

IMAGES OF THE PETRINE ERA IN RUSSIAN HISTORY  
PAINTING

Marianne McLeod Gilchrist

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## ERRATA

- p. xii      caption for fig 87.  
Should read Georg Friedrich Dinglinger
- p.167      line 19  
Should read "Dresden miniaturist "Georg  
Friedrich Dinglinger"
- fig. 87      Should read  
G F Dinglinger

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IMAGES OF THE PETRINE ERA IN  
RUSSIAN HISTORY PAINTING

DOCTORAL THESIS  
UNIVERSITY OF ST. ANDREWS

MARIANNE MCLEOD GILCHRIST



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B436

Images of the Petrine Era in Russian History Painting examines the changing iconography of Petr I (1672-1725) in nineteenth-century Russian painting, and its relationship with Petr's symbolic rôle in the cultural debate between the Westernisers and the Slavophiles over the interpretation of the Russian past and the direction of Russia's future. Artistic developments are discussed against a background of history, historiography and literature. Paintings by Academic artists that were produced as contributions to the official cult of Petr, fostered by Nikolai I, are explored as expressions of aspects of the archetypal Hero. The evolution of historical genre painting, and particularly the developments introduced by Shvarts in the 1860s, are examined as a crucial component of the context for the emergence of the Peredvizhniki.

The main focus of this study comprises the Realist history paintings of the Peredvizhniki. The pursuit of historical truth, after Aleksandr II's relaxation of censorship in the late 1850s, became a significant factor in the application of Realism to history painting. The treatment of Petrine themes by the Peredvizhniki in their First Exhibition in 1871 is discussed in relation to the celebrations for Petr's bicentenary in 1872. Ge's Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof is analysed in detail for its importance as the first treatment in a Realist style of a controversial historical incident which was unfavourable to Petr. Evidence, exemplified by Myasoedov's The Grandfather of the Russian Fleet, is brought forward which suggests continuities between the Academy and the Peredvizhniki. The Peredvizhniki's varied approaches to Petrine themes are examined, emphasising the group's lack of ideological uniformity. History paintings are explored in their social and cultural context, for instance, nineteenth-century depictions of Tsarevna Sof'ya Alekseevna and the rise of Russian feminism, and the effect of Surikov's personal experience of cultural conflict on his works.

(i) I, Marianne McLeod Gilchrist, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 99,388 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

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(ii) I was admitted as a research student under Ordinance No. 12 in October 1987 and as a candidate for the degree of Ph. D. in October 1987; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St. Andrews between 1987 and 1993.

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CONTENTS:

<u>Acknowledgements</u>	ii
<u>Notes on Transliteration, Dates and Abbreviations</u>	iv
<u>List of Illustrations</u>	v
<u>Introduction</u>	1
<u>Chapter 1: The Historical Context.</u>	8
<u>Chapter 2: Academic History Painting and Petr I.</u>	36
<u>Chapter 3: The Eighteen-Sixties.</u>	104
<u>Chapter 4: The First Travelling Exhibition and Petr's Bicentenary.</u>	138
<u>Chapter 5: The Female Opponent: Tsarevna Sof'ya.</u>	191
<u>Chapter 6: Surikov.</u>	231
<u>Conclusion</u>	294
<u>Bibliography</u>	308

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### Notes on Transliteration, Dates and Abbreviations:

I have used the Oxford Slavonic Papers transliteration system throughout, without exceptions for proper names, apart from Peterhof and Monplaisir (Petergof and Monplezir blunt the impact of their unRussianness), and Alexander Herzen (rather than Aleksandr Gertsen): his name was made up by his father, Ivan Yakovlev, from herz (German, heart), for his German mother. In other cases, where a name is found in two forms, I have bracketted the alternative, e.g. Shteiben (Steuben): in bibliographical references, the first form given is that used in the edition mentioned. Otherwise, in a Russian context, the Russian form seems more appropriate for general use. Patronymics are used only where confusion is possible, e.g. to distinguish between Mikhail Konstantinovich and Mikhail Petrovich Klodt, and for members of the royal house, as is customary. I have based my transliteration of titles on the modern orthography throughout, for the sake of consistency (e.g. Istoriya Petra Velikogo, instead of Velikago).

I have used the Old Style (Julian) Calendar throughout for dates before 1918. Any references to New Style (Gregorian) Calendar dates are indicated by the abbreviation N. S. In the seventeenth century, the Julian Calendar was ten days behind the Gregorian; in the eighteenth century, eleven days; in the nineteenth, twelve days.

In bibliographical references, please note the following abbreviations:

GRM - the State Russian Museum (Gosudarstvennyi Russkii Muzej), St. Petersburg;

GTG - the State Tret'yakov Gallery (Gosudarstvennaya Tret'yakovskaya Galereya), Moscow.

## ILLUSTRATIONS:

1. Bartolomeo Carlo Rastrelli, Bust of Petr I, 1723-30, bronze, height 102 cms. Hermitage, St. Petersburg.
2. Bartolomeo Carlo Rastrelli, Equestrian Statue of Petr I, 1716-44, erected 1800, bronze. Klenovaya Ulitsa, St. Petersburg.
3. Marie-Anne Collot, Head of Petr I (Bronze Horseman), 1767, bronze. Russian Museum, St. Petersburg.
4. Etienne Falconet & Marie-Anne Collot, Monument to Petr I (Bronze Horseman), unveiled 1782, bronze. Decembrists' (formerly Senate) Square, St. Petersburg.
5. Etienne Falconet & Marie-Anne Collot, The Bronze Horseman, detail.
6. Vasilii I. Surikov, View of Petr I's Monument in Senate Square, 1870, oil on canvas, 52 x 71 cms. Russian Museum.
7. William Faithorne the Younger, The Grand Czar of Moscovy, Drawn by the life, 1698, engraving. British Museum, London.
8. Adriaan Schoonebeck, Emperor Petr I, 1703, etching, 28 x 17.5 cms. Saltykov-Shchedrin Public Library, St. Petersburg.
9. Hyacinthe Rigaud, Louis XIV, 1701, oil on canvas, 279 x 190 cms. Louvre, Paris.
10. Jean Marc Nattier, Petr I, 1717, oil on canvas, 142 x 110 cms. Hermitage.
11. Bartolomeo Carlo Rastrelli, Bust of Petr I (fig. 1), detail of armour.
12. Johann Gottfried Tannauer, Petr I at the Battle of Poltava, 1710s, oil on canvas, 76 x 63.5 cms. Russian Museum.

13. Charles Le Brun, Louis XIV's Personal Rule, 1679-84, detail of ceiling painting. Hall of Mirrors, Versailles.
14. Jacopo Amigoni, Petr the Great with Minerva, 1732-4, oil on canvas, detail. Hermitage.
15. Abraham Bosse, The Joy of France, 1638, engraving. Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.
16. Aleksei F. Zubov, vignette from Maritime Prints, 1718, detail. Reproduced in Alekseeva, Gravyura Petrovskogo Vremeni, p. 156.
17. Andrei Matveev, after Carel de Moor, Petr I, c. 1724-5, oil on canvas, 78 x 61 cms. Hermitage.
18. Johann Gottfried Tannauer, Petr I, 1710s, oil on canvas, 78 x 61 cms. Hermitage.
19. Bartolomeo Carlo Rastrelli, Bust of Petr I, 1719, wax and painted plaster, height 61 cms. Hermitage.
20. Bartolomeo Carlo Rastrelli, Life-size Effigy of Petr I, 1725, wax, standing height of figure 204 cms. Hermitage.
21. Fedor A. Bruni, The Death of Camilla, Sister of Horatius, 1824, oil on canvas, 350 x 526.5 cms. Russian Museum.
22. Anton P. Losenko, Vladimir and Rogneda, 1770, oil on canvas, 211.5 x 177.5 cms. Russian Museum.
23. Andrei I. Ivanov, The Brave Deed of a Kievan Youth during the Siege of Kiev by the Pechenegs in 968, c. 1810, oil on canvas, 204 x 177.5 cms. Russian Museum.
24. Jean-Auguste Dominique Ingres, Don Pedro de Toledo kissing Henri IV's Sword, 1820, oil on canvas, 48 x 40 cms. Private collection, Oslo.

25. Jean-Auguste Dominique Ingres, Paolo Malatesta and Francesca da Rimini, 1819, oil on canvas, 48 x 39 cms. Musée d'Angers.
26. Hippolyte (Paul) Delaroche, Cardinal Mazarin Dying, 1830, oil on canvas, 55.8 x 96.5 cms. Wallace Collection, London.
27. Hippolyte Delaroche, The Princes in the Tower, 1831, oil on canvas, 44.2 x 50.1 cms. Wallace Collection, London; reduction of 1830 version, 178 x 214 cms., in the Louvre.
28. Karl P. Bryullov, The Last Day of Pompeii, 1833, oil on canvas, 456.5 x 651 cms. Russian Museum.
29. Karl P. Bryullov, The Death of Inez de Castro, Morganatic Wife of Dom Pedro, the Infante of Portugal, 1834, oil on canvas, 213 x 290.5 cms. Russian Museum.
30. Aleksandr K. Begrov, The Petr Gallery in the Imperial Hermitage Museum, 1872, engraving by L. A. Seryakov. P. N. Petrov & S. N. Shubinskii, Al'bom 200-letnego Yubileya Imperatora Petra Velikogo, 1672-1872, p. 188.
31. Aleksei G. Venetsianov, Petr the Great, the Foundation of St. Petersburg, 1838, oil on canvas, 260 x 351 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery, Moscow.
32. Le Blond workshop, after Charles Le Brun, Louis XIV's Foundation of Les Invalides in 1674, 1670s, tapestry, detail. Versailles.
33. Petr V. Basin, Petr I, as an Infant, surrounded by his Tutors in Boyar Costume, finds a Sabre among a Merchant's Gifts, late 1830s - early 1840s, graphite pencil on paper, 24 x 19 cms. Russian Museum.
34. Karl K. Shteiben, Petr the Great in Childhood, saved by his Mother from the Fury of the Strel'tsy, 1830, oil on canvas, 138 x 163 cms. Russian Museum.

35. Karl K. Shteiben, Petr the Great in Childhood, saved by his Mother from the Fury of the Strel'tsy, detail.
36. Vasilii K. Shebuev, The Election of Mikhail Fedorovich to the Tsardom, n. d., lead pencil, sepia and ink on paper. Russian Museum.
37. Vasilii K. Demidov, Tsaritsa Natal'ya Kirillovna with Tsarevich Petr on the Red Staircase, 1848, oil on canvas, 79 x 106 cms. Russian Museum.
38. Petr V. Basin, Petr I uncovers a Strel'tsy Conspiracy, late 1830s - early 1840s, graphite pencil on paper, 24 x 19 cms. Russian Museum.
39. A. Zemtsov, Petr the Great at Tsykler's House, 1881, engraving. Niva, no. 6, 1881.
40. Adolf I. Sharleman, Petr I catches the Conspirators in Tsykler's House, 23 February 1697, 1884, oil on canvas, 73 x 106.5 cms. Russian Museum.
41. Nikolai P. Zagorskii, The Arrest of Tsykler, 1882, engraving. A. G. Brikner, Istoriya Petra Velikogo, pl. facing p. 268.
42. Vasilii V. Mate, after Jan Ottens, Petr the Great in Russian Dress, during his stay in Holland in the Great Embassy, 1882, engraving. Brikner, Istoriya Petra Velikogo, p. 183.
43. Henri Testelin, Louis XIV establishing the Academy of Sciences (1666) and the Observatory (1667), 1668, oil on canvas. Versailles.
44. Mikhail P. Klodt, Peter at Work in his Lodgings at Zaandam, 1878, etching. Scribner's Monthly, vol. XXI, no. 1, Nov. 1880, p. 3.
45. Mstislav V. Dobuzhinskii, Petr the Great in Holland. Amsterdam, the East India Company Wharf, sketch for painting for the Petr I City School, St. Petersburg, 1910, oil on paper on card, 41 x 52.8 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.



46. Grigorii or Nikanor G. Chernetsov, Petr in his Workshop in Zaandam, 1840s, oil on canvas, 27.7 x 38.5 cms. Russian Museum.
47. Petr V. Basin, Petr I draws in an exercise book, while leaning against a boat, late 1830s - early 1840s, graphite pencil on paper, 24 x 19 cms. Russian Museum.
48. Petr V. Basin, The Foundation of St. Petersburg in 1703, late 1830s - early 1840s, graphite pencil on paper, 21 x 27.5 cms. Russian Museum.
49. Anton I. Ivanov, Petr I on the Banks of the Neva, 1843, oil on canvas, 20 x 14.5 cms. Russian Museum.
50. Stanislav Khlebovskii, An Assembly in the Reign of Petr I, 1858, oil on canvas. Russian Museum. Engraving by E. Helm, Brikner, Istoriya Petra Velikogo, pl. facing p. 648.
51. William Powell Frith, Charles II's Last Sunday, 1867, oil on canvas, 168 x 260 cms. Private collection, Britain.
52. Aleksandr N. Benua, The Summer Garden in the Reign of Petr the Great, 1902, watercolour on paper. Location unknown. Reproduced from postcard, 1903.
53. Valentin A. Serov, The Great Eagle Cup, 1910, tempera on card, 90.5 x 65 cms. National Picture Gallery of Armenia, Erevan.
54. Nikolai A. Zauerbeid, Petr I quells his Cruel Soldiers at the Taking of Narva in 1704, 1859, oil on canvas, 169.7 x 214.8 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
55. Karl K. Shteiben, Petr the Great on Lake Ladoga, 1812, oil on canvas. Location unknown. Engraving by Seryakov, after N. S. Negadaev, 1872, Petrov & Shubinskii, Al'bom, p. 61.
56. Petr M. Shamshin, Petr the Great at Lakhta, 1844, oil on canvas. Tret'yakov Gallery. Engraving by K. Veierman, after Negadaev, 1872, Petrov & Shubinskii, Al'bom, p. 157.

57. Nikolai P. Zagorskii, Petr the Great at Lakhta, 1882, engraving. Brikner, Istoriya Petra Velikogo, pl. facing p. 678.
58. Jean-Louis-Ernest Meissonier, The Lost Game, 1858, oil on canvas, 20.7 x 26 cms. Wallace Collection.
59. Karl F. Gun, St. Bartholomew's Eve, 1868, oil on canvas, 115 x 89.5 cms. Russian Museum.
60. Vyacheslav G. Shvarts, Ivan the Terrible with the Corpse of his Son, Killed by Him, in Aleksandrovskoe, 1864, oil on canvas, 71 x 89 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
61. Hippolyte Delaroche, Cromwell gazing at the Body of Charles I, 1831, oil on canvas. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nîmes.
62. Vyacheslav G. Shvarts, Palm Sunday in Moscow in the Reign of Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich, 1865, oil on canvas, 60 x 122 cms. Russian Museum.
63. Vyacheslav G. Shvarts, A Scene from the Domestic Life of the Russian Tsars (A Game of Chess), 1865, oil on card, glued to canvas, 26.5 x 33 cms. Russian Museum.
64. Vyacheslav G. Shvarts, Patriarch Nikon at New Jerusalem, 1867, oil on wood, 21.7 x 16 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
65. Konstantin E. Makovskii, The Russian Bride's Attire, 1889, oil on canvas, 334 x 423.3 cms. M. H. De Young Memorial Museum, San Francisco.
66. Andrei P. Ryabushkin, A Merchant's Family of the Seventeenth Century, 1896, oil on canvas, 143 x 213 cms. Russian Museum.
67. Andrei P. Ryabushkin, "They're Coming!" Muscovites at the time of the Arrival of a Foreign Embassy in the late Seventeenth Century, 1901 oil on canvas, 204 x 103 cms. Russian Museum.
68. Sergei V. Ivanov, Strel'tsy (In the Strel'tsy Quarter), 1907, tempera on paper on card, 59 x 81 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.

69. Konstantin D. Flavitskii, Princess Tarakanova, 1864, oil on canvas, 245 x 187.5 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
70. Nikolai D. Dmitriev-Orenburgskii, The Strel'tsy Revolt, 1862, oil on canvas, 150 x 200 cms. Taganrog Picture Gallery.
71. Anon., after Schurmann, Tsaritsa Natal'ya Kirillovna Naryshkina, c. 1687-94, oil on canvas. State Historical Museum, Moscow.
72. K. Brozh, The Celebrations on 30 May 1872. Thirty Paintings from the life of Petr the Great on Tsaritsa's Meadow in St. Petersburg during the Festivities, 1872, engraving by E. Dammyuller. Petrov & Shubinskii, Al'bom, p. 252.
73. G. Broling, The Celebrations on Emperor Petr the Great's 200th Jubilee. The Transportation of the Boat 'The Grandfather of the Russian Fleet' to Moscow. Festivities on of Petr's Square, St. Petersburg, 1872, engraving by Dammyuller. Petrov & Shubinskii, Al'bom, p. 236.
74. Grigorii G. Myasoedov, The Grandfather of the Russian Fleet, 1871, oil on canvas, 100 x 155 cms. Arts Museum of Uzbekistan, Tashkent.
75. Grigorii G. Myasoedov, Petr at Zaandam, 1878, pencil (?) on paper. Private collection, Russia.
76. Ivan F. Zubov, Petr I's Boat, 1722, engraving. Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow.
77. Aleksandr K. Begrov, The Boat found by Petr I (1688) in Izmailovo, which aroused his interest in navigation, and was named by him 'The Grandfather of the Russian Fleet', 1872, engraving. Petrov & Shubinskii, Al'bom, p. 24.
78. Nikolai N. Ge, Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof, 1871, oil on canvas, 135.7 x 173 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
79. The Great Hall, Palace of Monplaisir, Peterhof.

80. Jan Steen, Esther before Ahasuerus, n. d., oil on canvas, 105 x 83 cms. Hermitage.
81. Gerard ter Borch, The Message, n. d., oil on canvas, 70 x 54 cms. Hermitage.
82. Gerrit van Honthorst, Christ before the High Priest, 1617, oil on canvas, 272 x 183 cms. National Gallery, London.
83. Hippolyte Delaroche, Cromwell gazing at the Body of Charles I (fig. 61), detail.
84. Valentin A. Serov, Petr I, 1907, tempera on card, 68.5 x 88 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
85. Jacob Houbraken, after Carel de Moor Petr I, Emperor of the Russians, 1718, engraving, 55.2 x 41.3 cms. Hermitage.
86. Nikolai N. Ge, Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof, detail of Petr.
87. Johann Melchior Dinglinger, Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich, c. 1711-12, enamel miniature. Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden.
88. Carl Wortmann, after Johann Paul Lüdden, Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich, 1728, engraving. Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow.
89. Johann Gottfried Tannauer, Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich, c. 1712-16, oil on canvas, 80 x 60 cms. Russian Museum.
90. Nikolai N. Ge, Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof, detail of Aleksei.
91. William Lindsay Windus, Too Late, 1858, oil on canvas, 95.2 x 76.2 cms. Tate Gallery, London.

92. Hubert Gravelot, after Francis Hayman, Hamlet, Act 3, Scene 7, 1740s, engraving. Reproduced in Ashton, Shakespeare: His Life and Work in Paintings, Prints and Ephemera, p. 131.
93. Nikolai N. Ge, Petr I, 1870, pencil sketch for Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof. Tret'yakov Gallery.
94. Nikolai N. Ge, Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof, 1870, sketch, oil on canvas, 22 x 26.7 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
95. Nikolai N. Ge, "What is Truth?" - Christ and Pilate, 1890, oil on canvas, 233 x 171 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
96. Nikolai N. Ge, Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof, 1872, oil on canvas, 134.5 x 173 cms. Russian Museum.
97. Il'ya E. Repin, Ivan the Terrible and his son Ivan, 16 November, 1581, 1885, oil on canvas, 199.5 x 254 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
98. Nikolai A. Yaroshenko, The Old and the Young, 1881, oil on canvas, 90 x 100 cms. Russian Museum.
99. Boris V. Ioganson, The Interrogation of the Communists, 1933, oil on canvas, 211 x 279 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
100. Aleksandr N. Benua, Design for Act 1, Scene 1 of Merezhkovskii's tragedy, Tsarevich Aleksei, 1920, watercolour on paper. Bakhrushin Theatrical Museum, Moscow.
101. Il'ya E. Repin, The Regent Tsarevna Sof'ya Alekseevna, in the year after her Imprisonment in the Novodevichii Convent, during the Execution of the Strel'tsy and the Torture of her Serving-women, October 1698, 1879, oil on canvas, 201.8 x 145.3 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
102. Nikolai Sokolov, after Nikolai Sinyavskii, Petr the Great's Courage, 1805, engraving. State Historical Museum, Moscow.

103. Pavel A. Ivachev, The Banishing of the Schismatics, led by Nikita Pustosyvat, from the Facetted Chamber, in the reign of Ivan and Petr Alekseevich in 1682, 1872, lead pencil on paper on card, 70 x 92.5 cms. Museum of the Academy of Arts, St. Petersburg.
104. Nikolai A. Koshelev, The Debate of the Schismatics before the Court, 1869. V. Zolotov, Istoriya Rossii v kartinakh, 3rd ed., St. Petersburg, 1869.
105. Il'ya E. Repin, The Ovation for Nadezhda Vasil'evna Stasova, 1889, sepia on paper. Institute of Literature of the Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg.
106. Anon., Tsarevna Sof'ya Alekseevna, the 'Eagle' portrait, 1682-89, oil on canvas, 119 x 100 cms., detail. Russian Museum.
107. Anon., Tsarevna Sof'ya Alekseevna, late eighteenth - early nineteenth century, oil on canvas, detail. Hermitage.
108. Anon., Tsarevna Sof'ya Alekseevna, Co-Regent of Russia, d. 1704, the 'Versailles' portrait, nineteenth-century engraving by François Audibran, after Louis-Étienne Guemied, detail. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.
109. Anon., Tsaritsa Marfa Matveevna Apraksina, c. 1682, oil on canvas, 89 x 72 cms. Russian Museum.
110. Anon., Petr I, the 'Serbian' portrait, 1710s-20s, oil on canvas, 111.5 x 81 cms., detail. Hermitage.
111. Il'ya E. Repin, The Regent Tsarevna Sof'ya, detail.
112. Il'ya E. Repin, Sarra Aleksandrovna de Bove, study for The Regent Tsarevna Sof'ya, 1878, graphite pencil on paper, 19.5 x 29 cms. Russian Museum.
113. Il'ya E. Repin, Elena Ivanovna Blaramberg-Apreleva, study for The Regent Tsarevna Sof'ya, 1878, oil on canvas. Location unknown. Lyaskovskaya, Repin: Zhizn' i Tvorchestvo 1844-1930, p. 140.

114. Il'ya E. Repin, Valentina Semenovna Serova, study for The Regent Tsarevna Sof'ya, 1879, graphite pencil and soft black crayon on paper, 29.8 x 24.7 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
115. Photograph of Valentina S. Serova, 1880s. Reproduced in V. S. Serova, Kak Ros Moi Syn, facing p. 32.
116. Il'ya E. Repin, The Regent Tsarevna Sof'ya, sketch, 1879, graphite pencil and soft black crayon on paper, 29.5 x 19.8 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
117. Il'ya E. Repin, In the Laboratory, 1881, oil on canvas, 33 x 37 cms. Collection of A. L. Myasnikov, Leningrad (1948).
118. Il'ya E. Repin, They Did Not Expect Her, 1883-98, oil on wood, 44.5 x 37 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
119. Il'ya E. Repin, A Female Revolutionary awaiting Execution (In Solitary Confinement), or Anguish, c. 1884, oil on canvas. Private collection, Czech Republic.
120. Il'ya E. Repin, Sophia's Appeal to her Partisans, 1880, engraving. Scribner's Monthly, vol. XX, no. 4, August 1880, p. 576.
121. Vasilii G. Perov, Nikita Pustosvyat: the Debate on the Faith, 1880-1, oil on canvas, 336.5 x 512 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
122. Klavdii V. Lebedev, The Death of Tsar Fedor Alekseevich, 1897, oil on canvas. Location unknown. V. S. Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 126.
123. Mikhail P. Klodt, The Interrogation of Tsarevna Sof'ya, 27 September 1698, c. 1894. Russkii Sever, 1894.
124. Vasilii I. Surikov, Petr the Great drags boats from Onega Bay to Lake Onega to capture Noteburg Fortress from the Swedes, 1872, graphite pencil on paper, 52.5 x 70.8 cms. Russian Museum.

125. Vasilii I. Surikov, Dinner and fellowship of Petr the Great at the home of Prince Menshikov with Dutch sailors from a merchant vessel which Petr, as pilot, led from Kotlin Island to the Governor-General's house, 1872, graphite pencil on paper, 51.2 x 69 cms. State Literary Museum, Moscow.
126. Vasilii I. Surikov, The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy, 1881, oil on canvas, 218 x 379 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
127. Vasilii I. Surikov, The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy, detail.
128. Vasilii I. Surikov, The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy, detail of bowing Strelets.
129. Vasilii I. Surikov, The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy, detail of black-bearded Strelets and his wife (Stepan Torgoshin and Elena Deryagina).
130. Vasilii I. Surikov, The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy, detail of red-bearded Strelets (Kuz'ma).
131. X-ray photograph of The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy, showing seam to the right of Petr, where the canvas was extended.
132. Vasilii I. Surikov, The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy, first sketch of the composition, 1878, graphite pencil on paper, 18.6 x 26.8 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
133. X-ray photograph of The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy; hanged Strel'tsy.
134. Diagram of the composition of The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy. M. Voloshin, Surikov, p. 63.
135. Vasilii I. Surikov, Petr I, study after engraving by William Faithorne the Younger (fig. 7), n. d., graphite pencil on paper. Krasnoyarsk Regional Art Gallery.



136. Vasilii I. Surikov, The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy, detail of Petr.
137. Vasilii I. Surikov, Foreigner (Guarient), study, 1879, oil on canvas, 43 x 24 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
138. Ural Cossack woman's traditional costume, late nineteenth century. Museum of Ethnography, St. Petersburg. M. N. Mertsalova, Poeziya Narodnogo Kostyuma, p. 131, fig. 117.
139. Ivan I. Lanskoi, The Execution of the Strel'tsy, 1872, watercolour on paper. Astrakhan Art Gallery.
140. Aleksandr S. Yanov, The Execution of the Strel'tsy, 1882, graphite pencil and white on paper, 26 x 47 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
141. Vasilii I. Surikov, Two Women in a Wooden Izba, first sketch for Menshikov at Berezov, 1881, oil on canvas, 26.9 x 24.2 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
142. Vasilii I. Surikov, Menshikov at Berezov, 1883, oil on canvas, 169 x 204 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
143. Bartolomeo Carlo Rastrelli, Bust of Prince Aleksandr Danilovich Menshikov, 1716-7, bronze, height 122.5 cms. Hermitage.
144. Vasilii I. Surikov, Aleksandr Danilovich Menshikov, study from marble version of bust by Rastrelli, 1882, watercolour on paper, 24 x 34 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
145. Vasilii I. Surikov, Portrait of a Man (Studennikov/Nevenglovskii), study for Menshikov in Menshikov at Berezov, 1882, oil on canvas, 60 x 48 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
146. Vasilii I. Surikov, Menshikov at Berezov, detail of Menshikov.

147. Attr. Johann Heinrich Wedekind, after Johann Gottfried Tannauer, Mariya Aleksandrovna Menshikova, mid-1720s, oil on canvas, 77 x 61 cms. Menshikov Palace, St. Petersburg.
148. Attr. Johann Heinrich Wedekind, after Johann Gottfried Tannauer, Aleksandra Aleksandrovna Menshikova, mid-1720s, oil on canvas, 77 x 61 cms. Menshikov Palace, St. Petersburg.
149. Vasilii I. Surikov, Portraits of the Menshikov Family, studies after portraits at Aleksandrovskoe, 1882, watercolour on paper, 24.2 x 34 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
150. Vasilii I. Surikov, Elizaveta Avgustovna Surikova, study for Mariya Menshikova in Menshikov at Berezov, 1882, watercolour on paper, 34.5 x 25 cms. Collection of the artist's descendants, Moscow.
151. Vasilii I. Surikov, Menshikov at Berezov, detail of Mariya Menshikova.
152. Vasilii I. Surikov, Menshikov at Berezov, detail of icons.
153. Vasilii I. Surikov, Boyarynya Morozova, 1887, oil on canvas, 304 x 587.5 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
154. V. I. Surikov, Boyarynya Morozova, first sketch of the composition, 1881, oil on canvas, 48.7 x 72 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
155. Diagram of the composition of Boyarynya Morozova. Voloshin, Surikov, p. 96.
156. Aleksandr D. Litovchenko, Boyarynya Morozova, 1881, oil on canvas. Novgorod Historical and Architectural Museum-Reserve.
157. Vasilii G. Perov, The Torture of Boyarynya Morozova, 1881, graphite pencil on paper. Tret'yakov Gallery.
158. Vasilii I. Surikov, Boyarynya Morozova, detail of Princess Avdot'ya Urusova.

159. Embroidered shawl, early nineteenth-century. Museum of Ethnography, St. Petersburg. Mertsalova, Poeziya Narodnogo Kostyuma, p. 111, fig. 98.
160. Early nineteenth-century Old Believer costume. Nizhnii-Novgorod Historical and Architectural Museum-Reserve. Mertsalova, Poeziya Narodnogo Kostyuma, p. 36, fig. 27.
161. Vasiliĭ I. Surikov, Head of Boyarynya Morozova (Avdot'ya Torgoshina?), c. 1886, oil on canvas, 48.2 x 35.7 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
162. Photograph of Anna Ivanovna Kostina, 1880s-90s. Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 500.
163. Vasiliĭ I. Surikov, Boyarynya Morozova, detail of Boyarynya Morozova.
164. Vasiliĭ I. Surikov, Boyarynya Morozova, detail of Boyarynya Morozova.
165. Vasiliĭ I. Surikov, Boyarynya Morozova, detail of the Holy Fool.
166. Photograph of Vasiliĭ I. Surikov as Stepan Razin, 1906. Kemenov, Vasily Surikov, p. 30.
167. Photograph of Aleksandr III in Muscovite costume, late 1880s-90s. Mansell Collection.

## Introduction.

The image of Petr I (1672-1725) and his reign has always been a source of controversy within Russian history and culture. As the great Westernising Tsar, he is central to the continuing debate over the direction of Russia's past, present and future: whether Russia should imitate the West in every respect, or develop according to its own traditions, or whether, perhaps, some balance or synthesis between these extremes is possible.

In his own lifetime, Petr was awarded the title of 'the Great' and 'Father of the Fatherland' by his admirers,<sup>1</sup> while his opponents denounced him as an impostor and the Antichrist.<sup>2</sup> Throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, official propaganda and censorship developed an exclusively positive image of Petr as a national hero, the Reformer and Enlightener of Russia. Artists of the Imperial Academy of Arts in St. Petersburg give visual expression to this cult of Petr in celebratory history paintings. However, Petr took on further symbolic importance in the cultural debate among the intelligentsia, from which the Westernisers and Slavophiles emerged. After the death of Nikolai I in 1855, historians were given access to more controversial sources, and their publications were less rigorously censored.

The formation, in 1870, of the Association for Travelling Art Exhibitions (Tovarishchestvo Peredvizhnykh Khudozhestvennykh Vystavok; its members were called Peredvizhniki), an exhibiting society which sought patronage outside the Academy and Court, gave artists the opportunity to question Petr's official image by incorporating newly-

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<sup>1</sup>R. K. Massie, Peter the Great: His Life and World, New York, 1980, pp. 741-3.

<sup>2</sup>N. V. Riasanovsky, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought, New York & Oxford, 1985, pp. 75-9.

available knowledge into their history paintings. As a result, history painting became another battleground for Westernisers and Slavophiles, provoking heated debate among artists, critics and public.

Nineteenth-century history painting reflects the changes that Petr's image underwent in response to fluctuations in Russian perceptions of the past and present. As Gasiorowska has written:

The reign of Peter the Great is a watershed in Russian history, and his place in it may be considered unique. No historical personage inspired such a rich anecdotic lore, none is accorded so many works of scholarship and fiction, few are so widely known...<sup>3</sup>

The battles that characterised the almost incessant wars of Petr's forty-three year reign were depicted by painters such as Aleksandr Kotsebu and Aleksei Bogolyubov. The laudatory, patriotic tone of such works remained consistent. However, the domestic crises and the social impact of the Westernisation which Petr promoted were more controversial. This can be seen most clearly in paintings which examine Petr's relationships with his own subjects, including members of his family, like his half-sister Sof'ya and his son Aleksei. It is on these domestic subjects that this study is based.

The present study traces the development of Petrine iconography in Russian history painting from its roots in the art of Petr's own time until the 1880s, and examines the challenge to Petr's official image made by the Peredvizhniki. This emerged in paintings such as Nikolai Ge's Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof, Il'ya Repin's The Regent Tsarevna Sof'ya Alekseevna, in the Year after her Imprisonment in the Novodevichii Convent, during the Execution of the Strel'tsy and the Torture of her Serving-women, October 1698, and the history paintings of

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<sup>3</sup>X. Gasiorowska, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian Fiction, Madison & London, 1979, p. xii.

Vasiliï Surikov. These Peredvizhniki created images of Petrine Russia which were startling not only in treating historical subjects with the Realism and psychological insight usually applied to contemporary genre and portraiture, but also in their controversial content.

This combination of Realism and historical controversy was the Peredvizhniki's particular contribution to Russian history painting. The style and the content of their paintings embodied their pursuit of truth: truth to nature, and historical truth, previously hidden by a hundred-and-fifty years of official propaganda and censorship. Contemporary critical responses to and interpretations of history paintings by the Peredvizhniki convey the excitement and interest with which the intelligentsia greeted these works. They suggest, too, the seriousness with which history painting was regarded as a vehicle for historical discourse and revelation.

The first chapter provides a summary of Petr I's career and outlines the history of Russia during the nineteenth century. This section includes material on the evolution of Russian historiography and the heritage of eighteenth-century literary and artistic iconography of the Petrine era. I also examine the positions of prominent Westernisers and Slavophiles in relation to Petr I and his cultural legacy. In other words, this chapter provides a general context within which the events, paintings and artists can be examined.

Chapter 2 charts the evolution of Academic history painting in Russia, and the influence of Western history painting by Ingres and Delaroche, whose work was known in Russia in reproduction. This is related to an examination of the official image of Petr I, as expressed in Academic art, and the cult of Petr fostered by Nikolai I in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. I endeavour to show how key incidents and themes in Petr's life were continually adapted and

refashioned to accord with his image as national hero, embodying aspects of the archetypal Hero of myth. Petr's rôles as Child-Hero, as Bearer of Culture and as Saviour are explored through Academic history painting and book illustrations. These representations also provide the official iconographic image of the Petrine era with which the works of the Peredvizhniki may be compared and contrasted.

Chapter 3 examines the simultaneous emergence of historical genre painting and of the Peredvizhniki during the 1860s. The accession of the comparatively liberal Aleksandr II in 1855 had already helped to establish the context for the growth of more controversial, Realist history painting in the 1870s. The paintings of Vyacheslav Shvarts are seen in the context of the increased scope for contemporary genre painting in the Academy and the emergent Artist-Antiquarian tradition in history painting represented by Delaroche. Vyacheslav Shvarts' preference for genre, instead of great set-piece subjects, and his interest in historical and archæological research are examined as significant points of lasting influence in the development of a new approach to history painting. Similarly, Konstantin Flavitskii's Princess Tarakanova (1864) exemplifies the new emphasis upon psychological drama in history painting. The 1863 secession from the Academy and the creation of the Artists' Co-operative, then the Association for Travelling Art Exhibitions in 1870, independent of the Academy and with access to new markets, gave artists an opportunity to challenge official ideology and survive commercially.

However, the relationship between the Peredvizhniki and the Academy was ambivalent, and more complex than has sometimes been portrayed. Exaggerated claims have been made for the artistic, social and political radicalism of the Peredvizhniki, while the impact of the reforming Statutes of 1859 on the Academy has been underestimated. Links were never entirely severed for practical reasons of social

advancement and professional training. Indeed, it was through the Academy that the Peredvizhniki encountered the works of Delaroche, which significantly shaped their approach to history painting. Shvarts' enduring influence also provided a strong element of continuity between Vice-President Grigorii Gagarin's liberalised Academy of the late 1850s and early 1860s and the history painters of the Peredvizhniki.

Subsequent chapters supply detailed expositions of the impact of the changes of the 1860s on images of the Petrine era in Russian history painting. I argue that, in the wake of the new historiography of the late 1850s and 1860s, some of the Peredvizhniki increasingly turned their attention from Petr I himself to the position of his domestic opponents, and I suggest the possible reasons for this. The claim that history paintings functioned as the artistic equivalent of the 'Æsopian' language of philosophers and theorists, as a means of commenting on contemporary issues without provoking the censors, is also discussed. The spiritual and political concerns of individual artists offer some clues towards understanding and interpreting the iconography, and wherever possible, I refer to the artists' own words and contemporary reviews. Possible influences from contemporary life, such as the friendships between artists and activists, and the political trials of the period, are examined. However, I argue that the case for direct contemporary allusions has been overstated, and that the political diversity of the Peredvizhniki has been underestimated. This is particularly evident from the comparison between Ge and Surikov.

The history paintings shown in the first Travelling Exhibition of 1871 - Grigorii Myasoedov's The Grandfather of the Russian Fleet and Ge's Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof - initially prompted by the commercial opportunities of Petr's bicentenary in 1872, exemplify the contrast between the official tradition and the new critical



treatment. Myasoedov's picture is examined in relation to the rôle of Petr's boat in the bicentenary and the Academic precedents of depicting Petr as Child-Hero and Bearer of Culture. The iconography of Ge's controversial picture is analysed, its historical and æsthetic sources and possible mythic resonances explored.

Ge's Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof revolutionised nineteenth-century Russian history painting, particularly its depictions of the Petrine era. Ge's combination of visual truth and historical truth, in depicting a theme which had been heavily censored, set an important precedent for later artists. It also provoked a heated critical debate in which art, history, and cultural politics were inextricably entwined. I examine the critics' interpretations of the painting, and re-evaluate the evidence, including Ge's own statements, which have sometimes been disregarded or misrepresented. The full significance of the painting cannot be understood without also touching upon Ge's religious and philosophical interests, including his friendship with Alexander Herzen.

Following Ge's precedent, Repin's The Regent Tsarevna Sof'ya provides another perspective on the interpretation of the Petrine era in art. An examination of Sof'ya's image in history paintings and literature reveals an attempt to marginalise a significant character in the history of the period. Chapter 5 discusses the way in which Academic artists tried to excise Sof'ya from the official iconography of Petr's reign, and the extent to which this is connected with sexual stereotyping. Repin's depiction of her is placed in the context of the rise of feminism in Russia and his depictions of contemporary emancipated women.

Chapter 6 is devoted to the work of Vasilii Surikov during the 1880s, specifically three paintings depicting cultural and political upheaval in late seventeenth - early eighteenth-century Russia: The Morning of the

Execution of the Strel'tsy, Menshikov at Berezov, and Boyarynya Morozova. I examine the iconography of these paintings, and discuss them and the possible motivation behind them in relation to the artist's own cultural background and values. In doing so, I consider the evidence surrounding Surikov's political views, with reference to the artist's few statements on the subject. The result suggests a far greater diversity of political opinions among the Peredvizhniki than is usually perceived.

The Conclusion outlines the subsequent return of emphasis to Petr himself in the works of the World of Art movement, and the glosses placed upon some of the paintings discussed in this study by twentieth-century Soviet critics. I draw together the issues raised by the changing interpretations of the Petrine era in Academic history painting and the works of the Peredvizhniki, and consider the ultimate impact of these works on Russian art and as contributions to the debate over Petr's cultural legacy.

## Chapter 1: The Historical Context.

History paintings cannot be examined without first understanding the events depicted and the historical context in which the pictures themselves were produced. It is also important to be aware of the interpretations placed upon events and characters in historiography. History painters are particularly dependent upon the work of scholars. In nineteenth-century Russia, Petr I's reign was viewed in the light of the conflicting ideologies of Westernisers and Slavophiles, both groupings in turn divided between Right and Left. There was also an official image of Petr, which had developed during the eighteenth century, fostered by the State from Petr's lifetime onward. The resulting contrasts and contradictions within Petr's image are reflected in a diversity of artistic images. Subjects which figure prominently in Petrine iconography, such as the revolts of the Strel'tsy and his treatment of Tsarevich Aleksei are discussed in greater detail in the relevant later chapters. The following outline locates them within the context of Petr's life and reign, and traces subsequent events which significantly affected Petr's image in the arts.

Central to the paintings discussed in this work is the character of Petr himself. The dichotomy of Christ or Antichrist - the official version of his image against its inversion - recurs in any consideration of creative interpretations of Petr I in literature or the visual arts. He was capable of contrasting behaviour - generosity, courage, treachery and extremes of cruelty which shocked even his contemporaries. Writers and artists seeking to portray him as a national hero were forced to suppress or justify his negative aspects - if they were aware of them. Before 1855, censorship meant that generations had grown up with only the positive image of Petr. The image of Petr the Antichrist, although not exclusive to

the Old Believers, was essentially a popular phenomenon, outside the cultural élite.<sup>1</sup>

Petr was remarkable, first of all, by reason of his physical appearance. The life-size wax effigy (fig. 20), made soon after Petr's death in 1725 by Bartolomeo Carlo Rastrelli (1675-1744), gives Petr's height as 204 cms., a most unusual height for that time. Rastrelli's busts of Petr in bronze and wax (figs. 1 & 19) probably provide the most accurate impression of Petr in his later years, being based on a life-mask. They show a round face, with heavy jowls and large, prominent eyes. The thin lips seem to have resulted from the mouth being compressed to resist the plaster, since the Duc de Saint-Simon described them as "thick",<sup>2</sup> and they are usually thus depicted in portraits. The general impression is of a small head upon a narrow-shouldered body, with long thin legs. The moustache, although varying in thickness over the years, seems to have been a constant feature of his adult face. Static images, however, cannot convey Petr's physical energy or the recurring convulsions which contorted the left side of his face, his left arm and leg.<sup>3</sup> Cardinal Kollonitz, who met him in 1698, described "a fixed and fascinated look in his eye and a constant movement of his arm and leg to hide which, he accompanies this forced motion with continual movements of his entire body...".<sup>4</sup> The degree of flattery found in portraits varies widely: Johann Gottfried Tannauer's painting of Petr in profile (1710s, Hermitage, fig. 18) is extremely close to the life-mask, and so may be judged accurate, while

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<sup>1</sup>Riasanovsky, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought, pp. 75-9.

<sup>2</sup>See description quoted by E. Schuyler, Peter the Great, Emperor of Russia: A Study of Historical Biography, London, 1884, vol. II, pp. 394-5.

<sup>3</sup>Massie, Peter the Great, pp. 134-6, suggests that these spasms were caused by brain damage, perhaps a result of encephalitis. This contributed to Petr's unpredictable behaviour; heavy drinking further aggravated the effects of the lesions.

<sup>4</sup>Quoted by Schuyler, Peter the Great, vol. I, p. 383.

the portrait in armour by Jean Marc Nattier (1717, Hermitage, fig. 10), from the same period, is idealised. From the first, then, nineteenth-century artists were presented with a choice of portraits, handsome and ugly. Opinions on his life and reign also are divided.

Petr I was born on 30 May 1672, the first child and only son of Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich's second marriage to Natal'ya Naryshkina (1651-94; fig. 71), daughter of a Colonel of a Strel'tsy (Musketeer)<sup>5</sup> Regiment. Aleksei died in 1676, and was succeeded by the eldest surviving son from his first marriage, Fedor III (1661-82). Despite its brevity, Fedor's reign is notable for a significant reform. In 1682, Mestnichestvo, the system of precedence in which "the position of a given person had to correspond to the standing of his family and to his own place in the family",<sup>6</sup> was abolished.<sup>7</sup> Petr's introduction of the Table of Ranks in 1722 furthered this effort to institute a more meritocratic system, but later its privileges too became hereditary. Later rulers also eroded the obligation of the gentry to provide services to the State in return for their privileges.<sup>8</sup>

Fedor's death, soon after that of his infant son, created a crisis in the succession. The next in line, Ivan (1666-96), was sixteen, but disabled,<sup>9</sup> while Petr was healthy but only ten years old. The boys' maternal relations came into conflict in attempting to resolve this

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<sup>5</sup>The Strel'tsy were a militia, composed largely of artisans, with officers from the gentry and nobility.

<sup>6</sup>N. V. Riasanovsky, A History of Russia, New York & Oxford, 4th ed., 1984, p. 187.

<sup>7</sup>L. A. J. Hughes, Sophia, Regent of Russia, 1657-1704: Ambitious and Daring above her Sex, New Haven & London, 1990, pp. 48 & 51.

<sup>8</sup>Riasanovsky, A History of Russia, pp. 248-50.

<sup>9</sup>The cause of Ivan's handicap is uncertain: he had speech problems and poor sight. Down's Syndrome has been suggested (W. B. Lincoln, The Romanovs, London, 1981, p. 58), but would cast doubt on the paternity of Ivan's daughters. His difficulty in standing and moving unaided, Schleissing's observation that he could not control the movement of his eyes (see Hughes, Sophia, Regent of Russia, p. 94), and the contortion of the left hand in the otherwise idealised portrait in the Russian Museum (Portret Petrovskogo Vremeni: Katalog Vystavki, GRM & GTG, Leningrad, 1973, p. 118) may suggest cerebral palsy.

problem. The situation was further complicated by a revolt of the Strel'tsy in May 1682, initially over a pay dispute originating in Fedor's reign. Tsarevna Sof'ya (1657-1704; fig. 106), one of Ivan's elder sisters, emerged as the leader of the senior branch of the Romanovs, calming the Strel'tsy and restoring order. It was decided that both Ivan and Petr should be crowned jointly as Tsars, under Sof'ya's regency.<sup>10</sup>

During the 1680s, Petr kept away from the centre of politics, preferring to live at Izmailovo and Preobrazhenskoe.<sup>11</sup> He had received a very basic education, but enjoyed playing with weapons from the age of eleven. He engaged in mock battles with his 'Play Regiments', which later became the Western-style Preobrazhenskii and Semenovskii Guards regiments.<sup>12</sup> In 1688 he found and learned to sail the boat which became known as the 'Grandfather of the Russian Fleet' (figs. 76-7). That same year he also began his first attempts at ship-building on Lake Pleshchevo.<sup>13</sup> Petr's association with inhabitants of the Foreign Suburb had stimulated his interest in such pursuits. He also enjoyed the society of Western military personnel and women. The most long-lasting of his early mistresses, Anna Mons, was German. His first male favourite, François Lefort, was a Swiss soldier, whom he later appointed Admiral. It was through Lefort that Petr met Aleksandr Menshikov (1673-1729; fig. 143), who remained his closest companion for the rest of his life.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>See L. A. J. Hughes, "Sofiya Alekseyevna and the Moscow Rebellion of 1682", Slavonic and East European Review, London, vol. 63, no. 4, October 1985, pp. 518-39, and Sophia, Regent of Russia, pp. 58-71.

<sup>11</sup>Hughes, Sophia, Regent of Russia, pp. 222-3.

<sup>12</sup>For a fuller account of Petr and his Play Regiments (Poteshnye Polki), see Massie, Peter the Great, pp. 67-70.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., pp. 71-5.

<sup>14</sup>It cannot be proved conclusively, but, on the evidence, it is probable that Petr and Menshikov were lovers. Homosexual relationships were not uncommon in sexually-segregated Muscovite Russia; but according to Dr. Samuel Collins, Aleksei Mikhailovich was somewhat shocked by his father-in-law Il'ya Miloslavskii's open

Ivan V married, but fathered only daughters. In order to secure a male heir, in 1689 Petr married Avdot'ya or Evdokiya Lopukhina (1669-1731).<sup>15</sup> Petr's marriage produced three sons, only the first of whom, Aleksei (1690-1718; figs. 87-9), survived infancy. In 1698 Petr forcibly sent his wife, an inoffensive woman of traditional upbringing, to a convent in Suzdal'. She had refused to go voluntarily, fearing (justifiably, as events proved) for the welfare of her son in Petr's hands.<sup>16</sup>

In summer 1689, following a rumour that Sof'ya was about to seize the throne, Petr moved to the Trinity-St. Sergei Monastery to rally support, and the Regency was overthrown. Sof'ya was sent to the Novodevichii Convent in Moscow, and her adviser Prince Vasilii Golitsyn - an able and cultured man who had also served as a minister under Fedor III - was exiled to Siberia.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, Petr remained Tsar in name only:

...he still did not rule, essentially because he did not wish to. For the next five years [i. e. until her death in 1694] the government remained in the hands of his mother, a woman of mediocre abilities, and of a number of conventionally minded boyars.<sup>18</sup>

Unlike Sof'ya and Golitsyn, and the adult Petr, the Naryshkin regime was hostile to foreigners and their ideas. Indeed, Petr's coup of 1689 had gained support from some Strel'tsy regiments and conservative elements

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pursuit of male servants; see N. Tolstoy, The Tolstoys: Twenty-Four Generations of Russian History, 1353-1983, London, 1983, pp. 32-3.

<sup>15</sup>Massie, Peter the Great, pp. 75-6.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., pp. 239-41.

<sup>17</sup>Hughes, Sophia, Regent of Russia, pp. 231-41

<sup>18</sup>M. S. Anderson, Peter the Great, London, 1978, p. 32.

because he and his party were perceived as traditionalists.<sup>19</sup> The nominally joint rule lasted until Ivan's death in 1696.

During the 1690s, Petr began to pursue his naval and military ambitions seriously. His visits to Arkhangel'sk in 1693 and 1694 gave him his first view of the sea, and stimulated him to further efforts in shipbuilding (in which he personally participated). His first naval campaign was waged against the Turks in 1695-6. The capture of Azov on the Don delta in 1696 gave Petr access to the Black Sea, and enabled him to establish shipyards at Voronezh and a naval base at Taganrog. Labour was provided by conscripted peasants, working under foreign shipwrights. However, the ships produced at Voronezh during this period were poorly built and had to be replaced within a short time.<sup>20</sup>

In 1697-8 Petr travelled to Western Europe, the first Russian Tsar to do so. Although ostensibly incognito, he visited Western Courts, and applied himself to acquiring technical expertise, particularly in shipbuilding, gunnery and science. He also attempted, without success, to acquire allies to continue the war against the Turks. Petr stayed in Zaandam in Holland, where he learned shipbuilding, and Deptford on the Thames, again for access to the shipyards and docks. Although he achieved his purpose in gaining some of the skills he needed and in recruiting foreign experts, the visit was less successful in terms of improving Russia's image abroad. Even by the standards of the time, Petr's behaviour was uncouth. His vandalism at Sayes Court, John Evelyn's house at Deptford which William III had hired to accommodate him, left the King in the embarrassing position of having to pay Evelyn the considerable sum of £350, 9d. compensation. Evelyn's steward

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<sup>19</sup>Schuyler, Peter the Great, vol. 1, pp. 218 & 235, and Massie, Peter the Great, pp. 104-5

<sup>20</sup>See Anderson, Peter the Great, pp. 38-9.



described Petr and his entourage as "right nasty".<sup>21</sup> As the London-based Austrian diplomat Johann Philipp Hoffman wrote: "They say that he intends to civilise his subjects in the manner of other nations. But from his acts here, one cannot find any other intention than to make them sailors..."<sup>22</sup>

During Petr's absence, fears arose that he would never return: that he had been murdered, or that he had abandoned Russia. At the same time some Strel'tsy regiments petitioned the authorities in Moscow in protest at being posted to the frontier, without being given leave to pass through Moscow to see their families (it must be remembered that the Strel'tsy were a militia, not full-time soldiers). The order for their arrest sparked the revolt of four regiments, which then began to march on Moscow from Toropets. They were intercepted by government troops near Istra, and defeated. Executions followed. Petr was summoned back to Russia, and on his return to Moscow executions continued throughout the autumn and winter of 1698 - although the revolt had been put down before his return. Over 1,200 men were executed, from about 2,000 in the four mutinous regiments; the remainder were either branded, or had noses or ears cut off, and were sent into internal exile. There was a fear that some of the rebels may have hoped to restore Sof'ya to the regency, but this is by no means certain.<sup>23</sup> It has been speculated that Petr was avenging childhood traumas originating in the 1682 revolt. However, the extent of his reprisals suggests that his chief aim was to instil terror, to deter any other potential rebels. The suppression of the revolt also aided his plans to

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<sup>21</sup>Massie, Peter the Great, pp. 208-9. The toll included broken windows and furniture, paintings used for target practice, and the destruction of a large holly hedge caused by Petr racing around the garden in a wheelbarrow.

<sup>22</sup>Anderson, Peter the Great, p. 44.

<sup>23</sup>Schuyler, Peter the Great, vol. I, pp. 389-92; Massie, Peter the Great, pp. 244-5; Hughes, Sophia, Regent of Russia, pp. 249-50.

reform the army, allowing him to downgrade the remaining loyal Strel'tsy regiments prior to abolishing them in 1708.

Petr's next major project was the war against Sweden, which began in 1700, following the end of the Turkish War. It ended only in 1721, with Russian victory. Among Petr's objects was territorial expansion with access to the Baltic. He succeeded, and founded St. Petersburg near the site of a captured Swedish fortress, Nyenskans, on Finnish territory, in 1703. By making this the capital, he not only broke free of Moscow's symbolic rôle at the heart of the realm but also - more significantly in practical terms - brought the apparatus of government to his sphere of military and naval operations in the Baltic. Even the site of his summer residence, Peterhof, was chosen as a stopping-place between St. Petersburg and the island base of Kronshlot (now Kronshtadt). War broke out with Turkey again in 1711, but this time Petr was defeated, losing the territories gained in 1696. In 1722, after the Great Northern War with Sweden, he fought Persia. This conflict had not ended by the time of his death, and the territorial gains were not lasting. Petr was engaged in expansionist wars throughout his personal rule.

The needs of war on both land and sea, over a span of decades, drove many of Petr's domestic reforms. Conscription was imposed in 1705, followed in 1724 by internal passports, which make it more difficult for men to evade it. Increasing numbers of taxes were levied. Some, like the 1705 Beard Tax on town-dwellers and the 1716 double rate of tax on Old Believers, were ostensibly to encourage Westernised habits. However, the prime aim was financial, to raise money for Petr's wars. In 1718, this led to the introduction of a poll tax, or 'Soul Tax', based on a general census. This removed some distinctions in status between the different social groupings, largely to the detriment of the lower orders: independent small landholders were now classed as peasants. As Anderson observes,

rural society became divided "more and more between a great peasant majority, largely unfree, which paid the new impost and a privileged ruling minority of landowners who did not".<sup>24</sup> Industrial expansion, particularly the growth of the metal-producing industries in the Urals, was geared to military needs, with factories largely manned by forced labour.

Government reforms, including the institution of gubernii as administrative districts (1708), the establishing of the Senate (1711), and the rationalisation of government departments into 'Colleges' (1718), were also part of Petr's desire to create a more efficient wartime State, as exemplified by the enemy, Sweden. In ideological terms, Petr was partly influenced by the example of Western absolutism, particularly Louis XIV's France.<sup>25</sup> Contemporary paintings and prints of Petr consciously imitated Western iconography, and were sometimes produced by Western artists recruited by the Tsar (figs. 1, 2, 8, 10, 12 & 17). Like Louis XIV (fig. 9), whose policy of Gallicanism limited Papal authority in French ecclesiastical affairs during the 1680s, and his own father Aleksei, who had dismissed the ambitious Patriarch Nikon, Petr prevented the Church becoming a potential focus for opposition. In 1700, when the Patriarch of Moscow died, he was not replaced. In 1721, the Patriarchate was abolished and replaced with a Synod, originally named the 'Spiritual College', in the style of the other government departments.<sup>26</sup> Feofan Prokopovich, Petr's favourite bishop, had considerable influence as a propagandist for absolutist ideology and Petr's personal image. The Church essentially functioned as a government office. One aspect of this was that priests

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<sup>24</sup>Anderson, Peter the Great, p. 97.

<sup>25</sup>Petr never met Louis XIV, whom he admired, but in 1717 he visited Louis' eighty-two-year-old widow, Françoise, Marquise de Maintenon, at her convent of St. Cyr; see Massie, Peter the Great, p. 652, for differing accounts of their meeting.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., pp. 788-94.

were obliged to report to the authorities any subversive statements made in confession.

In his effort to create a Court culture on the Western model, Petr built palaces in and around St. Petersburg, and compelled the aristocracy to move to the new capital. This created a deep division in Russian society and culture: a social élite of absentee landlords, Westernised in manner (however superficially), and the bulk of the population, free and unfree, largely untouched by Western ideas. Petr's Western-style Court did give greater social freedom to upper-class women, who had previously led very secluded lives reminiscent of Asiatic society in the upper stories (teremy) of their homes. In accordance with the general ethos of the time, their new rôle at Court was chiefly decorative. Petr had a number of mistresses, and the moral atmosphere seems to have been fairly lax.<sup>27</sup> Despite the institution of formal 'Assemblies' in 1718, Petr's preferred informal entertainment was the debauched 'All-Drunken Synod', founded early in his reign as a parody of Church ritual.<sup>28</sup> He also enjoyed playing sadistic 'practical jokes' on guests, as an exercise in power and humiliation.

The succession remained a problem for Petr. In the early 1700s, he took as his mistress one of Menshikov's servants, a Livonian whose original name seems to have been Marta Skavronska (c. 1684-1727).<sup>29</sup> She was baptised into the Orthodox Church as Ekaterina Alekseevna, Petr's son Aleksei standing as her sponsor. Petr apparently married her secretly in 1707, publicly in 1712. They had at least twelve children.<sup>30</sup> Only three

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<sup>27</sup>Massie, Peter the Great, pp. 811-3.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., pp. 118-20, and V. Klyuchevsky, Peter the Great, London, 1958, pp. 46-7.

<sup>29</sup>She was born in Ringen, in present-day Estonia, of Lithuanian parentage.

<sup>30</sup>The total number of children has not yet been established; see L. A. J. Hughes, "Peter's Russia: Work in Progress", synopsis of a paper given at the 33rd Meeting of the Study Group on Eighteenth-Century Russia, Study Group on Eighteenth-Century Russia Newsletter, Cambridge, no. 20, September 1992, p. 9.

daughters survived beyond the age of five: of these, only Anna and Elizaveta reached adulthood.

Aleksei, Petr's son by Avdot'ya, although intelligent, proved a disappointment to his father.<sup>31</sup> As he grew up, Aleksei's stability and health were undermined through a combination of neglect, physical violence and intense pressure to succeed on Petr's militaristic lines. He was cultivated by traditionalists and opportunists, and became the focus of popular sympathy in the hope that Petr's death would bring peace. Aleksei, however, was a passive figure, who spoke rashly against Petr and Menshikov when drunk, rather than an active conspirator. It became increasingly less likely that he would outlive Petr, since, by his twenties, he was both an alcoholic and tubercular. He may also have suffered a nervous breakdown: in 1713 his terror of Petr drove him to try to shoot himself in the hand to avoid being tested in technical drawing by him. His unhappy marriage to Charlotte von Braunschweig-Blankenburg (1694-1715) resulted in two children, Natal'ya and Petr, before Charlotte, herself consumptive, died from puerperal fever.

In 1715 Petr's wife Ekaterina also bore a son, Petr. Aleksei was no longer necessary to his father, and was threatened with disinheritance. In 1716, he fled abroad with his mistress Afrosin'ya, a former serf, to seek asylum at the Court of the Holy Roman Emperor Karl VI (Charlotte's brother-in-law). The last two years of his life were spent travelling from Vienna to Naples and eventually back to Russia. In 1718 he was lured home with the promise of a pardon and the chance to live as a private citizen on his own estates with Afrosin'ya. Instead, Petr set about

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<sup>31</sup>For Aleksei's biography, see N. G. Ustryalov, Istoriya Tsarstvovaniya Petra Velikogo, vol. VI, St. Petersburg, 1859, A. G. Brückner (Brikner), Der Zarewitsch Alexei (1690-1718), Heidelberg, 1880, and E.-M. de Vogüé, "Le Fils de Pierre le Grand", Revue des Deux Mondes, Paris, 1880, vol. 39, 1 & 15 May, pp. 125-63 & 295-332.

investigating Aleksei's escape from Russia, which he prosecuted as an act of treason against his life and crown. Aleksei was imprisoned in the Peter and Paul Fortress, the first major political prisoner to be held there. The death sentence was passed, but Aleksei died before it could be officially implemented, probably as a result of torture.<sup>32</sup> Petr's younger son, Petr Petrovich, in whose favour Aleksei had been discarded, died in 1719, aged three-and-a-half. In 1722 Petr abolished the hereditary right of succession: each ruler was to nominate his own successor. Yet he himself died in 1725 without having done so.

The triumph of Petr's last years was the Peace of Nystad in 1721, which ended the war with Sweden. As a result, his Senate voted to endow him with the titles of 'Emperor', 'the Great' and 'Father of the Fatherland' in imitation of the Roman Imperator, Augustus and Pater Patriæ.<sup>33</sup> This marked his final break with the Muscovite Tsardom, and expressed his wish to see Russia as an Empire on the Roman model.

One of Petr's last and most enduring achievements was the establishment of the Academy of Sciences. The decree was issued in January 1724, but the institution itself did not open until December the following year, after Petr's death.<sup>34</sup> The sciences, including anatomy and surgery, had long been among his more serious interests, and he practised dentistry (sometimes as a punishment) and carried out operations.<sup>35</sup> His Kunstammer, or Chamber of Curiosities, included teeth which he had removed, with their owners' names, as well as "anatomical

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<sup>32</sup>Somewhat inconsistently, Petr executed a former mistress, Marie Hamilton (Mariya Gamil'ton), for infanticide and abortion on 14 March 1719; see A. A. Polovstov, ed., Russkii Biograficheskii Slovar', St. Petersburg & Moscow 1896 - Petrograd 1918, vol. IV, "Mariya Danilovna Gamil'ton", pp. 202-4.

<sup>33</sup>Massie, Peter the Great, pp. 741-3. In practice, he had been using 'Emperor' for some years already; see fig. 8.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 817.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 188.

preparations" by the Dutch embalmer Frederik Ruysch, whom he had met in Holland. Ruysch's work aimed to satisfy scientific curiosity and prompt meditation on morality and mortality with elaborate tableaux made from adult and foetal remains.<sup>36</sup>

Petr died in January 1725, aged fifty-two, from a painful disease of the urinary tract.<sup>37</sup> Two months previously, he had caught a chill while rescuing soldiers from a boat which had run aground at Lakhta on the Gulf of Finland. The chill had aggravated his illness, although it had not caused it. The Lakhta incident was swiftly incorporated into his legend to provide a more suitable heroic end to his life.

Petr died without naming his successor. With the aid of Menshikov, Petr's widow Ekaterina, whom he had crowned as Empress in 1724, gained the throne, in place of the direct male heir, Aleksei's young son, Petr. On Ekaterina's death in 1727, the boy, not yet twelve, succeeded. Menshikov attempted to rule, as he had during Ekaterina's reign, but was banished to Siberia by the rival Dolgorukii family. Petr II died of smallpox in January 1730, aged fourteen, causing another crisis in the succession, since his elder sister Natal'ya (1714-28) had died of tuberculosis eighteen months before.

The throne was offered to Anna Ivanovna, Duchess of Kurland, Ivan V's second daughter (1693-1740). She was a childless widow, whom

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<sup>36</sup>The Ruysch collection may be the source for the rumours, used by novelists, that Petr kept the heads of Marie Hamilton, Wilhelm Mons, and Aleksei's illegitimate child in jars; see Gasiorowska, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian Fiction, pp. 47-8 & 113, and D. S. Merejkowski (Merezhkovskii), transl. by B. G. Guernsey, Peter and Alexis, New York, 1931, p. 507.

<sup>37</sup>See Massie, Peter the Great, pp. 842-5, on Petr's last illness. Venereal disease and heavy drinking may have been implicated. According to Counsellor Paulson, a former Court surgeon, when the body was opened, "a gangrene had already taken place in the parts about the bladder, of which the sphincter was swelled, and so hard as to be cut with difficulty..."; J. von Stæhlin Storcksburg, Original Anecdotes of Peter the Great, collected from the conversation of Several Persons of Distinction at Petersburgh and Moscow by Mr. Stæhlin, Member of the Imperial Academy at Petersburgh, anonymous translation, London, 1788, p. 363.

the nobles believed they would be able to control. This proved not to be the case. Anna brought several Baltic-German advisers from Kurland, notably Ernst-Johann Bühren (Biron in Russian), who became powerful and unpopular.<sup>38</sup> She tended to act in an arbitrary and sadistic way, and had an alcohol-fuelled sense of humour not dissimilar to that of her late uncle. Also like him, but unlike Petr II, who had preferred Moscow, she continued to build palaces and hold Court in St. Petersburg. An early example of the posthumous glorification of Petr dates from her reign: Jacopo Amigoni's Petr the Great with Minerva (1732-4, Hermitage, fig. 14), commissioned by Prince Antiokh Kantemir (1709-44),<sup>39</sup> a protégé of Feofan Prokopovich and author of an early verse panegyric on Petr, Petrída.<sup>40</sup>

The accession of Petr's daughter Elizaveta (1709-61<sup>41</sup>) in 1741, after a coup against Anna's infant nephew Ivan VI, gave a new impetus to Petr's image. After a series of short-lived monarchs distantly related to Petr, his daughter had finally gained power. Elizaveta established an extravagant Court, reflecting French rather than Dutch or Baltic-German cultural taste.<sup>42</sup> She embarked upon numerous architectural projects, such as the restoration of the Cathedral of the Resurrection in the New Jerusalem Monastery, and the building of the Ekaterinskii Palace at Tsarskoe Selo, a new Winter Palace, and the Smol'nyi Convent in St. Petersburg, to which she had hoped to retire, but which was unfinished at the time of her death.

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<sup>38</sup>Riasanovsky, A History of Russia, p. 244-5.

<sup>39</sup>G. N. Komelova & I. N. Ukhanova, ed., Ermitazh: Russkaya Kul'tura VII-XVIII vekov. Ocherk-putevoditel', Leningrad, 1983, p. 142.

<sup>40</sup>Riasanovsky, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought, p. 27.

<sup>41</sup>Elizaveta died on 25 December, O. S.; the year 1762 is given by texts using N. S. dating.

<sup>42</sup>Riasanovsky, A History of Russia, p. 247.



During Elizaveta's reign, Petr's memory was constantly invoked by writers, who used his reputation to increase his daughter's prestige. In his speech to commemorate the Empress' name-day in 1759, Aleksandr Sumarokov (1718-77) portrayed pre-Petrine Russia as a Dark Age, "drowned in the darkness of ignorance", awaiting enlightenment: "Peter the Great became man, the sun rose, and the darkness of ignorance scattered."<sup>43</sup> Mikhail Lomonosov (1711-65), a scientist and man of letters from a humble background, may have felt personally indebted to Petr for the opportunities to advance socially through his skills: much of his literary output lauds Petr.<sup>44</sup> His "Panegyric to the Sovereign Emperor Petr the Great Of Blessed and Everlastingly Honoured Memory", 1755, commemorated the twenty-fourth anniversary of Elizaveta's coronation by praising her father. Like Sumarokov, he emphasised Petr's rôle as Enlightener of Russia, the sole agent of the nation's transformation, of quasi-divine stature.<sup>45</sup> Such authors established Petr's image in literature and history during the Enlightenment; indeed, Lomonosov helped François Voltaire with his Histoire de l'Empire de Russie sous Pierre le Grand, 1759-63.<sup>46</sup>

Elizaveta was succeeded by Karl Peter Ulrich von Holstein-Gottorp (1728-62), the son of her elder sister Anna (1708-28). He ruled as Petr III (r. 1761-2). Petr was pro-Prussian, and admired Friedrich II and his army. Despite his conversion to the Orthodox Church, he remained essentially

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<sup>43</sup>A. P. Sumarokov, "Slovo Pokhvalnoe Gosudare Imperatore Petre Velikom, sochinennoe ko dnyu Tezoimenitstva Eya Imperatorskogo Velichestva 1759 goda", quoted by Riasanovsky, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought, p. 29.

<sup>44</sup>See ibid., pp. 30-4.

<sup>45</sup>M. V. Lomonosov, "Panegyric to the Sovereign Emperor Petr the Great Of Blessed and Everlastingly Honoured Memory", transl. by R. Hingley, in M. Raeff, ed., Russian Intellectual History: an Anthology, New Jersey & Sussex, 1966, pp. 32-48.

<sup>46</sup>Riasanovsky, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought, pp. 30-1.

Lutheran.<sup>47</sup> He removed Petr I's imposition of compulsory State service on the nobles and allowed them to travel or take service abroad if they wished. He also "abolished the secret police, prohibited the purchase of serfs by manufacturers for service in factories, and secularized the estates of the Church".<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, he was perceived to place the interests of Holstein-Gottorp above those of Russia, and was overthrown by a military coup in favour of his wife, Ekaterina<sup>49</sup> (1729-96), dying soon afterwards in suspicious circumstances.

Ekaterina, conscious of her weak claim to the throne, constructed symbolic links between herself and Petr in order to justify her position. More than Elizaveta, Petr's real daughter, she needed to emphasise continuity, to prove that she was, in some sense, Petr's spiritual heir and the continuer of his work.<sup>50</sup> Like Petr, she extended the Empire, gaining control of the northern shore of the Black Sea, including the Crimea, and regaining Azov from the Turks. The partitions of Poland continued Russia's westward expansion, following Petr's acquisition of the Baltic provinces from Sweden. Ekaterina's interest in the ideas of the French Enlightenment, whether or not she succeeded in implementing them, also drew her to foster favourable comparisons between herself and Petr I in his rôle as Reformer. In 1767, Ivan Betskoi, the Director of the Imperial Academy of Arts, claimed that Petr "created men in Russia; Your Highness has given them souls",<sup>51</sup> a sentiment echoed in almost identical words by

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<sup>47</sup>Riasanovsky, A History of Russia, p. 248, notes that he planned the reform of vestments and the removal of icons to give the Russian Church a Protestant atmosphere.

<sup>48</sup>L. Kochan, The Making of Modern Russia, London, 1962, p. 120.

<sup>49</sup>Née Sophie Auguste Friederike von Anhalt-Zerbst.

<sup>50</sup>J. T. Alexander, Catherine the Great: Life and Legend, New York & Oxford, 1989, pp. 50, 62, & 158, and Riasanovsky, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought, pp. 34-8.

<sup>51</sup>Quoted ibid., p. 37.

the poet Mikhail Kheraskov the following year,<sup>52</sup> while Voltaire wrote: "...permit me, my lady, to kiss the statue of Petr the Great, and the hem of the gown of Ekaterina the Greater."<sup>53</sup>

Collections of documentary sources about Petr were first published during Ekaterina's reign. In 1787-8, Fedor Tumanskii's ten-volume Collection of Various Notes and Works Serving to Provide Complete Knowledge of the Life and Deeds of the Lord Emperor Petr the Great was published in St. Petersburg.<sup>54</sup> Ivan Golikov's The Acts of Petr the Great, the Wise Reformer of Russia,<sup>55</sup> was even more copious. Golikov (1735-1801) presented Petr in the prevailing favourable view of the Enlightenment. He assessed Petr's deeds as "great, overwhelming, glorious, and resounding but at the same time salutary for Russia, immortal".<sup>56</sup> Golikov and his contemporaries glossed over Petr's well-documented cruelty with a combination of historical relativism and special pleading, arguing that Petr's ends justified his means.<sup>57</sup>

During Ekaterina's reign there was a limited rehabilitation of the Regent Sof'ya, whose reputation had been hitherto denigrated by Petr's admirers.<sup>58</sup> Ekaterina was interested in Sof'ya as the first woman to rule

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<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>53</sup>Letter dated 16 December 1774, in W. F. Reddaway, ed., Documents of Catherine the Great: The Correspondence with Voltaire and the 'Instruction' of 1767 in the English Text of 1768, Cambridge, 1931, p. 204.

<sup>54</sup>Sobranie raznykh zapisok i sochinenii sluzhashchikh k dostavleniyu polnogo svedeniya o zhizni i deyaniyakh Gosudarya Imperatora Petra Velikogo; see Riasanovsky, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought, p. 44.

<sup>55</sup>I. I. Golikov, Deyaniya Petra Velikogo, mudrogo preobrazovatelya Rossii, sobrannye iz dostovernnykh istochnikov i raspolozhennye po godam, 12 vols., Moscow, 1788-9, and Dopolneniya k Deyaniyam Petra Velikogo, 18 vols., Moscow, 1790-7. Gasiorowska, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian Fiction, p. 31, describes the contents as "heterogenous and unchecked".

<sup>56</sup>Golikov, Deyaniya Petra Velikogo, vol. I, p. IX, quoted by Riasanovsky, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought, p. 43.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., pp. 48-52.

<sup>58</sup>See Hughes, Sophia, Regent of Russia, pp. 268-70, for positive images of Sof'ya in Ekaterina's reign.

Russia in modern times, again seeking a precedent for her own position. However, Sof'ya had acted only as Regent for her younger brothers, whereas Ekaterina continued to rule as Empress after her son Pavel had reached his majority.

Ekaterina's cultivation of Petr's image was expressed visually in the equestrian statue of Petr by Etienne Falconet (1716-91) and Marie-Anne Collot (1748-1821) which is known as The Bronze Horseman (figs. 3-6). It was unveiled on Senate Square (now Decembrists' Square), St. Petersburg, in 1782, the centenary of Petr's accession, and bears the dedication,

PETRO PRIMO

CATHARINA SECUNDA

("To Petr I from Ekaterina II"), emphasising Ekaterina as Petr's true successor.<sup>59</sup> In keeping with the Neo-Classicism of the period, the figure was originally intended to be nude,<sup>60</sup> but instead was dressed in draperies suggestive of the Roman Empire, rather than the costume of Petr's own time. The plinth, which was naturally wave-shaped and named the 'Thunder Rock', had to be transported from where it was found, near Lakhta, to St. Petersburg over land and then by water.<sup>61</sup>

Ekaterina's son, Pavel (1754-1801) shared his father's militaristic preoccupations and his fate, being himself murdered in a coup in 1801. Pavel attempted to emphasise his links with Petr I. Rather than commissioning a new sculpture, in 1800 he had Rastrelli's bronze equestrian statue of Petr (1716-44) erected near the newly-built Mikhailovskii (from 1823, Engineers') Castle in St. Petersburg (fig. 2). The

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<sup>59</sup>Riasanovsky, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought, p. 37.

<sup>60</sup>T. E. Little, "Introduction", in A. S. Pushkin, Mednyi Vсадnik (The Bronze Horseman), Oxford, 1974, p. xi.

<sup>61</sup>I. Bartenev & V. Batazhkova, transl. A. Miller, Leningrad: Architectural Landmarks, Art Museums, Suburban Parks and Palaces, Leningrad, 1985, p. 53.

inscription, "To the Grandfather from the Grandson",<sup>62</sup> deliberately echoes the formula Ekaterina used on the Bronze Horseman. Pavel was actually Petr's great-grandson, and may have intended to reinforce his link with Petr by omitting a generation, or to pay tribute to the memory of his father, Petr III, whom he had had exhumed and reburied with his mother in 1796.<sup>63</sup> The reign of Pavel's son Aleksandr I (1777-1825) was dominated by Russian involvement in the Napoleonic Wars, and contributed little to Petrine iconography, although the growth of the intelligentsia and the influence of German Romantic philosophy had greater effect later.

The evolution of Petr's image during the nineteenth century occurred in a context of increasing social change and the long-running cultural debate between the Slavophiles and the Westernisers. Petr's image became a particularly powerful symbol in this context.

Throughout the nineteenth century, Tsars and reformers came into conflict, sometimes violently, as the structure of Russian government and society was questioned. In 1825, at the foot of the Bronze Horseman, the Decembrists protested against Nikolai I's accession, demanding a constitution and the accession of his elder brother Konstantin. General Miloradovich was shot, and artillery was brought in. About four hundred people were shot. Five of the leaders were executed, others exiled.<sup>64</sup> Nikolai (1796-1855) continued to use repressive measures to uphold the autocracy. As Riasanovsky has written, "[Nikolai's] new regime became

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<sup>62</sup>ibid., p. 154.

<sup>63</sup>Alexander, Catherine the Great, p. 326.

<sup>64</sup>R. Payne, The Fortress, London, 1967, pp. 25-64.

pre-eminently one of militarism and bureaucracy".<sup>65</sup> Its ideology was 'Official Nationality' - Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationality.<sup>66</sup>

...autocracy dominated the entire ideology... Orthodoxy came to mean an effective control of the church by the state, for religion was an important safeguard against disorder. Nationality...was interpreted to mean the affirmation and the defense of the established, national order of things, including serfdom.<sup>67</sup>

Historians expressed this ideology in their work, and promoted the veneration of Petr I, Nikolai I's personal hero.<sup>68</sup>

The liberal and nationalist revolutions of 1830 and 1848 in several countries reinforced Nikolai's opposition to reform, in the interests of the stability of his own empire and the status quo in Europe as a whole. The 1830 Polish insurrection was suppressed,<sup>69</sup> and the Organic Statute of 1832 made Poland "'an indivisible part' of the Russian Empire".<sup>70</sup> In 1849-50, Russian troops helped the Austrians crush the Hungarian revolution, partly as a warning to the Poles.<sup>71</sup> However, Nikolai's larger-scale military endeavours were unsuccessful; he died in 1855, having led Russia into humiliating defeat by Turkey, France and Britain in the Crimean War (1853-5).

History writing during Nikolai's reign reflected the values of Official Nationality, and took the Enlightenment's adulation of Petr I to new extremes. One of the most prominent historians of this time, Mikhail Pogodin (1800-75) of Moscow University, praised Petr as the creator of

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<sup>65</sup>Riasanovsky, A History of Russia, p. 324.

<sup>66</sup>See N. V. Riasanovsky, Russia and the West in the Teaching of the Slavophiles: A Study of Romantic Ideology, Cambridge, Ma., 1952, p. 9.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., loc. cit.

<sup>68</sup>See N. V. Riasanovsky, Nicholas I and Official Nationality in Russia, 1825-1855, Berkeley & Los Angeles, 1959, p. 105 ff., and Chapter 2.

<sup>69</sup>Riasanovsky, A History of Russia, p. 331-2.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., p. 332.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 335.

modern Russia, and listed at length those features of modern life with which Petr could be credited, from the Table of Ranks to potatoes and sheep.<sup>72</sup> Pogodin shared with Nikolai I an intense emotional attachment to Petr, which coloured his writings.<sup>73</sup> Nikolai Ustryalov (1805-70), of St. Petersburg University, wrote the standard textbooks for schools and universities, disseminating further the familiar claim that the reform of Russia was the sole work of Petr.<sup>74</sup> However, both these historians contributed significantly to the study of the Petrine period in their rôle as editors of documents from the official archives, to which only a few researchers had access (see below). A more popular approach was taken by the journalist Nikolai Polevoi in his History of Petr the Great (1843), which concluded with a chapter titled "Petr the Great as Tsar, Person, and Destiny's Chosen One. Conclusion".<sup>75</sup> He portrayed Petr as a divinely-ordained "epochal world phenomenon",<sup>76</sup> and a paragon of domestic virtue: "a kind son, a tender brother, a loving husband, a child-loving father".<sup>77</sup>

The supremacy of such adulatory interpretations of Petr and his reign was challenged by the conflict within the intelligentsia between the Westernisers and the Slavophiles. Both groups had emerged in opposition to the repressive ideology of Official Nationality, drawing upon "German idealistic philosophy [notably Hegel], and...the romantic concept of nation and national mission".<sup>78</sup> The break between them was

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<sup>72</sup>See extracts from his essay "Petr Velikii", quoted by Riasanovsky, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought, pp. 111-3.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., pp. 110-1, and Chapter 2.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., pp. 115-6.

<sup>75</sup>"Petr Velikii, kak tsar', chelovek i izbrannik sudeb. Zaklyuchenie", Istoriya Petra Velikogo, St. Petersburg, 1843, vol. IV, pp. 301-44; see ibid., p. 117, n. 76.

<sup>76</sup>Quoted ibid., p. 117.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., p. 118.

<sup>78</sup>Riasanovsky, Russia and the West in the Teaching of the Slavophiles, p. 88.

gradual, becoming final in c. 1846.<sup>79</sup> The Westernisers, who included Vissarion Belinskii (1811-48) and Alexander Herzen (1812-70), believed that Russia's future lay in Europeanisation. They admired Petr as much as the exponents of Official Nationality, but they emphasised reform and enlightenment rather than absolutism and autocracy. The conflict between the Western constitutionalism which they espoused and the Western absolutist models which Petr had admired was still being enacted in the revolutions of 1830 and 1848. However, by identifying all that was tyrannical and oppressive in Russia with the influence of the Mongols, Belinskii was able to portray Petr's reforms as attempts to replace negative Asian influences, alien to Russia, with positive European ones.<sup>80</sup> Despite his increasing radicalism, Belinskii retained his positive vision of Petr as Enlightener and Reformer: in his last years, he wrote "Russia needs a new Peter the Great".<sup>81</sup> Herzen began his career as a writer and philosopher with a similarly high opinion of Petr as a revolutionary. However, he changed his mind as he traced the roots of the contemporary autocracy back to Petrine Russia, and found the West, at first-hand, disappointing.<sup>82</sup>

Slavophilism arose from the same philosophical roots as the Westernisers' ideology; in Riasanovsky's words, "Slavophilism represented the fullest and most authentic expression of Romantic thought in Russia".<sup>83</sup> According to the Slavophiles, Western models of progress were unsuitable for Russia; rather, Russia had to develop

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<sup>79</sup>ibid., pp. 87-9.

<sup>80</sup>See reviews of Ivan Golikov and Benjamin Bergman's works on Petr in V. G. Belinskii Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii, St. Petersburg, 1903, vol. VI, p. 187.

<sup>81</sup>V. G. Belinskii, Pis'ma, St. Petersburg, 1914, vol. III, p. 339, quoted by Riasanovsky, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought, p. 125.

<sup>82</sup>ibid., pp. 136-42, and Chapter 4.

<sup>83</sup>ibid., p. 143.



according to her own traditions and culture. In social policy, Slavophilism was opposed to serfdom and in favour of strengthening the peasant commune.<sup>84</sup> The ideal of the commune permeated the Slavophile concept of land ownership: "The land belonged really to the commune: Russian land belonged to the great commune of all Russia, local communes were the masters of local holdings."<sup>85</sup> At the same time, Slavophile political theory was not democratic in recognisable Western terms. As Riasanovsky explained:

The Slavophiles were anarchists of a peculiar kind: they considered...every form of state evil, but they were convinced that the state could not be avoided. The best one could do was to limit the scope of that evil...<sup>86</sup>

This meant an uneasy combination of autocracy ("if power was an evil burden, the fewer men who had to carry it the better"<sup>87</sup>) with a theory of popular sovereignty.

Slavophilism questioned the prevailing positive interpretation of Petr I and his reign, as expressed by the official propagandists and the Westernisers. Previously, few writers had ventured negative opinions on the subject. However, to the Slavophiles, Petr and St. Petersburg represented the major source of contemporary Russia's bureaucracy, despotism and cultural disunity. As Konstantin Aksakov (1817-60) wrote, describing the gulf between the Westernised upper classes and the mass of the population: "The public speaks French, the people speaks Russian. The public follows Paris fashions. The people has its Russian customs..."<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup>Riasanovsky, Russia and the West in the Teaching of the Slavophiles, pp. 133-8, and N. Zernov, Three Russian Prophets: Khomiakov, Dostoevsky, Soloviev, London, 1944, p. 72.

<sup>85</sup>Riasanovsky, Russia and the West in the Teaching of the Slavophiles, p. 135.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., p. 149.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., p. 150.

<sup>88</sup>Quoted by L. Brodskii, Rannie Slavyanofily, Moscow, 1910, p. 122, in ibid., p. 153.

