

Title: From Al'vek to Halbwachs: The posthumous legacies of Khlebnikov and Maiakovskii  
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A contemporary of Russian Futurism, the persecuted Soviet writer Varlam Shalamov recorded in his memoirs a literary evening at which the famous poet Vladimir Maiakovskii was publicly accused of stealing Velimir Khlebnikov's manuscripts in order to benefit from his legacy. The alleged accuser was a poet known as Al'vek (Iosif Solomonovich Israilevich: 1895-1943?). Al'vek claimed that Maiakovskii stole the manuscripts in order to publish them subsequently on his own behalf. Maiakovskii vigorously denied this bold accusation and informed the public that Khlebnikov's manuscripts, which had been at his disposal, resided with Roman Jakobson in order to be published by the Institute of Russian Literature in Prague.

This paper will explore the differences in Soviet 'discursive recognition' concerning these Russian Futurist poets. These differences mirror the Soviet reception of two prominent Symbolists: Andrei Belyi and Aleksandr Blok. The 'approved' Symbolist, Blok, was apparently preferred to the 'controversial' and 'perplexed' Belyi, who was less frequently published. In a remarkably similar fashion the 'good' Futurist, Maiakovskii, occupied a far better position than the 'problematic' Futurist, Khlebnikov, who was barely published in Soviet times.

Our understanding of the posthumous legacies of these poets depends largely on what we may call 'collective memory' using a post-durkheimian notion theorized by the French philosopher Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945). This concept differs from 'individual memory' since collective memory is shared, passed on and at the same time intentionally 'constructed' by the people who comprise the modern social habitus. Halbwachs' ideas were taken up by Jan Assman with the notion of 'communicative memory' (a variety of collective memory based on everyday communication) and by James E. Young who introduced 'collected memory' that championed memory as inherently fragmented, 'selectively collected' and, above all, peculiarly individualistic.

This paper will identify the authors' behavioral and publishing strategies within the context of the reigning Soviet social order, analyzing the ways they were assumed into the ever changing Soviet 'cultural memory'. I will demonstrate the significant inconsistencies in the strategic maneuvering of each author, and will dwell upon the possible reasoning for their successes and failures.

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