
French in the education of the nobility: Mikhail Shcherbatov's letters to his son Dmitrii

Introduction

Prince Mikhail Shcherbatov

Prince Mikhail Mikhailovich Shcherbatov (1733-90) was a member of a large and ancient noble family that claimed to be descended from Riurik, the Norseman who, according to the Russian chronicles, had founded the Russian state in 862. One of Mikhail's forebears, Ivan Andreevich Shcherbatov, who happened to become his father-in-law (and who also features in this corpus of primary source texts), had served as a diplomat in London in the reigns of Anne and Elizabeth. Mikhail's father had seen military service in the wars of Peter I (the Great) against the Turks and the Swedes and had risen to the rank of Major-General.

Mikhail himself, as a deputy elected by the nobility of the District of Iaroslavl, played a prominent role in the deliberations of the Legislative Commission set up in 1767 by Catherine II (the Great) with the supposed aim of drawing up a new code of laws and, even more ambitiously, fundamental political laws informed by the ideas of western thinkers of the Age of Enlightenment, above all Montesquieu.¹ Resentful of the recent elevation of commoners such as Peter's favourite, Prince Aleksandr Menshikov (1673-1729), Shcherbatov insisted on the pre-eminence of the high nobility of ancient lineage and made every effort to halt the rise of the newer service gentry. He accordingly opposed the meritocratic principle which is embodied in the Table of Ranks that Peter introduced in 1722 and which was favoured as a criterion for admission to and status in the nobility by many notable Russian writers and thinkers of the eighteenth century, including the satirist and diplomat Antiokh Kantemir and, in Shcherbatov's own age, the dramatist Denis Fonvizin (1744 or 1745-92).² With his firm belief in human inequality, his determination to perpetuate social inequality and his invariable deployment of arguments designed to bolster the interests of the old nobility, Shcherbatov exemplifies a form of reactionary conservatism which attracts little sympathy in the modern age.

Moreover, Shcherbatov was an arrogant and outspoken man, who made himself unpopular at court and among his peers and became embittered by his consequent failure to attain positions in public life that seemed commensurate with his intellect and abilities.

He was, however, a prolific writer and left a literary legacy for which he is justly remembered. From 1768 he was official historiographer and he wrote a compendious, though unfinished, *History of Russia from the Earliest Times*, using numerous primary sources which he himself had brought to light. Seven volumes of this work were published between 1770 and 1791, covering Russia's history up until the early seventeenth century.³ Shcherbatov's *History* served as an important source for Karamzin's monumental, better-known and more elegantly written *History of the Russian State*, of which twelve volumes would come out between 1818 and 1829.⁴ (Not that Karamzin scrupulously acknowledged the extent of his debt to Shcherbatov.) A large part of Shcherbatov's writing, though, was too critical of Russia under Catherine, and of Catherine herself, to be published in his lifetime and did not become known until the second half of the nineteenth century. A case in point is the work that is perhaps now his most famous, his jaundiced treatise *On the Corruption of Morals in Russia*. The work was composed in 1786-87, near the end of his life, but remained unpublished until 1858, when the political exile Alexander Herzen (1812-70) had it printed on his Free Russian Press in London. It did not appear in Russia until 1896, and then in expurgated form. In this treatise Shcherbatov deplored the decadence that he believed had taken root in Russia since the seventeenth century and which he attributed in particular to the introduction of luxury and foreign goods and customs.⁵ He also left an unfinished utopian tract, *The Journey of Mr S., a Swedish Nobleman, to the Land of Ophir* (written in 1783-84), in which – in conformity with his pessimistic view of human nature and his consequent belief in the need for authoritarian government – he imagined a puritanical and strictly policed state dominated by the hereditary nobility.⁶

Shcherbatov's acquisition of French and the limits of his willingness to use it

Shcherbatov was brought up during the age of Elizabeth when, it seems, it was already becoming obligatory for the ambitious Russian nobleman to acquire a knowledge of French. A library of French classics had been available to him in his youth and he enthusiastically absorbed this literature (we use the term 'literature' in the broad sense of 'letters').⁷ French writings, moreover, were preponderant in the large library that Shcherbatov accumulated in the course of his adult life, as Wladimir Berelowitch has shown. Out of 2,407 titles in this library, embracing 8,301 volumes in all, 1,764, or over 73% of the total, were in French, compared to just 414 in Russian, 162 in English (of which many came down to Shcherbatov from his father-in-law Ivan), 32 in Latin, 24 in Italian, and two in Spanish (probably also from his father-in-law) and one each in German and Polish. Berelowitch has also established that the great majority of these books in French were acquired by Mikhail Shcherbatov himself, rather than inherited. For Mikhail, then, French was indisputably the language of culture.⁸

