysus, Aphrodite, and Sophia---and for a sound appreciation of his prescriptions for religious myth-making. As an example of how Belyj's Greek-inspired religious myth-making is meant to work, the character of Apollon Apollonovič is then viewed through the optic that the opening argument has constructed.

The Eleventh Annual Belyj Society Meeting

The eleventh annual meeting of the Andrej Belyj Society was held during the 1991 AATSEEL conference in San Francisco on Saturday, December 28, 1991. Here is the program:

Chair: Laura Goering, Carleton College
Secretary: Virginia Bennett, University of Hawaii,
Manoa

"Belyj's Final Decade: Decline or Ascent?"

Olga Muller Cooke, Texas A&M University

"Symbolization of Space in Rodenbach and Belyj"

Peter I. Barta, Texas Tech University

"Belyj and Wagner"

Rosamund Bartlett, University of Michigan,
Ann Arbor

The Belyj Society elected Rosamund Bartlett as Vice-President to succeed Virginia Bennett who is President for the year 1992. There were several other presentations on Belyj on other panels: William Comer's (University of Kansas) "Andrej Belyj's Sectarians: The Doves in *The Silver Dove*," and Andrew Kahn's (Oxford University) "Mandel'stam and Belyj."

Symbolization of Urban Space in George Rodenbach's
Bruges-la-Morte and in Belyj's *Petersburg*

Abstract by Peter L. Barta

Paper Presented at AATSEEL, December 1991

Rodenbach's *Bruges-la-Morte* (1892) and Belyj's *Petersburg* (1916) occupy a distinguished position in the history of the European novel: named after the city which serves as the protagonist, they stand as prominent representatives of the small corpus of Symbolist novels. While Belyj was undoubtedly familiar with Rodenbach, nothing seems to indicate that *Bruges-la-Morte* overtly informs the consciousness of Belyj's novel. Such prominent Russian Symbolist journals as *Vesy*, *Zolotoe runo* and *Russkaja mysl'* reviewed Rodenbach's works, but considered him a somewhat marginal figure. Furthermore, Zinaida Vengerova's study of Rodenbach in *Literaturnye zarakteristiki* indicates that translations of *La Carillonneur* and *L'Art en Esil* attracted greater interest in Russia than *Bruges-la-Morte* (translated into Russian in 1904 under the title "Mertyvj Bruž").

Rodenbach emphatically suggests in his "Foreword" that Bruges -- a city which "appears almost human" -- is the main character of the novel. In his "Prologue," Belyj reveals that the ontological status of the "spirit" of the city is the central problem of *Petersburg*. The narrator of the "Prologue" says of the city that "it only appears to exist." Like Rodenbach, Belyj postulates that Petersburg has an intellect of its own. By endowing space with symbolism, both writers personify their cities.

Through examining these similarities, we can see that Rodenbach and Belyj use the city for the purpose of symbolization in two different ways: in Rodenbach's novel the city's "personality" becomes knowable and gains specificity thanks to its approximation to the human protagonist's state of mind. In Belyj's novel, however, the city's mysterious and invisible "center" is beyond the reach of the novel's narrative which probes the characters' lives, shattered by the experience of Petersburg. The two authors' different application of the symbolic potential of the city throws light on the versatility of this figure for the literary exploration of human consciousness at the time of the *fin-de-siècle*.

Rodenbach does not seek to unveil terrible truths about the universe. The details of the actual city fuse with the states of Hugues' soul and motivate his actions. The result is no less devastating than in Belyj but the novel's statement about the world is translated into personal terms rather than into "cosmic" ones as is the case in *Petersburg*. In *Literaturnye zarakteristiki*, Zinaida Vengerova suggests that Rodenbach's symbolism is "unconscious." He does not pursue "abstract truths"; instead, his lyric vision arises as he accounts for the impact of the world of objects on the human soul.

Through Rodenbach's and Belyj's novels, Bruges and Petersburg have become prominent statements about the imprisonment of human consciousness in an urban world it had originally created to protect the values of civilization. The endings of both novels strongly question some basic tenets of civilization itself. Its brainchild, the city, turns into a monster in *Petersburg*, which devours its own children. In *Bruges-la-Morte*, the city has become a dead,

crystallized idea, which cannot tolerate the warmth of human life. As characters die, go mad or run away from the city in these two Symbolist novels, the city remains unchanging: its colors and sounds mock those whose limitless imagination is forced into an existence greatly limited by space and time.

Belyj and Wagner

Abstract by Rosamund Bartlett

Paper Presented at AATSEEL, December 1991

The important influence that Wagner's music and ideas exerted on the Russian Symbolists confirms that the "Symbolist" Wagner had very little to do with the Wagner that the Russian public flocked in droves to hear in the years leading up to the Revolution. Belyj, Blok and Ivanov were all drawn towards Wagner as part of their overall enthusiasm for German Romanticism, and were primarily attracted by the composer's symbolical creative methods. These, they believed, were intimately connected to their own attempts to reveal the deeper realities that they were convinced lay behind the world of appearances. Belyj, Blok and Ivanov each responded to Wagner in largely different ways in their writings, however.

Belyj probably first came into contact with Wagner's music in 1898, when he began to attend the orchestral concerts for which his mother had taken a subscription. Later he had the chance to see Wagner's "music dramas" performed in full. The *Ring* cycle (and *Siegfried* in particular) was always Wagner's most important work for Belyj, except during the Steiner years, when it was eclipsed for a

while by *Parsifal*. Belyj was always particularly enthralled by the rhythm of Wagner's music, which he linked to the idea of "Eternal Recurrence." There is little evidence that Belyj took Wagner's theoretical writings very seriously, however, although it appears he read articles about the composer with some interest.

