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SPECIAL ISSUE
Andrzej Belyj – On the Occasion of His 125th Birthday

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(Continued on back cover)
RUSSIA’S ODD COUPLE: ANDREI BELYJ AND ALEKSEJ REMIZOV

THOMAS R. BEYER

It is Érenburg 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 predstaviti’ istoriju russkoj proxy” (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. Eto 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 – самопел. У Ремизова оно живое... (1923: 9)
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. 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.

Алексей Михайлович Ремизов (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 Nikolaevich 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 1947. Remizov would complain of difficulties in publishing his works in his early career. Belyj had ready access to the Symbolist journals Zoologo releasing and Pes, 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 Moscovites 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 (Граевщ 2000: 8-28). It seems unlikely that their paths crossed in their student years in spite of Remizov’s hint to the contrary. 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 (Лавров 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 M. Moldavov, Plavuš devaški pered zamadestvom. 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 Simfoniya (2-ja dramaticheskaia) 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 štati (Граевщ 2000: 16). In December 1905 Belyj traveled to St. Petersburg and stayed with the Merežkovskij 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. Remizov dates the meeting precisely as December 3, 1905 (2000-2003, VII: 56). Belyj describes the first meeting with Remizov at the home of the Merežkovskij:
рокой, светлолицой, голубоглазой и гладкою, дама с головой, показавшейся очень огромной, с глазами тоже огромными; и тут же поняла: она не стигла, — сидела на диване; а когда встала, то оказалась очень высокой, а не довольно высокой, и только довольно широкой; а не очень широкой; это была Серафина Павловна Ремизова, супруга писателя.

Рядом с ней сидел ее муж с короткими ножками, одна доящая до пола, с толстым ребенком в коричневом пиджаке, пореходнем огромной сутюжкой, с которой стоял темный плед; огромная в спину вдавленная голова, прижатая подбородком к краю, и головка собой слабой обл, гладящей мерцанием, да он ужасно вставшие косы; смотря под ним придано-нечто овальное было то самое выражение ужаса, если бы не глазки; выскочив над очком он ужасал; наскоков был приветствия; пришлились губки под попую вечными визами туфель; бородка — кивикушом; щеки — как бы; обдувавший турецкий, неделя торговец коров, явившийся из песков Гоби шаманствовать по кварталь, — вот первое впечатление.

Гиппокуску рукою с лорнеткою соединила нас в воздухе: — Бора, — Алексей Михайлович! Алексей Михайлович, — Бора! Ремизов встал с дивана и, приговаривая, засеменил на меня; он выставил руку, совсем неожиданно сел за козу из пальцы.

— А вот она — коза, коза! Но, подойдя, он серьезно и строго мне подал холодную лапку: — Алексей Ремизов.

И вот на холщиках, под подбородком, высунул очком:

— Я-то уже вот как вас знаю.

С тех пор автор романа Пуэ высунуть мне из-за каждой спинки каждого посетителя журиковников Розанова, Вержнева, Вячеслава Иванова; вот и Вержнев, соскабливая тихо, обрывает речь и жидко хватает воздух дрожащими пальцами; Ремизов, выступающий из-за него, — мне блестят очком; и делает “козу”, а вот он, — огуленный, маленький, — в том счастье с пчела пледом (ему ходячно), выбравший жертвой везикулового Вячеслава Иванова — таскается за янковской флиповой; куда то-, туда этот; пальцем показывает на фазлу:

— У Вячеслава Иваныча — нос в табаке... У Вячеслава Иваныча — нос в табаке...

Это тонкий намек на какое-то “толстое” обстоятельство: эквили;

смешанный взгляд, вязающего на себя в этом обществе роль Эвгена, — всегда не случайный: не то — безобидный, не то — очень зла, он сам не то — ладный, не то — злой; не то — прост, не то — хитрый “бестия” он ко мне приглашает; и я жалуюсь на него Гиппокус.

— Так — меня успокаивает.

