

Strangers in the North.

Three embodiments of gallomania in comedies by Fonvizin, Holberg and Wycherley

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1. In a discussion of Dostoevskii's *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions*, Fiona Bjöfling made the following pertinent point:

It is often said that Dostoevskij became disillusioned with Europe during his first visit there in 1862. I hope that my reading of his travel account [...] has shown that this is not the case. Dostoevskij was deeply disillusioned with European ideas before he set out on his journey; in a state of profound prejudice, he used his journey to confirm what he already 'knew'. (Björling 1997, 87-88)

One source of Dostoevskii's prejudice about Europe was Denis Ivanovic Fonvizin (1745—1792), a classic of Russian eighteenth century literature. It may even look as if Dostoevskij had an edition of Fonvizin with him on his forty-eight hours train ride from St. Petersburg to Berlin. Chapter 2 of his *Winter Notes*, entitled 'On the train', starts with a blatantly francophobe aphorism from a travel letter by Fonvizin, written in 1778: The Frenchman has no sense, and he would consider it the greatest personal misfortune if he did' (Dostoevskij 1973, 50, as translated in Björling 1997, 78). In addition, the third chapter, entitled 'Which is completely super-

fluous', offers a further discussion of Fonvizin and his comedy *The Brigadier*.

Chapters 2—4 of Dostoevski's travel account pretend to relay the author's reflections in the carriage on his way to Berlin. In actual fact they constitute, as Fiona Björling puts it, 'a tract and a diatribe against what I shall call the *Russian Europeans*, that is those Russians who for more than a hundred years have desperately been trying to Européanise themselves' (78).

Dostoevskij saw Fonvizin as one of those superficially Europeanised Russians who wore the short French frock-coat, following the dress code that Peter the Great had forced upon the nobility. He even refers to Fonvizin as 'one of these French frock-coats' (odin iz ètich francuzskich kaftanov) (Dostoevskij 1973, 55). Replacing the man by his coat, Dostoevskij clearly wished to underscore the superficiality of Fonvizin's European affiliation, which in turn would explain his sudden shift when he first went abroad: '[...] as soon as he had stuck his nose across the border, he got very busy staving off Paris [...] and decided that "the Frenchman has no sense"' (Dostoevskij 1973, 53).

Despite Dostoevskij, it is quite unlikely that Fonvizin's disillusionment with the French was an immediate response to his travel encounter with France. Just like Dostoevskij, Fonvizin arrived in Europe with a preconceived attitude to what he would find. By 1777, when he set out on his travel to France, he was already a well-known man of letters. His first comedy, *The Brigadier* (written 1768-69), had struck a deep chord with the Russian public by offering a caricature of gallomania in the guise of the young nobleman Ivanushka who returns to his parents' estate as a complete stranger after a fairly short visit to Paris. The comedy soon became part of the canon of Russian eighteenth century literature. According to Charles A. Moser (1985, 151), *The Brigadier*, more than any other single work, 'recalled Russian society to a sense of proportion in its infatuation with everything French'.

The Europeanisation program, introduced by Peter the Great, had caused not only a split between the enlightened, westernized upper classes of society and the majority of Russians. It had also generated among national conservatives in the upper classes an undercurrent of wounded patriotism and of dissatisfaction with

Russia's long-standing apprenticeship in relation to Western Europe. Fonvizin's travel letters and comedy aptly addressed this undercurrent of national conservatism and helped articulate reservations against the all-pervading foreign manners. However, as I shall try to show, Fonvizin chose his tools for this task from the arsenals of newly imported European ideas and literature. He subjected the West — as represented by France, its leading nation at the time — to ridicule by using ideological and discursive weaponry forged in the West.

2. By the time Russians started donning the short foreign topcoat that made them Russian Europeans, the nations of Western Europe, located on their small peninsula and a few adjacent islands, had already for centuries been cultivating firm notions about one another. Each nation had its own swelling scrapbook of historical experience with other Europeans, and its own stock of ready, stereotypical images of their neighbours. European travel writing and geography textbooks were full of national characterology. Accounts of travels to Russia were no exception from this rule, and when Russians eventually learned to read French, German and other West European languages, they could suddenly familiarise themselves with current western images of their own nation. Such images were usually not very flattering (see, e.g., Møller 1993).