Wagner's influence on Belyj falls into three principal categories, which also roughly correspond to distinct phases in the history of Belyj's attitude to the composer. Firstly, Belyj was affected by the metaphysical properties he was inspired by Schopenhauer to see in Wagner's music. In his early writings, the "Symphonies," he attempted to construct his prose works on the lines of the Wagnerian music drama, using "*unendliche Melodie*" and the leitmotif, a technique he returned to during the composition of his last novel, *Maski*. Secondly, the "*Berlinskaja redakcija*" of Belyj's memoirs and his "*intimnaja biografija*" show us the extent to which he tended, under the influence of Emil Medtner, to transpose the symbolism of Wagner's *Ring* on to the events of his own life. Not only did he start to cast his contemporaries (even their ideas) as characters from the tetralogy in his writings, but certain scenes and images from the work also crept into his poetry (most notably the five-part cycle of 1902, "*Starinyj drug*," several poems written during the Revolution and "*Pervoe svidanie*"). Wagner loomed large in the ideology of the pro-Germanic *Musaget* publishing house that Belyj helped to set up in 1909. It was during these years, however, that Belyj became attracted to the ideas of Rudolf Steiner. Together with Lev Ellis he came now to link Wagner with Rosicrucianism and Anthroposophy, in which the Grail

symbolism was a key feature. Accordingly, he now began to graft symbols from *Parsifal* on to the events of his life and incorporate them into his writing. Numerous examples can be found in his *Putevye zametki*, the collection of poems entitled *Korolevna i rycari* and *Na perevalu*. The symbolism of Wagner's last work is also obliquely reflected in *Peterburg*.

Finally, Wagner features prominently in Belyj's *Istorija stanovlenija samosoznajuščej duši* as the only composer to whom he devotes an entire chapter out of the thirty two which comprise its second volume. The unpublished *Tablitsy i szemy idejnoj preemstvennosti (metafizičeskaja koncepcija)* (1912-1916), a series of increasingly convoluted and complex diagrams which relate to this work, reveal that Belyj regarded Wagner as a father figure in the Symbolist movement and a key figure in the history of European culture.

Belyj's Final Decade: Decline or Ascent?
Abstract by Olga Muller Cooke
Paper Presented at AATSEEL, December 1991

When asked why his experimental works were inaccessible to the ordinary reader, Belyj responded that only the future would find an audience for his creative works, that is, the works he "composed," rather than "stitched together." In his "Kak my pišem" Belyj attributed the exalted status of "artistic composition" (in the musical sense of the word), to only six or seven books, namely "The Dramatic Symphony," *The Silver Dove*, *Petersburg*, *Kotik Letaeu*, *The Christened Chinaman*, and the *Moscow* novels. Few critics would agree with Ivanov-Razumnik, Belyj's closest ally in the final decade of his life, who called Belyj's final novels "the highpoints not only in Russian but also in European literature." While Klavdija Bugaeva would argue that *Maski* was Belyj's finest novel, most have considered the *Moscow* novels the works of a failing master.

But perhaps the opposite is the case: Belyj's *Moscow* novels not only represent a continuation of the dazzling linguistic architectonics found in the earlier novels, but it expresses completely new themes couched in a new method of characterization with a greater regard for plot construction. Moreover, Belyj moves toward a more universal audience, with European points of reference. Now Dickens, Shakespeare and Cervantes become his fellow travellers. In "O sebe kak pisatele" Belyj wrote about his "stremlenie k novomu človeku." Belyj not only offers new types of heroes, where the victim is also the torturer, and vice versa, but by casting his doubles Korobkin and Mandro in twin roles on a

journey entailing blindness, death and resurrection, he paves the way for the type of new world needed in embody the spiritual revolution he anticipated in virtually all his anthroposophical writings. If one looks at the growth of his principal hero, Korobkin, from a mathematician whose scientific discoveries can lead to the explosion of the world, to a Tolstoyan with a commune of pacifists, to a virtual guru, one cannot help but notice the ethical imperative of the novel.

Had Belyj wrote Volume 3, which would have deposited Korobkin in the Caucasus Mountains surrounded by loyal followers, a type of anthroposophical collective of individuals would form a utopian commune and bring about social change. However, it comes as no surprise that Belyj's "new man" was painfully out of touch with Soviet reality, just as Mejerxol'd's "new poetics of the theatre" failed to appeal to the politicians of the day. The new readers of the 1930s, forced to accept Socialist Realist dogma, could scarcely comprehend what Belyj was saying. Those who did understand, like Ivanov-Razumnik, faced arrest and exile. Finally, is the work of Belyj's clairvoyant and deeply moral last ten years an index to an increase in powers or a decrease? As Belyj intimated, only the future will tell.

What's Doing at Arbat, 55 By Charlene Castellano

Unfortunately but not unexpectedly in these troubled times, Soviet plans to enshrine Belyj in his childhood Moscow home are stalled for want of material support. The only real progress made this year was the institutionalization of a "Sector for the Founding of the Belyj Museum," headed by Nikolaj Alexandrov as extension of his duties at the Puškin memorial apartment at Arbat, 53. His efforts on behalf of the Belyj museum are shared by his assistant at the Puškin apartment, Ira Volkova, and also by Monika Spivak, Kira Šelmanova, and Evgenija Garber, who are members of the staff at the Puškin museum on Kropotinskaja Street. This group of young and enthusiastic scholars looks to the apartment/future museum as proof positive of Belyj's hopeful prediction that his "creative efforts will be justified by the year 2000" (see Belyj's essay, "Kak my pišem"). But to ensure reality, they need help.

The idea of housing a museum in the apartment Belyj inhabited until 1906 became a possibility only when Aleksej Sadovskij, former director at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which occupies Arbat, 55, ceded almost all the space formerly comprising the Bugaev apartment to the memorial division of the Puškin State Museum ("Puškin Apartment on the Arbat"). Last year, as part of a complete interior reconstruction of the Ministry's Arbat quarters, the Bugaev apartment was rebuilt according to plans provided by a restoration architect. It includes the dining room, living room (with its inviting, corner balcony), bedroom, nursery and study. (The narrow corridor figuring so prominently in Belyj's mental

journeys is also now intact.) Gone, however, are the foyer, pantry, and kitchen (with its notorious "black stairway" down to the Solov'ev apartment -- now totally lost to the Ministry's cafeteria). Nonetheless, the apartment stands freshly painted and waiting for creative use.

As Alexandrov noted in an article published last year in *Naše Nasledie* (V/17 -- this issue of *Istusstvo's* glossy journal devoted a generous portion to the 110th anniversary of Belyj's birth), the apartment looms large in the poetic spaces of *Kotik Letaeu*, *Moskovskij čudak* and *Kreščennyj kisaec*, and is described in great and realistic detail (right down to wallpaper patterns), in the three volumes of Belyj's memoirs. This copious commentary easily allow for an accurate reconstruction of the interiors, through which Alexandrov wishes to distribute documentary materials devoting each room to a different period in Belyj's life. Interestingly enough, the periods are defined less by Belyj's works than by the visitors to the apartment. Alexandrov is emphatic in his belief that the apartment deserves memorializing not simply because it was inhabited by Belyj, but also because it played host to so many of the fine minds whose interaction produced Symbolist culture.

