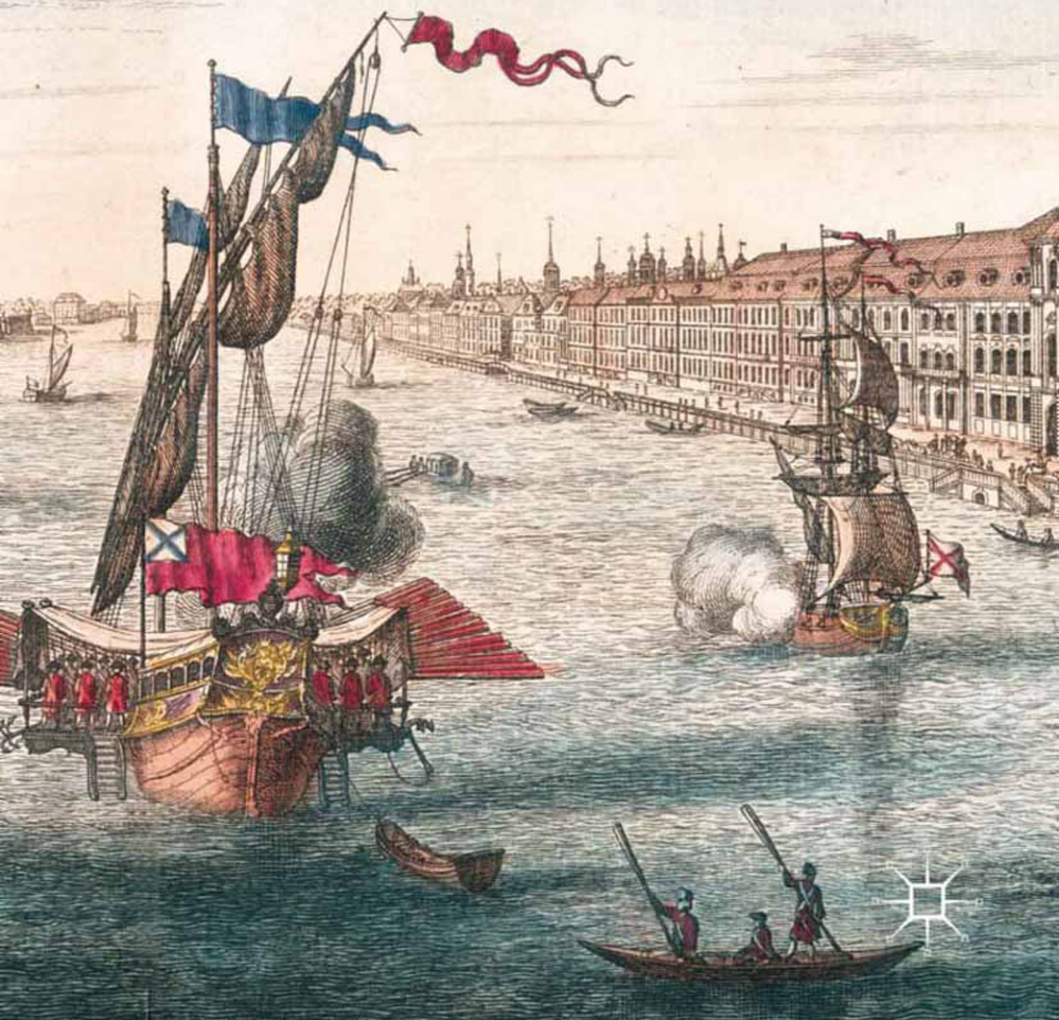
St Petersburg and the Russian Court, 1703–1761

Paul Keenan



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To the memory of Lindsey Hughes (1949–2007)

