Information and Empire

Mechanisms of Communication in Russia 1600-1850

Edited by Simon Franklin and Katherine Bowers

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OpenBook Publishers

Cover image: Top: Clement Cruttwell, *Map of the Russian Empire*, in *Atlas to Cruttwell's Gazetteer*, 1799, image by Geographicus Fine Antique Maps (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1799_Clement_Cruttwell_Map_of_Russian_Empire_-_Geographicus_-_Russia-cruttwell-1799.jpg). Bottom: image from the first Italian edition of Sigismund von Herberstein's description of Muscovy (Venice, 1550), private collection.

Cover design by Katherine Bowers and Corin Throsby.

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V.
INFORMATION AND PUBLIC DISPLAY

11. Information in Plain Sight:
The Formation of the Public Graphosphere

Simon Franklin

The "graphosphere" is the space of the visible word, the sum of the places where words are to be seen.[1] The graphosphere is therefore a multi-faceted, multi-functional phenomenon of culture. It is dynamic, both in its physical properties and in its interactions with its viewers and inhabitants. It can permeate many locations: domestic and institutional, official and informal, urban and rural. Over time it may change its size, its shape, its composition, its relative density, and its configuration of functions. It is a complex, multi-dimensional field of information and communication. The present chapter focuses on one set of its locations: public spaces, which here means places which are out of doors and openly accessible: streets, squares, external surfaces, but not interior spaces with public uses, such as public rooms. We will consider when, how, and to some extent why a public graphosphere emerged in Russia, the types of institutions and activities that facilitated or shaped (or inhibited) its formation, and the functions that its various components were intended to serve, as well as some of the ways in which it was perceived.

It is characteristic both of antiquity and of modernity that urban public spaces are saturated with visible words: signs, inscriptions, and

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1   Further on this concept see Simon Franklin, 'Mapping the Graphosphere: Cultures of Writing in Early 19th-Century Russia (and Before)', *Kritika*, 12. 3 (Summer 2011), 531–60.

so on. By contrast, the medieval city, across Europe, was outwardly mute. This was a difference in the very idea of the city. In the ancient city, visible writing was part of the fabric of the urban experience. Streets and squares were lined with inscriptions: formal and informal, funerary, commemorative, legislative, commercial, triumphal or devotional. The medieval city was more inward-facing. In medieval Rus, Byzantium, or early Muscovy, the space for the display of words was inside a church, with its inscribed wall-paintings and panel icons, its Gospel books in jewelled bindings, the wordily embroidered textiles covering the liturgical vessels or hanging beneath the sacred images, or draped over royal tombs.[2] Ecclesiastical interiors could be filled with visible words, but their graphospheric density did not extend into the streets. A few signs of writing might have been found clustered around church walls: on the occasional exterior wall paintings,[3] or, in a more transient context, on the icons, banners, and ceremonial vestments briefly paraded on feast-day processions. For the most part, however, public, open spaces were free of the visible words.

When, how, and why did signs of writing spread into the cityscape and, indeed, into the wider landscape? In Russia the transformation of the public graphosphere took place far later than in much of Europe. In the Renaissance city the stones spoke once more.[4] In Russia we only begin to see the faintest hints of a beginning of a process from the late fifteenth century, but little fundamental change—despite some vigorous attempts—until the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. By the second half of the nineteenth century, in Jeffrey Brooks's evocation, "the city, with its shop signs and street names, window displays and price tags, newspapers and kiosks, announcements and bookstalls

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2   See, e.g., Charlotte Roueché, 'Written Display in the Late Antique and Byzantine City', in *Proceedings of the 21st International Congress of Byzantine Studies. London, 21–26 August 2006. vol. 1. Plenary Papers*, ed. by E. Jeffreys (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 235–53.

3   M. A. Orlova, *Naruzhnye rospisi srednevekovykh khramov. Vizantiia. Balkany. Drevniaia Rus'*, 2nd ed. (Moscow: Severnyi palomnik, 2002); esp. pp. 193–250.

4   On public inscriptions in the Renaissance see Armando Petrucci, *Public Lettering. Script, Power, and Culture*, transl. by Linda Lappin (London, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1993), esp. pp. 16–51.

exhibited the written word to all who walked its streets".[5] How did such transformations come about? The question here is not about literacy. Obviously there may be links between graphospheric density and rates of literacy, but literacy rates are by no means the only variables, and, for present purposes, are not the most important variables.

Between the mid-fifteenth century and the mid-nineteenth century, the formation of the Russian graphosphere was not an evenly paced process. One can distinguish three phases. The first phase, roughly from the late fifteenth century to the late seventeenth century, is characterised by sporadic, uncoordinated and not widely conspicuous graphospheric activity on behalf of the Church and the state. The second phase, over the late seventeenth century and the early eighteenth century, was a period of fairly intense graphospheric initiatives by the state. The dynamics and the aims were, so to speak, top-down, as visible writing was introduced to further the causes of ideology, public information, and, to some degree, public education. The third phase began towards the middle of the eighteenth century but was not fully developed until the early nineteenth century. One of the principal actors was again the state, though now the purposes were largely administrative and fiscal. However, the crucial new catalyst for the spread of public writing was not an institution taking "top-down" decisions on the means of communication, but a "bottom-up" activity which generated its own powerful graphospheric demands: trade, commerce, private business. The three phases are not entirely distinct chronologically. In their movement and interrelations they are perhaps more like successive waves—linked at their troughs but separable at their peaks.

Phase One: Sporadic Inscription

Public inscription began to appear in Muscovy from the late fifteenth century, and for almost two hundred years was almost entirely restricted to three contexts: inscriptions on gravestones; inscriptions marking the completion or dedication of public buildings; and inscriptions on monumental bronze-cast cannons and bells.

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5   Jeffrey Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read. Literacy and Popular Culture, 1861–1917* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 12.

For half a millennium after the first official conversion in Rus, Christian East Slavs were apparently content to bury their dead in unlabelled graves. In the early centuries the articulate lapidary marking of grave-sites, while not wholly unknown, was a rare exception.[6] A practice of producing inscribed commemorative stone crosses is suggested by a few survivals from the mid- to late fifteenth century.[7] As for grave-slabs themselves, a continuous tradition of their inscription begins from the 1490s. Over the following couple of centuries the practice became fairly widespread in major monastic cemeteries (and in church interiors) both in Moscow and elsewhere.[8] From the initial bare record of names, the inscriptions, on horizontal slabs, went through phases of increasingly informative formulae, adding the date according to the calendar of church festivals, the year, sometimes even the hour of death, as well as the lifespan and the social standing of the deceased. Eighteenth-century cemeteries adopted the whole range of rhetorical funerary genres that befitted an enlightened empire, including a rich variety of inscriptional forms and genres, and, from the latter part of the century, sculpted figurative monuments.[9]

What prompted the change in practice? The sources do not explain themselves.[10] Here we simply note that the proliferation of

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6   See Simon Franklin, 'On the Pre-History of Inscribed Gravestones in Rus', *Palaeoslavica*, 10 (2002), 105–21.

7   A. V. Sviatoslavskii, A. A. Troshin, *Krest v russkoi kul'ture. Ocherki russkoi monumental'noi stavrografii* (Moscow: Drevlekhranilishche, 2000), pp. 158–63. (On the cross of Stepan Borodatyi: G. V. Popov, 'Belokamennyi krest 1462/1467 goda iz Borisoglebskogo monastyria v Dmitrove', in ΣΟΦΙΑ. *Sbornik statei po iskusstvu Vizantii i Drevnei Rusi v chest' A. I. Komecha* (Moscow: Severnyi palomnik, 2006), pp. 325–46.

