

One hundred years of change in Andrey Bely's image: Russian criticism of Bely as a symbolist literary critic

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Abstract. In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the Russian critical discourse on the symbolist critic Bely in the last hundred years and to show the changes in this image, the critic Bely is judged in three stages in terms of the multiple relationships between Bely's literary criticism and his own literary creation, Russian symbolist literature, Russian literature and even Russian literary criticism, and finally to construct a collection of critical Bely's images covering different times, perspectives and fields, in which the image goes through the process of going from invisibility to incipient and then to complete presentation. The Russian criticism of Bely has been controversial in different eras, but his insistence on a combination of tradition and innovation and his active search for originality have made him a highly regarded critic. This review of the changing image of Bely deepens the understanding of Bely and Russian symbolism and is a useful reference for the study of Bely's literary criticism.

Keywords: Andrey Bely; symbolist literary criticism; critic; poetry and fiction.

1. Introduction

Andrey Bely, the representative of the "young generation" of Russian symbolists, is not only a master of Russian symbolist literature and an outstanding representative of the entire Russian modernist literary movement, but also deserves to be one of the best Russian critics and literary theorists of the 20th century. It is no wonder that one scholar has said of him: "As a symbolist poet, Bely is on a par with Blok; as a symbolist novelist, Bely is on a par with Solokhub; as a symbolist literary theorist, Bely is on an equal footing with Breusov"[1]. The modern Russian literary scholar and professor V. N. Krylov (Крылов В ячеслав Николаевич) considers that in the field of Russian symbolist literary criticism "of the younger generation of symbolists, Bely expresses the most detailed view of the Russian critical tradition and the current state of criticism of his contemporaries"[2]. The study of the writer and poet Bely is currently well researched, but that of the critic Bely is rare. After his death and until the collapse of the Soviet Union, Bely's symbolist literary criticism became increasingly evident in highlighting the literary value of writers and in constructing a complete image of them, and many scholars emphasized its importance in the study of literary works, but did not discuss it systematically. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the symbolist literary criticism of Bely gained independent value, and his identity as a critic was given more attention. As the image of the critic Bely has gone through a process from invisibility to incipience to full expression, this article will therefore describe the evolution of Bely's image as a critic in three stages: during his life; after his life; until the collapse of the Soviet Union (1934–1917); and after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

2. Before Bely's life

During his lifetime, Bely was influenced by the development of Russian symbolist literature, and his symbolist literary works were the first to attract critical attention and his literary creations were studied extensively by critics[3]. Shortly after the publication of Bely's *Dramatic Symphony*, in 1903, the literary critic and music critic E.K. Medtner (Эмилий Мётнер, 1872-1936) published the article *Andrey Bely's Symphonies*, pointing out the inadequacies of the arrangement of the *Symphony*, and thus calling it a suite rather than a "symphony". Medtner finds that Bely's *Symphony* has three layers: musical, ironic, ideological and symbolic, all three of which are

intended to express a mood and are interlinked by that mood, "This bold, almost audacious attempt by Andrey Bely is significant as a vivid sign of the penetration of poetic and musical elements. This Symphony has no future, but many of its techniques will be strongly developed and enhanced in other works by the author himself, and mastered and adopted by other writers." [4] E.K. Medtner first proposed the fusion of music and poetry that characterised the Symphony and saw it as a sign of Bely's innovation and a new trend in the artistic development of the time; the idea of artistic synthesis later became a critical claim and basis for Bely.

In the study of Bely's poetry, the Russian literary critic and literary historian F. Batyushkov (Федор Батюшков, 1857-1920), in his essay *Andrey Bely, <The Gold of the Blue Sky>* (poetry and prose), highlights the poet's individual character and bold innovations embodied under the label of the Symbolist genre, and makes it clear that in this collection of poems he quite ruthlessly denounces and exposes the decadent mood that was so popular not long ago, and when his messianic attempts failed, critical awareness inspired him to undertake a series of prophetic experiments in poetry and fiction. The essay makes it abundantly clear that Bely was a symbolist with a strong sense of literary criticism and that he embodied the ideas and traces of literary criticism in his literary production. In the same year, one of the leaders of Russian symbolist literature, Bryusov (Валерий Брюсов, 1873–1924), pointed out in his essay *Andrey Bely, the Gold of the Blue Sky*, that Bely's poetry was more lyrical than Ivanov's, due to his critical consciousness in his poetry, while Ivanov's was more artistic, and that their different creative mindsets and In 1909, S.M. Solovyov (Сергей Соловьев 1885-1942) published a book review of *Ashes*, which briefly illustrates the two schools of thought on the function and nature of poetry in Russian poetry at the time. S.M. Solovyov, the author of the book *Ashes* argues that the appearance of *Ashes* led Russian poetry to a new stage of development because "the greatest merit of Bely's book is that it is truly connected with modernity" [5] and that this unique style of poetry broke the stalemate in the poetic debate of the time and tilted the development of poetry in the direction of tendentious and propagandistic functions. The high praise of Bely's leading role in the field of poetry and his ability to describe and criticise reality in his poetry speaks volumes about Bely's strong desire for literary criticism and his keen perspective, as well as his critical approach to literary creation, compared to other poets of his time. The thinker and philologist Viach. Ivanov (Вячеслав Иванов, 1866-1949) saw a fundamental change in Bely in *Ashes*, namely a shift in the centre of his artistic consciousness from idealism to realism. "One of the signs of this symbolic evolution is Andrey Bely's new collection of poems, *Ashes*, a composition that in its conception goes far beyond the intimate art of the poetic school, is primarily devoted to the problems of our public and is directed towards society." [6] Viach. Ivanov argues that Bely's symbolist literary creations are not only critically conscious but also full of religious connotations.