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Abbreviations

Printed Sources

AKV	*Arkhiv kniazei Vorontsovykh*, ed. Petr. I. Bartenev (Moscow, 1870–95), 40 vols.
ChIOIDR	*Chteniia v Imperatorskom Obshchestve Istorii i Drevnostei Rossiiskikh pri Moskovskom universitete* (Moscow, 1846–1918), 258 vols.
KfZh	*Kamer-fur'erskie Zhurnaly, 1726–1771 goda*, ed. B. M. Fedorov (St Petersburg, 1853–5), 40 vols.
MIIAN	*Materialy dlia istorii Imperatorskogo Akademii nauk*, ed. Mikhail V. Sukhomlinov (St Petersburg, 1890–1900), 10 vols.
MP	*Muzykal'nyi Peterburg. Entsiklopedicheskii slovar': XVIII vek*, ed. Anna L. Porfir'eva (St Petersburg, 1999–2000), 3 vols.
PiBIPV	*Pis'ma i bumagi imperatora Petra Velikogo* (Moscow, 1887–), 13 vols to date.
PoZh	*Pokhodnye i putevye zhurnaly imperatora Petra I-go, 1695–1726*, ed. A. Th. Bychkov (St Petersburg, 1853–5), 32 vols.
PridZh	*Pridvornye zhurnaly... 1741–42, 1743–48*, ed. Ivan A. Cherkasov (St Petersburg, 1883 and 1913).
PSZ	*Polnoe sobranie zakonov rossiiskoi imperii... 1649–1825* (St Petersburg, 1830), 46 vols.
SEER	*Slavonic and East European Review*
SGECRN	*Study Group on Eighteenth-Century Russia Newsletter*
SIRIO	*Sbornik Imperatorskogo Rossiiskogo Istoricheskogo Obshchestva* (St Petersburg, 1867–1926), 148 vols.
SK	*Svodnyi katalog katalog russkoi knigi grazhdanskoi pechati XVIII veka, 1725–1800*, ed. I. P. Kondakov et al. (Moscow, 1962–7), 5 vols.
Slovar'	*Slovar' russkogo iazyka XVIII veka*, ed. Stepan G. Barkhudarov et al. (St Petersburg, 1984–), 19 vols. to date.
Sochineniia	*Sochineniia imperatritsy Ekateriny II, na osnovanii podlinnykh rukopisei*, ed. A. N. Pypin (St Petersburg 1901–7), 12 vols.
SPV	*Sanktpeterburgskie Vedomosti*
SR	*Slavic Review*

TZhRAI	*Teatral'naia zhizn' Rossii v epokhu Anny Ioannovny. Dokumental'naia khronika, 1730–40*, ed. Liudmila M. Starikova (Moscow, 1995).
TZhREP	*Teatral'naia zhizn' Rossii v epokhu Elizavety Petrovny. Dokumental'naia khronika*, ed. Liudmila M. Starikova (Moscow, 2003–), 3 parts, in progress.
ZhDGA	*Zhurnaly dezhurnykh general-ad''iuntantov: tsarstvovanie imperatritsy Elizavety Petrovny*, comp. Leonid V. Evdokimov (St Petersburg, 1897).

Archives

RGADA	Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv drevnikh aktov
RGIA	Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv
RGVIA	Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi voenno-istoricheskii arkhiv
StPb IRI RAN	Sanktpeterburgskii filial Instituta Rossiiskoi Istorii Rossiiskoi Akademii Nauk

Archival references

f.	fond
op.	opis'
d.	delo
kn.	kniga
l. or ll.	list(y)

Introduction

There has been an enduring fascination with St Petersburg in the course of the three centuries since its foundation in 1703 and, at first glance, it is not difficult to understand why this should be the case. It is a relatively recent city, founded only at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and yet it rapidly grew to become the famed capital city of one of Europe's Great Powers. Several aspects of this process help to explain the continuing allure of St Petersburg. It has often been described as Russia's 'window' into Europe, a phrase first coined by Francesco Algarotti who visited St Petersburg in the 1730s and one that neatly encapsulates the situation of the city, geographically and culturally.[1] The mythology associated with the creation and development of St Petersburg has also attracted considerable interest over the intervening centuries.[2] One popular example is the myth of the city's foundation, which presents Peter creating his new city in a wilderness and has featured in numerous literary treatments of St Petersburg. This image conveniently overlooks two considerations: that Peter may not have been present on this momentous occasion in May 1703 and that the proposed site contained a Swedish fortress, known as 'Nienschants', as well as a number of small settlements, principally the town of Nien.[3] Instead, this topos has its origins in the work of successive eighteenth-century writers, beginning during the reign of Peter himself, that celebrated the achievement of the city's founder and it subsequently gained widespread currency through its inclusion in Aleksandr S. Pushkin's famous *Bronze Horseman*.[4]

Yet, despite the poetic licence or mythology at work in these presentations of the city, such images of St Petersburg have played an important part in influencing its interpretation. For example, the city's distinctive architecture reflects the influence of a variety of European styles, while its location on the Baltic coast meant that it played an important commercial and diplomatic role in Russia's relationship with northern and western Europe. These interactions were a deliberate and essential influence on St Petersburg during the decades immediately following its foundation. Likewise, in the seventeenth century, only Moscow was comparable in size and population

to other European cities and Russia remained a predominantly rural society until the late nineteenth century. Although hardly created from 'nothing', the building of a new city like St Petersburg was a major project and therefore a symbol of considerable significance. According to my interpretation, the first half of the eighteenth century set the tone for St Petersburg's development as a leading European capital city thereafter. Before introducing the broad themes of this study, I want to address two questions that occurred to me at an early stage in my research and that have subsequently helped to situate the book in a wider scholarly context. The questions surround the choice of the period – the first half of the eighteenth century – and the subject matter – the cultural life of St Petersburg.