8   See L. A. Beliaev, *Russkoe srednevekovoe nadgrobie. Belmennye plity Moskvy i Severo-Vostochnoi Rusi XIII–XVII vv.* (Moscow: MODUS-GRAFFITI, 1996); *Russkoe srednevekovoe nadgrobie, XIII–XVII veka: materialy k svodu. Vypusk 1*, ed. by L. A. Beliaev (Moscow: Nauka, 2006).

9   T. S. Tsarkova, S. I. Nikolaev, 'Epitafiia peterburgskogo nekropolia', in *Istoricheskie kladbishcha Sankt-Peterburga. Spravochnik-putevoditel'*, ed. by A. V. Kobak and Iu. M. Piriutko (St Petersburg: Izd. Chernysheva, 1993), pp. 111–29; S. O. Androsov, 'O pervykh figurativnykh nadgrobiiakh v Rossii', in *idem, Ot Petra I k Ekaterine II. Liudi, statui, kartiny* (St Petersburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 2013), pp. 240–52.

10   Daniel H. Kaiser, 'Discovering Individualism Among the Deceased: Gravestones in Early Modern Russia', in *Modernizing Muscovy: Reform and Social Change in Seventeenth-Century Russia*, ed. by Jarmo Kotilaine and Marshall T. Poe (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), pp. 433–59.

funerary inscriptions in cemeteries was one of the first processes as the graphosphere spread out from under the roof of the church or the scriptorium or the chancery, into the open air, exposed to the public gaze. However, cemeteries were "public" only in a limited sense. Though open to the elements, a cemetery was still enclosed, bounded: a designated, delineated space for the display of writing. This is still a very long way from the late antique lapidary inscriptions which lined the streets and addressed their civilised epigrams to any passer-by who cared to pause and contemplate.

The occasional practice of placing outward-facing inscriptions on buildings likewise dates from the end of the fifteenth century. The earliest known example was—and still is—on the Kremlin itself. The Kremlin's massive brick walls were built between 1485 and 1495 by a team of Italian architects including Antonio Gilardi, Marco Ruffo, and Pietro Antonio Solari. Above the main entrance to the Kremlin from Red Square, under the Frolov Tower (renamed the Spasskaia Tower in 1658), were two inscriptions carved on stone tablets, one on the inner façade (i.e. in effect above the exit from the Kremlin), the other on the outer façade (above the entrance from Red Square). Both recorded, in almost identical wording, the construction of the tower in 1491 by Solari on the orders of the Grand Prince Ivan III. Though the tablets agree on the year, they differ on the month: March in the outer inscription, July in the inner inscription. The exit inscription was in Slavonic, but the entrance inscription—the first and most publicly visible inscription—was in Latin.[11] For Solari this was normal, in the manner of equivalent inscriptions in contemporary Italy.[12] In Muscovy it was wholly exceptional. To a limited extent, the practice became naturalised. Several other equivalent inscriptions, in Slavonic, date from the early

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11   D. A. Drboglav, *Kamni rasskazyvaiut… Epigraficheskie latinskie pamiatniki XV-pervaia polovina XVII v. (Moskva, Serpukhov, Astrakhan')* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1988), pp. 12–16. See, however, D. A. Petrov, 'Monumental'nye nadpisi P'etro Antonio Solari v Moskve', *Voprosy epigrafiki*, 5 (2011), 322–34, for a different reading of the sequence of months.

12   See O. A. Belobrova, 'Latinskaia nadpis' na Frolovskikh vorotakh Moskovskogo Kremlia i ee sud'ba v drevnerusskoi pis'mennosti', in *Gosudarstvennye muzei Moskovskogo Kremlia. Materialy i issledovaniia. Novye atrib4utsii. Vypusk V* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1987), pp. 51–57.

sixteenth century.[13] Nor was the acquired custom restricted to the state, or to Moscow. Over the first half of the sixteenth century, carved stone or ceramic inscriptions marking the foundation or construction of churches can be found in the provinces, even in quite small settlements.[14] The tradition of ceramic inscriptions seems to have originated in Pskov in the late fifteenth century; several Moscow examples date from the seventeenth century.[15]

To treat bronze bells and cannon in the same context as buildings may seem incongruous, but they are brought together in the public graphosphere. Bells in a Russian bell-tower are somewhat liminal between exterior and interior. They are within the bell-tower, but Russian bell-towers were often little more than elaborate open-sided frames, in which the bells were visible. Although bells had been cast in Rus in earlier centuries, the proliferation of elaborately *inscribed* Muscovite bronze-cast bells dates from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[16] Whether they were the grand, multi-ton monumental bells with details of their donors cast in quite large and visible bands of lettering around the shoulder and/or rim, or the smaller bells for market sale and subsequent inscription, they added to the thickening clusters of signs of writing on display on and around, rather than exclusively inside, the church.

The technology of casting cannons in bronze was brought to Moscow by Italian craftsmen in the late 1480s. Chronicles record the casting of a "great cannon" by the *friazin* Pavlin (Paolo), an event considered memorable enough to be recorded pictorially in the official, prestigious

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13   A. V. Grashchenkov, 'Plita s latinskoi nadpis'iu so Spasskoi bashni i titul gosudaria vseia Rusi', *Voprosy epigrafiki*, 1 (2006), 16–25; A. G. Avdeev, 'Utrachennaia nadpis' 1530 g. o stroitel'stve kremlia v Kolomne: Opyt rekonstruktsii soderzhaniia', *Voprosy epigrafiki*, 2 (2008), 178–89.

14   G. G. Donskoi, 'Proklamativnaia funktsiia nadpisi na kolokol'ne Novospasskogo monastyria', *Voprosy epigrafiki*, 7. 2 (2013), 199–205; V. B. Girshberg, 'Nadpis' mastera Poviliki', *Sovetskaia arkheologiia*, 2 (1959), 248–49; A. G. Avdeev, 'Khramozdannye nadpisi XVI–XVII vv. Kostromy i kraia', *Kostromskaia zemlia*, 5 (2002), 158–65.

15   I. I. Pleshanova, 'Pskovskie arkhitekturnye keramicheskie poiasa', *Sovetskaia arkheologiia*, 2 (1963), 212–16; S. I. Baranova, *Moskovskii arkhitekturnyi izrazets XVII veka v sobranii Moskovskogo gosudarstvennogo ob"edinennogo muzeia-zapovednika Kolomenskoe-Izmailovo-Lefortovo-Liublino* (Moscow: MGOMZ, 2013), esp. e.g. pp. 75–77.

16   On inscribed bells, A. F. Bondarenko, *Istoriia kolokolov v Rossii XI–XVII vv.* (Moscow: Russkaia panorama, 2012).

and elephantine *Illustrated Chronicle* of the late sixteenth century.[17] The earliest surviving local cannon, by the master Iakov, dates (like the Kremlin tower inscriptions) from 1491. The mid-sixteenth century saw the casting of a series of enormous cannons which became, in effect, public monuments: in the 1550s by Kaspar Ganusov (over 19,000 kg) and Stepan Petrov (nearly 17,000 kg). These giants served on military campaigns in the early 1560s, but were later put on public display in Red Square, near the Frolov Gates (which bore Solari's inscription of 1491). Here they were joined by the most monstrous gun of all, Andrei Chokhov's "Tsar Cannon" (as it has come to be known) of 1586, weighing over 38,000 kg.[18] Chokhov's cannon was not even made to be fired. Its internal workings were never completed. Its function was to impress, and part of its impressive display was the eloquent cast decoration on its barrel, which included an equestrian representation of the Muscovite ruler, and two inscriptions (in Russian) declaring the patronage of the tsar and his wife, and the date of the cannon's manufacture by Chokhov. On the occasions that inscribed cannons were used in the field or on parade, they might be joined by an altogether more flimsy form of inscribed object: banners. Particularly grand and elaborate was Ivan IV's "Great Banner", commissioned in 1559–60.[19]

Few meaningful conclusions can be drawn from this period of sporadic public inscriptions. The functions seem to me mainly declarative or commemorative, noting a death, or the commissioning of the relevant structure or object. Some of the state inscriptions formed a graphospheric cluster around (and on) the entrance to the Moscow Kremlin. However, here and elsewhere we should make a distinction between visibility and legibility. Accessibility and ease of reading does

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17   E.g. *Ioasafovskaia letopis'* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1957), p. 126 (fol. 134v of the MS); *Litsevoi letopisnyi svod XVI veka. Russkaia letopisnaia istoriia. Kniga 17 1483–1502 gg.* (facsimile edition; Moscow: AKTEON, 2010), p. 73 (fol. 410 of the 'Shumilov' manuscript of the original).

