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## **The Representation of the Volga in the Nineteenth Century Russian Literature: with Special Attention to Apollon Grigor'ev's "Upward the Volga"**

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Through the history of literary representation of the Volga we can trace a genealogy of a fixed image "the Volga as a border." In the geopolitical sense the Volga is really an inland border, which divides (and unites) the European and Asiatic parts of the great empire. At the same time it is a border zone, where various ethnicities, cultures and confessional groups (including Muslims, Buddhists, Old believers, Protestants) have confronted and coexisted with each other. Usually the right bank and left bank of the river represent quite different worlds in terms of landscape, lifestyles and occupations of the inhabitants. To go across the Volga as well as to go down (or up) the river is a trans-cultural or trans-historical experience, which will influence one's own cultural identity.

Our paper aims at characterizing the specific features of the literary representation of "the Volga as a border" in the mid-nineteenth century. The main subject of our examination is Apollon Grigor'ev's poem "Upward the Volga" (1862), in which the poet, critic and theorist of the *pochvennichestvo* (native soil conservatism) describes a farewell to his last love (an ex-prostitute of St. Petersburg) against the background of his own sentimental journey to and from Orenburg, the Empire's forward base in Central Asia.

The major topics of our discussion are as follows:

- 1) How the river reflects various aspects of the poet's last love (instable, impulsive, irrational, sacred, vulgar, pure, immoral, severe, instinctive, fateful, unrestrained moments).
- 2) How the river represents the geographic-spatial border between Europe and Asia, civilization and wildness and so on.
- 3) How the river represents the mental-psychological border between spirit and body, pure love and carnal desires, commitment and neglect, seriousness and self-indulgence, soberness and drunkenness, and so on.
- 4) How the poet fails to go across the border in the direction of civilization and sober life, and how he, after all, remains on the borderland, in-between these opposing worlds.

5) How, in total, Grigor'ev's Volga represents Russia itself by its intermediate socio-cultural location between Europe and Asia.

The article also briefly sketches the functional change in the Volga's image in Russian literature from the odic genre in the eighteenth century through to the romantic-realist genres of the mid-nineteenth century. This is done by way of comparison between Nikolai Karamzin's "The Volga" (1793) and Nikolai Nekrasov's "On the Volga" (1860).