

Title: Melting the Ice: A New Approach to Marina Mnishek in Pushkin's *Boris Godunov*
Author: Amanda Murphy, University of Wisconsin, Madison

Marina Mnishek's lack of interest in love is unusual for a Pushkinian heroine, for whom "if she is a woman, then she is in love," as suggested by the epigraph to Chapter Three of *Eugene Onegin*. Since the very publication of *Boris Godunov*, critics have found the thirteenth scene "Night. Garden. Fountain." especially problematic. Caryl Emerson provides an apt description of why the scene is so jarring: "Pushkin's Polish Act is an anti-love story, where the love object is indifferent and the lover is sincere and therefore inept" (Emerson, 213). This study will apply biographical analysis to provide a fresh explanation of why Pushkin depicted Marina as a cold ice goddess.

Why use biographical analysis in this case? Most importantly, the discordant nature of the fountain scene indicates that it is an appropriate place to seek "sly hints" about Pushkin's personal psychology within the scene, using the methodology suggested by Khodasevich (Khodasevich, 493). In addition, given the many parallels between Pushkin and the Pretender, the False Dmitry's interactions with Marina can be mapped onto the poet's psychological conditions during his exile in Mikhailovskoe, which reveal why Pushkin may have depicted such an unfeeling heroine. While Marina resists one preferred reading, as is the case with the play as a whole (Sandler), her character can be interpreted simultaneously as an unrequited love interest, a muse, and a historical actor. This composite picture explains the function of the fountain scene within *Boris Godunov* as well as sheds new light on Pushkin's use of female characters within his oeuvre.

References

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