Motherhood, Love, and the Self in the Soviet Novel:

Religious reconstructions of female young adult identity

in postwar novels (1945-1990)

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Introduction

Having suffered an estimated 27 million casualties of soldiers and civilians, the Soviet Union was decimated by the end of World War II and struggled to rebuild its physical, political, and psychological landscape in the postwar years.[1] The war drastically changed many cultural understandings of sacrifice, responsibility, and the collective vs. the self. It was a disorienting period for children especially; the war deprived children of their childhood, the time and space to explore their self-identity, which had drastic psychological consequences in the postwar years.[2] In this disorientating period of societal reconstruction, socialist conceptions of individual and family identity clashed with traditional religious ideals due to the partial revival of Russian Orthodoxy during the war.[3] The limited return of organized religion exacerbated the societal disruption caused by the war's violence, challenging socialist understandings of age, gender, and motherhood. This study will pay specific attention to the war's influence on female young adult identity as portrayed in two recently-translated postwar novels, Friedrich Gorenstein's *Redemption* (1984) and Dina Kalinovskaya's *Picture in the Teacup* (1986). Novels are a particularly interesting window into postwar redefinitions of "normalcy" in the family and in self-identity. These novels were subjected to Soviet censorship but since they are fictional, these authors were able to hide their critiques of Soviet society within the multi-layered development

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[1] For postwar devastation, see: Smith, Mark B. "*Property of Communists: the Urban Housing Program from Stalin to Khrushchev*." DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010., Ironside, Kristy. "*Stalin's Doctrine of Price Reductions During the Second World War and Postwar Reconstruction."* Slavic Review 75, no. 3 (2016): 655–77. doi:10.5612/slavicreview.75.3.0655.

[2] For Soviet children and war trauma, see: Kucherenko, Olga. "*Little Soldiers : How Soviet Children Went to War, 1941-1945.*" Oxford University Press, 2011., Cathy A. "*Silence Was Salvation: Child Survivors of Stalin's Terror and World War II in the Soviet Union.*" New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015.

[3] For wartime revival of Russian Orthodoxy, see: Peris, Daniel. "*'God Is Now on Our Side': The Religious Revival on Unoccupied Soviet Territory During World War II.*" Kritika (Bloomington, Ind.) 1, no. 1 (2000): 97–118. doi:10.1353/kri.2008.0135., Miner, Steven Merritt. "*Stalin's Holy War Religion, Nationalism, and Alliance Politics, 1941-1945."* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003.

of their young female characters. By examining these two postwar novels, I intend to utilize the leniency of this artistic genre to explore Gorenstein and Kalinovskaya's "anti-Soviet"[4] conceptions of age, gender, and family as specifically informed by their personal hardships as war children. These facets of identity are all in different ways connected to love and motherhood, emphasizing the role of maternal affection and the icon of the mother in a young woman's navigation of the postwar period. By analyzing these subtly religious constructions, I will illuminate these authors' subversive opinions on not just the war's damage, but also the Soviet system's perpetuation of terror after the war.

This study examines these censored Jewish authors to focus on minority voices that were silenced in their lifetimes, rather than continue to center ethnic-Russian authors in Soviet literary scholarship. It also allows for the examination of religious concepts in "atheist" Soviet society from the perspective of persecuted Jewish authors. The novels *Redemption* and *Picture in the Teacup* were specifically chosen not just for their authors' minority identities, but also for their unique character construction and content. Both novels are set and published in the postwar period before the Soviet Union's dissolution in 1991 which allows for a thorough examination of these concepts while they are still in the Soviet societal context. These novels mainly discuss three main facets of identity central to both religious and socialist concepts of self: gender, age, and the family. These novels feature young female protagonists, both of whom were war children and continue to be deeply traumatized by the war, and center their personal journeys throughout young womanhood. The similarity of these authors' backgrounds to their characters' also allows for the exploration of an autobiographical aspect of these novels. This specific focus will also shed light on the uniquely difficult experiences of young women, in their late teens and early

[4] "Anti-Soviet" is defined as either opposing socialist conceptions or against official Soviet ideology.

twenties, forcibly suspended between childhood and adulthood in the postwar period. Though Soviet scholarship has recently focused on the personal trauma of Soviet children during the war, the young adult subgroup has often been included in the study of either younger children or grown adults, thereby erasing the distinctive circumstances of their wartime experiences as undefined "others."

Value of Novels

Novels provide a unique view into postwar Soviet society by allowing authors to evade censorship and explore "anti-Soviet" conceptions of the self through their work. Due to the oppressive Soviet censorship network, the likes of which are entirely unknown in Western countries, Russian counterculture in literature became more nuanced as a means of survival.[5] This makes the texts difficult for foreigners to understand since it often hinges on their audiences' ability to detect their hidden meaning beneath layers of metaphors, double meanings, and cultural contexts. Additionally, a crucial difference between Western and Soviet literature is the role of the author in Soviet society. As historian Kathleen Parthé notes in her article *What Was Soviet Literature?* (1994), unlike in any other country, the Soviet author was burdened with the added responsibilities of being Russia's "second government."[6] Rather than simply having the freedom to create literature as artists, Soviet writers were held to higher moral standards and were expected to communicate the public's collective suffering, despite the looming threat of incarceration, exile, or death. Historian Andrew Wachtel supports Parthé's claim; in *The Battle for Childhood: Creation of a Russian Myth* (1990), Wachtel notices a "peculiarly symbiotic

[5] For Soviet literature censorship, see: Garrard, John Gordon., and Carol Garrard. "*Inside the Soviet Writers' Union*." New York: Free Press, 1990., Ermolaev, Herman. "*Censorship in Soviet Literature, 1917-1991*." Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997.
[6] Parthé, *Soviet Literature*, 294.

relation between works of literature and ideological points of view."[7] His examination of the childhood myth merely "represents one instance of a much broader sociocultural phenomenon."[8] Through this, he notes the unique Russian tendency for works of literature to become embedded in social culture, emphasizing the same unusually intimate relationship between the Russian writer and the general public that Parthé noted. Thus, in this context, it is necessary to reexamine novels as extremely culturally-significant and one of very few spaces for dissent against the Soviet system.

Author and Novel Introduction

The positionalities and experiences of these authors and their works well demonstrate the complicated aspects of the Soviet Union's societal rebuilding in the postwar period. Friedrich Gorenstein and Dina Kalinovskaya are two "marginal"[9] Russian-Jewish writers who were children during the war and established their own young adult identities in the postwar period. It is essential to emphasize that as Jewish people, Gorenstein and Kalinovskaya suffered from both antisemitic state violence and persecution as well as war trauma.

