

Winged out of *Woe from Wit*:  
The Entrance of Literary Phrases into Russia's Oral History

By Daria Locher

WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY IN ST. LOUIS

Division of International and Area Studies  
Global Cultural Studies

Thesis Examination Committee:

Seth Graebner

Kim Sukkoo

A Thesis on the Assimilation of Russian Literary Phrases  
into Russian Oral History as Winged Words

by

Daria Locher

A thesis presented to The Undergraduate School  
of Washington University in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements of the degree of  
Bachelor of Science of International and Area Studies

May 2020  
St. Louis, Missouri

2020, Daria Locher

# **Table of Contents**

List of Figures.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Introductory Remarks.....	1
Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework.....	3
1.1    Defining the term “winged word”.....	3
1.2    Lingual Design in the 18 <sup>th</sup> and 19 <sup>th</sup> Centuries.....	6
1.2    How to Approach this Question.....	14
Chapter 2: Historical and Cultural Context.....	18
2.1    Who was Griboedov? .....	18
2.2 <i>Woe from Wit</i> contributed to the breakdown of serf theater.....	21
2.3 <i>Woe from Wit</i> approached the language of living rooms.....	26
2.4 <i>Woe from Wit</i> after Griboedov’s death.....	32
Chapter 3: Interviews as anecdotal evidence.....	41
3.1    Set-up for Interviews.....	41
3.2    Interviewees’ composite definition of the term “winged expression”.....	47
3.3    How do winged expressions develop in the present day?.....	49
3.4    Generational conflict as exposed by winged expressions.....	55
3.5    Standardized literary education as a moderating factor.....	59
3.6    Is there political nuance in Griboedov's winged words?.....	65
3.6.1    Post-soviet (contemporary) concepts of Griboedov.....	65
3.6.2    Decembrist Chatsky.....	70
Concluding Remarks.....	74
Bibliography.....	77
Appendices.....	83
Appendix 1: Winged expressions mentioned in interviews.....	83
Appendix 2: Interview Transcripts.....	84

# List of Figures

Table 1: Summary Results of Interviews.....	42
---	----

# **Acknowledgments**

I would like to offer special thanks to the following individuals instrumental to this research:

Nicole Svobodny, whose comprehensive and imaginative lesson plans inspired me to consider pursuing this topic in the first place, and then whose insights supported me throughout my journey.

Aleksandr, Sofia, Natala, Masha, and Mila, my interviewees, without whom I could not have designed this study and who deepened my understanding and love of this subject with their open-hearted approach to my questions.

Caitlin Hawkins, who showed me *умеренность и аккуратность* (moderation and accuracy) in writing her history thesis concurrently with my own.

Professors Cindy Brantmeier and Shanti Parikh, who aided me in designing this incredibly interdisciplinary research project through their insights into their specialties – linguistics and ethnographic anthropology, respectively.

Daria Locher

*Washington University in St. Louis*

*May 2020*

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

A Thesis on the Assimilation of Russian Literary Phrases  
into Russian Oral History as Winged Words

by

Daria Locher

Bachelor of Science in International and Area Studies

Global Cultural Studies

Washington University in St. Louis

Professor Seth Graebner

Professor Kim Sukkoo

The Russian language has a high integration of metaphorical expressions derived from literary works. This study explores the process of integration to determine why one work, Aleksandr Griboedov's play *Woe from Wit*, has contributed into the language to a significantly higher degree than any other single work of literature. Cultural and linguistic scholars point to the intricacy of the play's language, the redefinition of the Russian language and theater in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the intertextuality of contemporaneous literary circles, and the embrace of the subversive values of the play by the Soviet administration a century after the play's initial release. Building off these scholars' work, this study revolves around five case studies to glean a contemporary, idiosyncratic image of the effect of these historical processes on the modern vernacular. These individuals commented on the generational conflict exposed by people's knowledge and conception of winged expressions, as well as remarked on the moderating factor of standardized literary education. The case studies reveal the pitfalls of an echo chamber of linguistic scholars, as well as demonstrate an emotional connection to this literary work that has lasted through centuries.

## Introductory Remarks

It is well documented how intricacies and grammatical construction of different languages impact people's experiences of reality, including their perceptions of color, cardinal directions and unconscious biases.<sup>1,2</sup> Cultural scholars define culture as an ambiguity transmitted to new and existing members through speaking a common language.<sup>3</sup> “New members of society,” who are either born into the culture or immigrate into it, transmit both this common language, as well as the culture attached to it. Along with the transmission of the language comes a shared perception and understanding of reality, as permitted and perpetuated by the idiosyncrasies of their language.

Psychologist Elivera Sorokina argues that the transmission itself defines the quality of the culture: people observe the world around them and express their thoughts concerning it by the means available to them through their language.<sup>4</sup> While variable in the nature and source of communication, the scope of language is naïve, conservative, and even normative: the language inherited from previous generations cannot cover the developing intricacies of a dynamic world.<sup>5</sup> Sorokina concludes that “higher level” language is necessary to communicate complex thoughts, emphasizing that “language vocabulary for special purposes is created on the basis of a collection of words already available in the language.” This collection of words has already had a

---

<sup>1</sup> Panos Athanasopoulos et al., “The Whorfian Mind,” *Communicative & Integrative Biology* 2, no. 4 (July 1, 2009): 332–34, <https://doi.org/10.4161/cib.2.4.8400>.

<sup>2</sup> Lera Boroditsky, “How Language Shapes Thought,” *Scientific American*, accessed October 28, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1038/scientificamerican0211-62>.

<sup>3</sup> Lucian Conway and Mark Schaller, “How Communication Shapes Culture,” n.d., 21.

<sup>4</sup> Эльвира Сорокина, “Консубстанциональность Как Языковое Звление,” in *Terminology Science in Russia Today: From the Past to the Future*, ed. Larissa A. Manerko, Klaus-Dieter Baumann, and Hartwig Kalverkämper (Frank & Timme, 2014).

<sup>5</sup> Л.А. Джелалова, “Пословица Как Объект Обиходно-Ориентированного Общения (На Материале Русских Пословиц),” *Известия Высших Учебных Заведений. Поволжский Регион* 44, no. 4 (2017), <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/v/poslovitsa-kak-obekt-obihodno-orientirovannogo-obscheniya-na-materiale-russkih-poslovits>.



long history of communicating specific thoughts and feelings, and it is that history that deepens the subjective semantics of words and phrases from their original, nonmetaphorical uses.

A common measure of adding specialized meaning to words is in languages' ever-changing metaphorical nuances. Words originally connoting quite discrete ideas on their own can signify a complex notion when strung together in a fixed manner. Metaphors construct cultural idiosyncrasies and highlight existing communal cognitions.

In this study, I will focus on how the language's high integration of quotes from literary works impacts Russia's cultural identity. The expression крылатые фразы (winged phrases) defines this specific method of integration. Russian folklorist V. P. Anikin points out that these expressions originate in the literary world, when Russian find their innermost feelings conveyed through Russian literary language. He further remarks that these mysterious sayings – winged phrases – express a sort of mass assessment of how a people experience the world in their individual minds. By adopting these expressions into their vernacular, they can communicate previously difficult or uncommunicable thoughts while giving a nod to their literary canon.

# Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework

## 1.1 Defining the term “winged word”

Phraseological units are simply fixed expressions. According to Anikin, they contain “the specificity of truth expressed in a generalized form.”<sup>6</sup> Dictionary compilers Felitsina and Prokhorov necessitate them having at once informational and emotional tones, calling to mind a vivid image while communicating a pithy truth. This multi-tonal facet of winged expressions contributes to their wide appeal and use.<sup>7</sup> Another dictionary compiler, Büchmann, coined the term “winged word” to refer to “a formed notion, but more a concept-gestalt<sup>8</sup> combining rational and sensually perceived features of the object.”<sup>9</sup> In this definition, the expression “rational features” refers to the traceable historical or literary source of the expression, while “sensually perceived” covers the emotional connection speakers feel towards the object. The concept of the notion being “formed,” according to Büchmann, came from its stability, repeatability and link with the source. So, why did Büchmann coin this term as “winged?” Numerous ethnographers simplify Büchmann’s definition to consider winged words simply those that “fly out” of a person’s mouth – closer to the unrelated use of the phrase in Homer’s *The Odyssey*.<sup>10</sup> However, that definition doesn’t distinguish winged words as a distinct phraseological unit as described by Büchmann.

---

<sup>6</sup> В. П. Аникин, “Грибоедовские Крылатые Слова в Сопоставлении с Фольклором,” *Студия Полонославика: К 90-Летий Со Дня Роздения Профессора Е.З. Цбенко* 1 (2014): 243–49.

<sup>7</sup> V.P. Felitsina and O.O. Prokhorov, *Russkie Poslovice, Pogovorki i Krylatye Vyraženija: Lingvostranovedčeskij Slovar’ Lingvostranovedčeskij Slovar’* (Russkij jazyk, 1979).

<sup>8</sup> “Gestalt” means “a specific whole or unity incapable of expression simply in terms of its parts” (New Oxford English Dictionary)

<sup>9</sup> Elena Golovanova, “Cognitive Aspects of Phraseological Nomination in the Sphere of Special Knowledge,” in *Terminology Science in Russia Today: From the Past to the Future* (Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2014), 141–50.

<sup>10</sup> Golovanova.

Dr. Elena Golovanova, a professor of philology at Chelyabinsk State University, breaks down phraseological units into two types distinguished in the nature of transmission. The first type relies on associating the phrase with its current and written uses while acknowledging their intrinsic unity of the object's "significant features" – based on active, synesthetic, linguistic, and uniquely personal experience.<sup>11</sup> In English, an example of such a phraseological unit could be "a rose by any other name would smell as sweet" from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. English speakers, in employing this expression, take into account the source (Shakespeare) while also acknowledging the shift of its meaning in contemporary language. Gradual, objective, and one-sided understanding juxtaposes this second type. Golovanova would probably consider the expression "once in a blue moon" as an appropriate English example, since people only understand the expression's semantics and employ the expression without comprehending its linguistic and cultural history.

Given this dichotomy in phraseological units, winged phrases distinctly lie in the first bin of phraseological unit, while at the same time maintaining the connotations of "flying out" of speakers' mouths. Golovanova expands this simplified understanding to explain that the term "winged" calls to mind concepts of quickness; the thought communicated by the phraseological unit flying into the receiver's consciousness; flying out of the nest (meaning, in this metaphor, the text) into self-existence; and the flash of inspiration when a speaker correctly reproduces the expression. This final connotation relates to Büchmann's concept of "sensually perceived" features.

Russian's winged phrases are also raised to additional highly specific standards. Inspired by Büchmann's original definition, current conceptualizations of winged expressions often share

---

<sup>11</sup> Golovanova.

the following characteristics: 1) connection with the source (author; literary, mythological, folklore or historical character; a work of art or literature; a historical event, etc.); 2) composition of multiple, connected words; 3) reproducibility (they are not created in the process of communication, but are reproduced as ready-made integral units); and 4) stability of the component and semantics.<sup>12,13</sup> The most important facet shared in modern day scholars' definitions is the connection to the source.

Irina Sergeevna, in writing the preface to her *Big Phraseological Dictionary of the Russian Language*, considers it fundamental that winged phrases contain both a memory of its source as well as its flight from it into the language. She confidently affirms that, when native speakers use these expressions, the phrases' meanings firstly contain an inherent memory about their author-creators, the works they come from, or the historical events that served as the basis for their occurrence. The dissimilarity between the spoken expression and the original intention of the author-creator begins with the transition between a written work and spoken language, when the inherent memory compounds with both "living conditions and language culture."<sup>14</sup> Next, each use of the expression preserves, and transmits, a dynamic culture. In the same vein, Russian newspapers often use winged expressions, well-known songs, and quotes from famous works (primarily poetry) in their headlines, creating new associations with each use.<sup>15</sup> In this way, phrases might gain new meanings or "come back to life" after being passively held in the back of a people's collective consciousness for years. Russian writers begin to take a marked position in their linguistic history in the context of their divided society at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Валерий Павлович Берков, Валерий Михайлович Мокиенко, and Светлана Григорьевна Шулежкова, *Большой Словарь Крылатых Слов Русского Языка* (Greifswald: Ernst-Moritz-Arndt-Universität, 2008).

<sup>13</sup> Other linguists have different, narrower definitions that include the long existence of a winged unit as a fixed expression, and its origin point in literary circles. See Займовский (1930) as an example of a differing definition.

<sup>14</sup> Irina Sergeevna, *Большой Фразеологический Словарь Русского Языка* (АСТ-ПРЕСС, 2006).

<sup>15</sup> Берков, Мокиенко, and Шулежкова, *Большой Словарь Крылатых Слов Русского Языка*.

century. The dynamic linguistic history therefore impacts the innate meaning of the winged phrase.

### 1.3 Lingual Design in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries

The linguistic history necessarily begins with the history of Europeanized Russian aristocrats in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In the essay “Country Trip,” Russian author Aleksandr Griboedov called the Russian nobility “a damaged class of semi-Europeans to which I belong,” noting that the foreigner may have the impression “that our gentlemen and peasants come from two different tribes that have not yet had time to mix customs and mores.”<sup>16</sup> Soviet literary scholar Robert Maguire writes about cultural discourse at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century centered around the dichotomy between assimilation into a European lifestyle and rediscovery of indigenous values.<sup>17</sup> In the early nineteenth century, translators of Western works struggled to bring sentences from the flexible European languages into Russian construction. They were creating a bastardized, “new, Europeanised, albeit hybrid, literary language.”<sup>18</sup> Initially forced to by Peter the Great’s Europeanization project, Russian nobility came to embrace German emotional ethics and French Enlightenment. They also consumed German spiritualistic literature to fulfill their religious needs, given Peter’s reforms minimizing their Orthodox church.<sup>19</sup> They often integrated French words into their daily speech to talk about concepts that the Russian language lacked words for. Only the educated aristocracy could understand this language, due to the adoption of

---

<sup>16</sup> A.C. Грибоедов, “Загородная Поездка,” accessed March 8, 2020, <http://www.griboedov.net/proizvedeniya/zagorodnaya-poezdka.shtml>.

<sup>17</sup> Robert A. Maguire, *Exploring Gogol* (Stanford University Press, 1996).

<sup>18</sup> Alessandra Tosi, *Waiting for Pushkin: Russian Fiction in the Reign of Alexander I (1801-1825)* (Rodopi, 2006).

<sup>19</sup> Marc Raeff, “At the Origins of a Russian National Consciousness: Eighteenth Century Roots and Napoleonic Wars,” *The History Teacher* 25, no. 1 (1991): 7–18, <https://doi.org/10.2307/494605>.

“syntactic and lexical elements into the Russian speech<sup>20</sup>.” This created a dialect of sorts called “salon style.”<sup>21</sup> This part of society, culturally emancipated from Russian traditions, exulted the poet as the one to “maintain social harmony and regulate social good” rather than the tsar, who traditionally held that role. Linguist Zhivov argues that this cultural differentiation cut them off from their national cultural tradition, which remained “preserved by the lower classes.”<sup>22</sup>

However, two events tipped the pendulum back towards Russian traditions: the French Revolution and the War of 1812. These two events fulfilled the psychological necessity of defining one’s cultural identity in opposition to the “Other” which, previously unfulfilled, caused Griboedov to call them “damaged.” Jarringly for the Russian aristocracy, this shift required the realization that the European culture they were previously instructed to identify with was not only not their own, but actually ran counter to many parts of their identities. Alexandre Tchoudinov, a scholar researching foreign perceptions of the French Revolution, discussed how Russian writer Karamzin was emblematic of the generation of Russians who grew up with a French education. Karamzin visited Paris in 1790 and witnessed firsthand the progression of the Revolution. First, he watched admiringly as it achieved the theoretical goals they shared with French Enlightenment thinkers. Soon, though, he saw how it rapidly became violent and put him at risk as a member of the same social class as those guillotined by the French populace.<sup>23</sup> Aleksandr I stated famously that one must distinguish the principles from the crimes in the French Revolution.<sup>24</sup> The French Revolution’s clear display of barbarism based on the values

---

<sup>20</sup> Tosi, *Waiting for Pushkin*.

<sup>21</sup> Orlando Figes, *Natasha’s Dance* (Picador, 2004). Page 50

<sup>22</sup> Victor Zhivov, “The New Cultural Differentiation: Linguistic Purity as an Ideological Category,” in *Language and Culture in Eighteenth Century Russia* (Academic Studies Press, 2009), 346–429, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1zxsjs0.9>.

<sup>23</sup> Alexandre V. Tchoudinov, “Le Culte Russe de La Révolution Française,” *Cahiers Du Monde Russe* 48, no. 2/3 (2007): 485–98.

<sup>24</sup> Tchoudinov.

that Russians had previously held to such high regard alienated many Russian intelligentsia, causing them to turn their attention back to their own Russian culture.<sup>25</sup> Tchoudinov believes that Russian nationalism materialized into patriotism in the face of a national invasion by Napoleonic forces in 1812.<sup>26</sup> During the war of 1812, the nobility fought alongside the “common people” that they had previously very few interactions with. For the first time, Russian aristocrats were operating in close proximity to the “common people,” noting these individuals’ remarkable moral values employed to the benefit of their shared motherland, Russia. Wartime camaraderie revealed and strengthened these two groups’ common “Russianness.”<sup>27</sup> Starting after the war of 1812, the Russian aristocracy began to actively reconnect with its Russianness – even as they struggled to pinpoint this multifaceted (and perhaps, self-contradictory) concept.

The nobility looked to historical and artistic folklore in an attempt to define what it meant to be Russian. In the early 1800s, Russian poet Merzlyakov exalted folk songs as the medium through which elite Russians could better understand their place in their cultural history. Once they understand their place, he argues, they could learn to value it.<sup>28</sup> The poet, first values in his/her ability to define elite Russians’ semi-European culture, now filled a role as the definer of a merged cultural history. That is why Russian scholar Figes asserts that, “more than any other Western canon, oral narrative traditions root Russian literature.”<sup>29</sup> The famous Russian writer Pushkin integrated the oral history transmitted to him by his nanny into his writings, dedicating multiple poems to her.<sup>30</sup> However, before Russian literature’s rapid entrance into the national

---

<sup>25</sup> Figes, *Natasha’s Dance*. Page 67

<sup>26</sup> Tchoudinov, “Le Culte Russe de La Révolution Française.”

<sup>27</sup> Figes, *Natasha’s Dance*. Page 84

<sup>28</sup> Joshua S. Walker, “Incomprehensible from Without: Folk Authenticity and the Foreign Perspective in Gogol’s, Turgenev’s, and Tolstoy’s Russian Songs,” *Ulbandus Review* 16 (2014): 114–33.

<sup>29</sup> Figes, *Natasha’s Dance*. Page 113.

<sup>30</sup> Sergei Davydov and David M. Bethea, “Pushkin’s Biography,” in *The Superstitious Muse, Thinking Russian Literature Mythopoetically* (Academic Studies Press, 2009), 205–26, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1zxsj7q.12>.

consciousness, it barely existed at all.<sup>31</sup> Only two brief catalogs of the Russian literary tradition existed, and writers were just beginning to open literary societies, journals, and publishing businesses. Famous writers of the time, including Pushkin and Karamzin, agreed that Russian literature did not exist as its own entity, even as they were actively defining and popularizing a new Russian cultural literature.<sup>32</sup>

These individuals were forming their cultural consciences at the same time that they were designing a new language focusing on their linguistic and cultural traditions. However, they had more than a poorly developed literary tradition working against them: it was difficult to define the parameters of what their literary language would be. Early on, writers tried to bring together the common tongue with the church Slavonic, to great failure, calling it the “Славин-российский” (Slavin-Rossiski, meaning “Slavic-Russian”) language.<sup>33</sup> As scholar Zhivov explains, Karamzin and his followers hypothesized that the transition from Latin to the Romance languages due to its “contamination with barbarian dialects” had occurred in the same manner in the Slavonic language. This resulted in the split into two fundamentally different languages: Church language (influenced by Serbian and Greek) and the Tartar-influenced spoken Russian. Due to this esoteric origin point, they argued, the Russian written language was, before the nineteenth century, obscure, complex, and undefined. Other writers’ attempts to bring these two languages together amounted to a “monstrosity.”<sup>34</sup> In 1816, poet Batyushkov verbalized the era’s literary mandate: writers needed to “enrich and shape the language” so the glory of Russia’s military would be matched with an equally glorious language.<sup>35</sup> Poets were taking on official and

---

<sup>31</sup> Figes, *Natasha’s Dance*.

<sup>32</sup> Maguire, *Exploring Gogol*.

<sup>33</sup> Zhivov, “The New Cultural Differentiation;”

<sup>34</sup> Daria Khitrova, *Lyric Complicity: Poetry and Readers in the Golden Age of Russian Literature* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2019).

<sup>35</sup> Maguire, *Exploring Gogol*.



government roles so they could contribute to “engineering Russia’s own beautiful and articulate officialese.”<sup>36</sup> They were filling holes in the Russian language that were previously filled by European words and phrases. Vyazemsky felt so strongly about the paradox of these holes in this language considered so rich that he wrote an article titled “On the Misuse of Words” in 1827.<sup>37</sup> However, even by the 1830s none of these early innovations in the written language had bled into conversational speech, since French was still the language of higher society.<sup>38</sup>

Zhivov explains that Karamzin made it his mission to clean up his overly rich language, surfeited with the numerous languages that factored into it. Karamzin’s literary circle integrated only well-known and accepted Slavonic words where the Russian language lacked an equivalent, dipping into European languages for words as well. Starting in the 1780s, Karamzin’s cultivated style came into widespread use, replacing obsolete styles with a more “pleasant,” “natural literary language.”<sup>39</sup> While he considered his innovation a form of patriotism and a way to advance the national culture, a literary camp arose in opposition to his work – the *Beseda*. Members of *Beseda* believed the future of the Russian literary language should be sourced directly from the Church Slavonic. In fact, their name came from the phrase “беседа любителей русского слова,” or “the Colloquy of Lovers of the Russian Word.” Shishkov, at the head of the vast network of *Besedisti*, spoke for them all in his idealization of Church Slavonic as a “virile, unadulterated language.”<sup>40</sup>

In response to this literary camp cropping up and in particular in response to one product of the group, *The Lipetsy Spas*, the *Arzamas*, another literary group, arose to defend Karamzin’s

---

<sup>36</sup> Khitrova, *Lyric Complicity*.

<sup>37</sup> Zhivov, “The New Cultural Differentiation;”

<sup>38</sup> Zhivov.

<sup>39</sup> Zhivov.

<sup>40</sup> Zhivov.

ideals of an innovated and Westernized future language. While *Beseda* had a very hierarchical structure (reminiscent of the Orthodox church), *Arzamas* considered themselves a tight group of jesting friends.<sup>41</sup> The *Arzamas*' main aim was to paint this well-established literary camp as conservative and backward. This unfair characterization ignored that the *Besedisti* also strove to advance the Russian language, desiring the “expressive qualities of popular speech and literature,” confined at that time to “folklore genres.”<sup>42</sup> The younger *Beseda* crowd (including Griboedov) was mostly a group of romantic radicals with nationalist leanings rather than conservative reactionaries. According to Yuri Tynyanov, the inadvertent Soviet coiner of the oppositional terms “archaists” and “innovators” in 1929,<sup>43</sup> the main characteristics tying together these two types of utopists were their insistence on the continuity in the history of the Russian language; the aforementioned focus on folklore and the vernacular (and a resultant rejection of excessive literary eloquence in their writing); using etymology as a technique in their defining new words in the Russian language; and translating words rather than using the other language's original words in Russian. Columbia professor Reyfman extolls this confluence of the new Europeanized meanings of words as well as their homonyms in the archaic Russian language as allowing amusing wordplay in the poetics of these writers.

The *Arzamas*' extensive use of neologisms and esoteric literary references rendered their writings nearly unintelligible to those not in their group. The same was true for the *Besedisti*, whose style was so archaic as to limit the comprehension of their language to themselves. It got

---

<sup>41</sup> Irina Reyfman, *Vasilii Trediakovsky: The Fool of the “New” Russian Literature* (Stanford University Press, 1990).

<sup>42</sup> Zhivov, “The New Cultural Differentiation;”

<sup>43</sup> Reyfman argues that Tynyanov's main point in his text “*Arkhaisty i novatory*” was that the archaists were genuine innovators, modernizing the literary system by using archaic language. Archaism actually greatly contributed to the principles of Russian Futurism, further influencing the “poetics of the entire Russian literary avant-garde.” According to Reyfman, Tynyanov's creating two terms to describe these literary camps was, in fact, a mistake: the original title for the book was *Arkhaisty-novatory* (Archaists-Innovators), referring to a simple literary camp. See Reyfman for more information about Tynyanov's text.

to the point that, at the time, all Russian – whether spoken, written, formal, or familiar – was judged on a speaker’s “mastery of expression.”<sup>44</sup> By the 1820s, the fighting between the two literary groups had died down as “both groups had realized the necessity of a compromise between the utter archaization and the reckless modernization of the literary language.”<sup>45</sup> For example, Pushkin compromised and integrated colloquial speech and spoken idioms into his literature.<sup>46</sup> The resulting language (primarily leaning in the direction of Karamzin and the *Arzamasti*) merged written and spoken language and brought Russian to par with European languages’ flexibility and readability. They had created a distinct language fitted to their cultural era, open to future modification and idiosyncratic life. This allowed for literary blossoming and experimentation, pursued by budding Decembrists and other writers.

This final step marks the conflation of two aspects of Russian society at the time: as Maguire puts it, “literature, in fact, became the focus of [cultural expression], and has remained so ever since.”<sup>47</sup> The search for defining Russia and the Russian people inspired Russia’s “great artistic prose works.”<sup>48</sup> Moscow State University and other academic institutions led this new way of thinking about the past and what it could mean for the future.<sup>49</sup> Rather than fit into one of the divisions in society – European, peasant or official Russia – young literary circles strived to define themselves in the absence of these backdrops.<sup>50</sup> Tolstoy argued in his “A Few Notes on War and Peace” that an author’s job was to represent idiosyncratic individual human experience. Russian history cannot be simply chronicled by historians, Tolstoy believed, because they rely

---

<sup>44</sup> Khitrova, *Lyric Complicity*.

<sup>45</sup> Reyfman, *Vasilii Trediakovsky*.

<sup>46</sup> Maguire, *Exploring Gogol*. 114

<sup>47</sup> Maguire, *Exploring Gogol*.

<sup>48</sup> Figes, *Natasha’s Dance*.

<sup>49</sup> Ирина Н. Медведева, *Творчество Грибоедова // Грибоедов А. С. Сочинения в Стихах / Вступ. Ст., Подгот. Текста и Примеч. И. Н. Медведевой* (Современный писатель. Ленинградское отделение, 1967), <http://feb-web.ru/feb/griboed/texts/svs/svs-005-.htm>.

<sup>50</sup> Figes, *Natasha’s Dance*. Page xxvii.

on the official narrative, which is often inhibited by falsehoods, exaggeration, and simplification. The role of artists is contributing to this collective memory in keeping alive the “majestic, complex, infinitely diverse, oppressive, and vague” fact of life.<sup>51</sup> Karamzin, the official historiographer under Aleksandr I, created a comprehensive cultural history with his *История Государства Россійскаго* (History of the Russian State), first published in 1818.<sup>52</sup> Written by a poet, this tome gave readers micro and macro views of Russian culture and history. This volume opened up the ability for poets and other writers to refer to their history as fixed rather than indefinite and mythical.<sup>53</sup> This comprehensive narrative gave a historical and lexical foundation upon which writers could build their stories. In fact, a leading grammarian of the time, N.I. Grech, wrote: “To Karamzin we are indebted for (contemporary) Russian style.”<sup>54</sup> Pushkin dedicated his historical dramatic poem *Boris Godunov* to Karamzin in a nod to his contribution to literary foundations.

Late Columbia University scholar Robert Belknap asserts that, following this building of literary foundation, “Russian prose in the 1820s and 1830s” traced the development previously seen in Europe at an extraordinary pace. The history of the “proto-novel” began as collections of individual tales, then progressed to tales “linked by a narrative situation,” followed by those “linked by a single narrator,” and ending with those “linked by a single hero.”<sup>55</sup> The definition of a common, fixed history and language came together with the development of narrative complexity to create a truly Russian literary tradition. Russian artists defined their culture at a more minute scale than their imitation of Europe or reliance on the official narrative, chronicling

---

<sup>51</sup> Leo Tolstoy, “A Few Words on War and Peace,” in *War and Peace* (The Russian Archive, 1868).

<sup>52</sup> Raeff, “At the Origins of a Russian National Consciousness.”

<sup>53</sup> Jurij Striedter, “Poetic Genre and the Sense of History in Pushkin,” *New Literary History* 8, no. 2 (1977): 295–309, <https://doi.org/10.2307/468523>.

<sup>54</sup> Zhivov, “The New Cultural Differentiation;”

<sup>55</sup> Gabriella Safran, “The Troubled Frame Narrative: Bad Listening in Late Imperial Russia,” *The Russian Review* 72, no. 4 (2013): 556–72.

the idiosyncratic daily lives of their fellow Russians. Literature's use of traditional, folk cultural units crystallized the Russian consciousness of a shared cultural history.<sup>56</sup> Given the specificity, emotionality, and intrinsic cultural identity of phraseological units, it only makes sense that these integral parts of the oral tradition were exalted during this time. This innovative spirit was particularly expressed in the works of one early nineteenth-century writer – Aleksandr Sergeevich Griboedov.

## 1.2 How to Approach this Question

*Woe from Wit* is widely considered the most quoted play or novel in the Russian literary canon. In this paper, I will analyze this success of Griboedov's rhetoric in the context of the natural processes of pithy phrases crystallizing into the language. Given this play's uncommonly heavy contribution to the Russian language, I narrow my research to *Woe from Wit* to examine how winged words are integrated into the Russian vernacular and why this language emphasizes the innate history of their winged phrases more than other languages. Previously, literature has focused solely on the difficulty of defining the origin points of words and expressions; and identifying which phrases became winged from *Woe from Wit*. Currently, there lacks comprehensive literature addressing the process of crystallization of winged phrases from this one play and the cultural-linguistic effect of this universalism.

This study will examine the following questions: how did winged expressions from *Woe from Wit* enter and continue to remain in spoken Russian? How does the oral narrative tradition of Russian literature factor into the fluidity of literary and vernacular language?

---

<sup>56</sup> Maguire, *Exploring Gogol*.

First, my analysis of *Woe from Wit* follows an investigation of the rhetorical idiosyncrasies of this text according to prior research. This complements my description of the cultural, social, and historical milieu surrounding this topic. I then compare my contextual analysis of the play's place in Russian history to case studies of Russian individuals' interviews to provide me with a greater ability to explore more informally Russians' lived experiences with their cultural history and contemporary idiomatic vernacular. The interviews are with Moscow residents ranging in age from 20 to 57. My participant population is not randomized or split into treatment and control; it is rather a collection of my Russian acquaintances. This was purposeful: due to our personal connection, we begin with a comfortable rapport that leads to a better, more fluid discussion about the subconscious usage of language. In my analysis, I split the interviewees into two categories: those above and below the age mark of 40. This is to explore cultural-linguistic difference between Soviet or Russian regimes and educational systems.<sup>57</sup> I chose to employ video interviews (via Facebook, Skype, and Whatsapp) so that I could give follow-up questions; catch them in an unknowingly, telling sidetracks; and direct the conversation in a way lacking in an online questionnaire. These five individuals, while covering a diverse age range and a wide geographic spread, represent case studies and are not necessarily representative of the whole.

My interview questions cover upbringing, media consumption habits, understandings of winged expressions in their language, interaction with the play, and thoughts on the author himself. For each interview, I chose winged expressions from the text of *Woe from Wit* underlined in the text (indicating that the author considered it a winged expression) as well as

---

<sup>57</sup> According to Natala, a case study participant, a 40-year-old would have been 11 years old at the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, multiple years short of 8<sup>th</sup> grade. According to Fefilova's 9<sup>th</sup> grade lesson plan, current-day students typically read Griboedov's *Woe from Wit* during this year of schooling.

listed in the *Большой Словарь Крылатых Слов* (The Big Dictionary of Winged Words). I cross-referenced these two resources to confirm the permeation of the phrases included in the interviews. For each interview, I chose three winged expressions to ask the interviewee about. Previous literature cited one as well-known and oft said. The second was an expression that seemed archaic, niche and/or difficult to integrate into twenty-first century conversation. The final expression I picked for each interview was somehow being multi-part: it could be a multi-line expression; two expressions immediately next to one another, one from one source and the other from the other; or an expression appeared in a longer format in one but not the other. These judgements about which expressions filled each of these categories, especially the well-known ones, came from various scholarly articles and dictionaries, in lists online of famous winged expressions from the play and mentioned by previous interviewees.<sup>58</sup> Additionally, given the dictionary's insistence that a winged phrase must be traceable (in active memory) back to the work of literature that begot it, I will ask the native speakers if they can trace the idioms back to *Woe from Wit*.

These interviews will help determine the legacy of Griboedov's additions to the Russian language into the twenty-first century. The interview questions cover topics such as education, personal feelings towards specific phrases found cited in the *Большой Словарь Крылатых Слов Русского Языка* (the Big Dictionary of Winged Phrases of the Russian Language),<sup>59</sup> and how the native speakers feel about the individual phrases. Looking at Soviet and modern lesson plans, comparing them to the lived experience of my interviewees, and focusing on how winged phrases factor into the educational curriculum will provide a clearer picture of the extent to

---

<sup>58</sup> See Хилинг, "Крылатые Выражения Из 'Горе От Ума' Грибоедова" for an example of an informal list online of popular expressions in *Woe from Wit*.

<sup>59</sup> Берков, Мокиенко, and Шулежкова, *Большой Словарь Крылатых Слов Русского Языка*.

which Russia's standardized education system has uniformly distributed knowledge of specific winged phrases among its populace. This study aims to demonstrate the ongoing conversation between the Russian formally composed and vernacular languages. With these case studies, I aim to answer the question: how does the story they paint differ from the one that presented in the existing research on the topic?

In all, this study puts forth a more holistic approach to the analysis of the transition between Woe from Wit's text to the common vernacular. This paper will be the first to look at the historical, linguistic, and educational processes that came together to catapult this one play into such widespread reclaim.



# **Chapter Two: Historical and Cultural Context**

## **2.1 Who was Griboedov?**

Aleksandr Sergeevich Griboedov was born in Moscow in the final years of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>60</sup> His family belonged to Moscow's gentry class, although later literature often exaggerates his family status to the level of wealthy aristocracy, probably due to his mother's connections to Moscow's elite nobility. His absent father gambled away the estate's money, and his educated mother had the singlehanded ambition that her son would enter government service rather than pursue his literary passion. This was partially motivated by the need of money – government work could get consistent high pay, while an author's income was less dependable. His family associated with numerous foreigners during Aleksandr's upbringing, the aim and result of which that he spoke several foreign languages quite easily.<sup>61</sup>

He went to a liberal secondary school for future military and government officials and then registered at Moscow State University at the tender age of twelve.<sup>62</sup> He was the youngest enrolled student in the university's history.<sup>63</sup> By the time he enrolled, he was already fluent in French, German, and English (along with his mother tongue Russian, as well as his reading of Latin fluently). During his time at this university, he learned several additional languages, including Italian.<sup>64</sup> Besides his formal education, he also honed his skills composing music for

---

<sup>60</sup> Biographers of Griboedov disagree on the exact dates of his birth and life, with his birth year ranging from 1790 to 1795. See Медведова (1967), Кнеп (1976), and the introduction to Горе от Ума (2017)

<sup>61</sup> James Robert Kneip, "A.S. Griboedov: His Life and Work as a Russian Diplomat, 1817-1829" (Dissertation, Columbus, Ohio, 1976), [https://etd.ohiolink.edu/!etd.send\\_file?accession=osu148700497175106&disposition=inline](https://etd.ohiolink.edu/!etd.send_file?accession=osu148700497175106&disposition=inline).

<sup>62</sup> The age at which Griboedov entered university differed in the sources I used from age eleven to thirteen. See Фелиова (2019) for what is officially taught to Russian students.

<sup>63</sup> Figes, *Natasha's Dance*.

<sup>64</sup> "Биография Грибоедова Александра Сергеевича," accessed March 25, 2020, <http://www.griboedov.net/bio.shtml>.

the piano. He began his studies in literature; having attained that degree, he moved on to law. After attaining this second degree, he began his studies in mathematics and the sciences, but was interrupted by the entrance of Napoleon's troops into Russia in 1812. At this time, eighteen-year-old Griboedov enlisted but never saw actual combat due to his appointment in the reserves. In 1814, he published a meticulously written article titled "On the Calvary Reserves," which earned him mild reprimand despite the topic. Medvedova argues that the high role of Russia in the liberation of peoples following the defeat of Napoleon delighted all patriotic youth, including Griboedov.<sup>65</sup> Once having finished his duties, he moved to St. Petersburg and began writing plays.