18   E. L. Nemirovskii, *Andrei Chokhov (okolo 1545–1629)* (Moscow: Nauka, 1982); Sergei Bogatyrev, 'Bronze Tsars: Ivan the Terrible and Fedor Ivanovich in the Décor of Early Modern Guns', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 88. 1–2 (January/April 2010), 48–72.

19   Sergei Bogatyrev, 'The Heavenly Host and the Sword of Truth: Apocalyptic Imagery in Ivan IV's Moscow', in *The New Muscovite Cultural History. A Collection in Honor of Daniel B. Rowland*, ed. by Valerie Kivelson, Karen Petrone, Nancy Shields Kollmann, and Michael S. Flier (Bloomington: Slavica, 2009), pp. 77–90.

not seem to have been a criterion for those who commissioned and made many of the inscriptions. Few Muscovites would have been able to read Solari's Latin; but, equally, without exceptional eyesight, few would have been able to see distinctly the lettering on the bells in their bell-towers. And even if they had access to the towers, or if they bought one of the smaller portable bells, few would have found the bands of highly ornamental, quasi-cryptographic *viaz'* lettering simple to decipher. The *presence* of an inscription was plainer than its contents; as if that presence had its own eloquence, a visual communication irrespective of the individual's ability to decode its verbal information.

Phase Two: State Projects, Projections of the State

In May 1682 an uprising of the Moscow musketeers (the *strel'tsy*) installed Sofiia Alekseevna, elder half-sister of the nine-year-old future Tsar Peter I, as regent. As part of the settlement, Sofiia issued a decree, one of whose stipulations was that the actions of the *strel'tsy* were to be, in effect, retrospectively legitimised, and that they were not to be deemed rebels. The text of this decree was embossed onto two large brass plates, which were then fixed to what was described as a "pillar"—actually a kind of four-sided plinth or pedestal—on Red Square.[20] Whether or not this monumental decree-stand was intended to be permanent, it only survived for a few months. It was demolished with the next twist in political fortunes. However, the precedent did not go unnoticed, and was revived in the late 1690s by Peter, already as tsar. In March 1697 Peter set up another pedestal on Red Square, on which to display the heads of a group of failed (obviously) conspirators.

We do not know whether this graphic (in another sense) display was accompanied by a written text, but there is no doubt about the graphospheric function of Peter's next such monument, set up two years later, in 1699. The catalyst, as it had been in 1682, was a revolt of the *strel'tsy*, but on this occasion the revolt was catastrophically unsuccessful, the tsar's reprisals were harsh, wide-reaching, and prolonged, and the setting up of plinths with texts was an important

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20 A. V. Lavrent'ev, 'Stareishie grazhdanskie monumenty Moskvy 1682–1700 gg', in *idem*, *Liudi i veshchi. Pamiatniki russkoi istorii i kul'tury XVI–XVIII vv., ikh sozdateli i vladel'tsy* (Moscow: Arkheograficheskii tsentr, 1997), pp. 177–202.

device for promulgating the fate of the rebels. After the suppression of the revolt, Peter placed such plinths not only in Red Square, but in ten other locations around the city. Each column was four-sided, and to each side was fixed a cast-iron plate displaying lists of the names of the traitors. In the absence of any other free-standing public monuments, this was a major incursion into the Muscovite cityscape. Moreover, the "pillars" of 1699–1700 proved more durable than their predecessor from 1682. They stood throughout Peter's reign before being removed in 1727, before the coronation of Peter II. One of the cast iron plates survives to this day.[21]

These late-seventeenth-century structures were, in effect, monumental public notice boards. The monumental display of legislation was not unusual in the graphosphere of the antique city.[22] In Russia the monumentality turned out to be transient, but the function met what was increasingly felt by the authorities to be a regular need. In the second half of the seventeenth century, government decrees quite often specified the means by which they were to be promulgated. Traditional devices included public proclamation, and the distribution of handwritten copies to the relevant offices and regions. From the 1690s, the texts of some decrees begin to stipulate that, in addition to oral declamation and internal distribution, copies should be made for public display, to be posted on, for example, gate-posts, walls, and church doors.[23] These were, in a sense, a kind of official newspaper before newspapers.[24] From 1714 Peter decreed that all decrees of general applicability must be printed, not handwritten, and it became common for the texts to be produced in two formats: what one might call book-size, and poster-size. The book-sized versions, printed on both sides of the sheet, were for internal use, while the poster-sized versions, printed on one side only (i.e. as broadsides), were for display. The metallic messages on the plinths set up in Moscow in the wake of successive uprisings of the *strel'tsy* can be seen as early experiments in the visual

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21   In the collections of the museum of the Novodevichi Monastery: see Lavrent'ev, 'Stareishie grazhdanskie monumenty', p. 178.

22   Also a widespread function of public inscriptions in the ancient world: see e.g. Roueché, 'Written Display', pp. 251–52.

23   Simon Franklin, 'Printing and Social Control in Russia 2: Decrees', *Russian History*, 38 (2011), 467–92 (esp. pp. 473–76).

24   On newspapers in Russia see Chapters 3 and 6 in the present volume.

projection of the authoritative word. However, although purpose-built monuments might have been felt to convey the importance of the message, public pronouncements generated by current events rarely retain their aura of urgency and currency. Paper, print and existing surfaces proved more effective (and, surely, more cost-effective) over time. The posting of paper copies of decrees from the late seventeenth and, especially, the early eighteenth century was perhaps the first device through which the word of the state contributed in a systematic and sustained way to the formation of a public graphosphere: initially in Moscow, then in St Petersburg, then throughout the empire.

As in the case of the earlier inscriptions, one might well wonder who, among a largely illiterate populace, was expected to read such notices. This was not the authorities' concern. The purpose was to make the text of decrees available, and to stress repeatedly in the texts themselves the principle that ignorance of the law would not be counted as an excuse. The expectation, presumably, was that further dissemination would still be oral. Those who could not read still had access to the text via those who could. And all could (or should) understand that words posted in public—especially printed words, since the technology of print was a state-controlled monopoly—carried the voice of authority. They were, indeed, the principal visible devices by which the tsar communicated information to his subjects.

For legislative announcements, the monumental form was abandoned, but the fashion for monumental public inscriptions persisted. It developed in different directions, for different purposes.