Individual Slavophiles varied in the degree to which they condemned Petr and his Russia. Aksakov claimed that "everything that is true in Peter's reforms was...started before him",<sup>89</sup> while blaming Petr as far as he could for all Russia's problems, including serfdom, which actually pre-dated him. Aleksei Khomyakov and Ivan Kireevskii attempted to find in pre-Petrine Russia the roots of corruption and weakness which had enabled Petr and the culture of Petersburg to prevail.<sup>90</sup> The Hegelian basis of their theories obliged the Slavophiles to regard the Petrine era and its legacy as a historical necessity, a period of national self-renunciation which would contribute ultimately to the renewal of Russian civilisation.<sup>91</sup> The deaths of both the Kireevskii brothers, Khomyakov and Konstantin Aksakov between 1856-60 effectively killed Slavophilism in its original form.<sup>92</sup> Ivan Aksakov (1823-86), Konstantin's brother, continued to write, and edited the journal Rus', but his increasing conservatism drew him closer to Pan-Slavism and the extreme nationalism characteristic of the 1880s.<sup>93</sup>

Aleksandr II's reign (1855-81) brought new vigour to research into Petrine subjects. Nikolai I's unquestioning Petr-worship was replaced by a more critical approach. Most of the leading Slavophiles were dead by 1860, but, in a less restrictive political atmosphere, their criticism of Petr I contributed positively to historical debate. Aleksandr's relaxation of censorship gave historians access to previously inaccessible sources.

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<sup>89</sup>K. S. Aksakov, Sochineniya Istoricheskie, Moscow, 1861, vol. I, p. 41, in ibid., p. 80.

<sup>90</sup>Riasanovsky, Russia and the West in the Teaching of the Slavophiles, p. 78, and The Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought, p. 144. See also Zernov, Three Russian Prophets, pp. 45-6, for a twentieth-century expression of this view.

<sup>91</sup>Riasanovsky, Russia and the West in the Teaching of the Slavophiles, pp. 80-2, with quotations from Khomyakov.

<sup>92</sup>Riasanovsky, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought, p. 149.

<sup>93</sup>Riasanovsky, Russia and the West in the Teaching of the Slavophiles, pp. 52-5; also see Chapter 6.

Editions by Ustryalov and Pogodin, in 1859 and 1861 respectively, of documents relating to Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich were particularly significant.<sup>94</sup> As already stated, both authors were conservative historians of Nikolai I's reign, applying the values of Official Nationality to history.<sup>95</sup> However, by publishing these documents, they enabled readers to form their own opinions, independent of the editors' intentions, on a particularly sensitive and controversial aspect of Petr's life and reign. Similarly, the character and rule of Tsarevna Sof'ya were re-examined, reflecting not only renewed historical interest in Petr's predecessors, but also growing interest in the position of women in the late 1850s.<sup>96</sup> The first monograph about Sof'ya, by Petr Shchebal'skii, was published in 1856.<sup>97</sup> Mikhail Semevskii wrote biographies of several characters around the Petrine Court, including Tsaritsa Praskoviya (Ivan V's wife), Ekaterina I, and the Mons family, and documented the treason cases of the reign.<sup>98</sup>

Aleksandr II (1818-81) began his reign with comparatively liberal intentions. He abolished serfdom in 1861, but without completely resolving the question of land ownership and tenure. Reforms in local government, such as the establishment of the rural zemstvo (1864) and of town councils (1870), and the reform of the judiciary (1864) were significant moves towards modernising Russian society.<sup>99</sup> The effects of rebellion in Poland in 1863, and an increase in terrorism, including

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<sup>94</sup>Ustryalov, Istoriya Tsarstvovaniya Petra Velikogo, vol. VI; M. P. Pogodin, ed., Sobranie Dokumentov po Delu Tsarevicha Alekseya Petrovicha, Moscow, 1861.

<sup>95</sup>Riasanovsky, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought, pp. 109-116.

<sup>96</sup>D. Atkinson, "Society and the Sexes in the Russian Past", in D. Atkinson, A. Dallin, & G. W. Lapidus, ed., Women in Russia, Hassocks, 1978, p. 28.

<sup>97</sup>Hughes, Sophia, Regent of Russia, pp. 271-2.

<sup>98</sup>Riasanovsky, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought, pp. 209-10, n. 166.

<sup>99</sup>Riasanovsky, A History of Russia, pp. 374-8.

Dmitrii Karakozov's attempt to kill Aleksandr in 1866, led to more reactionary policies in the second half of Aleksandr's reign. However, in March 1881, he was considering further constitutional reform, when he was assassinated by a revolutionary group, the People's Will.<sup>100</sup>

Aleksandr III (1845-94; fig. 167) executed his father's assassins and replaced his political allies with extreme reactionaries such as his former tutor, Konstantin Pobedonostsev, the Chief Procurator of the Synod. Aleksandr's manifesto of 29 April 1881 set the tone for his reign:

...the voice of God commands Us to stand bravely at the helm of government, trusting in Divine Providence and with faith in the power and truth of the Absolutism We are called upon to defend; and we are determined to strengthen the State against any attempt to weaken Our power...<sup>101</sup>

In many respects, he restored Nikolai I's doctrine of Official Nationality, with even greater emphasis upon national and religious chauvinism. This extreme nationalism was not Slavophilism in its original, relatively liberal sense, but contained aspects of Slavophilism adapted and adopted by the State for its own purposes.<sup>102</sup> Under Nikolai I, the Slavophiles had suffered State censorship and repression,<sup>103</sup> and Pobedonostsev himself, who revered Petr I as a fellow-authoritarian, criticised the Slavophile interpretation of history.<sup>104</sup> However, the Slavophile belief in the dissemination of Orthodoxy,<sup>105</sup> especially as interpreted by Ivan Aksakov,<sup>106</sup> was compatible with the militant religious intolerance of

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<sup>100</sup>Narodnaya Vol'ya; see *ibid.*, pp. 378-84, and Payne, The Fortress, pp. 272-9.

<sup>101</sup>Quoted by Payne, The Fortress, p. 300.

<sup>102</sup>Riasanovsky, Russia and the West in the Teaching of the Slavophiles, p. 87, n. 57.

<sup>103</sup>*ibid.*, p. 154.

<sup>104</sup>R. F. Byrnes, Pobedonostsev, His Life and Thought, Bloomington & London, 1968, pp. 323-4.

<sup>105</sup>Although the original Slavophiles had not advocated the use of force; see Riasanovsky, Russia and the West in the Teaching of the Slavophiles, p. 132.

<sup>106</sup>Aksakov believed that "because Russian land belonged to the Orthodox Russian people, foreigners and non-Orthodox Russian landlords in Orthodox areas had land

Aleksandr III's reign. Pan-Slavism had already begun to spread in the 1870s, with Russian military intervention against the Turks in the Balkans. Policies of Russification and religious discrimination were directed against non-Russian and non-Orthodox subjects of the Empire. Pogroms, the May Laws and other discriminatory legislation were directed against Jews in particular. Pobedonostsev is said to have recommended the death of one-third of the Jewish population, the expulsion of another third, and the conversion of the remainder as a solution to this 'problem'. Protestants and Russian sects were subject to forced conversion and restrictions. In non-Russian-speaking areas such as the Baltic provinces, Ukraine, and Poland, teaching in the vernacular was forbidden.<sup>107</sup>

Despite his Russian nationalism and patronage of the Russian Revival in art,<sup>108</sup> Aleksandr III's fervent belief in autocracy prevented him repudiating Petr as a positive symbol. It was his son, Nikolai II (1868-1918, r. 1894-1917), who preferred to identify with Aleksei Mikhailovich, claiming that Petr was "the ancestor who appeals to me least of all. He had too much admiration for European culture...".<sup>109</sup>

The historical research published in Aleksandr II's reign remained accessible, although in literature there was a return to the pro-Petrine approach of Nikolai I's time. Daniil Mordovtsev (1830-1905) wrote several novels on Petrine themes, most of which adhere to the official positive image. In Tsar Petr and the Regent Sof'ya (1885) Sof'ya is the villain, and titles such as More Enlightenment! (1881) and The Crowned Carpenter

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only on sufferance, and were required to give it up on demand for a proper compensation", ibid., p. 136.

<sup>107</sup>Kochan, The Making of Modern Russia, pp. 196-7, and Riasanovsky, A History of Russia, pp. 394-5.

<sup>108</sup>For example, the official announcement of the Empress's coronation on 15 May 1881, by an unnamed artist, in M. Anikst & E. Chernevich, Russian Graphic Art 1880-1917, London, 1990, p. 28, pl. 23.

<sup>109</sup>Quoted by R. K. Massie, Nicholas and Alexandra, London, 1968, p. 78.

(1883) speak for themselves. Mordovtsev's only departure from a pro-Petrine stance came in his earlier work, Idealists and Realists (1878), a sympathetic but inaccurate treatment of Aleksei Petrovich and Petr's opponents.<sup>110</sup> It may be significant that this novel pre-dates Aleksandr III's accession. In 1889, Aleksandr Arsen'ev (1854-96) published stories such as Arisha the Little Duck, about a blacksmith's daughter who is Petr's fictional godchild, and The Tsar's Verdict, the plot of which "illustrates Peter's love of justice, his respect for his own laws, and the awe he inspires".<sup>111</sup> Meanwhile, in the history paintings of Vasilii Surikov (figs. 126, 142 & 153) and Andrei Ryabushkin (figs. 66-7), Petr himself was no longer the main focus of attention. The revival of interest in folk art turned many artists with historical interests, such as the brothers Viktor and Apollinariii Vasnetsov, towards traditional Russian folktales and Muscovite history, rather than the Petrine themes which had been prominent in the first half of the century.

Only in the reign of Nikolai II, with the rise of the Symbolists and the so-called 'Decadents' of the Silver Age, were the more sinister and grotesque aspects of Petr's personality and life fully absorbed into his literary image, in Antichrist: Petr and Aleksei (1905) by Dmitrii Merezhkovskii (1865-1941) and Petersburg (1916-22) by 'Andrei Belyi' (Boris Bugaev, 1880-1934). This period saw the concomitant re-emergence of Petr himself as a protagonist in history painting, often in disturbing guise (figs. 53 & 84).

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<sup>110</sup>Gasiorowska, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian Fiction, p. 188.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid., p. 186.

## Chapter 2: Academic History Painting and Petr I.

Western-style secular painting in Russia was not introduced by Petr I,<sup>1</sup> although its acceptance and development were undoubtedly promoted by him. He recruited Court painters from Western Europe such as Tannauer (1680-1733/7; figs. 12, 18 & 89), a Swabian-born pupil of the Venetian Baroque portraitist Bombelli, and the Frenchman Louis Caravacque. Young Russian artists, including the brothers Ivan and Roman Nikitin, and Andrei Matveev (1701/4-39; fig. 17), were sent abroad, to Italy or Holland, for training. Dependence on Court patronage determined the nature of the art produced - chiefly portraits and Baroque allegories.

These works treated Petr's image in precisely the same way as an absolute monarch in Western Europe. Through engravings these portraits of the Tsar were given a wide currency in Russia and the West, establishing the iconography for later representations of Petr in commemorative portraits and in history painting. Tannauer's Petr I at the Battle of Poltava (c. 1710s, Russian Museum, fig. 12) celebrates Petr as a successful commander, watched over by winged Victory, who is blowing the trumpet of fame and holding out a laurel wreath towards him. This type of semi-allegorical depiction recurs in engravings such as the equestrian portrait by Aleksei Zubov (1682/3-1743), captioned "The Great Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Petr the Great, Father of the Fatherland,

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<sup>1</sup> Several portraits from his predecessors' reigns show development away from the sixteenth-century parsuna (icon-type funerary portrait) towards greater naturalism. See Portret Petrovskogo Vremeni, GRM & GTG, pp. 107, 111, 120 & 121, for examples. A portrait of Natal'ya Naryshkina (1687, Russian Museum), p. 105, is by Schurmann, probably a German. The portrait of Aleksei Mikhailovich (Russian Museum), p. 107, may be the work of a Dutch artist, Daniel Vuchters; see P. Longworth, Alexis, Tsar of All the Russias, London, 1984, p. 121. See also figs. 71, 106 & 109 below.

Emperor of All the Russias"<sup>2</sup> (1721, Russian Museum), celebrating Petr's newly-acquired titles following the Peace of Nystad. The combination of a naturalistic figure and mythological and symbolic beings continued to be a feature of Academic history painting into the 1830s. It was part of the Baroque style which Petr had imported from the West, and can be seen in official representations of Louis XIV (whom Petr admired as a ruler and self-publicist) such as Charles Le Brun's Louis XIV's Personal Rule (1679-86, ceiling of the Hall of Mirrors, Versailles, fig. 13), and Amigoni's Petr the Great with Minerva (fig. 14).

After his first journey to the West in 1697, Petr's official image changed. For instance, The Grand Czar of Moscovy (1698, British Museum, fig. 7) by William Faithorne the Younger (1656-1710) shows Petr in Russian dress,<sup>3</sup> while the etching Emperor Petr I (1703, Saltykov-Shchedrin Public Library, St. Petersburg, fig. 8) by Adriaan Schoonebeck (1661-1705) depicts him in Western costume, complete with cuirass, wig, plumed hat, and that contemporary status symbol - an African page. Schoonebeck's portrait embodies Petr's aspirations towards a Western image of absolutism, although the result is more martial in emphasis than works like Hyacinthe Rigaud's Louis XIV (1701, Louvre, fig. 9). Western Court painters, such as Sir Godfrey Kneller and Nattier, also depicted Petr in armour, which was an anachronism in battle, but remained part of the iconography of military success and State power (1698, Collection of H. M. the Queen, Kensington Palace, and fig. 10).

Petr's personal involvement in importing Western technology and dress into Russia was later exploited by history painters who cast Petr in

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<sup>2</sup>M. A. Alekseeva, Gravyura Petrovskogo Vremeni, Leningrad, 1990, p. 55. It is based upon a 1707 plate by Picart.

<sup>3</sup>Sketched by Surikov as a source for The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy (see Chapter 6, fig. 135).



the archetypal rôle of the Bearer of Culture. The concept of Petr as creator of a new Russia was also expressed in contemporary art - most curiously as a detail on the front of his right pauldron (shoulder-piece) in Rastrelli's bronze bust (1723-30, Hermitage, figs. 1 & 11). Here, in low relief, he is depicted in Roman armour,<sup>4</sup> sculpting a new Russia (a crowned and armoured female figure, physically reminiscent of his wife, Ekaterina) from coarse rock.<sup>5</sup> Such a depiction of Petr's career prefigures Andrei Ivanov's elaborate allegory in the 1838 competition, described below, which was part of a continuing tradition in official art from the Baroque period.

The most overt examples of Petrine propaganda art were those paintings which depicted Petr as the divinely-appointed autocrat. This idea could be conveyed by emphasising the legitimacy of his rule, depicting him among his predecessors. For example, Pieter Picart, in Petr I in his Genealogy (1717, Russian Museum),<sup>6</sup> linked him directly with Rurik the Varangian.<sup>7</sup> Zubov, in The Conclusion of the Succession<sup>8</sup> (1717, Saltykov-Shchedrin Public Library) showed Petr, bathed in radiant light from God, passing on the sceptre to his younger son, Petr Petrovich, then aged two, to show the line continuing into the future. In the crowd,

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<sup>4</sup>Revived by Cosimo III de' Medici in Florence in the 1550s as "the ideal imperial image for monarchy", D. de Marly, Louis XIV & Versailles, London, 1987, p. 13, n. to fig. 2.

<sup>5</sup>N. V. Kalyazina & G. N. Komelova, Russkoe Iskusstvo Petrovskoi Epokhi, Leningrad, 1990, relate it to the myth of Pygmalion and Galatea, p. 102 and pl. 76.

<sup>6</sup>Alekseeva, Gravyura Petrovskogo Vremeni, p. 153, and M. Cherniavsky, Tsar and People: Studies in Russian Myths, New Haven & London, 1961, fig. 13.

<sup>7</sup>The Romanovs were not related to the House of Rurik save by the first marriage of Ivan IV the Terrible to Anastasiya Romanova, Tsar Mikhail Fedorovich's great-aunt. Picart emphasised the continuity of the Crown, although the form he used suggested a spurious line of descent. Even more spurious are the portraits of Tsars and Grand Princes preceding Ivan IV, derived from a series of the Dukes of Brandenburg; see D. A. Rovinskii, Podrobnyi Slovar' Russkikh Gravirovannykh Portretov, izdanie s 700 fototipnymi, St. Petersburg, 1886, col. 1622, and Cherniavsky, Tsar and People, p. 82.

<sup>8</sup>Alekseeva, Gravyura Petrovskogo Vremeni, p. 181.

angels and Olympian deities mingle with Petr's wife and other children. Both these engravings seem directly linked to Petr's efforts to boost confidence in his dynasty following the uncertainties that resulted from Tsarevich Aleksei's flight abroad the previous year.<sup>9</sup> By depicting the divine source of Petr's authority, the artists tried to suggest that Petr's breaking with the tradition of primogeniture was divinely sanctioned, and that the monarchy itself was not in jeopardy.

Another way of emphasising Petr's Divine Right was simply to link him directly with God. This strategy was adopted by Zubov in his frontispiece to The Book of Mars (1712, Saltykov-Shchedrin Public Library), a "chronicle of the Great Northern War"<sup>10</sup> against Sweden. In this image, rays of light emanating from Heaven descend upon Petr through a halo-like laurel wreath held above him by winged celestial trumpeters.<sup>11</sup> In 1718, Zubov adopted a similar device in a vignette in Maritime Prints<sup>12</sup> (fig. 16). The religious context again mingles Christian and pagan symbols. God is represented by a radiant triangle - the Trinity - clearly labelled "GOD", while the Classical Victory and several putti support Petr's framed portrait.<sup>13</sup> In this way, the concept of the Divine Right of Kings merged with the Roman tradition of the deified Emperor in visual and theoretical terms. There was nothing specifically Russian about the Baroque deification of the monarch: for example, Abraham Bosse's engraving The Joy of France (1638, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, fig. 15) depicted Louis XIII's wife and his long-awaited heir as

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<sup>9</sup>Aleksei was not formally disinherited until his return in 1718, but Zubov's engraving indicates that Petr's intentions were known well in advance.

<sup>10</sup>Kniga Marsovaya; see Alekseeva, Gravюра Petrovskogo Vremeni, p. 124.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 125.

<sup>12</sup>Kunshty Korabel'nye; Alekseeva explains, ibid., p. 180, that kunsh (lit. "art", from the German kunst) was used in Petr's reign to mean a print or engraving. Later it was replaced by estamp, from the French.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 156.

a secular Virgin and Child, under a canopy held aloft by putti.<sup>14</sup> However, in Russia the symbolic vocabulary of Western absolutism was grafted onto an older tradition of kingship, in which the ruler was intercessor for his people, and sometimes martyr. This tradition reinforced the Western model, before being subsumed within it.<sup>15</sup>

A large and varied body of Petrine iconography was bequeathed to later generations of artists. These images included naturalistic portraits by Carel de Moor (1717, private collection, Paris<sup>16</sup>) and Tannauer (fig. 18); Rastrelli's sculptures based upon Petr's life-mask (Russian Museum and Hermitage, figs. 1, 19 & 20); allegorical depictions as described above, and other works of varying quality and degrees of idealisation. Many portraits of Petr were subsequently engraved,<sup>17</sup> and became easily accessible to painters of historical subjects.<sup>18</sup> The choice of likenesses was determined by the kind of history painting to which the artists aspired, their attitudes, and current official policy.

The European Academies were responsible for the emergence of history painting in the late eighteenth century. One of the central tenets of Academic painting was the depiction of the Ideal. As defined by the German theoretician, Anton Mengs (1728-79), "an ideal in painting depends upon selection of the most beautiful things in nature purified of every imperfection".<sup>19</sup> In history painting, this implied the idealisation of physical forms, and the choice of edifying themes. In 1764 the Director

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<sup>14</sup>De Marly, Louis XIV & Versailles, p. 11.

<sup>15</sup>Cherniavsky, Tsar and People, pp. 79-85; see also discussion of the ruler as Passion-bearer below.

<sup>16</sup>This portrait also exists in a variant by Matveev in the Hermitage (fig. 17), and a much-reproduced engraving by Houbraken (fig. 85).

<sup>17</sup>See Rovinskii, Podrobnyi Slovar' Russkikh Gravirovannykh Portretov, cols 1512 ff.

<sup>18</sup>As a child in Siberia in the mid-nineteenth century, Vasili Surikov first saw Petr in an engraving, which he tried to copy; see M. A. Voloshin, Vasili Ivanovich Surikov, Leningrad, 1985, p. 45.

<sup>19</sup>Quoted by H. Honour, Neo-Classicism, Harmondsworth, revised ed. 1977, p. 105.

of the Imperial Academy of Arts, General Ivan Betskoi, formalised the training of artists within Russia according to the model of the French Académie des Beaux-Arts.<sup>20</sup> In the French Academy, history painting had been given high status since the seventeenth century, when the prestigious Prix-de-Rome had been established for subjects from Biblical and Classical history.<sup>21</sup> The purpose of Academic history painting was summed up by Jean-Baptiste Deperthes in 1818:

...the art of composing scenes by selecting from among the finest and greatest natural features and presenting characters whose action, by recalling an historical event or conjuring up an ideal subject, is such as to excite lively interest in the spectator, evoke noble sentiments or spur his imagination.<sup>22</sup>

This belief provided moral justification for the pre-eminent position of history painting within the hierarchies of genre set up by the Academies of Europe.

When artists depicted Classical subjects, the moral lessons that were highlighted were intended to have universal application. For example, Fedor Bruni's The Death of Camilla, Sister of Horatius (1824, Russian Museum, fig. 21), shows the Roman hero pointing contemptuously at his sister, whom he has stabbed for grieving for her lover, an enemy of Rome whom he has killed. Bruni depicted the wounded woman sentimentally, but she is languid rather than in real agony. In Academic history painting of this period, the concept of idealisation constrained the depiction of suffering.<sup>23</sup> This is in contrast with later nineteenth century works by the Peredvizhniki, such as Nikolai Ge's Petr I

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<sup>20</sup>A. Bird, A History of Russian Painting, Oxford, 1987, p. 47.

<sup>21</sup>A. Boime, The Academy and French Painting in the Nineteenth Century, Oxford, 1971, p. 19.

<sup>22</sup>J.-B. Deperthes, Théorie de Paysage, Paris, 1818, p. 210, quoted ibid., p. 140.

<sup>23</sup>See Honour, Neo-Classicism, pp. 146-50, on the treatment of death in Neo-Classical art.

interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof (1871, Tret'yakov Gallery, fig. 78; see Chapter 4), in which psychological and physical anguish are vividly conveyed. At the same time, the heroic figure of Horatius, placed in the centre of the canvas, emphasises the stern moral of the piece: the supremacy of patriotic values over domestic allegiances, and of the masculine over the feminine.

When painters tackled subjects from the history of their own country, the selection of inspiring subjects was even more important. The need to assert a sense of national identity demanded the creation or affirmation of national myths - the stories and heroes of a nation's past which embodied its self-image and cultural values. In Russia, this acquired particular significance, because of the cultural schism caused by Petr I's reforms. Academic art was official art, supported by the State and dependent on Court and aristocratic patronage.<sup>24</sup> The Western culture which it represented had been imported by the Court. Artists were graded as the lowest class of civil servants (Fourteenth Rank), with the possibility of being promoted to the Tenth Rank on gaining the title of Academician<sup>25</sup> (Nikolai I amended these original regulations in 1840, replacing them with a more complicated grading system, based upon examinations.<sup>26</sup>). According to the Table of Ranks, established by Petr I in 1722,<sup>27</sup> Civil Service rank gave the bearer hereditary privileges. These included an internal passport, as well as exemption from the poll tax and from conscription. Hence the titles of Artist and Academician were

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<sup>24</sup>Bird, A History of Russian Painting, p. 71.

<sup>25</sup>E. Valkenier, Russian Realist Art, the State and Society: The Peredvizhniki and their Tradition, Ann Arbor, 1977, p. 5.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., pp. 5-6.

<sup>27</sup>Massie, Peter the Great, pp. 761-2.

particularly valued by artists from lower middle-class and peasant backgrounds.<sup>28</sup>

Anton Losenko's Vladimir and Rogneda (1770, Russian Museum, fig. 22) is an early example of a history painting on a Russian theme. Its approach parallels that of contemporary Western history painting, which Strong has labelled "Gothick Picturesque".<sup>29</sup> The composition is comparable with John Francis Rigaud's Lady Elizabeth Grey petitioning King Edward IV for her Husband's Lands (1796, location unknown).<sup>30</sup> The poses of the main male figure in each are similar, with his hand placed on his breast in a stereotypical gesture of ardour. Like his Western counterparts, Losenko made little attempt to represent the dress and environment of early mediæval Kiev accurately. The costumes, like the exaggerated gestures of the characters, appear to be essentially derived from the theatre, with their blend of generalised 'period' and contemporary dress, and elaborate accessories.<sup>31</sup>

In the early nineteenth century, French art was the dominant influence on Russian history painting. A hybrid of Neo-Classicism and Romanticism emerged as the Academic style. Hence in Andrei Ivanov's The Brave Deed of a Kievan Youth during the Siege of Kiev by the Pechenegs in 968 (fig. 23) and The Single Combat of Mstislav the Bold with Rededya (1810 and 1812 respectively, both Russian Museum), the heroes are scantily clad in Classical-style draperies, rather than in the costume appropriate to their time and country. Where armour is depicted, it is

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<sup>28</sup>Valkenier, Russian Realist Art, pp. 11-13.

<sup>29</sup>R. Strong, And when did you last see your father? The Victorian Painter and British History, London, 1978, pp. 13-24.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 22, fig. 11; both paintings depict a triumphant warrior-king wooing a woman of the defeated enemy.

<sup>31</sup>Strong, in his discussion of Gothick Picturesque history painting, refers to "the vagaries of historical dress as introduced by David Garrick", ibid., p. 23.

based upon Roman as much as upon early mediæval forms.<sup>32</sup> This is partly a result of contemporary artistic fashion, but also an attempt to convey the universality of the heroic values depicted.<sup>33</sup> In nationalistic terms, too, it reflected a desire to elevate Russia's own heroes to the status of those of Classical antiquity. However, this form of nationalism entailed rejecting the indigenous Russian culture and artistic traditions. Just as Petr had imposed Western dress upon his nobles, so the Academic artists, working in a style borrowed from the West, disguised the traditional heroes of Russia as Greeks and Romans. It seemed necessary for a Russian to "appear like a foreigner"<sup>34</sup> in order to be taken seriously, as Repin complained later.

At the same time, Academic history painting of this period continued to display traits reminiscent of early eighteenth-century allegories. In Ivanov's The Single Combat of Mstislav the Bold with Rededya, Mstislav, a twelfth-century Prince of Novgorod, is watched over by the winged figure of Victory, holding aloft a laurel wreath. This device suggests the continuing influence of the vocabulary of Baroque symbolism. It is reminiscent of Tannauer's Petr I at the Battle of Poltava, in which the same Goddess hovers above Petr. Ivanov wrote that pictures which were "(purely) historical, without the admixture of allegorical characters or attributes" were "prosaic".<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>These paintings could be considered art pompier. J. Harding, Artistes Pompiers, London, 1979, p. 7, explains the origin of this term in the resemblance between the helmets depicted in Academic history painting and those of nineteenth-century firemen.

<sup>33</sup>However, clothing characters in Classical costume to give a historical subject universal relevance sometimes obscures identification of the subject; Honour, Neo-Classicism, p. 143.

<sup>34</sup>I. E. Repin, letter dated 18 December 1878, in I. E. Repin & V. V. Stasov, Perepisika, Moscow & Leningrad, 1949, vol. II, p. 42.

<sup>35</sup>Andrei Ivanov, quoted by M. M. Rakova, Russkaya Istoricheskaya Zhivopis' Serediny Devyatnadsatogo Veka, Moscow, 1979, p. 125.

In the 1820s, a new kind of history painting began to emerge that was concerned to depict Russian characters in Russian costume and in a recognisably Russian environment. Historical accuracy and naturalism increasingly replaced allegorical figures. Russian history painting followed the development of its Western counterpart through direct contact with European artists, or indirectly through the circulation of engravings of Western pictures.

Jean-Auguste Dominique Ingres' development of the genre historique was exemplified by pictures such as Henri IV surprised by the Spanish Ambassador while playing with his Children (1818, Petit Palais, Paris),<sup>36</sup> Don Pedro de Toledo kissing Henri IV's Sword (1820, private collection, Oslo, fig. 24),<sup>37</sup> and Paolo Malatesta and Francesca da Rimini (1819, Musée d'Angers, fig. 25). Whereas Neo-Classical history painting had focussed upon great deeds and events, Ingres - a former pupil of David - began to adopt an anecdotal approach to history. He chose fairly minor or informal incidents which were nevertheless revealing of character and the atmosphere of the period. Costumes and characters were based on antiquarian research and contemporary portraits. Even so, in some respects, Ingres remained indebted to the Neo-Classical tradition. The figures often occupy a fairly shallow picture space, derived from David's frieze-like compositions, and the colours are generally light and bright. Somewhat incongruously, the background of Don Pedro de Toledo kissing Henri IV's Sword, set in sixteenth-century France, is dominated by a row of Classical caryatids more in keeping with contemporary decorative taste. However, Ingres' choice of subjects reflected a Romantic interest in mediæval and early modern history and in the heroes of his own

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<sup>36</sup>Strong, And when did you last see your father?, p. 38, fig. 31.

<sup>37</sup>See ibid., pp. 38-9.



country.<sup>38</sup> As Strong has explained, the "style troubadour" aimed "to combine 'historical interest' and 'ideal beauty' with a renewed feeling for colour based on a study of Dutch painting",<sup>39</sup> which was becoming fashionable again.

Ingres' influence may be visible in Karl Bryullov's The Death of Inez de Castro, Morgannatic Wife of Don Pedro, the Infante of Portugal (1834, Russian Museum, fig. 29). In subject and style it is reminiscent of Ingres' Paolo Malatesta and Francesca da Rimini. Both depict the violent ends of secret mediæval love affairs.<sup>40</sup> The brilliance of colour and the almost doll-like face of Inez are reminiscent of Ingres. However, the depth of the picture-space, with its recession towards the door on the left and the bed on the right, and the attention to details of texture, as in the velvets and furs worn by the King and the murderers, are unlike the fresco-like two-dimensional emphasis in Paolo Malatesta and Francesca da Rimini. These features are more suggestive of the influence of Delaroche.

Hippolyte (Paul) Delaroche (1797-1856), the youngest artist elected to the French Academy in the nineteenth century,<sup>41</sup> eclipsed Ingres' importance as a history painter. His influence was "crucial for the climax of the Artist-Antiquarian tradition".<sup>42</sup> His detailed and dramatic compositions became well-known across Europe through engravings. Théophile Gautier and others criticised Delaroche for taking a

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<sup>38</sup>Ingres' The Vow of Louis XIII (1824, Cathedral of Nôtre Dame, Montauban), reflects a more formal and overtly nationalistic approach to a historical subject, perhaps influenced by its setting.

<sup>39</sup>Strong, And when did you last see your father?, p. 38. For Dutch influences on the Peredvizhniki, see Chapter 4.

<sup>40</sup>Inez de Castro, a Spaniard, was murdered on the orders of her father-in-law, King Afonso of Portugal, while their countries were at war; on his accession, Pedro had her corpse crowned. Francesca, wife of Giovanni Malatesta da Rimini, fell in love with her husband's brother, Paolo; Giovanni killed them both.

<sup>41</sup>Boime, The Academy and French Painting in the Nineteenth Century, p. 56.

<sup>42</sup>Strong, And when did you last see your father?, p. 40.

predominantly intellectual approach to his art.<sup>43</sup> In 1867, Théophile Thoré-Burger described him as "very intelligent..., but not at all an artist. Engaged in painting, he worked with his intellect".<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, in history painting, such an approach had its own value and significance. Delaroche's re-creations of the past, which were based, as far as possible, upon historical research, seemed far more authentic than those of his predecessors in their accumulation of meticulously observed detail.<sup>45</sup> Despite his evident interest in the material surroundings of a given period, Delaroche paid close attention to the psychology of his characters. This is evident in paintings such as The Princes in the Tower (1830, Louvre; reduction, 1831, Wallace Collection, fig. 27), and Cromwell gazing at the Body of Charles I (1831, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nimes, figs. 61 & 83), in which there is little physical activity and the whole drama of the scene is expressed in the faces of the figures. Also, despite some critics' attempts to diminish Delaroche's skill as an artist rather than as a historian, he was an accomplished colourist, who used colour carefully to counterpoint or emphasise the mood of his subject. The contrast between the livid face of the dying man and the brilliance of the interior and the courtiers' costumes in Cardinal Mazarin Dying (1830, Wallace Collection, London, fig. 26) suggests its moral theme of the transience of worldly glory.<sup>46</sup> In The Princes in the Tower, however, he used a rich, darker palette to convey the ominous atmosphere of impending murder.

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<sup>43</sup>Harding, Artistes Pompiers, p. 109.

<sup>44</sup>Quoted in the original French, ibid., loc. cit.

<sup>45</sup>For example, Cardinal Mazarin Dying, (1830, Wallace Collection, London, fig. 26).

<sup>46</sup>The same vanitas theme recurs in Delaroche's work, e.g. The Death of Queen Elizabeth (1828, Louvre), and The State Barge of Cardinal Richelieu on the Rhône, (1829, Wallace Collection), which contrasts the splendour of the scene and vitality of the courtiers with the consumptive Richelieu.

Delaroche worked in Italy during the mid-1830s, and it seems that some of the Russian painters studying there at that time may have become acquainted with him or his works directly.<sup>47</sup> Aleksandr Ivanov, for instance, writing to his father, described Delaroche as "now the most illustrious history painter among the French".<sup>48</sup> In 1857, Nikolai Ge was deeply impressed by the posthumous exhibition of his paintings in Paris,<sup>49</sup> and Delaroche's influence can be detected in some of Ge's secular history paintings (see Chapter 4). Among the Russian painters of the 1820s-30s, Karl Bryullov appears to have been particularly influenced by Delaroche as he developed as a painter of historical subjects.<sup>50</sup> Other Russian painters studied in Paris, and encountered Western history painting there. Karl Shteiben was a pupil of, among others, François-Antoine Gérard and Pierre Prud'hon,<sup>51</sup> and later settled in France. Stanislav Khlebovskii studied under Jean-Léon Gérôme,<sup>52</sup> a former pupil of Delaroche.<sup>53</sup> Later, the sculptor Mark Antokol'skii summed up the impact of Delaroche and other Salon painters on Russian Academy students, who knew their work only from photographs:

We glued ourselves to these photographs with a passion and trembling that only young hearts can possess. We especially got to love Gérôme, Meissonier, and, chiefly, Delaroche. How

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<sup>47</sup>Rakova, Russkaya Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 115. Delaroche's paintings were also known through reproductions; for example, a lithograph of The Princes in the Tower was published in L'Artiste in 1830.

<sup>48</sup>Quoted ibid., loc. cit.

<sup>49</sup>A. G. Vereshchagina, Nikolai Nikolaevich Ge, Leningrad, 1988, p. 14.

<sup>50</sup>Rakova, Russkaya Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 115.

<sup>51</sup>E. Bénézit, Dictionnaire Critique et Documentaire des Peintres, Sculpteurs, Dessinateurs et Graveurs, Paris, new ed., 1948-55, vol. 8, p. 119, "Steuben".

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., vol. 2, p. 492, "Chlebowski". Gérôme's reputation as an Orientalist, as shown in The Snake-Charmer and The Slave Market (n. d.; both Sterling & Francine Clark Institute, Williamstown, Mass.), and Muslims at Prayer in Cairo (1865, Kunsthalle, Hamburg), may explain Khlebovskii's later career as Court painter to the Ottoman Porte (see below).

<sup>53</sup>Harding, Artistes Pompiers, p. 111.

much feeling in his works, what drama, and how deeply he touched us.<sup>54</sup>

This response suggests that the French critics' view of Delaroche as an artist of purely intellectual, rather than painterly or emotional interest was not shared by Russian artists.

Literary influences had turned Western artists towards historical subjects. In Russia, history painting and the historical novel developed together in the 1820s and 1830s.<sup>55</sup> The emergence of the Russian historical novel at this time was attributable to the international popularity and influence of Sir Walter Scott, whose works were known to the Russian Romantics,<sup>56</sup> and the French novelists, Alexandre Dumas père<sup>57</sup> and Victor Hugo.<sup>58</sup> The reign of Petr I soon emerged as a popular setting for historical fiction, narrative poetry and drama. Aleksei Evstaf'ev's Alexis the Tsarevich, succinctly described by Gasiorowska as a "pseudo-historical fantastic play worshipful of Peter",<sup>59</sup> was published abroad as early as 1812.<sup>60</sup> Aleksandr Pushkin's unfinished novel The Blackamoor of Petr the Great, based upon the life of his African ancestor, Ibrahim (called 'Hannibal'), was begun in 1827. Pushkin returned to the subject of Petr five years later in The Bronze Horseman, which was not

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<sup>54</sup>"Zametki ob iskusstve", Vestnik Evropy, 1897, vol. 32, no. 2, pp. 525-6, quoted by Valkenier, Russian Realist Art, p. 54.

<sup>55</sup>Rakova, Russkaya Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 9.

<sup>56</sup> For example, in Mikhail Lermontov's Geroi Nashego Vremeni (A Hero of Our Time). Pechorin reads Shotlandskie Puritane (The Scots Puritans), a translation of Old Mortality; see M. Yu. Lermontov, Izbrannye Sochineniya, Moscow, 1983, p. 743.

<sup>57</sup>See G. K. Leontyeva (Leont'eva), Karl Briullov: Paintings, Watercolours, Drawings, Leningrad, 1990, pls. 149 & 151, for Bryullov's ink drawings illustrating Dumas' 'Musketeer' novels.

<sup>58</sup>On the origins of Russian historical fiction, see Gasiorowska, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian Fiction, pp. 30-2.

<sup>59</sup>ibid., p. 186.

<sup>60</sup>A. Eustaphie (Evstaf'ev), Reflections, notes and original anecdotes illustrating the character of Peter the Great, To which is added a tragedy in five acts entitled Alexis, the Tsarevitz, Boston, 1812.

published in full until after his death in 1837, because of censorship problems.<sup>61</sup> Aleksandr Kornilovich wrote short stories and novellas about Petr in the late 1820s. In the 1830s, Konstantin Masal'skii, and in the 1840s, Nestor Kukol'nik continued in similar vein to write novels set in Petr's reign.

In such works, Petr often appeared as a deus ex machina, the benefactor of the fictional characters, aiding the happy resolution of the plot.<sup>62</sup> At this time, as Gasiorowska has described,

Peter's fictional image was enveloped in an atmosphere of respectful awe and admiration. He appeared...like Jupiter (without...embarrassing escapades), magnificent, wisely dispensing rewards and punishments... At the same time he deigned to be kindly, delighted humble folks by visiting their homes..., wearing simple clothes of foreign design, and engaged in manual work to teach his subjects respect for labour.<sup>63</sup>

The laudatory tradition of the late eighteenth century, as exemplified by Golikov's thirty-volume The Acts of Petr the Great,<sup>64</sup> remained strong. Censorship prevented any examination of the negative aspects of Petr's character or reign. Evstaf'ev sentimentalised the official version of Tsarevich Aleksei's death.<sup>65</sup> Kornilovich's Tat'yana Boltova, 1828, a story based on "Peter's respect for lawful dispensation of justice and his readiness to forgive...a former Strelets who had lived as a fugitive for

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<sup>61</sup>A. S. Pushkin, Mednyi Vsadnik (The Bronze Horseman), Oxford, 1974, p. xxi.

<sup>62</sup>See Gasiorowska, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian Fiction, "Plot Summaries", pp. 186-90.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>64</sup>See Chapter 1.

<sup>65</sup>Gasiorowska, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian Fiction, p. 165; see Chapter 4 for an examination of the difficulties which this episode presented.

thirteen years",<sup>66</sup> belies the ruthlessness with which the 1698 Strel'tsy mutiny was actually crushed.<sup>67</sup>

The ideological outlook and personality of Nikolai I (r. 1825-55) were crucial factors in shaping Petr's image in art and literature. Nikolai's resistance to reform was encapsulated in the doctrine of Official Nationality:<sup>68</sup> Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationality - in his own words, "...faith, tsar and fatherland".<sup>69</sup> Official historians, such as Pogodin and Ustryalov, interpreted Russian history according to these values, and particular prominence was given to Petr I. As Riasanovsky has explained:

The entire history of Russia foreshadowed and justified Nicholas I's regime, but its direct line of descent stemmed from Peter the Great. The proponents of Official Nationality, from the monarch himself downward, admired, almost worshipped, the titanic emperor.<sup>70</sup>

Count Kankrin's suggestion was typical:

out of gratitude, we should change our general tribal name of Slavs to the name of the creator of the empire and of its well-being. Russia should be called Petrovia, and we Petrovians..<sup>71</sup>

The journalist Faddei Bulgarin commented that this was "An unusual idea, but an essentially correct one".<sup>72</sup>

Nikolai's personal commitment to the Petrine cult which he encouraged cannot be underestimated.<sup>73</sup> It went beyond preserving

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<sup>66</sup>Gasiorowska, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian Fiction, p. 187.

<sup>67</sup>See Chapter 6.

<sup>68</sup>As proclaimed by Uvarov, the Minister for Public Instruction in 1833; see Riasanovsky, Russia and the West in the Teaching of the Slavophiles, p. 9.

<sup>69</sup>Quoted by Riasanovsky, Nicholas I and Official Nationality, p. 5.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., p. 105, and Rakova, Russkaya Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 118.

<sup>71</sup>F. Bulgarin, Vospominaniya, St. Petersburg, 1846-9, vol. I, pp. 200-1, quoted by Riasanovsky, Nicholas I and Official Nationality, p. 139.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., loc. cit.

<sup>73</sup>It seems to have begun in his childhood, with the reading of Golikov's works; Riasanovsky, Nicholas I and Official Nationality, p. 113.

Petrine relics as his predecessors had done (nineteenth-century engravings show the accumulation of Petrine memorabilia in the Petr Gallery of the Hermitage: not only Rastrelli's wax effigy, but also Petr's dog and horse, stuffed (fig. 30)). Nikolai was extremely conscious of being Petr's direct descendant and his great-great-grandson: Petr's image as Emperor and Autocrat reflected on Nikolai and the Romanov-Gottorp dynasty as a whole. Nikolai identified very intensely with Petr. The keeper at Petr's small palace of Monplaisir told the artist Nikolai Ge in 1870:

[Emperor Nikolai Pavlovich] would stay here for a long time, standing by the window on to the garden, wearing Petr I's dressing-gown and night-cap. He said he very much wished he could enter that time.<sup>74</sup>

In 1831, Nikolai I forbade publication of Pogodin's eulogistic play, Petr I because:

The person of Emperor Peter the Great must be for every Russian an object of veneration and of love: to bring it onto the stage would be almost sacrilege, and therefore entirely improper.<sup>75</sup>

The Academy was effectively under Nikolai's personal supervision. He regarded its students "not as creative artists but as his employees to whom he assigned tasks and commanded at will".<sup>76</sup> Moreover, from 1843 onward, the President of the Academy was a member of the imperial family.<sup>77</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that Academic artists depicted Petr I as "an object of veneration and of love" in accordance with

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<sup>74</sup>Quoted by V. V. Stasov, Nikolai Nikolaevich Ge, ego Zhizn', Proizvedeniya i Perepiska, Moscow, 1904, p. 230.

<sup>75</sup>Quoted by Riasanovsky, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought, p. 108.

<sup>76</sup>Valkenier, Russian Realist Art, p. 5.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

Nikolai's wishes. Academic history painting exalted the image of the Ideal:

The Ideal is an absolute example for imitation, the personified incarnation of human virtues. The Hero was the Ideal of the Classical picture, as Petr I was in art of the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries.<sup>78</sup>

In Nikolai I's reign, artists based their paintings of Petr on eighteenth-century accounts of his life and deeds, and on his popularity as a hero of historical fiction.

Official interest in Petrine subjects was most clearly shown by a competition organised by the Council of the Academy in 1837. This was sponsored by Anatolii Demidov, Prince San Donato, who, besides being a Gentleman of the Bedchamber at Court, was an Honorary Fellow of the Academy of Arts.<sup>79</sup> His interest in history painting was already known: in 1827 he had commissioned Karl Bryullov to paint The Last Day of Pompeii (1833, Russian Museum, fig. 28).<sup>80</sup> The theme for the competition was "Petr I on one of those occasions when he was considering one of the gigantic and profound ideas by which he raised our beautiful Fatherland to the supreme level of glorious power".<sup>81</sup>

The competition was advertised in the newspaper Sankt-Peterburgskie Vedomosti. Russian artists working in Italy were informed through the Vatican's Chargé d'Affaires.<sup>82</sup> However, few of the artists who chose to enter were particularly prominent. As Rakova observes, "none of the most powerful artists - Bryullov, Bruni and Basin"

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<sup>78</sup>A. G. Vereshchagina, Khudozhnik, Vremya, Istoriya, Leningrad, 1973, p. 63.

<sup>79</sup>Rakova, Russkaya Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 118.

<sup>80</sup>Leontyeva (Leont'eva), Karl Briullov, p. 208.

<sup>81</sup>A. V. Kornilova, ed., Aleksei Gavrilovich Venetsianov. Stat'i, Pis'ma, Sovremenniki o Khudozhnike, Leningrad, 1980, p. 301, n. 1 to doc. 28.

<sup>82</sup>Rakova, Russkaya Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 122.



participated.<sup>83</sup> It is not clear why: possibly the theme proposed did not appeal to them,<sup>84</sup> or perhaps they were occupied with other commissions. Leont'eva suggests that these artists, trained in traditional Academic history painting, may have sensed that "it was impossible to paint a historical theme according to the old style, although nobody quite knew how to do it in a new way".<sup>85</sup> By the "new way" she may mean the research-based style represented by Delaroche.

The final judging took place in December 1838 for two prizes of 8,000 rubles, awarded by Demidov.<sup>86</sup> Members of the jury were nominated by the Academy and Demidov. The Academy's panel included prominent artists like Fedor Tolstoi, Vasilii Shebuev, Karl Bryullov and Fedor Bruni, while Demidov's consisted of Court officials, such as Counts Benkendorf and Litta, and Prince Golitsyn.<sup>87</sup> The six finalists were Andrei Ivanov, Aleksei Venetsianov, Georgii (Georg Rudolf) Karing (a Latvian working in Berlin), and the Academicians Ivan Levshin, Vasilii Demidov,<sup>88</sup> and G. Gyune or Geine.<sup>89</sup> Venetsianov's painting, Petr the Great. The Founding of St. Petersburg (1838, Tret'yakov Gallery, fig. 31), seems to be the only entry known today.<sup>90</sup> Indeed, apart from Andrei Ivanov, Venetsianov is the only competitor who is still considered artistically significant.

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<sup>83</sup>Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>84</sup>Bryullov certainly was inclined to contest some official commissions. When asked by Nikolai I, "Paint for me Ivan the Terrible and his wife in a Russian izba, kneeling before an icon, while through the window show the conquest of Kazan", Bryullov suggested painting the siege of Pskov by the Poles in 1581 instead. Nikolai accepted the change, but the painting remained unfinished; Leontyeva (Leont'eva), Karl Briullov, p. 33.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>86</sup>Kornilova, ed., Venetsianov. Stat'i, Pis'ma, Sovremenniki, p. 301, n. 1 to doc. 28.

<sup>87</sup>Rakova, Russkaya Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 123.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., pp. 122-3.

<sup>89</sup>Possibly descended from Andreas Kaspar Gyune (Hüne or Hühne), d. 1813; see Zhivopis' XVIII-nachalo XX veka. Katalog, GRM, Leningrad, 1980, p. 102, no. 1586.

<sup>90</sup>Rakova, Russkaya Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', pp. 122-3.

Venetsianov had first expressed interest in depicting a Petrine subject in 1808. The St. Petersburg Censorship Committee had banned his satirical magazine, Zhurnala Karikatur, and this had left him facing "total ruin",<sup>91</sup> since he had spent the subscriptions collected (over 800 rubles) on materials. Venetsianov attempted to save the situation by requesting permission "to publish a magazine, the contents of which would be taken from anecdotes of Petr the Great and from Russian history".<sup>92</sup> Aleksandr I and the St. Petersburg Censorship Committee agreed to this proposal,<sup>93</sup> but for some reason the project was abandoned. Venetsianov turned to satirising the French during the Napoleonic Wars.<sup>94</sup>

For the competition, Venetsianov chose a subject which accorded with the set theme, but was difficult to dramatise as a painting. Petr the Great. The Founding of St. Petersburg is extremely static. It avoids the melodramatic tendencies of much early nineteenth-century history painting, being based on eighteenth-century symbolic portraits, in which subjects were depicted with attributes, much like a secular saint, to relate the image to specific events or activities. Indeed, Venetsianov's Petr in features and pose owes something to Aleksei Antropov's Petr I (1770, Russian Museum), or to Antropov's source, Nattier's idealised portrait (fig. 10).<sup>95</sup> The handling of space and perspective is weak. The frontal plane is occupied by Petr and a thin-faced man in a wig, probably

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<sup>91</sup>Letter from Prince Aleksei Kurakin, Minister of the Interior, to Count Petr Zavadovskii, Minister of Education, 30 January 1808, in Kornilova, ed., Venetsianov. Stat'i, Pis'ma, Sovremenniki, p. 150.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., loc. cit.

<sup>93</sup>Extract from the Protocols of the St. Petersburg Censorship Committee, 3 March 1808, in ibid., pp. 150-1.

<sup>94</sup>Kornilova, "Zhiznennyi Put' A. G. Venetsianova v Pis'makh, Vospominaniyakh, Dokumentakh", in ibid., pp. 11-12.

<sup>95</sup>The extent of Nattier's idealisation of Petr is apparent if one compares his portrait with contemporaneous portraits by de Moor (engraved by Houbraken; fig. 85), Tannauer (fig. 18) in the Hermitage, and the waxworks by Rastrelli (Hermitage, figs. 19 & 20), based upon Petr's life-mask (Russian Museum).

Menshikov, and beyond there is little real sense of recession. Most of the bodies and feet of the courtiers on the right are obscured by the shrubs and trees, which makes it difficult to judge their exact position. The space they occupy is flattened, like a theatrical backcloth. In a sense, this is precisely what it is. Petr is the most important and the most convincingly three-dimensional character depicted. The surroundings provide a historical and geographical context, and an element of narrative, but only as a foil to Petr.

Petr's act of founding a city is conveyed by the presence of charts, to one of which he points with dividers. Nevertheless, he does not gaze at the map, but directly at the spectator. This seems to emphasise the fact that that this picture is not a naturalistic re-creation of a historical event, but a symbolic representation of it. This method of depicting the foundation of a place or building was an established artistic convention before Petr's time. It was used in one of the Versailles tapestries woven by the Le Blond workshop, after Charles Le Brun, Louis XIV's Foundation of Les Invalides in 1674 (fig. 32): it is not known whether Venetsianov was aware of this work at all. Le Brun included allegorical figures, such as Minerva and Fame, blaring her trumpet, whereas Venetsianov stressed the symbolic significance of his scene by placing in the clearing the 'Thunder Rock', the pedestal of Falconet's Bronze Horseman, and was actually found near Lakhta.<sup>96</sup> By including it in his picture, Venetsianov was clearly linking St. Petersburg, Petr's lasting monument, with the memorial which embodied his official heroic image, and punning visually on Petr's name, meaning rock.

What is, perhaps, most interesting about Petr the Great. The Founding of St. Petersburg is the fact that Venetsianov researched Petr's

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<sup>96</sup>See Chapter 1.

costume - his Preobrazhenskii Guards uniform - from surviving examples of his clothing. He wrote to Prince Petr Volkonskii in January 1838:

His Majesty's artist Venetsianov, engaged in a picture about the life of Petr the Great, at Mr. Demidov's suggestion, requests permission to study His [late] Majesty's clothes which are preserved in Marly at Peterhof, and to make some drawings of them.<sup>97</sup>

Permission was granted, on condition that he did not remove the costume from the house.<sup>98</sup> This represents the beginning of that striving for authenticity, which became increasingly prominent in nineteenth-century history painting. Later, artists such as Nikolai Ge and Il'ya Repin went to great lengths to ensure that their characters were accurately costumed (see Chapters 4 and 5).

The 1838 competition also demonstrated, as Rakova has remarked, "the tenacity of the Classical method in the composition of history paintings".<sup>99</sup> Of the seven pictures exhibited in the final round of the competition, only Karing, Gyune and Demidov's entries seem to have approached the theme in a naturalistic, rather than allegorical fashion. Unfortunately, they can only be judged from contemporary descriptions, and some attributions are uncertain. However, according to Andrei Ivanov, Karing's picture, Petr I on Zaandam Wharf, fashioning a Rudder, was the best painting shown.<sup>100</sup>

The jury awarded first place to Levshin, although, apparently, the sponsor, Anatolii Demidov, was reluctant, because he had hoped that more major painters would have competed.<sup>101</sup> Levshin's victory reflected the

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<sup>97</sup>In Kornilova, ed., Venetsianov. Stat'i, Pis'ma, Sovremenniki, p. 180.

<sup>98</sup>Order of Prince Petr Volkonskii to Lieutenant-General Eikhen, dated 30 January 1838, ibid., loc. cit.

<sup>99</sup>Rakova, Russkaya Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 125.

<sup>100</sup>ibid., p. 123, although this seems somewhat inconsistent with his expressed opinions on non-allegorical history painting (see below).

<sup>101</sup>ibid., loc. cit.

Academy's continuing support for semi-allegorical history painting. His picture was described:

Petr the Great, standing by a rock on which lies a map of the Gulf of Finland, points into the distance, where, between the clouds, the Peter and Paul Fortress and the monument to Petr the Great erected by Ekaterina II [i.e. the Bronze Horseman] can be seen. The shades of the Tsar and of singers gaze down from the heavens.<sup>102</sup>

The symbolic content was clearly far more important than any attempt at historical accuracy. Levshin may have been attempting to show "one of [Petr's] gigantic and profound ideas", as the competition specified, and its continuing significance. Hence, the Fortress and the Bronze Horseman were shown as existing simultaneously with Petr's decision to found St. Petersburg, and Petr himself was depicted as both a living person and as an immortal presence in Heaven. In this respect the work resembles Andrei Ivanov's The Single Combat of Mstislav the Bold with Rededya (1812) in its juxtaposition of the historical with the allegorical.

Andrei Ivanov's own contribution to the competition continued in this vein, being even more symbolic than historical. As mentioned above, Ivanov considered naturalistic history painting, without allegorical components, "prosaic", although this seems inconsistent with his praise of Karing's painting in Demidov's competition. His son Aleksandr disagreed,<sup>103</sup> regarding the use of allegory as a symptom of "artistic decline".<sup>104</sup> Nevertheless, Andrei Ivanov maintained his faith in the style of painting in which he had been trained, regardless of new

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<sup>102</sup>p. N. Petrov, ed., Sbornik Materialov dlva Istorii Imperatorskoi Sankt-Peterburgskoi Akademii Khudozhestv za sto let ee sushchestvovaniya, St. Petersburg, 1864-6, vol. 2, p. 379, quoted ibid., p. 122.

<sup>103</sup>Aleksandr Ivanov's belief in the importance of archæological research was reflected in his careful tracings of Ancient Egyptian paintings; ibid., pp. 161-7 & 169-70.

<sup>104</sup>As quoted by his father, Russkii Khudozhestvennyi Arkhiv, 1892, no.s 5-6, p. 331, quoted ibid., p. 125.

developments: "If allegory is not now in fashion, then, of course, it must be used with restraint, but not forsaken completely...".<sup>105</sup>

His description of his painting for the 1838 competition about Petr I does not suggest restraint in its use of allegory:

A vast circular building, decorated with niches containing...statues, is depicted. This building is our Fatherland, in which, in appropriate places, important men have their monuments, ...among which is the monument to Minin and Pozharskii, after Martos' model.<sup>106</sup> In the middle of this huge building there sits on a pedestal a colossal statue of Russia, to which...each Russian offers a sacrifice... In one of the entrances to this building an important event takes place - Petr destroys harmful Prejudice, which is personified as the ruler of the popular mind, which he holds prisoner..., not giving it the freedom to study and think. This figure is in appearance an old man, still robust, who wears on his head an iron crown with a keyhole, and on his breast a pectoral like that of a Jewish High Priest, but with the emblem of venom-spitting serpents on it.<sup>107</sup>

Petr was to be depicted sitting at a workbench, having overthrown Prejudice.<sup>108</sup> It seems from the content that Andrei shared his son's exalted faith in Petr as Enlightener. In a letter written six years previously, Aleksandr had apostrophised God: "With Petr the Great You began our Enlightenment". He claimed that Petr, "with the words of Jesus, with words of great truth", had saved Russia from "the scribes, the Pharisees and the Sadducees".<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>105</sup>Ibid., loc. cit.

<sup>106</sup>The monument in Red Square, Moscow, now outside the Cathedral of St. Vasillii the Holy Fool.

<sup>107</sup>Russkii Khudozhestvennyi Arkhiv, 1893, p. 347, quoted by Rakova, Russkaya Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 127.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid., loc. cit.

<sup>109</sup>Kniga chernovikov pisem khudozhnika Prof. A. A. Ivanova za 1832-6 gg., Dept. of MSS, GRM, Fond 24, Ed. khr. 13, p. 170. I am indebted to Andrew Curtin, a fellow-member of the Study Group on Eighteenth-Century Russia, for use of the relevant extracts from his transcript.

Since Andrei Ivanov's painting is lost, it is impossible to judge whether he succeeded in expressing visually such a complex allegory. The description suggests that it had little in common with the efforts of artists like Bryullov and Venetsianov to introduce a greater measure of naturalism and physical authenticity to history painting.

Even in these more naturalistic history paintings, Academic artists depicted Petr I as the embodiment of various aspects of the heroic archetype.<sup>110</sup> His image as a national hero was already firmly established in literature, as sanctioned by the ruling Emperor and monitored by his censors. The artists shaped Petr's life, from his childhood to his last months, in accordance with this image. It is possible to create a visual biography of Petr from Academic paintings and other official nineteenth-century depictions. While the pictures adhere in the main to attested historical incidents, Petr's idealisation is apparent in the emphasis upon some areas of his life at the expense of others.

The childhood of the archetypal Hero is usually remarkable. He is marked out from the beginning as special and significant in some way, perhaps by "unusual strength or cleverness".<sup>111</sup> Petr I was the healthiest and longest-lived of Aleksei Mikhailovich's six sons. It was claimed that he could walk at six months.<sup>112</sup> His rate of growth was such that, in 1683, Englebert Kampfer took him for a sixteen-year-old when he was only eleven.<sup>113</sup> His strength and precocity were further emphasised

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<sup>110</sup>See J. L. Henderson, "Heroes and hero makers", in C. G. Jung & M-L von Franz, ed., Man and his Symbols, London, 1964, pp. 101-9, and B. Butler, The Myth of the Hero, London, 1979, for more general discussion of this concept.

<sup>111</sup>Butler, The Myth of the Hero, p. 29.

<sup>112</sup>Schuyler, Peter the Great, vol. I, p. 19.

<sup>113</sup>Hughes, Sophia, Regent of Russia, p. 93.

in comparison with his disabled half-brother Ivan V, with whom he shared the throne until 1696.<sup>114</sup>

Petr Basin (1793-1877) illustrated Petr's childhood strength in one of a series of pencil sketches made in the late 1830s - early 1840s for an unidentified, uncompleted official project.<sup>115</sup> Petr I, as an Infant, surrounded by his Tutors in Boyar Costume, finds a Sabre among a Merchant's Gifts (Russian Museum, fig. 33) contains inscriptions which indicate that the subject is derived from Jacob von Stählin Storcksburg's Original Anecdotes of Peter the Great, a popular collection of reminiscences published in 1785, and translated into several languages. The incident depicted is set in 1675, the year of his father's death, when Petr was three years old.<sup>116</sup> Rakova has argued that this sketch, like the others in the series, retains the character of an illustration, and treats a historical subject "as a genre scene, without romantic rhetoric".<sup>117</sup> However, it is noticeable that sketches by Academic artists retained a greater degree of vigour than did their finished paintings. By its very nature, Petr I, as an Infant, finds a Sabre is an extremely melodramatic subject which lends itself to "romantic rhetoric". Petr is presented to the spectator as an infant prodigy, fitted for leadership from his earliest years, Polevoi's "Destiny's Chosen One". His small figure is the focus of attention, placed just to the right of centre. His pose - the sword raised in his right hand, his left arm extended, and feet apart - and upward gaze are a childish prefiguring of the grandiose gestures of adult heroes. His attendants' expressions range from the anxiety of his nurse on the right

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<sup>114</sup>ibid., loc. cit.

<sup>115</sup>Rakova, Russkaya Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 134. The album of sketches is numbered A6/11 (Russian Museum), the drawings inventoried as R-11383-11388 (ibid., pp. 221-2, n. 122).

<sup>116</sup>ibid., pp. 221-2, n. 122.

<sup>117</sup>ibid., p. 136.



to the astonishment of the man - perhaps the merchant - on the left. The date ascribed to the incident suggests that, despite Fedor III's accession and the frail Ivan's claims, Petr's early gifts and assertiveness already mark him as Tsar Aleksei's most worthy successor. In 1871, Grigorii Myasoedov's The Grandfather of the Russian Fleet (Arts Museum of Uzbekistan, Tashkent, fig. 74) treated Petr as youthful prodigy and as bearer of culture. Although it was shown in the first exhibition of the Association for Travelling Art Exhibitions, which had broken with the Academy, it nevertheless presented Petr's official image in the Academic manner (see Chapter 4).

During his youth, the Hero's life may be in danger,<sup>118</sup> often from rival members of his own family.<sup>119</sup> According to the official legend of Petr I, this was most clearly illustrated during the Strel'tsy revolt of May 1682, which followed the death of Fedor III. The revolt stemmed from a pay dispute during Fedor's reign, and was triggered by fears for Ivan and Petr's safety on the symbolically significant anniversary of the death of Tsarevich Dmitrii Ivanovich.<sup>120</sup> A number of people against whom the Strel'tsy held grievances were murdered; these included some of Petr's maternal relations, and Fedor's Western doctor who was blamed for his death. In its aftermath, Tsarevna Sof'ya, one of Ivan's older sisters, became regent.<sup>121</sup> In early nineteenth-century historical writings,

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<sup>118</sup>Butler, The Myth of the Hero, Chapter 4, pp. 67-96, on the motif of the expulsion and testing of the Hero.

<sup>119</sup>Ibid., pp. 37-9, for the Classical examples of Perseus, threatened by his grandfather, and Heracles, whose enemy was his stepmother Hera, & pp. 127-8. In the Russian folktale, The Firebird, Tsarevich Ivan is murdered by his brothers, but resurrected by his animal helpers; see B. Zvorykin, J. Onassis, ed., The Firebird and other Russian Fairy Tales, New Jersey, 1978, pp. 24-6.

<sup>120</sup>Ivan IV's youngest son, d. at Uglich in 1591, apparently accidentally, but traditionally believed to have been murdered by Boris Godunov's agents. He was canonised as a martyr in 1606 in an attempt to halt the emergence of further False Dmitriis; see Riasanovsky, A History of Russia, pp. 155-6 & 164.

however, the revolt was regarded as a deliberate plot by Sof'ya to seize power from her stepmother's family, with suspicions that Petr's death may have been intended. This view has since been undermined by modern research;<sup>122</sup> however, it is in the context of the earlier interpretation that these paintings must be understood.

Petr the Great in Childhood, saved by his Mother from the Fury of the Strel'tsy (1827, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Valenciennes; copy, 1830, Russian Museum, figs. 34-5), by Karl Shteiben,<sup>123</sup> presents one of the most dramatic, if historically inaccurate, images of the 1682 revolt. Shteiben invoked royal and religious symbolism by setting his picture in the Cathedral of the Dormition in the Kremlin, where coronations traditionally took place. Natal'ya Naryshkina hurls herself in front of her son - a golden-haired child with a defiant and commanding look - and points to an icon of the Mother of God of Vladimir. The sword-wielding Strelets recoils. The pairing of Natal'ya and Petr with the Mother and Son in the icon reflects the identification of Petr with Christ, as Russia's Messiah, which is found in late eighteenth-century literature.<sup>124</sup> Indeed, the poet Aleksandr Sumarokov addressed Petr's birthplace thus:

Russian Bethlehem: the Kolomenskoe village,  
Which brought Peter into the World!  
You are the source and the beginning of our happiness;

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<sup>121</sup>See L. A. J. Hughes, "Sofiya Alekseyevna and the Moscow Rebellion of 1682", Slavonic and East European Review, London, vol. 63, no. 4, October 1985, pp. 518-39, and Sophia, Regent of Russia, pp. 58-71.

<sup>122</sup>Hughes, Sophia, Regent of Russia, pp. 55-60.

<sup>123</sup>Shteiben (Charles Guillaume Steuben), 1788-1856, the son of a German officer in the Russian army, studied and worked in both Russia and France. He received the Légion d'Honneur for his help in creating the Musée d'Histoire at Versailles; Bénézit, Dictionnaire Critique et Documentaire, vol. 8, p. 119, "Steuben".

<sup>124</sup>Also compare fig. 15, depicting Anne of Austria and the Dauphin Louis as Madonna and Child.

In you Russian glory began to shine.<sup>125</sup>

Shteiben's painting displays both the strengths and weaknesses of Academic history painting of the early Romantic period. It is well-finished, with a dynamic composition and a vivid palette. The subject is easily understood, even without the explicit title. However, the characterisations and gestures have a theatrical quality which almost amounts to caricature. The Strelets, indeed, is a stereotyped image of Old Russian ferocity with long beard and wild eyes, who recurs in pro-Petrine depictions of the 1682 revolt well into the late nineteenth century and beyond.<sup>126</sup> Shteiben manipulated the relative scale of his figures for dramatic effect. Natal'ya is larger than expected in relation to the male figures, even to the fallen Strelets who occupies the foreground and, by reason of perspective, ought to appear bigger. However, it must be noted that, like her son, she is said to have been "of greater than average height".<sup>127</sup>

The costumes in Petr the Great saved by his Mother suggests that Shteiben had some knowledge of traditional Russian dress. He did not depict Natal'ya as a widow, in the dark mantle and low, closed cap which she wore in portraits from the 1680s-90s (fig. 71). Instead, he painted her as a Tsaritsa in a scarlet, white and gold ceremonial costume. These colours dominate the whole painting, with the red of the Strelet's tunic, the red and gold of Petr's costume and the icon, and the gold tones of the

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<sup>125</sup>A. P. Sumarokov, "Rossiiskii Vifleem", Polnoe Sobranie Vsekh Sochinenii, Moscow, 1787, vol. VI, pp. 302-3, quoted by Riasanovsky, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought, p. 28.

<sup>126</sup>See engravings after Medvedev, The Strel'tsy Revolt. The Strel'tsy disturb the peace of Tsaritsa Natal'ya Kirillovna (1876), Zinov'ev, The Death of Boyar Matveev (1880), and Korzukhin, The Killing of Ivan Kirillovich Naryshkin (1903). V. S. Kemenov, V. I. Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis' 1870-1890, 2nd ed., Moscow, 1987, pp. 130-1.

<sup>127</sup>According to a contemporary description by Jacob Reutenfels, quoted by Hughes, Sophia, Regent of Russia, p. 37.

Cathedral interior. The sleeveless form of Natal'ya's sarafan, exposing her blouse's full sleeves, and the shape of her embroidered kokoshnik (headdress) owe more to contemporary folk costume than to seventeenth-century Court dress as shown in portraits.<sup>128</sup> Nevertheless, this is extremely effective visually. The bold sweep of her white-sleeved right arm, protecting Petr, draws the spectator's gaze immediately to the faces of mother and son, while her left arm directs it towards the icon.

Vasilii Demidov, a pupil of Bryullov,<sup>129</sup> took a less flamboyant approach to the same events in Tsaritsa Natal'ya Kirillovna with Tsarevich Petr on the Red Staircase (1848, Russian Museum, fig. 37). In this painting, the mutineers have already been pacified and kneel for mercy before the child Tsar, his mother, and the Patriarch. The overall composition is very reliant on Vasilii Shebuev's drawing The Election of Mikhail Fedorovich to the Tsardom (n. d., Russian Museum, fig. 36), with the Tsar and his mother on the right, raised above the supplicants by a series of low steps in the porch of a building. It does not resemble the architecture of the actual staircase (called the Red, i.e. Beautiful or Ceremonial Staircase, demolished in the 1930s), a long, ornate external stair down the side of the Facetted Chamber in the Moscow Kremlin.<sup>130</sup> Similarly, the architectural details in the background do not correspond with the location of the Red Staircase in the Kremlin. A small, plain church, in front of a wall with a gate tower, occupies the place of the many-domed Cathedral of the Annunciation. Demidov's setting fancifully

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<sup>128</sup>Ye. Moiseyenko (E. Moiseenko), "Folk Costume", Russian Style 1700-1920: Court and Country Dress from the Hermitage, Barbican Art Gallery, London, 1987, p. 48, notes that the sarafan hung from shoulder straps, as depicted by Shteiben, was a later development; originally it was a high-necked garment (this design was retained in more remote parts of Russia; see fig. 137).

<sup>129</sup>Rakova, Russkaya Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 123.

<sup>130</sup>See A. Voyce, The Moscow Kremlin: Its History, Architecture and Art Treasures, Berkeley & Los Angeles, 1954, pp. 56-7 and fig. 42, an eighteenth-century engraving of the Red Staircase, between pp. 64-5.

evokes the past, but does not depict it accurately. The painting is subdued in tone, soft browns predominating, with the chief characters emphasised in blue and white, again in contrast with Shteiben's approach.

Demidov shows Petr, despite his extreme youth, as a figure of authority, extending his right hand in a gesture of pardon. At the same time, the fact that Petr is still a child is emphasised by the way his left hand is clasping his mother's. Ivan's inferior position, in terms of Petrine iconography,<sup>131</sup> is indicated as Petr partly blocks him from view as he gazes up at his stepmother. Natal'ya's rôle is somewhat different from Shteiben's painting, in which her dynamic form dominated the composition. Here, as is more usual for a female character in a history painting on a Petrine theme,<sup>132</sup> she is a subordinate figure. However, in both paintings, she is still the ideal mother, whether risking her own life for her child, or standing behind him, head meekly bowed, acknowledging his authority. In these rôles she is also the Tsar's ideal loyal subject. Like the Mother of God, Natal'ya's status is defined by her relationship to her fatherless son. Shteiben's visual association of her with Mary in Petr the Great saved by his Mother is by Demidov, who gives her the appearance of a sweet-faced Western Virgin, robed in blue and white rather than the Orthodox imperial purple. Demidov amplifies the theme of the sanctity of motherhood by including among the supplicants a woman holding up a baby, presumably to strengthen her pleas for its father's life.

These paintings succeeded in conveying a pro-Petrine interpretation of the 1682 revolt by appealing to the spectator's

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<sup>131</sup>Despite his disabilities, Ivan nevertheless represented the senior line of the Romanovs.

<sup>132</sup>See Chapter 5 for a discussion of the rôle of women in depictions of the Petrine era.

sensibilities. These depictions of a child and his young mother braving brutal soldiers reinforced the concept of the autocrat as the sole human defender of order in the face of chaos. They did not suggest that the revolt was a result of weakness in the autocracy, because Petr and Ivan were minors. Rather, it was implied that, even when the Tsar's person was weak, he was still to be obeyed because of his divinely-appointed rank. Hence Shteiben's *Natal'ya* invokes the icon of Christ and His Mother, and Demidov's Petr, although a child, commands the respect of the repentant Strel'tsy and their families.

The emergence of these paintings in the reign of Nikolai I certainly reflects his cult of Petr as part of the vocabulary of Official Nationality. It may also be connected with Nikolai's reaction to the Decembrist revolt of 1825, led by army officers demanding a constitution, and also fuelled by confusion over the succession following Aleksandr I's death.<sup>133</sup> Shteiben's first version of Petr the Great saved by his Mother (Musée de Beaux-Arts, Valenciennes) was painted only two years later, while the second (Russian Museum) dates from 1830, the year of European revolutions which Nikolai I was determined to resist. Demidov's painting, perhaps significantly, also dates from a 'Year of Revolution', 1848. Given the subject's melodramatic appeal, it is perhaps unsurprising that the 1682 revolt and the image of Petr as the threatened Child-Hero recurred throughout the century. However, Nikolai Dmitriev-Orenburgskii's treatment of it in his entry for the Large Gold Medal competition, The Strel'tsy Revolt (1862, Taganrog Picture Gallery, fig. 70), shows traces of newer currents which emerged in history painting in the 1860s. It marks

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<sup>133</sup>Although Konstantin Pavlovich, older than Nikolai, had resigned his rights to the throne; see Chapter 1.

a transitional phase in depictions of the Petrine era, and is discussed in Chapter 3.

Another aspect of Petr's heroic rôle is as an active adult combating treachery. There was a potentially serious problem inherent in depicting Petr subduing domestic opponents: some of them were also members of the royal house. During the reign of Nikolai I, the study and depiction of particularly sensitive subjects, such as the trial and death of Tsarevich Aleksei, was impossible because of censorship.<sup>134</sup> Hence, even in Academic paintings that supported Petr, it was impossible to depict either the Tsarevna Sof'ya or Aleksei,<sup>135</sup> despite the significance of such family antagonists in the archetypal Hero's life. As Butler states:

[They] are a way of stating the essential identity of the hero and his enemies. They are not different in kind, only in viewpoint depending on which side are the affections of the mythmaker and his listeners.<sup>136</sup>

This may help to explain the ambiguous attitudes of critics and spectators and, perhaps, even of the artists themselves, to later paintings about these characters (see Chapters 4 and 5).

For Academic history painting, however, Petr's adversaries had to be unambiguous enemies of reform. The Strel'tsy, and especially the Old Believers among them, were safe targets for Petr's righteous anger, as they were actively disruptive in their rejection of his concept of Tsar and State. A popular incident was Petr's arrest of the Strel'tsy Colonel Ivan Tsykler (of German origin - Zickler or perhaps Ziegler) and the Boyars

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<sup>134</sup>A. G. Vereshchagina, Istoricheskaya Kartina v Russkom Iskusstve. Shestidesyatye gody XIX veka, Moscow, 1990, p. 83.

<sup>135</sup>Both characters had established official images in history and fiction, but only emerged in history painting later in the century. See Chapter 5 on images of Sof'ya before Repin.

<sup>136</sup>Butler, The Myth of the Hero, p. 127. See Chapter 4 for the sympathetic popular attitude towards Aleksei.

Fedor Pushkin and Aleksei Sokovnin, shortly before his departure for the West in 1697.

These three men were accused of plotting Petr's death and the restoration of Sof'ya.<sup>137</sup> Tsykler, who had supported Sof'ya in 1682, had changed his allegiance to Petr in 1689, but by 1697 felt that his support had been unappreciated; Pushkin and Sokovnin were both Old Believers. Sokovnin, in particular, had personal grievances against the State: his sisters, Fedos'ya Morozova and Avdot'ya Urusova, had died for their faith in prison in Siberia.<sup>138</sup> However, as Schuyler observes, "In all probability there was no plot whatever, but simply loose and unguarded talk between discontented men".<sup>139</sup> These men, nevertheless, confessed under torture to having conspired against Petr. They were dismembered and beheaded in Red Square on 4 March 1697. As a final macabre flourish, Petr exhumed the corpse of Ivan Miloslavskii, Sof'ya and Ivan's maternal uncle, who had died in 1685, and had it dragged through Moscow on a sled drawn by pigs. The open coffin was placed under the scaffold on which the three men were executed, so that their blood would fall on the corpse.<sup>140</sup>

The version of events most likely to have been accessible to artists was that published in Stahlin's collection of anecdotes. It is a colourful account, attributed to Ivan Trubetskoi, entitled, "Firmness of Peter in the midst of a band of conspirators":<sup>141</sup>

Peter walked in without any sentiment of fear, and found Soukanin [Sokovnin], Sikel [Tsykler], and all the conspirators, assembled in the room. They all rose hastily

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<sup>137</sup>Hughes, Sophia, Regent of Russia p. 248.

<sup>138</sup>See Chapter 6.

<sup>139</sup>Schuyler, Peter the Great, vol. I, p. 339.

<sup>140</sup>Ibid., pp. 339-40.

<sup>141</sup>Stahlin, Original Anecdotes, Anecdote V, pp. 29-36.



from their seats, and showed their master the usual marks of respect. He accosted them with familiarity, and told them, that, passing by the house and seeing it full of lights, he had presumed that the master of it was not alone, and that...he had been tempted to step in to take a glass with the company.

The Czar...continued a long time seated in the midst of the conspirators, who...drank his health in their turns, and were pledged by the Czar. In the mean time, one of them made a sign to Soukanin, and said to him in a whisper, ...'Brother, it is time!' - Soukanin...answered, ...'not yet.' The Czar, who heard him, sprang instantly from his seat, and giving him a blow in the face: 'If it be not time for you,' said he, 'son of a dog, it is for me!' 'Here! let these dogs be bound!' - At that very instant the clock struck eleven, and Lapouchin [Lopukhin] entered the apartment, followed by his company under arms. On seeing this, the traitors fell on their knees, confessed to their crime, and bound one another by the Czar's command.<sup>142</sup>

Petr Basin's drawing Petr I uncovers a Strel'tsy Conspiracy (late 1830s - early 1840s, Russian Museum, fig. 38) is part of the same series as Petr I. as an Infant, finds a Sabre. Although unfinished, it was clearly intended to depict the climax of the story. It shows the young Tsar about to draw his sword, as the plotters recoil in fear; one conspirator is on his knees, begging for mercy, another puts his hand to his head in despair. Behind and to the left of Petr, a couple of armed figures in a doorway are roughly outlined. They probably represent Lopukhin's men.

The main figures of Petr and the conspirators are sketched vigorously and with some detail of folds in their clothing and the texture of the fur lining of a kaftan. The table, with its elaborately turned legs, and the still-life upon it are also drawn in outline. The background and the heap of weapons in the foreground are indicated more simply and

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<sup>142</sup>Ibid., pp. 35-6.

with lighter strokes. Basin's approach to the composition appears fairly conventional. The main focus of the drawing is towards the front of the picture plane. Petr and his allies are physically and symbolically divided from the Strel'tsy by the vertical emphases of the table leg, the wall behind it which continues its line, and the candlestick, the line of which is extended downward by the fall of the tablecloth.

Basin depicted Petr in Western dress, in contrast with his adversaries, and with a suitably youthful appearance sometimes found lacking in other depictions of this subject (for example, Sharleman, Petr I catches the Conspirators in Tsykler's House, 23 February 1697, fig. 40). However, Petr was not as Basin stated in his inscriptions "23 years" in "1697",<sup>143</sup> but was actually nearly twenty-five. Petr's likeness is not taken from any recognisable early portrait, such as those by Kneller or Faithorne, and may be derived from a model. Certainly, unlike Sharleman, Basin did not emphasise Petr's extreme height. In fact, the Strelets seated in front of the table, facing Petr, would be about the same height, were he standing. This suggests that Basin's model for Petr was not exceptionally tall. It may also indicate that the idealisation of Petr in Academic art was physical as well as moral, as artists modified his unusual physique to conform to more widely-accepted norms.

A. Zemtsov's drawing Petr the Great at Tsykler's House (1881, fig. 39),<sup>144</sup> is far more melodramatic in its treatment of the subject. In depicting Petr knocking Tsykler down with one blow, as the plotters stand with knives drawn to assassinate him, it follows Stahlin's account quite closely. However, Petr's simultaneous feat of hurling a bench behind him at an old boyar, probably intended to represent Sokovnin, is an

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<sup>143</sup>Rakova, Russkaya Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 221, n. 121.

<sup>144</sup>Published in Niva, no. 6, 1881, reproduced in Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 136.

addition to the narrative. It further emphasise Petr's heroism and adds visual interest to the right side of the drawing.

In compositional terms, Petr the Great at Tsykler's House is not without skill. The lines of the bench and of Sokovnin's kaftan, which billows out behind him as he runs, continue the upward diagonal from Tsykler's fallen body. Petr's arms counter this with an opposing diagonal thrust. The framing of Petr's head within the outline of the icon-case in the Red (or Beautiful) Corner symbolically emphasises his divine right and the justice of his cause. In conjunction with the elaborately detailed traditional architecture of the room, it forms part of what Gasiorowska describes as the "'Slavic' stage set"<sup>145</sup> which conveys the values of Petr's opponents in literature and art. Kemenov describes it as "pseudo-Russian".<sup>146</sup> Certainly, Zemtsov's interest in the decoratively leaded windows and the carved woodwork reflects the growing interest in folk art which was reflected in the Russian Revival style of the reigns of Aleksandr III and Nikolai II.<sup>147</sup>

Kemenov comments that "The genre-type anecdotal treatment and flattering idealisation of Petr deprive the drawing of any historical content".<sup>148</sup> But these qualities do not deprive it of historical interest. The picture serves as a useful example of Petr's official image as interpreted in popular magazine illustration. The idealisation of Petr is more extreme than that found in the Academic paintings of this period. Sharleman's depiction of the same subject, dramatic as it is, is considerably more subtle. Zemtsov's drawing is reminiscent of works

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<sup>145</sup>Gasiorowska, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian Fiction, pp. 169-70.

<sup>146</sup>Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 136.

<sup>147</sup>As expressed in the architecture of the State Historical Museum, 1878-83, and Igumnov House (now the French Embassy), 1893, in Moscow, and the Church of the Resurrection 'on the Blood', completed 1907, in St. Petersburg, and in the graphic art of Viktor Vasnetsov, Ivan Bilibin and Boris Zvorykin, among others.

<sup>148</sup>Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 136.

produced under Nikolai I's Petrine cult. It was published in the year of the accession of another reactionary Emperor, Aleksandr III. He succeeded to the throne upon the assassination of his father, and commenced his reign with the execution of the regicides. The theme of conspirators and assassins overthrown in Zemtsov's drawing could very well have carried contemporary resonances for his audience.

Adolf Sharleman (Baudet-Charlemagne; 1826-1901)<sup>149</sup> painted Petr I catches the Conspirators in Tsykler's House, 23 February 1697 (Russian Museum, fig. 40) in 1884. He chose an earlier moment in the narrative: Petr's unexpected arrival and its effect upon the conspirators. Sharleman's use of a concealed source of light, reminiscent of the Caravaggisti, is particularly effective. However, in a Russian context, this may reflect a more recent influence - that of Nikolai Ge's The Last Supper, (1863, Russian Museum), which used the same device to dramatise the departure of Judas. Symbolically, too, this would have been an appropriate source: both paintings are concerned with betrayal. The candle or lamp is obscured by the man who sits with his back to the spectator, his profile sharply outlined against its warm-toned brightness. This may suggest that he is a character of major importance. The fact that his image is darkened in shadow may imply, in simple dualistic terms, that he is the villain of the piece, presumably Tsykler himself. Again, this is reminiscent of Ge's use of concealed back-lighting to emphasise Judas' figure in The Last Supper.

Like Ge, too, Sharleman paid attention to the psychology of his characters. Most of the conspirators are depicted in various states of

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<sup>149</sup>His grandfather Jean-Baptiste Baudet-Charlemagne, was a French artist invited to St. Petersburg by Ekaterina II. Adolf studied in St. Petersburg under Bruni, then in Munich and Paris; see Bénézit, Dictionnaire Critique et Documentaire, vol. 2, p. 441. "Charlemagne".

astonishment and alarm, except for the plump, sullenly watchful man on the far right. The linking diagonal gaze between Tsykler, depicted in profile, and the angry Petr, may suggest the possible influence of Vasiliï Surikov's The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy (1881, Tret'yakov Gallery, fig. 126), which uses a similar visual device to connect Petr with a fierce opponent (see Chapter 6). The tonal effects of the glow of candlelight upon the blue and white glazed tiles of the stove are handled skilfully.

Basin, Zemtsov, and Sharleman all based their depiction of the foiling of the Tsykler conspiracy upon Stahlin's highly-coloured and partisan account. Only in 1882, in Nikolai Zagorskii's illustration, The Arrest of Tsykler (fig. 41), for The History of Petr the Great by Aleksandr Brikner, was a more dramatically-restrained version of the event published.<sup>150</sup> Zagorskii's approach may have been dictated by the relationship of his drawings to Brikner's biography; his depiction of Petr the Great at Lakhta too eschewed excessive theatricality. The Arrest of Tsykler post-dates the Petrine subject paintings of Ge, Repin and Surikov. Zemtsov and Sharleman, also working in the 1880s, did not reflect these artists' innovations in giving weight to the viewpoint of Petr's opponents and victims, but Zagorskii did. As a younger artist (b. 1849), he was perhaps more receptive to the influence of the Peredvizhniki. Indeed, he had exhibited one painting, The Horsewoman, in the Eighth Travelling Exhibition in 1880,<sup>151</sup> and in 1891, two years before his death, became a full member of the Association.<sup>152</sup> It is possible that he may have seen

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<sup>150</sup>A. G. Brikner, Istoriya Petra Velikogo, St. Petersburg, 1882, pl. facing p. 268.