Dina Kalinovskaya, originally named Dora Meshalimovna Beron, was born in 1934 in Odesa, Ukraine. She was seven years old at the onset of the war in 1941 and spent the entire war in evacuation in Tashkent with her family.[10] Her father, who remained in Odesa, was hanged by invading Romanian troops allied with Nazi Germany. She moved to Moscow in the 1950s,

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[7] Wachtel, *Childhood,* 204.

[8] Ibid., 205.

[9] The quotations here are meant to emphasize that "marginal" does not imply a lack of interest in these works from the Soviet public, but rather the interference of Soviet censors which forcibly silenced these minority Russian-Jewish voices and their "anti-Soviet" content.

[10] For wartime evacuation, see: Manley, Rebecca. "*To the Tashkent Station: Evacuation and Survival in the Soviet Union at War."* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009., Stronski, Paul. "*Tashkent: Forging a Soviet City, 1930-1966."* Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010.

against her mother's wishes, to work at a shipbuilding bureau and soon began publishing children's stories in small periodicals. Throughout the 1980s, Kalinovskaya published mostly in Yiddish in the "Soviet Gameland" magazine, where *Picture in the Teacup* appeared originally in 1985. It was then translated into Russian for the literary translation collection of the magazine "Year by Year."[11] This 2022 translation of *Picture in the Teacup* by Sasha Senderovich and Harriet Murav was the first translation of any of her works into English.

Picture in the Teacup follows a 22-year-old Jewish woman Serafima and her mother Marusya as they return to their prewar apartment in Odessa in 1957, twelve years after the war's end. Serafima's father was killed during the war, but his memory continues to haunt their family. His absence as the family mediator between the stubborn Marusya and the rambunctious Serafima further worsens their relationship as they attempt to cope with his death. Serafima is (allegedly) the model Soviet student who dreams of moving to Moscow to join the workforce despite her mother's demands for marriage and children.

Because of Kalinovskaya's "marginality," very little has been written about her as an author or her novella's intent. From what is known, however, it is clear that her own life and *Picture in the Teacup* share many similarities, hinting at an autobiographical element to this work. Kalinovskaya was a 23-year-old Jewish woman in 1957 who lived in Odesa before moving to Moscow despite her mother's protests. Her father, like Serafima's, was killed in the war, specifically by the Nazi-allied Romanian troops that are mentioned in the novella. This adds another dimension to Serafima's struggle with her identity presentation as having at least some ties to Kalinovskaya's own experience. Kalinovskaya's ability to process her own trauma

[11] Лавка Бабуин, *Дина Михайловна Калиновская.*

through this fictitious character also demonstrates how novels were a valuable coping method in oppressive postwar society which de-emphasized individual suffering.

It is also important to note that since the novella was written in Kalinvoskaya's native Yiddish, her story and its engagements with the "New Soviet Person" model were originally intended for Jewish audiences. The use of her native language, as opposed to Russian, could imply an intimate relationship with the novella's content, which is then corroborated by the similarities between Serafima's and Kalinovskaya's personal journeys. Its subsequent translation into Russian then made the novella available to Russian readers, specifically Russian Orthodox audiences, adding yet another perspective on its religious elements. The infusion of personal trauma as both a war victim and a Jewish Soviet citizen is also a key feature of this study's next work, *Redemption* by Friedrich Gorenstein.

Self-described as a "literary provocateur and intellectual anarchist,"[12] Friedrich Gorenstein faced many difficulties in the postwar period due to his uncompromising discussion of the wartime Jewish experience in Soviet society.[13] A popular screenwriter by profession, Gorenstein believed his literary work to be "free of the chains of censorship… the sole purpose of his life."[14] His Jewish identity is central to these works which consistently criticize the Soviet system, antisemitism, and conflicts between Judaism and Christianity. Like Kalinvoskaya, the interplay of language in defining identity is crucial to understanding Gorenstein's work. In Gorenstein's own words: "If I knew Yiddish, I probably would have become a Jewish writer and written in Yiddish. But I write in Russian, hence I'm a Russian writer whether anybody likes it

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[12] Krutikov, *Outside Looking In*.

[13] For postwar Jewish persecution, see: Draitser, Emil. "*Shush! : Growing up Jewish Under Stalin : A Memoir*." 1st ed. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008. doi:10.1525/j.ctt7zw52x., Altshuler, Mordechai., and Saadya. Sternberg. "*Religion and Jewish Identity in the Soviet Union, 1941-1964*." Waltham, Mass: Brandeis University Press, 2012.

[14] Draitser, *Redemption: Introduction*, XII

or not."[15] Already garnering accusations of "anti-Sovietness," he retorts: "'With such opinions,' [they say], 'what right do you have to write in Russian?' What right? And what right do *you* have to use the Jewish Bible and the Jewish Gospels?"[16] Gorenstein's unflinching pride in his Jewish identity shows that his novel is most likely directly related to the treatment of religion in the Soviet Union, himself having experienced this persecution firsthand.

This controversy hindered the publication of many of his subversive works as the publication history of *Redemption* demonstrates. Gorenstein wrote the novel in 1967, immediately after the "thaw" period (1953-1964) under Nikita Khrushchev which saw a relaxation of strict censorship practices. During this brief period of tolerance, Khrushchev did, however, also reinvigorate harsh anti-religion campaigns.[17] *Redemption* was written in the first few years of Leonid Brezhnev's term, which became known as the "period of stagnation" (1964-1982). Brezhnev was much less socially progressive than his predecessor; thus, the "thawing" of Stalinist censorship practices waned under his leadership. As a result, Soviet censors barred Gorenstein from publishing *Redemption* since the novel discusses postwar devastation, trauma, and continued antisemitic violence. Gorenstein moved to West Berlin in 1980 and was unable to publish this novel until 1984, and even then only in the US. This work was not translated into English until 2018, demonstrating the success of Soviet censors in marginalizing Gorenstein's work.

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[15] Grinberg, *Stubbornly Jewish Worldview*.
[16] Ibid.
[17] For Khrushchev and religion, see: Grossman, Joan Delaney. "*Khrushchev's Anti-Religious Policy and the Campaign of 1954.*" Soviet Studies 24, no. 3 (1973): 374–86. http://www.jstor.org/stable/150643., Demirtaş-Coşkun, Birgül. "*Khrushchev's Policies Toward Religion: Repression in a Period of Reform*." Karadeniz Araştırmaları (KaraM) 5, no. 18 (2008).