The significance of Peter I (or 'the Great') and his reign as Tsar of Russia has long been debated. Both in the popular imagination and in academic studies, he continues to be the focus of considerable attention. His dynamic character and his eccentricities are writ large in the popular treatments of his reign.[5] The scholarly analysis instead dwelt on the impact of Peter's reforms, with positive and negative assessments about the legacy that they created for Russia's subsequent development.[6] During the Soviet period, scholarship in Russia chiefly discussed Peter I's role in transforming Russia, a process in which culture was considered less significant than the military or the economy.[7] While several important works, particularly in the late Soviet period, explored the costs of these 'revolutionary' reforms – examining the violence and surveillance of the Petrine system, for instance – the fundamental paradigm had not altered significantly since the late imperial period.[8] However, in the last two decades, there have been a number of major works on the Petrine era that have demonstrated the merits of adopting a different approach to this period, while acknowledging their debt to previous writings. In particular, their analysis has integrated previously understudied aspects of the period, such as the influential political networks and the complex cultural expressions of power at the Petrine court.[9] Other recent work has further contextualised the period in terms of the important developments of the preceding seventeenth century and the influence of foreign examples.[10]

A related aspect of the debate on Peter I's significance spotlights the period between his death in 1725 and the accession of Catherine II in 1762. This period between Russia's two 'Great' reigns of the eighteenth century has often been overlooked because of the perception, both scholarly and popular, of the weakness and instability of the rulers, memorably described by one historian as 'ignorant, licentious women, half-witted German princes, and mere children'.[11] This attitude proved both widespread and resilient, with the middle decades of the eighteenth century remaining relatively understudied as a result. There were some important exceptions to this historiographical trend that attempted to rehabilitate or at least better contextualise these rulers.[12] More recently, there has been a concerted effort to

re-examine the 'era of palace revolutions' using an impressive array of archival and printed materials in order to analyse and unpick some of its mythology, such as the question of stagnation and the influence of favourites.[13] Just as the revisionist scholarship on Petrine Russia stresses the need to examine the extent and nature of change during his reign in a wider context, so too the significance of the post-Petrine period lies in exploring the aftermath of those reforms, when their impact and longevity can be properly assessed. Given the considerable changes that Russia underwent in this period, not least in the demands placed on its populace, it is hardly surprising that one leading historian talks of the need for a 'breathing space' during this period when the various reforms could be consolidated and adapted for purpose.[14]

The city of St Petersburg was one of these changes, introduced by Peter, that would require this period of consolidation, even if it subsequently became the most visible and enduring of all of his endeavours. While Peter's desire to found a new city had its roots in the 1690s, St Petersburg is nevertheless a clear example of an innovation that had no roots in the pre-Petrine era. In addition, its location and intended function explicitly reflects a desire to engage directly with the rest of Europe, whether militarily, commercially or culturally.[15] It is therefore tempting to view the city as a physical manifestation of the wide-ranging goals of the reforming Tsar. While the reality is necessarily more complicated than this broad characterisation suggests, the idea that the city was founded and developed as part of an attempt to create a new image of Russia, domestically and internationally, is a striking and, to my mind, persuasive one.[16] St Petersburg has been the subject of an extensive and varied literature since the early decades of its existence, with both inhabitants and outsiders keen to learn more about the history and characteristics of the city, particularly around one of its anniversaries, as in 1903 and 2003.[17] The modern histories of the city have generally presented a narrative of St Petersburg's development, from the early imperial era to the Soviet period and beyond, while exploring its role as a crucible for political, social or cultural change in Russia.[18]

The city became an important theme for successive generations of Russian authors and the question of what St Petersburg represents has been explored in a number of works dealing with its literary portrayal over the same period. These works analyse the rhetorical and symbolic presentation of St Petersburg, which is so often reflected in accounts of the city.[19] For my chosen period, in the early eighteenth century, the standard starting place remains Petrov's magnum opus on St Petersburg's history up to 1782, which not only provides a wealth of information but also a critical view on some of the city's mythology.[20] Likewise, the construction and early life of the city during the Petrine era has been covered by the pioneering work of Luppov.[21] This subject has been further developed in two major recent works by Ageeva and Anisimov that include much greater consideration of the social and cultural life of the early city.[22] Each of these works, both general and

specific, has been important in shaping my view on the city and in suggesting areas for further discussion.

