

Using “Mapping Imagined Geographies of Revolutionary
Russia”
to identify emotional communities of writers
in the Russian revolution and civil war

Graduate seminar in Soviet Literature
Edith W. Clowes, Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures
University of Virginia

Context:

- The Soviet Seminar investigates the heritage of didactic writing in the service of political power during the 70 years of the Soviet era.
- The seminar starts with the question: Where did the highly codified, ideological literature of Socialist Realism come from? We know about pre-revolutionary models, such as Chernyshevskii's *What Is To Be Done?* («Что делать?»). What about writers during World War I and the civil war?
- The Mapping Imagined Geographies of Revolutionary Russia" (MAPRR) website suggests a novel way to answer that question by examining groups of writers and their writings that shared political views and emotional connection to particular places during the nine years of war and revolution.
- The written assignment for this exercise is a short summary of students' investigations of a particular "emotional community" of writers and their findings concerning images of place ("imagined geographies") and shared feeling about place.

Goals of this MAPRR assignment:

- Define one emotional community (defined on slide 4) among Russian writers in the revolutionary period when feelings and cultural networks were more fluid than usual in Russian literary history.
- Find the emotional community in one of two ways:
 - Start with the “force directed graph” on the author index page (<http://maprr.iath.virginia.edu/authors>). Click on one author who interests you to highlight that name. Then hold that circle and drag it to the right or left and watch how other authors are attracted to that writer, or move away. That will give a rough idea of writers who are connected to other writers who share “place-based concepts” (shared feeling, political inclination, and place into relationship with one another (defined on slide 5). On Slides 6 and 7 you can see two examples of well-connected writers, Marina Tsvetaeva and Vladimir Maiakovskii, who are likely familiar to you.
 - Start with places (so-called “multivalent markers,” defined on slide 10) and explore the writers who shared feelings about a certain place. Suggestion: do not pick “Russia,” “Moscow,” or “Petrograd”! You will be swamped. If you explore this route to an emotional community, choose a place that has at least 8-10 PBCs associated with it.
- For the specifics of your one-page report, see slide 17.

What is the difference between an emotional community and an emotional regime?

- “emotional community”: “any social group with common interests and goals should qualify as an emotional community. One would logically pick a group and read everything that its members wrote, carefully noting the emotions..... It is important...to know what words signified emotions for the particular emotional community you are dealing with” (B. Rosenwein, 2010).
- “emotional regime”: “Some face-to-face communities within a larger polity may be able to sustain emotional styles that have little in common with the transregional norms of that polity. If they enforce these styles through penalties such as gossip, exclusion, or demotion, these styles count as ‘emotional regimes’. Those styles that are more or less coordinated with the emotional norms enforced at the center of power or authority of a polity could be considered components of its ‘emotional regime’” (W. Reddy, 2010).
- Interaction of emotional communities and regimes: “there often are dominant emotional communities at any given time. I would not mind calling these ‘emotional regimes’. But they co-exist with many other ‘marginal’ emotional communities that have the potential in their turn to come to the fore” (B. Rosenwein, 2010).

