

Throughout this multidisciplinary project, I learned to balance literary and historical analysis by using research support systems but also to persist through information gaps, shifts of focus, and bouts of frustration.

Deciding to focus on novels for this project was a relatively simple decision; I had already worked with concepts of identity in personal documents and I had become interested in those same concepts in literature. Rather than continue with my work with wartime media, I decided to expand my focus to the postwar period to track the development of the identities I had studied in diaries from the Siege of Leningrad. However, sifting through possible novels and narrowing down my selection to two central texts was by far the most difficult part of the search process. I collected recommendations from past Russian literature professors and met with Professor Senderovich, who was currently teaching a course on Jewish Russian literature. Through this, I was able to attain the nearly-finished yet unpublished English translation of Dina Kalinovskaya's *Picture in the Teacup* by Professor Senderovich himself and Dr. Harriet Murav. With Kalinovskaya in mind, Professor Senderovich also advised that I look into Friedrich Gorenstein's *Redemption* among others, which further sharpened my focus on newly-translated postwar literature. Their initial similarities were too striking to ignore; both of these works were written in the postwar period by Jewish authors who were children during World War II and both focus on the personal journey of a young adult female protagonist. After selecting my two novels, I then read both to grasp the larger themes and motifs of each story.

Finding biographical information about Kalinovskaya and Gorenstein proved to be one of this project's biggest roadblocks. Since my project examines personal topics like war trauma and senses of identity, it was important to me to have a strong understanding of the authors' lives to better understand their work. Kalinovskaya and Gorenstein are "marginal" authors of the Soviet period, not by any measure of their talent as writers, but for the controversial content of their works which were then censored by the Soviet government. For Gorenstein specifically, the censorship of his work forced him to immigrate to Berlin and begin publishing abroad. The only way I was able to find information on the two was through Russian texts available online but even then, there is very little on their personal lives. I was able to find a project commemorating Gorenstein on the Russian language pages of Радио Свобода "Radio Free Europe," which had a few interviews of other writers about Gorenstein and a Russian documentary about his career. As an outspoken dissident writer and well-known screenwriter, Gorenstein's life was memorialized and preserved but information on Kalinovskaya was virtually non-existent. The only way to navigate the issue was to accept the lack of sources and glean what I could from what I had available.

Though I relearn this concept almost every time I do research, the most valuable lessons I learned in this project are patience and pacing. As I progressed through the project, I realized my initial questions were becoming less and less relevant to my findings; the novels were beginning to develop their own arguments which were related to one another, but not to my overall project. My original questions had been broad and focused on constructs of fictional identity: how do these authors describe their characters? What facets of selfhood are most emphasized? How does

the war influence these characters? At that point, it was clear that these questions were much too simple and did not address the role of the author's own experiences in conceptualizing young female adulthood. These questions also did not acknowledge the Jewish identities of the authors and how their unique trauma from the war *and* the Soviet Union's religious persecution would have impacted their sense of self. I became frustrated with my lack of progress and my confusion about what my argument had become which had made the entire project seem disorganized. I was unsure how to form that analysis into a coherent argument and then connect those ideas to broader conversations in the field of Soviet war history. This difficult moment had come after months and months of reading and rereading my novels and conducting analysis without revisiting my project's questions. I realized I had been working alone with very little outside input for too long and needed a break from my own thoughts on the topic.

My most successful strategy in continuing to develop my project despite these moments was to consistently meet with professors from different disciplines, all of whom approached my work from various perspectives. Aside from my primary mentor, Professor Glennys Young, I also frequently met with my Honors History professor, my translation instructor, and my Russian language professor, and sent my drafts to Professor Alexis Peri at Boston University, who is an expert in Russian war history through personal media. It is their myriad expertise that kept the project clear and focused, especially as I began to alter my research questions. I found it especially helpful to meet with professors outside my field (Soviet war history) and non-specialty readers as they were able to pinpoint what context was necessary to understand my points. Peers in my Honors cohort were able to provide feedback on improving the paper's clarity and structure, especially as the argument became more complicated. It is with their guidance that I was finally able to refine my paper's focus. It was not until the last few weeks of the project that the main theme of religion even emerged as the throughline of all my separate points. From then on, I focused on connecting my sub-themes of age, gender, and motherhood to religion and how these ideas operated in the supposedly atheist Soviet Union, bringing me to the end of my project.