<sup>151</sup>"Katalog vos'moi vystavki kartin Tovarishchestva peredvizhnykh khudozhestvennykh vystavok", in T. V. Moiseeva, ed., Tovarishchestvo Peredvizhnykh Khudozhestvennykh Vystavok 1869-1899. Pis'ma, Dokumenty, Moscow, 1987, vol. 1, p. 205.

<sup>152</sup>"Protokol obshchego sobraniya chlenov Tovarishchestvo peredvizhnykh khudozhestvennykh vystavok", 6 March 1891, ibid., vol. 2, pp. 388-9.

Surikov's The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy, exhibited in 1881, which had similarly concentrated upon the breaking of human relationships and the domestic suffering left by Petr's pursuit of his opponents.<sup>153</sup>

Zagorskii depicted Tsykler's arrest as a family tragedy, rather than a melodrama. Instead of a leader of a group of armed conspirators, his Tsykler is an old soldier, at supper with his wife, when Petr and his guards enter to arrest him. By depicting him this way, Zagorskii may have been attempting to suggest that his crime was nothing more than the "loose and unguarded talk" to which Schuyler referred. Brikner certainly dismissed the details of Stählin's account, much used by artists, as "legendary".<sup>154</sup> Like Sharleman, Zagorskii made effective use of chiaroscuro and a concealed light on the table - in this case, to illuminate the distressed expression of Tsykler's wife, an innocent focus for the spectator's sympathies, like the women in Surikov's The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy. Tsykler's own image is more complex; his facial expression may suggest anger or guilt.

The portrayal of Petr is derived from contemporary engravings, most notably those by Faithorne and Jan Ottens. Basin and Sharleman, seeking to emphasise the contrast between Petr's Westernising outlook and the traditionalism of his opponents, had shown Petr in Western costume. However, Zagorskii took Petr's Russian costume and his pose from Ottens' full-length portrait of him during his first visit to the West (fig. 42).<sup>155</sup> It is possible that Aleksandr Brikner, author of The History of

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<sup>153</sup>See Chapter 6.

<sup>154</sup>Brikner, Istoriya Petra Velikogo, p. 268, n. 3. Brikner compares various accounts of the case, but in little detail, and draws no definite conclusion as to the actual seriousness of the plot, pp. 268-70.

<sup>155</sup>Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 137, notes Zagorskii's debt to Ottens in this picture.

Petr the Great, may have been brought Ottens' engraving, which appears in the book,<sup>156</sup> to his illustrator's attention. The setting of Tsykler's house is less elaborate than the Russian Revival interior in Zemtsov's 1881 drawing. The most prominent folk-art detail is the zoomorphic embroidery on the table cloth; this may have been copied from direct observation, or based upon designs published by Vladimir Stasov in 1872.<sup>157</sup> Whatever the specific source, it is apparent that Zagorskii's picture was based upon careful research.

These various depictions of the arrest of Tsykler represent in microcosm the changes which occurred on a wider scale in depictions of Petr I and his opponents in art during the nineteenth century. For Basin, Zemtsov and Sharleman, Petr was undoubtedly a hero, single-handedly defeating sedition and treason. For Zagorskii, however, on the fringes of the Peredvizhniki, less constrained by the Academic convention of depicting Good and Evil as unequivocal absolutes, there was scope to question the traditional images of both sides. How this development became possible in the historical works of the Peredvizhniki will be discussed in more detail in subsequent chapters. The aftermath of Tsykler's conspiracy was depicted eventually in Gavriil Gorelov's The Mocking of the Corpse of Ivan Miloslavskii (1911, Russian Museum), when the Academic concern with edifying content had been abandoned, allowing early twentieth-century artists to deal explicitly with more disturbing subjects.

The facet of the heroic archetype central to Petr's image is that of the bearer of cultural gifts, as he is repeatedly described and depicted as

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<sup>156</sup>Brikner, Istoriya Petra Velikogo, p. 183.

<sup>157</sup>V. V. Stasov, Russkii Narodnyi Ornament. Vypusk Pervyi: Shit'ye, tkani, kruzheva, St. Petersburg, 1872, plates reprinted as Russian Peasant Design Motifs for Needleworkers and Craftsmen, New York, 1976.

the reformer and Westerniser of Russia. Petr's own hero, Louis XIV, had been depicted as Bearer of Culture in his own life time, as in Henri Testelin's Louis XIV establishing the Academy of Sciences (1666) and the Observatory (1667) (1668, Versailles, fig. 43). In Butler's words:

The gift of the hero is salvation of the community or the tools or symbols of that salvation... His gifts, like his self, are ambivalent...

That is not to say that all gifts of all heroes are fatal or treacherous, but they usually have more than one edge, and kill as often as they cure.<sup>158</sup>

This ambivalence of and towards the gifts and the giver lay behind Petr's symbolic importance in the cultural debate between the Westernisers and the Slavophiles throughout much of the nineteenth century.<sup>159</sup> It was, inevitably, based upon an oversimplification, as Russia's contacts with the West had been growing gradually for many years under Petr's predecessors.<sup>160</sup> The Slavophile Konstantin Aksakov conceded that "everything that is true in Peter's reforms started before him",<sup>161</sup> but also condemned his use of coercion, wherein lay "the originality and the historical significance of his work".<sup>162</sup> Meanwhile, the Westerniser Belinskii could maintain in 1841 that "[Petr] is the the divinity that called us to life, breathing a living soul into the body of old Russia, colossal but

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<sup>158</sup>Butler, The Myth of the Hero, p. 10.

<sup>159</sup>See Riasanovsky, Russia and the West in the Teaching of the Slavophiles, pp. 78-82.

<sup>160</sup>In the 1470s-90s, Bolognese and Milanese architects worked on the Moscow Kremlin; see Voyce, The Moscow Kremlin, pp. 18-9. However, the acquisition of the Ukraine from Poland by Aleksei Mikhailovich and his enthusiasm for Western culture and technology had more direct bearing upon late seventeenth-century developments; see Longworth, Alexis, Tsar of All the Russias, pp. 108-9, 120-1.

<sup>161</sup>K. Aksakov, Sochineniya Istoricheskie, Moscow, 1861, vol. 1, pp. 41-2, quoted by Riasanovsky, Russia and the West in the Teaching of the Slavophiles, p. 80; but note the value judgement in "everything that is true".

<sup>162</sup>Ibid., loc. cit.



plunged in deathly slumber".<sup>163</sup> Despite this historical and philosophical conflict, nineteenth-century history paintings mainly presented a positive image of Petr as the Bearer of Culture.

As a subject for artists, Petr's introduction of new technology into Russia was potentially difficult to depict. However, because of Petr's personal and enthusiastic participation, it was possible to create dramatic incidents around him. The complex process of technological development could be embodied in a single episode, with the Tsar as hero. This approach had a long artistic life-span and was continued by later Peredvizhniki such as Grigorii Myasoedov in The Grandfather of the Russian Fleet (1871, Arts Museum of Uzbekistan, Tashkent, fig. 74) and Petr the Great at Zaandam (1878, private collection, Russia, fig. 75),<sup>164</sup> and Mikhail Petrovich Klodt in Petr at Work in his Lodgings at Zaandam (1879, fig. 44),<sup>165</sup> and by Mstislav Dobuzhinskii of the World of Art group in Petr the Great in Holland. Amsterdam, the East India Company Wharf (1910-1, fig. 45).<sup>166</sup>

In the 1838 competition, both Georgii Karing and the little-known G. Gyune contributed paintings dealing with Petr as Bearer of Culture. Karing depicted Petr I on Zaandam Wharf, fashioning a Rudder (location unknown).<sup>167</sup> As mentioned above, Andrei Ivanov regarded it as the best picture in the final stage of the contest, although he felt that the figure of

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<sup>163</sup>V. G. Belinskii, Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenie, St. Petersburg, 1912, vol. VI, p. 119, quoted by Riasanovsky, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought, p. 127.

<sup>164</sup>See Chapter 4.

<sup>165</sup>Etching reproduced in E. Schuyler, "Peter the Great", Scribner's Monthly, New York, vol. XXI, no. 1, Nov. 1880, p. 3, where it is misattributed to "Baron Michel Klodt". Baron Mikhail Konstantinovich Klodt (1832-1902) was a landscape artist; the signature is that of the genre painter Mikhail Petrovich Klodt (1835-1914).

<sup>166</sup>Painted for the Petr I City School (now the Admiral Nakhimov Naval Academy), St. Petersburg; sketches in the Russian Museum and Tret'yakov Gallery.

<sup>167</sup>Rakova, Russkaya Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 123.

Petr lacked character. The setting impressed him because it appeared to have been painted from nature.<sup>168</sup> In the 1840s, one of the Chernetsov brothers also painted Petr in his Workshop in Zaandam (Russian Museum, fig. 46).<sup>169</sup> In this painting too, the chief focus of interest is in the depiction of Petr's surroundings, probably painted from life. Petr's figure seems simply to have been added to give significance to the otherwise undistinguished interior.

Petr's house at Zaandam was a place of pilgrimage for Russians visiting Holland. Mikhail Pogodin, historian and ardent admirer of both Petr and Nikolai I, vividly described the experience of his visit in 1839:

My heart contracted, tears came to my eyes, I could hardly breathe, as I opened the gate...

With a trembling heart I crossed the threshold, for a long time I could not collect my senses... So this is where our Peter lived and worked! So this is where he thought and dreamed about Russia! How pure, how noble he was here!...

I bowed to the ground to the Great One and left his sanctuary with a full heart.<sup>170</sup>

Pogodin's account makes explicit the quasi-religious nature of the Petrine cult. Depictions of Petr at work in this 'shrine' seem to have had the same appeal as depictions of Christ working as a carpenter:<sup>171</sup> the appeal of a supreme figure of authority voluntarily humbling himself for his people. The Hero's adoption of a lowly disguise in order to gain knowledge from a

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<sup>168</sup>Ibid., loc. cit.

<sup>169</sup>Formerly attributed to Lavr Plakhov, whose 1842 view of the same room, without Petr, is in Novgorod Historical and Architectural Museum-Reserve (Zhivopis' XVIII-nachalo XX veka. Katalog, GRM, p. 229, item no. 4054). The signature 'Chernetsov' was discovered recently, but it is not yet certain whether it is the work of Grigorii or Nikanor. I am indebted to Elena Stolbova, Dept. of Eighteenth-Early Nineteenth-Century Painting, GRM, for this information.

<sup>170</sup>M. P. Pogodin, God v Chuzhikh Kraiakh, 1839, Moscow, 1844, vol. IV, pp. 14-5, quoted by Riasanovsky, Nicholas I and Official Nationality, p. 106.

<sup>171</sup>The title of one of Daniil Mordovtsev's novels on a Petrine theme, The Crowned Carpenter, published in 1883, has obvious religious overtones; for plot summary, see Gasiorowska, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian Fiction, p. 188.

foreign place also has the flavour of myth or folktale.<sup>172</sup> It may also be used to suggest that the Hero understands the common man because his experiences incognito have given him an empathetic bond with his subjects. However, although Petr worked and socialised with professional shipwrights and carpenters, he still expected his rank to be recognised and respected.<sup>173</sup> His image as a man of the people, who "sanctifies labor with his august hands",<sup>174</sup> expressed in these pictures, was in some respects as superficial as Marie Antoinette's career as a dairymaid at the Petit Trianon. He could not be construed as a democrat because of it.

The content of G. Gyune's painting for Demidov's competition in 1838 (location unknown) was described as follows:

Petr I..., standing in a boat, drops a sounding-lead to measure the depth of the sea. Beside Petr are three figures, among whom are a blackamoor [arap], who is busy unfolding the line, and a peasant, who supports the line of the lowered lead.<sup>175</sup>

The emphasis of this painting seems to have been upon Petr's quest for scientific knowledge. It is possible that Gyune's inclusion of a black character was intended as a tribute to Ibrahim Hannibal, whose descendant, the poet Aleksandr Pushkin, had died after a duel only the previous year, 1837. It also reflects the eighteenth-century fashion for African attendants, which is illustrated in Ivan Adol'skii's Ekaterina I

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<sup>172</sup>Butler, The Myth of the Hero, pp. 106-8, on the uses of disguise by the hero.

<sup>173</sup>Massie, Peter the Great, pp. 181-3 & 185-7. Some indignities of ordinary life clearly angered the shipwright 'Petr Mikhailov'. In Zaandam, he complained to the Burgomaster after being pelted with mud by children in a dispute over the sharing of plums; the Burgomaster ordered citizens to refrain from insulting "distinguished persons who wish to remain unknown", quoted ibid., p. 181.

<sup>174</sup>A. V. Arsen'ev, Arisha Utochka, publ. in Povesti, St. Petersburg, 1889, p. 8, quoted by Gasiorowska, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian Fiction, p. 119.

<sup>175</sup>Petrov, Sbornik Materialov, vol. 2, p. 379, quoted by Rakova, Russkaya Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', pp. 122-3.

with a Page (1725-6, Russian Museum) and, later, in Surikov's The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy.

Petr's interest in technical devices and in acquiring practical knowledge was the theme of other pictures which have survived, and can therefore be discussed more fruitfully. These are essentially historical genre paintings, which do not necessarily depict a documented historical event, but show individuals engaged in their characteristic pursuits. Another of Basin's drawings depicts Petr I drawing in a copy-book, while leaning against the side of a boat (fig. 47). Judging by the diagrams visible on the page, Petr may be practising his geometry, or possibly sketching the components of a boat. There is no indication of the date or of Petr's age upon this drawing, and the background is only roughly sketched. However, Petr appears fairly young, and he and his companions are wearing Western costume. This may suggest a Dutch or English setting, but it is not certain. Other drawings in Basin's album, all executed sometime between the late 1830s and the early 1840s, include a depiction of Petr I as a youth, with a boat, talking to its builder, inscribed "17 years old" and "1691", and another of Petr on a riverbank with a fisherman, inscribed "25 years old" and "1699".<sup>176</sup> This suggests that Basin was particularly interested in the theme of Petr's acquisition of practical knowledge from working men. It may be that Basin had contemplated entering the 1838 competition and experimented with several ideas in these drawings, although he produced no finished painting. The sketches nevertheless suggest a great deal about the attitude of a prominent Academic artist towards Petr. While adopting a genre-type, anecdotal approach, Basin retained Petr as the hero-figure of Academic art and of official history, embodying positive values. In other

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<sup>176</sup>Ibid., p. 221, n. 122.

drawings from the series, already mentioned, he depicted Petr's precocity and his courage; in these, he concentrated upon his scientific curiosity, and his interest in practical skills.

The foundation of St. Petersburg was perhaps the most obvious subject for artists who wished to depict Petr as a Bearer of Culture. It was the home of the Academy and the imperial Court, the centre of artistic life, and tangibly Petr's creation. However, the foundation of a city was an abstract concept, which was not easily depicted visually. As a result, the theme was conveyed in the form of a portrait of Petr, surrounded by objects which explained the implicit narrative, as already mentioned in relation to Venetsianov's treatment of this theme. This method was not far removed from the artistic convention of identifying saints by their symbolic attributes.<sup>177</sup> Indeed, images of Petr of this kind by Basin and by Anton Ivanov (1818-63) depict him almost as patron saint of his city.

Basin's small oil sketch The Foundation of St. Petersburg in 1703 and the related pencil drawing (fig. 48)<sup>178</sup> and Anton Ivanov's Petr I on the Banks of the Neva<sup>179</sup> (1843, fig. 49; both Russian Museum), are similar in approach. Both artists depict Petr standing alone by the Neva, outside his wooden cabin, the first house in St. Petersburg, which had become virtually a shrine by the nineteenth century.<sup>180</sup> In both pictures, plans

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<sup>177</sup>For example, Peter by his keys, Barbara by her tower, Catherine by her wheel.

<sup>178</sup>The undated oil sketch is small, 21.5 x 16 cms. The pencil drawing is tentatively dated to the 1840s by Rakova, Russkaya Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 122. It appears more finished than other examples of his Petrine series of drawings. The painting was never executed. The Russian Museum has another oil sketch by Basin, The Translation of the Relics of Aleksandr Nevskii from Vladimir to Petersburg by Petr the Great in 1724, ascribed to the 1840s. This was a sketch for the fresco for the western lunette of the chapel of St. Aleksandr Nevskii in St. Isaac's Cathedral; however, it seems unlikely that The Foundation of St. Petersburg in 1703 was related to this project.

<sup>179</sup>This is also a very small work - 20 x 14.5 cms - which suggests that it too may be a sketch.

<sup>180</sup>Indeed, judging by an engraving of the interior in Brikner, Istoriya Petra Velikogo, p. 423, it contained a working chapel.

of the new city are visible; these identify the paintings as depictions of the city's foundation, rather than simply commemorative portraits of Petr.

In Basin's version, the plan is spread on a table, which, with some chairs, stands out of doors, beside the cottage. In the background, a ship is visible upon the Neva, suggesting the importance of the navy and trade in Petr's reign. Basin's Petr gazes straight out of the picture, arms folded, confronting the spectator with his achievements. This direct gaze makes the picture less of a narrative work than a devotional image. Like Petr's sidelong glance in Venetsianov's painting, it implies an awareness of the spectator's presence and solicits a fitting response. A small dog, emblematic of fidelity and devotion, sits by his feet and looks loyally up at him, perhaps suggesting the admiration expected from the spectator.

Anton Ivanov's Petr, more naturalistically, studies the plan he is holding. He also appears physically more mature than in Basin's version, which is reminiscent of the characterisation in his drawing of Petr and Tsykler. Petr is depicted in his green and red Preobrazhenskii Guards uniform as in Venetsianov's painting; his preference for simple dress, sometimes uniform, was a well-established feature of his image.<sup>181</sup> Anton Ivanov includes in the background a bastion of the Peter and Paul Fortress with a flying standard. This is probably intended to be a symbolic indication of Petr's enduring legacy in the physical existence of St. Petersburg, as in Levshin's painting for the 1838 competition, described above. The symbolic nature of Anton Ivanov's picture is further emphasised by the presence of a rainbow in the sky, a traditional emblem of peace. It suggests that the Petr's reforms and the foundation of the city

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<sup>181</sup> Gasiorska, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian Fiction, p. 77; Schuyler, Peter the Great, vol. II, p. 546.

established unifying and harmonious influences in Russia after the turmoil of his minority. Indeed, it could be claimed that the maintenance of this harmony was the responsibility of his descendants; that the continuation of the autocracy preserved the 'order' represented by the rainbow. The juxtaposition of the rainbow with the Fortress perhaps typifies the lack of irony which characterised these works which upheld Nikolai I's Petrine cult. The Fortress was still in use as a political prison, as it had been since Petr's time, and to a more cynical observer it might suggest the price at which Petr and Nikolai's vision of harmony was achieved.

Both these pictures emphasise Petr as the sole creator of the city. Venetsianov's Petr the Great. The Foundation of St. Petersburg (fig. 31), as already discussed, differed from this model by showing Petr walking with his companions through the undeveloped countryside. However, by including the 'Thunder Rock', Venetsianov too looked towards the future and Petr's image in posterity. Vasilii Demidov's lost entry for the 1838 competition seems to have been similar: "Petr I, accompanied by Menshikov and Dolgorukov, discusses the foundation of St. Petersburg. In the distance peasants cut down the forest and erect landmarks".<sup>182</sup> There are references to another painting in the competition, depicting Petr on the Gulf of Finland, as if saying "Here shall stand my capital" but it has not been clearly identified by either Andrei Ivanov or Petr Petrov.<sup>183</sup>

Petr's establishment of a Court on the Western model, with the building of Baroque palaces and the enforced attendance of his aristocracy at numerous social functions, was another of his "cultural gifts" depicted in art. The Academic vision of the Petrine Court was

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<sup>182</sup>Petrov, Sbornik Materialov, vol. 2, p. 379, quoted by Rakova, Russkaya Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 123.

<sup>183</sup>Ibid., loc. cit.

highly idealised, as Stanislav Khlebovskii's An Assembly in the Reign of Petr I (1858, Russian Museum, fig. 50) demonstrates. As a pupil of Gérôme, who in turn had been Delaroche's pupil, Khlebovskii had absorbed at one remove Delaroche's painstaking approach towards history painting. The bright, colourful interior, with its carefully grouped figures, suggests the atmosphere of the right side of Delaroche's Cardinal Mazarin Dying (fig. 26), although it lacks that painting's underlying moral theme. Possibly, Khlebovskii may have had access to Delaroche's work in engraved reproduction, either in Russia or in the West.<sup>184</sup> It is also instructive to compare An Assembly in the Reign of Petr I with William Powell Frith's Charles II's Last Sunday (1867, private collection, Britain, fig. 51). For historical reasons, Khlebovskii and Frith responded differently to these superficially similar scenes of Court life by adopting contrasting moral positions.

Strong has argued that Charles II's Last Sunday was intended as a condemnation of vice and extravagance,<sup>185</sup> based upon a scene described by John Evelyn:

...the King, sitting & toying with his Concubines... A french boy singing love songs, ...whilst about 20 of the greate Courtiers & other dissolute persons were at Basset round a large table,...upon which two Gent: that were with me made reflexions with astonishment, it being a sceane of utmost vanity; and surely as they thought would never have an End: six days after was all in the dust.<sup>186</sup>

In contrast, Khlebovskii's depiction of Petr's Court is positive. The images of luxury and elegance which Frith used to convey the decadence of the

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<sup>184</sup>Khlebovskii (Chlebowski), 1835-84, a Pole by birth, studied in Munich and in Paris after graduating from the Petersburg Academy; Bénézit, Dictionnaire Critique et Documentaire, vol. 2, p. 492, "Chlebowski".

<sup>185</sup>Strong, And when did you last see your father?, pp. 94-5.

<sup>186</sup>John Evelyn, Diary, 6 February 1685, quoted ibid., p. 94.



Restoration here represent the triumph of Western civilisation in Russia. In a Petrine context, the presence of women at social gatherings indicated their emergence from Muscovite seclusion. The elaborate detail of the courtiers' costumes suggested not merely frivolity and extravagance, but Petr's success in enforcing Western dress upon his aristocracy. This moral reversal is emphasised by the figure who parallels Frith's dour John Evelyn. In the equivalent position, entering the scene from the left rather than the right, Khlebovskii depicted a bearded boyar in traditional dress. Both the boyar and Evelyn appear out of place and uncomfortable in the environment in which they are depicted, but while Evelyn was the bearer of moral values with which Frith's audience identified, Khlebovskii's boyar represented Muscovite culture and opposition to Westernisation.

Khlebovskii portrayed Petr playing chess with his companions, one of whom - judging by his plain shirt and waistcoat and his bare head - appears to be a craftsman or sailor. He thus dissociated Petr somewhat from his luxurious surroundings by reminding the spectator of the iconography of "the Crowned Carpenter". Whereas, in Strong's words, "Not only did the King [Charles II] indulge in every form of immorality... but, what was worse, he enjoyed it",<sup>187</sup> the same could not be claimed of Petr - at least in Khlebovskii's depiction.

Khlebovskii appears to have based his painting on a description of an assembly by Friedrich Christian Weber, diplomatic representative of Hannover and (after 1714) Britain in St. Petersburg:

At those Assemblies there is dancing in one Room, in another People are playing at Cards, Draughts, but particularly at Chess, in which even the meanest Russians excel; in a third Room there is a Company smoaking and

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<sup>187</sup>Ibid., loc. cit.

discoursing together, and in the fourth are Ladies and gentlemen diverting themselves with Questions and Commands, Forfeits, Cross-purposes, and other such little Plays, that create good Humour and Laughter.<sup>188</sup>

Nevertheless, in An Assembly in the Reign of Petr I, Academic history painting was again presenting a misleadingly decorous image of the Petrine era, modified to conform with Petr's official image and avoid offending contemporary sensibilities. Khlebovskii omitted the dwarfs, giants and buffoons who were as much a feature of the Petrine Court as of those of the West (as in Diego Velázquez' depictions of Felipe IV's Court). In the early twentieth century, Aleksandr Benua (Benois) included them in his pictures of Petr and his entourage (fig. 52), but in the mid-nineteenth century, Petr's interest in 'freaks' ran counter to his sanitised image, and was not dwelt upon. The assemblies themselves were more restrained and polite than the orgies of the 'All-Drunken Synod': "none of the Company are obliged to drink any more Wine or Brandy than what they ask for, except one transgresses the established Rules...of the Assembly, which happens very often".<sup>189</sup> The Great Eagle Cup was retained as a punishment for any infringement of etiquette, as specified in Petr's "Regulation for Keeping Assemblies at Petersburg".<sup>190</sup> This was a large goblet, filled with a quart of spirits, which the transgressor had to drink in a single swallow. It reflected Petr's continual desire to exert power over others even in minor matters, and in practice could be very dangerous.<sup>191</sup> The sadistic aspect of Petr's social gatherings was depicted

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<sup>188</sup>See F. C. Weber, The Present State of Russia, London, 1722-3, vol. I, p. 186.

<sup>189</sup>Ibid., loc. cit.

<sup>190</sup>Ibid., vol. I, pp. 186-8, Rule V.

<sup>191</sup>Gasiorowska, discussing petite histoire evidence about Petr's behaviour, notes that the death of the octogenarian Prince Yakov Dolgorukii and a miscarriage suffered by Marshal Olsuf'ev's wife were ascribed to enforced drinking at Petr's parties; see The Image of Peter the Great in Russian Fiction, p. 83.

only in 1910 by Valentin Serov in The Great Eagle Cup (National Picture Gallery of Armenia, Erevan, fig. 53), in which a man collapses as Petr, laughing, forces the cup to his lips. Serov's picture was only possible because censorship of the arts had been reduced. His interpretation was also influenced by Dmitrii Merezhkovskii's 1905 Symbolist novel Antichrist: Petr and Aleksei,<sup>192</sup> which, in Riasanovsky's words, "abounded in sensationalism, sex, and violence",<sup>193</sup> at least by the literary standards of its time. Such a scene would have been inconceivable in Academic history painting of the 1850s, particularly for an 'official' artist like Khlebovskii, who in 1865 was appointed Court painter to Sultan Abdul-Aziz of Turkey.<sup>194</sup>

The dominant ideology in these paintings, which assert Petr's rôle as Bearer of Culture, is simultaneously Westernising and conservative. Petr's acceleration of Russia's technical modernisation - resulting from a mixture of personal enthusiasms and a desire for military expansion - was portrayed in these works as a revolutionary departure from the reigns of his predecessors. Petr was depicted as the sole driving force behind the introduction of Western ideas. This image of Petr found favour not only with the Emperor and the Establishment which sponsored it, but also among the Westernisers.<sup>195</sup> Belinskii's admiration of Petr was "unqualified and uncompromising",<sup>196</sup> and led him to defend every aspect of Petr's reforms, including the compulsory adoption of Western

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<sup>192</sup>The final volume in the trilogy Christ and Antichrist; the preceding novels deal with Julian the Apostate and Leonardo da Vinci.

<sup>193</sup>Riasanovsky, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought, p. 230.

<sup>194</sup>He painted a series of paintings on Turkish historical subjects for the Ottoman Porte; Bénézit, Dictionnaire Critique et Documentaire, vol. 2, p. 492.

<sup>195</sup>For example, Mikhail Saltykov's response to Ge's Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof in Chapter 4.

<sup>196</sup>Riasanovsky, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought, pp. 124-131.

costume and shaving of his nobles, because "the external sometimes draws the internal after it".<sup>197</sup> Herzen, too, in his youth, attempted to balance a positive view of Petr as a genius and a revolutionary with his opposition to contemporary autocracy.<sup>198</sup> However, by the 1850s, he found this "dialectical" approach impossible to maintain, and he became increasingly anti-Petrine.<sup>199</sup> Herzen's later views may have directly influenced the artist Nikolai Ge, who contributed significantly to the development of a new Petrine image in historical art (see Chapter 4).

The official image of Petr as Bearer of Culture was attractive to the liberals, who regarded Petr's efforts as paralleling with their own struggles with the present autocracy. Yet the official image was essentially authoritarian: Petr was depicted as a man working alone, a unique figure, who was single-handedly responsible for change. Officially, Petr's autocracy was treated as an entirely benevolent force for order. It was never seen to be challenged or questioned, save by the Strel'tsy or the Old Believers, who were portrayed as irrational and anarchic. This official glorification of Petr in Academic art led ultimately to depictions of him as a saviour-figure - indeed, as the Saviour of Russia.

In 1859, Nikolai Zauerbeid (1836-66) was awarded a Small (Second Rank) Gold Medal by the Academy for Petr I quells his Cruel Soldiers at the Taking of Narva in 1704 (Tret'yakov Gallery, fig. 54). Petr is depicted arriving just in time to prevent his soldiers raping and murdering civilians in the Estonian city which they have captured from the Swedes. As a prize-winning painting, it embodies the Academic approach to Petrine subjects in both style and content.

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<sup>197</sup>Belinskii, "Peterburg i Moskva", quoted ibid., p. 131.

<sup>198</sup>ibid., pp. 136-9.

<sup>199</sup>ibid., pp. 139-42.

Petr I quells his Cruel Soldiers at the Taking of Narva is highly finished. The theatricality of the scene is emphasised by the composition: the foreground is occupied by the frightened citizens; Petr gallops dramatically into the middle plane of the picture from the left; the background is occupied by the picturesque architecture typical of the Hanseatic ports. The disposition of the figures in the foreground is related to the architectural structures on each side of the composition - a building with a Gothic window on the left, and one with a skull and crossbones over the door on the right. These act like wings in a stage set, guiding the eye into the picture. Indeed, Petr seems to have entered from behind the left wing. The smoke or haze behind him, which envelopes the crowd of figures between him and the buildings, also limits the sense of space. It flattens the buildings, as is usually the effect of smoke or mist, although this device is also commonly used in the backgrounds of Academic paintings.

The overall tone is light and bright, with sunlight, and the vivid hues of uniforms and civilian clothes prevailing over the smoke in the sky. This helps to create a mood of positive emotion in the spectator, suggesting that the horror of war is ending and that Petr will restore peace to Narva. Despite the three-month siege and heavy bombardment, the hapless citizens are depicted colourfully. They cling to each other, some wounded or dying, or reach out imploringly to Petr, but their suffering lacks real conviction. They are intended to be touching but not disturbing. The subject of the painting is not their distress, but Petr's heroism, and the spectator's eyes and sympathies are directed towards him.

Zauerbeid's use of lighting emphasises Petr's presence: light sweeps in diagonally from the right side of the foreground, illuminating Petr and the figures in front of him. However, it is also possible to read

the light as emanating from Petr himself, as if he is bringing it into the stricken city, with its smoke-filled sky. The diagonal of the shaft of light is paralleled by the thrust towards Petr of the people reaching out to him from the lower right. At the same time, this line intersects the opposing diagonal movement of Petr's horse and of the figures in the shadows on the left. These lines meet in Petr's tricorne hat, directing attention to his face, in which horror and outrage mingle.

The work lacks the accurate observation of historical detail which was becoming increasingly prominent in Russian history painting. This is particularly noticeable in the costumes and hairstyles of the women. For instance, the young woman kneeling in front of Petr's horse, with her back to the spectator, is wearing a full skirt, possibly over hoops, which were not worn until later.<sup>200</sup> In 1704, skirts were comparatively narrow, sometimes falling in a train over a cul de crin, an early type of bustle.<sup>201</sup> Circular hoops were fashionable in 1859. The woman's hair is also dressed in contemporary fashion, draped low over her ears and turned up at the back. The swooning woman in the doorway on the right of the picture wears an almost identical costume. Her skirt is clearly supported by circular hoops, and her bodice is cut according to contemporary tastes, with a short waist and oval décolletage.<sup>202</sup> Similarly, the beards, thick moustaches and side-whiskers of a number of the male characters, probably derived from Zauerbeid's models, would not

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<sup>200</sup>The early eighteenth-century revival of wide hoops began c. 1708 in Britain, whence it spread to France; see de Marly, Louis XIV & Versailles, p. 111.

<sup>201</sup>This style appeared in the highest levels of Western society in 1693; see ibid., p. 95.

<sup>202</sup>An analogy in British history painting can be found in John Everett Millais' treatment of the female figure in The Black Brunswicker (1860, Lady Lever Gallery, Port Sunlight) - her dress and hairstyle are hybrids of contemporary and 1815 fashions. The same is true of William M. Thackeray's illustrations for his own historical novel, Vanity Fair, 1847-8, despite his statement in 1840 that "A painter should be as careful about his costumes as an historian about his dates", quoted by Strong, And when did you last see your father?, p. 60.

have been worn in 1704, when facial hair, except for thin moustaches, was unfashionable. Only in his depiction of military uniforms was Zauerbeid able to give his figures a plausible eighteenth-century look.

Zauerbeid's Petr, in gleaming breastplate, gallops into the picture on his chestnut horse, sword in hand. His features are somewhat idealised but recognisable; his flowing hair and round-eyed expression may be derived from the bronze bust by Rastrelli, then in the Academy of Arts (fig. 1). Petr is represented not as a practical commander, restoring military discipline after victory, but a hero, the embodiment of the Ideal, engaged in a romantic act of chivalry. In fact, Petr's efforts to control his men at Narva, which included personally beheading one soldier, failed, and there was wholesale slaughter.<sup>203</sup> Hence, this painting expresses far more about official perceptions of Petr than about the actual circumstances of the capture of the city. In 1859, despite Aleksandr II's relaxation of literary and historical censorship, the Academic context within which Zauerbeid worked demanded a treatment of the subject which was favourable to Petr. The Academy could not allow an artist to show that Petr's attempts to restrain his troops had been ineffective, because that would have suggested that he was not always in complete control. To have depicted a Tsar's authority being flouted would have been provocative, suggesting by implication that any Tsar could be disobeyed with impunity.

Depictions of Petr engaged in marine rescue also emphasised his image as a heroic Saviour. The theme emerged in Stahlin's Original Anecdotes of Peter the Great, which influenced a number of other collections of petites histoires.<sup>204</sup> Anecdote LXXXIV, "Peter the Great's

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<sup>203</sup>Massie, Peter the Great, pp. 398.

<sup>204</sup>Gasiorowska, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian Fiction, p. 27.

intrepidity on the water"<sup>205</sup> includes the following tale, as related by Mr. de Bruyns, Master Attendant General at the Admiralty:

[Petr's] confidence in his knowledge as a pilot made him intrepid in the highest degree. When overtaken by a storm, he was so far from being afraid, that he encouraged the frightened sailors. - 'Never fear,' said he, 'the Czar Peter cannot be drowned: did you ever hear that an Emperor of Russia perished on the water?'<sup>206</sup>

A further story relates how Petr, taking some foreign ministers by boat from Petersburg to Kronshtadt, remained calm while they panicked during a storm, but was forced to anchor at Peterhof, where "he restored his company to life by means of a good repast and excellent Hungarian wine".<sup>207</sup>

Shteiben's Petr the Great on Lake Ladoga (1812, location unknown, fig. 55),<sup>208</sup> was copied as Petr I's Heroic Deed during a Storm (1832, Russian Museum) by Aleksandr Kotsebu, probably as a student exercise.<sup>209</sup> It shows Petr and two companions in a small boat on Lake Ladoga during a storm; the mast has broken; the other men are visibly terrified; but Petr stands heroically in the stern, steering with one hand, and with the other gesturing for calm among his companions. Petr's tall figure dominates the canvas. He is the only upright figure, and the

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<sup>205</sup>Stahlin, Original Anecdotes, pp. 271-4.

<sup>206</sup>Ibid., p. 271.

<sup>207</sup>Ibid., p. 274.

<sup>208</sup>Engraved reproduction in P. N. Petrov & S. N. Shubinskii, Al'bom 200-letnego Yubileya Imperatora Petra Velikogo, 1672-1872, St. Petersburg, 1872, p. 61.

<sup>209</sup>Kotsebu (August-Alexander von Kotzebue; 1815-89), was a native of Königsberg, who came to Petersburg to attend the Cadet School, but abandoned military studies in favour of the Academy of Arts. However, he remained noted as a painter of military historical subjects, e.g. Victory at Poltava (c. 1864, Hermitage), and The Battle between the Russians and the Swedes near the Village of Lesnaya, 28 October 1708 (1870, Russian Museum). See Bénézit, Dictionnaire Critique et Documentaire, vol. 5, p. 302, "Kotzebue". Several of his works are reproduced in Petrov & Shubinskii, Al'bom, pp. 45, 52-3, 57, & 60. As primarily military subjects, these lie somewhat outwith the scope of the present work.



pitching of the boat raises him even higher. His dominance has been intensified by setting him against the lighter areas of the sky. Since the light source is visibly behind Petr (the forward-facing parts of his face and body are in shadow), it should follow that he casts a shadow upon his companions. However, they seem to be illuminated in a way which suggests that Petr himself is a source of light.

This dramatic scene became extremely popular. It was copied by naive hands, painted on lacquer boxes, woven as a tapestry by the Imperial Tapestry Works,<sup>210</sup> and engraved. One engraving bears the following inscription, which reveals the symbolic subtext of the original: "Fear not exclaimed the Emperor, seizing the rudder abandoned by the Helmsman - 'Fear not your Lord Petr is with you and you shall not perish!...'".<sup>211</sup> This carries overtones of Christ calming the Sea of Galilee,<sup>212</sup> and walking on the water: "Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid".<sup>213</sup> It also possesses the resonance of the message that those who believe in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

Although open to charges of blasphemy, this identification of Petr with Christ and, indeed, with God had been present in his literary image since the mid-eighteenth century. On 26 April 1755, Lomonosov presented his "Panegyric to the Sovereign Emperor Petr the Great Of Blessed and Everlastingly Honoured Memory" to commemorate the anniversary of Elizaveta Petrovna's coronation,<sup>214</sup> which concludes:

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<sup>210</sup>See Sotheby's, catalogue of Sale of Russian Art, London, 5-6 December 1989, p. 49, no. 70, for a naive copy, with an inscription taken from the engraving, and mention of the use of the image in applied arts.

<sup>211</sup>D. A. Rovinskii, Podrobnii Slovar' Russkikh Gravirovannykh Portretov, St. Petersburg, illustrated ed., 1886, col. 1720, item no. 645.

<sup>212</sup>Matthew VIII, 24-7; Mark IV, 37-41; Luke VIII, 23-5.

<sup>213</sup>Matthew XIV, 24-32, and Mark VI, 48-51.

<sup>214</sup>Lomonosov, "Panegyric to the Sovereign Emperor Petr the Great...", Raeff, ed., Russian Intellectual History, pp. 32-48.

Then to whom shall I liken our Hero? I have often pondered the nature of Him whose all-powerful hand rules sky, land, and sea... But a limit has been set to human thoughts! They cannot grasp the Deity! He is usually pictured in human form. And so, if a man must be found who, in our conception, resembles God, I find none excepting PETER the Great.<sup>215</sup>

These in turn drew upon a tradition established in Petr's lifetime and soon after his death by the sermons of Bishops Feofan Prokopovich and Gavriil Buzhinskii (see below). As mentioned above, official art of Petr's time, including Zubov's engravings, had already stressed his links with God in visual terms, combining Classical and Christian symbols.

Shteiben and Kotsebu's pictures also embody the idea of the Tsar as Helmsman of the Ship of State, steering it through the turbulent waters of change. Such an image further emphasised his autocratic powers: it is the job of one man, and one man alone, to guide the ship. As late as 1905, this symbolic representation of Petr sailing boldly into a storm recurs in Merezhkovskii's Antichrist: Petr and Aleksei:

And with a firm hand the helmsman [Petr] steered  
over the iron and ensanguined waves toward the unknown,  
the distant.

The sun sank, darkness fell, and the storm began to  
howl.<sup>216</sup>

In the early nineteenth century, the assumption underlying this theme was that, whatever the apparent dangers, the State was sailing towards a safe future under the autocrat's guidance. By the time of the 1905 revolution, such faith was no longer possible. Petr's image had become morally ambivalent, and these sentences, which close the main narrative of the novel, are extremely ominous.

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<sup>215</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>216</sup>Merejkowski (Merezhkovskii), Peter and Alexis, p. 536.

The archetypal Hero "is unlikely to die in his bed of old age".<sup>217</sup> Indeed, his death "has to be seen as tragic in an extraordinary manner",<sup>218</sup> sometimes with sacrificial overtones. Despite years of active warfare and periods of domestic unpopularity, Petr I died in middle age of natural causes probably connected with his alcoholic and sexual habits.<sup>219</sup> However, one event of his last months was exploited by late writers seeking to reaffirm his heroic status, by emphasising his rôle as self-sacrificing Saviour. According to Stahlin's Anecdote CX, "The Death of Peter the Great", Petr's fatal illness was aggravated by a chill caught while rescuing soldiers and sailors from a boat which had run aground near Lakhta in November 1724.<sup>220</sup> Stahlin related:

The Czar immediately sent a vessel to their assistance; but notwithstanding the efforts of the crew, they could not get the other afloat. The Emperor, witness of this distressing spectacle, was afflicted to see how little they exerted themselves to save men half dead with fear from the fury of the waves. At once he took the resolution of going himself, and finding that his boat could not advance to the shore on account of sand banks, he waded into the water, up to his knees, and reached the boat that was aground. His presence and example made every one redouble his efforts; the boat was soon got off, and the people it contained were saved...

The generous Czar was obliged to change his clothes; and notwithstanding the suddenness of the change from warm to cold, and from dry to wet, he did not appear to have injured his health. His mind was entirely occupied with the pleasure of having saved a considerable number of men from perishing, without being deterred an instant by the

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<sup>217</sup>Butler, The Myth of the Hero, p. 30.

<sup>218</sup>Ibid., loc. cit.

<sup>219</sup>In 1716 Petr boasted to the King of Denmark of the cheapness of his harlots, which he regarded as an economic virtue rather than a reflection upon their quality; see Massie, Peter the Great, p. 811.

<sup>220</sup>Stahlin, Original Anecdotes, pp. 361-3.

fear of a return of his disease, from which there was no hope of his recovering a second time.<sup>221</sup>

During the night, Petr became feverish and suffered abdominal pains. According to Stahlin, his condition continued to deteriorate, and he died on 28 January 1725.<sup>222</sup>

Although the sea rescue at Lakhta was not the direct or sole cause of Petr's death,<sup>223</sup> it was a genuinely heroic deed, and was used to present his death as a sacrifice for others. As Gavriil Buzhinskii had written in a sermon commemorating the first anniversary of Petr's death:

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. In this love Peter is a true imitator of Christ the Lord, not sparing his dearest life for his fatherland...not sparing his life in seafaring, where once he was in such a storm on the Baltic Sea that all hope of salvation was gone; all this he suffered for the fatherland, laying down his life for his friends.<sup>224</sup>

Even in Petr's lifetime, this self-sacrificial image was being prepared for him by his chief ecclesiastical supporter and propagandist, Feofan Prokopovich. In a sermon delivered in St. Petersburg during the succession crisis of 1718,<sup>225</sup> Prokopovich used it to arouse guilt and to condemn the ingratitude of Petr's subjects:

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<sup>221</sup>ibid., pp. 361-2.

<sup>222</sup>Stahlin does not mention the likely contribution to Petr's death of some extremely riotous parties, including the 'Conclave' of the 'All-Drunken Synod' at the end of December, which his poor health did not prevent him hosting. The banquet in honour of the new 'Prince-Pope' included large quantities of alcohol and, as food, wolves, foxes, bears, cats and rats; see Schuyler, Peter the Great, vol. II, pp. 638-9.

<sup>223</sup>See Chapter 1. The precise nature of Petr's disease is uncertain, but the chief symptom for some years had been strangury; Massie, Peter the Great, pp. 826, 836, 842, 844-5.

<sup>224</sup>G. Buzhinskii, Polnoe sobranie pouchitelnykh slov, skazyvannykh v vysochaishem prisutstvii gosudarya imperatora Petra Velikogo, Moscow, 1784, pp. 252-3, quoted by Riasanovsky, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought, p. 13.

<sup>225</sup>F. Prokopovich, "Sermon on Royal Authority and Honor, How It Is Established in the World by God Himself, and How Men are Obligated to Honor Kings and Obey Them, and Who the People Are Who Oppose Them and How Great Is The Sin They Have", in Raeff, ed., Russian Intellectual History, pp. 14-30. This sermon was given on Palm

...when by his many cares and efforts he is bringing untimely old age upon himself, when for the integrity of his fatherland, disregarding his own health, he is hurrying toward death as though at a gallop, ...some think he is living too long!<sup>226</sup>

The concept of the ruler as a self-sacrificing "imitator of Christ" was deeply rooted in Russian tradition, particularly in the myth of the Strastoterpets - the Passion-bearer. According to Cherniavsky, the Passion-bearers "accept, 'voluntarily', the death that comes to them by virtue of their being princes, and through this...are able to remain princes after death for all time",<sup>227</sup> as intercessors for their subjects. This idea was first embodied in Kievan Rus' by Princes Boris and Gleb, murdered by their brother Svyatopolk for dynastic reasons in 1015.<sup>228</sup> Their non-resistance and passive acceptance of death were seen to give them the character of martyrs: "[they] did not die for Christ, but in Christ, imitating Christ and his passion".<sup>229</sup> A popular cult grew around them very quickly.<sup>230</sup> The cults of later Strastoterp'tsy were more overtly political. Andrei Bogolyubskii, Grand Prince of Suzdal' and Vladimir, was a "cruel and ruthless"<sup>231</sup> man, murdered in 1175 by his own nobles. His betrayal and death granted him the status of a princely martyr, since rulers were appointed by God to be obeyed, and to overthrow them in this fashion was to disobey God.<sup>232</sup> However, because of Andrei's aggression

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Sunday, 6 April 1718; it seems to have been directed at the disinherited Tsarevich Aleksei and his surviving sympathisers.

<sup>226</sup>Ibid., pp. 28-9.

<sup>227</sup>Cherniavsky, Tsar and People, p. 14.

<sup>228</sup>Ibid., pp. 7-9, and A. Besançon, Le Tsarévitch Immolé: La Symbolique de la Loi dans la Culture Russe, Paris, 1967, pp. 60-1.

<sup>229</sup>Cherniavsky, Tsar and People, p. 7.

<sup>230</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>231</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>232</sup>See ibid., p. 12, for a quotation from the Trinity Monastery Chronicle (Troitskaya Letopis'), which in turn refers to Saints Paul and John Chrysostom. Prokopovich in

towards other cities, including Kiev, his cult remained local until, perhaps significantly, Petr I gave it national recognition in 1702.<sup>233</sup> These cases strongly parallel those of slightly later Scandinavian ruler-saints, such as Jarl Magnus of Orkney.<sup>234</sup> However, popular tradition did not accord Petr a place within this myth. Indeed, many people, not just the Old Believers, regarded him as an impostor-Tsar and as the Antichrist, rather than as a Christ-figure.<sup>235</sup> Paintings which attempted to show him in the rôle of Saviour were based on the deliberate literary elaboration of the tradition of the Strastoterpets, as described above.

In art, Petr's participation in the rescue at Lakhta was depicted in terms of Buzhinskii's interpretation as the last great deed of a self-sacrificing hero. Petr the Great at Lakhta (1844, Tret'yakov Gallery, fig. 56),<sup>236</sup> by Petr Shamshin (1811-95), shows Petr in the midst of the shipwreck victims, pulling them to safety. The composition is based upon overlapping right-angled triangles. The masthead of the rescuers' boat forms the apex of the overall design, while Petr's head forms that of the main part of the scene, which occupies the foreground and middle distance. Attention is further focussed upon Petr by the strong diagonal

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his "Sermon on Royal Authority and Honor", Raeff, ed., Russian Intellectual History, pp. 21 & 26, cites exactly the same religious texts in support of Petr I.

<sup>233</sup>Ibid., p. 11; also see previous note.

<sup>234</sup>N. W. Ingham, "The Sovereign as Martyr, East and West", The Slavic & East European Journal, Bloomington, Ill., vol. 17, no. 1, 1973, pp. 7-8. Ingham draws a number of parallels between the tradition of the sovereign as martyr in Slavic countries and in the West, particularly in Scandinavian or Scandinavian-influenced countries. Given the close contact between the Slavs and the Norse in the early Middle Ages, particularly through Kiev, this is not surprising (see ibid., pp. 10-1). The tradition has strong echoes of Norse religion and sacrificial kingship; see J. G. Frazer, The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion, abridged ed., London, 1954, pp. 274-93, & 607-9.

<sup>235</sup>Cherniavsky, Tsar and People, pp. 76-7, n. 12, and Riasanovsky, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought, pp. 76-81. The latter, p. 81, mentions an interesting popular attempt to deal with ambivalent attitudes towards Petr - the idea of a redeemed "real" Petr and his "satanic double".

<sup>236</sup>Engraving in Petrov & Shubinskii, Al'bom, p. 157.

which runs from the figure on the right, carrying a victim on his shoulder, through the two women, and along the arm of the man whom Petr is dragging ashore to Petr's own arm and head.

Some components of the picture appear to be derived from the works of other Romantic artists. The diagonal thrust of the reaching figures and the underlying triangular structure of the composition are reminiscent of Théodore Géricault's The Raft of the Medusa (1817, Louvre), an influential painting in both the development of Romanticism and the iconography of disaster at sea. However, it is unknown whether Shamshin could have had access to a reproduction of Géricault's work. The poses of the bending man in the shirt and the woman whom he is rescuing bear some resemblance to those of Pliny and his aged mother in Bryullov's The Last Day of Pompeii (fig. 28, bottom right). It is likely that Shamshin was familiar with Bryullov's celebrated painting, which had been awarded a Gold Medal at the Paris Salon and exhibited to large crowds at the St. Petersburg Academy in 1834, and hung in the Hermitage.<sup>237</sup> The man on the right, carrying a victim over his shoulder, is comparable with the soldier carrying the old man in the foreground of Bryullov's picture, and, to a lesser extent, of the figure carrying a girl on the right of Bruni's The Brazen Serpent (1826-41, Russian Museum). This painting was then in the Hermitage, where Shamshin may have seen it. Traces of the Classical tradition, as represented by Andrei Ivanov, are also in evidence: with the exception of Petr himself, the other characters all seem to be wearing draperies more appropriate to a Classical or Biblical setting. This convention removes the event from its specific historical context and gives it a universality and a timelessness which reinforce its strong symbolic overtones.

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<sup>237</sup>Leontyeva (Leont'eva), Karl Briullov, pp. 26 & 208.

Shamshin departed from recorded history by including women and a small child among the shipwreck victims, who were, in fact, twenty soldiers.<sup>238</sup> This was probably done to increase the pathos of the scene by emphasising the victims' helplessness, and to attribute a chivalrous spirit to Petr. It adds a universal character to Petr's rôle as the Saviour of all his subjects. He pulls a drowning man (to whom another is also clinging) from the waves with his left hand, while cradling an infant in his right arm - a pose which is physically improbable, although extremely dramatic.<sup>239</sup> It conveys his dual image in the painting as both the strong man of action and the tender protector of the helpless. The child gazes up adoringly at Petr, who in turn gazes heavenward. This suggests a link with a divine reality beyond the painting, as if Petr is invoking God's aid or seeking to remind the spectator that, as the divinely-appointed Emperor, he is doing God's work. The rock on which he stands is more substantial than the sand bank mentioned by Stahlin. This may be partly for visual reasons, to increase the prominence of the figures upon it, and partly a symbolic play upon the Emperor's name, with echoes of the New Testament. Petr himself is depicted as a rock upon whom others depend for survival, the rock upon whom the modern Russian Empire is founded.

A later treatment of Petr the Great at Lakhta, drawn by Zagorskii for Brikner's History of Petr the Great (fig. 57)<sup>240</sup> in 1881, reflects a greater degree of naturalism, while still portraying Petr as a hero. The scene adheres more closely to documented fact. There are no women or children present, and all the characters are depicted in more accurate

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<sup>238</sup>Massie, Peter the Great, p. 843.

<sup>239</sup>This would be virtually impossible without falling in oneself or letting go of one of the victims; the drowning man, if held, would be likely to suffer a dislocated shoulder (I am indebted to my father, a former Merchant Navy officer, for this observation).

<sup>240</sup>Brikner, Istoriya Petra Velikogo, pl. facing p. 678.



eighteenth-century costume. Petr, standing in the shallows, coat flapping in the wind, is still the focus of attention. The low viewpoint emphasises his height, and he is placed in a prominent position, close to the centre and close to the foreground. His extended left arm seems to come towards the spectator, with the pointing hand precisely in the centre of the picture. Yet his physical appearance is comparatively unidealised, closer to Houbraken's engraving after de Moor (1718, Hermitage, fig. 85)<sup>241</sup> than to Zauerbeid's handsome knight-errant.

The theme of Petr as Saviour re-emerged in 1914, in Vasilii Afanas'ev's Petr I saves Soldiers stranded during a Flood (Russian Museum). Its date may be significant. The growth of history painting outside the Academy's control from the 1870s onward had created an alternative repertory of hostile or ambivalent images of Petr. The laudatory images of Academic history painting, reflecting Petr's reputation in official history, were undermined by the impact of paintings such as Vasilii Surikov's The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy (fig. 126). However, at a time of national crisis, such as the outbreak of the First World War, an image of self-sacrificing, patriotic leadership retained particularly strong resonances.

The image of Petr as an archetypal mythic hero, as presented in official art, was challenged by developments of the late 1850s-1860s in contemporary politics, in historiography, and in painting. The death of Nikolai I and the accession of the comparatively liberal Aleksandr II led to a reduction in censorship and a moderation, for a time, of the cult of Petr. Meanwhile, the artistic influence of the short-lived Vyacheslav Shvarts was to have an effect upon Russian history painting that lasted until the

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<sup>241</sup>ibid., facing p. 494. This engraving is an important source-image of the older Petr.

early twentieth century. An alternative image of Petr and his reign was developed, which was expressed most powerfully in paintings by Ge, Repin and Surikov. That this was possible was also a result of the breaking of the Academic/Court monopoly on art, as the formation of the Association for Travelling Art Exhibitions, the Peredvizhniki, brought Academy-trained artists outside the Academy's control to a new audience and market.

### Chapter 3: The Eighteen-Sixties.

The 1860s were a transitional period in the evolution of Russian history painting. Increased official recognition of contemporary genre painting helped a new approach to develop. Although Mariya Nikolaevna, Nikolai I's daughter, kept her position as President of the Academy after her father's death in 1855, the Vice-President, Prince Grigorii Gagarin, was able to implement reforms in 1859. Gagarin (1810-93) was a talented artist, and, as a pupil of Bryullov<sup>1</sup> and friend of Mikhail Lermontov,<sup>2</sup> was closely linked with Romanticism. Deciding that "only realistic genre painting, pictures of contemporary manners please the public now",<sup>3</sup> he presided over a relaxation of competition rules. One of the new Statutes of 1859 gave students a free choice of subjects in the Silver Medal competitions.

The new Statute did not include the Large and Small Gold Medal competitions, but some students took matters into their own hands and chose their own subjects.<sup>4</sup> Contemporary genre subjects of a moral or sentimental nature were popular. Nikolai Chernyshevskii's dissertation, The Aesthetic Relation of Art to Reality had been published in 1855.<sup>5</sup> In it Chernyshevskii attacked Hegelian æsthetic theory and Academic idealism, promoting in its stead a more utilitarian approach:

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<sup>1</sup>Leontyeva (Leont'eva), Karl Briullov, pp. 31 & 207, and pl. 82.

<sup>2</sup>Gagarin collaborated with Lermontov upon An Episode of the Battle of Valerik, 11 July, 1840 (1840, Russian Museum); see E. A. Kovalevskaya, ed., Lermontov: Kartiny, Akvareli, Risunki, Moscow, 1980, pp. 224-5 & 246, item 160; also L. Kelly, Lermontov: Tragedy in the Caucasus, London, 1977, p. 131, and plates between pp. 96-7, including several of Gagarin's paintings.

<sup>3</sup>Gagarin, quoted by Vereshchagina, Istoricheskaya Kartina v Russkom Iskusstve, p. 31.

<sup>4</sup>Valkenier, Russian Realist Art, p. 18.

<sup>5</sup>Included in N. G. Chernyshevskii, Selected Philosophical Essays, Moscow, 1953, pp. 281-381.

The essential purpose of art is to reproduce what is of interest to man in real life. But, being interested in the phenomena of life, man cannot but, consciously or unconsciously, pronounce judgement on them... This judgement is expressed in his work - this is another purpose of art, which places it among the moral activities of man.<sup>6</sup>

However, it is difficult to determine whether Chernyshevskii's opinions directly influenced the artists, or whether the increasing interest in contemporary subjects simply developed alongside the theory in a common cultural milieu.<sup>7</sup>

In 1860 Small Gold Medals were won by Vasilii Perov for The First Grade (Iranian Embassy, Moscow), which showed a sexton's son being measured for his uniform on achieving his first civil service grade, and by Valerii Yakobi for A Beggar's Feast-day (Russian Museum). A Large Gold Medal was awarded to Ivan Shishkin for A View of Valaam Island. The Locality of Kukko (Russian Museum). In 1861 Grigorii Myasoedov, Aleksandr Morozov and Aleksei Korzukhin won Small Gold Medals for genre paintings. Myasoedov's Young People's Celebrations in a Landowner's House (Russian Museum) shows peasants being welcomed into the parlour by the young ladies of the house. It is not a piece of social criticism, and until 1897 it hung in the Aleksandrovskii Palace at Tsarskoe Selo.<sup>8</sup> Morozov's Rest at Haymaking (Tret'yakov Gallery) depicts clean, well-dressed, robust peasants having lunch in the fields. It is an idealised rural scene, reminiscent of Venetsianov, rather than a critique of the condition of the peasantry. In contrast, Korzukhin depicted the harsh reality of peasant life in A Family's Drunken Father (Museum of

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<sup>6</sup>"The Aesthetic Relation of Art to Reality", *ibid.*, pp. 374-5.

<sup>7</sup>Valkenier, Russian Realist Art, pp. 10, & 15-16. She notes, p. 19, that in his reviews in Sovremennik, Chernyshevskii paid little attention to the social criticism in Perov's paintings.

<sup>8</sup>Zhivopis' XVIII-nachalo XX veka. Katalog, GRM, p. 212, item no. 3722.

Russian Art, Kiev, Ukraine), showing women and children cowering in fear as the drunkard breaks in the door of his home.

The official subject for the 1861 Large Gold Medal was Sof'ya Vitovtovna (At the Wedding of Grand Prince Vasiliï Vasil'evich the Dark, Grand Princess Sof'ya Vitovtovna takes from Prince Vasiliï the Squinting, brother of [Dmitriï] the Unjust, the jewelled belt formerly belonging to Dmitriï Donskoi, which the Yur'evich [brothers] had wrongfully seized).<sup>9</sup>

This subject was treated by Pavel Chistyakov (Russian Museum), Vasiliï Vereshchagin (sketch; Museum of the Academy of Arts, St. Petersburg), Karl Gun (Karlis Huns, a Latvian; Kaunas Historical Museum, Lithuania), Nikolai Dmitriev-Orenburgskii and Bogdan Venig (uncertain attribution; Irkutsk Regional Art Museum). Chistyakov's version, which was awarded a Large Gold Medal, is the best-known. Large Gold Medals were also presented to Mikhail Petrovich Klodt for Her Last Spring, Perov for A Sermon in the Village, and Yakobi for The Convicts' Halt (all now Tret'yakov Gallery).<sup>10</sup> Klodt's sentimental depiction of two young women visiting a consumptive friend raised no difficult social issues. However, the awards to Perov and Yakobi revealed the extent of Gagarin's liberalisation. Just as Perov satirised clerical corruption and lack of moral leadership in A Village Easter Procession (1861, Tret'yakov Gallery), so in A Sermon in the Village he criticised the absence of real Christianity among parishioners. Church attendance is shown as a social chore, rather than an expression of faith; while the gentry sit dozing or flirting during the sermon, the peasants fidget and gossip; only a little girl and an old man are listening. Yakobi's The Convicts' Halt was more controversial

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<sup>9</sup>Vereshchagina, Istoricheskaya Kartina v Russkom Iskusstve, p. 92. To clarify the title: Vasiliï II Vasil'evich was the grandson of Dmitriï Donskoi and the son of Sof'ya Vitovtovna; Vasiliï the Squinting and Dmitriï the Unjust were the Yur'evich brothers.

<sup>10</sup>ibid., p. 23.

still, in showing the brutal treatment of convicts and their families on the forced march to Siberia.

On 22 September 1862, the Council of the Academy decided to extend the scope of the Small Gold Medal Competition:

This competition is appointed to undertake, in place of a historical episode, the expression of some sort of emotion or common action, e.g. war, sorrow, longing for one's homeland, joy, etc., allowing the student to choose his own image on the set theme, in whichever genre of painting he prefers.<sup>11</sup>

Similarly, the Large Gold Medal was henceforth to be awarded "without distinction between genres of painting."<sup>12</sup>

By officially giving equality to all artistic genres, the Academy helped to blur their traditional boundaries. History painting had been dominated by the quest for subjects of heroic significance and drama. Historical genre painting recreated scenes of everyday life in the past, not major events. Previously, Khlebovskii's An Assembly in the Reign of Petr I (fig. 50) had been classified as a genre painting, as had (less logically) Mikhail Peskov's heroic subject, Minin's Appeal to the People of Nizhnii-Novgorod (1861, Samara City Art Gallery).<sup>13</sup> Vyacheslav Shvarts (1838-69) was an influential early exponent of this type of painting. Although most of his works are set in pre-Petrine Russia, Shvarts' emphasis upon researching settings and costumes, and upon naturalistic compositions, without excessive melodrama, influenced the Peredvizhniki's approach to Petrine subjects in the 1870s and 1880s.

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<sup>11</sup> P. N. Petrov, ed., Sbornik materialov dlya istorii Imperatorskoi S.-Peterburgskoi Akademii Khudozhestv za sto let ee sushchestvovaniya, St Petersburg, 1864-6, vol. III, p. 406, quoted ibid., p. 24.

<sup>12</sup> ibid., loc. cit.

<sup>13</sup> ibid., p. 22.

Shvarts was the son of a Major-General who had served in the Napoleonic Wars and in the Caucasus.<sup>14</sup> He was well-educated, and from his youth, he had drawn military subjects.<sup>15</sup> While a pupil at the Aleksandrovskii Lycée in Tsarskoe Selo, his interest in art had been fostered by his friendship with an Academy student, Arsenii Meshcherskii.<sup>16</sup> In 1857, encouraged by Meshcherskii, Shvarts began to paint in oils, again treating subjects from military history, such as Napoleon at Marengo (location unknown).<sup>17</sup> He enrolled at the University of St. Petersburg in 1859, to study Oriental Languages, and attended lectures by the noted historian Nikolai Kostomarov.<sup>18</sup> However, he withdrew and entered the Academy of Arts, where he studied under Gotfrid Villeval'de, Professor of Battle Painting (1818-1903),<sup>19</sup> who also taught genre drawing.<sup>20</sup>

Shvarts was interested in contemporary subjects of a moral and sometimes satirical nature. In 1861, he made a drawing titled The Unequal Marriage (Russian Museum), prefiguring Vasilii Pukirev's painting of the same title (1862, Tret'yakov Gallery). Shvarts simply contrasts the profile of a beautiful, refined-looking woman with a caricatured bureaucrat with a foolish expression and a decoration on his coat.<sup>21</sup> Travelling through Poland to Frankfurt-am-Main that year, he made ink

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<sup>14</sup>A. G. Vereshchagina, Vyacheslav Grigor'evich Shvarts 1838-1869, Leningrad & Moscow, 1960, p. 12.

<sup>15</sup>"Spisok proizvedenii V. G. Shvarts", in ibid., pp. 146-7; e.g. Waterloo (1849, location unknown), The Death of Colonel A. N. Karamzin (1854, location unknown), a series of scenes from the Crimean War (1856, Russian Museum), Valerik and The Battle of Marengo (both 1857, Russian Museum).

<sup>16</sup>Meshcherskii (1834-1902) became a landscape artist.

<sup>17</sup>Vereshchagina, Shvarts, pp. 18-9.

<sup>18</sup>ibid., p. 21.

<sup>19</sup>ibid., p. 23.

<sup>20</sup>ibid., p. 40.

<sup>21</sup>ibid., p. 45.

drawings of poor Jews,<sup>22</sup> and satirised officials: Frankfurt a/M freie Stadt!!! (Russian Museum) caricatures three officers - a Prussian, an Austrian and a Bavarian.<sup>23</sup> Two drawings criticised the Russian army: "Don't You Dare Overtake the Chief!"<sup>24</sup> showed guards being ordered not to walk ahead of an old, presumably slow-moving General, while An Invalid<sup>25</sup> portrayed a much-decorated, one-legged veteran begging (both 1862, Russian Museum). Shvarts satirised the clergy, much as Perov did in A Village Easter Procession and Tea-drinking at Mytishchi, in Panikhida [Service for the Dead] in a Cemetery in Winter (1862, Russian Museum).<sup>26</sup>

Shvarts combined his inclination towards genre themes with his training in Academic history painting in his later historical genre subjects. He was aware of Western developments in this area. In Paris, in 1863, at the time of Delacroix's death, he wrote to his father: "France has lost in him her best and most original artist".<sup>27</sup> However, Shvarts' own talents and the tastes of the 1860s did not lead him towards Delacroix's large-scale, dramatic Romanticism. While in Paris, he developed a strong admiration for Jean-Louis-Ernest Meissonier (1815-91) and his small, finely detailed history paintings.<sup>28</sup> Meissonier was influenced by the subject matter and style of seventeenth-century Dutch genre painting, as can be seen in his tavern scene, The Lost Game (1858, Wallace Collection, fig. 58). Shvarts was not the only Russian-trained artist to be impressed by Meissonier; Gun remained closer to Meissonier in his preference for French subjects, such as St. Bartholomew's Eye (1868, Russian Museum,

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<sup>22</sup>Three Jews in the Street (location unknown) and Jewish Water-Carrier (Russian Museum), *ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>23</sup>*ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>24</sup>*ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>25</sup>*ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>26</sup>*ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>27</sup>*ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>28</sup>*ibid.*, pp. 62-3.



fig. 59), in which a Parisian Catholic pins a white cross to his hat to avoid being taken for a Huguenot on the night of the massacre in 1572. However, Shvarts' application of Meissonier's style to Russian subjects had greater long-term significance.

Shvarts' interest in Muscovite Russia had begun when, as a schoolboy, he had access to the library of the historian Shakeev, father of one of his friends.<sup>29</sup> In the 1850s, Aleksandr Viskovatov, the father of another schoolfriend, wrote books on the history of Russian costume and armour. Viskovatov's works influenced Shvarts' interests and inspired some early drawings.<sup>30</sup> Vereshchagina has observed:

[Shvarts] was almost [completely] uninterested in the eighteenth century. Pre-Petrine Rus', the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, to be precise, was the time which the artist inhabited.<sup>31</sup>

He was also interested in contemporary folk tradition, sketching Kursk peasants during his summer vacation in 1860.<sup>32</sup> In nineteenth-century Russia, this implied nationalist values<sup>33</sup> - if not full subscription to Slavophile ideology, at least sympathy towards the historical reassessment of pre-Petrine Russia which had begun after Nikolai I's death. Shvarts kept abreast of the latest historical publications.<sup>34</sup> Vereshchagina goes so far as to claim that, without this proliferation of historical, archæological

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<sup>29</sup>ibid., p. 19. Shakeev's library included old manuscripts, Prince Kurbskii's letters, material on the Pretender Dmitrii, and translated travellers' accounts of Russia, including the works of Olearius and Gerberstein.

<sup>30</sup>ibid., loc. cit.

<sup>31</sup>Vereshchagina, Khudozhnik, Istoriya, Vremya, p. 55.

<sup>32</sup>Vereshchagina, Shvarts, p. 40.

<sup>33</sup>Vereshchagina, Khudozhnik, Istoriya, Vremya, p. 55.

<sup>34</sup>Vereshchagina, Shvarts, p. 74, lists a number of the works he studied: Kostomarov, Essays on the Domestic Life and Customs of the Great-Russian People in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, (1862); Zabelin, The Domestic Life of the Russian Tsars in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, (1862); Savvaitov's Description of the Ancient Crown Jewels, Costume, Arms and Armour and Horse-Trappings, with lithographs (1865), Archimandrite Savva's Reproductions of Palæography from Greek and Slavonic Manuscripts, etc.

and ethnographic research, he would not have been able to paint his pictures.<sup>35</sup> Although Shvarts' characterisations suggest some degree of conformity with conventional, post-Petrine historiography (his Aleksei Mikhailovich is benign but weak and priest-ridden), he nevertheless raised the important issue of pre-Petrine contacts with the West. It is possible that, as in the later case of Surikov, Shvarts' preference for Muscovite themes may reflect a more ambivalent (if not negative) attitude towards Petr I.

In earlier Academic history painting, as discussed above, Petr I's image as Bearer of Culture was an important part of his iconography. For this image to carry its fullest significance, pre-Petrine Russia had to be portrayed in completely hostile terms, as a backward country completely isolated from the West. Shvarts, interested in the reigns of Ivan IV and Aleksei Mikhailovich, undermined this concept. Pictures such as Foreign Envoys at the Foreign Office (1865, location unknown<sup>36</sup>) and The Russian Ambassador at the Court of the Holy Roman Emperor (1866, Tret'yakov Gallery) reflected the new focus on earlier contacts, as described by historians such as Solov'ev. The costumes of the Westerners show clearly that Foreign Envoys at the Foreign Office is set c. 1630-50, while The Russian Ambassador at the Court of the Holy Roman Emperor is set in the sixteenth century.

In addition to his extensive reading, Shvarts also studied historical costumes and artefacts in the Kremlin Armoury Museum.<sup>37</sup> Early in 1865, as a tribute to his scholarship and artistic achievements, he was awarded membership of the Russian Archæological Society.<sup>38</sup> This would have

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<sup>35</sup> ibid., loc. cit.

<sup>36</sup> Vereshchagina, Istoricheskaya Kartina v Russkom Iskusstve, p. 205.

<sup>37</sup> Vereshchagina, Shvarts, p. 75.

<sup>38</sup> ibid., loc. cit.

given him greater access to recent research by fellow-members and probably to artefacts of the period. It also aligned him, in the context of Western European history painting, with the tradition of the Artist-Antiquarian, begun in the late eighteenth century by artists like John Singleton Copley (1738-1815),<sup>39</sup> and more recently exemplified by Delaroche.<sup>40</sup> Historical research into costume, architecture, furniture and other accessories had not always been of particular significance in history painting, as shown in Chapter 2. However, the dominant influences of Delaroche and Meissonier, who went to considerable lengths in their attempts to recreate the past, and the steady movement towards Realism in contemporary genre painting, raised the expectations of critics and audiences.<sup>41</sup>

Vereshchagina has defined "the problem of the Hero" as central to Russian history painting in the 1860s.<sup>42</sup> By this she means that the idealisation of characters in earlier Academic history painting was no longer tenable, given the impetus towards Realism in style and content. This idealisation was both physical and moral. Chistyakov's Sof'ya Vitovtovna (1861) seems to mark a move away from physical idealisation of a historical character. He depicts Sof'ya as a heavily-built middle-aged woman, rather than as the elegant figure with a finely-cut profile who appears in Gun's painting.<sup>43</sup> To a spectator accustomed to the Platonic association of outer and inner beauty in Academic art, this would suggest,

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<sup>39</sup>See E. Gombrich, The Story of Art, London, 15th ed., 1989, pp. 381-2, with Copley's Charles I demanding the Surrender of the Five Impeached Members of Parliament (1785. Public Library, Boston, Ma.), fig. 316.

<sup>40</sup>Strong, And when did you last see your father?, p. 40.

<sup>41</sup>Strong notes that in Britain, critics such as Thackeray were already judging history paintings in terms of accurate representation of costume in the early 1840s; see And when did you last see your father?, p. 60.

<sup>42</sup>See the chapter of this title, "Problema Geroya", in Vereshchagina, Istoricheskaya Kartina v Russkom Iskusstve, pp. 82-151.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., pp. 92-3.

a negative evaluation of Sof'ya's character. Vereshchagina describes Chistyakov's Sof'ya as "not only ugly and ignorant, but inwardly common, almost vulgar"<sup>44</sup> on the strength of her appearance. However, in his reliance upon melodrama, epitomised by the histrionic gestures and poses of the main characters, and in his use of a limited picture space, Chistyakov had produced what in other respects was a conventional Academic painting.

The question of the idealisation of the hero became more pressing when artists depicted characters whose reputations were known to be controversial. Petr I had been depicted in an unambiguously heroic light in compliance with the censorship of history and Nikolai I's personal enthusiasm for him. Nikolai Koshelev, in The Debate of the Schismatics before the Court<sup>45</sup> (1869, fig. 104), restored the Regent Tsarevna Sof'ya to her rightful prominence in the scene,<sup>46</sup> but essentially Petr's official image remained unchallenged during the 1860s. The artistic and historical developments which led to more critical portrayals of Petr in the 1870s and 1880s began initially in relation to characters who were less central to the image of the contemporary Romanov dynasty. Shvarts' chief contributions to these developments centred upon subjects from Muscovite history, notably Ivan IV, Aleksei Mikhailovich, and Patriarch Nikon.

Ivan IV, 'Ivan the Terrible' (although his epithet Groznyi literally means 'Dread', 'Menacing' or 'Stern'), was perhaps the most famous Muscovite ruler. As Riasanovsky observes, he "remains the classic Russian tyrant in spite of such successors as Peter the Great, Paul I and

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 93.

<sup>45</sup>In V. Zolotov, Istoriya Rossii v kartinakh, 3rd ed., St. Petersburg, 1869, reproduced in Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 126.

<sup>46</sup>See Chapter 5 for a discussion of the iconography of the debate and the rôle of female characters.

Nicholas I".<sup>47</sup> His ambivalent image in many respects prefigured that of Petr I. Ivan successfully waged war against the Tatars and captured Kazan'. He was a gifted scholar and composer, and he was interested in links with the West. At the same time, he suffered from bouts of insanity, alternating savage brutality with extreme religiosity and repentance. He instigated massacres of potential rivals, and of whole villages and towns. Novgorod was sacked in 1570, and Filipp, the Metropolitan of Moscow, was imprisoned and murdered for questioning Ivan's authority.<sup>48</sup> Also, like Petr I, Ivan killed his eldest son.<sup>49</sup>

Images of Ivan IV and his reign formed a significant part of Shvarts' œuvre. He illustrated Lermontov's bylina (mediæval-style narrative poem) The Song about Tsar Ivan Vasil'evich, his young Oprichnik, and the Bold Merchant Kalashnikov (1862-4, Tret'yakov Gallery),<sup>50</sup> and Aleksei Tolstoi's historical novel Prince Serebryanyi (1863-5, Russian Museum and Tret'yakov Gallery),<sup>51</sup> both set in Ivan's reign. Both these works condemned Ivan's tyranny. Kalashnikov is executed for killing, in a trial by combat, the oprichnik (member of Ivan's private army) who tried to rape his wife. In Prince Serebryanyi, Aleksei Tolstoi contrasted his idealised, chivalrous title-character with a lawless environment presided over by the increasingly despotic Ivan.<sup>52</sup> The dependence of illustrations upon their text makes it difficult to obtain clear evidence of the artist's attitude towards the subject from them. These ink drawings reflected Shvarts' interest in Muscovite costume and

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<sup>47</sup>N. V. Riasanovsky, A History of Russia, New York & Oxford, 4th ed., 1984, p. 143.

<sup>48</sup>The Orthodox Church venerates him as a martyr-saint, Filipp the Miracle-Worker.

<sup>49</sup>For a brief account of Ivan's reign, see Riasanovsky, A History of Russia, pp. 143-155.

<sup>50</sup>Vereshchagina, Shvarts, pp. 52-5.

<sup>51</sup>Reproduced ibid., pp. 86-91.

<sup>52</sup>N. Tolstoy, The Tolstoy: Twenty-Four Generations of Russian History, 1353-1983, London, 1983, pp. 230-2.

settings. Ivan the Terrible on a Hunt, meeting Blind Men (Tret'yakov Gallery), one of the illustrations to Prince Serebryanyi, was a genre scene of which he also made an oil sketch (late 1860s, Russian Museum).

Apart from these illustrative commissions, Shvarts produced two oil paintings about Ivan IV. Ivan the Terrible with the Corpse of his Son, Killed by Him, in Aleksandrovscoe (two versions; 1861, Russian Museum and 1864, Tret'yakov Gallery, fig. 60) set a new precedent in the development of Russian history painting. In 1861, the first version was awarded a First-Class Silver Medal,<sup>53</sup> and three years later the second version was awarded the Small Gold Medal. A work which depicted one of the most famous Russian Tsars as a criminal, a filicide, received official recognition from the Academy. To some extent, an understanding of the subject-matter depicted depends upon the title and the audience's familiarity with the characters and narrative. It is not immediately obvious that Ivan is responsible for his son's injuries; superficially, it could simply be a poignant death-bed scene. However, Shvarts' concentration upon Ivan's expression, as it reflects his psychological state, suggests the truth. It is possible to detect in the contrast between the killer, deep in thought and perhaps, in remorse, with the calm face of the victim, some relationship with Delaroche's Cromwell gazing at the Body of Charles I (1831, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nimes, figs. 61 & 83). Shvarts had not yet been abroad at the time he painted Ivan the Terrible with the Corpse of his Son, but he may have encountered Delaroche's work in reproduction, since it is known that students at the St. Petersburg Academy in the 1860s had access to photographs of Delaroche's paintings, among which Cromwell gazing at the Body of Charles I was noted as a

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<sup>53</sup>Gagarin was extremely impressed by Shvarts' work; see Vereshchagina, Shvarts, p. 38.

favourite.<sup>54</sup> Shvarts' composition is more crowded than that of Cromwell gazing at the Body of Charles I, with a greater density of historical detail. He also reverses the position of the main elements: Delaroche's Cromwell stands above Charles' coffin, on the right; Ivan sits on the left, below the bier. However, Shvarts' emphasis upon the protagonist's psychology and the overall mood seems indebted to Delaroche, as does the handling of space, with the main figures dominating the foreground in their proximity to the spectator and their size relative to the dimensions of the picture.

The ideological implications of this painting were profound. The traditional rôle of a Muscovite Tsar was expressed in his popular title, Batyushka Tsar' (Little Father Tsar). A proverb stated, "Without the Tsar the land is a widow; without the Tsar the people is an orphan".<sup>55</sup> Ivan IV, like his predecessors, had also become a monk on his deathbed. As Cherniavsky explains, this ritual played an important part in Muscovite tradition, drawing upon the earlier tradition of the saint-princes:<sup>56</sup>

...what this ceremony accomplished was the destruction of the tension between the prince's two natures [secular and saintly]. The prince who became a monk on his deathbed was the prince who, all his life, was both Tsar and angel-like monk. No matter how human in nature the prince might be, his monastic state was a guarantee of salvation and more, for the monk was...not just human but a being intermediate between man and God...

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<sup>54</sup>M. M. Antokol'skii, "Zametki ob iskusstve", Vestnik Evropy, 1897, vol. 32, no. 2, pp. 525-6, quoted by Valkenier, Russian Realist Art, p. 54.

<sup>55</sup>Cherniavsky, Tsar and People, p. 44.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., pp. 47-9. See also the first chapter, "Saintly Princes and Princely Saints", pp. 5-43, and Chapter 2 for a discussion of the concept of the ruler as Passion-bearer.

...Ivan IV died as a monk, and hence the absolution of his sins was as automatic a consequence of his being a man as his power was of his being Tsar.<sup>57</sup>

However, according to Cherniavsky, in Ivan IV's reign, "The early tradition of the prince as a complete mimesis [imitation] of Christ...was modified by the new conception of the State".<sup>58</sup> According to Besançon, the increasing centralisation of the Muscovite state and concentration of power in the Tsar's hands led to the Tsar being identified with God the Father, the Terrible Judge, rather than with the self-sacrificing Saviour, as the first Passion-bearers, Boris and Gleb, had been (see Chapter 2).<sup>59</sup> Ivan's manslaughter of his son in 1581 seemed to confirm in reality this change in the ruler's mythic image. Instead of the Tsar himself being the Christ-like Passion-bearer, the rôle was transferred to his son.<sup>60</sup>

The image of the 'Little Father Tsar' killing his own heir could be used as a metaphor for the relationship between a despot and his subjects. Shvarts did not deal explicitly with the violent act itself, unlike Repin in Ivan the Terrible and his son Ivan, 16 November, 1581 (1885, Tret'yakov Gallery, fig. 97),<sup>61</sup> who thereby incurred official hostility.<sup>62</sup> Shvarts depicted the aftermath, the actual death of the Tsarevich some days later. Like his friend Tolstoi, the author of Prince Serebryanyi,<sup>63</sup> Shvarts may

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<sup>57</sup>ibid., pp. 48-9.

<sup>58</sup>ibid., p. 51.

<sup>59</sup>Besançon, Le Tsarévitch Imolé, pp. 82-6. Hubbs, Mother Russia, p. 185, also sees the martyrdom of Metropolitan Filipp as part of Ivan's assumption of the rôle of "the terrible father judge".

<sup>60</sup>Besançon, Le Tsarévitch Imolé, p. 96, Frazer, The Golden Bough, pp. 289-93, for pre-Christian mythological analogies, and Chapter 4.

<sup>61</sup>Repin informally referred to this painting as The Son-Murderer (Synoubiitsa); see I. E. Repin, Izbrannye Pis'ma v Dvukh Tomakh, Moscow, 1969, vol. I, p. 301.

<sup>62</sup>Repin's picture had to be withdrawn from exhibition; see Moiseeva, ed., Tovarishchestvo. Pis'ma, Dokumenty, vol. I, pp. 297-8.

<sup>63</sup>Aleksei Tolstoi held Shvarts in high esteem and commissioned him, on Gagarin's recommendation, to design costumes for his play The Death of Ivan the Terrible (Smert' Ioanna Groznogo) in 1866; see Vereshchagina, Shvarts, pp. 98-106.



have regarded the subject of Ivan IV as a source of lessons concerning the dangers of unchecked autocracy. It is possible that he may have shared Tolstoi's belief that the more civilised spirit of his own time and the character of Aleksandr II, rather than constitutional change, provided the best defence against the abuse of autocratic power:

Your Majesty's name, which you have allowed me to place at the head of this romance of the time of Ivan the Terrible, is the best guarantee that an unbridgeable gulf separates the dark circumstances of our past from the enlightened outlook of the present day.<sup>64</sup>

Shvarts' treatment of royal filicide in the context of Ivan IV's reign set a precedent for dealing with a disturbing and controversial subject. By 1864, the extent of Petr I's involvement in killing his son, Aleksei, had been exposed by historians,<sup>65</sup> but his positive image in history painting was still unchallenged. Nikolai Ge's Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof (1871, Tret'yakov Gallery, fig. 78) was considerably more provocative than Shvarts' depiction of Ivan IV, because censorship of the circumstances of Aleksei's death had prevailed until the late 1850s. Unlike Ivan, Petr had not acted in hot blood and subsequently repented, but had committed judicial murder - a far more sensitive issue, given the prevalence of political trials in nineteenth-century Russia.<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, Shvarts' Ivan the Terrible with the Corpse of his Son was significant in enabling Ge and, later, Repin to return to the theme of filicide in a more controversial context and manner.

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<sup>64</sup>Dedication of Prince Serebryanyi, quoted by N. Tolstoy, The Tolstovs, p. 232.

<sup>65</sup>Ustryalov, Istoriya Tsarstvovaniva Petra Velikogo, vol. VI; also see Chapters 1 and 4.

<sup>66</sup>See Chapter 4.

Besides Ivan IV, Shvarts depicted other unusual heroes, such as Aleksei Mikhailovich and Patriarch Nikon. Their images in history painting are of particular relevance to subsequent discussion of Petr's image: the Schism of 1666 and Aleksei's interest in Western technology and ideas formed an important part of the background to Petr's career. Aleksei Mikhailovich (1629-76, r. 1645-76) was frequently dismissed by historians, including Solov'ev, as a virtuous man but a passive and ineffectual ruler, especially in comparison with his son Petr.<sup>67</sup> One of his titles, Tishaishii - the Most Serene - was taken as a personal epithet,<sup>68</sup> and further fostered the image of a pious weakling. This was misleading, as modern scholarship has shown.<sup>69</sup> However, in Shvarts' time, this weak image prevailed, making Aleksei seem an unlikely hero in terms of Academic history painting. Patriarch Nikon was also a controversial figure. As a dominant personality in the first two-thirds of Aleksei's reign and granted the royal title of Great Sovereign in 1653,<sup>70</sup> Nikon was responsible for the Church reforms which resulted in the Schism - the departure of the people who became known as Old Believers or Old Ritualists from the Orthodox Church.<sup>71</sup> Nikon was subsequently disgraced, demoted and sent to the New Jerusalem Monastery, near Istra, but his reforms remained. He was therefore reviled both by Old Believers

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<sup>67</sup>Longworth, Alexis, Tsar of All the Russias, pp. 2-3.

