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Konstantin Mochulsky. *Andrei Bely: His Life and Works.* Tr. Nora Szalavitz. Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1977. 230 pp. (paper).

The mystical world of Andrej Belyj has become an object of renewed interest in recent years, due largely to the translations of the author's novels *Kotik Letaev* (tr. Gerald Janecek [Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1971]) and *The Silver Dove* (tr. George Reavey [New York: Grove Press, 1974]), which join the previously published *Petersburg* (tr. John Cournos [New York: Grove Press, 1959]). These three major novels in English have also been a boon to students of Russian literature for whom Belyj's complex Russian prose is a formidable obstacle. Translation of Močul'skij's study of Belyj's life and works is an equally welcome contribution to the bibliography of works about Belyj in English, previously limited to Oleg Maslenikov, *The Frenzied Poets: Andrei Biely and the Russian Symbolists* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1952) and John Elsworth, *Andrey Bely* (Letchworth, England: Bradda Books, 1972).

Močul'skij's work, which appeared posthumously in 1955, is the most complete study of Belyj to appear in any language to date. In no sense, however, is the book an exhaustive examination of Belyj's complicated and confusing career. Močul'skij relied heavily for biographical information on Belyj's own fascinating but often unreliable memoirs, *Na rubeže dvux stoletij, Načalo veka,* and *Meždu dvux revoljucij,* as well as on the novels, *Kotik Letaev* and *Zapiska čudaka.* Consequently, the biography of Belyj is neither complete nor accurate, especially in the discussion of events after 1910. Similarly, Močul'skij's treatment of Belyj's early works is far superior to his scant mention of the author's later writings. Močul'skij is at his best in his analyses of the first collections of poetry, *Zoloto v lazuri, Pepel,* and *Urna,* and his excellent scholarly reviews of the novels *Serebrjanyj golub'* and *Peterburg.* Less satisfying is Močul'skij's attempt to explain Belyj's experiments in verse analysis in *Simvolizm*; the presentation is unclear and shows an inadequate comprehension of the subject matter. If the explication of Belyj's prerevolutionary writings ranges from good to excellent, the account of the postrevolutionary works ranges from only fair to good. Močul'skij has little to say on the novels of the 1920s; he resorts to extensive quotations instead of analyses of poetic texts and he largely ignores Belyj's efforts in literary criticism, *Ritm kak dialektika i "Mednyj vsadnik"* and *Masterstvo Gogolja.* This lack of attention to certain aspects of Belyj's career can be to some extent attributed to insufficient time and the inaccessibility of archival materials. However, Močul'skij's work suffers in part from his own bias toward Belyj (who returned to Russia from Berlin) and his inability to appreciate or objectively evaluate Belyj's involvement with Rudolf Steiner and Anthroposophy. It is doubtful whether any one person or single work can provide a completely satisfactory study of the numerous volumes of theoretical articles, literary criticism, poetry, prose, and memoirs, and Močul'skij's book remains, despite its failings, one of the most important contributions to Belyj scholarship in this century.

Szalavitz provides a competent and largely accurate literal translation of Močul'skij's Russian. The result is a clear and flowing prose which is easy to read and understand. The translator also makes some essential corrections of typographical mistakes, rearranges misplaced pages in the original, and incorporates Močul'skij's three appendixed passages into the body of the text. Notwithstanding this almost word for word translation there are significant differences between the Russian and English versions. Szalavitz promises in her introduction to provide (where possible) transliterations of Belyj's poems, which constitute an essential and substantial portion of the text. Had the translator carried out this intention, the work would have been considerably

in addition to the usual table of contents. Dikman has provided the edition with excellent notes, which indicate the archival location of the manuscript or typescript of the poem, where it was previously published, and which published version was chosen. The notes, moreover, give all types of information about the poems, explain Biblical, mythological, and literary references, and occasionally relate specific imagery or lines to those of other Russian and foreign poets. These extensive notes are the most valuable aspect of the anthology for the scholar since Cexnovicer's edition was virtually without annotation. Moreover, Dikman has included some forty hitherto unpublished poems, mostly from the 1880s and 1890s, and a larger section of translations from Latin, French, German, Armenian, and Ukrainian than the 1939 anthology. All this makes the new anthology more useful to the student of literature than Cexnovicer's quite good work.

