

A PROPOSAL TO THE OHIO UNIVERSITY RESEARCH COUNCIL

TITLE OF PROJECT: Three Borises: Poetic Truth against the Will to Power NAME OF APPLICANT: Vladimir Marchenkov

STATUS: Asst. Prof. Assoc. Prof. Prof. Administrator

DEPARTMENT: Interdisciplinary Arts

CAMPUS ADDRESS: 31 South Court Street, Room 067

E-MAIL ADDRESS: marchenk@ohio.edu

RE-SUBMISSION: YES (Original Submission Date _____)
 NO

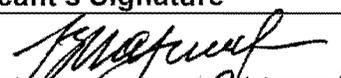
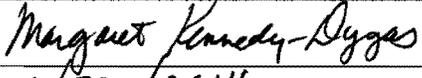
BUDGET: Total Request 6,154.50
 (May not exceed \$8,000)

IRB AND IACUC APPROVAL:

To ensure that the University is in compliance with all federal regulations, complete the checklist below. Note: your proposal can be approved prior to IRB or IACUC approval, but funding will be withheld until notification of approval or exemption.

Yes	No	Office of Research Compliance	Policy #
	X	Human Subjects in Research (including surveys, interviews, educational interventions): Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval #: Expiration Date:	19.052
	X	Animal Species: Institutional Animal Care & Use Committee (IACUC) Approval #: Expiration Date:	19.049

SIGNATURES:

Applicant's Signature		Chair/Director's Signature	
Signature		Signature	
Name	Vladimir Marchenkov	Name	CHARLES BUCHANAN
Dept/School	IARTS	Unit	IARTS
Date	01/30/14	Date	1/29/14
Dean's Signature			
Name	MARGARET KENNEDY-DYGAS	Signature	
College	COFA	Date	1/30/2014

Optional:

If selected for funding, I give permission to the Office of the Vice President for Research and Creative Activity to use my proposal as an example during training and workshop exercises.

Signature:  Date: 01/30/14

Ohio University Research Council Proposal Checklist

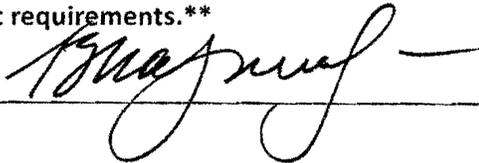
Applicants **must** complete and sign the checklist. The checklist should be included as the second page of the application (following the cover page):

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cover Page | use OURC form |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Checklist | use OURC form |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Abstract* | 1 double-spaced page |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Introduction (<i>for resubmissions only</i>)* | 1 double-spaced page |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Project Description (<i>for established applicants only</i>) [†] * | 1 double-spaced page |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discussion | 10 double-spaced pages |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Glossary/Definition of Terms* (<i>not required</i>) | 2 double-spaced pages |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bibliography (<i>not required</i>) | 3 pages |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Biographical information (<i>applicant(s) and key personnel</i>) | 3 pages per person |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other Support (<i>applicant(s) and key personnel</i>) | 1 page per person |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Budget and Justification | no limit specified |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Appended Materials | 10 pages; no more than 10 minutes of footage |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recommended Reviewers | 5 required |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Electronic copy of proposal | Single Acrobat file, containing entire proposal and required signatures |

* These sections should be written in language understandable by an informed layperson to assist the committee in its review. Established applicants ([†]) are faculty members who have tenure **and** have been at the university at least three years or administrators who have been at the university at least five years.

****Please note: The committee has the right to return without review any proposals that do not conform to these format requirements.****

Applicant signature: _____

 01/30/14

Project Title: Three *Borises*: Poetic Truth against the Will to Power

Abstract

Funds are requested for two weeks of archival work in St. Petersburg, Russia, as part of research for my book *Three Borises: Poetic Truth against the Will to Power*, in the summer of 2014. The archival research is needed in order to test my hypothesis about the possible quotation in the finale of Modest Musorgsky's famous 1868-1872 opera *Boris Godunov*. The last three notes in the opera happen to coincide with Johannes Kepler's proposed "song" of planet Earth in his groundbreaking 1618 treatise *Harmony of the World*. If this is a mere accident, it is trivial to the point of being meaningless. If, however, I can show that it was an intentional quotation, a significant adjustment of the composer's place in the history of Russian music will be in order. Musorgsky, who has been mostly understood as a social critic, will also be linked to the tradition of the so-called "Russian Cosmism."

New Project Description

I am requesting funds to conduct archival research at the Russian National Library, Mariinsky Central Music Library of Academic Theatre, Opera, and Ballet, and St. Petersburg Rimsky-Korsakov State Conservatory Library in St. Petersburg, Russia, from 2 to 15 June 2014. This research is needed in order to test my hypothesis about the possible musical quotation in the finale of Modest Musorgsky's 1868-1872 opera *Boris Godunov*. The hypothesis forms a considerable part of the chapter on Musorgsky's opera in the book that I am writing at the moment, titled *Three Borises: Poetic Truth against the Will to Power*.

While I have worked in archives before, it was as a philosopher looking for and at philosophical texts. In this case, by contrast, I am engaging in the work of a music historian, touching on broader cultural history as well. Specifically, I should like to find out how Musorgsky may have encountered the information about Kepler's peculiar "findings" in his *Harmonies of the World*, namely the songs of various planets in the Solar System. Short of finding direct evidence, I plan to assess the likelihood that the composer may have been aware of Kepler's "song" of the Earth. There are three main types of materials that I plan to examine. First, there are Musorgsky's personal writings, the leading Russian newspapers published between the years 1865 and 1868, when most of the composition of the opera took place and the existing finale took its form, and, finally, books on astronomy that were current in Russia in the 1860s and that the composer, who was interested in astronomy among other things, was likely to be familiar with.