<sup>68</sup>Cherniavsky, Tsar and People, pp. 61-3; it translates the Byzantine Greek Galenotetos, from the Latin Serenissimus.

<sup>69</sup>See Longworth, Alexis, Tsar of All the Russias.

<sup>70</sup>Velikii Gosudar'; the only previous Patriarch to hold this title had been Filaret (Fedor Nikitich Romanov), as father of Tsar Mikhail Fedorovich. Nikon was granted it to denote his position as prospective Regent, before Aleksei went off to war. See ibid., p. 90.

<sup>71</sup>See Chapter 6 for further details of the Schism, in the context of Surikov's Boyarinya Morozova.

as the source of their problems and by anti-clerical liberals as an example of a power-hungry priest manipulating the ruler.<sup>72</sup>

Shvarts did not depict Aleksei and Nikon in confrontation, as did Nikolai Nevrev, a member of the Peredvizhniki, in Patriarch Nikon before the Court, 1 December 1666 (1884, location unknown<sup>73</sup>). Instead, he depicted them in genre scenes, which nevertheless revealed his perception of their characters and historical rôles. Palm Sunday in Moscow in the Reign of Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich (1865, Russian Museum, fig. 62) superficially portrays a seventeenth-century pageant, displaying Shvarts' skill in depicting secular and religious costume of the time in a frieze-like procession. Its significance lies in the feast depicted. On Palm Sunday, the Patriarch rode around the Kremlin on an ass, in imitation of Christ's entry into Jerusalem; the Tsar, on foot, led the ass by the reins.<sup>74</sup> By choosing to set his depiction of this ritual in Aleksei's reign, Shvarts may have been trying to convey Nikon's power over the Tsar. This picture is also interesting in terms of its handling of space. The distance between St. Vasilii's Church and the Spasskii Gate of the Kremlin seems to be compressed, as in Surikov's later The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy (1881, Tret'yakov Gallery, fig. 126). However, the exact relationship between the buildings is obscured by the figures in the procession. Unlike Surikov, Shvarts accurately depicted the different

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<sup>72</sup>Aleksandr Litovchenko's Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich and Nikon, Archbishop of Novgorod, at the Tomb of St. Filipp the Miracle-Worker, Metropolitan of Moscow (1886, Tret'yakov Gallery) produced an angry outburst from the liberal Ge; see Repin, "Nikolai Nikolaevich Ge i nashe pretenzii k iskusstvu", Dalekoe Blizkoe, p. 317.

<sup>73</sup>Moiseeva, ed., Tovarishchestvo. Pis'ma, Dokumenty, vol. 1, p. 290, fig. 258, and F. S. Roginskaya, Tovarishchestvo Peredvizhnykh Khudozhestvennykh Vystavok. Istoricheskie ocherki, Moscow, 1989, p. 216, fig. 175. It was shown in the 1939 exhibition of Russian history painting at the Tret'yakov Gallery; see Russkaya Istoricheskaya Zhivopis'. Vystavka 1939 goda, GTG, Moscow, 1939, p. 22, exhibit no. 27.

<sup>74</sup>Longworth, Alexis, Tsar of All the Russias, p. 37.

forms of the towers on that section of the Kremlin Wall, and suggested the downward slope of the ground behind the figures; the centre-left of the background is occupied with clouds rather than buildings.<sup>75</sup>

In A Scene from the Domestic Life of the Russian Tsars (A Game of Chess) (1865, Russian Museum, fig. 63), also called Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich Playing Chess,<sup>76</sup> Shvarts depicted the Tsar playing chess with his companions, while his cat playfully pounces on captured chessmen on the floor. The peaceful nature of the scene conveys Aleksei's image as the 'Most Serene Tsar'. His home life is tranquil, not the violent world of Ivan IV. Chess, in which each player has to defend his own King against his opponent, lends itself to symbolism when one of the players depicted is a ruler. Aleksei's meditative approach to the game - he is shown pondering his next move - may be intended to suggest his approach to government. However, it appears, from the number of captured red pieces, that he is losing. This may suggest the weakness of his rule alleged by nineteenth-century historians and depicted in Palm Sunday in Moscow. Stylistically, this picture reveals Shvarts' strong leanings towards graphic art, as attested by his illustrative work. While he painted the figures themselves and foreground furniture naturalistically, his treatment of the background is draughtsmanlike, rather than painterly, with the stove and other details crisply outlined.<sup>77</sup> This focusses the spectator's attention upon the apparently more solid forms of the Tsar, his opponent, the table, and the cat.

Patriarch Nikon at New Jerusalem (1867, Tret'yakov Gallery, fig. 64) is more naturalistic and painterly. The effects of sunlight, such as the

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<sup>75</sup>See Chapter 6 for Surikov's treatment of space and the architecture of Red Square in The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy.

<sup>76</sup>Zhivopis' XVIII-nachalo XX veka. Katalog, GRM, p. 346, note to item no. 6188.

<sup>77</sup>Vereshchagina, Shvarts, p. 71.

dappled light on Nikon's gown, suggest that the models may have posed for sketches en plein air, although the painting itself was probably completed in a studio. This may reflect the influence of the Barbizon School: in 1863 Shvarts had spent some months at Barbizon, where he had practised painting landscape and figure studies en plein air.<sup>78</sup> Meissonier, whom Shvarts greatly admired, had also learned from the Barbizon artists how to use plein air sketches as the basis for paintings executed in the studio, as shown by his realistic treatment of the snow in The French Campaign, 1814 (1864, Louvre).<sup>79</sup> Nikon's portrait is based upon contemporary likenesses, and suggests both dignity and authority. Shvarts depicted him in conversation with a monk. One may assume that some ecclesiastical controversy, perhaps related to the Schism is being discussed. The contrast between the two men is skilfully drawn: Nikon is powerfully-built figure with a look of wary, brooding intelligence; the monk is slighter, with an expression and pose which suggest that he does not understand what Nikon has said. Like the conversation depicted, the painting is open to interpretation. It seems plausible that Nikon is being portrayed as a tragic figure, fallen from power as a result of his own ambition. Having outlasted his usefulness to his Tsar, he has been shut away from Court politics in a monastic community in which, Shvarts implies, he is the only man of any intellectual distinction. Thus, despite living in a community, he is isolated from any meaningful interaction with his fellows.

Shvarts' career was cut short by his death from Addison's Disease in 1868, at the age of thirty-one.<sup>80</sup> However, his influence upon Russian

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<sup>78</sup>Ibid., pp. 63-4. His interest in technical innovation was otherwise limited. History painting was his chosen genre, and he found more to interest him in the 1863 Salon than in the Salon des Refusés; see ibid., pp. 61-2.

<sup>79</sup>Harding, Artistes Pompiers, pp. 119-20.

<sup>80</sup>Vereshchagina, Shvarts, pp. 128-30.

history painting was long-lasting. His emphasis upon carefully-observed, authentic detail prefigured and stimulated that of the Peredvizhniki. Hence, Ge, Repin and Surikov went to great lengths in order to secure authentic costumes and artefacts for their history paintings. Shvarts' development of historical genre painting subsequently produced two main tendencies. One is represented by the work of Konstantin Makovskii,<sup>81</sup> who painted charming but superficial and inaccurate scenes of Muscovite boyar life, such as The Russian Bride's Attire (1889, M. H. De Young Memorial Museum, San Francisco, fig. 65).<sup>82</sup> The second, less superficial but very decorative trend is epitomised by the detailed work of Andrei Ryabushkin in the 1890s and early 1900s.<sup>83</sup> He depicted seventeenth-century Muscovite life with less idealism and with touches of humour. In A Merchant's Family of the Seventeenth Century (1896, Russian Museum, fig. 66), the disposition of the figures echoes contemporary studio photographs, while their gaudy clothes and the women's heavily painted faces conveys the cultural differences which separate them from their modern descendants. At the same time, "They're Coming!" Muscovites at the time of the Arrival of a Foreign Embassy in the late Seventeenth Century (1901, Russian Museum, fig. 67) reflects sympathetically the variety of emotional responses among the crowd. The proportions of the canvas and the abrupt cropping of the figures may reflect Ryabushkin's involvement with the World of Art group, and the possible influence of fashionable Japanese prints. Ryabushkin exhibited with the World of Art, which emphasised æstheticism rather than the

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<sup>81</sup>Makovskii also painted contemporary genre scenes, such as The Shrovetide Fair on Admiralty Square, St. Petersburg, and the fantasy Rusalki (1869 and 1879; both Russian Museum).

<sup>82</sup>A. Bird, A History of Russian Painting, Oxford, 1987, p. 141, fig. 73. In this painting, Makovskii depicted at least five different forms of kokoshnik from various parts of the country in one Muscovite household.

<sup>83</sup>Vereshchagina, Shvarts, p. 133.

didacticism which had become associated with the Peredvizhniki. Slightly later, Sergei Ivanov painted scenes from seventeenth-century Muscovite life for the historian Sergei Knyaz'kov's series of children's booklets, Pictures about Russian History.<sup>84</sup> Knyaz'kov had such a high regard for Shvarts' accuracy that he advised Ivanov to study his paintings for the depiction of costume.<sup>85</sup> Like Shvarts, Ivanov approached the past in terms of anecdotal genre scenes: Strel'tsy (In the Strel'tsy Quarter) (1907, Tret'yakov Gallery, fig. 68) depicts the musketeers sympathetically by focussing on their everyday lives, rather than on the more sensational revolts.

Another short-lived artist who made an impact upon history painting in the 1860s was Konstantin Flavitskii (1830-66). While his large-scale scenes, like Christian Martyrs in the Colosseum (1862, Russian Museum), remained firmly within the orbit of Bryullov and the Academy's brand of Romanticism, his single-figure composition, Princess Tarakanova (1864, Tret'yakov Gallery, fig. 69), embodied the new emphasis upon psychological content within a melodramatic Romantic scenario.

The subject is a mixture of history and legend. Whoever the 'Princess' was, 'Tarakanova' was not her real name: it is an adjectival form derived from tarakan (cockroach), an ironic nickname for an imprisoned pretender.<sup>86</sup> In 1774, a woman named Elizaveta, claiming to be the daughter of Empress Elizaveta Petrovna, was arrested in Italy by Count Aleksei Orlov, on Ekaterina II's orders. She was brought back to Russia in May 1775. She was attractive and cultured, but spoke no Russian

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<sup>84</sup>S. A. Knyaz'kov, Kartiny po Russkoi Istorii, Moscow, 1907.

<sup>85</sup>Vereshchagina, Shvarts, p. 134.

<sup>86</sup>Alexander, Catherine the Great, p. 182, suggests that it may be a corruption of Daraganova, the name of a real noblewoman, but this seems to miss the obvious, blackly humorous word-play, and as he admits, there is no evidence to associate Sof'ya Daraganova with the prisoner.

and now denied that she had claimed to be the Empress' daughter. She gave an inconsistent and far-fetched account of her previous travels. Although already suffering lung hæmorrhages, she was imprisoned without trial in the Peter and Paul Fortress. She died there, of tuberculosis, on 4 December 1775.<sup>87</sup> However, a legend arose that she had drowned in her cell during a severe flood.<sup>88</sup> It was this version of the story which Flavitskii chose to depict, with the added dramatic touch of the rats climbing on to her bed. It is implied that, as the water rises, the frightened animals will cling to the Princess herself.

Flavitskii's Princess Tarakanova is interesting mainly for two reasons. Firstly, it is a single-figure composition. Academic history painting generally consisted of multiple-figure scenes, in which dramatic tension and interest were created by physical activity. The Princess is alone, except for the rats; she does not seem to move. The psychological and emotional emphases found in Delaroche's Cromwell gazing at the Body of Charles I and Shvarts' Ivan the Terrible with the Corpse of his Son are here essential to create drama. The subject is the Princess's despair and fear at her plight. Hence, Flavitskii gave considerable attention to her facial expression, as shown by a finely-detailed oil study in the Russian Museum.<sup>89</sup>

Secondly, the painting could also be construed as a criticism of imperial justice. Throughout the nineteenth-century, the Peter and Paul Fortress was still in use as a prison for political offenders, and it is possible that Flavitskii, a Herzenite liberal,<sup>90</sup> may have had this in mind

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<sup>87</sup>See ibid., pp. 180-2, and Payne, The Fortress, p. 17.

<sup>88</sup>The flood, in which the Neva rose fourteen feet above its usual level, actually took place in September 1777. Another legend was that, while in prison, she bore Orlov's child. See Alexander, Catherine the Great, p. 182.

<sup>89</sup>Vereshchagina, Istoricheskaya Kartina v Russkom Iskusstve, p. 116.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., pp. 115-119.



when choosing the subject. In 1862, the philosopher Nikolai Chernyshevskii, a former disciple of Herzen, who had become more radical than his mentor, was imprisoned there.<sup>91</sup> However, it is possible to overstate any direct contemporary political allusions in history painting. Princess Tarakanova may represent victims of the autocracy in a general sense. She was a political prisoner, imprisoned without trial. The truth of her identity and, therefore, of her crime was never clearly established. Flavitskii did not have the means to show whether she was simply an adventuress or the rightful Empress, imprisoned by a woman whose own right to the throne was questionable. Instead, he showed her as a victim of injustice and (a point also of contemporary relevance) of appalling prison conditions. She also epitomises the stereotype of the beautiful, victimised woman, whose vulnerability is intended to inspire male spectators with chivalric feelings.<sup>92</sup> As such, this painting contrasts strongly with Repin's and Surikov's depictions of other imprisoned noblewomen, the Regent Sof'ya and Boyarynya Morozova in the late 1870s and 1880s (figs. 101 & 153).<sup>93</sup> This not only reflects differences between the characters depicted (Tarakanova was ill, and her personality does not emerge strongly from the surviving accounts) but also suggests the changes in attitudes towards women which emerged in Russia in the late 1850s and 1860s.<sup>94</sup>

In addition to the direct contributions of Shvarts and Flavitskii, changes within the Russian art world had an indirect but enduring effect on the development of history painting, and particularly upon images of

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<sup>91</sup>He was arrested in 1862 and held there until his banishment to Siberia in 1864; see Payne, The Fortress, p. 126.

<sup>92</sup>See Strong, And when did you last see your father?, pp. 122 & 133-4, for other examples of this in nineteenth-century Western history painting, and Chapter 5 on women in Russian history painting.

<sup>93</sup>See Chapters 5 and 6.

<sup>94</sup>Atkinson, "Society and the Sexes in the Russian Past", Women in Russia, p. 28.

the Petrine era. These changes began with the secession of fourteen students from the Academy of Arts in 1863.<sup>95</sup> The ostensible cause of their departure was the subject chosen for the Large Gold Medal competition in history painting, Valhalla.

The choice of a mythological subject seemed to signal that there were limits to liberalism in the Academy. Vice-President Gagarin was not in full control of the Council of the Academy, and had attempted to avoid conflict with his more conservative colleagues, such as Professors Nikolai Pimenov and Petr Basin.<sup>96</sup> Although equality of genres had been established in 1862, separate themes, more specific than those for the Small Gold Medal, were assigned to the contestants for the Large Gold Medal in 1863. However, according to the Council's resolution of 9 November:

In considering subjects for painters in the Gold Medal competition it was kept in view to give special preference to those with the potential of containing several episodes to give the students a choice, according to their abilities and the direction of their talent.<sup>97</sup>

The genre painters were given an extremely topical subject, The Emancipation of the Serfs.<sup>98</sup> The history painters' subject, Valhalla, was the first topic from Scandinavian mythology to be chosen for a competition.<sup>99</sup> This might suggest that nationalist feeling may have played a part in the students' protest. However, as Vereshchagina has

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<sup>95</sup>There were, initially, thirteen secessionists: Ivan Kramskoi, Bogdan Venig, Nikolai Dmitriev-Orenburgskii, Aleksandr Litovchenko, Aleksei Korzukhin, Nikolai Shustov, Aleksandr Morozov, Mikhail Peskov, Konstantin Makovskii, Firs Zhuravlev, Aleksandr Grigor'ev, Nikolai Petrov. Petr Zabolotskii joined them at the last moment. There was also a sculptor, Fedor Kreitan. See Roginskaya, Tovarishchestvo Peredvizhnykh Khudozhestvennykh Vystavok, p. 10.

<sup>96</sup>Vereshchagina, Istoricheskaya Kartina v Russkom Iskusstve, p. 33.

<sup>97</sup>Petrov, Sbornik materialov dlya istorii Imperatorskoi S.-Peterburgskoi Akademii Khudozhestv, vol. III, p. 434, quoted ibid., p. 34-5.

<sup>98</sup>ibid., loc. cit.

<sup>99</sup>ibid., loc. cit.

pointed out, the importance of the Norse - the Varangians - in the development of Kievan Rus' was the subject of much debate in the 1860s. By choosing a Norse theme, the Council of the Academy was reflecting this interest and a more nationalist spirit. In style, too, it suggested a Romantic treatment, rather than the Classical manner of composition more common to Gold Medal subjects.<sup>100</sup>

A group of students, led by the portrait-painter Ivan Kramskoi, had petitioned the Council of the Academy on 9 October to be allowed to choose their own topic. Valkenier states:

No definite reply was given before the students entered Catherine Hall on November 9th to face their examiners. There they were handed a slip of paper specifying a subject from Scandinavian mythology - The Festival of the Gods in Valhalla - with detailed instructions on positioning the gods, to include moonlight, wolves, ravens clouds, etc.<sup>101</sup>

It is clear that the Council of the Academy specified the more general theme of Valhalla, rather than The Feast of the Gods in Valhalla.<sup>102</sup> The instructions about content may have been included because of the unfamiliarity of Norse mythology as a subject. Nevertheless, the students, accustomed to greater freedom in the Silver Medal and Small Gold Medal competitions, "refused to participate under these conditions and asked that they simply be granted diplomas and the title of Artist".<sup>103</sup>

Given the Academy's hegemony over art and artists in Russia at this time, this was a daring step. The ideological causes of the secession are uncertain. On 4 October, a radical critic, Ivan Dmitriev, published a

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<sup>100</sup>ibid., loc. cit.

<sup>101</sup>Valkenier, Russian Realist Art, pp. 33-4, from Kramskoi's several accounts of the incident.

<sup>102</sup>Vereshchagina, Istoricheskaya Kartina v Russkom Iskusstve, pp. 34-5.

<sup>103</sup>Valkenier, Russian Realist Art, p. 34.

polemical article, "The Art of Bowing and Scraping",<sup>104</sup> in which he attacked the Academy, its competitions, the absence of artistic freedom, and the rôle of artists as servants of the State.<sup>105</sup> He called for art to become a weapon in changing society, stimulating "energetic protest and dissatisfaction".<sup>106</sup> As Valkenier notes, he "made the fact that students could not choose their own subjects a symbol of their enserfment",<sup>107</sup> although, after the reforms of 1859 and 1862, the Academy's policy on setting competition subjects was much less restrictive than it had been. There is no evidence to suggest that the students shared Dmitriev's political agenda, but, since his article preceded their petition by only five days, it may have contributed to their mood.<sup>108</sup>

In Paris, 1863 marked the opening of the Salon des Refusés for works which had been rejected by the Salon jury, but the situation was not analogous to the Russian secession. The Salon des Refusés was established by Napoléon III in response to dissatisfaction among artists and the public when the jury had accepted less than half the five thousand works submitted for exhibition. It was an official 'unofficial' exhibition, rather than an initiative by artists to liberate themselves from the Salon. It was a critical failure and was not repeated, although some of the participants, such as Édouard Manet, Camille Pissarro, Ignace Fantin-Latour and James Whistler, later made successful reputations.<sup>109</sup> The Russian artists, who had chosen to withdraw from the Academy competition, and were not stylistic innovators, had no official support. In 1855, Gustave Courbet had set up a one-man exhibition, the Salon du

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<sup>104</sup>"Rassharkivayushcheesya Iskusstvo", Iskra, no. 38, pp. 521-30.

<sup>105</sup>Valkenier, Russian Realist Art, pp. 20-1.

<sup>106</sup>Quoted ibid., p. 21.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid., loc. cit.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>109</sup>Harding, Artistes Pompiers, pp. 11-12.

Realisme after the jury for the Exposition Universelle had rejected A Burial at Ornans (1849-50) and The Painter's Studio (1855; both Louvre).<sup>110</sup> However, although in 1866 Kramskoi, the most ideologically-aware of the secessionists, read a Russian translation of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's Du Principe de l'Art et de sa Destination Sociale, which praised Courbet, there is no evidence that the secessionists were interested in his work.<sup>111</sup> If any precedent inspired them, it may have been that of Milii Balakirev's Free Music School, which opened in 1862, in competition with the official Conservatory.<sup>112</sup>

The secessionists, with the exceptions of Zabolotskii and Kreitan, formed an Artists' Co-operative,<sup>113</sup> led by Kramskoi. This was a supportive community which enabled them to work outside the dictates of the Academy and to try to find an independent market for their work. The prominent critic, Vladimir Stasov, subsequently attempted to give the revolt a nationalist gloss, as the beginning of a movement to liberate Russian art from the Western influences popular at Court.<sup>114</sup> Attempts have also been made to suggest that the artists were motivated by the radical social and utilitarian æsthetic theories of Nikolai Chernyshevskii, who had written about co-operatives in his novel What is to be Done?<sup>115</sup> In terms of style and content there was little at first to differentiate the secessionists from Academic artists. The Co-operative members concentrated upon contemporary genre scenes with a liberal approach to social problems, in the manner of Perov,<sup>116</sup> rather than directly

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<sup>110</sup>Ibid., p. 96.

<sup>111</sup>Valkenier, Russian Realist Art, p. 54, and G. H. Hamilton, The Art and Architecture of Russia, Harmondsworth, rev. ed. 1975, pp. 259-60.

<sup>112</sup>Valkenier, Russian Realist Art, p. 38.

<sup>113</sup>Artel' Khudozhnikov.

<sup>114</sup>Valkenier, Russian Realist Art, pp. 56-7, & 62.

<sup>115</sup>Chto Delat'?, St. Petersburg, 1863, originally serialised in Sovremennik.

<sup>116</sup>Valkenier, Russian Realist Art, p. 35.

attacking the whole structure of Russian society, as Dmitriev and Nikolai Ogarev demanded.<sup>117</sup> Chernyshevskii's writings, although read by the Co-operative, do not appear to have been invested with any particular significance.<sup>118</sup>

History painting was not among the Co-operative's chief interests at this time, although some members, notably Dmitriev-Orenburgskii, Aleksandr Litovchenko, and Konstantin Makovskii, practised it at other times. Dmitriev-Orenburgskii's entry for the Large Gold Medal contest in 1862, The Strel'tsy Revolt (Taganrog Picture Gallery, fig. 70) is a particularly interesting example of a recurring subject in Petrine iconography. He modified the high drama of earlier Academic depictions of this theme (e.g. figs. 34 & 37) with the new interest in historical accuracy, exemplified by his contemporary, Shvarts. The revolt is depicted, according to the traditional version, as an attack upon the young Petr.<sup>119</sup> However, Dmitriev-Orenburgskii's depiction of the architecture of the Kremlin is considerably more accurate than Demidov's (fig. 37): Petr, Natal'ya Naryshkina and Ivan are standing in front of the royal palace, while in the background the canopy of the Red Staircase is visible, running down the side of the Facetted Chamber. The costumes, too, appear historically correct, although Natal'ya is shown in white brocade, the ceremonial costume of a reigning Tsaritsa, rather than as a widow.<sup>120</sup> Petr also wears white, and his form merges with Natal'ya's, joining with the line of the light-coloured pillar and arch. White also has connotations of purity and innocence, which the artist may have intended to evoke in connection with the characters. In terms of Petrine iconography, this

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<sup>117</sup>Ibid., pp. 20-1.

<sup>118</sup>Ibid., pp. 22, 90, & 199, n. 7.

<sup>119</sup>As mentioned in Chapter 2, this interpretation is rather dubious.

<sup>120</sup>Shteiben, in Petr the Great in Childhood, saved by his Mother from the Fury of the Strel'tsy, also depicted Natal'ya in a colourful costume; see Chapter 2.

painting represents a transitional stage. In terms of content - indeed, as an Academic competition piece - it still reflects the pro-Petrine orthodoxy of Nikolai I's reign. In style, too, it maintains the Academy's theatricality, setting dramatic foreground action against a background which, despite pleasing sunlight effects, lacks a realistic sense of depth. Natal'ya's appearance is idealised and more fragile than contemporary portraits or descriptions suggest (fig. 71). However, in his attempts to create an accurate visual impression of seventeenth-century Moscow in terms of costume and architecture, Dmitriev-Orenburgskii, like Shvarts, pointed the way forward for Repin and Surikov.

Kramskoi remained the driving force in the Co-operative, organising the communal workshop and the weekly soirées at which ideas and books were discussed. As Valkenier has observed:

It was the Artel's attempt to practice art as a free profession, to reach the public independently of the official channels, and to be accepted as members of the cultural élite that constituted the group's pioneering contribution.<sup>121</sup>

However, the success of the venture was limited in practical terms. The Co-operative's lack of a distinctive artistic identity contributed to its failure to make an impression on the provincial market at the Nizhni-Novgorod Fair in 1865.<sup>122</sup> For commissions and the provision of working and exhibition space, the artists had to continue to rely upon the Academy. Opportunities for social advancement depended upon acquiring the Civil Service ranks which Academic recognition provided, and several members, including Kramskoi (after protesting initially) ultimately accepted the rank of Academician, with its attendant privileges.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>121</sup>Valkenier, Russian Realist Art, p. 35.

<sup>122</sup>Ibid., pp. 35-6.

<sup>123</sup>Ibid., pp. 36-7. In contrast, Courbet could refuse a chair at the Academy (1868) and the Légion d'Honneur (1870) on principle, because he had a wealthy patron, Alfred Bruyas, and because in France, unlike in Russia, Academic ranks were not

The situation changed in the winter of 1869-70, when Nikolai Ge and Grigorii Myasoedov returned from Italy. Ge was a liberal intellectual, acquainted with political exiles such as Herzen and Bakunin.<sup>124</sup> On his visit to St. Petersburg in 1863, to receive a Professorship for his controversial The Last Supper (Russian Museum), he had encouraged Kramskoi in the early days of the Co-operative.<sup>125</sup> Some even believed that Ge's belief in artistic freedom had been a contributory factor in the secession.<sup>126</sup> He had then returned to Italy, where he spent much time living and working alongside Myasoedov. Myasoedov and Ge had much in common: they were members of the gentry, and were unhindered by the social insecurities which beset most of the Co-operative artists. Myasoedov had strong links with the musical world, particularly with Balakirev.<sup>127</sup> It seems likely that the example of Balakirev's Free Music School may have suggested to Myasoedov that the independent artists needed to form a more structured organisation if they were to flourish.<sup>128</sup>

Myasoedov based himself in Moscow on his return, Ge in Petersburg. Myasoedov taught at the School of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture, which, although administered as a branch of the Academy, was more adventurous. Among his colleagues were Perov - the noted genre painter of the 1860s, Aleksei Savrasov and Illarion Pryanishnikov. Myasoedov devised the idea of a new society to bring together the experienced Moscow artists and the Co-operative members, asking Ge to

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essential for gaining basic rights, such as the freedom to travel; see Harding, Artistes Pompiers, pp. 12-14.

<sup>124</sup>Ge, "Vstrechi", in N. Yu. Zograf, ed., Nikolai Nikolaevich Ge. Pis'ma, Stat'i, Kritika, Vospominaniya Sovremennikov, Moscow, 1978, pp. 231-7.

<sup>125</sup>Roginskaya, Tovarishchestvo Peredvizhnykh Khudozhestvennykh Vystavok, p. 124.

<sup>126</sup>Valkenier, Russian Realist Art, p. 38.

<sup>127</sup>I. N. Shuvalova, Myasoedov, Leningrad, 1971, p. 12.

<sup>128</sup>Valkenier, Russian Realist Art, p. 38.



approach Kramskoi and the Co-operative.<sup>129</sup> A letter, with "Draft Statutes of the Association for a Mobile Exhibition", was sent from Myasoedov's Moscow group to the St. Petersburg Artists' Co-operative. It was signed by Myasoedov, Perov, Kamenev, Savrasov, Shervud, Pryanishnikov, Ge, Kramskoi, Lemokh, Vasil'ev, Volkov, M. P. Klodt, Dmitriev-Orenburgskii, Trutovskii, Sverchkov, Grigor'ev, Zhuravlev, Petrov, Yakobi, Korzukhin, Repin, Shishkin and Popov.<sup>130</sup> Its aim was:

...to bring to inhabitants of the provinces the opportunity to follow the progress of Russian art. In this way, the Association, endeavouring to broaden the circle of art-lovers, shall open new paths for the sale of works of art.<sup>131</sup>

This suggests that commercial rather than ideological goals were the primary concern to the signatories. Only by finding an independent market for their work outside Court and Academy commissions could the artists acquire the material security which would allow them, if they wished, to be more adventurous in content. The draft statutes included outlines for the organisation of exhibitions and financial arrangements, to assure prospective members of its viability.<sup>132</sup>

The final draft constitution of the Association for Travelling Art Exhibitions, to give its full and final title, was submitted to Aleksandr Timashev, Minister of the Interior and honorary member of the Academy of Arts, in September 1870.<sup>133</sup> It was published on 23 November.<sup>134</sup> The members were listed with their professional status: Professor Ge, Academician Kramskoi, Academician Perov, School Artist Myasoedov,

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<sup>129</sup>Stasov, Nikolai Nikolaevich Ge, p. 217.

<sup>130</sup>"Proekt ustava Tovarishchestvo podvizhnoi vystavki"; Moiseeva, ed., Tovarishchestvo. Pis'ma, Dokumenty, vol. 1, pp. 51-3, and pp. 51-4, figs. 1 for reproductions of the document in Myasoedov's hand.

<sup>131</sup>Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>132</sup>Ibid., pp. 51-3.

<sup>133</sup>"Tovarishchestvo Peredvizhnykh Khudozhestvennykh Vystavok"; ibid., pp. 55-6.

<sup>134</sup>Ibid., pp. 57-8.

Academician Savrasov, Artist Kamenev, School Artist Pryanishnikov, Academician Shishkin, Academician M. K. Klodt, Professor M. P. Klodt, Academician Korzukhin, Professor Konstantin Makovskii, Artist Nikolai Makovskii, Academician Yakobi and School Artist Lemokh.<sup>135</sup> Only Kramskoi, Korzukhin, Lemokh and Konstantin Makovskii had been members of the Co-operative. Valkenier suggests that the reluctance of other Co-operative members to join may have been due to fear at the prospect of severing all their ties with the Academy.<sup>136</sup> However, despite harassment by the Academy, the Association's Petersburg exhibitions took place on the Academy's premises.<sup>137</sup>

The establishment of the Association, whose members were known as Peredvizhniki (Travellers, Itinerants, Wanderers), had a significant effect upon Russian history painting. The Travelling Exhibitions visited provincial cities like Moscow and Kiev, where the rising class of merchants and industrialists could supply them with patrons.<sup>138</sup> The interests of such people and their attitudes towards history differed from those of the Court in St. Petersburg, with its strongly French- and German-influenced culture. Riasanovsky has explained:

Russian entrepreneurs and employers...came from different classes - from gentry to former serfs - with a considerable admixture of foreigners. Their leaders included a number of old merchant and industrial families who were Old Believers, such as the celebrated Morozovs.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>135</sup>Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>136</sup>Valkenier, Russian Realist Art, p. 39.

<sup>137</sup>Ibid., pp. 41-2.

<sup>138</sup>It is interesting to note that the Pre-Raphaelites, who had separated from the Royal Academy, and had an impact on British art as strong as that of the Peredvizhniki upon Russian art, similarly attracted the patronage of the nouveaux riches rather than the aristocracy.

<sup>139</sup>Riasanovsky, A History of Russia, p. 425.

In order to appeal to these potential patrons, the artists had to depict historical events from a less Court-centred point of view. In particular, the events of the Schism and of the Petrine period could be treated more freely, reflecting the new scholarship which had followed the death of Nikolai I. The most important industrial patron was Pavel Tret'yakov, a Moscow textile manufacturer who in his first Will of 1860 had determined that his collection of Russian art should become a public museum.<sup>140</sup> Tret'yakov was a devout man of Slavophile tendencies, not always in agreement with some of the more liberal Peredvizhniki.<sup>141</sup> Sometimes he had to be pressured into accepting more adventurous works.<sup>142</sup>

History painting, in the hands of Peredvizhniki like Nikolai Ge, Il'ya Repin and Vasilii Surikov, evolved as a critique of the Academy's positive iconography of Petr. Delaroche and Shvarts had contributed to this development in their rôles as antiquarians and artists, demonstrating the importance of historical research and visual accuracy. The general stylistic trend towards Realism<sup>143</sup> combined with greater truthfulness in content. The concept of a Realist history painting is, in some respects, an oxymoron. Realism implies expectations of contemporary content, depicted with fidelity to nature and without idealisation or sentimentality, whereas history painting, unless depicting events recent enough to have been photographed, can only aspire to be a credible dramatisation, based on a combination of historical evidence and artistic imagination. It is an

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<sup>140</sup>Ya. V. Bruk et al., ed., Gosudarstvennaya Tret'yakovskaya Galereya: Istoriya i Kollektzii, Moscow, 1986, p. 31.

<sup>141</sup>See Valkenier, Russian Realist Art, pp. 66-7.

<sup>142</sup>R. F. Christian, ed., Tolstoy's Letters, London, 1978, vol. II, pp. 460-3, for Tolstoi's persuasion of Tret'yakov to buy Ge's "What is Truth?" - Christ before Pilate (1890, Tret'yakov Gallery).

<sup>143</sup>Russian artists do not seem to have been acquainted with Courbet's works in the 1860s, but photography was evidently influential: Kramskoi, whose portraits are almost photographically realistic, had worked as a photographer's retoucher. See Valkenier, Russian Realist Art, pp. 34 & 53-5.

imaginative re-creation of the past. However, the Peredvizhniki used history painting to address serious historical issues. Their pursuit of historical truth, untrammelled by censorship, required a style which reflected this through truth to nature.

#### Chapter 4: The First Travelling Exhibition and Petr's Bicentenary.

Two of the founding Peredvizhniki, Ge and Myasoedov, produced history paintings on Petrine themes for the First Travelling Exhibition in 1871. These pictures serve to demonstrate contrasting perceptions of Petr I and his reign, and the varying degrees to which the ideology and iconography of the Academy's image of Petr affected two very different artists. It is important to examine the historical circumstances and commercial opportunities which motivated them to depict Petrine subjects for this significant exhibition.

The preparations for Petr I's bicentenary in 1872 mark a turning point in the development of his image in Russian history painting. The official displays of commemorative art can be seen as the zenith of the State-sponsored Petrine cult. At the same time, the Association for Travelling Art Exhibitions organised its first exhibition. In the course of the bicentenary year, this exhibition visited St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev and Khar'kov. It included two paintings on Petrine themes, which exemplify contrasting approaches to the subject.

Discussion of plans for the official festivities began in St. Petersburg in 1870, and spread to many towns. Petr Petrov and Sergei Shubinskii in The Album of the 200th Jubilee of Emperor Petr the Great explained:

Thanks to the general spreading of word in the public ear about the forthcoming bicentenary of Petr the Great's birth, they hastened everywhere to celebrate this highly significant date in the history of Russia's enlightenment, as far as local resources allowed.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Petrov & Shubinskii, Al'bom, p. 280.

The Moscow authorities announced a 'Polytechnical' Exhibition, while the St. Petersburg City Duma formed a commission to organise celebrations there. Some of the initial ideas, such as a re-enactment of the ethnographic procession with which Petr had celebrated the Peace of Nystad in 1721, and illuminations with banners showing Petr's major deeds, were rejected on financial grounds.<sup>2</sup> Finally, at the beginning of 1872, by imperial command, a government commission replaced the City Duma's commission for arranging and co-ordinating the celebrations. This commission, chaired by State Councillor Pavel Ignat'ev, consisted of representatives of the Ministries of the Interior, War, the Navy, and the Imperial Court, together with members of the City Duma.<sup>3</sup>

The festivities focussed upon Petr I as a reformer and patriotic leader - images which complemented the concerns of Aleksandr II, the 'Tsar-Liberator'. The main ceremony on the bicentenary day, 30 May, was an ecclesiastical procession to the SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral. There, in the presence of the imperial family and Court, the Metropolitan of St. Petersburg conducted a panikhida (Orthodox office for the dead) at Petr's tomb. Exhibitions and theatrical productions were held to inform and edify the general public.

The Academy of Arts was mainly responsible for organising the artistic component of the bicentenary celebrations. This reflected its obligations to the State as the Imperial Academy, and its response to increasing nationalist sentiment. On 19 November 1871, the Council of the Academy had voted to exclude 'Universal History' from its course of studies, and to concentrate on Russian themes. Among the supporters of this were Aleksei Bogolyubov, whose paintings included depictions of

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid. pp. 280-1.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. p. 281.

Petrine naval battles, and Gun, despite his preference for French historical subjects.<sup>4</sup>

In St. Petersburg, a public gala, arranged by Fedor Trepov, the city governor, opened on 30 May 1872 on the Tsaritsa's Meadow<sup>5</sup> (fig. 72). There was a display of thirty paintings depicting major events and achievements of Petr's life. Since the exhibition was open-air and temporary, they were done in size-paint. The list of titles indicates that the pictures replicated the less ambivalent images of Petr from the reign of Nikolai I.<sup>6</sup> Each was accompanied by an explanatory inscription. Like much public art of the nineteenth century, the exhibition had a didactic, as well as a celebratory, function. The paintings were accompanied by two contemporary portraits of Petr, one of which was by Louis Caravacque, and a bust of him in front of a map of European Russia, displayed in pavilions.

The exhibition fulfilled the aims of the bicentenary celebrations by focussing entirely on Petr's positive achievements, with particular emphasis upon his technical and military activities. Only the fourth

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<sup>4</sup>Vereshchagina, Istoricheskaya Kartina v Russkom Iskusstve, p. 46.

<sup>5</sup>Tsaritsyn Lug, now the Field of Mars (Marsovo Pole).

<sup>6</sup>Petrov & Shubinskii, Al'bom, p. 282, footnote \*\*:

1. Timmerman shows Petr the use of an astrolabe. 2. Karsten Brandt launches his boat on the Yauza. 3. Petr with his Play Regiments at his little fort of Presburg. 4. Petr at the Lavra [Trinity-St. Sergei Monastery] (1689). 5. Petr at Arkhangel'sk. 6. The Capture of Azov. 7. Petr on the wharf in Amsterdam (1697). 8. Petr equips his fleet in Voronezh (1699). 9. Petr forges iron. 10. Petr tests the knowledge of his courtiers after their return from Europe. 11. The Capture of Nöteborg. 12. The Battle on the Neva Estuary (1703). 13. The Founding of St. Petersburg. 14. The Subjugation of Narva (1704). 15. The Battle of Lesna (1708). 16. Poltava (1709). 17. The Founding of the Senate (1712). 18. Petr at the Prut (1711). 19. The Battle of Hangó (27 July 1714). 20. The Command of the Fourth Fleet (1716). 21. Petr in Paris (1717). 22. Petr's interest in factories. 23. An Assembly. 24. The Tsar's visit to an almshouse and a school. 25. The Notification of Peace (4 September 1721). 26. Petr I as Emperor (22 October 1721). 27. The Taking of Derbent (23 August 1722). 28. Petr I at Tveretskii Lock (February 1725) [sic]. 29. The Translation of the Relics of St. Aleksandr Nevskii to St. Petersburg (30 August 1724) and 30. Petr rescues the drowning at Lakhta (1 November 1724).

The artists are unnamed.

painting, of Petr at the Trinity-St. Sergei Monastery, touched upon the important issue of domestic opposition, in this case, his overthrow of the Regent Sof'ya. The exclusions were as significant as the inclusions; there were no paintings of the Strel'tsy revolts, which had been popular in Nikolai I's reign for asserting the rights of the autocracy, nor any works about Petr's relationship with Aleksei, which a pro-Petrine artist could have made comparable with Brutus and his sons. The regime had grown sufficiently cautious to avoid contentious material altogether, rather than present it in a favourable light. Even so, in a theatre in Riga, Shteiben's Petr the Great in Childhood, saved by his Mother from the Fury of the Strel'tsy was included, with Petr at Zaandam Wharf, Petr on Lake Ladoga and The Apotheosis of Russia, in a series of tableaux vivants.

Six months previously, on 29 November 1871, the first Travelling Exhibition had opened at the Academy of Arts in St. Petersburg, replacing the Academy's "usual annual exhibition, postponed until spring".<sup>7</sup> It closed on 23 January 1872, to open in Moscow, at the School of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture, on 24 April. The exhibition remained there until 1 June, two days after Petr I's bicentenary day. It then travelled to the Universities of Kiev (6 September - 3 October), and Khar'kov (15 October - 6 November).

The Association outlined the contents of the exhibition in its first annual report as "a total of 82 works of art: 2 pictures of historical content, 16 genre, 13 portraits, 35 landscapes, 3 watercolours, 4 drawings, 5 statues, 1 engraving (etching)".<sup>8</sup> The two history paintings depicted Petrine subjects: Myasoedov's The Grandfather of the Russian Fleet (Arts

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<sup>7</sup>"Peterburgskaya Khronika", Golos, no. 332, 1 December 1871, p. 2.

<sup>8</sup>"Otchet Tovarishchestva peredvizhnykh khudozhestvennykh vystavok za pervyi god ego sushchestvovaniya 1871-1872 god", in Moiseeva, ed., Tovarishchestvo. Pis'ma, Dokumenty, vol. 1, p. 71.



Museum of Uzbekistan, Tashkent, fig. 74), and Ge's Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof (Tret'yakov Gallery, fig. 78). The former would not have seemed out of place amid the official bicentenary tributes, but the latter carried different implications.

Myasoedov's The Grandfather of the Russian Fleet (fig. 74) in many ways epitomises the Academic tradition in history painting. Its subject is recognisable and uncontroversial - the sixteen-year-old Tsar's discovery of an old wooden boat in a shed on the Izmailovo estate. Petr insisted that he be allowed to sail it, thus beginning his life-long attachment to ship-building and sailing. The small English or Dutch sail craft consequently gained a special place in Petrine lore and iconography: as early as 1722, it was the subject of engravings by Ivan Zubov (Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow, fig. 76). Later, it became known as 'the Grandfather of the Russian Fleet'.

Myasoedov depicted the scene in the shed when Frans Timmerman, a Dutch merchant, explained the steering of the boat to an attentive and excited Petr. However, it is not portrayed as the chance discovery suggested by historical accounts. Petr is accompanied by an entourage of tutors and attendants; chairs have been placed in the shed; two boys are removing a tarpaulin from the boat. Vladimir Stasov, in his generally favourable review in S.-Peterburgskie Vedomosti, noticed this:

...why is the young Tsarevich sitting? Where has this chair come from? He has gone into this shed by chance; he has seen the boat by accident; so, there was never anywhere for him to sit down... We understand that, by seating Petr, the painter has gained an opportunity to show him impetuously darting off and dashing towards the boat; but we fancy that this result could have been achieved without a chair. The figure on the left in the blue kaftan is an accessory and nothing more, and the two boys in the background are superfluous, because the boat surely had no cover in the

shed, so it would have been unnecessary for covers of any kind to be removed from it.<sup>9</sup>

The newspaper Golos also commented that Myasoedov's picture was "distinguished by a certain theatricality, as also are his previous works".<sup>10</sup> This criticism seems particularly true of his few history paintings, such as The Flight of Grigorii Otrep'ev from the Inn on the Lithuanian Border. (1862, Aleksandr Pushkin Museum, St. Petersburg,<sup>11</sup> and 1867, Novosibirsk District Picture Gallery). In this case, however, the theatrical quality can be justified because the subject is taken from Pushkin's play, Boris Godunov.

The Grandfather of the Russian Fleet shows little trace of those innovations in history painting introduced by artists like Shvarts, except, perhaps, in the care taken to depict costume accurately. Shuvalova has observed, "In all the liveliness of its images, there is still present in it the insurmountable influence of the Academic school".<sup>12</sup> Since historical subjects were not Myasoedov's speciality or natural strength, he apparently adhered closely to Academic precepts when painting them. The Grandfather of the Russian Fleet reminds the spectator that the breach between the Academy and the Peredvizhniki was not based on stylistic differences.

The picture is partially redeemed from its stilted composition by the individuality of the characters. Stasov and Saltykov, in their reviews, devoted attention to the depictions of Petr, Timmerman, and the boyars. Saltykov went so far as to say, "in this picture interest is centred not so

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<sup>9</sup>V. V. Stasov, "Peredvizhnaya Vystavka 1871 goda" (originally publ. in S.-Peterburgskie Vedomosti, nos. 333 & 338), Izbrannye Sochineniya, vol. 1, Moscow, 1952, p. 215.

<sup>10</sup>"Peterburgskaya Khronika", Golos, 1 December 1871, p. 2.

<sup>11</sup>In 1862 Myasoedov won a Large Gold Medal from the Academy for this painting; Vereshchagina, Istoricheskaya Kartina v Russkom Iskusstve, p. 23.

<sup>12</sup>Shuvalova, Myasoedov, p. 33.

much on Petr as on the boyars surrounding him".<sup>13</sup> Stasov described his impression of the central characters:

Petr, a young, rosy-cheeked, handsome boy, with marvellous eyelashes and quick eyes, dressed in a Tsarevich's red velvet kaftan, still of Eastern style, and fur cap, is seized with burning impatience. He rushes towards the boat, which is uncovered and revealed to him, while Timmerman, in wig and coat, explains to him with Germanic precision...what sort of vessel the boat is, and how it runs under sail...<sup>14</sup>

The boyars are all carefully characterised, even the young noble, with his intrigued expression, whom Stasov dismissed as an "accessory". The older men, to whom the situation is particularly alien, were the focus of Saltykov's interest:

The first boyar is a type of benevolence, goodness and calm. Thus his ruddy, smiling face, with its magnificent grey, waist-length beard, appears, and says: I do not understand, but I do not intend to be an obstacle, because I see no harm in knowledge... In contrast, the other boyar looks at Petr's enterprise from a completely antithetical viewpoint: he hates and curses. His whole figure says: I curse Satan and his angels, and in his myopic fanaticism he is ready to transfer this hatred even to the blossoming youth who gazes at the boat with such passionate enthusiasm.<sup>15</sup>

Both reviewers emphasised the importance of the subject: Petr's first glimpse of the foreign boat marked the beginning of his obsession with the West and Western technology. In this scene, Petr is seen to be breaking away from the trappings of Muscovite Russia which surround him, a personification of youth and progress. According to Saltykov, The

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<sup>13</sup>N. Shchedrin (M. E. Saltykov), "Pervaya Russkaya Peredvizhnaya Khudozhestvennaya Vystavka" (originally publ. in Otechestvennye Zapiski, December 1871, pp. 268-76), Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii, vol. 8, Moscow, 1937, p. 278.

<sup>14</sup>Stasov, Izbrannye Sochineniya, vol. 1, p. 214.

<sup>15</sup>Shchedrin (Saltykov), Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii, vol. 8, p. 278.

Grandfather of the Russian Fleet had a profound emotional impact upon a censor he met at the exhibition:

...he was weeping inconsolably.

'What's the matter with you?' I asked him. 'Forgive me!' he replied, 'See how inquisitive that great ruler was! How he loved science! With what noble zeal he made outlets for it! But we! But I!' ...To my great embarrassment, he stood in the middle of the hall and, without any outside prompting, called out in the words of Feofan Prokopovich: 'Brothers! What are we doing? We are burying Petr the Great!'

Having spoken thus, he broke down on Mr. Myasoedov's chest...<sup>16</sup>

Petr's symbolic rôle as Bearer of Culture clearly appealed to Myasoedov. In 1878, he sent his wife, Elizaveta, a drawing for a picture which he never executed, Petr at Zaandam (private collection, Russia, fig. 75). He described it:

It is Petr at Zaandam, in his Dutch chart-room - his head up to the very ceiling - a young, ungovernable giant, his brain full of plans. Europe made Russian power fruitful; here it wanders, locked in a dark cage, but from here came those revolutions...which must be expressed in his face in the given moment. The figure is life-size.<sup>17</sup>

Myasoedov's approach in both this drawing and The Grandfather of the Russian Fleet is sympathetic to Petr. His attitude, as expressed in the letter, accords with the liberal Westernisers' view of Petr as the Great Reformer, as expressed by Belinskii and Saltykov.<sup>18</sup>

Despite the revelations of recent scholarship concerning Petr's character and reign, depictions of Petr as child and craftsman allowed a sympathetic treatment without intellectual dishonesty. In such settings,

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., pp. 272-3.

<sup>17</sup> V. S. Ogolovets, ed., Grigorij Grigor'evich Myasoedov. Pis'ma, Dokumenty, Vospominaniya, Moscow, 1972, p. 78.

<sup>18</sup> See Chapter 1 and below.

Petr remained the hero, as both "the main protagonist and the positive image, the embodiment of heroism and other moral values".<sup>19</sup> The "problem of the Hero",<sup>20</sup> which had emerged in the 1860s, seems not to have affected Myasoedov's treatment. This may have been because of his positive view of Petr, or perhaps simply a reflection of his general lack of interest in history painting, and preference for modern genre and landscapes: "The Academy had...wanted to see in Myasoedov a history painter, although there was little foundation for this definition."<sup>21</sup> The prominence of the theme of The Grandfather of the Russian Fleet in the bicentenary suggests that Myasoedov's motives in painting it were probably commercial. This further strengthens the argument that the chief aim of the Peredvizhniki was to develop a market for art independent of the Court and the Academy,<sup>22</sup> rather than to make art serve a radical agenda.<sup>23</sup>

During the celebrations, the actual 'Grandfather of the Russian Fleet' was taken from its shrine beside the Peter and Paul Cathedral (fig. 77) and made the focus of attention. On 28 May the boat was escorted along the Neva from the landing stage at Petr's Cottage, by the St. Petersburg Yacht Club, to the railway station (fig. 73). It was then taken by train to Moscow. On 30 May it was welcomed by the Moscow Yacht Club at the Polytechnical Exhibition, which was opened by Grand Prince Konstantin Nikolaevich.<sup>24</sup> The Grandfather of the Russian Fleet and Merchant

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<sup>19</sup>Vereshchagina, Istoricheskaya Kartina v Russkom Iskusstve, p. 82.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., loc. cit..

<sup>21</sup>Shuvalova, Myasoedov, p. 32.

<sup>22</sup>"Proekt ustava Tovarishchestvo podvizhnoi vystavki", Moiseeva, ed., Tovarishchestvo. Pis'ma, Dokumenty, vol. 1, p. 51.

<sup>23</sup>Like most Soviet art historians, A. K. Lebedev ascribes political motivation to the Peredvizhniki, in The Itinerants: Society for Circulating Art Exhibitions (1870-1923), Leningrad, rev. ed. 1982, pp. 6-9; but see Chapter 3 on Chernyshevskii, and Valkenier, Russian Realist Art, pp. 21-3.

<sup>24</sup>See engravings in Petrov & Shubinskii, Al'bom, pp. 236-7.

Igolkin, the subject of a painting by Vasilii Shebuev (1839, Russian Museum), were the plays performed on the two open-air stages during the gala on the Tsaritsa's Meadow in St. Petersburg.

Similarly, the theme of Petr at Zaandam was exploited as another way of presenting him as a progressive hero. The subject was included in the thirty paintings displayed in the gala on the Tsaritsa's Meadow, discussed above. It was also the theme of an 1841 play, which was revived for the bicentenary in both St. Petersburg and Moscow: Rafail Zotov's The Shipbuilder from Zaandam or, His Name is Ineffable. This was a typical product of Nikolai I's Petrine cult. Zotov obeyed the censorship regulations governing theatrical representations of royalty by keeping Petr offstage as an invisible deus ex machina.<sup>25</sup> The general tenor of the play is conveyed by its final moments as Petr leaves Zaandam, and a bust of him is presented to a Dutch shipwright. Gasiorowska translated:

The Shipbuilder: Who is he? Voice of a Russian apprentice:  
His name is not to be spoken. He is our father, our benefactor, our idol, our all in all! Let others call him First and Great, but with us Russians, it is He! His name is ineffable!

(Everyone kneels. Gun salutes and shouts of "Hurrah!" backstage. The orchestra plays 'God Save the Tsar'. The curtain falls.)<sup>26</sup>

The revival of this play for the bicentenary in 1872 epitomises the laudatory tone of the celebrations.

If Myasoedov's The Grandfather of the Russian Fleet would not have seemed incongruous in the Academy of the 1850s, Ge's painting was unquestionably a product of a new intellectual climate. As Vereshchagina observes, "the problem of the Hero is one of the central [issues] in N. N.

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<sup>25</sup>See Riasanovsky, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought, p. 108, and Chapter 2 for Nikolai I's ban upon Pogodin's play, Petr I.

<sup>26</sup>Gasiorowska, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian Fiction, p. 121.

Ge's work".<sup>27</sup> The choice of subject in itself, Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof (fig. 78), would have been impossible before the relaxation of censorship on historians after 1855.

Vereshchagina states that "the murder of Tsarevich Aleksei", like the murder of Pavel I, and the Decembrists, was among the subjects "closed to historical study" in the reign of Nikolai I.<sup>28</sup> Officially, Aleksei's death had been explained by the statement issued by Petr - but widely disbelieved at the time - that Aleksei, overcome with guilt and remorse, had suffered an apoplectic stroke and died repentant, after a deathbed reconciliation with his father.<sup>29</sup> This version was used by Evstaf'ev in his 1812 play, Alexis the Tsarevich, with Aleksei dying - "as an additional tender touch - in Peter's arms".<sup>30</sup> In 1831, Pogodin had written a play, Petr I, which glorified Petr's sacrifice of his son to his patriotic duty.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, Nikolai I forbade its publication on grounds that it was improper for Petr I to be portrayed on stage.<sup>32</sup> In 1843, Polevoi, in his History of Petr the Great, had even characterised Petr as "a child-loving father, ...a quiet family man".<sup>33</sup> Ge, therefore, in choosing to depict a scene from Aleksei's last months was making a bold statement in support of the release of history from State censorship. It also challenged the positive image of Petr I presented by Myasoedov and the official bicentenary celebrations.

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<sup>27</sup>Vereshchagina, Istoricheskaya Kartina v Russkom Iskusstve, p. 123.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>29</sup>Weber, The Present State of Russia, vol. I, pp. 228-230. The word "stroke" (udar) has the same double meaning in Russian as in English, as either a seizure or a violent blow; Petr may have been punning on Aleksei's true fate.

<sup>30</sup>Gasiorowska, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian Fiction, p. 165.

<sup>31</sup>Published in Moscow, 1873.

<sup>32</sup>Riasanovsky, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought, pp. 108 & 110; also see Chapter 2.

<sup>33</sup>N. Polevoi, Istoriya Petra Velikogo, St. Petersburg, 1843, vol. IV, p. 312, quoted by Riasanovsky, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought, p. 118.

Ge later referred to "studying many documents"<sup>34</sup> in his research for the picture. Since there is no evidence that he consulted historical archives, this suggests that he used the collections of relevant documents published since 1855. The most notable of these was volume VI of Ustryalov's History of the Reign of Petr the Great, published in 1859.<sup>35</sup> This was devoted entirely to the biography of Tsarevich Aleksei, and contained large amounts of primary source material. In 1861 Pogodin edited a shorter book, Collection of Documents about the Case of Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich,<sup>36</sup> which supplemented, but did not supersede, Ustryalov's work.

Ustryalov's book is most likely to have been Ge's source. It contains a wide range of documents, including personal letters between Petr and Aleksei and between Aleksei and his mistress, essential to understanding the characters in human rather than political terms. It also includes transcripts of the interrogations, confessions and depositions from the investigations in 1718. All documents are published complete, in their original languages, in the 301-page appendix, while lengthy extracts from them, with foreign texts translated into Russian, are presented within Ustryalov's narrative framework in the main body of the book.

Ge painted Petr I questioning his son for alleged treason on 12 May 1718. Petr confronted Aleksei with the letters he had written to the Russian Senate and Russian bishops while he was in Naples. In these letters, the Tsarevich had explained the fear of his father and the threats of disinheritance which had driven him to seek asylum abroad. In the

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<sup>34</sup>Stasov, Nikolai Nikolaevich Ge, p. 239.

<sup>35</sup>N. G. Ustryalov, Istoriya Tsarstvovaniya Petra Velikogo, vol. VI, St. Petersburg, 1859

<sup>36</sup>M. P. Pogodin, ed., Sobranie Dokumentov po Delu Tsarevicha Alekseya Petrovicha, Moscow, 1861



painting the focus of Petr's attention is the document in a large hand, placed in front of Aleksei at the corner of the table.

This document was identified in 1875 by the historian Kostomarov as the denunciation written by Afrosin'ya Fedorovna, Aleksei's Finnish mistress, whom he had hoped to marry.<sup>37</sup> Kostomarov had taught Ge history at the Kiev Gymnasium in the 1840s. In 1870 they met again in Petersburg, and, according to Ge, discussed historical subjects.<sup>38</sup> Kostomarov's identification of the document may be based on the artist's own explanations. Ustryalov had described Afrosin'ya's deposition as having been written in an even shakier hand than usual.<sup>39</sup> The document in Ge's painting is illegible, but its appearance fits this description and a holograph letter by Afrosin'ya which Ustryalov illustrated.<sup>40</sup>

Afrosin'ya's evidence included answers to questions about the letters written by Aleksei to the Holy Roman Emperor and to the Russian bishops. She knew they had been written, but little of their contents. She claimed that she was responsible for persuading Aleksei to return to Russia with his father's envoy, Petr Tolstoi, instead of seeking asylum with the Pope.

She wrote that Aleksei had told her that he had fled because of his father's hostility and ill-treatment, "to live in peace while his father lived; and he, the Tsarevich, wanted the succession very much, and by no means wanted to become a monk".<sup>41</sup> This contradicted Aleksei's hope to

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<sup>37</sup>N. I. Kostomarov, "Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich (Po povodu kartiny N. N. Ge)", Drevnyaya i Novaya Rossiya, nos. 1-2, Jan.-Feb. 1875, St. Petersburg, no. 2, p. 145.

<sup>38</sup>N. N. Ge, "Kievskaya Pervaya Gimnaziya v Sorokovykh Godakh", in Zograf, ed., Ge. Pis'ma, Stat'i, Kritika, pp. 226-7.

<sup>39</sup>Ustryalov, Istoriya Tsarstvovaniya Petra Velikogo, vol. VI, p. 238.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., "Snimki i Vidy", no. 6, at end of volume.

<sup>41</sup>Ustryalov, Istoriya Tsarstvovaniya Petra Velikogo, vol. VI, p. 500.

be disinherited, which he expressed in his letters to her: "...I hope to be free of everything so that we may live together, you and I, God willing, in the country, and have no other business with anything!"<sup>42</sup> In March, he wrote to her of his relief at being disinherited, and repeated his hopes for a quiet life in the country: Kostomarov published this letter in 1875,<sup>43</sup> but neither Ustryalov nor Pogodin's works included it.

Afrosin'ya claimed that Aleksei hoped to be brought to power by a popular revolution against his infant half-brother and stepmother after his father's death. She described Aleksei's intentions:

...when he became Tsar, he would live in Moscow, and leave Petersburg a simple town; also, he would abandon the ships, and not keep them; he would keep troops only for defence; he wanted no wars with anyone, but wished to be content with our old domains, and intended to live in Moscow in winter and in Yaroslavl' in summer...<sup>44</sup>

As an attack on the rôle of St. Petersburg and the fleet - Petr's personal projects - these alleged remarks were particularly damaging. The implied criticism of Petr's aggressive foreign policy and imperial expansion was also construed as treasonable.

To ensure her co-operation, Afrosin'ya had been imprisoned before and during her confinement with her first child. She was granted her life in return for her testimony, although nothing more is known of her baby's fate. Under such circumstances, her evidence should, perhaps, be treated with caution. However, from Petr's point of view, it was effective. Afrosin'ya had to repeat her denunciation verbally in front of Aleksei, before being taken back to the Peter and Paul Fortress.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Letter to Afrosin'ya, dated 22 January 1718, in ibid., p. 437.

<sup>43</sup>Kostomarov, "Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich", Drevnyaya i Novaya Rossiya, no. 2, p. 145.

<sup>44</sup>Ustryalov, Istoriya Tsarstvovaniya Petra Velikogo, vol. VI, p. 500.

<sup>45</sup>"Manifesto of the Criminal Process of the Czarevitz Alexei Petrowitz", in Weber, The Present State of Russia, vol. II, p. 145: the British edition of the official report.

Aleksei, who had previously attempted to defend his mistress when questioned about her involvement in his plans, made little attempt to defend himself subsequently. He died in his cell on 26 June, after a week of torture: he had suffered forty wounds in two sessions of knouting, and in the third (in Petr's presence), on the morning of his death, the number of strokes was not recorded.<sup>46</sup>

Ge avoided the obvious drama of the lovers' confrontation. Instead he used the written evidence of Afrosin'ya's betrayal as a detail in his depiction of the relationship between father and son. Here, the definition of treason as a political crime becomes entwined with more personal concepts of betrayal. Petr, as Tsar, could claim that Aleksei had betrayed him by seeking political asylum with a foreign power, and harbouring thoughts of sedition. His flight - a public display of ingratitude and disobedience - had betrayed and humiliated Petr as a father. In turn, Aleksei could be seen as a victim of his father's betrayals. When Petr banished his first wife to a convent in 1698, he betrayed his son by leaving him to a childhood marked by neglect and Menshikov's abuse. Twenty years later, he reneged on the pardon promised Aleksei on his return from Italy. He intimidated Aleksei into betraying his friends, and Afrosin'ya into betraying her lover. In addition, in his Westernisation policy, Petr could be regarded as a traitor to traditional Russian culture.

Unlike Myasoedov's The Grandfather of the Russian Fleet, Ge's scene is completely static: "the narrative is suppressed, in that we see no action which can be read and immediately understood".<sup>47</sup> There are no

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<sup>46</sup>See Ustryalov, Istoriya Tsarstvovaniya Petra Velikogo, vol. VI, pp. 280-94, for the evidence and theories about Aleksei's death. He had already been sentenced to death; it is possible that the last morning's tortures were intended to kill him, to avoid the international and domestic embarrassment of a public execution.

<sup>47</sup>R. L. Brown, Chernyshevskii, Dostoevskii and the Peredvizhniki: Toward a Russian Realist Aesthetic?, doctoral thesis, University of Ohio, 1980, p. 149.

gestures or poses to detract from the emotion concentrated in the faces of the two men. As Saltykov observed:

Mr. Ge is set apart from the mass of his colleagues in history painting, in that he distinguishes perfectly the external, clamorous expressions of drama from its inner substance and, tackling the former only with the strictest restraint, concentrates all his artistic insight on the latter...<sup>48</sup>

Stasov, however, felt that this restraint weakened the painting, because it was alien to his conception of Petr's character:

Petr was not the sort of man to be content with indignation, reproofs, bitter and noble reflections. In him, an idea became at once a deed, and his temper was savage. So, at the interrogation of his son he was either formal and indifferent, or angry and menacing to the point of madness. But this middle note, given him by the painter, in our opinion does not accord at all with his nature and character.<sup>49</sup>

The lines of perspective created by the chequered floor converge upon a vanishing point to the left of the Tsarevich, and draw the eye towards him; the line of the table edge leads towards Petr. Despite his more imposing presence, it seems from the geometry of the composition that Ge did not want Petr, the dominant authority figure, to dominate the painting.

The room is drawn from memory, after a visit to Monplaisir, as Ge explained in 1886:

I took home in my head, in my memory, the whole background of my picture Petr I and Aleksei, with the fireplace, the cornices, the four Dutch School pictures, the chairs, the floor and the lighting. But I was only in this room once, and once intentionally, so as not to spoil the impression I took away. I searched for a carpet to cover the

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<sup>48</sup>Shchedrin (Saltykov), Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii, vol. 8, pp. 275-6.

<sup>49</sup>Stasov, Izbrannye Sochineniya, vol. 1, p. 210.

table...; I found it in a Dutch painting and sketched only one figure of the pattern. I did the whole carpet with all its coloured patterns and perspective, as I had need of it - I did the whole house, without running to check up.<sup>50</sup>

Ge omitted the upper part of the walls and the ceiling, with their elaborate stucco work and paintings by Philippe Pillement, which give the hall at Monplaisir a bright, airy atmosphere (fig. 79) - the opposite of the ominous, claustrophobic mood he required. The Dutch-style architecture and furnishings of Monplaisir suggested to Ge the atmosphere of seventeenth-century Dutch domestic genre paintings.

Seventeenth-century Dutch art was influential in the development of nineteenth-century genre and history painting. As mentioned in Chapter 3, Meissonier incorporated elements of Dutch style and content into his own history paintings. However, to a Peredvizhnik like Ge, seventeenth-century Dutch art may have had more than æsthetic significance. The Dutch School embodied the aspirations of a newly-independent, liberal, tolerant republic. It was nationalistic: as Nash has written, "national sentiment" was one of the "essential catalysts" for its development. The other was mercantile wealth;<sup>51</sup> Dutch art "was produced for and bought by the Dutch middle classes".<sup>52</sup> It was anti-Academic, and, unlike Baroque art elsewhere in Europe, it did not embody the values of Absolutism. Although the founding of the Peredvizhniki had not been motivated by nationalism, their separation from the St. Petersburg Academy, with its European Academic style, and the ideological influence of Vladimir Stasov<sup>53</sup> fostered their image as a

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<sup>50</sup>Stasov, Nikolai Nikolaevich Ge, p. 229.

<sup>51</sup>J. M. Nash, The Age of Rembrandt and Vermeer: Dutch Painting in the Seventeenth Century, London, 1972, p. 10.

<sup>52</sup>R. H. Wilenski, Dutch Painting, London, rev. ed., 1955, p. 132.

<sup>53</sup>See Valkenier, Russian Realist Art, pp. 56-62.

national School. Also, like seventeenth-century Dutch artists, the Peredvizhniki were heavily dependent upon the patronage of wealthy merchants. Above all, Dutch art was not Academic art, dominated by the concept of the Ideal, but was "grounded in the world of [the] senses".<sup>54</sup> The Dutch search for the Sublime in the real, rather than in the Ideal,<sup>55</sup> set a valuable precedent for the pursuit of realism in nineteenth-century Russian painting. Ge's use of seventeenth-century Dutch influences in Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof was singularly apt because of Petr's known enthusiasm for Dutch painting.<sup>56</sup> In addition, Dutch art's democratic image made it an appropriate style for a liberal artist's criticism of an absolute ruler.<sup>57</sup>

Ge was able to study works by Jan Steen, Gerard ter Borch, Willem Duyster, Gabriel Metsu and Pieter de Hooch in the Hermitage.<sup>58</sup> The attention to detail evident in Ge's painting, epitomised by the objects on the table, seems to result as much from seventeenth-century Dutch art as from nineteenth-century Realism. For instance, the pattern of the carpet is taken from the one, similarly laden with documents, on the scribe's table in the foreground of Steen's Esther before Ahasuerus (n. d.,

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<sup>54</sup>Nash, The Age of Rembrandt and Vermeer, p. 40.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>56</sup>Petr particularly admired Dutch marine painting; see Massie, Peter the Great, p. 189, and Anderson, Peter the Great, p. 119.

<sup>57</sup>For further discussion of Ge's politics, see below.

<sup>58</sup>In 1871 these included Steen, Esther before Ahasuerus and The Tric-Trac Party, ter Borch, The Message, The Glass of Lemonade, The Music Lesson and The Rustic Messenger, Duyster, The Tric-Trac Party, Metsu, Breakfast, and de Hooch, A Lady and her Servant, Ermitage Impérial. Catalogue de la Galerie des Tableaux. Deuxième partie: Ecoles Néerlandaises et École Allemande, A. Somof (Somov), ed., St. Petersburg, 1901, lists works alphabetically, by artist, with dates of acquisition. See Stasov, Nikolai Nikolaevich Ge, p. 230, on Ge studying portraits in the Hermitage; Ge mentions copying the carpet from a Dutch painting, without giving its title or location, ibid., p. 229. I have identified this as a work by Steen in the Hermitage (see below), confirming that Ge looked at Dutch paintings there.

Hermitage, fig. 80).<sup>59</sup> The tiled floor in this work may have reminded Ge of Monplaisir. De Hooch's A Lady and her Servant (c. 1657-8, Hermitage) also shows how black and white tiles can be used to æsthetic effect. Ge's general composition seems particularly indebted to that of the Flemish artist Gerrit van Honthorst's Christ before the High Priest (n. d., Hermitage). The original now hangs in the National Gallery, London (1617, fig. 82), but a copy entered the Hermitage from Manuel de Godoy's collection in 1831.<sup>60</sup> In both Honthorst and Ge's paintings, the central relationship is between two figures - the seated older man, confident and powerful, and the young man, a prisoner, separated from him by a covered table. Honthorst (1590-1656), one of the leading Utrecht Caravaggisti, used candlelight to draw attention to the faces of his main protagonists and away from the secondary characters. Ge used dull natural light from unseen windows and the darkness of the panelling and clothes to achieve a similar concentrated effect. This subtle and dramatic use of light may also derive from ter Borch's The Message (Hermitage, fig. 81<sup>61</sup>). The background is in subdued tones, with brighter colours on the carpet on the table, and the female figure, seen from the back, dressed in white and black. As is common in ter Borch's work, an invisible light source illuminates the woman's dress and the face of the manservant, while the room itself remains comparatively dim. As in Ge's Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof, the colourfully draped table is used to distance the figures from each other. This effect is more startling in Ge's picture because of the apparent proximity of his

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<sup>59</sup>Ermitage Impérial. Catalogue. 2e partie, Somof (Somov), ed., pp. 397-8, plate in N. Wrangell (Vrangel'), Les Chefs-d'œuvre de la Galerie de Tableaux de l'Ermitage Impérial à St-Petersbourg, London, Munich & New York, 1909, p. 168.

<sup>60</sup>Ermitage Impérial. Catalogue. 2e partie, Somof (Somov), ed., pp. 164-5; P. Descargues, The Hermitage, London, 1961, pp. 59-60.

<sup>61</sup>Wrangell (Vrangel'), Les Chefs-d'œuvre de la Galerie de Tableaux de l'Ermitage, p. 162.

figures and the way the corner of the table is thrust into the space between them, emphasising the emotional gulf between the two men, despite their blood relationship. The narrative element in ter Borch's painting, like Ge's, is not explicit: documents - a letter and a book - are shown, but it is up to the spectator to interpret the situation. Kahr has written of the "ulterior meanings"<sup>62</sup> which often underlie the seeming decorous tranquillity of many Dutch domestic genre paintings.<sup>63</sup> These may be erotic, or moral allegories on the vanitas theme. In either circumstance, the drama is conveyed through the psychology of the characters, within a formally harmonious composition. This approach is clearly that embraced by Ge in Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof.

Ge's picture also exhibits more recent influences. Although Ge had remained faithful to the legacy of Bryullov during the 1850s-60s, his sketches on an Italian Renaissance subject, The Death of Imelda Lambertazzi (1860, Museum of Russian Art, Kiev), showed a change of emphasis. In their departure from Classical or Biblical subject matter and more intimate setting, these sketches bear comparison with Bryullov's The Death of Inez de Castro (1834; fig. 29). However, the comparative naturalism and the absence of large-scale melodramatic gestures in The Death of Imelda Lambertazzi may equally reflect the beginning of Delaroche's influence upon Ge.

Allusions made by Stasov and other critics, quoted below, suggest that Delaroche's work was well-known in Russia, probably through reproductions.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, in 1857, travelling through Paris on his way

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<sup>62</sup>M. M. Kahr, Dutch Painting in the Seventeenth Century, New York, 1978, p. 178.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., pp. 282-4.

<sup>64</sup>Stasov, Izbrannye Sochineniya, vol. 1, p. 209, and "Peterburgskaya Khronika", Golos, 1 December 1871, p. 2; Antokol'skii, quoted by Valkenier, Russian Realist



to Italy, Ge had visited and been impressed by the large retrospective exhibition of the work of Delaroche, who had died the previous year.<sup>65</sup> Some of Delaroche's history paintings, such as The Princes in the Tower (fig. 27), and Cromwell gazing at the Body of Charles I (figs. 61 & 83), concentrate on the psychological states of the characters. In The Princes in the Tower, the threat of violence is implicit, rather than explicit. This aspect of Delaroche's approach is very evident in Ge's Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei at Peterhof. However, neither The Princes in the Tower nor Cromwell gazing at the Body of Charles I was shown in the 1857 exhibition;<sup>66</sup> if Ge saw them, it must have been as prints or engravings. It is known that the Academy had a photograph of Cromwell gazing at the Body of Charles I,<sup>67</sup> which he may have studied.

Contemporary critics were quick to draw comparisons between Ge and Delaroche:

Mr. Ge's new picture is particularly outstanding in its more stringent realism... In this respect, Mr. Ge's Petr is reminiscent of Paul Delaroche's Cromwell standing over the coffin of Charles I, whom he had executed. Mr. Ge, like Delaroche, having fully fathomed the tragic element of the scene itself, completely disdains the merely theatrical effects in which the untalented are wont to take refuge.<sup>68</sup>

Stasov was also favourable: "Neither Delaroche's Cromwell, nor his Elizabeth of England or Jane Gray rank above this painting".<sup>69</sup>

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Art, p. 54, states that photographs of his work were popular among Academy students.

<sup>65</sup>Vereshchagina, Ge, p. 14.

<sup>66</sup>I am indebted for this information to Bunty King, the Wallace Collection; Sylvie Dubois, Archivist, the Louvre; and V. Lassalle, Curator, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nîmes.

<sup>67</sup>Antokol'skii, quoted by Valkenier, Russian Realist Art, p. 54, mentions it specifically.

<sup>68</sup>"Peterburgskaya Khronika", Golos, 1 December 1871, p. 2.

<sup>69</sup>Stasov, Izbrannye Sochineniya, vol. 1, p. 209. For The Death of Queen Elizabeth and The Execution of Lady Jane Gray, see Strong, And when did you last see your father?, pp. 41 & 123.

Delaroche's work was not always free of melodramatic "theatrical effects" as in, for example, The Execution of Lady Jane Gray (1834, National Gallery, London).<sup>70</sup>

The comparison with Cromwell gazing at the Body of Charles I is more apposite. In nineteenth-century Britain, Cromwell, like Petr, was an ambiguous hero for political reformers.<sup>71</sup> Delaroche shows the aftermath, Ge the preliminaries, of a political execution involving the shedding of royal blood. Both are ostensibly neutral, aiming to provoke the spectator to meditate on the issues and characters involved. Delaroche's simplicity of composition and richness of colour, with warm browns and reds (fig. 83), also suggests influences from seventeenth-century Dutch paintings, though Ge's painting is cooler in tone.

The critical response to Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof was extremely revealing, particularly about the attitudes of the critics themselves. The painting was generally regarded as a positive development, after the poor reception given to his religious paintings of the late 1860s,<sup>72</sup> but the primary focus of discussion was the subject, with its ethical and political implications. Debate centred on Ge's treatment of his two characters. Both Petr and Aleksei had established popular images, according to which Ge's characterisations of them and the painting as a whole were judged. Most of the critics were still attached to the Academic concepts of the heroic Ideal in art, which Ge himself was outgrowing.

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<sup>70</sup>Strong, *ibid.*, p. 122, on the sacrificing of historical accuracy to pathos in The Execution of Lady Jane Gray.

<sup>71</sup>*ibid.*, pp. 148-151, on Cromwell's image in Victorian art.

<sup>72</sup>The writer of "Peterburgskaya Khronika", in particular, had been unimpressed by Harbingers of the Resurrection (1867, Tret'yakov Gallery), and feared for Ge's artistic future until he saw his new work. See Golos, 1 December 1871, p. 2.

Stasov was prepared to sympathise with Aleksei on humanitarian grounds, but saw the picture as an attempt to vindicate Petr:

We think Mr. Ge has looked at Petr I's relationship with his son solely through the eyes of the former, but this is not enough. There is still the view of History, the view of posterity, which must and can be just, and which no kind of haloes, no kind of glory, should suborn. That Petr I was a great genius of a man no-one doubts; but this is still no reason to treat one's own son in a barbaric and despotic fashion, and finally, after torturing him, order him to be smothered with pillows in a guard room (as Mr. Ustryalov relates in his volume VI)<sup>73</sup>...

...How can we be on Petr's side here? Granted, he was a great man; granted, Russia is indebted to him; nevertheless, Aleksei's case is one of those affairs from which History averts her eyes in horror...<sup>74</sup>

In contrast, Mikhail Saltykov, like many Westernisers of his generation, identified Petr's efforts to implement reforms with the struggles of the reform movement of his own time against the entrenched autocracy. Saltykov approvingly discerned pro-Petrine sympathies in Ge's painting:

Petr's personality is extremely attractive to Mr. Ge; indeed, it cannot be otherwise, because in the eyes of an artist the character to be reproduced is only appealing in so far as it is human, i.e. so far as it is accessible to the whole diversity of human emotions. The person of Petr the Great is of precisely this kind. His whole life is an uninterrupted epic, in which the kingly mingles with the common at every step, not artificially, not contrivedly, but completely naturally and freely...<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup>Ustryalov, in fact, utterly discredited the document containing the smothering story (*Istoriya Tsarstvovaniya Petra Velikogo*, vol. VI, p. 294). His favoured theory, still the most widely accepted, is that Aleksei simply died of his wounds. Stasov's taste for the melodramatic overtook his reading of the text.

<sup>74</sup>Stasov, *Izbrannye Sochineniya*, vol. 1, pp. 209-10.

<sup>75</sup>Shchedrin (Saltykov), *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenij*, vol. 8, p. 276.

The review by the unidentified 'Amateur Artist' in the journal Delo is interesting. Alone of the critics, he came away from the painting with an æsthetic and emotional response which overruled his political preconceptions. In his review, he attempted to rationalise this. A liberal of Westernising views, he was disappointed to see what he perceived as reactionary tendencies in the work. Unlike Stasov and Saltykov, he regarded the work as hostile to Petr:

...the first idea that comes into one's head is that it was painted by a very gifted artist, but a Slavophile-artist, a thorough enemy of Petrine reform and a defender of Old Russian retrograde principles. Constantly looking back and forth from the figure of Petr, ...with his handsome but bloated and thoroughly unintellectual face, to the worn but very expressive physiognomy of the Tsarevich, with his high forehead and hollow cheeks, it is as if you are seeing an extremely attractive, intelligent, but half-exhausted prisoner standing before a triumphant prosecutor [of bourgeois stock, with the brutish propensities of a district police officer]...<sup>76</sup>

As might be expected, Ge's characterisation of Petr was hotly debated. Stasov described him in the following terms:

...energy itself, an inflexible and mighty will, the handsome giant in his Preobrazhenskii regiment coat and high military boots... Anger, reproach, scorn - all burn here in his gaze...<sup>77</sup>

This contrasted with Saltykov, whose review appears in some respects to have been written in response to Stasov's. He saw in Petr's expression neither hatred nor threat, but only profoundly human suffering, and above this, if you will, reproach, but reproach

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<sup>76</sup>Khudozhnik-lyubitel', "Na Svoikh Nogakh (Po povodu pervoi khudozhestvennoi vystavki Tovarishchestva Peredvizhnykh Vystavok)", Delo, 1871, no. 12, quoted by Zograf, ed., Ge. Pis'ma, Stat'i, Kritika, p. 94. Bracketted portion supplied from Stasov, Nikolai Nikolaevich Ge, p. 232.

<sup>77</sup>Stasov, Izbrannye Sochineniya, vol. 1, p. 208.

directed at everything, anything, but not at this human ghost... Seen from this point of view (and it seems to me, at least, that this point of view is correct), the figure of Petr appears full of that luminous beauty which undoubtedly only a fine inner peace gives a man.<sup>78</sup>

Saltykov's definition of beauty here seems comparable with Chernyshevskii's as "that which...expresses life, fresh, and full of health and strength"<sup>79</sup>. Chernyshevskii regarded "attraction for pale sickly beauty", as suggested in the 'Amateur Artist's' contrast between the characters, as "a sign of artificially corrupted taste".<sup>80</sup>

The 'Amateur Artist' saw what he regarded as an inaccurate characterisation of Petr embodying criticism of Nikolai I's reign. He believed the analogy to be false, but it is interesting that he made it, given the prominence of the Petrine cult under Nikolai:

You look at Petr and you do not see in him the despot-reformer with the gleam of genius and devastating iron will in his black eyes... If the artist set out to depict not the Tsar-reformer but only 'the man', without any aura of greatness, he has thrown himself to the opposite extreme: he has painted not 'the man', but only a prosecutor of the '20s or '30s.<sup>81</sup>

Ge's Petr (fig. 86), however, was not a construct of stock epithets acting as a vehicle for nineteenth-century ideological concerns. He was a fully developed character. Ge studied contemporary and near-contemporary representations of him in the Hermitage,<sup>82</sup> including the seated wax effigy by Rastrelli (fig. 20). The finished likeness is not drawn from any single portrait. As the 'Amateur Artist' observed, it is not

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<sup>78</sup>Shchedrin (Saltykov), Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii, vol. 8, p. 277-8.

<sup>79</sup>Chernyshevskii, "The Æsthetic Relation of Art to Reality", Selected Philosophical Essays, p. 289.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., p. 288.

<sup>81</sup>Zograf, ed., Ge. Pis'ma, Stat'i, Kritika, pp. 94-5.

<sup>82</sup>Stasov, Nikolai Nikolaevich Ge, p. 230.

entirely flattering. However, Petr's negative aspects are not conveyed through physical grotesquery, as in Valentin Serov's Petr I (1907, Tret'yakov Gallery, fig. 84), which was based wholly on Rastrelli. Serov's painting reflects, almost to the point of caricature, the Silver Age's emphasis on Petr's sinister qualities, as expressed in Merezhkovskii and Belyi's novels. Ge's Petr has an impressive head, not dissimilar to Collot's model for the head of the Bronze Horseman (Russian Museum, fig. 3), or the de Moor type portrait, engraved by Houbraken in 1718 (Hermitage, fig. 85). The overall physical impression accords with a Parisian eye-witness's description of Petr in 1717, "with short hair and no wig, with a plain face, large eyes, his body quite heavy..."<sup>83</sup> Like Delaroche's portrayal of Cromwell, it is an image full of dignity and authority. At the same time, Ge used fine strokes of red and blue to suggest broken veins in Petr's heavy jowls, perhaps indicating that dissipation had taken its toll on him.

Ge shows Petr in his favourite uniform, that of the Preobrazhenskii Guards. This was displayed, with other clothing and the wax effigy, in the Hermitage.<sup>84</sup> It is not known what Petr actually wore when he questioned his son, but by choosing to depict him in uniform Ge may have wished to suggest that Petr was relating to Aleksei not as a parent but as a commanding officer dealing with an insubordinate inferior. One of the charges against Aleksei in 1718 was that of deserting from the army, because he had fled to the Holy Roman Empire under the pretext of joining Petr on campaign in Mecklenburg. Indeed, one reviewer likened Petr's expression in the painting to "the look of a triumphant

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<sup>83</sup>Quoted by Anderson, Peter the Great, p. 158.

