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HISTORY AND IDENTITY:

PUSHKIN AND

THE TIME OF TROUBLES

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HISTORY AND IDENTITY:

PUSHKIN AND

THE TIME OF TROUBLES

A Thesis Presented to the Graduate Faculty of

Dedman College

Southern Methodist University

in

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the degree of

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with a

Major in History

by

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History and Identity:
Pushkin and
The Time of Troubles

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Russian identity is a complicated subject. Discussions usually revolve around the extent to which Russia can be said to be European or not. The poet Alexander Pushkin, since the time of his death, has been a symbol of Russian identity and is seen to have articulated central components of Russian identity through works such as *The Bronze Horseman* and *Eugene Onegin*. However, Pushkin also addressed a critical era in the formation of Russian identity: the Time of Troubles. During this period Russian autocracy was strengthened and serfdom became further entrenched. This thesis will explore Alexander Pushkin's interpretation of the Time of Troubles.

Understanding Pushkin's view of Russian identity has been complicated by the fact that there are two versions of his historical play on the Time of Troubles. One version, *Boris Godunov,* is a tragedy and has been used to support the idea of Pushkin as a supporter of autocracy. The other, *Comedy about Tsar Boris and Grishka Otrepiev,* is a comedy and provides a contradicting view. The work of scholars has demonstrated that Pushkin's own view can best be understood as that reflected in the comedy, in which he presents a heroic Pretender and an active *narod.*

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Cultural and political identities are constructed over time and by nature contentious. Russian identity is particularly contentious due to the confluence of several factors: obscure historical origins, geographic position, and long-standing great power struggles. Debates over Russian identity are neither the product of the Petrine Reform nor the Revolutionary era, but part of a larger process of continual redefinition, along with the emergence and evolution of the Russian state and empire.[1] The intensity of these debates has increased over time. Disputes over Russia's cultural and political orientation amplified after Russia's ascension to European Great Power status during the reign of Peter the Great, with some rejecting and others embracing Westernizing reform. The debate intensified again during the nineteenth century due to the elimination of the Napoleonic threat and concurrent evolution of notions of political identities oriented around the nation and nationality.[2] Debates over Russia's cultural and political identity have been and continue to be heavily polarized along ideological lines, either embracing or repudiating Western political and cultural influences.

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[1] Nicholas Riasanovsky, *Russian Identities: A Historical Survey*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 4 – 5

[2] William Mills Todd, *Literature and Society in the Imperial Russia, 1800 – 1914,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 203; Paul Debreczeny, *Social Functions of Literature: Alexander Pushkin and Russian Culture,* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 225

From the late nineteenth century through to the present day, the dominant symbol of Russian identity has been nineteenth century poet Alexander Pushkin.[3] Pushkin's ascent to monumental status was by no means a certainty at the time of his death. Pushkin achieved and held his status for reasons that have less to do with his actual poetry and more to do with social and political developments.[4] Pushkin served as a constant fixture for evolving conceptions of Russian identity and values. Yet, Pushkin's own writings articulated a less polarized vision of Russian cultural identity.

This paper will assess how Pushkin, poet and historian, assessed the process of the Russian history and its implications for Russian identity. In particular, this paper will argue that though Pushkin was cultivated as Russia´s national poet, he directly challenged the idea of Russian nationality or *narodnost'*. In order to entertain these questions this paper will first review the origins of the identity disputes and the adoption of Pushkin as a national symbol. This will follow in the next two chapters. Pushkin will be seen to symbolize values and attitudes that he did not hold. Efforts to challenge the established image of the national poet have been viewed as acts of aggression against an entire population.

Pushkin most directly challenged the ideas of Autocracy and *Narodnost'* in his play *Boris Godunov*. *Boris Godunov* addresses a critical juncture in Russian history: the Time of Troubles, which led to the establishment of the Romanov dynasty in 1613. In addition, the Time of Troubles resulted in the strengthening of the pillars of Russian identity: Autocracy, Orthodoxy, and

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[3] Catherine Theimer Nopomnyshchy, "Introduction" in Abraham Tertz *Strolls with Pushkin*, trans. Nepomnyashchy, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 27

[4] Debreczeny, 245

Nationality.[5] An important, yet controversial aspect of this period is the identity of the pretender Dmitry. Dmitry's identity cannot be known with certainty and his image was darkened by the propaganda of his opponents, who portrayed him as a devil and sorcerer who defiled true Russian customs.[6] Pushkin departed from official historiography in depicting the Pretender Dmitry as a positive hero with the real support of the Russian people.[7] Chapter four will address Pushkin's portrayal of the Pretender Dmitry.

Significantly, in *Boris Godunov,* Pushkin also addresses the nature of the Russian people's support for the Pretender Dmitry. Autocracy was frequently justified by appealing to the lethargic and passive quality of the Russian people, who were incapable of understanding their political interests. Support was either coerced or blind obedience. In *Boris Godunov*, Pushkin portrayed a *narod* that was active and rational. Unfortunately, this portrayal of the Russian *narod* did not appear in the official, censored version of the play published in 1831. Chapter five will discuss Pushkin's controversial portrayal the *narod* in *Boris Godunov*.

This thesis concludes that though Pushkin has been cultivated as the national poet and embodiment of national ideals, the reality was much different. Instead the poet had a critical and subversive nature that is best illustrated in his 1825 *Comedy about Tsar Boris and Grishka Otrepiev.*

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[5] Chester Dunning, *Russia's First Civil War: the Time of Troubles and the Founding of the Romanov Dynasty,* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 464

[6] Dunning, 2001, 130 - 131

[7] Chester Dunning, "The Exiled Poet-Historian and the Creation of His *Comedy"* in Chester Dunning ed., *The Uncensored Boris Godunov: The Case for Pushkin's Original Comedy,* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 67 - 68

CHAPTER TWO

IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION AND RUSSIAN HISTORY

> "Pushkin's name immediately calls to mind the thought of a Russian national poet…Pushkin is an extraordinary phenomenon and perhaps the only manifestation of the Russian spirit…In him the Russian nature, the Russian soul, the Russian language, the Russian character are reflected with the same purity the same purified beauty in which a landscape is reflected on the convex surface of an optical glass." [8]

Quoted above are words written by Nikolai Gogol published in 1834, a few years prior to Pushkin's death. Defining Russian identity was a major concern for Russian writers and intellectuals in the 1830s. As of this time, Russian intellectuals had yet to take a major step in identity construction and establish a positive national myth. [9] A central figure with which to identify Russian society and culture was lacking also. Identifying a national bard to symbolize and articulate culture is the result of anxiety over national identity, which in turn was the result of several factors. Included among them are geographic location, long-term divergent paths of historical development, and short-term historical events like the victory of 1812 over Napoleon and the disappointment of the Decembrist Revolt in 1825. Typically, discussions of identity

[8] Quoted in Nepomnyashchy, 27

[9] Rozaliya Cherepanova, "Discourse on a Russian "Sonderweg": European models in Russian disguise" *Studies in East European Thought*, Vol. 62, No. 3/4, Crossing Boundaries: Russian Discourses on Culture (November 2010), 319

disputes in Russia focus on the nineteenth century and nationalism.[10] Yet, the project of identity building did not begin in the nineteenth century, nor did it originate as a movement of a people seeking to define themselves. Much of the process of identity creation in Russia has been top-down and reactionary and centering upon eighteenth century developments.[11]

Identity Creation from Above

Discussions of Russian identity are intertwined with the idea of *Sonderweg*, a separate and special path. The concept of a special path is debatable. One scholar has observed that the lingering preoccupation with Russian identity implies that both Russian and Europe have failed to identify real, fundamental differences between themselves, despite many statements to the contrary.[12] However, enough significant developmental differences do exist between Russia and Europe to make the idea of a *Sonderweg* appear plausible.

Frequently cited historical examples used to bolster claims of Russia's special path are delayed political development, isolation from European cultural and intellectual movements such as the Renaissance and Reformation, forced Westernization alongside the persistence of coerced servitude in the form of serfdom. The idea of a special path can have either positive or negative connotations. Either way, the idea of Russia's separate history is critical in disputes over Russian identity. Whether or not the special path is conceived positively or negatively, attempts at

[10] Luba Golburt, *First Epoch: The Eighteenth Century and the Russian Cultural Imagination*. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2014), 4

[11] Cherepanova, 318

[12] Cherepanova, 323

understanding Russian history revolve around understanding “what went wrong”, where the divergence really began or whether or not convergence was ever a real possibility.

Russia’s isolation from Europe during the era of Mongol domination in the thirteenth century partly explains the developing sense of separateness. The period of Mongol domination has been used to justify the view of Russia possessing a civilization distinct from the West. In reality, though, the Horde’s influence over Muscovy was less than Moorish influence in Spain. Muscovy was simply part of a large tribute network, intermittently raided, and regularly subject to heavy taxation.[13]

The idea of separateness can best be explained not by an action imposed from the outside, but from a choice made from the center of power: conversion to Christianity. The state mandated conversion to Orthodox Christianity and not Roman Catholicism had profound implications for the development of Russian identity in the long-term. In an era when identity was defined not by language or monarch, but by religion and membership in a sacred community, the Russian state and culture could only be perceived as separate from Western Europe under the Catholic Church. For example, the seventeenth century French historian, Jacques Margeret, in his work on the Time of Troubles in Russia, explained that his work would help “remove the false opinion held by many who believe that Christianity extends no further than Hungary.”[14] Embracing Orthodoxy instead

[13] Jack F. Matlock, Jr., “Russia, Europe, and ‘Western Civilization’” in Stephen Kotkin and Catherine Evtuhov, eds., *The Cultural Gradient: The Transmission of Ideas in Europe, 1789 – 1991*, (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003), 233

[14] Jacques Margeret, *The Russian Empire and Grand Duchy of Muscovy: A 17th Century Account,* trans. Chester Dunning, (Pittsburg: Pittsburg University Press, 1983), 3

of Roman Catholicism also later contributed to Russian suspicions of the West, and poor relations between Russia and Poland.[15]

The adoption of Orthodox Christianity by Prince Vladimir in 988 placed the Russian polity within the cultural and political boundaries of the legacy of Byzantium rather than Rome.[16] In addition, it is possible that without this acceptance of Orthodox Christianity, Russia may have embraced Islam instead. In embracing Orthodoxy, Prince Vladimir "chose to become the eastern flank of Christendom rather than an extension into Europe of non-Christian civilizations."[17] The fall of Constantinople in 1453 to the Ottoman Empire marks a turning point. Muscovy then became the professed protector of Eastern Orthodoxy.[18] When in the sixteenth century, the unity of Europe under the Catholic Church was broken by the Reformation, Orthodoxy could claim to have the monopoly on true Christian teaching and heritage.[19]

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[15] Nicholas Riasanovsky, *Russian Identities: A Historical Survey,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 20

[16] Both Slavophiles and Westernizers see Russia´s conversion to Orthodox Christianity as a defining moment in Russian history, separating Russia from the West. Russian Jesuit Ivan Gagarin disagreed and argued that the religious separation of Russia from the West was a gradual process only completed with the rise of Muscovy. Andrzej Walicki, ¨The Religious Westernism of Ivan Gagarin" in Catherine Evtuhov and Stephen Kotkin, eds., *The Cultural Gradient: The Transmission of Ideas in Europe, 1789 – 1991,* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 40

[17] Riasanovsky, 2005, 20

[18] Laurence Dickey, "The 'Geography of Salvation'", in Stephen Kotkin and Catherine Evtuhov, 25

[19] Jack F. Matlock, Jr. notes that while to scholars like Arnold Toynbee and Samuel Huntington, a core religion is the most important element in defining distinct civilizations, these scholars do not consider the rift between Catholics and Protestants to have caused a fundamental rift in Western Civilization. Yet, the schism between Rome and Constantinople in 1054 did. "Russia, Europe, and 'Western Civilization'" in Stephen Kotkin and Catherine Evtuhov, 231

The concept of the Third Rome, articulated by Pskovian monk Filofei in the 16th century, imagined Moscow as holy heir to the spiritual treasures of Rome and Constantinople, for two "Romes have fallen, but the Third stands fast; a fourth there cannot be."[20] Russia's special path in this understanding has divine origins and messianic implications, an idea appealing to the Slavophiles in the nineteenth century.[21] However, Russia's membership in the Orthodox Christian community resulted from a decision made by the state, not the people. Also, in the sixteenth century, Muscovy had appealed to the legacies of both the Golden Horde and Byzantine Christianity as justification for expansion. After the Time of Troubles and rise of the Romanov dynasty the Horde's legacy was left behind.[22]

