

Trans-national Representations of Pretenders in 17th-Century Russian Revolts

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Pretenders (*samozvantsy*) played a part in most of the major popular revolts in early modern Russia that were characterised in Soviet Marxist historiography as “peasant wars”.¹ In particular, false descendants of Ivan the Terrible were prominent throughout the “Time of Troubles” of the early 17th century; Sten’ka Razin, who headed the cossack-peasant revolt of 1669-1671, was reportedly accompanied by a false Tsarevich Aleksei Alekseevich; and Emel’ian Pugachev, the leader of the similar uprising of 1773-1774, depicted himself as Peter III, the murdered husband of Catherine the Great. Pretenders were not, of course, an exclusively Russian phenomenon. False claimants to a royal identity can be found in most hereditary monarchical systems. Ancient history provides the examples of the Pseudo-Smerdis

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- 1 The only one of the four so-called “peasant wars” which had no trace of pretenderism was the Bulavin revolt of 1707-1708. The term “peasant war” was of course highly misleading, based on a (false) analogy with the Peasant War in Germany of 1525, on which Karl Marx’s collaborator Friedrich Engels had written. The revolts led by Razin, Bulavin and Pugachev were primarily cossack (or cossack-led) popular uprisings. The Time of Troubles was a much more complex and heterogeneous series of events, involving foreign military intervention as well as civil war and social conflict. Soviet historians themselves disagreed on whether the whole period described by pre-revolutionary historians as the “Time of Troubles” (*smutnoe vremia*, *smuta*) constituted a “peasant war”, or whether the term should be applied only to the episode of most acute social conflict within it, the Bolotnikov revolt of 1606-1607. The main common factor throughout the period c.1603-1614 was in fact the presence of pretenders claiming to belong to the old Moscow dynasty and thereby challenging the legitimacy of the elected tsars Boris Godunov, Vasili Shuiskii and Michael Romanov. See Maureen Perrie, *Pretenders and Popular Monarchism in Early Modern Russia. The False Tsars of the Time of Troubles* (Cambridge, 1995).

of Persia and the False Agrippa of Rome; the medieval period offers the False Count Baldwin of Flanders and the False Emperor Frederick II. The closest parallels and the most immediate precedents for the Russian pretenders of the Time of Troubles, however, can be found in early modern Europe. England had known the impostors Lambert Simnel and Perkin Warbeck in the late fifteenth century; and in the last decades of the sixteenth century a number of royal pretenders appeared in Moldavia, as well as a series of impostors claiming to be Don Sebastian, the King of Portugal who had died on the battlefield of Alcazarquivir in 1578.² But from the beginning of the seventeenth century the pretender phenomenon is particularly associated with Russia, and with Russian popular revolts.

THE TIME OF TROUBLES

Foreigners' accounts have long been regarded by historians as a valuable source of evidence about the Time of Troubles. In this article, however, I am concerned not so much with the factual information which these contemporary observers provide, or its reliability, but rather with the broader narratives through which they interpret the phenomenon of pretendership. As we shall see, there are two rival narratives concerning pretenders. The first is that of the pretender as impostor, which places the Russian examples in the context of a tradition of such fraudsters, dating back to antiquity. The second is that of the persecuted royal heir who miraculously escapes from death, eventually reveals his true identity and reclaims his ancestral throne. This theme, which was popular in adventure romances in medieval and early modern Europe, recurred in the "back-stories" (fictional autobiographies) of many Russian pretenders. Most foreign observers were sceptical about the pretenders' stories, but some took them at face value, and their accounts of the career of the First False Dmitrii, in particular, often resemble the romances of the age of chivalry.

The First False Dmitrii

The First False Dmitrii was the best known pretender of the Time of Troubles. This man appeared in Lithuania in 1602, claiming to be Ivan the Terrible's youngest son, who had died as a child in mysterious circumstances at Uglich in 1591. The old

2 On the Moldavian pretenders, see N.A. Mokhov, *Ocherki istorii moldavsko-russko-ukrainskikh sviazei (s drevneishikh vremen do nachala XIX veka)* (Kishinev, 1961), 40-69; on the False Sebastians see, for example, Yves-Marie Bercé, *Le roi caché. Sauveurs et imposteurs. Mythes politiques populaires dans l'Europe moderne* (Paris, 1990), 17-81.

dynasty of the Moscow rulers came to an end in 1598, with the death of Dmitrii's elder half-brother, Tsar Fedor Ivanovich. The throne passed to Boris Godunov, Tsar Fedor's brother-in-law, who was widely believed to have plotted against the heirs of Ivan the Terrible in order to obtain the throne for himself. The pretender invaded Russia in 1604, defeated Boris's armies and became tsar in 1605. He was overthrown in 1606 by the boyar Prince Vasilii Shuiskii, who acceded to the throne.

Both Russian and foreign accounts provide various versions of the explanation which the pretender offered of his supposed escape from death at Uglich and his subsequent life until he revealed his "true" royal identity to Prince Adam Vishnevetskii (Wiśniowiecki) on his estate at Brahin in Lithuania in 1603.³ The research of the Jesuit scholar Paul Pierling, published in the early 20th century, has definitively established that the earliest version of the pretender's back-story is the account which Adam Vishnevetskii transmitted to the Polish king, Sigismund III, in October/November 1603. According to Vishnevetskii, the account represented the pretender's own version of his biography, but modern scholars have suggested that Vishnevetskii himself may have played a part in its composition.⁴

The story began with some historical background about Ivan the Terrible, his wives and sons. It then proceeded to the reign of Tsar Fedor, and described how Boris Godunov had plotted to obtain the throne for himself. Having gained power by killing his fellow regents, Boris conspired against Dmitrii's life, and hired assassins to cut his throat while he was asleep in bed at night. One of his tutors, however, intervened. He substituted another boy, a relative of the tsarevich, of a similar age, who was killed in his stead while the tutor helped Dmitrii to escape. In the ensuing tumult a further 30 boys were killed, and the substitute victim's body was so badly bruised that the tsarevich's mother failed to realise that he was not her son. Soon after this the tutor fell gravely ill, but before he died he entrusted Dmitrii to the care of a faithful friend, a nobleman, who brought the boy up. When this protector in turn was about to die, he advised Dmitrii to enter a monastery. The tsarevich became a monk, and wandered from one monastery to another. One day a fellow monk recognised him as Dmitrii, "because of his way of walking and heroic

3 For references to these explanations see, for example, K.V. Chistov, *Russkie narodnye sotsial'no-utopicheskie legendy XVII-XIX vv* (Moscow, 1967), 42-46; Maureen Perrie, "Popular Socio-Utopian Legends' in the Time of Troubles", *Slavonic and East European Review* 60 (1982): 224-33; Perrie, *Pretenders and Popular Monarchism*, 37-43, 64-69, 79-81.

4 P. Pierling, *La Russie et le Saint-Siège; études diplomatiques*, 5 vols. (Paris, 1897-1912), 3 [1901, reprint The Hague, 1967]: 42; Waclaw Sobieski, *Szkice Historyczne* (Warsaw, 1904), 82-86; P. Pirling [Pierling], "Nazvannyi Dimitrii i Adam Vishnevetskii", *Russkaia Starina* 117 (1904): 123-128.

manners”. Fearing danger, he fled to Poland, where he eventually came to Prince Vishnevetskii’s house, and declared himself to be the Prince of Moscow.⁵

Not surprisingly, when the news of Dmitrii’s appearance began to circulate in Poland, some scepticism was expressed about the young man’s story. The Polish chancellor, Jan Zamoyski, in response to a letter from Adam Vishnevetskii informing him of Dmitrii’s arrival on his estate at Brahin, remarked: “As for the Muscovite staying with Your Lordship, who calls himself the son of the Muscovite Prince Ivan Vasil’evich, then very often such matters turn out to be true, but often also to be inventions.”⁶ Later, at a session of the Sejm on 1 February [20 January Old Style] 1605, Zamoyski compared the episode in Dmitrii’s story in which a substitute victim was killed in his stead to “a comedy by Plautus or Terence”. What sort of plotter, he asked, did not check to make sure that the assassin he had hired had killed the right person?⁷ Albert Baranowski, the bishop of Płock, in a letter of 6 March 1604 to the king, had also expressed scepticism about elements in Dmitrii’s story: “First of all, how did his mother not recognise her murdered son? Secondly, why were another 30 children killed? Thirdly, how could a monk recognise Tsarevich Dmitrii, whom he had never seen?”⁸

