2003

The history of Russian vaudeville from 1800 to 1850

Alexander V. Tselebrovski

Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, atseleb@lsu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_dissertations

Part of the Theatre and Performance Studies Commons

Recommended Citation

https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_dissertations/3876
THE HISTORY OF RUSSIAN VAUDEVILLE FROM 1800 TO 1850

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
The Department of Theatre

By
Alexander V. Tselebrovski
Perm State Institute of Arts (Russia), 1982
Directing Master Courses at GITIS, Moscow (Russia), 1985
May 2003
To Dr. Leigh Clemons,  
Dr. Harald Leder, and  
Dr. Leslie Wade

“И дельный разговор зашел про водевиль.  
Да! водевиль есть вещь, а прочее все гиль.”

“And we began to speak about vaudeville.  
Yes! vaudeville is quite a thing, and all the rest is nil.”

(A.S. Griboedov. *Woe from Wit*, Act 4, Scene 6.)
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many individuals and institutions have helped to bring this project to reality. The Department of Theatre of Louisiana State University provided a very stimulating environment and guidance during the research period. The Interlibrary Borrowing Department of the T. Middleton Library assisted greatly in finding the necessary materials from all over the United States.

Mr. M. Ledee and Dr. L. Kuyper-Rushing (Musical Resources of the Middleton Library) put aside their business each time when I needed their professional help.

Dr. Harold Leich from the European Division of the Library of Congress took my concerns as his own and found materials extremely important for this work.

Mr. Jan Adamczyk from the Slavic Reference Service of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign spent several months looking for necessary periodicals published in the former Soviet Union in 1936; and he found them!

Mr. R. Erickson (Paris, France), Mr. R. Lynch (Hammer Gallery, New York), Mr. G. Sukharev (Tickets of Russia, Inc.), and Ms. S. Kotliarenko (Mariinskii Theatre, St-Petersburg, Russia) kindly allowed me to use photographic images from their websites.

Dr. L. Stanton (Russian Area Studies, LSU) and a coterie of friends, Mr. J. Smylie is the first among them but not the only, had fun with me in search for American equivalents to the very specific Russian idiomatic expressions necessary for this work.
Ms. S. Dixon, an LSU grad school editor, helped me (not a native speaker) greatly in formatting my dissertation by her constant encouragement and advices.

And at last, this work is dedicated to three persons: Dr. Leigh Clemons, Dr. Harald Leder, and Dr. Les Wade...

Without you it would never have happened. Each of you became a part of my life. Each of you made me believe in the best of human race. There are no words to thank you enough for everything. Thank you all.
PREFACE. ON ORGANIZATION OF THE DISSERTATION AND TRANSLITERATION AND TRANSLATION OF RUSSIAN NAMES, WORDS, AND TERMS

For reference purposes this dissertation uses a dual system of notes. The footnotes and the words marked with an asterisk (*) elucidate specific historical, cultural, or linguistic phenomena that might be not immediately understood by an English reader. The English translations of foreign quotations are given also in the footnotes. The numerical notes at the end of each chapter provide the sources of quotations where the names of works by foreign authors are given in the original language with the English translation in parentheses.

The appendices presenting the English translation of the original Russian plays provide left side-line numbering to aid the reader in quickly finding the lines analyzed in the dissertation. The capital D, E, or F (which is followed by a dash and a page number) define the SPECIFIC APPENDIX; numbers following the semicolon define the lines of the play. Thus, referring the reader to (D-345; 16-18) would mean that he can find the lines under discussion in Appendix D, page 345, lines 16-18.

This dissertation also uses System II, the Library of Congress system for transliteration of modern Russian with the diacritical marks omitted (See Shaw, J. Thomas. The Transliteration of Modern Russian for the English-Language Publications. Madison, Milwaukee, and London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1967). System II is used consistently throughout the text of the dissertation for all place names and proper names and for words as words in the text proper and for all the citations of the bibliographical material. The names for which
Anglicized spelling is traditionally accepted follow that spelling (Moscow for Moskva, St.-Petersburg for Sankt-Peterburg, and the like).

Non-Russian personal names are given in their original spelling (e.g., Eugène Scribe, Jean-François de Laharpe). Names of Russian authors or public figures of non-Russian origin, who made their reputation writing in Russian, are transliterated as Russian (e.g. Fonvizin, Gogol, Bulgariin).

For the citation of place of publication for Russian sources, widely accepted abbreviations are used: M. for Moscow, SPb. for St- Petersburg, L. for Leningrad.

Most of the translations of the original Russian, French, and German texts are done by the author of the dissertation. In all other cases, the translator’s name is indicated.

The photographic images in this dissertation are used with the permission of copyright holders (see Appendix A). The image of the Vaudeville Theatre from J. B. Matthews’ The Theatres of Paris is used in accordance with US Code, Title 17.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .................................................................................................................................................. iii

PREFACE. ON ORGANIZATION OF THE DISSERTATION AND TRANSLITERATION AND TRANSLATION OF RUSSIAN NAMES, WORDS, AND TERMS ...................................................................................................................... v

LIST OF FIGURES ..................................................................................................................................................... x

ABSTRACT ................................................................................................................................................................... xi

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION. VAUDEVILLE IN THE RUSSIAN THEATRE

HISTORIOGRAPHY .................................................................................................................................................... 1

   Historical Overview ............................................................................................................................................... 1
   Origin Of Vaudeville ............................................................................................................................................. 13
   Vaudeville As Genre ........................................................................................................................................... 21
   Endnotes to Chapter 1 ........................................................................................................................................ 33

CHAPTER 2. THEATRE IN RUSSIA AT THE BEGINNING OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY ......................................................... 36

   Politics and Theatre ............................................................................................................................................ 36
   The Problem of Narodnost’ in Russian Theatre ................................................................................................. 44
   Repertoire of the Imperial Theatres ....................................................................................................................... 56
   Endnotes to Chapter 2 ........................................................................................................................................ 63


   Prince A. A. Shakhovskoi, First Russian Vaudevillist .......................................................................................... 66
   Cossack-Versifier, Peasants, or Meeting of the Uninvited; and Lomonosov, or Recruit-Versifier ....................... 73
   Two Teachers or Asinus Asinum Fricat .................................................................................................................. 77
   Endnotes to Chapter 3 ........................................................................................................................................ 94

CHAPTER 4. ARISTOCRATIC PERIOD OF THE RUSSIAN VAUDEVILLE: 1812-1825: PART TWO .......................................................... 96

   N. A. Khmelnitskii, the Master of Vaudeville Style .............................................................................................. 96
   A. I. Pisarev and His Vaudevilles as Weapons in Literary Battle ......................................................................... 114
   The Busybody, or Know-How Gets the Job Done Best ........................................................................................ 127
   Endnotes to Chapter 4 ...................................................................................................................................... 138

CHAPTER 5. A BAD REPUTATION OF THE GOOD VAUDEVILLE: WHO IS BROTHER WHO IS SISTER OR DECEIT AFTER DECEIT BY A. GRIBOEDOV AND P. VIAZEMSKII .............................................................. 142
LIST OF FIGURES

1. Théâtre du Vaudeville in Paris. Engraving of the Mid-XIX Century . . . . . 16
5. Genre Presentation in the Repertoire of the Paris Minor Theatres in 1815 -1830. ....................................................................... 20
6. Correlation of the Original Russian and Foreign Plays in the Repertoire of the Russian Theatres: 1800-1811 .................................................. 57
7. Genre Peculiarities of the Repertoire of Russian Theatres: 1800-1811 . 58
8. Moscow Boarding School for the Young Men of Noble Birth at Moscow University ................................................................. 67
9. The Quartet (Scene N° 9 of Roslavlev Sr., Pan Chizhevskii, Antosia, and Ludvisia from the Vaudeville Who is Brother, Who Is Sister, or Deceit after Deceit by A. Verstovskii .............................. 154
10. The Opening Song of Antosia and Ludvisia from the Vaudeville Who Is Brother, Who Is Sister, or Deceit after Deceit by A. Verstovskii. ....... 160
11. St-Petersburg Population in 1834. .............................................. 186
12. Moscow Population in 1835. .................................................... 187
13. Vaudeville in the Repertoire of the St.-Petersburg Theatres in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century ..................................................... 190
14. Vaudeville in The Repertoire of the Moscow Malyi Theatre in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century ................................................. 191

x
ABSTRACT

There is no significant scholarly work on the history of the Russian vaudeville. The author of the dissertation makes an attempt to explore the history of vaudeville in Russia from 1812, when the first original vaudeville was written by A. Shakhovskoi, to the 1850s, when vaudeville as a genre was finalized as a form and brought to its classic completion.

Two phases of the history of vaudeville in Russia, aristocratic and democratic-raznochinnyi, are considered in close connection with the political, social, and cultural events of Russian society of the time.

The first phase embraces the period from 1812, when the first original Russian vaudeville was produced in St-Petersburg, to 1825, when tsar Aleksandr I died and Nicholas I inherited the crown of the Russian empire.

The second phase, democratic-raznochinnyi, includes the years from 1826 until 1855, the years in which Nicholas I ruled. The division of the history of Russian vaudeville is made on the assumption that political events in Russian society always have been closely connected with and often caused changes in its cultural, art, and literary life.

Vaudevillists such as A. Shakhovskoi, N. Khmelnitskii, A. Griboedov, and A. Pisarev present the first phase. F. Koni, P. Karatygin, and N. Nekrasov familiarize the reader with the second phase. The author of this dissertation analyzes the most exemplary works of each of the aforementioned authors.

For better understanding the peculiarities of the development of vaudeville in Russia, the dissertation also presents a broad socio-cultural background of the
first half of the nineteenth century and shows how theatre in general, and vaudeville in particular, mirrored the changes of the socio-cultural life of the nation in their own way.
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION. VAUDEVILLE IN THE RUSSIAN THEATRE HISTORIOGRAPHY

Historical Overview

Vaudeville as a theatre genre emerged on the Russian stage around 1812 and became a dominant genre for the next four decades. These decades reveal the illustrious development of vaudeville in Russia from its first appearance in the form of French imitations, translations, and remakes to the later original pieces that possess all the qualities of Russian national drama. Nevertheless, theatre historians, though recognizing the extreme popularity of this genre, have given scant attention to the form: no significant work has been written on the history of the Russian vaudeville.

This study is an attempt to fill in the “blank spot” in the history of Russian drama of the first half of the nineteenth century. It will examine the nature and extent of the role played by the vaudeville on the Russian stage. This dissertation will trace the development of vaudeville from 1812 to 1855, contextualizing the genre in the political, social, and cultural currents of Russian society at that time.

The value and significance of such a study is not merely in “filling in the blank spots” though that in itself would justify this research; very often, minor entertainment forms or popular works can give us a more vivid picture of a certain time, environment, immediate concerns, and modus vivendi of people than the more respected and noble genres, such as tragedy or high comedy. Generally speaking, every dramatist in his writing directly or by allusion, mimicking or arguing, deliberately or subconsciously represents the unique sensibility of his
society. And, indeed, vaudeville did well reflect the peculiarities of its time. In order to more fully understand the role of vaudeville in the history of the Russian theatre (and Russian society generally), this research takes up the following tasks and objectives:

1. To take a close look at the political, social, and cultural aspects of the Russian society of the first half of the nineteenth century.

2. To analyze the texts of the most popular vaudevilles, to establish the connection (if any) between the vaudevilles’ texts and the state of the Russian society, and to analyze this connection in light of how, by what means and methods vaudeville reflected these aspects.

3. From this analysis, to define the role of vaudeville in the life of Russian society in general, and in the history of Russian drama, in particular.

In the first half of the nineteenth century vaudeville was extremely popular in the Russian theatre. Each season presented two-three hundred new vaudevilles in both capitals, Moscow and St-Petersburg. Vaudevilles were staged as curtain-raisers as well as concluding pieces of theatre evenings. New vaudevilles were also demanded by actors for their bénéfices, as pieces which guaranteed the actors’ success. Russian theatre-goers rushed to the theatres in order not to miss a favorite actor in a new vaudeville; in these shows beautiful actresses, cross-dressed as hussar officers, delighted young (and not so young) aristocrats.

For the complete list of the vaudeville by the Russian authors considered for this work see Appendix B: Index of Plays.
Vaudevilles also served as weapons in literary struggle when the author, through the couplets sung by the characters of his play, mocked or ridiculed his literary rival. Vaudeville’s *apropos*, or rhymed commentaries on the hot topics of the day, created the impression of contemporaneity and reality of the theatrical action on the stage and let the audience feel a part of the show. These epigram-like couplets were memorized and repeated the next day at the fashionable literary salons, written down in personal journals and diaries, and sent, as part of the latest news, in letters to friends. At that time, vaudeville was as much a part of the everyday life of the Russian urban society as political news, literary novelties, or the premieres of ballets, operas, or dramas at the imperial theatres.

The incredible popularity of this genre in nineteenth-century Russia warrants scholarly attention and invites critical speculation. Vaudeville, as a cultural phenomenon, well reflected the major issues of Russian social and cultural life. One of the most important questions at that time was that of nationalism and its influence on Russian drama. A central task of this dissertation will thus involve this fundamental issue: how did the popular entertainment form of vaudeville evidence and express the idea of Russian nationalism?

My research in the history of Russian vaudeville of the nineteenth century has unambiguously established the popularity of vaudeville as a fact. At the same time, it has revealed the lack of scholarly attention given to this genre. While the history of the Russian literature and drama of the nineteenth century has long attracted both Russian and foreign scholars (with numerous scholarly works on the Golden Age of Russian culture), surprisingly, the history of the Russian vaudeville
has not drawn in-depth research or evaluation. Two possible reasons might be suggested to explain this situation.

The first reason is that the Golden Age of Russian literature presented such outstanding playwrights as Alexander Griboedov (comedy), Alexander Pushkin (folk drama and tragedy), Iurii Lermontov (romantic drama), and Nikolai Gogol (satiric comedy), whose dramatic works re-defined the development of national drama and brought it to heights Russian theatre had not known before. Most likely, the significance of these men of letters has overshadowed the modest role of the authors of vaudevilles in the history of Russian theatre.

The second reason for the lack of research might lie in the traditional attitude of Russian theatre critics towards vaudeville, as a genre. Traditionally in Russia, a writer is considered a public figure; his works first and foremost are called to serve the society in expressing the ideas of “the good and the beautiful.” Similarly, theatre in Russia was not considered purely as entertainment. It also had to be a school for morality, a tribune from which the ideas of educating and improving society had to be expressed. Considering this point, the emergence of vaudeville onto the Russian stage, a genre whose very purpose was not to educate or propagate, but to amuse and delight, i.e., to entertain the public, caused arguments and diverse, often negative responses from Russian theatre critics. The nature of the genre contradicted the generally accepted idea of theatre. Moreover, the critics considered vaudeville not only socially meaningless but also strange to the national character of Russian drama. Was that true? Was the genre borrowed from another culture able to express the problems of Russian
culture? What was the role of vaudeville at the time when Russian theatre went through the complex and diverse process of creating original national drama? Did vaudeville remain a foreign trifle on Russian stage? Or did it change in time, gained the features of original Russian drama, and was able to contribute to the development of Russian national drama? At the beginning of the nineteenth century, many critics answered these questions negatively. This research advances a contrary opinion.

As illustration of one of the harshest critics of vaudeville was Nikolai Gogol. He repeatedly attacked vaudeville during his lifetime in articles and private letters to his friends. Being influenced by ideas of nationalism, he criticized the attempts of Russian playwrights to create an original vaudeville, which, in his opinion, was foreign to the Russian national character. He ridiculed the genre itself and, along with it, the whole French nation for giving birth to such an unworthy (in his opinion) genre. Gogol wrote:

A Russian vaudeville! Really, it's a little strange, strange because this light, colorless plaything could be born only among the French, a nation lacking in its character a deep and stable expression; but when a Russian still somewhat rigorous and ponderous character is forced to spin around as a petit-maître. . . I just imagine how our stout and quick on the uptake merchant with his broad beard, hasn’t ever known on his foot anything but a heavy boot, put a narrow ball-shoe and stockings à jour on one of his feet instead of that heavy boot, and simply left his other foot in the boot, and stood this way to be the first to start the French quadrille.1

What Gogol tried to mock was a subject of pride for French poet, critic, and novelist Théophile Gautier (1811-1872):

This comedy, called vaudeville, is a diversified form, animated with witty, sowing Attic salt in handfuls, and showing customs with a casual yet pointed veracity. ... This is a purely French genre. The Greeks had their
tragedy; the Romans, their comedy; the English and the Germans, their drama; but vaudeville is completely ours.²

Gautier had his reasons to be proud. By the middle of the nineteenth century, vaudeville did what Napoleon Bonaparte had failed to do: vaudeville conquered the European continent. It became one of the most popular theatre genres in all Europe. Russia, along with hundreds of trashy vaudevilles (mainly remakes of third-rate French originals) yearly produced examples of good vaudeville writing, including pieces by Alexander Shakhovskoi, Nikolai Khmel’nitskii, and Alexander Pisarev. But in spite of these obvious achievements of the Russian vaudevillists, Gogol was not able to notice the positive side in the development of this genre in Russia. In his 1845 meaningfully-titled article О Театре, об одностороннем взгляде на театр и вообще об односторонности (About Theatre, About the One-Sided View of Theatre, and, in general, About One-Sidedness), he criticized the contemporary theatre in Russia, rejecting vaudeville and some other genres as worthless, and expressed his understanding of what had to be done to improve Russian theatre:

It [theatre] is such a rostrum, from which much good might be said to the world. Just separate the highest theatre proper from all kinds of ballet jumping around, from vaudevilles, melodramas, and those tinsel-magnificent performances which please the depravity of taste and the depravity of heart, and then have a look at what theatre can be.³

Vaudeville, in the opinion of those who shared Gogol’s point of view, could not suggest anything “good” to the world (or this “good” was insignificant in comparison with great Russian drama), and, consequently, was “separated” from the high art in the history of Russian theatre. Theatre historians usually only
“mention” the extreme popularity of this genre while writing on other theatre subjects, but the history of Russian vaudeville per se has never been written.

Nevertheless, Russian vaudeville did not develop and gain its enormous popularity in a vacuum; it belonged to its time and was conditioned by this time. So, to understand the reasons of popularity of this genre means to understand the time. For this purpose, the method of establishing connections between political and cultural conditions of the Russian society in each considered period and the development of original Russian vaudeville, will be used throughout this work. Vaudeville, no matter how “little” this “little dramatic form” was, mirrored the life of the Russian society in its own way. Moreover, without this reflection, vaudeville would always remain a foreigner on Russian stage. Again, to understand the national particularities of Russian vaudeville means to understand the socio-political and cultural background of nineteenth-century Russia. That is why this dissertation considers these two constituents parallel to each other.

To fill in the gaps in the knowledge of Russian theatre and to trace the development of this genre the author had to review the works available to date. The nineteenth century, the Golden Age of Russian literature, has been the subject of continuous interest to theatre historians. Many voluminous works have been written on the Russian drama of this period. As for Russian vaudeville proper, the bibliographical data presented very few sources. The State Library of Russian Federation in Moscow, which I contacted via e-mail, could not name any more or less solid publication on the history of Russian vaudeville. The article Democratic Tendencies in the Russian Vaudeville of 30s-40s of the XIX century by D. L.
Brudnyi (Брудный Д. Л., Демократические тенденции в русском водевиле 30-40 гг. XIX века, Ученые записки Киргизского пед. ин-та”, 1957, вып. 2) was named as one of the main sources in the “Bibliographia” to the article on vaudeville in Literary Encyclopedia (Краткая Литературная Энциклопедия. Т.1. Государственное Научное Издательство “Советская Энциклопедия”, 1962, стр.1003). The copy of this article was found through the help of Mr. Jan Adamczyk from the Slavic Reference Service at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Three introductions by M. Paushkin, Vs. Uspenskii, and N. Shantarenkov to different anthologies of Russian vaudevilles published (accordingly) in 1937, 1959, and 1970 were obtained through the LSU Interlibrary Borrowing Department. The electronic copy of the most recent (1999) one-page report Russian Vaudeville: To the Question of the Genesis of the Genre by O. K. Orlova presented at the XI Purishev Readings at the Moscow State Pedagogical Institute was purchased via Internet at the State Library of the Russian Federation. Unfortunately, this document presents the most common information, available in any textbook on theatre history. Even in a such very general overview of the subject, the author managed to state some absurdities, like: “Водевиль с легкостью перенимает элементы других жанров и меняет свою жанровую форму.”

The article by Brudnyi and the Paushkin’s Introduction to the Старый Русский Водевиль (Old Russian Vaudeville, 1937), though providing some

Vaudeville easily borrows the elements of other genres and changes its own genre form.
interesting details on the subject, were written to fit into the official doctrine of
socialist realism and presented rather tendentious efforts of the authors to explain
the popularity and significance of vaudeville by its democratic overtones. The
introductions by Uspenskii (Russian Vaudeville, 1959) and Shantarenkov (Russian
Vaudeville, 1970) give a very general overview of the development of this genre
in Russia, which do not differ much from the information suggested by the seven
volume edition of История Русского Драматического Театра (History of
Russian Drama Theatre).

The abovementioned works served the research well in terms of
understanding the general development of vaudeville, but certainly they were not
enough for understanding the role of vaudeville in the development of Russian
original drama. Additional data for this dissertation was collected by scavenging
“crumbs” from the published diaries, journals, personal letters, memoirs of actors,
men of letters, and playwrights. Bits of information about vaudeville were found in
adjacent fields, such as the history of censorship in Russia, the history of Russian
journalism, the history of Russian literary criticism, and the history of Russian
music. Besides its immediate purpose (vaudeville), the study of these subjects
resulted in broader knowledge of the period as a background for understanding the
development of vaudeville in Russia.

The foremost primary sources were the plays themselves. Besides the
aforementioned anthologies, some vaudevilles were published in different editions,
like Selected Works by Prince A. Shakhovskoi (1961), or Selected Works in Eight
Volumes by N. Nekrasov (1966). The discovery of the 1816 edition of one of the
first Russian vaudevilles *Lomonosov* by Shakhovskoi, which was found among other vaudevilles in a special collection in the European Division of the Library of Congress with the help of Mr. Harold Leich, was a stroke of great fortune.

Access to as many original vaudeville texts as possible was essential for this dissertation to avoid inexactitude in the analysis of the plays. In this respect, some problems encountered on the early stage of the research served as a good reminder of what one should not do in a scholarly work.

Thus, the analysis of the original text of *Lomonosov* served, as a certain indicator for credibility of the scholars writing about this vaudeville. The problem was that some authors left the impression that they never read the play and were acquainted with the plot only through another’s writing. The inaccuracy of one writer led to the misreading or misinterpretation of another. The error of one writer was repeated by another without discerning the *status quo* of the matter. In such writings, a word or a phrase taken out of context, could express what the author of the considered vaudeville did not intend to express. So, during research, the task also was to sift the wheat from the chaff, i.e., to establish the objective facts before studying them. The analysis of the primary sources i.e., the vaudevilles themselves, allowed to make the right conclusions. Understandably, the more original vaudevilles could be analyzed, the more accurate results would be achieved. Another problem was the discovery that, sometimes, the information about a certain vaudeville was not exactly accurate (mainly, the facts regarding dates or names); therefore, several sources had to be compared to choose the most valid or, at least, plausible.
The author of this dissertation encountered yet another problem in the varied opinions as to definition of the genre of some plays. The same play might be defined as a comedy by one source and as a vaudeville by another. Thus, theatre historian B. Varneke (1951) considers N. Khmelnitskii’s pieces *The Prattler, Mutual Trials, Castles in the Air*, and *The High Society Incident* vaudevilles, while the editor and author of the historical commentaries of the Russian anthology *Versified Comedy of the End of the XVII - Beginning of the XIX Century* (1964), M. Iankovskii, (1964) defines them as comedies. I met the same confusion not only in the writings of current scholars but among the nineteenth century authors also. N. Nekrasov, a poet, theatre critic, and vaudevillist, within the same article (*Article Three* of the “Review of the New Plays Produced at the Aleksandrinskii Theatre”)⁵, called the same piece alternatively a comedy, and a vaudeville, using the terms synonymously. Nekrasov certainly knew the difference between the two genres, a comedy and a vaudeville. The next year (1842) in his review *Petersburg Theatres*, commenting on the premiere of the translated Scribe’s comedy *Which One of Us?* he writes about the difference in understanding the two genres:

Водевиль мил, забавен и остроумен. Неизвестно почему он назван на афише “комедией”. Разве потому, что русский переводчик не поместил в нем куплетов?. .⁶“

---

¹ *Just an Angel When She’s in Public, Simply Satan When She’s at Home* by D. Lenskii

² The vaudeville was sweet, funny, and witty. It’s not known why it was called “a comedy.” Is it only because the Russian translator did not place some couplets into it?
This short comment shows that, at that time, on the one hand, a couplet was considered a significant part of a vaudeville. On the other hand, Nekrasov did not consider a couplet an obligatory constituent of a vaudeville or else Scribe’s play would have been simply a comedy.

So, for the clarity of this dissertation, the task was to set up the genre definition in order to select plays necessary for the analysis. In this work, in the respect of the definition of the genre of a play, two principles are basic for solving this problem: first, the definition of the author of a play and, secondly, the analysis of the text of the play in question. To give the reader the unequivocal understanding of the subject this dissertation deals with, the peculiar features of a vaudeville as a genre will be detailed later in this chapter along with the brief historical overview of its development. The genre definition accepted in this work helped to determine original Russian vaudevilles for this work.

The 40 plays analyzed for this dissertation present both the aristocratic and democratic-raznochinnyi phases of the historic development of vaudeville. This sampling allowed me (a) to analyze the particularity of vaudeville as a dramatic genre in Russia in general and (b) through the analysis of each play, put in connection the with political, social, and cultural conditions of the society at each given period, to define the role of vaudeville in the history of the Russian theatre of the first half of the nineteenth century.

It would be proper before analyzing the history of vaudeville in Russia to look at the two central constituents of this dissertation, vaudeville and Russian theatre, at the point in time when they were introduced to each other. For this
purpose, a brief overview of the origin and development of vaudeville before it 
came to Russia will be considered later in this chapter. Chapter 2 will consider the 
situation in the Russian theatre in close connection with political and social conditions of the society immediately before the emergence of vaudeville.

Origin of Vaudeville

The following short description of the origin of vaudeville was compiled from numerous sources. Different books on theatre history (either in English, in French, or in Russian) usually repeat the same information; the more circumstantially organized article presented by the website of the Catholic Encyclopedia helped to put the origin of vaudeville in connection with the political life of fifteenth century Normandy, the place and time of vaudeville’s birth.

The territory of a French province Normandy, which had a strategical importance, was a subject of a long time struggle between the Normans, English and French. In 1431, the English tried to establish their domination by executing of Blessed Joan of Arc at Rouen. Nevertheless, English rule was insecure and marked by a series of conspiracies and revolts in 1435-1436. One of the most famous revolts was the one of Val de Vire (Valley of Vire); it gave birth to a specific ballad literature Vaux de Vire (Voices of Vire) where the name of Olivier Basselin (1350-1408), a fuller and an amateurish poet, became the most popular. In 1719 J.-J. Rousseau mentioned his name defining vaudeville in his Dictionnaire de Musique and explained the origin of the word vaudeville:

Sorte de Chanson à Couplets, qui roule ordinairement sur des sujets badins ou satiriques. On fait remonter l’origine de ce petit Poëme jusqu’au
règne de Charlemagne; mais, selon la plus commune opinion, il fut inventé par un certain Basselin, Foulon de Vire en Normandie; à telle sorte, pour danser sur ces Chants, on s’assemblait dans le Val de Vire, ils furent appelés, dit-on, Vaux de Vire, puis par corruption Vaudevilles.  

The songs-ballads, written on historic themes about the English invasion of Normandy, later began to lose their political meaning and became more entertaining in character. In the eighteenth century the popular playwrights began to insert songs, namely vaudevilles, into their comedies performed at the prominent fairs of Saint Germain, Saint Laurent, and Saint Ovide. Very often vaudevilles had a satirical character, what brought them success with the democratic audiences.

At the beginning the popular and well known melodies were used for vaudevilles in the plays. Later, professional composers began to write original music for vaudevilles. The form of the poetic texts also changed, from the ballad-type poem to a couplet containing topical allusions. Vocal music in “grand” comedy (from Regnard to Beaumarchais) began to be called vaudeville. In the nineteenth century, vaudeville gradually began to lose its quality as an inserted number or divertissement and became a necessary part of the dramatic action, not as some kind of decoration but as a means of a development of the action. The name “vaudeville” broadened its meaning and began to signify not only a song but

*A kind of songs in couplets, which deal usually with gay and satirical plots. They suppose the origin of such little poems refer to the time of reign of Charles the Great; but, according to common opinion, it was invented by a certain Basselin, a fuller from Vire in Normandy; because of the fact that people gathered to dance to these songs in the Valley of Vire, they were called Voices of Vire, where from the distorted Vaudeville comes.
a dramatic piece of a certain type. The article “Vaudeville” in the aforementioned Catholic Encyclopedia points out:

These songs, which later became bacchic or amorous in character, and which subsequently developed into the popular drama known as "Vaudeville."\textsuperscript{10}

Vaudevilles, as popular theatrical performances were performed by different companies at city fairs. Later, as Angela Pao states in her study *The Orient of the Boulevards on nineteenth-century popular French theatre*, most of the fairground troupes began to move to the Boulevard du Temple, which was the northern edge of Paris in the late 1750s and the 1760s. Here the companies were able to move into more or less permanent structures situated amid a wide variety of street performers, carnival sideshows, puppet shows, cafés, gambling dens, and brothels. At their new location on the Boulevard du Temple, these theatres shared in the general popularity of the entertainment offered to a very diverse public.\textsuperscript{11}

Among these forms of entertainment, vaudeville remained as one of the most popular for many years.

In time vaudeville lost its satirical character and turned to pure entertaining content without political allusions. At the end of the eighteenth century a new Théâtre du Vaudeville was founded. It became very popular and successfully competed with other minor theatres in Paris. Parisians would not be Parisians if they did not respond to this event the way they did and it would not be about The Vaudeville if they did not respond by an epigram-like couplet, alluding to the place of the inauguration of the Vaudeville, the Little Pantheon Hall in Paris:

La meilleure fondation dramatique de cette époque est celle du Vaudeville, inauguré rue de Chartres le 12 janvier 1792, dans la salle du
The best dramatic institution of this epoch is The Vaudeville, has been inaugurated on January 12, 1792, in the Little Pantheon Hall, because in our country, like in Paris as well, that's how the life usually runs: there is Pantheon for the grand men and there is Pantheon for the little ones. **

* Petit Panthéon: Car dans le pays où nous sommes On voit qu'il existe à Paris Et le Panthéon des grand hommes, Et le Panthéon des petits. *"*12

---

" The best dramatic institution of this epoch is The Vaudeville, has been inaugurated on January 12, 1792, in the Little Pantheon Hall, because in our country, like in Paris as well, that’s how the life usually runs: there is Pantheon for the grand men and there is Pantheon for the little ones.

" The image of the Vaudeville Theatre from J. B. Matthews’, The Theatres of Paris is used in accordance with US Code, Title 17.
Fig. 2. Edouard Leon Cortès (1882-1969). Théâtre du Vaudeville.*

Fig. 3. Paris, 2001. The Building of the Former Théatre du Vaudeville, nowadays the movie theatre owned by Paramount Pictures, Inc.”

* The reproduction of E. L. Cortès’s Theatre du Vaudeville is used with the kind permission of the owner, Mr. Richard Lynch, Hammer Galleries, New York.

** The photo image is the property of the author of this dissertation.
The Vaudeville Theatre became extremely popular. As Marvin Carlson noted in *The French Stage in the Nineteenth Century*:

One of the most frequented new theatres of the Revolutionary period had proved to be the Vaudeville, founded in 1792 by Piis and Barré to present this form of light comedy richly decorated with songs. . . . Before Napoleon came to power, vaudevilles were frequently based on social issues, class questions and political concerns, causing not a few disputes with the various parties in power since the founding of the theatre. After about 1804, however, the genre turned away from political and social concerns. ¹³

P. Piis (1755-1832) and M. Barre (1749-1832), were playwrights and régisseurs, “who had quarrelled with Sédaine, then the manager of the Opéra Comique,”¹⁴ to what fact Parisians were obliged to have the Theatre du Vaudeville. By 1814, when the Russian troops occupied the French capital and the Treaty of Paris was signed, the popularity of the Boulevard Theatres (the Théâtre Du Vaudeville was among them), which had slowed down during the war years, began to grow again. The following chart shows the annual take of the box-office of four minor Paris theatres from 1810 through 1813 (the last number of the Caïté refers to 1814), which reflects the increase in attendance of these theatres by Parisian audience.

The chart shows the growth of vaudeville popularity after 1812, as well other entertaining genres. As Carlson also mentions, there were many authors who presented their works in the genre of vaudeville (the most popular Capelle, Gouffé, Laujon, and Desaugiers), but it had to be Eugène Scribe (1791-1861) who came to raise “the vaudeville to great popular success and even to a certain literary respectability.”¹⁵
Fig 4. The Yearly Take of the Box-Office of the Variétés, Gaîté, Vaudeville, and l'Ambigu: 1810-1813.

*The chart is created on the numeric data brought up by Maurice Albert in his *Les Théâtres des Boulevards* (footnote 1, page 248).
During the next fifty years French vaudeville became the leading genre on Paris stage. As it seen from the chart above, the number of new productions of comic genres prevailed during 1815-1830s on Paris stage. Tragedy was ousted out by melodrama. Vaudeville was a champion among comic genres. The public sentiment of the after-war years was expressed in the slogan *Vive la paix!* and the spirit of joy and merriment flooded Paris theatres. Maurice Albert described this period like this:

---

*The chart is created using the numerical data from M. Carlson’s *The French Stage in the Nineteenth Century* (p.53).
La Muse du boulevard arrive, qui leur annonce la bonne nouvelle. ... Le Melodrame préside un tournoi exécuté par des personnages historiques et romanesques, et La Pantomime un ballet, où la comédie, le vaudeville, l'opéra-comique et la chanson, conduits par l'Amour, mêlent leur gaîté, leurs refrains et leurs rires.¹⁶

The amusing and merry vaudeville remained one of the favorite genres of Parisians and, as far as Paris still remained a cultural capital of Europe, vaudeville, as a part of this culture, conquered one European capital after another.

Before considering vaudeville’s fast invasion of Moscow and Petersburg scenes, a look should be taken at what vaudeville proper had become as a genre by the beginning of the nineteenth century. Vaudeville’s characteristic features were those which Russian audiences enthusiastically accepted, first, in translated pieces and, later, exploiting these features in creating original plays. French vaudeville of the beginning of the nineteenth century is a starting point to trace the development of this genre in Russia during the next forty years.

Vaudeville as Genre

Vaudeville, as a dramatic piece, is, usually, a light comedy with music, songs, dances. Its plot almost always revolves around a couple of young characters being in love with each other and having to overcome all kinds of obstacles on the way to their happiness. Some vaudevilles are just dramatized anecdotes; others present funny, unusual or ridiculous characters; and still others

¹ The Muse of boulevards has arrived and announced some good news... Melodrama is taking over the historic or romantic heroes, Pantomime is ruling in ballet, just as in comedy, in vaudeville, in comic opera, and in song Cupid is conducting, mixing together their gaiety, their refrains, and their laughter.
try to impress the audience mainly with stage effects, exotic environment, ethnic coloration. One of the distinguishing features of vaudeville was its mobility; hot topics of the day, current issues dealing with different events of everyday life could be easily interwoven either into the plot itself, or expressed by means of couplets. Very often, the theme(s) of the couplets had little in common with the story. Authors used this device to express their opinion on different subjects (political, cultural, or artistic). A couplet, set to a well known or easily remembered melody, expressed in aphoristic form the attitude of the author towards these topics.

Some words should be said about the musical side of a vaudeville. The fact that vaudeville often used well known melodies for its couplets receives sometimes a slightly disdainful attitude of some authors writing on the history of vaudeville; they interpret the usage of a pre-existing melody as another proof of the insignificance and low quality of the genre in general. It is far from being true.

First, there were many talented composers who wrote music for vaudeville, as in France, so in Russia. So, the tradition of using popular music for the couplets cannot be explained simply by the rejection of composers to work in this genre. Secondly, in the history of the French vaudeville, since 1807 according to the Code Napoléon (till the end of the Empire), all minor theatres were not allowed to present new, specially composed for their productions music; only popular tunes had to be used, though, as M. Carlson stated in his *The Theater of the French Revolution*, “this law was not always respected.” So, availability dictated this formal convention, not lack of interest or talent. The third, and the most important consideration, is that the role of the borrowed musical pieces, incorporated into the
dramatic text of vaudeville so far has not been studied. No deep and solid work on this subject has been published. The only exception is the article “Playing It Again: A Study of Vaudeville and the Aesthetics of Incorporation in Restoration France” by Barbara T. Cooper, published in the Nineteenth-Century Contexts. In her very interesting analysis, the author writes about the function of the pre-existing musical pieces incorporated into the dramatic text of nineteenth century French vaudeville:

. . . while theatre-goers eagerly awaited new plays on subjects dictated by current events, they neither expected nor desired true originality. Authors of vaudevilles therefore continued to employ a strategy of incorporation and reference which made their works seem at once familiar and new. The distinctiveness derived from the topicality of their subject matter was mitigated by the use of stereotypes and conventions while recycled music, gleaned from many sources, fostered a sense of cultural continuity and community.18

The “strategy of incorporation and reference” Cooper writes about, was characteristic not only for the French vaudeville, but for the Russian vaudeville as well. Sometimes, well-known musical pieces were used in a vaudeville to create a comical effect based on unexpected combination of the music and lyrics.

Thus, F. Koni in his vaudeville Студент, артист, хорист и аферист (He’s a Student, an Artist, a Chorister, and a Rascal), used the popular melody of Giacomo Meyerbeer’s (1791-1864) Mefisto-Waltz. One of the characters sang to this music such lines: “I hasten by post-chaise from here to Kharkov and I will be back to see you in eight weeks.”

The humor of this couplet was in the fact, that everybody knew the state of Russian roads and the “quickness” of traveling by post-chaise. The lines, put on
The theme of a *road*, from romantic/nostalgic meditations to humorous/mocking descriptions is one of the main themes in Russian literature. For this particular case, cp., Viazemskii’s sarcastic lines in his poem *The Station*:

"...Driving in Russia is unhampered / on two occasions only: when / our McAdam – or McEve –, winter accomplishers, crackling with wrath, / her devastating raid / armors the roads with the cast iron of ice, / and powder snow betimes / with fluffy sand covers her tracks; ..."

Viazemskii plays here with two words: the name of John Loudon McAdam (1756-1836), road engineer, and the word ‘winter,’ which in Russian has feminine gender. So, Viazemskii, calling winter “our McAdam,” immediately “corrects” himself: “or McEve.”

For such purposes vaudeville was even more suitable than comedy. Vaudeville did not demand elaborated characters, complex intrigue; it did not take much time to write; it had a small cast; it was easy and inexpensive to stage it, because, as a rule, a very conventional setting was used and costumes were pulled out from the stock. The author’s ideas expressed through a couplet gave the audience the sense of contemporaneity of the stage action and the sense of connectedness with it. Very often a couplet gained a character of an epigram.

More detailed analysis of the role of music in the Russian vaudeville will be given on the example of A. Verstovskii’s score to the vaudeville *Who Is Brother Who Is Sister, or Deceit After Deceit* by A. Griboedov and Prince P. Viazemskii in Chapter Four.
The best plays of this genre have not lost their meaning and qualities and are still produced nowadays all over the world. As we shall see later in this work (chapters dealing with particular plays), couplet in Russian vaudeville became one of the devices in creating an original national vaudeville.

The general tendency of Russian drama toward socially meaningful themes could not help avoiding vaudeville. From 1830s social aspects began to emerge into vaudeville as a bitter satire on different aspects of the Russian life: tzar Nikolai I’s regime, corruption and venality of the official press, theatre behind the scenes intrigues, bribery of the court system. Under the conditions of a strong censorship an author had to be very careful about expressing his satirical thoughts; usually such ideas were put in couplets of this or that character; in case of trouble with censorship the couplet could be removed or replaced by some “innocent” lines without damaging the plot line.

At the same time, it would be incorrect to present vaudeville as a satirical genre called to struggle for social improvements. The principal purpose of vaudeville was to amuse, to entertain, and to delight a theatregoer. It never had serious intentions and did not strive to immortalize itself in theatre history. This very feature of vaudeville could never be accepted by some critics who, in a Russian tradition to consider theatre as a public tribune, did not want to put up with such superficial, light-weighted, and, thus, unworthy in their opinion, genre and criticized it severely. The vaudeville playwrights did not accept the criticism, *

* The best plays of this genre have not lost their meaning and qualities and are still produced nowadays all over the world.
considering, fairly, that vaudeville might be judged only by the rules established by vaudeville itself. One of the most popular vaudevillists in the 1830-40s Dmitrii Lenskii wrote, responding to such critics:

When did a vaudeville strive for any long duration?
How can it reach old age without evading blight?
And if it does not lisp, and if it isn't bright
As happy babes so full of animation,
It surely will be doomed and loose all its delight!19

Since that time the words “vaudeville character,” “vaudeville situation” became idiomatic expressions in the Russian language defining a not serious, light-minded person and/or humorous or a much-ado-about-nothing situation. Along with humorous/satirical couplet the main features of vaudeville as of a dramatic piece were swift action, witty intrigue and counter-intrigue, comical situations, lightness and particular brilliance of a dialogue (in the style of marivaudage), and stock characters or social types easily recognized by the audience. All of these features are common for both French and Russian vaudeville but, as we shall see later, by giving the situation and characters recognizable national character, Russian vaudevillists made this genre national phenomenon. In other words, French vaudeville became Russian only when it turned to Russian characters, situations, and themes.

There is another important characteristic of vaudeville as a genre. Besides the abovementioned features, vaudeville (both French and Russian) often used various outer means of expression what allows to speak about different types of vaudeville or, one could say, genres within the genre: comedy-vaudeville, opera-vaudeville, proverb-vaudeville, etc. Donald Witt in his dissertation *Eugene Scribe*
and Nineteenth-century Theater: From Vaudeville to Grand Opera\textsuperscript{20} distinguished three types of the French vaudeville: vaudeville; the comédie, mêlée de vaudeville; and the comédie-vaudeville. Later in his work, he called these types genres and granted E. Scribe with the invention of one of them, namely the comédie-vaudeville. It would be out of the concerns of the present work to go as far as to the detailed research of the genesis of the genre. But, for the clarity of the present work, Mr. Witt’s conclusions, as far it comes to the genre definitions, might be easily argued.

As a proof of the birth of a new genre, comédie-vaudeville, Mr. Witts described the characteristic features of the comédie-vaudeville, which, according to M. Witt, distinguished it from other genres:

1. light-hearted plot or story line
2. cast with chorus
3. finale instead of vaudeville at the end
4. abundant use of properties
5. songs integral to the plot.\textsuperscript{21}

The groundlessness of such definition might be seen from the following contra-arguments (point by point, in the same order):

1. this characteristic is common for any type of a vaudeville;
2. an opera with or without a chorus is still an opera;
3. it is a general tendency of vaudeville’s development in time, what, finally, gave birth to a new genre in America, namely, \textit{musical} (some other musical’s parents can be found too);
4. since what time the quantity of props on stage began to define the genre of a dramatic piece?
5. see # 3.

All types of vaudeville possess the features which were discussed above (structure, thematicality, witty intrigue, certain way of characterization of the dramatis personae, music, couplet, swift action, marivaudage) and which, strictly
speaking, make vaudeville vaudeville. The differences between the vaudeville types are not significant enough to speak about them as of different genres. So, it would be more correct to speak about different types of vaudeville at different periods of its historical development.

Very often the author’s definition of his new vaudeville could not be referred to a certain “genre within the genre,” in other words, the piece did not present characteristic and typical features what would give the right to consider it as a type or “sub-genre,” but rather gave a description of a play to be presented with some kind of an advertising or a pressing-an-invitation-on-the-audience-to-come character. Prince Alexander Shakhovskoi, the author of the first Russian original vaudevilles, was especially inventive in this matter. Here are some examples of the author’s definitions of his own vaudevilles:

- vaudeville-ballet in different metrical and free verses, with machines, with the flood of the whole theatre, with different dances, and music compiled from the folk songs;

- romantic vaudeville, compiled from the oriental legends, with new parables, choruses, ballets, and magnificent spectacle.

One more particular feature of vaudeville is important to explain the sudden popularity of this genre in Russia. As it was said before, it was easy to stage a new vaudeville (stock costumes, conventional set, small cast, etc.). Such mobility and

А. Шаховской. Девкалионов потоп, или Меркурий-предъявитель. (Deucalion’s Flood or Mercury-Claimant); 1829. Три дела, или Евфратский пеликан. (Three Affairs, or The Euphrates Pelican,) 1823. Алепский горбун, или Размен ума и красоты. (Alep Hunch-back or Exchange of Wit and Beauty).
plainness suited well the system of benefit performances, which was firmly established in the Russian theatre at the beginning of the nineteenth century. It made the journey of the vaudeville from the author’s desk to the stage quick and beneficial for both sides: an actor received something ‘new and fresh,’ the author could boast off about his connection with theatrical circles, what was quite fashionable at the time. As Nicholas Evreinov wrote in his *Histoire Du Théâtre Russe*:

> L’usage des soirées au bénéfice de tel ou tel acteur était alors si répandu qu’il nécessitait constamment du nouvelles pièces. Un léger vaudeville assurait au bénéficiaire un rôle brillant, tout neuf, et qui faisait rire.²²

So the genre particularities of vaudeville were at the beginning of the nineteenth century when it made its first appearance on Russian stage. Such type of performance, probably, had in mind Shakhovskoi, when he attempted to use the French-born genre for creating an original Russian vaudeville. His experiment opened the gates for triumphal invasion of the Russian stage by this newcomer.

Proceeding from all these considerations, the structure of the dissertation is as follows. After setting up the subject of the research (Russian vaudeville), its origin and genre specificity (what was done in this chapter), Chapter 2 presents the overview of the socio-political and cultural life of the Russian society at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Before the analysis of the first Russian original

---

* The custom of giving the evening performances for the benefit of this or that actor, which was widespread at that time, constantly demanded new plays. Light vaudeville surely provided the beneficiary with a brilliant role, absolutely new, and funny.
vaudevilles might be made, it seems to be logical to review the situation in the Russian theatre “on the eve” of this invasion and to make an effort to understand what political and social circumstances provided the reasons and conditions for that triumph.

One of the most important issues of this chapter is dedicated to the problem of the growing national consciousness of Russia and to narodnost - the term which embodied this problem in arts and literature. The problem of the national originality of drama could not help being argued when it came to vaudeville because of its French origin. The way this problem was understood and interpreted in play writing during the first aristocratic period (1812 -1825) of the development of vaudeville in Russia will be discussed in Chapter 3 and chapter 4. Chapter 3 is dedicated to the author of the first original Russian vaudeville A. Shakhovskoi, where one of his best vaudevilles Two Teachers, or Asinus Asinum Fricat is analyzed. Chapter 4 continues research of the same period and introduces two other remarkable vaudevillists of that period N. Khmelnitskii and A. Pisarev and analyzes their contribution to the development of original Russian vaudeville. The style of the both authors, the literary merits of their writing, and vaudevillists’ relation to the problem of narodnost is considered on the examples of Busybody, or The Know-How Gets the Job Done Best by Pisarev and Actors Among Themselves, or First Debut of the Actress Troepolskaia by Khmelnitskii.

The analysis of the aristocratic period of Russian vaudeville is completed in Chapter 5 which deals with one of the best Russian original vaudevilles of that period Who is Brother Who Is Sister, or Deceit After Deceit by A. Gribiedov and P.
Viazemskii, where the concept of narodnost was revealed in the most convincing and artistic ways.

The year of 1825 brought many differences in Russian political and social life. These changes, along with events in cultural and artistic spheres, found their reflection in vaudeville. A new generation of vaudeville playwrights came onto the stage and signified a new period in the history of Russian vaudeville, democratic-raznochinnyi. A historic overview of this period in connection with vaudeville is presented in Chapter 6. More detailed analysis of the development of Russian original vaudeville is given in the next two chapters. On the example of F. Koni’s *The Petersburg Apartments*, Chapter 7 reveals the experiments of Russian vaudevillists with the vaudeville’s form and their attempts to fill this form with more socially significant content. Chapter 8 is dedicated to a new movement in Russian literature, the Natural School, and its influence on vaudeville. The vaudevilles *The Petersburg Usurer* by the apologist of the Natural School N. Nekrasov and *The Bakery* by Nekrasov’s antagonist P. Karatygin are considered in this chapter.

By the 1850s, the development of Russian vaudeville came to the point when the form and content of this genre was finalized. Though many good vaudevilles were written in the second half of the nineteenth century, they did not add anything new into the development of the genre.

Chapter 9 concludes this study by overviewing the development of vaudeville genre in Russia during the first half of the nineteenth century, summarizing the merits of this genre, and defining its role in the history of Russian drama. The significance of this research might be defined as follows.
1. It broadens our knowledge of Russian theatre of the first half of the nineteenth century, otherwise known to foreign scholars mainly by the dramatic works of Pushkin, Lermontov, and Gogol.

2. The dissertation presents wide spectrum of political and cultural events of the period and artistic movements in Russian theatre (from Classicism to Romanticism and Sentimentalism), which is necessary for understanding the process of development of Russian drama from poor imitations (or translations) of European plays to creation of the national original pieces.

3. The study of vaudeville, the “secondary” genre, through the small details of everyday life incorporated into a play, gives better understanding of the period, environment, immediate concerns, and *modus vivendi* of the Russian society then more respected and noble genres, such as tragedy or high comedy. Of course, vaudeville writers cannot be compared with these outstanding men of letters neither in their talent, nor in writing skills, nor in the impact of their writing on Russian society.

At the same time, however, the role of vaudeville in the social and cultural life of the Russian society is significant enough to consider the picture of the Russian theatre incomplete without vaudeville. Vaudeville formed that soil on which geniuses could grow. In this respect, the connection of vaudeville with the greatest plays of this period (thematicality, characterization, language, problems of versification, etc.) is very important.

4. The significance of this dissertation is also in the fact that it shows vaudeville as a predecessor of Realism in Russian drama and on Russian stage.
In the process of creating original national vaudevilles, Russian authors turned in their writing to more realistic style of portraying situations and characters. The best pieces in this genre demanded special style of acting which was developed by great Russian actors Shchepkin, Karatygin, Asenkova, Zhivokini, and others, the acting style Russian theatre will be known for since that time on.

5. One more important meaning of this work is its connection with contemporary Russian theatre. As we see nowadays, vaudeville goes through another boom of its popularity in Russia. There is no theatre in Russia which would not produce at least one classical vaudeville a season. In 1999, the Gorky Film Studio (films for children and youth) undertook a special project to create a series of ten films based on classical Russian vaudevilles.

A scholar who is eager to research, understand, and analyze this phenomenon in contemporary Russian theatre and culture, inevitably has to go back in time to the beginning of the beginnings, to the first half of the nineteenth century when vaudeville was introduced to the Russian audiences. This dissertation presents this opportunity.

Endnotes to Chapter 1


3. Ibid., 133.
4. From the electronic copy of the report received from the Russian State Library in Moscow via Internet.


6. Ibid., 418.


21. Ibid., 25.

CHAPTER 2. THEATRE IN RUSSIA AT THE BEGINNING OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Politics and Theatre

It looks as if there is no connection between politics and vaudeville. Vaudeville’s goal is to entertain. In a certain sense, vaudeville has to take people’s attention away from political problems. That might be one of the reasons why the powers that be strongly encouraged this genre on the nineteenth century Russian stage. On the other hand, no significant cultural phenomenon (and vaudeville of the nineteenth century is certainly one of them) can be analyzed apart from its political context. When it comes to theatre, the official ideology of such a totalitarian state as Russia was (or the resistance to this ideology), champions some playwrights and desolates others, defines the preferable topicality of national drama, shapes the repertoire of theatres, and even favors one style of acting over another. In short, policy shapes theatre.

Vaudeville, no matter how light-minded and insignificant this genre is, reflected the political and cultural events of the time in its own way. Even the very first original Russian vaudeville owes its appearance to a political event, namely the 1812 war with Napoleon of 1812 (Chapter 3 of this work deals specifically with the history of the first Russian vaudeville). So, in order to understanding the role of vaudeville in the history of Russian theatre, it is necessary to understand the political situation in Russia and how it influenced Russian theatre. There are three interconnected subjects in this chapter which are equally important for this work: the political situation, the repertoire of the Imperial theatres, and the problem of
national originality of Russian drama, i.e., narodnost. If the first two give us the broad background of the time when the Russian vaudeville first came onto the Russian stage, the latter is crucial for understanding Russian theatre at the beginning of the nineteenth century in general and Russian vaudeville in particular. Thus, this chapter describes the situation in the Russian society and Russian theatre. The analysis of vaudeville per se is to follow in the next chapters.

There are several factors which characterize and to a certain degree define the development of the Russian theatre at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the time when the first Russian vaudevilles appeared on stage, gained an enormous popularity, and established a dominance that would extend for the next fifty years. These factors can be divided into two main groups: 1) political and 2) socio-cultural events in Europe and in Russia. The following overview briefly describes these events.

The French Revolution of 1792-1795, the Napoleonic wars, the spread of democratic ideas, and the national-liberating movements caused the growth of
national consciousness in European peoples as well as in Russia. After the assassination of tsar Paul I, whose main interests rested on military matters, Russians looked with hope for changes with the new tsar. Aleksandr I, Paul’s son, seemingly supported the optimistic views of the liberal gentry, appearing as the “enlightened monarch.” The key issue was the question of serfdom. Only the most reactionary and ignorant of the Russian provincial gentry opposed the plans of the anti-feudal reforms. The need to solve the problem of serfdom was important not only in the sense of the economical development of Russia (the level of agriculture was much lower than in European countries). It had political and moral meaning as well. The efforts to understand the place of Russia among other European countries, to define its uniqueness and originality as a nation, and to evaluate its achievements in its historical process brought a growing sense of national consciousness among the educated and cultural representatives of the Russian nobility. As we will see later, among the artistic intelligentsia, this concept found its realization in the term narodnost’.

Foreign policy influenced the development of national consciousness as well. The fact that Russia from 1807 was at war with France awakened patriotic sentiments among Russians. French theatre in St-Petersburg was closed and a number of patriotic plays appeared in the repertoire the of Imperial theatres (more detailed information on repertoire comes later in this chapter). The Treaty of Tilsit⁷,  

⁷ After Russia was defeated by France in the Battle of Friedland on June 14, 1807, the Treaty of Tilsit was signed; according its provision the territories of Poland, which previously belonged to Russia and Prussia came under Napoleon’s protectorate as the Duchy of Warsaw (for more information see website
when Aleksandr I reversed himself and allied Russia with France, was considered shameful by Russians, strengthened these feelings, and inspired the desire of revanche. After relations with France deteriorated and Napoleon began his invasion of Russia, the wave of patriotic sentiments reached its peak and, finally, received full glorification when Russian troops occupied Paris and brought about the signing of the Treaty of Paris on May 30, 1814, by France and seven allies: Russia, Great Britain, Spain, Portugal, Prussia, Austria, and Sweden. Besides the war with France, Russia was also involved in wars with Turkey (1806-1812, from which Russia received Bessarabia), with Sweden (1808-1809; Finland and Aland Islands were joined to Russian territories), with Iran (Russia gained Georgia and Dagestan). In 1815, Russia, according to the Congress of Vienna (which ended Napoleonic wars in Europe), received most of Poland.

When the time came to face domestic problems, it became clear that Aleksandr I was not going to free the serfs or make any other social changes in Russia. The last decade of his rule was characterized by strong oppression and the strengthening of his power as a monarch. This policy resulted in severe censorship in drama and theatre.

In spite of Aleksandr’s regime, the years of war not only made Russian people to try to identify the place of their country and themselves in the world in terms of the social/political arrangement of the state and the historical significance of Russia and its people; not only awakened the feelings of patriotism, national

consciousness, pride and sometimes pain for their country, but also increased the intercourse between Western Europe and Russia. The ideas of German idealistic philosophy (I. Kant, G. Hegel) and French Age of Enlightenment (J.-J. Rousseau) became available not only in their original languages but also in Russian translations. This intercourse resulted, in the liberalization of political and artistic views started among Russians. Russian liberals shared with Western thinkers the ideas condemning any kind of oppression and emphasized the necessity of the free individual.

The development of political, philosophical, and aesthetical thought among the progressive part of Russian society, on the one hand, and the intensification of the despotic regime of Aleksandr I with its corruption, bureaucracy, and oppression of the serfs and lower social strata, on the other hand, resulted in the formation of secret political societies consisting of mainly young officers who belonged to the nobility and who were concerned with the future of Russia. They were known collectively as the “Decembrists.” In 1825, when Aleksandr I died and the Grand Duke Nicholas, Aleksandr’s brother, inherited the throne, the Decembrists mutinied at the Senate Square in St-Petersburg. The revolutionary movement was brutally put down; five of the leaders were hanged at the Senate Square; hundreds were sent into exile.

The views of the Decembrists and of those who were close to them are important for understanding the first two decades of the nineteenth century in Russia. It was a transitional period of searching for new philosophical ideas, a period of efforts to define the relations of arts and reality, and a period of
comprehending the national originality and historicism of arts. Theatre art became an inalienable part of everyday life. Vaudeville, though presented in theatres practically every night, did not get unmistakable Russian features. It was either a translation from French, or a slightly adjusted to the Russian mores remake of a French play. The first experiments in this genre by Russian playwrights were not extremely convincing. Moreover, the entertaining character of vaudeville and its absence of “global” ideas contradicted Decembrists’ views on theatre.

Like the majority of commentators on current events in Russia, the Decembrists also did not separate the problems of theatre from the problems of literature and the arts. Theatre questions were considered in close connection with political and cultural problems. Influenced by the ideas of the Age of Enlightenment, the Decembrists gave the priority to the educational function of Russian theatre and its ability to express new ideas en masse. The aim of art in general, and theatre in particular, was understood in terms of civic service to the Russian people. The Decembrists wanted theatre to express socially and politically significant conflicts and ideas: theatre had to be a school of arts, taste, and language for Russian society.*

It is quite logical from this point of view that one of the topics most frequently discussed by the Decembrists was the question of the national originality of Russian drama. In his articles in The Son of Fatherland, Decembrist I.M. __________________________

Murav’ëv-Apostol wrote about the necessity of studying Russian folk poetry, of connecting the development of theatre culture with the national consciousness. He said that the principles and plots of foreign drama could not be passively adopted by another nation, no matter how the original pieces were perfect. Murav’ëv-Apostol pointed out that the great authors like Moliere, Shakespeare, and Schiller expressed the national spirit of the French, English, and German people. But it would be senseless to imitate them because

если комедия есть живое в лицах представление господствующих нравов, то каждый народ должен иметь свою комедию, - по той самой причине, что каждый народ имеет свои собственные нравы и обычаи.¹

Decembrist A. A. Bestuzhev, a brilliant polemist, saw the flaws of the contemporary drama in following the decrepit French canons and traditions. “Theatre demands the knowledge of life,”² he wrote in 1819. Bestuzhev, himself of a bright and vivid wit, criticized mercilessly the conservatives and imitators in this dramaturgy. He said about Kriukovsky’s tragedy “Pozharsky” that there was more patriotism in it rather than truth. He wrote that A. Shakhovskoi (the author of the first original Russian vaudeville) supported the decrepit Russian stage by both his translations and by his re-made (i.e., not original, and thus, devoid of the national spirit) dramas and vaudevilles³.

During the first two decades of the nineteenth century Bestuzhev, K. F. Ryleev (one of the leaders of the 1825 revolt) and other critics in the Decembrist

¹ if comedy is a live presentation of the predominant dispositions, then each people has to have its own comedy according that very reason that each people has its own dispositions and customs.
camp considered artistic truth the main criteria in the evaluation of a dramatic piece. In his article *Несколько мыслей о поэзии* (Some Thoughts on Poetry), Ryleev did not reject Aristotle’s ‘unities’ as outdated or non-poetical. Not without some vexing intonation, he wrote, that in all the debates, too much attention was paid to the form, when it would be better to speak about the essence of the subject. In his opinion there was neither classic nor romantic poetry. There was only real original poetry, which was born by its Time. Each particular Time in history dictates the poetry forms of expression. To support his thought, Ryleev wrote that the peculiarities of the ancient tragedies were conditioned by the *modus vivendi* of ancient life. At present time there was

многолюдства государств новых, степень просвещения народов, дух времени, словом, все физические и нравственные обстоятельства нового мира определяют в политике и поэзии поприще более обширное...`

The drama of Goethe, Shakespeare, Schiller, and Calderon, he wrote, corresponds with this ‘throng’ of the world. The merits of such drama was in the fact that it was free, “not correct” (i.e., neglecting the prescribed rules and canons), and nationally peculiar drama. Russian art should follow this way, it should destroy “в себе дух рабского подражания и обратиться к источникам высоких чувств, мыслей и вечных истин”.”

---

*a throng of new states, new level of culture, new spirit of time, in a word, all physical and moral circumstances of the new world define in politics and in poetry the more spacious field...* 

“the spirit of servile imitation in itself, and it should turn to sources of high emotions, thoughts, and eternal truth.
General ideas on how Russian drama should develop, expressed by progressive men of letters, certainly were applied to vaudeville as well. That is why, awkward, unskilled, and tasteless remakes of second-rate French originals were criticized. On a bigger scale it was a political question of freeing theatre (and nation!) from blindly mimicking foreign traditions; this proved question of national autonomy. The appearance of the first Russian vaudeville was thus preconditioned by these concerns of creating original Russian drama in general.

The arguments about national literature and arts the gave birth to a new concept in Russian literary criticism, narodnost’, which defines the quality of a piece of art or literary work in terms of its national characteristics. It would be impossible to speak about Russian vaudeville without understanding this concept. The origin of this term and the author's definition of it, which will be used consistently in this dissertation, are given below. There is also misunderstanding of the term among some foreign historians writing about narodnost’ which should be clarified here as a necessary condition for the rest of this work.

The Problem of Narodnost’ in Russian Theatre

The idea of national originality in the arts in general and theatre and drama in particular was not new at the beginning of the nineteenth century in Russia. Starting from 1730s, Russian classicists Antiokh Kantemir (1708-1744), Vasili Trediakovskii (1703-1769), Mikhail Lomonosov (1711-1765), and Aleksandr Sumarokov (1718-1777) expressed the national spirit in traditional literary forms in poetry (ode, hymn, satire, and anacreontic lyrics) and drama (tragedy and comedy). Theatre was a device in educating people. Thus, Sumarokov
considered that in education the examples of virtues, (patriotism was the first among them) were more resultant when they were drawn from the Russian history. For this purpose, he used the stories from the Russian distant past as the plots for his tragedies.⁵

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the idea of the national originality of Russian literature and theatre found its further development in the works of progressive Russian writers. This idea became the credo for P. A. Viazemskii (1792-1878). The circle of his interests was very wide; he was a poet and a publicist, a historian and a theorist, a literature and theatre critic. Because of his closeness to the Decembrists, Vyazemski was named by one of his contemporaries “the Decembrist without December.” He was not a member of a secret Decembrist society, but his views were noted for a belief in the ideas of freedom, liberation, and patriotism. Probably, Vyazemskii’s strongest talent was that of a theatre critic. Like the majority of his contemporaries, he was a passionate fan of theatre and he is remembered in the history of Russian theatre above all as a critic, theorist, and historian of Russian drama.

To Viazemskii we are obliged for the invention of the term narodnost’ (народность†), which has been used ever since and without which it would be impossible to speak about Russian theatre and drama. In his letter to A. I. Turgenev (November 22, 1819), Viazemskii wrote:

† На-род-ность > Народ (people, folk) + suffix -н + ending -ость, which has the meaning of a uniting quality (as -ness in English).
“Зачем не перевести nationalité - народность? Поляки сказали же narodowość! Поляки не так брезгливы, как мы, и слова, которые не добровольно перескакивают к ним, перетаскивают они за волосы, и дело с концом. Прекрасно! Слово, если нужно оно, укоренится.”

The reasons for the discussion should be explained. Both of them stemmed from the growing sense of Russian national consciousness. The first reason lies in the fact that at the time when Russian literature, theatre, arts were trying to gain national originality (again, we should not forget that that was a general idea which embraced all aspects of Russian life at that time: political, social, cultural), there was the need of a word that would unite all the characteristics of the national as a single concept. It was the necessity of naming a quality of a piece of art which would not just present outer features which referred this piece to this or that nationality, but which would embody all the uniqueness of this nationality, including the specificity of its expression, the logics of the thinking, and the genetical sense/memory of the nation. Anticipating the further discussion on narodnost’ in this dissertation, it is necessary to emphasize that this term very quickly lost its “local” understanding as “Russianness” and began to signify national originality of a piece of art as a universal term in criticism.

The second reason needs more extensive explanation. The everyday language of the Russian upper strata was French. A. V. Nikitenko, who was a

• Why would not we translate nationalité as народность? Did say the Poles narodowość! The Poles are not so squeamish as we are; they grab the words, which do not vault over into their language voluntarily, for their hair, and drag them over, and that will be that. Fine! The word, if it is in need, will strike root.
censor for over forty years (1826-1877), describes in his diary one of his students whose Russian Nikitenko had to improve to the point where the young man could compose letters and official papers; the student “speaks impeccable French since he’s a true Russian.”7 Also A. Pushkin, in his “Eugene Onegin”, describing the scene when Tatiana writes a love letter to Eugene, shares with the reader:

Она по-русски плохо знала,  
Журналов наших не читала  
И выражалась с трудом  
На языке своём родном,  
Итак, писала по-французски...  
Что делать? повторяю вновь:  
Доньне дамская любовь  
Не изъяснялась по-русски...”8

Good manners, nobility of feelings, and refinement of expression in the Russian nobility were associated directly with the French language. That is why the question of language (everyday language, literary language, folk language, and the language of drama) became an important part of the problem in depicting national self-consciousness.

