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Andrej Belyj – On the Occasion of His 125th Birthday

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RUSSIA'S ODD COUPLE: ANDREJ BELYJ AND ALEKSEJ REMIZOV[1]

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It is Ėrenburg who unites the two writers in his own memoirs, in particular during their Berlin years (1966: 428 ff.). Describing his own debt to these two innovators he notes that "bez nego [Belogo] (kak i Remizova) trudno sebe predstavit' istoriju russkoj prozy" (1966: 430). Perhaps no two writers had such an impact on the Russian language and prose styles of the twentieth century as Belyj and Remizov. Numerous scholars and critics mention both in the same breath. Greta Slobin in her *Remizov's Fictions, 1900-1921* notes:

> Along with his illustrious contemporary Andrei Belyj (1880-1934), Remizov pioneered the experimental writing that radically affected the development of modern Russian fiction during the first quarter of this [the twentieth – T.R.B.] century. (1991: xiii)

Viktor Šklovskij in a review of Remizov's *Rossija v pis'menach* likewise mentions the two in the same breath: "Nel'zja pisat' knigu po staromu. Ėto znaet Belyj" (Remizov 2000-2003, VII: 483). Gleb Alekseev writing in Berlin in 1923 publishes a tiny volume, priceless for its characterizations of Belyj and Remizov:

> Я никогда не видел раньше человека, до такой степени влюбленного в слово. Если А. Белого волнует происхождение слова, его ритмика, его музыка, для Ремизова: слово – самоцель. У Ремизова оно живое... (1923: 9)

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(2)

They had much in common. Yet this seemingly self-evident fact has received little serious attention and no in depth study of the two men, their literary lives and the intersections of their lives and works has appeared.[3] This is one more example of the lack of attention to many Russian writers of the twentieth century, in particular those who went abroad after the 1917 revolutions. Russians themselves until recently, as we must remind a younger generation, often were denied access to their literary heritage and publicly avoided mention of those in emigration for political reasons. The past fifteen years have seen enormous strides in addressing this issue, such as the excellent scholarly edition in ten volumes of Remizov's works. Critical editions of Belyj's prose and memoirs have also appeared in Russian. American and other English reading audiences have had limited access to works in English by both writers. Remizov once remarked that the richness of English literature has precluded a thirst for translations. The ornamental prose styles of both, unique and yet similar in their complexity and foreshadowing of sound and form over content, have made translation difficult, some would say impossible. The autobiographical writings of both writers remain largely untranslated and, except to a handful of scholars, largely unknown. In addition, few scholars seem to have bridged the divide between Belyj and Remizov studies.

My modest task is to provide a brief overview of the intersections biographically and bibliographically, based primarily on the surprisingly little each has written of the other, with a somewhat longer characterization of their Berlin period from 1921-1923 when the two were in close contact on a number of occasions. Not only did the personal paths of the two writers cross for almost twenty years, they shared a number of similarities. But first for the differences.

Aleksej Michajlovič Remizov (his real name) was born in 1877 to a family of merchants, but his mother soon abandoned the father and raised her children largely on her own. Boris Nikolaevič Bugaev, better known by his

penname Andrej Belyj, was born in 1880, the son of a Moscow University professor and musically gifted mother. Remizov was short and stout, with bushy hair and eyebrows. Belyj was tall and lanky, and with the years would lose his curly locks. Belyj died in Moscow in 1934; Remizov died in Paris in 1957. Remizov would complain of difficulties in publishing his works in his early career. Belyj had ready access to the Symbolist journals *Zolotoe runo* and *Vesy*, and to the major Symbolist publishing houses. Remizov was largely a prose writer and memoirist. Belyj was a prolific critic, theorist and poet in addition to publishing novels, memoirs and books of literary criticism. So much for the differences!

Both were only children. Both were Muscovites with all that that meant for Russian literature in a time when the political, and thus the intellectual and artistic capital of Russia was St Petersburg. There was always something more "Russian" and less cosmopolitan about Moscow, an aura of good old-fashioned values always in contrast to and with contempt for the foreign, artificial, unnatural world of the Petersburg *intelligentsia*. Both attended Moscow University. Remizov began visiting classes in 1895 but was arrested in the fall of 1896 after participating in a student demonstration and subsequently exiled to Penza (Gračeva 2000: 8-28). It seems unlikely that their paths crossed in their student years in spite of Remizov's hint to the contrary.[4] The timing does not bear out the memory. Belyj enrolled at the University in September 1899. He was awarded his degree in May 1903 but continued his studies that September until he withdrew in the fall of 1906 to travel abroad (Lavrov 1988: 775-777).

Belyj and Remizov both entered the literary scene in the first years of the twentieth century. Remizov's first publication came in 1902 under the pseudonym N. Moldavanov, *Plač devuški pered zamužestvom*. Boris Bugaev took the penname Andrej Belyj (Andrew the White) to avoid confusion with and embarrassment for his father, Nikolaj Bugaev, a professor of mathematics and Dean at Moscow University, and published his *Simfonija (2-ja dramatičeskaja)* in 1902.

How aware were they of each other's existence in those early years? Remizov had returned from exile to St Petersburg in the beginning of 1905 where he received a position with the journal *Voprosy žizni* (Gračeva 2000: 16). In December 1905 Belyj traveled to St Petersburg and stayed with the Merežkovskijs until his return to Moscow sometime after December 20. Remizov's comment that they had studied together notwithstanding, they both date their first meeting to 1905.[5] Remizov dates the meeting precisely as December 3, 1905 (2000-2003, VII: 56).[6] Belyj describes the first meeting with Remizov at the home of the Merežkovskijs:

> Однажды, войдя в гостиную Мережковских, – увидел я: полуприсев в воздухе, улыбаясь мне довольно высокая и очень ши-

рокая, светловолосая, голубоглазая и гладколицая дама с головой, показавшейся очень огромной, с глазами тоже огромными; и тут же понял: она не стояла, – сидела на диване; а когда встала, то оказалась очень высокой, а не довольно высокой, и только довольно широкой, а не очень широкой; это была Серафима Павловна Ремизова, супруга писателя.[7]

Рядом с ней сидел ее муж с короткими ножками, едва достающими до пола, с туловищем ребенка в коричневом пиджаке, переломленном огромной сутулиной, с которой спадал темный плед; огромная в спину вдавленная голова, прижатая подбородком к крахмалу, являла собой сплошной лоб, глядящий морщинами, да до ужаса вставшие космы; смятое под ним придаток-личико являло б застывшее выражение ужаса если бы не глазок: выскочив над очком он лукавил; носченок был пуговка; кривились губки под понуро висящими вниз усами туранца; бородка – клинушком; щеки – выбриты; обнищавший туранец, некогда торговец ковров, явившийся из песков Гоби шаманствовать по квартирам, – вот первое впечатление.