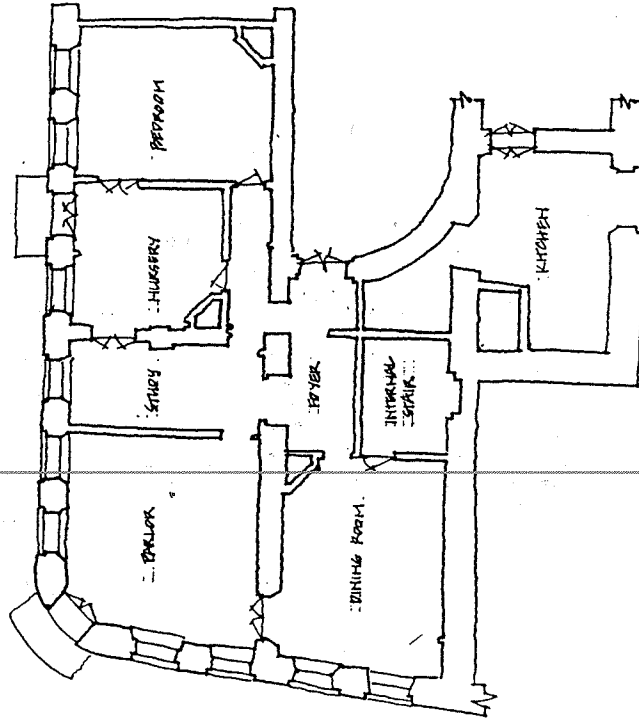
Along these lines, Alexandrov suggests that the Bugaevs' Moscow apartment rivals Vjačeslav Ivanov's famous Petersburg "Tower" in the impetus it gave to the development of Symbolism. In this spirit, it seems to me that some way other than a period restoration might be found to represent, within the apartment's walls, that efflorescence of artistic life to which Belyj so fervently devoted himself. Perhaps inspiration could be found in the enormously successful, newly

renovated Majakovskij house--museum on Serova Proezd, in which the designers conceptualized less the chronology than the spirit of the man who so boldly made politics a form of poetic art. This and other advances recently made in Soviet museology suggest that the talent need only be harnessed to the Belyj cause.

But cooperation is needed in other areas as well. The holdings of the Belyj apartment are meager. At present, it houses a desk that was Belyj's and a few other pieces of furniture (an armchair, sofa, cupboard, some occasional chairs and a lamp) that probably but not certainly belonged to the Bugaevs. Belyj's pocketwatch, a handful of his pens, a couple of his father's books, some carpets, odd bits of hardware, and a few photographs are also on hand. The highlight of this preserve is Belyj's collection of "kamuški," the smooth, tiny pebbles that aided him in developing color vocabulary. But the lion's share of Belyj's personal possessions now belong to and were removed from the apartment, so Alexandrov told me, by Tatiana Vladimirovna Norina, a niece of Klavdija Bugaeva's sister, who, apparently, has promised to donate them once the museum's opening becomes a fact.

Alexandrov freely admits to needing support for the museum at every level, and welcomes whatever materials and ideas we might be able to add to his store. He has specifically requested that we send him copies of our publications, and also would like to begin collecting books on museum design. He can be reached at the Puškin State Museum, Memorial Division, Arbat 53. Shouldn't we help him out? If nothing else, we could at least offer moral support in

Sketches of Arbat, 55
By Richard Becherer



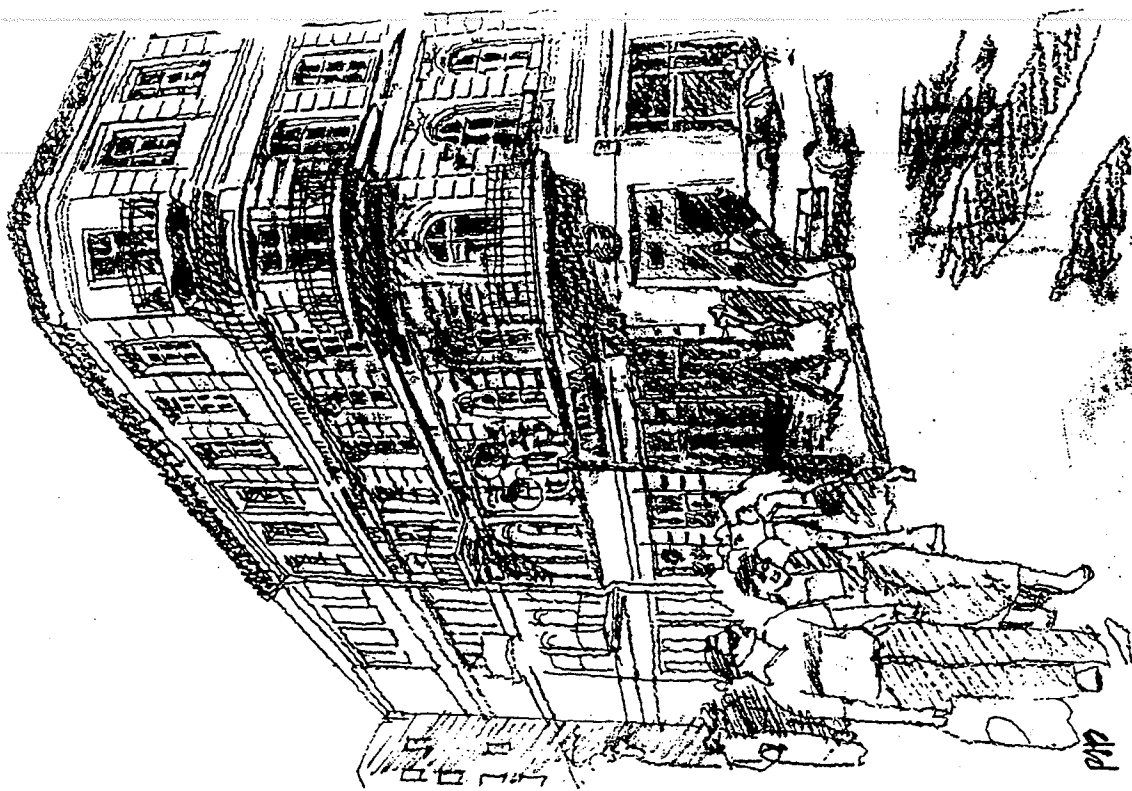
BILGAEV APT.
ARBAT 55, 3RD FLOOR

what seems right now to be a lonely battle. The isolation of Alexandrov's group from a larger population of "Belovedy" could doom the project. It would be a shame to leave the long-fought acquisition of the apartment and the hard-earned establishment of the Belyj museum "sector" languishing.