In the study of Bely's fiction, in 1914, the poetess and literary critic S.Я. Parnok (София Яковлевна Парнок 1885-1933) published the article *Petersburg* in the 6th issue of *Northern Notes*, arguing that, against the background of the booming development of Russian poetry and the relative lack of development of prose at that time, Bely played an important role in promoting the prosperous development of Russian prose. He introduced the techniques and principles of poetry into prose writing, highlighting the organic fusion of form and concept. But the author further notes that "Andrey Bely's formal innovations, his examples of 'treatment' in the art of prose, fall into the category of innovations introduced into prose by the poet; and they are rooted in a misunderstanding of the basic distinction between the methods of writing poetry and the methods of writing prose. It seems that in order to pave a new path in prose, you should not be a poet in the first place." [7] The article was argued by S.Я. Parnok's contemporary, the Russian futurist and literary critic S.P. Bobrov, who pointed out the internal contradictions in the text and the inconsistency of the author's definitions: "Why do our critics jump to conclusions so quickly? One moment, Buley is a genius; the next he is a man of bad manners and even worse immorality... Andrey Polyanin looks at it and does not believe her eyes: she sees one thing, but she reads another according to 'her own multiplication table' thing It is harmful to write about things you don't know about yourself." [8]

Despite the critical controversy over Bely's prose innovations, it affirms his grasp and flexibility in the techniques and principles of prose and poetry, which should be combined with his symbolist criticism in order to fully understand his innovations in the field of prose. Thus, the Soviet essayist and critic M.S. Shaginyan (Мариэтта Сергеевна Шагинян, 1888-1982) argues that because of Bely's unique conception, his unique view of characters and events, and other symbolist-critical ideas, "Andrey Bely's new work Petersburg is distinguished by its intuition, the vast structure of the whole story, the heaviness of its language and its unexpected richness, surpassing all his predecessors (including *The Swarm*) and, finally, its realism in a way that even the great Dostoevsky could not achieve in *The Swarm*." [9] On October 30, 1916, M. Gershenzon (Михаил Гершензон, 1869–1925), in an article entitled *Pushkin's Notes*, pointed out that Bely's novel *Kitty Letaev* was an extraordinary phenomenon not only of literature but of self-consciousness as a whole at the time, and that he was perhaps the first person who dared to observe and reproduce the elements of the human spirit. At the same time, M. Gershenzon argues that the absolute authority of reason and science was bankrupt; that they no longer met people's cognitive needs and even deceived them, which led to a crisis of culture; and that the emergence of Bely's novel was an unmistakable sign that the task he undertook was not only necessary at the time, but that only through him could culture be saved. M. Gershenzon praised Bely not only as the first person in human history to reveal the mystery of the inner world of the spirit but also as a cure for the spiritual crisis of mankind, and compared Bely to Pushkin on this level, arguing that "from Pushkin to Andrey Bely, this is the way we have been going for a hundred years," [10] demonstrating the importance of Bely's symbolist-critical thought. The importance of the symbolism of Bely.

On December 22, 1916, the literary and theater critic I. Ignatov (Илья Игнатов, 1856-1921) published an article in the Russian daily newspaper *About Bely* in which he pointed out and defended Bely's novel *Kitty Letaev* against the negative voices of the critics of the time. While opponents argued that Bely's novel was too alien, fragmented, and confused, making it difficult to understand, I. Ignatov argued that this was because Bely followed the line of the soul in his work and tried to reproduce it in a narrative way, so that the work appeared on the surface as a confused, fragmented, even illogical world, but it always followed this thread of the soul internally. "There is an inseparable link between the form and the content of *Petersburg*, between the disturbing psychological state of the characters and the equally disturbing narrative, and in places the author achieves perfection in this respect." [11] The author even argues that the reader should be familiar with Bely's original attempts at genius as he endeavours to convey these "tales of the unspeakable soul" ("несказанные сказанья души").

