

Double Life, Camp Culture, and the Making of a Collective Identity” (Ch. 10) describes exactly the kind of lighthearted community-building process Petri is trying to capture as if it were something undescribed and exclusive to Petersburg. Furthermore, just because Kuzmin did not visit at night or describe sex in the garden itself is not proof that others did not participate in nighttime cruising and sex there.

Petri’s style tends to speculation and metaphor. She focuses on Kuzmin’s use of the term “literate,” expanding it from “men who were eager to have sex with other men” (171) to an ability to “read” the spaces of queer Petersburg, which Kuzmin may have been “particularly attuned to, given his literary achievements and preoccupations” (174). But I’m not convinced Kuzmin and Somov would have used “literate” (*gramotnyi*) to refer to themselves: they apply it to strangers, hooligans, and bath-house attendants—people who were “in the know.” The leap to a connection to reading and literature, from *gramotnyi* to *literaturnyi* seems far-fetched. The metaphor can only be stretched so far. This is symptomatic of the main problem with the volume: Petri’s account seems vague and unmoored from the concrete details of both her primary sources and some of her secondary ones.

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Russia in the Early Modern World: The Continuity of Change. By Donald Ostrowski. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2022, xiv, 559 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Glossary. Index. \$155.00, hard bound.
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Donald Ostrowski’s book is an interpretative history of Russia from 1450 to 1800 or 1801 (different cut off dates appear in different parts of the book). He challenges the traditional Petrine divide in Russian history by contending that the period saw a continuous development without major breaks. There were more important changes occurring during the Muscovite period (up to 1700) than under Peter I and his successors in the eighteenth century. Ostrowski organises his material into thematic chapters on imperial expansion; social mobility and the landowning class; military technology, tactics, and strategy; the pre-industrial economy; governmental structure and legislation; the church; and culture. All these topics have been extensively discussed in previous literature. Ostrowski’s book offers a selective coverage of these themes intertwined with historiographical essays. The discussion heavily focuses on men, though Ostrowski briefly comments on female landowners.

Ostrowski concludes that Russia was part of Eurasia. Russian society and economy were connected with the Eurasian economy and experienced common transformations in military technology and warfare that occurred across Eurasia, in particular the Euro-Ottoman zone. The main reasons for Russia’s imperial expansion were security concerns and aspirations to improve access to resources and trade routes. The Russian government employed different methods to sustain Russia’s territorial growth. The main forms of landowning in Muscovy, *votchina* (private estates held by members of the ruling class) and *pomest’e* (conditional grants of land) appeared simultaneously in the late fifteenth century; the service and administrative obligations of *votchina* owners quickly merged with those of *pomest’e* holders. In his approach to the church Peter I followed traditional state-church relations in Byzantium and Rus. The bedrock of Russian culture continued to be that of Byzantium from 1450 to 1800.

These observations raise several methodological issues related to Byzantium, external influences, and Europe. Byzantium ceased to exist in 1453. All subsequent

claims on Byzantine heritage are invented traditions. As numerous studies have demonstrated, Muscovite cultural practices, like court ceremonies or icon painting, claimed continuity from Byzantium but in fact were adaptations of diverse foreign and local traditions. The Muscovite reception of Byzantine models depended on court politics, the availability of cultural resources, language expertise, and the dynamic relationship between the crown and the church. Affected by these factors, foreign models underwent deep transformations during the process of borrowing in Russia. Ostrowski acknowledges Russia's agency in adapting state-of-the-art warfare to local conditions. But in general, Ostrowski sees Russia as a passive recipient of ready foreign models, which he seeks to find across Eurasia. His tenacious search for pre-packed models sometimes results in stretched assertions, like his claim that Peter I borrowed the Table of Ranks, which regulated service in Imperial Russia through 1917, from the Moghuls. As many historians have argued, the Table of Ranks most likely utilized different European sources and practices, making the process of borrowing complex and creative. If so, the Table of Ranks may perfectly illustrate Ostrowski's general observation that Russia was becoming increasingly involved in cooperation with Europe throughout the period under consideration.

Ostrowski's discussion of Europe is perplexed. He is of course correct in rejecting the idea of an idealized progressive "Europe." By putting the word Europe in inverted commas, he treats "Europe" as a cognitive construct which is based on cherry picking the best elements in politics, society, technology, and culture. But he also uses Europe without quotation marks, leaving this usage unexplained. This is where the exposition becomes confused and confusing. Ostrowski insists that Russia is not part of "Europe" (Ostrowski's inverted commas). He rejects Catherine II's claim that Russia was a European country, noting that her statement is anything but an impartial assessment. Catherine was of course biased. But partiality lies in the core of the concept of "Europe" as described by Ostrowski. Catherine's preoccupation with Europe helps us understand the role of "Europe" as a cognitive idea in making the identity (or identities) of the Russian imperial elite in the eighteenth century. But Ostrowski seems to have no interest in early modern identities. Such indifference occasionally leads to factual errors, like the misidentification of the Scottish engineer Christopher Galloway as English (he added a clock to the Savior tower of the Moscow Kremlin). But there are broader methodological implications. Ostrowski's study of Russia's relationship with Eurasia fails to address the key issue of how early modern Russians saw Russia's place in the world. Did their perception evolve throughout the period, and, if yes, what does it tell us about continuity and change? A closer engagement with invented traditions, the reception of influences and the issues of identity would have made Ostrowski's argument more nuanced and more persuasive.

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