Thus it was thus through an ability to read French that Shcherbatov, like other eighteenth-century Russians, became familiar with the corpus of imaginative literature, thought and historical writing of the Age of Enlightenment. This corpus, it should be noted, consisted not merely of work that had been written in French by French authors but also of work that had been translated into French from other modern languages and even work in

classical languages in which eighteenth-century readers took a fresh interest. Indeed, in the course of his twenties and partly as a means of furthering his own education, Shcherbatov not only read but also himself translated into Russian a considerable body of work that had been written in or translated into French, including Montesquieu's *Considerations on the Grandeur and Causes of the Decadence of the Romans* (1734), an excerpt from the same author's *Spirit of the Laws* (1748), Fénelon's *Examination of Conscience on the Duties of Kingship* (1711), the introduction to Voltaire's *Age of Louis XIV*, the *Dissertation on the Reasons to establish or abrogate Laws* written by Frederick the Great of Prussia, Cicero's *On Duties* (44 BC), Alexander Pope's *Essay on Man* (1737) and part of an English universal history.⁹ In the case of works not originally written in French, Shcherbatov translated from French versions, using the translation of Cicero's text by Philippe Dubois (1626-94) and the translation of Pope's text by Jean François du Bellay Du Resnel (1694-1761).¹⁰

Translation from French thus played an important part in Shcherbatov's intellectual development and literary career. In fact his debut as a writer in the journal *Articles and Translations for Use and Amusement* consisted almost entirely of translations, mostly from French sources.¹¹ He wrote essays of his own in French too, as well as works in Russian. These included 'Various reflections on government',¹² composed around 1760, and, in 1768, a memorandum on the peasant question, which was a riposte to a dissertation by an otherwise unknown author, Béarde de l'Abbaye (?-1771), who had recommended the liberation of the serfs and who had been awarded a prize by the Free Economic Society that Catherine had founded in 1765.¹³

However, when it came to private correspondence, Shcherbatov clearly did not consider it appropriate to use French, as a rule, in letters to his compatriots. His correspondence is mainly monolingual and mostly in Russian. He wrote in Russian, for example, to all of the following: General Field Marshal Prince Aleksandr Mikhailovich Golitsyn (1718-1783); Prince Vladimir Borisovich Golitsyn (1731-1798) and his highly francophone family, including his wife, Natalia Petrovna Golitsyna (1741-1837) and their son Prince Boris Vladimirovich Golitsyn (1769-1813); Catherine's secretary Grigorii Kozitsky (1724-75); Aleksandr Borisovich Kurakin (1752-1818), a future Vice-Chancellor and member of the Russian Academy; Catherine's favourite Prince Grigorii Potiomkin (1739-91); Aleksandr Viazemsky (1727-93), the Procurator-General (*Генерал-прокурор*) of the Senate; and Count Roman Illarionovich Vorontsov (1707-83) and his son Count Aleksandr Romanovich Vorontsov (1741-1805). Shcherbatov also wrote in Russian to Catherine herself.¹⁴ Since all these correspondents had a very good or even excellent command of French, Shcherbatov's choice of Russian suggests a conscious decision to eschew the use of French with all people whose mother tongue was Russian or who, like Catherine, had a very good command of Russian, because he considered such usage artificial. This attitude towards language usage may go together with his views on noble education and on the evolution of Russian society, which we shall discuss shortly.

Shcherbatov did use French, on the other hand, as a *lingua franca*, a tool for communication with foreigners, as opposed to a prestige language for social display within

his own class. He wrote in French, for example, to Gerhard Friedrich Müller (1705-83),¹⁵ a Russian historian of German origin who served in the Russian Academy of Sciences, Jacob von Stählin (1709-85), another German member of the Academy, Baron Diego Bodissoni (dates unknown), a Venetian art merchant who visited St Petersburg, and António Nunes Ribeiro Sanches (1699-1783), a former doctor at the Russian court who was close to the French *encyclopédistes*.¹⁶ Shcherbatov also used French for one strictly practical purpose within his family, as we shall see from three extant letters of 1775 to his son Dmitrii, which we reproduce in this corpus and to which we shall now turn.