In 1803, A. S. Shishkov (1754-1841) published his Discourse on the Old and New Style in the Russian Language. Shishkov’s theory became the central topic of all debates in literary criticism during the next decade and influenced the development of the Russian thought on language and literature. Shishkov called for the preservation of the Old-Slavonic language (Church-Slavonic), for the

* She knew Russian badly, / Did not read our reviews, / And expressed herself with difficulty / in her native tongue; / Hence wrote in French. / What’s to be done about it! I repeat again: / As yet a lady’s love / has not expressed itself in Russian... (Translation by V. Nabokov.)
rejection of neologisms, and for the development of the clarity and simplicity of modern Russian language that should be based on the common people’s language as semantically closest to Church-Slavonic.

Shishkov’s main attacks were directed against N. Karamzin and his followers, and Romanticism in general. According to his writing, the adherence of the Russian romanticists to the French language was spoiling the Russian language: “...Voltaire’s, Jean-Jacques’s’, Corneilles, Racines, Molieres would not teach us how to write in Russian.” Connecting faithfulness to the Church-Slavonic language with faithfulness to Russian customs and habits, Shishkov was not shy in expressing his doubts in the religious and patriotic beliefs of the romanticists. Thus, the question “about the new and the old style” from the very beginning moved from the literary/linguistic field into the socio-political sphere.

Shishkov’s opponents - P. I. Makarov, D. I. Iazykov, D. V. Dashkov - responded in numerous magazine articles about general laws of language evolution, bringing up historical examples of word borrowing in the Old-Slavonic language from Greek in the tenth through twelfth centuries, about co-enrichment of languages due to the natural exchange of terminology, pointing out that the Russian language as any live language was in the permanent state of development, and that the Russian language of the epoch of Vladimir Monomakh (Grand Prince of Kiev; 1053-1125) differed from the one of the time of Peter the Great or Catherine II. Considering the political situation and the growing negative

\[ \text{J.-J. Rousseau (A. T.)} \]
attitude towards “everything French,” such publications revealed the principles and
courage of the authors who could be easily accused lacking patriotism by the
“archaists.”

In spite of the reactionary character of Shishkov’s theory as a whole, there
was a rational seed in it, namely the idea of the necessity of the connection
between the common people’s language and literary language; ancient Russian
literature and folklore were realized as alive and necessary sources of the
contemporary literary language. Later, this idea was developed further by the
Decembrists and by such writers as P. A. Katenin, A. S. Griboedov, and W. K.
Küchelbecker and became one of the constituents of the concept of narodnost’.

Almost fifty years later, in 1961, N. P. Ogarev, evaluating this debate, wrote:

В забавной вражде с чужеземным, в тяжелом переводе
иностранных слов на искусственный русский язык возникает
стремление вглядеться в начало собственной народной жизни.”

Thus, from the beginning of the nineteenth century and on, narodnost’
became one of the important terms in defining qualities of a piece of art and
literature in Russian criticism.

However, for some foreign scholars this term remains either misunderstood
or misinterpreted. The error comes from the fact that since the 1830s the term
narodnost’ (having a different meaning) became an important part of official policy
of Nicholas I. The same word began to signify absolutely different (if not opposite)

* In a funny enmity with the foreign, in an awkward translation of foreign
words into the artificial Russian language the desire to peer at the beginning of
people’s own folk life appears.
As one can guess, Uvarov wanted to get rid of not only “incompetent” professors, but also of those progressive teachers. For the sake of clarity and the unambiguous interpretation of this term in this dissertation some explanations should be given here. As it was said already, the term narodnost', as “an expression of people’s character and opinions,” was suggested by Viazemskii in his private letter to A. Turgenev in 1819. Gradually, the word became popular and in use not only in everyday language but in a literary criticism as well.

“Narodnost’” as an absolutely different concept came into being from “above” in December, 1832, namely from the report of a vice-Minister of Education, Uvarov to Nicholas I. Sergei Semenovich Uvarov (1786-1855) was a curious person. He was smart and educated in a European way. “He was especially insistent on presenting his views and measures as simply a reflection of his sovereign’s will.”

This ability helped him to build up his career quickly. In April, 1832 Uvarov was appointed a vice-Minister of Education. In May, A. Nikitenko referred to Uvarov as the author of “a purification system,” the goal of which was to dismiss the incompetent professors at the universities. In December of the same year he presented to Nicholas I his report on the results of his inspection of the Moscow University. In this report, Uvarov, knowing about a very unstable position at the court of his superior, the Minister of Education Count Lieven, unfolded his own views on higher education and censorship in Russia. In three months (March, 1833) Uvarov’s actions resulted in Lieven’s dismissal and the appointment of

* As one can guess, Uvarov wanted to get rid of not only “incompetent” professors, but also of those progressive teachers.
Uvarov the Minister of Education. The report by S. Uvarov was included almost in full in M. Lemke’s Nicholas’ Gendarmes and Literature of 1826-1855 published in 1909 in St.-Petersburg.

The subject of our interest here is the word narodnost’. This word had been in use since 1819 as a literary term. But for the first time it appeared in this strange combination Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Narodnost’ and for the first time it appeared in the official report with quite a different meaning. Russian historian S. M. Soloviev, in his Notes, described Uvarov’s actions as follows, not without sarcastic humor:

... он [Уваров] внушил ему [императору Николаю] мысль, что онъ, Николай, творецъ какого-то нового образования, основаннаго на новыхъ началахъ, и придумалъ эти начала, т.-е. слова: православіе, самодержавіе и нарродность; православіе — будучи безбожникомъ, не вѣряя въ Христа даже и по-протестантски; самодержавія — будучи либераломъ; нарродность — не прочитавъ въ свою жизнь ни одной русской книги, писавши постоянно по-французски или по-немецки. ... При разговорѣ съ этимъ человѣкомъ, разговорѣ часто блестяще умномъ, поражали, однако, крайнее самолюбіе и тщеславіе; только, бывало, и ждешь — вотъ скажет, что при сотвореніи міра Богъ совѣтовался съ нимъ насчет плана...’

Uvarov could not more please Nicholas with his report, considering the emperor’s fears of his amis du quatorze and their revolutionary ideas of political
and social rearrangement of the Russian state. The goal of education in Russia was defined by Uvarov as “the directing the spirit and the way of thinking of young people in a careful thought-off way, in order to form useful and zealous instruments of the government in the bigger number of them.”\textsuperscript{14} The idea of autocracy was expressed also in his will to develop “loyal love to the existing order.” Orthodoxy had to remain as the ruling religion and the source of eternally Russian ethical values and ideals. Narodnost (Uvarov, naturally, wrote about Russian narodnost‘ - Russian people) emphasized the particular nature of the Russian people and characterized the citizens as a loyal subject to the sovereign and government and faithful Orthodox believer. Narodnost, as a part of the Official Nationality was gladly accepted by Russian nationalists. They interpreted Russian narodnost (read - Uvarov’s variant) as superior to all other narodnost’s’, i.e., other peoples:

Interpreting narodnost’ to mean "nationalism" rather than ‘nationality,’ they used their authority to institute Russification policies in schools in non-Russian areas of the empire, to pressure non-Orthodox religious groups to convert, and to enact various restrictive measures that suppressed non-Russian nationality groups.\textsuperscript{15}

The term presented by Uvarov, as a part of this political trinity Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Narodnost‘, is a political term; it expresses the chauvinistic policy of Russian autocracy and officially establishes the idea of superiority of the Russian people over all other nations; it belongs to it’s time, the nineteenth century, and to its country, tsarist Russia. It is in the past and it is not the term which is used in this dissertation. (Though, one can find the points of similarity in the Uvarov’s interpretation and the interpretation of narodnost’ by the communist authorities of the former Soviet Union. The latter considered the arts and literature
in close connection with the ideas of the Communist party, i.e., expressed the policy of the powers that be in a totalitarian state.)

The term narodnost’ as suggested by Pëtr Viazemskii has been in use from 1819 (thirteen years earlier Uvarov’s “invention”) to nowadays. It has nothing to do with the “expression of chauvinist sentiment (narod as nation).”16 This term, as a device in literary or art criticism, does not belong exclusively to Russia. Understandably, it can be applied to various pieces of art, regardless of its national origin or time of creation. One can speak about the narodnost’ of Princess Turandot by Carlo Gozzi and L’école des femmes by J.-B. Moliere, Piano Concerto in E-minor by Frédéric Chopen and Le Sacre du printemps by Igor Stravinski, Accidente en la mina by David Alfaro Siqueiros or Bal a Bougival by Pierre-Auguste Renoir, feature films Horse Whisperer by Robert Redford and The Mirror by Andrei Tarkovskii, etc.

In this respect, the editor and translator of a splendidly compiled anthology Russian Romantic Criticism, Mr. Lauren Gray Leighton, presented an exemplary work, not only as an editor, but also as an author of the Introduction to this anthology. This work might be characterized by his perfect knowledge of the subject, his ability to see the literary process as a historical phenomenon in all its diversity and fullness, and by his skill to word it out in a simple (but not simplified) way. In his laconic but very informative comments, he writes on narodnost’ of the period:

The notion of an ‘imprint’ (otpechatok) of narodnost was articulated by Somov, Vyazemsky, Katenin, Küchelbecker, Bestuzhev-Martinsky, Pushkin, Kondraty Ryleyev, D. V. Venevitinov, M. A Dmitriev, and many
others. At time the word suggests an expressive quality, at other times it is a quality of the writer or of an effect on an audience, and even seems to be a mimetic quality, as when it is defined as a ‘mirror of poetry.’

Rejecting ‘narodnost’ as the “expression of chauvinist sentiment,” Mr. L. Leighton correctly analyses Petr Viazemskii’s view:

He [Viazemskii] felt obliged to point out in an introduction to Dmitriev’s collected works, *A Word on the Life and Poems of Ivan Ivanovich Dmitriev*, that ‘native pride, the source of love for the fatherland, this prime virtue of the people and this prime voice of glory, cannot and must not be a blind feeling of bias or vulgar self-praise.’ To him, native pride was a matter of appreciating ‘native glory,’ and he summed up the implications of these epithets and the term *narodnost* in the belief that literature must be the expression of the character and opinions of the people.

Narodnost’ was also one of the main topics for discussion for all significant Russian men of letters. A. S. Pushkin, meditating on narodnost’, noted the discordance of opinions of his contemporaries; to express his point of view he appealed to the great artists:

... it is difficult to deny Shakespeare the merit of great narodnost’ in his *Othello, Hamlet, Measure for Measure*, and others; Vega and Calderón move constantly to all parts of the world, borrow subjects of their tragedies from Italian novellas, from French plays. Ariosto glorifies Carlo Magno, the French knights of chivalry, and the Empress of China. Racine took his tragedies from ancient history.

It is difficult, nonetheless, to deny these writers the merit of great narodnost. In Pushkin’s view, narodnost’ is that “peculiar physiognomy” of each people, which is conditioned by the fact that “there is a mode of thinking and feeling, there is a throng of customs, superstitions, and the habits which belong exclusively to

*For the sake of the wholeness of Mr. Leighton’s consideration, the passage is quoted as it is, i.e., including the Viazemskii’s quotations, which were brought up by Mr. Leighton to confirm his statement.*
any given people. The quality of a piece of art defined as narodnost', as Pushkin stated, might belong to each “given people.” At the same time, as he thought, “narodnost in a writer is a merit which can be completely appreciated only by his compatriots – for others it either does not exist or it can even seem to be a defect.”

This thought, expressed in 1825, unexpectedly came into connection with the considerations of contemporary American scholar Ms. Nancy Condee, who in her thorough and original study on Russian culture compared the hypothetical narrations of a foreigner and of a native writing on the same subject; she emphasized the difference as follows:

...the foreign traveler, the transient figure condemned to write travelogue while the native writes autobiography. The two genres share common features, but a key difference is the kind of narrative authority brought to the act of narration.

As it can be seen, both considerations, in spite of the over one hundred and fifty years between them, in their own way finalize the necessity of a deep and not preconceived study of a subject in order to understand the national character of a given art work and, thus, to gain (or, at least, to come as close as possible to) “the narrative authority” of one’s narration.

To summarize all the aspects of narodnost' and to avoid any misreading, the term “narodnost” in this dissertation is defined as follows.

**Narodnost’ is the aggregate of distinguishing qualities and properties of a certain people, nation, or ethnic group, among which are spirituality, mind set, system of ethical and aesthetical norms and values which are expressed by the artistic means in a given literary work or a work of art.**
This definition of narodnost' is the key in understanding all the peculiarities of the original Russian vaudevilles considered in this study because Russian vaudeville became Russian only when it gained all the qualities of Russian drama embodied in the concept of narodnost’. This term will be used to trace the process of vaudeville’s changing its quality from the imitation of French pieces to original Russian play.

To evaluate the role of vaudeville in the development Russian drama and theatre it is necessary to have a look at the repertoire of the Russian theatres during the decade immediately before the first Russian vaudevilles appeared on the stages of St. Petersburg and Moscow, i.e., 1800-1811. What was Russian drama at that period? How did vaudeville accord with other genres established in Russian theatre?

Repertoire of the Imperial Theatres

The Russian theatre at the beginning of the nineteenth century was characterized by diverse and complex processes. It was the time of the transition from neoclassicism to romanticism and later to critical realism, both in dramatic literature and in the style of presenting drama on stage. The repertoire of the theatre reflected this very diverse picture. The majority of plays produced both in St. Petersburg and Moscow during this decade were either translations or re-makes of the popular foreign repertoire. This fact concerned Russian theatre critics and writers. The necessity of creating national drama or, better to say, of developing the traditions of Russian drama which were established during the eighteen century, was an actual matter. The best plays of the past were still
produced. New plays in different genres appeared in theatres, but they did not answer the growing demands of the Russian society in terms of the quality of the writing, originality, and national contents. Considering the rise of national self-consciousness, the problem became a burning question of the Russian theatre.

The correlation of the original and translated drama is obvious from the following two charts, from which one can see that the original Russian drama formed less than a half of the repertoire.

---

* The created charts are based on the list of plays, produced in theatres of St. Petersburg and Moscow in 1801-1825, published in the *History of Russian Drama Theatre* (1977).
There were 536 plays staged during this decade. Out of this number there were 117 original Russian plays, almost one third of the whole. Among the 359 foreign plays (either translations or remakes) 214 came from France, 110 from Germany, and 35 from other countries. It should be mentioned that the data for this chart was compiled according to the origin of this or that particular play; some plays created in one country came to Russia through versions created in the other
Jean Françoi Ducis, a second-rate playwright, among other works, presented for the French audiences his milk-and-water adaptations of major Shakespeare’s tragedies; as the French had to discover Shakespeare anew in the first half of the nineteenth century, when the Odéon had its “English” season with Kemble, Macready, Kean, and Harriet Smithson.

Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet made its first appearance on the Russian stage in 1795 (and was revived in 1804) in the French variant written by Louis-Sébastien Mercier (1740-1814) entitled Le tombeaux de Vérone (The Tomb of Verona); in 1802 another variant of Romeo and Juliet was produced in St-Petersburg, translated from German. In this chart, both variants were considered as plays of English origin. One of the prominent Russian playwrights of that time, a poet and translator, Nikolai Gnedich (1784-1833) wrote his version of King Lear (1807) which was based both on the original Shakespeare work and on its French remake by Jean François Ducis (1633-1816); in this chart the tragedy, considered as English, was placed under Other.

As seen from both charts (Fig. 6 and Fig. 7), France was the main supplier of dramatic pieces for the Russian stage practically in all genres; only in drama proper Germany was the leader. During the first decade of the nineteenth century 536 plays were produced in the St-Petersburg and Moscow theatres: 77 tragedies (T), 76 dramas (D), 16 melodramas (M), 244 comedies (C), 28 operas (O), 91 countries. Thus, Carlo Goldoni’s (1707-1793) comedy Un Curioso accidente (The Curious Accident) was translated directly from Italian, while his Servitore di due padrone (The Servant of Two Masters) came to the Russian stage via its French version Le valet de deux; in the chart both plays were referred to as Other (Italy).

countries. Thus, Carlo Goldoni’s (1707-1793) comedy Un Curioso accidente (The Curious Accident) was translated directly from Italian, while his Servitore di due padrone (The Servant of Two Masters) came to the Russian stage via its French version Le valet de deux; in the chart both plays were referred to as Other (Italy).
comic operas (O.C.), and four vaudevilles. The comic genres made up 278 titles, while the “serious” genres only 197.

The matter with the serious genres was rather complex. On the one hand, the plays by Pierre Corneille (Ariane), Jean Racine (Andromaque, Britannicus), Prosper Jolyot de Crébillon (Rhadamiste and Zénobie; Atrée et Thyeste), François Marie Arouet de Voltaire (Mérope, Sémiramis, Zaïre, Tancredé, L’orphelin de la Chine), and Russian classicists Sergei Glinka (1776-1847), Mikhail Kriukovskii (1781-1822), Aleksandr Sumarokov, the “Racine of the North” (1718-1777), Yakov Kniazhnin (1742-1791), Mikhail Kheraskov (1733-1807) were widely produced.

On the other hand, interest in the works by Shakespeare, Gotthold Lessing (1729-1781), Friedrich von Schiller (1759-1805), and other European playwrights, who were not considered classicists, was increasing. During this decade theatres in both capitals produced Shakespeare’s Taming the Shrew, Hamlet, King Lear, Othello (again, not without the ‘help’ of monsieur Ducis: Othello, ou Le maure de Venise), and two versions of Romeo and Juliet. Lessing was represented by his Emilia Galotti and Miss Sara Sampson.

The tzar’s censorship frequently prohibited the production of European drama. Thus, Schiller’s Die Räuber was translated by Sandunov in 1793 but was prohibited for performance. At that time, Princess E. Dashkova explained the ban in terms of the motherly care of the Empress Catherine the Great for the Russian people, who were not ready to perceive the revolutionary ideas of the Schiller’s tragedy: "Шиллер и не увидишь, куда иного направит; мы еще младенцы, а
that good is suitable for adults, but not always proper for children.” 23 The Empress and the Princess turned out to be wrong: Russian spectators were grown up enough to understand the power of Schiller’s tragedy. They knew the tragedy in reading, and they wanted to see it on stage.

The way out was found in 1809, when, in spite of the continued ban on the Schiller’s tragedy, a play by Jean Henri Ferdinand Lamartelière (1761-1830) Robert chef de brigands, a French remake of Schiller’s tragedy (in the Russian translation of Fedor Ivanov), was produced in Moscow with great success and revived many times during the next decade (up to 1823”). Besides The Robbers, two other Schiller’s plays were translated at that time: Die Verschwörung des Fiesko zu Genua (Fiesco, or the Genoese Conspiracy) and Kabale und Liebe (Cabal and Love). But, nevertheless, Russian autocracy was on guard and prevented the spread of liberal ideas.

It was not only the political issues expressed in Schiller’s plays that made them difficult to produce in Russia at the beginning of the century. Russian classicists rejected and criticized the new movement (Romanticism). New concepts of understanding of the tragic, new approaches to the constructing drama and to creating character, that were expressed in Schiller’s pieces, as well as in the plays

23 You cannot predict where Schiller may direct some people; we all are in our childhood still, and what is good for adults is not always suitable for children.

“The original F. Schiller’s The Robbers in N. Sandunov’s translation was staged in St. Petersburg in 1814 for the benefice of the actor A. Iakovlev, who played Karl in this production. (See История русского драматического театра. Т. 2. М., “Искусство”, 1977 [“History of Russian Drama Theatre.” V.2. М.: Iskusstvo, 1977.].
of other Romanticists, found strong opposition of the adherents of classicism in the Russian theatre. A. Shakhovskoi, who persistently criticized and mocked the romanticists, wrote sarcastically about Schiller’s tragedies and new French drama:

Почти все герои Шиллеровых трагедий, кажется, с ним вместе воспитывались в немецком университете, где они напитались новой философии, от которой избави господи всякого честного человека. Большая часть действующих лиц в новых французских драмах, мелодрамах и трагедиях, кажется родились вместе с их революциею.24

In spite of Shakhovskoi’s sarcasm, the tragic and dramatic repertoire in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Russia continued to be dominated by translations and adaptations of foreign plays.

In comical genres, especially comedy and opera-comique, the influence of the French and Italian repertoire was even stronger, though original Russian plays were popular and produced often. Of greater merit were two comedies by Denis Fonvizin (1745-1792), Бригадир (The Brigadier, 1769), a satire on Gallomania, and Недоросль (The Minor, 1783) and a comedy Ябеда (The Slanderer, 1798) by Vasilii Kapnist (1757-1823) dealing with bribery and corruption in Russian judicial circles. Ivan Krylov’s (1768-1844) comedies were a connecting link between the two centuries in terms of simple chronology and, more importantly, in terms of the dramatic language and the technique of versification in drama, qualities developed later in A. Griboedov’s “Woe from Wit.”
Having analyzed the repertoire of the first decade of the nineteenth century we may conclude that in spite of the achievements of the national drama, Russian theatre was still influenced heavily by the French classic tragedy of Corneille and Racine and comedy by Moliere, as well as by Italian opera and German melodrama. This fact and the growing national self-consciousness set a task for the Russian playwrights: creation of national drama in different genres. Understanding these two factors that defined Russian theatre of that period (foreign influence and the necessity of developing national drama) and political situation (the war with Napoleon), one can rightly expect that the first Russian vaudeville would deal with these issues. The next chapter will explore the history of the appearance of the first Russian vaudeville, describe the writing style of its author A. Shakhovskoi, and analyze one of his best vaudevilles Two Teachers, or Asinus Asinum Fricat.

Endnotes to Chapter 2

1. Сын Отечества, 1813, ч.9, № 44, с. 224-225. ["Son of the Fatherland," IX,1813, № 44 (224-225).]

2. Сын Отечества, 1819, ч. 51, № 6, с. 259. ["Son of the Fatherland," CI 1819, № 6 (6).]


10. Ibid. Also see polemical articles in the Russian magazines of the time: Makarov’s editorial article in the *Moscow Mercury*, #12, 1803 (155-198); Iazykov’s “The Letter from the Unknown” in the *Northern Courier* b.1, #1, 1804 (17-28); and Dashkov’s brochure *About the Easiest Way to Object the Criticism*. Spb, 1811.


13. More information on Uvarov can be found in works by Lemke, Riasanovskii, and Nikitenko; see Bibliography.


18. Ibid., (44).

19. Ibid., (87).

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.


23. Макаров, М. *Федор Федорович Иванов.* “Репертуар и Пантеон”, 1845, кн.8, стр. 484. [Makarov, M. *Fedor Fedorovich Ivanov.* “Repertoire and Pantheon,” book 8 (484).]

Prince A. A. Shakhovskoi, First Russian Vaudevillist

In the history of Russian vaudeville, Prince Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Shakhovskoi remains the first playwright who created an original Russian vaudeville. This fact is a good reason alone to start the chapter’s narration with this author. But besides that, Shakhovskoi, a prolific writer, controversialist, and theatre practitioner was always in the mainstream of theatre and literary events and expressed his opinions in articles as well as in drama. From this point of view, his vaudevilles present an interesting historical chronicle of the literary/theatre life of the nineteenth century. Shakhovskoi’s first three vaudevilles will be discussed in this chapter, and one of his best pieces Two Teachers or Asinus Asinum Fricat will be analyzed in detail in connection with events and arguments in literary/theatre life of the Russian society of that period.

Shakhovskoi was born on April 24, 1777, on his father’s real estate in the Bezzaboty, Smolensk region. Having graduated from the Boarding School for Young Men of Noble Birth at Moscow University, he entered military service in St-Petersburg. He lived with the family of I. I. Walberch, a choreographer and translator. Walberch introduced the young man to the literary and theatrical circles of the capital. Being encouraged by his new friends, Shakhovskoi began to write poetry and tried playwriting.

After some successful experiments, Shakhovskoi decided to resign from the military service and dedicate himself completely to theatre.¹
In 1801, Shakhovskoi was appointed a member of the Repertoire Committee of the Directorate of the Imperial theatres. In 1802, he was sent on a business trip to Paris to engage a French theatre company to perform in the Russian capital. In France, Shakhovskoi spent over a year studying the French theatre, and styles of acting; he became acquainted with French actors, writers, and painters. The simplicity of the acting style of Jacque Marie Boutet de Monvel and the innovations of François Joseph Talma proved most useful for his later

---

* The photo image is used with the permission of Mr. G. Sukharev. See Appendix A, letter 4.
work as a theatre director and a teacher of acting. Known for the inconsistency of
his political views, Shakhovskoi was a very devoted and inspiring man of the
theatre. He thought that

the director must not be a member of the company proper, but a person
whose wholehearted zeal and flaming devotion to art, rather than petty
careerism should absorb his interest exclusively.²

Because of his comic appearance (he was short and fat, not handsome,
could not pronounce properly many consonants, and was extremely exaggerated
in expressing his emotions), Shakhovskoi’s rehearsals sometimes turned into an
entertainment for the onlookers, but not for the participants. S. T. Aksakov (1791-
1859) described one such rehearsal where a young actress, Ekaterina Ezhova
(1788-1836), had to sing a long aria. While the actress was making mistake after
mistake, Shakhovskoi sat stationary, bowing to her at each mistake. His face
expressed such suffering that, according to Aksakov, it was both funny and pitiful
to. Being completely embarrassed and confused, the actress, when it came time
to sing again, started to sing verses from another opera. That was too much for
Shakhovskoi:

The prince crawled unobserved from his armchair, knelt down, and
fell at her feet. The rehearsal was halted. For a long time, without
changing his position, Shakhovskoi continued to mutter in a most doleful
and screaming voice: “O Lord, why dost Thou chastise me! Do have mercy
on me, the sinner! I humbly thank thee, Mother Katerina Ivanovna!” And
suddenly, leaping up with the frenzy of an enraged tiger, he screamed in
mad, Calibanlike voice: “So this is our acting. From the beginning,
tomorrow - we’ll take it from the beginning!”³

* The name of the actress (A. T.).
Such behavior from Shakhovskoi probably made reference to the eccentricity of his character, for which he was known. At the same time it should be said that at the beginning of the nineteenth century in Russia the line which divided art and everyday *modus vivendi* was disappearing. In his *The Theater and Theatricality as Components of Early Nineteenth-Century Culture* Yurii Lotman explains:

> The theatre invaded life and actively restructuring everyday behavior. The monologue comes into the letter and the diary into everyday speech. What shortly before had seemed pompous and comic, since it was ascribed only the domain of theatrical space, became the norm of everyday speech and everyday behavior. ⁴

It should be added that later, in the 1830s, the theatricality of everyday behavior began to look as 'pompous and comic' as it was before the 1810-1820s (at the end of the eighteenth century). One of the popular readings among the young Russian gentry in the 1830s was E. G. Bulwer-Lytton’s (1803-1873) *Pelham; or, Adventures of a Gentleman* (1828), with its code of behavior of a real gentleman: “Whatever is borrowed becomes vulgar. Original affectation is sometimes good *ton*; imitated affectation always bad.” ⁵ These rules had much in common with the views of Grand Duke Konstantin, expressed in his letter to his tutor Laharpe:

> No-one in the world more than I fears and hates actions done for effect, actions whose effect is calculated in advance, or actions that are dramatic and full of enthusiasm. ⁶

Though not ‘calculated’ (quite opposite, very spontaneous and sometimes unpredictable) Shakhovskoi’s actions were certainly ‘dramatic and full of enthusiasm’ and remained so till his dying day. Probably, it would not be right to
consider his behavior, in terms of Bulwer-Lytton, as ‘imitated affectation.’ The extreme theatricality of Shakhovskoi’s everyday behavior came from his passion for theatre, becoming his alter ego. He loved theatre unconditionally. Theatre was literally his life: he wrote for theatre; he directed plays; he taught acting, he published a theatre magazine, he wrote reviews and articles on theatre topics. The behavior, described by S. T. Aksakov in the citation above, was quite natural for him.

As a playwright, A. Shakhovskoi tried different genres but achieved recognition only in comic style: comedy, vaudeville, opera-comique, and the like. A. S. Pushkin, describing St.-Petersburg theatre of the time of Eugene Onegin, mentioned:

Там вывел колкий Шаховской
Своих комедий шумный рой.  

By 1812, when Shakhovskoi wrote the first original Russian vaudeville, he was already the author of 4 comic operas, 5 comedies, and a tragedy. He translated A. Kotzebue’s Die Verleumder (The Slanderer) and Des Teufels Lustschloss (Summer Residence of the Devil) and Voltaire’s L’Orphelin de la Chine (A Chinese Orphan) and Zaire. For four years he had been publishing his magazine Драматический вестник (Drama Courier), the only theatre periodical of its kind for the next thirty years. In the literary/theatre debates of the time he not only wrote articles in magazines but expressed his ideas through the characters

* In V. Nabokov’s translation: there caustic Shakhovskoi brought fourth / the noisy swarm of his comedies.
of his own plays. In the argument about old and new styles of the Russian language, Shakhovskoi took the side of Aleksandr Shishkov (1754-1841) and became a member of the literary society, founded by Shishkov, Беседа любителей русского слова (Colloquy of Lovers of the Russian Word).

In 1805, Shakhovskoi wrote the one-act comedy New Stern, mocking sentimentalists for the over-exaggerated emotions in their writings and the habit of Russian romanticists to form neologisms by remaking a French word into its Russian equivalent using the root of this word.

Thus, in one of the scenes, he used the case described by Shishkov in his book where the latter attacked the words “трогать” (to touch) and “трогательный” (touching) which were used by N. Karamzin and his followers as they used them in French (toucher), in the sense of not only “to perceive by the sense of feeling,” but also in the sense of “to arouse an emotion.” The second meaning of the verb “трогать” (to touch) as “to arouse an emotion,” was not in use in the Russian language.

In the play, “karamzinist” Count Pronsky responds to a peasant woman, Kuzminichna, who has just described to him her love of her daughter Malania, “the only treasure” in the woman’s life:

\[\text{In English literature, the name of the society Беседа любителей русского слова is translated in inventively different ways. Gathering of Lovers of the Russian Word (Encyclopedia Britannica) does not render the goal of the meetings: people can gather for different purposes; The Forum of the Friends of the Russian Language (Varneke, tr. B. Brasol) sounds a little high-flown; the same about Nabokov’s Concourse of Lovers of the Russian Verb. In this work the translation of Mr. L. G. Leighton, Colloquy of Lovers of the Russian Word, as the closest to the original name, will be used.}\]
If nowadays the *calembour* ‘to touch - to touch’ can cause simply a smile, at the time of Shakhovskoi it was taken as a shot at the romanticists’ camp.

Such exchanges of opinions, as well as all literary and theatrical debates, were put on the back burner in June of 1812, when Napoleon launched the Grand-Armée against Russia. The latest war news became the most important topic of discussion in Russian society. In theatre, the patriotic feelings of the audience were shared and encouraged by the repertoire. Tragedies and dramas written and produced at this time were based on concrete facts from the history of not only Russia, but of other nations as well. They were full of political allusions and were met with enthusiasm: *Velzen or Liberated Holland* by Fedor Glinka; *Grangul* by Aleksandr Benitskii (about the life and struggle for freedom of the American Indians); and *Spartans of the Eighteen Century* by L. V. Nevakhovich (struggle of the Greeks for their freedom against the Turks). Russian drama, such as Vladislav

---

• Count: Kind woman, you are touching me!
  Kuzminichna: Cross yourself, master! I did not touch you.
  Foka (a village lad): Isn’t it a sin to give the old woman a bum rap?
  Ipat (Count’s servant): Boors, they take everything off the reel; to touch is not to touch... well, what is it?..
  Count: What a pity that their sentiments are not refined. You live in a circle of unenlightenment.
  Foka: Not in the circle, but in the mill.
Ozerov’s tragedy Дмитрий Донской (Dmitry of the Don), one of the best Russian tragedies in neo-classical style, and Пожарский (Pozharski), a tragedy by Matvei Kriukovskii (both first produced in 1807), were met with tremendous animation and were a success regardless their artistic merits.

Responding to political events, A. Shakhovskoi turned to the comic genre where he felt strong enough to say a word of his own, namely, to vaudeville. It had to have Russian characters, it had to be a situation dealing with Russian life, and it had to express patriotic sentiments. The task was to create the first original Russian vaudeville. Thus, the political situation (war with Napoleon) stimulated the appearance of a new genre in Russian drama.

_Cossack-Versifier, Peasants, or Meeting of the Uninvited; and Lomonosov, or Recruit-Versifier_

As a story for his first vaudeville, Shakhovskoi chose a historical anecdote about the cossack Semën Klimovski from the period of the Russian-Swedish war during the reign of Peter the Great. Shakhovskoi set the action of his Казак-Стихотворец (Cossack-Versifier) in Little Russia (Ukraine) with the intention of picturing the beautiful Ukranian landscape, customs and traditions of everyday life.

---

*Dmitrii of the Don* deals with the liberation of Russia from the Tartar yoke, which began in 1380 when Russian Prince Dimitri defeated the Golden Horde at Kulikovo. Pozharski’s plot is based on the invasion of Russia by the troops of the King Sigismund III of Poland, who was desirous of the Russian throne, and on the expelling the Poles by the Russian army led by Prince Dimitri Pozharski in 1612. Pozharski, in spite of the poisoned remark of Bestuzhev, that it had more patriotism than truth, was a great success due to the political situation and to the inspiring performance the title role by A. S. Iakovlev and, later, was chosen as an opening show for the newly erected Aleksandrinsky Theatre in St.-Petersburg (1832).
For a comic effect he decided to use both Russian and Ukranian languages. However the task was to be bigger than his abilities. Shakhovskoi did not know the Ukranian ways of life and the Ukranian language, so the characters in the play spoke some kind of strange tongue that was immediately ridiculed by the critics; actor; involved in the production had to correct their lines in order not to be laughed at.

Nevertheless, *Cossack-Versifier*, produced on May 15, 1812, was a success. There were three main reasons for this. First, Shakhovskoi created two colorful comic personages, Gritsko and Prudius, who held the audience’s attention with their funny characters. Second, Catterino Cavos (1775-1840) composed beautiful music, delicately arranging Ukranian folk songs. Third, the play, expressing monarchic ideas, glorifying the victories of Peter the Great, appeared timely for the patriotically tuned spectators. Because of these three factors, *Cossack-Versifier* was often produced on the Imperial stage until the 1850s.

In his first vaudeville, Shakhovskoi set up his own devices as of a vaudeville playwright which he would exploit in his further writing. These included an ethnic background as a source of the spectacular; regular types of characters, like the misfortunate lovers, their virtuous benefactor, and the comic villain; and the harmony of each was attained due to the love and faith to Tsar and Motherland.

As it is known, the prominent musical comedy *Natalka-Poltavka* (1819) by the Ukranian writer Ivan Kotliarevski, with its specific Ukranian humor, colorful and ‘tasty’ language, was the answer of the classic of the Ukranian literature to this awkward attempt of Prince Shakhovskoi and it remains in the repertoire of the Russian and Ukranian theatres ever since.
In 1814 two more vaudevilles by Shakhovskoi were presented in Petersburg: *Крестьяне или встреча незваных* (Peasants, or Meeting of the Uninvited) and *Ломоносов, или Рекрут-стихотворец* (Lomonosov, or Recruit-Versifier).

In *Peasants*, the scene where a young Russian lad in his monologue describes how Russian villagers met the ‘uninvited guests’ (the French) was met enthusiastically by the audience, as was the patriotic song of the village headman. The general idea of the play was to show how good life became after the enemy was thrown out of Russia: when the people defended their Tsar, its landlords, and its religion, the times of peace and prosperity returned.

In *Lomonosov*, Shakhovskoi used a historical anecdote about M. V. Lomonosov (1711-1765)*, while being abroad, was recruited into the Prussian army. The figure of the famous Russian poet and scientist was drawn by Shakhovskoi without any historical accuracy or plausibility, though a good half of Lomonosov’s lines in the play were borrowed by Shakhovskoi from Lomonosov’s own writings.

There were elements of satire in *Lomonosov* presenting a Prussian officer Трумф (Trumph). This name in the mind of Russian theatre-goers was associated immediately by the audience with one of the characters of I. A. Krylov’s prominent

---

* Lomonosov, Mikhailo Vasilevich, Russian poet, historian, chemist, physicist, mathematician, mining engineer: he has been described as the founder of modern Russian literature and of modern Russian culture. ([http://w2.xrefer.com/entry.jsp?xrefid=372451&secid=-](http://w2.xrefer.com/entry.jsp?xrefid=372451&secid=-))
In 1800 I. A. Krylov was forced to halt his activity as a publicist and playwright and to leave Petersburg for Ukraine; there he wrote an extremely severe and well-aimed satire on the police regime of Paul I, ‘buffo-tragedy’ Triumph (another name Podschipa) in a style of a folk balagan performance. It was presented at the house of Prince S. F. Golitsyn, but could not be published because of its sharp anti-government character. As a manuscript, the play was known to ‘all reading Russia.’ It was published abroad in 1859 and only in 1871 in Russia.

When Shakhovskoi wants to bite you, he only slobbers over you.

* In 1800 I. A. Krylov was forced to halt his activity as a publicist and playwright and to leave Petersburg for Ukraine; there he wrote an extremely severe and well-aimed satire on the police regime of Paul I, ‘buffo-tragedy’ Triumph (another name Podschipa) in a style of a folk balagan performance. It was presented at the house of Prince S. F. Golitsyn, but could not be published because of its sharp anti-government character. As a manuscript, the play was known to ‘all reading Russia.’ It was published abroad in 1859 and only in 1871 in Russia.

** When Shakhovskoi wants to bite you, he only slobbers over you.
He wrote *The New Stern*, a cold pasquinade on Karamzin.

He wrote vaudeville *Lomonosov*, presented the father of Russian poetry in a tavern and made him to recite his Russian poems to Germans, and stretched the action from two or three diverting scenes to three acts. He wrote *Cossack-Versifier*; there are lucky words in it, intricate songs, but there is not even a shade of either an exposition or a resolution... I do not talk about the *Meeting of the Uninvited*, a shallow show without a slightest art or entertainment.

Of course, this opinion of a young Pushkin about Shakhovskoi might be considered too harsh and explained by the youth of its author, but it is objective enough and, what is more important, here one can sense the position of the poet (Pushkin) in the struggle for a new Russian drama, which will start in 1830s.

In spite of the frequent criticism of his writing, Shakhovskoi was a prolific playwright; during his lifetime he wrote more than one hundred plays in different genres; for more than thirty years his plays were produced in both capitals, in the provinces, and in numerous, so called, home theatres. Among his vaudevilles *Два учителя, или Asinus Asinum Fricat* (Two Teachers, or Asinus Asinum Fricat) is considered the best.

*Two Teachers, or Asinus Asinum Fricat*

*Two Teachers, or Asinus Asinum Fricat*, was written by A. Shakhovskoi in 1819 and presented in St. Petersburg the same year on September 22, 26; October 10; and November 4. The vaudeville was a success, and it was included in the repertoire during the next six years (1820-1825). The plot of the vaudeville

He wrote *The New Stern*, a cold pasquinade on Karamzin.

He wrote vaudeville *Lomonosov*, presented the father of Russian poetry in a tavern and made him to recite his Russian poems to Germans, and stretched the action from two or three diverting scenes to three acts. He wrote *Cossack-Versifier*; there are lucky words in it, intricate songs, but there is not even a shade of either an exposition or a resolution... I do not talk about the *Meeting of the Uninvited*, a shallow show without a slightest art or entertainment.
Shakhovskoi borrowed from the comedy Le Deux précepteurs, ou Asinus asinum Fricat by E. Scribe (1791-1861) and Mélesville [A. H. J. Duveyrier] (1787–1865), but he made rather significant changes. He changed not only the French names of the characters into Russian but portrayed the characters (their language, their manner of speaking, and their manner of behavior) so that they became recognizable as Russian types. He placed the action of the play in a Russian province and saturated the texture of the play with numerous details depicting the life of the Russian provincial gentry, due to which the whole story gained an appreciably Russian character.

The action takes place in a little provincial town Glukhov. The name of the town was probably not chosen by Shakhovskoi accidently. The name Глухов (Glukhov) originated from the adjective глухой (glukhoi), which, regarding the physical space besides other meanings, has the one of “the place without a passageway, the dead end or the out-of-the-way place.” Besides that, in Ukraine, there was a real small town Glukhov (or, in Ukranian spelling, Glukhiv). In spite of its respectable age it was considered deeply provincial at that time.

The stage setting presents a flower garden, Turusina’s house on the right side, and a little house where Alësha lives on the left. There are several benches,
water barrel, and tools for gardening. There is also a rack for clean clothes near Alësha’s house. In one word, it is a picture quite “familiar” to the aristocratic audience. All of them had their own estates in the province.

There are seven characters in the vaudeville: Turusina, a rich landlady who lives in province; her son Alësha, a young man of 17 who was brought up in one of the best private boarding schools in St. Petersburg; Verushka, a young girl, a god-daughter of Turusina; Chupkevich, a teacher and owner of a boarding school in Glukhov; Annushka, a young girl, his step-daughter; Ivan, a servant; and Jacques, a servant who poses as a fashionable French teacher from St. Petersburg.

In his vaudeville, Shakhovskoi employs metonymical characteristic in the names of the *dramatis personae*. In many of his other vaudevilles and comedies, Shakhovskoi often gave the names to the characters which carry a certain meaning, besides being simply a personal name in a tradition of eighteen century Russian comedy. Thus, the spectators/readers receive some extra information about the character in the play or about the author’s attitude towards him or her. In the *Two Teachers*, Mrs. Turusina (Турусина) is a comic character. Sometimes she uses words without understanding their meaning, which causes comical effect. In old Russian the noun *turusy* (турусы) means idle talk; the verb *turusit’* (турусить) means to spout drivel, to talk nonsense. Shakhovskoi makes fun of her ignorance and her manner of mixing Russian and distorted French words. Certainly, it is not by chance that Shakhovskoi gave her the last name *Turusina*. The meaning of the word is transferred here onto the character. Likewise,
*Chupkevich* (Чупкеевич) is formed from the archaic Russian chupak (чупак), tuft of hair or forelock fluffed up on top of one’s head. It reflects the cocky behavior of this character.

The names of the young heroes - Annushka, Verushka, Alësha - are quite common. To express his good attitude towards them Shakhovskoi uses their pet names and not the main form - Anna, Vera, Aleksei. Not quite so clear is the case of the name “Jacques”. Shakhovskoi could have used it as a common French name for the trickster-servant just to emphasize servant’s French origin. It is not known if Shakhovskoi knew the meaning of the name “Jacques”: “he who supplants, replaces.” On the other hand, considering Shakhovskoi’s friendship with Shishkov, his pro-Russian position in the debates about the 'old and new style of the Russian language,' and his interest in the Old-Russian language, it would be logical to suppose that Shakhovskoi used homonymic Russian word жак (zhak) (or played on the homophony of the Russian and French words). The noun жак in Old Russian defines the action of quick, and not always honest, snatching or grabbing something from someone, using a good situation. None of the explanations suggested above contradict the character of the personage (as a matter of fact, they compliment each other). As far as no direction information was found about this particular case, one can only speculate. The fact to be pointed out, however, is that Shakhovskoi used proper names in his vaudevilles as an auxiliary means of characterization. This device was well known in the world dramatic literature of the time and also was traditional in the Russian folklore and dramatic literature. The plot of the play is typical vaudeville fare. Mrs. Turusina
invites from Petersburg Mr. Бене (Bénin), a famous professor, to continue her son’s, Alësha, education. Alësha, however, thinks that he has learnt enough while studying in Petersburg. He is in love with Verushka and wants to marry her. Having left Petersburg, Mr. Bénin falls ill and sends his valet Жак Трише (Jacques Tricher) ahead to Glukhov with a letter for Turusina that explains his delay. Jacques decides to pose as a professor but is recognized by Annushka, who grew up in Petersburg and loved Jacques. Thinking that Jacques is no longer faithful to her, Annushka discloses Jacques’ true identity to Alësha.

Meanwhile, Turusina introduces the “professor from Petersburg, who taught abroad, and knows all the sciences, and speaks Russian as well as we do” to Chupkevich, who wanted the position of Alësha’s gouverneur for himself. Chupkevich is a conservative, not to say reactionary, teacher who supports naturally the old system of education and presupposes that “this Petersburg French” is an advocate of a new one.

Quite unexpectedly, Jacques gets support from Alësha who says that monsieur Bénin is an extraordinary teacher and that he did not expect to have such a knowledgeable gouverneur. But things change for Jacques in the next scene when Alesha says that he knows about Jacques’ disguise and that his first intention was to throw Jacques out “over the fence.” But he has changed his mind because of two reasons. The first reason is that Alësha does not want to have a "

* Бене corresponds to the French bénin - good-natured, indulgent.

** Трише is the Russian spelling for the French verb tricher - to cheat, to trick.
gouverneur at all. If he told his mother about Jacques, he might have a real
gouverneur, who could be, in Alësha's words, even more stupid than Jacques is.
The second reason is that Alësha is going to give a ball for his friends and wants
Jacques to help him with all the organization while his mother is out at the local
gentry marshal's dinner.

At the height of the ball, Mrs. Turusina comes back to discover young
people dancing and “the professor” standing on the water barrel playing the violin.
After a heated conversation everything comes to a happy end: Turusina allows
Alësha to marry Verushka; Jacques is forgiven and is going to marry Annushka;
Turusina promises Chupkevich to take him with her to Moscow as her companion.
In gratitude, Chupkevich sings that he will let the children from his school go to
their families and, thus, he will be delivered from sufferings. His students join his
song with “deliver us from sufferings, too.” In these final couplets, directed to the
audience, all the characters come to agreement that “sometimes strictness kills our
souls and our abilities, but leniency revives; so, do not be strict to us!”

The structure and characters of the vaudeville Two Teachers, Or Asinus
Asinum Fricat are traditional for the comic genre. There are two young couples in
love: a noble couple, Alësha and Verushka and a comic couple, Jacques and
Annushka. There is a benefactress, Mrs. Turusina, whose good will brings a happy
end to all the characters. There is Chupkevich, not really a villain (who ever saw
a real villain in a vaudeville?), who provides a counteraction. There is Jacques,
the trickster-servant, a traditional stock character whose origin comes from the
Italian Harlequin, French Sganarelle, and Russian Petrushka. The types of all the
characters and the way they acted and reacted in the play were very familiar to all spectators. Such types were common in Russian rural life. Shakhovskoi managed through the characterization of the dramatis personae to create undoubtedly a Russian play.

In vaudeville to achieve the impression of contemporaneity on stage means to talk about the topics which are important for the audience. Shakhovskoi created the Russiannes of his vaudeville speaking on (mentioning or mocking) the topics which were discussed in the salons of Russian gentry. Shakhovskoi used such “signs of time” to establish the connection with the audience and to give national character to his pieces. This form of vaudeville allows it to happen very directly either through the plot line or through the couplet. In The Two Teachers, traditional for a classic vaudeville, the music was important and served Shakhovskoi to create national coloration on stage.

There are twenty scenes in the Two Teachers interspersed with seventeen musical numbers. The music, to be more exact, the lyrics composed by Shakhovskoi, are an integral part of the vaudeville and was used by Shakhovskoi in different ways. As a rule, there is an introductory song for each character (except Turusina and Ivan) that allow the audience to identify the personage and which portrays this personage. Couplets are used usually for comical or satirical

* In time, the term couplet from its literary proper definition, as two consecutive lines that rhyme, began to be applied to quatrain while the aphoristic character of a couplet was preserved; in Russian vaudeville the term gained even more wide meaning, customarily defining all the songs presented by the characters regardless their poetic form.
Such device was brilliantly used in Rossini’s operas, for what he got his nick-name “Maestro Crescendo.”

effect. Thus, Annushka, in her introductory couplets (Scene I) sings about the foolish habit of mothers to decrease the age of their sons in order to hide their own age and make themselves look younger. Alësha in his arguments with his mother (Scene III) sings that some people do not have a soul: “when one’s soul is always ‘your humble servant,’ when it crawls trying to get into the aristocracy, and when it is so small and ignoble and do not dare to be itself but always goes where it was said, then it is not called a soul, but a petty soul.” Through Alësha’s couplets, Shakhovskoi attempts to mock the servility and lack of principles among some people in order to obtain a profitable position or closeness to the court.

There are different types of musical numbers which Shakhovskoi (together with Cavos) exploited in his vaudeville besides the aforementioned solos, such as a song (solo, or duet, or trio) that more or less organically developed the action expressed in the previous ‘spoken’ scene. In The Two Teachers, three scenes (Turusina and Chupkevich, Scene IV; Turusina and Jacques, Scene VII; Annushka and Jacques, Scene VIII) are constructed similarly: dialog turns into a duet and the duet continues as a dialog again. Another music form was an ensemble, which served to give more tension to the already tightened action. It usually involved all present on the stage, though the attitude of each person to the event might be different. A song, which had a reference or which responded to the topic of the day, usually, had nothing to do with the plot of the vaudeville or it had a very loosened connection with it. It could have a satirical character but was not a

Such device was brilliantly used in Rossini’s operas, for what he got his nick-name “Maestro Crescendo.”
requirement. Shakhovskoi used this traditional device in Annushka’s couplets (Scene I) and Alësha’s song (Scene II).

Sometimes authors included such songs/couplets in their vaudeville just because it was ‘hot’ or fashionable. It gave the audience the impression of reality of the action and linked it with their everyday lives, with themes discussed in fashionable salons, and with the news read in the newspapers. In The Two Teachers Alësha talks to Verushka about his intention to open the ball with a waltz (Scene II). He sings to her:

I adore waltzes, what might be sweeter in the world? In the presence of everybody I press you to my breast. I am flying, I am spinning with you, I am looking into your eyes; I read your eyes with my soul and find a joy.

... Ah! Believe me, my heartfelt friend, the one, who invented waltzes, is entitled to the eternal glory as he found the way to happiness. 17

The waltz as a ballroom dance was introduced to European courts at the beginning of the nineteenth century (though in different modifications it was known long before as a folk dance). What made Alësha so excited about the waltz in 1819 in a provincial Russian town was exactly the same that made the editors of The Times so angry about it at the ball given by the Prince Regent in London in 1816. The editorial article angrily described:

We remarked with pain that the indecent foreign dance called the Waltz was introduced (we believe for the first time) at the English court on Friday last ... it is quite sufficient to cast one’s eyes on the voluptuous intertwining of the limbs and close compression of the bodies in their dance, to see that it is indeed far removed from the modest reserve which has hitherto been considered distinctive of English females. So long as this obscene display was confined to prostitutes and adulteresses, we did not think it deserving of notice; but now that it is attempted to be forced on the respectable classes of society by the civil examples of their superiors, we feel it a duty to warn every parent against exposing his daughter to so fatal a contagion. 18
The waltz was among those new things which were brought to Russia from Europe by young Russian officers, participants in the war with Napoleon. In 1819 Russian society had a dual attitude towards the waltz. We can conclude this from the Verushka’s answer to Annushka’s question if she likes waltzes: “Very much, especially with my god-brother.” Verushka likes to dance the waltz not with a stranger but with a member of her family, the young man she is in love with.

In chapter Five of his Eugene Onegin (finished in January 1826), Pushkin described Onegin dancing the waltz with Olga, which after all became one of the reasons for Lenski to fight a duel with Onegin:

Monotonous and mad
like young life’s whirl,
the waltz’s noisy whirl revolves,
pair after pair flicks by.
Onegin, chuckling secretly,
goes up to Olga, rapidly with her
twirls near the guests,
then sits her on a chair,
proceeds tp speak of this and that;
a minute or two having lapsed, then
again with her he goes on waltzing;
al in amazement are. Lenski himself
does not believe his proper eyes.”

In Pushkin’s 1826 stanzas, the waltz was already a legitimate activity in a provincial ball room discourse. Seven years prior to that, Shakhovskoi showed the transitional attitude to this novelty in his vaudeville.

* A very interesting research on XIX century Russia social dance is done by S. Sandler in her Pleasure, Danger, and the Dance: Nineteenth Century Russian Variations in “Russia. Women. Culture.” See bibliography.

“ Translation by V. Nabokov.
There was another topic of the day much more important for Shakhovskoi than the fashionable dance, the topic that he made the through-theme of his vaudeville. It was the problem of education. Education was considered in close relation with the development of the national literature. By the time the vaudeville *The Two Teachers* was written, the struggle in Russian literature between the romanticists, who were identified as French followers, and the advocates of classicism, propagating the Old Slavonic language, was reaching its height. Romanticism and sentimentalism, as literary movements in such magazines as *Вестник Европы* (The European Courier), were considered to be connected with political liberalism and therefore dangerous to the Russian monarchy. Not only the problems of the language but also the matters of philosophy, aesthetic, arts, and education were questioned insofar as should Russia imitate the foreign experience or its own way.

By choosing *The Two Teachers or Asinus Asinum Fricat* for his vaudeville, and the problem of education as the main theme, Shakhovskoi intended to kill two birds with one stone. The illiterate and uneducated small provincial gentry was always the subject of Shakhovskoi’s satire. The second target of his mockery became the new ideas in education associated primarily with the name of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (here might be another reason for A. Shakhovskoi to name the trickster-servant in *The Two Teachers Jacques*).

Mrs. Turusina makes her entrance in Scene III. She does not have an introductory song/couplet in this vaudeville because her character is funny and can attract the audience’s attention without any auxiliary means. Her speech is filled
with French words, which are either mispronounced or used in incorrect ways. The combination of common language and such ‘refined’ French causes a comical effect. She admits that she did not study French but picked up “some things” in Moscow.\textsuperscript{21} She thinks that knowing how “to glue in a French word” in everyday conversation is necessary to live in high society. Though the scene does not move the action forward, it is still enjoyable to watch because of this comical character. The scene ends with Turusina’s intention to talk with Chupkevich ("here’s Chupkevich coming") privately, and she sends Alësha away, asking him to order the servants to serve \textit{дежени} in the gallery. This line also would cause laughter in the French speaking aristocratic audience; she pronounces French \textit{déjeuner} (lunch, luncheon) as \textit{de génie} (with or out of spirit, genie, sylph, etc.); so, what she actually says to Alësha is: “order to serve the genie in the gallery.” One of the strong qualities of Shakhovskoi as of a playwright was the ability to notice the funny in real life and to bring it into his writing.

The funniest places in \textit{The Two Teachers} are the two subsequent scenes, Scene IX and Scene X, which are very dynamic, replete with unpredictable turns, and full of humor. Scene IX starts when Turusina unexpectedly comes to the flower garden and discovers “the prominent professor” standing on his knees in front of Annushka, the girl she hired to teach Verushka, her ward, embroidering (in the previous scene Jacques was begging Annushka for forgiveness). Annushka does not belong to the nobility; in fact she is almost a servant. So the behavior of the ‘professor’ is unacceptable. Like Molière’s Sganarelle, Jacques has to talk fast\textsuperscript{22} and explains that he is picking up a handkerchief and has nothing to do with
Annushka. Turusina presupposes that a stitcher might drop the handkerchief, so there is no necessity to bother oneself to pick it up. Jacques says: “Швея или не швея, я не вхожу в эти подробности, а уважаю женщину, женщину; да, мадам, женщину.”

Jacques switches to a song that glorifies women and the superiority of their qualities over men’s. He quotes, “one renowned Jesuit, a professor of politics” who used to say to his children that “extra gallantry is better than extra incivility.”

Turusina is pleased with the new teacher’s mind set and asks Jacques to teach Alësha politics well, because he is not “politic” at all. She describes how Alësha several days ago guffawed right in the face of a lady, the neighbor, “who appeared at a party wearing a blue spencer, a pink turban, an orange dress, and a purple shawl.” In terms of the development of the plot, this scene was necessary for Shakhovskoi to show the ignorance of Jacques and, thus, to focus the audience’s attitude towards him in the next scene, where Jacques would defend the new system of education based on the ideas of French Enlightenment.

Hardly has Jacques convinced Turusina to rely upon him in educating the young man when Chupkevich and Alësha come to the garden almost

* A stitcher or not a stitcher, I do not go into such details, but I respect a woman; yes, madam, a woman.

** Jacques’ made up “quotation” sounds funny because Jesuits in Russian common mind were associated first of all with inquisition, auto-da-fé, and the like.

*** A tight short jacket. As a particle of a woman’s dress spencer was often decorated with fur; was on fashion in European countries during the first third of the XIX century.
simultaneously. Chupkevich is angry with the new teacher because of whom he did not get the profitable position of a gouverneur at the Turusina’s house. (Turusina is planning to give the teacher a separate apartment; he would eat together with the family,’ he would have his own carriage, and he would have two thousand roubles salary.) Chupkevich wants to teach “this Petersburgian French” a lesson and begins to pick on Jacques. Chupkevich claims that he has understood instantly that the “Petersburgian French” is an advocate of the new system. As for himself, he is the supporter of the old one.

Chupkevich. Yes, monsieur, yes! My system is known to everybody and I will never change it.
Jacques. The worse for you.
Alēsha. And for his students.
Turusina. Keep silence, you are too young to interfere into the scholarly despot
Go on, monsieurs, I do love serious matters.
Chupkevich. I do not mind the disputes, I turned grey speaking from the platform.
Jacques. Though I did not turn grey, I am not afraid your platform. (Aside) The more courage, the better!
Chupkevich. We’ll see, monsieur, we’ll see. As far as you support the new system I conclude that you are a new Jean-Jacques.
Jacques (aside). Jacques. Has he recognized me?
Chupkevich (aside). He is embarrassed. (To Jacques) Why don’t you answer?
Jacques. Who? I do not answer? Quite opposite! I answer, I... very clearly, that Jean-Jacques is a man... a man...
Chupkevich. Dangerous and harmful.
Jacques. Dangerous, well... It might be, but harmful... it’s another matter...
Chupkevich. What is that, monsieur?
Jacques. That is that, monsieur... What do you call ‘harmful’? Uh? Do you know that this word demands a big explanation... or declaration?
Chupkevich. Here is the declaration but not the explanation. I call Jean-Jacques harmful, because he is harmful, I mean his writing is

’ As a member of the family, not with servants in the kitchen or in his own room.
harmful.
Jacques. His writing? Fine! That’s where I’ll catch you. Have you read in
his glorious book about... You should know it, this famous chapter
regarding the... you understand me... in which he proves that...
with such clarity, that there’s nothing to answer.
Alësha. I am of the same opinion with you.
Chupkevich. How’s that, nothing to answer?..
Jacques. Then, answer.
Chupkevich. To what?
Jacques. To what I have had the honor to suggest to you... to this
chapter.26

The endless altercations finally come to an end when Jacques accuses
Chupkevich of being “a pedant and an ass” and asks Turusina to solve their
argument. Turusina, confused by such highly “academic” elocutions of the two,
does not know what to say.

The comedy of the scene lies in the fact that both Chupkevich and Jacques
do not know what are they talking about while they try to present the opposite
impression. Jacques did not get any formal education. His only advantage is that
he can chat in French. Chupkevich has stagnated in his ignorance. He certainly
heard the name Jean-Jacques Rousseau but knows nothing about him or his ideas
on education. In his stupid arrogance he cannot admit it and, as all foolish and
ignorant people do in similar cases, simply rejects the new.

It is necessary to mention here that Chupkevich in the vaudeville is not only
a comical figure. The problem of education in Russia was closely connected with
political affairs. In spite of the fact that the official policy of Aleksandr I towards
France changed after the war with Napoleon and that the French, who had been
called in manifestos of 1812-1814 “Godless fiends” became “God-fearing and loyal
subjects” of Louis XVIII, the suspicion surrounding ideas from France, the nest
of revolutions, rebellions, and free thinking, still remained. The scene of the arguing “teachers” makes clear the position of Shakhovskoi himself: he laughs at ignorance in all its appearances. The meaning of the second part of the title *Asinus Asinum Fricat* turns into Shakhovskoi’s message to the audience.

In *The Two Teachers or Asinus Asinum Fricat*, as well as in Shakhovskoi’s other vaudevilles, one will not find a complex intrigue and psychologically elaborated characters. His versifications are sometimes lame and the dramatic action sometimes “stumbles and marks the time.” At the same time, in spite of these flaws, Shakhovskoi was the most popular author of the comic genre of the time. The ability of the playwright to notice the ridiculous, the funny, or the absurd and his skill to use it in his plays made the characters in his pieces more plausible.

Shakhovskoi also paid much attention to the language of his plays. He broke the rule of composing comedies, using only alexandrine style of versification. He also used different meters trying to bring the language of a play closer to the everyday speech. In vaudevilles, he felt himself free from the canonical rules of a comedy and experimented with the verses in the manner of I. A. Krylov’s versified fables.

After the Decembrist revolt of 1825, Shakhovskoi left St-Petersburg for Moscow, after he had been questioned about his connections with the rebellions and, finally, was freed from his service at the Petersburg Imperial Repertoire Committee. Shakhovskoi never entered any civil service again, but he played an important role in the theatre life of Moscow as a productive playwright, director,

\* Asinus Asinum Fricat - An ass is fooling an ass (lat.).
and teacher of acting. As a member of Shishkov’s *The Colloquy of Lovers of the Russian Word*, Shakhovskoi was interested in enriching the Russian conversational language of the aristocratic circles with the everyday language of the common people. He was repeatedly criticized for using the words and expressions which, in critics’ opinion, were too plain or rude to be used in the “enlightened” society. These experiments with the language by Shakhovskoi, however, might be considered as the first rather modest and sometimes awkward steps on the way of democratization of the language of Russian vaudeville (which came in late 1830s-40s and will be discussed in chapters 7 and 8).

Also, at the time when Shakhovskoi created his first vaudevilles, the term narodnost’ was not in use yet. But being concerned with the development of national drama in general, Shakhovskoi was the first to make an attempt of creating nationally original vaudeville. Considering vaudeville’s characters, plot, place of action, and language, which reflected Shakhovskoi’s understanding of the Russianness in drama, his vaudevilles were the first to express the concept of narodnost’ or what Pushkin called a “peculiar physiognomy” of people in this genre.

At the beginning of the century, Shakhovskoi’s contemporary playwright-rival Khmelnitskii also attracted critics’ attention with the language of his vaudevilles, though because of quite different reasons. His works and the works of the other vaudevillist of the “aristocratic vaudeville,” A. Pisarev, are the subjects of the next chapter.
Endnotes to Chapter 3


3. Ibid.


11. Village.com. @ http://www2.parentsoup.com/babynames/meanings


14. Ibid., 94.

15. Ibid., 56.

16. Ibid., 61.

17. Ibid., 59.


19. Ibid., 60.


24. Ibid., 77.

25. Ibid., 58.

26. Ibid., 79-80.
CHAPTER 4. ARISTOCRATIC PERIOD OF THE RUSSIAN VAUDEVILLE: 1812-1825: PART TWO

N. A. Khmelnitskii, the Master of Vaudeville Style

As Shakhovskoi was reproached for countesses in his plays speaking like housemaids, and Khmelnitskii was criticized that the valets and maids in his plays spoke as countesses. Nikolai Ivanovich Khmelnitskii (1789-1845) was considered by many critics as the most talented comedy writer prior to Aleksandr Griboedov. He was the son of a prominent writer and scientist I. P. Khmelnitskii and the last descendant of Ukranian Hetman Bogdan Khmelnitskii.

He graduated from the College of Mines in St. Petersburg and started his civil service career as an official at the Collegium of Foreign affairs at the age of seventeen. As a diplomatic courier, he frequently traveled abroad. During the war of 1812, Khmelnitskii joined the army and took part in some major battles with Napoleon. When the Russian army stayed in Paris, many young officers were interested in the social changes that had taken place in France during the last twenty years and did their best in efforts to get acquainted with revolutionary ideas first hand. Many of these young men later joined the Decembrist movement.

In contradistinction to them, Khmelnitskii enjoyed Paris theatres, cafes, witty conversations full of ‘Gallic spirit,’ and French culture in general. This experience would influence his writing in the future. The style of his writing is recognizable as his particular talent when analyzing the manner in which he

* Bogdan Khmelnitskii (1595-1657), an educated representative of Ukranian gentry, was elected the Hetman and led the Cossacks rebellion against Polish invaders (1648).
constructed monologues and dialogues in his vaudevilles and which might be identified as Russian marivaudage.

At the beginning of his literary career, Khmelnitskii was a member of Shakhovskoi’s circle, together with A. Pisarev, A. Griboedov, and others. At the meetings in “Shakhovskoi’s attic” (as Shakhovskoi’s apartment was known in literary and theatrical circles), the hot topics of the day were discussed, poets and playwrights read their new pieces, and the opinions and actions in literary struggle were clarified and planned. In “Shakhovskoi’s attic” Khmelnitskii had an opportunity to meet popular actors and to watch how Shakhovskoi trained them and rehearsed new roles. Besides that, because he was appointed after the war at the Office of the general-governor of Petersburg Count Miloradovich, Khmelnitskii was well informed about theatre matters.  

