

Title: Anna Barkova's 1954 Love Lyrics in the Gulag
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Abstract:

This paper introduces and explores Anna Barkova's love poems of 1954, an exceptionally prolific time in her life—to judge by the texts that survive—during which she was incarcerated in the far northern Vorkuta camps. Her relationship there with Valentina Makotinskaia provided both the occasion for these poems and for their preservation: in a mix of both women's handwriting, they fill a series of notepads that were arrested (read: archived) by the KGB until the 1990s.

Although much of Barkova's surviving verse has been published since then, many love poems of this period have been passed over. Also unpublished are Makotinskaia's poems, many of them addresses and responses to Barkova: the remarkable parallel series so formed provides a rare account of intimacy in one of the darkest corners of Soviet history. I follow Catherine Brémeau and L.N. Taganov (1993) in ascribing seminal importance to Barkova's poetry of this period, in which several of her major themes culminate or undergo transformations that endure into the next (and final) two decades of her work.

The paper describes Barkova's poetic voice particularly in terms of modes of address and apostrophe: this cycle of poems is defined by the appearance of a particular form of poetic speech, directed both to her demonstrably present beloved and to the "eternity" of future readers. The direct address to the beloved both literalises and subverts the trope of apostrophe, which is theorised as the lyric mode *par excellence* (Johnson, Culler), by which absence is evoked and presence is textually generated. This emotionally intense and remarkably preserved poetic encounter provides a deep introduction to Barkova's verse, as well as contexts for research into 20th century women's poetry and Gulag literature more broadly.