Visualizing Russia in Early Modern Europe

In early modern Europe, the emergence and development of print culture proved a powerful new method for producing and disseminating knowledge of Russia through visual means. By examining the images of Russia found in travel accounts, pamphlets, maps and costume books, this study demonstrates how the visual shaped a dual understanding of these lands: Russia and Russians were portrayed as familiar, but the steppe and forest frontiers were seen as forbidding and exotic. As these images were reproduced and plagiarized in new formats, so too were their meanings – the idea of Russia was one that constantly shifted across genres, usages and audiences. Nancy S. Kollmann examines the techniques harnessed by artists and publishers to suggest the authenticity of their publications and explores in turn how these complex depictions of Russia contributed to Europeans' understanding of themselves.

Nancy S. Kollmann is the William H. Bonsall Professor in History at Stanford University. Kollmann's research focuses on Russia in the early modern period, and she holds particular interests in politics, law, empire in action, and the role of the visual. Previous publications include *The Russian Empire 1450–1801* (2017) and *Crime and Punishment in Early Modern Russia* (Cambridge, 2012).

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Nancy S. Kollmann
Stanford University, California

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Dedicated to my students and valued colleagues, Valerie Kivelson, Erika Monahan and Lindsey Martin

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Preface

As a historian whose entire career has been immersed in archives and sources from sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Muscovy, I feel odd to be introducing a book about European print culture. My intellectual journey to the final formation of this book has been circuitous. I suspect that it started around 2010, when publisher AKTEON in Moscow began issuing a facsimile edition of the mid-sixteenth-century *Illuminated Chronicle*, eventually totaling twenty-four volumes. AKTEON followed up with other facsimiles of illustrated sixteenth-century hagiographies and historical works. Even though the secular images in the *Illuminated Chronicle* – armies and battles, weddings and funerals in the ruling family – were done in iconographic style, they were nevertheless a revelation. Historians, probably more than art historians, jumped at this new source, including myself; it was terrifically stimulating to produce a couple of articles on how these images represented Muscovite political ideology and practice.

From there I began thinking about visual representations of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Russia done by eyewitness travelers. I naively assumed that there were many of them, that they told a consistent tale about how "Europeans" understood "Russia," and that I could figure out whether these were accurate depictions of Russians and Russian life. Wrong on all counts. There were relatively few images of Russia that circulated in sixteenth-century Europe, and many were iconic stereotypes rather than even an attempt at "eyewitness" representation. Furthermore, I quickly observed that those images of Russia and Russians that I did identify were pirated, swapped, repurposed, redrawn and otherwise transformed from their original context with gay abandon. I came to understand that the story I had to tell about images of Russia was not about their content, but about the process of their production.

Sixteenth-century print culture is a fascinating world. Much has been written about it, and the historiography is very rich, populated by some of the most entertaining and original writers and thinkers in early modern European studies – Burke, Chartier, Febvre, Daston, Findlen, Grafton, Greenblatt,

Pagden, Johns . . . I could go on. But I have found few if any equivalents of the sort of granular analysis of the production of individual images or sets of images (say, in a travel account) that I was able to do with these relatively few images of Russia. Everyone notes that imagery was swapped and bowdlerized; I have enjoyed getting down to the ground level to show how that worked. I initially resolved to study only images that were produced under the supervision of eyewitness travelers to Russia and that circulated in Europe at the time. Within those guidelines I included maps and images associated with travelers Sigismund von Herberstein, Anthony Jenkinson and Adam Olearius, as well a grand-princely portrait associated with Paolo Giovio. Two illustrated travel accounts – those of Augustin von Meyerberg and Erich Palmquist – fell out of consideration since their illustrations sat in archives until the modern day and never circulated in early modern Europe.

Those stipulations narrowed the field so significantly that I relented and branched out to obvious or unsuspected fakes, including scurrilous broadsheet images of Ivan IV "the Terrible" and his armies in the Livonian campaign, stylized images of "typical Russian dress" in costume books and "typical Russians" on maps (Chapter 7). Such a detour proved fruitful since I ended up with multiple and complex examples of the transformation and travels of visual imagery in sources through the mid-seventeenth century. My intent is to provide several case studies of the burgeoning world of sixteenth-century humanist print culture, in hopes that such micro-level detail will deepen our understanding of print culture and the knowledge production that it generated.