Discussion

As I pointed out above, the proposed archival research is part of my work on my second book, *Three Borises: Poetic Truth against the Will to Power*, and its results may have a bearing on my interpretation of the opera. I should note that, although my project is primarily philosophical in nature, relying on musicology but not seeking to contribute to it directly, in my research I stumbled upon a music-historical riddle, potentially with far-reaching implications. Namely, the last notes of Musorgsky's opera, *e-f-e*, happen to be the ones planet Earth sings, according to Johannes Kepler, in the celestial harmony of the Solar System. Even more strikingly, the last words of the Holy Fool's aria in the opera's finale sound like a quotation from the Keplerian Earth song. "Weep, weep, poor Russian folk," sings the Russian Jeremiah, "the hungry folk!" "The Earth sings MI, FA, MI," Kepler wrote at the time of the events described in the opera, "so that even from the syllable you may guess that in this home of ours MIsery and FAmine hold sway." The existing musicological literature contains, as far as I can tell, no commentary on this curious coincidence. If quotation were to become plausible it would call for a considerable adjustment of Musorgsky's place in the history of the arts. He has been understood as a master-psychologist, a democratic or populist artist who sings glory to the Russian folk, as a merciless expositor of the sins and illegitimacy of autocracy, and in other, similarly socio-political, terms. However, if a cosmological dimension were added to his persona, then he would also be connected to Russian Cosmism, stretching from the writer and philosopher Prince Vladimir Odoevsky (Pushkin's younger contemporary), through the poet Fëdor Tiutchev, the philosopher Vladimir Solov'ëv (Musorgsky's

contemporary), and the composer Alexander Scriabin to, among others, Andrei Tarkovsky.

The book as a whole is a philosophical interpretation of Alexander Pushkin's 1825 tragedy *Boris Godunov*, Musorgsky's 1872 opera of the same name, and Andrei Tarkovsky's 1983 production of Musorgsky's opera at Covent Garden. My focus is on how these artists expressed their respective views on the role of the poet in modernity. (The poet here is a figure that stands for artists in any art form, the artist in general.) And yet it is not merely an interpretation but also an occasion to present my own views on this subject, while allying myself with the artists in question. Martin Heidegger did something of this nature with Van Gogh's *Peasant Shoes* and a temple at Paestum in his essay "On the Origin of the Work of Art," and Michel Foucault enlisted Velazquez in support of his cause in *The Order of Things*. Still I hope to be sensitive enough not to twist the artists' arms, as it were, but instead carefully to listen to their voices. I am in dialogue with them, not marshaling them as convenient witnesses.

My argument, in a nutshell, is that Pushkin, Musorgsky, and Tarkovsky's renderings of Tsar Godunov's story are, among other things, meditations on the place of art in modern political history. They are lasting, reverberating statements about the relation between *poetic truth* and *the will to power*. All three artists view modern history as a near-ultimate triumph of the will, and pit against it the poet's commitment to truth. The unique individual visions that found expression in these works do not dispel the continuity that marks these artists' answers to the challenges that modernity casts before the poet. All three *Borises* have been read through the lens of political history, social critique, psychological insight, and various other, mostly socio-historical, approaches – to

say nothing of literary studies and musicology. I am not aware of a prior study approaching these works as expressions of their authors' art-philosophical convictions.

All three artists articulate their visions, first and foremost, as artists, and it is not my intention to turn them into philosophers speaking in allegories. Still the imagery they deploy does not merely stir our emotions, but also stimulates philosophical reflection. Any attempt strictly to separate these two aspects, opposite as they may seem each by itself, rips apart the living fabric of the work. To keep this fabric whole is *principium primum* of my hermeneutics.

In my interpretation I rely on Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope, the network of spatial and temporal relations that underlie events and actions in a literary work. I enrich this concept with my own philosophy of myth (which owes much to the work of Bakhtin's contemporary Aleksei Losev), in order to bring to light two contrasting chronotopes in the tragedy, consistently in conflict with each other. The first is the chronotope of the emerging modern world, epitomized, above all, in the figure of False Dimitrii. The insatiable and unprincipled will to power that is the driving force of this world also glares through the political intrigue at Godunov's royal court, as well as through the key characters in the Polish scenes. This is the new open-ended world of infinite time and space, where the human subject is the sole agent deciding what is true and what is false. The second is the chronotope of the pre-modern world, quickly receding into the past and seemingly irrelevant, but at the same time refusing to vanish completely. It is realized in Pushkin's tragedy through the figures of the chronicler Pimen, the Shepherd, cured of his blindness on the grave of the martyred Prince Dimitrii, and, above all, the Holy Fool Nikolka, the figure that symbolizes the abject state of truth

in the world of early modern politics. This is a closed, hierarchically ordered world ruled by the transcendent truth and objective moral law that manifests itself in visions, miracles, and prophecies. The central character, Tsar Boris, tries in vain to reconcile these two worlds, and perishes in the attempt. The silence of the folk, terrified by a repeat regicide, in Pushkin's final scene is famously ambiguous: will it be followed by more violence or is it the sign of a dawning conscience?

The arch-like classical structure of Pushkin's tragedy inspires cautious faith in the rational course of events. By contrast, Musorgsky composes a different ending: a raging mob joining False Dimitrii's march on Moscow, with the Holy Fool left behind to lament the coming misery and famine. The abject state of truth is even more pronounced in the opera where it is brought in high relief by the fact that, among all the characters, the Fool is now the sole truth-teller. Even Pushkin's monk-chronicler Pimen becomes a scheming courtier, and the genre of his speech changes from a straightforward witness account to a politic allegorical hint with an ulterior motive. The ostensible love affair between False Dimitrii and Marina Mnishek likewise loses what traces of genuine emotion it had in Pushkin's kinder original, and turns in Musorgsky's hands into a struggle of two wills, each lusting for power. Tsar Boris remains the tragic character that he was in Pushkin's rendering but his death now promises no reprieve to his tormented realm; it is simply a collapse of a false order to be followed by an even falser one, amounting to destructive disorder.

In his production of the opera Tarkovsky deepens the Holy Fool's abjection even further but at the same time he introduces elements that counterbalance Musorgsky's bleak pessimism. While the Fool is made even more invisible, as it were, with his head

covered by a sack, the presence of the pre-modern chronotope is, by contrast, made visible by the sightings of Tsarevitch Dmitrii's ghost. The illegitimate Tsar Boris no longer points to his own mere hallucinations, but to a visible image of the world that haunts his guilty conscience. The ending is likewise suggestive: there is a bloodied axe lying at the Fool's feet in the proscenium but behind the crouching figure looms a large, luminous Orthodox cross. The world of objective moral law, these images suggest, is not swept away by the bacchanal of the will; its presence is ineluctable. Chronologically, Tarkovsky's *Boris* was nestled between his last two films where the salvific role of the artist was the sole most important theme. Gorchakov in *Nostalgia* (1983) and Alexander in *Sacrifice* (1986) both commit acts that are intended to save the world from an impending apocalypse. The poet turned chronicler Gorchakov (he is writing the biography of a Russian musician) receives a piece of candle from the madman Domenico, so that he can carry its feeble flame across a filthy drained pool at a provincial Italian spa. He dies of a heart attack the moment this absurd mission is complete. The actor turned professor of aesthetics Alexander prevents a nuclear holocaust by mystical coitus with a woman reputed to be a witch. He then fulfils his vow of sacrifice to God by burning his house and is promptly taken to a mental asylum. What seems like madness to the modern world turns out to be superior wisdom, stemming from the mysterious connectedness of the world's whole that is preserved by the acts of self-sacrificing artists. The final image of Tarkovsky's entire output is a boy watering a desiccated tree.

