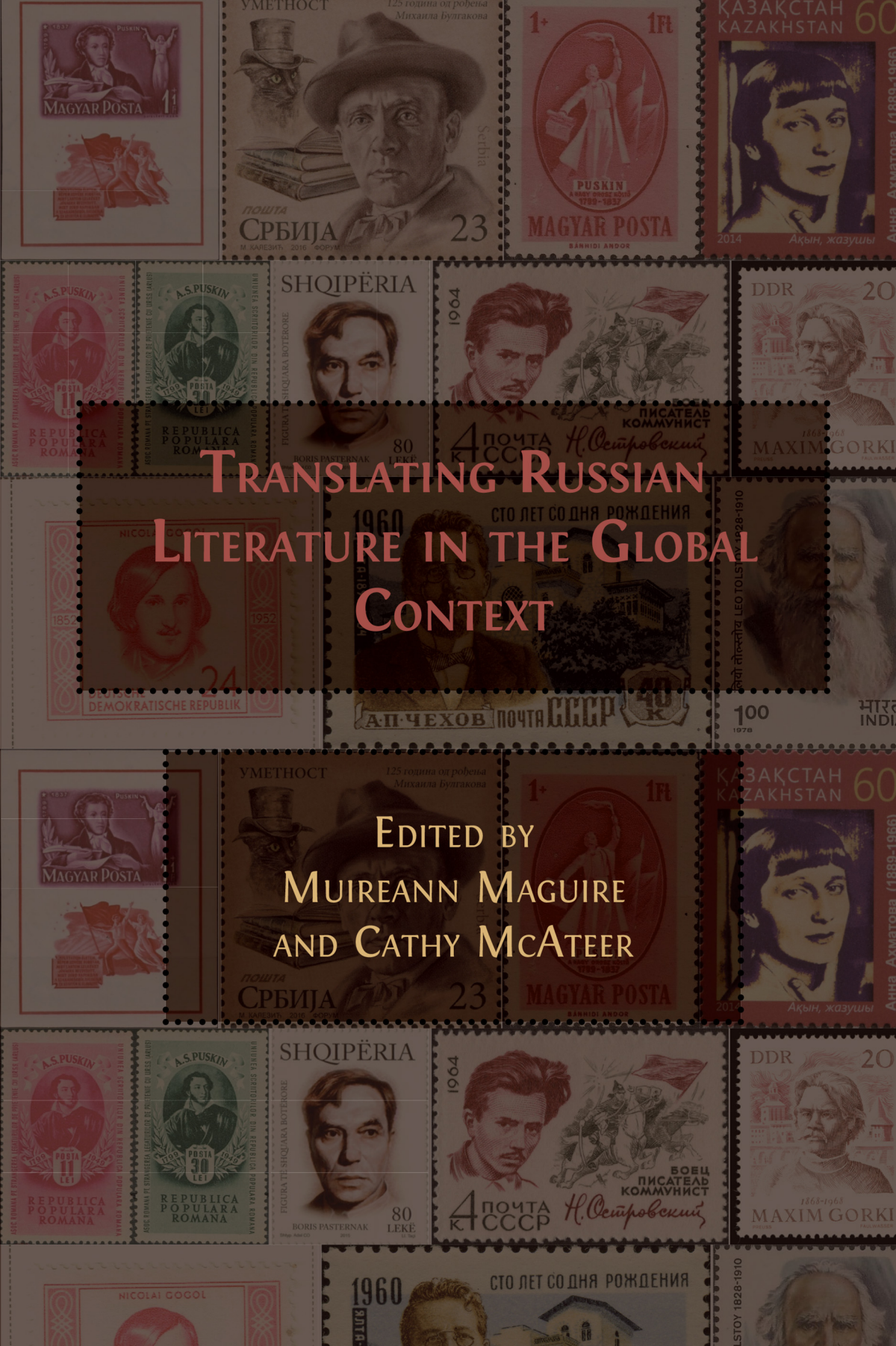

Translating Russian Literature in the Global Context

Edited by
Muireann Maguire
and Cathy McAteer

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France

"May Russia Find Her Thoughts Faithfully Translated": E. M. de Vogüé's Importation of Russian Literature into France

Elizabeth F. Geballe

Introduction

Eugène-Melchior de Vogüé (1848–1910), a French diplomat, literary critic, travel writer, archaeologist, and philanthropist is known primarily in the Slavic intellectual community for bringing the pantheon of nineteenth-century Russian writers to French and then to West European attention. After acquiring first-hand knowledge of Russia, and of Russian, as a diplomat in Saint Petersburg, and marrying a Russian (Aleksandra Annenkova), de Vogüé turned his attention to literature.[1] His *Le Roman russe* (*The Russian Novel*), published in 1886 and translated immediately into English and German, was both epoch-making and canon-forming.[2] It offered biographies of Aleksandr

1 For a more detailed summary of de Vogüé's introduction to Russian culture and language, see Anna Gichkina, *Eugène-Melchior de Vogüé, ou comment la Russie pourrait sauver la France* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2018), esp. Chapter IV, pp. 77–94.