All these circumstances and his own passion for theatre had led to Khmelnitskii’s debut as a playwright in 1817. The vaudeville Говорун (The Prattler) was an adaptation of a comedy Le Babillard by Guy de Boissy. It was a tremendous success, remained in the repertoire for the next ten years, and was

* In Russia all theatres were under the jurisdiction of the general-governor of a city at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Since 1782, all public performances were under the jurisdiction of police. Next year (1783) a special committee was formed to regulate music and theatre affairs, yet under the police supervision. In 1811, The Ministry of Police was established by Aleksandr I. Theatre remained under the jurisdiction of police until 1826 when the Ministry of the Imperial Court was founded; all theatre committees, directorates, and other administrative units were given under the power of this Ministry. (Перечень актов русского законодательства о театрах и зрелищах в “О театре.” М.: Искусство”, 1940, 185-188 [A List of Acts of the Russian Legislation on Theatres and Performances in the anthology of articles “On Theatre.” Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1940, 185-188.])
revived several times in the 1830s and 1840s. Some historians (B. Varneke) consider this piece one of the best that N. Khmelnitskii wrote. The majority of them were adaptations of the French comedies and vaudevilles: *The Pranks of the Enamored,* (J.-F. Regnard’s *Les Folies amoureuses*), 1817; *The Irresolute* (based on P. Néricault Destouches’ *L’Irrésolu*), 1819; *Grandmother’s Parrots* (from M. and A. Dartois *Les Perroquets de la mère Philippe* ), 1819; *Marriages are Made in Heaven,* (Collin d’Harleville’s *Les Châteaux en Espagne*), 1821; *The New Parnassus,* (C.-S. Favart’s *La Rosière de Salency*), 1829; and many others. In the 1820s, N. Khmelnitskii’s plays were extremely popular and produced widely at professional and amateur theatres.

In spite of the fact that most of his plays were translations from French, Khmelnitskii’s writing certainly influenced the development of Russian vaudeville. This influence and the particularities of his writing will be discussed in this chapter.

There are several features which distinguish Khmelnitskii from other popular playwrights of the time. His plays sustain light aphoristic verses; language, free from archaisms, expressive, and contemporary to the language spoken in high society salons; and vivid and elegant dialogs.

His vaudevilles brought him fast fame which, unfortunately, did not last long. Nevertheless, the drama critics considered him one of the most talented authors of the 1820s.

* There are three exceptions: a) two masterly translations of Moliere’s *School for Wives* (1821) and *Tartuffe* (1828); b) two original vaudevilles *Actors Among Themselves* and *A High Society Incident*; and c) several historical plays, written in his late days, which never had a success.
Just like Pushkin, N. Khmelnitskii was a man-about-town; he belonged to that very “golden youth” of the Russian society of the beginning of the nineteenth century who formed a class of educated, well-bred young people of noble origin. They knew the skill of casual conversation in the fashionable salons of Petersburg and Moscow. They had sharp wits; verbal fencing brought them prominence as well as real duels. They knew all the literary novelties not only in Russia but in Europe also. In the Petersburg Imperial theatres, they represented that very “left flank” (they used to occupy their seats in the left side of the parterre) which could be a real threat for the actors. This noisy young crowd often decided whether the performance should be hissed or applauded.

They patronized their favourite actresses sometimes without any ulterior motives, simply for the sake of fashion. It was fashionable to proclaim to be in love with an actress and to show one’s passion publicly. (Prince A. Shakhovskoi, however, was truly in love with the actress Ekaterina Ivanovna Ezhova and proposed to her many times. To which she used to say: “I would be rather beloved Ezhova rather than a ludicrous princess.”¹).

All of these young men spoke French and some of them knew several foreign languages. Aleksandr Nikitenko, who made his way from being a serf to the one of the most remarkable and respected censors in tsarist Russia, wrote in his diary when he was twenty two and just started his professional career in the capital:

В самом деле, знание французского языка служит как бы пропускным листом для входа в гостиную хорошего тона. Он часто решает о вас мнение целого общества и освобождает вас,
Truly, the knowledge of French serves you as a pass ticket to enter a “good tone” drawing-room. Very often the French language makes an opinion of you to the whole society and liberates you, if not forever then for a long time, from the duty to expose your other, most important rights for the attention and favour of the public.

Khmelnitskii brought into his writing the style of everyday life from the Petersburg upper strata: naturalness, ease, and gracefulness of a dialog; witty remarks; and allusions to the political or cultural events discussed in the salons. The personages of Khmelnitskii’s vaudevilles, lacking any distinct social differentiation, behaved as Russian aristocrats. They were recognizable, familiar, and identified by the people filling in the parterre and loges of a theatre every night. They spoke the same language.

Though Khmelnitskii, according to the tradition, wrote his plays in alexandrine and did not experiment with other meters (as A. Shakhovskoi did), his manner of versification captured the audience by its skill, inventiveness, and the novelty of its poetic expression, in contradistinction to the heavy and high-flown stanzas of classic comedies. Before Eugene Onegin and Woe from Wit, Khmelnitskii was one of the first to bring the live contemporary language onto the stage. Some of the lines and calembours from Khmelnitskii’s vaudevilles became by-words, like this one from The Prattler, Scene 1: “... и где же справедливость, - / У женщин похищать их право на болтливость!” (... and where is the justice, folks? - / To steal from women their right for idle talks!). Also, Mrs. Troepolskaia (Actors Among Themselves, Scene III), in planning her revenge against scoffers

1 Truly, the knowledge of French serves you as a pass ticket to enter a “good tone” drawing-room. Very often the French language makes an opinion of you to the whole society and liberates you, if not forever then for a long time, from the duty to expose your other, most important rights for the attention and favour of the public.

100
I have such a weakness for him that I am ready to place the whole couplet in his honor in the 1st stanza of Onegin.

At the time when Pushkin began to gain his prominence, namely in the twenties, Batiushkov and Khmelnitskii already wrote in clear, light, conversational language, what is the main contribution of Khmelnitskii.

Popov and Shumski, sings: “But your “she-fool” will make the fools / Of fools who brag to be so clever.”

Count Zvonov (The Prattler, Scene 10) talking about his friend who unhappily married a rich girl notes: “Sometimes we see a bride without / The soul but having souls about.” (In the nineteenth century Russia one of the indicators of a person’s wealth was the number of “souls,” serfs, possessed by the owner. Here Khmelnitskii plays with two meanings of the word soul: ‘soul’ in its primary meaning and “soul” as a serf. (Gogol’s novel Dead Souls is based on the story of fictitious possession of serfs, i.e., ”souls.”) Khmelnitskii’s calembours were remembered and repeated after the each premiere of his new vaudeville because of their aphoristic form and conversational style of expression. This quality of Khmelnitskii’s writing was appreciated by his contemporaries. In 1825, A. Pushkin, working on his novel, wrote in a letter to his brother about Khmelnitskii: “Я имею к нему такую слабость, что готов поместить в честь его целый куплет в 1-ю песнь Онегина.”

The article in the magazine Москвитянин (The Muscovite) presenting the new edition of Complete Works of N. Khmelnitskii in 1849 pointed out:

В то время, когда Пушкин начинал приобретать свою известность, именно в двадцатых годах, Батюшков и Хмельницкий писали уже чистым, легким разговорным языком, в котором и состоит главная заслуга Хмельницкого.”
Khmelnitskii in his own article (*My Little Ball*) revealed some thoughts of his own on the secrets of his creativity:

...как иной дилетант, напевая новую тему, варьирует ее на разные тоны, так точно и я в моем dolce far niente, напав на какое-нибудь словцо, играю им, как мячком, бросаю его во все стороны, во все фразы, перифразы и даже антифразы, если вам угодно. И поверьте, если бы мы почаще играли таким мячком, то скорее бы приучились владеть языком, который еще недостаточно гибок для языка разговорного.

The traditional vaudeville feature of referring to current events was used by Khmelnitskii not to settle accounts with his literary enemies, as Shakhovskoi and Pisarev often did, but, rather, to maintain the plausibility of an action, to make the audience to believe that the characters were living the same life as people in the auditorium. In 1818, public interest centered on the news from the island of St. Helen. The rumors about Napoleon’s escape from the island and about the danger of traveling in the Atlantic Ocean were circulating in salons and drawing rooms.

In his vaudeville *Castles in the Air*, Khmelnitskii put such lines in the mouths of Aglaeva, a young widow, and Alnaskarov, a retired midshipman:

Aglaeva
But let us sit and tell me, please, and don’t refuse me, What are the news of yours?  
Alnaskarov
I hope, you’ll excuse me, I have not read the papers for three months, Lord gracious!

... as some dilettante, singing a new theme, varies it in different tones, so I in my dolce far niente, having found a word, play with it, as with a little ball, throw it in different directions, into all phrases, periphrases, and even antiphrases, if you will. And believe me, if we played with such a ball more often, we would learn sooner to possess the language, which is not flexible enough for a conversational language.
Aglaeva
I think, you’re joking, you simply don’t have patience
To read the news about Saint Helena island,
About storms and rains, or how Algerians’re violent...

Alnaskarov
Algerians! Again they made some merchant vessels drown?
It is a shame; they should be, really, calmed down.”

Khmelnitskii often mentions the names of popular novels, their authors, or
their characters, to make the dialog sound more like real life. In Russian society
the novels of Samuel Richardson (1689-1761) and Marie Cottin (1770-1807) were
very popular, and Khmelnitskii used the names of their heroes to characterize a
person. Aglaeva (in the same vaudeville *Castles in the Air*) is trying to imagine the
unknown to her Count Lestov, who is eager to get acquainted with her: “He is
Lovelace by face and Malek-Adhel by soul!”**

It was not necessary to explain to the audience who Lovelace or Malek-Adhel were or what Aglaeva meant describing her future encounter with the Count
in such a way. Popular public figures, popular reading, popular music, international
or domestic news - all served to present the connection between stage and theatre

‘The ‘Algerians’ are mentioned due to the fact that some news about the
piracy in the Mediterraneans from time to time appeared in the European and
Russian newspapers. In spite of the International agreement to outlaw the piracy, Algeria in 1818 broke the Agreement by robbing the merchant ships and enslaving people.

** Lovelace was a handsome “lady-killer” from S. Richardson’s novel *Clarissa, or the History of a Young Lady*; the name Lovelace became a common noun (*ловелас*) in the Russian language with the meaning ‘ladies’ man, philanderer, ‘libertine’ and still is in use in the contemporary language. Malek-Adhel, a Muslim commander who was passionately in love with a virtuous Christian Princess, the sister of King Richard Cœur de Lion, from M. Cootin’s novel *Matilda* (1805).
auditorium and, thus, to create the impression of real life. And it was not some “general” life; it was the life of the author and his contemporaries living in the first half of the nineteenth century in Russia.

Some vaudeville references to events or names could be understood by any audience, but in certain cases a foreigner probably would not understand what was so funny in this or that vaudeville line. For example, in the vaudeville *A High Society Incident* (1829), Stolitsyn asks Ramirski where he is going, to what Ramirski answers (Scene VI):

Ramirski

Right now - home... later - theatre.

Stolitsyn

Bah! That’s fun!
Who of significant personae goes there? No one.
And who would like to have such boring theatre lot to listen till next morning to Sir Walter Scott?¹⁰

Of course, this replication had nothing to do with Khmelnitskii’s evaluation of the prominent English novelist.

Khmelnitskii referred to a recent event in Petersburg theatre life. In 1824, Shakhovskoi wrote and produced *The Fate of Nigel, or All the Trouble for the Misfortunate*, “a romantic comedy in five acts with singing, choruses, divertimenti, and splendid spectacle” for the benefit performance of a famous Russian tragic actor P. Mochalov. The comedy was based on W. Scott’s novel *The Fortunes of Nigel* (1822). The performance was extremely long, boring, and not successful. S. Aksakov, who was a friend of Shakhovskoi, wrote in his diary about
...this unfortunate performance, to listen to the end of which nobody was able; by the end of the performance many spectators were gone.

Khmelnitskii did not miss the chance to make a joke at Shakhovskoi's expense.

Similar examples might be found in different vaudevilles by Russian authors. As a rule, all these remarks, insertions, allusions, double-meanings, interspersions, and calembours in Khmelnitskii’s vaudevilles did not have any connection with the story itself; rather, they served as a background for it, presenting a familiar social environment to the aristocratic spectator. Behind each proper name or event there was a story known by the audience. The audience enjoyed this word-game and reacted appropriately. The phrase “who would like to have such boring theatre lot / to listen till next morning to Sir Walter Scott” certainly caused laughter among the theatre goers who knew very well the whole matter about Shakhovskoi’s production. In Khmelnitskii’s vaudevilles, a word (proper name, event, etc.) became a sign and operated within the system of signs common for the author/performers and for the audience. It was a language which did not need to be deciphered. As a result, a simple vaudeville plot gained one more important dimension: an indissoluble connection with everyday life.

Borrowing sujets from French comedies, Khmelnitskii chose those which could be easily applied to Russian reality. The simple vaudeville situations, enriched by the characteristic details of Russian life, by portraying personages to
the extent that during the performance the spectators began to turn their heads looking for a certain Mr. X or Mrs. Y. in the auditorium identifying them with the characters on stage, by the humouristic replications, and by the brilliance of a dialogue, became enjoyable and undoubtedly Russian pieces in Khmelnitskii’s writing.

Sometimes, in the borrowed French plots, Khmelnitskii did not change the place of the action and the names of the characters to Russian ones, probably understanding that such mechanical alternations would not make the play Russian. In contradistinction to Shakhovskoi, he was never carried away with Russophile ideas. Moreover, in his parody-vaudeville *Greek Ravings, or Iphigenia in Tauris* (1820), Khmelnitskii mocked the primitive attempts of certain playwrights to Russify foreign plays. Khmelnitskii made Iphigenia speak and sing using the vocabulary of the Russian common people’s language, while in combination with “high” mythological theme and heroic characters caused laughter in the audience.

Besides mocking Russophiles, Khmelnitskii (it is not known, deliberately or not) broke one of the rules established by the spokesman of classicism Nicolas Boileau, an indisputable authority among Russian classicists. According to Boileau, the writer’s interpretation of a “low” sujet in a high style of heroic epos was noble and preferable. Boileau also demonstrated his own theoretical statements in a practical way - by writing heroic comical long poem *Lutrin* (a funny story of a

---

1. Boileau-Despréaux, N. (1636-1711), French poet, critic, and theorist of Classicism was well known in Russia. His *L’art poétique* (1674) was a reference book for many Russian poets; in 1808 it was published in Sankt-Petersburg in Russian translation.
quarrel of two prelates). In his parody-vaudeville *Greek Ravings, or Iphigenia in Tauris*, Khmelnitskii did the opposite: he lowered the mythological story by retelling it in a plain language. The vaudeville showed the absurdity of treating universally known world classical plots as something specifically Russian. In his own translations, Khmelnitskii, as it was stated before, very often changed neither names of the characters nor the place of action. In terms of national identity, Khmelnitskii let his characters be what they were.

However, a curious fact might be brought to the discussion about the national identity of Khmelnitskii’s characters. The vaudeville *Marriages are Made in Heaven, or Each Cloud Has a Silver Lining (Суженого конем не объедешь, или Нет худа без добра, 1821)* was remade from Collin d’Harleville’s *Les Châteaux en Espagne*. Khmelnitskii did not try to make the vaudeville “Russian.” The opening direction line read, “theatre presents a hall of a Gothic castle,”12 which for an experienced theatre-goer meant a French, German, or Spanish setting, not Russian. The names of the characters were not Russian. At the same time, however, two main characters, hussar officers Brant and Ernest, resembled Russians very much. In Russia during the first half of the nineteenth century, the whole hussar subculture had been developed and was fully reflected in poetry, prose, painting, and music of that period.

Since that time, the image of a Russian hussar became an archetype in the Russian literature and culture and can be found nowadays in literature, theatre, music, and numerous TV and cinematography productions.
In 1820s, the image of the hussar had gained an extreme popularity due to the victorious (for Russia) war with Napoleon. Hussars were heroes and became the subject of national pride. They were welcomed as dear guests in fashionable salons; madrigals, odes, and panegyrics were dedicated to them; they became attractive characters in novels, short stories, poetry, and, of course, in drama.

What was the hussar stereotype in Russian literature? A hussar stereotype was a bright and well-fit uniform (when and where do women not like a man in a uniform?), a skill in salon conversing and a skill in the commanding of arms, a brotherhood with his fellow-hussars, wild parties with *Veuve Clicquot* champagne and gipsy choirs, courage on the battle field and a penchant for daring actions in the time of peace (e.g., to kidnap a girl and to marry her secretly against her parents’ will). Who was a hussar? A hussar was a well-bred brave man of a noble origin, a bully, a squabbler, a wit, a duelist, an author of epigrams or madrigals, a passionate lover, and a faithful friend. Such are Ernest and Brant in *Marriages are Made in Heaven*. Usually, Khmelnitskii developed one particular quality of a character to its comical extreme; psychological depth was absent. The chatterbox, the dreamer, the irresolute, the squabbler are the character types in Khmelnitskii’s plays. In his *Marriages Are Made in Heaven*, Khmelnitskii used the same method in portraying young hussar officers. Brant is more of an epicurean type; Ernest is what is called *veni, vidi, vici*.

*The French champagne *Veuve Clicquot* was of a great popularity in nineteenth century Europe and Russia; it is still produced in France and imported to the USA.*
Their characters are revealed through their lines and actions. On their way to Paris, the hungry and tired officers are forced to stop at a countryside castle because their carriage broke. Both hussars are not willing to continue their trip until they can rest and get some food. But the manager of the castle and his wife refuse to let Ernest and Brant stay in the castle because their master is absent. It makes both officers angry and they react to these words according to their characters. Having decided to frighten an old couple, Ernest announces a war and sings: “A war! A war! I am very glad! / What is more attractive for a warrior? / We’ve never known a retreat / And we will see who is more courageous here!”

Brant is more concerned about a wine cellar: “I go to the wine cellar right away. / That’s where I can distinguish myself. / I’ll line up the bottles in one row / And start immediately my heroic deeds!” In this vaudeville Khmelnitskii involuntarily endowed the French officers with qualities typical of Russian hussars. A man of dolce far niente, or “sweet idleness,” Khmelnitskii saw the main goal of theatre to entertain and knew how to do it.

One more play by Khmelnitskii should be brought to this discussion. Among his original plays, the Actors Among Themselves, or First Debut of the Actress Troepolskaia stands out for two reasons. It is the only original, in the strictest sense of the word, vaudeville by Khmelnitski,i and the characters of the vaudeville are Russian actors. In this case, Khmelnitskii’s intention to create original Russian vaudeville is obvious.

---

*A complete translation of this vaudeville into English is presented in this work as Appendix C.*
The *Actors Among Themselves, or First Debut of the Actress Troepolskaia* was written in 1821 and performed for the first time on January 3 at the St. Petersburg Imperial theatre at the bénéfice of the actress A. T. Kolosova. According to some sources, the vaudeville was written with the participation of N. V. Vsevolozhskii; however, in the 1830 edition of *Theatre of Nikolai Khmelnitskii*, Vsevolozhskii was not mentioned as one of the authors of this vaudeville.

In the *Actors Among Themselves* there are four characters: Mrs. Troepolskaia, her husband Mr. Troepolskii, and his friends Shumskii and Popov. The names were not made up; Khmelnitskii used the real names of real actors from the eighteen century. Iakov Shumskii (performed in 1752-1785; died in 1812) was known as a bright comedian who successfully played the roles of servants and old women. Troepolskii was a second-rate actor, husband of Troepolskaia. M. I. Popov (1742-1790) was a prominent actor and playwright, the author of the comic opera *Aniuta*. Tatiana Troepolskaia (17??-1794) was recognized by her contemporaries as a great tragedienne. Her “majestically superb figure, her attractive face, and her captivating, melodious voice”\(^\text{15}\) made her perfect for the French classic tragedy. She had success as Shakespeare’s Juliet and Ophelia and was excellent as Célimène in Moliere’s *The Misanthrope*. A. Sumarokov found her the best actress for his tragedies. The Russian audience, always eager to draw analogies between Paris and St-Petersburg theatres, often favored Troepolskaia to Mlle. Lecouvreur (1692-1730) or to Mlle. Dumesnil (1713-1803).

\(^{\text{15}}\) Besides quoted here Varneke, some information on these actors can be found in *The History of Russian Drama Theatre*. V. 1. M., “Iskusstvo.”
Troepolskaia, although ill, was to appear in her benefit performance on May 1774, but she died in her dressing room before the show. Besides the names of the characters, however, Khmelnitskii’s vaudeville has nothing in common with these remarkable people.

The plot of the vaudeville is very simple. The action takes place in a St.-Petersburg suburb, where the newlyweds Troepolskie rent a dacha for the summer time. They are expecting guests to celebrate Mrs. Troepolskaia’s name-day. Mr. Troepolskii receives a letter from his friends, Shumskii and Popov, the actors of the Petersburg Imperial theatre, who are known for their sharp tongues and the ability to ridicule everybody and everything. In the letter, the two express their wish to come for celebration and make some jokes at Mrs. Troepolskaia’s expense and at her dream to become an actress, though they have never seen her before. Having read this letter, Mrs. Troepolskaia decides to take the vengeance on them for their impoliteness and mockery. During her husband’s absence she meets first Popov and, later, Shumskii. She fools both of them by posing as a princess in the scenes with Popov and as a maid in the scenes with Shumskii. She makes them fall in love with her, and after that she reveals herself to the ashamed men. Popov and Shumskii are charmed with Mrs. Troepolskaia’s beauty and wit and have to recognize her excellent acting.

The title of the vaudeville *The Actors Among Themselves, or First Debut of the Actress Troepolskaia* contains a linguistic case which was not explained by
anybody so far. Knowing Khmelnitskii’s irreplaceable sense of style and perfect knowledge of French, it seems incomprehensible that he used such a word combination as “first debut.” It is a clear example of tautology: the word ‘debut’ already contains the meaning ‘first time.’ Either the phrase was the accepted as a linguistic norm at the time, or, what is more likely, Khmelnitskii wanted to emphasize that the first appearance of Mrs. Troepolskaia before the public as an actress (a ‘debut’) did not take place on stage; so it is not strictly a ‘debut’. To consider the story of the vaudeville as Troepolskaia's first performance before her formal debut on the Imperial stage, then, probably, it would be lawful to call it ‘first debut’ (though, it would not be a correct grammatical form). Also, it is quite possible that Khmelnitskii, as usual, was playing with words, using the tautological word combination purposefully for comic effect and willing to puzzle the audience; it would be quite in character for him.

*Actors Among Themselves* cannot be analyzed from points of historical plausibility or character verisimilitude. The story, as unfolded by Khmelnitskii, never took place in the real life of the actress Troepolskaia. The vaudeville characters have nothing to do with their real life prototypes. But the Russian identity of the characters is obvious from Khmelnitskii’s writing. Their behavior, manners, style of conversation, the form of expression, and the language itself (vocabulary, grammar constructions, idioms, accepted forms of conversing, etc.) unmistakably belong to the Petersburg aristocratic salons of the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The absence of historical truth does not make this play of any less importance in the history of Russian vaudeville, because Khmelnitskii did not
intend to present a historical piece. What he did want to do he expressed in the final couplets of his vaudeville *Marriages Are Made In Heaven, or Each Cloud Has a Silver Lining*, a philosophy that can be applied to all his vaudevilles and comedies:

* What is our play? It’s known to everyone:
The twaddle of a merry writing;
But if this trifle brings you fun,
Then...every cloud has a silver lining.

Among Themselves remained in the history of a Russian vaudeville as a light, witty, graceful, and certainly Russian play.

Eight years after the successful premiere of the *Actors Among Themselves*, Khmelnitskii enjoyed the fame of a popular vaudevillist and his *dolce far niente* in the Russian capital. In 1829 Khmelnitskii was appointed as the Governor of Smolensk, a city that had been destroyed during Napoleon’s invasion. As M. Iankovskii wrote in a short biographical sketch of Khmelnitskii, the playwright was not a businessman. He worked hard to restore the ancient city and produced good results, but he spent too much money. The contractors he hired enriched

---

* What is our play? It’s known to everyone:
The twaddle of a merry writing;
But if this trifle brings you fun,
Then...every cloud has a silver lining.
themselves at the expense of Imperial Treasury. Khmelnitskii was transferred to Archangelsk. In 1837 he was ordered to come to Petersburg where he was charged with thriftlessness and negligence. That was the ruin of his career. After a very long trial, Khmelnitskii was imprisoned in Petropavlovskaya fortress and remained there till 1843, when by the order of Nicholas I he was freed.

Khmelnitskii took a trip abroad and, on his return home in 1845, died in Petersburg. While living in Smolensk and Archangelsk Khmelnitskii was torn away from theatre life in both capitals and did not write anything for theatre. After the Petropavlovskaya fortress he tried to come back to literary activity, but, being depressed by all the misfortunes, he never could write in that light, brilliant style he had been known for. Aksakov in his diary notes of November 16, 1939, describing the dinner to which he had been invited, where he met Khmelnitskii, referred to him as “весьма известный и любимый прежде литератор.”

A. I. Pisarev and His Vaudevilles as Weapons in Literary Battle

During the time of Khmelnitskii’s popularity and fame, the works of another playwright, not less talented than Khmelnitskii and Shakhovskoi, began to quickly invade the vaudeville stage. While Shakhovskoi was concerned with patriotic ideas in his plays and Khmelnitskii entertained himself and others by “merry twaddles,” Aleksandr Ivanovich Pisarev (1803-1828) was probably the first Russian vaudevillist who began to turn in his works to the social problems of Russian society. While Shakhovskoi made jokes (“when Shakhovskoi wants to bite you, he
only slobbered over you") and Khmelnitskii exercised stylish marivaudage and verbal fencing, Pisarev raised the art of vaudeville couplet to the level of killing epigram. And while Shakhovskoi naively interspersed his vaudevilles with archaic words to make them more Russian, and Khmelnitski boasted with the language of Russian aristocracy, Pisarev, in his best vaudevilles (Busybody, A Trip to Kronshtadt, and others) created characters which might be considered forerunners of those which came later to the Russian national drama of Griboedov and Gogol.

Pisarev was born into the family of a small landowner, at his father’s estate Znamenskoe of the Orël province. In 1817 he entered the Boarding School for Young Men of Noble Birth at Moscow University and graduated with the best of his class in 1821. His name was inscribed in gold letters on the School’s marble board among the names of other notable former graduates (other prominent graduates were A. Griboedov, Lu. Lermontov, the brothers Turgenev, D. Venevitinov, V. Odoevskii, and many of the future Decembrists).

Pisarev began to write while a student. His schoolmates

признавали его превосходство, и все, кто его знал, смотрели на Писарева как на будущего славного писателя; его проза и стихи превозносились не товарищами и начальством пансиона, но и всеми.”

After graduating, Pisarev lived in Moscow and began his service at the Directorate of Moscow Theatres as a translator and a deputy of the chief of the repertoire commission. He made friends with writers Mikhail Zagoskin (1789-
At the time of Shakhovskoi, Khmelnitskii, and Pisarev there was a certain Shatilov who had a pleasure to deliver epigrams from ‘camp’ to ‘camp’ during a theatre performance. “He, for example, took an epigram from somebody in a loge and brought it to the parterre to Viazemskii and Griboedov; then came back to the loge and informed: “The answer will come tomorrow.” This story was described in Epigram and Satire. V. 1. M.-L.: Academia, 1931 (185).

Young Pisarev found himself in the center of literary and theatre battle between different groups of writers and threw himself into the maelstrom of opinions, statements, judgements, and criticisms on classicism and romanticism, Russian language and the ways of its development, methods of versification, problems of dramatic writing, and so on. His ability to respond to his literary enemies instantly and with killing sarcasm made them furious but also admired by his friends. The epigram was extremely popular in the first half of the nineteenth century in Russia not only as a literary genre but as a means of communication as well. The representatives of different literary groups used to exchange epigrams towards each other through the magazines and newspapers or using poetry albums, which each hostess of the literary salons usually kept for her guests. Some epigrams flew from mouth to mouth or were copied and sent to friends in private letters, as the latest news.” Pisarev was a master of this genre. Being a staunch supporter of the conservative group of Shishkov, M. Dmitriev and Shakhovskoi, Pisarev rejected the new trends in Russian literature, such as

* At the time of Shakhovskoi, Khmelnitskii, and Pisarev there was a certain Shatilov who had a pleasure to deliver epigrams from ‘camp’ to ‘camp’ during a theatre performance. “He, for example, took an epigram from somebody in a loge and brought it to the parterre to Viazemskii and Griboedov; then came back to the loge and informed: “The answer will come tomorrow.” This story was described in Epigram and Satire. V. 1. M.-L.: Academia, 1931 (185).
romanticism and sentimentalism, and aimed his attacks at the authors of this camp. He could not accept the innovations of Griboedov’s *Woe from Wit* and became one of its most furious attackers. He wrote in 1824:

Мы искренне поспорим в этом:  
Мы черным черное зовем;  
Глупца – глупцом,  
И Грибуса не назовем  
Поэтом.**19**

The method of versification used by A. Griboedov in his versified comedy *Woe form Wit* was not exactly new in Russian literature of the time, but, in the opinion of the ‘classicists,’ the guardians of the purity of the genre of high comedy, it was unacceptable. That is why Pisarev refused to call Griboedov a poet.

In his epigrams, Pisarev’s attacks often became personal and extremely offensive. For example, Griboedov was short-sighted and wore eye-glasses. Pisarev used this fact to write the following epigram:

Глаза у многих змей полны смертельным ядом,  
И видно для того придуманы очки,  
Чтоб Грибус, созданный рассудку вопреки,  
Не отравил кого своим змеиным ядом.” 20

His epigrams were often improvised right on the spot. At one of the sessions of *The Colloquy of Lovers of the Russian Word* the translation of *The Book of Psalms* by Mikhail Dmitriev (1796-1866) was discussed and praised.

--------

* We’ll argue this honestly: We name the black black, a fool we name a fool,  
But we won’t call Gribus a poet. (Gribus was a nick-name for Griboedov among his literary enemies.)

** The eyes of many snakes are full of deadly poison, / And, probably that’s why the glasses were invented, / In order Gribus, who was created contrary to the common sense, / Could not poison anybody by his snake-like gaze.
Pisarev did not take part in the discussion. When he was asked to express his opinion, he picked up a piece of paper and wrote down:

    The Polyhymnia’s sons, both Dmitriev and Shatrov∗,  
    Called David out of his grave. But what a loss!  
    As the translators they are even by the taking off  
    As far as possible from the source.21

In 1822 Mikhail Zagoskin wrote *The Heirs*, a comedy which was a huge success. After opening night, all the friends congratulated the author, and Zagoskin, embracing Pisarev, said proudly: “Well, my darling, can you write an epigram on my *Heirs*?” “Why not,” replied Pisarev and, in a minute, recited this improvised epigram:

    The preacher of the comical for ages  
    Presented recently his comedy *The Heirs*,  
    The fact which proves and certainly presages,  
    That he is not among Moliere’s heirs.22

Everybody burst into laughter but kindhearted Zagoskin forgave his friend for this mockery. Zagoskin, like everyone, appreciated Pisarev’s talent.

The ability of Pisarev to put sharp thought into a rhymed, aphoristic, epigram-like couplet brought him prominence as a vaudeville writer. During his short life (he died at the age of twenty-five), he wrote twenty three plays, mostly vaudevilles.

The most significant exception was his very good (for that time) translation of *The School for Scandal* by R. B. Sheridan (1751-1816), though, like many others, he changed the place of action to Russia and changed the English names

∗ N. M. Shatrov (1765-1841) was another translator of *The Psalms.*
into Russian ones. Also, according to the custom of the time, he often used the sujets of French plays as the basis for creating his own variation on a certain theme. The most popular vaudevilles by Pisarev were Поездка в Кронштадт (A Trip to Kronstadt, 1823), Учитель и ученик, или В чужом пиру похмелье (The Tutor and The Pupil, or The Hangover for the Feasting of Others; 1824; for the benefice of the actor Saburov), Хлопотун, или Дело мастера боится (Busybody, or The Know-How Gets the Job Done Best; 1824), Волшебный нос, или Талисман и финики (The Magic Nose, or the Talisman and the Dates; for the benefice of the dancer Voronina-Ivanova; 1825), and Забавы калифа, или Шутки на одни сутки (The Caliph’s Amusements, or Jokes for One Day; 1825).

Pisarev’s vaudevilles were characterized by diverting intrigue, bright spectacle, and funny characters. Though he translated vaudevilles from French, the couplets were original and dealt with the hot topics of the day.

As S. Aksakov described in his Memoirs, the witty and often evil couplets, full of humor and literary allusions brought him the fame and обольстительное титло - любимца московской публики. Pisarev enjoyed his fame and used vaudeville couplets as his weapons in literary debates. He ridiculed his literary rivals in writing vaudevilles and, also, attacked romanticists. In his vaudeville The Tutor and The Pupil, or The Hangover for the Feasting of Others (1824), he placed the couplets directed against P. Viazemskii, whom Pisarev considered as his rival in writing vaudevilles:

"The captivating title - the pet of Moscow audience."
Mishurskii was a nick-name of Count Viazemskii in the circle of his literary enemies.

The well-known journalist Grafov / Offended Mishurskii by the analysis of his work. / Mishurskii without wasting his time / Responded to the criticism with nonsense; / Both writers began to make noise, / To write, to scold, to quarrel... / But why the public should have a hangover for the feasting of others?  

Later, Viazemskii described this situation in his letter to one of his friends:

Once [during the performance of Pisarev’s *The Tutor and The Pupil*] Griboedov and me were sitting in the director’s loge. It must be confessed, I was more busy looking at the loges rather than at the stage. Suddenly Griboedov says to me: “Eh bien, vous voilà chansonné sur la scène?” “How’s that?” - I ask. Meanwhile, I hear loud ovation and shouts *bis*. I joined my voice to the crowd in order to find out what’s the matter. The actor repeated the requested couplet and I understood the target of the author... I still remember this couplet... It was one of those piece-of-evidence circumstances in the literary fight which in that time had made a lot of noise. 

Rejecting Romanticism, Pisarev in the couplets of his vaudeville *Three Tens, or The New Two Days Battle* (1825) attacked Nikolai Polevoi (1796-1846), the editor of the popular magazine *The Moscow Telegraph*.

The magazine consistently published the works of Romanticists and positive literary reviews of such works. Shishkov’s circle considered Romanticism foreign to Russian literature, and, in accordance with this view, the patriotism of Russian romanticists was called into question. Thus, political and literary problems were
mixed again. There was one more factor which irritated Pisarev and his friends.

During this aristocratic period of Russian vaudeville Polevoi was the first Russian
publisher not of noble origin. His father was a merchant and he was registered as
a merchant also. Polevoi was from a rather poor family. He did not get a formal
education; his parents could not afford to have home teachers and gouverneurs
as the majority of gentry had. He educated himself studying French and the classic
languages (Greek and Latin). He read a great deal and made acquaintances
among prominent writers and scientists who helped the young man in his
development.

Starting in January 1825, Polevoi began to publish The Moscow Telegraph,
which was designed as a socio-scientific-literary magazine and was addressed to
different social layers of the Russian society. It became very popular like its
publisher. The Moscow Telegraph became the most progressive periodical edition.
As an editor, Polevoi consistently carried out the policies of defending romanticism,
propagating folklore, and educating his readers in different sciences.

Besides this, Polevoi published poetry by Pushkin, Viazemskii, Gnedich,
and Zhukovskii; later, the prose by Lazhechnikov, Veltman, and Bestuzhev. In his
magazine, Polevoi had permanent section on literary criticism where he
propagated the ideas of romanticism. In his magazine Polevoi also published his
own works: articles and novels. The low class origin of Polevoi irritated many of
his noble contemporaries, who were ready to gossip about “merchants climbing the
Parnassus.” Pisarev did not miss a chance to ridicule Polevoi in his epigrams:
The couplets in the aforementioned vaudeville were very similar to this epigram. *Three Tens, or The New Two Days Battle* was expected to be another success of Pisarev. But scandal broke out when the actor Saburov delivered the lines:

У нас теперь народ затейный
Пренебрегает простотой:
Всем мил цветок оранжерейный,
И всем наскучил полевой.\(^{27}\)

The translation of this quatrain is: “Nowadays the folks are fancy, /They neglect the simplicity: / Everyone likes the greenhouse flower / And is bored by the field [one].” The calembour which caused the storm in the audience should be explained. The last name *Polevoi* and the adjective *field* in the Russian language are homographs (and homophones). So, in the last line of the quatrain the audience actually heard: “Everyone... is bored by Polevoi.”

This attack might be explained only by Pisarev’s personal hostility towards Polevoi. Polevoi was at the peak of his popularity and *The Moscow Telegraph* doubled the number of subscribers during the two years of magazine’s existence.

As soon as Saburov had sung the last line the agitation, noise arose in the theatre. Aksakov remembers:

---

' He is the eternal guild buddy of Mishurskii, / He is a scoundrel of the first guild, / A merchant of a second guild, / And a writer of a third guild.
Публика разделилась на две партии: одна хлопала и кричала браво и форо, а другая, более многочисленная, шикала, кашляла, топала ногами и стучала палками.28

The actor Saburov, instead of repeating the last two lines as he was supposed to according to the music score, waited for the music in the orchestra and for the noise in the audience to stop, and then loudly and expressively repeated: “And everyone is bored by the field” (i.e., by Polevoi). The uproar resumed in the house. The scandal went beyond the theatre walls and took a character of a city event.

As a result, a group of Polevoi’s supporters applied to the theatre Directory and the word polevoi (field) was changed in the couplet for lugovoi (meadow), which in Russian have the same ending, i.e., can be rhymed. But word about the snub had already gotten out, so this substitution did not change anything.

More surprising is the fact that the friends of Polevoi did not pay attention to the second part of the couplets, which was much more insulting: than the first part:

Журналист без просвещенья
Хочет умником прослыть;
Сам не кончивши ученья,
Всех пускается учить;
Мертвых и живых тревожит...
Не пора ль ему шепнуть,
Pisarev in the quoted above couplets from his vaudeville *Three Tens, or The New Two Days Battle*, tried snobbishly and arrogantly to ridicule Polevoi's origin and education. And again, policy, social problems, and vaudeville interlaced. But in this case, Pisarev underestimated the popularity of the Polevoi's magazine and its editor. The hostile couplets brought his vaudeville to failure. At the end of the performance when the friends of Pisarev began to shout out his name for a bow, they were suppressed by the other part of the audience. Pisarev appeared in the director's loge but had to retreat right away on seeing the people's indignation. Describing the whole situation, Ksenofont Polevoi, the brother of the ridiculed publisher, added some vivid strokes to this picture in his *Notes on Life and Works by N. A. Polevoi*:

> Some people shook their fists at him [Pisarev]... General K. (killed later during the Russian-Turkish war in 1828) stood up from his seat in the first row and, having turned to Pisarev, spat!.. And all this was going on with such quick temper, unexpectedness, that I cannot remember anything like this in theatre, and I don't think that anything like this ever happened in Russian theatre!"  

However, Pisarev did not take this incident to heart. While he enjoyed his popularity, at the same time he was rather skeptical about public opinion. In his vaudeville, *The Meeting of Diligences* (1825), the last couplet, as usual, was

--

*A journalist without education / Wants to be reputed as a smart person; / Haven't finished his own study, / He starts to teach everybody; / He bothers the dead and the alive... / Isn't it the time to whisper to him, / That no one can teach others, / Who studied anyhow.*

"The book was published posthumously in 1888 in St-Petersburg."
directed to the spectators, but instead of asking the audience not to be strict in their judgements or to be lenient towards the actors and the author (what would be quite customary), the actress sang the following:

Не помню я в какой-то книжке  
Писали за сто лет назад,  
Что пьесу хвалят понаслышке  
И понаслышке же бранят;  
Но мы желаем знать, какое  
Сужденье ваше про нее?  
Скажите... только не чужое,  
Скажите – что-нибудь свое!

The last distich “Please, tell us not somebody’s view, / But tell us something of your own” took on the tone of a dare, underscoring Pisarev’s point that the audience did not have its own opinion and always depended on the opinion of somebody else. As Aksakov described it, the audience reacted appropriately to this provocation: they hissed the vaudeville, its author, and the actress Repina, though she was extremely popular among Moscow theatre goers. However, Aksakov added, after a week, the audience softened and began as usual to shout bravo and foro to Pisarev’s new vaudeville.31

Pisarev’s extraordinary gift for epigrammatic writing was more happily realized when he turned in his couplets to the social issues of the time. The

I read in some kind of a book, which, say,  
Was written hundred years ago,  
That play is praised by hearsay,  
By hearsay it’s rated low.  
What is our play, we’re asking you?  
Let your opinion will be known.  
Please, tell us not somebody’s view,  
But tell us something of your own.

125
criticism in such poems was sharp as usual in Pisarev’s writing, but, more importantly, the types introduced by the author were recognizable, taken from everyday life, albeit the representatives of the nobility. Here are the lines of a young man, disappointed in his civil service (Three Tens):

And what I experienced very much / Is that it’s a shame to work for nothing, / That honesty is a dead capital, / That truth became consumer goods. / I saw numerous people, / Who managed by different ways / To occupy many posts/ Without being occupied with them.

Transcribed and translated by Boris Brasol.
vaudeville. Nevertheless, Pisarev, in spite of his own belief that the goal of theatre was to entertain and not to correct the mores of the audience, was the first vaudeville playwright who tried to criticize the flaws of Russian social life. As a rule, the topics for Pisarev’s criticism were not connected thematically with the main idea or the plot of a vaudeville; they were expressed in the couplets sung by a character or in the final couplets, when characters asked the audience to appreciate their acting and the author’s writing. In this respect, Pisarev’s vaudeville *The Busybody, or the Know-How Gets the Job Done Best* is no exception. What makes it interesting for the present work is the character of Repeikin, which was elaborated by Pisarev more thoroughly than it usually was in a vaudeville. Perhaps for the first time in a Russian vaudeville, an undoubtedly Russian character (and the funniest one) appeared on stage.

*The Busybody, or the Know-How Gets the Job Done Best*

*The Busybody, or the Know-How Gets the Job Done Best*, one of the most superb early Russian vaudevilles, was written in 1824 and presented that year on November 4 at the Moscow Malyi Theatre for the benefit of the actor G. Saburov. The performance was a triumph and ensured Pisarev’s fame as a vaudeville playwright. The acting of incomparable Mikhail Shchepkin in the role of Repeikin assured the success of the production.

*The Busybody, or the Know-How Gets the Job Done Best* takes place at the Radimov’s estate near Moscow. The setting presents a room with three doors, a window, a table, several chairs, and a wall clock. There are six main characters in the vaudeville: Radimov, a rich landowner; his daughter Nadin’ka; Repeikin, a
friend of Radimov; Lionskii, Radimov’s neighbor, a landowner; Sasha, a housemaid; and Ivan, Radimov’s batman. Besides these main characters there are a gardener, a servant, hunters and peasants.

The story is simple and traditional. Lionskii is in love with Nadin’ka. Radimov, Nadin’ka’s father, wants her to marry his friend, the old bachelor Repeikin. All of the vaudeville confusions begin with the Repeikin’s arrival at the Radimov’s country estate. Having come to Radimovs’s, the restless and cheerful Repeikin sticks his nose in all matters with the best intentions to correct, to help, to arrange, and to make it right. He becomes Lionskii’s confidant and helps him write a letter to the father of the girl Lionskii is in love with, because Repeikin knows how to write such letters. Repeikin doesn’t realize that the father in question is Radimov, and the girl is Nadin’ka, whom Repeikin is going to marry. When the young people get Radimov’s consent for their marriage and Repeikin understands that he acted against his own interests, he remains true to his cheerful character. He finds encouragement for himself in the fact that the letter was written masterfully and, anyway, he would be a fool if he married a girl who was in love with somebody else.

In general, the sujet of The Busybody, or The Know-How Gets the Job Done Best is quite traditional. All the customary vaudeville elements are present. The intrigue is swift and finishes with the scène à faire. The characters are familiar and may be easily categorized according to the traditional vaudeville emplois. Radimov, the noble father, wishes his daughter well. His intentions do not coincide with the desires of his daughter, which establishes the preliminary conflict in the
play. Nadin’ka, the ingenue, wants to marry Lionskii, the juvenile. The matter is complicated by the quarrel of her father with Lionskii over a disputed piece of land; as a result of this argument, Lionskii is not accepted in the house of Radimov and cannot come to see Nadin’ka. Sasha, the soubrette, Nadin’ka’s housemaid and confidant, tries to arrange a rendezvous for Nadin’ka and Lionskii. Radimov invites his friend, forty years old Repeikin to come to his estate. He sees Repeikin as his future son-in-law and wants him to get acquainted with Nadin’ka, whom Repeikin has not seen since she was a child. Radimov thinks that Repeikin’s age is the best age for a man, to which Sasha responds:

Yes, for a friend, but not for a wife. Do you know, sir, how dangerous it is to get married at this age? When an old man gets a wife who is twenty five years younger than he is, she begins to twist him round her little finger, to fool him the way she wants... And what? No matter how poor husband is stubborn, he is afraid to make his wife upset, he obeys her, and then... And then who knows what can happen?  

Radimov, angry with Sasha’s quick tongue and her talking counter to him, decides to send her away. At this time, Repeikin arrives at the estate.

Repeikin’s character deserves to be analyzed more closely not only because Pisarev introduced a new vaudeville stock character to the Russian stage, but also because this character was very well elaborated, which was uncharacteristic for vaudeville writing of that time. Mainly because of this character, the vaudeville was a great success. The character of a restless, troublesome man, who, acting with the best intentions, manages to confuse all and everything around him, will be successfully used in the later vaudevilles of M. Zagoskin (The Noble Theatre) and N. Khmelnitskii (A High Society Incident).
Pisarev gave this character the surname Repeikin. In Russian репей or репейник (repe, repeinik) means “burr.” Like a burr, Repeikin sticks to everything around him. His first appearance is rather effective. After a servant reports to Radimov that Mr. Repeikin has arrived and Radimov asks to show the guest in, a gunshot is heard from the entrance hall. Repeikin comes into the room with a hunting gun and explains to an anxious Radimov:

Repeikin. That’s nothing, nothing, calm down, my dear Radimov. I, passing by through the lackey’s room, see this gun; it looks really good. I take it; meanwhile...
A hawk is flying in the yard.
I, to prevent the trouble,
Aim – bang!.. The gun fires...

Radimov. Have you hit it?
Repeikin. I hit the rooster.
The hawk got scared;
The rooster fell dead.

Radimov. So, the rooster himself caught the bullet
And it’s not you who shot it.

Repeikin. It’s an accident. However, I congratulate you. You have a nice gun; trust me, I am an expert.35

After the accident is explained the old friends can finally greet each other properly. Repeikin explains his tardiness. His cabman was drunk, so Repeikin had to take his place (“you know, I can drive a cab masterfully.”36). The cab, however, turned over, but nobody was really hurt. The cabman bumped himself against a fence, so Repeikin gave him an embrocation (“you know, I am an expert in medicine”) and some money. Then, Repeikin informs Radimov that he has already examined his house and came to the conclusion that it should be rebuilt (“I was born an architect”): the horse stables should be replaced, the green house should be moved away, etc. Repeikin is inexhaustible in suggesting new ideas.
(“benefits of my friends are more important for me than my own”) and in his readiness to help. Such ‘accidents’ continue to happen through the whole play, causing the never-ending laughter of a reader/spectator.

In spite of all the mishaps, Repeikin sincerely believes that he acts in the best interests of other people and humbly rejects any possible gratitude. He believes that he does not interfere in other people’s affairs (“why should I mess up with somebody’s matters”); all his actions are dictated by his good will (“we are people and we have to help each other”) and so unselfish that people, even if he makes them upset sometimes, simply cannot be angry with him for a long time and forgive him easily.

Here is a list of Repeikin’s ‘heroic deeds’ in addition to those which have been mentioned:

- he makes Radimov cancel his decision to send Sasha away;
- he brought a Dutch dog with him which was given to him by his friend to train; the dog destroyed the flower beds and strangled Radimov’s chickens;
- he breaks the wall clock in the drawing room, intending to set the right time;
- according to Repeikin, the Lionskii’s house, which he noticed on his way to the Radimov’s place, stands not on a right spot and should be destroyed;
- he promises Sasha and Ivan, Lionskii’s servant, to arrange their marriage, puzzled as to why Radimov is against this marriage (“oh, this Radimov always interferes other people’s affairs”);
- he confidentially shares with Nadin’ka that Lionskii is in love with someone passionately (“trust me, I am an expert in love matters”);
- he is in horror that Radimov’s cook asks how to cook the ducks and immediately
takes over the kitchen enterprise (“let Radimov see my cooking art”);

- he dictates to Lionskii the letter to be sent to the father of the girl Lionskii is in
love with, again, not realizing that the father is his friend Radimov (“do you think
these fathers understand anything? They are so slow-witted . . . I will dictate you
... I know these fathers by heart”);

- as soon as Lionskii comes to Radimov’s house, a crowd of peasants, who have
been threshing, comes to the Radimov’s house, fulfilling the order of Pepeikin, who
still does not realize who is the bride and bursts out into a song glorifying the bride
and her groom (“the poetry is mine... Isn’t it good? I composed the music also; it
can be used in a vaudeville; just give me some time, I can write poetry and music
as much as you want; it’s very easy” 37).

At the end, Pepeikin is quite happy to hear that, if not for him, Nadin’ka and
Lionskii would not be happy: “Ah! So, you recognize that nobody but me would
be able to do that for you?” To what Radimov ironically replies: “Of course, the
know-how does the job best.” 38 Pisarev extends the comedy of Pepeikin’s
caracter to the end in the best traditions of Russian comedy of the eighteen
century. Even in the final couplets of the vaudeville, when the actors usually ‘step
out’ of their characters and direct their lines to the audience as actors and not as
the characters, Pisarev uses a funny trick. As indicated earlier, the final couplets

* A dash of author’s irony is present here; Pisarev, certainly, realized his
superiority over the less talented and, consequently, less popular vaudeville
writers.
have no connection with the vaudeville; they are a ‘suite’ of different topics.

Radimov starts the ‘suite’ with the lines which present a mockery of Viazemskii:

— Mishurskii has scribbled a vaudeville; his friends praised it; it was played out and it failed the way vaudevilles can fail. I tell Mishurskii my advice not to be in hurry, to keep one’s mouth shut and to remember my refrain that the know-how gets the job done best.¹

Then Sasha sings:

— They decided in vain to marry my sister to an old man; she did not want to listen to her relatives; she was sad and cried all the time... But later, she decided to agree and assured her kinship, that the know-how gets the job done best.

Ivan’s couplets have an element of social satire where Pisarev condemns some of his morally unprincipled fellow-citizens:

— There are more thefts than you can count, but all of them are divided into two classes; some of them are caught for stealing, others themselves catch whatever they can. Some of them are punished, others have fun and repeat bravely, that the know-how gets the job done best.

Repeikin starts a patriotic theme (reminiscent of the war with Napoleon) and immediately slows down the rapidly rolling action to the end: “We saw our enemy; Europe shook with fear in front of him; he crushed everyone... but suddenly Russia stood up for his downfall.” At this moment a noise is heard from the wings. Repeikin stops his singing and says: “Oh, my God! Without my guidance they will break all the dishes over there. Let me go out, he (pointing at

¹ In the comments to this couplet in the Epigram and Satire, vol. 1, M., - L.: Academia (226), these lines are mistakenly referred to Viazemskii’s vaudeville Бальдонские воды (Baldon Spa); it cannot be so because the Viazemskii’s Baldon Spa opened on September 10, 1825, i.e., almost ten months later than Pisarev’s The Busybody. The object of Pisarev’s mockery was Viazemskii’s and Griboedov’s Who Is Brother, Who Is Sister. See next chapter on this matter.
Lionskii) will sing instead of me, he’ll do it better (*runs away*).” Lionskii starts the same couplet from the beginning, finishing with “the Russian proved to the whole world, that the know-how gets the job done best.” Nadin’ka starts the final very traditional couplet:

What is our success today? Probably there will be arguments about it, because actors cannot satisfy all the tastes...

Here the customary floating of the finale is broken once more. Repeikin comes back and reports to the audience: “I am sorry, it has taken some time; without me they broke the plate with fried ducks on it; but don’t worry, I straightened up the matter.”

In these final couplets, the participants of the performance talked/sang to the audience as actors, not characters, but Repeikin remained Repeikin, even after the story was over. Using this device, Pisarev created an impression that Repeikin was a real life person, not a vaudeville personage. One could imagine that, after the show, the actors would take off their costumes and wigs and become those people who they were in real life, not on stage. Repeikin, however, would go backstage, in the street, home, or to his friends and would try “to straighten up” everything in other people’s life, as he did in the vaudeville. The vaudeville ends with Repeikin finishing the couplet which was started by Nadin’ka:

We want to do our best for our authors;
you often received them well, but still,
how one can not be afraid of parterre?..

On the night of 4 November 1824, the actors and the author did not have to be afraid of the parterre: the performance was a definite success. There were
two main factors which provided an enthusiastic reception of the vaudeville by the audience. Both were important for the development of Russian original vaudeville.

First, in spite of the fact that Pisarev borrowed the story from the French, the vaudeville was accepted as a truly Russian vaudeville. Pisarev, defining the place of action as Radimov’s estate near Moscow, did not intend to russify the play in the naive manner of Aleksandr Shakhovskoi. However, he complicated the love conflict through the use of an element which was immediately associated with everyday Russian life: the argument over a disputed piece of land between two landowners, Radimov and Lionskii. Such cases were extremely frequent in real life and were described in numerous works of Russian writers. Besides, Pisarev knew the life of provincial gentry very well from his personal experience and portrayed it in the most recognizable way. This fact allowed the audience to interpret the vaudeville as purely Russian in character.

The second factor deals with the style of acting. The main character Repeikin might live in any country. Pisarev was interested more in psychological truth rather than in creating a national type. Shchepkin’s performance made this character Russian.

Mikhail Semenovich Shchepkin (1788-1863), one of the greatest actors of Russian theatre of all times, was equally good in different roles. He was inimitable in the Russian repertoire (Griboedov, Gogol, Turgenev, and Krylov). But, as his wife Aleksandra Shchepkina wrote in her memories:

*Pushkin, Gogol, and Saltykov-Shchedrin are the first who come to mind, but, certainly, not the only.*
He had a talent for capturing the essence of a character and present it in his own way. . . . Understanding artistically the “inner” person of a character, Shchepkin had no difficulty in creating a role not of a Russian life: roles from Moliere’s comedies were his best.  

In the history of Russian theatre, Shchepkin is considered the first to develop a realistic style of acting. Herzen wrote about Shchepkin: “He created truth on Russian stage, he was the first to become not theatrical in theatre, his representations were without a slightest verbiage, affectation, or caricature.”

Shchepkin brought realistic style of acting into a vaudeville performance. Schematic and not elaborated vaudeville characters, in Shchepkin’s interpretation gained psychological truth, depth, and cogency. Moreover, his performance set up a canon for the next generations of vaudevillists, both actors and playwrights, and helped Russian vaudeville to become a national phenomenon. Many vaudevillists were obliged to Shchepkin for the success of their plays. According to Pisarev’s own admission, “the acting of the incomparable Shchepkin” assured the success of his vaudevilles *A Trip to Kronstadt, The Tutor and the Pupil*, and *Busybody*. Schepkin’s style of acting set a level of acting for other actors. While French vaudeville kept exploiting traditional representative style of acting, Russian vaudeville began to move towards a more realistic and psychologically true way of presentation.

Besides these two factors (thematical closeness of the *Busybody* to a Russian spectator and Shchepkin’s realistic acting), Pisarev’s passion for “stuffing” the vaudeville couplets with hot topics of the day or with his sarcastic comments on the current literary and theatre events gave the audience the impression of
close connection of the theatrical action with their own real life. Thus, the couplet in *The Busybody* about Mishurskii, who "has scribbled a vaudeville," was not just a customary tribute to the never-stopping enmity between Pisarev and Viazemskii.

Another meaning of this endless exchange of epigrams between two prominent writers and their friends constituted a much more important issue: national originality of drama, i.e., narodnost’ and how to express it in a vaudeville. It is sad that Pisarev, due to his negative attitude to new ideas in literature and drama, rejected *a priori* everything that would come from the "camp" of progressive writers. His personal malice towards Viazemskii, Griboedov, and others blinded his ability to apprehend the value of these writers’ contribution to Russian literature and drama.

At the same time, being a brilliantly talented and sensitive dramatist, Pisarev, against his own views, could not help being influenced by the innovations of Griboedov, Pushkin, and Viazemskii. The best confirmation of this point is Pisarev’s *The Busybody* analyzed in this chapter.

This vaudeville is probably the most noticeable in the ranks of hundreds of others in the time that embodied the idea of narodnost’. It left no doubt in its national character: place of action, characterization of the dramatis personae, the story itself - everything was recognizably Russian. This vaudeville became a forerunner of the pieces which would appear shortly on the Russian stage. The narodnost’ of *The Busybody* was “accidental,” meaning that Pisarev only wanted to create a vaudeville based on Russian life (and, indeed, he succeeded in this task). But several months prior to the Pisarev’s piece, the vaudeville *Who Is
Brother Who Is Sister, or Deceit After Deceit by Pisarev’s literary rivals Viazemskii and Griboedov presented narodnost’ as a deliberately chosen quality, not as a nationalistic, specifically Russian idea but as a certain characteristic applied to any piece of art regardless its national origin. Probably it is worth to remind the definition of narodnost’ which I give in Chapter 2.

Narodnost’ is the aggregate of distinguishing qualities and properties of a certain people, nation, or ethnic group, among which are spirituality, mind set, system of ethical and aesthetical norms and values which are expressed by the artistic means in a given literary work or a work of art.

The vaudeville Who Is Brother Who Is Sister, or Deceit After Deceit embodied the concept of narodnost’ on a high artistic level. In a certain sense, it was a turning point in the history of Russian vaudeville and, therefore, will be discussed separately in the next chapter.

Endnotes to Chapter 4


2. Никитенко, А. В. Дневник в трех томах. Т. 1. М., Госиздат “Художественная литература”, 1955, стр. 11. [Никитenko, A. V. Diary in Three Volumes. V. 1. М.: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1955 (11).]


5. Стихотворная комедия конца XVIII - начала XIX в. М.,-Л. “Советский писатель”, 1964, стр. 301. [“Versified Comedy of the End of the XVIII - beginning of the XIX century.” М.-Л.: Sovetskii pisatel, 1964 (301).]


13. Ibid., 131.


18. Ibid., (49).

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.
21. С. Т. Аксаков. Собрание сочинений а четырех томах. Т. 3.
"Художественная литература", М., 1956, стр. 73. [Aksakov, S. T. 
“Selected Works in Four Volumes.” V. 3 (73).]

22. Ibid.

23. С. Т. Аксаков. Собрание сочинений а четырех томах. Т. 3.
"Художественная литература", М., 1956, стр.56. [Aksakov, S. T. 
“Selected Works in Four Volumes.” V. 3 (56).]

24. Старый русский водевиль. Л., “Гослитиздат”, 1937, стр. 223. [“Old 
Russian Vaudeville.” L.: Goslitizdat, 1936 (223).]

25. Эпиграмма и сатира. Т. 1, М. - Л., “Academia ”, 1931, стр. 225. [“Eigram 

26. Ibid., 252.

27. Quoted from: Стихотворная комедия конца XVIII - начала XIX в. М.-Л.
“Советский писатель”, 1964, стр. 39. [“Versified Comedy of the End of the 
XVIII - beginning of the XIX century.” M.-L.: Sovetskii pisatel, 1964 (39).]

28. С. Т. Аксаков. Собрание сочинений а четырех томах. Т. 3.
“Художественная литература”, М., 1956, стр. 146-147. [Aksakov, S. T. 
“Selected Works in Four Volumes.” V. 3 (146-147).]

29. Ibid.

30. Эпиграмма и сатира. Т. 1, М. - Л., “Academia ”, 1931, стр.343. [“Epigram 

31. С. Т. Аксаков. Собрание сочинений а четырех томах. Т. 3.
“Художественная литература”, М., 1956, стр. 144-145. [Aksakov, S. T. 
“Selected Works in Four Volumes.” V. 3. М., 1956 (144-145).]

32. С. Т. Аксаков. Собрание сочинений а четырех томах. Т.3. “Художеств 
енная литература”, М., 1956, стр.147.[Aksakov, S. T. “Selected Works in 
Four Volumes.” V. 3. М., 1956 (147).]


34. А. Писарев. “Хлопотун, или дело мастера боится.” Русский водевиль, Л., 
1959, стр. 159. [A. Pisarev. “The Busybody, or The Know-How Gets the 
Job Done Best” in the Russian Vaudeville. L., 1959, (109).]
35. Ibid., 111-112.

36. Ibid., 112.

37. Ibid., 134.

38. Ibid., 135.


Who Is Brother, Who Is Sister, or Deceit After Deceit by A. Griboedov and P. Viazemskii analyzed in this chapter concludes the discussion of the aristocratic period in the history of Russian vaudeville in this dissertation. The period got its name because the main and the most talented representatives of this genre belonged to the upper strata of the Russian society. They were not professional playwrights. They did not have to earn their living by writing. Noble by birth, talented by nature, and refined by education they were brilliant dilettantes. Each of the authors considered in the previous chapters, Shakhovskoi, Khmelnitskii, and Pisarev, brought something of his own into the development of Russian vaudeville. The particular qualities of these authors will be summarized once more in the conclusion.

In this respect, in the history of Russian vaudeville, Who Is Brother, Who Is Sister, or Deceit After Deceit by A. Griboedov and P. Viazemskii, stands out because of different reasons.

First, unlike the vaudevilles discussed earlier in this work, it gained a reputation as an unsuccessful piece and was not produced often. One of the co-authors, Viazemskii, sadly (and not justly) considered this vaudeville a failure. After its opening night, Pisarev, Viazemskii’s literary enemy, responded to the

\[ \text{The vaudeville had several successful productions in the second half of the twentieth century in Russia. The most notable was 1945 radio version of this vaudeville in Leningrad timed for the Griboedov’s 150th anniversary.} \]
event with a gloating epigrammatic couplet.' The reason for such a reaction was ideological - the battle between classicists and romanticists was at its peak; the ways of development Russian literature were fiercely discussed, and the opponents attacked each other furiously and mercilessly.

However, this vaudeville was not worse than the best vaudevilles by Khmelnitskii, Pisarev, and Shakhovskoi. Moreover, this graceful and funny piece, might be considered as one of the best vaudevilles of the aristocratic phase in the history of Russian vaudeville. Therefore, the artistic merits of *Who is Brother, Who Is Sister* preconditioned by the talents of its authors is the first reason to discuss this play in this dissertation.

Secondly, it has the significance of being the play that brought a dramatic piece into the debates on national originality, i.e., narodnost'. Griboedov and Viazemskii expressed their views not in theoretical postulate, but in the most practical way: in writing a play. It is important for this dissertation to define when and how vaudeville became a significant part of national theatre culture. In this respect, this play might be regarded as a certain turning point in the history of Russian vaudeville.

The first part of this chapter will give some historical background and will describe the circumstances of *Who Is Brother Who Is Sister, or Deceit After 143

---

* For the convenience of reading I quote the couplet here once more. Mishurskii has scribbled a vaudeville; his friends praised it; it was played out and it failed the way vaudevilles can fail. I tell Mishurskii my advice not to be in hurry, to keep one’s mouth shut and to remember my refrain that the know-how gets the job done best.
Deceit's creation. After that, it will analyze the narodnost' of the vaudeville both in terms of the music and the dramatic elements themselves.

Request for a New Vaudeville

In the winter of 1823, Fëdor Kokoshkin, an administrative director of the Malyi Theatre in Moscow, asked Pëtr Viazemskii to write a vaudeville for the actress M. L'vova-Sinetskaia (1795-1875), who was his protégé. Viazemskii, considering himself more a poet than a playwright, decided to invite Aleksandr Griboedov to be his collaborator and agreed to write all the verses, that is, “all that should be sung,” and Griboedov would write the prosaic parts of the play: monologues, dialogues, and general scene organization.1 Aleksei Verstovskii, who recently relocated to Moscow from St-Petersburg, was invited to compose music for the production.

The vaudeville was written very quickly. Both writers were quite experienced as men of letters. It should be said though that Viazemskii was too humble in appreciating his drama writing skills: by that time he had translated several plays from French, that had been successes, and, as he wrote in his letter to A. Turgenev: “Actors come to me, as to Shakhovskoi, with petitions for a new play for their bénéfice.”² Viazemskii’s sharp wit made him no less prominent than Pisarev in writing epigrams. A. Griboedov also had experience in writing interludes, comedies, and vaudevilles since 1814. Some of these plays were written in close cooperation with other playwrights, such as Pavel Katenin (The Student, 1817), Shakhovskoi and Khmelnitskii (Our Family, 1817), and Andrei Zhandr (The Feigned Infidelity 1818). In March 1823, Griboedov came back to
Russia from the Caucasus and brought with him two finished acts of his *Woe from Wit*. At his friend Sergei Begichev’s estate, he wrote the third and fourth acts and read the comedy to his close friends. Pëtr Viazemskii was one of them.

Griboedov and Viazemskii first met sometime between 1806 and 1812 when Griboedov was a student at the Moscow University. In 1823, they resumed their acquaintance with keen interest. Griboedov, having spent almost six years as a diplomat in Persia and in the Caucasus, came back to Moscow in March, 1823, and was glad to plunge into Moscow literary and theatrical events, political discussions (at that time Viazemskii’s views on some subjects were more radical than the views of the Decembrists), and the journal polemics of classicists and romanticists. Viazemskii was interested in the “Persian” Griboedov as an eyewitness of political events in the Middle East and as a person of great cultural experience.

