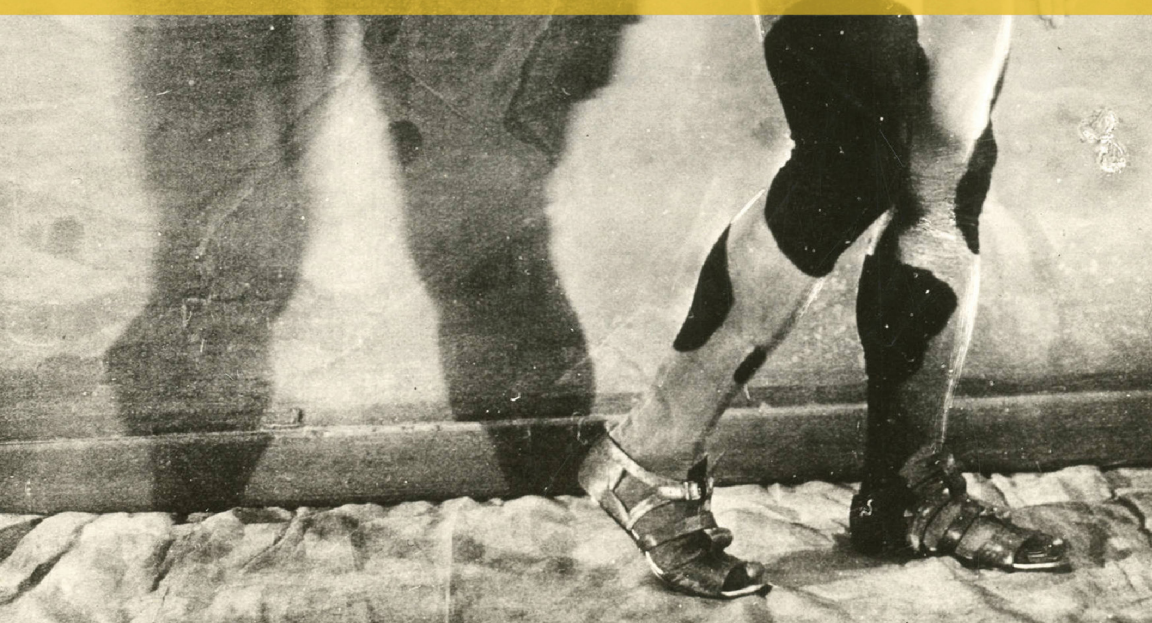




# NIJINSKY'S FEELING MIND

THE DANCER WRITES, THE WRITER DANCES

**NICOLE SVOBODNY**



# **Nijinsky's Feeling Mind**

# Crosscurrents: Russia's Literature in Context

*Series Editor:* Marcia Morris, Georgetown University

Embodying what is specific to a single culture as well as what is common to all humankind, literature has always been a privileged mode of discourse in Russia. *Crosscurrents* takes cognizance of Russian literature's simultaneous particularity and universality by exploring the aesthetic, cultural, political, temporal, and geographical contexts in which it has been written. Monographs and edited collections in the series focus on literature written across cultural periods, geographical divides, and intellectual disciplines. We welcome proposals and manuscripts focused on the intersections between literature and law, religion, philosophy, science, film, the arts, and other disciplines as well as on Russian émigré literature, literature written in Russian by non-Russians, and comparisons of different cultural periods.

## Advisory Board

Eliot Borenstein, New York University  
Lioudmila Fedorova, Georgetown University  
Deborah A. Martinsen, Columbia University  
Amy D. Ronner, St. Thomas University  
Ilya Vinitzky, Princeton University  
Peter Rollberg, George Washington University

## Titles in the Series

*Nijinsky's Feeling Mind: The Dancer Writes, The Writer Dances*, by Nicole Svobodny  
*Napoleon in the Russian Imaginary: The Idea of the Great Man in the Works of Pushkin, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Merezhkovsky, and Evgenii Tarle*, by Gary Rosenshield  
*Literary Biographies in The Lives of Remarkable People Series in Russia: Biography for the Masses, Volume 1*, edited by Carol Ueland & Ludmilla A. Trigos  
*Dostoevsky as Suicidologist: Self-Destruction and the Creative Process*, by Amy D. Ronner  
*Wingless Desire in Modernist Russia: Envy and Authorship in the 1920s*, by Yelena Zotova  
*Babel in Russian and Other Literatures and Topographies: The Tower, the State, and the Chaos of Language*, by Martin Meisel  
*Russian Symbolism in Search of Transcendental Liquescence: Iconizing Emotion by Blending Time, Media, and the Senses*, by Anastasia Kostetskaya  
*Chekhov's Letters: Biography, Context, Poetics*, edited by Carol Apollonio and Radislav Lapushin  
*Physical Pain and Justice: Greek Tragedy and the Russian Novel*, by Gary Rosenshield

# **Nijinsky's Feeling Mind**

**The Dancer Writes,  
The Writer Dances**

Nicole Svobodny

LEXINGTON BOOKS

*Lanham • Boulder • New York • London*

Published by Lexington Books  
An imprint of The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc.  
4501 Forbes Boulevard, Suite 200, Lanham, Maryland 20706  
www.rowman.com

86-90 Paul Street, London EC2A 4NE

Copyright © 2023 by The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc.

*All rights reserved.* No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without written permission from the publisher, except by a reviewer who may quote passages in a review.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Information Available

### **Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Names: Svobodny, Nicole, author.

Title: Nijinsky's feeling mind : the dancer writes, the writer dances /  
Nicole Svobodny.

Description: Lanham : Lexington Books, 2023. | Series: Crosscurrents:

Russia's literature in context | Includes bibliographical references and index. |

Summary: "The first in-depth study of Vaslav Nijinsky's life-writing, this book combines textual analysis and literary theory with intellectual biography to elucidate the dancer's riffs on Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and Nietzsche. This interdisciplinary study explores the modernist contexts from which the dancer-writer emerged at the end of World War I"— Provided by publisher.

Identifiers: LCCN 2023015478 (print) | LCCN 2023015479 (ebook) |

ISBN 9781793653536 (cloth) | ISBN 9781793653543 (ebook)


Subjects: LCSH: Nijinsky, Vaslav, 1890-1950. Dnevnik Vatslava Nizhinskogo |  
Ballet dancers—Biography.

Classification: LCC GV1785.N6 S96 2023 (print) | LCC GV1785.N6 (ebook) |

DDC 792.8092 [B]—dc23/eng/20230515

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2023015478>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2023015479>

™ The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992.

# Contents

Acknowledgments	vii
Note on Transliteration	xi
Introduction	1
<b>PART I: FROM STAGE TO PAGE</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>1</b> Trance Dance	43
<b>2</b> Walking and Talking	93
<b>3</b> Predator-Prey	147
<b>PART II: A LIFE IN BOOKS AND MAGAZINES</b>	<b>201</b>
<b>4</b> Reading Nijinsky Reading	203
<b>5</b> Dancing the Tightrope between <i>World of Art</i> and <i>Feeling</i>	251
Conclusion	309
Selected Bibliography	353
Index	361
About the Author	373



# Acknowledgments

A Summer Stipend from the National Endowment for the Humanities (2019) allowed me to visit archives and delve deeper into the conceptualization and writing of this project. I had the opportunity to view Nijinsky's three St. Moritz notebooks "live," in situ, thanks to Arlene Yu at the Jerome Robbins Dance Division of the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. I was welcomed warmly to John Neumeier Foundation in Hamburg by the curator of collections, Hans-Michael Schäfer. One of the most memorable moments of working on this project was when John Neumeier walked me through this amazing treasure trove for dance research, sharing his love for Nijinsky's art and for the dancer's "beautiful signature." I am also immensely grateful to Claudia Jeschke for inviting me to Munich to peruse her collection of documents related to Nijinsky; many of these materials were given to her and Ann Hutchinson Guest by Romola Nijinsky to aid in their work decoding Nijinsky's 1915 dance notation system. Not only has Claudia patiently explained to me the basics of dance notation, but she also encouraged me to make my own interpretative readings of the 1917–1918 notation by looking at the Russian text and diagrams. I remember finding a charming little "poem" in Nijinsky's notation: "Stands in the yard. Snowing." Claudia demonstrated to me the accompanying movement that Nijinsky had indicated through musical symbols. Incredible! In addition, I thank the librarians at the Bibliothèque nationale de France Richelieu-Musique for the opportunity to view on microfilm Nijinsky's "fourth notebook" of unsent letters; and my special thanks to Masha Sapp at WashU Libraries for pointing me in the right direction for several key sources.

A publication stipend from Global Studies at Washington University in St. Louis paid for indexing and image permissions costs. My heartfelt thanks to the artist Michelle Thomas, my friend and neighbor, for helping me prepare

the images for publication. Marcia Morris, Series Editor of *Russian Literature in Context*, has been supportive of this book from the beginning; I thank her and the wonderful Jasper Mislak at Lexington Books, along with Meridith Murray at MLM Indexing, for their patience and diligence in helping me bring this project to fruition.