Gender: the Non-Woman[18]

The clash between socialist and religious ideals in Serafima's family can be observed in their different understandings of femininity and the role of women in society. This is demonstrated in *Picture in the Teacup* as the novella's central conflict revolves around Serafima's Soviet-coded aspirations and her inability to align with her mother Marusya's religious conceptions of femininity.

Their difficulty in choosing between socialist vs. religious conceptions of women also stems from the undefined status of organized religion itself in postwar Soviet society. Russian Orthodoxy had been central to the Russian national identity since the founding of Rus', Russia's predecessor. Christianity was declared the official state religion in 988 CE by Prince Vladimir I and was a main pillar of Russian culture ever since, especially among Russia's enormous peasant population.[19] However, one of the main defining features of socialism is its strict aversion to any form of organized religion since, as Marx famously said, "religion is the opium of the people."[20] Loyalty to God challenged loyalty to the Party, and so, following the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, the Soviet Union was declared officially atheist.[21] Soviet authorities ruthlessly destroyed sites of worship, executed and arrested religious figures, and spread fiercely anti-religious propaganda.[22] Despite this, religion proved to be one of the most resilient and persistent

[18] In this paper, "non-woman" refers to Serafima's inability to fully align with either religious conceptions of femininity or the genderless New Soviet Person. The term denotes her suspension between these two ideals as a definitive "other."

[19] For religion in Imperial Russia, see: Coleman, Heather J. "*Orthodox Christianity in Imperial Russia: A Source Book on Lived Religion."* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014.

[20] Pedersen, *Religion,* 354.

[21] For Russian Orthodoxy and socialism, see: Wynot, Jennifer Jean. "*Keeping the Faith: Russian Orthodox Monasticism in the Soviet Union, 1917-1939*." 1st ed. College Station, Tex: Texas A & M University Press, 2004, Roccucci, Adriano. "*A Contradictory and Multifaceted Relationship: Russian Orthodoxy and 1917*." Harvard Ukrainian Studies 36, no. 1/2 (2019): 87–104.

[22] Froese, *Forced Secularization,* 35.

opponents of socialism, specifically due to its importance to societal and personal identity: "Religion and nationalism are not identical, of course, but especially in Eastern Europe they often run together, posing insurmountable challenges to unstable, multinational regimes."[23]

However, with the onset of war in June 1941, the Soviet Union was in a state of cultural upheaval and disarray, with many socialist ideals having been compromised to satisfy the urgent needs of wartime mobilization. Most notable was its decrease in religious persecution; the Orthodox patriarch was officially reinstated in September of 1943 with Stalin also allowing the partial reopening of churches, especially in the USSR's western regions near the front. This was intended to "stoke the fires of Russian nationalism but as a tool for restoring Soviet power to areas that the Red Army recovered from German occupation."[24] During the war, Stalin also used the limited revival of organized religion "for propaganda campaigns aimed at convincing the Western Allies that the USSR… was a bastion of religious freedom."[25] Important to note here is that Stalin's efforts were concentrated on rehabilitating Russian Orthodoxy, the dominant religion in the USSR, but *not* other religions such as Judaism. After the war, however, harsh anti-religion campaigns returned if not increased, with Soviet officials claiming "'the party's relationship with religion' had 'not changed.'"[26] This revival of religion in the USSR, albeit shortlived and very limited, could have strengthened religious dedication and religious conceptions, especially in the intimate and private space of the family. Particularly in the aftermath of the Holocaust, Marusya's defense of her traditional religious conceptions of femininity could also be read as a defense of her Jewish identity as a whole.

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[23] Miner, *Holy War*, 293.
[24] Miner, *Holy War*.
[25] For use of religion during the war, see: Miner, Steven Merritt. *Stalin's Holy War: Religion, Nationalism, and Alliance Politics, 1941-1945*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003.
[26] Berkhoff, *Motherland*, 209.

Marusya's understanding of traditional feminine identity is shown in her constant critiques of Serafima based on her poor prospects for marriage, her physical unattractiveness, and her disinterest in having children. Marusya constantly berates Serafima for her appearance: "'Are you saying I'm ugly?' Serafima asked while chewing. 'To put it mildly!' Marusya retorted… 'Look at yourself in the mirror, ugly face!'"[27] When discussing Serafima's move to Moscow with a relative, Marusya argues: "'at her age, she should think about the future! …And what is a woman's future? A woman's future is children.'"[28] Marusya's ideal daughter, that is one that aligns with religious conceptions, comes in Serafima's cousin Nelly: "Their entire lives Nelly was touted as a model for Serafima… Nelly was considered a beauty… Nelly's biography was smooth, without blemishes."[29] Marusya sees Serafima's desire to move to the capital city as nothing more than a naive dream: "She doesn't have anyone in Moscow, not even acquaintances… no one there was interested in her! This is what she can't accept."[30] However, Marusya's issue isn't merely with a career in Moscow but rather with its socialist connotations and what she sees as Serafima's implicit rejection of religious ideals.

In the postwar period, Serafima's prioritization of a career over starting a family would be heavily associated with Soviet ideology and the New Soviet Person. According to Marx, gender distinctions, like religion, were yet another impediment to social progress. He posited that "the degree of female emancipation is the natural measure of universal emancipation."[31] The institution of marriage in capitalist society was simply a form of "'exclusive private property'

[27] Kalinovskaya, *Picture,* 12.
[28] Ibid., 19.
[29] Kalinovskaya, *Picture,* 11.
[30] Ibid., 19.
[31] Chattopadhyay, *Women's Question,* 2455.

(for man)."[32] Marx also considered the nuclear family to be a bourgeois construction in which "the women and children are man's slaves."[33] From his perspective, the family reinforced these dehumanizing gender roles as a bourgeois man's means to maintain absolute control over his "assets." Thus, the New Soviet Person, a purposefully ageless and genderless ideal, should reject these bourgeois indulgences and instead focus on contributing to the work effort and bettering society.[34]

Serafima's intelligence and dedication to literature should also be read in the context of the Soviet Student ideal, a version of the New Soviet Person specifically aimed at children and young adults. This would be a prominent aspect of postwar society since "education, especially the task of raising young people to be ideal Soviet citizens, had always been central to the Soviet project, but during WWII it became bound up with the defense of the USSR."[35] It is not that reading itself is Soviet-coded as demonstrated by Marusya's praise of Serafima's cousin, Nelly: "Nelly is a capable young woman. She's the one who can't imagine living without books! She reads all the time."[36] It is in the context of Serafima's refusal of marriage and children, the cornerstones of religious conceptions of femininity, that Serafima's academic interests take on socialist connotations. Marusya warns Serafima: "'Do you remember Aunt Nadya? …When she was your age, she would devour Schopenhauer.' 'And?' 'And nothing. She never got married.'"[37] From Marusya's perspective, Aunt Nadya's single status, a symbol of her failure as

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[32] Ibid., 2455.
[33] Ibid., 2455.
[34] For formation of the New Soviet Person, see: Krylova, Anna. "*Soviet Modernity in Life and Fiction: The Generation of the 'New Soviet Person' in the 1930s.*" Order No. 9993137, The Johns Hopkins University, 2001. https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/soviet-modernity-life-fiction-generation-new/docview/304702418/se-2.
[35] Peri, *Lessons of the Leningrad Blockade,* 2.
[36] Kalinovskaya, *Picture,* 12.
[37] Ibid., 5.

a woman, marks the end of her story; no other information about her is relevant, such as her career or what became of her. She uses Aunt Nadya as a cautionary tale for Serafima, that if she continues to abide by socialist conceptions, she will amount to nothing: a non-woman.