A number of scholars have reviewed Bely's cultural criticism, mainly in relation to the East-West issue, which was of great intellectual concern at the time; D. C. Merezhkovsky was close to Bely in the 1900s; and in many ways, Bely regarded him as a spiritual mentor and a like-minded person in his intellectual pursuits. West" and argued that Bely's novel *The Silver Pigeon*, which embodies the meeting of the two undercurrents of East and West in Russia and the clash here between the Western revolution and the Eastern religion, was entirely without his own will in exploring the question of East and West, and that the mistake he made on the subject was that of all Slavophiles, old and new, in considering the Russian East to be in absolute opposition to the European West, but the author of the article argued that only the union of the East and the West is the perfect truth of the God-man. "To the question: East or West? The only answer is the negation of the question itself: not East or West? rather than East and West. This is the limit of abstract thought; however, for important action, one must know by which foot one begins to step and where one is going at all times. One needs the will. In Bely's present state (not, we hope, his final state), he is a man without a will. " [12] The author ultimately argues that Bely was a genius at identifying and describing problems, but had no talent for revealing and solving them, and that D. Merezhkovsky had begun to pay attention to the symbolist critic Bely. The Russian literary critic and translator S. Andrianov (Сергей Адрианов, 1871–1942), who in his article *Critical Sketches* (European Herald, no. 7, 1910) pointed out that Bely had placed more emphasis on form than on content in his literary work and

had over-emphasised the symbolic meaning of things to the extent that his exposition of the East-West problem was without substance. In contrast, in *The Russian Symbolists* (1910), Ellis highlights the important role and uniqueness of Bely in the emergence and development of Russian symbolism, highly evaluates his symbolist criticism of human nature from a cultural perspective, and compares him to Nietzsche; from the perspective of literary trends, he highly praises Bely's elaboration of symbolism, and points out that he not only inherited and carried forward the critical tradition represented by Belinsky in literary criticism. In terms of literary trends, he is highly praised for his exposition of symbolism and points out that in literary criticism he not only inherits and carries forward the critical tradition represented by Belinsky, but also presents a new perspective on symbolist criticism.

There are also studies that evaluate the symbolist critic Bely positively. For example, the Russian Romantic poet P.D. Kogan (Коган, Павел Давыдович, 1918–1942) in his treatise *An Introduction to the History of Modern Russian Literature* (1911) describes Bely's personal and creative tragedies and compares the different literary situations of Bely and Merezhkovsky. He argues that it was the "singularity" of Bely's thoughts and creative thinking that kept him from escaping the crisis, so that "Andrey Bely was perhaps the most precious victim of the mystical crisis. Merezhkovsky was happy to be on the road of life, confident that in the distant future, someone would need his vague philosophy". [13] The author details Bely's tragedy and the related internal and external causes, while there is no targeted assessment of his response in the literary polemic, except to simply state the internal and external causes that prompted his angry outburst and to accuse him of not being thoughtful and calm enough in his retort to make a conceptual mistake. P.D. Kogan's study illustrates the important influence of Bely's symbolist literary criticism, but there is a need to. In his book review of *Andrey Bely's Symbolism*, Green Grass, a collection of miniatures (Russian Thought, 1911), Bely finds that Bely's organization of the collection is often disorganized and illogical, and that these deficiencies undermine the artistic beauty and literary value of the work as a whole, and that Bely's criticism of his opponents is overly subjective, which can lead to a loss of authenticity and objectivity. At the same time, the author acknowledges Bely's important achievements in poetry criticism and argues that his ideas on symbolic criticism need further study.

In his 1910 article *On Rhythm* (in the light of Andrey Bely's work "Symbolism"), Breusov focuses on Bely's study of rhythm in his treatise *Symbolism*, analysing his choice of subjects for criticism, his views on poets and poetry of different eras and genres, and the criteria of poetry criticism. Breusov argues that not only does Bely fall short in these three areas and make mistakes in rhetoric, linguistic expression, and other levels of writing that are incompatible with his status as one of Russia's finest rhetoricians, but that his subjective and arbitrary assessment is inconsistent with his slogan of "scientific aesthetics" in the text, and the author prefers to argue that "Andrey Bely is lost. There is really little real science in his writing, and his conclusions remain his subjective guesses." [14] Breusov, who maintained the principle of artistic independence throughout the polemics of his time [15], thus pointed out many problems of writing technique and questions concerning the quality of the artist in his studies of the rhythm of Bely's poetry. In his essay *Reply to Andrey Bely* according to the book *"Rhythm as Dialectic"* (Stars, 1929), V.M. Zhirmunsky (Виктор Максимович Жирмунский 1891-1971) acknowledges Bely's landmark role in the study of rhythm, the study of form, and the attraction of poetry. In his article *Reply to Andrey Bely*, he acknowledges Bely's landmark role in the study of rhythm and form in poetry and in attracting poetry lovers; acknowledges that the widespread rise of theoretical research problems began with Bely in Russian science at the time; and gives a relatively objective assessment of Bely's image as a symbolist critic in the literary polemics; and his successes and failures in the study of rhythm in poetry from a more macro-dynamic perspective.

