

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

**Nina Perlina
(1939–2019)**

Nina Perlina (née *Нина Моисеевна Перлина*, though she did not habitually use the traditional Russian patronymic professionally as her middle name in the U.S.) was born May 16, 1939 in Leningrad. She lived through the German siege of Leningrad during World War II as a small child, an early formative experience which eventually resurfaced in her professional life as the 2005 volume of oral history *Writing the Siege of Leningrad: Women's Diaries, Memoirs, and Documentary Prose* (with Cynthia Simmons). She graduated in 1961 with a degree in philology from the Herzen Pedagogical Institute in Leningrad. She spent the first part of her career working at the Dostoevsky Literary Memorial Museum in Leningrad, where *inter alia* she worked on preparation of the definitive 1972-1990 *Complete Works* edition of Dostoevsky, and emigrated to the U.S. in 1974. Nina obtained her bureaucratically unavoidable but by then intellectually more or less redundant Ph.D. degree from Brown University in 1977 (it is hard to imagine another humanities scholar who could have earned an Ivy League Ph.D. in only three years as recently as she did). She taught at Macalester College and Rutgers University before settling in her ideal position in 1988 as a literary scholar in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures at Indiana University, where she mentored numerous graduate students and enjoyed a highly productive research career well past her retirement in 2008. As a symptom of her remarkable scholarly intensity, when Nina passed away on May 23, 2019 she had over 2,000 IU library books in her Bloomington home.

A world-class specialist in Dostoevsky and the literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin, she produced several noteworthy books in addition to a mountain of scholarly articles in both English and Russian: *Varieties of Poetic Utterance: Quotation in "The Brothers Karamazov"* (1985); *Olga Freidenberg's Works and Days* (2002), the aforementioned *Writing the Siege of Leningrad: Women's Diaries, Memoirs, and Documentary Prose* (2005), and a final monograph in Russian *Picture-Texts and Ekphrasis in Dostoevsky's "The Idiot" (Teksty-kartiny i ekfrazisisy v romane F. M. Dostoevskogo "Idiot,"* 2017). She was the proud recipient of an excellent Festschrift volume in 2012: *From Petersburg to Bloomington: Essays in Honor of Nina Perlina*, edited by John Bartle, Michael C. Finke, and Vadim Liapunov.

Former students praise her as a mentor. Miriam Shrager writes: "I remember once attending a lecture about St. Petersburg and Dostoevsky she gave in a colloquium at our department. Using strictly scholarly analysis and without mentioning anything explicitly personal in her lecture, she managed to communicate something very personal: her love for this topic. I remember the deep inspiration I felt when I left the lecture, and that's how I will always remember her." Stu Mackenzie writes: "Dostoevsky himself might have commented that the grief and loss we're feeling are necessary if we're to develop a great intelligence and a deep heart. If so, perhaps these reflections are among the last of Nina's many great gifts to us. ... You never forget a mentor. Nina was a person who invested deeply in her students, pushed them to grow and be better people." Her fellow graduate student at Brown and

subsequent collaborator on the 2005 book, Cynthia Simmons, also characterized their relationship as a kind of mentorship: “Most significant in our shared lives as Slavists was our work together, with other colleagues, on the gathering of oral histories of women who suffered the siege of Leningrad in WWII. I had the opportunity to work in Russia with Nina, on her native soil, in her native tongue. It was a gift all around—to share that time with her, and to be a part of that project. Nina was an original—a keen intelligence who at times found it difficult to fathom or master simple tasks. I was fortunate not to have taken part in her attempts to learn to drive. A friend of hers in Petersburg described her to me as having either ‘*idée luxe*’ or ‘*idée fixe*.’ The former most definitely compensated for the latter.” Within our department, we will remember her for both her unsurpassed intellect and deep knowledge of many diverse aspects of Russian culture, as well as her great warmth and empathy towards her colleagues and friends. George Fowler (department chair at the time of her passing) summarized these twin qualities: “I knew her as a person with an outsized warm heart, and as it turned out eventually, a heart with an unexpected weakness that betrayed her. She had a unique, otherworldly way of asking a question at a lecture or dissertation defense, sometimes taking a winding path but arriving at an incisive and often unforeseen point that would turn out to be highly significant for her interlocutor.”

This resolution is intended for presentation to the Bloomington Faculty Council and preservation in its minutes and archive. She is survived by two cousins, Mikhail Gromov and Vladimir (Vova) Khavkin, who will receive copies of this resolution after its presentation in the Council.

George Fowler
Associate Professor, Slavic and East European Languages and Cultures
Indiana University Bloomington

(Edited by Vicki Polansky)

