

Title: Maiden-Tsar and Tsar-Maiden: Solovyevian Eros in Tsvetaeva's Tsar-devitsa
Author: Karina McCorkle, University of California at Berkeley

Abstract:

This paper examines the parallels between Vladimir Solovyev's philosophical tract *The Meaning of Love* (*Smysl' lyubvi*, 1893) and Marina Tsvetaeva's poem-skazka "The Tsar-Maiden" (*Tsar-devitsa*, 1920). *The Meaning of Love* has primarily been seen as an influence on the Symbolists, but the romantic arc in "The Tsar-Maiden" is arguably modeled off what Solovyev presents as the erotic ideal: a union of man and woman into a single androgynous being, which, united by love, could transcend death and the material world. Solovyev's influence is best demonstrated through the ways in which the characters in the poem differ from their counterparts in the fairy tale of the same name, which is the text's most obvious progenitor. Tsvetaeva presents the Tsarevich and the Tsar-Maiden as an inversion of the traditional heterosexual couple, a hyperfeminine man and hypermasculine woman. Over the course of the poem, the two adopt each other's qualities, becoming so alike that the narrator believes the reader could not tell them apart. Although the poem ends before the two lovers become one, the ending is left open to this possibility, and it is strongly suggested that the Tsar-Maiden has taken refuge in an otherworld, i.e. transcended the earthly for the spiritual plane in which Solovyev's erotic ideal could occur. A Solovyevian reading of "The Tsar-Maiden" is in line with Tsvetaeva's interest in gender subversion, especially during the early twenties, and provides a philosophical framework in which to understand many of its idiosyncrasies, from its unusual characterization to its inconclusive ending.

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Solovyov, Vladimir. *The Meaning of Love*. Trans. Beyer Thomas R. : Lindisfarne, 1985. Print.

Tsvetaeva, Marina. *Tsar'-devitsa: Poema-skazka*. Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatelstvo, 1922. Print.