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

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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

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of lost unity; scholars have since remained divided, however, on whether the resulting expressions of longing constitute an "authentic tragic vision" (3). Maksim Hanukai's *Tragic Encounters* offers a satisfying, extensively researched, and lucidly argued response to this body of critical scholarship, interrogating its primary theorists' reliance on a single author or national tradition, as well as their confinement to the dramatic genre. His study approaches romantic tragedy as a broad and flexible *mode*, accommodating a range of hybrid genres unified by recurring themes and ethical concerns; he contemplates its expansive and protean dimensions through a comparative analysis of four generically ambiguous works of Aleksandr Pushkin that "make significant use of the tragic modality" (7). Considering diverse narrative forms and avoiding the impulse to reduce the poet's unconventional, ever-changing body of work to a single, stable "tragic vision," Hanukai outlines the evolution of Pushkin's sense of the tragic, contextualizing it within broader European trends to reveal both an active engagement with developments outside of Russia and a "sustained interest in redefining the conventions and visions of tragedy" (7).

The first chapter rereads *The Gypsies* as a reflection of Pushkin's disillusionment with the radicalism he encountered among proponents of the Greek independence movement during his exile in Chișinău. Hanukai convincingly argues that the work presents a critique of Rousseau's romantic ideology, which the young poet blamed for the movement's ultimate failure. Finally, he considers Pushkin's oscillation between dramatic and lyrical modes to distinguish between the non-redemptive tragic plot of Aleko and the cathartic acts of his poetic creator. The second chapter examines the formally innovative *Boris Godunov*, taking up the familiar question of genre that dates to the drama's very inception. Here, Hanukai draws upon classic studies of narrative form to demonstrate how Pushkin set his heroes in opposition through modes of emplotment, as Godunov's severe, traditional tragedy alternates with the pretender's dynamic romance. Analyzing the coexistence of these modes within the dramatic frame ultimately reveals the centrality "not of comedy, but of irony to Pushkin's historical and dramatic visions"—layers of irony that went unrecognized by the play's initial critics, who had sought to define it in more familiar generic terms (70). The third chapter addresses *The Little Tragedies*, which Hanukai considers Pushkin's most direct and sustained engagement with the evolving ethics and aesthetics of European romanticism. The tragedy in each of these four short plays results from its hero's transgressive pursuit of some decadent end, and Hanukai argues that the cycle represents Pushkin's exploration of the radical sensibility emanating from *l'école frénétique* of the late 1820s—which he terms the "sublime noir" in homage to its provenance—within the moral framework of tragedy. Hanukai devotes his final chapter to *The Bronze Horseman*, which inscribes Pushkin's reflections on "Russia's tragic encounter with modernity," paying particular attention to scenes of visual apprehension. Hanukai posits that Pushkin's mediation of the discursive space between symbol and allegory amounts to a meditation on "the precarious, even fateful, act of reading meaning into images" (138). The poem's preoccupation with the fraught act of viewing and interpreting—and indeed, the impossibility of locating a single, stable meaning within—reflects the poet's concern with the status of late romantic values within contemporary Russian society. The coda shifts focus from literature to life, surveying the enduring scholarly impulse to interpret events leading to Pushkin's death within the moral frame of the tragic in order to illustrate how the poet's biography succumbed as easily as his works to these generic modes of emplotment.

Hanukai's chronological examination of these generically ambivalent texts from romanticism's pivotal decade of 1824–33 highlights Pushkin's "embeddedness in the broader Romantic milieu," as well as his transformation of the major poetic and intellectual currents flowing from the west (8). Individual chapters reveal a comprehensive knowledge of literary and theoretical traditions, and Hanukai's fresh, surprising insights yield unorthodox but persuasive re-readings of canonical texts, always rooted in the scholarly tradition but never bound by prevailing interpretations.

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Taken as a whole, the study reveals the capacious, adaptable nature of Pushkin's tragic vision as it reflected narrative forms from abroad and refracted them into a unique, late-romantic sensibility which, tempered by the poet's dominant mode of irony, invited the possibility of endless re-vision. *Tragic Encounters* thus represents a significant contribution to our field and beyond, broadening our understanding of the poet and his works, their redefinition of romanticism's tragic dimensions—and, ultimately, the conceptual boundaries of the tragic mode itself.

Lynn Ellen Patyk. *Dostoevsky's Provocateurs.*

Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2023. viii, 226 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. $95.00, hard bound. $32.00, paper.

Paul Fung

The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong
Email: paulfung@hsu.edu.hk

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This new addition to the Studies in Russian Literature and Theory series examines Fedor Dostoevskii's fictions and journalistic writings from the angle of communication studies. The author borrows the ideas of Rainer Paris, a German sociologist, to explain the structure of provocative acts in Dostoevskii's works. A provocateur is someone who "emerges from nowhere, and acts, but obliquely, not directly, by addressing themselves to others and making them (re)act" (4). Mikhail Bakhtin's 1929 seminal work *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* has successfully proven the presence of provocation in the writer's work. For Bakhtin, the interaction between characters is an "orderly and profoundly civil exchange" (9). But Patyk shows that it is more complicated; characters would deploy various strategies to disrupt a balanced and progressive conversation.

The first provocateur is Golyadkin in *The Double.* He suffers from various insufficiencies: the lack of self-awareness, other awareness, and communicative skills (29). To overcome his inadequacies, he seeks independence by cutting himself off from other consciousnesses and reiterating his identity. Multiple selves co-exist in the protagonist: not one other, but many other "others." The righteous Golyadkin and subservient Golyadkin; the rebellious Golyadkin and the social climber Golyadkin. These different selves clash in the story, leading to language excess. The aim of provocation, that is, to confirm his single identity, eventually fails.

The Underground Man in *Notes from the Underground* is the second provocateur on the list. Borrowing McGowan's Lacanian discussion of laughter, the author argues that the protagonist again suffers from a lack, to which the hero responds using excessive language. His language touches on the lack and excess, which are repressed in people's everyday life. Nervous laughter arises when we encounter our unconscious. Paris points out that when a provocation fails, the subject will repeat his act more intensively. This is what happens to the Underground Man when he fails to elicit a submissive response from the compassionate Liza. He counteracts by further humiliating her, reiterating her identity as a whore. His provocation is also marked by his pursuits of irrational desires. Well-being is a great thing, but it implies unity and finitude. It is only in perverseness that the Underground Man can fully express his longing for infinitude and freedom.

Nastasya Filippovna in *The Idiot* is distinguished by her sensational provocation. Not only does she protest patriarchy as a feminist, but she also raises people's awareness of

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