While discussing the upcoming vaudeville, both Viazemskii and Griboedov came to an agreement not to touch any political or literary issues, even indirectly, to avoid any possible conflicts with the censors and, thus, to make the play’s journey from the censor’s desk to the stage as short as possible. This mutual agreement came from their promise to their friends-actors to write a vaudeville. They had to present the play on a certain date in order not to let down their friends. Petr Viazemskii tried to use his personal connections to secure the vaudeville’s way through the censors. In his letter to Turgenev, Viazemskii wrote:

Сыщи Анету Голицыну... дочь Ланского, но только тотчас, и скажи ей, что я жду водевиль из театральной цензуры; что если найдется кое-что непозволительного, то пусть вьмарат, а не
Viazemskii worried in vain: the censors allowed the performance of the vaudeville *Who Is Brother Who Is Sister, or Deceit After Deceit* without any complications. For the censors, there was nothing in the vaudeville to carp at, for neither plot, characters, nor the place of action had any connection with political problems.

The place of the action of the vaudeville is the post station in a little Polish town: “a room; a table on the right with the books for records, paper, etc., on the left there is a clavichord; there is a guitar on the wall; in the middle of a backdrop there is an open view onto a flower garden.” There are ten characters in the play: Pan Chizhevskii, a keeper of the post station; Antosia and Ludvisia, his daughters; Roslavlev, Jr., a hussar officer; Iulia, his wife; Roslavlev, Sr.; Andrei, his servant; and others.

The plot is a classic vaudeville intrigue. The hussar officer Count Roslavlev marries a Polish girl in Petersburg without the consent of his elder brother, who lives in Warsaw. Roslavlev, Sr. objects to this marriage because lately, after some misfortunate love affairs, he had become disappointed in all women. Roslavlev, Jr. decides to go to Warsaw to out-stubborn Roslavlev, Sr. to change his opinion.

* Find Annette Golitsina... the daughter of Lanskoi, (Countess Golitsina’s father was the Minister of Internal Affairs - A. T.) only right away, and tell her that I am waiting for the vaudeville from the theatre censors; if they find something in it, that is not allowed, let them cross it out but not hold the play, and let them send to me whatever might be said and sung without insulting God, tsar, and the asinine ears of this one, and that one, and the third, and the fourth, and the fifth.
On their way to Warsaw, the newlyweds stop at a post station in a small Polish town. They learn that Roslavlev, Sr. is on his way to Petersburg to prevent the marriage. Roslavlev, Sr., having experienced misfortunes in his love affairs, became, as he claims, a misogynist ("especially towards Polish women"). The newlyweds come out with a plan to play a practical joke on Roslavlev, Sr., to get his consent for their marriage. And “deceit after deceit” starts.

When Roslavlev, Sr. arrives, Iulia, the wife of Roslavlev, Jr., alternatively poses as a young hussar officer and his sister. Iulia-officer introduces "himself" to Roslavlev, Sr. as a fellow misogynist and by the by praises “his sister” to the sky. Iulia-sister makes Roslavlev’s head go giddy with her beauty and meek character. Moreover, she demonstrates her patience and kindness, nursing an old paralytic in a wheel-chair (who is her disguised husband).

The passionate misogynist cannot resist the beautiful Pole and reveals his feelings to her “brother.” Iulia-officer then takes off his moustache, side-whiskers, uniform overcoat, and konfederatka and ... confesses, that she has been in love with Roslavlev, Sr. for a long time, but he never noticed her. So, she followed him from Warsaw in disguise. Roslavlev, Sr. throws himself on his knees in front of Iulia to tell her about his flare up of unexpected love.

Antosia and Ludvisia sarcastically note, as pay back to ‘the misogynist’ for his attitude towards them at the beginning of the vaudeville: “What a disdain towards our gender! He has driven over the whole room on his knees!” At this moment the “old paralytic” takes off his bandages and blankets, jumps out of his wheel-chair, and introduces his wife to his brother. The brothers reconcile; Pan
Chizhevskii invites musicians to celebrate the occasion; and everybody sings the final couplets, followed by a divertissement.

The opening night on the January 24, 1824 was not a success, but it was not a complete failure, as Viazemskii thought. According to the practice of Russian theatres, a production that failed on the first performance was taken off the repertoire right away and not repeated. The theatre administration did not lose anything because, as a rule, no money was spent on the production of one act comedies or vaudevilles. Scenery and costumes were pulled out of stock. So, in case of a play’s failure, the administration did not need to make money to compensate the production expenses and simply canceled the remaining shows. *Who Is Brother Who Is Sister, or Deceit After Deceit* was not canceled. It was repeated four times that year: January 24 and 29 and February 5 and 16. Moreover, six months later, in September 1824, the vaudeville was staged in Petersburg, which certainly would not have happened had the play failed in Moscow. The Petersburg production received good responses from the audience and press. Some years later, the Moscow magazine *Молва* (The Talk) announced:

Some more of our public’s favorite plays it is decided to revive (italics mine - A. T.); we’ll name some of them: *The Lipetsk Spa* by Count Shakhovskoi, *The Calif’s Amusements* by A. I. Pisarev, and the vaudeville *Who Is Brother Who Is Sister, or Deceit After Deceit* by A. S. Griboedov and Prince Viazemskii.\(^6\)

The reasons for the opening night failure of the vaudeville (or more precisely, cool perception) lay not in any negligence during the rehearsal process or bad acting, as Viazemskii tended to explain at first. Three days before the
Light comedies, vaudevilles, and opera-vaudevilles for actors’ benefices were rehearsed not more than one week; usually, there were three-four rehearsals. Shakhovskoi, who directed the play, could not be reproached for negligence because his passion for theatre, known to everybody, prevailed in him over the difference in opinions of different authors in questions of literature or theatre theory and over his personal attitude towards this or that author. He loved theatre too much to do his job badly. Besides, the responsibility of learning lines was solely the actors’ duty.

It should be mentioned that not knowing the lines by one of the actors not always led to the failure of the production. So, there was nothing particularly different in the process of preparing this play for performance. The whole situation looked like Who Is Brother Who Is Sister, or Deceit After Deceit by Griboedov and Viazemskii had to be a success. However, after opening night, the production and

---

*I wanted to write a lot to you, but there are Verstovskii and Bulakhov at my place; Bulakhov is a splendid local singer but a wooden and forgetful actor. The vaudeville opens on Thursday and he still does not know his lines.

"An anecdotal fact is known in the history of the Russian theatre, when the actor Klimovskii at the performance of Khmelinskii’s vaudeville The Grandma’s Parrots knew neither his lines, nor the music. During the performance, the prompter had to speak and sing the entire role out from his booth instead of Klimovskii. That, naturally, added some more merriment for the public. Nevertheless, Grandma’s Parrots was a success."
its authors were pummeled with poisonous epigrams from the camp of their literary enemies. In addition to Pisarev’s epigram-couplet from his *The Busybody*, Mikhail Dmitriev wrote:

Вот брату и сестре законный аттестат:  
Их проза тяжела, их остры не остры;  
А вот и авторам: им Аполлон не брат  
И Музы им не сестры.⁸

The reason for these attacks was not the artistic merits or flaws of the vaudeville. In 1824, Viazemskii published Pushkin’s (who was in exile at that time) romantic verse tale *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* and wrote an introduction to it. In the introduction, Viazemskii expressed his opinion that the real quality of a good poetry is its narodnost, which lies not in some rules, but in emotions. From this point of view he claimed that the poetry of Homer, Horace, and Aeschylus has much more in common with the contemporary Romanticism than with those “classicists” who tried by their cold and servile imitations to pose as Greeks and Romans.⁹

Classicists Aleksandr Pisarev, Mikhail Dmitriev, and Mikhail Kachenovskii (the editor of the journal *The Herald of Europe*) launched furious polemics, attacking Pushkin, Griboedov, Viazemskii, and Romanticism in general (Griboedov’s *Woe from Wit* was already known from the manuscripts which were circulating in both capitals and also drew a cruel criticism from the same camp).

* For brother and for sister: their witticisms are hollow;  
  And more of attestation: their prose does not glister;  
  Here is for authors: they are not the brothers of Apollo  
  And none of Muses is their sister.
In the case of *Who Is Brother, Who Is Sister*, pure literary concerns were mixed up with personal motifs. It was thought that in his early comedy *The Student* (written together with Pavel Katenin, 1817), Griboedov ridiculed Zagoskin, a friend and confederate of Pisarev, Shakhovskoi, and Shishkov. As Russian theatre historian M. O. iankovskii suggests in his analysis of Griboedov's *Woe from Wit*, among the gallery of caricatures on the Moscow gentry, the Griboedov's character Repetilov in his persona “absorbed some features of a member of the Moscow literary circle, of an author of vaudevilles, looking very much like Pisarev.”¹⁰ So, Pisarev wanted to take vengeance on his enemy for this caricature. In his epigram on *Who Is Brother, Who is Sister* Dmitriev, supporting his friend Pisarev, referred to *The Student* and *The Woe from Wit* by Griboedov:

Одна комедия забыта,
Другой еще не видел свет;
Чем ты гордишься, мой поэт?
Так силой хвастает бессильный волокита.”¹¹

So, it would be fair to say that the main reason for the sharp critique of the vaudeville *Who Is Brother, Who is Sister*, was ideological (casting the classicists against the romanticists, the conservative wing of Russian literature against the progressive). It was, however, not without personal motifs, as well. All these attacks created the impression of vaudeville’s failure and characterized its reputation on the Russian stage as “unsuccessful.”

¹⁰ One comedy is well forgotten, / Another has not been seen yet; / What are you proud of, my poet? /An impotent lady-lover boasts of his power like this. (The first line is the reference to Griboedov’s *The Student*; the second line - to his *Woe from Wit*. - A. T.)
Music in *Who Is Brother Who is Sister*

The composer Aleksei Nikolaevich Verstovskii (1799-1862) was the only person involved in the production who was praised. *The Herald of Europe*, namely M. Kachenovskii hiding himself behind the initials N. D., appreciated Verstovskii’s music:

Г-н Верстовский сочетал блестящую талантом, прекрасную, богатую и знатную музыку свою с водевилем, не имеющим ни качеств ее, ни преимуществ. * 12

Aleksei Verstovskii belonged to the same aristocratic strata as the arguing playwrights and critics, but he did not want to side with any particular literary group and managed to keep good relations with everybody. In 1819, at the age of twenty, Verstovskii made his debut as a composer in Sankt-Petersburg when he wrote music for Khmelnitskii’s vaudeville *Grandma’s Parrots*, which, as stated earlier in this chapter, was a success. This first experience encouraged Verstovskii to continue composing music for theatre. He considered himself “the first Russian composer to write music for original and translated opera-vaudevilles.”13

Verstovskii, one of the most popular composers in the first half of the nineteenths century in Russia, wrote the successful operas *Pan Tvardovskii* (1828), *Vadim* (1832), and *Askold’s Grave* (1835), which played an important role in the development of Russian opera in the pre-Glinka period. The latter ran for

___________________________

* Mr. Verstovskii combined his beautiful, rich, and splendid music, shining with is talent, with a vaudeville, which has neither the qualities nor advantages of this music.
600 performances and “even reached New York in 1869, as the first Russian opera performed in the United States.” The majority of his works are theatrical and include cantatas, operas, incidental music for dramas, melodramas, and vaudevilles.

The custom of using the “pre-existing” musical pieces for a new vaudeville has already been explained in the first chapter of this work. However, in Russia, as well as in France, many prominent composers contributed to the success of playwrights by creating expressive, highly theatrical, and original musical scores.

In France it was A.-C. Adam, E. Auber, J.J. Rousseau, L.-J.-F. Herold, F.-A. Boieldieu, and others. Among Russian composers the most popular were Catterino Cavos, Ludwig Maurer, Stepan Davydov, Aleksandr Aliabiev.

Aleksei Nikolaevich Verstovskii was among these notable musicians who composed original music for vaudevilles. The following analysis of the music score to the vaudeville Who Is Brother, Who Is Sister explains its particular features in terms of both general development of the Russian vaudeville and its national originality, i.e., narodnost’.

As in the best examples of this genre, the music in the vaudeville Who Is Brother, Who Is Sister fulfilled different functions. One of the most important was the tendency to use music to develop the action when character(s), overwhelmed with emotions, could not “simply” speak but went onto another level in his/her emotions through a song. Later, this feature (a musical number as a continuation of the action) was perfectly elaborated in American musical. A perfect example of such continuation of the action through the music in Who Is Brother, Who Is Sister
occurs in Scene 9, when Roslavlev, Sr., hurrying to Petersburg to prevent his brother's marriage, demanded fresh horses immediately:

Fig. 9. The Quartet (Scene № 9) of Roslavlev Sr., Pan Chizhevskii, Antosia, and Ludvisia from the Vaudeville Who Is Brother, Who Is Sister, or Deceit after Deceit by A. Verstovskii.¹⁵
As seen in the quotation above, the resolute character of Roslavlev Sr. is shown in his first line both literally and musically. Having hardly entered the room, he gives Pan Chizhevskii an order: "Скорей, скорей, лошадей, лошадей" Sko-réi, sko-réi, lo-sha-déi, lo-sha-déi [Hurry up, hurry up, horses, horses!]). This phrase is written as three melodic intervals: fourth, fourth, and fifth, (a’, a’; a’ - d”; a’, a’ - d”; a’, a’ - e” ) and sounds like a military trumpet signal. The swiftness and decisiveness of the action are expressed by the introductory chord, by the immediately following fast legato passage in sixteenth notes from the d” down to the A, and by the Allegro Vivace tempo of the whole scene. The abrupt replications of Roslavlev Sr. ("galloping" combination of two foot iamb and two foot anapest - sko-réi, sko-réi, lo-sha-déi, lo-sha-déi) go over the animated phrases of Pan Chizhevskii and his daughters. Music functions here both as a characterization of Roslavlev, Sr. and as an accelerator of the action.

Besides expressive characterization either of the action or the dramatis personae, there was another very important feature of Verstovskii’s music, namely its narodnost’. The narodnost’ of Verstovskii’s music and the narodnost’ of the play itself made this vaudeville significant phenomenon in the history of Russian vaudeville. The authors showed how in such an entertaining genre as vaudeville to express, in Pushkin’s terms, “peculiar physiognomy” of a people without going to the extremes of cheap nationalism or pompous official patriotism. The analysis of narodnost’ (by what means, how, and because of what circumstances) of this vaudeville is coming next.
Narodnost’ of *Who is Brother, Who Is Sister*

To choose the setting of their vaudeville in Poland was not accidental for Aleksandr Griboedov and Pëtr Viazemskii. Of course, they were thinking about the spectacular side of the future production; folk dances, songs, and costumes could give the production brightness of a local colour. Of course, they knew the advantages of placing the action in a post station, where people come and go: constructing the plot in the tradition of a “road adventures novel,” they would not need to look for specific justification for their characters to arrive or to leave. Of course, they tried to use all the devices of a classic vaudeville: romantic love story, original characters, lines stuffed with witticisms and calembours, cross-dressing, disguise, and couplets. But what is more important is that they knew Poland from their own life experience.

The whole story is built on real national material: a little Polish town post station; five of ten characters are Poles, including the main character Iulia; the characters represent different social layers; the language of the characters is interspersed with polonisms (Griboedov used them very subtly); and, the finale of the play was a divertissement of characteristic music and songs. Purposefully bringing into the vaudeville the elements of Polish everyday life, Griboedov and Viazemskii took the first steps towards realism in Russian drama.

In the authors’ attempt to create a veracious national atmosphere in their vaudeville, there was nothing of the naive method of A. Shakhovskoi (we remember Shakhovskoi’s experiments with the Ukrainian language in his *Cossack-Versifier*), and there was nothing of the foggy-conventional and far from being true
attractions of numerous vaudevilles on the fashionable “oriental” theme (the successful Calif’s Amusements by Pisarev was a good, or should we say bad, example of those). There was a truthfulness in presenting the national, i.e., narodnost’.

The secret of creating a national character and national atmosphere in this vaudeville can be revealed very simply: the authors did not write (in terms of Ms. Nancy Condee’) “travelogues;” they wrote their “biographies.” Both authors had strong connections with and knowledge of Polish culture. This gave them the unique perspective for portraying national characters. The language of the vaudeville was natural, the characters were recognizable, and the whole situation was as plausible as vaudeville can be. This vaudeville certainly was an improvement over those written by Shakhovskoi, Khmelnitskii, and Pisarev. Now I wish to offer some explanations.

Griboedov’s ancestors were Poles. The genetic memory of nationality allowed him to see and sense not just the outer characteristics of a people, but their inner spirit. During the war campaign of 1812-1813 Griboedov joined the hussars and did get acquainted with the motherland of his ancestors while chasing with his regiment the retreating troops of Napoleon. In 1813-1815 Griboedov lived in Poland, where he wrote his comedy Young Married People. In 1823, after Alexander I put down the Polish uprising of the secret student organization The Filomaci, many Poles were either exiled or had to leave their country voluntarily.

* See Chapter 2.
Among those who were deported to Russia was the young Adam Mickiewicz (1798-1855). Griboedov met him in Moscow as well as other members of the Polish “colony.” The relations between Griboedov, Mickiewicz and other Poles have been investigated by the Russian scholar S. V. Sverdlina in her essay *Griboedov and the Exiled Poles.*

Польское происхождение и польский язык – это только исходные элементы того доверия и взаимной приязни, которые возникли между Грибоедовым и поляками. В комплексе, определившем отношение круга польских изгнанников к Грибоедову, ведущую роль сыграли его достоинства как человека и писателя, автора комедии “Горе от ума”.

All these facts conditioned the “imprint of narodnost’ “ in *Who Is Brother, Who Is Sister,* for which, as we remember, Griboedov “had to write the prosaic part of the play: monologues, dialogues, and to organize the scenes in general”. Though Viazemskii chose for himself a more modest role - to write “all that should be sung,” he was neither a stranger to Poland. From the beginning of 1818 till April of 1821 “he served under Count N. N. Novosil'tsev in Warsaw, where he took part in working out a project of Russian constitution and had a reputation of a ‘liberal’ in the official circles.”17 He traveled across Poland and knew well the country and its people (not by hearsay).

The third author of the vaudeville, Aleksei Verstovskii, composed the score using the characteristic features of Polish folk music. The overture and the final
couplets were in the character of mazurka. Composer defined the duet of Antosia and Ludvisia (#4) and the couplets of Pan Chizhevskii and his daughters as *tempo di polacca*. Other popular musical forms of the period were presented also. The waltz form was used for the couplets of Antosia and Ludvisia.

In terms of musical genres, the score was rather varied. It contained romances, couplet, couplets with refrain, duets, trio, quartet, and chorus. Griboedov, worrying about the true Polish character of the whole work, wrote to Verstovskii about the possibility of adjusting the melody of a folk Polish song to Pan Chizhevskii’s couplets. But Verstovskii composed his own melody which successfully expressed the national Polish character.

In general, Verstovskii’s music to *Who Is Brother, Who Is Sister* is very “Polish,” but without any elements of ethnocentrism. The closeness of the two cultures, Polish and Russian, made Verstovskii’s task easier. Polish dances like the mazurka, krakoviak, polka, and polonaise were danced at the court and in ball-rooms in capitals, cities, and in the country’s estates. Stephanie Sandler observes correctly:

> Nowhere was the mazurka enjoined more than in Russia and Eastern Europe: French and English dance books complained of its complexity to justify their nations’ preference for other dances. It became the culmination of Russian balls (as it is in the *Onegin* scene) because the mazurka offered dramatic opportunities for skill in performance.18

Moreover, in Russia the tradition of using popular Polish musical forms in all kinds of compositions developed since early nineteenth century; the traditional Polish musical forms were used in operas, ballets, and symphonies by Mikhail Glinka, Petr Tchaikovskii, Modest Mussorgskii, and many others.
In Who Is Brother, Who Is Sister, Verstovskii used the character of mazurka several times. The Polish theme of the vaudeville is revealed from the very beginning. Scene 1 starts with the duet in a mazurka style of Antosia and Ludvisia, written on an eternal folk topic, about a faithful and gullible girl and her false lover. The sisters sing, accompanying themselves on harpsichord and guitar:

Fig. 10. The opening Song of Antosia and Ludvisia from the Vaudeville Who Is Brother, Who Is Sister, or Deceit after Deceit by A. Verstovskii.19
The national coloration in this song is rendered by the traditional mazurka measure (3/8) and by a very characteristic construction of a musical phrase and its intonation. This allows the listener to identify instantly the type of the musical form (like it always happens with popular forms in folk music of different countries: fandango, bolero, polka, chardash, tarantella, etc.).

Thus, there are several reasons for the successful collaboration of Griboedov, Viazemskii, and Verstovskii on the vaudeville Who Is Brother Who Is Sister. First, it was an original story. Though it contained all the traditional vaudeville elements, such as love intrigue, swift action, cross-dressing, and sometimes almost stichomythic dialogues, the story was not borrowed from a foreign source and/or adjusted to the Russian reality. The place of action, a post station in a little Polish town, was familiar to the Russian gentry. Travelers from

---


During the composer’s lifetime an anthology of his music to various vaudevilles was published under a title Recueil choisi de différents morceaux d’operas-vadevilles russes, composés et arrangés pour pianoforte par A. N. Verstovsky. “Vaudeville russes” - “Russian vaudeville”, was an accepted form at the beginning of the century to differ the translated or remade vaudevilles from the original ones, regardless their national content.
Russia to Europe could hardly escape staying at such Polish post stations. The local coloration added freshness and brightness to the story.

Second, the characters of the vaudeville, both Russians and Poles, though reminded traditional stock characters, such as a hussar (both brothers Roslavlev), an ingénue (liulia), and a soubrette (both sisters, Antosia and Liudvisia), still were given one or two personal qualities.

The way of portraying the characters allows to speak about the third reason, the verisimilitude of the dramatis personae which might be considered the first step towards realism in vaudeville. The characters maintain and support the appearance of reality, a somewhat stylized representation still recognizable as accurate.

Thus, in Scene 19, we see Roslavlev, Sr. trying to wake up his lazy servant Andrei:

Roslavlev, Sr.
Yes, indeed! The only thing you know how to do is to be drunk all the time or to sleep like a dog and to yawn in between.

Andrei (loose and yawning)
For goodness' sake, what else can we do? Our life is a nightdream...

This is a familiar Russian type of a servant who is a home-made philosopher and raisonneur, who talks back to his master and who, by his laziness and imperturbability, can drive his master crazy. (Gogol’s Osip in The Inspector General is the brilliant example of the same type.)

In Scene 3, Pan Chizhevskii sings a comic song: “And, stumbling on a slippery spot, I am falling down but still keep my legs in a beautiful position!” In common perception, this quality, which might be defined as “putting a good face
on a bad business,” is considered very “Polish.” Not without a reason we find in the Polish language such sayings-characteristics and by-words as “bez spodni ale w kapeluszu” (to have no trousers on but wearing a hat) or “boso ale w ostrogach” (to be without boots but to wear spurs).

The language of the characters, the logic of their thinking and behavior, and the manner of their acting and reacting in different situations are easily recognizable as Polish or Russian. The aggregate of these elements made *Who Is Sister, Who Is Brother* the first vaudeville where the concept of narodnost’ was embodied on a high artistic level. As a result, the vaudeville had, in Pushkin’s words, its “peculiar physiognomy,” that made it an original dramatic piece, different from the “faceless” hack-works flooding the Russian stage at the time. *Who Is Sister, Who Is Brother* presented that very case when narodnost’ expressed on a high artistic level, no matter how “much national” the work is, becomes “international,” i.e., understandable, interesting, and attractive for people of other nationalities. All of the world’s greatest pieces of art possess this quality that makes them valuable and enjoyable for the rest of the world.

There is one more consideration. By the time of writing *Who Is Brother*, *Who Is Sister*, all three authors already had certain experience as vaudevillists. But it was not vaudeville writing which made them part of Russian theatre history. Griboedov immortalized his name with his *Woe from Wit*. Articles by Viazemskii

---

* In the eighteenth - beginning of the nineteenth century, boots with spurs were a customary part of the Polish nobility’s attire. Skillful dancers, wearing such boots, demonstrated a particular effect dancing mazurka.

163
still have their importance in the study of the history and theory of Russian literature and drama. In Russian musicology, Verstovskii is considered the most significant opera composer in pre-Glinka period. All three were remarkable figures of the first half of the nineteenth century and only once did all three gather together for a common project. The level of literary/musical talent of these men resulted in a funny, graceful, and very entertaining piece which might be considered as one of the best examples of this genre of the aristocratic phase of the history of Russian vaudeville and which marked a shift in the representation of narodnost on the Russian vaudeville stage.

The next period, the 1830s and 1840s, brought new characters, new themes, and new ideas into the original Russian vaudeville. This period will be considered in the following chapters. Chapter 6 will examine the political conditions of the period from 1825 to 1850s which presents the second phase, the democratic-raznochiny, of the development of Russian vaudeville, the repertoire of the Imperial theatres and the official policy towards the problem of national originality of Russian drama. It will also outline the general tendencies which took place in the development of vaudeville during this period. The two following chapters will introduce how these tendencies were realized in the works of Russian vaudevillists and will analyze the best of them.

Endnotes to Chapter 5

2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., 9.
4. Ibid., 31.
5. Ibid., 45.
6. Ibid., 18.
7. Ibid., 16.
12. Вестник Европы, № 1, 2 января, стр. 150. (The Herald of Europe, 1824, № 1, January 2, 150.)


20. Ibid., 43.

21. Ibid., 33.
CHAPTER 6. THEATRE DURING THE REIGN OF NICHOLAS I: 1825 -1855

Nicholas I and His After-Decembrist Revolt Policy

The next phase of the development of Russian vaudeville chronologically coincides with the period of the reign of Nicholas I (1825-1855). To understand the changes Russian vaudeville went through at this time means to understand the political, social and cultural events which conditioned and/or caused these changes. This chapter brings a wide spectrum of socio-political life in Russia during this period, examines the connection between official policy of the tzar and Russian drama in general, and defines the main directions in the development of vaudeville. The importance of this overview lies in the fact that this period democratized vaudeville as an aristocratic genre and brought Russian vaudeville to its classical completion. Evaluation of it cannot be done out of touch with what formed Russian life during these years.

The social transitions of the 1810s - the beginning of the 1820s, caused by the foreign and domestic policy of Alexander I, resulted in a revolt in December of 1825. Despite the fact that Alexander I made some reforms in the Russian state arrangement, introduced a more orderly governing of the country by creating eight ministries, and established new universities in St.-Petersburg, Kharkov, and Kazan, the last years of his reign were marked by growing reactionary policies and despotism, which caused popular discontent. In November of 1825, Alexander I died unexpectedly in Taganrog. Alexander I did not have children; according to the
order of succession to the Russian throne, Alexander's younger brother, Grand Duke Constantine, who lived in Warsaw, was announced as new Russian emperor. However, he refused the throne in favor of his youngest brother Nicholas (b. 1796). Nicholas implored Constantine to accept the crown. Constantine refused again. Nicholas "devoted the nine days from 3 to 12 December urging formal renunciation or abdication upon his elder brother in a series of personal letters which were carried back and forth between Warsaw and St.-Petersburg by their youngest brother, the Grand Duke Mikhail."¹

Young military officers, members of the secret society, decided to use the uncertainty of the situation to their advantage. On the fourteenth of December, 1825, three thousands troops were brought to the Senate square in St.-Petersburg in open revolt.

Nicholas acted fast and firmly. The revolt was quickly suppressed. Five leaders of the revolt were hung; it was the first public execution since the reign of Catherine the Great. About six hundred were arrested that winter and spring. Dozens were exiled to hard labor in Siberia.

The situation was used also “to clean” the capital; hundreds of people who had nothing to do with the revolt were forced to move out of the city, including passportless peasants, unemployed clerks, unlicenced lawyers, beggars, and vagabonds. As Sidney Monas points out in The Third Section: Police and Society in Russia under Nicholas I:
It [the revolt] cast a shadow over his entire reign. It called into doubt the state of discipline and loyalty within the officers’ corps, and Nicholas could not be very certain to what extent the actions of the Decembrists reflected shared ideas, latent sympathies, and half-formed intentions on the part of friends and kinsmen among the nobility who had not actively participated in the conspiracy.  

One of the first steps undertaken by Nicholas I as the new Russian emperor was the establishing of a secret political police force, which was engaged in social espionage. Nicholas incorporated the police into His Majesty’s Private Imperial Chancery. The head of this so-called Third Section was general Aleksandr Benckendorff (1783-1844). Benckendorff was reputed to be a faithful and loyal subject to the Russian monarchy. Back in 1821, he presented to the ruling tsar Alexander I Записка о тайных обществах в России (Message about Secret Societies in Russia). Alexander I disregarded the Message, but when Nicholas I became the emperor, the document became evidence of the extraordinary perspicacity of Benckendorff.

Prior to that, Benckendorff worked out a document with the suggestion to organize a special highest secret police; the document was given no consideration by Alexander’s administration. At this point it received the approval of Nicholas I, and the loyal general was appointed the chief of the new institution, The Third Section. The agents of the Third Section had to spy and report on religious groups, economic and supervisory administration, foreigners, “suspicious or dangerous” persons, etc. In 1828, a special bureau of censorship of theatrical works was added to the other offices of the Third Section. (These facts and the
whole history of Benckendorff’s becoming one of the most powerful men in Russia in the second quarter of the nineteenth century and the relations between the secret police and Russian literature were investigated and described by the Russian historian Mikhail Lemke; his thoroughly documented volume Николаевские жандармы и литература 1826-1855 гг. [Nicholaian Gendarmes and Literature in 1826-1855] was published in 1909.)

Arrests, exiles, and threats scared many people. Even the most progressive and intelligent thinkers were going through a period of dismay. At the same time, as Aleksandr Herzen (1812-1870) noticed:

Всюду росло недовольство, революционные идеи за эти двадцать пять лет распространились шире, чем за все предшествовавшее столетие.*

After the Decembrist revolt was put down, Nicholas I was still afraid of any expression of political thought that could be associated with the ideas of liberty, revolution, and freedom. News about revolutionary events in Europe scared him. On such occasions he had a habit of repeating: “Ceux sont mes amis du quatorze.”** The occasions continued to happen.

In July of 1830 Europe was shocked by news of the revolution in France. The July Revolution appeared to be the first link in a chain of democratic uprisings on the European continent, particularly in Belgium, Germany, Italy, and Poland.
Grand Duke Constantine’s unpopular harsh rule as a viceroy of Poland and the desire of Poles for independence had led to an insurrection in November of 1830. The uprising was put down quickly by the Russian army in 1831. The autonomy of Poland was removed and the constitution was taken away.  

The revolution, which drove the Bourbons from the throne of France, also had similar repercussions in Italy. In 1831 insurrections erupted in the Papal States. A congress of representatives of all the states (except Rome) met in Bologna and adopted a constitution establishing a republican form of government. For an absolute monarch, as Nicholas I was, the European events were considered a threat to his own well-being as ruler.

During his reign, Nicholas I’s foreign affairs policy continued the expansion of Russian Empire. The thirty years of his rule were characterized by constant military actions and wars in the Caucasuses, the Balkans, Central Asia, and in the Far East. The war with Iran (1826-1828), the interference in revolutionary events in Greece, the Russo-Turkish war (1828-1829), and events in Poland were considered by the leading European states as signs of a growing military and political power of Russia in Europe.

After the Russian army appeared in the Dardanelles and after Nicholas I invaded the Danube principalities, Turkey (breaking the agreement of 1833 and having the support of Great Britain), Austria, Prussia, and France declared the war

Constantine did not live to see it; he died in June of 1831 from cholera.
on Russia in 1853. The disastrous war ended in 1856, one year after Nicholas I's
death, and cost Russia dearly:

The Treaty of Paris, signed on March 30, 1856, was a major setback for Russia's Middle Eastern policy. Russia was forced to return southern Bessarabia and the mouth of the Danube to Turkey; Moldavia, Walachia, and Serbia were placed under an international rather than a Russian guarantee. The Russians were forbidden to maintain a navy on the Black Sea.6

During the thirty years of Nicholas I's reign, there was no peace in domestic life either. Describing the political situation in Russia in the 1820s-1850s, the seven volume History of the Russian Drama Theatre directly connects social disturbances with the reactionary regime of Nicholas I.7 The following brief overview shows the irreversible process of growth of the social self-consciousness of Russian society.

In 1827, a new secret society founded by the brothers Kritskie was disclosed. The members of the group were accused of the intention of organizing a revolutionary overturn. They were imprisoned in the fortress and died four years later.

On June 17, 1831, the trial of N. P. Sungurov started. The secret society organized by Sungurov, a small landowner, intended to strike a rebellion of factory workers, to seize the ordnance depot, to take the money and to give it out to soldiers, and to cancel serfdom. All the members of this group were sentenced either to hard labor in Siberia, sent soldiering, or exiled. Serfdom remained one of the major problems of the Russian empire under Nicholas I. The feudal-serf
system of the economy conflicted with the capitalist notions of a new social class, the bourgeoisie. The unbearable living conditions of the serfs caused numerous disturbances: from 1825 to 1854 there were 674 peasant rebellions.8

In this long chain of rebellions, the Decembrists’ revolt was the first link. As far as the Decembrists were mostly military officers, one of the first steps by Nicholas was to cleanse the army and the military schools of all different-minded. In the civil service also, all officials were obliged to take a special oath, declaring that they did not belong to any secret society within the Empire or abroad and that they would not have any relationship with any of them “from now on.”9 The government control and repression embraced all social layers.

Also, the domestic policy of these years was characterized by the strengthening of censorship, the paying of close attention to the universities as nests of liberal ideas (many professors of history and philosophy were fired and the student bodies were reduced to about 300 in each university), and the further activating of the work of the political police. In his study on the relations between society and police under the rule of Nicholas I, Sidney Monas stated:

“It was impossible to discuss political, social, religious, or philosophical problems in a free and open manner. Of course, the terms of censorship could be and were evaded by the employment of an Aesopian language; nevertheless, the Ministry of Education, the Church, and the Third Section were formidably inhibiting.”10

However, it looked as if at the universities one could breathe a little more freely. In the 1830s and 1840s, many young people pursued their education and their thirst for new ideas. Though the study of formal philosophy was banned in
1826, many talented professors encouraged their students’ interest in philosophical studies. German philosophy in 1830s and French social writings were the subjects of inspirational discussions in auditoriums and beyond. Herzen recalled:

 Мы и наши товарищи говорили в аудитории открыто всё, что приходило в голову; тетрадки запрещенных стихов ходили из рук в руки, запрещенные книги читались с комментариями, а при всем том я не помню ни одного доноса из аудитории, ни одного предательства.11

In 1830-40, in spite of the repressions, delations, the huge nets of spies and informers of The Third Section, the examination of private correspondence, and severe censorship, Russian arts and literature achieved heights which never had been reached before. Nikolai Berdiaev (1874-1947), one of the most outstanding and original Russian philosophers, explaining this phenomenon in his *The Russian Idea*:

It was a century of thought and speech and at the same time a century marked by that acute cleavage which is so characteristic of Russia. It was, too, the century which achieved interior freedom and it was a period of intense activity in spiritual and social enquiry.

And later he continues:

The great Russian writers of the nineteenth century created not from the joy of creative abundance, but from a thirst for the salvation of the people, of humanity and the whole world, from unhappiness and suffering, from the injustice and the slavery of man.12

---

1 In the auditoriums we and our mates spoke out openly whatever came into our heads; note-books of forbidden poems were passed from hand to hand, banned books were read with discussions following and, for all that, I do not remember a single delation, which would come from the class room, not a single betrayal.
The inner freedom and resistance to the autocratic regime during the first half of the nineteenth century, known as The Golden Age of Russian arts, produced the theatrical masterpieces that brought Russia international recognition, such as A. Griboedov’s *Woe from Wit*, A. Pushkin’s *Boris Godunov*, and Lermonov’s *Masquerade*. These years also became, however, the years of great losses for Russian literature. Alexander Griboedov was killed by a mob in Teheran in 1829. He never saw his *Woe from Wit* staged; the censor did not allow the play to be staged until 1831. In his diary, Alexander Nikitenko, the liberal and educated censor, appreciated the production:

16 February. I attended a performance of Griboedov’s comedy, *Woe from Wit*. Someone made the witty and apt remark that nothing but woe was left in this play, for it was badly mutilated by the deadly knife wielded by Benkendorff’s literary department. ... The play is performed every week. They say that the director of the theatre is making a pile of money out of it.¹³

In 1837, A. S. Pushkin was killed in a duel. The shocking news caused the twenty-three year old M. Lermontov to write the poem *On the Death of a Poet* in which he accused the ruling class of Pushkin’s murder. Nicholas I, being afraid of public disturbances, sent the poet off to the acting army. S. Monas describes:

Lermontov had written his famous scathing lines against “society’s” participation in the death of Pushkin, and in a short time the poem, without publication, gained for itself literally thousands of readers. It was not merely circulated; it was memorized. The Third Section in this instance reacted quite differently; Benkendoroff sent an imperially confirmed order to War Minister Chernyshev, transferring Lermontov (a Guards officer) to the Caucasus, and he imprisoned Lermontov’s friend S. A. Raevskii (for trying to warn him), before sending him off in Olonets province.¹⁴
Lermontov, a brilliant poet, second only to Pushkin, spent almost two years in the line regiment. He was sent to the Caucasus again in 1840 and killed there in a duel in 1841. None of Lermontov’s early plays -- *The Spaniards* (1830), *Menschen und Leideshaften* (“People and Passions,” 1830), *A Strange Man* (1831), and *Two Brothers* (1836), -- got through censorship. The best of his plays, *Masquerade* (1835, published in 1842, after the poet’s death), was continuously barred from professional performance by the censors till 1862, when it was staged at the Moscow Maly Theatre. A. Benkendorff, the chief of The Third Section, considered Lermontov’s *Masquerade* “glorifying the vice and demanded to end the play by reconciliation of Arbenins.” Benkendorff’s response reflected the consistently conducted policy of The Official Nationality, where the virtues of man were defined by the Orthodox church, by the loyalty of the subject to his sovereign, and by his tireless demonstration of Russian patriotism. The censorship during the reign of Nicholas I also acted in strict accordance with the official doctrine embodied in the trinity: Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality.

The Repertoire of 1830s-1840s and the Official Nationality

The 1830s-40s in Russia are characterized by the development of realistic tendencies in the arts and literature. A. Pushkin’s *Eugene Onegin* was published in 1833, *The Queen of Spades* in 1834, *The Captain’s Daughter* in 1836; Lermontov’s *The Hero of Our Times* was published in 1840; N. Gogol’s *Dead Souls*
came out in 1842. Also, realistic features began to penetrate the paintings of romanticists K. Brullov (1799-1852), A. Venetsianov (1780-1847), and Pavel Fedotov, and the romantic ballets choreographed by Charles Didelot (1767-1837).

In theatre the situation was very diverse. Classicist tragedies were not produced anymore. Old comedies like The Slanderer by V. Kapnist, The Minor by D. Fonvizin, and A Lesson to the Daughters by I. Krylov, from time to time continued to appear on capital and provincial stages. The majority of the repertoire consisted of romantic dramas, melodramas, and vaudevilles. Foreign drama predominated over the national.

It is necessary to mention here that under Nicholas I censorship developed into a multi-leveled structure. So, the permission to publish a play did not mean that the play was allowed for presentation in theatre. Thus, out of four of Pushkin’s Little Tragedies only Mozart and Saliery was staged in 1832 “for the audience to gather, replacing a customary in such cases, vaudeville.” The remaining three - The Miserly Knight, The Stone Guest, and A Feast During the Plague were not produced during Pushkin’s lifetime. His Mermaid was produced without success in 1938.

The best dramatic genre to fulfill the ideas of The Official Nationality became melodrama. This policy, though similar to that of Alexander I, had a different impact on the shifting scenes of mid-nineteenth century Russian theatre. In Western Europe melodrama started its conquering procession in Paris in 1800 with 387 successive performances of Guilbert de Pixérécourt’s (1773-1844) Coelina,
ou L'Enfant du Mystère. In Russia, melodrama began with Victor Ducange’s *Thirty ears, or A Gambler’s Life* at the Petersburg theatre in the season of 1818-1819. In addition to the translated plays of August von Kotzebue (1761-1819), Victor-Henri-Joseph Brahain Ducange (1783-1833), and Alexandre Dumas, Père, (1802-1870) original melodramas began to gain enormous popularity during the 1830s-40s but still could not reach the popularity of vaudeville.

Besides other reasons, which will be considered later in this chapter, the atmosphere in Russian theatre of that time, its morals, and codes of behavior served as a favorable background for producing hundreds of vaudevilles a year. Theatre was a political institution; vaudeville was apolitical, i.e., did not contain any dangerous ideas which could displease the powers that be and, consequently, bring bad luck for the author (in 1830s the notes of social criticism only started to appear in vaudeville). The explanation of this favorable for vaudeville atmosphere in Russian theatre and how official policy ruled drama/theatre at that time comes from the story which happened to two playwrights, typical for this period, Nestor Kukolnik (1809-1868) and Nikolai Polevoi (1796-1846).

Both playwrights had something in common. Both of them defined some of their plays as tragedy or drama, though in reality their writing absorbed all the characteristic features of fashionable melodrama: pseudo-historical coloration, affectation, ‘horrible’ theatrical effects, elements of miracle in the plot, and rewarded virtues. In terms of political views, both playwrights were loyal subjects of Nicholas. They did not have trouble with theatre censorship. In their plays they
paid full tribute to the ideas of the official nationalism and were supported by the
government and the Tsar. But the pithy saying from Griboedov’s Woe from Wit
says: “Let us beware more than of any sorrows of masters’s wrath as well as of
their love.” The good attitude of Nikolai I turned out bad for N. Polevoi in 1834,
when N. Kukolnik presented his next chef d’œuvre Рука Всевышнего
Отечество Спасла (Almighty’s Hand the Fatherland Has Saved).

The sujet of the play dealt with The Period of Troubles in Russian history
and with the election of Mikhail Romanov as a new tsar (1613). The play
presented a series of episodes, loosely connected with each other; the versification
was lame; the characters were static; the plot was lacking a dramatic action; and
melodramatic scenes and monologues were far from being historical or plausible.
As B. Varneke stated:

Artistically it is in no way superior to Torquato Tasso, its only
advantage being shorter. From a political standpoint this drama, conceived
in a burst of patriotism and monarchical spirit, conformed precisely to the
tendencies and aims of the government; and it was, therefore, given a very
elaborate production. To attend the play and express delight over its merits
was a kind of testimonial loyalty.

* The Period of Troubles [The Time of Troubles] is the name of the period
at beginning of the seventeenth century when struggle over the Muscovy throne
was complicated by a civil war, interventions of Poles and Swedes. The period of
continuous chaos in the country till 1613 when the boyar Mikhail Romanov was
proclaimed a tsar and Romanov’s family began its 300-year reign (http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+ru0018).
Kukolnik turned to this period willing to flatter the reigning monarch Nicholas
Romanov.

** Kukolnik’s tragedy Torquato Tasso was written and produced a year
earlier, in 1833.
With his retinue, Nicholas I was present on the opening night of Kukolnik’s *Almighty’s Hand the Fatherland Has Saved* at the Aleksandrinskii Theatre in Petersburg and was delighted. The unheard sum of money spent on this production and the presence of imperial personages gave the performance the character of celebration. At the time, Nikolai Polevoi came to Petersburg from Moscow to take care of some business regarding his magazine. He attended the performance of the *Almighty’s Hand the Fatherland Has Saved* and during the intermission met A. Benkendorff. The latter inquired if Polevoi was going to write something approving about the great patriotic drama in his *Moscow Telegraph*. Polevoi answered that he was already acquainted with the play through reading and that he had already written a critical disapproving article about it.

- And has this article been already published? - asked Benkedorff.
- Not yet, but I gave it to print in my magazine!
- What are you doing, Nikolai Alekseevich! - exclaimed almost with horror Benkendorff, - you see how they receive the play here; you should consider this opinion, otherwise you can draw a terrible trouble on yourself!.. 19

Polevoi understood that he made a political mistake and tried to correct it. He wrote a letter to his brother in Moscow, asking to stop printing the article, but it was too late. A new book of the *Moscow Telegraph* with the ill-starred article was already printed out and distributed to its subscribers. The consequences were disastrous for N. Polevoi and his magazine. In two weeks Polevoi, accompanied by gendarmes, was brought to the Third Section, questioned in Benkendorff’s office by S. Uvarov, kept under custody for three days, ordered to write an explanation, and, finally, was freed.
The main character in this 'drama' was, however, S. Uvarov. As soon as he became the Minister of Education, he began to prove his loyalty to his sovereign with the zeal of a hungry hunting dog. In 1833, he reported to Nicholas I about the article in The Moscow Telegraph about Walter Scott’s book Life of Napoleon, considering the article insulting for a Russian. Nicholas wrote his resolution on Uvarov’s report:

Я нахожу статью сию боле глупою своими противоречиями, чем неблагонамеренною. Виновен цензор, что пропустил, автор же — въ томъ, что писалъ безъ настоящаго смысла, вероятно себя не разумя. Потому бывшему цензору строжайше замётить, а Полевому объявить, чтобы вздору не писать: иначе запретится журналъ его. **20

Uvarov could not forgive Polevoi’s “victory” in this case and began to collect into a special note-book all the articles, or paragraphs, or even separate phrases (taken out of context) placed in The Moscow Telegraph, which proved Polevoi’s ill-disposed activity. The faithful Uvarov presented his collection to the emperor along with his report about Polevoi’s criticism of Kukolnik’s Almighty’s Hand the Fatherland Has Saved.*** Uvarov calculated everything correct. After the royal

* The nine volumes of Life of Napoleon by Sir Walter Scott was published in 1827.

I find the article more foolish by its contradictions, rather than not loyal. The censor is to blame that let it go, the author is to blame, that wrote it without any sense, probably, not understanding himself. So, the censor should be warned strictly, and Polevoi should be advised not to write nonsense; otherwise the magazine will be banned.

*** The faithfulness of Uvarov brought him its fruit: In 1846 he was granted the tsar’s gratitude, the title Count; the words Orthodoxy, Autocracy, Narodnost’ became the device in his freshly created heraldic coat of arms. (See: M. Lemke.)
approval of the Kukolnik’s play, Polevoi had to be punished for his dissidence. Polevoi’s magazine (considering other “sins” of the editor, such as positive responses on Griboedov’s *Woe from Wit*) was banned; the editor became *persona non grata* in official literary life and in the publishing business. As usual in Russian social life, an anonymous wit was not long in responding with a sarcastic epigram on the whole matter:

 Rune Всевышнего три чуда совершила:
 Отечество спасла,
 Поэту ход дала
 И Полевого загубила.*

 The punishment brought Polevoi to despair. He became a lapdog for the regime. Alexander Herzen (1812-1870), a political thinker, critic, and writer, wrote with regret about the sudden change in Polevoi’s views:

 Он стал покорен, льстив. Печально было видеть, как этот смелый боец, этот неутомимый работник, умевший в самые трудные времена оставаться на своем посту, лишь только прикрыли его журнал, пошел на мировую со своими врагами.**21

 In a private letter, Vissarion Belinskii (1811-1848), one of the most outstanding Russian critics of the nineteenth century, was no less sharp in

 *Almighty’s Hand* three miracles presented:
 Saved our fatherland,
 Named certain poet grand,
 And Polevoi’s decease was implemented.

 **He became obedient, flattering. It was sad to see how this brave fighter, this restless laborer, who managed to remain his position during the most difficult times, reconciled himself to his enemies as soon as they closed his magazine.
evaluating Polevoi’s play writing, although he respected him as the former editor-publisher of progressive *The Moscow Telegraph*:

Я могу простить ему отсутствие эстетического чувства... но для меня уже смешно, жалко и позорно видеть его фарисейско-патриотические, предательские драмы народные ("Иголкина" и т.п.), его пошлые комедии и прочую сценическую дрянь.\textsuperscript{22}

Belinskii was referred to the later plays by Polevoi (written after the scandal with the *Moscow Telegraph*), such as *The Grandfather of the Russian Fleet, The Soldier’s Heart, A Russian Remembers the Good*, and *Merchant Igolkin*, which eulogized a Russian’s devotion to his Tsar and Fatherland. Polevoi tried to restore Nicholas’ favor. The melodramatics of these plays, raised to the power of nonsense, allowed some anonymous critic to accuse Polevoi of bringing back “Kotzeb-iatina” on the Russian stage. At a time when progressive Russian playwrights and theatre critics were struggling for creating original national drama, “Kotzebiatina,” i.e., cheap and banal melodrama not typical for the Russian national character, was fairly considered to be a movement backward on this path.

\textsuperscript{22} I can forgive him for not having an aesthetical sense... but it becomes already funny, pitiful, and shameful to watch his pharisaical-patriotic, traitorous folk dramas ("Igolkin" and so on), his banal comedies, and other scenic crap.

\textsuperscript{22} An anonymous sharp tongue coined the word formed by putting together the part of the name *Kotzeb*-ue, suffix -\textit{iatin}-, and ending -\textit{a}, *Kotzebiatina*, which in common mind (because of the rareness of the usage of this suffix in Russian grammar) immediately rhymed with *poshliatina* (triviality) and *otsebiatina* (ad-libbing); the suffix -\textit{iatin}-, having a mocking-despising shade of the meaning in both words, communicated the same attitude to the phenomenon defined by a new “term,” i.e., to the style of Polevoi’s plays.
Nevertheless, original or translated melodrama and romantic drama, posing as tragedy, dictated the tastes for dramatic genres on the Russian stage in 1830s-1840s; as for comical genres, the domineering genre was vaudeville. While retaining its genre particularities, vaudeville underwent some changes, conditioned by the socio-political life of Russian society, which were stated above, as well as an additional phenomena: such as the growth of the trade, manufactures, and industrial labor market. These changes in Russian society brought new themes and new characters into Russian vaudeville. One of the main features of vaudeville of the 1830s-40s was the appearance of a common man as the main hero of the story. The reasons for that were conditioned by political and economical situation in the Russian state of the time.

Vaudeville of the 1830s-1840s and a Common Man

In the second quarter of the nineteenth century the majority of the Russian population were illiterate; however, with the development of trade and industry (mainly small fabrics and plants), gradually more peasants and trade-and-craft people learned how to read. Though, scared by the revolutionary events in Europe, the Russian government assured itself that there was not a proletariat class in Russia, even though the number of people involved in industrial organized labor was growing:

During Nicholas' reign, the problem of factory labor assumed social dimensions for the first time. Russian industry had begun to expand, even with serf labor, in the late thirties, and in the forties the use of hired labor, especially in Moscow and St.-Petersburg, reflected a certain limited dynamism set off by the new money which the recently expanded European
grain market had brought in. For its part, the Third Section had been extremely wary of the part presumably played by the proletariat in the revolts and revolutions of Western Europe.²³

Literacy among fabric workers spread faster than in other social groups. All these people: workers, merchants, trade and craft people, raznochintsy, and meshchane began to fill in theatre houses more actively in the 1830s-40s, enjoying performances and not being shy to express their opinion about the seen. This audience, to a certain extent, also began to define the repertoire of Imperial theatres as aristocratic audience in the 1810-20s formed the majority of theatre goers and defined to a certain extent theatre’s repertoire. The demography of

As a legal umbrella term, the category raznochintsy dated back to the reign of Peter the Great, where it referred to the lower service categories of Muscovy and imperial Russia. Following legal precedent, the authors of the urban instructions to the Legislative Commission (1767) also employed the category as an umbrella label for lesser service categories; in nineteenth-century legislation and the Digest of Laws, raznochintsy continued to indicate petty servicemen below the Table of Ranks.

Whereas nineteenth-century literature and journalism provided prosaic depictions of raznochintsy as upwardly mobile educated commoners with a range of individual attributes and moral qualities, in the second quarter of the century the development of a self-conscious opposition in education society produced positive images that implied a deliberate statement of values. At first, the raznochintsy appeared as participants in a liberal, socially mixed cultural milieu of progressive educated individuals; this image anticipated subsequent, or direct portrayals of the raznochinets as a symbol of correct thinking. [Elise Kimerling Wirtschafter. Structures of Society. Imperial Russia’s “People of Various Ranks.” DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1994, (145-146).]

“Meshchanstvo or Meshchane is defined as “a repository for unattached individuals, such as retired soldiers, vagrants, orphans, foundlings, and persons of illegitimate birth, regardless of whether they possessed sufficient capital or an appropriate occupation. [Elise Kimerling Wirtschafter. Social Identity in Imperial Russia. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1997 (132).]
both Russian capitals in 1830s-1840s was rather democratic, and can be seen from the following charts (Fig.11 and Fig 12).

Fig. 11. St.-Petersburg Population in 1834.

In 1834 the population of St.-Petersburg reached 403,555 inhabitants. There lived over 34,070 people of noble origin (the data is not exact, as a certain

* Both population charts (Fig. 11 and Fig. 12) are created using the numerical data from the History of Russian Drama Theatre, v. 3 (8).
number of senior military officers belonged to the upper strata as well; in this chart they were entered under the rubric ‘military’). This number amounted to only 8.44% of the whole population of the capital. The representatives of other estates, such as merchants (10.828), raznochintsy (55.366), and meshchane (36.576), made 25.5% of the whole population. In 1830s-1840s the latter group began to attend theatre performances more actively, what became one of the facts influencing the current theatre repertoire. The same tendency might be observed in Moscow.

Out of total the Moscow population in 1835 (335 782) gentry amounted to only 6.13%, while the lower social classes of meshchane (47160), merchants (16233), raznochintsy (19 637), fabric workers (2 518), and people of trades and
crafts (9 342) made up 28.26%. The process of democratization of the population in both capitals gradually changed the demographic structure of the theatre attendees. It is interesting to compare two observations made by V. Belinskii and N. Nekrasov in 1845. Belinskii described the Moscow theatre audience in terms of particles of every day clothes, which identified the social position of a person:

... тут увидите и модные фраки с желтыми перчатками, и удалые венгерки, и пальто, и старомодные шинели с воротниками, и бекеша, и медвежьи шубы, и шляпы, и картузы, и чуть не колпаки, и шляпки со страусовыми перьями, и шапочки на заячев меху, головы с платками парчевыми, шелковыми и ситцевыми.**24

N. Nekrasov was a good observer. Being influenced by the ideas of the Natural School in his writing, he paid a special attention to the lower social classes. In his description, he gave portraits of the social types filling in the upper gallery of the Aleksandrinskii theatre in St.-Petersburg:

Какое изумительное разнообразие, какая пестрая смесь! Воротник сторожа, борода безграмотного каменщика, красный нос дворового человека, зеленые глаза вашей кухарки, небритый подбородок вынанного из службы подьячего... хорошенькое личико магазинной девушки... рядом с ней физиономия отставного солдата...**25

*...you will see here a fashionable fracs with yellow gloves, and a bold dolman, and an overcoat, and old-fashioned greatcoats with collars, and winter overcoats, and bear fur coats, and hats, and caps, and nearly fool’s caps, and little hats with ostrich feathers, and bonnets on rabbit fur, and heads wearing shawls made of brocade, or silk, or cotton.

“... What an amazing diversity, what a multi-colored mixture! A collar of a watchman, a beard of an illiterate brick-layer, a red nose of a house servant, green eyes of your cook, an unshaved chin of a kicked out of his job scrivener... a pretty face of a girl from a shop... next to her a physiognomy of a retired soldier...”
As these two quotes indicate, the performances of Russian drama in The Malyi Theatre in Moscow and Aleksandrinskii theatre in St.-Petersburg were attended mainly by middle- or even low-class people. The highest nobility, as a rule, preferred opera, ballet, and the productions of the French troupe. Among the middle- and low-class audiences in 1830s-1840s, the favorite genres were melodrama and vaudeville.

Besides the traditional popularity of vaudeville as a light, funny comedy with music, singing, and dancing, there was a political reason for the enormous quantity of vaudevilles produced at this time on the Russian stage. In general, the theatre policy of the Nicholas I government might be the ancient and proved slogan “bread and circus.” Vaudeville took people’s attention from socially important matters and every night presented a light and enjoyable entertainment.

Theatre official R. M. Zotov (who himself wrote a number of vaudevilles) tenderly exhorted his readers on the pages of the reactionary *Northern Bee*:

К чему нам в театре плакать и терзаться, когда и настоящая ежедневная наша жизнь глядит так угрюмо и неласково; чаще хмурится, чем улыбается; более печалит, чем радует! К чему смотреть вам на эти драмы с их волями, страданиями и неестественными криками, когда у вас есть такая прекрасная вещь – водевиль.”  

* Why should we cry and suffer in theatre, when our real, everyday life looks so morose and unfriendly; it is more often gloomy rather than smiling; more often makes us sad, rather than joyful! Why should you watch these dramas with their screams, sufferings, and unnatural shouts, when you have such a beautiful thing as vaudeville.
Yearly, there were hundreds of "such beautiful things," rubbishy vaudevilles, staged at the Russian theatre. The list of all the plays staged in St-Petersburg and in Moscow Malyi Theatre month by month in the first half of the nineteenth century (unfortunately, some of them without genre definition) gave the opportunity of transferring this datum into two graphic forms (Fig. 13 and Fig. 14) for more ocular demonstration of the proportion of vaudeville in the theatre repertoire of both Russian capitals.

![Fig. 13. Vaudeville in the Repertoire of the St.-Petersburg Theatres in the First Half of the Nineteenth century.](image)

From the chart above (Fig. 13) the tendency of popularity and growth of the quantity of the produced vaudevilles in the Russian capital is quite clear. The same situation was evident in Moscow.
Moreover, starting from the 1830s, vaudeville became the domineering genre in all Russian theatres. The majority of these plays were remakes of French second or third rate comedies and vaudevilles. Original vaudevilles often followed the well-trodden French road and were the same “one-day-in-the-life” pieces, the content of which nobody could remember next morning. Such vaudevilles presented banal situations. The characters seemed to roam from one play into
another without any changes: jealous husbands, coquettish and light-minded wives, brave hussars, good-natured uncles, old maidens with unbearable character, half-wit provincials, etc. The plot usually was based on the notorious *quid pro quo*: a lackey was taken for his master; a jealous husband mistakenly got to know about supposed amorous affairs of his wife, who was innocent; a respected head of a family mistakenly goes to the wrong apartment and places himself into an ambiguous situation, and the like.

Such vaudevilles were criticized severely by progressive writers, but... the theatre benefice system forced actors to beg the authors for “something new” that could bring an easy success. Theatres did not spend anything on such productions and could always take the “failed” vaudeville off the repertoire. Of course, when the favorites of the public were performing in a vaudeville, theatre fans were present to express their support, admiration, and delight; and to be sure that the others in the audience saw it. As A. Pushkin put it in *Eugene Onegin*:

Где каждый, критикой дыша,  
Готов охлопать entrechat,  
Обшикать Федру, Клеопатру,  
Моину вызвать для того,  
Чтоб только слышали его. *29

One of the most harsh critics of vaudeville was Nikolai Gogol:

It’s been five years now that melodrama and vaudeville have dominated the theatres all over the world. What apishness! ... If only this

__________________________

*Where everybody, breathing criticism, / is ready to applaud an entrechat,  
/ hiss Phaedra, Cleopatra, / call out Moëna – for the purpose / merely of being heard. (Transl. by V. Nabokov.)*
pestilence had spread at the mighty bidding of a genius! When all the world was in tune with Byron’s lyre, there was nothing funny about it; there was even something affecting in that aspiration. But Dumas, Ducange and their lot have become universal legislators!.. I swear the nineteenth century will be ashamed of itself for these five years.  

Vissarion Belinskii also criticized vaudeville, emphasizing its ideological emptiness and artistic penury:

First, mainly they are remakes of French vaudevilles, therefore, their couplets, witticisms, funny situations, exposition and denouement - everything is ready, just take and use. So, what comes out of it? This lightness, naturalness, vividness, which carried you away and amused your imagination in a French vaudeville, this sharpness, this sweet foolishness, this coquetry of a talent, this game of a wit, these faces of fantasy, in one word, all this disappears in a Russian copy; only heaviness, awkwardness, unnaturalness, tension, two-three calembours, two-three evasions remain and nothing else. Let us not be strict to our vaudevillists, let us not demand from them a particular vividness and a great sense of humor; but can we not demand from them naturalness and common sense? A common sense is an especially necessary thing: without it vaudeville cannot do as well as drama or comedy.

However, Belinskii did not reject vaudeville as a genre. He considered that it related to high drama the way

epigram relates to satire; it does not laugh furiously at life, but makes faces to it; does not castigate life, but grimaces to it; finally, it is no less no more but an impromptu on a certain case from everyday life... Our Russian life can deliver for a talented writer an inexhaustible pit of materials for a folk vaudeville and, I say, only for a vaudeville, and for nothing else.

Russian life was rich in situations worthy of vaudeville and many vaudevillists used these situations to create interesting and good quality plays. Summarizing all the particular features of this period (political, economical,
demographic, cultural), it is possible to come to a such a conclusion. In 1830s-1840s, the period in the history of Russian vaudeville called democratic-raznochinnyi, democratic writers, belonging to raznochintsy, began to use the genre of vaudeville to speak about the everyday life. Under the cruel censorship of Nicholas I, vaudeville became the only outlet for satire in Russian theatre. Of course, it could not be compared with the satirical power of the comedies by Gogol or, later, with the comedies by Sukhovo-Kobylin, but it certainly “made faces” to some ugly facets of Russian reality. Among the best vaudevillists of this period were Dmitrii Timofeevich Lenskii (1805-1860), Fedor Alekseevich Koni (1809-1879), Petr Andreevich Karatygin (1805-1879), Petr Ivanovich Grigoriev (1806-1871), and Nikolai Nekrasov (1821-1878).

Characterizing this phase of the development of Russian vaudeville in general, several features made it [vaudeville] different not only from French (which, correspondingly, made it more Russian) but also from the Russian vaudeville of 1810s-1820s. There were several distinctions between this group of the democratic-raznochinnyi period of Russian vaudeville and the playwrights of the aristocratic period (A. Shakhovskoi, N. Khmelnitskii, and A. Pisarev):

1. The vaudeville playwrights of 1830s-40s did not belong to the upper strata of the Russian society.

2. Far from being radicals, nevertheless, they brought onto the Russian stage democratic tendencies in depicting everyday life of Russian society. Themes of bribery, bureaucracy, sponging, and disrespect to a person often became a part
of the plot and were not simply "touched" upon in a couplet. The place of action began to move from conventional castles, drawing rooms, and salons into the city’s streets, cheap apartments, or working places and became more realistic.

3. New playwrights—vaudevillists were not dilettantes in both literature and theatre, but professionals: actors, journalists, theatre officers.

4. They brought into vaudeville new types of characters, which did not exist in the vaudeville of the 1810s-1820s representing common men, including insignificant clerks, journalists, actors, willful merchants, and the like. Authoritative officials of a high rank or noble gentry were usually portrayed ironically.

5. Besides D. Lenskii, who was called “the magician of a couplet,” they were not strong in writing poetry. This led to a structural change in a vaudeville: the specific gravity of a couplet in a vaudeville became lesser and, as a result, the characterization of dramatis personae together with the satirizing the personal or social flaws began to be expressed more through the dialogue and dramatic action rather than through a statement-like couplet.

6. The diminishing of the role of music in the later vaudeville of 1830s-40s, saturation a play with socially important themes, and the tendency of the vaudeville playwrights to present a realistic slice-of-life in their plays, finally, generated this genre into the comedies of A. Ostrovskii, A. Sukhovo-Kobylin, and M. Saltykov-Shchedrin. These distinctions will be analyzed in the following chapters on the examples of the best vaudevilles of the authors-raznochintsy: Fedor Koni, Nikolai Nekrasov, and Petr Karatygin.
Endnotes to Chapter 6


6. Encarta Encyclopedia on line encarta.msn.com/find/Concise.asp?ti=06C6B000


10. Ibid., 290.


15. Ibid.


17. Griboedov, A. S.


20. Ibid., 240-241.


25. Н. А. Некрасов. Полное собрание сочинений и писем в 12 томах, т. 5. М 1948 (509) [Nekrasov, N. A. “Complete Works and Letters in 12 volumes, v. 5. Moscow, 1948 (509).]


32. Ibid., (137-138).

The general characteristics of the democratic-raznochinnyi period in the history of Russian vaudeville find their practical embodiment in The Petersburg Apartments by Fedor Koni. Koni was the most socially oriented and satirically minded author of the period. He came to this type of vaudeville gradually but it was the type which brought him fame and distinguished him greatly from other vaudevillists. His The Petersburg Apartments socially and satirically is the most strong vaudeville and probably is the best representative of the peculiarities and tendencies of the democratic-raznochinnyi period in the history of Russian vaudeville.

F. Koni and His The Petersburg Apartments

Fedor Alekseevich Koni (1809-1879) was considered one of the most educated people of his time in Russia. He was born to a rich merchant family. As a child he spoke five languages. From 1827 to 1833 he studied at Moscow University (Department of Philosophy and Department of Medicine).

