

Title: Love in Calendrical Terms: Reading Mayakovsky's "About That"

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**Abstract:**

Vladimir Mayakovsky's poem "About That" was devoted to Lili Brik and was written during their self-imposed separation for two months from December 1922 to February 1923. The complexity and ambiguity of the poem preclude a detailed analysis from most of Western researchers. Soviet specialists, in turn, preferred not to analyze it at all in order not to slip into the 'forbidden zone' of 'the best Soviet poet's biography.' All researchers accept, however, that the poem cannot be understood without careful investigation of the circumstances surrounding its creation. In this paper I offer a reading of the poem while taking into account the two crucial extra-literary facts: creation of this work as an event in Maykovsky's public and private life, and its connection to real time and calendar.

While the primary reason for writing the poem was the poet's longing for his loved one, to understand it fully we must understand the reason for couple's parting. Their friends knew about their separation and it is described in abundance in their contemporaries' memoirs. These are the sources we must rely on, rather than reminiscences of Lili Brik, who is an unreliable witness in this case.

The fictional time of the poem corresponds with the time of its writing and the fictional events revolve around a Christmas celebration. The celebration itself becomes a symbol of circular time and society's adherence to traditional myths and concepts.