

Title: Searching for the Slavic Pushkin: Khlebnikov Revisits *Boris Godunov*

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The Romanov dynasty's three-hundredth anniversary in 1913 inspired a number of works linked with the family's ascension to the throne. Among these was Velimir Khlebnikov's long poem *Marina Mnischech*, an account of the life of the Polish woman who briefly ruled Russia in 1606. Khlebnikov's interpretation of Mnischech's role in the Time of Troubles allowed him to showcase his knowledge of this historical period. Meanwhile, the poet also included a number of allusions to *Boris Godunov* (1825), which productively engage with Pushkin's text and encourage us to read *Marina Mnischech* as a response to the famous tragedy.

Khlebnikov's reception of Pushkin was more subtle than the notorious manifesto *A Slap in the Face to the Public Taste* (1912) would lead us to believe. In an essay from 1915, he explained that it was not *Pushkin* he and his fellow Futurists sought to throw “from the steamship of modernity,” but rather the Pushkin who had become a rigid literary fact. In fact, Khlebnikov saw the Futurists as successors of Pushkin, who confirmed the value of the famous poet by challenging his legacy.

When he did criticize Pushkin, however, Khlebnikov's main critique centered on what he saw as his Western orientation. In several essays, Khlebnikov reproached the poet for failing to provide a proper voice for the Slavic peoples and declared his intention to rectify this oversight in his own literature. This paper will demonstrate how Khlebnikov's references to Pushkin in *Marina Mnischech* constitute an attempt to formulate this “Slavic voice” in response to Pushkin's “Western” treatment of the Time of Troubles in *Boris Godunov*.