

The Andrej Belyj Society



Newsletter

Number 9

1990

The Andrej Belyj Society Newsletter

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Editor's Note

I would like to apologize for the delay with Number 9. Shortly after the New Year, a powerful electric storm, typical for Texas, destroyed my word processor and printer. What made matters worse was the discovery that the computer company, Kay Pro, had gone out of business! So after three months of auction hopping, perusing classified adds, and finally locating a second-hand variant, Sunnyside Press is back in business, at least for one more issue, about which we are a little less sunny.

In response to the announcement made last autumn, namely that the Belyj Society seeks the energy of a new editor, I have received several "interested" replies, but as yet no firm "yes." Given your kind words of encouragement, I am certain someone among you will emerge with a genuine commitment. As for the notion of changing the title of the newsletter, while a few of you suggested the title, *Russian Symbolism*, it seems the "majority" of respondents is content with the title as is. One person asked: "Why do you want to change it? I like it exactly as is!" Perhaps this question needs more discussion. Needless to say, Number 10 will be published before Christmas, as was the practice with previous issues, that is, as long as no meteor gets in the path of my "new" Kay Pro dinosaur. Let's hold a hope that the Belyj Society is not yet destined for extinction. So I look forward to receiving your copy by the first of November.

**History and Narrative: the Responses of
Belyj and Remizov
Abstract by Greta Slobin
Presented at IV World Congress of Slavists**

The parallel paths of Belyj and Remizov before 1917 show great involvement with experimental narrative form and with problems of czarist Russia on the brink of collapse. Exploration of individual subjectivity and perception is combined with social and cultural concerns in their major novels of 1909–1916. However, the fluid boundary between autobiography and fiction, present from the early 1900s both in Belyj's *Symphonies* and in Remizov's first lyrical novel, *The Pond*, is retained in the later novels. A remarkable change occurs in their work after the Revolution: a shift from fiction to autobiography and memoir. The novels written subsequently are largely autobiographical. Both writers sustain their leadership position in this new form of narrative experiment where the relationship of fiction and history undergoes a fundamental change. This paper will consider the shift in the light of the recent critique of historical narrative and of the nineteenth-century split between history and fiction.

**Belyj and Pil'njak
Abstract by John Elsworth
Presented at IV World Congress of Slavists**

This paper examines the ways in which the style of Pil'njak's works of the early 1920s can be seen to reveal significant similarities to the style of Belyj's prose. Such features as rhythm, metaphor, syntax and overall structure are considered. The conclusion is reached, following G. Gorbačev, that despite the evidence of clear resemblances at each of these levels, Pil'njak's prose as a system is radically different from Belyj's. The two systems are then examined from the point of view of the subjectivity implied by each. Here, too, fundamental differences are found in the relation between the implied author and the text, but a general affinity is nevertheless suggested in the relationship that can be perceived between the subjectivity of the implied author and the community whom he addresses.

Andrej Belyj's *Petersburg* and Metafictional Narration
 Abstract by Roger J. Keys
 Presented at IV World Congress of Slavists

By comparison with his earlier novel *The Silver Dove* (1909), Belyj's *Petersburg* (1913-1914) displays an even greater shift towards ambiguity and irony with all that this implies for the possibility of embodying transcendent, supra-empirical meanings in fictional form. At the opposite pole from the authoritative authorial word -- as we find it in the *Symphonies* (1902-1908) and, to a certain extent, in *The Silver Dove* -- is the utterance lacking all authority, the novel offering so many possible perspectives that it ends up by lacking any. This is the metafictional phenomenon which appears to confront the reader of *Petersburg*. At the root of everything in this novel lies ambiguity, the fact that it is impossible to make definite statements about the meaning or value or ontological status of anything within the fiction, and Russian literature had seen nothing like it since the days of Gogol'. Nothing in *Petersburg* can be clearly authenticated, and this appears to be as true for the reader as it is for the individual characters, for the narrator and perhaps even, finally, for the implied author.

Kotik Letaev and the Flight of the Witches
 Abstract by Peter I. Barta
 Presented at IV World Congress of Slavists

In *Kotik Letaev* Belyj's imagery and symbolism, as well as his innovative use of language, present the journey of the mind from an atemporal, eternal condition, through the development of arising human consciousness, towards a union with Christ in which the transhistorical condition is regained. Belyj draws on his vast erudition and his anthroposophical and other beliefs in an attempt to create the poetic world which, in turn, will give rise to a new world (Cassedy, "Magic of Words," *Selected Essays*, 98). Nevertheless, the author does not fully control meaning since that is ultimately determined by the ideological and cultural moorings of discourse: intertextuality is not at the service of intention.

Belyj's cosmic scheme utilizes the concept of the "feminine principle." The consistently negative valorisation of this principle, however, has nothing to do with a cosmic, transhistorical or atemporal force; it is, rather, established by the decidedly historical misogyny of the discourse in which Belyj's text is embedded.

This paper's focus is on the novel's witch imagery whose ability to create meaning is exclusively determined by other texts and oral discourse through which historical, but not -- as Belyj would suggest -- transcendental, memory is handed down. The cosmic design is buttressed by binary oppositions, the most relevant of which are the contrasting symbols of Christ and the witches.

Rusalki in Belyj's Novels

Abstract by Olga Muller Cooke

Presented at the IV World Congress of Slavists

Belyj's fictional heroines are remarkably vapid creatures with prototypes in folk tales, chivalric romances, and decadent literature. One of the many storybook gender roles which Belyj used in modelling his women was the *rusalka*, particularly in *The Silver Dove* and the *Moscow* novels. *The Silver Dove* begins during the most important celebration of spring vegetation, the seventh week after Easter, Trinity Week, known in ancient days as "Rusal'naja" week. Dar'jalskij is seduced by the call of Matrena's elemental nature; wherever she appears her predatory sexuality is permeated with *rusalka* motifs: she is always gazing at the water, singing in a plaintive voice, combing her tresses, often with a lunar atmosphere as backdrop. Fear of being engulfed by Matrena is reflected in the image of drowning, precisely the way some *rusalki* kill their victims. In addition to the *rusalka* material with which Lizaša, the heroine in *Moskva*, is associated throughout the novel, there is also the subtext of the folk tale "Sestrica Alenuška and Bratik Ivanuška," exhibiting another clear tie with *rusalki*. What emerges in the different manifestations of both *rusalki* is Belyj's clear preference for Lizaša. On the one hand, Belyj brings about the motivation for Lizaša's rape through the opulent *rusalka* associations; at the same time he creates a heroine with psychological depth.

Автобиографические Документальные Сводь

Андрея Белого

(Тезисы)

А.В. Лавров

Presented at IV World Congress of Slavists

1. Тяготение к автобиографизму — характернейшая черта всего творчества Андрея Белого. Едва ли не все его художественные произведения насквозь автобиографичны; в вымышленных сюжетах скрыта непосредственно жизненная основа, узнаются события или коллизии, сыгравшие определенную роль в судьбе Белого.

2. В творчестве Белого отсутствует принципиальная разница между собственно художественной прозой и произведениями мемуарного жанра. Элементы автобиографической хроники наличествуют уже в первом его опубликованном произведении — "Симфонии (2-й, драматической)" (1901). Картины подлинной жизни Москвы в воспоминаниях "На рубеже двух столетий" дублируются или дополняются эпизодами из романов "Котик Летаев," "Крещенный кигаец," "Москва," в основе которых — та же историко-бытовая реальность, пропущенная через личный жизненный опыт автора.

