RECREATION OF CHERNOBYL TRAUMA IN SVETLANA ALEKSIYEVICH’S
CHERNOBYL’SKAYA MOLITVA

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ABSTRACT

Little has been written about the literary methodology of the contemporary
Belarusian writer Svetlana Alekseyevich. The main purpose of this thesis is to investigate
how the aesthetic manipulation of factographic content in Svetlana Alekseyevich’s
Chernobyl’skaya molitva aids Alekseyevich in her stated goal of creating a “closer
approximation to real life,” while secondarily positioning Alekseyevich within the literary
background of Belarusian and Soviet dissident writers of documentary prose and
providing an in-depth analysis of the narrative structure of Chernobyl’skaya molitva. At
the heart of the methodology of Chernobyl’skaya molitva is a bifurcated structure I call
“literary traumatic space,” which is a modification of Michael Rothberg’s
concentrationary space as described in Traumatic Realism: The Demands of Holocaust
Representation. The emotional impact of Alekseyevich’s Chernobyl’skaya molitva is
greatly increased through multiple representations of irreconcilable trauma (as portrayed
in “literary traumatic space”) positioned one against another within the text.