Fonvizin understood that generalised national characterisations were a part of travel writing and, more important, that they could be turned around. Several of his critical images of the French (and other Europeans) in his travel letters may well be seen as counter-images. For instance:

Stench is often in travel writing an indicator of the degree of civilisation. Bad smell signals low hygiene and low development of civilisation. In early western travel accounts from Russia, olfactive impressions are usually negative. According to Just Juel, Danish envoy extraordinary to Peter the Great 1709—1711 and a somewhat choleric, but not untypical witness —

[... the Russians] emit such a foul and abominable smell that if they have stayed in a room or a chamber for merely 3 or 4 days, they ignite the air so completely that it reeks of them for a long time, and one cannot stay there (Juel 1893,101-102).¹

Fonvizin was probably familiar with this type of discourse, and used it with a twist of his own. He let his nostrils ascertain that he had crossed the border to France:

When we rode into the city we were assaulted by a horrid stench, which left us in no doubt that we had entered France. In short, no other place do you find people who care so little about cleanliness. They will pour just anything out of their windows and down into the street, so unless you wish to suffocate, you must of course keep your window closed (Fonvizin 1959, II, 418).²

Overall, Fonvizin was a reluctant visitor to France. His letters express little or no desire to go there. Instead, it looks as if destiny sent him, with a wry smile. His dearly beloved wife had contracted a tapeworm that Russian doctors could not defeat, and she needed to go abroad for expert assistance. Hence, the couple set out for Montpellier, a town then famous for its doctors. On the journey home, they also visited Paris.

In Montpellier, the Mrs. underwent a severe, but successful cure against the unpleasant parasite, as described in some detail in her husband's letters (Fonvizin 1959, II, 416-417, 428, 453-454, 465). It seems to have been a nightmare of costly consultations, tedious diets, and disgusting medication. At the same time, Fonvizin himself underwent the ultimate cure against gallomania. He assured his

¹ In Danish: "[Russerne lugter] så hæszlig og vederstyggelig, at hvor de ickun i et kammer eller stue har været udj 3 eller 4 dage, antænder de lufften saa gandske, at det stincker efter dem i lang tiid, saa mand ej kan være derudj". Danish and Russian sources are cited in my translation, unless otherwise indicated - *P.U.M.*

² In Russian: При въезде в город ошибла нас мерзкая вонь, так что мы не могли уже никак усомниться, что приехали во Францию. Словом, о чистоте не имеют здесь нигде ниже понятия, — всё изволят лить из окон на улицу, и кто не хочет задохнуться, тот, конечно, окна не отворяет. The first period of the quotation is cited as translated in Moser 1979,90; the rest is in my own translation - *P.U.M.*

correspondents that 'as soon as we drive out the tapeworm, PJI leave this place' (Fonvizin 1959 II, 428).³

While waiting for the happy day, he observed the French with irony and characterised them with sarcasm in his letters home. His patriotism was clearly shining through.

If any of my youthful countrymen who have solid good sense should become indignant over the abuses and confusions prevalent in Russia and in his heart begin to feel alienated from her, then there is no better method of converting him to the love he should feel for his Fatherland than to send him to France as quickly as possible. Here he will soon discover that all the tales about the perfection of everything here are absolutely false ... (Fonvizin 1959, II, 467, as translated in Moser 1979, 90).⁴

Fonvizin's conviction — that life was just as good in Russia as in France, if not better — was backed by more counter-images. Probably the most striking of them was his reversal of the deeply rooted western view of the Russians as a barbarous and ignorant nation. Almost daily public executions in Paris caused him to remark that it was difficult to understand 'how such a sensitive and philanthropic nation could be so close to barbarism' (Fonvizin 1959, II, 441).⁵ As for ignorance, this trait had been a Russian evergreen in western travel writing and geography books from time immemorial (MøHer 1993, 110-115). Fonvizin did not hesitate to turn it around and use it against the very nation that was widely considered the pinnacle of European civilisation and enlightenment. Clearly conscious of the paradoxical effect, he accused the French nobility at large of ignorance:

³ In Russian: Как скоро выживем глисту, то отсюда поеду.

⁴ In Russian: [...] если кто из молодых моих сограждан, имеющий здравый рассудок, вознегодует, видя в России злоупотребления и неустройства, и начнет в сердце своем от нее отчуждаться, то для обращения его на должную любовь к отечеству нет вернее способа, как скорее послать его во *Францию*. Здесь, конечно, узнает он самым опытом очень скоро, что все рассказы о здешнем совершенстве сушая ложь [...]