The role of French in noble upbringing

As a rule, Shcherbatov wrote to his children in Russian. We may therefore suppose that the three extant letters that he wrote entirely in French to Dmitrii had a special function and that his choice of language in them was highly significant. The crux of the matter is that the chief function of these three letters is pedagogical. Dmitrii, who was born in 1760, was a teenager at the time when the letters were written, that is to say he was in the formative period of his life, and had just been sent abroad for further study. Moreover, Shcherbatov's purpose in the letters is educational both in a moral sense, as we shall show in this section of our introduction, and in a linguistic sense, as we shall see in the following section. The letters reflect a paternal concern, on the part of a member of a distinguished ancient family, to ensure that the boy to whom they are addressed will be worthy of the family's name. They are not intimate, natural and spontaneous but formal, indeed formulaic, in both content and tone. Shcherbatov addresses his son not by his name but as 'My dear son' ('Mon cher fils!') and with the personal pronoun 'vous' rather than 'tu'. (In general, second-person pronominal usage seems less flexible in the French written by Russian eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century nobles than usage in their Russian. Their preference for the plural form 'vous' may, of course, indicate a feeling on their part that French utterances consistently have an air of formality that is appropriate whenever, for instance, a dutiful father exhorts or admonishes his children.) Shcherbatov repeatedly underlines the pedagogical purpose of his letters, offering somewhat vacuous statements of intent such as the following (in which, as everywhere, we preserve Shcherbatov's spellings): 'I am taking up the pen to write to you not merely to inform you of the state of our family but also to give you some paternal advice' ('je prends la plume pour vous écrire, non seulement pour vous informer de l'état de notre famille, mais aussi pour vous donner les avis paternels'); 'my occupations have enabled me to combine the duties of a teacher with those of a father' ('mes occupations m'ont put permettre de joindre les devoirs d'un precepteur a ceux du pere'); 'I want to speak to you again about your studies' ('je veux vous parler encore sur vos études'); 'I advise you as a friend and father' ('je vous conseille en ami et en pere').¹⁷

Shcherbatov's letters do indeed contain numerous instructions to his son about how he should behave. Dmitrii should show respect and gratitude towards the man who is his teacher and towards his teacher's wife. (This is a conventional injunction of parents to sons embarking on an educational trip or setting out on the 'Grand Tour' with their governor.) He

should learn how to conduct himself when he lives in somebody else's house. He should be diligent in his studies, because a man who is not well educated cannot be virtuous or useful to his country or indeed lead a life which brings personal happiness. He should attentively study history, because it furnishes edifying examples of good actions which bring credit to a man and bad actions which bring dishonour and indelible shame. Dmitrii should 'always bear in mind what great men have done in the various situations in which they have found themselves' ('avoir toujours present à votre idée ce que les grands homes ont fait dans les divers cas ou ils se sont trouvé'). Shcherbatov adduces his own examples of admirable conduct, such as the heroic self-sacrifice of the three hundred Spartans, led by their king Leonidas (died 480 BC), who defended Greece against the Persians at Thermopylae in 480 BC, and the refusal of Socrates (469-399 BC) to flee from his native Athens, although he had been unjustly condemned to death.¹⁸ It is indicative of the growing consciousness of national identity in Russia and of Shcherbatov's recognition of the importance of a people's history as an expression of that identity that he urges his son to study examples of virtue in Russia's own history too.¹⁹ At the same time, Shcherbatov's strong belief in the pre-eminence of the nobility leads him to draw his historical examples exclusively from the conduct of that estate. He extols Prince Dmitrii Pozharsky (1578-1642), for instance, but he does not mention the contribution that was also made by the commoner Kuzma Minin (late sixteenth century-1616), who was possibly the son of a salt-worker, to the national resistance against the Polish invaders in 1611-12, during the Time of Troubles (Смутное время).²⁰

Shcherbatov's crude defence of aristocratic privilege rests partly on a claim that the ancient nobility had originated in men of superior competence and virtue and that these qualities had been transmitted through the generations. He therefore sees it as an essential duty of the aristocrat to inculcate a sense of the worth of his family in each succeeding generation. 'Common sense itself convinces us and all the best writers acknowledge', he had confidently asserted in one of his perorations to the Legislative Commission,

that honour and glory are most active in the nobility: hence these qualities have more influence on those who, almost from their very birth, hear of the great deeds of their ancestors, see their pictures, recall the feats for which they won renown – than on those who, when they look at their fathers, who worked their way up to officer's rank either by long service or by sharp practice, but not by outstanding services – see no such example which might inspire them to glorious deeds, and the names of whose ancestors are now veiled in obscurity.²¹

Hence Shcherbatov's exhortation to his son that he be aware that he is 'a man of birth' ('un homme de naissance'), a person of a rank above the common run, that heaven decreed he be born in a family which goes back several centuries and that he has ancestors whose services to their country have made them illustrious.

However, it is not only to his family that the young aristocrat has responsibilities. For despite the fact that Peter III had freed nobles in 1762 from compulsory service to the sovereign, Shcherbatov still conceives of the family's responsibilities within a larger national frame. He sets national duty above domestic duty: 'I am a citizen before I am a father' ('Je suis citoyen avant que d'être père'), he tells his son. His son too must learn that he has a duty as a subject as well as a responsibility as the son of an aristocratic line. Not that the two types of duty, towards country and family, are incompatible, for it is precisely by being useful to his country that the nobleman will bring credit to his family: a knowledge of engineering, for example, may make his son, Shcherbatov tells Dmitrii, 'more useful to your Fatherland and deserving of your name' ('plus utile à votre Patrie et de mériter votre nom').

