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Griboedov's Gore ot uma in the Context of his Life and Other Writing.

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Abstract

This dissertation seeks to analyse and account for the disparity between Gore ot uma and Griboedov’s other works, by examining his plays and poems, his letters and travel notes, the memoirs of his contemporaries, his literary sources and social milieu.

His writing is divided into three categories which correspond to three distinct periods in his life: the early plays and poems in which Griboedov exercised his craft; Gore ot uma, his single work of art; and the small amount of later work, much of it unfinished, inspired largely by ambition.

A chronological survey of his life discusses positive and negative influences. Among the former may be numbered Griboedov’s association with Shakhovskoi, his wide knowledge of Russian, Classical and European literature, his admiration for the Book of the Prophet Isaiah and the salutary shock of a duel. This last gave him the opportunity of reflecting, in enforced isolation, on the flaws in his own society and the ineptitude of those who sought to reform it; the dual theme of Gore ot uma. Two powerful negative influences are discussed; his ability to write a passion out of his system and his reaction to the terrible aftermath of the Decembrist uprising. His idealism fell to the former, his gift for comedy was a victim of the latter.

A comparison of earlier Russian verse comedies with Gore ot uma shows it to be rooted in neo-classicism. In the last chapter the final text of the play is compared with the earliest known version and the effect of the numerous alterations is assessed. A synthesis of Griboedov’s own character and that of Aleksandr Odoevskii is seen as the source of Chatskii’s disruptive naturalness; this is discussed in relation to the neo-classical tradition in Russia, of which Gore ot uma was the fatal crowning achievement.
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Introduction

I.A. Shliapkin, editor of the first Complete Collected Works of Griboedov, doubted that the latter had written Gore ot uma. A. Lebedev, in his book Griboedov: Fakty i gipotezy, tells us: ‘He [Shliapkin] did not exclude the possibility that Griboedov had simply appropriated the work of some writer of genius who wished to remain anonymous.’ While this theory has not received serious consideration it does indicate the extreme disparity between Gore ot uma and the writer’s other works. This dissertation will seek to analyse and account for that disparity.

There is a wealth of critical literature on the subject of Griboedov’s masterpiece; relatively little on his other works. Its first appearance in 1823, in manuscript form - the only form in which it was available during his lifetime - provoked an immediate response. Since that time Griboedov and Gore ot uma have never ceased to occupy Russian writers. In 1825 only excerpts from Gore ot uma had been passed by the censor; these were published in Russkaia Taliia. It was not until 1833 that the entire play was published by the Imperial Academy of Physicians and Surgeons; even then the text was far from reliable. No editor claims responsibility for this publication, a facsimile of which was produced in Moscow for ‘Khudozhestvennaia literatura’ in the 1990s. Nicholas I had decreed that only the censored version of the comedy, the version then being performed in the Imperial Theatres, could be published. But, as Piksanov points out, the text of the theatrical scripts had been badly corrupted, ‘on the one hand by the censor, on the other, by the copy-clerks.’ The text of the 1839 edition, with its lengthy
article by Polevoi, was scarcely more reliable than the 1833 publication, in spite of a small number of corrections made to the earlier version.\textsuperscript{5} In the 1830s two anonymous, uncensored versions appeared in print, but between the copy-clerks and the type-setters these editions were marred by their numerous errors (see Efremov in \textit{Bibliograficheskie zapiski}).\textsuperscript{6}

On 30 January 1854 the period of the author's sole rights to his intellectual property - then only twenty-five years - expired. Seven editions of his comedy appeared in that year, and the first 'collected works' were published by A. Smirdin.\textsuperscript{7} In all of them, and in the editions published between 1855 and 1857, the text of \textit{Gore ot uma} was based on the 1833 edition; these texts were, of course, equally inaccurate, some of them more so, since some of them were even more heavily censored. A compilation published by Evgraf Serchevskii in 1858 contains, apart from selected Scenes from \textit{Gore ot uma}, much valuable material, including articles on the play. It provides a fuller collection of works and letters, but the text of the comedy is still taken, as in the Smirdin edition, from the current theatrical version.

The first full, uncensored editions of \textit{Gore ot uma}, based on the anonymous publications mentioned above, appeared abroad in that same year, 1858. In 1860, however, the play was published in Berlin, edited, apparently with the censor's permission, by M.N. Longinov and P.I. Bartenev.\textsuperscript{8} A paper given by N.P. Giliarov-Platonov on the subject of this remarkable volte face was published in \textit{Russkoe obozrenie}.\textsuperscript{9} Finally, in 1862, the first full, if censored, edition of \textit{Gore ot uma} was published in St Petersburg by Nikolai Tiblen.\textsuperscript{10} The text contained numerous inaccuracies. Even when, later that year, a second edition was published, whose source was the authoritative Zhandr manuscript,
which had been copied in the latter's office and checked by Griboedov himself, corrections were far from complete. From then on, however, Gore ot uma was published in full.

In 1875 a version of Gore ot uma, edited by I.D. Garusov, declared itself to be 'the first full edition as regards content'. It contains additions to the text not found in any other manuscript, including that of Zhandr; in Act III, Scene 10, for instance, a passage of forty-six lines is inserted, involving Khlestova, Sofiia, Natal'ia Dmitrievna, Princess Tugoukhovskaia and the two Countesses, grandmother and granddaughter. Griboedov is said to have left a copy of his comedy with A.D. Iumatova, a ward of the Lopukhins, in 1823, made a few corrections to it from memory in 1826, and signed it. It was taken in 1827 to Iumatova's estate in Jaroslavl', where in 1842 the young Garusov, still a pupil at the gymnasium, made a copy of it. Though the original manuscript later disappeared, he continued to regard his copy as the definitive text.

Garusov also published, in this same edition, the text of the manuscript of Gore ot uma given by Griboedov to Bulgarin. This was later to be established, by Piksanov, as virtually identical with the authoritative Zhandr manuscript. Garusov, however, hoped to expose the inaccuracies of the Bulgarin text by offering it for comparison with his own copy. He writes: In reproducing the text with literal accuracy [his own emphasis, MH] we neither draw conclusions nor make observations. As the Ancients have it: sapienti sat, - anyone may easily answer the question for himself: could the Bulgarin manuscript ever have been the indisputably authentic version of the comedy?

Later in 1875 the fifth issue of Russkaia biblioteka, published by the editorial board of Vestnik Evropy and edited by Aleksei Veselovskii, was
dedicated to Griboedov. The issue contained a biography by Veselovskii, poems written both before and after Gore ot uma, articles and letters; some of this material was published here for the first time. Veselovskii did not have access to the Zhandr manuscript of Gore ot uma or the Bulgarin copy. He based the text of the comedy on the copy made by Smirnov of the Muzeinyi avtograf, published by Russkii arkhiv in the previous year. In spite of Veselovskii's claims that this newly-published text was a synthesis of the most reliable editions, it drew heavily on Garusov's 1873 publication mentioned above. These dubious additions to the text of Gore ot uma, referred to by Piksanov as 'falsifications', though given only in the commentary, were nevertheless presented as genuine variants, the work of Griboedov.

In 1879 D.G. Eristov published a text of Gore ot uma based on a manuscript dated 1831, found in Tiflis. It contained, he boasted, '150 variants'. But, as Piksanov points out, the overwhelming majority of these were the result of an inaccurate reading of this manuscript, while others were derived from the unreliable Garusov edition mentioned above. In 1879 P.A. Efremov edited Gore ot uma for A.S. Suvorin's Deshevaia Biblioteka. This publication, which ran to nineteen editions between 1879 and 1912, was no more reliable than those which preceded it; Efremov had no knowledge of the Zhandr manuscript.

1889 saw the publication in St Petersburg of Polnoe sobranie sochinenii A.S. Griboedova, edited by I.A. Shliapkin. It included the hitherto virtually unknown works Student and Kto brat, kto sestra, his letters, and two versions of Gore ot uma. Shliapkin had access to D.A. Smirnov's copy of the Muzeinyi avtograf and the Bulgarin manuscript, practically identical with the Zhandr manuscript. Influenced by Garusov, however, Shliapkin 'failed to accord the
Bulgariin copy that authoritativeness which it possesses,\textsuperscript{23} and did not base his edition on it.

The so-called Muzeinyi avtograf, which was donated to the Moscow Historical Museum by a descendant of Griboedov’s friend Begichev, appeared in Moscow, edited by V.E. Iakushin, in 1903, and the Zhandr manuscript was finally published in 1912, with an introduction and commentary by its editor, N.K. Piksanov (see bibliography). The latter was responsible for what is considered to be 'the first scientific edition of the works of A.S. Griboedov, which retains its significance to this day'.\textsuperscript{24} Three volumes, comprising the complete collected works of Griboedov, were published by the Imperial Academy of Sciences, between 1911 and 1917. Piksanov both edited these three volumes and wrote commentaries for them; in the case of the first volume this work was undertaken in collaboration with I.A. Shliapkin. Although numerous plans were subsequently made to publish a new academic edition, it was not until 1995 that the first volume of such an edition, edited by S.A. Fomichev, appeared. Two further volumes await publication.

There have, of course, been separate editions of Gore ot uma published during the intervening years, or selections from his works which include the comedy. These are listed in the bibliography, and include the Sochineniiia edited by VI. Orlov, first published in Leningrad in 1940; Sochineniiia v stikhakh, published in Leningrad in 1967, and Gore ot uma, published in Moscow in 1973, both edited by I.N. Medvedeva; the selection from Izbrannoe: P'esy, Stikhotvoreniiia. Proza. Pis'ma, edited by S.A. Fomichev and published in Moscow in 1978, and the Sochineniiia edited by A.L. Grishunin, which was published in Moscow in 1985. The projected Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v trekh
tomakh referred to above, promises to be a worthy successor to the academic edition of Piksanov.

Two editions of Gore ot uma are of special interest to English readers. In 1977 Prideaux Press published the comedy, edited and with notes by D.P. Costello; while in 1995 a new edition of the play was published by Bristol Classical Press, with a commentary by Richard Peace, to mark the bicentenary of the author's birth.

*

The first material published on the subject of Griboedov was largely biographical. In 1824 Faddei Bulgarin offended Griboedov with his feuilleton 'Literaturnye prizraki'. His excessive praise of 'Talantin', as he called the writer, evidently seemed to Griboedov an unmerited embarrassment. In 1823 Pushkin, before reading Gore ot uma, had written to P.A. Viazemskii: 'What kind of a man is Griboedov? I'm told that he's written a comedy on Chaadaev; in the present circumstances that is extraordinarily noble of him.' Upon reading the comedy, however, he wrote in 1825 to A.A. Bestuzhev, in some detail, about his impressions of the play, largely favourable; there was no further mention of Chaadaev. Soon after Griboedov's death in 1829 Bulgarin's reminiscences, under the title 'Vospominaniia o nezabvennom Aleksandre Sergeeviche Griboedove', appeared in Syn otechestva. Seven years later further reminiscences were published by Bulgarin in his Severnaia pchela.

In his article 'Gore ot uma' Belinskii's opinion of the play was, from the outset, ambivalent. First he denies the work its true status: Gore ot uma is a satire, but not a comedy; then he continues, in typically didactic manner, 'a satire cannot actually be a work of art' (Belinskii's own emphasis, MH). Though in the
same article he concedes that the work is 'a shed – but built of precious marble'.

One senses the struggle between his philosophical principles and his artist's instinct. In his article 'Russkaia literatura v 1841 godu', he seems, at first, equally ambivalent. Gore ot uma, he says, is an immature work: 'the vagueness of the concept detracts from the completeness of its artistry'. On the following page, however, he admits that 'Gore ot uma, in spite of all its inadequacies, seethes with the genius of inspiration and creativity'. While in 'Razdelenie poezii na rody i vidy' he appears, finally, to have reconciled his warring ideals: 'Gore ot uma is of great significance both for our literature and for our society'.

In 1836 the excerpts from Pushkin's 'Puteshestvie v Arzrum' relevant to Griboedov appeared in Sovremennik. An article by Ksenofont Polevoi, 'O zhizni i sochineniiakh Griboedova', was included in the 1839 edition of Gore ot uma mentioned above (pp.39-97). Polevoi, like Pushkin, knew Griboedov personally, and was able to recall much useful material. A purely literary view, on the subject of Griboedov's earliest published work, was the chapter entitled 'Pervye pechatnye opyty Griboedova' in M.N. Longinov's Bibliograficheskie zapiski. This was published in Sovremennik in 1857. The Serchevskii compilation published in 1858, mentioned above, is also a useful resource, not so much for the text of Gore ot uma as for the numerous articles on the comedy written between 1825 and 1857, and the history of the performances given during that period.

D.A. Smirnov, to whom S.N. Begichev had entrusted Griboedov's rough notebook, first published selected items from it in 1859. Together with biographical and critical material, much of Griboedov's writing was seen for the first time in Russkoe slovo for that year: his travel notes, notes for the projected
work on Peter the Great, plans for and excerpts from the unfinished ‘Radamist and Zenobia’, '1812', 'Gruzinskaia noch", the description of the flood of 1824 in St Petersburg, various other fragments.35

In 1860 L.N. Maikov’s Zametka ob A.S. Griboedove’ appeared in print.36 It contains biographical material given to Maikov by V.V. Schneider, who had known Griboedov well in his student days, noted the existence of the prose play Student, later to be found and published by I.A. Shliapkin, and included the libellous poem ‘Lubochnyi teatr’. Bestuzhev’s reminiscences on the subject of Griboedov were published in the same year.37

D.V. Davydov was extremely critical of Griboedov. Writing in the aftermath of the Decembrist rising, he accused the latter of insincerity and duplicity in his dealings with Ermolov and Paskevich during that terrible year. His contribution to A.S. Griboedov v vospominaniakh sovremennikov, and the commentary on it which appears in the 1980 edition of that work, shed some light on the sudden deterioration of their previously friendly relations.38

Herzen saw Chatskii as ‘Онегин-резонер, старший его брат’, and maintained that 'первые песни Онегина весьма напоминают нам язвительный, но сердечный комизм Грибоедова';39 in 1871 Goncharov published his justly celebrated Mil'on terzani', a critical study of Gore ot uma.40

The memoirs of the Decembrist D.I. Zavalishin were published in the fourth issue of Drevniaia i novaia Rossiia for 1879; they are reproduced in A.S. Griboedov v vospominaniakh sovremennikov.41 Zavalishin knew Griboedov during that critical period for the Decembrists, the last months of 1824 and the first of 1825; they were in prison together after Griboedov’s arrest in 1826. The collected memoirs of Griboedov’s contemporaries mentioned above is, of course,
an extremely valuable resource. In 1903 the archive material of the Investigative
Commission concerning the arrest and questioning of Griboedov in 1826 was
made available for research. It is very fully explored in P.E. Shchegolev’s book,
A.S. Griboedov i dekabristy.\(^{42}\)

It would be impossible to overestimate the contribution made by N.K.
Piksanov to Griboedov studies. His books and articles are listed in the
bibliography to this dissertation. They range from biographical studies to literary
criticism, and remain, in my view, unsurpassed. His Tvorcheskaia istoriia 'Goria
ot uma', the opening article in volume I of the 1911-17 edition of Griboedov’s
complete works in three volumes, entitled 'A.S. Griboedov: Biograficheskii
ocherk' (pp.i – cxlvii), and Griboedov: Issledovaniia i kharakteristik\(^{43}\) the book
which summarizes much of his research into the life and works of the writer, are
all valuable resources.

1929 saw the publication of two remarkable pieces of 'faction' by
Tynianov, Smert' Vazir-Mukhtara and Kiukhlia. The former presents such a
convincing portrait of Griboedov in his last years that, as Gor'kii wrote to the
author, 'he really must have been like that. And even if he wasn't', Gor'kii added,
'he will be now'.\(^{44}\) In Kiukhlia Tynianov departed from the stereotypical attitude
to Griboedov as 'a classical writer', entitled to automatic reverence, but in Smert'
Vazir-Mukhtara his original view is developed in far greater depth. Tynianov’s
Pushkin i ego sovremenniki is useful in placing Griboedov in his literary
context,\(^{45}\) as is that writer’s 'Arkhaisty i Pushkin'.\(^{46}\) Leonard Grossman provides a
brief but illuminating glimpse of Russian theatre in his Pushkin v teatral'nykh
kreslakh: Kartiny russkoj stseny 1817-1820, a world familiar to both Pushkin
and Griboedov.\(^{47}\)
The volume of *Literaturnoe nasledstvo* (47-48) published in 1946 contains a quantity of interesting new material on Griboedov's life and works.\(^48\)

In 1947 Nechkina published her study of Griboedov as a revolutionary thinker, *Griboedov i dekabristy* (2nd edn 1951). Her view is opposed to that of the more detached Piksanov; it is a book which must be read with Soviet history in mind.\(^49\)

Amongst major studies of Griboedov's use of the Russian language are G.O. Vinokur's "*Gore ot uma" kak pamiatnik russkoi khudozhestvennoi rechi\(^50\) and Boris Tomashevskii's outstanding essay 'Stikh *Goria ot uma*'.\(^51\) Rhyming Patterns in Griboedov's *Gore ot uma* by G. Kalbous analyses this particular aspect of the comedy.\(^52\)

S.V. Shostakovich's *Diplomaticheskaia deiatel'nost' Aleksandra Sergeevicha Griboedova* (1960)\(^53\) and O.I. Popova's *Griboedov: Diplomat* (1964)\(^54\) provide valuable insights into the writer's career in the service.

Jean Bonamour is exceptional in the inclusiveness of his approach. In his book *A.S. Griboedov et la vie littéraire de son temps* (Paris, 1965) he discusses all Griboedov's works, his cultural background, his travels, his career in diplomacy, his commercial concerns, his marriage, his death.\(^55\) The early plays are subjected to a detailed analysis, as are all the works. Perhaps this inclusive but somewhat compartmentalized approach leaves insufficient room for comparison of the various stages in Griboedov's creative development. In spite of that, it is, in Simon Karlinsky's opinion, 'the most detailed, honest, and perceptive study of Griboedov's life and work so far done in any language, vitiated only by the author's willingness to accept all viewpoints'. [Karlinsky's own emphasis, MH]\(^56\)
D. Welsh’s *Russian Comedy: 1765-1823* (Paris: Mouton, 1966) prepares the ground for the view of *Gore ot uma* as rooted in the neo-classical comedies of that period. He emphasizes the play’s social aspect as significant in the development of Russian comedy; though it is surely Griboedov’s strikingly original use of language, within his chosen free iambic meter, which guarantees *Gore ot uma* its immortality.

S.A. Fomichev has made a significant contribution to Griboedov studies. He is the editor of several important collections, including *A.S. Griboedov: Tvorchestvo, biografiia, traditsii* (1977), *A.S. Griboedov: Materialy k biografi (1989), Problemy tvorchestva A.S. Griboedova* (1994), and *A.S. Griboedov: Khmelitskii sbornik* (1998). He has himself contributed articles to all the above-mentioned publications. He heads the group of editors currently preparing the three volume edition of Griboedov’s works mentioned above, of which, at the time of writing, only the first volume is published. The invaluable commentary to this first volume, which contains *Gore ot uma* together with its earlier editions and variants, is by A.L. Grishunin. The latter is also responsible for the commentary on pages 368-79 of the second edition of Piksanov’s *Tvorcheskaia istoriia ‘Goria ot uma’* (Moscow, 1971) which was originally published in 1928.

Both *Sochineniia v stikhakh*, edited and with a commentary by I.N. Medvedeva (Leningrad, 1967) and her *‘Gore ot uma’ Griboedova*, published together with G. Makogonenko’s *Evgenii Onegin’ A.S. Pushkina* (Moscow, 1971), contain much useful material.

The edition of *Gore ot uma* edited and with notes by D.P. Costello (Letchworth: Prideaux Press, 1977) is, as mentioned above, an invaluable aid to English-speaking students in the understanding of a play whose language can be
elliptical to the point of obscurity. A collection of articles, edited and compiled by V.S. Shaduri, entitled *Tam, gde v'tsia Alazan*, published in Tbilisi in the same year, is valuable for new information on Griboedov's connection with Georgia.

1978 saw the publication of *Izbrannoe: Pesy, Stikhotvoreniia, Proza, Pis'ma*, edited and with a commentary by S.A. Fomichev, and of Iu.N. Borisov's *'Gore ot uma' i russkaia stikhotvornaia komediiia: U istokov zhanra*, published in Saratov; in 1979 the results of Evelyn Harden's research were published by Birmingham University under the title *The Murder of Griboedov: New Materials*.

In 1980 a new edition of *A.S. Griboedov v vospominaniakh sovremennikov* appeared in Moscow, edited by V.B. Vatsuro, which contained some extra material as well as omitting some items from the earlier version. The most important publication for that year in Moscow was undoubtedly A. Lebedev's *Griboedov: Fakty i gipotezy*, in which he reviews the rich variety of attitudes and opinions which surround the author, while drawing his own conclusions.

Meshcheriakov has written extensively on Griboedov: *A.S. Griboedov: Literaturnoe okruzenie i vospriiatie (XIX – nachalo XXv.*)* published in Leningrad in 1873; and articles such as 'Zagadka Griboedova', *Novyi mir*, 1984 no. 12, 209-19, 'Novoe o Griboedove', *Russkaia literatura*, 1985, no.1, 195-205, and 'Byl li A.S. Griboedov chlenom Severnogo obshchestva dekabristov?', *Voprosy russkoi literatury*, 1991, no. 1, 94-102. In 1989 his *Zhizn' i deiania Aleksandra Griboedova* was published in Moscow. This is a beautifully written
book. The author has allowed himself a certain inventive licence; it is, nevertheless, essential reading on the subject of Griboedov.

The third edition of *Stikhotvornaia komediia, komicheskaia opera, vodevil' kontsa XVIII – nachala XIX vv.*, edited by D.M. Klimova (Leningrad, 1990), contains the verse comedies of Griboedov's most important predecessors and contemporaries. Other more recent contributions to Griboedov studies include D. Clayton's exhaustive 'Tis folly to be wise: the semantics of um- in Griboedov's "Gore ot uma";<sup>68</sup> the literary journal *Drugie berega*, 4-5 (Moscow, 1994), which contains many fresh readings of Gore ot uma by a wide range of contemporary and earlier cultural figures, including writers, film directors and critics; I.Z. Serman's 'Pushkin i Griboedov – reformatory russkoi dramaturgii' in *Pushkinskii sbornik: Pamiati B.S. Bassermana*, I (Jerusalem, 1997), pp.173-86; the numerous articles on Griboedov as writer and diplomat in *Griboedov, A.S.: Litso i genii*, compiled, with the text of Gore ot uma and excerpts from Tynianov's writing, by V. Kabanov (Moscow, 1997); 'One of Many: an Eclectic Manuscript Copy of Griboedov's "Gore ot uma"' by Kevin Windle, Rosh Ireland and Andrei Rode, *Australian Slavonic and East European Studies*, 12, no.1 (1998), 81-95; and Stephen Baehr's 'Is Moscow Burning? Fire in Griboedov's *Woe from Wit*', in *Russian Subjects. Empire, Nation, and the Culture of the Golden Age. Studies in Russian Literature and Theory*, edited by Monika Greenleaf and Stephen Moeller-Sally (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998), pp.229-42.

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Jean Bonamour, in his *A.S. Griboedov et la vie littéraire de son temps*, summarizes Griboedov's literary output with admirable objectivity. 'En moins de
quatre ans Griboedov a adapté ou écrit en collaboration quatre pièces, production médiocre qui constitue poutant, Le Malheur d'avoir l'Esprit excepté, l'essentiel d'une oeuvre assez restreinte. Blok, in his essay 'O drame', describes Gore ot uma as 'гениальной русская драма', and goes on to observe 'но как поразительно случайно она! [his own emphasis, MH] И родилась она в какой-то сказочной обстановке: среди грибоедовских пьесок, совсем незначительных. D.A. Smirnov, in the article which introduces the excerpts from Griboedov's rough notebook mentioned above, comments: 'Questions and expressions of astonishment have long been heard among us: "How does it come about that Griboedov, after some sort of "Pritvornaia nevernost" or "Svoia sem'ia", suddenly appears with a play like "Gore ot uma"?" The disparity is acknowledged, as it must be; and yet it has not, perhaps, been fully considered. Why does a man produce a handful of mediocre works, write a masterpiece, then fail to finish anything of significance? There are further connections to be made if Gore ot uma is not to be regarded as an unaccountable aberration of genius in a moderately talented writer.

This dissertation will seek to make some of those connections. Griboedov's works, his letters and travel notes, the memoirs of his contemporaries, possible literary sources, social milieu and personal relationships, all these will be examined in the light of his own complex character in order to place Gore ot uma at the centre of a brief creative life, the circumstances of which exerted so powerful an influence on his writing. If justification is required for attacking the problem in this manner I refer the reader to Pushkin's military metaphor in 'Domik v Kolomne'. Accepting no restrictions on his choice of rhymes he writes: 'Все годы в строй: у нас ведь не парад.'
Nature, nurture and simple chance combined to set the creative writer on course. A precocious intelligence and a gift for music and language developed a facility for verse-making at an early age; the invasion of 1812 uprooted the academic, cutting short a promising career; a fortunate posting introduced him to Begichev, who was to become his closest friend, and Shakhovskoi, at whose invitation he wrote the first of his plays to be performed, Molodye suprugi.

Griboedov’s writing will be presented as falling into three categories, which correspond to three distinct periods in his life. These are divided by the ‘partie carrée’ of 1817 in which Sheremetev died, and the Decembrist uprising; the effect of the former was salutary, of the latter destructive. His early plays and poems, in which he exercised his craft, belong in that first period before the duel. His single work of art, Gore ot uma, was the fruit of enforced isolation; his own Moscow society, viewed from afar, inspired a reforming zeal which owes much to the first book of the prophet Isaiah, with which it will be compared. The small amount of work written after the débacle on Senate Square, most of it unfinished, represents the third category, inspired only by ambition.

The writer possessed a complex and divided talent, one which enabled him to work at art and craft separately and, in the case of Kto brat, kto sestra?, written before the completion of Gore ot uma, simultaneously. In both categories the act of writing will be shown to satisfy, to extinction, the passion which inspired it. His use of free iambic metre and its debt to, amongst others, Krylov and Shakhovskoi, will be discussed. Apart from these and other Russian influences, his gift for languages gave him access to a wide range of literary sources, both Classical and modern European; these too will be discussed in relation to his masterpiece – Gore ot uma.
It should be explained, here, that I have found it necessary to use three separate editions of Griboedov's works. The most recent research on the text of Gore ot uma, in both its original and final forms, is published in the first volume of Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh, edited by S.A. Fomichev and others. For Griboedov's other works and his letters I have used the 1911-17 edition of the complete works edited by N.K. Piksanov and, in the case of the first volume, I.A. Shliapkin. A few letters not included in that early edition and his contribution to Shakhovskoi's Svoia sem'ia are quoted from A.S. Griboedov, Sochineniia v dvukh tomakh, edited by M.P. Eremin (Moscow, 1971) (hereafter, Griboedov, Sochineniia, 1971).

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2. A.S. Griboedov, 'Gore ot uma, Act I, Scenes 7-10, Act III', in *Russkaia Talia*, a present for lovers of the Russian theatre in 1824 published by Faddei Bulgarin (St Petersburg, 1825), 257-316.


7. A.S. Griboedov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, ed. by A. Smirdin (St Petersburg, 1854).


13. Ibid., p.248.


16. N.K. Piksanov, 'Pechatnye izdaniia "Goria ot uma"', in Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, II (1913), 276.

17. Russkaia biblioteka. V. A.S. Griboedov (St Petersburg, 1875).


21. The Muzeinyi avtograf was not published until 1903: Griboedov, A.S., Rukopis' komedii Griboedova 'Gore ot uma' (izd. Muzeinogo' teksta) (Moscow, 1903).

22. The Zhandr manuscript was first published in 1912. Griboedov, A.S., 'Gore ot uma': Tekst Zhandrovskoi rukopisi, ed. by N.K. Piksanov (Moscow, 1912).

23. Ibid., p.277.


27. Ibid., VI, 96-97.

28. F.V. Bulgarin, 'Vospominaniia o nezabvennom Aleksandre Sergeeviche Griboedove', in Syn otechestva, 1830, 131, no.1, 3-42.


31. Ibid., I, 516-17.

32. Ibid., II, 5-66 (p.60).


36. L.N. Maikov, 'Zametka ob Griboedove', in Shbnik, izdannom studentami S.-Peterburgskogo Universiteta (St Petersburg, 1860), II, 235-44.


40. L.A. Goncharov, 'Mil' on terzanii': kriticheskii etiud', in his Sobranie sochinenii, ed. by S. Mashinskii and others, 6 vols (Moscow, 1972) VI, 382-416 (hereafter Goncharov, Mil'on terzanii).


42. P.B. Shchegolev, A.S. Griboedov i Dekabristv. (Po arkhivnym materialam) (St Petersburg, 1905).

43. N.K. Piksanov, Griboedov: issledovaniia i kharacteriski, ed. by A. Gorelov (Leningrad, 1934) (hereafter Piksanov, Issledovaniia i kharacteristiki).


51. B.V. Tomashevskii, 'Stikh Goria ot uma', in his *Stikh i iazyk* (Moscow, 1958) (hereafter 'Stikh Goria ot uma').


62. N.K. Piksanov, *Tvorcheskaia istoriia 'Goria ot uma'* (Moscow, Leningrad, 1928 (1929)).


64. V.S. Shaduri, *Tam, gde v'etsia Alazan'* (Tbilisi, 1977).


67. A. Lebedev, Griboedov: Fakty i gipotezy (Moscow, 1980).


69. Bonamour, Griboedov, p.130.


71. D.A. Smirnov, 'Stat'ia pervaia', Russkoe slovo, 4 (1859), 1-16 (p. 4).

Chapter 1

Rhyme and Reason: a Marriage of Convenience.

On 23 September 1815, in St Petersburg, Shakhovskoi’s five-act verse comedy, Urok koketkam, ili Lipetskie vody, was given its first performance. The play loosed the flood referred to by Pushkin as ’the Lipetskii flood’, whose high watermark was to be Griboedov’s Gore ot uma. Six days later, at the Malyi Theatre, an apprentice work, Molodye suprugi, served as a curtain-raiser to an opera, Efrozina i Koradin, on the occasion of a benefit performance for Nimfodora, the young sister of the great tragedienne Ekaterina Semenova. It must surely have been for this family reason that Semenova, grande dame of St Petersburg theatre, agreed to appear in an adaptation of a French comedy, Le Secret du Ménage, by Baron A. F. Creuzé de Lesser. Its author was the twenty-year-old Griboedov.

Aleksandr Sergeevich Griboedov was born on 4 January (Old Style) 1795. Recent research suggesting that he was born in 1790 awaits conclusive proof. According to Viktor Meshcheriakov, Griboedov was born out of wedlock in 1790; his mother, herself a Griboedov, subsequently married Sergei Ivanovich Griboedov, member of another branch of the family. Griboedov’s maternal grandfather had four daughters and one son. The third
daughter, according to contemporary sources, married a Razumovskii. There is no record of such a marriage, however, in the Razumovskii archive. Meshcheriakov suggests, tentatively, that the rumour of a Griboedov-Razumovskii liaison could be related to the pre-marital affair of Griboedov’s mother, Nastas’ia Fedorovna. ‘Of course’, he says, ‘this is purely supposition’.

G.D. Ovchinnikov maintains that he knows the name of Griboedov’s real father, but is not yet prepared to reveal it. Accepting the earlier date, and with it the inevitable conclusion that Griboedov was party to a deliberate deception, obliges us to believe that he entered the Moscow University Blagorodnyi Pansion at the age of thirteen, supposedly only eight years old; that he accepted the prize awarded to the youngest children when he was somewhere between thirteen and fourteen; and that he joined Moscow University in the philosophical faculty’s department of literature at the age of sixteen, posing as a prodigy of eleven. Even to protect the good name of his mother, who seems painfully unaware of any special obligation to him, it is hard to see Griboedov, whose moral standards ranged from high to unattainable, colluding in the perpetration of such a fraud. Not to mention - and this is hardly the place to mention - physical changes in a growing boy, however undersized, which it would have been impossible to conceal. The year 1795 will be accepted, in this dissertation, as the year of Griboedov’s birth.
In June 1808 Griboedov was awarded the degree of kandidat slovesnykh nauk. In 1810 he received his degree in law, remaining at the university to study mathematics and natural science. Then in 1812 Napoleon invaded Russia. Griboedov abandoned the role of eternal student and in July of that year enlisted as a cornet in the regiment of the Moscow Hussars, being formed at that time in Kazan'. In December this regiment merged with the Irkutsk Dragoons to form the Irkutsk Hussars, based at Kobrina in the province of Grodno. In 1813 Griboedov was promoted. He became adjutant to General A. S. Kologrivov, commander of the cavalry reserve, in Brest-Litovsk. It was there that he first met with Stepan Nikitich Begichev and Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Shakhovskoi, then leader of the Tver' irregulars. The former would become his closest friend; the latter his entrée to the world of the St Petersburg theatre.

At the end of 1814 Griboedov came on leave to St Petersburg. Shakhovskoi, eighteen years his senior, had already returned to the distinguished career in the theatre which had been interrupted by the war. As an influential administrator of the Imperial Theatres he was virtually in charge of repertoire until 1826, and maintained his connection with the theatre even after that date. But his greater fame is as a playwright. As Pushkin's Evgenii Onegin says, nostalgically, of that 'волшебный край', the St Petersburg theatre, 'Там вывел колкий Шаховской | Своих комедий шумный рой'. In what was known, affectionately, as Shakhovskoi's 'attic',
Griboedov was introduced to the theatrical and literary life of the capital. There he met N. I. Khmel' nitskii, N. I. Grech, A A. Zhandr, P. A. Katenin. Shakhovskoi must have noted Griboedov's letter to the Editor from Brest-Litovsk published in Vestnik Evropy in August, 1814. Here was a young man who could put words together. A young man who knew the literature of his own and several other countries, who could read Molière, Schiller and Shakespeare in the original.

Griboedov did indeed have an exceptional gift for languages and, except in moments of despair, a high opinion of his own talents. In a letter dated 19 October 1817 he tells Katenin that he is making a literal, 'word for word' translation of Schiller's Semela for Zhandr. 'I'm sure he'll make a charming thing of it', he says. 'It's for Semenova's benefit'. Later in the same letter he writes: 'Goodbye, I'm going out now. Where do you think? To study Greek. That language is driving me out of my mind. I study every blessed day from twelve till four.' Then adds, more truthfully, 'I'm already making great progress. I don't find it at all difficult.'

On 12 October 1818, in a letter to S. I. Mazarovich, he includes a joking but apposite quotation from the second Eclogue of Virgil. He is about to set out from Mozdok to the Caucasus, in terrible weather, on horseback. 'How often I shall have occasion to exclaim: “O Coridon, Coridon, quae te dementia caepit!...”'. In another, written in Tavriz on 3 May 1820, he asks Kakhovskii to witness his dedication 'eo, qui Caucasii fastigia montis sua sub
In June 1824 he tells Begichev, in a letter from St Petersburg, that Karatygin is urging him to cooperate with Zhandr in a translation of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. Griboedov doubts the advisability of these 'literary partnerships'. Moreover, he says, I'll be translating from the original, he from a badly written version of it. A letter to Katenin, dated January 1825, reveals Griboedov's knowledge and understanding of Molière's plays. Like most of the well-born young men of his generation, he would have been able to read them in French. Shakhovskoi was not slow to recognize an asset. Would Griboedov adapt Le Secret du Ménage as a one-act curtain raiser? He needed something new for Semenova.

It would not, in fact, be Griboedov's first attempt at a play. In 1805, while he was still a pupil at the Blagorodnyi Pansion, Shakhovskoi's Novyi Stern was entertaining St Petersburg audiences. Laurence Sterne's Sentimental Journey was, of course, one target. But the Sentimentalists whom Shakhovskoi had in his sights were nearer home. Karamzin and his followers were mocked, parodied, satirized. In 1807, when Griboedov was already in his second year at Moscow University, Ozerov's Dmitrii Donskoi was hailed as a patriotic masterpiece, and its author rewarded by the Tsar. But when the dramatist wished to retire from the Department of Forestry, and devote himself solely to writing, he was mysteriously denied a pension. The decision, according to Simon Karlinsky, came from the Tsar himself. This sudden and unaccountable fall in Ozerov's popularity was made more
painful by 'a flurry of anti-Ozerov epigrams and lampoons'.\textsuperscript{13} The source of these attacks was that same anti-Sentimentalist literary clique, headed by the linguistic theoretician, Admiral Shishkov, later to be known as the Archaists. This group included Derzhavin, Krylov and, unsurprisingly, Shakhovskoi.

The precocious Griboedov took sides. He wrote a parody of Ozerov's heroic drama entitled \textit{Dmitrii Drianskoi}, on the subject of the rivalry between the Russian and German professors at Moscow University. Simon Karlinsky refers to it as 'nasty'.\textsuperscript{14} It may well deserve that reputation. But we can no longer read the text. It found its way, after Griboedov's death, into the library of Dmitrii Aleksandrovich Smirnov, a distant relative of Griboedov. (Smirnov's great-great-grandfather, Mikhail Semenovich, was the brother of Leontii Semenovich, Griboedov's great-great-grandfather.) The manuscript of \textit{Dmitrii Drianskoi} and, more importantly, 'a large bound notebook of rough drafts', left by Griboedov with Begichev, were given to Smirnov in 1857, when he visited the man who had been the writer's closest friend at his country residence near Tula.

This dilatory academic, attempting to justify his procrastination by maintaining that 'it is really too early for a full discussion on the subject of Griboedov, and it will never be too late', failed to achieve his declared aim of ordering and publishing the notebooks.\textsuperscript{15} In April 1859, after the death of Begichev, Smirnov did publish the first of Griboedov's travel notes in \textit{Russkoe slovo}, IV; the remainder of the travel notes, together with some
unfinished poems, appeared in *Russkoe slovo*, V, in the following month. Of his projected *Griboedov i ego kritiki* all that remains is a preface to *Gore ot uma*. Smirnov died in 1866, his mission unaccomplished. The polemical article, a defence of Griboedov against accusations in Davydov’s reminiscences of the writer, published in the second issue of *Besedy Obshchestva Liubitelei Rossiiskoi Slovesnosti* in 1868, was part of another splendid project, *Materialy dlia biografii A.S.Griboedova*. This work was to have cleared up many of the doubts and uncertainties regarding Griboedov’s early years. The notes of Smirnov’s conversations with the writer’s friends were not published until 1929.

After Smirnov’s death his widow gave much of the material on Griboedov to the Obshchestvo Liubitelei Rossiiskoi Slovesnosti at Moscow University. Apart from the above mentioned article nothing was published. In 1874 Zil’bershtein records that the then president of the society, Aleksei Veselovskii, used the material in his article ‘Ocherk pervonachal’noi istorii “Goria ot uma”, published in *Russkii Arkhiv*, 1874, no.6. Unfortunately, Zil’bershtein writes, with admirable restraint, Veselovskii gave no indication as to the contents of the collected material, and no precise references to the source of his borrowings. Similarly, when the selected works of Griboedov, edited by Veselovskii, were published in 1878, the biography contained in this edition failed to include exact references to the Smirnov source. Those on pp.118 and 191 are the sole exceptions. Moreover, when I.A. Shliapkin
wished to use this material in his work as editor of the complete collected works of Griboedov, eventually published in 1889, the Smirnov manuscripts, 'in spite of Veselovskii's thorough search of the Society's library', could not be found. There is worse. In 1877 the Griboedov papers which had remained in Smirnov's extensive library were destroyed by a fire on his estate at Sushchevo. Apart from Smirnov's work on Griboedov, the writer's own notebook, the priceless 'remarkable rough notebook', was lost in the blaze; and with it – to conclude this lengthy but necessary digression – the manuscript of Dmitrii Drianskoi. According to A.K. Afanas'ev, curator at the Moscow State Historical Museum, no copy of the play exists.

That it did once exist places Griboedov in the anti-Sentimentalist camp. But during the three years that he spent in St Petersburg, from 1815 - 1818, a period of close association with Shakhovskoi and his circle, his affiliation was more partisan than passionate. In a letter to his friend, P. A. Katenin, dated 19 October, 1817, he writes 'Andrei Andreevich' - in all probability his friend, Zhandr - 'went to the evening at Shishkov's last Tuesday and slept happily through Tacitus in prose... I myself am ill, regularly, every Tuesday'. Derzhavin had given the magnificent hall of his home on Fontanka for the sessions. It was always 'brilliantly illuminated, like some temple to the god of light', Vigel' writes in his Zapiski; 'the reading usually lasted more than three hours and neither the style nor the content matched the appointments of this great temple'.21
In 1814 Griboedov was nineteen; a young man with a career to make. On leave from the army in which he had enlisted to help drive the French from the soil of the fatherland, he set about translating and adapting a second-rate French comedy. Not in order to express his individual views, but to achieve a better conformity; to do what his small society did, but do it better; to break in, not out; to belong, and profit by it. The Molchalin philosophy in action.

As Eremin writes, 'that sort of play did not require talent; all that was needed was a literary knack and a certain knowledge of the stage. If necessary it could be knocked up by a group – of two, three or four people: one thought up the plot, another wrote the dialogue, a third the "kuplety". [...] In Gore ot uma Griboedov made malicious fun of such wares. Eremin is referring, of course, to Repetilov's words:

вдруг каламбур рожу,
Другие у меня мысль эту же подцепят,
И вшестером глядь ведевильчик слепят,
Другие шестеро на музыку кладут,
Другие хлопают, когда его дают.23

The Griboedov who undertook to adapt Creuzé de Lesser's play was not the Griboedov of Gore ot uma, Griboedov the perfectionist, balancing the mind against the heart. This was the rational classicist exercising his intellect; writing as a social grace in an ambitious young man.

Romantic art goes in and out of fashion, but the romantic perception of the artist is remarkably persistent. The mature work is an expression of the
mature personality. The in-born, individual gift develops. We would hardly be aware of the existence of Bastien et Bastienne if Mozart had not subsequently become one of the glories of European music. But the facility which Griboedov already possessed, evident in the glib dialogue and easy rhymes of Molodye suprugi, was a craft which he had at his disposal. Leaving aside the poisonous Student, for later analysis, it was a craft with which he would always be happy to oblige a friend.

His contribution, together with that of Khmel'hitskii, to Svoia sem'ia, ili Zamuzhniaia nevesta enabled Shakhovskoi to meet a deadline. The latter had promised the play for Val'berkhova's benefit performance. In a letter to Katenin dated 19 October 1817, referring to Shakhovskoi's comedy Pustodomy, Griboedov sums up the predictable denouement with dismissive brevity and concludes: 'Inkvartus and a lot of other people are fooled, including, in my view, the audience, but what business is that of mine? [my emphasis, MH] I shall applaud!'24 The loyalty is admirable, the detachment revealing.

It is apparent that Griboedov had no very high opinion of Zhandr as a writer or as a scholar. 'Have you read Zhandr's excerpt from Gofoliia in Nabliudatel'?' he writes in the same letter. 'A superb thing, only – [only] – one word and its rhyme are simply frightful: "goviada". In the Bible, do you see, it means "stado", [he underlines both words] but what business is that of mine?'25 (This time the emphasis is my own, MH.) Six months later, however,
needing to leave St Petersburg and committed to completing the play *Pritvornaia nevemost'*, once again for a benefit performance in honour of Semenova, it is Zhandr's help that he enlists. '...and so that it wouldn't keep me in St Petersburg, I went rushing round to our friend Zhandr for help', Griboedov writes to Begichev on 15 April 1818.\(^{26}\)

In 1814, when he was beginning to practise his craft, the battle over the proper course of development for the Russian literary language was at its height. The party known as the Archaists favoured Lomonosov's view, expressed in the previous century: the language should use and adapt the Church Slavonic vocabulary and avoid the unnecessary import of foreign words. The opposition, headed by Karamzin, aimed at a written language closer to spoken Russian. They had no time for Slavonic archaisms, and were prepared to adopt both French vocabulary and French syntax.

Their innovations enraged Admiral Shishkov, president of the Russian Academy, linguistic specialist and future Minister of Education. As Nebel writes, quoting the Admiral: "They were anti-national and anti-religious and it was all due to the French. "If Europe is now drinking a cup of bitterness, it is because, before she was vanquished by the arms of France, she had been conquered by the language", he indignantly exclaimed.\(^{27}\) In 1810 Shishkov helped to found the literary society, Beseda Liubitelei Russkogo Slova. His friend, the reactionary Shirinskii-Shikhmatov, who would be appointed Minister for Public Education in 1850, and in whose
view secondary schools and universities should be available only to the nobility, was an enthusiastic supporter. Shakhovskoi was another. He had already parodied the sentimentalists in his play *Novyi Stern*. In 1815, in response to his *Lipetskie vody*, which satirized the works of both Zhukovskii and Karamzin in the recitations of the feeble poet Fialkin, Karamzin's supporters organized their own circle at the home of S.S.Uvarov. This was the Arzamas Society, of which Karamzin was an honorary member.

The young Pushkin’s opinion of Shirinskii-Shikhmatov’s major dramatic work of 1807, the narrative poem *Pozharskii, Minin, Germogen, ili Spasennaia Rossiiia*, is succinctly expressed in the following four lines, written somewhere between 1814 and 1817:

Пожарский. Минин. Гермоген
Или Спасенная Россия,
Слог дурен, темен, нарушен —
И тяжки словеса пустые.\(^{28}\)

Shakhovskoi’s comedy, *Lipetskie vody*, was given its first performance on 23 September 1815; on 8 December of that year the sixteen-year-old Pushkin wrote in his diary the following epigrammatic tongue-twister:

Угрюмых тройка есть певцов -
Шихматов, Шаховской, Шишков,
Уму есть тройка супостатов —
Шишков наш, Шаховской, Шихматов,
Но кто глупей из тройки злой?
Шишков, Шихматов, Шаховской!\(^ {29}\)
And on 23 March 1816 Karamzin, together with P.A.Viazemskii and V.L.Pushkin, visited this future member of Arzamas at the Lycée.\textsuperscript{30}

The meetings of their society may have been light-hearted, but the philosophy they set out to defend, as expressed in Karamzin's Sentimentalist poetry and prose of the 1790s, was a serious one. Its essentials were 'a rationally conceived natural world furnishing maxims of art and morality and the idea of an intense concentration on the individual's subjective experiences'.\textsuperscript{31} By 1789 Karamzin had already rejected the narrow and mystical masonic view of literature as the weapon of morality in the struggle against scepticism, atheism and materialism. When Catherine II, unnerved by the French Revolution, took refuge in repression, he continued to defend the Enlightenment in his essays, published in his magazine \textit{Aglaia}. In the more liberal atmosphere engendered by the accession of Alexander I, Karamzin's essays, published now in his new journal \textit{Vestnik Evropy}, reveal a retreat from belief in the primacy of the emotions to a more moderate position in which a balance was to be sought between emotion and reason.

Nevertheless, Karamzin had attacked French Neo-classical drama, in his theatrical reviews and \textit{Pis'ma russkogo puteshestvennika}, published in his \textit{Moskovskii zhurnal} in 1791 and 1792, and in his play \textit{Sofija} (1791). The nineteen-year-old Griboedov knew where his allegiance lay. Shakhovskoi's \textit{Novyi Stern} had provided an entertaining example of how these 'sensitive
plants' in the opposite camp might be parodied. The younger man set to work to translate and adapt Creuzé de Lesser's *Le Secret du Ménage*.

He would not be the first Russian to do so. In 1812 Aleksandr Gavrilovich Volkov, a disciple of Karamzin, had produced a Sentimentalist version in prose, *Urok zhenam*, which, as S.M. Shavrygin writes, 'was a success on the Russian stage. But in the final analysis, Shakhovskoi and Griboedov were not so much trying to parody the "periphery" of Sentimentalism (Volkov's translation), as its ideological and aesthetic centre – the works of Karamzin.32

The comedy by Creuzé de Lesser has a cast of three. Two women and one man. Semenova had indeed agreed to take part in this prelude to the main performance. But she was, perhaps, less willing to share a very modest amount of limelight with another actress. This is at least a possible explanation of the damaging reversal in Griboedov's adaptation. His play contains one woman and two men: on the occasion of its premiere, the two personable young actors, Sosnitskii and Brianskii.

*Le Secret du Ménage*, first performed in Paris in 1809, was itself an adaptation of an earlier play, *La Nouvelle École des Femmes*, a prose comedy in three acts by Mouslier de Moissy, written in 1758.33 De Moissy's title clearly refers to the play by Molière, written nearly a century earlier. Molière's verse comedy is an hilarious version of the 'sleeping beauty' legend. Brought up in total ignorance of a specific danger, the heroine is helplessly
vulnerable when exposed to it. Both the sleeping beauty and Agnes, Molière's innocent, are awakened by a kiss; but in *L'École des Femmes* the awakening is the danger.

In *La Nouvelle École des Femmes*, Mouslier de Moissy reverses Molière's plan. What a wife needs is not an obsessional man who will preserve her ignorance, but an experienced woman who will instruct her in the ways of the world. The subsequent variations on this theme are progressively less amusing. De Moissy casts the husband's lover, a courtesan, as the woman from whom the wife seeks instruction:

MELITE (the wife) Ces agréables femmes connoissent mieux les coeurs des hommes que nous; la façon dont elles les subjuguent en est une preuve; peut-être m'ouvrira-t-elle quelques avis dont je pourrai profiter.

MARTON (her maidservant) Madame, c'est aller crier au secours à la porte de son ennemi. (I. 6)

When the courtesan realizes to whom she is giving this lesson, she generously withdraws from the contest.

Creuzé de Lesser, half a century later, claims in his preface to the 1809 edition that a courtesan would be unacceptable on stage. His worldly woman is 'cousine' to the husband, who finds her more attractive than his wife. The cousin is as helpful as the courtesan in explaining how to keep a husband. Griboedov discards the worldly woman entirely, and with her the only piquancy that this plot might once have possessed. A totally disinterested young man, Safir, a friend of the family, undertakes to tell the wife, El'mira, why she is failing to please her husband. Safir, of course,
cannot speak from experience. After a little generalizing he is reduced to hearing the husband's complaint against his wife so that she may overhear it.

Bearing in mind the loss of Griboedov's notebooks it will be useful to make a detailed comparison of *Molodye suprugi* (referred to below as MS) with its source. It is, after all, the only play, apart from *Gore ot uma*, of which he is the sole author. His other plays are the result of that friendly collaboration mentioned above.

How did Griboedov approach the problem? How did he reduce Creuzé de Lesser's three-act comedy to a one-act curtain raiser? What did he see as indispensable and what did he reject? What did he adapt and what did he add? The answer to the first question is simple. Far from reducing the length of the play, Griboedov wrote 682 lines to Creuzé de Lesser's 660. One can only admire the stamina of the St Petersburg audiences. It was Creuzé de Lesser who made the reduction in adapting de Moissy's play.

Griboedov adopts the familiar rhyme scheme and metre of his source, *Le Secret du Ménage* (referred to below as LSDM). These are the rhymed couplets in the alexandrines, with alternating masculine and feminine endings, which Ozerov had used in *Dmitrii Donskoi* and, it seems reasonable to suppose, Griboedov had imitated in his parody of the play, *Dmitrii Drianskoi*.

His first concern is to direct the attention of the audience to the target. The only name he retains is that of Creuzé de Lesser's Aglaé, in its
Russian form, Aglaia, the name of Karamzin's magazine of the 1790s. The name he adopts for the husband recalls two of Karamzin's most famous stories. The hero of Tuluiia' is called Aris. His son, like the treacherous young man in Bednaia Liza, is an Erast. The husband in MS is Arist, a composite version of the two names.

Griboedov's one act is divided into fourteen scenes. LSDM is in three acts, of six, five and thirteen scenes respectively. The source play opens with a monologue delivered by the husband, D'Orbeuil. 'On ne voit qu'à moi seul ces malheurs arriver' he complains, peevishly. Then takes twenty-three more lines to reveal, at once, all the main components of the plot. His wife bores him. She has charms, but conceals them. Aglaé the coquette is more entertaining. He doesn't want to love his widowed cousin, Madame D'Ercour, but she amuses him.

Griboedov's husband, Arist, omits D'Orbeuil's somewhat paranoid opening line. He takes just one couplet to tell us that his wife bores him, one more to comment on the strange fact that though he loves her he is happier when they are apart, and concludes the first scene with a couple of lines altogether more brisk:

'OdaNako vPervye ne mnoю nайдено | ЧTo вskore нaдoest одно и все одно,' (I.1) he says, replacing sentimental introspection with a rational generalization.
The stage directions heading the second scenes of both plays are instructive. Mme D'Orbeuil, the wife in Creuzé de Lesser's three-part invention, makes her entrance 'très négligemment mise, et avec un grand chapeau qui la cache'. Griboedov, nineteen and writing for the great Semenova, loses his nerve, perhaps. His 'wife', El'mira, enters 'в простом утреннем платье'. Both wives express their reluctance to leave their homes, even momentarily. Both husbands make the point that their wives used to enjoy the pleasures of society. The wives reply that their former taste for the social round has been superseded by a determination to live only through their husbands. Creuzé de Lesser introduces the subject of music here, reinforcing this subordination of the wife's tastes to those of her husband. Griboedov saves it for the following nineteen lines, a development of Creuzé de Lesser's thirteen, in which both husbands complain that their wives' talents, so impressive before marriage, are no longer in evidence. Creuzé de Lesser's approach is a little grasping. 'On compte dans la dot quelques talents acquis', he says (I. 2). Griboedov makes a forthright reference to the purpose of the display, as 'уловка матерей'. Before music is mentioned both writers refer to the drawing shown to a suitor, apparently the work of his beloved. Creuzé de Lesser merely suggests the deception. It is a drawing 'dont un maître souvent pourrait se faire honneur' (I. 2). Again, Griboedov is more straightforward. 'А чай работали художники наемны' (I. 2).
Creuzé de Lesser's 'demoiselle habile | Fait voltiger ses doigts sur un clavier mobile' (I.2). Griboedov, himself a brilliant pianist, knows how the trick is done. 'Меж тем учитель ей подражает скрипкой'. After which 'влюбленного как в сети завлекли, | В загоне живопись, а инструмент в пыли' (I. 2).

D'Orbeuil introduces the subject of his wife's uncle. In LSDM this uncle is the cause of the problem which the wife will solve. He is laying claim to the house in which the action of the play takes place. In this case the persuasive influence of his niece will suffice. Griboedov casts the uncle as the wife's adviser and makes the problem a far more serious affair, requiring very different qualities in the wife. Arist tells Safir, the disinterested friend of the family, 'Что ныне как в суде мое решают дело | И, может, приберут имение к рукам...' (I.4)

El'mira goes out into a man's world. 'Я не щадила просьб, подарков и хлопот.' (I.5) She shows herself to be both more able and more responsible than her husband, who admits 'Я, вместо что сказать по стряпчим, по судам, | Платить и кланяться – к прелестнице поеду.' (I. 4)

Griboedov's El'mira is a strong character, capable of exacting revenge. Mme D'Orbeuil wants no more than her husband's love returned to her. Even when she is playing the coquette, acting on the advice of her cousin, she cannot resist telling him 'Tout ce que j'en ferai, ce sera pour vous plaire'. (III. 5)
There is some discussion, in both plays, of where the young couple should spend the summer, in which both wives are exasperatingly compliant and both husbands politely express their gratitude, only to be told, by both wives, that they look bored. Protesting, the husbands reach for the newspapers. Creuzé de Lesser takes a line and a half to make this little joke. 'On ne peut s'amuser autant que je m'amuse... | Ou donc est le journal?' (I. 2.). Griboedov manages it in one line: 'Я рад с тобою быть...однако где газету?' (I. 2). But then spoils it by hammering home the point with an aside: 'Над ними все-таки пристойнее зевать.'

Since Safir is the disinterested friend of both Arist and El'mira there can be no flirtation scene in MS. D'Orbeuil is able to flirt on-stage with his cousin while she reproaches him for his faithless behaviour with the coquette, Aglaé - a double deception. Griboedov, too, introduces his Aglaia in Scene 3. But he has limited himself, by his reversal, to the description of flirtation. Arist boasts heartlessly to Safir, in the presence of El'mira, about the unpleasant game he played at last night's ball, in a speech which has no equivalent in LSDM.

В Аглаю знаешь как Сердаков влюблен?
Я настоял на том, чтобы взбесился он:
С Аглаей все шептал и танцевал нарочно;
А он краснел, бледнел, дрожал, ворчал,…

(Scene 3)
Serdalikov sounds remarkably like poor Lenskii in Pushkin's *Evgenii Onegin*. Perhaps the young Sasha Pushkin saw a performance of *Molodye suprugi*. It was staged both in St Petersburg and, on 4 June 1816, in Moscow.

At the end of Scene 3 the wives leave, unnoticed. 'Mon mari ne s'en aperçoit pas,' Mme D'Orbeuil says sadly. El'mira's aside is even sadder. 'А я здесь лишняя.'

So far Griboedov has stayed fairly close to his source, with the above-mentioned exceptions. Now he is obliged to depart from it. Scene 4 is played between the two male friends. Tension sags. 'Не совсем ли тебе с женой столько нежной | Вести себя, как ты, так сухо, так небрежно?' Safir asks Arist, a touch priggishly. Arist expresses his dissatisfaction with his marriage of three months. He reveals the soporific nature of their relationship. 'У нас с Эльмирою эмблемой приняты | Не розаны, мой друг, а маковы цветы.'

The elaborate fancy is lifted from Karamzin's story, *Rytsar' nashego vremeni*, where it forms part of a compassionate plea by the author that his hero's suffering may be dulled by the opiate poppy. 'И ты, подобно Морфею, рассыпаясь маковые цветы забвения: брось несколько цветочков на юного моего героя.' In Griboedov's play the poppy is used by Arist as the emblem of his boredom which, as he sees it, is the suffering. In this context the imagery, however parodic, sounds forced. 'Согласие всегдашнего' is his real complaint; the concealing of his wife's gifts, her poor
taste in dress. More brutal by the line, Griboedov introduces a sad truth, one which Creuzé de Lesser omitted and which Karamzin would have rejected out of hand. 'Немые ласки те божественны сначала, | А в продолжении весьма надоедят.' And when Safir protests that one would think Arist had been married for years, the latter launches into a direct attack on Sentimentalism which, again, has no counterpart in the source play.

Po справедливости, три месяца – три века!...
С Эльмироей можно близь тенистого просека,
Под свесом лиловым, на бархатном лужку
Любиться, нежиться, как надо пастушку,
И тать весь свой век в безмолвье неразлучно.
Все это весело в стихах, а впрочем скучно.

Safir suggests, ironically, that it would be better if El'mira were not a loving wife but a coquette. D'Orbeuil's wife is a dangerous mixture of the two. 'Et, des hommes craignant les discours seducteurs, | N'en doit aimer qu'un seul, mais...peut plaire à plusieurs'. Griboedov conveys the same idea with a couplet of unadorned simplicity. 'Пусть ищет нравиться моя Ельмира всем, | Но любит лишь меня, и я доволен тем'. This is a great improvement on his awkward borrowing of Karamzin's 'roses and poppies' style, but still a world away from Gore ot uma with its natural, conversational rhythms falling, without apparent effort, into iambic metre.

The texts diverge. Griboedov gives Arist a speech full of youthful cynicism, not present in the source
В наш век степеньша по свадьбе через год
Берет любовника, - единообразье скучно,
И муж на то глядеть обязан равнодушно.

The writer has found one small advantage in his 'reversal'. It is a speech which would not have been made to a woman. Childishness, Safir tells Arist, accurately. He will remind this young husband, later, of that obligation to indifference. Chatskii, joking with Platon Mikhailovich about his much rehearsed flute sonata, makes the opposite point. 'Ну, постоянный вкус! В мужьях всего дороже'. But his friend's views on marriage are hardly less cynical than those of Arist. Try it, he says. 'От скуки будешь ты свистеть одно и тоже' (Горе от ума, III.6.261)

From time to time a hint of the future writer surfaces. Compare the use of bathos, in Arist's reply to Safir's accusation of childishness, with its use in Горе от ума. In both instances false emotion descends abruptly to genuine self-interest. Arist declares 'Любовь моя к жене род страсти, обожание!...' And then remarks 'Постой, да ныне мне назначено свидание'. (Scene 4). Repetilov, having defined his feelings for Chatskii as 'влечение, род недуга, | Любовь какая-то и страсть', goes on to say:

Ругай меня, я сам кляну свое рожденье,
Когда подумаю, как время убивал!
Скажи, который час?

He has remembered his meeting at the English Club (Горе от ума, IV.4.67-69). In 1814 Griboedov gives Arist two quite separate statements, linked only by rhyme. Ten years later he plants the word 'время' as a trigger for
Repetilov's apparent non sequitur concerning 'час'. We hear how little it takes to distract the man from his rhetoric. The effect is both funny and revealing.

The final couplet of Scene 4 is spoken by Safir. In the manner of an older, wiser 'raison neur' he tells the retreating Arist: 'Поди, сударь, к жене.'—Вот суший ветрогон. | Чему ж дивиться нам, что мало верных жен.' The last line echoes Karamzin's story 'Iuliia' and the views of its hero, Aris: Порочные жены бывают от порочных мужчин,' he tells his lapsed but forgiven wife. Creuzé de Lesser offers no such excuse for faithless wives. But then, he has not raised the matter. He is only concerned with a faithless husband. So, indeed, is Griboedov. The line is awkwardly borrowed, out of place. Especially as it seems to represent the genuine view of the earnest Safir rather than a parody of the original. Perhaps he needed a rhyme for 'ветрогон' and Semenova was waiting.

S.M. Shavrygin, in his article, Griboedov and Karamzin, finds the source of several of Arist's speeches in the two poems by Karamzin, 'К верной' and 'К неверной'. He uses some textual similarities to maintain that, in combining the emotional state of both the loved and the betrayed hero in one character, Griboedov 'endowed Arist with psychological and emotional complexity'. Arist seems to me a shallow and tiresome young man who hardly deserves this serious claim made on his behalf. Griboedov is said to reveal, in the former's character, 'the capacity for change in human feelings'. In my view both Arist and El'mira are all too prone to change their feelings.
Mme D’Orbeuil at least took some persuading. The first attempts of the ‘cousine’ to show her the error of her ways were greeted with confident unbelief. Peut-être que j’ai tort, et je ne dis pas non; Mais à vous parler vrai, je crois avoir raison’, she says, as she prepares to hide in the library for the overhearing scene at the end of II.1. The cousin is obliged to arrange this Scene in order that Mme D’Orbeuil may learn her husband’s point of view. Then she changes. At the drop of an unbecoming hat.

In MS Griboedov reverses this order. The overhearing in Scene 4 precedes the advice in Scene 5. El’mira makes it clear that she has learned nothing new. She enters, ‘одетая с большим вкусом, чем прежде’ (Stage directions at the beginning of Scene 5) and tells Safir about her 'горести', adding a touching note of loyalty absent in the source. 'Я опасалась в них довериться родным, Чтоб не доставить тем худой Аристу славу'. But when Safir explains that she has been too compliant, that love cools without 'взаимность', that she would do better to be more frivolous and capricious and that a readiness to die for her husband is unlikely to be required, she replies 'Довольно', and abandons the life of the feelings altogether.

Он насмехается над чувствами моими.
С теперешней поры и я прощаюсь с ними:
Род жизни я моей переменяю весь.

So much for the vows of constant and unchanging love admired by the Sentimentalists. As Safir says in response to El’mira’s decision, ‘Я знаю, женщинам нет легче ничего, Как пременять свой вид, и даже свойства,
Assuming, of course, that the first state is as artificial an affectation
as the last.

Semenova has concealed her talents for long enough. 'Сыграйте
что-нибудь и спойте в добрый час', Safir encourages El'mira, in a scene
which is a complete departure from the source play. The multi-talented
Semenova displays her musical gifts, playing the Rondo written by her
teacher John Field, then resident in St Petersburg. Safir is suitably overcome.
Arist, who, at the beginning of Scene 6, stands at the door to hear the third
verse, is equally charmed by her performance, until he discovers that it was
not given to surprise him but to oblige Safir. Griboedov returns, briefly, to
the text of his source. In the words of Mme D'Orbeuil, 'Quand on commande
trop, on n'est pas obéi.' (III.5) Or, as El'mira has it in Scene 6, 'Их просьба
на приказ ужасно как походит, | А повеление до сердца не доходит.'
Измена!' Arist says, though not yet in earnest.

Creuzé de Lesser's Mme D'Orbeuil goes to the ball and is much
admired, until her husband's flirtation with Aglaé forces her to retreat,
humiliated. Griboedov's El'mira declares her intention of going to the ball -
after she has visited various shops. 'Не верю я ушам', Arist says. 'Вот та,
которая из самых постоянных!', he complains, unreasonably, since this is
just the behaviour in a wife he claims to prefer.

Mme D'Orbeuil barely managed to conceal her distress when her
husband refused to accompany her to the ball. She was obliged to suggest an
aunt as chaperone, until he changed his mind. El'mira is made of sterner stuff. She insists on going alone. If they are constantly together, she says, the world will either think him jealous, Или найдут, что мы как пара голубков’ (Scene 6), a reflection of that 'склонение на наши нравы' devised by Lukin in the previous century.

The 'hat' motif appears belatedly at the end of Scene 6. It was enough for Mme D'Orbeuil to appear without it. El'mira asks Safir what colour of hat would suit her. This unlikely result of casting a young man as 'confidante' enrages her husband. 'Саифр! Желаите мне успеха', she says, and leaves. We know what Arist does not; she is about to battle with the court. Her unaccustomed elegance is neatly explained.

D'Orbeuil is still flirting long after the transformation of his wife into a beauty. It is her opposition that re-engages his attention. Is this the woman who was so submissive Et qui, jusqu'à l'excès poussant la complaisance, | Fatiguait ma tendresse et ma reconnaissance?’ he enthuses. 'M'a su contrarier et charmer à la fois.' (III. 6)

Arist's immediate response to the change in El'mira at the opening of Scene 7 is one of stunned delight. 'Да, я влюбился вновь' he assures his friend, Safir. Aglaia is forgotten. But El'mira, more concerned than Mme D'Orbeuil to make her husband suffer, returns with a display of the recommended capricious behaviour. Her 'shopping expedition' is delayed. Her carriage is not ready. 'Вы бы с ума сошли' she tells him. It is the first
time that she has used the formal 'вы' to her husband. And when he assures
her that no one will notice her dress, only her beauty, she replies nastily
'Удачно мадригал вы, сударь, мне сплеи; Аглае лучше бы его
поберегли.'

Her whispered words to Safir, imploring him not to reveal the true
purpose of her visit, arouse suspicion and jealousy in Arist. El'mira is well
satisfied. 'Пора уж отомстить мне за его проказы', she says, and makes a
second exit.

Scene 9 opens with a rather long and lifeless quarrel between the two
men. Arist accuses Safir of telling his wife about Aglaia. Safir denies the
charge and is offended. Arist apologizes. No such scene is necessary in
LSDM as D'Orbeuil does not hesitate to mention his Aglaé in the presence of
his wife. Arist now sees the change in El'mira rather differently. 'Внезапно
кротость та пожертвована вздору', Safir reminds him in his own words
from Scene 4, merely replacing 'муж' by 'ты', of his obligation to
indifference, should his wife take a lover. 'И ты на то глядеть обязан
равнодушно.'

Creuzé de Lesser does not even pay lip-service to such an idea. Now
Griboedov's hero, too, rejects it. 'Еще не знал тогда я ревности отрав.' He
is not helped by Safir's statement of the obvious. Arist has only got what he
wanted. The latter is, by now, beside himself with jealousy. 'Здесь воздух
мне тяжел', he says, and walks out.
In Scene 10 Safir points the moral in a pious pair of couplets which would have done credit to any eighteenth century raisonleur. И это был Арист! Он может быть ревнивым! | Так! Вертопрахам он пример велеречивым; Griboedov writes, echoing Elchaninov’s Nakazannaia vertoprashka of 1767. Блаженства сущностью они не дорожат. | Его утративши, по нем же загрустят’. The moral sits oddly here, as though it should be ringing down the curtain on some other play.

It does not occur to D’Orbeuil to be jealous. He sees jealousy in his wife, suspects it in his cousin. When, that is, she rejects his advances. What other reason could there be? The letters which his wife receives after the ball from her admirers arouse his curiosity and, when she refuses to show them to him, a moment of possessive anger. He demands to see them. Surely, he is joking, Mme. D’Orbeuil says. Her husband is quick to agree.

Arist, on the other hand, is overcome by jealousy. El’ mira is delighted. When a servant brings a letter from her uncle, informing her of her success on her husband’s behalf, and preserving the unity of time and place by rendering her attendance at the court unnecessary, she tells Safir that she will use the letter to torment him. ‘Мои чувства жалости совсем отдалены’ she says, just in case we are still in any doubt as to her position regarding Sentimentalism. ‘С ума его сведу’. Sofiia’s approach, in Gore ot uma, is rather more subtle. She, too, is angry. But she will exact her revenge, seizing the chance offered her, by refusing to deny the suggestion of
Chatskii’s madness, thereby encouraging the rumour. There is something shrewish in El’mirá here which has been refined out of the later heroine. ‘И накажу его, он может быть покойн.’ she tells Safir in Scene 12. One is almost sorry for her husband.

The uncle’s letter becomes the focus of Arist’s jealousy. He overhears it discussed, guesses incorrectly at its contents and challenges Safir to a duel. Safir, reasonable man and friend of the family, is thrown out. ‘Еще ли вам повторить, что нам не нужен третий?’ Arist asks him angrily. ‘Сафири уходит’, the stage directions tell us. The young couple are left alone. El’mirá is addressed not only as ‘ты’, but as ‘сеньоры’. She replies in the same coldly plural manner. Both Mme.D’Orbeuil and El’mirá, when asked to surrender their letters, parry with the same counter-accusation.

MME D’ORBEUIL. Peut-être pourriez-vous [...] Monter quelque billet plus doux que tous les miens.’

ЕЛЬМИРА. Читаю ли я когда, что пишет часто вам
Любезная для вас, прелестная Агния
И, может быть, ещё прелестница другая?

she adds, for good measure.

It has to be said that Creuzé de Lesser reveals a stronger feeling for sexual equality than Griboedov. ‘Je la quittai cent fois: voila qu’elle me quitte: | C’est juste’. Griboedov was the man who could write from St Petersburg to his friend Begichev, in June 1824, ‘I’m an enemy of the screeching sex’, even though he does go on to exclude two women - his
friend's wife and his own sister. His hero's three outrageous lines on the subject of sexual inequality, addressed to El'mira, deserve to be given in full.

Как заблуждения дерзаете равнят
Мои вы с вашими? Иль вам растолковать:
Мои суть шалости, а ваши преступенья.

Of course, he might be making a protest. But he would be making it on behalf of so many of Karamzin's wronged heroines. It seems unlikely.

D'Orbeuil tears up the love letter he has received in a fit of remorse. Arist tears up his letter in Scene 13 to demonstrate to his wife that, since he is only unfaithful to her 'на несколько часов', it is of no importance. He goes in to the attack. He has noticed changes in her. What changes, El'mira wants to know. Unable to think of one he blusters about thousands. And then comes up with what must be an early example of that traditional defence, the headache. 'Страдаете всегда вы болью головной,' he complains, adding, admittedly, 'Когда случается вам выезжать со мной'. There is no mention of a headache in LSDM.

The penultimate scene in both plays hinges on the handing over of a letter revealing that the wife has succeeded where the husband failed. Mme. D'Orbeuil has only to disclose that she has persuaded her uncle of her husband's right to the disputed property and he becomes ecstatic. 'O femmes, il n'est rien que vous ne puissiez faire | Dès que vous profitez de vos moyens de plaire'. His feeling for sexual equality, mentioned above, has, perhaps, been exaggerated.
Griboedov's Scene 13 is powered by jealousy. Twice Arist asks for the letter: 'Подайте мне письмо'. Then he demands it: 'Письмо я требую'. He is talking wildly now of bullets. 'Одну бездельницу, другую для себя'. Twice more he asks for it in the original phrase and twice with a single Подайте' before El'mira relents and hands it to him. He reads aloud this letter from the uncle, including the initial 'N' with which it is signed, giving an unexpected jolt to the otherwise blamelessly iambic rhythm of the play.

His reaction is equally blameless. He calls his wife an angel, himself every kind of fool; and all in the second person singular. He can find no words with which to justify himself. When Safir enters, in the last Scene, he finds El'mira in tears and Arist on his knees before her. Like Aris in Karamzin's story Tuliia', and Molière's Alceste before him, Arist offers his wife the seclusion of the countryside, where they will live only for each other. Perhaps detecting the fictional quality of this offer, with its mention of 'леса дремучие', straight from folklore, Elmira wisely rejects it. Besides, she says, town life is pleasant.

From now on he will spend all his time at home, Arist promises her. He is a little cast down to learn that his wife will not always be with him there. Safir, she says, has taught her to oppose him occasionally so that he will know how to value her compliance. But her last couplet contains a fatal reservation. 'Так! Он любовь твою мне возвратить хотел, | Старался
The words mock those Sentimentalist certainties.

Such was Griboedov's first performed and published play. It fulfilled its function. Semenova was seen to triumph over two handsome young men. The curtain was raised on her sister's benefit, though it seems unlikely that this great actress would have had to compete with the chatter of late-comers, the usual fate of performers in any prelude to the main performance. The première went well. As Simon Karlinsky says, 'the dialogue of The Young Couple is lively, but it is also a faceless compendium of eighteenth-century speech mannerisms'.

It is tempting, nevertheless, to look for evidence in the play, however slight, of Griboedov the artist. There is very little. But I suggest that the following passage, taken from the preface which Creuzé de Lesser wrote to the first, 1809 edition of LSDM, has some relevance to Griboedov's future development. This preface was omitted when the play was published in La France dramatique au dix-neuvième siècle in 1841. But it seems reasonable to assume that Griboedov worked from the 1809 edition and read the piece. Since Creuzé de Lesser's heroine, Mme. D'Orbeuil, is to win back her husband by the charm of her conversation, 'il faut bien qu'il y ait beaucoup de conversations.' In his play 'la conversation est l'action' (his own emphasis). If the conversation achieves its end, 'l'action marche'. If mouvement in comedy
means valets bringing letters, a soubrette receiving them, a tutor catching them out, there is no mouvement in this comedy, he says. But, he continues,

Si l'on réfléchit qu'en moins de vingt-quatre heures les trois seuls personnages qui y paraissent changent absolument de disposition, de sentiments et de rapports, peut-être loin de trouver qu'il y a trop peu d'action dans cet ouvrage, trouvera-t-on qu'il en a trop en si peu de temps.41

Ну вот и день прошел, и с ним
Все призраки, весь чад и дым
Надежд, которые мне душу наполняли.

Gore ot uma, IV.3.24

'La conversation est l'action.' The change of dispositions, feelings, attitudes is the drama. This preface appears to have directed Griboedov's attention to possibilities beyond the scope of Creuzé de Lesser's limited and artificial play.

* 

The factors fundamental to the development of Griboedov's creativity, discussed in this chapter, may be summarized as follows: his social milieu, to which further reference is made in Chapter 7, his privileged education, his gift for languages, the interruption of a successful academic career, his distaste for Sentimentalism, not unrelated to his admiration for Prince Shakhovskoi, and the beginning of his close friendship with Stepan Nikitich Begichev. All these had their influence on a precocious intelligence, an instinctive feel for the craft of verse-writing and a driving ambition not necessarily related to any artistic ideal.
Taken together, these factors provide early intimations of the dichotomy between art and craft revealed in this assessment of Griboedov's completed – and uncompleted – works.
1. Rough draft of letter (20 September 1820 [?]) to Arzamas members, in Pushkin, PSS, VI, 22.


6. Pushkin, PSS, III, 16.


9. Griboedov, Sochineniia, 1971, II, 189-191 (p. 190). This quotation is identified by the editor in his note on page 354.


11. Ibid., III, 155-158 (pp.156-57).


14. Ibid.


19. Ibid., p. 225.


23. A.S. Griboedov, Gore ot uma, Act IV, Scene 4, ll.165-69, in Griboedov, PSS, 1995, I, 106 (all subsequent textual references to the play in this chapter are to this edition).


25. Ibid., p. 125.

26. Ibid., p.128.


29. Ibid., I, 114.

30. See Ibid., I, 671.


33. M. de Moissy, *La Nouvelle École des Femmes: Comédie en trois actes et en prose* (Paris: Prault fils, 1758). This comedy is bound with other plays in a volume with non-consecutive pagination.


