

**The City's Memory:
Texts of Preservation and Loss in Imperial St. Petersburg**

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Petersburg's imperial-era chroniclers have displayed a persistent, paradoxical obsession with this very young city's history and memory. Count Francesco Algarotti was among the first to exhibit this curious conflation of old and new, although he seems to have been influenced by sentiments generally in the air during the early eighteenth century. Algarotti attributed the dilapidated state of the grand palaces along the banks of the Neva to the haste with which these residences had been constructed by members of the court whom Peter the Great had obliged to move from Moscow to the new capital:

[I]t is easy to see that [the palaces] were built out of obedience rather than choice. Their walls are all cracked, quite out of perpendicular, and ready to fall. It has been wittily enough said, that ruins make themselves in other places, but that they were built at Petersburg. Accordingly, it is necessary every moment, in this new capital, to repair the foundations of the buildings, and its inhabitants built incessantly; as well for this reason, as on account of the instability of the ground and of the bad quality of the materials.¹

In a similar vein, William Kinglake, who visited Petersburg in the mid-1840s, scornfully advised travelers to admire the city by moonlight, so as to avoid seeing, “with too critical an eye, plaster scaling from the white-washed walls, and frost-cracks rending the painted

¹Francesco Algarotti, “Letters from Count Algarotti to Lord Hervey and the Marquis Scipio Maffei,” Letter IV, June 30, 1739. (London: Johnson and Payne, 1769; Reprint in Goldsmiths’-Kress Library of Economic Literature, no. 10500).

wooden columns.” Comparing Solomon’s obstinacy in creating Tadmor -- the pre-Semitic name for Palmyra -- to Peter’s project, Kinglake evoked the city’s “huge, staring masses of raw whitewash,” which, to him, had “the air of gigantic models, abandoned on the site intended to be hereafter occupied by more substantial structures.”²

Algarotti and Kinglake viewed the ruined aspect of the Russian imperial capital with the critical assessing gaze of foreign visitors. For Russian writers during the nineteenth century, in contrast, the notion of premature ruins came to be associated with Petersburg in increasingly poignant metaphysical and moral-ethical terms. The image of Petersburg in ruins is, of course, a reflection of the eschatological thinking in the literary works of Pushkin, Gogol, Dostoevsky, and Bely, as discussed in contemporary writing about the “Petersburg mythology.” What is less often acknowledged, however, is that this imagery also responds to real historical processes of urban destruction and reconstruction.

Although Petersburg is a comparatively young city, the imperial capital’s particular history makes the urban topography seem a much-overwritten and rewritten cultural text, subject to cycles of such rewriting well before the well-known early-Soviet and post-Soviet re-conceptions of its topography. The quintessential twentieth-century Petersburg project of replacing, renaming, and reclaiming various city structures finds many counterparts in nineteenth-century literature that vividly illustrate the continuous re-mapping – that is, the intertwined process of forgetting and remembering -- that represents both the life and death of the city.

²William Kinglake, “A Summer in Russia,” The New Monthly Magazine and Humorist, no. 2, 1846, pp. 278-279.

Beginning in the nineteenth century, the city's memory has been maintained by diverse institutions, events, and practices dedicated to this purpose, beginning with monuments, plaques, cemeteries, museums, memory journals, and memoirs, and continuing in preservationist descriptions and cultural histories. All manner of written tributes memorialize aspects of city life that gradually fell victim to the passage of time, as well those erased in a single day by disasters such as flood and fire. Of course, it is also true that imperial St. Petersburg often cannibalized itself, destroying old structures to make way for the new, and, during the Soviet period, extensive changes of this sort were imposed on the city by the Bolshevik government. Still, the Museum of City Sculpture, the Museum of Old Petersburg and its successors, not to mention the city's historical archives have provided repositories for artifacts of both preservation and loss, while monuments and memorial plaques around the city physically figure a past that they propose to contemporary viewers as simultaneously present and absent. Over and over, Petersburg proves the counterintuitive but ancient rule that writing, that seemingly ephemeral medium, is the most reliable way to build an enduring monument to the past.

Cemeteries: The Trope of Permanence

In 1903, the People's Educational Commission issued *Guidebook to St. Petersburg: Educational Excursions (Putevoditel' po S.-Peterburgu: Obrazovatel'nye ekskursii)*, which attempted to combine imperial, institutional, cultural, and pedagogical approaches to the city over the course of thirty-five topographically organized tours intended for visitors and residents of the city from the burgeoning ranks of literate Russians. Many of the excursions march their tourist-pupils through the city's museums:

Zoological Museum, Museum of Ethnography and Anthropology, Naval Museum, Imperial Agricultural Museum, Museum of Baron Stieglitz, and Pushkin Museum. The fifteenth excursion features a lengthy tour through the Public Library, whose hours are given as though to encourage readers to patronize its facilities. The twelfth excursion is devoted to the Hermitage collections and the sixteenth excursion surveys the holdings of the Russian Museum, describing the contents of each exhibition hall. To be sure, this guidebook provides a reasonably eclectic grouping of sites for most of its area-based excursions, and includes visits to churches and a synagogue, factories, markets, hospital, printing press, cemeteries, laboratory, and musical conservatory. Nevertheless, a certain view of St. Petersburg as a “museum of museums” emerges from this late imperial guidebook that seems in retrospect to reverse the sense of teeming diversity characteristic of ethnographic approaches to St. Petersburg, and instead to convey a foreboding sense of stasis. Petersburg as rendered by this official commission is unmistakably a text of the past, inviolate and self-evident. And yet, during this very period, a guidebook movement arose that conceived of St. Petersburg as a priceless treasure frighteningly vulnerable to the vicissitudes of time, and fought to establish a more elitist, rather than more populist view of the city as a shared resource.

In the 1990s, the writer Alexander Skidan acknowledged, if ironically, Petersburg’s primary function as the “sepulcher of imperial Russian culture.” For Skidan, the “museum principle” as everywhere manifested in Petersburg “gives rise to the nauseating sensation of unceasing *déjà vu*.”³ In Petersburg, Skidan notes, even the most recent of events are “conserved,” “surrendered before our eyes into an archive,” and

³Alexander Skidan, “O pol’ze i vrede Peterburga dlia zhizni,” <http://www.russ.ru/krug/99-07-06/skidan.html>. Like Brodsky, Skidan declares that the Bolsheviks are to be thanked for the city’s transformation into a cemetery-museum after the transfer of the capital back to Moscow.

transformed into “reminiscence” and “petrified ruins.” For Skidan, Petersburg’s dead, fixed quality could be attributed to the Bolsheviks’ neglect of the imperial capital, compounded by the lack of funds during the post-Soviet period for sprucing up shabby palaces and formerly grand apartment houses. For many imperial-era commentators, however, Petersburg has always been a city of loss, the cemetery-like site of much-regretted change and destruction. In Petersburg cultural history, however, even the cemetery topos – elsewhere typically a site of memory and a repository of urban history – is often linked with the threat of encroaching oblivion. There have been moments in Petersburg’s pre-revolutionary history when the city as a whole could be seen as a cemetery monument marking its own grave. These periods include an interlude following Peter the Great’s death when the capital temporarily shifted back to Moscow (1728-1731), as well as the imperial period after the 1881 assassination of Alexander II, when both Alexander III and Nicholas II preferred to reside in Moscow and at the Gatchina and Tsarskoe Selo palace-preserves outside of Petersburg.⁴

As Lewis Mumford points out, “Mid the uneasy wanderings of paleolithic man, the dead were the first to have a permanent dwelling.” The site of ancestral graves thus often served as an incentive for the living to form a settlement. In this sense, “The city of the dead antedates the city of the living . . . is the forerunner, almost the core, of every living city.”⁵ In the Petersburg text, the cemetery provides one of the most common figures for the city’s memory, as well as a favorite subject for cultural historians. A.V. Kobak and Iu.M. Piriutko term the Petersburg cemeteries “a chronicle of the city, which

⁴For details on the latter period, see Richard Wortman, “Moscow and Petersburg: The Problem of Political Center in Tsarist Russia, 1881-1914” in Sean Wilentz, ed., Rites of Power: Symbolism, Ritual, and Politics Since the Middle Ages (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985).