Preliminary Studies

Since 2008 when I gave the first paper on this subject, I have presented papers that grew out of the various parts of the project at conferences and in lectures, testing my ideas and approach, as well as creating building blocks for the future book. In January 2011, for example, I gave a lecture on “Three *Borises*: Pushkin, Musorgsky, and Tarkovsky on Art, Politics, and History” at the Ohio State Center for Slavic and East European Studies. In 2012 I presented a paper on “Three Notes, the Course of History, and the Interpreter’s Conundrum” at the Midwest Slavic Conference (see Appendix below), and shortly thereafter one on “Abject Truth: Tarkovsky’s *Boris* in the Post-Soviet Context” at a conference held by the Goldsmiths College in London. *Three Borises* has become the most urgent item among all my other plans for research, writing, and translation; it is the focal point in which I see the ideas converging that have been taking shape in my work over the past four years.

Significance for the Field

The book is, above all, a contribution to the current academic discourse in aesthetics. I see this discourse as dominated by two mutually opposed paradigms: the formalist one, which used to be dominant in arts-related disciplines until three or four decades ago, and the ideological one that has emerged in these recent decades and challenged formalism’s dominance. Neither of them, in my opinion, does justice to art as a unique human pursuit with its own goals. Art’s purpose cannot be reduced to “disinterested pleasure,” the solving of technical problems in the medium at hand, or ideological indoctrination. In my work I join those who articulate an alternative to both of

these paradigms, i.e., such authors as Arthur Danto and Giorgio Agamben, even as I develop my own, distinct approach. My interpretation-cum-exposition should culminate in a philosophical defence of art as the transformation of the inner human person by means of transforming the external world. In addition to aesthetics I also seek to contribute to the large and growing corpus of scholarly and philosophical commentary on Pushkin's tragedy, Musorgsky's opera, and Tarkovsky's artistic outlook. And, finally, I see my work in the context of the interdisciplinary study of the arts, a trend that is gathering momentum and helps overcome the isolation of various disciplines brought about by excessive and narrowly understood specialization.

Bibliography

(A brief sampling of the works in English that will be relevant to my project.)

Agamben, G. *The Man Without Content*. Trans. G. Albert, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999.

Bakhtin, M. *The Dialogic Imagination*. Trans. C. Emerson and M. Holquist, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981.

Bird, R. *Andrei Tarkovsky: Elements of the Cinema*. London: Reaktion Books, 2008.

Danto, A. *Beyond the Brillo Box: The Visual Arts in Post-Historical Perspective*, New York: Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, 1992.

Emerson, C. *Life of Mussorgsky*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

_____. *Boris Godunov: Transpositions of a Russian Theme*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986.

Emerson, C. and R. W. Oldani. *Modest Mussorgsky and Boris Godunov: Myths, Realities, Reconsiderations*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Gasparov, B. *Five Operas and a Symphony: Word and Music in Russian Culture*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005.

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Jones, D. *The Soul That Thinks: Essays on Philosophy, Narrative and Symbol in the Cinema and Thought of Andrei Tarkovsky*. Ph.D. Dissertation, Ohio University, 2007.

Kepler, J. *The Harmony of the World*. Trans. E. J. Aiton, A. M. Duncan, and J. V. Field, [Philadelphia]: American Philosophical Society, 1997.

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_____. *Boris Godunov: The Royal Opera House Production by Andrei Tarkovsky*. Videorecording, New York: PolyGram Video, 1993.

Nietzsche, F. *The Will to Power*. Trans. A. Ludovici. New York: Barnes & Noble, 2006.

Orlova, A. *Musorgsky's Days and Works: A Biography in Documents*. Trans. R. J. Guenther. UMI Research Press, 1983.

Pushkin, A. *Sobranie sochinenii* (Collected Works), vol. 2, Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1986.

Tarkovsky, A. *Sculpting in time : reflections on the cinema*. Trans. K. Hunter-Blair. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1991.

_____. *Martirolog: dnevniki 1970-1986* (Martyrologue: Diaries 1970-1986). Istituto Internazionale Andrej Tarkovskij, 2008.

Taruskin, R. *Mussorgsky: Eight Essays and an Epilogue*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.

Biographical Information

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Education

- Ph.D., Interdisciplinary (Philosophy, Music, and Comparative Studies in the Humanities), The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, 1998. (Dissertation topic: *The Orpheus Myth in the Musical Thought of Antiquity, the Renaissance, and Modern Times*).
- Master of Arts (Philosophy) (Thesis: *Hegel, Schopenhauer, Hanslick, and Langer on the Meaning of Music*), The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, 1994.
- Diploma (English and Danish), Moscow State Pedagogical Institute of Foreign Languages, Translators' Faculty, Moscow, USSR, 1980.

Areas of Interest and Research

Philosophy, Music History, and Comparative Studies in the Humanities; Philosophy of Art/Aesthetics, Continental Philosophy; Philosophy of Culture, Myth and Ritual Theory; Russian Philosophy; and Aesthetics of South, East and Southeast Asia.

Career Highlights

- Professor, Aesthetics and Theory, School of Interdisciplinary Arts, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio. 2012 to present.
- Associate Professor, Aesthetics and Theory, School of Interdisciplinary Arts, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio. 2007 to 2012.
- Assistant Professor, Aesthetics, tenure-track, School of Comparative Arts (later Interdisciplinary Arts), Ohio University, Athens, Ohio. 2001 to 2007.
- Visiting Assistant Professor (full-time), Aesthetics, School of Comparative Arts, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio. 2000-2001.
- Visiting Assistant Professor (full-time), Department of Philosophy, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio. Winter and Spring 2000.
- Graduate Research Associate, Center on Education and Training for Employment, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, March 1992 to 1998.
- Independent Translator/Interpreter, Moscow, 1989-1992. Principal clients: ABCNews; USSR Academy of Pedagogical Sciences; and World Bank.
- Translator, Postfactum News Agency, Moscow, USSR, September 1989 through September 1991.
- Translator, Central Pulp and Paper Institute, Moscow, 1980-1989.

Selected Publications

Books

- *Three Borises: Poetic Truth against the Will to Power*, in progress.
- *Ontology, Reality, and Play: Art as Transfigurative Praxis*, in progress.
- *The Orpheus Myth and the Powers of Music*, Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon, 2009.