35. Shavrygin, 'Griboedov i Karamzin', p. 132.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

38. Stage directions at the beginning of Act II, Scene 3, read 'D'Orbeuil, Madame D'Ercour, Madame D'Orbeuil, qui a ôté son grand chapeau.'


Griboedov's writing at this stage of his life reveals few of the qualities which distinguish *Gore ot uma*. In seeking to account for the disparity between them, however, it is worth examining both the life and the works for any detail which may suggest the future course of his development, both as man and writer. This chapter will concern that period in St Petersburg which followed the writing of *Molodye suprugи*. The works discussed appear in Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17; they are the poem 'Ot Apollona' (I, 3), the article 'O razbore vol'no go perevoda biurgerovoi ballady "Lenora"' (III, 14-25), the prose play *Student* (I, 65-151) and the libellous 'Lubochnyi teatr' (I, 3-4).

*Molodye suprugи* may be counted as a success. Begichev, writing in 1854, remembers that 'it was often performed at that time in St Petersburg and was always very well received'.\(^1\) Even allowing for the natural prejudice of a close friend, Griboedov had clearly provided the little that was expected of him with elegance and ease. But he was not over-anxious to repeat the experience. If writing was to be his career, his output during the next twenty-one months must surely have been seen as less than impressive: one poem of nine lines and one article.

The poem, 'Ot Apollona', was published in *Syn otechestva* amongst a collection of reviews of Shakhovskoi's play *Urok koketкам, ili Lipetskіe vody*, in the November of 1815.\(^2\) It comments on the extremes of opinion provoked by the play, but refrains from giving the writer's own view, remaining humorously
detached. Mikhail Zagoskin, on the other hand, had known poverty and understood the benefits of patronage. His play, *Komediia protiv komedii*, which defended *Lipetskie vody* against all comers, was written, rehearsed and performed while the latter was still being enjoyed by St Petersburg audiences. Shakhovskoi's play opened on 23 September 1815, Zagoskin's on 3 November 1815, as a benefit performance for Brianskii. Zagoskin's appreciation was evidently genuine, but perhaps even the appearance of sycophancy was distasteful to the fastidious Griboedov. It could account for the dismissive brevity of his own comment.

The article discussed below did not appear until July 1816. The friend with whom he lived at that time, Begichev, defends not only Griboedov but all the members of their close little circle from the charge of idleness. This 'practically inseparable society consisted of Griboedov, Zhandr, Katenin, Chipiagov and myself', he remembers. They talked to each other and to Begichev about their plans for future masterpieces 'but they didn't do much writing', he admits, adding in extenuation, 'their work didn't leave them time for it'. This may be true of his friends, but it does not absolve Griboedov. He came on leave to St Petersburg at the end of 1814, applied for his discharge from the army in December 1815 and received his discharge papers on 25 March 1816. He did not start work at the College of Foreign Affairs until 9 June 1817. The question remains. Just how did he spend his time in St Petersburg? The memoirs of his friends and his own letters provide some revealing answers.

In St Petersburg, by reason of his youth, Griboedov led a wild life', Begichev tells us. And not only in St Petersburg. Stepan Nikitich Begichev was ten years older than Griboedov, but the younger man needed no encouragement.
In 1818 the pair of them rode their horses up a flight of stairs to a ball in Brest-Litovsk, where they were then serving as adjutants to Kologrivov. On another occasion they entered the church of the Catholic monastery in that city during a service. Griboedov climbed up to the organ loft, played beautifully at some length and then broke into what Begichev describes as 'our own, beloved "Kamarinskii" [sic]. The code of conduct of these two young officers, like that of many young men let loose for the first time on foreign soil, was somewhat narrow in its application; women, especially foreign, provincial women, and Catholics were, apparently, outside its scope. Honour was an exclusive club designed for socially acceptable males, a medium well suited to Griboedov. It is an attitude in evidence throughout Gore ot uma. One need only compare the artificiality of Chatskii's approach to Natal'ia Dmitrievna with the relaxed and natural manner in which he addresses her husband, his old friend Platon Mikhailovich. Chatskii's comments on Natal'ia Dmitrievna's improved appearance are a reflex conditioned by the sight of an unattached woman. On hearing that she is, in fact, married, he complains that she should have told him earlier. 'Давно бы вы сказали!' (III.5). Her failure to do so was an infringement of the rules in this social game. It is she who has embarrassed him.

Nevertheless, Griboedov could be immensely kind. Young Sosnitskii, starting out as an actor and living, in 1815, in the bleak accommodation provided by the state for such beginners, became ill. 'Griboedov very frequently visited me, brought me medicine, and all at his own expense', he told Smirnov. 'Griboedov was generally a very kind man', Smirnov replied. 'Yes, but he could be difficult, and his manner was always abrupt', Sosnitskii reminded him. Sosnitskii was the young dancer turned actor whose first speaking part was in
Shakhovskoi's *Lipetskie vody*. His second, presumably, was as Arist, only six days later, in Griboedov's *Molodye suprugi*.

Begichev never forgot the exhilaration of those early St Petersburg years. "Our life in those days was gay and carefree!", he writes, in his *Zapiska ob A.S. Griboedove*. The five close friends shared a passion for the theatre:

> We often visited it and we used to finish our evenings, that is until two or three o'clock in the morning, at Prince Shakhovskoi's, then director of the theatre. [...] There you could meet a writer and an artist, a gifted actor and a good little actress, a scamp of an officer and sometimes even a scholarly academic."

It is not hard to see why Griboedov found such a milieu attractive; for a while it satisfied every aspect of his multi-faceted nature. It was a hazardous time, however, for the careless theatre-goer. Shakhovskoi may have been a powerful influence in the theatre, but an oppressive bureaucratic hierarchy watched over him. The chief director during Griboedov's early years in St Petersburg was first Naryshkin and later Apollon Aleksandrovich Maikov, grandfather of the poet. A committee of four members worked under the leadership of Miloradovich, the then Governor-General of St Petersburg. Shakhovskoi was the member of this committee responsible for the repertoire. And it was a heavy responsibility. The officially appointed spy (rekvizitor) was there to inform on any seditious conversation, or a seditious work offered for performance. As Zhandr remarked, in a conversation with Smirnov which took place on 2 June 1858, "God forbid that you should allow yourself to take any kind of liberty in the theatre, especially in relation to the actresses, who all had their "patrons"." The great tragedian Vasilii Karatygin was once imprisoned in the Petropavlovsk fortress for forty-two hours; he had failed to stand as Maikov walked past, having, as he assured his accusers, simply not noticed the man. His elder brother, Petr
Karatygin, records this appalling incident in his Zapiski. It is typical of Griboedov that his nine lines of verse referred to above should be entitled 'Ot Apollona'. It was surely both reckless and arrogant to find this way of using Maikov's name in a poetic statement, purporting to come from Parnassus, disclaiming all responsibility for the commotion which Lipetskie vody had caused there.

[In Zhandr's opinion, Griboedov] would undoubtedly have got himself involved in some scandal or other and been imprisoned in the fortress, if it had not been for his guardian-angel, who constantly watched over him and looked after him – this was Prince Aleksandr Odoevskii, later a victim of 14 December. [...] He never left Griboedov alone in the theatre, simply followed him about like a nanny, and frequently dragged him away from its alluring entrance by the hand.

In his introductory article to the collected poems of A.I. Odoevskii, M.A. Briskman writes that 'a tender and passionate friendship linked him with A.S. Griboedov, in spite of the difference in their ages'. Odoevskii was born on 26 November 1802. Zhandr remembers him, at this time, as a young man of twenty-one. But in fact this guardian angel was not yet sixteen when Griboedov left St Petersburg on 29 August 1818. Griboedov, writing to Aleksandr's cousin, V.F. Odoevskii, on 10 June 1825, from Kiev, tells him: 'Brother Aleksandr is my protégé (pitomets), l'enfant de mon choix'. Three months later, in a letter to Begichev written on 9 September 1825, by which time Griboedov had arrived in Simferopol', he says of his young friend: 'Do you remember me, what I was like before I went to Persia; he is exactly like that. Plus many fine qualities which I never possessed.' Such modesty, rare in Griboedov, surely reveals the strength of his attachment.

The following story told by Karatygina, née Kolosova, provides another instance of Griboedov's careless and sometimes cruel wit. The incident occurred
in 1818, at the very end of the early years in St Petersburg. After a severe bout of fever Pushkin shaved his head and took to wearing a wig. It imparted a certain originality to his characteristic physiognomy and did not particularly add to its attractiveness’, Karatygina says with admirable tact. Having joined the Karatygins in their box at the Bol’shoi Theatre, Pushkin, at a moment of high drama in the performance, complained of the heat, removed the wig and started to fan himself with it. He then slid from his chair to the floor, replaced the wig as though it were some kind of cap, and spent the rest of the evening making jokes about the play and the performers. He may well have expected reprisal. Hearing that someone at Shakhovskoi’s had called him a monkey (martyshka) he readily believed the rumours that Karatygina was guilty of this offensive remark. He wrote his famous epigram ‘Na A.M. Kolosovu’, describing in an equally offensive manner her Размалеванные брови | И широкая нога! His repentant poem written to Katenin in 1821, by way of apology, reinstates the ‘Черты волшебницы прекрасной’. As Karatygina writes, in the above-mentioned memoir, it was not she but Griboedov who had used the word martyshka. To be fair, the same thought had already occurred to Pushkin. Four years before this incident he described himself in ‘Mon Portrait’ as ‘Vrai démon pour l’espièglerie, Vrai singe par sa mine’.

One can only hope that the young Griboedov wrote, occasionally, to his mother and sister in Moscow. But while the circle remained unbroken, while Griboedov, Zhandr, Katenin, Chepiagov and Begichev pursued their daily round of theatre-going, drinking, womanizing and gossip, what need for letters? Only one survives from this early period. Written on 9 November 1816 to a
temporarily absent Begichev, it shows Griboedov missing his constant companion, and cheerfully accepting the price exacted by their 'wild life'.

I'm having nothing to do with the fair sex at the moment and for a very important reason. I am a familiar figure at the chemist's. I'm trying out the salutary effects of 'muzhzevelovykh' [a pun on mozhzhevelovykh – juniper, MH] powders, of sarsaparella, sulphur and so forth.

Dismissing this minor inconvenience, he writes:

Come back, come back, come back as soon as you can. On Sunday I'm going to Shusterklub with Istomina and Sheremetev; if only you were here, you could come and play the fool with us too – the amount of porter we get through, and how cheap it is!^^

By 1825 Griboedov had lost his enthusiasm for literary squabbles. In a letter to V.F. Odoevskii written in the June of that year he says:

I can't make out the polemical pamphlets here, Criticism and Anti-criticism. I'm sorry, but although you feel moved to take my part, I feel angry on your behalf. This desire to squabble so earnestly over a few lines, over their fluency, their inflexibility, their triviality; they are bound to answer you, and feel obliged to pay you back in the same coin. It's a childish struggle, a schoolboys' quarrel. What a triumph for those who wish with all their hearts that our fatherland remain in everlasting infancy!!!^^

In 1816, however, an attack, in print, on the work of a friend was sufficient to divert him, if only momentarily, from his absorbing social life. Zhukovskii, in 1808, had made an extremely refined translation of Burger's ballad 'Lenore', entitled 'Liudmila'.^^ Man and nature grieve in harmony as a young maiden, visited at night by the lover she mourns, is persuaded to accompany him on horseback to the grave. This remarkably unperceptive young woman, in spite of repeated hints, fails to notice that her lover is dead. The verse is in trochaic tetrameter, divided into stanzas of varying length. Its rhyming couplets have alternately feminine and masculine endings. It is, in spite of its over-sweet language, spine chilling stuff, full of that dramatic irony and sense of impending doom typical of the genre.
Katenin thought that he could do better. In his 'Ol'ga', also translated freely from Burger's 'Lenore', he adopted a more complex rhyme scheme. His thirty-one stanzas, each consisting of eight lines, are built on the pattern:

\[
\text{A B A B C C D D}
\]

\[
\text{f m f m f m m}
\]

But he retains the trochaic tetrameter.

The real difference between the two versions lies in Katenin's use of language. In accordance with anti-Sentimentalist principles, it was simple and direct. Gnedich, a member of the opposite camp, published an extremely hostile review of Katenin's 'Ol'ga' in Syn otechestva under the title 'O vol'nom pervode biurgerovoi ballady "Lenora"'. Griboedov sharpened his pen and set to work.

'O razbore vol'nogo pervoda biurgerovoi ballady "Lenora"' is both witty and destructive. Like all bad reviews it makes entertaining reading. More importantly, since it is the only piece of critical writing published by Griboedov, it sheds valuable light on the standards by which he himself was guided.

The Latin epigraph is revealing. 'Iniquitas partis adversae justum bellum ingerit'. (p.14) For Griboedov, justice was to be done, at whatever cost. Ultimately this unalterable principle may be said to have cost him his life, since he lost it defending the just claims of three citizens of the Russian empire when a more cautious diplomat might well have temporized.

Having established the justice of his cause, Griboedov picks up, one by one, the weapons of this unjust enemy and turns them on him. Gnedich accuses Katenin of errors of grammar and logic. Unwisely, as it turns out. First, to the logic. Zhukovskii writes ballads. Other people write ballads. Therefore these other people are either imitating him or envious of him. [...] There is an example
of the gentleman reviewer's logic for you' (p.15), Griboedov writes happily. Perhaps some people will not approve of the insulting nature of Gnedich's conclusions? The writer explains how these things are done in literary circles. The gentleman reviewer reads a new poem; it is not written in a way that pleases him; he abuses the author as the mood takes him, calls him envious and prints this in a journal without signing his name. It is quite usual; it no longer surprises anyone.

The critic stands accused of both arrogance and cowardice. Griboedov turns his attention to the grammar. Gnedich has taken exception to the lines 'Рать под звон колоколов | Шла почитъ от всѣх трудов'. 'The gentleman reviewer's grammar is all his own, quite new and similar to his logic', Griboedov writes. To enter the town "под звон колоколов", "плясать под музыку". - The construction is spoken and written and confirmed by constant use, but the gentleman reviewer does not like it: therefore it must be grammatically incorrect. 'Meanwhile', he continues, 'we will respect the whims of the reviewer, and consider, in turn, all those things which displease him'. (p.15) This is exactly what Griboedov does. The unkind humour of his attack is based on a pretence of taking seriously the views he derides, in the same sentence, as 'whims'. After a while the sheer destructiveness of it begins to pall, as it must have done at the time for everyone except, perhaps, Gnedich. But in defence of a friend, Griboedov is indefatigable.

'Один только красоты поэзии могли до сих пор извинить в сем роде сочинений странный выбор предметов', Gnedich maintains, slightly misquoting 'a comedy'. (p.15). The line is from Zagoskin's Komediia protiv komedii referred to above. In Act II, Scene 1, the conversation turns to the
subject of ballads. Izborskii speaks out against imitators who are less gifted than their models:

Only the beauties of poetry have, till now, been able to excuse a strange choice of themes, and if such a type of poem finds imitators who, while lacking the outstanding gifts of their model, begin, in a similar manner, to write exclusively about dead people and ghosts, then I am sure you will agree, the benefit to our literature is not great.27

'A strange choice of themes, i.e. the miraculous, of which ballads are full', Griboedov comments. He confesses his ignorance: he had no idea that the miraculous in poetry demanded an apology.(p.15)

It is worth persevering in the face of this overweight irony. In each fresh accusation Griboedov reveals his own ideal. The reviewer is 'on the whole, the implacable enemy of simplicity', he writes in a footnote; (p.15) the word 'турк', he points out, used both by Lomonosov and in simple folk songs, is unbearable to the reviewer's hypersensitive ear, as is the abbreviation 'с песньми'. (p. 16) This last problem is easily solved, Griboedov says. One has merely to lengthen the word: 'the brevity which makes the description livelier will disappear; [...] but then the length of his article proves that the gentleman reviewer is not concerned with brevity'. (p.16) The mind leaps forward to that quality in Gore ot uma.

Gnedich professes himself amused by the expression 'слушайте, дочь', and risks a mild joke. 'One would think that the mother wanted to beat the daughter.' I imagine, Griboedov says, and so must others, that the mother simply wants to speak to the girl. (p.16) Evidently not foreseeing Griboedov's acid response to his criticism the reviewer takes a greater risk. He gives his own version of four lines in Katenin's translation. Griboedov includes both versions for comparison. Gnedich's lines are set out as verse, but Griboedov denies them even that dignity. 'He finds his own prose far better!', he says, concluding the
Sentence by sentence, Griboedov continues to tear the review apart. 'But he is becoming more fastidious by the minute', he tells us, in his small, regular clerkly hand-writing. 'Слезный' is too dull an epithet; the dead man's speech is too coarse. He makes a pretence of sympathetic agreement. 'In our lachrymose age even the language of the dead should be romantic.' (p.17) Seven years later he is still using this satirical device. The Countess-granddaughter in Gore ot uma complains that hosts of Russians marry foreign women without making proper enquiries, and present their aristocratic families with dressmakers as close relatives. Chatskii replies:

Несчастные! должны ли упреки несть
От подражательниц модисткам?
За то, что смели предпочтень
Оригиналы спискам?

Гнедич expresses a prudish distaste for the maiden's enquiries concerning the nuptial couch. Griboedov pauses in his personal attack to include the whole of the opposition. 'Whatever is she supposed to do?', he asks, derisively. 'Abandon herself to sickly dreams of ideal love? The hell with dreams; whatever little book you dip into nowadays, whatever you read, canto or epistle, there's always some dream.' Then adds, denying that unity of nature and the dreamer so dear to the Sentimentalist, 'but nature - not a smidgin'. (p.18)

It is not elemental but human nature which occupies Griboedov; his Gore ot uma is an indoor play. When Chatskii, in II.2.130, tells Famusov 'Кто путешествует, в деревне кто живет...' we are aware that the travellers are crowded together in foreign lecture halls learning about revolution, while the
young stay-at-homes are probably sitting in their libraries reading or writing seditious pamphlets. Molchalin, in III.3.194, makes it perfectly clear that his object in attending those 'праздники на даче' given by Tat'iana Iur'evna, however pastoral their setting, is not purification but patronage. Even Chatskii's praise of the countryside in III.6.271-72 - 'Деревня летом рай' - is aimed more at the liver than the heart. 'Движенья более' he advises Platon Mikhailich. 'Будь чаще на коне.' It is his prescription for 'головные боли' mentioned above. And for Famusov the countryside is clearly a punishment. В деревню, к тетке, в глушь, в Саратов' he threatens Sofiia in IV.14.452.

After a brief skirmish with Sentimentalism Griboedov resumes his frontal attack on Gnedich. The latter has criticized Katenin's use of the word 'prashch'. Finally, after seventeen pages, the gentleman reviewer has arrived at a fair comment', Griboedov begins, ominously. We have come to suspect his sympathy. The young poet should perhaps have said 'stone from a sling', since in company with the conventional 'arrow' and 'bird', prashch' is employed as a simile for speed. But, as Griboedov is quick to point out, Zhukovskii, the leader of the opposition, has used it in just this way. He quotes from the poem. "От стука палиц, свиста пращей, | Далече слышан гул дрожащий." Стихотв[орения] Жуковск[ого], т.1, стр. 107'. (p.18) The slings, not the stones, are whistling. Poor Gnedich. He cannot put a foot right.

Griboedov has accused him of injustice, false logic, cowardice, a finicky insistence on grammatical correctness at the expense of verve and a pedantic refusal to understand the obvious. Now he seizes on the name of the village, Tentelovo, from whence Gnedich's anonymous review purports to come, and plays a variation on the theme of sympathy. Are there colonists there, he asks. Is
the reviewer himself, perhaps, a colonist? In that case he offers profuse apologies. For an immigrant from Germany Mr R. already knows our language very well'. (p.19) One can sense the cerebral conversationalist who both enraged and delighted those who knew him. This is surely that mind 'Который скор, блестящ и скоро опротивит', the sort of mind which Sofiia justly accuses Chatskii of possessing (Gore ot uma, III.1.113). A mind capable of considering the argument, rejecting the peripheral and homing in on the one right word in that fraction of a second between a noun and its adjective. Chatskii we have. Griboedov the conversationalist we can only guess at. As Pushkin wrote in his 'Puteshestvie v Arzrum', 'Замечательные люди исчезают у нас, не оставая по себе следов. Мы ленивы и нелюбопытны'. Griboedov left fewer traces than most.

From a pretence of sympathy, by way of a few minor quibbles disposed of with zest, Griboedov arrives at another 'tiny prejudice'. The reviewer may well laugh, but he does feel that anyone undertaking to check a Russian translation against the German original really ought to have a good knowledge of both languages. Of course the gentleman reviewer considers this superfluous. Why, otherwise, would he...? Griboedov gives us an example of Gnedich's excessively literal translation, offered as an improvement on Katenin's version. 'One might as well translate "ventre à terre" as "belly to the ground"', he remarks. (p.19-20)

It is unnecessary to indulge Schadenfreude further. One begins to feel sorry for the victim. But before Griboedov has quite exhausted his ammunition in the cause of friendship he does make two interesting points, the second more serious than the first. The critic, he says, is subject to the law of supply and demand. His readers insist on this stuff. He should say to them, once and for all,
The readers would desist, and useless, offensive criticism would not fill twenty-two pages of a journal. But who, he asks, could forego the innocent pleasure of searching for flaws? (p.20) Not, it seems, Griboedov. He assumes the role of reviewer himself - tells us so in a footnote (p.21) - and for four more pages or so subjects Zhukovskii's 'Liudmila' to a hair-splitting parody of a review in the style of Gnedich.

Finally he abandons his parody and offers us 'two words about criticism in general'. It is advice so sane and so sound that we are hard put to it to recognize the malicious author of the preceding pages. It deserves to be given here in full:

If one reviews a work in order to determine whether it is good, indifferent or bad, it is necessary, first of all, to search for its beauties. If there are not any, it is not worth writing the criticism; if there are beauties, one must consider - what kind are they? Are there many of them, or few? Only by thinking in this way is it possible to determine the merits of a work.

One cannot help wishing that Griboedov had left it at that. But after all, Katenin was a very close friend. 'That is what the reviewer of "Ol'ga" does not know, or does not want to know', he concludes. (p.25)

On 14 March 1833 Pushkin's review of Katenin's work, entitled 'O sochineniakh P.A. Katenina', appeared in Literaturnye pribavleniia k russkomu invalidu. Pushkin praises Katenin's scholarly accomplishments, the resonance of his hexameters, his technique in general. In the course of the review he justifies Griboedov's criticism of Gnedich's response to 'Ol'ga': 'Простота и даже грубость выражений [...] неприятно поразили непривычных читателей, и Гнедич взялся высказать их мнения в статье, коей несправедливость обличена Грибоедовым'.29
Having discharged his anger on behalf of Katenin, Griboedov returned to his former dissipated life. His article was published in July 1816. It was June 1817 before he started work at the College of Foreign Affairs. Student, the play written in collaboration with Katenin, was begun at about the same time. It was presumably finished by the beginning of August of that year, since Katenin left St Petersburg with his regiment on 5 August to be present at the laying of the foundation stone of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, and remained in Moscow for about a year. What happened between July 1816 and June 1817 to arouse that hostility towards Mikhail Zagoskin which persuaded Griboedov back to his writing table?

Opinions differ as to the sequence of events. Simon Karlinsky writes that Zagoskin published a review of Molodye suprugi which, while generally 'eulogistic in tone', found a few of the verses 'awkward'. This review appeared in the latter's 'Ezhenedel'nyi repertuar'. In response Griboedov circulated his lampoon on Zagoskin, 'Lubochnyi teatr'. 'Not satisfied', Karlinsky continues, 'he caricatured Zagoskin in the protagonist of his comedy The Student (1817)'. In this version of events Zagoskin's review provokes first a lampoon and then a play. But the play must surely have been finished before Katenin's departure for Moscow on 5 August. 'Lubochnyi teatr' is dated 16 October 1817. If ever a piece of verse was written in a moment of white-hot rage it is 'Lubochnyi teatr'. The lines are very clearly a response to a perceived insult. And Griboedov was not slow to perceive an insult. It is impossible to imagine that he seethed for two and a half months before producing his brief but unprintable reply. Unprintable and, until 1860, unprinted. In 1817 Griboedov was forced to have copies made and
circulate them himself. It seems clear that Student was not written in response to Zagoskin's review of Molodye suprugi. To what, then, was it a response?

Meshcheriakov offers a more convincing sequence. He refers to an earlier article by Zagoskin published in Severnyi nabliudatel', 2 (1817), in which the latter, without actually naming Griboedov, mocks both his erudition and his conceit. The article, entitled 'Znatoki, ili Istorlia odnogo dnia', occupies the first section of Part I under the heading 'Nravy'. It takes the form of a conversation between Erast and Milostanov on the subject of the know-all. Erast arrives in his friend's study, exhausted after a day in which he has encountered numerous examples of the breed. His man assures him that an umbrella will be unnecessary since he can predict fine weather better than any barometer; it pours. A stranger in a restaurant offers to prove that there is not one decent building in St Petersburg; six would-be experts prepare to pay an English horse-dealer forty thousand roubles for a horse worth six rather than admit ignorance; a man wishing to be thought a gourmet forces himself to chew oysters; a self-appointed music critic fails to recognize that the piece he praises is by the composer he condemns; a loud-mouthed amateur of theatre complains of the translation while wrongly attributing the original.

Erast decides to spend the remainder of the evening at the home of Count N. There, at last, Zagoskin comes to the subject of literature and what is painfully recognizable as the true target of his article:

One young man, gifted with a command of language beyond belief, managed, finally, to attract the general attention: he turned to the right, to the left, he asked, answered, proved, took the argument to pieces, quarrelled with everyone, exhausted everyone, and within a few minutes had completely cleared the field.[...]'He knows Greek and Latin', my
neighbours whispered; how can one quarrel with a man who reads Homer in the original, and finds incorrect lines in Horace and Juvenal. (pp.58-59)

Having disposed of the Classics, the 'young man of letters' speaks slightingly of English and German writers before arriving at the French. 'O! now the bloody battle began: the twenty-year-old censor spared neither sex nor age.' Zagoskin-Erast pretends to assume that the young man is motivated by patriotism; he is denigrating the French in order to praise the talents of his fellow-countrymen. 'Spare us!', a guest implores. The young man of letters, ignoring him, destroys the reputation of Voltaire. 'I hope that Molière...'. 'He was trying to imitate Plautus', the young man says, dismissively. It is hardly necessary to mention that the Russians fare no better. The conversation turns to sculpture, painting, architecture; the young man holds forth 'with the same noble courage'. 'My God!', Erast-Zagoskin exclaims, escaping to a quiet corner of the drawing-room. 'How good it would be if this young man didn't know something.' (pp.59-63)

It seems unlikely that the twenty-two-year-old Griboedov, six years younger than Zagoskin, will have failed to recognize himself as the irritatingly erudite 'young man of letters'; if he did, his acquaintances will surely have drawn it to his attention. Katenin was obliged to Griboedov for his defence of 'Ol'ga'. Griboedov was out for revenge. Together the two close friends prepared to pillory Zagoskin.

Student is not a very amusing play. Simple is too fine a word. Much of it is the sort of stuff that might well have been written over a bottle or two of champagne, when alcohol had blunted the edge of wit. It probably seemed immensely funny at the time. That it still seemed so to Griboedov in the morning reflects the vulnerability of his self-esteem. Fortunately Shakhovskoi's judgement
remained unimpaired; it was not performed until the end of the nineteenth century.

Critics have reacted variously to the play. Simon Karlinsky, correctly in my view, considers that 'the humour is crude and cruel and the satire jejune'. Jean Bonamour takes it more seriously. The play, he writes, is both a satire on Sentimentalism and an example of a comedy of manners freed from the Sentimentalist convention. As Bonamour notes, 'L'effet de contraste donne à la comédie son unité profonde.' It is not easy to see profundity of any kind in the play. Especially when the comedy descends to puerile farce and Benevol'skii/Zagoskin changes his clothes in the street or accidentally throws wine over his servant.

The Sentimentalist target was more or less obligatory for these young Archaists. Zagoskin's allegiance to Shakhovskoi would seem to place him at a safe enough distance from it, although in his Komediia protiv komedii, while supporting his patron, 'Zagoskine avait soutenu sur les ballades des opinions assez proches de celles de Gnédich, condamnant le genre et admirant Joukovski'. Perhaps it was just this ability to run with the hare that offended Griboedov and Katenin. Their Benevol'skii embodies the worst excesses of the Sentimentalist movement. Evidently Griboedov had not yet acquired the distaste for caricature referred to below. The form of the personal attack on Zagoskin is more interesting. A social humiliation is inflicted on the provincial Benevol'skii, a student from Kazan', which has little to do with any Sentimentalist affiliation. He is punished more severely for his social ambitions than for his literary tendencies. It is worth examining the background to Zagoskin's own social aspirations.
In 1878 Russkaia starina (no. 4, p. 546) contained, under the title 'Griboedov', an anecdote contributed by 'a certain Novosil'tseva', told to the lady by Thomas Evans, an Englishman who lived in Russia for forty years, a lecturer in English language and literature at Moscow University from 1809 to 1826, and a friend of Griboedov. The anecdote, which relates to the year 1823, describes the latter's behaviour at a Moscow ball as exactly similar to that of Chatskii, with identical results. It gives rise to the rumour that Griboedov is mad. Thomas Evans, concerned, calls to ascertain the state of Griboedov's mental health. He is not the first. Griboedov greets him coldly, relents and offers to explain why Moscow has declared him mad. He goes on to say, in this probably apocryphal story, that he will put them all in his play, adding 'and much good may it do them'. This 'certain Novosil'tseva' is sure that the older inhabitants of Moscow will remember Thomas Evans. She clearly knew the Englishman and, bearing in mind the nature of their small close-knit community, she will surely have known the subject of the anecdote.

In 1816 Zagoskin married the natural daughter of D.A. Novosil'tsev, 'a famous and wealthy grandee of Catherine's reign' who, according to Iu. Beliaev, 'treated his son-in-law "as an insignificant young man without substance or social position", with barely-concealed antipathy and disdain'. Mikhail Zagoskin was the son of an impoverished provincial landowner. The family was not without its history; Peter I is said to have acted as proxy father at a Zagoskin wedding. But the young provincial's attempts to secure a post in the theatre administration, his assiduous support of Shakhovskoi, were seen, perhaps, as social climbing, an exercise calculated to inspire Griboedov's cruel wit. Poor Zagoskin, reputedly a kind and gentle man, deeply in love with his St Petersburg beauty, must have
been the butt of many snobbish jokes. His father-in-law insisted that the young
couple share his home, and when in 1820 Novosil’tsev decided to move to
Moscow Zagoskin’s financial circumstances were such that he was obliged to
accompany him to that city. When Griboedov left for Persia in 1818 he would
have carried with him the memory of this ambitious and, in his view,
sycophantic young man who had won the love of a woman whose social standing
was far above his own. A young man whose literary models he despised - 'Я
gluposti ne чтец' (III.3.207) - whose unflagging attendance on his patrons he
mocked - 'Я езжу к женщинам, да только не за этим'. (III.3.190) Both the lines
quoted above are, of course spoken by Chatskii to Molchalin in Gore ot uma

In a letter to Katenin, then in exile, dated January 1825, Griboedov writes:

Portraits and only portraits make up comedy and tragedy; however, there
are features in them characteristic of numerous other people, sometimes
of the entire human race, in so far as every man resembles the members of
his own two-legged fraternity. I hate caricatures; you won't find a single
one in my scenes. Those are my poetic principles.38

Molchalin is not a caricature of Zagoskin. But there are parallels in both the
situation and character of these young men as perceived by Griboedov. Similarly,
it is difficult not to see Maksim Petrovich in that description of 'a famous and
wealthy grandee of Catherine II's reign'.

Something in the summer of 1817 provoked Griboedov and Katenin to
write Student. Both literary and personal hostility demanded expression. There
was that offensive article. And then Griboedov had just started work at the
College of Foreign Affairs. Suddenly the writer's life, in retrospect, may have
seemed irresistibly appealing. It is not easy to assess the extent of Katenin’s
participation in the making of this rather awful play. Two thirds of the only
manuscript are in his hand; the remaining third, copied by a clerk, has corrections written by him.

Only four letters written by Griboedov to Katenin survive. The first of these contains the poem 'Lubochnyi teatr' discussed below. The second is no more than a note dated 26 March 1819, from Teheran, thanking Katenin for sending him one act of his new verse comedy, Spletnia, directed, like Student, against Zagoskin. The third, headed 17 October 1824, St Petersburg, apologizes for a five-year silence. It is full of theatre gossip, dissatisfaction with the changes in his former world, and a very natural longing to put the clock back. 'Once again, farewell, and love me as you used to,' he writes, in a sudden access of nostalgia. The fourth letter, that referring to Gore ot uma, was begun in the first half of January 1825 and finished on 14 February of that year. Griboedov seldom sees his old friends, he writes, towards the end of this long letter. He has not renewed his former intimacies, nor is he making any new friends. 'Times have changed, my heart is colder,' he says, sadly. It sheds more light on Griboedov's relationship with the future Decembrists in that vitally important year than it does on the nature of Katenin's participation in the writing of Student.

It is clear from the fourth letter mentioned above that Griboedov respects the sincerity of Katenin's criticism of Gore ot uma, although he considers it to be 'harsh and in general unjust'. Meshcheriakov declares boldly, 'on the whole it was Griboedov who composed Student; Katenin wrote it down, criticized or approved, only occasionally suggesting a line', but he fails to tell us how he came to this conclusion. Bonamour, in his chapter on Student, refers throughout to 'Griboedov and Katenin' as the joint authors. V.A. Koshelev, who discusses
the hypothesis first proposed by N.V. Fridman in 1948, that Student parodies the first, prose volume of K.N. Batiushkov's *Opyty v stikhakh i proze*, published earlier in 1817, adopts Bonamour's order of precedence. He refers to the joint authors throughout his article as Griboedov and Katenin; nowhere does he suggest that the play is, basically, the work of Griboedov, and that Katenin was little more than an amanuensis, writing at his friend's dictation and making only occasional suggestions. Vladimir Orlov, on the other hand, considers it 'very possible that Katenin was responsible for the majority of Student', on the grounds that the ideology, literary polemics and style are consistent with the latter's literary and social views. One thing is certain. The text of the comedy is not unadulterated Griboedov. We do not know the extent of Katenin's participation, and the conclusions which may be usefully drawn from it are, in consequence, somewhat limited.

The plot is a thinly disguised version of the familiar neo-classical comedy. The action takes place in the home of Zvezdov in St Petersburg. Two well-born and attractive young people, Varin'ka and Poliubin are in love. Varin'ka's guardian, the fifty-year-old Zvezdov, has promised her, some years previously, to the son of his steward in Kazan'. When the play opens the son, Benevol'skii, has arrived to claim his prize. Benevol'skii's literal minded servant, Fed'ka, provides the foil for his master's ludicrous Sentimentalist excesses; the usual energetic and resourceful maidservant is replaced here by the energetic and resourceful Zvezdova, a wife who, at something over twenty years of age, can be little older than her ward. Zvezdov embodies perverse obstinacy, a quality exploited to secure the happiness of the young lovers.
It seems safe to assume that the play was finished by 5 August 1817, when Katenin left St Petersburg. Zagoskin’s new play, Gospodin Bogatonov, ili Provintsial v stolitse, was first performed in St Petersburg on 27 July 1817. The title suggests a closeness to the theme of Student. But unless this theme was not chosen until 27 July, leaving Griboedov and Katenin eight days in which to write their play, it is hard to see this as anything but an unlucky coincidence. Speed of writing may, of course, account for Student’s lack of subtlety. Meshcheriakov imagines the authors ‘trying to preserve the basic plot-line of Bogatonov’. But even here there is no general agreement. In Bonamour’s opinion ‘Il n’y a guère d’analogies entre Bogatonov et L’Étudiant, malgré le sous-titre Un provincial dans le capitale.’ What we do know is that Zagoskin’s article, apparently referring to Griboedov as an overbearing know-all with little time for any talent but his own, appeared in Severnyi nabliudatel’, no.2, 1817; and that in the interval between its publication and Katenin’s departure for Moscow on 5 August Griboedov and Katenin completed the play which pilloried Zagoskin as an uncouth outsider. So that there should be no doubt as to his identity, their hero’s name, Benevol’skii, is the pseudonym used by Zagoskin in Severnyi nabliudatel’.

The most interesting feature of the play is, undoubtedly, its language. In their determination to ridicule the refined convolutions into which Zhukovskii had led his followers the authors allow all but Benevol'skii to adopt the style of speech natural to their position in society. Since the object of their satire is elevated and poetic their play is in prose. Shakhovskoi, satirizing the Sentimentalists in his Novyi Stern, adopts this cautious approach. A verse comedy might well have provided the enemy with too valuable a source of ammunition. However, even in prose Benevol'skii manages to avoid calling a
spade a spade. Or a porter anything less than 'человек, вооруженный длинным жезлом...'. (I.1) His head is full of Sentimentalist literature, on which he is dangerously reliant. Fiction is the complete guide to life. '...читал Мармонтеля, Жанпис, пленительные повести новых наших журналов; и кто их не читал? [...] Они будут водители мои в этом блуждании, которое называют большим светом'. (I.2) He blunders through the play, quoting and misquoting from his favourites, Karamzin, Zhukovskii, Batiushkov, meeting only a mocking incomprehension, either genuine or assumed.

This particular joke is not a new one. Either a sharp-witted member of the lower orders pretends to take the fanciful maundering of some dreamy young hero literally, or a simpler soul fails to spot the metaphor. Shakhovskoi's Pronskii, in Novyi Stern, has a servant, Ipat, of the sharp variety. When asked, in Scene 1, what he and his master are doing in the countryside he replies:

Мы, сударь?.. Смотря по погоде: вздыхаем, плачем, восхищаемся, умиляемся, трогаемся. Ясное солнце согревает наши чувства, ужасный мороз напрягает нашу жизненность, быстрый ручей мелодию свою питае нашу меланхолию, тихое озеро служит зеркалом нашей сантиментальности; наконец, ведро, ветер, дождь, горы, леса, луга, болота, люди, скоты, птицы, муки, комары – все имеет влияние на нашу душу; словом, мы сантиментальные вояжеры!49

Shakhovskoi wrote his play in 1805. Henry Fielding's Tom Jones was published in 1749. Partridge accompanies Tom on his journeying; like Ipat, he provides the antidote to Sentimentalism:

'Partridge', Tom says, 'I wish I were at the top of this hill; it must certainly afford a most charming prospect, especially by this light: for the solemn gloom which the moon casts on all objects is beyond expression beautiful, especially to an imagination which is desirous of cultivating melancholy ideas.' 'Very probably', answers Partridge; 'but if the top of the hill be properest to produce melancholy thoughts, I suppose the bottom is the likeliest to produce merry ones, and these I take to be much the better of the two'.50
Shakhovskoi leaves it to his peasants to provide the literal-minded response. When Count Pronskii, in Scene 8, tells the miller's widow, Kuz'minshna, 'Добрая женщина, ты меня трогаешь!', she replies, scandalized, 'Что ты, барин, перекрестись! Я до тебя и не дотронулась.' Or again, when Pronskii, speaking with regret of the young peasant Foka's undeveloped sensibilities, remarks 'Вы живете в кругу непросвещения', Foka replies 'Ничуть не в кругу, а на мельнице.' The play is full of such gems.

Griboedov and Katenin certainly knew Shakhovskoi's play. Griboedov may well have read Fielding's novel. Both Tom Jones and Joseph Andrews were translated in 1770, the first English novels to appear in Russia. Griboedov, of course, had no need of such translations. The two authors give their Benevol'skii a servant, Fed'ka, who is sharp enough on his own level. He either ignores his master's flights of fancy and replies with a practical observation of his own, or turns some half understood detail in Benevol'skii's speech to his own advantage. Act I, Scene 2. affords an example of the former tactic. As Benevol'skii begins to record his sentimental journey with the words 'Мирюсь с Тобою, Провидение! Я в желанной пристани...', Fed'ka interrupts him with the comment 'Ох, кабы перекусить что-нибудь!' A little later in the same scene an exchange between Master and servant illustrates the latter. Benevol'skii asks how much he is paying Fed'ka:

ФЕДЬКА Давашней милости, я чай, самим известно.
БЕНЕВОЛЬСКИЙ Жалкий человек! Ты думаешь, что я занимаюсь этой малостью.
ФЕДЬКА Ну вот видите, сударь, теперь сами признаетесь, что малость.
(1.2)

Throughout the play the simple, colloquial level of Fed'ka's speech serves to emphasize the silliness of Benevol'skii's verbal contortions. Indeed, the speech
levels of all the characters in the play fulfil this same function. The young Poliubin’s first meeting with Benevol’skii is typical of numerous subsequent exchanges juxtaposing the natural and the ornamental.

БЕНЕВОЛЬСКИЙ Позвольте спросить; я кажется, если не ошибаюсь, имею честь говорить с вами?
ПОЛЮБИН Вы не ошибаетесь. (I.5)

Zvezdov, who has quite forgotten his rash promise made to Benevol’skii’s father, is a busy man, with no time for such circumlocutions. Что такое, батюшка? Переведи пожалуй на простонародный язык’, he demands. (I. 12)

Captain Sablin, Zvezdova’s brother, is, as Bonamour says, ’le type de ces hussards que Griboedov a connus à Brest-Litovsk, bruyant et insouciants...’ In III.9. Sablin and Benevol’skii arrive home in a state of intoxication. Sablin has encouraged Benevol'skii to drink and introduced him to card-sharpers, to whom he has lost his small store of money. They enter at the beginning of the scene, hand in hand, staggering slightly. Sablin begins to sing ‘Vive Henri IV’. Benevol'skii protests. Why sing a French song? ’У нас столько пленительных мелодий певцов своей печали’, he says, referring, somewhat slightingly, to Pushkin’s ‘Pevets’, published earlier in the year in Severnyi nabliudatel’, no.1. ’Пусть они сами свою печаль поют’, Sablin replies; he is reliving his regiment’s triumphal entry into Paris.

Griboedov and Katenin, in their determination to demonstrate the unnaturally refined qualities of the Sentimentalists' literary language, offer, by way of comparison, the new and revolutionary alternative of natural speech. It is the only distinction the play possesses, albeit an extremely important one for Griboedov’s future development as a writer. There is no sign, in his first play, Molodye suprugi, of that rich variety of language levels which characterizes Gore
of uma. In Student he and Katenin strike out in a genuinely new direction. In spite of its bad jokes and shared authorship the play deserves attention.

The extremes of language are concentrated in the male characters; the role of the two women in the play is to demonstrate Benevol'skii's social ineptitude. Time after time, Benevol'skii gets it wrong. At their first meeting he mistakes Zvezdova for his future fiancée, and babbles on in high-Sentimentalist clichés about his love for his host's wife. Varin'ka, whose hand he has been absent-mindedly promised by her guardian, he mistakes for a maidservant. He calls her 'милая', addresses her as 'ты'. She is, reasonably, outraged. 'Милая! Как он смеет!' (I.9) Coming upon Zvezdova and her brother discussing their plans for persuading Zvezdov to allow the marriage of Poliubin to Varin'ka, Benevol'skii assumes that this is a lovers' tête-à-tête, and is odiously tolerant. 'Какой закон святее любви?', he asks. (II.3.)

When the plot finally creaks to a standstill and the young lovers are united Benevol'skii finds himself alone in the house. Even his servant Fed'ka abandons him: 'Пошу себе барина потолковее', he says, (III.12) and leaves. Prokhor enters, reading a letter of introduction from Zvezdov concerning Benevol'skii. The latter imagines that his great literary talent has at last been recognized. Prokhor, a character supposedly based on Zagoskin's own typographer at Severnyi nabliudatel', Pozhorskii, offers him a job as a proof-reader. Worse, he is obliged to accept it. A small boy is demanding payment for a bottle of wine: 'Этот офицер сказал, что вы заплатите', he says. (III.14) It is Sablin's Parthian shot. Benevol'skii has no alternative but to accept Prokhor's offer and ask him for an advance. Consistent to the last, he bemoans the dreams of his youth in the
approved Sentimentalist manner. 'Сопутницы неизменные! Куда вы исчезли, заманчивые?...', he cries. (III.14)

\textit{Student} is an awkward mixture of caricature and characterization. More than the germ of a new literary language, however, connects it with \textit{Gore ot uma}. The most obvious resemblance has been defined by, amongst others, Bonamour. Both Benevol'skii and Chatskii, he writes, are in opposition to all the other characters: \textit{Tchatski est une manière d'anti-Benevolski qui souffre de voir lucidement la réalité, et d'être le seul à la voir ainsi. Benevolski n'est pas moins seul, mais sa solitude est celle du rêve et non de la lucidité.}^{54}

Chatskii has his allies, though they remain in the wings throughout. In II.5.376-81 he refers to himself as one of a group.

\begin{quote}
Теперь пускай из нас один,
Из молодых людей, найдется: враг исканий,
Не требя ни мест, ни повышенья в чин,
В науки он вперит ум, алчущий познаний;
Или в душе его сам Бог возбудит жар
К искусствам творческим, высоким и прекрасным...
\end{quote}

The collective aspirations of these young people are not dissimilar to those of Benevol'skii. In III.10 he tells us 'с кем я ни встречался здесь в столице, ни один не чувствует этого стремленья, этого позыва души — туда! К чему-то высшему, незнамемому!'

Both Benevol'skii and Chatskii are victims of the so-called 'white crow syndrome'; they are different, and they are rejected because they are different. Both find it almost impossible to believe that they are not loved, although both are constantly informed that this is the case. Both are extremely slow to apprehend the attitudes and feelings of others. Both choose the least appropriate audience for the exposition of their most cherished beliefs. Before this list of similarities gives rise to misunderstanding, the real difference between the two
young men should be noted. Benevol’skii is a fool and Chatskii is not. Much of Chatskii’s behaviour is foolish, but his misfortune, as Griboedov pointed out, is the result of intelligence. Benevol’skii tells the porter about the oath of undying friendship taken by his father and Zvezdov, and that within seconds of his arrival at Zvezdov’s door; Chatskii, as Pushkin tells us, scatters his pearls before swine. But they are at least pearls. Benevol’skii, boasting about his published writings, dreams his way to a pension in the second scene: 'О, бесподобно! Звездов ездит во дворец, - он будет моим Меценатом, мне дают пенсию, как всем подобным мне талантам, я наживусь, разбогаю'. (I.2) This is the extent of his dream. Chatskii has larger aims, but as small a hope of success. He is preaching to the unconvertible; to a Moscow society most profitably dedicated to the status quo. While Chatskii remains inflexibly self-righteous, Benevol’skii is easily lured from his poetic ideal. Ничьи, ни богатства для меня не приманчивы: что они в сравнении с поэзией?’ he asks. (I.5) However, when Poliubin flatters him into believing that his abilities will enable him to achieve high office he leaps up from his chair crying, ‘Ась? Возможно ли! Быть полезным государству! Это превосходно, это именно моё дело’. (I.5)

Нынче горничные везде, всегда и со всеми разговаривают. Я это читал во всех новых комедиях, а комедия зеркало света’. Benevol’skii claims, displaying, again, his naïveté. In Gore ot uma Griboedov makes liberal use of the convention he satirizes here; Liza converses freely with her mistress. And there are traces of Zvezdov in Famusov. In the last scene of Act I the harassed Zvezdov performs what Famusov only describes, in his speech to Sofiia in I.4.102-05

День целый
Нет отдыха, мечусь как словно угорелый.
По должности, по службе хлопотня,
Тот пристает, другой, всем дело до меня!

In Student, I.12, three servants enter in rapid succession, with a reminder of a promise, a demand for help, a new request. 'Чего у меня просит'!, Zvezdov snaps. 'Убирайся к черту. Мне до кого нет дела, а до меня всем.'

Sablin is not yet the limited, promotion-hungry regular officer whom Griboedov parodies in Skalozub. But the type is recognizable in Zvezdova's description of 'all you military gentlemen!'. 'Толкуют об лошадях, об мундирах [...] кричат во все горло.' (II.2) Compare Chatskii's 'хрипун, удивленник, фагот', (III.1.6) explaining to a bored Khlestova how to distinguish one regiment from another 'в мундирах выпуски, погончики, петлички'. (III.12.405) There is, perhaps, a touch of Skalozub in Sablin's desire to instil some military discipline into Fed'ka. 'Пришли его к мне в эскадрон, братец, я его научу послушанию.' The same longing overtakes Skalozub when Repetilov invites him to a meeting of their far from secret society at the home of Prince Grigori.

Я князь Григорию и вам
Фельдфебеля в Вольтеры дам,
Он в три шеренги вас построит,
А пикните, так мигом успокоит.
IV.5.192-95

Zagoskin survived. Although he wrote with great sadness, in 1820, of leaving St Petersburg, it seems that Moscow was, for him, the richer source of inspiration. It was there that he began to write the historical novels on which his reputation rests. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to understand why, in his review of Molodye suprugi, published in Part Two of Severnyi nabliudatel', October 1817, he allowed himself to be just a little critical of Griboedov's verse. The
review, on pages 54-56, was full of praise. But he found several 'bad, uneven lines'. He gives nine examples, the first of which reads: 

Тд нет взаимности, рождается остыда.' 'Reading such lines', he writes, 'one involuntarily remembers the words of the Misanthrope: "Такие, граф, стихи | Против поэзии суть тяжкие грехи". (p.56) Griboedov admitted that Molière had talent. He even allowed that it might be greater than his own. In the letter to Katenin dated 14 February 1825 quoted above he had written 'Yes! Even I, if I don't possess the talent of a Molière...'.

To be attacked in the words of the classicist's hero was more than his irritable temperament could bear.

'Lubochnyi teatr', Griboedov's response to Zagoskin's review, must be included in this discussion of writing as a weapon, although chronologically it follows the scenes which he contributed to Shakhovskoi's verse play Svoia sem'ia, ili Zamuzhniaia nevesta which were written in the second half of August 1817. The golden time was coming to an end. The circle was broken. Katenin and Begichev, who might perhaps have restrained him, were no longer in St Petersburg. Griboedov wrote to Katenin on 19 October 1817: 

Vestnik Evropy had refused to publish his 'Lubochnyi teatr'. Begichev, who knew the publishers and presumably might have used his influence on Griboedov's behalf, 'still hasn't written so much as a line', he complains. He encloses the poem, offering to substitute the name Mikhailo Mos'kin for that of Zagoskin. He is even prepared to sign the thing. 'If I must', he adds, emphatically, in parenthesis.

When no publisher could be found for this unpleasant little poem he had it copied and circulated amongst his friends. In it he derides Zagoskin as a fair-ground freak and dismisses him as a writer. 'Вот вам его Проказник', he jeers, mentioning the title of Zagoskin's first play. Спроказил он несово: раз упал |
He accuses Zagoskin of plagiarism; his hero Bogatonov is stolen from Shakhovskoi’s Tranzhirin, his dialogue from V.L. Pushkin’s poem ‘Opasnyi sosed’. Then he concludes his attack by turning on audiences and readers alike, rather as he did in his article on the review of Katenin’s ‘Ol’ga’, blaming them for paying attention to such rubbish.

One feature of the poem marks a real departure for Griboedov; his use of free iambic metre. ‘Ot Apollona’ is written in lines of three, four or five feet. ‘Lubochnyi teatr’ contains everything from the alexandrine to the monometer. The intimate connection between rhythm and wit, so evident in Gore ot uma, is exploited here by Griboedov for the first time. In a sudden access of rage he found his individual rhythmic voice. It owes more to the early fables of Krylov than to neoclassical formality. The alexandrine induces us to lower our guard, whereupon a line of iambic trimeter or even dimeter delivers the coup de grace.

After four short lines listing characters from Zagoskin’s plays, for instance, Griboedov writes ‘Они хоть не смешны, да сам зато уж он | Куда смешон!’

In another example two offensive lines of iambic trimeter with masculine endings emphasize the point that there is nothing to choose between Severnyi nabliudatel’ and Syn otechestva; a second couplet, with feminine endings, merely elaborates the insult:

Один напишет вздор,
Другой на то разбор;
А разобрать труднее,
Кто из двоих глупее.

The jolt of the final dimeter in the following passage, coming after four lines of tetrameter, the second and fourth of which are soothingly similar, provides an instance of a different rhythmic pattern:

Да уж давно махнул рукою
Compare Gore ot uma, III.9.327-28, as just one example of the developed technique at its wicked best. Zagoretskii puts his question in a ponderous alexandrine, lamed by a caesura. Sofiia’s monosyllabic reply is crushing.

ZAGORETSKII Ha zavtrashniy spektakl imeete bilet?
SOFIGA Net.

* 

Griboedov’s angry response to Zagoskin’s parody of him as an arrogant, if erudite, young man suggests an unwelcome degree of recognition. At this early stage in his career as a writer hostility is the only stimulus strong enough to divert him from his absorbing social life. Nevertheless, attitudes are beginning to emerge which will find their place in Gore ot uma. The attack on Gnedich reveals qualities which will appear, purged of their venom, in the mature work. They may be conveniently summarized as: a passion for justice; a mocking disdain for cowardice, Sentimentalism and other people’s pedantry; an appreciative ear for simplicity; a sharp understanding of human, as opposed to idealized nature. In the final paragraph of this article, moreover, Griboedov first articulates a serious approach to literature.

The experimental use of a variety of language levels in Student is fully exploited in Gore ot uma, as is the free iambic metre used by Griboedov for the first time in ‘Lubochnyi teatr’. But Gore ot uma is distinguished by this difference. There is tension and opposition in the latter, between characters, between ideologies, between the imagery which illuminates them; but it contains no narrow animosity. That burned itself out in ‘Lubochnyi teatr’. However touchy
and vindictive Griboedov could be in his personal relationships, he would never again use his gift for writing as a weapon.

2. A.S. Griboedov, 'Ot Apollona', in Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, I, 3. (See also N.K. Piksanov and I.A. Shliapkin, 'Stikhotvoreniiia', in Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, pp.275-76.)

3. Mikhail Zagoskin, Komediia protiv komedii, ili Urok volokitam (St Petersburg, 1816) (hereafter Zagoskin, Komediia protiv komedii).


5. Ibid., p.7.


7. Smirnov, 'Rasskazy', p.278.


15. Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, III, 175.

16. Ibid., III, 179.

17. A.M. Karatygina, 'Vospominaniia', in Griboedov v vospominaniakh, 1929, pp.104-08 (pp.105-06).

18. Pushkin, PSS, I, 244.

19. Ibid., I, 287.

20. Ibid., I, 77.

22. Ibid., III, 176. See also V.F. Odoevskii, 'Neskol'ko slov o "Mnemozine" samikh izdatelei', Mnemozina, 4 (1824), 230-36; and V.F. Odoevskii, 'Antikritika: zamechaniiia na suzhdeniiia Mikhaila Dmitrieva o komedii "Gore ot uma"', Moskovskii telegraf, 10 (1825), 1-12.


25. N.I. Gnedich, 'O vol'nom perevode biurgerovoi ballady "Lenora"', Syn otechestva, 27 (1816), 3. (See also B.V. Tomashevskii on the polemic between Gnedich and Griboedov concerning Katenin's 'Ol'ga' and Zhukovskii's 'Liudmila', in Pushkin: issledovaniia i materialy, II, ed. by M.P. Alekseev (Moscow-Leningrad, 1958), 49-184 (p.90).)

26. Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, III, 14-25. Textual references to this are by page only. See also N.K. Piksanov and I.A. Shliapkin, 'Proza', in Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, III, 281-83; and Bonamour, Griboedov, p.86.

27. Zagoskin, Komediia protiv komedii, p.44.

28. Pushkin, PSS, IV, 408.

29. Ibid., V, 77.

30. M. Zagoskin, 'Ezhenedel'nyi repertuar', Severnyi nabliudatel', 14-15, no. 2 (1817), 48-56 (pp.54-56).


32. Meshcheriakov, Zhizn' i deianiia Griboedova, p.111.


34. Karlinsky, Russian Drama, p.281.

35. Bonamour, Griboedov, p.144. See also N.K. Piksanov and I.A. Shliapkin, 'Dramaticheskie sochineniia', in Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, I, 290-93.

36. Ibid., p.141.


38. Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, III, 168.
40. Ibid., III, 135.
41. Ibid., III, 161-64.
42. Ibid., III, 167-70.
43. Meshcheriakov, Zhizn' i deiania Griboedova, p.117.
44. Bonamour, Griboedov, pp.140-53. See also N.K. Piksanov and I.A. Shliapkin, 'Dramaticheskie sochinenia', in Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, I, 290-93.
46. V. Orlov, Griboedov: ocherk zhizni i tvorchestva (Moscow, 1954), p.80.
47. Meshcheriakov, Zhizn' i deiania Griboedova, p.117.
51. Shakhovskoi, Komedii, p.744.
52. Bonamour, Griboedov, p.143.
55. Pushkin, PSS, VI, 96.
56. Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, III, 168.
57. Griboedov, PSS, I, 3-4. See also N.K. Piksanov and I.A. Shliapkin, 'Stikhotvoreniiia', in Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, I, 276-78.
57. Ibid., III, 124-28, (p.125-26).

This chapter concerns Griboedov's life and work during the months before his departure from St Petersburg in the spring of 1818. His contribution to Shakhovskoi's *Svoia sem'ia, ili Zamuzhniaia nevesta*, the verse comedy translated from Barthe's *Les Fausses Infidélités* as *Pritvornaia nevennost*, and the one-act interlude *Proba intermedii*, are examined together with the events which influenced the writing of them: collaboration with Shakhovskoi and Khmel'nitskii and the duel in which Griboedov was involved as Zavadovskii's second. The version of Griboedov's contribution to *Svoia sem'ia* discussed is that published in *Syn otechestva* in 1817, prior to the publication of the complete play in 1818 by the printing-house of the Imperial Theatre. It is unclear which, if any of the alterations in the later publication are the work of Griboedov, and which were made by Shakhovskoi. Piksanov concludes that, in the interval between the two publications, Griboedov reworked his Scenes. However, the earlier version is undoubtedly his own; it is prefaced by a short paragraph in which he summarizes the plot of the complete play, and writes: 'I have undertaken to do several scenes from the second act. Here they are.'

Griboedov's letter of 4 September 1817 to Begichev was written nearly a month after the latter's departure, an event lamented with such enthusiasm that Griboedov, on the following day, could neither control his hands nor feel his spine. It contains this account of his chance meeting with Kaverin two days later. The latter, Griboedov writes, exclaimed: 'What? Begichev's left? Gone off...
with the Horseguards to Moscow? Aren’t you lonely without him? I’ll move in with you.’ ‘We parted’, Griboedov continues, ‘I went as usual to Shakhovskoi’s; I arrived home that night to find someone else’s Penates in my apartment – Kaverin’s’. Kaverin, he says, is the same as ever; he likes to get a little drunk, on his own or with friends.³

The writer goes on to congratulate Begichev’s brother on his promotion to the rank of colonel in the Irkutsk Hussars, but begs Sasha to dissuade him from actually joining their old regiment; it was possible, at that time, to enjoy one’s promotion at a distance. ‘I only spent four months with that unit and after four years I still haven’t managed to get onto the right track.’ He requests his friend’s help in obtaining some money owing to him and says that he has consulted the fortune-teller Kirkhovsha, famous in St Petersburg at that time, whose nonsensical lies about his possible future were ‘worse than a Zagoskin comedy’. Then, and only then, does he remember to mention his literary work. ‘By the way’, he says, ‘Shakhovskoi asked me to do a few scenes in the verse comedy he’s writing for Valberkhova’s benefit, and I’ve made rather a good job of them. I’ll copy them out in a day or two and send them to you in Moscow.’⁴ Griboedov was never a modest man, but his assessment is accurate. These five scenes are, indeed, the best so far.⁵ He does not mention, here, that his friend Khmel’nitskii had also been asked to contribute a scene to the play.

Shakhovskoi’s introductory note to the separate edition of this new comedy, Svoia sem’ia, ili Zamuzhniaia nevesta, published in St Petersburg in 1818, offers one explanation of his request for assistance. The play, he says, was devised to enable Valberkhova to display her versatility on the occasion of her forthcoming benefit performance. Short of time, and not wishing to break his
promise to the lady, he asked Griboedov and Khmel'nitskii to help him. Another explanation, offered by, amongst others, Simon Karlinsky, may have been 'his desire to dispel his image as an envious persecutor of competing playwrights'. As a well-established theatre administrator in charge of repertoire, who was himself a prolific playwright, it must have been hard for Shakhovskoi to avoid such a reputation; and enlisting the help of two young up-and-coming writers was at least a more generous mode of defence than that adopted by Griboedov. The latter, still attempting to find a publisher for his vindictive 'Lubochnyi teatr', is sympathetic, but impatient of such passivity. 'Say what you like, you can't escape by keeping quiet when some fool is droning out nonsense about you. You won't get anywhere like that, witness Shakhovskoi, who is forever preserving a noble silence and is forever being showered with lampoons', he wrote to Katenin in a letter dated 19 October 1817.

In both Shakhovskoi's *Urok koketkam, ili Lipetskie vody* and *Svoia sem'ia, ili Zamuzhniaia nevesta* there are three levels of reality; the powerful female lead, played in both instances by Valberkhova, a somewhat more conventional supporting cast and a collection of stereotypes. As a vehicle for a talented actress on the occasion of her benefit performance it is an ideal formula. Neither the Countess Leleva in *Lipetskie vody* nor Natasha in *Svoia sem'ia* is up against serious competition.

The plot of the latter is as follows: Liubim, young, handsome and an orphan, will lose his inheritance if his remaining family do not unanimously approve his choice of a bride. He marries, secretly, another orphan, one with a convenient talent for amateur dramatics, brought up as the ward of an aristocratic family, and brings her home from St Petersburg to Chukhloma to be inspected.
Apart from Varvara Savvishna Vel'diuzeva, a sensible and supportive aunt who suggests that the marriage be concealed until Natasha has won the family's approval, there are five relatives with five very different views on the perfect wife. Natasha manages to convince the uncle that she is simple, the brother-in-law that she is learned, the miserly aunt that she is thrifty, the Sentimentalist aunt that she sighs over the beauties of nature, and the frivolous grandmother that she lives for pleasure. When, finally, the miserly aunt sees through the performance, Natasha defends herself successfully against the charge of dissimulation; she has merely presented five different aspects of her true self.

Griboedov drew the miserly aunt; his contribution is worth consideration. He was already familiar with the extremely successful *Lipetskie vody*, whose première, as mentioned above, took place just six days before that of his own first play, *Molodye suprugi*. In *Lipetskie vody* Shakhovskoi had devised a fairly complex rhyme-scheme for his alexandrines. There are examples of four-line patterns of the AbAb variety with alternate masculine and feminine endings; examples of the aBaB pattern in which the feminine precedes the masculine ending; examples of both AbbA and aBBa rhyme-schemes. These are interspersed with occasional rhyming couplets, having either masculine or feminine endings. In *Svoia sem'ia* his alexandrines are written exclusively in the more limiting rhymed couplets, a form to which Griboedov and Khmel'nitskii were, of course, obliged to adhere. Nevertheless, Griboedov had before him the example of Shakhovskoi's earlier play, with its vivid portrayal of a central character whose reality is thrown into sharp relief by the presence of the secondary and tertiary groups mentioned above.
In *Svoia sem'ia* Griboedov, in writing the first five scenes of Act II, took over characteristics already determined by Shakhovskoi. The miserly aunt, called Mavra Savishna by Griboedov, Fekla Savvishna by Shakhovskoi, has already stated her objection to the marriage in Act I, Scene 1. She is not prepared to contemplate her hard-won fortune being squandered by some fashionable young ‘Madam’.

ФЕКЛА САВВИШНА Я знаю этих бар — у всех одно и то же:  
Им нашего добра чужая грызь дороже.  
Мадамам да мусьям за дрянь, за всякий вздор  
Родные денежки бросают так, как сор.

I.1.

Shakhovskoi knew his audience. Xenophobia was always good for a laugh, particularly if it involved the French. They had, after all, been driven from the fatherland only five years earlier. Though even that great conflict had not cured the aristocracy of its francophilia. Griboedov holds his fire. He is not yet, as he says, 'on the right track'. Five years later Chatskii will speak for him.

Shakhovskoi’s Varvara Savvishna Vel’diuzeva has already shown herself to be both sympathetic and resourceful; it is she who urges the reluctant Natasha to use her acting ability and persuade each of the five resistant relatives, one after another, that she fulfils their five disparate conditions. Liubim is besotted with his Natasha and Natasha is just the least bit impatient of her adoring husband. His relatives will be captivated, he enthuses. There is no one who can compare with her.

| NATASHA | Да ты забыл, конечно,  
|         | Что я жена твоя!  
| LIUBIM  | Так что ж? Чистосердечно  
|         | Муж разве говорить не волен о жене?  
|         | Пускай милей тебя они показут мне.  
| NATASHA | Ей-богу, ты смешон!  

I.5.
Nikolai Khmel'nitskii, the other participant in this joint enterprise, exerted his own significant influence on Griboedov. The première of his verse comedy Govorun, an adaptation of an eighteenth-century French play by Louis de Boissy, had taken place earlier in the year, to public acclaim. His source may have been this obscure French writer, but the economy of his dialogue, his ability to choose speech rhythms which fit naturally into the framework of iambic meter, opened up the possibilities of the language in a way which was, as Karlinsky writes, 'unmistakably Russian and unmistakably Khmel'nitsky's'.  

He quotes just one of the 'constant echoes of Griboedov' present in the text of this play: the invention by the garrulous Count Zvonov of fictitious military distinctions, in a speech which resonates with overtones of both Colonel Skalozub and Repetilov. There is, moreover, a Liza, ladies' maid and confidante, to recommend the virtues of the hero to her young mistress or, left alone on stage at the end of Scene 2, to deliver the conventional concluding couplet. 'Вот чудный человек! Никак не унывает: | Ну, не с кем говорить – с самим собой болтает'.

Less conventionally, alexandrines may be fragmented and speakers interrupted in the swift exchanges of natural conversation. In Scenes 4, 5 and 6 of this one-act play Zvonov even manages to appropriate an extra iamb, underlined in the following excerpt, as his rival Modestov and a servant try and fail to prevent his telling them a mind-numbing anecdote about his grandmother's high opinion of his gifts when he was only three years old.

Явление 4

ГРАФ Взяв на руки меня...

МОДЕСТОВ (в сторону) Ну, люди уж сбежались!
That opening phrase of Zvonov's, which occurs four times in the space of six alexandrines, is delayed on its second appearance by the stolen iamb 'сейчас', nudged up to the caesura on its third appearance by a second 'сейчас', used quite legitimately this time, separated from its fourth appearance by two words of insincere apology and restored, finally, to its rightful position as foot-in-the-door to the anecdote. Played at speed, the combination of repetition and rhythmic insecurity alone could reduce an audience to nervous laughter. This is natural, all too recognizable speech. Even the superfluous iamb is in character.

In Gore ot uma Griboedov had at his disposal the greater latitude allowed by his chosen free iambic meter. But compare two typical 'shared' alexandrines from that play with the above quotation from Khmel'nitskii. The first is taken from III.2.137:

чашкий Куда?
сophia К прихмахеру.
чашкий Бог с ним.
сophia Щиццы простудит.

The second is from III.5.231:
Both these lines reflect the skilful choice of speech rhythms which fall naturally and conversationally into their alexandrines as if by accident. It is hard to resist the conclusion that Griboedov’s fine musical ear retained and developed much that he heard during the course of this fruitful collaboration.

In Molodye suprugi Griboedov was content to create artificial characters in an artificial situation. In his contribution to Svoia sem’ia the situation is certainly artificial, but the characters have a lively reality about them. It might be thought that this young St Petersburg bachelor, who managed to combine high living with high thinking, could know little of household economy in the provinces. Where did he find the material for his entertaining portrait of the miserly aunt? The miniature in the Moscow Historical Museum of his own aunt Akinfova, gaunt with economy, painted by an unknown artist on ivory in watercolour and gouache, offers a visual clue; his own childhood provides the most likely source.

The little we know of it reveals that he was the second child of ill-matched and quarrelsome parents. His father was a retired army officer, a drinking man with a passion for the card table. His mother, a Griboedova before her marriage, was a powerful woman who soon assumed command. When Aleksandr was a few months old and his sister Mar’ia just three, the family moved away from Moscow to the village of Timirevo; there, apart from wheat, cattle and poultry, Nastasia Fedorovna took possession of only sixteen serfs—seven male and nine female. When, in 1800, she brought her children back to Moscow, a move made possible by a small legacy, their father did not live with
them in the home on Novinskii, near the Church of the Nine Martyrs. Nastassia Fedorovna struggled, alone and without too much success, to achieve a financial security commensurate with her position in society. But that period spent in the village of Timireva, the first five years of Aleksandr’s childhood, must have seen her fortunes at their lowest ebb. Her son may well have heard the price of sugar discussed, more than once, and with real anxiety. The sugarless carrot-cake which he invents for Natasha is surely an echo of those early years.¹²

However, before tackling the miserly aunt, Griboedov allows himself one more dig at the Sentimentalists. Both he and Shakhovskoi were untiring in their mockery of the Sentimentalist movement. Shakhovskoi had already pilloried its sillier aspects in his Novyi Stern of 1805. Now, twelve years later, he made the hypersensitive maiden aunt, Raisa, the butt of his malicious humour. Griboedov and Katenin had only recently completed the anti-Sentimentalist Student. Shakhovskoi must have exercised considerable diplomacy. Somehow he managed to avoid staging this unpleasant play without alienating Griboedov. A third possible explanation of his choice of the latter as one of his two collaborators presents itself; perhaps the invitation to contribute five scenes to his own comedy was intended to soothe the pain of rejection.

Shakhovskoi has already introduced Raisa in the family conference of Act I. Here the grandmother, Zvonkina, acts as an impatient interpreter of her Sentimentalist jargon:

RAISA [speaking of Liubim]  Давно ему пора
Отдать душевной долг родства священной связи.
ZVONKINA  Подумать о родных.  I.1.
While her nephew, the major, makes the same pretence of taking the stuff literally as Ipat in *Novyi Stern* and Fed'ka in *Student*:

**РАИСА**

....Ей-богу,

**МАЙОР**

Ты братец, в свет рожден совсем без сердц! Как?

Poшупай, вот оно, и бьется.

II.1.

Act II, Scene 1, the first of Griboedov's scenes, opens with Liubim's description of his visit to the lady. She faints from emotion on seeing him, then lets loose a flood of exhortations. She knows all the latest (Sentimentalist) literature. By heart. 'Hy, так и сыплет вздор'. On the subject of his 'fiancée' she maintains that the modern coquette has neither an ardent heart, natural tenderness nor simplicity. She has read an article about it. '"взял шляпу, был таков', Liubim says. Shakhovskoi, who appears to have edited both Griboedov's and Khmel'nikskii's contributions, has a good entrance planned for the sensitive aunt in Scene 7 of the same act. He lets the younger man's scene stand. His own Raisa appears, naming the flowers she has gathered - 'Вот незабудочка, вот скромная фиалка, / Вот стройный василек!' (II.7) - like some parodic Ophelia, or the latter-day Sentimentalist in James Thurber's beautiful line-drawing captioned 'I come from haunts of coot and hern!'. It is apparent, throughout the play, that all three writers are enjoying themselves.

Natasha's proposed course of action has been discussed in Act I, Scene 3. She is to give five different performances of the ideal wife to each of her five new relatives. She has already charmed the Major; they will all love her, Varvara Savishna says confidently, in II.1. 'Дай срок.' The Major is different, Natasha tells her. He is so like Liubim. 'Такой же ветреный, и так же добр и мил' (II.1), she adds, a powerful woman in the making. The aunts are another matter. 'Не сладишь с ними скоро!' (II.1).
Natural pride combines here with sentimental ideas of self-sacrifice in a way which pre-figures Griboedov’s Sofiia in Gore ot uma, II.11.518-20.

In the separate edition of the whole play which was published in St Petersburg in 1818 there are substantial editorial alterations. After Varvara’s ‘Дай срок’ the texts diverge. It is Liubim’s uncle, the Major, who is not ‘ветреный’, but ‘весел, добр и мил’ - and amazingly like Liubim. Ты точный дядюшка, мой друг, под старость будешь’, Natasha says, and paints an engaging portrait of her husband in old age, always the hussar, constantly re-living old battles, old exploits, regretting his youth. In this final edition Liubim counters with his own prediction:

This is a less romantic version, as one might expect from the forty-year-old partner of that talented actress and domestic tyrant, Ezzhova, who bullied Shakhovskoi mercilessly, respecting him only in his capacity as stage director. The part of the miserly aunt, Fekla Savvishna in Shakhovskoi’s version, one of many such roles written specially for her, appears to represent his sole means of revenge. But we have lost that simple mixture of pride and sentimentality which Griboedov will develop into the complex character of Sofiia.

The unexpected arrival of this same aunt, Mavra-Fekla, interrupts their discussion. Compare the earlier version:
Shakhovskoi may have objected to 'сварливая', in which the iambic meter places the stress rather oddly on the first syllable. He omits the word altogether. But his perfectly balanced lines have lost the verve of Griboedov’s more adventurous version. Liubim’s И скупая’ no longer defines the problem in four gloomy syllables, a male coda to the anxious female voices.

Natasha escapes, to borrow an apron from one of the house serfs, and Liubim follows her. Enter Mavra Savishna. Like Khlestova, of whom she is surely the prototype, she dispenses with any form of greeting and launches at once into a complaint against, in this case, her nephew Liubim. He has, indeed, called on her, but only when he knew that she would be at vespers. Of the twenty-five lines in this second scene, Varvara Savishna’s share is a protesting ‘Hy, можно ли…’, which quite fails to stem the flow. The complaint broadens to embrace St Petersburg behaviour in general. Even the best families send their servants round with visiting cards. Griboedov, seeking a rhyme for ‘нурсий’, allows himself what I take to be a joking distortion - ‘карточкой визитной’ (II.2). In the final version the adjective is moved to the beginning of the line, out of harm’s way, and ‘визитной’ restored. Nor is the reference to ‘Питер’, made
twice in these five scenes and twice corrected, allowed to stand. The affectionate nickname, which no doubt came naturally to Griboedov, would perhaps be less natural in the speech of a provincial aunt.

Mavra Savishna admits that Liubim did, at least, call on her in person. "He подражает в том столичному он краю" (II.2), she says. Shakhovskoi knows that his audience will have come to see Valberkhova and may not be paying attention; the line is cut and replaced by the more explanatory "Что сам он заходил, я от Потанки знаю". But the following line is retained; it is included here as an example of Griboedov at his laconic best: 'А все-таки спесив! Увижу - разругаю.' There are numerous occasions in Gore ot una when Griboedov employs such elliptical constructions; compare Khlestova's irritable regret that she did not make a better job of instilling some discipline into young Chatskii while she still had the chance, compressed into the last two words of the sentence 'Я за уши его дирала, только мало' (III.10).

Valberkhova makes her entrance. After a brief exchange between the two older women in which she is introduced as the daughter of Varvara Savishna's late sister-in-law, Mavra Savishna turns to this demure version of Natasha: 'Ты с нами долго ли пробудешь? а?' (II.3). The 'а?' falls weightily onto the second syllable of its iamb. Не знаю-с', Natasha replies, giving it the respect it demands. A question mark is moved, a dash removed, but the rest of the Scene remains unchanged; Varvara Savishna, at Natasha's request, goes to inspect the imaginary carrot cake mentioned above, leaving Mavra Savishna and Natasha alone.

The opening line of Scene 4 in which Mavra Savishna expresses her amazement that this young thing can cook - Чего это, матушка? Неслыханное
Алекто! - ends with a collocation calculated to touch a nerve in this St Petersburg audience; it recalls the title of Sudovshchikov’s extremely funny play Неслованное диво, или Честный секретарь; first performed there in 1809. According to Zhikharev, Sudovshchikov’s comedy was full of such comic scenes and amusing characters that, seeing it on stage, one was reduced to helpless laughter, particularly by Rykalov’s brilliantly funny performance as the bribe-taking president, and Rozhestvenskii in the role of his "dvornik".14

What kind of dish has Natasha prepared, Mavra Savishna enquires. Пирожное одно-с, И выдумки мои, she replies, grovelling, lying, boasting - and all in a sentence. I include what I take to be this half-remembered recipe from Griboedov’s childhood. Морковка, яйца и кое-что другое, he begins cautiously. 'Да соку положить лимонного чуть-чуть'. (II.4) Mavra Savishna is impressed:

МАВРА САВИШНА Ну, сахар входит же?
(Наташа качает головой)
Хоть крошечка?

НАТАША
(Отнюдь!
Как, сахар? шутка ли? что вы? побойтесь Бога!
Нет! и без сахару расходов нынче много. II.4

Natasha silently shakes her head, drawing out the caesura, then plunges ahead into her protest against this extravagant suggestion, so shocked that she forgets to append the servile '-s'.

