

Title: Dream and Reality: The Duality of Alexander Blok's Consciousness in "Stikhi o Prekrasnoi Dame"

Author: Zaur V. Agayev, Princeton University

The precise relationship of Alexander Blok's "Stikhi o Prekrasnoi Dame" (SPD) to reality and spirituality has always been elusive. The connection between poetry and reality is undeniably present in most of Blok's works, for he believed that the underlying substance of a poet's life should be reflected in his verse. Therefore, it is possible, in principle, to reconstruct the state of Blok's consciousness at the time by deciphering the language of "SPD."

Scholarship to date has succeeded in establishing two main paradigms for the interpretation of "SPD." The first one emphasizes the dominance of the mystical, "Solovievian" aspect of "SPD" over reality as the true theme of the collection. According to this paradigm, change and motion in "SPD" are primarily initiated from "above" or from "Her," and then descend upon the "liricheskii geroi" and everything that is below. Due to the divine nature of such motion, the protagonist/poet has no control over it, and therefore every change that occurs in him is only a response to the phenomena that originate from "above."

The second paradigm, on the other hand, denies the significance of the "otherworldly"/mystical aspect in "SPD" and claims the opposite: it is reality, and especially Blok's relationship with Lyubov' Dmitrievna Mendeleeva, that occupies the central part in "Stikhi o Prekrasnoi Dame." This essay will attempt to provide an interpretation that would link these paradigms together and to illustrate that already during the period of 1901-1902, when the original collection of "SPD" was created, Alexander Blok's consciousness was sharply divided between his desire to believe in and profess the "Solovievian" dream of Sophia and his need to represent the reality of the world, of which he was painfully aware.