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LIMINALITY IN VASILII AKSËNOV'S ÉMIGRÉ WRITING: LITERARY TRACES OF HIS TRANSIT JOURNEY THROUGH PARIS

This paper explores the concept of liminality in the émigré writing of Vasilii Aksënov (1932–2009). Aksënov had to leave the Soviet Union in 1980 and spent about three months in Paris and other places in Europe before boarding a plane to the US, his chosen destination. Little is known about his summer in Europe, but the way Aksënov's stories conceive of Paris — a frequent place of action in Aksënov's writing — suggests an influence of his transit journey through Paris on his writing. Paris seems to be a liminal space, marked by transit-ness, and the liminality that results from the moment of transit has an effect on how Aksënov's protagonists conceive of time and space and their own being in the world.

Key words: liminality, transit, Russian émigré literature, Paris.

Vasilii Aksënov (1932–2009), an accomplished writer in the Soviet Union since the 1950s, had to leave his home country in 1980 after having been involved in the scandal around the almanac *Metropol*. Like many of his peers, he passed through France and Italy on his way to the US, his chosen destination: Aksënov and his wife arrived in Paris in July, they spent the rest of the summer in Europe, and boarded a plane from Milan to New York in September (Aksënov 2015, n210). After they had settled overseas, Aksënov returned to Paris and France again and again — and so do numerous protagonists of his émigré novels and short stories. Paris is a central place of action in his writing, and notably seems to contain a sense of transit-ness in the way it appears to be a place one travels to, but mostly on one's way to another destination.

My paper will focus, in a first part, on Aksënov's literary conceptions of Paris and France in his émigré writing. In the second part, I will examine how the very moment of *transit* is a central concept for the way Aksënov's protagonists conceive of time and space, conceive of their place in the world, and conceive of reality as such. As a theoretical framework, I propose to look at Aksënov's émigré writing through the concept of "liminal spaces". Liminality,

as defined by the *Handbook to Literature*, describes "[t]he state of being on a threshold in space or time", that threshold being "a place where many social meanings congregate" (Harmon 2003, 284). The concept originates from the study of anthropology, where it describes a rite of passage between preliminary and postliminary stages of being.[1] In literary studies, it is used to examine stages of in-between-ness: such as in regard to characters and their psychology, or in regard to spatial concepts.[2] It is a stage that is "both destructive and constructive; it serves to erase what one has been and create what one will be" (Breininger 2015, 5). The transfer stay in Paris of Soviet émigré writers of the Third Wave seems to be a perfect case study for a liminary rite of passage: They have left their home country with a sense of possibly never being able to go back, but they cannot start their new life at their new destination just yet. In my reading of Aksënov's émigré writing, I will focus on how Paris and France are described as places of liminal character; on how Paris' liminal nature seems to extend to the protagonists; and on how Aksënov's protagonists perceive places and movement through them in liminal terms.

Unlike most of his fellow Soviet citizens, Aksënov had actually already been to France before his emigration. Though there is no clear overview of Aksënov's pre-emigration travels in his two biographies (Kabakov and Popov 2011; Esipov 2012), we know that he had managed to get permission from the Soviet authorities to travel to France with his mother Evgeniia Ginzburg in 1976 (Aksënov 2015, n73); one year later he traveled France again, as we know from a famous indignant letter he wrote to Brodsky, dated 29 November 1977 from Ajaccio (ibid, 154–155). In the autobiographically inspired short story "24/7 Non-Stop" ("Kruglye sutki non-stop") (1976), his narrator even mentions a first stay in Paris in 1963 (Aksënov 1992a, 128). Thus Aksënov's relationship to the city of Paris was not established during his transit journey, but before. Paris also features prominently in his pre-emigration novel *The Island Crimea* (*Ostrov*

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[1] In his famous *Les Rites de Passage* (1909), van Gennep described three different rites of passage: "des rites préliminaires (séparation), liminaires (marge) et post[]liminaires (agrégation)" (Gennep 1981, 20), which Turner elaborated on in the chapter "Betwixt and Between" in his 1967 book *The Forest of Symbols* (Turner 1967, 93–111).