Mavra Savishna is softening audibly and, one presumes, visibly. Natasha is, by now, 'друг мой'. The younger woman, having established that the miserly aunt is not too well acquainted with the facts, sets out to persuade her that these economical habits were acquired during her upbringing as the poor relation of the wealthy and extravagant Countess Ladova. Shakhovskoi’s Natasha was brought up in the household of Prince Ladov, but this discrepancy has been allowed to
stand. Perhaps the hard-pressed playwright, hurrying as usual to meet a deadline, simply did not notice it.

The older woman is incredulous:

НАТАША Вот что...
МАВРА САВИШНА Да сядь!
НАТАША (севши на краешке стула) Сижу.

This rhythmic gift for lightening an alexandrine by sharing it between characters so that the small change of conversation falls effortlessly into the chosen metre is one with which Shakhovskoi, Khmel'nitskii and Griboedov were all well-endowed. Griboedov was already developing the technique in 

suprugi. In Act I, Scene 2 of that play El'mira tells her husband:

ЭЛЬМИРА Нет! я так замечала
АРИСТ Что скучно все тебе.
ЭЛЬМИРА Мне скучно?
АРИСТ Да.

Mavra Savishna and Natasha sit. The pace slows to a steady narrative of largely uninterrupted alexandrines. The few shared lines are neatly broken in half at the caesura. Mavra Savishna, remembering the last time that she met Natasha's mother, more than twenty-five years ago, says with a sigh, 'И сгорел я с тех пор уж трех мужей!' (II.4) Whether they died of her economies is unclear, but we sense their relief. Griboedov leaves the line where it lies. Natasha makes no response to it. In 

Gore ot uma he will air his prejudices against the dominant female in a more robust manner. As Famusov says, feelingly,

А дамы? — сунься кто, попробуй, овладе;
Судьи всему, везде, над ними нет судей;
За картами когда восстанут общим бунтом,
Дай Бог терпенье, ведь сам я был женат;
Скомандовать велите перед фрунтом!
Присутствовать пошлите их в Сенат!
Mavra Savishna’s line reveals Griboedov; the lines from Gore ot uma reveal Famusov. Expansive, prone to exaggeration, enjoying the sound of his own voice, chanting his litany of powerful women:

Ирина Власьева! Лукерья Алексеева!
Татьяна Юрёва! Пульхерия Андреевна!

Natasha begins her description of life in St Petersburg. It sounds remarkably similar to Chatskii’s Moscow. Compare ‘Вчера концертный день, а нынче танцевальный, | А завтра что-нибудь другое’ with ‘Вчера был бал, а завтра будет два’ (Gore ot uma, I.7.354). Natasha describes the busy social round. Chatskii, in that brusque and dismissive sentence, reveals his attitude to it.

Mavra Savishna is suitably appalled by Natasha’s account. How could a young girl survive such a life. ‘Зара́за! Истинно зараж! жаль, родная, | Смерть жалко! хоть кого испорти́т жизнь такая’. (II.4) Natasha, however, claims to have emerged from the ordeal with a positive distaste for luxury. As Mavra Savishna congratulates her, Natasha leans suddenly from her chair and stares intently at the floor. The gleam of a hairpin has caught her eye. ’A! вот она! нашла’. She picks it up and pushes it into her plait. Ведь и булавочка нам может пригодиться’, she remarks, sententiously. Mavra Savishna is won over. If only her nephew could have chosen Natasha, instead of some ‘русскую мамзель’. This is another theme to which Griboedov will return in Gore ot uma: ‘Нечистый этот дух | Пустого, рабского, слепого подражанья’. (III.22.394-95)

Especially of things French. In his last, long monologue of Act III, Chatskii has abandoned witticisms. He makes a straightforward attack on Francomania.
Mavra Savishna is in despair; this 'русская мамзель' is only waiting for Liubim’s aunts and uncles to die, so that she may squander his inheritance. When Varvara Savishna reappears in Scene 5 she insists that Natasha is the wife for her nephew. Varvara Savishna can only agree. 'Он петербургские все шашки позабудет', Mavra Savishna says, confidently, and prepares to make an effort. Liubim, now 'Liubimushka', must call on her at once:

...быть может, без брани,
Аовось!..загадывать я не хочу заране.
Аовось!.. не ведает никто, что впереди.
Сестра! без проводов! останься! не ходи!

II.5

Mavra Savishna's hurried exit completes Griboedov's contribution to the comedy. The five scenes reveal an awareness of Shakhovskoi's method of characterization, in which the stereotypical highlights the natural, an adventurous use of rhythm, the ability to find the consonance between colloquial speech, with its elliptical constructions, and iambic metre. Whether this limited use of his developing gift would have satisfied Griboedov for long in other circumstances is open to question.

He was now sharing an apartment with Zavadovskii, a somewhat eccentric character known as 'The Englishman', whom later he would portray, in Gore ot uma, as Prince Grigorii. In conversation with Smirnov, some forty years later, Zhandr remembered that Sheremetev, 'a prankster and a rake, but the best and most noble-hearted of men', loved Istomina 'with all the madness of passion', and that Zavadovskii, who had hoped to win the dancer for himself, had been obliged to give her up to this fortunate rival. On 3 November 1817 the lovers quarrelled, and Istomina left Sheremetev to go to her friend, the dancer Azareva. It is unlikely to have been the first quarrel; theirs was a fighting relationship.
Istomina is recorded as saying that she had long intended to leave him on account of his "restless character and cruel behaviour to her".16

It was less than a year since Griboedov had written, in his light-hearted letter to Begichev dated 9 November 1816 (Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, 122), "On Sunday I'm going with Istomina and Sheremetev to "Shusterklub". For some reason, Zhandr continues, at the time of this quarrel it occurred to Griboedov to invite Istomina to his (and Zavadovskii's) apartment; they were to take tea together after the evening's performance. Zhandr shows Griboedov exercising considerable caution in carrying out this innocent plan, if such it was; he accepted Istomina's suggestion that he wait for her not at the theatre itself but at the nearby Gostinyi dvor, lest they arouse the suspicions of Sheremetev. It is hard to resist the conclusion that Griboedov used the three days between quarrel and reconciliation to play the unpleasant role of Pander to Zavadovskii's unlikely Troilus. On the day following the tea-party Istomina and Sheremetev were reunited. But the latter, threatening to shoot her, forced her to confess where and with whom she had spent the evening of 5 November.17 A duel was now inevitable.

Griboedov's part in the affair continues to be less than straightforward. Kaverin, with whom he had so recently shared his apartment, was acting with Iakubovich on behalf of Sheremetev; the pair of them are described by S.A. Fomichev as 'известные брёгера'. In the latter's account of this affair the second duel was planned as a result of a quarrel between Griboedov and Iakubovich over the conditions of the first duel, which was to be between Sheremetev and Zavadovskii.18 They were indeed uncompromising. Only six paces would separate the opponents when both had advanced to the barriers.
The first duel was fought on Volkov Field, at 2pm on 12 November 1817. Zhandr tells Smirnov that Sheremetev, not waiting to reach the barrier, fired first. His bullet tore off part of Zavadovskii's collar. 'Ah! il en voulait à ma vie. A la barrière!', the enraged Zavadovskii cried, according to Zhandr. Fomichev has Sheremetev waiting coolly at the barrier until his opponent is a motionless target at six paces: 'Тогда Шереметев, "забыв все условия дуели" [in the words of the Investigative Commission] крикнул, что, если будет промах, он все равно рано или поздно пристрелит Завадовского, как собаку.' That was too much for Zavadovskii. An excellent marksman, he took careful aim at Sheremetev's stomach. Zhandr maintains that Kaverin, having seen how Sheremetev 'несколько раз подпрыгнул на месте, потом упал и стал кататься по снегу', walked up to him and enquired 'Что, Вася? Репка?'. One would prefer not to believe it. But Zhandr adds, in his scholarly manner, 'Ре на ведь лакомство у народа, и это выражение употребляется им иронически в смысле: "Что же? вкусно ли? хороша ли закуска?"'.

The second duel was, of necessity, postponed. Medical help was sought. But the young guards officer, Istomina's lover, Griboedov's former friend and drinking companion, died twenty-six hours later.

The effect of this tragic and unnecessary waste of a life on Griboedov was profound, lasting and - ultimately - salutary. Begichev remembers that Griboedov wrote to him of 'terrible depression'. The dying Sheremetev, he said, was constantly and unshakeably in his mind. But 'his stay in Persia and the solitary life in Tabriz did Griboedov a lot of good', he writes in his 'Zapiska'. Pushkin agreed:

Griboedov's life was shadowed by certain clouds; the consequence of a passionate nature and powerful circumstances. There came a moment
when he felt that he must finally settle accounts with his youth and radically change his way of living. He bade farewell to St Petersburg, to the idle, irresponsible life, and travelled to Georgia where, in solitude, he worked tirelessly for eight years. His return to Moscow in 1824 marked the turning point in his fate, the beginning of uninterrupted success. His manuscript comedy Gore ot uma made a tremendous impression, and placed him, instantly, among our foremost poets.²⁰

Eight years’ is an exaggeration, and it is not easy to recognize the ‘beginning of uninterrupted success’; but Pushkin’s appreciation of the change in Griboedov which took place after the duel, the life so tactfully referred to as ‘shadowed by certain clouds’, his generous welcome of Griboedov to the front rank of Russian poets, makes heartening reading.

On 20 November 1817 the committee of inquiry sent Zavadovskii abroad, Iakubovich to the Caucasus and Griboedov home to his conscience. He was given no sentence. It is sometimes assumed that this, like his duel with Iakubovich, was merely postponed; by October of the following year he was in Tbilisi, an exile not entirely voluntary.

It is impossible not to believe that Griboedov considered and reconsidered what his behaviour had been, both before and during the duel. Iakubovich was spreading unpleasant rumours about his part in it, and Zavadovskii was trying to justify himself by hinting at Griboedov’s improper conduct during the affair. It was said that Zavadovskii offered reconciliation with Sheremetev, and the latter hesitated, but that Griboedov, by insisting on the duel as a matter of honour, was responsible for Sheremetev’s death. As Iu.M. Lotman points out, writing on the role of the seconds in a duel of that period, ‘As mediators between the opponents, they [the seconds, MH] were obliged, first and foremost, to make every effort to secure a reconciliation.’²⁴ Griboedov seems to have preserved a lofty silence in the face of these rumours which, in view of his previous hotly defensive attitude
towards the slightest slur, would appear to indicate at least some admission of responsibility. If he had indeed failed to fulfil his obligation as a second his depression must have included a large measure of guilt.

Somehow he continued to work. The translation of another French comedy, *Les Fausses Infidélités* by Barthe, to which his friend Zhandr contributed two scenes, was written after the duel.\(^{25}\) It is a smooth, competent piece; but the sparkle has gone. This is Griboedov employing his craft and keeping his word; he had promised the play for Semenova's benefit. When time ran short and his affairs necessitated a visit to Narva he seems to have had no hesitation in enlisting the help of Zhandr, for whom he had just made a literal translation of Schiller's 'Semele'. 'I'm sure he'll make a delightful thing of it', he tells Katenin, in his letter of 19 October 1817.\(^{26}\) And if he did not, it would be all the same to Griboedov. Earlier in the same letter, he had expressed some adverse criticism of Zhandr's work, with the words, 'what business is that of mine?' He had promised Semenova. And Zhandr was a perfectly adequate writer.

Jean Bonamour comments on a contemporary review in *Syn otechestva* of *Pritvornaia nevernost'. Griboedov's title for the play, as 'le plus bel éloge qu'a jamais reçu aucune pièce de Griboedov avant *Le Malheur d'avoir de l'Esprit*. Recommending it to lovers of poetry, the critic writes, in Bonamour's translation, 'elle est de très bon style, dégagé, pur, agréable et de bon ton'.\(^{27}\) Griboedov has honed his skills into a state of acceptability. His play will offend no-one. The critic clearly means well, yet this is a somewhat negative virtue. There is little indication in his review of the ground-breaking originality to come. That Griboedov could separate this purely cerebral activity from the mood of black depression which seized him after the duel is surely a tribute to the man's
strength of will, if not his artistic integrity; to translate a superficial comedy about a jealous lover in the circumstances verges, in my view, on the heroic.

Griboedov commenced work on the translation at the end of 1817. It was finished in the January of the new year and performed for the first time on 11 February 1818. In the event Zhandr only provided two of the seventeen scenes in this one-act play. Griboedov sent a copy of it with his letter to Begichev dated 15 April 1818.28 'Christ is risen', he writes, in the traditional Orthodox Easter greeting. Then adds, with bitter humour, 'I, on the other hand, am dying of boredom and am hardly likely to be resurrected'. It seems that during Griboedov's visit to Narva Zhandr only managed to complete Scenes 12 and 13. However, even in his scenes there is something of mine, and he has made changes in my stuff; you know how closely I write; he copied it out while I was away, couldn't make out many of the lines at all and replaced them with his own. Some I've taken out and some I've left: those which are better than mine'. 'Better than mine'? This, from the man who had taken the trouble to write a whole play attacking Zagoskin for venturing to suggest that one or two of his lines in Molodye suprugi were less than perfect. Modesty was not in Griboedov's nature; this can only be indifference.

There is very little of Griboedov in Pritvornaia nevemost'; he has not made many alterations to this artificial comedy. There are no radical changes, even for the worse, such as the substitution, in Molodye suprugi, of the male friend of the family, Safir, for the female cousin of the original. Apart from the one example quoted below, Griboedov has not even the heart to attack the Sentimentalists. It makes the few additions and omissions all the more revealing.
The Dormilli of Barthe's version, here Roslavlev, is the passionate, jealous lover of Angélique, Griboedov's Liza. Valsain, his Lenskii, is the level-headed, undemonstrative admirer of her cousin, the young widow Dorimene, the Eledina of the translation. The name Lenskii was to find greater fame, of course, in Evgenii Onegin, although Pushkin's young romantic is closer in character to Griboedov's Roslavlev than to his Lenskii.

The plot, followed closely in the translation, is as follows: Mondor, Griboedov's Blestov, is a wealthy conceited womanizer of forty who tries to entrap both young heroines at once. He writes them both the same ridiculous letter. The dominant Eledina persuades the more timid Liza that in order to reform the lovers, and cure them of their extremes of behaviour, they should both reply to Blestov, pretending to respond favourably to his advances. The overhearing scene soon clears up all misunderstanding. The lovers are re-united. The elderly Blestov is discomfited. Although, in both French and Russian, he does have the last word.

The occasional resonance of a line in the original, faithfully translated, with an idea which will reappear in Gore ot uma, provides the play's only other source of interest. In Scene 1 Barthe's Dormilli makes one of Famusov's many complaints against women.

**DORMILLI**

Elles sont d'une adresse! Elles savent contraindre
A demander pardon du tort qu'elles ont eu.

**РОСЛАВЛЕВ**

От этих женщин мы чего не переносим?
А кончится одним: что мы прощенье просим.

Compare Famusov, in II. 5.298:

Судьи всему, везде, над ними нет судей.
The idea undergoes a process of compression, from Dormilli's two leisurely lines, through Roslavlev's well balanced but unexciting couplet, to the familiar 'laconic brevity' of Gore ot uma, from which everything inessential has been jettisoned.

A few lines later, Lenskii warns Roslavlev that everyone is laughing at his excesses of tenderness and jealousy; then, departing from the original, adds 'а в свете толковать о странностях других | Вседе охотники', a line which certainly reflects Griboedov's own experience. Even before the duel he had known how to attract attention, not all of it friendly.

Before Lenskii's line declaring that women are a little frivolous, and sometimes faithless, Griboedov inserts this modified version of Barthe's 'Ses vertus sont de lui, ses défauts sont de nous', spelling out the theme of responsibility even more clearly: 'Что в добродетелях нам должно брать уроки | У них. – Мы сами же заводим их в пороки'. What he omits in this speech is the suggestion that 'L'air froid cache souvent un coeur qui sçait aimer'; while in Lenskii's next speech he leaves out the lines 'Pour les juger enfin coupables en amour, | Je veux des preuves, moi, plus claires que le jour...'. Perhaps he felt both Istomina and himself condemned without sufficient proof, not only by the hot-headed Sheremetev but by society in general, and consigned the lines to his dignified silence.

Barthe's Dormilli refers to 'ce sexe maudit, que je hais, que j'adore', and Valsain, in reply, demands 'Du respect pour le Sexe, où je romps avec vous'. Griboedov appears to agree with Valsain. Such extremes are distasteful; he omits the exchange. While at the end of this first scene he interpolates four lines which
are included here only because in *Gore ot uma* he takes just seven words to express the same idea.

Compare Chatskii’s 'Мне в петлю лезть, а ей смешно’. (III.1.18)

In Scene 2, between Valsain and Mondor, the latter has four extremely cynical lines which Griboedov rejects. They say of Dormilli’, the older man tells Valsain, ‘qu’il veut garder un coeur, après l’avoir vaincu. | Dans Paris! à son age! ou Diable a-t-il vécu?’. One senses that, for all St Petersburg’s francophilia, this is a shallower and more frivolous brand of cynicism than a contemporary Russian audience could stomach. Barthe’s play was first performed, after all, on 25 January 1768. 'Il est quitté? La chose est elle si cruelle? | Une belle bientôt nous venge d’une belle’, Mondor continues. The Russian lover’s reaction to losing his mistress, with all its hurt pride, is better represented in another of Griboedov’s interpolations in Scene 6. 'Зато же сыщете вы где меня другого?’ Roslavlev demands of his Liza. Pushkin’s poem to his departed mistress, 'Ia vas liubil', with its final peevish line, 'Как дай вам Бог любимой быть другим', was not written until 1829; but the message is the same. Both ladies will be sorry.

Scene 2 also contains the only substantial divergence between the original and its translation. Barthe’s Valsain asks Mondor to tell him the secret of his success with women. 'Comment faites-vous donc?’ he wants to know. 'J’éveillé l’amour propre, et le pique et le flatte’, Mondor begins. But having laid claim to 'un esprit transcendant' he reveals that his vast wealth is a great help. 'On éblouit
ainsi le pauvre genre humain'. 'Allier tant d'esprit à tant de modestie!', Valsain enthuses; his irony is quite wasted on Mondor.

Griboedov cuts the whole of this discussion on ways and means. He substitutes a revealing exchange. What would Roslavlev do if Liza preferred someone else, Blestov asks. 'Одно предложение', he assures Lenskii.

БЛЕСТОВ Но все, я вам божусь, что с ней еще покуда
Мы на учтивостях – и более никак.
ЛЕНСКИЙ Я верю без божбы.
БЛЕСТОВ значительно
А если бы не так,
На что решился он?
ЛЕНСКИЙ Он с Лизой бы простился;
А там и с вами бы, конечно, объяснился.
БЛЕСТОВ Стреляться бы он стал? – Стреляться не беда!
Но быть ревнивым? – о! в нем вовсе нет стыда.

Griboedov can neither let go of the thought that obsesses him nor, in this context, treat it other than flippantly. The translation drifts like flotsam on the dark tide of his depression. There is no harm in duelling - but jealousy is shameful. It is a parodic reversal of standards that the Liza of Gore ot uma will echo: 'Трех не беда, молва не хороша'. (1.5.209)

Now Blestov tells us the secret of his success. It is very different from that of Barthe's Mondor. A matter of caprice and blind chance. One woman pursued him, another, in the only reference to the suffering heroes of the Sentimentalists, fell in love with - 'Ну, отгадайте, чем? – любезностью, умом? | Нет! – бледностью лица! – Я был жестоко болен'. Lenskii interrupts him before he can tell us about a third conquest. 'И хоть Еленину, жестокий, пощадите', he implores. Only Blestov could take him seriously. 'Adieu, ménagez moi dans vos vastes desseins' is Valsain's equivalent line. It signals the end of the digression.

From now on Griboedov adheres closely, even literally, to the original text. In Scene 3 Barthe's Mondor, alone on stage, delivers a more confident
monologue than Griboedov's Blestov, who expresses a momentary doubt concerning the wisdom of having sent the same love-letter to both Eledina and Liza. There are small additions and subtractions after this passage, but its eight lines represent the last significant alteration.

In Scene 6 Dormilli, claiming that no one loves like he does, complains 'j'extravague en effet; car je veux qu'une femme / N'ait pas l'ambition...de plaire...au monde entier'. Griboedov does not allow the possibility of improvement. Roslavlev's despairing couplet reveals an even lower opinion of women. 'Твержу в наш век, чтобы кокетство позабыли, | Хочу чтоб женщины не женщинами были'.

Dormilli reassures Angélique; she need not fear that he will be a tyrannical husband. 'N'auriez-vous pas alors juré d'être fidèle!', he says. Griboedov knows better. He leaves the line untranslated. 'Вы очень знаете что женщины все можно', his Blestov tells Roslavlev. This warning does not appear in the original text.

Scene 9 shows Roslavlev sharing Chatskii's inability to believe himself unloved, or properly to assess the power of a despised rival. 'А с Лизой в ссоре я — Хоть тем могу я льститься | Что Лизе вряд ли он умеет полюбиться'.

In Scene 10 Valsain-Lenskii, having planned Mondor-Blestov's downfall and the lovers' reconciliation, exacts a promise from Dormilli-Roslavlev:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{VALSAIN} & \quad \text{Laisser vivre Mondor pour nos menus plaisirs.} \\
\text{DORMILLI} & \quad (\text{avec une joie excessive}) \text{ Je ne le tueraï point.}
\end{align*}
\]

Griboedov's version is as brief, if not as funny.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ЛЕНСКИЙ} & \quad \text{Дайте Бlestovu пожить, не вызывай его.} \\
\text{РОСЛАВЛЕВ} & \quad \text{Не вызову.}
\end{align*}
\]
He abbreviates the scene by omitting a rather repetitive passage in which Valsain maintains that 'une femme affligée est plus intéressant'. Griboedov was evidently not prepared to express this Sentimentalist view, even in translation.

In Scene 11 a brief monologue delivered by Valsain-Lenskii, alone on stage, contains another revealing divergence on the subject of women. Both Barthe and Griboedov agree that they should not be spoiled. Barthe's Valsain goes on to say, chivalrously:

\[\text{N'y mettons nous pourtant trop d'inhumanité, Ne soyons pas cruels...Bonnes gens que nous sommes. \textit{Gaiement} Qui désole une femme est le vengeur des hommes.}\]

Griboedov will have none of that. There is no such gentlemanly undertaking in his translation. His Lenskii maintains that 'нет хуже, как прощать насмешки их над нами'; then remarks, in a practical manner, 'Их поздно в руки брать, как будут нам женами...'.

Scenes 12 and 13 need not concern us here, since they are the work of Zhandr, and it is no longer possible to know which lines contain the corrections referred to by Griboedov.

Both Barthes and Griboedov permit Valsain-Lenskii to triumph over Mondor-Blestov in the penultimate scene, although Barthe sees the worldly Mondor's social humiliation as his punishment, while Griboedov prefers that Blestov should answer to God. Both Barthe and Griboedov allow Mondor-Blestov the final cynicism. Mondor is the more explicit. 'L'amour me les ravit, l'Hymen me les rendra', he says, confidently. Griboedov is content to suggest the possibility of such an outcome. 'Как будут замужем они, - тогда увидим!', he concludes his translation, with yet another of those exclamation marks to which
he seems a touch addicted, even in comparison with other Russian writers of his generation.

It was the second time that Griboedov had provided a play for Semenova’s benefit performance. The comedy was completed some time in January 1818, passed by the censors on 7 February and performed for the first time four days later. Such a system allowed little time for rehearsal. It must have had much in common with that of the provincial repertory theatres in this country during the first half of the present century, by which actors acquired their craft in the so-called ‘weekly rep’, learning lines and rehearsing next week’s play during the day while performing this week’s play during the evenings, and trying, sometimes unsuccessfully, not to confuse the two.

The benefit performance was given, apparently to Semenova’s complete satisfaction. Griboedov, however, must surely have paused to consider. Translation, adaptation, collaboration. But where was the independent, original, significant work of which he knew himself to be capable? On 16 February, nine days after the censors had approved Pritvornaia nevrest for performance, they decided in favour of another work by Griboedov, his Proba intermedii.29 In this short, one-act interlude for the theatre Griboedov, freed at last from the constraints of the alexandrine, did what he did best; he allowed his anger to power his wit. He had done it before, with deadly effect, in his slanderous little poem attacking Zagoskin. But this time he directs his anger not against an individual, but a system embodied by individuals, as he would do with such brilliance in Gore ot uma, where he not only attacks the system in just this manner, but demonstrates, in the person of Chatskii, the uselessness of trying to change it by preaching to those who derive most benefit from it.
The freedom of the rhythm in Proba intermedii is exhilarating. There are, in all, eighty-six lines of verse, with occasional outcrops of prose. The rhyme-scheme of the verse includes couplets, triplets, the alternate A B A B pattern; there is even an example of A A B A B B. Griboedov begins by using trochees for both chorus and individual actors, a rhythm which the chorus maintains throughout. His use of metre has not yet achieved the subtlety of Gore ot uma, in which length of line acquires a semantic force. There are little clumps of lines in trochaic or iambic dimeter, trimeter, tetrameter, even pentameter, but not a single hexameter; he has temporarily foresworn the alexandrine.

The action takes place on the untidy stage of a provincial theatre. The cast list includes six performers whose 'speaking names', Fekolkov, Alegrin, Rezvushkin, Pripryzhkin, Svistalova and Bemol'skaia require no explanation. There is also a technician, a prompter and an anonymous group of actors and actresses who speak in chorus. The choice of theme is unsurprising; the leading actor, Fekolkov, reveals it in his opening speech:

Много вас, актеров и актрис.
Батюшки, мне нужен бенефис!
Матюшки, мне нужен бенефис!

They agree to knock something up for him. 'Надо, что скорей попсело', Fekolkov says, in words which must have been all too familiar. He does not foresee any problem. 'Делайте как ни пропало', he tells his troupe. Does he want an opera, a ballet, a comedy? No. He wants an 'интермедия'. The idea does not find favour. 'Интермедью! — Боже сохрани!' Anything but that, they implore him. An interlude is nothing but 'Бедным зрителям зевота!'

Rezvushkin takes pity on the anxious Fekolkov. 'After all', he says, in prose,

this isn't St Petersburg; you'll have a job finding an author; the prompter can do it - he knows how to write. Come on then, old chap, crawl out of
your box; you've been itching to write something for the theatre for ages, now's your chance, go on, distinguish yourself.

It was all very flattering to the St Petersburg audience. But behind this grotesque parody of collaboration lies Griboedov's very real discontent with the system and his own part in it. What had he been doing over the past months but turning out alexandrines to meet a deadline?

The company mockingly agrees in verse; the prompter is their only hope. 'You may laugh, gentlemen,' he says, 'but you'd be lost without me. And anyway that's not the point. You need a new play. It'll take some doing, but the essentials are: sets, actors, words, music and dancing... dancing and dances'.

Rezvushkin calls up to the scene-shifters in the flies. 'Let down the set. There you are - a wood and some water'. They have the actors, with or without appropriate costumes. Bemol'skaia, a singer safeguarding the size of her role, tells them, 'The fewer words the better'. The discussion in prose continues. 'We've only got to write something or other to go in front of it', Fekolkov says. 'It'll be easy. Especially for the prompter. He's been speaking other people's lines all his life'. 'Let him steal it from wherever he likes', Alegrin says, 'so long as the play's ready in time.' Don't you worry, he'll write so much, more's the pity, that we won't learn it in a month of Sundays', Svistalova assures him.

Behind this entertaining mockery of the dramatist's calling lies Griboedov's profound disillusion. The gulf between the reality and the dream can seldom have seemed less bridgeable. He had had enough of St Petersburg, its theatrical life and his own part in it. Separation, by whatever unwelcome means it was eventually achieved, had become a necessity.

At this point in the interlude the metre changes from trochees to iambics. Seven lines of iambic tetrameter are followed by a dozen in iambic trimeter as
the piece, and the interlude being cobbled together within it, are hurried to a conclusion. The set provides the prompter with his title:

На завесе река,
Пусть будет же: "Ока",
Готово и названье
Благодаря реке:
"Пирушка на Оке".
Иль: "За Оку гулянье.
И песнями начать,
И плясками кончать!

'Whatever can we sing? which dances?', the performers, not unreasonably, demand to know. 'Just sing and skip about to your heart's content', the harassed prompter tells them, 'only not all at once'. The company agrees to rehearse the beginning of the interlude while he writes the words of the final song (kuplety); 'Get on with it! Quick! Or I’ll stop writing', he threatens.

There follows, according to the stage directions, singing and dancing. This is interrupted by the prompter. The kuplety are ready. Would they do him the honour of singing them as the finale? 'Is that really the end?', Fekolkov asks, dismayed. 'What more do you want?', Bemol'skaia says. She takes the newly-written couplets and sings the final twenty-one lines, written in a conventional iambic tetrameter. They develop her own comment. What more does any audience expect? No one asks whether the thing is stupid or clever, sad or funny. Griboedov's final, bitter couplet is:

Лишь только бы новее было;
Всегда что ново, то и мило.

Proba intermedii was the last of his works to be staged during his lifetime. Though it was passed by the censors on 16 February 1818 it was not performed until the November of the following year, as a 'benefit' for Brianskii, by which time Griboedov was already in Tbilisi. Shakhovskoi may well have hesitated to
invite his audience behind the scenes, even though the theatre satirized here is disguised as 'provincial', an epithet calculated to amuse the St Petersburg sophisticates. Whatever the reason for this delay, it is clear that Griboedov carried his disillusion with theatre practice into exile and back to Moscow. When he returned to the capital in May 1824 he had already written it into the part of Repetilov:

Засяду, часу не сижу,  
И как-то невзначай, вдруг каламбур рожу.  
Другие у меня мысль эту же подцепят,  
И вшестером глядь водевильчик слепят,  
Другие шестеро на музыку кладут,  
Другие хлопают, когда его дают.  

IV.4.164-69

This criticism of the hasty and careless methods implicit in the word 'слепят', the suggestion that there will always be some undemanding audience to applaud, represent Griboedov's final word on the subject of collaboration, as practised in the St Petersburg theatre of his day.

*  

Three very different pieces of work, and the circumstances in which they were written, have been examined in this chapter for any indications of the emerging artist. Griboedov's light-hearted contribution to Svoia sem'ia reveals a developing gift for the use of natural speech rhythms in verse which he would perfect in Gore ot uma. The duel is shown to mark the end of that first period of his life referred to in the introduction; the changes in him are evident. In Pritvornaia nevernost' the writing displays a descent from verve to competence. In Proba intermedia anger once more inspires his wit, but the target has changed. Griboedov's entertaining attack on the theatrical conventions of the day surely contains a large measure of dissatisfaction with his own achievements.

2. Ibid., I, 155.


4. Ibid., III, p.124.


17. Ibid., p.267, n.1.


The 'partie carrée' in which Griboedov was so unhappily involved marked the end of a carefree period in St Petersburg. The resulting depression was to remain with him, adversely affecting, from time to time, his belief in his talent and his resolve to write. Even at this low point, however, he was not indifferent to the prospect of promotion. This dichotomy in Griboedov between emotion and calculation would find expression in his ambivalence towards his Chatskii, as a reformer both passionate and inept. It is an ambivalence which becomes apparent in his attitude to the aims of the future Decembrists and their views on the abolition of serfdom, discussed in this chapter with reference to Chatskii's last monologue.

On 13 April 1818 Griboedov was informed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Count Nesselrode, that he was to be appointed secretary to the Russian diplomatic mission in Persia. In his letter to Begichev, written two days later, Griboedov refers to his collaboration with Zhandr, and then continues: 'However. Enough said about Feigned Infidelity; I want to tell you about my unfeigned misery. Imagine where they're determined to send me. Where would you have thought? - to Persia, to live there.' Griboedov had attempted to make his acceptance of the post conditional on a double promotion. He argued, eloquently, and in French, that it would be cruel to insist that he spend his young life among these wild Asiatics, in voluntary exile, far from friends, family and the literary
success which he was entitled to expect, far from enlightened people and charming women for whom he himself possessed a certain charm (‘Don’t laugh’, he tells Begichev, in a footnote: ‘I’m young, a musician, amorous, I love talking nonsense, what more do they want?’). 2 Nothing made the slightest difference. ‘You will perfect your gifts in solitude’, Nesselrode told him. ‘On the contrary’, Griboedov replied, ‘musicians and poets need listeners and readers; there aren’t any in Persia’. But he laughs at his own hypocrisy. He has declared himself to be quite without ambition; for a double promotion, however, he is prepared to place himself entirely at the Count’s disposal. ‘Only two officials are granted an audience with the Shah’, he boasts. However unwelcome this sudden promotion, it is a flattering one. Just the kind of opportunity to shine that his mother had always wanted for him. ‘I’ve decided to be a collegiate assessor or nothing’, he declares. Then adds, uncertainly, ‘What do you think?’.

Griboedov’s next letter to Begichev is headed 30 August 1818, Novgorod. In reply to what must have been the latter’s attempt to comfort his friend, Griboedov writes:

This time you’re wrong about my heart, my dear fellow, my true friend Stepan, my grief won’t pass, it won’t diminish. Here I am in Novgorod, but my thoughts are constantly in Petersburg. I had many griefs there, but sometimes I was happy; now, as the distance grows between us, it seems that everything was good there, I regret all of it.

Тогда ж лучше? Где нас нет...’ (I.7.358). Friendships had soured, or ended in tragedy; the small group of equals which constituted his society was spreading unpleasant rumours about him. If ‘sometimes he had been happy’, it was, perhaps, in Shakhovskoi’s attic, talking about the things that mattered. Writing, rehearsals for a benefit performance, the publication of a new poem, readings of a new play, the championing of a friend or the routing of an enemy in literary debate.
Griboedov’s isolation in Persia was to be extreme. He refers to himself as ill supplied with books and lacking any native Russian speaker to whom he might read his work. It is all the more important, therefore, to consider those factors, both literary and personal, which seem likely to have influenced his creativity during that isolation. On 27 August he left St Petersburg. On 3 September he arrived in Moscow to visit his mother and sister. One week later he set off for Persia. What was it that he carried with him into exile? Whatever it was took root and flowered there.

Tomashevskii quotes R. Koshutich as connecting what the latter calls the accuracy of Griboedov’s rhymes in Gore ot uma with the fact that the writer was not only a poet but a musician. Setting out for Persia in 1826 he left his instructions, presumably with Faddei Bulgarin, since it is in the Bulgarin archive that a copy of the list survives. Among the items to be sent by sea to Astrakhan, apart from the four cases of Champagne, the Port, Madeira, Sauterne, Medoc and Burgundy, we read ‘Фортопьяно [sic] не рояль, но хорошие купить у Шредера. Струн переменных и ключ настраивать’. He is unlikely to have relied on a serf piano-tuner being available in Teheran; one can only assume that, rather than forego the music so essential to him, he was prepared to carry out the work himself. In the letter to Begichev quoted above Griboedov describes himself first as a musician and then as a poet. In his lighthearted footnote he fails to mention poetry at all. Music was, perhaps, his most instinctive gift. He would never have needed to count syllables like poor Zagoskin.

Piksanov writes:

Rhythm and rhyme never came easily to Griboedov. It was only in Gore ot uma, as a result of a thorough, careful re-working that the lines achieved such heights. In his later works, both lyrical and dramatic, there was an immediate, sharp drop in the quality of the verse.
I agree with him as to the sharp drop in quality; it is central to this dissertation. But I cannot accept the explanation he offers. The author of *Gore ot uma* was not the musically limited but painstaking writer his words suggest. Other reasons will have to be found.

Shakhovskoi’s new play, *Ne liubo, ne slushai, a Igat’ ne meshai*, was not performed until 23 September 1818, when Griboedov had already left St Petersburg; but it was passed by the censors on the day before his departure. Having worked so recently and so closely with Shakhovskoi it is hard to imagine that Griboedov was unaware of the play’s progress, had not heard readings, attended rehearsals, taken part in discussions on the subject of this entertaining comedy with its innovative use of free iambic metre. This rhythm, which came most naturally to Griboedov, had not previously been used in comedy. Kniazhnin had introduced free iambic metre to the St Petersburg stage in 1790 with his verse tragedy *Titovo miloserdie*. It was the traditional metre of the fable, adopted by both Sumarokov and Krylov. Now Shakhovskoi had opened up an exciting new possibility; an entire comedy written in iambic lines of varying length. It was a freedom which Griboedov’s musical ear was quick to appreciate. This was the rhythm of humour, unpredictable as a joke, with rhyme the only certainty. As Tomashievskii points out, in his essay ‘Stikh Goria ot uma’, ‘in free iambic metre, the essential signal which indicates the end of a line is the rhyme’. In the same essay he defines three classes of free iambic metre; the lyrical, as in the elegies of the early 19th century, the ‘didactic-narrative verse’ of the fable, and the ‘free iamb’ of dramatic verse. The lyrical poem, he says, is essentially an emotional monologue; the fable - ‘also monological’; drama includes, in its more
complex structure, both monologues and dialogues. It would be wrong, he maintains, to compare the free iambic metre in drama with any other genre or style; if we are determined to find similarities between Griboedov’s *Gore ot uma* and Krylov’s fables we will find just as many in Batiushkov’s elegies. Indeed we will. It was this close little community of writers, with all its passionate debate on genre and style, which nourished the genius of Pushkin.

The hard-pressed Shakhovskoi used anything that worked. He was prepared to exploit the humorous possibilities offered by the distinguishing feature of free iambic metre – the varying length of its lines – whatever their source. Tomashevskii, discussing the effect of the sequence of such lines in the essay referred to above, divides the possibilities neatly into ‘three basic types’. A sequence of lines of the same length; a progress from long to short lines; and one in the reverse direction. The occurrence of an arbitrary sequence of long and short lines is relatively rare’, he says. I doubt that there is anything arbitrary about the choice of line-length in *Gore ot uma*. Not even ‘rarely’. ‘Final short lines almost always sound more determinative than the long lines preceding them. They produce an impression of laconism, characteristic of a summary of an argument or a train of thought’, he continues. He fails to mention that the use of one or more long lines to induce a sense of rhythmic security in order to overturn it with a short one contains that essential ingredient of humour - surprise.

The element of surprise is not, of course, the prerogative of the joke. Accepting Tomashevskii’s purely rhetorical invitation to consider Batiushkov, we find that the latter’s elegy ‘Mechta’, published in St Petersburg in 1817, is written in the free iambic metre characteristic of the genre. The first twelve lines are impeccable alexandrines in rhyming couplets, each with its carefully
observed caesura. The next five lines, whose rhyme-scheme is ABBAB, are rhythmically identical to four alexandrines, since lines four and five of this group are in iambic trimeter, that is, the equivalent of the two hemistiches of a hexameter. It is the rhyme, 'струнам', arriving unexpectedly early, which takes the ear by surprise. The poem surges forward; we sense the impatient longing of the poet for the inspiration of the dream:

Под тенью яворов ты бродишь по холмам,  
Студенью неною Воклюза огошенным?  
Явись, богиня, мне, и с трепетом священным  
Коснуся я струнам,  
Тобой одушевленным!

These lines of Batiushkov illustrate the effect of a rhyme that arrives before it is expected. It is evident that Shakhovskoi and Krylov were well aware of this rhythmic resource; it seems likely that the former broke with tradition and wrote his comedy in free iambic metre precisely because he had appreciated its effectiveness in other genres and styles.

Humour, unpredictable by nature, can only exist against a background of reasonable expectation. It is just this reasonable expectation which metric poetry is ideally equipped to establish. Of course, in free iambic metre, the poet must take care to feed the expectation with enough predictable material in order to spring his surprises. Tomashevskii has found that of the 2,221 lines in Gore ot uma, 1,145 of them are alexandrines. It is curious that the proportion of this type of line increases from act to act. In the first act the proportion is 38.6% (188 of 486), in the second – 40.4% (229 of 567), while in the last two acts the figure rises to 49% (316 of 638 and 262 of 530). This creates the impression that at first Griboedov took trouble with the possible variations in line-length, then habit prevailed and the alexandrine occupied its usual place.14 In this I think he
underestimates Griboedov. The beginning of his play is full of uncertainties and the hope of change. At its end the seeming impossibility of change brings this strange comedy close to tragedy. The re-establishment of the conventional alexandrine as the dominant metre reflects its sad conclusion. Chatskii has changed nothing.

Shakhovskoi’s comedy Ne liubo, ne slushai was completed just before Griboedov left for Persia. An earlier influence will have been Krylov. The first of his fables, ‘Stydlivyi igrok’, was published in 1788, seven years before Griboedov was born. It is probable that, like many Russian children of his class, he became familiar with the fables at an early age. We can be sure that he carried at least one of them with him into his ‘voluntary exile’. Lzhets’, first published in 1812, was reprinted in the 1815 edition of the fables. The compulsive liar of the title claims to have seen, in Rome, a cucumber the size of a mountain. When his companion informs him that the bridge ahead of them is known to collapse under the weight of a liar he modifies his claim; the cucumber was as big as a house. Reminded of the bridge and its magical powers, he explains that Roman houses are not like your Russian mansions:

Что там за дома:
В один двоим за нужду влезть,
И то ни стать, ни сесть!

Famusov, in Act II, Scene 1 of Gore ot uma, refers to the coffin, using the title of another famous fable, as larchik. ‘Ох, род людской!’ he philosophizes, momentarily diverted from his musings on the indigestibility of the Moscow dinner by the thought of his own mortality.

Ох, род людской! пришло в забвенье,
Что всякий сам туда же должен лезть,
В тот ларчик, где ни стать, ни сесть. II.1.15-17.
'Lzhets', far from being monological, is really a miniature play. Of its 65 lines only the first five are narrated. Line 6 contains the word 'говорит'; line 22 has 'приятель отвечал'; the penultimate line includes the words 'тут переврал мой Лжец'. The remainder of the fable consists of a dialogue between the liar and his friend. Krylov's use of rhymed free iambic metre is a delight. The first two lines present an example of Tomashevskii's third 'basic type': movement from the short to the long line. 'From a brief thesis to its development, in the less sharply defined dissemination of an idea'. The definition, while accurate, has little to do with Krylov's gentle humour, which lies here not in the unexpected appearance of a rhyme, but in the rambling unreliability of his opening couplet-a line of tetrameter followed by an alexandrine:

Из дальних странствий возвратясь
Какой-то дворянин (а может быть, и князь).

Those 'distant wanderings' in unspecified areas, the nobleman 'of some sort' (or perhaps he was even a prince) set the scene for Krylov's compulsive liar. Even the narrator is a man who will tell us more than we want to know. In lines 31-37, on the other hand, the length of line diminishes from five feet to four feet to two feet. The friend, speaking first, describes the miraculous bridge. Anyone who does not lie, he says, may walk on it in perfect safety:

'Ступай по нем, пожалуй, хоть в карете.'
- 'А какова у вас река?'
- 'Да не мелка.'

The liar's question is divided into two rhyming halves of four syllables each, luring the listener into anticipating symmetry; the dimeter takes him by surprise with a third, final rhyme. The humorous effect is heightened, here, by the negative form of its understatement.
There are numerous examples of such inventive use of the metre in Gore ot uma. Compare Repetilov’s account of his failure to gain promotion by marrying the minister’s daughter in IV.5.199-202:

По статской я служил, тогда  
Барон фон Клоц в министры метил,  
А я  
К нему в зятья.

There follows a lengthy description of just how he went about achieving this relationship, only to be frustrated of his promotion by the unreasonable honesty of his German father-in-law. But the motive for his ruthless courtship of the poor girl is implicit in that single iambus followed by a line of laconic dimeter.

If Krylov’s fable about a compulsive liar provides an entertaining example of dialogue in free iambic metre, Shakhovskoi’s new comedy on the same theme represents an adventurous development. Like 'Lzhets’, Ne liubo, ne slushai has left traces in the text of Gore ot uma. As Leonid Grossman writes, ‘not only the form of the free verse, but certain sections of the dialogue and even some of the situations in Shakhovskoi’s little play are reflected fairly closely in Gore ot uma’. He cites the following examples in a long footnote, omitting the corresponding passages from Gore ot uma as ‘sufficiently well-known’. I include them here for ease of comparison.

ЗАРНИЦКИЙ ДАШЕНЬКА ЗАРНИЦКИЙ

Для милой вестницы у нас гостинец есть.  
А что сударь?

Безделка:  
Сережки с жемчугом. Жемчуг хоть не зернист  
С орешек не большой, да уж за то как чист:  
И что за милая отделка.

МОЛЧАЛИН

Есть у меня вещицы три:  
Есть туалет, прихитрая работа;  
[...]

Жемчужинки, растертые в белилы!  
II.12.544-51
The resemblance between the actual texts is not close. Zarnitskii's 'бездела' becomes Molchalin's 'вещица'. The pearls in Zarnitskii's ear rings are the size of a small nut, while Molchalin's 'жемчужинки' have been ground to a powder. But the aim is identical. To tempt the maidservant with trinkets.

Later, as Zarnitskii attempts to kiss her, Dashen'ka says 'Нет, поцелуй вы изволите побречь | Невесте вашей...'. (I.1) Compare Liza's sour 'Просу пустить, и без меня вас двое'. (II.12.539)

Grossman's last example, however, is the most interesting. Compare part of Zarnitskii's first speech with three lines from that of Chatskii:

ЗАРНИЦКИЙ Я сказал фельдегерам на диво.
Пять раз был выброшён [...] но в тридцать два часа... [...]
Из Петербурга к вам не всякой бы поспел,
За то уж я не пил, не ел. I.1.

ЧАЦКИЙ Я сорок пять часов, глаз мигом не прищурая,
Верст больше седьмисот пронесся, ветер, буя;
И растерялся весь, и падал сколько раз.
I.7.313-15

Allowing for Zarnitskii's exaggeration, the descriptions of reckless haste and the complaints of hardship really do have something in common. Why should the earnest young Chatskii make his entrance in a manner so similar to that of Shakhovskoi's compulsive liar?

Lotman maintains that the contemporaries of the future Decembrists emphasized [...] the tendency, 'unpleasant' from the point of view of fashionable norms, to call things by their names, breaking the received conventions. [...] The aspiration to speak one's mind in a forthright manner, without deferring to established ritual and the rules of fashionable conversation.18

Or, as Katenin wrote to his friend Bakhtin in 1823, encouraging him to greater openness in the current literary debate, 'the obligation, now, to stand up
for oneself and for a just cause, to speak the truth without hesitation.'²⁹ What if..., Griboedov appears to have thought. What if a young man were to return from his travels with a compulsion to tell the truth? It would be a game of reversal to inspire imitators. Two more returning travellers spring instantly to mind. The daughter of Pushkin’s Stantsionnyi smotritel’ reverses the parable of the prodigal son by prospering, against the odds, and then returning to a father who has drunk himself to death. Pushkin hangs a print of the original on the wall of the post-house lest we should miss the point.³⁰ Saltykov-Shchedrin, in a grimmer reversal of the same parable, sends his prodigal son home to a callous and uncaring mother who neglects him to death.³¹ Zarnitskii and Chatskii represent opposite extremes; both are the losers in their respective comedies. Is Griboedov, 'посынок здорового рассудка’ and rational classicist, mocking excess? To be punished, like Kniazhnin’s parrot, who returned from his travels with language even less acceptable than Chatskii’s, by exclusion from decent society? As Famusov himself might well have remarked, with Kniazhnin:

Ах! Часто вояжер
За новый свой манер,
Достоин заперт быть.²²

Zagoretskii’s line in III.16, ‘Схватили, в желтый дом, и на цепь посадили’, merely anticipates the likely fate of this likely Decembrist. It is, perhaps, worth noting that the officer who returns Zhako the parrot to its former mistress, assuring her that the bird is much improved, uses a phrase which Skalozub would borrow - ‘Как честный офицер’. (II.5.193)

Parallels undoubtedly exist between Ne liubo, ne slushai and Gore ot uma, but the process of thought which may have led from the one to the other is, of course, unknowable. Shakhovskoi’s choice of free iambic metre for his comedy,
however, can hardly have failed to influence the younger writer; his use of it in

**Ne liubo, ne slushai** is worth consideration.

Of Shakhovskoi’s first 41 lines, 29 are alexandrines; of the last 41 lines, 31 are alexandrines. In both cases the proportion is high; Shakhovskoi is well aware of the need to establish and preserve that ‘reasonable expectation’ of a hexameter. Of the first 8 lines of his comedy, only the second has less than six feet. The final couplet is written in iambic hexameter, with a comma wedged into the caesura of the last line. Departures from the norm are all the more effective for this predominance of the alexandrine.

The first scene of **Ne liubo, ne slushai**, a Igat’ ne meshai allows Zamitskii to demonstrate his powers of invention before a willing, if sceptical audience of one. Dashen’ka is housemaid to his aunt, to whose home he has just returned after an absence of more than eight years. He claims to have made the forty-five-hour journey from St Petersburg to Moscow in thirty-two hours, some of it without benefit of horses. His coachman, he says, took a turn so sharply that the king-pin broke in two, the splinter-bar was torn off, И с дышлом лошади, как вихрь, умчались прочь. | Что ж? – я без лошадей в коляске с гор скатился...|. Dashen’ka has the measure of him by line 36. 'Ай! Наш племянник лгун!', she says in an aside. Several lies later she is obliged to remind him, like Griboedov’s Liza, that he has a fiancée. How did she know he was to be married, he asks. He wrote to tell them, Dashen’ka reminds him. He had forgotten. Does he no longer like the lady? 'Не говори о ней...', Zarnitskii begins, in a speech reminiscent of Repetilov's description of his promotion-seeking activities referred to above. 'Через ее родных искал я в службе места, | Хотелось в чины пробиться поскорей'. These lines are the tenth and eleventh
of a fifteen-line exchange between Zarnitskii and Dashen’ka written entirely in alexandrines. In it he explains that he became so bored by the girl, her family and her father, ‘что бросил наконец’. They share the last alexandrine of the group:

Дашенька  Что ж, бедная, она?
Зарницкий  Она?.. растосковалась,
Занемогла
И умерла.

The lengthy preparation achieves its effect. The callous couplet is as unexpected as it is amusing.

Accused of heartlessness by Dashen’ka, Zarnitskii invents a series of women who have died for love of him. The text disintegrates into dots (three sets of three in two lines) as he casts about for a convincing detail; Shakhovskoi is preparing the ground for a later joke. ‘Одной, не помню, я сказал какой-то вздор... | Она... в окошко скок... и поминай как звали’.

At the end of Scene 1 the conversation turns on the aunt’s half-brother, Mezetskii. He is, like Griboedov’s Madam Roz’е, a person ‘редких правил’. Unaware that Mezetskii is engaged to the young widow who lives in the vicinity, Zarnitskii maintains that he himself loves her, and that his love is returned. Scene 2 ends with a pair of alexandrines. Scene 3 opens with one. Dashen’ka, alone on stage, considers the likely consequence of Zarnitskii’s marrying the widow:

Ну, вряд ли от него княгиня уцелеет;
Он скажет вздор, она в окошко скок...
А дом ее высок.

The diminution from 6 to 5 to 3 feet, the compression of Zarnitskii’s two hesitant lines into Dashen’ka’s one, followed by that brutally practical trimeter, illustrates, once again, the humorous effect of a rhyme that arrives before the ear expects it.
Of course, long lines may be fragmented, allowing characters to make short, sometimes monosyllabic utterances. Even an iambus may be shared between characters, as in the following dialogue between Zarnitskii and his aunt, Khandrina, where the last unstressed syllable of 'нпонажю' forms the first syllable of the foot, while the single word 'Все!' constitutes the second.

ЗАРИЦКИЙ  Ах! лучше б умер я!
ХАНДРИНА  Что ж сделалось?
ЗАРИЦКИЙ  Пропажа.
ХАНДРИНА  Как! что пропало?
ЗАРИЦКИЙ  Все!
ХАНДРИНА  Как все?
ЗАРИЦКИЙ  Да, все дотла.

Here seven short speeches make up, between them, two alexandrines; but in the absence of any unexpected rhyme the effect is more hurried than humorous.

In a second dialogue, between Dashen'ka and Mezetskii, the pace is further accelerated by the fragmentation of three lines into nine separate speeches. These brief utterances in lines of diminishing length - six, five, then four feet - combine to form an urgent stretto.

ДАШЕНЬКА  Что это?
МЕЗЕЦКИЙ  Ничего.
ДАШЕНЬКА  Однако?
МЕЗЕЦКИЙ  Где ж она?
ДАШЕНЬКА  Идет сюда.
МЕЗЕЦКИЙ  С Зарницкиным?
ДАШЕНЬКА  Одна.
МЕЗЕЦКИЙ  А он?
ДАШЕНЬКА  Он тетушке попался.

Zarnitskii’s tale of intrigue, betrayal, a duel, told to an increasingly sceptical Mezetskii, is written, for the most part, in alexandrines. But when Zarnitskii dares us to disbelieve him with some more than usually outrageous detail the lines diminish in length. Invention falters. Hesitations are indicated by a series of dots. Then the speaker regains his confidence, expands into an
alexandrine, and allows the following line of trimeter, devoid of dots or punctuation of any sort, to run on into a final pentameter.

After the four alexandrines describing the widow as quite literally dying of love for him, Zarnitskii continues:

Но, к счастью, я гречанку отыскал,
Которая... дивитесь чудной силе
Ее зеленых порошков...
Княгиня так от них вдруг сделалась здоровой,
Что на другой же день
Поехала к Адельке за обновой.

Sofiia, in Gore ot uma, invents her dream in just this hesitant manner. After a line of hexameter shared with her father, she begins:

Позвольте... видите ль... сначала
Цветистый луг; и я искала
Траву
Какую-то, не вспомню наяву.
Вдруг милый человек, один из тех, кого мы
Увидим – будто век знакомы.

I.4.154-59

Again, faltering invention is indicated by dots. The reduction in length from 4 feet to a solitary iambus, 'travu', is more extreme - and funnier. But then Sofiia is a less experienced liar than Zarnitskii, and very nearly comes to a complete halt. She manages to keep going for the space of a pentameter before wisely abandoning the herb and expanding, like Zarnitskii, into a confident alexandrine, which overflows without pause into the following line of tetrameter, on a topic closer to her heart. Both Zarnitskii and Sofiia indicate, by means of enjambment, the forward surge of imagination after a momentary hesitation.
Griboedov's Gore ot uma, unlike those legendary warriors born of dragon's teeth, did not spring from the ground ready-armed. It grew naturally in the literary climate of its day. The difference between it and the verse comedies which preceded it is a difference less of kind than of quality. Some of the literary influences revealed by the play have been discussed above. But there were other influences, equally powerful.

Griboedov's post at the College of Foreign Affairs will have given him the opportunity to study both the nepotism of a Famusov and the sycophancy of a Molchalin at close quarters. It is there that he met the future Decembrist Kiukhlebeker, one of many such passionate young revolutionaries who, with their reforming zeal and their less-than-secret societies, contributed something to the character of both Chatskii and Repetilov. His continuing friendship with the best of his fellow-officers ensured close contact with that bitter mood of post-war disillusion which culminated in the rising on Senate Square; while the coarse and limited careerists among them provided him with material for his Skalozub. His views on the Sentimentalist movement have already been discussed. Its effect on the young women of his acquaintance can only have served to intensify his prejudice. His Sofiia, whose natural intelligence is undermined by both the Sentimentalism and the cynicism of her comfortable milieu, may finally see through the former, but is not shown as escaping the distorting influence of the latter. In Chatskii's view, at least, she will conform.

Aleksandr Odoevskii was another of those 'passionate revolutionaries'. 'Enfant de mon choix', Griboedov had called him; he would come to see his earlier self reflected in this young man. 'Do you remember me, what I was like
before I went to Persia; he is exactly like that', he wrote to Begichev, on 9 September 1825.\(^{23}\)

Griboedov left St Petersburg on 29 August, was in Novgorod on the following day, and arrived in Moscow on 3 September; he was to spend a week with his mother and sister. His letter to Begichev, dated 5 September 1818, is revealing. His expectations may not have been as high as Chatskii's, his disillusion is less dramatic, but Griboedov's sensations on returning to the home of his childhood were very close to those of his hero in a similar situation. It's all new to me here and, consequently, still pleasant; I won't have time to get bored, because I'm setting out in three days' time.\(^{24}\) Otherwise, he implies, he might well have pre-empted his Chatskii in IV.10.288. 'Я вижу, что она мне скоро надоест'.

A performance of his *Pritvornaia nevemost'* which he attended was so badly played that Kokoshkin apologized for the fact that 'my delightful verse was being tormented'. Griboedov continues, 'I was kissed at the theatre by a million acquaintances, of whom I knew neither the faces nor the names.\(^{25}\) In *Gore ot uma* it is Chatskii, not his verse, who undergoes torments (terzaniia); but his description of his arrival at the ball in III.22.564-67, is very much in the same vein:

Да, мочи нет: миллион терзаний
Груди от дружеских тисков,
Ногам от шарканья, ушам от восклицаний,
А пуще голове от всяких пустяков.

Griboedov refers to Moscow audiences as 'the local hottentots'; St Petersburg applauds everything, so they applaud nothing, he says. Then tells Begichev, who has evidently complained of his own 'barrack-room hottentots', 'it's the lot of intelligent people, my dear fellow, to spend the greater part of their
lives with fools, and what a multitude of them we have!'. He was not entirely reformed by recent experience, however. Setting out with the excellent intention of equipping himself for Persia, he called on a friend, dined with him in a restaurant, 'плотно поел', drank a bottle of champagne, visited the theatre, and was obliged to retire to bed with a thundering headache. This was relieved, he tells us, by the application of his mother's 'eau de Cologne paste', a source of comfort not available to Chatskii, whose mother, 'сантиментальная модница и аристократка московская' of Begichev's 'Zapiska' mentioned below, lived only in the latter's memory.

On 10 September Griboedov left Moscow. His next letter to Begichev is headed 18 September 1818. Voronezh. He has had time to reflect. 'Until now I have been a son and brother in name alone; when I return from Persia I will be so in fact. I'm going to start living for my family, I'll bring them to live with me in Petersburg.'

If he is dissatisfied with himself, he is even more so with Moscow:

Nothing is to my taste in Moscow. Empty idleness, luxury, unconnected with the slightest feeling for anything good. They used to love music there, nowadays it's held in contempt; no one has any love for the finer things, but then 'a prophet is not without honour, save in his own country'. My fatherland, my roots and my home are in Moscow.

Guilt, disillusion and hurt pride make him long for St Petersburg. Everyone in Moscow remembers him as dear little Sasha, he says; grown-up now, a bit of a scapegrace, got himself a decent job; might make Councillor of State in time. 'They don't want to see more than that in me', he adds, bitterly. At least St Petersburg took him seriously as a writer. His mother accused him of envy one evening over dinner ('ask Zhandr', he says) because he was not enrapured by
Kokoshkin 'and those like him. I forgive her for it, with all my heart, but I will never forgive myself in future if I allow myself to grieve her in any way'.

Nothing remains of any correspondence between Griboedov and his mother. She is mentioned very rarely in the letters to others which have survived. A sample of her maternal advice is to be found in Katenin's letter to N.I. Bakhtin, written on 29 May 1828, but referring to a time some ten years earlier, when Griboedov was about to take up his appointment in Persia. She writes to her son that he is not to emulate Katenin; he will get nowhere by being straight and honest. Then goes on to recommend, as a more suitable model, a successful relative, who is 'a scoundrel, as you know, and he's doing famously'. In the letter written to Begichev dated 9 November 1816, he had joked in mock envy 'you haven't got a mother to whom you're obliged to seem sound and solid'. His generous intention, in spite of her poor opinion of his talent, to be a better son to his mother in future, is expressed in the letter from Voronezh mentioned above.

His final reference to his mother, in a letter to Paskevich written on 3 December 1828, less than four months after his marriage, is the most painful.

Some get it from strangers, I get it from my own family, imagine it, instead of congratulations I received the most wounding letter from my mother. Only please, keep this to yourself, I am not even entrusting it to any of your family. I needed to tell you, it eases my heart.

It is clear that there was seldom much warmth in the relationship between Griboedov and his mother. Yet it was after the week in Moscow that he expressed his sense of obligation towards her, his intention of being a son to her in more than name when he returned from Persia, revealed himself as most warmly attached to her. What inspired this change of heart? It comes as something of a shock to learn of a possible cause, which was not mentioned in either of his letters to Begichev, written during and shortly after his visit, but
which must surely have been discussed with his mother; the very ugly situation which was developing in Kostroma, the most recently acquired of her estates.  

In 1816 Nastas'ia Fedorovna Griboedova was already a widow. Her husband, Sergei Ivanovich, had died in the previous year. Her son had left the army but had not yet taken up a post at the College of Foreign Affairs; she was supporting his expensive life-style in St Petersburg. Her daughter was now of marriageable age, and must be introduced to society. Nastas'ia Fedorovna, an extravagant woman by nature, embarked on an extremely risky enterprise. In her own words, translated from the papers of the subsequent case,

not having enough money of my own to buy the estate, I sold my Riazan' village, borrowed a considerable sum from various people and then re-mortgaged the newly purchased estate with the Moscow Council of Guardians, since what with the duty and the other expenses I incurred, it cost me more than 300,000 roubles. (p.89)

Only a quick profit could justify the purchase; this she set out to make. She did not, herself, visit her new estate. Instead, she sent two of her clerks from Moscow to make an inventory of the serfs and their property. (p.89) She had not taken the trouble to discover that the climate in Kostroma was harsh, the land poor, the grain-harvest invariably inadequate; wheat had to be imported from the Volga region. On 17 November 1816 she sent instructions to the bailiff. He was to tell the serfs that they were now her property. 'I paid very dear for you, so it is impossible to leave you in your former position', she says, ominously. 'If you want to live in peace on your own native soil, then give me...'. (p.90) There follows a list of her outrageous demands. 100 roubles from each household, and a quite unreasonable quantity of cloth, butter, white mushrooms, mutton, eggs, poultry and game. The Moscow family, even with all its servants and stable-
boys, could not have consumed such quantities of food. It is clear that Griboedova intended to sell not only the cloth but the surplus provisions. (p.91)

She demands as much from all her villages, she tells the bailiff - and some of them lack the 'advantages' of Kostroma. The following extract from her prikaz is typical of her bullying tactics. The bailiff is to make it clear to the serfs:

it's better to pay the extra and be free and on your own land, and if not, half the arable land will be taken from you, we'll put you onto the ploughed land, we'll set up a distillery and a cloth mill, where you'll have no peace, day or night. (p.90)

Later in this same document she turns her attention to the profitable business of serf-breeding. 'Marry off all the single people and watch that the wife isn't older than the husband, or at least the same age [...] or else I'll bring them here [to Moscow] to marry', she threatens. (pp. 90-91)

The serfs protested. Griboedova insisted. On 12 March 1817 the peasant Petr Nikiforov sent a letter of complaint, through State-Secretary Kikin, to the Empress. Griboedova, meanwhile, increased her demands. Her instructions to her bailiff of 10 March 1817 required that timber be supplied, in vast quantities. 'See to it that it's done, or it will be the worse for you.' Now, like Baron Tuzenbach, she began to dream of a brick factory. 'Make 100,000 bricks, don't plead ignorance, it's not difficult, it's already been done locally, but even if you don't know how, get a master and give him the workers - even the women can work the clay', she adds. (p.92)

Perhaps this plan could shed some light on Griboedov's otherwise unexplained visit to Narva, mentioned in his letter to Begichev dated 15 April 1818. It appears to have been a matter of some urgency: 'on my departure for Narva, Semenova pressed me to hurry so that I shouldn't delay her benefit performance'. In spite of which, 'in order not to be delayed in St Petersburg', he
enlisted the cooperation of Zhandr, left him to get on with the translation of *Les Fausses infidélités*, and set off for Narva, at that time a city of the St Petersburg province. The letter, the first written to Begichev after the duel of the previous November - or the first to survive - is the one referred to at the beginning of this chapter, in which he describes his interview with Nesselrode. It reveals him as depressed, if still joking. A visit to Narva hardly seems calculated to dispel such a mood. The industrial revolution spread to Estonia in the late 1820s, but Narva's later development does not suggest that it was, even then, a cultural centre. According to the Great Soviet Encyclopaedia its industries, by the middle of the nineteenth century, included the manufacture of textiles, power engineering and the production of building materials. Brick factories are mentioned. It is at least possible that Griboedov was making enquiries on his mother's behalf.

More significant, perhaps, was the crisis in the corvée system in Estonia which, according to the same encyclopaedia, 'impelled the government and nobles to initiate reforms'. After a series of disturbances laws had been enacted, in 1802, which entitled the peasants to own half of their moveable property, and to bequeath their holdings. These measures proved inadequate, and in 1816, the year in which Griboedova acquired the estate of Kostroma, the Estonian peasants gained their personal freedom. The landlords kept the land, however, and the peasants' freedom of movement was curtailed. It is also possible that Griboedov, with his degree in law and his concern for justice, wished to see, at first hand, the effect of these reforms, in view of the increasing unrest on his mother's new estate.

In June 1817 Petr Nikiforov, having apparently received no reply to his first complaint, addressed a second to the Tsar. (pp.94-95) From that time
onwards a series of petitioners from Kostroma came to St Petersburg, where Griboedov was then working, of course, at the College of Foreign Affairs. One of these, Semen Kornilov, waited at the entrance to the Winter Palace and gave his petition into the hands of a startled Tsar. (p.117) It was Nikiforov’s second letter of complaint, however, that was brought to the attention of Arakcheev, who passed it to the Committee of Ministers. (p.96) They took action. Six of Griboedova’s neighbouring landowners were appointed; their task was to give an opinion as to the reasonableness or otherwise of her demands. (p.100) Unsurprisingly, they found them reasonable. In a letter to the St Petersburg military governor-general, the civil governor, Karl Baumgarten, explained that the obrok of 100 roubles demanded was not from each registered soul but from each household. This reduced, but still excessive burden on each household of 75 roubles was declared by the six to be ‘moderate’. (p.102) Still the serfs protested. Baumgarten mounted an investigation. He found that the obrok in the district was generally set at between 11 and 15 roubles; the highest figure, a single exception, was only 24 roubles. (p.110)

This complex process of complaint and counter-complaint dragged on without resolution. Griboedova’s estate was placed under the supervision of the local landowners. In March 1818 Lt.-Col. Ogarev, nephew of Griboedova and a man after her own heart, appeared with these custodian landowners at a meeting with the serfs. He declared his intention of buying them, and transferring half of them to his own estate in Penza; their homes were to be broken up, assembled into rafts, and sent there by water. (p.113) There must have been someone representing Griboedova apart from the two clerks sent to make inventories; it seems likely that Ogarev performed this function. She herself did not make her
first - and only - visit to Kostroma until 19 October 1818, two days after writing to Lavrov, director of the police department, requesting military help in the rapidly deteriorating situation on her estate. The serfs, more accustomed to hunting than to agriculture, were expert shots. Apart from stakes and pitchforks they had armed themselves with up to three hundred weapons, including an antiquated cannon. The rising was not finally suppressed, and then only by the intervention of the military, until 28 April 1818. (p.136)

Griboedov arrived in Moscow on 3 September of that same year. It is unlikely that the matter of her rebellious serfs had already been dismissed from Griboedova’s mind. It is impossible to believe that, during his week at home, she did not discuss the matter with her son. Was it, then, sympathy with her cause which prompted the sudden access of filial warmth in his letter from Voronezh? Even if his visit to Narva was quite unconnected with the unrest at Kostroma, he cannot have been unaware of the situation there. Griboedova was a woman of considerable social standing. If the Tsar and his ministers knew of the affair, it must surely have provided St Petersburg society with excellent material for a scandal. By the end of 1817, as a result of the unfortunate duel, St Petersburg was already circulating unpleasant rumours about the son; it is unlikely to have refrained from doing the same for the mother.

Griboedov must have known that the source of the unrest at Kostroma was not the personal cruelty of a resident landowner to her serfs - a common enough occurrence, but surely not one that he could have condoned. Griboedova never went near her serfs. It was evident that her unreasonable financial demands were at the root of the trouble. And yet he was prepared to accept the income obtained by this exploitation. In that same letter to Begichev, written from Voronezh on 18
September 1818, he mentions his 'Dido', a reference, perhaps, to Metastasio's opera *Didone abbandonata*, first performed in Russia in 1765. Il'ia Ogarev will send her money from Kostroma in your name', he says, wishing to ensure that she is provided for in his absence.38

It cannot be assumed that because Chatskii speaks out, with passion, against the abuse of serfdom, that Griboedov was opposed to the institution itself. As Piksanov says, 'it is possible to disapprove strongly of the abuse of a given institution while defending the latter just as strongly'.39 Catherine II wrote a comedy entitled *Chto za shtuki?*, in which the abuse of serfdom is implicitly condemned.40 Simon Karlinsky points out that in any other author's play, a hypocritical domestic tyrant, such as Catherine's Tverdina (the anti-heroine of the piece) would inevitably have been interpreted as an indictment of serfdom by Soviet scholars.41 And yet, to quote Edward Crankshaw, 'Catherine herself, for all her liberal protestations and her flirtations with Voltaire and Diderot, had reduced the peasantry to a condition of servitude more absolute and ignominious than at any time in Russian history.42

In Act II, Scene 4, of Catherine's comedy, Sofiia, Tverdina's niece, has the following conversation with Varvara, house-serf and ladies' maid.

ВАРВАРА Что тамо опять?
СОФИЯ Одеваться хочу.
ВАРВАРА На что?
СОФИЯ Тетушка приказала прийти к себе.
ВАРВАРА То дело иное.
СОФИЯ И ворчать причину не имеешь.
ВАРВАРА Тебе бы хотелось потачки во всем, а тетушка потакать не велит.
Ты знаешь, что Прасковью сослали в деревню за то... [in the manuscript the conclusion of this sentence, 'что потакала тебе!', is crossed out, МН]
СОФИЯ Я потачки от тебя никогда не требовала, да и за Прасковьюю иной вины я не знаю, как только та разве, что с ней по вечерам игрывали в жмурки.
ВАРВАРА То так, знаем...
The abuse of the owner's power over his serfs to which Chatskii refers in *Gore ot uma*, II.5.360-72 is indeed appalling. But in his last monologue, at the end of Act IV, where he pours out what is closest to his heart, neither serfdom nor the abuse of it are mentioned. The speech is full of hurt pride and the pain of rejected love. All Moscow is condemned, not least for its failure to appreciate him. Nowhere is there any mention of that chief of evils so fiercely opposed by the most radical of the future Decembrists. He makes no protest when Famusov declares his intention, in the preceding speech, of sending Fil'ka the porter off to a penal battalion ... 'В работу вас, на поселенье вас' (IV.14.441). He remains silent while the man condemns poor Liza to a filthy existence in the poultry-yard ... 'Изволь-ка в избу, марш, за птицами ходить' (IV.14.447), a fate similar to that of Praskov'ia in Catherine’s play. When those young reformers, the future Decembrists, adopted *Gore ot uma* as their manifesto, in this one respect at least they read more into the play than can be justified by the text; it does not represent an unequivocal condemnation of serfdom.

Nechkina has no hesitation in claiming Griboedov as an early revolutionary thinker: 'Was not Griboedov on the way to understanding that revolution must involve the people?'. And to Zhandr, in conversation with Smirnov in 1858, so many years after his friend’s death, there may have seemed no harm in according him a little posthumous heroism.

'I am very curious, Andrei Andreich', I began, 'to know the actual, real extent of Griboedov’s participation in the conspiracy of 14 December'. The extent? The full extent.' 'Full?', I said, somewhat surprised, knowing that Griboedov himself had actually laughed at the conspiracy, saying that a hundred ensigns wanted to change Russia’s entire system of government. 'Of course, full. Even if he did talk about a hundred ensigns, that was only in relation to the practicalities, but he believed absolutely in the necessity and the justice of the cause.'
Zhandr's use of the word 'only' here is revealing. There can be little doubt that Griboedov, at the time, shared at least some of the idealistic yearnings of the future Decembrists; but his view of their methods is equally clear.

On 3 September 1818, he left Moscow to take up his post in the diplomatic service. He had assembled all his material - literary, political, social, personal. It may indeed have been thought expedient to promote this talented, troublesome young man out of harm's way, in a manner advantageous to the government. The East, the so-called 'Warm Siberia', was regarded as a most convenient method of disposal; not exactly exile, but distant enough. Nesselrode, irritatingly, was right for all the wrong reasons. Griboedov, contrary to his own more gloomy expectations, did 'perfect his gifts in solitude'. In five years' time he would return to Moscow with the first two acts of Gore ot uma.

2. Ibid., p. 129.

3. Ibid.


11. Ibid., pp.185-86.

12. Ibid., p.186.


19. Ibid., p.342.


S.A. Makashin and others, 20 vols (Moscow, 1965-77), XIII (1973), 7-262.


23. Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, III, 179.

24. Ibid., III, 130-32 (p. 130).

25. Ibid., p. 131.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid., III, 132-34 (p. 133).

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.


32. Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, III, 121.

33. Ibid., III, 240.

34. N.K. Piksanov, 'Griboedov i krepostnye raby po neizdannym dokumentam', in Piksanov, Issledovaniia, pp.83-158. Subsequent references to Piksanov's study in this chapter are by page number in brackets.

35. Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, III, 128.


37. Ibid., p.309.

38. Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, III, 134.


40. Catherine II, Chto za shtuki?, in Sochineniia Imperatritsy Ekateriny II na osnovanii podlinnykh rukopisei i s ob"iasnit' nymi primecheniami Akademika A.N. Pypina, III, Dramaticheskie sochineniia (St Petersburg, 1901), 155-203 (p.171).

41. Karlinsky, Russian Drama, p.91.

42. Edward Crankshaw, The Shadow of the Winter Palace (London: Macmillan,


44. Smirnov, 'Rasskazy', p.269.

The travel notes, especially those addressed to Begichev between 29 January and mid-February 1819, provide evidence of changes in Griboedov as significant as those between Molodye suprugi and Gore ot uma; changes which chart the progress from craftsman to artist, from St Petersburg socialite to powerful writer. The physical distance between Griboedov and his former way of life promotes objectivity. With a growing sense of isolation he re-examines his values. One by one he abandons the conventions: social, academic, theatrical, political. Indeed, it would be hard to account for the quality of Gore ot uma without recognizing this necessary development.

The ambivalence of both Murav'ev and Iakubovich towards Griboedov emphasizes the difficulty of reconciling conflicting aspects of his complex character during this period of creative growth. The two of them scarcely seem to know whether they are charmed or offended. On 21 October 1818 Griboedov would arrive in Tbilisi. The 'prophet without honour'. The writer with something to say and no one to listen. This view of himself was not, however, the one which preceded him. Iakubovich, who had been posted to the Caucasus, arrived in Tbilisi on 15 February of the same year, bringing with him his own account of the duel between Sheremetev and Zavadovskii. He claimed to have fired at the latter in anger after the fatal wounding of Sheremetev and the consequent postponement of his own duel with Griboedov. The bullet had gone through
Zavadovskii's hat. This was why he had been sent to Georgia, he explained to Murav'ev.\(^1\)

Staff-Captain Nikolai Nikolaevich Murav'ev had served under Ermolov in the Caucasus since 1816. At twenty-five he was a veteran of the Paris campaign. He seems to have felt a certain sympathy for Iakubovich. The entry in his diary for 15 February 1818 which records the arrival of this young officer notes that 'Sheremetev was killed, Zavadovskii was forgiven, but the second was punished.'\(^2\) On 7 October he learned from Iakubovich that Griboedov would shortly be arriving in Tbilisi, on his way to Persia. Iakubovich was determined to take this chance. He asked Murav'ev and a fellow officer, the adjutant Ungern, to assist him in arranging the second half of the now notorious 'partie carrée'.

Griboedov, meanwhile, accompanied by his friend, Dr Hamburger, who was to be the clerk to the mission in Persia, had reached Mozdok. It is, he tells his superior, Mazarovich, in a letter dated 12 October 1818, 'a wretched hole, where one can see nothing but mud and mist, in which we sit up to our ears'.\(^3\) It would have been enough to drive them insane, he continues, if they had not been amply compensated for all the miseries of Mozdok by the cordiality of the Commander-in-Chief. It is somehow satisfying to learn that in this benighted outpost Griboedov met his match, in the person of General Ermolov, 'the Proconsul of Iberia', as the writer called him (Iberia being the old Byzantine name for Eastern Georgia). 'I must confess', he tells Mazarovich, 'he's such a marvellous talker that conversing with him, in spite of having too much pride to lack confidence, I was often lost for words.'