Another major turning point in the construction of Russian identity is the process of Westernization undertaken early in the eighteenth century by Peter the Great. This cultural revolution was driven by military needs and state mandated.[23] Peter's reforms were wide ranging from the creation of a meritocracy in the Table of Ranks to simplifying the Russian alphabet. He brought the European print revolution to Russia and by his death Russia would have ten printing presses.[24] Much of the cultural reform was aimed at secularization, a process already begun in

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[20] Filofei quoted in Zara Martirosova Torlone, *Russia and the Classics: Poetry's Foreign Muse,* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 2009), 13

[21] Laurence Dickey, "The 'Geography of Salvation'", in Stephen Kotkin and Catherine Evtuhov, 15

[22] Michael Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500 – 1800*, (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2002), 222

[23] James Cracraft, *The Petrine Revolution in Russian Culture*, (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2004), 12; 158

[24] James Cracraft, *The Revolution of Peter the Great,* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 97

Europe. Peter's use of titles such as *Imperator* and his Roman style victory celebrations are small examples of a meaningful shift in emphasis. Conversion to Orthodox Christianity implied a rejection of the spiritual legacy of Rome, but Peter's cultural reform embraced the political legacy of Rome. Peter chose to embrace the secular legacy of Roman civilization as part of the process of cultural Westernization. The architectural principles utilized in constructing St. Petersburg were European and classical. The adoption of this heritage was a statement of equality with Europe. Both could claim the legacy of Augustus. Peter could do so by stressing the Romanov link to Ivan IV, who claimed descent from Rurik, who claimed descent from Augustus.[25]

Peter is also responsible for the creation of the Russian intelligentsia. The development of the Russian intelligentsia is often described in the context of the path to revolution. The intelligentsia in Russia are portrayed as outsiders in their own government and nation, and described as having grown up in isolation and opposition to the government, as European "in its occupations, its views, and it ways of thinking" and therefore conflicting with an Asiatic autocracy.[26] Andrzej Walicki has pointed out that this new class created by Peter´s Westernizing reforms became overly receptive to revolutionary ideas and during the reign of Catherine the Great were saturated with the ideals of the French thinkers who set the path for revolution.[27] Yet, intellectual culture in Russia during the eighteenth century supported state-driven priorities and was supported by the state.

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[25] Torlone, 2009, 15

[26] Boris Kagarlitsky, *The Thinking Reed: Intellectuals and the Soviet State, 1917 to the Present*, trans. Brian Pearce, (New York: Verso, 1988), 13

[27] Andrzej Walicki, ˙The Religious Westernism of Ivan Gagarin" in Catherine Evtuhov and Stephen Kotkin, 43

Before Peter's reform, Russian intellectual life was dictated by the Church and literature had an "equal appeal to all classes in society", because of their religious training. Peter's reform allowed the aristocracy to break away from the Church and create new forms of art and literature for their own audience.[28] While the cultural revolution of Peter the Great is often cited as having alienated the upper, literate classes from the rest of Russian society and causing the crisis of identity, Peter's reforms resulted in new articulations of Russian identity in the form of historical works. Vasily Tatishchev, who had served Peter the Great in the Foreign Office as well as governor of Astrakhan, wrote the first full history of Russia, *Russian History from the Earliest Times*. In this work, published in the 1760s, Tatishchev portrayed autocracy as the ideal form of governance in Russia.[29] This can be said to reflect the shift in conceptualizing identity from religious terms to secular and political terms in post-Westphalia Europe.

Catherine, who reigned from 1762 to 1796, furthered the creation of Russian identity by extending the process of seeking Russia's history. She mandated historical projects, as seen in her 1783 order directing Count Andrei Petrovich Shuvalov to oversee the completion of notes concerning ancient history relevant to Russia. Further, Catherine herself participated in constructing Russia's history through her *Historical Notes* and historical dramas.[30] Catherine the Great focused her creative energies on works that demonstrated the strength and justice of the autocratic regime. Works expressing anti-autocratic viewpoints were suppressed.[31] In Russia,

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[28] George Vernadsky, *A History of Russia*, (New Haven: Bantam, 1961), 193

[29] Andrew Wachtel, *An Obsession with History: Russian Writers Confront the Past,* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 21

[30]Wachtel, 31

[31] For example, the 1789 *Vadim of Novgorod* by Yakov Kniaznhnin. Dunning, Chester ed., *The Uncensored Boris Godunov: The Case for Pushkin's Original Comedy,* (Madison: University of

identity creation began as a top-down endeavor with rulers taking direct and influential roles, though to a significantly limited audience, the court. Two things are significant about the focus of these top-down historical endeavors from both Peter and Catherine: the use of secular political concepts and the emphasis on the legitimacy of autocracy that was, according to Catherine and others, a proven fact of Russian history.

The process of identity construction continued in the nineteenth century, after Absolutism had been embraced by the rulers of Russia, who saw themselves as the enlighteners of their people.[32] Alexander I appointed Nikolai Karamzin as the official state historian. In 1812, Karamzin composed his *Memoir on Ancient and Modern Russia* for Alexander I, in which he encouraged the tsar not to move away from the autocratic principle: “Autocracy founded and resuscitated Russia. Any change in her political constitution has led in the past and must lead in the future to her perdition, for she consists of very many and very different parts, each of which has its own special civic needs; what save unlimited monarchy can produce in such a machine the required unity of action.”[33]

Wisconsin Press, 2006), 58; Catherine supported the Norman theory because it can be used to justify the rule of an outsider like herself, Wachtel, 1994, 25; Also Johann August von Kotzbue was forced by the Russian government to change the title of his play, *Demetrius Iwanowitsch. Zaar von Moscau,* removing the word ‘zaar’ lest it suggest that Dmitry was anything but a pretender. Dunning, 2006, 72

[32] It has been noted that in the West the rise of absolutism and the creation of civil society went together and rested on an unwritten constitutionalism. Malia, 1999, 27; James Cracraft discusses the promulgation of an absolutist theory similar to Bossuet found in *Pravda voli monarshe vo opredelenii nas lednika derzhavy svoei.* Cracraft, 2003, 66

[33] Karamzin in Richard Pipes, *Karamzin’s Memoir on Ancient and Modern Russia: A Translation and Analysis,* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 139

Karamzin also published the *Istoriia rossiiskogo gosudarstva* in twelve volumes from 1818 to 1826. In this work, the true force of progress in Russia is shown to be the tsarist state.[34] Like Catherine, he too held history to have a moral and educative purpose. However, his historical writing reached a broader audience. History, according to Karamzin, demonstrates that when Russia embraces autocracy, she embraces stability and civilization. Moving away from autocracy, is a move into chaos. Such ideas echo conservatives ideologies found in Western Europe advocating traditional monarchy like Louis de Bonald, who held that society returned to savagery when Christianity and monarchy were abandoned.

Karamzin's historical works not only justified the merits of an autocratic regime and underscored the dangers of moving away from autocracy, but also commented on the reign of Peter the Great. While placing Peter's achievement in the broader context of centralizing project undertaken by the Muscovite princes, he described the fatal mistake of Peter as having failed to "realize that the national spirit, constitutes the moral strength of the states."[35] Peter's ridicule of native customs had long term implications for both people and regime. Peter's reform is described as having been accomplished through "tortures and executions."[36] The founding of the new capital was "on tears and corpses."[37] Further, criticizing the activities of his contemporaries stating that prior to the eighteenth century it was inconceivable for "a Russian lord, who owed everything to

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[34] Wachtel, 36; The publication of Karamzin's work was an event. Pushkin wrote that Karamzin "discovered ancient Russia as Columbus discovered America." Quoted in Wachtel, 47

[35] Karamzin, trans. Pipes, 2005, 121

[36] Karamzin, trans. Pipes, 2005, 124

[37] Karamzin, trans. Pipes, 2005, 126

his fatherland, gaily to abandon his tsar forever, in order to sit in Paris, London, or Vienna, and calmly read in the newspapers of the perils confronting our country."[38]

Later on, Nicholas I, who reigned from 1825 to 1855, also conceived of himself as an enlightened autocrat whose duty it was to educate his people and himself sponsored artists, writers, and scientists.[39] Nicholas appointed Alexander Pushkin as his official court historian. However, in the nineteenth century constructing identity required more than religious or political concepts. It was critical to identify the nation or essence of the people. For Nicholas and his supporters the essence of the Russian people was their devotion to autocracy. Identity construction in the nineteenth century was no longer a purely top-down process, but a task undertaken separately by educated elite and government. Against this background, the regime singled out the three defining concepts of Russian identity: Orthodoxy, not Catholicism; Autocracy, not parliamentary institutions; and Nationality found in communal traditions, not individualism of capitalist West.[40] Official Nationality was formally articulated by Education Minister Serge Uvarov in 1832 and was cultivated at universities and permeated Nicholas's domestic and foreign policy.[41] While parts of this formula were embraced by the Slavophile movement, it too originated at the top.

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[38] Karamzin, trans. Pipes, 2005, 124

[39] Cherepanova, 327

[40] Cherepanova, 315; Martin Malia observed that Nicholas championed absolute monarchy at a time out of synch with Western Europe. Nicholas's Russia was a European state of the past, a European Old Regime. *Russia Under Western Eyes: From the Bronze Horseman to the Lenin Mausoleum,* (Cambridge: Belknap, 1999), 139

[41] Nicholas Riasanovksy, "'Nationality' in the State Ideology during the Reign of Nicholas I" in *The Russian Review*, Vol. 19, No. 1, (Jan., 1960), 38

Reactionary Nature of Russian Identity Construction

Regardless of where the special path begins, it can be understood as reactionary. The identity debate in Russia and the concept of a special path are both reactions to events and processes occurring in Europe.[42] Political and economic development resulted in a geographic shift of power that reflected significant political and economic shifts of power from Southern Europe and the Mediterranean to North West Europe and the Atlantic. [43] Modernization leads to crises in identity that invite new understandings of identity, creating an environment where the idea of a special path is highly attractive. Identity crises, then, are not to be understood as problems unique to industrial societies.[44]

If the construction of European identity occurred during the Enlightenment, and the unifying source of identity could no longer be found in the idea of Christendom, secular notions of rational civilization came to the foreground. Here, the issue of religious affiliation is not just relevant for articulating Russian identity internally, but externally as well. This similarity, and yet difference in the form of Christianity, allowed for Russia to be considered almost an equal. In the eighteenth century, Russia provided the chaotic backdrop against which the orderly, rational, and humanitarian Europe could be contrasted.[45] The link of Christianity made Russia a more suitable

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[42] Cherepanova, 318

[43] Vesa Oittinen, "Russian 'otherness': from Chaadaev to the present day", in Alapuro, Risto, Mustajoki, Arto, and Pesonen, Pekka, eds. *Routledge Advances in Sociology: Understanding Russianness.* (Florence: Routledge, 2011), 70

[44] Cherepanova, 316

[45] Cherepanova, 318

partner than the Ottoman Empire.[46] Orthodox Russia was different but fundamentally similar, allowing the concept to be flexible according to the need of the situation. Russia could at different times be a member of the European community of states, and an outsider.[47] Chinese and Arabic civilization would not fit neatly into this construction because of the high level of advancement at a time when European civilization was beset by instability, warfare, and cultural backwardness in the Middle Ages.

Enlightenment European opinions of Russia frequently described the lack of order and the political backwardness.[48] For example, enlightened Absolutist Frederick the Great, admitting that Prussia had not yet attained the civilized standard of Bourbon France, referred to Russia as semi-barbaric.[49] As the Enlightenment discourse developed, the image of Russia became increasingly backward and barbaric so that European thinkers in the nineteenth century could refer to Russia as a "bloody mass of Mongol servitude."[50] Also increasing in direct proportion to the concept of a civilized and rational Europe, was the idea of Russia's distinctiveness.

In the nineteenth century, the failure of Russia to adopt a constitutional monarchy, a more rational form of governance, in 1825 seemed to affirm the separateness and special path of Russian development.[51] The Decembrists in 1825 demanded an accountable constitutional government,

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[46] Malia, 1999, 41

[47] Cherepanova, 318

[48] Oittinen, 72

[49] Malia, 1999, 36

[50] Karl Marx, *Revelations of the Diplomatic History of the Eighteenth Century*,1899, quoted in Oittinen, 72

[51] Oittinen, 72

like that of Western Europe. However, it is unlikely that their cause would have ever succeeded as Nicholas's brother, Constantine, whose accession the Decembrists championed, was every bit as reactionary as Nicholas. Further, Constantine felt that the government was in fact not harsh enough toward the Decembrists. [52]

Though Catherine the Great took initiative for developing and extending historical consciousness in Russia, her efforts too can be understood as reactionary. In the preface to the 1783 *Notes Concerning Russian History,* Catherine wrote that these were "composed for our youth at a time when books calling themselves histories of Russia have been appearing in foreign languages. But these books should really be called biased creations, since every page bears witness to the hatred with which they were written." [53] Catherine was reacting to Enlightenment portrayals of Russia.

