

Title: Writing the Family, Creating the Nation in Pushkin's *Captain's Daughter*
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One of particularities of Aleksandr Pushkin's novel, *Captain's Daughter* (*Kapitanskaia Dochka* 1836), is the emphasis on familial relationships, so that even the rebel, Pugachov, and the empress, Catherine the Great, become parental figures to the novel's protagonists, Petr Grinev and his wife, Masha. Initially, the familiarity between the protagonists and the historical figures appears strange. However, Pushkin's narrative strategy reflects his growing interest and investment in national history and identity.

In his essay, "What is a Nation?" Ernest Renan suggests that an ability to forget past violence plays a central role in the formation of a modern nation. Yet, historical novels often recover past violence, which, according to Renan, would undermine the national project. Benedict Anderson modifies Renan's notion of forgetting by emphasizing the selective and creative nature of this process. Anderson argues that the citizens of modern nations must go through the process of "a deep reshaping of the imagination" (201). This process turns disparate groups, divided on ethnic, racial, and social grounds, into an extended national family. Therefore, according to Anderson, even national conflicts should be represented as civil or familial disputes—"reassurance of fratricide"—and not as violence committed by unrelated enemies (202). A similar creative approach to national history can be illustrated by Pushkin's novel. The emphasis on the family conceals the contradictions of a divided nation and the dangers of a growing contiguous empire.

References

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