Some studies also talk about the necessity of Bely's symbolist literary criticism and the limitations of his research. The critic and philosopher S. Askold (Сергей Аскольдов, 1871–1945), for example, opens his essay *The Creation of Andrey Bely* (*Literary Thought*, 1922) by stating the primacy of Bely in Russian literature of the last 20 years, but confesses: "I do not consider at all

political and partly philosophical, or more correctly, life-educational, aspects of Bely's creations, both because of the peculiar nature of the subject and because in this aspect of his creations he is for me an entirely indeterminate value, uncertain both in quality and in scale. As a teacher and preacher, he has a clear need for this role, and it seems to me that he has even a hypothetical value. He has not yet given any definite teaching, nor has he yet adhered to any definite doctrine. " [16] It is therefore true that the author does not analyse the theoretical and critical parts of Bely in the whole text, not because that part of the composition is not important, but because the development of Bely's thought was still at an unstable and immature stage, as well as the limitations of the study, and the author's cautious approach to the study is an indication of the attention and importance he attaches to the critic Bely. In the *Marble Thunder* (Andrey Bely) (Ring, 1928), argues that Bely's symbolist-critical ideas, especially in terms of their remarkable achievements in reforming neo-realism, had a great influence on the literature of future generations, but because "the writer Bely was first of all at the service of the writer and then of the reader." For the general circle of readers, he tends to be heavy and incoherent. His mystical symbolism was reactionary, hostile, and alien to the modern Soviet reader. This explains why we often encounter the problem of underestimating Bely. " [17] These scholars were thus aware of the specificity and importance of Bely's symbolist criticism and the lack of sufficient attention given to it at the time, which was due to the uniqueness of literary criticism itself and the limitations of the Soviet era, as the Russian poet and literary critic N.Otsup (Николай Оцуп, 1894-1958) lamented in his essay celebrating his 50th birthday. "Is it not a sad fate for this great writer that Bely's creations have become only material for a new generation?" [18]

During Bely's lifetime, his image as a symbolist literary critic was largely hidden in poetry and fiction, and was that of a critic who led the way in artistic trends and technical innovations. The Russian critical studies of the critic Bely were heavily influenced by the development of symbolist literature in his country, and he received much praise as an innovator of artistic technique and a trendsetter of ideas in the early years of Russian symbolism. As symbolism developed and his own creative thought evolved, some scholars showed contrasting attitudes to some of his critical ideas, but none explored Bely's literary criticism in its entirety, let alone defined it specifically, so that his image as a symbolist critic is embedded in the identities of novelist, poet, and essayist, with which scholars have a low and fragmented sense of identification.

3. After Bely's birth and the collapse of the Soviet Union (1934-1991)

Before the 1950s, the stages of the development of Soviet literary history were divided on the basis of major political events, and literary works were classified mostly by their subject matter. This tendency developed especially after the Second World War, when Zhdanov was in charge of literature on behalf of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and the anti-personal cult and emancipation that gradually began after 1953, especially the relaxed atmosphere around the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, held in February 1956, brought about a major turnaround in the vitality of Soviet literary life and the development of literary theory and criticism. Nikolayeva and Stolovich, among others, pointed out in their articles or treatises the previous neglect of the characteristics of art and put forward the view that "the essential characteristic of art is aesthetics". The trend of aesthetic criticism became one of the main trends in Russian literary criticism, which was of great help in re-examining Bely's symbolist literary criticism, the theory and poetics of which remained the main object of study at that stage.

Bely's death from arteriosclerosis at 12:30 on January 8, 1934 caused a great stir in the Russian literary world of the time. Obituaries and, in some cases, articles were published by scholars in Russia and abroad, and some were included by contemporary Russian scholars Spivak (Моника Спивак) and Elena (Елена Наседкина) in the anthology *The Death of Andrey Bely (1880-1934)* (2003), a collection of essays that reviews Bely's life and writing, many of which talk about Bely's symbolist literary criticism and related elements, and reviews some of Bely's literary criticism in the

context of his literary output; for example, Pasternak, Pilignak and Sannikov's obituary Andrey Bely, published in *Kommersant* on 9 January, on Bely's literary status; his main creative experiences; and his influence on later Russian literature. The following day, the proletarian writer L. Kamenev also wrote an article on the subject in *Kommersant*, beginning: "Andrey Bely—poet, novelist, philosopher, literary critic, essayist, literary historian, and poet—was above all a dreamer. All his works are filled with the quest for a unified and complete world view. His curious and restless mind rests on a certain synthesis of dreams." [19] In the author's view, Bely was a dreamer detached from reality, his personality disconnected from his sociality, and his inability to express his criticism in clear and concise terms, and he always tried to get out of this dilemma by arguing for a symbolist worldview. One of the founders of Russian Futurism and the poet D. Burliuk (Давид Бурлюк, 1882-1967) published an article in the *New York Russian Voice* entitled *The Death of Andrey Bely*, in which he quoted a contradictory comment by A. Volonsky about Bely: 'A. Bely's symbolism proved unacceptable to the advanced classes who were rebuilding the world, but A. Bely proved to be unacceptable to the advanced classes who were rebuilding the world, but A. Volonsky also notes that Bely influenced Soviet poets, even those who 'forged' the first period, and that he portrayed in the clearest possible way the life of a class that was on its way to destruction. [20] A more official obituary, *Andrey Bely has died*, "published jointly by the editorial board of *Literatura* and a group of writers' societies in *Literatura* on January 11, noted that Bely was an excellent symbolist whose lectures and cultural work among the proletariat had a positive and long-lasting impact on socialist culture and literature, and that he was a representative of the great pre-revolutionary artists and contributed his rich experience to the cause of pre-revolutionary art. These essays deal with the critic Bely, mainly about his important place in the literary world of his time, his influence and contribution to the future of Russian literature, and also point out his regrets. There are also essays dealing with Bely's criticism of symbolism, such as Spivak's *The Death of Andrey Bely*, which mentions that Bely had always defended the healthy development of symbolism in Russia as well as in the Soviet era.

