

ALEXANDER GRIBOYEDOV (Extracts from 'Woe from Wit', 1823)

'The little Frenchman, puffed with pride
Was telling them: he had a fright
Going to Barbaric Russia! But he found
There was caressing all around.
With not a single Russian face,
The language spoken was *Francais*.
It looked as though he were in France
Among his friends, in his *province*,
And if you saw him, he'd appear
To you a petty monarch here,
With ladies all in the French style,
He's happy here, it's we can't smile.
His speech gave rise to great elation
With sighing moans and lamentation.
«Oh France! The land beyond compare!» --
Two sister duchesses declare
The way their mother taught them to,
And governesses said to do.'

[...]

Into what circles I'm driven by fate?
Circles of hell where my tormentors wait
To victimise me! ostracize me! Storytellers!
Gossiping traitors to love as well as
Ungainly connoisseurs, cunning laymen,
Malicious aged men and women
Grown stale on a diet of schemes and lies.
You brand me a madman with your loud cries!
You're right: he'll come through fire who
When staying just a day with you,
Breathing air with people of your kind
Would not be driven from his mind!
Away from Moscow! Out of these parts!
I seek a place for outraged hearts!
I'll go around the world in search
Get me a coach! Get me a coach!