Suspicious were soon expressed that Dmitrii was an impostor. In Rome, on receiving his first report about Dmitrii from Claudio Rangoni, the Papal Nuncio in Cracow, Pope Clement VIII wrote in the margin: “Sarà un altro Rè di Portogallo resuscitato”.⁹ The analogy with the false Don Sebastians was also made in Poland: according to a later report by Rangoni to Rome, the Vice-Chancellor [Piotr Tylicki] had compared Dmitrii to the false Agrippa of ancient Rome and to the false King of Portugal.¹⁰ The bishop of Płock, in the letter to the king which we have already cited, also referred to the precedent of “the adventures of the so-called Sebastian”, and to the pretenders who appeared in Wallachia whenever the throne was vacant

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- 5 F.K. Nowakowski, ed., *Źródła do dziejów Polski*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1841), 2: 65-70. Nowakowski wrongly dated the text 1606: see Pierling, *La Russie et le Saint-Siège*, 3: 42, 399.
 - 6 *Zapiski Getmana Zholkevskogo o Moskovskoi Voine*, ed. P.A. Mukhanovym, 2nd edn. (St Petersburg, 1871), *prilozheniia*, no.3, col.9.
 - 7 *Russkaia Istoricheskaia Biblioteka*, ed. Arkheograficheskaiia kommissiia, 39 vols. (St Petersburg, 1872-1927), 1: col.16.
 - 8 P. Pierling [Pierling], *Iz smutnogo vremeni: stat'i i zametki* (St Petersburg, 1902), 6-7.
 - 9 Pierling, *La Russie et le Saint-Siège*, 41.
 - 10 P. Pierling, *Rome et Démétrius, d'après des documents nouveaux, avec pièces justificatives et facsimile* (Paris, 1878), 12, 178 (Rangoni's despatch of 13 March 1604).

there. The phenomenon of pretence, he added, was even known in Poland, “among the nobility, when an inheritance is divided”.¹¹

Information about Dmitrii quickly spread throughout Europe, especially after he embarked on his successful campaign to obtain the Russian throne. As a result of his secret conversion to Roman Catholicism in Poland, there was particular interest in his story in the Catholic hierarchy and among the Catholic monarchs of Europe. The Polish Jesuit chaplains Nikolaj Czyrzowski and Andrzej Lawicki, who accompanied the pretender on his march from Poland to Moscow, sent reports back to Cracow, and Rangoni forwarded them to Rome. From Cracow news of Dmitrii also reached Venice, where it was enthusiastically received by the veteran Jesuit Antonio Possevino, who had visited Moscow in 1581 to negotiate the end of the Livonian War, and had engaged in debate about religion with Ivan the Terrible. Possevino in turn passed on the information to his contacts in Florence and Paris. News of Dmitrii was spread through other channels too. The French captain Jean La Blaque, who was based in Cracow, corresponded with Philippe Canaye de Fresnes, the French ambassador to Venice, who reported back to the court of King Henri IV in Paris; while in Prague the Emperor Rudolph II obtained information directly from his agents in Moscow and indirectly from those in Cracow and Venice.¹²

The earliest published version of Dmitrii’s story to appear in Western Europe was the account issued in Venice in 1605 by Barezzo Barezzi, and generally attributed to Possevino.¹³ The details it contains of Dmitrii’s campaign for the throne are based on the letters of Czyrzowski and Lawicki. The earlier chapters, which describe the events at Uglich, the tsarevich’s escape from Boris’s assassins and his eventual revelation of his true identity in Poland, bear some resemblance to the account in Vishnevetskii’s report to the king.¹⁴ This indicated to Pierling that the author was familiar with that document,¹⁵ but there are also some differences

11 Pirling, *Iz smutnogo vremeni*, 7. The analogy with the Wallachian (Moldavian) pretenders was one which was likely to be made in Poland, since these pretenders had been supported not only by the Zaporozhian cossacks but also by the Vishnevetskii family. It is perhaps not surprising that the bishop warned the king that Dmitrii should not be allowed to flee to the cossacks (*ibid.*, 7).

12 Pierling, *La Russie et le Saint-Siège*, 3: 192-201.

13 Baretstso Baretstsi [Barezzo Barezzi], *Povestvovanie o Dimitrii Samozvantse, sobrannoe Baretstso Baretstsi* [translation of the Florence edition of 1606], *Inostrannye sochineniia i akty, otnosiashchiesia do Rossii*, comp. K.M. Obolenskii, vol. 4 (Moscow, 1847), iii-iv; Pirling, *Iz smutnogo vremeni*, 205-220.

14 Baretstsi, *Povestvovanie*, 5-6, cf. Nowakowski, *Źródła do dziejów Polski*, 2: 68-70.

15 Pirling, *Iz smutnogo vremeni*, 208.

which suggest the additional use of unknown independent sources, probably – Pierling suggests – of Jesuit origin.¹⁶

The author of the Barezzi account accepts that the man who became Tsar Dmitrii in 1605-1606 was the true Tsarevich Dmitrii of Uglich, and he adopts a highly triumphalist attitude towards his hero's success (the account ends with Dmitrii's accession to the throne in Moscow) and the enticing prospects which it presented for the conversion of Russia to Catholicism. Although it has a recognisably historical Russian setting, in many respects the narrative resembles those fictional literary texts in which long-lost royal heroes, after many vicissitudes and adventures, eventually regain their ancestral thrones and punish the usurpers who had unjustly deprived them of their inheritance (see below). But the author's Jesuit perspective also means that the story is presented as the working out of Divine Providence on behalf of Dmitrii and in the interests of the Roman Catholic Church.

There are, however, indications in the Barezzi narrative that Dmitrii was regarded by some as an impostor. The author notes that while Dmitrii was in Poland, Boris sent an envoy to the king, claiming that the self-styled tsarevich was a deceiver, the son of a priest, and demanding that he be returned to Russia, dead or alive. Boris had also spread the rumour in Russia that Dmitrii was a well-known magician.¹⁷ The author adds that subsequently, during Dmitrii's occupation of the town of Putivl' en route to Moscow, his men captured "Grishka Otrep'ev, that notorious magician and wizard, about whom the tyrant [Boris] had spread the rumour that it was not Dmitrii, the son of Ivan Vasil'evich, but this magician, known through all Muscovy as a bad person, who had come with Polish cossacks to take the throne from him." Barezzi then piously observes, "Thus God's just judgment, which always brings down on the heads of slanderers their own slanders, clearly revealed that this magician was a completely different person from Dmitrii the lawful sovereign."¹⁸

Barezzi's account was phenomenally successful in transmitting news about Dmitrii to the wider public in Western Europe. After the Italian editions of 1605 and 1606, published in Venice and Florence respectively, versions in Latin, French, Spanish, German and Czech were published in Madrid, Munich, Valladolid, Lisbon, Grätz and Prague.¹⁹ Thus the earliest narrative of Dmitrii's story to spread

16 Ibid., 211.

17 Baretstsi, *Povestvovanie*, 8.

18 Ibid., 11. On this incident, which is described in one of the Jesuits' letters, see Perrie, *Pretenders and Popular Monarchism*, 70.

19 See Baretstsi, *Povestvovanie*, v-vi; Pierling, *La Russie et le Saint-Siège*, 3: 196-197. See also the editor's introduction to the Russian translation of the Czech version: "Is-

throughout Europe presented him as the true heir returning to claim his father's throne from the usurper Godunov.

In addition to the first edition of Barezzi, another account published in 1605, i.e. before Dmitrii's death, was the report of the embassy of Sir Thomas Smith, who was sent from James I to Boris Godunov to negotiate new privileges for English merchants. News of Dmitrii's invasion reached the diplomatic party in October 1604, when they were in Moscow. They left Moscow in March 1605, but continued to receive information about events in the capital until their departure for home from the White Sea at the beginning of August. The account mostly takes the form of a chronological report of the embassy, incorporating news of Dmitrii's campaign as it was received in Moscow, often in somewhat garbled form. The final section, however, is a kind of appendix that summarises events in Russia since the death of Ivan IV. This provides a slightly different version of Dmitrii's story from that which the pretender himself had related to his patrons in Poland, and which is reflected in Barezzi's account. According to the English author, the substitution of another child for Dmitrii took place at Uglich long before the fateful night of May 1591.²⁰ Thus, like Barezzi, the author of the Smith report accepts that Tsar Dmitrii was the real Dmitrii of Uglich, but he provides a new variant of his story.