In seeking a literary camp to be part of, he chose the Archaist one, which was full of individuals of the future Northern Society wing of the Decembrist movement.<sup>66</sup> Griboedov lived for half a year with a close friend of his who frequently hosted their group meetings.<sup>67</sup> He, however, was more interested in the literary camaraderie of these individuals, and he joined the aforementioned Beseda literary camp. The group, existing in St. Petersburg from 1811 to 1816, gave Griboedov two of his lifelong friends, Katenin and Begishev.<sup>68</sup> At this time, Griboedov reluctantly enrolled in the College of Foreign Affairs to pursue state service but maintained his carefree literary life. This lifestyle continued until he became involved in a two-part duel over one of his friends' love affairs. Every participant in the duel was severely punished, but Griboedov's familial connections softened his punishment. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs offered him an "honorable," "voluntary exile" at the diplomatic mission in Persia in 1818. He

---

<sup>65</sup> Медведева, *Творчество Грибоедова // Грибоедов А. С. Сочинения в Стихах / Вступ. Ст., Подгот. Текста и Примеч. И. Н. Медведевой.*

<sup>66</sup> Figes, *Natasha's Dance.*

<sup>67</sup> А. С. Нечкина, *Грибоедов и Декабристы* (Moscow: Изд-во Академии наук СССР, 1951).

<sup>68</sup> Татьяна Кравченко, *Фонвизин Д. И. Грибоедов А. С. Пьесы* (ОЛМА Медиа Групп, n.d.).

lamented taking this position, citing his carefree life and blossoming literary career as reasons he wanted to stay.<sup>69</sup> In his letter to Несселрод (Nesselrod), the Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time, he begged to stay in the country:

“You’ll improve your talents in solitude”

“Not at all, your Excellency. The musician and the poet need readers, none of which are in Persia.<sup>70,71</sup>

Rising in literary fame, he had found himself a group of friends and literary circle. Finally in a place free from his stifling mother and from the Napoleonic wars, Griboedov probably viewed this appointment as the death of his freedom. His winning personality, musical skills, and the notoriety of the duel defined his position as a “literary celebrity” at the time. His promising diplomatic career also contributed to his acclaim, but now he faced actually having to report for duty.<sup>72</sup>

He stayed in Persia for five years, during which time he began to slowly work on his eventual masterpiece. After returning home in 1824 for what should have been a four-month leave of absence, he stretched this absence to two years.<sup>73</sup> Within the first month home, he finished the play *Woe from Wit*, a comedic reflection on 19<sup>th</sup> century Muscovite aristocratic life. The plot follows Aleksandr Chatsky, a young Russian aristocrat returning to Moscow after a long period abroad. He wants to return to his childhood sweetheart, Sophia, but she has fallen in love with her father’s secretary, Molchalin. Shocked at Sophia’s rejection, Chatsky causes scandal after scandal and harshly critiques the Russian aristocratic society he isn’t accustomed to. At the end of the play, Chatsky returns to Europe, branded insane. Even before publication,

---

<sup>69</sup> Кнеип, “A.S. Griboedov: His Life and Work as a Russian Diplomat, 1817-1829.”

<sup>70</sup> “Вы в уединении усовершенствуете свои дарования. / Нисколько, ваше сиятельство. Музыканту и поэту нужны слушатели, читатели, их нет в Персии”

<sup>71</sup> Медведева, *Творчество Грибоедова // Грибоедов А. С. Сочинения в Стихах / Вступ. Ст., Подгот. Текста и Примеч. И. Н. Медведевой.*

<sup>72</sup> Figes, *Natasha’s Dance.*

<sup>73</sup> Кнеип, “A.S. Griboedov: His Life and Work as a Russian Diplomat, 1817-1829.”

literary circles considered the play a masterpiece. As a result of this text, Pushkin, despite being a member of the antagonist Innovators literary circle, considered Griboedov to be one of his three intellectual equals in the world.<sup>74</sup>

However, Griboedov's association with the archaist social literary circles suddenly came to a head with the Decembrist Rebellion in 1825 in response to the ascension to the throne of Nichola I. He left St. Petersburg with some of his Decembrist-Archaist acquaintances for travel across Russia seven months before their unsuccessful uprising and as a result was arrested and interrogated a month later.<sup>75</sup> While there is significant debate over the extent of his involvement in this organization and in the uprising, police cleared him of all charges. After being freed, he returned to his government service in Persia. A few months into his marriage to a sixteen-year-old Georgian princess Nina Chavchavadze, a popular uprising in reaction to a highly unpopular policy of his culminated in Persians storming the embassy and massacring Griboedov and the members of his diplomatic team.<sup>76</sup> However, Griboedov's death did not hinder the transmission of his writing work's place in Russian history, in the language as well as the culture. This *homo unius libri*, man of one book, holds a truly cherished position in Russian history.

## **2.2 *Woe from Wit* contributed to the breakdown of serf theater**

Serf theater was a huge entertainment draw in rural Russia from the mid-1700s to the mid-1800s. Scholar Priscilla Roosevelt contextualizes the extravagant sets and highly skilled serf actors in the reign of Catherine the Great. Catherine led a vast campaign to build theaters all over

---

<sup>74</sup> D. S. Mirsky, "Centenary of the Death of Griboyedov (1829--January--1929)," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 8, no. 22 (1929): 140–43.

<sup>75</sup> Kneip, "A.S. Griboedov: His Life and Work as a Russian Diplomat, 1817-1829."

<sup>76</sup> Figes, *Natasha's Dance*.

the countryside to “enlighten the Russian provinces...through theater and spectacle.” The whole enterprise to civilize the rural gentry was inspired by Europe.<sup>77</sup> University of California professor Karlinsky outlines how, during this century-long period, theater progressed from Elizabeth’s introduction of formal court drama into romantic drama and neo-classical tragedy inspired by seventeenth century France. The next phase was directed by Catherine, who loved prose comedy, often revolving around a docile noblewoman with a learned maidservant and which satirized the older generation.<sup>78</sup> Sentimental drama entered in Russian dramatic scene around 1770 inspired by the incredible international success of the genre. The literary genre of comedic opera blossomed in the reduced censorship under Catherine, as authors turned away from earlier musical drama and incorporated satire into their works. Finally, verse comedy appears, under which *Woe from Wit* falls. Some consider the character Chatsky in the play to be the first Russian dramatic hero.<sup>79</sup>

French dramatist Eugène Scribe remarked to Pushkin that Russian theater approaches the proverbs of living rooms, where society defines itself and speaks in its own daily language.<sup>80</sup> Roosevelt posits that the eighteenth-century Russian nobility was fittingly passionate about the theater because those theatrics were similar to the experience “of imperial practice.” Roosevelt describes their constant need to “act” noble (read: European) as necessary to stay in the capricious good graces of the autocracy and maintain their social standing. The Europeanness commanded by Peter the Great was not an easy thing; it was culturally unnatural to them.<sup>81</sup> The

---

<sup>77</sup> Priscilla R. Roosevelt, “Emerald Thrones and Living Statues: Theater and Theatricality on the Russian Estate,” *The Russian Review* 50, no. 1 (1991): 1–23, <https://doi.org/10.2307/130207>.

<sup>78</sup> Simon Karlinsky, *Russian Drama from Its Beginnings to the Age of Pushkin* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

<sup>79</sup> Медведева, *Творчество Грибоедова // Грибоедов А. С. Сочинения в Стихах / Вступ. Ст., Подгот. Текста и Примеч. И. Н. Медведевой.*

<sup>80</sup> Аникин, “Грибоедовские Крылатые Слова в Сопоставлении с Фольклором.”

<sup>81</sup> Figes, *Natasha’s Dance*. 43

unnaturalness of their performance of everyday life, argues scholar Iurii Lotman, was what gave value to aristocrats' social conduct.<sup>82</sup> Their highest level of play-acting, at balls and feasts, "was not merely a source of pride, it was a way of life and perceived as an obligation."<sup>83</sup> Their obligatory behavior in these situations ritualized into a memorized script on repeat.<sup>84</sup> Lotman describes how an individual aristocrat designed his days around this markedly foreign depiction of Europeanness because "he prefers to live in this world of convention and play rather than the real one."<sup>85</sup> Russians' experience visiting Europe, says Lotman, molded this play-acting even further, transferring "the laws of diplomatic protocol to his everyday conduct."<sup>86</sup>

The aristocracy's attempts to imitate Europeanness became extravagant to such an extent that they exceeded their role model and dove into the garish. Roosevelt remarks that all "Russian magnificence was tinged with vulgarity." This confluence of Russian and European values made these individuals feel that peak Russian refinement was European. Dostoevsky observed, "we Russians have two fatherlands: Russia and Europe."<sup>87</sup> Frequently Russian émigrés with their European upbringing and education could not stand to live in Russia, creating the literary trope of "superfluous men."<sup>88</sup> The character Chatsky from *Woe from Wit* was emblematic of this concept of "superfluous man," a man so used to European customs that chaos ensues from his attempt to reintegrate into Moscow society. In the end, he returns to where is familiar: Paris.<sup>89</sup>

---

<sup>82</sup> Yuri M Lotman, "The Poetics of Everyday Behavior in Eighteenth-Century Russian Culture," ed. Ann Shukman, *The Semiotics of Russian Culture*, 1984, <https://www.amherst.edu/system/files/media/1445/Semiotics%252520of%252520Russian%252520Cultural%252520History.pdf>.

<sup>83</sup> Roosevelt, "Emerald Thrones and Living Statues."

<sup>84</sup> Figes, *Natasha's Dance*.

<sup>85</sup> Lotman, "The Poetics of Everyday Behavior in Eighteenth-Century Russian Culture."

<sup>86</sup> Lotman.

<sup>87</sup> Figes, *Natasha's Dance*.

<sup>88</sup> Figes. 54-55

<sup>89</sup> Александр Сергеевич Грибоедов, *Горе от ума : комедия в четырех действиях*, ed. Anita Belotserkovskaya, trans. Bernard Pares (Monpelier, VT: Russian Life Books, 2017).

At the same time as this dramatic dichotomy faced by the Russian aristocracy, theater was changing. The focus on the classic unities (of time, place, and action) was sidelined by the cropping up of a new theme: the representation of peasants on the stage and “the acceptance of Russian folk song as raw material for Western-style musical composition.”<sup>90</sup> In the final years of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, nationalists and romantics discovered a “creative spontaneity and fraternity to the simple peasantry that had long been lost in the bourgeois culture of the West.”<sup>91</sup> This fraternal feeling combined with the aforementioned esprit du corps developed during the Napoleonic Wars to create an uneasiness with the concept of serf theater. Another historical process began at the same time: uneducated villagers started going to the theater to imitate the intelligentsia. While the rural audiences generally held different taste preferences for theater than the gentry, they shared a love of *Woe from Wit* to an extent that even surpassed the former group’s appreciation. *Woe from Wit* found its place as the pioneer of a movement called “power theatre” that superseded serf theater.<sup>92</sup> This series of plays, operas, and other written works attributed the moral ruin of society to foreign (and especially French) artificiality in Russia.<sup>93</sup> A central idea in *Woe from Wit* of critiquing extreme and unmerited inequality also perpetuated the breakdown of the former serf theatre structure.

As Pushkin’s uncompleted 1820 essay “My remarks on the Russian theater” points out, the Russian audience forms a core feature of the Russian theater. As he succinctly puts, “It is the public that shapes dramatic talents.” Applause should not be the measure of talents on stage, he argues, but would be better considered by the responses of various audience members. He judges the actors as mostly bad; and the audience as broken down into “enlightened or partisan judges;”

---

<sup>90</sup> Karlinsky, *Russian Drama from Its Beginnings to the Age of Pushkin*.

<sup>91</sup> Figes, *Natasha’s Dance*. 60

<sup>92</sup> Gary Thurston, *The Popular Theatre Movement in Russia, 1862-1919* (Northwestern University Press, 1998).

<sup>93</sup> Figes, *Natasha’s Dance*.

the government workers, distracted by work, politics, appearance, or practicality; and the monotonously bored, arrogant, fretful, and stupid aristocracy.<sup>94</sup> Fretting about the performance art of their daily social lives, this last group goes to the theater so others can see them.<sup>95</sup> The last category of audience members that Pushkin mentions is the common folk, who were largely irrelevant in city theaters.

In this new power theater, the peasant audience did not experience the art of theater as these city theatergoers Pushkin described. Scholar Gary Thurston describes this truly “inexperienced audience,” which did not understand the concept of a play as a literary work memorized and acted. Rather, they experienced the performance as actively unfolding in front of them, the actors themselves creating the story. Folklorist V.P. Anikin points out that Griboedov’s fascination with Russian folklore and language facilitated this misjudgment, in particular due to his use of folkloresque proverbs and sayings. He aimed to make his writing universally understandable and relatable, which connected with the peasant audience.<sup>96</sup> The actors felt this connection, preferring to play in villages due to the “some kind of invisible moral connection...between the actor and the public, which rarely happens in the city.”<sup>97</sup> Thurston continues, contextualizing the villagers’ response to the play in their “oral culture, laying blame and extracting proverbial wisdom.”<sup>98</sup> They experienced *Woe from Wit* and other plays in power theater the same way that they did moral fables passed down for generations. These villagers conceivably took pithy tidbits of the play back home and shared them as proverbs like they customarily had done with folklore.

---

<sup>94</sup> Aleksandr Pushkin, “My Remarks on the Russian Theater,” in *Russian Dramatic Theory from Pushkin to the Symbolists: An Anthology*, by Laurence P. Senelick (University of Texas Press, 2014).

<sup>95</sup> Figes, *Natasha’s Dance*. 42-43

<sup>96</sup> Аникин, “Грибоедовские Крылатые Слова в Сопоставлении с Фольклором.”

<sup>97</sup> Thurston, *The Popular Theatre Movement in Russia, 1862-1919*.

<sup>98</sup> Thurston.



## 2.3 *Woe from Wit* approached the language of living rooms

So, how did Griboedov imitate folklore speech to the extent that peasants and society members took it in as their natural tongue? His words sounded to them like people's daily speech, which was unprecedented in theater at the time. Griboedov developed his style over the course of his lifetime. Early on, Griboedov loved to translate poetry from other languages, especially from his favorite writers. He began his lifelong love affair with the works of Shakespeare, Schiller, Cornell, Racine, and Moliere at university.<sup>99</sup> Above all others, he extolled Goethe. In his early translations of these writers' works, Griboedov recognized the attempts by these writers to innovate new ways to employ their limited language and brought this to the next level in his translation. From Cornell, Racine and Moliere, he absorbed a laconic, aphoristic style; Griboedov innovated Schiller's dramatic ballads with folk sources; and finally, he discussed Shakespeare with contemporary actors.<sup>100</sup>

Beyond his poetic translations, scholars consider some of his early original writing lackluster, albeit rapidly maturing. Figs considers them all unnoteworthy plays, especially since they were collaborative works, and also since Griboedov relied on archaist and anti-nationalist themes, unpopular with the audience at the time.<sup>101</sup> This biographer calls Griboedov's 1815 translation of Auguste Creuzé de Lesser's play *Young Spouses* a "faceless compendium of eighteenth-century speech mannerisms." This could be due to his membership in the Archaist literary circle. Despite its faults, Russian writer Irina Medvedeva argues that it was first in this translation that Griboedov reached a certain level of conversational lightness and simplicity

---

<sup>99</sup> Медведева, *Творчество Грибоедова // Грибоедов А. С. Сочинения в Стихах / Вступ. Ст., Подгот. Текста и Примеч. И. Н. Медведевой.*

<sup>100</sup> Медведева.

<sup>101</sup> Figs, *Natasha's Dance.*

reflecting the spoken language.<sup>102</sup> The nature of Griboedov’s writing, stresses Figes, was most constructively pushed along by his exposure to two contemporary plays, Schakovsky’s 1805 “*Урок кокеткам, или Лепестки воды*” (A Lesson for Coquettes, or The Lipetsk Spa) and Khmel’nitsky’s 1817 “*Говоруна*” (The Chatterbox).<sup>103</sup> According to Figes, Griboedov’s next collaborative work, the 1817 “*Своя семья, или замужня невеста*” (One’s Family, or the Married Fiancé), contained “a new verve and fluency that he could have learned only from” these two preceding comedies. Additionally, Griboedov wrote this play with the authors of these two influential works, allowing direct instruction to help “Griboedov discover the language and the style for his play.”<sup>104</sup> Later that year, his marked style of free verse first appeared in his experimental, satirical poem “Lubok Theater.”<sup>105</sup>

Эй! Господа!  
 Сюда, сюда!  
 Для деловых людей и праздных  
 Есть тьма у нас okazji разных:  
 Есть дикий человек, безрукая мадам.  
 Взойдите к нам!  
 Добро пожаловать, кто барин тороватый,  
 Извольте видеть — вот  
 Рогатый, нерогатый  
 И всякий скот:  
 Вот господин Загоскин,  
 Вот весь его причет:  
*Княгини и*  
*Княжны,*  
*Князь Фольгин и*  
*Князь Блѣсткин;*  
 Они хоть не смешны, да сам зато уж он  
 Куда смешон! —  
 ...

Hey! Gentlemen!  
 Come here, come here!  
 For businesspeople and idle ones  
 There is a multitude of different opportunities:  
 There is a wild man, an armless madam.  
 Come up to us!  
 Welcome, those who are generous sirs,  
 Kindly see – there are  
 Horned, unhorned  
 And all sorts of beasts:  
 There is the gentleman Zagoskin,  
 There is his entire lament:  
*Princesses and*  
*Countesses,*  
*Count Folgin and*  
*Count Blyostkin;*  
 They aren’t even funny, but to make up for it he  
     himself is certainly  
 Quite ridiculous!  
 ...

---

<sup>102</sup> Медведева, *Творчество Грибоедова // Грибоедов А. С. Сочинения в Стихах / Вступ. Ст., Подгот. Текста и Примеч. И. Н. Медведевой.*

<sup>103</sup> Figes, *Natasha’s Dance.*

<sup>104</sup> Figes.

<sup>105</sup> The full text of this poem can be found on Griboedov’s website, Griboedov.net. I chose the first eighteen lines to express the free flow of his experimental style

As shown in this excerpt of the poem, this poem introduces various motifs that Griboedov expands upon in *Woe from Wit*. The satire of society's members, called "скот" (meaning swine, cattle, or, figuratively, beast) in the poem, continues into the extended ridicule of the honored writer Zagoskin's social angst by quoting two of the writers' plays. Additionally, the difficulty of translating the second-to-last line succinctly in English showcases Griboedov's greatest legacy, his efficient use of language.

Griboedov continued to hone his theatrical style, bridging the gap between his poetic tendencies and theatrical guidelines. Shakhovsky's 1818 play, *He Любо – не слушай, а лгать не мешай* (*If you Don't Like it, Don't Listen, but Don't Bother Lying*), "taught him the comedic use of iambic lines of varied length, a meter previously reserved for fables and opera libretti."<sup>106</sup> He began writing scenes for *Woe from Wit* as early as 1816, but removed many characters and threw out most of the content of this early writing, especially as writing tropes entered and went out of style.<sup>107</sup> His friendship with his contemporary Katenin influenced Griboedov's experimental direction in writing during this time. Katenin revered the accuracy and harmony of the language employed in theater's classical drama genre, which inspired Griboedov to adopt several techniques from the genre. Employing a distinctively classic and romantic French poetry literary device, self-insertion, Griboedov's voice breaks through the narrative hero of Chatsky.<sup>108</sup> Beyond his narrative voice, Griboedov borrowed the virtuoso style from French classical poetry's well-defined division of verse.<sup>109</sup> Looking at Chatsky's monologue in Act III Scene 22

---

<sup>106</sup> Figes, *Natasha's Dance*. 278

<sup>107</sup> Медведева, *Творчество Грибоедова // Грибоедов А. С. Сочинения в Стихах / Вступ. Ст., Подгот. Текста и Примеч. И. Н. Медведевой.*

<sup>108</sup> Медведева.

<sup>109</sup> Медведева.

about a hypothetical “Французик из Бордо” demonstrates his seamless integration of these techniques into his writing:

Приехал – и нашел, что ласкам нет конца;  
Ни звука русского, ни русского лица  
Не встретил: будто бы в отечестве, с друзьями;  
Своя провинция. – посмотришь, вечером  
Он чувствует себя здесь маленьким царьком<sup>110</sup>

He arrived – and finds that there’s no end to the fawning;  
Not a single Russian sound, nor Russian face  
He encountered: it’s as if he were in his homeland with his friends;  
His own province. Now lookie here, tonight  
He feels like a little tsar.

These lines integrate these new styles Griboedov picked up after writing “Lubok Theater.” He created varied lengths of his poetic lines by cutting sentences short and leaving some of them longer. These lines rhyme (конца, лица; вечером, царьком) except for the middle line, which rhymes with the line immediately preceding this excerpt. The virtuoso, poetic style revealed by this excerpt complements this rhyme scheme, blending together the formal description of the Frenchman’s arrival with the informal verb “посмотришь” (you look) and diminutive version “вечерком” (in the evening) of the word “вечером” (in the evening). Finally, the sentiments that Chatsky is communicating are Griboedov’s own, directed against the French language. Griboedov himself employed French only as necessary to prove a point in his works.<sup>111</sup> While Pushkin’s innovative literary circle integrated the French language in their popular works, Griboedov and his Archaist literary friends disliked what they considered superfluous literary use of the French language.<sup>112</sup>

---

<sup>110</sup> Грибоедов, *Горе от Ума*.

<sup>111</sup> In *Woe from Wit*, Griboedov uses French four times (three times excluding the French pronunciation of a character’s name). In each of these situations, he uses the foreign language to imitate how the characters (being aristocrats) would naturally communicate to one another.

<sup>112</sup> Mirsky, “Centenary of the Death of Griboedov (1829--January--1929).”

Katenin devoted his efforts to French classicism, Griboedov merged these techniques with a type of romanticism inspired by Goethe. His writing echoed the grandiosity, supreme courage and freedom found in Goethe's *Faust*.<sup>113</sup> He eventually integrated several translated paraphrases from Goethe's *Faust* directly into *Woe from Wit*.<sup>114</sup> By integrating Goethe's poetic style into his play, he created what he considered a "stage poem," the likes of which had not previously existed in the Russian literary canon.<sup>115</sup> This ostentatious poetic writing for a play was feasible in part to the fact that good acting at this time depended primarily on the quality of poetic diction. Kalbouss, a contemporary American language educator, argues that, "the rhyming poetics of *Gore ot uma* are even more so a testimony to Griboedov's originality and creativity," and that his poetics cause others to define the work's language as prodigious.<sup>116</sup> Griboedov matched the versatility of each character's rhymes to the quality of the character speaking them.<sup>117</sup> Kalbouss argues that the poet's tendency to put verbs at the end of sentences made clever and dynamic rhymes. This stylistic choice could be due to his admiration of Goethe, writing in German, a language which necessitates end-sentence verbs. In the previous excerpt from *Woe from Wit*, the sentence "Ни звука русского, ни русского лица/He встретил" (Not a single Russian sound, nor Russian face/He encountered) contains this verbal orientation. In this excerpt, as in the rest of Griboedov's works, the author employed his culture's language while integrating French and European styles into his writing.

The flowing integration of various poetic features creates the conversational expressiveness of Griboedov's characters. In particular, Chatsky's monologues are marked by a

---

<sup>113</sup> Медведева, *Творчество Грибоедова // Грибоедов А. С. Сочинения в Стихах / Вступ. Ст., Подгот. Текста и Примеч. И. Н. Медведевой.*

<sup>114</sup> Медведева.

<sup>115</sup> Медведева.

<sup>116</sup> George Kalbouss, "Rhyming Patterns in Griboedov's *Gore Ot Uma*," *The Slavic and East European Journal* 39, no. 1 (1995): 1–13, <https://doi.org/10.2307/308688>.

<sup>117</sup> Kalbouss.

jumping, satirical narrative interrupted by both lyrical and poignant intonation as well as catchy aphorisms. Stylistically, he combined the colloquial four-footed verses in equal amounts with the more “romantic” five-footed verses, broken up with few other-footed verses marking dissonances of colloquial, spontaneous exclamations.<sup>118</sup> Medvedova argues that this combination of various principles gives Chatsky’s tragic tirades comedic tone and style. Griboedov’s friend and fellow Archaist Katenin did not appreciate the addition of a colloquial style: he believed that a structured manner of speaking would more befit Chatsky in the context of a romantic comedy.<sup>119</sup> Griboedov’s peer, Gogol, wrote in a notebook in either late 1832 or early 1833 that he considered the play “not properly designed for the stage,” due to its rejection of the fundamental theatrical rules of plot, denouement, and distance from the author.<sup>120</sup> These critiques resulted from Griboedov melding several techniques together which previously existed in singularity. Medvedova posits that Griboedov’s contemporaries (including Pushkin and Katenin) fought against the limits of their chosen styles, while Griboedov alone rejected these limits in favor of creating a new, fluid, blended genre for his work. Figes posits that Griboedov’s inability to showcase his brilliance in works before *Woe from Wit* came from his following the stringent rules of drama, which inevitably limited the freedom of his creativity.<sup>121</sup>

Griboedov created fluid, varied verses by merging his poetic tendencies with his desire for common vernacular in his writing. Ironically, the integration of countless international techniques in this work produced a product so markedly emblematic of Russian culture that Russians find it difficult to distinguish from their deep-rooted, oral folklore. In summary, Figes

---

<sup>118</sup> Медведева, *Творчество Грибоедова // Грибоедов А. С. Сочинения в Стихах / Вступ. Ст., Подгот. Текста и Примеч. И. Н. Медведевой.*

<sup>119</sup> Медведева.

<sup>120</sup> Edmund Little, “Vyazemsky, Griboyedov and ‘Gore Ot Uma (Woe from Wit)’: A Question of Heresy,” *New Zealand Slavonic Journal*, 1984, 15–31.

<sup>121</sup> Figes, *Natasha’s Dance.*

extolls *Woe from Wit* as “the ultimate proof that the art of literature is on its basic level the art of words.”<sup>122</sup>

## 2.4 *Woe from Wit* after Griboedov’s death

Unfortunately, Griboedov did not live to see his work achieve this degree of renown: he died tragically early on in his literary and diplomatic careers in 1829, closely following getting married to his young Georgian wife. It was the history of the work after the playwright’s death that truly defined its current place in the Russian ethos. This history necessarily included the vast degree of censorship during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Even when Griboedov was an infant, censorship had begun in earnest.<sup>123</sup> Throughout his life, censorship controls fluctuated but remained widespread. Following the 1825 Decembrist Revolution in response to the inauguration of Nicholas I, the new tsar immediately instated the strictest censorship controls ever before seen in Russian history.<sup>124</sup> Nevertheless, it was often easier to write approvable literature than try to evade the system. At this time, censors and authors came from the same literary circles and salons – the overlap between the two professions meant that writers knew what could be ignored and what would be hopeless to try to publish.<sup>125</sup> Authors under this tsarist censorship learned to use extensive metaphorical and indirect language in their texts – not to trick the censor into letting something slip, but rather to help the censor be able to approve it.

In the context of this overbearing censorship machine, Griboedov had written a polemic, comedic tragedy. *Woe from Wit* revolved around the inability of an ideologically Decembrist-

---

<sup>122</sup> Figes.

<sup>123</sup> Медведева, *Творчество Грибоедова // Грибоедов А. С. Сочинения в Стихах / Вступ. Ст., Подгот. Текста и Примеч. И. Н. Медведевой.*

<sup>124</sup> Figes, *Natasha’s Dance.*

<sup>125</sup> Robert Belknap, “The Russian Literary Scene: 1860s and 1980s: Address to the Annual Meeting of the Columbia University Seminars April 12, 1989,” *Urbandus Review* 9 (2005): 19–29.

leaning émigré to assimilate back into his mother culture. Chatsky, after being rebuffed from his childhood sweetheart, tries to present his radical ideas to an audience unreceptive to them. Finally, realizing the futility of his attempts, he runs back to Paris, which, he finally realizes, feels more like home to him than this foreign land. While Griboedov was still finishing drafting *Woe from Wit* in 1824, he wrote a letter to a fellow writer, Vyazemsky, about the difficulties he was facing in St. Petersburg with the censor controls.<sup>126</sup> Vyazemsky suggested an edit that would make the text more palatable to a censor reading it.<sup>127, 128</sup>

In the official performance of *Woe from Wit* in 1831, Nicholas' censorship machine cut out discussions of secret political societies, references to Molchalin spending a night in Sophia's room, as well as Molchalin and Famusov's improper seduction of Liza.<sup>129</sup> Censors also deleted the sentence “кто что ни говори,/Хоть и животные, а всё-таки цари” (no matter what you say, even though they are animals, they are still kings).<sup>130</sup> Nevertheless, the full uncensored text was “universally known” in the underground literary world by the late 1820s through the secret dissimulation and copies of manuscripts.<sup>131</sup> In the mid-1850s Griboedov's former friend Vyazemsky became the tsar's censor and used his position to approve of the fullest edition of the play yet published.<sup>132</sup> It was finally during the reforms of the early 1860s that the text was published and subsequently performed in its entirety. While before, the group of people exposed to the full manuscript remained relatively constrained to the urban literary crowd, *Woe from Wit*

---

<sup>126</sup> А.С. Грибоедов, “Письмо А.С.Грибоедова П.А.Вяземскому о Пьесе ‘Горе От Uma,’” accessed February 18, 2020, <http://literatura5.narod.ru/griboedov4.html>. As cited in the text of the following footnote.

<sup>127</sup> Little, “Vyazemsky, Griboyedov and ‘Gore Ot Uma (Woe from Wit).”

<sup>128</sup> The edit was in Act II scene 8; after Molchalin falls and Sophia reacts so strongly as to faint, Chatsky originally said, “желал бы с ним убиться для компаньи” (I wish I had been killed with him for company), which was amended to have “для компаньи” asked sarcastically by Liza in response to the first part of the sentence. See Little for more information about specific censorings.

<sup>129</sup> Figes, *Natasha's Dance*.

<sup>130</sup> Little, “Vyazemsky, Griboyedov and ‘Gore Ot Uma (Woe from Wit).”

<sup>131</sup> Figes, *Natasha's Dance*.

<sup>132</sup> Little, “Vyazemsky, Griboyedov and ‘Gore Ot Uma (Woe from Wit).”



at this time became “the most beloved and most widely performed play of the Russian repertoire.”<sup>133</sup>

Despite this warm reception by audiences, critics who were initially ecstatic about the new play changed their opinions after Griboedov’s death. By delving into a scathing review by writer M. Dmitriev in 1825, one can explore the most common critiques of the play at the time. He found issue with the play’s “scolding patriotism” and Griboedov’s uncharacteristic representation of Moscow. He called Griboedov’s language rigid, irregular, incorrect; and his style bookish. He further critiqued Griboedov’s use and rhyming of French words with his Russian ones.<sup>134</sup> While typical, this critique demonstrates a misunderstanding of Griboedov’s creative process that went into this work. According to Vinokur’s rhetorical analysis of Griboedov’s work, the author practices language characterization, matching the verses’ vocabulary and language intricacy to each character’s personality, which could create the aforementioned irregularity of his verses. Sophia, for example, speaks using long, complex linguistic techniques, while Molchalin (apt to his name coming from the verb “to remain silent”) participates in multiple scenes without uttering a word.<sup>135</sup> As mentioned before, Griboedov’s pointed dislike of the appearance of French in Russian literature reduced the use of French in his play to conversations between aristocratic characters who, in reality, would be speaking French to one another. Vinokur argues that Griboedov’s use of French in these specific circumstances was a form of language characterization, fitting the individual characters’ use of language to a parlance representative of their position in society.<sup>136</sup> The intentional bookish style of his writing

---

<sup>133</sup> Figes, *Natasha’s Dance*.

<sup>134</sup> Little, “Vyazemsky, Griboyedov and ‘Gore Ot Uma (Woe from Wit).’”

<sup>135</sup> To read more about how Griboedov created harmony between the syntagmatic structure of his verses and their actual rhythmic sound, see Vinokur (1959).

<sup>136</sup> Г.О. Винокур, “Горе От Ума’ Как Памятник Русской Художественной Речи,” in *Избранные Работы По Русскому Языку* (Moscow: Учпедгиз, 1959), 257–300, <http://feb-web.ru/feb/griboed/critics/vin.htm?cmd=p>.

can be traced back to Griboedov's membership in the Archaist literary circle. Finally, it was well established in the literary consciousness that uncharacteristic representations of society were common in literature, as Dostoevsky laments about in his novel *The Idiot*:

In their novels and stories writers most often try to choose and present vividly and artistically social types which are extremely seldom encountered in real life, and which are nevertheless more real than real life itself.<sup>137</sup>

Dostoevsky considers this such a common trope that he remarks that it is difficult to fill a novel with ordinary people, since they come off as uninteresting to the reader. Therefore, one can view this common critique, given its author's inability to comprehend the nuances of Griboedov's language use, as reflecting more on its author than the work it was written about.

Vyazemsky offered a more nuanced critique of the play in 1848, calling it incomplete. He discusses the play's satirical, improvised nature; "its language and structure...and the overshadowing of characters and content by the views of Griboyedov himself."<sup>138</sup> Similarly to the previous critic, he condemns what contemporaries and literary scholars have extolled in the play. Overall, though, he admires how "there is life: it breathes and moves."<sup>139</sup> The facets of the play that Vyazemsky focuses his critique are, in fact, what scholars mark as critical in creating this resulting living impression of the play that drew the admiration of the aforementioned villagers. He, along with Westernizer Belinsky in 1840, consider Griboedov to have been a developing playwright genius and *Woe from Wit* overflowing "with creativity and inspiration of genius despite all its faults."<sup>140</sup> Griboedov had been drafting several romantic dramas in the months leading up to his death.<sup>141</sup> Had he been able to finish these works, one could imagine he might have been able to work on these faults of his.

---

<sup>137</sup> Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (Vintage Classics, 2003).

<sup>138</sup> Little, "Vyazemsky, Griboyedov and 'Gore Ot Uma (Woe from Wit).'"

<sup>139</sup> Little.

<sup>140</sup> Little.

<sup>141</sup> Figs, *Natasha's Dance*.

In the same way that writers found alternative career paths in censorship, the professions of writer and literature critic also overlapped at this time – producing poetic works of literature remembered in their own right for years to come. Writer-critic Ivan Goncharov wrote one of the most famous critiques of *Woe from Wit* in 1871. This critique, titled “Милльон Терзаний” (Zillions of Torments), garnered such fame as to be considered the crowning response to the work. Goncharov begins by dismissing previous critiques written about the work, considering them multitudinous and contradictory. The critic believes that Griboedov’s exemplary work blazes above others in its magnificent youthfulness, vitality, and freshness. Goncharov argues that the characters, in particular Chatsky, strike viewers as portraits in a historical gallery more than living lessons. With this metaphor, Goncharov is trying to communicate that the definition of these characters is so bright as to tip into the ultra-intense; their characters furnished with such reality of detail that their humanity is covered by the masks they put on for others. This emotion, Goncharov argues, suits both theatrical production as well as private readings, due to the power of the words alone. He disapproves of actors who feel the compulsion to act out Griboedov’s predominantly silent scenes melodramatically. Goncharov didactically reminds these overzealous actors that executing their few lines tactfully and intelligently would deliver a greater impact than overpowering the words with accompanying bodily exercises.<sup>142</sup>

These reviews, as well as the appropriation of the play by both conservative and liberal political factions by the 1860s, influenced the play’s representation on stage.<sup>143</sup> In 1923, V. I. Nemirovich-Danchenko wrote that the productions of *Woe from Wit* “are not putting on the play, but the journalistic articles that it generated.”<sup>144</sup> Later, around the turn of the twentieth century,

---

<sup>142</sup> И. А. Гончаров, “Милльон Терзаний,” accessed March 2, 2020, <https://ilibrary.ru/text/1075/p.1/index.html>.

<sup>143</sup> Karlinsky, *Russian Drama from Its Beginnings to the Age of Pushkin*.

<sup>144</sup> Медведева, *Творчество Грибоедова // Грибоедов А. С. Сочинения в Стихах / Вступ. Ст., Подгот. Текста и Примеч. И. Н. Медведевой*.

this creative interpretation of the text went further, once Chatsky was scathingly rejected as an emblem of their Decembrist movement by radical factions.<sup>145</sup> This climaxed in the reactive interpretation of the play by the Soviet director Vsevolod Meyerhold, who took several artistic liberties including the reaffirmation of Chatsky's Decembrist affiliation.

Figes asserts that Meyerhold seemed “motivated to...negate its very text” through his perverse casting, directing, and renaming of the text in 1928.<sup>146</sup> Prolific Soviet author and expert theater critic, Konstantin Rudnitsky, however, paints Meyerhold in a sympathetic, misguided light. Rudnitsky argues that Meyerhold got carried away with his directorial license in attempting to make the play clearer and began to unconsciously adapt rather than simply present.<sup>147</sup> He began his project by reviewing all preserved authorial versions of the play and chose to reject the canonical text in favor of a new, “consolidated” version. In this version, he restored the working title *Горе Уму* (Woe to Wit) and added silent scenes of his own authorship. Rudnitsky admits that, while typical of the director, these edits became excessive in this case. For example, Meyerhold emphasized a love affair between Famusov and Lisa. He wanted to emphasize “features that bring (Chatsky) closer to the Decembrists,” a revisionist plan popular in the Soviet era. Strangely in the time of Soviet propaganda, Meyerhold portrayed the tsarist society as well-ordered, healthy, sensuous, and strong. The director instructed the actor playing Chatsky to act emotionally strained throughout, and spend most of the play at one of the pianos on stage. Meyerhold imagined Chatsky drawing life from music like Beethoven or Griboedov himself. Rudnitsky paints Meyerhold as a man propelled by “whimsical imagination” to create a

---

<sup>145</sup> Figes, *Natasha's Dance*.

