From Other to Brother: Western Travel Writers and the Remaking of Russia

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Very few Early Modern Europeans who wrote accounts of Russia actually wanted to go to Russia. The famous English explorer Richard Hakluyt and his Tudor contemporaries were trying to find a north-east passage to China and the German Lutheran Adam Olearius was en route to Persia with no other choice but to transit through Russia. Olearius would go so far as to state that "there cannot any thing be more barbarous than that people," comparing them unfavourably with pagans and indigenous Greenlanders.[1] Only the German Catholic Sigismund von Herberstein, who in 1517 began the first eyewitness account of Russia since Ibn Fadlan in the 10th century travelled abroad as a diplomat with the intent of learning about Russia and the Russians – but even he was not particularly pleased about what he found.

Remarkably, these Western European accounts of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Russia employ language more notoriously used of contemporaneous European exploration of the New World. Hakluyt recounting the voyage of Hugh Willoughby and Richard Chancellor in 1553 frames it explicitly as a "discovery" of Russia by the Englis, with local Russians whom Hakluyt defines in his own words as "barbarous," falling on their knees at the sight of the huge English ships.[2] This language precisely parallels the same used in first contact narratives of Europeans encountering indigenous peoples on the shores of North and South America including Hakluyt's own description of Inuit peoples near modern Iqaluit, Nunavut.[3]

Through these eyewitness accounts Russia was established as a near "Other" and would remain in that category until the reforms of Peter the Great at the turn of the eighteenth century. These reforms would propel Russia into a close cultural relationship with Western Europe it had

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[1] Adam Olearius, "The Voyages and Travells of the Ambassadors Sent by Frederick, Duke of Holstein, to the Great Duke of Muscovy and the King of Persia Begun in the Year M.DC.XXXIII. and Finish'd in M.DC.XXXIX: Containing a Compleat History of Muscovy, Tartary, Persia, and Other Adjacent Countries: With Several Publick Transactions Reaching near the Present Times: In VII. Books. Whereto Are Added the Travels of John Albert de Mandelslo (a Gentleman Belonging to the Embassy) from Persia into the East-Indies in III. Books Written Originally by Adam Olearius, Secretary to the Embassy; Faithfully Rendered into English, by John Davies," 27.

[2] Richard Hakluyt, *Voyages and Discoveries: The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*, 60–63.

[3] Hakluyt, 190.

never experienced before: Peter's new Russian nobility wore Western fashions, espoused Enlightenment values, and freely intermingled in exclusive German and French aristocratic circles.

As historian Anthony Pagden notes, Early Modern Europeans who encountered new cultures described them in relation to "'natural' patterns of behaviour" with themselves as the civilised norm and the "discovered" peoples as contrary barbarians.[4] In other words, to understand other people they defined them through similarity or dissimilarity to themselves; the fewer points of comparison, the more bewildered Europeans became. Consequently, the more apparent points of comparison, the more the differences stood out. The question arises then: why should ostensibly Christian, near-European Russia have been considered barbarians to fellow Christian Europeans?

The answer lies less in Russia and more in the socio-cultural climate of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Western Europe. By examining not only the accounts of Western travel writers to Europe but the writers themselves I will show how the "discovery" of Russia by Westerners was defined by Early Modern anxieties surrounding religion and society that emerged during the Reformation and Enlightenment. These travel writers especially the Germans Sigismund von Herberstein and Adam Olearius – a Catholic and an Evangelical Lutheran respectively – used Russia as a field on which to argue their own respective views on what an ideal moral society should look like in the process establishing Russia as an antithetical Other. In particular, they criticised Russian men as violent, licentious, and stupid drunks while Russian arranged marriages condemned women to essential slavery locked at home with husbands who expressed love for them only by beating them. In reforming Russian society Peter the Great responded to these exact criticisms, creating a new and outward-looking class of international aristocrats to represent Russia thereby de-othering it in the eyes of their Western European counterparts.