⁵ In Russian: ... как нация, чувствительнейшая и человеколюбивая, может быть так близка к варварству.

One is astounded, dear sister, to find such ignoramuses here. Especially the nobility is not able to make head or tail of a thing. Many of them hear for the first time that there is a place on earth called Russia, and that we in Russia speak a language of our own, different from theirs. Human imagination is incapable of grasping how this land, in spite of all its opportunities for enlightenment, can remain so densely packed with ignoramuses. (Fonvizin 1959, II, 423)⁶

In Aachen, in September 1778, on his way home, Fonvizin wrote a letter to his friend P. I. Panin, in which he tried to summarize his impressions of France and the French. This is where he penned the aphorism Dostoevskij liked so much — that the Frenchman has no sense etc. Dostoevskij thought it testified to Fonvizin's undeniably Russian nature that prevailed as soon as he found himself among the French. Interestingly, literary scholarship has revealed that this letter in particular is crammed with borrowings from a book of 1751 by the Frenchman C. P. Duclos, entitled *Considerations sur les mœurs de ce siècle*. Moser (1979, 88) describes Duclos as 'a keen observer of the French national character, an unsystematic sociologist with a gift for the accurate and epigrammatic generalization', and believes that Fonvizin found him intellectually congenial. This would seem to exemplify what the present article tries to show — that Fonvizin used readily available spare parts from western literature in his struggle against gallomania and unending Russian apprenticeship.

In Paris Fonvizin met with several of 'our Russian Frenchmen', and described them ironically to his relatives at home:

I will tell you what amazes me the most here, namely my dear fellow countrymen. Some of them are complete eccentrics that go crazy over the name of *Paris* alone. Yet, despite all this, I can personally testify that they are bored to death [...] If someone assures you that Paris is the very centre of fun and entertainment, don't believe it: it's nothing but

⁶ In Russian: Удивиться должно, друг мой сестрица, какие здесь невежды. Дворянство, особливо, ни уха ни рыла не знает. Многие в первый раз слышат, что есть на свете Россия и что мы говорим в России языком особенным, нежели они. Человеческое воображение постигнуть не может, как при таком множестве способов к просвещению здешняя земля полнехонька невеждами. In Fonvizin's comedy *The Brigadier*, the character of the Brigadier's wife demonstrates her vast ignorance by not knowing the first thing about France. See below 191.

stupid affectation; they are all telling shameless lies. If you do not have your own inner resources, your life will be the same in Paris as in Uglich (Fonvizin 1959, II, 444-45).⁷

Fonvizin concluded that in spite of everything, he was happy to have been abroad. Now at least 'our *Jean de Frances* cannot impress me' (Fonvizin 1959, II, 449).⁸ Although Fonvizin was, himself, the creator of a comedy character, Ivanuška, who was a caricature of a Russian Frenchman, he chose in his letter to refer to Ivanuška's kind by mentioning the better known tide character from Ludvig Holberg's comedy *Jean de France* (first performed 1722, printed 1723). Once again, western literature proved to stock components that could be put to use in a critical discourse on Russia's relations to the West.

3.

What did he inherit from the Kaffirs?

*What did the Lycée in Tsarskoe Sek give?*⁹

In Danish literary slavistics, the relationship between Holberg and Russian eighteenth century comedy became the subject of a classical comparative study by Ad. Stender-Petersen (Stender-Petersen 1923, 1924 and 1925). Its third chapter, reprinted in Fonvizin 1973, is devoted to Fonvizin's relationship to Holberg. Most of it is a detailed comparison of Holberg's comedy *Jean de France* or *Hans Frandsen* with Fonvizin's *The Brigadier*.

Stender-Petersen was not the first to assert Holberg's influence on *The Brigadier*, but he spelled out what Russian literary scholars

⁷ In Russian: [...] скажу тебе, что меня здесь более всего удивляет: это мои любезные сограждане. Из них есть такие чудачки, что вне себя от одного имени *Паруа*; а при всем том, я сам свидетель, что они умирают со скуки [...] Итак, кто тебя станет уверять, что Париж центр забав и веселий, не верь: все это глупая аффектация; все лгут без милосердия. Кто сам в себе ресурсов не имеет, тот и в Париже проживет, как в Угличе.