The impact of this socialist conception of femininity (or rather socialism's rejection of femininity) is demonstrated in Serafima's disinterest in her appearance and social status. Serafima rarely reacts to Marusya's constant barrage of insults, simply stating "'ugliness is a good defense in a whole range of circumstances… self-esteem, Mama, results from smallness of the heart."[38] Serafima feels no need to outwardly present as feminine or to be visually associated with traditional conceptions of women; when Marusya kept pulling on her long hair as punishment, the novella remarks: "Serafima had no choice but to cut it short… A boy cut was, for this city, a bit of a provocation."[39] Though the townspeople are conservative, Serafima still has little attachment to her physical appearance, which could be perceived as a rejection of religious conceptions.

Marusya's traditional nature is also shown in the importance she places on others' perceptions and opinions of Serafima's femininity. Marusya warns Serafima that walking with a married man to work damages her reputation: "'the neighbors have already been asking me questions. Both of you arrive at the factory together every morning: what others think there, and what conclusions are being drawn, that I can't even imagine."[40] Serafima's indifference to these social implications and their impact on her marriage prospects results in an explosive reaction from Marusya: "Why are you silent?! There's rotten, evil blood in your veins! …Oh, why didn't

[38] Ibid., 11.
[39] Ibid., 13.
[40] Kalinovskaya, *Picture*, 12.

I strangle you in your crib? It was already clear then what sort of fruit I bore!"[41] Serafima's female identity does not merely spark an argument between the two but also causes Marusya to wish for the complete destruction of their relationship. This exchange in particular also demonstrates how these identity conflicts brought additional violence and strife into the family unit, which had already been destabilized by the war. It complicates Marusya's ability to express concern for her daughter and in return, Serafima struggles to both give and receive love within her family unit.

Regardless of Serafima's personal development, her inability to fit religious ideals continues to haunt her through the end of the novel. Even after she moves to Moscow, the novella emphasizes that: "her brother would have an ace up his sleeve that would trump the success Serafima (still-single and childless) had achieved in the capital city—a son of his own."[42] Serafima's status as an unmarried non-mother was so crucial, as it defines her entire existence in religious conceptions, that it was necessary to interject it into the sentence with a parenthetical specifier. Marriage and children are so crucial in defining religious feminine identity that it supersedes all of her accomplishments, regardless of what they were; Serafima can in no way compensate for this loss and like Aunt Nadya, this failure is where her story ends.

The main issue with Marusya's understanding of femininity is its lack of any flexibility or fluidity, which is a defining feature of postwar identity for placeless war children. Though Serafima's outwardly presenting characteristics, such as her aspirations and academic interests, align with socialist ideology, her internal nature is much more nuanced. Instead of being defined by marriage or children, Serafima's personal definition of femininity hinges on her character,

[41] Ibid., 12.
[42] Ibid., 22.

specifically her capacity for sympathy, compassion, and love. During an argument with Marusya, Serafima claims her compassionate nature outright: "'In my opinion, love! The most interesting thing in life is—love!'"[43] This is met with Marusya's ridicule: "'What?!' Marusya was amazed. "There you have it!" Hanging her head, she sighed, and then started up again. 'If you would only hear yourself!'"[44] Since Marusya has already established that Serafima is not a woman by religious standards because of her socialist ambitions, she criticizes Serafima's naive insincerity. Serafima's love is also denied by her brother, Murzinka when he visits her in Moscow to claim a family heirloom. Serafima, "almost crying from pity and love for him," says to her brother: "'The memory of our childhood weighs heavily on me. Do you remember how we fought? … It seems to me that you were lonely as a boy. Right? This really gnaws at me!"[45] Even in the midst of an argument, Serafima is primarily concerned with the emotional pain she may have caused her younger brother, specifically feelings of abandonment. Concern for the emotional state of the family is feminine-coded as it is traditionally the role of the mother, yet Serafima's affections are consistently rejected.

Though her intelligence has been associated by others with the Soviet Student, Serafima uses literature as a way to express her feminine love which is suppressed by the tensions in her family unit. This is demonstrated when Serafima admits she "hadn't wept so much while reading since the first time she ever read a whole book on her own, Dmitry Grigorovich's sad story about a poor circus boy."[46] The Russian version of the novella identifies this story as "Гуттаперчевый мальчик" or *The Gutta-Percha Boy* written by Dmitry Grigorovich in 1883. The novel is a grim

[43] Kalinovskaya, *Picture*, 13.
[44] Ibid., 13.
[45] Ibid., 23.
[46] Kalinovskaya, *Picture*, 5.

tale in which an 8-year-old orphan boy is taken in by a traveling circus. The lead acrobat viciously beats this boy while training him for their act, which causes him to fall from the heights during a show.[47] He is brought to the hospital but eventually dies from his wounds. Serafima's ability to sympathize with this fictional character is maternal-coded as Serafima, a woman of childbearing age, cares so deeply for a young child specifically. This strong emotional connection should be associated with religious femininity since it is representative of Serafima's innate maternal nature. However, since Serafima chooses not to express this through traditional means, that is by birthing and raising her own child, this is not acknowledged by those around her as a presentation of Serafima's feminine identity.

Serafima is also able to demonstrate the duality of Soviet-coded characteristics through her emotional connections with anti-Soviet literature, specifically Iosif Brodksy's *Ballad of Small Tugboat* (1962). Brodsky's poem is implicitly mentioned when Serafima, walking alone along the shore, sees a small tugboat in the distance. Immediately, Serafima yearns to call after it: "'Poor thing!" She was moved by the human behavior of the sea vessel. 'Your poor tugboat soul! Of course, no large ship could ever exit the port without you, they are all just full of themselves! … You've been underestimated, barely loved at all! But you are the greatest—I can see that you are better than all of them, you are the strongest, the most handsome!'"[48] Her ability to feel such deep affection for the inanimate ship appears to be evidence enough of her loving character. However, in the context of Brodsky's poem, this nature would also carry anti-Soviet connotations that directly conflict with her Soviet Student categorization.