[2] For examinations of liminality in Slavic literatures, cf., e.g., Judith Kornblatt on the liminality of the Cossack in Russian culture (Kornblatt 1992, 14–15), Danielle Lavendier's thesis on liminality in Dostoevskii and Dickens (Lavendier 2009), Valeria Sobol's article on Lermontov's "Taman" (Sobol 2011), Laura J. Olson's article on post-Soviet Russian women's *chastushki* (Olson 2013), Olga Breininger's article on liminality in the Russian literary imagination of the Caucasus (Breininger 2015), Kirsten Tarves' thesis on the trickster and liminal figure in Sigizmund Krzhizhanovsky (Tarves 2018), Marja Sorvari's article on girl protagonists in novels by three contemporary Russian female writers (Sorvari 2018), Aleksandr Zhitenev's article on Russian poetry between 2000 and 2010 (Zhitenev 2019), the collected volume by Henrieke Stahl and Ekaterina Friedrichs on liminality in contemporary Russophone poetry (Fridrikhs and Shtal' 2020), or Sergei Zhdanov's article on liminality in regard to Russian literature's conceptions of Germany in late 19th and early 20th century Russian literature (Zhdanov 2020). In regard to Aksënov, Derek C. Maus mentions the concept of liminality in examining his Crimea fiction, but he does not go into detail (Maus 2019). The existing scholarship seems to have not yet explored the concept of liminal spaces in regard to Russia's Third Wave Emigration through Europe.

Krym, written 1979, published 1981), where his protagonist Luchnikov frequently travels between Moscow, the Crimea and Paris. Nevertheless, it is after Aksënov's emigration that Paris seems to gain the ephemeral quality in his writing, the quality that I will discuss in this paper.

Paris as a Place of Transit

Aksënov writes a postcard to Bella Akhmadulina from a Greek island, on 19 August 1981, thus just one year after his emigration, where he describes: "Tomorrow we fly to Paris and from there home to Washington"[3] ("Завтра летим в Париж и оттуда домой, в Вашингтон", Aksënov 2015, 99). Even though they had settled in Washington D.C. not long ago — they had lived in different places all over the US the first few months — Aksënov already refers to Washington as 'home'; and Paris is 'transit'. The semantic connection between Paris and traveling *through* is frequently found in Aksënov's émigré writing. Indeed, Paris is one of the most frequent places of action in his literature, as many of Aksënov's post-emigration protagonists are émigrés themselves. Notably, many of them also travel to Europe and to Paris, *before* their emigration, as did Aksënov himself. I find that the way the city appears shows it as a place defined through its transit-ness: Paris is a place one goes to and leaves, returns and leaves again. One chapter in the novel *Sweet New Style* (*Novyi sladostnyi stil'*, 1996) even plainly carries the title "Crossroads Paris" ("Перекрёсток Париж", (Aksënov 1999, 368), which subsumes what I want to show in this first part: Paris is more of an intersection than a destination in Aksënov's émigré literature.

Let us first look at Aksënov's protagonists before their emigration and at how they conceive of France and Paris. The narrator in the *povest'*[4] *Paper Landscape* (*Bumazhnyi peizazh*, 1982) is a Moscow engineer who is not all too happy with his restricted life in Soviet Russia. He introduces himself in the beginning of the story as Igor Velosipedov and complains that people call him "Monsieur Velosipedov" ("месье") instead of "Igor"", which he'd prefer. He tries to distance himself from his fellow citizens by imagining he lived in Paris: "If I lived, let's say, in Paris, that's what they'd call me — Monsieur Velosipedov, with the accent on the last word, pardon me, syllable" ("если бы я, предположим, жил в Париже, меня бы так и называли бы — месье Велосипедов, с ударением на последнем слове, пардон, слоге", Aksënov 1983, 8). His fellow citizens give him a teasingly posh French nickname, which he objects to; nevertheless, he imagines Paris as a contingent reality to his being in Moscow. Moreover, the parents of Velosipedov's girlfriend are diplomats and live in Paris; in her apartment, there are pictures of them in front of the Eiffel tower. Paris thus poses as a background to their Moscow romance. A later lover of Velosipedov, an Armenian, the wife of a KGB officer and herself probably also member of the KGB, frequently

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[3] All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

[4] A specific genre in Russian-language literature that describes a shorter novel, or a longer novella.

travels to and from Paris. When Velosipedov later emigrates to the US with an Israeli visa, there is, however, no mention of a transit station in Europe.