Catherine's reign produced Russia's first "intelligent" and social critic, Nikolai Novikov. Novikov engaged the monarch in journalistic debate. He attacked what he saw as vices of the aristocracy and a slavish devotion to things French. Novikov looked to Russia's own ancient history and culture, not questioning autocracy or serfdom.[54] Other late-eighteenth century Russian writers voiced criticism of the European orientation of the government and upper classes. Denis Fonvizin held Paris to be a center of decadence and French philosophers to be hypocritical and

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[52] Nicholas Riasanovksy, *Nicholas I and Official Nationality,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959), 37

[53] Quoted in Wachtel, 24

[54] Pipes,1974, 256 – 258

materialistic.[55] Historian Mikhail M. Shcherbatov wrote of the corruption of morals and satirized the reforms of Peter the Great in his 1784 *Journey to the Land of Ophir*.[56] Common to these writers is an anti-European focus. True virtue was to come from the natural and religious customs of the Russian people.

By Pushkin's time, by the reign of Nicholas I, Russia had finally produced an educated elite "so bold as to demand, in the persons of the Decembrists, that tsarism liberalize with the times."[57] However, their failure illustrated the unwillingness of the regime to adapt. Instead, Nicholas I aimed at strengthening the autocracy, which he saw as the preservation of order in a chaotic Europe. He believed he was preserving the spirit of Peter in the autocratic principle. Worth remembering is the fact that according to the theory of absolutist rule embraced by Peter and Nicholas, the monarch is morally bound to serve the common good.

In the nineteenth century, the identity debates can also be described as reactions to external and internal factors. Externally, the impact of Napoleon and Napoleon's invasion of Russia provided fuel to the construction of Russian identity. Success in the Napoleonic wars appeared to both vindicate the autocratic regime and increased the desire for social reform. Liberal and Romantic principles supported social reform. Yet, the failure of Russia to adopt a constitutional monarchy after 1825 led to pessimistic formulations of Russia's history.

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[55] Orlando Figes, *Natasha's Dance a Cultural History of Russia*, (New York: Picador, 2002), 63 – 65

[56] Figes, 59

[57] Malia, 1999, 139; the author further refers to this as the "cruel paradox" of Nicholas's reign, the emergence of creative European culture is what caused the divorce of Russia from Europe.

Pyotr Chaadaev, influenced as much by Romanticism[58] as by Christianity's formulation of mission driven history, wrote that Russian did

> "not belong to any of the great families of the human race; we are neither of the West nor of the East, and we have not the tradition of either. Placed, as it were, outside time, we have not been touched by the universal education of the human race…What is the life of man, says Cicero, if memory of earlier events does not relate the present to the past? But we, who have come into the world like illegitimate children, without a heritage, without any ties binding us to the men who came before us on this earth, carry in our hearts none of the lessons preceding our own existence…"[59]

Chaadaev's *Eight Philosophical Letters*, which were never published in his lifetime but circulated in manuscripts, opened the long debate between Westernizers and Slavophiles.[60] They also earned him a declaration of insanity from the Tsar himself.

Just as Europe could define itself in contrast to Russia. Russia could also be defined in contrast to the West. After the July Revolution and the Polish Revolt of 1830, the tsarist government became the Gendarme of Europe. Opponents of Chaadaev's critique of the Russian

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[58] It is unknown for sure when Chaadaev read Guizot. However, it is possible that his *Philosophical Letters* was, at least partially, a reaction to Guizot's framework for evaluating civilizations. Catherine Evtuhov, "Guizot in Russia", in Stephen Kotkin and Catherine Evtuhov, 58

[59] Chaadaev, quoted in Torlone, 2009, 11; a sentiment echoed by twentieth century British historian J. A. R. Marriott who stated that "Russia is not, and has never been, a member of the European family." Quoted in "Russia, Europe, and 'Western Civilization'", in Stephen Kotkin and Catherine Evtuhov, 229

[60] Andrzej Walicki, ˙The Religious Westernism of Ivan Gagarin" in Catherine Evtuhov and Stephen Kotkin, 35; the author discussed the influence of Chaadaev on Prince Ivan Sergeevich Gagarin who not only embraced Catholicism by joined the Jesuit Order. While Chaadaev held that Russia's embrace of Orthodoxy cut her off from Europe and history, Gagarin argued that Russia had a true, Catholic past and could find her true identity through reconnecting to the Catholic Church. While Chaadaev held a positive view of Peter the Great, Gagarin's view was more critical, 45.

system, encompass another articulation of Russian identity: the Slavophile movement that included such thinkers as Ivan Kireevsky, Alexei Khomiakov, and Konstantin Aksakov. The Slavophiles, echoing earlier writers such as Denis Fonvizin and historian Mikhail Shcherbatov, articulated wariness of the Western path and harped on the spiritual poverty and materialism of the West. European history was the unfolding of "perverse spiritual principles".[61] Liberal political ideals led to instability and turbulence. Peace and stability could be found by embracing the patriarchal culture of the Orthodox peasant *mir*, and not Western political ideas or culture.

In the Slavophile vision, Russianness is not only a difference in nationality, but in rationality, as Vesa Oittinen observed.[62] It is a rejection of Enlightenment principles of rationality, hence the persistence of Orthodoxy as a critical part of Russian identity.[63] Further, the Slavophile movement blurred the distinction between the secular and spiritual realm, instead advocating a vision of salvation on earth that set the precedent for later radical and communist ideas. The Slavophiles, who in general accepted the three pillars of Official Nationality were a Russian rendition of revolutionary nationalisms present in the nineteenth century, as Walicki noted.[64]

Counter to the Slavophiles, who idealized religion and the peasantry, were the Westernizers. In addition to Chaadaev, Westernizers included such thinkers as Alexander Herzen, Mikhail Bakunin, and Vissarion Belinsky. This school of thought is diverse and united only its

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[61] Nicholas Riasanovsky, *Russia and the West in the Teaching of the Slavophiles: A Study in Romantic Ideology,* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), 91

[62] Oittinen, 80

[63] Richard Pipes, "The Historical Evolution of the Russian Intelligentsia", *Daedalus,* Vol. 89, No. 3, The Russian Intelligentsia (Summer, 1960), 487 – 502

[64] Andrzej Walicki, ˙The Religious Westernism of Ivan Gagarin" in Catherine Evtuhov and Stephen Kotkin, 44

opposition the doctrines of the Slavophiles.[65] Members of this circle are noted for having embraced Western modes of thought and institutions. They adopted a critical approach to religion and politics.[66] Vissarion Belinsky, for example, held that

> "Russia sees her salvation not in mysticism or aestheticism or piety, but in the achievements of education, civilization, and humane culture. She has no need of sermons (for she has heard too many), nor of prayers (she has mumbled too many), but of the awakening in the people of a feeling of human dignity, lost for so many ages in the mud and filth. It needs laws and rights in accordance not with the teachings of the Church, but those of common sense and justice…"[67]

Where Slavophiles vilified Peter the Great and his reform, Westernizers praised him.

The government's articulation of Russian identity in Nicholas's Official Nationality incorporate ideas from both schools of thought. Like the Slavophiles, Official Nationality holds that the Russian people are unique and spiritually superior to the West.[68] But, like the Westernizers, Official Nationality holds that the nation is embodied in the person of the Absolute monarch who has perfected Peter's accomplishment of establishing European absolute monarchy in Russia.[69]

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[65] Some westernizers advocated limiting autocracy and the abolition of serfdom. Others, like Herzen and Bakunin, were more radical and embraced peasant socialism. Malia, 1999, 143

[66] Pipes, 1974, 268 – 269

[67] Vissarion Belinsky quoted in Berlin, *Russian Thinkers,* (London: Penguin Books, 1960), 172

[68] Nicholas Riasanovksy, "'Nationality' in the State Ideology during the Reign of Nicholas I" in *The Russian Review*, Vol. 19, No. 1, (Jan., 1960), 45

[69] Richard Wortman, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy from Peter the Great to the Abdication of Nicholas II,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 120 - 141

In conclusion, the problem of Russian identity is one that precedes the revolutionary activity of the twentieth century, the perceived backward political structure of Nicholas I, and the reforms of Peter the Great. The identity question is a reflection of the power politics that have existed since the creation of the Russian polity and have altered in response to changing notions of state structures and political identification. The characterization of Russia as non-Western, or non-European has served European political needs first and then been adopted and cultivated by Russian intellectuals, who often present an image not a Russia equal to Europe, but a Russia that is inherently superior and occupying a higher plane of moral existence. The terms of the identity disputes have been dictated by Russian reactions to European ideas.

During the nineteenth century, identity debates became particularly heated and pressing due to a combination of circumstances, the success of 1812, which seemed to validate the Russian system; nationalism and the need to define a "people". Combining all of these factors was the late development of a public literary arena for discussion of such issues and a growing historical consciousness developed by nineteenth century Russian writers, who in general had polarized ideas about Russian identity.

CHAPTER THREE

PUSHKIN THE SYMBOL

Веленью божию, о муза, будь послушна
Обиды не страшась, не требуя венца,
Хвалу и клевету приемли равнодушно,
И не оспаривай глупца.
To God and his commands pay Thou good heed, O Muse.
To praise and slander both be nonchalant and cool.
Demand no laureate's wreath, think nothing of abuse,
And never argue with a fool.[70]

Alexander Pushkin was born in 1799 to an aristocratic family that had lost influence and wealth, yet maintained the outward appearances of their station. Pushkin was never particularly close to either of his parents and was more at home at school. From 1811 to 1817 he was educated at the Lycee in Tsarskoe Selo, which was the most progressive educational institution in Russia. Pushkin was part of its first class. Emperor Alexander I presided over his final examination in 1817. During these years he developed superb command of French and was introduced to classical and neoclassical writers. Though he was intelligent, he was never more than a mediocre student and graduated at the bottom of his class.[71] At Lycee, Pushkin became a member of the Arzamas

[70] Pushkin, *Exegi Monumentum*

[71] David Bethea and Sergei Davydov, "Pushkin's life" in Kahn, Andrew ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Pushkin*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, 11 – 13

Society of Obscure Men. This literary society of like-minded friends was dedicated to furthering Russian literary endeavors. Members of Arzamas include the Turgenev brothers Alexander and Nikolai, Nikita Muraviev, as well as Nikolai Karamzin. Members of the Arzamas society were followers of Karamzin, before he articulated a very different view of Russian history. They were critical of conservatism and serfdom. Their meetings and rituals were full of parody, ridiculing the meetings of the conservative literary society, the Lovers of the Russian Word or *Beseda*, as well as other religious rituals. The comic tone and ideas of Arzamas were subversive.[72] Pushkin was actually the first among the Arzamas Society to be subject to punitive action by the regime in response to his political ideas found in the 1820 poem *Ode to Liberty*, whose title referred the work of the seditious challenger of serfdom Alexander Radishchev.[73] The main points of Pushkin's criticism were directed at unlimited autocracy, the institution of serfdom, and the complicity of Alexander I in his father's assassination. Several members of this society went on to participate in the Decembrist revolt. Pushkin did not.

At the time of the Decembrist Revolt Pushkin was in exile for his *Ode to Liberty*. He had been exiled to the southern provinces of Kishinev and Odessa from 1820 to 1824, after which he was sent to his family estate at Mikhailovskoe where he was still under surveillance and scrutinized.[74] If not for the intercession of people like his mentor Nikolai Karamzin, and friends Vasily Zhukovsky and Pyotr Chaadaev (members of his circle in the Arzamas Society), Pushkin

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[72] Joe Peschio, *The Poetics of Impudence and Intimacy in the Age of Pushkin,* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013), 34

[73] Dunning, 2006, 55 -57

[74] David Bethea and Sergei Davydov, in Kahn, Andrew ed., 14 – 17

may have found himself exiled to Siberia. The degree of the punishment is an indication that Tsar Alexander did in fact fear the influence of Pushkin's ideas. [75] Exile provided him the opportunity to study and appreciate that his family had long included rebels and dissidents[76]: *Противен мне род Пушкиных мятежный.*[77]

Upon returning to Moscow in 1826 Pushkin was given an audience with Tsar Nicholas. It is said that at this meeting the two men came to a truce, Pushkin admitting that he would have taken part in the Decembrist Revolt and Nicholas accepting. Nicholas would be Pushkin's personal censor, while Pushkin agreed not to "contradict the accepted order."[78] Pushkin was also placed under the supervision of police-chief General Benckendorff. In 1831, Pushkin was appointed official Court Historiographer to Nicholas I and commissioned to write a history of Peter the Great. While Pushkin appreciated the opportunity to research in the official archives, he did not enjoy life as a courtier.