<sup>146</sup> Figes.

<sup>147</sup> К. Л. Рудницкий, “Режиссер Мейерхольд.,” accessed February 18, 2020, [http://teatr-lib.ru/Library/Rudnitsky/dir\\_meye/](http://teatr-lib.ru/Library/Rudnitsky/dir_meye/).

performance far from the playwright's original intentions. An overwhelming cry of aversion rose from the reviews: "Назад к Грибоедову!" (Back to Griboedov!).<sup>148</sup>

This play, released exactly one hundred years after Griboedov's untimely death, belonged to the many celebrations of Russia's beloved playwright. A centennial journal article written by famed historian D.S. Mirsky considered Griboedov to be "certainly one of the most striking personalities in Russian history."<sup>149</sup> One hundred years after the playwright's death, Mirsky noted that a renewed interest in Griboedov resulted in his later poetry and personal correspondence gaining relevance. This upsurge of interest followed the 1929 non-serialized publication of the Russian historian Tynyanov's novel *Death of the Vazir-Mukhtar*,<sup>150</sup> a historical fiction based on the events transpiring in the last year of Griboedov's life.<sup>151</sup> He explained why he wrote the novel in a posthumously published autobiography, in which he described his own quest for information about Griboedov. He was left "appalled by how poorly he was understood, by how little resemblance there was between all that Griboedov wrote and all that had been written about him by literary historians."<sup>152</sup> This novel situates Griboedov in his diplomatic success with the Turkmenchay Peace Treaty, his renown as the exceptional author of a famous unpublished comedy, and his familiarity with the actors in the failed Decembrist rebellion. Back in Russia, his literary acquaintances are gone, either exiled or executed. He finds himself at a creative block, and, his grandiose plans of the Transcaucasian project stymied, "there is nothing left for Griboedov to do but to go on to Persia to his inevitable end."<sup>153</sup> There is

---

<sup>148</sup> Рудницкий.

<sup>149</sup> Mirsky, "Centenary of the Death of Griboyedov (1829--January--1929)."

<sup>150</sup> Vazir-Mukhtar is Persian for "ambassador"

<sup>151</sup> Mirsky, "Centenary of the Death of Griboyedov (1829--January--1929)."

<sup>152</sup> Dimitri N. Breschinsky and Zinaida A. Breschinsky, "On Tynjanov the Writer and His Use of Cinematic Technique in The Death of the Wazir Mukhtar," *The Slavic and East European Journal* 29, no. 1 (1985): 1–17, <https://doi.org/10.2307/307921>.

<sup>153</sup> Breschinsky and Breschinsky.

heated discussion about the verity of Tynyanov's representation of Griboedov as working with the Tsar, given his Decembrist associations. However, the narrative was so convincing that famed author Maxim Gorky remarked, "That's what he must have been like. And even if not – he will be from now on." Soviet citizens worried about accepting this revisionist version of Griboedov's life and motivations. They feared that Tynyanov was making a parallel between Griboedov, disaffected with the 1825 Decembrist rebellion, and a hypothetical 1929 contemporary with subversive thoughts about the 1917 October Revolution. For a period of time, Soviet critics banned the novel as a result of this potential seditiousness in the USSR.<sup>154</sup>

Other Soviet historians wrote new biographies of Griboedov, superseding this 1929 revisionist novel in their claimed verity. *Woe from Wit* was completely reimagined in 1951 when Militsa Nechkina published her *Griboedov and the Decembrists* study, which attempted to frame Griboedov as a Decembrist through his mere association with other members of the organization. Nechkina also attempts to demonstrate that *Woe from Wit* was a revolutionary predecessor to the Soviet 1917 revolution. In her version, a Decembrist Griboedov substantiates the Soviet Union's revisionist history. Griboedov's Chatsky stands in opposition to Molchalin, who represents the old, tired tsarist Russia. Chatsky, with the victory of the Soviet revolution, becomes the "victorious" force in the long run – making this tragic hero a sort of early martyr for the Soviet cause, a man before his time.<sup>155</sup> Alexander Druzhinin, a greatly respected figure among Soviet historians, condemned Nechkina's *Griboedov and the Decembrists*. He highlighted that Nechkina was alone in her "Bolshevised Decembrism" interpretation. Druzhinin disagreed with her assertion that the entire course of Russian history led to the revolution, necessarily "smash[ing] the old aristocracy and clear[ing] the way for the triumph of the republican

---

<sup>154</sup> Breschinsky and Breschinsky.

<sup>155</sup> Нечкина, *Грибоедов и Декабристы*.

regime.”<sup>156</sup> Rather, in the same way that Griboedov and the Archaists were fighting a losing battle against the Innovators, future paths are abstruse. The closest possible avenue to ascertaining its uncertainty is in viewing the themes in the present. In the final section of this study, contemporary Russian citizens explain how their country’s literary past influences their lived experience in the present.

---

<sup>156</sup> John Gooding, “The Decembrists in the Soviet Union,” *Soviet Studies* 40, no. 2 (1988): 196–209.

## **Chapter Three: Interviews as anecdotal evidence**

### **3.1 Set-up for Interviews**

Pushkin, in speaking about one of Griboedov's earliest drafts of *Woe from Wit*, remarked in 1825, "I say nothing of his verses: half of them should become proverbs."<sup>157</sup> And they did – continuing into the current day. To form a picture of Griboedov and his play's lasting legacy, I conducted interviews to glean from contemporary Russians their perception of Griboedov's exceptional language. Delving into individuals' personal experiences with literature, schooling, and more recent contact with vernacular uses of winged expressions exposes the pervasiveness of the epigrammatic phrases of *Woe from Wit*.

On the following page, Table 1 outlines the summary results of the interviews, laying out the questions I asked each of the interviewees. This presentation reveals specific idiosyncrasies of their responses. The first part of the interview, the individuals' demographics, served as a potential opportunity for discussions of their upbringing, love (or lack thereof) for literature, and the changing technological landscape of their childhood to the current day. Multiple interviewees asked me if they should be responding as extensively as they were. I told them that their digressions and spontaneous reflections were, in fact, what I found the most compelling since those revealed the most about their individual experience of their cultural language. One important detail to note is that Natala and Sofia grew up in the Soviet Union, with Sofia completing her secondary school education in the former principality of Moldovia.

---

<sup>157</sup> Александр Сергеевич Пушкин, "Пушкин о 'Горе От Ума,'" accessed March 6, 2020, <http://sobolev.franklang.ru/index.php/pushkin-i-ego-vremya/139-pushkin-o-gore-ot-uma>.



Table 1: Summary Results of Interviews

Name	Mila	Masha	Aleksandr	Natala	Sofia
Age	20	21	31	49	57
Where they were born / went to school	Moscow, Russian Federation	Moscow, Russian Federation	Moscow, Russian Federation	Georgia / Moscow, USSR	Moldovia, USSR
Upbringing	They watched a lot of TV as a family	She read prolifically alone and with her parents	Grandma read classics to him and his siblings; his childhood home had many books	She read prolifically alone maand with parents, esp. international books	She read prolifically alone, at school, and with her parents
What / how often do they read for pleasure?	Often; nonfiction, psychology	Not often; fiction	Very often; all genres	Reads more news than books	Less often; art books
Do they listen to the radio, watch news on the TV, and/or read newspapers	Only in the car; yes; no	No; no but her parents do; reads the news on social media	No; no; no; mostly reads the news on the internet	Yes; no; yes, online	No; yes; yes; as well as the internet
Year they learned about Woe from Wit in school	9 <sup>th</sup> grade (assumedly)	10 <sup>th</sup> grade	9 <sup>th</sup> grade (2002)	7 <sup>th</sup> or 8 <sup>th</sup> (probably 8 <sup>th</sup> )	7 <sup>th</sup> or 8 <sup>th</sup> grade (when she was 14 / 15)
Did they read an abridged version or the full version?	Abridged (Sparknotes Russian equivalent)	Full	Full	Full	Full
Which monologue did they memorize from the play	Doesn't remember	Chatsky's "a cydu kmo" monologue	Chatsky's "a cydu kmo" monologue	Chatsky's "a cydu kmo" monologue	Doesn't think anyone memorized monologues from Woe from Wit
Familiarity with the play (Scale: 1 being least to 5 being best)	3	4	5 (4 because he can't quote it)	~3	4 (3+ before rereading)
Profession (information not derived from interviews)	Architecture student (college)	English Cultural student (college)	English language professor	College administrator	Retired economist

Almost all of the interviewees described their childhood love of literature, though they differed on their favorite genres. Aleksandr sums up how these book lovers remember their childhood: “We were brought up by books.” His grandmother read classics to him and his siblings until he was old enough to read himself. At that point, he loved reading the books lying around the house and specifically sought out encyclopedias. Natalia’s parents also read to her, and she defines “reading [as] an essential part of my growing up.” She, along with her friends, read a wide assortment of international stories and fairytales because a vast amount had been translated into Russian and was easily accessible at her local Soviet library in Moscow. Masha found the same easy access to her favorite genre, international fiction novels, while growing up in the Russian Federation’s Moscow. Sofia echoes these same sentiments in her interview. Undoubtedly these individuals picked up numerous winged expressions unconsciously through their prolific reading. Even if they did not manage to read *Woe from Wit* before entering school, some expressions have gained celebrity on their own or through other author’s writings. The line “Кричали женщины: ура! И в воздух чепчики бросали” (The women cried: hurrah! And threw their bonnets into the air) has its own extensive Wikipedia page.<sup>158</sup> In addition to *Woe from Wit*, Pushkin’s *The Snowstorm* and Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina* contain this Russified idiom. It is unclear if the expression originally comes from Griboedov’s work, since it echoes the French expression, “*jeter son bonnet par-dessus les moulins*,” which ties back to Karamzin’s campaign to westernize and the Russian language.<sup>159</sup> As an Archaist, it seems unlikely that Griboedov

---

<sup>158</sup> “Кричали женщины: ура! И в воздух чепчики бросали,” in *Википедия*, October 4, 2018, [https://ru.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=%D0%9A%D1%80%D0%B8%D1%87%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%B8\\_%D0%B6%D0%B5%D0%BD%D1%89%D0%B8%D0%BD%D1%8B:%D1%83%D1%80%D0%B0!\\_%D0%98\\_%D0%B2\\_%D0%B2%D0%BE%D0%B7%D0%B4%D1%83%D1%85\\_%D1%87%D0%B5%D0%BF%D1%87%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%B8\\_%D0%B1%D1%80%D0%BE%D1%81%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%B8&oldid=9541812](https://ru.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=%D0%9A%D1%80%D0%B8%D1%87%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%B8_%D0%B6%D0%B5%D0%BD%D1%89%D0%B8%D0%BD%D1%8B:%D1%83%D1%80%D0%B0!_%D0%98_%D0%B2_%D0%B2%D0%BE%D0%B7%D0%B4%D1%83%D1%85_%D1%87%D0%B5%D0%BF%D1%87%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%B8_%D0%B1%D1%80%D0%BE%D1%81%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%B8&oldid=9541812)

<sup>159</sup> While the French expression has a similar meaning to the English “throw in the towel,” this significantly differs from the Russian expression’s celebratory connotation.

would intentionally seek out a non-Russian phrase for his text, but rather was influenced by other contemporaries. That this one phrase so suddenly appeared in multiple texts at the same time demonstrates the extensive intertextuality of the time's literary circles. This trend explains why countless other Russian authors integrated winged expressions from the play into their works. Pushkin made his 1825 remark about the proverbial future of Griboedov's writing "a self-fulfilling prophesy by incorporating lines" from the comedy into his works *Eugene Onegin* and "The Snowstorm."<sup>160</sup> Quotations from *Woe from Wit* are also found in Dostoevsky's works and Chekhov's personal letters, both widely read even today.<sup>161</sup> Therefore, readers encounter Griboedov's expressions not only in *Woe from Wit* itself, but also in numerous other famous writing works.

One individual did not share the others' love of literature, openly sharing her dislike of classic Russian literature. Mila spent her childhood watching Soviet films. Assumedly this television watching could affect her exposure to literary winged expressions in favor of those produced and reproduced in these films. Both Natala and Sofia acknowledge that the access to the Internet and television of present-day children would have stunted their prolific reading. Aleksandr, now 31, grew up during the release of this new technology and confessed his struggle to manage his reading time with comics, video games, and the rising number of television channels. The interviewees consider secondary sources an important point of contact with winged expressions, further demonstrating their pervasiveness. Aleksandr uses the example of kids' shows as a likely point of exposure to Griboedov's classic expressions. Beyond Soviet movies and kid shows, research indicates that winged expressions are even more widespread than people might be aware of. Multiple songs in pop music, such as Russian artists Kino and

---

<sup>160</sup> Karlinsky, *Russian Drama from Its Beginnings to the Age of Pushkin*.

<sup>161</sup> Karlinsky.

Viktor Tsoya's collaborated song "Red-yellow days," borrow directly quoted winged expressions from *Woe from Wit*.<sup>162</sup> The line "Светает!... Ах! как скоро ночь минула! Вчера просилась спать – отказ" (Day is breaking! Oh, the night passed so quickly! Yesterday I asked for sleep – and it was surrendered) takes the 27<sup>th</sup> place of the top 100 most popular poetic lines in Russia (including both Russian and international works) in the Russian magazine "Русский репортёр" (Russian Reporter).<sup>163</sup>

Another secondary source of winged expressions is the mass media: newspapers, radio, or television. Scholar O. Kultysheva posits that reporters enjoy using the pithy, culturally relevant expressions in headlines and articles, and often employ a wide range of them while talking on the radio and/or television. <sup>164</sup> Scholar Svitlana Malykhina writes that, as the world becomes increasingly fragmented and "sectionally differentiated," the mass media increasingly fabricates a universal, coherent image of reality. "Media makers specifically design the discourse to communicate intimacy," Malykhina says, so media increasingly approaches the colloquial language of common discourse.<sup>165</sup> Kultysheva brings this argument to the next level, positing that mass media's universality and individuals' reliance on it create a subjective reality, within which the use of winged expressions (even rare ones) artificially makes them more relevant in the language.<sup>166</sup> The five reasons to make allusions in newspaper texts, according to linguist Paul Lennon, are to attract reader attention, to borrow stylistic nuance, to appeal to common cultural

---

<sup>162</sup> "Russmus: Кино - Красно-Желтые Дни / *Krasno-Zheltye Dni / Red and Yellow Days* Lyrics and Translations," accessed September 3, 2019, <http://russmus.net/song/7267>.

<sup>163</sup> Виталий Лейбин and Наталья Кузнецова, "Слова Не Выкинешь," accessed September 3, 2019, <http://rusrep.ru/article/2015/06/26/slova-ne-vyikinesh>.

<sup>164</sup> O Kultysheva, "Ways of Manipulating Public Consciousness with Modern Media: An Analysis of the Russian Regional Publications," *Медиаобразование*, no. 4 (2019), <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/ways-of-manipulating-public-consciousness-with-modern-media-an-analysis-of-the-russian-regional-publications>.

<sup>165</sup> Svitlana Malykhina, *Renaissance of Classical Allusions in Contemporary Russian Media* (Lexington Books, 2014).

<sup>166</sup> Kultysheva, "WAYS OF MANIPULATING PUBLIC CONSCIOUSNESS WITH MODERN MEDIA."

values with the reader, to intellectually stimulate the reader, and to show the writer's "knowledge, beliefs, values, and wit."<sup>167</sup> Kultsheva believes that news writers employ these expressions for these reasons towards the ultimate aim of manipulating the audience. She argues that the use of winged expressions gives the news writer the ability to insidiously influence the reader, especially when the newspaper transmits official news. The interviewees have a variety of media consumption habits, but all consume media regularly enough to have secondary exposure to common winged expressions directly through media. Masha reads the news on social media, especially using VKontakte and Telegram.<sup>168</sup> Sofia primarily reads newspapers and watches the television, while Natala extensively reads the news on the internet, consuming a wide variety of sources ranging from official news like *Госновости* (literal translation: government news) to a freer press like *Meduza*. Both Aleksandr and Mila's news consumption are more casual: Mila seeks out her news on the television, specifically on Russian channel 1, and Aleksandr only intentionally looks up news stories once they come up in conversation or pop up on his e-mail account's home login page.

While all of the interviewees, excepting Mila, sadly reflect on their reduced reading habits after childhood, they continue to find ways to integrate the activity into their daily lives. Sofia recently reread *Woe from Wit* and remarked in surprise that almost every phrase turned out to be a winged expression. Natala also reread parts of the work when her daughter was learning it in school, in order to help her daughter study, and, at the same time, satisfying her own curiosity when her daughter mentioned interesting facets of the play. Natala fell in love with a midcentury film following the play, so she interacts with the literature in that way as well. Aleksandr is

---

<sup>167</sup> Malykhina, *Renaissance of Classical Allusions in Contemporary Russian Media*.

<sup>168</sup> VKontakte functions similarly to Facebook, but is primarily used in the Russian Federation and nearby countries; Telegram is a messaging application, similar to Whatsapp, but additionally has channels one can subscribe to, in which individuals and news organizations consistently release news updates.

probably the interviewee with the most prolific present-day reading habits, explaining that he makes sure to “always have a book to read” in transit or to fill small gaps in his day.

### 3.2 Interviewees’ composite definition of the term “winged expression”

---

**И ГОВОРИТ, КАК ПИШЕТ** [*You speak as one might write!*]

*Disapproving.*

Act 2, Scene 2: when Famusov is judging Chatsky’s way of speaking;

About a person who speaks eloquently, but nonetheless comes across as forced, bookish, or rehearsed.

*Source: Большой Словарь Крылатых Слов Русского Языка*

---

The interviewees agree on the pervasiveness of winged expressions, their strength being that they are useful and universally understood. In the discussion of where they come from, everyone mentions a distinct source: Mila limits her sources to fairytales from which people pulled expressions a long time ago, while the others list books, famous individuals, films (especially Soviet ones) and art. There is an emphasis on the textual nature of the source, as well as its popularity. Sofia explains that calling a phrase “winged” exposes the fact that people have forgotten the source, a sentiment echoed by the others. Aleksandr and Masha both explain that the extensive repetition of these expressions causes an individual to adopt them gradually as they grow up. “Especially,” Masha stresses, “when your parents were born and grew up in the Soviet Union...they know all these expressions, and you just grow up with them.” Another aspect of winged expressions repeated during the interviews was how fundamental they are to the Russian language. The interviewees describe how the expressions “tie together” the language; and how they are a part of the collective consciousness in that they come naturally, as any other ordinary

word in the language. These phrases, equated to idiomatic folklore by several of the individuals, clearly communicate the exact sentiment of a particular situation in a shortened format.

Succinctly put by Sofia, these “words that we use that are as short as you want to speak.”

Another agreed-on characteristic of winged expressions is their fixedness, the same “orientation of words” repeated from one individual to another. Aleksandr reflects that having a grammatically adaptable language with a flexible word order makes fixed phrases that always come out the same way “something to cherish.” Sofia cherishes these expressions, explaining that, “It’s like our code;” it’s a way to understand that the two speakers belong to the same distinct cultural tradition (emblemized in the expression “МЫ СВОЕ”<sup>169</sup>). Due to the cultural knowledge required to understand these expressions in their daily usage, Figes calls the language so idiomatic that translation or comprehension of the work by non-native Russian speakers is nearly impossible.<sup>170</sup> Aleksandr disagrees with this assertion, arguing that understanding winged expressions is not necessary in understanding daily conversation, proven by Natala’s ability to accurately guess the meaning of a winged expression by context clues even though she had never heard it before. All together, the interviewees they conceive of a winged expression as

a culturally-tied, pithy phrase with a well-known, typically text-based source, repeated in its fixed format enough that language learners pick it up and employ it without necessarily knowing its source or being aware of their use of it.

Natala, in struggling to come up with her definition, laughed, remarking, “See, if I had a крылатая фраза (winged phrase) for what I’m trying to say, I would probably use that.”

The interviewees came up with a variety of explanations for why the Russian language has such a large number of winged words. Most of them started with a response exemplified by Natala’s confusion: “I did not know [or] think about the fact that other languages did not have”

---

<sup>169</sup> This expression directly translates as “we are ours,” but communicates the sentiment of “we both belong to one another,” due to the shared belonging in their cultural group.

<sup>170</sup> Figes, *Natasha’s Dance*.

winged expressions. The two main explanations they came up with were the aforementioned flexibility of the Russian language and the cultural tendency to appreciate them. In Russian grammar, Natala points out, there are countless tools to change the meaning of sentences – prefixes, suffixes, word endings – integrated into the language. In a similar way to how verb prefixes succinctly specify an unambiguous meaning, winged expressions describe particular emotional situations while nodding to the speaker’s intelligence and cultural literacy. Masha makes this last point, which Natala describes as an understandable love of catchphrases shared by all of her countrymen. Natala says it’s often easier and more enjoyable to use winged expressions rather than expressing herself otherwise because “it’s easier to understand exactly what you mean [with] this sort of шаблон (template/rote) kind of phrase.” The end result: the code that Sofia reveres, in Soviet times tying together citizens of the Soviet republics; and going into the present day, defining the formerly Soviet citizens and present-day Russians as a distinct in-group tied together by their common linguistic history.

### 3.3 How do winged expressions develop in the present day?

---

ЛУЧШЕ ТАМ, ГДЕ НАС НЕТ [*The grass is greener on the other side*]

*Jealousy, greediness.*<sup>171</sup>

Act 1, Scene 7: when Chatsky derides Moscow and Sophia tries to defend it;

Used to scornfully reflect on one’s present circumstance in relation to another, better one.

*Source: Словари и энциклопедии на Академике*

---

---

<sup>171</sup> “Там хорошо, где нас нет. - это... Что такое Там хорошо, где нас нет.?” Словари и энциклопедии на Академике, accessed February 29, 2020, [https://dic.academic.ru/dic.nsf/dahl\\_proverbs/8412/%D0%A2%D0%B0%D0%BC](https://dic.academic.ru/dic.nsf/dahl_proverbs/8412/%D0%A2%D0%B0%D0%BC).



In the text of *Woe from Wit*, Sophia asks Chatsky “Где ж лучше?” ([emphatically] Where is better?), and he replies, “Где нас нет” (Where we aren’t). This expression exemplifies one of the reasons Griboedov’s expressions fit so fluidly into conversation – the split-up feature of many of his phrases allows for a call-and-response to occur. This direct translation, however, hides Griboedov’s ingenious grammatical ambiguity that Sir Bernard Pares’ 1925 rhymed translation of the text reveals. It must be stated that, in Pares’ translation, he took significant allowances to make his language echo the emotion and sentiments of the original, rather than directly translating to the nearest English equivalents. He chose to translate this dialogue as,

SOPHIA:

Where’s it better?

CHATSKY:

Where there’s none of us.

This translation changes Sophia’s emphatic question of “where is better” by adding the subject “it.” In the context of their conversation about how Chatsky finds Moscow banal, “it” is referring to the city of Moscow. In the other sense of the expression – where is better – Sophia is asking Chatsky to give her an example of a better place. Adding Moscow was the subject creates the nuance of asking if it is possible that there is a better place at all. Chatsky’s directly translated response, “where we are not,” is a rebuttal to her, following the sense of the English language expression “the grass is always greener on the other side.” However, in Pares’ translation, the emphasis is on the place rather than the people with his grammatically correct, albeit rare, translation of “где нас нет” as “where there’s none of us.” Chatsky stresses that the issue with the location he and Sophia find themselves is that they themselves are there, and that a better place is unachievable because they are the spoiling factor in their present environment. This ambiguity in Griboedov’s language allows contemporary speakers the ability to employ the winged expressions in a variety of contexts to mean different things. Both Mila and Sofia correct my textual version with their own: Mila gives me «лучше там, где нас нет» (it’s *better* in the

place where we aren't) while Sofia says, “там хорошо, где нас нет” (it's *good* in the place where we aren't). While these two versions are similar, they contribute to the question of what makes the other place better: is it the absence of the interlocutors and/or their immediate surroundings; or is it that this other place has enviable characteristics? In English, the expression “the grass is always greener on the other side” has the answers built into it: at once, the speaker is admonishing their conversation partner for envying an imagined value of another circumstance by using the word “always” to inform them that they would be envious of others no matter what circumstance they find themselves in. When I ask Mila about the Russian expression, she promptly remarks, “it's the most ironic joke at oneself.” Mila's version of Chatsky and Sophia's repartee unironically admires the advantages of other people's life situations, while Sofia's more evenly reflects on the shared virtues of both her circumstances and other people's. Whether this difference reflects a generational divide between Soviet commiseration of life destinies versus a more capitalist envy of more successful individuals, one cannot surmise from this one expression. However, the development of this expression from the text to these individuals' vocabulary does elucidate the contentious journey of these words from the text to people's contemporary mouths.

The text became widespread in Russia during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century before the coining of the term “winged expressions.” This is why Pushkin famously said that the play's expressions would turn into *proverbs*. German philologist and lexicographer Georg Büchmann coined the term “winged phrases” in 1864.<sup>172</sup> By the late 1800s, informal compilations of winged phrases in the Russian language had begun emerging, including one containing what the author, Rednikov, considered “remarkable sayings.”<sup>173</sup> Current-day winged words dictionary compilers

---

<sup>172</sup> Берков, Мокиенко, and Шулежкова, *Большой Словарь Крылатых Слов Русского Языка*.

<sup>173</sup> Берков, Мокиенко, and Шулежкова.

Berkov et al. note that these informal dictionaries affected the later occurrence of some more unknown phrases, due to their lenient standards that sometimes included “ordinary quotes that attracted the attention of the compiler either with instructive content or poetic expressiveness.” It seems that this dictionary of remarkable sayings would easily fit this standard. Later, in an attempt to eradicate obsolete or relevantly unrecognized expressions, a 1929 book written by Kamenev accumulated old winged phrases to show what *not* to include in the new society but ended up simply being a dictionary of old aphorisms.<sup>174</sup> The language of winged phrases is constantly changing: sometimes they gain new meanings or language speakers resurrect them after passively holding them for years. Individual winged expressions evolve from protologisms into neologisms as other, less popular ones drop out of the language.<sup>175,176</sup> I found that during my interviews, some sources for popular winged expressions had become inaccurate in the short time between publication and my reading them. For example, a professor writing a 2017 article inaccurately stated that the expressions “Умеренность и аккуратность” and “Французик из Бордо” were commonly used by students, while the student I asked had never heard the expression before.<sup>177</sup>

Aleksandr is the only one of the interviewees who organically brings up the fact that the playwright’s language stood out to him while studying the play. He says he began to “love” the play in part due to the language, which made the play sound beautiful with its multiple layers. While rereading it after his first exposure, he focused on “how the language worked.” Soviet linguist and literary critic G.O. Vinokur believes that *Woe from Wit*’s diversity of techniques and

---

<sup>174</sup> Берков, Мокиенко, and Шулежкова.

<sup>175</sup> Zhivov, “The New Cultural Differentiation;”

<sup>176</sup> Mila, Case study participant (Pseudonym Mila), interview by Daria Locher, Whatsapp Video, January 14, 2020.

<sup>177</sup> Е.П. Пиянзина, “ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЕ КРЫЛАТЫХ СЛОВ И ВЫРАЖЕНИЙ В РЕЧИ СТУДЕНТОВ,” *Научный потенциал XXI Века (Scientific Potential of the XXI Century)*, June 8, 2017, 124–31.

application of them while maintaining compositional completeness create a beautiful work ripe for potential winged phrases.<sup>178</sup> Ironically, the integration of countless international techniques in the work produced a product so markedly emblematic of Russian culture that Russians find it difficult to distinguish from their deep-rooted, oral folklore. People often consider Griboedov's lines to be folk proverbs and popular clichés is due to the author's seamless integration of the qualities of folklore speech into his writing. <sup>179,180</sup>

During her re-reading of the play, Sofia found herself understanding the play differently from when she first read it. She reflects that, at different points in one's life, a person has different priorities: "You grow up and your mentality changes, your priority changes, and that's why you see other sides of it." The scholar Malykhina corroborates Tamara's sentiment, explaining that, often people cannot understand the original, textual meaning of winged words due to the expressions themselves alluding to more ancient works. Perhaps a reason why the older interviewees bring up Griboedov's language use in their interviews is due to their lifelong exposure to them in multiple cultural and textual contexts. It follows that one's use and understanding of Griboedov's expressions also reflect their changing priorities and mentality. Furthermore, present-day adaptations of the play attach additional connotations to winged expressions that already contain almost two hundred years of history. Aleksandr speaks about an operatic adaptation of *Woe from Wit* by Kirill Serebrenikov that he considers a blatant affront to the community, way of life, and intelligence of the Muscovites that were Serebrenikov's main audience. While Aleksandr does not intend to praise the play, his critique actually highlights Serebrenikov's ingenuity in translating Griboedov's mockery of his contemporaries to the

---

<sup>178</sup> Винокур, "'Горе От Ума' Как Памятник Русской Художественной Речи."

<sup>179</sup> Аникин, "Грибоедовские Крылатые Слова в Сопоставлении с Фольклором."

<sup>180</sup> Figs, *Natasha's Dance*.

present day. An online critique of the opera – named *Chaadsky* after its main philosopher-dissident as a foil to the play’s timeworn Chatsky – describes it as difficult to listen to and more of a reflection on the play’s author than the play itself. With most of the cast condemned to physically holding the rich, main characters up off the coal-strewn floor, the great dichotomy between current-day oligarchs and the common people is made exceedingly clear.<sup>181</sup> The impressions from this radical adaptation could impact its audiences’ experience of its winged expressions afterwards. Perhaps, rather than viewing an expression of Chatsky’s in the context of a fight against the 19<sup>th</sup> century Old Regime, an audience member might view it in the context of a contemporary offended oligarch.

The often two-part nature of these expressions compounds the ambiguity arising from their multiple layers, allowing for differing contextual uses. In discussing the expression, “Ври, да знай же меру;/есть от чего в отчаяние придти” (talk nonsense but know when to stop;/you’re driving me to despair), Mila informs me that she would use the two phrases in completely different contexts. She explains her confusion in saying that she employs the two phrases as two distinct expressions. The first one she would use in exasperation at someone spinning a yarn, while she would use the second while talking about despair in the general sense without purposely referencing a text. Perhaps this expression has become too common for her to consider it text-based at all. Natala and Masha propose another explanation for why people only know the first half of an expression. In the case of a long expression, people often only use the first part with the assumption is that the end of the phrase automatically resonates in the interlocutor’s mind. Masha, unlike Natala, admits that, while people often only use the first part of the phrase, “sometimes nobody knows the second part.” While this ignorance could be due to

---

<sup>181</sup> “Кирилл Серебренников поставил оперу по «Горю от ума»,” GQ Россия, accessed February 29, 2020, <https://www.gq.ru/entertainment/kirill-serebrennikov-postavil-operu-po-goryu-ot-uma>.

these expressions finally fading out of the collective consciousness after almost two hundred years, other explanations seem more probable. For one, the expressions for which this is true could be generally less popular than others, either currently out of fashion, or never completely ubiquitous in the vernacular. Masha reflects sadly that most people today don't like classics, which her and Mila's reading habits reflect. It follows that they value winged expressions in a similar manner. The interviewees perceive many of the interview winged expressions as coming from classical literature. Aleksandr guesses that two of the expressions I give him were even older – derived from the Bible and the other *Домострой* (Homebuilding), a 16th century handbook on household etiquette. When Natala finds out that the phrase “Французик из Бордо” (a Frenchman from Bordeaux) is not from Pushkin's *Evgenii Onegin*, as she believed, but from *Woe from Wit*, she insists that I explain the surrounding context to resituate herself. For the most part, all of the interviewees' knowledge of the phraseological source of the winged expressions are lacking compared to what scholars anticipated. Rather, the interviewees find it more important to know the names of oft quoted works than which specific work an expression was tied to. Natala remarks that *Woe from Wit* has “a lot of phrases that float around” but people don't often know where any singular expression is from.

### 3.4 Generational conflict as exposed by winged expressions

---

УЧИЛИСЬ БЫ НА СТАРШИХ ГЛЯДЯ [*You could learn by looking at your elders*]

*Humorous or ironic*

Act 2, Scene 2: Famusov's response to an insolent remark by Chatsky;

An elder's admonishment; the advice to follow the speaker's example.

*Source: Большой Словарь Крылатых Слов Русского Языка*

---

Before finding out that all the winged expressions I ask about in the interview came from *Woe from Wit*, Aleksandr uses the play as an example of a theme in Russian literature to place “elders and the young” into conflict, with the older generation trying to “save” members of the younger generation that they perceive as going astray. The expression we are talking about, “учились бы на старших глядя” (you could learn by looking at your elders; similar to the English expression “respect your elders”), explicitly addresses this generational conflict. Scholar Vinokur points out that rhetorical questions and/or emotional exclamations define popular winged expressions by Griboedov.<sup>182</sup> This expression can be used by an exasperated elder speaking to a foolhardy younger individual. Aleksandr describes how he primarily encountered the expression at school when his teachers were telling him how he should be acting. While 31 himself, Aleksandr was in high school at the turn of the millennium, placing his education squarely under the Russian Federation’s purview. His teachers, on the other hand, grew up during the Soviet era, and Aleksandr considers them part of a more conservative generation than his own. While his generation looks to the future, this older generation had grown up in an era stagnant in future prospects and therefore exalting history and, by extension, their elders. This is the aforementioned expression that Aleksandr believed came from a 17<sup>th</sup> century handbook on household etiquette, *Домострой* (homebuilding). This handbook directs its target readers to accept a man as in charge of the household and children following their parents, etc. Another possible source that Aleksandr proposes is the 12<sup>th</sup> century ruler Vladimir Monomakh, who wrote letters to his son. Both of these ancient texts communicate traditional, conservative values in a didactic fashion, and it’s possible that Griboedov was referring to them when he made Famusov respond to a particularly insolent remark by Chatsky with this remark.

---

<sup>182</sup> Винокур, “‘Горе От Ума’ Как Памятник Русской Художественной Речи.”

Aleksandr personally does not use this expression seriously in any context, considering it belittling to his students. However, employing these phrases ironically can upturn the dominant conservative view in Russia upheld in some winged expressions. Mila and Masha both substantiate this opinion, considering the use of some expressions only possible in jest or sarcasm. Mila goes so far as to say that the only genuine expressions necessarily originate from fairytales (assumedly in the form of proverbs and other moral truisms). Therefore, the use of winged expressions differs across generations: someone older might unironically use an expression someone younger would only employ in jest. This could be due to the fact that expressions winged from non-fairytales allow for nuance, which can then be twisted in the manner that the speaker wants it to be. Masha views this nuance as emblematic of the generational-educational divide. Scholar Malykhina proposes the idea that simply growing up during Soviet times can change people's experience of encountering winged expressions. During Soviet times winged words were ubiquitous in Soviet programming, so individual expressions might hold even more nuance connected to this programming than for the younger generation.<sup>183</sup> To further solidify these words' place in the collective conscience, Natala explains that, "in the Soviet days when you did some research, you were supposed to quote a political leader, classic philosopher, a thinker, or a literary author." Malykhina describes this the traditional view of Russian classic literature as "a precious asset, a repository of shared values."<sup>184</sup> Soviet children considered access and reference to these texts precious due to their hyper-censored environment, which used to be more suffocating than today. On the flip side, a post-Soviet generation with multiplying technology at their fingertips demonstrate overall reduced reading habits and reduced exposure to the texts' nuance. The expressions then enter the language through other

---

<sup>183</sup> Malykhina, *Renaissance of Classical Allusions in Contemporary Russian Media*.

<sup>184</sup> Malykhina.



means and with different connotations than straight from the text. Some consider various expressions “Soviet” – ironic, due to their actual origin. These differences in life experience contribute to each individuals’ own phraseological vocabulary while also being emblematic of the greater processes at play.

While this small case study cannot reveal generational change and language progression, the changing definitions of winged expressions in phraseological dictionaries can shed light on some general shift in the use of particular winged expressions. The dictionary *Русские Пословицы, Поговорки, и Крылатых Выражения* (Russian Proverbs, Sayings, and Winged Expressions) was published in 1979, while the *Большой Словарь Крылатых Выражения* (The Big Dictionary of Winged Expressions) was published in 2008. The expression in question: “Блажен, кто верует, тепло ему на свете!” (Blessed is he who believes; this gives him warmth in the world). When I ask where he thought the expression came from, Aleksandr assumes it came from the Bible or another church-related text, because of the expression’s mimicking of the textual structure of the 10 Beatitudes of Matthew (e.g. “Блаженны кроткие, ибо они наследуют землю” [Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth]).<sup>185</sup> Aleksandr explains that he personally does not use the expression that often, because he avoids discussions about religion in general, since he feels that they often revolve around an attempt to convert the other interlocutor. That being said, he says he would use the expression in a monastery to be polite. This expression, he considers after a short time, he can use in a nonreligious context about a belief other than that in God. *The Big Dictionary of Winged Expressions* (2008) reiterates the same use of the expression, saying that it communicates the following sentiment: It is good for

---

<sup>185</sup> “Евангельские Заповеди Блаженства / Православие.Ru,” accessed March 2, 2020, <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/104825.html>.

those who believe in the possibility of felicitous coincidences; who optimistically look at life.<sup>186</sup> Both Aleksandr and the dictionary compilers, Berkov et al., emphasize that this expression covers some belief in positive possibilities. *Russian Proverbs, Sayings, and Winged Expressions* (1979) paints a different picture, defining the expression as spoken ironically about people, who without enough base believe something considered unlikely.<sup>187</sup> This difference might trace back to the Soviet intolerance of religion, which would shed an ironic, even sardonic, shade on an expression imitating the language of the Bible.