The monuments with the most dramatic effect on the cityscape and its graphospheric density were the towers, arches, gates and the like which Peter (and then several of his successors) ordered to be erected for festive occasions: for firework displays, or for triumphal entries of the tsar and his troops after military victories.[25] The earliest in the sequence were the fireworks and triumphal arch to mark the Azov campaign in 1696. The most elaborate were the multiple arches constructed in Moscow

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25   D. D. Zelov, *Ofitsial'nye svetskie prazdniki kak iavlenie russkoi kul'tury kontsa XVII–nachala XVIII veka. Istoriia triumfov i feierverkov ot Petra Velikogo do ego docheri Elizavety* (Moscow: Editorial URSS, 2002), pp. 122–94; E. A. Tiukhmeneva, *Iskusstvo triumfal'nykh vrat v Rossii pervoi poloviny XVIII veka. Problemy panegiricheskogo napravleniia* (Moscow: Progress-Traditsiia, 2005).

to mark the victory at Poltava in 1709. All of them were prominently, and often copiously, inscribed, sometimes in Latin, sometimes in Cyrillic, sometimes in both scripts. These were very major projects for the projection of imperial prestige, both to an internal audience and to visitors. Rhetorical and explanatory descriptions of such festivities were written out in manuscript and printed as pamphlets, many of which included full details of all the inscriptions.[26] Engravings were commissioned, showing images of the triumphal and festive structures, including (in several cases) scrupulous renditions of the inscriptions.[27]

So, were public spaces in Moscow, and then in St Petersburg, thereby irrevocably transformed, turned into graphospheric simulacra of their counterparts in antiquity? No. The problem is that these structures were mostly temporary. They were erected quickly, for special occasions, generally in wood and with papier-mâché ornamentation, though painted to resemble marble. Then they disappeared. They were, in a sense, monumental ephemera, part of the decorations for one-off performances on a public stage. They served imperial ceremonial, not urban design. We know of them mostly by their reflection in other media: through printed descriptions and in engravings. Paper turned out to be more permanent than wood. A saturated public graphosphere was part of the aesthetic of urban space for Peter's engravers. They helped to create and to disseminate the image, but it was largely an illusion.

Such monumental ephemera, or ephemeral monuments, were not peculiarly Russian. Their transience should not be taken to imply that ceremonial graphospheric structures in Russia were uniquely or even unusually flimsy. On the contrary, ephemeral-monumental epigraphy (the oxymoronic phrase is suggested by Armando Petrucci)[28] was characteristically Western European. That was partly the point. In this, as in so many of his presentational initiatives, Peter was following European custom. Equivalent ephemeral monumental writing was common throughout Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,

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26   For texts see Tiukhmeneva, *Iskusstvo triumfal'nykh vrat*, pp. 154–275. For a list of printed accounts see Zelov, *Ofitsial'nye svetskie prazdniki*, pp. 140–48.

27   See the extensive illustrations in Tiukhmenova, *Iskusstvo triumfal'nykh vrat*, between pp. 96 and 97; also M. A. Alekseeva, *Graviura petrovskogo vremeni* (Leningrad: Iskusstvo, 1990), pp. 72–75, 117–22; M. A. Alekseeva, *Iz istorii russkoi graviury XVII– nachala XIX v.* (Moscow, St Petersburg: Al'ians Arkheo, 2013), pp. 142–51, 188–94.

28   See Petrucci, *Public Lettering*, pp. 53–55.

as, indeed, was the concern to issue texts to record and explain the spectacle. The most immediate exemplars were probably Dutch. Among Russian translations from Dutch in the 1690s was a version of the detailed account of the triumphal entry of William of Orange into The Hague on 5 February 1691, including the translation of some 140 Latin inscriptions on the various ceremonial monuments.[29] William's parade was also captured in engravings by, among others, the physician Govert Bidloo, whose nephew Niclaas became physician to Peter. The early engravings of the Petrine festivities were made by Peter's Dutch engravers Adriaan Schoonebeck and Piter Pickaert and by their Russian pupils. Indeed, Schoonebeck's engraving of the firework spectacle following the Azov campaign of 1696 was most likely made while he was still in Holland, on the basis of the accounts of Russian envoys.

Peter's triumphal arches were durable in one respect. They set a fashion among Russia's rulers which lasted until the end of the eighteenth century, not just at parades to mark military victories but on more peaceable occasions such as coronations.[30] As for the inscriptions, their graphospheric functions were integral to the "top-down" creation of a quasi-classical urban aesthetic (once more, irrespective of whether viewers could read the Latin), but they also had more specific associations. They derived from the pan-European culture of emblems—illustrations with edificatory mottoes and captions—which Peter embraced and which retained popularity in Russia for much of the eighteenth century.

Peter's other initiative in the commissioning of inscribed monuments—antique statuary—was likewise both elegant and edificatory, though less bombastic and more solid. Peter worked on plans for his Summer Gardens from 1704. Antique statuary, ordered from abroad, was integral to the concept, and remained a characteristic feature of the gardens throughout many subsequent redesigns and

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29 Yu. K. Begunov, '"Opisanie vrat chesti…": a Seventeenth-Century Russian Translation on William of Orange and the "Glorious Revolution"', *Oxford Slavonic Papers. New Series*, 20 (1987), 60–93. Begunov attributes the translation to Il'ia Kopievskii.

30 See e.g. A. N. Voronikhina, 'Triumfal'nye vorota 1742 g. v Sankt-Peterburge', in *Russkoe iskusstvo barokko. Materialy i issledovaniia*, ed. by T. V. Alekseeva (Moscow: Nauka, 1977), pp. 159–72; also Paul Keenan, *St Petersburg and the Russian Court, 1703–1761* (Basingstoke, New York, 2013), pp. 66–75.

remodellings.[31] Mostly the inscriptions were simply labels identifying the figures represented in the sculptures, sometimes also the maker. Some, however, were more elaborate. Jacob von Stählin tells the story of a conversation between Peter and his Swedish garden designer. Peter said that he wished the garden to be educative, to "convert this place of mere amusement into a kind of school". The Swede assumed he meant that books—suitably protected—were to be left on the benches. Peter laughed, and explained his idea. One area was to consist of four fountains joined by alleys, and the fountains and the alleys were to be ornamented with figures from Aesop's fables. Moreover, "as the Czar knew that few people would be able to find out the meaning of these figures, and that a still smaller number would comprehend the instruction conveyed in the fables, he ordered a post to be placed near each of them: on these posts a sheet of tin was fastened, on which the fables and their morals were written in the Russian language".[32]

Stählin's source for the story of Peter and the garden designer was apparently Aleksandr Lvovich Naryshkin (1694–1746), who was Director of the Imperial Buildings and Gardens from 1736—that is, more than a decade after Peter's death. This account may or may not reflect an actual conversation. However, it does catch one aspect of Peter's known intentions: that his parks and gardens should be places of education and edification as well as pleasure and contemplation, and that inscriptions were integral to this vision.[33]

Among those who paid attention to the inscriptions was no less a commentator than Giacomo Casanova, who recorded his impressions of a visit in 1765. Casanova waxed supercilious not only about the poor quality of the statues but expressly about the ineptitude of the labelling: "As I walked about I marvelled at the statuary, all the statues being made of the worst stone, and executed in the worst possible taste. The names cut beneath them gave the whole the air of a practical joke. A

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31   S. O. Androsov, 'Raguzinskii v Venetsii: priobretenie statui dlia Letnego sada', in *idem, Ot Petra I k Ekaterine II.*, pp. 44–78; James Cracraft, *The Petrine Revolution in Russian Imagery* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1997), pp. 220–31.

32   J. Stählin, *Original Anecdotes of Peter the Great, Collected from the Conversation of Several Persons of Distinction at Petersburgh and Moscow* (London and Edinburgh: J. Murray, J. Sewell, W. Creech, 1788), pp. 249–52 (anecdote no. 75).

33   See e.g. D. S. Likhachev, *Poetika sadov. K semantike sadovo-parkovykh stilei. Sad kak tekst*, 2nd ed. (St Petersburg: Nauka, 1991), pp. 126–28.

weeping statue was Democritus; another, with grinning mouth, was labelled Heraclitus; an old man with a long beard was Sappho; and an old woman, Avicenna; and so on".[34] Most likely, Casanova was exaggerating for effect, but behind the specific points there perhaps lies a broader condescension regarding the use of such inscriptions in general, for he demonstrates that no self-respecting Venetian needs labels to help him identify the figures of antique statuary. Whether or not Casanova regarded inscriptions as, in principle, educative, he made it clear that he regarded the Russians as being in need of education.