<sup>84</sup>Engraving in Brikner, Istoriya Petra Velikogo, p. 674; Russian Style 1700-1920, Barbican Art Gallery, pp. 100-1, exhib. no. 8.

commander".<sup>85</sup> This impression is also conveyed by Petr's letters to Aleksei, as published by Ustryalov. In the letter headed "A Declaration to my son", presented to Aleksei at his wife's funeral, on 27 October 1715, Petr upbraided him:

...having no inclination, you learn nothing, and hence know nothing about military matters... Do you plead weakness of health that you cannot bear military toil? That is no excuse!<sup>86</sup>

He threatened Aleksei with disinheritance and the monastery if he refused to change:

...let it be known that I shall cut you off completely from the succession, like a gangrenous limb. Do not think that you are my only son, and that I am only writing this to frighten: truly (by God's will) I will do it, for I have not spared, and do not spare my own life for my fatherland and people, so how can I spare you, unworthy creature? Better a good stranger than an unworthy kinsman.<sup>87</sup>

Petr's uniform in the painting establishes him as a practical man of action, in contrast with his son, who, in Stasov's words, seems "the very image of a dull, narrow-minded sacristan, despite his rich, black velvet attire".<sup>88</sup>

Ge's portrayal of Aleksei was particularly controversial. It was the first time that the Tsarevich had appeared as a character in a history painting, and interest in the case had been stimulated by the publication of Ustryalov and Pogodin's books. Almost inevitably, Aleksei's reputation was overshadowed by the fact that he had died a convicted traitor.

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<sup>85</sup>Birzhevye Vedomosti, quoted by Stasov, Nikolai Nikolaevich Ge, p. 235.

<sup>86</sup>Ustryalov, Istoriya Tsarstvovaniya Petra Velikogo, vol. VI, p. 347. Alternatively, the last sentence may be translated "That is not right!", since Petr uses the loan-word "rezon", perhaps imitating the French "avoir raison".

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., p. 348.

<sup>88</sup>Stasov, Izbrannye Sochineniya, vol. 1, p. 208.

Riasanovsky has summed up the approach taken by official accounts in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries:

The canonical account emphasized the sovereign's profound love for his son and his effort to...make him his worthy successor... Instead, [Aleksei] relied on the evil advice of obscurantists and enemies of Peter the Great and his reforms... These fiends wished death to the emperor and annihilation of his work.<sup>89</sup>

Aleksei's opposition to Western ideas had been necessarily exaggerated in order to contrast him unfavourably with Petr. His formal education, although somewhat erratic, had been conducted by Russian and German tutors. Aleksei also studied numerous Western works on subjects which interested him, such as philosophy, history and theology.<sup>90</sup> Count Wilczeck, who met him in Cracow in 1710, was impressed by his enthusiastic love of learning and interest in his new surroundings:

...he was constantly buying books, and spent six to seven hours a day reading, and then made notes on all he had read... [He] visited churches and monasteries in Cracow and attended disputations at the University. He was interested in everything, he asked questions about everything, and noted down what he had learned...<sup>91</sup>

Wilczeck was also struck by Aleksei's "passionate desire to see other lands and learn things".<sup>92</sup> This is reminiscent of Petr's intellectual curiosity,<sup>93</sup> although Aleksei's interests were scholarly rather than technological.

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<sup>89</sup>Riasanovsky, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought, p. 51.

<sup>90</sup>Bruckner (Brikner), Der Zarewitsch Alexei, p. 102, lists some of the books which Aleksei purchased on his trip to Karlsbad in 1714. These include a history of Bohemia, Cardinal Baronius' Annales Ecclesiastici (a history book about which Aleksei was questioned under torture in 1718), Thomas à Kempis' De Imitatione Christi, and a number of other religious works, both Catholic and Lutheran.

<sup>91</sup>MS Beschreibung der Leibs und gemiths gestaltt dess Czarischen Cron-Prinsen, dated 5 February 1710, State Archives, Vienna, indirect quotation in Polovstov, ed., Russkii Biograficheskii Slovar', vol. 11, "Aleksei Petrovich", p. 40.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., loc. cit.; less positively, he noted Aleksei's shyness, melancholy and extreme nervousness.

<sup>93</sup>See Anderson, Peter the Great, p. 158.



Sergei Solov'ev touched on the positive aspects of Aleksei's character in the seventeenth volume of his A History of Russia from Most Ancient Times of 1867.<sup>94</sup> As Riasanovsky has observed, "His Alexis, in contrast to the common image, had intelligence, education, some attractive personal qualities, and deep links to the Russian society of his time".<sup>95</sup> Nevertheless, Solov'ev, like his predecessors, ultimately justified Aleksei's death in the name of progress. As Kostomarov's remarks about Ge's painting show, some still regarded Aleksei as the personification of dissipation, conspiracy, and reaction. Even Stasov, hoping for a more positive portrayal, saw in the painting "the common image": "He is worthless, he is contemptible, he is repulsive in his Old Ritualist cowardice."<sup>96</sup>

Stasov's hopes for a more overtly sympathetic depiction were shared by the reviewer in Russkii Vestnik:

This pitiable, emaciated figure, unpleasant in the highest degree - can it really be that this is the son of Petr the Great, and not some kind of German doctor?... Whether the artist wanted to show his lack of sympathy towards the Tsarevich as a representative of old, pre-Petrine Rus', or wanted to represent, for the spectator's edification, his vices and offences in his most unattractive appearance - either way, he has earned reproach for shrinking from the rôle of the truthful, objective historian...<sup>97</sup>

Kostomarov also claimed to see Aleksei's "vices and offences" in Ge's characterisation: "Dull-minded, shallow cowardice, mental and bodily

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<sup>94</sup>Istoriya Rossii s drevneishikh vremen, St. Petersburg, twenty-nine annual volumes, 1851-79.

<sup>95</sup>Riasanovsky, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought, p. 163.

<sup>96</sup>Stasov, Izbrannye Sochineniya, vol. 1, p. 208. Brown, Chernyshevskii, Dostoevskii and the Peredvizhniki, p. 150, asserts that the painting depicts "the continuing feud between Peter and the Old Believers", although Aleksei was not, in fact, an Old Believer.

<sup>97</sup>Quoted by Stasov, Nikolai Nikolaevich Ge, p. 234.

indolence and coarse animality are visible in his features... something evil, deceitful and cunning..."<sup>98</sup> It is worth noting that Adolphe Pannemaker's engraving of the painting, which accompanies Kostomarov's article, makes Aleksei look much less pathetic and unhealthily gaunt than in the original canvas.<sup>99</sup>

In contrast, the 'Amateur Artist' saw Ge's portrayal of Aleksei as sympathetic:

...involuntarily, all the spectator's concern, all his sympathy, passes to the Tsarevich. Despite his rather seminarist-like appearance, there is in his pose and in his facial expression something Hamlet-like, appealingly sorrowful... The spectator...yielding to the fascination of the picture, directs his sympathy not to the father, but to the son.<sup>100</sup>

He went on to criticise Ge for "poeticising" the Tsarevich in this way, repeating his suspicions of Slavophilism about the picture.<sup>101</sup>

Yet the evidence does not suggest that Ge "poeticised" the portrayal of Aleksei. The most commonly reproduced portraits of the Tsarevich at this time were based on the Dresden jeweller, Johann Melchior Dinglinger's enamel miniature (c. 1711-12, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden, fig. 87), and on Carl Wortmann's engraving of Johann Paul Ludden's posthumous portrait of him in armour (1728, Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow, fig. 88).<sup>102</sup> Dinglinger's miniatures are extremely

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<sup>98</sup>Kostomarov, "Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich", Drevnyaya i Novaya Rossiya, no. 2, p. 145.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., no. 1, p. 30.

<sup>100</sup>Zograf, ed., Ge. Pis'ma, Stat'i, Kritika, p. 95.

<sup>101</sup>Quoted by Ya. V. Bruk, "Pervaya Peredvizhnaya", Khudozhnik, 1971, vol. 34, no. 12, p. 37; see below.

<sup>102</sup>Geatbach's engraving, after Dinglinger, but reversed, is the frontispiece to Ustryalov, Istoriya Tsarstvovaniya Petra Velikogo, vol. VI. For Seryakov's engraving, after Wortmann, see Petrov & Shubinskii, Al'bom, p. 69.

idealised, as a comparison between his Petr I<sup>103</sup> and, for example, de Moor's portrait or Petr's life-mask shows. Wortmann's engraving after Ludden remains one of the most frequently reproduced portraits of Aleksei. The head is based on the portrait from life by Tannauer (Russian Museum, fig. 89), but with some changes to the features and expression to produce a more vigorous and masculine impression.

Tannauer's portrait of Aleksei<sup>104</sup> was in the Romanov Gallery of the Hermitage at the time of Ge's researches there. Ge drew on it, rather than on reproductions of Dinglinger and Ludden's works. Tannauer had painted Aleksei between 1712-16, probably before 1714, when the Tsarevich's chronic tuberculosis had advanced sufficiently to prompt his doctors to send him at once to Karlsbad.<sup>105</sup> The portrait shows a less robust young man than either Dinglinger or Ludden's images suggest, with a long, thin face and large eyes. It fits Count Wilczeck's description of him in 1710:

...a youth of above average height, ...broad-shouldered, with a broad chest and slender waist... The Tsarevich's face was long, his forehead high and broad, his mouth and nose of regular form, his eyes brown, ...and his hair, which the Tsarevich, not wearing a wig, [just] combed back, dark brown; his complexion was olive... [He] did not know how to

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<sup>103</sup>For Dinglinger's miniatures of Petr and Aleksei (Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden), see E. Donnert, Russia in the Age of Enlightenment, Leipzig, 1986, plates 62-3.

<sup>104</sup>See Portret Petrovskogo Vremeni, GRM & GTG, p. 96; Kalyazina & Komelova, Russkoe Iskusstvo Petrovskoi Epokhi, pp. 142-3. A. N. Benua, "Petr I: Materialy dlya illyustratsii ego vremeni", Khudozhestvennaya Sokrovishcha Rossii, vol. III, no.s 1 & 2-3, St. Petersburg, 1903, no. 2-3, p. 78, notes that the painting was originally oval.

<sup>105</sup>Ustryalov, Istoriya Tsarstvovaniya Petra Velikogo, vol. VI, p. 36, with the Austrian diplomat Pleyer's contemporary report, p. 318, that Aleksei's doctors were pessimistic about his life-expectancy because of his "vollkommene Schwindsucht" (fully-developed pulmonary tuberculosis).

carry himself, and, being of good height, appeared round-shouldered...<sup>106</sup>

Ge envisaged Aleksei in 1718, aged twenty-eight and showing the effects of several more years' tuberculosis, alcoholism, and psychological stress (fig. 90). To create this impression, he used a living model, Nikolai Zaichnevskii, a gaunt, ailing young civil servant from the Ministry of Finance, who resembled the portrait.<sup>107</sup> By depicting a living model with his skills as a painter of Realist portraits, Ge was perhaps asserting the importance of truth to nature in expressing historical truth, particularly in relation to a story which had been falsified for so many years.

As a result, Aleksei's condition was depicted without "the inveterate spiritualizing of TB and the sentimentalizing of its horrors"<sup>108</sup> common in nineteenth-century art and literature, even in paintings by fellow-Peredvizhniki.<sup>109</sup> In Russia, tuberculosis was particularly associated with St. Petersburg,<sup>110</sup> the damp climate of which exacerbated sufferers' symptoms. The fact that Aleksei was infected with the 'Petersburg disease' has a symbolic value, given his antipathy to the city and what it represented. It suggests that Petr's schemes were already indirectly

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<sup>106</sup>Beschreibung der Leibs und gemiths gestalt dess Czarischen Cron-Prinsen, indirect quotation in Polovstov, ed., Russkii Biograficheskii Slovar', vol. II, p. 40. Wilceck ascribed Aleksei's stoop to his habit of studying with his books on his knee. There is no trace of Ge having had access to this description, yet it accords well with his depiction of the Tsarevich.

<sup>107</sup>Stasov, Nikolai Nikolaevich Ge, p. 230; thirty-three years after the painting, Stasov described Zaichnevskii as "long dead" - implying that he died comparatively young.

<sup>108</sup>S. Sontag, Illness as Metaphor, Harmondsworth, 1983, p. 45; see also pp. 31-6 for the Romantics' glamorisation of the disease which had led to this.

<sup>109</sup>For example, M. P. Klodt, Her Last Spring (1861, Tret'yakov Gallery), or N. A. Yaroshenko, In Warm Climes (1890, Russian Museum), in Roginskaya, Tovarishchestvo Peredvizhnykh Khudozhestvennykh Vystavok, p. 119, fig. 81, and p. 222, fig. 184, respectively.

<sup>110</sup>V. M. Mekhanikova, Andrei Petrovich Ryabushkin, 1861-1904, Leningrad, 1989, p. 95. De Vogue thought it superfluous to name the "maladie" of Charlotte, Aleksei's wife, since she had contracted it in Petersburg; "Le Fils de Pierre le Grand", Revue des Deux Mondes, vol. 39, 1 May 1880, p. 146.

killing his son, before Aleksei had committed any of his alleged offences. Ge's realism in depicting the ravages of the disease may have been what Russkii Vestnik found so "pitiable" and "unpleasant" in his portrayal of the Tsarevich. Similarly, in Britain, William Lindsay Windus' Too Late (1858, Tate Gallery, London, fig. 91) had been criticised as "morbid" because of its unglamorised portrayal of an extremely haggard, consumptive woman.<sup>111</sup>

Ge's Aleksei is ashen and emaciated, his long dark hair (curling in Tannauer's portrait) hanging lank about his shoulders. The critic in Golos thought his appearance excessively ghastly:

...the face...is completely covered in grey-blue paint; not even a corpse has a face of such a colour. Also, ...the artist dresses the unfortunate Tsarevich in deep mourning, which makes him look like a Lutheran pastor. We think the impact of the picture would have been even more striking if the Tsarevich had been depicted in the splendid Court costume of the time.<sup>112</sup>

But, in Berger's words, "it is rare that...the hurt, the defeated, or the tortured look either beautiful or noble."<sup>113</sup> Aleksei's blue-tinged pallor, which Ge may have observed in his model, is a known symptom of pulmonary tuberculosis.<sup>114</sup> His lowered gaze, which gives an impression of the eyes being closed, even suggests the face of one already dead. His right hand hangs weakly at his side, blue veins showing through the translucent skin, beneath a delicate lace cuff. It is as expressive as his face in conveying his character and contrasts with the strength and tension in Petr's hands, clenched on his knee and the arm of his chair.

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<sup>111</sup>C. Wood, The Pre-Raphaelites, London, 1981, p. 78.

<sup>112</sup>"Peterburgskaya Khronika", Golos, 1 December 1871, p. 2.

<sup>113</sup>J. Berger, "A Professional Secret: How can the portrayal of violence and suffering be acceptable in a painting?", New Society, London, vol. 82, no. 1303/4/5, 18 Dec.-7 Jan. 1988, p. 23.

<sup>114</sup>The Ship Captain's Medical Guide, H.M.S.O., London, 1946, p. 151.

Aleksei's black velvet suit emphasises his pallor and suggests mourning, perhaps hinting at his imminent death. Its simplicity conveys his diminished status, and his lack of a sword shows that he is a prisoner.<sup>115</sup> As the 'Amateur Artist' remarked, the general effect is "Hamlet-like".<sup>116</sup> Indeed, Ge's Aleksei is reminiscent of such eighteenth-century depictions of Hamlet as Hubert Gravelot's engraving, after Francis Hayman, of the 1740s, with his unpowdered hair and black clothing (fig. 92).<sup>117</sup> Ge's emphasis on Aleksei's frailty points to the unequal odds in his conflict with his father. His obvious physical vulnerability makes the spectator's knowledge and contemplation of his eventual fate particularly chilling.

Ge did not express his own views on the interpretation of this painting for many years. In 1892, two years before his death, he wrote:

At the time of painting Petr I and Tsarevich Aleksei I was fostering a sympathy towards Petr, but then, after studying many documents, I realised that sympathy was impossible. I had been working up sympathy towards Petr in myself, I had been saying that in him public interests were higher than paternal feelings, and that his cruelty was justified, but it had killed the Ideal...<sup>118</sup>

Like Myasoedov, Ge's choice of a Petrine theme had been stimulated by the approaching bicentenary. In Stasov's words:

...the choice fell on a subject from the story of Petr the Great precisely because in 1870 there was much talk among us everywhere about the preparations in Moscow for the 1872 exhibition celebrating the bicentenary...<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>115</sup>When Aleksei was formally disinherited on 3 February, 1718, he did not wear a sword, indicating that he was a prisoner; Ustryalov, Istoriya Tsarstvovaniya Petra Velikogo, vol. VI, p. 143.

<sup>116</sup>Zograf, ed., Ge. Pis'ma, Stat'i, Kritika, p. 95.

<sup>117</sup>G. Ashton, Shakespeare: His Life and Work in Paintings, Prints and Ephemera, London, 1990, p. 131.

<sup>118</sup>Stasov, Nikolai Nikolaevich Ge, p. 239.

<sup>119</sup>Ibid., p. 227.

As quoted above, Ge implied that he had begun Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof within a framework of the Academic concepts of the Ideal, "the personified incarnation of human virtues".<sup>120</sup> However, as Vereshchagina has explained, "deprived of the halo of idealisation, Petr, in Ge's treatment became a living historical personality".<sup>121</sup>

Access to primary sources made Ge realise that the characters would not fit the heroic types of Academic history painting. They could not be used as ciphers for 'Good' and 'Evil', or for 'Reform' and 'Reaction' in contemporary terms. Ge's choice of subject thus forced him to rethink his artistic approach, in a way that Myasoedov, by tackling a less controversial incident from Petr's life, had not been compelled to do. The changes in Ge's outlook seem to have been reflected in the development of the composition itself, and in the Realist style which he employed. His researches had led him from the censored, official version of the story, in which Petr retained his rôle as the ideal Russian hero, to the tragic truth, as revealed by the documents in Ustryalov's book. The edifying idealism of Academic history painting was inappropriate to the depiction of brutal historical truth. Truth in content required the same in style, the Realist pursuit of truth to nature, previously employed only on paintings of contemporary subjects, such as genre scenes, portraits and landscapes. In consequence, Ge's finished picture challenged not only Petr I's established image, but also the underlying principles of history painting in the Academy.

Stasov, however, argued that the artist's words quoted above reflected his views in 1892, when he was very friendly with Lev Tolstoi,

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<sup>120</sup>Vereshchagina, Khudozhnik, Vremya, Istoriya, p. 63.

<sup>121</sup>Ibid., loc. cit.

and did not represent his opinions of 1870-71.<sup>122</sup> Certainly, there is an ambiguity about time in Ge's use of the word "zatem" (either simply "then", or the stronger "later"), when he contrasted his earlier pro-Petrine stance with the result of "reading many documents". Porudominskii has discussed this point, but concluded that Stasov is probably mistaken.<sup>123</sup> There is no evidence that Ge contemplated returning to the subject in the 1880s-90s which would explain his alleged study of sources at that time. There was also no reason for him to attempt to mislead anyone concerning his views on his earlier painting. In addition, the evolution of the composition, from the oil-sketch of 1870 to the finished painting, appears to indicate a change of focus artistically and morally, contradicting Stasov, but confirming the artist's statements.

An early pencil drawing of Petr shows him in an extremely sympathetic guise, gazing at the floor, a sorrowful, troubled look on his face (fig. 93), supplying evidence of that "profoundly human suffering" mentioned by Saltykov. In the oil sketch of 1870 (fig. 94), Petr is on the left, Aleksei on the right, in an arrangement closer to that of Honthorst's Christ before the High Priest (fig. 82). Petr is unequivocally the focus of attention, the window forming a square halo behind his head. Repin saw the picture in this state in Ge's studio early in 1871, with Petr "in silhouette against the light background of a window".<sup>124</sup> Aleksei is almost peripheral. By reversing the composition for the finished painting, however, Ge shifts the emphasis. It is natural for a spectator used to a left-to-right script to read visual images from left to right. Thus,

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<sup>122</sup>Stasov, Nikolai Nikolaevich Ge, p. 239. Stasov's interpretations of artists' motives must be treated with caution; see Valkenier, Russian Realist Art, pp. 58-62.

<sup>123</sup>V. I. Porudominskii, Nikolai Ge, Moscow, 1970, pp. 110-111.

<sup>124</sup>I. E. Repin, "Nikolai Nikolaevich Ge i nashe pretenzii k iskusstvu", Dalekoe Blizkoe, Leningrad, 1982 ed., p. 316.



in the painting, one looks first from Aleksei to Petr, assisted by the perspective of the floor, as mentioned above.

The 'Amateur Artist's' comments in Delo also indicate that the artist's change of heart took place during, and not after, the painting's production:

Knowing Mr. Ge in person, we can venture to say that he began the picture with a clear and correct understanding of the historical episode represented by him... [But] at the same time he has not achieved his aims.<sup>125</sup>

The 'Amateur Artist' meant that Ge had begun the work sharing his own pro-Petrine sympathies. He concluded:

If we were sure that the artist had indeed set out with the wish to poeticise the person of the Tsarevich, and draw the figure of Petr I in the manner of the Slavophiles, then we would admit that Ge has achieved his aim with success, although it is false in principle. But we do not have that certainty. We are more inclined to think that some thoughtlessness and falsity, to which the artist unwittingly yielded, is to blame for everything...<sup>126</sup>

This implies that he did not wish to believe that Ge had deliberately changed his position. He preferred to think that the artist had simply forgotten what he was supposed to be doing. However, it is more probable, given Ge's own words, that he realised that he could not suspend compassion for the sake of realpolitik.

Ge's work was closely connected with his humanitarian and Christian convictions. He used his art to explore and express his own approach to the life of Christ, from The Last Supper (1863. Russian Museum) onward. His attitude towards the State-dominated established Church was unsympathetic. Repin recalled an anti-clerical outburst,

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<sup>125</sup>Zograf, ed., Ge. Pis'ma, Stat'i, Kritika, p. 94.

<sup>126</sup>Quoted by Bruk, "Pervaya Peredvizhnaya", Khudozhnik, 1971, vol. 34, no. 12, p. 37.

prompted by discussion of Aleksandr Litovchenko's Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich and Nikon, Archbishop of Novgorod, at the Tomb of St. Filipp the Miracle-Worker, Metropolitan of Moscow (1886, Tret'yakov Gallery): "I cannot, I cannot glorify the pernicious domination of the clergy!"<sup>127</sup> During the 1880s Ge also became a close friend and follower of Tolstoi, who greatly admired his religious paintings.<sup>128</sup>

Given the artist's lifelong interest in religious and ethical matters, it is not surprising that religious paintings should have contributed to the development of Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof. The subject of Steen's Esther before Ahasuerus (fig. 80) provides an ironic counterpoint: an autocratic king is prevented from committing an injustice, when his wife intercedes for her people's lives. There is no-one to stay Petr's hand, to intercede for Aleksei. The closer parallels with Honthorst's Christ before the High Priest (fig. 82) create a powerful symbolic undercurrent through typological associations. Marcadé, indeed, has seen Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei at Peterhof as a modern, secular interpretation of the theme of Christ's interrogations, to which Ge turned in the 1880s-90s:

Christ before Pontius Pilate; the unfortunate Tsarevich Aleksei, eyes lowered, head bowed, wordless, stands in the attitude of a condemned victim before the terrifying Tsar who embodies the unlimited power of the State.<sup>129</sup>

Setting Petr in the traditional place of Caiaphas or Pilate had disturbing implications. These went beyond the challenge to the Academic concept of the Ideal described above by Vereshchagina. Ge was

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<sup>127</sup>Repin, "Nikolai Nikolaevich Ge i nashe pretenzii k iskusstvu", Dalekoe Blizkoe, p. 317.

<sup>128</sup>Tolstoi expressed supported for Ge's controversial Crucifixion, removed from the 22nd Travelling Exhibition, in his letter dated 14 March 1894, Christian, ed., Tolstoy's Letters, vol. 11, pp. 503-4.

<sup>129</sup>V. Marcadé, Le Renouveau de L'Art Pictural Russe 1863-1914, Lausanne, 1971, p. 37.

challenging not only the official historical rôles of his characters, but also the relationship between the ruler and his subjects.

Petr was the archetype of the modern Emperor, as Ivan IV was of the mediæval Tsar. He was, according to the title he had had voted to himself in 1721, the 'Father of the Fatherland' (Otets Otechestva, after the Roman title, Pater Patriæ<sup>130</sup>). This title in itself signified the cultural division between Tsar and people, breaking the old symbolic link between the Batyushka Tsar' (Little Father Tsar) as husband of the land, Matushka Rus' (Little Mother Rus' ).<sup>131</sup> The old relationship between the Tsar and the land had been expressed in the Muscovite coronation rite:

The coronation was identical to a wedding...: the tsar assumed the throne only through his union with Mother Russia and ruled his land from her very center. He lived in 'Mother' Moscow, the mother of all cities in the popular imagination...<sup>132</sup>

Petr broke this bond, which was originally rooted in pre-Christian concepts of sacral kingship. He spurned Moscow and created a new city on the fringe of the realm, with a foreign name, 'Sankt-Peterburg'. By 1742, the coronation ritual had become one of self-crowning, emphasising the autonomy and absolute power of the sovereign.<sup>133</sup>

Petr redefined the rôle of Batyushka Tsar'. As Otets Otechestva, he was the sole progenitor of a grammatically neuter but implicitly masculine Fatherland, "he who - like a true father of the fatherland - has

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<sup>130</sup>Cherniavsky, Tsar and People, p. 76, n. 12, notes that this was also a Patriarchal title; Petr's assumption of it was regarded as a usurpation of ecclesiastical and divine authority.

<sup>131</sup>Ibid., pp. 83-4.

<sup>132</sup>J. Hubbs, Mother Russia: the Feminine Myth in Russian Culture, Bloomington & Indianapolis, 1988, p. 188.

<sup>133</sup>Cherniavsky, Tsar and People, pp. 90-1.

given birth to Russia and nursed her".<sup>134</sup> The land was no longer his partner, but subject-child to his autocratic parent. Petr's persecution and judicial murder of his heir - an act as unnatural as Prokopovich's image of the male ruler giving birth to and suckling his country - could therefore serve as a political metaphor. Petr's attack upon his own kin (rod) reflected his relationship with his wider family of 'children', his people (narod). To depict Petr as a filicide indicted the whole autocratic system. It broke down the moral distinction between the 'despotic' Ivan and the 'reforming' Petr, suggesting that reform was simply a veneer covering the continuing brutality of mediæval despotism. As Petr himself was the archetypal Emperor, the analogy could be extended to his reigning descendant.

Shvarts had already broached the theme of royal filicide in Ivan the Terrible with the Corpse of his Son (fig. 60). However, historical accounts of this event had not been stifled by censorship to the same degree as those concerning the death of Aleksei. There seem to have been two reasons for this: firstly, Ivan killed his son in anger, and was then stricken with remorse; secondly, as a member of the Varangian house of Rurik, Ivan IV was not a blood relation of the present ruling house of Romanov-Gottorp. Petr, on the other hand, had formally sentenced his son to death for high treason, during a lengthy investigation and a series of political trials. There is no evidence that he felt remorse: indeed, in 1718 he had a medal struck to commemorate the event as "The Restoration of Peace to the State".<sup>135</sup> Petr was also a direct ancestor of the reigning

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<sup>134</sup>F. Prokopovich, "A Funeral Oration for the Most Illustrious and Most Sovereign Emperor and Autocrat of All Russia, Peter the Great, Father of the Fatherland", in M. Raeff, ed., Peter the Great Changes Russia, Lexington, Mass., 2nd ed. 1972, p. 40.

<sup>135</sup>Portret Petrovskogo Vremeni, GRM & GTG, p. 267, item no. 35. It bears the inscription "Thy Greatness is Clear Everywhere": whether "Thy" refers to God or to Petr is (perhaps intentionally) ambiguous.

Tsar, who, as a descendant of his daughter Anna, owed his throne to the killing of Aleksei and the deaths of his heirs in childhood.

The myth of the Strastoterpets, the Passion-bearer, and the concept of the ruler as martyr have been discussed in Chapter 1 in relation to Academic depictions of Petr as Saviour.<sup>136</sup> Popular tradition did not always place Petr and his death within this context; indeed, he was often regarded as an Antichrist rather than a Christ-figure. However, literary tradition attempted to rectify this, as mentioned above, creating the subtext of paintings such as Shamshin's Petr I at Lakhta (fig. 56). The archetype of the Strastoterpets becomes potentially more subversive when applied to the historical myths of Ivan Ivanovich and Aleksei Petrovich. It suggests another possible layer of meaning in Ge's use of Christian typology.

As described in Chapter 3, when Ivan IV killed the Tsarevich Ivan in 1581, the event and its ideological context fused to create a new aspect of the old myth of the Strastoterpets. The rôle of the Passion-bearer was assumed not by the ruler but by his son: as Frazer has written:

...the substitute who died for [the king] had to be invested...with [his] divine attributes... No one, therefore, could so appropriately die for the king and, through him, for the whole people, as the king's son.<sup>137</sup>

Subsequent events, such as the death of Tsarevich Dmitrii in 1591 and his eventual canonisation as a martyr, perpetuated this change. The myth became the story of the death of the rightful heir at the hands of a usurping or, in some sense, 'false' Tsar. Besançon has argued:

Boris and Gleb died for the people. But who will represent the people if the Tsar detaches himself from them and

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<sup>136</sup>See also Cherniavsky, Tsar and People, "Saintly Princes and Princely Saints", pp. 5-43, and Ingham, "The Sovereign as Martyr, East and West", The Slavic & East European Journal, vol. 17, no. 1, pp. 1-17.

<sup>137</sup>Frazer, The Golden Bough, pp. 289-90.

represents God? In the theatre of religion the person of Christ...is duplicated to fulfil the two functions of sacrifice and judgement. But...the theatre of politics offers another analogy: that of the Tsar judge and the sacrificed Tsarevich. In this strange series of infanticides [Ivan IV - Ivan, Boris Godunov - Dmitrii, Petr I - Aleksei, Ekaterina II - Ivan VI], history and myth mingle inextricably.<sup>138</sup>

In the case of Petr and Aleksei, the Tsar had divorced himself even further from his people and their beliefs, and was seen to be actively hostile towards them, so "it is the father who represents the secularised world, and the son, the icon of Orthodox Christianity".<sup>139</sup> Aleksei's basic passivity, which made him "a poor candidate for evil incarnate"<sup>140</sup> to Petr's apologists, has a symbolic function. The rôle of the Strastoterpets is to offer non-resistance to evil and accept martyrdom at the hands of his treacherous kinsman.<sup>141</sup> Hence in folk ballads, Aleksei became "the bold and goodly youth,/ Aleksei Petrovich, our light",<sup>142</sup> assimilated to the rôle once held by Tsarevich Ivan Ivanovich. In popular myth, then, Aleksei sometimes assumed the character of a type of Christ, in contrast to Petr's Antichrist.

Ge's Ukrainian upbringing would have exposed him to the Kievan cult of Saints Boris and Gleb, the prototypical Strastoterp'tsy. How far he

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<sup>138</sup>Besancon, Le Tsarévitch Immolé, p. 96.

<sup>139</sup>Ibid., p. 111.

<sup>140</sup>Riasanovsky, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought, p. 50.

<sup>141</sup>Ingham, "The Sovereign as Martyr, East and West", The Slavic & East European Journal, vol. 17, no. 1, p. 2. He also notes, ibid., p. 12, that, since the obedience of the innocent victim is emphasised, the political authority of the murderer is not called into question by the killing. Betrayal by a close relative is a common motif in the deaths of legendary heroes; see Butler, The Myth of the Hero, p. 30.

<sup>142</sup>"...udaloi dobroï molodets,/Aleksei Petrovich-svet", in Tsarevicha Alekseya Khotvat Kaznit' (They Want to Execute Tsarevich Aleksei): L. I. Emel'yanov, ed., Russkaya Istoricheskaya Pesnya, Leningrad, 1987, no. 144, p. 227. In this ballad, a piece of popular wishful thinking, Aleksei is saved from execution by the intervention of his uncle, Mikita (sic) Romanov. It is adapted from an earlier song about Tsarevich Ivan Ivanovich, whose maternal uncle was Nikita Romanov, grandfather of Tsar Mikhail Fedorovich.

was aware of the wider tradition cannot be established. Unlike Vasilii Surikov, who grew up within a living folk culture in Siberia, Ge was born into the landed gentry, of Russianised Franco-Polish descent.<sup>143</sup> However, the historical myths and songs were part of a common ethos which permeated many strata of rural society. The peasant nanny was often responsible for introducing gentry children to folk traditions. Ge, whose mother died in his infancy, was known to be close to his nanny.<sup>144</sup> It is possible that he may have heard ballads like They Want to Execute Tsarevich Aleksei, quoted above, even if the implications of the underlying myth were not then apparent.

Whether or not that was the case, it seems likely that Ge intended to make the parallels between Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof and Honthorst's Christ before the High Priest (fig. 82). Both paintings emphasise the passivity of the victims, their refusal or inability to defend themselves. They are both powerless against worldly power. Implicit in the Honthorst, however, is the Christian concept of redemption from sin through suffering. If one reads Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei at Peterhof as a purely political parable against the autocracy, hope of salvation is impossible while the system remains unchanged: there is only the suffering of the broken victim awaiting torture. Alternatively, the placing of the tormented, dissolute Aleksei - the image of a humbled sinner - in the place of Christ in his Passion could be seen to strengthen the idea of redemption through sacrifice.<sup>145</sup> The iconography of Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei at

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<sup>143</sup>Zograf, ed., Ge. Pis'ma, Stat'i, Kritika, p. 307, note 3. His father, Nikolai Ge, was the son of an emigré from the French Revolution; his mother, Elena Sadovskaya (Sadovska), was the daughter of a Polish political exile. It is unknown whether the family was related to the French history painter Julien-Michel Gué (1789-1843).

<sup>144</sup>Vereshchagina, Ge, p. 7.

<sup>145</sup>Merezhkovskii, in his novel Antichrist: Petr and Aleksei, 1905, also treated Aleksei as a flawed Strastoterpets.

Peterhof thus looks back to Western religious art and forward to Ge's "What is Truth? - Christ and Pilate (1890, Tret'yakov Gallery, fig. 95). Indeed, Russkii Vestnik's criticism of Ge's Aleksei even prefigures the critics' response to Christ in his later work. His friend Tolstoi's statement that Christ "is not the sort of person who it would be pleasant to look at, but he is precisely what a man should be who has been tortured all night and is going to be led out to be tortured again",<sup>146</sup> is equally applicable to Aleksei. Consciously or unconsciously, Ge had created an image of the Strastoterpets.<sup>147</sup>

The relationship between Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei at Peterhof and the politics of the artist's own time is nevertheless a strong one. Delaroche's Cromwell gazing at the Body of Charles I (figs. 61 & 83), with which Ge's picture was compared, obliquely reflected the French experience of regicide and revolutions, although Delaroche denied "explicit contemporary reference"<sup>148</sup> in his art. Similarly, Ge's painting reflected, and acted as a focus for, the continuing debate about reform in absolutist Russia.

Politically, Ge was a liberal, but he avoided categorisation according to the Westerniser/Slavophile divide, and associated with scholars and writers in both camps. He met the Slavophile Ivan Aksakov and the anarchist Mikhail Bakunin (1814-76) in Italy.<sup>149</sup> Ge's acquaintance with Bakunin seems to have been brief, but it is interesting to note that the latter held decidedly anti-Petrine views.<sup>150</sup> Apart from Bakunin, Ge met

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<sup>146</sup>See Christian, ed., Tolstoy's Letters, vol. II, p. 468.

<sup>147</sup>It is unknown whether Ge knew that Aleksei owned a copy of De Imitatione Christi; if he did, there may be a touch of deliberate irony in the imagery of the painting.

<sup>148</sup>Strong, And when did you last see your father?, p. 140.

<sup>149</sup>Ge, "Vstrechi", in Zograf, ed., Ge. Pis'ma, Stat'i, Kritika, pp. 231-3.

<sup>150</sup>Riasanovsky, Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought, pp. 135-6.



no more of "the Bazarovs and Raskol'nikovs in Italy".<sup>151</sup> Vereshchagina has likened his other associates there, including Garibaldi, to Insarov, the hero of Turgenev's On the Eve - idealists, rather than nihilists.<sup>152</sup> Being half-Polish, Ge expressed passionate support for the 1863 Polish Rebellion.<sup>153</sup> According to Repin, Ge's Thursday soirées in Petersburg were attended by men of letters such as Ivan Turgenev, Nikolai Nekrasov, Mikhail Saltykov, Nikolai Kostomarov, Konstantin Kavelin, Aleksandr Pypin and Aleksei Potekhin.<sup>154</sup> Ge seems to have remained aloof from the radicals, probably on ideological grounds, rather than simply because of his absence in Italy during most of the 1860s.<sup>155</sup>

Perhaps most significantly, Ge had met Herzen, whom he had long admired, in Italy in 1866. Early the following year, Ge painted Herzen's portrait, which the philosopher described as "rembrandtisch"<sup>156</sup> and "a first-rate chef d'œuvre".<sup>157</sup> They became friends. Herzen was impressed by Ge's Last Supper: "How new, how true it is!"<sup>158</sup> They discussed Belinskii and Chernyshevskii; Herzen told Ge that he thought the latter "insincere".<sup>159</sup> Their children attended the same private school in Florence, run by Joseph Daumangé,<sup>160</sup> a former participant in the 1848 French Revolution.

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<sup>151</sup>Vereshchagina, Istoricheskaya Kartina v Russkom Iskusstve, pp. 134.

<sup>152</sup>Ibid., loc. cit.

<sup>153</sup>G. G. Myasoedov, "N. N. Ge (Vospominaniya o Khudozhnike)", in Zograf, ed., Ge. Pis'ma, Stat'i, Kritika, p. 245.

<sup>154</sup>Repin, Dalekoe Blizkoe, p. 317.

<sup>155</sup>As Vereshchagina claims, Istoricheskaya Kartina v Russkom Iskusstve, p. 134.

<sup>156</sup>Herzen's letter to N. P. Ogarev, dated 13/1 February 1867, in Zograf, ed., Ge. Pis'ma, Stat'i, Kritika, p. 73.

<sup>157</sup>Letter to Ogarev, 8 March (24 February), ibid., loc. cit.

<sup>158</sup>Ge, "Vstrechi", in ibid., p. 236.

<sup>159</sup>Ibid., loc. cit.

<sup>160</sup>Ibid., p. 371; Ge painted Daumangé's portrait in 1868 (Tret'yakov Gallery).

At this time, nearing the end of his life, Herzen was, according to Ge,

a profoundly unhappy man. I saw in him a boundless love for the homeland which was for ever closed to him, and an aversion to all that surrounded him in the West: for him it was alien, petty... It was grievous to see this talent broken.<sup>161</sup>

In his disillusion with both the Russian reform movement and with the West, Herzen's hostility towards Petr had increased. He regarded him as the founder of the autocracy and bureaucracy which continued into his own time. In "Our 'Opponents'" of 1854, he criticised of modern Slavophilism, but referred to "a wounded national feeling, as an obscure memory and a true instinct, ...ever since Peter I cut off the first Russian beard", and identified Tsarevich Aleksei and the Strel'tsy as manifestations of "the resistance to the Petersburg culture terrorism".<sup>162</sup> His comments of 1864 certainly seem appropriate to the mood of Ge's painting:

Peter I loves passionately the navy, civilization, and I do not know what else, but he loves even more passionately denunciations, rumors, investigations, torture; and suddenly all around him become informers, the Preobrazhenskii office is flooded with cases - noble and nonnoble bones crackle on the rack...<sup>163</sup>

It is possible that Ge could have been influenced by the views of the man both he and his wife had revered for years, "our favourite writer from youth",<sup>164</sup> as he researched the subject for his painting.

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<sup>161</sup>Ge, quoted by Stasov, Nikolai Nikolaevich Ge, p. 168.

<sup>162</sup>A. I. Herzen (A. I. Gertsen), "Our 'Opponents'", My Past and Thoughts, ed. and abridged D. Macdonald, London, 1974, p. 289.

<sup>163</sup>A. I. Gertsen, Sobranie sochinenii v tridtsati tomakh, vol. XVIII, Stat'i iz 'Kolokola' i drugie proizvedeniya 1864-1865 goda, Moscow, 1959, p. 41, quoted by Riasanovsky, Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought, p. 142.

<sup>164</sup>Ge, "Vstrechi", in Zograf, ed., Ge. Pis'ma, Stat'i, Kritika, p. 234.

Ge had discovered the extent of Nikolai I's personal cult of Petr. He was told, on his visit to Monplaisir, how Nikolai had frequented the house, wearing Petr's dressing-gown and nightcap.<sup>165</sup> Ge may also have been aware of Bakunin's view of Nikolai as Petr's spiritual as well as physical heir:

The present master of Russia [in 1849-50, i.e. Nikolai I] is a faithful successor to the political tendency created by Peter, and he is conducting that policy even more consistently than Peter. His rule is nothing other than the now mature...system of the man of genius, who created the Russian state; and never before was that state as threatening externally and as oppressive internally as precisely in our time.<sup>166</sup>

The Golos critic's comments partially echoed Herzen's, as he detected a chill in Petr's gaze under which

the blood freezes in one's veins. Both the criminal son and the exasperated father are silent, but in this silence are heard the moans of torture and all the horrors of the Fortress torture-chamber.<sup>167</sup>

The Peter and Paul Fortress, where Aleksei died, and "where the modern state prison began",<sup>168</sup> was still in use as a political prison. This fact in itself inevitably endowed the subject with some contemporary political resonances. But as the painting suggested, in the period of disillusion with the official reforms of the 1860s and the rise of the radicals, the artist's Herzenite liberalism could offer no unequivocal answers.

Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei at Peterhof was ambiguous enough, and the attitude of Aleksandr II flexible enough, for the painting

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<sup>165</sup>See Chapter 2, and Stasov, Nikolai Nikolaevich Ge, p. 229-30.

<sup>166</sup>M. A. Bakunin, Sobranie Sochinenii i Pisem, 1828-1876, Moscow, 1935, vol. IV, pp. 143-4, quoted by Riasanovsky, Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought, p. 136.

<sup>167</sup>"Peterburgskaya Khronika", Golos, 1 December 1871, p. 2.

<sup>168</sup>Payne, The Fortress, p. 23.

to be well-received by the Emperor. In 1872, because the original was bought by Tret'yakov, before the exhibition opened, Aleksandr II commissioned Ge to paint him a copy (fig. 96).<sup>169</sup> It appears that by this time Ge had become less equivocal in his attitude towards his subject. The second Petr's face is more florid, his expression more openly contemptuous. Aleksei, too, is slightly altered: the resemblance to Tannauer's portrait is lessened, as if Ge, perhaps, was relying more on his model, and his hair is lighter in colour. It is this version which now hangs in the Russian Museum, St. Petersburg. Possibly Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei at Peterhof had some personal significance for Aleksandr II. In 1839 he had attempted to resist the plans of his father, Nikolai I, to arrange his marriage. Nikolai had written to his wife about their son's obstinacy, in terms reminiscent of Petr's "Declaration to my son" :

...much as I love my children, I love my fatherland much more still. And, if...necessary, there is the example of Peter the Great to show me my duty; and I shall not be too weak to fulfill it.<sup>170</sup>

Such was the success of the painting that Ge was commissioned to produce four more copies. These are now in the Art Museum of Uzbekistan, Tashkent (1872), the Novgorod Historical and Architectural Museum-Reserve (1874), the Rybinsk Historical and Art Museum (1874), and a private collection in Kiev (1878).<sup>171</sup> The favourable official response he received can be contrasted with the treatment of Il'ya Repin's Ivan the Terrible and his son Ivan (1885, Tret'yakov Gallery, fig.

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<sup>169</sup>Stasov, Nikolai Nikolaevich Ge, p. 240.

<sup>170</sup>Nikolai I, quoted by Riasanovsky, Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought, p. 108.

<sup>171</sup>See Zhivopis' XVIII-nachalo XX veka. Katalog, GRM, p. 91, item no. 1374.

97), which had to be withdrawn from that year's Travelling Exhibition.<sup>172</sup> Repin referred to this picture under the title of The Son-Murderer in a letter to Tret'yakov in January 1885.<sup>173</sup> The repressive climate of Aleksandr III's reign, which followed Aleksandr II's assassination in 1881, was unfavourable. The painting's explicit violence, reflecting the artist's emotional reaction to the assassination and subsequent executions, made its point about the fractured relationship between Tsar and people too forcefully for the reactionary regime.

Ge's Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof allowed multiple readings. At one extreme, Saltykov interpreted it as a celebration of Petr's public virtue in putting the future of his Westernising reforms before the life of his worthless son. This view could be described as the liberal pro-Petrine position. A conservative pro-Petrine interpretation might celebrate the sacrifice in terms of Petr's duty to the State: as autocrat, he was justified in using any means to suppress dissent.

Anti-Petrine interpretations differ similarly in their emphases. Stasov's objections were humanitarian rather than political: Petr remained a great national figure, despite his cruelty and treachery towards Aleksei - for which Menshikov and Ekaterina were partly to blame.<sup>174</sup> A plausible Slavophile view is represented by the opinions to which the 'Amateur Artist' found himself succumbing against his will - seeing Petr as an incarnation of the prevailing bureaucracy and

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<sup>172</sup>Moiseeva, ed., Tovarishchestvo. Pis'ma, Dokumenty, vol. 1, pp. 297-8.

<sup>173</sup>"Synoubiitsa"; Repin, Izbrannye Pis'ma v Dvukh Tomakh, v. 1, p. 301.

<sup>174</sup>Stasov, Izbrannye Sochineniya, vol. 1, p. 210.

autocracy, with Aleksei as the doomed young 'Hope of Russia',<sup>175</sup> supported by the people.

Whatever Ge's original intentions, they are not forced upon the spectator. As S.- Peterburgskie Vedomosti stated:

he has only shown the two figures, as if to say: here are the father and the son, look at them, compare them, read their hearts, and decide for yourself which of them is more deserving of your sympathy.<sup>176</sup>

The decision is placed firmly with the spectator, even permitting disagreement with the artist, in a clear break with the unambiguous morality of Academic history painting. It is a universal choice: between the individual conscience and the State; between the powerless and the powerful; between compassion and expediency. It is also Petr's own choice: his dilemma is depicted, but his solution is ethically questionable. Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof contains many levels of meaning. Beside it, Myasoedov's picture, its companion in the Travelling Exhibition, appears merely diverting and anecdotal,<sup>177</sup> like much of the official bicentenary celebrations.

The official bicentenary had little long-term effect upon artistic images of Petr I, apart from the continuing presence of some statues erected during the festivities. After 1872, paintings of Petrine subjects were absent from the Travelling Exhibitions for several years. This suggests that the bicentenary was itself important in motivating artists to depict Petrine themes. In the Third Travelling Exhibition of 1874,

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<sup>175</sup>Thus was Aleksei's health popularly toasted; see Aleksei's supplementary note to his deposition to the Senate, 17 June 1718, in Ustryalov, Istoriya Tsarstvovaniya Petra Velikogo, vol. VI, p. 518.

<sup>176</sup>1871, no. 328, quoted by Bruk, "Pervaya Peredvizhnaya", Khudozhnik, 1971, vol. 34, no. 12, p. 29.

<sup>177</sup>Shuvalova, Myasoedov, p. 33.

Bogolyubov and Gun showed a joint work depicting the jubilee celebrations, but this cannot be classed as a history painting.

Ge was busy until 1878 painting copies of Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof. His other attempts at secular history painting in this period were less striking artistically, although still popular. In his sketch for the unexecuted Tsar Boris questions Tsaritsa Marfa about the Death of Dmitrii (1874, Samara City Art Museum),<sup>178</sup> he repeated some of the compositional elements of his Petrine painting. The use of candlelight heightens its relationship with Honthorst's Christ before the High Priest. There is also a connecting theme of the abuse of power and, metaphysically, its symbolic expression in the myth of the Passion-bearer. Indeed, in his later years, Ge's greatest achievement was his powerful sequence of paintings on Christ's Passion, painted under the philosophical influence of Tolstoi.

The iconography Ge created for Petr I and Aleksei was adapted by later artists to express other ideological conflicts.<sup>179</sup> However, the subject itself did not become popular within the artistic repertoire of Petrine subjects. Possibly the political and moral complexities of the relationship between the father and son made it too problematic, especially after 1881. Even so, Aleksei began to appear as a sympathetic character in popular novels such as Daniil Mordovtsev's Idealists and Realists (1878) and Petr Polezhaev's Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich (1885), which emphasised

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<sup>178</sup>N. Yu. Zograf, Nikolai Ge, Moscow, 1974, p. 35.

<sup>179</sup>The most direct example is Nikolai Yaroshenko's The Old and the Young (1881, Russian Museum, fig. 98), depicting the conflict between the earlier generation of liberals and their radical sons which Turgenev described in Fathers and Sons. Yaroshenko reversed the main elements of Ge's composition, and made the son the more assertive of the figures - perhaps implying that now it was the young who were taking the lead in ideas and action. At further remove, Boris Ioganson's The Interrogation of the Communists (1933, Tret'yakov Gallery, fig. 99), a Socialist Realist painting on a Civil War subject, adapted Ge's composition to depict two Communist prisoners in the hands of White officers.

romance rather than controversy.<sup>180</sup> The renewed interest in Petr and the symbolic image of St. Petersburg among the writers of the Silver Age resulted in Merezhkovskii's novel Antichrist: Petr and Aleksei (1905),<sup>181</sup> in which the scene of Aleksei and Petr's confrontation at Peterhof is clearly based upon Ge's painting.<sup>182</sup> In the dramatised version, Tsarevich Aleksei: A Tragedy in Five Acts (1920) Merezhkovskii transferred the location to the Winter Palace.<sup>183</sup> Aleksandr Benua's set and costume designs for this play seem to be the only significant artistic treatment of Aleksei's story after Ge's painting, and reflect Benua's lifelong interest in eighteenth century decorative art (fig. 100).<sup>184</sup>

The most enduring influence of Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof on history painting lay in Ge's rejection of Academic idealism in favour of painterly Realism and an emphasis upon his characters' psychology. This made possible the appearance of other paintings challenging Petr's official heroic image. These were the work of fellow-Peredvizhniki, whose access to wider sources of patronage freed them from dependence on the Court and Court ideology. History painting was no longer necessarily an adjunct of official interpretations of history. Repin's The Regent Tsarevna Sof'ya Alekseevna, in the Year

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<sup>180</sup>Gasiorowska, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian Fiction, p. 42, outlines Mordovtsev's sentimentalisation of Afrosin'ya as a gentlewoman and a virgin, who eventually kills herself. Polezhaev's novel is summarised as "thoroughly fictionalized... Historical personages are reinterpreted at the author's will", *ibid.*, p. 189.

<sup>181</sup>As mentioned above, Merezhkovskii projected the myth of the Passion-bearer on to Aleksei. He also introduced a sado-masochistic element into the Aleksei-Afrosin'ya relationship, as bizarre as Mordovtsev's platonic interpretation; see Merejkowski (Merezhkovskii), Peter and Alexis, pp. 158, 343-9 & 504, and Gasiorowska, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian Fiction, p. 42.

<sup>182</sup>Merejkowski (Merezhkovskii), Peter and Alexis, pp. 501-8

<sup>183</sup>D. S. Merezhkovskii, Tsarevich Aleksei: Tragediya v Pyati Deistviyakh, Petersburg, 1920, stage directions at the beginning of Act IV, p. 59.

<sup>184</sup>M. G. Etkind, Aleksandr Nikolaevich Benua, 1870-1960, Leningrad & Moscow, 1965, pp. 134-5 and pl. 70.



after her Imprisonment in the Novodevichii Convent, during the Execution of the Strel'tsy and the Torture of her Serving-women, October 1698 (1879, fig. 101), and Surikov's The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy (1881, fig. 126; both Tret'yakov Gallery), are among the major paintings of the next decade which focussed on Petr's opponents, while Petr himself became less prominent.

## Chapter 5: The Female Opponent: Tsarevna Sof'ya.

Between 1872-79 very few history paintings appeared in the Travelling Exhibitions. The Association adhered fairly closely to a Realist or naturalist agenda, with landscapes, portraits and modern life subjects predominating over literary or historical themes.<sup>1</sup> This suggests that the bicentenary of Petr I had played an important part in determining Myasoedov and Ge to paint Petrine subjects for the First Exhibition. Without the external stimulus of the bicentenary to draw spectators and potential patrons, interest in Petrine subjects lapsed. The balance of the content of the exhibitions in the mid-late 1870s may also have reflected the tastes of their audience, chiefly the rising upper middle classes of the provincial cities.

The circuit of the exhibitions had expanded since 1871-2. The Seventh Travelling Exhibition opened at the Academy of Sciences in Petersburg on 23 February 1879, and visited Moscow, Odessa, Kiev, Khar'kov, Saratov and Tambov, before closing at Voronezh in 1880.<sup>2</sup> It included the first painting on a Petrine theme by a Peredvizhnik artist since 1871, Il'ya Repin's The Regent Tsarevna Sof'ya Alekseevna, in the Year after her Imprisonment in the Novodevichii Convent, during the Execution of the Strel'tsy and the Torture of her Serving-women, October 1698 (Tret'yakov Gallery, fig. 101). It was the artist's first major secular history painting.

Like Ge's Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof (fig. 78), it reinterprets, and presents as a significant individual

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<sup>1</sup>See Moiseeva, ed., Tovarishchestvo. Pis'ma. Dokumenty, vol. 1, for contents of these exhibition, with some reproductions: 1st Exhib., pp. 60-7; 2nd, pp. 72-3; 3rd, pp. 100-1; 4th, pp. 119-25; 5th, pp. 130-4; 6th, pp. 150-7; 7th, pp. 177-84.

<sup>2</sup>ibid., vol. 2, p. 628.

in her own right, a character previously condemned and marginalised as an opponent of the Tsar. Hughes has explained the reasons for Sof'ya's neglect:

...authors who wrote about Peter in the wake of his...reforms took full advantage of the vivid juxtaposition of the dark and barbaric era of Peter's childhood with the age of good sense and enlightenment apparently inaugurated by the great man. Sofiya was a suitably dramatic symbol of the 'old ways', especially as she had apparently so narrowly failed to stifle a great genius.<sup>3</sup>

Repin's depiction implies a more thorough appraisal of pre-Petrine history and a further questioning of the Petr-centred view presented in official art. It is all the more striking because the protagonist is a woman - which, it can be argued, in itself undermined the earlier use of Sof'ya as a "symbol of the 'old ways'".

In many respects, Sof'ya's regency (1682-9) laid the foundations for the expansion of Russia's relations with the West. The Foreign Office was directed by Prince Vasilii Golitsyn (1643-1714), Sof'ya's most trusted adviser, who was interested in Western culture. During the regency, treaties were concluded with Sweden, Poland and China to establish Russia's borders; the Treaty of Moscow, with Poland, 1686, was particularly favourable, confirming Russia's possession of Kiev and areas of the Ukraine, including Smolensk and Zaporozh'e.<sup>4</sup> French Huguenots, fleeing after Louis XIV's revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, were encouraged to come to Moscow, with promise of employment and freedom of worship.<sup>5</sup> Golitsyn was also responsible for obtaining the first Catholic

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<sup>3</sup>Hughes, "Sofiya Alekseyevna and the Moscow Rebellion of 1682", Slavonic and East European Review, vol. 63, no. 4, p. 521.

<sup>4</sup>Hughes, Sophia, Regent of Russia, p. 192.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 209.

priest for the Foreign Colony, following a request from Patrick Gordon on behalf of its small community.<sup>6</sup>

Sof'ya's regency was significant culturally.<sup>7</sup> 'Moscow Baroque' architecture flourished, under the Regent's personal patronage. She commissioned a number of buildings in the Novodevichii Convent, including the gate-churches of the Transfiguration and the Intercession, and the bell-tower. Golitsyn's house in Moscow was built by Europeans, and furnished with Western goods. In 1687, the Slavonic, Greek and Latin Academy was established in Moscow, under two Greeks, graduates of Padua. Although its early achievements were limited, it was the first institution for higher education in Russia. There was little development in Russian literature, but the poet Sil'vester Medved'ev was among the small cultural élite with access to foreign works. Also in this period, the voluntary adoption of Western dress, later forcibly imposed by Petr, became more noticeable: one of Sof'ya's sisters, Ekaterina, dressed "in the Polish style".<sup>8</sup>

Sof'ya's assumption of power as Regent for her disabled brother, Ivan V, and her half-brother Petr I, a minor, was remarkable in itself. In seventeenth-century Muscovite society: "The higher the social position of a family, the more rigorously were its women shielded from public view. Women of the tsar's family were particularly restricted."<sup>9</sup> Although Petr has been credited with freeing aristocratic ladies from the terem, Sof'ya and her sisters had already set an example of female involvement in public life. Of course, Sof'ya's rank limited the impact of her example, but it is acknowledged that her reign made possible the accession of five

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 125.

<sup>7</sup>See ibid. Chapter 7, "Culture", pp. 134-178, for detailed discussion of the main points of this paragraph.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>9</sup>Atkinson, "Society and the Sexes in the Russian Past", Women in Russia, p. 17.

female rulers<sup>10</sup> before Pavel I's reintroduction of male primogeniture at the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>11</sup>

Sof'ya had seldom been depicted in history paintings before Repin's The Regent Tsarevna Sof'ya. The religious debate between the Orthodox clergy and the Old Believers on 5 July 1682 had been a popular subject in early nineteenth century history painting. Sof'ya had been actively involved in the debate, boldly defending her late father, Tsar Aleksei, and brother Fedor III against the Old Believers' allegations of heresy:

If Arseny and Nikon were heretics, then so were our father and brother. This means that the reigning tsars are not tsars, the patriarchs not patriarchs and the prelates are not prelates. We refuse to listen to such blasphemy and to hear our father and brother referred to as heretics...<sup>12</sup>

Sof'ya was accompanied by other female members of the family: her aunt Tat'yana Mikhailovna, her stepmother Natal'ya Naryshkina, and at least one of her sisters.<sup>13</sup> The presence of the royal womenfolk, in full public view, at such an event was unprecedented. As Solov'ev, whose A History of Russia from Most Ancient Times was one of the first major historical works to discuss Sof'ya's regency as an evolutionary stage leading towards Petr's reforms, wrote:

...the Schismatics...had come to assert the old faith and destroy all novelties, but they did not notice the unparalleled novelty which met them in the Facetted Chamber: there were women in the Tsar's place! The Tsarevnas, the maidens, were

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<sup>10</sup>Ekaterina I, 1725; Anna Ivanovna, 1728; the Regent Anna Leopoldovna, 1740; Elizaveta Petrovna, 1741; Ekaterina II, 1762.

<sup>11</sup>Massie, Peter the Great, p. 107.

<sup>12</sup>Quoted by Hughes, Sophia, Regent of Russia, p. 77.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 76, noting that some sources disagree as to the identity of some of the women - probably because they had seldom been seen in public previously.

openly in front of the people and one Tsarevna was in charge of everything!<sup>14</sup>

Nevertheless, paintings of the debate often omitted Sof'ya and the other women. The young Tsars, neither of whom had been present, were included instead. The falsification of the event was therefore two-fold - the exclusion of the women and the inclusion of the boys. Nikolai Sinyavskii's Petr the Great's Courage (literally, and significantly, 'manliness', or 'manly courage' - muzhestvo), a naive work engraved by Nikolai Sokolov (1805, State Historical Museum, Moscow, fig. 102),<sup>15</sup> and copied in oils by Ivan Karmanov (1847, Russian Museum),<sup>16</sup> shows ten-year-old Petr as the only member of the royal family at the debate. Sof'ya and her sisters are absent. Two anonymous nineteenth-century lithographs, Petr denounces the Schismatics<sup>17</sup> and The Debate with the Schismatics in the Facetted Chamber<sup>18</sup> (both State Historical Museum), also depict Petr taking charge; in the latter a nurse leads the frightened Ivan away. Sof'ya is again omitted from both pictures. The image of young Petr's 'manly courage' is created at the expense of his sisters and of historical truth.

Kemenov bluntly ascribes this "falsification of historical fact" to the influence of Petr's eighteenth-century apologists Petr Krekshin (1686-1750) and Ivan Golikov.<sup>19</sup> Krekshin has been described as

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<sup>14</sup>S. M. Solov'ev, Istoriya Rossii s drevneishikh vremen, vols 13-14, 5th ed., vol. VII, Moscow, 1962, p. 287.

<sup>15</sup>Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 125. Rovinskii and the Russian Museum catalogue give 1805 as its date; Kemenov, 1755. Since Sinyavskii was born in 1771, and Sokolov in 1767, Kemenov's date is impossible.

<sup>16</sup>Catalogued as The Suppression of the Schismatics' Revolt by Petr I, inv. no. ZhB-943.

<sup>17</sup>Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 127.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 128.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., loc. cit.

"generally unreliable".<sup>20</sup> Golikov defined his aim clearly in his preface to his Acts of Petr the Great:

to devote the rest of my days not to a cunning, but to a simple, zealous description, moved by gratitude, of the great, overwhelming, glorious, and resounding but at the same time salutary for Russia, immortal deeds of His.<sup>21</sup>

Such authors were naturally inclined to amplify Petr's rôle at Sof'ya's expense.

In conformity with historians before Solov'ev, the artists who depicted this subject as an all-male gathering ignored, perhaps deliberately, its significance in the emergence of aristocratic Russian women from the terem into public life. According to Atkinson, "A popular saying proclaimed that 'A maiden seen is copper, but the unseen girl is gold'. In seventeenth-century Russia, copper was debased currency".<sup>22</sup> By making Sof'ya and her kinswomen invisible, Sinyavskii, Karmanov and other early nineteenth-century artists were returning them to their traditional place in society. The removal of Sof'ya from a scene which demonstrated her fierce opposition to the Old Believers reflected the false image of her as an opponent of all reform, the complete opposite of the enlightened Petr.

Even in 1872, sixteen years after historians began to reassess Sof'ya (see below), Pavel Ivachev's student work, The Banishing of the Schismatics, led by Nikita Pustosvyat, from the Facetted Chamber, in the reign of Ivan and Petr Alekseevich in 1682, (Museum of the Academy of Arts, St. Petersburg, fig. 103),<sup>23</sup> placed her in a subordinate rôle. She is

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<sup>20</sup>Riasanovsky, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought, p. 26.

<sup>21</sup>Golikov, Deyaniya Petra Velikogo, vol. I, p. IX, quoted by Riasanovsky, *ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>22</sup>Atkinson, "Society and the Sexes in the Russian Past", Women in Russia, p. 17; the saying is taken from I. E. Zabelin, Opyty izucheniya russkikh drevnostei i istorii, Moscow, 1872, vol. I, p. 155.

<sup>23</sup>Reproduced in Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 128.

shown seated on the dais, behind Ivan, while young Petr again takes command of the situation. This drawing closely reflects the spirit of the official bicentenary celebrations in its focus upon Petr. However, the inclusion of Sof'ya, even as a supporting character, suggests that by this date it was no longer possible to ignore her completely.

In the 1860s there was at least one representation of the debate which accorded Sof'ya her rightful place at the head of the Court party. Nikolai Koshelev's The Debate of the Schismatics before the Court (1869, fig. 104<sup>24</sup>), shows Sof'ya rising to her feet to confront the Old Believers' leader, Nikita 'Pustosvyat'<sup>25</sup> Dobrynin. This shift towards representing Sof'ya in her proper historical rôle was a result of several related factors.

The consequence for historians of Nikolai I's death has already been discussed: a slackening of censorship which allowed his Petrine cult to be challenged. In 1856 the first monograph on Sof'ya, Petr Shchebal'skii's The Regency of Tsarevna Sof'ya, was published.<sup>26</sup> Shchebal'skii emphasised the active part Sof'ya herself took in government. Volumes 13-14 of Solov'ev's A History of Russia from Most Ancient Times, 1863-4, further contributed to a reassessment of the regency's significance. Solov'ev was very sympathetic towards Petr, but he was prepared to acknowledge, like Shchebal'skii, that the foundations of some of Petr's reforms and the exchange of ideas between East and West had been laid by his immediate predecessors. This reappraisal of pre-Petrine Russia brought with it a reappraisal of Sof'ya, who had often been

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<sup>24</sup>V. Zolotov, Istoriya Rossii v kartinakh, 3rd ed., St. Petersburg, 1869, reproduced in Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 126.

<sup>25</sup>Literally, "Empty Saint"; R. O. Crummey translates it as "the Bigot" in The Old Believers and the World of Antichrist. The Vyg Community and the Russian State 1694-1855, Madison, Milwaukee & London, 1970, p. 22.

<sup>26</sup>Pravlenie Tsarevny Sofii, Moscow, 1856.



used as a symbol of sinister, retrogressive Muscovite culture.<sup>27</sup> Solov'ev emphasised positively both Sof'ya and Petr's strength of character, linking them with a single epithet: Sof'ya is called the "bogatyri'-tsarevna",<sup>28</sup> Petr an "unprecedented bogatyri"<sup>29</sup> (bogatyri - gigantic legendary heroes). Nevertheless, like previous historians sympathetic to Petr, he still claimed that Sof'ya had organised the 1682 Strel'tsy revolt.<sup>30</sup>

The political threat which Sof'ya posed to Petr was directly related to their relationship as half-sister and half-brother. Nikolai Karamzin wrote:

in respect of her mind and intellectual qualities she was worthy of the name of sister of Peter the Great; but blinded by ambition, she aspired to rule alone and reign alone, thus placing the historian under the sad obligation of being her accuser.<sup>31</sup>

The historian is accusing her of being an 'unnatural', disloyal sister to Petr, yet Petr himself is rarely accused of behaving unnaturally, despite his persecution and killing of his son, and forcible confinement of his wife and half-sisters in convents. Sof'ya is often charged with excessive ambition. De la Neuville (or his editor) claimed: "Without ever having read Machiavelli, she has a natural command of all his maxims, and especially this, that there is...no crime which may not be committed when ruling is at stake".<sup>32</sup> Weber also argued along these lines, claiming to

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<sup>27</sup>For a fuller discussion of these texts and the historiography of Sof'ya, see Hughes, Sophia, Regent of Russia, pp. 263-76.

<sup>28</sup>Solov'ev, Istoriya Rossii s drevneishikh vremen, vols 13-14, p. 184.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 183.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 264. As Hughes demonstrates in "Sofiya Alekseyevna and the Moscow Rebellion of 1682", Slavonic and East European Review, vol. 63, pp. 518-39, and Sophia, Regent of Russia, pp. 56, 61-2, there is little evidence to support this claim. See also Chapter 2.

<sup>31</sup>N. M. Karamzin, "Panteon rossiskikh avtorov", Sochineniya v dvukh tomakh, Leningrad, 1984, vol. 2, p. 102, quoted by Hughes, Sophia, Regent of Russia, p. 268.

<sup>32</sup>F. de la Neuville, Relation curieuse et nouvelle de Moscovie, published edition only, not in original MS; quoted by Hughes, ibid., p. 265.

quote Petr himself (see below). Sof'ya's failure to conform to a submissive ideal of feminine and sisterly behaviour, by the standards of her own or later times, provided the unwritten subtext of these assessments.<sup>33</sup>

This subtext was made explicit when Sof'ya's 'wickedness' was defined in sexual terms. The hero of Ivan Lazhechnikov's 1833 novel, The Last Recruit is alleged to be Sof'ya's illegitimate son by her adviser, Vasilii Golitsyn,<sup>34</sup> although there is little evidence for the frequent claim that she was Golitsyn's mistress.<sup>35</sup> In 1834, in his novel, The Mysterious Monk, Zotov, who also wrote The Shipbuilder from Zaandam, "makes [Sof'ya] propose marriage to Golitsyn, to Prince Khovansky, and to her maternal uncle, Ivan Miloslavsky - all married men",<sup>36</sup> adding incest to the alleged adultery. None of this is substantiated. In her study of female leaders and their historical images, Fraser has noted the frequency of sexual innuendo about powerful women by (predominantly male) commentators.<sup>37</sup> The implication is, that a woman who asserts herself in an 'unfeminine' manner in public life must be 'immoral' - i.e. sexually voracious - in private.<sup>38</sup> The rumours about Sof'ya were rooted in this assumption, based on her public rôle as the first woman to exercise political power in Russia, and on patriarchal definitions of 'appropriate'

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<sup>33</sup>Interestingly, Ekaterina II had favoured a limited rehabilitation of Sof'ya as a precedent for herself (Hughes, Sophia, Regent of Russia, p. 268). However, Pavel I's reintroduction of male primogeniture and his son Nikolai I's cult of Petr countered this.

<sup>34</sup>See Gasiorowska, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian Fiction, p. 187

<sup>35</sup>Hughes, Sophia, Regent of Russia, pp. 98, 227-8, & 274. Sof'ya's two surviving letters to Golitsyn, pp. 227-8, are effusive and elaborate, but this may simply reflect the prose style of the period; the rest of the evidence is rumour from hostile sources.

<sup>36</sup>Gasiorowska, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian Fiction, p. 43.

<sup>37</sup>A. Fraser, Boadicea's Chariot: The Warrior Queens, London, 1988, pp. 11-12.

<sup>38</sup>A modern popular biography of Petr has even accused Sof'ya of promiscuous relations with numerous Sirel'tsy officers - without any evidence; see H. Troyat, Peter the Great, London, 1987, p. 11.

feminine behaviour. Sof'ya's image was established as the opposite of the virtuous, almost Marian image of Petr's mother Natal'ya Naryshkina, depicted in Shteiben's Petr the Great saved by his Mother (1830), and Demidov's Tsaritsa Natal'ya Kirillovna with Tsarevich Petr on the Red Staircase (1848), discussed in Chapter 2. The two women were turned into the contrasting female stereotypes of the Whore and the Madonna.

The beginning of the historical reassessment of Sof'ya in the late 1850s coincided with the emergence of the 'Woman Question' in contemporary Russian society. Female emancipation "surfaced...in tandem with the question of serf emancipation, only after Russia's defeat in the Crimean War in 1856".<sup>39</sup> Campaigns to improve educational opportunities were led by women like Nadezhda Stasova, Vladimir Stasov's sister. Stasova was a major figure in the Sunday School movement, and in the campaign for women's higher education. In 1876, after eight years of petitioning the authorities, she registered eight hundred students for the first Advanced Women's Courses in St. Petersburg.<sup>40</sup> Repin became acquainted with her through his friendship with her brother, and in 1874, she was godmother to Repin's daughter Nadezhda.<sup>41</sup> Repin drew and painted her portrait several times,<sup>42</sup> and in The Ovation for Nadezhda Stasova depicted her being fêted by the students of the Advanced Courses

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<sup>39</sup> Atkinson, "Society and the Sexes in the Russian Past", Women in Russia, p. 28.

<sup>40</sup> C. Porter, Fathers and Daughters: Russian Women in Revolution, London, 1976, p. 111.

<sup>41</sup> I. S. Zil'bershtein, Khudozhestvennoe Nasledstvo. Repin, Moscow & Leningrad, 1948, vol. I, p. 181.

<sup>42</sup> Portrait (1883, I. I. Brodskii Museum-flat, St. Petersburg), O. A. Lyaskovskaya, Ilya Efimovich Repin: Zhizn' i Tvorchestvo 1844-1930, Moscow, 3rd ed. 1983, p. 421, and drawing Nadezhda Stasova Embroidering (Russian Museum), in G. Sternin et al., ed., Ilya Repin: Painting, Graphic Arts, Leningrad, 1985, pp. 265-6, item no. 163.

(1889, Institute of Literature of the Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg, fig. 105).<sup>43</sup>

Women's increasing political involvements were reflected in literature, in the characters of Elena in Turgenev's On the Eve in 1859, and Vera in Chernyshevskii's What is to be Done? in 1863. By the 1870s, radical women, like Vera Zasluch, who shot and wounded Governor Trepov of St. Petersburg in 1878, were taking violent action. Artists highlighted women's social problems, as Pukirev's The Unequal Marriage (1862, Tret'yakov Gallery), which depicts a young gentlewoman being married off to an elderly but wealthy dignitary, and Perov's The Arrival of a Governess at a Merchant's House (1866, Tret'yakov Gallery). The Sixth Travelling Exhibition of 1878 had included Mikhail Petrovich Klodt's The Tsarevna's Terem (Perm Art Gallery),<sup>44</sup> depicting the picturesque but extremely restricted existence from which Sof'ya had emerged. On one level, it reflected a continuation of Shvarts' fascination with the minutiae of seventeenth-century domestic life; on another, it prefigured some of the preoccupations of Repin's The Regent Tsarevna Sof'ya in focussing on the seclusion of women.

Repin had moved to Moscow in September 1877, a year after returning from Paris. He had written from Paris in 1874 to Kramskoi: "the St. Petersburg climate kills our art... On returning to Russia, I think I'm sure to settle in Moscow."<sup>45</sup> His new home was on Bol'shoi Teplyi Pereulok, near Maidens' Field<sup>46</sup> and the Novodevichii Convent.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Zil'bershtein, Khudozhestvennoe Nasledstvo. Repin, vol. I, for the painting (1888, private collection, Moscow), p. 181; the drawing of 1889 heads an address to Nadezhda Stasova, p. 183.

<sup>44</sup>Moiseeva, ed., Tovarishchestvo. Pis'ma, Dokumenty, vol. 1, p. 155, fig. 105.

<sup>45</sup>Letter of 13 September, 1874, quoted by Zil'bershtein, Khudozhestvennoe Nasledstvo. Repin, vol. I, p. 154.

<sup>46</sup>Devichoe Pole.

<sup>47</sup>V. N. Moskvinov, Repin v Moskve, Moscow, 1954, p. 29.

His proximity to the Convent, where Sof'ya had spent the last fifteen years of her life, prompted his interest in her story as the subject for a painting. By December 1877 Repin had formed a mental image of Sof'ya in her convent cell.<sup>48</sup> However, work did not commence fully until 1878. He developed his ideas as he took his small children for walks upon the field beside the convent. His daughter Vera, then aged five, later recalled:

We especially loved to go for walks with Papa on Maidens' Field and over the ice on the Moscow River... Walking on the other side of Maidens' Field, we listened to Papa's stories, how, behind a latticed window of the convent, Tsarevna Sof'ya had languished, and how, at the window of her cell had hung a Strelets, gibbeted by Petr...<sup>49</sup>

Repin preferred to work from live models wherever possible: "Having conceived a picture, I have always sought in life the sort of people in whose figure and facial features would be expressed what I need for my picture".<sup>50</sup> For a history painting, however, he had to combine this with historical research and with reference to contemporary images of his subjects. Repin was not a gentleman-scholar, like Ge, but a professional artist of Ukrainian peasant origins, the son of an army trooper.<sup>51</sup> Stasov, the nationalist critic, assisted him with much of his research.

Written descriptions of Sof'ya seem contradictory. Repin discussed them in his correspondence with Stasov:

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<sup>48</sup>Letter dated 14 December 1877, in Repin & Stasov, Perepiska, vol. II, p. 25.

<sup>49</sup>V. I. Repina, "Iz detskikh vospominanii", Niva, 1914, no. 29, p. 571, quoted by Zil'bershtein. Khudozhestvennoe Nasledstvo. Repin, vol. I, p. 154.

<sup>50</sup>S. Durylin, Repin i Garshin. Iz istorii russkoi zhivopisi, Moscow, 1926, p. 26, quoted by L. Pevzner, "Repin rabotaet nad obrazom", Khudozhnik, Moscow, 1962, vol. 8, p. 41.

<sup>51</sup>Sternin et al., ed., Ilya Repin, p. 232.

...you say that 'some foreigners say one thing, others - another'. I'd like to read everything. Would you take extracts of these for me from the foreign accounts about her, and also from the Russian ones I haven't read?<sup>52</sup>

Foy de la Neuville's Relation curieuse et nouvelle de Moscovie, 1698, was frequently quoted by both Russian and Western historians:

Her mind and great ability bear no relation to the deformity of her person, as she is immensely fat, with a head as big as a bushel, hairs on her face and tumours on her legs, and at least forty years old. But in the same degree that her stature is broad, short and coarse, her mind is shrewd, unprejudiced and full of policy.<sup>53</sup>

The accuracy and authenticity of this description have been questioned. Hughes observes that the passage appears only as a marginal note to the original manuscript, which seems to date from c. 1690. She suggests that the description may have been added, perhaps by an editor, after Sof'ya's fall from power, "to emphasise [her] negative aspects".<sup>54</sup>

A different image was supplied in the late 1710s by the Hanoverian diplomat Weber. He alleged that Petr had described his half-sister as "endowed with all the Accomplishments of Body and Mind to Perfection, had it not been for her boundless Ambition and insatiable desire of governing".<sup>55</sup> John Perry also described her, without having seen her, as a "handsom young Lady".<sup>56</sup> The contradiction between these descriptions may be more apparent than real. Weber and Perry, who had never met Sof'ya, obtained their impressions from Russians, who judged female beauty by a different æsthetic to that of seventeenth-century Westerners. As a British doctor wrote:

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<sup>52</sup>Letter dated 26 October 1878, in Repin & Stasov, Perepiska, vol. II, p. 38.

<sup>53</sup>Quoted by Schuyler, Peter the Great, vol. I, London, 1884, p. 208.

<sup>54</sup>Hughes, Sophia, Regent of Russia, p. 265.

<sup>55</sup>Weber, The Present State of Russia, vol. I, p. 138.

<sup>56</sup>J. Perry, The State of Russia, Under the Present Czar, London, 1716, p. 143.

A lean woman [the Russians] account unwholesome, therefore they who are inclined to leanness, give themselves over to all manner of Epicurism, on purpose to fatten themselves, and lye a bed all day drinking Russian Brandy (which fatten extremely) then they sleep and afterwards drink again like swine designed to make bacon.<sup>57</sup>

Whatever the problems of assessing verbal descriptions of Sof'ya, most contemporary portraits of her are related and fairly consistent. An engraving by Leontii Tarasevich, 1688, was sent to Amsterdam and copied by Abraham Bloteling for wider circulation. Most copies were destroyed by Petr I after his coup the following year, but a few survived. There are related portraits in oils. These show Sof'ya's portrait within an oval which forms the body of a double-headed eagle, accompanied by allegorical emblems.<sup>58</sup> Two finished examples are in the Russian Museum, St. Petersburg (fig. 106), and the Historical Museum, Moscow; a third, unfinished, is in the Novodevichii Convent Museum.<sup>59</sup> Stylistically, these portraits are rooted in the parsuna, or funerary portrait-icon of the late sixteenth-early seventeenth centuries, but they also reflect the Western influences which had entered secular portraiture in Aleksei Mikhailovich's reign, through foreign artists such as Daniel Vuchters.<sup>60</sup> Sof'ya's appearance is not idealised, and naturalistic modelling of her features with chiaroscuro has been attempted, but the hieratic approach of the parsuna is evident in the stiffly formal way that she is presented to the spectator.

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<sup>57</sup>Samuel Collins, The Present State of Russia, London, 1671, Ch. XV, quoted by V. Cowles, The Romanovs, London, 1971, p. 11. Dr. Collins served as physician to Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich early in his reign.

<sup>58</sup>For a discussion of the 'Eagle' type portraits of Sof'ya, their relationship with the engravings and Sof'ya's political aspirations, see Hughes, Sophia, Regent of Russia, pp. 142-4.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 144.

<sup>60</sup>The Russian Museum's portrait of Aleksei, inv. no. Zh-3988, has been attributed to Vuchters; see Longworth, Alexis, Tsar of All the Russias, p. 121.

In June 1878 Repin requested a print of Sof'ya's portrait which had appeared in 1870 in the illustrated album of the Historical Exhibition of Portraits of Personalities of the Sixteenth-Eighteenth Centuries.<sup>61</sup> This was a modern painting from Nikolai Putilov's collection,<sup>62</sup> based upon the 'Eagle' portrait type, most closely resembling that in the Hermitage's Romanov Gallery (now in the Russian Museum). A few months later, Repin also saw the unfinished 'Eagle' portrait in the Novodevichii Convent, and copied it; he described it as a "splendid portrait".<sup>63</sup>

In December 1878 Repin asked Stasov to obtain a photograph of the 'Versailles' type of Sof'ya's portrait for him.<sup>64</sup> This differs markedly from her other portraits. The Sof'ya of the 'Eagle' portraits is a plump, stern-featured young woman, wearing a crown on the loose, uncovered hair of a maiden (fig. 106); the 'Versailles' Sof'ya is slender and girlish, wearing an elaborate pearl-sewn kokoshnik over her hair (fig. 108). The latter is probably a depiction of Sof'ya's sister-in-law, Marfa Apraksina, second wife of Fedor III (fig. 109). Dmitrii Rovinskii noted its resemblance to the portrait exhibited as Tsaritsa Marfa Matveevna<sup>65</sup> in the 1870 Historical Exhibition. Repin may have realised this from his

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<sup>61</sup>Letter dated 28 June 1878, in Repin & Stasov, Perepiska, vol. II, p. 32. The work to which Repin referred is Vystavka Obshchestva Pooshchreniya Khudozhnikov, Istoricheskii Al'bom Portretov Izvestnykh Lits XVI-XVIIIvv, fotografirovannyi i izdannyi khudozhnikom A. M. Lushev, Obshchestvo Pooshchreniya Khudozhnikov, A. M. Lushev, ed., St. Petersburg, 1870. The plates are tipped-in cartes de visite.

<sup>62</sup>Katalog Istoricheskoi Vystavki Portretov Lits XVI-XVIIIvv ustroennoi Obshchestvom Pooshchreniya Khudozhnikov, Obshchestvo Pooshchreniya Khudozhnikov, P. N. Petrov, ed., St. Petersburg, 1870, p. 12, item no. 32. It is reproduced in E. Schuyler, "Peter the Great", Scribner's Monthly, New York, vol. XIX, no. 6, April 1880, p. 907, and in Brikner, Istoriya Petra Velikogo, p. 58.

<sup>63</sup>Letter dated 26 October 1878, in Repin & Stasov, Perepiska, vol. II, p. 38.

<sup>64</sup>Letter dated 11 December 1878, ibid., p. 40.

<sup>65</sup>D. A. Rovinskii, Podrobnyi Slovar' Russkikh Gravirovannykh Portretov, col. 1945, item no. 13, for comments on the 'Versailles' Sof'ya. It is compared with the Tsaritsa Marfa Matveevna listed in Katalog Istoricheskoi Vystavki Portretov, Obshchestvo Pooshchreniya Khudozhnikov, Petrov, ed., p. 17, as item no. 48. The Russian Museum's copy of this portrait of Marfa (fig. 108) also bears out this comparison.



study of the album of this Exhibition; or it may be that he did not regard the image presented as appropriate to his concept of Sof'ya's character. Whatever his reasons, he decided not to use the 'Versailles' portrait. Another alleged portrait of Sof'ya is in the Hermitage (there is also a version in the Museum of the New Jerusalem Monastery). This portrait probably dates from either the late eighteenth century (the period of Ekaterina II's interest in Sof'ya) or the early nineteenth century.<sup>66</sup> It does not resemble any other likenesses, depicting Sof'ya as an ideal princess wearing a crown (fig. 107).<sup>67</sup> Repin makes no reference to it; if he knew of it, he may have rejected on grounds similar to those on which he rejected the 'Versailles' type.

When Repin requested a copy of the 'Versailles' Sof'ya, he also asked Stasov for a photograph of a painting of Petr I:

You wanted to send me that astonishing photograph of Petr (the Serbian portrait<sup>68</sup>). Oh, that would be good! I have still not finished Sof'ya's face, and I think that Petr's eyes will give me something.<sup>69</sup>

The 'Serbian' portrait (Hermitage, fig. 110) is an anonymous depiction of Petr, later in life, wearing a mixture of Western and Russian dress. The fierce expression of his eyes is particularly distinctive. Perhaps the austere serenity of Sof'ya's expression in the 'Eagle' portraits seemed inappropriate for the tense situation in which Repin wished to depict her (fig. 111). Drawing upon Petr's portrait could also remind the spectator of the protagonists' close blood ties.

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<sup>66</sup>Hughes, Sophia, Regent of Russia, p. 144.

<sup>67</sup>However, Massie, Peter the Great, p. 79, describes and reproduces the Hermitage portrait as a likeness which has "never been challenged".

<sup>68</sup>So called because it was formerly in the Velika Remeta Monastery in Serbia. See Portret Petrovskogo Vremeni, GRM & GTG, pp. 172-3.

<sup>69</sup>Letter dated 11 December 1878, in Repin & Stasov, Perepiska, vol. II, p. 40.

Repin sought living models of the appropriate physical features, and strength of character. Repin's daughter Vera described one, the subject of an oil sketch (present location unknown), as "a fat young home-dressmaker who lived in one wing of the courtyard".<sup>70</sup> A full-length study, drawn in 1878 (Russian Museum, fig. 112) is of Sarra de Bove (de Beauvais), whose portrait Repin had painted in Paris four years previously. He was on good terms with her and her husband Sergei, who were both art lovers. The costume in the study differs slightly from that in the completed painting, and Sarra de Bove's hair is dressed in the fashion of 1878, rather than of 1698. Clearly, here Repin was primarily concerned with determining Sof'ya's pose and general demeanour. In a detailed sketch on the same piece of paper, he drew the position of her feet and shape of her shoes. A later inscription in Repin's hand reads: "To Inna Sergeevna Vasil'chikova, in memory of Sarra Aleks. and 'Penaty'. 1914 5 March" (Inna Vasil'chikova was the sitter's daughter, to whom he gave the drawing).