Many people have helped me in this project over the years, making it impossible to thank each and every one in these acknowledgments. Nevertheless, I would like to extend my formal gratitude to several people in particular who have encouraged, inspired, and guided me. On a brisk walk around St. Louis, Tatiana Venediktova stimulated my readings of Nijinsky's notebooks; and upon her invitation, I participated in an international round-table discussion at Moscow State University on the topic of corporeality in literary practice. There the first glimmers of this book took shape. Lynn Garafola invited me to present my (then) first chapter of this book at the Studies in Dance Seminar at Columbia University (2018), where I received valuable feedback from several dance scholars and critics. Lynn has been especially generous in sharing sources and has inspired me with her meticulous scholarship. Emboldened by the boundless enthusiasm of Amy Ronner, interdisciplinary scholar extraordinaire, I was able to imagine audiences for this book. I lack the words to express my gratitude for Amy's insightful comments on several drafts of my manuscript and for her deep and loving commitment to the writing process. My knowledge of dance practice was extended through a course I took on Isadora Duncan, taught by the incomparable Alice Bloch, who also encouraged me to take Frank Flynn's course on Sacred Dance and Mary-Jean Cowell's course on Michio Ito (all at WashU), where I had the opportunity to try out some Ito-method choreography of my own. Yelena Francis awes me with her knowledge and appreciation of Russian Silver Age print culture and Petersburg topography; she always responded cheerfully to my questions about Russian language, orthography, Nijinsky's handwriting, and other sundry inquiries. Several other people lent their time and expertise to reading parts of this manuscript. I am especially thankful to Emmelyn Butterfield-Rosen (early drafts), Anca Parvulescu (early draft of Introduction and chapter 4), and Kimerer LaMothe (chapter 5 and conclusion). My bright and talented students at WashU, past and present, have helped me work out many of the arguments in this book, even if they haven't read any of the manuscript; their curiosity and sensibility have spurred many of my ideas. Of course all errors in the final book are my own.

To my friends and family I bow down in gratitude. The following listing hardly does justice to the intellectual and emotional support they have given me over the years: Annabelle Brunet, Lisa Cullen, Jenny Hok, Julie Hu, Celia Imrey, Jean Lutwak, Sondra Maze-Ladd, Mike McDanel, Karen Miscall-Bannon, Erin Rabitcheff, Sarah Searcy, Amy Strong, Dane Svobodny, Tom

Svobodny, Cat Tian-Svobodny, Eiichi Yoshino, and especially Gabe Svobodny for his wit and compassion. The grand finale of these acknowledgments goes to my daughter. This project has benefitted greatly from Sophie Yoshino's keen visual sense, analytical acumen, love of cinema, and joy in dance. ME: I'm thinking of writing a book on Nijinsky. YOU (skipping): Mama's writing a book! Well, here it is, and you've leapt off to college. I love you, Soph.



## Note on Transliteration

For words rendered in Latin script from the Cyrillic, I have used a modified version of the ALA-LOC system. For common terms and names, I have used the most conventional form used in American English (e.g., Nijinsky, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Diaghilev). However, I have kept the form that was originally used in the sources I cite. For example, I use Vaslav Nijinsky in the main text, but sometimes in citations, the first name is rendered as Vatslav or Waslaw, and the last name as Nijinski or Nizhinskii. I have kept the Cyrillic in certain cases: when I deemed the original script important for understanding, or when I want to emphasize the look of the script.



# Introduction

On January 19, 1919, when he was twenty-nine years old and living with his wife and their little daughter in a rented villa in St. Moritz, Switzerland, Vaslav Nijinsky emerged from a long hiatus to give a solo dance recital for the benefit of the Red Cross at the nearby Suvretta House Hotel. The well-heeled audience, expecting to be entertained by the world-famous dancer, was alternately horrified by Nijinsky's enactment of trench warfare, awed by his graceful, ethereal dancing, and perplexed by the moments of heavy stillness, introspective gestures, and short bits of monologue. A few hours before performing in what he called his "marriage to God," Nijinsky had begun writing in Russian in a black notebook.<sup>1</sup> When he returned home from the performance, he resumed his writing, staying up most of the night. In the following six weeks, Nijinsky filled up four notebooks: one full of unsent letters to family, friends, and humanity in Polish, Russian, and French, and three other notebooks in Russian prose and verse from the perspective of a self-proclaimed "non-thinking philosopher," a book manuscript he titled *Feeling* (*Chuvstvo*), separated into two parts, "On Life" and "On Death."

On March 4, Nijinsky put aside his writing to take a short trip with his wife and in-laws to Zurich, where he hoped he might find a publisher for his book. A few days later he had a consultation with Dr. Eugen Bleuler, a leading Swiss psychiatrist who had coined the term *schizophrenia* in 1908 and had written an influential monograph on the subject in 1911. Bleuler diagnosed Nijinsky as "a confused schizophrenic with mild manic excitement." He also noted the patient "showed fear of being declared mentally ill" and "constantly had to ask me how I can recognize mentally ill people etc."<sup>2</sup> After the consultation, Nijinsky looked "strangely sad."<sup>3</sup> That night he and his wife returned to their hotel suite in Zurich, and Nijinsky locked himself up in his room, refusing to come out, only allowing his breakfast to be brought in the next

morning. According to Bleuler's report, Nijinsky had purchased a knife and shown it to his relatives, claiming he planned to use it for sharpening pencils.<sup>4</sup> Twenty-four hours later, the police knocked down his door, and Nijinsky was taken to Burghölzli Hospital. At the end of his stay he was diagnosed with "catatonia," suggesting a disturbance in self-regulation of body movement and emotion.<sup>5</sup> Nijinsky was discharged from the hospital on March 10 and was escorted to the Bellevue Sanatorium in Kreuzlingen. For the next three decades until his death in 1950, the dancer remained by all accounts mentally incapacitated, often in a state referred to as a catatonic stupor—"a captive in his own mind," as Igor Stravinsky puts it, "his most perfect gift of expression in movement stricken, immobile."<sup>6</sup> Nijinsky never danced publicly again, and he never resumed his writing.

Why did Nijinsky even begin his writing project? As far as we know, *Feeling* was the dancer's first and last attempt at literary art. Certainly he had written many letters to friends and family over the years, but nothing like the sound-poetry he composed in St. Moritz. There is no evidence that he had previously even kept a diary. In interviews Nijinsky avoided erudition, bookishness, or any notion that dance was dependent on literature.<sup>7</sup> The dancer did not impress with his linguistic and conversational skills. Simple and modest, silently smiling, dumb-bell, the poor boy, an idiot of genius: these are some of the ways he was described by his circle of acquaintances. They marveled at the contrast between the awesome larger-than-life presence onstage with the "almost tiny," verbally incompetent, it seemed to them, blank figure offstage.<sup>8</sup> Many of these comments can be chalked up to snobbery stemming from class and cultural differences, some to jealousy, and most as know-it-all attempts to read backward to find evidence of the dancer's latent insanity. To a large extent they also stem from an underlying belief in dance as the "return to the body," an art form that "speaks beyond words" and has "no need for translation," a corporeal expression that presents "not secondary literary meaning, but direct meaning."<sup>9</sup>

In 1919, due to a combination of personal and political circumstances, Nijinsky found himself cut off from the collaborative and structured world of ballet, isolated in a glamorous ski-resort town in a neutral country, with plans to wait out the war and then return to dance. What were the physical and cognitive processes involved when the dancer sharpened his pencil and sat down to write? Was his writing a substitute for dancing? A "dangerous supplement" to a living, bodily art?<sup>10</sup> Did it drive him mad? Or maybe the writing was more a sign or a symptom—of what, though? Of creative blockage? Of psychological trauma manifesting as hypergraphia? Alternatively, could the writing have been part of a healing process, a way to stave off catastrophe, at least temporarily? To pose these questions another way: Did putting graphite to paper stop Nijinsky dead in his tracks, or did it set him

into motion? Finally, what did he think would happen with his writing? Who would read it?

Throughout his book Nijinsky poses these questions himself, in similar terms, and he answers most of them, often in multiple ways. *Feeling* offers a profound meditation on the spaces between dance and writing. It is a book about the writing process, the traces left behind, the circulation between bodily presence and the written word, the hesitation between speech and silence, and the special dynamic between reader and writer, in which the language of intimacy registers as public statement, and vice versa. *Feeling* proclaims itself a book in search of an audience, as Nijinsky considers various publishing venues: maybe he will get his manuscript translated and printed in many copies, or maybe he should make photographs of the pages to show how the handwriting “leaps” (80). He even fantasizes about taking a trip to Paris to hand-deliver his notebooks to the prime minister of France, Georges Clemenceau. In sum, Nijinsky began writing, as many writers do, because he believed he had something to say. He wanted to be read. Specifically, he wanted people to read about his process of writing a book, which includes trying to explain why he is writing in the first place.

Three of Nijinsky’s St. Moritz notebooks came up for auction in London in 1979.<sup>11</sup> They were bought by an Oxford book collector who eventually sold them in 1982. They went up for auction again in New York in 1989 and were sold to an anonymous collector.<sup>12</sup> In 1993 the anonymous collector loaned one notebook to an exhibit at the Dansmuseet in Stockholm. At that time the curator of the exhibit notified the New York Public Library that the collector was willing to sell. After months of negotiation, the Library purchased the notebooks in 1994.<sup>13</sup> These notebooks (each 8½ x 6½ inches) contain 381 pages in total, including 31 blank pages. The pages show that Nijinsky began writing with a graphite pencil and changed to a blue pencil (41 pages altogether) and then switched to a fountain pen for the rest. His very neat handwriting fills up the entire page, on a clear straight path from left to right, with no margins, no headers, very few paragraph breaks, and almost no cross outs (figure 0.1). Only in a few places does Nijinsky depart from the continuous flow of his handwriting: to write in verse, to inscribe a salutation to a letter, or to draw a line or ellipsis, as if he felt a need to fill up the space, or to express silence. Once he has written the words “Stephens’ Blue Black Writing” in Latin letters, referring to the brand name of the writing fluid he is using, which in turn leads him to the subject of his fountain pen: “The word ‘Ideal’ is written on my pen, but my fountain pen is not ideal,” he writes, while he proposes his own invention of a pen that would deliver the ink evenly, without clogging or leaking (142, 72). In addition to the handwritten words that comprise *Feeling*, the notebooks also contain nine abstract drawings (of circles, mandorlas, arcs, segments, eyes) and fifteen pages of dance

notation (musical symbols, circular diagrams, and Russian text). The pages of dance notation contain Part II of Nijinsky's *Theory of Dance*, a textbook he intended as a vehicle to teach how to read and write dance through a new notation system he was developing.<sup>14</sup>

In light of the visual and scriptural legibility, even beauty, of these three notebooks, is it possible that Nijinsky wanted to present them as art objects, as his version of an artist's book? If so, how do the different modes (dance notation, drawings, and writing) interact with each other? And to what extent do these notebooks differ from what Nijinsky bluntly calls the “leftovers of lived experience,” the artifacts that reside in archives and museums and “smell of the graveyard”?<sup>15</sup> As a partial answer to these questions, Nijinsky states that he wants his book to be published while he is still alive, not after he is dead. He also makes it abundantly clear that he is not writing to solidify his legacy for posterity.