3. Факты биографии Андрея Белого — необходимая основа не только для создания представления о жизненном пути писателя, но и для понимания и истолкования подавляющего большинства его произведений. В силу этого обстоятельства особую значимость приобретают автобиографические

документальные материалы, которых среди рукописного наследия Белого осталось чрезвычайно много. Самое их обилие и степень подробности, тщательности в освещении биографических фактов дополнительно свидетельствуют о том, насколько значительную роль играли те или иные жизненные вехи в мировосприятии Белого, в осознании им себя как личности и художника.

4. Рукописные автобиографические материалы Белого в большинстве своем, как и мемуары, ретроспективны по отношению к описываемым фактам. Как правило, эти документы уступают в степени подробности и яркости изображения жизненных реалий воспоминаниям Белого, однако существенно отличаются от них отсутствием какой-либо тенденциозности, специфической окраски пережитого под знаком тех идей и настроений, которыми руководствовался автор в период работы над мемуарами. Вторая существенная особенность документальных сводов Белого — их предназначенность "для себя," а не "для читателя"; это — копилка фактов, извлеченных из памяти, а не систематизированное, художественно обобщенное их описание. В воспоминаниях Белого касается главным образом наиболее важных обстоятельств своей жизни, в записях "для себя" зарегистрировано много не самого "важного" — то, что казалось Белому второстепенным, случайным либо не укладывалось в авторскую концепцию пережитого, предлагаемую читателю; в этой установке на полноту и беспристрастность в охвате жизненного материала — особая значимость рукописных документальных сводов для

исследователя. Наконец, третья важная особенность документальных сводов, бесценная для специалиста—"беловеда," — более или менее точная хронологическая привязка фактов; сопоставление ретроспективных записей с фактами, известиями по синхронным с ними документам, позволяют убедиться в уникальной точности и "стереоскопичности" памяти Андрея Белого.

5. Автобиографические рукописные материалы Белого распределяются на две основные группы — собственно регистрационные и регистрационно-описательные. К первой группе относятся документальные своды, в которых только фиксируются по определенному типу сгруппированные факты биографии Белого без какой-либо их аналитической или эмоциональной характеристики:

"Себе на память," список прочитанных лекций, рефератов, бесед и т.п. — с начала творческой деятельности до 1932 г. (зафиксировано всего 924 публичных выступления);

"Передвижения за 1910–1918 год" ("Жизнь с Асей") — хронологическая канва с указанием мест пребывания (по месяцам);

"Передвижения" — хронологическая канва с 1923 по август 1933 г. (аналогичный документ);

"К биографии. Общественная деятельность. Членства" — указатель различных культурных объединений, в которых участвовал Белый (всего 42 позиции);

"Службы и обязанности" — аналогичный указатель официальных "служб" Белого (17 позиций);

"Сотрудничества в журналах и газетах с 1904 до 1910 г." — указатель изданий, в которых участвовал Белый (доведен до 1925 г.; 41 название);

"Список прослушенных университетских курсов" (36 курсов на естественном отделении физико-математического факультета и 5 курсов на филологическом факультете);

"Кружки людей, в которых мне приходилось бывать" (25 позиций с перечнем лиц в каждой, с которыми Белому приходилось сталкиваться в том или ином объединении).

6. Регистрационно-описательные документальные своды представляют наиболее значительный интерес, поскольку хронологически дискретная и весьма точная регистрация биографических фактов дается в них внутри цельного описания либо всей жизни, либо какого-то одного ее периода, и сопровождается, как правило, достаточно подробными характеристиками фиксируемых событий. Первые образчики этого жанра — "Жизнь без Аси" (описание пережитого с августа 1916 по май 1917 г.) и "Работа и чтение" (январь 1916 — январь 1918 г.). Первая рукопись — образец собственно биографического жанра, вторая — опыт творческой и деловой хроники. Эти два небольших документальных свода — первые пробы жанра, осуществившегося в двух наиболее крупных и значительных рукописях Белого — "Материале к биографии" и "Ракурсе к дневнику."

7. "Материал к биографии" — опыт "внутренней" автобиографии писателя: "Автор брал себя как объект анализа." Начатые как сравнительно краткий и суммарный

автобиографический свод, эти записи по мере их ведения делались все более детальными и конкретными, а в описании событий 1913–1915 гг. (охватывающем по объему около 2/3 всего текста) превратились в подробное мемуарное изложение. Рукопись особо ценна описанием сугубо личных (зачастую интимного характера) жизненных обстоятельств, не нашедших прямого отражения в опубликованных мемуарах Белого.

8. Рукопись "Ракурса к дневнику," описывающая события с 1899 г. по 3 июня 1930 г., представляет собою — в сравнении с "Материалом к биографии" — опыт "внешнего" жизнеописания: достаточно лапидарная регистрация жизненных обстоятельств, хроника творчества, перечни прочитанных книг и т.п. Имея много общего и отчасти пересекаясь с "Материалом к биографии," "Ракурс к дневнику" отличается большей подробностью и тщательностью в отражении культурно-общественной жизни Белого. С января 1927 г. и до конца текста "Ракурс..." — уже не ретроспективный текст, а собственно дневник, состоящий из кратких ежедневных записей.

9. Скорейшее опубликование важнейших документальных рукописных сводов Андрея Белого в полном объеме — одно из актуальных задач на пути дальнейшего исследования писателя.

**Belyj's *Silver Dove* as the Summation of the
Nineteenth Century Rural Prose Tradition
Abstract by Maria Carlson
Paper Presented at AAASS, October 1990**

One of the distinctive stylistic features of Russian *fin-de-siècle* art in general, and literature in particular, is its *citatnost'*. *Citatnost'* is the conscious use of thematic, semantic, and structural elements to generate an associative sequence of words, images, or themes in the reader's mind in an effort to create a new kind of reader-text interaction. The author uses *citatnost'* to connect his text with previously-existing cultural texts (novels, poems, paintings, music, philosophical works, etc.); the result is a shorthand incorporation of their cultural meaning and context into his own work.

Some degree of *citatnost'* is present in the art of all periods, but it seems to be more characteristic of periods (like the Russian Silver Age) when historical, cultural, and social ambiguity are the norm. Such periods experience a sense of aesthetic insecurity, disintegrating social identity, and at the same time a sense of elitism and cultural arrogance. Not surprisingly, there arises an intense need to reinforce the sense of belonging to a cultural tradition and of engaging in dialogue with it not as an epigone, but as an equal of that tradition.

Andrej Belyj is a master of *citatnost'*. In his first major novel, *The Silver Dove*, he "cites" the Russian tradition of rural prose, from its early 19th century roots in Theocritus to the populist novels of the century's end.

Belyj's citations are of various kinds: stylistic, visual, textual, and personal. In the course of the novel he cites the *skaz* manner of Gogol' and Leskov; Gogolian name games; the nostalgia for the 18th century reminiscent of the paintings of Benois, Somov, and Borisov-Musatov; the muddy landscapes of Gogol's Mirgorod, Dostoevskij's Skotoprigonevsk, and the provincial wastelands of Saltykov-Ščedrin and Sologub. Numerous other voices associated with the Russian village are "cited" in *Silver Dove*, including Mel'nikov-Peterskij and his sectarian novels, the stylized and aurally-hypnotic *duzovnye stixi* of Bal'mont's *Zelenyj Vertograd*, Turgenev's lyrical landscapes from *Zapiski oxotnika*, as well as Nekrasov's romanticized *narodnyj dux*. The popular *narodnik* novels of Gleb Uspenskij are parodied in Belyj's depiction of the provincial revolutionary movement and the pretensions of the local Lixov intelligentsia. Belyj also cites his own articles from 1905 and other cultural documents as well. *Silver Dove* is actually a literary companion to *Vezi*, citing the imagery and the ideas of the book of essays which Belyj read as he was writing the novel.