⁵Lewis Mumford, The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1961), p. 7.

preserves thousands of names of government officials, military men, scholars, performers, writers, artists, and musicians.”⁶ Vladimir Saitov’s massive project of 1907-1911 took precisely this approach to Petersburg cemeteries within the city territory and its environs, compiling more than 40,000 epitaphs from fifty-seven different burial places in a four-volume reference that he termed a “dictionary of individuals.”⁷ Petersburg’s cemeteries as a group, moreover, comprise a cultural text that speaks to phenomena such as the haphazard nature of cemetery planning in eighteenth-century Russia, the evolution of cemeteries’ relationship to the nineteenth-century city, and the post-revolutionary relocation of individual graves to the Masters of Art cemetery (*Nekropol’ Masterov Iskusstv*) and the Volkovo Writers’ Footways (*Literatorskie mostki*) -- museum-like collections of dead Russian cultural luminaries. In 1939, all of the city sculpture, including monumental and memorial work inside cemeteries, came to be known collectively as the “Museum of City Sculpture” – an indoor and open-air abstraction that pointed to the increasingly museum-like quality of St. Petersburg as a whole. The State Museum of City Sculpture, located inside the former Blagoveshchenskaia Church on the monastery grounds, opened in 1955, in order to provide a centralized account of its subject by means of a single, permanent exhibit of models, drawings, and the like.

Despite well-developed burial practices, the explicit transformation of selected Petersburg cemeteries into museums, as an official exercise in purported cultural commemoration during the 1930s, occasioned an immense loss of Petersburg’s individual and family grave-markers from the imperial period. These cemetery-museums oddly

⁶A.V. Kobak and Iu.M. Piriutko, “Ot sostavitelei,” *Istoricheskie kladbishcha Peterburga: Spravochnik-putevoditel’* (SPb: Izdatel’stvo Chernysheva, 1993), p. 5. For a historical survey of Petersburg’s cemeteries, see their “Ocherk istorii peterburgskogo nekropolia” in the same volume.

⁷V.I. Saitov, Introduction to *Peterburgskii nekropol’* (SPb, 1912-1913), t. 1-4.

represent at once an enhancement and a violation of the imperial-era practices that hallowed cultural ground in this way. As Iu.M. Piriutko observes, logical “groupings” of graves – according to family ties, close friendships, area of residence, professional associations, and circumstances of death -- evolved in many of the city’s cemeteries.⁸ In this way, the original resting place for literary and cultural luminaries was the Lazarevskoe cemetery at the Alexander-Nevisky monastery.⁹ By the end of the imperial period, Lazarevskoe thus already constituted a virtual “memory museum” as a result of organically evolving city burial practices. The 1930s plan in then-Leningrad, however, sought to establish a formal pantheon of dead Russian cultural heroes modeled after the practices in Paris and London, and to this end the Alexander-Nevisky (Lazarevskoe and Tikhvinskoe) and Volkovskoe cemeteries were reconceived and remapped.¹⁰ While tombstones of the greatest historical and artistic interest were transferred to the new museums -- with or without the human remains whose location they marked -- many other markers were destroyed in the process of liquidating historical burial grounds throughout the city.

The “Masters of Art” cemetery was opened on the grounds of Tikhvinskoe in 1937, and, in 1939, the “Cemetery of the Eighteenth Century” (*Nekropol' XVIII veka*)

⁸Iu.M. Piriutko, “Leningradskii panteon,” *Antsiferovskie chteniia: Materialy i tezisy konferentsii* (Leningrad: Leningradskoe otdelenie sovetskogo fonda kul'tury, 1989), p. 162.

⁹For detailed historical information about Lazarevskoe, see the section on “Kladbishcha Aleksandro-Neviskoi lavry” by Iu.M. Piriutko in *Istoricheskie kladbishcha Peterburga*. See also Iu.M. Piriutko, “Lazarevskaiia usypal'nitsa – pamiatnik russkoi kul'tury XVIII – XIX vv.,” *Pamiatniki kul'tury. Novye otkrytiia* (Moscow: Nauka, 1989).

¹⁰Note that the Paris Panthéon was established in an eighteenth-century church that was secularized during the French Revolution (although it twice reverted back to being a church during the nineteenth century) and dedicated to the memory of great French citizens. The Panthéon contains the remains of Voltaire, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Victor Hugo, Émile Zola, and Marie Curie, among others. The Père-Lachaise cemetery, opened in 1804, contains the remains of dozens of famous Frenchmen and Frenchwomen. London’s Westminster Abbey provides another example of this phenomenon, housing the tombs and memorials of famous British subjects such as Sir Isaac Newton, Geoffrey Chaucer, Ben Jonson, John Dryden, and Robert Browning.

was established on the territory of Lazarevskoe. The “Eighteenth Century” cemetery houses the graves of the writers Lomonosov and Fonvizin, the architects Quarenghi, Starov, Voronikhin, Zakharov, Toma de Thomon, and Rossi, and the painter Borovikovskii, among others. The “Masters of Art” cemetery includes the graves of the writers Karamzin, Zhukovskii, Gnedich, Krylov, Baratynskii, Viazemskii, and Dostoevskii, the composers Glinka, Serov, Dargomyzhskii, Musorgskii, Rubinshtein, Borodin, Chaikovskii, and Rimskii-Korsakov, the sculptor Klodt, and other cultural notables such as the critic Vladimir Stasov and the actress Vera Komissarzhevskaiia. It is true that many of these luminaries were originally buried in the Tikhvinskoe or Lazarevskoe cemeteries, but their numbers were significantly augmented by new arrivals transferred from other cemeteries during the 1930s. As a 1970s guidebook to the “Museum of City Sculpture” explains, during the 1930s, “the cemetery was liberated of monuments that possessed no artistic value or historical significance. At the same time, the mortal remains and graveside monuments of many gifted prominent figures were transferred here from other cemeteries in Leningrad.” The cemetery was thus converted into a “shady park with wide alleys,” charming little pathways, and well-tended vegetation. As a rule, “the graves are grouped according to the principle of the intellectual and creative affinity between the interred: writers, musicians, representatives of the theater, masters of the plastic arts. This particularity of the necropolis significantly facilitates the study of its historical-artistic collection.”¹¹

The transfer of tombstones and remains thus represented a rearrangement of the Petersburg cultural text, making it at once more coherent and less historically accurate.

¹¹G.D. Netunakhina and N.I. Udimova, Muzei gorodskoi skul’ptury: Kratkii putevoditel’ (Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1972), pp. 109-110.

On the other hand, conveying human remains to a new location to underscore their emblematic cultural significance parallels Peter the Great's own 1724 decision to transfer the relics of thirteenth-century Prince Alexander Nevsky from a monastery in Vladimir to the Petersburg Alexander-Nevsky monastery, in commemoration of this Russian hero's 1240 victory over the Swedes at the confluence of the rivers Izhora and Neva.¹²

The "Writers' Footways" of the Volkovo cemetery constitute Petersburg's other primary imperial-era "cemetery-museum," also officially established during the 1930s. Beginning with Radishchev's burial at Volkovo in 1802 (albeit the precise site of his grave has been lost), there evolved a tradition of burying Petersburg's "civic-minded" writers in a community of their literary brethren. Belinskii was buried at Volkovo in 1848, and Dobroliubov in 1861.¹³ Also buried in the "Writers' Footways" now are Saltykov-Shchedrin, Leskov, Goncharov, Pomialovskii, Grigorovich, Pisarev, Reshetnikov, Mamin-Sibiriak, Garshin, and Gleb Uspenskii.¹⁴ As in the Alexander-Nevsky cemetery-museums, quite a number of literary luminaries had originally been buried in this same part of the Volkovo cemetery; other writers, Turgenev and Kavelin among them, were transferred during the 1930s from liquidated sections of Volkovo and from city cemeteries that were slated for destruction. The "Writers' Footways" as a twentieth-century institution elaborated and made official a nineteenth-century development that proved fortuitously convenient for the Soviet establishment – the

¹²For a description of the official ceremonies accompanying the transfer of the relics, see M.I. Pyliaev, *Staryi Peterburg* (Leningrad: Titul, 1990), p. 23

¹³Note also the parallel tradition of burying nineteenth-century radical thinkers (Vera Zasulich among them) in the Literatorskie mostki. For a description of the notorious funeral of populist Pavel Chernyshev at Volkovo, see Tom Trice, "Rites of Protest: Populist Funerals in Imperial St. Petersburg, 1876-1878," *Slavic Review*, vol. 60, no. 1, Spring 2001.

