What is Russia? Who are Russians? What is “Russianness”? The question of national identity has long been a vexed one in Russia, and is particularly pertinent in the post-Soviet period. For a thousand years, these questions have been central to the work of Russian writers, artists, musicians, film-makers, critics, politicians, and philosophers. Questions of national self-identity permeate Russian cultural self-expression. This wide-ranging study, designed for students of Russian literature, culture, and history, explores aspects of national identity in Russian culture from medieval times to the present day. Written by an international team of scholars, the volume offers an accessible overview and a broad, multi-faceted introductory account of this central feature of Russian cultural history. The book is comprehensive and concise; it combines general surveys with a wide range of specific examples to convey the rich texture of Russian cultural expression over the past thousand years.

Simon Franklin is Professor of Russian Studies at the University of Cambridge. He has published widely on Russian history and culture, especially the Medieval period, and his recent books include Writing, Society and Culture in early Rus: c.950–1300 (Cambridge, 2002), winner of the Alexander Nove Prize for 2002.

Emma Widdis is Lecturer in the Department of Slavonic Studies at the University of Cambridge. She is author of Visions of a New Land: Soviet Film from the Revolution to the Second World War (New Haven, 2003) and Alexander Medvedkin (London, 2004).
Contents

List of illustrations vii
Notes on contributors ix
Preface xi
Note on the transliteration of Russian xiii
1 'All the Russias... '? 1
Simon Franklin and Emma Widdis

SECTION I. IDENTITIES IN TIME AND SPACE 9
2 Russia in time 11
Simon Franklin
3 Russia as space 30
Emma Widdis

SECTION II. CONTRASTIVE IDENTITIES: 'US' AND 'THEM' 51
4 'Us': Russians on Russianness 53
Hubertus F. Jahn
5 'Them': Russians on foreigners 74
Anthony Cross

SECTION III. 'ESSENTIAL' IDENTITIES 93
6 Identity and religion 95
Simon Franklin
7 Music of the soul? 116
Marina Frolova-Walker
Contents

8 Identity in language?   132
   Boris Gasparov

9 Byr: identity and everyday life  149
   Catriona Kelly

Section IV. Symbols of Identity  169

10 Monuments and identity  171
   Lindsey Hughes

11 'Pushkin' and identity  197
   Stephanie Sandler

Afterword  217
Notes  219
Selected further reading in English  231
Index  235
Illustrations

Map: The growth and contraction of Russia and its empire

2.1 Postage stamp series 'History of Russian Culture', 1991 20
2.2 Ukrainian bank notes, 1991–96 25
2.3 Ukrainian bank notes: reverse 27
3.1 Isaak Levitan, ‘Vladimirka’, 1892: modern postcard (from the original in the Tretiakov Gallery, Moscow) 42
3.2 Ermak and his troops: from Tale of the Siberian Land, dir. Ivan Pyrev, 1947 44
3.3 The fire of conquest: from Tale of the Siberian Land 45
3.4 Nature subdued: from Tale of the Siberian Land 45
3.5–6 Siberia inhabited: from Tale of the Siberian Land 46
3.7 Map of the USSR: from M. Gor’kii, L. Averbakh, and S. Finn (eds.), Belomorsko-Baltiiskii kanal imeni Stalina: istoriya stroitel’stva (Moscow, 1934), insert 48
4.1 Pushkin monument, Kazbegi 54
4.2 ‘Raëk’ picture show 68
4.3 Ermak: advertisement poster for Randrup Company in Omsk (1909) 70
4.4 ‘Village Song’: popular print (lubok); lithographic studio of Efim Iakovlev, 1871 71
4.5 ‘Scenes from Russian Life’: artist unknown: chocolate factory advertising card 72
6.1 The occupation of Pskov: from Aleksandr Nevskii, dir. Sergei Eisenstein, 1938 111
6.2 News of the German knights’ advance reaches Novgorod: from Aleksandr Nevskii 112
Illustrations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Illustration</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>Cathedral of the Dormition (Assumption), Moscow Kremlin: early 20th-century postcard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>Vladimir Mother of God; 12th-century icon: modern postcard (from the original in the Tretiakov Gallery, Moscow)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>Monument to Peter I (the 'Bronze Horseman') by Etienne Falconet, 1782: modern view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>'Epic Warriors' (bogatyri); cigarette packet from the 1980s, after the 1898 painting by Viktor Vasnetsov</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>Old Testament Trinity; 15th-century icon by Andrei Rublev: modern postcard (from the original in the Tretiakov Gallery, Moscow)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>'St Basil’s’ Cathedral (Church of the Intercession of the Veil), Moscow, Red Square: first-day cover in the 'Monuments of History' series, 1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>'St Basil’s’ Cathedral: ‘Cupolas of Moscow’ chocolate wrapper, c. 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>Vera Mukhina, ‘Worker and Collective Farm Woman’: Soviet Pavilion at 1937 exhibition in Paris (with thanks to Prof. E. B. Mozgovaia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, Moscow, 1839–83: early 20th-century postcard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.10</td>
<td>Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, Moscow: view of the reconstructed cathedral, 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>Cover photograph for the poetry almanac Latin Quarter (Latinski kvartal), 1990. Courtesy of the editor, Victor Kulle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>Cover illustration for the almanac Citizens of the Night (Grazhdane nochi), 1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>Pushkin Monument, Moscow: photograph by Lev Melikhov, from New Literary Review (Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie), 1999</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notes on contributors