Dmitrii's own proclamations to his Russian subjects had been notoriously reticent about the details of his supposed escape from death at Uglich,²¹ and the English account records a version, evidently current in Moscow at the time of the pretender's first entry into the capital, which is more credible – and more consistent with the real events at Uglich – than the earlier “Poland” version, repeated by Barezzi, in which both the substitution and the murder took place on the same night. In Smith's ‘Moscow’ version, the substitution took place in advance, and the substituted child was killed by one of his playfellows who cut his throat with a knife when they were “disporting themselves” together, evidently in the daytime.²² William Scott, another member of the English diplomatic party, provided a variant to this version in a letter to Lord Salisbury (undated, but written before Tsar Dmitrii's death). According to Scott, Dmitrii was “changed” before being sent to Uglich, and another child was “kept and killed in his room”. The real tsarevich was then “conveyed” to Poland by some loyal Russians. Scott is, however, sceptical about whether the new tsar is “the true heire”. He hints strongly to Salisbury that

toricheskoe i pravdivoe povestvovanie o tom, kak moskovskii kniaz' Dimitrii Ioannovich dostig otsovskogo prestola. Cheshskii tekst 1606 g., s predisloviem i perevodom V.A. Frantseva”, *Starina i Novizna* 15 (1911): iii-iv.

20 *Sir Thomas Smithes Voiage and Entertainment in Rushia* (London, 1605), f.M2v-[M3].

21 See Perrie, *Pretenders and Popular Monarchism*, 64-65.

22 *Sir Thomas Smithes Voiage*, f.M2.

Dmitrii is “Suppositio[u]s and Imposter”, but that it is politic to recognise him as the legitimate ruler.²³

A similar version to Smith’s is provided by the mercenary soldier Jacques Margeret in his account published in French in Paris in 1607. Margeret, who had been in service to Boris Godunov, switched his allegiance on Boris’s death and became commander of Tsar Dmitrii’s palace guard. Margeret remained in Moscow until September 1606: like the author of the English account, he believed that Dmitrii really was the son of Ivan IV. According to the French captain, Dmitrii was saved by his mother and “some of the high nobles”, who suspected that Boris was planning to kill him. They substituted another child for the tsarevich and brought Dmitrii up secretly; the “changeling prince” was subsequently murdered in his stead. After Boris succeeded Fedor as tsar, Dmitrii, “in a monk’s habit, was sent to Poland”, where he revealed his true identity.²⁴ Margeret, like Barezzi, knows that Boris and others claimed that Dmitrii was the unfrocked monk Grishka Otrep’ev (the English author, however, does not mention this), but Margeret asserts that Grishka was a different person, who had accompanied Dmitrii from Russia to Poland, and then returned with him.²⁵ Since Margeret, like the English writers, dates the substitution of the tsarevich earlier than the night of 15 May 1591, it seems likely that they are conveying a new variant of Dmitrii’s story, devised in 1605 by his Russian backers in Moscow, who realised that the version he had used in Poland was unlikely to withstand scrutiny in Russia, where the events at Uglich were well known.²⁶

A very different perspective on the pretender is provided by Petrus Petreius (Peer Persson), a Swedish crown agent in Russia, in his *Relation*, published in Swedish in Stockholm at the end of 1608. Petreius is convinced that the First False Dmitrii was the renegade monk, Grisha Otrep’ev, who fled to Poland and entered the service of Prince Adam Vishnevetskii, where he acquired all kinds of knightly accomplishments. Grisha subsequently came to the attention of the Jesuits, who noticed that he bore a strong physical resemblance to Dmitrii of Uglich, and decided to make use of him for their own purposes. They offered to supply him with everything he needed in order to become tsar, provided that he agreed to marry the Polish noblewoman Marina Mniszech and introduce Catholicism in Russia.

23 V.N. Aleksandrenko, comp., “Materialy po Smutnomu vremeni na Rusi XVII v.”, *Starina i Novizna* 14 (1911): 246-247.

24 Jacques Margeret, *The Russian Empire and Grand Duchy of Muscovy: a 17th-Century French Account*, trans. Chester S.L. Dunning (Pittsburgh, PA, 1983), 17, 81.

25 Margeret, *The Russian Empire*, 81-82.

26 Cf. Perrie, *Pretenders and Popular Monarchism*, 79-81.

Grisha soon acquired the patronage not only of the Jesuits but also of the Papacy and the Polish king.²⁷

Petreius was not the first foreign observer to represent Dmitrii as a tool of the Jesuits. William Scott in his letter to Lord Salisbury had stated that when news of Dmitrii's invasion first reached the English envoys in Moscow, they had assumed "this interprise to be a jesuitisme (that broode so swarming in Polande) likelie to vanishe quickly".²⁸ A Dutch merchant's account, first published in Dutch and French in 1606 and in English in 1607, claims that the main reason for Dmitrii's overthrow in May 1606 was the influence which he allowed the Poles to have in Moscow, and adds: "but I beleue that the Pope, with his Seminaries, and Jesuites, were a principal cause of his ruine, and totall subuersion."²⁹ Even in the Catholic world, similar views were expressed by the enemies of the Jesuits: in August 1606 Francesco Soranzo, the Venetian ambassador to Prague, blamed the Order for provoking Dmitrii's murder by encouraging him to marry a Polish Catholic.³⁰

Petreius is, however, the most strongly anti-Catholic of all the contemporary foreign visitors to Russia. His entire account is based on the view that the First

27 *Reliatsiia Petra Petreia o Rossii nachala XVII v.*, comp. Iu.A. Limonov (Moscow, 1976), 82-84. Petreius' *Relation* of 1608 was probably based on his reports of 1601-1605 to Charles IX. In his Introduction to the text (*ibid.*, 17-18) Iu.A. Limonov notes that Petreius' information (possibly in the form of his reports to Stockholm) was used by the French historian Jacques-Auguste De Thou (Thuanus), who refers to him as "Peter Paterson of Uppsala", and shares his hostility to the Jesuits. See "Skazaniia De-Tu o Dimitrii Samozvantse", in *Skazaniia sovremennikov o Dimitrii Samozvantse*, ed. N.G. Ustrialov, 3rd corr. edn., 2 vols. (St Petersburg, 1859), 1: 329-331. De Thou's *History*, published in 1619, also made use of the accounts of other foreign observers such as Margeret. In its turn, it was used as a source by others, including Samuel Purchas in his compilation of travel writings, first published in 1625. See, for example, Samuel Purchas, comp., *Hakluytus Posthumus, or Purchas His Pilgrimes. Contayning a History of the World in Sea Voyages and Lande Travells by Englishmen and Others*, 20 vols. (Glasgow, 1905-1907), 14 [1906]: 158-163.

28 Aleksandrenko, *Materialy po Smutnomu vremeni*, 245.

29 Sonia E. Howe, ed., *The False Dmitri; a Russian Romance and Tragedy, Described by British Eye-Witnesses, 1604-1612* (London, 1916, reprint Cambridge, 1972), 60. For the publication history of this account ("The Reporte of a Bloudie and Terrible Massacre [...]"), see, for example, *Moskovskaia tragediia, ili rasskaz o zhizni i smerti Dimitriia*, trans. from Latin A. Braudo and I. Rostsiusa, ed. S.D. Sheremetev (St Petersburg, 1901), xi-xii.

30 Pierling, *La Russie et le Saint-Siège*, 3: 330. On accusations about the Jesuits' role in the affair of the First False Dmitrii, see Bercé, *Le roi caché*, 352-359.

False Dmitrii was the instrument of the Pope, the Jesuits and King Sigismund.³¹ In many ways, it represents an inversion of the Barezzi account. Both authors agree that Dmitrii received important support in his campaign for the throne from the Catholic hierarchy, the Jesuits and the Polish King: Barezzi, however, claims that Tsar Dmitrii was the true Dmitrii of Uglich; whereas Petreius believes him to be an impostor, who was justifiably killed by the Russians because of his patronage of the Poles and the Jesuits.³² The contrasting attitudes of Barezzi and Petreius reflected the religious and great-power divide in East-Central Europe in the early seventeenth century: Catholicism versus Protestantism, Poland versus Sweden. The Protestant Swedish agent Petreius rejected the claims of the pro-Polish Catholic convert Tsar Dmitrii, and wrote approvingly of the pretender's nemesis, Tsar Vasili Shuiskii, who was later to seek Swedish military aid against the Polish threat.