The book essentially illustrates the trends in research on Bely between his death and the collapse of the Soviet Union, and although some of these assessments are contradictory, the critic Bely has become an important object of study for scholars, and the study of his literary work cannot be separated from the study of symbolist criticism.

In 1980 and 1984, the centenary of Bely's birth and the fiftieth anniversary of his death, respectively, sparked a wave of research on Bely in Russia and abroad. In February 1980, a party was held at the A. A. Fadeyev Centre Club in Moscow to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Bely's birth, at which a number of prominent scholars gave lectures. The Soviet poet and critic S. Narovchatov (Сеprей Наровчатов, 1919 - 1981) opened the evening by emphasising that Bely's literary legacy was vast and significant, but that it was not yet sufficiently researched, and that the idea of compiling an anthology, *Andrey Bely: Problems of Creation* (1988), was born in Soviet literary circles. 1988), the first collective treatise on Bely in the Soviet period. These essays introduce Bely's symbolist theory and aesthetics, his assessment of his contemporaries, and his study of traditional writers, and the collection fully demonstrates the interrelationship between Bely's symbolist literary criticism and creative work, as well as the status and influence of the symbolist critic Bely in Russia. In his essay *Bely - Poetologist and Bely - Poet* (1988), the Russian literary critic and classical philologist M. Gasparov (Михаил Гаспаров, 1935-2005) analyses Bely's poetry and poetic studies, pointing out that Bely was both a poet and a poetic theorist and that all current Russian poetics derives from his treatise *Symbolism* and, in all likelihood, all future poetics will derive from *Rhythm as Dialectic* and *<The Bronze Horseman>*, an essay that amply illustrates the profound influence of Bely's poetic theory on Russian poetic studies and poetry; another essay, *The Technique of Gogol: Notes on the Books of Andrey Bely* (1988), points out Bely's views on contemporary and traditional literature, as well as his views on importance of Gogol's literary criticism.

In order to evaluate Bely and his work more comprehensively, the critical community has increasingly come to value his literary theory of symbolism.

Another article by M. Gasparov, *Discourse between melody and rhythm: a literary meeting between Tsvetaeva and Bely* (1989), analyses the interrelationship between Bely and Tsvetaeva in their poetic work and finds that Bely's theory of symbolist criticism, although abstract, is essentially concise in the cultural ideas associated with it, and that he always uses theoretical analysis to show the real surprises of the poems. He always uses theoretical analysis to reveal the real surprises of poetry. The author argues that Bely's symbolist criticism is closely related to cultural thought and that the theory of criticism is closely linked to the development of symbolist poetry at the time, making it an important part of his Russian poetry criticism. The Soviet writer and screenwriter V. Orlov (Владимир Орлов, 1936–2014) in *Alexander Blok and Andrey Bely in 1907* (1937) analyses the relationship between Bely and Blok in 1907 against the backdrop of the internal and external environment of symbolism in the revolutionary era, mainly exploring their contradictions and literary polemics on the issue of revolutionary and symbolist creation. The author finds that Bely's memoirs are not only a good example of the symbolism of the revolutionary era but also a good example of literary polemic. The author finds that there is a distortion of facts in Bely's assessment of Brock's poetry in his memoirs, an assessment of poetry that amply demonstrates the principled basis and direction of their polemic and exposes his own polemical intentions, which were heavily influenced by anti-capitalist culture during the revolutionary period.

A number of scholars have studied Bely's symbolist prose criticism. In his monograph *Andrey Bely and his novel Petersburg* (1988), the Russian literary scholar and important Belyan researcher L. Dolgoplov (Леонид Долгополов, 1928-1995) judged from the fact that Bely actively reconciled symbolism and realism and greatly admired Chekhov that Bely was more than an artist; he also undertook the task of articulating He was more than an artist; he also took on the task of articulating human destiny, theory, and art. A monograph by the Soviet philologist and honoured activist of science in the Russian Federation (1993), L. Novikov (Лев Новиков, 1931-2003), *The Rhetoric of Andrey Bely's Ornate Prose* (1990), analyses the rhetoric of Bely's prose in the context of his literary theory of symbolism and finds that Bely, as an artist and theoretician, was also an artist of ornate prose (арриков). The rhetoric of his prose is analysed in the context of his literary theory of symbolism, from which it is found that Bely, as an artist and theoretician, was also the founder and most prominent representative of the rhetoric of ornate prose (орнаментальная проза). [21] Bely entered the realm of ornate prose as a symbolist, but his symbolism was not a narrow literary school but a worldview that grasped reality from an aesthetic perspective, and he continued to experiment with rhetoric in his literary theory and creative practice, ultimately creating a unique kind of ornate prose. In short, Bely's poetics of prose had a huge and profound influence on modern Soviet literature, and the associated symbolist literary theory is to blame.