In the novel *Say Cheese* (*Skazhi izium*, 1985), the photographer Maksim Ogorodnikov frequently travels to Paris, because his ex-wife lives there with his children. The very first mention of him shows him, in fact, "after getting tipsy at a private club in Paris" ("подвыпив в одном парижском частном клубе", Aksënov 1985, 7). His older brother, who carries the Soviet patriotic name "October", also used to live in Paris, as he is introduced: "October Ogorodnikov was a figure not without mystery, an international commentator, for years sitting either in Brazil, or in the United States, or stationed with all the appropriate accoutrements in Paris" ("Октябрь Огородников был фигурой не без загадочности, международный комментатор, годами сидящий то в Бразилии, то в Соединенных Штатах, то располагающийся со всеми соответствующими причиндалами в Париже", ibid, 35). Paris is one place among many where Russians of a certain standing live and go to and from, notwithstanding the travel restrictions that apply to most Soviet citizens.

For Maksim Ogorodnikov, Paris is one of three places he frequently visits. When he starts having trouble with the Soviet authorities, his freedom of movement is suddenly restricted, and we learn about his previous travel opportunities: "one after another, trips [collapsed]", "to New York (on the USSR SF line)" — i. e., an official organ of the Soviet Union, "to Milan (on the USSR Goskino line)" — i. e., the State Committee of Cinematography, "to Paris (on the Ovir line, just to see the kids <...>)"[5] — i. e., the Visa and Registration Department (Aksënov 1985, 46). This shows the motion range of a (privileged) Soviet photographer around the 1970s/1980s, and Paris is among the most frequent places one travels to, but certainly not the only one.

Paris is also a meeting point, where people 'have met each other' at some point ("Я его в Париже как-то встретил, привет-привет...", Aksënov 1985, 242), before they leave again. Moreover, it is also the place of the Soviet diaspora, the place where emigrants meet, know each other, discuss each other's destinies. When Maksim Ogorodnikov visits his children in Paris, "all of Paris is saying" ("весь Париж говорит", Aksënov 1985, 145) that he has supposedly left the USSR for good. The city is even called a "Russian city", as the narrator describes that "rumors spread through the Russian city of Paris" ("по русскому городу Парижску поползли слухи", ibid). The capital of France is thus ascribed a certain Russian quality, due to the sheer number of Russian/Soviet citizens residing there. At the same time, the city is, however, also a place of transit, as one travels "to Moscow with a stopover in Paris?" ("в Москву еду с заездом в Париж?", ibid, 131). Paris seems to be the central transit point to enter and exit Europe for Soviet citizens.

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[5] "[О]дна за другой рухнули поездки в Нью-Йорк (по линии СФ СССР), в Милан (по линии Госкино СССР) в Париж (по линии Овира, просто детишек повидать <...>), то есть по всем линиям".

Similarly, in *A Moscow Saga* (*Moskovskaia saga*), Aksënov's three-part epic novel ("роман-эпопея") from 1992, Paris appears both as a place of Russian exile and of transit. The writer Il'ia Erenburg is called "The famous 'Moscow Parisian', poet and world journalist" ("Знаменитый 'московский парижанин', поэт и мировой журналист..." (Aksënov 2017, 284), and as the protagonist Nina meets him as he sits in the restaurant "Natsional" in Moscow, someone says "There's Orenburg, fresh from Spain and, of course, via Paris" ("Вон Оренбург, только что из Испании и, конечно же, через Париж", ibid). Firstly, a poet such as Erenburg possesses such a strong semantic connection with Paris that he is called a 'Moscow Parisian'. Secondly, wherever he is coming from, on his way back to Moscow, he will naturally have traveled *through* Paris as the logical place of transit.