Pushkin's life ended on January 29, 1837, due to wounds received from a duel with Frenchman Georges D'Anthes, who was serving in the Russian guard. This duel was caused by an insult to his wife's honor. On November 4, 1836 Pushkin had received an anonymous letter stating that he had been appointed to a new post: Deputy Grand Master and Historiographer of the

[75] Dunning, 2006, 57

[76] Dunning, 2006, 60

[77] "How I hate this rebel clan of Pushkins". А. С. Пушкин, *Комедия,* Сцена 11.

[78] Quoted in David Bethea and Sergei Davydov, 18

Most Noble Order of Cuckholds. Copies of this letter had been sent to several of his friends. Pushkin responded by challenging D'Anthes to a duel.[79]

Pushkin spent his final days in excruciating pain and opium induced hallucinations. His death was a public event. Thousands of people in St. Petersburg came to mourn the passing of the poet and view the body in his home. The government felt it necessary to move Pushkin's funeral to a smaller church and have the area barricaded by police.[80] Sergei Uvarov, Minister of Education, expressed frustration that Pushkin's death occasioned such displays of public emotion. After all he was a poet, not statesman or military leader.[81] Pushkin would soon rise to becomes the recipient of public affection and remain as such. Prior to Pushkin' death, he composed *Exegi Monumentum,* appropriating the Horatian Ode for himself: *Я помятник себе воздвиг нерукотворный/ К нему не заростет народная тропа.*[82]

Pushkin as a Symbol of Identity

Though the process of identity construction discussed in the previous chapter is seen to be top-down and reactionary, the same cannot be said for the adoption of Pushkin as a national symbol. This occurrence did not originate from the center of power, but initially originated from

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[79] David Bethea and Sergei Davydov, 22

[80] David Bethea and Sergei Davydov, 23

[81] Nepomnyashchy, 36

[82] *I've raised a monument to myself not built by human hands/*
The public path to it cannot be overgrown. Pushkin, *Exegi Monumentum*

the intelligentsia's search for a national symbol. However, the state managed to reassert control over shaping national identity. By the end of the nineteenth century the government recognized the importance of Pushkin as a national symbol, who had previously been adopted by liberals and radicals. The tsarist regime then utilized Pushkin for its own ends, promoting unity and loyalty to the state domestically and advertising cultural achievement internationally.[83] This process was repeated by successive regimes. Pushkin maintained his position in each one. The poet of freedom, became enslaved to a series of national myths, and "not one of Pushkin's admirers would allow you to be free of Pushkin himself."[84] His image would be "refracted as every hue of the rainbow."[85] He became the Holy Spirit of Russian Culture. [86] Pushkin and his works have been kept alive by interaction of cultural processes, filtration and adaption, social circumstances, psychological needs

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[83] Several works trace the creation of the national poet myth: Marcus C. Levitt, discusses the Pushkin image created by Dostoevsky and Turgenev and literary elites and its implications for Russian culture in *Russian Literary Politics and the Pushkin Celebration of 1880*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989); Paul Debreczeny, utilizes psychological approaches to explore the reception of Pushkin among readers and their responses in *Social Functions of Literature: Alexander Pushkin and Russian Culture,* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); Stephanie Sandler, studies how Pushkin serves as an object of affection in *Commemorating Pushkin: Russia's Myth of a National Poet*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004)

[84] Tatiana Tolstaya, *Pushkin's Children: Writings on Russia and Russians,* trans. James Gambrell. (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2003), 83

[85] Sergei Davydov, "The Evolution of Pushkin's Political Thought", in Bethea, David M., ed. *Pushkin Handbook*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 238

[86] С. Г. Бочаров, «Из Истории Понимания Пушкина» in Bethea, David M., ed. *Wisconsin Center for Pushkin Studies: Pushkin Handbook*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 352 - 363

and the political need for a national symbol.[87] Stephanie Sandler has observed that Pushkin retains place in the cultural imagination because of his ability to be “our” Pushkin and “my Pushkin.”[88]

Calls for a national poet came as early as the 1820s. Slavophil Ivan Kireevsky in the late 1820s, said that the national poet must embody the age. Poetry in and of itself is insufficient, he says, “it is also necessary to have been raised, as it were, in the midst of the nation’s life and to have shared in the fatherland’s hopes, aspirations, and passions- in short to live its life and to express it spontaneously while expressing oneself…”[89] Ivan Kireevsky marks the first attempt to elevate Pushkin to national poet.

Others did not agree. For example, social and literary critic, Westernizer Vissarion Belinsky did not think Pushkin an appropriate candidate for Russia’s national poet. To him, Pushkin belonged to an era whose primary task was the imitation and translation of European models. Further, though he does admit that the works of Pushkin “reveal the Russian soul, the clear and positive Russian mind and strength and depth of feeling”, foreigners will not be able to appreciate or comprehend this because the “Russian nationality is not yet sufficiently fashioned and developed for the Russian poet to place its sharply defined stamp upon his works.”[90] In

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[87] Paul Debreczeny, *Social Functions of Literature: Alexander Pushkin and Russian Culture,* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 245

[88] Stephanie Sandler, “The Pushkin Myth in Russia” in Bethea, David M., ed. *Pushkin Handbook*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 403

[89] Ivan Kireevsky, “On the Nature of Pushkin’s Poetry”, in Debreczeny, Paul and Jesse Zeldin, ed. *Literature and National Identity: Nineteenth-Century Russian Critical Essays,* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970), 15

[90] Belinsky in Matlaw, Ralph E. *Belinksy, Chernyshevsky, and Dobrolubov: Selected Criticism,* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976, 12

contrast, the spirit of the nations of Western Europe are already sharply defined. In addition to this developmental setback, Belinsky also states that the poet "who is not called by his own name cannot be considered equal to the man by whose name he is called."[91] However, Belinsky is responsible for popularizing the idea of Pushkin as the father of Russian literature.[92] This idea is a critical component to the Pushkin myth. Stalin, in 1950, claimed that modern Russian language was "Pushkin's Russian".[93]

Property of the Literary Elite

The year 1880 marks a turning point in the evolution of the Pushkin myth. Here Pushkin officially became the national symbol of Russian culture, to whom a monument was erected.[94] A bronze statue in Moscow, it was the first statue erected to memorialize a literary figure in any Russian city. The choice of literary figure rather than military hero or politician reflected the shift in conceptualizing identity. The Pushkin Days of 1880 were led by the literary elite who cultivated the sense of making history, referring to the occasion as an event of "huge importance for the history of our development and culture"[95] and "a profound historical revolution in Russian life,

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[91] Belinsky in Matlaw, 15

[92] Berlin, 158

[93] Quoted in Wendy Slater, *The Patriot's Pushkin,* Slavic Review, Vol. 58, No. 2, pp. 407 – 427, (Summer 1999), 416

[94] Slater, 412

[95] *Golos*, quoted in Marcus C. Levitt, *Russian Literary Politics and the Pushkin Celebration of 1880,* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 1

comparable to Russia's conversion to Christianity or Peter the Great's forced Westernization."[96] This event was to be a resolution to the opposition between state and increasingly radicalized nation, putting forth a position of compromise.[97] It was an activity of the public, of society separate from the state and the radical intelligentsia. An indication that the era of Russian absolutism was nearing an end. Celebrating Pushkin was akin to an exercise in self-rule.[98]

Pushkin was made into the ultimate Russian in the speeches of F. Dostoevsky and I. S. Turgenev.[99] These speeches each represent different angles on the Pushkin myth. Turgenev's modest appraisal focused on Pushkin's significance with respect to his role in the creation of a poetic and literary language for the Russian people. This was, in his mind, a necessary step towards establishing a literary tradition.[100] Here he disavowed the literary traditions of the eighteenth century as inauthentic, European imports. Turgenev refrains from comparing Pushkin with the great poets and writers of the Western world, such as Schiller, Cervantes, or Shakespeare. Dostoevsky's position was that Pushkin certainly cannot be compared to those poets because he is superior to them.

Dostoevsky was last to speak. For Dostoevsky, it was Pushkin's universality and pan-human qualities that mark his superiority and signal his messianic calling.[101] Summarizing the

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[96] Konstanin Leontiev, quoted in Levitt, 1 -2

[97] Levitt, 1989, 8

[98] Levitt, 1989, 10

[99] Stephanie Sandler, "The Pushkin Myth in Russia" in Bethea, David M., ed. *Pushkin Handbook*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 407

[100] Forty years earlier, Belinsky had praised Karamzin for doing just that. Matlaw, 3

main points of his speech Dostoevsky wrote that Pushkin arrived fortuitously as “we were just beginning to be conscious of ourselves” and that with his “purely Russian heart” was first to diagnose the pathological separation of the educated classes from the People, which Pushkin depicted in young men like Eugene Onegin, restless and alienated. But, Pushkin also provided Russia with artistic types of beauty, seen in the figure of Tatiana.

Further, Dostoevsky wrote that Pushkin has the unique ability to assume the form of the “geniuses of other nations” and that his universality was therefore also uniquely Russian, and a trait that Pushkin shares with his beloved People.[102] Dostoevsky by writing that

> “the greatness of Pushkin as a guiding genius lay precisely in the fact that he, surrounded almost entirely by people who did not understand him, so quickly found a sure path, a great solution which we Russians had been longing for, and showed it to us. This solution was nationality, turning to the People and bowing down to the truth of the Russian people…A Russian who fails to understand Pushkin has no right to call himself a Russian.”[103]

Dostoevsky went on to say how Pushkin understood the mission of the Russian people more deeply than any other and how he “testified to the universality and the all-embracing nature of the Russian spirit, thereby divining the future mission of the Russian genius within humanity as a whole as an all unifying, all-reconciling and all-regenerating principle.” Here Dostoevsky makes Pushkin sound like a Christ-figure, supposed to reconcile all peoples to himself.[104]

By 1887, fifty years after his death, Pushkin had been turned into national symbol and the ultimate Russian. Pushkin represented about 12 – 18% of all books published in Russia at the

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[102] Dostoevsky, *Writer's Diary*, trans. Kenneth Lantz, (London: Quartet Books, 1995), 1271 – 1274

[103] Dostoevsky, 1249

[104] Dostoevsky, 1249

time.[105] During the prerevolutionary era Pushkin was included in school readers with increasing variety toward the end of the era.[106] Pushkin's works were thought to have patriotic value and the ability to cultivate in the youth a love of Russian history. Yet, the next Pushkin commemoration would not focus on the poet's death, but his birth marking a shift in control over the image of Pushkin.

Possession of the Tsar

By the one hundredth anniversary of his birth in 1899, Pushkin had moved from dissenting rebel to the sanctioned spokesman of Russian culture.[107] The Pushkin of 1899 is an obedient subject of the tsar and an apologist for autocracy. The decision to commemorate birth rather than death, is significant to his image as a supporter of the tsarist regime. The circumstances surrounding Pushkin's death evolved into the myth of Pushkin as a martyr, with the martyrdom of Boris and Gleb from the *Primary Chronicle* as the model.[108] Pushkin became a victim of high society, a victim of a tyrannical tsar. The idea of the martyred poet appealed to various sectors of Russia's population who felt themselves to be suffering injustice at the hands of the autocratic regime.