An Introduction to Belyj's "Otkrytoe pis'mo
dekadenta k liberalam i konservatoram"
By Olga Muller Cooke

As every student of Russian Symbolism is well aware, few memoirs compare with Belyj's *Na rubeže dnuv stoletij* for bringing to life a "whole gallery of remarkable figures of the symbolist period."¹ Belyj's memoirs are especially revealing with regard to how he grew up as the son of Professor Nikolaj Vasil'evič Bugaev (1837-1903), dean of the Faculty of Mathematics of Moscow University. While his father embodied all the qualities of an erudite man of learning, respected by international mathematicians and serving as "chief mentor" to such philosophers as Pavel Florenskij,² Belyj perceived the world of his father's colleagues as small and vulgar. The stuffy professorial narrow-mindedness and pretentiousness, which pervaded the Bugaev household seemed to poison Belyj's childhood.

In *Na rubeže dnuv stoletij* he recreates the struggle his father waged with what Belyj labelled "Zadopjatovščina," that collective condition of obscurantism, philistinism and tunnel-vision, which he attributed to the professorial establishment: "ot 'Zadopjatovyx' mutilo ego." (32) Belyj's choice of coinage—"Zadopjatovščina"—for this assortment of negative traits was based on the characterization of Zadopjatov in the *Moscow* novels, the professor of inexact sciences, a charlatan in the university, who stood for everything Belyj loathed among pseudo liberal-minded professors.³ This portrayal became the object of Belyj's most acrid satire. While Zadopjatov represented a composite of a number of Professor Bugaev's colleagues, Korobkin, the hero of the final



Итак виноваты не они, а квартира, сплетенная с другими квартирами: виновата профессорская среда и профессорская квартира, — не наша, а среднеарифметическая квартира профессора; нет, не спроста я в первом вылета из нее разразился в 1903 году манифестом против "либералов и консерваторов"; в этом "Открытом письме", напечатанном в первом номере "Художественной хроники", издаваемой при журнале "Мир Искусства", разговор шел не о партиях, не о программах, а о слишком хорошо мне известной профессорской квартире; ошибка юности заключалась в том, что я не представил "Открытое письмо к профессорам-либералам и к профессорам-консерваторам", ибо к ним-то я и обращался; и то, что это письмо было понято по адресу, свидетельствует тот факт, что максимум ярости оно вызвало именно в профессорском кругу; в других кругах прочли, покачали головой, забыли, а в профессорском кругу обвели красным карандашом, запомнили, — срезали на государственном экзамене, устраивали маленькие пакости в университете, демонстрировали мне презрение над гробом отца, через год негласно уведомили, чтобы я лучше не поступал на филологический факультет, ибо мне на нем делать нечего [...]

И уже в 1925-1926 годах шептали, что я-де в романе "Москва" осмеял ученую интеллигенцию в угоду кому-то и чему-то; не говоря о том, что в романе "Москва" профессор Коробкин задуман, как апофеоз подлинной интеллигенции от науки: в этих шлотах о подоплеках осмеяния мною "профессорской квартиры" — явная клевета, ибо не в 1925 году она увидена, а в 1890 году; увидена, и изжита до дна. (478-79)

novels, was drawn principally from Belyj's father. *Na rubeže dvux stoletij* mercilessly depicts Professor Bugaev's war with these types, just as *Moskva* depicts the struggle between Korobkin and the Zadorjatovs of the world. However, Belyj's satiric antipathy in his memoirs and *Moskva* is not directed toward the role of higher education, but rather at dogma and obscurantists. If one takes *Na rubeže dvux stoletij* as a companion piece to *Moskva* one discerns uncanny similarities between the professorial colleagues of Korobkin on the one hand and Professor Bugaev on the other.

The lengthy citation that follows is taken from the section in *Na rubeže dvux stoletij*, in which Belyj attributes his rejection by his father's colleagues to the letter he wrote for *Mir Iskusstva*, namely his "Открытое пис'мо." The tone here is one of bitter reminiscence, punctuated by disgust for the little minds associated with the university. Belyj's "Открытое пис'мо" not only won him enemies in the university (we learn that he was advised, in no uncertain terms, to leave the university after receiving his diploma in natural sciences. Belyj had intended to pursue a degree in philology), it seems also to have affected Professor Bugaev's relations with his colleagues, so much so Belyj was snubbed at his own father's funeral. This rather long passage serves a dual function: as commentary on the "Открытое пис'мо," written originally during the same year his father died, as well as an account of a painful memory which emerged twenty seven years after the fact:

At first glance one may find few, if any, ties between this passage and the reprint which follows. Belyj's "Open Letter" below reads like a "cri de coeur," whose mouthpiece is the infantile voice of a rejected child, beseeching adults to listen to their children. Defining himself as a member of the "decadent" generation, Belyj reveals the gulf that existed between the generations, without ever pointing his finger at future detractors. There is not a single reference to professors in the letter, and yet as the citation from *Na rubeže dvou stoletij* clarifies, Belyj's principal attackers were his father's university colleagues.

Notes

¹Georgette Donchin, "Introduction" to Andrej Belyj, *Na rubeže dvou stoletij* [1930] (Chicago: Russian Language Specialties, 1966). All pages will henceforth follow citations in the text.

²Robert Slesinski, *Pavel Florensky: A Metaphysics of Love* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Press, 1984), p. 25. Steven Cassedy's *Flight from Eden* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1990) also devotes several pages to Nikolaj Bugaev's important contributions to mathematics.

³A. Tarasenkov notes that Zadopjatov is based on the portraits of Professors Veselovskij, Storoženko and Kareev. See A. Tarasenkov, "Tema vojny v romanax Andreja Belogo *Moskva, Znaniya*, 10, 1932, p. 173. In actuality, Zadopjatov is probably based on the traits of other professors as well. However, from the point of view of concrete biographical parallels, the characterization of Zadopjatov does seem to draw mostly from the very real personality traits of Professor Storoženko. See *Na rubeže dvou stoletij*, pp. 8, 10, 14, 27-36, 40, 62-3, 83-4, 104-17, 126, 128, 131, 155-6, 339-40, 480.