Nijinsky had no authorial input when his book was eventually published. He was still living, but he had nothing to say about the publication. His wife, Romola Nijinsky, had the manuscript translated into English, made major edits, and published this bowdlerized version in 1936 under the title *The Diary of Vaslav Nijinsky*.<sup>16</sup> The generic label “diary” serves as a useful signpost for readers: from the title, one can assume this is a book in which Nijinsky kept a daily record of events and experiences. This is an accurate enough description—except that Nijinsky does not employ dated entries and never uses the word “diary” (*dnevnik*). To refer to his work, Nijinsky uses the following words: *kniga* (book), *rukopis'* (manuscript), *tetradi* (notebooks),



**Figure 0.1 One of Nijinsky's St. Moritz Notebooks, 1919.** Source: Courtesy of Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. Photograph, Nicole Svobodny.

*pis'mo* (letter/writing) and *zapis'* (recording/notation). All of the labels that Nijinsky confers on his work suggest ways to read it: (1) as a "recording" of his amateur psychoanalysis sessions, an eyewitness record of the events leading up to his institutionalization, and a notation of his psycho-physiological processes; (2) as several "notebooks"—physical objects he needs to hide away from prying eyes—a repository of his ongoing multimodal project that contains dance notation and drawing; (3) as a live "manuscript," an always already unfinished document that allows him to connect his hand (*ruka*) to the pen (*ruchka*) to the page in a type of therapeutic ritual and a demonstration of his commitment to the *work* of writing; (4) and finally, it is a "letter" in the sense that it contains letters to his wife and doctor (that he does not want them to read). It is also a "letter" in which he reaches out to a broader public to convey "necessary things," meaning saving the world from the "death of feeling": from the negotiations at the Paris Peace Conference that he believes might perpetuate world war; from the wasting of fossil fuels destroying the planet; from the stock market that is rigged against the poor; from factories that dry people out; from a socioeconomic system that separates people into predators and prey; from "thinking" based on Social Darwinism that judges human beings according to the measurement of "heads" instead of by a person's actions and spiritual nature; from the killing of lambs, pigs, and other animals to eat; from the abuse of work horses that drives them into the ground—and many other "necessary things" Nijinsky wants to share with his readers.

In addition to the generic designations—book, recording, manuscript, notebooks, letter—it occurs to Nijinsky, *as he is writing*, to give his book a title and separate it into two parts. This two-part structure highlights the book's distinct narrative movements. In Part One: "On Life," the text traces a series of dreamlike solitary walks that Nijinsky interweaves with verse sections. In Part Two: "On Death," these walks and sound-poems give way to a series of thwarted walks and eventually to immobilization. The household drama that Nijinsky has been recording since the beginning—muffled telephone conversations, a telegram received, the arrival of his in-laws—drives the book forward in a terrifying momentum that reads like an accidental novel, which heartbreakingly ends as Nijinsky waits for the cab to take him to Zurich. Joan Acocella aptly compares the narrative effect of this "grim march of events" to that of a depersonalized *nouveau roman*.<sup>17</sup> To use a theater analogy: Nijinsky, the writer, takes center stage under the spotlight as an actor, giving a monologue on his non-thinking philosophy, and meanwhile dramatic events are unfurling in the background, as if backstage. We are barely cognizant of what is going on in the background because we are so focused on what is happening center stage, but we can re-read the document to find "clues" from the very beginning. It slowly begins to make sense that Nijinsky compares the

“dry beans” he is eating for breakfast to the “dry town” of Zurich as he prepares for his performance later that evening. He suspects that his “luggage is already packed” and he is headed to that place full of factories and businessmen and psychologists, even if he also hopes he can find a publisher for his book there. As part of her extensive edits to the manuscript, Romola Nijinsky completely re-arranged the order of events, thereby repressing the effect of this accidental novel and her own part in Nijinsky’s grim march to Zurich. She also changed the manuscript’s two-part structure. In her revision, the “diary” has a three-part structure with an epilogue: Life, Death, Feelings (in the plural, not the singular, as Nijinsky had indicated). Thus, the bowdlerized version makes it seem that Nijinsky is keeping a “diary” about his “feelings,” rather than offering his philosophy about “feeling.”

These edits further obfuscate the manuscript’s intertextual dialogue with Russian literary texts, including Leo Tolstoy’s philosophical work, *On Life* (1886). Originally Tolstoy had titled his work *On Life and Death*, but when he handed over his manuscript to his wife for publication, he crossed out the second part of the title. This gesture parallels the argument Tolstoy makes in the work. To simplify, Tolstoy argues that to overcome death, a person needs to develop “reason” (*razum*), or what he terms a “reasonable consciousness” (*razumnoe soznanie*), to get beyond an individual “I” in order to live in and for others; this heightened consciousness of one’s part in the interconnectedness of the entire universe (animal, vegetable, mineral) reveals to a person the undeniable infinitude of life.<sup>18</sup> Some form of this argument appears in many of Tolstoy’s works that influenced Nijinsky—not only in philosophical works such as *On Life* and *The Kingdom of God is Within You* (1894) but also in semi-autobiographical literary works such as *Confession* (1880) and “Notes of a Madman” (1884–1910), and in what Tolstoy considered his most important work, a calendar book of quotations and wise words he collected under the title *For Every Day*.<sup>19</sup> Unlike Tolstoy’s definitive gesture of crossing out “death,” Nijinsky’s book ends practically mid-sentence as he waits for a cab to drive him away. *Feeling* remains an unfinished experiential project of self-becoming and self-disappearing.

Nijinsky’s intertextual dialogue with Tolstoy and other writers is especially apparent in the original Russian language. Passages from *Feeling* that might seem nonsensical in even the best translations make more sense within a Russian linguistic context. For example, Nijinsky repeatedly uses the word *sumasshedshii* (mad, crazy, insane). The word is common in Russian, but since Nijinsky uses it so often and almost never uses a synonym, the word carries enormous weight. The word *sumasshedshii* is a past active participle (verbal adjective) that derives from the verb of motion (*soiti*), literally meaning “to descend,” or “to go down from,” and the prepositional phrase *s uma*, meaning “from the mind.” A literal translation of *sumasshedshii* would be

something like “having-gone-out-of-his-mind.” Nijinsky also frequently uses the word *um* (mind, intellect, intelligence) by itself, almost always in opposition to *razum* (mind, reason, logos) which he writes on almost every page. For Nijinsky *um* is completely negative, the mind divorced from the body, and he characterizes it as inert, dry, and cold, as death-in-life. By contrast, *razum* he associates with life, energy, mobility, and feeling. In Nijinsky’s diction, *um* is the mind without feeling, and *razum* is the feeling mind. Within this constellation of meanings, Nijinsky’s paradoxical assertion to be a “madman with reason” (*sumasshedshii s razumom*) acquires an incisive clarity. He *wants* to go out of his mind (*um*) in the sense that he wants to be a person with a feeling mind (*razum*). At the same time, he knows that this liberating movement of descending-from-the-mind will probably lead to his containment in a madhouse. Although Nijinsky’s usage is idiosyncratic, the words resonate in a Russian literary context, evoking not only Tolstoy’s works but also Pushkin’s lyric “God Forbid I Go Out of My Mind” (“Ne dai mne bog soiti s uma,” 1833), Gogol’s “Notes of a Madman” (“Zapiski sumasshedshego,” 1835), and Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment* (1866), among other literary texts. This wordplay also calls to mind the experimental poetry of the Russian Futurists (*Budetliane*), written in a language they called *Zaum*, a neologism formed from the preposition *za* (beyond) and *um* (mind), meaning beyond-the-mind, transrational, or beyonsense.<sup>20</sup> When read within these Russian cultural contexts, Nijinsky’s words come together poetically in a coherent “non-thinking philosophy,” gaining significance, poignancy, and power.

The first Russian-language version of Nijinsky’s text was published in 1995. Through a type of translation telephone game, this Russian version was actually a translation from the French translation of the bowdlerized English translation. The full version of Nijinsky’s text based on the original manuscript was published in Russian only in 2000, under the title *Chuvstvo: tetradi* (*Feeling: Notebooks*). This edition appeared a few years after the unexpurgated versions in French translation (*Le Sentiment*, 1995) and in English translation (*The Diary of Vaslav Nijinsky*, 1999).<sup>21</sup> Both the expurgated and unexpurgated versions have been translated into many other languages (German, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Spanish, and Swedish, among others) under titles that range from descriptive phrases taken from Nijinsky’s writing (*Clown of God, At the Edge of a Precipice*) to more generic titles such as “journal” or “notebooks.”<sup>22</sup> In English, Nijinsky’s book is most often referred to as his diary or diaries. (In what follows, I use the term “diary” in reference to Romola’s version, and *Feeling* in reference to the Russian manuscript.)