— Что вы, Бора? Алексей-то Михайлович? Да это — умный, честный человек, серьезный человек, видащий нас всякий раз, когда он “городит” — так из ума, Что вынес он в заточенье? К нему приезжает садист жандарм, за что-то взбесившийся; он насильно наказывает Ремизова на камнях, заставляя бегать по городу, а товарищ по заключению удивлялся:

“Ремизов на свободе!” Жандарм даже таскал его насильно с собою в театр, и через весь город он выезжал ему знаком внимания; все для того, чтоб пройти слух: Ремизов — провокатор... А — тяжелое детство, — вечная пищета эта! Тень пережитого — в больной коробочке; это — маска боли его.

Еще больше узнан был писатель, первые же строки которого встретил со страхом, что о его оценках и человеческих полобиях весь разнесется по весть, а если и подоба на этих страницах шары, — в этом понимании могут твориться воспоминания и там, где мы встретимся...

(1900 гг: 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.4

Remizov’s own version of their first meeting at the Merezhkovskijs comes in his Kukcha: Rozanov pís’ma. The entry for December 3, 1905 reads:


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

4.12 Именны Варвары Дмитриевны Розановой. Сют, письмо и нос в табаке! — вот как выглядел. Выдумал я нос табаком Вя. Иванову. А после ужина переверну с помощью именинницы в молитву с Н. А. Бердевым. Бердев ничего, только каштурсал, а Андрей Белый от неожиданности физиономии прозрел. (VII: 56)

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

7.12. 1905. У Вяч. Иванова: Андрей Белый, Блок, Габриэлион, Стенбек, В. П. Веобразов. А. Белый изумительно читает стихи. Он не говорит, а поет — до самых до высоких вос: пришел, пришел из дала его и Женевы...

(Должно быть, это про А. Г. Бердевщена! [sic] — моя догадка) (57)

Belyj has a somewhat more detailed and less flattering picture of Remizov at the Rozanovs.
Ne забуду воскресений этих, позднее на них пришлось быть. Впервые я к писателю Ремизову; он сидел, такую замечательную, самую голову огромной улыбки под ей, и лицо очаровано был, от окошекики, наложенной на сладкую бокал; там же, за кранами, скучившиеся под кружкой, он мне подмигнул очень строго, и мне показалось, что он испускал: сапун, вино, окошечки у всех под мантелити; послеш пришествовать к Евгению Ивановичу.

— У Вячеслава Иваныча — яс в табаке! — и весь вечер, сутенерский, мазливый, странный таскался за В. И. Ивановым, вдруг, подскочив к кухне, в которой мазливый Бердев сидел, он стремительно, явно-шапокнопинным движением переплел вниз кухню; все, всюду, всюду; Бердев, накрытый коконом, представлял нам в ужасном виде: там, где сапоги, там, где голова, как сапоги, как голова, на сапогах, и назвался, только не Розанов, сдающий нутбез, невозможно ползись с кем-то. (1900a: 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 P rud after reading the publication in Vosprosy Zenni.

Ромни не оставил равнодушным и Андрея Белого, сообщавшего в письме Ремизову от 10 января 1906 г. о "Прод" зачтено неплохо, но, где обложка, очень близко. Простите за прежнее невнимательное отношение: местами сильно проникнуты, но случается, насколько можно выразить, как будто ничего хорошего о Проде.

In fact, Belyj was less kind in his actual review of the book version of P rud in Vesny, 1907, № 12, 54-56 (also in 1911: 475-477; Lavrov 1968: 464):

Белый, кстати, не менее выразил своё неприятие резюмированных стилевых и композиционных новаций: "Не нравится Прод [...]. Проталкинавая, путающая."

(1911: 475-476; in Remizov 2000-2003, 1: 531)

Remizov himself recalls:

Иванов Разумник в Петербурге, а Андрей Белый — в Москве, по-разному, но оба возмутились... (1985: 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—fendship. Remizov often felt left out among the big names of Russian literature.


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 (1900b: 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 phallic were recurring themes in many of Remizov's works — appreciated by some for the inside 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 Obzrevatel. His certificate is dated January 24, 1917: "Obzrevatelni znak poveren stepeni s chvostom — za preterzenie ratnec, za stichy, eche no pochitennye" (Obatina 2001: no page).

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.