Thus far they have travelled by coach. Griboedov plans to save the full story of their calamitous journey till he meets Mazarovich in Tbilisi. 'The
coaches which broke down a hundred times and had to be mended a hundred times, the long delays which this necessitated, the vast expenses incurred, which left us in dire straits', he writes. As well to mention these unforeseen expenses at the earliest possible moment, whatever else was left unsaid. 'Now', he continues, 'we are setting out for the Caucasus, in terrible weather and, what's more, on horseback.' This can hardly have been news to Mazarovich; there was no other way. 'How often I shall have occasion to cry: "O Coridon, Coridon, quae te dementia caepit!"... Forgive my scrawl', he concludes, conventionally. 'Our pens are badly sharpened, the ink [like Mozdok] is wretched, and yet I'm hurrying, without myself knowing why'. He resorts to polite formalities, comforts himself with a Latin quotation; but that compulsive and unnecessary haste reveals a tension which pride prevents him from sharing with anyone except, perhaps, Begichev.

If Griboedov's letter to Mazarovich is, even unintentionally, revealing, his travel notes made on the journey from Mozdok to Tbilisi are, for the most part, models of objectivity. He describes the changing landscape and weather conditions over a period of eight days, often in short, incomplete sentences, producing a vivid aide-memoire clearly intended for later elaboration. The bright October day fades, the wind gets up, the sky becomes overcast. 'Вступаем в царство непогод', he comments, as they reach the Kabardinskii Redoubt at the end of their first day's ride. (G30)

The ascent begins. Griboedov notes, meticulously, the apparent merging of the seasons, the rapid transition from a comfortable warmth to leaves frozen with hoar frost. He rides off, momentarily abandoning the convoy, to experience 'a pleasant loneliness'. The way becomes steeper, they ride in single file. (G30)
Eagles and hawks, he observes, and is unable to resist telling himself that they are descended from the tormentors of Prometheus. (G31) On the third day he and Hamburger set off ahead of the rest with ten Cossacks. 'Snow like linen hung in folds, golden hills, sound of Terek crashing down mountainside.' One can almost hear the fine writing he hopes to base on this experience. 'Pheasants, wild boar, chamois (different names)' he continues and then, remembering, perhaps, a favourite St Petersburg restaurant, 'but there is nowhere to eat them in Vladikavkaz'. (G31)

The fourth night is spent in Dariali. 'Terror caused by extraordinarily high cliffs.' (G31) Koban, their resting place on the fifth night, evokes a similar response. 'Terrible position of Koban - wind, snow-bound, height and precipice.' (G32) It would seem that vertigo is compounding his problems. The convoy travels by the narrow, slippery mountain road alongside the Terek. Riders fall constantly, the road continues to rise. They are forced to dismount and cross the fast-running mountain streams on foot. 'I fell several times from exhaustion', he writes. 'I don't know how the kibitka and our droshki don't topple into the abyss.' (G32)

Finally they reach Kashaur. There they load up the pack-animals, procure fresh horses and begin the descent. Griboedov looks down on the Aragva and makes an inventory of the landscape with understandable enthusiasm: bushes, ploughed fields, flocks, various houses, towers, huts, villages, sheep and goats - 'they walk all over the rocks', he notes with respect - various ruined castles, churches and monasteries, some 'wild, as in the American plantations', some amongst the trees, some in the woods which cling to the mountainside, others beside the Aragva. With relief Griboedov and Hamburger take to the droshky and
drive through this welcoming countryside, 'the mountains of the East, but not terrifying, like the last ones' .

On the seventh day they rested. Griboedov lists a few trees, notes 'Ananuri, quarantine', and leaves his last sentence unfinished. 'Our apartment is like... ' (G33) Fatigue, perhaps, intervenes. On the eighth and last day of this journey from Mozdok to Tbilisi he records: 'Departure - alongside the Aragva. Georgian morning song.' (G33) In the early part of June 1828 the composer Glinka was to meet Griboedov in St Petersburg. His Zapiski contain the following entry:

Spent almost the whole day with Griboedov, the author of the comedy Gore ot uma. He was a very good musician, and played me the theme of a Georgian song, to which A.S. Pushkin, soon afterwards, wrote the romance: 'Ne poï, volshebnîtsa, pri mne'.

By the time the poem reaches the pages of the Academia edition of Pushkin's works, the poem is as he wrote it, but Griboedov's name is no longer associated with it. Addressed, of course, not to 'волшебница' but to 'красавица', the commentary tells us that 'according to the composer, M.I. Glinka, it was written by Pushkin to a Georgian melody, which he chanced to hear'. Had Glinka mis-remembered both the poem and Griboedov's contribution to it? Or did one of those Georgian songs penetrate the morning haze of fatigue and lodge in the writer's musical consciousness, to be recalled ten years later? It seems perfectly possible.

On the day of his arrival in Tbilisi Griboedov was met by a hostile Iakubovich demanding satisfaction, and agreed to meet him. Iakubovich was by now on friendly terms with Murav'ev; the two young men were both much occupied by plans for the forthcoming duel. In Murav'ev's Zapiski the entry for 8 October 1818 reads: 'Walked about the garden after dinner, trying to find a
suitable place for Iakubovich's duel. Iakubovich spent the evening with me. I liked many of his views.' (M59)

When the duel had first been discussed, on the previous evening, Iakubovich had not asked Murav'ev or Ungern to act for him, knowing the risk to which this would expose their careers. They were merely to stand at a distance of twenty paces or so, prepared to help the wounded. Now he came to them both, saying that Griboedov had agreed to finish what they had started, and asking Murav'ev to be his second. Murav'ev felt obliged to assent. It was suggested that they should fight in Talyzin's apartment, no suitable place having yet been found in Tbilisi.

Iakubovich had known Griboedov since their schooldays at the Blagorodnyi Pansion; Murav'ev had never met him. His immediate reaction to the writer, whom he saw for the first time on the following evening, 22 October, reveals an ambivalence which he was never to resolve. Murav'ev would be alternately attracted and repelled by this proud, witty, scholarly young man, seeming to sense, from their first meeting, something of Griboedov's complexity. The man's extremely intelligent and well-read, but he seems to me to think too much of himself', he wrote in his diary, later that night. (M59)

Iakubovich, Griboedov and Hamburger, who had agreed to act as his colleague's second, gathered at Murav'ev's apartment after dinner to make the final arrangements. Hamburger at once attempted to effect a reconciliation. In this he was not only carrying out the duty of a second, but fulfilling a promise made to Griboedov's mother (M60); he had assured her that he would do his utmost to prevent the duel from taking place. Iakubovich would have none of it. When Griboedov, who had no personal quarrel with this young officer, asked
him why he was so determined to proceed with the affair, Iakubovich replied that he had given his word to the dying Sheremetev that he would avenge him by fighting both Griboedov and Zavadovskii. 'You have been abusing me everywhere', Griboedov says. 'I have, and I was bound to do so till this moment, but now I see that you acted as a noble man', Iakubovich replies. Under the influence of Griboedov's powerful presence Iakubovich feels impelled to grant him, oddly, a retrospective nobility. Nevertheless, he had given his word. It only remained for the seconds to discuss conditions.

Murav'ev suggested Iakubovich's apartment as a suitable venue. Hamburger would not agree; Iakubovich might already be accustomed to shooting in his room. This objection provides an interesting insight into the behaviour of these young officers, freed from the restraints of Moscow or St Petersburg. But Peter the Great was scarcely creating a precedent when he used John Evelyn's family portraits for his target practice; as mentioned above, young men throughout the ages have responded to 'abroad' in a similarly uninhibited manner.

Eventually it was decided that the duel should be fought at some distance from Tbilisi. Hamburger borrowed a brichka from the Mazarovich brothers and hired the horses. Murav'ev persuaded Miller, the embassy doctor, to stand by in case any wounds required attention. (M60-61) Having done everything possible to ensure that Griboedov and Iakubovich were afforded the chance to kill each other honourably, the four of them spent the evening together in high good humour. 'They all met at my place', Murav'ev recalls, 'we had supper, we were cheerful, friendly, we chatted and laughed as though there were no such thing as a duel.'
The event itself, however, was a serious matter. Murav’ev recalls that Iakubovich strode at once to the barrier and waited for Griboedov to fire. Griboedov took just two paces forward and stopped. They stood for a long minute. Finally Iakubovich lost patience and fired first. According to Murav’ev he fired at Griboedov’s leg, evidently not wishing to kill his opponent, but the bullet penetrated the palm of Griboedov’s left hand just below the little finger. Griboedov raised his bloodied hand, showing his injury to the seconds; then, waiving his right to approach the barrier, took aim. He had not intended to kill Iakubovich until that moment, he told his friends later. (M62) The bullet went so close to Iakubovich’s head that the latter thought himself wounded. He felt for blood and stared in disbelief at his unstained hand. ‘O sort injuste’, Griboedov is reported to have said, eschewing the rich possibilities of the Russian swearing, even at this critical moment, in favour of French classicism. The remark attributed to Iakubovich seems, in view of their friendly behaviour to one another both before and after the duel, less likely. While Murav’ev galloped off up the hill to retrieve Dr Miller, Griboedov lay in Iakubovich’s arms. It is hard to believe in this closeness if the latter had really shouted, as he fired at Griboedov, ‘At least that’ll stop you playing.’ Murav’ev, though he quotes Griboedov’s exclamation, does not include this vindictive remark in his account of the duel, written on the same day. Zil’bershtein is quoting P. Bartenev in his footnote to this page of Murav’ev’s Zapiski’. (M62) Perhaps this was a later addition to the story made by Iakubovich himself, who seemed to find it easier to dislike Griboedov when not actually in his presence.

Murav’ev expresses his admiration for Iakubovich’s behaviour under fire, ‘how he awaited certain death after his own shot with arms folded’. Griboedov’s
self control after the duel is no less impressive. He did not complain and gave no sign that he was suffering,' Murav'ev records. Ksenofont Polevoi, in his 'O zhizni i sochineniiakh A.S. Griboedova', recalls an evening, many years later, spent with Griboedov at Prince V.F. Odoevskii's. The conversation turned to man's power over himself. Griboedov maintained that such power is limited only by physical impossibility, but that over everything else man is able to exert complete control, to make of himself anything he chooses. Though the following story is, of course, this writer's translation of Polevoi's recollections of Griboedov's words, Polevoi himself was much impressed at the time by a rare quality: a kind of sincerity which never overstepped the limits of good form'.

'Naturally,' he [Griboedov] said, 'if I were to wish my nose shorter or longer' (his own comparison) 'that would be stupid, because it is impossible. But in the moral sense, which is sometimes deceptively physical in its effect on the feelings, it is possible to make anything of oneself. For example, in the last Persian campaign, during one engagement, I happened to be near Prince Suvolov. A cannon-ball from the enemy battery fell close to the Prince, showering him with earth, and I thought, for a moment, that he had been killed. It sent such a shudder through me that I started to shake. The prince was only bruised, but I felt an involuntary trembling and couldn't overcome a vile feeling of fear. I was mortified. Was I really a coward at heart? The thought is unbearable to any decent man, and I decided, at all costs, to cure myself of a fear which you may ascribe, if you wish, to my physical make-up, my organism, some innate feeling. But I wanted not to tremble at cannon-balls, at the sight of death, and at the first opportunity I stood on the spot at which the enemy battery was firing. There I counted a certain number of shots which I myself had determined, then, quietly turning my horse, rode calmly away. Do you know, this rid me of my fear. I was never again afraid of any military danger. But give way to the feeling of terror and it will become stronger, gain a hold on one.' Such an original opinion remained in my memory: I have retold it here almost in Griboedov's own words.9

In 1818 the younger Griboedov had not yet attained the 'complete control' he considered both possible and desirable. His behaviour before and after the duel was exemplary in this respect; but there was a moment of uncontrolled rage when
he would have killed a man for damaging his hand. Slander he could ignore; music was another matter.

Dr Miller, when found, bandaged Griboedov's hand and assured him that it would soon heal. This it did, but not without leaving the little finger permanently crooked. His friend Zhandr, many years later - on 3 June 1858 to be precise - in conversation with Smirnov, said that the bullet hit the palm of Griboedov's hand near the thumb, but damaged the tendon controlling the little finger. In order to play the piano he was obliged to devise a special fingering.\textsuperscript{10} Dr Ion, at one time Griboedov's tutor, confirms this story in an earlier conversation which took place on 2 March 1842. He maintains that the bullet went through the palm of Griboedov's hand near the little finger, and adds 'afterwards he had to work out a special fingering in order to play the piano'.\textsuperscript{11} Whatever Griboedov's ingenious method of adjusting to his disability, it was evidently effective. By 27 January 1819 he would write, in his letter to Ia.N. Tolstoi and N.V. Vsevolozhskii from Tbilisi, 'I was very nearly deprived, here, of the ability to play the piano, however, I've recovered now, and I'm playing runs again'.\textsuperscript{12}

The immediate concern of the participants in this duel was to conceal it from the authorities. They agreed to say that Griboedov had fallen from his horse while out hunting and the animal had stepped on his hand. (M62) No one was convinced. When the rumours reached Colonel Naumov, staff-officer at Ermolov's embassy, he gave Iakubovich until the evening of 27 October to leave Tbilisi; Griboedov, once again, went unpunished. (M63) There were a dozen Iakuboviches in every regiment. Mazarovich needed a secretary. The tsarist powers, like the mills of God, were prepared to grind slowly; time enough to
send him into a dangerous situation to perform an impossible task when they no
longer had any use for him.

On 25 December Ermolov arrived in Tbilisi. General Velîamînov, in
charge of the division in Georgia, was summoned to his presence. Over dinner
that same evening the general informed Murav’ev that the Commander-in-Chief
was extremely angry about the duel. Angry with Iakubovich, that is. Griboedov,
he advised, should ask Mazarovich to give Ermolov some explanation that would
persuade him to let the matter drop. (M64) This plan appears to have succeeded.
Griboedov settled down to spend the next three months in Tbilisi.

The majority of reminiscences concerning Griboedov are inclined, in the
nature of things, to be prejudiced in his favour. Smirnov did not conduct any of
his recorded conversations with the writer’s enemies. Murav’ev’s ‘Zapiski’ adjust
the balance. The extremes of his ambivalence can be dramatic. After dining with
Ermolov on 31 December 1818 he went to Griboedov’s apartment and the two
friends saw in the new year together. By 11 January 1819 he is accusing
Griboedov:

[he is] using all the same tricks with Ermolov that he used with me. He
takes in Aleksei Petrovich [Ermolov], who probably credits him with a
wide and profound knowledge. Griboedov is intelligent, and he knows
how to go about things so carefully that everything he says is ambiguous;
he only gives his own opinion when it confirms Aleksei Petrovich’s so that
he never contradicts him, just repeats A.P.’s words: everyone thinks that
he knew all about the subject in the first place. I’ve already been taken in
by him and I’ve seen how he does it. (M65-66)

Five days later he writes ‘It seems to me that Griboedov is constantly
trying to get at me, and that things are not going to go well between us.’ He then
relates a rather ludicrous story about a certain ‘fat Stepanov’, who came to the inn
in which he and Griboedov were both dining, although Murav’ev does not say
that they were dining together. His account seems humourless and somehow
unreliable, as though there had been a joke intended which he had deliberately
failed to see. The conversation, as recorded by Murav'ev, went like this:

Griboedov: Is that the man they were talking about, the one you were
afraid of?
Murav'ev: What do you mean, afraid - who am I going to be afraid of?
Griboedov: But he does look terrifying.
Murav’ev: He may terrify you, but he doesn’t terrify me in the least.

Murav'ev waited, he tells us, until this oversized man had left; then he called
Hamburger over - the inn seems to have been a general meeting place - and asked
him loudly if he had heard that Griboedov found Stepanov’s appearance
terrifying. Griboedov, again, according to Murav’ev, looked embarrassed and
tried to explain that it was his size which made Stepanov look menacing. (M66)
The whole exchange could hardly be sillier. And yet duels have been fought for
less. Mercifully, they were both still living down the last one, or we might well
have been deprived of Gore ot uma.

Murav’ev’s entry for 22 January reads:

I dined with A.P. [Ermolov, MH] Griboedov distinguished himself by the
most stupid flattery and nonsense. I don’t understand how A.P. can
continue to be so mistaken in him. It seems that he is still extremely well
disposed towards him. As far as I am concerned, it’s fortunate that
Griboedov isn’t staying in Tbilisi, but leaving with Mazarovich. (M66)

The entry for 28 January shows him at his spiteful worst. ‘Griboedov, who
knew how to get himself disliked by one and all, has left with Mazarovich, to the
great satisfaction of everyone.’ He goes on to report that Griboedov, having been
asked by Ermolov to write an account of a recent earthquake in Tbilisi for
inclusion in the dispatches, ‘wrote a frightful thing: "With a roar the Kurinskii ice
swayed, snapped and hurled itself into the abyss; here there was thunder,
cracking, rumbling, terror, citizens scattered, a town deserted.”’ (M66) Poor
Griboedov. The original of this piece has not survived, but it seems possible that
after struggling over the Caucasus on horseback, losing the use of his little finger and alienating at least some of his companions, the temptation to indulge in a comforting bit of fine-writing ('golden hills, sound of Terek crashing down mountainside') proved irresistible. I found out', Murav'ev concludes, 'that A.P. thanked him effusively for it, praised it to the skies; as soon as Griboedov had left he got Mogilevskii to write the whole thing again.' (M67)

Apart from this description of an earthquake, and two or three pages of notes on I.I. Golikov's *Deianiia Petra Velikogo, mudrogo preobrazovatelia Rossii, made between 1818 and 1820*, Griboedov’s letter to *Syn otechestva* belongs to this period in Tbilisi. It is dated 21 January 1819, one week before he set out for Persia, and was published in that journal on 8 March. He begins with a quotation from Lomonosov and a little local colour. Consulting his 'travel notes', he manages to find a place for the tormentors of Prometheus and the swift change from winter to spring on the steep descent from Kashaur to the Aragva. He complains that his friends have forgotten him. ‘Travel 3,000 versts and you might as well be dead as far as former friends are concerned’, he writes, sourly. Then, leafing through December's *Russkii invalid*, no. 284, he says, he caught sight of an article about Georgia. ‘This place cannot be completely forgotten yet, I thought; sometimes people even think about it, and, consequently, about those who live in it...’ His sarcasm is heavy-handed but understandable. Papers had arrived; where were the letters?

Putting aside his personal grievances he comes at last to the point. The article contains an account sent from Constantinople, on 26 October 1818, of a rising in Georgia led by a wealthy Tatar prince. Griboedov is 'both saddened and amused'. How could a Russian paper believe this nonsense? News of a real
rebellion would have been received through the proper channels, not from Constantinople. 'And who are these Tatar princes in Georgia? There aren't any', he writes, going on to describe a tranquil and orderly society living under 'the firm and wise measures adopted by our government'. These include the building of a fortress on the Sunzhan River to put a stop to the incursions of the Chechens, and the occupation of Bashli in Daghestan. In a word, the supreme power of the Tsar has never been able to rely with such confidence on the submission of these peoples. The opening of his letter was designed, it would seem, to put the reader off the scent. Griboedov is clearly speaking now in his official capacity.

His next task is to point out the harm which such rumours can cause. The English may circulate them in Tabriz or Teheran - 'perfectly innocently', he is careful to say, with transparent insincerity. The powerful British influence at the Persian court was a sensitive issue. 'And where is the real source of such inventions?', he asks his readers. Or, as Chatskii will put it, Чье это сочинение!' (IV.10.283)

Some Armenian, dissatisfied with trade in Georgia, arrives in Tsar'grad and tells an acquaintance, grim-faced, that things are going badly there. This friendly piece of information is relayed to someone else, who interprets what was a private grievance as common to the entire nation. It's easy enough for a third person to turn it into a rebellion!

Chatskii, too, describes the spreading of a rumour as a three-stage process:

Поверили глупцы, другим передают,
Старухи вмит тревогу бьют,
И вот общественное мнение!

IV.10.284-86

Griboedov's letter ends with a reproof. If this spot may be justly called, as far as you are concerned, gentlemen of St Petersburg, "the forgotten country", it is permissible only to forget about it, not to invent or repeat nonsense about it.
In spite of Murav’ev’s hostile comments, Griboedov had clearly entered into the social life of Tbilisi. Prince Palavandov, who met him soon after his arrival in the town, is recorded as saying, ‘I can see him now, great staring eyes, charming everyone with his clever talk; he was cordially received in all the best houses.’ Nor had he confined himself to clever talk. Several tasks were assigned to him, one of which was the reorganization of the Tbilisi Institute of the Nobility. Now, once again, Griboedov must uproot himself. On the eve of his departure he writes to Tolstoi and Vsevolozhskii, ‘I feel at home here, and I’m sick to death of travelling, but there’s no help for it.’ Then concludes, with words which reveal a deepening sense of isolation, ‘If one of you goes to the theatre, take a look at the first box from the left and remember me, perhaps my soul will respond, and make me hiccup somewhere near Ararat or on the Araks.’

Two days’ journey from Tbilisi, Griboedov picks up his pen again and begins the second of his Putevye pis’ma’, addressed this time directly to Begichev. ‘My Dearest Stepan Nikitich! You don’t write to me often enough and, what’s worse, I don’t write to you at all. From now on things are going to be different.’ However, he continues, his other St Petersburg friends have forgiven him. They guessed that he would not have time to write in Tbilisi. Even Katenin, even Prince Shakhovskoi, ‘who scarcely lives in the real world, he’s so wrapped up in his ideal Kholminskiis and Ol’gins’, all of them seem to know him so well. It would be natural enough, he says, if Begichev alone understood him, but that everyone, everyone... ‘Am I really such an ordinary man!’, he exclaims, managing to feel affronted by their understanding. He retires, defensively, into his fashionable St Petersburg persona. ‘My time was entirely taken up with three excessively important things: a duel, cards and sickness.’ It is only a momentary
retreat. 'Now, two days’ ride from Tbilisi, I have somehow got together with my common sense again’, he says, as though he were speaking to one friend about another.

Like Murav’ev, Ermolov had sensed an ambiguity in Griboedov, but his interpretation of it was more charitable. 'Would you believe it’, Griboedov writes, 'even Aleksei Petrovich, wishing me farewell, declared that I'm a scapegrace; he added, however, that I am a fine man for all that. Alas, I doubt neither the one nor the other’, he adds, propping up his wounded self-esteem. He was paying a high price for his part in that first duel. The future was, at best, insecure. As he mounted his horse, he turned to the general. Ne nous sacrifiez pas, Excellence, si jamais vous faites la guerre à la Perse.’ Ermolov laughed. 'A strange idea', he replied. Griboedov did not find it in the least strange. The general had been empowered to declare war or make peace; 'what if he were suddenly to take it into his head that the Russian border with Persia is not sufficiently well-defined, and decide to extend it up to the Araks! - What would happen to us then?’, he asks.

Nevertheless, Griboedov was strongly drawn to Ermolov. 'It's not so much that he's clever, nowadays everybody's clever', he remarks. Ermolov is eloquent - but 'not with this present-day fragmented, incoherent Napoleonic rhetoric'. Griboedov may have been able to avoid the mind-numbing sessions of 'Besedy' in Admiral Shishkov's temple of enlightenment by being regularly indisposed every Tuesday, but Lotman's earnest young truth-tellers were everywhere; they made it their business to show their disapproval of the society in which they moved so comfortably. These were his friends. Right but ineffecutal. He shared their ideals, laughed at their rhetoric and reserved his
sharpest satire for their 'hangers-on', the self-indulgent poseurs who would be damned by Repetilov's ecstatic praise. The card-sharpening Tolstoi-Amerikanets, for instance:

Когда ж об честности высокой говорит,
Каким-то демоном внушаём:
Глаза в крови, лицо горит,
Сам плачет, и мы все рыдаем.

IV.4.156-59

Empty phrase-making had devalued the currency. 'Nowadays everybody's clever.'

Ermolov was impressive. Griboedov, unaware of defending himself against Murav'ev's allegations, reveals his respect for the man. 'He may not convince you, but he makes you listen [...] I didn't out-argue him once', he adds. 'Perhaps I've improved.' (G36) And perhaps it was this genuine deference shown to a man he found remarkable that Murav'ev perceived as duplicity.

The leader of their convoy arrives with the pack-animals and starts to unload. Noisily. Griboedov can no longer concentrate. Later, long after midnight, too tired to sleep, he resumes his letter. 'I'm going to have another talk with you', he writes. 'We were discussing Ermolov. He has none of that stupidity which nowadays passes for cleverness...’ (G36) It is a theme to which he will return.

The candle burns down. There is no one awake from whom he can demand another.

Goodbye, my dear fellow; everyone is snoring, and the Secretary to the Peripatetic Mission in Asia is lying on the floor, in a filthy hut, on a rug, near a minute fire which gives out more smoke than heat; we're surrounded by carrion-crows and hawks. (G37)

Not the tormentors of Prometheus; just hawks. 'If you don't look out, they'll peck your overcoat to pieces. Yesterday we spent the night with the horses: at least there was somewhere to sleep.' (G37) Shakhovskoi and his Lipetskie vody must
indeed have seemed remote. Griboedov’s world had become uncompromisingly real.

On the third day of this journey from Tbilisi to Teheran, 31 January, Griboedov remembers his intention of giving Begichev a day-by-day description of it. Thoughts of Ermolov have distracted him, he says. To turn his attention from such a splendid man to an insignificant traveller would have not the slightest interest for readers, 'if I wanted them. But I am writing to a friend and I judge by my own feelings. You are more interesting to me than all Plutarch's heroes.'

'28th', he writes, beginning from the beginning. But the subject of his discourse remains obstinately personal. 'After a friendly breakfast we left Tbilisi; I find friends everywhere, or I imagine that I do; the fact is, a lot of people saw us off, among them Iakubovich, and were sorry, it seemed, that I was leaving.' (G37) 'I imagine.' 'It seemed.' These moments of self-doubt are as appealing as they are infrequent. It is hard to believe, however, that Griboedov could have been insensitive to a general feeling of hostility as described by Murav'ev. Perhaps the reason for the incompatibility of their two accounts lies in the wit of the former and the near-total absence of a sense of humour in the latter. For confirmation of this last the reader is referred to Murav'ev’s own description of the duel, given above.

Griboedov makes light of the effect which this journey has on his health, dismissing his illness in Tbilisi along with duelling and gambling. But later that day he finds it difficult to keep up with the convoy. 'Several times I dismounted and fell on the snow, I ate the stuff; fortunately one of the convoy's Cossacks had a pomegranate, which revived me.' (G38) What revives him more effectively is
the discovery, in the midst of all this natural beauty, of a magnificent man-made bridge. 'Consoling!', he enthuses, and describes it. (G38) One can almost feel his yearning for the simplest St Petersburg building. He climbs over it, ascends a spiral staircase, nearly breaking his neck, he says, in the process. 'Others' - and for Griboedov they are all 'others', except, perhaps for Hamburger, and he is German - have written or carved their names on the stone. Griboedov feels himself too sophisticated to add to the graffiti. 'However', he adds, honestly, 'even I, standing beneath the great arch, where the echo is loudest, taught it to repeat my name.' (G39)

Shemir-Bek, their interpreter, trots alongside him. Griboedov is still thinking about the bridge. 'We have nothing like it in Petersburg', he feels obliged to admit.

Not even in the descriptions of Pavel Petrovich Svinin [that notorious teller of tall tales, prototype for Krylov's 'Lzhets', MH]. 'Just think', he said to me. 'To be in Persia 8 times and never to see Petersburg, isn't that terrible!' We came the other way, I replied. This stupid joke made me laugh, I don't know - will it make you laugh? (G39)

Funny or not, it reveals Griboedov's patronizing pleasure in being misunderstood by those he considered to be his inferiors. He feels free to allow himself these stupidities, he tells Begichev, because his letter is addressed to him personally, and the few close friends to whom he will show it, not to Syn otechestva where, he says, his scrawl, with its bad style and poor content, properly belongs. The remark, as it stands, is hardly flattering to the recipient of the scrawl. Griboedov explains. 'You're modest, and you value my gifts. You won't expose me to the criticism of people I despise.' (G39) Everyone but Begichev and the few close friends, apparently. Even Griboedov's respect for the prolific Shakhovskoi is qualified by the consideration that, driven by yet another 'benefit', he might just
resort to plagiarism. I deliberately fill my letters to the others with talk of personal matters, so that they don’t find their way, somehow or other, from our dear Prince’s little table to the theatre’s printing press.’ (G39)

Shakhovskoi’s attic is powerfully present. Griboedov has suddenly no heart for travel notes. Katenin, he says, may exhort him to produce his ‘observations’. (G39) It is all very flattering.

But I don’t know how to babble out erudition; my books are in my luggage and I’ve no time to dig them out; I huddle up when it’s cold, I unbutton my coat when it’s warm, I don’t consult the thermometer and I don’t note down how far the mercury rises or falls, I don’t prostrate myself on the earth in order to ascertain its properties, I don’t think about the bare shrubs and try to decide to what family their foliage belongs. (G40)

The weather’s warm’, he writes, at the end of that third day. ‘As though it were already late spring.’ He crosses a dilapidated bridge, walks to the cliff and leans against a mossy, overhanging rock. I stood there like Gray’s "Bard", he jokes. ‘All I needed was the beard.’ (G40) But Griboedov’s sorrow is real. Gray’s Pindaric ode was founded, he tells his readers in the ‘Advertisement’ which precedes it, ‘on a Tradition current in Wales, that EDWARD THE FIRST, when he compleated [sic] the conquest of that country, ordered all the bards that fell into his hands, to be put to death’.28 What was Griboedov’s exile, if not literary death? ‘Ruin seize thee, ruthless King!’ he remembered, standing alone by the rock-face.

Robed in the sable garb of woe,
With haggard eyes the Poet stood;
(Loose his beard, and hoary hair
Stream’d, like a meteor, to the troubled air)
And with a Master’s hand, and Prophet’s fire,
Struck the deep sorrows of his lyre.

[...] 

Dear lost companions of my tuneful art,
Dear, as the light that visits these sad eyes,
Dear, as the ruddy drops that warm my heart.
And who had separated him from them?

With joy I see
The different doom our Fates assign.
Be thine despair, and sceptred Care,
To triumph and to die, are mine.

This Russian bard had the Master's hand, the Prophet's fire, the love for his lost companions, the determination to triumph, once, before his death.

Later that evening Griboedov continues the letter which has so clearly become a necessary means of communication. It is an entertaining jumble of the personal and the objective, the scientific and the literary. Do you want to know with whom I'm travelling, now by stony slope, now through powdery snow?' he asks, mocking the self-consciously poetic. Then warns, touchily,

You're not to feel sorry for me though. I'm fine. It could be more tedious. There are 25 of us, don't know how many pack-animals, but a good many. We rise early; ride for two or three hours; to stop myself getting miserable, I sing, anything I know, French couplets, our Russian dancing songs; everyone copies me, even the Asian interpreters; ... They're a cheerful lot; we've got Borzoi dogs with us; they dash off after hares, or the ghosts of hares, because I still haven't seen one. The Tatars take this opportunity to show off their art. They ride all over the glades, ditches and bushes at a furious pace, gallop up to the mountain, fire into the air and disappear into the mist, like the Tsarevich in the 1,001 nights. While I lag behind, you're thinking? No, this isn't Brest, with me in the cavalry reserve. Here I gallop off at breakneck speed; bought myself a new stallion yesterday; I've got so used to being on horseback that as we ride the slippery slopes and the icy ground I calmly smoke my long pipe.(G40-41)

Begichev, after all, is not there to watch. There are one or two instances recorded of Griboedov falling off his horse. Even in Tbilisi the invented story of such a fall, designed to conceal the facts of the duel, seems to have been accepted by all the participants, including Griboedov, as being potentially convincing. But he is not just boasting. He is drawing Begichev's attention to a kind of perverse cussedness in his nature, even though he does claim that it is characteristic of humanity in general. 'I'm like that in everything', he says. 'In Petersburg, where
everyone invited me, encouraged me to write, admired my muse, I was silent, while here, where there isn’t even anyone to whom I can read it through, the pen’s never out of my hand.’ (G41) We should be glad of every scrap. Little enough of his writing survives; these vivid and spontaneous letters deserve attention.

‘One source of annoyance: my inadequate knowledge of these parts enrages me at every step. But did I think that I’d be travelling to the East? It never entered my head. Sometimes I make unforgiveable or ignorant mistakes’, he writes. It is not so much an admission as a complaint.

A while ago I saw bushes like cotton-plants, verst after verst of them, and took them for ‘bambak’ [perhaps ‘bambai’, of the Valerian family, known as the ‘Steppe Candle’], when the stuff had actually fallen from passing caravans - in the narrow twisting ways here the prickly shoots cling to the cotton and one could collect several poods of the stuff. (G41)

Enough of science. I would have given anything for an artist. There are no words to describe the mists which encircled the mountain all yesterday morning’, he writes, and then finds some. It is a technique in which Gogol’ would take a special delight. The sun gilded them, and they resembled a seething, fiery ocean [...] then they coiled themselves like clouds and lay at the foot of the distant mountains.’ (G41) It was, perhaps, his own description that reminded him of the Sentimentalists: ‘Now we are working our way, with difficulty, between rocks, over ice-covered ground, in the kingdom of Zhukovskii, over precipices; mists, mists over the mountains.’ ‘Old men and children gawp at the arrivals’, he scribbles in the margin. (G41)

There is a pause.

‘Yesterday I slept like a log all day’, Griboedov writes. ‘Four days since we left Tbilisi, three more to Erevan.’ He had slept away 1 February. The next day’s record is dated 2 February. This very brief entry belongs, perhaps, to the small
hours between the two. It would account for the anxiety of its last sentence. 'We're dreading the Dilizhanskii Gorge.' (G42)

By daylight the gorge seemed very much like its Caucasian counterparts, with one difference; in the latter the struggle against natural obstacles had already been conducted 'with gun-powder and crow-bar'. Here the traveller must fend for himself. 'Heaps of stones seem to grow at every step, overhanging branches lash you in the eye, the road is almost impassable.' When the way opens out they meet the full force of the wind. Finally, as the gorge narrows again, they find a place to pitch camp, in the shelter of a wood, near a stream. The pack-animals are unloaded, the horses freed to graze. The men pile up the packs, cover them with carpets and build a shelter. Fires are lit. Some huddle around them for warmth, others skewer pieces of raw meat on splinters of kindling wood and cook themselves kebabs. 'Best of all', Griboedov writes, 'we could see a fire smoking on a nearby island, and a group of travelling merchants settled around it'. (G42)

Their little party of twenty-five was not, after all and best of all, alone in a hostile universe.

Griboedov chews his kebab and searches the store-house of his historical knowledge. Others have slept here before him, and slept well. The first man to work iron with a hammer, the man who invented the tsevnitsa and the gusli. 'They were rewarded by their vast families with glory and love', he reflects, remembering, perhaps, his own small one.

Ever since towns and citizens have existed men have journeyed from the Gulf of Finland to where the son of Tobit went in search of the ten talents, and all in the hope of achieving a fame worthy of praise [...] travelling for an age, perhaps, and never arriving, he adds, with a near-audible sigh of frustration. (G42)
Tobias, the son of Tobit, whose story is told in the Apocrypha, was as reluctant a traveller as Griboedov. It was only at the insistence of his blind father that he undertook the journey to Rhaga in Media, the city which once stood on the site of Teheran. At least Tobias had the good fortune to be accompanied by the angel Raphael. Disguised, of course, as a helpful soul called Azarias. Tobias went to reclaim his father’s capital; the ten silver talents he sought represented a fortune. Griboedov, too, was to find his talents at the end of his journey. Both heroes would return home with a longing to open the eyes of the blind, though it has to be said that whereas Tobias achieved a miraculous cure by the application of fish-gut, Griboedov shows Chatskii, his passionate young reformer, to be sadly ineffectual.

On 3 February their little party arrived in Erevan. It had taken them a week to cover 248 versts. Griboedov charts their progress, giving the exact distance of each stage. I won’t weary you with a description of our last day’s journey’, he says. He does, though. ‘We covered neither more nor less than 60 versts through deep snow - at a good trot, of course. That’s real service for you’, he tells Begichev, with feeling. ‘Producing official documents isn’t work, especially for someone whose favourite form of exercise is letter-writing.’ (G43)

The twin peaks of Mount Ararat impressed Griboedov deeply. Apart from a natural reverence inspired by the sacred tradition, he says, ‘one sight of this ancient mountain and one is overwhelmed by an inexplicable astonishment’. For a while he sat there, motionless, deep in thought. Evidently my "golden-hooves" didn’t share his rider’s feelings; he bolted, and in no time at all he’d plunged the pair of us into the moist element. I was wet through - the kind of damp that gets to the bones.’ (G44) Is this ‘plunge into the moist element’ a euphemism for yet
another fall? First the foothills, then the middle slopes of Ararat disappeared from view, but the summit of the mountain hung over them like a cloud, he tells Begichev, all the way to Erevan. There, it seemed, no one was expecting them. 'Not a soul came out to meet us', Griboedov writes. They have no concern for our peace of mind, they haven't even assigned us any quarters. I was enraged; anyone in my place would have been offended by such disrespect shown to Russian officials - even someone with less pride', he adds, anticipating Begichev's smile. He was not alone in suspecting a deliberate offence. Mazarovich declared his intention of going straight to the Sardar and raising hell. The situation was defused, however, by the discovery that they had, indeed, 'come the other way'. They had not approached Erevan by the usual route; it was their short-cut which had given rise to the confusion. (G44)

They are conducted to their quarters. Griboedov remarks on the special preference shown to the Russians; chairs have been provided. 'The English', he says, 'sit on the floor - unbooted - while we occupy raised seats and carelessly trample on valuable Persian carpets with our thick soles'. His compatriots, he writes, 'are obliged to Ermolov for this degree of respect, on which they very properly insist here'. (G45) It is not difficult to see how British diplomats had gained the ascendancy in Teheran and Tabriz. Far from Petersburg, Griboedov's natural xenophobia is beginning to assert itself. It seems to have arisen in the usual way - that is, from a conviction of his own and his nation's superiority. Even before they reached Voronezh, Griboedov had persuaded his friend and travelling companion Hamburger that 'to be a German is a very stupid role to play in this world. He already signs himself "Amburgev", not " - r", and the pair of us abuse the Germans outright...'.

30
Griboedov finds little to admire in Erevan, and much to mock. His first complaint is not, he says, one he could make before the ladies. But Begichev is a military man... 'The visiting Sardar and his two farasha filled our apartment with the most amazing, heavy, unpleasant smell!' Compared with which, he says, the surplus of asafoetida in St Petersbourg pharmacies is pure mignonette. (045) He seems unimpressed by what must have been a fair degree of magnificence, notes the omnipresent hookahs offered to every guest, and finds the use of the European title of 'adjutant' amusing. 'It merely distinguishes the man who is closest to the person of the Sardar and who, in consequence, is beaten more frequently.' (G45-46)

The English fare no better. Griboedov meets what he describes as an English guide - not a booklet, he says, a person.

He interferes in everything, he's forever instructing; it seems that nature intended him to wield his whip on a curricle or ply his oars on the Thames. Here he's translating Albion's drill-manual into the Farsi language which, for this purpose, he doesn't know very well. They are entrusting a whole battalion to him, or at least, that's what he says. As soldiers, they'll make excellent tight-rope-walkers, if they're trained by it. He bores us to death. We don't know how to get rid of him; generally speaking, insatiable curiosity and importunity are in constant use here. The room is always full of complete strangers, looking at you, at your papers, if you happen to be writing, at this very moment some sort of extraordinary mug, partially covered by a hideous cap, is poking itself into my letter. A terrible urge is coming over me to teach it a lesson. (G46)

The Sardar, returned from a hunting trip, sends their party a wild sheep. Mazarovich generously returns the compliment with some kaleidoscopes, with which it is time to entice Asia, since we are already bored by them. [...] Their hospitality ought to blunt the barbs of the derisive observer', Griboedov admits. But of course, it does not. The politeness of their hosts is indeed extreme. Megmed-bek declares himself 'so overjoyed by their arrival, that should his dear guests find it amusing to cut off the heads of all his servants or even that of his
brother, it would afford him great satisfaction'. (G46-47) Fortunately this claim was not put to the test.

Formal days were followed by drinking nights. Griboedov’s erudition is irrepresible; wine merely provides an additional stimulus. Excited by what I had seen - and swallowed - I was carried back to our fatherland of two hundred years ago. I saw my host as a good-hearted Muscovite, the farashas as members of his household, and I myself as Olearius.’ (G47) This Russian-speaking German scholar visited Russia in 1633-34 as a member of the Schleswig-Holstein embassy; the diary of his travels was published in Schleswig in 1647.31

Even the shifty red-faced little fellow who calls himself an Englishman, though one couldn’t vouch for it, this anonymity with his ridiculous stories about what goes on overseas - I saw him as Margeret, the immigrant in the time of Dmitri, the Pretender, as he is known, or any of those wandering foreigners of that era, who ate, drank and made themselves at home in all the best houses and then, on returning to their own countries, repaid Russian hospitality with abuse. Even the Erevan Margeret speaks sarcastically about the Persians, who are preventing him from dying of starvation. (G47)

Olearius’s account of Russian society was, presumably, more diplomatic than that of Margeret:

Jacques Margeret, a French soldier of fortune, entered Muscovite service in 1601 and, under Boris Godunov, commanded a squadron of foreign cavalry. He served the Pretender, but escaped death in the massacre of 1606, soon afterwards leaving the country. Later he returned to Moscow in 1611 in Polish service. His memoirs, an important source for the period, are entitled Estat de l’Empire Russie, et Grand Duché de Moscovie avec ce qui s’y est passé de plus mémorable et tragique, depuis l’an 1590 jusques en l’an 1606. These memoirs were first published in Paris, in 1607; a second edition followed in 1669.32

Griboedov allies himself with the German Olearius, condemning both the shifty red-faced Englishman and the Frenchman Margeret, but his own attitude towards his Armenian and Persian hosts is closer in spirit to those of the 'wandering
foreigners’ whom Famusov will dismiss, in *Gore ot uma*, I.4.131, as 'побродяги'.

On the following day, 5 February, Griboedov, suffering from a severe hangover, visited the Sardar. I don't know - what can I tell you about his mansion?, he asks Begichev. 'There's no unity about it, and what's more, there are so many crooked places, turnings, alley-ways, extensions, super-structures, entrances, corridors, narrow, ill-lit and generally gloomy, that you can't make any sense of it.' Their little party, led by Mazarovich, was obliged to wait. 'I had time to observe the Scene through my lorgnette', (G48) Griboedov remarks. When the Sardar arrived they were offered tea with cardamom and the inevitable hookah. Servants entered balancing great silver trays of sweetmeats on their heads. These were new to Griboedov. He found them 'absolutely delicious'. They talked with the Sardar about Ermolov's campaigns in Chechnia and Daghestan, about the Tsar's efforts for peace in Europe. 'I don't recall how he came to confuse Vienna with Venice...', he writes. (G49) Whatever other benefits Griboedov may have derived from travel, it cannot be said to have broadened his mind.

The addition to this long letter made in Nakhichevan on 9 February reveals him in a mood which not even writing to Begichev can relieve. It is quoted here in all its expressive brevity.

Three days ago, on the 7th, we set out from Erevan, we arrived here today, in all, 133 1/2 versts. It's not fatigue that's destroying me, - it's the unendurable ferocity of the winter; no one here remembers such a severe frost, all the southern plants have died. It's not only that - how heartily sick I am of everyone and everything! Shakhovskoi is right, - it's boredom that drives my pen; it's hardly surprising that I'm communicating it to you! No! today you've nothing to fear: I'm going to bed with just my memories of you! (G49)

A night's sleep does little to improve matters. What would have become of me if I hadn't been able to shorten the excruciating hours spent in dark
lodgings, filthy with soot, by talking with you!' He only troubles to notice his surroundings, he says, for the pleasure of describing them to Begichev. (G49-50)

The weather remains atrocious. Griboedov hugs the fireside, complaining of insufficient firewood. The temperature stands at 180 Reaumur. He comments, with disgust, on the local peoples' servile acceptance of their leaders' corruption. 'Slaves, my dear fellow!', he writes. (G50)

The other day a Provincial Governor, an elderly man with the Koran in his hands, was beaten, without any trial, of course [...] In Europe, whether they try a man fairly or unfairly, the accused is at least given a chance to defend himself [...] I'm not in Persia proper yet, and I haven't seen one free act. (G51)

Finally', Griboedov says, although his complaints will cover another page or two, I'll tell you about the citizens of Erevan; they may be very charming people in summer, but in winter they freeze their guests; I was chilled to the marrow at the Sardar's, and ossified at Megmed-bek's place.' (G51)

As they set out from Erevan, Griboedov huddles beneath his burka, wraps his face in a hood and retreats into himself. 'Think about it for a moment, put yourself in my place', he implores Begichev. 'Think what it's like to travel in silence, muffled up to the eyes, not daring to remove your clothes, or even take a quick look about you lest - worse than boredom - you expose yourself to a chill. No! I'm not a traveller!' We had begun to suspect this. Fate, he tells Begichev, has forced him into this extreme situation. I would never have parted with my household Gods to wander in a barbaric land, at the worst possible time of year, of my own free will, simply out of curiosity.' (G51-52)

Arriving at their lodgings for the night in a large Tatar settlement, Griboedov throws himself down by the hearth, taking neither food nor drink, and sleeps the sleep of the dead. Next day, 'just for a change', he says, there is more
of the same. A Persian travelling with his servants, however, provides a welcome
distraction. These latter are all loaded with the apparatus of smoking - one carries
the hookah, another a huge pouch, a third has a brazier of coals attached to his
saddle. Griboedov loses patience. He goes at it with the reforming zeal of a new
magistrate:

If, instead of this empty luxury, one were to gather together all the
purveyors of hookahs, their hookah-bearing assistants and all the most
passionate smokers of the hookah, and force them to clean, trample and
tread down the snow on the road, so that one could travel in some kind of
conveyance, wouldn't it be far better! (G52)

Griboedov's entries in this diary of a letter are becoming shorter by the
day. He has evidently heard from Begichev at some stage along the way; news
of his duel has reached St Petersburg and Begichev is anxious about the pianist's
damaged hand. On the subject of duels, Griboedov is dismissive. 'Is it worth it, my friend!', he says. (G52) And later, 'Let them shoot at someone else, I've had
my turn [...] Remind the Prince about me more often', he begs, indulging his
nostalgia. (G53) But he knows himself loved. Fondly he remembers
Shakhovskoi's fervour in their arguments over metre and rhyme, his gentleness
with his outrageous wife. 'You wouldn't believe how thinking about it all cheers
me up in my present loneliness', he writes. Mazarovich's brother Osip, who had
apparently accompanied them thus far, is returning to Russia. 'Comrade
Hamburger couldn't stand it either, he's gone to take the waters, and he might not
come back! Whatever will you say, you dear good fellow, if I stick it here for two
years?' (G53) Begichev is, after all, ten years older than Griboedov. The slight,
studious young officer in glasses who wrote to the papers about the cavalry
reserve may have caused him, at first, some good-humoured amusement ('while I
lag behind, you're thinking? No, this isn't Brest...'). Griboedov clearly wishes to impress the older man with his fortitude. He values this friendship.

You're at the bottom of all this, you know. You are always accusing me of faint-heartedness. You're not going to in future, truly, you're not. I'm no longer an idle servant of the muses. I'm writing, my friend, I'm writing, I'm writing. Only it's a pity there's no one to read it to. (G53)

It is an even greater pity that we cannot know what he was writing. Was he merely limbering up with verses about golden hills and the tormentors of Prometheus? Or was he beginning to understand the form in which his woe might be expressed? 'I embrace you most warmly' he writes. 'But oh, how bitter I am feeling!'...’(G53)

The letter to Begichev ends in this trail of dots. If there was more, it has not survived. It is impossible to imagine that their correspondence ceased; and yet the next letter addressed to his closest friend is dated 10 June 1824, and was written from St Petersburg, after their reunion in Moscow in the previous year. Griboedov records the journey from Tabriz to Teheran in a series of laconic notes, designed solely to prompt his memory. 'Baths and climate in comparison with those of Tbilisi', he writes in Tabriz, confident that he will remember the difference. 'Frozen fruits.'Are these a delicacy or a disaster? He does not say. His account of this eleven day journey is full of such details, some more obscure than others. There is 'dancing and music' in Tabriz, but Griboedov stores his musician's memory of it for future use. (G53) The entry for the fourth day, written in Miana, ends with the words 'Dangerous insect, carpets', but whether he killed the insect or bought the carpets we shall never know. (G54)

On 10 March 1819, exactly six months after leaving Moscow, the Secretary to the Peripatetic Mission for Asia makes his way along the busy road which winds up and down the foothills. (G55) The mountains slope away to the
left; on his right he sees the ruins of Rhaga in Media, the Rhaga of Tobias; ahead of him lies Teheran. 'Our home', Griboedov writes. (G56) He has travelled with so little hope. Now it is better to arrive:

A closer inspection, on the following day, sees the revival of his disdain. 'Walls with towers, gateways faced with tiles, awkward streets (filthy and narrow) - that is Teheran', he writes. They are escorted through these streets into a great square, along another, covered way, past crowds celebrating, not their arrival, but the eve of the festival of Beiram. Finally they are led into an inner courtyard and thence to the ante-room. There they await an audience with the Shah. The English arrive:

In front of the throne, a pool with fountains, same width as throne, decorated with artificial flowers, like our willows. Sherbet served. We are conducted to our places. Three volleys fired. The Shah's children, young and old. Tsar, with lorgnette. [One longs to know if Griboedov was using his; was there a moment of mutual observation?] Amlich's remark [which only Griboedov will remember]. Mullahs. Verses. God save the king [he records the title in English]. Trumpets, verses, an elephant, money, performances, the king's movements. Length of Tsar's beard. He is celebrating Beiram in the harem, too. On the eve, at night and all day long, constant barbaric music. Our diplomatic monastery. (G56)

Griboedov writes, and puts down his pen. The prophet without honour has come into his wilderness.

The changes in Griboedov revealed in this examination of his travel notes may be briefly summarized. In St Petersburg Griboedov insists on the duel as a matter of honour; in Tbilisi he accepts it; in the last of the notes addressed to Begichev he rejects it out of hand as 'stupidity'. The first note contains meticulous observations concerning vegetation, climate, and so on; that written only two days later refers, with some impatience, to 'babbling out erudition'. The conformist author of Molodye suprugi has come to see Shakhovskoi's characters as 'ideal', their creator as 'hardly living in the real world'. While the fashionable
'cleverness' of those young St Petersburg reformers, so many of them future Decembrists, is dismissed as 'incoherent Napoleonic rhetoric'. The conventions have been uprooted, the ground prepared for Gore ot uma; twenty-one months elapse, however, before Griboedov, occupied by demanding work and plagued by self-doubt, persuades himself to his writing-table.


4. Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, III, 30-34. References to these travel notes in the text are by page number, preceded by 'G', in brackets. See also I.K. Enikolopov, 'Predislovie i primechaniia k tekstu', in A.S. Griboedov, Ot Mozdoka do Tiflisa: putevye zapiski: Kavkaz - Persiia, ed. by N.K. Pksanov (Tbilisi, 1932), pp.7-10 and 10-13.

5. Griboedov v vospominaniiakh, p. 338.


7. Ibid., I, 760.

8. Murav'ev, 'Zapiski', pp.58-103 (p.59). Subsequent references to these notes in the text are by page number, preceded by 'M', in brackets.


11. Ibid., p.235.


17. Ibid., p. 27.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid., p. 28.
21. Ibid., p. 29.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid., pp. 29-30.


27. Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, III, pp.35-56 (p.35). Subsequent references in this chapter to these travel notes are by page number, preceded by 'G', in brackets. It may be noted that some of Griboedov's notes take the form of letters to his friends. See also P.S. Krasnov, 'Putevye pis'ma Griboedova (ot Tiflisa do Tegerana)', in Fomichev, Tvorchestvo, pp.206-11.


29. The Book of Tobit', in The Holy Bible: The Apocrypha, IV-XII and XIV.

30. Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, III, 134.

31. Entsiklopedicheskii slovar', ed. by F.A. Brockhaus and I.A. Efron, 82 vols (St Petersburg, 1897), XLII, 856.

A Poem of the Utmost Significance.

Two apparently unproductive periods of Griboedov's life are examined here. The twenty-one months referred to at the end of the preceding chapter, 10 March 1819 to 27 December 1820, of which he gives us some account in his letters and notes; and the period from 27 December 1820 to 10 October 1822, concerning which we lack even this subjective source of information. One instance of Griboedov as diplomat, confronting corruption, and one example of the hazards of travel undertaken in the course of this work, are introduced to illustrate its demanding nature. The resulting exhaustion, in combination with his mood, revealed in his letters as a contradictory mixture of lethargy and ambition, self-doubt and self-confidence, may well account for his literary silence during the first period. The more profound silence of the second period precedes the writing of the first scenes of *Gore ot uma*. I will suggest that this was a time of intense creative activity which has left its mark on that play.

The *Gore ot uma* that we know is not the work which Griboedov dreamed of writing. In his own brief note on his comedy, probably written, according to Piksanov, at the end of 1824, he tells us:

The first outline of this poem for the stage, as I conceived it, was of the utmost significance, a far more splendid thing than it is now, wrapped up in all this obligatory trivia. The childish satisfaction of hearing my verse in the theatre, the desire for it to succeed, forced me to ruin my creation in every possible way.
These words clearly refer to an earlier version of the play. But unless the first two acts of _Gore ot uma_ which he brought from Tbilisi to the 'guest' wing of Begichev’s house on Miasnitskaia were subsequently re-written in their entirety, the 'poem of the utmost significance' had long since fallen victim to Griboedov's own common-sense. Kiukhel’beker nowhere suggests that the first Scenes of _Gore ot uma_ read to him in Tbilisi between December 1821 and May 1822 were substantially different from those which Griboedov brought to Moscow. As Piksanov points out, Kiukhel’beker 'made no reservations concerning any sharp distinction between the early and the latest text'. At some point during the writer’s sojourn in that 'diplomatic monastery' a very different play was conceived, perhaps written, certainly abandoned.

On 26 March 1819, however, he was far from writing a play of any kind. Reading one seems nearly beyond him. His letter to Katenin, written on that date, two weeks after his arrival in Teheran, hardly represents the considered appreciation which his friend and former collaborator had a right to expect. Katenin had sent him one act - presumably the first - of his new play, _Spletni_. Like Zagoskin’s comedy _Dobryi malyi_ of the previous year, this is a translation of _Le Méchant_ by Gresset. Katenin, clearly intending to show their mutual enemy how it should be done, and anxious that no one should miss the point, has named his central character Zel'skii, after Zagoskin's Vel'skii. Unfortunately his comedy is written in what Simon Karlinsky calls 'a style of stultifying monotony'. Collaboration over the banal _Student_ must have seemed remote indeed. Griboedov's reply betrays a numbed weariness; it is given here in full.

Dear Pavel Aleksandrovich.

Thank you for your letter and for the act of _Spletni_. It was very good of you to send it. Keep writing, my dear fellow, and I'll read.
Deadly idleness and boredom, can’t settle to anything. Farewell. Your true friend,

Griboedov.

Warmest greetings to Zhandr. 4

Months of isolation and inactivity alternated with periods of exhausting travel. On 9 July 1819 Griboedov set out again for Tabriz, the fiefdom of Abbas Mirza, the Shah’s second son and heir to the throne, already an effective administrator on behalf of his father who, with his 158 wives and more than 900 concubines perhaps found little time for affairs of state.

On this occasion Griboedov was engaged on an extremely delicate mission. Under the terms of the treaty of Giulistan, 1813, which concluded Russia’s war with Persia, all deserters and prisoners were to be returned. Harsh conditions in the Russian army had tempted a good number of soldiers to desert; they formed the Shah’s ‘Russian Battalion’. According to Sergei Fomichev, ‘documents prove conclusively that the initiative in active Russian diplomacy in Persia was taken by Griboedov, and not by his superior, Mazarovich’. 5

Griboedov was determined to obtain the release of these soldiers and return them to the fatherland. He understood very well the risks involved in such an undertaking. Arriving in Tabriz on 22 August, he makes these two entries in his travel notes.

23. Efforts on behalf of prisoners. Rage and grief.

On 30 August Griboedov records the following conversation between himself and the heir-apparent to whom he refers, here, as Naib-sultan. 7 The temerity of this young secretary, fresh from the intrigues of the St Peters burg theatre, with two duels to his discredit and less than six month’s experience in
Persia, is impressive. It reveals the reckless intransigence which, ten years and one abortive revolution later, would be in no small measure responsible for the massacre at the Russian Mission.

The Sultan's irritation is at once apparent.

NAIB-SULTAN. Why don't you act like the other Russian officials who come here? They simply present their credentials.
I. We are acting according to the treaty, and we're not presenting it to you because you should know it better than ourselves: it was signed by your parent.
N-s. If Mazarovich is going to go on like this you can go back to Teheran.
I. We're not in Tabriz on a good-will mission, but on your orders.
N-s. You see that reservoir? It's full. There would be no great harm if it were to lose a few drops. My Russians mean as little to Russia.
I. But if those drops could wish to return to the pool, why prevent them?
N-s. I'm not preventing any Russians from returning to their fatherland.
I. That is, of course, perfectly clear; meanwhile they are imprisoned, tortured and not allowed access to us.
N-s. Why do they need access to you? Let them tell me and I'll send you any that want to come.
I. Your Highness may, perhaps, feel so disposed, but those around you take a very different view: they are even trying to lure back the men we already have under our command, promising gold, leaving surreptitious letters.
N-s. It's not true; you are stirring my people to revolt, while they are all acting in the proper manner.
I. Would Your Highness like to see? I have the anonymous letters sent by your officials on me.
N-s. That's no mystery; that was done on my orders.
I. That is a great pity. I thought that it had been done without your knowledge. However, you are displeased by our untruths: where are these untruths? what do they consist of? Be so good as to tell me.
N-s. You're giving them money, you're whispering all kinds of nonsense to them.
I. Ask them if we have given them so much as a chervonets; there is actually no way in which we can whisper anything to them, since guards have been posted in every alley in the vicinity of our quarters, and they keep us imprisoned there; we're prevented not only from whispering but from speaking out aloud to anyone.
N-s. Why don't you behave like the English? They're quiet, peaceable. I'm very pleased with them.
I. The English are no example to us - nor is anyone else. The minister wishes to act in a way that will please you but our main concern is to do right in the eyes of our lawful Tsar and Emperor. However, Your Highness, allow me to go to the soldiers so that I can hear how your officials are interrogating them.
N-s. My officials are doing their job; you need not concern yourself with
them.
I. I strongly suspect that, as usual, they are not doing their job honestly.

Here Griboedov launches into a forthright attack on Abbas Mirza's
officials. They are 'preaching debauchery', frustrating all his attempts to
communicate with the soldiers directly, ignoring the men's own requests to be
repatriated. The Sultan is obliged to face facts. He retires to some imaginary
moral high-ground and commands the returning Russians to serve their Tsar as
faithfully as they have served him. He then instructs Griboedov as to their future
welfare - 'so that things should go well for them in Russia'. Griboedov's self-
control remains impeccable.

I. It is extraordinarily pleasant to see how you, Most High Sultan, are
concerned for their future lot. Of course, Your Highness is unaware that
for some time past they have not received any pay in your service, and
will no doubt order them to be paid what they are owed.

'No, no, no', the Sultan snaps, losing all patience with this game of
diplomacy. 'Why should I do that? If they hadn't abandoned me, if they'd
continued to serve me, that would be different.'

Griboedov was not a man to stop while he was winning.

I. I thought that Your Highness would not wish to deprive them of pay for
their past services.
N-s. Let Mazarovich give it to them. They're his now.
I. Yes, their fate is in his hands. However, the Minister will pay your debt,
including the arrears of pay - since you refuse. I expect Your Highness to
keep your word and order the rest of the soldiers who wish to return to
their fatherland with their comrades to be brought here. Those on the list
which I had the honour to present to you.

The Sultan then summoned one of the Russian deserters, S(amson)
M(akintsev). 'I lost my temper', Griboedov admits. 'Not only should you be
ashamed to include this scoundrel amongst your courtiers', he tells the Sultan,
'you should be still more ashamed to parade him in front of a Russian officer of
the nobility, as if the Most-High Sultan wished to imply that the Tsar would send an Armenian deserter from Persia to treat with him.' 'He's my assistant (njuker), the Sultan replies. 'I don't care if he's your general, to me he's a villain, the lowest of the low, and I should not be expected to meet him.' 'At this point he became angry', Griboedov tells us, 'started to say all kinds of ridiculous things, I gave rather better than I got, he would have nothing more to do with me - and we parted'.

Griboedov was too proud to do anything badly. He had come to regain command over 158 Russian soldiers and he was not leaving without them. When their party did finally set out he still had to face hostile, stone-throwing mobs, a deliberately misleading guide to whom he referred as 'executioner and thief', and constant anxiety for the men under his command, in addition to the usual hazards of the exhausting journey which need no further description. A strong sense of duty combined with personal pride to ensure that he achieved what he had undertaken. His account of the conversation between himself and Abbas Mirza, however, does cast some doubt on the claim he makes, in his report to Mazarovich, dated 11-13 September, that 'even when exasperated I did not allow myself to overstep the limits set by sober judgement, and offended no one'. To which he adds, protesting, perhaps, too much, 'And if anyone should tell you otherwise, it would be a pure lie, I give you my word of honour.8

This is the public man with a professional reputation to defend. A subsequent journey to Ermolov in Chechnia for further instructions provides a brief glimpse of the old Griboedov. Conditions in the quarantine hospital at Ananuri were bad enough to inspire a glimmer of gallows humour. On 29
November 1819 his travel-notes contain the following entry, of which the first sentence deserves to be given in the original:

Впользуем в странноприимную хату, где действительно очень странно принимают. It's cold, we ask for firewood. Though we are surrounded by a wood, there isn't any. We buy an expensive armful from a decrepit invalid. We light the stove and are suffocated by the smoke. When it heats up it produces deadly fumes and we're still freezing. We request food for ourselves and fodder for our horses - there's nothing to eat.9

A doctor appears who informs Griboedov that he and Bebutov, with whom he is travelling, are in a 'political hospital', that their room is sometimes knee-deep in water and that the duration of their obligatory period of quarantine depends on the commissar. Griboedov then suffers twenty-four hours of illness as a result of the fumes, after which the commissar himself arrives. 'Save us', Griboedov implores him.

Your quarantine is very cleverly organized to prevent the spread of the plague: those it catches here will undoubtedly be buried - they'll either die of cold, smoke or fumes ... but Bebutov and I haven't got the plague, don't order our extermination.10

Quite another Griboedov emerges in his personal correspondence. Three months later, in the February of 1820, he writes to Katenin from Tabriz:

It's just over a year now since I mounted my horse, set out from Tbilisi for Iran, secretary to the peripatetic mission. I haven't been able to find myself since then. How does it happen? A man gallops 70 versts every day, all day of course, and gallops for two months at a stretch, under the blazing Persian sky, through the snows of the Caucasus, with intervals of rest of perhaps two weeks, three at the most, in one place! Am I really that man? Let us suppose, however, that I haven't gone completely mad. I can still make out the people and objects amongst which I move: I'll tell you briefly what I've done in the past year, the tricks fate has played on me.

'Am I really that man?' Griboedov scarcely recognizes himself.

My gaiety is spent, I don't write poetry, I might have done, but there's no one to read it to, my colleagues are not Russian. I have absolutely no idea of the whereabouts of my beloved piano. The books I sent from Petersburg by the same route are lost... How much pleasure I lose by my
idleness! If the friends dear to me had received letters from me they would probably have replied. At least I like to comfort myself with this fancy.

This excerpt from later in the same letter is another of those rare moments of self-doubt which accompany his darker moods.

Towards the end of this long letter Griboedov sends greetings to Prince Shakhovskoi:

Do give my warmest regards to the respected Prince on behalf of an absent friend. I could not be more glad that he is one of those people who, like it or not, must remember me. We were often together. Splendid man! A gentle, affectionate manner, a pleasant mind, the stature of the man, his reading, writing, his fervour in arguments over feet and rhyme, our constant censor, under the censorship, himself, of Katerina Ivanovna...  

Compare the 'travel-letter' to Begichev mentioned in the previous chapter.

Remind the Prince about me more often. For me he is one of the pleasantest of creatures. I could not be more glad that he is one of those people who love me and to whom I am deeply attached. His stature, his reading, writing, his fervour in arguments over feet and rhyme, his gentleness with Katerina Ivanovna, - you wouldn't believe how the memory of all that cheers me sometimes in my present loneliness.

Both the similarities and the differences serve to emphasize Griboedov's feelings for Shakhovskoi; they suggest not so much a passage kept for reference and used again a year later, with minor variations, to save the writer trouble, as an expression of Griboedov's enduring affection for the man.

The letter to Katenin concludes with a quotation. 'One must derive some good from everything', Griboedov tells him, 'so learn something from my letter. Here's a line of Arabic verse for you.' He demonstrates his newly-acquired skill in Arabic calligraphy and then translates. The worst of countries is the place where there is no friend.

It is something other than exhaustion, now, which will not allow Griboedov to write. Don't imagine me immersed in books' he tells Nikolai Aleksandrovich Kakhovskii, in a letter from Tabriz dated 3 May 1820, written
three months after that to Katenin quoted above. 'That's for some future time.' Then goes on to talk of alterations to his house, or winning at what he refers to as 'ving-un', the newly fashionable card game. Mazarovich is cursing - he'll curse even more when he hears that the little de la Fosse girl is undoubtedly going to be mine. She's a lively, sweet little thing ... what won't boredom do to you? - but my judgement is still unscathed', he maintains.\(^{14}\) It is unlikely that Kakhovskii thought to doubt it; Griboedov is reassuring himself.

The longer he lives without writing, the harder he finds it to begin. He has already made numerous excuses, some more convincing than others. When no longer worn out by travel or engaged on some hazardous diplomatic mission he pleads absence of books, the failure of his piano to arrive, lack of a Russian listener. Another letter written to his former travelling companion Kakhovskii, written on 25 June 1820, nearly two months after the one quoted above, urging the latter to join him in Tbilisi, betrays the cost to Griboedov of this growing tension between the desire to succeed and the need to write. 'What women you'd find at my place! And not just one, but many, each more delightful than the last. Who would have foreseen it a month or two ago. The ways of love are inscrutable.' Then he adds, apologizing for his somewhat incoherent scrawl, 'I am seriously ill, and find writing an extraordinary physical and mental strain.'\(^{15}\)

In an equally ambivalent letter to A.I. Rykhlevskii bearing the same date Griboedov first curses the day he put on the uniform of the College of Foreign Affairs, then complains that he has not been promoted. What would Ermolov have said, with his gifts, had he been obliged to spend an age as a captain in the artillery? He is not seeking to compare his abilities with those of the General, he assures Rykhlevskii, 'but truly, I am worth more than my present rank.'\(^{16}\)
In November of 1820 another letter to Rykhlevskii contains the following revealing passage: 'Don't reproach me too much for keeping quiet about myself. I prefer not to bother friends anyway, even close friends, but with the chaotic life we lead here I've grown too lazy to write, now or at all.'

Even while protesting that he does not wish to trouble Rykhlevskii with his problems, Griboedov reveals what must surely have been at the root of them; his inability to force himself back to the writing table. Finally he devises, if unconsciously, his own solution. We have only the rough draft of his letter written at midnight on November 1820. We do not know to whom it is addressed. In it Griboedov describes the dream from which he has just awoken.

I enter a house, where an evening party is in progress; I have never been in this house before. A host and hostess. Pol' [Paul?] and his wife receive me at the door. I run through the first hall and through several others. Lights everywhere; sometimes the rooms are crowded, sometimes half-empty. Many people, one of them seems to be my uncle, others are also familiar; I reach the last room, a crowd of people, some dining, some in conversation; you are sitting right there in the corner, leaning over someone, 'т ваша возле вас'. An unusually pleasant feeling, not new, but one I remember, comes over me. I turn around and go somewhere else, stay there for a while, return; you come towards me from that same room. Your first words: is that you, А[лесянд]р[еревич]? How you've changed! I wouldn't have recognized you. Come with me; you lead me right away from the strangers into an isolated, long side-room, to a wide window, you lay your head against my cheek, my cheek burns, and amazingly! it is hard for you, you have to bend over in order to touch my face, and it seems to me that I was always considerably taller than you. But size is distorted in dreams, and don't forget, all this is a dream.

Then you ask me a string of questions, have I written anything for you? You force me to confess that I have long since given up, I put off writing every letter, I have no inclination, no intelligence — you become angry. 'Promise me that you will write.' 'Whatever do you want from me?' 'You know very well.' 'When must it be ready?' 'In a year's time, without fail.' I give my word. 'Within a year — take an oath...' And I take it, trembling. At that moment a stunted [maloroslyи, MH] little man, standing quite close to us, but whom I, having long been blind, have not been able to see properly, says distinctly 'Sloth destroys every talent'... And you turning to the man say, 'Just look who's here'... He lifts his head, gives an 'ah!' and throws his arms around my neck with a shrill cry... he stifles me with his friendly embrace... Katenin!... I wake up.
I wanted to lose myself again in that pleasant dream. I couldn't. I got up, went out for a breath of fresh air. A miraculous sky! Nowhere do the stars shine so brightly as they do in this boring Persia! From the top of the minaret the muezzin sounded the early hour for prayer (the hour of midnight), all the mosques echoed it, finally the wind got up, the nighttime chill dispelled my half-conscious reverie, I have lit the candle in my little temple, I'm sitting down to write, and I remember my promise vividly; given in a dream, it will be kept in reality. [Griboedov's own emphasis, MH]\(^\text{18}\)

Griboedov knew himself well enough. This was the only irresistible pressure and he had known how to apply it. He was a man of honour. He had given his word. Now he was irrevocably committed to writing his play.

Bonamour, amongst others, thinks that the letter is addressed to Prince Shakhovskoi, a view which I share\(^\text{19}\). Shakhovskoi could reasonably have demanded to know, in the dream, whether Griboedov had written anything for him. It was Shakhovskoi, in charge of repertoire, who would have set the deadline for the completion of the work. A.L. Grishunin objects to this idea on two counts. Shakhovskoi, he says, was taller than Griboedov, and the whole tone of the letter suggests that it was written to a woman\(^\text{20}\). But Griboedov's letters to Begichev can reveal something of that intimate quality which characterizes his description of the dream. This self-confessed 'enemy of the screeching sex' could write freely to his closest friend, on 31 August 1824, I have neither wife nor daughter. In my heart I belong to you alone.\(^\text{21}\) Begichev was ten years older than Griboedov, Shakhovskoi nearly twenty years older. It is possible that the writer, with his dominating mother and largely absent father, placed a special value on these friendships. In the letters to Begichev and Katenin quoted above Griboedov clearly expresses a warmth of feeling for Shakhovskoi which may, perhaps, account for the tone of his letter, written while still powerfully affected by the dream from which he had just woken. As mentioned above, it survives only in...
the form of a rough draft; in the colder light of day he may have decided not to send it. It could account for the fact that its recipient, if any, is still unknown.

The subject of relative height is mentioned three times in the course of the dream. It concerns, in the 'Shakhovskoi' hypothesis, three writers; Griboedov, Shakhovskoi and Katenin. Griboedov is speaking of Shakhovskoi when he says 'but it seems to me that I was always considerably taller than you'. 'Always' is an odd word to use concerning the relative height of two men who met first as adults; and the word translated here as taller, 'vyshie', might equally be applied to Shakhovskoi's intellectual statura, the non-Russian word used by Griboedov when speaking of the Prince in his letters to both Begichev and Katenin. Again, it is heights ('velichiny') which are distorted in dreams, a word with overtones of 'eminence'. Katenin, on the other hand, is presented as undersized. It seems possible that physical height in the dream may represent figurative stature. The word has both the literal and figurative meaning in English and French, as does the Italian statura. In this case Griboedov would be revealing his opinion of his own worth in relation to that of Shakhovskoi and Katenin. Hence his shame when Shakhovskoi must stoop to lay his head on Griboedov's burning cheek. The latter is guiltily aware that the work of which he is capable should already have earned him a stature above that of Shakhovskoi, while Katenin's stature - or talent - is, Griboedov writes, positively stunted ('malorosslyi'), a conclusion based, perhaps, on his reading of Spletni.

If the letter was indeed written to a woman, it must have been to someone connected with the theatre. Semenova is one possibility. She, too, could have asked Griboedov whether he had written something for her; he had done so twice already, with some success. She, too, would have insisted that the work be ready
by a certain date, if it was to be written, like both Molodye suprugi and
Pritvornaia neveryost', for her 'benefit performance'. This theory does at least
dispose of one difficulty; Griboedov is likely to have been taller than Semenova.
But it creates another. Who was 'ваша', in Griboedov's faintly mocking phrase 'и
ваша возле вас', if not Shakhovskoi's wife, the outrageous Katerina Ivanovna?
All this, of course, is only conjecture. But one thing is certain. For whomsoever
the letter was intended, the dream was addressed to Griboedov himself.

The distance between the rational man and the dreamer was never more
pronounced than in this period of intellectual isolation. Griboedov could record
the implacable logic of his exchange with the 'Naib-Sultan'; he could dismiss the
duel, that ultimate manifestation of the romantic's 'code of honour', in a sentence
- 'Let them shoot at someone else, I've had my turn'; but he could still evoke
the power of that same code to dream himself a deadline.

In the light of his renewed determination to write, the dates of the three
surviving letters, following that in which the dream is recorded, are revealing.
The first, a rough draft, dated simply 'November, 1820. Tabriz', is written in
French on the back of the 'dream' letter. It is an urgent, somewhat emotional plea
for his release from the service. It was intended, according to Sergei Fomichev,
for the Minister himself. 'It is hardly likely that this message was sent', Fomichev
adds.

The second, written to Kakhovskii on 27 December 1820, contains two
remarks which suggest that Griboedov may have begun to keep his promise. 'We
flourish in the wilderness, abandoned by men and rejected by God'... and
'Serieusement, il y a quelque chose qui m'empêche de Vous continuer ma
présente'. The third letter, addressed to Kiukhel'beker from Tabriz, was started
on 1 October 1822 and finished at the end of January 1823. Between these last two letters there is an interval of nearly two years’ duration. Some of Griboedov’s letters must, of course, have been lost. But there is no similar lacuna in the collected letters. Of the two editions containing these which I have used here, referred to in the end-notes as ‘Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17’, and ‘Griboedov, Sochinenia’, the former has six letters from 1820, none from 1821, the letter to Kiukhel’beker begun in October 1822, and ten letters from 1823; the latter has eleven letters from 1820, none from 1821, the same single letter to Kiukhel’beker from the end of 1822 and eight letters from 1823. It is difficult to resist the conclusion that during this long silence Griboedov was writing, not letters to friends, but his ‘poem of the utmost significance’.

*Kiukhel’beker’s diary contains the following entry:

3 January 1832.
Read the first 30 chapters of the prophet Isaiah. There is no doubt that none of the prophets can compare with his power, his elevated style, his passion; the first five chapters of his inspired prophesies constitute an ode unequalled in any language, of any people (they were the favourite chapters of my late friend Griboedov, and I first got to know them when he read them to me in 1821 in Tbilisi).27

Griboedov, writing to Katenin from Tabriz in February 1820, has already complained that the books he sent from St Petersburg have not arrived. He travelled directly from Tabriz to Tbilisi in November 1821; Kiukhel’beker arrived in Tbilisi in the following month. If Griboedov read the first five chapters of the prophet Isaiah to his friend in 1821 it may be assumed that he had them with him in Tabriz.

The Bible, of course, was not translated into Russian until 1875-76. The Slavonic Bible satisfied liturgical requirements. It must also have satisfied
Griboedov’s poetic sense; both the psalms and the prophesies would have formed part of the services he had attended since childhood.

