**BRIUSOV, VALERY (БРЮСОВ, ВАЛЕРИЙ) (1873-1924)**

Valery Briusov was a multitalented poet, critic, and prose-writer who took a leading role in the creation of Russia’s Symbolist movement at the turn of the twentieth century. As editor of the journal *Vesy* (The Scales), Briusov introduced the Russian reading public to works of Western European modernism and provided a forum for a newly emerging generation of stellar Russian poets. Briusov accepted the Bolshevik takeover in 1917 and went to work for the new regime, but died disillusioned in 1924.

**Timeline of Life:**

1873: born in Moscow

1897: marries Ioanna Matveevna Runt

1899: graduates from Moscow University

1904: becomes editor of journal *Vesy* (The Scales)

1904: begins affair with poet Nina Petrovskaia

1909: leaves Vesy

1910: takes up editorship at journal *Russkaia Mysl’* (Russian Thought)

1914: becomes a war correspondent when World War I breaks out

1917: accepts Bolshevik takeover, goes to work for new regime

1920: becomes a Communist

1924: dies in Moscow

**Timeline of Best-Known Works Published During Lifetime:**

1894: *Russkie simvolisty* (Russian Symbolists), a poetry collection written largely by Briusov under several pseudonyms, is published

1894-1895: Two more collections titled *Russkie simvolisty* are published

1895: poetry collection titled *Chefs d’oeuvres* is published

1897: poetry collection titled *Me eum esse* (It is I) is published

1900: poetry collection titled *Tertia Vigilia* (Third Watch) is published

1903: poetry collection titled *Urbi et orbi* (To the City and the World) is published

1906: poetry collection titled *Stephanos* (Wreath) is published

1907: novel titled *Ognennyi angel’* (The Fiery Angel) is published

1907: collection of prose fiction titled *Zemnaia os’* (The Earth’s Axis) is published

1916: poetry collection titled *Sem’ tsvetov radugi. Stikhi 1912-1915 gg.* (Seven Colors of the Rainbow. Verses from 1912-1915) is published

1916: *Poeziia Armenii s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei* (The Poetry of Armenia from Ancient Times to the Present), edited and annotated by Briusov, is published

1922: poetry collection titled *Mig. Stikhi 1920-1921* (A Moment. Poems 1920-1921) is published

Valery Briusov was born on 1 (13) December 1873 in Moscow. He read widely from a young age and as a university student began translating French Symbolist poetry. He also took his first steps toward establishing Russian Symbolism with the publication in 1894 of *Russkie simvolisty* (Russian Symbolists), a collection of poems he wrote with one friend under several pseudonyms to create the impression of a multi-person movement; two further such collections, all poorly reviewed, followed. Undeterred, in 1895 and 1897 respectively Briusov published two books of verse titled *Chefs d’oeuvres* and *Me eum esse* (It is I), the latter Latin title reflecting Briusov’s enduring interest in ancient Rome. Also in 1897, Briusov married Ioanna Matveevna Runt, a governess in the Briusov household.

Photograph of Briusov,

1910.

Briusov was involved from the start in the Skorpion (Scorpion) Publishing House, founded in 1899 specifically to publish examples of the new art of the day. In 1900, Skorpion published Briusov’s next book of verse, *Tertia Vigilia* (Third Watch), which brought Briusov the literary acclaim he craved. Another much-lauded volume of verse, *Urbi et orbi* (To the City and the World), appeared in 1903. In 1904 Skorpion founded the journal *Vesy* (The Scales), and Briusov became its powerful editor. His 1906 volume *Stephanos*, often considered his best work, included poems on Russia’s demoralizing loss of the Russo-Japanese War, the revolution of 1905, and Briusov’s romance with the minor poet Nina Petrovskaia. In 1907 Briusov turned to prose, with the novel *Ognennyi angel’* (The Fiery Angel), a tale of a love triangle in sixteenth-century Germany; Sergei Prokof’ev wrote an opera based on it.

Rejecting the mystical bent of many of his fellow-Symbolists, Briusov left *Vesy* in 1909 and took up the editorship of *Russkaia mysl’* (Russian Thought), where he worked from 1910 to 1912.

When World War I broke out in 1914, Briusov chose to go to the front as a war correspondent, an experience reflected in his poetry of the period. Also at this time, Briusov embarked on a new project: in 1915, he began editing a collection of Armenian poetry, translated into Russian. Briusov’s translations include in addition the works of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Oscar Wilde, Paul Verlaine, and a number of Roman authors.

