

Foreword

Thanks to the drastic changes which Russia has experienced during these last decades we are faced with a range of old and new questions: What is Russia? What is her geopolitical as well as civilizational position in the world? What is the meaning of thinking about Russia for us? These questions directly influence the styles of Russian cultural studies (*Russistika*), the various fruits of which are now appearing under the rubric of so-called cross-border or trans-disciplinary studies.

The International Symposium “Beyond the Empire: Images of Russia in the Eurasian Cultural Context” was held on December 13–15, 2006 at the Slavic Research Center, Hokkaido University. The main aim of the symposium was to rethink the traditional problem of the image of Russia for Russians as well as for “others” in the new cultural context. For this purpose 23 specialists from several fields (art, cultural studies, education, film, gender, geography, history, literature, music) gathered together from seven different countries (England, Germany, Latvia, Poland, Russia, the United States, Japan). The articles in this book are based on the presentations and discussions during those three full and fruitful days.

The book treats four topics: the way Russians imagine themselves and others; the phases of imperial consciousness, orientalism and post-colonialism in Russia; images of Russia and Russians abroad; the curious manipulation of Russia’s images by contemporary literature. In order to convey the warm and humorous atmosphere of the symposium, we decided to publish the articles in their original languages, i.e. in English and Russian. We hope this book will find readers in various countries

and invite them to our discussion.

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Editor
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