[47] Брифли, *Гуттаперчевый Мальчик*.
[48] Kalinovskaya, *Picture*, 10.

This episode is associated with Brodsky by Kalinovskaya's use of "буксир," a specific word for a tugboat that is used in the poem's title: "Баллада о маленьком **буксире**."[49] The poem is about a small tugboat that dreams of seeing the world beyond the port but is needed by other larger ships to navigate the shallow waters. He acknowledges that the only time he'll be able to leave is when he is to be "retired," that is when he dies. The reference to Brodsky himself would be meaningful to Kalinovskaya's audience in 1985 as Brodsky was a prominent and outspoken poet of the 1970s, arrested three times (for unrelated charges) as a result of his poetry's anti-Soviet content. His confrontations with Soviet authorities led Brodksy to leave the Soviet Union in 1972 and permanently relocated to the US in 1974.[50] His permanent exile from the USSR is particularly salient in the context of this line, the only words in capital letters, from *Ballad of a Small Tugboat*: "НО Я ДОЛЖЕН ОСТАТЬСЯ / ТАМ, ГДЕ НУЖЕН ДРУГИМ."[51] - "I MUST STAY / WHERE I AM NEEDED BY OTHERS." *Ballad of a Small Tugboat* can be read as a euphemism for the Soviet system's persecution of intellectuals, specifically writers and poets. Like the tugboat, Brodsky believes that it is his duty as a poet to remain in the Soviet Union despite the constant threat of incarceration or exile. It is his duty not out of loyalty to the Soviet state, but in the service of those that need him, that is the Russian public, which invokes Parthé and Wachtel's observation of the Soviet writer's moral responsibility.

In this context, Serafima's love is not for the inanimate object of the tugboat itself, but for the sentiments of Brodsky's poem which depicts the tragedies that befall Russian artists and criticizes the Soviet Union's system of oppression. For reading or even mentioning an officially

[49] Emphasis mine.
[50] Культура РФ*, ПЕРСОНА: Иосиф Бродский*.
[51] Brodsky, *Ballad.*

"disgraced" poet, a Soviet citizen could be charged with the crime of "anti-Soviet agitation."[52] Regardless, Serafima claims her love for this tugboat (and Brodsky's poem) loudly and publicly. By empathizing with "counterrevolutionary" literature, Serafima contradicts Marusya's association of her intellect with socialist ideology; she is a Soviet Student, but she does not align with official Soviet thought. Though she is consistently misidentified by her own mother as a socialist non-woman, Serafima maintains her femininity for herself by persistently expressing love.

Also crucial to note is that in all three examples, her younger brother, Grigorovich's Guttapercha Boy, and Brodsky's tugboat (grammatically masculine), Serafima's affections have been directed towards a male subject. In the framework of a gender binary, this then firmly establishes Serafima as the feminine counterpart of these male figures. However, per Marusya's religious conceptions, feminine love is restricted to being romantic, between a husband and wife, or maternal, between a mother and her child. Serafima's love is for her brother, a fictional character, and a literary symbol is therefore invalid.

Through Serafima, Kalinvoskaya explores the damage inflicted on young women by the rigid definitions of femininity by both socialism and religion through their relationships with love. Serafima herself does not identify with either ideal but is made to align with these categorizations by others, specifically her mother. Because of this, she is unable to fully express her affection and love without fear of suppression or retaliation and is forcibly suspended between the two warring ideologies as a non-woman.

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[52] For weaponization of "anti-Soviet agitation," see: Davies, Sarah. *"The Crime of 'Anti-Soviet Agitation' in the Soviet Union in the 1930's."* Cahiers Du Monde Russe 39, no. 1/2 (1998): 149–67. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20171078.

Age: Neither Child nor Adult

In *Redemption*, Gorenstein's depiction of Sashenka's complicated relationship with her young age, specifically her inability to stably identify as either a child or an adult, emphasizes the placelessness of war children as well as the infusion of violence into their selfhood. When discussing senses of age in the postwar period, it is also important to note that in many ways the postwar child's experience reflected the pre-war children's conceptualizations of childhood. Laurie Bernstein's review of Julie DeGraffenried's *Sacrificing Childhood: Children and the Soviet State in the Great Patriotic War* makes an invaluable point: "the contention that WWII served as a significant breach in children's lives does not take into account how the Five Year Plans, collectivization, and the purges had already subjected them to devastating loss and trauma." Bernstein also posits that "'childhood' was a recent social construct, particularly among the peasant population of the Soviet Union… the absence of middle-class childhoods, as well as labor and sacrifice, was not unfamiliar for the vast majority of them."[53] This demonstrates how traumatic childhoods like Sashenka's were not solely a result of the war or limited to the postwar period, but were also caused by the violent implementation of the Soviet system. The war's trauma did however further worsen this disconnect through the infusion of violence and death into these foundational facets of personhood.

Immediately, the use of the name Sashenka, a diminutive form of Sasha, would mark her as a child to the Russian-speaking audience. In Russian, the diminutive can be used to show either affection or belittlement and is used amongst close friends, romantic partners, and family members. It is notably most often used by mothers towards their children; the only other diminutive the novel consistently uses for a character aside from Sashenka is her daughter

[53] Bernstein, *Review: Sacrificing Childhood*.

Oksana, referred to as Oksanka. Through the end of the novel, she never ceases to be Sashenka or "little Sasha" to the audience, which constantly reminds the audience of her young age despite her efforts to enter adulthood.

The novel begins with Sashenka's attempt to establish herself as the head of the household, traditionally the father's role, demonstrating the destabilization of age identities in the family unit. She co-opts her father's honorable legacy as an airforce pilot and uses this as a means of control over her mother and their tenants. She feels she is entitled to make decisions about the household, weaponizing her father's memory in the process: "'My father died for the motherland,' she shouted at her mother in a high voice, as if she were at a Komsomol meeting, 'and you're hiding a German toady here.'"[54] The occupation of this older male role is difficult for Sashenka as she is aware of how unintimidating she is physically and mentally as a teenage girl. She remedies this by self-suppressing her natural emotions: "Clenching her teeth in angry irritation again, because she realized that if she once smiled and stopped being angry and suffering, she would forfeit her power in the home."[55] However, occupying the father's role conflicts with her sense of young femininity and by extension creates a tense relationship with her sexual maturation and desires.