The Protestant/Catholic divide does not, however, explain the support for Dmitrii's authenticity expressed by the author of the report of Sir Thomas Smith's embassy and by Jacques Margeret – both of whom were apparently Protestants.³³ For the English diplomats, in search of the renewal of their trade concessions in Russia, it was clearly expedient to recognise Tsar Dmitrii's legitimacy, even if some, like William Scott, as we have seen, were privately sceptical.³⁴ The mercenary Margeret, who entered Dmitrii's service, had a personal self-interest in asserting that his new royal master was the true son of Ivan IV. Chester Dunning, in the Introduction to his translation of Margeret's account, suggests that he may have been willing to serve the new tsar well "in part because Dmitrii's career reminded him of King Henri's".³⁵ (Margeret had fought for Henri IV during the French Wars of Religion.) This must remain pure speculation, although it is true that there were some similarities between Dmitrii and Henri, who had to wage war for recognition of the legitimacy of his claim to the French throne. It is also interesting to note that in his argument in favour of Dmitrii's authenticity Margeret states that his personal qualities were such that

31 Reliatsiia Petra Petreia, 73.

32 Ibid., 93-97.

33 On Margeret's religion, see Margeret, *The Russian Empire*, XVI; and Zhak Marzheret [Jacques Margeret], *Sostoianie Rossiiskoi imperii. Zh. Marzheret v dokumentakh i issledovaniakh (Teksty, kommentarii, stat'i)* ed. An. Berelovicha, V.D. Nazarova and P.Iu. Uvarova (Moscow, 2007), 453-454.

34 On the pragmatic considerations which led the English government to recognise Dmitrii, see Geraldine M. Phipps, *Sir John Merrick: English Merchant-Diplomat in Seventeenth-Century Russia*, Russian Biography Series, vol. 13 (Newtonville, MA, 1983), 57-64.

35 Margeret, *The Russian Empire*, XVIII.

[...] he could not be less than the son of a great prince. He had an eloquence which charmed all the Russians. There even shone in him a certain inexpressible majesty not seen before among the lords in Russia, much less in one of low quality as he would necessarily have been had he not been the son of Ivan Vasil'evich.³⁶

The notion that the legitimacy of a true monarch might be revealed through his personal nobility of spirit was part of the political philosophy of the age,³⁷ and Margeret may genuinely have held this view. The idea that a true monarch possessed such qualities might also, of course, have been an indirect form of flattery of King Henri, who had commissioned the publication of Margeret's account,³⁸ and who had taken a keen interest in Dmitrii since he first received news of his campaign for the crown in 1605.

As far as the hostile foreign observers are concerned, it is perhaps surprising that none of their accounts of the career of the First False Dmitrii draws parallels with the Portuguese and Moldavian pretenders, although, as we have seen, these precedents were well known in Poland. As the responses of Pope Clement VIII and the Polish sceptics suggest, invoking the European tradition of pretendership was a convenient weapon to discredit a supposedly long-lost heir. Perhaps the type of foreigners who were in Russia in 1604-1606 (merchants, mercenary soldiers etc.) were not sufficiently familiar with the history of pretenders in Western Europe to recognise these precedents. But it may also be relevant that the early sceptical responses were made in Poland before the Russian government had issued a clear identification of the pretender as Grisha Otrep'ev: thereafter, the issue became more specific: was Dmitrii who he said he was; was he Grisha; or someone else? Starting with Margeret and Petreius, the foreign observers' accounts often included lists of arguments, sometimes in the form of numbered points, why Tsar Dmitrii was or was not Dmitrii of Uglich.³⁹ As we have already noted, however, the decisions of

36 Ibid., 88. On Dmitrii's princely qualities, see also *ibid.*, 70, 91.

37 Bercé, *Le roi caché*, 379-381.

38 The editors of the recent Russian edition of Margeret's account plausibly suggest that he had drafted his text before returning to France in 1606, so that the king authorised only its publication, rather than its composition, as Margeret claimed in his dedication: Marzheret, *Sostoianie Rossiiskoi imperii*, 16.

39 Margeret, *The Russian Empire*, 80-91; Reliatsiia Petra Petreia, 98-102; Petr Petrei de Erlezunda [Petrus Petreius], *Istoriia o Velikom Kniazhestve Moskovskom* (Moscow, 1867 [translation of the German version published in Leipzig in 1620]), 241-244; Conrad Bussow, *The Disturbed State of the Russian Realm*, trans. G. Edward Orchard (Montreal, 1994), 81-83. Much of Bussow's material, which remained unpublished until the 19th cen-

foreign participants in the Time of Troubles whether or not to recognise Dmitrii as the son of Ivan IV were probably based not on logical deductions from the evidence about his identity, but rather on considerations of self-interest – as, indeed, were the attitudes of most Russians.

Two non-Russian writers who had not themselves visited Russia, however, did make comparisons between the First False Dmitrii and earlier pretenders. In the *Muscovite Tragedy* published by Gerhard Grevenbruch in Cologne in 1608, the author concludes that it is still unclear whether Dmitrii was the true tsarevich or not (*Verus an supposititius*). He adds: “I know, it is true, that in history there are several examples of people who have aspired to a kingdom or a throne by similar deceit and lies”, and goes on to cite the examples not only of the Sebastians of Portugal but also of Perkin Warbeck. He notes, however, that “these and many others, before attaining the kingdom, were executed when their deceit was detected”, and that “few of these people, as is well known, achieved what Dmitrii did”.⁴⁰ Thus for the author of the *Tragedy*, Dmitrii’s relative success distinguished him from his unsuccessful predecessors and, by implication, left open the question of whether or not he was an impostor.⁴¹

The other writer who invokes earlier pretenders is the Spanish dramatist Lope de Vega in his play, *El Gran Duque de Moscovia y Emperador Perseguido*. Lope places the analogy in the mouth of Boris Godunov, who compares Dmitrii to pretenders of antiquity and to the Portuguese Don Sebastians.⁴² Lope himself, however, considers that Dmitrii was the true tsarevich, although the Portuguese Sebastians were false.⁴³ By attributing the reference to previous pretenders to the villainous Boris, the would-be murderer of Tsarevich Dmitrii, the dramatist undermines the relevance of the parallel.

tury, was “borrowed” by Petreius for his *History*, which was first published in Swedish in Stockholm in 1615, and is a distinct work from his *Relation* of 1608.

40 Moskovskaia tragediia, 69-70.

41 Grevenbruch's account is a compilation based largely on Barezzi in its first part, and on the anonymous 'Reporte of a Bloudie and Terrible Massacre [...] in its second part. The author's information about Perkin Warbeck focuses on the assistance which Perkin obtained from the Scottish king, and is based on [George] Buchanan's 'History of the Scots' – which no doubt explains why he does not mention Warbeck's immediate predecessor, Lambert Simnel.

42 Lope de Vega, *El Gran Duque de Moscovia y Emperador Perseguido* (Alicante, 2002), Acto II, ll.190-198. As far as I am aware, no “real” native Russian sources refer to earlier examples of pretenders elsewhere.

43 Ervin C. Brody, *The Demetrius Legend and its Literary Treatment in the Age of the Baroque* (Rutherford, N.J., 1972), 130-131.

Even if most foreign authors were unaware of specific historical precedents for the phenomenon of pretence, however, they were undoubtedly familiar with the concept of imposture, so that a trans-national perspective is implicit in their accounts: most foreigners had words for an impostor available in their own languages, whereas their Russian contemporaries used more generic terms such as *vor* (villain, criminal) or *eretik* (heretic) to describe the First False Dmitrii.⁴⁴

The foreign authors may also have been familiar with literary and folkloric narratives which incorporated the type of motifs that were found in Dmitrii's back-story. Such narratives may have influenced both the production of Dmitrii's fictional autobiography, and its reception and re-telling by foreign observers.

The distinguished Russian folklorist K.V. Chistov has argued that the rumours and tales about Dmitrii which circulated in early 17th-century Russia constituted a "popular socio-utopian legend about a returning royal deliverer". Chistov considers that these legends existed in Russia from the 17th to the 19th centuries; they included motifs such as the attempted murder of the true tsar or tsarevich, his miraculous escape, lengthy wanderings incognito, eventual recognition and restoration to the throne; and they constituted a genre of folklore.⁴⁵ Dmitrii's legend, he suggests, "was not the fruit of an individual's devising, but arose naturally, and was devised by the collective consciousness of the peasant, cossack and urban masses".⁴⁶ The accounts of contemporary foreign observers, Chistov claims, convey the legend of Tsarevich Dmitrii "in the form in which it reached them from Russians' accounts".⁴⁷ But the foreigners' accounts, as we have seen, can mostly be traced back to the version of Dmitrii's back-story which Adam Vishnevetskii reported to King Sigismund in 1603. Far from originating among the Russian masses, it was devised by Dmitrii himself, or his backers, and it first circulated at the highest levels of the European culture of the day. The Polish king, and princes of the Catholic Church such as Rangoni and Possevino, appear to have taken the pretender's fantastic story quite seriously.