This book examines St Petersburg as a conscious attempt to create a forum for certain social and cultural changes in Russia, while further developing the latter's relationship with the rest of Europe. This is not to suggest either that these attempts were a coherent or cohesive set of policies, or that St Petersburg should be seen as a microcosm for the Russian Empire as a whole. In a country where the official urban population was only 3 per cent of the total population in this period, St Petersburg was hardly typical in its composition and growth.[23] As a result, my argument examines St Petersburg's development from a number of related perspectives, with particular focus on the role of the court in promoting and regulating the city's cultural life. My work focuses on the period between St Petersburg's foundation and the death of Peter I's daughter Elizabeth, because the significance of this period has often been overlooked in studies of this topic. In my view, the developments of the preceding period are crucial to understanding the priorities and actions of Catherine II, both for the city and the court.[24] In order to provide some context for the discussion that follows in subsequent chapters, the following sections briefly introduce the three concepts that provide a backdrop to this book: the question of Russia's relationship with 'Europe'; recent developments in studying the early modern court, particularly in Russia; and the comparison between St Petersburg and other *Residenzstädte* ('court cities').

Russia and Europe

When comparing Russia to a broadly defined region, be it Europe or 'the West', one must question what that region meant to contemporaries, rather than applying that definition anachronistically. At risk of gross understatement, 'Europe' was a complex term in the early modern period, as now. The religious divisions of the Reformation challenged the unitary concept of (Latin) Christendom of the medieval period, and attempts to create a 'universal monarchy' were undermined by the dynastic rivalries of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[25] Yet, religious and Classical ideas continued to inform the discourse about 'Europe' amongst early modern scholars. In their view, Europe was the heart of the 'civilised' world and was thought to be defined by certain values, such as 'liberty', that emphasised its civilisation, as compared with its 'barbaric' rivals in Asia and north Africa.[26] Russia presented an interesting test case for these ideas. It had been part of the European order during the medieval period, when Kievan Rus' had an established, if fractious relationship with a number of leading powers, such as the Byzantine Empire.[27] Grand Prince of Moscow Ivan III's aggressive assertion of sovereignty after two centuries of Mongol domination led to renewed relations with other European rulers during the fifteenth century. As a result,

Muscovy forged commercial and diplomatic contacts with a number of German states and, from the mid-sixteenth century, with England and the Dutch Republic.

Ivan's dynastic marriage to the Byzantine Empire's ruling family, the Palaiologoi, was an important step toward greater recognition on the European stage. With the fall of Constantinople in 1453, Muscovy claimed the role of leading Orthodox Christian polity and the eastern successor to the imperial legacy of Rome.[28] However, at the same time, Muscovy remained very much on the periphery of continental Europe for much of the early modern period and its staunch Orthodoxy created tension with the Latin Christian Church that it had anathematised in 1054. A small but growing number of foreigners travelled to Russia, including craftsmen, merchants, soldiers and diplomats. The accounts written by these travellers played a key role in shaping the debate on Russia, its form of government and the question of its status as 'civilised' (or otherwise) during the early modern period.[29] While such foreigners were the subject of mistrust, not to say xenophobia, their expertise was employed by the Muscovite elite throughout this period, as reflected in the Italian influence on the Kremlin and its cathedrals.[30] The foreign presence was consolidated with the establishment of a 'foreign quarter' in Moscow by the mid-seventeenth century, which proved an important, if restricted conduit for these personnel, their expertise and practices.[31]

The relationship developed in several important ways from the mid-seventeenth century onward. There was a growing awareness of Muscovy across Europe. Its involvement in the Holy Alliance, albeit as an ally of Poland, against the Ottoman Empire in the 1680s was hardly successful in military terms, but reflected a recognition of its utility in international affairs and guaranteed its possession of Left-Bank Ukraine.[32] This acquisition also brought Russia geographically closer to 'Europe', although the generally-acknowledged eastern boundary of Europe had been gradually shifting in that direction anyway, from the River Don in the fifteenth century to the Ural mountains in the eighteenth century.[33] This boundary was proposed on the basis of the differences between the physical geography on either side of the mountains by both Philip Johann von Strahlenberg, a Swedish officer and prisoner of war in Russia, and by Vasilii N. Tatishchev, a Russian geographer and proponent of the Petrine legacy, thereby giving Russia a voice in this debate for the first time.[34] Although Russia stretched across both continents, its heart lay on the European side of this divide. While Muscovy had extensive contact with and a degree of admiration for Asian powers throughout this period, there was a clear sense of distinction between them, not least on the grounds of religion. Similarly, in its dealings with Siberia and its maritime exploration from the late eighteenth century, there are many similarities between imperial attitudes in Russia and in other European cases.[35]