⁸ In Russian: Со всем тем, я очень рад, что видел чужие край. По крайней мере не могут мне импозировать наши *Jean de France*.

⁹ In Russian: Что было наследием кафров? Что дал царскосельский лицей? — From Boris Pasternak's poem *Theme with variations*.

such as N. S. Tichonravov and A. N. Veselovskij had already suggested: That it is difficult to imagine Ivanuška without Jean de France (Veselovskij 1896, 71—72). Later Russian critics, however, got over that difficulty, and Marvin Kantor observed (1973, 476-77) that '[with] the exception of D. Blagoi, contemporary Soviet literary critics writing either about the theatre or Fonvizin himself ignore this question entirely'. To which Cynthia Dillard made the following appropriate comment:

This is a telling observation, encouraging the reader to consider this issue and others with the scepticism needed regarding anything written under censorship (Dillard 1994,170).

Determining literary influence on the creative process is, of course, a bit like selling elastic by the metre. It takes self-discipline not to overstretch similarities or differences. Although Stender-Petersen to some extent overstated Holberg's influence on the emergent Russian literature, he fully acknowledged Fonvizin's originality in creating a truly Russian comedy based on Holberg's work, in a convincing Russian setting and with credible Russian comical characters. Kantor, however, found (1973, 477) that the relationship between the two comedies 'was flagrantly overstated' by Stender-Petersen and others. They had been 'relying heavily on extrinsic considerations and causal explanations, and disregarding completely intrinsic analyses of "structure" in the broad sense of the term'. Kantor's own comparison focused on the genre-based structural difference between the two comedies:

While Holberg's *Jean de France* is a comedy of humors (or character), Fonvizin's *The Brigadier* is one of manners. In the former type, comic interest is derived principally from the exhibition of individuals whose conduct is governed by a single characteristic of humor. [...] The latter type is usually very topical and concerns itself with the manners and conventions of an artificial, 'elegant' society (Kantor 1973, 478).

One should add, in all fairness, that Stender-Petersen did not overlook this structural difference, but arrived at it, inevitably, when

trying to explain why Fonvizin, unlike Holberg, had not made the [principal character of his comedy its tide character (Stender-I Petersen 1924, 154—155, 177). He discussed this difference of genre Lt some length, seeing Fonvizin's choice as a step forward in the [emancipation of Russian comedy from its 'literary patterns and models":

Technically speaking, Fonvizin's comedy can no longer be called a 'comedy of character' par excellence, a 'one-type-comedy' as most of Holberg's and Molière's comedies. [...] On the contrary, we find in Fonvizin a clear tendency to widen the bounds of comedy by exhibiting a whole series of [...] typical representatives of a certain society and different classes within that society (Stender-Petersen 1924,178).¹⁰

Several other differences, brought forth by Kantor's allegedly more intrinsic and structural reading, had already been noticed and discussed by Stender-Petersen, e.g., the difference in the use of French language in the two comedies (frequently spoken and comically distorted in *Jean de France*, grammatically correct, but less frequently spoken in *The Brigadier*) (Stender-Petersen 1924, 156; Kantor 1973, 479). But even if the two slavists in several cases made the same comparative observations, they disagreed about the relative significance of similarities and differences for the question of influence. Kantor concluded from his discussion of genres that 'gallomania is central to *Jean de France*, but incidental to *The Brigadier** (Kantor 1973, 480). This, however, seems an overstating of differences. Even if gallomania is not the only issue in Fonvizin's comedy, it is certainly the central one and by no means incidental.

¹⁰ In Danish: Vi lægger nemlig mærke til, at Fonvizins komedie rent teknisk betragtet ikke længere kan kaldes 'karakterkomedie' par excellence, 'en-type-komedie' i den forstand, som er betegnende for Holbergs og Molières allerfleste komedier.[...] Vi finder hos Fonvizin tværtimod en ganske udpræget tendens til at udvide komediens rammer ved at fremføre en hel serie af [...] typiske repræsentanter for et bestemt samfund og dette samfunds forskellige klasser.