Гиппиус рукою с лорнеткою соединила нас в воздухе: – Боря, – Алексей Михайлович! Алексей Михайлович, – Боря!

Ремизов встал с дивана и, приговаривая, засеменил на меня; он выставил руку, совсем неожиданно сделав козу из пальцев:[8]

– А вот она – коза, коза!

Но, подойдя, он серьезно и строго мне подал холодную лапку:

– Алексей Ремизов.

И встав на цыпочках, под подбородок, блеснул очком:

– А я-то уже вот как вас знаю.

С тех пор автор романа *Пруд* высунут мне из-за каждой спины каждого посетителя журфиксов Розанова, Бердяева, Вячеслава Иванова; вот Бердяев, сотрясаясь тиком, обрывает речь и жадно хватает воздух дрожащими пальцами; Ремизов, выставясь из-за него, – мне блистает очком; и делает "козу"; а вот он, – сутуленький, маленький, – в том же свисающем с плеча пледике (ему холодно), выбравший жертвой великолепноглавого Вячеслава Иванова – таскается за ивановской фалдой; куда тот, – туда этот; пальцем показывает на фалду:

– У Вячеслава Иваныча – нос в табаке... У Вячеслава Иваныча – нос в табаке...

Это тонкий намек на какое-то "толстое" обстоятельство: экивоки, смешочки писателя, взявшего на себя в этом обществе роль Эзопа, – всегда не случайны: не то – безобидны, не то – очень злы; он сам не то – добренький, не то – злой; не то – прост, не то – хитрая "бестия"; он ко мне пристает; и я жалуюсь на него Гиппиус.

Та – меня успокаивает:

– Что вы, Боря? Алексей-то Михайлыч? Да это – умнейший, честнейший, серьезнейший человек, видящий насквозь каждого; коли он "юродит" – так из ума. Что вынес он в заточеньи? К нему привязался садист жандарм, за что-то взбесившийся; он насильно нагнал Ремизова из камеры, заставляя будто бы свободно прогуливаться по городу; а товарищи по заключению удивлялись: "Ремизов на свободе!" Жандарм даже таскал его насильно с собою в театр; и перед всем городом оказывал ему знаки внимания; все для того, чтоб прошел слух: Ремизов – провокатор... А – тяжелое детство, – вечная нищета эта! Тень пережитого – в больном юродничанье; это – маска боли его.

Когда ближе узнал я большого писателя, первые ж строчки которого встретил со вздрогом, то я его оценил и человечески полюбил; не раз придется мне говорить о нем; а если я подаю на этих страницах шарж, – в этом повинны мои тогдашние восприятия и та атмосфера, в которой мы встретились. (1990b: 64-65)

Belyj's promise of more about him never comes, although he himself points to a distant blood relationship on his mother's side.[9]

Remizov's own version of their first meeting at the Merežkovskijs comes in his *Kukcha: Rozanovy pis'ma*. The entry for December 3, 1905 reads:

> У Мережковских. Познакомился с Андреем Белым. Очарован. Безгрешный и чистый, – белый. (2000-2003, VII: 56)

For the next day, December 4, 1905 Remizov recalls the above episode:

> 4.12 Именины Варвары Дмитриевны Розановой.
> Сыт, пьян и нос в табаке! – вот как полагается.
> Вымазал я нос табаком Вяч. Иванову. А после ужина перевернул с помощью именинницы качалку с Н. А. Бердяевым. Бердяев ничего, только кашлянул, а Андрей Белый от неожиданности финик проглотил. (VII: 56)[10]

A few days later at the "tower" of Vjačeslav Ivanov, Remizov notes:

> 7.12. 1905. У Вяч. Иванова: Андрей Белый, Блок, Габрилович, Сюнненберг, П. В. Безобразов. А. Белый изумительно читает стихи. Он не говорит, а поет – до самых до высоких нот:
> пришел, пришел из далека
> скиталец из Женевы...
> (Должно быть, это про А. Г. Барладеана! [sic] – моя догадка) (57)

Belyj has a somewhat more detailed and less flattering picture of Remizov at the Rozanovs.

> Не забуду воскресников этих; позднее на них пригляделся – впервые я к писателю Ремизову; он сидел, такой маленький, всей головою огромной уйдя себе под спину; дико очками блистал; и огромнейшим лбом в поперечных морщинах подпрыгивал из-под взъерошенных, вставших волос; меня вовсе не зная, уставился, как бык на красное; вдруг закрививши умильные губки, он мне подмигнул очень странно; мне сделалось жутко; и он испугался; сапнувши, вскочил, оказавшися у всех под микитой; пошел приставать к Вячеславу Иванову.
> – У Вячеслава Иваныча – нос в табаке!
> И весь вечер, сутуленький, маленький, странно таскался за В. И. Ивановым; вдруг, подскочивши к качалке, в которой массивный Бердяев сидел, он стремительно, дьявольски-цапким движением перепрокинул качалку; все, ахнув, вскочили; Бердяев, накрытый качалкой, предстал нам в ужаснейшем виде: там, где сапоги, – голова; там же, где голова, – лакированных два сапога; все на выручку бросились; только не Розанов, сделавший ижицу, невозмутимо поплескивал с кем-то. (1990a: 479-480)

The December 1905 encounters initiated contacts that would last for another fifteen years. Already in January of 1906 Belyj commented in a letter to Remizov on his *Prud* after reading the publication in *Voprosy žizni*.