Another facet of this relationship revolves around the 'Europeanisation' of Russia during this period. The use of 'Europeanisation' has now become slightly more common in its application than its bedfellows 'Westernisation' or 'modernisation', but it naturally raises the spectre of the debatable nature of such concepts (or processes) for Russia.[36] The imprecision of such overarching terms has been highlighted in the long-running debate on the subject, which has raised very important questions about the chronology of the process, the areas that it affected and the extent of its impact.[37] Bushkovitch is right to highlight the danger of defining Russian developments in terms of an abstract 'Europe', often based on the exceptional, rather than the typical.[38] With that in mind, I have drawn on the work of Cracraft, whose recent monograph on Russia's cultural development during the Petrine era and its relationship with a variety of influences from across Europe, provides a brief, but useful working definition of 'Europeanisation': 'assimilation or, more appropriately, appropriation in some degree of European cultural practices and norms'.[39] My study places St Petersburg and its cultural life during this period in the broader context of other case studies from across contemporary Europe in order to understand the nature and extent of its development.

Russia and the early modern court

For contemporaries, there was no question about the centrality of the royal court in the early modern world. For popular audiences, then as now, the lives and activities of 'the royals' was a source of a certain fascination, whether motivated by devoted loyalty, righteous indignation or idle curiosity. This interest was fed by the publication of royal histories, biographies and collections of historical anecdotes, a trend that continues to the modern day despite the fading of monarchy as a political institution. However, it was rarely the focus of scholarly attention, often being associated with the study of the court's ceremonial setting and trappings at a surface level. The serious academic study of royal courts has only emerged in recent decades. The influence of Elias's work on the 'court society' was undoubtedly a major contribution to this endeavour, even if it has subsequently been extensively critiqued by historians of the period.[40] Elias's importance lies in prompting a re-examination of certain basic assumptions about the composition and functions of the royal court, in order to better understand its significance as an institution in the early modern period.[41] What has emerged from this 'new court history' is a detailed, more nuanced picture of the early modern court as a key forum for the developments of the period and the revision of previous assertions about the ruler's relationship with the elite, the role of religion and the influence of new cultural practices.[42]

The historiography of the Russian court presents a similarly mixed picture. Historians of the late imperial period produced a number of important

scholarly works on the rulers and their court in preceding centuries, some of which remain the standard starting point for modern treatments of the subject.[43] Although there was a tendency toward biographical studies, blending anecdotal and archival evidence, they reveal something of the official and popular discourse on certain rulers, notably Catherine II.[44] During the Soviet period, there was a relative paucity of works on the royal court, an institution usually identified with arbitrary cruelty, corruption and profligacy in Marxist historiography. The important contributions to our understanding of the court during the eighteenth century from this period focused instead on its institutional and financial structures.[45] Such work was undoubtedly valuable, not least for highlighting the complexity and partial nature of relevant materials on this area. In the last two decades, this approach has begun to change, as the royal court has become a topic for serious study again, gradually engaging with the growing court historiography outside Russia.[46] The rise of this 'new court history' in Russia has been complemented by an upsurge of interest in other aspects of the early modern period that had previously been neglected or sidelined, such as religion, gender and identity.[47]

The importance of such studies has been to challenge previous assumptions or oversights about these subjects, on the basis of extensive work in Russian archives – now more accessible than ever before – and comparative analysis, as informed by other historical case studies or academic disciplines. The court provides a useful focal point from which to approach a number of these areas. Several historians have challenged the widely held view that Peter I had little time or patience for elaborate ritual and therefore introduced a new 'secular' court, in contrast to its religious Muscovite predecessor.[48] Instead, as noted above, Peter adapted existing Muscovite practices, where they suited his purposes, while simultaneously innovating in other respects, as reflected in the reform of the Muscovite ritual calendar and the introduction of new anniversaries.[49] Similarly, far from Peter's reign being a period of secularisation in Russian culture, recent work has clearly demonstrated the religious foundations of his close circle's activities and the continuing importance of Orthodoxy in the court's major rituals.[50] In a similar vein, Marker's study of the cult of St Catherine in eighteenth-century Russia presents a sophisticated analysis of the relationship between Orthodoxy, female rulership and its expression in Russian court culture.[51]