In his autobiographically inspired novel *In Search of Melancholy Baby* (*V poiskakh grustnogo bebi*, 1987), Aksënov lets a first-person narrator write about his emigration from the USSR into the US. The narrator remembers having traveled to Paris before his emigration already, as Aksënov had done. Interestingly, his Paris is not just the capital of France, or a place of the Soviet diaspora. Rather, he remembers: "The first time I saw Paris <...>, I found it beautiful not only for its thousand-year accumulation of elegance but also for the glimmer of those transient Americans of the twenties" (Aksënov 1987, 149) ("Попав впервые в Париж, я нашел, что он окрашен для меня не только своим собственным тысячелетним очарованием, но и промельком тех мимолетных американцев конца двадцатых" (Aksënov 1992b, 324). The image of Paris here is, interestingly, one of an *American* emigration experience. The narrator calls the Lost Generation of the 1920s "fleeting Americans", 'мимолетные', which ascribes Paris a certain sense of liminality: The American writers seem to have 'passed by', ephemerally appearing and disappearing; but they also left their trace on the city, as Aksënov's Paris is "окрашен", "painted" or "colored" by their presence even decades later. In his pre-emigration short story "24/7 Non-Stop" that is similarly inspired by Aksënov's own biography, Aksënov's narrator even adds "I found it [Paris] colored, besides all its own charms, by Hemingway's charms, perhaps the strongest of all. It was <...> also the Paris of those fleeting, rapidly disappearing young Americans" ("[О]н [Париж] оказался для меня окрашенным, кроме всех своих собственных очарований, еще и хемингуэевским очарованием, быть может, самым сильным. Это был <...> и Париж тех мимолетных, быстро пропавших молодых американцев", Aksënov 1992a, 128). The generation of writers around Hemingway left their mark upon the city, "perhaps the strongest of all", i. e., stronger than the French themselves (?), even though they were a 'fleeting' generation, 'rapidly disappearing'. If Paris is so strongly influenced by a generation that was merely passing through, then the city itself seems to metonymically acquire a liminal quality.

In different ways and in different stories, Paris repeatedly appears as a place of transit. As Aksënov's first-person narrator of *In Search of Melancholy Baby* finds himself in the US, he describes how news traveled from the USSR to the

US *through* Paris: “we would exchange Soviet jokes fresh from their first stop in Paris or Copenhagen” (Aksënov 1987, 166) (“мы обменивались анекдотами свежей советской выпечки, только что поступившими в обращение через Париж или Копенгаген”, Aksënov 1992b, 341). Firmly settled in the US, the protagonist mentions how he will later frequently meet Carl Proffer again, with whom he had stayed a few weeks in Ann Arbor: “Periodic meetings in New York, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, Milan, Paris...” (Aksënov 1987, 167) (“Периодические встречи в Нью-Йорке, Вашингтоне, Лос-Анджелесе, Милане, Париже...”, Aksënov 1992b, 341). Aksënov also underlines the protagonist's globetrotter identity when he weaves an interview into the narrative, where the interviewer asks the protagonist “[y]ou’ve been all over since you emigrated — Paris, Jerusalem, London, Berlin, Rome” (Aksënov 1987, 24) (“и в Париже, и в Иерусалиме, и в Лондоне, и в Берлине, и в Риме, где только ты не побывал”, (Aksënov 1992b, 158). Or Erenburg in *A Moscow Saga* will have logically travelled through Paris on his way from Spain to Moscow.

In the 2006 novel *Moscow Qua-Qua* (*Moskva Kva-Kva*), Paris also appears as a place of constant arriving and leaving. The story takes place in the early 1950s, and the first-person narrator Kirill, a Russian writer, frequently travels to Paris. This time, he is in Paris as the head of the delegation of Soviet writers at an international event. On the evening before flying to Japan, directly from Paris, he meets a young man, who seems to him an “evident Parisian” (“явный парижанин”, Aksënov 2006, 142), but who turns out to be Russian. The young man, who had been born in Paris, had moved to Moscow later, and had ended up in Paris again after the Second World War. He describes the complicated route of his earlier life:

> That’s how my odyssey ended. — <...>. Paris — Moscow — Bugulma, again Moscow — Tashkent, once more Moscow — Poland or hell knows what, Reich — Normandy — Paris. I was nineteen years old when I came back. I’ve been living here ever since.
>
> Вот так моя одиссея закончилась. — <...>. Париж — Москва — Бугульма, опять Москва — Ташкент, еще раз Москва — Польша или черт знает что, Райх — Нормандия — Париж. Мне было девятнадцать лет, когда я вернулся. С тех пор живу здесь (ibid, 146).

The biography of this young Russian man starts in Paris, covers different places in Eurasia and Europe, leads back to Paris; later in the novel, he is shot in Abkhazia. Paris is one of the places of his nomadic life, among many others. In reference to Aksënov’s descriptions of Paris as a liminal space in earlier stories, it even seems that the man’s identity as a Russian born in Paris is bound to make him a liminal character, someone who is bound to constantly be in a state of transit.

These are some examples of the way Paris appears to be a constant place of transit in Aksënov’s literary world: people meet in Paris, their ways part again; news travels through Paris. Most interesting, however, are two examples that

we will now take a look at in more detail — examples that show how the state of transit seems to have an impact on the way the protagonists understand time and space and how they interact with the world around them.