Repin's other models were progressive, talented women, suggesting, perhaps, that he saw Sof'ya as a precursor of the modern emancipated woman. In the summer of 1878, while staying with the Mamontovs at Abramtsevo, Repin was introduced by Turgenev to Elena Blaramberg-Apreleva (1846-1923), whom Turgenev considered a promising novelist.<sup>71</sup> She wrote under a masculine pseudonym, 'E. I. Ardov'. Repin already knew her brother, Pavel, a composer, writer and co-editor of the newspaper Russkie Vedomosti, whose portrait he painted in 1884.<sup>72</sup> In 1878 Elena Blaramberg sat for a bust-length study of Sof'ya

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<sup>70</sup>Quoted by Zil'bershtein, Khudozhestvennoe Nasledstvo. Repin, vol. I, p. 158. For the sketch, see Lyaskovskaya, Repin: Zhizn' i Tvorchestvo, p. 141.

<sup>71</sup>Letter dated 7 August 1878, Repin & Stasov, Perepiska, vol. II, p. 35.

<sup>72</sup>Zil'bershtein, Khudozhestvennoe Nasledstvo. Repin, vol. I, p. 156; for portrait of P. I. Blaramberg, see Sternin et al., ed., Ilya Repin, p. 262.

(fig. 113). Vera Repina recalled her visits to the studio: "She used to let down her wonderful long hair, and let me pull and tangle it, and I imagined I was plaiting it."<sup>73</sup> The study suggests that the light colour and particular intensity of Sof'ya's eyes in the finished painting are based on Elena Blaramberg's.<sup>74</sup>

In the later stages of the work, Repin's model was Valentina Serova (1846-1924), mother of his thirteen-year-old pupil, Valentin Serov. She was one of the artistic circle which visited Abramtsevo. Of German parentage,<sup>75</sup> Valentina Bergman was the widow of the composer Aleksandr Serov, and a pianist, music critic and composer in her own right. In 1879, when she modelled for a study of Sof'ya's head (now in the Tret'yakov Gallery, fig. 114), she was working on her opera, Uriel' Akosta,<sup>76</sup> and was also pregnant from her second marriage to Vasili Nemchinov.<sup>77</sup> Repin described Serova as "a little figure of Oriental type",<sup>78</sup> with "much boldness and scorn in her gaze and manners".<sup>79</sup> Contemporary photographs show some resemblance to the Sof'ya of the 'Eagle' portraits (fig. 115).<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>73</sup>Quoted by Zil'bershtein, Khudozhestvennoe Nasledstvo. Repin, vol. I, p. 158.

<sup>74</sup>The present location of this study is unknown; see Lyaskovskaya, Repin: Zhizn' i Tvorchestvo, p. 140. Blaramberg used her memories of sitting for Repin in her novel Rufina Kazdоеva; see Zil'bershtein, Khudozhestvennoe Nasledstvo. Repin, vol. I, p. 157.

<sup>75</sup>I. S. Zil'bershtein & V. A. Samkov, "Valentina Semenovna Serova. Ee muzikal'naya, literaturnaya i obshchestvennaya deyatel'nost'", in V. S. Serova, Kak Ros Moi Syn, Leningrad, 1968, p. 15.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 96; it was first performed in 1885.

<sup>77</sup>Her daughter, Nadezhda Nemchinova, was born that spring; see ibid., p. 220, n. 60, and I. S. Zil'bershtein & V. A. Samkov, ed., Valentin Serov v perepiske, dokumentakh i interv'yu, Leningrad, 1985-9, vol. I, p. 29, n. 6. Serova continued to use her first husband's name professionally.

<sup>78</sup>Repin, "Valentin Aleksandrovich Serov", Dalekoe Blizkoe, p. 350.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., loc. cit.

<sup>80</sup>Serova, Kak Ros Moi Syn, plates between pp. 24-5 and facing p. 32.

Repin's researches for The Regent Tsarevna Sof'ya highlight the importance which was now attached to the pursuit of historical accuracy in history painting. Earlier in the nineteenth century, inaccuracies in details like costume had been comparatively unimportant. Zauerbeid's Petr I quells his Cruel Soldiers at the Taking of Narva in 1704 (1859, fig. 54) had depicted women in late 1850s crinolines and hairstyles. However, the examples of Shvarts' antiquarianism and Ge's Realism led to a greater emphasis on physical accuracy in history painting. The spectator's expectations of history painting were also raised when albums such as that of the 1870 exhibition of historical portraits and Petrov and Shubinskii's volume for Petr's bicentenary, illustrated with engravings from photographs, made authentic images of historical characters and artefacts more accessible.

Repin encountered problems in obtaining an accurate costume for his models. He wrote to Stasov on 15 October 1878:

...send me a costume for Tsarevna Sof'ya!... Get it from the wardrobe of the Mariinskii or Aleksandrinskii Theatres. The new costumes there are quite accurately made. You know better than I how the cut of it should be. I would only like it to be white, brocade, silk, or with small oriental patterns on a white or whitish background... All shall be returned safely...

...It would be best to give the wardrobe-keeper 5 rubles...but it's up to you... From Ivan the Terrible, or Vasilisa Melent'eva<sup>81</sup> - but you know better than I where to look. I would only like the character of the costume to be oriental-Byzantine in both cut and design...<sup>82</sup>

A study of early illustrations and surviving examples of seventeenth-century dress and accessories in the House of the Romanov

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<sup>81</sup> Historical plays: A. K. Tolstoi's The Death of Ivan the Terrible, and A. N. Ostrovskii's Vasilisa Melent'eva.

<sup>82</sup> Repin & Stasov, Perepiska, vol. II, pp. 37-8.

Boyars and in the Kremlin Armoury Museum<sup>83</sup> revealed to Repin that modern stage costumes were unsuitable because they "distort female costumes in the current fashion...and if this is with corsets and other developments of our time, I don't need it".<sup>84</sup> In the 1870s, it was unthinkable for a theatrical designer to create a female costume without a whalebone corset, although in pre-Petrine Russia women wore loose-fitting garments which did not restrict the favoured ample figure.<sup>85</sup>

Repin described to Stasov what he needed to create an authentic representation of seventeenth-century Russian dress:

a sorochka [blouse] with narrow muslin sleeves up to 10 arshiny [710 cms.] long (they are pleated on the bare arm!); ...a telogreya [padded coat] that buttons down the front, ...with long, turned-back, split sleeves, and ...an opashen', which is a kind of mantle with hanging sleeves,<sup>86</sup>

but concluded that "It will probably have to be made".<sup>87</sup> According to Vera, the artist's daughter, at least some of the dressmaking was done at home:

A sarafan with turned-back sleeves was sewn for [Sof'ya] from silver brocade; Mama trimmed it with pearls. Under the sarafan was worn a blouse with long, tight sleeves, made out of nine arshiny [c. 639 cms.], muslin sleeves with gold embroidery which scratched the arms a great deal when they were put on; and these sleeves were gathered into fine pleats.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>83</sup>Ibid., p. 38, and Moskvinov, Repin v Moskve, pp. 39-40. The House of the Romanov Boyars is on the Varvarka, near Red Square.

<sup>84</sup>Letter of 26 October 1878, Repin & Stasov, Perepiska, vol. II, p. 38.

<sup>85</sup>The costumes for The Death of Ivan the Terrible may have been those designed by Shvarts; see Vereshchagina, Shvarts, pp. 98-106 and Chapter 3. If so, Shvarts may have been forced to compromise his desire for authenticity with the wishes of the performers.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., loc. cit.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., loc. cit.

<sup>88</sup>Repina, quoted by Zil'bershtein, Khudozhestvennoe Nasledstvo. Repin, vol. I, pp. 166-7.

The dress which appears in the drawing of Sarra de Bove (fig. 112) differs in the details of the fastening and trimmings from the 1879 sketch of the full composition (fig. 116) and the finished painting. Given the artist's difficulties in obtaining the costume, this may indicate that alterations were made, rather than a new one obtained.

In The Regent Tsarevna Sof'ya (fig. 101), Sof'ya dominates the canvas, occupying the frontal plane of the picture as in the 'Eagle' portraits. She is shown full-length, her outline disrupted only by the chair. The other human figures in the painting are truncated abruptly by the edges of objects - the hanged man by the window frame and glazing bars, and the young nun by the table and its contents. Broken up and physically distanced from Sof'ya, they cannot detract from her powerful presence.

The contents of the cell are painted with great care. The details clearly were chosen to highlight aspects of Sof'ya's character. The illuminated book on the table conveys Sof'ya's literacy and piety. Through Stasov, Repin may have been aware of a recent article which described a Gospel manuscript copied and decorated by Sof'ya herself.<sup>89</sup> Behind her, the wall is painted with icons, more of which gleam in candlelight in the adjacent oratory. These are part of the lavish furnishings one might expect in the cell of a royal lady in a seventeenth-century convent.<sup>90</sup> Yet they place Sof'ya's tragedy under the scrutiny of divine powers. They also intensify the sense of confinement, shutting off the space beyond the arched doorway, just as effectively as the double

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<sup>89</sup>S. Moropol'skii, "Tsarevna Sof'ya Alekseevna (Zametki)", Russkaya Starina, 1878, no. 23, pp. 130-1, reference in Hughes, Sophia, Regent of Russia, pp. 175-6. The manuscript was in the Saviour-Transfiguration Monastery in Kargopol'; its current location is unknown.

<sup>90</sup>Russian nuns of this period retained their external sources of income and often furnished, decorated or even built their own cells in a manner befitting their secular status; see Hughes, Sophia, Regent of Russia, p. 246.

lattice and the corpse at the window block access to the outside world. The blood-red carpet perhaps symbolically suggests the spread of suffering from Sof'ya to her servants and followers, implied by the picture's full title. The claustrophobic atmosphere is intensified by the rich colours and the density of furnishings in a small area, but relieved by the silver of Sof'ya's brocade dress and the cool grey light at the window.

Through the window can be seen the silhouette of a hanging Strelets. His bowed head and greenish face, fragmented by the glazing bars, create a sense of horror through suggestion, rather than by explicit detail. Two hundred and thirty Strel'tsy were hanged outside the Novodevichii Convent, as Johann Korb, an Austrian eyewitness, recorded in his diary on 28 October 1698:

...three ringleaders of this perilous mutiny, who presented a petition inviting Sophia to take the helm of the State, were hanged over against the walls of the said monastery, close to the window of Sophia's room, and he that hangs in the middle holds a paper, folded like a petition, tied in his dead hands; perhaps in order that remorse for the past may gnaw Sophia with perpetual grief.<sup>91</sup>

Korb's Diary had been published in Latin in 1700 in Vienna, and banned in Russia by Petr I. The first complete Russian-language edition was published in 1867, and may have been among the foreign sources Repin consulted.<sup>92</sup> The inclusion of the hanged man adds drama to the scene. It emphasises the fact that this painting is not a sanitised, Academic vision of the past, but an attempt to portray honestly a macabre historical incident. It also reflects Repin's interest in executions. In 1879, Repin

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<sup>91</sup>J. G. Korb, Diary of an Austrian Secretary of Legation at the Court of Czar Peter the Great, London, 1863, vol. 1, p. 194. This translation, by Count MacDonnell, attempts to retain the archaic style of Korb's Latin.

<sup>92</sup>See letter dated 26 October 1878, in Repin & Stasov, Perepiska, vol. II, p. 38, already quoted.

had advised Surikov, who was working on The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy (fig. 126), to include some corpses on the gallows (fig. 133).<sup>93</sup> In 1866 Repin had also attended and made sketches of the public hanging of Dmitrii Karakozov, executed for his unsuccessful attempt on Aleksandr II's life,<sup>94</sup> and in 1881, in St. Petersburg, he witnessed the bungled hanging of the successful regicides.<sup>95</sup> This may suggest a ghoulish streak in Repin's nature. However, public executions were part of the reality of Russian life in 1879, as in 1698: by depicting them from direct observation, Repin, as a Realist, was asserting the power of truth against Academic idealism and censorship.

Repin seems to have taken an artistic liberty in depicting Sof'ya in secular dress, with her hair unshorn, because she apparently took her vows around 21 October 1698,<sup>96</sup> a week before the execution of the Strel'tsy outside the Convent. Showing Sof'ya dressed as a Tsarevna was perhaps a deliberate way of focussing attention on her fall from power. The young nun provides both a contrast to Sof'ya and an image of Sof'ya's future. Repin's inclusion of the nun may be based on Evdokiya Rostopchina's poem The Nun (1843), in which Sof'ya tells her story to a young companion in the convent:

...Young Peter, my half-brother,  
To manhood grown, began to threaten me  
And here I am, in this mute convent cell  
Interred...a passionate woman of the world  
Against her will condemned to take the veil

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<sup>93</sup>Voloshin, Surikov, p. 70.

<sup>94</sup>Repin, "Kazn' Karakozova". Dalekoe Blizkoe, pp. 197-208.

<sup>95</sup>Sternin et al., ed., Ilya Repin, p. 238.

<sup>96</sup>According to the inscription on her tomb, which states that at her death, aged forty-six, on 3 July 1704, she had been a nun for 5 years, 8 months, and 12 days. See Hughes, Sophia, Regent of Russia, p. 310, n. 41.



And dedicated forcibly to God.<sup>97</sup>

Alternatively, the girl may be a spy, commanded to keep an eye on Sof'ya after the arrest of her servants.

Repin's painting presents an ambiguous image of Sof'ya. On the one hand, the facts of her situation, as given in the title, present her to the spectator as a focus for sympathy: a once-powerful woman condemned to incarceration in a convent, while her supporters are hanged or tortured. On the other hand, her formidable appearance could equally be seen as the embodiment of male fears of the emasculating, dominant woman.<sup>98</sup> Vasilii Surikov, who retained some degree of idealism, later criticised her because she lacked the beauty he believed appropriate to the tragic heroine of a history painting. Showing a study of a Moldovan girl "with a strong, high-cheekboned face"<sup>99</sup> to Maksimilian Voloshin, he said,

This is how Tsarevna Sof'ya ought to be, not at all like Repin's. Would the Strel'tsy have come out for such a podgy besom? A beauty like this could have roused them just by raising her eyebrows...<sup>100</sup>

Yet Repin's Sof'ya (fig. 111) remained close to the forceful, unglamorised 'Eagle' portrait (fig. 106). She challenges the spectator to dare to pity. Her direct, staring gaze aggressively confronts the spectator; it does not appeal for help. She may be contrasted with Flavitskii's Princess

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<sup>97</sup>E. Rostopchina, "Monakhinya", Moskvitiyanin, 5, 1843, no. 9, 11, quoted by Hughes, Sophia, Regent of Russia, p. 242.

<sup>98</sup>Similarly, Atkinson observes of the Polyanitsy, the warrior heroines of folk tradition: "These are clearly positive heroines, but there are times when admiration of them seems tinged with masculine uneasiness"; "Society and the Sexes in the Russian Past", Women in Russia, p. 9.

<sup>99</sup>Voloshin, Surikov, p. 192.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid., loc. cit. "Besom" conveys something of the derogatory tone of baba. The heroine of Surikov's A Tsarevna's Visit to a Convent (1912, Tretyakov Gallery), may be how he envisaged Sof'ya; her title and her costume suggest a seventeenth-century setting. She seems to be intended to represent a daughter of either Mikhail Fedorovich or Aleksei Mikhailovich - if not Sof'ya herself, then one of her aunts or sisters.

Tarakanova (fig. 69), and Delaroche's The Execution of Lady Jane Gray (1834, National Gallery, London) and Jeanne d'Arc in Prison (c. 1843, Wallace Collection), in which the imprisoned heroines are portrayed as passive victims.<sup>101</sup>

Evidence suggests that the static quality of the final image, which was strongly criticised by Stasov and Musorgskii, may not have been a constant feature of Repin's conception. In July 1878, Tret'yakov suggested to Repin that he should depict Sof'ya convulsively clutching a mirror in one hand, and gripping the edge of the table with the other hand, because "with folded arms, it's like a pose".<sup>102</sup> Repin replied warmly: "...a mirror - that's splendid...I shall try to make use of your idea."<sup>103</sup> His response may have been sincere, in which case he subsequently changed his mind, or he may simply have been humouring an important patron. A late sketch of the composition (fig. 116), executed in 1879, in the Tret'yakov Gallery, suggests that Repin experimented with a more dramatic image. The chair, which occupies the foreground at the left-hand side of the completed painting, is drawn at the right, lying on its back, as if Sof'ya has overturned it in her rage. Sof'ya stands in front of it, arms folded, as in the finished work. Her tense stillness gains in psychological credibility as the aftermath of an emotional outburst. However, Repin seems to have found the drama of the fallen chair

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<sup>101</sup>See Strong, And when did you last see your father?, pp. 45, 133-4, & 154, on how strong female characters were manipulated by artists to conform to nineteenth-century ideals of femininity, as in Delaroche's The Execution of Lady Jane Gray, which shows the helpless, blindfolded girl being guided to the block, "to which...she resolutely made her own way" in reality; ibid., p. 122.

<sup>102</sup>Letter dated 12 July 1878, in I. E. Repin, Pis'ma 1873-1898, Moscow & Leningrad, 1946, p. 38.

<sup>103</sup>Letter dated 21 July 1878, Repin, Izbrannye Pis'ma, vol. I, p. 215.

overstated,<sup>104</sup> and sketched in the upright chair's outline where it appears in the painting.

Repin expressed his opinion of Petr's legacy in a letter to Stasov. It is worth quoting at length for the light which it sheds upon his interpretation of Sof'ya:

Yes, bureaucracy! Bureaucracy! Whatever you say, that's one of Petr's feats. He enslaved Russia, he gave her in bond-slavery<sup>105</sup> to foreigners; Russia ceased to think, feel or act consciously for herself. They converted her into a trained automaton, a dumb bond-slave. Every talentless German became a full master and enlightener of Russia... The gifted people fell silent for a long time. 'It has been commanded' - force obtained everything.

And before Petr, our ancestors were not foolish (I'm studying this period now), they were learning from foreigners, they borrowed many things also, but freely; they chose gifted people from there, and these people treated them with respect and tried to do what was required of them, and constructed excellent things, such as they had never created in Europe. With Petr, it was altogether different: every untalented, semi-literate German soldier fancied himself a great civiliser, an enlightener of Russian ignorance. They began to build every kind of ugliness and introduce them everywhere as being the most ideal forms; but the main thing is that the foreign bureaucrat wanted to build a second fatherland here. And sheer disorder ensued with the life of the people despised, dragged through the mud... Foreign lords and Russian bond-slaves, and every Russian bureaucrat was already trying to appear like a

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<sup>104</sup>Saltykov mentioned overturned and broken furniture among the melodramatic devices of lesser historical painters in his review of Ge's Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei at Peterhof in 1871; see Shchedrin (Saltykov), Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii, vol. 8, p. 275. Possibly this view was widely held. Repin nevertheless used the overturned chair in Ivan the Terrible and his son Ivan (1885, Tretyakov Gallery).

<sup>105</sup>Kholopstvo, a state of bondage inferior to serfdom; kholop is translated as "bond-slave".

foreigner, or else he would not be a master. How much of this exists still to this day!<sup>106</sup>

This was the nearest Repin seems to have come to an open declaration of antipathy to Petr's regime, and of sympathy with pre-Petrine Russia and by implication with Sof'ya and the regency. The contrast drawn between Petr and his predecessors in their approaches towards Westernisation is strongly reminiscent of a passage by the early Slavophile writer Konstantin Aksakov:

...everything that is true in Peter's reforms was, of course, started before him... Before him only the useful had been taken from the foreigners. Foreign life had not been borrowed, our own principles of life had been left intact, and Russia remained independent. Peter, on the other hand, began to take everything from the foreigners, not only the useful and the universal, but also the particular and the national, foreign life itself with all its accidental details... Therefore even the most useful, which had been accepted in Russia before Peter the Great, became of necessity not a free borrowing, but a slavish imitation.<sup>107</sup>

Repin may have read this piece, and based his argument upon it. However, Repin also made explicit the parallels with the contemporary situation which enabled him to approach an historical subject.

There are other reasons for suspecting that Repin's attitude towards Sof'ya was essentially positive. As already mentioned, he knew Nadezhda Stasova, and seems to have taken an interest in the advances which were being made by women in contemporary Russia. At least two of his models for The Regent Tsarevna Sof'ya, Blaramberg and Serova, had successful careers. Stasova's influence, and that of Repin's fellow-Peredvizhnik Nikolai Yaroshenko, who was also interested in the 'Woman

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<sup>106</sup> Letter dated 18 December 1878, in Repin & Stasov, Perepiska, vol. II, p. 42.

<sup>107</sup> K. S. Aksakov, Sochineniya Istoricheskije, Moscow, 1861, vol. I, pp. 41-2, quoted by Riasanovsky, Russia and the West in the Teaching of the Slavophiles, p. 80.

Question',<sup>108</sup> may have contributed to Repin's paintings of emancipated women in contemporary settings. These include In the Laboratory (1881, private collection, fig. 117), painted for a doctor, Yuliya Yakhontova, which shows a female medical student dissecting the thorax of a cadaver.<sup>109</sup> Repin's first version of the political prisoner's return, They Did Not Expect Him (1884, Tret'yakov Gallery), was They Did Not Expect Her (1883, Tret'yakov Gallery, fig. 118), conveying the contrast between a radical woman and her conventional sisters.

There were other contemporary political resonances in The Regent Tsarevna Sof'ya apart from an expression of growing interest in female emancipation. At the 'Trial of the Moscow Women', which opened in St. Petersburg in March 1877, six women - Sof'ya Bardina, Ol'ga Lyubatovich, Lidiya Figner, Aleksandra Khorzhevskaya, Gesya Gelfman and Anna Toporkova - were sentenced to hard labour for political agitation among factory workers.<sup>110</sup> They had already been in prison for nearly two years before the trial, which was conducted under Senate supervision, without a jury. Their case, and in particular Sof'ya Bardina's spirited defence speech: "...you have the material power on your side. But we have the moral power, ...the ideals - and ideals, I fear, you will not kill with your bayonets",<sup>111</sup> inspired writers such as Turgenev and Nekrasov,<sup>112</sup> both of whom Repin knew. In February 1878, Vera Zasluch was tried for shooting Governor Trepov of St. Petersburg. The Regent Tsarevna Sof'ya

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<sup>108</sup>E.g. At the Litovskii Fortress (1881, presumed destroyed), and A Female Student (Kursistka, literally A Student of the Advanced Courses) (1883, Museum of Russian Art, Kiev).

<sup>109</sup>Zil'bershtein, Khudozhestvennoe Nasledstvo. Repin, vol. 1, pp. 178-80, reproduced p. 179. At the date of publication (1948) it was in the collection of A. L. Myasnikov, Leningrad.

<sup>110</sup>Porter, Fathers and Daughters, pp. 148-55.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid., p. 152.

<sup>112</sup>Ibid., p. 153, for descriptions of Turgenev's prose poem, At the Threshold, and Nekrasov's poem, The Trial of the Fifty.

probably does not contain any direct allusion to these events, but a general awareness of strong-minded women being imprisoned for taking an active rôle in political activity formed part of the context in which the image was conceived.

There may be some relationship between The Regent Tsarevna Sof'ya and Repin's later work, A Female Revolutionary awaiting Execution (In Solitary Confinement) (early 1880s, private collection, Czech Republic, fig. 119). This painting was not exhibited until December 1896, and then under the less politically-explicit title Anguish.<sup>113</sup> The composition, with the figure positioned in the foreground, between a window and a candle upon a table, has affinities with that of The Regent Tsarevna Sof'ya's composition. However, it is a bleaker work, more closely related to the contemporary The Refusal of Confession (1886, Tret'yakov Gallery). The seated woman stares out of the canvas in despair. Unlike Sof'ya, she appears to be defeated in spirit. The picture may reflect the pessimistic mood which followed the assassination of Aleksandr II and the execution of the regicides in 1881, and which Repin later expressed in Ivan the Terrible and his son Ivan (1885, fig. 97).

The critics were divided in their responses when The Regent Tsarevna Sof'ya was shown in the 1879 Travelling Exhibition. The anonymous reviewer of Vsemirnaya Illustratsiya wrote favourably:

As far as we can recall, no other single picture has produced such a stunning, such a vivid impression, nor has a single picture thus affected the spectator. Whoever has seen Repin's Sof'ya will carry her tragic image with him for a long time... With this picture I. Repin has justified the hopes vested in him.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>113</sup>Zil'bershtein, Khudozhestvennoe Nasledstvo. Repin, vol. I, p. 176.

<sup>114</sup>Quoted ibid., p. 163.

In contrast, Stasov, despite all the assistance he had given Repin in tracing sources and discussing ideas, reviewed the finished painting very critically:

[Repin] is not a dramatist, he is not a historian, and it is my deepest conviction that even if he were to paint twenty pictures on historical subjects, they would all be even less successful than this one.<sup>115</sup>

Stasov went on to compare Repin's talent for Realism with that of the dramatist Ostrovskii:

Both utterly lack the kind of imagination which is able to transport an artist to another time and place. The ability to understand and communicate which they share is connected inseparably and exclusively to the contemporary world, contemporary life, contemporary people, and outside this, their work loses its power, truth and fascination.<sup>116</sup>

He described Sof'ya as "that most talented, fiery and passionate woman of Old Rus".<sup>117</sup> To him, Repin's static portrayal of her did not fit her character:

Sof'ya is standing still, but why...? I do not believe she would have stood still at this moment; it is too theatrical, too contrived. She was not that sort of woman! She was the still semi-Asiatic, own sister of the future Petr Alekseevich! Read his life, and hers also: these people did not stand around in poses plastiques and meditate, they had no hesitation, no pause in word or deed... Sof'ya would have flung herself impetuously at the window, her whole body would have hurtled forward, like a wild animal, at the lattice, at her enemies.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>115</sup>V. V. Stasov, "Khudozhestvennye Vystavki 1879 goda" (originally publ. in Novoe Vremya, 8, 14, 15 March 1879), Izbrannye Sochineniya, vol. 11, p. 24.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid., loc. cit.

<sup>117</sup>Ibid., loc. cit.

<sup>118</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

The criticism that Repin's The Regent Tsarevna Sof'ya was too controlled and too restrained recalls Stasov's remarks in 1871 concerning Ge's Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof.

Both Ge and Repin had chosen to depict characters whose stories had been censored and distorted to serve the official version of Russia's past. Their Realist approach, which rejected the excessive dependence on theatrical gestures of Academic history painting to concentrate on the psychology of the characters, reflected their assertion of the importance of historical truth against propaganda. Stasov's implication that Repin had not read sufficiently about Sof'ya and her life seems ironic, since Stasov had given the artist so much help with the historical aspects during the painting's development. In 1698, Sof'ya was a mature woman of forty-one, who had already spent nine years in the Novodevichii Convent. Repin's depiction of her expression suggests emotion suppressed, an attempt to maintain dignity at least, perhaps, while there is a witness present. What is striking, and not always apparent in reproductions of the painting, is the pallor of Sof'ya's face, contrasting with her burning, red-rimmed eyes (fig. 111). It seems to be the face of a woman who has already been weeping in anger and frustration. She is static, but she is not calm. The painting captures the moment either before or after the "psychic explosion"<sup>119</sup> which Stasov believed Repin was incapable of expressing, and suggested in the earlier sketch by the overturned chair.

Modest Musorgskii, who was collaborating with Stasov on the opera Khovanshchina, set during Sof'ya's regency, shared some of the latter's misgivings about Repin's characterisation of Sof'ya:

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<sup>119</sup>ibid., p. 24.



My imagination summons up a little thick-set woman, time and again trying to live life without the copy-book, but I saw [in Repin's picture] a Petr-like quean, wicked, not embittered, a massive wench, not small, ...not thick-set, but spreading everywhere so that her enormous size...left little room for the spectator... If only she...had come out of her bedchamber into her oratory and, on seeing her brother's outrageous deed, had flung herself like a tigress at the window... - I would have understood the artist, I would have recognised Sof'ya ...<sup>120</sup>

Musorgskii did not portray Sof'ya in Khovanshchina, so it is impossible to compare his interpretation of her fully with Repin's conception.

Stasov's review disappointed Repin, and caused a rift between them which lasted for most of the year. Repin was particularly stung by Stasov's betrayal, after the advice and assistance he had given him.<sup>121</sup>

...I see that my Sof'ya doesn't satisfy you. (Perhaps she has been badly positioned?) I would like you to send me a detailed criticism of the picture, what you found wrong, unlikelike, inexpressive, and untalented about it, and if you found anything good; please write to me, frankly and in detail, how you found it... I am prepared for a cutting, honest word and shall be very glad of it. Since I value your opinion very much, I'd like to have it straight, not obscured by any kind of delicacy.<sup>122</sup>

Ivan Kramskoi, in an attempt to defuse the quarrel, wrote to Stasov praising the picture: "His Sof'ya is a history painting...I rejoice with all

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<sup>120</sup>Letter to Stasov in M. P. Musorgskii, Pis'ma, Moscow, 1953, pp. 176-7, quoted by Moskvinov, Repin v Moskve, p. 38. I have tried to convey Musorgskii's distinction between his Sof'ya as a zhenshchina and Repin's as a baba

<sup>121</sup>Stasov had already (1873-77) tried to manipulate Repin's image for ideological reasons and even published excerpts from his letters without permission; Valkenier, Russian Realist Art, pp. 59-61.

<sup>122</sup>Letter dated 1 March 1879, Repin & Stasov, Perepiska, vol. II, p. 46.

my heart for Repin."<sup>123</sup> However, Stasov failed to reply to Repin, who in October reproached him bitterly:

I'm right...about your insincerity. Remember what you wrote privately to me about Sof'ya, that it was a capital thing, although that wasn't so; and when I asked you to write to me in detail, you didn't answer at all, but dragged the picture through the mud in the press - completely unjustly, in my opinion, and only because you had decided even earlier, for some reason, that I ought not to succeed with it.<sup>124</sup>

Meanwhile, Kramskoi loyally supported Repin, writing on 14 February to him:

I am very moved by your picture. After Bargehaulers this is your most significant work. More - I think this picture is even better.

Sof'ya produces the impression of a tigress locked in an iron cage, which completely accords with history. Bravo, thank you!<sup>125</sup>

In his reply, Repin referred to Stasov's review, without naming him:

So far only one person has taken me to task for my Sof'ya, and soundly rebuked me, saying that I'd foolishly wasted my time, that this was old, and was, ultimately, not my business, and that he would even be sorry if I had a success with my Sof'ya... That's how strongly!<sup>126</sup>

Repin remained grateful for Kramskoi's words on his behalf:

It was scarcely complete news to me that nearly all the critics are against me; this repeats itself with each of my works... The difference is that previously Stasov was the exception and defended me. Now even he barks too, like an old dog. Very well, they'll bark a while, then stop. These are trifles in comparison with eternity...<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>123</sup>Letter dated 18 February, I. N. Kramskoi, Pis'ma, Moscow & Leningrad, 1937, vol. II, pp. 173-4.

<sup>124</sup>Repin & Stasov, Perepiska, vol. II, pp. 46-7.

<sup>125</sup>Letter dated 14 February 1879 in Kramskoi, Pis'ma, vol. II, p. 171.

<sup>126</sup>Repin, Izbrannye Pis'ma, vol. I, p. 229.

<sup>127</sup>Letter dated 17 May 1879, Repin & Stasov, Perepiska, vol. II, p. 259, note 3.

Repin returned to the subject of Sof'ya in December 1879, when the American magazine Scribner's Monthly wanted illustrations for its serialisation of Eugene Schuyler's biography of Petr I. Their quarrel now over, Repin explained the project to Stasov:

...more than three weeks ago, Monsieur Richard Whyteins<sup>128</sup> approached Vasnetsov with a commission to make a drawing after my picture Tsarevna Sof'ya for his magazine, which is going to include a life of Petr, and he says that even more drawings from Petr I's life will be needed. But since my picture wasn't here (it's still touring), Vasnetsov passed me the commission, which I completed partly from remaining studies, partly from memory - according to the sample format which the American had sent, and I sent it to him within a few days...

I asked Mr. Whyteins to send me a proof of my drawing immediately; as yet I have received nothing. But the magazine is very elegant, small in format, and very intelligently run, I think...<sup>129</sup>

The drawing was titled The Princess Sophia as the Nun Susanna in the Novodevitchy Monastery<sup>130</sup> by the magazine, although, like the painting, it shows Sof'ya in secular dress. Sof'ya's features appear to be based more closely upon the study of Valentina Serova. Returning to the 1879 sketch (fig. 116), Repin placed the chair in its original position, overturned on the floor, between Sof'ya and the window. The restoration of this detail may have been an attempt by Repin to respond to Stasov's criticisms.

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<sup>128</sup>Scribner's Monthly's representative in Europe, based in Paris; see F. & S. J. Parker, Russia on Canvas: Ilya Repin, University Park, Pa., & London, 1980, p. 56.

<sup>129</sup>Letter dated 12 January 1880, Repin & Stasov, Perepiska, vol. II, p. 50.

<sup>130</sup>Schuyler, "Peter the Great as Ruler and Reformer", Scribner's Monthly, vol. XXI, no. 2, December 1881, p. 218.

For the same publication Repin also drew Sophia's Appeal to her Partisans (fig. 120),<sup>131</sup> depicting the Strel'tsy swearing allegiance to Sof'ya shortly before her overthrow in 1689.<sup>132</sup> The strong chiaroscuro effects of the lantern draw the spectator's eye to the illuminated areas: Sof'ya's face, hands and cross; the axe blades, musket barrels and raised hands of the Strel'tsy. Repin took some slight liberties in Sophia's Appeal to her Partisans. Firstly, Sof'ya's hat is of the closed type seen in portraits of matrons and widows,<sup>133</sup> rather than unmarried women. However, it is visually effective, framing her pale face, and perhaps prefiguring the closed black cap of a nun.<sup>134</sup> Secondly, Repin paints the Strel'tsy using two fingers to cross themselves, in the manner of the Old Believers. Although the Strel'tsy included Old Believers, they were unlikely to have been among Sof'ya's supporters in 1689, because during her regency, she had persecuted the sect with increasing harshness.<sup>135</sup> It is a visual way of indicating ideological differences between Sof'ya and Petr, but it is inaccurate. In 1689, traditionalists, including Strel'tsy regiments, gathered around Petr and the conservative Naryshkins, against Sof'ya and Golitsyn's moderate reforms. Petr, then seventeen, had not yet identified himself with radical Westernisation.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>131</sup>Schuyler, "Peter the Great", ibid., vol. XX, no. 4, August 1880, p. 576.

<sup>132</sup>Zil'bershtein, in Khudozhestvennoe Nasledstvo. Repin, vol. 1, pp. 165-6, had not seen this illustration in its published context in Scribner's Monthly; he based his interpretation of it under the incorrect assumption that it is set during the 1698 mutiny.

<sup>133</sup>For example, anon., after Schurmann, Tsaritsa Natal'ya Kirillovna Naryshkina (fig. 71), and anon., Tsaritsa Marfa Matveevna Apraksina (1700s, before 1715, Russian Museum), Portret Petrovskogo Vremeni, GRM & GTG, p. 123.

<sup>134</sup>This may be why Zil'bershtein misidentified the subject.

<sup>135</sup>Hughes, Sophia, Regent of Russia, pp. 121-3.

<sup>136</sup>Schuyler, Peter the Great, vol. 1, p. 218, on Strel'tsy support for Petr in 1689, and p. 235, on the "outburst of the popular hatred against foreigners" which followed the overthrow of Sof'ya. Massie, Peter the Great, pp. 104-5, notes the historical irony of the conservative boyars' support for Petr: "By helping Peter overthrow Sophia and Golitsyn, they believed they were rejecting the dangerous intrusion of Western culture".

While Repin was involved in the project for Scribner's Monthly, Vasilii Perov began a large painting featuring Sof'ya, Nikita Pustosvyat: the Debate on the Faith (1880-1, Tret'yakov Gallery, fig. 121), which returned to the 1682 religious debate often depicted earlier in the century. Valkenier suggests that Perov's motives in painting this subject may have been pecuniary: "Tretiakov's devout faith was well known to the painters, and the further fact that he would pay more for a painting on a religious subject".<sup>137</sup> Nikita Pustosvyat is an extremely theatrical essay in the Academic 'grand manner', which implies that the Peredvizhniki attached to little importance to stylistic innovation. Apparently, Nikita Pustosvyat was "one of Surikov's favourite paintings",<sup>138</sup> although it is less subtle than Surikov's historical works. There is a strong element of melodrama, almost to the point of caricature, in the depiction of the furious Nikita and the men restraining him.

Perov's Sof'ya, both dignified and imperious, is a successful characterisation, based on the 'Eagle' portraits.<sup>139</sup> Unlike Repin, Perov

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<sup>137</sup>Valkenier, Russian Realist Art, p. 68, continues: "...Perov received 2,000 rubles for his The Bird Catcher (1870) and 8,000 for his Nikita Pustosviat (1881)... Since Perov did not undergo a religious conversion, the many religious pictures he painted late in life can be ascribed to this financial factor". Perov's concern with both financial and spiritual matters may have been prompted by illness: in 1874 he contracted tuberculosis, from which he died in May 1882. See V. A. Petrov, "Tvorcheskoi put' V. G. Perova" in V. Perov. Vystavka proizvedenii k 150-letiyu so dna rozhdeniya. Katalog, GTG, Moscow, 1988, p. 62. Perov's later works include a sketch for an unrealised painting of another scene of courageous Old Believer defiance, The Torture of the Boyarvnya Morozova (Tret'yakov Gallery); see Chapter 7.

<sup>138</sup>Petrov, "Tvorcheskoi put' V. G. Perova", in V. Perov. Katalog, GTG, p. 60.

<sup>139</sup>Perov showed some knowledge of contemporary portraits and engravings in his depiction of the secondary characters. The likeness of Vasilii Golitsyn, shown as, literally, 'a power behind the throne', half-shaded by the canopy, on the dais above the Patriarch, appears to be based on Leontii Tarasevich's engraving of 1689, and related oil portraits. A modern copy was shown in the Historical Exhibition of Portraits of Personalities of the 16th-18th Centuries in 1870; Katalog Istoricheskoi Vystavki Portretov Lits XVI-XVIII vv., Obshchestvo Pooshchreniya Khudozhnikov, Petrov, ed., p. 10, item no. 26. It is possible that Perov, like Repin, had access to an illustrated album of the exhibition. The stout boyar below and to the left of Golitsyn resembles Fedor Romodanovskii, whose portrait was also in this exhibition; ibid., p. 23, no. 64.

shows Sof'ya in her rôle as Regent, in public life. She is not the sole focus of the painting, but she takes her rightful place in the narrative, as in Koshelev's The Debate of the Schismatics before the Court (fig. 104), discussed above. The strong diagonal in the composition, emphasised by the shafts of sunlight, draws the eye upwards and to the left, first to Nikita, and then, following his gaze, to Patriarch Ioakim and Sof'ya. The sunlight makes Sof'ya the apex of a triangle formed with the other strongly-illuminated figures, Ioakim and Nikita. Her face is mostly in shadow above her gold-trimmed gown and brocade mantle - a dramatic touch which further draws attention to her.

Nikolai Dmitriev-Orenburgskii and Klavdii Lebedev, in illustrative work of the 1880s, continued to develop Sof'ya's image. Dmitriev-Orenburgskii was commissioned to produce drawings for the serialisation of Schuyler's biography of Petr I in Scribner's Monthly: Sophia Feasting the Streltsi (sic) and The Disputation Before Sophia.<sup>140</sup> These illustrations were, of course, conceived in conjunction with the text, and do not necessarily reflect the artist's independent interpretation of the subject. It is also difficult to establish to what extent the subjects were themselves chosen by the editors. Nevertheless, it can be argued that these pictures attest to a greater interest in Sof'ya. Lebedev, for example, followed Repin by showing Sof'ya in circumstances where her public, political rôle is closely entwined with her private life; receiving a letter from her Foreign Minister, and alleged lover, Golitsyn, and bidding farewell to

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<sup>140</sup>Schuyler, "Peter the Great", Scribner's Monthly, vol. XIX, no. 6, April 1880, pp. 908 & 917 respectively.

another ally, Fedor Shaklovityi (in popular legend, also her lover<sup>141</sup>), before he is taken for execution after her overthrow in 1689.<sup>142</sup>

In 1897, Lebedev's painting The Death of Tsar Fedor Alekseevich (location unknown, fig. 122<sup>143</sup>) was shown in the Twenty-Fifth Travelling Exhibition. It sets the scene for the succession crisis and Sof'ya's appointment as regent after the 1682 Strel'tsy mutiny. The work conveys something of the tension between the two branches of the Romanov family. Natal'ya Naryshkina is portrayed in a stiff pose and with a stern yet wary expression, apparently unmoved by her stepson's death. Sof'ya, in contrast, clutches a handkerchief to her breast as she draws aside the bed curtain to gaze sadly down at Fedor. It is possible that Lebedev, like Repin, intended to portray Sof'ya sympathetically, as a woman struggling with strong emotions - here, grief at the death of her brother. Alternatively, it is possible that he may have wanted to depict her as a dissembling schemer, hiding her ambitions behind a show of grief. Certainly, Lebedev's depictions of the young Petr, like The Tutor Zotov instructs Tsarevich Petr Alekseevich in his Letters (1903<sup>144</sup>), which shows him as the attentive pupil of a kindly and conscientious tutor, are positive and idealised, similar to the portrayal in Myasoedov's The Grandfather of the Russian Fleet.

Mikhail Petrovich Klodt's The Interrogation of Tsarevna Sof'ya, 27 September 1698 (c. 1894, fig. 123<sup>145</sup>), shows a debt to Ge's Petr I

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<sup>141</sup> In Khovanshchina, Musorgskii and Stasov show him supplanting Golitsyn in Sof'ya's affections as early as 1682 (although the chronology of the opera is confused; it includes some events of 1689, notably Golitsyn's banishment).

<sup>142</sup> Sof'ya receiving a letter from Vasilii Golitsyn, in Niva, 1883, no. 41; Sof'ya's Farewell to Shaklovityi, also in Niva, 1888, no. 30. Both reproduced in Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', pp. 134-5.

<sup>143</sup> Reproduced in Kemenov, ibid., p. 126.

<sup>144</sup> Sotheby's, catalogue of Sale of Icons, Russian Pictures and Works of Art, London, 17 June 1993, lot 315.

<sup>145</sup> In Russkii Sever, 1894, no. 40, reproduced in Kemenov, ibid., p. 137.

interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof (fig. 78) in its composition as in its title, including a draped table and chequered floor. Since Sof'ya is seated, Petr's tall figure dominates the composition, partly obscuring the clerk who is taking notes. The cross in the leaded window at the centre of the picture symbolically places the scene under divine scrutiny, functioning like the icons in Repin's painting. Separating the brother and sister, this also suggests Matthew X, 34: "I came not to send peace, but a sword". Different concepts of Christian duty divide the two.<sup>146</sup> The window is also the main light-source in the picture, distracting the spectator's attention away from the main characters. Ge had avoided this by showing the effect of light upon the faces of his figures, but not showing its source. Klodt provides no visual clues to direct the spectator's sympathies towards either Petr or Sof'ya. As a result, his picture appears more ambiguous than Ge's.

The development of Sof'ya's image in painting was linked to her portrayal in historical writing. Few other women appear in history paintings on Petrine themes - chiefly, Petr's mother Natal'ya and his second wife Ekaterina, who function essentially as supporting characters. Sof'ya, however, as Petr's rival for power and as a woman, did not 'know her place' in subordination to him. Hence, she was portrayed critically in history and either ignored or marginalised in art. Only in the later nineteenth century, after the death of Nikolai I, and with the emergence of feminism, did she begin to be portrayed as an important figure in her own right. It could even be claimed that the evolution of Sof'ya's image from literal invisibility, in Sinyavskii's Petr the Great's Courage (fig.

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<sup>146</sup>Sof'ya's dutiful public piety is well-attested - see Hughes, Sophia, Regent of Russia, pp. 132-3, as is Petr's combination of belief in his own divine right with a fondness for bawdily blasphemous parodies of religious ritual; see Klyuchevsky, Peter the Great, pp. 46-7.



102), to the fully developed character presented by Repin and Lebedev paralleled the increasing awareness of women as members of society. However, by the turn of the century, when *The World of Art* focussed artistic attention again on Petr himself, Sof'ya's rôle was again diminished.

## Chapter 6: Surikov.

In the 1880s, Russian history painting was dominated by Vasiliï Surikov (1848-1916). His three major paintings of the decade - The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy (1881, fig. 126), Menshikov at Berezov (1883, fig. 142), and Bovarynya Morozova (1887, fig. 153) - dealt with important conflicts of the late seventeenth-early eighteenth centuries. They are linked by the general theme of the tensions between tradition and reform, and have been described as "a trilogy of suffering: the execution of the Strel'tsy, the exile of Menshikov, the torture of Morozova".<sup>1</sup>

They have been subject to conflicting interpretations; as Valkenier writes,

There is much controversy over Surikov's political views and sympathies. Most pre-Revolutionary writers saw him as a conservative and a Slavophile, while post-1936 Soviet historiography makes him a progressive patriot.<sup>2</sup>

Surikov's viewpoint can be clarified by analysing the works themselves and examining his own comments in interviews. The origins of the pictures and the process of their composition provide insights into Surikov's artistic methods and the development of his ideas. Despite their historical content, they are embedded in his own experience.

Surikov was naturally predisposed towards history painting.<sup>3</sup> The past from which he chose his subjects was rooted in his own background. In his boyhood he directly experienced surviving elements of pre-

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<sup>1</sup>Ya. A. Tepin, "Surikov" (originally publ. in Apollon, 1916, 4-5), in N. A. & Z. A. Radzimovskii & S. N. Gol'dshtein, ed., Vasiliï Ivanovich Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya o khudozhnike, Leningrad, 1977, p. 201.

<sup>2</sup>Valkenier, Russian Realist Art, p. 207, n. 21.

<sup>3</sup>Of his major works, only The Taking of the Snow Castle (1891, Russian Museum) has a contemporary setting, but its depiction of a Siberian winter game is deeply nostalgic. The way of life depicted was already an anachronism.

Westernised Russian folk culture. In Voloshin's words, he effectively "grew up in the authentic atmosphere of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Russia".<sup>4</sup> In the mid-nineteenth century, life in the Siberian Cossack community of Krasnoyarsk, Surikov's home, had changed little since its foundation. Surikov proudly traced both sides of his ancestry from men who had participated in the Krasnoyarsk revolt, contemporary with the Strel'tsy uprising.<sup>5</sup> Some of his relatives still led an extremely traditional way of life. His mother's family, the Torgoshins, lived at Torgoshino stanitsa (Cossack settlement) in an old house, with old icons and traditional costumes. His female cousins sang folk songs and practised traditional embroidery.<sup>6</sup> Surikov first learned of the Strel'tsy and of the Old Believer martyrs from the oral tradition in his own family.<sup>7</sup>

At the same time, his father Ivan Surikov (1809-59) and uncle Mark (1829-56), Cossack soldiers disabled by tuberculosis,<sup>8</sup> introduced him to the literary culture of St. Petersburg: the journals Sovremennik and Novosel'e, the poetry of Pushkin and Lermontov, and Milton's Paradise Lost.<sup>9</sup> It is significant that one of the earliest literary works the artist remembered was a historical novel, Mikhail Zagoskin's Yurii Miloslavskii, read aloud to him by the dying Mark Surikov.<sup>10</sup> Vasilii also showed an early interest in Petr I: aged six, having outgrown daubing paint on the leather upholstery, he copied an engraving of Petr, colouring the uniform blue, with cranberry facings.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Voloshin, Surikov, p. 23.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 26-8.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>7</sup>Tepin, "Surikov", Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 195.

<sup>8</sup>Voloshin, Surikov, p. 45.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., loc. cit.

Surikov entered the Academy of Arts in 1869.<sup>12</sup> As early as 1870, he painted his View of Petr I's Monument in Senate Square (Russian Museum, fig. 6), which was shown in the Academy's exhibition that year.<sup>13</sup> His first important commission on a Petrine theme was for the official bicentenary celebrations in 1872, while he was still a student. Mikhail Sidorov, a Krasnoyarsk timber merchant and amateur historian organised an exhibition of drawings entitled Petr the Great's Activities in Northern Russia, at the Polytechnical Exhibition in Moscow.<sup>14</sup> Initially, Pavel Ivachev and Nikolai Lavrov were recommended for the commission, but later Surikov was substituted for Lavrov.<sup>15</sup> The twelve subjects were anecdotal, and resemble the commemorative art produced for the St. Petersburg gala of the same date (see Chapter 4).<sup>16</sup> The final image in the series is an extreme example of Petrine hagiography, derived from Golikov's writings. It depicts a priest vainly reproving an old soldier for burning a lamp and praying before a portrait of Petr in the Red Corner of his cottage.<sup>17</sup> As Kemenov stated, in this project Sidorov "idealises Petr and his relations with foreigners... and with the people".<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 349.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 350.

<sup>14</sup>V. S. Kemenov, "Neizvestnye raboty V. I. Surikova o Petre I", Iskusstvo, 1949, no. 6, pp. 78-92.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 82. It is not known who made these recommendations; possibly Surikov's Krasnoyarsk connections may have attracted Sidorov.

<sup>16</sup>The titles are listed, ibid., p. 82: 1. Petr the Great on the White Sea; 2. The pilot Antipa begs Petr the Great's forgiveness; 3. Petr the Great drags boats from Onega Bay to Lake Onega to capture Notenburg [sic] Fortress (now Shlissel'burg) from the Swedes; 4. Petr the Great rewards Bazhenin, the first shipwright in Russia; 5. Petr the Great at the Arkhangel'sk Exchange; 6. Petr the Great and Witsen look for a place to build a fortress on Novaya Zemlya; 7. Petr the Great, as pilot, at dinner at the home of Menshikov, Governor-General of St. Petersburg; 8. Petr the Great, as skipper, sets an English ship afloat; 9. Prince Ya. F. Dolgorukov tears up a decree of Petr the Great in the Senate; 10. The cunning of the Dutch Merchants; 11. Petr the Great at a sailor's house; 12. The portrait of Petr the Great in the icon-case of an old soldier's house.

<sup>17</sup>I. I. Golikov, Anekdoty kasayushchiesya do Gosudariya Imperatora Petra Velikogo, Moscow, 1798, no. 132. The old man, who lived in Nizhnii-Novgorod, "refused to

It is difficult to assess the rôle of these drawings in Surikov's development as a history painter and in his approach to the Petrine period because the published lithographs<sup>19</sup> do not indicate which are by Ivachev and which by Surikov. Only two of the original drawings by Surikov are known<sup>20</sup> - Petr the Great drags boats from Onega Bay to Lake Onega to capture Noteburg Fortress from the Swedes (Russian Museum, fig. 124) and Dinner and fellowship of Petr the Great at the home of Prince Menshikov with Dutch sailors from a merchant vessel which Petr, as pilot, led from Kotlin Island to the Governor-General's house<sup>21</sup> (State Literary Museum, Moscow, fig. 125). Kemenov has suggested that Prince Yakov Dolgorukov tears up a decree of Petr the Great in the Senate may be Surikov's, and that its image of an angry Petr prefigures that in The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy.<sup>22</sup> In the absence of the original, however, it is impossible to be certain. All twelve pictures are executed in a conventional Academic style, and lithographic reproduction blunted further any distinctions between them.

Six years later, Surikov returned to a Petrine subject of his own choosing, with markedly different results. The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy (fig. 126) was his first major easel painting after graduating from the Academy. In 1877 he had moved to Moscow to work

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discontinue the practice in spite of the remonstrations of the bishop himself"; Gasiorowska, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian Fiction, p. 119.

<sup>18</sup>Kemenov, "Neizvestnye raboty V. I. Surikova o Petre I", Iskusstvo, 1949, no. 6, p. 91.

<sup>19</sup>Reproduced ibid., pp. 79, 81, 83, 85-6; the lithographs, by A. Argamakov, were originally published as Kartiny iz deyanii Petra velikogo na Severe. 12 kartinok, snyatykh s risunkov, predstavlenykh M. Sidorovym na Politekhnikeskuyu vystavku v Moskve, 1872 g., St. Petersburg, 1872.

<sup>20</sup>No.s 3 & 7 respectively in the list of titles.

<sup>21</sup>See V. S. Kemenov, "Vnov' naidennaya rabota V. I. Surikova o Petre I i Menshikove", Iskusstvo, 1951, no. 4, pp. 71-4.

<sup>22</sup>Kemenov, "Neizvestnye raboty V. I. Surikova o Petre I", Iskusstvo, 1949, no. 6, p. 85.

on a series of murals depicting the Œcumenical Councils for the Church of Christ the Saviour.<sup>23</sup> He soon became engrossed in the city's history, and the artistic potential of its traditional architecture:

...I felt far more comfortable here than in Petersburg. There was in Moscow something which reminded me much more of Krasnoyarsk, especially in winter... And, like forgotten dreams, there arose in my memory more and more pictures of things I had seen in my childhood, and later in my youth; types and costumes were recalled, and I was drawn toward all that was native and ineffably dear to me.

But most of all, the Kremlin captivated me, with its walls and towers. I don't know why, but I sensed in them something astonishingly close to me, as if long- and well-known. ...with the coming of twilight, I would set out to walk through Moscow, and, above all, to the Kremlin walls. These walls became the favourite place for my walks, especially at twilight. The darkness descending to the earth began to conceal all the contours, a kind of new, unfamiliar appearance overtook everything, and strange things were created for me. It suddenly seemed that these were not shrubs growing by the walls, but some kind of people in Old Russian garments, or it seemed that from the towers women were emerging, in quilted brocade jackets and with kiki [married women's closed caps] on their heads... And soon I noticed that the environs of these walls were populated by types and costumes which I knew and had seen so much in my own country, at home...<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Letters to Praskov'ya & Aleksandr Surikov (his mother and brother), in Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 47. The Church of Christ the Saviour was demolished in the early 1930s. Only one of Surikov's frescoes, The Fourth Œcumenical Council at Chalcedon, has been preserved (Cathedral of the Kazan' Icon of the Mother of God, St. Petersburg).

<sup>24</sup>Quoted by S. Glagol' (S. S. Goloushev), "V. I. Surikov. Iz vstrechi s nim i besed", (originally publ. in Nasha Starina, 2, 1917), in Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, pp. 213-4.

This imaginative process led him, in 1878,<sup>25</sup> to begin The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy:

...one day I was walking through Red Square, not another soul about. I was standing not far from the Place of the Skull,<sup>26</sup> gazing at the outline of St. Vasilii's, and suddenly there flashed into my mind the scene of the execution of the Strel'tsy, so clearly that my heart started pounding. I felt that if I painted what had appeared to me, a stunning picture would come out. I hurried home, and deep into the night I made sketches, that of the general composition, and that of the separate groups. However, I must say that I had had an idea to paint a picture of the execution of the Strel'tsy even earlier. I had thought of it even in Krasnoyarsk. Only I had never sketched the scene in this kind of composition, so vividly and horrifically.<sup>27</sup>

Surikov hoped to finish it during the winter of 1878-9,<sup>28</sup> but did not complete it until the beginning of 1881. This delay was partly caused by changes to the composition, discussed below, and partly by Surikov's health. In January - February 1879 he was seriously ill with pneumonia, and had to take a kumys (fermented mare's milk) cure in Samara that summer to regain his strength.<sup>29</sup>

The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy was heavily indebted to Johann-Georg Korb's Diary of an Austrian Secretary of Legation,<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Letter to P. F. & A. I Surikov, December 1878: "I finished the work in the Church this summer and now have remained in Moscow to paint a picture about the Strel'tsy revolt...", in ibid., p. 49.

<sup>26</sup>Lobnoe Mesto, lit., Place of the Brow-bone, the stone tribune from which Tsars proclaimed edicts and Patriarchs gave public blessings; Voyce, The Moscow Kremlin, p. 93. Although death sentences were announced from it, executions were actually carried out near the Kremlin wall, see ibid., p. 132, n. 5.

<sup>27</sup>Glagol', "V. I. Surikov. Iz vstrechi s nim i besed", in Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 214.

<sup>28</sup>Letter to P. F. & A. I Surikov, December 1878, in ibid., p. 49.

<sup>29</sup>Letter to P. F. & A. I Surikov, 25 February 1879, in ibid., p. 51; Tepin, "Surikov", in ibid., p. 201; also, p. 351.

<sup>30</sup>Voloshin, Surikov, pp. 70-1.

which provided one of the most vivid first-hand accounts of the executions. As Korb related, Red Square was not the only site used for the executions; many took place outside the walls of Moscow, at Preobrazhenskoe, and, as a gesture against Sof'ya, outside the Novodevichii Convent.<sup>31</sup> Surikov took features from Korb's descriptions of several executions, combining and modifying them to create a representative scene. As Brown has observed: "[Surikov] presents an image that would seem to fall into the Ruskinian category of 'truth of impression' rather than reportage..."<sup>32</sup>

By choosing to paint the execution in Red Square, the heart of Moscow and the old Muscovite state, Surikov emphasised the fact that the conflict depicted was about political dominance and the nation's cultural identity. This interpretation contrasts with Aleksandr Yanov's drawing The Execution of the Strel'tsy (1882, Tret'yakov Gallery, fig. 140), which took a more historically accurate approach, depicting the first execution, on 10 October 1698, outside the city gates.<sup>33</sup>

Surikov's depiction of the Strel'tsy parting from their families accords follows Korb's account of the first execution on 10 October:

There was a cart for every criminal, and a soldier to guard each. No priestly office was to be seen; as if the condemned were unworthy of that pious compassion. But they all bore lighted tapers in their hands, not to die without light and cross. The horrors of impending death were increased by the piteous lamentation of their women, the sobbing on every side, and the shrieks of the dying that rung upon the sad array. The mother wept for her son, the daughter deplored a parent's fate, the wife lamenting a husband's lot,

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<sup>31</sup>Korb, Diary, vol. I, p. 194.

<sup>32</sup>Brown, Chernyshevskii, Dostoevskii and the Peredvizhniki, pp. 155-6.

<sup>33</sup>Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 138. The prostrate, weeping girl in the foreground seems to be derived from Surikov's painting.



bemoaned along with the others, from whom the various ties of blood and kindred drew tears of sad farewell.<sup>34</sup>

The group to the right of the painting (fig. 127) - a woman (perhaps an officer's wife) wearing a richly embroidered, fur-trimmed robe, her son crying against her skirts, and her husband, apparently weakened by torture, being led away to execution - may have been suggested by Korb's description of the beheadings in Red Square on 13 February 1699:

A wife and children followed one of them up to the very beam, with great and frightful wailing. As this man was on the point of lying down, he gave his gloves and linen - all that he had left - to his wife and the sorrowful group of his beloved offspring, by way of last farewell.<sup>35</sup>

Surikov used these significant details to focus attention on the Strel'tsy as husbands, fathers, brothers, and sons. He made it clear that, whatever their offences, not only they but also their whole families were forced to suffer. Indeed, Korb wrote that the widows and children of the executed men were banished from Moscow, and forbidden any help or employment save as servants in distant parts of Russia.<sup>36</sup>

Surikov built up the painting in the studio from numerous studies of individual figures and objects. He claimed later that "From 1878 onward I was a plein-airiste. I painted The Strel'tsy.. outdoors".<sup>37</sup> However, as the canvas of The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy measures 218 x 379 cms, this is unlikely. It seems that Surikov defined plein-airisme very loosely. He meant that he made sketches and studies from life en plein air, and then worked them up and combined them in his studio.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Korb, Diary, vol. II, p. 103.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., vol. I, pp. 249-50.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., vol. II, pp. 113-4.

<sup>37</sup>Voloshin, Surikov, p. 100.

<sup>38</sup>See below, and Glagol', "V. I. Surikov. Iz vstrechi s nim i besed", in Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 219.

The Barbizon School used this method, which was adopted by Meissonier<sup>39</sup> and perhaps also by Shvarts.<sup>40</sup> When Surikov painted The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy, he had never travelled outside Russia. Any acquaintance he may have had with French plein air painting at this time could not have been direct. It is possible that he misunderstood the term, or else later adopted it to heighten the impression of his own modernity in this interview of c. 1913 with Voloshin.

Surikov explained to Voloshin the close relationship between the individual characters in the painting and his Siberian background:

You remember the Strelets I had there, with a black beard, 'like a lamb submitting to his fate' - that's Stepan Fedorovich Torgoshin, my mother's brother... And the women - you know, my family had old women like these - sarafan-wearers, Cossack women though they were. And the man who is bowing [fig. 128] - this is a [political] exile of about seventy. I remember he used to go about carrying a sack, swaying from weakness, and used to bow to people.<sup>41</sup>

Surikov did not return to Krasnoyarsk while working on The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy, so these people could not have posed for him.<sup>42</sup> Instead, Surikov used his memories of them to suggest the appearance of his characters and enable him to choose appropriate models.<sup>43</sup> This can be shown in the case of the black-bearded Strelets. Stepan Torgoshin was born in 1810,<sup>44</sup> but the character Surikov depicts is not the elderly man he would have been in 1878-80; rather, he is depicted

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<sup>39</sup>Harding, Artistes Pompiers, pp. 119-20.

<sup>40</sup>See Chapter 3.

<sup>41</sup>Voloshin, Surikov, p. 59.

<sup>42</sup>Despite Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 294, letter 3, n. 3.

<sup>43</sup>Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 498-9.

<sup>44</sup>Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 294, letter 3, n. 3.

in middle-age, as Surikov would have remembered him from his boyhood (fig. 129).

It is possible, although Surikov himself does not mention it, that the defiant character of the red-bearded Strelets (fig. 130) was suggested by Fiodor Flerkowski. He was a Polish soldier whom Surikov, in 1866, aged eighteen, had seen shot by firing-squad for wounding his superior officer, Captain Serebrennikov: "He cried out, 'Do what I have done!'"<sup>45</sup> The model for the red-bearded Strelets was a gravedigger named Kuz'ma. Surikov found him in a cemetery:

I said to him: 'Come and pose for me.' He had already put his foot on board the sledge, when his workmates started laughing. He said, 'I don't want to.' And he was just like a Strelets in character: a wicked, unruly type. His eyes, very deep-set, unnerved me. With difficulty, I persuaded him. As he was posing, he asked: 'Is my head going to be cut off, or something?'

But my sense of delicacy stopped me short of telling the man I was painting that I was depicting his execution.<sup>46</sup>

Other models included Elena Deryagina, the sister of his friend and fellow-student at the Academy, Nikolai Bodarevskii. Surikov made studies of her as the black-bearded Strelets' wife (fig. 129) in summer 1879, while he was convalescing at the Deryagins' estate in Tula.<sup>47</sup> The little girl with the red headscarf in the foreground of the painting was modelled upon the artist's daughter, Ol'ga.<sup>48</sup> Numerous studies for many of the other characters survive in the Tret'yakov Gallery and various Russian provincial galleries.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Voloshin, Surikov, p. 41, and Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 325, n. 51.

<sup>46</sup>Voloshin, Surikov, p. 62.

<sup>47</sup>Tepin, "Surikov", Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 201, and p. 330, n. 16.

<sup>48</sup>Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', pp. 222-3.

<sup>49</sup>See ibid., pp. 204-229, for examples.

Korb's account of 10 October 1698 provided Surikov with evidence for including Petr and his entourage at the right of the canvas:

When all were duly brought to the place of execution..., the Czar's Majesty, ...attended by a numerous suite of Muscovite nobles, came to the gate, where, by his Majesty's command, the imperial Lord Envoy had stopped in his own carriage, along with the representatives of Poland and Denmark. Next them was Major-General de Carlowitz, who had conducted his Majesty on his way from Poland, and a great many other foreigners, among whom the Muscovites mingled round about the gate.<sup>50</sup>

X-rays have revealed that this section of canvas was attached after the main portion of the painting was under way (fig. 131).<sup>51</sup> The characters added include Petr's half-sister Marfa<sup>52</sup> in the carriage; a group of foreigners, among whom Kemenov has identified the Austrian ambassador Ignatius Christopher Guarient<sup>53</sup> and Korb, his secretary; and a boyar<sup>54</sup> in the traditional costume which Petr banned soon afterwards. The join runs down through the turban of the most visible of the black footmen and through the left ear and eye of Petr's horse, so the Tsar and his favourite, Menshikov,<sup>55</sup> who is bowing to him, were painted after the canvas was extended. X-ray show that Petr's head and torso were painted over the beams of the gallows.

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<sup>50</sup>Korb, Diary, vol. II, p. 104.

<sup>51</sup>S. N. Gol'dshtein, "Utro Streletskoi Kazni". Khudozhnik, 1973, no. 2, pp. 15-19.

<sup>52</sup>Of the two sisters implicated in the revolt, Sof'ya had been in the Novodevichii Convent since 1689 and remained there until her death (see Chapter 5), and so cannot be the woman depicted. Kemenov suggests Marfa in Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 228-31.

<sup>53</sup>Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 225.

<sup>54</sup>Kemenov, ibid., pp. 225-8, identifies him as Prince Mikhail Cherkasskii, on the strength of Lev Tolstoi's description of him in Nachala (A Beginning), his unfinished novel about Petr I (see pp. 189-91 on Surikov's acquaintance with Tolstoi at this time), or Tikhon Streshnev, Petr's kinsman.

<sup>55</sup>Identified by N. Aleksandrov in Khudozhestvennyi Zhurnal, vol. I, 1881, no. 4, p. 226, quoted by Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 223.

In Surikov's first sketches, inspired by his walk in Red Square in 1878 (Tret'yakov Gallery, fig. 132),<sup>56</sup> the composition consists wholly of the Strel'tsy, with their families and guards, against the background of St. Vasilii's Cathedral and the gallows. Surikov never explained his later decision to include Petr and the representatives of his new Russia - Menshikov, the Preobrazhenskii Guards, and Western diplomats. However, the inclusion of both sides of the conflict increased the dramatic tension of the scene. It also made it possible for spectators to study both parties, and decide from Surikov's portrayal where their sympathies lay in relation to the artist's own. In this respect, The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy followed Ge's Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof and Repin's The Regent Tsarevna Sof'ya by using history painting to provoke discussion about a controversial aspect of Petr's reign.

According to Aleksandr Golovin, Petr I was the only character who was not painted from a living model.<sup>57</sup> Surikov turned to contemporary engravings, reproduced in history books: "I painted my Petr from a portrait from his trip abroad, and took the costume from Korb".<sup>58</sup> The portrait was Faithorne the Younger's engraving from a drawing made from life in London in 1698 (fig. 7).<sup>59</sup> Surikov's drawing of it survives in the Krasnoyarsk Regional Art Gallery (fig. 135),<sup>60</sup> showing that it was taken from a reversed version of the plate. However, it is clear from the finished painting (fig. 136) that Surikov went beyond Faithorne's

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<sup>56</sup>Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 198.

<sup>57</sup>A. Ya. Golovin, extract from Aleksandr Yakovlevich Golovin. Vstrechi i vpechateniya. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya o Golovine, Leningrad & Moscow, 1960, in Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 238.

<sup>58</sup>Voloshin, "Surikov. Materialy dlya biografii" in ibid., p. 183.

<sup>59</sup>Anderson, Peter the Great, pl. 9.

<sup>60</sup>Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 216.

portrayal in attempting to convey Petr's forceful and alarming personality - just as Repin developed Tsarevna Sof'ya's expression from the severe serenity of the 'Eagle' portraits (see above). Given the contact between the two artists in Moscow at this time,<sup>61</sup> it is possible that Surikov may have consulted the 'Serbian' portrait of Petr which Repin had used because of its fierce gaze (fig. 110).<sup>62</sup>

Ottens' engraving of Petr in Russian dress (fig. 42)<sup>63</sup> may have contributed to the design of his costume. Its colour is derived from Korb's description of Petr at the executions on 10 October 1698, "dressed in a green Polish cloak".<sup>64</sup> Korb also supplied evidence about Petr's general bearing and mood during the executions. Korb's entry for 27 October described a stern, unmoved Tsar watching the beheading of three hundred and thirty Strel'tsy from horseback, as in the painting:

The Czar himself, sitting in his saddle, looked on with dry eyes at the whole tragedy - at this frightful butchery of such a multitude of men - being only irate that several of the Boyars had performed this unaccustomed function with trembling hands - for that no fatter victim could be immolated to God than a wicked man.<sup>65</sup>

A further alteration to the painting was caused by Surikov's indecision over whether he should depict the executions in progress, with Strel'tsy already hanging from the gallows. The first sketch includes a figure raised above the crowd, with head bowed, but this appears to be the prototype of the bowing Strelets. Surikov revealed that in 1880 it was suggested to him that he include suspended corpses:

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<sup>61</sup>Voloshin, Surikov, p. 70, and Tepin, "Surikov", Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 201; see below.

<sup>62</sup>See Chapter 5 and Portret Petrovskogo Vremeni, GRM & GTG, pp. 172-3.

<sup>63</sup>Reproduced in Brikner, Istoriya Petra Velikogo, p. 183.

<sup>64</sup>Korb, Diary, vol. II, p. 104.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., vol. I, p. 193, original italics.

I had almost finished Strel'tsy.. Il'ya Efimovich Repin came to see me, and said: 'What's this? - You haven't a single executed man! You should put one here, on the gallows, on the right-hand side of the background...'66

Yakov Tepin adds that Repin exclaimed excitedly, "Poves'! Poves'!" - "Hang them! Hang them!"67

As soon as he had gone, I wanted to give it a try. I knew I shouldn't. But I wanted to know what would work. I drew in chalk the figure of a hanging Strelets. But just then, the nanny came into the room - and as soon as she saw it, she fainted.68

As Surikov told Igor Grabar', many years later: "Then I understood that I was right, and not Repin: art should not have such an effect."69 Tret'yakov is also reported to have said on seeing the hanging figures, "What are you doing? Do you want to spoil the whole picture?"70 In the wake of such adverse reactions, the corpses were overpainted. The forms of the two executed Strel'tsy are visible with X-rays (fig. 133).71

Surikov's reluctance to depict the executions in progress can be ascribed partly to his boyhood experiences. Returning home from school, Surikov witnessed numerous public knoutings and executions in the square. The impressions were powerful:

It always struck me that there was beauty in it, strength. The black scaffold, the red shirt [of the executioner]. Beauty! And the way the criminals bore themselves... what strength those people had: they endured a hundred lashes without

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66Voloshin, Surikov, p. 70.

67Tepin, "Surikov", Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 201.

68Voloshin, Surikov, p. 70.

69I. E. Grabar', "Pamyatnye vstrechi" (originally publ. in Sovetskoe iskusstvo, 1937, 11 January, no. 2), Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p.264.

70Voloshin, Surikov, p. 70.

71Gol'dshtein, "Utro Streletskoi Kazni", Khudozhnik, 1973, no. 2, p. 18.

crying out. And there was no terror of any kind. Rather, exultation. Their nerves endured it all.

...I remember the flogging of one man... He stood just like a martyr. Not once did he cry out. And all of us lads were sitting on the fence. First his body turned red, and then dark blue; only venous blood was flowing. They gave him spirits to smell.<sup>72</sup>

However, unlike Repin, who had sketched Karakozov's execution,<sup>73</sup> Surikov maintained that "Anyone who has seen an execution will not depict one",<sup>74</sup> and spoke with distaste of the "clots of blood - black and sticky" in Repin's Ivan the Terrible and his son Ivan (fig. 97).<sup>75</sup>

Surikov also had an extremely vivid imagination, which did not spare him the horror of the deaths of the Strel'tsy:

... every night I saw the execution in my dreams. The most horrific dreams. The smell of blood was all around. I was afraid at night... In my picture the blood was not shown, the executions had not yet begun. But all of it - the blood, the executions - all of it I have relived.<sup>76</sup>

This sensitivity and sense of personal involvement probably contributed to his unwillingness to depict explicit violence in the painting. It seems likely, too, that Surikov's idealism, reflected in his criticism of Repin's "podgy" Sof'ya,<sup>77</sup> disposed him towards a more subtle approach.

Like Repin, Surikov researched costumes and accessories in museums. Marfa's carriage was based on a seventeenth-century Patriarch's carriage in the Armoury Museum in the Kremlin.<sup>78</sup> Guarient's frock-coat and waistcoat were derived from a suit belonging to

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<sup>72</sup>Voloshin, Surikov, pp. 40-1.

<sup>73</sup>Repin, "Kazn' Karakozova", Dalekoe Blizkoe, pp. 202-4, illustration, p. 198.

<sup>74</sup>Tepin, "Surikov", Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 201.

<sup>75</sup>Voloshin, Surikov, p. 70.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., pp. 62-3.

<sup>77</sup>Voloshin, Surikov, p. 192; see Chapter 5.

<sup>78</sup>Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', pp. 229-30



Petr II, also in the Armoury.<sup>79</sup> The suit post-dates the event by about thirty years, but any anachronisms of style and decoration are barely discernible because of the dark coat and cloak which Surikov added to the outfit. A more obvious inaccuracy is the facial hair of both Guarient and the soberly-clad man (Korb?) looking over his shoulder. Beards were seldom worn by late seventeenth - eighteenth-century Western Europeans, and then only by old men, as portraits of the period show.<sup>80</sup> It is not clear why Surikov added beards, although an answer may lie in the extremely youthful appearance of the model who posed as Guarient (fig. 137).

The costumes of the Strel'tsy and their wives were partly based on research in books and magazine articles.<sup>81</sup> The colours of the Strel'tsy's kaftans indicated their regiments - for example, Bukhvostov's Regiment wore green, and Golovlinskii's, cranberry.<sup>82</sup> Surikov also drew upon contemporary survivals of traditional dress (fig. 138). While convalescing with the Deryagins in Tula, he sketched local folk costumes.<sup>83</sup> He received assurances of help from his home town and family friends: "[Avdot'ya Kuznetsova] has promised to bring me a hat from Krasnoyarsk for my picture."<sup>84</sup> He also asked his brother for assistance with his researches: "Sasha, take a look in the market at the sort of hats our peasants wear in winter and draw them roughly for me. I need this."<sup>85</sup> The final costumes, then, are a hybrid of documentary

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<sup>79</sup>Ibid., p. 225.

<sup>80</sup>For example, William Aikman's Patrick, 1st Earl of Marchmont (1720, private collection), in R. K. Marshall, Costume in Scottish Portraits 1560-1830, Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh, 1986, p. 23.

<sup>81</sup>Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', pp. 203-4.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., p. 204; Strel'tsy regiments bore the names of their respective Colonels.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., p. 203.

<sup>84</sup>Letter to P. F. & A. I. Surikov, 3 May 1879, in Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 50.

<sup>85</sup>Letter to P. F. & A. I. Surikov, 22 October 1880, in ibid., p. 52.

descriptions of seventeenth-century costume and nineteenth-century folk dress, which had evolved only very slowly during the ensuing two centuries. Surikov adopted the same approach in both Menshikov at Berezov and Boyarynya Morozova, with similar success. Anachronisms may exist, but they are minor.<sup>86</sup> Surikov's first-hand acquaintance with people who wore traditional clothes as a matter of course, such as his Torgoshin cousins, meant that he knew how the garments were meant to be worn. Hence his characters look at ease and move naturally inside their clothes, rather than look as if they are wearing fancy-dress.

The finished composition of The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy is constructed upon what appears to be a very simple scheme (fig. 134<sup>87</sup>): the crowd of Strel'tsy, which is based upon a spiral arrangement, on the left; on the right, Petr and his companions. The eye is led into the painting through the group of Strel'tsy, from those furthest from death, who sit and wait in the carts, to the visibly broken man who is being led by guards towards the gallows (fig. 127). The spiral is interrupted by the vertical line of the bowing Strelets (fig. 128). His silhouette is reminiscent of that of a hanged man with a broken neck, or of a saint in the deesis (in Russian, chin) tier of an iconostasis.<sup>88</sup> He is bowing in prayer or in farewell to his own people, but his back is turned to the Tsar. The link between the two parts of the picture and the two sides is the stare exchanged between the red-bearded Strelets (fig. 130)

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<sup>86</sup>In Boyarynya Morozova, the embroidered border on Princess Urusova's shawl, with its bows and sprays of flowers, has a late eighteenth-early nineteenth-century appearance (compare figs. 158 & 159).

<sup>87</sup>Voloshin, Surikov, p. 63.

<sup>88</sup>The row of figures, depicted in three-quarters profile, bowing in prayer on either side of a frontally-depicted enthroned Christ. It spans the full width of the iconostasis, above the Royal Gates. See L. Ouspensky & V. Lossky, The Meaning of Icons, New York, revised ed. 1982, pp. 63-4.

and the Tsar (fig. 136). Both are depicted as uncompromising and unflinching, representing the extreme polarities of this confrontation.

Surikov's treatment of space in The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy is interesting. Some critics commented on "the inaccuracies in the drawing, the weakness of the outdoor perspective".<sup>89</sup> Russkie Vedomosti went so far as to say that "the profound concept [of the picture] is not wholly fulfilled thanks to the weak perspective, [and space] too heaped up with figures".<sup>90</sup> Certainly, Surikov distorted the spatial relationships between the buildings on Red Square. The distance between the Cathedral and the Kremlin wall has been compressed, and where the Kremlin wall should recede, as the Square slopes downhill towards the Moscow River, it rises in the painting to balance the Cathedral's towers and domes on the left. The middle distance is occupied by the Place of the Skull and its occupants, balanced against Petr and his followers on the right. Behind this, the architectural background is flattened (fig. 126). The critic in Novoe Vremya regarded this treatment of perspective as a failing readily forgivable in a young artist,<sup>91</sup> but, given Surikov's training and his first-hand knowledge of the location, it seems more likely that his use of space and perspective was deliberate.

The narrowing of Red Square pushes the mass of figures on the left forward into the frontal plane of the picture. The apparently unbroken skyline of the cathedral and the Kremlin walls encloses the area, suggesting captivity and confinement. The Strel'tsy and their families, the main victims, are further hemmed in by the Place of the Skull. Petr and his companions are also closed in - perhaps implying that they too

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<sup>89</sup>Novoe Vremya, 26 March 1881, quoted by Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 175.

<sup>90</sup>Russkie Vedomosti, 11 April 1881, quoted *ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

<sup>91</sup>Novoe Vremya, 26 March 1881, quoted *ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

are trapped by fate or their own actions into their rôles in this event. The dull tones and flattening of the perspective behind the middle plane intensifies to this effect. Surikov may have been trying to depict a thin river mist over the buildings. It also prevents the otherwise colourful architecture from distracting attention from the human drama.

Another possible factor in Surikov's handling of space lies in the conventions of theatrical scenery with a backcloth and additional wings and props nearer the front of stage. This approach was often present in Academic history painting, but Surikov also admired opera, and particularly liked those with picturesque historical settings. Among his favourites was Musorgskii's Boris Godunov,<sup>92</sup> Act IV, Scene I of which is set outside St. Vasilii's in Red Square. It is possible that Surikov envisaged his depiction of the same location in terms of theatrical space - hence, perhaps, the compression of the width of the Square and the lack of depth beyond the middle distance. This may have been to prevent the scale and grandeur of the setting distracting from the characters. In this respect, it can be contrasted with Ivan Lanskoï's watercolour, The Execution of the Strel'tsy (1872, Astrakhan Art Gallery, fig. 139),<sup>93</sup> in which the expanse of the Square and the open sky are emphasised. If Surikov's approach was indebted to the theatre, then the debt was returned, as his treatment of the crowd and setting in The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy has influenced the design of productions of Musorgskii's Khovanshchina.

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<sup>92</sup>G. A. Cheptsova, "Gody znakomstva s V. I. Surikovym" (originally publ. in Iskusstvo, 1961, no. 6), in Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 280. She writes that he also enjoyed Rubinshtein's Kupets Kalashnikov (The Merchant Kalashnikov), based on Lermontov's bylina, and Verdi's La Traviata, which, after unsuccessful early productions in contemporary dress, was usually set in Louis XIV's reign (see G. P. Upton, The Standard Operas, London, n. d., c. 1907, p. 358). In Milan, in 1884, Surikov saw Meyerbeer's Les Huguenots at La Scala; see letter to N. S. Matveev, 1 February 1884, in ibid., p. 64.

<sup>93</sup>Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 138.

Indeed, it is not unusual to find comparisons made between Surikov's crowd scenes and Musorgskii's choruses.<sup>94</sup>

Surikov took liberties with the structure of the Kremlin wall in order to make it appear more forbidding. In place of the more decorative Tsarskii, Nabatnyi and Konstantino-Elenskii Towers, which are actually on the side facing St. Vasilii's, he substituted the plainer form of the Senatskii Tower, which he repeated twice.<sup>95</sup> Surikov's approach here can again be contrasted with that of Lanskoi, who included the tall, elegant Spasskii Tower and Gate, in the background of his 1872 watercolour The Execution of the Strel'tsy. Once again, Surikov's treatment of the scene seems to be founded on "'truth of impression' rather than reportage".<sup>96</sup>

The tonal effects of the finished painting have generally been regarded as successful and atmospheric, given its dramatic and tragic subject. Tepin wrote:

The highest note of colour... is provided by the white shirts of the condemned men and the burning candles in their hands, the lowest by the black notice of their disgrace. All the rest is sustained in a harmony of grey and dried blood tones... The misty autumn morning covers the picture in cool tones.<sup>97</sup>

Earth colours and grey predominate, with the pale grey sky and the brick tones of the buildings in the background. Surikov himself was dissatisfied, believing that the whole effect was too dull. He blamed what he regarded as the defects in the handling of colour upon striving after unusual light effects:

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<sup>94</sup>N. A. Radzimovskaya, "Epistol'arnoe nasledie V. I. Surikova", in Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 16.

<sup>95</sup>Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 202.

<sup>96</sup>Brown, Chernyshevskii, Dostoevskii and the Peredvizhniki, p. 156.

<sup>97</sup>Tepin, "Surikov", Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 200.

As regards the impression on the spectator, the flames of the candles clutched in the hands of the condemned men had great significance in the picture. I knew that these flames, flickering in the early morning mist, would increase the picture's particular sensation of horror, and I wanted these flames really to gleam, really to be like flickering flames. But here, instead of achieving this through contrasting colours,... I added a muddy tint to the general tone of the picture. I achieved the impression I wanted, but at the expense of the general tone.<sup>98</sup>

He seems to have succeeded.<sup>99</sup> The brighter areas, chiefly the white shirts which reflect the candle flames, and the red in details of costume, draw the eye to individual characters. The black-bearded Strelets, with the strong contrast between his beard, his shirt and his red kaftan, stands out particularly clearly, as does the red-bearded Strelets, and the little girl, whose bright red kerchief is set against the white sleeve of the white-bearded Strelets' weeping daughter. The blue, red, gold and cream embroidered costume of the woman with the small boy (fig. 127) echoes the colours of the variegated cupolas and tilework on the church façade, as do the other patches of red, blue and green among the Strel'tsy. The darker greens and reds of the Preobrazhenskii Guards, Petr and entourage harmonise with the dark green roofs and brick wall of the Kremlin.<sup>100</sup>

The main emphasis of Surikov's picture is upon the Strel'tsy and their families. Most earlier history paintings about the Strel'tsy revolts had focussed upon the 1682 rising, as in Shteiben's Peter the Great saved by his Mother (fig. 34), Demidov's Tsaritsa Natal'ya Kirillovna and Tsarevich Petr on the Red Staircase (fig. 37) and Dmitriev-Orenburgskii's

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<sup>98</sup>Quoted by Glagol', "V. I. Surikov. Iz vstrech s nim i besed", in *ibid.*, p. 215.

<sup>99</sup>Due to renovation work at the Tret'yakov Gallery in 1991, I was unable to view the canvas myself, as it was in storage, rolled. It is difficult to assess the colour accurately from the variable tonal qualities of reproductions.

<sup>100</sup>See below for the possible symbolic implications of this.