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[105] Debreczeny, 1997, 163

[106] Debreczeny, 1997, 164

[107] Slater, 413; Dunning, ed., 2006, 11

[108] Debreczeny, 1997, 228

By shifting the emphasis away from of his death and celebrating instead his birth, the regime could distance itself from the martyred poet and instead celebrate the loyal subject whose life and works well-served the tsarist regime and its people. By the end of the nineteenth century, it was the regime that was appropriating and molding the Pushkin image. For this regime, it was best to commemorate birth, not death. In order to enhance the symbol of unity, celebrations at multiple sites in 1899 were synchronized. Children received copies of Pushkin's works and candies with his face on them.[109] This image of Pushkin lacked complexity as he was simplified into a symbol of national prestige that was geared toward ordinary people.[110]

State Ownership

After the revolution, members of the intelligentsia sought to reclaim Pushkin for themselves, to free the poet from the masses. In 1921 during the "Pushkin Days" held in Petrograd members of the Russian intelligentsia celebrated the poet's death as a way of distancing themselves from the culture of the old regime. Symbolist poet Alexander Blok gave a speech in which he blamed the poet's death on the bureaucracy and stifling censorship. To Blok, the unfortunate and mindless rabble that the poet had been victimized by was not the people, but the court of the aristocracy.[111] However, the Pushkin commemorations of 1924 and 1949 also celebrated birth.

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[109] Marcus C. Levitt, "Pushkin in 1899", in Boris Gasparov, ed., *Cultural Mythologies of Russian Modernism.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 183 - 203

[110] Slater, 413

[111] Nepomnyashchy, 36

The Stalinist regime of the 1930s, shifted the commemoration back to the poet's death. 1937 was the Jubilee year celebrating the 100th anniversary of Pushkin's death. This Jubilee celebration was part of the regime's retreat from revolutionary ideal intended to help maintain the illusion of stability. In fact, Stalin's regime here revived the practice of venerating Pushkin, a tsarist innovation. Yet, it was also reminiscent of the practices of cult of Lenin.[112] Elevating Pushkin served to elevate the Soviet regime and marked the consolidation of soviet power. The new regime created a new Pushkin, a representative of Soviet Man.[113] The regime celebrated "the day of the death of the great Russian poet, creator of the Russian literary language, and founder of the new Russian literature- Alexander Sergeevich Pushkin, who enriched humankind with his immortal creations in artistic language".[114] Pushkin was a proto-revolutionary who would have supported the Soviet regime if only he had been blessed enough to have been born into this present era. Though he was an aristocrat, he "first and foremost belongs profoundly to the people."[115]

Pushkin, who had almost been thrown out with the tsarist regime during the early years of the revolution,[116] again became a martyr. Here, he was again a victim of the tsarist regime, and also of foreign interference reflecting the world of Soviet foreign policy. Pushkin's martyrdom could be used to highlight all of the Soviet regimes enemies: foreigners, tsars, and any remnants

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[112] Slater, 414

[113] Stephanie Sandler, "The Pushkin Myth in Russia" in Bethea, David M., ed. *Pushkin Handbook*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 407

[114] Central Committee, 1935 Quoted in Sandler, 2006, 408

[115] "*Slava russokogo naroda*," 1. Quoted in Slater, 415

[116] Vladimir Maiakovskii prior to the revolution had advocated throwing Pushkin "overboard from the steamer of the Present Time". Quoted in Debreczeny, 1997, 231

of the old regime. A newspaper described the poet's death, "One hundred years ago, a passionate defender of all living things perished at the hands of a foreign scoundrel, the hireling of the Russian Tsar and of the reactionary aristocracy."[117] Works that emphasized the injustice of Pushkin's death, such as Lermontov, author of *Hero of Our Time*, were reprinted, while others, like Dostoevsky, became distasteful.[118] The Pushkin of 1937 was monolithic and controlled by the state.[119] The same rhetoric that in the 1880s and 90s made the regime uneasy was not being used by the regime as part of the official myth.

Liberated Pushkin?

State appropriation of the Pushkin myth began in 1899 with the commemoration of his birth. Whether or not in support of the tsarist regime or the Soviet regime, Pushkin's image has been associated with national unity. Pushkin is imagined as a supporter of autocracy, reimagined as a true soviet citizen, and again reimagined as a supporter of conservative Russian values. Perceived attacks on Pushkin are interpreted as attacks on Russian national values, especially in the late 1980s as the Soviet Union declined. The critical component of the national Pushkin is his imagined freedom from western liberal ideals.[120] One particularly interesting example of the

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[117] "*Nash Pushkin*" quoted in Sandler, 2006, 408

[118] Sandler, 2006, 407

[119] Thomas J Shaw, "Recent Soviet Scholarly Books on Pushkin: A Review Article", *The Slavic and East European Journal,* Vol. 10., No. 1 (Spring 1966), 66

[120] Slater, 409

intensity these identity debates revolves around a very Pushkinesque publication: *Strolls with Pushkin* by Andrei Siniavskii under the pseudonym Abram Tertz.

This work was published outside of the Soviet Union in 1975 and inside the Soviet Union in 1989. *Strolls with Pushkin* managed to offend Russian patriots who objected to creative characterizations of Pushkin as female, as Jewish, and as a vampire. Patriots scorned the image of Pushkin running "into great poetry on thin erotic legs".[121] These playful re-imaginings of the beloved national symbol served to undermine the official image of Pushkin that had crystallized during Stalin's regime.[122] The author thought it necessary to forewarn readers against taking it too literally and missing the "heavy dose of irony, paradox, and distancing."[123] Members of the literary establishment showed they were incapable of entering into the author's subversive mindset, viewing the work as a major attack in a long drawn out cultural battle.[124]

Strolls with Pushkin was referred to as "Russophobic" and a "desecration of great Pushkin" by critics. Its author was ostracized.[125] Humor and irony directed at established cultural norms and images was simply too much to be tolerated.[126] It displayed "hooliganism, and not petty hooliganism either, but a very serious matter."[127] Siniavskii presented readers with images of the

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[121] Abraham Tertz *Strolls with Pushkin*, trans. Nepomnyashchy, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 55

[122] Slater , 410

[123] Quoted in Slater, 411

[124] Slater, 411

[125] Tolstaya, 84

[126] Slater, 411 – 413

[127] Stanislav Kuniaev, editor of *Nash sovremennik*, quoted in Slater, 417

poet that challenged the conventional values promoted by the regime, yet the spirit of work was in greater harmony with Pushkin than any speech or publication from prior commemorations. The most basic convention challenged by *Strolls with Pushkin* is the image of the simple, uncomplicated poet "of the people", whose work presented positive heroes and ideological certainty.[128]

Two hundred years after Pushkin's birth after the dissolution of the Soviet regime, Pushkin's image was no longer controlled by the political center, but returned to the hands of civil society. In 1999, many sectors of society competed for power over Pushkin, artists, poets, scholars, and vendors.[129] Scholars during this jubilee were challenged to rethink commemoration, think critically about Pushkin's central position in modern cultural self-definitions, "pull apart webs of meaning", question whether systems must have centers, and remember that "hidden histories of identification, rewriting, misreading, and polemic remain to be uncovered…let us see anew how writers, poets, and creative artists have absorbed his influence yet, displaced, jostled with his work, and shared his glory in ways that rewrite his legacy entirely."[130] Pushkin's image is still a contentious component of defining Russian identity.

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[128] Slater, 416

[129] Sandler, 2006, 411

[130] Stephanie Sandler, "Introduction", *Slavic Review*, Vol. 58, No. 2, (Summer 1999), 290

CHAPTER FOUR

REHABILITATING THE PRETENDER

Да лет семи; ему бы ныне было
(Тому прошло уж десять лет...нет больше:
Двенадцать лет) – он был бы твой ровесник
И царствовал;[131]
Seven, he would have been; now he'd have been
(Ten years have passed since then- no, more, say twelve),
He would have been about your age…and tsar;

While the Slavophiles and Westerners tended to focus their discussion on the reign of Peter the Great as the critical turning point in Russian history, the Time of Troubles in reality is a very important juncture in Russian history.[132] It is because of this period that all of the pillars of what would become Official Nationality were strengthened. Pushkin, interested in turning points and the confluence of chance, personality, and circumstance, dealt with the Time of Troubles in his play *Boris Godunov*.[133] Approaching Pushkin's interpretation in this play is complicated by the

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[131] А. С. Пушкин, *Комедия О Царе Борисе И О Гришке Отрепьеве. 1825.* Сцена 5

[132] Riasanovsky, 1952, 77

[133] David Bethea, "Pushkin as a Historical Thinker" in Bethea, David M., ed. *Pushkin Handbook*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 271; Pushkin also had a personal interest in the Time of Troubles as his ancestor Gavrila Pushkin was a supporter of Dmitry and played a critical role in the overthrow of the Godunov Dynasty. Dunning, 2006, 60

fact that there are two editions: the 1831 published edition and the 1825 manuscript titled *Komediia o tsare Borise i o Grishke Otrep'eve*, that was not published during Pushkin's life time. In a letter to a friend, Pushkin described this version as "full of good jokes and allusions to the history of the time."[134] In the 1831 version, Pushkin portrays an interpretation of the Time of Troubles very much in line with official history and in support of the regime's concept of Russian identity. Recent work by Chester Dunning, however, has shown that in fact the 1825 version represents the author's real interpretation of this critical period in Russian history.[135]

Boris Godunov begins in 1598 in a Kremlin Palace and ends in 1605 with the deaths of Maria Godunova and her son Fedor. The play was composed during Pushkin's exile. He began working on the play in 1820 and finished in November of 1825 after have been at his mother's estate for one year. During this period, the poet was productive working on *The Gypsies* and *Count Nulin* in addition to his play on the Time of Troubles.[136] All Pushkin's attempts to publish the play prior to 1831 were frustrated.[137] Instead, the play underwent a transformation that disappointed Pushkin's personal friends and seems to more likely reflect the ideas of Tsar Nicholas I more than Pushkin.[138] Nicholas, dismayed by both the July Revolution and the Polish revolt before Pushkin's original could go to press, made the revised version of the play "not the product

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[134] Quoted in Wachtel, 67

[135] Chester Dunning, "The Tsar's Red Pencil: Nicholas I and Censorship of Pushkin's 'Boris Godunov'", in *The Slavic and East European Journal,* Vol. 54, No. 2 (Summer, 2010), 240

[136] Beathea and Davydov, "Pushkin's Life", in *The Cambridge Companion to Pushkin*, 17

[137] Dunning, 2010, 242

[138] Dunning, 2010, 245

of artistic revision, but a reflection of fear and political correctness at imperial court."[139] It is unknown for certain which changes to the text of Pushkin's play were made by him, the censors, or his friend Zhukovsky.[140] At the last minute, Pushkin changed the dedication from Zhukovsky to Karamzin.[141]

Synopsis of the Time of Troubles

The Time of Troubles is a period of domestic and international conflict for Muscovy beginning in 1598 with the death of Fedor Ivanovich and ending in 1613 with the accession of the Romanov dynasty. In 1604 someone claiming to be the dead tsarevich Dmitry invaded backed by a small army. In 1605 Boris Godunov died and the Pretender Dmitry became tsar. Dmitry was assassinated and there followed the reign of Vasily Shuisky, civil war, and the foreign intervention of Sweden and Poland. During the drawn-out conflict, not just one but several other pretenders appeared, numbering nine by 1611. The end of the Time of Troubles resulted in the election of Mikhail Romanov as tsar of Russia. The Time of Troubles in Russia was part of a broader struggle between decentralized, aristocratic states and the growing, centralized monarchies developing in the 16th and 17th centuries.[142] It was the first crisis of the autocratic Muscovite state and it resulted in the strengthening of the autocratic state, demonstrating the conservative character of both the

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[139] Dunning, 2010, 240

[140] Dunning, 2010, 245

[141] Dunning, 2010, 243

[142] William McNiell, *Europe's Steppe Frontier, 1500 – 1800,* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1964)

elites and underclass. The Time of Troubles saw a rejection of innovation in order to restore the old order.[143]

There are multiple causes of the Time of Troubles. Long term causes include the emergence of the fiscal-military state, peasant flight caused by economic downturn and the oprichnina of Ivan IV, and the imposition of state service.[144] Short-term causes include the succession crisis brought about by the death of Fedor and the prior death of Ivan's son Dmitry at Uglich in 1591, the famine of 1601-03, and existence of a credible pretender. The famine of 1601 placed considerable hardship on the peasants and the cities. Peasants in the countryside were reduced to cannibalism.[145] Boris Godunov was generous with relief efforts, yet this caused peasants to swell in the cities.[146] The most decisive immediate cause was the succession crisis brought about by the end of the Rurikid line and the appearance of a pretender. Rumors of Dmitry's survival began to be heard in 1600. Boris Godunov reacted to these rumors with increased repression and encouraged denunciations of boyars by their servants, rewarding generously the servant informers.[147] This demonstrates that Godunov thought that Dmitry was the

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[143]Chester Dunning, *Russia's First Civil War: the Time of Troubles and the Founding of the Romanov Dynasty,* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 464