Dikman's lengthy introduction to Sologub (5–74) is more informative than Cexnovicer's. One must of course "read beyond" the attempts to "justify" publishing the works of a writer whose concerns are so foreign to those of prerevolutionary progressive writers and the officially sanctioned Soviet literature. Gor'kij's praise of Sologub's mastery of verse technique is cited by both anthologists, and both blame the conditions of Czarist society for Sologub's escapism, erotic tastes, solipsism, Satanism, tendency to create myths, and his cult of "sweet death." These predictable vagaries of cultural analysis do not, however, dominate Dikman's introduction to the degree that they do Cexnovicer's. Dikman gives a detailed biographical sketch of the poet, a clear, descriptive account of the different periods he passed through, and she tries to characterize the spirit of Sologub's age, the important literary events and personages and the philosophical concerns of the epoch.

All the periods Dikman delineates are well represented in the anthology. Cexnovicer's smaller anthology, perhaps rightly, devotes proportionately more space to the pessimistic works of the late 1890s and first decade of the twentieth century, which many critics consider the truly "great" Sologub. Dikman admits that Sologub's optimistic poetry and his attempts to "keep up with the times" in the 1920s are often artistically inferior to his Decadent verse. In her notes Dikman raises the important question of how Sologub's poem should be arranged in an anthology. Sologub never followed chronology strictly, and would often publish poems which had a similar feeling tone (*nastroenie*) in an order calculated to produce a particular interaction between the poems themselves. Because the same Sologub poem often appears in several collections in different positions, Dikman has chosen to follow the chronological principle, except in the case of the pastorals, the triolets, and five distinct cycles, which were never rearranged by the author himself.

Dikman is at her best when she discusses Sologub's *Weltanschauung* and his poetics. She relates many of Sologub's attitudes to Šestov's thought and to modern Existentialism. She emphasizes the importance of Schopenhauer's philosophy and of Nietzsche's concept of Eternal Return for Sologub's thought, and most importantly, for his art. Dikman's suggestion that many of Sologub's poems are "poetizations" of philosophical concepts and particularly her comparison of Sologub's artistic method with Schopenhauer's tendency to pass from concrete, subjective impressions to reflection and generalization (25), are extremely interesting and deserve fuller development in an article or monograph. On the whole, Dikman should be commended for producing an excellent anthology. One can only regret that the first printing numbered a mere 15,000 copies, barely enough for libraries and interested scholars of the world.

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enhanced. As it is, the translations of the poems are literal and sometimes even poetic, but they fail to duplicate or convey in English the sound structure, rhyme, and meter of Belyj's originals. The discussion of Belyj's rhythmic analyses in *Simvolizm* is equally disappointing. Misprints, deviations from Močul'skij's own imprecise geometrical figures, and mistranslations of the technical vocabulary (both *četyrexdol'nik* and *kvadrat* are translated as "quadrangle" and *prjamougol'nik trex vidov* as "rectangle of three sides" instead of a "right triangle" [116, 117]) create chaos rather than clarity in the reader's mind.

Although the remainder of the translation is basically clear and coherent, there are occasional errors. Instead of providing a notation for Belyj's word-game with *čaju*, Szalavitz translates "Čaju voskresenija mertvyx" as "The tea of the resurrection of the dead" (77). Sometimes her translations are imprecise: "stat'ej 'Simvolizm' " becomes "in the articles in *Symbolism*" (113) instead of "in the article 'Symbolism.' " Belyj's use of German expressions also imposes difficulties on the translator; for example "Dornach became 'Dorn' for me" (159) would be better rendered as "Dornach became a thorn for me." Szalavitz is also inexact in her translations of Biblical titles: *Otkrovenie* is not "Apocalypse" (35) but "The Revelation," and *kniga Bytija* is not "the book of Being" (176) but "Genesis." At times the translations are so literal that abbreviations which may be obvious in Russian can cause difficulties for the English reader, for instance "Gikhl" and "SPB." Transliteration of Russian names and words seems to follow no consistent principle so that Russian *ë* has at least four different variants: "Seryozha," "Soloviev," "Semionov," and "moye" juxtaposed to "svoyo." Comparison with the original also reveals a variety of what might be typographical errors: the date "1912" (155, 157) is twice used instead of "1921" and K. B. Vasilieva (216) is, of course, K. N. Vasilieva. Indeed, the most serious defect of the book lies in the editing and proofreading. No attempt is made to maintain the peculiarities of capitalization or punctuation, or to copy Belyj's highly personalized use of italics and typographical arrangements. As a result the reader remains unaware of this important stylistic feature in Belyj's writings. Finally, the footnotes to the text are based entirely on Močul'skij's: most are in Russian transliteration (of little help to the English reader), some are incomplete or incorrect, and others are simply omitted.