In using *citatnost'*, Belyj is not attempting to imitate; the self-conscious and completely accessible citations serve to summarize not only the century-long tradition of Russian rural prose, but also the development of the Russian intelligentsia's attitude toward the *narod*, making *Silver Dove* a philosophical and intellectual, as well as literary, statement.

**Belyj's *Kotik Letaev* and Pasternak's *Detstvo Ljuvers*:
A Binocular Vision of the Russian Avant-garde**

Abstract by John M. Kopper

Paper Delivered June 30, 1990 at the
Pasternak Centennial Symposium
Norwich University

The "childhood text" offered Pasternak and Belyj a field in which to study both a functional question, how language is acquired, and a moral question, how relationships with others are first defined.

Although most readers have assumed that the tropological basis of Belyj's work is metaphoric and Pasternak's metonymic, the two authors are more interested in the process of naming which underlies these and all figures of substitution. Learning to name is the chief activity of the child heroes Kotik and Ženja, and in both texts the plot is constituted by the irreversible order of the protagonists' naming adventures. For Belyj and Pasternak cognition is inherently linguistic.

Kotik moves through three stages in mastering language. His belief in a primitive concord of sign and referent is replaced by acceptance of the problematic, arbitrary, and inadequate fit between word and world. Kotik surmounts this stage in turn by understanding that his experience can be contextualized within the system of images accumulated by world culture. At the conclusion of his *bildung* Kotik writes his autobiography in a language which is necessarily symbolic.

At the beginning of *Detstvo Ljuvers* the word is distinguished from experience but is sufficient to it.

Ženja, however, is early forced to realize that words like "beremenna" or "Azija" can possess many senses. From a semiotic form of unity (one word/one sense) she progresses to a concept of multiplicity, where the word becomes the aggregate of fragmentary and elusive senses conceived by the subject. Toward the end, introduced by her arithmetic homework to the idea of infinity, she discovers that these senses detach themselves from objects and repeat indefinitely. Objects in the world are not necessarily alike, but the migratory attributes which attach to them create the sense of a common condition. Death, for example, is an attribute shared by Ženja's stillborn brother and the utterly dissimilar Cvetkov.

In a gesture characteristic of the Russian avant-garde, Belyj and Pasternak make the linguistic progress of Kotik and Ženja a figure for evolving moral awareness. Both texts develop an "ethics of language." Pasternak's theory of infinite interconnection defines a Christianity founded upon the conversion of *blizkij* to *bližnij*, where contiguity implies responsibility. Belyj makes revelation and reincarnation the essence of Christianity. Kotik's initially contextless suffering is made significant because it repeats Christ's crucifixion as bearer of the Word, and his life takes on meaning to the extent that it is bound to the past. Belyj remains acutely sensitive to cosmic patterns of sacrifice and redemption, an attitude that tends to cast present time in the novel in eclipse. Language in *Kotik Letaev*, too, derives its significance from a diachronically conceived system of correspondences. Because its language theory depends on synchronous correspondence and its ethics on coincidence, *Detstvo Ljuvers* privileges present time.

Despite their differences, nonetheless, Pasternak and Belyj borrow from each other's tropological strategies. Though not a prominent feature of *Detstvo Ljuvers*, explicit metaphors like the identification of Cvetkov and his "sleeping friends" with Christ and his disciples in Gethsemene invest the story with a Belyian, transcendent axis of Christian imagery rhetorically supportive of the general plan of the work. *Kotik Letaev*, conversely, uses various "milieux," defined by contiguities of circumstance and place, to provide plot material. Professor Letaev's circle of colleagues, the Arbat neighbors, and the eccentric relatives at Kas'janovo represent micro-worlds where interconnection is a matter of shared condition and does not depend on participation in Belyj's grandly inclusive anthroposophical system.

The Tenth Annual Belyj Society Meeting

The tenth annual meeting of the Andrej Belyj Society was held during the 1990 AATSEEL conference in Chicago on Friday, December 28, 1990. Here is the program:

Chair: Christine Tomei, Allegheny College
Secretary: Laura Goering, Carleton College

"Conquering Chaos: Theosophical Subtexts in the Projected Trilogy"

Maria Carlson, University of Kansas

"Kantian Aesthetics in Belyj's Article, 'O celesoobraznosti'"

Virginia Bennett, University of Hawaii—Manoa

"Belyj's 'Rakkurs k Dnevniku'"

Thomas R. Beyer, Jr., Middlebury College

The Belyj Society elected Virginia Bennett as Vice-President to succeed Laura Goering who is President for the year 1991. There were several other presentations on Belyj and the Symbolists on other panels: John Kopper's "Andrej Belyj and the Neo-Primitivist Movement," Martin Bidney's "Extending the Limits of Genre and Culture: A Mayan Scriptural Text in a Russian Symbolist Context," Olga Cooke's "'Zvezda': Belyj's Anthroposophical Tankas," and Peter Christensen's "The Antichrist Figure in the Fiction of Merežkovsky, Brjusov and Belyj."

Conquering Chaos: The Theosophical Subtext of Petersburg

Abstract by Maria Carlson
Paper Presented at AATSEEL, December 1990

Russian literature has always carried a great deal of philosophical baggage. While critics easily identify and evaluate the importance of social and economic philosophies in literary works, mystical and occult thought tends to be more problematical, and critics do not always take it seriously. Any factor that fundamentally determines the world view of the author, however, will profoundly affect the world of the novel; exploring that world view, especially when it deviates considerably from a culturally accepted ideological or religious norm, can provide considerable insight into the merit of a literary work and enhance reader appreciation. Theosophy is such a world view in Belyj's novel *Petersburg*.

The novel grows out of a basic mystical concept, *consciousness creates form*, which lies at the basis of theurgy. An intense power of will can create palpable objects. God thinks the universe; Divine Will brings it into being. "As God creates, so man can create," observes Theosophy's founder, Mme. Blavatsky. Analogically, the author is the god of his literary universe. He creates his characters, wills them into being, and they take on lives of their own, thinking their own creative thoughts in the divine game of "cerebral play." Dudkin arises in Senator Ableuxov's mind, and acquires being. But the Senator's consciousness is in turn the fruit of the author's consciousness, and so on, back to the First Creative

Principle.

The world of Theosophical "thought-forms" (for that is what the Senator and Dudkin are) is not the physical world. The physical world is only one of several planes of existence, and the coarsest at that. The varying planes of existence are different dimensions, or states of consciousness, existing simultaneously in the same space, but made of different kinds of "matter." The relevant plane in Belyj's novel is the Astral Plane.

The astral plane is inhabited not by people, but by ideas, thoughts, fears, and desires that human beings experience on the physical plane. On the astral plane these ideas and feelings become concrete entities called "artificial elementals," or "thought-forms" (*myslennye obrazy*). Once they have astral being, thought-forms can in turn influence events on the physical plane. Astral matter is fluid, continually changing shape as human thoughts massage the astral matter. Belyj's novel, too, is full of changing shapes and "forms." The astral world, finally, is the mirror image of the physical world -- everything there happens backwards (1000 = 0001; Šišnarfné = Enfranšiš; etc.). History also runs backward.