I. The Travellers

Sigismund von Herberstein was a sixteenth-century Viennese diplomat whose first journey to Russia coincided with the publishing of Martin Luther's Ninety-Five Theses in 1517; Herberstein's second journey to Russia, in 1526, coincided with the Battle of Mohacs which saw

[4] Anthony Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology*, 13, 15.

the conquest of Hungary by the Ottoman Empire. Herberstein himself was a Catholic, a baron in the Holy Roman Empire, and extremely well-read and educated. As the premier ambassador from Germany to Russia, contemporaries and later German historians went so far as to label him – as Hakluyt did Willoughby – the "discoverer of Russia."[5] His account would act as a key guidebook and reference point to Russia for later travellers both fellow Germans like Adam Olearius and Englishmen like George Turberville.[6] Herberstein with a great deal of existing diplomatic experience and a knowledge of Slovenian which allowed him some mutual intelligibility with spoken Russian was an ideal candidate to act as ambassador to Moscow. The nature of his understanding of Slovenian, however, poses another historical problem: both of his visits, and the publication of his *Notes Upon Russia*, took place before the Slovenian Protestant clergyman (as opposed to the Catholic Herberstein) Primož Trubar published his codification of the Slovene language and alphabet in Germany in 1550.[7] By the sixteenth century Slovene and Russian had been separate languages with distinct linguistic and alphabetic influences for centuries though sharing enough similarities in grammar and some vocabulary to render them similar – but not mutually intelligible – today. It is possible that Herberstein hearing linguistic "false friends" and assuming too many similarities between both Slavic languages, may have lost some things in translation.

Geographically, Herberstein is not sure if Moscow – being on the other side of the "Tanais" or Don River, the assumed border of Europe since Strabo defined it as such in his *Geographica* – should be identified as in Europe or in Asia, perhaps the first reference to Russia's status within a Eurasian periphery which remains a point of discussion today.[8] Herberstein's account begins first and foremost with the political history of Russia. This makes sense considering his purpose was official diplomatic business. Originally, the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I wanted an

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[5] Sigismund von Herberstein, "Notes upon Russia: Being a Translation of the Earliest Account of That Country, Entitled Rerum Moscoviticarum Commentarii," ii.
[6] Stéphane Mund, "The Discovery of Muscovite Russia in Tudor England," 352.
[7] Helen Fedor and Taru Spiegel, "Textbooks from Post-Reformation Europe," Government, *The Library of Congress* (blog), May 21, 2018, //blogs.loc.gov/international-collections/2018/05/textbooks-from-post-reformation-europe/.
[8] von Herberstein, "Rerum Moscoviticarum Commentarii," vol. 2, p. 4; "Having assumed the Tanaïs [Don] as the boundary of Europe and Asia, we must begin our description in detail from this river." As per Strabo, "Geography," trans. H.C. Hamilton, Esq. and W. Falconer, n.d., bk. 11, chap. 2,

alliance with the Grand Duke of Muscovy against the Poles and Lithuanians which later became a search for a fellow Christian ally against the Ottomans.[9] After this, his next area of focus is not so much ethnography as it is an examination of the structure and doctrine of Russian Orthodox Christianity from the coronation ceremony of rulers to the clerical hierarchy to the instructions of religious teachers on specific issues chiefly those which differ from Catholic doctrine. A common theme in this section of his commentary is the conflict between Catholicism and Orthodoxy with excerpts from Papal Bulls praising the conversion of Russians in Lithuania from the Greek to the Latin rite.[10] To his credit Herberstein's own comments here are fairly neutral and again mostly interested in issues of doctrine though he does repeatedly mention the apparent insistence of Russians that they are the only true Christians and their zeal in converting Catholics.[11]

Naturally, the topic of religion eventually leads to an overview of Russian marriage. He establishes first that Russian marriages are arranged by the respective parents and that the bride and groom are strictly not allowed to meet until the wedding. Here Herberstein becomes more openly critical of Orthodox Christianity. He claims hypocrisy on part of Russian priests that they allow bigamy while scorning it along with allowing divorce while concealing it and knowing it to be "contrary to religion."[12] According to Herberstein there is little love between Russian wives and their husbands, offhandedly remarking that adultery in Russia is only defined as having the wife of another man not an unmarried woman. This also could be the first oblique description of the Russian *terem*, the historical aristocratic practise of confining women to a single section of a house which Herberstein condemns as a miserable existence apparently worse and more restricted than the similarly cloistered lives of upper class women in the west. On the topic of the treatment of women, he relates the following anecdote from Jordan, a German blacksmith in Moscow, and his wife:

"After she had lived some time with her husband [Jordan], she thus once lovingly addressed him: 'Why is it, my dearest husband, that you do not love me?' The husband replied: 'I do love you, passionately.' 'I have as yet,' said she, 'received no proofs of your love […] you have never beaten

[9] von Herberstein, "Rerum Moscoviticarum Commentarii," 37–38.
[10] This marks an early reference to Ukrainian Greek Catholics, who would officially enter communion with the Pope in 1596 and later define a large part of modern Ukrainian history; von Herberstein, 75.
[11] von Herberstein, 85.
[12] von Herberstein, 93.

me.' 'Really,' said the husband, 'I did not think that blows were proofs of love; but, however, I will not fail even in this respect.' And so not long after he beat her most cruelly; and confessed to me that after that process his wife showed much greater affection towards him. So he repeated the exercise frequently; and finally, while I was still at Moscow, cut off her head and her legs."[13]

The later account of Adam Olearius, published in 1669 mentions this same blacksmith as a point of reference for the treatment of Russian women though Olearius expresses doubt as to its veracity and the idea of women desiring to be beaten.[14] It is also probably no coincidence that Herberstein chooses a fellow German as the protagonist of this most likely fictional anecdote. Jordan, in his reluctance, frames his wife's request as alien to his (good) sensibilities regarding proper marital relations. Olearius notes in his recounting of the story that another visitor to Russia, one Petreius, cast his own "Jordan" as Italian.[15]

In other family matters, Herberstein says that fathers have a custom of selling their sons into slavery often repeatedly because in his words the Russians "enjoy slavery more than freedom."[16] On slavery, he also claims that Russian labourers only work hard when they are beaten and if they are not they fear that they have displeased their master. Meanwhile, men in the military he stereotypes as cowardly and often lose in battle as opposed to Tatars who make much more resolute soldiers. He claims that usury is commonplace in Russia despite everyone knowing that it is a sin and he condemns the Muscovites as "more cunning and deceitful than all others."[17]

Herberstein also relates stories not unlike those of European explorers in the New World of humanoid fish and men with the heads of dogs albeit personally considering them unbelievable.[18] For Western Europeans, both places represented a sort of *terra incognita* in which seemingly anything was possible. While Russia did *exist* as a conceptual space, neither its bounds nor its contents were precisely known in contrast to "known" Europe. This is reflected well in the 1496 Nuremberg Chronicle map in which "Russia" appears in a blank space at the top of the map

[13] von Herberstein, 94–95.
[14] Olearius, "The Voyages and Travells of Adam Olearius," 70.
[15] Olearius,70.
[16] von Herberstein, "Rerum Moscoviticarum Commentarii," 95.
[17] von Herberstein, vol. 2, p. 7.
[18] von Herberstein, vol. 2, 41–42.

as well as the famous Waldseemuller map in which Russia does not appear at all and in its place are ancient references like Tanais (the Don river), Sarmatia, and Hyperborea.[19]

16th century Europeans then defined Russia by its exotic and distant nature and by its poor Christianity. In addition to calling them outright "barbarous" Hakluyt would consider them not "good Christians" and cruel even to their own people let alone others.[20] Those on Russia's borders in Poland and Livonia went even farther in their invective declaring Russians to be infidels and not Christians at all.[21] Russia was a truly foreign place perfect for what Marshall Poe describes as the "inverted image" that these travellers projected onto it arguing for and defending their own idealised society against a Russia interpreted to be its antithesis but likely resembled their own medieval past.[22] This is a trend that would be continued and amplified in the 17th century as conflict in Western Europe over moral authority intensified and travellers became more familiar with Russian life.