4. In his short autobiography, *An Open-Hearted Confession of My Deeds and Thoughts*, Fonvizin described what an overwhelming experience it had been when he for the first time, during a visit to St. Petersburg, went to a theatre and saw a play, which happened to be Holberg's comedy *Henrich og Pernille* (Fonvizin 1983, 255). Shortly after he made his literary debut by translating Holberg's *Moralske Fabler* (1751) from a German translation. It was published as *Basni npravoucitel'nye Gol'berga* (1761, second enlarged edition 1765, third edition 1787). As for his comedies, it is 'widely believed', in Cynthia Dillard's words (1994, 170), 'that Fonvizin based his *Brigadier* on Holberg's *Jean de France* as there are so many similarities between the two plays, from specific characters to the topic of gallomania to virtually parallel scenes'.

In both comedies, a young man returns to his parents and his fiancée after a sojourn in Paris. In Holberg's play, he is the son of a Copenhagen townsman. His proper Danish name is Hans Frandsen, but he insists on the frenchified form Jean de France. Fonvizin named his youth Ivanuška (the diminutive of Ivan, corresponding to Hans/Jean), and made him the son of an officer in the rank of brigadier.

Both Hans og Ivanuška have in a short time become very frenchified, in dress, manners, and language, and feel nothing but contempt for life at home, including their fiancées. Hans/Jean thinks the face of his intended, Jeronimus' daughter Elsebet, is too much 'à la Danois, à la Vimmelskaft' (Holberg 1923,129).¹¹ Another annoying thing about her is that she speaks Danish. Elsebet, in return, finds that Hans has gone crazy ('forstyrret') during his journey abroad. Besides, she is now in love with Antonius, a nice young Copenhagener whom she will eventually marry. Similarly, Ivanuška has no feelings for Sof'ja — and vice versa. Instead, she is in love with the nice young Russian Dobroljubov, whose name could well be a russification of Liebhold, the name given to Antonius in some German translations of Holberg's play (Stender-Petersen 1924, 153).

¹¹ *Vimmelskaft*'is a Copenhagen street name, now a section of the central shopping street *Strøget*.

The plot leads to the cancellation of the engagement and includes in both comedies that the young francophile flirts with a French-speaking woman. In Holberg's play, Jean is outwitted by a conspiracy of clever servants, among them Jeronimus' maid servant Marthe, disguised as Madame la Flèche, a distinguished *Parisienne* who happens to be passing through Copenhagen. Fonvizin had, in his cultural transposing of *Jean de France*, left out Holberg's witty servants, possibly because they did not fit into the setting of his comedy, the rural environment of the Russian landed gentry, where servants would typically be serfs. Instead, he let a romance develop - and be revealed — between Ivanuška and his intended mother-in-law (I), the Councilor's wife, who is also a gallomaniac and an admirer of Ivanuška's imported manners:

Ivan. Tell me, how do you spend your time?

Counc. wife. Oh, soul of mine, I'm dying of boredom. But if I couldn't sit at my toilet for some three hours in the morning, then I can tell you, I wouldn't care if I died; I live only for the headdresses, sent me from Moscow, which I wear all the time.

Ivan. In my opinion, lace and blond make the best adornment for the head. Pedants think this is foolishness, and that it's necessary to adorn the head from the inside and not from the outside. What nonsense! Who the devil can see what's hidden? But everyone sees what's on the outside.

Counc. wife. Yes, soul of mine, I do share your *sentimen*; I see that you got powder on your head but I'll be damned if I can see if you got anything in your head (Kantor 1974, 55).¹²

¹² In Russian: *Сын.* Madamel Скажите мне, как вы ваше время проводите? *Советница.* Ах, душа моя, умираю с скуки. И если бы поутру не сидела часов трех у туалета, то могу сказать, умереть бы все равно для меня было; я тем только и дышу, что из Москвы присылают ко мне нередко головные уборы, которые я то и дело надеваю на голову.

Сын. По моему мнению, кружева и блонды составляют голове наилучшее украшение. Педанты думают, что это вздор и что надобно украшать голову снутри, а не снаружи. Какая пустота! Черт ли видит то, что скрыто, а наружное всяк видит.

Советница. Так, душа моя: я сама с тобою одних сантиментов; я вижу, что у тебя на голове пудра, а есть ли что в голове, того, черт меня возьми, приметить не могу. (Fonvizin 1959, 1, 55-56).