Chistov notes that most of the motifs of the deliverer legends can be found in other genres of folklore, in particular in plots about unjustly persecuted heroes,

44 The term *samozvanets* does not seem to be used for a pretender (impostor) until the second half of the 17th century.

45 Chistov, *Russkie narodnye sotsial'no-utopicheskie legendy*, 24-33. I am sceptical about the extent to which these "legends" can be described as "socio-utopian", in relation to the Time of Troubles, at least. See my critique of Chistov in: Perrie, 'Popular Socio-Utopian Legends' in the Time of Troubles.

46 Chistov, *Russkie narodnye sotsial'no-utopicheskie legendy*, 40-41.

47 *Ibid.*, 43.

where the motif of a substitute victim is common.⁴⁸ These plots and motifs, however, are not exclusive to folklore: they can be found in most genres of world literature at all periods. In many fictional narratives, royal heirs are saved from conspiracies against them, and live incognito for many years before eventually asserting their true identity and regaining their ancestral throne. Such narratives, which were popular in chivalric adventure romances in medieval and early modern Europe, have parallels with the tales told by pretenders such as the First False Dmitrii in order to provide themselves with a fictional autobiography. The very nature of pretence, of course, makes miraculous escapes from death, or concealment or substitution at birth, a necessary ingredient in any pretender's back-story.⁴⁹

If the story which Dmitrii or his sponsors devised at Brahin had fictional influences, they were likely to have been derived not only from folklore but also from the chivalric romances, or even from classical literature (remember Jan Zamoyski's reference to "a comedy by Plautus or Terence").⁵⁰ To take one example: the medieval romance later known in Russia as 'Bova korolevich (Prince Bova)' ("Bevis of Hampton" in England, 'Buovo d'Antone' in Italy) had spread eastwards as far as Lithuanian Belorussia by the end of the 16th century: in the earliest Belorussian version of this tale, the young hero's father, King Kgvidon, is deposed and murdered by his mother and her lover; they conspire against Bova, who is saved by the servant girl who was ordered to poison him; Bova travels incognito for many years and has various exciting adventures; eventually he returns to his father's kingdom, kills his mother and the usurper and becomes king himself.⁵¹ There is a marked similarity between the first part of this plot and the

48 Ibid., 227.

49 For example, those of Perkin Warbeck and François de La Ramée (the False François de Valois): see Bercé, *Le roi caché*, 172, 361.

50 A later example of a Russian pretender who was aware of – and was perhaps influenced by – earlier historical and literary precedents is Timofei Ankudinov, the False Ivan Shuiskii, who in his writings of 1646 drew a parallel between his own case and that of Tsar Dmitrii (whom he considered to be the true son of Ivan the Terrible). He also compared himself to two pseudo-historical monarchs who had wandered unrecognised by their subjects: Apollonius of Tyre and the Emperor Ovidian (Jovinian) of Rome, both of whom featured in the medieval *Gesta Romanorum*, which Ankudinov probably knew in its Polish version (*Historye Rzymskie*). See Iu.B. Simchenko, "Lzhe-Shuiskii II. Pravoslavnyi, musul'manin, katolik, protestant", in *Russkie: Istoriko-etnograficheskie ocherki*, ed. S.V. Cheshko (Moscow, 1997), 36-37, 39; and A.M. Panchenko, ed., *Russkaia sil'labicheskaiia poeziia XVII-XVIII vv.* (Leningrad, 1970), 88, 366.

51 A.N. Veselovskii, *Iz istorii romana i povesti: materialy i issledovaniia*, 2 vols. (St Petersburg, 1886-8) 2 [suppl./prilozheniia]: 129-172.

story which Dmitrii told in Poland-Lithuania;⁵² and the happy ending is echoed in Barezzo Barezzi's account of Dmitrii's triumph.

Dmitrii's career in its turn subsequently served as the subject of literary treatments, notably by Lope de Vega in his play, probably written within a few years of the pretender's death, and based on the Spanish version of the Barezzo Barezzi account.⁵³ Although Lope undoubtedly knew about Dmitrii's death and official unmasking as an impostor,⁵⁴ he ended his drama with the hero's victory over Boris on the battlefield. In Lope's dramatic concept, poetic justice is implemented: the virtuous hero triumphs and the villain is punished.⁵⁵ Dmitrii's story on the Spanish stage – unlike historical reality, but in line with the conventions of romances such as Bova – has a happy ending, and the true heir is restored to his rightful throne.⁵⁶

Thus Dmitrii himself, or his patrons, may have been influenced not only by the examples of earlier historical pretenders, but also by literary narratives when producing his back-story. Subsequently, the availability and popularity of such tales in early modern Europe may have influenced the reception and re-telling of his story by foreign writers. It is perhaps because it was so often told like a real-life version of familiar and well-loved fictional tales that the story of Tsarevich Dmitrii became such a fashionable theme in literary and historical writings in early 17th-century Europe.

Sometimes a later author, unsure of the details of Dmitrii's story, improvised parts of the narrative. The Dutchman Elias Herckmans, in an account written in 1625, describes the events at Uglich as follows:

When a boyar who was ordered to kill the tsarevich in a certain way came to the town, Dmitrii learned of his intention (it is not reliably known whether this was because he himself was devoted to Dmitrii, or because this boyar was afraid to carry out his mission and told the

52 i.e. in the region in which the story of Bova had been recorded in the late 16th century.

53 Brody, *The Demetrius Legend*, 54-78. I am unconvinced by Brody's argument (*ibid.*, 141-216) that John Fletcher's play, *The Loyal Subject*, is also based on the Demetrius theme.

54 Brody, *The Demetrius Legend*, 59-68.

55 *Ibid.*, 68-70.

56 Other versions of Lope's play subsequently appeared in 17th-century Catholic Europe: see Brody, *The Demetrius Legend*, 131-132, 217, 275. In one of these, published in Cesena in 1651, Dmitrii's murder is shown, but the hero is depicted as a martyr for the Catholic faith: Bercé, *Le roi caché*, 358. In Germany and Russia, by contrast, from the late 18th century, Dmitrii was invariably depicted on the stage as an impostor: Brody, *The Demetrius Legend*, 217-273, 275-276.

tsarevich's favourites about it, or because the tsarevich had his spies at the court of Boris Godunov, whose evil disposition was known to the tsarevich).⁵⁷

Thus Herckmans offers his readers a choice of variants to one of the motifs in his plot, no doubt drawing on his own store of knowledge of similar tales involving unsuccessful assassination attempts. Herckmans believes that Dmitrii escaped death not only at Uglich in 1591 but also in Moscow in 1606, in the latter case as the result of temporarily transferring power to a double – an episode which he contrasts with the legend of King Ninus of Babylon, who was killed by his concubine Semiramis when he allowed her to become monarch for a day.⁵⁸

The Second and Third False Dmitriis

The Second False Dmitrii did not appear in Russia until the summer of 1607, but rumours were rife in Moscow from the very day of Tsar Dmitrii's murder that he had escaped death. In many of these rumours, in an echo of the First False Dmitrii's back-story, a substitute victim had been killed, and the tsar had fled from the capital.⁵⁹ Jacques Margeret, who was in Moscow at the time of the uprising against Dmitrii, recorded the rumours but expressed doubts about their veracity.⁶⁰ Petreius left Russia at the end of 1605, but came back in 1607/1608 on a mission from Charles IX to Vasili Shuiskii. He assures his readers that on his return to Russia he was informed by "Russians and foreigners who can be believed" that Grishka had indeed died.⁶¹ Petreius is very scathing about those who thought that Dmitrii had again escaped death, a rumour for which he blames the Jesuits, the main villains of his narrative.⁶² In his Relation of 1608 Petreius does not provide any specific information about the Second False Dmitrii, but in his History of 1620 he discusses

57 *Skazaniia Massy i Gerkmana o smutnom vremeni v Rossii* (St Petersburg, 1874), 264.

58 *Skazaniia Massy i Gerkmana*, 285-286.