The Strel'tsy Revolt (fig. 70). In these, it was possible to win sympathy for Petr as an innocent child threatened by rioting troops. The 1698 setting cast him in the different rôle of executioner. This was a subject difficult to treat in a way that would be sympathetic to Petr, since, as one critic observed, "An artist cannot make comparisons and antitheses".<sup>101</sup> Only after Nikolai I's death in 1855 and, particularly, after the breakthrough of Ge's Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof, did the 1698 revolt and its aftermath emerge as a significant artistic subject. By depicting the Strel'tsy as victims awaiting execution, rather than as troops actively engaged in revolt, Lanskoi, Yanov and Surikov roused sympathy for them. Even so, these artists refrained from showing Petr personally beheading some Strel'tsy, as Korb claimed he had done:<sup>102</sup> in the 1870s-early 1880s the image of a Tsar was still to be treated with restraint.<sup>103</sup>

Nevertheless, the architectural background to the figures contains symbolic undertones indicating Surikov's sympathies. Petr and his entourage on the right side of the canvas are depicted in front of the Kremlin wall, which has been altered to appear duller and grimmer than in reality. The Strel'tsy, on the left, are set against the fantastic but idiosyncratically harmonious forms of St. Vasilii's. The use of colour strengthens these links between characters and setting. The Kremlin, the centre of government in Muscovite Russia, depicted behind Petr, embodies the power of the State. A few years later, Petr, in founding St. Petersburg,

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<sup>101</sup>(S. V. Flerov), "Peredvizhnyia vystavka kartin", Moskovskie Vedomosti, 26 April 1881, in Kremenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 178.

<sup>102</sup>Korb, Diary, vol. I, pp. 182-3, 252.

<sup>103</sup>One can compare Shvarts and Repin's treatments of Ivan the Terrible and his son, discussed in Chapter 3. Shvarts, in the 1860s, could broach this controversial subject with a subdued deathbed scene, whereas by 1885, Repin felt able to depict the bloody moment of manslaughter. Repin's painting, nevertheless, had to be withdrawn from exhibition.

was to reject it. However, in 1698 it retained its prominence and hence its symbolic rôle in The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy. In contrast, St. Vasili's represents popular spiritual traditions and values. Although founded in 1560 as the Cathedral of the Intercession of the Mother of God, commemorating Ivan the Terrible's capture of Kazan', its folk-name derives from the shrine of a popular saint, Vasili the Holy Fool. According to legend, he reproached Ivan the Terrible for the sack of Novgorod.<sup>104</sup> Possibly this is why Pushkin chose St. Vasili's as the site for his Holy Fool's refusal to pray for Boris Godunov.<sup>105</sup> In Surikov's painting, Vasili's shrine may be reproaching another tyrannical Tsar for executing so many of his subjects. Visually and perhaps morally the Cathedral supports the Strel'tsy and their families, who pray with their candles, although they have been deprived of a priest on Petr's orders.<sup>106</sup> Petr is depicted as a remote figure, set apart even from his supporters. It is possible to see him in this portrayal as an outsider, a blasphemer,<sup>107</sup> even as the Antichrist of Old Believer myth.<sup>108</sup>

The depiction of the Strel'tsy in family groups, in relationships with each other, emphasises further their rôle as carriers of human values. Petr, in contrast, is physically isolated from most of the other

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<sup>104</sup>G. P. Fedotov, The Russian Religious Mind, Cambridge, Mass., 1966, vol. II, p. 338.

<sup>105</sup>A. S. Pushkin, transl. A. Hayes, Boris Godunov, London, n. d., p. 92.

<sup>106</sup>Korb, Diary, vol. II, p. 103.

<sup>107</sup>Not only did Petr deprive the Strel'tsy of religious consolation before execution, but he also hanged the priests who had prayed for the rebels on cross-shaped gibbets outside the Trinity Church. The executioners on this occasion were the Court buffoon and the 'Mock-Patriarch of the All-Drunken Synod', wearing religious vestments. See Korb, Diary, vol. II, pp. 108-9. For vivid accounts of Petr's 'All-Drunken Synod', see S. Graham, Peter the Great. A life of Peter I of Russia called the Great, London, 1929, pp. 66-8, 291-3.

<sup>108</sup>On Petr as Antichrist, see Cherniavsky, Tsar and People, pp. 76-7. Surikov gained much support among the Old Believer communities of Moscow for The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy; see below, and Glagol', "V. I. Surikov. Iz vstrech s nim i besed", Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 219.



characters. The only member of his family present is his half-sister, Marfa, confined to the carriage. Menshikov, Petr's favourite, is present, but he is also visibly subordinate, making obeisance below him. The Preobrazhenskii Guards are depicted mainly as a distant row of expressionless soldiers - perhaps more disciplined, more effective as a fighting force than the Strel'tsy, but, in the context of the painting, less human. They are only individualised where they mingle with the Strel'tsy; but even then, they remain comparatively impassive.

The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy was not finished until the beginning of 1881. Its appearance in the Ninth Exhibition of the Association for Travelling Art Exhibitions that year marked Surikov's debut as a major talent in Russian history painting, although he was not yet a member of the Peredvizhniki. Repin responded with enthusiasm. Even before the exhibition opened, he commended The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy to Tret'yakov, who later bought it for 8,000 rubles.<sup>109</sup>

Surikov's picture makes an irresistible and profound impression on everyone. Everyone has expressed unanimous willingness to give it the best place; it's written on everyone's face that it's the pride of this exhibition. (Good people, cultivated people, yes, long live enlightenment!)

...What perspective!...A powerful picture!<sup>110</sup>

He added that, on the strength of it, the Peredvizhniki had decided "to offer Surikov membership at once".<sup>111</sup> Tret'yakov's daughter later confirmed its first striking impact:

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<sup>109</sup>See Surikov's letter to P. F. & A. I. Surikov, summer 1881, Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 53.

<sup>110</sup>I. E. Repin, Perepiska s P. M. Tret'yakovym 1873-1898, Moscow & Leningrad, 1946, p. 47.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid., loc. cit..

[Surikov's] appearance in the art world with the picture The Execution of the Strel'tsy was stunning. No-one had begun this way. He did not tremble, he did not hesitate, and, like thunder, this work broke forth.<sup>112</sup>

Repin wrote to Surikov himself that "The picture is a triumph!"<sup>113</sup> They criticise the drawing and pick on Kuzya [the red-bearded Strelets] especially - the mangy Academic party are the fiercest of all. They say that on Sunday Zhuravlev pulled a wry face with regard to 'unseemliness'... [But] All decent people are touched by the picture.<sup>114</sup>

Firs Zhuravlev's alleged comments may have been prompted by the tragedy which coincided with the exhibition's opening on Saturday 1 March. That day, also in St. Petersburg, Aleksandr II was assassinated by the People's Will terrorist group. In such circumstances, a painting apparently sympathetic to characters who had revolted against a Tsar could be regarded as at least in poor taste and possibly politically suspect.

A review under the initials 'K. M.' in Ivan Aksakov's magazine Rus' attacked Surikov's painting on those grounds, with scathing asides on opponents in the press:

The clear bias of the subject of this picture has provoked loud and unanimous praise from the 'liberal press', which recognised in Mr. Surikov's The Execution of the Strel'tsy 'profound, stunning, almost contemporary significance'...

...The choice of subject itself already...attests to the precocious but profound corruption of this artist's artistic taste...<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>112</sup>A. P. Botkina, quoted by Gol'dshtein, "Utro Streletskoi Kazni", Khudozhnik, 1973, no. 2, p. 15.

<sup>113</sup>Letter of late February 1881, V. I. Surikov, Pis'ma 1868-1916, Moscow & Leningrad, 1948, p. 154.

<sup>114</sup>Ibid., loc. cit.

<sup>115</sup>K. M., "IX Peredvizhnaya vystavka kartin", Rus', 9 May 1881, quoted by Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 178.

An article in the following week's issue further emphasised the ideological position behind K. M.'s argument. It referred to "the completely anti-revolutionary nature of the Russian people - the true support of the throne",<sup>116</sup> and attempted to diminish the seriousness of the Strel'tsy revolts as a manifestation of popular discontent with Petr's reforms:

The courtiers revolted, but when did the peasant rise against the sovereign? The shaven chin and foreign costume revolted, but when did the Russian beard and kaftan? The Strel'tsy revolts of Petr's reign were, in their particular character, more riots than rebellions.<sup>117</sup>

Rus' was a vehicle for the Slavic chauvinism which became characteristic of Aleksandr III's reign. The editor, Ivan Aksakov, had been among the original Slavophiles (see Chapter 1), but, by the 1880s, had moved considerably to the Right. Riasanovsky explained:

In his own articles, [Ivan Aksakov] was invariably...narrow, provincial, and crudely nationalistic... [He]...served as an introduction to the extreme nationalism, Pan-Slav and otherwise, which became prominent in Russia at the end of his life and which marked a negation of the principles most cherished by the Slavophiles.<sup>118</sup>

In publishing K. M.'s articles, Aksakov's editorial policy departed from traditional Slavophile hostility towards Petr I. Support for autocracy had always been an element of Slavophilism,<sup>119</sup> but on "historical and functional, therefore relative, never religious and absolute"<sup>120</sup> grounds. Here, however, the need to support Petr as Tsar was placed above grounds for criticising him for attacking Russian culture.

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<sup>116</sup>Rus', 16 May 1881, quoted ibid., p. 179.

<sup>117</sup>Ibid., loc. cit.

<sup>118</sup>Riasanovsky, Russia and the West in the Teaching of the Slavophiles, p. 55.

<sup>119</sup>See ibid., pp. 149-52, and Chapter 1.

<sup>120</sup>Ibid., p. 151.

K. M.'s claims that the only opposition to the crown came from the Court itself (probably a veiled allusion to Aleksei Petrovich's alleged conspiracy in 1718 and to the numerous palace coups of the later eighteenth century) and that the 1698 Strel'tsy revolt was simply a criminal riot was a politically-motivated distortion of history. The revolt stemmed from a number of causes, mostly connected with Petr's plans to reorganise the army on Western lines.<sup>121</sup> The Tsar's absence in Western Europe further heightened anxieties, as rumours circulated that he had been murdered or had no wish to return.<sup>122</sup> The Strel'tsy had grievances about serving under foreign officers, but their most pressing problem concerned postings. While Petr's favourite regiments, the Western-style Preobrazhenskii and Semenovskii Guards, were given garrison duty in Moscow, the Strel'tsy - Moscow artisans - were sent to remote garrisons, including Azov and the Polish border. They were forbidden to pass through the city for home leave on their way to these new posts. Some deserted to Moscow and petitioned the authorities for back pay and permission to stay, but these requests were rejected. The revolt of the four regiments in Toropets in June 1698 and their attempted march on Moscow was prompted by a decree ordering the arrest and exile of the petitioners.<sup>123</sup> Such was the fear of a general popular uprising that wealthy citizens fled from the capital when they heard of it.<sup>124</sup> By blurring distinctions between the panic-fuelled Strel'tsy revolt of 1682 and the rational grievances behind events sixteen years later, the Rus' columnists removed the significance of Surikov's subject as an example of

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<sup>121</sup>Schuyler, Peter the Great, vol. I, pp. 389-92; Massie, Peter the Great, pp. 244-5; Hughes, Sophia, Regent of Russia, pp. 249-50.

<sup>122</sup>Massie, Peter the Great, p. 245.

<sup>123</sup>Schuyler, Peter the Great, vol. I, pp. 390-1.

<sup>124</sup>Ibid., vol. I, p. 392.

resistance to Petr's military policies. In doing so, they also reduced the reasons for for sympathising with the Strel'tsy.

Elsewhere, attempts were made to link Surikov's sympathy for the Strel'tsy with his own family history. The review in Khudozhestvennyi Zhurnal claimed that Surikov was descended from exiled Strel'tsy.<sup>125</sup> This prompted him to ask the editor, Nikolai Aleksandrov, to publish a denial of it as a factual error. As he explained: "I am, in fact, descended quite simply from local Siberian Cossacks."<sup>126</sup>

Despite the unfavourable political circumstances, The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy received some positive reviews. Like Repin, Prince Aleksandr Urusov, in Poryadok, claimed that it was "one of the most remarkable pictures in the exhibition":<sup>127</sup>

The picture, in which there are up to fifteen main figures, painted with great power, produces a tremendous impression. The second and third planes [of recession], the buildings, the accessories, the faces in the crowd - these all attest to painstaking and careful work.<sup>128</sup>

He concluded that "In the person of Surikov, history painting has made an undoubted gain".<sup>129</sup> The reviewer in Novoe Vremya agreed, with only slight reservations on technical grounds, as noted above. He claimed that The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy was "the sort of picture about which one could write a whole article".<sup>130</sup> Vsemirnaya Illyustratsiya regretted Surikov's decision not to depict the executions in

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<sup>125</sup>Khudozhestvennyi Zhurnal, 1881, vol. 1, no. 4, p. 227.

<sup>126</sup>Letter of May 1881, in Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 53.

<sup>127</sup>'A. I.' (A. I. Urusov), "Nashe Iskusstvo", Poryadok, no. 60, 2 March 1881, quoted in Surikov, Pis'ma 1868-1916, p. 200, n. 3 on Repin's letter of 3 March.

<sup>128</sup>Ibid., p. 200.

<sup>129</sup>Ibid., loc. cit.

<sup>130</sup>Novoe Vremya, 26 March 1881, in Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 175.

progress, but lauded the power of his work and the "profundity of its penetration into the realm of spiritual suffering".<sup>131</sup>

However, the question of Surikov's attitude towards his characters and the event depicted remained unresolved. Sergei Flerov, in Moskovskie Vedomosti found the evidence of the painting itself inconclusive:

Judging by the scenes of the despair of the Strel'tsy's families depicted, one might think that Surikov is not on Petr's side. It would then follow for him to explain his idea for us and depict graphically to us what prompts his sympathies towards the Strel'tsy.<sup>132</sup>

However, he felt that Surikov's attitude towards his "piratical" Strel'tsy, who expressed "nothing except rage or exhaustion",<sup>133</sup> was unclear:

Like a historian and a thinker, an artist should approach a conclusion when he takes up history... [But] An artist cannot, like a historian, be impartial in his conclusions...<sup>134</sup> An artist cannot make comparisons and antitheses, he cannot argue in his picture that a famous historical character, on the one hand, was good, but, on the other hand, also had defects.<sup>135</sup>

In short, he seems to have believed that Surikov, in attempting to portray the Strel'tsy as fully rounded characters with positive and negative traits, had blurred the overall moral standpoint of the painting. This is reminiscent of Russkii Vestnik's review of Ge's Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei at Peterhof, quoted in Chapter 4,<sup>136</sup> which regarded Aleksei's unprepossessing physical appearance as undermining any

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<sup>131</sup>Vsemirnaya Ilyustratsiya, vol. 25, 1881, no. 634, in ibid., loc. cit.

<sup>132</sup>(S. V. Flerov), "Peredvizhnaya vystavka kartin", in ibid., p. 178.

<sup>133</sup>Ibid., loc. cit.

<sup>134</sup>Flerov evidently regarded history as an objective science rather than an art, according to the beliefs of his time.

<sup>135</sup>Quoted by Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 178.

<sup>136</sup>Quoted by Stasov, Nikolai Nikolaevich Ge, p. 234.

objective moral or historical lessons to be drawn from the painting. Flerov denied the possibility of objectivity in history painting, but his main point was similar; it was, essentially, that the heroes and villains should be depicted clearly and unambiguously, as in Academic history painting. The fact that he made this comment almost ten years after the appearance of Ge's painting suggests the difficulty which many critics still had in coming to terms with a more sophisticated approach to historical subjects.

Surikov's own attitude towards the Strel'tsy is hinted at in a letter of 1901, written to him by Vasilii Anuchin, author and ethnographer. Unfortunately, Surikov's letter to Anuchin has not survived, but the reply suggests the views it contained:

Just like you, I am not over-fond of Tsar Petr - he has too much blood on his hands, but even so, I cannot deny that the Strel'tsy movement was reactionary from the point of view of the historical process.

Ask yourself the question: what if the Strel'tsy had won?

Of course, those who call you a reactionary solely because you depicted the Strel'tsy warmly are profoundly unjust...<sup>137</sup>

This implies that Surikov was indeed hostile towards Petr: Anuchin's phrase "not over-fond" reads like an ironic understatement. The letter also suggests that the artist was essentially in sympathy with the Strel'tsy to an extent with which Anuchin disagreed. It is possible that Surikov's opinions in 1881 were not dissimilar to those he held twenty years later.

Surikov's use of words such as "wicked" and "unruly"<sup>138</sup> to describe the red-bearded Strelets may be taken to imply a condemnation

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<sup>137</sup>Letter of 14 October 1901, Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, pp. 150-1.

<sup>138</sup>Voloshin, Surikov, p. 62; see above.

of the character. However, this is not necessarily the case. Surikov took pride in his descent from the equally unruly Cossacks who took part in the Krasnoyarsk revolt,<sup>139</sup> and in 1906 he had himself photographed in costume as the famous Cossack rebel Stepan Razin (fig. 166). This may suggest that for Surikov, stubborn rebelliousness was a heroic quality. The fact that the red-bearded Strelets remains bold and unbroken after torture and in the face of death and the Tsar is in itself heroic, whether or not one sympathises fully with his cause.

After The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy, Surikov intended to begin another historical project. He made a preliminary sketch for Boyarynya Morozova (fig. 154; see below), and another for Tsarevna Kseniya Godunova with the Portrait of the Prince, her Dead Fiancé (Tret'yakov Gallery),<sup>140</sup> from Pushkin's Boris Godunov. Surikov was also considering a third subject, taken from the life of Petr I's favourite, Aleksandr Menshikov, and it was this which events led him to develop first, on a rainy autumn evening in 1881. As he told Glagol':

I was then living with my family in a dacha at Pererva... It was only one half of a peasant izba, without a stove, and with a low ceiling and tiny windows... Anyway, towards evening, when it was already beginning to grow dark, I returned from Moscow. I approached the dacha, I came into the entrance, I opened the door and... froze in astonishment, because there before me was the exact composition of the picture, which I was seeking. In the middle of the room, out of the draught, directly opposite the window, my wife was sitting at the small table; at her feet, muffled up in a fur coat, was our daughter. Facing my wife... a young lady of our

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<sup>139</sup>Ibid., pp. 26-8.

<sup>140</sup>The painting was never executed; Katalog Zhivopisi XVIII-nachala XX veka, GTG, Moscow, 1984, p. 449, inv. no. 24797.



acquaintance sat in the weak light of the window with her head buried in a book, reading aloud...<sup>141</sup>

This became the basis of Menshikov at Berezovo (Tret'yakov Gallery, fig. 142), depicting Menshikov in exile in Siberia with his children, c. 1728-9. It is not strictly a Petrine subject, being set after Petr I's death, in his grandson Petr II's reign. However, it reflects on the Petrine legacy, through the disgrace of his once-powerful favourite.

The account of its origins which Surikov told Tepin was similar to the version he gave to Glagol'. According to Tepin, however, Surikov was sitting reading a history book in front of an Old Believer icon-case in the dacha, and was reminded of his own childhood in Siberia. Tepin also wrote that the first sketch was not made until the following day, when Surikov had glimpsed some approximations to the physical types he needed for Menshikov's children in the crowd in Red Square.<sup>142</sup> This contradicts Glagol', according to whom Surikov said that he had made his first pencil sketch that evening in the dacha.<sup>143</sup> However, it clarifies the very brief account which Surikov gave Voloshin, that he had suddenly thought of the scene, based on the dacha interior, while walking through Red Square.<sup>144</sup>

The picture was built up from a number of sketches. The oil study Two Women in a Wooden Izba (Tret'yakov Gallery, fig. 141)<sup>145</sup> is based on the artist's preliminary impressions of his wife and her companion in the dacha. It established the basic tonal values of the painting: it is largely in

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<sup>141</sup>Glagol', "V. I. Surikov. Iz vstrech s nim i besed", Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, pp. 215-6.

<sup>142</sup>Tepin, "Surikov", in ibid., p. 201.

<sup>143</sup>Glagol', "V. I. Surikov. Iz vstrech s nim i besed", in ibid., p. 216.

<sup>144</sup>Voloshin, Surikov, p. 73.

<sup>145</sup>Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 295.

a variety of browns, with patches of brighter colours and the grey-white of the window.

Unlike The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy, in which Petr I was the only character drawn from historical portraits, the rest being essentially 'types', all the characters in Menshikov at Berezov were known from contemporary portraits. Surikov combined these visual sources with living models, as Ge and Repin had done previously.

From the early sketches of the composition, 1881 (Tret'yakov Gallery)<sup>146</sup> onward, Surikov developed the picture around the small group at the table, with Menshikov himself depicted in profile. Two-dimensional portraits of Menshikov were therefore unsuitable as sources, as these take a frontal or three-quarter view of his unusually narrow, sharp-featured face.<sup>147</sup> Hence Surikov took the likeness from a marble copy of Rastrelli's bust of Menshikov (fig. 143),<sup>148</sup> which he saw on a visit to the Menshikov estate at Aleksandrovscoe in the district of Klin, north of Moscow.<sup>149</sup> His watercolour study of this bust, in profile, facing right, is now in the Tret'yakov Gallery (fig. 144).<sup>150</sup> Surikov's final depiction of Menshikov (fig. 146) retains the thin moustache shown in the portraits and bust. From a conversation with Lev Tolstoi, he had

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<sup>146</sup>Inv. no.s 6086 & 27175, ibid., p. 296-7.

<sup>147</sup>For example, the engraving by Jean Simon; see N. V. Kalyazina, "Materialy k ikonografii A. D. Menshikova (prizhizennye portrety)", in G. N. Komelova, ed., Kul'tura i Iskusstvo Petrovskogo Vremeni, Leningrad, 1977, pp. 74-5. On p. 83, n. 28, she notes, in explanation of Menshikov's gauntness, that he suffered from "decline and weakness in the lungs", with hæmorrhages - probably tuberculosis.

<sup>148</sup>Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 284. The original bronze, 1716-7, is now in the Hermitage; see Kalyazina & Komelova, Russkoe Iskusstvo Petrovskoi Epokhi, pl. 77, p. 103, and N. V. Kalyazina, "Materialy k ikonografii A. D. Menshikova (prizhizennye portrety)", in Komelova, ed., Kul'tura i Iskusstvo Petrovskogo Vremeni, p. 71.

<sup>149</sup>Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 284. Its owner, Prince Vladimir Menshikov was the last of the line; see N. V. Kalyazina, L. P. Dorofeeva, & G. V. Mikhailov, Dvorets Menshikova, Moscow, 1986, p. 190.

<sup>150</sup>Inv. no. 27168, in Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 287.

learned that Menshikov had grown a beard during his exile. However, by depicting him with his characteristic moustache, fashionable at the Petrine Court, Surikov emphasised Menshikov's identity as Petr's creature.<sup>151</sup> It is a visual indication of how out of place this courtier is in a Siberian *izba*. Also, more practically, the moustache ensured that spectators familiar with Menshikov's image from contemporary portraits would recognise him.

Surikov combined his study of the bust with studies of a man (fig. 145) whom he chanced to see in a Moscow street:

The artist at once noticed his gigantic figure, his big, powerful chin, and his shaggy grey hair which showed beneath his hat... [Surikov] cautiously came up behind him. His usual approach - to address him and ask him to pose - seemed inappropriate here. The stubborn, wiry grey tuft [of hair] on his brow and his irritable, short-tempered face did not bode well...<sup>152</sup>

He was a retired mathematics teacher, a morose bachelor, whose name is given as either Studennikov or Nevenglovskii.<sup>153</sup> Surikov followed him to his home,<sup>154</sup> and asked the porter if he could speak with the teacher's maid. Reluctantly the porter agreed. Surikov later repeated his conversation with the maid to Glagol':

'..I very much need to draw a portrait of your master. For one of my pictures. Persuade him to agree somehow.'

'Go on! You don't say! Him agree to that?!' The woman began to wave her hands. 'You don't know how unapproachable he is, and for you to make his portrait...'

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<sup>151</sup>ibid., loc. cit.

<sup>152</sup>Tepin, "Surikov", Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 201.

<sup>153</sup>See ibid., pp. 327-8, n. 110 on Tepin, "Surikov", for a discussion of the model's identity.

<sup>154</sup>Glagol', "V. I. Surikov. Iz vstrech s nim i besed", in ibid., p. 217.

'Try somehow. If you persuade him, I'll give you 3 rubles, and this is an advance' - and I slipped her 50 kopeks.<sup>155</sup>

The bribe proved effective. However, Surikov still thought it wise to lie to the mathematician that he was using his portrait for that of Field-Marshal Suvorov, a highly-esteemed popular hero, rather than the notoriously corrupt Menshikov.<sup>156</sup>

In the sketches and in the finished painting, Menshikov's figure is painted on a larger scale than the interior and his children. Nesterov reported:

Kramskoi said...that he did not understand the picture - either it was a work of genius, or he had not got sufficiently used to it. It both delighted and offended him by its... illiteracy - 'You see, if your Menshikov stood up, he would hit his head on the ceiling'.<sup>157</sup>

This may be the result of an intentional compression of the perspective, although Pavel Chistyakov had advised Surikov in 1882: "Don't neglect the perspective of the room; get it right as far as you can".<sup>158</sup> The size of the two younger children implies a greater degree of recession in the picture space than is conveyed by the relationship of the table to the floor and other furniture. However, Mariya, who occupies the frontal plane of the picture with her father, is also painted on a smaller scale appropriate to the dimensions of the room. Menshikov dominates the scene, a huge figure cramped in the box-like interior of the *izba*. In fact, this may be a deliberate attempt to express in visual terms Menshikov's fall from power. He literally no longer fits into this environment, reminiscent of his own

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<sup>155</sup>Ibid., loc. cit.

<sup>156</sup>Ibid., pp. 217-8. For a study of 1882 (Tret'yakov Gallery, inv. no. 26773), see Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis' p. 288.

<sup>157</sup>M. V. Nesterov, extract from Davnie dni. Vstrechi i vospominaniya, Moscow, 1959, in Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 232.

<sup>158</sup>Letter of 1882, undated, in ibid., p. 155.

humble origins.<sup>159</sup> Grown accustomed to wealth and influence, he cannot physically adapt to straitened circumstances. This sense of constriction also reflects his position as a political exile, unable to move from his place of banishment.

At Aleksandrovscoe, Surikov made watercolour sketches from portraits of Menshikov's son, Aleksandr, and two daughters (1882, Tret'yakov Gallery, fig. 149).<sup>160</sup> He inscribed the portrait of the younger daughter, Aleksandra, as "Dar'ya", which was her mother's name, but with the correct patronymic, "Aleksandrovna".<sup>161</sup> Judging by the costumes and hairstyles, the portraits of Aleksandr and Aleksandra date from the period after their return to Court from Berezov in 1730. Since the portrait of Aleksandr shows him as a grown man in uniform, Surikov also sketched a younger model, Nikolai Shmarovin.<sup>162</sup> Surikov seems to have taken Aleksandra's elaborately curled and powdered wig as an indication of her true hair colour. In the finished painting she is depicted as blonde, while Mariya, as in the portrait at Aleksandrovscoe, is dark. However, the portraits of the girls which now hang in the Menshikov Palace in St. Petersburg (figs. 147-8)<sup>163</sup> show Aleksandra as a

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<sup>159</sup>Menshikov had gentry connections, but little money: as a boy, he was rumoured to have sold pies in the Moscow streets. In 1686, he entered the service of Petr's first favourite, Lefort, whence he entered that of Petr himself. Menshikov's father, Daniil, was an army clerk at Preobrazhenskoe, but had landed relations near Minsk, then in Lithuania (Schuyler, Peter the Great, vol. I, p. 528; Massie, Peter the Great, p. 368). This may suggest that his branch of the family was either very junior or illegitimate.

<sup>160</sup>Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 290.

<sup>161</sup>Ibid., pp. 293-4; Kemenov speculates whether the portrait might in fact depict Dar'ya Arsen'eva, Menshikov's wife, but it does not resemble the portrait of her now displayed in the Menshikov Palace, St. Petersburg, engraved by Zubov in 1726 (M. S. Lebedyanskii, Graver Petrovskoi Epokhi Aleksei Zubov, Moscow, 1973, pl. 38).

<sup>162</sup>Voloshin, Surikov, p. 214, n. to p. 79; Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 294-5.

<sup>163</sup>Kalyazina, Dorofeeva, & Mikhailov, Dvorets Menshikova, pp. 142-3. They have been attributed to Tannauer, but S. Rimskaya-Korsakova, "Atributsiya ryada portretov petrovskogo vremeni na osnovanii tekhniko-tehnologicheskogo issledovaniya", in Komelova, ed., Kul'tura i Iskusstvo Petrovskogo Vremeni, p. 198, tentatively ascribes them to Ludden. However, Irina Zharkova (Dept. of Eighteenth-

brunette and Mariya with fair, probably powdered, hair.<sup>164</sup> Surikov's depiction of the girls as contrasting physical types reflected his attempt to contrast their characters also.<sup>165</sup> Mariya, with dark hair and sickly pallor, is portrayed as sensitive, melancholy and introspective (fig. 151). Aleksandra, golden-haired and more robust, is reading, and, alone of the family, appears to be occupied with something other than regret or self-pity.

Surikov's half-French wife, Elizaveta, posed for Mariya,<sup>166</sup> the frail elder daughter who died at Berezov in the winter of 1729, soon after her father.<sup>167</sup> Despite her comparatively robust appearance in a photograph of the early 1880s,<sup>168</sup> Elizaveta had a heart defect,<sup>169</sup> and Surikov's studies of her as Mariya emphasise her pallor and fragility (fig. 150).<sup>170</sup> In the finished painting, Mariya's form is contained within her father's outline, almost overwhelmed by it. This visual bond between parent and child in adversity carries overtones of Lear and Cordelia, or Ædipus and Antigone. It also symbolises the way in which Menshikov's schemes destroyed Mariya's life. Although, at sixteen, she was already

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Mid Nineteenth-Century Painting, GTG) informed me (August 1991) that they are currently believed to be copies by Johann Heinrich Wedekind (1674-1736) after lost originals by Tannauer.

<sup>164</sup>Kalyazina, "Materialy k ikonografii A. D. Menshikova (prizhizennye portrety)", in Komelova, ed., Kul'tura i Iskusstvo Petrovskogo Vremeni, p. 86, n. 67.

<sup>165</sup>Kemenov likens them to Tat'yana and Ol'ga in Pushkin's Evgenii Onegin; see Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 294.

<sup>166</sup>Tepin, "Surikov", Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 202, and Voloshin, Surikov, pp. 79-82.

<sup>167</sup>Massie, Peter the Great, p. 851, and Kalyazina, Dorofeeva, & Mikhailov, Dvorets Menshikova, p. 142.

<sup>168</sup>Voloshin, Surikov, p. 72, and Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, pl. 5, between pp. 96-7.

<sup>169</sup>Letter to A. I. Surikov, dated 20 April 1888, following Elizaveta's death, aged thirty, from heart failure and pneumonia, in Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, pp. 76-7.

<sup>170</sup>See studies in Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 289 (collection of the artist's descendants), & p. 293 (present location unknown).

betrothed to a Polish nobleman, Piotr Sapieha, her father betrothed her to eleven-year-old Petr II in 1727, to further his own power.<sup>171</sup> When he fell from favour, Mariya, with the rest of the family, shared his fate, and Petr was betrothed instead to Ekaterina Dolgorukaya, his new adviser's daughter.<sup>172</sup> Kalyazina has asserted that Mariya "was sacrificed to her father's ambition",<sup>173</sup> and it is as such a victim that Surikov depicted her (fig. 151).

In the painting, Aleksandr and Aleksandra are not subordinated to their father's form as Mariya is. Both survived Siberia, returning to Court in 1730, after an order made by Petr II ten days before his death in January that year.<sup>174</sup> Indeed, the knowledge that the restoration of their fortunes was so near intensifies the tragic effect of Mariya's death only the previous month. In Aleksandr and Aleksandra's appearance, Surikov suggested the luxury to which the family had been accustomed at Court. Aleksandr was a "dissolute youth",<sup>175</sup> one of several with whom Menshikov had surrounded Petr II in order to debauch the child Emperor and reinforce his control over him.<sup>176</sup> Surikov shows the boy's boredom and frustration as he picks at the wax on an elaborate candlestick. His fine lace cravat and cuffs are now grubby and crumpled - a small but telling detail. Aleksandra's gown of multicoloured silk brocade is also pathetically incongruous in her present setting.

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<sup>171</sup>Kalyazina, Dorofeeva, & Mikhailov, Dvoretz Menshikova, p. 142, and Massie, Peter the Great, p. 849.

<sup>172</sup>Massie, Peter the Great, p. 851.

<sup>173</sup>Kalyazina, Dorofeeva, & Mikhailov, Dvoretz Menshikova, p. 142.

<sup>174</sup>Ibid., p. 143. The following year, Aleksandra married Gustav Biron, brother of Empress Anna's favourite. She died in childbirth in 1736.

<sup>175</sup>T. Talbot-Rice, Elizabeth, Empress of Russia, London, 1970, p. 24.

<sup>176</sup>Ibid., p. 25. Even after Menshikov's fall, Petr's new guardians continued his practice of encouraging the Emperor's attentions towards older boys, again as a means of control, p. 26.

The still-life of the interior is depicted with considerable attention to detail. The lamp in the Red Corner and the gleam of its flame upon the icons there provide the strongest notes of warm colour and brightness in the whole painting, drawing the eye towards them. Among the icons, images of St. George slaying the dragon, the Mother of God, and a male saint - possibly Saint Nicholas the Miracle-Worker - can be discerned (fig. 152). The selection of images may be significant. St. George is the patron saint of Moscow, the old capital rejected by Petr I, which had also been Menshikov's boyhood home. St. Nicholas, one of the patron saints of Russia, is also the patron of children. The icon of the Mother of God appears to show her as the Hodigitria, or Guide, indicating the path to redemption through her Child.<sup>177</sup> As in Repin's The Regent Tsarevna Sof'ya (fig. 101) and later, in Surikov's own Boyarynya Morozova (fig. 153), the presence of the icons implies divine scrutiny and, perhaps, judgement. Here, they may also represent the continuity of tradition, despite the changes and reforms of Petr's reign - faith is constant, in contrast with the transience of worldly success.

Nesterov described Menshikov at Berezov as "the most Shakespearean of Surikov's dramas".<sup>178</sup> It depicts the human tragedy behind the power-politics of eighteenth-century Court life. Menshikov, risen from undistinguished origins to become the Serene Prince and Generalissimo, favourite of the Emperor, was brought down by his own ambition and the counter-plots of the old nobility. His disgrace can be read partly as a morality tale of a man unable to escape retribution for his past misdeeds.<sup>179</sup> Surikov had already depicted him in The Morning of

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<sup>177</sup>Ouspensky & Lossky, The Meaning of Icons, pp. 80-1.

<sup>178</sup>Nesterov, in Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 232.

<sup>179</sup>Besides a long career of embezzlement and intrigue, Menshikov had abused Tsarevich Aleksei from childhood (Brückner (Brikner), Der Zarewitsch Alexei, pp.



the Execution of the Strel'tsy, and would have known, from his reading of Korb's Diary, of his enthusiastic participation in beheadings.<sup>180</sup> However, by including the children in Menshikov at Berezov, Surikov added greater meaning to the image. However corrupt, unscrupulous and cruel Menshikov was himself, the children, whom he dominates even here, were less culpable. Those who punished them along with their father were also committing an injustice. Mariya in particular is depicted as a victim of both the Dolgorukiis and her father.

The third picture in Surikov's "trilogy of suffering",<sup>181</sup> Boyarynya Morozova (fig. 153), is less directly Petrine in subject, yet it is related to The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy and Menshikov at Berezov in its themes of cultural change and the interaction between human beings and autocratic power. It depicts the Old Believer martyrs, Fedos'ya Morozova (who secretly became the nun Feodora<sup>182</sup>), and her sister Avdot'ya Urusova being led to imprisonment and torture in November 1671. Both women, 'spiritual daughters' of the famous Archpriest Avvakum,<sup>183</sup> were subsequently exiled to Borovsk in Siberia, where they died of cold and hunger in an underground prison in 1675.<sup>184</sup> The story had long interested Surikov, as Tepin explained: "Just imagine, his aunt

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29-30, quoting the Austrian diplomat Pleyer), and his name heads the list of those who sentenced him to death (Ustryalov, Istoriya Tsarstvovaniya Petra Velikogo, vol. VI, p. 533). Petr II, who banished Menshikov, was Aleksei's son.

<sup>180</sup>"The more cruel Alexasca [sic, for 'Aleksashka', i.e. Menshikov] went boasting of twenty heads that he had chopped off", Korb, Diary, vol. I, p. 192.

<sup>181</sup>Tepin, "Surikov", Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 201.

<sup>182</sup>A. I. Mazunin, "Morozova, Feodosiia Prokof'evna", in A. M. Prokhorov, ed., The Great Soviet Encyclopædia, transl. M. L. Waxman, New York, 1977, vol. 16, p. 572.

<sup>183</sup>Avvakum, The Life of the Archpriest Avvakum by Himself, transl. J. Harrison & H. Mirrlees, London, 1924.

<sup>184</sup>p. Pascal, Avvakum et les Débuts du Raskol, Paris & The Hague, 1963, p. 456, 499-500, and Longworth, Alexis, Tsar of All the Russias, p. 217-8.

Ol'ga Matveevna [Durandina<sup>185</sup>] told Surikov in his childhood the story of Boyarynya Morozova from the oral tradition!"<sup>186</sup> This early knowledge inspired later research. Surikov was particularly indebted to Ivan Zabelin's books on domestic life in the royal household in the seventeenth century.<sup>187</sup> He had also probably read N. Tikhoradov's article of 1865, "Boyarynya Morozova. An Episode from the History of the Russian Schism",<sup>188</sup> because he later quoted Avvakum's description of Morozova from a letter published in this piece.<sup>189</sup> He may also have read Mordovtsev's historical novel, The Great Schism, in which Morozova figures prominently, together with Stepan Razin, another of his heroes.<sup>190</sup>

However, again Surikov referred his researches back to his own memories and experiences. As he told Tepin: "You see, everything that Zabelin writes about was real life for me."<sup>191</sup> Surikov described Avdot'ya, the wife of his uncle, Stepan Torgoshin (the black-bearded Strelets), as "inclined towards the Old Faith",<sup>192</sup> and claimed that memories of her inspired his first sketch of Fedos'ya for Boyarynya Morozova.<sup>193</sup> From

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<sup>185</sup>Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 500; née Torgoshina, she was also the artist's godmother.

<sup>186</sup>Tepin, "Surikov", Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 195.

<sup>187</sup>Ibid., loc. cit. The most important work was Domashnii Byt Russkikh Tsarei, vol. II: Domashnii Byt Russkikh Tsarits, Moscow, 1872. See ibid., pp. 306-7, item 86, n. 1.

<sup>188</sup>"Boyarynya Morozova. Epizod iz Istorii Russkogo Raskola", Russkii Vestnik, 1865, no. 9. See Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 328, n. 119.

<sup>189</sup>Voloshin, Surikov, p. 86; see below. It is also likely that he had read Avvakum's autobiography; see p. 214, note on p. 88 (sic; for 88, read 86).

<sup>190</sup>Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', pp. 319-20, 336.

<sup>191</sup>Tepin, "Surikov", Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 195.

<sup>192</sup>Voloshin, Surikov, p. 85.

<sup>193</sup>Ibid., p. 85-6.

the traditional Torgoshin household, he said, "came the whole female realm of Morozova".<sup>194</sup>

As with his earlier paintings, the catalyst for developing Boyarynya Morozova seems to have been a chance impression:

I saw a crow in the snow... The crow was sitting with a drooping wing, a black stain upon the white. For many years I could not forget this crow. You close your eyes - and there is the crow sitting in the snow. Hence I painted Morozova.<sup>195</sup>

From this, Surikov developed the central image of the composition: the black-clad figure of Morozova contrasted with the snowy street.

The first sketch was made in 1881 (Tret'yakov Gallery, fig. 154).<sup>196</sup> This established the main elements of the composition as they appeared in the finished painting six years later. Surikov envisaged the diagonal of Morozova's sled and its track as the axis of the picture. The crowd on the right, with the kneeling beggarwoman and the weeping figure of Princess Urusova, differs only in the details of individual characters from the painting. The left side of the sketch is less fully-developed, with only the figure of a running boy (retained in the painting) and a woman prostrating herself full-length in the snow. The background also clearly depicts the Kremlin wall - a feature retained in several subsequent sketches,<sup>197</sup> but later rejected in favour of a more generalised street scene, based upon traditional Siberian architectural forms.<sup>198</sup> Again, Surikov drew upon his own memories "of one of the streets in

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<sup>194</sup>Tepin, "Surikov", Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 192.

<sup>195</sup>Voloshin, Surikov, p. 82.

<sup>196</sup>Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 408.

<sup>197</sup>For example, the Russian Museum sketch, ibid., p. 409.

<sup>198</sup>See in particular the sketches from the Tret'yakov Gallery and Tver' District Picture Gallery, ibid., p. 434.

Krasnoyarsk, which he had seen filled with a crowd, and along which some condemned person had been driven to the scaffold".<sup>199</sup>

After making the first few sketches, Surikov did not return to Boyarynya Morozova until he had completed Menshikov at Berezoy in 1883. Meanwhile, he made his first trip to Western Europe, spending several months in Paris and Florence, visiting galleries.<sup>200</sup> Glagol' claimed that this was the source of the rich and varied palette used in Boyarynya Morozova:

Surikov's trip abroad, where he saw many things and became acquainted with the then sought-after Impressionists, played a major rôle [in the development of his use of colour].<sup>201</sup>

However, in Surikov's letters from France and Italy, the contemporary artists whom he mentioned most frequently were not Impressionists. He was enthusiastic about Giuseppe de Nittis and Jules Bastien-Lepage's genre paintings - "wonderful things".<sup>202</sup> He also admired Western history painters, including Meissonier for his "filigree finish of detail",<sup>203</sup> Georges-Antoine Rochegrosse for the tone of his Andromache, and Wenzel Brozik for The Trial of Jan Hus in 1415, then on exhibition in Paris.<sup>204</sup> The appeal of Brozik's picture may partly have lain in its subject-matter, the martyrdom of a prominent religious dissenter, which related thematically to Surikov's current project. Surikov criticised another

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<sup>199</sup>Glagol', "V. I. Surikov. Iz vstrech s nim i besed", Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 218.

<sup>200</sup>Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 351, gives his itinerary as follows: "Departure from Moscow 24 September 1883, Berlin (3 days), Dresden (2 days), Cologne, Paris (from 16 October to 24 January 1884), Milan (4 days), Florence (30 January-3 February), Rome (5-10 February), Naples, Venice, Vienna. In May 1884 he returned to Moscow".

<sup>201</sup>Glagol', "V. I. Surikov. Iz vstrech s nim i besed", in ibid., p. 219.

<sup>202</sup>Letter to N. S. Matveev, 14 October 1883, ibid., p. 55.

<sup>203</sup>Letter to P. P. Chistyakov, end of December 1883, ibid., p. 61.

<sup>204</sup>Letter to Matveev, 14 October 1883, ibid., p. 55.

popular Academic painter, Hans Makart, as superficial, writing that his pictures reminded him of "oleographs".<sup>205</sup>

Surikov was particularly impressed by the Western Old Masters which he saw in Berlin, Paris and Italy. He was captivated by Velázquez' portraits of the Infantas Maria Teresa and Margarita in the Louvre.<sup>206</sup> Besides Rembrandt and van Dyck, Veronese, Tintoretto and Titian were among his favourites,<sup>207</sup> although he remarked that "Italian art is just rhetoric, if one can say that about painting".<sup>208</sup> Tepin asserted that these Italian artists influenced the coloration of Boyarynya Morozova:

The Venetian masters made a strong impression on Surikov. It seems that the silveriness of Morozova would not have existed without their influence. In Rome he painted A Scene from the Carnival...<sup>209</sup> in the hanging carpet the colouring of Morozova is prefigured.<sup>210</sup>

However, influences of this kind cannot be proven conclusively. Velázquez' handling of richly coloured fabrics and varied textures, sometimes with fairly broad strokes, may have contributed to the tonal and stylistic development of Boyarynya Morozova. The brushwork of Boyarynya Morozova is certainly broader than that of his earlier works or of the Realist history paintings examined in Chapters 4 and 5, and the painting lacks the high finish associated with Academic art and retained by many of the Peredvizhniki. Glagol's reference to Impressionist

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<sup>205</sup>Letter to Chistyakov, 17 May 1884, ibid., p. 65.

<sup>206</sup>Letter to Chistyakov, end of December 1883, ibid., p. 63.

<sup>207</sup>See letters to Chistyakov, ibid., pp. 61-3, 65-7, and Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', pp. 306-7.

<sup>208</sup>Letter to Chistyakov, end of December 1883, Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 62.

<sup>209</sup>1884, Tret'yakov Gallery, inv. no. Zh-308, in Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 316.

<sup>210</sup>Tepin, "Surikov", Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 202; see also Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', pp. 312-3, 374.

influences on Surikov, quoted above, may, in fact, reflect a common source in Velázquez.<sup>211</sup> The treatment of the dirty, rutted snow, receding diagonally from the foreground, is reminiscent of The French Campaign, 1814, by the much-admired Meissonier, which Surikov may have seen in the Louvre or in reproduction. Surikov's use of plein air sketches and real pieces of folk costume may also have contributed more directly to his use of colour.<sup>212</sup>

The central black and white image of Morozova in the snow was the key to the centre of the composition. Rich reds, blues, yellows and browns give Bovarynya Morozova greater tonal variety than The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy, which Surikov had considered disappointingly dull.<sup>213</sup> A bizarre rumour circulated that the vividness and detail of the textiles in Bovarynya Morozova was produced by the artist "covering it with scraps of multicoloured fabric, stitched like an old quilt", not of paint.<sup>214</sup> It is false to claim, as Golovin did, that Surikov's colour effects, unlike those of the Spaniard Mariano Fortuny, were achieved without a scientific study of pigments.<sup>215</sup> Surikov had studied Chemistry as part of his Academy course.<sup>216</sup>

In his sketches for the basic composition of the picture, Surikov was continually adjusting the angle of Morozova's sled in relation to the picture plane, thereby altering the vanishing point created by the lines

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<sup>211</sup>See Gombrich, The Story of Art, p. 324, on the Impressionists' admiration for Velázquez.

<sup>212</sup>Voloshin, Surikov, p. 100; see below.

<sup>213</sup>As in the case of The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy, I was unable to see the painting itself. The variable tonal qualities of reproductions make it difficult to offer any authoritative judgements concerning the use of colour.

<sup>214</sup>Glagol', "V. I. Surikov. Iz vstrech s nim i besed", in Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 219. Surikov laughed "Nonsense!" in reply to the suggestion.

<sup>215</sup>Golovin, in ibid., p. 238.

<sup>216</sup>See below, and ibid., p. 298, item 32, n. 3.

of the street and the sled.<sup>217</sup> In the finished painting, the effect of this diagonal, as in Meissonier's The French Campaign, 1814, is to draw the spectator into the scene, as part of the crowd following Morozova. These changes also enabled Surikov to further develop the crowd on the left, which had consisted of only two figures in the first sketch of 1881. With the proportions of the composition broadened to accommodate a greater number of figures, Surikov increased the dramatic tension within the scene by filling the left side with characters broadly hostile to Morozova, and the right mainly with her sympathisers (fig. 155). In this respect, he was repeating a device from The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy, in which the opposing groups were clearly separated physically. Courbet had segregated his friends from his enemies in his allegorical The Painter's Studio (1855, Louvre), but it is impossible to say whether his example had made any impression on Surikov.

As in his previous paintings, Surikov took great care in selecting models for his characters. He was assisted by the Old Believers of Moscow, among whom his earlier painting had won favour:

The Execution of the Strel'tsy had made a great impression among them. The Old Ritualists sensed much in it that was close to them. Surikov struck up an acquaintance with them, and little by little he succeeded in obtaining studies.<sup>218</sup>

He also spent the spring and summer of 1885 in Mytishchi in search of authentic-looking models.<sup>219</sup> He told Glagol':

...I decided to observe and capture types of pilgrim. I stayed in Mytishchi and purposely found myself a suitable dacha on the very highway that they use on the pilgrimage to the

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<sup>217</sup>See diagrams comparing the geometry of the various compositional sketches in Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', pp. 420-6, 430-43.

<sup>218</sup>Glagol', "V. I. Surikov. Iz vstrech s nim i besed", Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 219. The Old Believers also liked Surikov because he was a Cossack and a non-smoker; see Voloshin, Surikov, p. 86.

<sup>219</sup>Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 351.

Trinity[-St. Sergei Monastery]. My wait was not in vain. I came across marvellous types, and made numerous pencil sketches.<sup>220</sup>

Some of the studies of the Holy Fool were apparently drawn, en plein air in snow, from a real beggar "who selflessly posed for the artist, fearing neither frost-bitten feet nor falling ill",<sup>221</sup> These and other studies made in the open seem to have been the basis for Surikov's definition of himself as a plein-airiste. "All was plein air", he claimed of Boyarynya Morozova.<sup>222</sup> However, it is impossible that the 304 x 587.5 cms canvas itself was painted outdoors in the snow.

Earlier depictions of Fedos'ya Morozova had been made by Litovchenko and Perov.<sup>223</sup> Litovchenko's Boyarynya Morozova (1881, Novgorod Historical and Architectural Museum-Reserve, fig. 156), shows her under arrest and being forcibly carried from her house in a chair because of her refusal to walk.<sup>224</sup> There is considerable emphasis on picturesque detail, such as the ornately-tiled façade of her house. Morozova herself is depicted as serene and delicately pretty - a rather passive figure. Perov's The Torture of Boyarynya Morozova (1881, Tret'yakov Gallery, fig. 157), is a pencil drawing for a painting left unexecuted at the time of the artist's death. Here, Morozova is stripped to the waist and tied up, about to be raised on the strappado and flogged. Fiercer than in Litovchenko's portrayal, she defiantly continues to harangue her captors. This image of spiritual courage is intensified by its contrast with her physical defencelessness - the powerlessness of her bound arms and the vulnerability of her naked breasts. Indeed, Perov's

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<sup>220</sup>Glagol', "V. I. Surikov. Iz vstrech s nim i besed", ibid., p. 218.

<sup>221</sup>ibid., p. 219.

<sup>222</sup>Voloshin, Surikov, p. 100; also see above.

<sup>223</sup>Reproduced in Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 335.

<sup>224</sup>Pascal, Avvakum et les Débuts du Raskol, p. 456.



disturbing juxtaposition of the apparatus of torture with a semi-nude woman suggests the more overtly sadistic examples of Western religious art depicting female martyrs.<sup>225</sup> Morozova was probably in her late thirties in 1671<sup>226</sup> - no longer young by seventeenth century standards, but Litovchenko and Perov gave her an attractively youthful appearance, to add poignancy to her plight. Both artists emphasised, to varying degrees, elements of helplessness and the popular nineteenth-century theme of a beautiful young woman as suffering victim<sup>227</sup> in their characterisations of Morozova .

In contrast, Surikov depicted her without this kind of sentimentality. His portrayal has an elemental power which accords with Avvakum's description, which he later quoted to Voloshin: "The fingers of your hands are slender, and your eyes are lightning... Pounce upon your enemies like a lion".<sup>228</sup> The physical type he envisaged was based on memories<sup>229</sup> of his Old Believer aunt Avdot'ya Torgoshina, in whose home pilgrims could often be found.<sup>230</sup> Kemenov has identified an early study of this type, which Surikov told Voloshin was in the Tret'yakov Gallery,<sup>231</sup> with a study inventoried as no. 777 (fig. 161).<sup>232</sup> Surikov

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<sup>225</sup>E.g. Sebastiano del Piombo, The Martyrdom of St. Agatha (1520. Pitti Palace, Florence). See G. Saunders, The Nude: a New Perspective, London, 1989, pp. 14-15, and K. Armstrong, The Gospel according to Woman: Christianity's Creation of the Sex War in the West, London, 1986, pp. 182-4, on the sado-erotic element in depictions and descriptions of female martyrdom.

<sup>226</sup>Mazunin, "Morozova, Feodosiia Prokof'evna", in Prokhorov, ed., The Great Soviet Encyclopædia, vol. 16, p. 572, suggests 1632 as her year of birth.

<sup>227</sup>See Chapter 5 and Strong, And when did you last see your father?, pp. 45, 122, 133-4, & 154, on the portrayal of strong female characters as victims.

<sup>228</sup>Voloshin, Surikov, p. 86.

<sup>229</sup>Avdot'ya herself did not serve directly as a model. See above, re: Stepan Torgoshin and the black-bearded Strelets, and Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 498-9.

<sup>230</sup>Voloshin, Surikov, pp. 85-6.

<sup>231</sup>Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>232</sup>Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 498-9, reproduced p. 508.

likened his aunt and, by implication, Fedos'ya Morozova to the fictional character, Nastas'ya Barashkova, in Dostoevskii's The Idiot.<sup>233</sup> Like Surikov's heroine, Nastas'ya's thin, dark beauty combines passion and suffering,<sup>234</sup> and this similarity is emphasised in the description of her as she goes to be married to Rogozhin, who will soon murder her: "as white as a sheet..., but her large black eyes blazed like burning coals upon the crowd".<sup>235</sup>

Other studies were made from Anastasiya Mikhailovna, a hermit from Irgiz, who was suggested to Surikov by his friends from the Preobrazhenskoe Old Believer community:<sup>236</sup> "At first, of course, she would not agree to pose. That, she said, was sinful, shameful, etc. However, my friends spoke to her. And so I painted a study of her".<sup>237</sup> The third identified model was a young widow, Anna Kostina<sup>238</sup> - presumably the "altogether ordinary woman whom his wife sought out"<sup>239</sup> for Surikov when Anastasiya Mikhailovna's likeness proved unsatisfactory. The photograph of her which Kemenov reproduces (fig. 162<sup>240</sup>) shows a woman with strong features and large, dark eyes, bearing a close resemblance to Surikov's later sketches.<sup>241</sup> Surikov added

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<sup>233</sup>Voloshin, Surikov, p. 86.

<sup>234</sup>In F. M. Dostoyevsky (Dostoevskii), The Idiot, transl. D. Magarshack, London, 1955, p. 62, Prince Myshkin says, "...she has suffered a lot, hasn't she? Her eyes show it and her cheekbones, those two points under her eyes. It's a proud face, a terribly proud face".

<sup>235</sup>Ibid., p. 638.

<sup>236</sup>Glagol', "V. I. Surikov. Iz vstrech s nim i besed", Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 219, and Voloshin, Surikov, p. 86.

<sup>237</sup>Glagol', "V. I. Surikov. Iz vstrech s nim i besed", Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 219.

<sup>238</sup>Kemenov was informed of this by her grandson in 1952; see Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', pp. 499-500.

<sup>239</sup>Glagol', "V. I. Surikov. Iz vstrech s nim i besed", Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 220.

<sup>240</sup>Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 500.

<sup>241</sup>Such as inv. no. 84 (1886, Tret'yakov Gallery), ibid., p. 509.

Morozova's emaciation and pallor, the result of fasts and penances,<sup>242</sup> and her impassioned expression.

The mocking face of the driver contrasts with Morozova's profile in a manner suggestive of the iconography of the mocking of Christ, as in Hieronymus Bosch's The Bearing of the Cross (c. 1505, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Ghent). If this was intentional, it is not known which examples of this religious theme Surikov may have had in mind. Morozova's spiritual strength and striking appearance are intensified by their contrast with the driver's ruddy cheeks and leering expression (fig. 163). There is, however, a certain ambivalence in Morozova's image - fervour seems to become fanaticism, and intensity obsession in her extreme situation.

Surikov depicted the character most hostile towards her, the toothless Nikonian priest, as grotesque and totally contemptible. Garshin took Surikov to task for this characterisation, describing it as "not altogether just... If one takes fully into account who was the real inner aggressor, then it perhaps appears that he is not the oppressor", and went on to attack the fanaticism of Avvakum and his followers.<sup>243</sup> The figures on the right of the canvas, although on the whole sympathetic towards Morozova, express a wide range of emotional reactions - fear, despair, sorrow, uncertainty, respect, astonishment. Surikov devoted a great deal of time and effort to these figures, which were based upon numerous sketches and studies. His depictions of traditional costume were based, like those in The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy, on a combination of historical research and direct observation. However, unlike the later artist, Andrei Ryabushkin, who also frequently painted seventeenth-

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<sup>242</sup>See Pascal, Avvakum et les Débuts du Raskol, p. 335.

<sup>243</sup>V. M. Garshin, "Zametki o khudozhestvennykh vystavkakh" (originally publ. in Severnyi Vestnik, 1887, no. 3, pp. 160-70), Sochineniya, Moscow & Leningrad, 1960, p. 354.

century Russian women, Surikov did not show his female characters wearing the stylised, stark red and white lead face-paint of the period.<sup>244</sup>

Besides the main perspective line of the sled and the mainly sympathetic crowd on the right (fig. 155), which draw the spectator into the scene, Surikov constructed other diagonals which link the main symbolic elements of the composition. Morozova's raised hand, giving the forbidden two-fingered blessing (fig. 164), is linked with that of the Holy Fool, who mirrors her gesture (fig. 165). Yet another diagonal runs between Morozova's blessing and the hand of the awe-struck youth holding the fastening of the window-shutter. Morozova's line of vision links her with the icon of the Mother of God of Tenderness;<sup>245</sup> she is oblivious to the living faces around her, her gaze fixed upon the Virgin. As in Menshikov at Berezov, the icon acts as both witness and judge. Morozova may be appealing to it as a symbol of a higher justice than that which has condemned her. If so, its rôle is amplified by the symbolic presence of the Holy Fool (fig. 165).

The Holy Fool is, after Morozova herself, the most significant character in the painting. His rôle is not, as Garshin suggested, simply that of a fellow-fanatic, urging her to "...Accuse the prodigal heretics!".<sup>246</sup> Traditionally, the Holy Fool was permitted to challenge the established order with impunity.<sup>247</sup> In Boyarvnya Morozova he is comparable with Nikolai the Fool in Pushkin's Boris Godunov, who responds to the Tsar's request that he pray for him: "It is impossible to

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<sup>244</sup>See Ryabushkin's A Seventeenth-Century Merchant's Family (1896, Russian Museum; fig. 66) and Seventeenth-Century Russian Women in Church (1899, Tretyakov Gallery).

<sup>245</sup>Umilenie type; see Ouspensky & Lossky, The Meaning of Icons, pp. 92-101.

<sup>246</sup>V. M. Garshin, "Zametki o khudozhestvennykh vystavkakh", Sochineniya, p. 353.

<sup>247</sup>Fedotov, The Russian Religious Mind, vol. II, pp. 338-42, and above re: St. Vasilii.

pray for Tsar Herod; the Mother of God forbids it",<sup>248</sup> His judgement transcends that of the political and material world. As already mentioned, Musorgskii's Boris Godunov was one of Surikov's favourite operas.<sup>249</sup> It is possible that Surikov's use of the Holy Fool as a representative of a justice superior to that of the Tsar may owe something to the character of Nikolai.

Boyarynya Morozova was exhibited in the Fifteenth Travelling Exhibition, which opened in St. Petersburg on 25 February 1887.<sup>250</sup> It was generally well received by the critics.<sup>251</sup> However, as on former occasions, much discussion concentrated upon the content of the painting and its moral import. Vsevolod Garshin, a young writer and critic known to the Peredvizhniki,<sup>252</sup> reviewed the painting in Severnyi Vestnik.<sup>253</sup> While he praised its vivid visual appeal - "There has never before been such a depiction of our old, pre-Petrine crowd in the Russian School"<sup>254</sup> - his attitude towards Surikov's subject showed the difficulties of a nineteenth century intellectual in understanding the deeper issues behind the 1666 Schism. His article provided a detailed account of Morozova's life,<sup>255</sup> but his sympathies were not engaged: he regarded Morozova's "love, passion, energy and self-sacrifice"<sup>256</sup> as wasted:

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<sup>248</sup>Pushkin, Boris Godunov, p. 92; in Musorgskii's opera, this takes place in Act IV, Scene 1, outside St. Vasilii's.

<sup>249</sup>Cheptsova, "Gody znakomstva s V. I. Surikovym", in Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 280.

<sup>250</sup>F. S. Roginskaya, Tovarishchestvo Peredvizhnykh Khudozhestvennykh Vystavok. Istoricheskie ocherki, Moscow, 1989, p. 419.

<sup>251</sup>For a selection of criticisms and comments, see Kemenov, "Otsenka kartina Boyarynya Morozova sovremennoi ei kritikoi", Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', pp. 383-401.

<sup>252</sup>He was a model for Tsarevich Ivan in Repin's Ivan the Terrible and his son Ivan; see P. Henry, A Hamlet of his Time: Vsevolod Garshin, the Man, his Works and his Milieu, Oxford, 1983, pp. 183-4.

<sup>253</sup>Garshin, "Zametki o khudozhestvennykh vystavkakh", Sochineniya, pp. 342-54.

<sup>254</sup>Ibid., p. 352.

<sup>255</sup>Ibid., pp. 349-52, with reference to Zabelin's publications.

<sup>256</sup>Ibid., p. 351.

She was an adherent of the old faith. Two fingers, 'Isus' [instead of 'Iisus' for 'Jesus'] were the sacred objects of her soul, along with the old words of life according to the Domostroi [sixteenth-century code of household rules], suffocating and dark, into which the light of real human life was just beginning to break...

...[The Old Believers] lived as if in a dark box, creating for themselves an artificial, phantasmal world of attachment [to custom]. They all spoke of Christ, but under 'Christ' they understood only the meaningless positioning of the fingers, the need to make thousands of prostrations, and to get their feet frozen...

The weak rays of light of the new life disturbed these martyrs for martyrdom's sake; they saw their illusions fade... They hated this light... And in Surikov's painting and in reality this poor woman hated the enemy's world as much as she loved her illusions.<sup>257</sup>

To Garshin, Morozova's martyrdom seemed an unnecessary and avoidable act, which was not based on rational considerations. Certainly, she had antagonised Tsar Aleksei by small, personal slights, such as refusing to attend his wedding to Natal'ya Naryshkina,<sup>258</sup> when an outward semblance of conformity with the reformed religious practices would have guaranteed her safety (she had previously been protected by her friendship with Mariya Milostavskaya, Aleksei's first wife).<sup>259</sup> By concentrating on the disagreements over points of ritual which had led to the Schism, however, Garshin risked trivialising the Schism, the Old Believers, and the issues behind Surikov's depiction of Morozova.

Stasov came nearer to understanding the wider implications of the painting in his review:

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<sup>257</sup>ibid., p. 349-51.

<sup>258</sup>Pascal, Avvakum et les Débuts du Raskol, p. 456.

<sup>259</sup>Longworth, Alexis, Tsar of All the Russias, p. 218.

Those interests which moved this poor fanatic two hundred years ago cannot move us; for us there are now completely different questions, broader and deeper, but it is impossible for us not to bow before this mighty spirit, this woman's unbreakable mind and heart. We shrug our shoulders at her strange delusions, at her vain, worthless martyrdom, but we cannot take the side of these guffawing boyars and priests, we cannot stupidly, brutishly rejoice with them... All these are the people who 'know not what they do'.<sup>260</sup>

Fedos'ya Morozova's cause may no longer have seemed relevant, or worth dying for, to Garshin or Stasov,<sup>261</sup> but, as Stasov realised, her example remained valid as a symbol to illustrate a larger moral point. The painting celebrated an individual's courage and strength to resist attempts by the State to dictate to that individual conscience. These qualities raised Morozova morally above the "guffawing" herd, who, as Stasov indicated with his Biblical quotation, were as blinkered to the real issues as the persecutors of Christ in the Gospels. The Schism itself was concerned not merely with liturgical details but with questions of spiritual and temporal authority - whether a Patriarch and a Tsar had the power to overrule the traditions of the Christian community. A negative answer to this led logically to a rejection of the State and its authority,<sup>262</sup> and to the evolution of the Bespopov'tsy, the Priestless Old Believers. Surikov was also no doubt aware, through Avdot'ya Torgoshina and others, of the rôle of the Old Believers as tradition-bearers in his

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<sup>260</sup>Stasov, "Vystavka Peredvizhnikov" (originally publ. in Novosti i Birzhevaya Gazeta, no. 58, 1 March 1887), Izbrannye Sochineniya, vol. 3, p. 61.

<sup>261</sup>Neither would Antigone's determination to give her brother the proper burial rites. It is interesting to note that, while planning Boyarynya Morozova, Surikov saw Rubens' The Triumph of Justice from the Marie de' Medici series in the Louvre, and referred to it not by its more common title, but as Antigone. It is possible that he may have been thinking of the Greek tragic heroine as a possible analogy to Morozova. See letter to Chistyakov, end of December 1883, Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 62.

<sup>262</sup>See Cherniavsky, Tsar and People, pp. 75-7, 117-8.

community, guarding and transmitting their stories of the martyrs, older traditions of icon-painting, and preserving many aspects of pre-Petrine culture in their lives (fig. 160).

Much has been made, especially by Soviet writers, who wished to portray Surikov as a radical,<sup>263</sup> of Vera Figner's association of an engraving of Boyarynya Morozova with Sof'ya Perovskaya, the only woman among the regicides executed in 1881. Figner wrote: "The engraving made a powerful impression... It resurrects a page of life... 3 April 1881. The carts of the regicides... Sof'ya Perovskaya."<sup>264</sup> This may be more revealing of Figner's concerns during her years of exile than Surikov's. However, it was the main piece of evidence used by Soviet critics (like Andrei Lebedev, who described the Schism as a "spontaneous protest by the masses against oppression, poverty and spiritual enslavement",<sup>265</sup> with no reference at all to theological issues) to portray the artist as a radical sympathiser. Surikov made his first sketch for Boyarynya Morozova in 1881 (fig. 154), the year of the trial and execution of the regicides, which had a major impact on some of his colleagues, notably Repin.<sup>266</sup> But Surikov's preoccupations do not seem to have been 'political' in this sense. When he expressed his views on contemporary politics, he seems to have been to the Right of his colleagues. For example, he greeted the accession of the deeply conservative Aleksandr III with enthusiasm.<sup>267</sup> It is the politics of cultural change, of cultural conflict and its effects on the individual and society, which emerge most

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<sup>263</sup>See Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', pp. 322-3.

<sup>264</sup>V. N. Figner, Polnye Sobrannye Sochineniya, Moscow, 1928, vol. I, pp. 252-3.

<sup>265</sup>Lebedev, The Itinerants, p. 13.

<sup>266</sup>Repin's Ivan the Terrible and his son Ivan (1885) was his later response to the events of 1881; see A. L. Hilton, The Art of Iliia Repin: Tradition and Innovation in Russian Realism, doctoral thesis, Columbia University, 1979, p. 116.

<sup>267</sup>Voloshin, Surikov, p. 207.



strongly as the underlying theme of these paintings. In creating them, Surikov drew heavily on his experiences, externalising cultural tensions that existed in his own life.

As has been shown above, in the process of creating his history paintings, Surikov repeatedly reached back into his memories of Krasnoyarsk. From this, perhaps, comes the strong sense of personal involvement with his subjects which Tepin identified:

Surikov convinces us of the reality of his visions with the power of his own experiences. The Strel'tsy, Morozova, Ermak - in all only he, Surikov, the sovereign genius of our imagination, is the criminal and the hero. Before him historical events were depicted as something abstract, not essential for us. Surikov revealed that he himself had seen all this; that his uncle had been executed, that his grandmother had been tortured, and that he had run behind her sled in those days, unable to take his eyes from her face.<sup>268</sup>

At times it seems as if Surikov's perceptions of the world were filtered through a layer of historical and mythic images, corroborating Tepin's words. Powerful impressions from the real world were associated with archetypal images from history and folklore. In 1865, aged seventeen, he had seen the murdered body of his friend, 'Mitya' Burdin, lying naked on the frozen ground, after a brawl over a woman.<sup>269</sup> It immediately suggested to him the image of another Dmitrii - "the murdered Tsarevich Dmitrii at Uglich"<sup>270</sup> - who was revered as a Strastoterpets, a Passion-bearer.

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<sup>268</sup>Tepin, "Surikov", Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 191.

<sup>269</sup>Voloshin, Surikov, p. 42.

<sup>270</sup>Glagol', "V. I. Surikov. Iz vstrechi s nim i besed", Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 211.

Surikov's sense of a living relationship with the past and of the immediacy of history was partly the result of his traditional Cossack background. Its oral tradition and customs reflected those of pre-Petrine Russia. As Voloshin observed: "...he, born in the nineteenth century, found himself a genuine contemporary and eyewitness of those events which he strove to embody in his work."<sup>271</sup> At the same time, Surikov's education and career introduced him to Westernised intellectual circles in Petersburg and Moscow. It is possible that this direct experience of cultural dislocation is reflected in his choice of subjects, particularly The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy, Menshikov at Berezov and Boyarynya Morozova. If these paintings are externalisations of a cultural conflict within himself, this may be the source of their apparent emotional and moral ambivalence. While historical hindsight loaned a futile character to the attempts at resistance to change shown in The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy and Boyarynya Morozova, the deep-rooted sympathies, transmitted from the world in which Surikov first learned these stories, were less amenable to such reasoning. The cost of not resisting was also high: a loss of identity. However, because Surikov revealed little in his letters or interviews about his motives in choosing his subjects, such a personal interpretation must remain speculative.

Surikov's creative processes, at least as he described them, seem to have been essentially intuitive. It is possible that he deliberately presented them in this way to prevent critics ascribing purely intellectual rather than painterly qualities to his work, and to project an image of himself as an unsophisticated but inspired Cossack. However, his accounts are psychologically plausible. Surikov emphasised the

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<sup>271</sup>Voloshin, Surikov, p. 23.

suddenness of inspiration - an idea crystallising at the momentary sight of an object or place. In the case of The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy, the architecture and atmosphere of Red Square and St. Vasilii's stimulated what could almost be described as a vision. Menshikov at Berezov stemmed from the interior of his own dacha on a rainy night. Boyarynya Morozova was a black crow in white snow - which, as an image of a particularly striking kind of beauty, is a widespread archetype in European folklore.<sup>272</sup> Sudden images, moments of epiphany, triggered Surikov's imagination at an unconscious level. Tepin observed that "Surikov is not the judge of history - he is its poet",<sup>273</sup> and contrasted his approach and ability to express "the spiritual essence" and "mystical enlightenment"<sup>274</sup> of his subjects with the work of Bryullov, Shvarts and Ge. Tepin was less than just in dismissing the history paintings of these three artists as "conventional".<sup>275</sup> However, Ge provides a clear example with which to compare Surikov's history paintings.

Ge adopted a deliberately intellectual approach, like that of Delaroche,<sup>276</sup> to Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof. The subject was chosen for a specific occasion - Petr's bicentenary in 1872 - and the picture developed from his close study of various sources, as a work of written history might evolve. In Surikov's case, the subjects had been with him from his youth, in the oral traditions

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<sup>272</sup>This image of a crow or a raven in the snow occurs in Celtic tradition, e.g. "The Story of Deirdriu", in K. H. Jackson, ed., A Celtic Miscellany, London, rev. ed., 1971, p. 50, and "Peredur son of Efwrawg", in The Mabinogion, transl. G. & T. Jones, London, 1949, p. 199. Ancient folk migrations, similarities in environment between primitive cultures, and Jung's concept of the collective unconscious are all possible explanations for this curious phenomenon.

<sup>273</sup>Tepin, "Surikov", Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 202.

<sup>274</sup>Ibid., p. 191.

<sup>275</sup>Ibid.; as has been shown in Chapters 3 and 4, Shvarts and Ge in particular contributed much that was innovative to the development of Russian history painting.

<sup>276</sup>Harding, Artistes Pompiers, p. 109.

of the Siberian Cossacks and Old Believers, and there is almost a sense of inevitability about his decision to depict them on canvas. The order in which he decided to treat them seems to have been determined by those sudden visions - Red Square, the dacha at Pererva, the bird in the snow - and his responses to them. His later researches were used to reinforce the images and impressions which had been formed then, and to provide authentic detail.

Surikov's philosophical and religious views are also reflected in his choice and treatment of historical subjects. Kemenov acknowledges that "Surikov was a religious man", even if critical at times of the official clergy.<sup>277</sup> According to his certificate from the Academy, dated 4 November 1874, Church History was one of his best subjects,<sup>278</sup> an interest reflected in his work. Although he himself was Orthodox, his wife was a devout Catholic,<sup>279</sup> who as a girl had attended St. Catherine's Church on Nevskii Prospekt in Petersburg.<sup>280</sup> Tepin notes that after her death in 1888, "only reading the Bible served as his consolation".<sup>281</sup>

Nesterov referred to interests in Slavophile and religious subjects which he shared with Surikov when young.<sup>282</sup> Both enjoyed reading Khomyakov and Gogol', and admired Ivanov's The Appearance of Christ to

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<sup>277</sup>Kemenov, Vasily Surikov, p. 207.

<sup>278</sup>The certificate reads: "Church History - excellent, Universal History - very good, Russian History - very good, History of the Fine Arts and Archæology - very good, Mathematics - good, Physics - excellent, Chemistry - good, Russian Literature and Æsthetics - very good, Perspective and Tonal Theory - good, Architecture - excellent, Anatomy - good". See Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 298, item 32, n. 3.

<sup>279</sup>Elizaveta Avgustovna Share (Charrier?) had a French father and a Russian mother, a daughter of the Decembrist Svistunov.

<sup>280</sup>Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 104.

<sup>281</sup>Tepin, "Surikov", Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 203.

<sup>282</sup>Nesterov, in ibid., p. 232.

the People (1837-57, Tret'yakov Gallery).<sup>283</sup> Surikov's attitude towards the radicals was unsympathetic. Recalling the currency of Chernyshevskii's utilitarian æsthetic theories during his student days, he said that Chernyshevskii's young adherents "looked patronisingly and contemptuously at art".<sup>284</sup>

Surikov's views on the person and image of the Tsar help to establish his attitude towards royal authority and rejection of it in The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy and Boyarynya Morozova. Surikov saw Aleksandr III at the time of his coronation, and later said: "I look upon Aleksandr III as a true representative of the people... There was nothing grandiose about him".<sup>285</sup> This is highly revealing. Aleksandr III's belief in autocracy and Russian nationalism manifested itself in private and in public. His government "held high the banner of 'Orthodoxy-autocracy-nationality'",<sup>286</sup> as Nikolai I's had done. Whereas Nikolai had sought to reinforce his own image by invoking that of Petr I, Aleksandr also looked farther back to the Muscovite autocrats, creating a version of 'Official Nationality' within the symbolic vocabularies of Pan-Slavism and popular xenophobia. He had himself photographed in seventeenth-century Muscovite costume (fig. 167<sup>287</sup>), and officially patronised the revival of traditional Russian arts.<sup>288</sup> Politically, he pursued a policy of Russification among the non-Russian peoples of the

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<sup>283</sup>See Riasanovsky, Russia and the West in the Teaching of the Slavophiles, p. 148, on Khomyakov's belief that this painting revealed "the true Christian spirit of Russia".

<sup>284</sup>Quoted by Glagol', "V. I. Surikov. Iz vstrech s nim i besed", Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 212.

<sup>285</sup>Voloshin, Surikov, p. 207.

<sup>286</sup>Riasanovsky, A History of Russia, p. 391.

<sup>287</sup>Mansell Collection, in Cowles, The Romanovs, p. 222. His son, Nikolai II, who disliked Petr I for his Westernisation of Russia, considered reviving Muscovite Court dress; see Massie, Nicholas and Alexandra, pp. 77-8.

<sup>288</sup>See Chapter 1.

Empire. With his former tutor, Pobedonostsev, he enforced legal restrictions on the non-Orthodox and, in particular, encouraged pogroms against Jews.<sup>289</sup>

Surikov's admiration of Aleksandr III seems to confirm contemporary assessments of Surikov as "a conservative and a Slavophile".<sup>290</sup> His reference to Aleksandr as "a true representative of the people" suggests that he saw the Tsar in his traditional rôle as the 'Little Father' (Batyushka) of his people, the embodiment of their religious and national identity. Surikov's antipathy towards Petr and his values, implicit in Anuchin's response to his remarks,<sup>291</sup> can be understood in terms of Petr's uneasy relations with his subjects and with the traditional image of the ruler. Petr did not represent his people's values, but attempted to impose alien values upon them. In Cherniavsky's words, "The impious tsar could not be a true tsar",<sup>292</sup> with the result that "opposition, rebellion and self-immolation were considered justified by this impiety".<sup>293</sup> Morozova's opposition to the Schism and the Strel'tsy's revolt against Petr were not rejections of authority, but affirmations of older concepts of authority in the face of governments which they regarded as no longer legitimate because of their violation of tradition. Indeed, in The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy, Petr may be regarded as the antithesis of Surikov's positive image of a Tsar: he is shown not as the representative of his people, but as their executioner. Menshikov is depicted in the same painting as Petr's lackey, and in Menshikov at Berezov is seen to be paying the price for his service to the

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<sup>289</sup>See Riasanovsky, A History of Russia, pp. 394-5, and Chapter 1.

<sup>290</sup>Valkenier, Russian Realist Art, p. 207, n. 21.

<sup>291</sup>Letter of 14 October 1901, Radzimovskii & Gol'dshtein, ed., Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniya, p. 150, and above.

<sup>292</sup>Cherniavsky, Tsar and People, p. 76.

<sup>293</sup>Ibid., p. 77.

"impious Tsar". Menshikov and his children are also depicted as victims of the modern State created by Petr, now in the hands of his descendant. It could be argued, therefore, that all three paintings criticise the abuse of autocratic power, but not autocracy itself.

Surikov's contribution to the iconography of Russian history and of the late seventeenth-early eighteenth centuries in particular was extremely influential. His intense personal involvement in the past, in the fusion of personal experiences and, possibly, psychological conflicts with his research, gave his paintings an immediacy unusual in history painting. His use of his first-hand knowledge of folk tradition fed into the folk art revival of the 1880s-90s. His depictions of pre-Westernised life, together with the lasting influence of Shvarts, provided the foundations for the Muscovite genre scenes of Andrei Ryabushkin and Sergei Ivanov.

Surikov's later works seem more closely linked with Pan-Slav conservatism. Ermak's Conquest of Siberia and Stepan Razin (1895 and 1907 respectively; both Russian Museum) depict traditional Cossack heroes, and as such can be regarded as part of Surikov's artistic exploration of his own ancestry and cultural heritage. However, Ermak's Conquest of Siberia, which celebrates the defeat of the Siberian tribes by the Cossacks, also reflects the national chauvinism of Aleksandr III's reign - in particular, his campaigns of Russification and militant Orthodoxy against his non-Slav subjects. The Cossacks advance confidently under a religious banner, like Russian conquistadores, spreading Muscovite civilisation and Christianity with the gun. Suvorov Crossing the Alps (1899, Russian Museum), a more straightforwardly patriotic picture, depicted the military hero of the Napoleonic Wars. Unsurprisingly, it was this later phase of Surikov's work which was imitated by Aleksandr Bubnov in The Morning of the Battle of Kulikovo

(1943-7, Tret'yakov Gallery) during the wartime nationalist revival fostered by Iosif Stalin.<sup>294</sup>

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<sup>294</sup>See Valkenier, Russian Realist Art, pp. 176-7.



## Conclusion.

Throughout the nineteenth century, artists drew upon the historical and literary sources available to create history paintings of the Petrine era which, in turn, shaped their audiences' perceptions of the that period. Whether in the reign of Nikolai I or that of Aleksandr II, within the Academy or the Peredvizhniki, these images were understood in relation to the established image of Petr I as 'Petr the Great', either subscribing to it or questioning it. They reflected the Westerniser-Slavophile debate in visual terms.

Ultimately, empirical realism is as impossible in history painting as pure objectivity is in the writing of history. Both are acts of imaginative recreation, based upon the selection of evidence. In Schama's words, the historian's (or history painter's) task is "to take the...remains of something or someone...from...the documented past and restore it to life...in our own time and place...".<sup>1</sup> History painting gained credibility as a means of interpreting historical events and characters as increasing importance was attached to historical research and a Realist style. At the same time, the artists, like historians, were influenced in their approach by the moral, philosophical, cultural and political climate of their own time.

Then, as now, Petr was a profoundly paradoxical figure, especially to liberal Westernisers. He was a pragmatic reformer, but also a repressive autocrat. He was a Westerniser, but aggressive, militaristic, and despotic. The intellectual Westernisers of the 1840s could no more resolve these paradoxes than previous or later scholars. Ultimately, it was a matter of personal choice, epitomised by the views of Belinskii and

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<sup>1</sup>S. Schama, Dead Certainties (Unwarranted Speculations), London, 1991, p. 319.

Herzen. Belinskii, despite increasing radicalism, clung to the image of Petr as the Reformer and Enlightener, despite his authoritarianism; Herzen, however, saw Petr as the founder of the repressive, bureaucratic autocracy of his own time, and denounced his ruthless torture and extermination of his opponents. In the art of the Peredvizhniki, these polarities are expressed in Myasoedov's The Grandfather of the Russian Fleet - the work of a liberal Westerniser who retained a positive view of Petr, despite the evidence of his extreme illiberalism, and Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof by Ge, an admirer and personal acquaintance of Herzen.

Until the death of Nikolai I in 1855, strict censorship had restricted historians' access to the primary documentary sources, which limited in turn the scope of painters who wished to study historical subjects in order to paint them. Until 1863, the Academy completely controlled the training and status of artists and, with the Imperial Court, was almost the sole source of patronage. Only after the relaxation of censorship in Aleksandr II's reign and the establishment of the Association for Travelling Art Exhibitions in 1870, which enabled artists to attract new patrons, was it possible for history painters to effectively challenge Petr's official image, whether from a Herzenite or Slavophile perspective.

The changes within history painting as a genre contributed to this. The shift from the Academic tradition, with its roots in Neo-Classicism and early Romanticism, towards a greater degree of Realism paralleled broader tendencies within Russian art in the nineteenth century. It reflected, too, the influence of Western art. The French Salon painters Delaroche and Meissonier played a significant rôle in Russia, as elsewhere in Europe, in raising standards of historical accuracy and stylistic Naturalism in history painting. Their innovations were compatible with the aims of the liberalised Academy in the late 1850s-1860s: Naturalism,

unlike Realism, does not preclude some degree of idealisation. Several further factors led Russian artists, although apparently unfamiliar with Courbet, to adopt Realism.

The enhanced status given to genre painting by the Academy in Prince Gagarin's 1859 Statutes and the search for truth which followed the reduction of censorship encouraged artists like Perov to depict contemporary life critically. Perov's friend Shvarts applied this approach to the historical subjects which he researched assiduously. Increasing familiarity with photography also fostered the growth of Realism: Kramskoi's meticulous style evolved from his work as a retoucher. In history painting, the idealisation of Academic art was associated with the censored, official version of the past; Realism reflected the artists' desire to depict the uncensored truth. Realism gave the verisimilitude of photography to history paintings, thus making an artist's recreation of a scene much more convincing to the audience.

In the 1870s, Ge and Repin gained attention by sympathetically depicting Aleksei and Sof'ya, two previously marginalised characters, but the two artists were not primarily known as history painters. The new subject-matter reflected the accessibility of controversial historical material following Nikolai I's death. Ge and Repin painted these new subjects in the same Realist style which they used for contemporary portraits and genre paintings, rather than reverting to the hybrid of Romanticism and Neo-Classicism of their Academic training. Their approach did not replicate the illusionistic detail of Delaroche's The Execution of Lady Jane Gray, for example, but they were clearly indebted to Delaroche's more meditative works, such as The Princes in the Tower and Cromwell gazing at the Body of Charles I, for their emphasis on the psychology of the characters.

The evolution of images of the Petrine era in Russian history painting during the nineteenth century was a response to many cultural stimuli. In many respects, it was a shift in emphasis away from Petr himself. The Peredvizhniki focussed on characters who had been hitherto neglected or vilified. Before 1855, much of Tsarevich Aleksei's story had been suppressed to protect Petr's reputation. Historians had condemned Tsarevna Sof'ya partly because she had failed to conform to submissive feminine stereotypes, and artists had excised her from depictions of events in which she had taken a prominent rôle. Surikov, the most Slavophile of the artists, moved the centre of attention further from the Court by depicting the impact of cultural and political change upon the citizens of Moscow - the artisans who served in the Strel'tsy and their families, and all levels of society affected by the Schism of 1666. In The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy, the fact that Petr and his entourage were an addition to the composition, painted on a stitched-on piece of canvas, seems to indicate how marginal they were to the artist's original conception.

The Academic artists, whatever their individual backgrounds or predilections, worked to a historical formula, an official tradition originating in Petr's own lifetime but continued and developed by his successors. It moulded Petr's life and deeds to the pattern of the archetypal Hero, the Ideal of Classical mythology. The myth was created by propagandists and historians. In art, it was supported by the Academy and its patrons, centred chiefly around the Court. While it offered a range of themes, from Petr's childhood to his death, the treatment was unremittingly positive, and potentially controversial subjects were avoided.

