

Goal and Thesis:

The fact that both Schiller in his "Demetrius" fragment and Pushkin in his "Boris Godunov" elected to convert the same historical material into tragedies, as well as the fact that both plays were written within thirty years of each other gives rise to the question usually asked by the student of literature: was Pushkin, whose work was published in 1833, at all influenced by Schiller's 1805 drama, and if so what similarities exist between the two plays? Although answering this type of question constitutes a valid approach towards the understanding of some literary phenomena, I would argue that this is not the case with the texts at hand. Undoubtedly the Schillerian connection has a role in Russian literature¹. Biographical evidence, furthermore, proves beyond doubt that Pushkin was indeed familiar with Schiller's works². Still, any direct historical

¹see for example Edmund K. Kosta, Schiller in Russian Literature (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1965) in which he covers Schiller's influence from Stankevich to Ivanov; almost no connections were made to the work of Pushkin.

²In his letter to his L.S. Pushkin on April 23, 1825, for example, he asks for the Oevres dram. de Schiller a 1821 french translation by M. de Barante. Found in Tatiana Wolff ed., Pushkin on Literature (London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1971).

or biographical evidence is sketchy at best and any attempt to link both works using this particular approach would require a detective-type investigation whose scope is beyond the parameters of this essay.

Another, more feasible route that the student of literature might take is to compare both works by content and form. However, if this approach is chosen, one is left with the sometimes difficult task of justifying the 'raison d'etre' for one's work, or, in other words, one has to legitimize the approach one has taken. Thus, in our case it is, for example, possible to state that Schiller took greater liberties with historical facts than did Pushkin.

This statement is valid and can subsequently be re-enforced and explained by examining both Pushkin's and Schiller's philosophical stance on the use of history in drama. Yet, one is still left with the task of explaining why this particular comparison is of significance to the study of literature. In effect, merely stating that Schiller uses history in one way, while Pushkin uses it in another is of little literary value, for such information can be presented more efficiently by analyzing both plays individually: the use of comparison if to be of value requires justification. Keeping in mind the arduous

task that any such an approach would entail, I have subsequently refrained from comparing the works at hand on form and content only.

The only obvious connection that exists between Pushkin's "Boris Godunov" and Schiller's "Demetrius" fragment is that both are based on the tumultuous years in Russian history that followed the death of Ivan IV. It is of interest, however, that while Schiller used the imposter Demetrius as the protagonist for his drama, Pushkin elects to make Godunov into the tragic hero³. Furthermore, as I will explore in this essay, certain similarities do exist between the fate of Godunov, as described by Pushkin and that of Dimitrius, as described by Schiller. These similarities will not be used to prove any direct biographical connections between the two plays. Instead, they will simply serve as evidence for the following thesis: while any given historical event can be manipulated

³The question of who should be viewed as the tragic hero in "Boris Godunov" remains a point of contention among scholars. In this essay I will follow Stender-Petersen's argument that Godunov should be viewed as the tragic hero, as he states: "Er (Pushkin) machte die Idee, das selbst das schönste und edelste Ziel böse und unedle Mittel nicht heiligen könne, die Idee vom Konflikt in der Seele Boris Godunovs zum Kern der Tragödie". Out of Birgit Osterwald, Das Demetrius-Thema in der russischen und deutschen Literatur (Aschendorf Muenster: Studia slavica et baltica, 1982).

by the dramatist in a number of ways -- even to the point of choosing diametrically opposed protagonists as is the case in the two works under discussion -- the elements used to depict the tragic often resemble each other. Naturally, this study viewed by itself cannot offer enough proof that any such assertion is true under all circumstances. It should, therefore, be viewed as a small piece in a larger puzzle.

The Boris / Demetrius Comparison

Any comparison between Schiller's Demetrius and Pushkin's Godunov involves a certain amount of organisational difficulties due to the nature of the works involved. Thus, while Schiller includes Demetrius in most of the finished and the unfinished scenes, Pushkin's hero appears in only six out of the twenty-four scenes. This discrepancy in volume of information requires a careful balancing act, one that does not favour Schiller's work. Further problems arise when attempting to sub-divide the development of the characters at hand: while Schiller divides his play into four acts,

using the third act as his climax, Pushkin, attempting to rid Russian drama from the confines of the Aristotelian model, strings twenty-four scenes together, each with its own climax. An act-by-act, scene-by-scene comparison is thus impossible. To

circumnavigate these problems I have divided this exercise into three parts: i) the rise to power; ii) "Dimitri's Ghost", and; iii) the transformation and downfall. These sub-categories are of a highly subjective nature and serve to streamline the argument rather than to depict the actual subdivision of the character developments.

i) The Rise to Power

Both Pushkin's *Godunov* and Schiller's *Demetrius* are unlikely candidates for Aristotelian tragic material, for lack of noble blood⁴, and in *Godunov's* case, noble spirits, marks both heroes; consequently, they can loosely be labelled as self-made heroes. Thus from

⁴Shuisky at one point refers to *Godunov* as "A Tartar, erstwhile slave, Malyuta's spawn"(7), hinting at the fact that *Godunov's* family had been raised to the rank of boyar only under the reign of Ivan the Dread. By contrast, Schiller's *Demetrius* finds that he is not of noble birth only after he defeated The Czar, as shown in the fragment "Demetris erfährt seine Geburt" (90).