Briusov welcomed the February and October Revolutions and shocked many of his erstwhile Symbolist colleagues by working for the Bolsheviks’ Soviet regime and becoming a Communist. His last poetry collections addressed the revolution and its aftermath, with which Briusov became increasingly disenchanted. Briusov died on 9 October 1924.

Portrait of Briusov by Mikhail

Vrubel, 1906.

**References and Further Reading:**

Leading book-length English-language studies of Briusov:

Joan Delaney Grossman, *Valery Bryusov and the Riddle of Russian Decadence* (Berkeley: University California Press, 1985). This is an excellent and accessible introduction to Briusov's early career and the development of the Russian Symbolist movement under his leadership.

Martin Rice, *Valery Bryusov and the Rise of Russian Symbolism* (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1975). This first, much-needed English-language book dedicated to Briusov's work provides valuable insight into Briusov's literary and theoretical views and their development, particularly in the context of Western European literature.

**Chronology of Works:**

Poetry Collections:

*Russkie simvolisty. I. Valerii Briusov i A. L. Miropol’sky* (Russian Symbolists. I. Valerii Briusov and A. L. Miropol’skii) (1894);

*Russkie simvolisty. 2. Stikhotvoreniia Darova, Bronina, Martova, Miropol’skogo, Novicha i dr.,* (Russian Symbolists. 2. The Poems of Darov, Bronin, Martov, Miropol’skii, Novich, and others), with an introductory essay by Valerii Briusov and a foreword by publisher, as Maslov (1894);

*Russkie simvolisty. Leto 1895. [III]* (Russian Symbolists. Summer 1895. [III]) (1895);

*Chefs d’oeuvre. Sbornik stikhotvorenii (Osen’ 1894 - vesna 1895)*. (Masterpieces. Collected poems (Fall 1894-Spring 1895)) (1895);

*Me eum esse. Novaia kniga stikhov* (It is I. New Book of Verse) (1897);

*Tertia Vigilia. Kniga novykh stikhov. 1897-1900.* (Third Watch. A Book of New Poems. 1897-1900) (1900);

*Urbi et Orbi. Stikhi 1900-1903 g.* (To the City and the World. Poems 1900-1903) (1903);

*Stephanos. Venok. Stikhi 1903-1905 goda.* (Wreath. Poems 1903-1905) (1906);

*Vse napevy* (All Melodies), in: *Puti i pereput’ia. Sobranie stikhov* (Paths and Crossroads. Collected Verse), Vol. III (1909);

*Zerkalo tenei. Stikhi. 1909-1912.* (Mirror of Shades. Poems. 1909-1912) (1912);

*Izbrannye stikhi (1897-1915)* (Selected Verse. 1897-1915) (1915);

*Sem’ tsvetov radugi. Stikhi 1912-1915 goda.* (Seven Colors of the Rainbow. Poems 1912-1915) (1916);

*Opyty po metrike i ritmike, po evfonii i sozvuchiiam, po strofike i formam. Stikhi 1912-1918 g.* (Experiments in Metrics and Rhythmics, Euphony and Harmonies, Strophes and Forms. Poems 1912-1918) (1918);

*Poslednie mechty. Lirika 1917-1919.* (Last Dreams. Poems 1917-1919) (1920);

*V takie dni. Stikhi 1919-1920* (In Such Days. Poems 1919-1920) (1921);

*Mig. Stikhi 1920-1921 gg.* (An Instant. Poems 1920-1921) (1922);

*Dali. Stikhi 1922 goda.* (Distances. Poems from 1922) (1922);

*Krugozor. Izbrannye stikhi 1893-1922.* (Horizon. Selected Poems 1893-1922) (1922);

*Mea. Sobranie stikhov. 1922-1924.* (Mine. Collected Verse. 1922-1924) (1924);

*Venok sonetov*. (Wreath of Sonnets) (1925);

*Neizdannye stikhi. 1914-1922.* (Unpublished Poems. 1914-1922) (1928);

*Neizdannye stikhotvoreniia* (Unpublished Poems) (1935).

Novels:

*Ognennyi angel. Povest’ XVI veka.* (The Fiery Angel. A Tale of the Sixteenth Century.) (1908) (trans. by Ivor Montagu and Sergei Nalbandov as *The Fiery Angel: A Sixteenth Century Romance* (London: Humphrey Toulmin, 1930; Westport, Connecticut: Hyperion Press, 1977; Daedalus European Classics, 2005));

*Altar’ pobedy. Povest’ IV veka* (The Altar of Victory. A Tale of the Fourth Century) (1913).