In Belyj's novel, the thoughts and feelings of the Russian national consciousness have molded and remolded the astral image of Russia, inhabiting it with dangerous thought-forms ensouled by revolutionary ideas, which in turn generate chaotic and unnerving events on the physical plane. These events have their own inexorable cosmic logic, expressing the negative collective Karma of the Russian people. In this way Theosophy as a system offered Belyj a seemingly

coherent explanation of apparently chaotic historical events. All his life he searched for a system that would explain it all, a system that would allow him to conquer the chaos of modern life.

**The Antichrist Figure in the Fiction of
Merežkovskij, Brjusov and Belyj**

Abstract by Peter G. Christensen

Presented at AATSEEL on December 30, 1990

In *The Resurrection of the Gods* (*The Romance of Leonardo da Vinci*) Dmitrij Merežkovskij not only uses the Antichrist theme in a complex way on the literary level, but he also asks us to see the intellectual limitations of the historical uses of such Antichrist imagery in a way that Belyj, in *The Silver Dove*, and Brjusov, in *The Fiery Angel*, do not. Merežkovskij does not take devil worship as more than a delusion, and he shows a political awareness of the sinister effects of the Roman Catholic Church's view that the Antichrist can come as a wolf in sheep's clothing. If evil people are disguised as good ones, then all compassion becomes dangerous and meaningless. Giovanni, Leonardo's disciple, becomes aware of this schizophrenia-producing system in which all virtue becomes suspect, and so he commits suicide.

In contrast, Brjusov composes *The Fiery Angel* as a fantastic tale in which the existence of demons is a distinct possibility. Thus, he partially justifies the inhumane activities of the Inquisition. Belyj, in accepting the idea of a resurrection following a conflagration, leads us to a passive acceptance of disaster that has negative political overtones.

Extending the Boundaries of Genre and Culture:

**A Mayan Scriptural Text in a
Russian Symbolist Context**

Abstract by Martin Bidney

Paper Presented at AATSEEL, December 1990

K.D. Bal'mont's *Zmeinye cvety*, a tour of modern and ancient Mexico, is as cross-generic as it is cross-cultural. It contains a complete translation of the Mayan holy scripture, the *Book of Council* or *Popol' Vuh* (based on early Spanish and French renditions, for Bal'mont knew no Quiché), which the Russian poet thereby makes available to Russian readers in 1910 (the first complete English version appeared only forty years later). Bal'mont offers a comparative look at major motifs of the work in contexts ranging from the *Kalevala* to Chinese legend, and in addition, he translates a pair of dramatic monologues fancifully "deciphered" from Mayan hieroglyphs by a Frenchman in the 1880s. Having filled his mind with Mayan lore and scholarship, Bal'mont responds with enthusiasm to his encounter with a Mayan sculptured queen, a carven likeness that seems half-sunken into the cellar floor of the Casa de la Vieja at Uxmal. The poet kisses her—and she seems to respond: he apotheosizes her with rhetoric influenced by Shelley, Tennyson, and H. Rider Haggard. This Mayan anima or muse seems to reappear in Bal'mont's later disquisition on virgin births in world religions, and finally in his concluding remarks on François-Aymar de la Rochefoucauld's purported decodings of soliloquies uttered by a Mayan queen and by her favorite sculptor. The queen becomes, for Bal'mont as for his French mentor, the

spirit of the Mexican earth, while the sculptor speaks with the elemental voice of Ocean, his hieroglyphs inspired by the shapes of shells and the intricate forms of sea creatures. (An expanded version of this paper, dealing with Bal'mont's vision of Aztecs as well as Mayas, is being prepared for publication).

Zvezda: Belyj's Anthroposophical Tankas

Abstract by Olga Muller Cooke

Presented at AATSEEL on December 30, 1990

In the preface to *Zvezda* Belyj asserted that his cycle of 48 poems, embracing the years 1914–1918, contained his most meditative and philosophically significant poetry: "This period coincides with my encounter with spiritual study, which has illuminated my previous journeys, and for this reason represents a synthesis of my poetic philosophy." *Zvezda*, Belyj's paean to anthroposophy, was written in Switzerland when Belyj was studying with Steiner, and also in Russia after his departure from Dornach. Indeed, the cycle can only be understood in the context of Belyj's devotion to anthroposophy, his marriage to Asja Turgeneva, and his return to Russia. One can interpret all three dominating feminine themes, *Asja*, *antroposofija* and *Rossija*, as spiritual marriages, of sorts. Belyj uses the tanka form to elaborate on these and yet other subsidiary themes, such as reincarnation, shared karma, the spiritual fusion of two souls, transfiguration upon death, illumination, to name a few. The tanka is intended to aid the devotee to look within himself, and at the same time present a sort of hieroglyph of spiritual insight. It expresses the experience of vision, without the accoutrements of word-weaving embellishments and rich Slavonicisms, so typical of the rest of the cycle. What is new for Belyj is the form, a variation of the traditional Japanese lyric form, which in plain and everyday language represents one of his most homogeneous diagrams of the workings of cosmic harmonies. Few cycles compare with this testimony to his personal religion.

Andrej Belyj -- the Berlin Years 1921-1923
 Belyj's Own Materials
 By Thomas R. Beyer, Jr.

In 1984 I began work on the brief period in Belyj's life that he spent in Berlin. The results of that study are being published as "Andrej Belyj -- the Berlin Years 1921-1923" in *Zeitschrift für Slavische Philologie*, L (1990), 90-142. The article was prepared largely on the basis of library holdings in Berlin, Heidelberg, Tübingen and Paris. Repeated attempts to achieve access to materials in Soviet archives had previously been politely but firmly declined. The most concrete examples of *glasnost*' and *perestrojka* for scholars concern the new and unprecedented access to valuable materials, especially the many prepared by Belyj himself in an attempt to categorize his own life and literary activity.

In November 1989, after the article had been accepted for publication, I travelled to the Soviet Union sponsored by the Middlebury Center for Russian and Soviet Studies and the Institute for the Study of the USA and Canada of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. In Moscow and Leningrad I received complete cooperation and extensive access to the archival holdings concerning Belyj's stay in Berlin at the Institut Russkoj Literatury ANSSR (Puškinskij Dom), the Rukopisnyj otdel Gosudarstvennoj publičnoj biblioteki im. Saltykova-Ščedrina, the Rukopisnyj otdel Gosudarstvennoj biblioteki im. Lenina and the Central'nyj gosudarstvennyj arxiv literatury i iskusstva (CGALI). Of particular importance was A. Belyj, *Rakkurs k "Dnevniku"* (CGALI, f. 53, op. 1, ed.x. 100), which has just recently been made available to scholars. The *Rakkurs* generally supports the

information presented in my article. For the Berlin period, in which Belyj was forced to rely primarily on memory, the *Rakkurs* contains several inaccuracies, mostly concerned with months in which a particular lecture or meeting took place. In general, the Berlin period lacks much of the extensive documentation and numerous letters which Belyj had access to in support of his autobiographical writings. A. Belyj, *Sebe na pamjat'. Perečen' pročitannyx referatov, publičnyx lekcij, besed (na zasedanijax), opponirovanij s 1899 do 1932 goda* (CGALI, f. 53, op. 1, ed.x. 96, p. 14/2), 15/1) admits on the top of two pages devoted to the Berlin years: "Память моя ослабела, и может быть в перечень есть ошибки (пропуски, или неверная отметка месяцев)."