Adam Olearius epitomises the 17th century travel writer concerned with socio-cultural behaviours and morals as much as with ideal government and religion. Olearius from Holstein was an Evangelical Lutheran and his journey to Persia via Russia in 1633 would have taken place in the middle of the Thirty Years' War. It is worth noting how, even one hundred years after Herberstein, a voyage to Russia was considered worthy of an ethnographic travelogue. At this point this type of writing was usually the domain of travellers to the Americas or the "Orient" of the European imagination delineated by Turkey and the Balkans. Russia was as much the Other in the seventeenth century perhaps even more so than it had been in the sixteenth century.

Much like Herberstein, Olearius was also sent as an ambassador to this far-off land. In contrast to Herberstein, Olearius' ethnography discusses religious rituals and doctrine only after his long section on the apparent morals and culture of the locals explicitly building off of Herberstein's account from the outset.[23] Where Herberstein mostly interacts with the wealthy

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[19] Hartmann Schedel, *Nuremberg Chronicle World Map* (Nuremberg: Liber Chronicarum, 1496), https://digital.library.cornell.edu/catalog/ss:3293718; Martin Waldseemuller, *Waldseemuller Map*, 1507, 1507, https://www.loc.gov/rr/geogmap/waldexh.html.
[20] Hakluyt, *Voyages and Discoveries*, 79.
[21] Marshall Poe, *A People Born to Slavery: Russia in Early Modern European Ethnography, 1476-1748*, 19–20.
[22] Poe, 81.
[23] Olearius, "The Voyages and Travells of Adam Olearius," bk. 2, 37.

aristocratic and merchant class, Olearius frequently describes peasants and the urban poor though in less detail than the same upper class society with whom Herberstein mingled.

The increased detail and familiarity with Russian culture in Olearius' account is not accompanied with open-minded curiosity but with consistent and specific invective directed exclusively against Russians. This parallels another ethnographic subject of his time in Russia indigenous pagan Greenlanders. The Greenlanders are defined as savages while as for the Russians he declares "there cannot any thing be more barbarous than that people."[24] The Russians he says pretend to be descended from ancient Greeks but with none of their virtues. Olearius, it seems, was unaware of the depth of influence of the Medieval Greek Byzantines on Russia a major oversight.

Many of Olearius' criticisms of Russians echo those of Herberstein. Marriages are arranged, loveless, and consequently adulterous, women are regularly beaten and are confined to their homes, men are violent and drunk, and Russians in general are deceitful, superstitious, naturally inclined to slavery, and hate foreigners. Olearius further adds to these by noting that women wear too much makeup and dress like men and that Russians are ignorant and do not study the arts or sciences as Westerners do. He relates a particular incident - which he calls "the highest act of Muscovite civility" – with a nobleman who invited him to his house. This nobleman showed off his wife and insisted that Olearius kiss her on the mouth, something that bewildered the author for whom kissing a lady's *hand* was gentlemanly etiquette.[25] This physicality similarly to the Russian practise of nude mixed bathing he later describes is more a reflection of his Lutheran view on sexuality and the body than proof of Russian loose morals.

Complementary to that, as opposed to Herberstein, Olearius seems to largely approve of Russian Orthodox Christianity especially its hostility towards Catholicism and relative neutrality towards Lutheranism.[26] However, when he opens his section on Orthodoxy, he again brings up the question of whether Russians are true Christians without any immediate conclusion of his own.

Even in 1633, when Olearius visited Russia and in 1669 when he published his travelogue, Russia was still an Other to Europe despite (or because of?) its seeming Christianity which Olearius mentions was problematic and dubious to Lutherans, despite misgivings about their

[24] Olearius, bk. 3, 57.
[25] Olearius, bk. 3, 66.
[26] Olearius, bk. 3, 108.

"abominable" corruption of Biblical stories he at least respects them as true Christians.[27] As a society more broadly, however, at the time of the Enlightenment the Russians would have seemed even more backwards given Olearius' impression that they have no interest in art, science, or personal liberty. In other words, the Russians of the seventeenth century that Olearius and others observed barely seemed to resemble what they would have considered a "civilised" society, their differences social, cultural, and physical. To de-other Russia, then, Peter the Great not only had to introduce aesthetic change but change the behaviour of (noble, wealthy) Russians entirely to make them resemble their Western counterparts.