Tropes of Transit

Aksënov wrote the short story "The Right to an Island" ("Pravo na ostrov") in 1981, the year after his emigration. The story tells of a writer-essayist who spends his winter in Ajaccio, Corsica, as he does every year. Leopold Bar, as he is called, is a "globetrotter, a globe-trotting multinational man ("глобтроттер, шагающий по шарику многонациональный человек", Aksënov 1995, 564). He does not seem to identify himself with any particular country; he apparently lives (seemingly among other places) in Paris (ibid, 563), looks like an Englishman (ibid, 569), has Russian roots (ibid, 581), has traveled to countless countries. In the course of the story, a third-person narrator tells of several chaotic encounters Leo Bar has during the course of one day on Corsica: In a story that sounds like a fever dream, he meets a Parisian woman, Corsican men, a Russian; he gets beaten up; he thinks about life, about history and a lot about Napoleon Bonaparte. In the end, the story takes a final abrupt turn:

> He bowed and walked resolutely toward the nearest Agence de Voyage, that is, the Travel Agency. He approached it and saw his reflection in the mirror of the window more and more clearly. <...> How glorious it is to do one's own thing, well, at least to write books, how — ha-ha-ha — glorious, <...> to bring dreariness and gloom on readers, if only so that they <...> go to the bazaar, buy artichokes or, after all, go on journeys from capitals to islands and back again, for indeed there is something else in the world besides the gloomy emptiness of literature.
>
> — Forgive me for such a wild ending to the story, but can I book an airline ticket with transit of extreme complexity? — Leo Bar asked a Corsican clerk at the agency. Let's say, Corsica — London — Moscow — Singapore — New York — Warsaw — Iceland — Rome — Corsica?
>
> — Transits of any complexity, monsieur, smiled the modest little Bonaparte kindly.

> Он поклонился и решительно направился к ближайшему "Ажанси де вояж", то есть "Агентству путешествий". Он приближался к нему и все отчетливей видел свое отражение в зеркале витрины. <...> Как славно заниматься своим делом, ну вот хотя бы писать книжки, как — ха-ха-ха — славно, <...> нагонять тоску и мрак на читателей, хотя бы для того, чтобы они <...> шли на базар, покупали артишоки или, в конце концов, отправлялись в путешествия из столиц на острова и обратно, ведь в самом деле есть в мире еще кое-что, кроме мрачных пустот литературы.
>
> — Простите за столь дикое завершение сюжета, но не могу ли я у вас заказать авиационный билет с транзитом чрезвычайной сложности? — спросил Лео Бар в агентстве у клерка-корсиканца. — Предположим, Корсика — Лондон — Москва — Сингапур — Нью-Йорк — Варшава — Исландия — Рим — Корсика?
>
> — Транзиты любой сложности, месье, — любезно улыбнулся скромный маленький Бонапарт (Aksënov 1995, 584).

Transit, in this story, is not something one must overcome in order to arrive somewhere else: it is not a mere middle point between the place of departure and the place of arrival. Rather, transit is an end in itself. It is a continuous state, and the more complex and the longer it lasts, the better. At least this is how the protagonist Leo Bar interacts with the world: He seeks out not (only) new places to travel *to*, but places to travel *through*. The ending of this short story thus shows how transit-ness becomes a central trope for how Aksënov's protagonists deal with the world: the liminality of traveling *through* a place is the only state of being they know, and they are bound to strive for liminality over and over again. The story thus creates a sense of instability of place and time, when the focus shifts from place as a static concept to place as a dynamic concept, from place as a somewhere to *be* to place as a point of *transit*.

It is particularly interesting that this ending is introduced by the remark "Forgive me for such a wild ending to the story"; words that are directed at the reader, but Bar also seems to have said them to the clerk in the travel agency. This break in the story's diegetic consistency contributes to the sense of liminality of the diegetic world, to how the story creates the effect of instability of place, time, and also of storytelling.

