

# A Comparative Approach to the Image of Boris Godunov in the Art of Alexander Pushkin and Faddey Bulgarin

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## Abstract

In the early 19th century, important historical developments were intensely reflected both in the thought structure and literature of the period. Novels such as *Ivanhoe* and *Waverley*, written by Scottish writer Walter Scott in the 1810s, initiated the genre of 'historical literature' in Europe and the historical genre soon found its place in other national literatures. Inspired by Walter Scott, Russian literature also succeeded in producing original historical works in a short time. Under the leadership of writers such as Nikolay Karamzin, Mikhail Pagodin, Ivan Lajechnikov, Mikhail Zagoskin, the Russian historical novel produced its first serious examples. The historical events and people that the authors dealt with within the scope of fiction, especially inspired by their own national history, attracted great interest of the public.

The pioneering works in this field in Russian literature are Karamzin's *Natalya, the Boyar's Daughter* (Natalya, boyarskaya doç, 1792) and Zagoskin's *The Russians in 1612 or Yuri Miloslavski* (Yuri Miloslavski ili Russkie v 1612 godu, 1829). Soon after the publication of these works, Alexander Pushkin (1799-1837) and Faddey Bulgarin (1789-1859) also wrote remarkable examples in the historical novel genre. Pushkin's first historical work is the tragedy *Boris Godunov*, which deals with 16th century Russia. Although this work was written in 1825, it could only be published at the end of 1830 due to censorship. The tragedy deals with the Period of Confusion (Smutnoe vremya) of Russia between 1598 and 1613, which was characterised by turmoil and the struggle for the throne, and Boris Godunov and Dmitri the Impostor who claimed the throne during this period.

Faddey Bulgarin's work on the same subject, *Dmitri the Impostor* (Dmitri samozvanets), was published in the same year as Pushkin's *Boris Godunov*. Bulgarin, one of the most important representatives of the Walter Scott tradition in Russia, also wrote other historical novels such as *Mazepa* and *Ivan Ivanovich Vijigin*. **The novel *Dmitri the Impostor*, which deals with the same historical period as Pushkin's tragedy *Boris Godunov*, is a remarkable example of how a historical personality and event are treated differently by the two authors.** Indeed, Pushkin and Bulgarin treated Boris Godunov as a historical person, from a completely different point of view. Although Pushkin treats Godunov as a negative character, he portrays him as a relatively positive hero by showing his good sides, too. In contrast to Pushkin, Bulgarin portrays Godunov as a very negative character, as a murderer who assassinates Tsarevich Dmitri for his own glory. This approach was undoubtedly influenced by the authors' worldviews and ideological approaches.

In this study, Pushkin's and Bulgarin's approaches to and treatment of Boris Godunov and Russia's 17th century period of turmoil will be analysed both by the authors themselves and with examples from the works in question. Thus, it will be shed light on how the same historical event or personality is treated differently according to the worldview and artistic style of different authors.

**Key Words:** Alexandr Pushkin, Faddey Bulgarin, Historical Novel, Compararison