Edited Volumes

- *Between Histories: Art's Dilemmas and Trajectories*, Hampton Press, 2013.
- *Arts and Terror*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, forthcoming in 2014.

Articles

- "Prophecy of a Revolution: Aleksei Losev on Wagner's Aesthetic Outlook," in Anastasia Belina and Stephen Muir (eds.), *Wagner in Russia, Poland, and the Czech Lands: Musical, Literary, and Cultural Perspectives* (forthcoming from Ashgate in 2013).
- «Мифологический статус эстетических учений "Серебряного Века"» (The Mythological Status of Silver Age Aesthetic Doctrines), *Античность и культура Серебряного века* (Antiquity and the Culture of the Silver Age), Moscow: Nauka, 2010, pp. 28-35.
- "The Dialectic of the Serious and the Ludic," in Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (ed.), *Analecta Husserliana: The Yearbook of Phenomenological Research*, vol. XCVII: Beauty's Appeal: Measure and Excess (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2008), 173-80.
- "Orpheus as an Ancient Music-Philosophical Symbol," *Hera's Peacock. An International Thematic Interdisciplinary Journal*, No. 1: Orphée (2), May 2006, pp. 13-30.
- "Poiesis, Praxis, and the Romantic Fallacy of Modern Aesthetics," *Phenomenological Inquiry*, vol. 28 (2004), pp. 36-51.
- "Mythos and Logos in Losev's Absolute Mythology," *Studies in East European Thought*, vol. 56, nos. 2-3, June 2004, pp. 173-186.
- "Art and Mystery in Mikhail Bulgakov's Novel *The Master and Margarita* and Aleksei Losev's Study *The Dialectics of Myth*" in Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (ed.) *Mystery and Its Passions: Literary Explorations, Analecta Husserliana*, vol. LXXXII, Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer, 2004, pp. 247-57.
- «Монодия, полифония и личность: Мечта о русском многоголосье» (Monody, Polyphony, and Personhood: The Dream of Russian Polyvocality), *Muzykal'naja akademija*, no. 3, 2001.
- "Vladimir Solovyov and Vyacheslav Ivanov: Two Theurgic Mythosophies," Wil van der Bercken, Manon de Courten, Evert van der Zweerde (eds.) *Vladimir Solov'ev: Reconciler and Polemicist; Selected Papers of the International Vladimir Solov'ev Conference held at the University of Nijmegen, the Netherlands, in September 1998*, [Eastern Christianity Studies, vol. 2] Leuven: Peeters, 2001, pp. 211-221.

Encyclopaedia Articles

- “Russian Philosophy” (12,000 words), Donald Borchert (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Second Edition)*, Macmillan, 2006.
- “Losev, Aleksei Fedorovich” (1,500 words), Donald Borchert (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Second Edition)*, Macmillan, 2006.

Translations

- Aleksei F. Losev, *The Dialectics of Myth*, London and New York: Routledge, 2003. Contains “Translator’s Introduction: Aleksei Losev and His Theory of Myth” (pp. [3-65]) and Notes (pp. 211-218).

Editorial Highlight

- Consulting Editor, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Second Edition*, Donald M. Borchert, Editor in Chief, Detroit, New York, San Francisco, San Diego, New Haven, Conn., Waterville, Maine, London, Munich: Thomson Gale, 2006.

Budget and Justification

Airfare	\$1,652.50*
Hotel	2,492 (\$178X14 nights) *
Meals	1,605 (\$107X15 days)**
Incidentals	405 (\$27X15 days)**
Total	6,154.50

*Concur figures for 27 January 2014.

**Official OU (U.S. Department of State) rates for St. Petersburg, Russia.

Other Support

Over the past several years I have received the following funding:

- Center for International Studies/Southeast-Asian Studies Research Travel Grant (\$2780), July 2009. I conducted initial research in Malaysia and Indonesia in order to determine promising new directions for the study of Southeast-Asian mythology and cultural history.
- OU College of Fine Arts and School of Interdisciplinary Arts Conference Support (\$950), October 2010. Presented a paper at a conference.
- NEH Summer Institute Fellowship (\$3,000); OU International Travel Grant (\$500); College of Fine Arts and School of Interdisciplinary Arts International Travel Support (\$800). The Summer Institute on the Culture and History of Modern India provided a month-long stay in India, filled with lectures by leading scholars and public figures, and visits to important cultural-historical sites. What I learned as a fellow at the Institute has richly informed my teaching and research.
- OU Research Division grant to attend the NEH Grant Writing Conference, Kent State University, (\$250), 2012.
- OU College of Fine Arts and School of Interdisciplinary Arts Conference Support (\$950), April 2012. Presented a paper at a conference in London, UK.
- OU College of Fine Arts and School of Interdisciplinary Arts Conference Support (\$650); OU International Travel Grant (\$750), August 2012. Presented a paper at a conference in Paris, France.

In the autumn of 2013 I applied for the Guggenheim and ACLS Fellowships with the aim of working on my current book, and am now awaiting the results. This spring I plan to apply for the NEH Faculty Fellowship, for the same purpose.

List of Recommended Reviewers

Caryl Emerson
Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures and of Comparative Literature
Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures
241 East Pyne Hall
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Professor Emerson is a leading authority in the U.S. on Russian literature, literary theory, and Russian spiritual thought. Her scholarly and teaching interests are focused on the 19th century (Pushkin, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Russian opera) with a 20th-century pocket for Mikhail Bakhtin. She is the author of such books as *All the Same the Words Don't Go Away (Essays on Authors, Heroes, Aesthetics, and Stage Adaptations from the Russian Tradition)*, Academic Studies Press, Boston, 2011; *The Cambridge Introduction to Russian Literature*, Cambridge University Press, 2008; *The Life of Musorgsky*, Cambridge University Press "Musical Lives" series, 1999; *The First Hundred Years of Mikhail Bakhtin*. Princeton University Press, 1997; *Modest Musorgsky and Boris Godunov: Myths, Realities, Reconsiderations* (with Robert William Oldani), Cambridge University Press, 1994; *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics*. (with Gary Saul Morson), Stanford University Press, 1990; and *Boris Godunov: Transpositions of a Russian Theme*, Indiana University Press, 1986. Her contributions to the study of Russian literature and opera have received broad international recognition. I met Professor Emerson at various professional meetings and during her visit to OU as a guest lecturer. She served as an external reviewer for my promotion and tenure in 2007.