The Church was not alone in its objection to the idea of a Russian translation. Shishkov was strongly opposed to a Bible in the Russian language; in 1825 he helped to suppress the attempt at such a translation. As Florovsky says:

For him the mere thought of a translation of the Bible represented the most wicked heresy, - but it was, above all, ‘a literary heresy’ (as Sverbeev wittily remarked). For Shishkov denied the very existence of the Russian language – ‘as if it were a thing apart’, he would say, puzzled. ‘Our Slavonic and Russian language are one and the same thing, differing only in being either elevated or simple’.28

Griboedov may have avoided the formal tedium of the Admiral’s sessions by means of diplomatic illness, but he was Archaist enough to have loved and wished to preserve the traditional, if incomplete, Slavonic version of the Bible. It may be safely assumed that this was the version from which he read to Kiukhel’beker.29

It is not hard to see why Griboedov found these five chapters so appealing. The didactic compulsion which drove Gogol’, Tolstoi and, in our own time, Solzhenitsyn, to abandon their natural creative gifts for the seductive pleasure of delivering a Message is a peculiarly Russian affliction. It seems that Griboedov, in isolation, may very nearly have succumbed to it. At all events, it will not have been modesty which prevented him from playing the prophet. Begichev, in his ‘Zapiska ob A.S. Griboedove’, writes:

He was, in the fullest sense of the word, a Christian; he said to me one day that he had long thought of appearing in Persia as a prophet and bringing about a complete reformation there; I smiled and replied ‘The ravings of a poet, my dear friend!’ ‘You laugh’, he said, ‘but you have no idea of the impressionability and the passionate imagination of the Asiatic! Mahomed succeeded, why shouldn’t I?’ And he started to speak in such an inspired manner that I began to believe in the feasibility of such an idea.30
We cannot, of course, compare the first five chapters of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah with a play that no longer exists and may, indeed, never have existed, except in Griboedov’s imagination. We can compare them with the play we have. It is precisely those first two acts of Gore ot uma, begun, perhaps, in Tabriz, completed in Tbilisi, that reveal traces of the Prophet’s influence. Even when, later, they were altered and edited in both Moscow and St Petersburg, they still retained those traces. The earliest version of Gore ot uma appears in the first volume of A.S. Griboedov, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh, published in 1995, whose main editor is S.A. Fomichev. In 1902 the manuscript of this version was presented by Begichev’s daughter to Moscow’s Historical Museum, to be known, thereafter, as the Muzeinyi avtograf. This is the manuscript which Griboedov left with his friend Begichev in 1824 when he set out for St Petersburg. Approximately nine tenths of it is in Griboedov’s own handwriting, according to Zhandr, who has signed a statement to this effect on page 67 of the manuscript. Exceptions, Grishunin says, are Act I, Scenes 2 and 3, Scene 4 up to the stage direction (Famusov sits) preceding the dream, some additions to Scene 7 of the same act, and the last Scene of Act III. Acts III and IV are written on a different, yellowish paper, as are the inserts in the first two acts. These, as Grishunin says, are ‘probably contemporary with the work on Acts III and IV’. These ‘inserts on yellowish paper’ replaced lines which Griboedov cut out and burned; even this earliest version is not quite the play he brought with him to Moscow. Begichev tells the story in his Zapiska ob A.S. Griboedove’. Griboedov, he says, came to Moscow on leave in 1823. He had written only two acts of his comedy, Gore ot uma.

He read them to me, I made several comments on the first act, he argued, and even indicated that he had not taken this in good part. On the
following day I arrived at his place early; he had only just got out of bed; not yet dressed, he was sitting in front of a lighted stove and throwing his first act into it page by page. I shouted: 'Look here, what are you doing?!' 'I've thought it over', he replied, 'you were telling the truth yesterday, but don't worry: I've got it all in my head'. And within a week the first act was already written.33

Piksanov presents conclusive proof that this was not the case. The paper of the first two of the four note-books which comprise the Muzeinyi avtograf is identical, and dates from the Tbilisi period. The books are sewn together with the same white thread. (The third and fourth books, written on paper of a later date, are sewn with black thread.) The earlier name of 'Chadskii' is used throughout the first two books, Acts I and II. The later name of Chatskii appears only on the inserts referred to above, written in Moscow. True, Griboedov does, probably inadvertently, use the old name for his hero on three occasions in the third and fourth notebooks, Acts III and IV. But one of these instances has been corrected, as have all other uses of the earlier name after Act I, Scene 7, line 418. The hero is 'Chadskii' on his first entrance, but at line 418 he becomes, and will remain, 'Chatskii'. These corrections have been made, moreover, at a later date and in a different ink.34

It seems that Begichev has either mis-remembered the incident, or allowed the horror of the moment, remembered only too well, to lead him into exaggeration. The four pages which were, in fact, removed - and very probably burned in front of an appalled Begichev - cover Scenes 2 and 3, and Scene 4 up to the stage-direction 'Famusov sits'; that is, the part of the Muzeinyi avtograf not in Griboedov's own handwriting. A second point of interest in Begichev's Zapiska is his contention that Griboedov had conceived the idea for Gore ot uma in 1816, and had written several scenes. 'I don't know whether it was in Persia or Georgia', he says, with a certain regret, 'but Griboedov changed it in many
respects, and eliminated several characters, amongst others, Famusov’s wife, a fashionably sentimental Moscow aristocrat (a spurious sensitivity was still in vogue then with the ladies of Moscow). This sounds so very likely. The swoonings and sighings of a fashionable Sentimentalist had been the very things to inspire Griboedov in his Archaist St Petersburg days. One remembers the sensitive aunt, Raisa, in his contribution to Shakhovskoi’s comedy Svoia sem’ia. As for the play having been inspired by a dream, Begichev insists that Griboedov never mentioned it to him. Perhaps the writer sensed that this too might be condemned by his practical friend as ‘the ravings of a poet’.

The first five chapters of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah are powerfully written. It is unsurprising that the lonely young secretary found their poetry irresistible. ‘Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers’, Isaiah cries, condemning the universal corruption of Jerusalem (1.4). Griboedov’s view of Moscow, as expressed in the first two acts of Gore ot uma, is scarcely less gloomy. Isaiah, at least, offers some hope, though not until Chapter VI. Here the prophet, purified of his own sin, will exhort his fellow-countrymen to repentance. ‘Here am I; send me’, he offers. (6.8) But his people will not understand him, he is told. Not at once. ‘Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate’. (6.11) For Moscow that moment had come and gone. Eight years earlier, in 1812, the city had indeed been ‘wasted without inhabitant’. ‘Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire’ Griboedov read, in 1.7. He hardly needed reminding. And yet no prophet had arisen. Alone and dreaming, the writer planned to tell the Muscovites where they had gone wrong.
If Isaiah’s sixth chapter provided the stimulus for Griboedov’s reforming zeal, many of the evils which the prophet rails against in Chapters I-V are also condemned by Griboedov in Gore ot uma. Verse 21 in Chapter V must surely have been the source of his title.

Горе мудрым в себе и пред собою хитрым.

Was this not a reference to just that parade of superficial intelligence which had so irritated him in Moscow, and which he had compared so unfavourably with that of Ermolov in his travel notes addressed to Begichev, cited in the previous chapter: ’...nowadays everybody’s clever’;36 ’...that stupidity which nowadays passes for cleverness...’37

The original title of Griboedov’s comedy, Gore umu, is crossed out on the first page of the manuscript he left with Begichev in 1823, the so-called Muzeinyi avtograf. It is replaced, there, by the familiar Gore ot uma, a title which resonates with that of Kniazhnin’s comic opera, Neschast’e ot karety;38 in both cases the title declares a second noun to be responsible for the first. Gore umu extracts the essence of Isaiah’s warning, Gore ot uma emphasizes the consequence of not heeding it; prompted, perhaps, by the Kniazhnin, Griboedov has compressed Isaiah’s thinking into something crisp but enigmatic. Pushkin was quick to perceive the disparity between play and title. Who is the intelligent character in Gore ot uma? answer: Griboedov.39

The ambiguity of his title springs from the deeply divided nature of the man himself. They were right, those young idealists. He shared their earnest longing for reform, he knew them to be right. He also knew that without a coherent strategy their rhetoric would achieve nothing but their own destruction. However, he did not allow himself to know it then; not in Persia. There he
planned quite another play. Of that, at least, we can be sure. We have his word for it. But unless he actually wrote this masterpiece and kept it with him until the end, and unless, as Evelyn Harden suspects, Iran still holds personal documents belonging to Griboedov, it is unlikely that we shall ever read it. It is still possible, however, to trace the influence of Isaiah in the play that survives.

* 

Gore ot uma

Act I

Both the first and final versions of Gore ot uma begin by informing the audience that Sofiia has spent the night alone with a young man. However innocently. Sofiia spends most of the fourth scene lying to her father, inventing her dream in order to distract his attention from the truth of the matter. Molchalin, she maintains, has only just arrived. Understandably, he joins her in the deception; he has come 'с бумагами-с'. (I.4.186) Famusov displays a cynical indifference to the usefulness of the latter, 'что дело, что не дело'. (I.4.203) Liza, in Scene 5, parodies her aristocratic owners in a blithe reversal of values: 'Трех не беда, молва не хороша.' (I.5.209) Sofiia's father, she says, is like all Muscovites. He will require rank, wealth and honour in any suitor for her hand. She laughs at her own account of the elderly aunt and the young Frenchman, which she introduces to conceal her amusement at Sofiia's simplicity. This is all fairly unsophisticated stuff. It has more in common with Griboedov's earlier plays than any of the subsequent acts. If we may rely on Begichev's somewhat shaky memory, and Griboedov really did start writing a version of Gore ot uma in 1816, this first act could indicate the likely nature of those early scenes from which his comedy developed.
In Act I Chatskii and Famusov hold their fire. Famusov is concerned with the expense of French fashions and French tutors; he complains of the precocity of the young, but only when trying to prevent Liza from expressing her doubt concerning his 'monastic existence'. Chatskii speaks of Moscow with an almost affectionate irony. He mocks the obscurantism of Sofiia's relative, 'Книгам враг' (I.7.379); he derides the educational system whereby a stoker (MA, I.7.407-10) from a foreign country is to be accepted as a geographer or an historian in Moscow. (MA, I.7.407-10; GOU, I.7.397-99) The word 'stoker' is omitted in the final version. But neither Chatskii nor Famusov reveal their true attitude to Moscow society until they deliver their respective monologues in Act II.

Goncharov, in his critical study 'Милон терзаний', published in 1871 on the occasion of Monakhov's benefit performance of Gore ot uma, draws attention to the many-faceted nature of the play. 'Gore ot uma is not only a picture of contemporary mores, but a gallery of life-like characters, an endlessly witty, biting satire, and at the same time a comedy.' But in Act I the play is not yet the 'biting satire' that it will become in Act II. When Bulgarin published extracts of Gore ot uma in his almanach Russkaia Taliiia, in 1825, the only publication of the play permitted by the censors in Griboedov's lifetime, the first six 'scandalous' Scenes were cut, but the remaining Scenes were allowed to stand. Act III, too, remained, while Acts II and IV were excised in their entirety. The different nature of the attack which Chatskii makes in Act IV will be discussed below. It is Act II, written before Griboedov's return to Moscow, in which the parallels between Isaiah and Griboedov are most striking.

Act II
Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. (Isaiah 5.20)

The verse defines Famusov's function in Gore ot uma. His highly ambiguous speech in Act II, 'Вкус, батюшка ...', (II.5.262-318) purports to be in praise of Moscow, and yet he describes just those evils which most enrage Chatskii, Griboedov, and Isaiah. In Piksanov's opinion, 'there are occasions when the author fails to restrain himself and entrusts his own ideas to characters to whom they are alien, even ideas to which they are hostile'. Belinskii considered that Famusov, in his monologues, sometimes 'makes attacks on society, which could only have occurred to Chatskii'; this, he implies, is a flaw in Griboedov's characterization. In my view Famusov is embodying what Griboedov sees as one of that society's besetting sins; the tendency to boast about its own venality. Like the inhabitants of Jerusalem, 'they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not. Woe unto their soul! for they have rewarded evil unto themselves'. (Isaiah 3.9) Famusov's monologues in Act II are an illustration of this cynical propensity.

To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord. (1.11)
Your appointed feasts my soul hateth. (1.14)

Famusov opens Act II with a monologue. After grumbling, briefly, at the silent Petrushka, who seems to be present largely in order to provide him with an audience for it, he muses contentedly on the fitness of things. 'Куда как чуден создан свет!', he says, and describes a dinner during Lent at which the letter of the law is observed, the spirit not at all.

Великий пост, и вдруг обед!
Еще три часа, и три дни не сварится!
Грибки, да кисельки, щи, кашки в ста горшках.
(MA II.1.11-13)
In the final version Griboedov drops the direct reference to 'великий пост' and cuts the third, vegetarian line. The first of these lines now reads 'То бережись, то обед'. (II.1.11)

*Everyone loveth gifts and followeth after rewards.* (1.23)

Having disposed of hypocrisy and gluttony Famusov offers his audience, by way of example, the respected Kuz'ma Petrovich, who had very sensibly increased his own fortune by marrying money, and was not averse to a spot of nepotism:

> [...]* Почтенный камергер,  
С ключом, и сыну ключ умел доставить,  
Богат, и на богатой был женат. II.1.*

Working his way through Isaiah's list of complaints against Jerusalem, Griboedov finds:

*They judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.* (1.23)

Famusov calculates the likely birth-date of the child expected by the doctor's widow; such calculations are based on information hardly available to anyone but the prospective parents. He may attend the christening, but if he wishes to remain 'монашеским известен поведеньем!' (I.4.125) he is unlikely to acknowledge the child. Particularly since its mother's social position is so far inferior to his own. This would have been taken for granted by a contemporary audience.

*Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end to their treasures; their land is also full of horses, neither is there any end to their chariots.* (2.7)

Famusov's next monologue is inspired by Chatskii's high-minded condemnation of the grovelling attitude to superiors prevalent in the civil service. 'Служить бы
rad, прислушиваться тошно.' (II.2.61) Enraged by the arrogance of youth in general and Chatskii in particular, he offers another example.

[...] покойник дядя,
Максим Петрович: он не то на серебре,
На золоте едал, сто человек к услугам;
Весь в орденах; ежвал-то вечно цугом.
II.2.65-68

'Ездить цугом', that is, in a carriage drawn by six horses, was an ostentation related to rank. V.I. Lykoshin, in his 'Zapiski', writes:

Anyone with the rank of Brigadier, Councillor of State, or higher, never travelled otherwise than six-in-hand with two out-riders, horses in blinkers, coachmen and grooms in livery with tricornes, never less than two lackeys on the footboard, sometimes even three. Only merchants travelled in a coach and pair.45

And the mean man boweth down, and the great man humbleth himself: therefore forgive them not. (2.9)

Famusov has established Maksim Petrovich as what would have been seen, in both Moscow and Jerusalem, as a great man. Now he shows him exploiting his own humiliation. Bowing to Catherine II, he falls and nearly cracks his skull. Rewarded by the royal laughter, he falls again - 'уж нарочно' - and again. 'А? Как по-вашему?', Famusov asks Chatskii; 'по нашему - смыщен. | Упал он больно, встал здорово'; (II.2.84-87) he goes on to relate the swift rise to power of this elderly sycophant.

'И точно, начал свет глупеть, | Сказать вы можете вздохнувши', Chatskii replies. (II.2.96-97) How, indeed, can one compare the past and present century? This is the technique which Griboedov used in his destructive article on Gnedich referred to earlier. The pretence of sympathy is to catch us off guard. 'Свято предание, а верится с трудом', he remarks, showing his hand. (II.2.100) The more a man grovelled the higher he rose. The term 'frontal attack' acquires new meaning as foreheads hit the dust. 'Как не в воине, а в мире брали лбом, |
The really determined crawler did not spare himself.

Now Chatskii, too, reminds us of Isaiah's words.

Relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. (1.17)

'Кому нужна — тем спесь, лежи они в пыли', he tells his elderly host. (II.2.104) Let Famusov call evil good. He knows an evil when he sees one. His attack is offensively blunt. 'А тем, кто выше, лесть как кружево плели. | Прямой был век любви и страха'. (II.2.105-06) Later Griboedov changes the word 'love' for 'submission'; just in case we fail to guess that his hero means feigned love. 'Когда все красилось усердием к царю'. (MA II.2.108) At some point, in Moscow or St Petersburg, Griboedov replaces the line with the more direct 'Все под личиною усердием к царю'. (II.2.107) It will not have endeared him to the censors.

What 'court Don Quixote' would sacrifice his skull nowadays? Chatskii demands. (MA II.2.111) No doubt his contemporaries envied him the opportunity. 'Дворцовый Донкишот' failed to survive Griboedov's numerous alterations; he does not appear in the final version of the speech. Its last two lines, however, stand unchanged. There are crawlers everywhere, Chatskii concedes. 'Да нынче смех страшит, и держит стыд в узде; | Недаром жалуют их скупо государи'. (II.2.119-20) This last is too much for Famusov. 'Ах! — Боже мой! он карбонари!', he exclaims. (II.2.121) Chatskii, in the earlier version, compounds the felony. 'Нет! нынче дурно для дворцов' was Griboedov's first thought. (MA II.2.123) It made Famusov's 'Опасный человек!' seem almost reasonable. The Carbonari at least struck terror at a distance; to suggest that no court was immune to such threats was ominous indeed.
Griboedov's final version 'Нет, нынче свет уж не таков' (II.2.122) seems tame by comparison.

Famusov's monologue in II.3.158-79 is yet another instance of his anti-idealism. He tries to persuade Chatskii, without too much hope of success - 'Эх! Александар Андреич, дурно, брат!' (line 167) - to adopt his own attitude towards rank and wealth. The visitor whom his servant announces at the beginning of the scene, Colonel Skalozub, possesses both. He is 'известный', 'солидный', 'И знаков тьму отличья нахватал'. (lines 162-63) Further promotion seems inevitable. Не нынче завтра, генерал.' (line 165) What more could he want in a suitor for the hand of his only daughter? Uncharacteristically, a fatherly doubt overtakes him. 'Ведь Софья молод.' But he soon shifts the responsibility. 'А впрочем, власть Господня.' (line 175) He implores Chatskii not to argue about every blessed thing, to abandon the ideals he refers to as these 'Завиральные идеи', (l. 177) and hurries off to give God a hand with His matchmaking.

After Chatskii's monologue, a speech of only eight lines, Famusov returns with Skalozub. The dialogue with the Colonel which precedes his long monologue in praise of Moscow, 'Вкус, батюшка...', is an object lesson in the servile respect for wealth and rank he has recommended to Chatskii. This is grovelling in action. He bustles about, adjusting the warmth of the stove, until Skalozub feels obliged to make some remark. 'Зачем же лазить, например, | Самим!... Мне совестно, как честный офицер', (II.5.192-93) he says, with as much sincerity as the temporary owner of Kniazhnin's parrot - the original owner of the phrase. Famusov, not ashamed to undertake even menial tasks 'для друзей', (II.5.194) as he says, rattles on.
Famusov, unabashed, continues in similar vein. He claims, respectfully, to be distantly related to the Colonel, and follows through with eight lines in praise of nepotism. The first of these eight lines is more extreme in the final version. Griboedov's original thought was the more reasonable 'А я так дорожу родством'. (MA II.5.209) This is replaced, later, by the outrageous line 'Нет! я перед родней, где встретится, ползком', (II.5.208) a use of the word 'crawling' which sounds remarkably modern. Isaiah can be no more opposed to true humility than Griboedov is to true intelligence. It is surely this self-seeking servility which the Prophet attacks in Chapter II, verse 9.

The first of Skalozub's three lines on his cousin which form part of his dialogue with Famusov is stronger in the original. The man has started, unaccountably, to read books. 'Но крепко заражен теперешним столетьем.' (MA II.5.227) Griboedov has second thoughts, and replaces it with the line 'Но крепко набрался каких-то новых правил.' (II.5.226) It is a more politically cautious version, and it does avoid repeating the metaphor of 'infectious' ideas, already used by Famusov in II.3.177.

It should be mentioned here, in relation to Skalozub, that the latter's function throughout Act II is to balance Famusov's cynical attitude to Moscow society with his own equally cynical view of army life. As each fresh topic for discussion is raised in their dialogue, he speaks in favour of the worst aspects of mindless militarism. His insatiable appetite for medals, for instance -

'Everyone
Famusov's longest and most important monologue is that in II.5.262-318, beginning 'Вкус, батюшка,...'. In it he calls so many evils good that when he finishes Chatskii is no longer able to restrain himself.

Having praised the Moscow taste, the haughty manner, Famusov sets out to explain to Skalozub how things are done in that incomparable city. 'Вот, например, у нас уж исстари ведется, | Что по отцу и сыну честь' (lines 264-65); any irresponsible halfwit, if wealthy enough, is an acceptable suitor.

His next target is the Enlightenment, seen as pretentious erudition; 'book-learning':

Другий хоть прычче будь, надутый книжным чванством,
Пускай себе разумником слыви,
А в семью не включат.

II.5.269-71

Famusov plays the unreliable witness, damning Moscow with his enthusiastic praise. With Isaiah he cries 'Gore mudrym v sebie i pred soboiu khitrym', 'да только не за этим', as Chatskii remarks in III.3.190. Famusov objects to these earnest young men not only because they represent a threat to his comfortable world, but on the basis of their class. 'Ведь только здесь еще и дорожат дворянством.' (line 272) He has already declared his opinion of books
in I.2.41: И в чисть прок-та не велик’. By III.21.540-41, this view has hardened. 'Уж коли зло пресечь, | Забрать все книги бы да сжечь.’ In Act II he reveals an unpleasant mixture of disdain and snobbery.

_The child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient._ (3.5)

'Извольте посмотреть на нашу молодежь’, Famusov says, presenting these odious young people for Skalozub’s approval. ‘В пятнадцать лет учителей научат!’ (lines 281, 284)

_As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them._ (3.12)

Here is a subject after Griboedov’s own heart. ‘A наши дамы, ась? речистей мужей’, (MA II.5.293) was his first thought. Subsequently he changed the line to ‘А дамы? – синясь кто, попробуй овладей’. (II.5.297) Happily, he left the next line unchanged - ‘Судьи всему, везде, над ними нет судей’. Another first thought was the line ‘Мужчины все от них дрожат’, (MA II.5.296) which Griboedov replaced with the wittier ‘Давай Бог терпение, ведь сам я был женат’. (II.5.300) ‘Скомандовать заставьте перед фрунтом!’, (II.5.301) Famusov exclaims. Later, feeling perhaps that such an order was unlikely to require enforcement, Griboedov substitutes ‘велите’’ for ‘заставьте’. 'Присутствовать пошлите их в Сенат!', his Famusov cries, helplessly. We feel oppressed by the combined weight of the ladies as he rolls out their names. In the later version ‘Настасья Юрьевна’ has become ‘Татьяна Юрьевна’, both equally recognizable to the Moscow society of her day, according to Gershenzon, as Praskov’ia Iur’evna Kologrivova.46

Now Famusov turns his attention to the daughters of Moscow. They are no less given to shameless display than the daughters of Zion, but they evidently
presented more of a temptation to Isaiah than they did to Griboedov. The Prophet devotes verses 16 - 24 of his third chapter to these young women. Only two verses concern the terrible punishment that awaits them; the other seven describe their clothing and ornaments in a manner which suggests long and careful observation. *The chains, and bracelets, and the mufflers*. (3.19) *The bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the headbands, and the tablets, and the earrings*. (3.20)

Griboedov allows Famusov to expose yet another contemporary evil with his ironic praise. This time it is the education of girls for the marriage market:

И точно, можно ли воспитаннее быть!
Уметь же себя принарядить
Тафицей, бархатцем и дымкой. (II.5.309-11)

Then, remembering Moscow drawing-rooms, adds a few points of his own. The restricted artificiality of their conversation, the romances rehearsed to charm a suitor - in French, of course. This last is the practice which Griboedov refers to in Act I, Scene 2 of his *Molodye suprugi* as '...уловка матерей, | Чтобы избавиться от зрелых дочерей'.

Cynical to the last, his Famusov praises the young women's devotion to the military as patriotism. 'К военным людям так и льнут, | А потому, что патриотки', (II.5.315-16) he jokes, understanding the attraction of a uniform as well as Jane Austen's Mr Bennett.

Chatskii's magnificent reply to Famusov's monologue, 'А судьи кто?', was written later in Moscow. But there are two early variants of this scene which pre-date the version of the play he brought home with him from Tbilisi. In the earliest variant, when Famusov has finished speaking, Skalozub remarks that the fire has much improved the appearance of Moscow, Famusov replies 'Ох! От пожара нам пришлось было туго', (MA, II.5.319) and Chatskii, 'not addressing
himself to anyone’, comments 'Не послужило в прок'. (MA, II.5.320) Then he
delivers a monologue of thirty-four lines, ending with the words that remain in
the final text of the play, 'И в воздух чепчики бросали'. There is a second
attempt at this speech, with minor alterations, before both are abandoned in
favour of the familiar monologue 'А судьи кто?' (MA, II.5.332-388, GOU, 339-
395) In the two earlier (pre-Muzeiny автограф) versions quoted below Chatskii
counters Famusov's presentation of 'evil as good' with his own comments on the
Moscow young.48

And I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them. (3.4)

He speaks ironically of certain 'virtues' which persist even in this new Moscow,
overcoming both fashions and fires. Amongst these he attacks the shameless
cultivating of those children, sons of the nobility, who will inherit great fortunes:

And I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them. (3.4)

He speaks ironically of certain 'virtues' which persist even in this new Moscow,
overcoming both fashions and fires. Amongst these he attacks the shameless
cultivating of those children, sons of the nobility, who will inherit great fortunes:

Грибоедов, PSS, 1995, p. 162-63, n. 2a

The second version makes this even plainer than the first:

Ibid., p. 163-64, n. 2b

After the alterations and insertions made in Moscow in 1823 both these passages
are omitted. Chatskii no longer condemns the adulation of the young heirs to the
wealthy. The point has been made; repetition will merely slow the pace. Chatskii
is to address more serious problems.
The Lord will enter into judgement with the ancients of his people, and the princes thereof: for ye have eaten up the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your houses.

What mean ye that ye beat my people to pieces, and grind the faces of the poor? saith the Lord God of hosts. (3.14-15)

It seems unlikely that Griboedov could have read those lines without remembering his mother’s treatment of her serfs in Kostroma. In his letter to Begichev from Voronezh, written so soon after leaving Moscow in September 1818, he wrote of his determination to be a better son to her in the future.\(^\text{49}\) Now, with time to reflect on the powerful words of Isaiah, he could hardly have failed to feel their relevance; ‘the spoil of the poor is in your houses’. ‘If you want to live in peace on your own native soil, then give me...’ He is unlikely to have seen this letter of 17 November 1816, referred to earlier, in which his mother instructed her bailiff to convey her orders to her serfs.\(^\text{50}\) But he will have been unable to avoid knowing that the unrest at Kostroma was caused by the unreasonable demands contained in it. In Act II, Scene 5 it is his mother’s generation which receives the full force of his hero’s rage and disgust.

Famusov provides the trigger. Introducing Chatskii to Skalozub, something he had hoped to avoid, he tries to buy the young man’s restraint with a compliment. ‘Он малый с головой’, he says. И славно пишет, переводит, | Нельзя ли пожалеть, что с здаким умом...’. (II.5.333-35) This well-tried tactic proves to be worse than useless. Нельзя ли пожалеть об ком-нибудь другом? | С меня уж будет’, (MA, II.5.329-330) Chatskii says. Famusov is stung to retort, Не я один, а всякий так же судит’. (MA, II.5.331) Griboedov has skilfully brought the dialogue round to what will be the keyword in Chatskii’s monologue. In the Muzeinyi avtograf that word is ‘судит’. Later Griboedov changes it to the less neutral, more condemnatory ‘осуждают’, which necessitates altering the
previous, rhyming line; 'с меня уж будет' (MA II.5.330) becomes 'И похвалы мне ваши досаждают'. (II.5.337) 'Осуждают' provides Chatskii’s anger with a more direct stimulus, but the repetition of the stressed syllable 'су-' – 'судит' followed by 'суди' - is lost; the effect of a word, seized on and turned against the opponent, which is such a recognizable feature of lively argument; the harmless 'А всякий так же судит' manipulated to launch Chatskii’s ferocious attack, 'А судьи кто?!

It is 'the ancients of his people, and the princes thereof' whom Chatskii now condemns. 'And who are these judges?', he begins. He disposes of the older generation in the first eight lines. Their endless court gossip, their opinions formed by forgotten papers from the 1780s, their readiness to fight old battles, 'Не замечая об себе: | Что старее, то хуже', he says cruelly. 'Где? укажите нам, отечества отцы, | Которых мы должны принять за образцу?' (II.5.347-48) Chatskii has had enough of Famusov's examples. 'Не эти ли?', (II.5.349) he demands, and names their vices. Their wealth was acquired by plunder (the spoil of the poor is in your houses), they used the influence of friends and family to defy the law, they squandered fortunes in their magnificent palaces on feasting and every kind of extravagance; it is they, not their foreign protégés, who will revive the worst features of the old ways. They reduce traditional hospitality to a form of bribery. 'Да и кому в Москве не зажимали рты | Обеду, ужины и танцы?' (II.5.355-56) ('everyone loveth gifts and followeth after rewards').

Moving from the general to the particular, Chatskii gives two appalling examples of his own. 'Не тот ли?', (II.5.357) he enquires. The wealthy member of the nobility to whom, as a child, Famusov introduced him. A man who exchanged his loyal servants for three Borzoi hounds. 'Или вон тот еще?',
(II.5.365) he asks. This third rhetorical question, twice repeated in varying forms, provides the first part of the monologue with its structure. The behaviour of Chatskii's second example was not only morally repugnant but illegal. This nobleman removed serf-children from their parents, trained them as dancers, brought his infant ballet to Moscow, found the enterprise beyond his means, and sold his little 'Amours' and 'Zephyrs' separately, as individual items of property. Sales of this sort, though common, were in contravention of the law.

Вот те, которые дожили до седин!
Вот уважать кого должны мы на безлюдьи!
Вот наши старики! Взыскательные суды!
II.5.373-75

The use of the word 'вот' to begin each of these three lines, with their three exclamation marks, balances the three angry rhetorical questions. The final 'суды' echoes Chatskii's opening sentence. He has asked us; in an enraged stretto, he tells us. This part of his attack has come full circle.

Now he mocks the older generation for its utter incomprehension of his own generation's ideals. Chatskii may stand alone against the establishment in Gore ot uma, but he is far from isolated in the country at large, as Griboedov's contemporaries will have understood. Nor is it simply a question of the 'generation gap'. The divisions in the play are both horizontal and vertical; not only do they separate Chatskii from Famausov, as representatives of different generations, but Chatskii from Molchalin, Chatskii from Sofiia. Indeed it is this division which constitutes the comic-romantic element of this complex play. Pushkin thought that it should have been the main element. Chatskii's mistrust of Sofiia's love for Molchalin is delightful! – and how natural! That's what the whole comedy should have turned on...\textsuperscript{51}
Griboedov had other ideas. Chatskii's monologue, up to this point, has become progressively angrier. Rage has driven out humour. Its return signals the ambivalence of Griboedov towards his hero.

Теперь пускай из нас один
Из молодых людей, найдётся не служащий
И не зависимый от новшенья в чин,
От мест и должностей, иным огнем горящий,
В науки ум вперит иль воспитает жар
В душе к высокому, к искусствам благородным –
Они тотчас: разбой! пожар!
И прокричат его мальчишкою негодным...

MA, II.5.369-76

or, in the final version of this last line, 'и прославят у них мечтателем! опасным!!' (II.5.383) In either case, for the bathos of that penultimate line to succeed, the young men must be - and in my view are - revealed as a touch unrealistic in their aspirations. Their noble independence of promotion does, after all, rely exclusively on the fortunes amassed by their elders.

Griboedov's next attack is, momentarily, more serious. Uniforms, he says, cover a multitude of sins. He names some. 'Их слабодушие, рассудка нищету'. (II.5.386) But the monologue loses power as Chatskii concludes it with a complaint against the female passion for a military uniform; this is hardly on the same level as his two shocking examples of the abuse of serfdom.

Famusov's original response to Chatskii's attack, spoken to himself, was the rather reasonable 'Теперь нет мочи, как в бреду'. (Griboedov, PSS, 1995, p. 166, n. 1a) Griboedov changed this in the Muzeinyi avtograf to the familiar line, also spoken under his breath, 'Уж втянет он меня в беду', (MA, II.5.389) a reaction which the censors would share. It appears in this form in the final version.
A strong Moscow influence pervades this monologue of Chatskii's in Act II, Scene 5. The speech, as mentioned above, was largely written in that city. Those old men, with their 'forgotten papers' from the eighties, were there before Griboedov's eyes. The scandalous abuses of serfdom were well known in Moscow society. He was free to observe, in any drawing-room, the qualities, or lack of them, concealed by a uniform, civil or military. But the evils condemned earlier in Act II, whether obliquely by Famusov or directly by Chatskii, are more closely related to those attacked by Isaiah in his first five chapters.

Scene 6 consists of eleven lines spoken by Skolozub, in which he manages to display three out of the four qualities named by Chatskii as lying concealed beneath a uniform; insignificance, emptiness and stupidity. The remainder of Act II, Scenes 7-14, devoted to moving forward the plot of the romantic comedy, will be discussed below.

The comparison made between the first five chapters of Isaiah and the monologues of Famusov and Chatskii should not be regarded as an attempt to trivialize the words of the Prophet; it will be remembered that this was precisely Griboedov's own criticism of his comedy. 'The first outline of this poem for the stage, as I conceived it, was of the utmost significance, a far more splendid thing than it is now, wrapped up in all this obligatory trivia.'

The writer appears to have contemplated a more direct method of attack on the evils of Moscow society. The censors, however ruthless, could not have changed Gore ot uma from elevated and prophetic to outraged but witty. Griboedov must have longed to base his play on that original conception; fortunately for us, he resisted the temptation. In Gore ot uma, and only in Gore ot uma, his divided nature achieved synthesis. The rational classicist stood
outside the play and set up the romantic idealist to fail. The compromise produced a masterpiece.
1. 'Po povodu Goria ot uma, (Chernovoi nabrosok)', in Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, III, 100-01. See also A. Kushner, 'Rebiacheskoe udovol’stvie slyshat’ stikhi moi v teatre', Voprosy literatury, 5 (1972), 142-50.

2. Piksanov, Tvorcheskaia istoria, p.304.


7. Ibid., III, 61-64. See also O.I. Popova, Griboedov: Diplomat (Moscow, 1964); D.P. Costello, 'Griboedov as Diplomat', Irish Slavonic Studies, 4 (1968), 52-73.


10. Ibid.

11. Ibid., pp. 136-38.

12. Ibid., p. 53.

13. Ibid., p. 138.


15. Ibid., p. 142.


17. Ibid., II, 212.

18. Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, III, 144-45.


22. Ibid., III, 53.
23. Ibid., III, 145.
25. Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, III, 143-44.
29. The Book of the Prophet Isaiah, in The Holy Bible in the Slavonic language (Moscow: Pechatnyi dvor, 1663). Translations of The Book of Isaiah are taken from the King James Bible which is, for my purposes, sufficiently close to the Slavonic version. Transliteration is used only where the Slavonic text is essential to the argument.
31. In textual references Muzeinyi avtograf is abbreviated to MA.
34. Piksanov, Tvorcheskaia istoria, pp.88-90.
36. Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, III, 35.
37. Ibid., III, 36.
40. This privately expressed opinion is noted in Grishunin, 'Kommentarii', p.260.
41. A.S.Griboedov, Gore ot uma, first and final versions, in Griboedov, PSS,
1995, I, 125-238 and 9-122.

42. I.A. Goncharov, ‘Mil’on terzanii’, p. 385.

43. Piksanov, Tvorcheskaia istoriia, p.299.

44. V.G. Belinskii, SS, I, 514.


47. Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, I, 32.


50. Piksanov, Issledovaniia, p.90.

51. Pushkin, PSS, VI, 96.
Acts I and II of *Gore ot uma* bear the imprint of the isolation in which the play was conceived. Letters and memoirs are introduced, in the first part of this chapter, to show that Griboedov, once more in contact with his peers in Tbilisi, reveals characteristics which he shares with his Chatskii; arrogance, a feeling that his social conscience should be better appreciated, and the inability to refrain from making inappropriate jokes.

In the second part of the chapter a survey is made of possible sources of the form and content of *Gore ot uma*. Moscow, to which he now returned, not only offered a reminder of earlier academic influences, but enabled him to observe its society at this critical point in Russia's history. Griboedov made good use of both these possibilities. The survey acknowledges the rich variety of literary sources available to the writer. Given this *embaras de richesse*, it has been necessary to choose representative examples. These have been taken from Classical and neo-Classical, English, French and Russian literature.

In the November of 1821 Griboedov arrived in Tbilisi with dispatches for General Ermolov. As a result of yet another fall from his horse during the journey, he had sustained a broken arm. It was a most fortunate fracture, one necessitating prolonged treatment. Ermolov, who accepted no one's advice on matters of diplomacy, or indeed on any other matter, welcomed intelligent conversation; by 19 February 1822 Griboedov found himself in the diplomatic
department of the General’s staff. (Compare Famusov about Molchalin in Act I, Scene 4: Топал, или хотел попасть?) The degree of freedom which the latter allowed this exceptional young man is evident in the following exchange, recounted to M.S. Shchepkin by Griboedov himself:

I told Aleksei Petrovich to his face, 'Knowing your principles, your way of thinking, one is puzzled, because one doesn't know how to reconcile them with your actions; in action you're a complete despot.' Experience the delights of power for yourself,' Ermolov replied, 'and then pass judgement'.

The General was not an appreciative audience for Griboedov’s poetry, however. Pushkin visited Ermolov some seven years later; by this time the latter was out of favour and in enforced retirement in Orel. 'Several times the conversation touched on literature', Pushkin writes, in his 'Journey to Arzrum'. ‘О стихах Грибоедова говорит он, что от их чтения скули болят.' Fortunately Kiukhel’beker arrived in Tbilisi only a month after Griboedov. Here at last was the willing listener for whom Griboedov had been waiting. 'Griboedov practically wrote Gore ot uma in my presence', Kiukhel’beker boasts in his diary. 'He read me each new scene as soon as it was written.'

When Kiukhel’beker left Tbilisi in May of the following year, however, Griboedov was once again deprived of his necessary audience. 'Now I only entrust my poetry to the walls', he tells the former, in his letter of 1 October 1822. This after an interval of five months, much of it occupied by travel. The letter is not completed until the end of January 1823, by which time Griboedov is declaring his mood to be one of 'inexplicable gloom'. He even looks back, with regret, to the 'calm clarity' engendered in him by the ruins of Berd, Shamkhor, and the Arab monuments in Shemakha. (Где лучше? Где нас нет.) Ermolov, he says, merely laughs at him. So do 'the others'. In Persia Griboedov had longed
for a posting to Tbilisi; now he longs, in this same letter, and more ambitiously, for Moscow. He has had enough of his present companions:

Ah, these spoilt children of obesity and digestion, who only care about hot casseroles, etc., etc. I'd like to transplant them into my secret soul, to which nothing is alien, which suffers for the sickness of its neighbour, which rages against any calamity; so that they might be really shaken, just once, by something other than their own personal problems.4

Griboedov kept his secret soul to himself; his witticisms left a trail of havoc. Murav'ev was pleasantly surprised to re-encounter what he took to be an improved Griboedov. In his diary for 25 January 1822, just two months after Griboedov's arrival in Tbilisi, we read: 'Spent the evening with Griboedov. Found him much changed. The man is very intelligent and extremely knowledgeable.'5 By 2 February they are exchanging language lessons; Murav'ev is teaching Griboedov Turkish and Griboedov is instructing Murav'ev in Persian. The latter is impressed. Working alone, and without the aid of books, Griboedov has acquired an excellent knowledge of Persian. Now he is studying Arabic. 'I found him much changed,' Murav'ev repeats. 'He was very pleasant yesterday.'6 This rapprochement is short-lived. On 6 February Murav'ev is enraged to learn that Griboedov, at General Ermolov's on the previous evening, has joked to the general's cousin, his friend Petr Nikolaevich, about their Eastern-language lessons, 'disparaging my [Murav'ev's] abilities and exalting his own by making the most derogatory remarks at my expense.'7

Murav'ev continues to be alternately repelled and attracted. 'I intended and still do intend to sever relations with him, gradually,' he writes. But he feels obliged to accept Griboedov's apology, on two conditions: '1) That Griboedov does not dare to abuse it [Murav'ev's ability] again, and 2) That he will be more careful in future conversations.' Griboedov agrees 'willingly,' Murav'ev records,
and gives his word of honour that he will abide by these conditions. He undertakes not to mention the matter anywhere. Murav'ev, who has returned Griboedov's textbooks and demanded the return of his own, now gives them back to Griboedov and promises to continue their studies together. Bobarykin apologises to Griboedov for informing Murav'ev of the derogatory remarks, and Griboedov takes this opportunity to apologise for several 'careless jokes' he had previously made about Bobarykin. They part briefly, meet again at the house of a mutual friend and spend the evening together. Later Murav'ev would write, in his diary for 1827:

I never had a friendship with Griboedov; there were various reasons for this. The duel, which he fought with Iakubovich in 1818, in which I was witness on behalf of the latter, the tendency of the man to engage in backbiting and inappropriate, sometimes even offensive jokes, his arrogance.

And yet, even when Murav'ev is the butt of the offensive jokes, he cannot quite bring himself to carry out his declared intention of breaking off relations with this brilliant, exasperating man.

Griboedov's request for extended leave in Moscow and Petersburg was not officially approved until 6 March, but it is clear that he felt certain it would be granted. He tells Kiukhel'beke, adding to his long letter at the end of January 1823: 'I am informing you of my departure for the legendary land as though I were burdened by prophesy. "И будет ти всякое место в предвижение." Write to me in Moscow, at my home on Novinskaia Square.' He remembers his home. 'But perhaps it will be even worse there', he adds. The letter ends on a note of intense nostalgia for the Moscow frost. Fur coats are brought for his inspection. Griboedov has not given them a thought in four years, he says.

But how ever can one brave our beloved fatherland without them! They are heavy. They weigh one's shoulders down to the ground. The odour of
every kind of fox, hare, wolf, infects the room like a corpse. It's the initiation ceremony for those wishing to travel to Russia: it is absolutely essential to tear some animal to pieces and wrap oneself in its skin, in order to breathe the freezing air of the fatherland in luxury.\textsuperscript{10}

Two further letters survive from this period in Tbilisi. The first, written in French, and dated 26 January 1823, is to Kiukh\'beker's elder sister, Iustina Karlovna Glinka.\textsuperscript{11} In it Griboedov speaks warmly of her brother and refers, again, to his own gloomy state of mind. He feels 'utterly alone amongst people to whom I am completely indifferent'. In a few days, he says, he will leave Tbilisi, 'and that boredom and disgust which torment me here, in order, very possibly, to find them somewhere else'. Adopting the elevated tone which seems to overtake him in moments of real despair, he continues: 'Persuade your most excellent brother to reconcile himself to his fate, and to look upon our misfortunes as a moral crucible'; then abandons piety to describe the fate that awaits all of us – if we are lucky. 'Irritable old age, a dry cough and endlessly repeated admonitions to the young.' Given that Griboedov will not reach what he calls, in the same letter, 'le bon port', the lines, written less than six years before his death at the age of thirty-four, have a certain poignancy.

The last letter written before Griboedov's departure from Tbilisi was to Colonel Petr Nikolaevich Ermolov.\textsuperscript{12} It shows Griboedov ready to leave, though not much elated by the prospect. Packing up his beloved piano caused him genuine heartache. 'One might have thought I was burying a friend',\textsuperscript{13} he writes. There cannot have been many such excellent companions amongst those 'people to whom he was completely indifferent'. This cousin of Ermolov seems to have been a rare exception. Griboedov is not ashamed to admit that as he writes about the 'peaceful and happy days' they spent together, he 'cries like a child'.\textsuperscript{14} The piano was sold, to Murav'ev, its former owner, the books were packed, 'in case I
don't come back\textsuperscript{45} (an optimistic touch, this). After an absence of four and a half years, Griboedov was going home.

In Griboedov's letter to Kiukhel'beker's sister, referred to above, he emphasizes his present mood of depression by contrasting it with the productive period of Kiukhel'beker's sojourn in Tbilisi. Instead of the man he knew here formerly – carefree, cheerful, even exuberant, I have become a burden to myself, he writes. A state of mind frequently associated, in his letters, with the inability to write. And yet he had completed two acts of Gore ot uma. It seems reasonable to suppose that the last two acts hung fire for want of Moscow; the loss of Kiukhel'beker as an audience is not sufficient to account for this gloom-inducing 'writers' block'.

It is noticeable that the monologues in the second act all inspire a strong reaction; conflicting views are instantly opposed. The only monologue in Act III devoted to matter of public concern, Chatskii's tirade directed against slavish francophilia, brings down the curtain on a reaction of complete indifference. His splendid final monologue in Act IV is dismissed by Famusov in eight peevish lines. In Act II Griboedov tells us that he agrees with the principles of those high-minded future Decembrists; in Acts III and IV he shows these same young men that their methods of propagating their laudable views will merely expose them to ridicule – or worse. But Griboedov had been away from Moscow for four-and-a-half years. He needed to know what changes, if any, those years had brought about. The monologues in Act II expose or attack the vices of an older generation, the corrupting inheritance of the Molchalins; they are vices which Isaiah found equally reprehensible. Before Griboedov could complete his play he
needed to observe Moscow's present reaction to its much-travelled, well-educated, subversive youth.

At the end of March 1823 Griboedov arrived in Moscow. He had experienced the influences of isolation; now he would lay himself open, once again, to those of his own small society. If St Petersburg, with its flourishing theatre and its College of Foreign Affairs, had thus far determined the form of Griboedov's adult life, Moscow, and the 'little' Moscow established each summer at Khmelita, his uncle's estate, with its lively extended family of children and their foreign tutors, were responsible for much of its content. Moscow University had been reorganized in 1804. Fifteen new professors were appointed, eleven of them foreign; they included names famous in Europe, celebrities such as the economist Schlepper, the Hellenist Mattéi, and the philosopher Buhle. And in 1805-06, for the first time, children of the nobility were enrolled as students, not at the state's, but at their own expense, a practice which was discontinued in 1811 when the Lycée was established at Tsarskoe Selo. But for this brief period children attended lectures accompanied by their private tutors. Among them were the ten-year-old Griboedov with his German tutor Petrosilius, and two of his summer companions from Smolensk, the thirteen-year-old Lykoshin and his eleven-year-old brother Aleksandr in the charge of their private tutor, Maubert. Lykoshin writes in his memoirs:

The first lecture was given by the professor of Russian literature, Gavrilov. He made us translate a psalm from Slavonic: 'By the Waters of Babylon'; you can judge how accurately I could do that, when I didn't know how to spell in Russian!"}

It was within a few months of his return to Moscow, in 1823 or 1824, that Griboedov made his only translation of a psalm, apart, presumably, from his
attempt on the occasion described by Lykoshin; entitled 'David', it is an undistinguished version of the apocryphal Psalm CLI in rhymed iambic tetrameter.

Matvei Gavrilovich Gavrilov became a student of Moscow University in 1777. In 1811 he obtained the Kafedra Slovesnosti. But, as Lykoshin remembered, he was already lecturing as Ordinarii Professor Slavianskogo Iazyka i Slovesnosti, Teorii Iziashchnykh Iskusstv i Arkheologii when Griboedov was enrolled. The University Press records, in 1810, the following address, delivered in the presence of the Tsar and assembled academics:

Promotion is proceeding nicely. Gavrilov is no longer merely an 'established Professor'. In the following year he will obtain his Chair of Literature, either as a result of his learned address or the twenty minutes of verbal grovelling to the Tsar, no doubt obligatory, which preceded it.

Although Griboedov had received his degree as kandidat slovesnykh nauk on 3 June 1808, at the age of thirteen, Gavrilov will have exerted a powerful influence in the sphere of Slavonic and Russian language and literature throughout the former's years as a student at the University. And Griboedov was in no hurry to leave what were evidently congenial surroundings. But for Napoleon, he might well have remained there to become an outstanding academic. (He might, on the other hand, not have written Gore ot uma.) He had obtained his second degree, in law, on 15 June 1810, and was embarking on a
third in mathematics and natural sciences when news of the French invasion reached Moscow.

Gavrilov's address, delivered only fifteen days after Griboedov received his degree in law, may, perhaps, have been part of some graduation ceremony. But if Griboedov was not present on this occasion, he will have attended many similar lectures. His professor reveals a reverence for Classical models verging on adulation:

the works of the Ancients remain beautiful to this day for poets, prosaists and every kind of representational artist; they are the models most worthy of imitation, they retain their supremacy over new works [...] This praise is founded on their internal, essential superiority; for this reason a knowledge of their languages, history, antiquities, mythology and allegories is vital for every artist.¹⁹

He does find it in himself to praise several Russian writers, however, among them Kantemir. In the same document we read: 'Can one ignore the witty Prince Kantemir and not do justice to his works which are, in their own way, outstanding.'²⁰

Griboedov, with his knowledge of European languages first acquired in the polyglot community at Khmelita and perfected during his university years, limited himself neither to Classical nor to Neo-classical models. As he wrote to Katenin, in January 1825, 'I live as a write, in complete freedom (svobodno i svobodno).²¹ This last would seem to be Griboedov's response, not only to Katenin, whose critique of his Gore ot uma he considered to be 'cruel and completely unjust',²² but to Batiushkov. In 1817 the latter, in his essay 'Nechto o poete i poezii', had offered rules for the guidance of poets: 'I wish [...] that a poet's life could be made a science [...] The first rule of this science should be to live as you write and to write as you live.'²³ In the face of all his training and experience, knowing so well the models of excellence accepted by his elders and
contemporaries, Griboedov went his own original way, 'svobodno i svobodno'. He took what he needed from the past, he offered no model for the future. As Salieri remarks, bitterly, of Mozart: 'Наследника нам не оставит он. Что пользы в нем?' Russian writers were spared the trouble of murdering Griboedov. But Gore ot uma obliged them to adopt a more courageous course than Salieri's; the only way now was forward – and in a different direction. In Gore ot uma Russian verse comedy reached its zenith. In David Welsh's view 'the "mot à la fin" which concludes Gore ot uma' [...] 'sets the seal on Čackij's defeat at the hands of society. The age of didacticism in the Russian theatre was over'. As Simon Karlinsky says, 'Griboedov's great masterpiece both crowned this school of comedy and spelled its natural end.'

Griboedov had already accumulated a vast knowledge of Classical, Russian and Western literature when Napoleon invaded. He abandoned the role of 'eternal student' and joined the army. It was there that he first met Begichev. The latter, in his 'Zapiska ob A.S. Griboedove', writes:

Griboedov's taste and opinions on the subject of literature were already formed when I first met him: I know this on my own account. The only foreign literature I knew was the French, and to me the works of Corneille, Racine and Molière were above perfection. But Griboedov, while doing full justice to their great talents, would always say to me: 'But why did they cram their talents into the narrow framework of the three unities? And not give free rein to their imagination to roam in a broad field?' He introduced me to Goethe's Faust; at that time he already knew, almost by heart, Schiller, Goethe and Shakespeare.

This last claim may well be, like Begichev's description of 'the whole first act of Gore ot uma burned page by page', the understandable exaggeration of a devoted friend. But Griboedov had certainly read Shakespeare – and in English.

In Gore ot uma, for the first and only time, Griboedov allows his imagination free rein. His gift for languages has broadened the field
considerably. Works to which an early passion for literature and a lifelong thirst for knowledge have given him access, now offer him targets for satire, characters, situations, even snatches of dialogue, to be transformed by his individual talent. Simon Karlinsky rightly points out the structural similarities between Shakhovskoi's *Lipetskie vody* and *Gore ot uma*, by summarizing the former:

It begins with a Russian nobleman of great moral integrity and uncompromising principles arriving at dawn, after a period of travel, to a place where there are some people to whom he had felt close earlier. Among them there is a young woman with an independent mind, in whom the traveller had expected to find a friend and ally.

Substitute 'Danish' for 'Russian' and, but for the fact that the pliable Ophelia can scarcely be described as possessing 'an independent mind', Karlinsky's summary might equally be applied to *Hamlet*. Here there are further similarities. Both Chatskii and Hamlet come home to a corrupt society which they long to change. Neither young man has the least idea of how to go about it. Their hope of love is frustrated. The fathers of both young women disapprove of the desired match. Polonius and Famusov are neck and neck in their sycophantic reverence for rank. Both Hamlet and Chatskii suffer, as did Griboedov, from an inability to resist the inappropriate joke. Both writers introduce the theme of false madness; assumed in *Hamlet*, imposed in *Gore ot uma*. But it cannot therefore be deduced that Griboedov set out to plagiarize Shakhovskoi or write *Hamlet, the Comedy*. These parallels illustrate, again, the process by which Griboedov absorbed and used, 'svobodno i svobodno', the works of other writers.

Piksanov has made a comprehensive survey of possible Western influences. French sources which have been suggested include Molière's *Misanthrope*, Voltaire's *Tancrède*, Gresset's *Le Méchant* (translated by
Shakhovskoi as Kovarnyi, by N.P. Svechin as Zloi, by Zagoskin as Dobryi malyi, and by Katenin as Spletni), Le Mariage de Figaro by Beaumarchais, Chevalier à la mode by the eighteenth-century playwright Dancour. Goethe's Faust, Abderiten (the Russian Abderitiane) by Wieland, and Schiller's Don Carlos have also been mentioned in connection with Gore ot uma.

Shakespeare's Timon of Athens and Hamlet have been considered as sources, and attention has been drawn to the Byronic aspects of Chatskii. Italy is represented by a play which was performed in Bologna in 1748, entitled Il misantrop a caso maritato o sia l'orgoglio punito, although A.N.Veselovskii, who cites it, fails to mention the author; there is even an Italian novel, Ultime lettere di Iacopo Ortis by Ugo Foscolo, published in 1802, with which tenuous connections have been discerned. Powrot posta, given in Russian as Vozvrashchenie deputata, by J.U. Niemecewicz, was published in Warsaw in 1790; his hero joins Shakespeare's and Shakhovskoi's 'noblemen' as one of a band of returning malcontents. Lucian of Samosata's dialogue Timon the Misanthrope is the earliest suggested source; Bakhtin refers to him as 'a prolific Greek Satirist and Sophist, perhaps the wittiest and least reverent writer under the Roman Empire'. 'Wittiest and least reverent' makes him a likelier choice than some.

As comparisons multiply, the slur of plagiarism, discreetly termed 'influence', is undermined. Griboedov had no need to thumb though his university text books in search of an idea. In years of reading and play-going he had laid down a literary and dramatic compost-heap, a rich mixture of sound and sense, human qualities and moral attitudes, forms and techniques; having abandoned the
monolithic view from the heights in Persia, he turned again to these resources, and allowed them to fertilize his own, spring-new growth.

Numerous critics have picked over the heap. Piksanov has made an exhaustive record of their findings. But, as Hamlet famously remarks, 'the play’s the thing'. Griboedov’s original conception of Gore ot uma, and the traces of it that remain in the final version of the comedy, have been discussed in the previous chapter. This chapter is concerned with the sources, Russian, Classical and Western, of the play we have.

In 1672 Artakserksovo deistvo, commissioned by Tsar Alexis, written by the German Pastor Grigorii and translated by clerks at the Foreign Office, was performed at court. It was the first play intended purely for entertainment in Russia’s brief history of drama. In 1701 Peter I attempted to establish a secular theatre, in the manner of Western capitals. He ordered one to be built on Red Square in Moscow. The attempt failed, lamentably, for want of Russian plays, or a literary language into which foreign plays might be translated. The language of the chancery clerks could not hold a baffled audience; in a theatre which seated 450 an average of twenty-five spectators attended the performances. By the time Ivan Elagin was appointed by Catherine as director of the Imperial Theatres, in 1766, theatre had made some headway, but there was still a dearth of Russian comedies. Elagin, working with three young colleagues, Fonvizin, Lukin and Elchaninov, devised a technique of adapting foreign comedies to Russian mores. The plot was imported; the characters and customs recognizably home-grown. It was a process christened by Lukin ‘adapting to our ways’. The season of 1764-65 saw an adaptation, by Elagin himself, of a Danish satire, Ludwig Holberg’s Jean de France. His choice of the play was prompted, perhaps, by the target of
Holberg's satire: the worship of all things French. The same season produced Denis Fonvizin's verse comedy Korion, based on J.B.L. de Gresset's Sidney.

Fifty years later Griboedov, too, was working in Petersburg for the Imperial Theatres, adapting Creuzé de Lesser's Le Secret du Ménage 'to our ways'. Molodye suprugi, of course, was a one-act curtain-raiser. But for full-length verse comedies the five-act form, while not invariably adopted, was still considered desirable, and the unities of time, place and action were to be preserved. Themes were limited. From Nikolev to Shakhovskoi, many full-length comedies of the late 18th - early 19th centuries, translated or adapted from these French neo-classical models, followed a well tried plan.

A young lady loves a young gentleman. Her maidservant loves his manservant. A parent or guardian exerts pressure to bring about a marriage to an unwelcome suitor. A deception, a misunderstanding or a revelation – possibly all three – often due to the intervention of the maidservant or, less frequently, the manservant, with pious commentary provided by an older relative playing raisonneur, result in the rout of the unwelcome suitor. The lovers are united. Variations on this theme range from the banal to the ingenious. They serve as the backdrop to a satire on some human failing embodied in one of the characters: often the parent or guardian, sometimes the unwelcome suitor, but never, of course, the young lady or gentleman. As David Welsh writes, 'The comedy of situation in the Russian theatre was usually founded on a simple intrigue provided by the efforts of the servants to place obstacles in the way of foolish or disagreeable suitors, and to encourage the courtship of their master or mistress. Sumarokov's early "Ssora u muzha" had provided a formula for the comedy of situation, from which few of his successors departed very far'.

32
The comedies discussed below, however, are related to that same structure in order to show Chatskii as superfluous to it. Beneath the flesh and blood of the human, fallible characters in *Gore ot uma* the skeleton of such a formulaic play is still discernible. If we leave out Chatskii. Or, *Gore ot uma* is a traditional neo-classical comedy transformed by the introduction of a real, flesh-and-blood character. Griboedov remembered Shakhovskoi with great affection; but, as he wrote to Begichev early in 1819, he saw him as someone 'who hardly lives in the material world, but spends all his time with his ideal Kholmskiis and Ol’gins'. How would those characters of his react if a real young man were to come among them? One who had travelled beyond their small circle, knew something of the wider world and its more serious concerns? One who was prepared to tell them where they had gone wrong? They would ignore him, Griboedov may well have reflected, sadly. And planned his comedy, divided as the man himself. Chatskii would show us the flaws in Moscow society; Griboedov would show us the flaws in Chatskii. Surrendering the role of prophet, he set about writing the play to which Moscow would pay attention.

* 

The form that Griboedov chose for his comedy, like the pattern of his life, owes much to St Petersburg. The years of study in Moscow undoubtedly enriched the content of the play. But it was in Petersburg, through his close association with Shakhovskoi, that Griboedov became familiar with the Russian comic repertoire. *Gore ot uma*, as David Welsh points out, is its direct descendant. But *Gore ot uma* is the maverick work of genius that devalues its predecessors while retaining a strong family likeness. ‘Да эдакий ли ум семейство очастливит?’, Sofiia — and Salieri — complain.
Consider the bare bones of Gore ot uma. A father with a passion for rank. His beautiful daughter. The poor young man whom she loves. The coarse, wealthy colonel whom she does not. The worldly, wise-cracking maidservant who mysteriously acquires, from time to time, the language of her betters, and the manservant she loves. In the play we have, all that remains of the latter is his name – Petrusha. But its prominent position – the final word before the 'second act curtain' – suggests an earlier plan abandoned. The last act presents the usual hiding, overhearing, revealing denouement, with the father deceived into dismissing the wrong lover, the lover behind the column who did not make the secret assignation which has so enraged him. There is, of course, no Chatskii in this conventional neo-classical formula. Skalozub, it must be, determined to know the worst, who hides behind the column. The 'unwelcome suitor'. Chatskii is the suitor surplus to requirements, whose wholeness unbalances the Neo-classical structure of the play. Both Sofiia and Molchalin break out of their Neo-classical moulds as they approach the psychological realism of Chatskii. Piksanov writes:

Chatskii is present, once and for all, fully-developed, complete, in the creative consciousness of the poet. [...] There is no disharmony in the image of Chatskii, no fusing of disparate elements, he is cast 'aus einem Guss'.

While not for one moment wishing to diminish the feat I would add that such consistency supports the view of Chatskii I wish to propose: as an aspect of his creator, disrupting a group of characters who, left to themselves, might have played out a perfectly conventional Neo-classical comedy entitled Chinoliubets, ili Otets obmanut. As Piksanov points out:

[The third act] can easily be divided into two acts or 'Scenes'. The first three Scenes constitute one part (III. 1, 2 and 3.1-220). They are separated from the rest of the text, not only by a particularly detailed, substantial
stage direction: 'Evening. All doors wide open, - etc.', but by their content: the first part, complete in itself, is an attempt by Chatskii to declare his love for Sofiia, the second (III. 4–22. 221-638) depicts the ball. If the third act were to be divided into two, the result would be a classical five-act comedy. 36

The following comparisons illustrate the 'family likeness' referred to above.

In Nikolev's five-act verse comedy Samoliubivy stikhovorets, written in 1775, the main aim was to ridicule Sumarokov, in the character of Nadmen, as a vain and failing poet. If we are to believe Vigel's often malicious Zapiski, Nikolev's characterization is painfully accurate.

The excessive arrogance of Sumarokov was beyond all description: no success moderated his pride; countless failures could never reform him. In his attitude towards those whom, from his youth, he was not accustomed to consider as being more eminent than himself, there was always something coarse, harsh, insufferable. In extreme old age he remained just as difficult and unbearable as he had been in his youth; he could not have become more so. 37

But the above-mentioned plot persists. The poet's beautiful young niece Milana loves the handsome young Chesnodum, a measure of whose honest simplicity is his conviction that he will ingratiate himself by showing Nadmen his own verse. Marina and Panfil, the servants in this quadratic equation of the classes, try desperately to avert the calamity. They fail. But divert Nadmen's wrath from Chesnodum by persuading Modstrikh, Gallomanic fop and unwelcome suitor, to pass the poem off as his own. The jealous Nadmen, predictably enraged, throws him out. The young couple are united.

Here is Chesnodum's father, Kruton, as raisonneur. 'Accursed was the man who thought of the sciences! They only use it to drive everyone out of their minds.' 38 Compare Famusov in Gore ot uma. Having told his guests, in III.21.500, that there can be no doubt of Chatskii's madness, he goes on to say:

Ученье – вот чума, ученость – вот причина,
Что нынче, пуще, чем когда,
Again, here is Modstrikh, after a flirtatious passage with his beloved's maidservant, soliloquizing on her mistress's expectations. Она мне надоест, влюбясь безрассудно | И будучи женой... женой?... как это дроль! 

Compare Molchalín's attempt, in IV.12.337-39, to flirt with Sofiia's maidservant, Liza. She reminds him, disapprovingly, of Sofiia's expectations. He replies:

МОЛЧАЛИН  Какая свадьба? С кем?
ЛИЗА    А с барышней?
МОЛЧАЛИН  Поди
         Надежды много впереди.
ЛИЗА    Без свадьбы время проволочим.

Marina's description of Modstrikh's way of life, spoken to Panfil in Act IV, Scene 1, contains lines which could equally characterize that of Zagoretskii:

Вить что он делает? Везде сбирает вести,
Развозит по домам, в рассказах ищет чести,
Выдумывает ложь, выводит клевету.

Panfil, Chesnodum's manservant, philosophizes Вить умных горсточка, а дураков-то тьма. | Какая прибыль нам жить в свете для ума? The first line recalls Griboedov's own words on Gore ot uma, in a letter to Katenin: In my comedy there are twenty-five stupid people to one sensible one. The second – on the advantages of intelligence – is the question to which Chatskii will provide the tragi-comic answer. Chatskii and Modstrikh, who have nothing else in common, share this one small irony. They both do quite enough to alienate themselves from all the other characters in their respective comedies; but both are rejected, ultimately, for something they did not do. Modstrikh did not write the offending verse; Chatskii did not make the assignation with Sofiia.

Khvastun, a five-act verse comedy by Kniazhnin, written some ten years later, casts the braggart of the title in the role of 'unwelcome suitor.' The young
lady – a beautiful Milena – is urged by her mother, a wealthy widow, to marry him. Milena loves, of course, a blameless young man called Zamir, whose father, Cheston, plays raisonner. The manservant in this version of the plot belongs to the braggart, of whom he is a somewhat paler imitation. The maidservant – to Chvankina, the widow. But the deception-revelation device is exploited at both social levels. Cheston pontificates. The braggart 'unwelcome suitor' is exposed. The young couple are united. Chvankina's opinion of books is recognizably that of Famusov. 'И весел завсегда, кто в книги не глядел', she says. (II.2) The moral in the final couplet, spoken by the maidservant Marina, supports the comfortable status quo for a wealthy minority of Famusovs bent on keeping the peasants in their places; it would have found favour in the Church of England in the earlier part of this century.

Теперь—то вижу я:
Чтоб глупо не упасть и чтоб не острашиться,
Так лучше не в свои нам сании не садиться.
V.9.36-38

Compare the Church of England's once-familiar prayer: 'Help us to be content with that station in life to which it has pleased God to call us.'

The wealthy widow in Klushin's five-act comedy Smekh i gore, written in 1792, has a niece, Priiata. Her reasons for wishing to marry the girl to the empty-headed Vetron instead of to the upright officer Plamen are less than disinterested. She wants Plamen for herself. It is a rivalry between parent and child which recalls Molière's miser, who planned to marry his son's beloved. The servants Aniuta and Andrei, helpfully given, like the two noble lovers, the same initials, prevent the widow from carrying out her plans. Her brother-in-law Starovek, is a good old-fashioned raisonner. His opinion of women bears more than a passing resemblance to Famusov's.
The disparaging 'у них-то', the dig at the enlightenment, the female educated in fashion – compare Famusov, addressing Skalozub in Act II, Scene 5, on the young ladies of Moscow:

И точно, можно ли воспитаннее быть!
Умеют же себя принарядить
Тафтицей, бархатцем и дымкой.

II.5.309-11

True, Klushin lists batiste, calico and cambric, while Griboedov remembers taffeta, velvet and gauze, perhaps the more affluent collection; but they are agreed on the triviality of the female mind. Both writers rhyme 'лавка' with 'булавка'; Klushin in the lines quoted above, Griboedov in I.4.95, where Famusov rails against the inordinate influence of French literature and French fashions on the behaviour of his daughter:

Когда избавит нас творец
От шляпок их! чепцов! и шпилек! и булавок!
И книжных и бисквитных лавок!

I.4.93-95

Klushin's play includes a pair of fake philosophers whose names, Plaksin and Khokhotalkin, reveal their philosophical stock-in-trade. Plaksin, Plamen's servant Andrei and his soldier friend Vetron are all agreed on one thing, however; there is very little profit to be had from intelligence. To Plaksin it is positively dangerous. 'Ты учишься к чему? К погибели своей!' Andrei is convinced that one is happier without it. 'И счастливеу нас разумных дураки.' Vetron declares it useless and unnecessary:
Francophilia provides what seems an obligatory target. Plaksin complains, of the foppish Vetron: 'Дрягает, корчится, французски врет слова. | А русского совсем почти не понимает.' While Andrei, dressed for reasons of plot as a woman and rehearsing his lines for the ball, replies to an imaginary invitation to dance the Kazachok: Нет, даме стыдно. | Так просто русскую?... Ах! Это мне обидно. One can hear his falsetto swooping about above the laughter.

There is one further point of contact concerning the hurt pride of a rejected lover. Both Plamen and Chatskii are stunned to find that another might be preferred to themselves. 'А ты в то время мне Ветрона предпочла, | Когда навеки ты мою быть могла', Plamen says, in evident bewilderment.

Compare Chatskii's outraged 'А вы! О Боже мой! Кого себе избрали? | Когда подумаю, кого вы предпочли!', (IV.14.471-72) in his final monologue. Though to be fair, the preferred suitor in his case has just been revealed by Griboedov, in that perfect denouement dreamed up on the journey from Moscow to St Petersburg, as the definitive cad. Chatskii is using the formal plural of the loser.

Sudovshchikov's Neslykhannoе divо, ili chestnyi sekretar', a verse comedy written in 1802, employs the less usual three-act structure. Another Milena wants to marry this wonder, whose name, Pravdin, hammers the point home to the least attentive post-prandial audience, as do the multitude of 'speaking names' in these comedies. Krivosudov, her father, has other plans. Kriuchkostroi, a lieutenant in the police service, is his choice of 'unwelcome suitor'. Не молод, правда, он, но человек честной', he claims. (I.3) We are not
deceived. Appalled to find his daughter in love with his poor but genuinely honest secretary, he rounds off Act II of this comedy of corruption in the courts with a line which bears a strong resemblance to Famusov’s at the end of Act I. 'Трудись и потей, коль хочешь быть отцом.' (II.16) Compare the latter’s famous line 'Что за комиссия, Создатель, | Быть взрослой дочери отцом!' (I.10.485-86) Even without the answering resonance of that final 'отцом' it is the same despairing cry of a father plagued by a daughter.

In an exchange between two serfs, the dvornik Asmodei and the maidservant Strela who makes fun of him, the former says angrily 'Послушай же, голубка, | Не задевай меня! – ты, вишь ли, скалозубка.' (I.14) This reversal of the verb зубоскалить is of course that used by Griboedov in naming his Colonel. Liza understands only too well Skalozub’s penchant for mockery. 'Шутит и он горазд' she warns Sofiia, who has recklessly revealed her feeling for Molchalin.(II.11.509)

It will come as no surprise to learn that Pravdin gets his girl. The straight-talking Priamikov, who plays raisonneur, concludes the play with a couplet celebrating the young man’s unique honesty. 'И я тебе скажу, любезный друг, правдиво - | Тебя у нас зовут: Неслышенное диво!' (V.20) That will have sent them chuckling home in St Petersburg.

In the plays I have mentioned, conceit, boastfulness, the selfish silliness of an amorous widow, the corruption of a crooked judge, are all satirized in the context of the simple plan outlined earlier. The last of the five verse comedies discussed here is the least likely to have influenced Griboedov. The letter to 'an unknown person' in which he promised himself to write his play is dated 17 November 1820.52 Katenin’s Spletni was performed for the first time on
31 December 1820 at the Bolshoi Theatre in St Petersburg. It was not published in a separate edition until the following year.\textsuperscript{53} We know only that Griboedov had read the first act, the receipt of which he acknowledged in his perfunctory note of 26 March 1819.\textsuperscript{54} And yet even this unpromising material adds to an understanding of Griboedov's capacity for creative assimilation. This much-translated play, versions of which by Shakhovskoi, Svechin and Zagoskin preceded Katenin's adaptation, must surely have been known to Griboedov, in its original form – \textit{Le Méchant} by Gresset;\textsuperscript{55} the title page of the 1821 publication claims that the play is an 'imitation' of that work.\textsuperscript{56} Like Kniaznin's \textit{Khvastun}, the comedy contains a widow jealous of her daughter. Named Krashneva by Katenin, the impoverished and dependent woman lives with her brother Variagin, a wealthy bachelor and landowner, on his estate outside Moscow. Here, too, the human failing satirized is embodied in the 'unwelcome suitor', a man courting both mother and daughter while he attempts to discover which of them will inherit. It is this trouble-maker, Gresset's 'méchant', Katenin's Zel'skii, whose deliberate malice powers the plot, a tangled affair which culminates in his downfall and the marriage of the childhood sweethearts Chloe and Valère, or in Katenin's version, Lidin and Nastin'ka. Zel'skii's manservant Semen is forced to write anonymous letters for his master. Annushka, the widow's maidservant, arranges the overhearing scene in which Zel'skii's true character is revealed. She even persuades Semen to transfer his allegiance to the young Lidin (how he was to do this is unclear) so that this matching pair of servant-lovers are not separated by the inevitable happy ending.

Lidin, returning to the countryside after a period spent in Moscow, has nothing but praise for the old capital. Encouraged by Zel'skii's 'Ты лучше
This unreliable witness offers the hectic pace of Moscow life as evidence of 'ум'; it is just this spurious intelligence which Griboedov will mock. Lifin's description of the great houses springing up there, the taste employed in their decoration, recalls Famusov (II.5.323), whose reference to 'Дома и все на новый лад' inspires Chatskii's bitter 'Дома новые, но предрасудки стары'. (II.5.324) While Lifin's breathless 'там спектакль, там бал, там чтенье' appears as Chatskii's dismissive 'Вчера был бал, а завтра будет два' in I.7.354 It is left to Zel'skii to conclude 'И словом, что Москву с теперешним умом | Не худо б запереть на время в желтый дом.' (I.3) In Gore ot uma Moscow accuses Chatskii of madness, Zagoretskii invents his incarceration. 'Схватили, в желтый дом, и на цепь посадили'. (III.16.458)

In Spletni Lifin, replying to Zelskii's question, 'Ты, слышно, был влюблен в нее?', tells him:

...Мы жили вместе,
Росли и свыклись; она тогда мила
Была как ангел, - Что? Я слышал, подросла,
Похорошела?
In *Gore ot uma* it is Liza who reminds Sofiia of her former closeness to Chatskii.

Sofiia begins in similar vein:

Да, с Чацим, правда, мы воспитаны, росли;
Привычка вместе быть день каждый неразлучно
Связала детскою нас дружбой.

I.5.263-65

But goes on to give her account of a more complex relationship, broken off by Chatskii, resumed, then interrupted a second time by his 'охота странствовать'. Sofiia, too, now appears more beautiful to her former childhood companion. Как Софья Павловна у вас похорошела!’ Chatskii tells Famusov in I.9.455 It is a predictable development; Sofiia was fourteen when Chatskii left, seventeen on his return.

Act I, Scene 5 of the earlier play provides more interesting material. In a lengthy dialogue between Zel’skii and Krashneva the latter mentions Moscow. ‘Мне Москва до смерти надоела’, he says, and goes on to tell her why, concluding ‘Все запуски кричат, что просветила век. | Что слишком все умны; а ум с дня на день реже.’ It is this paradox which Griboedov will embody in his Chatskii. Three lines later Katenin gives Zel’skii the following neatly-balanced aphorism: ‘Без правил старики; без толку молодежь’. In Act II of *Gore ot uma* Chatskii expresses his agreement with the first statement, Famusov with the second. ‘Кто в случае, бранят’, Zel’skii continues. Famusov, calling evil good in II.2.74, refers to the arrogant behaviour of courtiers, particularly those in favour: ‘Вельможа в случае, тем паче’. ‘А бредят орденами’, Zel’skii complains. This unpleasant feature has already been discussed with reference to Skalozub. ‘Сорят на пустяки.’ (I.5) Famusov, on the subject of ‘наши старики’ in I.5.291-92 makes the same point. ‘А придерутся |
К тому, к сему, а чаще ни к чему’. На дело очень скупы’, Zel’skii tells the widow. Famusov admits it with a shameless wit:

А у меня, что дело, что не дело,
Обычай мой такой:
Подписано, так с плеч долой.
1.4.203-04

И если два умны, так, верно, двадцать глупы’, Zel’skii calculates, summing up the male element in Moscow society. Griboedov, in his letter to the author of Spletni referred to above - that written in January 1825 - assesses the proportion of sensible men to fools with even less optimism, as one to twenty-five.

After thirty-three lines Krashneva manages to interrupt Zel’skii. Как? и об женщинах забыли вы совсем?’, she asks. He demurs. При вас их осуждать не смею я.’ Krashneva has no such scruples. Her remarks, of course, do not include her own generation; they are addressed to that of her daughter. Pathetic creatures. How could it be otherwise, when they are taught nothing? Французское – и то плохое лепетанье; | Мазурка, вальс и шаль – вот все их воспитанье. [...] Судите об ленточках, и уж отнюдь не дале’. Unlike Famusov, she is not even pretending to praise this millinery education. Женихов | Век ищут, но им муж без денег и чинов | Не муж’, she continues. In Katenin’s comedy the young ladies themselves are said to hold this mercenary view; Liza, in I.5.231-37 attributes it to the Moscow fathers, Famusov among them:

Как все московские, ваш батюшка таков:
Желал бы зять он с звездами, да с чинами.

[...]

Вот например полковник Скалозуб:
И золотой мешок, и метит в генералы.
I.5.231-32, 36-37
The long Scene ends with the intrusion of the author into the play. Katenin has included this dialogue from Act II, Scene 3 of the original in his first act, the act he sent to Griboedov in Teheran.

'Всех на смех описать'... these few lines represent the challenge, the problem and its solution. Griboedov had described Zagoskin 'with malicious humour' and, when no one would print his offensive verses, had them copied and circulated. Gore ot uma was to follow the same evasive route, so familiar to his contemporaries that the censors were evidently prepared to pass Katenin's reference to it: 'Да жаль, Мольера нет.' The line is not in the French original. As if no one but Molière could hope to immortalize a generation in verse, Griboedov may have thought, reading Katenin's tedious first act; though it took him another two years to dream his way out of his 'writers' block'.

In Gresset's Le Méchant the young widowed mother Florise is quite as jealous of her daughter as Katenin's Krashneva. In this, at least, his translation is faithful to the original. 'Elle est si peu formée et si sotte, entre nous', she tells Cléon, 'le méchant', in Act I, Scene 4. And when her daughter Chloe appears in
I.6, her greeting is scarcely maternal. 'Vous êtes aujourd'hui coiffée à faire horreur'.