59 One variant of these rumours – that "a German named Artsykalus" had been killed in his stead – was incorporated into the back-story of the Second False Dmitrii: D. Buturlin, *Istoriia smutnogo vremeni v Rossii v nachale XVII veka*, 3 vols. (St Petersburg, 1839-1846), 2 [1841]: Prilozheniia, no.7, p.51.

60 Margeret, *The Russian Empire*, 75-77. For various versions of the rumours, see Perrie, 'Popular Socio-Utopian Legends' in the Time of Troubles, 239-242; Perrie, *Pretenders and Popular Monarchism*, 109-115. The accounts of foreigners present in Moscow at the time of Dmitrii's overthrow provide the main evidence of the content of these rumours.

61 *Reliatsiia Petra Petreia*, 103.

62 *Ibid.*, 73, 97. The Jesuits were also accused of spreading these rumours by Philippe de Canaye, the French ambassador to Venice: see Bercé, *Le roi caché*, 355.

both the Second and Third False Dmitriis, preceding this part of his account with the comment that, although both Dmitrii of Uglich and Grishka Otrep'ev were really dead,

other Dmitriis were invented in the very same way, causing much evil and much blood to be shed. The Poles and the cossacks played a big vulgar joke and comedy with the Russians, because as soon as one Dmitrii died, another immediately appeared in his place, so that there was no end to the Dmitriis.⁶³

In relation to the Third False Dmitrii, who appeared in north-west Russia in 1611, after the murder of the Second False Dmitrii at Kaluga, Petreius notes sarcastically that “he, like the others, called himself the true son of Ivan Vasil’evich, Dmitrii, who had now three times been subjected to such great mortal danger, first at Uglich, then in Moscow and finally at Kaluga, but had always avoided death”.⁶⁴

Other foreign observers, too, subsequently mocked the proliferation of Dmitriis. Samuel Purchas notes that when the body of the First False Dmitrii was burned, the ashes were “throwne into the aire, the seeds, as the sequele seemed to show, of many Demetris after”.⁶⁵ When the same author reports the appearance of the Second False Dmitrii (“another revived Demetrius”) he adds, “yea many pretending that Name and Title did after arise, as out of his dispersed ashes”, and later refers to “that Demetrius new risen from the dead (not to mention the others of inferiour note)”.⁶⁶ Jerome Horsey, in his account written in the 1620s, claims that the Polish crown “had many Dmitriis in store to maintain the same title”.⁶⁷ Lope de Vega – perhaps thinking of the proliferation of Portuguese Sebastians – attributes to Boris Godunov’s ambassador to King Sigismund the idea that the appearance of one pretender was likely to give rise to “a thousand” others.⁶⁸

The appearance of multiple pretenders, however, undermined the credibility of each of them. None of the later pretenders of the Time of Troubles was a plausible claimant to the throne. Unlike the First False Dmitrii, whose authenticity continues

63 Petrei, *Istoriia*, 244.

64 *Ibid.*, 297.

65 Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus*, 14: 197. Howe wrongly attributes the quotation to “Captain Gilbert's report” (*The False Dmitri*, 63).

66 Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus*, 14: 198; cf. Howe, *The False Dmitri*, 65, 66.

67 L.E. Berry and R.O. Crummey, eds., *Rude and Barbarous Kingdom: Russia in the Accounts of Sixteenth-Century English Voyagers* (Madison, WI, 1968), 365.

68 Lope de Vega, *El Gran Duque de Moscovia*, Acto III, l.552; Brody, *The Demetrius Legend*, 65, 131, 279.

to be considered possible by some credulous historians,⁶⁹ the claims of the Second False Dmitrii were accepted by only a few contemporary foreign observers, such as the Poles in his camp at Tushino, who had a vested interest in doing so.⁷⁰ Charles IX sent Petreius to Ivangorod to inspect the Third False Dmitrii, but the Swedes were soon disillusioned with this new pretender.⁷¹ As we have seen, the critics of the First False Dmitrii in 1603-1604 had cited the precedents of earlier pretenders such as the Portuguese Sebastians in order to discredit his claims; in its turn, the precedent of Tsar Dmitrii, officially “unmasked” by Shuiskii as an impostor, was used by hostile foreign observers to mock his various reincarnations.

Tsarevich Petr and the Other Cossack Tsareviches

Samuel Purchas, as noted above, had referred to the Second False Dmitrii and other pretenders “of inferiour note”: since there was only one other False Dmitrii, we may assume that these included the multitude of cossack “tsareviches” who appeared in 1606-1608, all claiming to be relatives of Tsar Dmitrii. With the exception of “Tsarevich” Petr Fedorovich, who was a major ally of Ivan Bolotnikov in 1606-1607, information about these pretenders is very scarce, in both Russian and foreign sources, but they all seem to have acted in Dmitrii’s name, as his supporters against Shuiskii, rather than as his rivals or opponents.⁷²

The earliest foreign evidence about Tsarevich Petr is provided by Margeret, who notes that at the end of April 1606 Tsar Dmitrii had received news that about 4000 cossacks had assembled between Kazan’ and Astrakhan’, and that they

69 Philip L. Barbour, *Dimitry, Called the Pretender, Tsar and Great Prince of All Russia, 1605-1606* (Boston, MA, 1966; London, 1967); Chester S.L. Dunning, *Russia's First Civil War. The Time of Troubles and the Founding of the Romanov Dynasty* (University Park, PA, 2001).

70 See, for example, *Dnevnik Mariny Mnishek*, trans. V.N. Kozliakov (St Petersburg, 1995); “Dziennik Jana Piotra Sapielhy (1608-1611)”, in *Polska a Moskwa w pierwszej polowie wieku XVII*, ed. Aleksander Hirschberg, (Łwow, 1901), 167-332. Those who believed that the Second False Dmitrii was Tsar Dmitrii generally also continued to believe that Tsar Dmitrii was Dmitrii of Uglich; for this reason, versions of the First False Dmitrii's backstory are particularly common in Polish sources.

71 Petrei, *Istoriia*, 297-300, 307-308.

72 On these pretenders, see Perrie, *Pretenders and Popular Monarchism*, 90-97, 131-49, 174-81; Maureen Perrie, “Pretenders in the Name of the Tsar: Cossack 'Tsareviches' in Seventeenth-Century Russia”, in *Von Moskau nach St. Petersburg. Das russische Reich im 17. Jahrhundert*, ed. Hans-Joachim Torke, *Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte*, vol. 56 (Wiesbaden, 2000), 243-256, 244-249.

“caused harm along the Volga” because they felt that they had not been adequately rewarded by Dmitrii.⁷³ The cossacks were said to have with them a young prince called Petr, who was supposedly the son of Tsar Fedor Ivanovich and his wife Irina. His back-story was a variant of Dmitrii’s: the boy had allegedly been replaced at birth by a girl (the real Tsarevna Feodosiia, who died as an infant). According to Margeret, the cossacks’ story was untrue, and “it was well known that this was only a pretext to pillage the land”. Dmitrii wrote to Petr inviting him to Moscow, but the tsar was assassinated before the cossacks could reach the capital.⁷⁴

The Dutch merchant’s account, however, states (somewhat improbably) that it was Dmitrii who had created the new pretender: that after his murder Dmitrii had been condemned by the new government of Vasiliu Shuiskii for inviting Tsarevich Petr to Moscow to help him:

[...] he was accused to haue bene the Authour, and occasion of a great spoyle, and damage, which fell out vppon the riuer of Volga, causing himselfe by false markes to be proclaimed the sonne of Fender Iuanuitz, whom under this pretext he had suborned to come to his succour, with many thousand Cosaques, to be the more secured of the country.⁷⁵

Like Margeret, the Dutch author describes the looting committed by Petr’s cossacks: “[...] he was the cause of marueilous ruine to the country, for all the Ports of Astracasses were sacked, and all the goodes and marchandize there, robbed, and pill’d”.⁷⁶

Petreius at the time of writing his Relation knew something of the later history of Tsarevich Petr, since he notes that he was captured at Tula in 1607 and hanged in Moscow in 1608.⁷⁷ Like Margeret, he regards Petr as a pretender created by the

73 Margeret, *The Russian Empire*, 70-71, cf. 71: ‘These Cossacks were discontented with Dmitrii, reckoning that they had not been recompensed by him as they had hoped to be’.

74 *Ibid.*, 71. For other versions of Tsarevich Petr’s back-story, mostly taken from Polish sources, see Perrie, ‘Popular Socio-Utopian Legends’ in *The Time of Troubles*, 236-239; Perrie, *Pretenders and Popular Monarchism*, 140-142.