II. The Russian Perspective

Ultimately, foreign accounts could have only been so important. In order for Peter to need to reform Russia into a culturally Western state, the criticisms of Herberstein, Olearius and others had to have some basis in reality. At this point, we need to examine Russian sources and scholarship of history at the time to see how accurately foreign ethnographers depicted pre-Petrine Russian life particularly in the realms of gender and marriage.

The *Domostroi*, a text from the 1550s on elite household management, provides a view into what was expected of men as heads of a house as well as their women and children. Its priorities are far different from those of Herberstein or Olearius. The *Domostroi* has a few references to beating one's wife but those mentions are largely in reference to punishment for consorting with sorcerers and old crones a social problem mentioned many times in the book.[28] Travel writers do not seem to mention this Russian concern with gossipy, suspicious old women and pagans, even when writing about Russian superstitions and the questionable veracity of their Christianity as per Olearius. However, beating as punishment is extremely casual in the *Domostroi* as a whole with regular references to punishing servants and especially children to inspire fear and obedience in them. Deference to the father is inherently assumed though women are not framed as slaves and were responsible for their servants. Women in Russia were viewed as morally good and

[27] Olearius, bk. 3, 93, 99.
[28] Carolyn Johnston Pouncy, *The "Domostroi": Rules for Russian Households in the Time of Ivan the Terrible*, 109, 182.

not evil or inherently suspicious.[29] There is no reference to selling sons into slavery either despite foreign accounts insisting on this being a common practise but fathers are exhorted to "discipline them and break them in."[30] Though wives were supposed to be "severely whipped" if they were disobedient, this is no different from how children and servants were expected to be treated.[31]

The quotidian nature of beatings-as-punishment in Russia, combined with open slavery and the marriage ceremony of a father whipping his daughter and then passing the whip to his son-in-law – something foreign accounts detail with horror – coloured Western perspectives of Russian marriage as a whole.[32] In their eyes slavery became something that pervaded Russian society as a whole including the sacred space of marriage. For Lutherans like Olearius while women were to be deferential to their husbands, a marriage was meant to be loving and in some respects equal – "companionate" is the specific term used.[33] This, however, was an ideal and not necessarily reality. Violence was as much an "inherent characteristic" of marriage in the rest of Medieval and Early Modern Europe as it was in Russia.[34] However, Russian marriage *was* decidedly unromantic. For pre-Petrine Russians sex did not equal love and the purpose of marriage was alliance and childbearing and not emotional partnership similar to Medieval Western Europe.[35]

Another aspect of marriage, the seclusion of women in the *terem*, is described with relative accuracy by Western ethnographers. In modern historiography it is doubted that the *terem* as an institution is dated to no earlier than the beginning of the seventeenth century but it is possible earlier writers like Herberstein saw a similar antecedent practise – one that may ultimately not have been too much different from the relegation of Western women to the private sphere.[36] Its arrival in Russia may have been the product of years of civil strife and uncertainty at the turn of the seventeenth century, traditional Orthodox values that promoted women's virginity and asceticism or both.[37] Western writers were also accurate about women's fashion. "Heavy" makeup

[29] Pouncy, 28.
[30] Pouncy, 95–96.
[31] Robert K. Massie, *Peter the Great, His Life and World*, 32.
[32] Marshall Poe, "The Sexual Life of Muscovites: Evidence From the Foreign Accounts,"412.
[33] Katherine Crawford, *European Sexualities: 1400-1800*), 18.
[34] Marianna Muravyeva, "'Till Death Us Do Part': Spousal Homicide in Early Modern Russia," 307.
[35] Poe, "The Sexual Life of Muscovites: Evidence From the Foreign Accounts," 409.
[36] Natalia Pushkareva, *Women in Russian History: From the Tenth to the Twentieth Century*, 83.
[37] Pushkareva, 92; Pouncy, *The "Domostroi,"* 1–2.

by the standards of Westerners was considered the appropriate feminine norm and both men and women wore the traditional, dress-like *kaftan*, in part because in the seventeenth century Western dress was either banned (for men) or seen as outrageously bold (for women).[38]

The pre-Petrine masculine ideal was similarly foreign to Western especially Protestant outsiders but ultimately in keeping with Orthodox values. Olearius describes the most respected Russian men as being corpulent – like their women – and heavily bearded with shaved heads for major aristocrats and lesser or disgraced nobles growing their hair long.[39] Beards were a sign of virility in men and the ideal Orthodox Russian man was pious, humble (in deeds and appearance), and most of all devoted and orderly.[40] Sobriety was also a key virtue but if Olearius and others are to be believed the Russians were at the time the most drunken people in the world.