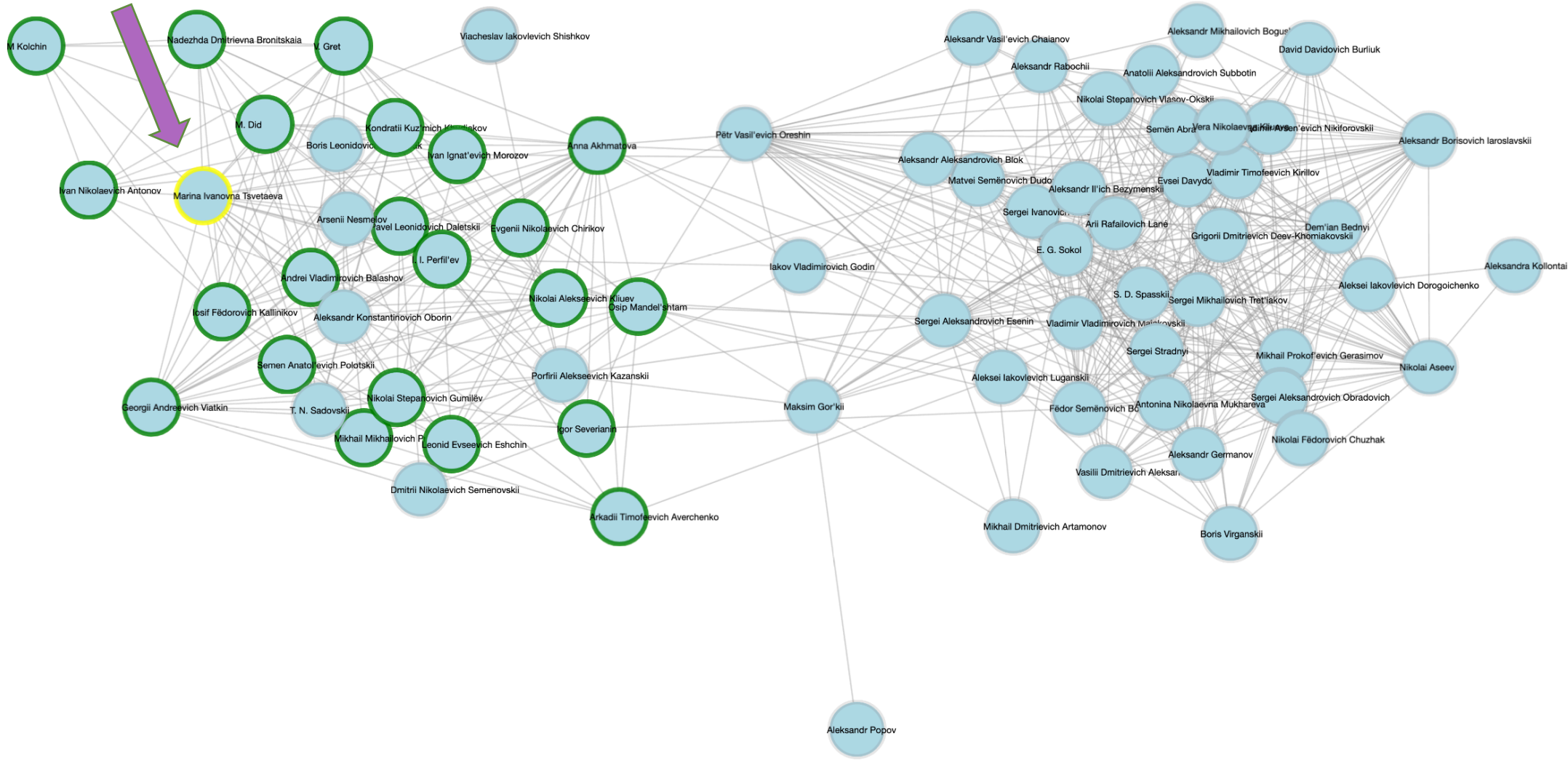
What is a place-based concept (PBC; http://maprr.iath.virginia.edu/place_based_concepts)?

PBC is the analytical tool that highlights the commonalities and complexities of place-based identity among a vast array of political allegiances and experienced emotions. It is a kind of “conjunction” or tag that connects up to six types of component to each spatial image in a literary work. Those six types are:

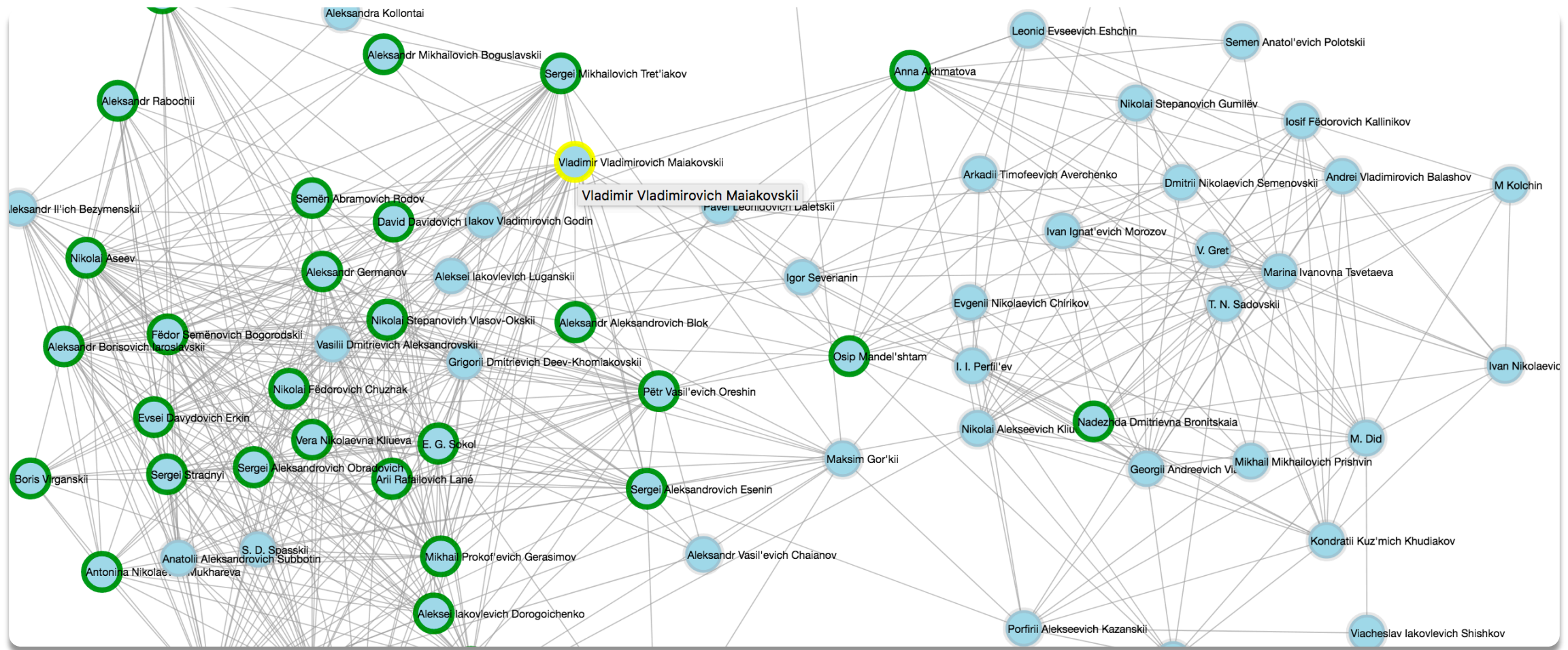
- genre of space (place or liminal space are the two choices here)
- type of place or liminal space (for example, home, not-home, road, front)
- scale (for example, village, city, nation, empire)
- politics (for example, Bolshevik, regionalist, nationalist, tsarist nationalist)
- feeling (for example, jubilation, grief, love, anger, and many more)
- concept of time (this component appears only occasionally)

Writer groups by shared feelings, political views, and/or affiliation to place. Here Marina Tsvetaeva (yellow circle) might have a sizable emotional community

Explore:
<http://maprr.iath.virginia.edu/authors>



Here Maiakovskii (yellow circle”) appears to have a large emotional community. Explore others: <http://maprr.iath.virginia.edu/authors>



Mapping Imagined Geographies of Revolutionary Russia 1914-1922

Home Agents Authors Place Based Concepts Works
Locations Multivalent Markers

About

“Mapping Imagined Geographies of Revolutionary Russia” (MAPRR) helps us construct a topography of Russians’ feelings and attitudes toward their beloved country during the tumultuous years between 1914 (the start of World War I) and 1922 (the end of the Civil War). These attitudes echo even today.

Drawing from period literature across Russia, MAPRR offers unique insight into strongly opposing identities in close relation to their sense of belonging to a place. Explore the myriad ways that authors imagined Russia in their writings of the moment.

Brief overview:

Attachment to place—knowing where we belong—is one of the ways in which we know who we are. We call this sense of belonging “place-based identity.” From 1914 and the start of World War I through 1922, when the revolution and Russian civil war ended, Russians’ feelings about their national identity underwent radical shifts. Their feelings about “Russia” and “homeland” (rodina)—and many other places—transformed the imagined geography of their country and the world. Major writers and ordinary Russians alike made this process particularly visible in the poems, stories, and essays they wrote in this turbulent time.

Authors

List of writers. Select an individual author to find a list of their works and relevant spatial imagery.

Go to Index of Authors

Place Based Concepts

List of possible connections between spatial images, feeling, and political attitudes. See how a mere “space” becomes meaningful “place.”

Go to Index of Place Based Concepts

E. W. Clowes—2021

Here is the MAPRR beta home page. Click on “Authors” (see lilac arrows) to open Authors home page.

(
<http://maprr.iath.virginia.edu/authors>)

Click on “Authors” on MAPRR home page to go to the Authors home page. Then find the well-connected author who caught your attention in the force-directed graph.

- Go to the personal author page and see how many works they have in the MAPRR database.
- Follow the PBCs that they share with other writers and try to define an “emotional community” to which that author might belong.
- What feelings do writers of a particular political view share, particularly about a place? To get an answer you will have to explore actual PBCs (http://maprr.iath.virginia.edu/place_based_concepts) and try to identify the PBCs around which an emotional community might coalesce. On each PBC page you will find a list of all the works in which that PBC appears.

