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Following a semester studying abroad in Saint Petersburg, Russia, I spent my summer with Professor Elizabeth Skomp of Sewanee's Russian Department, analyzing works by contemporary Russian author Iuliia Voznesenskaia in the context of exploring Russian Orthodoxy's purpose and presence in the literature, art, and politics of recent Russian culture. Professor Skomp, having recently completed a book following years of study on contemporary Russian author Ludmila Utlitskaya, has vast expertise in the area of Russian studies, and Voznesenskaia's works are notable for their treatment of Orthodox themes in a contemporary context and their appeal to readers of all ages. My summer research entailed first building a foundation of knowledge regarding Russian Orthodoxy and its role in current and past Russian society in order to have a basis for analysis of Voznesenskaia's works. To accomplish this I began by independently researching Russian Orthodoxy and meeting several times each week with Professor Skomp to discuss my findings and understanding of Orthodoxy and its relevance. Professor Skomp would guide me with suggested reading and help pose questions for me to explore which would later be pertinent as I began studying Voznesenskaia specifically. I was expected to provide summaries of each work I read along with applicable questions and analyses. Once Professor Skomp and I felt that I had a strong understanding of Russian Orthodoxy, I moved on to analyzing Voznesenskaia's books. This phase of my internship required applying not just my research skills but my Russian language skills, as the books I focused on exist only in Russian. I read Voznesenskaia's "Iulianna" series of three books, which is geared toward young adults and was an appropriate challenge for my language level. As I read

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the novels Professor Skomp and I continued meeting regularly. At these times we would not only discuss the works in the context of our broader research but Professor Skomp would also assist me with any problems I encountered in reading Russian books on my own for the first time. I was expected to compile lists of relevant Russian vocabulary and analyze the purpose of Orthodox themes I encountered. As I tackled these books, Professor Skomp researched more advanced works by Vosnesenskaia, and we were able to speak comparatively about our findings.

Fortunately, because my summer internship was at Sewanee, my research with Professor Skomp is ongoing. We will continue to analyze and discuss Vosnesenskaia's works and their relevance. The ultimate result of this project will be for me to co-author a paper with Professor Skomp tentatively titled "Faith, Fantasy, and the Feminine: Iuliia Voznesenskaia's Orthodox Turn." This paper will explore Iuliia Voznesenskaia's work as a diagnosis of the role of Orthodoxy in contemporary Russian society. In addition, I will be able to prepare a presentation on my research for Scholarship Sewanee, and I intend to present a panel at a Slavic Studies conference in the spring. All of this is relevant not only because I intend to apply my understanding of past and contemporary Russian culture to a future career but also because of the major role that Russia is playing in today's world. Developments such as the Pussy Riot events, the Sochi Olympics, and Russia's movement into Crimea and further involvement with Ukraine have kept Russia in the news. To interpret the political and cultural significance of Russia today, understanding the country's dynamics is more important than ever. This understanding cannot be reached without considering the significant role that Russian Orthodoxy

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and its traditions play in Russian society. Using contemporary literature as a window to understanding one aspect of such a large and complex culture is important because of its implications for fostering greater accessibility between Russia and the Western world.

My summer research with Professor Skomp not only refined my Russian language skills and understanding of Russian culture but also provided me with insight into conducting academic research under an advisor. I was able to develop a foundation for which I will soon build skills in preparing conference papers and co-authoring an academic article for publication. Perhaps most importantly, my internship provided me with the analytical skills vital for the development of any post-undergraduate career.