After Bely's death, the critical community began to synthesise his literary status in Russia and the world. Symbolist literary criticism has become extremely important in Bely studies, not just as an aid to poetry and fiction criticism, but as Bely the critic has also appeared more frequently in the critical field, and studies of Bely the critic have become an important reference point in the study of his literary works. The image of the symbolist critic Bely has been first revealed through, and Russian criticism is divided on, the critic Bely as a defender of Russian symbolist literature and a coordinator between different genres of Russian literature, who profoundly influenced the development of symbolist literature and even modernist literature and actively contributed to the construction of Soviet culture.

4. After the collapse of the Soviet Union

The late 1980s and 1990s saw an important shift in Russian criticism, a shift in socio-historical criticism from the real world to the religious world, a shift that was strictly speaking a revival of religious-cultural criticism. The revival of religious-cultural criticism prompted, on the one hand, a

massive republication of books on Silver Age symbolism and religious-cultural criticism and, on the other hand, inspired a number of contemporary researchers of Russian literature to become very enthusiastic about the religious, philosophical, and cultural study of literature, leading them to begin to re-examine the development of Russian literature and some of the influential writers of the twentieth century from the perspective of religious culture. [22] After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the policies related to the study of Bely were relaxed, so studies on Bely proliferated. First of all, studies of Bely's symbolist theory have continued to emerge; poetry, prose, memoirs, letters, notes, and biographies are still the main themes of Bely studies, but his literary theory has become an important basis for researchers to evaluate Bely and his literary works.

The Soviet culturalist and aesthete A. L. Kazin (Александр Леонидович Казин, 1945-) edited Bely's anthology *Criticism, Aesthetics, Theory of Symbolism* (1994), the first reprint of Bely's critical legacy since the collapse of the Soviet Union, and in his foreword, A. L. Kazin notes that Bely began with Symbolism and ended with Block's study of speech; that his symbolist artistic and critical thought had cosmic psychic powers and was the first of its kind in terms of spiritual transformation, and that A. L. Kazin highly appreciates Bely's theory of symbolism and its influence from the perspective of Russian literary history. *Philosophy, Literature, Art: Andrey Bely-Vyacheslav Ivanov-Alexander Scriabin* (2012) is a comparative study of Bely's philosophy of symbolist art, his creative achievements, and influence. The author first discusses music in Bely's symbolist literary theory, pointing out the importance of music in Bely's actual creation and theory. Next, he focuses on the influence of Bely on the poetry of Mayakovsky and Pasternak. Then, a comparative analysis of Bely and his contemporaries highlights Bely's views on realistic issues and the corresponding symbolist techniques of expression and ideological themes, illustrates the uniqueness of his symbolist theory and related literary achievements, and points out the shortcomings in his creative work. The author focuses on the musical ideas in Bely's symbolist theory and the influence and significance of musical ideas on other writers. The book analyses Bely's critical theory primarily from a musical perspective and considers his musical ideas as an internal benchmark for literary theory and composition.

Secondly, as the study of Bely continues to deepen and improve, his literary theory of symbolism gradually gains independent research value.

As the twenty-first century approached, many historiographical and contextual studies of Russian symbolist literary criticism emerged, with A.S. Sokolov (Александр Сергеевич Соколов, 1949-), a leading contemporary Russian scholar and professor of 20th-century Russian literature at Moscow State University, describing the history of Russian literature in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries in his monograph (1999), which describes the development of Russian literature at the turn of the century, with a special focus on Bely and the symbolist genre. The author analyses Bely in the context of the symbolist school and the literature of the Silver Age, describing his main critical ideas, their formation and development, their commonalities and their individuality, and briefly describing their repercussions among his contemporaries, who, he argues, had a pioneering role in the development of Russian symbolism due to the influence of Bely's unique world view. And the modern Russian literary scholar and professor V.N. Krylov (Крылов Вячеслав Николаевич) describes Russian symbolist literary criticism in terms of its genesis, the tradition of Russian criticism, and the style of criticism in his monograph *Russian Symbolist criticism : genesis, traditions, genres* (2005). In the book, the author often discusses Bely's symbolist criticism from these perspectives, revealing its typicality and individuality, its relationship to traditional criticism and its genre characteristics, highlighting the important role of the critic Bely in the evolution and development of Russian literary criticism.