It cannot be said, of course, that Shcherbatov's insistence that private interest be subordinated to some larger interest is in itself a manifestation of an idea imported from the contemporary West. After all, such subordination is no less characteristic – indeed, it is possibly more characteristic – of pre-modern autocratic states such as medieval Muscovy than of Europe's eighteenth-century absolute monarchies. Nonetheless, the concepts and values that Shcherbatov uses in order to define the relationship of the individual to the polity and to the society in which he finds himself are clearly novel in eighteenth-century Russia, and they are of foreign origin. Foremost among these concepts and values, as we see from Shcherbatov's letters to his son, are the fatherland and the duty to love and serve it: 'I shall speak to you' ('je vous parlerai'), Shcherbatov proposes, 'of one of the main virtues of a citizen, which is love of the fatherland, for which we must sacrifice ourselves' ('d'une des principales vertus d'un citoyen qui est l'amour de la patrie, pour la quelle nous devons nous sacrifier'). Central too in his outlook – as we also see from the foregoing quotation – are the concepts of virtue (by which Shcherbatov means both moral excellence and consciousness of what constitutes it, without which one acts only out of instinct), the citizen (a member of a community that not only requires loyalty but also confers rights), self-respect (the sense of worth that drives a nobleman's actions) and utility (especially public utility, which serves as a criterion for judgement of the value of one's actions). For the most part, these notions have their roots in classical antiquity, whence they were transmitted to European societies during and after the Renaissance through the writings of Cicero, Lucius Annaeus Seneca (c. 4 BC-65 AD) and other Roman authors. Nevertheless we are bound to note that the primary vehicle for their introduction to the young Shcherbatov is the French language, as it had been for Mikhail Shcherbatov in his own youth. It is the French concepts 'patrie' (invoked eleven times in the second of Shcherbatov's letters published here; the word 'nation' also occurs), 'obligations', 'vertu', 'citoyen', 'amour-propre' and 'utilité' that serve as the basis for the notions of *отечество*, *долг*, *добродетель*, *гражданин*, *самолюбие* and *польза* that are ubiquitous in late eighteenth-century Russian literature and that provide a substantial part of the template used by late eighteenth-century Russian writers to organise their view of the world.²² Finally, it is Montesquieu who provides the principal inspiration for Shcherbatov's view of the hereditary nobility as a superior caste

which will prevent the monarch from becoming a despot and whose satisfaction with its lot is perceived as essential to the well-being of the realm.

It might be added that while he attached great importance to the inculcation of the notion of the good citizen and to examples from ancient history and Russian history for the moral edification of his son, Shcherbatov seems to have neglected certain other aspects of the cultivation of the 'honnête homme' which commonly featured in discourse about the education of the nobleman at this time.²³ He does not speak at all in his extant letters to his son, for instance, about 'knowledge of good society' ('la connaissance du monde') or such arts of pleasing ('arts d'agrément') as the ability to dance, play music or draw, or about the art of sociability in the aristocratic salon. He may have regarded such arts as artificial and futile. In this respect the conservative aristocrat would have come unexpectedly close to contemporary educators of non-noble origin who were eager to belittle the importance of these specifically noble preoccupations. Even his attitude towards the acquisition of academic knowledge may have been somewhat unconventional, in so far as Shcherbatov undoubtedly prized a deeper form of learning than that which was expected of the *honnête homme*, who took care not to expose himself to the charge of pedantry.

The extent of the Russian nobleman's command of written French

Shcherbatov does not regard French as the only foreign language which it is important for the Russian nobleman to acquire. He tells Dmitrii (who at the time when Shcherbatov writes to him is in German-speaking East Prussia, in Königsberg (that is to say, modern Kaliningrad)) that it is also necessary for a Russian gentleman to know German. One reason for this advice is pedagogical, inasmuch as acquisition of a language helps one to learn other languages of the same linguistic family (although Shcherbatov did not put it in quite those terms). In an educational treatise on *Ways of teaching Various Sciences* Shcherbatov argued that knowledge of German would help one to study English, just as knowledge of French helps one to learn Italian or Spanish. (He had learned Italian in this way as an adult, he explained.)²⁴ However, there were far more important pragmatic reasons for learning German. First, this language was spoken in several provinces of the vast Russian Empire. Secondly, Russia was near to German-speaking countries. Thirdly, Russians had various types of relationship with the German-speaking 'nation'. Fourthly, German might be useful for the Russian nobleman in military service, for he might in some provinces have to speak to people, including soldiers, who know only that language. Dmitrii should therefore be sure, Shcherbatov advises him, that he will be able to 'understand the full force of the orders that [his] superiors will give [him] in that language' ('jugez si vous pouvez comprendre toute la force des ordres que vous donneront en cette langue vos supérieures') and that he himself will be able to issue orders in it to his subordinates.²⁵