Shuisky we find out in Scene 1 that it was Godunov's gift for political intrigue as well as his ruthless behaviour⁵, rather than lineage that put him into a position of power. Once his true birth-right is known to him, Demetrius too is capable of some quick political manouvering, as is evident in his encounter with Marfa, his supposed mother (92-94).

Yet, in both plays, self motivation is only one of the factors responsible for the rise to power. More important for the elements of the tragic within both plays, are the outside forces that are at work. Both Schiller and Pushkin recognized that a certain degree or inevitability of fate had to balance out the element of free will in order for tragedy to occur. As we shall see, both authors used different combinations of religious imagery (the God-element) and the 'will of the people' (the human element) to depict the element of fate.

When we first encounter Pushkin's Godunov, he is very much reluctant to accept the crown. From Vorotynski we find out that the time Boris has spend ducking empirical responsibilities had gone well past the period allotted for political decorum: "But now a

⁵Pushkin , influenced by Karamzin, blames the murder of the young Dimitri on Godunov.

month has passed,/Since, shut up in the convent with his sister,/ He seems to have
 foresworn all that is worldly." (5). By the time Godunov does consent to becoming Czar
 at the end of scene 3, Pushkin has managed to introduce the two elements discussed in
 the opening paragraph of this section. Thus, the 'will of the people' is demonstrated by
 the various distinguished visitors to the cloister, The "Holy priests, boyars, and
 Patriarch" (11), as well as by the crowd of commoners that has gathered in front of the
 convent (scene 3). Religious imagery also abounds in the first three scenes. Not only
 does Pushkin place the future Czar inside a convent, but through Shchelkalov we find
 out that one last spiritual effort will be made to convince Godunov to accept:

The Sobor has now resolved	To try the last time the power of prayer
...	Tomorrow the Most Holy Patriarch,
Preceded by the Holy Banners and	The Icons of Vladimir and the
Don,	Will rise exalted from a great Te Deum
Kremlin, and with him the Synod,	Sung in the
And all the Orthodox of Moscow- we	The Conclave of Officials, Deputies,
Tsaritsa,	Will all again go pray to our
homes. ...	Go back, now, to your
And from the hearts of all the Orthodox	Let
fervent prayers ascend to Him on high.(11)	

To the will of the people is thus added a religious dimension: since prayers are given for the Godunov's consent, and he accepts the crown one scene later, the 'heavenly connection' has indeed been made. A note of caution must added, however, for it is possible to interpret this particular sequence of events in a manner which would eliminate the divine element. The religious imagery could, for example, be viewed merely as an extension of the political pressure that was brought to bear upon Godunov. Never-the-less, Pushkin clearly demonstrates that outside pressures, though not necessarily divine, influenced Godunov's rise to power.

Unlike Pushkin, Schiller's outside forces are made up mostly of supernatural, rather than of human elements, although examples of the latter are present. Let us then look more closely at the initial rise to power of Demetrius. While still a monk Demetrius already senses that this life was not to be his destiny; thus, he tells us in the opening scene: Moench unter Moenchen fand ich mich, als ich/ Anfang zum Selbstbewusstseyn zu erwachen...und dunkelmaessig in den Adern empoerte sich dass ritterliche Blut."(18). This inner force subsequently drives him away from the monastery and he

eventually takes up service with a polish nobleman. From here on in the turn of events takes on almost miraculous proportions. Sentenced to death for the murder of a polish nobleman, Demetrius' apparent noble birth is discovered at the moment of execution: a golden cross, dangling from his neck, later to be identified by russian refugees as belonging to the Czar's family, interrupts the sentence and saves Demetrius (19). Fate has intervened, and has transformed Demetrius from a condemned man into the future Czar. Schiller adds other elements, such as the little book written in greek, identifying Demetrius as Fyodor's son, as well as a close physical resemblance between Demetrius and the Czar's dead son to strengthen the idea of pre-determination. Further, by the time the archbishop of Gnesen wonders: " Wie? Ihr kanntet euch nicht,/Und doch erfuellte damals schon der Ruf/ Die Welt, dass Prinz Demetrius noch lebe?" and Demetrius replies:" Ging ein Geruecht umher von meinem Daseyn,/ So hat geschaeft ein Gott verbreitet" (18) it has become quite clear that Demetrius rise to power has been sealed by a seemingly supernatural string of co-incidence.