### 3.5 Standardized literary education as a moderating factor

---

**А СУДЬИ КТО?** [*And who are our judges?*]

*Bookish; disapproving*

Act 2, Scene 5: when societal judgement affronts Chatsky;

Used in relation to people called onto to sum up, judge, or evaluate something or someone, but show incompetence or bias; those who are not worthy of their professional or moral qualities to evaluate the activities or actions of someone else, or to judge other people.

*Source: Большой Словарь Крылатых Слов Русского Языка*

---

Other than hearing these expressions on the television and by their families, the most cited other origin point for the interviewees' exposure to expressions from *Woe from Wit* is in school. The standardized education described in the previous chapter ensures that graduates of the secondary school program share decent exposure to classic literature and winged expressions. To explain this phenomenon, one must look at the history of literary education in Russia.

---

<sup>186</sup> Берков, Мокиенко, and Шулежкова, *Большой Словарь Крылатых Слов Русского Языка*.

<sup>187</sup> В.П. Фелицына and Ю.Е. Прохоров, *Русские Пословицы, Поговорки, и Крылатых Выражения: Лингвострановедческий Словарь*, ed. Е.М. Верещагина and В.Г. Костомарова (Москва Издательство "Русский Язык," 1979).

Russian literature entered the higher education curriculum in 1812, right around the time that Russian society was turning to its traditions to define itself.<sup>188</sup> Since that time, it has developed greatly. To begin with, there are two defining documents for the Russian secondary education system: the 2004 *Стандарт Среднего (Полного) Общеого Образования по Литературе* (Russian Standard for Secondary (Complete) General Education in Literature) and the 2010 *Приказ об Утверждении Федерального государственного Образовательного Стандарта Основного Образования* (Order about the Ratification of a Federal Governmental Educational Standard for Secondary General Education). These two come together to outline the requirements for all Russian schools and teachers to follow. The latter states that the “understanding of literature (is) one of main national-cultural values of the people, as a special way of learning life.”<sup>189</sup> This order states that the secondary school literature curriculum aims for the systematization of students’ ideas about the historical development of literature. This systemic uniformity intends for students to become both “spiritually developed” (духовно развитой), gain a “refined taste” in literature (художественного вкуса). One of the stated requirements for graduation is the ability to “reproduce the content of literary works,” referring to the widespread practice of memorizing monologues from classical literature. All of the interviewees’ stories reflect this wide range of literature consumed in the classroom. Natala remembers how she “read, of course, a lot for school. Every classic, every author which is considered to be a classic of Russian literature I think I’ve read that.”

As an important part of this literary tradition, *Woe from Wit* is required reading for students across Russia, as stipulated in the *Order about the Ratification of the Federal*

---

<sup>188</sup> Maguire, *Exploring Gogol*.

<sup>189</sup> artemiofs, “ФГОСы - Федеральные государственные образовательные стандарты,” *ФГОС* (blog), accessed September 3, 2019, <https://fgos.ru/>. (classes 5 through 9)

*Component of the Governmental Educational Standards of General Primary, Fundamental, and Secondary (Full) Education (not needing state registration).*<sup>190</sup> Students typically read the play in their ninth year of schooling,<sup>191</sup> sometimes making the ninth-grade summer reading list along with classics such as Pushkin's *Evgenii Onegin*, Chekhov's *The Snowstorm*, and Karamzin's *Poor Liza*.<sup>192</sup> Often the same monologues are memorized through generations and across the country, as seen on the numerous websites online with the same cherrypicked passages.<sup>193</sup> Both the interviewees as well as a ninth-grade lesson plan for use across Russia stipulate Chatsky's monologue beginning with the famous winged expression, "а судьи кто?" referenced in the beginning of this section.

By looking at this teacher's guide for the ninth-grade literature class, it is possible to see explicit lesson plans designed for teaching students about Griboedov and his play. This lesson plan is part of a handbook for teaching the entire ninth-grade Russian literature course, and Griboedov enters the narrative on a Thursday in class 18, which is dedicated to introducing students to his life, destiny, and creative work. This involves tabulating his biography and learning about his societal ideals. The lessons focus on Griboedov's relationship with Pushkin and the poet's ingenuity, as well as the contextualization of the content of the play in history. The students act out parts of the play, discuss Chatsky's critiques of society, situate Griboedov's innovative playwrighting in the literary storyline of the time, discuss Chatsky as an anachronistic

---

<sup>190</sup> В.М. Филиппов, "Об Утверждении Федерального Компонента Государственных Образовательных Стандартов Начального Общего, Основного Общего и Среднего (Полного) Общего Образования (Не Нуждается в Госрегистрации) (с Изменениями На 7 Июня 2017 Года), Приказ Минобразования России От 05 Марта 2004 Года №1089," accessed September 3, 2019, <http://docs.cntd.ru/document/901895865>.

<sup>191</sup> Metelitsa, "В Каком Классе Изучают Горе От Ума Грибоедова?," accessed September 3, 2019, <http://www.bolshoyvopros.ru/questions/1769488-v-kakom-klasse-izuchajut-gore-ot-uma-griboedova.html>.

<sup>192</sup> "Список Литературы Для Чтения Летом (5-11 Классы) | ГБОУ Средняя Общеобразовательная Школа №252 Красносельского Района г. Санкт-Петербурга," accessed September 3, 2019, <http://school252.ru/uchebniy-plan/spisok-literaturi-dlya-chteniya-letom-5-11-klassi.html>.

<sup>193</sup> Крюкова Марина Анатольевна, "Наша Территория: Учим Наизусть Грибоедова," *Наша Территория* (blog), 2010, [http://yaplusti.blogspot.com/2010/10/blog-post\\_13.html](http://yaplusti.blogspot.com/2010/10/blog-post_13.html).

character, and finish up in class 24 by discussing the famous 1871 critique “Мильон Терзаний” (Zillions of Torments) by I. A. Goncharov. The lesson plans make a point of discussing how Famusov’s use of ordinary language demonstrates his desire to prove himself a “real Russian master” – whatever that means to him. An interesting point is that these lessons call Chatsky’s language the most extensive and rich of all the characters, contradicting aforementioned scholars, who believe unequivocally that the title belongs to Sophia.<sup>194</sup>

My interviewees tell me that they spent on average just under a month on the play, and the lesson plan factors in three weeks.<sup>195</sup> They remember different parts of their lessons, including covering the plot, the protagonists’ identities (and dialects), the main conflicts, and the play’s style and composition. Sofia and Aleksandr recall writing essays, with Aleksandr first writing dictations of well-written essays to imitate before putting together a quote plan for the final composition. Interestingly enough, the eldest interviewee, Sofia, specifically mentions reviewing *Woe from Wit*’s winged words in class. Teachers would make a point to use the expressions in class so that students would learn, repeat, and then begin naturally using them. Natala describes how her teachers had students read long sections of the play in class. Students, either first enunciating these expressions in class while reading out loud, or perhaps recognizing expressions they were already employing, were formulaically introduced to the play’s winged expressions. Sofia traces people’s occasional use of the expressions to this rote focus in her education (I believe she probably underestimates how frequently she employs Griboedov’s expressions in her daily life). In terms of discussing the playwright himself, Aleksandr remarks, “when you study him in school it was always unusual because he was the writer with basically

---

<sup>194</sup> Галина Фефилова, *Литература. 9 класс. Планы-конспекты для 105 уроков. Учебно-методическое пособие* (Litres, 2019).

<sup>195</sup> The lesson plan designates seven lessons of the year’s 105 total literature classes to Griboedov and his masterpiece. This factors out to three weeks – with two classes a week in a 35-week

one book. Which is not true.” This description reveals a gap in this standardized educational plan: teachers communicate a simplified story to their students in their haste to cover numerous classics. The fact that this lesson plan elides Griboedov’s younger life and previous works demonstrates this. This cursory dive into each text leaves people with a vague recollection of both the text and author’s biography.

Mila tells me that she reads summarized versions of most literature she encounters in school, using the multitude of SparkNotes-like websites online to avoid having to read the classic novels that she so dislikes. She also offhandedly mentions that she can’t read the newspaper, replacing that impossible reading with more digestible television news. The Russian newspaper *Meduza* published an article in June of 2018 titled “The Minister of Education said that a quarter of Russians aren’t functionally literate. But how can I figure out whether or not I am?”.<sup>196</sup> The authors quote pedagogical student Yelena Romanycheva in that primary school teaches students the fundamental mechanics of reading, and the language in secondary school texts operate on such a high level that they are rendered incomprehensible to students. The article calls this “a completely new language.” An example of how these two “languages” differ is in the most basic word of them all: the verb “to be”. People do not use this verb in present tense in simple, colloquial Russian. However, the formal version of it, “являться,” applies to situations ranging from journal articles to government documents to high literature and textbooks, which the authors of this article consider “very difficult to understand – you can only learn, recite and forget.” The authors, Platov and Dmitriev, claim that the use of abridged versions of literary texts in class exacerbates the students’ separation from the text – a custom tracing back to Soviet times

---

<sup>196</sup> Артем Платов and Денис Дмитриев, “Министр просвещения сказала, что четверть россиян не владеют функциональным чтением. А как понять, я владею или нет?,” *Meduza*, accessed September 3, 2019, <https://meduza.io/cards/ministr-obrazovaniya-skazala-chto-chetvert-rossiyan-ne-vladeyut-funktsionalnym-chteniem-chem-chem-a-kak-ponyat-ya-vladeyu-ili-net>.

when this play was first introduced into the educational system. Due to this inability of students to understand texts, therefore, “lectures and oral explanations” dictate their education and further reduce the amount of student textual engagement. The article states, “Schoolchildren and students simply do not have enough practice to learn to read and understand, and then competently respond in writing.” While the goal of this educational design is to expose students to a greater scope of the great Russian literary tradition, it results in a standardized, cursory knowledge of a huge number of texts with a shallow understanding of what they are reciting.<sup>197</sup> One can see this failure of the educational system in Masha’s responses, while the other interviewees were more engaged in their studies and took their learning out of the classroom to deepen their engagement with texts. Masha tells me that, when she “was in school, I read [*Woe from Wit*] four times and I saw some performances in theater twice.” Aleksandr, in his preparation for the pedagogical institute, reread the play one year after his first introduction to it. It was the first text they covered in the preparation. Years later, he tutored students learning the play in school. Interestingly enough, all of the interviewees rank themselves at least a three in familiarity with the play, while Masha, Sofia, and Aleksandr give themselves a 4. While these ranks indicate a basic uniformity in their education, they also show that true engagement with the play only occurs on individuals’ own time. That being said, the interviewee’s professions factor into their present knowledge of the play as well: Aleksandr and Natala work in academia, while Mila and Masha are college students and Natala is a retired economist. Given a lack of correlation between profession and textual literacy, their interviews indicate that their familiarity with the play is more reliant on their personal interest in literature and the play rather than their professions.

---

<sup>197</sup> Платов and Дмитриев.

### 3.6 Is there political nuance in Griboedov's winged words?

---

СЛУЖИТЬ БЫ РАД, ПРИСЛУЖИТЬСЯ ТОШНО [*I'm happy to serve, but it sickens me to be servile*]  
*Disapproving.*

Reply from Act 2, Scene 2; Chatsky's response to Famusov's advice to go into service

Contrasting true and unselfish service to the cause of sycophancy and careerism.

*Source: Большой Словарь Крылатых Слов Русского Языка*

---

#### 3.6.1 Post-soviet (contemporary) concepts of Griboedov

In an Iran-centric account of Griboedov's life, historian Firuza Melville puzzles over the fate of Griboedov in Russians' historical conscience as primarily a "rebellious poet and sometimes a composer which is, in fact, what he always wanted to be."<sup>198</sup> She considers him primarily in the context of his ambitious career as a talented diplomat in Persia, having a personal hand in consolidating Russia's Caucasian territories. Melville ridicules an audience member in the television program "Имя России" (Name of Russia),<sup>199</sup> who called Griboedov a "wunderkind and author of waltzes." She considers this characterization as a ridiculously narrow conception of his contributions to Russian history.<sup>200</sup> However, the interviews reveal a different story. Due to both Soviet and Russian school curriculums focusing extensively on the biography of authors, the interviewee's collective picture of Griboedov is surprisingly rich and detailed. Lesson plans, according to Figes, reflect the rich history of Griboedov himself and the

---

<sup>198</sup> Firuza Melville, "Alexander Sergeevich Griboedov: Russian Imperial James Bond Malgré Lui. In Memory of the 225th Anniversary of His Birth," in *Russians in Iran: Diplomacy and Power in the Qajar Era and Beyond*, ed. Rudi Matthee and Elena Andreeva (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018).

<sup>199</sup> This television program was a 2008 project by the television channel "Russia" to identify the most notable individuals in Russian history. Griboedov did not make the final cut to 50 people.

<sup>200</sup> Melville, "Alexander Sergeevich Griboedov: Russian Imperial James Bond Malgré Lui. In Memory of the 225th Anniversary of His Birth."



innumerable attempts to understand both his and his play's position in 1820s Russia (and Persia) despite their aforementioned shortcomings.<sup>201</sup> His two roles – as playwright and as diplomat – were intrinsically linked and influenced each other. All of the interviewees, with an exception of Mila, who evades my questions about Griboedov, paint a dual picture of the writer-diplomat. Most of them explicitly mention that *Woe from Wit* is the only work that everybody knows, and that many people falsely believe that Griboedov only wrote that one work (though they drew blanks at exactly what else he did write). Masha inflates his diplomatic position of Minister Plenipotentiary to that of ambassador, which further highlights lesson plans' lofty presentation of his nonliterary primary occupation. Iranian historian Melville, upset by what she considers a serious omission of Griboedov's historical significance, might consider one interviewee's understanding of Griboedov's death to be an "important provocation of some sort" grossly simplified. Rather than recall the diplomatic win of the Treaty of Turkmenchay, the recompense for Griboedov's death – the алмаз шах (the Shah Diamond) – sticks in Aleksandr's mind. The diamond fit the writer perfectly, Aleksandr reasons, "because, yeah, it's not the most exciting diamond but its price is huge."

Authors reflecting on Griboedov's life proclaim that he betrayed the ideals of his generation, which his friends and contemporaries all died for. Rather, he went in the opposite direction, leaning into government work to make a successful career. They argue that this betrayal, and his literary ambitions stolen from him, fundamentally held him back and caused him to lose his driving ambition. He tried to pursue love with Nina Chavchadadze, but at the same time chose an incredibly dangerous diplomatic mission, as if premediating and setting up his death.<sup>202</sup> This understanding of his life, however, ignores his passion for literature that caused

---

<sup>201</sup> Figes, *Natasha's Dance*.

<sup>202</sup> Mirsky, "Centenary of the Death of Griboyedov (1829--January--1929)."

him to passionately argue against his diplomatic mission to Persia, and the moral grounds upon which he chose his hill to unfiguratively die on.<sup>203,204</sup> These two narratives cast Griboedov in dramatically different lights: one as a fun-loving young man, highly educated, associating with other men of similar interests and intelligence; the other as an ambitious career diplomat who cast aside his friends and literary success for power. These two narratives, while discordant with each other, reflect on their authors and historic time periods even more than the life of this poet. D.S. Mirsky, a Russian exile in Great Britain trying to return to his motherland, wrote his commentary in 1929 on the centenary of Griboedov's death. The other was a diplomatic biographic dissertation written by James, Kneip, an American PhD student at Ohio State University in 1975.

The play in the end was a window into Griboedov himself. He breathed his own life into his characters so that they could communicate his values through their actions to the audience and readership. As Figes puts,

The main theme of Griboedov's creative and research interests throughout his life has been the fate of the Russian nation, its social and cultural being, with disunity between the masses and the nobility, gravitating away from the countryside, to the court and the department.<sup>205</sup>

This began with his efforts to define the future of the Russian literary language as an Arcahist and then continued in his diplomatic work. Griboedov's work in Persia came together with this role as playwright, both perpetuating Russian civilization while trying to ameliorate it from within. His critiques of serfdom and the aristocracy in his play somehow fit together with his fatal decision to support an unpopular, but morally upright, policy in Persia, inciting violent riots that climaxed at a storming of the embassy and massacre of all of the policymakers inside.<sup>206</sup>

---

<sup>203</sup> Kneip, "A.S. Griboedov: His Life and Work as a Russian Diplomat, 1817-1829."

<sup>204</sup> Figes, *Natasha's Dance*.

<sup>205</sup> Медведева, *Творчество Грибоедова // Грибоедов А. С. Сочинения в Стихах / Вступ. Ст., Подгот. Текста и Примеч. И. Н. Медведевой.*

<sup>206</sup> Kneip, "A.S. Griboedov: His Life and Work as a Russian Diplomat, 1817-1829."

Perhaps the reason Russian students grow up without having learned about Griboedov's diplomatic successes, is that they think of Aleksandr Pushkin's text "A Journey to Arzrum." In this text, Pushkin recalls Griboedov's melancholy nature, embittered mind, and good nature; he called him a brilliant man forever underestimated and relegated to obscurity. In his final years, writes Pushkin, Griboedov was living a most envious life: gaining celebrity from his comedy, diplomatic success due to his encyclopedic Persian expertise, and spiritual fulfilment in his recent marriage.<sup>207</sup> Griboedov, in his letters home from his Persian post, construes his life as a novel with him as the hero. Lotman reflects on this tendency to "perceive one's own life as a text... and (assume) life's movement toward an immutable goal."<sup>208, 209</sup> Griboedov leaned into this propensity, calling his life "мой роман живой" (my living novel). He spent the latter part of his life obsessing over the "finale" of his impending death, reflects scholar Angela Brintlinger.<sup>210</sup> Griboedov was filled with a sense of foreboding leading up to what could have been an anticipated demise following a dangerous diplomatic decision. Even as early as August 1818 he wrote,

Today is my name day<sup>211</sup>; the pious prince after whom I am named became famous here; you remember that he died on the return trip from Asia; maybe the same plight awaits his namesake, the secretary of the embassy, only it's doubtful that I will find myself sainted!

Despite Griboedov's forebodings, Pushkin elegiacally framed his death as "мгновения и прекрасна" (instantaneous and beautiful). Pushkin, at the end of his notes, mourned only that his remarkable friend would be forgotten by history as others before him.

---

<sup>207</sup> А.С. Пушкин, "Путешествие в Арзрум," accessed March 2, 2020, <https://rvb.ru/pushkin/01text/06prose/01prose/0870.htm>.

<sup>208</sup> Lotman, "The Poetics of Everyday Behavior in Eighteenth-Century Russian Culture."

<sup>209</sup> Lotman.

<sup>210</sup> Angela Brintlinger, "The Persian Frontier: Griboedov as Orientalist and Literary Hero," *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne Des Slavistes* 45, no. 3/4 (2003): 371–93.

<sup>211</sup> A "name day" is a day of the saint after which an individual is named (For Griboedov, that was Saint Alexander, on the 30<sup>th</sup> of August)

The fact that both Masha and Sofia know immediately where Griboedov's monument in Moscow stands (at the Чистые Пруды [Chistiye Prudi] metro station) might have surprised Pushkin.<sup>212</sup> Each of the individuals recalls specific facts about Griboedov's life because, as they are learning about him in school, they find a part of his story relatable, remarkable, and/or brave. Therefore, they keep these facts with them for years. For example, Aleksandr admires the writer both in his difficult diplomatic placement as well as his matchless command of language. Additionally, cable specials each year on his birthday anniversary as well as infrequent television series keep Griboedov's story alive and current in people's memories. Both Natala and Masha agree that people tend to romanticize Griboedov and his play, probably due to the same reasons that they idealize the Decembrists. Natala's teachers specifically taught their students that the work drew its importance in its critique of the Old Regime's conservative society. In the play, Chatsky is the young émigré returning to Moscow after living in France, ready to be reunited with his people and most importantly, with his childhood love, Sophia. Soviet students learned about Chatsky as a "a progressive thinker, a revolutionaire of sorts" that aided the Soviet government's image of moral superiority over the regime they overthrew. Masha, interestingly enough, considered Chatsky only a hero in the Post-Soviet mindset. Her teachers taught their post-Soviet students that the Soviet education did not present Chatsky's attempts to communicate his liberal ideas to the other characters in a favorable manner. While contradictory at first, it makes sense that Chatsky holds this exalted place in both Soviet and post-Soviet educational curriculums. Both governments are trying to show their citizens that they are currently the most liberal and modern form of government – one that the literary hero Chatsky and his romanticized

---

<sup>212</sup> This is especially surprising, given that the location of Griboedov's statue is different in Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* – meaning that they knew the correct location, despite a famous novel immortalizing it differently.

Decembrist friends would have supported. In exalting Chatsky, the government puts itself on the side of its citizens and raises itself in their eyes.

### 3.6.2 Decembrist Chatsky

However, this romanticizing has been a recent phenomenon: when first published, numerous critics found fault with what they considered a flat representation of Chatsky's character. In a surprising turnaround from his exultations of the play in 1834, Russian writer Belinsky harshly critiques *Woe from Wit* six years later. He believes that Griboedov intended to make Chatsky a profound man standing up against society, while Belinsky considers him presented as a comic figure. Other contemporary critics echo this view of Chatsky as the one comic aspect of the otherwise satirical play. This comedy comes from Chatsky's futile attempts to convince the other characters of his beliefs. Pushkin, in a letter to a friend in 1828, speaks about Chatsky as if he was a material individual who, "having spent some time with a very intelligent man (namely Griboedov), became infused with his thoughts, quips, and satirical remarks." All of his words are clever but wasted on his interlocutors. "A first indication of an intelligent man," Pushkin observes, "is knowing from the first glance who he is dealing with and not to throw pearls before swine" (or, in this case, Repetilovs).<sup>213</sup> This critique condemns Chatsky where Griboedov succeeded: even now, scholars do not know his political ideology, since he kept that from the public. At the same time, it equates this seemingly failed character with the author who birthed him. Medvedova remarks sadly, "what are Chatsky's political and philosophical tirades, if not youthful suppression of ideas that have not yet been fully thought

---

<sup>213</sup> ПУШКИН, "ПУШКИН О 'ГОРЕ ОТ УМА.'"

out, but hastily expressed to oneself and others?”<sup>214</sup> Rather than symbolizing a rational, forward-thinking philosophizer, Chatsky comes off as an irrational romantic – similar to how the Decembrists were thought of at the time. In particular, these critics were reacting in the immediate aftermath of the Decembrist Revolution; later scholars reflect much more favorably on the tragic character.

The modern consensus is that Chatsky was a rough representation of the Decembrist movement, futilely fighting against the old ways.<sup>215</sup> Goncharov was the first to present this narrative in his 1871 critique “Мильой Терзаний” (Zillions of Torments). He explains that Chatsky’s precise embodiment of the Decembrist movement caused this aforementioned controversy surrounding Chatsky. This embodiment, he argues, goes so far as to dip into the abstract; Griboedov employing such artistry in the painting of this character as representative of all of Griboedov’s exiled and executed friends.<sup>216</sup> Neither Eugene Onegin, nor Lermontov’s protagonist of “The Hero of Our Times,” Pechorin, or any other “франты” (fops; dandies) could match the skill with which Griboedov put together the characters – in particular, Chatsky. Since he possibly could not have foreseen how the Rebellion ended, scholars disagree on whether or not he regretted painting such a picture of Chatsky. Masha explains that this character criticized the ruling powers in the 1830s, presenting arguments about reforms and changing of power echoed by the real Decembrists a year later during their Rebellion. Interviewee Aleksandr goes a step further, arguing that when Griboedov passed around his manuscript to his literary circle (comprised mostly of Decembrists), “he said it was made for Decembrists.” While scholars generally agree that Griboedov was not himself a Decembrist, most of his friends were. Sofia

---

<sup>214</sup> Медведева, *Творчество Грибоедова // Грибоедов А. С. Сочинения в Стихах / Вступ. Ст., Подгот. Текста и Примеч. И. Н. Медведевой.*

<sup>215</sup> Медведева.

<sup>216</sup> Гончаров, “Мильон Терзаний.”

suggests during our interview that Griboedov didn't have the character to want to "overthrow everything." This might be why he merely had minor associations with the movement, and potentially contributed to its goals on a minor scale, as pointed out by Masha. For the most part, however, Sofia believes that he "reflected the life of the person society thought he was." This fulfilment of expectation probably drew significantly from his mother's pressure on him to support the family with government work. After the Decembrist Rebellion, she adds, he was arrested with the Decembrists but escaped getting executed, so it logically followed that he could not have been a Decembrist. Masha, after presenting strong cases for Griboedov serving a whole variety of roles within and separate from the Decembrist movement, ends on a confused, lukewarm comment, making a note to look more into his friendship ties.

Whether stunted or magnificent, Griboedov's representation of this elitist, fringe political faction might reflect more on the reader than the author on how they consider this movement. Sofia shares this previous thought with me when I ask her if there was political nuance in the use of Griboedov's words. She believes that the expressions coming from the play have many applications, some of which are politically tinged and others not. Both Mila and Aleksandr consider winged expressions too common to be political, and Mila argues that Griboedov did not intend the expressions to possess a kind of political meaning. While politicians do, in fact, use the expressions, Aleksandr insists that he has "never heard it being used in any political speech or political protest." In fact, these phrases factored into Lenin's speeches and United Nations speeches by Soviet delegates, creating a nearly impossible job for their translators.<sup>217</sup> After I pointed out his error, he reflected that his obliviousness must be due to their being too common for people to notice.

---

<sup>217</sup> Karlinsky, *Russian Drama from Its Beginnings to the Age of Pushkin*.

As a nod to Griboedov, or perhaps to the Decembrist Chatsky represented, Dostoevsky integrated the Chatsky character type into his 1871 book *Demons*, and Tolstoy in his 1895 novel *Resurrection*. Chatsky-inspired characters are also found in Chekhov's writing, as well as in the works of Ivan Bunin and in the Russian Symbolists.<sup>218</sup> Unaware that their witty epigrams follow such a marked history, individuals quote daily his Decembrist arguments, softened by the passage of time. After the interviews, most of the interviewees expressed to me their desire to reread the play and reconnect with the original language that remains so present in each of their daily lives. As Goncharov remarked in his famous critique, in encompassing the Russian mind and language in a beautiful union of prose and verse, Griboedov's words easily left the theater and brought these pithy reflections on life back into where they came from: the Russian consciousness. Griboedov gifted his present and future Russian countrymen with a more exacting way to communicate feelings they possessed all along.<sup>219</sup>

---

<sup>218</sup> Медведева, *Творчество Грибоедова // Грибоедов А. С. Сочинения в Стихах / Вступ. Ст., Подгот. Текста и Примеч. И. Н. Медведевой.*

<sup>219</sup> Гончаров, "Мильон Терзаний," Викитека, accessed February 19, 2020, [https://ru.wikisource.org/wiki/%D0%9C%D0%B8%D0%BB%D1%8C%D0%BE%D0%BD\\_%D1%82%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%B7%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%B9\\_\(%D0%93%D0%BE%D0%BD%D1%87%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%B2\).](https://ru.wikisource.org/wiki/%D0%9C%D0%B8%D0%BB%D1%8C%D0%BE%D0%BD_%D1%82%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%B7%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%B9_(%D0%93%D0%BE%D0%BD%D1%87%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%B2).)



# Concluding Remarks

The introduction of this study focused on the conceptual literary discussion about the definition of the term “winged expression.” The definition, since its inception in late 19<sup>th</sup> century Germany, has gone through a series of permutations resulting in the literary consensus of:

- 1) connection with the source (author; literary, mythological, folklore or historical character; a work of art or literature; a historical event, etc.);
- 2) composition of multiple, connected words;
- 3) reproducibility (they are not created in the process of communication, but are reproduced as ready-made integral units); and
- 4) stability of the component and semantics.

The interviewees’ composite definition of this term slightly differed, considering it,

A culturally-tied, pithy phrase with a well-known, typically text-based source, repeated in its fixed format enough that language learners pick it up and employ it without necessarily knowing its source or being aware of their use of it.

These two definitions, while similar, diverge in significant ways. First of all, they differ in the strength of the connection to the source material: while scholars describe winged words as inherently transmitting the memory of their creators and works (or historical events) they originally belonged to which they originally belonged, the interviews presented a different story. Often, the individuals expressed confusion about the source material, either not knowing it or mixing it up with another. This observation disproved the idea that winged expressions were significantly defined by the context from whence they came. The instability of the winged words’ components and semantics also appeared in the interviews, in which interviewees acknowledged that the same winged expressions were applicable in different forms, meanings, and situations. Juxtaposing a phrase defined in both the Soviet and Russian dictionaries also revealed the shifting meanings of these expressions, even as scholars insist on the basic continuity of semantics.

Often, scholarly circles find themselves caught in an echo chamber of sorts, discussing topics on such an elevated level that they lose touch with the individuals interacting daily with these complicated processes. The interviews gave me the ability to go straight to the source and sample a selection of individuals about their individual experiences of winged expressions. I found an incredible diversity of thought among the interviewees, especially between those who grew up in the Soviet Union and those growing up in the Russian Federation. Scholarly articles about winged expressions tend to emphasize their continuity, while this study aimed to contextualize shifting historical processes as transforming the culturo-linguistic landscape. How could an expression as manifestly religious as “блажен, кто верят, тепло ему на свете” (Blessed is he who believes; this gives him warmth in the world) have the same signification in the explicitly nonreligious Soviet Union as it does in contemporary, non-secular Russia?

At times, the research available was lacking. Scholars rarely explore the contemporary use of winged expressions. Competition over funding in Eastern Europe leaves potential diachronic analysis and historical linguistics edged out by other research deemed more “noteworthy.”<sup>220</sup> While this research revealed the changing linguistic landscape in Russia and other post-Soviet Republics through these case studies, this body of research is lacking a comprehensive study of the generational difference in known winged expressions revealed by my interviews. A study involving a greater number of individuals would open the possibility of quantitatively answering a multitude of questions impossible with such limited case studies as this one. Does the younger generation know fewer expressions overall? Does it know different ones from the other generation? Are there themes or nuances appearing in the expressions known

---

<sup>220</sup> Cindy Brantmeier, Discussion with Cindy Brantmeier, Informal conversation, February 2, 2020.

by each generation? How significantly has the conception and usage of winged expressions changed due to different governments presenting distinctive narratives to their citizens?

In reading Russian texts heralded as cultural landmarks, the undefinable Russian soul becomes more accessible. After all, just as Russian students learn Russia's cultural history and language by consuming these classic texts, students of Russian language and culture can follow the same path. Russian speakers find pride in their language's intricacies and untranslatability, towards which winged expressions play a major part. They derive cultural pride in a major part from their rich literary tradition, and the use of winged expressions in their daily speech allows them to keep the tradition alive and tied to their daily lives. Their current cultural experience is intrinsically tied to their oral transmission of this text and others, deepening their ability to communicate to one another while commemorating the life project of the tragic historical figure of Griboedov. Sometimes a winged expression expresses our thoughts better than we can ourselves. So, to quote *Woe from Wit*, one thing is for sure: “словечка в простоте не скажут” (they will not say a single word in simplicity).<sup>221</sup>

---

<sup>221</sup> The meaning, according to *Большой Словарь Крылатых Слов*, Берков et al., is “о жеманстве; о болтливости, излишней велеречивости” (speaking about affectation, loquacity, excessive bombast). An extended form of the expression is “словечка в простоте не скажут (всё с ужимкой),” the addition being “everything with a grimace)

# Bibliography

- Aleksandr. Case study participant (Pseudonym Aleksandr). Interview by Daria Locher. Whatsapp Video, February 4, 2020.
- Anderson, Roger B. "Karamzin's Concept of Linguistic 'Cosmopolitanism' in Russian Literature." *The South Central Bulletin* 31, no. 4 (1971): 168–70. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3188983>.
- Andrianova, Dania. "The Changes in the Lexicographic Principles of Representation of Phraseological Units and Stable Word Combinations in the Dictionary of the Modern Russian Literary Language and in the Large Academic Dictionary of the Russian Language." *Voprosy Leksikografii-Russian Journal of Lexicography* 15 (June 2019): 71–82. <https://doi.org/10.17223/22274200/15/5>.
- artemiofs. "ФГОСы - Федеральные государственные образовательные стандарты." *ФГОС* (blog). Accessed September 3, 2019. <https://fgos.ru/>.
- Athanasopoulos, Panos, Alison Wigggett, Benjamin Dering, Jan-Rouke Kuipers, and Guillaume Thierry. "The Whorfian Mind." *Communicative & Integrative Biology* 2, no. 4 (July 1, 2009): 332–34. <https://doi.org/10.4161/cib.2.4.8400>.
- Barran, Thomas. "The French Revolution and Russian Reactions to Rousseau's 'Premier Discours.'" *Revue Des Études Slaves* 61, no. 1/2 (1989): 81–85.
- Belknap, Robert. "The Russian Literary Scene: 1860s and 1980s: Address to the Annual Meeting of the Columbia University Seminars April 12, 1989." *Ulbandus Review* 9 (2005): 19–29.
- Boroditsky, Lera. "How Language Shapes Thought." *Scientific American*. Accessed October 28, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.1038/scientificamerican0211-62>.
- Brantmeier, Cindy. Discussion with Cindy Brantmeier. Informal conversation, February 2, 2020.
- Breschinsky, Dimitri N., and Zinaida A. Breschinsky. "On Tynjanov the Writer and His Use of Cinematic Technique in The Death of the Wazir Mukhtar." *The Slavic and East European Journal* 29, no. 1 (1985): 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.2307/307921>.
- Brintlinger, Angela. "The Persian Frontier: Griboedov as Orientalist and Literary Hero." *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne Des Slavistes* 45, no. 3/4 (2003): 371–93.
- Conway, Lucian, and Mark Schaller. "How Communication Shapes Culture," n.d., 21.
- Crystal, David. *Think on My Words: Exploring Shakespeare's Language*. Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Davydov, Sergei, and David M. Bethea. "Pushkin's Biography." In *The Superstitious Muse*, 205–26. Thinking Russian Literature Mythopoetically. Academic Studies Press, 2009. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1zxsj7q.12>.
- Dostoevsky, Fyodor. *The Idiot*. Translated by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. Vintage Classics, 2003.
- Felitsina, V.P., and O.O.E. Prokhorov. *Russkie Poslovice, Pogovorki i Krylatye Vyraženija: Lingvostranovedčeskij Slovar' Lingvostranovedčeskij Slovar'*. Russkij jazyk, 1979.
- Figes, Orlando. *Natasha's Dance*. Picador, 2004.

- “Gestalt | Gestalt, n.” In *OED Online*. Oxford University Press. Accessed January 23, 2020. <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/77951>.
- Gippius, Vasilii Vasil'evich. *Gogol*. Duke University Press, 1989.
- Golovanova, Elena. “Cognitive Aspects of Phraseological Nomination in the Sphere of Special Knowledge.” In *Terminology Science in Russia Today: From the Past to the Future*, 141–50. Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2014.
- Gooding, John. “The Decembrists in the Soviet Union.” *Soviet Studies* 40, no. 2 (1988): 196–209.
- Kalbouss, George. “Rhyming Patterns in Griboedov’s Gore Ot Uma.” *The Slavic and East European Journal* 39, no. 1 (1995): 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.2307/308688>.
- Karlinsky, Simon. *Russian Drama from Its Beginnings to the Age of Pushkin*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986.
- Khitrova, Daria. *Lyric Complicity: Poetry and Readers in the Golden Age of Russian Literature*. University of Wisconsin Press, 2019.
- Khrebtova, Tatiana S., and Nataliya Khatina. “Phraseoderivatology: phraseosemantics in the context of derivational morphology (based on G.D. Grebenshikov’s American texts).” *Filologicheskie Nauki-Nauchnye Doklady Vysshei Shkoly-Philological Sciences-Scientific Essays of Higher Education*, no. 4 (July 2019): 25–32. <https://doi.org/10.20339/PhS.4-19.025>.
- Kneip, James Robert. “A.S. Griboedov: His Life and Work as a Russian Diplomat, 1817-1829.” Dissertation. Columbus, Ohio, 1976. [https://etd.ohiolink.edu/!etd.send\\_file?accession=osu148700497175106&disposition=inline](https://etd.ohiolink.edu/!etd.send_file?accession=osu148700497175106&disposition=inline).
- Komaromi, Ann. “The Material Existence of Soviet Samizdat.” *Slavic Review* 63, no. 3 (2004): 597–618. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1520346>.
- Kultysheva, O. “Ways of Manipulating Public Consciousness with Modern Media: An Analysis of the Russian Regional Publications.” *Медиаобразование*, no. 4 (2019). <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/ways-of-manipulating-public-consciousness-with-modern-media-an-analysis-of-the-russian-regional-publications>.
- Liebich, André. “‘Maîtres à l’épée, Maîtres à Danser, Maîtres à Penser’: Founding French National Consciousness in Russian Exile.” *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne Des Slavistes* 49, no. 1/2 (2007): 27–47.
- Little, Edmund. “Vyazemsky, Griboyedov and ‘Gore Ot Uma (Woe from Wit)’: A Question of Heresy.” *New Zealand Slavonic Journal*, 1984, 15–31.
- Lotman, Yuri M. “The Poetics of Everyday Behavior in Eighteenth-Century Russian Culture.” Edited by Ann Shukman. *The Semiotics of Russian Culture*, 1984. <https://www.amherst.edu/system/files/media/1445/Semiotics%252520of%252520Russian%252520Cultural%252520History.pdf>.
- Maguire, Robert A. *Exploring Gogol*. Stanford University Press, 1996.
- Malykhina, Svitlana. *Renaissance of Classical Allusions in Contemporary Russian Media*. Lexington Books, 2014.
- Masha. Case study participant (Pseudonym Masha). Interview by Daria Locher. Facebook Video, January 18, 2020.