In spite of its failings, Szalavitz's translation is an excellent aid for those who are unable to read Močul'skij in the original Russian. The availability of this book in English can only help to increase and foster interest in the life and works of Andrej Belyj, surely one of Russia's most original and enigmatic literary personalities.

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Bengt Jangfeldt. *Majakovskij and Futurism, 1917–1921.* (Stockholm Studies in Russian Literature, 5.) Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1976. 133 pp. (paper).

The revolutionary years 1917–21 saw the phenomenal rise of the Russian Futurists (then synonymous with avant-garde or "left" artists) to positions of authority in the Commissariat of Education (*Narkompros*) under the Bolshevik regime. Those years were an extraordinary expression of creative activity and heated debate on the role and direction of art in a Communist society. As Nikolaj Punin put it, young and radically oriented artists gained, "probably for the first time in the whole of European history . . . the opportunity to realize their own ideas, perhaps insufficiently considered, but pungent and unquestionably creative." ("Balans," *Iskusstvo kommuny*, No. 10,

1919.) But there was also a destructive element in the creative ideas of the Futurists. They believed that new and relevant artistic and literary forms could only arise from the rejection—for some the destruction—of the art and literature of the past. Related to this belief was their view that art and literature could no longer be confined exclusively to the realm of "artistic" illusion, imagination, and isolation, but had to be directed to the reconstruction and transformation of society as a result of the Bolshevik revolution. By promising a political, social, and economic transformation, the Bolshevik revolution justified (for the Futurists) the search for new artistic forms and modes of work which would express the new revolutionary content. However misguided, the Futurists equated revolutionary art with revolutionary politics.

It is against this background that Jangfeldt's informative study seeks to deal with "some aspects of the development of Vladimir Majakovskij and Futurism during the first post-revolutionary years" (10). Jangfeldt begins by describing the decrees and manifestoes in *Gazeta futuristov*, which Majakovskij, Burljuk, and Kamenskij published on 15 March 1918. The newspaper, the first and only issue to appear, drew almost no attention. It was an "isolated phenomenon," as Jangfeldt notes, despite the fact that Majakovskij and Kamenskij pasted the newspaper on buildings in Moscow. The decrees and manifestoes called for a mass celebration and expression of creative activity to decorate the streets and squares with art and poetry; they called for the emancipation of art from the Academy and the state; and they were in effect a statement of the necessary conditions by which the "left" artists would agree to collaborate with Lunačarskij in organizing the art life of the country. According to Jangfeldt, many (if not all) of the "points" in the decrees and manifestoes were "realized in one way or another within the near future," in the sense that they pointed the way to the kind of artistic activities that followed (25).

Jangfeldt goes on to point out the relationship between Majakovskij's poems in late 1918 and the manifestoes in *Gazeta futuristov*. The poems, which appeared in the highly controversial *Iskusstvo kommuny*—the official organ of the Department of Fine Arts (*IZO*) under *Narkompros*—concerned "the decisive questions of the struggle against the old culture's influence and the creation of a new culture" (31). Jangfeldt also discusses the enormous difficulties the Futurists encountered in operating *IZO*, where they were often accused, not without some justification, of establishing a cultural dictatorship. This aspect of *IZO* should have been treated in relation to the rival *Proletkul't* movement, which made identical claims. The Futurists realized in 1918 that the Soviet state would eventually reveal its preference for an artistic style or method, even though the Party reacted with hostility to their own artistic activities. In this section, Jangfeldt creates the misleading impression that *IZO* began to function in January 1918. It was not until late July 1918 that *IZO* operated effectively, after Lunačarskij had come to terms with Brik and Majakovskij.

Jangfeldt devotes a chapter to the idea of a "Revolution of the Spirit," which the Futurists had adumbrated in *Gazeta futuristov*. He cites many of Majakovskij's poems and other statements in an attempt to give substance to the idea, but he is not particularly successful. He remarks that the Futurists wanted "to create art in freedom, without persecution from the bourgeois critics and the Academy, and to make their art more widely known" (66).

In his competent treatment of the polemics between the Futurists and *Proletkul't*, Jangfeldt rightly points out the critical ideological differences between them. While emphasizing the differences, he neglects to indicate their shared notions. He also ignores the fact that shortly after the revolution Lunačarskij, one of the leading supporters of *Proletkul't*, granted subsidies and status to *Proletkul't* as a politically inde-