Philip Grier
Professor Emeritus, Philosophy
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Email: grier@dickinson.edu

Professor Grier is a well-recognized authority in the U.S. on Russian philosophy and G. W. F. Hegel's thought. He is the author of *Marxist ethical theory in the Soviet Union*, Dordrecht; Boston: D. Reidel Pub. Co., 1978, and editor of *Identity and difference: studies in Hegel's logic, philosophy of spirit, and politics*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007. He has published widely in scholarly journals and collections, and is the translator of Ivan Il'in's seminal study of Hegel's philosophy *The philosophy of Hegel as a doctrine of the concreteness of God and humanity*, Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2011. I met Professor Grier once during a visit to

Dickinson College and have been in correspondence with him over the years regarding various issues in the study of Russian philosophy in the U.S. He served as an external reviewer for my promotion to Full Professor in 2011.

Dmitri Nikulin
Professor of Philosophy
Graduate Faculty
The New School
66 West 12th Street
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Professor Nikulin's research interests encompass ancient and modern philosophy, issues of metaphysics, moral philosophy, science and mathematics, ontology, and philosophy of history, theory of dialogue and dialectics, and philosophy of comedy. He is the author and editor of several scholarly volumes: *Metaphysik und Ethik. Theoretische und praktische Philosophie in Antike und Neuzeit*. München: C. H. Beck, 1996; *Matter, Imagination, and Geometry. Ontology, Natural Philosophy, and Mathematics in Plotinus, Proclus, and Descartes*. Ashgate, 2002; *On Dialogue*. Lanham: Lexington, 2006; *Dialectic and Dialogue*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010; *The Other Plato*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2012. His contributions as a scholar and teacher have received wide international recognition. I met Professor Nikulin during a visit to the New School University and then during his visit to OU as a guest lecturer in Interdisciplinary Arts.

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APPENDIX

Three Notes, the Course of History, and the Interpreter's Conundrum

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Introduction

The stage is empty. Everyone has left: the mad bloodthirsty crowd, the pompous hypocritical Impostor, cunning Jesuits, faithless mercenaries, enraged women who treat children cruelly, and children who grow up to be cruel – everyone is gone to ravage a defenceless Russia. Everyone, except the Holy Fool Nikolka, a timid, crouching figure in rags, an object of ridicule and disgust. The Holy Fool is the symbol of the abject condition of truth in Mussorgsky's opera *Boris Godunov*: he is the only character who speaks its unvarnished version and is not vying for power. Street urchins tortured him, the boyars wanted to get rid of him, the tsar pitied him (and perhaps feared him a little), and now everyone has gone to grab their share of power and loot, and he is finally alone. He begins to sing.

His song is a prophecy of Russia's fall: darkness, famine, and misery are descending upon the land, and the Fool pities the Russian people who have treated him so poorly. His lament, in a plaintive A-minor, ends with the obsessively alternating notes *e* and *f*, *mi-fa-mi*, echoing the Fool's voice in the accompaniment. "Weep, weep, poor Russian folk," sings the Russian Jeremiah, "the hungry folk!"¹ These are the last notes in the opera, the conclusion to which the course of events has come – and the conclusion to which the composer wishes to bring the spectator. But what are we to make of this conclusion?

The events that the opera describes took place at the turn and in the early years of the seventeenth century. It was the time of modernity's promise – even though its arrival was not universally hailed as a new dawn. While Francis Bacon and René Descartes hoped for superior wisdom to be gained by man, possessed of a "new organon" of knowledge, William Shakespeare and John Donne peered with great uneasiness into the new time, "its body and pressure" arising before them, and saw it "out of joint" and the order of the world "in pieces." It was also the time when the German mathematician, stargazer, astrologer, and music theorist Johannes Kepler was building the foundations of modern astronomy; in him one finds both these attitudes mixed. On the one hand, he worked tirelessly to discern a rational pattern in the universe, the harmony of the cosmos, while, on the other, the music of the planets that he heard sounded at times a pessimistic, not so say distressing note. Three notes, to be precise: the planet Earth, according to Kepler's calculations, sings a song that consists of *f* and *e*. "The Earth sings MI, FA, MI," Kepler wrote in his 1618 treatise *The Harmony of the World*, "so that even from the

¹ M. Mussorgsky, *Boris Godunov: Piano-Vocal Score* (1874), ?? (Translation from Russian here and in what follows is mine – V. M.).

syllable you may guess that in this home of ours Misery and FAMine hold sway.”² “Weep, weep, poor Russian folk, the hungry folk!” sings Nikolka in what would have been more or less the time when Kepler was writing these words, and Mussorgsky, in the second half of the nineteenth century, closes his meditation on Russian history with the Keplerian Earth Song.

Boris Godunov

Boris Godunov is without a doubt the most famous Russian opera in the world. Its plot, borrowed by the composer from Alexander Pushkin’s drama in verse, is built on the events of the Troubled Times in Russia: the fall of the still incipient Godunov dynasty, civil war, foreign invasion, and the rise of False Dimitrii to the Russian throne, the events that led in the end to the establishment of the House of Romanov – at least that is the teleology one finds in Nikolai Karamzin’s *History of the Russian State*.³ Both Pushkin, who first developed this plot in Russian literature, and Mussorgsky, who adopted it for his opera, provide enough clues for us to regard their works as artistic reflections on Russia’s entry into the modern world. Mussorgsky’s position in the history of Russian music and his authority as an artist are such that they encourage us to pay attention even to relatively insignificant details of his works. In this case, however, we are dealing not with a minor detail, but with the notes that close his opera, a musical judgement, as it were, and the summing-up of all that we have heard and seen unfold on the stage.

The coincidence that I have noted above seems to have escaped the attention of those who have written about the opera, and this literature is vast. Whatever else we may think of it, there is no doubt that for Kepler Earth’s lament meant the same thing that it means to the Holy Fool Nikolka, fictional character though he may be. But the question I wish to consider is what does this coincidence mean for interpreting Mussorgsky’s design from the point of view of the early twenty-first-century audience? This is not an idle question and the answer to it is far from obvious. In conclusion I briefly outline some consequences of adopting what I would call the quotation hypothesis.

