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ЛИТЕРАТУРНЫЙ ДЕТЕКТИВ

A LITERARY DETECTIVE

Abstract. This article explores the pathway that begins with a doctoral dissertation and translations of the works of the Russian Symbolist writer, Andrey Bely. A forty five year career as literary scholar leads one from Middlebury, Vermont, USA to Freiburg, Germany, to Dornach, Switzerland and Moscow, to trace the relationship of Andrey Bely to his mentor, Dr. Rudolf Steiner, and his complex relationship with his Anthroposophical first wife, Asya Turgeneva. A chance acquaintance with the German translator, Svetlana Geier, developed into a thirty year friendship and collaboration, that resulted in a gift of one hundred rare volumes connected with Bely and Asya, and that eventually lead to previously unexplored archival materials in the Goetheanum at Dornach. These, in turn, revealed an unknown intimate correspondence between Bely and Natalya Turgeneva-Pozzo, his sister-in-law. The letters in German translation and soon to be published Russian original shine a new light on Bely, his life and loves, and works after 1916.

Keywords: Andrey Bely, Natasha Turgeneva, Asya Turgeneva, Rudolf Steiner, Anthroposophy, Dornach, Goetheanum

Introduction. I believe it was the brilliant Leningrad scholar, V. Manuilov, who called himself a “literary detective” to describe his research into the lives and encounters of the Russian Golden Age

writers, in particular, M. Lermontov. I have been inspired since my graduate school days with his methodology that was empirical and not solely dependent upon one's own critical or aesthetic acumen. My own doctoral dissertation[7] drew inspiration from the application of a scientific approach to literary analysis by Andrey Bely and his contribution to the Russian Formalist school.

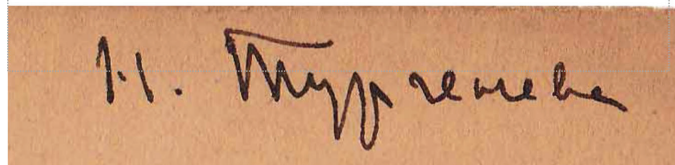
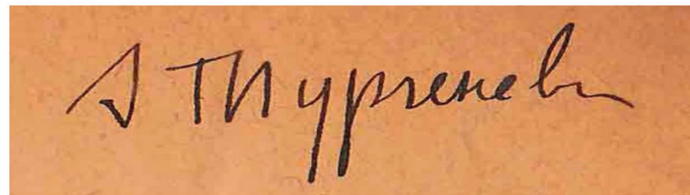
It all began with two letters: "A" and "H." The names in a few books could have at first glance been easily mistaken for the same person. But in fact, those two letters opened a journey into archival materials unexamined for over 70 years in a small collection of the Direktion at the Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland.

But this too had begun by a coincidence. I first reached out to Svetlana Geier, in a letter dated October 27th 1980.[9] (October 27th is the 20th century Gregorian or N.S. New Style calendar equivalent of Bely's birthday, October 14th in the Julian calendar, O.S.). Svetlana was teaching Russian literature at the University of Freiburg, and was also an already accomplished translator including two works by Andrey Bely. Her translation of *Verwandeln des Lebens*, (Воспоминания о Шрейнере),[2] had evoked my curiosity as to the manuscript. I was at the time working on my own translation of Bely's *The Christened Chinaman*, (Крещенный китаец).[3] Our first encounter in December 1980 led to a thirty year friendship and professional collaboration. It also resulted in a review article that re-examined and corrected the prevailing version of Bely's relationship to Dr. Rudolf Steiner.[8] This ultimately led to a new interest and willingness of colleagues in the Anthroposophical community in Dornach to permit access to hitherto closed materials.

After Svetlana passed away, in late August 2011 I was given two cartons of books by Michaela Götte, Svetlana Geier's daughter, and Sonja, her granddaughter. The so-called Belyj-Reisebibliothek (traveling library) purportedly contained books in the hands of Asya Turgeneva-Bugaeva (Andrey Bely's—Boris Bugaev's first wife), who, after Bely had returned to Russia in 1916, had remained in Dornach, Switzerland at the Anthroposophical community of Rudolf Steiner until her death in 1966.

Methods. I labored to document and identify the provenance of those 100 volumes. My goals were to preserve as well as possible the volumes, to establish the provenance or heritage to the extent possible of them, and to offer a digital archive for scholars with access to covers, titles, inscriptions, notations inside the books, as well as my own informed commentary and that of others. The complicated provenance of the books is recounted in the digital archive project.[10] I ultimately returned many to their proper and rightful home be it Basel, Dornach, or Moscow.