Meanwhile, Nijinsky’s original notebooks were scattered across the globe. In addition to the three notebooks at the New York Public Library, another notebook from the St. Moritz period, consisting of Nijinsky’s unsent letters,

was donated to the Bibliothèque nationale de France as part of the papers of Igor Markevitch (1912–1983).<sup>23</sup> Four other notebooks, drafts of Nijinsky's 1917–1918 dance notation (including one that contains Part I of Nijinsky's *Theory of Dance*), are located at the Bolshoi Theater Museum in Moscow, where the dancer's widow placed them in 1971.<sup>24</sup> At Bibliothèque-Musée de l'Opéra national de Paris (Paris Opera), Romola Nijinsky deposited a suitcase that had inside it notebooks containing Part III of Nijinsky's *Theory of Dance*, along with passports, personal items, and his rose-petal costume for *Le Spectre de la rose*. This suitcase has since disappeared from Paris Opera; apparently Nijinsky's daughter Tamara Nijinsky was asked to retrieve it.<sup>25</sup> Fortunately, Romola Nijinsky made photocopies of Nijinsky's dance notation (from the NYPL, Bolshoi, and Paris Opera notebooks) that over the years she gave to various dance notation experts, including Nadine Legat, Noa Eshkol, Ann Hutchinson Guest, and Claudia Jeschke.<sup>26</sup> Nijinsky's stand-alone art works from the St. Moritz period (more than 150 pieces) have been exhibited and sold over the years. Today they reside in personal collections and museums. The largest collection by far is held by the Foundation John Neumeier in Hamburg.

Drawing on my extensive archival research into these and other sources, *Nijinsky's Feeling Mind* presents the first in-depth academic study of Nijinsky's original Russian text. I situate Nijinsky's book within Russian cultural contexts by exploring it from two angles: first, as a hybrid of literary text/speculative philosophy/autobiography, a literary nonfiction form that was prevalent in turn-of-the-century Russia, the so-called Silver Age;<sup>27</sup> and second, as one mode of a multimodal project that stretches the boundaries of artistic medium, a cross-media approach that reveals Nijinsky's affinities with the Russian avant-garde of the early twentieth century, and anticipates later artistic developments in international modernism and postmodernism. While I make use of secondary sources, my analysis focuses on Nijinsky's own words. Many commentators on Nijinsky's writing have acknowledged its philosophical import and literary qualities: the profundity, intensity, simplicity of expression, the clear goal to communicate with an audience, the oddball wit, gnomic style, rhetorical feats, and the piercing beauty of certain passages. Although readers cannot avoid taking notice of Nijinsky's Russian references, most often these are viewed as naïve expressions of nostalgia and an almost cultish adherence to Tolstoyan teachings and codes of behavior regarding vegetarianism, pacifism, and chastity. Almost nothing has been said about the specific intertextual connections Nijinsky makes as a reader, and very few reviewers have commented on the original Russian manuscript as literary text. Going beyond the stereotypes of Nijinsky as helpless victim and naïve Tolstoyan, this book illuminates Nijinsky's innovative readings of literary texts, his experimental theory and practice of writing, and his

remarkable insights into what it means to be a human being amid increasing commodification, mechanization, and social fragmentation.

## LITERARY FORMS AND THE RUSSIAN SILVER AGE

In *Feeling*, Nijinsky does not hold up illustrious dancers as role models. Visual artists and musicians similarly are given short shrift. The real heroes of Nijinsky's book are creative writers. In his characteristic reductionist ("obsessive") approach, he does not clutter his writing with literary references. He circles around only a few well-known literary masters: Alexander Pushkin, Nikolai Gogol, Leo Tolstoy, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Friedrich Nietzsche, Émile Zola, and Guy de Maupassant. What most interests him in these writers is how they responded, as artists and human beings, to a spiritual, emotional, aesthetic, and/or social crisis. Facing a creative block, Gogol "felt death," tore up his works, threw the scraps into the fire, and went on a fast that led to his death from starvation at the age of forty-two (162). Tolstoy gave up writing novels for preaching and activism (in Nijinsky's terms, he was "ashamed" of his authorship and wanted to be "just a human being"), and at the age of eighty-two, walked away from domesticity to become a wanderer (78). With the physical and emotional stigmata of someone who had done hard labor in Siberia, Dostoevsky "loved God and understood Him" (77). By contrast, Nietzsche became "scared of people," and realizing that everything he had written was "nonsense," wrapped his arms around the neck of a beaten horse and broke down into tears. Zola made a courageous stand for Alfred Dreyfus ("he spoke the truth") and then died from carbon monoxide asphyxiation under suspicious circumstances—"gassed," according to Nijinsky (119). Seeking out solitude in his later years, Maupassant could not bear his loneliness and attempted suicide (92). Between life and death, sanity and madness, communion and isolation: this is the moment of the writer's biography that absorbs Nijinsky's attention.

While grappling with this moment of crisis (both theirs and his), Nijinsky engages with these writers through their texts. He uses specific words, quotes certain passages, and even enacts entire scenes—but never with quotation marks or any other markers that would come across as bookish. Nijinsky reads literary texts as reflections of the writers who created them. Thus, in Nijinsky's interpretation, "Dostoevsky is a great writer who wrote his life in the guise of the various characters he represented" (77). In this reading, the novels are autobiographical not because they present a chronology of factual events but because they address moments of crisis. A crisis is a turning point, a critical juncture, a time of intense trouble or danger. The word "crisis" comes from the Greek word *krisis*, decision. The kinds of decisions

made (or not made) can lead to a resolution of the crisis—either to death or to recovery. A crisis can also be a bridge to something entirely new, something not preconceived. Crisis is a concentrated moment of becoming. To read a literary text in terms of crisis means to recognize various potential outcomes. For example, instead of starting with the catastrophic ending of Dostoevsky's character Prince Myshkin (the eponymous "Idiot" who, like Nijinsky, ended up in a Swiss sanatorium) and reading backward to find evidence of this inevitable failure, one could instead read to understand the radical love that this Christ-like character embodies. This reading considers what the Idiot "might have done," to quote from Dostoevsky's notes to the novel.<sup>28</sup>

Although less obvious than his attention to individual authors, the connections *between* them fascinates Nijinsky. Through the dancer's take on literary figures, we contemplate Pushkin as the literary originator from whom the dancer tries to learn how to write poetry and novels, but then abandons this "copying" as a dead end. We wonder about Gogol as a writer who "loved Russia" and had a "reasonable consciousness," but whose feeling got blunted by his masturbation habit ("He was a big onanist"). We view Tolstoy as someone who made a mistake in calling Dostoevsky "a horse with a conformational defect." We notice the overlapping "apes" of Darwin, Nietzsche, and the nihilist-engineer Kirillov from Dostoevsky's *The Possessed*. And we are led to numerous other interconnections that are often refreshingly, even jarringly, unexpected. Despite making these intertextual connections, Nijinsky has no particular interest in literary tradition in the sense of tracking a literary genealogy for himself. He harbors no wish to immortalize himself within this pantheon of great authors. "I know that if I publish these books everyone will say that I'm a terrible writer," he remarks, adding, "I don't want to be a writer [*pisatelem*]. I want to be a thinker [*myslitelem*]. I think [*Ia mysliu*] and write. I'm not a scribbler [*pisaka*], but a thinker" (177). Here he uses the word *myslit'*/мыслить for "thinking," not to be confused with the other word he uses for "thinking"—*dumat'*/думать. In Nijinsky's remarkably consistent vocabulary, *myslit'* means "thinking" in the sense of imagining or dreaming. He associates the word with "deep thoughts" (*glubokie myсли*) and with "sense" and "meaning" (*smysl*). This is a kind of full-body thinking: "I work with my arms, and legs, and head, and eyes, and nose, and tongue, and hair, and skin, and stomach, and intestines" (82). Asserting himself as a "person with meaning" (*chelovek so smyslom*) and a "person with feeling" (*chelovek s chuvstvom*), Nijinsky approaches writing as a form of self-research. He writes as a way of life, a way *to* life. "I am not Schopenhauer," he continues his statement about writing and thinking, "I am Nijinsky" (178).

Nijinsky may or may not have read Schopenhauer, but he certainly read Tolstoy and his fictional characters reading Schopenhauer. (For example,

in *Anna Karenina*, Konstantin Levin substitutes Schopenhauer's "will" for "love" and finds temporary solace in this reading, although his more enduring revelation comes from a peasant whose words of wisdom awaken in him "the spiritual truths [he] had drunk with [his] mother's milk."<sup>29</sup>) This is the way that Nijinsky reads, too: "In novels I look not for novels but truth." In other words, he reads for the spiritual values conveyed in whatever form the writer found to express them. The form follows the meaning (*smysl*) and writer's purpose. Instead of copying an author, Nijinsky writes as himself, even if this process means breaking the mold of conventional forms. In this regard, Nijinsky's book follows a time-honored Russian literary tradition—at least according to Tolstoy. In response to the critics of *War and Peace*, Tolstoy wrote:

What is *War and Peace*? It is not a novel, still less an epic poem, still less a historical chronicle. *War and Peace* is what the author wanted and was able to express, in the form in which it is expressed. Such a declaration of the author's flouting the conventional forms of artistic prose works might seem presumptuous, if it were premediated and if it had no previous examples. The history of Russian literature since Pushkin's time not only provides many examples of such departure from European forms, but does not offer even one example to the contrary. From Gogol's *Dead Souls* to Dostoevsky's *Dead House*, there is not a single work of artistic prose in the new period of Russian literature, rising slightly above mediocrity, that would fit perfectly into the form of the novel, the epic, or the short story.<sup>30</sup>

With this statement, Tolstoy does not seek to create a new form of artistic prose that others can imitate. He does not suggest that others follow suit in combining fiction with philosophical digressions about historiography and the nature of historical events, as he does in *War and Peace*. He simply states that this *is what the author wanted and was able to express, in the form in which it is expressed*. If exasperated critics deride his work as "preachy" and denigrate it as a "large, loose, baggy monster," so be it.<sup>31</sup>