Yet, supernatural elements alone might not be the only factors behind Demetrius' rise to

power. Thus Saphieha speculates that this newly found Czar is nothing but a tool of the Woiwoida Von Sendomir, whose ambition is to control Moscow (27). This point is reinforced by Odowalsky's statement that: "Schon lang verzehrt sich unser tapfrer Muth/ Frieden, [missing fragment] die muessgen Schwerter rosten./ Auf lasst uns fallen in das land des Czars" (25). Similar to Pushkin's Godunov, Dimitrius can be viewed as a pawn, whose role is pre-determined by complex political and historical forces. Different interpretations notwithstanding, the common denominator linking Godunov's and Demetrius' fate is that in both cases outside forces beyond their immediate control facilitate their rise to power.

ii) "Dimitri's Ghost"

What at first appears as a subtitle of an unusual nature, can be readily understood once we have examined the elements which lead to the downfall of the two protagonists under discussion. What will become clear is that both Demetrius as well as Godunov are haunted by the same historical phantom, albeit that this ghost takes on different

shapes.

Already in scene 1 Pushkin makes it quite clear that Godunov's reign will be hounded by events that lie in the past. Thus, Vorotynski remarks: " Surely remorse must nag the murderer./ It must be that the guiltless youngster's blood/ Obstructs the step that leads him to the throne." (7). The real Dimitri is dead, yet lingers on in the guilty conscience of the doomed ruler. This point is emphasized in the description of the slain prince. In contrast to the rotting bodies around him the Tsaryevich's " face was clear/ And fresh and calm, as if relaxed in sleep." (73). Symbolically, then, the murdered Dimitri is both dead and alive. This dichotomy is present throughout the play and forms the focal point of Godunov's tragic rule: the false Demetrius is the physical manifestation of Godunov's guilty conscience and becomes, as Osterwald remarks, "a symbol for the inescapable punishment of fate" (Osterwald, 114) or, in other words, the punishing tool of a long dead ghost. The psychological toll that this premonition exacts on Godunov is evident in a number of passages, yet nowhere so clearly as in his monologue in scene 10. Having just listened to Shuiski's description of the Czarevitch's corpse he exclaims:

Ugh, it is stifling! Let me get my breath!

...

So this is why, for thirteen years on end,

I have dreamed constantly of the slain child!

Yes, yes, that's it! At last I understand.

But this dread enemy- who is it then?

Who is the foe? An empty name, a shadow- (73)

Undoubtedly, then, the dead Dimitri, a phantom of a guilty conscience metamorphosed into an avenging imposter, has taken control of Godunov's fate.

As in Pushkin's play, the ghost of the murdered Dimitri, takes on an important role in

Schiller's work -- again the term 'ghost' should not be interpreted in a literal sense, but

rather, as was the case in Pushkin's play, as a psychological manifestation. What

constitutes the turning point in Schiller's "Demetrius" fragment is that scene in which

the protagonist learns that he is not, as he had all along believed, the long lost heir to

the throne. The past comes to hound him in the form of X (Schiller had not given the

character a name) who demands recompense from Demetrius since it was he who had

murdered the young Czarevitch, and it was he who had fabricated Demetrius' past,

including the greek booklet, in order to avenge himself on Godunov (90). The ghost of

the past has arisen and is demanding its first victim: to conceal his true identity, Demetrius murders X (91). Blood has been spilled and the protagonist's journey from "innocence to consciousness in guilt" (Stahl, 150) has begun. As Schiller himself puts it: " Bis dahin war alles Streben und Hoffnung; von da an beginnt die Furcht und das Unglueck." (Stahl, 150). What follows for Demetrius is the hell of psychological isolation, one that is very similar in nature to that encountered in Godunov. The form that it takes is hinted at in the fragment in which Demetrius encounters his supposed mother, for the scene is described as follows: "Ein unbekanntes tritt zwischen beide, die Natur spricht nicht, sie sind ewig geschieden". It is into this "Unbekannte" - the wall that has been erected between Demetrius and the rest of the world- that we can place the "ghost of Dimitri", the past that has come to haunt the present.

iii) Transformation and Downfall

This last segment is directly linked to the previous section, for it is here that we will more closely explore how the 'isolatory guilt' which we have discovered in the two

protagonists will lead to their eventual downfall. And, while it plays a much greater role in Schiller's play than it does in Pushkin's, the concept of 'transformation' must also be dealt with in this section for through it the extent of the tragic can be fully exposed.