Nonetheless, it is French that is of paramount importance to the Russian nobleman, Shcherbatov explains, because French 'is now so widespread in Europe and consequently as necessary for conversation as for instruction, owing to the great number of good authors who have written in that language' ('est a present si rependus en Europe et par consequent

nécessaire tant pour la conversation, que pour l'instruction a cause du grand nombre de bons auteurs qui ont écrit en cette langue'). Shcherbatov is not at all pleased, though, with the progress Dmitrii has been making with his study of French. 'I am hardly happy', he chides him, 'with either your style or your French spelling' ('je ne suis guere content ni de votre stile, ni de votre orthographe françoise'). The boy ought to have a better knowledge of French to show for his five years of study of it, Shcherbatov thinks. The father urges the son to make up for the time lost in the giddy pursuits of youth and apply himself – as we know Shcherbatov himself did in his own youth – to the study of good French authors and to try to form his own style by following these models.

It is somewhat ironic, in view of Shcherbatov's complaint about the poor quality of his son's French, that his letters reveal his own written language as highly inaccurate. That is not to say that we should invariably pay attention to Shcherbatov's deviations from modern usage in spelling and use of accents, since French was not so rigorously standardised at this period as it subsequently became. For example, the form 'vôtre', in which the circumflex reminds readers of the original presence of 's' in this word and which is used by Shcherbatov where the modern standard would require 'votre', was quite common in the eighteenth century, even among authors who were considered exemplary. Shcherbatov's omission of accents of various sorts from French words (as in 'etat [état]', 'precepteur [précepteur]', 'pere [père]', 'a [à]', 'accables [accablés]', 'meme [même]' and 'ou [où]'²⁶) may therefore have been largely unexceptionable. At the same time, we find in Shcherbatov's letters numerous misspellings that might have been less acceptable even in the late eighteenth century. Shcherbatov is troubled in particular by the spelling of homophonous forms (e.g. 'je n'auroit [aurois] pas', 'tous [tout] ce que m'a dit', 'j'attend [attends]', 'l'attrais [attrait]', 'de nouveaux [nouveau]', 'je vous escrit [écris]', 'je ne peux qu'être surprit [surpris]', 's'abillent [s'habillent]', 'elle assur [assure]'.²⁷ Many of his spelling mistakes are tantamount to grammatical errors. He has difficulty distinguishing between preterite and past participial forms (e.g. 'je reçu [reçus]', 'm'ont put [pu]', 'a bien voulut [voulu]', 'j'auroit put [pu]', 'ceux qui ont eut [eu]', 'n'a pas voulut [voulu]', 'nous en avons recut [reçu]'. He makes mistakes in agreement (e.g. 'Il vous est trop connus [connu]', 'leurs [leur] permission', 'l'horreur des mauvaises actions n'a pas pus [pu] être effacée', 'cette Langue, qui est a present si rependus [répandue] en Europe', 'les uns sont destiné [destinés]', 'les premieres [premiers] alimens', 'sacrifier leurs [leur] vie'. He also frequently uses the wrong gender (e.g. 'un [une] education', 'le service actuelle [actuel]', 'etude continuel [continuelle]', 'quels [quelles] occasions quels [quelles] sont ses diverses modifications', 'un [une] mort', 'vertus nationaux [nationales]', 'societes entiers [entières]'. Further grammatical errors include 'vos journal' [instead of the plural 'vos journaux'], 'il me possible [il m'est possible]', and 'quoi que je ne suis guere content [quoique je ne sois guère content]'.²⁸

This, then, is the written French of someone who may have learned the language in an unsystematic way and primarily through listening to it rather than through studying its written form. (One may surmise that Shcherbatov had been inattentive to what was

considered good written usage in texts that we know he had read and that he concentrated on their content rather than on the language in which their authors' ideas were expressed.) The errors in his writing seem to have been commonplace among the francophone aristocracy, and not only in the age of Catherine but also later, in the Alexandrine age, when *francophonie* was at its peak in Russia. Both Piotr Viazemsky (1792-1878) and Aleksandr Pushkin (1799-1837), for example, made mistakes of a similar kind to those that we see in Shcherbatov's letters to his son. However, it would be wrong on this evidence to doubt that their command of French was of a very high order. Indeed Viazemsky, as Irina Paperno and Iurii Lotman have argued, may even have conceived ideas in French in certain registers and transposed them – with detriment to the clarity of the ideas – into Russian.²⁸ Perhaps it is safest merely to conclude that many francophone Russians (or at least, francophone Russian writers) used French in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries primarily for the purpose of speech in the family and in society rather than for writing. At any rate, Shcherbatov's weakness in French spelling, which often results in grammatical error, does not seem to accord with his fluency and mastery of French idiom.