- Melville, Firuza. "Alexander Sergeevich Griboedov: Russian Imperial James Bond Malgré Lui. In Memory of the 225th Anniversary of His Birth." In *Russians in Iran: Diplomacy and Power in the Qajar Era and Beyond*, edited by Rudi Matthee and Elena Andreeva. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018.
- Metelitsa. "В Каким Классе Изучают Горе От Ума Грибоедова?" Accessed September 3, 2019. <http://www.bolshoyvopros.ru/questions/1769488-v-kakom-klasse-izuchajut-gore-ot-uma-griboedova.html>.
- Mila. Case study participant (Pseudonym Mila). Interview by Daria Locher. Whatsapp Video, January 14, 2020.
- Mirsky, D. S. "Centenary of the Death of Griboyedov (1829--January--1929)." *The Slavonic and East European Review* 8, no. 22 (1929): 140–43.
- Natala. Case study participant (Pseudonym Natala). Interview by Daria Locher. Skype Video, January 30, 2020.
- Obatnin, G. "The Discourse of Archaic in Russian Culture." Accessed March 5, 2020. [http://www.helsinki.fi/venaja/e-materiaali/mosaiikki/en1/go1\\_en.htm](http://www.helsinki.fi/venaja/e-materiaali/mosaiikki/en1/go1_en.htm).
- Pushkin, Aleksandr. "My Remarks on the Russian Theater." In *Russian Dramatic Theory from Pushkin to the Symbolists: An Anthology*, by Laurence P. Senelick. University of Texas Press, 2014.
- Pushkin, Aleksandr Sergeevich, and John Bayley. *Pushkin on Literature*. Northwestern University Press, 1986.
- Raeff, Marc. "At the Origins of a Russian National Consciousness: Eighteenth Century Roots and Napoleonic Wars." *The History Teacher* 25, no. 1 (1991): 7–18. <https://doi.org/10.2307/494605>.
- Reyfman, Irina. *Vasilii Trediakovsky: The Fool of the "New" Russian Literature*. Stanford University Press, 1990.
- Rhodes, Neil. *Shakespeare and the Origins of English*. OUP Oxford, 2004.
- Roosevelt, Priscilla R. "Emerald Thrones and Living Statues: Theater and Theatricality on the Russian Estate." *The Russian Review* 50, no. 1 (1991): 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.2307/130207>.
- "Rusmus: Кино - Красно-Желтые Дни / Krasno-Zheltye Dni / Red and Yellow Days Lyrics and Translations." Accessed September 3, 2019. <http://rusmus.net/song/7267>.
- Safran, Gabriella. "The Troubled Frame Narrative: Bad Listening in Late Imperial Russia." *The Russian Review* 72, no. 4 (2013): 556–72.
- Encyclopedia Britannica. "Samizdat | Soviet Literature." Accessed January 23, 2020. <https://www.britannica.com/technology/samizdat>.
- Sergeevna, Irina. *Большой Фразеологический Словарь Русского Языка*. АСТ-ПИРЕСС, 2006.
- Shlapentokh, Dmitry. "The French Revolution in Russian Political Life: The Case of Interaction between History and Politics." *Revue Des Études Slaves* 61, no. 1/2 (1989): 131–42.
- Sofia. Case study participant (Pseudonym Sofia). Interview by Daria Locher. Whatsapp Video, February 4, 2020.
- Striedter, Jurij. "Poetic Genre and the Sense of History in Pushkin." *New Literary History* 8, no. 2 (1977): 295–309. <https://doi.org/10.2307/468523>.

- Tchoudinov, Alexandre. "The Evolution of the Russian Discourse on the French Revolution, in The Routledge Companion to the French Revolution in World History, London, Routledge, 2016, p. 277-298." Accessed March 4, 2020. [https://www.academia.edu/20390773/The\\_Evolution\\_of\\_the\\_Russian\\_Discourse\\_on\\_the\\_French\\_Revolution\\_in\\_The\\_Routledge\\_Companion\\_to\\_the\\_French\\_Revolution\\_in\\_World\\_History\\_London\\_Routledge\\_2016\\_p.\\_277-298](https://www.academia.edu/20390773/The_Evolution_of_the_Russian_Discourse_on_the_French_Revolution_in_The_Routledge_Companion_to_the_French_Revolution_in_World_History_London_Routledge_2016_p._277-298).
- Tchoudinov, Alexandre V. "Le Culte Russe de La Révolution Française." *Cahiers Du Monde Russe* 48, no. 2/3 (2007): 485–98.
- Thurston, Gary. *The Popular Theatre Movement in Russia, 1862-1919*. Northwestern University Press, 1998.
- Tolstoy, Leo. "A Few Words on War and Peace." In *War and Peace*. The Russian Archive, 1868.
- Tosi, Alessandra. *Waiting for Pushkin: Russian Fiction in the Reign of Alexander I (1801-1825)*. Rodopi, 2006.
- Walker, Joshua S. "Incomprehensible from Without: Folk Authenticity and the Foreign Perspective in Gogol's, Turgenev's, and Tolstoy's Russian Songs." *Urbans Review* 16 (2014): 114–33.
- Zhivov, Victor. "The New Cultural Differentiation: Linguistic Purity as an Ideological Category." In *Language and Culture in Eighteenth Century Russia*, 346–429. Academic Studies Press, 2009. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1zxsjs0.9>.
- Zykova, Irina. "The Russian Soul and the Origins of Idioms." Accessed September 3, 2019. <http://www.xn--h1ahlcm.xn--p1ai/en/publications/188295/>.
- Анатольевна, Крюкова Марина. "Наша Территория: Учим Наизусть Грибоедова." *Наша Территория* (blog), 2010. [http://yaplusti.blogspot.com/2010/10/blog-post\\_13.html](http://yaplusti.blogspot.com/2010/10/blog-post_13.html).
- Аникин, В. П. "Грибоедовские Крылатые Слова в Сопоставлении с Фольклором." *Студия Полонославика: К 90-Летий Со Дня Роздения Профессора Е.З. Цбенко* 1 (2014): 243–49.
- Берков, Валерий Павлович, Валерий Михайлович Мокиенко, and Светлана Григорьевна Шулежкова. *Большой Словарь Крылатых Слов Русского Языка*. Greifswald: Ernst-Moritz-Arndt-Universität, 2008.
- "Биография Грибоедова Александра Сергеевича." Accessed March 25, 2020. <http://www.griboedov.net/bio.shtml>.
- Винокур, Г.О. "'Горе От Ума' Как Памятник Русской Художественной Речи." In *Избранные Работы По Русскому Языку*, 257–300. Moscow: Учпедгиз, 1959. <http://feb-web.ru/feb/griboed/critics/vin.htm?cmd=p>.
- Гончаров. "Мильон Терзаний." Википедия. Accessed February 19, 2020. [https://ru.wikisource.org/wiki/%D0%9C%D0%B8%D0%BB%D1%8C%D0%BE%D0%BD%D1%82%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%B7%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%B9\\_\(%D0%93%D0%BE%D0%BD%D1%87%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%B2\)](https://ru.wikisource.org/wiki/%D0%9C%D0%B8%D0%BB%D1%8C%D0%BE%D0%BD%D1%82%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%B7%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%B9_(%D0%93%D0%BE%D0%BD%D1%87%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%B2)).
- Гончаров, И. А. "Мильон Терзаний." Accessed March 2, 2020. <https://ilibry.ru/text/1075/p.1/index.html>.



“Горе от ума.” In *Википедия*, July 5, 2019.

[https://ru.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=%D0%93%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%B5\\_%D0%BE%D1%82\\_%D1%83%D0%BC%D0%B0&oldid=100843159](https://ru.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=%D0%93%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%B5_%D0%BE%D1%82_%D1%83%D0%BC%D0%B0&oldid=100843159).

Грибоедов, Александр Сергеевич. *Горе от ума : комедия в четырех действиях*. Edited by Anita Belotserkovskaya. Translated by Bernard Pares. Monpelier, VT: Russian Life Books, 2017.

Грибоедов, А.С. “Загородная Поездка.” Accessed March 8, 2020.

<http://www.griboedov.net/proizvedeniya/zagorodnaya-poezdka.shtml>.

———. “Лубочный Театр.” Accessed March 6, 2020. [http://feb-](http://feb-web.ru/feb/griboed/texts/orlov/st59_02.htm?cmd=p)

[web.ru/feb/griboed/texts/orlov/st59\\_02.htm?cmd=p](http://feb-web.ru/feb/griboed/texts/orlov/st59_02.htm?cmd=p).

———. “Лубочный Театр.” Griboedov.net. Accessed March 6, 2020.

<http://www.griboedov.net/stihi/lubochniy.shtml>.

———. “Письмо А.С.Грибоедова П.А.Вяземскому о Пьесе ‘Горе От Ума.’” Accessed February 18, 2020. <http://literatura5.narod.ru/griboedov4.html>.

———. “Письмо Бегичеву С. Н., 30 Августа 1818.” Accessed March 16, 2020.

<http://www.griboedov.net/pisma/008.shtml>.

Джелалова, Л.А. “Пословица Как Объект Обиходно-Ориентированного Общения (На Материале Русских Пословиц).” *Известия Высшиз Учебных Заведений. Поволжский Регион* 44, no. 4 (2017). <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/v/poslovitsa-kak-obekt-obihodno-orientirovannogo-obscheniya-na-materiale-russkih-poslovits>.

“Евангельские Заповеди Блаженства / Православие.Ru.” Accessed March 2, 2020.

<http://www.pravoslavie.ru/104825.html>.

Займовский, Семён. *Крылатое Слово. Справочник Цитаты и Афоризма*. Гос. изд-во, 1930. <http://books.e-heritage.ru/book/10085675>.

“ИМЯ РОССИЯ.” Accessed February 18, 2020. <http://top500.nameofrussia.ru/vote.html>.

GQ Россия. “Кирилл Серебренников поставил оперу по «Горю от ума».” Accessed February 29, 2020. <https://www.gq.ru/entertainment/kirill-serebrennikov-postavil-operu-po-goryu-ot-uma>.

Кравченко, Татьяна. *Фонвизин Д. И. Грибоедов А. С. Пьесы*. ОЛМА Медиа Групп, n.d.

“Кричали женщины: ура! И в воздух чепчики бросали.” In *Википедия*, October 4, 2018.

[https://ru.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=%D0%9A%D1%80%D0%B8%D1%87%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%B8\\_%D0%B6%D0%B5%D0%BD%D1%89%D0%B8%D0%BD%D1%8B:\\_%D1%83%D1%80%D0%B0!\\_%D0%98\\_%D0%B2\\_%D0%B2%D0%BE%D0%B7%D0%B4%D1%83%D1%85\\_%D1%87%D0%B5%D0%BF%D1%87%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%B8\\_%D0%B1%D1%80%D0%BE%D1%81%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%B8&oldid=95418122](https://ru.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=%D0%9A%D1%80%D0%B8%D1%87%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%B8_%D0%B6%D0%B5%D0%BD%D1%89%D0%B8%D0%BD%D1%8B:_%D1%83%D1%80%D0%B0!_%D0%98_%D0%B2_%D0%B2%D0%BE%D0%B7%D0%B4%D1%83%D1%85_%D1%87%D0%B5%D0%BF%D1%87%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%B8_%D0%B1%D1%80%D0%BE%D1%81%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%B8&oldid=95418122)

Лейбин, Виталий, and Наталья Кузнецова. “Слова Не Выкинешь.” Accessed September 3, 2019. <http://rusrep.ru/article/2015/06/26/slova-ne-vykinesh>.

Медведева, Ирина Н. *Творчество Грибоедова // Грибоедов А. С. Сочинения в Стихах / Вступ. Ст., Подгот. Текста и Примеч. И. Н. Медведевой*. Современный писатель. Ленинградское отделение, 1967. <http://feb-web.ru/feb/griboed/texts/svs/svs-005-.htm>.

Нечкина, А. С. *Грибоедов и Декабристы*. Moscow: Изд-во Академии наук СССР, 1951.



- Пиянзина, Е.П. “ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЕ КРЫЛАТЫХ СЛОВ И ВЫРАЖЕНИЙ В РЕЧИ СТУДЕНТОВ.” *Научный потенциал XXI Века (Scientific Potential of the XXI Century)*, June 8, 2017, 124–31.
- Платов, Артем, and Денис Дмитриев. “Министр просвещения сказала, что четверть россиян не владеют функциональным чтением. А как понять, я владею или нет?” *Meduza*. Accessed September 3, 2019. <https://meduza.io/cards/ministr-obrazovaniya-skazala-chto-chetvert-rossiyan-ne-vladeyut-funktsionalnym-chteniem-chem-chem-a-kak-ponyat-ya-vladeyu-ili-net>.
- Пушкин, Александр Сергеевич. “Пушкин о ‘Горе От Ума.’” Accessed March 6, 2020. <http://sobolev.franklang.ru/index.php/pushkin-i-ego-vremya/139-pushkin-o-gore-ot-uma>.
- Пушкин, А.С. “Путешествие в Арзрум.” Accessed March 2, 2020. <https://rvb.ru/pushkin/01text/06prose/01prose/0870.htm>.
- Рудницкий, К. Л. “Режиссер Мейерхольд.” Accessed February 18, 2020. [http://teatrlib.ru/Library/Rudnitsky/dir\\_meye/](http://teatrlib.ru/Library/Rudnitsky/dir_meye/).
- Сорокина, Эльвира. “Консубстанциональность Как Языковое Звление.” In *Terminology Science in Russia Today: From the Past to the Future*, edited by Larissa A. Manerko, Klaus-Dieter Baumann, and Hartwig Kalverkämper. Frank & Timme, 2014.
- “Список Литературы Для Чтения Летом (5-11 Классы) | ГБОУ Средняя Общеобразовательная Школа №252 Красносельского Района г. Санкт-Петербурга.” Accessed September 3, 2019. <http://school252.ru/uchebniy-plan/spisok-literaturi-dlya-chteniya-letom-5-11-klassi.html>.
- Словари и энциклопедии на Академике. “Там хорошо, где нас нет. - это... Что такое Там хорошо, где нас нет.?” Accessed February 29, 2020. [https://dic.academic.ru/dic.nsf/dahl\\_proverbs/8412/%D0%A2%D0%B0%D0%BC](https://dic.academic.ru/dic.nsf/dahl_proverbs/8412/%D0%A2%D0%B0%D0%BC).
- Словари и энциклопедии на Академике. “Там хорошо, где нас нет - это... Что такое Там хорошо, где нас нет.?” Accessed February 29, 2020. [https://dic.academic.ru/dic.nsf/michelson\\_old/9281/%D0%A2%D0%B0%D0%BC](https://dic.academic.ru/dic.nsf/michelson_old/9281/%D0%A2%D0%B0%D0%BC).
- Фелицына, В.П., and Ю.Е. Прохоров. *Русские Пословицы, Поговорки, и Крылатых Выражения: Лингвострановедческий Словарь*. Edited by Е.М. Верещагина and В.Г. Костомарова. Москва Издательство “Русский Язык,” 1979.
- Фефилова, Галина. *Литература. 9 класс. Планы-конспекты для 105 уроков. Учебно-методическое пособие*. Litres, 2019.
- Филиппов, В.М. “Об Утверждении Федерального Компонента Государственных Образовательных Стандартов Начального Общего, Основного Общего и Среднего (Полного) Общего Образования (Не Нуждается в Госрегистрации) (с Изменениями На 7 Июня 2017 Года), Приказ Минобрнауки России От 05 Марта 2004 Года №1089.” Accessed September 3, 2019. <http://docs.cntd.ru/document/901895865>.
- Хилинг, Тета. “Крылатые Выражения Из ‘Горе От Ума’ Грибоедова.” Accessed September 3, 2019. <http://burido.ru/343-frazeologizmy-a-s-griboedova>.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Winged expressions mentioned in interviews

- “А впрочем, он дойдет до степеней известных, ведь нынче любят бессловесных.” (Interview with Natala)
- “А суди кто?” (Interview with Aleksandr, interview with Natala, interview with Masha)
- “Ах, боже мой, что станет говорить Княгиня Мария Алексеевна?” (Interview with Mila)
- “ба! Знакомые всё лица!” (Interview with Sofia)
- “Блажен, кто верует, (тепло ему на свете!)” (Interview with Aleksandr)
- “Ври, да знай же меру; / есть он чего в отчаянье придти” (Interview with Mila)
- “Господствует ещё смешенье языков: французского с Нижегородском” (Interview with Sofia)
- “И говорит, как пишет.” (Interview with Natala)
- “И дым Отечества нам сладок и приятен” (Interview with Sofia)
- “Из огня да в полымя” (Interview with Natala)
- “Каретку, мне каретку” (Interview with Sofia)
- “Кричали женины: “ура!” и во воздух чепчики бросали!” (Interview with Aleksandr, interview with Sofia)
- “К тетке, в глушь, в Саратов.” (Interview with Natala, interview with Masha)
- “Лучше нам, где нас нет” (Interview with Mila) or “Там хорошо, где нас нет” (Interview with Sofia)
- “Минуй нас пуще всех печалей И барский гнев, и барская любовь.” (Interview with Sofia)
- “Нельзя в прогулок подальше выбрать закоулков.” (Interview with Aleksandr, interview with Natala)
- “Не моего романа.” (Interview with Aleksandr, interview with Masha, interview with Mila)
- “Рассудки вопреки, наперекор стихиям.” (Interview with Masha)
- “Служит бы рад прислуживать со тошно.” (Interview with Masha)
- “Счастливые часов не наблюдают” (Interview with Masha, interview with Mila)
- “Умеренность и аккуратность.” (Interview with Aleksandr, interview with Natala, interview with Masha)
- “Учились бы на старших глядя.” (Interview with Aleksandr)
- “Французик из Бордо” (Interview with Natala, interview with Masha)
- “Чины людьми даются, а люди могут обмануться” (Interview with Sofia)
- “Шел в комнату, попал в другую” (Interview with Sofia)

# Appendix 2: Interview Transcripts

## 2.1 Mila's interview

### 2.1.1 Original Russian

DARIA. Мой диплом это про крылатые слова...

MILA. Ах, крылатые слова.

DARIA. Да, и поэтому у меня есть вопросы про образование и крылатые слова. Ну, давай?

MILA. Давай, что хочешь.

DARIA. Сколько тебя лет?

MILA. 20 лет.

DARIA. Где ты родилась?

MILA. Я родилась в Москве.

DARIA. Ну, скажешь мне про твоё среднее учение. Был что-нибудь фокус на чтение в твоём воспитании? Например, мой папа, он меня читал Harry Potter.

MILA. Ах, в детстве. В детстве или вообще сейчас тоже?

DARIA. Сейчас тоже, почему нет?

MILA. Ну, именно с родителей что делают или то, что делала я?

DARIA. Оба!

MILA. Ну, я всегда с родителей пересевом «спокойно ночи» а им меня нет. Я всегда Муляжей на что мама всегда готовит мне завтрак, то есть абсолютно всегда готовит завтрак, папа готовит ужин. Вот, воспитание... мы все любим пересматривать с семей старые советские фильмы. Что по телевизору или что-то по [muffled]. вот это мой соредий [muffled]. Вот, что еще? Мама и папа у меня очень часто любят погулять по Набереж на дому от дома, и мы с мамой любим смотреть какие-то шоу [muffled]

DARIA. Хорошо. Ты читаешь для удовольствия?

MILA. Да, часто.

DARIA. Какие книги?

MILA. Я прочитала почти все книги [incomprehensible]. Я читала на психологии, на русский [incomprehensible] музык, красная таблетка, и так далее. То есть, история пушкинизма, и вторые часта книги сейчас я читаю – искусство молодёва человека о наукой жизнь. Это старый русский писатель, что-то все биографии и пол учтенная о жизни. Вот такие чего я читаю.

DARIA. Вау.

MILA. Да, я не люблю русскую литературу классику. Я не читаю [incomprehensible].

DARIA. Да это главная... типа новые авторы, но... и ты слышишь радио в свободное время или нет?

MILA. Радио? Нет. Радио – мы только слышим только когда в машине... мы слышим Айтиём.

DARIA. Да.

MILA. Вот каченая...

DARIA. Но не радиожурналистики и новости – все это нет?

MILA. Новости, мы смотрим по телевизору.

DARIA. Хорошо. И последний это, ты читаешь журналы, газеты?

MILA. Я не могу почитать журналы, конечно, есть что-нибудь там нет. Я учили редко читать журнал, очень редко, практически никогда.

DARIA. Но сейчас я очень часто слышу подкасты. Это новости, это про всего. Я это люблю. Для меня, я редко слышу радио и газеты читаю.

MILA. Да, тоже самое.

DARIA. По твоему мнению, что это такое, «крылатые слова?»

MILA. Я просто могу путать. [she looks online] Коротким, это закрепили с нашим русским языке, это наши сказок потому, что за тридевять земель, то есть очень далеко, то есть это обшарить по жалость наши успешные сказки. Крылатые выражения, это придилиогизм. У нас в русском языке очень много. В какие-то стипере мне кажется крылатые выражения. Знаешь, они за павлина, их за [muffled] таблетки диалог чтобы вора об разницы. Мне кажется, что они полезны и понятны всем.

DARIA. Я знаю, что в русском языке есть больше крылатые слова чем в других языках. Ты знаешь почему есть больше?

MILA. Мне кажется, что [muffled], то есть все слова только за рештаки. У нас же есть шутки, есть клубе, принриях. Надо клубе все лучше простелите и может быть люди просто хотели какие-то слов [muffled] диалог забавили и я не так прижились до двадцатого века. Масс можно визнает возможно... но мне кажется, что да.

DARIA. У нас есть очень много из Шекспира, но он английский и у нас не много американских крылатых слова. Ну, у меня есть примеры крылатых слова.

MILA. Американских или русских?

DARIA. Русских! Ну, первый – это «где же лучше? / где нас нет.» Ты это знаешь?

MILA. «Лучше нам, где нас нет.»

DARIA. Потому, что я знаю, что крылатые выражения для этого, это чуть-чуть другие, чем в романе. Ты это знаешь, что это такое?

MILA. Это какие стиль сарказм. Это самая ирония шутка над самим собой. Вот так [muffled]

DARIA. Знаешь, откуда это выражение?

MILA. Ушами щиплет [sound muffled as she walks around] мне кажется. Ну, откуда?

DARIA. Это сюрприз, через минутку. Ну, ты помнишь, когда ты впервые услышала это выражений? Или нет, это просто речь?

MILA. Мне кажется, что я это слушала в каком-то фильме. В фильме, или в сказку. Нет, сказки бредили. Там сарказм в почти нет... нашем русским. Мне кажется, в фильме.

DARIA. Ты часто используете это выражение речи, или думаете, что оно устаревшее?

MILA. Оно не устаревшее, но то не использовать очень редко. Мало бывает ситуация, в которые бы это подошло.

DARIA. Втором, это – «есть от чего в отчаянье придти». Все в порядке, если ты не это знаешь.

MILA. ... есть от чего в отчаянье... придти в отчаянье... смысле... убием тут... тут слова «придти» они больше как «погрузить со в отчаянье». Ты заменить это слова, можно «погрузить» со словом «придти»... погрузить со в отчаянье. Ты лопасть такого нет.

DARIA. Да, это не так в романе. Может быть, это так в речи.

MILA. Погрузить в отчаянье, это как бы погружение в воду. Ты нароешь только нет, а в отчаянье. [muffled] ты спадаешь груз. Ты отчаянье, ты не как поет, ты чувствуешь себя плохо?? Как ваш.

DARIA. Думаешь, что есть длиннее вариант этого выражения. Потому что, здесь сказать, что есть вариант «ври, да знай же меру; / есть он чего в отчаянье придти.» И что, это все вместе одно выражение.

MILA. Какое, еще раз?

DARIA. Это «ври, да знай же меру; / есть он чего в отчаянье придти»

MILA. Ах! «ври, да знай же меру». Нет, мне кажется, что это чуть-чуть разное, потому что «погрузить в отчаянье,» это грустном, а «ври, да знай же меру», это оспорить. «Ври,» это обманывай, но не перегибай палку, это не стал трагедии. Вот, я бы сказала абсолютно разные крылатые выражения.

DARIA. Все в порядке, это то, что мне интересно! Ок, и знаешь откуда это выражение?

MILA. Нет.

DARIA. И помнишь, когда ты впервые услышала?

MILA. Первый раз услышала? Мне кажется еще в действии. Мне кажется, что тот все это в действии запоминает.

DARIA. Ты часто используешь это выражение речи, или думаешь, что оно устаревшее?

MILA. «Воде в отчаянье»: да, часто. Правда, очень часто он бывает. Это как мусор.

DARIA. Окай, ну последний, это: думаешь, что оно не очень используемое потому, что оно очень специфичное? Это: «Ах, боже мой, что станет говорить Княгиня Мария Алексеевна?»

DARIA. «Ах, боже мой»? Ну, «боже мой», это понятно. Вот это, знаешь, когда случает у тебя какая-то ситуация очень опасная, где ты можешь померить, тот ты сразу начинаешь со «ох Боги, по господи, все будет хорошо» и то, это точно позже.

MILA. Да, но это часть «что станет говорить Княгиня Мария Алексеевна», ты это знаешь? Я знаю, что это такое, «боже мой». Это не крылатые слова.

DARIA. Откуда это?

MILA. Нет конечно! Ты думаешь, что я помню?

DARIA. Это где, вот... [holding the physical book *Woe from Wit* in the video chat frame]

MILA. Горе от ума?

DARIA. Да, они все из этого. Сюрприз!

MILA. И бабушка моя, она знала, что они из этого?

DARIA. Ах... нет! Окай, по шкале от 1 до 5, где 1 абсолютно незнакомый и 5 полностью осведомлённый – как ты бы оценила твоё знание пьесы «Горе от Ума»? Ты это знаешь?

MILA. Но, честно, я «Горе от Ума» читала по школе программу. Задают это читать в школе. Вот это том мы делаем читать из этих книги. И я «Горе от Ума» с нами мне кажется на тройку.

DARIA. Да?

MILA. Ну, да. То есть, это не самая моя любимая книга.

DARIA. Хорошо. Ну, ты помнишь, как ваши учителя тебя учили об пьесе? Типа, «Ох, вот это роман. Мы вместе почитаем будет отлично,» или это типа «на два недели ты каждый день говоришь о песни?»

MILA. Смотри, нам задевали читать вот за два дня, задевали читать да пуст им сорок страниц. Мы прочитывали дома, приходили в класс, и случить их наследии. Мы разговаривали о том, что прочитали, и обсуждали что происходила в этой песне.

DARIA. Хорошо. Но это сколько времени? Может на месяц? Это много?

MILA. Ну, нет. Поменьше где-то. Примерная месяц. Я сейчас не вспомню, что в школе было. Мне кажется, что месяц был.

DARIA. И ты прочитала целую книгу, или сокращённый вариант?

MILA. Сокращённый.

DARIA. Да?

MILA. Конечно! Почти все я так делаю.

DARIA. Потому что я искала этот сокращённый вариант и не имела...

MILA. Щас, я их скину тебе по Whatsapp.

DARIA. Окай, где... да мой вариант, это из Москвы, я попросила Рейчел... у! [we disconnected]

MILA. Да, ты куда прод— [static]

DARIA. Не знаю.

MILA. Я еще раз ищу тебе. Не да сказ... поэтиксвья. Лагим, щас я скидаю по Whatsapp. Отправила. Но это прямо очень коротки читает это сказ. Но там все поесть пишут тут наёмной, что где как.

DARIA. Два минутки. Хорошо. У нас есть Sparknotes для английских книг, и это очень хорошо. И это как это, но лучше.

MILA. Но, конечно.

DARIA. Ты помнишь, какие-то стихи или монологи в школе запомнили из *Горе от Ума*? Потому что, я знаю, что это часто монологи запомнили.

MILA. Еще раз.

DARIA. Я знаю, что есть знакомые монологи из *Горя от Ума* и мой вопрос, это: ты помнишь, несколько монологи из романа или нет?

MILA. Нет. У нас такие романа было много. *Война и мир*, там *Горе от Ума*, *Онегин*. [incomprehensible] Ну просто там шиснешовать или реально запомнить какое-то часто помнишь аккурат се кто там был. Пару главных авторов и шлейный так делали. Но диалоги нет, конечно. Чего день читала ли пять назад.

DARIA. Хорошо. Окей, ты можешь ты можешь выкинуть из головы несколько примеров крылатых выражений из «Горе от Ума» сейчас? Потому что, я знаю, что есть очень известные примеры.

MILA. [begins to look it up online] щас...

DARIA. Нет! Нельзя в интернет. Может из головы!

MILA. Я просто не вспомню! Я просто не вспомню!

DARIA. Окай, ты знаешь...

MILA. Я знаю одно... «счастливые часов не наблюдают.»

DARIA. Да. Ты знаешь «не моего романа»?

MILA. Uh huh!

DARIA. Да, это из *Горя от Ума*!

MILA. Да. Вот это я точно знаю.

DARIA. Окай, у меня есть еще два вопроса. Один, это: что ты думаешь о Грибоедове? Кто он?

MILA. О нет? Есть что что там... как вся русская классика, полезна для прочтения, потому что, там очень много выше которые запоминают жизнь и тебя чему-то по-настоящему черт. То есть, классику прочитает над, не важность скучно или не скучно. Это [incomprehensible] крылатых выражения. Для меня вся русская классика немного скучна, потому что там один предмет писывать на две странице. Не интересно. Патолог «белая света» первая света записывая в две странице. Я люблю побольше психологии.

DARIA. Ну, хорошо. И последний вопрос, это: думаешь, что использование особых примеров крылатых слов можно рассматривать как политически? Есть политический нюанс в использовании крылатых слова?

MILA. Использование ли политики этого слова, или пыталось ли авторе какой-то политический смысл?

DARIA. Оба. Когда политики используют эти выражения или просто, когда ты используешь эти...

MILA. Использует эти слова...не всегда мне кажется. Честно, я... если в средение раз война, я тоже использую крылатые выражения. Ну, случайно. Вот, все используют – и политики, и Путин тоже использует. Ну, потому что это часть наше лов; это обычные слова для нас. И мы понимаем какое смысл за имея. А хотели ли авторы... автор хотел ли кимус какое-то политическое смысл... нет.

DARIA. Потому что, я знаю, что Грибоедов – он был политиком.

MILA. Нет, там выражения побольше часто об обычной жизни или нет ничего такого влаиваешь чего и какого-то компромисса. Это все жизнь.

DARIA. Хорошо. Я слушала, что есть дипломаты в Европе, они русские. И что, переводчики не могли переводить, чего они сказали, потому что это все крылатые слова и очень трудные выражения для перевода.

MILA. Мы им сложно поняты смысл это вот знаешь тот у нас имеется одного фаза – «да нет неверно». Вам у меня спрашивать «ты хочешь ушить (37:33) и я отвечаю «да нет неверно», то есть «да, нет, неверно.» но все это визнаете как слова «нет». «нет, но может быть потом я захочу.» Да, это не все поминают, «да нет неверно». «да» потом «нет» потом «неверно». Да, вот это такое тоже у нас есть.

DARIA. Это все, эти мои вопросы.

MILA. Если у тебя есть еще там что-то для твоего диплома, обязательно пишешь. Не потерялось.

DARIA. Ну, сейчас пока!

MILA. Пока.

## 2.1.2 English Translation

DARIA. My thesis is about winged words...

MILA. Oh, winged words.

DARIA. Yes, and that's why I have questions about education and winged words. Let's do it?

MILA. Let's do it as you want to.

DARIA. How old are you?

MILA. Twenty years old.

DARIA. Where were you born?

MILA. I was born in Moscow.

DARIA. Now, tell me about your secondary schooling. Was there any type of focus on reading in your upbringing? For example, my dad, he read me Harry Potter.

MILA. Oh, in my childhood. In my childhood or generally now as well?

DARIA. Now as well, why not?

MILA. Well, meaning what me and my parents did or what I did?

DARIA. Both!

MILA. Well, my parents and I always exchange "good night" and I didn't to them. Me always. Mom always prepares breakfast for me, I mean she absolutely *always* prepares breakfast, and dad cooks dinner. Now, childhood... we all love rewatching old Soviet movies as a family. Some on the TV and some [muffled]. That's my [muffled]. Alright, what else? My mom and dad quite often love to walk along the banks from house to home. And mom and I love to watch some shows.

DARIA. Okay. Do you read for pleasure?

MILA. Yes, often.

DARIA. Which books?

MILA. I've read almost all the books [incomprehensible]. I've read about psychology, about Russian music, red tablet, etc. That is, about history of Pushkinism, and the second part of the book I'm now reading is art of young people in science life. Old Russian writers, biographies and entire instruction about their lives. I read stuff like that.

DARIA. Wow.

MILA. Yes, I don't love classic Russian literature. I don't read [muffled].

DARIA. Yes, that's important...like new authors, anyways: do you listen to the radio in your free time?

MILA. Radio? No. We only listen to the radio when we're in the car; we listen to Aitiom.

DARIA. Yes.

MILA. That rolling...

DARIA. But you don't listen to journalism and news radio?

MILA. We watch news on the television.

DARIA. Good. And the last question about this: do you read journals, newspapers?

MILA. I can't read journals, of course there's something not there. I rarely learned to read journals, practically never.

DARIA. So now I often listen to podcasts. They're news; they're about everything. I love that. For me, I rarely listen to the radio or read newspapers.

MILA. Yea, exactly the same for me.

DARIA. In your opinion, what does "winged words" mean?



MILA. I can only muddle [the meaning] [she looks at Yandex]. In short, people fasten them with the Russian language. They are our fairytales, because [idiom], meaning a long time ago, meaning it ransacks our successful fairytales by pity. Winged expressions are a protologism. We have a great number in the Russian language. I consider winged expressions in a type of [mumbled]. Do you know that they are after [incomprehensible]. It seems to me that they are all useful and understood.

DARIA. I know that there are more winged words in Russian than in other languages. Do you know why there is more?

MILA. I consider that [mumbled] words are only from [mumbled]. We even have jokes, clubs, principles. One needs clubs better [static] and maybe people just want this type of word [static] dialog [mumbled] and I'm not totally acclimated to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Lots of people can find it possible...but I consider it right.

DARIA. We have a lot from Shakespeare, but he is an Englishman and we don't have that many American winged words. Now, I have examples of winged words.

MILA. American or Russian?

DARIA. Russian! Now, here's the first: "где же лучше? / где нас нет" (Where even is better? Where we aren't). Do you know that one?

MILA. "Лучше нам, где нас нет" (it's better where we aren't).

DARIA. Because I know, that winged expressions for that, it's slightly different, than in novels. You know what that one means?

MILA. It's a style of sarcasm. It's the most ironic joke at oneself. There it is.

DARIA. Do you know where this expression comes from?

MILA. My ears are tingling... It's from Lutishi, I think. So, where is it from?

DARIA. It's a surprise for in a minute! Now, do you remember, when you first heard this expression? Or no, it's only spoken?

MILA. I think that I heard it in a film. In a film or in a fairy tale. No, they are mad in fairytales. There is almost no sarcasm there done by a Russian. I think in a film.

DARIA. Do you often use this expression in your daily speak, or do you think that it is old dated?

MILA. It's not outdated, but we use it but rarely. Rarely do situations occur that it would come up in.

DARIA. Second is: "есть от чего в отчаянье придти" (you're driving me to despair). It's okay if you don't know it.

MILA. (rolls the words over in her mouth)... there is the word "come"; it's more like "to plunge into despair." You replace that word "immerse" with the word "come"... immerse into despair.

You don't ?? like that.

DARIA. Yes, it's not like that in the book. Maybe it's like that when spoken.

MILA. Plunge into despair, it's like diving into water. You only don't get that, but rather in despair. [mumbled] you drop the load. You despair, you're not like a poet, you feel bad.

DARIA. I think that there is a longer version of this expression, because it says here that there is the version "ври, да знай же меру; / есть он чего в отчаянье придти" (talk nonsense but know when to stop; / you're driving me to despair). And that it is all together one expression.

MILA. What is that again?

DARIA. It is: "ври, да знай же меру; / есть он чего в отчаянье придти" (talk nonsense but know when to stop; / you're driving me to despair).