Несколько Слов Декадента, Обращенных к Либералам и Консерваторам

Так часты нападки на молодежь. Так грубы укоры, обращенные к ней... Так суровы обвинения... Тут и упадок, и безумие, и безответственность, и лень, — тут всего много — в этих укорах со стороны либералов и консерваторов.

Сколько несправедливости!

Скажу откровенно я почти не встречал безпристрастных попыток войти в положение молодежи, рассмотреть ее увлечения. Да и были они? Были, конечно, слова о снисходительности, произносимые с олимпийским равнодушием, но кого прельстить всем приехавшая, стереотипная гуманность на словах! Было холодное заигрыванье быющих на популярность стариков. Много было. Было мало сердечности и соединенной с ней мудрости по отношению к молодежи.

Либералы и консерваторы спорили. Спорили жестоко. Спорили бесплодно. У нас трещит голова от этих споров. С детских лет у нас начиналась мигрень от все тех же пререканий. А они предлагают нам продолжать их спор. Видят-ли они близорукость этого предложения? Мы отказываемся. Они называют нас бездейными, когда мы переросли их ограниченный идеализм, в настоящую минуту с успехом прививаемый многим наивным барашкам, блещущим о гуманности.

Наша вина в том, что мы позднее. Они заставили нас довести их нелепые вождения до абсурда, чтобы потом бросить с отвращением. Они заставили почувствовать нас невыносимое бремя компромисса: наша-ли вина, что мы позднее?

И вот, когда многие из нас стали над бедной одинокие, растерянные, не понимающая друг друга, они-же — виновники наших несчастий (о, позор!) — стали рассматривать нас не то с любопытством, не то со страхом, приставив очки к близоруким глазам. Смотрели — не понимали: разразилась дружбою бранью. Дело в том, что у них закружилась голова при виде нас, стоящих над пропастью.

Но кто же нас привел к пропасти?

Нас укоряют в безпринципности. Но это — иллюзия. Видимая безпринципность несравненно благодетельнее ограниченного принципа. Ограниченный принцип ведет к активному противодействию тем положительным началам, которые не включены в этот принцип в силу его ограниченности. А таких начал может быть несравненно больше, нежели включено их в известный принцип. Видимая безпринципность — меньше зло сравнительно с принципиальной ограниченностью.

Часто, это — ночь на исходе. Но тщедушные принципы оскорблены. Роль молодежи часто непонятна теперь уже ни

либералам, ни консерваторам. И вопиют, ужасаясь, почтенные, честные близорукие. Не понимают.

Среди молодежи есть и большие, и с толку сбившиеся, и развратные. И их много. И число их растет. Часто тому причиной наследственность и влияние поверхностной культуры — предшествующие поколения с особенной старательностью позаботились как о том, чтобы укрепить свои недостатки в детях, так и о том, чтобы заполнить всю жизнь мертвящей серединностью. Молодежь болезненна — кто сощадл условия этой болезненности? Молодежь карикатурна — чья карикатура она?

Когда мы боремся за вечные вопросы, мы начинаем решать их по своему усмотрению, не ссображаясь с интересами предшествующих поколений. Когда человек приступает к делу на известном пути, то прежде всего он обязан расчистить свой путь от ненужного сора. Свежему человеку душевно работать в накуренной комнате. Первой мыслью его будет мысль открыть форточку. Его—ли вина, что ворвавшийся ветер задул свет. Лучше минуту посидеть во мраке, чем весь вечер в непроветренной духоте.

Мы не хотим брать в руки их жалкие хоругви, так важно именуемые направлениями,— они смотрят на нас, как на диких зверей... И все они дружно ругаются. Но они неправы, потому что они злее нас.

Среди молодежи все больше нигилистов, самоубийц,

декадентов. Один из самых распространенных типов — тип Арнольда Крамера. Это ужасно. Но это так.

И вот, незаметно подкравшись, совершится катастрофа... Разразилась — и недоумевают... Что?.. Как?.. Почему?..

Поздно..

Но невольно напрашиваются эти слова отца Крамера: "Куда мы летим?" "Я не оправдываю его, не!" "Я только снимаю смотрю на него..." "Он вырос в моих глазах..."

И кто хоть раз подымеется на холодную высоту, отношение к жизни меняется.

Тот поймет, что с трудом вымученные слова о жизни, о долге без свободы духа — обуза, а при этой свободе исчезает само понятие о труде и долге, потому что "дух дышет, где хочет, и голос его слышишь, а не знаешь, откуда приходит и куда уходит." (Иоанн).

В каком виде представляется эта принципиальная, нетерпимая уаость с высоты свободного озарения духом!

Какая глубочайшая мерзость, какое кощунство связывать эту озаренную духовность удушающей формой! И сколько молодых сил дупит в себе это духовное окрыление, чтобы явиться перед обществом в маске, умерщвляя сначала замаскированную душу, а потом наполняя эту пустую личину,

под которой когда то обитал, и умер дух, развратом, пьянством, подлостью.

Каждое поколение нервнее, тоньше, нежнее. С каждым поколением нужно обращаться все бережней и бережней. Часто более утонченные запросы молодежи отвергают. Над ними грубо смеются. Нормальный рост прерывается тогда: утонченность переходит в извращенность.

Ряд предшествующих поколений последовательно старался подчинить жизнь схемам, т.е. свести на нет, ибо всякая схема есть только отражение. Эта отраженная жизнь выдавалась за идеальную.

Несмотря на ужас, некоторые из молодежи все-же пытаются, преодолев его, осветить черное пространство, — карлики встречают злобой эти попытки. О, еще-бы им быть довольными! В каком мизерном виде созрены их схемы!

Тогда они начинают говорить о безумии. Они думают — молодежь запутаешь ярлычками и словами! Если то, что по нашему так прекрасно, если оно безумие, да здравствует безумие: носhibaем очки трезвости с близоруких носов!

Нет, не слов мы боимся! У нас слишком много накопилось, чтобы заниматься словоприемом, мы слишком страдали, чтобы не быть держими в мыслях. Волей-неволей мы загнаны в ледники — смехон нам страх к ледникам!

Какое нам дело до неповоротливых мужиков с низин, которые, если и поднимаются наверх, то-за тем, чтобы косить себе сено на горных откосах! "Почти всюду дорогу новым мыслям прокладывает сумасшествие; оно же ломает и уважаемые обычаи, и суеверия" (Ницше, Утренняя заря).

Мы знаем, что наши чувства подобны урагану, а их чувства смахивают на полное безветрие. Мудрено ли, что они боятся наших чувств, называя безумными их. Они не видят того, что когда мы начинаем говорить с ними, мы бесконечно суживаем себя. Знают-ли они, как мы снисходим к ним?