¹⁴Note that the Literatorskie mostki is also home to the gravesites of Petersburg cultural historians Mikhail Pyliaev and Petr Stolpianskii – a characteristic detail of Petersburg's meta-commentary upon its own history.

canonization of the “Belinskii line” of Russian literature.¹⁵ In this sense, Soviet cultural policy might be said to have fulfilled the wishes of the Petersburg democratic intelligentsia of the latter nineteenth century, as expressed in their writings.

In Nekrasov’s “Morning Stroll” (*Utrenniaia progulka*), the first part of his long poem “About the Weather” (*O pogode*, 1859), the depressed narrator happens upon a funeral procession. The narrator idly follows the lonely coffin being conveyed by a dray-cart hearse to the Volkovo cemetery, where he searches for the “inconspicuous grave” that constitutes the resting place of “a great force” (Belinskii). The cemetery watchman cannot tell him where his friend lies, but gives him some advice about navigating the cemetery: crosses mark the graves of petty-bourgeois, officers, and lower gentry; tombstone slabs stand above the graves of government officials, while slabs lie on the ground over teachers’ burial-places. The watchman concludes, “Where there is neither a slab nor a cross/There, most probably, lies a writer (*sochinitel*).”¹⁶ This part of Nekrasov’s poem thus fashions itself as a substitute grave-marker for Belinskii, whose resting place the narrator fails to find.

Vsevolod Garshin, who would himself eventually be buried in the Writers’ Footways, described a stroll through Volkovo in his “Petersburg Letters.” Explicitly echoing Pushkin’s 1836 poem “When pensive, I stroll outside the city...” (*Kogda za gorodom, zadumchiv, ia brozhu...*), Garshin takes himself off to the cemetery for a quiet walk, noting that city cemeteries such as Smolenskoe, Mitrofanievskoe, and Volkovo still allow new “residents,” even though the dead have been stacked one on top of another and

¹⁵For a historical survey, see A.I. Kudriavtsev and G.N. Shkoda, “Pravoslavnoe kladbishche i nekropol’-muzei Literatorskie mostki” in *Istoricheskie kladbishcha Peterburga*. For a Soviet-era description, see *Leningrad: Putevoditel’* (Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1988), pp. 194-195.

¹⁶N.A. Nekrasov, *PSSiP*, t. 2 (Moscow: Kudozhestvennaia literature, 1949), p. 64.

in tight rows.¹⁷ “Cemeteries are the shadiest parks in the city,” declares Garshin with dark humor, because vegetation grows beautifully in the “rich soil.”¹⁸ Garshin evokes the “Poets’ Corner” in Westminster Abbey as a reproach to his own countrymen: “We do not take care of our great dead as the English do. We do not take care of them even while they are alive.” Petersburg’s own “Poets’ Corner” is not actually a corner for poets, observes Garshin, but rather for “journalists” (*publitsisty*) such as Belinskii, Dobroliubov, and Pisarev. These great men inhabit their cramped corner, “surrounded by a numberless crowd of obscure names . . . The crowd, which they loved and taught and which suffocated them, has not left them in peace even after death, and has crowded and constricted their little corner so that there was no place for a new friend to lie down...”¹⁹ Long-ago visitors inscribed excerpts from Nekrasov’s poetry and their own “naïve prose with expressions of love and grief” on the wooden railings around the writers’ graves. Belinskii is now forgotten, mourns Garshin, and not a single wreath adorns his simple black-granite tombstone, in shameful contrast to the ornate monuments erected to merchants that surround his corner. Garshin’s emphasis on Russian prose, as opposed to English verse, implicitly proposes his “Letters” as Belinskii’s true monument, even as he deplores the poverty of physical commemoration.

The eulogy “Oration on Lomonosov” (*Slovo o Lomonosove*) that concludes Alexander Radishchev’s “Journey from Petersburg to Moscow” (*Puteshestvie iz*

¹⁷Most scholars concur that the site of Pushkin’s famous stroll through a depressing “public cemetery” took place at the Blagoveshchenskoe cemetery on Kamennyi Island, since the poem was written during the author’s visit to this island. The notion has also been advanced that this poem captures the impressions of a visit to his friend Anton Del’vig’s grave at the Volkovo cemetery, known for its diverse mix of representatives from the Petersburg population. See M.P. Alekseev, *Pushkin i mirovaia literatura* (Leningrad, 1987), p. 148.

¹⁸Vsevolod Garshin, “Peterburgskie pis’ma,” *Rasskazy*, kn. 3 (SPb: Tip. M.M. Stasiulevicha, 1902), pp. 62-64.

¹⁹This last is a reference to the writer Afanas’ev-Chuzhbinskii, who had requested that he be buried near Belinskii and Dobroliubov, but was laid to rest at some distance from them due to the lack of space.

Peterburga v Moskvu, 1790) represents a significantly earlier contribution to this conversation about public memory, and one which proves oddly prescient about the post-revolutionary fate of Petersburg cemeteries. Radishchev describes an evening stroll to the Alexander-Nevisky monastery, where he finds Lomonosov's 1765 grave, whose marble tombstone erected by Count Vorontsov bears inscriptions in both Latin and Russian. In contrast to Garshin, Radishchev disputes the power of a graveside monument ("cold stone") to preserve cultural memory, arguing that such majestic structures merely commemorate human vanity. "It is not a stone with your name inscribed that will carry your fame into future centuries," intones Radishchev. "Your words, living always and forever in your creations, in the words of the Russian tribe, made new again by you in our language, will fly on the people's lips beyond the boundless horizon of the centuries." He adds, "Let the elements, raging together, open the earthly abyss and swallow this splendid city, from which your great song resounded to all of the corners of vast Russia . . . but as long as the Russian language can be heard, you will be alive and not die."²⁰

Radishchev's evocation of the Petersburg apocalypse notwithstanding, he could hardly have anticipated the neglect with which the later nineteenth century, not to mention the twentieth, would treat the city's cemeteries, and the extent to which we now rely on strictly written accounts of "dead Petersburg."

Although burial sites represent a primary institution of memory, Petersburg has thus had to make special efforts to remember its cemeteries and markers, Vladimir Saitov's immense catalogue among them. The preservationists of the early twentieth

²⁰A.N. Radishchev, *Puteshestvie iz Peterburga v Moskvu*, V.A. Zapadov, ed. (SPb: Nauka, 1992), p. 115. Ironically, in 1783 Radishchev had composed an epitaph for his late wife and wished to have it inscribed upon her tombstone at the monastery cemetery, but was forbidden by the authorities on the grounds that the verses showed "insufficient certainty in the immortality of the soul." See A.N. Radishchev, *Sochineniia* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1988), p. 650.

century similarly complained of the disrepair into which many historical cemeteries had fallen, most particularly N.N. Vrangel' in his famous 1907 piece "Forgotten Graves" (*Zabytye mogily*).²¹ Thirty years before the institution of the "Masters of Art" cemetery, Vrangel' wrote passionately of the destruction wrought by time, the elements, and vandals on the expressive Lazarevskoe tombstone sculpture, which had been created by Petersburg Academy artists such as Mikhail Kozlovskii, Ivan Martos, and Dominique Rachette. Vrangel' pointed out the painful irony in the motifs of remembering that pervade the epitaph verse of these forgotten graves, and warned that the on-going neglect of these valuable monuments would lead to the loss of historical knowledge about Petersburg's burial practices. As mentioned, however, the 1930s saw the destruction of entire cemeteries in a mass exercise in historical forgetting. During the 1970s, several more imperial-era cemeteries were liquidated, resulting in the loss of thousands of gravesites, and hundreds of marble tombstones, not to mention the handmade decorative metalwork fencing that surrounded them. This process was halted only after the intervention of prominent city intellectuals headed by Academic Dmitri Likhachev.