MILA. Oh! "ври, да знай же меру" (you're driving me to despair). No, I think that is something slightly different, because "погрузить в отчаянье" (drive to despair), it's sad, but "ври, да знай

же меру” (talk nonsense but know when to stop), that challenges it. “ври” (talk nonsense), that is lying, but it doesn’t go that far, it doesn’t become a tragedy. Look, I would say it’s an entirely different winged expression.

DARIA. It’s all good, that’s what interests me! Okay, do you know where this expression is from?  
MILA. No.

DARIA. And do you remember when you first heard it?

MILA. First time I heard it? I think it was also in my childhood. I think that all of these were put into my memory in my childhood.

DARIA. Do you often use this expression in spoken speech, or do you think that it is old fashioned?

MILA. “Воде в отчаяне” (Plunge into despair): yes, often. It is true that it often comes across. It’s like rubbish.

DARIA. Okay, so the last one is this: do you think that this is not very used because it is very specific? Here it is: “Ах, боже мой, что станет говорить Княгиня Мария Алексеевна?” (Oh my God, what will Princess Mary Alekseevna say?)

MILA. “Ах, боже мой” (Oh my god)? Well, “боже мой” (my goodness), that’s understandable. This, you know, when you happen to have some kind of very dangerous situation where you can die, you start right away with “ох Боги, по господи, все будет хорошо” (oh gods, god, everything will be fine) and that’s for sure later.

DARIA. Yes, but it is a part of “что станет говорить Княгиня Мария Алексеевна” (what Princess Maria Alekseevna will say), do you know that one? I know what “боже мой” (my goodness) is. It isn’t a winged word. Do you know where is it from?

MILA. Of course not! What do you think, that I remember?

DARIA. This from, here ... [showing *Woe from Wit*]

MILA. *Woe from Wit*?

DARIA. Yes, they are all from it. Surprise!

MILA. And my grandmother, did she know that they were from this?

DARIA. Uh ... no! Okay, on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is completely unfamiliar and 5 is completely knowledgeable - how would you rate your knowledge of the play *Woe from Wit*? Do you know it?

MILA. But, honestly, I read *Woe from Wit* in the school curriculum. They gave a list to read at school. “This is what we are doing – reading from these books.” And I think we read *Woe from Wit* in the top three.

DARIA. Yeah?

MILA. Well yeah. Meaning, it’s not my favorite book.

DARIA. Good. Well, do you remember how your teachers taught you about the play? Like, “Oh, this is a novel. We’ll read it together; it’ll be great,” or is it like “for two weeks you talk about the play every day”?

MILA. Well, we skimmed it in two days, skimmed forty pages. We read at home, came to class, and paired to [incomprehensible]. We talked about what we read and discussed what happened in this play.

DARIA. Good. But in how much time? Maybe in a month? Is that a lot?

MILA. Oh no. Something less. Around a month. I now don’t remember what was in school. It seems to me that it had been a month.

DARIA. And you read the whole book, or an abridged version?

MILA. Abridged.

DARIA. Yeah?

MILA. Of course! I do basically everything like that.

DARIA. Because I was looking for this shortened version and couldn't...

MILA. Right now, I'll whip it over to you on Whatsapp.

DARIA. Okay, where ... yes, my version is from Moscow, I asked Rachel ... oh! (we disconnected)

MILA. Yes, where are you — [static]

DARIA. I don't know.

MILA. I'm looking for you again. Not a tale [mumbled] poetry. It's happening, one sec I'm whip it over on Whatsapp. I sent it. But this tale reads quite quickly. But there everyone writes [mumbled] what where how.

DARIA. Give me two secs. Alright. We have Sparknotes for English books, and that's very good. And it's like it, but better.

MILA. But of course.

DARIA. Do you remember some poems or monologues at school that you memorized from *Woe from Wit*? Because, I know that schoolkids often memorize monologues.

MILA. Say it again.

DARIA. I know that there are known monologues from *Woe from Wit* and my question is: do you remember any monologues from the novel?

MILA. No, we had a lot of novels like it. *War and Peace*, there. *Woe from Wit*, *Onegin*? Well, it's just there to fool around or really remember something. You often remember accurately who everyone was. They did a couple of the main authors and [mumbled]. But not the dialogues, of course. Something I read five or so days ago.

DARIA. Good. Okay, can you pull some examples of the catchphrases from *Woe from Wit* from your head right now? Because I know that there are very famous examples.

MILA. [She starts to look it up online] one sec ...

DARIA. No! You aren't allowed to go on the internet. You can only do it off the top of your head!

MILA. I just don't remember! I just don't remember!

DARIA. Ok, do you know ...

MILA. I know one thing ... "счастливые часов не наблюдают" (time flies).

DARIA. Yes. Do you know "не моего романа" (not of my novel)?

MILA. Uh huh!

DARIA. Yes, it's from *Woe from Wit*!

MILA. Yes. I know that for sure.

DARIA. Ok, I have two more questions. One, this: what do you think of Griboedov? Who is he?

MILA. Oh, no? There is something there ... like all Russian classics, it is useful to read it, because there are many higher who remember life and you're in real trouble. That is, read the classics again, it isn't important what's boring or not boring. It's [mumbled] to remember winged expressions. For me, all Russian classics are a little boring, because there is one topic to write on two pages. Not interesting. [incomprehensible]. I prefer psychology.

DARIA. Okay. And the last question is: do you think that the use of specific examples of winged words can be considered political? Is there a political nuance in using winged words?

MILA. Do politicians use the word, or did the author try to make some political meaning?

DARIA. Both. When politicians use these expressions or simply when you use these ...

MILA. It doesn't seem that way to me...people are always using these words. Honestly, if I'm in the middle of war, I also would use winged expressions. Well, by accident. See, everyone uses it

- both politicians and Putin use it too. Well, because this is part of our mind; these are ordinary words for us. And we understand the meaning behind the idea. But did the authors want their works to have some kind of political sense? No.

DARIA. Because, I know that Griboedov was a politician.

MILA. No, in there are more expressions often about ordinary life, or there's nothing that you're forcing some kind of compromise. It's life.

DARIA. Good. I heard that there are diplomats in Europe, they are Russian. And that the translators could not translate what they said, because they were using all these winged words and they were very difficult expressions to translate.

MILA. It's difficult for them to understand the meaning: you know that we have one phase – “yes no, uncertain”. You should ask me “you want to go out” and I answer “да нет неверно” (yes, no uncertain), that is, “yes, no, it is not true.” But all together this means “no”; "No, but maybe later I want to." Yes, not everyone remembers it, "yes no, it's not true." “Yes” then “no” then “uncertain”. Yes, we also have things like this.

DARIA. That's it, these are my questions.

MILA. If you still have something there for your thesis, be sure to write. Don't be a stranger.

DARIA. Well, bye for now!

MILA. Bye.

## 2.2 Natala's Transcript (Originally in English)

DARIA. Привет (Hi)! How are you?

Natala. Привет моя дорогая (Hi my dear)! Good to see you.

DARIA. Good to see you too.

Natala. It's been quite a while. How are you?

Natala. I'm alright. I'm alright. And you?

DARIA. I'm not bad at all. This semester I took very few classes so I've had a really relaxed semester, it's crazy. It's not usual for me.

Natala. It's your last semester before graduating?

DARIA. Yep! Spending all my time working on my thesis! So, it's pretty good. I just sat down with my thesis advisor and we just nailed down the definitive timeline for finishing my thesis, and now I'm like, stressed.

Natala. I think it's good to have this plan, the deadlines. It's always helpful. Otherwise it's impossible to fulfill all you want to do.

DARIA. Alright, let me. I guess let's start. I forget what I've told you. But I'm writing my thesis on крылатые слова and so the way that I'm doing my thesis is: I'm doing my research and I'm like, "man there's not a lot of information out there!" which is surprising. And so, I decided to interview – I call them interviews but they don't feel like interviews – but talk with some friends from Moscow to try to get sort of anecdotal evidence for my thesis.

Natala. So, do you want me to talk in Russian about this or, what kind of крылатые фразы?

DARIA. So, I'd like to do this in English, just because I did two interviews in Russian and I had to transcribe them and translate them and that too so much time. But if you think you can better express yourself in Russian, you can do that, it's just a lot to transcribe.

Natala. Okay, let's try, and if I can't do it, I'll switch to Russian.

DARIA. And obviously I'll be – wait that's later, I don't want to mess up the structure of my questions. So, the first question is to establish demographics and all that: so, what is your age?

Natala. My age is 49 years old.

DARIA. My next one is what is your gender, but I don't know why I have this question, because I know all...

Natala. You know my gender. Female!

DARIA. Where were you born?

Natala. I was born in Georgia but at that time it was still the USSR.

DARIA. And then you grew up –

Natala. I grew up in Moscow.

DARIA. When did you move between Georgia and Moscow?

Natala. I was a child. My father worked there, and I know my parents stayed there until I was three, but my mother brought me back and forth, so you know the first time I got to Moscow was when I was three months.

DARIA. Oh, so when you were quite young.

Natala. Yes.

DARIA. Okay, so but you had your secondary schooling and your education in Moscow?

Natala. Yes.

DARIA. Interesting. Do you think – this is a weird question; people keep getting stumped on it – but do you think there was there any specific reading focus in your upbringing? So, for example

my dad every night before my brother and I went to bed, he would read us Harry Potter and we got through the whole series that way, over a couple of years. So, was there any sort of, like your parents pushing you to read or reading with you?

Natala. Yeah, reading was an essential part of my growing up. There was no internet when I was growing up, you know? Yeah, my parents read a lot of me when I could not do that myself. They started with little poems and fairytales for kids, but I learned how to read pretty fast, I think I was five when I could read myself and I actually enjoyed it very much. And I loved reading fairytales, especially from the peoples from all over the world: German fairytales, well Russian fairytales, German fairytales, fairytales from the peoples of Asia, meaning India, China, Vietnam; different. Yeah, so I loved it. I would say, before I went to school fairytales would be my favorite stuff to read. Then there were other – do you want specific examples of what I read? DARIA. It's basically what you want to say. These questions are open-ended, so I can hear where you want to go with it.

NATALA. The other books that were my favorite when I was a kid was the author Nikolai Nosiv, and that's about [incomprehensible], so I liked Winnie the Pooh and I also, when I was like, when I was in elementary school, I started reading Duma, Alexander Duma, he's a French writer.

DARIA. Oh really?

Natala. Yeah. And I thought I understood it, but [laughing] I enjoyed reading it, I enjoyed reading about the adventures. And another favorite writer was Jules Verne, another French writer, and I enjoyed reading about adventures, traveling, stuff like that. So I would say that those were my favorite.

DARIA. So, you definitely had an international, I don't know, multicultural, I don't even know, library.

Natala. Yeah, I think so, but I think it was a common thing when I was growing up. At least among people that I interacted with.

DARIA. So, you continued reading throughout school? I find myself not having a lot of time to read – for pleasure, I mean. I read a lot for school.

Natala. Yeah, but I have to repeat, there was no internet, right? When I was a kid, so we had more time, more spare time. And I read, of course, a lot for school. I read a lot of Russian literature, Russian like Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Nikrasiv, well every classic, every author which is considered to be a classic of Russian literature I think I've read that.

DARIA. Yeah, there's definitely quite a few.

Natala. Oh, and I should say that Mark Twain Tom Sawyer was one of my favorites as well. And Huckleberry Finn, as well. And Fenmore Cooper, I liked those.

DARIA. Wow! So, you make my reading habits in my childhood seem, I don't know, very American!

Natala. No.

DARIA. I definitely read a lot of originally language books.

Natala. Well, I guess I was lucky because all of these books that I read were in Russian, had been translated into Russian, so I could read them in Russian.

DARIA. Yeah. Definitely lucky. And I guess you like, and were they all easily accessible at a local library?

Natala. [nodding yes]

DARIA. Wow, that's so cool! I wish today was like that. I definitely went to the library extensively when I was younger. And nowadays, I feel like I can assume that you continue to read for pleasure?

Natala. Actually, I do, but I don't have that much time. I read much less now than I used to, when

I was a kid, a teenager, a younger person. I read much less now. And I spend a lot of time reading news.

DARIA. Well, that was my next question! Do you read the newspaper? How do you get your news, I guess?

Natala. Now, it's, I, in order to get news, I use the internet. So, I go to particular news providers and try to collect information from different news providers, so

DARIA. A great habit.

Natala. You know, because we stopped watching news at home on the TV probably six years ago.

DARIA. Oh really?

Natala. Yes, because I got sick of the, I had a feeling that when I turned on the TV, the whole pressure of the political mass media would come to my house –

DARIA. Oh my gosh –

Natala. – and push me away. And plus advertisement. I got sick of hearing the same advertisement, and all of that. So that's how I moved to a different system. And what I do now, I read, for example, I read official news like *Гос*, I also read *Meduza*, I read *РБК*, I go to *BBC* and I try to compare what they say and try to analyze them and try to get a more objective picture of the fact.

DARIA. No, that is definitely the ideal way to read the news. I feel like often people don't have the time to read many sources, so they read just one, and it's like "hm, that's not the truth."

Natala. Yeah, yeah.

DARIA. And my last thing is, do you listen to the radio?

Natala. I listen to the radio, but it's often when I'm in the car. Or in somebody else's car.

DARIA. I really don't listen to the radio, but I listen to podcasts. So, it's like, the radio but I can choose exactly what I listen to.

Natala. See, I'm not that technically advanced.

DARIA. There are podcasts on the internet, too!

Natala. I know.

DARIA. So, then this is a very abrupt transition, but how would you define what a *крылатое слов* is? Just like, if I – just like, the dictionary definition from your brain, I guess.

Natala. Well, in my opinion, it's a phrase that could be pronounced or said by a famous person or maybe we don't know how said that, but this *крылатое слова* or *фраза*, you can use it when, in particular situations. So, this could be a synonym to a number of different words, but when you say this phrase, other people will know exactly what you mean, exactly what this situation is about. I know it's a mess.

DARIA. No, it makes sense. I definitely have tried to say, like I guess, an idiom, because we don't have this concept in English, and we spend like two minutes trying to explain the sense of the expression and why it's relevant, and it's quite easy when you just have a couple words. So, I just told you that in English we don't really have this concept, we don't even have a word for it in English, but why do you think that the Russian language has more *крылатые слова* than other languages? Because I found that it's not just English that is lacking.

Natala. Oh, I did not know that. I've never thought of that. And I did not know that, think about the fact that other languages did not have that. Hm, why is that?

DARIA. I also have no idea the answer, so I don't think it's something that you can Google, so I'm just curious about your –

Natala. Maybe in terms of linguistics, I know that the Russian language, there are lots of tools to change the meaning of what you're going to say. Different приставки, суффиксы, окончания (prefixes, suffixes, and endings) and other stuff, and there are words that, if you put different stress they would have different meaning, so maybe Russian language because of its grammar, has more shades of meanings, and if you want to, if you want other people to, it's easier to understand exactly what you mean why this, it's easier to have this sort of шаблон kind of phrase. So, press this particular button, everybody knows what signal it is, what meaning. I don't know, that is one guess, it's absolutely, I haven't thought of it, I'm just trying to make a guess. Another one, many Russians have a particular love to slogans, maybe we like it.

DARIA. Definitely maybe.

Natala. And you know, when, I don't know whether this is relevant or not, but in the Soviet days when you did some research or whatever, you were supposed to quote particular, a political leader, or maybe a classic philosopher, a thinker, or a literary author. So, you were supposed to make this quote as a, you know, an epigraph or conclusion, so maybe just easier. It's easier for Russian speakers to make their thoughts, to shorten their thoughts and make them sound exactly in a way they want. See, if I had a winged phrase for what I'm trying to say, I would probably use that.

DARIA. Definitely. No, those are definitely great guesses. I've heard totally different things from people I've spoken to, and I think it's just a thing and I wish we had more in the English language.

Natala. And if you translate it directly, крылатые фразы, it's phrases with wings, so they can fly and they can fly to others and other can get them, or... it's easier to, probably by using this, you can connect with others easier and faster. Explain what you think.

DARIA. So, I actually have a couple examples of, so we call them winged, okay I say "we" but it's just "me," I call them winged words. So, I have a few examples and they are directly from the, where they were first written, so they might slightly differ from what they are in common use. Okay, which do I want to start with? So, the first is: "нельзя ли для прогулок, по дальше выбрать закоулок" (if it's not possible to go out on a stroll, choose the secluded corner further away).

Natala. Um, can you read it again?

DARIA. Yeah, «нельзя ли для прогулок, по дальше выбрать закоулок» (if it's not possible to go out on a stroll, choose the secluded corner further away).

Natala. Ah, «нельзя ли для прогулок, по дальше выбрать закоулок» (if it's not possible to go out on a stroll, choose the secluded corner further away). Uh huh. Okay, you know what "закоулок" (secluded corner/alley) means, right?

DARIA. I have the translation right next to it!

Natala. «нельзя ли для прогулок...» (if it's not possible to go out on a stroll...) I actually haven't heard this one before, but I think – could you hold on a second, please? [talks to her daughter] Sorry.

DARIA. All good.

Natala. I don't know the context, but I would understand it as... two meanings. If one of the people who isn't invited, or wasn't invited for a walk, asking to walk further away from where they met, that's like a literal translation. Another meaning could be, I don't know, don't cheat near your home?



DARIA. I have a dictionary of крылатые слова (winged expressions) and I'm trying to find it, but I'm struggling because I don't know the order of the Russian alphabet. Which, yeah, the first thing I learned in Russian class, and I still don't know... so, yeah, there's been a bunch of dictionaries out there that have been helpful. So, it says "вам здесь делать нечего, занимайтесь своим делом, лучше бы вам убраться отсюда" (you aren't doing anything here, mind your business, it'd be better if you cleared off). So, it's what you just said! How nice. So, you've never heard of it before?

Natala. I don't think I've ever used it, yeah.

DARIA. That's so interesting.

Natala. But it doesn't mean anything.

DARIA. And if someone said it, you'd be like: "huh, what are you saying?"

Natala. But from specific context, I think I would be able to guess.

DARIA. Well, I brought that one up because it seemed like a pretty niche phrase, like I can't imagine dropping that into conversation. Okay, so then this next one is, it comes in two parts, so there's two versions out there from different sources, and one of them has them together and one of them has them separate, and I want to see if a) you know it and b) if you consider them to be related. So, it's: "А впрочем, он дойдет до степеней известных, ведь нынче любят бессловесных" (in fact, he is going to make it to a prominent degree, since, you see, nowadays people love the voiceless)

Natala. "А впрочем..." (in fact) what is that?

DARIA. "он дойдет до степеней известных" (he is going to make it to a prominent degree) that's the first.

Natala. "А впрочем он" (in fact, he)

DARIA. "до степеней" (to a degree). I think it might be an old spelling of a word, so it's "известных" (prominent)

Natala. Oh, "дойдет до степеней известных" (he is going to make it to a prominent degree). Yes, it's from Griboedov, right?

DARIA. Ding ding ding! Oh, that's so cool. So, you know it?

Natala. Yeah.

DARIA. And do you use it?

Natala. I think it's too long for using it.

DARIA. Definitely.

Natala. But if somebody used it, I would know. Because Griboedov's *Горе от Ума* (Woe from Wit), you know, we all read it at school. It does have a lot of крылатые фразы (winged phrases) in it. So, people use some of them sometimes.

DARIA. And like, everyone knows them, because?

Natala. Yeah. Like "а суди кто?" (who are our judges?) and others.

DARIA. Okay well we're getting to there. I'm going to first show you another expression and then I'll get back to that thought. Okay, wait, one last thing for this phrase, do you think that you learned it from when you were learning it from school?

Natala. Yeah, I think so. And it's like, if you speak about someone who is trying to do everything, something which is not very good, in order to get a better job, a better position in society, so a person who uses everything to get to the goal he or she has.

DARIA. Yeah.

Natala. Sometimes with not nice methods.

DARIA. I think that we would call that "stepping on someone"

Natala. Yeah, probably.

DARIA. So, you don't know the second part of it, “ведь нынче любят бессловесных” (nowadays people love the voiceless)?

Natala. “бессловесных” (voiceless). Yeah, so “ведь нынче любят бессловесных” (nowadays people love the voiceless), so you are not supposed to criticize the authorities or your boss, and if you don't do that, and say “yes, yes, you are right!” then you will get to what you want, even if you don't, disagree with the boss.

DARIA. Definitely. I get the idea! And so, you know both of these phrases, but in your mind, they are separate? Like, I can't imagine someone saying them both in order like that would be a long statement.

Natala. No, but I think that the whole phrase, if you say the first part, someone is thinking of the ending, so you can start with the first part, but you kind of expect that the person will end this phrase in his or her mind. Because it's connected.

DARIA. Yeah. Cool! That was exactly the answer I was hoping for! Okay, and the last one, you 100% know this, it's “и говорит, как пишет” (and he speaks like one writes).

Natala. Uh huh.

DARIA. Do you know where it's from?

Natala. Um, I don't remember.

DARIA. But it's, well the second question is, do you, kind of, just use it, like it's a phrase that you use and don't really think about it coming from anywhere?

Natala. Yeah, I don't remember where, do you know where it is coming from?

DARIA. Because they are all from *Горе от Ума*.

Natala. Okay! See, yeah, I should reread it. It has a lot of phrases that float around, but...

DARIA. But yeah, I was wondering because for us, the closest thing we have to крылатые слова are like that, like you know them, and then you are surprised to find out that they come from a famous piece of work, I guess. So that's cool. So now that I've told you the big reveal, that they are all from *Горе от Ума*, on a scale from 1 to 5, 1 being totally unfamiliar and 5 being completely knowledgeable, how would you qualify your familiarity with this play?

Natala. I would put myself somewhere in the middle, because I read it a long time ago, and I think the last time I read it was at school. I may have reread parts of it, but not the whole thing, when I was older.

DARIA. So, do you remember... oh what were you going to say?

Natala. No, just put me in the middle.

DARIA. So, do you remember, it's fine if you don't, what year in school you were when you read it?

Natala. Gosh. I think it was maybe, I don't know, 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

DARIA. I mean, I don't know the answer. I just know that nowadays, it's taught in the ninth grade.

Natala. So then, when I was at school, this would be equal to the eighth grade.

DARIA. Okay. Oh! That's good to know. I didn't know that. Do you remember how your teachers taught you about the play? Like, did you read the entire play *Woe from Wit*? Did you read an abridged version?

Natala. No, we read the entire play. And as far as I remember, our teacher liked us to read big pieces of it in class, like she would say “okay you will read part of Chatsky, you Molchalinov,” Molchalin, whatever. So, we will read in terms, like we were in theater.

DARIA. Yeah, that's cool. That's how we do it now, how we read Shakespeare.

Natala. Yeah, good.

DARIA. Do you, did you memorize any poems or monologues, do you remember?

Natala. I was supposed to memorize монолог Чацкого (Chatsky's monologue), I don't remember now!

DARIA. Is that the one that starts with "а суди кто?" (Who are our judges?):

Natala. Yeah, I think so. That phrase is somewhere there.

DARIA. I ask, because one of my 20-year-old interviewees, she also memorized that one.

Natala. See?

DARIA. And so, you mentioned that you read the play, or at least excerpts or parts from it since you were in school, so I guess like, why? Not like, you can't just for fun, but.

Natala. Why didn't I reread it?

DARIA. What drew you back to reading parts of it as opposed to the whole thing, or why didn't you just put in on your shelf and let it collect dust?

Natala. I have to tell you that, my daughter, when she was studying it, I had to, kind of, she would speak about it, so because of her I would come back to it. And actually, I found a great movie that was short in probably the 1950s or 60s, and it was a great, great movie. Like, it was like телеспектакль (television drama). And great actors.

DARIA. I'll definitely look it up.

Natala. Definitely look it up. Let me see if I can –

DARIA. I know that there was, I wouldn't call it a спектакль (drama), but a commemoration of Griboedov's birth, like earlier this month, and there was a whole thing about him.

Natala. Let me give you the link to the movie that I liked. It was 1952. There was another movie in 1970-something, but I like the 1952 one, where is this, no, oops. No. Yeah, I'll send it. Did you get it?

DARIA. I did! Let me see if I can open it.

Natala. Yeah, maybe it's.

DARIA. Because sometimes we have copyright issues. But also, it's Russian movies, so I don't think that copyright cares.

Natala. Yeah, it's a classic.

DARIA. Oh! So, look at that, it's playing! That's so exciting.

Natala. And here is another link to the movie that was made in 1970-whatever. 77. But I really like the first one. So, I don't know if you can open it.

DARIA. I'll definitely check them out! I've watched *Anna Karenina* like, all the different versions of that movie, all like twenty. We had a class and my professor really, we didn't watch the whole movie, we watched the beginning, we watched Anna Karenina's death, but like twenty times over. So, I'm looking forward to doing that with Горе от Ума.

Natala. Did you read *Anna Karenina*?

DARIA. Yeah. I've read it a couple times, always in English.

Natala. You know, the first time I read it I was in school, in high school, and of course I thought that Anna was the main hero of the thing, and her story was very important, but when I read it when I was 40-something, I just realized that she was not the main character. Левен was the main character.

DARIA. Definitely. I know! And why is it not named Левен?

Natala. I know, yeah.

DARIA. Yeah, I really like returning to old books and re-seeing them and being like "wow, I totally misunderstood that when I first read it."

Natala. Well, it's because of the certain age, you were focused on one things, and you grow up and your mentality changes, your priority changes, and that's why you see other sides of it.

DARIA. Well, yeah, that's why I wanted to ask you if you read *Горе от Ума* (Woe from Wit) after 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

Natala. I should!

DARIA. The next question that I have for you, you kind of did this before, but other than “а суди кто?” (Who are our judges?) can you think, off the top of your head a few examples of winged expressions from *Горе от Ума* (Woe from Wit)? And it's very fine if you can't.

Natala. “К тетке, в глушь, в Саратов” (to my aunt in the backwoods in Saratov) I remember that. So, he is trying to leave the capital, so “I don't care where, “в глушь, в Саратов” (in the backwoods in Saratov), so to the province, to Saratov. I remember that.

DARIA. I asked one of my friends if they knew that expression and they were like “I've never heard of it.”

Natala. Oh really?

DARIA. Yeah! Um, I'm trying to think. There are definitely very famous ones, like “говорят как пишет” (they speak like one writes) that I'm sure you know, and just didn't realize they were from here.

Natala. Yeah, I forgot.

DARIA. Okay, so a question, I asked other people this, and they hadn't heard of it, but my research told me people use it, but have you ever heard the expression, “французик из Бордо” (a Frenchman from Bordeaux)?

Natala. Yeah! That's Pushkin, right? Evgenii Onegin, right?

DARIA. Nope! It's *Горе от Ума* (Woe from Wit)!

Natala. *Горе от Ума* (Woe from Wit)? Oh, see?

DARIA. Yeah.

Natala. But I did, I did, yes. “Французик из Бордо” (a Frenchman from Bordeaux), yes.

DARIA. Good to know! I'm glad to know that.

Natala. Is it Скала (Skala), what is his name, Скалозубов (Skalozubov) who's saying that?

DARIA. Let me see. I think so.

Natala. So, he doesn't like the fashion, the new styles, like he's a conservative, right, right.

DARIA. Oh, it's Chatsky. What is the context? So, it seems basically that he is telling a story about like, and he's talking about this annoying person he met while in Bordeaux, and he's being like “wow!” wait “ах! В Франции нет в мире лучше края” (oh! There isn't a better corner in the world than in France) and probably make everyone hate him.

Natala. He's talking about women, Russians, Russian women who are ready if they, they heard that France is the best for culture, whatever, they accept even some random guy from a random city in France and they look up to him automatically, no matter what he says or does. See, yeah. I heard this phrase, but I have a mess with Pushkin.

DARIA. Well, 100% there are many. One of the, a really famous, or famous, or well-known English expression, “out of the pot into the oven”, it's from Don Quixote,

Natala. Uh huh.

DARIA. And I found that out, and I was like: “what!”

Natala. Yeah.

DARIA. Because I consider that very, very ingrained in the language. And I find out it's not even from English, which is wild.

Natala. “Из огня да в полымя” (Out of the frying pan into the fire)

DARIA. I think I've heard of that one. And you know, I'm going to say this one wrong, but the one with "аккуратность" (exactness). Let me look this one up. Right now, I'm using someone else's computer and I don't have my Russian keyboard, so I can't look up anything.

Natala. What exactly are you looking for?

DARIA. I just used a dictionary to find it. I thought this would be easy to find. It was about... oh okay! "умеренность и аккуратность" (moderation and accuracy) if you know that expression.

Natala. Um. It's the phrase that Molchalin uses to describe his character.

DARIA. Yeah. So that's pretty crazy because other people who I've spoken with haven't known that very well. But yeah, I think it just shows that each person's language is different from everyone else's.

Natala. Yeah, interesting.

DARIA. Okay, my last two questions are about Griboedov. Like, what are your thoughts on him? Could you give me a little biography of who he is?

Natala. [laughs] Well, he was a diplomat. And he was shot. And he's buried in Georgia, in Tbilisi.

DARIA. Ooh, I don't know that. I don't know about where he is buried.

Natala. Yeah, because I think he was married to a Georgian princess or whatever.

DARIA. Let's see. Yes, he is buried in Georgia.

Natala. Yeah, in Tbilisi. Yeah, I think I even saw his grave. But I think he is, I think that *Горе от Ума* is the only work that everybody knows. I'm not sure, see I'm not sure what else he has written, but I definitely, everybody knows that *Горе от Ума* was written by Griboedov.

DARIA. Yeah.

Natala. But I think his main job was being a diplomat. And I think even Pushkin mentioned that somewhere, "Грибоеда везут" (Griboedov is lucky), so one of the stories, one of the prose stories, maybe Lermontov mentioned that. So the murder, he was murdered, and that was important provocation of some sort. But I think he was also, I think he also wrote some music but nobody, not many people know about that. But the main thing was that he was a diplomat and he was the one who wrote *Горе от Ума* (Woe from Wit).

DARIA. Yeah, he did write other things, but it basically sounds like they are pretty irrelevant, and that some people who really like him read his correspondence, or read his later poetry, but nothing's on the level of *Горе от Ума* (Woe from Wit).

Natala. Yeah.

DARIA. And then so, the last question is, do you think that the use of specific examples of his крылатые слова (winged words) can be seen as political? Because I know that Chatsky for example, speaks about a lot of politically charged concepts. But is there any political nuance in today's use of Griboedov's phrases?

Natala. Well, definitely the phrase you mentioned earlier, not "умеренность и аккуратность" (moderation and accuracy), but "ведь нынче любят бессловесных" (nowadays people love the voiceless) this could be applicable to today's reality, but the reason it was so popular, or everyone had to learn about it in school, when I studied in the Soviet Union, was that it was also viewed as an important work in terms of criticizing the conservative society and Chatsky was a progressive thinker, a revolutionaire of sorts, and that's why he was kind of, in the Soviet days that work was used to kind of criticize the old society.

DARIA. So...

Natala. So, it could still be used in political terms, especially when you speak about conservatism or liberalism, I don't know.

DARIA. No, definitely makes sense! Well, those are all my questions for you. If you have any last thought that you want to share that you think I haven't covered, please share!

Natala. No, it's definitely, it's a good example, there's a lot of крылатые фразы (winged phrases) in this work! I should reread it; I will reread it now.

DARIA. That's so exciting to hear!

Natala. I realized I forgot a lot, and I have to sort of refresh my memory.

DARIA. Well, it's definitely been a pleasure.

## 2.3 Masha's Interview (Originally in English)

DARIA. What's your name?

Masha: My name is Olga Vedeneva, but I write this with an "e" at the end.

DARIA. What is your age? How old are you I guess is the more normal way to ask that.

Masha: I'm 21 years old.

DARIA. So, where were you born and where did you grow up? This is an easy question.

MASHA. For me, it's the same thing. I was born and grew up in Moscow. That's the capital of Russia, just in case.

DARIA. So, this one – the last two interviews I had, I think I need to rephrase it because it's confusing – basically tell me about your secondary school, specifically was there any reading focus in classes and at home in your upbringing? The example I give is that my dad used to read Harry Potter to me every night when I was younger, and we read the entire series and then we moved on to other classic books. Did you have that at all? And it's fine if you didn't.

MASHA. I can't say that I read much right now, but when I was a kid, my parents didn't read me something at all. I was swollen with books, especially when I was a teenager, I adored Rick Riordan which I know who I will, I know you [mumbled]. And I'm a big fan of Harry Potter as well.

DARIA. Everyone is!

MASHA. Except my professor in English, she hated Harry Potter. Like super overrated.

DARIA. So, you said you don't read that much now, but do you listen to the radio, the news on the radio? Do you read the newspaper?

MASHA. Yeah, I try to follow the news, especially on social media like VKontakte and on Telegram. I think I follow Радиосвобода (Radiosvoboda, meaning Free Radio), New York Times for my classes.

DARIA. Of course! High quality news there. So, you don't watch the TV for news?

MASHA. I think no. My parents do but not me.

DARIA. This is a really abrupt transition, but how would you define what a крылатое выражение (winged expression) is?

MASHA. Like, as an abstract term? In Russian, that works like an idiom or something, but I think we should relate them to quotes from movies or books or some of them are associated with special characters, especially from the Soviet cinema, that's really popular in Russia.

DARIA. Yeah, my research has shown me that. So, why do you think the Russian language has more крылатые выражения (winged expressions) than other languages? Because in English we don't even have a term for it. We can only translate it directly and no one knows what it means.

MASHA. I hate English idioms! They are so weird sometimes, I try to understand them, but I fail. I suppose that we have more synonyms than in English and I think everyone can guess that in Russian there are so many words. I can say that it is more than in English but that's the which language as Tolstoy said. It's hard to explain. Isn't that counter?

DARIA. No that's totally fine. I have no idea why either. I have thoughts as to maybe why, but I just think it's something interesting.

MASHA. Yeah, maybe some like to show off with them, like intellectual? When you mention some phrases, it's cool, like the [incomprehensible] that you're so smart. Slang is also popular.

DARIA. Yeah, I guess it's interesting the different occurrences of languages. So now I have a couple winged phrases – that's what it is in English – that I want to ask you about and I'm just going to read them to you and I have some follow up questions. They're straight from the book.

So, speaking of which, since they are straight from the book, they might slightly differ from how you know them. So, just disclaimer. So, the first one is: счастливые часов не наблюдают (time flies when you're having fun). Do you know it?

MASHA. Yeah! That's from one of my favorite Russian works.

DARIA. Which one?

MASHA. That's I think from *Woe from Wit*. We read it when I was in tenth grade. I should describe it or something right now, right?

DARIA. Yeah, so my questions are like: do you often use this expression in your daily speak or is it only like older people who use it? Do you think it is outdated?

MASHA. I use that not so frequently, but I definitely use it. This is not up to generations; I think many people use it. I just love this work, maybe that's because of this.

DARIA. Okay, we'll get – I have questions about that, but we aren't there yet. So, the next one is: рассудки вопреки, наперекор стихиям (contrary to intellect, counter to one's element)

MASHA. Can you repeat this?

DARIA. This is one that I chose because it is in phraseological dictionaries, but I was like, huh why do people use this? So, it's: рассудки вопреки, наперекор стихиям (contrary to intellect, counter to one's element).

MASHA. So, this is not as popular as the first one.

DARIA. But have you heard of it?

MASHA. Yeah... but it's a rare one.

DARIA. Do you know, so, in the dictionary it said that it was sometimes broken up. Is one part of the phrase used more than the other, or is it just used all together?

MASHA. Okay...

DARIA. No, that was a question. So, in the dictionary, it showed that that expression came in two parts and that maybe people only used one part of it.

MASHA. Yeah, the first one. I can say that we do this all the time with idioms, we use the first one. And sometimes nobody knows the second part. Yeah, that happens. I think I saw some post in VKontakte about it. Like, did you know? And I was like, okay I never heard of that.

DARIA. And so, do you associate this expression with any specific text or source, or do you just know it?

MASHA. I knew that, I think. It's really hard to say, especially when your parents were born and grew up in the Soviet Union, you think that they know all these expressions, and you just grow up with them.

DARIA. Well you knew the first one, so I had to ask. Okay, so the last one is: “в деревне в тетке в глушь в Саратове” (in the country to the aunt in the backwoods in Saratov). Can you please tell me how you would use that, because it's so niche?

MASHA. Yeah, we use the whole phrase, it's not too widespread as well but when do we use that? When you have to show that that's so far from you that you have to go there and that can take a great amount of time and so on and that there is no civilization, you are so isolated and alone. No help, no resources, something like that, I don't know.

DARIA. Sounds great,

MASHA. You would suffer. Something that you didn't get used to.

DARIA. So, would you say that the reason that this expression isn't used because there is not that many situations that it fits, or that it is outdated?

MASHA. Both, I can say. Most people don't like classics, and this is definitely classics. Yeah, some of them just do not know this expression and yeah, that's rather outdated but I think it's



cool when you say something outdated or hear something, especially when you try to say something,

DARIA. I agree. Okay, so now we are going into all my questions about *Woe from Wit*. On a scale from 1 to 5, 1 being totally unfamiliar and 5 being completely knowledgeable, how would you qualify your familiarity with the play *Woe from Wit*? So, if you were like, “I’ve never heard of that ever, what is it?” it’s a work of art? What?” and the other being like “I can quote half the play from memory” where are you on that scale?