Наше поколение — пограничная черта между двумя, коренным образом расходящимися, периодами. Приветствуя зарю, которую еще быть может и не увидим, мы отпеваем старое.

Да, мы суровы к прошлому.

Мы мост, по которому пройдут наши более счастливые дети. Все наше внимание должно сосредоточиться на том, чтобы эта переправа совершилась. Нет нам дела до застывших в своей ограниченности: не видят они бедны, развергающейся у ног — в безопасности они... Что им делается!

Наши дети пройдут по нашим телам. Они вскарабкаются на еще большие кручи. Они прислушаются — уловят первое предрассветное взвние, чтобы с чистым сердцем возвестить о солнце. Быть может из нас тоже будут такие, которым дано это

счастье.

В этом безорыстном назначении наша гордость, наше безстрашие, наша сила, наше презрение, наш вызов смерти!

Пусть мы сорвемся после того, как у нас голова пойдет кругом и почва зашатается под ногами — не мы, так другие! Смеемся в ответ на предостережения, любя, нежно любя, погибаем, бросаем наш крик, полный злости, в затхлую атмосферу болот. Мы — тот стенобитный материал, который поможет детям. Вот почему мы такие...

Было-бы смешно полагать, что нас много, что именно из нас-то и состоит молодежь. Мы — "декаденты" — имеем претензию полагать, что мы — зерно современной молодежи, мы — преторианцы, идущие во главе ее войска.

Андрей Белый

The Halcyon Quest: Andrej Belyj's Solution for a Torn Russia in The Silver Dove
By Harold Michael Sem

We shall have gained much for the science of aesthetics, once we perceive [...] that the continuous development of art is bound up with the Apollonian and Dionysian duality, involving perpetual strife with only periodically intervening reconciliations, and they continually incite each other to new and more powerful births.¹

In him [Daryalsky] a savage struggle was taking place between the hesitancy of weakness and the foretaste of conduct befitting an as yet unfounded life, a struggle between the image of the beast and that of a new human sanity; [...] into the dung, the chaos, the formlessness of the people's life, he had thrown down his secret challenge.²

Andrej Belyj wrote *The Silver Dove* as the first installment of an anticipated three part epic entitled *East or West*. The second part was called *Petersburg*, and the third was never completed. This titanic undertaking addressed the age-old Westernizer Slavophile question: should Russian destiny be entwined with the West, or should Russia focus on aspects of purely Russian origin, in determining the destiny of the nation?

Belyj steeped himself in Nietzschean philosophy, and finding Nietzsche's discussion of the Apollonian

and Dionysian conflict applicable, particularly in *The Birth of Tragedy*, he appropriated it for what seems to be the main theme of the project. Though Nietzsche was no mystic, Belyj's combination of mythic as well as Nietzschean attributes russified the conflict to meet his purposes in the novel. The Apollonian and Dionysian characteristics interact as well as conflict, and there seems to be a resolution at the battle's end. Under the circumstances existing at the conclusion of the novel, Belyj portrayed a catastrophic end for Russia; however, in earlier parts of the novel, he alluded to a possible finale in which the attributes of each deity would find reconciliation with the other and, in fruition, lead to a peaceful coexistence.

Apollo, as he appears in Greek mythology, is "the God of Light, in whom is no darkness at all, and so he is the God of Truth. No false word ever falls from his lips."³ This god varies but a little from the Apollonian ideal presented in Nietzsche. According to Nietzsche, Apollo is "the god of all plastic energies," arts such as sculpture, painting, and poetry. Elaborating on the proactive energy of Man, especially in dreams, Nietzsche asserts, "the beautiful illusion of dream worlds, in creation of which every man is truly an artist. [...] In our dreams we delight in the immediate understanding of figures; all forms speak to us; there is nothing superfluous." (Nietzsche 34-35) For Apollo we respond to art simply in an aesthetic way. No insight is given into Being itself, only into the artist's ability to manipulate media into an image, be it with paint, stone or words. In this apparently superficial image is presented order, the most important of Nietzsche's philosophical aspects of Apollo, and the distortion of this harmony results from "the tremendous terror which seizes man when he is

suddenly dumbfounded by the cognitive form of phenomena because the principle of sufficient reason, in some one of its manifestations, seems to suffer an exception." (36)

In this context, aspects of *The Silver Dove* become comprehensible. Most immediately the characters embodying the West appear Apollonian. The Gugolevo estate appropriately presents this image. "The imposing manor house with park, hothouses, roses and marble cupids" (Belyj 10) imply the Apollonian sense of beauty and aesthetics, as does the abundant light imagery. The inhabitants of the estate, Madame Todrabe-Graben, Katya, and Yevseich, follow this division as well. The Madame lounges all day, insulated from the outside world; her name is derived from the German *Tod* meaning death and *Grab* meaning ditch, or grave. She passes on the qualities of decadence and death to her son, Pavel Pavlovich. Katya embodies the Apollonian image of beauty. No insight is provided to her character, only to her external traits; she resembles a statue, and a French one at that.

As the god of wine, Dionysius was the only one of the Olympian gods not of divine birth; his mother was a mortal seduced by Zeus. Most important to us is his earthly aspect, as this theme most exemplifies the East, the dirty, muddy fertile field of the peasant at one with nature. Wine represents another component of the mythic Dionysius. The Bacchantes, his followers, were known to feast and drink wine for days in joyful revelry, yet at the drop of a hat, or on order from Dionysius, they could turn on some one or group as an angry, vicious mob, often killing by trampling or mutilation. This is an indication of the duality of

wine: "only the curious blending and duality in the emotions of the Dionysian revelers remind us -- as medicines remind us of deadly poisons -- of the phenomenon that pain begets joy, that ecstasy may bring sounds of agony from us." (40) Thus, opposing the Apollonian image "of the man wrapped in the veil of maya," is the Nietzschean Dionysius. According to Nietzsche, Dionysius preaches the gospel of universal harmony, in which each one fuses with his neighbor, "as if the veil of maya had been torn aside and were now merely fluttering in tatters before the mysterious primordial unity" (37), a passive reactive force, and thereby an abyssal disempowering truth.

