

Title: Intertextuality in *Pikovaia dama*: Pushkin and Diderot
Author: Douglas Clayton, University of Ottawa

To date no one has pointed out the echoes in Pushkin's *Pikovaia dama* of Diderot's *Les Bijoux indiscrets* (1748). Yet Diderot's novel reflects precisely the world of eighteenth-century French society in which the old countess in Pushkin's story spent her youth. This world of gambling and sexual intrigue, excesses and adultery, is inhabited by such figures as the Duc de Richelieu (in Diderot's *roman à clé* disguised as "Sélim"), who, we are to believe, almost shot himself because of the cruelty of Pushkin's "Vénus moscovite." The addiction of noblewomen to gambling is specifically referred to in Chapter XII of Diderot's text: "The majority of women <...> gambled furiously <...> 'But where do they get this passion? <...> how can they bring themselves to spend nights at the pharo table, trembling in expectation of an ace or a seven? This frenzy undermines their health and their beauty, when they have any, not to mention the mischief into which I am sure it precipitates them'." This passage parallels Pushkin's text, in which it is hinted that the young countess, in order to pay back a gambling debt to the Duc d'Orléans, slept with Saint-Germain in return for his "secret." It is exactly this kind of "mischief" (*désordres*) that Diderot describes in his novel. Moreover, the *gallant* aspect of Pushkin's tale is reinforced by several epigraphs; one in particular ("Homme sans mœurs et sans religion!") is a combination of two phrases in Diderot: "sans mœurs et sans sentiments" and "à leurs mœurs et à leur religion." These resonances underline the hybrid genre of *Pikovaia dama*, on one level a Gothic or fantastic tale ending in the obligatory madness, and on another, a risqué account of gambling and sexual intrigue in the manner of the Diderot's libertine novel.