

Though the book may be of interest to a general audience and specialists, it does not always meet the expectations of scholarly rigor. Nelson uses sources ranging from *The Telegraph* and Wikipedia to CD booklets. Though images and scores are frequently shown in the book, they are not often accompanied by substantive analyses. Likewise, quotations are not always contextualized and analyzed thoroughly, and some translations are problematic. While the book strives to be comprehensive, the abundance of information distracts from Nelson's main arguments and does not always flow well. This reader was intrigued to learn about Nelson's experience as a singer and an intendant. Clearly, Rimsky-Korsakov is both an academic and musical interest of his; Nelson's perspectives as a performer and music administrator would have been welcome in the book.

While this reader acknowledges the effort and labor that went into writing and producing this book, it must be pointed out that the book contains a surprising number of errors, which should have been corrected in the copyediting process. These include rather jarring mistakes, such as the caption of the cover image as "The sole [sic] of the people." Pushkin's patronymic is rendered as Alekseevich (230) when it is Sergeevich; the Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz's name is misspelled multiple times (91, 227); Princeton University is called Princetown University (132, 196). Aside from numerous typographical errors, there are also transliteration mistakes and inconsistencies as well as stylistic and formatting issues.

To conclude, Nelson's book joins a handful of others published after the centennial of Rimsky-Korsakov's death in 2008. It provides a helpful foundation for understanding him and the political aspects of his music.

## **Nicole Svobodny. *Nijinsky's Feeling Mind: The Dancer Writes, the Writer Dances.***

**Crosscurrents: Russia's Literature in Context. New York: Lexington Books, 2023. xi, 371 pp. Bibliography. Index. \$125.00, hard bound.**

Sharon Marie Carnicke

University of Southern California, School of Dramatic Arts

Email: [carnicke@usc.edu](mailto:carnicke@usc.edu)

doi: 10.1017/slr.2024.486

*Nijinsky's Feeling Mind* is a fascinating literary study on the diaries of Vaslav Nijinsky, who was arguably the most important dancer in Sergei Diaghilev's star-studded *Ballets Russes*. Nijinsky began to write when mental illness curtailed his ability to perform publicly. He wrote fluidly, much as he danced, without crossing out or editing anything. Thus, his writing captures the flow of his thoughts as they occurred without self-censorship. Rather than reading his diaries for symptoms of his illness as others have done, Nicole Svobodny approaches them as serious literature. She argues that, as his illness grew, Nijinsky engaged in a "multimodal project" (24) that brought three types of artistic activity together in conversation with each other: choreography, drawing, and writing. Within this project, his diaries constitute a literary performance, as rich in metaphor and allusion as his modernist choreography and as abstract in style as his drawings. By reading his diaries through this multimodal lens, Svobodny "aims to navigate a space between and across the 'poetics of dance' and the 'somatics of literature,'" (25) hence her subtitle *The Dancer Writes, the Writer Dances*.

The book begins with a descriptive analysis of Nijinsky's last public performance in 1919 at the Suvretta House Hotel in Switzerland, where he amazed, puzzled, and even frightened

members of his audience with improvisatory dances that expressed his feelings about war, pain, and the human condition. Svobodny then turns her attention to his diaries, which treat the same existential themes. In the following four chapters she painstakingly uncovers the literary, political, and philosophical works that influenced Nijinsky, among them classics by Aleksandr Pushkin, Lev Tolstoi, Fedor Dostoevskii, Nikolai Gogol', Friedrich Nietzsche, and others. She examines in forensic detail not only the sources behind Nijinsky's allusive writing, but also how he interpreted them through the prism of his own experience as a dancer. In fact, one of the joys in reading this book was the opportunity to revisit literature that I had encountered in graduate school through a new lens.

Over the course of the book a number of major ideas weave in and out of Svobodny's analysis. Two of them stand out as particularly contributory to Svobodny's overarching thesis. The first presents Nijinsky's diaries paradoxically. On the one hand, his "reason for not revising his manuscript" exposes his desire "for the reader to experience [his] writing process" (27). In this way, his book is "alive" (27). On the other hand, Nijinsky "points to the ink traces left on the page," (27) as evidence that, once written, a book becomes an unchanging and thus dead object. In short, Svobodny writes, "the making of the book is thus its own unmaking, . . . both a one-time live performance and the artifact that entombs it" (27).

The second stand-out idea addresses a consistent binary that echoes throughout Nijinsky's diaries, as for example, when he describes his wife as someone who thinks but lacks feeling and himself as feeling without thought. Svobodny translates this binary into one that contrasts *um* (usually translated as mind) with *razum*, which is most commonly translated as reason, but which she renders as feeling mind. As she explains:

For Nijinsky, the word "thinking" (*dumat'*) is related to the word *um* (intellect), whereas "feeling" in Nijinsky's lexicon is related to the word *razum* (feeling mind). *Razum* is the experience of the wholeness—body and mind—where *um* is incomplete: the mind cut off from the body (281).

While I question her creative translation of *razum*, as a former dancer I find her larger insight persuasive. Dancers do think holistically through the body and Nijinsky activates this kind of sensory perception as he writes. In fact, this insight is so central to Svobodny's thesis that she uses her rendering of *razum* as her book's title.

In conclusion, I am happy to recommend this book to anyone with an interest in Russian dance, culture, and literature. Svobodny's deep and yet wide-ranging analysis of Russian classics along with her insight into Nijinsky's visceral approach to writing makes this book an extraordinary achievement.

## **Maksim Hanukai. *Tragic Encounters: Pushkin and European Romanticism*.**

**Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2023. ix, 246 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. \$89.95, hard bound.**

Kathleen Scollins

University of Vermont

Email: [Kathleen.Scollins@uvm.edu](mailto:Kathleen.Scollins@uvm.edu)

doi: 10.1017/slr.2024.371

The passage from neoclassicism to romanticism was formally liberating, as poets reached beyond strictly defined genre categories in their quest to express the era's profound sense