
NEWS OF THE PROFESSION

BORIS ANATOL'EVICH NARTSISSOV, 1906–1982

The Russian poet Boris Anatol'evich Nartsissov was born in 1906 in the Mordvinian village of Noskaftym in Saratov province and died after a long illness on November 27, 1982, in Washington, D.C.

Boris Nartsissov, the son of a physician, attended the Commercial School in Iamburg, Petersburg province. In 1919, after the retreat of General Iudenich's army, the Nartsissov family emigrated to Estonia. Boris graduated from the Russian High School in Tartu in 1924 and completed his master's degree in chemistry at the University of Tartu in 1936. In 1937, he became a lieutenant in the Estonian army and was in charge of a chemical warfare defense laboratory. After the war, he worked as a chemist in American military laboratories near Munich until 1949 when he emigrated to Australia. Boris Nartsissov came to the United States in 1953 and was appointed to a scientific research post in Columbus, Ohio. Later he worked in the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. until his retirement in 1971.

Six volumes of Nartsissov's poetry have been published: *Stikhi* ("Poems," New York: Litfund, 1958), *Golosa* ("Voices," Frankfurt/Main: Possev, 1961), *Pamiat'* ("Memory," Washington, D.C.: Ruskaya kniga, 1965), *Pod'em* ("Ascent," Leuven, Belgium: A. Rosseels, 1969), *Shakhmaty* ("Chess," Washington, D.C.: Nartsissov, 1974), and *Zvezdnaia ptitsa* ("A Star Bird," Annandale, VA: Charles Buptie Studios, 1978). His poetry is represented in several Russian journals and anthologies, for instance *Nov'* (Tallin), *Sovremennye zapiski* (Paris), *Muza Diaspory* (Frankfurt/Main), *Sodruzhestvo* (Washington, D.C.), *Perekrestok* (Paris), *Novyi zhurnal* (New York), and others. Nartsissov is the author of several surrealist short stories and novellas, among them "Pis'mo samomu sebe" ("A Letter to Myself," *Vozrozhdenie*, Paris, 1967). He translated into Russian the Estonian works of Aleksis Rannit and A. H. Tammsaare. Some of these excellent translations were published in the Soviet Union. English translations of several of Nartsissov's poems are available in *Australia's Russian Poets* (1975), translated by Robert M. Morrison, and in *Russian Poetry: The Modern Period* (1978), translated by John Glad. The Canadian poet Meery Devergnas translated several of Nartsissov's works into French.

With his own profile and his own technique, Nartsissov had a very personal concept of the world, which consisted of two entities. One was the world as we know it; the other was the world of miracles, populated by wood goblins, house spirits, and moon sprites. Several of his most fascinating and original poems are poetic fragments written from a modern scientific point of view. One cycle of poems focuses on the human brain, illuminating it from various perspectives, including the physiological. The poems are a splendid demonstration that every aspect of modern life can be treated poetically. Nartsissov is equally gifted at fusing the biblical apocalypse with its modern representation. A personal poetic note is always present through the poet's vision of the last judgment. Surrealist *Angsträume*, sometimes simple and transparent, sometimes eerily imaginative, are always psychologically convincing. Although the bulk of Nartsissov's work is very contemporary, even "Kafkaesque," his verse displays a strong affinity with Romanticism in its preoccupation with the mirror theme, fascination with the moon, and concern with the supernatural, metaphysics, and *Naturphilosophie*. Nartsissov's diverse interests — chemical terminology and linguistics, gardening and mysticism, anthropology and philosophy, the theme of the double, legends — find expression in his poetry. Quite frequent also are apocalyptic visions, explosions, the collapse of the earth,

and the imminence of doomsday. Nartsissov's poetry, radiating an enlightened, spiritual attitude toward the world, is original and innovative.

Boris Nartsissov will be warmly remembered by his friends and the admirers of his poems.

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MICHAEL GINSBURG, 1902–1982

Michael Ginsburg, professor emeritus of Slavic languages and literatures and the first chairman of the Indiana University Slavic department, died on October 18, 1982 in New York City, where he and Mrs. Ginsburg, the former Edith Davis, had resided since his retirement in 1966.

Ginsburg was born on September 1, 1902 in Moscow, the son of the distinguished Jewish scholar and cultural leader Saul Ginsburg. He received his early education in St. Petersburg at the St. Catherine School and the Classical High School and earned degrees in jurisprudence from Demidov Law College in Iaroslavl' in 1920 and from Petrograd University in 1925. Emigrating to France shortly thereafter, he earned the *doctorat ès lettres* in 1931 at the University of Paris. Later that year he came to the United States and joined the faculty of the University of Nebraska as assistant professor of East European history and classical philology and archaeology. He was promoted to associate professor in 1938 and to professor in 1940. During World War II, while on leave from his university post, he served as an intelligence officer in the United States Air Force, and from 1945 to 1947 he was chief of the Internal Political Section in the USSR Division of the Office of Research and Intelligence at the Department of State.

Russian had been taught at Indiana University on a special basis during World War II, but it was only with Ginsburg's appointment to the Indiana University faculty in 1947 that Russian became a part of the university's regular program of study. Thanks to his vigorous pioneering work, within two years after his appointment the university established a Department of Slavic Studies and named Ginsburg as its first chairman, and in 1950 the Graduate School approved a program leading to an M.A. in Slavic Studies. In the summer of 1951 Ginsburg organized the first annual summer Russian Workshop, and in 1956 he took the first steps that were to lead at the end of 1958 to the establishment of a Ph.D. program in Slavic languages and literatures.

Throughout his teaching career at Indiana, Ginsburg's scholarly interest was focused on the whole of Russian culture. He was naturally interested in Russian literature, but he saw literature as only one branch of a living organism that includes the theater, architecture, painting, sculpture, and music as well. He constantly emphasized that none of these fruits of Russian culture could be properly understood apart from the political, economic, religious, and social conditions in which they had developed. Three intertwined themes are notable in his scholarly writing: jurisprudence, classical philology, and Jewish culture, particularly in its relation to Russian culture. He was awarded two Guggenheim Fellowships, one in 1939 and the other in 1942.

Michael Ginsburg was one of Indiana University's last living links with the rich Russian culture of the period immediately preceding the Revolution of 1917. He belonged to the generation of Russian émigré scholars and intellectuals who played a pioneering role in establishing Russian studies in the United States. Indiana University's Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures and its interdepartmental Russian and