MASHA. Okay, I think 4. Yeah, I can say that was when I was at school, I read it four times and I saw some performances in theater twice. But my memory is not so perfect, that’s why I can say 4.

DARIA. So, can you remember how your teachers taught you about the play? Like, what teaching strategies they used?

MASHA. Teaching strategies? How do you mean? How they described that or how we discussed that?

DARIA. Well, for example, did you read the play over the course of a week and you acted it out and you broke down important lines? Do you remember how you were taught it?

MASHA. So, first of all I think we should specify how the literature works in Russia, especially in school. Yeah, I think we devoted two/three weeks. I had two/three hours – I don’t remember now, I was fifteen, six years ago – a week. And I had a habit to read and write down some lines that I actually liked, or I can relate to some characters. And we [incomprehensible]? Discussed the plot and the style. We studied the biography of Griboedov. And we learned by heart one of the monologues, Chatsky’s monologues.

DARIA. So, did you read the entire play, or did you read an abridged version? Because I heard there was an abridged version out there, but it’s a pretty short play? Because I couldn’t find the shortened version.

MASHA. Full version, definitely. I think we only read the full version. I remember I couldn’t manage with *War and Peace* by Tolstoy and that’s all. Most of the works were read in full format. I liked literature when I was little, that’s why it was not a problem.

DARIA. So, you said that you learned one of Chatsky’s monologues. Do you remember which one?

MASHA. Which one? Wait a minute, I can’t remember so much. I remember that Chatsky and Famusov were quarreling, I think that’s Part III or something?

DARIA. Let me just open up the book!

MASHA. Oh no, it was with Molchalin maybe. I remember that it was with the line “а суди кто?” (and who are our judges?)

DARIA. Oh, I know that one!

MASHA. Yeah, it contains criticism.

DARIA. I can’t remember where it is either. Yeah, I know that expression. Ah, it is Act II Scene 5. It is Chatsky and Famusov. That’s a long monologue! We don’t memorize monologues in American schools.

MASHA. It depends on the country, it seems. By the way, the expression “а суди кто?” (and who are our judges?) is extremely popular.

DARIA. That’s why I didn’t ask you! I couldn’t, it was too popular!

MASHA. That’s a cool word, actually.

DARIA. Okay, can you right now tell me where the play is in your house? Because you said you read it multiple times after 10<sup>th</sup> grade.

MASHA. Including tenth grade! Three or four. Where it is in my house? I've done repairs recently that's why it's hard to say where the things are. Sometimes in boxes? Lots of the books are under my parents' bed right now. Yeah, a great space.

DARIA. So maybe you'll dust off the book and read it a fifth time?

MASHA. Hard to say. I need to look for sometimes. When I need a book, one, I just try to search for it, but sometimes it's hard to search for it. Now, especially. I think it's available on the internet.

DARIA. Yeah, especially the Russian internet! It's definitely not available on the American internet. So, can you think, other than "а суди кто?" (and who are our judges?), can you think off the top of your head any other examples of крылатые выражения (winged expressions) from Woe from Wit?

MASHA. Oh my god...

DARIA. I know it's putting you on the spot, but...

MASHA. I don't know, I often use "счастливые часов не наблюдают" (time flies when you're having fun). Hm, no, I don't remember right now.

DARIA. I had to ask. Because I know some other famous ones are... there's "умеренность и аккуратность" (moderation and accuracy), which you've heard of right? Do you know the expression "французик из Бордо" (a Frenchman from Bordeaux)?

MASHA. Французик (Frenchman)...?

DARIA. французик из Бордо (Frenchman from Bordeaux).

MASHA. I've heard that maybe.

DARIA. I asked Mila and she hadn't heard it but then my research said that "oh yeah, students nowadays often use that expression"

MASHA. No, I think I've heard that, but I've definitely not used that at all.

DARIA. And then you know the expression "не моего романа" (not of my novel)

MASHA. Yeah.

DARIA. That's also from here!

MASHA. I remember from another Chatsky's monologue, maybe that's not the quote but sounds like that: "Служит бы рад прислуживать со тошно" (I would be happy to serve, but it sickens me to be servile). Do you know that?

DARIA. I don't think so. Though there are innumerable, so many expressions in here that I wouldn't be surprised if I just hadn't seen it.

MASHA. I don't remember where.

DARIA. Well I'll look for it after this.

MASHA. Yeah, "Служит бы рад прислуживать со тошно". It means "I'm good to serve, but I don't want to obey."

DARIA. I get the sense of it. So, then my last few questions are about Griboedov. I think I mispronounced it. You pronounced it differently.

MASHA. Griboedov.

DARIA. Griboedov.

MASHA. Yeah, that's like mushrooms and eating.

DARIA. So, what are your thoughts about him? Can you give me a little summary of who he was?

MASHA. He was a diplomat I remember. An ambassador. And he died in Iran because... I don't remember exactly...because of the rebellion or something. So, what can I say more?

DARIA. He was a writer?

MASHA. Yeah, here in Moscow we have a monument of him which is on...не современник театр (not the contemporary theater) ... on чисти пруди (Chistii Prudii, meaning "Clean Ponds") station. Near it, this district. Is that enough about the author?

DARIA. No that's good! And did you learn about him...you learned about him in school right, but did you know about him before you learned about him in school?

MASHA. I think no. No, I was fifteen and teenage problems.

DARIA. Not talking about classical playwrights?

MASHA. Yeah, we started studying the war pretty intense.

DARIA. So, given that he was an ambassador, do you think that the use of specific крылатые выражения are political at all? Because you said that Chatsky's monologue was political. But when you use "а суди кто" (and who are our judges?) is that political, would you consider it?

MASHA. I think that the context is dedicated to the generation gap and that is problem. In many places that implied the views of different generations, of the young ones and the older. We can say that this rather political, just because he criticized the power and it was written, what year was it written? I remember that it was the first part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, like 1930?

DARIA. That's what I think but I don't want to be wrong. Let's see...it was 24. 1824. But then he edited it for like ten years.

MASHA. Yeah, I think that's an astounding moment, because that's only a year before the Decembrists. And we have some lines about something that we can associate with this event. Not a requirement, but... but maybe requirement of reforms and change of power. Always change. Yeah, that's definitely political.

DARIA. So, I heard about this book called *Griboedov and the Decembrists*. It was apparently an important piece of propaganda during Soviet times. How much do you still associate Griboedov with the Decembrists? Do you consider him a Decembrist? Do you consider him friends of Decembrists? Or is that a separate movement?

MASHA. I don't see him as a part of that Decembrist movement more, because his story I can't remember whether he was a friend of some Decembrists. I think he wasn't the only one from this field who was engaged with literature who was keen on these ideas, these liberal ideas that Decembrists offered. He's like a part of the mechanism here in the moment. But maybe he was, I need to check this about his friendship.

DARIA. So, the answer is that he was friends. Kind of like Dostoevsky, who wanted to be a Decembrist but couldn't.

MASHA. That's the same with Pushkin. He was one of the friends of the Decembrist but wasn't that. Most of his friends they were forced to move to Siberia and he definitely couldn't be one of them, but he wasn't apart. Exile, that's it.

DARIA. Yeah, he was exiled to Siberia. Yeah, we say that. Actually, that's an expression in English, "yeah he'll be sent to Siberia". "You'll be sent to hard labor" that's never a thing that happened in American history, but we borrowed that idea from Russian culture. Well, that's all of my questions for you, so do you have any other thoughts that you think I didn't cover, tell me now.

MASHA. So, you have to ask me some questions about крылатые выражения (winged expressions) exactly from *Woe from Wit* or from language?

DARIA. So, I'm looking at how these expressions started out in *Woe from Wit* and how they entered the Russian vernacular, like the spoken language. How they transitioned from written to spoken, through the education system specifically.

MASHA. I don't know whether this is useful or not, but I remember that this work predicted the whole development of Russian movement, especially connected with the first part of 19<sup>th</sup> century. I mean the works by Pushkin and Lermontov. "Hero of Our Times," *Eugene Onegin* – Chatsky was one of the...prototypes? Can you say that?

DARIA. You can say pioneers because generally prototype is about an object, but pioneer is a person.

MASHA. Yeah, like a pioneer. It's really strange but when our generation read this and we see Chatsky as a hero of our time, just because he's going not to carry out but to get people to understand some liberal ideas but many years ago in the Soviet Union he wasn't a hero at all and our professor said something about that... an antagonist? Not a person with a positive mind.

DARIA. Do you mean pessimist?

MASHA. This is why we can say it's a political text.

DARIA. Antagonist is someone who works against the main character, and a pessimist is someone who looks at the world negatively.

MASHA. No, antagonist is the right word here. He's against Famusov, and Famusov is the main character. He's the embodiment of the older generation.

DARIA. Interesting.

MASHA. I think that's useful for you.

DARIA. I think it's interesting. I actually read that, so this book "Griboedov and the Decembrists" was published and it was basically trying to paint Griboedov as a Decembrist, and the Decembrists were the precursor, like leading up to the Revolution, the Soviet Revolution. So Chatsky was a Soviet hero, because Famusov was the emblem, the prototype of Old Russia, and Chatsky was like "you guys are literally insane, wow, you are so backwards" and then he turns into a martyr at the end because he tries to change everyone's ideas and they're all stuck in their own ideas and so he leaves and gives up on his love interest!

MASHA. Yeah. I remember that. Yeah, we have some base for what you said. During the period of Soviet Union existence, revolution is always something positive. Have you heard about the film released recently, союз спасения (lifesaving union), in Russian?

DARIA. I don't know it.

MASHA. Maybe some news?

DARIA. What's it about?

MASHA. союз спасения (the lifesaving union). It's the name of the organization of the Decembrists.

DARIA. Oh, look at that! I just had to start looking up "союз" (union) and it already popped up!

MASHA. So, that contains so many elements of propaganda for our time. That's pretty interesting, because all the Decembrists tried to go against the government has a negative image. The author tries to show that this is not so great what lots of people think. People tend to romanticize the Decembrists. I was like "what's going on here?" perception changed all the time.

DARIA. Yeah, I think it's interesting, because you want to romanticize rebellion in the Old Regime but at the same time you don't want to romanticize rebellion in your own regime, so there is definitely a fine line.

## 2.4 Sofia's Interview

### 2.4.1 Original Russian

SOFIA. Привет.

DARIA. Привет.

SOFIA. Я уже думала ты у тебя чудском компьютером поучились.

DARIA. Это потому, что, я не знала почему, но Магазин Аппл удалил мой файл...

SOFIA. Все потеряло Даш? Ты все потеряло?

DARIA. Нет, это просто файл для интервью, этот файл и один документ, это все. Они оба были для моего диплома.

SOFIA. Много остановится. Нечего страшного.

DARIA. Очень страшно!

SOFIA. Страшно! У тебя еще есть времени, это не много осталось, да? Это мало у тебя?

DARIA. Да у меня не очень много времени и я так... я звонила магазину Аппил пять раз, и я они нечего не могли сделать, и я была как, «ох, как это возможно?»

SOFIA. Ну, нечего. Давай, давай вопрос.

DARIA. Хорошо. Ну так. Сколько у тебя лет?

SOFIA. 57.

DARIA. Хорошо. И где ты родилась?

SOFIA. Я родилась в Советском Союзе, ну раньше Молдавская была. Сейчас Молдова называет.

DARIA. И это другие места, где ты выросла?

SOFIA. Да, я не в Москве родилась.

DARIA. Ну да.

SOFIA. Молдавская. Ладно ты говорила о вроде что ты [incomprehensible] было?

DARIA. Это вопрос об образовании и все это. Потому что, я знаю ты не в Молдове учила. Ну, ты когда приехала в Москву?

SOFIA. Семнадцать лет мне было, в институт поступила.

DARIA. Что что?

SOFIA. Поступила в универ – ну у нас институт на за ни все считается. Переехали.

DARIA. Ну, скажите мне про твое среднее учение.

SOFIA. Школе?

DARIA. Да.

SOFIA. [incomprehensible] школу? Хорошо. У нас хорошая школа была. Учителя хорошие, нам дарят очень много и хорошие. Репки нами. Ну я хорошо училась. Лад.

DARIA. Думаешь, что был что-нибудь фокус на чтение в твоём воспитании или образовании? Потому что, раньше, когда мы говорили, я тебе объяснила о том, что мой папа, он мне читал книги Гарри Поттер каждую ночью, и когда я могла читать, мы еще читали эти книги вместе. Был что-нибудь как это в твоей жизни?

SOFIA. Ну, ты мне читала ли, конечно. Много читала, и в школе мы читали, родители читали мне всегда. И потом со мастером читать и очень много читал. Сейчас, меньше. Уже были у меня не хватает, а год.

DARIA. Ну, ты еще читаешь для удовольствия?

SOFIA. Конечно.

DARIA. Но меньше, чем меньше?

SOFIA. Конечно, да. Сейчас поменьше читать. Сейчас в интернет есть чем заняться, понимаешь? Пожираться какая мала, как была у нас нет. Мы телевизор купили, когда меня было пять лет. Пять лет телевизор у нас в доме поселился. Вот. И передать мало когда было, это сейчас сто каналов. А раньше два, три было канал. И мы всегда читали.

DARIA. Да. Ну какие книги или романы ты любишь читать сейчас или раньше? Потому, что я знаю, что Лиза, она любит эти книги психологии и я не понимаю.

SOFIA. Да, нет. Я люблю художественные книги [incomprehensible] даже что они веселые были, познавательные какие-нибудь.

DARIA. Да.

SOFIA. Вот. А пупу я посинелые... «ешь...», щас скажу тебя, что почитала... «Ешь, малис, любви.» Такой как она.

DARIA. Я не этот знаю.

SOFIA. По Джули Роджерс, я книжку начала пролистала о том фильм обметила.

DARIA. Хорошо. Я знаю Джули Роджерс... но кроме чтения, ты слышишь радио в свободное время?

SOFIA. Нет, телевизор. Радио у нас нет сейчас. Какой радио? Сейчас телевизор.

DARIA. Не знаю, телевизор в машине? Все это? Ну, ты смотришь телевизор, но тоже ты читаешь газеты, или просто в интернет,

SOFIA. Да, газеты читаю. Если успею. По телевизор все узнаю, и в интернете.

DARIA. Ну да, я согласна. У меня есть мое подкасты и кроме этого, это просто интернет. Ну так. По твоему мнению, что это такое, «крылатые слова?»

SOFIA. Крылатые слова? Ну щас я это скажу. Слова, которые используют как короткий то, что хочешь сказать. И все эти слова знают. Ты друг друга понимают, о чем речи идет.

DARIA. Думаю, что это круто, крутой концепт потому, что у нас нет на английском. Ну, что ты думаешь, почему есть в русском языке больше крылатые слова чем в других языках? Например, нету в английском языке.

SOFIA. Ты знаешь, я думаю, что это как код наш. Наш код, мы между нами общаемся, и мы понимаем, что мы свое, понимаешь? Это же, у тебя книжка «Горе от Ума». У нас раньше было много другие книги: у нас Дюлев и Петровы, и еще какие книги. Бабру слов скажешь, и чье [tumbled] понимает? Свой человек, что с ним можно общаться. Как нас код, как можно сказать.

DARIA. Я бы хотела, у нас есть на английском языке это код. Ну как. Потому что мы повторим этот интервью, я изменила

SOFIA. Конечно.

DARIA. Потому что ты знаешь, что мы говорим про Горе от Ума, это был сюрприз раньше.

SOFIA. А я стати перечитала, ну не до окончания; начала читать. И стеснилась. Слушай, каждый почти фразы – крылатые слова. Утвердительно на произведение.

DARIA. Эти версии Горе от Ума, есть всего (подчеркивали).

SOFIA. Тот согласна полностью. Читать и прямо [incomprehensible] как о чем вещь идет, ну как лопать набить заросли доучила.

DARIA. Ну, да.

SOFIA. [muffled]

DARIA. Ну, да. Благодаря эти, может быть ты лучше будешь для этого ряда вопросов.

Несколько этих выражения не происходят от Горе от Ума. Поэтому это сюрприз и если ты знаешь это выражения из Горе от Ума...

SOFIA. Я стати тогда нет! А я стати тогда тоже страшно, когда откуда из какого – это произведение. Только «в воздух чепчики бросали» ты мне спрашивала, и я не вспомнила откуда это. А все остановит я помела. Нас хорошо учили в школе.

DARIA. Окей, ну первое, это: «Шел в комнату, попал в другую» (*Горе от Ума*). Ты это знаешь?

SOFIA. Шел в комнату, попал в другую. Ну мне кажется, это оттуда. Оттуда?

DARIA. Это *Горе от Ума*.

SOFIA. Да, *Горе от Ума*.

DARIA. Да. Ну, ты знаешь. Это типа... Ты думаешь, что ты впервые услышала это выражение в школе или когда ты ...

SOFIA. Нет. Вот это «Шел в комнату, попал в другую», оно нежно, редко в принципе. Он в прочтении редко входит. А вот например...шас, я скажу... «Служить бы рад, прислужиться тошно.» Это есть.

DARIA. Я спросила, потому что я думала, что очень редкие ситуации происходят.

SOFIA. Да, это редко. Прочитала мне давно, поэтому я уж помню. Я не знала, что ты мне спрашиваешь, я просто заходилась мне вспомнить.

DARIA. Ну, это очень редко используют это выражение, но когда? Потому что я не понимаю почему в жизни ты можешь это использовать.

SOFIA. Ну, в каком случае можно использовать?

DARIA. Да.

SOFIA. Ну, «Шел в комнату, попал в другую». Ну когда-то собирался пойти. То есть он шел в одном месте отказалось что-то совсем другое место. Не то куда он хотел попасть.

DARIA. Да.

SOFIA. Да, это может быть.

DARIA. Я ничего не знаю об этом.

SOFIA. Вот это вообще все знают «дым Отечества нам сладок и приятен.» Вот это вот тоже шась выражения. [muffled]

DARIA. Ну, думаешь, что «Шел в комнату, попал в другую» -- редко использовать, или устаревшее?

SOFIA. Оно не интересно, оно как не очень интересно, вот это выражение.

DARIA. Ну да. Хорошо! Ну, второе выражение, это: «Привычка свыше нам дана, замена счастию она» (*Евгений Онегин*).

SOFIA. Да.

DARIA. Ты это знаешь?

SOFIA. «Привычка свыше нам дана, замена счастию она.» это я знаю.

DARIA. Ты знаешь, откуда оно?

SOFIA. Это мне кажется, по-моему ни оттуда. Это из *Евгении Онегина*.

DARIA. Ура! Да, да потому что я на Яндексe искала «очень популярные крылатых слова из *Евгении Онегина*.» У меня нет вопроса об этом, потому что мне все равно *Евгении Онегин*. Окей, последнее: «Господствует ещё смешенье языков: французского с ниже... [stumbling over words]» (*Горе от Ума*).

SOFIA. ...Нижегородским.

DARIA. Да.

SOFIA. Это, по-моему, это отсюда. Это из *Горе от Ума*.

DARIA. Ура! Умница! Ну, это выражение, думаешь, что оно устаревшее, редкое выражения или часто использовали?

SOFIA. Ну, это возможно. Это довольно часто, когда... как сказать? Ни того ни другого языка как флетует человек не знает. Вот и как бы Французском Нижегородским, то есть не Французском как следует не знает не Нижегородского, как следует...

DARIA. Когда использовать это выражение? Я видела в словаре, что есть другие варианты этого выражения. Ты это знаешь, или нет?

SOFIA. Какой?

DARIA. Ну, это просто «смешенье французского с Нижегородским» и это все. Это сокрушённый вариант.

SOFIA. Ах, ты мне ждуть до то, о что было? Или как?

DARIA. Это без слова зыков.

SOFIA. Но да, это осмыслений языков. Правильно. Да. Они загородкой, это о Нижегородце разговаривали. Профессиональный о русские язык, только раньше же как. Но наверно некого у вас американские разговоры в одном штате. Злой акцент другом другую. Ну у нас также. Нижегородском, по-моему, окуют немножко. А [incomprehensible] больше окуют.

DARIA. Но мой вопрос, это про другие варианты этого выражения, потому что я увидела, что это часто сокращанно, что это не все это фраза, а просто коротко говорили.

SOFIA. Да, когда ты используешь. Разлом, вот он на столе, что-то такого было?

DARIA. Да, потому что, когда ты используешь это выражение речи, это вся эта фраза, или короткий вариант? Потому что, я знаю, что есть много слова в этой фразе.

SOFIA. Ну, когда использоваться. Это коротко? Ну как бы у нас не узкий, когда, не знаю, языка и вот и вот какие слова из французского ну и всего другого языка. Русские фразы.

DARIA. Хорошо. Ну, сейчас, после того как ты перечитала книгу, по шкале от 1 до 5, где 1 абсолютно незнакомый и 5 полностью осведомлённый – как ты бы оценила твое знание пьесы «Горе от Ума»? Ты очень хорошо это знаешь или...?

SOFIA. Ну нет, ну нет. На 4 наверно. На 4, мне кажем так. Положительно свести, на 4.

DARIA. Но до того, как ты перечитала в этом месяце, где ты была в этом шкале?

SOFIA. Ну, скажу на 3+. На 3+.

DARIA. Хорошо. Вот так. Ну сейчас мы говорим про учение. Ну, когда ты впервые прочитала пьесу «Горе от Ума» в школе?

SOFIA. В девятом классе, по-моему, учили.

DARIA. Потому что –

SOFIA. В восьмом...? Сколько лет у меня была. Ну, щас скажу тебе. Лет 14, 15, наверно. Вот так.

DARIA. Потому что мы раньше говорила о том, что классы, девятый класс сейчас было ... я забыла слова... что девятый класс... сейчас восьмой класс в этом системе образования девятый класс в это время, когда ты была в школе. Я помню...

SOFIA. Я не понимаю вопрос. Я попомню школу, я школу помню...

DARIA. Мой вопрос, это то, что ты сказала, что было что-то... что есть изменение, когда... ты бы было, не знаю, восьмой... я не знаю, как это возможно объяснять.

SOFIA. Обучали?

DARIA. Что, когда Лиза сейчас, она сейчас было восьмом классе, что это было твоим седьмом классе, что это было изменение, когда –

SOFIA. Ах, я не знаю, я так примерна тебе сказала. Я не помню.

DARIA. Я не знаю.



SOFIA. Я не помню в каком классе мы учили. Но сейчас это, по-моему, в девятом учил или в восьмом. А мы на раньше. Мы всего раньше. У меня на седьмом учились корет того. Не вспомню в каком.

DARIA. Да. Хорошо. Ну, это было давно, но ты помнишь, как твои учителя тебя учили об пьесе? Ты прочитала целую книгу, или сокращённых вариантов раньше.

SOFIA. Мы читали полностью, все произведение, когда учились. И потом знала, как мы учились. Значит читали полностью произведение а потом дома читали, нет в школу – сейчас в школе читать – а мы дома должно были прочитать, а потом а в школе мы уже разбирали по этим героем: их характеры, их говоры, вот.

DARIA. Ну, главные.

SOFIA. Поэтому у нас остались в голове. Сочинение писали на этот теме.

DARIA. И ты стихи или монологи запомнила тоже?

SOFIA. Какие стихи?

DARIA. Типа стихи или монологи запомнила из *Горе от Ума*? Это не стихи; это монологи.

SOFIA. Монолог. Да, это монолог.

DARIA. Да.

SOFIA. Ну, да. Конечно.

DARIA. Помнишь какой?

SOFIA. Нет, конечно. Подожди. Мы монологи из *Горе от Ума*, не помню, что учили.

Только вот эти крылатые слова мы проходили наверно. Монологи мы учили из Евгении Онегин, это мы точно учили. А ты не прочитала Евгении Онегин?

DARIA. Да, я прочитала Евгении Онегин на английском.

SOFIA. У Пушкина как сказал, говорят: это человек, который русский язык он стал цельном литературном, понимаешь? И как так ты знаешь русский язык тебя может быть интересно на русском прочитать.

DARIA. Да, но моя школе летом, в этой школе была эта женщина, и она хотела русский язык учила, чтобы ... я думаю, что она хотела... *Война и мир*, да?

SOFIA. Ох, *Война и мир*, нет. Это не прочитать.

DARIA. Но она хотела это прочитать.

SOFIA. Но это не реально. Теперь прочитать *Война и мир*, это не реально. Мы прочитали просто... но ее... мы ее учили в школе, бот так было очень тяжело, вот. Со рослом, совсем по-другому читаться, когда вы патера [incomprehensible] это совсем по-другому это все вспоминает. А Евгении Онегин на английском читать, это просто как роман.

DARIA. Да.

SOFIA. Да нет с этим [incomprehensible diom], имена Пушкин букет выражения, о приставка там Онегин на был [incomprehensible] за то, что Ланский вызвала Онегина за то, что он оказал из-за его девочки. Ну это не то совсем. Нет, вот эта Пушкинская слога.

DARIA. Ну, хорошо. Окей, ну сейчас, потому что ты только что прочитала песню, ты можешь выкинуть из головы несколько примеров крылатых выражений из *Горе от Ума*?

SOFIA. Вспомнить, когда?

DARIA. Да.

SOFIA. Вспомнить? Щас. Ну, я это сказала, да? Что «дым Отечества нам сладок и приятен» и щас... «Чины людьми даются, а люди могут ошибатют (she means to say «обмануться»), да? Хмм, что еще? Есть такое «Чины людьми даются, а люди могут ошибатют» а еще знаешь как «Ба! Знакомые всё лица!». Это у нас тоже, когда – проходит это очень часто повздорят, заходит в компания. И видит все знакомые... «ба! Знакомые всё лица!». Вот

это тоже есть. Ах, еще есть, знаешь как, еще есть крылатые выражения. «Там хорошо, где нас нет.» Вот. Может немножко по-другому, оно там в произведении, но смысл это «Там хорошо, где нас нет.»

DARIA. Ну да, я знаю, что в песне не точно, это «ох, где нас лучше» «где нас нет.» Это диалог. Но в выражении это все вместе.

SOFIA. Ну про «каретку, мне каретку» даже говорит еще. Когда оно уходит выходит извела, это такой расстроены и говорят «карету, мне карету» и у нас тоже часто повторяется. Вот что там еще может быть... минуи нас пуще... щас... «Минуи нас пуще всех печалей И барский гнев, и барская любовь.»

DARIA. Вау, это много! Часто, когда я это спрошу, никто не может вспомнит эти фразы, потому что есть так много и часто люди не знают откуда...

SOFIA. Да, это да. Потому что это на что они крылатые, что оно используют, но откуда уже забыли откуда это было.

DARIA. Но ты сказала, что в школе ваш учителя говорили о крылатых выражениях типа «ох, вот это крылатое выражение», или нет?

SOFIA. Думаю, что да. Да, скорей всего да. Конечно, потому что и у нас это говорили, и после нас будут говорит. Да нас же тоже как крылатые выражения использовали. Уже двести лет используется.

DARIA. Хорошо, у тебя есть еще выражения в голове, давай. Ну, мой следующий вопрос, это про Грибоедове, как он.

SOFIA. О чем?

DARIA. О Грибоедове, тура автор Горе от Ума. Ну, что ты думаешь о Грибоедове?

SOFIA. Ах, Грибоедов. Грибоедов – это талантливый человек. Он же романсы писал, я вообще думала, что он погиб, когда он за сорок точно было. А ему 34 года погиб.

Молодой совсем был. Только что замылся. У его причём нет одного произведения, у него несколько, он много писал. Это просто его известная. Я он дипломатом был первое очерк. Только замылся, девушка его любила, потом замуж она не вышла. Она была восхитила, фильм мы смотрели, она не вышла замуж, так любила. И детей у нее не было.

DARIA. Да, его жена же было беременна, когда он умер

SOFIA. Когда он погиб и потеряла.

DARIA. Да, потеряла ее беременность.

SOFIA. И вот так, вот случилось.

DARIA. Ну ты все это знаешь о школе, или ты знаешь

SOFIA. Откого узнать. На наверно больше школе ну и так книги это мы читали и да мы случим и ступ. Но в школе очень много.

DARIA. Ну часто, когда мы читаем книги в школе мы тоже читаем биография это авторов, чтобы узнать о кем.

SOFIA. Я был во Грузи – Чавчавадзе. Она из вождя было, дочка графа: «кто он» граф.

Граф, по-моему. Ну еще какого-нибудь очень высокой положения в обществе был Чавчавадзе. Я была в этом сайте, где они жили. Там памятник стоит Тургенева.

DARIA. Да, думаю, что памятник рядом с метро ... забыла.

SOFIA. У нас, в Москве? У нас в чести пруда.

DARIA. Это правда. Забыла.

SOFIA. Я была во Грузи по веселья.

DARIA. Забыла, что...

SOFIA. Она из Грузинка была, его жена.

DARIA. И это где его

SOFIA. Где погребло его. Больше не знаю.

DARIA. Это в Тбилиси [mispronounced]?

SOFIA. В Грузии.

DARIA. Он сейчас в Тбилиси [again, mispronounced] ...

SOFIA. Тбилиси.

DARIA. Это что хотела сказать.

SOFIA. А раньше Тифлиса назывался город. А сейчас Тбилиси.

DARIA. Хорошо. И последний вопрос, это: ты думаешь, что использование особых примеров крылатых слов можно рассматривать как политически? Есть политический нюанс в использовании его крылатых слова.

SOFIA. Да, наверно в любом случае. Но только смотри в Москве, что еще можешь знать о этих крылатых слова.

DARIA. Это потому, что я знаю, что он был дипломатом, и я знаю, что он, что у него были друзья, которые были декабристы. И я знаю, что Чацкий, что он типа сказал очень много.

SOFIA. Может быть декабристом. Не знаю. Не уверена. Мне кажется, что у него нет тот характер был, декабристом был.

DARIA. Я не знаю, я знаю, что был этот больше... не скандал, не вопрос: «ох, Грибоедов, он был декабристом или нет?»

SOFIA. Нет. Он декабристом не был. Он может быть где-то рассылал с гляди дружеском, том дружил. Нет, [incomprehensible]. Но декабристом он не был. Не думаю, что он мог в голове могла прийти мысль. И все свергать. Не думаю.

DARIA. Мне кажется, что это интересно, что он был друзья с декабристами, но его песня не был... не сейчас, что это не политический роман, это просто...

SOFIA. Нет, политический? Не знаю. Он не политический. Он, как сказать, отображал жизнь что ли кого общество был кажем так. Он не политический. Но он отображал жизнь того общество. Но в принципе то, что он мог быть декабристом или нет, у него декабристом были. Потому что, когда вящее свет, он был не очень вострой, они все друг другом знали. Вот поэтому он дружил с ними, но декабристом не был. Так и он ушел в Турки.

DARIA. Я не знаю. Я знаю, что есть эта книга называется *Грибоедов и Декабристы* и что автор, Нечкина, хотела показать, что он декабристом был.

SOFIA. Нет, нет.

DARIA. Но это была пропаганда.

SOFIA. Да, да. Потому что они вроде начало арестовали, потому что кто-ти сказали, что он с ним разговаривал на эти теме, ну так все разговаривал, разговаривал, разговаривал. С ним не пошел в семнадцатого площадь. Вот.

DARIA. Ну это все. Эти мои вопросы еще раз.

## 2.4.2 English Translation

SOFIA. Hi.

DARIA. Hi.

SOFIA. I thought you had a wonderful computer.

DARIA. This is because, I did not know why, but Apple Store deleted my file...

SOFIA. Was everything lost, Dasha? Did you lose everything?

DARIA. No, it was just an interview file, this file and one document, that's all. They were both for my thesis.

SOFIA. A lot remained. That's nothing scary.

DARIA. Very scary!

SOFIA. Scary! You still have time, it's not much left, right? Is it not enough for you?

DARIA. Yes, I don't have much time and I've ... I called the Apple store five times, and I couldn't do anything, and I was like, "oh, how is that possible?"

SOFIA. Well, it's nothing. Let's do it, let's do the questions.

DARIA. Alright. Well then. How old are you?

SOFIA. 57.

DARIA. Alright. And where were you born?

SOFIA. I was born in the Soviet Union, well, it used to be Moldavia. Now it's called Moldova.

DARIA. And you grew up in a different place?

SOFIA. Yes, I was not born in Moscow.

DARIA. Well yes.

SOFIA. Moldavia. Okay, you were talking about something like you were [incomprehensible]

DARIA. This is a question about education and all that. Because, I know you didn't go to school in Moldova. Well, when did you come to Moscow?

SOFIA. I was seventeen years old when I entered the institute.

DARIA. I'm sorry, what?

SOFIA. I entered the university - well, we have an institute for everything to be thought about. We moved.

DARIA. Well, tell me about your secondary schooling.

SOFIA. School?

DARIA. Yes.

SOFIA. [incomprehensible] school? Good. We had a good school. Good teachers, they give us a lot of them, and they were good. Well, I studied well. Okay.

DARIA. Do you think there was any specific focus on reading in your upbringing or education? Because, earlier, when we spoke, I explained to you that my dad, he read Harry Potter books to me every night, and when I could read, we still read these books together. Was there anything like this in your life?

SOFIA. Well, were you reading me, of course. I read a lot, and at school we read, my parents always read to me. And then I read with the master and he read a lot. Now, less. Already I haven't enough in a year.

DARIA. Well, do you still read for pleasure?

SOFIA. Of course.

DARIA. But less than less?

SOFIA. Of course, yes. I read less now. Now there's stuff to do on the Internet, you know? There is so little to do because we didn't. We bought a TV when I was five years old. When I was five

years old, the television took up residence in our house. Here. And to convey a little when it was, there are now a hundred channels. And before two, three was a channel. And cha, we always read.

DARIA. Yes. Well, what books or novels do you like to read now or before? Because I know that Mila, she loves these psychology books and I don't get it!

SOFIA. Well no. I love art books to read before sleep because they are joyful, and some are educational.

DARIA. Yes.

SOFIA. Here. And I'm reading... "eat ...", one sec, I'll tell you...I read ... "Eat, pray, love." Like that one.

DARIA. I don't know this one.

SOFIA. By [incomprehensible] Julie Rogers, I started flipping through a book about what the film had overlooked.

DARIA. Good. I know Julie Rogers ... but other than reading, do you listen to the radio in your spare time?

SOFIA. No, the TV. We don't have a radio now. What radio? Now it's the TV.

DARIA. Do you not have a radio in the car? All that? Well, you watch TV, but do you also read newspapers, or just get the news on the Internet?

SOFIA. Yes, I read newspapers. If there is time. I find out everything on TV and on the Internet.

DARIA. Well yes, I agree. I have my podcasts and other than that, it's just the internet. Well then. In your opinion, what is it, "winged words?"

SOFIA. Winged words? Well, one sec I'll tell it. Words that we use that are as short as you want to speak. And everyone knows these words. You understand each other, what's being spoken.

DARIA. I think it's cool, a cool concept because we don't have it English. Well, what do you think, why are there more winged words in Russian than in other languages? For example, not in English.

SOFIA. You know, I think it's like our code. Our code, we communicate between us, and we understand that we are ours (мы свое), do you understand? It's this, you have the book *Woe from Wit*. We used to have many other books: we have Dyulev and Petrov, and some other books. You say the words to a woman who then understands? Our own person with whom you can communicate. It's like our code, as one might say.

DARIA. I wished we had this code in English. Well then, because we are repeating this interview, I changed –

SOFIA. Of course.

DARIA. Because you know that we are talking about *Woe from Wit*, and it was a surprise before.

SOFIA. And I reread it, well, not until the end; started to read. And [incomprehensible]. And listen, almost every phrase is a winged word. Affirmatively in the work.

DARIA. In this version of *Woe from Wit*, all of them are (highlighted).

SOFIA. I agree completely. Read and directly [incomprehensible] how everything is going on, well, how to dig into a thicket to finish learning...

DARIA. Well yes.

SOFIA. [muffled]

DARIA. Well yes. Thanks to this, maybe you will be better off for this series of questions. Several of these expressions do not come from *Woe from Wit*. Therefore, it'll be a surprise, and if you know these expressions from *Woe from Wit* –

SOFIA. In that way, no! And then I'm also scared when it comes from which - this work. Only "bonnets were thrown into the air" you asked me, and I did not remember where it came from. And I will stop everything. We were well taught at school.

DARIA. Okay, first thing is: Шел в комнату, попал в другую (He walked into one room, found himself in another) (Woe from Wit). Do you know it?

SOFIA. Шел в комнату, попал в другую (He walked into one room, found himself in another). Well, I think it's from there. Is it from there?

DARIA. It's *Woe from Wit*.

SOFIA. Yes, *Woe from Wit*.

DARIA. Yes. Well, you know. It's kind of ... Do you think you first heard this expression at school or when you –

SOFIA. No. This is "Walked into one room, found himself in another", it is narrow, rare in principle. He rarely enters in reading. But for example, ... one sec, I'll tell you ... "Служить бы рад, прислужиться тошно (I'd be happy to serve, but it sickens me to be servile). It is.

DARIA. I asked because I thought that it would occur in very rare situations.

SOFIA. Yes, it's rare. I read it a long time ago, so I really remember. I didn't know what you were asking me, I just stopped for a second to remind me.

DARIA. Well, it is very rare to use this expression, but when? Because I don't understand why in life you can use it.

SOFIA. So, in which case can I use it?

DARIA. Yes.