During the early years of the twentieth century, Saitov and Vrangel' worked to capture on paper the collective memory that a cemetery, with its monuments and inscriptions, is intended to preserve. The more recent efforts of cemetery historians such as Alexander Kobak, Iurii Piriutko, and Tatiana Tsar'kova have extended this pre-revolutionary project, and perhaps this is only proper. As Pushkin's famous "Monument" poem makes clear, material commemoration is doomed to fail in its goal of preventing

²¹N.N. Vrangel', "Zabytye mogily," *Starye gody*, February 1907. At the conclusion of this article, Vrangel' notes pensively, "Petersburg cemeteries are particularly beautiful during the autumn, before the snow falls, but after the trees have lost their leaves, when the marble and bronze silhouettes are sharply outlined against the background of the gray sky" (49).

the loss of memory. Only writing, a seemingly ephemeral medium but a well-developed Petersburg practice, can hope to succeed in place of monuments.

Cultural Memory and Monumental Loss

In his 1844 essay “Petersburg and Moscow” (*Peterburg i Moskva*), Vissarion Belinsky argued with those who characterized Petersburg as a city without a history, as evidenced by its lack of ancient historical monuments. “Yes, dear sirs, there are no such monuments in Petersburg, and there can be none because Petersburg has existed since the day of its founding for only 141 years,” he granted. However, “Petersburg itself is a great historical monument” in the extraordinary fact of its existence.²² In Belinskii’s view, even a young city like Petersburg can be the bearer of cultural memory, since it stands as a physical monument to its particular time and place.

The city, as it turns out, however, is not a very apt visual analog for either individual or cultural memory. As Sigmund Freud took pains to show in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, forgetting is an operation quite distinct from destroying, since any idea once formed in the human mind can in theory be retrieved or reconstructed. To support his point, Freud constructed an elaborate metaphor, hypothesizing that if Rome were a human consciousness “with just as long and varied a past history,” it would look very different from the modern city of Rome:

This would mean that in Rome the palaces of the Caesars were still standing on the Palatine and the Septizonium of Septimius Severus was still towering to its old height; that the beautiful statues were still standing in the colonnade of the Castle of St. Angelo, as they were up to its siege

²²V.G. Belinskii, “Peterburg i Moskva,” Peterburg v russkom ocherke XIX veka, p. 89.

by the Goths, and so on. But more still: where the Palazzo Cafferelli stands there would also be, without this being removed, the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, not merely in its latest form, moreover, as the Romans of the Caesars saw it, but also in its earliest shape, when it still wore an Etruscan design and was adorned with terra-cotta antifixae. Where the Coliseum stands now we could at the same time admire Nero's Golden House; on the Piazza of the Pantheon we should find not only the Pantheon of to-day as bequeathed to us by Hadrian, but on the same site also Agrippa's original edifice; indeed, the same ground would support the church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva and the old temple over which it was built. And the observer would need merely to shift the focus of his eyes, perhaps, or change his position, in order to call up a view of either the one or the other.²³

For Freud, this metaphor proves that mental life cannot be adequately rendered by visual representation, since only one structure can occupy a given space in an artistic depiction. What Freud does not acknowledge -- although he performs this very operation in elaborating Rome as metaphor -- is that a city's memory, like the memories of a human individual, may at least in theory receive a full representation in writing. The seemingly infinite contemporary Petersburg project of textual commemoration strives for precisely this articulation, in a permanently on-going reconstruction of the city's past. While cities may not be an adequate analog for the human mind, text serves very well as a model of

²³Sigmund Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents, trans. Joan Riviere (New York: Jonathan Cape & Harrison Smith, 1930), pp. 17-18.

the city. And the young city of Petersburg with its intensely compressed history has a great deal to remember.

As Umberto Eco declares, “Remembering is like constructing and then traveling again through a space . . . Memories are built as a city is built.”²⁴ Structures such as libraries, archives, and museums make this connection explicit, realizing in physical form the “containers for the documents that represent the memory of a civilization,” no less than do architectural monuments.²⁵ Similarly, architectural models of memory are common in treatises dating all the way back to the ancient Greeks, who first articulated the practice of mnemonics for mentally creating *loci* as assigned locations for objects, concepts, and events to be remembered.²⁶ Thus the creation of textual as well as physical architecture aids greatly in developing the faculties of memory.

From the standpoint of cultural history, the Strel’na palace provides a provocative parallel to Peterhof, the Petersburg palace park that most obviously speaks to the solid foundations of Peter’s project. Strel’na is most notable for its checkered history – alternating periods of glory and neglect. The third volume of Paul Svin’in’s *Memorable Sights of St. Petersburg and its Environs (Dostopamiatnosti Sankt-Peterburga i ego okrestnostei, 1816-1828)* provides a history of Strel’na until 1818, pointing out that Peter originally intended Strel’na to be his “Versailles,” until it was made clear to him that Peterhof’s topographical situation lent itself much more favorably to the system of fountains he had planned. Although construction of Strel’na continued after 1711, Peter

²⁴Umberto Eco, “Architecture and Memory,” *VIA* 8, 1986, p. 89.

²⁵See, in this regard, V.N. Zaitsev, “Bibliotechnoe-informatsionnoe prostranstvo Sankt-Peterburga,” *Fenomen Peterburga*.

²⁶For a detailed historical exposition of these practices from antiquity up to Leibniz, see Frances Yates’s classic study of “mnemotechnics” in *The Art of Memory*, vol. 3 in *Selected Works* (London: Routledge, 1966). For a fascinating particular case, see “Building the Palace” (Chapter One) in Jonathan D. Spence, *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1984).

then devoted his primary efforts to Peterhof.²⁷ Strel'na missed its chance at greater glory, and instead became a secondary palace, presented to subsidiary members of the royal family such as daughters and non-inheriting sons. Following a major fire during the reign of Anna Ioannovna, Strel'na was partially reconstructed by Rastrelli, but stood empty for the remainder of the eighteenth century. Svin'in imagines the sad spectacle with relish:

Soon the wide alleyways were overgrown with prickly grass, thick-trunked birches and aspen took root on the flagstone terraces and bridgeways, and the palace assumed an appearance of neglect and destruction. The growth-choked groves no longer beckoned visitors to rest; the waters turned to shaded marshlands; the wind whistled in the windows. Travelers avoided these sad, gloomy spots, or stopped there only to interrogate the echo, which would answer in a wild voice three times from the ruins. During this period, fearsome stories about spirits who wandered about the grounds and made noise at night circulated among simple folk.²⁸

Svin'in's account of Strel'na's sorry state segues into a lengthy and triumphant account of its return to glory after Paul presented the palace to his son Constantine in 1797. The new owner took great pains in renovating both the palace and grounds, and established a camp for his Horse Guards there. Unfortunately, Strel'na was almost entirely destroyed

²⁷For an account of Strel'na's early days, see S. Gorbatenko, "Dva petrovskikh ansambliia Strel'ny." *Nevskii arkhiv: Istoriko-kraevedcheskii sbornik III* (SPb: Atheneum-Feniks, 1997). See also P.N. Stolpianskii, *Petergofskaia pershppektiva* (Petrograd, 1923), pp. 35-46.

²⁸P.P. Svin'in, *Dostopamiatnosti Sankt-Peterburga i ego okrestnostei* (SPb: Liga Plius, 1997), pp. 177-178. Note that Stolpianskii scornfully dismisses Svin'in's "romantic" description of Strel'na in ruins, insisting that historical documents show some use of the palace by Catherine during the 1770s. See *Petergofskaia pershppektiva*, pp. 41-42.

by fire in 1803, but it was rebuilt at the wish of Alexander I. When Constantine died in 1831, the Strel'na drama was repeated: Nicholas I gave the palace to his son Constantine, who was only four years old at the time. In 1843, a new wave of renovations at the once-again dilapidated Strel'na began, and with Grand Duke Constantine's wedding in 1848, work on the main palace grew more intensive. The ensuing era – the second half of the nineteenth century, when the palace was called “Konstantinovskii” and occupied by the Grand Duke and his large family – can be considered Strel'na's heyday.²⁹ One of Constantine's sons published his own poetry under the initials “K.R.” (Konstantin Romanov), and several of his verses became well-known Russian art songs, set to music by Petr Tchaikovsky. More than a dozen of Constantine's elegiac lyrics were written at Strel'na – his birthplace and beloved personal refuge -- during the final two decades of the nineteenth century.