In her dissertation *Andrey Bely's Journalism in the Biographical and Historical-cultural Context (1916-1934)* (2011), C.M. Lvovna describes Bely's political activities and the development of symbolist literature in the years 1916–1934, synthesising relevant symbolist literary criticism and political criticism to show how he developed anthroposophy in the Soviet social context, and in doing so, he argued for the continued existence and development of symbolist literature. The thesis

shows how he developed anthroposophy in the Soviet social context and, in so doing, fought for the continued existence and development of symbolist literature. The thesis demonstrates that Bely's critical and political activities complemented each other, together embodying his faithful claims as a symbolist, and that the relationship with the Soviet authorities profoundly influenced his symbolist literary criticism.

The study of Bely's symbolist literary theory in Russian criticism has deepened and expanded.

Firstly, monographs on theater criticism have appeared, with the Romanian literary historian, translator and professor of Russian literature T.Niculescu (Татьяна Николёску 1923-) detailing Bely's dramatic adaptation of the novel and related symbolist theater theory in his monograph *Andrey Bely and the theater* (1995), arguing that his theory foresaw the development of art. The theater was a fundamental necessity for the Symbolists. For Andrey Bely, and for the younger generation of symbolists, theater was divine and life-building, the best means of reflecting reality and achieving the sacred goals of art [23], making Bely an important critic of symbolist theater. The contemporary Russian scholar O.R.Temirshina in his research monograph *Typology of symbolism: Andrey Bely and modern poetry* (2012), fully presents Bely's poetics typical of the symbolist world model, emphasizing his innovative significance in the construction of the field of symbolist poetics.

Secondly, with regard to the influence and character of Bely's symbolist criticism, the article *Ibsen in the articles of Blok and Bely 1905-1908: To the problem of commenting on the prose of the Block* (2009) finds that between 1905 and 1908, Block and Bely linked Ibsen to the question of the path of modern art and artists, developing their respective symbolist literary criticism and calling for Russian art and artists to follow Ibsen's path, and Bely describes the future path of Russian symbolism and the current state and problems of literature, primarily through a comparative analysis of Ibsen's and Dostoevsky's creations. The essay presents the image of Bely as a critic who actively explored and tried to lead the development of Russian symbolist literature, both as an explorer of the path of symbolism and as a sharp and insightful literary critic. Afanasyeva M.C. (Афанасьева Маргарита Сергеевна) article *Typology of literary-critical portraits in Andrey Bely's books "Arabesques" and "Meadow Green"* (2016) is dedicated to revealing the genre specificity of Bely's literary-critical portraits, revealing Bely's views on the individuality of writers and symbolism, as well as his literary aesthetic and critical perspectives. The article demonstrates that Bely's aesthetic and critical approach influenced his contemporaries, and that he was able to seize on issues reflecting the trends of the times in his constant reflection on the course of modern literature and to pursue innovation in his critical approach. A 2001 dissertation, *Synthesis of arts in the theory and early work of Andrey Bely*, affirms that Bely was among the first in the history of Russian literary criticism to argue theoretically for the possibility of synthesising narratives. The author of the dissertation finds that the fact that Bely's idea of artistic synthesis was inherited and developed by theorists of Russian postmodernism and structural approaches to textual analysis has not been universally acknowledged by the critical community. The doctoral dissertation *Ways of forming the poetics of Andrey Bely's prose in the context of the discoveries of art in the first third of the XX century* (2015) further explores Bely's theory of symbolist criticism and points out the close relationship between the evolution of his approach to prose composition and the development of his poetics during the first third of the 20th century. The author argues that Bely's poetic studies in prose are distinctly expressionist, reflecting the techniques of Russian avant-garde art and profoundly influencing modern art, particularly film and theater. In reality, Bely's Gogol's mastery and Petersburg helped the Soviet film director and film theorist S.M. Eisenstein to create the modern concept of coloured sound cinema, realising the strong impression, shapeability, and astonishing power of the symbolist nuances (sections). [24] The Italian Belyan scholar O.Obukhova focused on the cinematic art element of Bely's critical theory—editing—at an international symposium on the 125th anniversary of Bely's birth, and argued that Bely highlighted the essential features of popular culture and popular literature in talking about the transformation of current culture into popular culture, and grasped the future trend of literature very accurately at the early stage of the emergence of popular culture. He also foresaw the future development of prose in his

view of the correlation between literature and film. [25] Bely was a faithful practitioner of his own theory, and some of his perceptions of the development of literature and culture were prescient and ahead of their time.

In the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the critical community continued to reflect on the previous studies of symbolism, and in this context, they began to study the influence and characteristics of Bely's symbolist criticism as a way to analyse and deconstruct Bely's theory of symbolism in depth.