After graduating, he taught history at the 1st Moscow Cadet Military Corps. After moving to St.-Petersburg, he continued to teach; his lectures were published in 1839 as a text-book for military educational institutions and was translated into three foreign languages. His connections with theatre started in 1829 when he translated the melodrama The Death of Calas by Victor Ducange. Over the next

---

*M. Victor Ducange, un mélodrame intitulé Calas (théâtre de l’Ambigu-Comique, 1820).*
five years he adapted six French and wrote five original vaudevilles. During his lifetime, Koni wrote about thirty plays and numerous articles on theatre history, problems of acting, and theory of drama. As N. V. Koroleva in her Theatre Criticism in 1840-1850 says,

Fedor Koni during more than fifty years was a theatre attendant of all the shows, first in Moscow, and then, starting from 1836, in Petersburg; during the thirty years of his life (with some short breaks) he wrote about almost all productions he had seen, about actors and plays.²

At different times, Koni edited The Literary Gazette and Pantheon of Russian and All European Theatres. He was a person of all-round education and entered Russian literature as a translator, theatre historian, journalist, publisher, and playwright. Vaudeville was the genre which brought Fedor Koni fame and popularity. Some of the early Koni’s vaudevilles were weak and did not differ much from the ordinary bagatelles which enthralled Russian stage in the 1830s and 1840s. They presented a certain anecdote adjusted to the demands of the genre: The Bridegroom by Proxy, Devils Dwell in a Calm Pool, The Deceased Husband, The Husband in a Chimney, Titular Councilors at Home, Don’t Fall in Love Insanely, The Husband of All Wives, The Girl-Hussar. Though these plays were rather entertaining, another type of Koni’s vaudevilles brought him popularity and love of a democratic spectator. This type was characterized by a very strong social direction and satirical coloration.

The features of a socially meaningful vaudeville were developed gradually in Koni’s writing. Even in his trifling anecdotal vaudevilles of 1830s, one can find satirical couplets or lines. In the vaudeville Titular Councilors at Home, there were
couplets about the Russian landowners, who, trying to copy the Western way of managing their estates, in fact, ruined their holdings because of their own ignorance. A servant sings about his master:

He undertook a lot of miracles in his villages: sawed tobacco in his fields and felled the woods to make charcoal of it. Not sparing himself, his sweat and blood, he refines sugar from carrots and brews vodka from buckwheat. ³

During the performance, the upper gallery of a theatre, inhabited by the poorest audience members, greeted enthusiastically the lines of one of the characters, a serf servant, about his owner, “my master can fight very well,” ‘reading’ it as “my master beats me up cruelly,” or when he openly called his master “drunkard” and “cutthroat.” The majority of those in the upper gallery knew from their own experience the hard life of an enslaved man. Serfdom remained one of the biggest problems in Russia.

In time, social problems began to attract Koni more and more. In 1833 he wrote Prince with a Toupee, a Cataract, and a Hump. The sujet of this vaudeville was cast on a French folk fairy tale, known to the Russian reader in narration by Charles Perrault (1628-1703) Riquet à la Houppe.

Koni chose the place of the action an imagined Green Island. The reason for that was not in a custom of many vaudevillists to use some distant exotic place as a place of action for their vaudevilles to make the performance more spectacular or to justify the authors’ unrestrained flights of fantasy (like Shakhovskoi or Khmelnitskii did). Koni was going to speak about Russia and the problems of Russian life.
The vaudeville was composed as a féerie in two parts. The first part took place on the Green Island, where the undistinguished, vainglorious, and petty tyrant Governor was ruling; the second part took spectators into the magic castle of fairy Karabossa. The whole show was overloaded with scenic effects, with the help of which Koni: "endeavored to circumvent the censorship and criticize those aspects of the autocratic police system which people most abhorred."4

The couplets of the Governor, the ruler of the Green Island, resembled the policy of Nicholas I very much. Here is an example of the governor's elocution in Boris Brasol's translation:

Nothing critics know but cursing!  
Lock them up with insane!  
Let them there keep on rehearsing –  
This is wisdom true and plain.  
To maintain both peace and order  
All the students should be placed  
In the care of a strict warder –  
This is wisdom pure and chaste!  
No oppression or vexation!  
Revenues are to be raised 
Through additional taxation 
Of the sot by liquor crazed. 
Vengeance now will freely flutter, 
But my spies will put a curb 
On whoever dares to utter 
Words that public peace disturb.  
And all folks, with great elation, 
Will exclaim: Here's freedom's age!  
Let them dream of liberation:  
We shall keep in store our rage.5

Koni could not deceive the censors by the vaudeville's exotic "disguise." The seditious couplets (as well as some "inappropriate" lines) were cut out, and the play was published in an abridged form.
In such a cut-down form it was also allowed for performance; it was produced in both capitals and was a success.

In the vaudeville *The Passion to Write, or What a Rascal* (1836), Koni was mocking *melodrama*, which had invaded Russian stage at that time. The vaudeville was written as a satirical parody on plays where heart-rendering melodramatic effects substituted for content. Two central characters, the brother and sister Tragivral*, decide to write a tragedy. Mr. Tragivral explained to his sister (and at the same time, to the spectators) what new Russian drama needed:

In a new drama, there should be horrors, deaths, murders, fires, floods, and a doomsday! In order to make it more than the eyes can take! In order to shake the soul out of the body! In order to stand the public's hair on end! In one word, like it was in my last drama. What a chef d'œuvre! What a success! And what a butchery! In the first act there were murders! In the second -- executioner was putting them to death! In the third – somebody was broken on the wheel, and in the fifth the weeping of the dead was heard.6

Koni's own views on drama developed over time and in the 1840s, he wrote that the only real conflict in drama might occur, when individual's passions come to a contradiction with the established conditions or ideas of the society. He emphasized the necessary, in his opinion, social character of drama.

Applying his theoretical thoughts to contemporary Russian drama, he had to recognize that social life in Russia depended very much on the "administrative life" which meant that real drama was not possible in Russia. Koni understood the

---

* Tragivral > *tragi-* (tragedy, tragical) + *vral* (a liar). The first name of the sister is Aspasia, an ironic reference to an ancient Greek hetaera Aspasia (V century B.C.), one of the most educated women of her time, afterwards the wife of Pericles (495-429 B.C.). Here is another mockery of F. Koni.
“administrative life” as a complex of governmental socio-political limitations and frames which regulated the everyday being of Russian and which were allowed to cross neither in real life, nor in literature or theatre. From here, Koni came to the conclusion that the only opportunity to touch the real life problems in drama/theatre was not through tragedy (which had died), not through drama proper (which was not possible in Russia because of the censorship restrictions), but through comedy. With the help of laughter, the playwright would be able to pull through all the obstacles the most critically sharp idea.

To support this consideration, Koni used the examples of the two great Russian comedies by A. Griboedov and N. Gogol:

Оттого хорошие комедии наши очень похожи на драмы: они заставляют смеяться, но это смех судорожный, и, посмотрев их, выходишь из театра с сжатым сердцем. Такое чувство, верно, испытал всякий, кто поглубже вник в смешную сторону “Горя от ума” и “Ревизора”.  

Fedor Koni confirmed his theoretical considerations by his practice as a playwright. In 1840 he wrote *The Petersburg Apartments*, the vaudeville which is considered by all theatre historians the best among everything he wrote for the stage (See Varneke, Brudnyi, Slonim, Paushkin, and others).

Indeed, *The Petersburg Apartments* differs very much from other vaudevilles written and produced at that time. First of all, the structure of this vaudeville presents not a traditional one or, rarer, two act play; it consists of five

__________________________

* That is why our good comedies look so much like dramas: they make you to laugh, but it is a spasmodic laughter, and after seeing them, you come out of a theatre with your heart sank. Probably, everyone experienced such a feeling, who went deeper into a comical side of the *Woe from Wit* and *The Inspector General*.  

204
unfolded scenes, which the author named ‘apartments’ (apartment one, apartment two, etc.); the action of the play, conditioned by the sujet, where two characters are looking for a new apartment, moves from one apartment into another. The last segment includes two scenes: apartment five and apartment one, i.e., bringing the action back, where the story started, and concluding the ring-like movement of the plot. In short, the vaudeville presents five one-act plays.

Second, as it is known, the set design for the majority of vaudevilles was very conventional: a drawing room, a room in a Gothic style, a flower garden outside the house, etc. In The Petersburg Apartments, the stage directions describing the set of each apartment present characteristics of the owner and his social status; they give the reader/spectator the idea of his everyday life, habits, and hobbies and likings, i.e., serve as means of characterization. Apartment One of an Important Official is the neat room of Afanasii Gavrilovich Shchekotkin, a clerk and a family man, who has just been promoted in his service to the position of the head of the Department. There are a piano, a mirror, a wardrobe, a card-table, a coach, and a lace-frame in the room. There are gypseous figurines of Maria Taglioni and Fanny Elssler on the wardrobe. Apartment Two of a Singer in a Pea Street belongs to French opera singer Mlle. Dugibie. Koni describes it as “a kind of a drawing room.” This little “kind of” has the meaning of something as temporary, unsettled, as the position of a foreign singer itself. There is a cheval-glass and expensive furniture; in the wall there is a wardrobe. In Apartment Three

* Maria Taglioni (1804-1884) performed in Russia in 1837-1842. Fanny Elssler (1810-1884) made her appearance in St.-Petersburg in 1848-1849.
Koni depicts only one object: a huge dining table; the waiters are busy around it, decorating it and arranging wine bottles and vases with fruits. *Apartment Four of a Journalist on the Goat Swamp* presents journalist Zadarin’s study which contains book-cases and book shelves, globes, maps, and pictures. There is a big desk in the middle, piled up with magazines and newspapers; a voltairean arm-chair. The style of living of a young man Kutilin, the owner of *Apartment Five of a Scapegrace in Kolomna* comes from the description:

> the room is luxurious, but in the greatest disorder. There is a wash-hand-stand on the desk. The guitar is dropped on the floor. Papers, books, and music sheets lay scattered all over the room. In the different corners of the room smoking pipes are seen. An unsealed tobacco bag is on one of the chairs. On the back of the other chair a tail-coat is hanging. A mirror and plenty of brushes, phials with perfume, little glass jars with pomade, and the like are on the chest of drawers.

The importance of these more or less detailed descriptions is in the fact, that Koni suggests social identification of a character through the place of action.

Third, and, probably, the most important difference between Koni’s *The Petersburg Apartments* and a traditional vaudeville is in the fact that, though the couplets of the Koni’s vaudeville still fulfil their traditional satirical role, the satire is largely expressed not only through the couplets but also through the dialog and actions of the characters. It has moved from one of the components of the play (couplet) into the whole (play itself). It is understandable that, under such conditions, satire could not remain abstract, or general, aiming some universal

---

*Econom* - a Russian word for a house-keeper or manager in both State service or in private household; one of the duties of econom is to watch the correctness of everything spent: money, goods, products.
human flaws. As a part of a sujet, it became very concrete, definite, and exact. In this respect, Koni’s vaudeville appeared as a connecting link between the satirical comedies of Griboedov and Gogol and the comedies of Sukhovo-Kobylin and Ostrovskii.

Satirical overtones of *The Petersburg Apartments* become increasingly obvious with the development of the plot. In the opening scene of *Apartment One* a clerk, Afanasii Gavrilovich Shchekotkin informs his wife and daughter that he has been promoted to the position of the Head of the Department. It means a great improvement for their household: increased salary, plus dining money, free apartment rent, free firewood, free candles (“and not the tallow ones, but stearin candles”), and some other petty income. In the conversation, Shchekotkin reveals that the reason for such a sudden change is in the fact that he “presented” his boss’ wife with a carriage (“and what a beautiful sight! Satin upholstery! Mirrored window glasses!”), i.e., simply bribed his boss.

The family begins to dream about their upcoming luxurious life, the receptions and balls they would give, and about the attention and respect they would receive from their neighbors. They plan and argue about buying new furniture, grand piano, carpets, and what not, and, finally, decide that they have to have a new apartment, more appropriate to their new social status. Their acquaintance Petr Petrovich Prisypochka, a commissioner, promises to satisfy all their needs (“and very cheaply”) for new furniture, fashionable window curtains, and so on.

* The stearin candles do not produce as much soot as the tallow candles do.
and a new apartment. Only Lizanka is not exactly happy to hear that they are going to move out. She is interested in a certain young man who lives in the opposite house across the road and who recently began to stroll by her window expressing his interest in her. As soon as Prisypochka and Lizanka’s parents leave, she looks out of the window; her secret admirer throws to her a message with a poem explaining his feelings to her (a funny parody on salon amorous poetry).

The owner of Apartment Two, French opera singer Mlle. Dugibie, is planning to move out because she is going to marry an Englishman, Sir Johndog. She understands that this marriage can improve her both financial and social status. But at the same time she worries about her admirer Vanichka Kutilin:

...it seems, I loved him, in spite of his empty-headedness... But what’s to be done, it’s a necessity! But he’ll get consoled pretty soon. Only I have to announce to him everything today: my Lord Johndog is jealous as an anglicized Turk and if he’ll catch Vanichka here I’ll be in trouble!9

Prisypochka comes asking Mlle. Dugibie’s content to pose for a portrait, which one of his friends is going to draw and which, Prisypochka promises, will be published in one of the magazines. On seeing Mlle. Dugibie’s preparations for leaving, he promises to help her to sell her furniture.

Distressed Ivan Ivanych (Vanichka) Kutilin comes and informs Mlle. Dugibie that his parents have decided to get him married and today the parents of the bride have arranged a special dinner to make the deal. Vanichka is in despair because the bride is young, beautiful and has a large dowry. He feels relieved when Mlle. Dugibie says to him that he can not to miss this chance. In her turn, Mlle. Dugibie
tells Vanichka that she is going to get married also, and this makes Vanichka mad. He promises to kill Sir Johndog. The doorbell rings, and Vanichka has to hide himself in a wardrobe. The new visitor is the theatre director who wants Mlle. Dugibie to perform tonight. She refuses, explaining to the director that she is ill. The real reason, however, is in that she plans to go to the summer house with Sir Johndog. As soon as the director leaves, an almost most suffocated Vanichka has to get into the wardrobe again because somebody else has come. This time it is the Shchekotkin couple who, according to the ad placed by Mlle. Dugibie about leasing her apartment, have come to have a look at it.

Mlle. Dugibie leaves the couple alone to inspect the apartment. Afanasii Shchekotkin accidentally discovers the hidden Vanichka and, preventing his wife from seeing him (male solidarity!), locks the wardrobe, absentmindedly puts the key into his pocket, and after a while leaves together with his wife (politely saying while passing the wardrobe: “Goodbye, sir, sorry for bothering you.”\textsuperscript{10}). The scene ends with the animated conversation between Mlle. Dugibie and Kutilin in the wardrobe; the maid Fedosia is sent to find Shchekotkin and get the key back; and the Englishman, Mlle. Dugibie’s fiancee, appears one instant before the curtain (Mlle. Dubigie nevertheless manages to nest herself on a coach in a picturesque pose).

The events taking place in \textit{Apartment Three} add more mess to the whole story. It is the apartment of Foma Fomich Pokhlebov and his family. A huge table is laid for the dinner to celebrate Pokhlebov’s daughter Annette’s engagement. Prisypochka is here, of course, observing and managing the hired waiters:
Prisypochka: What is that?
Waiter: Fruits and candies.
Prisypochka: Put some of it into the box for me. ... And what is this? Wine?
Way too much. Put aside two bottles of each for me and three bottles of champaign also. Send everything to my apartment.\textsuperscript{11}

The parents thank Prisypochka for the nicely arranged table and hope that their future rich (as they think) son-in-law will be pleased with it. Guests arrive but the celebration cannot start because the bridegroom has not come yet. Finally, the doorbell rings causing an extreme animation of everybody: the bridegroom has arrived. Disappointingly for all present, the Shchekotkin couple comes to have a look at the apartment (because the Pokhlebov family is planning to move out to a better place after Annette’s wedding). With the help of Prisypochka, the vexing visit turns into a pleasant acquaintance and Shchekotkins are invited to share the celebration.

But the pleasant acquaintance turns sour when Fedosia, a middle-aged plain Russian woman, the maid of Mlle. Dubigie, enters the room demanding the wardrobe key, which she claims Shchekotkin stole from her mistress:

Fedosia. Who would believe you: ‘by an accident,’ ‘absentmindedly.’ Even \textit{The Police Gazette} has written about you: a man and a woman go from an apartment to an apartment, pretending that they are looking for a place to rent, and steal everything that isn’t nailed down.\textsuperscript{12}

To dispel everybody’s suspicions, Shchekotkin retells everything that has happened to him in the apartment of Mlle. Dubigie. All the guests calm down and begin to talk about the moral principles of young people nowadays. The doorbell rings once more and the long-expected bridegroom, who is none other than Vanichka Kutilin, enters the room and apologizes for being late:
Kutilin. Mille pardons, Messieurs et Mesdames, that I am late a little. Quite an unexpected circumstance.

Shchekotkin. Ah, my dear! This is you!.. I am to blame, my dear; God knows, I did not know that it was you in the wardrobe; I wouldn’t dare. As for the key, I took it accidentally... I guess, you cursed me up hill and down dale. But how did you manage not to get suffocated in that wardrobe?13

Everybody is shocked and a scandal starts right away. The immoral bridegroom runs away; Annete is advised to faint.

Annette. Ah! How’s terrible! What a shame!
Ustinia. Faint, darling! Here’s a chair for you. Faint away! The rules demand it. (Annette faints away.) Cry out: Ah!
Annette. Ah!.14

The Shchekotkins are shown out. Prisypochka is accused in all the wrongdoings and asked to leave. Father, at last, orders the waiters to bring vodka not to celebrate, but to dull his suffering.

In *Apartment Four* a journalist, Abdul Fadeich Zadarin, lives. The scene starts with Zadarin writing an article for a newspaper, reading the letters, and reflecting aloud on different subjects. Through a chain of monologues, Koni presents a portrait of an unprincipled and mercenary scribbler.

This characteristic becomes even more sharp in the following scenes. Prisypochka comes and brings Zadarin toys for his children and a ‘small gift’ for the journalist himself: a collection of gold coins. By the way, Prisypochka tells Zadarin, that he published a new book which needs to be praised in his newspaper. Zadarin promises to do so. Later, Prisypochka brings Kutilin to the Zadarin’s apartment and introduces the young man as a very promising writer, who would write for Zadarin’s newspaper for free. Zadarin is glad to hear that; he
expresses his assurance in the talents of Kutilin and to prove it sends the article, written by Kutilin, to the newspaper without even reading it. Shchekotkin and his wife, having seen an ad on the gates about an apartment for rent, come to the Zadarin’s apartment and meet Prisypochka and Kutilin. Kutilin is angry with Shchekotkin for unveiling his wardrobe adventure and ruining his engagement. Zadarin finds the story very interesting. When he gets to know the name of a singer (a half-wit Shchekotkin cannot keep his tongue behind his teeth, in spite of Prisypochka’s warning), he becomes really glad:

Zadarin. Mlle. Dugibie! Oh, I know her. *(Rubbing his hands.)* Aha! I’ve got her! I’ll nail her! I’ll nail her! *(To Kutilin.)* Thank you, my dear! I am obliged to you very much... I’ll publish the whole story!

Kutilin. No! You cannot do it! I won’t let you; you want to make dirty the honor of a noble actress...

Zadarin. Phoo-phoo-phoo! You really become boiling. I always scolded her in my magazine, and now I’ll have some fun. By the way, you should write in the same manner, when you’ll become my staff writer.

Kutilin. No, sir, I do not trade my opinion: whatever I’ve said today, I will say always.

Zadarin. And what have you said today?

Kutilin. I have said that she is an excellent actress, that she is an angel of kindness, that she is our best singer, and that... that whoever criticized her, did it out of the lowest types of cupidity.

Zadarin. And where have you said that?

Kutilin. In the article, which I gave you.15

It is too late to take the article back from the printing-house; besides, Zadarin has nothing to substitute for it. Understanding that he set himself up and knowing whom could he vent his fury on, an angry Zadarin accuses Prisypochka in recommending Kutilin as a good writer. After a while all three of them - Zadarin, Prisypochka, and Kutilin - fall upon Shchekotkin accusing him of sticking his nose
in other people’s business. Shchekotkin deems it best to retire, explaining to his wife that this apartment is too hot for them. Kutilin leaves promising to shoot Zadarin if he describes the wardrobe adventure. Prisypochka asks Zadarin to forgive him, kisses Zadarin’s elbow, and invites Zadarin to his place to taste liqueurs, crémant, and peaches. Zadarin is ready to go, but first decides to write to the police that Kutilin wants to shoot him.

Sad Kutilin in his apartment (*Apartment Five*) is thinking about all the misfortunes of the day: he broke up with Mlle. Dugibie and he did not marry rich Annette. But Kutilin cannot stay long in such a mood; his thoughts turn to a pretty girl, who lives in the opposite house across the street. He opens the window and, on seeing the girl, begins to talk to her. When he learns that her parents are not at home, he decides to visit the girl. At this moment the unlucky seekers for a new apartment, husband and a wife Shchekotkins come. Kutilin, having intended to marry Annette, placed an ad on the gates about an apartment for rent. Kutilin explains that he has urgent business to take care of and goes away, asking the couple to leave the key at the house care-taker’s after the couple examines the apartment. While Kutilin is absent, the Shchekotkins begin to dream about their daughter Lizanka marrying Kutilin; they still think about Kutilin as of a rich man. Mlle. Dugibie comes to say her last farewell to Kutilin and, not finding him at home, asks Shchekotkin to give Kutilin her portrait and leaves. Immediately after, a police officer comes. He takes Shchekotkin for Kutilin and says that he has an order to bring him to the police head-quarters. Jealous Shchekotkin’s wife thinks however that her husband is carried away with the actress and has left together with her.
Right in time Prisypochka comes and agrees to accompany Shchekotkin’s wife to catch her husband red-handed at the actress’ apartment.

Meanwhile, Kutilin reveals his love to Lizanka, stands on his knees in front of her, promising not to move until Lizanka confesses that she loves him also. Lizanka’s father, Shchekotkin comes in and, a little later, his wife and Prisypochka. After a very funny scene of a general misunderstanding and confusion, the status quo is restored, Lizanka and Kutilin are going to get married, and the Shchekotkins are happy that they do not have to move to another apartment and that Lizanka will live close to them, just across the street. Prisypochka suggests to bring champagne, which he “saved” from Annette’s failed engagement party, but the rest decide to go to the theatre, where a new vaudeville *The Petersburg Apartments* is performed with the young and talented Samoilov in the leading role. Traditionally, the play ends with final couplets where Shchekotkin asks the spectators not to wander from place to place if they want to find an apartment. Instead, they should come to the theatre where: “...we’ll show you all the apartments. We’ll arrange everything and present them in the most beautiful way because our task as the hosts is to please you. And if you will like our apartments, let us get our deposit.”

The democratic audiences certainly liked the “apartments” created by Koni because of the satirical character of the whole story. But the satire on the

---

* V. V. Samoilov (1813-1887) a brilliant Petersburg actor, master of transformation, played the role of Prisypochka on the opening night of Koni’s *The Petersburg Apartments* on September 3, 1840.
contemporary society sounded even stronger in Koni’s characterization of the

dramatis personae. In this vaudeville, Fedor Koni created the whole satirical
gallery of characters who were recognizable, taken from real life, and had
unmistakenly Russian characters. Through their monologues, dialogues, and,
more importantly, actions, the everyday life of the Russian society was revealed
with all its customs, habits, relations, and conditions.

An insignificant clerk Shchekotkin is promoted to the position of the head of
the department only because he bribed his boss. His and his wife’s dreams about
the upcoming changes in their life are full of the author’s mockery at the
Shchekotkins’ idea how important people live. The author’s satire is realized
through the lines of Shchekotkin, i.e., through self-characterization:

Shchekotkin. ... For those subordinates who visit me at home on business
matters I will need a silk robe. Obligatory, silk - it’s very important,
you know, negligée! My former boss used to wear a silk robe while
he was ripping me one side up and down the other. ... A new
apartment, it’s nothing, dear; the main thing is a silk robe.17

Petr Petrovich Prisypochka is a very busy man. He tries anything that can
bring money to him: he publishes books, arranges weddings and funerals, buys
and re-sells, and what not:

To crawl and to bow,
Or to plume myself and to boast -
I can do everything!
Look, and they begin to talk about me
As of an important man.
I do not care about that,
The only thing I want is
To add some hard cash
Into my pocket!
Everything, what is useful for me,
Is allowed,
Even a deceit!
This is my rule
And it got me my capital.\textsuperscript{18}

Foma Fomich Pokhlebov also does not hide the way he has made his fortune. Working for the State, he deals with wholesale contracts. According to him, his job is based on a thorough calculation: to short a buyer of flour only a half of pood\textsuperscript{*} per day makes one hundred eighty and one half poods of flour a year, or one hundred eighty three poods a leap-year. His philosophy is expressed in his couplets:

\begin{quote}
Let the control be strict nowadays,
But business does not go without a sin;
Let the grand total be correct,
And you’ll be considered an excellent econom.
I know this business in detail,
And I watch the interest of the State’s purse,
But give me a chicken to rear, -
I'll rear my cow at its expense.\textsuperscript{19}
\end{quote}

The most satirically killing portrait presented by Fedor Koni in his vaudeville is that of Abdul Fadeich Zadarin, a disgusting image of a venal journalist who changes his opinions and principles according to the payment he receives for his articles. His personal attitude to people is based on how much profit he can gain from them. When Zadarin asks his employee Semen Semiacchko to write a praising review of new a book, Semiacchko responds that the book is a pure charlatanism and swindling. Zadarin teaches Semiacchko:

\begin{quote}
Zadarin. Oh, you, young men! How fast all you are in your judgements.
It’s a nice book. I looked it through and found it content very good:
there were two really precious pages. Here’s one more page...
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{*}Pood - old Russian measure of weight (16.38 kg).
(Writes his resolution) To extol and to praise to the sky!  

Semiachko. Come on, it’s a vulgarity; the author lacks talent absolutely.  
Zadarin. ‘Lacks talent’! Much you understand. The author presented me a silver dining set!.. The other day he gave us a dinner in Pavlovsk; we all got drunk. You were not there, so you cannot appreciate all his gifts.

Zadarin actually robs people around him: he does not pay a tailor for ordered tail-coat and he does not pay merchants for delivered cigars, wine, sweets, fruits, and other goods. Instead, he promises all of them to write a laudatory article about their business in gratitude for their “service.”

The satirical portrait of Zadarin could remain as one in the chain of others created by Koni in his vaudeville if not for the fact that it was ‘painted’ from life. The portrait’s similarity with its ‘model’ was so exact that not only Koni’s friends, but his enemies (the friends of the “model”) had to recognize it. The prototype for the vaudeville’s character was Faddei Venedictovich Bulgarin, the publisher and editor of The Northern Bee. For the character in his vaudeville, Koni made up a name which almost directly pointed at a real journalist: Abdul Faddeievich (or in conversational form, Fadeich) Zadarin. Besides the rhyming endings of both last names, “Zadarin,” as it was often used in vaudevilles, had an additional meaning. The word “Zadarin” was formed from za-dar-in, where the root -dar- means a gift or a present; prefix za- used with the verb darit ‘(to present) indicates the action

Pavlovsk - one of the most beautiful little towns near St.-Petersburg, a gift of Catherine the Great to her son Alexander (the future Russian tsar Alexander I) in 1777; the architects Charles Cameron, Carlo Rossi, and Andrei Voronikhin contributed each in his time to the unique ensemble of palaces; a residence of tsar’s family.

“Powerful political pro-government newspaper.
of “loading with gifts.” It was a very transparent allusion to Bulgarin’s practice as a journalist of accepting gifts in exchange for positive articles in his newspaper. In his Nicholas I and Official Nationality in Russia, 1825-1855 Nicholas Riasanovsky pointed out that:

The journalist [Bulgarin] cheerfully accepted small bribes as well as a larger ones, considering a good dinner to be a proper inducement for a favorable review.22

Again, Fedor Koni did not have to imagine the character and his behavior; it was a portrait from life. The significance of satire is measured by the significance of its target. Faddei Bulgarin was worthy of Koni’s satire. No one, writing on politics, social life, culture or literature of the nineteenth century Russia, can escape at least mentioning the name of Faddei Venedictovich Bulgarin (1789 - 1859). Being of Polish origin, he entered Russian military school and, later, joined the Russian army in the campaigns against the French (1807) and the Swedes (1808). In 1811, after being forced to retire for his “bad behavior,” he morally sank, was even caught on stealing, and lived by begging.23 Finally, he went to Warsaw and joined the Polish legion of Napoleon’s army and fought on the side of Napoleon in Italy, Spain, and Russia (1812). After being captured and, later, granted amnesty by Alexander I, Bulgarin, following the principle ubi bene ubi patria, came to St-Petersburg to pursue a literary career. After several

---

* As Russian Internet historical site Hronos informs, Bulgarin was dismissed for his negligence: Great Count Konstantin (Nicholas’ brothwer) saw Bulgarin, when the latter’s was on duty, in a masquerade costume. The incident caused friction between Bulgarin and his commanders. (http://www.hronos.km.ru/biograf/bulgarin.html)
misfortunes, he decided to become a journalist and sided with N. Grech (1787-1867) in editing the newspaper The Northern Bee, the leading reactionary publication of the time and the proponent of the idea of “The Official nationality.” Starting from 1826, Bulgarin became a secret informer for the government and regularly informed against the Decembrists.

In the 1830s-1840s he wrote and published, besides numerous articles, novels and short stories, which were praised highly by his associate Grech. The relations between the two were immortalized in I. Krylov’s fable The Cuckoo and The Rooster (1834), where the birds were eulogizing each other’s singing voice. The moral of the fable said:

За что же, не боясь греха,
Кукушка хвалит Петуха?
За то, что хвалит он Кукушку."

In his The Petersburg Apartments, Koni, considering these facts, alluded to the connection of Zadarin with the chief of the police. This fact was particularly unbearable for the prototype, F. Bulgarin. Of course, sensors could not allow to scandalize Bulgarin. As a result, the fourth act of the vaudeville, Apartment Four of a Journalist was banned and the vaudeville was performed without it. It was a

---

* In contemporary Russia, with its constantly recapitulatory desire to re-write its own history after each political turn, there is a tendency to re-evaluate Bulgarin’s activity as an informer and a man of belle lettres. See articles by B. Vatsuro and A. Marchenko in the Russian literary magazine Novyi Mir (“New World”) № 7, 1999, on the recently published “Vidocq Figliarir. Letters and secret reports of F. Bulgarin to The Third Section” by A. I. Reitblatt, M., 1998.

" For what then, not being afraid to take a sin upon his soul, Cuckoo is singing Rooster praises?
For Rooster praises Cuckoo.
success and went for five nights in September (3, 6, 9, 16, 24), was repeated in October, November, and December of 1840 and in September and November 1841. In Moscow, *The Petersburg Apartments* was produced in November of 1840 and February of 1841.  

Concluding the analysis of this vaudeville, it is necessary to point out that besides the extreme satirical trend, there were other merits of Koni’s *The Petersburg Apartments*: the realistic depiction of the characters through the details of the environment, direct statements of characters, dialogues and interaction. It is quite understandable that such depictions made his vaudevilles very Russian. With its attention to a common man, the author’s knowledge of the described situations, and the exactness of the details of everyday life, this vaudeville can be justly referred to as a precursor of the style of the Natural School in Russian literature. But it is also necessary to state here that Koni’s attempts to give the traditional vaudeville form a new content was, in sense, testing this form for tensile strength. The vaudeville form resisted socially serious content because it lost its purpose as a genre: to entertain.

Socially important issues began to be the domineering themes in the works of writers and playwrights belonging to the Natural School. They brought the reader’s/spectator’s attention to insignificant people (often of the social lowest classes) and their life. There was no smarmy description of kind and loyal peasants or romantically exaggerated glorification of simple men in such works. It was the beginning of a powerful literary and art movement which was called critical realism and would lead to Ostrovskii, Sukhovo-Kobylin, Saltykov-Shchedrin,
and, later, Gorkii. Koni, together with his collaborator Nekrasov, were the first to link directly the ideas of the Natural School to vaudeville, which would pit them against their fellow vaudevillist P. Karatygin in a contest to determine the future development of Russian vaudeville as Official Nationality challenged the direct representation of narodnost’ on the Russian stage. The opposition of Nekrasov as a representative of the Natural school in Russian vaudeville to the “traditionalist” Karatygin will be discussed in the next chapter.

Endnotes to Chapter 7


5. Ibid.


9. Ibid., 253.
10. Ibid., 267.
11. Ibid., 269.
12. Ibid., 277.
13. Ibid., 280.
15. Ibid., 300.
16. Ibid., 314.
17. Ibid., 239-240.
18. Ibid., 243.
19. Ibid., 270.
CHAPTER 8. VAUDEVILLISTS OF THE DEMOCRATIC-RAZNOCHINNYI PERIOD: PART TWO.

The national peculiarities of Russian vaudeville were as obvious in the works of N. Nekrasov as in the best works of Koni. Nekrasov’s vaudevilles also had elements of social satire as Koni’s, but their main merits were in the author’s knowledge of life of the middle and lower strata of the Russian society. In this respect, his vaudevilles came close to the genre of the domestic comedy which later will be developed by Turgenev and Ostrovskii.

The knowledge of life of the lower social layers could not help bringing him to the followers of the Natural School in literature and it appearing in his play writing. But it should be said here that after The Petersburg Usurer, Nekrasov never turned to vaudeville writing again probably because of the inability of vaudeville as a genre to fulfill the socially meaningful tasks which Nekrasov considered important for himself as a writer. In this chapter the connection between the Natural School and vaudeville is explored on the example of Nekrasov’s The Petersburg Usurer and on the example of the raging antagonist of this movement P. Karatygin’s Bakery or The Petersburg German.

N. Nekrasov, the Follower of the Natural School, and His The Petersburg Usurer.

The term Natural School appeared on the pages of The Northern Bee as a despising definition of a new realistic trend in the Russian literature. In 1845 the almanac Physiology of Petersburg was published by Nikolai Nekrasov (1821-1878), followed by the almanac Petersburg Anthology (1846). Both compiled
works by Vissarion Belinskii, Dmitrii Grigorovich, Ivan Panaev, Vladimir Sollogub, Fedor Dostoevskii, Ivan Turgenev, Alexander Herzen, and others, and presented realistic short stories and sketches about common people and their everyday lives. During 1846-1847 Bulgarin and Grech attacked the new movement furiously. The reason for their rejection was conceptual: *The Northern Bee* claimed that some topics or themes could not be the subjects of literature and arts, as they were not worthy of the attention of a well-brought up person:

> Нынешняя так называемая новая литературная школа (уж подлинно школа!) мучит и терзает вас, заставляя читать скучные и вялые нелепицы для того только, чтобы описать или обрисовать словами какого-нибудь пьянюшку, гнусную бабу, жалкого писца, грязную комнату, т.е. так называемую натуру в действии, под именем физиологий, поэм (!!!???), фантазий и т.п."

The mentioned word *physiologies* became a new literary genre within the Natural School movement in Russia. It was not something extremely new. In Europe, mainly in England and France, it was developed during the nineteenth century by L.-S. Mercier (1740-1814), H. Balzac (1750-1850), C. Nodier (1780-1844), H. Monnier (1805-1877), W. M. Thackeray (1811-1863), C. Dickens (1812-1870), and many others. The sketches or sketch-like short stories, closely describing certain social types, often were called *physiologies*, that gave a name
to the literary genre.’ Quite understandably, such works were very national and differed from each other as much as different countries do.

A. G. Tseitlin, writing on this subject, argued that not just any short story or sketch written from life, “from nature,” could be considered a physiology: The peculiarity of a physiology, he maintained, was in the author’s endeavor not simply to describe the chosen phenomenon, but to study it, articulating it out of a variety of reality:

The ideas of the Natural School certainly influenced theatre. The vaudeville *The Petersburg Apartments* by Fedor Koni might be considered as a theatrical variant of a physiological sketch. Koni, as an established journalist and playwright, was a person who influenced young Nikolai Nekrasov, when the latter made his first steps towards a literary career in 1840. Nikolai Alekseevich Nekrasov (1821-1878), failed to enter the university but was allowed to attend classes as an auditor. Because his father refused to help him financially, Nekrasov experienced all the miseries of a homeless poor man from the very day of his arrival to

---

*E.g.: Physiologie de Bourgeois by Monnier (1841); Physiologie de l’homme marié by Paul de Kock, etc.

” Having got interested in a certain “type” of the Petersburg society, a certain street of the Russian capital, a certain profession or a branch of a “small industry,” physiologist had a goal to record the distinguishing features of this object within that complex the whole, to what the object belonged.
Petersburg in 1838. The first book of poetry written by Nekrasov (1840) was a
great disappointment for the young man: the poems were criticized cruelly but fairly
and did not bring him a penny. During those three years, 1838-1840, Nekrasov
sapped his health severely:

It was this constant starvation that finally brought on a serious illness,
diagnosed by doctors as complete exhaustion of the organism due to
malnutrition. Nekrasov, thought by many to be near death, eventually
recovered, but the traces of the disease remained in his system for the rest
of his life.3

Nekrasov, trying to support himself, took any temporary assignment at
different newspapers and magazines writing book reviews, articles, or children’s
primers. During this time, Nekrasov got acquainted with Fedor Koni. In 1840,
Koni, willing to help the young man, invited Nekrasov to write for his magazine The
Pantheon and for his The Literary Gazette. Nekrasov, along with his journalistic
duties, kept writing poetry and short stories. Certainly not without Koni’s influence,
Nekrasov, carried away with Petersburg theatre life, began to write vaudevilles. His
first vaudevilles did not differ much from the average vaudeville writing of that time:
Великодушный поступок (The Magnanimous Deed, 1840), Федя и Володя
(Fedia and Volodia*, 1840), Утро в редакции (Morning at the Editor’s Office,
1841), Шила в мешке не утаишь, девушку под замком не удержишь (Love
and a Cough cannot Be Hidden, April, 1841), Муж не в своей тарелке (An Out-of-
Sorts Husband, May, 1841). In 1841, Nekrasov wrote two vaudevilles which
brought him significant success: Актёр (An Actor, October, 1841) and Вот что

* Proper male names.
Mlle. Marie-Françoise Dumesnil, real name Marchand (1713-1813), was a prominent tragedienne of the Comédie Française. The manuscript text of The Petersburg Usurer was found by a Russian historian V. E. Evgeniev-Maksimov in the department of manuscripts of the Leningrad theatre library in 1921.

His mastery of the vaudeville genre was revealed with greater force in The Petersburg Usurer. It was written for the benefit performance of actress Maria Valberkhova (1788-1867) sometime in the middle of 1844. The exact date is not known, because the vaudeville was not published during the author’s lifetime and considered lost. The approximate date of the vaudeville’s creating came from its scheduled performance on November 14, 1844. However, the performance did not take place because the theatre censors kept the play and Valberkhova had to pick up a vaudeville by another author for her bénéfice night. The censor’s report on the vaudeville came to the censoring committee on December 7, 1844:

The Usurer. Vaudeville in one act. For the St. Petersburg Imperial theatre. The play describes different tricks of an usurer; hence it’s rather dirty. However, it does not include anything reprehensible.

Finally, the vaudeville was allowed performance on July 1, 1845, for the benefit of the actor Grigoriev II. The censor cut all satirical attacks on bureaucracy, the expressions which characterized the usurer as a cruel man, all mentions of God, and all lines that were frivolous in the censor’s opinion. The couplets of the main character, the usurer, (“I was about four years old”) revealing his life

\[\text{значит влюбиться в актрису (That’s What It Means to Fall in Love with an Actress, November 1841). The latter presented an anecdotical story from the life of the prominent French tragedienne Marie-Françoise Dumesnil (1713-1803).}^{\text{1}}\]

\[\text{His mastery of the vaudeville genre was revealed with greater force in The Petersburg Usurer. It was written for the benefit performance of actress Maria Valberkhova (1788-1867) sometime in the middle of 1844. The exact date is not known, because the vaudeville was not published during the author’s lifetime and considered lost}^{\text{2}}\text{. The approximate date of the vaudeville’s creating came from its scheduled performance on November 14, 1844. However, the performance did not take place because the theatre censors kept the play and Valberkhova had to pick up a vaudeville by another author for her bénéfice night. The censor’s report on the vaudeville came to the censoring committee on December 7, 1844:}\]

\[\text{The Usurer. Vaudeville in one act. For the St. Petersburg Imperial theatre. The play describes different tricks of an usurer; hence it’s rather dirty. However, it does not include anything reprehensible.}^{\text{4}}\]

\[\text{Finally, the vaudeville was allowed performance on July 1, 1845, for the benefit of the actor Grigoriev II. The censor cut all satirical attacks on bureaucracy, the expressions which characterized the usurer as a cruel man, all mentions of God, and all lines that were frivolous in the censor’s opinion. The couplets of the main character, the usurer, (“I was about four years old”) revealing his life}\]

\[\text{\' Mlle. Marie-Françoise Dumesnil, real name Marchand (1713-1813), was a prominent tragedienne of the Comédie Française.}\]

\[\text{\' The manuscript text of The Petersburg Usurer was found by a Russian historian V. E. Evgeniev-Maksimov in the department of manuscripts of the Leningrad theatre library in 1921.}\]
principles and *modus vivendi*, were banned completely. And that is exactly what is interesting for this work because it characterizes those peculiar features of the Russian society of the time and because those features, reflected in the vaudeville, make it Russian.

Nikolai Nekrasov, an adherent of the Natural School, did not have to study the subject of his vaudeville; he knew it well enough from his own experience. There is no doubt that, during his miserable existence from 1838-1840 in the Russian capital, he had many chances to get acquainted with the character of Petersburg usurers. All this knowledge Nekrasov used in creating the main character in his vaudeville *The Petersburg Usurer*.

The action takes place in the room of the usurer, Loskutkov Potap Ivanovich. His daughter Liza and a young man named Nalimov Ivan Fedorovich are in love with each other, but Loskutkov has his own reasons not to give his consent for their marriage. Loskutkov wants Nalimov to pay him for his daughter. It sounded funny at that time, because the custom was to give a dowry to one’s daughter, when she was getting married. Nekrasov reversed the situation to show the greediness of the usurer. Loskutkov is convinced that his way of thinking is very “logical.”

* See Appendix E, a complete translation of the vaudeville, for the description of the room and the list of the characters.

“ The construction of the vaudeville allows the actor playing Nalimov to play six other roles; disguise and cross-dressing are two the most favorite elements of a vaudeville for a spectator and a advantageous chance for an actor to demonstrate his skill.
Loskutkov. You want me to give you my daughter, right? All right... I mean, you want me to give her to you completely, as it goes, and she would be independent from me and I would not get any use from her... Well... I know, you are a noble man; in fifteen years you'll get a sign for irreproachable service... but how is it you want me to give her to you without nothing?

Nalimov. For pity's sake, if your will was to give me something as her dowry... I would consider it as a particular happiness...

Loskutkov. Tah! tah! tah! That's where we have a problem! And I am saying to you, would not you like to give me something... just... as a sign of your good kinship attitude to me.

Nalimov (clasping his hands). God, have mercy! For the first time in my life I hear such words from a noble man! (Aside.) Riffraff! (Aloud.) All the fathers award their daughters with a dowry.”(E-382; 7-15. E-383; 1-5.)

The logics of Loskutkov’s thinking is very simple: he gives away something of his own (his daughter), so he has to get something in exchange. He tries to justify it by explaining to Nalimov that, if a man gets a wife, he does not have to spend money to keep a cook, a house-keeper, a servant; he even makes a cautious hint about “some other expenses” of a single adult young man, which might be satisfied by his wife without spending money (E-382; 11-12). That was, probably, the line which was found frivolous by the censor. So, a man who gets married, gains, while he, Loskutkov, loses. That is why, in Loskutkov’s opinion, to make the whole deal just, Nalimov has to pay something to Loskutkov for Liza.

Nalimov is not a rich man, but he suddenly comes up with a witty idea how to solve the problem and begins to fulfil it right away. Before he leaves “in the hope of borrowing the necessary money” to get married, he drops a remark about a picture for sale, which hangs on the wall.

Nalimov (aside.) Ah! What an idea has come to my head... that will be good, really, good. (Coming up to the picture.) The picture is wonderful, indeed... it may cost two or three thousands, I think.
Loskutkov (with joy). Three thousands!.. Benefactor... Is that right?

Nalimov. It should be a work by Michelangelo, what’s the other name? Michelangelo... Or Rafael Sakcio... Sakcio... I forgot, but it doesn’t matter... I cannot buy this picture, but I can recommend it to some people.

Loskutkov. Benefactor! I will bow down to you in my gratitude... I placed an add in the Police Gazette: due to the death of an artist his picture is for sale: excellent German work portraying three dogs, two pigs and a ram, and a man in a Circassian coat, - but nobody comes...

Nalimov. All right, I will try!.. Maybe even today some people will come to your place to have a look at the picture... And what about your decision regarding Lizaveta Potapovna?

Loskutkov. My pleasure... only you prepare a little gift for me... let’s say, some two thousands in cash... isn’t it worth to make some efforts for your future father-in-law? We could arrange the wedding in a couple of days, while the wedding dress is still here... somebody brought it yesterday... (E-385; 8-22. E-386, 1-5.)

After this moment the sujet begins to untwine rapidly. One after another different people come to Loskutkov inquiring about the picture, admire on seeing it, and express their will to buy it. First comes the Unknown Gentleman who trades the picture for five thousand roubles, pays five hundred as a deposit, and makes Loskutkov swear not to sell the picture to anybody, promising to come in the evening with the rest of the money. The Unknown Gentleman even threatens to drag Loskutkov through the courts if Loskutkov would sell or substitute the picture. Then comes a certain Rostomakhov, who is fond of hunting and hunting dogs. He boasts to have a picture gallery at his house, where the portraits of all his favorite dogs are exposed:

Rostomakhov. I have, I tell you, ... plenty of such pictures... I even hire artists... if a certain dog excels, I right away order its portrait!... Ten thousands a year, that’s what I pay for that. (E-406; 14-17.)

When Rostomakhov learns that the picture is sold, he wants to leave. But then, “being unable to overcome his passion for the picture” he begins to talk
Loskutkov into the deal. As one can guess, Rostomakhov’s behavior is a trap for Loskutkov, who cannot overcome his greediness:

Rostomakhov (to himself). I haven’t seen such dogs in my entire life... live, just live; I need them in my pack... in my gallery... Ha-ha-ha! (To Loskutkov) You have to sell these dogs to me.

Loskutkov. I cannot, sir. I’ve had the honor to report to you, that the picture is sold.

Rostomakhov. Sold! Then, cut out of the picture the dogs only; you’ll have the picture and I’ll give you good money for the dogs.

Loskutkov. It’s impossible, sir.

Rostomakhov. Possible... do you hear, possible, damn you! I am not leaving without these dogs! (E-408; 18-22. E-409; 1-6.)

After a long haggling, Rostomakhov, having suggested sixteen thousand for the picture, is about to leave. Loskutkov, being tied by his promise to the Unknown Gentleman, still decides to sell the picture to Rostomakhov and takes fifteen hundred roubles as a down payment. When the Unknown Gentleman comes back to take his picture, the scandal bursts out. After all kinds of threats and arguments, the Unknown Gentleman agrees to go back on his will to buy the picture if Loskutkov pays him a compensation of two thousand roubles. Though, it is like a knife in his heart to let a kopeck out of his hands, Loskutkov prudently decides to get rid of the scandalous buyer, having in mind that he will get much more money for this picture later from Rostomakhov. As a shrewd spectator/reader might guess, Rostomakhov’s servant comes with the message. The message says that Rostomakhov changed his mind and does not want the picture any more and that the deposit of fifteen hundred roubles Loskutkov may keep for the trouble. Poor Loskutkov is at despair; he lost two thousands roubles. He is about to kill himself, but Nalimov comes right in time to save the usurer.
Loskutkov. ...Ah, why did you prevent me from my intention?.. I don’t want to live! I don’t want! Two thousand!.. Bring me back my two thousand or I don’t want to live.

Nalimov. Calm down, dear Potap Ivanovich... somebody swindled you for two thousand... it doesn’t matter for you from whom you want to get the money back, you just want to return them. Give me your consent to marry Lizaveta Potapovna and I give you two thousand right now.

Loskutkov. Benefactor! You resurrect me! My daughter! You are the wife of this noble man... Give me these two thousand... (Takes the money.)

Nalimov. Join our hands, Potap Ivanovich.

Loskutkov. Just a moment, just a moment! Let me first count... Well... (Joins the hands of Nalimov and Liza.) Be happy, my children... Live in peace and don’t forget your father. (E-423; 16-23. E-424; 1-6.)

The story successfully ended as it was expected by the spectators on the opening night and as it should in a vaudeville. But there were some features which made Nekrasov’s *The Petersburg Usurer* different from a customary beneficial vaudeville written for a certain actor, namely, its theme, main character, and the way Nekrasov unfolded the whole story.

Nekrasov worked on *The Petersburg Usurer* at the same time when he prepared for publishing the anthology *The Physiology of Petersburg*, this manifest of the Natural School of the Russian literature, which included his own sketch *The Petersburg Corners*. The dark corners of a big city were inhabited by low class people struggling to survive under the unbearable social conditions, striving with poverty, illnesses, injustice, despotism of the authorities. It is possible to suppose that, in *The Petersburg Usurer*, Nekrasov presented a collective image of Loskutkov, the usurer, a person dealing with such people on every day basis. Possessed by the only desire to gain money, Loskutkov gradually turned into a miser, who estranged himself from all normal human values such as kindness,
compassion, honesty, justice. That was from where the theme of profit raised to the power of one’s principle of life came as the theme of a vaudeville.

The theme of the vaudeville was disclosed through the main character of the vaudeville: Potap Ivanovich Loskutkov. Nekrasov gave the usurer the last name Loskutkov obviously alluding to his character’s desire (Loskut-kov < loskutok - rag, shred, scrap) to collect everything, even rags, in a hope to sell it and gain some money.

Loskutkov is ready to sell anything for profit. In the first scene, Loskutkov quite frankly answers Nalimov’s assertion that

Nalimov. You are ready to sell your own father for money!  
Loskutkov. So what?.. He died though... may his soul rest in the kingdom of heaven (crosses himself); I could’ve sold him to the Academy of Medicine... but my wife was still alive at the time... fat chance! She fought tooth and nail against me! So, he rotted in the dirt.” (E-384; 15-19.)

The character of Loskutkov is revealed in his couplets (which were banned by the censors) with extreme openness:

Loskutkov. I was about four years old,  
    When my father told me:  
    My child, everything in this world is nonsense,  
    The only real matter is a capital.

    And his wise advise was not left  
    Without my attention:  
    Next morning I stole  
    A piatak* from my father.  
    Since that time I got this passion  
    For hard cash,  
    I became a petty dog for those,  
    Who were rich and generous.

* Piatak - a five-kopeck piece.
To please them I, as a flatterer,
Licked their hands,
And at the age of seven,
I became a complete rascal...

Thirteen quatrains end with Loskutkov’s quoting again, as at the beginning, his father’s words: “Honor is a false coin, swindling is capital.” In each scene of the vaudeville, where Loskutkov is involved, he speaks only about money and profit. He complains that now people have stopped gambling the way they did before. It is bad for him because in old times, people used to lose big money and had to come to pawn expensive things to pay off their debts. Now a cook would come, bring a pile of rags; it looks like a lot of things, but all together not go for more then ten kopecks. That was a killing and typified portrait of a real person, taken from contemporary Russian life, and well acquainted with many theatre spectators, sitting not in the parterre but in the cheap “nose-bleed” seats next to the ceiling.

Nekrasov portrays Loskutkov according to the old theatre saying: the role of a king is played by his retinue. The greediness, cupidity, pettiness, and the desire for profit of Loskutkov is “played” by other characters of the vaudeville. For example, Krasnokhvostov,* one of the characters, comes to Loskutkov after he loses all his money in a card game. He is hungry but has nothing to pawn. The foulard scarf (“... made by the French, probably, look, how well it’s made...” E-398; 10-11.) suggested by Krasnokhvostov would not earn more than fifty silver

---

* The last name Krasnokhvostov is formed from krasnyi - red or beautiful and khvost - a tail. Nekrasov alludes to some semiotically stable expressions in the Russian language where to have/show/spread out one’s tail has a meaning to boast, to show off. Thus, Krasnokhvostov is read as the one who likes to show off.
kopecks in Loskutkov’s evaluation, not enough for Krasnokhvostov to dine at the
*Le Grand.* Finally, Krasnokhvostov decides to leave his greatcoat, though it is
cold outside and “people cannot recall such a frost for the last ten years.” (E-399; 21.) Loskutkov does not go into the ‘weather considerations’ and readily takes
Krasnokhvostov’s greatcoat for ten roubles, though, as he says later, it costs sixty.

Greediness dictates all Loskutkov’s actions. Scene IX of *The Petersburg
Usurer* makes Loskutkov look even worse. Liza, Loskutkov’s daughter, is going
to visit her relative, Aleksandra Grigorievna. Liza does not have a winter coat of
her own because her father never bothered to buy one for her. So she puts on a
coat which was brought to Loskutkov some time ago by a certain Akulina
Stepanovna. But at this moment, the woman comes back to get out of pawning
her coat and sees Liza wearing it. After the woman swears at Loskutkov, calling
him a rascal, a murderer, un-Christian, and a swindler, she pays the money and
goes away, leaving Liza in tears. Scene IX is a conversation between Liza and her
father. The complex of feelings, Liza is going through -- pity for her own miserable
and half-hungry existence, humiliation, and shame -- does not touch Loskutkov at
all. He does not see anything shameful in the situation. To Liza’s desperate “if all
the clothes are taken out of the pawn, I’ll have only my shoes on” Loskutkov
without any embarrassment or pity for his daughter says:

```
What is there to be ashamed of? To melt down in hysteria,
To cry out about some trifles?
I heard, that in America the aboriginals have nothing on at all,
Even shoes!” (E-404; 5-8.)
```

*Le Grand* was a fashionable restaurant in Petersburg.
As consolation he tells Liza a story from his own life, at a time when he had neither a suit nor a shirt to wear (meaning that there were no clothes in his pawn shop and he did not want to waste his own money to buy a suit for himself).

So, I put on somebody’s greatcoat... belted myself tightly... and walked around like this for good three weeks... even visited some people like this... Well, an acquaintance of mine invites me for a dinner... it’s a pity to refuse... ‘Why do you, Potap Ivanych,’ he says, ‘have your greatcoat on?’ ‘I vowed not to take it off for six weeks,’ I say, ‘I wear it as a mourning... My wife had died opportune at that time.’ ‘It’s a good thing, he says, to keep a promise.’ That’s it!.. live and learn!.. and you are crying... (E-404:19-21. E-405; 1-6).

The love for money, greediness, and cupidity in Loskutkov is stronger than the love for his own daughter.

There is an interesting detail in characterization of Loskutkov by Nekrasov. Deliberately or not, the author of the vaudeville establishes a thematical connection between Loskutkov and one of the characters of A. Griboedov’s Woe from Wit. Loskutkov in his couplets Пощечина людей позорит (“A slap in one’s face is a shame” E-417; 23) speaks about one of his acquaintances, who happened to quarrel with a rich man and was slapped in the face. To put a stop to the matter, the rich man paid a hundred thousand rubles to the offended. All of a sudden the attitude towards the poor man changed: he became honored and respected by others only because he became rich. In Woe from Wit, Famusov tells Chatskii about his uncle Maksim Petrovich who happened to fall down and to hurt himself badly in the presence of the empress. He began to moan, but he looked so funny that the empress smiled at him. Having noticed the smile, Maksim Petrovich fell down again, this time purposefully, causing the laughter of all the present; and he
fell down the third time. As a result, he received the empress’s attention, was promoted in his position at the court, and became a respected and honored person at the court. Cf.: Famusov: He fell down painfully, but got up healthfully.⁵ And: Loskutkov: It’s not a big deal to quiet a pain in one’s cheek, / To get one thousand roubles is a problem (E-418; 18-20). In both cases dignity and self-respect yield to profit.

In general, Nekrasov’s characterization of the dramatis personae in this vaudeville came very close to a realistic domestic comedy. This attaching of socially significant themes to a vaudeville practically came to an end in the works of F. Koni and N. Nekrasov. There were two main reasons for that.

First, the genre peculiarities of a vaudeville resisted the complication and deepening of the plot, theme, and characterization. The forceful filling a vaudeville with elements uncharacteristic for this genre had to bring to this process the change of the genre itself.

Second, Russian theatre, considered by the democratic part of Russian society as a school of morals and as a tribune to speak about the problems of society, could not help making efforts to turn to these problems in drama. Historically, vaudeville exhausted itself as a genre by the end of 1840s.

This does not mean that it died, but it stopped fulfilling a progressive role in the development of the Russian theatre, as it did in 1820-1840. The inability of vaudeville as genre to fulfill socially meaningful tasks which Nekrasov considered important for himself was, probably, one of the reasons that after The Petersburg Usurer he never turned to vaudeville writing again. In the history of Russian
literature Nekrasov remained first and foremost a poet. However, as a representative of the Natural School, he, together with F. Koni and V. Belinskii, paved the way for realism in Russian drama.

It was already mentioned that the writers of the Natural School were severely criticized in literature and drama for their “slice-of-life” writing by the adepts of “pure art.” In vaudeville, this struggle was as intensive as in literature in general. One of the most furious attackers of the new trend in theatre was P. Karatygin.

P. Karatygin, the Antagonist of the Natural School

Petr Andreevich Karatygin (1805-1879) came from a well known theatrical family; his brother, Vasilii Andreevich Karatygin, was one of the most prominent Russian tragic actors of the nineteenth century. In acting, Petr Karatygin did not match the fame of his brother; he usually performed secondary roles. His contemporaries appreciated him as an actor of sharp characterization and of exaggeration in his stage gestures, speech, and delivery in general: “... г-н П. Каратыгин – талант односторонний, годный не для многих ролей, но тем не менее весьма замечательный.” 6

Petr Karatygin was very conservative in his political and aesthetical views. In 1830-40 he could not accept the new realistic movement in Russian literature, expressed in the writings of N. Gogol (who was considered “the father” of the Natural School), F. Koni, and N. Nekrasov, as he did not accept later the plays of

* Mr. Karatygin is a one-sided talent, not good for a variety of roles, but nevertheless rather remarkable.
The sovereign liked your vaudeville very much, and you, if you want, can gain a lot from it as for His opinion about you and as of your career as an author. Insert into your vaudeville a couplet of a patriotic character, referring to the current events (the Polish uprising and the recent outbreak of cholera in Moscow). If your heart will prompt you a word of praise of our sovereign, – it won't diminish the vaudeville's effect on the audience. Think about my proposal and give me your answer in a couple of days.

---

I. Turgenev and A. Ostrovskii. For example, Karatygyn was among those who could not understand the exquisiteness of Turgenev’s Where It’s Thin It’s Apt to Tear. After the opening night of Turgenev’s play, he echoed with an epigram:

Although Turgenev did attain great fame,
The stage to him is far from being fair:
His comedy’s so thin that one can’t blame
Him who admits – where ‘tis thin it’s apt to tear.7

At the same time, he hated the bureaucracy, mercenary journalists, and corrupt police. His honesty might be characterized by the story which was retold by several authors (among them S. Monas and M. Lemke) writing on the policy of Nicholas I. After Karatygin had his successful debut as a playwright with his vaudeville The Acquainted Strangers in 1830 (he was twenty five at the time), the chief of gendarmes, Count Aleksandr Benckendorff, approached Karatygin at a private party and, talking tête-à-tête, suggested to the young man:

Государю очень понравился ваш водевиль, и вы, если хотите, можете много выиграть и в мнении его величества, и в вашей авторской карьерѣ. Вставьте в ваш водевиль куплет патриотического содержания по поводу нынѣшнихъ событий (польскаго мятежа и недавней холеры въ Москвѣ). Если сердце подскажет слово вѣ похвалу государю, – это не повредитъ эффекту на публику. Подумайте о моемъ предложеніи и дня черезъ два дайте отвѣтъ...8

Petr Karatygin was always a loyal subject to Nicholas, but despite all his love for the sovereign (or maybe exactly because of this love), he did not feel
comfortable exposing his patriotic feelings in front of a theatre audience, thereby turning them into an instrument to gain certain profits in his career.

On meeting Benckendorff, Karatygin excused himself from this task, saying that his vaudeville was too insignificant to insert couplets mentioning tsar and motherland. Benckendorff looked closely at the young author and stretched out his hand for a handshake: “Till this moment I liked you as a talented man, from now on I will respect you as an honest man.”

In his literary career, Karatygin was very successful as a vaudeville playwright and was recognized even by his literary enemies. Fedor Koni, encouraging Karatygin’s first experience in writing vaudevilles (The Acquainted Strangers) published an article in The Northern Bee in 1837 applying directly to the author:

Вы доказываете, вопреки иным московским производителям, что у нас на Руси может существовать водевиль, то есть веселая, маленькая комедия с эпиграммами, так же как и во Франции, и что для этого не нужно выставлять ни дураков, ни глупых помещиков, ни отвратительно пьяных лакеев, ни дурных, неправильных французских фраз. *

Karatygin wrote forty six vaudevilles, twenty of which were original. The rest were translated from French. In general, his plays were pure entertainment and fit perfectly into government theatrical policy. The most popular vaudevilles were Young Housekeepers of the Old Bachelor, Borrowed Wives, Two Wives versus

* Contrary to some Moscow sires, you prove that vaudeville can exist in Russia, vaudeville which is a little comedy with epigrams, the same as in France, and one does not have to present either fools, or silly landowners, or disgustingly drunk lackeys, or bad and incorrect French sentences for that.
One Husband, An Adventure at a Spa, A House in the Petersburg Suburb, and some others. Karatygin’s conservativeness prevented him from accepting the new literary current presented by the writers of the Natural School. Karatygin wrote a vaudeville 

Натуральная школа (The Natural School) 

where he ridiculed Belinskii, Nekrasov, and other “naturalists.” To make the characters in this vaudeville more similar to their life prototypes, Karatygin portrayed the characters using the language, physical appearance, and even hairstyle of his literary enemies. Chizhevskii, in his History of Nineteenth-Century Russian Literature, pointed out the hostility towards the writers of the Natural School which Karatygin expressed in his vaudeville:

In the plays, the writers of the Natural School are portrayed as ‘geniuses of the backyard’ and ‘empty-headed hacks,’ who have no morals and no command of language. All they do is create ‘low and dirty scenes,’ the life of beasts amid garbage and filth; their characters come from the ‘lowest strata of mankind,’ peasants, footmen, tramps, and janitors, ‘riffraff from the slums of St. Petersburg.’

Whether Petr Karatygin could accept the Natural School or not, it would be incorrect to claim that the new literary trend did not have any influence on his writing. The characters of his vaudevilles were often the insignificant common people of the Russian society whose portrayal Karatygin deplored. Being a man of a sharp wit and a good observer, he was atrabilious in ridiculing certain flaws of the Russian society, though he never could rise to the level of social generalization.

* Using the word ‘plays’ (plural) D. Chizhevskii referred also to a vaudeville by N. I. Kulikov with the identical title written several years after P. Karatygin’s The Natural School. It is not clear from Chizhevskii’s work from what sources he quoted the words presented in quotation marks.
in his vaudevilles. As a rule, the heroes of Karatygin’s vaudevilles embodied the common sense of a common man, where common sense entered into a conflict with the style of life in contemporary society. In this respect, Karatygin’s successful vaudeville Жена и зонтик, или Расстроенный настройщик (A Wife and an Umbrella, or The Out-Of-Tune Tuner, 1836) might be a good example.

The story was typical for a vaudeville. The wife of a tuner ran away from him. At the same time, the tuner lost his umbrella. Both events brought mess and confusion into the life of this ordinary man. His usual orderly existence became broken and he did not know how to deal with it any more. As the action went on, the tuner gained sympathy from the audience rather than the expected laughter. The comicality of the situation turned into the drama of an insignificant and downtrodden person.

The way Karatygin depicted the main character in his vaudeville A Wife and an Umbrella, or The Out-Of-Tune Tuner makes it possible to speak about the influence of the Natural School on his writing. In the performance, probably, this influence could be more noticeable because of the strong tendency of the Russian theatre towards realistic presentation which began to develop in the acting style of Mikhail Shchepkin, Maria Valberkhova, and Ivan Sosnitskii and which these actors applied to schematic vaudeville characters. This combination of author’s and actor’s skill in depicting a common man was revealed with greater power on the opening night (October 26, 1843) of one of the best vaudevilles by Karatygin Булочная, или Петербургский немец (The Bakery, or The Petersburg German) with the actor Aleksandr Martynov (1816-1860) performing the role of Karlusha.
Martynov created a dramatic image of a simple and kind guy, who got only blows from the life. Within the limits of the vaudeville genre, Martynov presented a realistic portrait of a young common man, which became possible because of the realistic style of Martynov’s acting and because the possibility for such acting was laid in the text of the vaudeville by its author, P. Karatygin. *The Bakery, or the Petersburg German* was a success and was produced numerous times in St-Petersburg, Moscow, and in the provincial theatres. It is, probably, the play which characterizes the style of Karatygin’s writing best of all. The sujet of the vaudeville is based on the traditional vaudeville device *quid pro quo.* The baker Ivan Ivanovich Kleister is worrying about recent bad news: some bakeries in Petersburg has been closed or fined by the authorities for baking bad bread. Though he knows that he has nothing to be afraid of because his bread is good, the news still disturbs him. Moreover, the rumors say that there is a disguised officer who walks around the city, pays attention to all the wrongdoings, and reports to the authorities. Recently Kleister has noticed a young decently dressed man, who has come to his bakery often, buying only a big pretzel. Kleister suspects that this young man can be that disguised informer. Kleister asks his good acquaintance Flugerov to figure out who this young man is. Flugerov is ready to help: “I am curious to have a look at him; I have very sharp eyes, I can recognize a policeman in disguise right away.” (D-344; 18-19.) I’ll drop by here obligatory, lie in wait for him, follow him, and get to know where he works, where he lives, I’ll smell out everything.” (D-345; 1-3.) In reality, the young man, Shagaev by name, is in love
with Kleister’s daughter Mashen'ka, who, in her turn, is in love with Shagaev. The young people hide their relations from Kleister, being afraid that he might not consent to their marriage.