The Peredvizhniki were not distinct from their Academic predecessors and contemporaries in terms of background or training.

The developments made by them in history and genre painting have been traced back to the reforming spirit of the Academy under Gagarin and the profound impression made by the works of Delaroche to which the Academy introduced them, albeit in reproduction. These elements of continuity are important. However, in breaking with the Academy and seeking a new market among the industrialists and rising middle classes of the provincial cities the Peredvizhniki had the opportunity to adopt a more independent attitude towards their subjects. The historical sources which they used had been available since the late 1850s-early 1860s. It was access to patronage outside the Court which enabled them to use this controversial material in their pictures. The commercial opportunity of Petr's bicentenary in 1872 must also be regarded as an important stimulus to Ge and Myasoedov's contributions to the First Travelling Exhibition; it is significant that no paintings of Petrine subjects were shown in the group's exhibitions for several years thereafter.

The emergence of the Peredvizhniki as an artistic group independent of the Academy allowed history painters to explore the opportunities opened up by the reduction of censorship after Nikolai I's death, and to contribute to the cultural debate between Westernisers and Slavophiles. Outside the Academy's control, the individual perspectives of the artists on the Petrine era emerged with greater clarity. The opposing extremes were represented by Myasoedov, a distinctly pro-Petrine liberal Westerniser, for whom Petr embodied progress, and by Surikov, a conservative Slavophile, from the traditional culture which Westernisation threatened. Between these extremes, Repin and Ge depicted characters who represented the attempt at synthesis between East and West: Sof'ya, with her piecemeal reforms, encouragement of Huguenot settlers, and patronage of the arts; Aleksei, with his enthusiasm for Western learning but aversion to militarism and imperial expansion.

This draws attention to the fact that, contrary to common impressions, the Peredvizhniki were not ideologically homogenous. Myasoedov's The Grandfather of the Russian Fleet and Petr at Zaandam celebrated Petr's rôle as a Bearer of Culture. Ge, Repin (at least at the time of painting The Regent Tsarevna Sof'ya) and Surikov all painted pictures which were essentially anti-Petrine to varying degrees. Ge's standpoint in Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei at Peterhof was Herzenite and Christian. As a liberal intellectual, Ge regarded Petr's reign as the origin of the autocracy under which he lived. As a Christian moralist, distanced from the State-controlled official Church, he could not condone torture and murder for political ends. He projected these convictions, which were of his own period and milieu, on to the more brutal early eighteenth century, and abandoned the Academic convention of the Ideal. Repin approached The Regent Tsarevna Sof'ya from a different position. Although basically a liberal, he was not an intellectual himself, nor was he primarily a history painter; he depended for much of his background research on Stasov, a nationalist, whose ideas helped shape his own attitudes towards pre-Petrine Russia. Repin's sympathetic treatment of Sof'ya was also informed by his awareness of the women's movement and of women's increasing involvement in political life, as reflected in his friendship with the feminist Nadezhda Stasova and his use of progressive women as models. Surikov's works represent the peak of the reaction against Nikolai I's official cult of Petr I, stemming in part from the increasingly nationalistic cultural climate of the 1880s. Surikov's own personality and background as a Siberian Cossack also influenced the historical and ethical content of his work. His paintings draw upon the cultural tensions between his extremely traditional background and the social position which his profession granted him, as a member of the outwardly Westernised cultural community and a city-dweller. Like Ge, he

explored the abuse of power, but from a different political perspective. Surikov's concept of the rôle of the Tsar was rooted in late Slavophilism and the ideology of Aleksandr III. His sympathetic portrayals of the Strel'tsy and Morozova were based not on a liberal hatred of autocracy, but on a conservative belief in traditional forms of authority.

The simultaneous pursuit of truth to nature and historical truth inspired the Peredvizhniki to create powerful and provocative images of the Russian past. An Academic history painting like Bruni's Death of Camilla, Sister of Horatius sentimentalised the victim and idealised the killer to glorify patriotism and service to the State above domestic ties: there is little blood or pain, and Horatius' deed is endorsed. Ge's rejection of Academic Idealism in Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof set a vital precedent for his fellow-Peredvizhniki. By depicting their characters with physical and psychological realism, they undermined this official art and its State-centred morality.

During the reign of Nikolai I, Academic artists generally gave the figure of Petr the most important rôle in their paintings, but the Peredvizhniki moved the centre of attention away from him. At best this reflected an ambivalence towards Petr and the values which he represented. What Petr was perceived to represent depended upon the perspective of the artists themselves. For Ge, he was a sadistic tyrant, the antithesis of the artist's liberal humanitarianism; for Repin, he was an ignorant bureaucrat, whose reputation had been inflated at the expense of his predecessors; for Surikov, he had violated the traditional relationship between Tsar and people. None of these images gave a whole or balanced picture of Petr I: his enthusiasm for practical knowledge was depicted by Basin, Chernetsov and Myasoedov, his physical courage by Kotsebu, Shamshin and Zagorskii. However, these significant paintings by the Peredvizhniki provided the necessary counter to the positive

Academic works. They faced the paradox of Petr's legacy as the idealised images of Academic art could not. Khlebovskii had shown Petr as the civiliser who had brought women out of seclusion into Court life; but Repin's depiction of the imprisoned Sof'ya, one of the most advanced women in Petrine Russia, challenged Petr's image as an emancipator. Similarly, the self-styled 'Father of the Fatherland', whom Shamshin had depicted rescuing a child and other innocents from a shipwreck, was portrayed by Ge and Surikov as a destroyer of his own son and of families among his wider family of subjects. Whatever the merits of Petr's activities, their human cost could not be ignored.

The Peredvizhniki broke with the Academic traditions of history painting and of Petrine iconography by confronting the spectator with the victims of history, realistically and without sentimentality.<sup>1</sup> In his discussion of Hans Holbein's Dead Christ (1521, Öffentliche Kunstsammlung, Basle) and the profound impression which it made on Dostoevskii,<sup>2</sup> Berger has asked:

The icon redeems by the prayers it encourages with closed eyes. Is it possible that the courage of not shutting one's eyes [to the portrayal of suffering] can offer another kind of redemption?<sup>3</sup>

This is the challenge implicit in the history paintings of Ge, Repin and Surikov. They call upon the spectator to question the received official version of their stories by demanding a direct human response to the characters' suffering. Ge showed Aleksei Petrovich neither as a stereotypical weak traitor, nor as an idealised hero, but as a vulnerable young man, wasted by disease and broken by persecution. Repin's Sof'ya is a strong, vigorous woman imprisoned for life - "a tigress locked in an

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<sup>2</sup>Dostoyevsky (Dostoevskii), The Idiot, p. 446-7.

<sup>3</sup>Berger, "A Professional Secret", New Society, vol. 82, no. 1303/4/5, p. 23.



iron cage", in Kramskoi's words,<sup>4</sup> with a decomposing corpse hanging outside her window. Surikov's Strel'tsy are individuals being torn from their stricken families, not an undifferentiated rabble, the fate of whose dependents is of no concern. Mariya Menshikova stares out of Menshikov at Berezov as an innocent victim of her father and of the State. Fedos'ya Morozova and Avdot'ya Urusova face torture and imprisonment not for minor liturgical changes but for questions of authority and conscience. The realistically-depicted sufferings of these people force the spectator to decide whether the ends - cultural Westernisation and the creation of a modernised, militaristic autocracy - can justify their exile, imprisonment, torture and death.

Berger has claimed that paintings cannot offer the catharsis of tragedy "because they do not evolve. They are static. They insist upon a single moment, a single act...".<sup>5</sup> This is not true of history paintings. Bound up as they are with their historical and literary context, they call upon the spectator's imagination to complete the familiar narrative. The spectator comprehends the painting as one scene within the story, and the emotional impact is all the greater because the story is known to be true. The disturbing atmosphere of Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei at Peterhof is intensified by the knowledge that the consumptive Aleksei died after repeated floggings. Repin's depiction of Sof'ya's imprisonment is made more tragic by the recollection that, before this, she had freed herself from the restrictions of the terem to become the most powerful woman in Russia. The fact that Mariya Menshikova died just before her family was recalled from exile adds poignancy to Surikov's depiction of her plight. This interaction between spectator and image contributes to

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<sup>4</sup>Kramskoi, Pis'ma, vol. II, p. 171.

<sup>5</sup>Berger, "A Professional Secret", New Society, vol. 82, no. 1303/4/5, p. 24.

the power of the works. It enables the paintings to "evolve" within the spectator's imagination, and produce the catharsis appropriate to the tragedy depicted.

Inevitably, the Peredvizhniki's preoccupation with the victims of Petr and his cult was followed by a reaction, in a renewed emphasis upon Petr himself. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Peredvizhniki had themselves become identified with the artistic establishment, against which the æsthetes of the World of Art rebelled. Petr re-emerged as the main protagonist in history paintings by Serov, Dobuzhinskii, Benua and Lansere. In some respects, this can be seen as the reassertion of the culture of St. Petersburg over that of Moscow. Benua and Lansere, in particular, were St. Petersburg artists, of non-Russian descent. The physical environment of Petersburg was a significant factor in their artistic development. The members of the World of Art were citizens of a modern, cosmopolitan capital, which had more in common with similar cities elsewhere in Europe than with the provincial cities of Russia. Traditional Russian culture, as depicted by Surikov, was not part of their environment, except through the folk revival (as in the Church of the Resurrection 'on the Blood', which marks the site of Aleksandr II's assassination). On the contrary, they were surrounded by architecture and decorative styles derived from eighteenth-century Western Europe. Like Petr himself, they were attracted by the image of Versailles and the culture of Louis XIV's Court.

However, they had also assimilated the changes in Petr's image in the late nineteenth century, and were aware of his negative aspects, as depicted by the Peredvizhniki. The World of Art was linked with the so-

called 'Decadence', with an interest in the erotic and the grotesque.<sup>6</sup> The images of the Petrine era which its members created were extremely ambivalent. In some respects, they synthesised the dual traditions of Petr. He was the main character depicted, sometimes in his rôle as Bearer of Culture, but sinister undercurrents remained. Merezhkovskii, the Symbolist writer whose novel Antichrist: Petr and Aleksei portrayed the Petrine era in a vivid and sensational manner, was an associate of the group.<sup>7</sup> Paintings on Petrine themes from this period express something of Merezhkovskii's influence in their concentration on the darker sides of Petr's character - his sadism and questionable sanity - as in Serov's The Great Eagle Cup (fig. 53). Serov's Petr I (fig. 84), Petr I at Monplaisir (1910-1, Tret'yakov Gallery), and Benua's illustrations for several editions of Pushkin's The Bronze Horseman (1903-22) all indicate a debt to Rastrelli's wax sculptures, which conveyed the mature Petr's ungainliness, suggesting the grotesque traits which they emphasised.

The Peredvizhniki's history paintings, with which this work has been chiefly concerned, have been reassessed frequently this century. The critical debate over the interpretation of Ge's Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof has continued. During the Stalinist period, which, to some extent, saw a revival of the cult of Petr, Saltykov's reading of the painting as an unequivocal endorsement of Petr was reiterated by Soviet art historians like Nikolai Shchekotov. In 1943, Shchekotov described Aleksei as the focus of "dark forces",<sup>8</sup> and "a

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<sup>6</sup>Sergei Dyagilev, one of the moving spirits behind the World of Art, introduced the work of Aubrey Beardsley to Russia through the group's magazine, Mir Iskusstva.

<sup>7</sup>Etkind, Aleksandr Nikolaevich Benua, pp. 134-5; see also ed. Zil'bershtein & Samkov, Valentin Serov v perepiske, dokumentakh i interv'yu, vol. I, p. 388, for Dyagilev's idea for the novel to be serialised in Mir Iskusstva with illustrations by members.

<sup>8</sup>N. Shchekotov, Petr I i Tsarevich Aleksei: Kartina Russkogo Khudozhnika N. N. Ge, Moscow & Leningrad, 1943, p. 8.

danger to the progressive evolution of the State".<sup>9</sup> He did not mention how Aleksei had died. While quoting Ge's initial enthusiasm for a Petrine subject, inspired by the 1872 bicentenary,<sup>10</sup> he also omitted any reference to the artist's change of heart.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, Andrei Lebedev claimed that the painting "glorified the great civic deed of Petr, who sacrificed his paternal feelings in the interests of his country",<sup>12</sup> and characterised the protagonists as "patriot father and...apostate son".<sup>13</sup> However, Ge's career, including his religious paintings, began to be reassessed in the late 1960s.<sup>14</sup> The publication of Ge's own comments and a selection of contemporary reviews of the painting by Natal'ya Zograf in 1978<sup>15</sup> brought a variety of interpretations to the attention of a Soviet audience. Western interpretations have generally followed Saltykov, with Valentine Marcadé being one of the few to examine the painting within the wider context of Ge's art and his moral values, and to grasp its subtext of religious iconography.<sup>16</sup>

Repin's The Regent Tsarevna Sof'ya was similarly re-interpreted according to the revived Petrine cult of the Soviet period. Lebedev referred to Sof'ya as "supported by the reactionary circles of the boyars and the Strel'tsy".<sup>17</sup> "Reactionary" is hardly a term applicable to Vasilii Golitsyn, her Westernised minister, and it also ignores the impact of Sof'ya as a woman exercising political power in an otherwise male-

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>11</sup>See Chapter 4 and Stasov, Nikolai Nikolaevich Ge, p. 239.

<sup>12</sup>A. K. Lebedev, Russkaya Istoricheskaya Zhivopis' do Okt'yabrya 1917 goda, Moscow, 1962, [introduction, p. vii].

<sup>13</sup>Lebedev, The Itinerants, p. 12.

<sup>14</sup>Valkenier, Russian Realist Art, p. 190.

<sup>15</sup>Zograf, ed., Ge. Pis'ma, Stat'i, Kritika, pp. 84-100.

<sup>16</sup>Marcadé, Le Renouveau de L'Art Pictural Russe 1863-1914, p. 37.

<sup>17</sup>Lebedev, Russkaya Istoricheskaya Zhivopis' do Okt. 1917 g., "Kommentarii", p. 7.

dominated society. The failure to comment on this may reflect the ambivalent Soviet attitude towards the emancipation of women. Lebedev epitomised the attitude towards the history paintings of the Peredvizhniki which was prevalent during much of the Soviet period. The pictures themselves were highly regarded in terms of style, and from the mid-1930s, the Peredvizhniki were often described as forefathers of Socialist Realism.<sup>18</sup> The subjects and their treatment were interpreted according to politically motivated revisions of Russian history, similar to Nikolai I's Official Nationality, and not in the context in which they were created.

During the 1930s and 1940s, Surikov's work was harnessed to nationalism.<sup>19</sup> In some respects, this was compatible with the artist's personal stance, as a supporter of the chauvinistic Aleksandr III. Stalinist critics played down the religious element in Surikov's paintings and his hostility towards Petr I. Vera Figner's comparison between Bovarynya Morozova and Sof'ya Perovskaya was seized upon in an attempt to portray Surikov, inaccurately, as a radical.<sup>20</sup> As in the case of Ge, the re-publication of primary source material, such as Voloshin's interviews with the artist, allowed Russian scholars to gain a less biased view of Surikov and his works.

The image of Petr as Bearer of Culture, especially as a symbol of Westernisation, has emerged again in the Perestroika and post-Soviet periods in Russia, while negative parallels are now being drawn between Petr and Stalin.<sup>21</sup> The nineteenth-century history paintings which

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<sup>18</sup>See Valkenier, Russian Realist Art, pp. 172-86.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., pp. 176-7.

<sup>20</sup>Lebedev, The Itinerants, p. 13; Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', pp. 322-3.

<sup>21</sup>See L. A. J. Hughes's review of E. V. Anisimov's Vremya Petrovskikh Reform, with quotations, in Study Group on Eighteenth-Century Russia Newsletter, Cambridge, no. 19, Sept. 1991, p. 42.

contributed so powerfully to the shaping of Petr's image will no doubt be reinterpreted in this political and social context. At the same time, they remain a record of the diversity of opinions and talents of the numerous artists who were drawn to this controversial character and theme. Petr himself and the fundamental cultural and political issues of his reign remain touchstones for evaluating Russia's past and for developing strategies for the present and future.

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## ILLUSTRATIONS:

### Chapters 1 & 2:

1. Bartolomeo Carlo Rastrelli, Bust of Petr I, 1723-30, bronze, height 102 cms. Hermitage, St. Petersburg.
2. Bartolomeo Carlo Rastrelli, Equestrian Statue of Petr I, 1716-44, erected 1800, bronze. Klenovaya Ulitsa, St. Petersburg.
3. Marie-Anne Collot, Head of Petr I (Bronze Horseman), 1767, bronze. Russian Museum, St. Petersburg.
4. Etienne Falconet & Marie-Anne Collot, Monument to Petr I (Bronze Horseman), unveiled 1782, bronze. Decembrists' (formerly Senate) Square, St. Petersburg.
5. Etienne Falconet & Marie-Anne Collot, The Bronze Horseman, detail.
6. Vasilii I. Surikov, View of Petr I's Monument in Senate Square, 1870, oil on canvas, 52 x 71 cms. Russian Museum.
7. William Faithorne the Younger, The Grand Czar of Moscovy, Drawn by the life, 1698, engraving. British Museum, London.
8. Adriaan Schoonebeck, Emperor Petr I, 1703, etching, 28 x 17.5 cms. Saltykov-Shchedrin Public Library, St. Petersburg.
9. Hyacinthe Rigaud, Louis XIV, 1701, oil on canvas, 279 x 190 cms. Louvre, Paris.
10. Jean Marc Nattier, Petr I, 1717, oil on canvas, 142 x 110 cms. Hermitage.
11. Bartolomeo Carlo Rastrelli, Bust of Petr I (fig. 1), detail of armour.
12. Johann Gottfried Tannauer, Petr I at the Battle of Poltava, 1710s, oil on canvas, 76 x 63.5 cms. Russian Museum.

13. Charles Le Brun, Louis XIV's Personal Rule, 1679-84, detail of ceiling painting. Hall of Mirrors, Versailles.
14. Jacopo Amigoni, Petr the Great with Minerva, 1732-4, oil on canvas, detail. Hermitage.
15. Abraham Bosse, The Joy of France, 1638, engraving. Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.
16. Aleksei F. Zubov, vignette from Maritime Prints, 1718, detail. Reproduced in Alekseeva, Gravyura Petrovskogo Vremeni, p. 156.
17. Andrei Matveev, after Carel de Moor, Petr I, c. 1724-5, oil on canvas, 78 x 61 cms. Hermitage.
18. Johann Gottfried Tannauer, Petr I, 1710s, oil on canvas, 78 x 61 cms. Hermitage.
19. Bartolomeo Carlo Rastrelli, Bust of Petr I, 1719, wax and painted plaster, height 61 cms. Hermitage.
20. Bartolomeo Carlo Rastrelli, Life-size Effigy of Petr I, 1725, wax, standing height of figure 204 cms. Hermitage.
21. Fedor A. Bruni, The Death of Camilla, Sister of Horatius, 1824, oil on canvas, 350 x 526.5 cms. Russian Museum.
22. Anton P. Losenko, Vladimir and Rogneda, 1770, oil on canvas, 211.5 x 177.5 cms. Russian Museum.
23. Andrei I. Ivanov, The Brave Deed of a Kievan Youth during the Siege of Kiev by the Pechenegs in 968, c. 1810, oil on canvas, 204 x 177.5 cms. Russian Museum.
24. Jean-Auguste Dominique Ingres, Don Pedro de Toledo kissing Henri IV's Sword, 1820, oil on canvas, 48 x 40 cms. Private collection, Oslo.



25. Jean-Auguste Dominique Ingres, Paolo Malatesta and Francesca da Rimini, 1819, oil on canvas, 48 x 39 cms. Musée d'Angers.
26. Hippolyte (Paul) Delaroche, Cardinal Mazarin Dying, 1830, oil on canvas, 55.8 x 96.5 cms. Wallace Collection, London.
27. Hippolyte Delaroche, The Princes in the Tower, 1831, oil on canvas, 44.2 x 50.1 cms. Wallace Collection, London; reduction of 1830 version, 178 x 214 cms., in the Louvre.
28. Karl P. Bryullov, The Last Day of Pompeii, 1833, oil on canvas, 456.5 x 651 cms. Russian Museum.
29. Karl P. Bryullov, The Death of Inez de Castro, Morganatic Wife of Dom Pedro, the Infante of Portugal, 1834, oil on canvas, 213 x 290.5 cms. Russian Museum.
30. Aleksandr K. Begrov, The Petr Gallery in the Imperial Hermitage Museum, 1872, engraving by L. A. Seryakov. P. N. Petrov & S. N. Shubinskii, Al'bom 200-letnego Yubileya Imperatora Petra Velikogo, 1672-1872, p. 188.
31. Aleksei G. Venetsianov, Petr the Great, the Foundation of St. Petersburg, 1838, oil on canvas, 260 x 351 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery, Moscow.
32. Le Blond workshop, after Charles Le Brun, Louis XIV's Foundation of Les Invalides in 1674, 1670s, tapestry, detail. Versailles.
33. Petr V. Basin, Petr I, as an Infant, surrounded by his Tutors in Boyar Costume, finds a Sabre among a Merchant's Gifts, late 1830s - early 1840s, graphite pencil on paper, 24 x 19 cms. Russian Museum.
34. Karl K. Shteiben, Petr the Great in Childhood, saved by his Mother from the Fury of the Strel'tsy, 1830, oil on canvas, 138 x 163 cms. Russian Museum.

35. Karl K. Shteiben, Petr the Great in Childhood, saved by his Mother from the Fury of the Strel'tsy, detail.
36. Vasilii K. Shebuev, The Election of Mikhail Fedorovich to the Tsardom, n. d., lead pencil, sepia and ink on paper. Russian Museum.
37. Vasilii K. Demidov, Tsaritsa Natal'ya Kirillovna with Tsarevich Petr on the Red Staircase, 1848, oil on canvas, 79 x 106 cms. Russian Museum.
38. Petr V. Basin, Petr I uncovers a Strel'tsy Conspiracy, late 1830s - early 1840s, graphite pencil on paper, 24 x 19 cms. Russian Museum.
39. A. Zemtsov, Petr the Great at Tsykler's House, 1881, engraving. Niva, no. 6, 1881.
40. Adolf I. Sharleman, Petr I catches the Conspirators in Tsykler's House, 23 February 1697, 1884, oil on canvas, 73 x 106.5 cms. Russian Museum.
41. Nikolai P. Zagorskii, The Arrest of Tsykler, 1882, engraving. A. G. Brikner, Istoriya Petra Velikogo, pl. facing p. 268.
42. Vasilii V. Mate, after Jan Ottens, Petr the Great in Russian Dress, during his stay in Holland in the Great Embassy, 1882, engraving. Brikner, Istoriya Petra Velikogo, p. 183.
43. Henri Testelin, Louis XIV establishing the Academy of Sciences (1666) and the Observatory (1667), 1668, oil on canvas. Versailles.
44. Mikhail P. Klodt, Peter at Work in his Lodgings at Zaandam, 1878, etching. Scribner's Monthly, vol. XXI, no. 1, Nov. 1880, p. 3.
45. Mstislav V. Dobuzhinskii, Petr the Great in Holland. Amsterdam, the East India Company Wharf, sketch for painting for the Petr I City School, St. Petersburg, 1910, oil on paper on card, 41 x 52.8 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.

46. Grigorii or Nikanor G. Chernetsov, Petr in his Workshop in Zaandam, 1840s, oil on canvas, 27.7 x 38.5 cms. Russian Museum.
47. Petr V. Basin, Petr I draws in an exercise book, while leaning against a boat, late 1830s - early 1840s, graphite pencil on paper, 24 x 19 cms. Russian Museum.
48. Petr V. Basin, The Foundation of St. Petersburg in 1703, late 1830s - early 1840s, graphite pencil on paper, 21 x 27.5 cms. Russian Museum.
49. Anton I. Ivanov, Petr I on the Banks of the Neva, 1843, oil on canvas, 20 x 14.5 cms. Russian Museum.
50. Stanislav Khlebovskii, An Assembly in the Reign of Petr I, 1858, oil on canvas. Russian Museum. Engraving by E. Helm, Brikner, Istoriya Petra Velikogo, pl. facing p. 648.
51. William Powell Frith, Charles II's Last Sunday, 1867, oil on canvas, 168 x 260 cms. Private collection, Britain.
52. Aleksandr N. Benua, The Summer Garden in the Reign of Petr the Great, 1902, watercolour on paper. Location unknown. Reproduced from postcard, 1903.
53. Valentin A. Serov, The Great Eagle Cup, 1910, tempera on card, 90.5 x 65 cms. National Picture Gallery of Armenia, Erevan.
54. Nikolai A. Zauerbeid, Petr I quells his Cruel Soldiers at the Taking of Narva in 1704, 1859, oil on canvas, 169.7 x 214.8 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
55. Karl K. Shteiben, Petr the Great on Lake Ladoga, 1812, oil on canvas. Location unknown. Engraving by Seryakov, after N. S. Negadaev, 1872, Petrov & Shubinskii, Al'bom, p. 61.
56. Petr M. Shamshin, Petr the Great at Lakhta, 1844, oil on canvas. Tret'yakov Gallery. Engraving by K. Veierman, after Negadaev, 1872, Petrov & Shubinskii, Al'bom, p. 157.

57. Nikolai P. Zagorskii, Petr the Great at Lakhta, 1882, engraving. Brikner, Istoriya Petra Velikogo, pl. facing p. 678.

Chapter 3:

58. Jean-Louis-Ernest Meissonier, The Lost Game, 1858, oil on canvas, 20.7 x 26 cms. Wallace Collection.

59. Karl F. Gun, St. Bartholomew's Eve, 1868, oil on canvas, 115 x 89.5 cms. Russian Museum.

60. Vyacheslav G. Shvarts, Ivan the Terrible with the Corpse of his Son, Killed by Him, in Aleksandrovskoe, 1864, oil on canvas, 71 x 89 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.

61. Hippolyte Delaroche, Cromwell gazing at the Body of Charles I, 1831, oil on canvas. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nimes.

62. Vyacheslav G. Shvarts, Palm Sunday in Moscow in the Reign of Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich, 1865, oil on canvas, 60 x 122 cms. Russian Museum.

63. Vyacheslav G. Shvarts, A Scene from the Domestic Life of the Russian Tsars (A Game of Chess), 1865, oil on card, glued to canvas, 26.5 x 33 cms. Russian Museum.

64. Vyacheslav G. Shvarts, Patriarch Nikon at New Jerusalem, 1867, oil on wood, 21.7 x 16 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.

65. Konstantin E. Makovskii, The Russian Bride's Attire, 1889, oil on canvas, 334 x 423.3 cms. M. H. De Young Memorial Museum, San Francisco.

66. Andrei P. Ryabushkin, A Merchant's Family of the Seventeenth Century, 1896, oil on canvas, 143 x 213 cms. Russian Museum.

67. Andrei P. Ryabushkin, "They're Coming!" Muscovites at the time of the Arrival of a Foreign Embassy in the late Seventeenth Century, 1901 oil on canvas, 204 x 103 cms. Russian Museum.

68. Sergei V. Ivanov, Strel'tsy (In the Strel'tsy Quarter), 1907, tempera on paper on card, 59 x 81 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.

69. Konstantin D. Flavitskii, Princess Tarakanova, 1864, oil on canvas, 245 x 187.5 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.

70. Nikolai D. Dmitriev-Orenburgskii, The Strel'tsy Revolt, 1862, oil on canvas, 150 x 200 cms. Taganrog Picture Gallery.

71. Anon., after Schurmann, Tsaritsa Natal'ya Kirillovna Naryshkina, c. 1687-94, oil on canvas. State Historical Museum, Moscow.

#### Chapter 4:

72. K. Brozh, The Celebrations on 30 May 1872. Thirty Paintings from the life of Petr the Great on Tsaritsa's Meadow in St. Petersburg during the Festivities, 1872, engraving by E. Dammyuller. Petrov & Shubinskii, Al'bom, p. 252.

73. G. Broling, The Celebrations on Emperor Petr the Great's 200th Jubilee. The Transportation of the Boat 'The Grandfather of the Russian Fleet' to Moscow. Festivities on of Petr's Square, St. Petersburg, 1872, engraving by Dammyuller. Petrov & Shubinskii, Al'bom, p. 236.

74. Grigorii G. Myasoedov, The Grandfather of the Russian Fleet, 1871, oil on canvas, 100 x 155 cms. Arts Museum of Uzbekistan, Tashkent.

75. Grigorii G. Myasoedov, Petr at Zaandam, 1878, pencil (?) on paper. Private collection, Russia.

76. Ivan F. Zubov, Petr I's Boat, 1722, engraving. Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow.

77. Aleksandr K. Begrov, The Boat found by Petr I (1688) in Izmailovo, which aroused his interest in navigation, and was named by him 'The Grandfather of the Russian Fleet', 1872, engraving. Petrov & Shubinskii, Al'bom, p. 24.

78. Nikolai N. Ge, Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof, 1871, oil on canvas, 135.7 x 173 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
79. The Great Hall, Palace of Monplaisir, Peterhof.
80. Jan Steen, Esther before Ahasuerus, n. d., oil on canvas, 105 x 83 cms. Hermitage.
81. Gerard ter Borch, The Message, n. d., oil on canvas, 70 x 54 cms. Hermitage.
82. Gerrit van Honthorst, Christ before the High Priest, 1617, oil on canvas, 272 x 183 cms. National Gallery, London.
83. Hippolyte Delaroche, Cromwell gazing at the Body of Charles I (fig. 61), detail.
84. Valentin A. Serov, Petr I, 1907, tempera on card, 68.5 x 88 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
85. Jacob Houbraken, after Carel de Moor Petr I, Emperor of the Russians, 1718, engraving, 55.2 x 41.3 cms. Hermitage.
86. Nikolai N. Ge, Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof, detail of Petr.
87. Johann Melchior Dinglinger, Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich, c. 1711-12, enamel miniature. Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden.
88. Carl Wortmann, after Johann Paul Lüdden, Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich, 1728, engraving. Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow.
89. Johann Gottfried Tannauer, Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich, c. 1712-16, oil on canvas, 80 x 60 cms. Russian Museum.
90. Nikolai N. Ge, Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof, detail of Aleksei.

91. William Lindsay Windus, Too Late, 1858, oil on canvas, 95.2 x 76.2 cms. Tate Gallery, London.
92. Hubert Gravelot, after Francis Hayman, Hamlet, Act 3, Scene 7, 1740s, engraving. Reproduced in Ashton, Shakespeare: His Life and Work in Paintings, Prints and Ephemera, p. 131.
93. Nikolai N. Ge, Petr I, 1870, pencil sketch for Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof. Tret'yakov Gallery.
94. Nikolai N. Ge, Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof, 1870, sketch, oil on canvas, 22 x 26.7 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
95. Nikolai N. Ge, "What is Truth?" - Christ and Pilate, 1890, oil on canvas, 233 x 171 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
96. Nikolai N. Ge, Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof, 1872, oil on canvas, 134.5 x 173 cms. Russian Museum.
97. Il'ya E. Repin, Ivan the Terrible and his son Ivan, 16 November, 1581, 1885, oil on canvas, 199.5 x 254 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
98. Nikolai A. Yaroshenko, The Old and the Young, 1881, oil on canvas, 90 x 100 cms. Russian Museum.
99. Boris V. Ioganson, The Interrogation of the Communists, 1933, oil on canvas, 211 x 279 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
100. Aleksandr N. Benua, Design for Act 1, Scene 1 of Merezhkovskii's tragedy, Tsarevich Aleksei, 1920, watercolour on paper. Bakhrushin Theatrical Museum, Moscow.

#### Chapter 5:

101. Il'ya E. Repin, The Regent Tsarevna Sof'ya Alekseevna, in the year after her Imprisonment in the Novodevichii Convent, during the Execution of the Strel'tsy and the Torture of her Serving-women, October 1698, 1879, oil on canvas, 201.8 x 145.3 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.

102. Nikolai Sokolov, after Nikolai Sinyavskii, Petr the Great's Courage, 1805, engraving. State Historical Museum, Moscow.
103. Pavel A. Ivachev, The Banishing of the Schismatics, led by Nikita Pustosvyat, from the Facetted Chamber, in the reign of Ivan and Petr Alekseevich in 1682, 1872, lead pencil on paper on card, 70 x 92.5 cms. Museum of the Academy of Arts, St. Petersburg.
104. Nikolai A. Koshelev, The Debate of the Schismatics before the Court, 1869. V. Zolotov, Istoriya Rossii v kartinakh, 3rd ed., St. Petersburg, 1869.
105. Il'ya E. Repin, The Ovation for Nadezhda Vasil'evna Stasova, 1889, sepia on paper. Institute of Literature of the Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg.
106. Anon., Tsarevna Sof'ya Alekseevna, the 'Eagle' portrait, 1682-89, oil on canvas, 119 x 100 cms., detail. Russian Museum.
107. Anon., Tsarevna Sof'ya Alekseevna, late eighteenth - early nineteenth century, oil on canvas, detail. Hermitage.
108. Anon., Tsarevna Sof'ya Alekseevna, Co-Regent of Russia, d. 1704, the 'Versailles' portrait, nineteenth-century engraving by François Audibrant, after Louis-Étienne Guemied, detail. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.
109. Anon., Tsaritsa Marfa Matveevna Apraksina, c. 1682, oil on canvas, 89 x 72 cms. Russian Museum.
110. Anon., Petr I, the 'Serbian' portrait, 1710s-20s, oil on canvas, 111.5 x 81 cms., detail. Hermitage.
111. Il'ya E. Repin, The Regent Tsarevna Sof'ya, detail.
112. Il'ya E. Repin, Sarra Aleksandrovna de Bove, study for The Regent Tsarevna Sof'ya, 1878, graphite pencil on paper, 19.5 x 29 cms. Russian Museum.



113. Il'ya E. Repin, Elena Ivanovna Blaramberg-Apreleva, study for The Regent Tsarevna Sof'ya, 1878, oil on canvas. Location unknown. Lyaskovskaya, Repin: Zhizn' i Tvorchestvo 1844-1930, p. 140.
114. Il'ya E. Repin, Valentina Semenovna Serova, study for The Regent Tsarevna Sof'ya, 1879, graphite pencil and soft black crayon on paper, 29.8 x 24.7 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
115. Photograph of Valentina S. Serova, 1880s. Reproduced in V. S. Serova, Kak Ros Moi Syn, facing p. 32.
116. Il'ya E. Repin, The Regent Tsarevna Sof'ya, sketch, 1879, graphite pencil and soft black crayon on paper, 29.5 x 19.8 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
117. Il'ya E. Repin, In the Laboratory, 1881, oil on canvas, 33 x 37 cms. Collection of A. L. Myasnikov, Leningrad (1948).
118. Il'ya E. Repin, They Did Not Expect Her, 1883-98, oil on wood, 44.5 x 37 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
119. Il'ya E. Repin, A Female Revolutionary awaiting Execution (In Solitary Confinement), or Anguish, c. 1884, oil on canvas. Private collection, Czech Republic.
120. Il'ya E. Repin, Sophia's Appeal to her Partisans, 1880, engraving. Scribner's Monthly, vol. XX, no. 4, August 1880, p. 576.
121. Vasilii G. Perov, Nikita Pustosvyat: the Debate on the Faith, 1880-1, oil on canvas, 336.5 x 512 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
122. Klavdii V. Lebedev, The Death of Tsar Fedor Alekseevich, 1897, oil on canvas. Location unknown. V. S. Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 126.
123. Mikhail P. Klodt, The Interrogation of Tsarevna Sof'ya, 27 September 1698, c. 1894. Russkii Sever, 1894.

Chapter 6:

124. Vasilii I. Surikov, Petr the Great drags boats from Onega Bay to Lake Onega to capture Noteburg Fortress from the Swedes, 1872, graphite pencil on paper, 52.5 x 70.8 cms. Russian Museum.

125. Vasilii I. Surikov, Dinner and fellowship of Petr the Great at the home of Prince Menshikov with Dutch sailors from a merchant vessel which Petr, as pilot, led from Kotlin Island to the Governor-General's house, 1872, graphite pencil on paper, 51.2 x 69 cms. State Literary Museum, Moscow.

126. Vasilii I. Surikov, The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy, 1881, oil on canvas, 218 x 379 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.

127. Vasilii I. Surikov, The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy, detail.

128. Vasilii I. Surikov, The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy, detail of bowing Strelets.

129. Vasilii I. Surikov, The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy, detail of black-bearded Strelets and his wife (Stepan Torgoshin and Elena Deryagina).

130. Vasilii I. Surikov, The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy, detail of red-bearded Strelets (Kuz'ma).

131. X-ray photograph of The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy, showing seam to the right of Petr, where the canvas was extended.

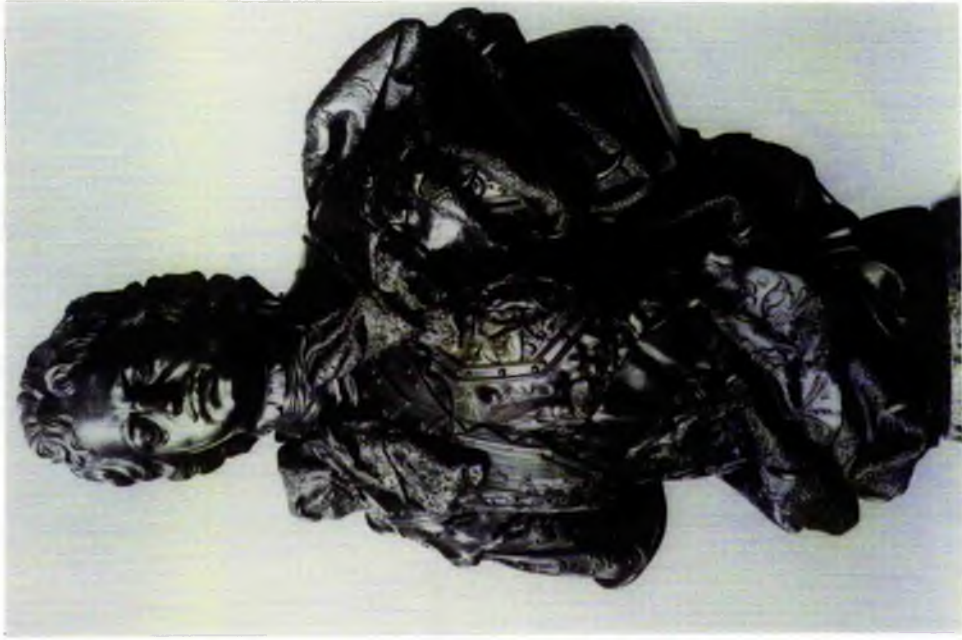
132. Vasilii I. Surikov, The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy, first sketch of the composition, 1878, graphite pencil on paper, 18.6 x 26.8 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.

133. X-ray photograph of The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy: hanged Strel'tsy.

134. Diagram of the composition of The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy, M. Voloshin, Surikov, p. 63.
135. Vasilii I. Surikov, Petr I, study after engraving by William Faithorne the Younger (fig. 7), n. d., graphite pencil on paper. Krasnoyarsk Regional Art Gallery.
136. Vasilii I. Surikov, The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy, detail of Petr.
137. Vasilii I. Surikov, Foreigner (Guarient), study, 1879, oil on canvas, 43 x 24 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
138. Ural Cossack woman's traditional costume, late nineteenth century. Museum of Ethnography, St. Petersburg. M. N. Mertsalova, Poeziya Narodnogo Kostyuma, p. 131, fig. 117.
139. Ivan I. Lanskoi, The Execution of the Strel'tsy, 1872, watercolour on paper. Astrakhan Art Gallery.
140. Aleksandr S. Yanov, The Execution of the Strel'tsy, 1882, graphite pencil and white on paper, 26 x 47 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
141. Vasilii I. Surikov, Two Women in a Wooden Izba, first sketch for Menshikov at Berezoy, 1881, oil on canvas, 26.9 x 24.2 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
142. Vasilii I. Surikov, Menshikov at Berezoy, 1883, oil on canvas, 169 x 204 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
143. Bartolomeo Carlo Rastrelli, Bust of Prince Aleksandr Danilovich Menshikov, 1716-7, bronze, height 122.5 cms. Hermitage.
144. Vasilii I. Surikov, Aleksandr Danilovich Menshikov, study from marble version of bust by Rastrelli, 1882, watercolour on paper, 24 x 34 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.

145. Vasiliĭ I. Surikov, Portrait of a Man (Studennikov/Nevenglovskii), study for Menshikov at Berezov, 1882, oil on canvas, 60 x 48 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
146. Vasiliĭ I. Surikov, Menshikov at Berezov, detail of Menshikov.
147. Attr. Johann Heinrich Wedekind, after Johann Gottfried Tannauer, Mariya Aleksandrovna Menshikova, mid-1720s, oil on canvas, 77 x 61 cms. Menshikov Palace, St. Petersburg.
148. Attr. Johann Heinrich Wedekind, after Johann Gottfried Tannauer, Aleksandra Aleksandrovna Menshikova, mid-1720s, oil on canvas, 77 x 61 cms. Menshikov Palace, St. Petersburg.
149. Vasiliĭ I. Surikov, Portraits of the Menshikov Family, studies after portraits at Aleksandrovscoe, 1882, watercolour on paper, 24.2 x 34 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
150. Vasiliĭ I. Surikov, Elizaveta Avgustovna Surikova, study for Mariya Menshikova in Menshikov at Berezov, 1882, watercolour on paper, 34.5 x 25 cms. Collection of the artist's descendants, Moscow.
151. Vasiliĭ I. Surikov, Menshikov at Berezov, detail of Mariya Menshikova.
152. Vasiliĭ I. Surikov, Menshikov at Berezov, detail of icons.
153. Vasiliĭ I. Surikov, Boyarynya Morozova, 1887, oil on canvas, 304 x 587.5 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
154. V. I. Surikov, Boyarynya Morozova, first sketch of the composition, 1881, oil on canvas, 48.7 x 72 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
155. Diagram of the composition of Boyarynya Morozova. Voloshin, Surikov, p. 96.
156. Aleksandr D. Litovchenko, Boyarynya Morozova, 1881, oil on canvas. Novgorod Historical and Architectural Museum-Reserve.

157. Vasilii G. Perov, The Torture of Boyarynya Morozova, 1881, graphite pencil on paper. Tret'yakov Gallery.
158. Vasilii I. Surikov, Boyarynya Morozova, detail of Princess Avdot'ya Urusova.
159. Embroidered shawl, early nineteenth-century. Museum of Ethnography, St. Petersburg. Mertsalova, Poeziya Narodnogo Kostyuma, p. 111, fig. 98.
160. Early nineteenth-century Old Believer costume. Nizhnii-Novgorod Historical and Architectural Museum-Reserve. Mertsalova, Poeziya Narodnogo Kostyuma, p. 36, fig. 27.
161. Vasilii I. Surikov, Head of Boyarynya Morozova (Avdot'ya Torgoshina?), c. 1886, oil on canvas, 48.2 x 35.7 cms. Tret'yakov Gallery.
162. Photograph of Anna Ivanovna Kostina, 1880s-90s. Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis', p. 500.
163. Vasilii I. Surikov, Boyarynya Morozova, detail of Boyarynya Morozova.
164. Vasilii I. Surikov, Boyarynya Morozova, detail of Boyarynya Morozova.
165. Vasilii I. Surikov, Boyarynya Morozova, detail of the Holy Fool.
166. Photograph of Vasilii I. Surikov as Stepan Razin, 1906. Kemenov, Vasily Surikov, p. 30.
167. Photograph of Aleksandr III in Muscovite costume, late 1880s-90s. Mansell Collection.



1. B. C. Rastrelli, Bust of Petr I (1723-30, Hermitage).



2. B. C. Rastrelli, Equestrian Statue of Petr I (1716-44, erected 1800, Klenovaya Ulitsa, St. Petersburg).



3. M.-A. Collot, Head of Petr I (Bronze Horseman) (1767,  
Russian Museum, St. Petersburg).



4. E. M. Falconet & M.-A. Collot, Monument to Petr I (Bronze Horseman) (unveiled 1782, Decembrists' (formerly Senate) Square, St. Petersburg).



5. E. M. Falconet & M.-A. Collot, The Bronze Horseman, detail.



6. V. I. Surikov, View of Petr I's Monument in Senate Square  
(1870, Russian Museum).





7. Wm. Faithorne the Younger. The Grand Czar of Moscow  
(1698, British Museum, London).



8. A. Schoonebeck, Emperor Petr I (1703,  
Saltykov-Shchedrin Public Library, St. Petersburg).



9. H. Rigaud, Louis XIV (1701, Louvre).



10. J. M. Nattier, Petr I (1717, Hermitage).



11. B. C. Rastrelli, Bust of Petr I, detail of armour  
(Hermitage).



12. J. G. Tannauer, Petr I at the Battle of Poltava  
(1710s, Russian Museum).



13. C. Le Brun, Louis XIV's Personal Rule, detail (1679-84, ceiling, Hall of Mirrors, Versailles).



14. J. Amigoni, Petr the Great with Minerva, detail  
(1732-4, Hermitage).



15. A. Bosse. The Joy of France (1638. Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge).



16. A. F. Zubov, vignette from Maritime Prints, detail (1718, reproduced in Alekseeva, Gravvura Petrovskogo Vremeni).





17. A. Matveev, after Carel de Moor, Petr I  
(c. 1724-5, Hermitage).



18. J. G. Tannauer, Petr I (1710s, Hermitage).



19. B. C. Rastrelli, Wax Bust of Petr I (1719, Hermitage)



20. B. C. Rastrelli, Life-size Wax Effigy of Petr I  
(1725, Hermitage).



21. F. A. Bruni. The Death of Camilla, Sister of Horatius  
(1824, Russian Museum).



22. A. P. Losenko. Vladimir and Rogneda  
(1770, Russian Museum).



23. A. I. Ivanov. The Brave Deed of a Kievan Youth during the Siege of Kiev by the Pechenegs in 968 (c. 1810, Russian Museum).



24. J.-A. D. Ingres. Don Pedro de Toledo kissing Henri IV's Sword (1820, private collection, Oslo).



25. J.-A. D. Ingres. Paolo Malatesta and Francesca da Rimini  
(1819, Musée d'Angers).



26. H. (Paul) Delaroche. Cardinal Mazarin Dying  
(1830, Wallace Collection, London).



27. H. Delaroche. The Princes in the Tower (1831, Wallace Collection).



28. K. P. Bryullov. The Last Day of Pompeii (1833, Russian Museum).



29. K. P. Bryullov. The Death of Inez de Castro, Morganatic Wife of Dom Pedro, the Infante of Portugal (1834. Russian Museum).



30. A. K. Begrov. The Petr Gallery in the Imperial Hermitage Museum (1872. in Petrov & Shubinskii. Albom 200-letnego Yubileva Imperatora Petra Velikogo, 1672-1872).





31. A. G. Venetsianov. Petr the Great, the Foundation of St. Petersburg (1838. Tret'yakov Gallery, Moscow).



32. Le Blond workshop, after C. Le Brun. Louis XIV's Foundation of Les Invalides in 1674, tapestry, detail (1670s, Versailles).



33. P. V. Basin. Petr I, as an Infant, surrounded by his Tutors in Bovar Costume, finds a Sabre among a Merchant's Gifts (late 1830s - early 1840s, Russian Museum).



34. K. K. Shteiben. Petr the Great in Childhood, saved by his Mother from the Fury of the Strel'tsy (1830, Russian Museum).



35. K. K. Shteiben. Petr the Great in Childhood, saved by his Mother from the Fury of the Strel'tsv. detail.



36. V. K. Shebuev. The Election of Mikhail Fedorovich to the Tsardom (n. d., Russian Museum).



37. V. K. Demidov. Tsaritsa Natal'ya Kirillovna with Tsarevich Petr on the Red Staircase, 1848, Russian Museum.



38. P. V. Basin, Petr I uncovers a Strel'tsy Conspiracy  
(late 1830s - early 1840s, Russian Museum).



39. A. Zemtsov, Petr the Great at Tsykler's House  
(1881, engraving in Niva, no. 6, 1881).



40. A. I. Sharleman, Petr I catches the Conspirators in Tsvkler's House,  
23 February 1697 (1884, Russian Museum).



41. N. P. Zagorskii, The Arrest of Tsvkler (1882, engraving in Brikner,  
Istoriva Petra Velikogo).



42. V. V. Mate, after J. Ottens, Petr the Great in Russian Dress, during his stay in Holland in the Great Embassy (1882, engraving in Brikner, Istoriva Petra Velikogo).



43. H. Testelin, Louis XIV establishing the Academy of Sciences (1666) and the Observatory (1667) (1668, Versailles).



PETER AT WORK IN HIS LODGINGS AT ZAANDAM. (FROM AN ETCHING BY FAKOS MICHEL KLODT.)

44. M. P. Klodt, Peter at Work in his Lodgings at Zaandam (1879, reproduced in Scribner's Monthly, vol. XXI, no. 1, Nov. 1880).



45. M. V. Dobuzhinskii, Petr the Great in Holland. Amsterdam, the East India Company Wharf, sketch (1910, Tret'yakov Gallery).





46. G. G. or N. G. Chernetsov, Petr in his Workshop in Zaandam  
(1840s, Russian Museum).



47. P. V. Basin, Petr I draws in an exercise book, while leaning against a boat (late 1830s - early 1840s, Russian Museum).



48. P. V. Basin, The Foundation of St. Petersburg in 1703  
(late 1830s - early 1840s, Russian Museum).



49. Anton I. Ivanov, Petr I on the Banks of the Neva  
(1843, Russian Museum).



50. S. Khlebovskii, An Assembly in the Reign of Petr I (1858, Russian Museum; engraving by E. Helm, 1882, in Brikner, Istorija Petra Velikogo).



51. W. P. Frith, Charles II's Last Sunday (1867, private collection, Britain).



52. A. N. Benua, The Summer Garden in the Reign of Petr the Great (1902, location unknown).



53. V. A. Serov, The Great Eagle Cup (1910, National Picture Gallery of Armenia, Erevan).



54. N. A. Zauerbeid, Petr I quells his Cruel Soldiers at the Taking of Narva in 1704 (1859, Tret'yakov Gallery).



55. K. K. Shteiben, Petr the Great on Lake Ladoga (1812, location unknown; engraving by Seryakov, after Negadaev, 1872, in Petrov & Shubinskii, Al'bom).



56. P. M. Shamshin, Petr the Great at Lakhta (1844, Tret'yakov Gallery; engraving by Veierman, after Negadaev, 1872, in Petrov & Shubinskii, Al'bom).



57. N. P. Zagorskii, Petr the Great at Lakhta (1882, engraving in Brikner, Istoriya Petra Velikogo).



58. J.-L.-E. Meissonier, The Lost Game (1858, Wallace Collection).



59. K. F. Gun, St. Bartholomew's Eve (1868, Russian Museum).





60. V. G. Shvarts, Ivan the Terrible with the Corpse of his Son, Killed by Him, in Aleksandrovskoe (1864, Tret'yakov Gallery).



61. H. Delaroche, Cromwell gazing at the Body of Charles I (1831, Musee des Beaux-Arts, Nimes).



62. V. G. Shvarts, Palm Sunday in Moscow in the Reign of Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich (1865, Russian Museum).



63. V. G. Shvarts, A Scene from the Domestic Life of the Russian Tsars (A Game of Chess) (1865, Russian Museum).



64. V. G. Shvarts, Patriarch Nikon at New Jerusalem  
(1867, Tret'yakov Gallery).



65. K. E. Makovskii, The Russian Bride's Attire (1889,  
M. H. De Young Memorial Museum, San Francisco).



66. A. P. Ryabushkin. A Merchant's Family of the Seventeenth Century  
(1896, Russian Museum).



67. A. P. Ryabushkin. "They're Coming!" Muscovites at the time of the  
Arrival of a Foreign Embassy in the late Seventeenth Century  
(1901, Russian Museum).



68. S. V. Ivanov, Strel'tsv (In the Strel'tsv Quarter)  
(1907, Tret'yakov Gallery).



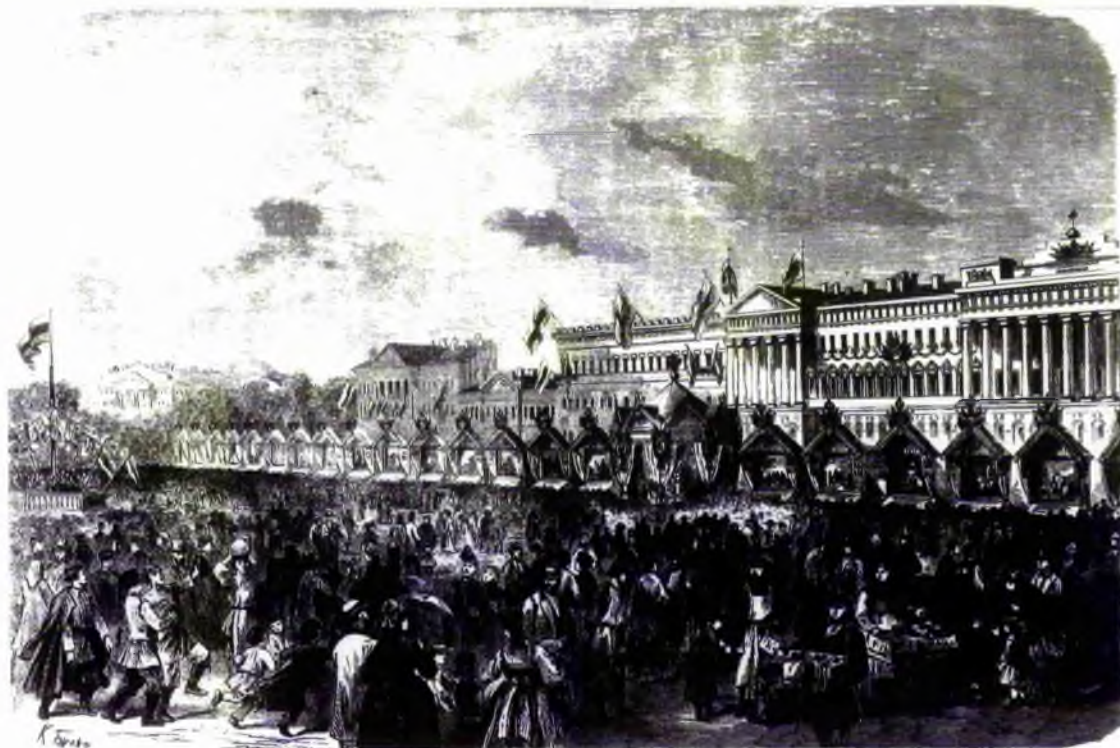
69. K. D. Flavitskii, Princess Tarakanova (1864, Tret'yakov Gallery).



70. N. D. Dmitriev-Orenburgskii, The Strel'tsy Revolt  
(1862, Taganrog Picture Gallery).



71. Anon., after Schurmann, Tsaritsa Natal'va Kirillovna Narvshkina  
(c. 1687-94, State Historical Museum, Moscow).

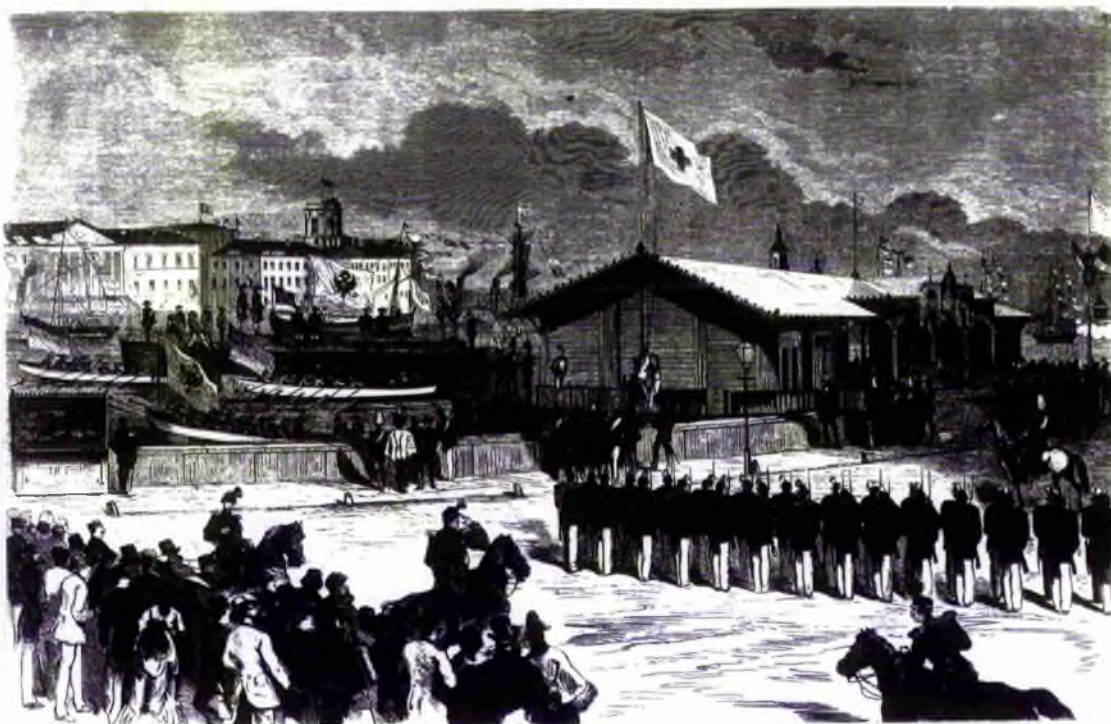


Празднование 30-го мая 1872 года.

Рис. А. Липин, грав. В. Давыдов.

Гравюра картинъ жизни Петра Великаго на Царыцыномъ лугу въ С.-Петербурѣ, во время торжества

72. K. Brozh. The Celebrations on 30 May 1872. Thirty Paintings from the life of Petr the Great on Tsaritsa's Meadow in St. Petersburg during the Festivities (1872, in Petrov & Shubinskii, Al'bom).



Празднование 200-лѣтняго юбилея Императора Петра Великаго.

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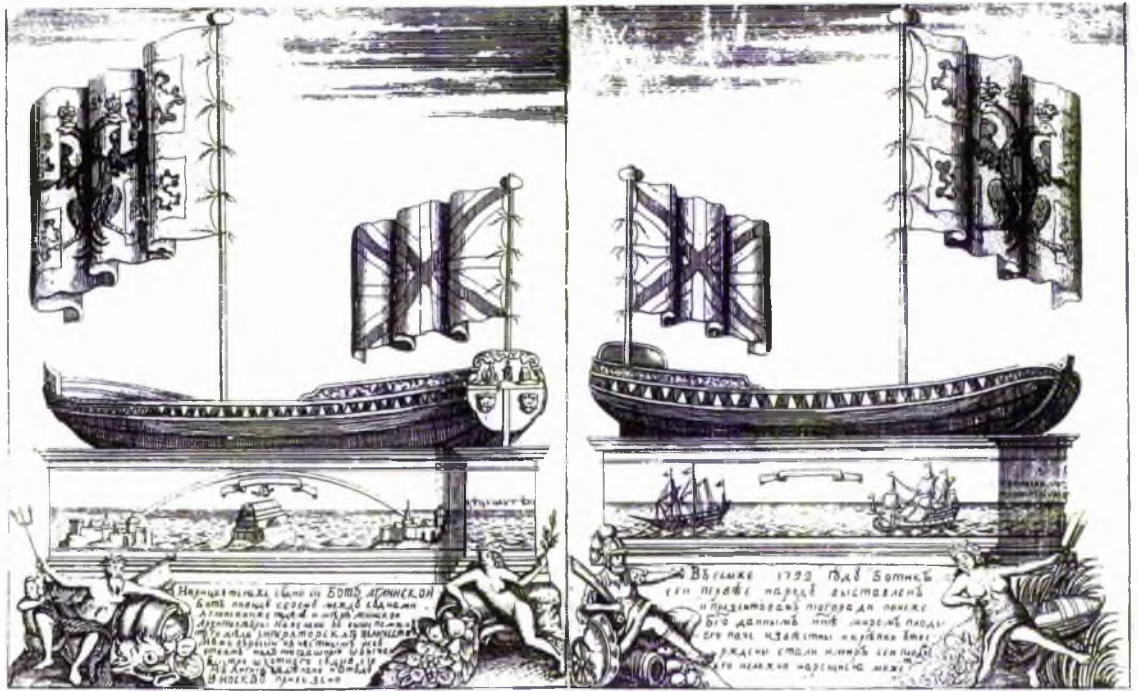


74. G. G. Myasoedov, The Grandfather of the Russian Fleet (1871, Arts Museum of Uzbekistan, Tashkent).

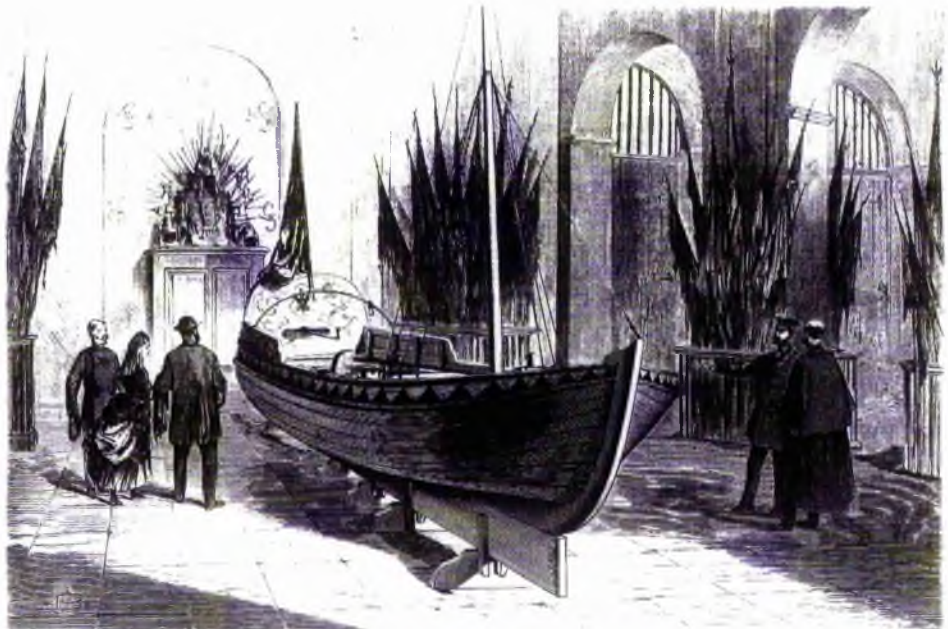


75. G. G. Myasoedov, Petr at Zaandam (1878, private collection, Russia).





76. I. F. Zubov, Petr I's Boat (1722, Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow).



Вотикъ, найденный Петромъ I (1688 г.) въ селѣ Измайловѣ

и подаренный въ 1872 г. императоромъ Александромъ II (в. кн. Голицынъ)

77. A. K. Begrov, The Boat found by Petr I (1688) in Izmailovo, which aroused his interest in navigation, and was named by him 'The Grandfather of the Russian Fleet' (1872, in Petrov & Shubinskii, Al'bom).



78. N. N. Ge, Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof  
(1871, Tret'yakov Gallery).



79. The Great Hall, Palace of Monplaisir, Peterhof.



80. J. Steen, Esther before Ahasuerus (n. d., Hermitage).



81. G. ter Borch, The Message (n. d., Hermitage).



82. G. van Honthorst, Christ before the High Priest  
(1617, National Gallery, London).



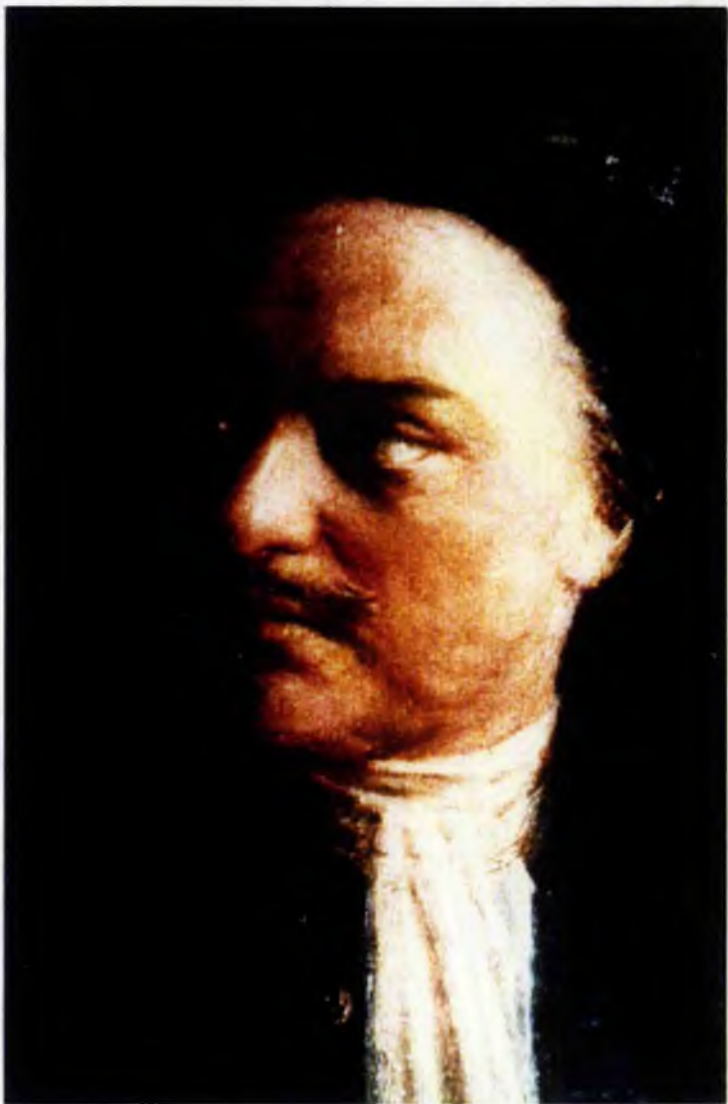
83. H. Delaroche, Cromwell gazing at the Body of Charles I. detail.



84. V. A. Serov, Petr I (1907, Tret'yakov Gallery).



85. J. Houbraken, after C. de Moor Petr I, Emperor of the Russians  
(1718, Hermitage).



86. N. N. Ge, Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof,  
detail of Petr (Tret'yakov Gallery).



87. J. M. Dinglinger, Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich  
(c. 1711-12, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden).





88. C. Wortmann, after J. P. Ludden, Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich  
(1728, Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow).



89. J. G. Tannauer, Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich



90. N. N. Ge, Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof,

1811, S. Altmann (The Art Newspaper Gallery)



91. W. L. Windus, Too Late (1858, Tate Gallery, London).



H A M L E T. Act 3, Sc. 7.

92. H. Gravelot, after F. Hayman, Hamlet, Act 3, Scene 7 (1740s, reproduced in Ashton, Shakespeare: His life and work in paintings, prints and ephemera).



93. N. N. Ge. Petr I (1870, pencil sketch for Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof, Tret'yakov Gallery).



94. N. N. Ge. Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof (1870, sketch, Tret'yakov Gallery).



95. N. N. Ge. "What is Truth?" - Christ and Pilate  
(1890. Tret'yakov Gallery).



96. N. N. Ge. Petr I interrogates Tsarevich Aleksei Petrovich at Peterhof  
(1872. Russian Museum).



97. I. E. Repin. Ivan the Terrible and his son Ivan, 16 November, 1581  
(1885, Tret'yakov Gallery).



98. N. A. Yaroshenko. The Old and the Young (1881, Russian Museum).





99. B. V. Ioganson. The Interrogation of the Communists  
(1933, Tret'yakov Gallery).



100. A. N. Benua. Design for Act 1, Scene 1 of Merezhkovskii's tragedy,  
Tsarevich Aleksei (1920, Bakhrushin Theatrical Museum, Moscow).



101. I. E. Repin. The Regent Tsarevna Sof'va Alekseevna, in the year after her Imprisonment in the Novodevichii Convent, during the Execution of the Strel'tsv and the Torture of her Serving-women, October 1698 (1879, Tret'yakov Gallery).



102. N. I. Sokolov, after N. Sinyavskii, Petr the Great's Courage  
(1805, State Historical Museum, Moscow).



103. P. A. Ivachev, The Banishing of the Schismatics, led by Nikita Pustosvyat, from the Faceted Chamber, in the reign of Ivan and Petr Alekseevich in 1682  
(1872, Museum of the Academy of Arts, St. Petersburg).



104. N. A. Koshelev. The Debate of the Schismatics before the Court (1869, reproduced in V. Zolotov, Istoriya Rossii v kartinakh, 3rd ed., St. Petersburg, 1869).



105. I. E. Repin, The Ovation for Nadezhda Vasil'evna Stasova (1889, Institute of Literature of the Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg).



106. Anon., Tsarevna Sof'va Alekseevna, detail of 'Eagle' portrait  
(1682-9, Russian Museum).



107. Anon., Tsarevna Sof'ya Alekseevna, detail  
(late 18th–early 19th C. Hermitage).



108. Anon., Tsarevna Sof'ya Alekseevna, Co-Regent of Russia, d. 1704, detail of 'Versailles' portrait (19th C. engraving by Audibran, after Guemied. Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris).



109. Anon., Tsaritsa Marfa Matveevna Apraksina  
(c. 1682, Russian Museum).



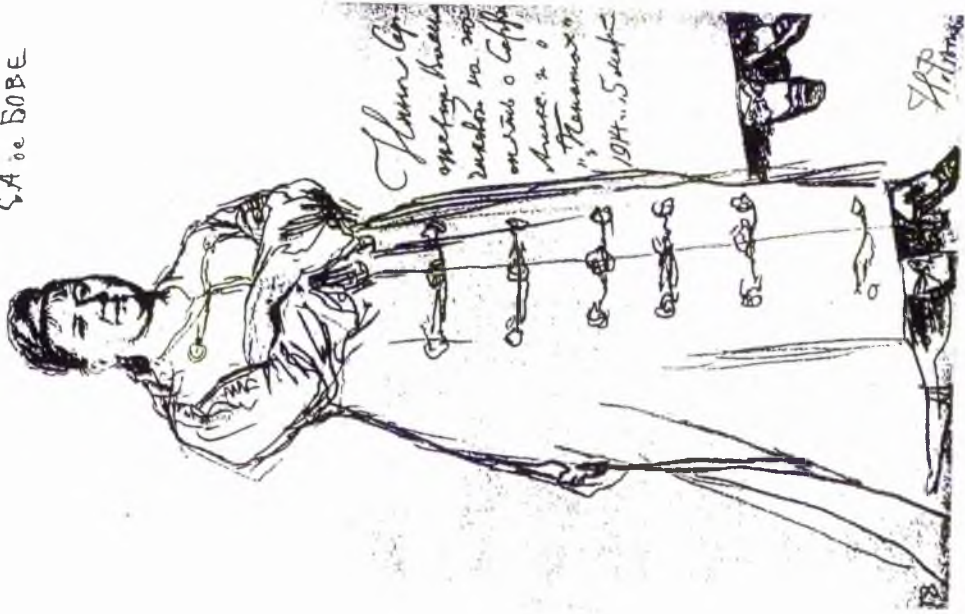


110. Anon., Petr I, detail of 'Serbian' portrait, (1710s-20s, Hermitage).



111. I. E. Repin, The Regent Tsarevna Sof'ya, detail.

С.А. де БОВЕ



112. I. E. Repin, Sarra de Bove, study for The Regent Tsarevna Sof'ya (1878, Russian Museum).



113. I. E. Repin, Elena Blaramberg-Apreleva, study for The Regent Tsarevna Sof'ya (1878, location unknown).



114. I. E. Repin, Valentina Serova, study for The Regent Tsarevna Sof'ya (1879, Tret'yakov Gallery).



115. Photograph of Valentina Serova (1880s, reproduced in Serova, Kak Ros Moi Syn).



116. I. E. Repin. The Regent Tsarevna Sof'ya, sketch  
(1879, Tret'yakov Gallery).



117. I. E. Repin. In the Laboratory (1881, collection of A. L. Myasnikov,  
Leningrad (1948)).



118. I. E. Repin, They Did Not Expect Her (1883-98, Tret'yakov Gallery).



119. I. E. Repin, A Female Revolutionary awaiting Execution  
(In Solitary Confinement), or Anguish (c. 1884,  
private collection (Czech Republic))





120. I. E. Repin. Sophia's Appeal to her Partisans (1880, engraving in Scribner's Monthly, vol. XX, no. 4, August 1880).



121. V. G. Perov. Nikita Pustosvvat: the Debate on the Faith (1880-1, Tretyakov Gallery).



122. K. V. Lebedev. The Death of Tsar Fedor Alekseevich  
(1897, location unknown).



123. M. P. Klodt. The Interrogation of Tsarevna Sof'ya, 27 September 1698  
(c. 1894, reproduced in Russkij Sever, 1894).



124. V. I. Surikov, Petr the Great drags boats from Onega Bay to Lake Onega to capture Noteburg Fortress from the Swedes (1872, Russian Museum).



125. V. I. Surikov, Dinner and fellowship of Petr the Great at the home of Prince Menshikov with Dutch sailors from a merchant vessel which Petr, as pilot, led from Kotlin Island to the Governor-General's house (1872, State Literary Museum, Moscow).



126. V. I. Surikov, The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy  
(1881, Tret'yakov Gallery).



127. V. I. Surikov, The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy, detail.



128. V. I. Surikov, The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy,  
detail of bowing Strel'tsy.



129. V. I. Surikov. The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsv. detail of black-bearded Strelets and his wife (Stepan Torgoshin and Elena Deryagina).



130. V. I. Surikov. The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsv. detail of red-bearded Strelets (Kuz'ma).

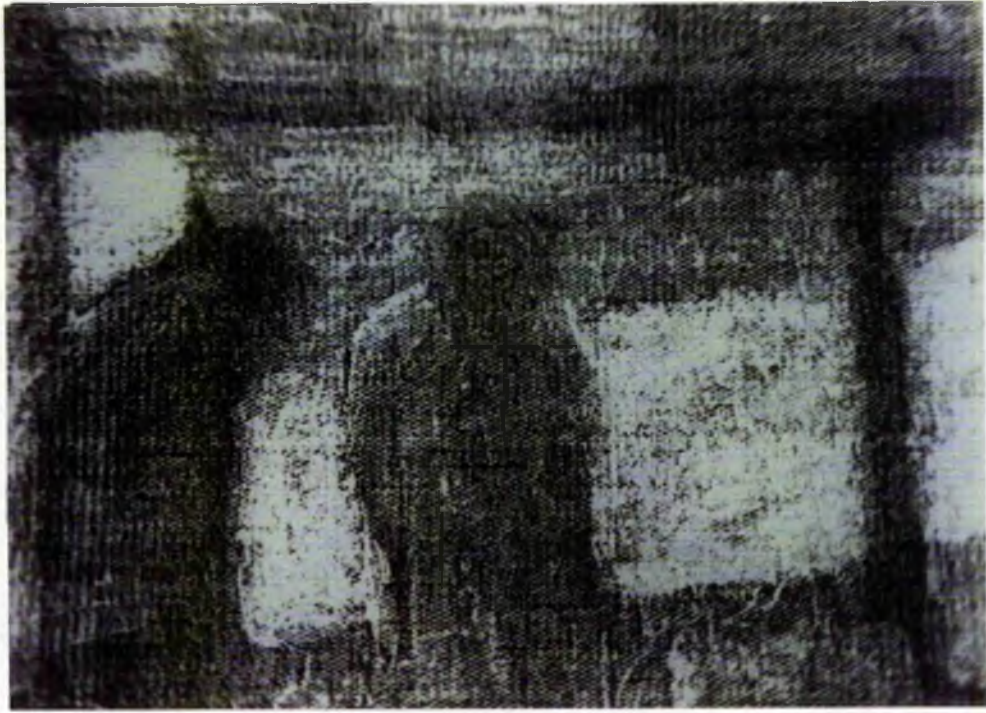


131. X-ray photograph of The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy: note seam to the right of Petr, where the canvas was extended.

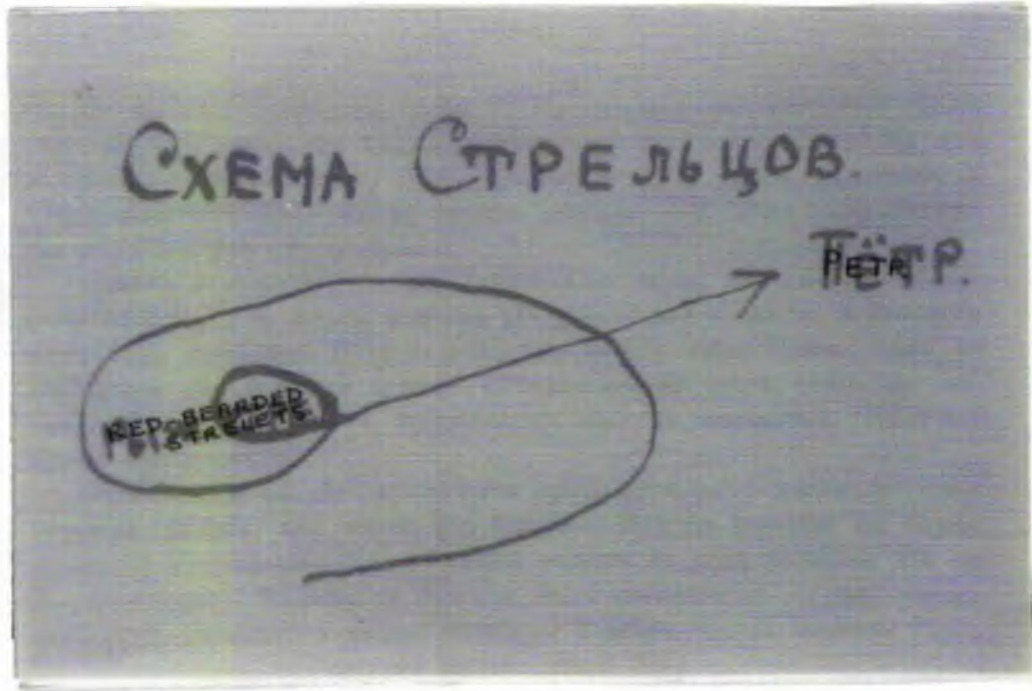


132. V. I. Surikov, The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy, first sketch of the composition (1878, Tret'yakov Gallery).





133. X-ray photograph of The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy:  
hanged Strel'tsy.



134. Diagram of the composition of The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy, published by Voloshin, Surikov.



135. V. I. Surikov, Petr I, study after engraving by Wm. Faithorne the Younger (fig. 7) (n. d., Krasnoyarsk Regional Art Gallery).



136. V. I. Surikov, The Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy,  
detail of Petr.



137. Ural Cossack woman's traditional costume  
(late 19th C., Museum of Ethnography, St. Petersburg).



138. V. I. Surikov, Foreigner (Guarient) (1879, Tret'yakov Gallery).



139. I. Lanskoï, The Execution of the Strel'tsv (1872. Astrakhan Art Gallery).



140. A. Yanov, The Execution of the Strel'tsv (1882. Tret'yakov Gallery).



141. V. I. Surikov. Two Women in a Wooden Izba (1881, Tret'yakov Gallery).



142. V. I. Surikov. Menshikov at Berezov (1883, Tret'yakov Gallery).



143. B. C. Rastrelli. Bust of Prince Aleksandr Danilovich Menshikov  
(1716-7. Hermitage).

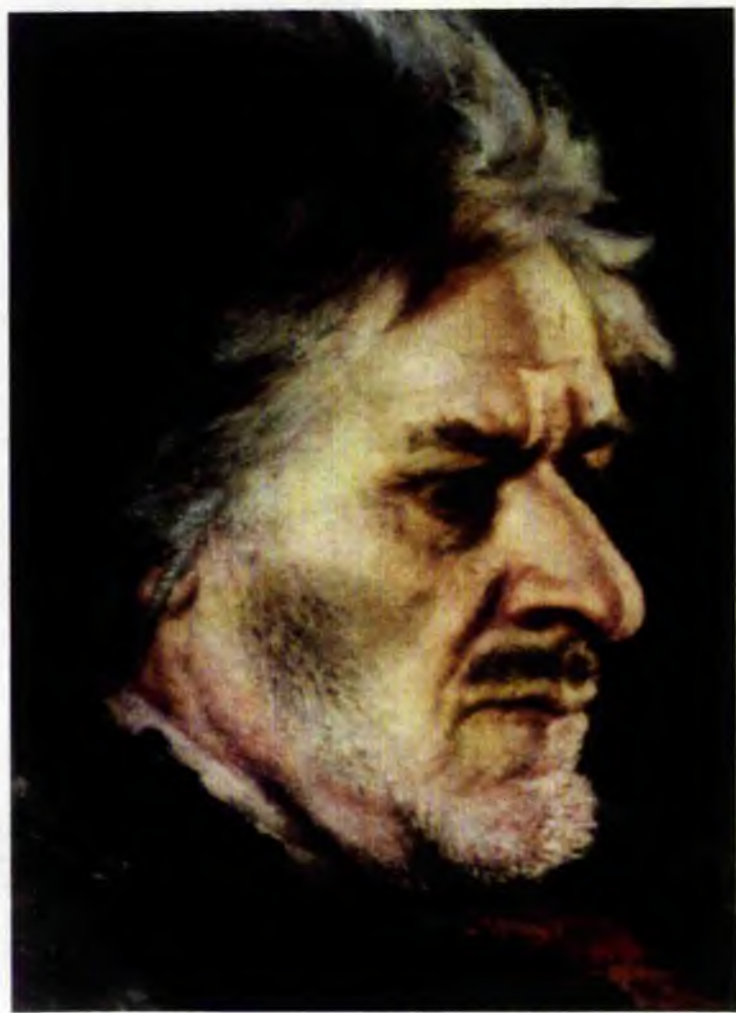


144. V. I. Surikov. Aleksandr Danilovich Menshikov, study from marble  
version of bust by Rastrelli (1882. Tret'yakov Gallery).





145. V. I. Surikov, Portrait of a Man (Studennikov/Nevenglovskii), study for Menshikov in Menshikov at Berezov (1882, Tret'yakov Gallery).



146. V. I. Surikov, Menshikov at Berezov, detail of Menshikov,



147. Attr. J. H. Wedekind, after Tannauer, Mariya Aleksandrovna Menshikova (mid-1720s, Menshikov Palace, St. Petersburg).



148. Attr. J. H. Wedekind, after Tannauer, Aleksandra A. Menshikova (mid-1720s, Menshikov Palace).



149. V. I. Surikov, Portraits of the Menshikov Family, after portraits at Aleksandrovscoe (1882, Tret'yakov Gallery).



150. V. I. Surikov, Elizaveta Avgustovna Surikova, study for Mariya Menshikova in Menshikov at Berezov (1882, collection of the artist's descendants, Moscow).



151. V. I. Surikov. Menshikov at Berezov, detail of Mariya Menshikova.



152. V. I. Surikov, Menshikov at Berezov, detail of icons.



153. V. I. Surikov, *Bovarynya Morozova* (1887, Tretyakov Gallery).



154. V. I. Surikov. Bovarynva Morozova, first sketch of the composition (1881, Tretyakov Gallery).



155. Diagram of the composition of Bovarynva Morozova, published by Voloshin, Surikov.





156. A. D. Litovchenko, Bovarynva Morozova (1881,  
Novgorod Historical and Architectural Museum-Reserve).



157. V. G. Perov, The Torture of Bovarynva Morozova  
(1881, Tret'yakov Gallery).



158. V. I. Surikov, Bovarynya Morozova,  
detail of Avdot'ya Urusova.



159. Embroidered shawl (early 19th C., Museum of Ethnography,  
St. Petersburg), comparable with fig. 158.



160. Early 19th C. Old Believer costume  
(Nizhnii-Novgorod Historical and Architectural  
Museum-Reserve).

161. V.



1. Surikov, Head of Boyarynya Morozova (Avdot'ya Torgoshina?)  
(c. 1886, Tret'yakov Gallery).



162. Photograph of Anna Kostina (1880s-90s, reproduced in  
Kemenov, Surikov: Istoricheskaya Zhivopis').



1. Surikov. Boyarynya Morozova, detail of Boyarynya Morozova.



164. V. I. Surikov, Boyarynya Morozova, detail of Boyarynya Morozova.



165. V. I. Surikov, Boyarynya Morozova, detail of the Holy Fool.



166. Photograph of Vasili Ivanovich Surikov as Stepan Razin  
(1906, reproduced in Kemenov, Vasily Surikov).





167. Photograph of Aleksandr III in Muscovite costume  
(Mansell Collection).