It is, of course, Paris and not Moscow which Cleon criticizes. 'Paris? Il m'ennuie à la mort', he tells Florise in II.3:

Des jeunes gens d'un ton, d'une stupidité!
Des femmes d'un caprice, et d'une fausseté!
Des prétendus esprits souffrir la suffisance,
Et la grosse gaieté de l'épaisse opulence.

So far there seems little to choose between the two capitals. Gresset's Cléon, however, has none of the Russian reluctance to ruin a female reputation. When Florise asks him about the Parisian women he responds with enthusiasm. 'Je suis tenté, parbleu! d'écrire mes Mémoires.' She is delighted. There is no talk of censorship. She even offers a certain Orphise, for inclusion in his scandalous reminiscences. 'Quoiqu'elle soit affreuse, elle se croit jolie, | Et de l'humilier j'ai la plus grande envie', she tells him. 'Si votre Orphise en meurt, vous plaire est mon excuse', he replies, with dubious gallantry. Katenin's Zel'skii, primly reluctant to judge the ladies in the presence of Krashneva, is clearly the victim of 'adapting to our ways'. Famusov, too, only criticizes Moscow's women to a male audience.

Piksanov has drawn attention to the unequal quality of works suggested by various writers as 'Western influences': 'The competing authors and works are far from being of equal merit.' The same wide range is evident in Griboedov's Russian inheritance. The verse comedies discussed above would be less significant if they formed part of a longer literary history; their family likeness to Gore ot uma is undeniable. They are introduced mainly in order to illustrate similarities of form, although form and content, inevitably, overlap.
The last part of this chapter is concerned with similarities of content and technique in works of various forms by Classical, Western and Russian writers; Lucian and Plautus, Shakespeare and Molière and, of course, Kantemir and Fonvizin. As Herzen writes, Russian literature 'was born in the satires of Prince Kantemir, developed in Fonvizin's comedies in order to reach full maturity in the bitter humour of Griboedov'.58 The works discussed have been chosen as representative examples of those already accessible to Griboedov in their original languages during his years at Moscow University. Lucian is the only exception.

But, as he wrote to Katenin from Petersburg on 19 October 1817:

Goodbye, I'm going out now; where do you think I'm going? To study Greek. That language is driving me out of my mind. I study every blessed day from 12 till 4, and I'm already making great progress. I don't find it at all difficult.59

It seems likely that his interest in this newly acquired language will have led him to re-read, in the original, those Classics so revered by his teacher Gavrilov, and to form his own opinions of them.

Lucian, Shakespeare and Molière have all written, famously, on the theme of the misanthrope: Lucian in Timon the Misanthrope, Shakespeare in his Timon of Athens, based loosely on Lucian's dialogue, and Molière in Le Misanthrope. The first to make the comparison with Molière's comedy, a comparison subsequently made by generations of literary critics, was M.A. Dmitriev. Of Chatskii he writes 'This is Molière's Misanthrope in trivial details and caricature.60 That any of his characters in Gore ot uma are caricatures is a conclusion which Griboedov angrily rejects. His answer to Katenin's letter on the subject has been quoted above, but bears repetition:

'The characters are just portraits'. Agreed! Even if I haven't the talent of a Molière at least I'm more honest than he is; portraits and only portraits belong in comedy and tragedy; however, there are features in them
characteristic of numerous other people, sometimes of the entire human race, in so far as every man resembles the other members of his two-legged fraternity. I hate caricatures; you won't find a single one in my Scenes. Those are my poetic principles.

Griboedov never did take kindly to criticism. He appears to have read Dmitriev's article, written, like his letter to Katenin, in 1825. But Chatskii is no misanthrope. He does not come to Moscow in order to hate mankind; he comes because he is in love. Nor does he learn to hate mankind during the course of the play. His final words – bar those spoken to some off-stage servant – reveal his intention of finding a corner of the world where there will be a place for his wounded feelings. If he merely wished to be alone he could achieve that without difficulty on his estate. It is in the wider world from which he has just returned that he will seek – and find – sympathy for his outraged sensibilities; among that section of mankind which he defends with such warmth in his great monologue 'A судьи кто?' in II.5.376-81:

Теперь пускай из нас один,
Из молодых людей, найдется: враг исканий,
Не требуя ни мест, ни повышенья в чин,
В науки он вперит ум, алчущий познаний;
Или в душе его сам Бог возбудит жар
К искусствам творческим, высоким и прекрасным...

'Из нас один.' Chatskii is not an isolated individual at odds with humanity; he is one of a growing number of determined, if disorganized young men, who within a year or two of the play's completion will stand on Senate Square, prepared to die for the views he expresses. It is Griboedov who has isolated Chatskii, for his own excellent dramatic purposes; not misanthropy.

**Lucian**

Petr Rutskii, who in 1901 translated Lucian's *Timon the Misanthrope* into Russian as *Lukian: chelovekonenavistnik*, writes in his commentary on this
dialogue: 'Lucian's Timon is the distant and coarse prototype of our subtly sensitive and irritable fighter of social evils, Chatskii'; though he does admit that 'there is a profound difference between Timon and Chatskii'. There is indeed.

Lucian's Timon is a true misanthrope. Even when the gods take pity and restore his fortune, his disillusion with mankind remains complete.

And be the rule and law of my remaining days to shun all men, be blind to all men, scorn all men. Friendship, hospitality, society, compassion — vain words all. To be moved by another's tears, to assist another's need, - be such things illegal and immoral. Let me live apart like a wolf; be Timon's one friend — Timon.

There is nothing of Chatskii in this Timon's bitter rejection of all the qualities that the former values. Nor is Gore ot uma a play about the process of Chatskii's disillusion with Moscow. That this has long since taken place is apparent from Act I, Scene 7, in which he makes his first appearance; his monologues in Act II reveal views already established, not reactions to events within the play. The slow process of his disillusion during the course of the play concerns Sofiia. He arrives in love and leaves with more understanding than he can easily bear.

'Mечтанья с глаз долой и спала пелена' he says, at last, and allows himself 'излить всю жельч и всю досаду'. (IV.14.502-06) True, Chatskii does refer briefly to his own, earlier illusions. On the subject of Moscow's passion for uniforms he admits, 'Я сам к нему давно ль от нежности отрекся?! | Теперь уж в это мне робчество не власть'. (II.5.389-90) But his vision of Sofiia is still intact. The age of innocence which he recalls with such yearning nostalgia — 'Где время то? Где возраст тот невинный' (I.7.337) — is also dismissed by Sofiia as 'ребячество'. (I.7.344) This is the moment at which Chatskii should have understood. But Griboedov delays his disillusion with his childhood sweetheart until Scene 13 in the final, fourth act.
An earlier work by Lucian, however, reveals closer parallels with Griboedov's Chatskii than Timon the Misanthrope. This is the dialogue Nigrinus, in which Lucian himself converts a friend to his new-found philosophy. Lucian, who has travelled to Rome to see, significantly, an oculist, undergoes there a process of spiritual enlightenment, as the result of a talk with Nigrinus, the Platonic philosopher. I forgot all about my ophthalmic troubles, in the gradual improvement of my spiritual vision, for till that day I had grovelled in "spiritual blindness", he enthuses.

Philosophy seems to have produced the same effect as wine is said to have produced on the Indians the first time they drank it. The mere taste of such potent liquor threw them into a state of absolute frenzy, the intoxicating power of the wine being doubled in men so warm-blooded by nature. This is my case. I go about like one possessed; I am drunk with the words of wisdom.

A faithful portrait of a passionate character suffering from an overdose of imperfectly assimilated Enlightenment. Who has, as Pushkin wrote to Bestuzhev in January 1825, 'spent some time with a very intelligent man (namely, with Griboedov)'.

The disgust with Rome expressed by Nigrinus, Lucian's unfavourable comparison of Roman mores with the 'Athenian liberty and unpretentious style of living', recall Chatskii's condemnation of Moscow.

The man over whom gold has cast its spell, who is in love with riches, and measures happiness by purple raiment and dominion, who, living his life among flatterers and slaves, knows not the sweets of freedom, the blessings of candour, the beauty of truth; he who has given up his soul to Pleasure, and will serve no other mistress, whose heart is set on gluttony and wine and women, [...] let all such (he cried), dwell here in Rome; the life will suit them.

As would, presumably, the life in Famusov's Moscow.

In Rome, as in Moscow, 'by the more ambitious spirits, an obeisance is expected; this is not performed at a distance, after the Persian fashion – you go right up, and make a profound bow, testifying with the angle of your body to the
self-abasement of your soul'. Chatskii despises such grovelling. As Famusov complains,

Чуть низко поклонись, согнись-ка кто кольцом,
Хоть пред монаршим лицом,
Так назвет он подлецом!

III.21.506-08

Slander, gluttony, 'flatterers and false friends, legacy hunters' are all condemned by Lucian, as they are by Griboedov.

Zagoretskii, too, has his counterpart in the Rome of 150 AD. Of its courtiers and flatterers Lucian writes: 'They rise in the small hours of the night, to go their round of the city...'. Compare Zagoretskii in III.9.334, in search of a ticket with which to buy Sofiia's gratitude. 'С зарей в шестом часу, и кстати ль!' 'To have doors slammed in their faces by slaves...'. Compare Khlestova in III.10.380-81. 'Я от него было и двери на запор; | Да мастер услужить'. Zagoretskii avoids the fate of Lucian's flatterers here, partially, but only partially, because his services are too valuable. In this respect Khlestova displays a degree of cynical self-interest in which Moscow surpasses even Rome: '...to swallow as best they may the compliments of "Dog", "Toadeater", and the like'. Again, compare Khlestova and the two little black children that Zagoretskii has managed to obtain for herself and her sister at the market. 'Купил, он говорит, чай в карты спутовал; | А мне подарочек, дай Бог ему здоровье!'. (III.10.83-84)

As Chatskii remarks, 'Не поздоровится от эдаких похвал'. (III.10.385)

Griboedov, creating his Chatskii, reveals an understanding of those earnest young contemporaries of his, with their zeal for reform and their tragi-comic ineptitude, which surely owes something to this passage spoken by Lucian towards the end of the dialogue:
A well-conditioned human soul is like a target of some soft material. As life goes on, many archers take aim thereat; and every man's quiver is full of subtle and varied argument, but not every man shoots aright. Some draw the bow too tight, and let fly with undue violence. These hit the true direction, but their shafts do not lodge in the mark; their impetus carries them right through the soul, and they pass on their way, leaving only a gaping wound behind them.73

Chatskii draws the bow too tight. He lets fly with undue violence. He hits the true direction, but his shafts do not lodge in the mark. His words wound everyone and change no one. Sofiia is left to heal the gaping wound in her self-esteem as best she may. Chatskii, who knows her better than we do, is bitterly certain that she will manage it. 'Вы помиритесь с ним по размышлениям зерлом' he predicts in his final monologue. (IV.14.487)

**Plautus**

Some 350 years before Lucian wrote *Nigrinus*, Plautus was entertaining Roman audiences with his comedies. In turn stage carpenter, failed man of business and baker's assistant, he took some time to find his true métier. It was just before the turn of the century, in 202 BC, when Scipio had finally defeated the great Hannibal at Zama, that he began to write his outrageous plays, full of impersonations, mistaken identity and -- more importantly for the present purpose -- humorous examples of miles gloriosus, the braggart warrior. In the second decade of the nineteenth century, that which preceded the writing of *Gore ot uma*, Russia's great enemy, too, was defeated. Russian officers returning to the fatherland cannot all have been high-minded idealists dedicated to reform; a fair proportion of them were closer, no doubt, to the braggart warriors pilloried by Plautus. 'Des rapprochments qui paraissent plus vraisemblables, par exemple entre le personnage de Skalozub et le Soldat Fanfaron de Plaute, se revelent decevants', Bonamour writes.74 But in my view the very appearance of the type in a post-war society, in both cases after the defeat of a powerful enemy, links the
two writers. We know that Griboedov, in his university days, was encouraged by Gavrilov to respect Classical models. His bent for comedy had been apparent since his schoolboy parody of Ozerov, Dmitrii Drianskoi. He can hardly have neglected to read such an important comic dramatist as Plautus. In *Miles Gloriosus* he will have found Pyrgopolynices, 'the terrific tower-taker', boasting of his heroic exploits, and Artotrogus, his parasite, as ready as Famusov to flatter in the cause of self-interest. A small sample will be more than enough. Here is Pyrgopolynices, as the play opens, addressing his sword.

```
PYRGO
Ah me, I must give comfort to this blade of mine
Lest he lament and yield himself to dark despair.
Too long ere now has he been sick of his vocation.
Poor lad! He's dying to make mincemeat of the foe.
(dropping the bombastic tone)
Say, where the devil is Artotrogus?
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ARTO
He's here,
By Destiny's dashing, dauntless, debonair darling,
A man so warlike, Mars himself would hardly dare
To claim his powers were the equal of your own.6
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And so on.

The soldier Stratophanes in *Truculentus*, makes his entrance preceded by dancing girls, drummers, and slaves bearing spoils and trophies. Expect me not, spectators, to declaim my deeds. It is my way to make my valour known by these hands’. It is a theme he develops until his scribe, who is recording his words for posterity, falls asleep and has to be roused with a kick. These are just two examples of Plautus's *miles gloriosus* to which Griboedov pays tribute with his Skalozub. Compare the latter's shameless boasting of his bravery in the trenches, as Nechkina points out, during the Plesvitskii truce. *Имеет, кажется, в петличке орденок?*, Famusov asks him, referring to the Colonel's brother. За третье августа, засели мы в траншее: | Ему дан с бантом, мне на шею.' (II.5.221-23)
Another character to find his parallel in Plautus is Zagoretskii. The parasite, despised but useful, was a stock figure in these Classical comedies. Artotrogus, though compared above to Famusov, can sing for his supper as well as Zagoretskii; both have made themselves indispensable:

```
PYRGO  How expertly you suit your mind to know my own.
ARTO   I ought to know your habits well-rehearsedly
       And see to it I sniff your wishes in advance.
PYRGO  How good's your memory?
ARTO   It's perfect, sir.
```

Artotrogus is remembering another spurious feat of heroism. Compare Zagoretskii, accepted as a guest by Famusov, 'sniffing' Sofiia's wishes in advance, anticipating her need of a ticket for tomorrow's play, introduced by Platon Mikhailovich to Chatskii in III.9.349 as 'отъявленный мошенник, плут'.

Ergasilus, the gluttonous parasite in Captive, is another of the same breed. He opens Act IV in joyous style; the information he has acquired will win him a comfortable place at Hegio's table. Philopolemus, Hegio's son, stolen twenty years previously at the age of four, has been found:

```
I shall unload all the heavens upon him, and more too.
Here's how now: like the slave in the comedy – run, run,
   (running in place, as on a treadmill)
thus, with my cloak tucked under my chin. I will bring him
news he shall never forget, be the first one to tell him,
pleasing him so, he will stuff me with dinners for
   ever,
```

'News he shall never forget.' Will never be allowed to forget, Ergasilus implies. Like Zagoretskii, he knows how to use the information he collects.

Henry Taylor, who translated Curculio (The Weevil) in the 1995 edition of Plautus's comedies used here, writes: 'Recent drama does not include the parasite among its stock characters, though the type shows up here and there under various other names.' Zagoretskii, like Ergasilus, Artotrogus and
Curculio, is a fixer, skilled in the art of exploitation. It is his other calling – that of informer – which arouses our anxiety in Gore ot uma. Like children at a pantomime, we long to shout, as Repetilov quotes the dangerously radical sentiments of Aleksei Lakhmot'ev, unaware that Zagoretskii has replaced Skalozub, 'Look out, he's behind you!' (IV.5.220-22).

The action of Curculio takes place in Epidaurus, established by the Producer, the Choragos of the original, as being, in fact, Rome. For Rome read Moscow, for Greece, the 'enlightened abroad', the position it then occupied, and the Weevil in the following passage might be threatening Repetilov:

As for those Greeks in short cloaks, walking around
With their heads covered, their clothes all stuffed
With books and food baskets, runaway slaves, most of them,
Plotting and arguing, who block your path, muttering
Grave conclusions, or sit in the toddy shop
When they've stolen some money, drinking hot drinks
And muffling their heads, then setting out, more somber
Than sober – if I bang into them, I'll pound
A grain-fed fart out of every one of them!\(^2\)

Zagoretskii’s approach to unreliable conspirators may be more subtle than Curculio’s, but the latter's description of them reading, drinking, arguing, then 'setting out, more somber than sober', to mutter their 'grave conclusions' to any passer-by, recalls Repetilov in his scenes with Chatskii, Skalozub and - inadvertently - Zagoretskii.

Shakespeare

As mentioned above, M.A. Dmitriev found similarities between Chatskii and Alceste as early as 1825, though he did not develop this theory. It was Veselovskii who made a detailed comparison of Gore ot uma and Le Misanthrope in his article, 'Al'tsest i Chatskii'.\(^3\) Similarities – and differences – between the two plays will be discussed below. The earlier source of possible
influence, however, Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens*, was suggested by N.K. Mikhailovskii in his response to Veselovskii's article, entitled 'Tri mizantropa'.

Lucian's Timon was a misanthrope from first to last; the philanthropy which ruined him is, at the opening of the piece, no more than a source of amusement to the gods. Shakespeare's Timon shows us the progress from one extreme state to the other; but he bears no closer resemblance to Chatskii than does Lucian's hero. Shakespeare's influence is more clearly revealed in the appearance of Repetilov. He arrives late – both in the action of the play and in the evening; too late, as Chatskii points out:

Час ехать спать ложиться;
Коли явился ты на бал,
Так можешь воротиться.

IV.4.69-71

Piksanov considers that the Scene with Platon Mikhailovich and his wife, the conversation of Zagoretskii with the Countess-grandmother, and the latter's with Prince Tugoukhovskii, slow down the development of the action. But, he says,

the perfection of the picture, the humour and the sarcasm more than compensate for this slowing of the pace, and the appearance of Chatskii and his monologue give the drama fresh impetus. [...] We also see this tendency to be isolated, to be cut off from the scenic nucleus, in the episode with Repetilov.

Piksanov's 'but' suggests that Griboedov stands in need of justification here. As though the slowing of the pace were less than deliberate. In my view the device is both intentional and effective. Nowhere more so than in the late appearance of Repetilov.

*Hamlet* first appeared in print in 1603, in the unauthorized text known as the first quarto. T.J.B. Spencer, in an account of the text published together with the play in 1980, writes: 'For all its faults, Q1 is occasionally useful to the editor […] Its stage directions, scanty though they are, are of exceptional interest, since
they give us information about the early staging of the play which is not available elsewhere.\(^{86}\) In this first quarto the stage direction which heralds the late appearance of Osrick runs, 'Enter a bragart Gentleman.'\(^{87}\) The Scene between Osrick, Hamlet and Horatio follows that between the two latter in which Hamlet arrives at one of Shakespeare's bleaker conclusions: 'And a man's life's no more than to say "one"': (V.2)\(^{88}\) In which Hamlet envies the directness of Laertes's rage. 'For by the image of my cause I see | The portraiture of his'.\(^{89}\) Osrick releases tension, distracts the audience from thoughts of mortality and failure; he even – momentarily – distracts Hamlet. When he exits, having managed, finally, to deliver the King's message concerning the wager, Hamlet continues to think of him. Osrick is a man who has 'only got the tune of the time', he remarks.\(^{90}\) But Osrick has served Shakespeare's purpose. The denouement is all the more powerful because we are caught off guard. Our attention has been diverted from the main issue.

Consider the entrance of Repetilov. Coming, like that of Osrick, immediately before the denouement, it follows the bleakest of Chatskii's monologues:

\begin{multicols}{2}

Ну вот и день прошёл, и с ним  
Все призраки, весь чад и дым  
Надежд, которые мне души наполняли.

IV.3.24-26
\end{multicols}

It fulfils the same function as Osrick's scene; we are momentarily diverted by Griboedov's 'bragart Gentleman'. Chatskii's final disillusion, when it comes, is all the more painful, his final monologue more powerful, because they follow the ramblings of Repetilov. Here indeed is a man who has 'only got the tune of the time'. It is Repetilov, not Laertes, of whom Chatskii might well have said, 'For by the image of my cause I see | The portraiture of his'. Hamlet, of course, compares
himself unfavourably with Laertes. Laertes is the very model of revenge, unconditional, uncomplicated. 'But sure the bravery of his grief did put me | Into a towering passion', Hamlet admits, with honest envy.91

Griboedov is writing a comedy. Chatskii, though not very perceptive and short on common sense, is a genuine idealist. He finds it hard enough to doubt that Sofiia loves him; he never doubts the rightness of his cause. Chatskii represents the best of his generation, Repetilov the worst. As Wladimir Troubetzkoy writes in his article 'Tchatski ou la répétition', 'Repetilov est le bouc emissaire qui sauve Tchatski des équivoques impures.'92 Such clear distinctions belong in comedy. But the slowing of the pace to which Piksanov refers could be better described as rubato. Griboedov the musician robs his comedy of its established tempo in order that the denouement may be played at an even more hectic pace. In my view he admired – and borrowed – the technique which Shakespeare uses with such mastery in Hamlet.

Molière

The comparison most frequently made by those in search of a Western source for Griboedov's comedy is, of course, that between Le Misanthrope and Gore ot uma. In my view the numerous similarities between the two plays are superficial, the differences profound. However, similarities there are. A detailed study of these was made by A.N. Veselovskii in the article 'Al'tsest i Chatskii' mentioned above. First published in Vestnik Evropy (III, 1881), it was included in his book Etiudy o Molière: Mizantrop published in that same year. The article was subsequently reprinted in his Etiudy i kharakteristiki (first edition – 1894, fourth edition – 1912); a resumé of his conclusions appears in his Zapadnye vlijaniia v novoi russkoi literature (fifth edition – 1916). Over a period of thirty-
five years Veselovskii reconsidered and reworked this article. Piksanov, in the chapter entitled "Gore ot uma" i zapadnye vliianiia: pereotsenka literaturnoi i literaturovedcheskoi traditsi’ which forms part of his book Griboedov: Issledovaniia i kharakteristiki, says that he has based his own study of the subject on Veselovskii’s article. For all its shortcomings and its debatability, it has to be reckoned with’, he writes.\(^{93}\) And, as Bonamour admits, in reference to Piksanov’s exhaustive study of possible Western influences, Il est inutile d’en faire ici l’étude, détaillée, qui a été faite par N.K. Piksanov.\(^{94}\) Veselovskii’s points of comparison, it seems, cannot be ignored. All thirteen of them have been summarized by Piksanov in the above-mentioned study.\(^{95}\) These summaries, which include quotations from Veselovskii’s article (given in inverted commas), are translated below; they are followed by my own comments.

1. The description of Zagoretskii ‘exactly fits’ the portrait of the scoundrel in Alceste’s lines spoken to Philinte (I.1)\(^{96}\)

   Nommez-le fourbe, infame et scélérat maudit,  
   Tout le monde en convient, et nul n’y contre dit.  
   Cependant sa grimace est partout bienvenue.\(^{97}\)

   Compare these lines from that speech with the words of Platon Mikhailovich: 'Ох, нет, братец, и нас ругают | Везде, а всюду принимают'. (III.9.357-58)

   The similarity is indisputable, the difference between the attitudes to the two scoundrels illuminating. In Alceste’s view his society accepts the man out of an excess of tolerance; its members are, to his disgust, 'aux méchants complaisants'.\(^{98}\) Famusov’s society, in the Moscow of the early 1800s, accepts the informer Zagoretskii because it would be unsafe not to do so. (При нём остерегись: переносить горазд', Platon Mikhailovich warns Chatskii in III.10.351. And then justifies itself by cynically pleading his extreme usefulness.
These reasons are Russian reasons. Alceste in Moscow would have wilted - 'завят', as Pushkin says of Vlakh in Venice - 'как пересаженный кустик'.

2. Chatskii's exclamation: 'искать по свету, | Где оскорбленному есть чувство уголок' is 'extraordinarily close' to the words of Alceste: 'chercher sur la terre un endroit écarté, | Ou d'être homme d'honneur on ait la liberté'.

This comparison is, it seems, the most popular; everyone who has written on the subject agrees with it.

The similarity between the final lines of Alceste and Chatskii, discussed above in relation to misanthropy, is evident. In Veselovskii's view they are 'extraordinarily close'. But here again, it is not the general similarity of the intent expressed, but the one, small difference in its expression which reveals in Chatskii, not a French misanthrope but a Russian Decembrist. Alceste seeks 'un endroit écarté'; an isolated spot. Chatskii - 'уголок'; a little corner. (IV.14.541). There is no mention of isolation. And from everything the play has told us, we know that there are many who share his views, who will sympathize with his wounded feelings. The response to these two declarations, moreover, is very different. Philinte, in the final couplet of the play, invites Éliant to join him in a determined effort to dissuade Alceste from seeking isolation. 'Allons, Madame, allons employer toute chose, | Pour rompre le dessein que son coeur se propose.' Chatskii, by the end of the play, has already achieved isolation – on stage. No one speaks up for him. His views on Moscow are dismissed as the ravings of a lunatic. Alceste may have followed the promptings of his heart; Chatskii is declared to be out of his mind. 'Ну, что? Не видишь ты, что он с ума сошел?', Famusov says. (IV.15.523) He would not be the last to dispose of a dissident in this convenient manner.
3. In both works we see, in the person of the hero, a mature and intelligent man, occasionally sinking into a state of extreme pessimism, harsh in his judgements and in the way he relates to people.\(^{103}\)

True, both Alceste and Chatskii are given to bouts of 'extreme pessimism', usually as a result of yet another untimely 'harsh judgement'. Their principles, unattainably high, make harsh judgement of fallible human beings inevitable. And Chatskii is as inept as Alceste in his wooing. But can he really be described as mature and intelligent? Alceste has more in common with the inflexible Griboedov than his impulsive Chatskii. Griboedov who in his youth, Gnedich tells us, admired and even played the role of Alceste in amateur performances, presumably in the theatre at Khmelita.\(^{104}\)

4. His loneliness amongst them is only ameliorated by his dedication to a woman who prefers a fool.\(^{105}\)

This fourth comparison is more convincing. The loneliness is understandable; both heroes know how to alienate those about them by plain speaking. Though the witty Célimène, who seems sadly incapable of loving anyone, can scarcely be compared with Sofiia. Whether playing the Sentimentalist game with Molchalin, revenging herself on Chatskii, or in a state of passionate regret, she must always be loving someone. Perhaps she will indeed reconcile herself to Molchalin. If loving fools and scoundrels went out of fashion, the world would grind to a standstill.

5. The element of chance (the finding and reading of Célimène's letter, the overhearing by Chatskii, concealed in the porter’s lodge, of the rumours concerning him, and of the Scene between Sofiia and Molchalin) opens the
hero's eyes, his last hope collapses, and he breaks off all connections with society.\textsuperscript{306}

The device of concealment and overhearing is used so frequently in neo-classical comedies that this fifth comparison gives little support to Veselovskii's theory.

6. 'Alceste's feeling for the old virtue (vertues des vieux ages) matches the speeches of Chatskii in which he could pass for an Old Believer.\textsuperscript{307}

Both heroes do indeed yearn for the virtues of an earlier age. Alceste rails against 'ces vices du temps' from the very first scene of Act I,\textsuperscript{108} as does Chatskii from his first appearance. But Chatskii is more specific. Пускай меня отъявят старовером', he says. It is 'старину святую | И величавую одежду' whose passing he regrets. (III.21.600-04) Russian Orthodoxy before the reforms of Nikon, the wearing of caftans and beards before the reforms of Peter the Great. His nostalgia is not for those mythical 'old days' mourned by each successive generation, but for the lost traditions of 17th-century Russia. In defence of which he allows his xenophobia free rein. If we were born to borrow, he says, why do we not borrow a little Chinese wisdom – 'Премудрого у них незнанья иноземцев'. (III.22.613) There is precious little of Alceste in this nationalistic fervour.

7. 'In not knowing how to restrain themselves, to remain silent when necessary, they are again similar.'\textsuperscript{109}

This applies not only to Alceste and Chatskii but to Gрибоедov himself. Alceste is the extreme case. He has no intention of remaining silent; certainly not in order to spare anyone's feelings. His dedication to the truth leaves no room for tact.
Alceste would never have said, as Chatskii says, in his longing to know himself loved, 'Раз в жизни притворюсь'. (III.1.32) Molière may have longed for the outrageous freedom of speech which he allows his hero; Griboedov the diplomat knew – in theory at least – the value of a rule well broken. Chatskii is prepared, 'for once in his life', to conceal his true opinion of Molchalin. That he fails to do so makes him the more human of the two characters. Alceste's resolve never wavers; Chatskii is simply unable to 'промолчать где нужно'. He starts well. 'Перед Молчалиным не прав я, виноват; | Быть может он не то, что три года назад'. The effort is too great. 'Есть на земле такие превращенья | Правлений, климатов, и нравов, и умов' he says, unwisely. Warming to his theme he cites 'important people', poets, soldiers, once known as fools, 'что стали умны хоть куда' (III.1.340-42). It is now too late. His subsequent declaration of love, lyrical and passionate, leaves Sofiia unmoved.

8. Famusov's conversation with Skalozub about the Muscovites, in Act I, in the presence of Chatskii, is reminiscent of the gossip in Célimène's salon in the presence of Alceste. (III.5)¹¹¹

This comparison is scarcely sustainable, unless reduced to its lowest common denominator; a person talks to some person or persons in the presence of the hero. That is to say, Célimène, in II.4, talks to Éliante, Philinte, Acaste and Clitandre about various members of Paris society in the presence of Alceste; and Famusov talks to Skalozub about the various groups which constitute Moscow society in the presence of Chatskii. But Célimène is not 'calling evil good'. She
has not a good word to say for anyone. The hero Alceste criticizes not what is praised, as does Chatskii in the scene offered for comparison by Veselovskii; he criticizes the encouragement Célimène receives from her admirers. 'Son humeur satirique est sans cesse nourrie | Par le coupable encens de votre flatterie'.

Célimène mocks the failings of individuals, Famusov praises his own comfortable world. 'Куда как чуден создан свет!', he says, in the monologue which opens Act II; (II.1.9) it is this theme which he develops in his conversation with Skalozub.

9. Chatskii 'stigmatizes' Molchalin with his jokes to Sofiia, amazed that she could find him attractive; Alceste does the same in the first Scene of Act II, mocking the appearance and manners of Clitandre.

Agreed. But Alceste is possessed of an irritating certainty concerning his rivals. He knows that he is right. Chatskii suffers from terrible doubtings and sinkings of the heart:

Ах! Софья! Неужли Молчалин избран ей!
А чем не муж? Ума в нем только мало;
Но чтоб иметь детей
Кому ума недостовала?

III.3.149-52

We can forgive Chatskii much for this simple observation.

10. 'Molière is exactly the same [as Griboedov] in not wanting to ignore his hero's excessive impulsiveness and quickness of temper [...] his almost doctrinaire intolerance.'

True. Both writers have chosen to create characters who, in the words of Lucian quoted above, 'hit the true direction', but whose shafts do not lodge in the mark. As both authors know, to be right and yet so ineffectual is enough to make any
man impulsive, quick tempered and intolerant. These are qualities which Alceste and Chatskii do indeed share, though Griboedov declares his hand less openly than Molière. How, otherwise, could his comedy have been adopted by those ardent young Decembrists as their manifesto? In allowing Chatskii the moral high ground while mocking his ineffectuality, Griboedov is playing a double game with his hero. Alceste, in all his obstinate goodness, never loses our respect; Chatskii never quite wins it.

11. 'Sofiia, even though no longer in love with Chatskii, is obliged to admit that he is witty, intelligent, eloquent; in the final Scene she goes so far as to confess to him that she is entirely to blame. Célimène secretly despises all her admirers, apart from Alceste, whose stern virtue and indomitable spirit she finds somehow attractive. Seeing her flirtations with other men as an amusement, she takes great care to divert suspicion from herself, to make excuses, in order that Alceste should continue to think well of her and, finally, she too confesses to him that she is in the wrong.\(^{115}\)

But when Alceste asks her to accept the only way in which it is possible for him to love her still – to shun the world and share his solitude – she replies, very reasonably, that 'la solitude effraie une âme de vingt ans',\(^ {116}\) a response which recalls Griboedov's first comedy, *Molodye suprugi*. Though in Arist's case the offer is made less seriously, and El'mira treats it as the Sentimentalist joke which it surely is. 'Леса дремучие' are no more to her taste than they are to his. 'Такие жертвы я, конечно, откажу: | Приятность в городе сама я нахожу' (I.14).\(^ {117}\) The less worldly Sofiia might well have accepted an invitation to share Chatskii's self-imposed exile from Moscow, had he made one. Griboedov leaves her bitterly aware of what she has lost but, unlike Célimène, she is denied even the satisfaction of refusing him.
12. The character of Molchalin offers some similarities to that of Philinte (at least in relation to his main characteristics — "umerennost' i akkuratnost'") which constitute a deliberately sharp contrast with the impetuous Chatskii.  

This, in my view, is scraping the bottom of a very well-scraped barrel. There is no possibility of friendship between Chatskii and Molchalin, as there is between Alceste and Philinte; the distance between them is central to the play. 'Umerennost' i akkuratnost" is Molchalin's own definition of his outstanding qualities. (III.3) We know better. The man is an ambitious crawler.

13. 'In the portrayal of manners, in the exposition of age-old problems, in expressing the opinions of the foremost young men of his day [...] Alceste became a Decembrist.'  

When Molière played Alceste to his wife's Célimène, in the first performance of Le Misanthrope on 4 June 1666, at the Théâtre du Palais-Royal, he was already forty-four. Years of experience inform Alceste's misanthropy. He does not speak, as Chatskii speaks, for the idealistic youth of his day; he speaks for a mature and profoundly disillusioned Molière.

**Kantemir**

Veselovskii's thirteen points are more than sufficient to establish that Griboedov, if not his Chatskii, was influenced by Molière's great comedy. Two important Russian writers can be said to have exerted a similar influence: Kantemir and Fonvizin. Kantemir wrote syllabic verse, in which lines of thirteen syllables were stressed on the penultimate syllable; later, influenced by Trediakovskii's work Novyi i kratkii sposob k slozheniu rossiiskikh stikhov, published in 1735, such lines were also stressed on either the fifth or the seventh syllable. His language has little to do with the music of Griboedov. W.E. Brown
defines the 18th-century view of poetry as a kind of geometry in which clarity is
the highest virtue; then adds but even the 18th-century poets are seldom as tone-
deaf as Kantemir. Belinskii makes what is, for our purposes, a more important
point: 'this man, by some sort of happy instinct, was the first to bring together
poetry and life'.

The first of Kantemir's Satires, written in 1729, is entitled 'Na
khuliashchikh uchenie: k umu svoemu'. It mocks not only disdain for scholarship,
but the corruption and inhumanity of judges, the respect shown to wealthy fools,
the ignorance of an ambitious soldier, grovelling, flattery, the effects of foreign
travel and, in defence of the Petrine system of meritocracy, snobbery. These are
all the targets of Griboedov's social satire.

Kantemir's Silvan, one of those
maintains: 'Землю в
четверти делить без Евклида смыслим, | Сколько копеек в рубли – без
алгебры счислим'. And, two lines later, concludes that the only really useful
knowledge is that 'что учит множить доход и расходы малить'. Since life is
so short, Luka says, taking up the theme, 'на что коротати, | Крушиться над
книгою повреждать очи?' All of which is encapsulated by Famusov in the
lines spoken to Liza in I.2.40-41: 'Скажи-ка, что глаза ей портить не годится |
И в чтеньи прок-от не велик'.

This last line is more reminiscent of the judge in Gogol’s Povest’ o tom, kak
possorilsia Ivan Ivanovich s Ivanom Nikiforovich than Chatskii’s impassioned
monologue on those ‘judges’ of his generation. But the comparison illustrates the
nature of the influence which Kantemir may be said to have exerted on
Griboedov; the latter has endowed his Chatskii with that same sense of moral outrage, without coming close to plagiarism. Again, Famusov is no judge. He is, however, in a position of power. His summary disposal of burdensome papers – 'Подписано, так с плеч долой' (I.5.205) – recalls lines 155-65 from the same, first satire. If anyone complains, tell him 'Что подьячим должно лезть на бумажные горы, | А судье довольно знать крепить приговоры'.

Охлодя себе быть, мнить, в незнати старети,  
Кому в роде семь бояр случилось имети,  
И две тысячи дворов за собой считает,  
Хотя в прочем ни читать, ни писать не знает.\(^{127}\)

Compare Famusov on the acceptability of a rich idiot:

Будь плохенький, да если наберется  
Душ тысячи две родовых, -  
Тот и жених. II.5.266-68

It is difficult not to believe that there is some answering resonance between Kantemir's 'две тысячи дворов' and Griboedov's 'душ тысячи две', diminished by III.21.552-58 to the mere three or four hundred quarrelled over by Famusov and Khlestova.

What must surely be an ancestor of Skalozub appears in this final quotation from the first satire: 'Воин ропщет, что своим полком не владеет, | Когда уж имя свое подписать умеет.\(^{128}\)' Compare Griboedov's Colonel in II.5, telling Famusov: 'Не жалуйсь, не обходили, | Однако за полком два года поводили'. There is, of course, no specific revelation of ignorance in the lines; it entertains us in Skalozub's every speech.

Satire II, 'Зависть и гордость дворян злоравных', discusses the qualities mentioned in the title: 'Если в те чины негод, скажешь мне, я, чайю, | Не хуже Клита носить ключ золотой знаю.'\(^{129}\) Griboedov does not make a direct attack on the envious courtier, although the old gentlemen at court do envy
Maksim Petrovich's fall and rise; but that golden key of office shines out like an answering signal across nearly a century from Famusov's valedictory lines on Kuz'ma Petrovich in II.1.21: 'С ключом, и сыну ключ умел доставить'. The golden key, of course, symbolized the office of Chamberlain.

Kantemir's Klit is clearly a man with a future. 'Стихи своей не жалел, кланя мухам'. Molchalin could do no more. As the portrait is lovingly developed, features of the latter begin to emerge:

Клит осторожен - свои слова точно мерит,
Льстит всякому, никому почти он не верит,
С холопом новых людей дружбу весть не редится,
Истинная мысль его прилежно таится
В делах его.

Molchalin is cautious – though, finally, not cautious enough. He measures his words, flatters everyone – everyone, that is, who may be useful to him – and trusts no one, not even Sofiia, for all her reckless declarations of love: 'Любила Чазкого когда-то, | Меня разлюбит, как его.' (IV.12.349-50) He tells Liza, quite shamelessly, that he inherited his principles, such as they are, from his father:

Во-первых угощать всем людям без изъятия;
Хозяйну, где доведется жить,
Начальнику, с кем буду я служить,
Слуге его, который чистит платья,
Швейцару, дворнику, для избежанья зла,
Собаке дворника, чтоб ласкова была.

IV.12.357-62

Addressing Chatskii, Molchalin conceals his 'истинная мысль' while pretending to justify a strategic refusal to express an opinion.

МОЛЧАЛИН Не смею моего сужденья произнести.
ЧАШКИЙ Зачем же так секретно?
МОЛЧАЛИН В мои лета не должно сметь
Свое суждение иметь.

III.3.211-14
Filaret, the 'lover of virtue', converses with Evgenii the nobleman in this second satire. His views on the influence of foreign travel are similar to those of Chatskii in the final monologue of Act III:

Долголетнего пути в краях чужестранных,
Иживений и трудов тяжких и пространных
Дивный плод ты произнес. Ущербя пожитки,
Понял, что фалды должны тверды быть, не жидки,
В пол-аршина глубоки и сией подшиты,
Согнув каftан, не были в станом все покрыты.132

Chatskii, too, makes fun of imported male attire. His reference to the kaftan is oblique; 'our North', he says, has changed for the worse:

И нравы, и язык, и старину святую,
И величавую одежду на другую
По шутовскому образцу.

III.22.603-05

On the subject of snobbery, Kantemir preaches, Griboedov shows us. The virtuous Filaret, coming to the end of his lengthy sermon, speaks the defence of the Petrine meritocracy mentioned above:

Они ведь собою
Начинают знатный род, как твой род начали
Твои предки, когда Русь греки крестить стали.
И твой род не все таков был, как потом стался...

He goes on to remind the patrician Evgenii:

Адам дворян не родил, но одно с двух чадо
Его сад копал, другой рас блеюще стадо.133

'Who was then the gentleman?', the English speaker automatically responds.

Famusov, having accepted, in principle, an aristocratic imbecile as a suitable husband for his only daughter, reveals his disdain for Moscow's upstart intellectuals:

Другий хоть прытче будь, надутый всяким чванством,
Пуской себе разумником слыши,
А в семью не включат. На нас не подиви.
One final piece of Kantemir's moralizing is worth noting. In his seventh satire, on the subject of education, he puts this fundamental question:

И с каким лицом журить сына, ты посмеешь,
Когда своим наставлять его не умеешь
Примером.\textsuperscript{134}

The harmonics resound throughout 	extit{Gore ot uma}. Famusov dares. He is the lively answer to Kantemir's question. He has one face for Liza and another for Sofiia. Having flirted energetically with the former in I.2, he has no hesitation in reproving his daughter in I.4 for a similar offence. He even offers himself as an example: 'Не надобно иного образца | Когда в глазах пример отца'. (I.4.120-21) 'Монашеским известен поведеньем!', (I.4.125) Griboedov makes him claim, shocking Liza into forgetting her place, and preparing a laugh at the expense of the doctor's hapless widow in II.2. Then, in II.5.281-84, Famusov himself takes up the subject of education entering into a dialogue with Kantemir:

Извольте посмотреть на нашу молодежь,
На юношей — сыников и внучат,
Журим мы их,
Журим мы их, а если разберешь,
В пятнадцать лет учителей научат!

Fonvizin

Education and francophilia come under fire in 	extit{Gore ot uma}. Both targets for satire are attacked with verve by Fonvizin in his two splendid prose comedies, 	extit{Brigadir} and 	extit{Nedorosl'}. Griboedov will have known these works from childhood. He is unlikely to have written on these themes without calling to mind the works of his illustrious predecessor.

\textit{Brigadir}, the earlier of the two comedies, was written in 1769. Fonvizin read it to Catherine II; presumably she enjoyed it, since it became one of the
most popular plays of the period. Young Ivanushka, the Brigadier’s son, is as helpless a victim of francophilia as Chatskii’s two princesses with their ecstatic ’Ax! Франция! Нет в мире лучше края!’ (III.22) When Sovetnitsa, the State Councillor’s wife, a lady who shares Ivanushka’s views on the subject, asks him if, having visited Paris, it would be possible to forget that one was Russian, he replies ‘Тotalement нельзя. Это не такое несчастье, которое бы скоро в мыслях могло быть заглажено’. 135 ‘Totalement нельзя’ is just one example of that ‘смешенье языков: | Французского с нижегородским’ to which Chatskii refers in I.7.413-14.

In Act V, Scene 2 of Brigadir, Ivanushka boasts of his preparation for life in Paris:

Да знаешь ли ты, каковы наши французские учители? Даром, что большая из их половина грамоте не знает, однако для воспитания они предпочитают люди: ведаешь ли ты, что я — я которого ты видишь, — я до отъезда моего в Париж был здесь на пансионе у французского кучера.136

Chatskii, holding forth on education in I.7.396 refers to ‘regiments’ of teachers, hired as cheaply as possible, ‘не то чтобы в науке далеки’; but in the original version of this scene in the Muzeinyi avtograf, Griboedov allows himself as gross an exaggeration as Fonvizin. There the line reads ‘В своей земле истопники’. (MA, I.7.407) Ivanushka’s teacher was a coachman; the youth of Moscow learned its history and geography from foreign stokers. Vigel’ writes, in his Zapiski on the first three decades of the nineteenth century: ‘The calling of teacher, to our barbaric way of thinking, seemed little higher than that of a serf-tutor.’ 137 Nevertheless, back in Moscow and dining with those who did the hiring, Griboedov changed the line.
Nedorosl' was written in 1782. It, too, offers several such minor points of comparison. Here Milon, who loves Fonvizin's Sofiia, speaks of his rival: 'Я не отрицаю в нем всех достойств. Он, может быть, разумен, просвещен, любезен; но чтоб мог со мною сравниваться в моей к тебе любви, чтоб...' \(^{138}\)

Compare Chatskii in III.1.43-44: Пускай в Молчалин ум бойкий, гений смелый; | Но есть ли в нем та страсть? то чувство? пылкость та?'

Prostakova, the doting mother of the ineducable Mitrofan, managed rather better than Famusov in retaining the services of a tutor. 'В Москве же приняли иноземца на пять лет и, чтоб дружине не сменили, контракт в полиции заявили.'\(^{139}\) Famusov had evidently failed to take this precaution.

Одно не к чести служит ей:
За лишних в год пятьсот рублей
Сменить себя другими допустила.
I.4.116-18

Little seems to have changed in the course of the forty years which separate the writing of the two plays.

Both Fonvizin and Griboedov have their stock 'funny Germans'. Both writers attempt to convey, phonetically, the sound of Russian spoken with a German accent. Vral'man, another of Fonvizin's coachmen posing as a tutor, and Griboedov's Countess-grandmother substitute unvoiced for voiced consonants, as in 'гальмно' for 'довольно' and 'палам' for 'балам'. More important, however, is the ignorant attitude towards education; central to Fonvizin's comedy, it is a recurrent theme in Gore ot uma. Chatskii jokes about it in I.7, as mentioned above. Famusov, cynically, praises the education of Moscow's young ladies for the marriage market in II.5.309-11:

И точно, можно ли воспитаннее быть!
Умеют же себя принарядить
Тафтицей, бархатцем и дымкой.
The contemporaries of Chatskii who choose to study science or dedicate
themselves to the arts are condemned, Chatskii tells Famusov in II.6, as
dangerous dreamers. While Famusov himself, in defence of his well-ordered life,
reveals an implacable hostility to any learning likely to disturb it.

Ученье – вот чума, ученость – вот причина,
Что пыньче, пуще, чем когда, 
Безумных развелося людей, и дел, и мнений.

III.21.522-24

To Skalozub’s suggestion, made later in the same scene, that books should be
reserved 'для больших оказий', Famusov gives us his last word on the subject.
"Сергей Сергеич, нет! Уж коли зло пресечь: | Забрать все книги бы, да
сжечь’. (III.21.540-41) Mitrofan would have applauded.

* 

The six writers discussed above belong in Griboedov’s thinking. Gore ot uma is
the work of a man familiar with the Classics, with Western literature, with that of
his own country. He took from all of it, and what he took, he changed. When
Pushkin predicted, accurately, that half the lines in the comedy would become
proverbs, he did not mean that Griboedov had re-invented Russian culture; these distillations of folk wisdom had long since formed a substantial part of the
spoken language. He recognized that Griboedov had found that beautiful straight
line which is the shortest distance between two points. Like Kantemir, he brought
together poetry and life; then, writing with breath-taking economy, he gave
memorable form to recognizable truth. His themes are not new; his comedy is a
work of luminous originality.

2. Pushkin, PSS, VI, 394.


5. Griboedov v vospominaniiakh, 1929, p.67.

6. Ibid., pp.67-68.

7. Ibid., p.69.

8. Ibid., p.70.

9. Ibid., pp.79-80.


13. Ibid., p. 219.


15. Ibid., p. 219.

16. Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, III, 149.


18. Moscow State Library, Museum of Rare Books, address given by M.G. Gavrilov, published in Torzhestvennoe sobranie Imperatorskogo universiteta (Moscow, 1810), pp.21-43.


20. Ibid., p. 40.


22. Ibid., III, 167.


29. Ibid., p. 215.


32. Welsh, Russian Comedy, p.108.

33. Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, III, 35.

34. Welsh, Russian Comedy, passim.

35. Piksanov, Tvorcheskaja istorija, p.221.

36. Ibid., pp.282-83.

37. Vigel', Zapiski, I, 84.

38. Stikhotvornaia komediia, I, 266.

39. Ibid., I, 309.

40. Ibid., I, 293.

41. Ibid., I, 268.

42. Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, III, 167.

43. Kniazhnin, Khvastun in Stikhotvornaia komediia, I, 324-441.

44. Ibid., I, 445.

45. Ibid., I, 461.
46. Ibid., I, 482.
47. Ibid., I, 514.
48. Ibid., I, 493-94.
49. Ibid., I, 528.
50. Ibid., I, 473.
51. Sudovshchikov, Neslykhanoe divo, ili chestnyi sekretar', in Ibid., I, 543-632.
52. Griboedov, PSS, III, 144-45.
54. Griboedov, PSS, III, 135.
58. A. Gertsen (Herzen), 'Novaia faza russkoi litteratury', in Estetika, kritika, problemy kul'tury (Moscow, 1987), pp. 461-510 (463).
59. Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, III,126.
61. Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, III,168.
65. Ibid., I,13.
66. Pushkin, PSS, VI, 96.
68. Ibid., I, 19.
69. Ibid., I, 19.
70. Ibid., I, 19.
71. Ibid., I, 19.
72. Ibid., I, 19.
73. Ibid., I, 24-25.
74. Bonamour, Griboedov, p.40.
76. Ibid., I, 73-74.
77. Plautus, Truculentus, in Ibid., II, 317-96 (p. 356).
78. Nechkina, Dekabristy, pp.277-78.
80. Ibid., I, 232.
81. Henry Taylor, Introduction to Curculio, in Ibid., I, 323.
82. Ibid., I, 329-37 (p. 345).
85. Piksanov, Tvorcheskaia istoriia, pp.283-84.
87. Ibid., p.384.
89. Ibid., V. 2. 77-78.

90. Ibid., V. 2. 85-86.

91. Ibid., V. 2. 79-80.


96. Ibid., p. 219.


98. Ibid., II, I. 1. 120.


100. Piksanov, Issledovaniia, p. 219.


102. Le Misanthrope, V. 4. 807-09.


104. Ibid., p.203.

105. Ibid., p. 219.

106. Ibid.

107. Ibid.

108. Le Misanthrope, I. 1. 234.


110. Le Misanthrope, I. 1. 81-84.

111. Piksanov, Issledovaniia, p. 219.


114. Ibid.

115. Ibid., pp. 219-20.


119. Ibid.


123. Ibid., 'Satira I', ll.77-78, 80.

124. Ibid., 'Satira I', ll.92-93.

125. Ibid., 'Satira I', ll.147-50.

126. N.V. Gogol', 'Povest' o tom, kak posrorilsia Ivan Ivanovich s Ivanom Nikiforovichem', in his *Sobranie sochinenii v semi tomakh* (Moscow, 1976-78), II (1976), 181-227 (p.200).


128. Ibid., 'Satira I', ll.181-82.

129. Ibid., 'Satira II', ll.301-02.

130. Ibid., 'Satira II', 1.307.


132. Ibid., 'Satira II', ll.167-72.

133. Ibid., 'Satira II', ll.364-67, 372-73.

134. Ibid., 'Satira VII', ll.233-35.

136. Ibid., I, 98.

137. Vigel', *Zapiski*, I, 84.


139. Ibid., I, 140.

In one sense the author of *Gore ot uma* may be seen as the ideal writer. Writing was not the prelude – or even the accompaniment – to action; writing was the action. The integrity of this approach, however, left him separated from the source of his inspiration, and his sense of loss is revealed in his letters. This chapter opens with two illustrations of the phenomenon; one trivial, one vital to the understanding of Griboedov's creative life. A temporary loss of libido in the Teleshova affair was no great matter; the permanent loss of the idealism which inspired his art was, for the writer if not for the diplomat, a disaster. The exercise of his craft, the quality of which is discussed below, proved no compensation. And even that minor creative spring was soon to run dry.

The second section of this chapter summarizes the comparisons made above between Griboedov and Chatskii. The third and final section discusses the conflicting elements in Griboedov himself, and the pattern of opposites in *Gore ot uma* which reflects it.

At five o'clock on the morning of his thirtieth birthday, 4 January 1825, Griboedov, unable to sleep, wrote from St Petersburg to his friend Begichev. Whatever the cause of his insomnia, it was not pleasurable anticipation. 'I'm halfway through my life', he writes, a piece of careless optimism which has given rise to much speculation concerning the date of his birth; half of three-score years
and ten is indubitably thirty-five. 'Soon I shall be old and stupid, like all my
noble contemporaries' he continues, in a further contraction of the years.

Yesterday I dined with the dregs of the local literati. I can't complain,
genuflection and incense all round, but nevertheless, I'm sick of their
stupidity, their gossip, their tawdry talents and their trivial little souls.
Don't despair, my respected friend, I'm not yet completely bogged down in
this quagmire of a kingdom. I'm leaving soon, and for a good while.2

These are scarcely the words of a man committed to the Northern Society
under Ryleev. They reflect less a passionate determination to bring about reform,
than a weary disgust with the whole romantic and impracticable movement. He
had already warned them with his Chatskii; had they not noticed? It seemed that
they had not. 'I've been living for some time in seclusion, isolated from
everyone', Griboedov writes; and goes on to tell Begichev of his brief affair with
the ballerina Teleshova, at twenty a leading soloist at St Petersburg's Bol'shoy
Theatre. 'Suddenly - a longing for society emerged; where should I go, if not to
Shakhovskoi's? There at least one can get one's hands on the swansdown of
sweet breasts etc.' The dismissive 'etc.' declares Griboedov's familiar disdain for
women in general and the Sentimentalists in particular. 'In the course of three or
four evenings T[eleshova] drove me out of my mind. [...] What made it all the
more tempting was the fact that my rival was Miloradovich, a braggart, a fool
and the idol of Shakhovskoi, who grovels to him. Swine, both of them.'
Griboedov's disillusion with St Petersburg society, his alienation from former
friends and acquaintances, is nowhere more sadly apparent than in this attack on
Shakhovskoi, of whom he had previously written with such warmth.

The affair with Teleshova lasted for just three weeks, during which time
her dancing was thought to have improved remarkably. 'Everyone was asking
her, what had brought about such a delightful difference? - such perfection?', he
writes, 'while I stood by, secretly exulting'. Then he wrote the poem. Teleshovoi: v balete "Ruslan i Liudmila", gde ona iavljaetsia obol'shchat' vitiazia. And that was the end of it. 'Would you believe it', he asks Begichev, 'since then I've cooled off, I see her less frequently to avoid disillusion'. Admittedly, Griboedov goes on to offer another possible explanation. There is no joy in his affair now that everyone knows about it. This too will have played a part in his sudden disenchantment. But his first thought on the subject is revealing. He has written the passion out of his system.

The nature of Griboedov's friendship with Aleksandr Odoevskii is unknowable and, for the purpose of this thesis, irrelevant. M.A. Briskman, in his article on the younger Odoevskii, writes 'despite the difference in their ages, a tender and passionate friendship linked him with A.S. Griboedov, who called him his "protégé", his "gentle, clever, beautiful Aleksandr"'. This friendship began, as mentioned above, in the St Petersburg of 1815, when Griboedov was twenty and Odoevskii thirteen. The memory of it supported Odoevskii in his exile after the Decembrist rising. The intensity of his feelings are expressed in his 'Elegiia na smert' A.S. Griboedova', written in Chita in 1829. A part of it is quoted below:

Я в узах был; - но тень надежды
Взглянуть, сжать руку, звук речей
Услышать на одно мгновенье
Восторгом полнило меня!

Now, he says, even the dream has been destroyed.

И мне, мне даже не дано
В темнице призраки лелеять,
Забыться миг веселым сном
И грусть сердечную развеять
Мечтать радужным крылом.
Griboedov's feelings for Odoevskii were no less intense. The short poem dedicated to him, written after 1826, when the latter was already in exile, is given here in full:

Я дружбу пел... Когда струнам касался,
Твой гений над главой моей парил,
В стихах моих, в душе тебя любил
И призывал, и о тебе терзался!...
О мой творец! Едва расцветший век
Ужели ты безжалостно пресек?
Допустишь ли, чтобы его могила
Живого от любви моей сокрыла?...

'В стихах моих.' Griboedov is not referring to translations from the French or the prose play Student or the handful of short poems written before the one quoted above. The only work 'в стихах' in which he 'loved and summoned up' a fully-rounded, painfully credible character, one for whom he suffered even as he mocked, is his Gore ot uma; while he was creating the character of Chatskii the genius of Aleksandr Odoevskii 'hovered over him'. These are not my words; they are Griboedov's. The boy whom he called his 'pitomets' grew to be the hero of his 'chado'; the hero with a head-full of 'призраки, весь чад и дым' (IV.3.), his 'Chadskii'. Only later, in the less elevated atmosphere of Moscow, surrounded by the chattering classes of 1823, those indefatigable young talkers, the future Decembrists, did Griboedov change Чадский to Чацкий. In view of his gift for languages, it is even possible that he intended an English joke, exclusively for the amusement of his English-speaking friends. Thomas Evans, for instance, Professor of English literature at Moscow University, might well have enjoyed it.

It is Eremin's edition which has Griboedov using the word 'чадо' in reference to his Gore ot uma; Piksanov, in his earlier edition has 'чудо'. However, I find it hard to believe that even Griboedov would have used the
word 'чудо' to describe his Gore without the addition of an exclamation mark, or a pair of inverted commas, to give this excessive claim the status of a joke.

Griboedov saw everything that was best in himself embodied in Odoevskii. 'Do you remember me', he writes to Begichev from Simferopol' on 9 September 1825, little more than three months before the uprising on Senate Square. 'He [Odoevskii, MH] is exactly like I was before I left for Persia. Plus numerous splendid qualities which I never possessed.' Both Griboedov and Odoevskii perceived themselves as burdened by inner and incommunicable ideals. Odoevskii, in a letter to his cousin Vladimir dated 10 October 1824, writes:

There is something in me, an ideal, perhaps, but boundless, without limits. I just walk about, I could be flying, I don't know myself how it happens, but there are these moments, when I enjoy a truly elevated life, a life that is always independent, that seethes within me like a full cup of Oden's mead.

It would seem that Odoevskii may have confused the Scandinavian god Oden with the Greek god Odin. Here he seems to be referring to the 'hydromel' of classical mythology. As Larousse tells us:

If Odin was the god of poetry, this was because he had had the skill and cunning to steal the 'mead of the poets', the hydromel, from the giants who had it. This hydromel was of divine origin [...] Whoever drank of it became both a poet and a sage.

'It doesn't run over', Odoevskii continues, mixing his own metaphor with a passing reference to Psalm 23, 'not for you, not for the world, you haven't yet tasted a drop of it, and is that my fault?' Once, at least, we have tasted its quality. This is the young man who cried, on the eve of the Decembrist rising, 'We shall die, brothers, ah, how gloriously we shall die!'

The existence of that secret, inner life, which both Griboedov and Odoevskii experienced and yet rarely found themselves able to share, even with
those closest to them, is revealed in Griboedov's letter to Kiukhel'beker, quoted in Chapter 7. Referring to his acquaintances in Tbilisi as 'the spoilt children of obesity and digestion', he writes I would like to transplant them into the secrecy of my soul, where no one is a stranger, where I suffer for the suffering of a neighbour, and seethe with emotion on hearing of another’s distress.’ Few of those who knew him were privileged to be thus transplanted. Perhaps only one, the young Aleksandr. Even Sosnitskii, remembering Griboedov’s act of kindness to himself (mentioned in Chapter 2), adds 'But he could be difficult, and he had an abrupt manner.'

Griboedov’s last known letter to the exiled Odoevskii, written in June 1828, seems, at first reading, shockingly callous. Griboedov had been closely involved in establishing the terms of the Treaty of Turkmanchay which concluded the war with Persia, and on 14 March of that year he brought the text of the treaty to St Petersburg. Before leaving the capital on 6 June he collected a quantity of books for dispatch to Odoevskii in Nerchinsk. And he wrote that letter. The contents are so unnatural that they demand our attention. 'Brother Aleksandr', he begins, 'May God give you strength.' A suitably pious opening for a letter to a prisoner which would be carefully scrutinized by the authorities. No doubt it was also sincere. He then boasts of the Tsar’s generous reward for his services. It is just possible to forgive this; not to mention it in 1828 might have been seen as unappreciative to the point of disloyalty. But how to read the following exclamations without wincing at the man’s insensitivity: 'My poor friend and brother! Why are you so unhappy!' Given the Decembrist’s situation at that time the answer should have been clear to what is sometimes called 'the
meanest intelligence'. And Griboedov, according to Pushkin, was 'one of the most intelligent men in Russia'.

'You would rejoice now if you could see me in a considerably better position than formerly, but I know you, you won't remain indifferent when you receive these lines, even there... far away, grieving, separated from those closest to you'. Did Griboedov really think this young man - still further idealized by his absence - capable of such generosity? Or did he choose this oblique manner of expressing his sympathy for the criminal without appearing to condone the crime?

'Dare I suggest a consolation in your present fate! It does exist for those with intelligence and feeling. It is possible to find honour even in deserved suffering.' One must remember the climate of repression engendered by the Decembrist rising, the danger to Griboedov of seeming to sympathize with it, and the fact that this letter represents a communication between two inner worlds; both Griboedov and Odoevskii admit that they have scarcely tested their ideals against the reality of experience. Now Griboedov is suggesting to Odoevskii this escape into himself. There is a moral and elevated inner life, independent of externals', he continues. 'To establish in oneself, by meditation, unalterable principles, and to become better in bonds, in captivity, than in freedom itself. This is the heroic feat which awaits you.' This is either the most sickening hypocrisy on the part of the man who set up his Chatskii to fail, or it is meant to serve some other purpose. Such as, for instance, that of allaying suspicion in the official appointed to read the prisoners' letters. The latter is at least possible, because what follows is very much more interesting. 'But to whom am I saying this?', Griboedov asks. 'I left you before your "exaltation" in 1825' (he uses the
word 'экзальтация', with its somewhat hysterical overtones). It was momentary, and I'm sure that now you are my same gentle, clever and beautiful Aleksandr, the person you were in Strel'no and in Kolomna, at Pogodin's. *Do you remember, my friend, at the time of the flood, how you swam and nearly drowned, to reach me and save me.* [my italics, MH]

Griboedov wrote an account of his personal experience of the St Petersburg flood in November 1824. He was living with Odoevskii at the time, in Pogodin's house on Torgovaia ulitsa. The account was not published until 1859 - the special collection planned by Grech and Bulgarin, for which it was intended, fell victim to the censors; details of the disaster were not to appear in print. 'Chastnye sluchai peterburgskogo navodneniia', the article is called. In it he makes no mention of being in any personal danger, although the flood was, of course, a horrifying experience. Water rose through the floor of Griboedov's room. His neighbours took what they could carry and retreated to the attics. I myself took refuge on the second floor with N.P.', Griboedov writes. There is no reference to any heroic rescue by Aleksandr Odoevskii, nor, apparently was there any need for one. However possible this account may have seemed to all other readers, Odoevskii himself will have known that he did not save Griboedov from the St Petersburg flood in any literal sense. It seems reasonable to assume that Griboedov is talking about that other flood. The one from which his 'guardian angel', as Zhandr called him, may well have saved him more than once, 'swimming and nearly drowning' in a sea of revolutionary eloquence, before finally succumbing to it himself.

Of that period which Griboedov spent in St Petersburg, 1 June 1824 until the end of May 1825, D.I. Zavalishin writes in his 'Vospominaniia o Griboedove'
that Odoevskii alerted Griboedov to the danger of too intimate relations, or political conversations, with certain people, and that Griboedov believed him, knowing his devotion to himself and not taking offence at his advice, as he might easily have done if it had been given by anyone else'. This last is so very likely; it inspires confidence in the remainder of Zavalishin's story:

this did indeed save Griboedov subsequently, because his close relationships were only with those members [of what Zavalishin calls 'the secret society', MH] who did not compromise, by a single word, either him or anyone else, even those whom others had already accused, though they could offer no proof.21

'Who enticed you into this destruction!!', Griboedov continues. He is clearly still writing on the same theme. 'You were sounder than the rest of them, even though you were younger than they.' At twenty-three, Odoevskii was the youngest of the Decembrists. 'You shouldn't have got mixed up with them, and they shouldn't have borrowed your intelligence and the goodness of your heart! Fate decided otherwise', he says, 'Enough of this.'

It is indeed hard to reconcile Griboedov's perception of Odoevskii with the avowed aims of Ryleev. And yet in the winter of 1824 Odoevskii was received into the Northern Society. The nature of these aims is made very clear in the Podbliudnye pesni' written by Ryleev in collaboration with A.A. Bestuzhev between 1824 and 1825. The last of these rabble-rousing songs is given below:

Как идет кузнец из кузницы, слава!
Что несет кузнец? Да три ножика:
Вот уж первой-то нож на злодеев вельмож,
А другой-то нож — на судей на плутов,
А молитву сотворя, - третий нож на царя!
Кому вынется, тому сбудется,
Кому сбудется, не минуется. Слава!22

Compare Odoevskii's 'Luna', from the same period.

Встал ветер с запада; седьми облаками
In a reversal of the natural order of things, the heavens become a lifeless ocean, obscured by grey clouds. These are penetrated at last by the moon, a golden boat with an angel of bright stars at its helm. It is the source of light which approaches, carried by the cloud-waves, to emerge, shining, from the mist. The imagery may be a touch romantic. Here are no blacksmiths, no knives. But the same wind is blowing from the West.

In the letter to Begichev quoted above, the letter in which Griboedov compares his own earlier self to Odoevskii, he reveals the existence of what would now be termed 'writers' block'. It was a state of mind from which he would not escape.

You know I've spent nearly three months in Tavride, and the result is nil. I've written nothing. I don't know, am I not demanding too much of myself? do I know how to write? really, it's all a mystery to me. - I've got more than enough to say - I can assure you of that, why am I mute? Mute as the grave!!

The youthful idealism that Griboedov had shared with Odoevskii, like his passion for Teleshova, had been written out of his system. Chatskii was now the only bearer of it. Griboedov, loving and mocking in equal measure, had given a voice to his alter ego and moved on. In a letter to Kiukhel'becker, written from Stanitsa Ekaterinogradskaja on 27 November 1825, he says: I really do not know, my dear Vil'gel'm, with whom I have shared my mind, but there's not much left of my share. In my view he knew only too well, however reluctant to admit it, even to himself. He had shared it with his Chatskii, and the little that
remained, his share, was not sufficient to power another masterpiece. Griboedov lived for a further three years after writing this letter. Three years filled with diplomatic activity enough to conceal the true state of affairs from all but his closest friends. The fact remains. He completed nothing of any significance after the writing of Gore ot uma.

Kto brat, kto sestra, ili Obman za obmanom was written in the winter of 1823-1824, at a time when Griboedov had still not found the final form for his masterpiece; it provides a striking illustration of his ability to work at art and craft simultaneously but separately. In the autumn of 1823, having spent the summer on Begichev’s estate in Tula, writing Acts III and IV of his comedy, he returned to Moscow. There he renewed his acquaintance with P.A. Viazemskii and was introduced to the composer A.N. Verstovskii. F.F. Kokoshkin, director of theatre in Moscow, had asked Viazemskii to write him something for L’vova-Sinetskaia’s benefit performance. In a letter to M.N. Longinov, later published as an article, Viazemskii writes: ‘I replied that I didn’t see myself as possessing any dramatic abilities, but I was prepared to lend a stuffing of couplets if someone else would undertake to cook up the play.’ Griboedov, approached by Viazemskii, and always ready to oblige a friend, agreed to concoct a vaudeville.

While giving numerous readings of the apparently completed Gore ot uma, and trying vainly to obtain for it the vital permission for publication and performance from the Board of Censors, he worked with Viazemskii on Kto brat, kto sestra. The piece has a strongly Polish flavour, and incorporates two of the genre’s favourite ingredients; romance on the highway, and a heroine disguised, for the purposes of this very silly plot, as a man. Griboedov provided the prose dialogue, Viazemskii wrote the lyrics for the kuplety, those satirical songs which
frequently contained topical allusions. These were to be sung not to the popular tunes of the day, as was frequently the case, but to music specially composed by Verstovskii. In fact Griboedov also supplied the lyrics for one of the songs, written in mazurka rhythm, and one romance. His letter to the composer, dated December 1823, reveals his workmanlike approach to this friendly collaboration. 28 Why don’t we meet at my place and split a bottle of champagne??, he writes. Then, having assured Verstovskii that he has urged Viazemskii to send the rest of the kuplety as soon as possible, he offers the musician a practical - and time-saving - suggestion. Could not 'The gentleman and the beauty' [the song referred to begins, in the final version, with the line Бар и барынь все бранят', MH] be sung, by the inn-keeper Chizhevskii in Scene 4, to the tune of the well-known Polish song 'Obeshchala dats' | S soboi poigrats'? [the spelling here is transliterated Cyrillic from Griboedov’s letter, MH] They would only have to cut four of Viazemskii’s sixteen lines. The suggestion was not accepted; lines nine to twelve of the lyric survive.

Kto brat, kto sestra was first performed in Moscow on 24 January 1824. It was not well received. In the letter to M.N. Longinov mentioned above Viazemskii writes:

We soon had our vaudeville concoction ready. It appealed to both Kokoshkin and the ‘beneficiary’ herself. It seemed that everything was going well. But the day of the first performance changed all that. The play, already somewhat lacking in interesting and amusing situations, was still further slowed down and, so to speak, frozen by the sluggish performance of the actors, some of whom had been unwilling to play in it. So of course the public were unwilling to listen. In a word, if the play wasn’t a complete failure it was because plays can’t fail on the official stage. The well-known French proverb ‘There’s a god for drunkards’ can be applied here to the theatre. The theatre administration exists for staggering and stumbling dramatists. It can ‘bring down’ the greatest success and tolerate a comedy of its own born crippled.
At all events, he concludes defensively, 'our play was no worse than many of those performed on the Moscow stage'. He may have been right. It is worth noting that a recent, rare performance of Kto brat, kto sestra on the Moscow stage, played at a furious pace and accompanied, as at its first performance, by contemporary music in a style familiar to its mainly young audience, was applauded with rowdy appreciation.

Five of Griboedov's poems were written in this same period, and an unfinished piece intended for the opening of a theatre which opened when Griboedov had written only the first twenty-five lines. The first poem is the translation of the so-called 'Psalm 151' referred to above. The Old Testament was translated into the Slavonic language from the Septuagint, the Greek version included in the Apocrypha; like the Russian Orthodox Bible, it places this unnumbered psalm after Psalm 150, familiar to readers of translations from the Hebrew as the last of the Psalms of David. The Apocryphal psalm tells the story of David, beheading the idolatrous 'member of a foreign tribe' and freeing the sons of Israel from oppression. Griboedov's poem 'David', with its somewhat archaic language, will have delighted Admiral Shishkov - if he could bring himself to countenance any translation.

There follows the Romans', in which the singer takes eight lines of a twelve-line poem to question the beloved's innocence, where Molchalin needed only three for his remark to Liza:

Ну кто бы сказал,
Что в этих щечках, в этих жилках
Любви румянец не играл!

IV.12.

The eight question marks and nine exclamation marks of the poem seem excessive even for this effusive genre. 'Ах! точно ли никогда ей в персах
The romance is a version of that written for *Kto brat, kto sestra*; its final despairing line, deprived of its exclamation mark, its dash replaced by a comma, is identical with the penultimate line of the romance sung by the older Roslavlev in the vaudeville: 'Нет! – не моя душа процвествъ.' It was, perhaps, a rejected alternative which Griboedov was loth to waste, though it was not published until after his death; it appeared for the first time in *Moskovskii telegraf*, no.6, in 1831.  

Veering between the romantic and the waspish, Griboedov's next short poem provides an antidote to the above excesses. He is always wittier when he allows the metre free rein. The 'Romans' discussed above consists of three verses, each comprising three alexandrines with carefully observed caesura, followed by a single line of iambic tetrameter. This next poem, 'Krylami porkhaia, strelami zvenia', is written in a rollicking amphibrachic metre.  

Love asks the question 'Ах! есть ли что легче на свете меня?' In the first verse the first and third lines have four feet, the second and fourth lines only three, although the ear is obliged, by the nature of the rhythm in this frequently-used form, to supply the missing foot; an amphibrachic pause is, as always, irresistible. In the last verse of six lines one is taken by surprise, after two lines of tetrameter, by a line of dimeter introducing the answer.

Есть песня такая:  
Легко себе друга сыскала Аглая  
И легче того  
Забыла его.

It is at least more entertaining than the 'Romans'.  

The malicious little 'Epigramma', attributed to Griboedov, was written during the first half of 1824, while he was still in Moscow.  

If it is not his work,
it certainly represents his usual response to those who criticized it; neither M.A. Dmitriev nor A.I. Pisarev, attacked in the poem, had taken kindly to his *Gore ot uma*. И сочиняют — врут, и переводят — врут!,' the poem begins. And concludes, after four more equally offensive alexandrines, by identifying them as 'Холопы Вестника Европы'. Unsurprisingly, it only appeared in full when, in 1888, K.A. Polevoi published his *Zapiski* in St Petersburg.

The slightly longer poem 'Kak raspolozhaiutsia zhurnal’nye pobranki!,' quite as scurrilous, did not emerge until 1957, when it was published in *Vestnik Leningradskogo universiteta*. It refers to the legend in which Faust is practising sorcery over a jar of magic powers:

И вылез черт из банки;
И будто Фаусту вложил
Он первый умысл развратный —
Создать станок книгопечатный.

Griboedov’s bitterness is understandable; his *Gore ot uma* seemed as unlikely as ever to reach the printing press.

The unfinished piece for the stage referred to above is *Lunost’ veshchego* of which, mercifully, only twenty-five lines were written. Begichev, in his *Zapiska*, says that in the autumn of 1823 Griboedov proposed to write a two-act prologue in verse for the opening of a new theatre in Moscow. He tells us what he can remember of the plot. The youthful Lomonosov, surrounded by humble fishermen, finds his soul filled with a hunger for knowledge of something higher, incomprehensible to his companions. He leaves the paternal home. As the curtain rises on Act II, Lomonosov is standing on Red Square. Begichev admits to having forgotten the rest.

But the news of his comedy was all over Moscow, and like it or not he was obliged to read it in numerous houses. At first this flattered the young author’s vanity, but after a while it bored him terribly, and took up much
of his time. He didn't manage to write the prologue before the theatre opened.\textsuperscript{38}

Lines such as the following support the view that this was no great loss. 'Судьба! О, как тверды твои уставы!' And these are just two of the seven exclamation marks in the twenty-five lines we have of the prologue.

Two categories of Griboedov's work have been discussed; his art and his craft. A third category is becoming painfully apparent; the poetry he thought he ought to write, the stuff that would buy him immortality. He was too close to his comedy, too aware of that 'poem of the utmost significance' he had failed to write, to understand that he had already won immortality. But on the subject of \textit{Gore ot uma} the Moscow censors were adamant; there was to be no publication, no performance. They seemed determined to bring down his greatest success while tolerating his limping vaudeville.

Like his Chatskii, Griboedov knew when to leave. At the end of May, suddenly and unexpectedly, he set out for St Petersburg. 'My dear brother, my invaluable friend', he writes to Begichev from the capital, on 10 June 1824:\textsuperscript{39}

You were probably less prepared for the unforeseen mystery of my departure than anyone, and of course appreciated the necessity of it better than anyone. One can hold out to a certain point, then another minute and one will become worse than an old woman.

This, to Griboedov, was as bad as it could get. 'I knew myself, and I did what I had to do, I dashed off without a backward glance.' \textit{Помчался не оглядываясь}, he tells Begichev. Or as Chatskii says in his final monologue, \textit{Бегу, не оглянуясь}. (IV.14) Both Chatskii and his creator took to their respective carriages. But this is scarcely nature imitating art; it reveals them, at that moment of crisis, as one and the same person.
In the carriage, on the way to St Petersburg, he added some entirely new material to Act IV involving Molchalin, Liza and Sofiia which would have a profound effect on the play.40 ‘Believe me, it would be wonderful to spend one’s whole life bowling along on four wheels’, he assures Begichev, writing from Simferopol’ in the September of the following year.41 ‘The heart pounds, great thoughts ferment and race far beyond the usual limits of everyday banalities; the imagination is fresh, a kind of stormy fire blazes freely in the soul...’ Griboedov was no more successful with the censors in St Petersburg than he had been in Moscow. There is a note of desperation in his second letter to Begichev, written only a few weeks later.42 Chebyshev, who undertook to deliver this letter, first suggested that they visit Moscow together. Griboedov was tempted.

But he was leaving too soon, I didn’t manage it in time or, rather, I can’t tear myself away from the childish trivia of authorial pride. I hope, I wait, I change things to a ludicrous extent, so that in places I’ve diminished the vivid colours of my dramatic pictures by half, I get angry, and put back what I’ve crossed out, so that it seems there’ll be no end to the work [...] There will be, I’ll get something done; patience is the alphabet of all the other sciences.

Griboedov had changed more than eighty of the original lines, ‘or rather’, he writes, ‘I’ve changed the rhymes, now it’s smooth as glass’. He was no longer satisfied with the earlier version. ‘It is so unfinished, so careless.’ He implores Begichev not to read the play to anyone and, if he can bring himself to do so, to burn the manuscript. Fortunately Begichev could not bring himself to burn the manuscript; it is still in the possession of the Historical Museum in Moscow. Apart from the alterations referred to above, Griboedov had written sixty-five new lines. Between lines 356 and 361, Act IV, of the Gore ot uma he himself had read to admiring audiences in Moscow, he had inserted an entirely new denouement.
A lively, swift-moving thing, the sparks fairly fly. I've been reading it in this form, from the actual day of my arrival, to Krylov, Zhandr, Khmel’nitskii, Shakhovskoi, Grech and Bulgarin, Kolosova, Karatygin, let's count, that makes eight readings, no, I've miscalculated, - twelve; three days ago there was a dinner at Stalypin’s, and again, a reading, and I've promised to do three more in various odd places.

The manuscript of *Gore ot uma* had suffered so many alterations, corrections and insertions that it was, by this time, nearly indecipherable. On Griboedov’s arrival in St Petersburg his friend Zhandr, with a department of clerks at his disposal, had a fair copy made - the so-called ‘Zhandrovskii spisok.’ There is a later copy, authorized by Griboedov in 1828. This is the signed copy of *Gore ot uma* he left with Faddei Bulgarin in that year before taking up his post as resident minister in Persia. In Piksanov’s and Grishunin’s view the ‘Zhandrovskii spisok’, corrected in Griboedov’s own hand, coincides almost letter for letter with Bulgarin’s copy. They conclude: ‘It is evident that the final edition of *Gore ot uma* had already been created by Griboedov in 1824 and was then confirmed in 1828.’

The readings continued. Griboedov became so bored with this constant repetition that he caught himself improvising in several places, ‘though no one else noticed’, he says. Improvising. In rhyming iambic metre. This is surely the mind which his Sofia, in III.1.112-13, accuses Chatskii of possessing. ‘Скор, блестящ [...] что гении для иных, а для иных чума.’ It is a reaction with which he was all too familiar; witness that of Murav’ev in Tbilisi, discussed above. Neither Griboedov nor his Chatskii could resist a witticism. In a letter to Viazemskii written during this same period in St Petersburg, we find the following one-liners which, though entertaining enough, were hardly likely to endear. Members of the English Club in St Petersburg, like their counterparts in Moscow, ‘practise the same trade: they know everything about everyone, except
what's going on at home'. Gnedich 'even ties his tie in hexameters'. Shakhovskoi has made 'some sort of wondrous poetic salad' out of Pushkin's Bakhchisaraiskii fontan. Krylov 'sleeps and eats immoderately. Oh, our poets! Such corpulent bodies giving birth to such trivial thoughts!'.

What becomes clear in Griboedov's second letter to Begichev from St Petersburg, referred to above, is his need for an audience. Like any writer, he wrote to be heard. The best that he could achieve, however, for all his efforts with the censors on behalf of his comedy, was the publication of an excerpt from Gore ot uma: Act I, Scenes 7-10, and the whole of Act III, with numerous cuts and alterations made by the censor. A. Biriukov finally approved this truncated version on 15 November 1824, five and a half months after Griboedov's arrival in the capital. It appeared in the almanach Russkaia Taliia in 1825, published by Faddei Bulgarin at Grech's printing-house. It was to be the only publication of the comedy during Griboedov's lifetime.

P.A. Karatygin, writing on his years as a student at the St Petersburg Theatre School in the early 1820s, remembers the publication of this excerpt, and adds: 'But the whole comedy, at that time, was forbidden fruit'. The school already possessed a permanent theatre. Its teacher of dramatic art, however, Prince Shakhovskoi, no longer came to the school after 1822, when his favourite pupils graduated, and by 1824 was giving lessons at his home. The theatre remained unused. Karatygin and a fellow-student, Grigor'ev, suggested to Griboedov that they should put on a performance of Gore ot uma. 'He was delighted', the actor recalls. This is hardly surprising. It must have seemed to Griboedov his only hope of seeing his comedy on stage.
Permission was obtained, with difficulty, from Inspector Bok, at that time responsible for the school. Griboedov rehearsed the young actors assiduously; Grigor'ev was to play Chatskii, Karatygin, Repetilov. 'Although we hacked his immortal comedy to pieces most grievously he was very pleased with us, and we were delighted that we were able to satisfy him', Karatygin tells us. 'This evening they're playing my comedy in the School, privately, without the permission of the censor', Griboedov writes to Begichev on 18 May 1825. 'At nine o'clock I'll go and see my offspring [chado], see how they mangle it.' But later on that same day, less than a fortnight before Griboedov's departure for the east, Inspector Bok arrived with a threatening letter signed by Count Miloradovich. How dare they 'play the liberal'. No work disapproved of by the censors could be performed at the school. Someone, it seemed, had informed on the students. Poor Inspector Bok feared, with good reason, that he would be accused of lax supervision and imprisoned. The project was, of necessity, abandoned. Griboedov's letter to Begichev concerning his rivalry with Miloradovich for the favours of Teleshova, a situation resolved, however briefly, to Griboedov's advantage, was written a little more than four months before this reverse. The Count may only have been doing his duty, but he was probably doing it with a certain amount of satisfaction.

The translation from Goethe belongs to this period in St Petersburg. It is not hard to see why the theme developed in the first part of his Faust, the section entitled 'Prelude on the Stage', appealed to Griboedov. It takes the form of a conversation between the director, the poet and the clown. 'True gold lives for posterity', the poet cries, in David Luke's translation. They must be entertained', the clown insists. The director is for compromise. 'You'll not go
wrong if you compose a stew.' Every attempt to achieve full publication or performance of Gore ot uma, his 'true gold', had failed; yet his Kto brat, kto sestra had already been performed three times, on 1, 7 and 11 September 1824, in St Petersburg, where it had been better received than in Moscow. Arapov writes that the vaudeville 'is very deftly and playfully written'. Its success can only have increased Griboedov's sense of frustration. Cultivating patience and waiting for posterity, he began a translation of the 'Prelude on Stage'. Omitting the last two speeches made by the clown and the director respectively, he chooses to end with the poet's last speech in praise of his high calling, extending the original twenty-four lines to thirty-nine-and-a-half, in a free adaptation of the original. Poliarnaia zvezda for 1825 was passed by the St Petersburg censors on 20 March 1825; it was in this publication that Griboedov's 'Otryvok iz Gete' appeared. The great work which - except in moments of despair - Griboedov believed himself capable of writing, would probably have owed more to Goethe than did his comedy.

Both this translated excerpt and the poem dedicated to Teleshova, already discussed, were written during this period in St Petersburg. Since he speaks of reading the completed Gore ot uma on the very day of his arrival in the capital, 'in this form', that is, including the 'more than eighty changes' to the rhymes and the new denouement, Kto brat, kto sestra is the last of his own works to be written before the completion of his masterpiece. Perhaps it was this brief diversion from art to craft which enabled him to see the imperfections obscured by familiarity, by too exclusive a concentration on his 'чадо'. The changes he made to it after the writing of Kto brat, kto sestra illuminate the comedy.
At the end of May 1825 Griboedov left the capital to resume his diplomatic activities. His extended leave could be extended no further. He had returned briefly to the security of translation and disposed of his love in romantic verse; now he remembered the still unused material in his travel-notes - 'snow like linen hung in folds, golden hills, sound of Terek crashing down mountainside'. Perhaps this would provide the necessary stimulus? Pushkin's Kavkazskii plennik, weakened by the intervention of both the board of censors and Gnedich, had appeared in St Petersburg in 1822. Griboedov tried his hand at 'local colour'. His poem 'Khishchniki na Chegeme', ten verses of eight lines in studied trochees, was written at the Kamennyi most fortress on the river Malka. Verse six recalls the vertigo of the travel-notes, tamed and tidied, as is the remainder of the poem, into a conventional tetrameter.

Двиньте узкою тропою.
Не в краю вы сел и нив.
Здесь стремнина, там обрыв,
Тут утес: берите с бою.
Камень, сорванный стопою,
В глубь летит, разбитый в прах;
Риньтесь с ним, откиньте страх!

He was writing barely a month before the December uprising. By 11 February 1826 he had been arrested in the Caucasus, brought back to St Petersburg and imprisoned in the Staff Headquarters opposite the Winter Palace. On 2 June he was declared innocent of complicity and released. During his months in prison he apparently wrote or improvised eight lines of verse in a mood of nervous bravado with which one can only sympathize:

По духу времени и вкусу
Он ненавидел слово "раб"... 
За то попался в Главный штаб
И был притянут к Иисусу...

Ему не свято ничего, -
According to Eremin, this poem was not published in full until 1938. Piksanov makes no mention of the second verse quoted above. He and I.A. Shliapkin, joint authors of the notes to Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, entitle the four lines 'Ekspromt' and 'in the absence of an authoritative text', include them in the section designated 'Poems attributed to A.S. Griboedov'. They give three further variants in the notes; from I.D. Garusov, from P.A. Karatygin and from the manuscript collection of P.A. Efremov. Of these, the Garusov and Efremov variants are in the first person, as is the version in 'Poems attributed to A.S. Griboedov':

По духу времени и вкусу
Я ненавидел слово: раб,
Меня позвали в главный штаб
И потянули к Иисусу.

That of Karatygin, like the two verses given by Eremin quoted above, is written somewhat distantly in the third person.

In a manuscript version in 'Sobranie Dashkova, P.Ia.', included in 'Rasskaz neizvestnogo ob areste Aleksandra Sergeevicha Griboedova v sviazi s vosstaniem dekabristov', the first verse only occurs, and this is written more directly.

Что ненавижу слово: раб –
В том откровенно признаюсь.
За то и взят в главный штаб
И повели к Иисусу.

It is accompanied, here, by the note: 'Русская поговорка: "а что, тянут к Иисусу"'.

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Он враг царю... Он друг сестрыцын.
Уж не повесит ли его,
Скажите правду, князь Голицын?.."
There followed five more poems. The eight lines dedicated to Odoevskii referred to above; 'Domovoi', a six-line fragment of dactylic tetrameter depicting children frightened by the dark;\textsuperscript{63} twenty-seven lines of deep disillusion entitled 'Prosti, otechestvo!';\textsuperscript{64} 'Kal'ianchi', a fragment of what was apparently intended to be a longer poem, again making use of Griboedov's experience in Georgia and Persia;\textsuperscript{65} and 'Osvobozhdennyi', another unfinished work, presented by Eremin as two excerpts from the same poem, the second beginning at line 21: 'Tam gde v'etsia Alazan". Piksanov and Shliapkin give it as two separate poems, the second fragment untitled.\textsuperscript{66}

A sketch for an historical verse drama was published in \textit{Russkoe slovo} in 1859, no.5, under the title '1812';\textsuperscript{67} the plan and the fifty-one lines of it which survive are thought to have been written between 1822 and 1828. The unrhymed iambic pentameter of this fragment, surely attributable to the influence of Shakespeare, seems to aim at a kind of heroic simplicity, admired by Bonamour. Le style, remarquable par sa noblesse simple, exempte d'influences livresques, montre une tentative originale de création d'une tragédie populaire.\textsuperscript{68} Though he does admit that the plan suffers from 'un certain embaras dans l'utilisation [...] du merveilleux'.\textsuperscript{69} The occasional departures from pentameter - a line of trimeter, one of tetrameter and two lines of hexameter in these fifty-one lines - are too rarely used to do more than draw attention to themselves.

Griboedov was employing his craft. But more was expected of him. He expected more of himself, and his inability to produce something worthy of his talent drove him at last to silence and depression. As early as 10 June 1825, in a letter from Kiev addressed to V.I. Odoevskii, he is beginning to seek reasons for this unhappy silence. He had heard that Verstovskii's father had moved to
Moscow. 'So will that be better or worse for his music?', he writes. I'm almost certain that a true artist should have no family. It's splendid to be a support to one's father and mother in important matters, but attending to their demands, frequently trivial and stupid, restricts a living, free, courageous talent. What do you think?²⁷⁰

On 9 September, in the letter to Begichev from Simferopol', he declares himself 'mute as the grave!!' He had arrived in that town hoping, like his Chatskii, 'to find a little corner for some solitude'. But the local residents discovered that he could play waltzes and quadrilles. The place has become more tedious to me than St Petersburg', he complains.

And that's not all. Travellers have arrived who know about me from the journals: the creator of Famusov and Skalozub, so he's a cheerful person. Confounded villainy! it's not cheerful, it's boring, disgusting, unbearable!.. [.....] I'll wait, perhaps my limitless plans and my limited abilities will find their equilibrium. Do me a favour, don't show this scrawl to anyone; I haven't read it through, but I'm sure there's much madness here.²⁷¹

Three days later, on 12 September 1825, he writes another even longer letter to Begichev, this time from Theodosia, 'a wretched little town'. Towards the end of a gallant attempt to return to the style of his earlier travel-notes he says:

**Meanwhile I feel so bored! so miserable! I thought it would help, I took up my pen, not feeling like writing, now I've finished, but it's no easier. Farewell, my dear fellow. Tell me something cheerful. I've been extremely gloomy for a while now. Time to die! I don't know why all this drags on so. I've never known such depression. Say what you like, if this torments me for much longer I'm not going to arm myself with patience; I leave that virtue to cattle. Imagine, this is the return of the hypochondria which drove me from Georgia, but intensified to such a degree as I've never known before. I'm not writing to Odoevskii about this; he loves me passionately, and will be unhappier than I if he finds out. You love me too, my invaluable Stepan, as only a brother can, but you're older than me, more experienced and intelligent; do me a favour, give me your advice, tell me what will save me from madness or a pistol, because I feel that one or the other lies ahead.²⁷²**
Griboedov's patience is at an end. That virtue is no longer 'the alphabet of all the sciences'; it is fit only for cattle. Intellectualizing a passion has fatally satisfied it. After his meeting in Kiev with the Decembrists S.I. Murav'ev-Apostol, A.Z. Murav'ev, M.P. Bestuzhev-Riumin and S.P. Trubetskoi, a meeting arranged for him by the Murav'ev family, evidently in the hope of securing his allegiance, he writes to Vladimir Odoevskii 'I'm afraid to surrender to their faith, one wouldn't break free in a hurry'. The Decembrist faith. 'Their' faith. Not his own. Griboedov can no longer write with or live by the fire of his former ideals; his secret soul is inhabited, now, by a cautious spirit of self-preservation.

Both Pushkin, with his Salieri, and Chekhov with Trigorin, Nina and Konstantin, have written movingly on the suffering of the second-rate; but the suffering of the man who has held the golden talent in his hand and then lost it must be nearly unbearable. Griboedov certainly found it so. His caution may, of course, be seen as justified by events. He continued to prosper, after the December Revolt, as a respected diplomat; young Odoevskii laboured in the Nerchinsk mines. But in the letter from Theodosia quoted above the pain of the loss is apparent.

While Griboedov was celebrating, as he mocked, the impracticable idealism of the future Decembrists, he cannot have imagined that within a year or two a hundred and twenty-one of them would be sentenced for their part in an uprising; five to death, the remainder to exile. On 13 July 1826 K.F. Ryleev, P.I. Pestel', S.I. Murav'ev-Apostol, M.P. Bestuzhev-Riumin and P.G. Kakhovskoi were hanged. Their fate as revolutionaries was the final determining factor in his own fate as a writer. Griboedov, travelling to St Petersburg with the text of the
Turkmanchay treaty in March 1828, 'looked in on me for a couple of hours', Begichev writes in his Zapiska’.  

And on the return journey, rewarded with money, promotion and the Order of St Anne second class 'with diamonds', Griboedov spent a further three days with Begichev. Begichev - kind, tactless man - asked Griboedov if he had not written another comedy, was there no new plan? "I told you at our last meeting" he replied. "I won't write any more comedy; my good humour has disappeared, and without good humour there's no good comedy. But I have completed a tragedy." The reference is apparently to Gruzinskaia noch'. "I'm still passionate about it", he said, "and I've promised myself not to read it for five years and then, when I've become more impartial, I'll read it like someone else's work, and if I'm satisfied with it then, I'll publish it." Not read it for five years? And this from the man who so needed an audience that on the very day of his arrival in St Petersburg with his new, improved version of Gore ot uma, he had embarked on a series of twelve separate readings; the man who could write, in his Zametka po povodu komedii Gore ot uma: 'The childish pleasure of hearing my lines in the theatre, the longing for them to succeed, has forced me to ruin my creation to the greatest possible extent.' Griboedov read those scenes from Gruzinskaia noch' in St Petersburg without, as Bonamour points out, maintaining that the tragedy was almost completed. Even Bulgarin, not given to understatement, only claims that he had 'written the plan and several scenes. Griboedov recited to us excerpts from memory', he writes, 'and the most cold-hearted people were touched by the pleas of the mother to her master, demanding the return of her son. Such was the tragedy that perished together with its author!...', he concludes. 'Свежо предание, а верится с трудом'. (Gore ot uma,
II.2.100) In my view Bulgarin’s conclusion is a little hasty. No one speaks of seeing the completed manuscript of this tragedy; or even the ‘almost completed’ manuscript. All these readings were ‘from memory’. When Griboedov set out from St Petersburg for what he himself felt would be the last time he left a copy of his *Gore ot uma*, his ‘чадо’, with Bulgarin. When he travelled from Georgia to Teheran, for what was in fact the last time, he left his precious young wife, then carrying his child, in the relative safety of Tbilisi. It seems, to say the least, unlikely that he should take with him, into what he knew was to be an extremely dangerous situation, the work that was to earn him immortality as a ‘serious’ poet. The tragedy belongs, perhaps, in that third category of Griboedov’s literary works; the poetry he thought he ought to write.

It is generally acknowledged that Pushkin’s *Boris Godunov* reflects that writer’s respect and admiration for Shakespeare. On 16 April 1827 Griboedov wrote to Bulgarin, asking him to send a complete edition of the work. His own plans during this period for a tragedy or an historical drama in verse suggest the same source of inspiration. The unfinished excerpt from an untitled tragedy, for instance, set in the eleventh century, the fragment variously entitled by subsequent publishers *Dialog polovetskikh muzhei*, *Serchak i Itliar* and *Otryvok tragedii o vremeni Sviatopolka Isiaslavovicha*. The sixty-one lines which survive are in rhymed iambic pentameter - except for one line, the second in Serchak’s second speech, which, curiously or carelessly, contains six feet:

В твоих сынах твой дух отцовский внедрен!
Гордись, Игляр! Тебя их мужественный вид,
Как в зимний день луч солнечный, живит.
One cannot help feeling that Griboedov's heart is not in it. There is an artificiality
about the lines that seems to come neither from the heart nor from the head.
Ambition was proving to be no substitute for passion - or wit.

Of Radamist i Zenobiia nothing remains but the plan. It is possible that
nothing was written but the plan. Set in the Armenia of the first century, it
concerns the attempt by members of the nobility to overthrow the despotic Tsar
Radamist. The reference to recent Russian history is obvious. Gore ot uma had
been Griboedov's pre-revolutionary comedy; this was to be his post-revolutionary
tragedy.

The first two acts are described in some detail. The conspirators are shown
to be flawed. As Bonamour says, Il y a parmi eux des hommes de valeur, mais
beaucoup, sans le savoir, sont déjà corrompus par la tyrannie qu'ils veulent
renverser. Only Armasil possesses the courage, the restraint and the political
understanding to carry off such an enterprise. A vain attempt is made in the
second act to arouse a desire for vengeance in the passive Zenobiia, wife of
Radamist, who has murdered her father. 'A creature of the harem, born and
educated to satisfy her husband's sensuality', Griboedov notes, disparagingly.
In the second act, he adds, Ashod [Assiud according to Eremin, editor of the
1971 edition also used in this dissertation, MH] - a conspirator incapable of
restraint - attempts to stab Radamist, the latter prevents him, 'pretence of
sympathy, wheedles the secret out of him, then flies into a rage'.

The sequence is strongly reminiscent of Nicholas I's behaviour towards
the Decembrists whom he interrogated personally. Baron A.E. Rozen writes that
the Tsar 'expressed his satisfaction with my former services [...] Heavy charges
were laid against me, he added, and he expected me to make a full confession. He
ended by promising to do everything possible to save me'.  A promise which did not prevent him from sentencing Rozen to imprisonment and exile.

N. I. Lorer remembers that Nicholas employed a similar approach during his own interrogation. Having accused Lorer of possessing 'no honour' the Emperor 'collected himself and continued far more gently, "you yourself are to blame, you yourself. Your former regimental commander is ruined, there is no saving him. And you must tell me everything, do you hear? Otherwise you will perish like him."'

Lorer, too, was exiled.

We do not know how Radamist i Zenobia was to end. Griboedov's plans for the first two acts develop both plot and character; they run to several pages. The plan for Act III consists of a single sentence: 'In the third act the conspirators are quarelling about future power, and at that moment Radamist is descending on them.' Griboedov may have intended to write two more acts, in the classical tradition. He may have abandoned his post-Decembrist historical themes, as Bonamour suggests, 'parce qu'ils ne pouvaient être admis par la censure, particulièrement sévère après 1825'. He may, on the other hand, have been unable to continue; he could write the comedy of failure, but not the tragedy.

On 16 May 1828, during his stay in St Petersburg, Griboedov was present at a reading of Boris Godunov, which took place in Princess Laval's salon 'during an evening which reunited Griboedov, Mickiewicz and Pushkin'. It was during this same visit that Griboedov read his 'extracts' from Gruzinskaia noch' to admiring friends. As Bonamour very reasonably remarks,

Seule la personnalité de Griboedov peut expliquer l'accueil très favorable que la pièce a trouvé chez ses amis ...succès d'autant plus étonnant que la critique contemporaine accueillera froidement Boris Godunov, et sera deconcertée par le mélange des genres ou les hardiesses stylistiques et métriques de Pouchkine.
It was less than a month later, on 12 June 1828, that Griboedov, according to Begichev, claimed to have completed his tragedy. The critics may have given Pushkin’s drama a cold reception, but I suggest that Griboedov will have been well aware of its quality. It is possible that desperation, not unmixed with envy, prompted him to make such a claim. Here, in my view, is a man with a ‘writers’ block’ of monumental proportions buying time; he would surely be able to produce something worthy of his talent within five years.

Griboedov did not, of course, have five years. He had less than eight months. His premonition of his death in Persia is recorded by Begichev in his Zapiska. Writing of those three days which Griboedov spent with him in 1828, he says:

During the whole of his stay with me he was extraordinarily gloomy. When I remarked on it he took my hand and said with profound sadness: ‘Goodbye, brother Stepan, it’s not likely that we’ll ever see one another again!!!’ ‘Why these thoughts and this hypochondria?’ I replied, ‘you’ve been in battle, but God spared you’. ‘I know the Persians’, he answered, ‘Allaiar-Khan is my personal enemy, he’ll destroy me! He won’t give me the peace that’s been concluded with the Persians. [...] I have a premonition that I won’t return from Persia alive.’ A.A. Zhandr told me the same thing when I met him.

It was a premonition less romantic than realistic; Griboedov knew very well the danger of the situation which awaited him in Persia. But even had he lived to reach that ‘quiet harbour’ of ‘irritable old age, a dry cough and endlessly repeated admonitions to the young’, it seems unlikely that he would have achieved what he had failed to achieve in the five years that remained to him after the writing of Gore ot uma. He had ‘shared his mind’ with his hero and finished nothing of any consequence thereafter.

*
Goncharov, in his critical study 'Mil’on terzanii’ mentioned above, draws attention to the many-faceted nature of Gore ot uma as a picture of contemporary mores, a gallery of life-like characters, an endlessly witty, biting satire and at the same time a comedy.\textsuperscript{90} Pushkin, as so often, goes straight to the heart of the matter: Who is the intelligent character in the comedy Gore ot uma? answer: Griboedov. And do you know what Chatskii is? A passionate, noble, decent young fellow, who has spent some time with a very intelligent man (namely, Griboedov).\textsuperscript{91} This description of Griboedov’s Chatskii could equally be applied to his pitomets Odoevskii, and to those aspects of Griboedov in which, he felt, he had once resembled the younger man. What he saw as his earlier, better self; passionate, noble and decent. But as Pushkin points out, there are other influences at work here. Griboedov has not only shared these splendid qualities with his hero; he has endowed him with certain characteristics of his own which are less than ideal. The inability to resist a witticism, however inappropriate, is just one example. It will be convenient, here, to summarize the qualities already introduced as characteristic of both Griboedov and Chatskii.

The entertaining but unpublishable Lubochnyi teatr’ represents Griboedov at his vindictive worst;\textsuperscript{92} but there were numerous occasions on which his offensive wit could only arouse hostility. His description of Pushkin as ‘martvshka’, for instance.\textsuperscript{93} His disparaging jokes concerning Murav’ev’s linguistic ability.\textsuperscript{94} Compare Chatskii, in III.2, trying and failing to take Molchalin seriously, unable, as A.N. Veselovskii points out in his article ‘Al’tsest i Chatskii’, ‘to remain silent when necessary’.\textsuperscript{95}
Iniquitas partis adversae justum bellum ingerit', Griboedov writes, as he goes into the attack on behalf of Katenin, whom he considers has been unjustly criticized for his 'Ol'ga'.96 Chatskii rages against injustice of a more serious kind in the monologues of Act II; the comparison, here, is not of a hostile review with the abuse of serfdom, but the reaction of Griboedov with that of Chatskii to injustice of any sort.

The anecdote quoted in the second chapter of this thesis shows Chatskii's behaviour at the ball in Act III as exactly similar to Griboedov's at a Moscow ball in 1823. Both choose this inappropriate setting in which to express their disapproval of their own society; both are, as a consequence, rumoured to be mad.

Zagoskin's father-in-law Novosil'tsev regarded him as 'an insignificant young man without substance and social position'.97 Griboedov's antagonism, though prompted mainly by Zagoskin's adverse criticism, contains a large measure of snobbery. Witness his cruel portrait of the latter in Student as a clumsy provincial aspiring to marry 'above him'.98 Chatskii displays a very similar attitude to Molchalin in III.1.54-55: 'A ох?.. смолчит и голову повесит; | Конечно смрен, все такие не резвы'. 'Все такие.' The disdain is evident. Molchalin is not 'one of us'. Famusov in II.5.271-72, having spoken approvingly of the wealthy well-born halfwit, goes on to say of the well-educated young man who lacks these advantages, 'A в семью не включат. На нас не посмотри. | Ведь только здесь еще и дорожат дворянством.' The importance of class-solidarity between Famusov, Chatskii and Griboedov himself is apparent. As Prince Palavandov said, Griboedov 'was cordially received in all the best houses'.99 So, too, was Chatskii. Famusov, forbidding him to visit Sofiia in IV.14.455-58, tells
him that after this latest piece of outrageous behaviour every door will be closed to him. From which one may infer that - until now - the ones that mattered had all been hospitably open.

The disillusion of both Griboedov and Chatskii on returning to Moscow after a prolonged absence is plainly expressed. It was in his letter to Begichev written shortly after this visit, dated 18 September 1818, that Griboedov wrote: 'Nothing is to my taste in Moscow. Empty idleness, luxury, unconnected with the slightest feeling for anything good.' Compare Chatskii’s despairing 'Нет! недоволен я Москвой'. (III.22.570) In the earlier letter to Begichev dated 5 September 1818, two days after his arrival in Moscow, he wrote, I was kissed at the theatre by a million acquaintances of whom I know neither the faces nor the names. Compare Chatskii at the ball, earlier in that same speech:

Да, мочи нет: миллион терзаний
Груди от дружеских тисков,
Ногам от шарканья, ушам от восклицаний,
А пуще голове от всяких пустяков.

III.22.564-67

Both young men seem alienated by the triviality of their welcome.

Murav’ev’s ‘Zapiski’ contain the following entry for 22 January 1819: ‘Griboedov, who knew how to get himself disliked by one and all, has left with Mazarovich, to the great satisfaction of everyone.’ By the time Chatskii had called for his carriage in IV.14, Molchalin, concealed in his room, might well have been writing something very similar about Chatskii, had he been incautious enough to keep a diary.

Griboedov, in his letter to Syn otechestva, dated 21 January 1819, deplores the spreading of a rumour. He describes it as a three-stage process; a
private grievance is exaggerated into a state of general unrest which is then reported as a rebellion.\textsuperscript{103} Chatskii, too, describes three stages:

Поверили глупцы, другим передают,
Старухи вмог тревоги бьют,
И вот общественное мненье!

IV.10.284-86

There is certainly a shared tendency to arrogance. Both Famusov and Sofiia complain of it in Chatskii. Famusov in II.2.62 with his 'Вот то-то, все вы гордецы!', and Sofiia in III.1.82-84 in the lines:

Зачем же быть, скажу вам напрямик,
Так невоздержны на язык?
В презреньи к людям так нескрыту?

P.A. Karatygin - that same young comic actor who was to have played Repetilov in the banned student performance of Gore ot uma - records perhaps the most extreme example of Griboedov's arrogance. In 1824 he was present at a reading of the comedy at Khmel'nitskii's house on Fontanka. Karatygin had invited Sosnitskii, Karatygin's brother Vasilii Andreevich, the famous tragedian, and several other artists and writers, among them Vasilii Fedorov, elderly author of an easily forgotten drama entitled Liza, ili Torzhestvo blagodarnosti. Karatygin writes:

While Griboedov was smoking his cigar, Fedorov went up to the table and took the comedy (which had been copied in a rather widely spaced handwriting), tried the weight of it on one hand and said with an ingenuous smile 'Ого! what a full measure!.. It's worth my Liza.' Griboedov looked at him from beneath his glasses and answered through his teeth: 'I don't write vulgarities.' Such an unexpected reply disconcerted Fedorov, of course, and trying to show that he took it as a joke, he smiled and hastened to add 'No one doubts that, Aleksandr Sergeevich; it's not just that I didn't wish to offend you by comparing you with myself, but truly, I'm prepared to be the first to laugh at my own works!' 'Yes, you may laugh at yourself as much as you like, but I don't permit anyone to laugh at me...' 'For pity's sake, I wasn't talking about the merits of our plays, only about the number of pages.' 'You cannot yet be aware of the merits of my comedy, but the merits of your plays have long been known to everyone.' Truly, you are mistaken, I repeat, I had absolutely no
intention of offending you.' 'Oh, I'm sure you spoke without thinking, but there is no way in which you could offend me.'

Khmel' nitskii, trying to improve matters, took the hapless Fedorov by the shoulder and said to him, laughing, 'We'll put you in the back row as a punishment.' To which Griboedov, walking about the drawing-room with his cigar, replied 'You may put him where you like, but I am not going to read my comedy in his presence.'... There was nothing for it ... the poor author of the virtuous Liza took his hat, went up to Griboedov and said: It's a great pity, Aleksandr Sergeevich, that my innocent joke was the cause of such an unpleasant Scene...but to avoid depriving our host and his respected guests of the pleasure of hearing your comedy, I am leaving...' Griboedov replied, with cruel composure, 'Safe journey!' [Schastlivogo puti!].

It says much for Griboedov's comedy - and his friends - that even after this outrageous display of arrogance his work was well received. 'As soon as Fedorov had left the reading began', Karatygin writes, 'and need I say, what an effect this comedy produced on its audience!'

Griboedov's xenophobia has been mentioned in Chapter 5 of this thesis; whether 'carelessly trampling on valuable Persian carpets' or persuading his friend Hamburger that 'to be a German is a very stupid role to play in this world'; it becomes evident as soon as he leaves the fatherland. In Gore ot uma we are invited to laugh at the Countess Khriumina, not only for her age and her deafness, but for her German accent, meticulously observed in the spelling of her lines. Chatskii's tirade at the end of Act III on the subject of Moscow's servile francophilia could be seen, perhaps, as more of a literary convention, whose antecedents have been discussed above, were it not for the lines:

Ax! если рождены мы все перенимать,
Хоть у китайцев бы нам несколько занять
Премудрого у них незнанья иноземцев.
III.22.611-13

His attack, widened here to include all foreigners, reveals something akin to Griboedov's own attitude.
Neither Griboedov nor Chatskii can accept the praise of those they consider to be their inferiors. Famusov, regretting that Chatskii is not in the service, tells Skalozub in II.5:

Жалль, очень жалль, он малый с головой;
И славно пишет, переводит.
Нельзя не пожалеть, что с таким умом...

II.5.333-35

This is rich, coming from a declared enemy of books and 'book-learning'. What he could know of Chatskii's writing, still less his ability as a translator, is unclear. 'Нельзя ли пожалеть об ком-нибудь другом? | И похвалы мне ваши досаждают', (II.5.336-37) Chatskii says, irritably.

Griboedov's sensitivity to the frequent criticism of his friendship with Bulgarin has been recorded by Zavalishin.

People - even those close to him - never reproached him for anything as much as they did for his relations with Bulgarin, and it always stung him to the quick. Although Griboedov would often argue heatedly on other subjects, he never became irritated; only when his connection with Bulgarin was discussed.  

His reaction to Bulgarin's odiously flattering feuilleton, 'Literaturnye prizraki', is an extreme example of that inability to accept the praise of an inferior. Bulgarin had presented him, in the person of Talantin, scholar and poet, as a perfect paragon, a model for all writers. Griboedov's letter on the subject is offensively formal: 'Dear Sir, Faddei Venediktovich', he begins. He is sorry. Bulgarin has always been so kind. He believes the latter's good opinion of himself to be sincere. Nevertheless, he writes, 'I can no longer continue our acquaintance'.

My principles, principles of decency and self-respect, do not permit me to be the object of praise which is undeserved, or in any case, premature. You praise me as an author, and it is precisely as an author that I have not yet produced anything of true distinction [istinno-iziyashchnogo].
Griboedov is surely using the word 'iziaxchnee' in its obsolete sense, as in the collocation iziaxchnye iskusstva - 'fine art'. It sheds light on his own view of Gore ot uma; clearly it does not belong in that third, dismal category of poetry he thought he ought to write. We should be grateful. 'Don't think that other people's opinions have prompted me to break off our acquaintance', Griboedov warns Bulgarin. 'Believe me, my conscience is more important to me than other people's gossip. And it would be ridiculous for me to value the opinion of people from whom I am doing my utmost to distance myself'. (A further confirmation of the fact that Griboedov, as he was to assure Begichev a few months later, had 'been living for some time in seclusion, isolated from everyone'.) I'm in disagreement with myself', he tells Bulgarin or, as his Chatskii puts it, 'ум с сердцем не в ладу'. (I.7.442)

If I become more and more close to you, it will be difficult to persuade myself that your praise was distasteful to me. I'm afraid of catching myself in some meanness, am I not grovelling [не выкапиваю-ли я] yet another handful of incense out of you!

Griboedov may have felt Bulgarin's praise undeserved or premature, but only in relation to what he felt himself capable of writing in the future. There is little evidence to suggest that he was averse to the praise he had received from other quarters for his Gore ot uma. His letter to Bulgarin was written at the beginning of October 1824; those twelve readings of his comedy took place on and shortly after 1 June 1824. It would seem that he accepted the praise of those he considered to be his equals, and was even prepared to discuss their criticisms. The letter to Bulgarin quoted above was written early in September 1824; three months later he was defending the structure of Gore ot uma to Katenin, in a letter which betrays little, if any, resentment. Like his Chatskii, the criticism of an
inferior enraged him - witness his reaction to Zagoskin's review of Molodye suprug; the ill-informed praise of an inferior was, simply, intolerable.

Griboedov rarely used a nickname in his correspondence. There is only one instance in all those letters to Begichev, and that in the earliest of them to survive. On 9 November 1816 Griboedov writes lightheartedly, 'My dear Stepan! Where have you taken yourself off to now, Your Inscrutableness'.113 The other three examples all occur in letters to Faddei Bulgarin. In the first Griboedov calls him 'My dear Sarmatian'. The reference is, of course, to the nomadic tribesmen of the steppe, who settled in the northern approaches to the Caucasus from 300 BC. There is, perhaps, a suggestion of friendly scorn for a primitive.114 The second nickname is more neutral; 'My dearest Bee', a reference to the Severnaia pchela, the journal published by Bulgarin and Grech.115 The third is revealing. 'Kaliban Venediktovich', Griboedov calls him. The nature of this unlikely friendship becomes immediately apparent. Griboedov is Prospero to Bulgarin's Caliban; creative genius to slave. Prospero was kind to Caliban until the first, terrible offence, the attempted rape of Miranda. Thereafter he was consistently cruel. Griboedov was so incensed by Bulgarin's threat to his self-esteem that he, too, very nearly ended their friendship. But it seems that Bulgarin was just too useful; though not always efficient. The following passage is given in Russian to illustrate the scant respect with which Griboedov could treat Bulgarin; it reveals a relationship almost akin to that of master and servant::

Очень хорош и заботлив ты, Калибан Венедиктович! Присылаешь ко мне Муханова, а не мог дать знать об отправлении в ночь фельдегеря; таким образом заготовленные мои письма остались в стол и будут лежать по твоей милости. Где ты вчера, моя душа, набрался необыкновенного вдохновения? Ей, берегись.116
Smirnov writes that Zhandr, in their conversation of 28 April 1858, expressed a somewhat similar view concerning the unequal nature of this relationship. 'Bulgarin', he said, 'was as devoted to Griboedov as a dog to its master.'

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The above comparisons constitute a survey of the characteristics common to Griboedov and Chatskii, the hero with whom he has 'shared his mind'. The best in Chatskii represents the best in Griboedov - or what he saw as the best; that idealistic aspect of himself which most closely resembled Aleksandr Odoevskii. But Griboedov does not maintain that he has invested all of himself in this process of sharing; his own share, however small, exists. His divided nature is revealed in certain views, actions, the opinions of those close to him. These, too, are summarized below.

'I have somehow got together with my common sense again', he writes to Begichev after the duel in Tbilisi.

He is 'a scapegrace', Ermolov tells him, but 'a fine man for all that' - a more usual contradiction.

The cool logic of his conversation with Naib-Sultan translated above contrasts sharply with his emotional response to the dream of 17 November 1820, in which he promised himself to write. Both took place in the relative isolation of Tabriz.

The earlier title of his comedy, Gore umu, and the final choice of Gore ot uma, may represent a warning and the consequence of not heeding it; but they are equally ambiguous. What kind of misfortune? To or as a result of what kind of intelligence? Griboedov's ambivalent attitude to his hero has been discussed in Chapter 6 with reference to Chatskii's monologue 'A судьи кто?' (II.5.339-95)
Griboedov, Aleksandr Odoevskii and Chatskii begin the speech in outraged unison. Humour only creeps in again as Griboedov, distancing himself, allows the elevated cliché, 'жар [...] высоким и прекрасным', (line 831) to be toppled from its perch by the bathetic 'разбой! пожар!'. (line 382) We smile, and the noble passion is dissipated.

Piksanov's view of Chatskii as cast 'aus einem Guss' is introduced above, together with the proposition that Griboedov's hero represents an aspect of the writer himself. If this proposition is accepted then the corollary must be inferred. There are other aspects of the writer not present in Chatskii. Griboedov may have divided his mind in order to share it with Chatskii; his 'share', separate and different, remains. Something of its quality emerges in the discussion of the comparisons between Alceste and Chatskii made by Veselovskii and reconsidered by Piksanov. In it I have questioned Veselovskii's definition of both heroes as 'mature and intelligent', concluding that 'Alceste has more in common with the inflexible Griboedov than his impulsive Chatskii'. To which I would add that Chatskii is only finally disillusioned at the end of the play; Griboedov was disillusioned before he started writing it - at least, concerning the usefulness of preaching on the ills of a society in its drawing-rooms.

Griboedov has created a masterpiece out of his own duality. The structure, the themes, the characters, the imagery present a pattern of opposites. Enlightenment and obscurantism, society and the individual, reaction and revolution, Russia and the West, owners and the owned, dream and reality, the ideal and the expedient, social climbing and social falling, the artificial and the natural, surfaces and what lies beneath them.
'Светает!... Ах! как скоро ночь минула!' The first word of Gore ot uma deplores the coming of the light; the next five regret the too swift passing of the comfortable dark. Liza's line prefigures the views of everyone in the play except Chatskii. Gore ot uma is, amongst so many other things, a play about a society opposed to an individual; a society in reaction against one man's passionate belief in the need for enlightened reform. Sofiia, in I.3, appears with her candle, her source of artificial light. She, too, deplores the arrival of the real stuff. 'Ах, в самом деле рассвело!', she acknowledges, reluctantly, and extinguishes it. И свет и грусть. Как быстро ночи!: (I.3.63-64) Liza's view exactly. One may imagine the dismay in her 'Светает!'; Sofiia connects light and sorrow in plain words. Of course the lines have their literal sense. Liza is exhausted, Sofiia must part with her Molchalin. But it is seldom - if ever - safe to assume that a writer used these words instead of those words by chance.

Chatskii's first words, like Liza's, concern the light. Чуть свет уже на ногах!, (I.7.304) he exclaims in delight. As well he may. There can have been very little reason to suppose that Sofiia, with whom he has had no communication for the past three years and who is not expecting him, will be up, dressed and ready to receive him. He is, for all his radical views, a well brought up young man who knows the rules; even his ardour could scarcely justify such an infringement of them. Griboedov, too, knows the rules. His Chatskii arrives with the dawn. Enlightenment, however inconvenient, is at hand.

In Act IV both Sofiia and Liza enter carrying candles. It is, as the stage directions point out, 'night'. When Chatskii arrives at the end of Scene 12, however, Liza drops her candle in fright; for the second time in the play artificial light gives way to genuine enlightenment, though this time Chatskii has not come
to impart it; he has just received it. Now Griboedov makes his final reference to *Hamlet*. 'Give me some light. Away!', the King cries in III.2.278. The 'away' is significant. Artificial light is not to illuminate the truth, but to obscure it. 'Свечей побольше, фонарей!', Famusov shouts to the 'crowd of servants with candles' specified in the stage directions at the beginning of IV.14.420. Here, too, truth is obscured, though not wilfully. Famusov sees more by their artificial light but understands less. Chatskii, as discussed earlier, is finally rejected for making a secret assignation with Sofiia. He has done much to anger Famusov during the course of the play, but he has not done this.

The issue of Russia versus the West in the play is a double-edged sword. Chatskii's attack on francophilia which concludes Act III, (III.22.574-638) his four malicious lines directed against the Countess-granddaughter at the end of III.8, condemn slavish imitation of all things French; except, presumably, the French revolution.

The distinction between owners and owned is somewhat blurred in the opening scenes; in Act II the theme is treated with passionate anger; by the end of the play it has lost all momentum. Liza, in the manner of those eighteenth-century verse-comedies referred to earlier, is both house-serf and confidante. She is used in both capacities and then attacked for not quite knowing when she is which. 'Послушай, вольности ты лишней не бери', (I.5.259) Sofiia snaps, ominously, when Liza oversteps the mark by reminding her mistress of feelings for Chatskii she prefers to forget. They are both aware of the power the one holds over the other.

