

## Aleksander Griboedov's Woe from Wit: A Commentary And Translation (Studies in Slavic Language and Literature)

Mary Hobson



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This work seeks to account for the disparity between Griboedov's "Woe from Wit" and his other works, by examining his plays and poems, letters and travel notes, the memoirs of his contemporaries, his literary sources and social milieu. The early works in which Griboedov exercised his craft, his single work of art and the few later works are related to three distinct periods in his life. Positive and negative influences are discussed. The former include Griboedov's association with Shakhovskoi, his wide knowledge of Russian, Classical and European literature, his admiration for the "Book of the Prophet Isaiah" and the salutary shock of a duel; the latter, Griboedov's ability to write a passion out of his system and his reaction to the Decembrist uprising. A comparison with earlier Russian verse comedies shows Woe from Wit to be rooted in neo-classicism. The final test of the play is compared with the earliest known version and the effect of numerous alterations assessed. A synthesis of Griboedov's own character and that of Aleksandr Odoevskii is seen as the source of Chatskii's disruptive naturalness; this is discussed in relation to the neo-classical tradition in Russia, of which Woe from Wit was the fatal drowning achievement.

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