The tendency to cross over between philosophical and literary modes continued in Tolstoy's later works, and perhaps became even more pronounced. One noteworthy example is his "Notes of a Madman," also translated as "Diary of a Lunatic" or "Memoirs of a Madman," which Tolstoy began in 1884 and worked on intermittently until 1903, although the story remained unfinished and was published only posthumously in 1910. The title "Notes of a Madman" announces its intertextual relationship with Gogol's short story of the same name and features a fictional narrator whose life, particularly in terms of one incident, resembles Tolstoy's own. The scholar Richard Gustafson dubs the work "autopsychological" (a term borrowed from Lydia Ginzburg's *On Psychological Prose*) in that Tolstoy lays out, almost schematically, a psychology of development that is grounded in his theological

ideas, most prominently his conception of deification (*theosis*).<sup>32</sup> Commenting on the story in 1920, the philosopher Leo Shestov shuddered at the way Tolstoy “pitilessly exposes himself before our eyes.” For its self-exposure and call to action, Shestov deemed “Notes of a Madman” both the greatest and the most terrifying of all Tolstoy’s works.<sup>33</sup>

Many other writers of the Silver Age similarly mixed fiction devices and philosophical speculations into one work. At the time there was not such a sharp distinction between the spheres. As George L. Kline explains, “In Russia during the 1880s and early 1890s, more than in most time and places, the linkage between belles-lettres and speculative thought was strong and close.” Literary writers such as Tolstoy engaged in cultural criticism and philosophy, and philosophers and cultural critics wrote poetry and novels. Within this milieu, it was quite natural, Kline continues, that many Russian writers “would see a kindred spirit in Nietzsche, ‘the philosopher with the hammer,’ who addressed the grand themes of speculative thought in a style that was brilliant, pyrotechnic, sometimes deliberately provocative, and whose literary versatility extended to the prose poem, the short lyric, and the pregnant aphorism.”<sup>34</sup> In the context of the Silver Age, Nietzsche was considered as much a literary artist as a philosopher.

Two of Nietzsche’s works are relevant to Nijinsky’s writing: the prologue to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (which the dancer likely revisited when he worked with the composer Richard Strauss on his ballet *Till Eulenspiegel* in 1916) and *Ecce Homo* (which Nijinsky mentioned to his wife when the couple visited the Nietzsche Museum in Sils Maria, not long after they settled in St. Moritz).<sup>35</sup> *Ecce Homo* is an unconventional intellectual autobiography in which Nietzsche reassesses his past (with headings such as “Why I Write Such Clever Books”) in anticipation of his next work (“I will shortly have to confront humanity with the heaviest demand ever made of it”) and as a way to educate others (hence the subtitle: *How to Become What You Are*). All of Nietzsche’s literary pyrotechnics, hyperbole, and provocation are on display, from his many explosive pronouncements—“I am not a man, I am dynamite”—to his signing off as god: *Dionysus against the crucified*. Written in a creative spurt of three weeks at the end of 1888, *Ecce Homo* is Nietzsche’s last original work before the mental collapse that left him completely incapacitated for the last decade of his life. It was published posthumously in 1908 and until recently was relegated to a marginalized status in the philosopher’s oeuvre. Today it is recognized, in the words of translator and scholar Duncan Large, as “one of the most sparkling, witty works of life-literature that we possess.”<sup>36</sup>

Although they are very different figures, both Tolstoy and Nietzsche loomed large in the Silver Age, which in retrospect, can be seen as a transitional period in Russian cultural history, a time when old institutions and

values were breaking down. As an avid reader of Russia's first arts magazine, Sergei Diaghilev's *Mir iskusstva* (*World of Art*), Nijinsky comes out of this time and place. In particular, two essays from that magazine, Diaghilev's inaugural essay as editor-in-chief of the magazine (1898–1899) and Dmitry Merezhkovsky's essay on Tolstoy and Dostoevsky (1900–1901) had a significant impact on Nijinsky's self-identity as an artist. Both of these essays take to task Tolstoy's treatise *What is Art?* for its "utilitarian," moralistic approach to art. Both essays also quote extensively and approvingly about the "freedom" they found in Nietzsche. Not coincidentally, Nijinsky takes an opposite approach in *Feeling*. He embraces Tolstoy's call for art to unite all people through "feeling," and he takes a more critical, albeit compassionate, stance toward Nietzsche: "I began to feel sorry for Nietzsche. I love Nietzsche. He would not understand me, for he thinks" (59).<sup>37</sup>

In *Feeling*, Nijinsky proclaims his new aesthetic vision in opposition to "Diaghilev and his friends." Through this proclamation, Nijinsky has no intention to return to the fold of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, nor does he show any interest in the impresario's latest artistic endeavors. This proclamation is less about the real-life Diaghilev than about Nijinsky's reassessment of his own formative years when he was immersed in Diaghilev's *Mir iskusstva*. Therefore, Nijinsky writes not only about Diaghilev, but he also lumps together Merezhkovsky and other critics as "Diaghilevs." Not rejecting his past entirely, Nijinsky is working out new artistic plans based on his own principles, and as part of this project, he aligns himself with creative writers. While Nijinsky read arts criticism in his capacity as a dancer, he read literary texts behind closed doors, alone, in a trancelike state: "I want everyone to be in a trance, for Tolstoy was in such a trance. Zola and Dostoevsky too" (83). Just as important as *what* Nijinsky says about these authors is *how* he reads them, the way he engages with their texts as part of his learning process. Nijinsky invites readers to experience his writing in the same way. As a form of self-research, his life-writing is not just a supplement to dance but, as I will argue in chapter 1, the trance dance itself.

### MORE THAN PSYCHOLOGICAL DOCUMENT OR DANCER'S MEMOIR

Until now Nijinsky's book has eluded in-depth academic analysis, quite simply because it has not been treated as literary nonfiction with relevance to the art of dance. Nijinsky's first readers were psychiatrists. In their medical charts, the Swiss doctors referred to technical aspects of Nijinsky's writing (illogical chains of associations, clanging, and even orthographic errors) as part of their diagnosis of schizophrenia.<sup>38</sup> In publicity materials for the first

editions of the bowdlerized version, Nijinsky's writing was characterized (inaccurately) as a diary he kept while in an asylum.<sup>39</sup> Marketing blurbs for subsequent editions promised that this diary would make stunning revelations about the Romola-Nijinsky-Diaghilev love triangle and expose "Diaghilev the master who made [Nijinsky] as a dancer and broke him as a coherent personality."<sup>40</sup> In other words, the *Diary* was meant to sync with the story that Romola tells in her 1933 biography in which she saved Nijinsky from an abusive relationship with Diaghilev, and, according to this story, the impresario then took revenge by sabotaging the dancing career of his former protégé and lover. In Romola's telling, Nijinsky's friends, the "Tolstoyan" dancers Dmitry Kostrovsky and Nikolai Zverev, were planted as part of Diaghilev's conspiracy to ruin her husband by brainwashing him into blindly imitating "that old lunatic Tolstoi."<sup>41</sup>

This is not exactly how Nijinsky tells the story. Even the highly edited version could not hide the fact that Nijinsky never pits Romola against Diaghilev. According to the dancer's memories, Diaghilev was not even on his mind when he proposed to Romola de Pulszky on the Avon Ship in the fall of 1913 during the Ballets Russes' first tour of South America. This was not a matter of either/or. While Nijinsky writes about Diaghilev with the disgust of an ex-lover (such as noting the older man's black hair dye left on their pillow) and bemoans the tremendous inequality of their relationship ("All of my practical life was in his hands"), mostly his protestations against Diaghilev center around their differing aesthetic-philosophical worldviews. Romola does not represent a "new" aesthetic-philosophical turn. That role would be reserved for Nijinsky's dear friend Kostrovsky whom Nijinsky barely mentions. Thus, instead of the Romola-Diaghilev-Nijinsky triangle, we find the following: Tolstoy and other literary writers help guide Nijinsky from his past life to the present. "I've been married just over five years," Nijinsky writes matter-of-factly. "I was also with Diaghilev for five years" (144). Now Nijinsky announces his "marriage to God."

There is, however, a real-time, earthly love triangle present in Nijinsky's book, one that Romola completely expunged from her version. In the bowdlerized version, all references to Dr. Hans Curt Frenkel have been deleted, or his identity camouflaged by the generic "friend" or plural "doctors." In Peter Ostwald's biography from 1991 (that is, before the publication of the unexpurgated text), Dr. Frenkel's importance was revealed, but his name was changed to Albert Greiber "for reasons of medical confidentiality," and probably out of respect for the copyright holder of the manuscript, Nijinsky's second daughter Tamara, who was rumored to be Frenkel's biological daughter.<sup>42</sup> Dr. Hans Curt Frenkel was a sports medicine doctor, employed at one of the hotels in St. Moritz. He also dabbled in Freudian psychoanalysis and had attended lectures by Dr. Eugen Bleuler. By the time Nijinsky

started his writing, Romola had asked Dr. Frenkel to monitor her husband, to analyze him, to track his psychic illness. Eventually Frenkel would write to Bleuler about Nijinsky's "catatonic" state and request a consultation for him. Nijinsky's book records this process. On the one hand, Nijinsky submits to the doctor because he realizes he might indeed be going out of his mind (although he is not sure that this is a bad thing), and he is aware that his actions cause Romola pain; if it makes her feel better, to stop crying, he will go to a psychiatric asylum. He also readily offers up the word-association poems Frenkel requests. On the other hand, Nijinsky resists the treatment, not because he refuses to confess intimate details (quite the contrary) but because he interrogates how the doctor determines mental illness. "He wants to examine my *um* [intellect, brain]. I want to examine his *razum* [feeling mind, reason]" (98). The analysis sessions become a battle of wits, or rather a struggle between two ways of seeing: the medical, intellectual gaze (thinking) which Nijinsky counters with his artistic, intuitive insights (feeling).