She frames her sexual exploration, a natural part of the teenage developmental processes, as a violent experience and comes to associate fear and pain with exhilaration and pleasure. She admits that: "sometimes, waking up in the night, she clenched her teeth and wanted someone big with a vague, indefinite face to take her body in his coarse hands and knead it and tear it to pieces. Just recently Sashenka had started thinking about the 'young hawk' Markeev."[56] Markeev

[54] Gorenstein, *Redemption,* 5.
[55] Ibid., 7.
[56] Gorenstein, *Redemption,* 5.

is a local young man to whom Sashenka is attracted, yet she can only understand and contextualize her desire through her bodily violation and destruction. This excerpt in particular also demonstrates the intrusion of war violence into the most personal and intimate facets of the self: Sashenka's ability to feel and process affection.

An important aspect of Sashenka's identity is not just her own experiences of age, but also how she is perceived and categorized by those around her, specifically by adults. She is implied by others to be neither a child nor innocent via her constant comparisons to August's younger sister, who was murdered along with his family by their Assyrian neighbor. When reporting the murder of August's family to the police, a witness states: "You mustn't offend a little child, it's an innocent soul… you'll suffer eternal penance in hell for the child… I told him: do Leopold Lvovich, if you've got the urge, do the wife and the daughter in, but don't touch the little child."[57] His sister was fifteen years old when she was murdered, yet this witness already identifies her as being inextricably linked to her father and old enough to deserve punishment for *his* sins. This is representative of the undefined role of young adults in the postwar period; like August's sister, Sashenka, sixteen years old, is a separate "other" who is not afforded the grace of a child or the respect of an adult.

Despite her violent nature, Sashenka was, according to socialist propaganda, the model Soviet youth of the prewar period. From an outside perspective, it appears that Sasheka informed on her mother for crimes against the state because she was "conditioned by the Soviet ideology to inform on one's own parents for the sake of the greater good."[58] Even her mother had praised her for her upstanding socialist morals: "'it's such a shame your father can't see what a grown-up

[57] Ibid., 48.
[58] Draitser, *Redemption: Introduction*, XIX.

Komsomol[59] girl you are now…'"[60] This specific betrayal of the parent by the child invokes the Soviet myth of Pavel Morozov, a young boy who informed on his father for impeding collectivization efforts. For this, he was then murdered by "kulaks," the richer peasant class who opposed the Soviet system and was heralded as a martyr for the socialist cause.[61] However, despite this, the family persisted in the socialist period as "the most fundamental of all social and economic units, the family provides a network for pooling resources, a model of social interaction, and a touchstone of identity."[62] The Pavel myth aimed to sever familial ties and encourage loyalty to the state rather than to one's parents, which erases a child's sense of age as defined by their place in the family unit. However, Gorenstein questions the valor of these actions by emphasizing that, when betraying her mother, Sashenka "does this not out of loyalty to the system and its proclaimed ideals, but because of her own teenaged misery. She does it to spite her widowed mother."[63]

Also important to note is that in this initial section, when Sashenka is most closely associated with this Soviet ideal, she is narcissistic and violent, often enjoying inflicting pain on those around her: "She wanted to hurt her mother even more badly; Sashenka was even seized by a kind of wild, bleak joy when she saw how afraid her mother was."[64] Early in the novel, these characteristics are not yet implied to be *caused* by her Soviet nature. It is still possible that this is just the result of Sashenka's personality or trauma. Regardless, this initial association draws a connection between socialist ideals and innately immoral and cruel behavior. It is not until after

[59] Komsomol - Abbreviation of "All-Union Leninist Young Communist League," Communist organization for adolescents and young adults ages 14-28
[60] Gorenstein, *Redemption,* 8.
[61] For the mythmaking of Pavel Morozov, see: Kelly, Catriona. "*Comrade Pavlik: the Rise and Fall of a Soviet Boy Hero.*" London: Granta, 2005.
[62] Peri, *War Within*, 90.
[63] Draitser, *Redemption: Introduction,* XIX.
[64] Gorenstein, *Redemption*, 29.

the betrayal of her mother that Sashenka's Soviet-coded characteristics come to be associated with sin and the biblical character of Judas.

After Sashenka informs on her mother, Gorenstein immediately places her actions in the context of Judas and Christ, coding the type of betrayal that is encouraged by the Soviet state as a biblical evil. With her mother gone, Sashenka realizes that: "without anyone else's attention and concern, this misery was insipid and tedious, and it brought no sweetness, for one of the attributes of childhood is the ability to **torment**[65] someone and ravage their feelings."[66] Here, the use of мучить (to torment, torture) has religious connotations since it shares the root "мук" with мученик, meaning a martyr who accepts torture or death specifically for the profession of their faith in Christ and Christianity. Their martyrdom is then rewarded with sainthood.[67] Sashenka considers childhood to be the opportunity to torture another, specifically her mother, in the way that Christ was tortured. This then codes her conflict with childhood as having religious parallels as well as being defined by inflicting pain.

Additionally, in Russian, the novel's title *Redemption*, "искупление," is specifically used in religious texts and can also be translated as atonement or repentance, which further supports the novel's religious connotations.[68] In this context, Sashenka's betrayal of her mother is not simply an act of teenage rebellion, but a biblical sin for which she will have to repent. This reading of Judas, widely considered a sinister character as Christ's betrayer, could be considered anti-religious (and thus pro-Soviet) since it is against his biblical characterization. However, even placing Sashenka in this Judas-Christ binary in itself is subversive since religion (allegedly)

[65] Emphasis mine.
[66] Gorenstein, *Redemption*, 104.
[67] Православная Энциклопедия, *Мученики*.
[68] Православная Энциклопедия, *Искупление*.

had no place in the Soviet Union. Any association of a model Soviet youth with Christ's betrayer would imply that the Soviet system is morally flawed and would deeply resonate with audiences who were even remotely familiar with religious texts.

Sashenka's contentious role in the ending of her childhood is especially interesting in the context of the genuine experiences of war children. During World War II, a Soviet child's perceived end of their childhood, a pivotal event in identity establishment, was a harrowing experience, most often characterized by suffering, specifically the loss of one's parents. In Svetlana Alexeivich's *Last Witnesses: An Oral History of the Children of World War II*, After he lost his mother, Volodia Korshuk, then seven years old, was told by his father: "'You're already an adult, you're a man.'"[69] Varia Kharevsky, four years old during the war, simply states: "I'm a man without a childhood. Instead of a childhood, I have the war."[70] This forced maturation was deeply traumatic and continued to have lifelong psychological consequences for many; Zina Kosiak states: "The war ended… I waited a day, for two days. No one came to get me… [Mama and papa] had perished somewhere under the bombs… I'm already fifty-one years old. I have children of my own. But I still want my mama."[71] Another respondent, Tamara Parkhimovich, admits: "I'm afraid of happiness. It always seems that it's just about to end… That childhood fear."[72] Gorenstein himself lost both of his parents due to state and war violence and was an orphan from the age of nine.

