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Transforming the Folktale: Gender Metamorphoses, Sexuality and Incest in Marina
Tsvetaeva's "The Tsar Maiden"

In July 1920 Russian poet Marina Tsvetaeva departed from lyrical explorations of her inner self and plunged herself into the world of Russian folk beliefs. Inspired by Aleksander Afanasiev's magic tale "The Tsar Maiden," Tsvetaeva completely rewrote the folktale, introducing dramatic changes to the original's form and content. Written in rhyming verse, Tsvetaeva's "The Tsar Maiden"; presents a substantially altered narrative that completely transforms the original Russian folktale. The set of characters the poet delineates in her literary recreation of the folktale undergo startling transformations that range from the reversal of gender roles to accentuated motifs of incest and the overt display of female sexuality.

Recent scholarly works published on the writings of Marina Tsvetaeva are mostly focused on her exilic poetry, the psychological aspects of her lyrics, and the poet's literary relationships with other influential writers. Most of the sources that provide details about the poet's reworking of "The Tsar Maiden" can be found in the bibliography below. Therefore, the main objective of this paper will be to illustrate how Tsvetaeva deviated from the original folktale, constructing a new diegetic space, devoted to the portrayal of gender metamorphoses and hyperbolized sexuality, aspects that are obviously absent from the narrative of the well-known Russian magic tale.

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