Short story collections:

*Zemnaia os’. Rasskazy i dramaticheskie stseny* (The Earth’s Axis. Stories and Dramatic Scenes) (1907);

*Nochi i dni. Vtoraia kniga rasskazov i dramaticheskikh stsen. 1908-1912.*(Nights and Days. Second Book of Stories and Dramatic Scenes) (1913);

*Obruchenie Dashi* (Dasha’s Betrothal) (1915);

*Reia Sil’viia. Povest’ iz zhizni VI veka. - Eluli, syn Eluli. (Rasskaz o drevnem finikiitse).* (Rhea Sylvia. A Tale of Life in the Fourth Century. Eluli, Son of Eluli. A Tale of an Ancient Phoenician) (1916);

*Neizdannaia proza. Iupiter poverzhennyi i fragmenty drugikh istoricheskikh rasskazov.* (Unpublished Prose. Jupiter Overthrown and Fragments of Other Historical Stories), Ed. I. M. Briusova (1934).

Edition in English:

*The Republic of the Southern Cross and other stories by Valery Brussof*, with an introductory essay by Stephen Graham (1918) (contains stories from *Zemnaia os’*, *Nochi i dni*, and *Reia Sil’viia*).

Plays:

*Zemlia. Tragediia iz budushchikh vremen* (Earth. Tragedy from the Future) (1905);

*Putnik (Psikhodrama)* (The Wayfarer. A Psychodrama) (1911);

*Protesilai umershii* (Protesilaus Deceased) (1913);

*Dachnye strasti* (Summer Passions) (1939);

*Mir semi pokolenii* (The World of Seven Generations) (1973);

*Diktator* (The Dictator) (1986).

Scholarship and Criticism:

*O iskusstve* (About Art) (1899);

*Ispepelennyi. K kharakteristike Gogolia.* (Reduced to Ashes. Towards a Description of Gogol) (1910);

*Velikii ritor: Zhizn’ i sochineniia Detsima Magna Avsoniia* (The Great Rhetorician. The Life and Works of Decimus Magnus Ausonius) (1911);

*Dalekie i blizkie. Stat’i i zametki o russkikh poetakh ot Tiutcheva do nashikh dnei* (Distant and Nearby. Articles and Notes on Russian Poets from Tiutchev to the Present) (1912);

*Za moim oknom* (Beyond My Window) (1913);

*Kratkii kurs nauki o stikhe* (A Short Course of Scholarship on Poetry) (1919);

*Osnovy stikhovedeniia* (The Basics of Prosody) (1924);

*Sintetika poezii, Problemy poetiki* (The Synthetics of Poetry, Problems of Poetics) (1925).

Edited Volumes:

*Agrippa Nettesgeimskii. Kritiko-biograficheskii ocherk Zhozefa Orsye* (Agrippa Nettesheim. A Critical-Biographical Sketch byJoseph Orsier), edited, with an introductory essay and an afterword by Briusov (Moscow, 1913);

Karolina Pavlova, *Sobranie sochinenii* (Collected Works), 2 vols., edited, with biographical essay by Briusov (Moscow, 1915);

*Poeziia Armenii s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei* (The Poetry of Armenia from Ancient Times to the Present, edited, with an introductory essay and annotations by Briusov (Moscow, 1916);

*Sbornik latyshskoi literatury* (A Collection of Latvian Literature), edited by Briusov and Maksim Gor’kii (Moscow, 1916);

*Sbornik finliandskoi literatury* (A Collection of Finnish Literature), edited by Briusov and Gor’kii (Moscow, 1917);

Pushkin, *Gavriiliada. Polnyi tekst* (Gavriliada. Complete Text), with an introductory essay and annotations by Briusov (Moscow, 1917);

Pushkin, A. S. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Complete Collected Works), edited, with introductory essays and annotations by Briusov (Moscow, 1920);

*Problemy poetiki* (Problems of Poetics), edited by Briusov (Moscow-Leningrad, 1925);

Autobiographical Writings and Diaries:

“Avtobiografiia” (Autobiography),in *Russkaia literatura XX veka* (Russian Literature of the Twentieth Century), ed. S. A. Vengerov, vol. 1 (1914);

*Iz moei zhizni. Moia iunost’. Pamiati* (From My Life. My Youth. Memories) (1927);

*Dnevniki: 1891-1910* (Diaries: 1891-1910), ed. I. M. Briusova, N. S. Ashukin(1927) (trans. as *The Diary of Valery Bryusov, 1893-1905*, with reminiscences by V. F. Khodasevish and Marina Tsvetaeva, ed., trans. and with an introductory essay by Joan Delaney Grossman (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980));

Selected Translations:

*Romansy bez slov*, by P. Verlen (*Romances sans paroles*, by Paul Verlaine) (1894);