When we first encounter Demetrius he is described by Schiller as follows:

Demetrius erscheint zuerst in einem unschuldigen schoenen Zustand als der ... liebenswuerdigste und herrlichste Juengling, der die Gnade Gottes hat und der Menschen... sein Geist geht hoch, aber seine Wuensche sind bescheiden. Er zeigt eine fuerstliche Grossmuth und hat einen begeisterten Glauben an das Glueck. (Osterwald, 164)

Yet, by the time the protagonist has become Czar a substantial transformation has taken place. He has become a proud, mistrusting despotic ruler, disliked by his subjects, without friends, forced to rule by power and violence(95). The clue to this change lies in the following description given to us by Schiller: "Das furchtbare Element traegt ihn nun selbst, er beherrscht es nicht, er wird von der Gewalt fremder Leidenschaften gefuehrt, und ist jetzt gleichsam nur noch ein Mittel und eine Nebensache."(95). Again the image of an outside force emerges. Paradoxically, this force has now taken over his inner world, controlling his destiny, leading us to suspect

that the 'furchtbare Element' is indeed part of a psychological reaction to the birth revelation. Schiller himself substantiates this claim by stating that "Er(Demetrius) setzt ein Misstrauen in alle, weil er sich selbst im Herzen einen Betrueger findet" (90). The image of isolation coupled with guilt again becomes apparent, and since the combination of both these traits is not found in the original description of the characters it is reasonable to argue that they are indeed parts of what Stahl describes as the "change ... wrought in him by the unexpected revelation of the truth" (Stahl, 152).

Eventually the self-doubt that was planted by what we previously labelled as the 'Ghost of Dimitri', coupled with the increased isolation that Demetrius encounters leads to his downfall. Interestingly the protagonist's murder occurs only after Marfa, mother to the real Demetrius, reverses her previous stand by publically disassociating herself from the Imposter: fate, in the form of the past has caught up with Demetrius.

The idea of transformation so apparent in Schiller's protagonist, is not readily detected in Pushkin's Godunov. Yet change can be detected in the attitude of the people towards their new Czar. With the arrival of the Imposter the "spell" that he had

"cast..upon the people" (9) has vanished. Instead defiance and abandonment greet the embattled ruler, as is most clearly shown in the Simpleton's remark at the end of scene 17⁶. Unlike Schiller whose depiction of change is from within, Pushkin uses a transformation steered by the outer world. An explanation for this divergence is easily found when one considers that Pushkin's protagonist is already engaged in an inner battle right from the onset of the play. Unlike Schiller's Demetrius, Godunov's inner battle with the guilt and isolation caused by the murder of the young Dimitri spans the entire plot, making a transformation in the Schillerian sense unnecessary. Although not brought on by a sudden revelation of truth, as was the case with Demetrius, Godunov's battle with guilt and isolation is no less severe and has similar consequences. The extent of the torment that Godunov endures reveals itself in his death: the moment the 'ghost of Dimitri', materialized in the form of the avenging Imposter, fails to conquer and to replace him -- thus, failing to bring salvation from the earthly misery -- Godunov dies

⁶The Simpleton's exclamation : "No, no! I can't pray for a Tsar like Herod. The Virgin will not let me."(121) can be interpreted as representing the voice of the people, but also as a voice of the divine, for historically the Simpleton was viewed as a holy fool with prophetic powers: Godunov's end seems to be foreshadowed in this scene.

from a sudden illness. In effect, Godunov, tired of the fight with his conscience, had accepted the Imposter as fate's tool for revenge. So strong is his belief in his destiny, that even the Imposter's defeat could not prevent it. Thus Godunov's downfall, like that of Schiller's Demetrius, incorporates the two elements necessary in order for the tragic to occur, namely free-will and fate.

Conclusion

The preceding analysis of similar tragic elements within Schiller's and Pushkin's interpretations of a specific historical event is not an attempt to fully interpret the material at hand -- many other methods of interpretation are indeed possible. The analysis should be viewed, however, as incorporating some of the proof necessary to support my original argument, which states that the tragic potential of any given historical situation can be exploited in a number of ways. Using Schiller's "Demetrius" and Pushkin's "Boris Godunov" I have shown that while the tragic elements can indeed be extracted from both sides of the historical coin, the nature of what is traditionally

recognized as the 'tragic' is less flexible; hence, the similarities within both approaches.

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AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE TRAGIC ELEMENTS
IN PUSHKIN'S "BORIS GODUNOV" AND SCHILLER'S "DEMETRIUS"

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