Did Nijinsky know that his wife was having an affair with the doctor? Ostwald thinks he did; Acocella thinks he did not, otherwise he would have directly mentioned it.<sup>43</sup> Either way, the stakes are high: Nijinsky writes in order to convince Romola that contrary to what she thinks, Frenkel is not "God." Nijinsky is. Banished from the bedroom, banished from the dining room, Nijinsky hides his notebooks—in the piano, in a cupboard—and tries to escape to find a little room in town to rent where he can write his book, this non-thinking philosophy, that he wishes to give to the world before his wife reads it and before the doctor gets his hands on it. That Romola has shown these notebooks to Dr. Frenkel marks for Nijinsky the ultimate betrayal. From a marketing perspective, however, it made more sense to appeal to public fascination with Nijinsky's relationship with Diaghilev—"the two most famous lovers since Romeo and Juliet"—and it was more clear-cut to focus on Nijinsky as a victim of his former lover and impresario.<sup>44</sup>

When Romola Nijinsky was preparing an exhibit of Nijinsky's artworks and the *Diary* for publication, she reached out to ten specialists, not linguists or art historians, but leading psychologists. These experts included Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Eugen Bleuler, and Alfred Adler.<sup>45</sup> It was Dr. Alfred Adler who agreed to make a written statement to be published as a preface to the 1936 edition. Adler begins his statement with a short report of his visit to Nijinsky in a sanatorium, a visit which proved unfruitful for analysis since the patient "did not speak and only occasionally broke into a friendly laugh."<sup>46</sup> Prefacing his remarks with the caveat that recovery from schizophrenia hinges on the "creative contact between doctor and patient," Adler provides the following general statement about schizophrenia from the perspective of Individual Psychology:

The schizophrenic patient is the purest advocate of irrationalism. There is a great temptation among men, even among philosophers down to our times, to disregard which binds us all—namely, the highest development of common sense, which nobody can contradict—and instead, driven by what I have called an “inferiority complex,” to soar and to indulge in their otherwise frustrated vanity.<sup>47</sup>

Based partly on what he read in the *Diary*, partly on what he found out about Nijinsky’s biography, and partly what he had learned from his own patients, Adler tracks the psychological development of “our poor hero” (for that is what he calls Nijinsky) from the futile “dreams of his childhood” to his present state: “As in the case of all failures, he shows a marked lack of social interest.”<sup>48</sup> For Adler, the *Diary* gives clear insight into how a “great artist” turned away from reality to “the primary unsocial phase of sexuality.”<sup>49</sup> In other words, Nijinsky does not simply write about “onanism,” (translated as “self-abuse” in Romola’s version, except in the case of Gogol who stands out as the lone “masturbator”), but his writing essentially amounts to mental masturbation.<sup>50</sup> Romola Nijinsky decided not to include Adler’s preface, which was published separately only in 1981.<sup>51</sup>

Ostwald takes a different approach to Nijinsky’s writing, cautioning that “it is hazardous to make a psychiatric diagnosis on the basis of written documents. Letters and notebooks can help us understand how people think, remember, and deal with problems; they have little diagnostic validity.” Ostwald evidently read the *Diary* in the English translation (by Kyril FitzLyon) from the 1979 Sotheby’s catalogue, and he also had access to the Russian text. In his short analysis (a few pages in his book), Ostwald concludes that “Nijinsky’s interest clearly was in communication and contact, rather than withdrawal and isolation.” He then adds parenthetically: “This is an important diagnostic point. There is nothing basically bizarre or ‘crazy’ about Nijinsky’s writing.” (The words “bizarre” and “alien” often crop up in the literature on schizophrenia.<sup>52</sup>) I would suggest that Ostwald came to this conclusion because he sat with Nijinsky’s writing for a while. He read it. He also reached out to an expert linguist and semiotician at Moscow State University, Vyacheslav Ivanov, who provided him with a short analysis of some aspects of Nijinsky’s word play and the textual features of the writing that “are typical of Russian culture.” Nijinsky’s writing is not the main focus of Ostwald’s study, yet he manages to balance his brief psychological interpretation of the notebooks by also taking into account a literary and cultural context.<sup>53</sup>

As a “psychiatric classic” and “a self-portrait of schizophrenia,”<sup>54</sup> Nijinsky’s *Diary* has been cited in various studies centered on mental disorders, most often in passing as an exemplar of schizophrenic writing. For example, Louis A. Sass analyzes one sentence from the *Diary* as an illustration of schizophrenic thinking (*Madness and Modernism*, 1992);<sup>55</sup> Kieran McNally

quotes from Nijinsky's sound-poem letter to Jean Cocteau in an appendix to a history of the concept of schizophrenia (*A Critical History of Schizophrenia*, 2016);<sup>56</sup> and, in his case study of Nijinsky, Emilio Fernandez-Egea, cites the *Diary* as a kind of checklist to confirm schizophrenia as the correct diagnosis ("One hundred years ago: Nijinsky and the origins of schizophrenia" in *Brain: A Journal of Neurology*, 2019).<sup>57</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari cite Nijinsky as one point of reference for their "schizo-analysis" (*Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 1972–1980).<sup>58</sup> These two authors do not really belong on this list of psychologists, since their contributions lie more in literary theory, where they have had an enormous impact on poststructuralist and postmodernist thought. Within this context, Deleuze and Guattari are keenly attuned to the affective intensities, multiplicities, rhizomatic connections, and "deteritorialization" of Nijinsky's writing. Although they had likely read Nijinsky in the bowdlerized French version (which, remember, was translated from the bowdlerized English translation) and make no mention of his drawings and dance notation, Deleuze and Guattari in many ways intuit Nijinsky's creative goals. Nijinsky, in turn, through his non-thinking philosophy and his multi-modal exploration of "feeling," anticipates many of Deleuze and Guattari's influential concepts that helped lay the groundwork for the "affective turn" in social sciences and the humanities in the twenty-first century.

Perhaps due to its status as an exemplar of schizophrenic writing, dance historians have approached Nijinsky's writing project with caution. The *Diary* has been mined but it has yielded few nuggets for dance history. The main problem is the way Nijinsky writes about dance. First of all, he does not spend a lot of time expounding on the ballets that made him famous. His ballet *Le Sacre du printemps* (*Rite of Spring*, 1913) is not mentioned, neither are most of the Michel Fokine ballets in which he starred. Second, Nijinsky says little about technique; we find out nothing about the "secret" of his amazing leap nor about the kind of training he got with his teachers. Third, he does not present his ballets—or anything, for that matter—in a systematic way. This lack of system (whether chronological or otherwise), as well as the lack of textual features such as paragraphs and headings, makes for an undeniably frustrating source book. Of the four ballets Nijinsky choreographed, he discusses three at some length: *L'Après-midi d'un faune* (*Afternoon of a Faun*, 1912), *Jeux* (*Games*, 1913), and *Till Eulenspiegel* (1916). These discussions could be useful for a dance historian in that they evoke, to a certain degree, the emotional motivation and circumstances within which Nijinsky composed them, what he thinks they "mean" in general terms, and most prominently, how he reacts to critical and audience response. However, Nijinsky offers no specifics that could explain what made these ballets choreographic milestones—nothing about gestures, steps, sequence, timing, and so forth. Moreover, these references are too emotionally saturated in the present moment to

be helpful for an objective assessment. One would have to read between the lines and connect his comments on the ballets to everything else he writes in *Feeling* to make good use of them. In short, Nijinsky's book cannot be read in the same way one would read a dancer's memoir. He specifically states that he is not writing his memoir: "I don't want to write my memoirs. I write everything that was and everything that is. I am, and not what was" (*Ja est', a ne to, chto bylo*) (117).

Since Nijinsky's writing does not offer much to the scholar as a dancer's memoir or as a straightforward treatise on dance, what would it mean to approach the book as a work of art? This approach also raises problems. Nijinsky's art of dance—or what we know of his dancing and his choreography—would seem to be worlds apart from the book he wrote. There are no films of Nijinsky dancing, and all but one of the four ballets he choreographed have been lost. The one ballet that was preserved, *Faune*, has been passed down in two forms: in memory-based versions and through the choreographic score Nijinsky composed in 1915 using his own dance notation system. From these sources and from an extensive archive of iconographic and written texts, one can see that Nijinsky's dance was characterized by precision and articulation, based on years of classical ballet training. It manifests a "steely intelligence: strict, analytic, even ironic."<sup>59</sup> His writing, by contrast, presents as a one-time effort, in which he records what is happening around him and jots down his memories in a flurry of associations that resembles automatic writing. In her introduction to the unexpurgated *Diary*, Joan Acocella sums up the difference: "The appreciation of Nijinsky's choreography is an aesthetic matter; one has to think about it. The appreciation of *him*, or of what he was said to be, was an emotional matter, connected to our fascination with sex, madness, and transfiguration. It was automatic."<sup>60</sup> In other words, the *Diary* has been understood as confessional, or what the scholar Thomas Mallon has called "a huge suicide note," a self-portrait of an artist descending into madness. In this view, it is only tangentially related, if at all, to Nijinsky's true art.<sup>61</sup>

## A MULTIMODAL CREATIVE PROJECT

Instead of asking what Nijinsky's book says *about* dance or to what extent his writing resembles his ballets, we might ask, after Nietzsche: Can Nijinsky-the-writer dance? Did he learn "to dance with a pen"? Can his book teach us to dance?<sup>62</sup> The short answer to these questions: Yes! However, from the outset I propose we shift these questions posed by a professional writer who danced alone (Nietzsche) and instead approach these issues from the perspective of a professional dancer who read behind closed doors and wrote alone

(Nijinsky). From such a perspective, the question that results is not whether writing can dance, but instead this one: Can dance write? In other words, is dance a kind of writing?