This overview of the Russian perspective on issues of gender and marriage shows that for the most part what Western writers claimed were normal Russian behaviours did indeed happen but the biases of these writers coloured their interpretation. In some cases, Russians were not so different fundamentally from their Western counterparts. One can imagine an earlier Medieval German writer, had they seen seventeenth-century Russia, might have seen many similarities. Indeed, it is perhaps those same similarities to Europe's Medieval past that writers like Olearius and Herberstein saw and found so objectionable. Russia was an Other not because it was extraordinarily different but because it was uncomfortably similar to a relatively recent past.

III. The Rehabilitation of Russia's Image

If the *Domostroi* of the sixteenth century embodied the ideal image of Medieval Russian society, *The Honorable Mirror of Youth* was its eighteenth-century equivalent for a new, reformed society. It was intended as a moral handbook for young men and women to educate them in modern "civility." It advises men to be "vigorous, work-loving, diligent, and energetic," in part to similarly inspire one's servants and also to study "languages, horseback riding, dancing, fencing and… good

[38] Lindsay Hughes, "From Caftans into Corsets: The Sartorial Transformation of Women During the Reign of Peter the Great," 17–28.
[39] Olearius, "The Voyages and Travells of Adam Olearius," bk. 3, 56.
[40] Marianna Muravyeva, "Personalizing Homosexuality and Masculinity in Early Modern Russia," in *Gender in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, 217; Poe, "The Sexual Life of Muscovites: Evidence From the Foreign Accounts," 417.

conversation."[41] It admonishes such behaviour as "living obesely in laziness" as well as nose-picking, swearing, drinking, gambling, sexual impropriety, and – much like the *Domostroi* – gossiping.[42] It hits similar notes of piety and familial respect as the *Domostroi* as well, but its other emphases – taking an interest in foreign cultures, courage and daring, reading, eagerness – are completely new. Before Peter, the home of married adults was the centre of social life. After, this centre shifted to youthful courtly life. The *Honorable Mirror* has very little to say about managing a household or even an estate and is above all concerned with personal behaviour and decorum.

However, where the *Honorable Mirror* recasts men as "cavaliers" instead of "masters," women are still expected to be "crowns."[43] Its advice for women closely resembles the *Domostroi* with a focus on Christian virtue utilising the very same repetition of Biblical allusions as the *Domostroi* – something completely lacking in its advice for men. At the same time, it diverges from the medieval tradition in a very typically Enlightenment fashion by citing classical Greek and Roman precedents of virtue as well as Martin Luther with equal validity.[44] Particular virtues given for young women – who now, unlike before, would have been more freely able to interact with men outside the home – are chastity, humility, shame, and silence. Though these virtues resemble those given in the *Domostroi*, they now exist in the newly-minted category of public etiquette as opposed to marital household duty. It cannot be understated how fundamental a shift it was for Peter the Great to encourage aristocratic women to join public life and even more than that get an education.

During Peter the Great's reign, it was in fact his mother, Natalia, who brought down the *terem* that bound aristocratic women in the home. In 1690 she left the imperial residence in a curtainless carriage allowing common people to see the face of a noblewoman for perhaps the first time in their lives.[45] Other women quickly followed suit, eagerly embracing public, mixed-gender life and all the German and French cultural trappings that came with it particularly education and personal fashion.[46] When in 1700 *all* women were ordered to wear Western dress for aristocratic women this was probably just a confirmation of what they were already doing. For ordinary

[41] Nancy S. Kollmann, "Etiquette For Peter's Time: The Honorable Mirror of Youth," 65–66.
[42] Kollmann, 65, 67.
[43] Kollmann, 74.
[44] Kollmann, 78–79.
[45] Pushkareva, *Women in Russian History*, 123.
[46] Massie, *Peter the Great, His Life and World*, 810.

