

Title: Chekhov's "Dushechka" as Dependent Love Junkie

Author: Dr. Mark Swift, University of Auckland

Emma Polotskaia named "Dushechka" "among Chekhov's greatest achievements as a psychologist" (Polotskaia: 61). She has been cited as a rendition of the myth of the mortal maiden Psyche, embodiment of the human soul (Winner: 215–16). Ironically childless, Olenka represents "a synthesis and abstraction" of maternal traits (Gromov: 160–61).

The proffered reading of "Dushechka" posits that the heroine's character is informed by psychopathology. In S.S. Korsakov's account of "psychopathic constitutions" (personality disorders in contemporary nomenclature) in his *Kurs psikhiatrii* (1893), a source in Chekhov's library, the psychiatrist notes: "Many degenerates have the tendency to submit to the influence of other stronger personalities exceptionally easily, to adapt their lives completely to the needs and desires of these other individuals" (Korsakov: 455). Olga readily forms attachments; she suffers separation anxiety, fears abandonment and lacks initiative when alone to the point of inertia; she is easily hurt by criticism and readily forgives to smooth over differences – all traits symptomatic of Dependent Personality Disorder. Semantically related lexical items ascribed to Olga highlight facets of agreeableness and conscientiousness in personality inventories – virtues to a fault in those with dependency disorder.

Since Chekhov's heroine is a fictional creation and not a case study of a personality disorder, the ways she does not fit the diagnostic criteria of the disorder warrant special attention in defining her uniqueness and aspects of Chekhov's artistic vision.

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