Detailed archival work has provided a great deal of previously unseen material on the question of the Russian court's evolution as an institution during the eighteenth century. Ageeva has examined this process in two complementary monographs in the last 10 years. The first analyses the court's 'Europeanisation' by examining the titles of court posts and the introduction of new regulations, often informed by courtly practices elsewhere.[52] The second is an exhaustive examination of the court's administration, chief offices and financial affairs, in a manner similar to Duindam's work on the

courts of Versailles and Vienna.[53] While the comparative context of other European courts is largely unexplored, there is no doubt that these two monographs have established a new gold standard for archival studies of the Russian court. They have been joined by other, similarly detailed archival studies, of which Pisarenko's recent book on Elizabeth's court is a welcome addition to a neglected period that provides a wealth of new details about the wide-ranging scope of court life.[54] While my work draws on the fruits of this new approach, particularly in shaping my view of its complexities, I will instead explore the court's role in creating and fostering the ceremonial and social life of St Petersburg. The organic relationship between the court, its elite and the city bears comparison with other European examples, which are discussed in the next section.

Russia and the *Residenzstadt*

The promotion of St Petersburg by Peter I and his successors has been viewed by some historians as an attempt to create a version of the German *Residenzstadt* or 'court city' in Russia.[55] At its most basic, the term *Residenz* was used to indicate the permanent, or at least long-term, presence of the ruler and their court in a given location, in contrast to the itinerant medieval and Renaissance courts that often moved to different centres across their realms on a regular basis.[56] There were a number of reasons for this trend. The growing size and cost of the court made a permanent base more attractive, while such *Residenzstädte* could be used to reflect the wealth, status and, ultimately, power of their ruler in material and symbolic terms.[57] Commonly, these towns or cities were transformed by the presence of the ruler and their court or, as in the case of St Petersburg, built specifically for this purpose. There are prominent examples across early modern Europe.[58] An early example of a royal court choosing a permanent location and then transforming the site to fit this purpose was the development of Madrid under the Spanish Habsburgs, where royal investment from Philip II onwards turned a small town into a major capital city.[59] Louis XIV's palace and garden complex at Versailles presents a high-profile, influential example of a *Residenz* created anew, on the site of an old hunting lodge, and one that was deliberately located beyond the *Stadt* of Paris.[60]

While it was undoubtedly one of the most impressive examples of its type, Versailles was not as dominant an influence as traditionally suggested. The Bourbons' main dynastic rivals, the Austrian Habsburgs, provided an alternative with their more austere but equally significant *Residenz*, based around the Hofburg palace in Vienna.[61] Similarly, the style of Italian architects, as reflected in Gian Lorenzo Bernini's commissions in seventeenth-century Rome, may not have satisfied Louis XIV's tastes but it proved influential in central and northern Europe throughout this period.[62] This multiplicity of influences can be seen at a range of courts of varying size and significance,

as demonstrated by a host of princes, dukes, bishops and other rulers across the German lands during the second half of the seventeenth century.[63] An appropriately magnificent residence represented an assertion of the ruler's status – whether a reality, an aspiration or, occasionally, a compensation – in order to be acknowledged by contemporaries, domestically and internationally. The ambitions of the Bavarian Wittelsbachs and the electors of Saxony found expression in the extensive redevelopment of Munich and Dresden from the 1680s onward.[64] Prussia's claim of a royal title in 1701 led to considerable investment in Berlin as Frederick I sought to reinforce his new status through extensive building projects and major court celebrations. On the other hand, Prussian rulers continued to be crowned in Königsberg, a tradition that bears comparison with the Russian case.[65]

With regard to St Petersburg, there are certainly similarities between Peter's new city and the seats of other contemporary rulers across Europe. In common with the smaller court cities across the German lands, it was a city that owed its entire existence to the ruler's will. The rapid development of St Petersburg was less an organic process than it was the result of investment by successive rulers and the city's wealthy elite. St Petersburg was firmly established as the principal seat of the royal court and the main administrative bodies within two decades of its foundation. However, contrary to popular belief, there was no formal declaration of St Petersburg's assumption of the title of capital city during Peter's reign.[66] St Petersburg's position came under scrutiny following the death of its founder in 1725, with speculation at the end of the decade that these institutions might return to Moscow permanently when the young Tsar Peter II preferred to reside there before his death in 1730. Instead, the triumphant return of Anna Ivanovna and her court to St Petersburg in 1732 confirmed the new city's ruling status, with the court spending only three of the next 30 years in Moscow.

