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| Bely, Andrei (БЕЛЫЙ, АНДРЕЙ) (1880-1934) |
| **[Enter any *variant forms* of your headword – OPTIONAL]** |
| Andrei Bely (1880-1934) was a writer of prose, poetry, literary criticism and memoirs, as well as a leading theorist and representative of the ‘second wave’ of Russian Symbolism. Music and philosophy first interested Bely as is evident in his four prose *Symphonies* (1902-1908)and a collection of poetry, *Gold in Azure* (1904). Following the failed 1905 Revolution, Bely’s poetry became more pessimistic. The mystical enthusiasm of his early poetry was replaced by images of disillusionment in two later collections: *Ashes* and *The Urn* (both 1909). In 1910, Bely published his first novel, *The Silver Dove*, yet it was his second, *Petersburg* (1916), which is considered to be among the finest novels of the twentieth century. Bely’s remaining prose works were much less successful. At the end of his life, Bely was under increasing pressure by Soviet officials to re-remember elements of the modernist movement. As a result, Bely’s memoirs are highly unreliable, but fascinating as examples of cultural coercion in the Soviet Union. Today, Bely is remembered as one of the principal voices of Russian Symbolism at its inception and then one of its main apologists after the movement was no longer in fashion in the Soviet Union. |
| Andrei Bely (1880-1934) was a leading theorist and representative writer of the ‘second wave’ of Russian Symbolism, along with Aleksandr Blok and Viacheslav Ivanov. Russian Symbolism was mainly known for its poetic attempts to evoke the phenomenal (spiritual) world, rather than to depict the noumenal (or terrestrial). Symbolists believed that there was a more ideal world that paralleled our present reality and through a language of symbols, they could induce this spiritual world. A writer of prose, poetry, literary criticism and memoirs, Bely was one of the principal voices of Russian Symbolism at its height and then one of its main apologists after the movement was no longer in fashion in the Soviet Union.  File: Photograph of Bely in 1904.jpg  Photograph of Bely in 1904  Source: Image copyrighted under Photographer’s direct; available at <http://www.photographersdirect.com/buyers/stockphoto.asp?imageid=2545718>  The son of a famous professor of mathematics, Boris Nikolaevich Bugaev took the pseudonym Andrei Bely for his creative works so as not to embarrass his father, the Dean of the Natural Science Faculty in Moscow. Music and philosophy first interested Bely as a young man and these interests were evident in his four prose *Symphonies* (1902-1908)*.* Under the influence of the Russian philosopher Vladimir Soloviev, Bely and the other young Symbolists of his group (who called themselves Argonauts) began to see the historical process as a movement toward the reunification of the phenomenal and noumenal worlds. This influence was particularly evident in Bely’s first collection of verse, *Gold in Azure*, which was published in 1904.  File: Portrait of Bely by Leon Bakst 1905.jpg  Portrait of Bely by Leon Bakst 1905  Source: Image available at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrei_Bely>  Yet, Bely’s jubilant anticipation of a final reunification resulted in significant disappointment when the Revolution of 1905, which did not result in substantive state reforms, failed to fulfil the apocalyptic promise of the Symbolists’ expectations. Soloviev had argued that the Antichrist would precede the arrival of Sophia, a figure representing the divine wisdom of God, which would necessitate a battle of apocalyptic proportions. As a result of Bely’s disappointment, his next two collections of poetry in 1909, *Ashes* and *The Urn*, were much more pessimistic. The mystical enthusiasm found in Bely’s golden sunset was replaced by images of disillusionment and devastation, illuminated by a frigid twilight.  File: Ashes 1909.jpg  Ashes 1909  Source: Image available at <http://kvartira-belogo.guru.ru/bibliography/pepel1909/images/1.jpg>  In 1910, Bely published his first novel, *The Silver Dove*, the story of a young poet who joins a primitive mystical sect and is murdered when he does not sire the new redeemer with one of their female members. Bely’s next prose work, *Petersburg* (1916), is considered to be among the finest novels of the twentieth century. Set in St. Petersburg, a group of revolutionaries entrust a young student to assassinate his father, a high-ranking government official, with a bomb in a sardine can. Playing upon St. Petersburg’s long cultural history as a demonic and cursed city, Bely also alludes to Russia’s historical ruptures (Tatar-Mongol Yoke; Peter the Great’s forced Westernization; failed and impotent intellectuals; etc.), in order to condense all of these cataclysmic associations into the disastrous year of the 1905 revolt. The ever-increasing cultural and historical tensions of the novel seem to be leading to an apocalyptic explosion that will not only destroy the father and the corrupt, geometrical capitol city, but possibly Russia itself. Yet, like the disillusionment felt in 1905, the explosion proves ineffectual and disappointing. Bely’s next two novels, *Kotik Letaev* and *The Baptized Chinaman*, which were autobiographical in nature, as well as his Moscow trilogy (*The Moscow Eccentric*, *Moscow Under Siege* and *Masks*) were much less successful prose works and are often given less scholarly attention than his Symbolist masterpiece, *Petersburg*.  