As I began work on the volumes, one book in particular struck my eyes, where at first glance I had overlooked the initial letter of the owner. In Cyrillic, the letters "H" and "A" in cursive are not that far apart from one another. One bore the handwritten name of N. Turgeneva in Cyrillic, apparently misplaced among those with those of A. Turgeneva.

The volume belonged not to Anna (Asya) Turgeneva (Bely's first wife), but to her sister, Natalya (Natasha) Turgeneva-Pozzo, Bely's sister in law.

In a trip to Dornach to help establish the rightful home of many of the volumes, I discovered additional books including many first editions of Bely's work with the name of N[atasha] inside. This led me to inquire of additional materials related to Asya and Natasha in the archives in Dornach. I turned to Johannes Nilo, the Director of the Dokumentation, in the small library located inside the Goetheanum, the Temple, Theater, Library, gathering place of Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophical Community. He presented me with several boxes containing the legacy of the two sisters and Aleksandr Pozzo, Natasha's husband. These papers had remained largely undisturbed since the deaths of Alexandr in 1941, and Natasha in 1942. Little here would attract attention except for the most dedicated biographers. However, in a box containing the belongings of Aleksandr (Sasha) Pozzo, I recognized a familiar handwriting, that of Andrey Bely himself. Ultimately, I uncovered ten hand written letters, a total of almost 100 pages, nine from Bely to Natasha and one from Natasha to Bely.

Without exaggeration, these letters represent an extraordinary find. Providing a frame around the 1914—1916 years in Dornach, the letters from September 1913 to July 1917 are of the familiar and familial nature appropriate to the time and circumstances, sometimes with notes by Asya to her sister. But in the middle, there are several that illustrate in the most striking way Bely's relationship and infatuation with his sister-in-law. That portrayal is all the more exceptional in that it sheds new light and, in some ways, counteracts or contradicts Bely's own published and unpublished comments on Natasha. Equally important is the unique and singular ability of Natasha to offer her perspective on the entire matter.

Natasha is largely overlooked in Bely's extensive volumes of memoirs, and most often treated casually, in passing, and sometimes in negative tones. He refers to her in one place as a "Raskolnikov in a skirt"[1]. Two exceptions to the rule are a rarely cited work *The Intimate Biography*,[4] and also a strange black line in Bely's own graphic portrayal of his life.[5]

Results. I have written and spoken about the relationship between the Natasha and Borya, her usual form of address to Boris N. Bugaev (Andrey Bely). (An overview of the relationship and Bely's public comments on Natasha can be found in my article on the Black Line) [11,12]. A major announcement of the letters that are scheduled for translation into German done by Christoph

Hellmundt and published in Switzerland, [6] will be followed by the publication with scholarly annotation and commentary in Russian. I am working closely with Monika Spivak, Director of the Andrej Belyj Memorial Apartment (museum) in Moscow to bring this about.

The eventual publication will contain several reproductions of the letters themselves.

Discussion and Implications. The significance of the exchange cannot be understated. For the first time, scholars will have a window into the tortured path of Bely's infatuation and passion for Natasha in from 1914 to 1916. This is invaluable for the re-examination of all of Bely's works after that period. For Bely was known for including autobiographical data artfully shrouded in his lyric poetry and fictional prose. Equally important is the response of Natasha, in a two-page letter that characterizes accurately her own role. For the first time she gets to express in her own words the simple truth: "Dear Borya, . . . I have Sasha, the Bau, Masha. . . . My trust in your courage, sense of duty and strengths, and my own relationship to them, are the singular help I can provide you with. With hope and trust I wish you a New Year." [14] Natasha refers to her own husband, Sasha (Aleksandr Pozzo), the Bau — the shortened name for the Johannesbau, the designation for the original Goetheanum then under construction in Dornach, and Masha her daughter. This put an end to the one sided, misunderstood, and unrequited nature of Bely's efforts to attract Natasha as more than a sister-in-law.

"Manuscripts do not burn" [13]. Nor have these letters! Left and preserved for a century they are now to be found and revealed from the holdings and Archives of the Dokumentation at the Goetheanum. There are likely to be more treasures to be uncovered offering fresh insights into what we thought we knew.

The end of the journey, the publication of the correspondence in German and Russian, mark a fitting end for my forty-five-year career devoted to life and work of Andrey Bely.

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