Harmonice mundi

Kepler began to think about his most well-known and important work, *The Harmony of the World*, in 1599, after the completion of his first major treatise on astronomy, *Mysterium cosmographicum*, but it saw the light of day only in 1618.⁴ A modern reader would be surprised to see that this work on astronomy contains a great deal of discussion regarding musical matters. A follower of the Pythagorean and Platonic tradition of the “harmony of the spheres,” Kepler wished to discover the musical order, as it were, of the Solar System. The first two books of the treatise deal with geometry, while the last three tie together geometry with astronomy and music simultaneously. Mathematics is used to discern regularities in the motions of the six planets known to Kepler, and the music

² Johannes Kepler, *The Harmony of the World*, trans. E. J. Aiton, A. M. Duncan, and J. V. Field ([Philadelphia]: American Philosophical Society, 1997), 440, author’s gloss on the margin.

³ It would be an error, however, to suppose that Pushkin’s drama, let alone Mussorgsky’s opera, projects a similar teleology.

⁴ Kepler, *The Harmony of the World*, p. vii (Preface).

theory of the time is combined with mathematical calculations in order to derive from these regularities the musical notes that the planets “sing.” Single planets, Kepler finds, sing in a manner that justifies the ancient doctrine of the “harmony of the spheres,” whereas jointly the planets produce polyphonic music, a motet, if you will, that Kepler challenges his contemporary composers to imitate (see Figures 1-4 in the Appendix below). The Creator designed the universe according to certain proportions, Kepler explains; Sublunary Nature likewise defines the seasons; to these orders, Kepler continues, “we should add human music, showing how the human mind shaping our judgement of what we hear, by its natural instinct imitates the Creator by showing delight and approval for the same proportions in notes which have pleased God in the adjustment of the celestial motions.”⁵

Musical proportions are, further, inherently possessed of what Plato had called “ethos” and Kepler calls “emotions.” Speaking of the minor third, for example, i.e. the interval consisting of a whole tone and a semitone, Kepler makes the following curious comparison: “[T]he minor third which stands in the lowest position of the first tone, since it has encompassed the semitone, from which it usually falls back when it has climbed over it, as if content with itself, and made by nature to be overcome and to be passive, always like a hen prostrates itself on the ground, ready for the cock to tread it.”⁶ The hen-like submissiveness of the minor third is due, according to Kepler, to the soft and weak nature of the semitone, and a few lines above the quoted passage Kepler speaks precisely of the interval between *MI* and *FA* as an example of a semitone. The progression of notes that the astronomer describes in the quoted passage is *RE-MI-FA-MI*; it mostly consists, in other words, of what later in the treatise will be identified as the song of planet Earth.

Kepler closes his observations with the praise of polyphony as that novel contribution which modern knowledge brings to supplement the monophonic wisdom of the ancients:

[T]he motions of the heavens are nothing but a kind of perennial harmony (in thought not in sound) through dissonant tunings, like certain syncopations or cadences (by which men imitate those natural dissonances), and tending towards definite and prescribed resolutions, individual to the six terms (as with vocal parts) and *marking and distinguishing by those notes the immensity of time*. Thus it is no longer surprising that Man, aping his Creator, has at last found a method of singing in harmony which was unknown to the ancients, so that he might play, that is to say, *the perpetuity of the whole of cosmic time in some brief fraction of an hour, by the artificial concert of several voices*, and taste up to a point the satisfaction of God his Maker in His works by a most delightful sense of pleasure felt in this *imitator of God, Music*.⁷

The polyphonic harmony of the cosmos is, Kepler proposes, the song of God’s time, of sacred history, and it can be heard, if only as a faint echo and in a vastly shortened form, in human music as well.

Kepler in Russia

⁵ *The Harmony of the World*, p. 129.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 446-448 (emphasis added).

Kepler was known to educated Russians at least since the founding of the Russian Academy of Sciences in 1725. Composed of progressive European scientists, mostly Newtonians, the Academy was a hospitable place for Kepler's ideas, in contrast to the rest of Europe where the Cartesian doctrine reigned until mid-eighteenth century.⁸ By Mussorgsky's time knowledge of his work was part of the normal curriculum in the study of astronomy. Apparently, he was particularly revered by Russian astronomers, which we can glimpse from the following fact. In the 1860s the German city of Weil-der-Stadt (Württemberg) started a campaign to collect money for a monument to Johannes Kepler. News of this campaign reached Russia and found Russian astronomers responsive. The observatory at Pulkovo near St. Petersburg, still in existence today, made a contribution. Likewise Karl Khristoforovich Knorre, director of the Naval Observatory in Nikolaev in the South, asked his superiors for permission to donate some savings from his Observatory's budget to the worthy cause. In his petition to Grand Prince Konstatin Romanov he wrote: "It is doubtless known to Your Imperial Highness that several years ago a committee was formed in Württemberg in order to erect a monument to the great astronomer Kepler in the city of Weil where he was born."⁹ Knorre writes as though the Grand Prince might have known of this project from the press; the fact that his remark may also be read as flattery to the Prince's omniscience hardly dispels this impression.¹⁰

Knorre goes on to characterize Kepler for the Prince and his description bears quoting: "Kepler was the greatest astronomer and the greatest martyr who ever existed. Unrecognised and misunderstood by his contemporaries, persecuted by the clergy, and deceived by the rulers, he was forced to earn his livelihood in an unworthy manner: by predicting the future for the wealthy and powerful – a deception that he resented and to which only extreme need forced him to resort."¹¹ We see here a classic type of the martyr for modern science that the nineteenth century seems to have been so fond of: Galileo Galilei, Giordano Bruno, Nicolas Copernicus, and many other early modern figures were habitually described in similar terms. They all seek the truth and speak it fearlessly but pay for it by becoming outcasts in their own time – just like Mussorgsky's Holy Fool Nikolka.¹²

These pieces of information do not, of course, confirm in any way that Mussorgsky knew about Kepler, let alone about Kepler's musical-cosmological calculations, and decided to quote the song of the Earth in his opera. They merely indicate that Kepler was well-known in the educated Russian society at the time when the composer began to work on his opera.

⁸ N. I. Nevskaia and F. Bialas (eds.), *Iogann Kepler. Sbornik No. 1. Raboty o Keplere v Rossii, Germanii i Avstrii* (Johannes Kepler. Collected Papers 1. Writings on Kepler in Russia, Germany, and Austria), (St. Petersburg and Munich, 1994), 9.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

¹⁰ At this stage I have had no opportunity to research the Russian press in order to ascertain Knorre's own sources.

¹¹ Nevskaia, pp. 93-94.

¹² Mussorgsky visited the naval observatory in Nikolaev in early August of 1879 while on tour with the singer Darya Leonova. See Alexandra Orlova, *Musorgsky's Days and Works: A Biography in Documents*, trans. R. J. Guenther (UMI Research Press, 1983), 571.