File: Cover to Bely's novel Petersburg 1916.jpg  Petersburg 1916  Source: Image available at <http://j.livelib.ru/boocover/1000495482/l/9971/Andrej_Belyj__Peterburg.jpg>  Just as important as Bely’s prose and poetry were his numerous publications as a theorist of the Symbolist movement. At various times, he was a devout Nietzschean, Solovievan, Kantian, Schopenhauerian and theosophist, but so too were most of the other modernists, so Bely’s texts offer an interesting depiction of the intellectual discourse of the time. In 1907, various factions of the Symbolist movement began to openly quarrel amongst themselves and Bely ardently defended his theoretical and aesthetic positions against prominent theorists like Georgy Chulkov and Viacheslav Ivanov in the journal *The Scales*. During the period 1902-1911, Bely attempted to establish a definitive theory of Symbolist poetics that were eventually published in three collections of essays, *Symbolism*, *The Green Meadow* and *Arabesques*. In 1912, Bely became a devotee of Rudolph Steiner’s anthroposophy while living abroad. Steiner’s theory of violent transitional periods within a cosmic evolution, clearly appealed to Bely’s former philosophical longings for an apocalyptic upheaval that would reunite the noumenal and the phenomenal worlds. After a break with his wife, Asia Turgeneva, Bely returned to Russia in 1918. During the next three years, Bely, Blok and Ivanov participated in the journal, *Alkonost* (a bird in Slavic mythology), the last attempt to bring the major Symbolists together. It was here that Bely published his *Reminiscences of A.A. Blok* shortly after his friend’s untimely death in 1921.  File: Photograph of Bely 1913.jpg  Photograph of Bely 1913  Source: Image available at <http://belousenko.com/books/Beliy/bugaev.jpg>  During an extended stay in Germany, Bely became increasingly anti-social, if not hysterical, and his relationship with Steiner cooled. In late 1923, Bely returned to a very different Russia that no longer held in high regard Symbolism’s mystical and, at times, decadent theology. In an attempt to avoid conflict with Soviet officials, Bely settled down to write his Moscow trilogy and, more importantly, his memoirs. In reading these, one must keep in mind that Bely was under increasing pressure in the late 1920s to re-remember events, literary allegiances and participants to stay on the right side of official cultural policies. As a result, *At the Turn of the Century*, *The Beginning of the Century* and *Between Two Revolutions* are highly unreliable as memoirs, but fascinating as examples of cultural coercion in the Soviet Union. For Bely, they were a final attempt to rescue his generation from extinction and provide an explanation for Symbolism that the Soviet generation could understand and, possibly, respect. List of WorksPoetry Zoloto v lazuri (*Gold in Azure*) [1904]  Pepel (*Ashes*) [1909]  Urna (*The Urn*) [1909]  Kristos voskres (Christ has Risen) [1918]  Pervoe svidanie (The First Encounter) [1921]  Glossalaliaa: poema o zvuke (Glossalaliaa: A Poem about Sound)[1922]  **Stikhi o Rossii (*Poems about Russia*) [**1922]  **Vozvrashchenie na rodinu (Returning Home)** [1922]  **Posle razluki:** Berlinskii pesennik (*After the Parting: A Berlin Song-book*) [1922] Prose Simfoniia, 2-ia, dramaticheskaya (*Second Symphony, the Dramatic*) [1902]  Severnaya simfoniya (*Northern* *Symphony*) [1904]  Vozvrat, 3-ia simfoniia (*The Return, Third Symphony*) [1905]  Kubok metelei, 4-ia simfoniia (*Goblet of Blizzards*, *Fourth Symphony*) [1908]  Serebrianyi golub’ (*The Silver Dove*) [1910]  Peterburg (*Petersburg*) [1916]  Kotik Letaev (*Kotik Letaev*) [1917-18]  **Korolevna i rytsari (*The Princess and the Knights*)** [1919]  Kreshchennyi kitaets (*The Baptized Chinaman*) [1921]  Zapiski chudaka (*Notes of an Eccentric*) [1922]  **Putevye zametki: Sitsiliia i Tunis (*Travel Notes: Sicily and Tunis*) [**1922]  Moskovskii chudak (*The Moscow Eccentric*) [1926]  Moskva pod udarom (*Moscow under Siege*) [1926]  Maski (*Masks*) [1931] Criticism / Theory Lug zelenyi (*Green Meadow*) [1910]  Simvolizm (*Symbolism*) [1910]  Arabeski (*Arabesques*) [1911]  Tragediia tvorchestva: Dostoevskii i Tolstoi (*The Tragedy of Creation: Dostoevskii and Tolstoi*) [1911]  Rudol’f Shteiner i Gete v mirovozzrenii sovremennosti (*Rudolf Steiner and Goethe from a Contemporary Point of View*) [1917]  Revoliutsiia i kul’tura (*Revolution and Culture*) [1917]  Sirin uchenogo varvarstva (*The Siren Bird of Scholastic Barbarism*) [1918]  **Na perevale (*At the Divide*)** [3 volumes: 1918-20]  O smysle poznaniia (*On the Theory of Cognition*) [1922]  **Poeziia slova: Pushkin, Tiutchev, Baratynskii, V. Ivanov, A. Blok (*Poetry of the Word*)** [1922]  Ritm kak dialektika i ‘mednyi vsadnik’ (*Rhythm as Dialectic in The Bronze Horseman*) [1929]  Masterstvo Gogolia (*The Mastery of Gogol*) [1934] Memoirs Vospominaiia ob A.A. Bloke (*Reminiscences of A.A. Blok*) [1922]  **Odna iz obiteley tsarstva tenei (*In the Kingdom of the Shades*)** [1924]  Na rubezhe dvukh stoletii (*On the Border of Two Centuries*) [1930]  Nachalo veka (*The Beginning of the Century*) [1933]  Mezhdu dvukh revoliutsii (*Between Two Revolutions*) [1934] |
| Further reading:  (Alexandrov)  (Elsworth)  (J. Elsworth)  (Keys)  (Maslenikov)  (Mochulsky) |