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St. Petersburg through the Eyes of Nineteenth-century British Female Travelers

This paper focuses on the image of St. Petersburg and its inhabitants in the travelogues, diaries, memoirs and letters by nineteenth-century European female travelers of different social strata and occupations. It examines recurrent themes, topoi and stylistic devices they employ to create the spirit of the capital in the age of modernity. The foreigner's view implies a "shift" or a "deformation" in perception of things and phenomena; it allows for a detection of unique details of urban culture hidden from the "local eye." Such observations and opinions inevitably give rise to a formation of a city myth separate from the one created by the local community. The presenter will analyze instances of misinterpretation and misrepresentation of the "other culture" constructed by female travelers. She will attempt to answer the question to what extent the visitors' perception of Petersburg is formed by their personal experiences and impressions of new and previously unknown phenomena during their travels. Likewise, she will discuss to what degree travelers' works are influenced by preconceptions in their homeland or even rooted in the concrete texts read by them before, during or after their trips to Petersburg.