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Shcherbatov was highly critical both of the increased social mobility and the new type of high society that were introduced into eighteenth-century Russia as a result of the Petrine reforms. The new noble sociability, he believed, brought coquetry and an appetite for ostentatious luxury which corrupted mores and ruined noble families. Consequently, his attitude towards the French language, whose use was inextricably bound up with this new sociability, was ambivalent. On the one hand, he did understand the utility of the main foreign languages – French and German – for the Russian nobility and appreciated their functions as *lingua francas* to be used in communication with other Europeans and as means of accessing foreign literatures. French was therefore a language that the Russian nobleman, if he was to be worthy of his privilege, needed to master. On the other hand, Shcherbatov did not use French as a language of cultivated exchange in correspondence with his compatriots. This deliberate avoidance of French as a social language is all of a piece with Shcherbatov's omission of any advice to his son to develop the skills required of a courtier, such as proficiency in dancing and music. Again, the value that Shcherbatov placed on French may have been limited by the fact that he regarded the arts and humanities, for which French was the major European vehicle in his lifetime, as of little practical use. It is significant that the arts and humanities are not developed in the land of Ophir described in Shcherbatov's utopian novel, because Shcherbatov did not see them as bringing any economic benefit. In his ideal educational curriculum the only disciplines considered worthy of study even though they had no obvious immediate utilitarian function were history and geography; literature and philosophy had no place at all.²⁹ Worse still, Shcherbatov may have associated French with the corrupting effect of the urban culture which Catherine, to his chagrin, was promoting. If he did indeed believe that Russians' use of French as an

aristocratic prestige language amounted to a rejection of the natural in favour of the superficial, then he resembled Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78), who was critical of the artifice of the theatre and the French model of education which was spreading among European elites during the eighteenth century. At the same time, we might place Shcherbatov in the Russian patriarchal tradition that was represented, so Lotman and Boris Uspensky have claimed, by the Old Believers, who saw the development of society as a process of corruption and imagined salvation in the rediscovery of authentic values that had been lost in the modern world.³⁰

In the final analysis, Shcherbatov's position on what we might call the politics of language use seems somewhat contradictory and poorly developed. Although he was a leading spokesman for that section of the Russian aristocracy that based its claims to privilege on ancient lineage rather than merit, for instance, Shcherbatov did not wholeheartedly adopt the linguistic behaviour that many contemporaries in his milieu were coming to recognise as an important mark of their elite social and cultural identity. Again, it is striking that while he complains, in his treatise *On the Corruption of Morals on Russia*, of the harmful effects of the introduction of a western way of life, including such features of salon culture as coquetry, Shcherbatov did not specifically mention the use of the French language. The omission seems the more surprising when we remember that other writers, especially Fonvizin and Nikolai Novikov (1744-1818), were beginning in the 1760s and 1770s vigorously to criticise Russian francophonie and Franco-Russian code-switching, in texts on which we shall comment elsewhere in our corpus.

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¹ On the Legislative Commission see especially Paul Dukes, *Catherine the Great and the Russian Nobility* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), and Isabel de Madariaga, *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1981).

² On the outlook of nobles who upheld the meritocratic principle, and on the views of Fonvizin in particular, see Derek Offord, 'Denis Fonvizin and the concept of nobility: An eighteenth-century Russian echo of a western debate', *European History Quarterly*, vol. 35, no. 1, 2005, pp. 9-38.

³ M. M. Shcherbatov, *История российская от древнейших времен*, ed. I. P. Khrushchev and A. G. Voronov, 7 vols (St Petersburg: tip. M. Akinfieva i I. Leontieva, 1901-04).

⁴ N. M. Karamzin, *История Государства Российского*, 12 vols (St Petersburg: V Voennoi Tipografii Glavnogo Shtaba Ego Imperatorskogo Velichestva, 1818-29).

⁵ Prince M. M. Shcherbatov, *On the Corruption of Morals in Russia*, ed. and trans. A. Lentin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969). The Russian title of this work is *О повреждении нравов в России*.

⁶ *Путешествие в землю офирскую господина С., швецкого дворянина*, in M. M. Shcherbatov, *Сочинения князя М. М. Щербатова* [*The Works of Prince M. M. Shcherbatov*], 2 vols (St Petersburg: Kn. V. S. Shcherbatov, 1896-98), vol. I, cols 749-1060. On this work see N. D. Chechulin, *Русский социальный роман XVIII века. Путешествие в землю офирскую г. С., швецкого дворянина. Сочинение князя М. М. Щербатова* [*The Russian Social Novel of the Eighteenth Century. The Journey of Mr S., a Swedish Nobleman, to the Land of Ophir. A Work by Prince M. M. Shcherbatov.*] (St Petersburg: V. S. Balashov i Ko., 1900). On Shcherbatov's career and writing in general, see especially Lentin's introduction in Shcherbatov, *On the Corruption of Morals in Russia*, pp. 1-102. See also Andrzej Walicki, *A History of Russian Thought from the Enlightenment to Marxism*, trans. Hilda Andrews-Rusiecka (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979 and

Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), pp. 27-32; Marc Raeff, 'State and nobility in the ideology of M. M. Shcherbatov', *The American Slavic and East European Review*, vol. 19, no. 3 (October 1960), pp. 363-79. Among Russian works see A. Fedosov, *Из истории русской общественной мысли XVIII столетия: М. М. Щербатов* [*From the History of Eighteenth-Century Russian Social Thought: M. M. Shcherbatov*] (Moscow: Moscow University Press, 1967).

