

EmaLeigh O'Neal

Summer 2015

I spent the summer of 2015 assisting Dr. Elizabeth Skomp with her research at Sewanee: The University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee, where she is the head of the Russian Department as well as an Associate Dean at Sewanee. This research covers the Russian Orthodox Church, the changes in popularity it experienced during and after the Soviet era, and the reasons behind those changes. The research has been particularly from a feminist, or rather feminine, perspective with a focus on the dissident Tat'iana Goricheva and the "Mariia" group. During this research assistantship, my personal responsibilities have included background reading on Soviet state and civilian responses to the Russian Orthodox Church and its followers and creating an annotated bibliography of both primary and secondary sources regarding the waxing and waning of Russian Orthodoxy's popularity and Tat'iana Goricheva's views on the matter. The majority of my time has been spent reading online and hardcopy sources in English translations as well as the Russian originals, including Tat'iana Goricheva's collaborative *Mariia* journals, and determining whether they contain information useful to my and Dr. Skomp's research. Most of the sources I have read have been found online using the databases available on the Sewanee library's website while the printed sources have been from the Sewanee library as well as from Dr. Skomp's personal collection of works. My final research responsibilities are to transfer the annotated bibliography into what Dr. Skomp and I refer to as a webliography and to write a final report using information from all the sources gathered that will be approximately 10-pages-long. I plan to present this report at Scholarship Sewanee or the Southern Conference

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of Slavic Studies, perhaps both if possible, and I have been pondering incorporating my findings into my final Russian comprehensive exam at the end of the coming school year.

This research assistantship has provided me with opportunities to improve not only my Russian comprehension abilities but also my analytical research skills, which are predictably very useful in many aspects of both career and everyday life. My time management skills have improved drastically during my summer research. Allocating my time properly has proven to be the most difficult challenge for me throughout my time at Sewanee, and this problem has been exacerbated during what is normally called summer “break.” I have finally been able to find the drive to push myself and complete my assignments at a decent pace rather than all at the last minute, however. My favorite aspect of my research assistantship has been the actual translation of texts from Russian to English. I have found it fun to piece together sources that I may not completely understand using my current and limited knowledge of the Russian language along with the online translator, ABBYY Lingvo, which I highly recommend for any translation necessities! It is very rewarding to accurately piece together the meaning of an essay or article that to me was previously more or less unknown and being able to understand the author’s message in the end.

Helping Dr. Skomp with her research has been an invaluable experience that I believe has gotten me a few steps closer to my ultimate career goals. Ultimately, I would like to have a career in the copy editing and translation fields, preferably having my work combine the two. It

goes without saying that translating sources for the annotated bibliography I have prepared and my general reading about Russian Orthodoxy and the culture surrounding it has honed my Russian comprehension skills, and I have found it to be a much more fun process than I previously thought, though it can be extremely time consuming. Reading analytically through a myriad of sources has improved my research abilities in the sense that I can now make connections that are at first glance unnoticeable between the research topic itself and the information within the sources. This has allowed me to see that thinking outside the box and finding less obvious ways the sources and topics relate to each other can provide more rewarding results than just sticking with the obvious relations. I believe the most important way this research assistantship opportunity has affected my career goals is its solidification of the fact that I want to indeed work in translation. Not only is translation a useful and necessary career, but now I understand how enjoyable and rewarding it can be, which is what I believe are the most valuable factors when choosing one's career path.