

INTRODUCTION

The Symposium *Velimir Chlebnikov (1885-1922): Myth and Reality* was held in Amsterdam, 4-6 September 1985, to commemorate the centennial of Chlebnikov's birth. It was the first major international conference ever devoted to this central figure of the Russian avant-garde.

Participants included scholars from Austria, France, Germany, Great Britain, Israel, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, the United States and Yugoslavia. Unfortunately, those invited from the Soviet Union did not have the possibility to attend the conference.

The studies collected in this volume testify to the recent significant increase in scholarly interest in Chlebnikov. The poet has always had devout admirers, but also many detractors who considered him an idiot and his work incomprehensible. Much of the Chlebnikov-reception is marred by this great difference in appreciation. Lately, however, the scales seem to have turned in favour of a more serious approach. Although a biography and a scholarly edition of Chlebnikov's works are still lacking (the poet is not even represented in the *Bol'shaja serija* of the *Biblioteka Poëta*), during the last ten years there has been a steady output of critical material on Chlebnikov which tries to define his role in Russian Futurism and to establish his position as one of Russia's major twentieth century poets. Among this critical material are studies by Soviet scholars, but also articles, books and dissertations by Western slavists.

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In most of the articles in this book the abbreviations SP,I-V and NP are used. They refer to Chlebnikov's *Sobranie proizvedenij*, Leningrad 1928-1933 and *Neizdannye proizvedenija*, Moskva 1940. A reprint of both these editions appeared as *Sobranie sočinenij I-IV*, München 1968-1972. The third volume of this edition contains the fifth volume of the Leningrad edition and a supplement of previously unpublished materials. This supplement is referred to as SS,III.

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