Chatskii is present when Khlestova mentions, in the same breath, her black maid and her pet dog - 'Арапку-девку да собаку' (III.10.364) - and asks
that they be fed with the leftover scraps from dinner. 'От ужина сошли подачку.' (III.10.66) He hears her telling Sofiia that Zagoretskii has either bought or cheated someone out of the two little black children he has given herself and her sister. 'Лгунishmenta он, картежник, вор', she admits. 'Я от него было и двери на запор;' (III.12.379-81) Like Griboedov with his Caliban, she has weighed the ideal against the expedient, and cannot quite bring herself to dispense with Zagoretskii's services. Chatskii's response is lighthearted. He merely comments, 'with a laugh, to Platon Mikhailovich', 'Не поздоровится от эдаких похвал, | И Загорецкий сам не выдержал, пропал' (III.12.385-86).

In Chatskii's final condemnation of Moscow, there is no mention of such abuses of serfdom. (IV.14) And yet two of them have just occurred in his presence. 'В работу вас, на поселенье вас', (IV.14.441) Famusov tells Fil'ka. This sentence to hard labour in a penal colony was in effect a life sentence, if not a death sentence. Fil'ka was unlikely to survive the statutory twenty-five years of army service to which Famusov condemns him. Liza, taken from the izba and trained as a lady's maid, is to be thrown back into the harsh conditions of village life for which she is now totally ill-equipped. 'Изволь-ка в избу, марш, за птицами ходить', (IV.14.447) Famusov commands. Chatskii makes no mention of this arbitrary abuse of power. He is too painfully concerned with his own feelings, it seems, to notice it. Even when he decides to express his disgust:

Теперь не худо б было сряду
На дочь и на отца,
И на любовника-глупца,
И на весь мир излить всю жельч и всю досаду.
IV.14.503-06
For all his bitterness and all his anger, he was able to ignore what use had led him to perceive as normal.

Sofiia pursues the Sentimentalist dream throughout the comedy. In I.4 she invents a dream of her own to protect the man she imagines she loves. In II.2 she invents a hairdresser for the same reason. Chatskii suggests that she leave her hair as it is, Sofiia protests the impossibility of appearing before guests in such a state, Griboedov adds to his pattern by opposing the natural to the artificial. The reality which he opposes to the dream, the reality of Molchalin's lack of feeling for Sofiia and the nature of her own feeling for Chatskii, he only reveals in that new denouement, dreamed up in the coach on the way to St Petersburg; the lines 337-401 of IV.12, which replaced lines 357-361 of the version he left with Begichev in Moscow. In the earlier version Sofiia scarcely has time to mention to Molchalin - 'my friend', as she is still calling him - that she thought 'что Чайкин здесь...' before Chatskii, 'throwing himself between them', cries 'Я здесь, притворщица. Да.' (MA, IV.14.362) It is left to Sofiia to provide the last syllable of the iamb with her 'Ax!...' Liza drops her candle in silence. In the final version Sofiia expresses her relief that no one has witnessed her humiliation; when she fainted, earlier in the day, 'Здесь Чайкин был...'. The half-line, thus slightly altered, precedes Chatskii's 'Он здесь, притворщица!' This time there is no 'Да'. Sofiia and Liza complete the hexameter in unison with a startled iamb - 'Ax! Ax!', (IV.14.402) and the new denouement fits seamlessly into the last act of the comedy.

The opposition of social climbing to social falling needs little elaboration; Griboedov has summed it up in Famusov's five words to Chatskii on the exemplary Maksim Petrovich, 'Упал он больно, встал здорово'. (II.2.89)
Molchalin, of course, climbs doggedly upwards throughout the play. In the
Muzeyniy avtograf Sofia’s illusions regarding him remain intact; in the final
version they are destroyed. In either case it seems possible that he will avoid a
well-deserved fall. Griboedov leaves it for us to decide.

Attitudes to the surface of things and what lies beneath divide the play;
Chatskii against the rest. Chatskii is for openness. Просу мне дать ответ, | Без
dумы, полноте смущаться’, he begs Sofia in I.7.348-49. The main concern of
Famusov in IV.14 is to preserve the surface. Chatskii is completely mad. How,
otherwise, could he dare to think of him as either a crawler or a prospective
father-in-law? All that threatening talk about Moscow! Is Sofia trying to kill
him? Hasn’t he enough problems already? Then with a cry of social pain he
reveals the true source of his anxiety: 'Ах! Боже мой! что станет говорить | Княгиня
Марья Алексеевна!’ (IV.14.523-30) How will it look? What will they
say? Famusov’s last despairing couplet represents the triumph of surfaces. This
is, after all - and that is where Griboedov has placed the lines - what matters.

This division between appearance and reality, between surfaces and
depths, is emphasized in attitudes to uniform. In Chatskii’s view it had been too
often used to conceal the meanness of spirit and poor judgement of his elders.

Мундир! Один мундир! Он в прежнем их быту
Когда-то укрывал, расшитый и красивый,
Их слабодушье, рассудка нищету.

........................................
И в женях, дочерях к мундиру та же страсть!
Я сам к нему давно ли от нежности отрекся?!
Теперь уж в это мне ребячество не впасть,
II.5.384-86, 389-90

he adds, dismissively. Skalozub, on the other hand, sees it as a necessary sign of
belonging. Surely Khlestova can recognise a man from a decent regiment? 'А
форменные есть отлички: | В мундирах выпушки, погонки, петлицы'
He applauds the Moscow passion for a uniform. Их золоту, шитью дивятся будто солнцам!, he assures Chatskii in II.6.403.

The ladies, too, have their millinery status symbols, which the six princesses are quick to assess. After Natal’ia Dmitrevna’s ecstatic greeting of her young unmarried friends, Griboedov directs ‘Loud kisses, then they sit down and look one another over from head to foot’.

From Liza’s first words to Famusov’s last, opposition generates tension, powers the comedy, illuminates the social background against which the two imaginary love stories are played out; the love of Sofiia for her idealized Molchalin, and that of Chatskii for his idealized Sofiia. ‘Chatskii’s inability to believe in Sofii’s love for Molchalin is delightful – and so natural!’, Pushkin wrote, in his letter to Bestuzhev: ‘That is what the whole comedy should have turned on.’123

In the final chapter of my dissertation I shall appropriate Pushkin’s belated advice to Griboedov and consider the development of this triangular relationship between the three young people; Chatskii, Sofiia and Molchalin.

2. Ibid., p. 165.


5. 'Odoevskii', pp.76-77.


7. Ibid., III, 173.


10. Ibid., III, 179.


19. Ibid., III, 304.


21. Ibid., pp.158-59. See also V.P. Meshcheriakov, 'Byl li A.S. Griboedov
chlenom Severnogo obshchestva dekabristov?’, *Voprosy literatury* (L’vov), 1991, no. 1, 94-102.


23. 'Odoevskii’, p.52.


25. Ibid., III, 183.


32. Ibid., I, 6. See also ‘Stikhovtorenia’, p.279.

33. Ibid., I, 6. See also ‘Stikhovtorenia’, pp.278-79.

34. Ibid., I, 23. See also ‘Stikhovtorenia’, p.286.

35. *Vestnik Leningradskogo universiteta*, XIV, no. 3 (1957), 159-60.


40. The timing of these changes is discussed in detail in Chapter 9.

41. Ibid., III, 178.

42. Ibid., III, 155-56.


44. A.L. Grishunin cites the view of Piksanov, in 'Kommentarii', Griboedov, PSS, 1995, I, 262.

45. Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, III, 156.


49. Griboedov, Sochineniia, II, 244. See also V. Viren, 'Igral li Griboedov Chatskogo?', Literaturnaja Rossiia, 1978, no. 40, 16.

50. Karatygin, p.112.


53. Pimen Arapov, Letopis' russkogo teatra (St Petersburg, 1861), p.358.

54. Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, I, 279.

55. Ibid., III, 31.


57. Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, 15-17. See also 'Stikhotvoreniia', PSS, 1911-17, pp.281-82.

58. Griboedov, Sochineniia, II, 18. See also 'Stikhotvoreniia', PSS, 1911-17, p.287.

276-80.

60. Griboedov, *PSS*, 1911-17, I, 23.

61. Ibid., 287.


63. Griboedov, *PSS*, 1911-17, I, 22. See also 'Stikhotvoreniiia', *PSS*, 1911-17, p.286.

64. Ibid., I, 19. See also 'Stikhotvoreniiia', *PSS*, 1911-17, pp.284-85.

65. Ibid., I, 20-22. See also 'Stikhotvoreniiia', *PSS*, 1911-17, pp.285-86.

66. Ibid., I, 17 and 18-19. See also 'Stikhotvoreniiia', *PSS*, 1911-17, pp.282-83 and 284-85.


69. Ibid., p.400.

70. Griboedov, *PSS*, 1911-17, III, 175.

71. Ibid., III, 177-78.

72. Ibid., III, 179-81.

73. Ibid., III, 176.


76. *Griboedov v vospominaniiakh*, 1929, p.36.

77. Griboedov, *PSS*, 1911-17, III, 199.

78. Ibid., I, 254-55. See also 'Dramaticheskie sochineniiia', *PSS*, 1911-17, p.300.

79. Ibid., I, 256-61. See also 'Dramaticheskie sochineniiia', *PSS*, 1911-17, pp.300
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-01, V. Vartanian, 'A.S. Griboedov i ego plan tragedii "Radamist i Zenobiia"', Literaturnaia Armeniia, 1959, no. 3, 130-32; Bonamour, Griboedov, pp.401-02; and V.E. Vatsuro, Griboedovskii zamysel tragedii "Radamist i Zenobiia", in Problemy tvorchestva, pp.162-93.

80. Bonamour, Griboedov, p.401.

81. Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, I, 258-59.

82. Ibid., I, 261.


84. Ibid., p.126.

85. Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, I, 261.

86. Bonamour, Griboedov, p.399.

87. Ibid., pp. 397-98.

88. Ibid.


90. Goncharov, 'Mil'on terzanii', p.483.

91. Pushkin, PSS, VI, 96.

92. Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, I, 3-4.


94. Ibid., p.69.

95. Quoted from Pksanov, Issledovaniia, p.219.

96. Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, III, 14.


98. Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, I, 65-151.


100.Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, III, p.133.
101.Ibid., III, 131.

102. Griboedov v vospominaniakh, 1929, p.66.

103. Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, III, 29.


105. Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, III, 45.

106. Ibid., III, 134.


110. Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, III, 165.

111. Ibid., III, 161.

112. Ibid., III, 167-69.

113. Ibid., III, 121.

114. Ibid., III, 197.

115. Ibid., III, 212.

116. Ibid., III., 172.


118. Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, III, 183.

119. Ibid., III, 35.

120. Ibid., III, 35.

121. Piksanov, Tvorcheskaia istoriia, p.221.


123. Pushkin, PSS, VI, 96.
Reference has been made above to several factors which had their influence on the disparity between Gore ot uma and Griboedov's other works. The most important of them may be summarized as follows: the writer's ability to work at art and craft simultaneously but separately; the profound influence of the two events which divide the three periods of his creative life – the duel between Zavadovskii and Sheremetev and the December uprising of 1825; and the sufficient satisfaction of writing itself, discussed in the preceding chapter. This last relates to the characterization of Chatskii, as a synthesis of idealism and realism, of the young Odoevskii and Griboedov. The author speaks of 'sharing himself', and professes not to know with whom. I have suggested, above, that Griboedov shared himself with his Chatskii, and distanced himself from his earlier idealism in the process. It remains to discuss what I have called the disruptive naturalism of Chatskii. It is the scale, nature and effect of the alterations made together with the new denouement which finally separate Gore ot uma from the neo-classical verse comedies which preceded it – including Griboedov's own. As Karlinsky says, 'Griboedov's great masterpiece both crowned this school of comedy and spelled its natural end. Pushkin's neo-Shakespearian Boris Godunov (1825) signalled the turning of Russian drama away from neo-classicism'.

*
In the letter to Bestuzhev mentioned at the end of the preceding chapter, Pushkin writes: 'Sofiia is drawn unclearly: not a [...] not a Moscow cousin.' Not even the Academia edition is bold enough to print this sentence in full; the censored word, so unwisely left to the imagination of the reader, becomes limitlessly offensive. 'Московская кузина', with its suggestion of the French-chattering stereotype bred for the marriage market, is offensive enough. 'В Москве ведь нет невестам перевода; | Чего? Плодятся годом года', Famusov boasts to Skalozub in II.5.257-58, shamelessly calling evil good. Pushkin is no less dissatisfied with Molchalin. 'He is not harshly base enough.' Could he not also have been a coward, the poet wonders. 'An old spring - but a cowardly civilian between Chatskii and Skalozub could have been very amusing.' To hear Molchalin described as insufficiently caddish sheds an interesting light on the society which Chatskii condemned; and Pushkin is referring to the final version of Gore ot uma (hereafter GOU), the version including the new scene in which Molchalin reveals the worst aspects of himself. The effect of this new material is profound. Until the interpolation of lines 337-401 in IV.12 it has been just possible to deceive ourselves about Molchalin. He has flirted with Liza. But then so has Famusov. The girl is, after all, only a house-serf. He has admitted to her, in II.12.541-42, that his profession of love for Sofiia is a career move - 'Её | По должности', he tells her. Even this is, perhaps, no more than any sensitive young man would have felt obliged to say in the circumstances. It could be argued that the remark shows a certain delicacy. Molchalin was not making, and Liza was not expecting an offer of marriage. In seeking, as he has so far been seen to be seeking, an advantageous union with his superior's daughter, he is not breaking fresh ground. There was very little romance in the dowry system as it then
existed. Repetilov may have failed to profit by it, but his account of his efforts to advance his career and recoup his fortune show him to be quite aggrieved at the unreasonable behaviour of his father-in-law:

Приданого взял — шиш, по службе — ничего.
Тещь немец, а что проку? —
Боялся, видишь, он упреку
За слабость будто бы к родне!


Or, as the earlier Muzeinyi avtograf (hereafter MA) has it, 'За маленький фавер к родне!...'. (MA, IV.6. 214) His mistake, he implies, was in choosing a German father-in-law; a decent Russian would have known how to behave. Griboedov changes most of the final sentence, but retains the essential; what Repetilov sees as a very proper partiality 'к родне'. Molchalin, it seemed, was relying on it. He was, and knew that he was, an exception. 'И будь не я, коптел бы ты в Твери', Famusov tells him in I.4.139; not, one suspects, for the first time. Nepotism was the natural order of things. Molchalin had a career to make; only connection by marriage would entitle him to the best Famusov was so happy to obtain for those related to him. As he tells Skalozub:

Один Молчалин мне не свой,
И то затем, что деловой.
Как станешь представлять к крестичку ли, к местечку,
Ну как не порадеть родному человеку!..

GOU, II. 5. 212-15.

Until the new denouement in which Molchalin reveals the true meanness of his philosophy to Liza and, unintentionally, to Sofiia and Chatskii, the young secretary is shown to be acting according to the rules laid down by the society which has produced him. Now we are obliged to reconsider what we have learned about him during the course of the play. And what we know about the young woman whom he has professed to love. The scene disturbs our perception
of their characters, while it adds fuel to the fire of Chatskii’s final reckoning with Sofiia, Famusov, Molchalin, and that same society.

It has been suggested, above, that both Sofiia and Molchalin break out of their neo-classical moulds as they approach the psychological realism of Chatskii, the hero made, according to Piksanov, ‘aus einem Guss’. The extent to which Chatskii is the true representative of the best - and some of the worst - of Griboedov has been discussed in the preceding chapter. It is the development of Sofiia and Molchalin in their triangular relationship with Chatskii that tears the conventions up by their Neo-classical roots. ‘Among the masterly features of this charming comedy’, Pushkin writes, ‘Chatskii’s inability to believe in Sofiia’s love for Molchalin is delightful - and how natural!’

The naturalness of Chatskii was an unheard-of departure from tradition. Griboedov had opened a Pandora’s box, and drama was forced to seek new ways forward. John Osborne, with his play Look Back in Anger, produced a similar effect on English-speaking dramatists and audiences in the fifties. Jimmy Porter, like Chatskii, fell into no known category. Like Chatskii, he stood alone - on stage - and challenged the status quo with his aggressive naturalness. Contemporary drama was shaken out of its rut.

Chatskii is not the bearer of some quality declared in a speaking name. He is as arrogant as Nadmen, honest as Chesnodum, severe as Kruton, truthful as Pravdin, ardent as Plamen, straight as Priamikov and inconsistent as life. His appearance in 1.7 disrupts the beginnings of what might have been the perfectly satisfactory neo-classical comedy of my invention, referred to above as Chinoliubets, ili Otets obmanut. Famusov, as the father in question, reveals his love of rank and wealth in his ambition for his only daughter. 'Кто беден, тот
тебе не пapa', he tells her (GOU, I.4.163). Liza expounds his views to Sofiia in
the following scene. 'Желал бы он с звездами да с чинами' | [...] 'Ну,
разумеемся, к тому б | И деньги' (I.5.232-35). The rhyme to the outrageous
'тому б' is, of course, Skalozub. Sofiia has revealed her aptitude for deception,
with her maid-servant playing 'resourceful accomplice'. Two suitors for her hand
have entered the lists, Molchalin, loved but poor, and Skalozub, unloved but
rich. The objective, in the best traditions of the genre, is a love-match; the
obstacles to it have been plainly stated. Enter a servant. 'К вам Александр
Андреич Чапкий', he announces, and the convention collapses under the weight
of yet another suitor. One who has already been unfavourably compared with the
loved but poor contender. Why is he here? What sort of man is he? How will he
influence the outcome? One would give much not to know the answers to these
questions. To hear the play as it was first heard at those numerous readings in St
Petersburg in 1824. Unhappily, it is as hard as unhearing all the music after
Mozart and responding to the mounting tension of a rising diminished seventh as
though its effect had not been subsequently devalued in early horror-movies. But
we can at least try.

Griboedov, in his letter to Begichev from St Petersburg dated 24 June
1824, tells him, first, of the eighty or so lines - 'or rather, rhymes' - which he has
changed in Gore ot uma. Now it is smooth as glass. Apart from which', he
continues, 'I decided to add a new denouement'. What he does not say is that he
has made important alterations to the entire comedy, although this is implicit in
his description of the manuscript of the play he left with his friend as 'so
unfinished, so careless', fit only to be burned. Griboedov did not habitually
discuss his work in any detail in his letters to Begichev who, unlike so many of
his friends, was not a writer; but the extensive alterations to the text, made in addition to the new scene between Liza and Molchalin, cannot be adequately described as a polishing of the rhymes. In tracing the course of the relationship between Chatskii, Sofiia and Molchalin it becomes apparent that Griboedov, throughout his work on the comedy, developed the naturalness of Chatskii, and created the characters of Sofiia and Molchalin to approach it, if not to match it. The new denouement, though it was added to what the author himself had previously considered to be the completed work, was in fact the final stage of this process. As discussed in the third chapter of this thesis, the characters in Shakhovskoi's verse comedies Lipetskie vody and Svoia sem'ia are written on three levels of reality; he gathers together on stage a powerful lead, a conventional supporting cast and a collection of stereotypes. In Gore ot uma Griboedov takes this technique one stage further; he creates, in Chatskii, a natural lead, gives him a powerful supporting cast and adds a collection of conventional characters, recognisable representatives of their society.

There were, of course, earlier alterations made to the text during the writing of the Gore ot uma which Griboedov read to admiring friends in Moscow. These are available in the footnotes to MA and the section entitled 'Varianty', both in the 1995 edition of Griboedov's works, of which only the first volume has so far been published. Other changes may have been lost to us as a result of the fire in Smirnov's library, in which Griboedov's notebooks were destroyed. But the changes relevant to my thesis are those made to MA itself during the same brief period in which the new denouement was written.

Zhandr, in conversation with Smirnov, many years after the events which he describes, tells him:
When Griboedov arrived in St Petersburg, having altered his comedy in his head, he wrote such frightful rough copies that one couldn't make them out. Seeing that this work of genius was on the verge of destruction I persuaded him to give me his half-pages. He handed them over, completely unconcerned. I had a whole office at my disposal: it copied out Gore otauma and got rich in the process, because there was a great demand for copies. The main copy, corrected by Griboedov in his own hand, is in my possession. You know his hand-writing. There cannot be the slightest doubt. Baron Korf wanted my copy for the Imperial Public Library, but I didn’t part with it. I wanted this copy to remain in the family.7

In Zhandr's version of events, Griboedov carried the projected changes in his head during the journey and only altered the manuscript when he arrived in St Petersburg. Griboedov's account is rather different. True, he only claims to have thought up the new denouement on the journey. The twelve readings he mentions in that same letter to Begichev may well have taken place over as many days; but Griboedov clearly states that one, at least, was given 'on the very day of my arrival, and in that form'.8 In the context of his letter to Begichev 'that form' already includes the more than eighty alterations and the new scene.

We have two letters from Griboedov to Begichev written in June 1824. The second, that quoted above, tells him of the changes to the text. The first describes the journey from Moscow to St Petersburg.9 'It snowed twice on the way, 29 and 30 May! I was chilled to the marrow, forced to stop overnight, it took us four days and nights to get here.' Holed up at the inn with a headful of new ideas, Griboedov is unlikely to have waited for the more civilized surroundings of St Petersburg before committing them to paper. It seems that the major changes, at least, were made on the journey; it is the only way in which he could have given that first reading of the play, in its new form, on 'the very day' of his arrival. It is, of course, possible that Griboedov made some of the alterations to MA before he left; though in the light of his close friendship with Begichev it seems odd, to say the least, that he should fail to mention them in
Moscow, but wait until he was in St Petersburg before urging his friend not to read his copy of the play to anyone and to destroy the manuscript as 'so unfinished, so careless'. The nature of the alterations which, whenever they were made, completed the process of development from neo-classical comedy to the play we have, is worth considering in some detail. They are not, as one might have expected, solely or even mainly concerned with ensuring that the new denouement fits seamlessly into place.

Piksanov has given a very full account of these alterations in his book Tvorcheskaia istoriia 'Goria ot uma'. They are discussed under such headings as 'Style', 'Images', 'Composition' etc. As he writes at the beginning of the section entitled 'Dinamika stilia', his intention is 'to identify all these alterations, systematize them in groups, define the poet’s motivation for them in this or that case, and finally, determine the general direction of his work on style'.10 He shows us the improvements. Examples are given of incorrect stress, eliminated in later versions of the play. 'However', he writes, 'some things escaped the vigilance of the author'. The line, for instance, beginning 'Судьи всему, везде…'. It seems only fair to point out that Shakespeare, so admired by Griboedov, frequently allowed himself this freedom with his iambics. There are ten such instances of 'misplaced' stress in the thirty-four lines of the prologue to Henry V, including the opening line, 'O for a muse of fire...' which, if 'судьи' is stressed, as it should be, on the first syllable, exactly reproduces the rhythm of which Piksanov complains.

He gives, of course, many more convincing examples. The rhyming of 'клуба' with 'любая' in MA, I.7.370-71, for instance, is changed in GOU, I.7.359-60 to the equally odd 'клуба' rhymed with 'гроба'.12 The awkward 'позволяйте'
in MA, 3.I.70 appears in GOU, I.3.70 as 'взгляните-ка', an undoubted improvement. Sometimes', Piksanov writes, 'a roughness is still in evidence in the final text. In MA, III.1.70, in the original edition, Chatskii said: "По-прежнему пущъсь слоняться в свет"; "слоняться в свет" was intolerable and in the final edition of the Muzeinyi avtograf was replaced by: "по-прежнему пущъсь во все края глядеть"; the syntactic structure of the phrase remained equally artificial, but Griboedov did not know how to rid himself of this persistent expression, and in the Zhandr manuscript we read: "Пущьсь подалее простить, охолодеть".

In his book Griboedov: Issledovaniia i kharakteristiki Piksanov tells us: The early plays, lyrical and dramatic, are written in extremely awkward verse. In comparison with them Gore ot uma represents a huge step forward. But even within the various editions of the comedy one can observe Griboedov's constant struggle with imperfections. This somewhat Platonic view of an ideal play at the summit and Griboedov struggling up the foothills has its more positive aspect: the writer was not always endeavouring to eradicate faults; his alterations frequently add to our understanding of his characters. Two further quotations from Tvorcheskaia istoriia illustrate the focus of Piksanov's attention on the inadequacies of the text.

The new denouement made the spiritual aspect of the heroine deeper and more profound. The basic elements of an as yet unawakened moral strength in Sofiia were sensed intuitively by the poet even earlier [...] and found their way into the early text of the comedy.

Or, again:

'[The new denouement] inevitably, perhaps unexpectedly to the poet himself, enriched the image and the role of Sofiia in the fourth act. One might have expected, after this, a retrospective re-working and reconstruction of the softened features of the passionate, impetuous individuality of Sofiia – in the text of the first acts. But this did not happen.'
The development of characterization as a result of alterations made to the earlier acts is, it seems, either unconsciously intuitive or non-existent. And yet, in my view, these alterations, not grouped under various headings, but taken in sequence, as they occur in the play, do reveal a deliberate attempt by Griboedov to re-consider his characters at this late stage in the creative history of his comedy.

* 

ACT ONE

Act I, Scene 1.

The first of these alterations occur in the opening scene. 'Покатишься', in line 4, is replaced by 'Не скатишься'; line 18, the rather ponderous alexandrine 'Ни верить не хотят, ни слышать, ни видать', loses two of its feet to become the crisper 'И слышат, не хотят понять'. These are minute variations, but they indicate the extent of the critical scrutiny to which Griboedov now subjected Gore ot uma. At this late stage, freezing in his coach or delayed at the inn, he went back to the beginning and reconsidered the entire comedy. He did indeed make many alterations which could be described as 'polishing' the text; they tauten the music, sharpen the impact of the words without changing the sense. But there are also changes which give new depth to the characterization; they support my view that it was his revolutionary introduction of a painfully natural young man into an artificial form which influenced Griboedov in his
characterization of Sofiia and Molchalin, forcing him, on occasion, to reconsider and re-write.

**Act I, Scene 2.**

This contains only minor lexical and morphological changes. In MA, 1.28, for instance, 'Ох!' becomes 'Ой!' and 'эль' now reads 'эль'. 'Лица' replaces 'Лицы' in MA, 1.29; 'скромна' replaces 'скромны' in MA, 1.30. 'Прок-та', in MA, 1.41, now reads 'прок-от'.

**Act I, Scene 3.**

Sofiia's opening question in MA, 1.60 had first suggested little more than curiosity. 'Ну что ж ты, Лиза, хлопотала?' In GOU, 1.60 she implies a criticism. 'Что, Лиза, на тебя напало?' The word 'Шумишь...', with which, in this altered version, she and not Liza begins the following line, ends in a trail of dots. It becomes evident that she has heard - in a real world, how could she not? - the scene between Famusov and Liza. Liza is anxious to interrupt her; she adds her original pentameter to Sofiia's iambus, so that the line has six feet.

софия  что, лиза, на тебя напало?
Шумишь...
лиза  конечно, вам расстаться тяжело?

The sharing of the second line gives a natural impetus to the exchange, lacking in the original.

In MA, 1.68, Liza suggests that God himself could scarcely endure her terrible lies to Famusov. 'Насилу вынес Бог. Для нашей, сударь, чести, |
Liza, here, is less the neo-classical soubrette than the maid-servant who enjoys a certain freedom with her mistress but knows her place. In MA she is not accused by Sofiia of 'taking liberties'. 'Послушай, вольности ты ты лишней не бери' (GOU, 1.259) is one of many additions to GOU which contribute to the naturalness of Sofiia. Apart from three changes in the punctuation there are two further small alterations made to this third scene. Liza's 'Повыгляньте' in MA, 1.70 becomes the slightly more urgent 'взгляните-ка', and 'ходясь' in MA, 1.72 is replaced by 'ходьба'.

**Act I, Scene 4.**

Substantial alterations begin with this scene, which consists, almost entirely, of a dialogue between Sofiia and Famusov. The scene does contain, in addition to these, minor morphological and lexical changes, the latter including the use of the more vivid 'всю суматоху' to replace 'вину еще всю' in the line 'Пожалуй, на меня всю суматоху сложит' (GOU, 1.149). There are numerous changes to the punctuation, two lines re-written without any significant change in the sense, and two occasions on which lines are wittier for being re-written. Famusov's response to Molchalin's hesitant 'Сей час – с прогулки' is the unremarkable 'Брат Молчалин, | Гуляешь возле женских спален!' (MA, ll. 84-85). In GOU Griboedov makes Molchalin's lie more fluent by removing the dash and Famusov's altered comment funnier by removing the exclamation mark.
'Друг. Нельзя ли для прогулок | Подальше выбрать закоулок?' (GOU, II.84-85).

The second occasion involves MA, II.102-03. Famusov's words, 'Я, София Павловна, и сам встревожен очень, | И без того уж многим озабочен', are replaced by the lines 'Я, София Павловна, расстроен сам, день целый | Нет отдыха, мечусь как словно угорелый' (GOU, II.102-03).

Significant alterations have been made to Sofiia's account of her dream. Only four lines of the original remain. The forty-one-and-a-half lines spoken by Sofiia in MA, interrupted three times by Famusov, are cut to a total of twenty-two lines. The only interruption retained is the latter's comment 'Ах! матушка, не довершай удара! | Кто беден, тот тебе не пара.' (GOU ll.162-63) It occurs after only eight lines, whereas in MA Famusov appears, at first, not to recognize Molchalin. 'И милый человек, кто он?', he enquires. (MA l.168) Even when Sofiia incautiously includes the sad sounds of a piano and a flute in her dream and Famusov admits to having heard them himself, he fails to draw the obvious conclusions; he blames Liza for waking him: (Указывает на Лизу) 'К рассвету я не спал, а все она штукарка'. (MA l.179) In this version Famusov is either slow or devious, not qualities with which Griboedov subsequently endows him. Both these interruptions are cut.

The rhythm, too, of Sofiia's speech concerning her dream is altered to enhance the effect of hesitant invention. The original forty-one lines spoken by Sofiia, and the one line shared with Famusov, contain eight alexandrines, nineteen lines of pentameter, twelve of tetrameter, two of trimeter, one line of dimeter which Griboedov retains, and no example of monometer. The nineteen
pentametric lines in this much longer version give an unnatural stability to the rhythm, which in GOU Griboedov takes care to disturb.

In MA Sofiia, after Famusov's second interruption, really gets into her stride. Her speech of six lines immediately following it contains three consecutive lines of pentameter; her final fourteen-line speech on the dream contains a group of five consecutive lines of pentameter; the same speech contains four further lines of pentameter, two of these consecutive. Griboedov retains only three lines from this speech in their entirety; the last, which provides the rhyme for Famusov's next line, and the lines which occur in GOU as II.173-74, an alexandrine followed by a line of dimeter: 'Нас провожают стон, рев, хохот, свист чудовищ! | Он вслед кричит!...'. In the final version of Sofiia's dream there are never more than two consecutive lines of the same length. The original speech opens with a rather solid alexandrine, followed by two lines of pentameter, in which Griboedov rhymes 'траву' with 'наяву'. In the altered version he retains this rhyme but fragments the rhythm:

Позвольте… видите ль… сначала
Цветистый луг; и я искала
Траву
Какую-то, не вспомню наяву. MA, II. 154-57.

The last of these four lines, I.157 in GOU, is the only other to survive intact.

Act I, Scene 5.

Liza opens the scene. In MA she begins by stating the obvious - 'Ушли они' - and goes on to suggest that Sofiia may now yearn for Molchalin at her leisure: 'Госкуйте на досуге' (I. 230), she tells her mistress. In GOU Liza's first two lines are replaced by a couplet which reveals a more human mixture of
sarcasm, anger and fear; this is, as she says, 'уж не до смеха'. Her third line remains unchanged, as does her cynical fourth line, 'Трех не беда, молва не хороша'; Liza, like Famusov, can call evil good on occasion. But although she still delivers her somewhat artificial aphorism, her fear is real. In GOU she foresees her own fate all too clearly: 'Меня, Молчалина и всех с двора долой'.

Sofiia's reply (MA, ll.234-40) has been cut, to be replaced, in GOU, by ll.210-24, consisting of four-and-a-half lines spoken by Sofiia, three-and-a-half by Liza, and a further seven by Sofiia. Sofiia's original speech in MA begins with the words 'Предвижу я'. She is immediately aware of her father's likely reaction to the morning's events. Since he is 'несправедлив и недоверчив, скор' (MA, 1.238). In GOU Griboedov cuts the first two adjectives and substitutes the more appropriate 'брюзглив, неугомонен'. It is natural for Sofiia to feel that her father is constantly grumbling about her behaviour. In GOU, I.4.86 he complains that it is too early in the morning to receive a young man: 'Чуть из постели прыг, | С мужчиной! С молодым! – Занятье для девицы!'. In GOU, III.22.572, when his daughter ignores both his spoken instructions and his signals to move away from Chatskii, he comments angrily 'Гм, София! – Не глядит!' And in Act IV his worst fears are confirmed; the girl is no better than her mother:

Страшница!
Бесстыдница! где! с кем! Ни дать ни взять, она,
Как мать ее, покойница жена.

GOU IV.14.422-24

The nearest Famusov gets to an affectionate word with his daughter is the diminutive 'Сонюшка'! (GOU, I.4.189) But even that is soon followed, four lines later, by a critical reference to her dream: 'Повыкинь вздор из головы'. The adjective 'скор' remains. Whether deciding that Chatskii is a dangerous man
to know in II.2, or in league with his guests in IV.14, Famusov is inclined to be hasty, both in his temper and in his judgements.

In the last seven lines of this new material in Scene 5 Sofiia reveals a more adult anxiety. 'Подумаешь, как счастье своенравно!', she says (GOU, 1.218). Life, she has noticed, is unreliable. One may feel so safe - 'а горе ждет из-за угла'. This is more than a daughter's fear of a father's anger, all that is expressed in the original seven lines. (MA, II.234-40)

Three out of the next ten lines, Liza's speech beginning, in both versions, 'Вот то-to-c, моего вы глупого сужденья', (MA, 1.241; GOU, 1.225) have been altered without any real alteration to the sense. Two of the four lines which constitute Sofiia's reply are similarly changed. Three of Liza's next six lines beginning 'Da-c, правду молвит, не хитер', (MA, 1.258; GOU, 1.242) have been altered. But the changes made to the third line of this speech (MA, 1.260; GOU, 1.244) are illuminating. In MA Chatskii is described by Liza as 'весел и умен, и ловок и остр'. In GOU he is first of all 'чувствителен', then 'весел' and 'остер', but apparently neither 'умен' nor 'ловок'; the Chatskii we know is taking shape.

This first mention of Chatskii introduces a second major change to the scene. Of the next twenty-two lines in MA, the conversation between Liza and Sofiia concerning the rival merits of Chatskii and Molchalin, only one line survives: Sofiia's 'Делить со всяким можно смех'. (MA, 1.267; GOU, 1.251) The three lines which precede it are more hostile in MA than in the final version. In reply to Liza's 'A помнится, он не противен был', (MA, 1.263) Sofiia says of Chatskii:

Не потому ли, что так славно
Зловорвать умеет обо всех?
А мне оно забавно?
In GOU it is not his splendid ability ' зло говорить', but 'пересмеять', which Sofiia remembers; and instead of posing a rhetorical question demanding the answer 'no', the last of these three lines now declares the opposite to be the case - however scornfully: 'Болтает, шумит, мне забавно'. (GOU, 1.250)

In line 68 of MA Liza takes what the Sofiia of GOU would assuredly have considered a 'liberty': 'А чем был плох ваш прежний вкус-то?' Far from reproving her, Sofiia attempts to explain her preference for Molchalin. We hear 'какою ворожбой умел к ней в сердце влезть!', as Chatskii remarks in III.3.155. He is a crawling flatterer and - fatally for the seventeen-year-old Sofiia - underprivileged; an irresistible combination. Chatskii, on the other hand, 'всех в прихоть жертвует уму, | Что встреча с ним у нас, то ссора', Sofiia tells Liza. (MA, ll.284-85)

There is nothing in this earlier version of Chatskii's tears on parting from Sofiia; nothing of his premonition of loss; no reproof for the lesser liberty taken by Liza in GOU, that of mentioning the above; no attempt by Sofiia to repudiate charges of faithlessness; no account of his childish friendship developing into love. Nor is there any reference to Chatskii as 'красноречаiv' in MA. When Griboedov added this adjective to Sofiia's description of Chatskii in GOU (I.1.270) he had, of course, already completed one version of his comedy and knew that it was safe to do so. Whatever other qualities his hero possesses, it cannot be denied that he is eloquent.

There is no mention in MA of Chatskii's being fortunate in his friends, though one cannot help wondering, in GOU, where they are. Platon Mikhailich puts up very little resistance to the rumour of Chatskii's madness. Even Repetilov holds out longer against the weight of public opinion. Nor are we allowed to
know, in MA, just how ambivalent are Sofiia's feelings for Chatskii. 'Вот об себе задумал он высоко', she tells Liza in GOU, 1.272, all spite and hurt pride. And then cries, touchingly: 'Ax! Если любит кто кого, Зачем ума искать, и ездить так далеко?' There is something about that simple 'кто кого' which goes to the heart; Sofiia has lost any lingering resemblance to Molière's cold, clever Célimène.

The two texts converge in Liza's next three lines, (MA, ll.286-88; GOU, ll.276-78) as she attempts to divert Sofiia from this line of reasoning. 'Где носится', she begins, in both versions. Sofiia's reply reveals the hurt of her rejection; no doubt Chatskii will be happier in more amusing company, she says, and returns to the easier subject of Molchalin. In MA he offends no one, eschews pointed remarks, is without guile, scarcely opens his mouth all day and is as timid as a young girl. (MA, ll.291-93) These negative qualities make Molchalin seem more dull than virtuous. In GOU Griboedov cuts lines 291-94 and tells us that Molchalin - as Sofiia perceives him - is unselfish and disapproves of impudence: 'за других себя забыть готов, Враг дерзости'; (GOU, ll.281-82) these are characteristics more likely to inspire her sympathy. And while he remains helplessly shy, he is no longer 'сложно девушка несмелый'. There are limits even to Sofiia's gullibility.

The last two of these seven lines in praise of Molchalin remain unchanged. 'Сидим, а на дворе давно уж побелело, Как думаешь? Чем заняты?'. (MA, ll.295-96; GOU, ll.284-85) Liza, challenged to guess, still replies, 'Бог весть, Сударыня, мое ли это дело?' Griboedov knew a good line when he saw one. His alterations add to the naturalness of his characters; they are not allowed to deprive us of his wit.
Sofiia's account of a night spent with Molchalin, (MA, ll.298-303; GOU, ll.288-92) does not vary substantially. There is the predictable, hand-on-heart, mute protestation of love. True, Griboedov does add a Sentimentalist sigh to the second line of this speech in GOU. But there is one vital difference. It would seem that Griboedov was concerned to defend his Sofiia's reputation from just such remarks as Pushkin's, quoted above. Although Griboedov calls her his 'naughty girl' (negodiaka) in his second letter to Begichev from St Petersburg, in the July of 1824, in GOU he is careful to point out, in a newly inserted phrase, that Molchalin does not utter, on these occasions, a single over-familiar word: 'ни слова вольного'. (GOU, l.289) While in the new denouement Sofiia addresses four lines to Molchalin which are even more emphatic.

Пойдите. – Стоите, будьте рады,
Что при свиданиях со мной в ночной тиши,
Держались более вы робости во праве,
Чем даже днем, и при людях, и въяве.
GOU, IV.12.394-97

The last two lines of Sofiia's speech in Scene 5 describing her nights with Molchalin (MA, ll.302-03; GOU, ll.291-92) are worth comparing. They constitute Sofiia's response to Liza's laughter - laughter not required in any stage direction but referred to in the text. The earlier version reads: 'Смейсяся ты? С ума сошла? | Пора ли хохоту такому!' Liza's laughter, here, is merely ill-timed. In GOU the lines read: 'Смейсяся! Можно ли! Чем повод подала | Тебе я к хохоту такому?' (ll.91-92) Griboedov has cut even this casual reference to madness; he is saving the word for his third act. And Sofiia is now genuinely offended. Like a true Sentimentalist, she takes herself seriously.

The story of Sofiia's aunt which Liza offers as a more acceptable reason for her uncontrollable laughter is reproduced in its entirety in GOU (ll.293-98).
Sofiia's sad comment 'Вот так же обо мне потом заговорят' remains unchanged (GOU, l.299), as does Liza’s reply, with the exception of the words 'пыталась я' which now read 'хотела я'; so do Liza's last three lines of Scene 5, in which she maintains that her hilarity was merely an attempt to cheer her mistress.

**Act I, Scene 6.**

In true Classical tradition, this change of scene heralds the entrance of a new character. 'К вам-с Александр Андреич Чалский', a servant announces, and leaves. In GOU 'Чалский' has long since been renamed 'Чапский'; and the particle 'с', which seems here to impede the free run of the line, is dropped, a recognizable part of Griboedov’s polishing process.

**Act I, Scene 7.**

Here, at last, is the superfluous hero for whom we have been waiting. Our curiosity has been skilfully aroused; Sofiia and Liza have expressed their opposing views of this childhood sweetheart; whose side will we take?

Chatskii betrays himself with every word of his first speech. His inability to grasp the changes in Sofiia is, as Pushkin remarked, delightful and natural. It is also very funny. 'И говорит, как пишет!', Famusov comments. (GOU, II.2.125) Chatskii’s first line, identical in MA and GOU, bar the removal of an earlier comma after 'свет', sounds rehearsed. He probably jotted it down in the coach. 'Чуть свет уж на ногах! И я у ваших ног', he begins. If he had not found Sofiia 'уж на ногах' one feels that he would have had an alternative opening prepared.
Her response, of silent amazement, is clearly not the one he had anticipated. He abandons the high-romantic manner after only a sentence and complains, peevishly, that he deserves a better welcome. Especially after all that he has been through. By which he means the ordinary hazards of the longish coach journey from St Petersburg or somewhere equally distant. Four of the thirteen lines in this first speech of Chatskii's have been altered. In three of these the sense is preserved almost exactly; but in the second line, MA, 1.316, Chatskii asks, rather tamely, 'Вы от меня не ждали этой прыти?' He might almost be apologizing. In GOU the equivalent line (1.305) runs: 'Ну поцелуйте же, не ждали? говорите!' He surely does not expect her to kiss him, she could not possibly have been expecting him, and he has no intention of allowing her to speak. Not, at least, for another eleven lines. Here is the poetic, passionate, impetuous, irrational Chatskii. Sofiia's first words, when she is at last allowed to interrupt him, must constitute one of the most joyous put-downs in literature. 'Ах! Чашкий, я вам очень рада', she says. We will never again be able to take him quite seriously. And yet our sympathy is instantly engaged. Here is an intelligent young man, getting it wrong. Instead of feeling his way into the new situation he plunges in recklessly with his complaints, his grievances, his reproaches. Finally even Liza feels obliged to take a hand. If only he had heard them, not five minutes ago. 'Сударыня, скажите сами', she urges her mistress. (MA 1.337; GOU 1.326) Presumably Sofiia is to devise some comforting lie; Liza can hardly hope that she will repeat the views on Chatskii which she expressed in I.5. II.248-51 of GOU:

Что помнится? Он славно  
Пересмеять умеет всех;  
Болтает, шутит, мне забавно;  
Делить со всяким можно смех.
The neo-classical heroine's role is to be as beautiful as her servant is clever. To be won like a game, taken like a fortress. Griboedov displays a positively neo-classical superficiality in most of his relations with women. In a letter to Count I.F. Paskevich he even refers to his new young wife as 'my Kars'; though perhaps only so that he may add 'and I hastened to take her as speedily as Your Highness has taken so many fortresses'. Sofiia, not in fact 'уж на норах' because she has been up all night, suddenly and unexpectedly under attack, begins to show signs of humanity. Her reply, a speech of six lines, is substantially re-written in GOU (l.327-32). 'Не можете мне сделать вы упрека' she says defensively, and spins him an unlikely tale about asking any passing stranger - even a sailor, she adds, over-egging the pudding - 'Что не встречал ли где вас в почтовой карете?'. (MA, l.343) As Piksanov points out, the final version avoids the odd stress on the last syllable of 'почтой', necessary here to the iambic metre, by placing 'вас' between 'почтой' and 'капеть'. The sense is the same; Sofiia is telling Chatskii what he wants to hear and Chatskii knows it. 'Положите, что так', he replies. 'Блажен кто верует, тепло ему на свете!'. (GOU ll.333-34) This bitter little joke is the measure of his disappointment.

Now he abandons reproach and takes another wrong turning. Instead of appreciating the predictable changes in Sofiia, from fourteen-year-old schoolgirl to seventeen-year-old beauty, he regrets their lost innocence, in a speech which is changed only by the substitution of 'и' for 'по' in GOU, l.340 and 'а тут' for 'или' at the beginning of l.341. 'Ребячество!', Sofiia tells him. A less self-absorbed young man might have detected a certain impatience with this new direction. But no, childishness, it seems, is the very thing he values. Sofiia is merely pretending not to know that she is beautiful.
Chatskii feels able to tell her father that Sofiia has become a beauty. 'Как хороша!', he exclaims, as he leaves at the end of Scene 9. But he has not the sense to tell Sofiia herself. Or rather, he manages to phrase his compliment in such a way that it can only be received as an insult. It is his sincerity which makes him clumsy. He is perfectly capable of complimenting Natal'ia Dmitrievna on her improved looks in III.5.232-35 because they mean so little to him. Though it has to be said that he does so with a characteristic lack of caution, quite failing to consider that, after an absence of three years, the lady may well be married and the compliment inappropriate. But then, as Griboedov remarks of himself, in a letter to Begichev, 'I appear considerably more worldly than, in fact, I am.'

Is Sofiia in love? is Chatskii's next question. There is to be no beating about the bush. He demands to know. 'Без думы, полноте смущаться'. (MA, l.360; GOU, l.349) Sofiia is, by now, almost completely antagonized. In MA her protest reads 'Как не смутиться мне? От вас нет оборон, | Вы обзераете меня со всех сторон.' (MA, II.361-62) In GOU the lines are re-written. 'Да хоть кого смутят | Вопросы быстрые и любопытный взгляд...', Sofiia says. Griboedov allows her angry couplet to surge unpunctuated into a trail of dots (II.350-51); the second line is already twice as long as the first and seems likely to have been longer but for Chatskii's interruption. The rhythm conveys the emotion. In MA the matching hexameters, their flow checked by a question-mark and a comma, do not.

Chatskii's reply to this couplet (MA, II.363-67; GOU, II.352-56) remains unchanged; it is Sofiia's character which Griboedov develops in this series of radical alterations. Unless, of course, she is required to provide the 'feed-line' for one of Griboedov's witticisms; she must still speak the lines 'Тоненье на
Moscow. That means seeing the light! Where else?’, so that Chatskii may deliver his bon mot 'Где нас нет'. (MA, ll. 368-69; GOU, ll. 357-58)

Chatskii, apparently intent on completing the process of Sofiia's alienation, commences what she describes as his 'Гонение на Москву'. (MA, ll. 368; GOU, ll. 357) And there is no stopping him. Even when she manages to suggest, while he pauses for breath after misquoting Derzhavin, that if he wishes to gossip he should get together with her 'auntie'.

It is an impressive tirade. The alterations, here, are of a different nature. Griboedov makes several diplomatic changes. 'Миритель спорщиков, и спорит так, что любо' (MA, l. 371) is replaced by the more neutral line 'Старинный, верный член до гроба'. (GOU, l. 360) Lines 373-77 in MA describing a character as 'турок или грек' are cut. They are replaced by lines 363-66 in GOU, lines which mock his appearance as 'черномазенький, на ножках журавлиных' but refrain from identifying him as possibly 'князь? Или граф?' The description of the German teacher in MA contains a reference to a tonsure; this ecclesiastical feature is cut. So, too, is the suggestion that the likely members of Griboedov's audience might unknowingly employ stokers to teach their offspring; this joke borrowed from Fonvizin is dropped. Even minute changes distance the audience. 'Сыщем,' 'постранствуем' and 'воротимся' are given the impersonal form of 'сыщешь', etc.; (MA, lines 395-96; GOU, lines 384-85) while in referring to the probability of Molchalin's future success, Griboedov removes the inclusive 'у нас' from MA, line 440. He was, after all, on his way to St Petersburg to try his luck with the censors.

In two instances he strengthens Chatskii's attack. 'Что ничего нет выше немца' (MA, l.415) is replaced by the more extreme 'Что нам без немцев нет
One remembers poor Hamburger, Griboedov's travelling companion, induced to sign himself 'Амбургев'. A second change of this type occurs in Chatskii's description of Molchalin begging copies of the latest songs. MA has the neutral 'Увидит, скажет тут: "Пожалуйте написать" (l. 439). GOU l. 424 begins with the more offensive 'увидит, пристает'. On the other hand, Griboedov holds his fire on the subject of the French. He cuts a total of four lines from Chatskii's speech, l. 420-29 in MA:

[А Гильоме,] куда глаза ни обратит,
Кто против легкости волшебной устоит?
Живем мы так давно, так дружно, так семейно
Со всяким вертуном залетным из-за Рейна
 Чтоб не забыть. [Здесь нынче тон каков?]

The two bracketed half-lines now form 1.411 in GOU. The pace is preserved; and Chatskii saves his anger for the Frenchman from Bordeaux in Act III.

The word 'посекретней' is added at the end of 1.387 in MA, 'За ширмами в одной из комнат', so that 1.389, 'В знак, что зимою лето помнят', may be replaced by the lyrical 'Певец зимой погоды летней'. (GOU, l. 378) And in MA 1.455 Griboedov changes the order of the words 'ужли мио слова', perhaps to separate the rhyming 'и' sounds in a line which is otherwise identical to 'Послушайте, ужли слова мои все колки?' (GOU, 1.440)

Two separate lines in Scene 7 are assigned to different characters in GOU. Griboedov gives the first of these, MA, 1.431, there spoken by Sofiia, to Liza. Chatskii, in the last two lines of the speech concerning Gil'ome quoted above, refers to 'смешенье языков | Французского с нижегородским'. (MA, 1.428)

The exchange which follows was originally between Sofiia and Chatskii:

сопия Смесь языков?
чаксый Два двух, без этого нельзя ж.
сопия Но мудрецо из них один скроить, как ваш.
It hardly seems likely that Liza the house-serf would interrupt the highly educated Chatskii to make a joke about the use of language. But Chatskii is about to attack Molchalin and Sofiia is about to lose her temper; there is no one else on stage to whom Griboedov can give the line. So Liza it is who delivers the decidedly uppity 'Но мудрено из них один скрыть, как ваш'. (MA, 1.416) Chatskii's reply is the same in both versions. 'По крайней мере, не надутый', he says, and proceeds to the one subject he should avoid.

One cannot help loving the man. So earnestly destroying all his hopes and so unaware of it. When will he understand? Not before he has committed the final indiscretion. 'А разве нет времен, | Что я Молчалина глупее?', he quips, introducing this fatal line of argument as if it were a happy reductio ad absurdum. Sofiia snaps.

сophia (в сторону) Не человек, змея!
Громко и принужденно
Хочу у вас спросить:
Случалось ли, чтоб вы, смеясь? или в печали?
Ошибкаю? добро о ком-нибудь сказали?
Хоть не теперь, а в детстве, может быть,
Когда пора была безвреднейшим забавам.

MA, II. 442-46

But it is Chatskii, not Sofiia, who yearns for and has already referred to the harmless amusements' of their lost childhood. Griboedov takes the last line away from Sofiia, makes it even more gentle, and gives it to Chatskii. 'Когда все мягко так? И нежно, и незрело?', he asks her. (GOU, 1.431) It does not change what we already know of Chatskii, but it gives Sofiia's speech a harder edge of anger; her reference to childhood, now, is bitterly sarcastic. Apart from the transposition of the words 'мои слова' mentioned above, and the necessary alteration in Chatskii's next line, where 'Вот доброты черта вам' (MA, 1.447) is replaced by 'вот доброе вам дело', (GOU, 1.432) providing the rhyme for the
newly introduced 'незрело', the rest of his speech and Sofiia's reply remain unchanged.

Sofiia's final words to Chatskii in Scene 7 recall a moment in Molodye suprugi. 'Хоть ныне умереть я за него готова', El'mira cries, speaking of her husband in I.5. Safir will have none of this Sentimentalist excess. 'Не надо умирать', he points out. 'Приличней средство есть.' In GOU it is Chatskii who offers the supreme sacrifice: 'Белите ж мне в огонь: пойду как на обед.' 'Да, хорошо — сгорите, если ж нет?', Sofiia asks him. (lines 445-46) If he burns, all well and good; but if he does not, she will still have to put up with his offensive behaviour. As last words go, these are rightly famous. This Sofiia is indeed remote from those passive Milanas and Milenas of the neo-classical tradition.

The major changes discussed above are those made to the writing of Sofiia as her relationship with Chatskii develops; apart from the transposition of the two words 'молодым людям' in a speech of Famusov's, (MA, 1.471; GOU, 1.456) and the replacement of 'Е-чай' by 'Я чай' in the last line of the same speech, there are no further alterations to the text of Act I after her exit in Scene 8. The twenty-nine lines of Scene 9, Chatskii's scene with Famusov, and Scene 10, Famusov's final monologue, remain unchanged.

ACT TWO

Chatskii is no fool; but his love is not the sort to induce clarity of vision. He loves his idea of Sofiia and he is deeply hurt by her failure to conform to it. 'И все-таки я вас без памяти люблю', he has assured her. (MA, 1.454; GOU,
1.439) He loves her in spite of what she has become, with a kind of wilful blindness that makes him insensitive to all feelings but his own. He has his rational moments, however. Left alone on stage in II.4. (MA, ll.181-88; GOU, ll.180-87) he admits that Sofiia's behaviour is scarcely encouraging. 'Как здесь бы ей не быть!!..', (MA, l. 184; GOU, l. 183) he asks himself, and the line merits two of Griboedov’s exclamation marks. Could she really consider this Skalozub? For the space of two short lines Chatskii faces reality: 'Ах! тот скажи любви конец, | Кто на три года вдаль уедет.' (MA, ll. 187-88; GOU, ll. 186-87)

The only changes to the text in this seven-line monologue are in its second and third lines; in MA, l.182 reads 'А София? – видно, нездорова', and 'чужого', at the end of the following line, is spelt 'чужова' - presumably in the interests of an eye-rhyme. GOU (l.181) has 'А София? – Нет ли впрямь тут жениха какого?' and 'чужого' is given in this more neutral form. Chatskii expresses his suspicions regarding a possible fiancé immediately, and more directly; there is no 'evident illness' to excuse Sofiia's absence. The new line, added to the original anxious reference to Skalozub, reinforces the bitterness of Chatskii's final couplet. However, this is not the moment for introspection. The second act, planned under the influence of Isaiah, is to be the platform for the castigation of Moscow society. The content of its monologues has been discussed above; once these have been declaimed our attention is swiftly re-directed, in I.7, to the three young people whose actions and reactions unite the disparate elements of this complex comedy: Chatskii, Sofiia and Molchalin.
Act II, Scene 7.

Although Sofiia and Chatskii are on stage together, there is no opportunity for communication between them; Sofiia runs to the window, cries 'Ах! Боже мой! упал, убился!'; and faints. Griboedov makes no alterations to this scene, apart from five changes to the punctuation.

Act II, Scene 8.

One small alteration was made to Scene 8 of MA. Griboedov cut the line 'Дай грудь ей распусту вольнее' (MA, 1.416) and substituted the more delicate 'Шнуровку отпустить вольнее'. (GOU, 1.421) A change made even earlier was that suggested by Viazemskii and adopted by Griboedov. The words 'Для компании?' (MA, 1.447; GOU, 1.452) were originally spoken by Chatskii. The first version of line 447 in MA ran 'Желал бы с ним убиться для компании'. Viazemskii thought it inappropriate for Chatskii, in love, to employ this 'vulgar expression'; it would be better to give the line to Liza. Griboedov did just that, by dividing the line with a full-stop. 'And this full-stop', Viazemskii writes, 'is my inalienable property in Griboedov’s immortal comedy of genius. In consequence, a scarcely noticeable, homeopathic grain of it falls to my share, which I have the honour to declare to our brokers for immortal works of genius.' This division of the line is retained in Gore ot uma.23
Act II, Scene 9.

Scene 9 illustrates very clearly the focus of Griboedov's attention in these numerous alterations. Of Skalozub's sixteen lines, one word is changed; 'фальшивая', the writer's original choice of adjective for 'гревора', is restored, replacing 'фамильная'. (MA, 1.451; GOU, 1.457) Molchalin's one line remains unaltered. Three of Chatskii's five lines are re-written, and ten of Sofiia's twelve.

The first alteration to Sofiia's lines is a very minor one. She has seen that Molchalin is only slightly injured; Griboedov changes 'Я чувствую, что из пустого' to 'Ах! очень вижу, из пустого'. But Sofiia's attempt to explain her excessive concern for Molchalin is re-written in its entirety. Griboedov had already reduced his original thirteen lines of explanation to the seven in MA (ll.460-66). Her reaction to everything, she says, in this even earlier version, veers irrationally between terror and indifference. Now she is a recklessly brave horsewoman, now prepared to run from the house because 'someone' is thrown. In MA she is prepared to gallop off after a fall, 'Но за других во мне души нет', a line which still rhymes, not very elegantly, with 'лошадь скинет'. In GOU Sofiia is not thrown from her horse - her carriage overturns. And she no longer rhymes 'скинет' with 'души нет'. The language is more natural, the speech still as unconvincing as Griboedov surely intended it to be. The last line now reads 'Хоть незнакомый мне, до этого нет дела', which necessitates a change in Chatskii's following couplet; its second line now provides the rhyme for 'дела': 'Что раз о ком-то пожалела!'
Of the last brief exchange between Sofiia and Chatskii which concludes this scene (MA, ll.478-82), three lines spoken by the former and two by the latter, only one remains. Sofiia's 'Ax! Александр Андреич, вот'. In MA her next two lines read 'К ее искателям кобы себя причли вы? - | Ведь вы на помощь топильны'. (MA, ll. 478-80) In GOU the lines are quite as malicious but a little more sophisticated: 'Явitezь вы вполне великолушны, | К несчастью ближнего вы так неравнодушны'. (GOU, ll. 484-85) Chatskii's reply is completely rewritten. The original two lines (MA, ll.481-82) read: 'Да-с, опыт давича я показал на вас | Смиреник погубил, а я от смерти спас'. Here he places himself in opposition to Molchalin; the speech in GOU (ll.486-89), extended now to four lines, is truer to the Chatskii we know. He brought her back to life - 'Не знаю для кого', he says, and we believe him.

Act II, Scene 10

The scene, a purely social exchange between Sofiia and Skalozub, is unaltered, apart from two changes to the punctuation.

Act II, Scene 11

Molchalin's line 'Чтоб дорого не заплатить за это' (MA 1.514) is made more explicit; now he refers directly to Sofiia's dangerous frankness: 'Не повредила бы нам откровенность эта'. (GOU, 1.521) Sofiia's over-reaction to Molchalin's slight injury, the dramatization of an insignificant event, is a familiar target for such an anti-Sentimentalist as Griboedov. Apart from this one line he
only changes the text of the scene between Sofiia, Liza and Molchalin when Chatskii is mentioned. Liza advises Sofiia. Both Skalozub and Chatskii are at present with the master. She should 'flutter in', all cheerful and carefree, to dispel suspicion. In MA she adds to this advice, that Sofiia should sit with Chatskii, alone, and by means of 'innocent endearments, kind words', give him hope. Chatskii, in his final monologue, accuses Sofiia of just such behaviour. 'Зачем меня надеждой завлекли?', he cries. (GOU, IV.14.473)

If there is one sin of which Sofiia cannot be accused, it is that of offering Chatskii the slightest hope. In MA, ll.522-25 Liza's lines read:

Таков и Чадский, вы бы с ним
Особняком подсели: между
Невинных ласок, милых слов…
Ему бы подали надежду.

The lines are cut. The equivalent passage in GOU, ll.529-32, reads:

И Александр Андреич, с ним
О прежних днях, о тех проказах
Поразвернитесь-ка в рассказах,
Улыбочка и пара слов.

An altogether more innocent course of action.

Act II, Scene 12.

Changes made to this scene, in which Molchalin attempts to flirt with Liza and is firmly put in his place, are limited to the replacement of 'зеркальце' by 'зеркальце' (MA, I.539; GOU, I.546) and of the verb 'сыму' by 'сниму', used by Molchalin with reference to his bandage. (MA, I.550; GOU, I.557) There are three changes of punctuation. In addition to which, Molchalin, in the final line of the scene, offers to reveal to Liza not 'тайну всю', but 'правду всю'. She appears
to ignore his invitation, given in the penultimate line: 'Приди в обед, побудь со
мною'. Molchalin's 'truth' is only to be revealed in the new denouement.

Act II, Scene 13.

In the four lines of this scene, spoken by Sofiia, 'у батюшке' gives way to the more conventional 'у батюшки', and a comma is inserted after 'Скажи Молчалину'.

Act II, Scene 14.

Griboedov makes no alteration to Liza's four lines; they still sound like a curtain-speech in a neo-classical comedy.

Грибоедов не вносит никаких изменений в четыре строки Лизы; они звучат так, как и в классической комедии.

Hy! люди в здешней стороне!
Она к нему, а он ко мне,
А я... одна лишь я любви до смерти трушу.
А как не полюбить буфетчика Петрушку!
MA, ll. 557-60; GOU, ll. 564-67.

Chatskii's lack of guile is revealed in this act as absolute. One can understand why Griboedov removed the word 'ловок' from Liza's description of him. He does not care about Molchalin and he will not pretend that he does. He suffers only where he loves. Once Sofiia is restored to consciousness he makes no effort to conceal his indifference to Molchalin's plight. He will not leave her alone, without help, in order to assist the young secretary. Infuriated, she hits out wildly and, meaning only to hurt, comes close to the truth: 'Да, правда, не свои беды для вас забавы'. (MA, l.439; GOU, l.444) Then, going beyond the limits of both comedy and acceptable behaviour, she tells the son 'Андрея Ильича
покойного', as Famusov introduces him in II.5, (MA, 1.323; GOU, 1.330) 'Отец родной убейся, все равно'. Had Chatskii loved this woman he would surely have understood that hope, for him, was at an end; but the Sofiia he loves, the woman he holds in his imagination, is scarcely touched by all of this. As Proust remarks, 'Our love becomes immense, and we never dream how small a place in it the real woman occupies'.

Chatskii observes Sofiia's reactions to Molchalin's fall. He draws the correct conclusion. 'Так можно только ощутить, | Когда лишается единственного друга' (MA, II.8, ll. 444-45; GOU, II.8, ll. 449-50). But it has no reality for him because, however well he understands it, he does not feel it. As he says of himself in I.7, (MA, 1.457; GOU, 1.442) 'ум с сердцем не в ладу'.

He watches Molchalin enter with bandaged hand, he notes that Sofiia avoids speaking to the invalid, he hears her maintain that while she herself knows no fear she is always terrified when the slightest disaster befalls others. 'Хоть незнакомый мне' (II.7.471) she adds, trying to disclaim any special closeness to Molchalin. Chatskii mocks the subterfuge - 'Прошенья просит у него, | Что раз о ком-то пожалела!' (II.7.472-73) - without seeming to interpret it. He stands in silence while Skalozub tells his spiteful anecdote about Princess Lasova, relevant only in so far as someone falls from a horse. He hears out Sofiia's even more spiteful comment. The princess needs a husband. Here is his chance to show his generosity - he does so love his neighbour. 'Да-с', he says, coldly (l. 486). He is just beginning to doubt that Sofiia loves him. But he is by no means sure that she does not. 'Не знаю для кого, но вас я воскресил' (l. 489), he says. Then he takes his hat and leaves. This much optimism is, in the
circumstances, both heroic and obstinate. These are qualities which would prove as fatal for Chatskii as they were, finally, for his creator.

ACT III

The first three scenes of Act III are central to the development of Griboedov’s love-story; the triangular relationship between Chatskii, Sofiia and Molchalin. They could well have formed a separate act. The intimate, dialogic nature of these scenes changes sharply at the beginning of Scene 4, when the orders given by a servant to his underlings introduce the kaleidoscopic variety of the ball-scene, which occupies the remainder of the third act. As Piksanov says, 'the third act is clearly divided into two parts'. The very full stage-directions at the head of Scene 4 lend support to this idea. Thus divided, the comedy would have conformed to the classical five-act structure. By this stage in the writing and re-writing of the play the character of the relationship between Chatskii and Sofiia is well established. The first version of these last two acts was written, not in exile, but in or near Moscow. Griboedov's alterations to them more nearly match his description of them in his letter to Begichev as achieving rhymes 'smooth as glass'. Some of these alterations seem purely concerned with the music of the language; but some of them do add, however slightly, to our understanding of the characters.
Act III, Scene 1.

Two of Sofiia's lines are altered in this scene; ten of Chatskii's. Sofiia, in reply to his question, 'Кто более вам мил?', completes МА, 1.15 with the comment 'Вот спросы пречудные'. Griboedov softens this rather callous remark. Line 15 in GOU now reads 'Есть многие, родные'. Just a warm-hearted family girl, is her unlikely claim. The only other change made to Sofiia's lines in this scene occurs in МА, 1.86. 'Нельзя назвать его' becomes, in GOU, 1.86, 'Случись кому назвать его'. Griboedov frequently shortens a line, to speed the pace or intensify the message; when he adds a foot, as in this case, there has to be a reason. Here the alteration appears to widen the scope of Sofiia's complaint. Not only is it impossible for her to mention Molchalin's name without attracting Chatskii's 'грубость колкостей'; the result is the same should anyone chance to do so.

The changes to Chatskii's lines begin with the long, impassioned and lyrical speech in which he declares himself to be Sofiia's lover, her friend, her brother; the speech in which, time and again, he tries - and fails - to conceal his disbelief in the possibility of Sofiia's loving Molchalin. 'Раз в жизни притворюсь', he promises himself, and launches into forty of the most beautiful, and the funniest lines in the comedy. The beauty is there to be heard; the humour lies in the failure.

'С Молчалиным мирюсь я, виноват', Chatskii says (МА, 1.34). Griboedov replaces this with 'Перед Молчалиным не прав я, виноват'. (GOU, 1.34). Chatskii still admits himself to be guilty of injustice to Molchalin, but there is to be no question of reconciliation. As he makes clear in GOU, 1.55, the man
belongs to a different social group. 'Конечно мирен, все такие не резвы.' 'Все такие.' That sort. Molchalin is not someone with whom he is prepared to communicate on equal terms, as becomes evident in Scene 3. MA, 1.55 runs 'Конечно, смирен, тих, безгласное травы', an entertaining description of Molchalin, but one less revealing of Chatskii’s disdain.

Nevertheless. Perhaps he really has changed, Chatskii begins. The temptation is irresistible. 'Есть на земле такие превращенья', he continues. 'Правлений, климатов, и правов, и умов.' In MA, II.38-39 he refers to 'люди важные, слыли за простяков, | Известных по газетам'. The equivalent lines in GOU are more direct and more specific. These same important people 'слыли за дураков: | Иной по армии, иной плохим поэтом, | Иной...' (II.38-40). The texts merge as Griboedov, attempting to avoid actual slander, grafts on MA, 1.40, beginning 'Боюсь назвать' The final version now runs:

Иной…Боюсь назвать, но признано всем светом,
Особенно в последние годы,
Что стали умны хоть куда.

Chatskii, it seems, is no more capable of refraining from an inopportune witticism than was Griboedov. This is not the direction he had intended to take. He tries again. 'Не в этом подлежит Молчалин укоризне' (MA, 1.43). This is altogether too generous. Griboedov changes the line; now Chatskii damns with excessive praise. 'Пускай в Молчалине ум бойкий, гений смелый', he proposes. (GOU, 1.43) 'But', he continues, in both versions, and sets about contrasting his own fiery passion unfavourably with the passivity of Molchalin:

Но есть ли в нем та страсть? то чувство? пылкость та?
Чтоб кроме вас ему все в жизни
Казалось прах и смех? дым, мелочь и тщета?

MA, II.44-46
Polishing away, Griboedov replaces 'все в жизни' with the more extreme, more romantic 'мир целый', and shortens the following line. The original alexandrine with a question-mark wedged in its caesura now reads: 'Казался прах и суета?', a line all the better for being two feet shorter (GOU, I.46).

The comma and the dash in GOU, II.49-50 are later additions. 'Чтоб мыслям были всем, и всем его делам | Душою — вы? вам утожденье?...'. Griboedov was evidently not prepared to leave these expressive pauses to the discretion of the actor.

The difference between MA, I.53 is one of aspect. In the former Chatskii says of his suffering as a lover: 'Я б не желал и личному врагу'; the latter reads: 'Не пожелал бы я и личному врагу'. The line is longer by a foot, but the statement - and the suffering - gain in intensity.

In both versions of this speech Chatskii blames Sofiia for encouraging Molchalin. But MA, I.61 becomes less colloquial. 'Не на его душе, весь грех на вашей шее...', he tells her. In GOU the line runs 'Не грешен он ни в чем, вы во сто раз грешнее'. Chatskii makes the same extreme accusation more formally, and at the same time manages to avoid any mention of Molchalin's soul.

Catching himself straying from the path he has determined to follow, Chatskii tries again. 'Нет! нет! пускай умэн, час от часу умнее', he says, retracing his steps. (MA, I.63; GOU, I.63) His very next sentence, however, begins with another 'but'. 'Но вас он стоит ли?' As a 'once in a lifetime' attempt to conceal his true opinion of Molchalin, this speech is not a success.

Chatskii concludes his profession of love for Sofiia by making his first, dangerous mention of madness. The idea does not come to Sofiia 'как с облаков',
as Famusov says of Chatskii; (I.9.450) Chatskii gives it to her. Let Sofiia convince him that Molchalin is worthy of her, 'Потом, | От сумасшествия могу я остерегаться', he says. (MA, I. 69) Those words stand in GOU. It is the following two lines which are altered. In MA Chatskii's speech ends with the lines:

По прежнему пущусь во все края глядеть,  
Искать хоть не любви, но буду я уметь  
Теряться по свету, забыться и развлечься.  

MA, II.71-72

The final one-and-a-half lines remain, but the passage now begins: 'Пущусь подалее простить, охолодеть, | Не думать о любви'. In MA Chatskii will not be searching for love. In GOU he makes a more reckless claim; he will become sufficiently cold to dismiss the subject from his mind altogether. One can see that Sofiia is not convinced. The idea of madness is taking root in the text. 'Вот нехотя с ума свела', she tells herself, more exasperated than sympathetic.

She could hardly make her preference clearer. Yes, she was concerned for Molchalin; it had evidently not occurred to Chatskii that he might show goodwill towards everyone, without distinction. But, she continues. 'Но, может, истина в догадках ваших есть'. (MA/GOU, I.80) What if she does love Molchalin? Why is he so openly hostile to everyone, even to the most humble. One has only to name him, she says, not naming him. Град колкостей и шуток ваших грянет. | Шутить! И век шутить! Как вас не это станет!’. (MA/GOU, II.87-88)

Chatskii’s ability to miss the point is quite wonderful. He ignores the 'but' and responds only to Sofiia’s final exclamation. Fools may amuse him, but more frequently they bore him, he replies. Sofiia cannot be accused of misleading Chatskii. All that, she says, applies to other people. Molchalin would hardly bore Chatskii 'Когда б сошлись короче с ним'. (MA/GOU, I.95) Again, it is Sofiia's
last remark on which Chatskii fastens, illustrating one of the most convincing features of Griboedov's dialogue. Reasoned argument is more easily followed in print; spoken ideas tend to replace one another. Chatskii forgets to deny that he could ever find Molchalin interesting, and responds only to the word 'короche'. 'За чем же вы его так коротко узнали?', he says (с ясаром). (MA/GOU, 1.96)

Griboedov rightly considered that the remainder of this scene could scarcely be improved. Sofiia extols the virtues of Molchalin and Chatskii draws the wrong conclusions. It emerges that Molchalin has been working for Famusov for the past three years, the exact length of Chatskii's absence. During which time he has endeared himself to everyone in the house. She defends him proudly, as submissive and self-sacrificing; foregoing his own pleasures in order to make a fourth at cards with the elderly. 'Целый день играет! | Молчит, когда его бранят!', (MA/GOU, III.1.108-09) Chatskii says in disgust. One is reminded of Griboedov's attitude towards Zagoskin, another impecunious young man with a career to make. 'Она его не уважает', Chatskii says (в сторону). (MA/GOU, 1.110)

Of course, Sofiia continues, going in to the attack, he does not have the kind of intelligence that some see as the mark of genius, and some (herself among them, she implies) as a perfect plague. The kind that attacks society in order to attract attention, favourable or not. But does this kind of intelligence make for a happy family, she wishes to know. 'Сатира и мораль, смысл этого всего?', Chatskii wonders. Does he really not understand? Apparently not. 'Она не ставит в грош его', he concludes (в сторону). (MA/GOU, ll.117-18)

Sofiia returns to the praise of Molchalin. Having listed several of the passive qualities which Chatskii despises, she tells him defiantly, 'Вот я за что
его люблю'. It could not be more plainly stated. 'Шалит, она его не любит',
Chatskii reassures himself in another 'aside'. Confident in this piece of wilful
self-deception, he dismisses the subject of Molchalin and sets about deriding
Skalozub. His description of the colonel, spread over four, shorter lines, is more
taut, wittier in GOU. Compare:

Но Скалозуб? [sic] вот человек с душой,
Люблю я рост его большой,
Геройский голос – бас, звучнее барабана.

MA, ll.129-31

with the equivalent passage:

Но Скалозуб? Вот загляденье:
За армию стоит горой,
И прямизною стана,
Лицом и голосом герой...

GOU, ll.128-31

'Герой' replaces 'геройский' in this final version, so that Sofiia does not need to
supply the noun in order to make sense of her reply; in MA her line reads
'Герой!... не моего романа.' In GOU Chatskii's speech does not come to a halt
with an alexandrine; it is interrupted by Sofiia, who responds here to his final
word with the acid 'Не моего романа'. 'Не вашего?', he says, 'кто разгадает
вас?' Not, it would seem, Chatskii.

Act III, Scene 2.

This short scene remains almost unchanged. Liza whispers to her mistress
that Molchalin is on his way to her room, Sofiia invents a hairdresser with
rapidly cooling tongs and Chatskii urges: 'Пусть студит их!'; or, in GOU, the
more extreme measure, 'Пускай себе...'. (MA/GOU, l.138) Sofiia accepts
neither suggestion. 'Нельзя, ждем на вечер гостей.' Chatskii completes the scene in a speech which begins in a mood of acute nostalgia and ends with a jibe at the expense of both his potential rivals. As a member of the English Club, 'Я там дни целые пожертвую молве | Про ум Молчалина, про душу Скалозуба'. Or, as the name is still spelled in MA, 'Skalazub'. (MA/GOU, ll.147-48) Like Griboedov, Chatskii has too strong a sense of the ridiculous to take anyone seriously but himself.

Only one line of this speech receives attention. 'Войду, не засижусь, вздохну минуты две'. (MA, l.145) Griboedov transposes 'Войду, не засижусь'. Then he replaces 'войду', colloquial in this sense, with 'войду', and the word 'вздохну' with 'всего'; this last, perhaps, because l.143 already contains the phrase 'мне отдохнуть дадут'. GOU, l.145 reads: 'Не засижусь, войду, всего минуты две'. The result is, as Griboedov would - and did - say, 'smooth as glass'.

Act III, Scene 3.

In Act I, Scene 3, the scene in which Molchalin makes his first entrance, he says nothing. In Scene 4 he speaks a series of half-lines in his attempt to allay Famusov's suspicion; only when Famusov appears to believe that he is there 'с бумагами-с' does he risk three whole lines, embroidering the theme of papers requiring attention. In Scene 5 we see him through Sofiia's eyes, in Scene 6 through Chatskii's.

In Act II, Scene 7, we learn that Molchalin, in Skalozub's view at least, is 'жалкий же ездок', (l. 416) a lack of aptitude with which Griboedov should surely have felt some sympathy. When he appears, bandaged, in Scene 9, his one
line, spoken to Sofiia, is suitably self-effacing: 'Я вас перепугал, простите, ради Бора'. (II.9.458) His contribution to Scene 11, unlike Sofiia's spontaneous outpouring of reproach and anxiety, is limited to five separate lines - four statements and a question. His hand is no longer painful. Sofiia is too frank. May not this frankness be harmful to them both? 'Ах! злы языки страшнее пистолета', (II.11.528) a truth of which Griboedov had had bitter experience, and the line of cowardly diplomacy: 'Я вам советовать не смею'. (II.11.534) Alone with Liza in Scene 12, his approach to the lower orders is revealed as simple and direct; when bribery fails, he tries a plea for sympathy and the lure of a secret.

Now, alone on stage with Chatskii in Act III, Scene 3, he displays his skill in dealing with a member of the class to which he aspires to belong. Chatskii makes no attempt to conceal his derision.

Ax! Софья! Неужли Молчалин избран ей!
А чем не муж? Ума в нем только мало;
Но чтоб иметь детей,
Кому ума не доставало?

MA/GOU, ll.149-52

he says, seeing Molchalin approaching.

Griboedov has made few changes to this scene. But MA, ll.184-91, the eight lines in which Molchalin speaks of Tat'iana Dmitrievna, have been cut. Although referred to in GOU as Tat'iana Iur'evna (she has exchanged patronymics with Natal'ia Dmitrievna, who appears in MA as Natal'ia Iur'evna), she is less easily identified as Praskov'ia Iur'evna Kologrivova.28 In GOU, ll.184-87 Griboedov contents himself with a more general description of this powerful woman; anyone who is anyone is either her friend or her relation.

Other changes, small though they are, point the difference between the two young men. Throughout the scene Molchalin keeps his temper, Chatskii
becomes progressively more offensive. After MA, l.162, Chatskii's 'К перу от
карт? И к картам от пера?', Griboedov inserts the line 'И положенный час
приливам и отливам'. (GOU, l.163) This addition, with its suggestion of
mindless obedience, emphasizes Chatskii's disdain for the established order of
things. MA, l.205, Molchalin's 'По нашему, тут нету преступления', is
replaced, in GOU, l.201, by the more polite 'Простите, впрочем тут не вижу
преступления'; 'По нашему' - Molchalin representing a body of right-thinking
people opposed to Chatskii - is cut. 'Бот вам Фома Фомич известен, верно?',
Molchalin continues, offering another of his heroes. In GOU Chatskii finds the
man positively 'ничтожный'; in GOU, l.205 he is superlatively 'пустейший'.

The last two lines of this scene, Chatskii's 'С такими чувствами! С такой
dушой дренною! | Любим!.. обманщица смеялась надо мной!' are spoken
'почти громко'. (MA, ll.223-24) In GOU Griboedov cuts the adjective
'дренною'. The comment could scarcely be more insulting, and the air of
symmetrical finality is well lost; the 'end-of-scene' pair of rhyming alexandrines
were, perhaps, too close to those Neo-classical models. Chatskii's conclusion
concerning Sofiia's feelings matches, very exactly, the one he came to as a result
of his conversation with her in Scene 1: 'Шалит, она его не любит'.

The symmetry of these two scenes is delightful. Molchalin has no need to
deceive Chatskii; Griboedov presents him as all too capable of deceiving himself.
This unhappy talent leads him to make his final, fatal attack on Molchalin. It is
inspired by his observation of the latter's brief conversation with Khlestova at the
end of III.12, a masterpiece of servile flattery. Molchalin first demonstrates that
willingness to play cards with the elderly so highly esteemed by Sofiia: 'Я вашу
партию составил: мосье Кок, | Фома Фомич и я'. Then, aware that praise of
children or dogs, however extreme, is seldom unacceptable, turns his attention to Khlestova's 'doggie' - the 'собачка' of III.10 (MA, l.368; GOU, l.364): 'Ваш шпиц - прелестный шпиц, не более наперстка, | Я гладил все его, как шелковая шерстка.' (MA, II.421-22; GOU, II.417-18) Natal'ia Dmitrievna refers to her husband as 'Мой муж, прелестный муж'. (MA, III.5, l.241; GOU, III.5, l.237) This is Griboedov's reward for the attentive playgoer; his hero's attack on the Moscow husband in the final monologue delivers the same message more directly.

Act III, Scene 13.

The exchange between Molchalin and Khlestova remains untouched, as does the opening of the conversation between Chatskii and Sofiia which constitutes Scene 13. Chatskii's attack on Molchalin, however, has undergone considerable alteration. In MA the speech reads:

397

Сказать вам, что я думал? – Вот:  
Старушки часто ведь сердиты,  
Кобы всегда такой служник знаменитый

430  
Тут был, как громовой отвод.  
Как он искусно все уладил! 
Рушитель ссор, смиритель гроз  
Как кстати карточку поднес! 
Как моську вовремя погладил!

435  
В нем Загарецкий [sic] не умрет,  
Чего не ожидать при этом нраве кратком,  
При свойстве угощать племянницам и теткам,  
еї на ухо 
О! давишнее вам так дором не пройдет. 
Уходит.

MA, II.427-38

Only three lines of this version are retained – lines 427, 430 and 435. Lines 431 and 432 are cut, to be replaced by a single line, the more emphatic
'Молчалин! – Кто другой так мирно все уладит!'. (GOU, 1.427) Lines 433 and 434 are reversed, and the actions described in them presented as habitual. Chatskii no longer refers specifically to Molchalin’s arranging a four for Khlestova or stroking her pet-dog, something they have just witnessed; he manages to suggest, with his use of 'там' and 'тут' coupled with the future perfective, the truly zealous crawler: 'Там моську вовремя погладит, | Тут в пору карточку вотрет'. The thoroughly offensive 'В нем Загорецкий не умрет' which follows these two lines is allowed to stand. The last three alexandrines are cut, as is the confidential stage direction. They are replaced by one line of hexameter and a final line of tetrameter: 'Вы давеча его мне исчисляли свойства, | Но многие забыли? - Да?'

Both versions of this speech are composed entirely of hexameters or tetrameters. But in MA, after two lines of tetrameter and one alexandrine the rhythm falls into a somewhat static pattern; six lines of tetrameter are followed by three of hexameter. In GOU the speech does not contain more than three consecutive lines of tetrameter, and the weighty final alexandrine is avoided. The pattern, here, is as follows: 4.4.6.4.6.4.4.6.4. This fluctuating rhythm better reflects the impulsive - and compulsive - nature of Chatskii’s mockery; the effect is not only more natural but wittier.

Act III, Scene 14.

Griboedov cuts Sofiia's first two lines in MA, Scene 14: 'Трозит и тешится, и рад бы что есть силы | Молчалина при всех унизить, как он
зоп!' Here her feelings are all for Molchalin. In GOU she thinks first, and most naturally, of herself:

Ах! этот человек всегда
Причиной мне ужасного расстройства!
Унизить рад, колынуть; завистлив, горд и зол!

GOU, II.432-35

In view of the havoc she is about to cause with her initiation of the rumour concerning Chatskii's madness, even this small justification is welcome. Sofiia is not acting with deliberate malice; she is 'terribly upset'. A state, notoriously, of suspended judgement.

In her conversation with Mr N., Griboedov offers another such slight justification; MA 1.441, that immediately following Sofiia's opening couplet, reads:

Г.Н        Вы в размышлении.
София             Об Чаяком.
Г.Н        Он премилый.

Here Sofiia's reply, 'Он не в своем уме', contradicts Mr N.'s last remark. In GOU he does not give his opinion of Chatskii; he asks for hers. The same reply seems, now, a natural extension of her opening monologue. Griboedov - and Mr N. - are edging her to the brink of indiscretion. Has he really gone mad?, the latter asks. In MA Sofiia replies without hesitation 'Не то чтобы совсем...'; in GOU Griboedov gives her the stage direction 'помоччавши'. The line is coloured by uncertainty. He makes no further changes to the scene, however, apart from removing a comma. Mr N. persists. 'Однако есть приметы?' Sofiia yields to temptation. 'Мне кажется', she says, and the damaging rumour is born.

The last three lines of this scene, spoken by Sofiia 'aside', suggest that she herself feels the need of justification.

Готов он верить!
After all, Mr N. is prepared to believe her. And Chatskii is happy enough to make a fool of everyone; how would he enjoy it? The lines are childishly defiant.

ACT IV

Act IV, Scenes 1, 2 and 3.

In Scenes 1 and 2 the guests depart. Their dissatisfaction with life in general and the evening in particular provides a parodie setting for the disillusion of Chatskii's monologue in Scene 3. The scene opens with Chatskii's demand, prefiguring his final words in the play, that his carriage be brought round at once; it closes with the information that his coachman is nowhere to be found. 'Попел, ищы. Не ночевать же тут', Chatskii orders him, irritably. Without this apparently unimportant hitch there would, of course, be no denouement, new or otherwise; Chatskii would have done precisely what Liza thought he had done: 'Любовь на завтра поберег, | Домой, и спать залег'. (GOU, II. 321-22; MA, II. 341-42) However, this is not the stuff of which comedies are made.
Act IV, Scene 10.

Chatskii emerges from his hiding-place in the porter’s lodge. He has overheard the rumour of his madness and is, reasonably, appalled. The alterations to his opening monologue are substantial. Of its original thirty-two lines only thirteen remain. The first six lines are retained (MA, II.289-94; GOU, II. 275-80). They express Chatskii’s awareness of malice; his amazement that such a rumour has been so generally believed; and the painful realization that while some sympathize, others rejoice.

The next five lines are cut (MA, II.295-99). 'О праздный! Жалкий мелкий свет' they begin, and chart the progress of a rumour. Griboedov rewrites this passage to begin with the despairing, if rhetorical question: 'О! если б кто в людей проник: | Что хуже в них? Душа или язык?' The texts merge as MA, ll. 300, 'Тревогу бьют... и вот общественное мненье', is divided between GOU, II.285 and 286. The progress of a rumour, thus condensed into three crisp lines, now stands as the rightly famous:

Поверили глупцы, другим передают,  
Старухи вмig тревогу бьют,  
И вот общественное мненье!  
GOU, II.284-86

The following lines, MA, l.301 and GOU, l.287, both begin 'И вот'. There the resemblance ends. In the former, Griboedov takes eight lines to construct an elaborate simile, comparing the rapid progress of an avalanche with the even more rapid spreading of a rumour. Гул, рокот, гром, вся в ужасе окрестность', he remembers. The speech, however, loses pace; Griboedov, true artist, sacrifices his travel notes and widens the scope of his attack. MA begins 'И вот Москва'.

GOU, ll.287-88 has 'И вот та родина... Нет, в нынешний приезд, | Я вижу, что она мне скоро надоест'. This stinging couplet replaces the whole eight-line passage.

Again, the texts merge. MA, 1.309, reads, as does GOU, 1.289, 'А София знает ли? – Конечно, рассказали'. Even at this late stage in the play Chatskii cannot bring himself to think the unthinkable. He will need to be told that Sofiia herself is responsible for initiating the rumour. The worst that he can imagine, in MA, ll.110-11, is that 'Она в веселый час, как до нее дошло, | Чай, позабавилась, не то чтоб мне назло'. The equivalent lines, GOU, ll.290-91, though re-written, express a similar conviction. 'Она не то чтобы мне именно во вред | Потешилась'.

Apart from the removal of the comma after 'бы' in MA, 1.318 and the words 'кто нечаянно' in 1. 319, replaced in GOU by 'кто-нибудь', the final four lines survive. Once again, Griboedov uses Shakespeare's 'Osrick' technique. Repetilov has preceded Chatskii. The former's frivolous account of his career has been followed by Chatskii's reaction to the rumour of his own madness. Now, at the very end of this monologue of thirty-two lines a bitter joke precedes disaster. Referring to Sofiia's fainting-fit, which he had taken for a sign of a passionate nature, Chatskii concludes:

Ни крошки,  
Она конечно бы лишилась так же сил,  
Когда бы кто-нибудь ступил  
На хвост собачки или кошки.  

GOU, ll.297-300

Whereupon Sofiia herself, candle in hand, calls down from the floor above:  
'Mолчалин, вы?' The years of Griboedov's well-spent youth in St Petersburg,
evenings at the theatre, readings in Shakhovskoi’s attic, inspire the moment. Once again, we – and Chatskii – are caught off guard.

Griboedov changes one line in Chatskii’s speech of recognition. 'Не впрямь ли я сошел с ума?’, he asks himself in both versions. The following line in MA is the vehement 'Нет, нет, к горячке я, конечно, подготовлен’, after which both texts read 'Но не виденье тут, свиданья час условлен’. Chatskii is adamant. He may have been driven to the edge, but there is no mistaking the evidence of his senses. 'No, no', he insists, and the sentence runs on to its conclusion impeded only by commas. Griboedov cuts this denial. He emphasizes Chatskii’s shock in the second full line of this speech by substituting exclamation marks for commas – 'Явилась! Нет ee!' (GOU, 1.303); then brings 1.305 to an uncertain halt with a semi-colon: 'К необычайности я точно приготовлен;'. Chatskii clutches at one last straw, but his hesitation is momentary. 'Но не виденье тут’, he tells himself, in both texts.

His servant enters with the good news. 'Капе…'. Chatskii silences the man with a 'Cc!' and pushes him off-stage. In MA, l.329, Chatskii is determined not to stir from the spot; in GOU he resolves not to close his eyes. For a man who has closed his eyes to so much this is an heroic undertaking. But Chatskii, like his creator, cannot be said to lack courage, whatever his other failings. 'Уж коли горе пить', he says, 'так лучше с одного присеста'. (MA, l.330-31) Or, as Griboedov’s beloved Shakespeare has it, in Sonnet 90, 'But in the onset come; so shall I taste | At first the very worst of fortune’s might'. In GOU Griboedov substitutes the shorter, bleaker 'так лучше сразу'. 'Gore’, it seems, comes not only 'от ума'; pride, passion, a dangerous talent for self-deception and an unreliable coachman have all conspired to bring about this particular misfortune.
Act IV, Scene 11.

'Ах! Мочи нет! Робею!' the scene begins in MA. Griboedov removes the exclamation mark after 'робею'; it was one of five in the first two lines of the scene, excessive even by his own standards. He makes no further alterations to Liza's witty speech, a mixture of peasant superstition and worldly cynicism. It is a pleasure to hear Chatskii described as 'бельмо в глазу'. It is, by this time, what we feel but had hardly liked to say.

Act IV, Scene 12.

This is the scene to which Griboedov made his major alteration. It is the scene which contains the 'new denouement'. Only one phrase of Molchalin's is changed before this new material is introduced – 'Но кто б сказал', he says, in MA, 1.349, that Liza was prepared to remain a virginal go-between in the love-affairs of others. Griboedov replaces the phrase with the marginally more challenging 'Кто б отгадал'.

It is Liza's mention of marriage which Griboedov uses to inspire Molchalin's unaccustomed outpouring of honesty. As a fiancé, he is not suffering enough, she complains. 'Пригож и мил, кто недост и недоспит до свадьбы'. (GOU, II.335-36) The word, one which has, as yet, no place in Molchalin's ambitious plans, inspires only contempt. 'Какая свадьба? С кем?', he jeers, and reveals his threadbare philosophy in a thirty-four line exchange with Liza.

Both Sofiia and Chatskii overhear Molchalin's cynical confession. Everything they say after it must be considered in the light of it; lines identical in
MA and GOU acquire a quite different significance. Even the line which re-introduces the text of MA, however similar to the equivalent line in GOU, originally referred to a different situation. In MA Sofiia saw something move as she came downstairs: 'мне показалось | Что Чатький здесь'. (MA, l. 362) In GOU she is speaking of her fainting fit, when 'Здесь Чатький был'. (GOU, l. 402)

More important is the new information about Molchalin's character which this denouement reveals, not only to Griboedov's audience, but to his hero and heroine. This will have a powerful effect on the few remaining scenes of the comedy. It may be summarized thus:

Molchalin has no intention of marrying Sofiia.

He sees nothing special in Sofiia.

He assumes that her love for him will be as shortlived as was her love for Chatskii.

He wishes that he found Sofiia as attractive as Liza. This remark elicits the asides 'Какие низости!' from Sofiia and 'Подлец!' from Chatskii, but both remain concealed.

He was taught by his father to please everyone who might be useful to him. The list begins with his landlord and ends by including the yard-sweeper's dog. This last is more of an insurance, 'Чтоб ласкова была'. (GOU, l. 362)

He is posing as Sofiia's lover to please her; she is, after all, his superior's daughter.

He jokes with Liza on the subject 'плачевой нашей крали', (GOU, l. 369), attempts to embrace her and, when she repulses him, cries in a moment of genuine honesty 'Зачем она не ты!', (GOU, l. 371) which would indeed be a simple solution to his problems.
This is, finally, too much for Sofiia. That he should find her servant more attractive than herself… She emerges from the darkness to express her outrage. It is a little late for Molchalin to claim, as he does, that he was only joking. 'В вас меньше дерзости, чем кривизны души', she says, memorably (GOU, 1.398). She is only glad that there is no witness present to reproach her; when she fainted, 'Здесь Чацкий был'. Chatskii throws himself between Molchalin and Sofiia and the texts converge. 'Он здесь, притворщица!', he cries, in both MA and GOU. In MA, 1.362 he concludes, rather smugly, 'Да', and Sofiia completes the alexandrine with a single 'Ax!' In GOU, 1.402 Griboedov cuts Chatskii's 'Да' and gives an iambic exclamation – 'Ax! Ax!' – to Liza and Sofiia in unison.

**Act IV, Scene 13.**

This short scene illustrates the impact of Molchalin's confession on both Chatskii and Sofiia. Chatskii's already low opinion of Molchalin has been entirely justified. The twelve lines of his opening speech remain almost unchanged. The only alteration is to MA, 11.367-68: 'И знал уж раз! И верить усумнился!' Griboedov re-writes just these two lines. He condenses Chatskii's feelings of utter disbelief in Sofiia's love for Molchalin into the succinct 'Глядел, и видел, и не верил!'. (GOU, 1.408) The preceding line is freed to express a misconception typical of Chatskii: 'Не знаю, как в себе я бешенство умерил!' With great difficulty, if at all, we could have told him. Apart from the sharpening of these two lines, the remainder of the speech stands.
In MA, Sofiia, her illusions unshattered, replies from a position of righteous anger. Her speech is given here in full:

софия Какая низость! подстеречь!
Подкрасься и потом, конечно, обесслать.
Что? Этим думали к себе меня привлечь?
И страхом, ужасом вас полюбить заставить?
Отчетом я себе обязана самой,
Однако вам поступок мой
Чем кажется так зол и так коварен?
Не лицемерила, и прав я кругом.
Ах! Боже мой! стук! шум! сюда бежит весь дом.
Вот батюшка.

ЛИЗА Сам барин!

Liza exclaims, completing the line.

Griboedov cuts the first ten lines of this speech. The last two he gives to Liza. In GOU, Sofiia, 'вся в слезах', accepts Chatskii's words. 'Не продолжайте', she implores him, 'я виньо себя кругом'. Then allows herself this timid attempt at self-justification: 'Но кто бы думать мог, чтоб был он так коварен'. (GOU, I.415-16) She no longer uses the word 'коварен' in accusing Chatskii of injustice to herself, but applies it to Molchalin. In MA the word 'кругом' is used in reference to her complete innocence; in GOU it is associated with her feelings of guilt. She seems incapable of uttering more than these two broken lines. It is left to Liza to raise the alarm with an entirely characteristic mixture of fear and sarcasm: 'Штук! Шум! ах! Боже мой! сюда бежит весь дом. | Ваш батюшка, вот будет благодарен.'
Act IV, Scene 14.

Famusov discovers what he takes to be a pair of lovers. Chatskii and his daughter. In a lengthy tirade of forty-four lines, only six are altered; none of these alterations significantly affects the sense. He still delivers his ultimate threat to Chatskii on a rising tide of fury: 'В сенат подам, министрам, государю'.

Chatskii ignores him. In MA he addresses his final monologue to Sofiia. And he begins with a straightforward apology. 'Я перед вами виноват', he tells her (MA, 1.429). Griboedov has not devised the new denouement. Chatskii has nothing to guide him but his instinctive disdain for Molchalin. He even withdraws an accusation previously unvoiced. Sofiia, he says, is not one of those who are prepared 'подавать себя в замужество' (MA, 1.436) on the Moscow marriage market:

Вы выше этого. По вас такой, что был
Немножко прост и очень мил,
Чтоб вы могли его и в возрасте бы зрелом
Беречь и пеленать, и спосылать за делом,
Муж-мальчик, муж-слуга, из жениньых пажей:
Высокий идеал московских всех мужей!

MA, 1.437-42

But for a comma in place of the colon and a full-stop followed by a dash in place of the exclamation mark, the last three lines are, of course, identical to GOU, 11.490-92. In MA Chatskii tries to understand Sofiia's choice, and the texts merge as he fails.

In GOU the stage direction 'после некоторого молчания' replaces the single word 'Софии' at the head of this blistering monologue. When Chatskii finally speaks, his words are puzzled, hesitant. Twice in his first four lines the text is broken by a trail of dots.
Anger, as so often, comes to his rescue. Another new stage direction – 'с жаром' – precedes lines no longer apologetic. Griboedov takes II. 447-50 from the middle of Chatskii's speech in MA and uses them, the first two lines slightly altered, to introduce an outburst of rage. The original pair read:

Я сам, где я искал награду всех трудов?
Спешил? летел, дрожал, вот счастье, думал близко.

Compare the more emphatic final version. Griboedov removes the two question marks and adds five exclamation marks:

Слепец! я в ком искал награду всех трудов!
Спешил!.. летел! дрожал! вот счастье, думал, близко.

These exclamation marks, excessive even for Griboedov, seem to indicate a rare moment of self-mockery; for once Chatskii is laughing, however bitterly, at himself. Both versions continue:

Пред кем я давеча так страстно и так низко
Был расточитель нежных слов!

Although in GOU Griboedov has removed MA's second exclamation mark after the word 'слов'.

Chatskii is angry with himself for wasting his love and with Sofiia for being unworthy of it. He is overcome by a sudden surge of hurt pride: 'А вы! о Боже мой! кого себе избрали? | Когда подумаю, кого вы предпочли!'. (GOU, IV.14.471-72). 'За что меня вы завлекли', (IV.14.445) Chatskii continues in MA Griboedov keeps the line, replacing 'За что' with 'Зачем', and develops this theme in twelve new lines. (GOU, II. 475-86) Sofiia, he says, could
have saved him so much pain if only she had been more honest. In view of her constant attempts to be honest, all of which Chatskii ignores, this is a little hard.

A third new stage-direction, 'насмешиливо', precedes 1.487 in GOU. Chatskii makes what is, in the light of everything that he and Sofiia have just overheard, his cruelest remark. 'Вы помиритесь с ним по размышленьи зрелом'. Sofiia, knowing what she now knows about Molchalin, will nevertheless marry him. Griboedov has saved his witticisms on the Moscow husband for this moment; coming after such a prediction they acquire fresh venom. 'Муж-малячик, муж-слуга, из жениных пажей, | Высокий идеал московских всех мужей' (GOU, IV.14.491-92). Now he allows his Chatskii to deliver the ultimate insult: 'с вами я горький моим разрывом' (l. 493). In MA, 1.451 the words are preceded by the qualifying 'Не верьте'; in GOU, 1.493 by a conclusive 'Довольно!…'.

Griboedov gathers together all the lines conveying Chatskii's disillusion with Sofiia before widening the scope of his attack,

На дочь и на отца,
И на любовника-глупца,
И на весь мир излить всю желчь и всю досаду.
MA, II.462-64; GOU, II.504-06

In MA Chatskii merely suggests that he should do so; in GOU he does. In MA the three lines quoted above, II. 462-64, are immediately followed by the exclamation 'Вон из Москвы! Сюда я больше не ездок', which introduces the last three lines of Chatskii's monologue. In GOU they are followed by twelve new lines (GOU, II.507-18) into which Chatskii pours all his fury, his disgust with Moscow society. 'С кем был! Куда меня закинула судьба!', he begins. 'Все гонят! Все клянут!' They are 'мучителей толпа', treacherous in love, untiring in their hostility, inveterate prattlers, ridiculous know-alls, cunning fools
and - for the gerontophobic Griboedov, this is bad indeed - old. 'Старух зловещих, старицов, | Дряхлееоых над выдумками, вздором'. 'Вон из Москвы!', he cries. Even here Griboedov has made two small changes, one minor, one vital. In GOU, l.520 'пойду' replaces 'пушу'. In MA, ll.466-67, the last words which Chatskii speaks to his social equals, he seeks more than a refuge for his wounded feelings; he intends 'искать по свету, | Где для рассудка есть и чувства уголок...'. A haven, in the first place, for his intellect, and only then for his feelings. Griboedov cuts the word 'рассудок' and applies the adjective 'оскорбленный' to Chatskii's feelings. 'Где оскорбленному есть чувству уголок!' Why? It was not for the sake of the rhythm; both lines are written in the alexandrine form. It was not for the sake of a rhyme; in both lines the last word is 'уголок'. Is the writer denying Chatskii the faculty of reason? It would seem that he agrees with Pushkin. 'Who is the intelligent man in Gore ot uma? Answer: Griboedov'.

Famusov's final speech, brief and dismissive, represents the triumph of form over content. Chatskii is driven out from his tight little society not because his principles are at fault, but because his manner of expressing them is socially inept. Bad form. The superficial, the surface of things, to which Griboedov persistently draws our attention in Famusov's references to taffeta, velvet and gauze, in Skalozub's lust for medals, his preoccupation with the details of uniform, its gold braid, its flashes, its tabs, the pleats, fringes, stoles and scarves of the six Princesses, all these Griboedov opposes to the profound convictions of one awkward young man. Surfaces win, hands down. What really matters to Moscow is revealed in Famusov's closing couplet. 'Ах! Боже мой! что станет говорить | Княгиня Марья Алексеевна!'.


Griboedov's comedy is as sad as it is funny.

* 

In *Student* Griboedov presented an unpleasant caricature of Zagoskin. But in reply to Katenin's comment that the characters in *Gore ot uma* are like portraits he writes, 'portraits and only portraits go into the making of comedy and tragedy'. What did Griboedov mean by 'portraits'? The character of Famusov may very well have been based on that of his uncle, the character of Sofiia on that of his cousin, with whom he spent so many happy childhood summers in Khmelita. Perhaps Liza really does resemble Duniashka, maid-servant to Mar'ia Ivanova Rimskaiia-Korsakova, as Gershenzon suggests. Chatskii's swarthy 'тук или грек' may bear a strong likeness to the Greek Metaxa, 'толстый, маленький, 35 лет, чернее цыган'. 'А тетушка? Все девушкой, Минервой'. Could she not have been modelled on the ageing Princess Khovanskaia? Might not Praskov'ia Iur'evna Kologrivova be disguised as the influential Tat'iana Iur'evna? Or Nastas'ia Dmitrievna Ofrosimova, immortalized by Tolstoi, as the outrageous Khlestova? Is there a reference to Zagoskin in the writing of Molchalin, who understands how his world works and means to make the most of it? In spite of numerous claims made by Griboedov's contemporaries that they recognized either themselves, their friends or their enemies in the play, characters lifted straight from life could only have amused a generation. Those in *Gore ot uma*, beneath their sometimes cranky exteriors, display that universality which distinguishes art from reportage.

Sofiia remains a problematic figure. Pushkin's view of her as drawn 'неясно' represents, perhaps, a craving for the ideal. He wrote his Evgenii as flawed, his Tat'iana as incorruptible. What was this Sofiia of Griboedov's? Something which
Pushkin’s publishers found unprintable, or a moskovskaia kuzina? Neither, of course, must be the answer. She is as near human as Griboedov could make her. During a recent discussion held at the Mossovet theatre in Moscow by a cast about to rehearse Gore ot uma, the question was raised: ‘What happened to Sofiia afterwards?’ That Pushkin’s Tat’iana could ever have been persuaded by Evgenii to abandon her principles is unthinkable. We know what happened to Tat’iana afterwards. She remained faithful to her husband. We can feel no such certainty concerning Sofiia: could she - just possibly - have married Molchalin? It is a technique which Chekhov would use so effectively. In his story ‘Imeniny’ the woman who has just given birth to a stillborn child is too heavily drugged to feel the loss; Chekhov leaves it to the reader to contemplate the months of mourning and recrimination which lie ahead. In Chaika we are left to guess at the reactions of Arkadina to her son’s death; the suicide is planted like a time-bomb, to explode after the final curtain. As with those speculations concerning Sofiia, doubt and uncertainty project the imagination beyond the confines of the play.

I have suggested that Chatskii shares many characteristics with Griboedov and Aleksandr Odoevskii. And yet we know Chatskii in a way which even their contemporaries could not have known those two young men. Proust, although he is writing, here, about the art of the novelist, defines the distinction between these two ways of knowing most beautifully:

A real person, profoundly as we may sympathize with him, is in a great measure perceptible only through our senses, that is to say, remains opaque [...] The novelist’s happy discovery was to think of substituting for those opaque sections, impenetrable to the human soul, their equivalent in immaterial sections, things, that is, which one's soul can assimilate. After which it matters not that the actions, the feelings of this new order of creatures appear to us in the guise of truth, since we have made them our own, since it is in ourselves that they are happening.34
This is the happy discovery which Griboedov made; the nature of the reality which he gave to his Chatskii. It is the quality which ensures the continuing significance of his great comedy, *Gore ot uma*. 

2. Pushkin, PSS, VI, 96.


4. Pushkin, PSS, VI, 96.


8. Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, III, 155.

9. Ibid., III, 154.


11. Ibid., p. 177.

12. Ibid., p. 178.

13. Ibid., p. 178.


15. Piksanov, Issledovaniia i kharakteristiki, p. 287.


17. Ibid., p. 231.

18. Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, III, 155.


20. Piksanov, Tvorcheskaia istoriia, p. 177.


22. A.S. Griboedov, Molodye suprugi, in Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, I, 40.


25. Ibid., I, 171, n.2.


29. Griboedov, PSS, 1911-17, III, 168.

30. Gershenzon, p.78. See also I.A. Shliapkin, Prototipy deistvuishchikh lits v komedii "Gore ot uma", in *Aleksandr Sergeevich Griboedov: Ego zhizn’ i sochineniia*, compiled and edited by V.I. Pokrovskii, 3rd edn (Moscow, 1911), pp.181-84; and, on the subject of 'Tolstoi-Amerikanets’, A. Korneev, 'Neobyknovennyi prototip', *V mire knig*, 1974, no. 8, 95.

31. Ibid., p.79.

32. Ibid., p.80.

33. Ibid., p.82.

34. Ibid., p.83.

35. *In Search of Lost Time*, I, 99-100.
Conclusion

In Gore ot uma Griboedov's art found, once and only once, its true voice. Like Caliban, he 'cried to dream again', and could not. Two possible reasons for this have been advanced. The first was his ability to write a passion out of his system: rage against injustice shown to a friend in his critical article 'O razbore vol'nogo perevoda biurgerovoi ballady "Leonora"'; personal animosity in Student and Lubochnyi teatr'; sexual passion in the poem to Teleshova; and moral passion in Gore ot uma. This last includes not only that reforming zeal inspired by Isaiah, but those qualities in Aleksandr Odoevskii which he loved, envied and mocked by turn and which he embodied in his Chatskii. On 12 September 1825, unable to write and seeing only madness or suicide ahead, he tells Begichev: 'I won't write to Odoevskii about this; he loves me passionately, and will be unhappier than I if he should get to know of it.' His silence on the subject of his own feelings is eloquent.

The second cause which I have proposed is the all-too-swift fulfilment of his prophesy. It was one thing to mock, in the person of Chatskii, the ineffectual idealism of his friends; it was quite another to see them hanged. Griboedov's gift was for comedy. And, as he said to Begichev less than a month after the execution of the five Decembrists, 'комедии больше не напишу, веселость моя исчезла, а без веселости нет хорошей комедии'.

The remains of his moral passion, cooled and hardened to obstinacy, are to be found in the final years of his life and in the manner of his dying. But after his release on 2 June 1826, declared innocent of complicity in the Decembrist rising, there were still two-and-a-half more years of diplomacy. Griboedov himself complained bitterly that it was his duties which prevented him from writing. At
all events he understood only too well that he was in no position to refuse promotion. In the middle of August 1826 he left Moscow, once again, for Tbilisi and Teheran.

On 30 July 1827 Griboedov writes to Paskevich, now in command in the Caucasus, of his meeting with Abbas Mirza. A victorious Russia has laid down her conditions for peace; Persia’s offers are not compatible with them. ‘I have been sent here in order that there may be no further misunderstandings on that account’, he writes, recording his conversation with his old enemy. He has lost neither his intransigence nor his wit. Having continued in this vein for some while, interpreting Russia’s terms to the Shah’s son, he writes: ‘I will not conceal the fact from Your Highness that Abbas Mirza appeared to find these words extremely unpleasant.’ And then adds, ‘Может быть, я и несколько перешел за черты данного мне поручения.’ It is possible.

The Treaty of Turkmenchai was signed. Griboedov returned to Petersburg in triumph. But his premonition of his own, imminent death, revealed to both Begichev and Zhandr before his return to Persia as Minister in Residence, was evidently based on the rational assessment of a real danger. Those who sent him will have been aware of this. On 30 January 1829 Griboedov, together with thirty-nine of his staff, was murdered at the Russian embassy in Teheran. Only one member of the Russian Mission, Mal’tsov, survived to make his report on the massacre.

Pushkin’s words on the subject are consoling. ‘Самая смерть, постигшая его посреди смелого, неровного боя, не имела для Грибоедова ничего ужасного, ничего томительного. Она была мгновена и прекрасна.’
Griboedov himself saw his ambitions as unfulfilled, his talents unused. It is true that none of his other works can match or even approach the brilliance of Gore ot uma; but it would surely be unreasonable to complain that in the course of a brief and troubled creative life he wrote only one masterpiece.

2. Griboedov, Sochineniia, II, 276-91 (pp.278, 280)


4. Pushkin, PSS, IV, 408. See also V. Khalatov, "Zhadno gliadel ia na bibleiskiuu goru...": O puteshestvie A.S. Pushkina v Armeniiu', Voprosy literatury,1994, no. 6, 373-76 (p.374); and S.A. Fomichev, "Zatemnena nekotorymi oblakami...", in Praznik zhizni: Etiudy o Pushkine (St Petersburg, 1995), pp.158-93.
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