Most of the narrative dealing with the East emphasizes an earthy quality. Likhov, the Eastern town whence the cult of the Doves comes, is presented with constant references to mud, muck and dust. The connection of the characters of the East and the Earth pervades as they often appear barefoot and in the mud or filth in appearance. The two principal women of the East, Matryona Semeonovna and Fyokla Matveyevna, both have the Russian word for mother (*mat'*) prominent in their names, insinuating the Mother Earth image, and both are described as coarse, earthy women. However, the utilization of this earthen imagery is ironic, an inversion of the mother vision, since neither woman is sexually fertile.

The Russian word for sorcerer (*kudesnik*) is the basis of Kudeyarov's last name. Sorcery implies magic or mysticism; though these are Dionysian aspects, they do not fully represent the idea. Magic implies familiars, animals closely associated, spiritually, with the sorcerer or sorceress, calling forth the earthly Dionysian image. Nietzsche reviews the magic and

Dionysian relationship in a discussion of the Greek myth in *Oedipus at Colonus*: "The myth seems to wish to whisper to us that wisdom, and particularly Dionysian wisdom, is an unnatural abomination." (69) In addition to being a sorcerer, Kudeyarov is also impotent. Nietzsche adds that "he who by means of his knowledge plunges nature into the abyss of destruction must also suffer the dissolution of nature in his own person." (69) Thus, Kudeyarov, the magi and sorcerer, crosses the bounds from the phenomenal to the noumenal Dionysian world of irrational absurdity, thereby enhancing his efforts to shatter the status quo.

The Apollonian-Dionysian conflict manifests yet another level of the story. Yeropegin, the miller, bears the qualities of both deities. He is Apollonian in that he is rich, smart, and a capitalist, the scourge of the West; at the same time he is from the East (Likhov), and he has never moved from the older part of Likhov where the mud and dust prevail. This double conflict takes a turn when Todrabe-Graben confronts the miller and with superior reason defeats him. An Apollo of greater skill defeats an inferior Apollo and subjugates the Dionysian tendencies; however, the second half of the conflict still looms. When Annushka poisons Yeropegin, because he was not a Dove, and because the cult needed his millions, we have a foreshadowing in small of Daryalsky's cruel fate. Yeropegin was not adequately endowed to be either Apollonian or Dionysian in nature.

Daryalsky. Our hero! At the outset, he is Apollonian. A bright student and poet, he feels nonetheless empty. He cannot fathom this emptiness until he sees Matryona and is entranced by her

earthiness. Contemplating the allure of pure Dionysianism, he abandons the West, Gugolevo and Katya, his fiancée, to embrace the purity and goodness of the peasant life as his panacea. However, the peasants never fully accept him. Daryalsky, who initially models the Apollonian ideal, becomes a Dionysian in death. When the Dionysian mob of Doves rushes through his door to kill him, he does not resist. They beat and crush him to death, taking pride in their deed, and bury him in an orchard. The first chills of autumn are in the air.

If we were to replace "Daryalsky" with "Dionysius" and "Doves" with "Bacchantes," and then locate the act in a vineyard, we would have the death of Dionysius. Every autumn Dionysius' followers would tear his body apart and bury him in the vineyard. For the vine to grow and increase in fruit, it must be pruned yearly of dead limbs. Dionysius, in his death promised rebirth and continuing joy (Hamilton 61-2). With Daryalsky's attraction to distant beauty and inescapable destruction, his death offered Belyj the opportunity to emphasize the paradoxical nature of Janus-faced Russia and to sharpen the focus upon the sacrifice necessary for his Nietzschean solution.

Belyj attempted to resolve the East vs West question in the first chapter of the novel, where Tselebevo is described, a town located between Gugolevo and Likhov. The name of the town has many derivations. It is remarkably similar to the words "tselebnost" and "tselebnyj," which mean curative or having healing properties; the word "tselost'" means wholeness, entirety, integrity. Although Tselebevo has within its boundaries inhabitants exhibiting both qualities of Apollonian (the

priest and merchant) and Dionysian (Kudeyarov and Matryona), they all live in relative peace. At the same time they live their lives taking their own sense of direction from their corresponding philosophies. It is this sense of balance which predicated the success of this community (a goal), a combination of both poles, reflecting the model in the small to the author's worldly vision (a cure for Russia's ills). Belyj envisioned a Russia based upon the consolidation of the ideas of a unified East and West.

In addition to Tselebevo, Belyj presents Schmidt in a positive light. Like the town in which he lived, Daryalsky's friend embodied both Apollonian and Dionysian aspects. While he taught Daryalsky and embraced a thirst for knowledge, he was also a mystic, dealing with astrology and tarot cards to predict the future. Indeed, he predicted Daryalsky's demise, suggesting the idea of sacrifice for Daryalsky's transformation into Dionysius (239). Unlike the diabolical magic of Kudeyarov, Schmidt's mysticism is perceived as beneficial.

Although there did not seem to be a philosophical denouement at the end of the novel, the premature death of Daryalsky punctuated the conclusion drawn at the outset of the novel: that the qualities of Apollo and Dionysius do not contaminate the soul when experienced individually; they merely lead to stagnation when growth within each does not occur upon equal terms, an altogether negative prospect according to Belyj. The fates of Daryalsky, Yeropegin, and Katya show what happens when the "strict proportion" tenet is neglected. Its observation brings calm wind and waves, welcoming the nesting Halcyon,⁴ while allowing the sometimes swiftly running undercurrents to continue below.

Notes

¹Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner*, trans. Walter Kaufman (New York: Random House, 1967), p. 33.

²Andrey Biely, *The Silver Dove*, trans. George Reavey (New York: Grove Press, 1974), pp. 134-35.

³Edith Hamilton, *Mythology* (New York: Penguin Books, 1969).

⁴Halcyon is a bird of mythology which could calm the waters upon which it nested by flapping its wings.

*All citations in the text will be followed by author and page number in parentheses. While I use the Russian spelling of characters' names found in Reavey's translation, I use the "scholarly" transliteration for spelling Belyj's name.

Лев Алексеевич Новиков, Стилистика орнаментальной прозы Андрея Белого, Москва, Наука, 1980. 181 стр.

As its title states, Novikov's small volume attempts a stylistic analysis of Belyj's ornamental prose, based essentially on the formalist model of Viktor Vinogradov. The author proposes to analyze Andrej Belyj primarily as *homo loquens*. In preparation for his analysis, Novikov surveys the characteristic features of Andrej Belyj's personality (his intellectuality, his love of music, his verbal meticulousness, his sense of cultural crisis, etc.) as the determining dominants of his literary oeuvre.