75 Howe, *The False Dmitri*, 58-59; cf. Isaac Massa, *A Short History of the Beginnings and Origins of These Present Wars in Moscow under the Reign of Various Sovereigns Down to the Year 1610*, trans. G. Edward Orchard (Toronto, 1982), 148: “[...] they accused him of having provoked the appearance of an impostor who was to come and lend him assistance in case of danger.” On the relationship between Massa’s work and the anonymous Dutch merchant’s ‘Reporte’, see Massa, *A Short History*, xxiii. Massa was a Dutch merchant whose contemporary account was first published only in the 19th century.

76 Howe, *The False Dmitri*, 59.

77 Reliatsiia Petra Petreia, 99.

Cossacks,⁷⁸ although his only mention of him is very brief, and it is situated in his list of arguments why Grishka Otrep'ev was not the real Dmitrii of Uglich: "In the fifth place, if Grishka were alive and were the true Dmitrii, the cossacks would not have chosen someone else in his place, as they did with Prince Petr, who claimed to be his relative and cousin".⁷⁹ Petreius also knows about two other cossack pretenders: he continues: "In the sixth place, if Grisha were the real Dmitrii, the cossacks and other renegades after the death of Prince Petr would not have chosen two others as their rulers and would not have made them sons of Fedor Ivanovich, whom he never had [...]"⁸⁰

Samuel Purchas also knows about these Cossack tsareviches. He cites a Russian source which states that in addition to the Second False Dmitrii there were other pretenders ("Wors") who "did name and call themselves sonnes of the slaine Emperour, as Ivan, Peter, Pheodor, and by many and divers other names: and under the same names, did consume the State, and shead much blood."⁸¹ Purchas himself describes Russia after the deposition of Shuiskii and death of the Second False Dmitrii as a many-headed monster, which he equates both with the Biblical beast of the Apocalypse and with the Hydra of classical mythology.⁸² The image of the many-headed monster to represent the multitude was a commonplace of English conservative political discourse in the mid-16th to mid-17th centuries, when it was deployed in response to popular revolts.⁸³ Purchas too uses it in this pejorative sense to describe the situation which prevailed in Russia in the later stages of the Time of Troubles: "a popular government happened, or if you will, a Confusion of the multitude bare sway"; "the whole Body became Heads in the worst of tyrannies,

78 In his *History*, however, Petreius describes Petr as Tsar Fedor's illegitimate son, who had fled to the cossacks and lived among them for several years in order to avoid an attempt on his life by Boris Godunov, but when his uncle Dmitrii became tsar, Petr had planned to approach him to request a princely remuneration. Petrei, *Istoriia*, 253. This version of Tsarevich Petr's story appears to have been borrowed by Petreius from Bussow, cf. Bussow, *The Disturbed State*, 96.

79 Reliatsiia Petra Petreia, 99. In fact Petr claimed to be Tsar Fedor's son, and hence Dmitrii's half-nephew. The logic of Petreius' argument is rather obscure.

80 Reliatsiia Petra Petreia, 99. In his *History* of 1620, however, Petreius does not mention these cossack pretenders, probably because they are not mentioned by Bussow, who is his main source for this part of the *History*.

81 Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus*, 14: 247.

82 *Ibid.*, 14: 230, 252.

83 Christopher Hill, "The Many-Headed Monster in Late Tudor and Early Stuart Political Thinking", in *From the Renaissance to the Counter-Reformation*, ed. Charles H. Carter (London, 1966), 296-324.

a popular (government shall I say? or) confusion.”⁸⁴ He contrasts the anarchy represented by the many-headed monster with monarchies, which “(how ever excessive and tyrannical)” were depicted “in divine Visions” as “simpler and more uniforme beasts”.⁸⁵ But Purchas adapts the image of the Hydra to incorporate not only mob rule but also the existence of pretenders: the monster’s heads included the “many Wor’s after the first and second Demetrius”, and Purchas laments the fragmentation to which they contributed.⁸⁶ The use of this striking imagery to represent the chaos which pretenders could create indicates the fear which conservative thinkers of the age experienced in the face not only of social unrest but also of multiple sources of political legitimacy.

STEN’KA RAZIN’S TSAREVICH ALEKSEI ALEKSEEVICH

The generally hostile and sceptical attitude which foreign observers expressed towards Tsarevich Petr and the other Cossack pretenders of the Time of Troubles can also be found in foreigners’ accounts of the revolt of Sten’ka Razin. Two of these provide unique information about the ‘Tsarevich Aleksei Alekseevich’ who supposedly accompanied Razin on his voyage up the Volga: the anonymous *Relation*, first published in German and Dutch in 1671 and in English and French in 1672; and the 1674 dissertation, written in Latin, of the German writer Johannes Justus Martius (Merz, Mertz).⁸⁷

The real Tsarevich Aleksei Alekseevich, Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich’s eldest son, had died in January 1670 at the age of 16.⁸⁸ According to the *Relation*,

84 Purchas, Hakluytus Posthumus, 14: 231, 252.

85 *Ibid.*, 14: 230. Of the Biblical references which Purchas provides, the most relevant for beasts representing monarchies is Daniel 7 and 8. Thomas Hobbes was later to use the image of the Biblical monster Leviathan (cf. Job 41) as a metaphor for his ideal Commonwealth and its monarch. See John M. Steadman, “Leviathan and Renaissance Etymology”, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 28 (1967): 575-576.

86 Purchas, Hakluytus Posthumus, 14: 252.

87 *Zapiski inostrantsev o vosstanii Stepana Razina*, ed. A.G. Man’kova (Leningrad, 1968), 84-126; *Inostrannye izvestiia o vosstanii Stepana Razina. Materialy i issledovaniia*, ed. A.G. Man’kova (Leningrad, 1975), 15-79.

88 At an earlier stage in the rising, in his speech to the cossacks at Panshin Gorodok in May 1670, Razin had cited the recent deaths of Tsarevich Aleksei, his younger brother Simeon and their mother, Tsaritsa Mariia Il’nichna Miloslavskaia, as evidence of the treason of the boyars. Martius knows this: he states that Razin initially blamed the boyars and proclaimed himself the avenger for the death of Aleksei Alekseevich (Inostrannye izvestiia,

however, as Sten'ka sailed up the Volga he had two ships, one lined with red and the other with black velvet, in which, he claimed, were Tsarevich Aleksei and the recently deposed Patriarch Nikon, respectively.⁸⁹ On the first vessel, Razin kept in the role of Aleksei Alekseevich a young Circassian prince whom he had earlier taken prisoner and whom he “compelled to act such a person”. Razin

spread abroad, that this Lord *Czarawitz* had made an escape from the violent hands of the Bojars and great Lords, and taken his refuge to him; adding, that he, *Stenko*, was come by order of the Great Czar to put to death all the Bojars, Nobles, Senators, and other great ones, (that were too near to his Majesty), as Enemies and Traytors of their Country.⁹⁰

Martius repeats and amplifies this version of the Razinites' tale:

Now they began to assert everywhere, that the son of the tsar had not died after all, but had fled from the plots which were being prepared against him and – safe and sound – was with Razin. The rumour was also spread that the boyars, hatred towards whom was irreconcilable, had tried to take all the power into their hands, had planned to kill the tsarevich [...] and [...] are wickedly causing tumult in the realm.⁹¹

Razin “persuaded everyone who wanted to have revenge and not to submit to the boyars, to join him and punish them for their lawlessness, recognising that this was the only way to save the realm from its decadent condition and to restore the true heir.”⁹² Martius notes that Razin displayed both Nikon and Aleksei standing in full

67). On the Tsarevich Aleksei affair, see Perrie, *Pretenders in the Name of the Tsar*, 249-252.

89 *Zapiski inostrantsev*, 97-98. Martius describes the ships as draped in red and black silk respectively (*Inostrannye izvestiia*, 70).

90 *Zapiski inostrantsev*, 98. The wording here is similar to that in the text of Razin's death sentence, reproduced as an Appendix to the *Relation*: “Thou didst also send to many other Towns some of thy villanous Companions, by false Writings bearing them in hand, that the Eldest Son of our Great Czar [...] was yet living, and that thou by Order of his Majesty, wast come to put to death as Traytors, all Bojars, Councillors, Noble-men and Officers, being in his Majesties service” (*ibid.*, 104-105). The death sentence, however, did not accuse Razin of setting up a pretender, but simply of spreading the rumour that Tsarevich Aleksei was still alive.

91 *Inostrannye izvestiia*, 67.