Many colleagues have helped me along the way as I dipped my toes into this topic. Valerie Kivelson, an accomplished scholar of the visual, introduced me to theoretical writings that provided helpful frameworks. Paula Findlen introduced me to the fabulous work of her colleagues in early modern history of science regarding theories of depiction. My colleagues Ali Yaycioglu and Patricia Blessing pored over some Olearius images with me, looking for Persianate influences. I also found immensely helpful the workshop series that Ali and I organized on "Eurasian Empires"; sessions often focused on the use of ritual, symbolism and the visual in imperial governance. During a year at the Stanford Humanities Center (2015–16) Katharina Piechocki of Harvard opened up the world of German humanism as we discussed Conrad Celtis. My colleague at Stanford, Bissera Pentcheva, helped me immeasurably in understanding Byzantine iconographic style and introduced me to a broader literature on representation and imagery. And a workshop on "Visualizing Revolt and Punishment in Early Modern Times" at Harvard University in 2014, organized by Malte Griesse, opened up a broad new perspective on the visual, and Malte has continued to provide insight and support.

I cannot fail to acknowledge our brave band – Michael Flier, Valerie Kivelson and Daniel Rowland – with whom I've presented a series of panels

at AAASS/ASEEES annual conventions on visual sources. I have learned so much from their papers, conversations and insights. Brian and Elena Boeck have also been immensely helpful, Elena explaining to me antique tropes about the Persians that, not surprisingly, showed up in the travel accounts I am surveying. Erika Monahan has opened my eyes to visual depictions of Russia at the turn into the eighteenth century, so different from the world where I end with Olearius. And my husband Jack, as always, provides sage advice from his deep knowledge of Russian visual sources.

I am very grateful for so much institutional support to carry out this work. In a fellowship year at Stanford's Center for the Advanced Study of the Behavioral Sciences (CASBS, 2011–12), I began to explore theory on visual representation while finishing up a book on an entirely different topic (empire). My fellowship year at the Stanford Humanities Center (2015–16) helped me really get into this work. Sabbatical support from the Dean of Arts and Humanities gave me uninterrupted time to write in academic year 2020–21, when the pandemic also unexpectedly cleared my days of the usual academic routine. Writing this "pandemic book" certainly turned lockdown into a pleasant experience.

I have had many helpful opportunities to present pieces of this project. I had a rigorous discussion of the problem of "accuracy" in imagery at Yale University at Paul Bushkovitch's "Russian History Workshop" in the autumn of 2018 – particular thanks to Paul and Maija Jansson for their feedback. I was honored to present my work on Olearius to audiences in northern Germany near his home in Schleswig: Thanks to Martina Winkler and Suzanne Schattenberg for invitations to present at the University of Kiel and the University of Bremen in June 2018, and warm thanks to Martina and her family for a lovely stay. I also had an animated conversation about the project over Zoom in the Colloquium zur Geschichte Osteuropas, Institut für Geschichtswissenschaften, at the Humboldt University, Berlin, in January 2022. Here at Stanford I have benefited from feedback from colleagues in many settings: presenting on Olearius at the Stanford Humanities Center at Paula Findlen's conference on "Writing Global History" in May 2019; presenting twice in our Center for Medieval and Early Modern Studies' "Primary Source Workshop," once on Anthony Jenkinson at the workshop held in our distinguished Rumsey Map Center in November 2019 and once by Zoom on images in broadsheets in February 2022; presenting on portraits of Vasilii III in "Historical Conversations" with my departmental colleagues in November 2021. I am also grateful to the many students with whom I have studied travel accounts to Russia; their research papers and savvy discussions have deepened my appreciation of the complexities of these sources that Russian historians lean on so much.

Many institutions contributed to providing the illustrations in this book, and I am grateful to them all. But the staffs of several institutions deserve special recognition for going above and beyond in fulfilling my often complex requests: Thanks to the Rauner Special Collections Library at Dartmouth College (all those Olearius images), the Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel (so many rare broadsheets), the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University (such a rich collection) and the Wrocław University Library, Wrocław, Poland (generous custodians of the only surviving "Jenkinson" map in the world).

It is painful to be writing a book about something as ephemeral as old pictures of Russia in the midst of a war of aggression by Russia itself. I dedicate this book to my three graduate students, two of whom have also gone on to study the visual and all of whom are deeply engaged with "Russian studies" – Valerie Kivelson, Erika Monahan and Lindsey Martin. Perhaps their generation will figure out a way to reconcile this violent expression of autocracy with what we thought we knew about Russia.