Once again, Bely's literary theory of symbolism has become an important part of the study of creative identity and thought; for example, the Slavist and researcher of Gogol and Bely's work, Yuriyeva (Зоя Осиповна Юрьева, 1922–2000), in his monograph *Andrey Bely's Creative Cosmos* (2000), deciphers Bely's search for self-help in his prose and poetic writings. In his monograph *Andrey Bely's Creative Universe* (2000), he reads Bely's intention to find self-help in prose and poetry, arguing that Bely's theory of symbolism not only serves as an aid to the study of literary works, but also reveals itself as a study in its own right, with the critic Bely playing more of a self-help role.

A critical retelling of Bely's literary polemic on symbolism. The American linguist and translator of Russian literature, Malmstad John (1941–), speaking of the polemic against the hooliganism of the *Literary Gazette* in 1907, argues that Bely constantly countered the newspaper's wanton attacks and insults against Buriusov and others, and left in anger. But "we find in the dramatic disrespect with which Bely treated his close and sincere friends, the theatrical and the mystical intertwined to form this amazing talent, a talent which gives to all his works a moving duality that his theosophical and anthroposophical teachers are completely devoid of." [26] In a new historical context, the author details the critical attitude and position of Bely towards symbolist literature and his contemporaries in the literary polemic and the profound reasons behind it. A similar study is *Be Kind to Bely!...: Andrey Bely, protagonist of the early twentieth-century newspaper sketch* (2008), which describes Bely's positive response to a number of magazine sketches in the period in order to escape the embarrassment of being in those sketches and to defend his symbolist views. The author argues that critical attacks on Bely shifted increasingly from ridiculing the weaknesses of being an ordinary person and the fragmentary farces of personal and literary life to Bely's critical texts and literary creations, suggesting a shift in the critical community's attitude towards the critic Bely, whose literary criticism began to become the focus of critical attention. Bely was an indefatigable polemicist during the polemic period, often shuttling between the Petersburg and Moscow camps, to the point of being branded a traitor.

Andrey Bely: Searches and sketches (2007) contains a number of articles and political essays by Lavrov, L. V. The second part, *Articles from the archive of Andrey Bely*, and "Characteristics of contemporaries" by Andrey Bely *Andrey Bely's <Description of his Contemporaries>*, deals with Bely's symbolist literary criticism, both with a corrective effect, the former discussing Bely's polemical activities on mystical anarchism in the journal *Scales*, illustrating his interest in The former discusses Bely's polemical activity on mystical anarchism in *Scales* magazine, illustrating his two contrasting attitudes to mystical anarchism and to symbolism; the latter illustrates the corrective significance of his essay "Characteristics of contemporaries" which not only remedies the deficiencies of the earlier evaluation but also fleshes out Bely's literary criticism of contemporaries, in contrast to the sometimes overly subjective and ironic descriptions of contemporaries in his earlier memoirs. The two essays examine the ambivalence of Bely's literary criticism and present an image of a critic who is constantly self-correcting and reflective.

The essay *The Poetics of Russian Symbolism: Andrey Bely*. Publications, research (2002), an anthology monograph of Bely studies, notes that Bely speaks early on in *The magic of words of the realm beyond human consciousness as the object of creation*; discusses the purely lexical, symbolic property of the individual; and constructs literary texts and his own everyday. The 2013 book *The Death of Andrey Bely (1880–1934)* (2013) collects discussions of Bely's death and his recollections from contemporaries, later scholars, and Bely researchers abroad, summarises the life and work of

the critic Bely, and restores him more objectively. It presents the image of Bely as a critic who was both a genius and a madman.

In the post-Soviet period, Russian criticism began to deconstruct the literary criticism of Bely's symbolism, highlighting its combined traditional, modern, and avant-garde character and correcting some of his previous unfair assessments. Other aspects of Bely's studies have continued to integrate his critical perspective, bringing out more fully the image of the critic Bely, whose critical theories influenced technological innovations in popular culture such as film and photography, and thus received the attention of both modern criticism and the literary world. Although his assessment remains controversial, he has become the quintessential Russian symbolist critic, the prophet of the development of literature and popular culture, and the subject of much later attention, playing a role in the history of Russian literary criticism.

5. Summary

To sum up, this article constructs a research framework covering three stages and analyses his critical thought, polemical activities and the relationship between literary criticism and other types of creative works around the symbolist critic Bely and his literary criticism; in response to this analysis, it explores a comparative research method based on social and cultural backgrounds and literary development trends, sorting out the changes of the critic Bely in different periods and his. In this study, the influence of literary criticism and the changes in the image of Belyan critics over the past century are described. The result is that the image of the symbolist critic Bely has gone through a process of invisibility, incipient and complete, and his literary criticism has also gone through a process of interpretation, structure and deconstruction; Bely was a critic who insisted on the combination of tradition and innovation and was highly individual and original, so his criticism has been controversial in Russian criticism, while his image as a pioneer of the Russian symbolist trend and a leader of later trends has become increasingly popular. His image as a pioneer of the Russian symbolist trend and as a guide to later trends has been increasingly noted and affirmed. This work is an initial attempt to construct a more detailed and inspiring analysis of the evolution of the image of the critic Bely, and the perspective and novelty of the ideas offered need to be improved.

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