> Роман не оставил равнодушным и Андрея Белого, сообщавшего в письме Ремизову от 10 января 1906 г.: "Пруд внимательно читаю на досуге, и сердцу близко, очень близко. Простите за прежнее невнимательное отношение: местами сильно пронимает. При случае хочу непременно печатать, сказать что-нибудь хорошее о Пруде."[11]

In fact, Belyj was less kind in his actual review of the book version of *Prud* in *Vesy*, 1907, № 12, 54-56 (also in 1911: 475-477; Lavrov 1988: 464):

> Белый тем не менее выразил свое неприятие ремизовских стилевых и композиционных новаций: "Не нравится Пруд [...]. Преталантливая путаница..." (1911: 475-476; in Ремизов 2000-2003, I: 531)

Remizov himself recalls:

> Иванов Разумник в Петербурге, а Андрей Белый – в Москве, поразному, но оба возмущались... (1983: 9)

Their paths crossed in the literary community. Belyj wrote reviews and sometimes intervened on Remizov's behalf in the literary world where he was well positioned among the Symbolists. They had many acquaintances in

common, and those relationships were at times problematic. Remizov admired Blok. The Blok-Belyj relationship was a complex and fascinating one, complicated by Belyj's infatuation with Blok's wife, their shared mantle of Symbolist fame, and twenty year long correspondence, a tortured friendship-fiendship. Remizov often felt left out among the big names of Russian literature.

> Я был с Блоком и Андреем Белым, но с первых же встреч я почувствовал мою бедность. В революцию Иванов-Разумник скажет обо мне, сравнивая с Блоком и Андреем Белым, – "бескрылый", [...] (2000-2003, X: 26-27)[12]

Both knew Berdjaev. Belyj mentions his close friendship with him, recalling that Berdjaev had been together with Remizov who had met him in exile in 1902 (1990b: 413).

As the passages reveal, there was always the playful-devilish or devil-may-care Remizov, whose nonsense was never particularly appreciated by Belyj, even if he as others tolerated it. The date ("finik") and the frequently euphemized phallus were recurring themes in many of Remizov's works – appreciated by some for the insider joke, but deplored by others, especially women.

There was less contact in the second decade of the century. Belyj spent much time abroad in the first years heavily involved with Anthroposophy and Rudolf Steiner. Upon his return to Russia Belyj was introduced by Remizov into the *Obezvelvolpal*. His certificate is dated January 24, 1917: "Obez'janij znak pervoj stepeni s chvostom – za preterpenie ratnoe, za stichi, ešče ne polučennye" (Obatnina 2001: no page).[13]

The Great and Free Chamber of Simians would play a significant role in Remizov's Berlin period and was just one more intersection for the two writers.[14]

Nothing, however, had prepared the two for their brief but intense contact over two years in Berlin. Given the significant overlap of two of the most widely published and prolific writers in that period, what is striking is the lack of any overall picture of either writer by the other. What does exist is fragmentary, aphoristic, rather than a coherent narrative. The connection of the two has also largely escaped attention by those who have documented Russian Berlin. An extensive examination to detail the daily comings and goings of Remizov in Berlin is sorely needed, something akin to the study on Belyj for that time period.

The major turning point in the lives of both came in the fall of 1921. Two events suggested that the time was right to depart. Aleksandr Blok died in August. Both would join others in mourning his loss. Blok's death for Belyj opened a floodgate of memories and a veritable cottage industry of

memoirs that would be written, published, revised and revisited over the next thirteen years. Blok likewise served as the stimulus for one of Remizov's first original works in Berlin, *Achru.* Blok was a victim of the physical hardships and the inability of writers to support themselves materially in Russia. More ominous were the arrest and execution of Nikolaj Gumilev in August-September 1921. This was the first execution of a writer and left no doubt that others could be at risk. Remizov had been arrested in 1918 and freed only after the personal intervention of Lunačarskij. In the case of Gumilev, even Gor'kij's personal intervention did not prove helpful.

So it was that independently, but almost simultaneously Remizov and Belyj decided to leave Russia. Remizov departed from Petrograd on August 5, 1921;[15] Belyj left Russia in October. Remizov, taking into account the time spent on the train at a siding, recalls the coincidence of leaving Russian territory on August 7, 1921, the same day that Blok dies. The symbolism was not lost on Remizov who writes on a note by him for a talk on Blok in Paris:

> 7 августа Блок умер
> 7 августа мы переехали русскую границу
> "и еще огонек погас на русской земли."
> но этого не стоит
> упоминать
> не важно.[16]

The Remizovs waited several weeks in Revel for permission to enter Germany and arrived in Berlin in mid September 1921 where he immediately applied to the Berlin Committee for the Aid to Russian Writers and Scholars for financial support: "priechali sjuda, ja i moja žena, prošu o den'gach, čtoby tam pobyt'." [17]

Remizov's arrival in Berlin was recorded along with that of others in an announcement in *Golos Rossii* (September 27, 1921). In the fall of 1921 Russian Berlin was just stirring, providing a hint, but no real indication of the cultural renaissance about to be experienced. There were a few brief notes of cultural activity for September, October and the beginning of December.

One curious announcement concerning the formation of a literary circle appeared in *Voskresen'e: Eženedel'nyj organ bespartijnych russkich v Germanii.*

> По слухам, в Грюневальде состоялась дуэль на старинных пистолетах между А. Дроздовым и И. Соколовым-Микитовым. Дуэлянты обменялись выстрелами в воздух. После дуэли произошло трогательное примирение противников.

> "Литературный кружок"
>
> В среду 26 октября в квартире известной в немецком артистическом кругу г-жи Лампрехт состоялся первый организационный чай кружка русских литераторов.
>
> В кабинете за круглым столом: – только что приехавший из России, как всегда душа общества, А. М. Ремизов, рядом с ним известный поэт Минский, З. Венгерова, молодая артистка Шаляпина, Ал. Дроздов, И. С. Соколов-Микитов, А. Вольский, П. Жакмон, Ф. Иванов и Р. Гуль. За чаем, который, под улыбки собравшихся, был вскипячен на газе А. М. Ремизовым, обсуждалась будущая работа кружка. Иногда обсуждения невольно прерывались рассказами А. М. Ремизова о жизни литераторов в Петербурге, о их вечерах...
>
> Образовавшийся кружок помимо интимных, художественно-литературных вечеров предполагает устраивать и небольшие открытые выступления. На них будут выступать со своими произведениями литераторы и приглашенные артисты, музыканты, художники. После частых неудачных попыток создать в Берлине чисто-литературный кружок – таковой создан. И создан при участии и руководительстве русского писателя, в атмосфере товарищеской непринужденности и подлинного искуства [sic]. (№ 3, 30.X.1921, 3).[18]

In fact nothing seems to have come from the meeting, if indeed it ever took place, but it does hint at the soon to be created Russian House of the Arts in Berlin.