Sashenka, however, continued to see herself as a child even after the war; it is not until she has her mother arrested that she recognizes a shift in her age identification. The novel

[69] Alexeivich, *Last Witnesses,* 118.
[70] Ibid., 33
[71] Ibid., 17.
[72] Ibid., 57

observes: “Sashenka’s childhood had come to an end a few minutes ago. It had ended at the moment when Sashenka realized there was nobody left to take any notice of her misery… no one pitied Sashenka and no one loved her.”[73] Unlike other war children, she willingly brings on the end of her childhood, though she continues to frame herself as the victim. This is demonstrated by the impersonal reflexive constructions used in Russian (“кончилось Сашенькино детство”), which removes Sashenka’s agency in this action; she did not end her childhood but instead, it ended on its own. Through Sashenka’s actions, Gorenstein notes how the Soviet system allows for and encourages this “ideal” behavior that disrespects those whose childhoods ended so traumatically.

These passive impersonal structures are also prevalent in Sashenka’s comparison to Judas: “The desire to be loved is inherent in everyone, but there are strong, high-strung, sensitive natures, in whom the longing for someone else’s love is so great that they lose the ability to love anyone themselves, and in order to constantly feel the strength of the other person’s love for them, they make that loving person suffer… One vivid example of such a character is Judas.”[74] This excerpt acknowledges a person’s agency in losing their ability to love (они теряют способность любить) and in making their beloved suffer (причиняют любящему страдание) but emphasizes that it is caused by these natures which simply exist (есть). Though these people appear to “choose” to act like this, it is in fact their natures that force them to be this way. This then suggests that though Sashenka chose to inform on her mother, she was actually made to behave like this by unnamed external forces. Considering her constant praise for her strong socialist character, the external agent could be the Soviet system that forcibly molded her, a

[73] Gorenstein, *Redemption*, 104.
[74] Ibid., 107.

vulnerable child in wartime, in its image. Thus, Sashenka's young age and her childhood are inexplicably defined by her innate inability to love anyone else.

The comparison continues: "The reason [Judas] hanged himself was not at all that he repented. Judas did not feel sorry for Christ… Christ's love for Judas was so strong that Judas could not have had a grain of love left for Christ."[75] This excerpt again uses impersonal constructions, with Judas rarely featured as the acting agent of the sentence. Like Sashenka, Judas' inability to love was out of his control and as a result, he should not have to repent his sin of betraying Christ. Similarly, Sashenka does not appear to regret informing on her mother since it is encouraged in Soviet ideology, and for the whole of the novel, she never once apologizes for this betrayal. This vindication absolves Sashenka of any fault, stating "children cannot love their mother, and the feeling that they experience is a different feeling altogether."[76] Sashenka's sin and her establishment as her mother's Judas mark the end of Sashenka's childhood but do not imply an entrance into adulthood, branding her as a definitive "other."

Motherhood: from Judas to Christ

These struggles with both gender and age identities are integral parts of Sashenka's tumultuous religious-coded relationship with the concept of motherhood as well as with her own mother. Sashenka's journey to becoming a mother symbolizes the struggles to overcome the trauma of the war and state violence to achieve holy absolution in the atheist Soviet Union.

Gorenstein's focus on motherhood is essential considering the centrality of the mother in traditional Russian values and culture before the rise of socialism in 1917. Maternal love has

[75] Gorenstein, *Redemption*, 107.
[76] Ibid., 107.

long been a defining feature of childhood in Russian culture. In his discussion of the childhood model in literature, historian Andrew Wachtel notes the presence of "the myth of the perfect mother."[77] He observes that in Russian literature, which would then become cultural practice, it was asserted that "childhood was often happy precisely because of the love and affection that the child received from his mother… mothers are seen as a fount of goodness, influencing the child's moral development."[78] In one example, Wachtel even considers a supposed autobiography to be a "work of hagiography."[79] A mother, "chosen by the Lord to work a miracle," uses a blessed pearl to cure her ill daughter. During a cholera epidemic, an actual icon is made from the pearl and all the local children are cured through its grace.[80] Thus, in Russian culture, the role of the mother is religiously coded.

For this same reason, the Russian word *sirota* (orphan) is also only used to refer to motherless children, the noun itself also being grammatically feminine. In the postwar period, this could be due to the high frequency of fatherless children due to war casualties; one Soviet authority reported that during WWII, from September to November 1943, 13,100 children were placed into foster homes. By 1946, there were 393,000 children in orphanages and 32,960 children in special institutions for mental and physical issues.[81] However, it also further corroborates the belief in a child's innate necessity for a mother in Russian culture. This establishes the mother as not only an indispensable part of her family, but also loving, devoted, and saint-like. Considering the strong influence of Russian Orthodoxy in Russian culture, it should be noted that this characterization of women is quite similar to the biblical descriptions of

[77] Wachtel, *Childhood*, 96.
[78] Wachtel, *Childhood*, 97.
[79] Ibid., 98.
[80] Ibid., 98.
[81] Stolee, *Homeless Children*, 78.

the Virgin Mary. Her main characteristics, if not her only ones, are her identity as a mother and her love for Christ. In this context, it is necessary to read Sashenka's interactions with motherhood as having religious connotations as well as connections to pre-revolutionary Russian culture. Both of these implications would be considered anti-Soviet as it undermines socialist reimaginings of religion and the family.