Nijinsky pondered this question deeply while he worked on developing a new dance notation system. What began as a means of composing a choreographic score for his ballet *Faune*, and, in principle, for his other ballets (first stage, 1915) became a theory of dance as writing (second stage, 1917–1918). In the first draft notebook for the second-stage notation, Nijinsky introduces his new system with epigraphs taken from the works of Tolstoy and John Ruskin:

Art is one of the means to unite people.

—L. N. Tolstoy

The wisdom of art and science consist in their being devoted unselfishly to the service of men.

—John Ruskin

Science and art are as tightly connected to each other as the lungs and the heart, so that if one organ is ruined the other cannot function properly.

True science studies and introduces into human consciousness the truths and knowledge which are regarded as the most important by the people of a certain period and society. Art transfers these truths from the realm of knowledge to the realm of feeling.

—L. N. Tolstoy

The John Ruskin quotation is taken from a series of lectures the critic gave at Oxford in 1872 and then published under the title *The Eagles' Nest*.<sup>63</sup> The two quotations from Tolstoy both come from *What is Art?*, published in 1898.<sup>64</sup> The word “science” (*nauka*) in Russian has an elastic meaning that can encompass more broadly “scholarship” or “knowledge.” Under this rubric Tolstoy includes theology, philosophy, history and political economy as well as natural science and mathematics. Tolstoy’s views on science are as anti-establishment as his views on art, which he likewise separates into the bad category (science which serves the purposes of the upper classes, the “enriching of capitalists, who produce the objects of luxury or tools for destroying human beings”) and the good (which “is not something which we have accidentally become interested in, but of how human life should be arranged”). John Ruskin took a similar approach in the Halcyon lecture: “Science does its duty not in telling us the causes of spots on the sun, but in explaining to us

the laws of our own life, and the consequences of their violation.”<sup>65</sup> Nijinsky uses these epigraphs as inspiring points of departure for his dance notation, which he had referred to in 1916 as “my real life-work” and “pioneering work” providing “foundations [that] will be sound and logical” upon which others can build.<sup>66</sup> After these epigraphs, Nijinsky then proceeds to define choreography as “the art of movement” and the “art of writing movement,” supplying this etymology: *choreo*=dance, *graphy*=writing.<sup>67</sup> The etymology of the word indicates writing dance or dance-writing. Originally the word “choreography” indeed referred to what we now call dance notation, a system of literal, graphic, and/or pictorial symbols to document and conceptualize dance. Today, as in Nijinsky’s time, the word “choreography” refers to the art of creating and arranging dances or the product of this creation. In a nutshell: choreography (the art of dance) can be represented through choreo-graphy (the art of writing dance).

Building on the etymology he supplies, Nijinsky announces his educational purpose on one of the title pages he made for his dance notation system in St. Moritz on March 1, 1918:

1. Dance is the art of movement. Dance is written and read with the same ease as the reading and writing of words we utter. In order to read dance, it is necessary to study the signs and rules by which means dance is written. The study of the rules and signs is the subject of the “Theory of Dance.”<sup>68</sup>

As if following the Tolstoy and Ruskin directives to unite people through science and art, Nijinsky arranges his notation as a textbook, with numbered Lessons (*Uroki*), Examples (*Primery*), and Exercises (*Uprazhneniia*). In very neat handwriting, presenting what seems to be a near-final version, Nijinsky proceeds to Part I: “The Signs Used for Writing Dance,” which he separates into “main” and “secondary” movements. The following pages in the notebook explain the system using musical symbols and other symbols he has devised, written explanation, and schematic renderings. In another notebook, he has written, “Part II, Scales-Intervals.” He defines “interval” as “the distance dividing the movements (two notes).” He defines the “vertical scale” (*vertikal’naia gamma*) as “one which progresses vertically, i.e., from down upwards or from up downwards,” explaining that “vertical scales succeed each other from an equal distance from each other.” The “horizontal scale” is one “which progresses in a horizontal position, i.e., from left to right or from right to left.” Part II likewise unfolds in textbook fashion, with lessons (“Lesson 4”), with numbered paragraphs that lay out the principles (“82. A vertical scale is . . .”), and with cross-references to previous material (“the series—semi-circles—shown schematically at the end of paragraph 18 of Part

I, gives us a visual notion of a vertical scale”) and to upcoming material (“The order of which will be explained in paras 86, 87 . . .”). These are all interspersed with exercises for the student, such as: “Mark the intervals separating the notes next to each other in the exercises below connected with a bow-like line.”<sup>69</sup> These exercises do not ask students to perform physical movements any more than a reading primer would demand students to act out model sentences. Nijinsky instead instructs students to practice *reading* the movement script, to stretch their choreographic imaginations. As Nijinsky explained in 1916, his new notation textbook would enable students “to behold and enjoy a ballet” with “the mind’s eye.”<sup>70</sup>

Through his *Theory of Dance*, Nijinsky expands on the ABCs of the dance notation system he had learned as a student at the Imperial Theater School in St. Petersburg—*L’Alphabet des mouvements du corps humain* by Vladimir Stepanov (1866–1896). Nijinsky’s new notation system would go beyond merely documenting dance and provide a new way of conceiving dance and teaching dancers. He seems to have been at least partly inspired by Tolstoy’s *Alphabet Book* (*Azbuka*). Tolstoy created his 700-page *Azbuka* in four volumes (completed in 1872) to be used as a reading primer in the rural schools he founded. The first volume begins with the thirty-five letters of the Cyrillic alphabet in large type; the next volumes present material (fables, scientific explanations, the rudiments of mathematics, extracts from religious texts, etc.) with progressing difficulty, followed by instructions for teachers. Attention to the “whole person” lies at the heart of Tolstoy’s pedagogic principles: to cultivate each student’s ethical, spiritual, creative, as well as intellectual abilities.<sup>71</sup> In a similar vein, Nijinsky begins his *Theory of Dance* with the basic signs and rules of dance notation, with the evident intention of proceeding with increasing difficulty. On March 22, just a few weeks after writing a title page for his notation system, Nijinsky began a separate notebook labelled “Dancing School of V. Nijinsky, St. Moritz, Switzerland,” in which he laid out the rules of his (hypothetical) school with the underlying purpose to develop each student’s “spiritual and physical health.”<sup>72</sup> Succinctly put, Nijinsky wanted to nurture the whole dancer. By means of his dance notation textbook (“my real life-work”) and his plans for a school, Nijinsky aimed to cultivate “dancing aspirants of the future” so that they would be “electrically sensitive” to all the arts which the dancer needs, including music and drama as well as “painting and the principles of pictorial art.”<sup>73</sup>

In this regard, we can extend the etymology Nijinsky gives for “choreography” so that *graphy* (*graphia*) also means “drawing,” as in the Russian word for drawing and writing: *pisat’* (писать). This is the word Nijinsky uses in the first draft notebook of his 1917–1918 dance notation, in which he lays out his goal to study the human body in terms of the physical aspects (breathing, etc.) and the typological (i.e., various body types) as well as “from the artistic

point of view: drawing and writing (in paints)” [*risovat’ i pisat’ (kraskami)*].<sup>74</sup> Nijinsky uses the same word—*pisat’*—in *Feeling* to describe his own drawing and painting. As he tells it, he began drawing in earnest in the summer of 1918 (around July) and he had devoted himself to it intensely by the fall (around October). His artwork of that period clearly extends his dance notation ideas. It is as if Nijinsky takes the diagrams he uses as visualizations of his dance notation system and lets his imagination (and pencil) run in various directions, stretching and expanding the movement possibilities of those circular diagrams. If the circular images of the dance notation represent a container to support movement, Nijinsky’s drawings of segments and arcs create virtual bodies that move within—and beyond—that container. One specific shape comes to the fore in these drawings: the almond shape, usually referred to by its Italian name, the mandorla. The mandorla is formed by two overlapping circles, and as in a Venn diagram, the intersection of the overlapping circles results in a third region or space. An ancient symbol, the mandorla represents sacred or mystical space, or the intersection of seemingly opposite elements such as spirit and matter, the invisible and the visible, the divine and earthly, the “I” as part of a whole and the “I” as self-contained individual. Of the nine abstract drawings in one of the St. Moritz notebooks, the first picture in the series presents the name Waslaw Nijinsky in Latin letters within two interlocking mandorlas. What a simple and potent representation of the artist’s liminal role. With this frontispiece, Nijinsky invites, or rather induces, the reader into his trance-dance writing.

The day before Nijinsky gave his “hypnotic” solo recital at the Suvretta House Hotel, the Swiss writer Maurice Sandoz had a chance encounter with the dancer in St. Moritz. According to Sandoz’s recollections published in 1952, Nijinsky told him that he was not dancing anymore (*Je ne danse plus*) but that he was writing dances (*J’écris les danses*).<sup>75</sup> He then explained his dance notation to Sandoz and reportedly declared, “I have transcribed the *Sacre* and intend to transcribe all of them, all of them . . . and in ten, twenty, a hundred years they will be able to dance these ballets as they dance them today.”<sup>76</sup> It seems unlikely that Nijinsky had written a score for *Sacre* because his 1917–1918 dance notation shows little interest in “fixing” movement in that way. However, Nijinsky was still clearly interested in writing dance. By this time, his dance-writing began to take another form. The morning after the conversation with Sandoz, Nijinsky picked up one of the notebooks that he had previously titled “Theory of Dance” and began writing down his “impressions” (*moi vpechatleniia*) in a freestyle form. On around February 27, he picked up a second notebook and continued his writing. This second notebook contains the nine drawings of circles and eyes, including the first one with his name written within mandorlas. In this same notebook, Nijinsky made a frontispiece for “Second Part, On Death”

and noted that he wanted to call everything in the first notebook “Life” and to title his entire book *Feeling*. At some point before March 4, Nijinsky picked up yet another notebook—the third and last of the books that comprise *Feeling*—a notebook half full with his dance notation. This time, he flipped it over and continued writing *Feeling* from the other side. Not wanting to waste paper (conservation of natural resources is an important issue for him), Nijinsky might simply have decided to reuse the notebooks from his previous projects. In any case, it makes a striking gesture: all three of the projects appear side by side, or upside down, in the same notebooks. Nijinsky evidently considered them as distinct but related modalities of one single creative project.