Remizov's story 'Krestiki' appeared in the first issue of *Spolochi* which was available in November. The newspaper *Rul'* announced an evening in honor of Dostoevskij in connection with the 100th anniversary of his birth (October 30, 1821, OS) planned for November 25 at the Philharmonie, where Remizov was scheduled to read with others (№ 304, 17.X.1921, 5). The newspaper later reported on the evening and summed up Remizov's remarks: "Net Rossii u Dostoevskogo i net Dostoevskogo v Rossii" (*Rul'*, № 313, 27.XI.1921, 4). The same issue described new attempts by "Russkij obščestvennyj komitet pomošči golodajuščim" to raise additional funds with the participation of A. Remizov and A. Tolstoj.

Belyj had departed from Russia on October 20, 1921 and traveled on to Kowno (Kaunas) waiting for entry permission into Germany. He arrived in Berlin on November 19, 1921. Here the paths of the two writers immediately crossed and stayed connected for the next two years. It was a brief period of extraordinary productivity, engagement in literary and cultural life, a pinnacle of professional achievement, for an instant both would be at the very center of Russian intellectual life.[19] Yet little attention has been paid to the public

persona, a new Remizov who appeared in Berlin, and then just as quickly disappeared in the thirty plus years that followed of his emigration in Paris.

Perhaps the most important event of the fall for Remizov, if not the key stimulus for the explosion of literary activity amidst the Berlin Russian community, was the arrival of Andrej Belyj. Belyj was quick to establish organizational ties with the literary elite of Berlin. Only two days after his arrival, on Monday evening November 21, 1921, Belyj and the Remizovs along with others attended an organizational meeting of a group at the Cafe Landgraf to discuss the establishment of a Berlin House of the Arts (Dom iskusstv v Berline; *Golos Rossii*, № 822, 24.XI.1921, 3).[20] A week later on November 29 Remizov was elected vice-president and a board of directors which included Belyj was chosen (*Golos Rossii*, № 829, 2.XII.1921, 4). Belyj had always had a penchant for forming groups. But for Remizov this marked a notable public presence, unparalleled either before or after Berlin. The next evening, November 30, a group of friends and co-workers of Skify met to open a chapter of the Free Philosophical Association "Vol'fila" ("Vol'naja Filosofskaja Associacija") in Berlin. Lev Šestov was chosen honorary president, but Belyj was elected president, a position he held in the Moscow and Petrograd chapters, at the meeting that included Remizov and Ėrenburg (*Golos Rossii*, № 831, 4.XII.1921, 1 and *Rul'*, № 318, 3.XII.1921, 4.).[21]

At the regular weekly meeting of the House of the Arts on December 3, Belyj read from *Ėpopeja* and Remizov read one of his tales (*Golos Rossii*, № 834, 8.XII.1921, 3). On December 5, there was a meeting of "Vol'fila" to elect new members and a number of open "Vol'fila" meetings was also announced. On December 10 the House of the Arts held its regular Saturday meeting with readings scheduled by A. Tolstoj and Remizov. On Monday, December 12, there was a closed meeting of "Vol'fila".[22] On December 14, Belyj finally delivered his earlier promised lecture 'Sovremennaja kul'tura v Rossii'.[23]

Belyj's first public statement is both profoundly personal, as well as a daring defense of Soviet Russia and none too veiled criticism of the emigration.

> Культурная жизнь современной России представляет собой пеструю смесь противоречий и крайностей [...] красота переплетается с безобразием, головные утопии с конкретнейшими достижениями в области искусства, забота о куске хлеба, одежде, дровах переплетается с мыслями о Вечности и о Гробе [...] смерть и воскресение, гибель и рождение новой культуры – все это столкнуто [...] норма отсутствует.

Belyj points to those who "ėmigrirovali v abstraktnuju sferu bezžiznennych principov, v vospominanija o prošlom". The accusatory tone is ironic, because Belyj as well as Remizov will both eventually arrive at "a land of Memories".

On December 15 in the Philharmonic Hall Belyj, Remizov and Tolstoj were featured at an evening organized by the Russian Social Committee to Aid Writers (*Golos Rossii*, № 839, 14.XII.1921, 3). On December 17 another meeting was held at the House of the Arts to choose officers of the literary, artistic and musical section. Belyj read at the House of the Arts on the 24th from his 'Pervoe svidanie', and Remizov read from his Tibetan tales, *Zajašnye skazki* (*Golos Rossii*, № 852, 30.XII.1921, 3). On the 26th Belyj was scheduled to deliver the "Vol'fila" lecture 'Vetchij i Novyj Zavet' (*Golos Rossii*, № 836, 10.XII.1921, 3). On the 30th the House of the Arts held its final meeting before the New Year.

As the brief review of the month of December indicates, there were many occasions in this period that brought together Belyj and Remizov. Some of Remizov's and Belyj's active participation in the House of the Arts is attested to by newspaper and journal entries of the time (see Beyer 1987). Even more important was Remizov's active role in producing the *Bulletins of the House of the Arts* (*Bjulleteni Doma iskusstv*).[24] The two modest issues are unique documents of the Russian emigration and its literary heritage. Published by Helikon (Gelikon) in Berlin the editorial board consisted nominally of N. Minskij, the first president of the House of the Arts, Remizov and S. Sumskij-Kaplun, the organization's secretary, who directed the Berlin publishing house "Ėpocha". While these three share equal credit on the back page, Remizov was clearly the driving force and the major contributor of original material to the work. The first issue numbered 1-2 is dated February 17, 1922 and has thirty eight numbered pages (actually 19 double-columned pages).

The volume contains a report on the August 28, 1921 speech of Belyj at the public meeting of "Vol'fila" in St Petersburg (3-6). While Remizov was the leading contributing author, the primary topic (sometimes target) of the publication was Andrej Belyj. The *Bulletins* represent an important and little known page in Belyj's Berlin period.[25]

The *Bulletins* also served as one of the major outlets for Remizov's literary hoaxes.[26] It is difficult to say with certainty what is real and what isn't in the issue. Belyj is mentioned yet again in a report on a meeting of the Berlin section of "Vol'fila" of which he was the president. The extended quotation from Belyj's speech points either to his active participation in the *Bulletins*, or some might conclude to Remizov's nonsense (28-30).