Antique statuary, often inscribed, became a common feature of the grand parks that proliferated throughout the century: first the royal parks, then their aristocratic followers. Sometimes the intended educative function of inscriptions was further developed. For example, on Aleksandr Borisovich Kurakin's estate at Nadezhdino in Saratov province, the park itself, laid out in the 1790s, became the subject of an elaborate set of signs and captions. Kurakin explained that "on each path one will find several posts with placards of its name, so that visitors will be overwhelmed by ideas and corresponding sensations".[35] This was not just a matter of displaying evocative names. Kurakin's signs showed four-line iambic hexameter verses explaining how he wished each temple and path to be interpreted and experienced.[36]

Regarding the Petrine period of state-promoted expansion of the public graphosphere, two points are clear. In the first place, Peter shared and promoted a new—for Russia—sense of visible writing as intrinsic to urban public spaces. This is apparent both in the consistency with which he sponsored the public display of writing, and in the reflections of this graphospheric aesthetic in other media: the booklets that described and explained public inscriptions, the engravings that reproduced them on paper. Even book illustrations with no direct relation to urban space might use the trope of the inscribed building, such as the architectural

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34 From the start of chapter 21 of the section 'In London and Moscow' in Casanova's *Memoirs*; cited from Arthur Machen's translation available at http://ebooks.adelaide. edu.au/c/casanova/c33m/index.html; see I. V. Riazantsev, *Skul'ptura v Rossii XVIII– nachala XIX veka* (Moscow: Zhiraf, 2003), pp. 412–18; and more broadly *ibid*., pp. 396–451 on park statuary.

35 Cited in Andreas Schönle, *The Ruler in the Garden. Politics and Landscape Design in Imperial Russia* (Oxford, Bern, Berlin etc.: Peter Lang, 2007), p. 185.

36 Schönle, *The Ruler in the Garden*, pp. 185, 193–205.

allegory of mathematics created as a headpiece for Russia's first printed scientific textbook: Leontii Magnitskii's *Arifmetika*, printed in 1703.[37] Indeed, the *idea* of the inscribed city permeated many areas of elite culture. Peter subscribed to it and promoted it, but it did not begin with him. For example, the latter part of the seventeenth century saw the appearance, in Russia, of genres of "epigraphic" poetry. This was a literary conceit: verses that were ostensibly designed to be inscriptions, whether or not there was in fact anywhere for them to be inscribed.[38] Secondly, and in contrast, Peter did not complete the transformation, or even the formation, of the public graphosphere. The vision may have been there, but its translation into the urban landscape tended to be partial, transitory, or delayed. His most visible constructions—the inscribed celebratory and festive edifices—were temporary. His most stable and permanent innovations—park statuary—were, like inscribed gravestones, both open and enclosed, not fully part of the everyday city. Other projects were idiosyncratic and unrepeatable, such as his decision, in 1722, to turn one of his early boats into a public monument, by setting it on a pedestal with appropriate inscription and ensuring that its image as a monument was recorded in engravings.[39]

The tradition of inscribed monumental statuary in fully accessible public spaces began only towards the end of the century, with Peter as its subject rather than its patron: Falconet's "Bronze Horseman", unveiled in 1792 and inscribed in Latin and Russian; and the contrasting equestrian statue set up by the Tsar Paul in 1800. The latter is a curious temporal palimpsest. It had been commissioned from Carlo Rastrelli by Peter himself, and was cast under the direction of his son Francesco Rastrelli in the 1740s, but remained in storage until retrieved by Paul, who set it up on its pedestal, with a pointedly monolingual Russian inscription, outside his own newly built palace.

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37   T. A. Bykova and M. M. Gurevich, *Opisanie izdanii, napechatannykh kirillitsei. 1689-ianvar' 1725 g.* (Moscow and Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1958), no. 25; reproduced in e.g. Alekseeva, *Graviura petrovskogo vremeni*, p. 65.

38   See L. I. Sazonova, *Literaturnaia kul'tura Rossii. Rannee Novoe vremia* (Moscow: Iazyki slavianskikh kul'tur, 2006), pp. 320–27.

39   Alekseeva, *Graviura petrovskogo vremeni*, pp. 86–89, 96.

Phase Three: Signs and the Shaping of Public Space

The second phase in the formation of the public graphosphere had been marked by a succession of acts of "top-down" communication, whether informative, celebratory or edificatory and educative. In the third phase, from the mid-eighteenth century, the state's interventions in the public graphosphere were of a very different type. Instead of communicating information *from* the ruler *to* those who frequented the relevant spaces, they focused on communicating information *on and about* the spaces, partly as aids to orientation for the users of those spaces, but partly also for the practical administrative purposes of the state itself. In their purposes and functions these graphospheric initiatives addressed some of the issues of information and communication that are already familiar from previous chapters in the present volume: postal routes, cartography and surveying, taxation. The particular inscriptions are varieties of what might loosely be termed signage: mileposts, street signs, house signs.

"Mileposts" here renders the Russian *verstovye stolby*, which mark not miles but versts. A verst (Russian *versta*) is 500 *sazhens*, which, in the system in place from the early eighteenth century, comes to almost exactly a kilometre (1.067 km). Some kind of route marking was essential and existed from ancient times, especially given the conditions in winter when snow obliterates so many features of the landscape. However, with specific regard to their inscriptions, the trail of legislation begins in the 1720s. The initiatives, therefore, are again Petrine, though some of the tasks and problems identified by Peter continued to be worked out subsequently for at least a hundred years.

On 7 August 1722 Peter instructed the Senate that they should arrange to measure the distance of the direct route from Moscow to Tsaritsyn (now Volgograd), and to set up "posts with inscriptions" (*stolby s nadpisiami*) along the way, "as has been done on the Novgorod and other roads". In addition, at the onset of winter, they were to arrange to measure the Moskva, Oka, and Volga rivers along the ice, and set up posts showing the distance between towns on the banks.[40] The measurements were

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40   *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi imperii*, Series 1 (1649–1825) (hereafter *PSZ* 1), no. 4071.

done in connection with the tsar's forthcoming journey to Azov. Route measurements and their markings became a recurrent theme in imperial legislation. Successive rulers accepted that mileposts were a necessity for the efficient administration of the empire. They were needed not for the convenience of curious travellers, but for the movement of people and goods on official business (and Russia's rulers strongly discouraged the movement of goods and people on unofficial business). However, mileposts were also a cause of administrative headaches. Stone posts were expensive to install; wooden posts, in Russia's climate, were expensive because of the need for regular maintenance and repair, and in the inscriptions it was difficult to sustain accuracy and consistency.