92 *Ibid.*, 67. Neither account tells us how (or whether) Razin explained the tsarevich's escape from death, but presumably the motif of a substitute victim, familiar from the Time of Troubles, was known in the cossack milieu. The False Simeon Alekseevich, who ap-

view on the ships; Sten'ka claimed that they had both fled to place themselves under his protection, and that they were now quite safe from the conspiracies of the boyars.⁹³

Neither Martius nor the author of the *Relation* has any doubt that the "Tsarevich Aleksei" on Razin's red-draped vessel was an impostor. According to the *Relation*, Razin "boldly pretended" that Aleksei was still alive, and "to colour this lye the better" he kept the Circassian prince on board the ship in the role of the tsarevich, and disseminated the story about his escape from death, in order "to ruine the Russian Empire and to seduce the common people". The writer describes the entire scenario in terms such as "mischievous devices" and "Artifices", and concludes that "By these base practises invented and push't on by *Stenko*, the ignorant people was inflamed to fight furiously".⁹⁴ Martius too identifies the false Tsarevich Aleksei as the captive Circassian prince, and claims that the vessel on which Nikon was supposedly sailing contained only an image of the patriarch.⁹⁵ He describes the business with the two vessels supposedly carrying the tsarevich and the patriarch as a "cunning ploy" (*dolum*) and a "shameless fraud" (*impio simulacro*), which nevertheless succeeded in gaining and retaining support for Razin's enterprise.⁹⁶

Both authors, and the author of the *Relation* in particular, present Razin as a skilful demagogue, who made use of the grievances of the ordinary people in order to further his own aims of revenge for his brother's death and his thirst for power. The author of the *Relation* recognises that the people had grievances and aspirations of their own which might motivate them to rebel, but he does so only implicitly and indirectly. He states, for example, that Razin did "much mischief" by sending out his "Emissaries from Astrakhan", who "stirr'd up the people to insurrection", and

peared in Zaporozh'e in 1673 in the company of some of Razin's former cossack supporters, told an elaborate tale in which the courtier who was ordered to poison him had poisoned a choirboy instead, dressed his victim in the tsarevich's clothes, and organised the real Simeon's escape: S.M. Solov'ev, *Istoriia Rossii s drevneishikh vremen*, 15 vols. (Moscow, 1960-65), 6 (1961): 462.

93 Inostrannye izvestiia, 70. These two foreign accounts are the only sources to describe the mystification with the red- and black-draped vessels, and the presence of a false Aleksei aboard the red ship.

94 Zapiski inostrantsev, 97-98.

95 Inostrannye izvestiia, 67, 70.

96 *Ibid.*, 46, 70. Compare the wording of the death sentence, on Razin's claim that Aleksei Alekseevich was still alive: "But *Thou Traytor* didst devise this with a designe to discompose the people, and to occasion the shedding of innocent blood." And on Nikon: "Thou hast also craftily given out, as if the Monk Nikow was with thee" (Zapiski inostrantsev, 105).

adds that: “Every where he promised Liberty, and a redemption from the Yoak (so he call’d it) of the Bojars and Nobles, which he said were the oppressors of the Country’. In Moscow, the author continues, “men began to speak openly in his praise, *as if* he were a person that sought the publick good and the liberty of the people [...]”.⁹⁷

And Martius states that Razin’s agents incited the Russians “to rebellion, on the pretext of fighting for their former freedom against boyar violence”. In 1667, “he set out on the road to tyranny, while presenting his vile enterprise as hatred towards it [tyranny]”.⁹⁸ In terms of his rabble-rousing abilities, Martius compares Razin with Catiline and with Wilhelm von Grumbach, the leader of a 16th-century German rising against the Emperor.⁹⁹ Thus the German author brings a trans-national comparative perspective to bear on the Razin revolt, but he does so in relation not to the pretender phenomenon as such, but rather to the leadership of Razin, whose exploitation of the rumour about Tsarevich Aleksei he presents as only one device in his arsenal of demagogic stratagems to attract popular support.

Unlike the Time of Troubles, when the source of political legitimacy itself was contested, the Razin revolt was a more conventional example of an uprising against the established order, and both Martius and the author of the *Relation* condemn Razin as a rebel against a legitimate ruler. The English account concludes with the pious words: “God Almighty give to the great Czar, *Alexis Michaelewitz*, the Victory over all his Enemies”,¹⁰⁰ and Martius reflects on Razin’s execution that “no other end was deserved by one who betrayed his sovereign and was an enemy and traitor to his fatherland (*desertor sui Imperatoris, et Patriae hostis Predatorque fuit*)”.¹⁰¹ In line with the philosophy which prevailed in Europe in the later seventeenth century, after the experience of civil war and rebellion in England and elsewhere, both writers were hostile to a popular revolt which threatened social and political stability.

CONCLUSION

The Time of Troubles of the early 17th century was a complex sequence of events, involving foreign invasion as well as dynastic strife, civil war and social unrest. It is

97 Zapiski inostrantsev, 97. My emphasis (M.P.).

98 Inostrannye izvestiia, 67.

99 Ibid., 67, 69. His other comparisons, with Ivan Podkova and Philip the Magnanimous of Hesse (ibid., 64-65) are made in terms of their physical strength.

100 Zapiski inostrantsev, 101.

101 Inostrannye izvestiia, 50, 75.

not surprising that contemporary foreigners' accounts focussed on those aspects which had the greatest international significance – the succession to the throne, and the rival interventions of Poland and Sweden – rather than on the socio-economic grievances of lower-class Russians, which are stressed in most modern historians' accounts. The greatest trans-national interest of all, however, was aroused by the pretender phenomenon, and in particular by the extraordinary career and intriguing personality of the First False Dmitrii. Even those foreign observers who regarded him as an impostor mostly found him attractive and impressive as an individual; and the complex representation of the pretender in later literary and historical works owes much to his broadly sympathetic depiction by foreign participants in the Time of Troubles (after May 1606 Russian sources, by contrast, painted a uniformly negative picture of him as the apostate monk Grisha Otrep'ev).

Pretenders have often been seen as a peculiarly Russian phenomenon, but the evidence examined in this article suggests that both the phenomenon itself and the narratives which accompanied it originated outside Muscovy and were brought into the country by the First False Dmitrii. Dmitrii's supporters presented him as the true heir to the throne, returning to overthrow the usurper Boris Godunov. This back-story resonated with (and may have been based on) the plots of chivalric romances which were popular in Western and Central Europe, and some foreign observers depicted Dmitrii as the hero of just such an adventure narrative. Others, however, who were acquainted with the pretender phenomenon elsewhere, saw Dmitrii as an impostor in the tradition of the Portuguese Sebastians and the false claimants to the Moldavian throne. The foreigners' accounts of Dmitrii's career transmitted familiar topoi back to their European audience: either the heroic romance of the persecuted tsarevich providentially restored to his ancestral throne (Barezzo Barezzi, Lope de Vega) or the cautionary tale of a fraudster who obtained his just deserts (Petreius).

If the pretender phenomenon was imported into Russia by the First False Dmitrii, it found there a fertile soil in which it rapidly took root: either providing legitimation for revolt against a reigning monarch such as Vasilii Shuiskii, who, like Boris Godunov, was widely perceived as a usurper; or adding weight to a rebellion in the name of the true tsar (the Cossack campaigns involving Tsarevich Petr and others in support of "Tsar Dmitrii"; and Razin's recruitment of Aleksei Alekseevich to help save his father from the traitor-boyars). After the death of the First False Dmitrii, however, the proliferation of self-styled descendants of Ivan the Terrible discredited the pretender phenomenon in the eyes not only of many upper-class Russians, but also of foreign observers. While Tsar Dmitrii had been depicted by some as the real Dmitrii of Uglich, later Russian pretenders were represented in foreigners' accounts almost exclusively as fraudsters and impostors. Within Russia, the motif of the true heir returning to reclaim his throne persisted in the back-stories of pretenders; and it was also found in the popular rumours and tales which surrounded them. The phenomenon of pretendership moved rapidly down the social

scale: the First False Dmitrii had been received at the court of the Polish king and corresponded with the Pope, but by the 18th century Russian pretenders were mostly of lower-class (cossack or peasant) background; and the narrative of the long-lost prince, originating in the chivalric romances of medieval Western Europe, had become folklorised in Russian popular culture. In their Russian manifestation, however, pretenders and their back-stories still had the power to mobilise a major popular revolt, as was the case with Pugachev in 1773-1774.