Anthony Cross has been Professor of Slavonic Studies at the University of Cambridge since 1985. He has written and edited over twenty books and written over 200 articles on all aspects of eighteenth-century Russia and Anglo-Russian relations. He is currently writing a book entitled Petersburg and the British: The City through British Eyes over Three Centuries.

Simon Franklin is Professor of Russian Studies at the University of Cambridge. His main research interests are the history and culture of early Rus, and nineteenth-century Russian literature. Publications include The Emergence of Rus 750–1200 (with Jonathan Shepard: London, 1996) and Writing, Society and Culture in Early Rus c.950–1300 (Cambridge, 2002).

Marina Frolova-Walker is Lecturer in Music at the University of Cambridge and a Fellow of Clare College, Cambridge. Her principal fields of research are German Romanticism, Russian and Soviet music, and nationalism in music. She is currently writing Russia: Music and Nation, commissioned by Yale University Press.

Boris Gasparov is Professor of Slavic Linguistics and Russian Literature at Columbia University, New York. He is the author and editor of numerous books and articles on the philosophy of language, Slavic historical linguistics, and Russian culture of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Recent publications include: Language and Memory (Moscow, 1996, in Russian), Old Church Slavonic (Munich, 2001), and Five Operas and a Symphony: Russian Music and Its Cultural Environment (forthcoming at Yale University Press).

Lindsey Hughes is Professor of Russian History and Director of the Centre for Russian Studies at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College London. Her recent publications include
Notes on contributors

Russia in the Age of Peter the Great (Yale University Press, 1998) and Peter the Great, A Biography (Yale, 2002). She is currently working on a study of responses to key monuments of Russian culture.

Hubertus Jahn is Senior Lecturer in Russian History at the University of Cambridge and a Fellow of Clare College, Cambridge. His recent publications include Patriotic Culture in Russia during World War I (Cornell University Press). He has just finished a history of begging and poverty in Russian history.

Catriona Kelly is Professor of Russian at the University of Oxford. She has published widely on Russian literature and cultural history, including Russian Literature: A Very Short Introduction (Oxford University Press, 2001), Utopias: Russian Modernist Texts 1905–1940 (Penguin, 1999), and a history of politeness in Russia. She also co-edited Constructing Russian Culture in the Age of Revolution and An Introduction to Russian Cultural Studies (both Oxford University Press, 1998). She is currently working on a history of childhood in twentieth-century Russia (for Yale) and a book about Pavlik Morozov, who betrayed his father to the authorities (for Granta).

Stephanie Sandler is Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures at Harvard University. Her most recent book Commemorating Pushkin: Russia’s Myth of a National Poet, was published by Stanford University Press in 2003. Her current research is on contemporary Russian poetry.

Emma Widdis is Lecturer in the Department of Slavonic Studies at the University of Cambridge. Her research focuses on Soviet culture of the 1920s and 30s, with a particular emphasis on cinema. Publications include Visions Of A New Land: Soviet Film from the Revolution to the Second World War (Yale, 2003), which examines representations of space and landscape in the culture of this period, and she has recently completed a book on the film director Aleksandr Medvedkin.
Preface

What is Russia? What is ‘Russianness’? Who are Russians? For a thousand years these and similar questions have preoccupied Russian writers, artists, critics, musicians, film-makers, politicians and ideologists, theologians and philosophers, intellectuals and demagogues. Implicitly or explicitly, questions of national identity permeate Russian cultural self-expression, from the very first native literary and artistic endeavours of the ‘Rus’ (ancestors of Russians, Ukrainians, and Belorussians) in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, through to the intensified self-questioning in the ‘new’ Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. And implicitly or explicitly, the same questions permeate a great deal of writing about Russia by foreigners, whether academics or journalists or travel-diarists or intelligence analysts. What need, then, for yet another book on the subject? Why add to the cacophony of competing voices?