In 1911, the Strel'na palace passed from Constantine's widow to his son Dmitri, who lived there until his 1918 arrest and 1919 execution at the Peter-Paul Fortress. The new Soviet government auctioned off the palace's contents, and the palace as well as the grounds rapidly deteriorated during the 1920s when Strel'na served as a facility for homeless children. During the late 1930s, the palace interior was reconstructed in preparation for its conversion to a sanatorium, but in 1941, the invading Germans occupied Strel'na. The extensively damaged palace was liberated in 1944, reconstructed to a certain degree, and given over to house the Arctic Institute until the 1990s. Various *perestroika*-era groups have taken an interest in restoring Strel'na, but due to the expense of such a project, the palace park remains decrepit and abandoned. Noting the “romantic

²⁹See the literary “tour” in V.V. Gerasimov, Bol'shoi dvorets v Strel'ne – bez chetverti tri stoletiiia (SPb: Almaz, 1997), pp. 86-113.

aura of mystery that enshrouds the palace park” at Strel’na now, the historian V.V. Gerasimov declares, “The Peterhof road represents a singular reflection of time. And a person who travels along the former Peterhof Road either on a daily basis or as a Sunday stroll, falls into a melancholy mood.”³⁰ Strel’na has long borne the “stamp of the outcast,” which has in turn created the “particular minor tonality of its descriptions.”³¹ As Gerasimov points out, the ruined pavilions on the Strel’na grounds are not carefully created effects, in contrast to those at Pavlovsk, but instead represent the actual work of time. The poet Joseph Brodsky was similarly susceptible to the mood of Strel’na, as evidenced by his lyrics “Strel’na Elegy” (1960) and “Strel’na” (1987).

In fact, wistful meditations on the ruined state of a palace park constitute a special “Petersburg” genre that extends from the latter half of the eighteenth century up until the present day. Writing about the Petersburg palace parks is limited to a few basic forms – official paean, private elegy, or museum catalog -- depending on the cultural moment of the palace in question.

A certain amount of change and loss in a cityscape over time is to be expected. Hardly any Petersburg residences from the early Baroque period have survived, for example, except for the Men’shikov Palace on the University Embankment and the restored Kikin house not far from the Tauride Palace. The beautiful Stock Exchange building by Thomas de Thomon (1805-1810) replaced Giacomo Quarenghi’s partially completed Stock Exchange from the 1780s. The present St. Isaac’s cathedral is actually the fourth cathedral by that name constructed in more or less the same place – two of these from the first half of the eighteenth century, and a third, designed by Antonio

³⁰Ibid., pp. 6-8.

³¹Ibid., pp. 162-163.

Rinaldi during the reign of Catherine the Great and completed by Vincenzo Brenna under Paul. Similarly, there were four different Winter Palaces. The third and fourth of these were built by Bartolomeo Rastrelli, the former for Anna Ioannovna during the 1730s, and the latter for Elizabeth during the 1750s. Catherine's Tsaritsyn Meadow became Paul's Field of Mars. Elizabeth's Summer Palace was torn down to make way for Paul's Mikhailovskii Castle. For the most part, Petersburg cultural historians have treated these major structural "rewritings" as a normative, if regrettable part of the city's history during the eighteenth century and the first part of the nineteenth-century. In contrast, the later nineteenth-century destruction of small homes and other buildings dating from the eras of Catherine the Great and Alexander I in order to make room for eclectic-style apartment buildings enraged many of Petersburg's most prominent cultural commentators, most notably the preservationists.

Beginning with the final years of the nineteenth century, Petersburg lost a number of its major architectural "monuments," due to unfortunate decisions by city officials. The neoclassical Bol'shoi Theater by Thomas de Thomon was almost entirely demolished and turned into a Conservatory of Music with nothing to recommend it architecturally. The famous Stroganov dacha on Chernaiia rechka was torn down in 1898 to make room for an apartment building, and is preserved only in the well-known painting by the architect Andrei Voronikhin that hangs in the Russian Museum. The Iakovlev residence by the Obukhov bridge, built in the 1760s by Rastrelli, was torn down in 1901 to accommodate the expansion of the Haymarket. The greater part of Trezzini's early-eighteenth-century Gostinyi Dvor on Vasilievskii Island was destroyed to make room for the construction of the Academy of Sciences library in the 1910s.

During this period, Petersburg preservationists actively protested the “vandalism” being wreaked on the imperial capital’s older buildings, initially in the journal *World of Art* and most particularly in the journal *Past Years (Starye gody, 1907-1916)*, which made saving Russia’s architectural legacy one of its primary missions.³² A 1907 article in *Past Years* mourned Petersburg’s old chain bridges, the Panteleimonovskii and Egipetskii bridges across the Fontanka, both dating from the last years of Alexander I’s reign, and both defunct as of the first decade of the twentieth century.³³ A 1915 article deplored the disappearance of several Petersburg gardens adjoining various palaces.³⁴ In general, the preservationist movement – a union of artists and architectural specialists -- made major textual contributions to the cult of “Old Petersburg” in the form of books, articles, and catalogues, and sponsored public lectures and exhibitions.³⁵ Like the journal *Past Years*, the Museum of Old Petersburg – eventually incorporated into the City Museum, and later called the Museum of the History of Petersburg -- dates from the late 1910s. The Museum, which included a large collection of original architectural drawings and photographs, had many homes over the years, including the residence of Count Siuzor, the Anichkov Palace, the Rumiantsev house on the English embankment, and the

³²Alexander Benois’s best-known articles in this regard are “Zhivopisnyi Peterburg,” *Mir iskusstvo*, no. 1, 1902; “Krasota Peterburga,” *Mir iskusstvo*, no. 8, 1902; and “Vandalizmy,” *Mir iskusstvo*, no. 10, 1904. For a brief historical sketch of *Starye gody*, see F.M. Lur’e, “Golosa ‘Serebrianogo veka’: knigi, zhurnaly, vystavki,” *Fenomen Peterburga*, pp. 183-187. For a memoiristic account of the founding of *Starye gody* written during the mid-1920s, see M.A. Vitukhnovskaia, “Vospominaniia P.P. Veinera o zhurnale ‘Starye gody,’” *Pamiatniki kul’tury. Novye okrytiia. Ezhegodnik 1984* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1986).

³³S. Troinitskii, “O tsepnykh mostakh Peterburga,” *Starye gody*, March 1907.

³⁴V. Kurbatov, “Unichtozhenie petrogradskikh sadov,” *Starye gody*, January-February 1915.

³⁵For an overview of preservationist activities, see Katerina Clark, *Petersburg, Crucible of Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 59-65.

Peter-Paul Fortress.³⁶ The work of the preservationists at the end of the imperial period thus took a consummately Petersburgian form, a fusion of literature and architecture.

The preservationist movement, which began during the final years of the imperial period, brought with it a spate of book-length guides to St. Petersburg. Georgy Lukomskii produced *Old Petersburg: Strolls Along the Historic Quarters of the Capital* (*Staryi Peterburg: Progulki po starinnykh kvartalam stolitsy*, 1917), which attempts to safeguard the legacy of the past, or, where that effort had already failed, to remember what had been lost. In his preface, Lukomskii declares that his attention was not confined to the universally-acclaimed architectural treasures of Petersburg, but extended to unsung entranceways and arbors “dispersed among distant outskirts, often built-over or blocked from the view of the passing pedestrian by the great masses of apartment blocks.”³⁷ The famous buildings can take care of themselves, claims Lukomskii. “But those details of Old Petersburg that have been crowded by the new buildings – obelisks, columns, wells, fountains, sphinxes, entryway pylons, lamplights by front-door awnings –deserve especially to be photographed or sketched.” Lukomskii does not organize his “strolls” according to neighborhood, but rather by structures such as markets, warehouses, barracks, private homes, bridges, and churches, because his purpose is to draw the reader’s attention to “little-noticed, but rapidly disappearing constructions of secondary architectural-artistic significance.”³⁸ He sets himself apart from the work that has preceded him in that his work does not emphasize the acknowledged “monumental,

³⁶Sources on the Museum include *Muzei Goroda: K Oktiabriu 1927 g.* (Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Muzeiia goroda, 1928); A.M. Blinov, “Muzei ‘Staryi Peterburg’, 1907-1918 g.,” *Leningrad ves' na ladoni* 1990; A.N. Andreeva, “Muzei Goroda,” *Peterburgskie chteniia* 96 (SPb: BLITS, 1996); and R.I. Shpiller, “Gosudarstvennyi muzei istorii Leningrada (1918-1985 gg.),” *Muzei i vlast': Iz zhizni muzeev: Sobrniki nauchnykh trudov* (Moscow, 1991).