Nothing, however, had prepared the two for their brief but intense contact over two years in Berlin. Given the significant topic of two of the most widely published and prolific writers in that period, what is striking is the lack of my 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, <i>Aehut</i>. 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 Lunacharskij. 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; 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 died. 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 перешли русскую границу
“и еще огонек погас на русской земле.”

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: “пришали сюда, я и моя жена, проси о ден’гах, чтоб там побыть.” 17

Remizov’s arrival in Berlin was recorded along with that of others in an announcement in <i>Golos Rosii</i> (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 <i>Voskrese’n’e: Etenedel’nyj organ bespartijnych russkich v Germanii</i>.

По слухам, в Гроневальде состоялась дуэль на старинных пистолетах между А. Дроховым и И. Соколовым-Минковым. Дуэльцы обменялись выстрелами в воздух. После дуэли произошло трагическое примирение противников.

"Литературный кружок"

В среду 26 октября в квартире известной в немецком артистическом кругу 1-ой Лымпих состоялся первый организационный чай кружка русских литераторов.

В кабинете за круглым столом: – только что приехавший из Ростовы, как всегда душа общества, А. М. Ремизов, рядом с ним известный поэт Минков, З. Венцерова, молодая артистка Земляцкая, Ал. Дрохов, И. С. Соколов-Минков, А. Вольский, П. Жакмон, Ф. Иванов и Р. Гуль. За чаем, который, под улыбки собравшихся, был вновь на стане А. М. Ремизовым, обсуждались будущая работа кружка. Иногда обсуждение довольно перерывалось рассказами А. М. Ремизова о жизни литераторов в Петербурге, о их встречах...

Образовавшийся кружок превращается в непризнанный, художественно-литературные вечера предпочитают устраивать и небольшие открытия 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 руководстве русского писателя, в атмосфере товарищеской неприимчивости и подлинного искусства [etc]. (№ 3, 30.X.1921, 3).

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 <i>Spolochi</i> which was available in November. The newspaper <i>Rul</i> 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: “Нет России у Достоевского и нет Достоевского в России” (<i>Rul</i>, № 313, 27.XI.1921, 4). The same issue described now attempts by “Русский общественный комитет помощи голодающим” 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. 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 his emigration to 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 Berlinie; Golos Rossi, No 822, 24.XII.1921, 3). A week later on November 29 Remizov was elected vice-president and a board of directors which included Belyj was chosen (Golos Rossi, No 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’f’ila” (“Vol’naja Filosofskaja Asotsiatsia”) in Berlin. Lev Sestrov 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 Ehrenburg (Golos Rossi, No 831, 4.XII.1921, 1 and Rul’, No 318, 3.XII.1921, 4).

At the regular weekly meeting of the House of the Arts on December 3, Belyj read from Époques and Remizov read one of his tales (Golos Rossi, No 834, 8.XII.1921, 3). On December 5, there was a meeting of “Vol’f’ila” to elect new members and a number of open “Vol’f’ila” meetings was also announced. On December 10 the House of the Arts held its regular Saturday meeting with readings scheduled by A. Tolstoy and Remizov. On Monday, December 12, there was a closed meeting of “Vol’f’ila.” On December 14, Belyj finally delivered his earlier promised lecture “Sosverennaja kul’tura v Rossi.”

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 песенную смесь противоречий и крайностей [...] красота переплетается с безобразием, головные уборы с конкретными достижениями в области искусства, забота о куске хлеба, одежде, дровах переплетаются 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 “emigriruvali v abstraktnyu sfere bezizinenzechnykh principov, v vosponsomnija o proilom”. 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 Tolstoy were featured at an evening organized by the Russian Social Committee to Aid Writers (Golos Rossi, No 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 vvidanie”, and Remizov read from his Tibetan tales, Zajatnye skazki (Golos Rossi, No 852, 30.XII.1921, 3). On the 26th Belyj was scheduled to deliver the “Vol’f’ila” lecture “Vetchi i Novy Zavet” (Golos Rossi, No 856, 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 by newspaper and journal entries of the time (see Beyer 1987). Even more important was Remizov’s active role in producing the Bulletin of the House of the Arts (Bulletini Doma iskusstv). 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 “Epocha”. 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’f’ila” 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.