⁷ Lentin, 'Introduction', p. 19.

⁸ On Shcherbatov's library (both the books that came to him through his family and the considerable number of volumes he himself accumulated) see Wladimir Berelowitch, 'La bibliothèque en langues occidentales de Mikhaïl Chtcherbatov: premières approches', in Sergueï Karp (ed.), *Le Siècle des Lumières. I. Espace culturel de l'Europe à l'époque de Catherine II* [*The Age of Enlightenment: I. Europe's Cultural Space in the Age of Catherine II*] (Moscow: Nauka, 2006), pp. 282-93.

⁹ i.e. *Grandeur et décadence des Romains* and *De l'Esprit des lois* by Charles de Secondat, baron de Montesquieu (1689-1755); *L'Examen de conscience sur les devoirs de la royauté* (1711) by François Fénelon (1651-1715); *Siècle de Louis XIV* by François-Marie Arouet (i.e. Voltaire, 1694-1778); *Dissertation sur les raisons d'établir ou d'abroger les lois* by Frederick the Great (1712-86, King of Prussia 1740-86); *De officiis* by Marcus Tullius (i.e. Cicero, 106-43 BC). See Lentin, 'Introduction', in Prince M. M. Shcherbatov, *On the Corruption of Morals in Russia*, p. 19.

¹⁰ All these manuscript translations by Shcherbatov are housed in the Manuscript Department of the Russian National Library in St Petersburg, in the Hermitage Collection.

¹¹ Lentin, 'Introduction', pp. 21-22. The Russian title of the journal in which this debut appeared was *Сочинения и переводы к пользе и увеселению служащие*, formerly known as *Ежемесячные сочинения* [*Monthly Works*].

¹² i.e. 'Réflexions diverses sur le gouvernement': see Lentin, 'Introduction', pp. 23-25.

¹³ The author of this memorandum is posing as a foreigner, which explains why it was written in French. Shcherbatov, *Князь М. М. Щербатов. Неизданные сочинения* [*Prince M. M. Shcherbatov. Unpublished Works*], ed. P. G. Liubomirov (Moscow: OGIZ SOTSEKGI, 1935), pp. 3-15. The title of de l'Abbaye's work was 'Dissertation qui a remporté le prix à la société libre et oeconomique de St. Pétersbourg, sur cette question [...] Est-il plus avantageux à un Etat, que les paysans possèdent en propre du terrain, ou qu'ils n'aient que des biens meublés? Et jusqu'où doit s'étendre cette propriété?' ['Dissertation which has won the St Petersburg Free Economic Society Prize on the question [...] Is it more advantageous to a state that the peasants should own land or that they should have only movable property? And how far should this property extend?'] (Amsterdam: M. M. Rey, 1769).

¹⁴ *Переписка князя М.М.Щербатова: публикация со введением, комментариями и именным указателем подготовлена С.Г.Калининой* [*The Correspondence of Prince M. M. Shcherbatov. Publication with an Introduction, Commentaries and Index of Names by S. G. Kalinina*] (Moscow: Drevlekhranilishche, 2011): see pp. 54-169, 323-25.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 170-303.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 340, 343; see also Berelowitch, 'La bibliothèque en langues occidentales de Mikhaïl Chtcherbatov', p. 283.

¹⁷ There is a curious similarity between the formality with which this austere eighteenth-century parent conducts his relations with his son and the way in which the father of the nobleman Fiodor Ivanovich Lavretsky, whom Turgenev portrays in his novel *A Nest of Gentry* (set mainly in 1842), brings up his young son in the Alexandrine age. Ivan Lavretsky subjects Fedia to a mélange of foreign educational influences, writes exhortatory letters to him in French and addresses him as 'mon fils' and 'vous': see *Дворянское гнездо*, in I. S. Turgenev, *Полное собрание сочинений и писем* [*Complete Works and Letters*], 28 vols (Moscow and Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1961-68), vol. VII, pp. 162-63.