women, it was probably as deeply traumatic as the enforced shaving of beards was for ordinary men.[47]

In 1702 Peter the Great banned arranged marriages allowing prospective partners to meet each other and had no compulsion to marry with either man or woman free to reject the other making marriage closer to the Protestant companionate ideal.[48] Perhaps even more importantly from the perspective of foreign visitors, Peter also replaced the traditional passing of the whip at weddings with a kiss. In one stroke, he not only removed the master-slave imagery from marriage but made romantic love central to marital partnership and as if to answer Olearius' awkward gentlemanly encounter with the nobleman's wife made kissing a fundamentally spousal act.

New education and fashion of course were not limited to women. As shown in the *Honorable Mirror*, young noblemen were also expected to be educated especially in foreign languages. Perhaps the most well-known of Peter the Great's reforms is the beard ban which along with uniforms brought well-to-do men's fashion in line with Western trends as epitomised by Peter himself in all of his portraits. The shaving of beards across society was transformative for Russian masculinity. The beard which had been as Olearius noted a symbol of virility and even a symbol of Christian piety was seen by Peter as something which made Russia uncivilised.[49] Though fashion as is always the case changed after Peter's reign and beards became trendy and acceptable again in the nineteenth century, they no longer carried universal symbolism of Orthodox manhood. The mature, adult patriarch was no longer the masculine ideal of Russia. That role had now passed to the beardless, energetic youth embodied by the young Tsar himself.

Following soon after his decree on beards, in January 1700 Peter commanded that Russian men – *boyars*, bureaucrats, and landowners – were to wear a uniform of his own devising based on French, German, and Hungarian models.[50] Aristocratic women too were required to don Western dress but they did so more readily and without the inherent military context of the men.

If these reforms seem not only Western, but remarkably Protestant, there is good reason. Peter's chief influences came from England and the Netherlands the two countries he visited during his Grand Embassy to explore Western culture. One of the chief teachers in Peter's court

[47] Hughes, "From Caftans into Corsets: The Sartorial Transformation of Women During the Reign of Peter the Great," 18.
[48] Massie, *Peter the Great, His Life and World*, 390–91.
[49] Massie, 235.
[50] Massie, 238–39.

was Pastor Johann Gluck, a Lutheran, who was the adoptive father of Peter's wife, Catherine, and the founder of Moscow's new School of Ancient and Modern Languages.[51] He was appointed to train Russian diplomats in all the arts required of them especially those outlined in the *Honorable Mirror*.

Not only did Peter intend for Westerners to see a changed Russia, he also explicitly intended for educated Russians to understand how foreigners had seen Russia in the past. He ordered translations into Russian of foreign books about Russia – perhaps those by Herberstein and Olearius – even if they were unflattering to Russia and its people.[52] Indeed, one can look at almost any observation about Russians made by Olearius in his 1669 ethnography and see a reform by Peter only about thirty years later answering it. Beyond changes to fashion, education, and marriage, Olearius' complaints about Russian propensity for swearing, dislike of tobacco, and slavery were all answered by Peter's reforms;[53] while slavery (in the sense of the specific term used by Herberstein and Olearius, *kholops*) was never technically abolished, all slaves were by 1725 effectively converted into serfs though the status of serfs as slaves is itself debatable.[54]

The most succinct way to show the vast transformation that Russian marriage and gender roles underwent is to examine historical portraiture. In an 1896 painting by Andrei Ryabushkin, intended to be representative of a seventeenth-century, pre-Petrine merchant family in Russia, we can see the old social order: a bearded, aged man in the centre of the family, seated, with his heavily dressed and made-up wife to his right and his children, seated and standing, to his left.[55] All are severe and the painting along with its subjects gravitates towards the father at the centre. Contrast the 1635 "Family Portrait" painting by Dutch artist Frans Hals which depicts a genial, affectionate family: the wife is seated, close to the children who are holding hands with the father standing off to the left looking at his wife who smiles warmly at the viewer.[56] Both paintings represent families