The most entertaining reading is contained in the section with the German title "Albern" (silly, childish), which is signed by Remizov. The word play, the practical joking, and general nonsense are the characteristic signature of this complex and fascinating Russian writer. The section opens both with a word play and explanation of the term "Albern" itself for the

Russian audience. In 'Tulumbas', which follows, the wandering minstrel-clowns ("skomorochi") appear, in a sense a self-justification of the role that Remizov assumed both in Russian Berlin and in the *Bulletins*. Reproduced here is a description of the Great and Free Chamber of Simians (Obezvelvolpal) along with its Manifest.[27] The caricature of Remizov is attributed to Vasilij Masjutin, and here we can see the seal of the "koza rogataja" (30-32).[28]

Belyj appears once more in the issue, in a fictitious conversation most likely the work of Remizov (33-34). Remizov will have a good laugh at the expense of Belyj, Sumski-Kaplun, and E. Lundberg. The reference to Lundberg is a reminder of a painful incident related to the destruction of Lev Šestov's 'Čto takoe russkij bol'ševizm' in the spring of 1922.[29] The issue was just the tip of an emerging iceberg of politicization and polarization of the Russian writers in Berlin, and the reference to it even jokingly may have offended some. The incident of Belyj's disappearing green scarf refers to a Christmas party held at the home of Jaščenko, editor of *Russkaja Kniga* and *Novaja Russkaja Kniga*, the influential bibliographical journals of Russian Berlin. The matter is picked up by Remizov, who goes to the trouble to footnote it. It will reappear in the next issue.[30]

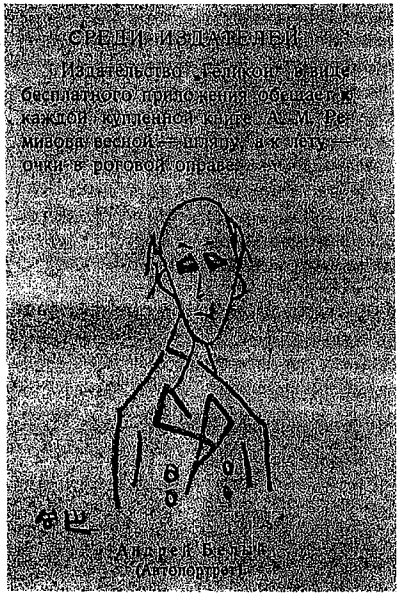
These last sections poke fun at Remizov himself, and the issue concludes with a closing sketch by Remizov of Jaščenko. It is most likely Remizov who prints the silly note about Belyj being a director of a film.

> Апокриф А. М. Ремизова 'Чудесный Урожай' из напечатанной в 100 экземплярах книги "Заветные сказы" приобретен кинематографической фирмой "Декла". В инсценировке участвуют артисты Моск. Художественного Театра. Режиссеры – З. А. Венгерова и Андрей Белый. (37-38)

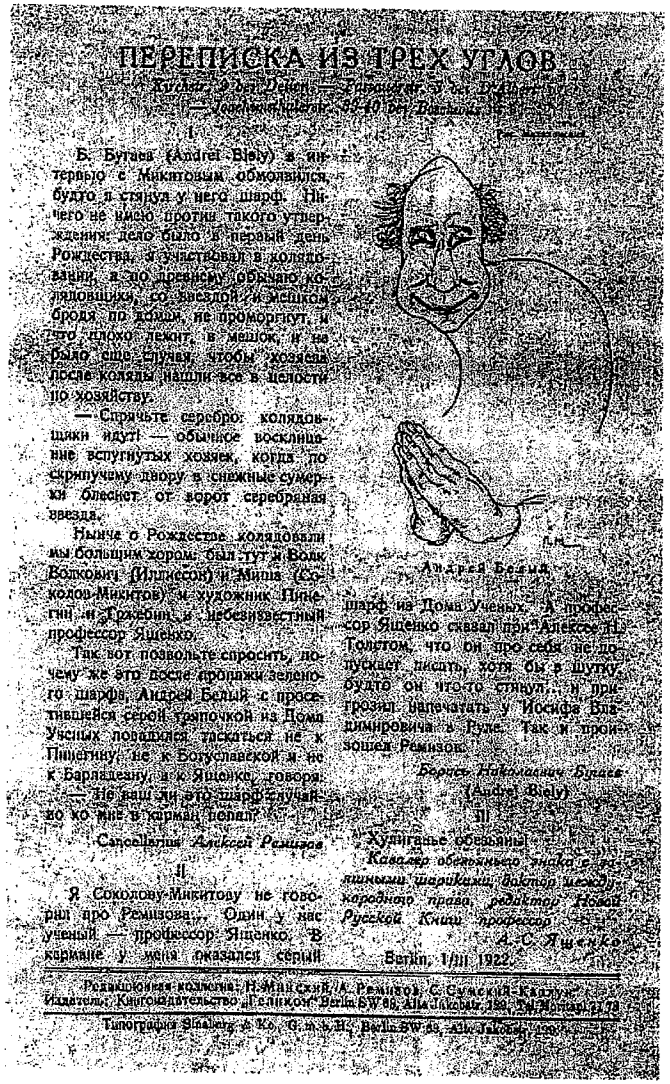
This type of a blurring of fact and fiction, mischief, "mystification", as Remizov himself would call it, was not always appreciated. In fact the

authorship of many of such pronouncements is likely to remain a mystery, although Remizov is clearly at the center of many if not all.

The next and final issue of the *Bulletin*, No. 3, was a far more modest attempt of four pages (eight columns) dated March 10, 1922. Once again there is a section entitled: ALBERN. The nonsense includes a note that in the future copies of Remizov's books will be bundled with a hat or eyeglasses. The page also includes a self-portrait of Belyj .



The original of the self portrait framed and embellished by Remizov can be found in the Fritz Lieb archive.[31] The two Glagolitic letters are *červ'* (Remizov's trademark) and *buki* (presumably for Belyj). Remizov is certainly the author of the Albern texts and the notes: 'A Three Way Correspondence'. The sketch in this section by Malačovskij masterfully captures Belyj's famous "eyes" (7-8). The green scarf is back in the news, but even with the good-natured kidding there is a hint in Belyj's alleged note that Jaščenko, even "in jest", was not amused.