Another route to finding emotional communities through “multivalent markers”:

Multivalent markers are specific examples or instances in which a geographically definable location (e.g. Volga, Urals, Kazan’) or an unmappable “idea” of place (e.g. home, homeland, abroad, idyll, paradise, hell, north, west) is connected to a place-based concept (PBC). In other words, a writer or many writers have attached feeling and significance to that location, raising it to the status of meaningful “place.”

Multivalent markers are the heart of the MAPRR project of connecting space to feeling and thus creating an imagined geography of Russia during this time of war and civil turmoil. Through these multivalent markers the MAPRR project enhances our understanding of Russian identity in this period and beyond.

Brief overview:

Attachment to place—knowing where we belong—is one of the ways in which we know who we are. We call this sense of belonging “place-based identity.” From 1914 and the start of World War I through 1922, when the revolution and Russian civil war ended, Russians’ feelings about their national identity underwent radical shifts. Their feelings about “Russia” and “homeland” (rodina)—and many other places—transformed the imagined geography of their country and the world. Major writers and ordinary Russians alike made this process particularly visible in the poems, stories, and essays they wrote in this turbulent time.

Authors

List of writers. Select an individual author to find a list of their works and relevant spatial imagery.

Go to Index of Authors

Works

List of works. English translation may be available.

Go to Index of Works

Locations

List and map of sites of literary activity and sites mentioned in literary texts.

Go to Index of Locations

Place Based Concepts

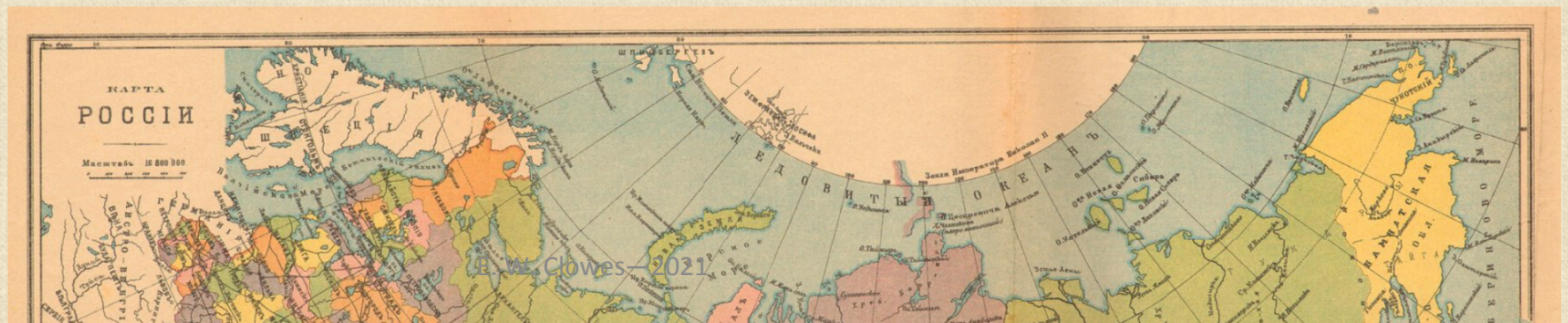
List of possible connections between spatial images, feeling, and political attitudes. See how a mere “space” becomes meaningful “place.”

Go to Index of Place Based Concepts

Multivalent Markers

List of spaces that are a meaningful place for at least one author. Single MM pages show all the different ways in which a specific spatial image is connected to a range of feelings and political views.

Go to Index of Multivalent Markers



Go back to the MAPRR home page and click on “Multivalent Markers” (see lilac arrow; <http://maprr.iath.virginia.edu/multivalentmarkers>):

Multivalent Markers Index



Балтийское море	ID: 229
Барабинск	ID: 261
Баргузин	ID: 251
Бельгия	ID: 232
Бийск	ID: 311
Босфор	ID: 394
Брест	ID: 408
Венеция	ID: 283
Волга	ID: 210
Волговерховье	ID: 166
Выборгский район	ID: 272
Галиция	ID: 239
Геркуланум	ID: 281
Голгофа	ID: 371
Гора Афон	ID: 305
Гора Бабырган	ID: 300
Лнестн	ID: 323



Example:
Multivalent Marker home page with index: (http://maprr.iath.virginia.edu/multivalent_markers).
Find the word “Волга” in the list and click on it. That will lead you to the individual page for “Волга.”