From the intermittent dates Nijinsky provides, a tentative timeline emerges. When he settled in St. Moritz at the very end of December 1917, Nijinsky resumed work on his “dance-writing.” That summer he moved to “writing-in-paints,” which seems to have been his exclusive creative outlet by late fall. By mid-January, he began his life-writing, which overlapped briefly with his “writing-in-paints.” In February he took down his paintings from the wall of his study and let his paints dry up. Knowing he had little time left, Nijinsky put all his energy into his life-writing “because everyone can read” (174).

A few days before he began *Feeling*, Nijinsky reportedly told his wife that he would improvise his solo dance recital at the Suvretta House because he wanted to show the audience “how dances are created” instead of serving up “ready-made” entertainment.<sup>77</sup> His multimodal writing project has the same aim: to lay bare the cognitive and physical processes of creativity as an exemplary case of self-study. Begun in textbook fashion, the project morphed into an experimental project of self-notation, in which Nijinsky explores Tolstoy’s burning question and extends it: What is art? What is writing? What is dance? What is feeling? The book *Feeling* thus rehearses what Nijinsky learned from his dance notation and drawing. He overlays one mode on top of the other. In his paintings, especially the ones that have been called the “Mask” series, it is clear that Nijinsky painted over his previous paintings. In one of the paintings at the John Neumeier Foundation, one can see on the reverse side a geometric figure made up of circles with several fields of color that evidently was the original background. As the curator Hans Michael Schäfer concludes, this background is “obviously an independent earlier drawing which Nijinsky has overlaid with ink and watercolor.”<sup>78</sup> This same overlay technique is evident in the notebooks at the New York Public Library. They constitute a palimpsest, that is, a tablet that has been written on many times, with prior layers imperfectly erased so that the page can be reused for another document. In other words, the notebooks have been reused, but they still bear visible traces of their earlier form. I use the term “artifact” to refer to this

palimpsest—something that can be “held in the hand”—and I use the term multimodal project to honor Nijinsky’s ongoing commitment to the process of making his book.

By treating Nijinsky’s *Feeling* as one mode of a multimodal project, I argue that his book has everything to do with dance—but not of the “My Life in Dance” variety. As counterintuitive as it may be, the way into the dance of Nijinsky’s book is through a consideration of its distinctly *literary* features, its literariness. Accordingly, *Nijinsky’s Feeling Mind* pays special attention to the following: (1) the repetition of words such as *sila* (force) and *energiia* (energy), *um* (intellect, mind) and *razum* (reason, feeling mind); (2) narrative structure and “vertical” and “horizontal” movements; (3) an inside out/outside in circulation between literal meanings and figurative tropes and between public and private discourses; (4) a verbal style that embraces circularity, multiplicity, and simultaneity. In summary, Nijinsky’s *Feeling* represents by verbal means the shapes (circle, mandorla), axes (vertical/horizontal) and creative goals (interconnectedness of self and world) of his dance notation and drawing.

## CONTRIBUTIONS

*Nijinsky’s Feeling Mind* is the first book-length study to consider Nijinsky’s writing as part of a multimodal project. From 1919 onward, the three modes—dance notation, drawings, and writing—have had separate afterlives and interpretive histories. I am indebted to the groundbreaking research on Nijinsky’s 1915 dance notation by Ann Hutchinson Guest and Claudia Jeschke.<sup>79</sup> I hope to add to an understanding of the 1917–1918 dance notation, a topic that has only in recent years received attention, namely by Nicoletta Mislser, who considers the notation in relation to Stepanov’s system, and by Jeschke, who views Nijinsky’s later notation to be as visionary as his choreographic creations.<sup>80</sup> In terms of Nijinsky’s artwork, I find enormously helpful the approach taken by Foundation John Neumeier (*Tanz der Farben*, catalogue of exhibit at Hamburger Kuntshalle, published 2009) and the Metropolitan Museum of Art (*Inventing Abstraction, 1910–1925*, exhibited from December 2012 to April 2013). This approach views the dancer’s drawings within art-historical contexts and networks of European modernism—not as mere pathological graphs as they had been seen for many years—while at the same time remaining sensitive to the particular questions that arise from outsider art.<sup>81</sup>

I also take a cue from the many artists—choreographers, filmmakers, song writers, playwrights, theater directors, dancers, and poets—who have been inspired by Nijinsky’s writing.<sup>82</sup> In his *Books in My Life* (1969), the writer

Henry Miller remarks that over the years he has often “thrust” Nijinsky’s *Diary* upon friends and acquaintances and has “scanned it closely,” holding it in the highest esteem: “It is a communication so naked, so desperate, that it breaks the mold. We are face to face with reality, and it is almost unbearable. The technique, so utterly personal, is one from which every writer can learn. Had he not gone to the asylum, had this been merely his baptismal work, we would have had in Nijinsky a writer equal to the dancer.” Celebrating Nijinsky’s literary technique, Miller deems the *Diary* “a book for writers.”<sup>83</sup> I agree wholeheartedly that *Feeling* is a book for writers, and not just for professional writers, but for anyone who writes and cares about writing.

Along the same lines as Miller, the dancer Mikhail Baryshnikov enthuses about Nijinsky’s “extraordinary book” when discussing the experimental theater piece that he worked on in collaboration with the director Robert Wilson. In *Letter to a Man* (2015–2016), Baryshnikov plays the role of Nijinsky.<sup>84</sup> There are no other roles. It is just Baryshnikov on stage in a tuxedo and white face makeup, as Nijinsky’s words from the unexpurgated text play in a voiceover, and flash on a screen, in both Russian and English. Baryshnikov explained that he purposely avoided trying to recreate Nijinsky’s dancing: “There is not one gesture. It is not about this. . . . He strikes a pose, flexing his arm suddenly into a gracefully balletic shape. ‘It is a strange parallel story about the voice of this person, not his physicality.’”<sup>85</sup> *Nijinsky’s Feeling Mind* is also not about “this” (insert Baryshnikov’s graceful balletic gesture), but it *is* about physicality. In his autobiographical writing, Nijinsky makes no attempt to solidify his legacy, but he assumes that the reader knows “Nijinsky,” the dancer. Accordingly, I reference his ballets, especially the ones he choreographed, as in many cases they help to illuminate his textual reading and writing.

In essence, this book aims to navigate a space between and across the “poetics of dance” and the “somatics of literature.” The underlining premise is that dance was at the center of inter-arts transformations in the early twentieth century, and Nijinsky was at the center of dance. By “center,” I refer not to his stardom but to his intuitive and experiential understanding of the “poetics of dance” (i.e., of body imagery, spatial figurations, and kinesthetic patterning). In her book *Poetics of Dance* (Tanz-Lektüren), the dance theorist Gabriele Brandstetter builds on the idea of the dance body as a form of writing (*écriture corporelle*) to posit a method of “reading bodies as body imagery and their figurations in space, and to a physical method of reading specific cultural and artistic phenomena contained in images and text with the help of dance itself.”<sup>86</sup> With the help of Nijinsky’s dance knowledge, my study aims to invigorate our readings of literary texts. This inquiry brings us back to the material side of writing, even to the act of putting pen to paper, as Nijinsky never lets us forget what he is doing. This drawing our attention

to the physicality of writing would seem to disrupt the narrative flow, but in truth it does the opposite because one of the main purposes of Nijinsky's narrative is to bring attention to the writing body. And we are always aware that this writing body is a dance body, or as Nijinsky puts it, "I want to show what a dancer is" (229). In his Suvretta House performance, Nijinsky knew the audience was enjoying his dance because he could feel that "they too wanted to dance" (50). This phenomenon, when spectators feel that they are participating in movement even when they are sitting still, is often referred to as "kinesthetic empathy." This empathy enacts a somatic transfer—that is, the somatic orientation of one body is transferred to another body. The literary and translation theorist Douglas Robinson extends this somatic mimeticism to cases in which the other body is not visually or aurally present but "simply remembered through a verbal account." Robinson uses the term the "somatics of literature" or the "somatics of language" to describe an affective sharing that occurs through the written word. This is the body-becoming-mind or the emotional-becoming-mental.<sup>87</sup> In the case of Nijinsky, the dance-writer, I would add the reverse direction here as well: the-mind-becoming-body.

As for Nijinsky's mental health, I offer no diagnosis. Instead I contextualize and historicize his writing. My argument is that his multimodal Theory of Dance is also a theory of mind. Hence, I put his writing in conversation with other theories from the fields of psychology, philosophy, literary and cultural theory, anthropology, and religious studies.<sup>88</sup> If Nijinsky is an exemplar of anything, he is first and foremost his own exemplar.

## OVERVIEW

*Nijinsky's Feeling Mind* begins with the dancer on stage, provoking and connecting with a live audience. It ends with the dancer in his private room, inviting readers in, to love him and to help him "correct his mistakes." Each of the five chapters explores this interplay of interiority and exteriority: personal therapy as communal healing (chapter 1), physical landscape as mental landscape (chapter 2), interoception and exteroception (chapter 3), private self in the public realm (chapter 4), and the somatic and the performative (chapter 5).

"Part One: From Stage to Page" contextualizes Nijinsky's writing within the form that emerges as he writes. "Chapter One: Trance Dance" zooms in on Nijinsky's Suvretta House Hotel performance as the catalyst for his writing. "Chapter Two: Walking and Talking" demonstrates how Nijinsky found a poetic structure for his book in the verse sections and the solitary walks he records. While the first two chapters emphasize the "vertical" axis (*kairos*), the third chapter emphasizes the "horizontal" (*chronos*). By tracing