Yet, despite claims to the contrary by some later commentators, Moscow was hardly neglected during this period.[67] It was the site of numerous construction projects – including state buildings, palaces and churches – that had much in common with those commissioned in St Petersburg.[68] It also continued to play an important ceremonial role for the Russian court by hosting a number of major celebrations, most importantly the ruler's coronation.[69] This overlapping status is reflected in the terms used to refer to both St Petersburg and Moscow during this period. To take one example, the titles of the maps produced of the two cities by both Russian and foreign cartographers use similar words to indicate their role as seats of the court and capital cities. St Petersburg is referred to as *la Capitale* (Nicholas de Fer, 1717), *Haupt-residenz* (Johann Homann, 1720), *Residentz Stadt* and *stolichnyi gorod* (Joseph de L'Isle, 1737 and John Truscott, 1753) – the latter phrase was also applied to Moscow (Ivan Michurin, 1739), along with its variant *tsarstvuiushii grad* (1763). These maps were subsequently reproduced across Europe in a number of forms.[70] Their titles are therefore significant in that

they established St Petersburg as akin to Europe's other capitals – by using the same terms to define the city – while maintaining the existing status of Moscow, the 'old' capital.

Chapter outline

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the creation of St Petersburg and its component spaces. The planning and appearance of St Petersburg reflect one aspect of the relationship between Russia and the rest of Europe during this period. However, such plans, whether for St Petersburg's layout or the designs commissioned for its main buildings, had to contend with the natural and practical restrictions imposed by the chosen location. St Petersburg was the site of several new, constructed spaces that provided important forums for related reforms. The chapter examines the creation and development of the city's social, intellectual and ceremonial spaces in order to provide a context for the more detailed discussion of these areas in later chapters. Chapter 2 examines another aspect of the relationship between Russia and the rest of Europe through a discussion of 'police' legislation that was introduced by a number of European states to promote 'good order' amongst their population. The chapter discusses the introduction of Russia's first 'police' institution in St Petersburg in 1718. The Police Chancellery was created by Peter I to oversee a number of key areas in the new city's development, which included the physical, economic and moral well-being of its inhabitants. By examining several specific concerns – excessive drinking, gambling and immoral behaviour – the chapter argues that Russia attempted to tackle these problems in a similar manner to other European states, although its results were very mixed.

Chapter 3 focuses on the Russian court and its annual celebrations. The eighteenth-century Russian court was related to, but distinct from its Muscovite predecessor as an institution, with the establishment of new ranks and offices with European titles and functions. The court calendar displayed a similar development, as new celebrations were added to the existing religious Muscovite court ceremonies. The latter were reshaped to include a greater emphasis on the state and the ruling dynasty under Peter and, particularly, under his successors. The chapter examines several case studies of large-scale public celebrations in St Petersburg relating to specific major events – royal entries, weddings and funerals – that established a strong connection between the dynasty and the city. The argument is that the planning, organisation and symbolic imagery associated with these events were a reflection of the Russian court's desire to establish itself on the courtly map of Europe. Chapter 4 turns to the question of the court's relationship with the regular social life of St Petersburg. The analysis centres on a number of related sociable activities, in which the ruler actively encouraged participation during this period, a practice continued under

Catherine II and beyond. Finally, St Petersburg hosted many traditional, popular forms of entertainment, such as ice slides and other seasonal festivities. The chapter discusses their ongoing presence to emphasise the theme of continuity, alongside the innovations elsewhere in St Petersburg's social and cultural life.

Finally, Chapter 5 shifts the focus of discussion from the spaces of the city to the people expected to participate within them. The novelty of certain 'Europeanised' aspects of St Petersburg's social life, such as the 'assemblies', meant that their intended attendees were initially ill-prepared for the experience. The chapter deals with several aspects of their process of adaptation. Education was a crucial means to acquire the skills considered appropriate to aid sociable interaction. New educational institutions for the elite, such as the Cadet Corps, and the increased use of foreign tutors by leading noble families facilitated this process. Advice on suitable behaviour was also available through foreign conduct literature, sometimes published in Russian translation. Dancing became an important part of education during this period, since it informed movement, comportment and behaviour in social situations. The chapter finishes by examining the changes to dress and grooming, the most visible symbol of change in Russian society during this period. European fashions became a mainstay amongst elite and urban groups during this period and access to certain events or areas within St Petersburg often listed dress requirements, thereby excluding the lower social groups. These reforms helped to minimise the physical and, to a certain extent, cultural distinctiveness between Russians and their contemporaries elsewhere in Europe.