Three new points, not reported in the press or other sources, do emerge from these documents. Belyj did see Asja in Berlin in November 1921 and there was a painful encounter with her again sometime in the last ten days of June 1922. He was exceptionally active in the Berlin section of Vol'fila, attending sixteen lectures and business meetings between November 1921 and May 1922. In October 1922 a meeting of Vol'fila was held to dissolve the organization. Finally, Belyj's fascination with dancing in the summer and fall of 1922 was partially an attempt to increase his physical activity for medical reasons. The *Rakkurs*, perhaps the most frank and honest of Belyj's memoirs, provides its own footnote to the Berlin period. Under the heading of October 1923, Belyj writes: "Знаю, что в Москве после статьи обо мне Троцким мне заповедено участие в журналах и литер. обществ. деятельность." (p. 116/2). Stopping to characterize the period between 1916 and 1923, he

adds in a paragraph underlined in red ink: "Активное литературно- общественное семилетие; подвожу ему итог, ибо после него уже я попал в иные условия; с литературой, с общественностью, можно сказать, — счета кончены" (p. 117/1)

A new and important day has opened for Belyj scholars in the Soviet Union. It was a pleasure and a joy to work there, and I want to thank the kind and attentive archivists and colleagues who supported my research. In particular, I am grateful to A.V. Lavrov for his insights and useful suggestions on use of the archives.

Belyj's *Petersburg* and Syphilis **By Martha Wessels**

Except something was wrong with his back: a fear of being touched on the spine. Was this the beginning of: *tabes dorsalis*?

Belyj, *Petersburg*

t[abes] *dorsalis*, spinal atrophy... symptoms include muscular incoordination and atrophy, anesthesia... a tertiary form of syphilis.

Stedman's Concise
Medical Dictionary

Syphilis? Well! An interesting disease with quite a long history! The reference to it in *Petersburg*, in relation to Apollon Apollonovič Ableuxov, occupies too prominent a place to be ignored, appearing, as it does, as the final paragraph concluding Chapter 3, and then remaining as a continuous undercurrent. In addition, Andrej Belyj, the sibylline voice of the Symbolist movement, would hardly have given one of his characters such a disease at random. What, then, did Belyj have in mind? This study is designed to offer a possible explanation of the significance of the disease as it relates to both the novel and the period in which it is set. They are most certainly connected.

First, let us examine the disease itself. Syphilis had been an affliction of plague-like proportions since the late 15th century. By the time *Petersburg* was written much was known about it.¹ In 1897, after half a century of hypothesizing, a connection was finally made between syphilis and a psychological disturbance known as general paresis.² This psychosis often appeared ten to twenty years after the disease's more obvious symptoms had disappeared. General paresis was discovered to be the result of a breakdown in the neural tissue of the brain and along with this, and occurring as much as another ten years later, can come a deterioration of the neural tissue in the lower spine, a condition known as *tabes dorsalis*. And soon after this—death. Any educated person familiar with the first two stages of the disease could not but have been aware, by this time in history, that the last stage was a dreaded possibility. One can only surmise that Belyj must have known about the progression of this infamous malady, the AIDS of its day.

The major cause of the symptoms of the third stage of syphilis has been briefly mentioned. Other physical manifestations resulting from neural collapse are paralysis, difficulties with vision, and necrosis of any organ or tissue, in particular, potential aneurisms of the aorta. As far as mental deterioration is concerned, some of the less severe symptoms are irritability, headaches, loss of memory and personality changes. Later, impaired memory, defective judgment, confusion and the extremes of depression and elation can occur. As the disease progresses, delusions may also become apparent.³

Do we see any signs of physical or mental deterioration in Apollon Apollonovič? Indisputably,

many of these symptoms would appear to be present, particularly in the novel's epilogue, (which is where they would be expected). Of the aforementioned symptoms of mental decline, loss of memory is clearly to be observed. Belyj states in simple terms: "Apollon Apollonovič was forgetting absolutely everything: the names of ordinary objects."⁴ Delusions of grandeur would also appear to be present: "...the old gentleman is penning his memoirs..." (292). While the senior Ableuxov was a senator of some importance, Belyj's irony leaves us in some doubt as to the suitability of an autobiography, indicating that Senator Ableuxov has an inflated sense of his own importance. An additional clue to Apollon Apollonovič's mental condition is given to us in Chapter One, where Belyj mentions that the Ableuxov house is "a yellow house" (9), the Russian colloquialism for an insane asylum. The expression is too popular to be overlooked and clearly must be an indication that one, or more, of the inhabitants of this house is of diminished mental capacity. It is very possible that the majority of patients in Russian "yellow houses" were, in fact, suffering from general paresis. To place these unfortunates in mental institutions was a common solution to an otherwise unsolvable problem, as no cure was available.⁵

And what of physical signs? Apollon Apollonovič had developed poor eyesight, "enormous spectacles had appeared on him..." (293). Ultimately, too, he lost the use of his legs: "His legs were wrapped in a lap robe (they were paralysed)" (293). Signs of physical failing are evident even earlier in the narrative. Several times he had attacks of angina, chest pain, and believed he was having a heart attack. Among other instances, he had such attacks in the carriage

upon catching sight of the stranger, at the party upon seeing the red domino and in his room after the bomb exploded (14, 123, 289). It is a major theme. Very frequently in syphilitic cases, aneurisms develop in the aorta.⁶ Apollon Apollonovič's doctors made such a diagnosis, an aneurism being "a dilatation of the aorta" (289).

In light of the above, it seems certain that Apollon Apollonovič did have tertiary syphilis. Indeed, his remark indicates that he was clearly expecting it, although he was not exhibiting all the symptoms at that time. He must have gone through the first two stages already. However, Belyj saw fit to keep his readers in the dark on this point. He does indubitably lead us to a diagnosis of *tabes dorsalis*, however, and therefore we must determine the ailment's significance in the novel.

Of the many levels of meaning which exist in *Petersburg*, one worth mentioning at this juncture is the identification of Apollon Apollonovič Ableuxov with Peter the Great and the tsarist bureaucracy. The parallel is clear. Peter laid out his great city in geometrically structured proportions. Apollon Apollonovič is obsessed with symmetry: "At times, for hours on end, he would lapse into an unthinking contemplation of pyramids, triangles, parallelepipeds, cubes and trapezoids" (11). When riding in his carriage, he sits high above the common people, watching them stream around him, much as Peter's statue in the square looks down on the populace beneath. "And high above those rails, as if/Of altitude and darkness blended,/There rode in bronze, one arm extended,/The Idol on its granite cliff."⁷ And, above all, the senator symbolizes the bureaucracy

set up by Peter the Great, being "head of a Government Institution" (5). It is this association of Ableuxov, father, with the paternalistic bureaucracy that provides us with a clue as to the meaning of the symbolism of *tabes dorsalis* in Belyj's novel.