[144] Dunning, 2001, 15 – 21

[145] Conrad Bussow, *Disturbed State of the Russian Realm,* trans. G. Edward Orchard (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 32 – 33

[146] Jacques Margeret, *The Russian Empire and Grand Duchy of Muscovy: A 17th Century Account,* trans. Chester Dunning (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 1983), 59; Dunning, 2001, 98 - 99

[147] Margeret, 60

result of a boyar conspiracy. [148] Further, that is was Dmitry himself that Godunov feared, not just "the shade of Dmitry."[149] Dmitry´s appearance made the civil war possible.[150]

Pushkin's Pretender

Some have seen Pushkin's Pretender as less a historical figure and more part of a meditation on the nature of Russian history, an exploration of determinacy and indeterminacy. The play, therefore, is most significant as an exposition on two approaches to history that are embodied by the Pretender and Boris Godunov. Svetlana Evdokimova, for example, sees Dmitry as "chance incarnate."[151] The play is also ambiguous, with no clear winners.[152] However, Pushkin's pretender is more than a personification of invisible forces, he is a character drawn from historical reality and therefore a challenge to the regime. Dmitry's identity was and remains a topic of controversy. Implying that Dmitry was anything more than a fraudulent pretender was subversive. For example, the German playwright August von Kotzbue, who was murdered by Karl Sand, was forced by the Russian government to change the title of his play *Demetrius*

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[148] Chester Dunning, "Who was Tsar Dmitrii?" in *Slavic Review,* Vol. 60, No. 4 (Winter, 2001), 710

[149] Philip Barbour, *Dmitry*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1966), 327

[150] Chester Dunning, *Russia's First Civil War: the Time of Troubles and the Founding of the Romanov Dynasty,* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 109

[151] Evdokimova, 57

[152] Evdokimova, 65; Stephanie Sandler earlier saw the play as ambiguous, resisting attempts to extract any single meaning, *Distant Pleasures: Alexander Pushkin and the Writing of Exile,* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989, 136

Iwonowitsch. Zaar von Moscau, removing the word 'zaar' so as not to indicate that Dmitry was anything but a pretender. There would be no Russian translation of this 1782 play published.[153]

Karamzin described Dmitry as receiving an unprecedented welcome at the time of his entry to Moscow.[154] Dmitry, according to Karamzin, "did have certain merits and a kindly disposition, but his temperament was romantic, and on the throne he resembled more a tramp than a king." He then proceeds to list the deficiencies of Dmitry, describing him as "fond of foreigners" and "ignorant of the history of his alleged ancestors". Further, his "jolly amiability altogether overstepped the bounds of decorum and did violence to that majestic modesty which autocrats require" and worse, Dmitry "treated Russian customs and religion with open contempt."[155] This accusation would be echoed with regard to Peter the Great. Unlike Peter, Dmitry did not root out and punish opposition.[156]

Contemporary sources do not contradict this accusation, but instead provide justification. Conrad Bussow, Saxon mercenary participant and author of an account of the Time of Troubles, related how Dmitry did not keep Russian customs, after eating he avoided sleep by going for walks. Dmitry is described as well-educated with a degree of refinement.[157] Jacques Margeret, who was a commander serving first Boris Godunov and later Dmitry, wrote:

> "As for the argument that he ridiculed the customs of the Russians and that he did not observe their religion except in form, it is not necessary to marvel

[153] Dunning, 2006, 72

[154] Karamzin, *Memoirs*, trans. Pipes, 112

[155] Karamzin, , 114

[156] Dunning, 2001, 206

[157] Bussow, 52 – 53

> at this—especially if one considers their customs and life-styles, for they are ruse and gross, without any civility. And Russia is a nation of liars, without loyalty, without law, without conscience- sodomites and corrupted by infinite vices and brutalities. Boris Fedorovich, who was above suspicion, detested not so much the Russians as their vices, and he brought to the country what little reform there is. How could Dmitrii (who knew something of the world, have been brought up for some time in Poland, which is a free country, and among the high nobles) have done less than to desire some reform and civility among his subjects."

Pushkin, like Karamzin, made Dmitry a romantic hero who preferred a brief active life to a long dull one- "en ce sens son Dimitrij prefigure le Pugachev de *la Fille du capitaine* et, par bien de cotes, est un personage dramatique plus reussi que Boris."[158] While also seeing him as a romantic figure, Pushkin presents Dmitry as a figure of real historical interest, likening him to Henry Navarre[159]:

> "*Il y a beaucoup du Henri 4 dans Дмитрий. Il est comme lui brave, genereux et gascon, comme lui indifferent a la religion – tous deux abjurant leur foi pour cause politique, tous deux aimant les plaisirs et la guerre, tous deux donnant dans des [chimeres] projets chimeriques—[tout] tous duex en butte aux conspirations… Mais Henri 4 n'a pas a se reprocher Ксения – il est vrai que cette horrible accusation n'est pas prouvee et quant a mois je me fais une religion de ne pas y croire*."[160]

Pushkin's view of Dmitry as Henry IV indicates a positive attribute of Dmitry's character. He is able to rise above the conventions and confines of his time to manipulate history. The Pretender

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[158] Catherine Depretto, " Karamzin et 'Boris Godunov', *Revue des etudes slaves*, Vol. 83, no. 2/3, Le letter et l'esprit: entre langue et culture: Etudes a la memoire de Jean Breuillard (2012), 763 -4

[159] Some, such as Stephanie Sandler, have mistakenly seen the following quote as referring to Henry IV of England from Shakespeare. Sandler, 1989, 127

[160] Pushkin, in a letter to Boris Tomashevsky, quoted in Depretto, 2012, 764

is, therefore, a new kind of person. He is a Europeanized Russian who was willing and able to create miracles and manipulate expectations.[161]

But the most important departure from conventional Russian interpretations of Dmitry lies in the fact that his Dmitry had actual popular support. In Scene 12- "Cracow. Wisniowiecki's House", the noble Krushchov pays respect to the Pretender and vocalizes his support and the support of the boyars for the Pretender Dmitry. Also, in this scene the audience learns that the Russian people also support Dmitry:

> Всё тихо там еще. Но уж народ
> Спасенне царевича проведал.[162]
> Everything is quiet there—though the people know
> The Tsarevich has been saved.

This passage and the dialogue between the Pretender and Krushchov was deleted from the 1831 version of the play erasing the support of Dmitry. Scene 13, known as "Maryna's Dressing Room" or "Palatine Mniszech's Castle, Sambor", was excluded from the 1831 version of the play completely. In this scene the audience is again made aware of the people's support and belief that Dmitry is the true tsar. Maryna states:

> Он точно царский сын и признан целым светом.[163]
> He is the son of a tsar—the whole world knows.

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[161] I. Z. Serman, "Paradoxes of the Popular Mind in Pushkin's 'Boris Godunov'", in *The Slavonic and East European Review,* Vol. 64, No. 1 (Jan., 1986), 38

[162] А. С. Пушкин, *Комедия О Царе Борисе И О Гришке Отрепьеве. 1825.* Сцена 12

[163] А. С. Пушкин, *Комедия,* Сцена 13

Pushkin's portrayal of Dmitry as having the real support of the Russian people is aligned with contemporary sources.[164] However, in portraying Dmitry as the monk Grigorii Otrepev, Pushkin departed from contemporary sources. Pushkin's pretender is a conscious impostor. The audience is first introduced to Dmitry in Scene 5: "Night, a cell in the Chudov Monastery". The year is 1603. The scene opens with Father Pimen writing by lamp light in a chronicle. Sleeping Grigory is awakened by dreams. We find in this scene that Grigory has been a monk from earliest age:

> ...а я, от отроческих лет
> По келиям скитаюсь, бедный инок![165]
> …Whilst I have been a monk
> From earliest youth, and trailed from cell to cell.

He is young and eager for adventure:

> Зачем и мне не тешиться в боях,
> Не пировать за царскою трапезой
> Why may not I participate in battle,
> Sit with the Tsar at table?

In this same scene, the audience finds that Pimen was witness to the death of the real Dmitry and that Boris was the one behind it.

> … Тут народ
> Вслед бросился бежавшим трем убийцам;
> Укрывшихся злодеев захватили
> И привели пред теплый труп младенца,

[164] Bussow, 50

[165] А. С. Пушкин, *Комедия,* Сцена 5

И чудо – вдруг мертвец затрепетал –
«Покайтеся» народ им загремел,
И в ужасе под топором злоден
Покаялись – и назвали Бориса.[166]
…The people
Rushed to pursue the three assassins, caught them,
Brought them before the young boy's corpse, still warm;
And now, a miracle! – the body trembled.
"Confess!" the people howled; and terror-struck,
Beneath the axe, the three confessed – and Boris
Was named.

The real Dmitry is dead. In Scene 6: "The Monastery Wall", which was removed from the 1831 edition, Grigory conspires with an evil monk who encourages Dmitry to pose as the tsarevich and explains:

Monk:

А бояре в Годунове помнят равного себе;
Племя древнего Варяга и теперь любезно всем.[167]
In Godunov the boyars remember an equal of themselves;
Even today the old Varangian line is loved by all.

Grigory responds:

Решено
Я – Димитрий, я – царевич
Decided.
I am Dimitry, the Tsarevich

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[166] А. С. Пушкин, *Комедия,* Сцена 5

[167] А. С. Пушкин, *Комедия,* Сцена 6

This scene is important because it provides Dmitry with motive: fight against the usurper and the regicide Boris Godunov. The idea to assume Dmitry's identity was not his own, but he agreed to for a noble purpose. Though a conscious impostor, Dmitry is not motived for dark or selfish reasons, as Godunov propaganda alleged.[168]

In Scene 15- "Night. Garden. Fountain" Dmitry reveals his true identity to Maryna, daughter of the Polish lord Mniszech. In this scene Pushkin portrays Dmitry as a figure of romantic sentiment who is smitten by Maryna.

> Она...вся кровь во мне остановилась.
> She…she stops my blood.

Maryna probes for his true identity:

> ...Знай: отдаю торжественно я руку
> Наследнику московского престола,
> Царевичу, спасенному судьбой.
> No, not the callow captive of my beauty,
> But he whom fate has favored, the Tsarevich,
> He who shall sit upon the throne of Moscow
> Shall be the one to whom I give my hand.

He reveals to her that he is in fact not Dmitry but a runaway monk.

> ...Нет полно:
> Я не хочу делиться с мертвецом
> Любовницей, ему принадлежащей
> Нет, полно мне притворствовать! Скажу
> Всю истину; так знай же: твой Димитрий
> Давно погиб, зарыт – и не воскреснет;

[168] Dunning, 2001, 110

А хочешь ли ты знать, кто я таков?

Изволь; скажу: я бедный черноризец;

…There, enough

I will not share my loved one with a corpse.

No more dissembling, now the truth: Dimitry

Was dead and buried long ago; he'll not

Come back to life. You'll ask, then – who am I?

I'll tell you who I am – a wretched monk.

Further, he says that it does not matter if he is the real Dmitry or not:

Димитрий я иль нет – что им за дело?

Но я предлог раздоров и войны.

Им ето лишь и нужно, и тебя,

Мятежница! Поверь, молчать заставят.[169]

Whether or not I really am Dimitry;

I am the pretext for war,

And that is all the world requires of me.

Should you oppose me—you will soon be silenced.