³⁷G.K. Lukomskii, *Staryi Peterburg: Progulki po starinnykh kvartalam stolitsy* (Petrograd: Svobodnoe iskusstvo, 1917), p. 10.

³⁸*Ibid.*, p. 14.

grandiose structures” of “official” Petersburg. In this way, Lukomskii continues the Natural School tendency to explore hidden crannies in St. Petersburg, except that now it is high culture, rather than the life of the lower classes, that is obscured and in need of illumination by writing. Lukomskii makes a fetish of the antique and decrepit, treating an old warehouse as a valuable cultural artifact, but a new warehouse as merely a functional structure. He also instructs his reader in attentiveness to the city’s physical analogues for literary marginalia, historical footnotes, parentheses, tiny details, and subsidiary forms.

One of Lukomskii’s “strolls” (in a chapter titled “Vandalism”) devotes itself to what has already disappeared, providing a guide to the past by taking the reader to the former sites of culturally-significant buildings pulled down to make room for unworthy successors, and by surveying existing constructions spoiled by tasteless, unsuitable renovation. Lukomskii’s primary task is to seek out moments of textual coherence in the Petersburg cityscape that transcend single surviving structures -- mini-ensembles that remain from the past, forming “little corners” (*ugolki*) of Old Petersburg. The most notable of these is located near Tuchkov Lane on Vasilievskii Island, an area that features low-lying structures dating back nearly to Peter the Great’s time, as well as the church of Saint Catherine, old warehouses, and a surviving private home on Birzhevoi Lane. Lukomskii mourns the loss of the old Gostinyi Dvor in this neighborhood, but is grateful that “Within the space of just a few blocks are concentrated not architectural ‘chef d-oeuvres,’ of course, but ‘monuments’ from a bygone time, and moreover an antique reality that is dear, cozy, and typical.”³⁹ Lukomskii asserts that the charms of Old Petersburg can be apprehended more powerfully in “little corners,” such as those around Kriukov Canal and the farther reaches of the Fontanka, than on the English Embankment

³⁹Ibid., p. 48.

in the city center. Lukomskii's *Old Petersburg* provides an inventory of cultural value at grave risk. The narrative of his "tour" speeds up as the book proceeds, and Lukomskii seems almost breathless as he hastens to name precious, specific features of the material city, as he creates a document of record that he hopes will ensure their safety.⁴⁰

The prolific Petr Stolpianskii contributed numerous works to the project of mapping Petersburg during the early twentieth century, although his are not true guidebooks, but admixtures of cultural and urban history. Stolpianskii's work is unique in Petersburg travel literature in its juxtaposition of historical depth and topographical specificity.⁴¹ Stolpianskii excels at choosing a single well-known spot in the city as the focus of a historical trajectory that reveals unexpected shifts and accidental developments in St. Petersburg's evolution. For example, Stolpianskii's 1923 *Old Petersburg: The Admiralty Island (Staryi Peterburg: Admiralteiskii Ostrov)*, subtitled "A Historical-Artistic Sketch," provides a dense textual exploration of a "miniature corner" of the city that "constitutes more than a single page" of Petersburg's history.⁴² But Stolpianskii's notion of "corner" is distinct from Lukomskii's use of the term, in that Stolpianskii does not wander through marginal areas of the city, but rather excavates the well-trammeled territory of tourist Petersburg. Stolpianskii's best-known work is the historical excursion

⁴⁰All of Lukomskii's cultural guidebooks similarly represent an exercise in time travel. Even Lukomskii's 1917 *Sovremennyi Petrograd* surveys what the book's subtitle describes as "The History of the Origin and Development of Classical Construction 1900-1915." In this study, Lukomskii sweeps aside the pseudo-Renaissance style of Alexander III's time, the "decadent" eclectic tendencies of late-imperial architecture, and atypical structures such as the Petersburg mosque to celebrate the architectural return to the Petersburg ideal in "the new classical architecture."

⁴¹Stolpianskii complained in 1926 that nineteenth-century guidebooks and cultural histories by authors such as Shreder, Bur'ianov, Pushkarev, and Pyliaev culled from printed sources and did not test or investigate this textual legacy on St. Petersburg. See P.N. Stolpianskii, *Bibliografiia Sankt-Piter-Burkha (nyne Leningrada): Opisanie i plany po ekzempliarom Publichnoi Biblioteki* (typewritten manuscript, held in reference section of St. Petersburg Public Library) (Leningrad, 1926). In this sense, the nineteenth-century tradition of Russian-language guidebooks resembles the oral transmission of city "lore" so often cited as a defining feature of St. Petersburg culture.

⁴²P.P. Stolpianskii, *Staryi Peterburg: Admiralteiskii ostrov (Sad Trudiashchikhsia)* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo, 1923), p. 7.

How Sankt-Piter-Burkh Arose, was Founded, and Grew (Peterburg: Kak vznik, osnovalsia i ros Sanktpiterburkh, 1918), which treats the city according to individual neighborhoods.⁴³ In a larger sense, however, Stolpianskii's equation of urban corner and textual page recalls Lukomskii's link between writing history and carefully reading the material evidence of the city. Stolpianskii's methodology encourages readers to stay put and to delve more deeply into parts of Petersburg they only assume to be known.⁴⁴ The writing of both Stolpianskii and Lukomskii inserts itself within the physical city, which is already written, but in a shorthand that few can penetrate unassisted.

For the preservationists, "Old Petersburg" was not simply a quaint place of memory, the setting for entertaining stories by elderly residents about antique social custom. The notion "Old Petersburg" instead spoke to the riches of cultural legacy that were more lasting than reminiscence, as embodied by specific architectural structures, those both extant and regrettably defunct. The preservationists provided their readers with time tours that performed virtuoso synchronic elaborations of individual locales, excavating beneath the contemporary surface to reach aspects of St. Petersburg that now

⁴³For an assessment of Stolpianskii's contribution to the study of Petersburg and of the need to complete work on his archive and a complete bibliography of his works, see I.A. Golubeva, "Neizvestnyi P.N. Stolpianskii." *Fenomen Peterburga*, Iu.N. Bespiatykh, ed. (SPb: Blits, 2000). This article also describes Stolpianskii's unfinished multi-volume project, "The History of Petersburg." See also I.A. Golubeva, "Istoričeskoe nasledstvo Petra Nikolaeviča Stolpianskogo (1872-1938): Biografičeskii očerok." *Zhurnal liubitelei iskusstva*, nos. 8-9, 1997.