ПЕРЕПИСКА ИЗ ТРЕХ УГЛОВ

I.

Б. Бугаев (Andrei Biely) в интервью с Микитовым обмолвился, будто я стянул у него шарф. Ничего не имею против такого утверждения: дело было в первый день Рождества, я участвовал в колядовании, а по древнему обычаю колядовщики, со звездой и мешком бродят по домам, не проморгнут, и что плохо лежит, в мешок, и не было еще случая, чтобы хозяева после коляды нашли все в целости по хозяйству.

— Спрячьте серебро: колядовщики идут! — обычное восклицание вспугнутых хозяек, когда по скрипучему двору в снежные сумерки блеснет от ворот серебряная звезда.

Нынче о Рождестве колядовали мы большим хором: был тут и Волк Волкович (Иллисон) и Мишка (Соколов-Микитов) и художник Пинегин и Грабарь и небезызвестный профессор Ященко.

Так вот позвольте спросить, почему же это после пропажи зеленого шарфа Андрей Белый с просветившейся серой тряпочкой из Дома Ученых повадился таскаться не к Пинегину, не к Богуславской и не к Барладеану, а к Ященко, говоря:

— Не ваш ли это шарф случайно ко мне в карман попал?

Сапсеатия: *Алексей Ремизов*

II.

Я Соколову-Микитову не говорил про Ремизова... Один у нас ученый — профессор Ященко. В кармане у меня оказался серый шарф из Дома Ученых. А профессор Ященко сказал при Алексее Н. Толстом, что он про себя не допускает писать, хотя бы в шутку, будто он что-то стянул, и пригрозил напечатать у Иосифа Владимировича в Руле. Так и произошел Ремизов.

Борис Николаевич Бугаев
(Andrei Biely)

III.

Хулиганье обезьяны!

Кавалер обезьянього знака с ослиными ушками, доктор между народного права, редактор Новой Русской Книги профессор А. С. Ященко.

Berlin, 1/III 1922.

Редакционная коллегия: Н. Минский, А. Ремизов, С. Сумский-Кацуба.
Издатель: Книгоиздательство „Геликон" Berlin SW 68, Alte Jakobstr. 130, Telephon: Amt Moritzplatz 12 73.
Типография Spaeth & Co. G. m. b. H., Berlin SW 68, Alte Jakobstr. 130.

This second issue of the *Bulletin* was the final one, and would become a bibliographic rarity. Roman Gul' cites the tender sensitivities of the intellectual community, quick now to take offense as a key reason behind the demise of the *Bulletins* (81). Remizov seemed to know as much when he presented a copy of the *Bulletin* to Aleksandr Bacherac with a cover page bearing his signature, the date April 7, 1922 (Marias Verkündigung, March 25) with the saying: "Ne stoilo ogorod gorodit'". Unfortunately sides were being drawn, and this *monkey business*[32] was soon no longer funny in an atmosphere of distrust and petty bickering that was founded ultimately on irreconcilable differences in the Russian community. In March 1922 the newspaper *Nakanune* began publishing and a tug of war began for the minds and hearts of Russians, drawing some home to Russia, threatening the final break with those who remained in Europe. Political developments would soon force many Russians to make a choice of being "with them" or "against them".

Belyj and Remizov were particularly closely allied in March of 1922. Starvation in Russia served as a common cause uniting various political factions in the émigré community. Worldwide attention was focused on the problem and on Sunday, March 19, the House of the Arts organized a concert ball to aid the hungry. Among those scheduled to appear were Belyj and Remizov (*Golos Rossii*, № 920, 19.III.1922, 9). The following evening, the House staged another major event with the appearance of Thomas Mann who spoke at a benefit performance for writers in Petrograd. Mann spoke first on the theme of Goethe and Lev Tolstoj after which Belyj thanked the writer (in German) for his help. As the second half of his performance Mann read from his *Das Eisenbahnunglück*.[33] Mann was familiar in translation with works of both Belyj and Remizov and would in fact send a letter of support to Remizov in early 1923 regarding the latter's residency issues.[34] Belyj and Remizov were also together at the House of the Arts on March 24, 1922. While the House of the Arts continued to occupy a leading role in the life of Russian Berlin, tensions in the community would eventually lead to a breakup and the creation of a new group, the "Writers' Club", in the fall of 1922.

After the summer break there was also a flurry of activity surrounding the thirtieth jubilee of Maksim Gor'kij's debut as a writer with the publication of his story 'Makar Čudra' (Koreckaja 1968). On September 30 messages and flowers were presented to Gor'kij by a delegation which included Belyj as the representative from "Vol'fila". On October 1 a special meeting in honor of Gor'kij at the Cafe Leon replaced the customary program at the House of the Arts. Belyj was one of the speakers (*Nakanune*, № 149, 3.X.1922, 5). On October 13, Ju. Ajchenval'd, recently expelled from Russia with other intellectuals, appeared while Belyj read 'Aforizmy'. Remizov was also scheduled to read a story that Friday evening (*Nakanune*, № 159, 12.X.1922, 5). The election of new officers scheduled for the House of the

Arts was postponed to a later meeting. On October 20, Vladimir Majakovskij, another recent arrival, gave a brief introduction to Futurism and read from his works. On October 27, Šklovskij read on 'Literatura i kinematograf' and Belyj took part in the discussion afterward (*Nakanune*, № 172, 29.X.1922, 6).

Elections were held the evening of October 27, 1922 in the Berlin House of the Arts and Belyj was chosen president. The other officers included Remizov, Vengerov, Minskij, Ėrenburg, Tolstoj, Šklovskij, Chodasevič and the painter Ivan Puni (*Nakanune*, № 176, 3.XI.1922, 5). Belyj's reign would be short-lived: a lovely caricature in *Veretenyš* (III, Nov. 1922, 15) would capture the wildly gesticulating contortionist presiding over his single meeting.

Андрей Белый председательствует в „Доме Искусств".