These two main plot lines Kleister – Shagaev and Mashen'ka – Shagaev are complicated by two other love lines: Kleister’s apprentice Karlusha, and Flugerov are also in love with Mashen'ka. (The scenes where Karlusha and Flugerov try to tell Mashen'ka about their feelings are very funny).

When Flugerov is trying to explain his feelings and intentions to Mashen'ka, he constantly is interrupted by customers, to whom Mashen’ka sells bread through the fortochka. Thus, one more vaudeville “character” which is not listed among others by the author begins to play an active role in the story, namely fortochka or vasisdas. The Russian word fortochka (форточка) means a small hinged pane for ventilation in a window of Russian houses.¹² In the nineteenth century, German bakers sold bread to the customers in the street through this fortochka; from a salesman’s usual question “Was ist das?” (What is it?) a Russified васисдас (vasisdas) came into the everyday Russian language. Fortochka (or vasisdas; Karatygin uses both words synonymously) plays an important role in creating comical effects in different scenes. Like in music, it is a certain suspension preventing the movement of a theme to resolve immediately into a presupposed final chord. Karatygin uses this device several times. In the first scene, Karlusha is trying to tell Mashen'ka about his love. When he finally pulls himself together

¹ Mashing'ka, Masha - derivative pet names from Maria in the Russian language.
and overcomes his nervousness, somebody from the street knocks at the fortochka, demanding rusks for twenty kopecks. The humor of the scene lies not only in the personification of an object (fortochka), but also in the author's deliberate mixing of the “high” and “low,” the “refined” and the “rude,” the “sublime” and the “ordinary, i.e., love and bread. In the mentioned love scene with Flugerov, "fortochka" interferes the course of the action continuously.

Flugerov. Hm! Hm! Maria Ivanovna... I... you... I... as you know...
(A knock at the fortochka.)

Mashen’ka. Just a minute. (To Flugerov.) Please, excuse me. (At the fortochka.) What can I do for you? This one? Five silver kopecks, sir. This? Three silver kopecks, sir. This one?.. You are welcome...
(Gives the buyer the bun.)

Flugerov. That’s a little bit unpleasant! In such a dear for me minute they ask for some twopenny-halfpenny buns! But it’s all right, we’ll be more brave, we’ll correct the situation! So, what was I talking about?

Mashen’ka. I don’t know.

Flugerov. Oh, yes! I, as you know...

Mashen’ka. That’s exactly true, you know...

Flugerov. I, as you know ... as you know... I don’t know what I was going to say... Hm! This damned ten kopecks bun! Now I am turning into a kopeck worth fool.

Mashen’ka. Why have you stopped? Go on.

Flugerov. You see, that’s what the matter is about... I, finally, decided to reveal to your father one of my desires, which I’ve had for a long time... and this revelation...
(A knock at the fortochka.)

Mashen’ka. (running from him). Excuse me, please!

Flugerov. Again! It’s just a punishment; as if they do it on purpose! As soon as I open my mouth, she runs to open her vasisdas, and all my gentle feelings are gone with the wind. The devil take it! I’ve almost thought off the most touching expressions, and now...

Mashen’ka (at the fortochka). Nothing is left, sorry. We had them, but we’ve run out of them now. (Coming up). I am sorry, sir.

Flugerov. It’s all right, commerce is commerce... bread and buns are our every minute necessities of life... So, Maria Ivanovna!.. I... you... and your father... (A part.) Now again I am becoming rooted to the spot.

Mashen’ka. Well, what’s next?

Flugerov. The next is... I, as you know, for the last six weeks had my
pleasure to be acquainted with you. During this time, you, probably, could notice that I am a man...
Mashen’ka. Well?
Flugerov. I am a man... who... who...
(A knock at the fortochka.)” (D-351-353.)

Of course, such an intrusion of the fortochka, an “uninvited character,” into Flugerov’s love affair drives him crazy (what an opportunity for a good vaudeville actor to demonstrate his acting skills!). Later, when Flugerov begins to think that Kleister and his daughter were fooling him, he, to express his vexation and anger, cannot find a better (or in this case, worse) word to swear at Kleister than vasisdas, i.e., fortochka: “And this vasisdas plays fool with me...” (D-348; 8). Thus the author’s personification of the object is finalized in the image of the baker.

In this dialog Karatygin uses another comical device. Some of the last Mashen’ka’s lines directed to the “fortochka,” i.e., to a customer, serve as answers to Flugerov’s lines aside. Flugerov listening to all these endless Mashen’ka’s answers “three kopecks,” five kopecks,” says aside: “I am turning into a kopeck worth fool.” To which Mashen’ka, returning from the fortochka and supposedly having not heard him, suggests: “Why have you stopped? Go on.” In other words: tell me more about how cheap/stupid you are. Also, when Flugerov gets angry with the endless interruptions, he says: “I’ve almost thought off the most touching expressions, and now...” Mashen’ka’s next line sounds like a continuation of Flugerov’s stopped line though it is directed to the fortochka: “Nothing is left, sorry.”

Karatygin, as a comic actor, knew well all the classical devices of the funny. In The Bakery, the dialogs were constructed inventively and with a sense of humor.
One of such devices is used in the dialog when two characters, seeming to understand each other, speak about different subjects. The wise audience, the only one who knows what really is going on, enjoys the confusion of the characters and anticipates with pleasure the moment when the muddle comes to a denouement. In *The Bakery*, the scenes of Flugerov and Karlusha and Kleister, Mashen'ka, and Shagaev are constructed in this manner. In Scene XIII, Kleister and Shagaev are extremely scared of each other; the first thinks the other is a secret agent, and Shagaev is afraid to be rejected by the father of a girl he is in love with. Not knowing how to start the conversation, Shagaev picks a neutral, in his opinion, topic: the bread. That scares Kleister to death because he *is* expecting to hear something bad about his product:

Shagaev (*timidly and stumbling*). Could you tell me... please... how much are these buns?
Kleister. Three silver kopecks.
Shagaev. It’s very cheap.
Kleister. Oh, dear Sir! I’ve been living in Sankt Petersburg for thirty five years; I’ve always had good products; I do not mix flour; I bake according to the police orders.
Shagaev. What are you talking about! Everyone knows you as an honest person.
Kleister (*with a bitter smile*). If you think that I am an honest person, then why do you come here so often?
Shagaev. Me?.. I... well, I have business here... I am waiting for my pretzel to be ready.
Kleister. Oh, excuse me... pretzel is a trifle. You have another reason to come here every week.
Shagaev. How’s that? You already know it?
Kleister. Yes, sir, I know everything! I cannot forbid you to do that. You may even check in here. But couldn’t you find anybody worse for this purpose? (D-368; 13-22. D-369; 1-7.)

Kleister’s last lines completely puzzle Shagaev and the situation becomes even more tangled up. At the end of the vaudeville, relief for the completely
exhausted Kleister comes when all the stratagems, tricks, misunderstandings, and confusions finally become clear, and Kleister consents to the marriage of Mashen'ka and Shagaev with joy:

Kleister: I still cannot come back to my senses... And you, and my daughter... and I... and police... and all this strange confusion... The Russian saying is right: the eyes of fear see danger everywhere! (D-371; 20-23.) (Easing off, to both). Ah, you are my dear! You are touching me so much. My heart almost stops beating from joy... (D372; 9-10.)

Besides the plot (based on quid pro quo), the place of action (bakery), characters (common people), and skillfully employed comic devices, there was one more feature of Karatygin’s The Bakery which distinguished it from other vaudevilles written in 1840s: the language of the play. No matter how Karatygin rejected and mocked the ideas of the Natural School, in The Bakery he uses the language characterizations of his personages the way the authors of physiologies did.

The authors of the physiological sketches considered language as one of the means of typification of a certain group of people. They differed three main ways to create a type by generalization either: a) ethnic peculiarities of a certain language; or b) everyday language of a certain locale; or c) language specificity of a certain profession. (In his Coming into Being of Realism in Russian Literature: Russian Physiological Sketch, A. G. Tseitlin analyzed in details the works of Russian physiologists from the linguistic point of view. All three categories were used by Karatygin in his Bakery. In this respect, the character images of Ivan Ivanovich Kleister present the most interest.
In the nineteenth century, many foreigners came to Russia attracted by the opportunity to make their fortune there. Among them there was a number of rogues but there were also honest trades people, who worked as tailors, shoemakers, jewelers, cooks, upholsters, etc. The image of Ivan Ivanovich Kleister is a collected portrait of these people. Kleister is a baker. He came from Germany to Russia when he was young and married a Russian woman. Now he owns a bakery, and probably, does not think of going back, because all his life is connected now with Petersburg. He is a good baker and, unlike some of his former fellow-country men, tries to maintain his reputation among his customers.

His position in the society has a dual character and is typical for a foreigner. Karatygin shows this duality mainly through the language of the play. He gives the character the last name Kleister, which sounds very “German;” at the same time his first name and patronymic, Ivan Ivanovich, are accentually Russian. Kleister speaks Russian, but he speaks with a thick accent and often not correctly. Kleister, willing to sound more Russian, adorns his speech with plenty of folk sayings, proverbs, and idiomatic expressions, which is quite in Russian style of conversing. At the same time, he often confuses the meaning of a saying or combines two parts of two different proverbs in one, which produces a comical effect for the Russian-speaking audience. Thus, in conversation with Flugerov,

Kleister agrees, that marriage is a serious step in one’s life and that it is necessary to think properly before this step is made not to regret after. He says: “Да-с, русские купцы говорят: десять разов отрезывай, а один обмеривай,” what is a paraphrase of a Russian folk proverb семь раз отмерь, один раз отрежь. (D339; 21) The literal translation of the original proverb is: measure off seven times and cut one time. (i.e., think properly before you are going to do anything, because once it is done there is no undoing it).

Kleister uses mistakenly another prefix: instead of от-мерь he pronounces об-мерь, which means to cheat in measuring, to give short measure to someone. The sentence in Kleister’s interpretation sounds: cut ten times and cheat one time while measuring*. (He also changed seven times for ten times.) Ethnic peculiarities of Kleister’s language come a comical device in characterization/typification of this personage. Besides ethnic identification of his characters, Karatygin uses extensively what Russian physiologists called professional specificity of language. (Though, in this particular case - baking - the professional terminology looks very close to the everyday language, for it was not something exceptionally strange or unknown to Russian households.) Karatygin not only stuffs the lines of characters with nouns, verbs, and adjectives relating to the process of baking bread, but he constantly plays with the semiotical meanings

* In the translation of the play (Appendix E) I tried to play with the English saying better safe than sorry, changing safe for save (in the style Kleister might do). The “new” saying better save than sorry being applied to the Russian merchants can be quite rightful, considering a habit of the Russian merchants of saving up hard cash for a rainy day. The times of Russian merchants-patrons of arts (Morozov, Tretiakov, and others) have not come yet in 1840s.
of these words. Thus, Karlusha speaks about the sufferings his love brings to him:

Yes, this love dries me out and fries me up, and, as a result, I cannot bake anything. Look at me, I am not myself. I am worse than a week-old rusk, but before that my cheeks were as buns baked on the rose oil!” (D-329; 15-17.) He complaints to Flugerov about Kleister: “He is angry with me because I burnt the rusk this morning; could you, please, butter him somehow?” (D-359; 14-16.) Flugerov is trying to get to know about the possible dowry of Mashenka and expresses his hopes in the same metaphorical manner: “I believe, the daughter of a baker will have her piece of bread.” (D-341;) The fact, that he is not young, bothers him, but not too much, because he thinks that he does an honor to the family of Kleister by marrying Mashen'ka:

I've just turned fifty... two years ago..., and the bride is about eighteen... The difference is not that big! At her fortochtka she saw all kinds of people, she knows the price of everything... Even a three day old rusk is sold cheaper because everyone wants a fresh one... (Comes up to the mirror.) However, here I am, looking at myself... What a nonsense! Do I really look like a rusk? (D-377; 16-22.)

Here, (as in the lines of “drying out” and “burning up”Karlusha) Karatygin creates an almost synaesthetic effect of transferring the image of the character from verbal into visual and even tactile perception. After Mashen'ka refuses Flugerov, he responds to her suggestion to have some more coffee that she “fed up” him” and cut him to pieces as a cake. The final couplets of the vaudeville also are full of idioms semantically connected with the profession of a baker:

Our author baked this vaudeville.
Is it to your taste? We do not know.
For someone, preps, it’s cake and ale,
But it’s not our fault if cake is dough.
Not in one oven, people said,
All bread is baked. Our hearts are fluttered.
When actors are praised, then the author's bread,
From both sides is also buttered. (D-379; 3-10.)

Besides the extensive use of the language characterization, there is one more quality of Karatygin’s writing which makes him a true representative of the 1830s-1840s in the history of Russian vaudeville, namely author’s attention to a common man. The characters of his vaudevilles are insignificant clerks, poor widows, owners of houses for rent, students, etc. (Young Housekeepers of the Old Bachelor, Civil Service Uniform, A House in the Petersburg Suburb, and others). Like The Bakery, these vaudevilles were not without the elements of social satire though they cannot be compared in this sense with Hekrasov's or Koni’s. Karatygin was very loyal to Nicholas. As an honest artist, who tried to depict the life of a common man in a truthful way, Karatygin could not help seeing the problems, a common man had to deal with, such as injustice or the arbitrariness of the authorities. These observations Karatygin used in his vaudevilles. In The Bakery, when slightly naive Kleister in his couplets sings about the good reputation and respect he earned for his honest work. As proof, he tells Flugerov (and the audience, who were acquainted well with such practice of local authorities) about the special attitude of a police officer towards him.

On honesty my name I build.
To all for honesty I’m known.
Und Herr Policeman always takes
From our house, as from his own,
His bread und pretzels, rusk und cakes.
Last Saturday he saw me walking
Und did like this,
(Imitates policeman’s salute)
und then he said:
“Guten Morgen,” und without talking
He shook my shoulder with his hand.” (D-342-343.)

The words about the policeman, who takes pretzels, cakes, and bred from the bakery not paying for them, certainly, resonated with the democratic audiences, which were acquainted very well with such practice of local police.

Of course, it would be far from truth to consider P. Karatygin a satirical playwright or vaudevillist-physiologist, like F. Koni or N. Nekrasov. But even indirectly, the social conditions of Russian society of the second quarter of the nineteenth century, artistic movements, and literary trends influenced Karatygin’s writing, though he remained in the history of Russian drama first of all as the author of funny, entertaining pieces which in their own way depicted modes and customs of his time.

Karatygin, Nekrasov, and Koni, no matter how different they were in their style of writing, in choosing themes and characters for their vaudevilles, in their political views, and artistic credos, certainly reflected the changes which took place in Russian literature in general and drama in particular under Nicholas I. The democratic-raznochinnyi period of Russian vaudeville might be characterized by three distinct features. First, the vaudeville genre borrowed from France established itself as a form of national Russian drama. Second, as an established form, vaudeville developed into a particular Russian phenomenon, from more or less successful imitations of French examples to original pieces of national drama. Third, Russian vaudeville of the democratic-raznochinnyi period brought to perfection the form of this genre, changed the traditional contents of it, and, in the
process of its own development, explored and defined the possibilities and limits of the genre, opening the doors for other genres for their further development.

The more detailed analysis of historical development of the vaudeville genre in Russia in the first half of the nineteenth century will be done in the next, concluding chapter.

Endnotes to Chapter 8


9. Ibid..

July 19, 1837.]


In the almost two hundred year history of the original Russian vaudeville the period between the 1810s and late 1840s is the most important for understanding the peculiarities of this genre and its development in the history of Russian drama. During this period, Russian vaudeville made its way from more or less successful imitations of the French pieces to the undoubtedly original Russian plays with all the qualities inherent in other genres of Russian national drama. By the end of this period vaudeville as a dramatic piece with certain distinct features which differentiate vaudeville from other relative genres, such as comedy and opera-comique, was finalized as a form and brought to its classic completion. After that, during the next one hundred fifty years of the history of Russian drama, vaudeville remained in this state of completeness. Attempts to attach to it qualities non characteristic for this genre led either to the deformation of the genre or to re-generating vaudeville into another genre.

The history of the Russian vaudeville of the period considered in this work very easily breaks down into two distinctive phases. The first phase, the aristocratic, is from 1812, when the first original Russian vaudeville was produced in St-Petersburg, till 1825, when tsar Aleksandr I died and Nicholas I inherited the crown of the Russian empire. The second phase, democratic-raznochinnyi, embraces years from 1826 till 1855, the years of Nicholas I ruling. The division of the history of Russian vaudeville is made, of course, not on the basis of when Russian tsars ascended the throne. The fact is that political events in Russian society always have been closely connected with and often
caused changes in its cultural, art, and literary life. Theatre in general, and vaudeville in particular, mirrored the changes of the socio-cultural life in their own way. In this process, the specificity of Russian society made Russian vaudeville distinctly Russian while it remained all the characteristic features of the genre.

The division of the history of vaudeville in the Russian theatre historiography into two phases, aristocratic and democratic-raznochinnyi, is based on the representation of the social estate among the authors of vaudevilles, on the thematicality and ideology of the dramatic pieces, on the social position of the dramatis personae of vaudevilles, and on the way vaudevillists depicted characters, events, and life in general. Thus, the majority of the vaudeville playwrights of the second phase belonged to raznochintsy and, more importantly, in their plays they expressed the ideology of their class, regardless the social group portrayed in their vaudevilles.

Moreover, beginning from the second quarter of the nineteenth century, raznochintsy as, in Wirtschafter’s definition, “a symbol of correct thinking” started to invade the space in intellectual fields (arts, literature, science) more aggressively and produced bright examples of their “correct thinking.” Also, the democratically oriented mind set of raznochintsy stimulated further

---

* The definition of the second phase as a meshchanskii vaudeville, suggested by M. Belkina does not have a good reason to consider it valid. Yes, a part of the dramatis personae of the vaudevilles written in 1830s-1850s do belong to this social group, meshchane, but it cannot be considered an indicator of social identification of these dramatic pieces.

** See footnote to page 162.

*** A bright example of depicting this process in literature is Turgenev’s prominent novel *Fathers and Sons.*
development of the concept of narodnost in drama in general and in vaudeville in particular. During the reign of Nicholas I, the situation in Russian theatre might be characterized by continuing efforts to create original national drama and by continuing confrontation of two conceptual ideas of national identity, narodnost and the Official Nationality. The former was born, collectively developed, and formulated by the creative mind of men of letters and artists. The latter was prescribed from “above” by tsar regime and served as precautionary measures against heterodoxy in order to protect this regime. This opposition, no matter how insignificant the genre of vaudeville might be considered, was reflected in the writing of Russian vaudevillists. During the democratic-raznochinnyi period the confrontation became more obvious.

It also should be said that, the division of the history of Russian vaudeville into aristocratic and democratic-raznochinnyi in terms of time (1812-1825 and 1826-1850s) is rather conventional. Some authors, like Aleksandr Shakhovskoi, continued to write in 1830s and 1840s, i.e., during the period which is considered as the second phase, but ideologically and stylistically such playwrights belonged to the aristocratic phase. Thus, one of the brilliant vaudevillists, Count Vladimir Sollogub (1814-1882) began to write vaudevilles in 1830s for home theatre. In the 1840s-50s he wrote and published about twenty vaudevilles for the professional stage, which were a success. Though, not without the influence of the Natural School, he often chose the characters for his vaudevilles from the lower strata of the Russian society, his mind set was pre-conditioned because he belonged to the aristocracy. He wrote graceful and very funny vaudevilles, brought the classic vaudeville form to its
perfection*, but he was not able to attach social significance to his plays, as N. Nekrasov and F. Koni did. Was it necessary or not in terms of the genre peculiarities of vaudeville is a question for consideration; the point is that Vladimir Sollogub during the democratic-raznochinnyi period was the person to have articulated the ideology of the upper strata of the Russian society, as the first Russian vaudevillists of the aristocratic phase were.

By analysing the history of the appearance and development of vaudeville on the Russian stage, it is possible to conclude that vaudeville as genre gained its enormous popularity and began to be a significant phenomenon in the theatre life of Russia only when it acquired the distinct features of the original Russian play. Vaudeville was known to the Russian aristocratic audience from the productions they saw in France and from the French theatre in St-Petersburg, where the French troupe presented contemporary and classic French repertoire (in the French language)**. During the first decade of the nineteenth century only four vaudevilles were produced in St.-Petersburg. But starting from 1812, when the first original Russian vaudeville was written and produced, vaudeville began its expansion on the Russian stage.

During the first phase of vaudeville’s history in Russia, tens of new vaudevilles were produced yearly on the stages of St.-Petersburg and Moscow and, later, the number of productions grew up to hundreds a year. In 1840s-

---

*A curious detail: some of the Sollogub’s vaudevilles were written in French and were successfully produced in Paris. More on Sollogub see the introduction to the anthology *V. Sollogub. Vaudevilles*. Moscow: 1937.

**During the war with Napoleon, French theatre in St.-Petersburg was closed. It opened again in 1822.
50s vaudeville became a domineering genre in the repertoire at the theatres of Moscow and St.-Petersburg. The sudden and growing popularity of vaudeville could be explained by several factors. Some of these factors were common for vaudeville in general which made this genre incredibly popular in France and Russia, as well as all over Europe. Among them there were: extremely entertaining character of the genre (music, singing, dancing, calembours, marivaudage, and funny sujet and characters); easiness to produce (conventional place of action did not demand elaborate stage setting, costumes were pulled out from the stock, cast was not big, and the orchestra could be reduced to three-four instrument ensemble). Also, vaudeville, as a short play, could be written very fast by a skilful writer (nobody expected from vaudeville profound thoughts, psychologically developed characters, or a broad scale of sophisticated emotions). Consequently, rehearsals, as a rule, did not take more time than a week, sometimes even less. It allowed a theatre company to present new plays almost every night without a significant outlay. A special style of acting in vaudeville was developed in time which might be characterized by swift action, fast tempo-rhythm, sincere belief in all incredible occurrences of the story, naturalness and brilliance of delivery the lines, badinage of a dialogue, words en aparté, and many more. Besides these general factors which made vaudeville popular on European stage, in Russia, there were other factors which distinguished Russian original vaudeville from its French

* K. S. Stanislavskii considered vaudeville acting difficult. In his book Stanislavskii Directs, N. M. Gorchakov brings up Stanislavskii’s utterance: "...it is a difficult genre: verisimilitude, sincerity of emotions, sometimes satire and burning topics of the day, musicality and sense of rhythm... It is a wonderful school for a young actor."
counterpart. *The first factor was the closeness of vaudeville of the aristocratic period to Russian comic opera and classic comedy of the eighteenth century.*

This closeness was not genetic, because vaudeville came onto the Russian stage from France as already established genre with all its peculiarities, but was revealed both in thematicality and in the methods of characterization. Thus, the theme of peasants was very popular in Russian comic opera of the late eighteenth - beginning of the nineteenth century and also became one of the themes of the early vaudeville. Like in comic opera, in vaudeville this theme was decided in different ways, which reflected socio-political views of the author: national-conservative (V. Maikov’s opera *The Countryside Holiday* and A. Shakhovskoi’s vaudeville (*Peasants, or Meeting of the Uninvited*), anti-serfdom (N. Nikolev’s opera *Rosana and Liubim* and P. Karatygin’s vaudeville *The September Night*), or liberal (M. Popov’s *Aniuta* and Ia. Kniazhnin’s *Misfortune because of the Coach* and M. Zagoskin’s *The Village Philosopher*).

Like in comic opera, vaudeville, based on the peasants themes, attracted specific lexis for characterization its personages, using folklore, phraseology, and local or/and ethnic idioms. The connection between comic opera and vaudeville can be also traced in the means of versification and the role of a couplet (its form and function) in the structure of a play. Also, the similarity of vaudeville and opera comique could be established in music which was often based on folk melos in songs and dances.

While the themes of some vaudevilles, such as gallomania, bureaucracy, ignorance, might be considered traditional for Russian drama, they also had their direct predecessors in Russian satirical comedy of the eighteenth century.
The second factor is the frameableness of vaudeville as of a dramatic piece. It might be characterized by a very simple framework, usually based on an anecdote or on a comical situation. This simplicity, combined with stereotyped characters common for vaudeville, regardless the place of birth of any particular piece, allowed the authors of the translations or adaptations to change easily, without damaging the plot, the names of the characters and the place of action from foreign to Russian and to saturate the foreign vaudeville plot with numerous details of everyday Russian life. The success of such changes depended mainly on the talent of the author of a remake, his literary skills, and his knowledge of Russian life and of particularities of writing for theatre. Hundreds of low-rate vaudevilles, remakes of second or third-rate French vaudevilles and comedies, are successfully forgotten now, as well as the names of their creators. Very few vaudevilles, which had been replaced on the Russian soil from France, under the hand of a talented author-translator gained the qualities of an original Russian play and sometimes even more distinguished merits than their originals. The most bright examples of such type vaudevilles are Two Teachers, or Asinus Asinum Fricat by A. Shakhovskoi, Lev Gurych Sinichkin or the Provincial Débutante by D. Lenskii, and The Busybody, or The Know-How Gets the Job Done Best by A. Pisarev.

The third factor laid in the structure of vaudeville. It was flexible and allowed the authors of vaudevilles to include into the text (more often into the couplets), directly or by allusion, the hot topics of the day, the way it was in French vaudeville. The difference in using this device in France and in Russia
was in more general character of couplets in French vaudeville and more direct (or often, personal) in Russian. The explanation is in the fact that Russian theatre audience of the aristocratic phase was homogeneous, in contradistinction to the French audience, which was socially more diverse. Russian audience of 1810s-1820s belonged to the same class of nobility to which the majority of authors belonged. They did understand all the hints, they recognized the disguised names, and they were quite aware of the latest social, political or cultural events mentioned in a play. This quality gave the audience the impression of contemporaneity of the action and made them feel privy to this action. Naturally, the contents of all these hints, allusions, and/or direct references dealing with specific Russian issues, made the audience identify the whole play as Russian.

The first Russian vaudevilles were written by Prince A. Shakhovskoi at a time when Russia was celebrating her victory over Napoleon. Shakhovskoi’s Cossack-Versifier (1812), Peasants, or Meeting of the Uninvited (1814), and Lomonosov (1814) were met by Russian audiences with great enthusiasm mainly not because of their artistic merits but because of their patriotic themes. One of the qualities of Shakhovskoi as a playwright was his keen ability to detect the moods of the audience and to respond to them quickly by writing a new play.

Shakhovskoi was a prolific playwright; during his life time he wrote over hundred plays in different genres. In vaudeville, Shakhovskoi tried to create national characters and to use historical events as vaudeville plots, in a manner the authors of Russian comic opera did. But the light and graceful form of
vaudeville often resisted Shakhovskoi’s ponderous and politically oriented writing. As soon as Shakhovskoi “forgot” about his pro-monarchial views and put aside his tendency to moralize, his vaudevilles gained all the qualities of the genre. Nevertheless, almost all his vaudevilles were a success either because of “two or three diverting scenes” or “lucky words” in them (in Pushkin’s words; see p. 63) or because of their fashionable topics. Nowadays, it would be difficult to present the majority of Shakhovskoi’s plays on stage without detailed explanations to the audience all the references, hints, and calembours which belong to Shakhovskoi’s time. However, among those few vaudevilles which might present more than historical interest, Two Teachers, or Asinus Asinum Fricat, written by Shakhovskoi in 1819, has not lost its charm, mild humour, and funny characterization of the dramatis personae. Moreover, in this vaudeville, the dramatist overcame his previous awkward efforts to Russify a borrowed sujet and created an undoubtedly Russian piece. People, their relations, style of their life were (and still are) recognizably Russian.

The problem of developing an original Russian drama (and vaudeville, as a part of it) inevitably brought into the question the language of dramatic writing (it should be remembered that during the aristocratic phase of the history of Russian vaudeville, French remained the main language of the Russian nobility). As a member of the Colloquy of Lovers of the Russian Word, Shakhovskoi interspersed the text of his vaudevilles with plain language idioms, Old-Slavonic archaisms, and purposefully touched-down style of conversing. In contradistinction to Shakhovskoi’s naive methods of russifying vaudeville, N. Khmelnitskii, one of the most talented vaudevillist of this period,
brought onto the vaudeville stage Russian language of fashionable salons and drawing rooms. He even was criticized for having the valets and maids in his plays speak as countesses. In response, Khmelnitskii wrote the parody-vaudeville *Greek Ravings, or Iphigenia in Tauris* (1820) where he ridiculed the clumsy attempts of Russifiers by making Iphigenia speak and sing in the common people’s language which in combination with such a “high” mythological theme, produced comical effect.

The majority of Khmelnitskii’s plays were translations of French originals. His impact into the development of Russian original vaudeville might be referred mainly to the refining the genre form of Russian vaudeville. Belinskii’s words about Russian*’ rigorous and ponderous character” cannot be applied to the Khmelnitskii’s manner of vaudeville writing. Being a man-about-town, he brought into his vaudeville his irreproachable sense of style, vivid and expressive dialogue (Russian-style marivaudage), and elegant and graceful calembours and witticisms. Some of his puns or sharp remarks often turned into by-words and came into the everyday language.

In spite of the fact that Khmelnitskii during his life time wrote only two original vaudevilles (*A High Society Incident* and *The First Debut of the Actress Troepolskaia*), his contribution to the history of Russian vaudeville might be evaluated as following. He refined the Russian form of vaudeville and proved that contemporary Russian language had flexibility, expressiveness, brightness, and lexis richness - qualities necessary for a light entertaining play. His masterly possession of Russian turned bombastic and stiff alexandrine verses

* See Chapter 1 (4).
(the majority of his plays were versified), considered by the classicists a must for a good comical play, into an almost conversational form - so great was the impression of his versification. In terms of the language problems of Russian drama, Khmelnitskii was the first to bring contemporary live language of his class on stage breaking down the classicist tradition in play writing.

While Shakhovskoi and Khmelnitskii were vying with each other for the noisiest success in St-Petersburg, another young dramatist made his debut as vaudevillist in Moscow. Alexander Pisarev started his career as a dramatist in 1823 by translating The School for Scandal by R. B. Sheridan which was produced same year and was a success. This experience encouraged the twenty-year-old playwright; his first play was still running, when one month later, his new vaudeville A Trip to Kronstadt was presented to Moscow audiences. Next year (1824) Pisarev presented three more vaudevilles: The Tutor and The Pupil, or The Hangover for the Feasting of Others; Busybody, or The Know-How Gets the Job Done Best; and The Heiress. All of them were success. Muscovites fell in love with a young playwright and attended each premiere of Pisarev’s new vaudevilles.

Moscow’s eternal rival, snobbish St-Petersburg, noticed the vaudevillist almost two years after his debut, but after that, his vaudevilles were produced there almost as frequently as in Moscow. In the five years from the first performance of Sheridan’s play till Pisarev’s early death in 1828, he wrote twenty three plays (only twelve were published).

Pisarev’s exceptional talents as a vaudevillist, brought him well-deserved prominence. One of his merits was his skill to create recognizable national
characters. Pisarev knew very well the life of a rural landowner and used his knowledge to portray dramatis personae in his vaudevilles in the most truthful way: Kleshnin, a Voronezh landowner, full of passion for the sea (A Trip to Kronshtadt); Prince Temirov, with his principle to do the right things (The Tutor and the Pupil or The Hangover for the Feasting of Others); and, probably, the most interestingly drawn character of Repeikin, and his indomitable obsession with sticking his nose into other people’s affairs (Busybody, or The Know-How Gets the Job Done Best).

Besides presenting true Russian characters, Pisarev was a master of couplets. His gift for writing epigrams served him well in writing sharp couplets for his vaudevilles and sometimes even caused public scandals (like it happened with Three Tens, or The New Two Days Battle and The Meeting of Diligences; see Chapter 4).

Hot topics of the day expressed in an aphoristic, witty, and sarcastic form of vaudeville couplets can be considered one of the most remarkable qualities of Pisarev as of a vaudevillist. There were many authors of brilliant epigrams, but in vaudeville couplets it would be difficult to find match for Pisarev among Russian vaudevillists. Also, the notes of social criticism in Pisarev’s vaudeville couplets anticipated the later themes of democratic-raznochinnyi vaudevilles of the 1830s-1840s.

Pisarev, Shakhovskoi, and Khmelnitskii certainly were not the only authors of vaudevilles presented on Russian stage during the first quarter of the nineteenth century, but they were the most talented. Each of them, in his own way, responded to the problems Russian drama (and literature in general) was
going through at that time: arguments of classicists and romanticists on theory of drama, search for the national originality of Russian drama, the correlation of the everyday language and the language of dramatic writing, national representation in Russian drama, and the questions of play writing technique, such as characterization of dramatis personae, plausibility of the action, versification in a dramatic piece, etc. Each of these playwrights, in his own way contributed to the development of the vaudeville genre on Russian stage.

Shakhovskoi’s experiments with versification and his sincere desire to enrich Russian drama language by the Old-Slavonic lexis and, thus, to prevent it from “littering” by calques from French; his constant attempts to create original vaudeville using events and figures from the Russian history;

Khmelnitskii’s elegance of style, inventiveness in using customary ways of versification, which proved that the resources of traditional metres were not exhausted yet, his audacity in bringing on stage the contemporary everyday language of St.-Petersburg salons instead of “prescribed” high-flown and archaic elocution of the eighteenth century;

Pisarev’s epigrammatic couplets with their polemical attacks on his literary enemies and with their satirical overtones directed against the flaws of the Russian society, his first and successful attempts in creating recognizable portraits of his contemporaries; - all this, placed in historic perspective, gives the idea of how vaudeville, the genre borrowed from another country, started to gain distinct Russian features at the first quoter of the nineteenth century.

This picture of the aristocratic period of Russian vaudeville cannot be complete without the vaudeville which stays aside in the history of Russian
vaudeville, namely *Who Is Brother Who Is Sister, or Deceit After Deceit* by Alexander Griboedov and Petr Viazemskii. It stays aside because of two different reasons. First, the authors did not consider themselves vaudevillists. Though Griboedov did write some vaudevilles, he was more attracted towards comedy and, probably, he would have left us more than his prominent *Woe from Wit* had he lived longer. Viazemskii did not take his play writing seriously; his main literary interests included poetry and criticism. In short, they did not consider themselves vaudevillists.

Secondly, in furious literary debates on narodnost’, Griboedov and Viazemskii were the first to express their views not only in theoretical articles, but in the most practical way - by writing a dramatic piece. It was done not by an aforethought intention, but came out as a logical continuation of their views on literature. In terms of narodnost’, only Pisarev’s *Busybody*, as a vaudeville depicting true Russian life and characters, might be compared with *Who Is Brother Who Is Sister*. During its aristocratic period, Russian vaudeville gained a distinct genre certainty in the writing of Khmelnitskii, Shakhovskoi, Griboedov and Viazemskii.

The vaudevillists of the next phase, democratic-raznochinyi, did not add somewhat significantly new to the form of vaudeville. The further ascending development of the genre and (however strange it might seem) its later descending popularity as well, took place at the expense of broadening thematicality of vaudeville, new type of characters, and another ideological

* The next was A. Pushkin on a much higher level with his *Boris Godunov*. 

269
basis which was conditioned by the changes in political, economical, and social life in Russian Empire. The changes came immediately after the mysterious death of Alexander I when his brother Nicholas I succeeded him as new Russian Emperor in 1825. The revolt of aristocratic liberally oriented officers in December 1825, who tried to use the situation to dethrone Nicholas I and to establish constitutional or parliamentary state, was cruelly put down. For the next thirty years, the policy of Nicholas I was characterized by strengthening the role of police in state affairs, suppressing any demonstrations of liberal thought, establishing The Third Section, a special secret institution the agents of which had to spy and delate on everything and everybody suspicious or dangerous in their opinion.

New laws on censorship firmly restricted literary and theatre activity. Censors acted in accordance with the official doctrine of Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality (see Chapter 2 on narodnost’ and nationality). Theatre repertoire was limited to tearful melodramas, pseudo-patriotic dramas and comedies, and vaudeville. The number of produced vaudevilles in both capitals increased to six-seven hundred yearly. Often, it was trashy one-day to live plays, where even the brilliant acting skill of prominent actors could not “save” the absurdity of the plot and colorless characters.

Nevertheless, the houses of the Aleksandrinskii theatre in St-Petersburg and Malyi theatre in Moscow were filled every night. With the development of new economical relations, expanding industrial labour, and growing literacy among the lower classes, new spectators began to fill in theatre auditoriums: workers, meshchane (townspeople), merchants, servants, etc. The class of
raznochintsy grew up significantly as well (see chart 7 and 8; pp. 163-164) and turned out to be the estate which began to define the direction of the development of Russian literature in general and drama in particular.

In contradistinction to the authors of the aristocratic period of Russian vaudeville, who were dilettantes, playwrights-raznochintsy were professional writers. They earned their living by writing. They brought into their plays their life experience and characters taken from real life. New social types began to inhabit traditional vaudeville, such as petty clerks, merchants, servants, and people from their own class - journalists, actors, teachers, students, and the like. Naturally, the vaudeville “problems” of princes and counts were ousted by the problems of the common man.

The custom of borrowing sujets from the French comedies and vaudevilles and adjusting them to Russian reality still existed at this time, but usually, the choice was made with taking into consideration new audience in theatre house. Thus, D. Lenskii adapted Le père de la débutante by Jean-François-Alfred Bayard as a five act vaudeville The Provincial Débutante (Лев Гурыч Синичкин или Провинциальная дебютантка). Since that time, this vaudeville never lost its popularity in Russia because Lenskii, an actor himself, knew from his own experience the life of provincial actors with all its back-stage intrigues, rivalry, patronage, etc. Lenskii was an average actor but a successful vaudevillist, though, as he confessed in a private letter:

Hell with them [vaudevilles]! I myself cannot stand them and I write only because of the necessity: my salary is only three thousand roubles, while my living expenses are three times more. Willy-nilly, you’ll start earning you living by writing couplets!2
He was not very innovative and exploited the well known vaudeville devices, but knowledge of stage, sense of humour, and ability to write splendid couplets made him one of the most popular vaudevillists of the period.

Lenskii’s fellow-actor, P. Karatygin, unlike his brother, a famous tragedian, had moderate success as an actor but became very popular as a vaudevillist. Karatygin’s unconditional loyalty to his sovereign Nicholas I and conservatism prevented him from adopting new trends in Russian literature and theatre. He could not understand and accept the progressive ideas of Natural School. Karatygin’s writing was devoid of the sparkling merriment of Lenskii, as well as the socially important overtones of two other most significant vaudevillist of this period, F. Koni and N. Nekrasov. Nevertheless, Karatygin’s vaudevilles attracted audience by author’s mild humour, true depiction of a character, and his compassion to a common man. Karatygin, as an honest artist, could not help noticing the flaws of the contemporary society, and then, probably, against his will, his writing gained the elements of social satire, like it was in his *Bakery, or The Petersburg German* (this vaudeville is analysed in Chapter 8; Appendix E presents English translation of the *Bakery*).

In contradistinction to Lenskii and Karatygin, the style of the best vaudevilles of F. Koni and N. Nekrasov might be characterized as satirical and socially significant. Koni’s *The Petersburg Apartments* and Hekrasov’s *The Usurer* presented the whole gallery of middle- and low class- characters. The representatives of the nobility were depicted in a mocking, almost farcical manner. Both playwrights were not strong enough in composing couplets. This fact and the general tendency of democratic authors towards satire brought
structural changes into vaudeville: the specific gravity of couplets was decreasing and satirizing personal or societal flaws was expressed through the action of the play and through the characterization of dramatis personae.

It seems, that in his Introduction to the vaudeville anthology published in 1937, M. Paushkin under appreciated the efforts of vaudevillists of the democratic-raznochinnyi period to turn to socially significant themes: “Слабые проблески социальной сатиры тонули в этом море мещанской пошлятины.” It should be remembered that the censorship of the Nicholaian regime cut out of the texts of the plays everything what might be considered undermining the existing order, like it happened with the mentioned above vaudevilles by Koni and Nekrasov (see Chapters 7 and 8). Two distinct tendencies in the development of Russian vaudeville of the democratic-raznochinnyi period can be revealed which brought this development to a stop.

One direction was to create more impressive and entertaining pieces by adding more music, singing and dancing into the texture of classical vaudeville, by complicating its simple sujet, by increasing the number of characters, and by adding choruses and ballet groups - in one word, to make vaudeville more spectacular and theatrical.

Another direction was to use the vaudeville genre (democratic by its origin) for socially important themes and for satirical depiction of reality by creating more elaborate and psychologically complex characters and by interweaving the texture of the play with veritable and recognizable details of everyday life. Both directions were preconditioned by economical changes in

“Weak gleams of social satire were sinking in this sea of vulgar banality.”
the Russian society. Both directions were preconditioned by political regime of the time: first went along with it, second tried to resist it. Both directions were preconditioned by new audiences filled in theatre houses: a mixed crowd of middle and lower estates with different levels of education and with different aesthetic orientation. In the 1840s-50s aristocratic public was not satisfied with the democratic-raznochinnyi vaudeville; it became not “a good ton” to attend Russian theatre anymore. The preferences were given to Italian opera and French theatre.

As a result, both direction led to the same destination - destruction of the vaudeville form. In first case, vaudeville turned into operetta which in the second half of the nineteenth century would conquer the world as easily as vaudeville did at the beginning of the century. In second case, vaudeville degenerated into domestic comedy which found its bright embodiment in the works of Ostrovskii, Sukhovo-Kobylin, Saltykov-Shchedrin, and others.

It took four decades for Russian vaudeville to come to the point in theatre history when it became possible to speak about originality of this phenomenon, Russian vaudeville. Russian vaudeville became Russian only after it gained the certain features which can characterize national drama as a whole. The national peculiarity expressed through the original plot, system of moral and aesthetic values of a given society revealed through this plot, language, characterization of dramatis personae - all these qualities gradually made the borrowed genre of vaudeville Russian. Besides, the ability of vaudeville to reflect and to respond instantly to the current events in the political, social, or cultural life helped vaudeville to establish a direct connection
with Russian life of the first half of the nineteenth century and become an inalienable part of it. After 1850s, some playwrights continued to write vaudevilles in its classic variant till the end of the nineteenth century but they had nothing to add to what had been already said or done. Historically, the role of vaudeville in Russian theatre of the first half of the nineteenth century was finished.

Endnotes to Chapter 9


WORKS CITED

Russian Language Sources


Вестник Европы, № 1, 2 января. [The Herald of Europe, 1824, № 1, January 2.]


276


Сын Отечества, 1813, ч.9, № 44, с. 224-225. [“Son of the Fatherland,” IX,1813, № 44.]
Сын Отечества, 1819, ч. 51, № 6, с. 259. [“Son of the Fatherland,” CI 1819, № 6 (6).]

Сын Отечества, 1825, № 22, с. 145-154. [“Son of the Fatherland,” CXIX 1825, № 2.]

Фаддей Венедиктович Булгарин. http://www.2day.ru/7951-show.asp


English, French, German, and Other Languages Sources


Brief History of Pavlovsk. http://www.alexanderpalace.org/pavlovsk


279


Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality. In "Britannica on Line" @ www.britannica.com/bcom/eb/article/4/0,5716,58924+1+57487,00.html


Rousseau, J.-J. *Dictionnaire de Musique.* Tome Second. A Amsterdam, Chez Marc Michel Rey, MD CCLXIX.


APPENDIX A: LETTERS OF COPYRIGHT PERMISSION TO USE PHOTO IMAGES

1. From: Ric Erickson, the photographer; Paris, France.

Subject: 02.07 - Theatre du Vaudeville  Date: Mon, 2 Jul 2001 14:17:51 +0100
From: erickso@worldnet.fr
To: theatrestudio5@netscape.net

02.07 - Theatre du Vaudeville

Bonjour Alexander Tselebrovski -

REF:- Date: Sun, 01 Jul 2001 15:24:46 -0400
To: info@wfi.fr
Subject: To: Linda Thalman: Theatre du Vaudeville image

--Your request was forwarded to me by Linda Thalman.

>I am finishing a dissertation on the history of vaudeville and would
>like to include the image of the former Theatre du Vaudeville, which
>was posted on your website "Metropole-Paris, Looking Around for
>Napoleon III "
>( http://www.metropoleparis.com/1997/71103244/opera.html ) as an
>illustration in the text of my dissertation. The dissertation is not
>designed for publishing; it will remain at our University (LSU) at
>the Theatre Department. I'd like to have a permission from you to
>use this image in my dissertation. Please, let me know if I can use
>it.

--Image:- oper244c.jpg [height="250" width="170"]
--Caption :- The ex-theatre du Vaudeville - a cinema since 1927, now
run by Paramont.

--Permission granted to use the image referenced above. Photographer:
Ric Erickson.

--Do you have much information about vaudeville theatres in Paris?

--regards, ric

----------
Producer-Editor - Metropole Paris - < http://www.metropoleparis.com >

Subject: FW: permission for using the image

Date: Mon, 2 Jul 2001 12:03:09 -0500

From: richard@hammergalleries.com

To: theatrestudio5@netscape.net

Organization: Hammer Galleries

Permission is given to use Cortes’s theater vaudeville for the exclusive purpose of dissertation.

Richard Lynch,
Hammer Galleries

-----Original Message-----
From: June
Sent: Monday, July 02, 2001 8:45 AM
To: Richard; Felicia
Subject: FW: permission for using the image

-----Original Message-----
From: theatrestudio5@netscape.net [SMTP:theatrestudio5@netscape.net]
Sent: Sunday, July 01, 2001 2:23 PM
To: info
Subject: permission for using the image

Dear Sir,
I am finishing a dissertation on the history of vaudeville and would like to include the image of the E. Cortes's "Theatre du Vaudeville" posted on your website as an illustration in the text of my dissertation. The dissertation is not designed for publishing; it will remain at our University (LSU) at the Theatre Department.
I'd like to have a permission from you to use this image in my dissertation. Please, let me know if I can have it.

Thank you,
Alexander Tselebrovski, Ph. D. (ABD) in Theatre.

From: Svetlana Kotlyarenko, Mariinskii Opera House, St.-Petersburg, Russia.

Subject: Re: photoimages

Date: Tue, 4 Sep 2001 12:26:26 +0400
From: skotlyar@mariinsky.ru
To: theatrestudio5@netscape.net
Hello ICC,

Monday, August 20, 2001, 12:11:33 PM, you wrote:

I> To whom it may concern:

I> I am Alexander Tselebrovski. This fall I am finishing my dissertation on Russian theatre of the XIX century.

I> I’d like to ask your permission to use the photo images placed on your site as illustrations for my dissertation.

I> If granted, the images will be used only for the dissertation purposes and not for publishing.

I> Thank you so much,

I> Alexander Tselebrovski, Ph.D. (ABD).

I> P.S. Please, respond to theatrestudio5@netscape.net.

Dear Mr. Tselebrovsky,

My name is Svetlana Kotlyarenko, I am Assistant Head of Repertoire and Information of the Mariinsky Theatre. Sorry for delay, I had holidays. Of course, you may use the photo images placed on our site as illustration for your dissertation, but not for publishing. I hope, your work will be very successful and wish you all best,

Svetlana Kotlyarenko  
mailto:skotly@marinsky.ru

4. From George Sukharev, Tickets of Russia, Ltd., St.-Petersburg

Subject: Re: website images Date: Mon, 17 Dec 2001 12:34:01 +0300 From: sukharev@ticketsofrussia.ru To: theatrestudio5@netscape.net Organization: Tickets of Russia, Ltd

Dear Alexander,
You may use our images for non-commercial purposes.
Yours truly,
George Sukharev
IT department, Tickets of Russia, Ltd.
http://www.TicketsOfRussia.ru

Saturday, December 15, 2001, 5:28:07 AM Moscow Time (GMT +3), you wrote:

From: ICC <icc@lsu.edu>
To: info@ticketsofrussia.ru
Date: Saturday, December 15, 2001, 5:28:07 AM
Subject: website images
To whom it may concern:

Hello,
I am Alexander Tselebrovski. Next spring I am finishing my dissertation on the Russian theatre of the first half of the XIX century.
I'd like to ask your permission to use the photo images placed on your site as illustrations for my dissertation.
If granted, the images will be used only for the dissertation purposes and not for publishing.

Thank you so much,
Alexander Tselebrovski, Ph.D. (ABD).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1812</td>
<td>Cossack-Versifier</td>
<td>A. Shakhovskoi [Шаховской, А. “Казак-стихотворец”]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1814</td>
<td>Lomonosov</td>
<td>A. Shakhovskoi [Шаховской, А. “Ломоносов”]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1817</td>
<td>The Pranks of the Enamored</td>
<td>N. Khmelnitskii [Хмельницкий, Н. “Шалости влюбленных”]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1817</td>
<td>The Prattler</td>
<td>N. Khmelnitskii [Хмельницкий, Н. “Говорун”]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1819</td>
<td>Castles in the Air</td>
<td>N. Khmelnitskii [Хмельницкий, Н. “Воздушные замки”]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1819</td>
<td>Two Teachers, or Asinus Asinum Fricat</td>
<td>A. Shakhovskoi [Шаховской, А. “Два учителя или Asinus Asinum Fricat”]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1821</td>
<td>The Actors Among Themselves, or The First Debut of the Actress Troepolskaia</td>
<td>N. Khmelnitskii (in collaboration with N. Vsevolozhskii?) [Хмельницкий, Н. (В сотрудничестве с Всеволожским, Н. В.?). “Актеры между собой или Первый дебют актрисы Троепольской”]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1821</td>
<td>Marriages Are Made in Heaven, or Every Cloud Has a Silver Lining</td>
<td>N. Khmelnitskii [Хмельницкий, Н. “Суженого конем не объяешь или Нет худа без добра”]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1824</td>
<td>The Busybody, or The Know-How Gets the Job Done Best</td>
<td>A. Pisarev [Писарев, А. “Хлопотун или Дело мастера боится”]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1824</td>
<td>The Tutor and the Pupil or The Hangover for the Feasting of Others</td>
<td>A. Pisarev [Писарев А. “Учитель и ученик или В чужом пиру похмелье”]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>1824</td>
<td>Who Is Brother, Who Is Sister, or Deceit After Deceit</td>
<td>A. Griboedov and P. Viazemskii [Грибоедов А., Вяземский, П. “Кто брат, кто сестра, или обман за обманом”]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>1826</td>
<td>A High-Society Incident</td>
<td>N. Khmelnitskii [Хмельницкий, Н. “Светский случай”]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>1828</td>
<td>An Honest Thief</td>
<td>D. Lenskii [Ленский Д. “Честный вор”]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>1829</td>
<td>Another Mercury, or The Novel Masquerade</td>
<td>A. Shakhovskoi [Шаховской, А. “Ещё Меркурий, или Романный маскарад”]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPENDIX B: INDEX OF VAUDEVILLES CONSIDERED FOR THE DISSERTATION
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>1829</td>
<td><em>Mutual Trials</em> by N. Khmelnitskii. [Хмельницкий, Н. “Взаимные испытания.”]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>1833</td>
<td><em>The Prince with a Toupee, a Cataract, and a Hump</em> by F. Koni.</td>
<td>[Кони, Ф. “Принц с хохлом, бельмом и горбом.”]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>1833</td>
<td><em>She’s Both Good and Bad and Smart and Silly</em> by D. Lenskii.</td>
<td>[Ленский, Д. “Хороша и дурна, и глупа и умна”.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>1834</td>
<td><em>The Scrivener under the Table</em> by D. Lenskii.</td>
<td>[Ленский Д. “Стряпчий под столом”].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>1836</td>
<td><em>The Girl-Hussar</em> by F. Koni.</td>
<td>[Кони Ф. “Девушка-гусар”].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>1837</td>
<td><em>Two Merchants and Two Fathers</em> by D. Lenskii.</td>
<td>[Ленский Д. “Два купца и два отца”]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>1838</td>
<td><em>A House in the Petersburg Suburb</em> by P. Karatygin.</td>
<td>[Каратыгин П. “Дом на Петербургской стороне”].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>1839</td>
<td><em>The Provincial Débutante</em> by D. Lenskii.</td>
<td>[Ленский Д. “Лев Гурьяч Синичкин или Провинциальная дебютантка”]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>1840</td>
<td><em>Buddies-Journalists, or It Won’t Work Without Sharlatanism</em> by P. Grigoriev I. [Григорьев, П. 1-ый. “Друзья-журналисты, или нельзя без шарлатанства”].</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>1840</td>
<td><em>The Petersburg Apartments</em> by F. Koni.</td>
<td>[Кони Ф. “Петербургские квартиры”].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>1841</td>
<td><em>Cough Cannot be Hidden, or You Cannot Lock up a Girl</em> by N. Nekrasov (Perepelskii). [Некрасов Н. (Перепельский). “Шила в мешке не утаишь, - девушку под замком не удержишь.”]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>1841</td>
<td><em>Bob, or Husband out of Place</em> by N. Nekrasov (Perepelskii).</td>
<td>[Некрасов Н. (Перепельский). “Феоклист Онуфрич Боб, или Муж не в своей тарелке.”]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>1841</td>
<td><em>Actor</em> by N. Nekrasov (Perepelskii).</td>
<td>[Некрасов Н. (Перепельский) Актер. 1841. ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>1841</td>
<td><em>That’s What it Means To Fall in Love with an Actress</em> by N. Nekrasov (Perepelskii). [Некрасов Н. (Перепельский). “Вот что значит влюбиться в актрису.”]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Translation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1843</td>
<td><em>The Daughter of a Russian Actor</em></td>
<td>P. Grigoriev I.</td>
<td>&quot;Дочь русского актера&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1843</td>
<td><em>Bakery, or The Petersburg German</em></td>
<td>P. Karatygin</td>
<td>&quot;Булочная или Петербургский немец&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1844</td>
<td><em>The Necessity of a New Bridge across the Neva-River, or The Thwarted Agreement</em></td>
<td>Anonym.</td>
<td>&quot;Потребность нового моста через Неву, или Расстроенный сговор&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1844</td>
<td><em>The Petersburg Usurer</em></td>
<td>N. Nekrasov (Perepelskii)</td>
<td>&quot;Петербургский ростовщик&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1845</td>
<td><em>The Civil Servant’s Uniform</em></td>
<td>P. Karatygin</td>
<td>&quot;Вицмундир&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1848</td>
<td><em>The Petersburg Anecdote with A Tenant and a Householder</em></td>
<td>P. Grigoriev I.</td>
<td>&quot;Петербургский анекдот с жильцом и домохозяином&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1849</td>
<td><em>Az and Fert</em></td>
<td>P. Fedorov</td>
<td>&quot;Аз и Ферт&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td><em>Collaborators, or Don’t Reap Where You Haven’t Sown</em></td>
<td>V. Sollogub</td>
<td>&quot;Сотрудники, или чужим добром не наживешься&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td><em>The Trouble from the Gentle Heart</em></td>
<td>V. Sollogub</td>
<td>&quot;Беда от нежного сердца&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1855</td>
<td><em>The Hunchback, or Choosing a Bride</em></td>
<td>V. Sollogub</td>
<td>&quot;Горбун, или выборы невесты&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1855</td>
<td><em>The Simpleton and the Well-Bred</em></td>
<td>D. Lenskii</td>
<td>&quot;Простушка и воспитанная&quot;.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Old Slavonic names for the letters A and F in the Russian alphabet.*

288
APPENDIX C:

N. I. KHMELNITSKII (1789-1845)

ACTORS AMONG THEMSELVES,
OR
THE FIRST DEBUT OF THE ACTRESS TROEPOLSKAIA

vaudeville in one act

written and produced for the first time for the benefit performance of

Ms. A. T. Kolosova

on January 3, 1821


289
Characters:

Mr. Troepolskii

Mrs. Troepolskaia

Popov, an actor

Shumskii, an actor
Troepolskii (comes out of the house with a letter in his hands). Well, just as I’ve been ready to go hunting, I receive the answer. Let’s see what my buddies are writing! I invited them to celebrate my wife’s name-day and, as I know, ladies’s man Popov and rake Shumskii do like the parties. (Reading.) “We have received your message and we are rejoicing not as much on the occasion of your returning to Petersburg, but we glad to know about the name-day of your honorable spouse, with whom we are going to get acquainted today. The saying says: every cloud has a silver lining; and that’s true! If you did not do such a foolish thing as to get married, we would not get a chance to celebrate at your expense. We heard that you were seduced by her dowry; it’s not that bad! If you think that she is not that smart, it’s not a trouble, you are making an even couple.” What unbearable scoffers they are! But that’s me to blame: I am too modest about my own virtues. (Sings.)

Popov and Shumskii are my friends
And they annoy me more than others.
And here’s where the story ends:
They laugh at me, my mocking brothers.
But is it me to blame or life?
Am I to blame for not being witty?
And even... who? My own wife
 Makes fool of me without pity.

Let’s see, what else is there? (Reading.) “You are saying that your wife has a passion and great abilities for theatre. Not you would say, not we would listen; but we will see this miracle ourselves and if she’s not that bad, we, probably will have some work on her; don’t be angry with us for that, we are not the gods to animate your Galatea. Farewell, good-bye! Your guests for today, Popov, Shumskii, and their retinue!” And they are my friends! But they will know Troopolskii! However I won’t show this letter to my wife because she might get angry and then our celebration won’t be a celebration at all. That’s right, the common sense demands that!

II

Troopolskii and Mrs. Troopolskaiia

Mrs. Troopolskaiia. You haven’t gone yet! What a letter do you hold?

Troopolskii. It’s not a letter... It’s... it doesn’t mean anything... (Aside) What a pity I did not hide it!

Mrs. Troopolskaiia. Why don’t you show it to me?

Troopolskii. Darling... What if it’s my secret...

Mrs. Troopolskaiia. The better; I, as your wife, should know it.

Troopolskii. But, listen, my friend...

Mrs. Troopolskaiia. I ask you, sir.

Troopolskii. What a desire to...
**Mrs. Troepolskaia.** Then, I order you.

**Troepolskii.** What a naughty child you are! She orders me... Then take it but promise not to get angry.

*She is reading.*

**Troepolskii.** *(Sings.)*

The kindest husband in the world,
That's who I am, believe me.
I'd do whatever I was told,
Just, dear friend, don't leave me.
She wants to be an actress? Fine!
And I am so gallant
That do not bother to decline
Her being loved for talent.

**Mrs. Troepolskaia.** Fine! That’s what your friends are! And you allow them to write such things about me!

**Troepolskii.** Now you see that you are punished for your own curiosity? But, please, don't be angry, it’s just an idle joke. Popov was always a scoffer, but since he had come from Paris and plays the roles of lady-lovers and rakes, he’s become even worse.

**Mrs. Troepolskaia.** I have nothing to do with that. But I am not going to tolerate such rudeness and I have to take the vengeance on them for that.

**Troepolskii.** Pardon me, my friend! What are you going to do? It’s not a duel, is
it?

**Mrs. Troepolskaia.** Oh no, you are not born for a sward; I find my own way to settle accounts with them.

**Troepolskii.** Stop it, for God’s sake! If you’ll make them angry with you, they will criticize your acting and you’ll never get a role in theatre.

**Mrs. Troepolskaia.** I do not need their protection.

**Troepolskii.** However, my friend, I can be an example for you. With all my talents...

**Mrs. Troepolskaia.** Ah, leave your talents alone!

**Troepolskii.** The fact is that I did not become a tragedian just because of their intrigues.

**Mrs. Troepolskaia.** A nice comparison!

**Troepolskii.** Well, really, don’t be upset. One glance at you would be enough for them to change their opinion about you.

**Mrs. Troepolskaia.** And they will change it. I assure you.

**Troepolskii.** However, if you demand I will be through with them tragically.

**Mrs. Troepolskaia.** Don’t bother. My revenge is ready.

**Troepolskii.** Ah! Ah! What is it?

**Mrs. Troepolskaia.** That’s my secret.

**Troepolskii.** But I could give you a piece of advice.

**Mrs. Troepolskaia.** I don’t need it.

**Troepolskii.** My friend... Remember the rules of a good behavior... A husband must know...
Mrs. Troepolskaia. And a wife does not want to say.

Troepolskii. But I demand...

Mrs. Troepolskaia. But I do not want, do not want, and again do not want.

(Sings.)

As your wife, I always know my duty.
You already have forgotten yours.
I am never grouchy or snooty.
To my words you always are averse.
If a husband wants to be admired sweetly,
Here’s a family I will portray:
Husband must obey his wife completely,
And a wife should have the reigning sway.

Troepolskii. Well, that’s enough, my friend; I was joking. How can I demand...

Mrs. Troepolskaia. Finally, you speak reasonably.

Troepolskii. Think off anything you want, and I go to see our relatives who have arrived here also.

Mrs. Troepolskaia. Please, come back soon.

Troepolskii. Certainly, my friend. Good-bye. Oh, by the way, if somebody of our guests will come earlier, you, please...

Mrs. Troepolskaia. I will receive all of them, especially, Popov and Shumski.

Troepolskii. But, please, receive them at your best and make them...

Mrs. Troepolskaia. Oh, of course, I will make them (aside) fools out of
themselves, if I’ll be fortunate.

**Troepolskii.** I am sure, you will! Good-bye! *(Leaves.)*

---

**III**

**Mrs. Troepolskaia.** *(Alone).* They are laughing at me! How dare they! But they will regret. *(Sings.)*

*And now my plan is ready. Damn!*  
I will revenge them. Grin and bear!  
Popov and Shumskii, both of them  
Will pay me well for what they dare.  
Who made them up, those home rules,  
To find these scoffers witty ever?  
But your “she-fool” will make the fools  
Of fools who brag to be so clever.

---

**IV**

**Mrs. Troepolskaia and Popov (wearing a hunting outfit and humming a song).**

**Mrs. Troepolskaia.** Oh, Lord! Somebody’s coming. What if it’s one of those scoffers? I’ll try to get to know who he is. *(Sits on the bench).*

**Popov (aside) Ah, ah, that’s a meeting! A young and pretty woman! Don’t make**
May I ask you, madam, isn’t it this dacha where Mr. Troepolskii lives?

**Mrs. Troepolskaia.** Troepolskii? What Troepolskii? No, ...seems to me he does not live here.

**Popov.** If not here, then somewhere around. I ask you to pardon me for disturbing you with my question.

**Mrs. Troepolskaia.** Not at all, it’s my pleasure to answer you.

**Popov** (*aside*). How lovely she is! I’ll try to start a conversation.

**Mrs. Troepolskaia.** You are looking for Troepolski, and what is he?

**Popov.** He is... simple and kind, if you will; he is my old friend. He invited me for a celebration and now I am going to his place from hunting.

**Mrs. Troepolskaia.** How did it happen that you do not know where he lives?

**Popov.** You see, he returned from Petersburg not long ago and rents one of these dachas.

**Mrs. Troepolskaia.** I am not acquainted with him. But there is a married gentleman who rents a dacha not far from here; he passes by this place rather often.

**Popov.** Together with his spouse?

**Mrs. Troepolskaia.** I haven’t noticed that.

**Popov.** I’d like to be sure that it’s him. Could you tell me if that gentleman looks as I describe him? (*Sings.*)

---

*Dacha - a holiday cottage in the country or in environs of a city or a large town.*
He is eccentric, middle-aged,

Polite extremely with his wife,

By her, I am sure, he was caged,

And may be turned into a housewife.

He thinks, that he is very clever,

(The funniest thing about him)

And with his wife in love forever...

Mrs. Troepolskaia. Your portrait is as true, as grim.

Popov. Then, I bet, it’s him. Would you forgive my curiosity if I ask you: how does his wife look like?

Mrs. Troepolskaia. Really, I do not like to laugh at people.

Popov. You mean, there’s something about her to laugh at?

Mrs. Troepolskaia. She seemed a little strange to me.

Popov. A little strange, not more? You are too magnanimous.

Mrs. Troepolskaia. And if you are too derisive, then I can confess...

Popov. Do me a favor!

Mrs. Troepolskaia. She, truly, surprised me. What a manner of walking! What manners!..

Popov. What a pleasantness!

Mrs. Troepolskaia. What a grace!

Popov. What a husband!

Mrs. Troepolskaia. What a wife!
Popov. What a couple!

(Both are laughing.)

Mrs. Troepolskaia. I should admit, our acquaintance started in a very merry way!

Popov. To make you to laugh more I'll draw a portrait of her and, I stake my head for the similarity. (Sings.)

So, she is ugly, awkward, snorty...

As for her years... you can't score,

Somewhere from thirty to, say, forty,

But I can bet that no more.

They say, she says she wants to change

Her dialect and provincial features.

Oh, how happy is our stage

To have such kind of monstrous creatures.

Mrs. Troepolskaia. You are a master of description.

Popov. But it's not all. Now imagine that our Iaroslavl’ goddess having such an attractive appearance wants in defiance of Nature to become an actress and her gentle husband invites us to enjoy her talent.

Mrs. Troepolskaia. Are you fond of theatre?

Popov. More: I am an actor.

Mrs. Troepolskaia. My God! I haven't recognized you! Are you Mr. Shumskii?

Popov. Not Shumskii. I am Popov.

Iaroslavl’ is a city where the first professional Russian theatre was established.
Mrs. Troepolskaia. Ah, Lord, I am so mistaken!

Popov. Now imagine that I in this costume and my buddy Shumskii in a footman livery will come to the husband. Having gotten his permission, we’ll play a comedy with our new actress or, in other words, we’ll simply fool her.

Mrs. Troepolskaia. (Aside.) We’ll see about that. (Aloud.) Oh, I think it’ll be extremely funny. Besides, it’s not hard for you at all. I enjoyed your charming acting so often...

Popov. I thank you for your indulgence.

Mrs. Troepolskaia. You are so pleasant, so graceful on stage...

Popov. Oh, don’t... (Aside.) She is so sweet! I’ve got to know who she is. (To her.) I thank the circumstances for getting acquainted with you. Will you allow me to know your name?