⁴⁴In a complementary vein, Preservationist Vladimir Kurbatov covered St. Petersburg's territory twice in his 1913 *Peterburg*. The first part of Kurbatov's monograph consists of the now-familiar cultural narrative of St. Petersburg, told – as it would be throughout the twentieth century and even more insistently in the post-Soviet period -- as a history of artistic and architectural masterworks. The second part surveys the city beginning from the center and extending out to the peripheral regions, organizing the material "by blocks and major arteries, along which it is natural to take long strolls." See V.Ia. Kurbatov, *Peterburg khudozhestvenno-istoričeskii očerok i obzor khudozhestvennago bogatstva stolitsy* (SPb: Lenizdat, 1993), p. 178. While Kurbatov does provide substantial descriptions of notable architectural monuments, he contents himself for the most part with an architectural inventory of city streets, noting building numbers and characterizing them briefly with phrases such as "1810s or 1820s," or "Building constructed by Montferrand. Primary portal is of interest," and so forth. The level of detail in Kurbatov's survey, down to individual and not necessarily remarkable buildings, strongly suggests that his reader is himself -- the Petersburg Preservationist resident and connoisseur who knows Petersburg like the palm of his hand.

led an exclusively textual life. The reader of these works was dependent on the immensely knowledgeable narrator for this information, which was nowhere manifested on the city's visible surface. Unlike true guidebooks, which turn complex urban environments into legible cultural topography and empower the tourist by placing knowledge literally right at hand, the preservationists' studies showed readers how much they did not and could not know. The preservationists themselves truly made St. Petersburg "old," estranging the city for their readers even as they attempted to win new converts to their cause. Following the tradition of the many "memory," "archive," and "legacy" journals such as *Russian Archive* (*Russkii arkhiv*, 1861-1917), *Russian Antiquity* (*Ruskaia starina*, 1870-1917), and *Historical Herald* (*Istoricheskii vestnik*, 1880-1917) initiated during the latter part of the nineteenth century, the preservationists continued the project of constructing an entire city out of printed material. Their Petersburg was the real one. The Petersburg contemporary to their writing projects was only a ghost of its former self.

The cult of Old Petersburg established at the beginning of the twentieth century did not die out after the 1917 Revolution, but continued through the 1920s. Among the longest-lived efforts directed at preserving Petersburg's memory of itself were the excursionist school of Ivan Grevs and Nikolai Antsiferov, specializing in the study of local lore, and the "Old Petersburg" Society (1921-1938), in which Petr Stolpianskii played a major part.⁴⁵ Both of these groups survived the early Soviet era by directing their work towards the cultural enrichment of city workers, in a departure from the elitist orientation of the pre-revolutionary organizations.

⁴⁵See A.M. Konechnyi, "Obshchestvo 'Staryi Peterburg – Novyi Leningrad,'" *Muzei* no. 7, 1987.

The work of Nikolai Antsiferov represents the culminating point of nineteenth-century guidebook literature and preservationist studies, while also serving as the basis for the great majority of Soviet and post-Soviet guides to St. Petersburg. Antsiferov perfected the humanitarian excursion that combined architectural and literary history – a format prefigured by poetry-citing nineteenth-century guidebooks. This genre of cultural tour treated literary referents associated with urban topography while exploring the physical city itself. An excursion of this type also exhibited its guide, who had mastered the network of cultural connections that linked text and terrain. As one of Antsiferov’s contemporaries declared, “a brilliant memory helped him to preserve, and at the necessary moment extract verse and prose excerpts, which he used to corroborate his conclusions.”⁴⁶

Antsiferov’s cultural excursions take several basic forms, all of them hugely influential. Firstly, literary “strolls” connected with a particular writer such as Alexander Blok, Fedor Dostoevsky, or Alexander Pushkin trace the routes of literary protagonists (most famously, of Dostoevsky’s Raskolnikov) or strive to see the city as the writer himself experienced it. Retracing routes to formalize them as text and thus facilitate numberless future tours is typical of Petersburg “travel” literature. In this way, Antsiferov’s *Dostoevsky’s Petersburg* represents a second-degree guidebook – a guide to a guide, as it were. Antsiferov produced his tour of Dostoevsky’s Petersburg after wandering around the city in 1910-11, using Dostoevsky’s literary works and biography to lead him towards a new understanding of the city. There thus evolves a tradition of Petersburg guidebooks that traverse the literary works and biographies of artists who

⁴⁶Veinert, Ia.A., “Vospominaniia o Nikolae Pavlovicche Antsiferove.” *Mashinopis’*. 1958 (sobranie M.B. Verblovskoi). Cited in Konechnyi and Kumpan, p. 14.

were students of this terrain themselves. The emblematic figure for Petersburg writing is a young author, wandering the city streets and neighborhoods with a book in his hand.

Tours such as the two Petersburg excursions in Antsiferov's 1924 *True Stories and Myths of Petersburg (Byl i mif Peterburga)* take a more traditional guidebook approach to the former capital, treating the city as a "document" that speaks to "the power of place as a source of knowledge."⁴⁷ In this vein, Antsiferov created excursions that covered specific parts of the city such as Vasilievskii Island, Sadovaia Street, and the outlying palace parks at Tsarskoe Selo and Pavlovsk.⁴⁸ Finally, *The Soul of Petersburg* constitutes yet another form of excursion, traversing the literary and cultural history, or perhaps more precisely, the textual history of St. Petersburg.⁴⁹ In short, Antsiferov's body of work crystallizes the essential connections between the excursion text and the physical city, to say nothing of the persistent textual metaphors for urban culture that infuse the entire tradition of writing about St. Petersburg.

With the onset of the Stalinist 1930s, however, the collective project of remembering and preserving Petersburg was largely put aside. Many of the city's most beautiful buildings were turned into functional headquarters for various Bolshevik organs, while others became Soviet museums, veterans' hospitals, and "cultural centers" for teachers. Towards the end of the Soviet period, however, the remembering project

⁴⁷N.P. Antsiferov, "Predislovie." *Byl i mif Peterburga* (SPb: Brokgauz-Efron, 1924), p. 5.

⁴⁸For example, Antsiferov treated Petersburg open-air trade from a systemic perspective, exploring particular areas of the city in terms of their cultural-historical function. Antsiferov's two trade-oriented studies from the mid-1920s explore Sadovaia Street ("The Street of Markets") and the development of capitalist trade in Petersburg ("The Seaport Area"). See "Ulitsa rynkov (Sadovaia, nyne ulitsa 3-ogo Iiul'ia v Leningrade): Kraevedcheskii material dlia ekskursii po sotsial'nomu i ekonomicheskomu bytu," *Po ochagam kul'tury: Novye temy dlia ekskursii po gorodu* (Leningrad, 1926), and "Raion morskogo porta (epokha torgovogo kapitalizma): Ekskursiia po Vasil'evskomu ostrovu (Strelka i Tuchkova naberezhnaia)," *Teoriia i praktika ekskursii po obshchestvovedeniuiu* (Leningrad, 1926).

⁴⁹A recent reference work displays an awareness of this tradition in its title: *Istoriia Sankt-Peterburga-Petrograda 1703-1917: Putevoditel' [emphasis mine] po istochnikam*, t. 1, vyp. 1 (Istoricheskie istochniki, raboty obshchego kharaktera, spravochnye i bibliograficheskie materialy) (SPb: Filologicheskii fakul'tet Sankt-Peterburgskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta, 2000).

that had been broken off by the 1930s resumed once more. The 1988 exhibition catalogue *Lost Architectural Monuments of Petersburg-Leningrad (Utrachennye pamiatniki arkhitektury Peterburga-Leningrada)* accompanied its brief descriptions of defunct structures with images from old photographs and postcards in order to commemorate approximately 150 vanished civil and religious buildings, monumental sculpture, engineering projects, and minor architectural forms such as bridges, gates, and railings from the imperial period. The compilers of the catalogue conceded that all cities undergo an on-going and organic process of change, but distinguish this necessary work of time from “malevolent” forces that degrade the cityscape. The center of then-Leningrad, they argue, should be considered a cultural “preserve” (*zapovednik*).⁵⁰ To this proposed city-museum, *Lost Architectural Monuments* added in textual and photographic form those structures that should by rights still be present.