Волга

Basic Information

Terms

Russian Term: Волга

English Term: Volga River

Associated Locations

[Volga River](#)

Textual Data

Works Where Волга Is Associated With a Place-Based Concept

- [Aseev, Volga](#)
- [Bednyi, Pod Samaroi](#)
- [Bednyi, Raskazanskoe polozhenie](#)
- [Bogorodskii, Gruzchiki](#)
- [Bogorodskii, Mednaia sila](#)
- [Bogorodskii, Untitled](#)
- [Chirikov, Blagovernaia zhena](#)
- [Chirikov, Sviataia gora](#)
- [Chirikov, Volzhskaia skazochnitsa](#)
- [Dorogoichenko, Volga](#)
- [Dorogoichenko, Zhiguli](#)
- [Dudorov, Po ukhabistym dorogam](#)
- [Esenin, Otchar'](#)
- [Esenin, Untitled](#)
- [Gerasimov, Eshche zveniat na Volge l'diny...](#)
- [Kliuev, Pesnia o sokole i o trekh ptitsakh Bozhiikh](#)
- [Maiakovskii, Dva ne sovsem obychnykh sluchaia](#)
- [Maiakovskii, III Internatsional](#)
- [Maiakovskii, Moia rech' na genuezskoi konferentsii](#)
- [Maiakovskii, Svolochi!](#)

Volga as a multivalent marker: in “Textual Data” find the list of works in which the Volga is connected to a PBC and, conversely, PBCs which are associated with the Volga. Explore: http://maprr.iath.virginia.edu/multivalent_markers/210.

Textual Data

- [Mandel'shtam, Zverinets](#)
- [Nikiforovskii, Kak starukhi u griad priseli izby derevni...](#)
- [Oreshin, Na Volge](#)
- [Viatkin, Otechestvo](#)
- [Virganskii, Rynok—v ventse iastrebynykh kryl'ev...](#)

PBCs Associated with Волга

- [PBC0055: resolve to fight](#)
- [PBC0071: dread of anarchy](#)
- [PBC0072: dread of oppression](#)
- [PBC0104: arrogant confidence](#)
- [PBC0112: faith in worker creativity](#)
- [PBC0195: mockery of elites](#)
- [PBC0213: love of homeland](#)
- [PBC0216: hope for peace](#)
- [PBC0219: ecstasy about a place](#)
- [PBC0220: pride in revolution](#)
- [PBC0221: filial love of homeland](#)
- [PBC0222: pride in place](#)
- [PBC0238: anger at enemy](#)
- [PBC0288: belligerence](#)
- [PBC0291: arrogant confidence](#)



List of Place Based Concepts (PBC) associated with the Volga: there should be 15 different PBCs.

For a definition of a place based concept check slide 5.

PBCs Associated with Волга

- PBC0055: resolve to fight
- PBC0071: dread of anarchy
- PBC0072: dread of oppression
- PBC0104: arrogant confidence
- PBC0112: faith in worker creativity
- PBC0195: mockery of elites
- PBC0213: love of homeland
- PBC0216: hope for peace
- PBC0219: ecstasy about a place
- PBC0220: pride in revolution
- PBC0221: filial love of homeland
- PBC0222: pride in place
- PBC0238: anger at enemy
- PBC0288: belligerence
- PBC0291: arrogant confidence

Note similarities among certain short descriptions of PBCs. These might hint at the formation of an emotional community.

The next step would be to click on these PBCs and go to the individual PBC page to read much more about the PBC, its components, and works expressing that PBC.

With these exercises we have already started to rethink the Russian map to show:

- a much livelier and more variegated imagined map of Russia than the 19th-c. literary map that showed virtually no toponyms other than Moscow and St. Petersburg and had lots of nameless villages and provincial towns and cities (always called the “city of NN”). For better or worse, this time of war and revolution was a time when many Russians got to know their country, often for the first time.
- much greater importance of regional places
- surprising shifts in the vocabulary of place-based identity (many more toponyms and shifts in usage of more abstract words like “rodina,” “Rus’,” “Rossiia,” otchizna,” etc.)
- Emotional communities that might turn into a dominant emotional regime or even bridge political divides

Your one-page report on the emotional community you identified should include these points:

- What feeling (or set of feelings) and political view (and place, if relevant) appear to be at the core of the potential emotional community that you are defining?
- Which writers share that community? Give names.
- Which place-based concepts appear to be the most prevalent for this emotional community? Briefly describe the relevant PBC(s).
- Give your best guess to answer these questions:

In the Soviet era was your emotional community likely to survive?

Can you see how it might become more strictly codified as a so-called “emotional regime” in which feelings become ritualized and dogmatized and eventually enforced either by social conformity or the state or other system of governance?