Ivan. Madame, you enrapture me [...] This entire unhappiness of mine lies in the fact that you are a Russian.
Counc. wife. This, angel mine, is, of course, a terrible perdition for me. *Ivan.* It's such a *défaut* that nothing can ever make up for it (Kantor 1974, 63-64).¹³

As the two quotations show, Ivanuška is not the sole representative of gallomania in *The Brigadier*. Holberg's Jean is more alone with his folly. True, he can practice French with his reluctant servant Pierre who was with him in Paris. In addition, his mother, the simple-minded Magdelone extends her maternal love so far as to dance a minuet with him, while her cowed husband Frands is forced to sing the tune, through tears. Still, as mentioned above, *Jean de France* is a comedy that revolves around the folly of one central character.

Fonvizin's comedy exhibits more characters with follies of their own, and was not named after Ivanuška, although he certainly carries its dominant folly. His father, the blustering Brigadier, has the tide rôle. He threatens on several occasions to beat the French-ness out of his prodigal son, and this is clearly what will happen after the fall of the final curtain. Maybe Fonvizin named his comedy after the Brigadier in his capacity of the instrument of punishment against gallomania. Without actually becoming a positive counterpart to his son, the Brigadier is his most vigorous opponent, and some of Ivanuška's most provocative statements are uttered in conversation with his father:

Ivan. Mon cher père! Should I tolerate hearing that they want to marry me to a Russian girl?
Brig. But what kind of Frenchman are you? It seems to me you were born in our native Russia.

¹³ In Russian: *Сын.* Madame, ты меня восхищаешь [...] Всё несчастье моё состоит в том только, что ты русская. *Советница.* Это, ангел мой, конечно, для меня ужасная погибель. *Сын.* Это такой *défaut*, которого ничем загладить уже нельзя (Fonvizin 1959, I, 69).

Ivan. My body was born in Russia, that's true; however my spirit belongs to the crown of France (Kantor 1974, 66).¹⁴

The Brigadier's wife is also a character with a folly of her own. With her naïve maternal love, she corresponds to Holberg's Magdelone. However, whereas Magdelone is in full control of her spouse Frands (through threats of sexual strike), the Brigadier's wife is a victim of wife battering. Her behaviour in any situation is marked by a pitiable stupidity that once made her Russian name *brigadirh* a common synonym for a deeply ignorant person from the countryside.

Brig, wife: What then, Ivanuška? Aren't the people there [in France] really like all us Russians?

Ivan. No, not like you, but like me (Kantor 1974, 69).¹⁵

Among remarkable differences between the two comedies, one should not forget differences in the very idea of gallomania. It came in two versions with somewhat different accentuations.

Holberg, at the end of his comedy, lets Jeronimus state its moral in verse. The lesson to be learned from Jean's example is 1) that youngsters should not travel to foreign countries; Danes should learn from other nations that keep their young people at home. 2) Youngsters who go abroad run the risk of forgetting Danish, wasting their money, losing their inheritance, learning bad manners ('galne Sæder'), and engaging in amorous affairs ('Galanterie') and pranks ('Abe-Spil'). 3. If young people must travel, let it be within the borders of Denmark. Much the same Ust of warnings and complaints, only in greater detail, was offered in conversation by Jeronimus in the opening scene of the play. In short, Holberg's criticism of gallomania had a prosaic focus on cost and benefit.

¹⁴ In Russian: *Сын.* Mon cher père! Или сносно мне слышать, что хотят женить меня на русской? *Бригадир.* Да ты что за француз? Мне кажется, ты на Руси родился.

Сын. Тело мое родилось в России, это правда; однако дух мой принадлежал короне французской (Fonvizin 1959,1,47).

¹⁵ In Russian: *Бригадирша.* Как же, Иванушка! Неужели там люди-то не такие, как мы все русские? *Сын.* Не такие, как вы, а не как я (Fonvizin 1959,1,77).

Sending a raw youth to France was expensive, and the yield was poor (Holberg 1923,155,110).

The economic cost of gallomania is a very minor theme with Fonvizin, in spite of the fact that Ivanuška's mother is comically mean about money and keeps accounts. Fonvizin is clearly more focused on the *moral* cost. Contrary to Holberg's comedy, *The Brigadier* has no explicit moral, perhaps because the comedy does not have a sufficiently respectable character to recite it. The title character himself, although he has Jeronimus' function as main adversary to the galloman principal character, is morally too compromised, not only because he beats his wife, but also because he courts the Councilor's wife (father and son are rivals here).