Just as the nineteenth-century construction of apartment housing caused the demise of old homes and dachas, the early Soviet period flattened church buildings to create new urban space for its own purposes. Among the churches destroyed were Znamenskaia, which was torn down to make way for the metro station opposite the Moscow railway station; Pokrovskaia, invoked by Pushkin in his poem “A Little House in Kolomna”; Uspenskaia, dating from the mid-1700s, and called Spas-na-Sennoi during the nineteenth century; the Church of St. Matvei, built in 1720 to commemorate the 1704 Russian victory at Narva on that apostle’s day; Preobrazhenskaia from Peter’s time on the left bank of the Neva; and the Troitskii Cathedral, which dated from the very earliest period in the city’s history, although it had burned down and been restored more than

⁵⁰V.V. Antonov and A.V. Kobak, eds., *Utrachennye pamiatniki arkhitektury Peterburga-Leningrada* (Leningrad: Khudozhnik RSFSR, 1988), p. 4.

once. The Sergievskaja, Voznesenskaia, Rozhdestvenskaia, Vvedenskaia, Vladimirskaia, Ekaterininskaia, and Panteleimonovskaia churches were similarly demolished, the Ekaterininskaia ignominiously pulled down to make way for a movie theater. Most of these churches dated in their earliest wooden forms from the eighteenth century, in some cases from Petersburg's earliest years. Although all of these churches had undergone remodeling and rebuilding over the years, most had retained their original period style and appearance. It is fair to say, however, that churches from all periods in Petersburg's history suffered equally at Stalin's hands. Several nineteenth-century churches by Constantine Thon were torn down during the 1930s, as were a number from the eclectic period of the later nineteenth century, including a fair number in the pseudo-Russian style, which might have been expected to escape the wrecking ball.

After the October Revolution of 1917, busts depicting Russia's imperial rulers were naturally removed from their places in front of public institutions such as the Obukhovskaia and Mariinskaia hospitals, and the Alexandrovskii lyceum. Several sculptures of Peter the Great erected around the time of Petersburg's bicentennial celebration in 1903 were moved to unobtrusive places in the city or destroyed. The large statue of Alexander III on horseback that stood on Znamenskaia Square was moved to a courtyard of the Russian Museum. One major sculptural monument was entirely demolished -- the 1880s victory column in front of the Troitskii Cathedral commemorating Russian soldiers and officers of the Izmailovskii regiment who fought in the 1877-1878 war with Turkey. As shown in old postcards, the monument was created from dozens of captured Turkish cannons forming five vertical "rings" and crowned with a winged Nike. Photographs, drawings, and written accounts are all that remain of this

victory monument. Reading the cityscape, the task of so much Petersburg literature from the imperial period, thus becomes in such a case an exclusively textual practice.

Along with the catalogue of *Lost Architectural Monuments*, memorial plaques affixed to buildings and other landmarks represent one of the Petersburg commemorative practices that serve as an antidote to the losses of time, telling stories that are literally inscribed upon the cityscape. These memorial plaques may be considered at once literature and sculpture. As Philippe Hamon has pointed out, “literature is perhaps, at its origins, a lapidary object or an inscription.”⁵¹ Literary language of a sort is, moreover, often inscribed upon an architectural work in decorative symbols, narrative bas-reliefs, coats-of-arms, dedications, inscriptions, signatures, and proclamations. Furthermore, observes Hamon, any architectural object is “infused by the various texts that are written before, in, around, and about it.” When literary texts describe architectural monuments, they are also “rewriting and reactivating the diffuse nebula of latent or absent discourses that surround the building, such as anecdotes, myths, historical narratives, legends, etiological accounts of ‘foundation,’ or stories involving the origin of place names.”⁵² In fact, an edifice is by nature “forgetful,” and can only reacquire its lost meaning through the agency of historians’ studies, guidebooks, and plaques. As evidenced by a substantial body of secondary literature, Petersburg memorial plaques dating back to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have themselves constituted an object of study – an exercise of meta-recollection -- within the larger project of reconstructing cultural memory.⁵³

⁵¹Philippe Hamon, *Expositions: Literature and Architecture in Nineteenth-Century France*, trans. Katia Sainson-Frank and Lisa Maguire (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p. 4.

⁵²Hamon, pp. 45-50.

⁵³See V.N. Timofeev, E.N. Poretskina, and N.N. Efremova, sost., *Memorial’nye doski Sankt-Peterburga: Spravochnik* (SPb: Art-Biuro, 1999), and B.N. Kalinin and P.P. Iurevich, sost., *Pamiatniki i memorial’nye doski Leningrada: Spravochnik* (Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1979).

It is hard not to notice the elements of irony and paradox that infuse the subject of cultural memory, its preservation, and loss in St. Petersburg. The memory journals of the nineteenth century, like all periodicals, were easily lost, destroyed, or preserved in an incomplete series. The Museum of St. Petersburg scarcely resembles a permanent institution, with its dizzying succession of names and locations. The Museum of City Sculpture, in transferring graveside monuments and human remains from all over Leningrad, and in converting the city's oldest cemetery into a cultural park, violates the notion of a final resting place. Some of the most serious and sustained efforts at preserving the past, or at least its memory, have been made by temporary exhibitions, such as those staged by the preservationists through the Society of Architect-Artists during the early 1910s, or the *Lost Architectural Monuments* project of the 1980s. In a certain sense, the continuity in the project of preserving Petersburg cultural memory comes most demonstrably from the frequency with which new efforts have been mounted.

Petersburg centennial (1803) and bi-centennial (1903) celebrations with their accompanying jubilee publications have offered occasions for particularly conscious and concentrated remembering. Preparations for the city's upcoming 2003 tri-centennial have accordingly entailed the most extensive physical renovations and commemorative preparations the city has ever seen. The "Petersburg book" industry, including the inventive textual memory-mappings and reprints that have proliferated since the city reclaimed its old name in 1991, performs memory work that is no less important than the original bricks-and-mortar construction of the Russian imperial capital.

Ever since the restoration of its historic name, St. Petersburg, the so-called “city without a history,” has seemed almost frantic to remember as much as it can, and this project has expanded at an accelerating rate as the 2003 tri-centennial year has approached. Along with innumerable cultural studies projects that detail various aspects of the city’s imperial-era past -- among them monographs devoted to Petersburg public baths and Petersburg fairground booths -- has come a flood of reprints. Bogdanov, Georgi, Svin’in, Pushkarev, Krestovskii, Bakhtiarov, Pyliaev, Kurbatov, Stolpianskii, and Antsiferov are all once again in print. Physical and literary Petersburg is being rehabilitated and updated. Some of the original features of the Summer Garden are under restoration, including the fountain system, the large oak trees, and the gilded details on the Garden railings. In a modern-day revision of the Sadovnikov and Bozherianov “panoramas,” a CD-ROM for purchase allows the viewer to traverse Nevsky Prospect by means of nearly 500 drawings and engravings, hundreds of pages of hypertext, and interactive panoramas that permit close approaches to individual structures.

Detailed Petersburg tri-centennial calendars for the period 2000-2003 reveal innumerable festivals, performances, exhibitions, commemorative gatherings, sports events, competitions, and conferences that have been taking place every month (see the tri-centennial website <http://www.300.spb.ru>). A database of Petersburg tri-centennial projects describes dozens of new efforts at various stages – those proposed, in-progress, and completed -- including an international conference on “The Petersburg Style,” a staged re-enactment of a Winter Palace ball, the commissioning of a “triumphal march” in honor of the tri-centennial, a competition for schoolchildren to research “The History of My Family” in connection with the history of Petersburg, and a mobile exhibition on

“The Fate of the Industrial Legacy,” dedicated to preserving imperial-era industrial architecture, to give only a few examples.

Some commemorative projects exhibit a slightly surprising, if strangely appropriate union of old and new. Sponsors are facilitating specific sprucing-up efforts, as in the case of Aeroflot, which is underwriting the restoration of the monuments to 1812 war heroes Field-Marshal Kutuzov and Barclay de Tolly. The second-annual Petersburg international rock festival was held in June 2002 under the Petersburgian rubric “Open the windows!” (*Okna otkroi!*, as per Algarotti and Pushkin). A student of the Moscow Aviation Institute is preparing for a contemporary “Journey From Petersburg to Moscow” in a motorized capsule with a parachute-like wing (called a *paralyot*), in hopes of breaking the world record for distance in such a craft, and this effort is dedicated to the Petersburg tri-centennial.

Through these diverse and colorful exercises in commemoration, St. Petersburg makes amends for the past. If 1903 was a cultural moment marked by preservationist calls to arms, 2003 celebrates a Petersburg that has learned many sad lessons about forgetting, and now strives to be all-inclusive. The collective project of recollection, having gone underground during the Soviet era, becoming the sole province of individual eccentrics and intelligentsia research-workers, is now in full swing.