Consider for a moment that syphilis, allowed to progress to its extreme, inevitably results in death. Belyj, then, may be warning that the death of the monarchy is at hand. This very message has been suggested before. Diana Festa-McCormick, in her book *The City as Catalyst: A Study of Ten Novels*, says: "Belyj unveils the symbolic meaning of his novel, which is nothing less than an appreciation of the city's impending doom, itself a forewarning of the collapse of Russia, condemned so that it may be born again."⁸

Given that Apollon Apollonovič represents the monarchy and the bureaucracy associated with it, and that syphilis symbolizes the decay of the monarchy, several very interesting parallels may be drawn between the respective symptoms of tsarism and disease. In the primary stages of syphilis, the victim suffers from painful sores and hardened lymph nodes. This stage could be considered to symbolize the "pains" the last czars experienced with the serfs after Alexander's II's emancipation in 1861. The peasantry displayed an increasing recalcitrant attitude toward the deprivation of their new-found privileges, assayed by Alexander III, son of the "tsar-liberator." This certainly must be considered the onset of the monarchy's final stage.⁹ It would have been virtually impossible at this point to restore serfdom, let alone return the lesser gentry and local administrative class to the relatively more oppressed condition in which they had been prior to 1861. The provincial gentry in

particular were enjoying greater autonomy in the newly organized local self-governing bodies known as zemstvos. The peasantry too had their representatives in the zemstvos, which paid attention to such basic needs as education, welfare and administration.¹⁰

Syphilis in its second stage finds its parallel in an incident closer to the events of the novel. The defeat of the Russians in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5) truly opened the eyes of the people to the shortcomings of their government. Corresponding to the widespread rash exhibited by one suffering from secondary syphilis is the widespread corruption that existed in the contemporary Russian government.¹¹ Stagnant canals, another symbol of corruption, lend added weight to the medical parallel.¹² Likewise widespread inefficiency and instability in several important areas of Russian life, neglected industrial development, shortages of land for the newly emancipated peasantry, incompleteness of political reform, in progress for more than forty years,¹³ can be likened to the partial collapse or disfunction of individual organs and tissues characteristic of this stage of syphilis.

Here we encounter an interesting dilemma in our parallel. The third stage of syphilis is as closely linked to the last year or so of the monarchy, as the previous stages have been to their correlated stages of history. The paralysis experienced by Apollon Apollonovič Ableuxov in his final years certainly mirrors the "paralysis" that possessed Tsar Nicholas II at the end of his reign. Before being forced to abdicate, the tsar was unable to stem the tide of revolution, virtually surrendering executive power to the tsarina and the Orthodox priest Rasputin.

Rasputin can surely serve as a parallel to the mental deterioration seen in the final stages of syphilis. Ultimate deterioration, needless to say, had the same consequence for both victims—death. However, these historical events occurred in 1917, three years after the novel was completed. Could Belyj have foreseen the horrors of revolution?

It may be that Belyj was gifted with prophetic insight. At one time in his life, the writer was certainly possessed by a prolonged interest in the occult and he was given to periods of meditation.¹⁴ It hardly required a soothsayer, however, to recognize a government in its death throes. At the time of the failed revolution of 1905, there had been constant strikes and protest marches. An unsuccessful revolution had at least brought about the revival of that elitist parliamentary body, the Duma. All the symptoms of a failing regime were present. Although Belyj largely revised and rewrote his novel in 1922, five years after the Bolshevik Revolution, the certainty of oncoming revolution is not attributable to hindsight. No mention of such cheating was found in any of the other studies of Belyj and his work examined by the author of this essay. The references to syphilis and its use as a symbol are so intertwined with the stuff of the novel, that they cannot be a post-revolutionary introduction.

Notes

¹*Cecil Textbook of Medicine*, Paul B. Beeson, Walsh McDermott, James B. Wyngaarten, eds. (London, 1979), p. 506.

²David L. Rosenhan & Martin E.P. Seligman, *Abnormal Psychology*, New York, (n.d.), p. 52.

³*Cecil Textbook of Medicine*, *Op. cit.*, p. 507.

⁴Andrei Bely, *Petersburg*, trans. Robert A. Maguire & John E. Malmstad (Bloomington, 1978), p. 293 (henceforth citations in the text will be followed by page number).

⁵*Cecil Textbook of Medicine*, *Op. cit.*, p. 506.

⁶A.D.T. Goran, P.S. MacFarlane, R. Callander, *Pathology Illustrated* (Edinburgh, 1986), p. 64.

⁷Alexander Puškin, "The Bronze Horseman," (own trans.), lines 396–399.

⁸Diana Festa-McCormick, *The City as Catalyst: A Study of Ten Novels* (New York, 1979), p. 115.

⁹Arthur E. Adams, ed., introduction to *Imperial Russia after 1861* (Boston, 1965), p. vii.

¹⁰George Fischer, "Before 1905: Oscillation between 'Small Deeds' and 'Senseless Dreams'," in *Imperial Russia after 1861*, *Ibid.*, p. 29.

¹¹*American Educator Encyclopedia*, Everett E. Sentman,

ed., Vol. XVII (Lake Bluff, 1971), p. R-274.

¹²Diana Festa-McCormick, *Op. cit.*, p. 115.

¹³Arthur E. Adams, *Op. cit.*, pp. x–xi.

¹⁴Magnus Ljunggren, *The Dream of Rebirth. A Study of Andrej Belyj's Novel Peterburg* (Stockholm, 1982), p. 55.

Peterburg in Moscow
Brett Cooke

Dramatizations of novels have long been a staple of the Soviet stage, no doubt thanks to the need of the country's many active professional theaters for new material. Beginning with the Taganka's staging of *The Master and the Margarita*, directors have looked more and more to prose works long unpublished in the USSR, hence, unperformed, especially now that *glasnost*' has eased the bounds of what was permitted. This past season of 1989-1990 witnessed the reappearance of Merežkovskij (*Pavel Pervyj*), Pasternak (*Doktor Živago*) and Nabokov (*Priglašenje na kazn'* and *Lolita*). Surely, it seemed, we would not have to wait long for Belyj to get his due.

Last June Moscow's Majakovskij Theater announced that they would stage *Peterburg* in the late winter of 1991. But it would not be the author's own dramatization, *Gibel' Senatora*, which the theater rejected as outdated; nor would it be based on Belyj's mutilated version which premiered under the direction of Mixail Čexov. Indeed, A. A. Gončarov, director of the Majakovskij Theater, rejected two other manuscripts before settling on one by S. Gessenix of Leningrad. Gončarov will direct the production himself. Although casting had not been set as of June, rehearsals were scheduled to begin in the fall of 1990.

Hopefully, this is but the beginning of Belyj's long overdue return to the Soviet stage; the last production of his work took place in 1925 with Čexov in the principal role of Senator Ableuxov. After 1928, the

year in which Čexov left Russia, *Peterburg* was removed from the repertoire of MXAT's Second Studio. Another recent development was the publication of Belyj's stage adaptation of *Moskva* in *Teatr* (No. 1, 1990); unfortunately, Mejerxol'd had never realized his ambition to stage Belyj's penultimate novel. Now one can now look forward to the staging of Belyj's early *plays*.

Л. Долгополов. Андрей Белый и его роман, "Петербург".
Ленинград, Советский писатель, 1988. 413 стр.

Andrej Belyj and His Novel "Petersburg", by L. Dolgoplov, breathes fresh air into our efforts to isolate and define the acknowledged greatness of Belyj's great work. With the confidence of a mature researcher who has scrupulously examined every published and archival source on the subject of Belyj's life and works, Dolgoplov draws some assuringly clear and distinct lines around *Petersburg* that describe its privileged place not only within Belyj's *oeuvre* but also vis-a-vis Russian Symbolism and more extensively, the Petersburg tradition.