After the talk, the discussion turned into a shouting match with a number of insults hurled around the hall, in spite of Belyj's plea at the beginning of the meeting (Beyer 1987: 27-32). The major controversy which erupted was followed by a request that Aleksej Tolstoj be expelled from the House of the Arts. On the next evening, November 4, Belyj with Remizov, Chodasevič, and others organized the new Writers Club ("Klub pisatelej") as an alternative outlet for their artistic and creative energies and within days they would resign their positions at the House of the Arts. Belyj was there and at a subsequent meeting of the Club.[35]

On November 11 Belyj was again at the Writers Club. Together with Remizov, Belyj was present at the official ceremony to honor Gerhart Hauptmann on the occasion of his 60th birthday on November 15 (*Dni*, 17, Nov. 17, 1922, 6).[36]

There is much more in addition to these chronological overlaps. Both published in excess of twenty books in just two short years, 1921-1923. They frequently collaborated; Belyj's text would be rendered in script or even Glagolitic by Remizov. They had mutual friends and acquaintances among the community of Russian writers: Ėrenburg, Šklovskij, Pasternak, Chodasevič, Jaščenko, and Vera Lur'e, the young poetess from Petrograd. They were intellectually and literarily allied in the Russian Berlin House of the Arts, The Writers Club, and The Free Philosophical Society. Together they attended series of weekly meetings and special events. They published in the same Russian daily newspapers *Golos Rossii*, *Dni*, the journals *Vereteno*, *Veretenyš*, *Spolochi*, *Ėpopeja*, *Bjulleteni Doma Iskusstv*, *Novaja Russkaja Kniga*, and for the same Berlin publishing houses, Helikon, Epocha. Both worked on extensive memoirs of Aleksandr Blok.

The history of this very special Russian Berlin has been examined by many, rightfully so as it was for two brief years, 1921-1923, the literary capital of the Russian world. As this world collapsed for economic and political pressures, Belyj and Remizov as well as most of the others would leave. On October 23, 1923 Belyj departed from Berlin, he arrived in Moscow on October 26; Remizov left November 5 for Paris. They would never meet again.

Belyj's arrival had coincided with and likely precipitated the burst of creative energies, and as it energized the Russian literary Berlin, so it might have given new life to Remizov, who would never before, and never again publish so prolifically or assume such a public profile. Somewhat surprising given the close contacts of the two is how little they subsequently contributed to an understanding of the times and of each other. Belyj's recollections of Remizov are sparse indeed. The difficulty of writing or even mentioning Russians in emigration likely silenced the voice of Belyj who had returned to Soviet Russia.

Remizov himself fails to spend the time and energy on Belyj that he devotes to others. His archives reveal a major gap for the Berlin years. His own memoirs of Berlin are at best very piecemeal and aphoristic. When he does mention Belyj, Remizov's recollections are largely positive, of respect and admiration, even tender memories of affection. Remizov does recall Belyj at a meeting of the editorial board of *Apollon* in May 1909.

> Необыкновенное впечатление на Андрея Белого. На него накатило – чертя в воздухе сложную геометрическую конструкцию образ Ивана Семеновича Стратилатова, костромского археолога, рас-

> секая гипотенузой, он вдруг остановился – необыкновенное блаженство разлилось по его лицу: преображенный Стратилатов реял в синих лучах его единственных глаз.
> [...]
> В Берлине в 1922-м лекция Андрея Белого "О любви". Антропософская аудитория, исключительно дамы. Слушают, затаив дыхание. Не в воздухе, а на доске мелом воздвигается сложная геометрическая конструкция. Закрутив центральную спираль, Андрей Белый обернулся к аудитории: синь плывет из его глаз, лицо сияет, образ любви за его спиной.
> И вдруг, подобно гласу из облака, неожиданно голос из публики:
> – А где же фалл? – Кусиков выразился по-русски. (2000-2003, X: 194)

Elsewhere Remizov recalls:

> Странны бывают люди – странными они родятся на свет.
> А бывают и не только что странные, больше – Андрей Белый – Андрей Белый вроде как уж не человек вовсе, тоже и Блок не в такой степени, а все-таки. (I: 13)

> Из всех самый крепкий, куда ж Андрей Белый – так мля газообразная с седенькими пейсиками, или меня взять – червяк в три дуги согнутый, и вот первый – не думано! – раньше всех, первый Блок просится с белым светом. (I: 14)

> Ангел небесный, слетевший в наш ров львиный, ну, ему в его голубом шарфе, на ледяном ли пупе, в зеленый ли вей, другие у него дороги и земля другая, Андрей Белый – большущий роман *Эпопея*. (I: 23)

In similar aphoristic fashion Remizov will mention Belyj in lists of writers, or alongside them, and in particular notes Belyj's affinity with Gogol', which Remizov shared.[37] But there is no major segment devoted to Belyj, and likewise Belyj has left us without his promised literary portrait of Remizov. But there must have been more. For in Berlin for two short years their fates and days were destined to be spent in closer proximity than ever before.

The most tender recollection of Belyj by Remizov comes in his notes to his own "Belyj album".

> В рисовании Андрея Белого было что-то от игры: как дети усядутся к столу и примутся рисовать, пока не надоест и потом начнется другая игра, а испачканные чернилами, а всего милее? Красками, листки с фантастическими рисунками, в которых никогда не употребляется линейка и резинка, разбросанные по столу, летят со стола на пол, а с пола в печку. Игра, а не мастерство: во всяком мастерстве есть почему, а в игре – как рука водила и всегда важен только процесс, а не результат. В этом душа рисунков Андрея Белого! Но было и другое: страсть иллюстрировать – изображать мысль: но при неумении и эти иллюстрации, в которых всегда преднамеренность и отчетность, превращались в фантастические узоры, ничего не объясняющие.[38]

Neither Belyj upon his return to Russia, nor Remizov who moved to Paris for the rest of his life ever achieved the public acclaim or the publishing success of the Berlin years. Berlin had offered a unique set of circumstances. There was the relative, and extraordinary, free interaction and political and intellectual freedom and tolerance that could mix liberals, conservatives, communists and monarchists in a single room. This was not long lived, but nevertheless a reality of December 1921 to April 1922 (Beyer 1997). In Paris Remizov and his wife were, if not ostracized, then clearly marginalized by the conservative elements. René Guerra recalls: "V Pariže [Remizov] byl domosedom. V Berline on byl na vidu." And then there was the absence of Belyj, who had often been at the center of Remizov's practical jokes and literary hoaxes: Belyj's fictitious interviews for the *Bulletin of the House of the Arts*, 'Zwovierson', the green scarf affair. That proximity and familiarity never seemed to become troublesome, although there is Remizov's comment to Kondrjanskaja that, "O russkom lade, on menja ne ponimal" (331).