Returning to Algarotti's description of the city, he notes several aspects of the city's construction: 'There reigns in this capital a kind of bastard architecture, which partakes of the Italian, the French, and the Dutch...' and 'It has been wittily enough said, that ruins make themselves in other places, but that they were built in Petersburgh.'[71] While typical of Algarotti's literary style, these observations nevertheless touch on two important themes that have influenced opinion on St Petersburg throughout its history. The first questions the nature of Russia's relationship with Europe, characterising it as imitating a hodge-podge of styles, while the second is a comment on the foundations of the city, which are presented as ill-conceived and unstable. The following chapters explore the questions raised by both of these characterisations, while challenging their conclusion.

1
Location: Situating the City

As founder of St Petersburg, Peter I consciously, and arguably also subconsciously, attempted to control both the city's space and its inhabitants, in pursuit of certain goals. These goals were in part related to his wider reform agenda – that of transforming Russia into a stronger entity, domestically and internationally – but were also emblematic of a desire to use the city as a testing ground for certain specific ventures. Whilst St Petersburg began life as a fortified port on the Baltic coast, considerable efforts were made by Peter I and his successors to provide it with the appearance, institutions and activities of something much more in keeping with a royal residence or a capital city. The cities that Peter himself visited during the Grand Embassy of 1697–8 provided a natural starting point for some of the inspirations for his new project. This list of cities includes both large capitals and some of the smaller, but significant cities in central Europe: Riga, Mitau, Königsberg, Amsterdam (specifically Zaandam), London, Leipzig, Dresden, Prague, Vienna and Rawa. These cities provided a range of experiences and examples that would prove important, to varying degrees, in Peter's planning. Whether as international ports, commercial centres, seats of learning or sites of courtly culture, they provided a tangible flavour of the possibilities available to the young Tsar.

This chapter examines the creation of the various spaces, buildings and institutions within St Petersburg and how they subsequently influenced the development of the city. As a newly founded city, St Petersburg offered a prime opportunity to plan and regulate its existence. The location of the major organs of the Russian state in the new city naturally led to an increase in official scrutiny in this respect also. Arguably the most important institution for such attention – the royal court – will be examined separately in Chapter 3. From the layout of its street plan to the appearance of its major buildings, from the question of how to populate the city to the emphasis on 'well-ordered' behaviour in everyday life, St Petersburg was a deliberate, if not always well-coordinated or consistent project. One of the principal stumbling blocks for the planning process was the natural

situation of the city. The Neva River occupied a central place in the city's geography and divided the city into distinct sections, which were not always well connected or easy to navigate. As a result and almost by necessity, the river became a major element in both the everyday and the festive life of the city. An alternative 'natural' space within St Petersburg was provided by the royal gardens, which were used as a symbolic representation of the harnessing of nature for beneficial purposes, and as part of Peter I's attempt to portray the new city as an earthly 'paradise'. They were also an important social space within the city, which will be examined in more detail in Chapter 4.

The relocation to St Petersburg also had an impact on the social life of the elite, in particular with the emergence of several new types of social gathering, both at court and in the houses of leading noble families. The developments of this period highlight the relationship between compulsion, regulation and acceptance of the new social context by the Russian elite. The city also housed the newly established Academy of Sciences, which was to help establish the city as an important centre for scientific study during the eighteenth century. However, on an exemplary level, the Academy also served as a model of educated, not to mention civilised behaviour, and its public activities served to highlight this to a domestic and international audience. Finally, as a result of the presence of both the royal family and the military, civil and court elite, the new city naturally hosted many of the celebrations associated with them. Whilst the specifics of the court calendar will be addressed in Chapter 3, it is important to give some context for the spaces in which these state occasions took place. While the setting of St Petersburg was 'new', in chronological terms, the form and content of these aspects reflects a more complex relationship between tradition and innovation.

A 'regular' city?

The example of Europe is frequently highlighted as an influence on Peter I's thinking about his new city. Its architectural appearance and various institutions also drew on existing models, in one form or another. St Petersburg has often been compared to other European cities, despite a lack of any clearly discernible influence on Peter I or any of his close advisers. For example, Italian visitors to the city during the eighteenth century did not share the views of some contemporary commentators who drew comparisons between St Petersburg and Venice on account of the city's waterways and canals.[1] According to some contemporary observers, Peter's preferred model was Amsterdam – a seaport built on international trade.[2] But these cities had evolved over centuries, whereas St Petersburg was a new project – it allowed the possibility of planning its overall design, rather than redeveloping an established urban site.[3] Another source of inspiration came from the