Such are the concerns and frustrations that are reflected in successive decrees. On 23 August 1739 the Senate complained that many of the mileposts around St Petersburg were rotted and their inscriptions had become illegible. New posts were to be set up in coordination with the *Iamskaia kontora*—the Office of Posts (in a different sense).[41] Here, and again in a series of decrees of the mid-1740s, we also find reference to the problem of inaccuracy as roads changed their courses, so that surveyors need to be sent to re-measure the roads and reposition the posts and recalibrate the inscriptions.[42] This was about money as well as time. On 16 August 1744 the empress complained to the Senate that the posts along the road from Moscow to Kiev indicated a total distance of 856 versts, but the charge for transport assumed a distance of 969 versts. On 27 November the Senate reported that their delegated surveyor had measured the route at 890 versts and had repositioned the posts.[43]

The inscriptions, too, were a recurrent theme: the techniques used to make them, their forms, information, shape, and location. Paint was the obvious medium, but in 1740 the Senate decided that in the long term it would be more economical to burn the lettering into the posts with specially made branding irons. In 1744 the inscriptions were to be painted again. In 1746 the Senate even specified the colours of the oil paints—scarlet and ochre. In 1760 it was decreed that inscriptions should be written on a triangular metal plate to be affixed to each post.[44] In the

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41   *PSZ* 1, no. 7881.
42   *PSZ* 1, nos. 8909, 9016, 9031, 9073, 9092, all from 1744.
43   *PSZ* 1, nos. 9016, 9073.
44   *PSZ* 1, nos. 8147, 9348, 11127.

early nineteenth century Alexander I expressed periodic irritation with the state of the mileposts. In detailed legislation of 1803, 1817, and 1819 he specified their height, their design according to official drawings, and the exact wording and arrangement of the inscriptions: when they should state the distance from Moscow or St Petersburg, and when they should only give the distance between post stations. He complained not just of inconsistency, but of excess verbiage. His 1817 decree on roads is particularly informative, not just about mileposts, but about a wide range of roadside signage: labelled pointers at crossroads, border signs at administrative boundaries stating which region (*guberniia*) or district (*uezd*) one was entering or leaving; signs stating the tariff at toll bridges or ferries; and, at the entrance to every settlement, a post with a signboard stating the name of the settlement, who it belonged to, and the number of "souls" in its population, "as is the custom in Little Russia".[45] Alexander's "striped mileposts" (*versty polosaty*) became embedded in the Russian cultural imagination through their appearance in one of Pushkin's best known poems, "The Winter Road".[46]

Mileposts extend the graphosphere into the countryside; in long ribbons they inscribe the empire: in real space for the efficient operations of the post roads, in imagined and reconstructed space for the accurate reduction onto paper by cartographers.

Labelling of the city itself began later. On 8 May 1768 Catherine II instructed the St Petersburg police chief, Nikolai Chicherin, to "order that, at the end of every street and alley, signs (here *doski*) are to be attached bearing the name of that street or alley in the Russian and German languages; if any streets and alleys are as yet unnamed—please name them".[47] Catherine's street signs—only two of which survive to

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45   *PSZ* 1, nos. 21963 (article 4), 27180 (articles 15–23, 32–33), 27787 (articles 30, 31). For the approved drawings of the respective types of milepost see the supplement to *PSZ* 1: *Chertezhi i risunki k sobraniiu*, p. 50.

46   A. S. Pushkin, *Sobranie sochinenii v desiati tomakh*, ed. D. D. Blagoi *et al.* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1959–1962), vol. 2, p. 159, http://rvb.ru/pushkin/01text/01versus/0423_36/1826/0428.htm

47   Cited in D. Iu. Sherikh, *Peterburg den' za dnem. Gorodskoi mesiatseslov* (St Petersburg: 'Peterburg–XXI vek', 1998), pp. 117–18. See also Ia. N. Dlugolenskii, *Voenno-grazhdanskaia i politseiskaia vlast' Sankt-Peterburga, 1703–1917* (St Petersburg: Zhurnal 'Neva', 2001), p. 278; S. Lebedev, *Nomernye znaki domov Peterburga. Zametki i nabliudeniia* (St Petersburg, 2010), http://www.liveinternet.ru/users/zimnyi/post285701342/

the present—were in marble. Thus began the process through which the very streets and houses became frames for the urban graphosphere. First the streets were inscribed, then the houses themselves: according to Catherine's *Charter for the rights and privileges of the towns of the Russian Empire* (*Gramota na prava i vygody gorodam Rossiiskoi imperii*), published on 21 April 1785, each building was to be allocated a street number, in order to facilitate the administrative task of drawing up lists of inhabitants,[48] though nothing is said here about the public display of such numbers. Finally, in 1804, in order to facilitate the administration of a new property tax, the authorities in St Petersburg required that the identifying information be made visible: above the entrances to all non-governmental buildings there were henceforth to be metal plaques stating not only the number and the district but the owner's name.[49] This sequence of measures on the systematic numbering of houses is roughly consistent with the chronology of equivalent legislation in parts of Western Europe. In France, for example, a requirement for universal house numbering was introduced in 1791, also for tax purposes.[50]

As in the case of mileposts, this process of inscribing the city with indications of its own physical and human geography, though undertaken for administrative reasons, also facilitated wider interactions and benefits. The city was now visibly indexed in the public graphosphere, and this "real space" index, too, could be transferred to paper, through the compilation of printed directories. St Petersburg's first address book was published in 1809 and was issued more or less simultaneously (by different publishers) in German, French and Russian. Its author, Heinrich Christoph von Reimers, acknowledged in his introduction the importance of the recent fact that, over the course of 1804, signs had been fixed on every house.[51] And, also like mileposts,

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48   *PSZ* 1, no. 16187, in an annotation to article 63.

49   Heinrich von Reimers, *St. Petersburg am Ende seines ersten Jahrhunderts. Mit Rückblicken auf Entstehung und Wachsthum dieser Residenz unter den verschiedenen Regierungen während dieses Zeitraums*, vol. 2 (St Petersburg: F. Dienemann & Co., 1805), pp. 285–86.

50   David Garrioch, 'House Names, Shop Signs and Social Organization in West European Cities, c. 1500–1900', *Urban History*, 21 (1994), 37–38.

51   Heinrich von Reimers, *St.-Peterburgische Adress-Buch auf das Jahr 1809* (St Petersburg: A. Pluchart [1809]); *idem*, *Dictionnaire d'adress de St.-Pétersbourg pour l'anné 1809, avec un plan et guide des étrangers a St-Pétersbourg* (St Petersburg [1809]); *idem*, *Sanktpeterburgskaia adresnaia kniga na 1809 god* (St Petersburg: Schnoor [1809]), p. iii.

the reach of these street and house signs stretched beyond factual information, beyond documentation and into culture. For example, the writer Evgenii Grebenka, in a "physiological" sketch published in 1845, treats the house signs on the "Petersburg side" (the district on the unfashionable side of the Neva river) first as sources for the social composition of the population: "The Petersburg Side fell into decline and became a refuge for the poor", he writes. "If one seeks proof of this, one need only read the inscriptions on the gateposts of the houses". Many of the owners were civil servants of the fourteenth (i.e. the lowest) to the eighth grade, others were non-commissioned officers, clerks, firemen, court lackeys, retired musicians. Then, however, Grebenka digresses into an anecdote of the man who apparently chose to designate himself, on the sign at the entrance to his residence, as a "retired blackamoor"—a claim which the utterly fair-skinned resident justified on the grounds that it brought him a higher pension.[52] The sign thus becomes a locus of invention, a means of creative self-expression (despite periodic attempts to impose uniformity).[53]

Not that house signs yet met all practical demands. Once a letter had successfully reached St Petersburg along the network of long-distance post roads, how did it find its addressee within the city? Signage on streets and houses and flats ought to help, perhaps. However, one visiting Englishman was left frustrated. Edward Thompson, who published his *Life in Russia; or, the Discipline of Despotism* in 1848, complained that, when he tried to deliver a letter to a resident of a building just off Nevskii Prospekt, he was unable to do so, for there was no directory of residents of the 170 flats (though there may well have been names on the individual doors).[54] Even the government recognised the problem, and around the same time devised a bureaucratic solution. In 1851, in the second, expanded edition of *All Petersburg in Your Pocket*

Note that Reimers had recognised the usefulness of the measure as early as 1805; for statistical tables of Petersburg buildings and inhabitants that he published as part of his history of the city: von Reimers, *St. Petersburg am Ende seines ersten Jahrhunderts*, p. 318.

52   E. Grebenka, 'Peterburgskaia storona', in *Fiziologiia Peterburga* (Moscow: Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1984) pp. 109–110

53   One such attempt at regulation is cited by F. Distribuendi, *Vzgliad na moskovskie vyveski* (Moscow: I. Smirnov, 1836), pp. 61–62.