In Dolgoplov's view, Belyj's novel brought the tradition of empirical realism in city literature to a close in order to open readers' eyes to the thoroughly new kind of realism that we now call Symbolism. Dolgoplov gives Belyj full and sole credit for pioneering Symbolism's founding world-view, but he is careful to distinguish Belyj's idea from that which became for some of his contemporaries a world conceived as divided between two separate and distinct, higher and lower realities. In Belyj's new *Petersburg* world, Dolgoplov hears no talk of hierarchy, sees no ladders of ascent, and sniffs out no paradigmatic relationships between body and soul. Rather, he says all is syntagma, linking the city's many and equally real manifestations of "быт" and "бытие" to the integrating powers of man's mind. Belyj thus extends the sweep of realism from the empirical to the elemental nature of man's being, and he equates man's element with the powers of both the

darkness and the light that were heretofore considered to lie beyond him. The life of man is now conceived as a continual accomodation of the dark achieved by ever bringing it to but never dispelling it from the light.

Dolgoplov roundly claims that with *Petersburg*, Belyj was the first literary artist to present the elucidation of the subconscious as the proper objective of artistic creation. Dolgoplov's particular interest in this innovation lies not in tracing its ramifications but rather in locating its roots in Belyj's enormous, lifetime endeavor to glean from world culture, past and present, the makings of a future, brighter world. Dolgoplov thus provides a full, contextual interpretation of the novel, and what is refreshing about his approach is the surety with which he separates the accomplishments of this one novel from the entirety of Belyj's artistic credo. Although Dolgoplov sees Belyj's equation of human history and self-awareness to have been born almost whole in his earliest writings, he sees Belyj's enterprise in *Petersburg* as limited to the depiction of but one historical moment, the moment in which man feels suffocated by the subconscious forces that have not yet been brought to conscious light. The transitory quality of this frightening moment is of utmost importance to Belyj's world view, but the possibility of a coming light is presented in *Petersburg* only marginally, according to Dolgoplov, because the dark moment was to pass only in the third, unwritten tome that was to make a trilogy of *Petersburg* and *The Silver Dove*. Thus, in Dolgoplov's reading, *Petersburg* is not at all about transcending the anguish and despair it so exquisitely depicts, but rather, it is about the nature of history (and thus the life of man) as not

merely transitory in and of itself, but in its essence, ultimately transitional.

One of the more intriguing moments in this reading of *Petersburg* is the one in which Dolgoplov isolates memory as the magic that brings unconscious knowledge to light. The art of reminiscence is the art that creates consciousness from the powers of the unconscious, and it is only man's largely unconscious memory of the time flowing outside historical time that can give history (and thus man's life in time) its elemental meaning and its ultimate measure. One almost expects that Dolgoplov will turn for more illumination here to Henri Bergson's *Matter and Memory*. For, it would seem that Belyj's notion of time outside time shares something with Bergson's conception of "duration;" Belyj's reliance upon intuition for access to that outer flow of time also has a Bergsonian cast even though, as Dolgoplov notes, the importance of intuition comes to Belyj by way of gnosiology. It turns out, however, that Dolgoplov's focus on memory is motivated in large measure by his intention to secure for *Petersburg* a coherent philosophy that is totally separate from all the mystical and dualistic philosophies in which Belyj was so fascinated. Dolgoplov's particular target is anthroposophy, and so, he indulges in a rather lengthy apologia for Belyj's attachment to Rudolf Steiner. In his unreserved rejection of Steiner's doctrines as keys to the novel, he insists, for example, that Steiner's belief in supersensory perception of disembodied spirits does not at all contaminate the rational underpinnings of perception as presented in *Petersburg*. In his effort to spare the novel anthroposophical interpretations, Dolgoplov claims that the phenomenological views of Kant and Schopenhauer have more to say about the

objective reality of *Petersburg's* hallucinatory world than do even any of Belyj's own experiments with anthroposophical meditations.

Dolgoplov takes this occasion also to forward his argument that the artistic subject matter offered in *Petersburg* is absolutely new. He involves himself thoroughly in explaining that Belyj's supremely rational orientation, which tempered his emotional need for the personal affections of Steiner with a sensitivity for universal concerns, is also that which moved the novel beyond both philosophical subjectivism and psychological analysis into the arena Dolgoplov calls *historiosophical*. The term *historiosophical* is used by Dolgoplov to emphasize the breadth of the concerns encompassed by Belyj's new way of writing Petersburg literature. It is this breadth, in fact, in which Dolgoplov finds Belyj's implicit rejection of the Petersburg tradition of the nineteenth century, and in this regard, the matter of memory surfaces again. For Dolgoplov finds that the Petersburg literature of Puskin and even Dostoevskij explored questions relating only to Russia's place within European history. For Belyj, on the other hand, the questions raised by the peculiarities of Peter's city are questions that have only tangentially to do with the historical fate of Russia. In the main, what Dolgoplov finds in Belyj's city is a conflict between Eastern and Western civilization on the grand scale. In exploring this world-historical conflict, Belyj does not merely "cite" or "refer" to the works of his predecessors, Dolgoplov says, but rather, he remembers them. Unfortunately, Dolgoplov does not elaborate on this potent idea, but it seems that Belyj's remembering consists in his listening to the subconscious echoes of those nineteenth century works

that reverberate as he reworks the grounds they marked out.

Although falling a bit short on the subject of memory, Dolgoplov's discussion of the Petersburg tradition does contain another one of the book's intriguing moments. For in this context, Dolgoplov reveals the distinction Belyj drew between civilization and culture in Europe. Civilization was the term Belyj applied to Europe's excessive interest in the forms of historical progress, finding this to be an excess of estheticism that allowed it to perfect material forms, while forgetting the spiritual progress they were to represent. Culture, on the other hand, is born, in Belyj's mind, of care for the abstract meanings that ever-perfect forms communicate. At the time he was writing *Petersburg*, Belyj found European culture to be alive only in Russia, while Europe itself had been totally numbed by civilization. Against this background of negatively and positively charged artistic forms, Dolgoplov cleverly elaborates upon the meanings communicated to the main representatives of the Petersburg tradition in literature by Falconet's monument to Peter I. He carefully holds up to the light each fragile yet distinct layer of the culture that produced the statue, the culture it was seen to represent, and the culture that it had retrospectively come to signify by the time *Petersburg* was written. Via this exposition, Dolgoplov is able to argue that the novel ultimately transforms the statue into an object as multidimensional and transitional as the novel claims all forms of life to be.

Dolgoplov's account of this suggestive process is clearly stated, carefully detailed, and as deftly nuanced as are the copious and complex ideas, facts,

formulations and interpretations that make up this book. By the masterful arrangement of his materials, Dolgoplov treats us to surprise after surprise that makes satisfying, good sense. Curiously enough, reading his book is much like reading Belyj's novel, where the challenge is to assimilate the unexpected to the narrative's rationale. In welcome contrast to Belyj's novel, Dolgoplov's book is clear-headed and straightforward, and it manages to delight us on purely analytical and rational terms. These, however, are the very qualities he finds in *Petersburg* that Dolgoplov admires most. To my mind, that makes his work a model of literary criticism -- one in which the scholar finds new means not only to explain but to achieve the author's familiar ends. My only complaint with *Andrej Belyj and His Novel "Petersburg"* is its somewhat limiting title. Although *Petersburg* does receive the lion's share of Dolgoplov's attentions, it is subordinated firmly to the context of Belyj's rich intellectual biography. Not a single major work of Belyj's from first to last, escapes a portion of Dolgoplov's insightful and enlightening commentary. The book therefore should appear on the reading lists of all of us interested in any aspect of Belyj's genius and in enjoying literary criticism at its best.

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L. Byckling and P. Pesonen, ed. *Studia Russica Helsingiensia et Tartuensia*. Проблемы истории русской литературы начала XX века. Slavica Helsingiensia, 6, 1989.