The Real Dmitry

In reality, Dmitry's identity is unclear. Documents relating to his brief reign were ordered by Shuisky to be destroyed.[170] Contemporary accounts of Dmitry are split. Jacques Margeret believed Dmitry to be the true son of Ivan IV, while Conrad Bussow believed him to be the

[169] А. С. Пушкин, *Комедия,* Сцена 15

[170] Chester Dunning, "Who was Tsar Dmitrii?" in *Slavic Review,* Vol. 60, No. 4 (Winter, 2001), 708

illegitimate son of Stephan Bathory, King of Poland.[171] The monk Grigory Otrepev actively sought out a Polish youth who had the appearance of Dmitry. Bussow claimed that Lord Basmanov, commander of the tsar's army, admitted that Dmitry was not the true son of Ivan, "but he is still our sovereign. We have recognized him and sworn allegiance to him, and we will never find a better sovereign in Russia."[172] Bussow also claimed to have heard from a very old Muscovite, aged 105 years, that though Dmitry was brave and prudent, he was not the son of Ivan for the old man had seen the dead child Dmitry after his murder. To Bussow, Dmitry was a foreigner whom the Muscovites embraced to rid themselves of Boris Godunov. [173]

Further, historians have followed in the path of anti-Dmitry propaganda created by both the Godunov and Shuisky regimes intended to discredit the Pretender.[174] Scholars have aligned the identities of Grigory Otrepev and Dmitry.[175] Russian Historian Ruslan Skrynnikov, for example titled the first chapter of his work on the Time of Troubles "Rule by A Monk".[176] Dmitry has also been portrayed in a negative light as an adventurer or manipulator, even a sorcerer.[177] However, other scholars have seen Dmitry as an enlightened figure, a forerunner to Peter the Great,

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[171] Bussow, 82

[172] Bussow, 82

[173] Bussow, 28, 82 - 83

[174] Dunning, 2001, 110, 202; Dunning, 2006, 68

[175] Dunning, 2001, 125 – 126

[176] Ruslan G. Skrynnikov, *Time of Troubles: Russia in Crisis, 1604 – 1618*, trans. Hugh F. Graham, (Gulf Breeze: Academic International Press, 1988)

[177] Maureen Perrie, *Pretenders and Popular Monarchism in Early Modern Russia: The False Tsars of the Time of Troubles,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 55

who was also maligned as the anti-Christ.[178] Contemporary sources do attest to the enlightened character of Dmitry:

> "for Dmitrii made them feel little by little that this was a free country, governed by a clement prince…He sometimes showed a bit too much familiarity towards the lords, who are brought up in such subjection and fear that they would almost not dare to speak in the presence of their prince without command. However, the emperor knew otherwise how to maintain a majesty and grandeur worthy of the prince that he was. Moreover, he was wise, having enough understanding to serve as a schoolteacher to all his council. "[179]

This same source argues that he was not and could not have been the runway monk Grigory. Jacques Margeret responded to claims that Dmitry was the run-away monk Grigory. He found these claims weak and provided evidence to the contrary. Firstly, the two men were not the same age. Margeret says that Dmitry was under twenty-five, while Otrepev was in his mid-thirties. Further, the monk Otrepev was seen alive after Dmitry's assassination. Lastly, Margeret claimed that the same person who was known to have seen Otrepev after Dmitry's death, also claimed that Otrepev stated that Dmitry was the true son of Ivan IV. [180]

Further, Shuisky had to assassinate Dmitry because these claims against him were not credible.[181] Both Shuisky and Godunov took the pretender's claim very seriously and put considerable energy into propaganda campaigns against Dmitry. For example, Shuisky and accomplices read letters claiming that Dmitry intended to give significant Russian lands over to

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[178] Richard Hellie, *Enserfment and Military Change in Muscovy,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 49; Barbour, 160

[179] Margeret, 69 – 70

[180] Margeret, 82

[181] Dunning, 2001, 130

Poland.[182] Shuisky went so far as to dig up the body of the supposedly real Dmitry and have him canonized as a saint.[183] Dmitry's own behavior is also worth noting. He lacked any suspicion of his subjects loyalty.[184] Whereas Boris had encouraged servants to inform in masters after Dmitry's existence was made known.[185] Neither did Dmitry behave in a way so as to prevent criticism:

> "if Dmitrii felt himself culpable, he would have worked above all and everywhere to please the Russians. He knew very well that Boris could do no more to discredit him than to call him a heretic. Thus, he would not have allowed any Jesuits to enter Moscow. He knew well enough that Boris had incurred the ill will of the Russian people by trying to ally himself with a foreign prince, so Dmitrii might have prevented this ill will by allying himself with a Russian house, as his predecessors had done."[186]

Dmitry had no need for purges or terror to maintain power.[187] Further, Dmitry was known to show clemency and had even pardoned Shuisky, which was his gravest mistake as Vasily Shuisky was behind his assassination.[188]

Nor was he simply a pretext for war. Discussions of the Time of Troubles interpreting the era as an example of class war or peasant war diminish the significance of Dmitry's identity.[189] If the real significance of the Time of Troubles is the spontaneous mass uprising against enserfment,

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[182] Margeret, 90

[183] Margeret, 74, 88

[184] Margeret, 75

[185] Margeret, 60

[186] Margeret, 88

[187] Dunning, 2001, 203

[188] Margeret, 69; Bussow 53

[189] For an overview of scholarship emphasizing the class war aspect of the conflict see Dunning, 2001, 3 – 11

then the figure of Dmitry is not important.[190] However, Dmitry ´s identity provided the trigger for the civil war as he was believed to be by many the true son Ivan IV.[191] As Chester Dunning states, "Far from being a mere figurehead under whom Russian rebels could pursue their own agenda, Dmitrii turns out to have been a remarkable character who seems to have truly believed he was the son of Ivan the Terrible and would, with God's help, win the throne of Russia."[192]

Pushkin portrayed Dmitry as a conscious pretender and romantic figure. He not only challenged the regime through his portrayal of Tsar Dmitry, he also touched on a more critical subject: popular consciousness and support of autocracy. The following chapter will discuss Pushkin's subversive portrayal of the Russian *narod.*

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[190] Dunning, 2001, 110

[191] Margeret, 90

[192] Dunning, 2001, 121

CHAPTER FIVE

AUTOCRACY AND THE *NAROD*

...Попробуй самозванец

Им посулить старинный Юрьев день,

Так и пойдет потеха.[193]

…Should the Pretender promise

The Restoration of St. George's Day –

Then the fun will begin.

In August of 1851, on the twenty-fifth anniversary of Nicholas I's coronation, the autocrat visited Moscow and performed the ceremonial triple bow from the Red Staircase. This symbolic act was meant to show the relationship of the tsar to the Russian people and also the distinction between the Russian people and their Western counterparts. In this act, the tsar acknowledged the people's love as the source of his unlimited power and also acknowledged that this love is a defining characteristic of the Russian people.[194] The Russian people naturally embrace autocracy, unlike Western Europeans who are subjugated by conquest.

This interpretation of Russian history is commonly referred to as the Norman Theory and used as justification for autocratic government in Russia. Nineteenth century historians like

[193] А. С. Пушкин, *Комедия,* Сцена 10

[194] Richard Wortman, *Scenarios of Power*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 164

Mikhail Pogodin and Nikolai Karamzin, who supported autocracy, took their proof from the Primary Chronicle, which states that in 862:

> "The Slavs, the tributaries, of the Varangians drove them back beyond the sea and, refusing them further tribute, set out to govern themselves. There was no law among them, but tribe rose against tribe. Discord thus ensued among them, and they began to war one against another. They said to themselves, 'Let us seek a prince who may rule over use, and judge us according to the law.' They accordingly went overseas to the Varangian Rus…"[195]

Conservative historian Mikhail Pogodin referred to this voluntary choice as "the first essential distinction in the kernel, the seed of the Russian state."[196] In the West, absolute monarchy was imposed, but in Russia it was embraced voluntarily.

As time passed and autocracy became more entrenched with the centralization of Muscovy, "The people, delivered by the princes of Moscow from the disaster of internecine wars as well as from the foreign yoke, felt no regrets for the ancient veche or for the dignitaries who used to restrain the sovereign's authority, the people did not argue over rights."[197] In the nineteenth century, Slavophiles viewed the apolitical tendencies of the Russian people as proof of the Slavic people's purity, rightly eschewing the corrupting influences of government.[198] Westernizers viewed it as proof of Russia's inadequacy need for outside influences. Alexander Herzen, for example, wrote, "The receptive character of the Slavs, their femininity, their lack of initiative, and their great capacity for assimilation and adaption, made the pre-eminently a people that stands in

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[195] Primary Chronicle in *Medieval Russia's Epics, Chronicles, and Tales*, ed. Serge A. Zenkovsky, 49

[196] Quoted in Wortman, 2006, 143

[197] Karamzin, *Memoir*, 112

[198] Riasanovsky, 1952, 149

need of other peoples; they are not self-sufficing."[199] Further, Vissarion Belinsky wrote, in a letter to a friend, that

> "Peter is clear evidence that Russia will not develop her liberty and her civil structure out of her own resources, but will obtain it at the hands of her tsars as so much else…To give Russia in her present state a constitution is to ruin her. To our people liberty simply means *license*. The liberated Russian nation would not go to a parliament, but run to the taverns to drink wine, break glass, and hang the gentry because they shave their beards and wear European clothes…The hope of Russia is education, not…revolutions and constitutions…"[200]

Even radicals and revolutionaries held that the *narod* was politically impotent. Nikolai Mikhailovskii, a radical who disagreed with idealizations of peasantry and contributor to Annals of the Fatherland (*Otechestvennye Zapiski*), wrote that ¨the voice of the countryside too often contradicts its own interests."[201] Peasants do not understand their own interests and must be led by revolutionary elite. Though to radicals like Mikhailovskii, this was the result of centuries of bondage, not natural disposition.

The Russian *narod* has been characterized as superstitious and apathetic, yet prone to violent, irrational action when provoked. Further, the *narod* is never provoked for a rational or just cause but willing to believe in anyone promising material advancement. This characterization of the Russian people was persistent, leading the view that Russian rebellions and revolutions are especially dangerous and destructive:

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[199] Alexander Herzen, *My Past and Thoughts*, trans. Isaiah Berlin, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 303

[200] Quoted in Berlin, 165

[201] Quoted in Richard Wortman, *The Crisis of Russian Populism,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 20

> "A political revolution is not possible in Russia…The Russian masses, whether workmen or peasants, are not looking for political rights, which they neither want nor comprehend…The peasant dreams of obtaining a gratuitous share of somebody else's land; the workman, of getting hold of the entire capital and profits of the manufacturer. Beyond this, they have no aspirations. If these slogans are scattered far and wide among the populace…Russia will be flung into anarchy."[202]

Historians have echoed these viewpoints in describing peasant action in Russia. For example, Richard Pipes opened a discussion on peasant disturbances writing that "once a century, Russian peasants went on a rampage, killing landlords and officials, burning estates and seizing properties."[203] The lethargic Russian people are unable to understand their own interests, and under the right circumstances will erupt with violent irrational fury. Characterizations of Pushkin as a supporter of Autocracy have argued that Pushkin agreed with these views and refer to a quote removed from the final published version of *Captain's Daughter* referring to the "senseless and ruthless"[204] Russian rebellion as well as the silent ending of the 1831 version of *Boris Godunov*. Yet, in the 1825 version of *Boris Godunov*, Pushkin depicted a *narod* that was conscious, responsive and active. Pushkin's interpretation challenged Official Nationality, the Slavophiles, and the Westernizers.

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[202] Pytor Durnovo, quoted in *Durnovo Memorandum* in Documents on Russian History http://novaonline.nvcc.edu/eli/evans/his242/Documents/Durnovo.pdf

[203] Pipes, 1974, 155

[204] Pushkin used these exact words to describe Pugachev's Rebellion in a chapter omitted from *Captain's Daughter.* Emerson, "Tragedy, Comedy, Carnival, and History on Stage" in Dunning, 2006, 173

Apathy and the Russian *Narod*

In scene 11, the reader sees Vasily Shuisky in 1603 speaking with Tsar Boris about the appearance of the Pretender Dmitry. Here Shuisky articulates the attitude of the Russian ruling classes concerning the character of the narod:

> Но знаешь сам: бессмысленная чернь
> Изменчива, мятежна, суеверна,
> Легко пустой надежде предана,
> Мгновенному внушению послушна,
> Для истины глуха и равнодушна,
> А баснями питается она.[205]
>
> But as you know too well, the senseless mob
> Is superstitious, fickle and rebellious,
> Often attached to insubstantial goals,
> Responsive to the passions of the season,
> Deaf and indifferent to the voice of reason
> Ready to feed its mind on fairy- tales.

It has been argued that Pushkin shared this view of the Russian people. This play has been seen by scholars as Pushkin's indictment of the apathy of the Russian *narod* and therefore his support of autocracy as the most appropriate form of government for such a people. It is fruit of his mature mind leaving behind the idealism of his youth and instead embracing the pillars of Official Nationality.[206] It is said that Pushkin uses the scenes with the *narod* to expose the people´s political

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[205] А. С. Пушкин, *Комедия,* Сцена 11

[206] Douglas Clayton, *Dimitry's Shade: A Reading of Alexander Pushkin's* Boris Godunov, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press), 173

indifference. The confused and passive masses obey orders, lacking understanding and the ability to question.[207] The ending of the 1831 version of the play is given as proof of the *narod's* inertia. Scene 23- "The Kremlin. House of the Godunovs", the final lines of the play:

Мосальский:

> Народ! Мария Годунова и сын ее Феодор отравили себя ядом. Мы видели их мертвые трупы. *(Народ в ужасе молчит.)* Что ж вы молчите? Кричите: да здравствует царь Димитрий Иванович!
>
> Народ *безмолвствует.*
>
> Конец.[208]

Mosalsky:

> People! Maria Godunova and her son Feodor have taken poison. We have seen their dead bodies. (*The people are silent in horror.)* Why are you silent? Shout: "Long live Tsar Dimitry Ivanovich!"
>
> The People are silent.[209]
>
> End.