54   See A. G. Cross, *St Petersburg and the British. The City through the Eyes of British Visitors and Residents* (London: Frances Lincoln Ltd., 2008), p.146.

by Aleksei Grech, readers were informed that now, if they wanted to find out where anybody lived, they had only to go to the "Bureau of Addresses" (*adresnyi stol*): "a new and highly useful institution, which can be used by private individuals who wish to find out anybody's place of residence".[55]

Important and resonant though it undoubtedly was, the state's administrative contribution to the formation of the urban graphosphere came to be massively overshadowed by the proliferation of a different kind of sign, generated not by an institution, but by an activity: not "top down", but "bottom up". The activity was trade. Its graphospheric contribution was in the spread of shop signs.

The spread of trade signs and shop signs cannot be mapped precisely either in time or space. The process can be approximately imagined through a succession of three types of evidence: legislation, illustration, and description. The trail of legislation seems to start towards the middle of the eighteenth century. Illustrations become informative from approximately the second and third decades of the nineteenth century, while in the 1830s and 1840s such signs became objects of documentary description, literary evocation, and even quasi-philosophical contemplation.

The trail of legislation about commercial signage begins in the 1740s and 1750s, and it relates both to the location of signs and to aspects of their contents. Where trade spilled over from its designated locations (markets, trading rows), the signs of its presence were not always welcome. On 2 December 1742, Empress Elizabeth issued a decree on the construction of railings on the canal embankments. And, while on the subject of urban orderliness and sightliness (this was the same day on which she ordered the expulsion of all Jews from the empire), Elizabeth added to the decree an instruction that inns and taverns should be banned from the main embankments, and that in the same locations fruit traders should be prohibited from setting up stalls under

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55   Aleksei Grech, *Ves' Peterburg v karmane: spravochnaia kniga dlia stolichnykh zhitelei i priezzhikh, s planami Sanktpeterburga i chetyrekh teatrov*, 2nd expanded and corrected ed. (St Petersburg: N. Grech, 1851), pp. 3–4. The first edition had been published in 1846. Note that Grech was aware that such directories needed constant updating: three supplements were published in 1852 alone (to 20 January, 25 May, and 15 November).

awnings at the ground-floor or basement street entrances to buildings.[56] Ten years later Elizabeth returned to the topic. In a decree of 14 October 1752 she reaffirmed the restrictions of 1742, and she further specified, significantly for our purposes, that she took exception not merely to signs of trade but to trade signs. The new decree stipulated that "along these streets there should be no signs (*vyveski*); lots of such signs, of various trades, are now visible even opposite the court of Her Imperial Majesty; signs are permitted on the street along the Moika".[57] This is the first legislation about trade signs, indicating that they were already becoming quite numerous and prominent, and for the empress a nuisance when they cluttered her view.

Also in the late 1740s we find the first legislation on wording. It relates to establishments which sold alcohol and tobacco. On 8 November 1746 the Senate ordered that hostelries (*kabaki*) in Moscow and St Petersburg must not display boards with the words "official drinking house" (*kazennyi piteinyi dom*). There was no objection to the designation "drinking house"; it was the word "official" that was to be deleted.[58] Clearly this was not enough to rein in the self-promoting commercial imagination, and in 1749 the Board of Revenue (*Kamer Kollegiia*) issued an order banning all excess graphic elements from signs advertising hostelries and tobacco shops. Henceforth they were to use only the prescribed wording: "In this house drinks are sold", "in this house tobacco is sold".[59]

Catherine II took a different approach. She accepted that a zonal restriction, with a blanket ban in specified areas, was damaging to trade, so in March 1770 she rescinded Elizabeth's decree of 1752. However, she did not thereby abandon all attempts to impose her own sense of civic decorum. Instead of a general ban, she regulated the form. In a decree which was to be generally applicable to both St Petersburg and Moscow, she stipulated that trade signs made of wood or canvas

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56   *PSZ* 1, no. 8674, articles 3–5.
57   *PSZ* 1, no. 10032. Note also the slightly earlier decree of Anna Ioannovna, dated 9 November 1739, allowing merchants to build permanent shops in specified locations, but forbidding unauthorised trading from houses and basement stalls: *PSZ* 1, no. 7940.
58   *PSZ* 1, no. 9350.
59   G. V. Esipov, *Tiazhelaia pamiat' proshlogo. Rasskazy iz del Tainoi Kantseliarii i drugikh arkhivov* (St Petersburg: A. S. Suvorin, 1885), p. 307.

were permissible either when fixed flat to walls, or when suspended from a protruding arm not exceeding one *arshin* in length.[60] Decency required that there should be no signs advertising men's underwear, or funeral services, and there were to be no paper or leather signs attached to fences or shutters (that is, "proper" fixed signs were acceptable, random posters were not).[61] This is consistent with Catherine's broadly facilitative legislation on urban trade. For example, in successive decrees of 28 June and 8 July 1782 she overturned previous restrictive legislation and permitted merchants throughout the empire to trade from shops in their houses rather than just in designated markets and trading rows. In principle these decrees all but abandoned a restrictive principle of urban zoning for retail trade in favour of facilitating the autonomous spread of private shops.[62]

The implication of this sequence of decrees is that on-street painted trade signs became increasingly familiar features of the urban landscape during the third quarter of the eighteenth century. For this early period, however, we have little direct evidence regarding what was actually displayed on such signs. The likelihood is that they were principally pictorial, rather than verbal: pictures on boards representing the type of goods sold, or the type of services offered.[63] The presence of some inscriptions is plausible. By the time that signs became objects of illustration and description, pictorial and verbal elements were mixed and matched to taste.

Paintings, drawings and engravings of the cityscape, by both Russians and foreigners, are a feature of the first half of the nineteenth century. Their coverage is neither consistent nor systematic, but in some cases

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60 On restrictions on protruding or hanging signs in various Western European countries see Garrioch, 'House Names, Shop Signs and Social Organization', 37.

61 *PSZ* 1, no. 13421.

62 *PSZ* 1, nos 15451, 15462; 28 June and 8 July 1782; on earlier decrees forbidding merchants to trade from their houses see e.g. *PSZ* 1, no. 7940, of 9 November 1739. Broadly on Catherine's policies on trade and merchants see Isabel de Madariaga, *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1981), pp. 299–303, 470–77.

63 See Alla Povelikhina and Yevgeny Kovtun, *Russian Painted Shop Signs and Avant-garde Artists* (Leningrad: Aurora Art Publishers, 1991), pp. 11–26; also the summary of the early history of signs in Sally West, *I Shop in Moscow: Advertising and the Creation of Consumer Culture in Late Tsarist Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2011), pp. 21–25; A. V. Sazikov and T. V. Vinogradova, *Naruzhnaia reklama Moskvy. Istoriia, tipologiia, dokumenty* (Moscow: Russkii Mir, 2013), pp. 11–18.

the contrasts between consecutive depictions of the same or equivalent spaces is sufficient to serve as evidence for a rough chronology of graphospheric change. With regard to the main thoroughfares of St Petersburg, they suggest that the decisive proliferation of inscribed shop signs took place over the first couple of decades of the century. We can compare, for example, the views of Nevskii Prospekt around 1800, by the Swedish artist Benjamin Patersen, with scenes from the panorama of Nevskii Prospekt in the mid-1820s by Vasilii Sadovnikov, which in the early 1830s was turned into an influential and much-celebrated series of lithographs. Patersen's St Petersburg is not completely sign-free; his view of Palace Square from the bottom end of Nevskii Prospekt shows a red sign in French in the right foreground. However, his long perspective view down the central part of Nevskii Prospekt, from Gostinyi Dvor on the left, is utterly wordless.[64] This is in stark contrast with the equivalent scenes in Sadovnikov's panorama.[65] By the 1820s Petersburg's most fashionable street had become saturated with signs.