The present volume is a collection of articles based on papers given at a joint conference between Tartu State University and the University of Helsinki, held in June 1987 in Helsinki. Under the rubric "the beginning of the twentieth century" the book contains articles on Čexov, Severjanin, Tynjanov, Blok, and M. Čexov, in addition to the articles discussed below that are of more direct interest to Belyj scholars. The volume also contains two unrelated articles by Jurij Lotman, one on the concept of the "semiosphere," and one on the late works of Puškin.

The one article devoted entirely to Belyj is Pekka Pesonen's "Problematika komizma v *Peterburge* Andreja Belogo." The article is based on a chapter from his book *Vallankumouksen henki hengen vallankumouksessa. Tutkielma Andrei Belyin romaanista "Peterburg" ja sen aatetaustasta* (*The Spirit of Revolution in the Revolution of the Spirit. A Study of Andrei Bely's Novel "Peterburg" and Its Ideological Background*), which was reviewed by Gitta Hammarberg in the 1988 edition of the *Newsletter*.

Pesonen argues that Belyj uses comic devices to call into question historical, literary and philosophical absolutes, thus creating a battlefield where the old is torn down on the path toward a new synthesis. The resulting "novel as revolution" is an extension of Baxtin's concept of the novel as a genre that continually breaks down accepted norms and

hierarchical relations. Pesonen uses Baxtinian terminology throughout, and few would argue with his claim that such terms as "*bol'soj smex*," "*čužoe slovo*," "*karnaval*," etc., are "appropriate and illuminate much not only in the novel, but in all of Belyj's creative work." (165) He goes on to survey the comic devices Belyj uses (parody through quotation, stylization and use of literary stereotypes, Menippean satire, juxtaposition of coarse naturalism with religious/philosophical quests, carnival laughter) and to analyze the role of each in creating a "revolutionary novel."

Most of this is well-travelled ground, and Pesonen gives due credit to those who have gone before him, including, among others, Steinberg, Szilard, Woronzoff, Banjanin and Drozda. The result is rather puzzling, for one can't help but wonder what sort of an audience the author had in mind. I suspect the article makes a great deal more sense as a chapter in a book, where it follows a detailed and thorough analysis of many different aspects of the novel. As it stands, the article is at the very least a useful summary of the many guises of humor in the novel and the way in which comic elements contribute to the "revolutionary" nature of the work.

While Pesonen focuses on *Peterburg* and steers clear of the morass of Belyj's theoretical work (as he must in an article of limited scope), I must take issue with the sharp dichotomy he draws between the two. Pesonen is certainly correct in arguing that Belyj's use of parody, the grotesque and the "polyphonic word" in the novel not only undermines the world inhabited by its characters, but also thwarts any attempt to extract an absolute worldview. Yet to state, as Pesonen does

on two occasions, that such an approach is "antithetical" to Belyj's approach in his theoretical work is to ignore the tremendous complexity and many contradictions within that body of work. While Belyj did expound the magical, incantatory power of the "word as such," he was also fascinated by Humboldt's theory of language as "*energeia*," according to which potential meaning of a word or work of art is infinite and is recreated by the recipient with every communicative act. This aspect of Belyj's theoretical interests is clearly relevant to Pesonen's discussion of parody and intertextuality. If, on the other hand, one accepts Pesonen's claim that the "interpretation of the world and existence [in *Peterburg*] is absolutely antithetical to the worldview Belyj espouses in theory," (178) one is left to wonder how the novel can simultaneously be "the fullest embodiment of the author's ideas." (188)

Pekka Pesonen clearly has much to contribute to the world of *Belovedenie*, particularly on the subject of *Peterburg*. One hopes that his entire book will soon be translated into Russian or English, for this brief excerpt seems not to do justice to scholarship that Professor Hammarberg has called "extensive, impeccable and up-to-date."

Among the other articles in the collection of interest to Belyj specialists, particularly noteworthy is Natalia Baschmakoff's analysis of "optimal projection" in the aesthetics of the Russian avant-garde. "Optimal projection" is a term the author borrows from the Yugoslav scholar Aleksandr Flaker to refer to attempts by the Futurists, Symbolists, and others to overcome the boundary between the perceiving subject and the objective world by projecting perceived reality

into the realm of universal potentiality. The artist uses verbal or visual images as a "funnel from the manifest to the mysterious" (Grigor'ev), that is, as a means of overcoming laws of time, space and causality in order to reconcile the "*ja*" and the "*ne-ja*" in the context of the larger world-text. The world thus created, according to Baschmakoff, is the "world of the projection of the word into infinity." (45) While Belyj's name comes up only in passing--the author focuses mainly on Xlebnikov, drawing some interesting parallels with drawings and paintings by Filonov and D. Burljuk--Belovedy will recognize many tenets of his Symbolist theory cast in a new and illuminating theoretical framework.

Belyj also comes up in P. Torop's article "*Problema perevodimosti poëzii russkix simvolistov*." Torop argues that translators in general, and Estonian translators in particular, have failed to take into account Russian Symbolist poets' self-conscious attitude toward their work as a whole. The Symbolists generally saw each individual lyric poem as a part of a larger organically interconnected text--Belyj's "*roman v stixax*," the content of which was nothing less than his "*iskanie pravdy*." It is therefore incumbent on the translator to be mindful of a given poet's entire creative output when making decisions, both about word choice in a single poem, and about choice of poems in a translated collection.

Also of interest to Belyj scholars will be Ben Hellman's article on the Neoslavophilism of Ern, Rozanov, Bulgakov, V.I. Ivanov, Berdjajev, Frank and Geršenzon around the time of the first World War.

The organizers of the conference and the editors of

this volume are to be commended for their groundbreaking efforts. I can only heartily second the hope expressed by the authors in the preface that this will be the first in a series of collaborative projects between the two universities.

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Andrej Belyj: A Bibliography 1989–1990
Compiled by Julian Graffy

(Some materials from 1989 were included in last year's bibliography. Some materials from before 1989 have only recently come to my notice and are included here.)

I. Primary Material: Recent Publications and Reprints

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"Avtobiografija Andreja Belogo" [1932], pp. 430–35 of Kopper, section IV.

"Iz junošeskoj prozy: Rasskaz No. 1," intro. and notes A.V. Lavrov, *Naše nasledie*, 5, 1990, pp. 87–90 (pub. of a story written in Oct. 1901).

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"Kak my pišem..., " in *Kak my pišem* (Moscow: Kniga, 1989), pp. 8–20. (Rep. of 1930 ed.).

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"Moskva. Drama v pjati aktax, semnadcati kartinax," *Teatr*, 1, 1990, pp. 160–92.

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(Moscow: Xudožestvennaja literatura, 1990), 687 pp. (Contains *Načalo veka*, pp. 7–526; Priloženie: 'Vmesto predislovija,' pp. 527–28, 'Vvedenie,' pp. 529–52 [these two texts pub. for the first time]; notes by A.V. Lavrov, pp. 553–684.

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"Očerki," *Naše nasledie*, 5, 1990, pp. 78–86. (Consists of 'Vladimir Solov'ev. Iz vospominanij,' first pub. in *Russkoe slovo*, 2 December 1907; 'Vjačeslav Ivanov. Siluët,' first pub. in *Utro Rossi*, 2 October 1910; and intro. and notes by V. Nexotin).

"O xudožestvennoj proze," *Russkaja reč'*, 5, 1990, pp. 43–59 (first appeared in *Gorn*, book II–III, 1919, pp. 49–55).

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