Nevertheless, it is evident that Fonvizin's criticism of gallomania is linked with a strong concern for sexual morality, monogamy, and family life, values that seem obsolete to Ivanuška and remote from a modern frenchified lifestyle. In the opening scene, Ivanuška prides himself of having written a thousand *billets-doux*, and when the topic of divorce pops up in conversation, he explains that 'in France [God] has left love, infidelity, marriage and divorce to the human will' (Kantor 1974, 52).¹⁶

Instead of a formal moral, the comedy holds up, rather briefly, an ideal in the shape of the pure love between Sof ja and Dobroljubov. As Moser points out, their love 'and their conception of the family are contrasted in every possible way with those of the negative characters in the play' (Moser 1979, 64). The flirt between Ivanuška and the Councilor's wife is, of course, directly linked to the theme of gallomania. But three other leading characters (the Councilor, his wife, and the Brigadier) are also courting crosswise of marriages and engagements. Only the Brigadier's wife does not take part in this. She is too simple-minded to notice even the Councilor's eager courtship. Dostoevskij quoted with compassion a line from this 'simple peasant woman' on the theme of wife battering, adding that this was 'the most striking, humane and ... unexpected' that Fonvizin ever wrote (1973, 58).¹⁷

¹⁶ In Russian: [...] во Франции [Бог] оставил на людское произволение — любить, изменять, жениться и разводиться (Fonvizin 1959,1, 50).

¹⁷ In Russian: [...] нет ничего у него метче, гуманнее и... нечаяннее.

5. Modern notions about intellectual copyright and artistic originality may sometimes obscure discussions of literary influence in European seventeenth and eighteenth-century literature. This was a time when new wine was poured into old bottles and vice versa. There was considerable freedom of movement for literary spare parts like plots, motifs, characters, opinions, metaphors, aphorisms, jokes. A practical approach to the interrelation of reading and writing was more or less the order of the day, until Romanticism brought about its cult of the creative genius.

If it is agreed that Fonvizin took some inspiration from what would have been an enthusiastic reading of Holberg, it may be tempting to conclude that Holberg was the creative genius and Fonvizin the insignificant imitator. Such a conclusion would be a fallacy. One should at least remember that Holberg did not invent the galloman youth, but copied this particular comical character from literature's public domain and planted him out in a Copenhagen setting. There is no general agreement about his precise sources. True, there is a Danish candidate, Hans Willumsen Lauremberg (1590-1658), cartographer, professor of mathematics at Sorø Academy. He was the author of a few satirical poems against French fashions, manners, and language (Lauremberg 1889-90). But there are many more possibilities if you look further west.

Fonvizin remarked in one of his letters from France that England 'from time immemorial, whenever she was facing extreme disaster, had always routinely resorted to declaring war on France' (Fonvizin 1959, 1, 433).¹⁸ As we know, the two countries have indeed fought each other on a regular basis, and it is hardly surprising that England should be well stocked with critical characteristics of the French. Moreover, the English stage, especially that of the Restoration after the return of King Charles II (1660), had its own embodiments of the ridiculous frenchified fop long before Jean de France and Ivanuška. W.R. Chadwick (1975, 76-77) draws the following impressive picture:

¹⁸ In Russian: [...] издревле всякий раз, когда ни доходила Англия до крайнего несчастья, всегда имела ресурсом и обычаем объявлять войну Франции.

The plays of the period are filled with comical Frenchmen such as Dufoy in Etherege's *Love in a Tub* (1664), Raggou in Lacy's *The Old Troop* (1668) and La Roch in Shadwell's *Bury Fair* (1689), or Gallomaniacs like *Frenchlove* in James Howard's *The English Monsieur* (1666), Melantha in Dryden's *Marriage a la Mode* (1672) and *SirVopling Flutter* in Etherege's *The Man of Mode* (1676). The type was sufficiently familiar in the English theatre for Francois Brunet to comment in his *Voyage en Angleterre* (1676): "L'on joue Les francois dans la plus part des Comedies qui sont faittes pour se mocquer de nos moeurs."

During his more than two years' sojourn in Oxford and London 1706-1708, Holberg may well have made the same observation as Brunet regarding English comedies. One in particular, William Wycherley's *The Gentleman Dancing-Master* has been suggested as a possible source for *Jean de France*, although Kantor dismisses it (1973, 479). Its first printed edition appeared in 1673, but the first performance seems to have taken place already in 1671.