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[51] Massie, 391.
[52] Massie, 391–92.
[53] Olearius, "The Voyages and Travells of Adam Olearius," bk. 3, p62; Massie, *Peter the Great, His Life and World*, 211–12.
[54] Richard Hellie, *Slavery in Russia, 1450-1725*, 698–99.
[55] Andrei Petrovich Ryabushkin, *Russian Merchant Family in the 17th Century*, 1896, Oil on canvas, 1896, https://www.akg-images.co.uk/archive/Russian-Merchant-Family-in-the-17th-century-2UMDHUW4WO87.html.
[56] Frans Hals, *Family Portrait*, c 1635, Oil on canvas, 113 x 93.4cm, c 1635, https://www.wga.hu/frames-e.html?/html/h/hals/frans/05-1638/49family.html.

from the same era but they could hardly be more different. The Ryabushkin painting shows no familial affection least of all between wife and husband while the Hals portrait presents an openly affectionate, much more relaxed and at ease – for the time – family. In portraiture made after Peter the Great's reforms, we see a complete change in family dynamics seen clearly in Andrei Matveyev's self-portrait with his wife.[57] Matveyev has his arm lovingly around his wife's shoulders and they are holding hands, youthful and dressed in Western fashion – Matveyev, of course, without a beard – and their smiles though slight are there. Compared to the 17th century merchant family, they seem to be from a completely different country – and in many senses, they are.

When Western travel writers ventured to (or, more accurately, *through*) Russia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, they found a country so exotic to them they saw themselves as having "discovered" it, its people and customs so different yet uncomfortably familiar that they immediately labelled them as barbaric. This marked the establishment of Russia as the "Other" in Early Modern Europe a status that did not change even after great social, religious, and political upheavals in the West. Most of all, these Western commentators were repulsed by Russian attitudes towards marriage and sexuality seeing their women as manly yet offensively painted with makeup and their men as violent, bearded drunks who embodied the notion of the uncivilised.

Peter the Great's transformation of Russia changed many aspects of the country from its military to its administration but some of his greatest changes were to the social fabric of the nobility and the wealthy. Led by his mother, he oversaw the abolition of the reclusive *terem* and he also introduced romance and choice to marriage along with the physical sexuality of kissing. Russian men and women were wholly reformed wearing Western uniforms and dresses, adopting Western education and a Western love of arts and sciences, as well as following new codes of public etiquette aligned with Western moral values and Enlightenment ideals. Perhaps most importantly of all, Western observers like the Dutch painter Cornelius de Bruyn wholeheartedly approved of this new Russia hoping that new fashions would "in time blot out the remembrance of the ancient dress."[58] Russia or at least its elite was at last accepted by the West into its exclusive

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[57] Andrei Matveyev, *Self-Portrait with Wife*, 1729, Oil on canvas, 75.5 × 90.5cm, 1729, https://rusmuseumvrm.ru/data/collections/painting/18_19/zh_4913/index.php?lang=en.
[58] Hughes, "From Caftans into Corsets: The Sartorial Transformation of Women During the Reign of Peter the Great," 17.

aristocratic *haute couture* – the Other no more. While the top-down nature of these reforms made them enticing and enriching to Russian elites, for ordinary people this sudden break with lived traditions must have been incredibly confusing and traumatic – a social conflict that would define Russia's 19th century.

To give a whole account of how Peter the Great changed Russian society even in the realm of gender and sexuality alone deserves far more research, especially into its far-reaching consequences that we could perhaps observe today. Additionally, though it has been a topic of some intense intellectual thought in the past few decades, more research could be done into the nature of Russia as Western Europe's "Other," and how this status has been established, disestablished, and arguably re-established once more.

With all this said, however, it would be wrong to assume that after Peter the Great Russian society and sexuality in no way resembled its Medieval past. Though much of the cultural practises and morals of the elites trickled down over the decades and centuries to the common people, much still remains even from Olearius' observations that can be seen today. For modern Russians, nudity in the sauna – though not mixed any more – is still common and Russians still have a strong tendency towards non-sexual, same-gender physical intimacy including handholding and kissing with those close to them.

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