An even more tenuous piece of “evidence” in support of the quotation hypothesis can be found in Mussorgsky’s voracious but unpredictable reading habits.¹³ It is conceivable that he may have read, among other things, an account of Kepler’s astronomical researches and was struck by their somewhat disheartening conclusions.

Mussorgsky’s Sense of History

The discussion of the opera’s meaning, as far as the vision of history that it projects is concerned, for various reasons has focussed on the roles of the ruler and ruled, the tsar and the folk. The patron critic of the Mighty Five Vladimir Stasov strove to make a democratically-minded artist out of Mussorgsky, an artist who would contribute to the glory and progress of Russian music, and this desire is evident in his efforts to influence the course of the composer’s work on the opera. Later Soviet musicology made a strenuous effort to mould Mussorgsky into a harbinger of the fall of tsarism: the main conflict in *Boris*, it was argued, is between the tsar and the folk and when the folk withdraw their support, the tsar falls. The folk, the argument went, is the true agent in history, determining its course. Mussorgsky’s piercing insights into the psychology of Boris’ guilty conscience have also been woven into these interpretative schemes: autocracy bears the original sin of violence against the innocent and defenceless, it is immoral in principle, and as such it is historically doomed.¹⁴ This paper is not the place to go into a detailed critique of these interpretations and I shall limit myself to a brief outline of my own proposed reading of Mussorgsky’s sense of history as it manifests itself in his *Boris Godunov* of 1872.

This reading makes use of Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of the chronotope: a particular configuration of time and space that makes itself felt through characters, events, and the plot. Chronotopes are underlying conceptions of the structure of the world in which these characters act, events happen, and the plot unfolds. One of the most intriguing features of Pushkin’s romantic tragedy is that there are two chronotopes in it and the dynamics of the whole are determined by their mutual interactions, at once conflictual and mutually complementary. These are, on the one side, the chronotope of the will to power and, on the other side, the chronotope of the truth. The dynamics of the first are defined by Boris, Grigorii Otrep'ev, Shuiskii, and Marina Mnishek – all obsessed

¹³ Andrei Rimsky-Korsakov recalled that, according to Dmitri Stasov, the brother of Vladimir Stasov, the ideological leader of the Mighty Handful, “among all Russian composers Mussorgsky stood out especially because of his intellectual curiosity, being well-read, and lively interest in all branches of knowledge: he read [books on] history, natural sciences, *astronomy*, and foreign literature, to say nothing of Russian literature, which made conversations with him extraordinarily interesting and substantive, given also his extremely idiosyncratic . . . ideas and extremely original attitude to what he read, as well as to all phenomena of life” (*Musorgskii M. P.: Pis'ma i dokumenty* [Mussorgsky M. P.: Letters and Documents [Moscow and Leningrad, 1932], 234; quoted in M. D. Sabinina, “M. P. Musorgskii,” in IU. V. Keldysh [ed.], *Istoriia russkoi muzyki* [History of Russian Music], vol. 7 [Moscow: Muzyka, 1994], 218; emphasis added).

¹⁴ For a brief discussion on this subject see R. Taruskin, *Mussorgsky: Eight Essays and an Epilogue* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 211-212.

with power and prepared to sacrifice every semblance of principle for its sake. These characters find themselves in the modern world: the world of infinite space and time, of inanimate matter, in which only the human subject possesses agency, and it is this subject that determines what is true and what is false. In this world, as Bakhtin notes when he speaks of the modern novel, only the present matters, and its chronotope consists in the infinite unfolding of the here and now. The second chronotope is created by such characters as Pimen, Nikolka, the blind shepherd, the Patriarch, and the hovering presence of the murdered tsarevitch, i.e., those who instead of power are focussed on, and focus in themselves, truth as the supreme principle. This is the chronotope of what Bakhtin called “the absolute past”: time and space are hierarchically structured and closed in it; here absolute values reign and the human agent is inextricably caught up in their interstices – try as he or she may to break free. Crime is always followed by retribution in it, and there is no one who is above its laws.

Mussorgsky was particularly receptive to the idea of two chronotopes in Pushkin's tragedy – arguably because of the nature of his own aesthetic outlook that he had developed by the time when he began to compose the opera. There are, in turn, two aesthetic paradigms whose mutual opposition shapes his view. The first is positivist-realist, absorbed by Mussorgsky from the aesthetic debates of the 1860s, while the other is more Pushkinian and more properly philosophical and poetic. In some respects these paradigms even coincide: in both the emphasis is placed, for example, on the faithful representation of the life of the folk. But it becomes immediately apparent that the notion of *life* sharply differs in these two approaches. Whether he is Charles Dickens, Leo Tolstoy, or Emile Zola, the realist artist acknowledges only a part of that experience which constitutes life from the second point of view—in the manner illustrated by the contrast between the medieval chronicler and modern historian. The chronicler's point of view is enunciated by Pimen in his instructions to Grigorii in the *Monastery of the Miracle*:

В часы,
 Свободные от подвигов духовных,
 Описывай, не мудрствуя лукаво,
 Всё то, чему свидетель в жизни будешь:
 Войну и мир, управу государей,
 Угодников святые чудеса,
 Пророчества и знаменья небесны.

(In the hours
 Free from spiritual labours
 Describe without deceptive wizardry
 All that you will witness in life:
 War and peace, the reign of sovereigns,
 Holy men's miracles,
 Prophecies, and heavenly signs.)¹⁵

War and peace and the rule of kings are subjects familiar to the modern historian, whereas miracles performed by holy men, prophecies, and heavenly signs hark back to

¹⁵ A. Pushkin, *Sobranie sochinenii* (Collected Works), vol. 2 (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1986), 367.

the medieval world. What Pimen proposes is therefore not the part of an historian as it will come to be defined in modernity, but that of a mythopoeist.

Modern realism sees its role as service to historical progress, whereas from the other point of view progress does not exist as a moral category. Correspondingly, in realist art the actions of characters are assessed by whether or not they promote life's forward movement, towards eliminating, as Dmitrii Pisarev memorably put it, "poverty and ignorance."¹⁶ By contrast, in the second paradigm these actions are measured by whether or not they correspond to the eternal truth; power is valid, as Pimen explains to Grigorii, only insofar as it is God-given. (The lesson is utterly lost on the chronicler's disciple, who goes on to become the False Dimitrii.) The folk for whose sake realism raises its banners is not, from this point of view, the genuine repository of such truth. Its own actions are subject to the same standard that "non-folk" characters answer to. In the end, Mussorgsky did not manage to reconcile these two paradigms; his aesthetic possesses less integrity than Pushkin's and it caused the composer (who was also his own librettist) to make certain changes in Pushkin's design, not all of them for the better. And yet his departures from Pushkin's position are telling, especially insofar as they bear witness to a new phase in the Russian meditation on the place of the artist in modern history.