Mrs. Troepolskaia. Unfortunately, I am a widow and I live with my relatives very solitary here. Don’t ask me more, that’s my secret.

Popov. I do not dare to ask you for more trust.

Mrs. Troepolskaia. Let’s leave it and talk about theatre which I love very much. Tell me, is it very difficult to be a good actress?

Popov. (Sings.)

The beauty and the talent let
You find the ways to get success.
The coquetry is for Suzette,
Simplicity is for Agnes.
And you can’t be a prima, dearest,
If you can’t hit the upper ‘do.’
Your feelings should be most deepest
To play the mythical Dido!

Mrs. Troepolskaia. Oh, yes, it is certainly very difficult. But each actress can choose roles according her talents, cannot she?

Popov. You are joking. It is very hard to choose when you have nothing to choose from.

Mrs. Troepolskaia. Well, but there are so many playwrights.

Popov. And so little plays. (Sings.)

A lot of authors make confession
That they can’t stand their own trade.
A playwright’s not a good profession
Because it’s properly not paid.
They also wish, they made it clear,
(I laughed at them, is it a crime?),
Not to be hissed at the premiere
But be applauded all the time.

Mrs. Troepolskaia. What a funny demand. But it does not cross your profits.

Popov. Quite opposite, it does, especially if you do not have a new play for the benefice.

Mrs. Troepolskaia. What is it, bénéfice?

Popov. (Sings.)

What’s bénéfice? I am so glad
To know its purpose.

It's a treasure for good actors and
It's worst than a bankruptcy for bad ones.

But I guarantee forever

That an actress like you

Would never present

A bad taste bénéfice.

Mrs. Troepolskaia. Thank you for your politeness! I engaged you... I wanted to say, I engaged myself so much into the conversation with you, though I have to go.

Popov. The only thought that I am seeing you may be the last time...

Mrs. Troepolskaia. Why? I am glad to get acquainted with you.

Popov. At least, tell me, do you saunter at this place often?

Mrs. Troepolskaia. Very often. My usual time for a walk is in an hour.

Popov. (Aside.) In an hour. I understand.

Mrs. Troepolskaia. So, farewell!

Popov. I depart in a pleasant hope to see you soon again.

_Trepolskaia leaves._

V

Popov (Alone). I admire her! Charming lady! It is absolutely essential that I know who she is. Who knows how all this might end? If to judge according how she received me... I hope... But it’s better not to guess my fortune.
VI

*Popov, Shumskii.*

**Shumskii.** Ah, Your Highness Count! Here I am at your service. (*Patting his shoulder.*) However don’t forget that we are not on stage. So, hello!

**Popov.** What a dandy!

**Shumskii.** Yes, the best theatre livery.

**Popov.** Right now at the back of a carriage.

**Shumskii.** Say better, out of the carriage. I’ve just arrived by this carriage and sent it back to bring our friends here for today’s celebration.

**Popov.** That’s good.

**Shumskii.** What about you? Have you found Troepolskii?

**Popov.** Yes, he lives not far from here.

**Shumskii.** How was the hunting luck?

**Popov.** Not bad.

**Shumskii (taking Popov’s empty game-bag.)** Merciful hunter! (Sings.)

Sometimes a hunter does not sleep

The whole night through,

And still his bag is empty

Though birds are flying right under his nose!

But he won’t tell you about his bad luck!

He always smiles and makes faces!

He does not take dogs to hunt!
His poodle” is an invisible dog.

Popov. Leave this nonsense, get glad, and help your friend.

Shumskii. What’s the matter?

Popov. Shumskii! My dear Shumski! A new intrigue!

Shumskii. Intrigue! Only not by correspondence, I am tired of that comedy in letters.

Popov. What letters! Rendezvous, love confessions — I’ll let you know — and that’s it.

Shumskii. So, there’s nothing to do for me.

Popov. On the contrary. The main thing is to get to know the name of an unknown beauty.

Shumskii. Unknown beauty? And where does she live?

Popov. In this house.

Shumskii. In this house? Not a big deal!

Popov. Farther,..

Shumskii. Don’t bother. I am close enough.

Popov. So, I hope.

Shumskii. What is said, that is done! However, you better be sure we won’t miss the dinner.

Popov. Oh, no! Troepolskii, I was told, lives somewhere around. I go to find him and you meanwhile, carry out my commission.

“Khmelnitskii plays with the word poodle (type of dog) and a hunting jargon poodle which means a miss.”
Shumskii. Tell me how all that happened?

Popov. You’ll know everything later. It is not the good time for that; they might see us together. So long! (Aside.) In an hour she will go for a walk. I have to come back sooner and to get rid of Shumskii. (Leaves.)

VII

Shumskii (alone). Well, Shumskii, come onto the stage! Truly, I am not quite sure in this role, but who from my brothers-actors was not in these shoes? The habit will help me, and the courage will be my prompter. (Knocks at the door.) Hey, anybody’s at home?

VIII

Shumskii, Mrs. Troepolskaia.

Mrs. Troepolskaia (in the house). Who do you need?

Shumskii. Woman’s voice! It’s better, a woman will blurt out everything.

Mrs. Troepolskaia (coming out). Was it you who knocked at the door?

Shumskii. That’s right, it was me, madam... my beauty. (Aside.) Popov is right. If the housemaid is such a beauty, I can imagine what is her mistress. (To her.) So, my sweetie, as we are both servants, let’s start without ceremonies with a kiss. (He wants to embrace her; she slaps his face.)

Mrs. Troepolskaia. Let’s start with a slap.

Shumskii. A-a! (Aside) Devil, I forgot that I am not on a theatre stage. (Aloud.)
I admit that such a reception of yours proved me rather...

Mrs. Troepolskaia. Does it hurt?

Shumskii. Let’s put these jokes aside. I am to blame and that’s it. Now let’s get to the business. (*Duet.*)

Shumskii. Of course, your mistress lives with somebody in this dacha?

Mrs. Troepolskaia. That’s right, my mistress lives not alone in this dacha.

Shumskii. And what’s the name they call her here?

Mrs. Troepolskaia. You don’t have a need to know that.

Shumskii. That’s a usual trick of a maid.

Mrs. Troepolskaia. I am not that easy to be fooled.

Shumskii. (*Aside*) This girl is a mischievous imp.

Mrs. Troepolskaia (*Aside.*) This Shumski is a mischievous imp.

Shumskii. It’s a mistake that you keep things secret; my questions do not lead to anything bad.

Mrs. Troepolskaia. If so, do they lead to something good?

Shumskii. Of course. What is bad about it if a servant of some famous master, looking for a friend of his master, knocked at this door and met a beautiful housemaid?

Mrs. Troepolskaia. And who is your master?

Shumskii. And who is your mistress?

Mrs. Troepolskaia. Princess Shumskaia.

Shumskii. Princess Shumskaia! Is that really so? That is very strange! I have never heard about this Princess. (*Aside.*) Attaboy Popov! Look, where he
has driven at!

**Mrs. Troepolskaia.** *(Aside.)* It's not that hard to fool them. *(Aloud.)* My mistress does not have any relatives and I've never heard about anybody bearing the same last name.

**Shumskii.** As far as I remember, there is somebody...

**Mrs. Troepolskaia.** Quite possible, some insignificant man whom nobody knows.

**Shumskii.** On the contrary. I am recalling now... That's right... there is an actor in Petersburg theatre, who, as they say, impersonates servants perfectly.

**Mrs. Troepolskaia.** Servants? What a pity! *(Aside.)* He'll get mad!

**Shumskii.** *(Aside.)* Here we are! That's how she treats me. And who is she?

A housemaid of my-might-be-relative her Highness. *(Aloud.)* You are wrong; to impersonate one of our fellow-tricksters is...

**Mrs. Troepolskaia.** Tricksters?

**Shumskii.** Sorry! I wanted to say, to impersonate an honest man is not that easy as you think!

**Mrs. Troepolskaia.** It's worth of taking lessons from you.

**Shumskii.** From me? Little rogue! Saying this, you are offending the actors.

**Mrs. Troepolskaia.** I do not like actors.

**Shumskii.** You should... *(Sings.)*

Your sentence is too cruel;

You cannot judge a talent like this.

I heard that a real actor
Is worth of everyone’s attention.

He’s not an actor who is not smart,
Who hasn’t a talent, taste, emotions.

Our audiences are the best

Patron of the Arts!

**Mrs. Troepolskaia.** Though inopportune, you stand for the actors well. You are not that foolish as I thought.

**Shumskii.** And you are as smart as I did not expect.

**Mrs. Troepolskaia.** And you are not mistaken. (*Aside.*) Here I am, your provincial she-fool, as you thought about me.

**Shumskii.** And you are beautiful!

**Mrs. Troepolskaia.** No jokes?

**Shumskii.** What jokes! (*Aside.*) I am losing my mind looking at this housemaid. She is a ready-made actress and could go on stage any when!

**Mrs. Troepolskaia.** You are a fine fellow and I am surprised looking how adroit you are!

**Shumskii.** You are surprised at my adroitness? Then, can I hope... (*Coming nearer to her.*)

**Mrs. Troepolskaia.** Not so close, please.

**Shumskii.** But why?

**Mrs. Troepolskaia.** Because... you haven’t forgotten, have you?

**Shumskii** (*backing up.*) Oh, yes. I mean, no. But it’s a horse of another color. How shy you are! I swear, you conquered my heart instantly!
**Mrs. Troepolskaia.** Does it mean that you like me?

**Shumskii.** I do. I like you so much. If you won’t reject me I am ready to make a deal and shake the hands.

**Mrs. Troepolskaia.** You are too quick... *(Sings.)*

Ah, one should not rush
To get married.
Ans as for me, I won’t
Until I fall in love.
But what are the manners
Of all these bridegrooms-to-be?
The only consolation for me is
A mutual love!
Husbands love to flirt with others,
But they always accuse their wives in it!
So, if you want me to make up my mind
And accept your proposal,
You have to promise
Not be jealous ever.

**Shumskii.** What flaws do I have? *(Aside.)* I got her!

**Mrs. Troepolskaia.** *(Aside.)* We’ll see who will trick whom. *(Aloud.)* Well, let’s start with the name of your master.

**Shumskii.** Certainly...
Mrs. Troepolskaia. But I’ve spent too much time chatting with you and I am afraid I will be punished.

Shumskii. You are right. I advise you to go to your mistress and come back soon again. And as a farewell, let me kiss your hand on the condition that...

Mrs. Troepolskaia. What is that? Tell me, don’t be afraid. By the way, you did not tell me who is your master.

Shumskii. I did not do it in purpose to make you come back sooner. Meanwhile, I'll think about it.

Mrs. Troepolskaia. Then, I'll be right back.

Shumskii. Don’t forget, oh, you, the beauty of all the housemaids, that I am waiting for you. “From now on my death and life are in your tender hands, my love!”

Mrs. Troepolskaia. Goodbye! It’s time for us to part.

Shumskii. “I wait for you, the luminary of my heart!”

IX

Shumskii (alone). Viva, Shumskii! Could I ever expect to meet such a charming maid! However, that slap in my face she awarded me without any extra ceremonies rouged my cheek too much! I am afraid that Popov may impede my date with her! (Sees Popov coming.) That’s it, he is coming! I have to get rid of him quickly.
Shumskii, Popov.

Popov (aside). I think I can miss my date. It is necessary to show Shumskii out.

(Aloud.) Well, brother Shumskii, we do stay without a dinner today!

Imagine, I could not find Troepolskii’s dacha anywhere.

Shumskii. Nonsense, brother, it cannot be like that. Now take another direction and you will find him for sure.

Popov. Your humble servant! Now it is your turn.

Shumskii. What turn are you talking about? Choose whatever you like: if you do not want to go, I cannot get any information about your lady.

Popov. Good you are! Could not do it yet!

Shumskii. I still hope I will. I was knocking at the door during the whole hour. At last, some stupid servant came out. I could get no sense out of him.

Popov. If the things are going like this, that’s what we should do. You go and find Troepolski, and I, let it be so, stay here and try to find out the name of my beauty.

Shumskii. Come on, brother, it’s my pleasure to do it for you.

Popov. Really, I am ashamed to bother you.

Shumskii. Stop it, what ceremonies! I started the matter and I will finish it. You will have a nice walk; you know, it’s healthy to stroll.

Popov. What about yourself? Are you lazy to take a walk? The weather is so nice!

Shumskii. The weather is nice, indeed. But wearing this costume I would not like
to meet anybody.

**Popov.** (Aside.) It’s impossible to show him out!

**Shumskii.** (Aside.) He still doesn’t want to leave.

**Popov.** Look, Shumski, blame it on yourself if we shall miss the dinner.

**Shumskii.** It looks like I’ve lost my appetite. (Aside.) I am starving!

**Popov.** (Aside.) Probably, I should confess to him.

**Shumskii.** (Aside.) He won’t leave. I better tell him what I am up to. (Aloud.)

Listen, Popov, I won’t keep secrets from you. I got acquainted with a pretty housemaid and I am waiting for her to come here any minute. If you want’s leave now, you’ll ruin all my plans.

**Popov.** With a housemaid? Phe-e, shame on you!

**Shumskii.** That’s what I like about you! She is so beautiful, I swear, I have never seen anything like that!

**Popov.** That’s absurd! I won’t let you play such pranks.

**Shumskii.** I ask you!

**Popov.** (Aside.) I’ll try to use cunning. (Aloud.) What is the joy for you in this? Just you wait, you’ll get into some kind of unpleasant story. Let’s go together. (Aside.) I’ll leave him at Troepolskii’s and come back right away.

**Shumskii.** (Aside.) I ask Troepolskii not to let him go away and I will return and meet my beauty.

**Popov.** So, let’s go.

**Shumskii.** Let’s go. Really, we behave as fools.

**Popov.** And for what purpose?!
**Shumskii.** Right you are! Let’s go.

They are about to leave, but having heard somebody’s singing in the house they stop.

**Mrs. Troepolskaia.** (In the house.)

I wait for you and can’t help waiting!

Why don’t you come for rendezvous?

My dear friend, I am confessing,

It feels so sad without you.

And if your love is really true,

Then hurry up, I wait for you!

**Shumskii.** What does it all mean?

**Popov.** Nothing, that’s nothing. Just leave me alone, for God’s sake!

**Shumskii.** No, we agreed to go together, didn’t we?

**Popov.** Have mercy on me! I have a rendezvous here and this song appears to be a signal for me.

**Shumskii.** A rendezvous! Ah, you, mister teacher of morals! Shame on you, sir!

I won’t let you play such pranks.

**Popov.** Go to devil! (Comes to the window and sings.)

My only love, my dearest ewe,
I’m here again for rendezvous!

Since we have met, my only duty

is to forestall your wish, my beauty.

And if your love is really true,

Then hurry up, I wait for you!

I think, she is going to come out. Shumski, for God’s sake, hide yourself somewhere for a minute!

**Shumskii.** All right! All right!

_A refrain of a Russian folk song is heard._

**Shumskii.** Ah, that one is for me. *(Taking Popov aside).* Give some space, it’s my turn now.

**Mrs. Troepolskaia.** *(Singing.)*

Why my heart is so gloomy?

Why my soul is so sad?

    Ah, luli, ah, luli!

Why my soul is so sad?

Either you don't really like me,

Or forgot me, poor girl?

    Ah, luli, ah, luli!

Or forgot me, poor girl?

No, I will not believe it,

You’ve been always loving me!
Ah, luli, ah, luli!
You've been always loving me!

**Shumskii.** She is not coming! Just you wait, I can sing for her not worse than anybody else. If only I could remember the lines! *(Sings.)*

For my sweetheart I am waiting,
For my sweetheart I am singing!

Ah, my darling, ah, my darling,

Come to your beloved lad.

Can I ever wait for the moment
When you come and stop my torment?

Ah, my darling, ah, my darling,

Come to your beloved lad.

How you looked and what you said
Made me feel the happiest lad.

Ah, my darling, ah, my darling,

Come to your beloved lad.

**Mrs. Troepolskaia.** *(In the window.)* My mistress and I will be out in a moment.
You both wait for us.

**Shumskii.** Popov! Popov!

**Popov.** Now what?

**Shumskii.** Both of us are asked to wait for them! Can you imagine: this girl, as I understand, is a maid to your Princess.
Popov. What Princess?

Shumskii. You're a fool! She is a Princess.

Popov. Is she? How happy I am!

Mrs. Troepolskaia.

Oh when, oh my sweetheart, I'll see you again?

I wait, and I wait, and I cannot help waiting.

When you are with me, only then I can gain

The peace in my soul and the joy's radiating!

Popov. But is not it you who is not coming out?

I, waiting for you, put myself on a fire!

I am madly in love and without a doubt

To see you again is my only desire.

Shumskii. Isn't it long, this overture?

Where are you, my sweetest maid?

Who's in love, that one for sure

Would not make the other wait.

Shumskii. What are they singing? Why would not they come out?

Popov. We'll wait. What else can we do?

Shumskii. Well, Popov, aren't we lucky?

Popov. We, sure, are. I cannot believe my happiness. What can we do to make them come out sooner?

They begin to cough, to sneeze, and to clap their hands.
XI

The same and Troepolskii.

Troepolskii. Bah, for the first time in my life I am received with applause! Hello, my friends!

Shumskii. (Aside.) Why the devil did Troepolskii have to come here?!

Troepolskii. I beg your pardon, friends, that it took me so long.

Popov. It does not matter.

Troepolskii. Let me give you a kiss, my dearest friends!

Shumskii. You’ve grown up!

Popov. You’ve become more handsome!

Troepolskii. Well, that’s enough! Let’s go to my dacha and I will introduce you to my wife.

Popov. Please, do us a favor. (To Shumskii.) What do we do now?

Shumskii. (Softly to Popov.) Why should we stand upon ceremony with him? Let us tell him and that’s it.

Troepolskii. Come on, my friends, let’s go.

Shumskii. Listen, Troepolskii, we are on guard here not because of nothing. Go home and we shall come to your place right away.

Troepolskii. What does it all mean?

Popov. It means, that we are expecting two pretty acquaintances to come here.

Troepolskii. What the boys! How could you do it so quickly?

Shumskii. That’s how we do it: kill with one shot!

Popov. They appointed a rendezvous at this place.
Troepolskii. That is lovely! Good you are! (To Popov.) So, who is she?

Popov. Imagine, some Princess!

Troepolskii. Ah, you rascal! (To Shumski.) What about your beauty?

Shumski. She is a housemaid, but she is wonder of a girl!

Troepolskii. Swindler you are! So, you are wearing this servant costume for her?

Shumski. No, brother. It’s for your wife. Don’t tell her a word. For her first acting debut we shall play a comedy with her.

Popov. All our friends actors will come very soon and you will have a funny entertainment for your celebration.

Troepolskii. Fine! I will owe you!

XII

Mrs. Troepolskaia comes out of the house.

Popov. (Aside.) My Princess!

Shumski. What a similarity!

Troepolskii. Right in time! Well, gentlemen, you may start your comedy.

Mrs. Troepolskaia. I am really sorry I made you to wait for such a long time.

Troepolskii. Oh, leave the ceremonies.

Popov. Are you out of your mind?

Shumski. Devil, what does it mean?

Mrs. Troepolskaia. Why don’t you introduce me to the gentlemen?

Troepolskii. Of course... of course... don’t be afraid, I won’t blab it out... these
gentlemen... some... in one word, so to say...

Mrs. Troepolskaia. Mr. Popov and Mr. Shumskii.

Troepolskii. No, wrong guess. Well, how do you know them?

Mrs. Troepolskaia. It turns out that I know.

Popov. *(Softly to Shumskii.)* Well, Shumskii!

Shumskii. You start the first and I'll pull myself together.

Troepolskii. Well, friends, explain to me what is that comedy you were talking about?

Popov. It is over.

Shumskii. And so unfortunately for us, that I have no desire to see it for second time.

Troepolskii. What are you talking about?

Mrs. Troepolskaia. I wanted to revenge these gentlemen for their mockery and now it seems to me that we are even.

Troepolskii. What a strange matter! I understand nothing!

Mrs. Troepolskaia. *(To Popov.)* Are you angry with me?

Popov. It's me who should ask you for forgiveness.

Mrs. Troepolskaia. *(To Shumskii.)* I am guilty for...

Shumskii. Please, be merciful, let us leave it between us.

Troepolskii. Between you! But tell me, at last, what is going on?

Mrs. Troepolskaia. Ask them and get the answer.

Popov. Mrs. Troepolskaia, about whom Shumski and me were so wrong, paid us back masterly while you were absent.
Troepolskii. All right, scoffers, she got you! *(To his wife.*) That is good, congratulations!

Mrs. Troepol'skaia. Now tell me, how did I play my role?

Shumskii and Popov. Excellent!

Mrs. Troepol'skaia. If you are not completely satisfied, still you can forgive me for the sake of my debut.

Troepolskii. *(Sings.)*

I did try to be an actor.

Nothing helped me, friends or strife.

Now I have my benefactor:

It's my own legal wife.

Not to waste another minute

I will do what others did:

For my first theatre debut

I will sit my friends in pit.

Popov. If Popov's role I played badly,

Please, forgive me and don’t yell.

Everyone would borrow gladly

Acting skills to play him well.

All you know: imitation

Never reaches what talent did,

But for all my application

Spare me, my dear pit.
Shumskii. I am bolder in delivery
And my role is greatly done
Just because my own livery
Is resembling Shumskii's one.
I feel now really shivery.
My success is yours, indeed.
Shout 'bravo' to my livery,'
Theatre lovers in the pit.

Mrs. Troepolskaia. If I am good in vaudeville,
I don't need to wait for roles;
Every beneficiary's will
Is to give me parts in shows.
But what's the use for us to know
That vaudeville's on every lip,
If you did not like the show,
If in silence is the pit?
If you liked it, don't be slow,
Let us know that, the pit.
APPENDIX D:

P. A. KARATYGIN

(1805-1879)

BAKERY,
OR
THE PETERSBURG GERMAN

Vaudeville in one act

written and produced

in 1843

Translated from П. Каратыгин. Булочная, или Петербургский Немец в антологии “Старый Русский Водевиль” [P. Karatygin, Bakery, or The Petersburg German in “Old Russian Vadeville”]. М., “Художественная литература,” 1937.
Characters

Ivan Ivanovich Kleister - baker,

speaks incorrect Russian with strong German accent

Mashen'ka - his daughter

Semen Semenovich Flugerov

Karlusha - baker’s apprentice

Shagaev

Krestian Bogdanovich Zviebach - master-baker from another shop

Action takes place in Kleister’s bakery on Vasil’evskii Island

in Sankt Petersburg.
Scene I

Mashen’ka. You call it “fresh...” I see, you’ve burnt them again. Just yesterday my father was scolding you that you over dried the rusks. And today they are even worse. Look, they are like nothing on earth.

Karlusha. So what? They are eatable. *(Takes a rusk and eats.)*

Mashen’ka. Yes, when it’s free. You see nothing today, you put them into the very heat.

Karlusha. No, it’s not because of that!

Mashen’ka. Then, why?

Karlusha *(sighing).* It’s because, ... because when I do not see one person, I am as if on the coals myself!

Mashen’ka. That’s what it is! Haven’t you fallen in love with somebody?

Karlusha. Ah, Maria Ivanovna, each man has his heart.

Mashen’ka. That’s great news!

Karlusha. Yes, I’ve noticed myself that from a certain time I cannot put my mind to anything; everything is falling out of my hands. It’s all because my heart is troubled. I am the unhappiest apprentice in the world; I feel guilty before my master; I feel ashamed in front of the other apprentices; I feel hurt when I talk to our customers; I feel sentimental toward you; and I feel vexing looking at myself! I am ashamed even to come up to the oven ’cause I’m getting so hot.

*(Sings.)*
There is no sense in me,
I am burning up with shame!
Now I turned the dough sour,
And now I burnt the rusks;
Now the bred is under baked,
And now the rolls are to be thrown away;
The pretzels do not come out right,
And everything goes wrong and is twisted and awry!
Love is a tormenting thing,
It does not appeal to a baker!
It is a torture for one’s heart and soul
And a waste of flour.

Yes, this love dries me out and fries me up, and, as a result, I cannot bake anything. Look at me, I am not myself. I am worse than a week-old rusk; but before that my cheeks were as buns baked on the rose oil!

Mashen’ka. Watch out, if my daddy will know about it, you are out of here.

Karlusha. Oh! You can say that again. Your father took me in when I was a boy.
And now, what a good boy I am; instead of teaching others I am ruining myself and I am ruining his goods!

Mashen’ka. And when did this misfortune happened to you?

Karlusha. Ah, seems to me, ages ago, but I’ve noticed it only recently.

Mashen’ka. What about her? Does she know about your love?
Karlusha. God knows! Looks like, she doesn’t want to have anything with me:

she’s laughing at me all the time.

Mashen’ka. Well, who wouldn’t? You are so funny.

Karlusha. Funny?

Mashen’ka. Of course. Look at yourself in the mirror: is it possible having such a figure and such clothes to talk about love with anybody?

Karlusha. That is true, Maria Ivanovna; the trade of a chimney-sweep and a baker stains a man from the outside. Only on Sundays we look like common people, and on week-days even our acquaintances do not recognize us. Last Sunday, in the park, I almost was about to tell her about my love...

But the rain started out of a sudden!.. Each time there’s some kind of an obstacle.

Mashen’ka. And who is that lucky girl? Last Sunday there were three of us walking in the park: you, me, and daddy. I didn’t see you leaving us for a moment.

Karlusha (sighing). Ah, Maria Ivanovna...

Mashen’ka. What is it?

Karlusha. Ah. Maria Ivanovna! Whatever happens happens! I’ve made up my mind... Maria Ivanovna!

(Somebody knocks at the fortocca* from the street.)

Here we go, again an obstacle.

Scene II

Mashen’ka. What’s that? Rusks for twenty kopecks? Just a minute, here it is.

Voice (from the street). Don’t you have anything better? I think, it’s yesterday’s rusks.

Mashen’ka. No, they are today’s, freshly baked. (To Karlusha.) Do you hear?

Voice. I don’t want them, I’ll go to another bakery... One cannot ... it’s just trash.

Karlusha. Trash! I am here, I baked these rusks. Who dares to call them trash?

(Shows himself into the vasisdas) Hey, you, come back! Our rusks are not trash, you yourself are trash!... Ouch!.. (Jumps off the window.)

Mashen’ka. What’s wrong?

Karlusha. Nothing, that’s nothing, miss. A little carelessness: was not quick enough to dodge... (Rubs his cheek.)

Mashen’ka (laughing). Serves you right! Don’t stick out when nobody asks you.

Karlusha. That’s true, I stack out too far... But he hurt me deeply: the rusks were a little burnt, that’s true; but still, they... Damn it! My cheek is burning! It’s a pity, I hadn’t enough time to remember his face, otherwise, he wouldn’t get

from a salesman’s usual question “Was ist das?” (What is it?) a Russified eacucðac (vasisdas) came into the everyday Russian language.

As V. Nabokov informs the French variant vasisdas as a literary norm was admitted by the French Academy in 1798 (Pushkin, A. Eugene Onegin. A Novel in Verse Translated from the Russian, with a Commentary by Vladimir Nabokov in Four Volumes. V. 2. Bollingen Series LXXII, Princeton University Press, 1975 (145). Karatygin in his Bakery uses both words fortochka and vasisdas as synonyms. The present translation follows the style of the original.
off cheaply!

Mashen'ka. I told you, these rusks are good for nothing.

Karlusha. You are right, Maria Ivanovna. Now I see, that I baked them to my misfortune. I got such a hot slap for these burnt rusks, that I am ready to swallow all of them at one time not to be reminded of my dishonor! I go out to the gates. May be he will walk by our street again; and if I do not recognize him... he will become familiar with me! I'll show him who I am. I'll just turn my burning cheek to him. Please, don't tell your father about it, otherwise he'll be upset.

Mashen'ka. Well, I guess, you are upset more.

Karlusha. No, miss, that's nothing to me, but why did he call our rusks trash?! (À part.) My God, my God! I began to talk about my love so nicely... and out of a sudden... (Rubs his cheek.) Each time there's an obstacle. (Leaves.)

Mashen'ka. Wait, wait! I forgot to ask you if the pretzel someone ordered yesterday is ready?

Karlusha. Pretzel? Is it for that young clerk, who continually orders them? No, it's not ready yet. Oh, these pretzels... a yoke on my neck. I put it into the oven... took it out not long ago, it's still not ready. I don't understand, why he orders such huge pretzels, if they even cannot go through the fortochka... one ruble each... It is very strange! Looks like his acquaintances have their birthdays too often; or may be...

Mashen'ka. It is not your business... Thank God, they order them.

Karlusha. Of course. As an apprentice, I am very glad, but as a reasonable man,
I think...

Mashen’ka. That is not your business also. Go, go. What if my daddy will see you idle? You know how angry he is today.

Karlusha. Yes, he is so gloomy all these days, so anxious; glances at me as if he wants to swallow me! Now Mr. Zviebach is sitting at the master’s room and they are talking about something very seriously... One baker doesn’t come to another on weekdays without a good reason! Oh, if I only could meet that slapper... I would... Yes, that was a hot slap! (Leaves.)

Scene III

Mashen’ka, Zviebach, and Kleister (in a white cook-cap and jacket, with a smoking pipe).

Kleister (mysteriously, mezzo voce). Wahrhaftig, Christian Bogdanych? War das nicht vor langen Zeit?

Zviebach. Seit fünf oder sechs Tagen.

Kleister. Tsss! Alle wissen es?

Zviebach. Ja, ja, es ist auch in der “Polizei Zeitung.”

Kleister. Fürchterlich, Krestian Bogdanych.

Zviebach. Serh schlecht, Ivan Ivanych!

Kleister. Ahscheulich, Cristian Bogdanych. Was soll man machen? Die Polizei ist hier serh streng!

Zviebach. Ja, ja, es ist für uns serh gefährlich, ich habe noch gehört... (whispers into Kleister’s ear.)
Kleister. Ist es möglich! Gott bewahr!

Zviebach. Ja, ja, sehr schlecht, sehr schlecht! (After a pause.) Nun, ich muss aber nach Hause... Adieu, Ivan Ivanych.

Kleister. Adieu, lebe Sie vohl... Ich danke recht sehr, dass Sie es mir gesacht haben... Adieu, Krestian Bogdanych.

Zviebach. Adieu, Ivan Ivanych... goodbye, Maria Ivanovna.

Kleister (seeing him off). Ich danke, ich danke... Adieu, adieu... (Zviebach goes, then comes back and whispers something to Kleister again.)

Kleister. Ja, ja!]

(Zviebach starts, comes back, and whispers.)

Kleister. Ich woll! Ich woll! Adieu, asieu!

(Zviebach leaves.)

Mashen’ka. What’s wrong, daddy?

Kleister (pacing the room anxiously). It’s not good, it’s not good at all.

Mashen’ka. What for did Krestian Bogdanych come?

Kleister. Nothing, he had some business to me.

Mashen’ka. Looks like he said something unpleasant to you.

Kleister. Yes, yes; he told me about the matter of a greatest importance, because of which we can have a big trouble.

Mashen’ka. Ah, daddy, you are frightening me... What is it?

Kleister. It’s not your business, you don’t have to know that... only we should be very careful. Hasn’t anybody decently dressed come here recently?

Mashen’ka. No, everybody bought the bread from the street.
Kleister. Through the vasisdas?

Mashen’ka. Yes, sir.

Kleister. That’s good. What about that young clerk, who orders the pretzels, hasn’t he come yet?

Mashen’ka (shyly.). No, sir, he has not. (À part.) What does it mean? Has daddy guessed?

Kleister. Hm! Do you know why he comes here so regularly?

Mashen’ka. How do I know? I... I... do not know him at all.

Kleister. And I know him all!

Mashen’ka (à part). That’s it!.. he guessed!

Kleister. Now, go to my office. Take away the beer bottles ... Wait, wait. Did our kind Semen Semenych come today?

Mashen’ka. Not yet.

Kleister. Hm! I need a piece of advice from him; he is a reasonable man.

Mashen’ka (à part). It’s certainly about him.

Kleister. Well, you may go now.

Kleister. (Mashen’ka leaves.)

Kleister. Phee, it’s so not good... It is all so vexing! I cannot start doing anything... Absolutely discouraged! Absolutely according to the Russian saying: ein bad sheep infects the whole flock.

Scene IV

Kleister and Flugerov.

331
Guten Morgen... guten Morgen, Ivan Ivanovich!

Ah, Semen Semenych!

Dammit! I dirtied myself entirely! It’s so vexing that you do not have a front entrance; it’s very unpleasant for a tidy man to go through your back yard. Your boy was shaking out a flour sack on the steps. I wanted to run by quickly, but he, rascal, powdered me from head to foot! Could you give me a brush to clean myself?

(getting a brush). Just a moment...

Dammit! My new uniform; just you come to the office like this, young guys will make a laugh-stock of you... Thank you, Ivan Ivanovich.

(cleaning him). Please, excuse me, Semen Semenych.

It’s all right, it’s a remediable matter. I am like this since my childhood, you know; I am very sensitive to a tiny stain on my clothes! As for being accurate, I am a real German. As for you, Ivan Ivanovich, it’s opposite, you are so much as Russian; you speak the way one never can get anything out of you.

(with a contended smile). Ja, ja, I look like Russian and I have proud through it. If ein Mann do not to know mine name, he cannot to guess which I am German.

It’s not the name. Your last name is Kleister,* so what? Kleister might be Russian. I myself have a German last name. My mates do not call me

* German “Kleister” is homonymic with Russian “клейстер,” which means flour paste.
Flugerov; they say: “You, Flugerov, are German...” Even the head of the department promoted me to Germans. I swear to God! My clothes, my boots, my furniture - everything is made by Germans. Even my hat is German, from Zimmermann; I’ve been wearing it the third year already. Recently, I became a member of Shuster-club in purpose. I am confessing, Ivan Ivanych, I respect Germans cordially: they are exemplary people... For example, to have a German spouse... what a housewife! She can make a silk purse out of a sow ear.

Kleister. Come on, Semen Semenych, there are some very pleasant Russian women too.

Flugerov. Of course, there are some, but still not of that kind. They are more like French. Such a woman would not have mercy on her poor husband; get her a new dress each holiday from wherever you want; she is not like a German, who would remake one old dress in three different styles... she would re-dye it, she would turn it inside out, she would decorate it, and she would not make her husband to incur the losses.

Kleister. No, Semen Semenych, I was married Russian; a kindest woman she was.

Flugerov. I believe you, I believe you! You remember her often. But my wife, the deceased... she was so vivid, not to remember her with this word; she loved to dress up to death! I served as an executor at that time. The position, of

German “Flüger” means weathercock; borrowed from German the word has the same pronunciation in Russian.
course, is a profitable one. They say, money do not burn in a fire, do not sink in water, but can hide in a pocket. I was inexperienced at that time; hardly escaped the trial! I remember, there were always arguments between us: buy me this, buy me that... “Just you wait, it’ll be out of fashion soon, it’ll be cheaper...” “No,”-she used to say, - “I won’t wear it then.” What can you do? You start to cut your coat not according your cloth. Oh, oh! Wives, wives, what troubled folks you are!

(Sings.)

A wife is the tree
Of the knowledge of good and evil;
Look to the right, look to the left,
You’ll see, that a marriage is a real miracle!
Someone, because of his wife, becomes
An important person and gets the ranks.
The other, quite opposite, becomes miserable
Thanks to his wife.
One, using illegal means,
Has built a house
And has a handy justification:
“Where did you get the money?” - “My wife’s dowry!”
The other married a show-off,
Who strives after the nobility;
But if they inquire about the income,
Then the husband will be called to account!
If the wife is foolish, she gives her husband the blues;
If she is clever, she fools her husband;
If she is beautiful, she finds friends on a side,
And her husband is neglected.
To make a long story short, it’s difficult to make a decision:
Marriage is a puzzling matter;
There is no life without a wife,
But often a wife makes your life miserable.

**Kleister.** Yes, Russian merchants use to say: better save than sorry.*

**Flugerov.** Yes, yes, it’s fair, it’s fair!.. But a German wife - it’s a horse of another color! In general, Ivan Ivanych, the German character is arranged differently. Let’s take for example our brotherhood, petty clerks. Russians are like this: today he goes to work, tomorrow he wants to relax, so he gets ill immediately. “Why,” he says, “I have to finish this work today, I'll have enough time tomorrow.” And look at him, - Morgen Früh! - he’s reached the position only of a titular counselor and that’s it. But if you only have a German patience and accuracy, you can reach everything. So, it comes

* In the original text Karatygin plays with the Russian folk saying: семь раз отмерь, один раз отрежь. Literally: measure off seven times and cut one time, meaning think properly before you are going to do anything (because once it is done there is no undoing it). Kleister, a German, uses mistakenly another prefix: instead of отмерь he pronounces обмерь, which means to cheat in measuring, to give short measure to someone. So, the sentence sounds: seven times cheat while measuring and cut one time. Applied to merchants the phrase carries quite a certain sense.
out that a German either out-sits you, or outdistances you. Here, just for you, the closest example: I have a nephew, my sister’s son; he’s a good boy, with abilities, with a head on his shoulders; but there never was a serious thought in this head; he is in service the third year and he changed three places already. No, Ivan Ivanych, I like Germans!

Kleister. Thank you so much, thank you.

Flugerov. That’s true! I’ve attached to you like... like a fever. Each other day I visit you accurately; I walk that side of the street, but this side (points at his heart) just drags me to you; and, note, without any particular business, just because I like you... By the way, I haven’t ask you, how is Maria Ivanovna doing?

Kleister. Thank God, she is well, thank God!

Flugerov. No dowry, but what a beauty she is!

Kleister. Thank you.

Flugerov. God, give her a wealthy fiancé soon.

Kleister. This is a very complicated matter.

Flugerov. Why so? I am sure you will spare something for her; beauty is beauty, but a dowry makes the bride even mote beautiful. I believe, the daughter of a baker will have her piece of bread.

Kleister (mysteriously). What baker, what bread! The time has come I can find myself without a piece of bread.

Flugerov. What are you talking about, Ivan Ivanych! Your goods are always on fashion. You are a master of an eternal guild. Nothing but bread is eternal.
Kleister. No, sir, I am very anxious! You, probably, have noticed that I am looking
today like nothing on the earth.

Flugerov. Yes, yes; when I came in, I wanted to tell you... You look much more
pale today then usually.

Kleister. Quite opposite, I always become red when I hear what bad things our
fellow-masters do.

Flugerov. I don’t understand you, Ivan Ivanovich!

Kleister (mysteriously). Haven’t you got to know yet, that two German bakeries
were sealed up, and three others paid big fines?

Flugerov. Ah, yes, yes... slipped out of my mind! Just yesterday I read about it
in the police newspaper; I even tied a knot on my handkerchief to tell you
about this casus. I even remember where exactly it happened: one bakery
in the Bread lane, the other in the Stray street, and the third, seems to me,
in the Nameless street.

Kleister. That’s how it is, Semen Semenych.

Flugerov. Well, Ivan Ivanych, to tell you the truth, they got cooked not without
a reason: the prices were raised regardless the law, the measures were
reduced, and a cheap flour was mixed in good bread. But you don’t have to
worry: your heart and your flour are absolutely pure; you are the real master.

Kleister. That’s true, that’s true, I got a completely good reputation for myself.

(Sings.)

I can inform: I am the meister,
Und not just certain man of guild.
There's not like me another Kleister,
On honesty my name I build.
To all for honesty I'm known.
Und Herr Policeman always takes
From our house as from his own
His bread und pretzels, rusks und cakes.
Last Saturday he saw me walking
Und did like this,
(Imitates policeman's salute)
und then he said:
"Guten Morgen," und without talking
He shook my shoulder with his hand.

Flugerov. You see? What are you afraid of? Of course, sometimes a man can be accused without a blame; you overlooked something and here you are, caught as a baby-mouse in a barn. Nowadays they nail up all the loopholes in state departments and in trade... all the old steelyards are replaced by the modern scales of the same type, and the taxes are printed out on everything... and this, and that... Such strong measures everywhere, that God forbid! There are even some special sort of people who are assigned to look for a disorder.

Kleister. Ja, ja, ja, there are. Zviebach Krestian Bogdanych told me that also.

Flugerov. However, it will all come out in the wash, Ivan Ivanych.

Kleister. Yes, but the Russian saying says: the pikes live in the water not to let the
crucians to sleep.

Flugerov. Eh, Ivan Ivanych! An experienced person can fish in troubled waters and get away scot-free.

Kleister. That’s true, that’s true, but one has to keep his ear to the ground. You know, Semen Semenych, I have noticed that a certain clerk comes here too often.

Flugerov. Ah! Ah! Ah!

Kleister. I should say, every day!

Flugerov. Eh, and you think that it must be a pike?

Kleister. Yes, a pike! He orders only one pretzel.

Flugerov. Oh! Only one?

Kleister. For one silver rouble.

Flugerov. It is strange! But they have not fixed the prices and taxes for pretzels yet. In one bakery they bake pretzels like this, in the other they have them twice smaller; pretzel is not bread, it’s a luxury; that’s why the prices for them are left for bakers’ considerations.

Kleister. Yes, but it seems that this person does it purposefully. He comes in and looks around, and looks around... Just yesterday he ordered a pretzel again, and, no doubt, he’ll come to pick it up soon.

Flugerov. Comes personally, wearing his civil service uniform - I don’t understand that... one rouble pretzel cannot be crammed into even secretary’s pocket, it’s too big.

Kleister. No, he wears a greatcoat.
Flugerov. Ts! That is surprising! I am curious to have a look at him; I have very sharp eyes, I can recognize a policeman in disguise right away.

Kleister. Please, do me a favor.

Flugerov. You are welcome, you are welcome! Today, let it be so, I won’t go to my office; anyway, I have to visit one of my acquaintances in the neighborhood, and after that I’ll drop by here obligatory, lie in wait for him, follow him, and get to know where he works, where he lives, I’ll smell out everything.

Kleister. Ah, Semen Semenych, you are pleasing me so much this time.

Flugerov. What scores there might be! You know how I like Germans in general, and you in particular... I like and respect you so much that I simply would like to become a relative of yours.

Kleister. Yes, but I cannot get this opportunity for you.

Flugerov. You don’t mean that, there are opportunities for everything. Some time ago I mentioned to you about me getting married... Marriage is a great deal; one has to be choosy. (Sighing.) It’s already about ten years as I am a widower! Six weeks after my wife died I began to look for another wife, but in vain! Of course, my cook is Swedish, she is very economical, but still, she cannot be compared with a thrifty housewife... Oh, Ivan Ivanych, your daughter is a very alluring bride!.. I, certainly, won’t demand any dowry from you! I need nothing; but you yourself, following your own heart, won’t let her, your only daughter, get married without nothing. So, my highly respected Ivan Ivanych, what would you say to that?
Kleister. You damaged my thoughts so much that I cannot make no consideration
with my good sense.

Flugerov. Come on, Ivan Ivanych! There’s nothing extraordinary in that; people
get married every day, but I want to do it only for the second time.

Kleister. But you are a noble clerk, and I am just a lower class baker.

Flugerov. That’s all right, Ivan Ivanych. That’s what our time is: profits overweigh
ambitions. Look, people of higher rank, no match for me, having a name
and weight in the society, get married either a daughter of a confectioner, or
a merchant’s daughter; they arrange such dinners and refreshments for
themselves that everybody’s tongue would refuse to censure them for the
mismatched marriage; and, really, what’s one’s ambition when there’s no
nutrition! Come on, Ivan Ivanych, make a decision, like Russians do, not
thinking too long over it.

Kleister. But I don’t want Mashen’ka to suffer through my enforcement.

Flugerov. Why enforcement? We can talk her into it voluntarily.

Kleister. No, sir, let it be her own decision. My manner is like this: whom you like,
that one you marry; just as Russian saying says, marriages are made of
Heaven. Not long ago, a rich guy, the son of a chimney-sweeper was
wooing Mashen’ka, but she did not like him and refused.

Flugerov. How can you even talk about it? What possibly may be in common
between a chimney-sweeper and such a refined creature as your daughter;
it’s like day and night! What a good husband who climbs the roofs at night
time; and what is his richness, anyway? Simply smoke and nothing else:
imagine, he climbed the roof, broke his neck... And she is left with the
seventh part of his richness... No, Ivan Ivanych, she needs an independent
husband, a stay-at-home, who would take care of her, not some kind of
a chimney-climber... Understandably, this matter of a great importance
cannot be solved this very instant, but you, I suppose, will allow me to hope,
to become liked by her, to explain to her, and may be in time...

*Kleister.* Yes, I agree with such conditions... Ah, it’s almost ten thirty! I need to
go to the address office to change the ticket for my kitchen boy. I beg your
pardon, Semen Semenych, that I am leaving you! I order to make some
coffee for you and... and if that suspicious clerk will come here...

*Flugerov.* Oh, don’t worry, I’ll take care of the whole thing.

*Kleister.* Good-bye, may be I’ll still catch you up here later. You’ve really calmed
me down. You know the Russian saying: you get to know your real friends
in the times of trouble. Good-bye, Semen Semenych.

*Flugerov.* Good-bye, Ivan Ivanych.

(Kleister leaves.)

**Scene V**

*Flugerov* (*alone*) Well, Semen Semenych, is it a good deal you are starting here?
The word has slipped out of my mouth. It wouldn’t take much to get married,
but it wouldn’t take much to get into a trouble as well. I’ve just turned fifty...
two years ago.., and the bride is about eighteen... The difference is not that
big! At her fortochka she saw all kinds of people, she knows the price of
everything... Even a three day old rusk is sold cheaper because everyone wants a fresh one... *(Comes up to the mirror.*) However, here I am, looking at myself... What a nonsense! Do I really look like a rusk? Sometimes after the dinner my cheeks become red; no grey hair is seen... under the wig...

I am a man of a high rank; I have a special sign of the irreproachable service, just do not wear it all the time: some numbers on it look confusing. Of course, thirty years of service is an honorable matter, but women have their own thoughts on this account. To make the long story short, I am doing honor to them by my proposal. Anyway, I am an official. Don’t joke with me!. And this vasisdas plays fool with me and all his dowry, probably, will be buns and rusks; no, brother, I wasn’t born yesterday. I know for sure, he has money. But to pull them out of a German is the same as to catch an eel on the rod: just make the wrong move and everything is as good as lost! But we will do it on the paper... signatures, stamps... The German is cunning, but I myself is a tough nut too, you won’t get to the core quickly...

*(A knock at the fortochka from the outside.)*

What’s that? Somebody’s knocking at the fortochka and there is nobody to open it... Hey, who is there? Hold on! That’s nice, the master’s gone and left me, the official, to keep the house... Again! Just a minute! Hey, Karlusha! Maria Ivanovna! Anybody!

**Scene VI**

*Flugerov and Mashen’ka (with a glass of coffee on a tray).*
Mashen’ka. Hold on just a minute! (To Flugerov) Semen Semenych, I’ve made some coffee for you.

Flugerov. My compliments, Maria Ivanovna... Thank you for your attention.

Mashen’ka (at the fortochka). Just a minute. Yes, sir? How many? Here it is.

Ten copecks change.

Flugerov. What a house-keeper!.. Has time for everything.

Mashen’ka. Is it sweet enough, Semen Semenych?

Flugerov. What can be not sweet from you? Syrup, Maria Ivanovna, simply syrup.

Mashen’ka. Would you like to have some little pretzels or little briochés?

Flugerov. Thanks a lot, my little bun.

Mashen’ka. May be you would like to go to eat to the other room? May be you do not feel comfortable here?

Flugerov. Oh, please, to look at you and to drink coffee is such a pleasure...

I can confess, nowhere else I have my coffee with such an appetite and with such pretzels. Oh, I am so impolite! I haven’t asked you about your health; Wie befinden Sie Sich, Maria Ivanovna?

Mashen’ka. Thank you, I am fine, thank God.

Flugerov. He-he-he, why don’t you answer me in German?

Mashen’ka. But you cannot speak German.

Flugerov. It doesn’t matter, I like this language very much.

Mashen’ka. And I don’t.

Flugerov. Is that right? He-he-he, you are German and you do not like your own tongue.
Mashen’ka. What German am I? My mother was Russian, she was brought up at the boarding school together with Russians; I even cannot speak German well.

Flugerov. That’s nice. He-he-he, by the way, we also have native Russians who cannot put together three words in their language; though, it’s more due to the fashion... But, you know, the German language must be an indigenous language: one can find such words in it which I’ve never heard of! I don’t speak French also, but German does not look like French at all; as for English, it goes without saying, you cannot use another language when you talk to an Englishman... but in the German language there are words which sound so soft and tender, for example: Ich Liebe Sie! Seems like even Finn would guess what you want to say! Where are you going, Maria Ivanovna?

Mashen’ka. I have to recount the money. Looks like I’ve made a mistake.

Flugerov. No, you have not. You cannot make a mistake: you are an accounting book, you are a real ledger, a Gross Buch, Maria Ivanovna.

Mashen’ka. Thank you humbly.

Flugerov. No, that is to say, you are Klein buch, sehr schöne Klein.

Mashen’ka. I see you can speak German really good.

Flugerov. D’you think so? (À part.) Hm, I shouldn’t miss this favorable minute.

Shönes, Maria Ivanovna!

Mashen’ka. What can I do for you?

Flugerov. We... had a conversation with your father...
Apartments on the middle floors usually were rented by rich and noble people, while the basements and the ground (lower) floors (as well as the attics and the like) were populated by insignificant (read: poor) clerks or tradesmen.

1 Mashen’ka. I heard you talking from the other room.

2 Flugerov. You heard? And you know what we were talking about?

3 Mashen’ka. No, sir, I did not listen. I do not overhear people’s talk.

4 Flugerov. Do you want me to tell you?

5 Mashen’ka. Please, don’t; it might be not my business at all and I am not curious.

6 Flugerov. It’s amazing: she is a house-keeper and she is not curious. Only on the lower floors one can find such a treasure*. Hm! Hm! Maria Ivanovna...

7 I... you... I... as you know...

8 (A knock at the fortochka.)

9 Mashen’ka. Just a minute. (To Flugerov.) Please, excuse me. (At the fortochka.)

10 What can I do for you? This one? Five silver kopecks, sir. This? Three silver kopecks, sir. This one?.. You are welcome... (Gives the buyer the bun.)

11 Flugerov. That’s a little bit unpleasant! In such a dear for me minute they ask for some twopenny-halfpenny buns! But it’s all right, we’ll be more brave, we’ll correct the situation! So, what was I talking about?

12 Mashen’ka. I don’t know.

13 Flugerov. Oh, yes! I, as you know...

14 Mashen’ka. That’s exactly true, you know...

15 Flugerov. I, as you know ... as you know... I don’t know what I was going to

* Apartments on the middle floors usually were rented by rich and noble people, while the basements and the ground (lower) floors (as well as the attics and the like) were populated by insignificant (read: poor) clerks or tradesmen.
say... Hm! This damned ten kopecks bun! Now I am turning into a kopeck
worth fool.

Mashen’ka. Why have you stopped? Go on.

Flugerov. You see, that’s what the matter is about... I, finally, decided to reveal
to your father one of my desires, which I had for a long time... and this
revelation...

(A knock at the fortochka.)

Mashen’ka. (running from him). Excuse me, please!

Flugerov. Again! It’s just a punishment; as if they do it in purpose! As soon as
I open my mouth, she runs to open her vasisdas, and all my gentle feelings
are gone with the wind. The devil take it! I’ve almost thought off the most
touching expressions, and now...

Mashen’ka (at the fortochka). Nothing is left, sorry. We had them, but we run out
of them now.

Flugerov. It’s all right! I will be luckier the third time.

Mashen’ka (coming up). I am sorry, sir.

Flugerov. It’s all right, commerce is commerce... bread and buns are our every
minute necessities of life... So, Maria Ivanovna!.. I... you... and your
father... (À part.) Now again I am becoming rooted to the spot.

Mashen’ka. Well, what’s next?

Flugerov. The next is... I, as you know, for the last six weeks had my pleasure to
be acquainted with you. During this time, you, probably, could notice that I
am a man...
Mashen’ka. Well?

Flugerov. I am a man... who... who...

(A knock at the fortochka.)

Again! Anybody’s patience would run out here!

Mashen’ka (running from him to the fortocka). Excuse me!

Flugerov. The devil take this fortochka! As if the whole Vasilievskii Island is dying from hunger! What kind of people they are not being able to live one minute without the food! And I, the old fool, each time I start the talk in a roundabout way. I won’t go far like this! Some other guy, being in my place, would’ve proposed to her twenty times already!

Mashen’ka (hardly hiding her laughter). So, I am coming up to you the third time and you keep halting at the same place.

Flugerov. You are beginning to laugh at me already, but I want to talk to you about a very serious matter.

Mashen’ka. I can’t help laughing... may be the Fate itself does not want me to know you secret today; you better wait till tomorrow.

Flugerov. To spite the Fate I’m telling you everything this instant. (Pattering.) Maria Ivanovna! At first sight, when I met you in the Fourth Line, I felt an irresistible attraction towards you... Owing to it I got acquainted with your father and gained his good attitude towards me. I am a man of noble intentions and with these intentions I tried to please you... Your heart has to decide if I’ve succeeded... With my soul trembling, I am waiting for you to bring in a verdict.
(Wipes his face with his handkerchief.)

Oo-ooff, finished! Nobody’s knocked at the fortochka, but what a knocking
I feel in my heart and head!

Mashen’ka. To tell you the truth, you surprised me greatly. I could not imagine
that you come to this place because of me.

Flugerov. Only because of you and for you alone!

Mashen’ka. But you tried to assure my daddy in your friendship all the time.

Flugerov. Friendship towards father, and the most tender feeling towards you...

Mashen’ka. I thank you so much. Do you want me to talk to you sincerely?

Flugerov. Please, do.

Mashen’ka. Then listen:

(Sings.)

There is a time for everything:

After the fall comes winter snow,

Before the summer comes the spring

And all in Nature starts to grow.

The season of love, like the time of spring,

Has its own time, like gentlest sprout.

You rushes to catch it but the thing

Is that you’re late to blossom out.

Flugerov. Well, I think you are too sincere! How should I understand your
answer?
Mashen’ka. Understand it as you wish.

Flugerov. Looks like, it is a final retirement.

Mashen’ka. Looks like.

Flugerov. May be you are in love with somebody else?

Mashen’ka. May be.

Flugerov. Who is he, can you tell me?

Mashen’ka. What for? You won’t feel better if you’ll know.

Flugerov (à part). Devil take it! That’s what real Germans are! She lives on the ground floor but talks to me from above. What’s that, Maria Ivanovna, are you leaving?

Mashen’ka. Don’t be upset, Semen Semenych; you have told me everything already, I have nothing to tell you, so I can keep silence in my own room.

Flugerov. Ogo, here come some refreshments for you, Flugerov, you’ve dreamt about!

Mashen’ka. Would you like some more coffee?

Flugerov. Thank you, but no, thank you; you’ve fed me up very well.

Mashen’ka. What’s to be done, Semen Semenych, I am sorry. (She curtsies and leaves.)

Scene VII

Flugerov alone, then Karlusha.

Flugerov (pacing the room). Well, I should admit, she cut me to pieces, as
a cake. Here I am. A clerk of the ninth rank* make a marriage proposal to a baker and she poses herself as zierlich-manierlich. She is already in love with somebody else. No, mademoiselle, I'll bake you until you are done, I'll tell your German everything! He will give pfeifen** to your beloved.

Karlusha (following Flugerov around the room). Semen Semenych...

Flugerov. Let him question her, how she dares to love somebody without her farther’s permission, how she could to prefer another rascal when I am right here...

Karlusha. Semen Semenych...

Flugerov. I personally make a proposal... And who is he, anyway? Where did he come from? How he dares to step on my way? (Runs against Karlusha.) Puh, the devil take you! What are you doing here?

Karlusha. Excuse me, Semen Semenych!

Flugerov. You sullied me with your flour again! What a torment! The only thing I do in this stupid bakery is sullying myself physically and morally! Give me the brush!

Karlusha. Let me clean you...

Flugerov. Get out, rascal!

Karlusha. I am sorry, it was an accident...

Flugerov. What do you need from me?

* There were fourteen ranks for the clerks in civil service at the time; the lowest was the fourteenth.

** He will make it hot for your beloved.
Karlusha. I just wanted to tell you ‘how do you do.’

Flugerov. That’s it?

Karlusha. That’s it for now... and, maybe, very soon I’ll say ‘good-bye’ to you and to my master, if you won’t come to help me out in my misfortune.

Flugerov (à part). What I have to do with his misfortune, I myself, as it turns out, came here not for my happiness.

Karlusha. You are so kind, Semen Semenych, so gentle; you are not like my master...

Flugerov. What? Then what am I like?

Karlusha. You are so simple, well-mannered, and particular... Don’t leave me with your mercy.

Flugerov. What mercy? What can I do for you?

Karlusha. You come often to our place; the master likes you and welcomes you; and you yourself are so compassionate; take pity on poor Karlusha!

Flugerov. Whom are you complaining about?

Karlusha. Oh! About my fate, Semen Semenych.

Flugerov. Well, brother, fate is not my Department.

Karlusha. Somehow, Semen Semenych, by your connections... The matter is so delicate that I don’t know how to say it. Of course, you are an old man, you cannot fall in love, it does not matter for you now...

Flugerov. What, what are you saying?

Karlusha. But before... some time ago, I am sure, you did love somebody; you know what it looks like, you cannot rest for worry. It’s burning all the time
right here (*shows to his heart*). Help me, my dear sir, Semen Semenych.

**Flugerov.** Are you out of your mind?

**Karlusha.** Not yet, I will be soon; I am waiting for your mercy only... Bring me back to my mind, if you only can... I dream during the daytime and rambling during the night... What a martyrdom! Simply to say, I am a lost man because of Maria Ivanovna!

**Flugerov.** How? What? So, is it you?

**Karlusha.** It is me, dear Semen Semenych, me!

**Flugerov.** How dared you to fall in love with her?

**Karlusha.** I do not know how it could happen!

**Flugerov (à part).** So, that’s who he is, her beloved! An apprentice is my rival!

**Karlusha.** I feel I am getting too high: she is the master’s daughter, no jokes... but the love does not choose people, it just happens...

**Flugerov (à part).** This flour sack... my competitor... Just you wait, I’ll boil you in oil, rascal.

**Karlusha.** Please, do it, dear Semen Semenych.

**Flugerov.** What about Maria Ivanovna? Does she love you?

**Karlusha.** I don’t know, sir. I had not time to reveal my feelings to her yet... You see, my occupation is so disorderly: I work at night, when Maria Ivanovna is sleeping; and during the daytime, when she is working, I am so worn out that I cannot stay awake. Sometimes, I don’t go to sleep in purpose, but still somehow miss a chance to talk to her. This morning, however, I managed
to drop a hint...

Flugerov. And she?

Karlusha. Nothing, sir, she was smiling all the time... well, maybe it's not that bad; people say love starts with jokes... (*giggles*).

Flugerov (à part). What a stupid mug, but he is pleased with himself.

Karlusha. Good sir, say a kind word for me to my master. He is angry with me because I burnt the rusks this morning; could you, please, butter him somehow?

Flugerov (*ambiguously*). Well, well, I'll do a good turn for you, as you wish!

Karlusha. Really?

Flugerov. Oh, yes, I'll tell the master everything.

Karlusha. I cannot believe it!.. Ah, Semen Semenych, let me hug you (*embraces him*).

Flugerov. You've sullied me again! It cannot be any worse; what a punishment for me!

Karlusha. I am sorry, it's from the bottom of my pure heart.

Flugerov. The devil take you! You stained all my chest with your pure heart.

I will brush it off till next morning.

Karlusha. Let me, I'll in a minute...

Flugerov. Go, go! A clean person must not mess up with the mob. Rascal! Who would ever have an idea to hug such a noble person as I am?

Karlusha. Excuse me, your Honor, I could not help hugging your Grace! My love made me a fool and I took you as the like of us.
Flugerov. I see that... but I am not the like of you! I would not hug somebody who is even cleaner than you.

Karlusha. Excuse me, Semen Semenych, I won’t lay a finger on you ever again, but, please, lend your helping hand to me.

Flugerov. Well, well, that’s enough, that’s enough; I promised and I will do it.

Karlusha (wants to embrace Flugerov again). Ah, my dear Semen Semenych!

Flugerov. (Jumping off him) Pssst!

Karlusha. I won’t touch you, your Honor, I won’t touch you.

Flugerov. You better watch out! Now, Ivan Ivanych is not at home, he will be back soon; I’ll be back in a quarter of an hour and I’ll arrange everything.

Karlusha. You’ll return my head to my shoulders. (Bowling)

Flugerov (à part). Keep bowing, store up trouble for yourself: Kleister will throw you out on your ear.

Karlusha. God bless your heart. You’ve comforted me so much.

Flugerov. Just you wait, I’ll comfort you much more.

Karlusha. I am pleased with what I have.

Flugerov. Good-bye, my good man, good-bye! You’ll remember me... (Leaves.)

Karlusha (seeing him off). I’ll never forget you!

Scene VIII

Karlusha (alone). Well, thank God! I’ve found a kind man who can stand for me. Now I can be more brave and have it out with Maria Ivanovna.

(Sings.)
Well, Karlusha, don’t be afraid:
If you come to your senses,
You day will come!
I will have a feast of feasts,
I will have my happiness
As soon as Ivan Ivanych
Gives us his consent.
I will get my
Honey-bun bride!
No dough can be compared
With the whiteness of her skin.
Her teeth are like almonds,
And her eyes have the color of cinnamon.
Her voice sounds like a nightingale,
And she looks so pretty.
That’s when I become a dandy
To the everybody’s surprise.
On Sundays we’ll go together
Along the Krestovski island!
I’ll cock my hat, my tails will be fashionable,
My height is dashing...
They will ask: “Who is that guy?” -
“I am a German baker!”
That's how it goes! I'll show'em what I can do.

(A knock at the fortochka.)

Just a minute, just a minute! What can I do for you? Ah! (Slams the fortochka.) I cannot believe my own eyes! It's that very greatcoat, who slapped my face this morning... He covered his face with the collar of his greatcoat, but I recognized him! He jumped away from the window, he got scared that I can jump out of the fortochka... All right! I'll get you next time!

Scene IX

Karlusha and Mashen’ka.

Mashen’ka. At last he left, this old lady-killer.

Now I have to tell him that he may come in... (On seeing Karlusha.) Karlusha, go to the kitchen, they were asking for you there. And please, make the big ordered pretzel ready to go. I stay here.

(She takes a pretzel of a medium size and puts it out on to the upper window shelf.)

Karlusha. Ah, Maria Ivanovna! That very greatcoat have knocked at the fortochka a minute ago.

Mashen’ka (looking through the window). Good, good... Go away...

Karlusha. Would you allow me to tell you something else...

Mashen’ka. Go away, I've told you!

Karlusha. Let me...

Mashen’ka. Will you go or not? Watch out, I'll tell daddy that...
Karlusha (à part). Ah! I understand, understand! She is waiting for him...

It’s an acquaintance through the fortochka; it’s just street pranks! Oh, I’ll lie in wait for him! This time he won’t escape... I’ll have my day too! (Hides behind the cupboard.)

Mashen’ka. Intolerable! At last he’s left! Here he is!

Scene X

Mashen’ka and Shagaev (wearing a greatcoat).

Shagaev. Ah, Maria Ivanovna! I’ve been waiting for your signal so impatiently, couldn’t take my eyes from the window, I walked back and forth by the bakery, and even tried to come in but this confounded Karlusha never left the room!.. This morning he was already in a pickle, but not enough as I can see; he annoys me to death.

Mashen’ka. Ah, we don’t have time to talk about him... Do you know what? Daddy begins to suspect you.

Shagaev. Is that right?

Mashen’ka. Yes; I knew these made to order pretzels would lead to no good.

Shagaev. But without ordering these pretzels I would not be able to see you often. There is not a front entrance to the bakery, big pretzels cannot go through the fortochka, and because of these two circumstances, I have a chance to come into this room through the back door to pick up my pretzel and to see you. Of course, such inventiveness becomes a little hard for me: a silver rouble is not big money, but I positively do not know how can I hide
each time such a big pretzel under my greatcoat... The last one I sent to the
supervisor of our Department: he had his birthday. He accepted it and that’s
why I took a risque not to go to the office today.

So, you say, that your father begins to suspect something?

*Mashen’ka.* It’s horrible! This morning he said that he knows why you come here
every day.

*Shagaev.* So what? If everything will come out, I will ask for your hand in a formal
way. I am single; I have no relatives, except my uncle; but my uncle will
agree immediately as soon as he will have a look at you.

*Mashen’ka.* I cannot believe it! And you would do it?

*Shagaev.* Anything for you! This morning, when I looked at the signboard of your
bakery with the picture of a big pretzel crowned with a diadem, I told myself:
maybe my love and my pretzels will be crowned with success also!

**Scene XI**

*Karlusha enters a minute before Shagaev finishes his lines
and stands between Shagaev and Mashen’ka.*

*Karlusha* (to *Shagaev*). Your pretzel isn’t ready yet!

*Shagaev.* Ah, ah, ah!

*Karlusha.* What? Are you afraid of me that turn off your face? If I managed to
turn off my face this morning, I wouldn’t have such a dishonor!

*Mashen’ka.* What for have you come here again? Go and prepare the pretzel;
you have no business here.
Karlusha. Right away, Maria Ivanovna, I only want this gentleman to look at me.

Shagaev. Well, what do you want?

Karlusha. Do you see my right cheek?

Shagaev. I do.

Karlusha. What can you say about it?

Shagaev. Nothing: it’s white of flour.

Karlusha. But this morning, it was red out of your grace!