In the first place, there is the matter of scope and convenience. We hope that this book will be useful precisely because so much else has been written, for it is surprisingly hard to find an accessible overview, a broad and multi-faceted introductory account of this central theme in Russian cultural history. To state the obvious: Russia is a vast country with a huge population and a varied culture which has emerged and developed and changed over many hundreds of years. Few individuals can plausibly claim adequate expertise across the full range, and most studies tend understandably to reflect the particular partial interests of their authors. There is nothing wrong with this, and the results can be stimulating and admirable; but equally there can be clear benefits in pooling resources, in bringing together the combined experience of a number of scholars in distinct disciplines, specialists in different areas and periods of culture. No survey in a single, medium-sized volume can truly claim to be comprehensive, but we have tried to convey at least some sense of the amplitude and diversity of the problem: across time, across cultural forms, across types of expression and idea.
Secondly, there is the matter of approach. Much discussion of Russian identity is driven by the belief, or at least by the assumption, that the question has an answer, that Russianness is a 'thing' to be located, described, and explained. The assumption behind the present book is rather the opposite: that to seek an answer in such terms is, in a sense, to misrepresent the question. Identity is not a 'thing' to be objectively described. It is a field of cultural discourse. It is each person's perception of themselves: as an individual, in relation to a group or groups, and by contrast with other individuals and groups. Russian identity is and has been a topic of continual argument, of conflicting claims, competing images, contradictory criteria. And that is the point. There is no need to resolve the contradictions, to take sides, to adjudicate between contested notions of true Russianness. There is no separate 'reality' behind the cultural expressions of identity. Hence the somewhat pointed title of this book: national identity in Russian culture. The multiple cultural expressions and constructs are the identity, or the identities. Their reality, or their truth, is in their own existence as facts of culture, not in the extent to which they accurately reflect a set of external facts.

Third, there is the matter of organisation, both of the book as a whole and of the chapters within it. Taken together, the sections of the book, and their constituent chapters, are designed to form a kind of grid, a conceptual geography of the subject, a way of mapping the various categories of discourse on identity. The grid can be extended and applied beyond the confines of the specific surveys and analyses in this book. Within the sections, each chapter has a dual structure, starting with a very broad overview of the wider implications of its topic, and proceeding—by contrast—to some very specific readings or case studies. If the sections combine into a map, the case studies combine more as a mosaic. In each chapter, the case studies by themselves are merely illustrative fragments, but when put together and assembled over the course of the book they provide a fairly representative and nuanced picture of the diverse ways in which notions of national identity function in cultural practice. The book is intended to be accessible to those with little or no special knowledge of Russia and Russian culture. References to places, people, and events are, as far as possible, explained, and each section is prefaced by an introductory summary.
A note on the transliteration of Russian

There are several systems for rendering Russian words in English transliteration. Different systems may be appropriate for different purposes, even in the context of a single publication. Thus in the present book our practice varies as follows.

(i) In most instances we use a modified version of the 'Library of Congress' system. This means, for example, using 'i' where some other systems have 'y': hence Tolstoi and Maiakovskii, rather than Tolstoy and Mayakovskiy. We stick to this system even when the name has become familiar in English in a different form: hence 'Chaikovskii', not 'Tchaikovsky'. Immigrants pose problems. We leave Stravinsky as he is, rather than converting him back to Stravinskii.

(ii) We omit most diacritics (superscript marks). The only exception is the indication of the Russian 'soft sign' (´), which indicates that the preceding consonant is 'soft' or – to put it technically – palatalized. However, we only use this symbol in words which are clearly marked as 'foreign' (through being set in italics) and in bibliographical references. Where Russian names appear as part of the normal English text, we omit the 'soft sign': hence Gogol, Gorkii and Prokofev rather than Gogol’ý, Górkii, or Prokof’ev (or indeed Prokofiev).

(iii) In general Russian personal names are given in their Russian forms, not anglicised: thus Aleksandr Nevskii and Nikolai Leskov, not Alexander Nevski or Nicholas Leskov. The exceptions, by oddly powerful convention, are the rulers of the Russian Empire from c.1700 to 1917: thus Peter the Great, Catherine the Great, Nicholas II, not Petr, Ekaterina, or Nikolai. Earlier rulers keep the Russian forms: Aleksei rather than Alexis; and of course Ivan the Terrible cannot be reduced to just plain John.
Map: The growth and contraction of Russia and its empire.