There is a touch of half-suppressed surprise in Caryl Emerson's astute conclusion that Mussorgsky's view of history is, after all, irredeemably pessimistic and mystical.¹⁷ The puzzlement that this conclusion may cause comes from several historical waves of tendentious musical criticism that sought to reformulate Mussorgsky and to interpret away his disturbingly anti-modern, anti-progressivist features. Even more forcefully than Pushkin, Mussorgsky advances the idea of the misguided nature of all attempts to make *political* action the chief instrument for improving the human condition. All characters in the opera – except Nikolka – are involved in political intrigue and strife, including the folk whom the composer was supposed to empathise with. As I indicated above, this empathy was demanded of him especially by the kind of ideological obsessions that Stasov's roaring nationalist-progressivist rhetoric imposed on the Mighty Handful but the soft-spoken and mild-mannered composer managed to resist their pressure and temptation. As a result, all personages in the opera represent varying degrees of deviation from the world of truth; all ardently desire power and set the latter over and above the truth – all, that is, with the significant exception of the Holy Fool.

The composer does not spare even Pimen, the character whose integrity was not compromised in Pushkin's text. In the latter it is the Patriarch who delivers to Boris and the boyars in the Duma the story of an old shepherd cured of his blindness on Tsarevitch Dimitrii's grave. By contrast, Mussorgsky entrusts this task to Pimen, who is introduced to the assembly by Shuiskii. The emphasis is thereby changed: the mythopoeist is made to speak directly to power, but now he speaks obliquely. This change transforms the genre of his story: instead of the truth transmitted by popular rumour, as was the case with the

¹⁶ D. Pisarev, *Izbrannye proizvedeniia* (Selected Works) (Leningrad: Khudozhestvennaia literature, 1968), 376.

¹⁷ See Emerson and Oldani, *Modest Mussorgsky and Boris Godunov : myths, realities, reconsiderations*, (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), ???; and Emerson's *Life of Mussorgsky*, p. ???

Patriarch's account in Pushkin's original, the legend of the blind shepherd becomes in Mussorgsky's opera a rhetorical manoeuvre performed by Pimen, an allegory that hints at the truth (the tsarevitch is now a saint because of his martyrdom) but remains a mere clever invention. Richard Taruskin notes this mutation of the character in his article on the opera in the *New Grove Dictionary*.¹⁸ In other words, instead of a direct enunciator of reality the composer turns the mythopoeist into a cunning, dissimulating trickster, Orpheus into Odysseus.

Mussorgsky compensates for this degradation of the chronicler by foregrounding Nikolka's role far beyond its standing, important as it was, in Pushkin's tragedy. Nikolka is now the only character in the story whose commitment to truth remains unquestioned. His prophetic role is correspondingly elevated and he becomes the tolling bell that Pimen failed to be both in Pushkin's original and even more so in Mussorgsky's interpretation. The addition of the Kromy scene that Mussorgsky chose for the finale shifts the emphasis significantly—away from the classical proportions of the arch-like structure of Pushkin's tragedy, framed by two regicides. The ominously inverted popular carnival of Mussorgsky's finale culminates now in the equally ominous, if frighteningly sober, lament of the Holy Fool. The arch with its closure at least leaves a faint glimmer of hope that the mob's final terrified silence in Pushkin's tragedy may be a sign of dawning self-awareness. Mussorgsky's finale, by contrast, predicts an intensifying cycle of misguided, frenzied violence.

The renunciation of Stasov's realist optimism is especially evident, paradoxical as it may sound, in the way Mussorgsky manipulates the hauntingly Russian sound of his music. This Russianness is supposed to be among the highest values in the Stasovian ideological economy. Mussorgsky subverts, however, this elevated position with its concomitant ethical implications. *All* Russian characters in the opera, including the least morally defensible ones, sing in the Russian idiom. Among the glaring examples of this idiom's moral ambivalence is Varlaam's song in the tavern scene about Ivan the Terrible's wholesale destruction of Kazan (the capital, let us note, of Boris' homeland, the Tartar Khanate). The drunken renegade monk glorifies genocidal violence to the strains whose unmistakably Russian spirit endeared him to Stasov and others. It is significant, then, that Mussorgsky treats Nikolka's final aria in a rather peculiar manner.

The aria begins with a melody that bears recognisable Russian traits but then, after a few bars, turns into a halting chromatic descent without any apparent identifying folk marks. The bitter truth that the Holy Fool now enunciates exists beyond nationally-coloured space, beyond Russia who does not possess it but is rather possessed by it. Full of unrelieved grief, his solitary voice epitomizes the abjection of mythopoeic truth left behind by modern history, driven as it is by the will to power.

Implications of the Three Notes

If it can be definitively shown that Mussorgsky's use of the *e-f-e* in the Holy Fool's song was a deliberate quotation from Kepler's doctrine of the singing planets, then

¹⁸ Richard Taruskin. "Boris Godunov." In *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, edited by Stanley Sadie. *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/O006575> (accessed March 25, 2012).

a significant shift in the composer's standing in the history of Russian culture would be in order. As I pointed out earlier, Mussorgsky has been understood as a master-psychologist, a democratic or populist artist who sings glory to the Russian folk, as a merciless expositor of the sins and illegitimacy of autocracy, and in other, similarly socio-political terms. In other words, he is exclusively identified with the tradition of social criticism in the Russian arts. However, if a cosmological dimension is added to his artistic output, then he would also be connected with the tradition of Russian Cosmism, which views human history, not as a self-contained and isolated domain, but as included in the dynamics of the cosmos and, in certain critical ways, defined by them. This tradition stretches from Prince Vladimir Odoevsky, Pushkin's partial contemporary, to Andrei Tarkovsky, our partial contemporary, with the figures of the poet Fëdor Tiutchev, religious philosopher Vladimir Solov'ëv, and composer Alexander Scriabin looming in the middle. To add Mussorgsky to their number would be a considerable adjustment in our picture of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Russian culture.

In order to ascertain the veracity of my quotation hypothesis one would need to demonstrate that Mussorgsky was familiar with the trope of the Keplerian Earth's lament, but even more importantly one would need to explain why the composer never acknowledged the connection openly to his friends – with whom he freely shared his creative plans and creative process. These tasks, I admit, are exceedingly difficult but the prospect of solving them is likewise exceedingly intriguing.

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