Shagaev. What are you driveling about? I’ve never seen you in my life.

Karlusha. Oh, really? No, I’ve recognized your greatcoat. Now you are wearing it thrown over the shoulders, but this morning you had it with your arms in the sleeves... I notice everything. I am an ambitious man: I cannot stand when somebody slaps this part of my body. Do you think that I don’t know why you come to our bakery every day? I know everything and I’ll tell my master everything.

Mashen’ka. Come on, Karlusha, really, are you out of your mind?

Karlusha. No, Maria Ivanovna, I have come back to my mind... I’ve been silent, but my blood is up now. I’ll tell your daddy everything! If somebody hits my sore spot, especially this one (points at his cheek), I become a terrifying man, I am not afraid of anything. Here’s our master, right in time. He will know everything.

Mashen’ka (frightened). Ah, daddy!

Shagaev (also scared). Now I am done for!
Scene XII

The same and Kleister.

Kleister (on seeing Shagaev freezes and looks at him with fear). Ah, the clerk is here!

Karlusha. Ivan Ivanych, I, as a man of...

Kleister (in a low voice). Get out!

Karlusha. I have to warn you...

Kleister. Get out.

Karlusha. Do you know, what this clerk comes here for?

Kleister. I know, I know, get out!

Karlusha. Let me at least...

Kleister (pushing him away). Go away, the good-for-nothing. You are making me hit you!

Karlusha. It’s always like this: the innocence is oppressed! (Leaves.)

Mashen’ka (looks at her father). Ah, how scary he looks at him. (Comes up to Kleister.) Daddy, do you really could...

Kleister. Go away!

Mashen’ka. I am asking you for one thing only...

Kleister. And I am asking you for the other: go away. I have to get some explanations from him.

Mashen’ka. What does he want to do? I’ll hear everything from here (steps off).

Kleister. Go away completely! (Mashen’ka leaves.)
Scene XIII

Kleister and Shagaev.

3 Shagaev (à part). What’s going to happen?

4 Kleister (à part). On the Isaakovskii bridge I was told that yesterday they fined
5 one more bakery!

6 Shagaev (à part). What a difficult situation! I’ve never asked in marriage before...
7 do not know even how to start... I’ll see what he will begin with.

8 Kleister (à part). He doesn’t speak anything.

9 Shagaev (à part). He keeps silence.

10 Kleister (à part). If I could give something to him to leave me alone, but I am
11 afraid he’d get angry.

12 Shagaev (à part). I’ve never been confused so much in my life! As if I am caught
13 at a crime.

14 Kleister (à part). My heart stops beating.

15 Shagaev (à part). What should I start with...

16 Kleister (à part). Ah, he is looking at my bread... I am dying!

17 Shagaev (timidly and stumbling). Could you tell me... please... how much are
18 these buns?

19 Kleister. Three silver kopecks.

20 Shagaev. It’s very cheap.

21 Kleister. Oh, dear Sir! I’ve been living in Sankt Petersbourg for thirty five years; I’ve
22 always had good products; I do not mix flour; I bake according to the police
23 orders.
Shagaev. What are you talking about! Everyone knows you as an honest person.

Kleister (with a bitter smile). If you think that I am an honest person, then why do you come here so often?

Shagaev. Me?.. I... well, I have business here... I am waiting for my pretzel to be ready.

Kleister. Oh, excuse me... pretzel is a trifle. You have another reason to come here every week.

Shagaev. How’s that? You already know it?

Kleister. Yes, sir, I know everything! I cannot forbid you to do that; you may even check in here; but couldn’t you find anybody worse for this purpose?

Shagaev (à part). What is he talking about? I don’t understand anything.

Kleister. Ivan Ivanych Kleister is an honest baker but might be done for two kopecks... Please, console me, the old man; I am at a loss; I haven’t slept for three nights: your scary figure does not give me a peace; I want to finish it once and for ever... I know, you can destroy me in order that everyone would point his finger at me. I can lose my reputation because of you, but my honor is more important for me.

Shagaev. Excuse me, Ivan Ivanych!

Kleister. No, you excuse me. I am about to lose my mind. Each man has his ambitions... Look, dear sir, in what other bakery you can get such rusks; you can understand even by touching that the French buns are exactly of that quality they have to be!

Shagaev. I know, I have no doubt that there is not better bakery than yours even
Kleister. Then, why are you stuck to poor Kleister? What for do you order these frightening pretzels?

Shagaev. Forgive me my innocent trick: I was not sure that you would agree.

Kleister. Oh, my agreement does not mean anything; I have no objection, but, I ask you, please, don’t torture me any more; let’s finish everything today.

Shagaev. Really? Ah, how happy I am! I could not even imagine that you would agree so quickly! I don’t want to deceive you: my salary is not very high now, but in several days I take another position and we will have everything we need.

Kleister (à part). What is he talking about?

Shagaev. Give me a hug, dear Ivan Ivanych, you’ll always have me as your good son!

Scene XIV

The same and Mashen’ka.

Mashen’ka. Ah, daddy! Ah, I am so glad!.. I was so afraid... my kindest daddy!

Shagaev. Honorable Ivan Ivanych!

Kleister. Hold on... hold on, sir... What hugging are you talking about?.. I cannot understand anything. (To Mashen’ka.) Why have you come here?

Mashen’ka. Daddy, I’ve heard everything from that room: you consent to our happiness.

Kleister. What happiness? What, what is it all about?
Shagaev. Kindest Ivan Ivanych!

Mashen’ka. My sweetest daddy...

Kleister. What is happening here? What do you all want from me? Explain it to me.

Shagaev. What’s wrong, Ivan Ivanych? You have almost agreed.

Kleister. To what? I feel like a fool, I don’t know anything.

Shagaev. We are in love with each other for a long time. You guessed and consented to our marriage... I cannot find the words to thank you.

Kleister. Wait, wait... I am beginning to understand. (To Mashen’ka.) So, you are in love with this gentleman...

Mashen’ka. Yes, daddy, and he loves me too.

Kleister (to Shagaev). Do you too?

Shagaev. I do too.

Kleister. How couldn’t I understand before? So, you came here to see Mashen’ka?

Shagaev. Who else, Ivan Ivanych?

Kleister. And this pretzel for one silver rouble...

Shagaev. All that was an excuse to come into this room.

Kleister. So, you are not that officer who watches the order around...

Shagaev. What do you mean by that? I don’t understand you.

Kleister. Me too, me too... I still cannot come back to my senses... And you, and my daughter... and I... and police... and all this strange confusion...

The Russian saying is right: the eyes of fear see danger everywhere!
Shagaev. Ivan Ivanych, decide our fate, bless our marriage right now!

Kleister. Ah, ah, ah, what a rush! As if to a fire. Marriage is not a bun, which you can swallow in no time.

Shagaev. Oh, you may appoint the wedding day even in a year, but tell us now that you consent.

Mashen’ka. Yes, yes, daddy, even in a half of a year, but tell us now...

Shagaev (begging). Ivan Ivanych...

Mashen’ka (begging). Daddy...

Kleister (easing off, to both). Ah, you are my dear! You are touching me so much. My heart almost stops beating from joy...

(A knock at the fortochka.)

Wait, wait, customers are knocking.

Shagaev. Good luck to them, they can wait, we need you more.

Kleister. How could I! The business is business; it’s important; it cannot be delayed. (At the fortochka.) What can I do for you? French bread? How much? Just a minute. (Hands through the fortochka several loafs.)

Scene XV

The same and Karlusha at the door.

Mashen’ka. Ah, I am so glad! I know that daddy will agree and all of us will be happy.

Karlusha. I cannot believe my own eyes!

Kleister. Karlusha! Karlusha! Ah, you are here; don’t go away... (To Shagaev
and Mashen’ka) Let’s go to that room... I need to ask you many questions...
I cannot pick up a husband for my daughter from the street. There should be an order in everything... As Russian saying says: a wife is not a guitar, you cannot hang it on the wall after you played it. Let’s go. (They leave.)

**Scene XVI**

**Karlusha** (*alone*). What I’ve seen! What I’ve heard! He makes a proposal and I hoped as a fool that... How many days I haven’t gone to bed just to have a look at her! How many nights I have thought about her! How much flour and my own blood I’ve spoiled because of my love to her! She made me lose taste for eating and working; and now she’s eaten my happiness! I haven’t had a morsel of food since yesterday; the only thing I’ve eaten this morning were two rusks... and a slap from my rival... But I’ll revenge, I will revenge horribly! Now I will eat as four men!.. I’ll eat all my master’s goods. I am feeling now how my fury goes down into my stomach. From now on Ivan Ivanych will fatten up a snake in his bakery! Let’s see what they are doing in there... (*Looks into the keyhole of the door.*) Cannot see anything... Maybe, the whole deal will fall apart... No, no, they are coming to each other... I cannot believe my eyes! I am dead! It’s over!

**Scene XVII**

367
Karlusha and Flugerov.

Flugerov. Well, has the master come back?

Karlusha (embracing him). Ah, Semen Semenych, if you only knew...

Flugerov. Dammit, you've dirtied me again!

Karlusha. Excuse me, Semen Semenych, this time it's because I am at despair!

Flugerov. To hell with you and your despair! Give me a brush, rascal!

Karlusha. You cannot imagine, Semen Semenych, what happened here while you were absent.

Flugerov. Give me a brush, I am telling you!

Karlusha. Let me tell you first what...

Flugerov. What a scoundrel! I'd kill you on the spot but I don't want to dirty my hands on you.

Karlusha. Oh, you don't hit a man when he's down, Semen Semenych; anyway, I am almost dead... Here's your brush.

Flugerov. Well, well, say it, what's happened here?

Karlusha. Such an accident that I cannot even describe it... Let me clean you.

Flugerov. Leave me alone, you, scarecrow! You don't know the right time neither for talking nor for keeping your mouth shut. So, what is it?

Karlusha. All right, sir. Some time ago I asked you to put in a good word for me with my master...

Flugerov. Well... well...

Karlusha. I don't need it ant more; say nothing to him; don't say a word about me!..
Flugerov. Can you explain properly what’s the matter?

Karlusha. What’s the matter? The matter is that there is nobody on the Vasilevskii Island unhappier than me.

Flugerov. And more stupid also?

Karlusha. Might be; but it’s already not my business... Look, Semen Semenych, this is his greatcoat... (Shows the greatcoat left by Shagaev.)

Flugerov. Whose is it? Your master’s?

Karlusha. No, my master’s greatcoat is of pea color. But he, wearing this very damned greatcoat, hit me into the fortochka.

Flugerov. Into the fortochka?

Karlusha. I mean, he hit my cheek through the fortochka.

Flugerov. But who? Whom are you talking about?

Karlusha. I am talking about him who takes away my happiness. He is in that room now. Ivan Ivanych is hugging him, Maria Ivanovna is hugging Ivan Ivanych, and I wanted to hug you because of my misfortune!

Flugerov. What a nonsense! I don’t understand anything.

Karlusha. Me too, Semen Semenych. And how could they do it so quickly? As soon as you were gone, he came. My master comes in, I go out, and what comes out of it? She becomes his bride.

Flugerov. Whose bride? Where did this bridegroom come from?

Karlusha. Just from the street! He’s nothing, an idling walker. He is that very clerk who orders big pretzels for one silver rouble and who ruined me for nothing.
Flugerov. That clerk is going to marry her?

Karlusha. He is. And he will.

Flugerov. And what about me?

Karlusha. You are all right. What about me? What do you think I feel about it?

Flugerov. No, devil take it, I won’t let it to happen; I’ll unsettle everything...

Karlusha. Be so kind, Semen Semenych!

Flugerov. Now I see that the German was fooling me. He told me all sorts of nonsense about this clerk... posed him as a some kind terrifying officer, and now he wants his daughter to marry him! It’s a personal offence thrown into my face!

Karlusha. Into two faces! I am very susceptible to offence also.

Flugerov. No, I’ll show him my real face!

Karlusha. Show him mine too, Semen Semenych!

Flugerov (pointing at Karlusha). Is he taking me for a fool or what?

Karlusha (offensively). What?

Flugerov. No, monsieur Kleister, I won’t get rid of you... And you won’t get off me cheaply.

Scene XVIII

The same, Kleister, Mashen’ka, and Shagaev

Kleister. Ah, Semen Semenych, you are here already! I have an honor to introduce our bridegroom to you.
Flugerov. Can’t believe my own eyes: my nephew!

Shagaev. Uncle!

Kleister, Mashen’ka, and Karlusha. Uncle!

Kleister. How’s that? He is your nephew? But, that’s fine! It’s a fine thing!

Shagaev. Uncle, what are you doing here?

Flugerov (abashed). It’s not your business, not your business... I am here...

I am in passing...

Shagaev. I just was going to visit you to ask your agreement to my wedding.

Flugerov. What, what are you saying? So, that’s what you are occupied with?

And do you think that I allow you to marry? No, no, sir, don’t you even dream about it.

Karlusha. Thank you, thank you so much, Semen Semenych... That’s a genuine uncle!

Kleister. Why, Semen Semenych? Does he hide from us something bad about himself?


Kleister. You always praised my Mashen’ka to the sky... and even you yourself wanted...

Shagaev. You, uncle, you wanted also?

Flugerov. It’s none of your business! I did not want at all; I did not even think about it...

Mashen’ka. Then what about those words you told me this morning?

Flugerov. What words? What are you confusing me? I did not say anything; you
misunderstood me.

Shagaev. I see, uncle... That's why you do not allow me to get married.

Flugerov. Stop it, stop it, please!.. Where do you take it from? I was kidding, just kidding; and in order to prove you that I am not upset absolutely, I give you my consent. Do you hear me? I agree, just leave me alone.

Shagaev (hugging him). Ah, uncle!

Kleister and Mashen'ka. Ah, Semen Semenych!

Karlusha. What about me, Semen Semenych, me? Have you forgotten about me?

Flugerov. Shake off, rascal, you are sullying me again.

Kleister. Why are annoying the gentleman? Get lost... Why wouldn't you have some sleep?

Karlusha (through his tears). There's no reason for me to go to bed, Ivan Ivanych; without going to bed I've overslept my happiness.

Flugerov (whispers to his nephew). You have no pride, young man, to marry a baker's daughter!

Kleister (to his daughter). You are getting married exactly the way the Russian saying says: you cannot escape your fate.

Mashen’ka.

(Sings.)

Our author baked this vaudeville.

Is it to your taste? We do not know.

For someone, praps, it's cake and ale,
But it’s not our fault if cake is dough.

Not in one oven, people said,

All bread is baked. Our hearts are fluttered.

When actors are praised, then the authors bread,

From both sides is also buttered.
APPENDIX E:

N. A. NEKRASOV

(1821-1877)

THE PETERSBURG USURER

written in 1844 for the benefice of the actress M. Valberkhova;

banned by the theatre censorship;

first produced at the Aleksandrinskii Theatre in 1845

at the benefice of the actor Grigoriev II

after the censorship cut out all the attacks on

the Russian bureaucracy, usury, mentions of God, and

whatever censors considered frivolous.

Characters

Loskutkov, Potap Ivanovich, an usurer

Liza, his daughter

Nalimov, Ivan Fedorovich, in love with Liza

The Unknown Gentleman

Publisher

Krasnokhovostov

Akulina Stepanovna

Rostomakhov

Podzatylnikov, shop-assistant without a position

Servant
Theatre presents a room of the usurer, overstuffed with furniture; on the wardrobes there are several dining-room clocks, plenty of candle-holders, etc.; there are dresses on the chairs, hunting guns in the corner, piles of material on the floor, and the like.

Scene I

Loskutkov and Nalimov.

1 Nalimov. So, do you refuse me resolutely in seeking your daughter’s hand?

2 Loskutkov. Me? God forbid! I could not want a bridegroom for my daughter better than you! Only...

3 Nalimov. Only, Potap Ivanych...

4 Loskutkov. Only let’s speak sincerely as gentlemen.

5 Nalimov. Speak.

6 Loskutkov. You want me to give you my daughter, right? All right... I mean, you want me to give her to you completely, as it goes, and she would be independent from me and I would not get any use from her... Well... I know, you are a noble man; in fifteen years you’ll get a sign for irreproachable service... but how is it you want me to give her to you without nothing?

7 Nalimov. For pity’s sake, if your will was to give me something as her dowry... I would consider it as a particular happiness...

8 Loskutkov. Tah! tah! tah! That’s where we have a problem! And I am saying to you, would not you like to give me something... just... as a sign of your good kinship attitude to me.
Nalimov (clasping his hands). God, have mercy! For the first time in my life I hear such words from a noble man! (Aside.) Riffraff! (Aloud.) All the fathers award their daughters with a dowry.

Loskutkov. I don’t care about all the fathers. Let them give everything to their daughters and let them go begging from door to door; I consider this matter like this... you, say, hire a cook... a servant... well, you’re a single man, may be you have some other expenses. You take my daughter from me, you marry her... naturally, you get an acquisition... Ah? You just calculate how much you will have an economy because of it... Eh? You may even not hire a cook... I don’t even speak about other expenses... And I get nothing... I am a poor man... I fed her, gave her something to drink... You know, she always has such an appetite, she used to eat up to four pounds of bread every day... God knows, I, as a noble man... I don’t know, whom did she take after like this... I don’t like anything except bread and onions and my wife, the deceased, called even onions a luxury... moreover, I even used to buy shoes for my daughter! Devil take it! It’s a ravage! Nobody brings shoes to pawn anymore! I even wanted to hire a teacher for her. And now I have to give my daughter away for nothing!.. Ha-ha-ha!.. If I reared a piglet... brought up a puppy, trained it, you would give me money for it!.. But my daughter is not a puppy... not a puppy, Ivan Federovich!

Nalimov. Of course, she’s not a puppy, Potap Ivanovich!.. If she was a puppy, I would not ask for her hand!

Loskutkov. That’s it... Thank God, she is as all other people are... I tell you
more... You’ll get your sign for the irreproachable service only in fifteen years, but she... you understand... she never set her foot outside the home... I always watched after her strictly... you may see it yourself... an innocent dove... Petersburg is not the back of beyond... Just try... You, Ivan Fedorovich, haven’t seen such a tasty morsel as my daughter in your entire life... he-he-he!.. Rich people, you know... thousands dollars is nothing for them... they visited me sometimes... as if they wanted to borrow some money from me... He-he-he!... I myself, I think, I would give some five thousands!

Nalimov. Ah, Potap Ivanych!


Nalimov. You are ready to sell your own father for money!

Loskutkov. So what?.. He died though... may his soul rest in the kingdom of heaven (crosses himself); I could’ve sold him to the Academy of Medicine... but my wife was still alive at the time... fat chance! She fought tooth and nail against me! So, he’d rotted in the dirt.

Nalimov. We all shall rot, Potap Ivanych.

Loskutkov. We’ll rot, we’ll rot, and even no ashes will be left after us!.. Oh, sinners are we. (Sighing.) Some days ago Kostochkin, the artist, died... some two weeks before that, he came to me... for God’s sake, says, loan me twenty five roubles, only for two days... I’ll bring you a picture as my bail... the frame itself, he says, costs more than that... (Pointing at the
That very picture... by some famous artist, he said... asked me not to sell it... I will redeem it obligatory, he said... He swindled me, rascal!

He died right on the day when the payment was due! The saying is right: there’s not worse people than artist and shoemaker and cabman and boatman. Ivan Fedorovich, buy this picture... it’s not expensive... I’ll take only what it costs... swear to God, its cost... some fifty roubles.

Nalimov. What, the devil, I need it for?.. (Aside.) Ah! What an idea has come to my head... that will be good, really, good. (Coming up to the picture.) The picture is wonderful, indeed... you don’t sell it cheap, it may cost two or three thousands, I think.

Loskutkov (with joy). Three thousands!.. Benefactor... Is that right?

Nalimov. It should be a work by Michelangelo, what’s the other name?

Buenarotti... Or Rafael Sakcio... Sakcio... I forgot, but it doesn’t matter...

I cannot buy this picture, but I can recommend it to some people.

Loskutkov. Benefactor! I will bow down to you in my gratitude... I placed an add in the Police Gazette: due to the death of an artist his picture is for sale: excellent German work portraying three dogs, two pigs and a ram, and a man in a Circassian coat, - but nobody comes...

Nalimov. All right, I will try!.. Maybe even today some people will come to your place to have a look at the picture... And what about your decision regarding Lizaveta Potapovna?

Loskutkov. My pleasure... only you prepare a little gift for me... let’s say, some two thousands in cash... isn’t it worth to make some efforts for your future
father-in-law? We could arrange the wedding in a couple of days, while the 
wedding dress is still here... somebody brought it yesterday... A certain 
young guy got married... in a week he lost the dowry in gambling... next 
week after that they had nothing to eat... so, no need in the wedding 
dress... ha-ha-ha! Vanity of vanities! It fits Liza all right... it’s short a little, 
but who would look at the bride’s feet anyway.

Nalimov. It’s a sin to talk about such presents, Potap Ivanych... but what one can 
do about you... may be I will get these two thousands for you somehow...

Good-bye, for now.

Loskutkov. Don’t forget to recommend the picture... What was the name of the 
artist who painted it?.. Who knows, may be a buyer will come... It would 
be good to impress him by the name.

Nalimov (at the doors). Michelangelo Buenarotti. (Leaves.)

Scene II

Loskutkov (alone). Buonarotti... Buonarotti... what a strange name... what 
Buonarotti?.. Some kind of an extraordinary rascal, probably! I can see it 
from his name... If only I could take some three thousands for this picture... 
and two thousands from Ivan Fedorovich... that would be good... I could 
buy some cod and I could allow myself to have some other tasty things...

He is a kindest man, Ivan Fedorovich, only I won’t give away my daughter 
for nothing... fat chance!.. Be ashamed, he says; that’s a fine how-do-you-
do; what have I to be ashamed of? And still, even if it is a shame, the
money should be taken... money, it’s a great matter, I would do anything for money. You know, the devil does not exist: I called him in several times, wanted to sell my soul to him; I would sell for cheap, God knows that, I would sell it for trifles... but no, he doesn’t come! How one can believe the scholars after this!.. I didn’t study anything, but came to this conclusion by myself; the secret is: if you yourself won’t save some money, the devil won’t give it to you. No, it’s not that easy to get the money. I’ve been working hard for that.

Devil knows, how the world has spoiled! Young people stopped boozing; even if someone goes on booze, just look, one year or two pass and on the third year he comes to his senses... and would not set foot to my place! People had noble passions in old times: someone would lose in gambling - next day his wife runs to me to pawn her overcoat! Nowadays the business is rotten! The preference is petty! They lose one kopeck and talk about it as of a ruble... and nobody from the noble people comes here anymore, almost nobody... a retired cook from Peski sometimes stops by... to have some coffee... brings a huge heap of rags: looks like a lot of things, but each hardly goes for ten kopecks. (Doorbell.)

God gives me somebody again.

Scene III

Loskutkov and The Unknown Gentleman.

The Unknown Gentleman enters and instantly notices the picture, stops and
stands for several minutes as if in shock. Loskutkov watches each his move.

Gentleman (to himself). Superb! Entrancing! The Great Michelangelo! I recognize your marvelous brush!

Loskutkov (to himself). What is he saying?.. Is he praising it?.. (Rubs his hands with joy.) Ege! Ege! ge!

Gentleman (getting inspired). All the contemporary painting has nothing to compare with this great chef d’œuvre as for the emotion, as for coloration, as for the deep knowledge of Nature and Man. The great, genius work of art of no comparison, of no price!

Loskutkov (to himself). Of no price!.. Oh, my God! Why do you give me this happiness!

Gentleman (getting more and more inspired). If only there could be found a man who in time might enrich the art with a similar work, a million would not be enough to reward this exceptional man, this genius...

Loskutkov (to himself). A million! Dear Father in Heaven! He’ll knock me off my feet!

Gentleman (in a entire delight). On your knees in front of this great work of art!.. On your knees!.. Oh, if I only could adorn my picture gallery with it... all my fortune, the fruit of my hard work for years... on your knees! (Kneels down.)

Loskutkov. All his fortune?.. On your knees! (Following the Gentleman, falls down on his knees.)

Gentleman (looks around as if coming back to his senses). Ah, you are here...
Are you the owner of this picture?

Loskutkov *(pretending to be touched by the viewing the picture).* Stand, stand some longer in front of this great work of art... and let me stand some more too... I've just entered the room and right away - bang on my knees... I cannot resist it: my heart is very sensitive.

Gentleman *(significantly).* Have you entered just now?

Loskutkov. I always, when I enter this room, this sanctuary, so to say, I always stand on my knees and, would you believe me, I, old man, I shed a tear.

Gentleman. So, you haven't heard anything, have you?

Loskutkov. Nothing.

Gentleman. I came in, probably, a quarter of an hour ago; I see it and say to myself: nothing in particular, quite an ordinary picture; and, just for a joke, kneeled down.

Loskutkov *(aside).* Yeah, right! Keep lying, my dear! Find yourself another dupe! *(Loudly, with irony.)* Yes, of course, if you will; I, myself do it only because of the habit, but, really, there's nothing in this picture, just, so to say, trash.

Gentleman. Right you are, it's a trash... resolutely, no merits, whatsoever.

Loskutkov *(aside).* What drivel he's spouting! *(Aloud.)* No merits whatsoever... only appearance and nothing else; still, you know, it's better when something is hanging on the wall.

Gentleman. How much do you want for this picture? I, to tell you the truth, like pictures, I buy even a crap... it does not matter, just let it be a picture.

Loskutkov *(aside).* Trills away like a nightingale, rascal! *(Aloud.)* I won't ask
much.

Gentleman. How much?

Loskutkov. Ah, what’s the use of a long talk? Give me forty thousands in cash and the picture is yours.

Gentleman. With all my respects to you, you are crazy! It does not cost more than a thousand roubles.

Loskutkov (crying out). Thousand roubles! (Aside.) He gives me a thousand from the beginning! Yesterday I would sell it to you, fool, for one hundred roubles! (Aloud.) No, swear to God, I myself bought it for fifty thousands... well, I can throw off ten thousands: it’s kinda worn out a bit... and one thing, and another...

Gentleman. Take a thousand roubles.

Loskutkov. Don’t even think about it... let it rather vanish, or rot; I rather leave it to my children... at least, they will be thankful to me for that. Give me twenty five thousands and let’s leave it at that.

Gentleman. Two thousands!

Loskutkov. I can’t, swear to my God, I can’t, I’ll be in the red; look, what an excellent work; I think, the painter was not Russian; a Russian would not be able to do anything like that!

Gentleman. Well, as you wish. Good-bye! (Heading to the door.)

Loskutkov (aside, cowardly). Father in Heaven! He is leaving, really, leaving! Here are your two thousands! (Aloud.) Listen, what ever happens happens, ten thousands!
Gentleman (at the door). Four!

Loskutkov (in a pitiful voice). Benefactor! Don’t ruin me! It cost me... Let’s make it at least five thousands.

Gentleman. Let it be so, five. Shake on it; here’s the deposit, five hundred roubles; I’ll come to pick up the picture to-night and bring the rest.

Loskutkov (hiding the money, aside). I swindled him! (Aloud). Let’s shake hands on it.

Gentleman (aside). I’ve swindled him! (Aloud.) Only you watch out: don’t sell it to anyone, the picture is mine... and don’t substitute it... otherwise I’ll drag you through the courts... Good-bye! (Leaves.)

Scene IV

Loskutkov, then Liza.

Loskutkov. O Lord! Cannot believe such a fortune can happen to a man! And what for? There was a picture on the wall... Devil knows, what kind of picture it was... neither aspect, nor splendor... Out of a sudden, a man comes to your place and, just like that, without rhyme or reason, gives you five thousands... Truly, it’s the hand of Fate... It’s a pity, I did not asked for hundred thousands; he would, probably, stump up some twenty thousands to me...

Liza enters.

My daughter, embrace me! Give a kiss to your parent!.. I am the happiest man of all the mortals! Those shoes, which Peretachkina did not redeem
in time, – let it be so, I present them to you as my gift!

Liza. Finally, you have come to your senses... remembered that your daughter
cannot walk without shoes! Thank you very much... Well, I'll put them on
right away... I want to visit Aleksandra Grigorievna.

Loskutkov. I knew that! Aleksandra Grigorievna! What kind of friendship you may
with her!.. and, anyway, why should you spent so much time at her place...
have a dinner with her and march home... Gossiping, chatting. I guess,
she speaks about the only thing: “what you have? where it came from?
how much you have?” And you are glad to wag your tongue... Ah, I would
be so glad if you did not go to Aleksandra Grigorievna at all.

Liza. Whatever next! We have the only relative and you do not want me to see
her... No, that's asking too much; I'll put my overcoat on and I will leave, I'll
leave for the whole day, – it’s really not fun for me to stay with you to gnaw
the rusks and to listen how you argue with your visitors...

The door bell ringing.

Here, somebody’s coming again. Well, I go to put on my overcoat.

Scene V

Loskutkov and Publisher.

Loskutkov. Visitors! Thank God! May be I'll manage to swindle somebody!
(Makes a sad face and goes to open the door.) Come in... Oh! oh! oh!
What bad days!

Publisher. My compliments, Potap Ivanych. I brought it...
Loskutkov. Ah! You brought it! Well, it’s a good deal! So, you agree to take seven kopecks for a copy, don’t you?

Publisher. What can I do? I’m in need. If I was not in extreme need, swear by God, I would not take less than ten kopecks for a copy... It’s an excellent work... by a prominent author... in a short while all the copies should be sold out... Where would you like me to pile them up?

Loskutkov. Just right here... I’ll show you...

Publisher (in the doorway). Come here.

Two draymen come in with bales of books.

And what an edition! Paper is splendid, style is even, and print is very good...

Loskutkov. Let me see... Well, dear, the books look too thin. And how many there are here of them?

Publisher. Twelve hundred copies.

Loskutkov. And how many there were printed out?

Publisher. As many again.

Loskutkov. So, there were not sold out a lot!.. What a desire to waste the paper!..

This way... Follow me... I’ll count them and give you the money. (He goes to the right door; the draymen follow him with the books.)

Publisher (with a gesture of giving up). Good luck!.. Let them rot over there... I am not such a fool to ransom them... no, it would be too much to redeem all the trash! No money will be enough! But me, really,.. I, a fool, thought I would gain God knows what big money for these books... You’re in
trouble if you mess up with writers... they are the number one rascals! Of course, one cannot take away their wits from them: they know how to swindle you masterly and in the most noble manner; it’s not like he strips you bare in the middle of the street... no, you even do not notice how he gets around you... very delicately... And he hugs you, and this, and that... but, actually, see, he’s robbed you blind, rascal... Next day, your shop is sealed up and, see, you have to move out from your apartment on Nevskii prospect to Kolomna, to the Lithuanian castle... But he is still all right, he is still a noble man, just as he was, and he is falling all over himself to shine up to somebody else.

Our book-selling business

Goes from of old this way:

To catch a simpleton means

To provide an income for the authors!

They would receive you importantly in a study,

They would offer you a cigar,

And they would publicly call you

The most respected and the smartest;

Very thoroughly, they would

Calculate all the profit,

But as soon as you published them,

Forget about the money

And pile their books in the basement!
They brought you to ruin and left you alone -
You are nothing for them now!.
And if they squander all they money,
God sends them another publisher!
But the end of that story is just the same.
I used to be rich sometimes also,
I used to live on the first floor;*
And I fooled and swindled everybody;
I skinned alive and dead,
Was not afraid of anybody,
But as soon I got into literature business,
I myself was swindled.
I had enough money even for my grandchildren,
But I published one hundred books a year;
And now nothing is ringing in my pocket!
That’s what literature is. Me too, when I won’t have anything to eat, I’ll start
to write also; I’ll be an excellent man of letters. (To entering Loskutkov.)
Well, dear, have you counted the books?
Loskutkov. I have... It’s exactly eleven hundred and ninety two books... Now, one
thing else is remaining...
Publisher. The only thing remaining for me is to get my money and that’s it... But

* Note: Russian бельэтаж < French belle-étage, what is the first floor, but not the ground floor.
you, Potap Ivanych, please... I hope, neither a mouse nor any other repulsive creature... Trust me, such composition is worth of being exhibited under the glass cover.

Loskutkov. Mice! Don’t you worry about that! Mice do not live at my place! So, well. (Takes abacus.) One thousand one hundred and ninety two books...

One thousand one hundred and ninety kopecks... Once...

The doorbell rings.

Ah, God sends me another guest. (Opens the door.)

Scene VI

The same and Krasnokhvostov.

Krasnokhvostov (from behind the door). Is Loskutkov at home?

Loskutkov. At home. (Shows in a gentleman.) Be so kind, would you wait for a little... I’ll be done in a minute... So, one thousand one hundred and ninety two kopecks - once...

Krasnokhvostov (comes forward and talks to himself). He looks like a scoundrel! But I am so surprisingly hungry. What could I pawn here?

Loskutkov (from his place). One thousand one hundred and ninety two kopecks - three...

Krasnokhvostov. When you begin to get carried away by playing cards, you lose your appetite completely... but when you lose all your money, you begin to get carried back to your hunger... such a silly thing!.. I lost to them, rascals... But there was something for sure... yes, I am sure there was
something... truly, I watched his hands closely... but, I guess, he knew some kind of a special trick... fool I am... I should yell to them: cheating... villains you are, rascals! May be, one of them would slap my face... then I would...

Loskutkov. Farewell.

Publisher. Goodbye, my dear!

Loskutkov. All the wealth of the world to you... (Shows him off. Publisher leaves.)

Krasnokhvostov. What can I pawn to him? (Looks closely at his foulard.) It's a good foulard...

Loskutkov. What do you want, sir?

Krasnokhvostov (gloomy). Money.

Loskutkov. Oh, money! money! What a world we live in! Ask anyone - everybody says he needs money... but try to get money and you’ll find yourself in a pickle... Take me, for example, swear to God, I don’t have money at all.

Krasnokhvostov. It’s just for a snack... just something to have a snack... you know, yesterday, I attended a beautiful supper... devil knows, I did not want to eat at all.

Loskutkov (whistles). Well.

Krasnokhvostov. This foulard... it’s made, probably, in France; look how nicely it’s made.

Loskutkov. It’s made well... nicely made ...

Krasnokhvostov. Now I see that you understand arts. It’s pleasant to deal with a...
clever person, - so, you like the foulard? Do you want to have it?

Loskutkov. What do you mean? Do you want to... I'd be eternally thankful to you for such a pleasant gift.

Krasnokhvostov. Well, if you want... I can give it to you as a gift... Only...only, you know, I do not eat much, just trifles, a crumb - and I am full already... Maybe you could... something... in order I could... just to snack a little.

Loskutkov. I understand... why not? We can do it this way... Fifty kopecks in silver, if you will.

Krasnokhvostov. For pity’s sake... At the Le Grand, it’s almost nothing... Why wouldn’t you add a couple of twenty kopeck pieces!

Door bell rings. Loskutkov rushes to open the door.

Rascal, gives me so little... if I had at least a rouble. (Examines himself from head to toes.) It would be good to pawn the greatcoat - I could get good money for that... but it’s so cold outside... God dammit! I am freezing even having this greatcoat on! Devil knows, it was so warm all the time - and out of a sudden the frosts! What a misfortune! Really, the Fate always goes against man’s life.

Scene VII

The same and Akulina Stepanovna

Loskutkov (during Krasnokhvostov’s monologue Loskutkov was talking in an undertone to Akulina Stepanovna; he leaves her, saying). All right, you’ll get your coat right away. (To Krasnokhvostov). So?
Krasnokhvostov. So, you cannot give me more than fifty kopecks?

Loskutkov. I would gladly... what can I do... God knows, I can’t! I take this foulard at my own risk.

Krasnokhvostov. Well, then give me the money... only, you know, maybe something else... I do not need much... what if you... listen... (notices that Loskutkov tries to untie a small knot on the foulard) It’s trifle... I tied it not to forget something. (To Akulina Stepanovna.) Is it cold outside?

Akulina Stepanovna. Sure thing, not summer... I still cannot warm myself... can’t keep my teeth from chattering... people say, there was not such a cold for the last ten years. - (To Loskutkov) What, my dear, haven’t you sent my coat on its way somewhere?

Loskutkov. Hold on.

Akulina Stepanovna. I know your sort! You know how to hire somebody’s things... how to pawn them.

Krasnokhvostov (talking to himself). But there should be a thaw, it has to be... that’s what the weather is like in Petersburg... the most changeable weather. (Takes off the greatcoat and remains in summer trousers.) Well, it’s summer trousers on me... listen, dear sir...

Loskutkov. Cannot find it anywhere... Wait, let me finish with this gentleman... and I’ll find it.

Krasnokhvostov. How much would you give me for this greatcoat?

Loskutkov (in amazement). For the greatcoat? Do you want...

Krasnokhvostov. What are looking at me like that? my blood is racing... I am... on
fire, simply, on fire... I eat ice-cream even in December... last winter, I
even wanted to start pouring water over myself in the mornings... and what
is useful about this greatcoat? It covers you from above, but the wind still
blows from underneath.

Loskutkov (examining the greatcoat). Probably, it would be possible to give you
ten roubles for that.

Krasnokhvostov. Ten roubles! It’s too little, God knows, it’s too little! Give me at
least fifty roubles.

Loskutkov. I can’t; ten, if you wish.

Krasnokhvostov (after some consideration). Let it be ten... it will be easier for me
to get it out of pawn.

Loskutkov (writes something down in a big book and then gives Krasnokhvostov
money). If you won’t bring money in a month... don’t be angry with me.

Krasnokhvostov. I’ll be back in a couple days (bows, scraping his feet adroitly),
I’ll be back without doubt.

Akulina Stepanovna. You will, if you do not freeze to death!

Krasnokhvostov. Only you, please, don’t give my greatcoat away... (Leaves,
humming). What is my Fate - your cold heart and my despairing love.

Loskutkov. It’s a very good greatcoat... sixty dollars or so... look, look, the lining
is all in holes... pocket... (fumbles in the pocket) Nothing... at least a
kopeck to find or something.

Akulina Stepanovna. Stop it! He wants to find something in the pocket of such a
rogue, God forgive me! Give already me my coat, will you?
Scene VIII

Loskutkov, Akulina Stepanovna, and Liza.

Liza (enters the room, having a coat and hat on). Well, daddy, I am ready now and I am going to visit Aleksandra Grigorievna.

Loskutkov. God bless you, daughter! Don’t stay for a long time, please. Remember, you have a father...

Akulina Stepanovna (rushing after leaving Liza). Oh, my God! Oh, Holy Mary the Virgin! Just you wait, you rascal... to dress your daughter in other people’s coats... look, she is going out... and there’s no understanding whatsoever that the coat is not her... (She pull her coat off of Liza). Take it off! Take it off, my dear!

Loskutkov. Don’t! (To the old woman) Money first!

Akulina Stepanovna. Here’s, rascal, your damned money! (Threws money to Loskutkov.) He dresses his daughter in my coat...

Loskutkov. So what? Should I spend my own money to buy coats? (Takes the coat and gives it back to Akulina Stepanovna). You come to my place once more... I’ll make you pay through the nose!

Akulina Stepanovna. Don’t even think about it! I’ll never set foot in your place again; I’ll shout from the house-tops about you, rascal! Let people know what a swindler you are! (Leaves.)
Scene IX

Loskutkov and Liza. She is crying.

Loskutkov. What a foolish woman, indeed! As if something could happen to her coat! (To Liza.) And you... start to cry right away... it's not decent... really, not decent... Look, tomorrow or maybe even today, somebody else will bring a coat to pawn... then you may go to Aleksandra Grigorievna.

Liza. I promised her that I visit her today!... You should be ashamed! Your own daughter does not have a coat... not only a coat... I do not have even a dress!... I have to wear somebody's old clothes... I walk and I feel scared: what if something happens like it happened last year... A gentleman began to attack me... “Where did you get this coat, my dear? It's a coat of my wife...” He wanted to take me to the police... I feel ashamed to live with you. You are worse than a Yid, daddy; everyone would say that you are worse than a Yid... That’s why she called you a robber... And, truly, you are a real robber! I read about certain Mephistopheles in one book who, as they say, turned himself in a dog and ate live people. There’s nothing else I can say here - you are real Mephistopheles!

Loskutkov. Robber! Mephistopheles! Where did you get such words from, I wonder? One she-fool blurted them out and you repeat them: robber! A real robber has his hands in blood, his mug looks like... and, besides that, you drag some Mephistopheles in! (Sings.)

It’s a shame to call your parent Mephistopheles, -

I nursed you, I fed you...
Liza. With rotten fish and congealed potatoes...

Loskutkov. I gave you fresh water to drink.

You may array yourself in brilliant dresses

Of rich and important ladies.

Liza. It’s better have one dress, but of my own,

Than twenty of somebody else’s!

They might get out of the pawn all of them at once,

It will be empty in our wardrobes,

And I will remain... It’s a torture even to think about it!

In what? In shoes only!

Loskutkov. Is there something to be ashamed of? To melt down in hysteria...

To cry out about some trifles?

I heard, that in America the aboriginals have nothing on at all,

Even shoes! You stop sniveling... if you want to visit Aleksandra Grigorievna, go; I am not holding you.

Liza. But what have I to put on?

Loskutkov (throwing Krasnokhvostov’s greatcoat on her). Here we are... does not look beautiful, but then it’s warm.

Liza. Get away! May be you should put woman’s coat on and have a stroll along Nevskii prospect*.

Loskutkov. And I will, swear to God, I will... As soon as we’ll run out of all

* Nevskii prospect - the central avenue in St.-Petersburg, the favorite place for an afternoon strolling; the place to show/see the latest fashion in dress.
greatcoats in our pawn shop... I am not going to buy anything... Once, I remember, such a case occurred... I had no suit, no shirt... A very unpleasant case! So, I put somebody’s greatcoat on, belted myself tightly... and that’s how I walked around for three weeks... I even went out for a dinner like this several times... You know, somebody invites me for a dinner... how can I refuse... “Why would not you, Potap Ivanych,” - he says, “take off your greatcoat?” “I gave a promise,” - I say, “not to take it off for six weeks.” Apropos, my wife died at that time. “It’s a good thing,” - the man says, “the promises should be kept.” That’s it, Liza!.. Live and learn!... and you are whimpering... What’s bad about this greatcoat? (Puts the greatcoat on and walks back and forth with importance.)

The doorbell rings.

Well, God sends me somebody else... go to your room.

Scene X

Loskutkov and Rostomakhov.

Rostomakhov. How do you do, my dear... I read in newspapers that you have a picture to sell with the depiction of three dogs, two pigs, a ram, and a man in a Circassian hat; truly, I don’t give a damn about your pigs, and the man, and those rams!.. But I am interested very much in dogs, I love dogs extraordinarily; I, I can tell you, even respect them. A dog is the most perfect creation of Nature; better than a man... a man is a sponger, a pig, so to speak, who does all kinds of nasty things, steals from his masters; but
a dog, would you believe, my dear, - I regret that I was not born a dog... a?.. would it be better?.. a?.. talk to me, my dear! (Pushes Loskutkov into his shoulder rather hard.)

Loskutkov (having been scared). That’s absolutely true... I myself had sometime such a desire to turn into a dog... a dog does not need clothes, it does not have to rent an apartment; some kind man always would give it something to eat free... that’s true, you are right... for a poor man it’s much profitable to be born a dog.

Rostomakhov. That’s it, my dear! If you were a dog I would pay for you some fifty roubles or, maybe, even one hundred roubles... but now, I would not buy you even for one kopeck! Ha-ha-ha! Swear to God, I won’t give a kopeck for you... Why are you making your face wry and looking at me as an owl...

Huh?

Loskutkov. That’s nothing, sir, I am just surprised by your eloquence and the profundity of your thought, so to speak...

Rostomakhov. Don’t waste your time, my dear... I do not pay for crap... But as for the picture, I’ll probably buy it if the dogs are done well... So, are you going to sell it to me?

Loskutkov. To my greatest regret, I cannot... it’s already sold.

Rostomakhov. Sold? Well, then there’s nothing to talk about...it’s a pity! I like pictures with dogs... I have, I am telling you, ...plenty of such pictures... I even hire an artist... as soon as one of my dogs excels, I order its portrait right away!.. I pay the artist ten thousand a year for this job!
Loskutkov (aside). Ten thousand!

Rostomakhov. He, rogue, does my dogs wonderfully... he's a past master in painting... I have four rooms with the portraits of my dogs... the richest gallery... do you hear that, blast you! (Slaps Loskutkov's shoulder.) Eight hundred pictures with dogs and each dog looks better than the other... One yellow-dappled dog is done so beautifully that I can tell you - in real life, I've never met a dog better... I would not sell it even for two hundred thousand!..

Loskutkov (aside) Two hundred thousand! Ooh! He's really a big pot!

Rostomakhov (sings).

There no any other fellow like me in the world,
And there were not in old times as well;
All my house is one big kennel,
And I am an excellent huntsman!
My property is really big;
Since old times I have ten thousands souls'
And eighteen thousand packs of hounds!
My fun is expensive
But it entertains me;
Fame about my hunt
Is flying all over our region!

\[\text{Souls=serfs. See footnote on page XX}\]
When a hare runs head over his heels
In an open meadow
And when his ears begin to shake with horror,
Then the last kopeck would not mean anything to me;
The only thing I want is to have my Sokol or Zmeika*
To get that grey hare!
The better dogs get better meal;
As for the excellent dogs... I love them so much
That I sit them to dine at our table
Next to my wife and to myself!
There no any other fellow like me in the world,
And there were not in old times as well;
All my house is one big kennel,
And I am an excellent huntsman.

Do you here me, God dammit! Ah? Here, would you like me to tell
you how we go hunting... dogs are barking... all differenr voices... the
hunters are shouting: go-go-go!.. blowing their horns... And, suddenly, a
hare is running at full tilt in an open field... tally-ho, tally-ho!.. Do you hear
me God damn you? well, yes, I see, you are a piece of crap!.. you don’t
have this passion for hunting at all... Farewell! (Goes and stops in front of
the picture.) Is it that picture you were selling?

* Dogs’ names.
Loskutkov. That very one.

Rostomakhov (to himself). Never in all my born days have I seen such dogs... alive, simply alive; I absolutely have to have them in my kennel... in my gallery... Ha-ha-ha! (To Loskutkov.) You certainly have to sell me these dogs.

Loskutkov. I can’t, sir. I have already had the happiness to report to you that this picture is sold.

Rostomakhov. Sold! Then, cut those dogs out of the picture; I'll have the dogs and you may have the picture; I'll give you good money for these dogs.

Loskutkov. It’s impossible, sir.

Rostomakhov. Possible... do you hear me, the devil take you! I won’t leave you without the dogs!

Loskutkov. As you wish, sir, but I already got the deposit... Somebody should come to take the picture soon.

Rostomakhov. Don’t give them the picture... return the deposit. I am ready to pay five thousand for this picture.

Loskutkov. Five thousand! But I sold it for eight.

Rostomakhov. All right, I’ll give sixteen thousand roubles.

Loskutkov (to himself) Dear Father in Heaven! What have I done! Sixteen thousand roubles! And I sold it for five!.. he robbed me... he ruined me!

(To Rostomakhov.) You, probably, wish to make some kind of a joke, sir?

Rostomakhov. You go to the devil with your jokes!.. I, my dear, do not like jokes!

Why should I make jokes to the fellow of your kind... here’s my deposit...
fifteen hundred in banknotes, - the rest fourteen thousand and five hundred
roubles I'll bring you in no time and take my picture. Deal?

Loskutkov (extremely agitated). Good Lord! What should I do?.. If I do not agree,
I am losing five thousand roubles; if I take this deposit, the other gentleman
might take me to the police... at my age... or he might file a suit against
me... Never such a misfortune happened to me: money go right into your
hands and you are afraid to take them.

Rostomakhov. So?..

Loskutkov (to himself). If I only could see the first buyer before this deal, I,
probably, could trick him somehow... to return the deposit... even to add
some money of my own to calm him down.

Rostomakhov. So, what? are you, dammit, taking the money/.. if not - I am out
of here!

Loskutkov (rushing after Rostomakhov). Ah! whatever happens happens! As you
wish... I am going into it only for you... but you take a pity on me... the
other gentleman can beat me up or to get arrested... could you add at least
one rouble more.

Rostomakhov. Hell with you! I can add ten more! Here's the deposit... Write
down my name: Savostian Grigoriev Rostomakhov-Shirokolobov, a retired
ensign, I live temporarily at Demut’s, number 459. Gud-buy.

Loskutkov. All the wealth of the world to you.
Scene XI

Loskutkov (alone). What a picture! Good God! I could not even expect such a fortune to happen!.. I would be glad to have some fish and caviar today; whatever that skinny painter says, I am not going to give him the picture... I'll return the deposit and that's it... even if he'll beat me up, it does not matter!.. for such money I can take beating... I feel as if I am drunk... I feel so happy as if they promoted me to the Councillor of State or as if merchant Savastianov, who pawned forty thousand poods of the sealing-wax, has suddenly died... Here it is, happiness! I never thought or dreamed... and out of the blue - sixteen thousand roubles in your pocket. (Doorbell.) Again somebody's coming; really, I don't feel like receiving anybody today!

Scene XII

Loskutkov and Podzatylnikov.

Podzatylnikov. Ah, an honest soul on crutches!

Loskutkov. Ah! Ermolai Ivanych! Ermolai Ivanych! (Kisses him.) My dear! It's been ages since I last saw you!.. Where God brings you from?

Podzatylnikov. I went to see my family for a while.

Loskutkov. Your family? Thank God!.. Is everybody in a good health?

Podzatylnikov. They are alive; mice haven't eaten their heads off yet.

Loskutkov. Ha-ha-ha! You are the same joker as you always are!

Podzatylnikov. I have some business to you, Potap Ivanych.

Loskutkov. I know, I know, you would not come if not the business... why would
not you come just to relax, to talk, and have a bottle wine...

Podzatynkiv. That's fine, I wouldn't refuse to have some right now.

Loskutkov. That's the problem that I do not have wine at home now and I have nobody to send for. What about to have some snack?


Loskutkov. That's good. You do like fresh caviar, don't you?

Podzatynkiv. Sure.

Loskutkov. What about smoked white fish?

Podzatynkiv. Our daughter-in-law anything would gnaw.

Loskutkov. Then come to see me next week.

Podzatynkiv. What's that?

Loskutkov. Come to me next week and I will treat you properly! Some fisherman from Nikolskii market borrows money from me; so he intends to send me some white fish and caviar to try it out.

Podzatynkiv (bowing). Thank you so much, I am contented with your favors up to the top of my head! Listen, Potap Ivanych, have you had some tea, at least?

Loskutkov. Tea? You think of it too late! Just last morning I had my tea; though, if you wish we could have some tea now, but I don't want you to go into

* Bread-and-salt is an idiomatic expression in the Russian language which might signify any meal, or treat, or hospitality in general.

** Наша невестка все трескает. Podzatynkiv means that he is not choosy, any treat would be good for him.
expenses; during your trip, I think, you spent quite a bit, didn’t you?

Podzatynnikov. I confess - guilty as charged!

Loskutkov. I know, we can’t help spending money.

Podzatynnikov. Frankly speaking, this is a reason I stopped at your place. Be a pal, lend me some dough.

Loskutkov. How’s that?

Podzatynnikov. I’d like to borrow some money from you.

Loskutkov. To borrow. (Gives Podzatynnikov the once-over.) Hm!

Podzatynnikov. As soon as I find a job, I return the money to you with all my respect.

Loskutkov. That’s fine, that’s fine... the trouble is that I don’t have money now.

Podzatynnikov. Come on, Potap Ivanych! Where else can I get some money if not from you?

Loskutkov. Really, I don’t have them! I have some money but it’s not mine. An acquaintance of mine let it through my shop on a percentage basis; but he’s such a yid that doesn’t allow me to have the interest less than one hundred per cent.

Podzatynnikov (aside). Rascal! (To Loskutkov.) Potap Ivanych, fear God! Remember my bread-and-salt for you.

Loskutkov. The table might be laid but call a spade a spade.* And, really, what treat, what bread-and-salt have I seen from you?

* Хлеб-соль ешь, а правду режь.
Podzatylnikov. What? Wasn’t it enough for you? Don’t you remember last year, when I used to bring you all the goods from my former master’s shop?

Loskutkov. What a deal! And what kind of goods they were? I still cannot sell those two pieces of fabric which you brought, though I lowed the price down to five roubles and fifty kopecks.

Podzatylnikov. You should ask ten roubles! Come on, at Gostinyi Dvor’ they sell such fabric for one rouble!

Loskutkov. A-ah! that’s it! An for how much did you sell it to me?

Podzatylnikov. One rouble and fifty kopecks!

Loskutkov. I beg your pardon, my dear, it was one rouble and fifty two kopecks. However, we should not talk about it; you are in need and I, as a good Christian, have to help my neighbor. Tell me, how much do you need?

Podzatylnikov. For now, at least something like... fifty roubles in banknotes.

Loskutkov (examines Podzatylnikov’s attire again and does not see anything good to pawn). Don’t you anything to pawn?

Podzatylnikov. That’s the problem, nothing.

Loskutkov. We-ell... ( Comes up to Podzatylnikov and examines his old fur-coat). Well, it’s impossible to give fifty roubles for this coat, because the fur is threadbare; there are two little bold spots on the back.

Podzatylnikov (looks at Loskutkov in surprise). Who told you that I was going to pawn my fur-coat?

* One of the biggest department stores in St.-Petersburg.
Loskutkov. Ah, then you have something else?

Podzatynnikov. I have nothing; I thought that you, for old times’ sake, would lend me money without pawning.

Loskutkov (scared). Without pawning? Lord gracious! What swindlers there are on the earth! they want to borrow money without pawning; it’s a robbery in broad daylight! Bloodsucker! Do you want to kill me or something?

Podzatynnikov. I see I can get as much good out of you as milk from a he-goat.

Farewell! Cleanout Viperych!¹

Loskutkov. Goodbye, goodbye, my dear!

Podzatynnikov. You should be friends with the devil himself! (Leaves.)

Loskutkov. It’s all right, I understand. Don’t forget, you promised to invite me for a tea.

Scene XIII

Loskutkov and the Unknown Gentleman.

Gentleman. Here I am... excuse me, please, for being late a bit. But now we can finish the whole matter in no time... I brought all the money I owe you. My people are waiting outside to take the picture. I’ll go and invite them in.

Loskutkov (makes a sad face and stops the Gentleman). Don’t.

¹ Cleanout Viperych [Обиralо Аспидыч]. The angry Podzatynnikov calls Loskutkov not Potap Ivanych but by the name which Podzatynnikov just made up, using the verb to clean out to form the first name and the noun viper + traditional suffix -ych to form the patronymic, to indicate the qualities of Loskutkov’s character.
Gentleman. What's that?

Loskutkov. I surrender myself to the mercies of yours, just let me talk to you. Be my benefactor, have mercy on me, the misfortunate.

Gentleman. What do you want to say?

Loskutkov. I am a poor man... sometimes, I even do not have a slice of bread for my dinner, not to talk about a piece of beef... What one can do about it? It’s poverty! My daughter, the most charming girl of the world, wears my old boots and suffers from a toothache because she eats frozen potatoes...

The only consolation for us was this picture, this great piece of art, as you kindly put it... Would you believe that we accustomed to this picture so much that we even shared our troubles with it; even spring smelt* seemed taste better when we looked at this picture... my daughter used to sit hours in front of it. I myself stood on my knees in front of this picture, you saw it...

The devil must have been at my elbow or, maybe, it was the finger of fate that I decided to sell it in a hope to improve my disastrous situation... so, you traded it, you gave me the deposit... but when my daughter got to know that you were going to take the picture from us, she burst into tears; now, she’s laying in bed absolutely ill... on her suffering-bed, so to speak... she might even die from sadness... I was all right at the beginning but as soon as I began to think that we have to give away our picture... I, an old man, I feel my heart almost stopped beating... Benefactor... don’t let us die...

* Spring smelt is of a bad quality, so they sold it even cheaper than usually.
let the picture be with us, it's the only treasure we have... take your deposit
back, please.

Gentleman. You, my dear, are spouting drivel... I've bought the picture. Here's
the rest of the money. I am taking the picture (goes to the door to call his
people in).

Loskutkov. Have mercy on me! Bring my daughter back to life!

Gentleman. Nonsense! Take the money!

Loskutkov. Don't let me die! (Falls down on his knees.) I will let you borrow
money from me without interest for the next ten years... Not only I return
five hundred roubles to you, I give you five hundred of my own.

Gentleman. Don't put on a show for me, leave me alone. I am going to order my
people to take the picture. (Goes to the door.)

Loskutkov (getting up and rushing after the Gentleman). No! I am not giving you
the picture! I am not... Do whatever you want with me... Kill me! Knife
me!.. I am not giving you my picture!

Gentleman. What? You are not? Have you forgotten that you sold it to me and
I've paid you for that?.. It's so low... Do you know how they teach you and
your sort for such things?

Loskutkov. What are saying, what? You want to slap my face... Go ahead!.. But
if you do, you will not get rid of me so easily!.. I'll bring an action against
you for my dishonor!

Gentleman. What a lowness!

Loskutkov. I have no choice. I am not a rich man! For a poor man, any way is
good to put bread on the table. (Sings.)

A slap in one’s face is a shame,
That’s how people thought in old days;
But nowadays, - nobody would argue that -
It’s quite opposite.

I used to know one poor man
With a respectful swollen face;
He ate only radish and straw
and had a reputation of a scoundrel;
once he ran into a rich man,
started to quarrel with him for no reason,
got slapped, and was paid one hundred thousand roubles
to quiet down the whole matter.
Out of a sudden everybody began to honor and to respect him.
Even those who never knew him began
to treat him as honorable man;
It seems to me that some of you had a dinner with him yesterday.

So, what is it all about? It would be stupid
To get angry, to think about revenge:
It’s not a big deal to quiet a pain in one’s cheek,
To get one thousand roubles is a problem.
But with such money one can live wonderfully,
Not knowing a trouble.
Not one hundred thousand, give me five thousand roubles
And I, as an honest man,
Will allow you to flog me!

Gentleman. That’s fine, but I bought this picture and I am going to take it with me.
Loskutkov. Benefactor! Give it up! By the name of my daughter I implore you...
give it up... I give you one thousand roubles along with your deposit.

Gentleman. One thousand roubles!.. I can get five thousand pure profit right
now... The only thing I have to do for that is to bring this picture to one
place and to show it to someone.

Loskutkov. Leave it here... So be it, I’ give you two thousand toubles.

Gentleman. Five.

Loskutkov. Five thousand! I’ve never had such money in my entire life.

Gentleman. It’s your choice. (Shouts for his people.) Hey, over there!

Loskutkov. Three thousand.

Gentleman. Four.

Loskutkov (aside). What should I do?.. If I give him four thousand, I still do not
lose. (Loudly.) Be a benefactor of me, the luckless, take three and a half.

Gentleman. Four and nothing less!

Loskutkov. Well, let it be so. Tomorrow, I will go begging from door to door but,
   at least, the picture is with us and my daughter is saved... You know, I have
   such a very sensitive heart: I’ll do everything for my daughter. (Goes to the
   wardrobe.)

Gentleman (aside). I feel like it’s really going to happen. Seems, I managed the
whole matter very well.

Loskutkov. Here’s your five hundred roubles deposit, and here’s four thousand
roubles more. Have a pity on me, the ruined... give me at least five
roubles... I’ll sink my sorrow in a glass of wine... farewell, my money,
farewell.

Gentleman. Well, God is with you! Here’s ten roubles for you... don’t forget me...
Farewell... (Leaves.)

Loskutkov. I wish you every happiness!

Scene XIV

Loskutkov, then Servant.

Loskutkov. Thank God! I’ve had a lucky escape! And it did not cost me much...

(Takes the abacus.) I got five hundred roubles of deposit from the first one;
fifteen hundred – from the second... Fifteen hundred... Two thousand
roubles. I gave him four thousand two of which are mine... so, the picture
will go for fourteen thousand roubles!.. Good! Very good! Ha-ha-ha! I
fooled them all! Ha-ha-ha! (Comes up to the picture laughing.) Could I
ever have such a thought to receive fourteen thousand roubles for this
crap!.. and what is so good about it, anyway? I would give five kopecks
for it... really, I would not... a ram is done not bad... but pigs are like
nothing on the earth... such pigs. But dogs, look how dogs look... as if
they want to say: “Farewell Potap Ivanych! This is our gift to you: fourteen
thousand roubles!” Ha-ha-ha! Well, thank you, thank you, doggies!.. Let
me treat you with some tasty bones for that! Ha-ha-ha! Serve your new
master well... Thank you... I kneeled in front of you not for nothing...

*The doorbell rings.*

Looks like, they are coming to take the picture... *(Talks to the picture.*
*Ironically.*) What a great pity to depart with you, the greatest piece of art...

What a pity... *(Opens the door.)*

Servant *(enters with a letter in his hand).* From the landowner Savastian
Grigorievich Rostomakhov.

Loskutkov. To take the picture?

Servant. Here’s the letter, sir.

Loskutkov. Anything else?

Servant. Nothing, sir *(leaves).*

Loskutkov *(reading).* “Dear Sir! I have to inform you that I am not in need of that
picture which I bargained for anymore...” What?.. What?.. He is not in
need anymore? I cannot believe it! What about the deposit? *(Keeps
reading.*) That is why, my dear sir, I leave the deposit at your disposal and
that is why I ask you not to expect me to come for that picture with the rest
of the money. Landowner Savostian Grigorievich Rostomakhov.” He does
not need it? He refuses to take back his deposit?.. Ah, I know what I am
going to do!.. I’ll drown myself! I’ll hang myself!.. You call them people?!
You call it people’s honor?! How one can believe in human virtues!.. Give
me a rope! A rope!
Scene XV

Loskutkov and Liza (runs into the room in fear)

Liza. What’s happening to you, daddy? You are yelling like a shoemaker who...

Loskutkov. My daughter! You do not have you father anymore!.. I am not a father to you! A shoemaker... really, like a shoemaker... I am a fool!.. I am a beggar... I had money, my daughter... I had them in my hands... and now I am ruined... I am robbed!.. I am losing my mind... I am more stupid than a donkey... more stupid than a post-chaise horse... Farewell, my daughter... I know what I am going to do! (Quickly runs away.)

Liza (alone). What’s happened to him? He looks really troubled with something...

I do not understand anything!

Scene XVI

Liza and Nalimov.

Nalimov. Lizaveta Potapovna! How are you? Let me kiss your hand... Why are you so anxious?

Liza. Something happened to my daddy. He was shouting “I am ruined, ruined,” tearing out his hair... and now, he’s run away... he looked scary!

Nalimov. That’s all right, don’t be afraid... It’s not a bad omen, it’s a sign of a joy.

Liza. Joy? What kind of joy it might be?

Nalimov. It’s a joy, because all the obstacles in our wedding plans are destroyed.

Liza. You mean, you got money?

Nalimov. That’s it, I got the money... But, really, where is your father?.. I am
afraid he can harm himself because of this despair... one can see why!

(Q Quickly goes away.)

Liza. Daddy lost his money... Ivan Fedorovich got the money... I still cannot
understand anything... I don't know but my heart is beating with joy... If
Ivan Fedorovich really got the money, my daddy would let me marry Ivan
Fedorovich! That would be a joy!.. At last, I will leave this damned house,
where I've been bored so much. That's wonderful, wonderful! I'll make new
dresses for myself, I'll buy new shoes and a fox fur-lined coat... I'll go to a
ball together with my husband...

Scene the Last

Liza, Loskutkov, and Nalimov.

Nalimov (walks in Loskutkov holding his arm; Loskutkov's face is bluish-pale).

Well, Lizaveta Potapovna! One more minute and you would become an
orphan!.. So, that's what happened to you, honorable Potap Ivanych... and
how much did you lose because of these swindlers?

Loskutkov. Two thousand roubles... two thousand roubles earned by the sweat
of my brow, my hard-earned money!.. Ah, why did you interfere my
intentions?.. I do not want to live! Two thousand roubles!.. Give me my
two thousand or I don't want to live!

Nalimov. Calm down, dear Potap Ivanych... You were duped and lost two
thousand roubles... It does not matter for you where from you would like to
get two thousand roubles back, does it? Consent to my desire to marry
Lizaveta Potapovna and I will give you two thousand roubles this very moment.

Loskutkov. Benefactor! You are resurrecting me! My daughter! You are the wife of this generous man... give those two thousand... (Takes the money.)

Nalimov. Potap Ivanych, you have to join our hands.

Loskutkov. Wait, wait! Let me count the money first... Well... (Loskutkov joins the hands of Nalimov and Liza.) Be happy, my children... Live in peace and don't forget your father!

Liza and Nalimov. Our kind daddy!

Loskutkov (grows tender). My good children! Ivan Fedorovich, I am not a miser, God knows, I am not... This picture was the reason of your happiness... Take it. It'll be your dowry, Liza... I am not a miser, as you might have thought...

Nalimov. Thank God! Now we are happy completely!

Loskutkov. So do I, my children... And still, I would like to know, who are those swindlers who tricked me so smartly.

Nalimov. Well, may be I will tell you that some day after my wedding.
VITA

Alexander Vladimirovich Tselebrovskii grew up in Estonia. When he was fifteen years old his family moved to Russia where he completed his high school education. In Russia he gained his Master’s degree in Theatre and began his professional career as a staging drama and musical show director. He also has experience of working at the television station where he created and hosted several programs. Before coming to Louisiana State University to study at the Department of Theatre, Mr. Tselebrovskii ran his own experimental theatre-studio. He directed over two hundred different shows and taught acting, directing, and stage movement at theatre and music colleges. In the spring of 2003 he will receive the degree of Doctor of Philosophy from the LSU Department of Theatre.