In Gorenstein's Judas-Christ binary, it is crucial to emphasize that the mother is not merely a saint, but the embodiment of Christ himself; only the mother is capable of Christ's "all-consuming unearthly love."[82] However, because mothers are Christ, a Judas-esque betrayal of them by their children is inevitable: "This always happens when someone loves extravagantly, as Christ loved everyone… such also is maternal love, the closest in nature to Christ's love."[83] Even after the mother is betrayed, she continues to love her child unconditionally as would Christ with Judas. Upon returning from the labor camp, Sashenka's mother forgives her for her sins, despite Sashenka's lack of repentance, and even faults herself for Sashenka's behavior: "Her mother actually hugged her, gave her a kiss and suddenly said: 'Forgive me, Sashenka, forgive me, my daughter, that things are so cheerless for you in this world…'"[84] Gorenstein posits that "such love does not demand reciprocity; it is blind and devoid of the torments and doubts often present in sexual love… the selflessness of maternal love makes it akin to Christ's love."[85]

After the end of her childhood, it is established that Sashenka, now identified as Judas, is incapable of loving and can only process another's love through torture and pain. The difficulty of this binary is that Sashenka is only able to be either Judas or Christ; there is no possibility of a

[82] Gorenstein, *Redemption*, 107.
[83] Ibid., 107.
[84] Ibid., 190.
[85] Draitser, *Redemption: Introduction,* XXIII.

gradient between the two. This is reminiscent of Serafima's struggle between religious and socialist ideals, unable to be a combination of both. It is not until Sashenka becomes a mother herself that the novel implies she may be redeemed for the sin she committed. Soon after her mother is arrested, Sashenka falls in love with August, a Jewish Red Army lieutenant. The two have a child soon after Sashenka's mother returns from the labor camp. When singing to her newborn daughter, Sashenka describes her love for her child as "a gratifying, sweet yearning that was reminiscent in some ways of her old yearning as a girl, only this yearning was calm and gentle, without any audacity, hate, or rebellion."[86] Her salvation is defined by her capability to love another, her daughter, as her mother had loved her and as Christ had loved Judas. She develops from the ideal socialist youth into a culmination of all things anti-Soviet; her sense of self is now highly-gendered as a mother, an identity unavailable to men, and due to the Judas-Christ framework in which she was placed, her fulfillment of this role is innately tied to biblical redemption. Through this, Gorenstein believes, she is forgiven for all her sins.

However, even mothers, the embodiment of Christ, are still subjected to the ever-present threat of state violence, one of the few survivors of wartime devastation. In the last chapter of the novel, one of Sashenka's acquaintances, a disgraced professor recently released from prison, informs her that he has one of August's notebooks. He brings her into his home, away from prying eyes, and worriedly asks her if she knows anything about them. The professor's wife then assures Sashenka: "'all [August's] comments, his notes, his papers, I'll destroy them… He's mistaken, but he's not an enemy of the people… He's muddleheaded…'"[87] This excerpt must be understood in the context of the Stalinist Purges of the 1930s, one of the victims being

[86] Gorenstein, *Redemption*, 179.
[87] Ibid., 188.

Gorenstein's own father.[88] During this period, Stalin cleansed the Party, the army, and general society of "internal enemies": "1.7 million people were arrested in the USSR and 1.5 million of them convicted, including 740,000 who were sentenced to death."[89] The lingering memory of the Purges "created a 'system of terror' in which fear held the population in check and ensured its loyalty."[90] In this context, this scene at the professor's house would immediately be recognizable to a Soviet audience as the implication that August has been arrested, if not already killed, by the secret police.

In her panic and fear for her husband's life, Sashenka experiences a slight return to her Judas-like behavior. She cries: "'All of you are enemies of the people… You said anti-Soviet things here… You think I'm a little fool and don't understand… My father died for the motherland…"[91] Her use of "my father died for the motherland" is a verbatim quote from her first rant against her mother at the very beginning of the novel. This complication of Sashenka's redemption by state violence is framed as a violation of the holy, of the Christ-like mother; though she is redeemed, Sashenka is not protected from the abuses of the Soviet system. World War II has formally ended in 1945, but the persistence of Stalin's mass arrests and executions prolong Sashenka's terror.

Gorenstein's veneration of motherhood is crucial in the context of both his personal identity as well as the inclusive nature of motherhood itself. Gorenstein lost his father to state violence at age three and grew up without a masculine influence or male role model. Gorenstein

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[88] For Stalinist Purges, see: Getty, J. Arch (John Arch), and Oleg V. Naumov. "*The Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932-1939."* New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1999., Thurston, Robert W. "*Fear and Belief in the USSR's 'Great Terror': Response to Arrest, 1935-1939.*" *Slavic Review* 45, no. 2 (1986): 213–34. https://doi.org/10.2307/2499175.

[89] Khlevniuk, *Archives of the Terror*.

[90] Thurston, *Fear and Belief,* 214.

[91] Gorenstein, *Redemption*, 187.

was then raised by his mother until she dies during evacuation when he was nine years old. This then associates the devastating damage of the war specifically with the loss of his mother, the sole remnant of his family unit. Gorenstein, as a man, is unable to become a mother and thus, this all-redemptive absolution given to Sashenka is unavailable to him. This could be an implicit critique of the differing roles of men and women in the perpetuation of the Soviet system's abuse, with only women being worthy of redemption.

However, more importantly, this could instead be a testament to the profound humanity of maternal love that Gorenstein experienced, having been raised by his widowed mother. Motherhood is available to all women regardless of their political or religious identities. Though it is crucial to both socialist and religious ideologies, the concept of motherhood does not and cannot solely belong to either; it is a natural constant. It is precisely because of motherhood's ability to transcend any current or future social categorizations that it is so powerful: "Gorenstein considers maternal love the only hope for the salvation of humanity and its redemption from wickedness and cruelty toward its brethren."[92] In the context of this belief, Sashenka's redemption is not merely defiance against the cruelty of the Soviet system in particular, but against any and all earthly evils. Through this, Gorenstein posits that despite the sins committed in the Soviet system or at any other place at any other time, mankind may still be redeemed so long as mothers persist.

Conclusion

Though Gorenstein and Kalinovskaya have many quintessential warchild experiences such as state violence, war trauma, and personal loss, this reading of their novels is not at all

[92] Draitser, *Redemption: Introduction*, XXII.

meant to fully encompass the complicated experience of a young adult person in the postwar period. The analysis of these novels is instead intended to broaden the understanding of dissension in the postwar period, but also the Soviet state's own role in worsening and perpetuating war trauma. The purposeful focus on identity was to emphasize the personal and deeply intimate effects of these broader political and social currents and their consequences for the war generation. It establishes young adult women and their intersectional identities as being the chief victims of this social fracturing, caught between the religious traditions of Rus' and the socialist reimaginings of the USSR.

Gorenstein and Kalinovskaya's centering of religiously-coded young women in itself is a form of dissension as it challenges Soviet atheism, genderlessness, and conceptualizations of the family, a feat that can only be achieved in the fictional removed space of the novel. The main impact of the war and state violence is on these characters' ability to process love, namely from their mothers, as well as express love, towards their mothers and as mothers themselves. Through this, Gorenstein and Kalinvoskaya question the value of either socialist or religious categorizations of identity as both are too rigid and exclusionary to accommodate the fluidity and fragility of the self, caused by decades of terror in the Soviet Union.

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