Wycherley borrowed his central plot from Calderon's *El Maestro del Dankar* (Zimbaro 1965, 48). In its English variation, fourteen-year-old Hippolita, the daughter of Mr. Formal, is to be married off to Mr. Parris, her rich cousin, whom she does not love. The strict father keeps her shut up in his house under the surveillance of his sister, but Hippolita outwits them all. Her heart is set on Mr. Gerrard, a young gendeman of the town, whom she invites to her home, passing him off as a dancing-master sent to her by her intended. This is not easy, since dancing is not among the skills of an English gendeman, but in the end the two can unite in marriage, with a bit of luck, and after several farcical scenes and much clever manipulation by Hippolita.

The cousin who loses his intended bride, is described in the list of persons as a 'vain Coxcomb, and Rich City-Heir, newly returned from France, and mightily affected with the French Language and Fashions'. The frenchified form of his name is Monsieur de Paris. The father who must eventually accept a last minute change of husbands for his daughter, is described as 'An old rich *Spanish* Merchant newly returned home, as much affected with the Habit and Customs of *Spain*, and Uncle to *De Paris*'. He calls himself Don Diego (Wycherley 1979,127).

It has been suggested that Wycherley tailored his play for two famous low comedians of the time, James Nokes and Edward Angel, who seem to have originally acted the parts of M. de Paris and Don Diego in London. Moreover, in 1671 Nokes was particularly celebrated for his impersonation of the French fop in another play (Chadwick 1975, 50). Apparently, theatrical embodiments of several national characteristics were blowing in the wind, ready for use by playwrights as spare parts. Gallomania may thus be incidental to the plot based on Calderon's dancing-master, but the rôle of Monsieur de Paris amounted to a substantial portion of the text: 'it is over thirty speeches longer than Hippolita's part which is the next biggest in the play' (Chadwick 1975, 50).

Like Jean and Ivanuška, M. de Paris oversteps the mark of sexual morality, by courting the two prostitutes Flirt and Flounce. Much of the farcical fun, however, is based on his dress and his language (an odd mixture of distorted English and French). Don Diego eventually forces him to put on Spanish clothes and give up his affected speech.

National characterology is also discussed in the dialogue of the comedy, and the following exchange between the two young English gentlemen Gerrard and Martin and Monsieur de Paris is not untypical of Wycherley's unbuttoned manner:

Ger. You know, to be a perfect *French-man*, you must never be silent, never sit still, and never be clean.

Mart. But you have forgot one main qualification of a true *French-man*, he shou'd never be sound, that is, be very pockie¹⁹ too.

Mons. Oh! If dat be all, I am very pockie; pockie enough Jamie, that is the only French qualification may be had without going to *Paris*, mon foy (Wycherley 1979,147-148).

Chadwick, remorsefully, puts this aspect of Wycherley's comedy in perspective:

¹⁹ Pockie, i.e., infected with the (French) pox — syphilis.

[...] certainly xenophobic satire is (all too) common throughout the history of English literature, and never more so than during the Restoration when the love-hate relationship with the continent, and especially France, was as complex as it had ever been. Again and again in the plays and poems of the age the French, the Spanish, and the Dutch are held up to ridicule.

In an even wider perspective, there was a common North European interest in the comical theme of gallomania. Its popularity extended geographically from England over Scandinavia to Russia, and in time over almost two centuries, thus surviving a number of different historical and cultural situations. The exact degree of English influence on Holberg, and of Holberg on Fonvizin, may remain forever shrouded in the mists of artistic creation. Yet, hovering in the boreal sky, there was an image of a comically dressed young man with a taste for dancing and foreign words. He could be downloaded for local use when needed, and was indeed downloaded and exposed to creative re-editing on numerous occasions. The three comedies discussed here are only the top of the iceberg. There is a ghost army of strangers in the North — young men just returned from a sojourn in Paris, still under the impact of their French experience. These strangers have walked across the stages and book pages of several nations, subject to ridicule and scorn, and demonstratively deprived of proper local female company. With their laughable manners, they often served the cause of popularising national patriotism. The downloading went on throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, for as long as France was the leading power in continental Europe.

A century after the frenchified fop had his heyday in the English Restoration comedy, he saw a second wave of popularity in Russia. Originally a figure designed to articulate northern warnings against southern ways, he now became a tool for a budding critical Russian Occidentalism.

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