SOFIA. Well, "He walked into the room, found himself in another." Well, at one point he was going to go. That is, he walked in one place and it turned out something completely different place. Not where he wanted to go.

DARIA. Yes.

SOFIA. Yes, it can be.

DARIA. I don't know anything about this.

SOFIA. Generally, everyone knows "И дым Отечества нам сладок и приятен!" (sweet and dear is the smoke of our Fatherland) This is also a part of an expression. [muffled]

DARIA. Well, do you think that "He went into the room, found himself in another" - is it rarely used, or outdated?

SOFIA. It is not interesting, it is not very interesting, this expression.

DARIA. Well yeah. Alright! Well, the second expression is: "Привычка свыше нам дана, замена счастью она (A habit from above has been given to us, it is a substitute for happiness)" (Eugene Onegin).

SOFIA. Yes.

DARIA. Do you know it?

SOFIA. "A habit from above has been given to us, a substitute for happiness." I know it.

DARIA. Do you know where it comes from?

SOFIA. It seems to me, in my opinion, it's not from there. This is from Eugene Onegin.

DARIA. Hurrah! Yes, yes, because I was looking on Yandex for "very popular winged words from Eugene Onegin." I don't have any questions about this, because I don't care about Eugene Onegin. Okay, the last one: "Господствует ещё смешенье языков: французского с ниже... (There is still a mixture of languages: French with below) ... (stumbling over words) (Woe from Mind).

SOFIA. Nizhny Novgorod.

DARIA. Yes.

SOFIA. This, in my opinion, is from here. This is from Woe from Wit.

DARIA. Hurrah! Clever! Well, this expression, do you think that it is an outdated, rare expression or is it often used?

SOFIA. Well it is possible. It's quite common when ... how to say this? Neither one nor the other language as flutters a person does not know. So, as it were, with French and the language of Nizhny Novgorod, that is, not French, does not know properly, does not know Nizhny Novgorod, as it should ...

DARIA. When does one use this expression? I saw in the dictionary that there are other versions of this expression. Do you know these or not?

SOFIA. Which one?

DARIA. Well, it's just "смешенье французского с Нижегородским (mixture of French with Nizhny Novgorod)" and that's it. It's an abridged option.

SOFIA. Ah, are you waiting for me before what it was about? Or how?

DARIA. This is a speechless language.

SOFIA. But yes, these are language interpretations. Right. Yes. They are a fence; it is about how people from Nizhny Novgorod talk. Basically the same as the Russian language, but earlier. But you probably don't have a single American way of speaking in a state. An accent is each to his own. Well with us as well. Nizhny Novgorod, in my opinion, will be a little bit enveloped. And [incomprehensible] more enveloped.

DARIA. But my question is about other versions of this expression, because I saw that it was often shortened, that this was not all together a phrase, but simply said more briefly.

SOFIA. Yes, when you use it. Right, here it is on the table, something like that?

DARIA. Yes, when you use this expression of speech is this whole phrase, or a short version? Because, I know that there are a lot of words in this phrase.

SOFIA. Well, when you use it. Is it short? Well, it's like we have a narrow one when, I don't know, the language, and here are some words from French and of all other languages. Russian phrases.

DARIA. Good. Well, now, after you reread the book, on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is completely unfamiliar and 5 completely knowledgeable - how would you rate your knowledge of the play "Woe from Wit"? Do you know this very well or ...?

SOFIA. Well no, well no. 4 probably. At 4, I think so. Positively would say a 4.

DARIA. But before you read it this month, where were you on this scale?

SOFIA. Well, I will say 3+. At 3+.

DARIA. Alright. So there. Well now we are talking about schooling. So, when did you first read the play "Woe from Wit" at school?

SOFIA. I believe they taught it in ninth grade.

DARIA. Because -

SOFIA. In the eighth ...? How old was I. Well, one sec I'll tell you. When I was 14, 15, probably. As it is.

DARIA. Because we used to say that classes, the ninth grade was now ... I forgot the words ... that the ninth grade ... now is the eighth grade in this educational system, the ninth grade at the time you were in school. I remember...

SOFIA. I do not understand the question. I remember school, I remember school ...

DARIA. My question is that you said that there was something ... that there is a change when ... you would be, I don't know, the eighth ... I don't know how to explain it.

SOFIA. They taught?

DARIA. That, when Lisa now, she was now in eighth grade, that this was your seventh grade, that there was a change when -

SOFIA. Ah, I don't know, I told you so as an example. I do not really remember.

DARIA. Yeah, I don't know.

SOFIA. I don't remember which grade we were taught it in. But now, in my opinion, it's taught in the ninth or in the eighth grade. And we did everything earlier. All of it we did before. In my seventh year, they studied it. I don't remember which one.

DARIA. Yes. Good. Well, that was a long time ago, but do you remember how your teachers taught you about the play? Did you read the whole book or a shortened version back then?

SOFIA. We read in full, the whole work, when we studied. And then I knew what we studied. So, we read the whole work and then read at home, not in school - now students read at school - but we had to read at home, and then at school we already sorted out everything about the heroes: their character, their dialects, that all.

DARIA. Yeah, the main things.

SOFIA. Therefore, that remained in our heads. We wrote an essay on this topic.

DARIA. And did you memorize poems or monologues too?

SOFIA. What poems?

DARIA. Like poems or monologues remembered from *Woe from Wit*? Not poems but monologues.

SOFIA. Monologue. Yes, it is a monologue.

DARIA. Yes.

SOFIA. Well yes. Of course.

DARIA. Do you remember which one?

SOFIA. Of course not. Wait. I do not remember which monologues from *Woe from Wit*. Only these winged words we went over probably. We studied monologues from Evgenii Onegin, we specifically learned them. Have you not read Evgenii Onegin?

DARIA. Yes, I read Evgenii Onegin in English.

SOFIA. As Pushkin said: they say this is the man who became the whole Russian language, understand? And since you know Russian, it may be interesting to read it in Russian.

DARIA. Yes, but my summer school, this woman was at this school, and she wanted to learn Russian so that ... I think she wanted ... *War and Peace*, right?

SOFIA. Oh, *War and Peace*, no. This is not to fully read.

DARIA. But she wanted to read it.

SOFIA. But this is impossible. To read *War and Peace* at this time, this is impossible. We just read ... but her ... we learned it at school, but that was very hard, yeah. With growth, it's completely different to read, when you throw out the [incomprehensible] it's completely different, everything is remembered. And Evgenii Onegin read in English, it's just like a novel.

DARIA. Yes.

SOFIA. No, with this [incomprehensible idiom], meaning Pushkin are a bunch of expressions, about Onegin's prefix there was a [duel] because Lansky called Onegin for what he had done because of his girl. Well, that's not it at all. No, this is Pushkin's style.

DARIA. Oh well. Okay, now, because you just read the play, can you pull out of your memory a few examples of the winged expressions from *Woe from Wit*?

SOFIA. Recall, when?

DARIA. Yes.



SOFIA. Recall? One sec. Well, I said one, right? That "the smoke of the Fatherland is sweet and pleasant for us" and one sec ... "Чины людьми даются, а люди могут ошибаются (she means to say "обмануться") (People give themselves ranks and people can feel it ("to be deceived")), yes? Hmm, what else? There is such "People give ranks, but people can feel it" and you also know how "ба! Знакомые всё лица!" ("bah! Familiar faces!") This is with us, too, when – it occurs very often when one enters company. And one sees all their friends ... "bah! Familiar faces!". That's one too. Ah, there is still, you know how, there are still winged expressions. "Там хорошо, где нас нет" ("It's good where we are not"). Here. Maybe a little differently, it's there in the work, but the sense is "It's good, where we are not."

DARIA. Well, yes, I know that the play is not exactly that, it is "oh, where would be better?" "where we are not." This is a dialogue. But in the expression, it is all together.

SOFIA. Well, about the "каретку, мне каретку!" ("a carriage, bring me a carriage") people say even more. When one comes out vexed, they are so upset and say "carriage, get me a carriage" and we often repeat it too. What else might be more ... pass us by now ... right now ... "Минуй нас пуще всех печалей И барский гнев, и барская любовь." (Pass us by all sorrows and lordly anger and lordly love").

DARIA. Wow, that's a lot! Often when I ask this, no one can remember any expressions, because there are so many and often people don't know where ...

SOFIA. Yes, that's it. Because this is what they are winged for, that they are used, but people have already forgotten where they came from.

DARIA. But you said that at school your teachers talked about winged expressions like "oh, this is a winged expression," or no?

SOFIA. I think yes. Yes, most likely yes. Of course, because they said it to us, and after we would say it. Yes, we also used winged expressions. We have been using them already for two hundred years.

DARIA. Ok, you have no more expressions in your head, let's move on. Well, my next question is about Griboedov: who is he?

SOFIA. About what?

DARIA. About Griboedov, the author of Woe from Wit. So, what do you think of Griboedov?

SOFIA. Ah, Griboedov. Griboedov was a talented man. He wrote romances, I in general thought that he died when he was exactly forty. And he was 34 years old. He was young when he died. Just got married. Moreover, he does not have only one work of writing, he has several. He wrote a lot. This is just his most famous one. He was a diplomat first. He just got married, the girl loved him so much that she did not marry again. She was delighted. We watched the film; she did not get married again because she loved him so much. And she had no children.

DARIA. Yes, his wife was pregnant when he died.

SOFIA. When he died, she lost the child.

DARIA. Yes, she lost her pregnancy.

SOFIA. And that's how it happened.

DARIA. Well, you know all this from school, or you know—?

SOFIA. I found out from someone. Probably more in school, because we read the books, and we listen etc. But in school very much.

DARIA. Well, often, when we read books at school, we also read the biography of these authors to find out about them.

SOFIA. I was in Georgia. Chavchavadze, she was from nobility, the daughter of a count; which count I don't remember. A count, in my opinion. Well, Chavchavadze was in a very high position in society. I visited the site where they lived. There is a monument to Turgenev.

DARIA. Yes, I think that the monument next to the metro ... I forget which one.

SOFIA. Ours, in Moscow? We have it at the metro Chisti Prudi.

DARIA. That's true. I forgot.

SOFIA. I was in Georgia for fun.

DARIA. I forgot that ...

SOFIA. She was from Georgia, his wife.

DARIA. And this is where he is.

SOFIA. Where they buried him. I don't know any more.

DARIA. It is in Tbilisi [mispronounced]?

SOFIA. In Georgia.

DARIA. He is now in Tbilisi [again, mispronounced] ...

SOFIA. Tbilisi.

DARIA. This is what I wanted to say.

SOFIA. And before it was called the Tiflis city. And now Tbilisi.

DARIA. Alright. And the last question is: do you think that the use of specific examples of winged words can be considered political? Is there a political nuance in the use of his winged words?

SOFIA. Yes, probably in specific situations. But just look in Moscow, what else can you know about these winged words.

DARIA. I ask because I know that he was a diplomat, and I know that he had friends who were Decembrists. And I know that Chatsky, that he said a lot...

SOFIA. He might have been a Decembrist. I don't know. I'm not sure. It seems to me that he doesn't have that character to be a Decembrist.

DARIA. I don't know, I know that this was a big ... not a scandal, but a question: "well, Griboedov, was he a Decembrist or not?"

SOFIA. Not. He was not a Decembrist. He might be sending out somewhere with a friendly look, then became friends. No, [incomprehensible]. But he was not a Decembrist. I don't think that he could have had that thought in his head to overthrow everything. I don't think so.

DARIA. It seems to me that it is interesting that he was friends with the Decembrists, but his play was not ... not at the current moment a political novel, it's just ...

SOFIA. No, political? I do not know. He is not political. He, how to say, reflected the life of the person society thought he was. He is not political. But he reflected the life of that society. But in principle, that he could be a Decembrist or not, he had Decembrist friends. Because when the great light, he was not very sharp, they all knew each other. That is why he was friends with them, but he was not a Decembrist. Then he went to the Turkey.

DARIA. I don't know. I know that there is this book called *Griboedov and the Decembrists* and that the author, Nechkina, wanted to show that he was a Decembrist.

SOFIA. No, no.

DARIA. But it was propaganda.

SOFIA. Yes, yes. Because they at the beginning sort of arrested him, because someone said that he talked with him on this topic, well, so everyone talked, talked, talked. He did not go to the seventeenth square with them. So there.

DARIA. Well, that's all. These were once again my questions.

## 2.5 Aleksandr's Interview (Originally in English)

ALEKSANDR. Is the connection good?

DARIA. Yes, I have a consistent connection with you. So, that's good.

ALEKSANDR. Yes, it's better.

DARIA. Spectacular.

ALEKSANDR. Sorry, I just came home and was like [imitating sleep] for a minute.

DARIA. Yeah, I did that last night when I was doing homework and I woke up this morning and I was one paragraph from the end of my reading, and I fell asleep.

ALEKSANDR. Okay, I'm ready to answer questions. You were asking about books, something like that, and I think I didn't catch the last question.

DARIA. Okay, how about we start from the beginning just to make sure, because I'm recording this so I can transcribe later and so it's coherent, one...

ALEKSANDR. Sorry, I was drinking water...

[tangent about water bottles]

ALEKSANDR. Okay, let's roll.

DARIA. Okay, so how old are you?

ALEKSANDR. 31.

DARIA. Where were you born and where did you grow up, if they are different.

ALEKSANDR. I was born and grew up in Moscow, actually in this place. South, no north of Moscow. So, I was born and raised in Moscow.

DARIA. So, do you think that there is any specific reading focus in your upbringing? So, for example my dad used to read me the Harry Potter books when I was younger and then he used to always go with me to the library to get new books like every week. So, was there anything like that for you?

ALEKSANDR. For me, I was brought up by people with books as well. So, my grandmother used to read to us, to me, my brother, my sister all the time. The books there were like Soviet vite? books. Tchaikovsky, Barto, Aignovotov, and Pushkin, that would be the most popular one. And then my mom works in the union of writer, works now, and now it's not as big as it used to be.

DARIA. What's the name of the union?

ALEKSANDR. It's just the Russian union of россиярежество. So, you always go to your mom's work and you see some important writers over there. You see books and we always had books around, like lying around. But my grandmother read to us more than mom. And then when you go to school you start to read yourself. At school it's like a competition between this and cartoons, and then video games appeared...

DARIA. Yeah.

ALEKSANDR. All the things. But books were always for me the best. Is that what you asked for?

DARIA. In your secondary schooling, I imagine you also read a lot... because that's what you do in school.

ALEKSANDR. Sorry, what?

DARIA. I'm assuming you read a lot of assigned books in school as well?

ALEKSANDR. Yes, of course. We read lots of encyclopedias, there was a lot like that. And I remember two of my favorite ones, you know sometimes you want to find something... I had a book...there is one book, several books, one book about an elephant who went to school, that was

its name. I don't know why I really, really liked it. And I read it several times, I really, really liked it. And also, I read a book about making some stuff from paper, you know?

DARIA. Like origami?

ALEKSANDR. Yeah, you know something like you make an owl or something like that, some toys, and I had three parts of this book, you know silly book, and I really enjoyed it. The first part specifically then the second one less and the third one less than others but still. I reread it several time. And I have one favorite encyclopedia which was very interesting because it was penned about everything and I really liked the pictures there, there was [incomprehensible] and I recall space and stuff like this, dinosaurs of course. Dinosaurs, space, what else? Yeah, something like that. Again, that was only in space and there was history, something ancient Egypt was always interesting when you were a kid. Yeah, we were brought up by books.

DARIA. And right now, do you still have time to read for pleasure?

ALEKSANDR. As I already said, I always had a book to read and trying to read and I actually have, as you can see, multiple books right here, and I need to read some of them. Yeah, and I have a book I've been trying to finish, *Harry Potter and the Rationality Masses*, I think that's it in English, and I have another one I want to read, what else?

DARIA. I'm trying to find what book, what *Harry Potter* book that is, because that's not –

ALEKSANDR. It's a fan fiction book, it's out of Юковский (Yukovskii), it's actually free, have you heard about it? It's probably one of the most popular fan fiction of Harry Potter, and the interesting thing is that it's illegal to sell it, and they did the crowd funding thing and it was the most successful crowd funding book process in Russia. They collected 5 million for that.

DARIA. That's so cool!

ALEKSANDR. And they did it in three books like that. It's actually free for websites. First English name, yeah: *Harry Potter and the Methods of Rationality*. Interesting book. Yeah, and it's not for sale.

DARIA. Interesting.

ALEKSANDR. For free, you know. Ah, Der Promi, yes that's one. I'm trying to read for pleasure but I'm a bit overwhelmed with work, with stuff to do, to plan, to do some exercise, check, so I mostly read in transport, so that's basically my reading place. So, when I go from house to work and work to house or for example when I wait for someone... I have some friends who are always late, so you wait for them, you change them. And on the other hand, I myself want to be more organized, so I try not to be late, so it's a conflict. So, I usually have these gaps and I feel them with reading. It's a pleasure. At home, not that much. Sometimes, but not that much. In the bath sometimes.

DARIA. I did that just last week! I was so involved by the book I couldn't put it down.

ALEKSANDR. The thing is that it's your "personal time."

DARIA. So, other than reading, do you listen to the radio or read the newspaper?

ALEKSANDR. Newspaper – mostly not. I usually check the news on the website. If I need evening news, I check Youtubers on YouTube... I'm often watching something, like *The Daily Show*, something like that. And then I have a recommendation and if it's interesting and kind of short, then I watch it. Same with Russian news. Also, with some jokes, and they start joking about the news, and I'm like, okay, probably study the news. Basically, as well there is a mail.ru website, which is a website for mailing and such, a huge company. And their main website, to enter your folder, you get to the website and it's actually a news website. And that's my main mail use, because I'm going to check my mail and I see the news and there I can click if it's interesting or something important. Because I work in international relations, so I catch, for example, all

aircraft-related, American-Russian relations, and something international, some big news like the government going.

DARIA. You aren't getting any news about the first primary Democratic election in Iowa failing last night? You don't get news about that?

[tangent about the caucuses]

ALEKSANDR. Yeah, I'm working with Americans and with Stephen Colbert I really like his show, and Trevor Noah I read the news, that's why I'm catching it. Also, sometimes I use it in a class with Russian students. It's kind of interesting in your elections... I was following the impeachment trial as well.

DARIA. It ends tomorrow. Alright, so getting back on track. How would you define what a winged word is? Or крылатые фразы (winged expression)?

ALEKSANDR. I would say it's a phrase usually a phrase from some kind of text, some kind of book, usually it's a book, I'd say it's a book, it's also from movies which became ultimately popular. And they go and they repeat them and repeat them and repeat them. So, they heard it once and the parents repeat it and they joke and joke and joke and maybe you don't understand where it came from, but they repeat it and it's a nice phrase. So, it's a fixed phrase, like a quote, from some popular, maybe not a very popular one as well, there was a phrase from a movie that no one is watching anyone. So, it's a quote from some piece of text, art, something from based on text which became popular, which goes from one person to another, like folklore does, so same word. So, I remember it, I like it, I pass it, like anecdotes, they're dead.

DARIA. So, in English we don't have that many and we don't even have a term for it, so when I'm telling people about my thesis, I have to explain the whole concept because we have very few.

ALEKSANDR. As I told you before in the last session, I heard that the fixed phrase, phraseologism, is very popular in Turkish, just like if you study them, how they work there. What I heard, to speak basic Turkish in everyday life you still need to know them, so in Russian you might not know them. They can come across, it will sound weird, but you won't lose the conversation. But I heard that in Turkey they actually use them super often. I might say that it's ultimately because our languages are super flexible, and everything can be mixed and put it there, and you can change the position and all that, and then you have a fixed phrase that always goes together, it's kind of unusual. So it's kind of like something to cherish. There are phrases that are teaching you, like “без труда не вытащишь и рыбку из пруда” (no pain, no gain), something like [mumbled] phraseologism, бежать сломя голову (breaking your head running, meaning “run like heck”) ...

DARIA. So, I have a couple крылатые фразы for you that I'm going to read them and then I have some follow up questions and the first one is basically “do you know it and do you know where it's from?” and it's very possible you don't know where it's from.

ALEKSANDR. Very possible.

DARIA. Because some of these could be very niche, just a disclaimer. Oh, it looks like I lost one, that's fine.... So, the first one, wait I don't want to start with that one... So, the first one is, “учились бы на старших глядя” (learn from your forefathers).

ALEKSANDR. This one I know, “учились на старших глядя” (learn from your forefathers). This one I heard of course a lot. I don't where it came from. I heard it in school mostly rather than at home. At school, that's where I know this one.

DARIA. So, I chose this one because it seemed pretty niche. I couldn't imagine using it in a sentence.

ALEKSANDR. Ah, but this was trying to teach you something, like I said this phrase when I was making my teachers, telling us to study and looking at the elders like that so we take example, and they tell you what to do, what's right and what's wrong. And you need to listen to them, stuff like that. And as you know we have still a conservative view in many ways, and they tell you "this is good this is bad". But most of them can be used in a talking way, for example I can be in some company where I'm doing something and someone is drinking and it's like "look how it's done, учились бы на старших глядя" (learn from your forefathers) and they become the elder somehow. Just like one year, it's already enough to say that, so it can be a joke as well.

DARIA. Okay, so I found the one I was looking for. So, the second one I chose... Oh I forgot my last question. So, you would say it's not totally used every day?

ALEKSANDR. It depends. I don't hear it every day, but probably not every day, but you hear it more often when you are a kid.

DARIA. Would you say the reason that it isn't used is because it's niche and there's not that many situations for it, or because it's old?

ALEKSANDR. Also older, and also because life changes and we have this contact between adults and youngsters and actually you don't want to study looking on them, there's actually a big conflict in Russian literature, there's this Горе от Ума play that's actually about that because he's coming and they're trying to save him, there's this conflict between elders and the young that's going on. It's actually quite...it's because of this idea inside of the trade we don't use it that often. I wouldn't say it to students, I don't want them to follow me or whatever, not because they don't like it, it's not nice [laughs]

DARIA. So, you've heard of that, but you don't remember explicitly learning it in its connection to a play?

ALEKSANDR. No, where's, how Othello first said, "blah blah blah", no, no, never. I just heard the phrase and it was repeated in the same way, maybe some kids' show as well, because sometimes kids' shows teach you something as well.

DARIA. But do you have an idea of which, of what it's from?

ALEKSANDR. If I need a suggestion, I would say this phrase is very old and it's coming from the book which is called "Домострой" (Domostroi, meaning "Homebuilding"). I never read it, it's an old, old, medieval book about how to be in your house and I imagine it is from there, because that's the place where it's saying "you need to follow your parents" and "the man is in charge of the house" and there's several rules, I never read it fully, just some abstracts when I was a student and philosophical backgrounds. Probably I would say it's from there if I need to guess. You know what is домострой?

DARIA. I don't think so.

ALEKSANDR. It's called домострой, it's teaching you how to hit kids, how to wive...

DARIA. How to do what to kids?

ALEKSANDR. How to hit them.

DARIA. Oh my gosh, I was thinking to *heat* them, and I was thinking of a witch putting them in a pot.

ALEKSANDR. No, it's medieval, it's the rules of your family and your family is super strict, and I would say it's from there, and the answers... or maybe it's from Мономах (Monomakh), it could be the ruler, he would say that first, I don't remember him saying that, Владимир Мономах (Vladimir Monomakh), he was a ruler in Russia, ancient... and he wrote, how to call it in

English, like calling to his sons, it was one of the first written works from the father to son. He might say that there.

DARIA. Okay, well I have... so my next one, I chose this one... So, I chose the last one because it seemed niche, I was like “I don’t really know why you would use that at all,” and this one, I chose because there are different versions of it in different phraseological dictionaries. So here it is: “Блажен, кто верует, тепло ему на свете!” (Blessed is he who believes; this gives him warmth in the world)

ALEKSANDR. Oh, isn’t that from the Bible, or church book? I heard it, yeah, I heard it.

DARIA. Have you ever just heard just “Блажен, кто верует” (Blessed is he who believes)?

ALEKSANDR. Yeah, I’ve heard it more in the short version only in talks about religion. A couple of times, that’s all. Yeah, it’s good to believe.

DARIA. And like my previous questions, you said it’s rarely used. Is that because you rarely talk about religion or because its outdated?

ALEKSANDR. I personally don’t like religion talks; I don’t like to convince anyone and stuff like that. But religion’s come up more and more in religion, but only when it’s really obvious that’s you’re your religion. Then it can come up. If it’s not obvious, then I probably won’t tell you anything. But if you’re in church, like in a monastery buying something, that’s where it came come up. Or if you’re wearing a cross and you do grace in a hotel, maybe it would come up, only like that. But I wouldn’t start a conversation about religion, like, “oh by the way do you believe in God? Oh, you don’t? Well, блажен, кто верует” (Blessed is he who believes)! But I heard it. But actually, as well it could be, not in a joke way, but in another way...

DARIA. Like sarcasm?

ALEKSANDR. Yeah, like if you’re believing in something, but it’s not necessarily God, блажен, кто верует (Blessed is he who believes).

DARIA. Okay, and my last one for you, you should totally know, I chose it because it’s so famous, it’s: умеренность и аккуратность (moderation and accuracy).

ALEKSANDR. Again?

DARIA. Умеренность и аккуратность (moderation and accuracy).

ALEKSANDR. умеренность и аккуратность (moderation and accuracy)?

DARIA. This is wild! Some people are like: I use this every day, and some people are like: I’m never heard of it.

ALEKSANDR. Yeah, I’ve never heard of it! It just doesn’t work for me at all.

DARIA. I really don’t get why that one is so... Okay, I’ll choose another one. This one should also be very popular: “кричали женины: “ура!” и во воздух чепчики бросали!” (the women cried “hurrah!” and threw their bonnets in the air!)

ALEKSANDR. You know, I wanted to say I’ve never heard it... I’ve heard it, maybe I’ve read it somewhere. Because it sounds very Soviet, because women screaming and throwing... but чепчики is the old hat. I didn’t hear it in the common language as well.

DARIA. That’s also cited as a very, very famous... Okay so surprise, all of these are from *Горе от Ума*.

ALEKSANDR. Oh! Nice.

DARIA. So, it’s kind of cool how it covers the different ones. So, another one I could’ve asked you is “не моего романа” (not from my novel).

ALEKSANDR. Yeah, that’s one I know, but from *Горе от Ума*, the one that I heard a lot is of course, “а судьбы кто?” (and who are our judges?) and at the beginning, “нельзя в прогулок подальше выбрать закоулок” (don’t go out on a stroll, choose the secluded corner further

away). That one I heard a lot. Or also the last one, how Molchalin was saying a thing...ah! “Пусть минуй пуще всех на барский, да, и барский гнев, и барская любовь (worse than all sorrows is lordly anger and lordly love; in the text, it is written as “Минуй нас пуще всех печалей / И барский гнев, и барская любовь,” meaning “worse *to us* than all sorrows is lordly anger and lordly love). That’s one.

DARIA. I don’t think I know that one.

ALEKSANDR. Maybe it’s more of a quote? It’s in the beginning.

DARIA. There’s so many! Oh, I just found it.

ALEKSANDR. Yeah, that one I actually read so much that...

DARIA. I was going to use that one! So...

ALEKSANDR. Any other questions?

DARIA. So, on a scale from 1 to 5, 1 being totally unfamiliar and 5 being completely knowledgeable, how would you qualify your familiarity with the play *Горе от Ума*?

ALEKSANDR. 5. I studied it, I read it, and I really like it. And I actually taught it several times. I really like it. I watched it. I watched it two times in a drama theater, one was an opera, one man made an opera out of it

DARIA. Why an opera?

ALEKSANDR. It wasn’t that good an opera. Like style. I don’t know why he did it. There were very great ideas. It was Кирилл Серебренников (Kirill Serebrennikov). He’s famous, he’s very famous actually, that director. He made his own version and I kind of liked it in some ways and didn’t like it in others. I liked some elements, not the whole, it was just a slap to the Moscow community and the Moscow way of life and Moscow intelligence, like the people, but it’s actually the audience of Серебренников (Serebrennikov), so he had some beef with them...

DARIA. Like he turned it on them?

ALEKSANDR. Yes, yes, 5 I would say. Maybe 4. 1 to 5? 5 was the most? 5, say maybe 4 because I can’t quote it.

DARIA. Do you know the first line?

ALEKSANDR. I’m not an actor who knows the lines, but I know the play very well.

DARIA. Alright, do you remember what year you read *Горе от Ума* in school?

ALEKSANDR. It was ninth form, definitely. So it was, let me count, I finished school... five... four... three... 2002 probably.

DARIA. And do you remember...?

ALEKSANDR. And 2002 that was when we started it in school but I reread it in the next year, 2003, because that’s when I did in my 10<sup>th</sup> form, where I teach the school, and I was already preparing to go to pedagogical university, and I was working with my very good professor and we started with *Горе от Ума* and that was my big meeting with it. I studied it really, really nicely, started to love it and the language.

DARIA. Now usually I’m not talking to someone who’s actually taught the play, so I’m going to split this question in two. So, do you remember how your teachers taught you about the play, and my second part of that is do you teach it the same way, or has it changed?

ALEKSANDR. So, what I remember... I don’t remember how we did it in school. We read something, and read it in class, and analyzing it, etc. when I was studying it in the tenth form, I was preparing for сочинение, when you need to write about, and what we were doing, we were analyzing in the kitchen, we were drinking tea and speaking about literature, so we were discussing first what was happening, who were the characters, and stuff like that. And then we were writing in dictations, like very good сочинение as an example, then we had something



similar. So, for example we had the conflict, and then at home we need to write another one, as an example. So, we were writing and then next lesson we were reading it, she was talking it, discussing, we might do something, we could do the quote plan for the сочинение. Do you understand what a сочинение is? It's like a paper.

DARIA. Like an essay.

ALEKSANDR. It's free, it's quite free. Сочинение (essay) right now, it's quite strict, it had some elements it must have. Back in the day, it shouldn't. It should have quotes and analysis. So, we could do a quotes plan. So, we discuss it, and we wrote quotes and we could put it in the essay and at home we need to write the essay fully and she would check, and we would discuss, and so on. That's how we did it. Also, she was giving us some critical... that's why I remember, for example, what Pushkin said about it, he said a very nice phrase about Chatsky, that everything that he says is really wise, but to whom he's saying it, the first skill of the wise person is know who you're talking to...

DARIA. Know your audience!

ALEKSANDR. It's a common phrase, “метать бисер перед свинья” (cast pearls before swine), like death in front of the pigs. Like, бисер (pearl), you know, this beautiful thing, the бисер (pearl) is the small things you can make bracelets...

DARIA. Like beads?

ALEKSANDR. Kind of. Like the small things. And метать (cast) is like throw, don't throw it in front of the pigs, just don't need it. I remember this quote because we were actually discussing it. And somewhere I have this book... and after we moved to Pushkin and I have a lot about Pushkin. That was 2003, and we repeat it in 2004, a little bit but much less, because that was the last year.

DARIA. Okay.

ALEKSANDR. I didn't teach it in school, but I taught it while I was tutoring and we were reading... oh also what we did in old schools, we learned a part of it. A couple lines, like Chatsky's monologue about Chatsky's “а суди кто” (and who are our judges). So, everyone, we always learned it. It was like a tradition. Because I didn't do it with my tutoring kid, he did it by himself. I did the same thing; we discussed the plan of the [incomprehensible] and at home he needed to write it and I checked it and we moved to another topic and we speak character and conflict and then composition. Mostly characters and the conflict. Something like that.

DARIA. You just hit a lot of my questions out, like check. So, I guess my remaining questions from this section is: you read the entire version, correct? Or did you read an abridged version?

ALEKSANDR. I read the entire, I think the first time I read it the full version and then when I was learning with my teacher, Пудон Алексеевич (Pudon Alekseevich), that was her name, and I definitely, she made us read everything. And she could make... explaining why it's important and we took time. We were discussing the quote plan, and we couldn't understand, where did this part come from because maybe you didn't finish, so you want to finish it on this time, because next lesson you are going to discuss another quote plan, and it would be good if you understand it... etc. so we had time. I think we spent a month on Griboedov, but there was like three classes. And when I was teaching, I also asked people to read the full, because it's a play and plays are quite easier to read. It's not like Tolstoy or Dostoevsky, which is like: look, my gosh it's so big. These days I argue with students because it's not that big. Have you seen *The Song of Ice and Fire*? It's bigger, much bigger than anything Tolstoy wrote. So essentially, it's not that hard to read right now.

DARIA. No, I agree. My version is really small and it's bilingual so it's twice as long as it needs to be.

ALEKSANDR. Yeah, it doesn't take that much time. I read through it several times actually.

DARIA. Okay, we're on my last questions. What are your thoughts on Griboedov himself? The person? Like, who was he?

ALEKSANDR. Maybe I'm a little bit... I kind of admire him, not admire like "oh my gosh I want to be like him" but I respect him because I never actually read his full biography, like a book with all the details, I know his biography from school lessons, because of course we spoke about it, and there is a TV series about Griboedov, which I really liked it. What is the name of it?

Griboedov? There is a TV series in Russian, I really liked it. *Горе от Ума*? It's like eight episodes. I think it's just Griboedov. If you want me, I can put it on Yandex Disk and send it to you, don't tell anyone!

DARIA. I was recommended to watch this, it was *Парадокс Грибоедова* (Paradox of Griboedov). It was aired.

ALEKSANDR. Again?

DARIA. *Парадокс Грибоедова* (The Paradox of Griboedov). It was apparently a special on the anniversary of his birth.

ALEKSANDR. I like his biography I think it was very interesting, when you study him in school it was always unusual because it was the writer with basically one book. Which is not true, there was scripts and ideas, and *Горе от Ума* was not actually published in his life, let me check.

DARIA. It wasn't.

ALEKSANDR. Yeah, that's what I remember. There was some writing...

DARIA. It was that he passed around the manuscript.

ALEKSANDR. It was passed around, because he said it was made for Decembrists and the ideas of Chatsky are very similar to Decembrists and the Decembrist Revolution. It's actually made him stop writing and he was dreaming. He was a very interesting... diplomat was very interesting job... It made me respect him for that because it was hard job, and then Persian Empire. It's not like being a diplomat in France or England, it's a hard place to be. Tragic death. And also, the diamond, because of his death, do you know the story? When he died, the shah of Persia gave Nicolas II... what do you call the diamond in English which is not a diamond?

DARIA. We just call that a rough diamond, we don't have a word for it.

ALEKSANDR. We have the word алмаз for the rough diamond and бриллиант for the diamond.

DARIA. Yeah, I remember spending a minute...

ALEKSANDR. Yeah, it's called the алмаз шах (Shah's diamond). It's just near the crown, if you go to the алмаз fund in Moscow, you can see there is this diamond which is right near the crown, which is considered to be one of the biggest in the world. When it was presented, it was the biggest in the world. It has the names of the shahs who owned it and he gave it as a "sorry" for that tragedy.

DARIA. I'm looking at pictures now.

ALEKSANDR. And it's usually with the picture of Griboedov. We also talk about it as a symbol of Griboedov himself, because, yeah, it's not the most exciting diamond but its price is huge. He's one of the most valuable diamonds in the world. In Russia. So, I tend to respect him because he's an interesting person, his personality, I know he liked fighting but his work, and his actually play sounds really nice, so many layers which is interesting. Sometimes when I was rereading it, it was interesting to see how the language worked.

DARIA. Okay, my last question is, do you think that the use of specific examples of these крылатые фразы (winged phrases) can be seen as political? Do you think there is any political nuance in the use of Griboedov's phrases, especially in the context of Chatsky's views and Griboedov?

ALEKSANDR. I think obviously kind of. The thing is that it's not mostly political than generational thing, with the generational thing, you know they get used to it, there's ongoing conflict always. The new generation always is favorable of other political forces other than the parents, right now, so we can use the phrases to say to our parents when we argue about something, or to our elders or something, yes, they can be used. No, I never heard, but that's the Russian, but I never heard it being used in any political speech or political protest, maybe it can be at some point, it's just not that popular, I think it's in our political they like to use history mostly, and specifically World War II. That's the most usable thing in politics, that's everything. So, they don't really have time, they use history.

DARIA. I actually heard that the UN diplomats from Russia were using so many of these phrases in their speeches, because they just weren't thinking about it, that the translators were having a really hard time translating it, because how do you translate something that has so much meaning in it?

ALEKSANDR. You mean the fixed phrases generally? Could be. They can be used, but from the Griboedov, not sure. I have to check. Maybe. Maybe I'm not sure they are using it because it sounds so common, like "oh yeah, yeah, is there something special in this speech? Oh, крылатые фразы (winged words)? Oh, you're right!" because I'm not thinking about it.

DARIA. I was talking to one of my friends and I used an English phrase, that actually translates into Russian but not into German, and she's an exchange student, and she didn't understand it. The expression was "it's been a long day" and she was like "what? Why are you measuring a day by distance? I was like..."

ALEKSANDR. It's such a common phrase!

DARIA. I was like, that's such a good point! But I totally didn't realize it was a figure of language.

ALEKSANDR. Oh, that movie was so long... I'm not watching the Irishmen because it's so long.

DARIA. I'm going to. Okay, that's all my questions for you, if you have any questions that you think I forgot, please let me know.

ALEKSANDR. Okay you can write me, and we can find time as well. There's no need to forget... Okay, well, thank you.

DARIA. Thank you!

ALEKSANDR. That is an interesting topic for your thesis, it will be a good one to read.