The Bulletins also served as one of the major outlets for Remizov’s literary hoaxes. 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’f’ila” 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 'Tumbras', which follows, the wandering minstrel-crowns ("skomorochi") appear, in a sense a self-justification of the role that Remizov assumed both in Russian Berlin and in the Bulletin. Reproduced here is a description of the Great and Free Chamber of Simians (Obezvelovolp) along with its Manifest. The caricature of Remizov is attributed to Vasilij Masjutin, and here we can see the seal of the "koza rogataja" (30-32).  

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, Sunski-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'sevizm" in the spring of 1922. 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.  

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.

The original of the self portrait framed and embellished by Remizov can be found in the Fritz Lieb archive. 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.
This second issue of the *Bulletin* was the final one, and would become a bibliographic rarity. Roman Oul'c 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 Bacharac 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* 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 Rossiї*, No. 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 Tolstoy after which Belyj thanked the writer (in German) for his help. As the second half of his performance Mann read from his *Das Eisenbahnunglück*. 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. 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 Cуда" (Koreckaja 1968). On September 30 messages and flowers were presented to Gor'kij by a delegation which included Belyj as the representative from "Vol'fïa". On October 1 a special meeting in honor of Gor'kij at the Café León replaced the customary program at the House of the Arts. Belyj was one of the speakers (*Nakanune*, No. 149, 3.X.1922, 5). On October 13, Ju. Aichenwal'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*, No 159, 12.X.1922, 5). The election of new officers scheduled for the House of the
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 (Dnia 17, Nov. 17, 1922, 6). 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 had mutual friends and acquaintances among the community of Russian writers: Erenburg, Sklovskij, Pasternak, Chodasevič, Bajchenko, and Vera Lur’e, the young poetess from Petrograd. They attended series of weekly meetings and special events. They published in the same Russian daily newspapers Golos Rossii, Dni, the journals Vereteno, Veretenyj, Spolochi, Epopeja, Bjuleteni 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 in 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.

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Art 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, Miasnik, Erenburg, Tolstoi, Šklovskij, Chodasevič and the painter Ivan Puni (Nakanune, № 176, 3.XI.1922, 5). Belyj’s reign would be short-lived: a lovely caricature in Veretenyj (III, Nov. 1922, 15) would capture the wildly gesticulating contortionist presiding over his single meeting.

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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 1967: 27-32). The major controversy which erupted was followed by a request that Aleksey Tolstoi 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 pisateľ”) 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.
Neither Belyy 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 Parizhe [Remizov] byl domoscom, 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 boxes: Belyj’s fictitious interviews for the Bulletin of the House of the Arts, ‘Zwövierson’, the green scarf affair. That proximity and familiarity never seemed to become troublesome, although there is Remizov’s comment to Kondratjukskaja 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. Erenburg concludes:

Andrey Beljy vitat in nebeskit, ne mog prozhit i deny bez filosofskej obobshchenij, mnoho edin po svetu, vostorgalas,
Andrey Beliy and Aleksey Remizov

1 My colleague, Tat'jana Smorodinskaja, pointed out the old Russian saying: "Сыр, т'ран j и нос в табаке!", значит u nego vse othlénno v èizmi." At the end of Kakhov in the passage 'Poslednee', Remizov recalls a different house of Rozanov's:

Только в этом доме, где когда-то "семейно" и шумно (караула с Верещагиным, физик Андрея Белого) праздновались именины Варвары Дмитриевны. (2000-2003, VII: 127)

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


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

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

The Simian Chamber has been the subject of a number of articles, most summarized and superseded with summaries in Oblatina's recent book.

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

Personal archive of Iegor Remizoff: 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 Gumilef'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.

Burchard quotes a letter from Remizov dated September 20, 1921 and uses a letter from 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.

"Ни беседы с А. М. Ремизовым..." Неоспорим дейсі таура надай прихіл сюди А. М. Ремизов і була радівою відвід кіл як руської еміграції, так и латышським і німецьким прадіячними печатн." (Rud', № 262, 27.IX.1921, 2)