¹⁸ The importance of ancient Greek and Roman history for educational purposes, especially during the Age of Enlightenment, has been emphasised by Annie Bruter: see her book *L'Histoire enseignée au Grand Siècle. Naissance d'une pédagogie* [*The History taught in the Grand Siècle. The Birth of a Pedagogy*] (Paris: Belin, 1997), and her chapter 'Des arcana imperii à l'éducation du citoyen : le modèle de l'éducation historique au XVIII^e siècle' ['Some *arcana imperii* in the education of the citizen: the model of historical education in the eighteenth century'], in Gérard Luciani et Catherine Volpilhac-Augier (eds), *L'Institution du prince au XVIII^e siècle. Actes du huitième colloque franco-italien des sociétés française et italienne d'étude du XVIII^e siècle tenu à Grenoble en octobre 1999* [*The Institution of the Prince in the Eighteenth Century. Proceedings of the Eighth Franco-Italian Colloquium on the Study of the Eighteenth Century held in Grenoble in October 1999*] (Paris: CIEDS, 2003), pp. 25-34. See also Ch. Grell, W. Paravicini, J. Voss, *Les princes et l'histoire du XIV^e au XVIII^e siècle*.

Actes du colloque organisé par l'Université de Versailles (Paris et Versailles : Saint-Quentin et l'Institut Historique Allemand, 13-16 mars 1996). [Princes and History from the Fourteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries. Proceedings of a Colloquium organised by the University of Versailles Paris and Versailles: St Quentin and the German Historical Institute, 13-16 March 1996] (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1998).

¹⁹ On the general association of history and identity, see in particular Annie Bruter, 'Histoire et identité : mariage indissoluble ou union passagère?' ['History and identity: an indissoluble marriage or a temporary alliance?'], in *Identités, mémoires, conscience historique. Textes rassemblés par Nicole Tutiaux-Guillon et Didier Nourrisson* [*Identities, Memories, Historical Consciousness. Texts assembled by Nicole Tutiaux-Guillon and Didier Nourrisson*] (Saint-Étienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint-Étienne, 2003), pp. 43-51.

²⁰ Shcherbatov had been guilty of the same omission, indeed misrepresentation, in one of his speeches to the Legislative Commission, as noted by Lentin, 'Introduction', p. 31. Minin and Pozharsky are jointly commemorated in the statue that stands in Red Square in Moscow; the statue was erected, though, in an age – shortly after the Napoleonic Wars – when it was perhaps intended to celebrate the national cohesion that had made possible the victory over Napoleon.

²¹ Quoted by Lentin, 'Introduction', p. 30.

²² As far as 'virtue' is concerned, it may be that this concept was less heavily stressed in discourse about men's education than in discourse about women's education (in the West and in Russia too). However, for Shcherbatov it was natural to discuss it, because he paid so much attention to the 'corruption of morals'.

²³ On this notion, its origin and its cultural implications see, e.g., Maurice Magendi, *La Politesse Mondaine et les theories de l'honnêteté, en France, au XVIIe siècle, de 1600 à 1660* [*Politeness in Society and Theories of Civility in Seventeenth-Century France from 1600 to 1660*] (Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1925?), 2 vols.

²⁴ W. Berelowitch, 'La bibliothèque en langues occidentales de Mikhaïl Chtcherbatov', p. 285. Shcherbatov's treatise, entitled «О способах преподавания разныя науки», was not published in his lifetime. It is printed in Shcherbatov, *Сочинения*, vol. II, cols 439-602.

²⁵ It is perhaps surprising, in view of Shcherbatov's assessment of the importance of German in his world, that his library should have contained only one book in German, as we have seen.

²⁶ Shcherbatov is also prone to insert an accent which is incorrect (e.g. 'états [états]').

²⁷ Further spelling mistakes include 'paraport' [instead of 'par rapport'], 'datte [date]', 'stile [style]', 'attentiff [attentif]', 'cependent [cependant]', 'un mauvais conseille [conseil]', 'se nurire' [se nourir]', 'dommestiques [domestiques]', 'jettons [jetons]', 'principeaux [principaux]' 'parelle [pareille] conduite', 'rependra [répandra]', 'viellesse [vieillesse]', 'il vous fera [fera]' and 'est defenduë [defendue]'.

²⁸ I. A. Paperno and Iu. M. Lotman, «Вяземский — переводчик "Негодования"» ['Viazemsky as a translator of "Indignation"'], *Ученые записки ТГУ [Scholarly Proceedings of Tartu State University]*, 1975, no. 369, pp. 129-30.

²⁹ Chechulin, *Русский социальный роман XVIII века*, pp. 19, 41, 44.

³⁰ See, e.g., B. A. Uspenskii and Iu. M. Lotman, 'Роль дуальных моделей в динамике русской культуры (до конца XVIII века)' ['The role of dual models in the dynamic of Russian culture (up to the end of the eighteenth century)'], in B. A. Uspenskii, *Избранные труды [Selected Works]*, 2nd edn, vol. I (Moscow: Iazyki russkoi kul'tury, 1996), pp. 338-80.