*Izbienie mladentsev*, by M. Meterlink (*Le Massacre des innocents*, by Maurice Maeterlinck) (1904);

*Stikhi o sovremennosti*, by E. Verkharn (Contemporary Poems, by Emil Verhaeren) (1906);

*Pelleas i Melizanda*, by M. Meterlink (*Pelléas et Mélisande*, by Maurice Maeterlinck)(1907);

*Francesca da-Rimini*, by G. D’Annuntsio (*Francesca da Rimini*, by Gabriele d’Annunzio), translated with V. Ivanov (1908);

*Tsvety zla*, by Sh. Bodler (*Les Fleurs du Mal*, by Charles Baudelaire) (1908);

*Elena Spartanskaia. Tragediia*, by E. Verkharn (*Hélène de Sparte*, by Emil Verhaeren) (1909);

*Frantsuzskie liriki XIX veka* (French Lyric Poets of the Nineteenth Century) (1909);

O. Wilde, *Gertsoginia Paduanskaia*, by O. Uail’d (*The Duchess of Padua*, by Oscar Wilde) (1911);

*Sobranie stikhov*, by P. Verlen (Collected Poems, by Paul Verlaine) (1911);

*Stikhotvoreniia*, by D. Avsonii (Poems, by Decimus Magnus Ausonius) (1911);

Amfitrion, by Mol’er (Amphitryon, by Molière) (1913);

*Frantsuzskie liriki XVIII veka* (French Lyric Poets of the Eighteenth Century) (1914);

*Ballada Redingskoi tiur’my*, by O. Uail’d (*The Ballad of Reading Gaol*, by Oscar Wilde) (1915);

*Sobranie stikhov*, by E. Verkharn (Collected Poems, by Emil Verhaeren) (1915);

*Erotopaegnia* (*Erotopaegnia: Verses of Roman Poets*) (1917);

*Frantsuzskaia lirika XIX veka* (French Poetry of the Nineteenth Century) (1922);

*Liliuli*, by R. Rollan (*Liluli*, by Romain Rolland) (1922);

*Polnoe sobranie poem i stikhotvorenii*, by E. Po (Complete Collected Poems, by Edgar Allan Poe)(1924);

*Faust*. *Chast’ pervaia*, by Gete (Faust. Part I, by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe) (1928);

*Eneida*, by Vergilii (*Aeneid*, by Vergil), translated with Sergei Solov’ev (1933);

*Fedra*, by Zh. Rasin (*Phèdre*, by Jean Racine) (1940);

*Torzhestvennyi privet. Stikhi zarubezhnykh poetov v perevodakh Briusova* (A Ceremonial Greeting. Poems of Foreign Poets Translated by Valerii Briusov), compiled and with an introductory essay by M. L. Gasparov (1977);

*Zarubezhnaia poeziia v perevodakh Valeriia Briusova* (Foreign Poetry Translated by Valerii Briusov) (1994).

Miscellaneous Writings:

*Nezakonchennye povesti Pushkina iz russkoi zhizni - Egipetskie nochi* (An Unfinished Tale by Pushkin from Russian Life: The Egyptian Nights), in: Pushkin, *Sochineniia* (Works) (ed. S. A. Vengerov), vol. IV (St. Petersburg, 1910);

*Kak prekratit’ voinu?* (How to Stop the War?) (Moscow, 1917);

*Letopis’ istoricheskikh sudeb armianskogo naroda* (A Chronicle of the Historical Destinies of the Armenian People) (Moscow, 1918)

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Audio recording of Briusov reading his verse: [http://baseofmp3.com/?q=%F7%E8%F2%E0%E5%F2+%C2%E0%EB%E5%F0%E8%E9+%C1%F0%FE%F1%EE%E2](https://webmail.sc.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=qZ-mMgB7mUyoegcUo3r_1EAkhTxoN88IaUcjCMVZL2Wl0zI1kNWHCKIQa-uafa7AXhTD2H21yd8.&URL=http%3a%2f%2fbaseofmp3.com%2f%3fq%3d%25F7%25E8%25F2%25E0%25E5%25F2%2b%25C2%25E0%25EB%25E5%25F0%25E8%25E9%2b%25C1%25F0%25FE%25F1%25EE%25E2" \t "_blank)

Source URLs for photographs:

Photo of Briusov, c. 1910

<http://visualrian.ru/en/site/gallery/#70689/context%5Bq%5D=&context%5Bcountry_id%5D=1&context%5Bcountry_title%5D=%D0%A0%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%81%D0%B8%D1%8F>

Briusov’s portrait painted by Vrubel:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Vrubel_Bryusov.jpg>