Although Novikov's study assumes a semiotic stance, it lies outside the mainstream of contemporary Western work on both Belyj and on semiotic approaches to literature. It fails to move beyond a modern application of the theories of Vinogradov, Tomaševskij, Šklovskij, Baxtin, and A.F. Losev to Belyj's novels and symphonies. While he decries the lack of linguistic or semantic analyses of Belyj's novels, Novikov is unacquainted with the studies of Michael Molnar, Charlene Castellano, Herbert Eagle, Carol Anschuetz, or other Western scholars who have examined Belyj's work from a semiotic point of view. And while he is aware of three or four older, more traditional German studies of Belyj and refers (at one point) to Roland Barthes (recently available in Russian translation), Novikov bases his discussion primarily on the Formalists, on the works of Belyj's own contemporaries (Ivanov, Florenskij, Zamjatin, Ivanov-Razumnik), and on recent Soviet scholarship (Vladimir Gusev [whose formulation of "intellectual *skaz*" he adopts], N.A. Koževnikova, and others). His

discussion of typographical experimentation and the "pictogrammic" nature of Belyj's prose texts fails to even mention Gerald Janecek's important 1984 study of typographical experimentation, *The Look of Russian Literature* (which begins with a lengthy chapter on Belyj).

The result is a relatively unsophisticated discussion, frequently mechanical and schematic, of a highly sophisticated topic. In a number of cases Novikov's purpose seems to be little more than overturning Soviet anti-formalist pronouncements. He sets up a Soviet "straw man" (i.e., the Soviet critic M.M. Kuznecov's "official" 1963 definition of ornamentation as "*proza s bubenciškami*"), and knocks him over handily with formalist sticks provided by Jurij Tynjanov and Boris Eјxenbaum (pp. 30-31; such "setting straight of the record" is characteristic of a certain genre within *glasnost'* scholarship). An entire section of Novikov's study labors mightily to give birth to the conclusion that ornamental prose is "the maximal, extreme representation of the language in its aesthetic function" (p. 37; emphasis Novikov's).

Instead of showing Belyj's striking anticipation of the thought of later semioticians or examining Belyj's role in the natural evolution of critical discourse, Novikov attempts a "translation" of Belyj's own terminology into "semio-speak," to reconstruct the semiotics Belyj would have devised, had he been a semiotician (*simvol* = sign; *emblem* = syntactic field, etc.). He reduces Belyj's concept of symbolization to the influence of Schopenhauer, Ivanov, and Steiner, without respect for dates or sequencing of influence, indiscriminately using Belyj's mature "Počemu ja stal simvolistom" (1928), Ivanov's "Zavety simvolizma"

(1910), and vague references to Schopenhauer (whom Belyj outgrew at an early age) to produce a crazy quilt of influences out of chronological sequence. The reader is left with little sense of organic development or logical evolution in Belyj's theories as Novikov hops around from concept to concept, year to year, and work to work.

Novikov's work generates yet another critical "vocabulary" by which to discuss the commonplaces of Belyj's work: his *skaz*, his phenomenal/nounenial dichotomy, his [prose] montage, leitmotifs, narratology, and other topics that readers will recognize as having been of keen interest to the Russian Formalists of the early twentieth century. The study becomes, finally, a catalogue of stylistic devices, compositional strategies, and imagery patterning. It does not do justice to Belyj's unique contributions to the art of the Word.

In conclusion, the reader is left with the impression that Novikov, although he clearly has a great deal of respect and admiration for Andrej Belyj as an artist and theorist, has failed to generate any deeper understanding or penetration of Belyj's complex creative process. Novikov's book retraces many old paths, but explores little new territory. The work is unusual for a Russian text in that it has a useful index.

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A Note on Belyj's Persona in Film and Fiction Olga Muller Cooke

The impact of Belyj's personality was such that it provided the basis for a number of *fictional* portraits. For example, when Grigory Kozintsev was preparing his version of *King Lear* for the screen he sought inspirational models for casting his mad hero in the portraits of Russian writers and thinkers. Kozintsev singles out Belyj in the following passage, taken from his *King Lear: The Space of Tragedy*, trans. Mary Mackintosh (London: Heinemann, 1977), p. 119:

In trying to find at least some traits belonging to the image (of King Lear), I studied a large number of portraits, remembered people – philosophers, scholars, poets – anyone who by their external appearance, size, oddity of mind could in any way (even if by the most distant association) help me to grasp something of our main character. I studied photographs of Andrei Bely, his grey hair, eyes, and remembered the verses Mandelstam wrote after Bely's death: 'I put a tiara on your head – on your fool's cap... teacher, tormentor, tyrant, fool... incomprehensible, comprehensible, inaudible, confused, easy. The collector of space... fledgling... of fool's bells!'

While commentary exists on the similarities between Belyj's persona and Nikolaj Vedenjapin in Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* (see Ronald Peterson's "Andrej Belyj and Nikolaj Vedenjapin," *Wiener Slavistischer Almanach*, No. 9, 1982, pp. 11–17), would anyone have guessed that Belyj may be credited with Zhivago's surname? In his new book on his father, *Boris Pasternak. The Tragic Years 1930–60*

(London: Collins Harvill, 1990), Evgenij Pasternak describes a scene in which his father was reading portions of *Doctor Zhivago* in the home of Serov, the painter, in the presence of Tolstoj's widow. Apparently, Pasternak asked Sof'ja Andreevna how far his novel "was all in the spirit of Lev Nikolaevich." Pasternak then went on to say: "The novel is not yet completed, I thought up the surnames out of my head, although some of them turned out to be familiar; and I came across the main hero's surname in Andrej Bely." (p. 174) Evgenij Pasternak provides the following footnote:

The attribution may well derive from the presence in *Dramatic Symphony* (1902), one of Bely's early works, of a minor character, an elderly religious lady of apocalyptic views, named Mertvago (meaning "dead") which could be regarded as an antonym for Zhivago (meaning "alive"). In fact, both Mertvago and Zhivago, though not commonly met with, are old Russian names.

The best-known fictional portrait of Belyj is in Brjusov's novel, *Ognennyj angel*, which is based on the tumultuous liaison between Brjusov, Nina Petrovskaja and Belyj, with Belyj's real-life portrait hiding behind the depiction of Count Heinrich. This, in turn, provided the basis for Sergej Prokofiev's opera by the same name, which has recently received its first Russian language recording (Deutsche Grammophon, 1991). Richard Taruskin's excellent introductory essay describes the relationships between Prokofiev's and Brjusov's art in Belyj's life.