They both loved the sound of words, the dream world, fairy tales, the literature of Gogol', symphonies. Each in his own way celebrated a victory of style over substance, sound over meaning in much of their writings. They were alike in their exploitation of complex sound images, neologisms for Belyj, archaisms for Remizov, all of which slow down or retard the reader in search of sense-meaning. There was, however, not a clear overlap, borrowing or influence to be spoken of. They listened not simply to different drummers, but to entirely different drums.

Today they and their contributions to Russian culture are being rediscovered and presented to new generations. Remizov's papers, in particular, anything bearing his own calligraphy or artistic enhancement, are being recognized as national treasures. Belyj too has been republished and some of his art has appeared in color reproduction (Gut 1997). If they could see, or better if we could look into both of their eyes, the defining physical feature of them both, whole new worlds might open before us and future generations. Ėrenburg concludes:

> Андрей Белый витал в небесах, не мог прожить и дня без философских обобщений, много ездил по свету, восторгался,

горячился, спорил. Алексей Михайлович Ремизов был домоседом, жил на земле, – даже под землей, походил на колдуна и на крота, вдохновлялся корнями слов, не мудрил, как Белый, а чудил. (1966: 433)

NOTES

1 I wish to express my gratitude to those who have shared their time and expertise with me on this project. First and foremost, Fritz Mierau in Berlin, along with Waltraud Werner and Amory Burchard; in Paris Iegor Reznikoff and René Guerra; and in the United States Greta Slobin.

2 The caricatures appeared in the satirical journal in Berlin, *Veretenyš*, 3 (1922), 11. The artist was Vl. Belkin.

3 There is a short comparison of their prose in Levin (1981: 245-275). Christa Ebert juxtaposes, but does not compare the two writers in her book. "Podobnye poiski vsecelo vnutrennich real'nostej [...] delajut Remizova blizkim k A. Belomu [...] (B.A. Čalmaev, 'Molitvy i sny Alekseja Remizova', Remizov 1989: 23). Greta Slobin has looked at Belyj's and Remizov's characterization of Gogol' (1994: 163-179).

4 Remizov later wrote. "Ja s nim učilsja v universitete: dva samych mne blizkich iz sovremennikov: Blok (Peterburg) i Andrej Belyj (Moskva)" (Kodrjanskaja 1959: 290-291). Both also had a fascination with Nietzsche. Christa Ebert pointed out to me that in 1895 Remizov had translated Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra*. It was not published; the first published Russian translation was in 1898 (see Rosenthal 1986: 33).

5 Remizov's literary memoirs must be approached with care for they are filled with lapses in memory, fabrications, hoaxes, called by Remizov and his researchers "mistifikacija". They are as much a part of the person as of his memoirs to the extent that they become an essential *Leitmotiv* in his work.

6 Obatnina errs in calling it 1906 (2001: 338). In December of 1906 Belyj was in Paris.

7 Belyj had earlier met Remizov's wife, Serafima Pavlovna, via the Gippius sisters (1990a: 471).

8 Iegor Reznikoff remembered as a child this "koza iz ral'cev" and believes it might be the origin and one explanation for the symbol that Remizov used in many of his illustrations (conversation with the author, January 2004). The symbol is also the glagolitic letter, *červ'*.

9 Belyj refers to his maternal ancestors in *Na rubeže dvuch stoletij*:

> [...] бабушка [...], ее девическая фамилия – Журавлева, где-то, через прабабушку, она была в родстве с Ремизовыми, с Лямиными с другими купеческими фамилиями; с А. М. Ремизовым (с писателем) я нахожусь в каком-то преотдаленнейшем свойстве через прабабушку (мою прапрабабушку); [...]. (1990: 100)

10 My colleague, Tat'jana Smorodinskaja, pointed out the old Russian saying: "'Syt, r'jan i nos v tabake!', značit u nego vse otlično v žizni." At the end of *Kukcha* in the passage 'Poslednee', Remizov recalls a different house of Rozanov's:

> Только не в том доме, где когда-то "семейно" и шумно (качалка с Бердяевым, финик Андрея Белого) праздновались именины Варвары Дмитриевны. (2000-2003, VII: 127)

The allusion to tobacco recalls Remizov's own scandalous erotic text 'Čto est' tabak?' See the commentary to the text by Obatnina (2000-2003, VII: 536).

11 Remizov (2000-2003, I: 531).

12 Remizov in his memoirs of Blok, cast as letters to his deceased friend will mention Belyj in a positive, but less cautious light. *Achru* is dated November 7, 1921, i.e. before Belyj's arrival in Berlin.

13 In another article, Obatnina (1996: 205) refers to a letter from Belyj to Remizov of February 17, 1917.

14 The Simian Chamber has been the subject of a number of articles. most summarized and superseded with wonderful illustrations in Obatnina's recent book.

15 A little known coincidence is that the certificate for Anna Achmatova, who had been married to Gumilev, is dated August 5, 1921.

16 Personal archive of Iegor Reznikoff. What is left unsaid is how the arrest of Gumilev (who would later be executed) impacted on their somewhat rapid departure from the city. Even recognizing that Remizov and his wife had been seeking exit permission, it does seem more than coincidental that on the day following Gumilev's arrest (the night of August 3 to 4) Remizov deposited a trunk with manuscripts in the hands of the Estonian consul to Petrograd (he would get it back in late June 1922). The very next day, August 5, 1921, he and his wife departed without ceremony.

17 Burchard quotes a letter from Remizov dated September 20, 1921 and uses a letter by Remizov to Gessen to locate the first Berlin domicile of the Remizovs in the Pension Schnabel at Bayreuther Strasse 10. The original letter is in RGALI f. 1570, op. 1, ed. chr. 37 [219] (105). The first mention of Remizov in the Berlin Russian press in 1921 relates back to his time in Revel.

> "Из беседы с А. М. Ремизовым..." Несколько дней тому назад приехал сюда А. М. Ремизов и был радушно встречен как русской эмиграцией, так и эстонскими и немецкими представителями печати. (*Rul'*, № 262, 27.IX.1921, 2)