The second example we will look at in more detail is from the already-mentioned novel *Sweet New Style* (1996), the chapter called "Crossroads Paris": The title itself underlines what we have observed in regard to Paris being an intersection, a place where people meet before moving on. In this chapter, the protagonists, who have been scattered around the globe, meet in Paris, and reflect on the nature of Paris as their continuous meeting point. The protagonist Sasha Korbakh thinks, as he walks through the city:

> So, here I am, <...>. All around is the eternal Paris. Who says it's eternal? I beg your pardon, not me. I've always been wary of such clichés. A different level of sophistication, you know. I love it, though. I love that ever-elusive Paris. I can't imagine an Earth without Paris. This eternal Earth without this eternal Paris <...>. Alas, Paris is not eternal either, such was the profound conclusion drawn by AYA [Alexander Yakovlevich] at this moment. Drive away this thought and be inspired by what is here eternal, that is, constantly slipping away, at this moment.
>
> Ну вот и я, <...>. Вокруг вечный Париж. Кто сказал, что он вечный? Прошу прощения, только не я. Всегда шарахался от таких клише. Другой, понимаете ли, уровень изощренности. Впрочем, я люблю его. Я люблю этот вечно ускользающий Париж. Я не могу представить себе Землю без Парижа. Эту вечную Землю без этого вечного Парижа <...>. Увы, и Париж не вечен, таков был глубокомысленный вывод, сделанный АЯ [Александром Яковлевичем] в этот момент. Отгони эту мысль и вдохновись тем, что тут есть вечного, то есть постоянно ускользающего, в этот момент (Aksënov 1999, 370).

In a contradictory stream-of-consciousness, Korbakh first calls Paris 'eternal', then distances himself from this attribute, and settles with Paris being the city that is 'eternally slipping away' ("вечно ускользающий"). The city thus appears to be a place of never-ending liminality. While the ephemeral, to Kor-

bakh, first seems to contradict the idea of 'eternal Paris', he then decides that it is suddenly exactly Paris' ephemerality that makes it eternal; or, even, ephemerality equals eternity: "what is here eternal, that is, constantly slipping away" ("что тут есть вечного, то есть постоянно ускользающего"). The very definition of eternity is thus the sense of constant liminality and the only way to be eternal is to be constantly changing, slipping away.

Conclusion

In *The Island Crimea*, the narrator, possibly voicing the thoughts of his protagonist, notes: "You get to Paris and are in no hurry to get anywhere. That's the pleasure" ("Приезжаешь в Париж и никуда не торопишься. Это наслаждение" Aksënov 1981, 74). While Aksënov's pre-emigration image of Paris already carries some of the features his émigré stories will draw of the capital of France — it is the place the Russian diaspora meets, discussing alternatives for their homeland — the image, overall, seems to be somehow static: When you're in Paris, you're not hurrying to go anywhere else. The post-emigration conception of Paris in Aksënov's writing seems to be different. Paris is not only the logical place of transit for the privileged Soviet citizens who have the possibility to travel, it is also the place of the Soviet diaspora, as well as the place that is marked by earlier ephemeral visitors, the "fleeting" and "rapidly disappearing" American writers of the 1920s; it is a "place where many social meanings congregate" (Harmon 2003, 284). Paris' liminality also generates liminal characters, such as the Paris-born Russian who seems to be bound to live his life in a constant state of transit. Most interesting, however, is how the liminality of transit affects the way Aksënov's protagonists perceive Paris as the city that is 'eternally slipping away', and how ephemerality becomes, ultimately, a synonym for eternity; and how his protagonists are bound to strive for liminality in their quest for a happy life, buying plane tickets not for destinations, but for a "transit of extreme complexity". I propose that this conception of Paris as 'eternally ephemeral' and the conception of being as constant liminality is the result of a structural impact that the moment of transit has left on Aksënov's writing.

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ЛИМИНАЛНОСТ У ЕМИГРАНТСКОМ СТВАРАЛАШТВУ ВАСИЛИЈА АКСЈОНОВА: КЊИЖЕВНИ ТРАГОВИ ЊЕГОВОГ ТРАНЗИТНОГ ПУТОВАЊА КРОЗ ПАРИЗ

Резиме

Овај рад је посвећен концепту лиминалности код Василија Аксјонова (1932–2009). Аксјонов је био принуђен да напусти Совјетски Савез 1980. године и провео је око три месеца у Паризу и другим местима у Европи пре него што се укрцао на авион за САД, своју одабрану дестинацију. Мало се зна о лету проведеном у Европи, али начин на који Аксјоновљеве приче приказују Париз, често место радње у његовом стваралаштву, сугерише утицај транзитног путовања кроз Париз на његово писање. Чини се да је Париз гранични простор, обележен транзитношћу, а лиминалност која проистиче из тренутка транзита утиче на то како Аксјоновљеви протагонисти доживљавају време и простор и сопствено постојање у свету.

Кључне речи: лиминалност, транзит, руска емигрантска књижевност, Париз.