---

[207] Evdokimova, 60

[208] А. С. Пушкин, *Борис Годунов. 1831.* Сцена 23

[209] It was also unclear if the ending was to be read or simply stage direction. Dunning 2006, 26

This ending has been viewed differently over time. At the end of the 19th century, it was seen as another example of Pushkin following the lead of his mentor Karamzin.[210] In the 1930s, it was viewed as the *narod's* rejection of the Pretender. More recently, it has been seen that this ending was Pushkin's deliberate attempt as an artistic to frustrate audience expectations of catharsis and illustrate the powerlessness of the *narod.*[211]

However, at the end 1825 version, the *narod* responds by cheering: *Да здравствует царь Дмитрий Иванович!*[212] This ending is historically accurate and reflected contemporary sources.[213] This ending also provides unity to the play, as the *narod* were forced to cheer for Tsar Boris in the "Maiden's Field" scene, but then cheered with enthusiasm for Dmitry.[214] Some scholars have argued that the ending does not make a difference, the *narod* is inert and apathetic in either reading, the *narod's* cheer or silence are essentially the same.[215] However, this cannot be. Such a reading hinges upon a negative portrayal of Dmitry and the *narod.* The previous chapter has discussed Pushkin's interpretation of Dmitry. The following pages will explore how Pushkin portrayed the *narod*.

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[210] Dunning, 2006, 31

[211] Sandler, 1989, 88; Caryl Emerson, *Boris Godunov: Transpositions on A Russian Theme,*(Bloomington : Indiana University Press, 1986); Dunning, 2006, 31 – 34

[212] "Long live Tsar Dmitry Ivanovich!" А. С. Пушкин, *Комедия,* Сцена 25

[213] Bussow, 49

[214] Dunning, 2006, 152

[215] Evdokimova, 61

In Pushkin's play the *narod* is not passive but active, with their own mind. For example in scene 18- "Square in Front of the Cathedral". Moscow, the *narod* vocalize their unwillingness to accept the idea that Dmitry was the monk Grigory Otrepev:

> Другой
>
> Я стоял на паперти и слышал, как даикон завопил завопил: Гришка Отрепьев
>
> Анафема!
>
> Первый
>
> Пускай себе проклинают; царевичу дела нет до Отрепьева.
>
> Другой
>
> А царевичу поют теперь вечную память.
>
> Первый
>
> Вечную память живому! Вот ужо им будет, безбожникам.[216]
>
> Second
>
> I was standing on the porch and I heard the Deacon shout: "Grishka
>
> Otrepiev—he shall be Anathema!"
>
> First
>
> They can curse 'im's much as they like – the Tsarevich ain't got nothin'
>
> To do with Otrepiev
>
> Second
>
> Now they're chanting eternal remembrance for the Tsarevich.
>
> First
>
> Eternal remembrance for the living! They'll catch it for that, the godless scoundrels.

[216] А. С. Пушкин, *Комедия,* Сцена 18

The *narod's* support of Dmitry was not just controversial in Pushkin's day. Their support of Dmitry was actually a source of embarrassment for scholars in the Soviet era.[217] During the 1930s, it was held that Pushkin, the "people's poet", intended to show the *narod* as heroic.[218] However, at this point in time Dmitry was seen as nothing more than a puppet of Poland. Therefore, the *narod* had to reject Dmitry. However, this scene does not illustrate rejection but support. The reason for support: belief in the true and rightful tsar.

The support shown above appears especially authentic when combined with what was scene 3 in the 1825 version "Maiden's Field". This scene uses comic elements to show a *narod* that is impertinent and only showing outward support of Tsar Boris. The people are shown to be crying because it is expected of them:

Один

(Михо)

О чем мы плачем?

Другой

А как нам знать? То ведают бояре,

Не нам чета.

First

(In a low voice)

Why are they weeping?

Second

How should we know? The boyars,

They'll know, it's not our business.

Yet, the tears do not come:

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[217] Dunning, 2006, 36

[218] Dunning, 2006, 32

Первый

Я также. Нет ли луку?

Потрем глаза.

Второй

Нет, я слюней помажу.

Что там еще?[219]

Another

The same with me. If only we had an onion

To rub our eyes with.

Second

Have to make do with spit.

What's happening now?

The people have the consciousness to know that outward signs of their approval is expected of them.[220] The idea for fake tears did not come from Karamzin, but instead from Mikhail Shcherbatov and Russian chronicles.[221] The comic elements in this scene adds a hint of subversive potential. Without this scene, the reader would only see the *narod* in the second scene awaiting the news of Boris's accession with few lines and then not again until much later on. Without this scene to develop the character of a bold *narod*, the *narod* seem servile and superstitious when encountered again in scene 18. After scene 18, the *narod* is only met again at the end of the play where they curse the Godunovs and cheer for Dmitry.[222]

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[219] А. С. Пушкин, *Комедия,* Сцена 3

[220] Sandler, 1989, 87

[221] Dunning, 2006, 65

[222] Dunning, 2006, 75

The Decisive Issue: Serfdom

The Time of Troubles resulted in the strengthening of the autocratic state and its supporting institution: serfdom. Peasants in Russia had been tenant farmers, never actually owning title to their land. Tenant farmers finding themselves in debt to their landlord were prohibited from moving until their debts had been paid, with one exception: St. George's Day.[223] St. George's Day in November, prior to the enserfment of peasants, had been the day when peasants could change their landlords. St. George's Day had been temporarily suspended in 1580, but then permanently suspended in 1603 by Boris Godunov.[224] The Time of Troubles, therefore, resulted in the strengthening of serfdom. In a way this was just:

> "The peasants, although compelled to accept a burdensome serfdom, saw a rude sort of justice in the service state, which required landowners to serve the tsar just as the peasants were compelled to serve their masters, the landowners. Moreover, the holy figure of a distant tsar, chosen by God for his high office, and himself God's servant, fitted peasant expectations better than an elective monarchy, hampered at every turn by a landowner's assembly where peasants had neither voice nor sympathy, could ever do. If government were inescapable and an evil- as Russians, along with all other peasants, no doubt felt- at least the autocratic, Orthodox tsar, as mirrored forth once more by Michael Romanov, was an intelligible power-wielder. His oppressions were the more tolerable because he oppressed everyone, rich and poor, landholder and cultivator, merchant and soldier."[225]

Just like Pushkin departed from contemporary sources on the identity of Dmitry, he also departed from sources on the reason for the people's support of Dmitry. In the 1825 *Komediia*,

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[223] Pipes, 1974, 102

[224] Dunning, *Russia's First Civil War,* 2001, 102

[225] McNiell, 84

Pushkin controversially ties the people's support of Dmitry with the issue of enserfment, as seen in scene 10 quoted at the beginning of this chapter. This scene contains the first written claim that Dmitry was supported because people expected him to abolish serfdom.[226] Oddly, this seen was not edited out of the play, even though this topic was highly contentious. The most likely reason given to explain the failure of the censors to remove the reference is the simple failure of the censors to recognize the reference.[227]

Why did people support Dmitry?

Pushkin was historically accurate for depicting Dmitry with real popular support, yet incorrect about the issue generating support. Why did the Russian people support Dmitry? Pushkin's linking the people's support with the expectation of the abolition of serfdom anticipated future historians that would interpret the Time of Troubles through the lens of class conflict. For example, Skrynnikov wrote that the Pretender, whom he held to be the monk Otrepev, gained the throne because there existed a "mighty revolutionary movement" that gained force because the abolition of St. George's Day meant that "only force could contain feudal arbitraries", resulting in a social explosion from the bottom.[228]

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[226] А. С. Пушкин, *Комедия,* Сцена 10; Dunning, 2006, 69 and 478 n116; the author points out that Mikhail Shcherbatov had earlier argued that the Time of Troubles was linked to the process of enserfment, 71

[227] Dunning, 2010, 247

[228] Ruslan Skrynnikov, *Time of Troubles: Russia in Crisis, 1604 – 1618,* trans. Hugh F. Graham, (Gulf Breeze: Academic International Press, 1988), 50

The interpretation of the Time of Troubles as a peasant war or social revolution ignores the realities of 16th century popular consciousness and minimizes the role of Dmitry. The Time of Troubles was not about serfdom, and in fact serfs had only minimal involvement.[229] It was instead about a specific worldview and expectations. Dmitry was not supported because of utopian expectations, but because of his supposed blood connection to Ivan IV, who in popular consciousness figured as the "good tsar" who would protect peasants from oppressive boyars.[230] Dmitry was identified with the "good tsar" and presented himself with a believable causal story to a population that believed in and expected miracles.[231] Dmitry was supported not for what actions he might take, but for who he was believed to be: son of Ivan IV. The people had incurred divine wrath by allowing themselves to be ruled by an evil usurper.[232] The injustice had to be rectified. The cause of the true tsar drew support from all social classes. The Russian people in this circumstance were neither apathetic nor apolitical. Neither were they proto-revolutionaries.

Time of Troubles does illustrate that at least aspect of the 16th/17th century: the Russian people did love their tsars. In this respect, the Time of Troubles is congruent with the ideals of the Slavophiles and Official Nationality, the Russian people in support of Dmitry were not rising up against their autocrat but in support of what they thought of as the true autocratic system, as Dunning has demonstrated. "If there were disturbances, they concerned the question of legitimacy

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[229] Dunning, 2001, 112

[230] Maureen Perrie "The Popular Image of Ivan the Terrible" in *The Slavonic and East European Review,* Vol. 56, No. 2 (Apr., 1978), 285; Dunning, 2001, 117

[231] Maureen Perrie, "'Popular Socio-Utopian Legends' in the Time of Troubles" in *The Slavonic and East European Review,* Vol. 60, No. 2 (Apr., 1982), 232

[232] Dunning, 2001, 27

of a particular ruler: of Boris, of the False Dmitrii, or of Shuiskii. But a voice never sounded among the people: we do not want monarchy, we do not want autocracy, we do not want the tsar. On the contrary, in 1612, having defeated the enemy and being left without a tsar, the people, unanimously and loudly, again called the tsar."[233]

[233] Konstantin Aksakov quoted in Riasanovsky, 1952, 77

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

Как бы сказать? по-русски – виршеписец
Иль скоморох.[234]
How shall I say?
In Russian- a scribbler of verses, or a minstrel.

Pushkin challenged official identity and official memory. Unfortunately, official memory and the official interpretation of events during the Time of Troubles are ultimately what became part of Pushkin's body of works and were used to discern the poet's stance on Russian history. However, it has been demonstrated that it is misleading to view the 1831 version of the play as representative of anyone's vision but that of Tsar Nicholas I.[235] In this way, before Pushkin's death, Nicholas I laid the foundation for the development of the image of Pushkin as a supporter of Official Nationality. Following generations of scholars proceeded to define Pushkin's relationship to Dmitry, autocracy and the potential of the Russian *narod* on a version of a play that did not accurately represent his potential either as a poet or a scholar. Restoration of the Pushkin's *Comedy* has furthered the view of Pushkin as a critical thinker. It demonstrates that Pushkin went

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[234] А. С. Пушкин, *Комедия,* Сцена 12. An exchange between Khrushchov and Pushkin taken out of the 1831 version.

[235] Dunning, 2010, 238 - 254

beyond articulating Russian identity in terms of West or East, and addressed institutions and relationships.

In this play, Pushkin challenged the notion of a passive people dependent on an autocratic system. In rehabilitating the image of the Pretender Dmitry he also challenged the official historical narrative of the founding events of Romanov Dynasty[236]. Finally, in linking Dmitry's support with the issue of serfdom, Pushkin challenged the supporting institution of Russian autocracy and ventured to touch on the most controversial issue of his time.[237] This play was in fact subversive and shows that Pushkin did not embrace conservative ideology. Yet, Pushkin should not be considered a supporter of class-leveling revolution as he praised Nicholas I for placing a "dike against inundation by a democracy worse than that of America."[238]

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[236] Dunning, 2010, 240

[237] Dunning, 2006, 69

[238] Quoted in Davydov, 308

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