To what extent did such signs spread beyond St Petersburg's most fashionable street? To follow them further we have to move beyond legislation and illustration. From the 1830s onward, street signs became objects of description in several genres: articles and essays, correspondence, and literature.

A vivid account of what one might call "off-street" signs is given in a sketch called "Nooks and Crannies of Petersburg" (*Peterburgskie ugly*), by Nikolai Nekrasov, which appeared in a collection of essays and stories about the city published in 1845 under the general title *The Physiology of Petersburg*. In search of accommodation, Nekrasov's narrator turns into the inner courtyard of a large building, where his "eyes encountered a patchwork of signs, which had been attached to the building just as carefully on the inside [i.e. in the courtyard] as on the outside [i.e. facing the street]". The signs advertised anything from coffins to tin plates to the services of a certified midwife. Each sign displayed three things: the relevant designation in words (the narrator is amused by some

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64   *Sankt-Peterburg v akvareliakh, graviurakh i litografiiakh XVIII–XIX vekov: iz sobraniia Gosudarstvennogo Ermitazha*, compiled by G. A. Miroliubova, G. A. Printseva, and V. O. Looga (St Petersburg: Arka, 2009), pp. 67–69 (from the engraving by Gabriel Ludvig Lory), 189–191.

65   See the detailed analysis by Katherine Bowers in Chapter 12 of the present volume.

idiosyncratic phraseology, here in non-standard Russian rather than in French); a hand pointing towards the entrance to the relevant apartment or stall; and an explanatory picture, such as a boot, scissors, a samovar with a broken handle, a sausage, an item of furniture, and so on.[66]

Shop signs seem to have proliferated in central Moscow over roughly the same period as in St Petersburg. On 27 August 1833 Aleksandr Pushkin wrote a letter from Moscow to his wife, Natalia, in St Petersburg. It was her birthday, and the poet was chatty and upbeat. "Important news", he wrote, "the French shop signs, destroyed by Rostopchin in the year that you were born, have reappeared on Kuznetskii Most".[67] Count Fedor Rostopchin had been the military governor of Moscow at the time of Napoleon's invasion of 1812.[68] However, in Moscow during the early 1830s, shop signs were by no means limited to Kuznetskii Most. The first (to my knowledge) attempt at systematic description is an engaging pamphlet about Moscow signs, published in 1836, whose author used the unlikely-sounding name of Fedor Distribuendi.[69] Distribuendi describes twenty-five varieties of what he calls "ordinary" signs, with brief information on their design and on their usual inscriptions. With the exception of clothes shops, most of the signs noted by Distribuendi are in Russian.

Shop signs appear quite regularly in essays and stories of the period. For some they are simply the background to the bustling life of the city, others are rhetorically indignant at what they regard as the culturally demeaning prominence of French.[70] One strand of such descriptions relates to signage in general, as an urban phenomenon. Curiously (in view of the evidence for the actual spread of signs), according to this

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66   *Fiziologiia Peterburga*, p. 132.

67   Pushkin, S*obranie sochinenii v desiati tomakh*, vol. 10 (1962), p. 135.

68   For a satirical allusion to brash signs on foreign shops on Kuznetskii Most on the eve of the Napoleonic invasion see Konstantin Batiushkov's 'Stroll through Moscow' ('Progulka po Moskve') written in late 1811 or early 1812, in K. N. Batiushkov, *Sochineniia v dvukh tomakh*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1989), p. 288.

69   Distribuendi, *Vzgliad na moskovskie vyveski*.

70   For Moscow in this perspective see e.g. I. T. Kokorev, 'Publikatsii i vyveski', in *idem, Moskva sorokovyh godov. Ocherki i povesti o Moskve XIX veka* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1959), pp. 61–76 (esp. pp. 73, 74). On St Petersburg: E. I. Rastorguev, *Progulki po Nevskomy prospektu* (St Petersburg: Tipografiia Karla Kraiia, 1846), repr. in *Chuvstvitel'nye progulki po Nevskomu prospektu*, ed. by A. M. Konechnyi (St Petersburg: Petropolis, 2009), esp. pp. 138–40.

view, signs—street signs, house signs, shop signs—are sometimes taken as a distinguishing feature of the graphosphere of St Petersburg, by contrast with that of Moscow. Indeed, the two cities are even characterised in terms of this contrast. In an article entitled "Petersburg Notes for 1836", Nikolai Gogol wrote: "Moscow is a warehouse. It piles bale upon bale. It is completely oblivious to the ordinary customer. Petersburg has spread itself piecemeal, has dissipated into stalls and shops to lure the ordinary customer. Moscow says 'if the buyer needs something, he'll find it'. Petersburg thrusts its signs in one's face. […] Moscow is one big market; Petersburg is a well lit shop".[71] Vissarion Belinskii picked up this theme in his essay "Petersburg and Moscow", with which *The Physiology of Petersburg* opens. Moscow looks inwards on itself; St Petersburg faces outward. Moscow is for Muscovites and their families; St Petersburg is for the public and for visitors. Moscow is uninterested in helping you find your way around. To find a flat in Moscow is "pure torment", whereas in St Petersburg the doors will often display "not only the number but also a bronze or iron plaque with the name of the occupant".[72] Thus, for Gogol and Belinskii, the fact that St Petersburg was a city of visible words was taken to be indicator of an aspect of its urban modernity.

In a way, the communicative dynamic of the graphosphere had been reversed. In the initiatives of Peter I the public graphosphere was created as a means of projecting information and images from and about the state. By the mid-nineteenth century, the public graphosphere had expanded as a set of reference points for orientation within and across the spaces themselves. In the early eighteenth century the translations of graphospheric phenomena into other media (engravings, printed explanations) were complementary devices to amplify and explain the message. By the mid-nineteenth century, the translations of the graphospheric phenomena into other media—in maps and plans, tax registers, urban directories of businesses and residents—served practical purposes both for the state administration and for private convenience. Under Peter I the graphosphere was, at least in part, formed to project cultural ideas of public space. By the mid-nineteenth

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71 N. V. Gogol, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 14 tomakh,* ed. by N. F. Bel'chikov and B. V. Tomashevskii (Moscow and Leningrad: AN SSSR, 1952), 8, p. 179.

72 *Fiziologiia Peterburga*, p. 56.

century, cultural ideas of public space were being formed to reflect perceptions of the graphosphere. Most of the earlier initiatives were either deliberately transient (the "ephemeral monuments") or they faded with the fashions that had engendered them. By the mid-nineteenth century the public graphosphere had taken on many of the features that it retains to the present.

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Information and Empire

Mechanisms of Communication in Russia, 1600-1850

EDITED BY SIMON FRANKLIN AND KATHERINE BOWERS

From the mid-sixteenth to the mid-nineteenth century Russia was transformed from a moderate-sized, land-locked principality into the largest empire on earth. How did systems of information and communication shape and reflect this extraordinary change?

Information and Empire brings together a range of essays to address this complex question. It examines communication networks such as the postal service and the circulation of news, as well as the growth of a bureaucratic apparatus that informed the government about its people. It also considers the inscription of space from the point of view of mapping and the changing public 'graphosphere' of signs and monuments. More than a series of institutional histories, this book is concerned with the way Russia discovered itself, envisioned itself and represented itself to its people.

Innovative and scholarly, this collection breaks new ground in its approach to communication and information as a field of study in Russia. More broadly, it is an accessible contribution to pre-modern information studies, taking as its basis a country whose history often serves to challenge habitual Western models of development. It is important reading not only for specialists in Russian Studies, but also for students and anyone interested in the history of information and communications.

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