2 The study comprised five articles that had been published in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* between 1883 and 1886 and one article, on Pushkin, that had appeared in the *Revue bleue* in 1886. Although several studies of Russian literature were published in the years preceding de Vogüé's book—including Ernest Dupuy's *Les Grands maîtres de la literature russes au dix-neuvième siècle* (1885) and Charles Turner's *Studies in Russian Literature* (1882)—neither achieved the widespread relevance that *Le Roman russe* did. In *Russomania*, Rebecca Beasley explains that "while Dupuy and Turner provided straightforward introductions to the novelists,

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Pushkin, Nikolai Gogol, Ivan Turgenev, Fedor Dostoevsky, and Lev Tolstoy, while also summarising their plots, sketching their relationships to Realism, and generalising about the Russian character. Ostensibly designed to redirect the trends of French Naturalism, de Vogüé's study cast Russian literature as "the great alternative, a paragon of decency and truthfulness with a moral edge, qualities calculated to warm the hearts of the late Victorians."[3] Though many of these chapters had been published in previous years, in slightly different forms, they cemented de Vogüé's reputation. Even in the current edition of France's Larousse literary encyclopaedia, de Vogüé is credited with having "discovered for French audiences" the major works of Russian literature.[4]

For the purposes of this essay, I acknowledge de Vogüé's achievements as a critic and cultural ambassador who set the expectations of the French reading public, but I grant more importance to his role as a translator. In the final sentence of *Le Roman russe*, de Vogüé expresses his hope that Russia will find in his study a sincere expression of its national virtues: "May she find her own thoughts faithfully translated, and recognize, without too much disparagement, the image of herself, ever before my eyes" ["*Puisse-t-elle y retrouver sa pensée fidèlement traduite et se reconnaître, sans trop y mécomptes, à l'image qu'elle m'a laissé dans les yeux*"].[5] Metaphorical as his 'translation' may be here, de Vogüé's oeuvre—when it concerned Russia—persistently grappled with both practical and theoretical issues of translation. Though a version of Tolstoy's 'Three Deaths' ('Tri smerti', 1859) was the only complete translation published by the French scholar ('Trois

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they stopped short of arguing for the contemporary significance of the Russian novel. In contrast, Vogüé argued that the Russian novel offered a moral and spiritual corrective to the materialism of French literature." See Rebecca Beasley, *Russomania* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 15.

3 Rachel May, *The Translator in the Text* (Chicago, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1994), p. 21.

4 Larousse, *Eugène Melchior, vicomte de Vogüé*, https://www.larousse.fr/encyclopedie/litterature/Eug%C3%A8ne_Melchior_vicomte_de_Vog%C3%BC%C3%A9/171945. F.W.J Hemmings, although he believed French audiences would have discovered the splendours of Russian literature without de Vogüé's help, credits the French author with establishing the feverish cult of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy: "The prestige of the periodical in which he was writing, his own eloquence, and evident sincerity—all these must be allowed to have given great impetus to the rapid popularisation of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky in France after 1886". See F.W.J. Hemmings, *The Russian Novel in France 1884–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950), p. 30.

5 In the course of this essay, I cite French passages from de Vogüé's original text: Eugène-Melchior de Vogüé, *Le Roman russe* (Paris: Librarie Plon, 1886). English translations are from Eugène-Melchior de Vogüé, *The Russian Novel*, trans. by Colonel H. A. Sawyer (London: Chapman and Hall, 1913). The lines cited here are from p. 347 of *Le Roman russe*, p. 332 of Sawyer's translation. In cases where Sawyer did not translate the French passage cited—his translation is slightly abridged—I provide my own translations. All other translations are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

Morts', 1882), he translated all the quotations scattered throughout *Le Roman russe* and used the latter study—and a separate article in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*—as a platform to evaluate the work of other translators.[6] It would be misleading to suggest that de Vogüé introduced the French public to Russian literature for the first time, since other translators preceded him. By 1886, the French public could access, among other texts, translations by Prosper Mérimée (1803–70) of Pushkin's 'The Queen of Spades' ('Pikovaia dama', 1834), 'The Hussar' ('Gusar', 1833), and 'The Bohemians' ('Tsygany', 1827), Gogol's 'The Inspector General' ('Revizor', 1836) and *Dead Souls* (*Mertvye dushi*, 1842); a translation by Victor Derély (1840–1904) of Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (*Prestuplenie i nakazanie*, 1866); translations by Louis Viardot (1800–83) of Pushkin's *The Captain's Daughter* (*Kapitanskaia dochka*, 1836) and of Gogol's 'Taras Bulba' ('Taras Bulba', 1835) and other stories; translations by Charles Morice (1860–1919) of Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* (*Brat'ia Karamazovy*, 1880) and of other works by the same author; Tolstoy's *War and Peace* (*Voina i mir*, 1867) translated by Princess Irène Paskévitch (1835–1925); translations by Ernest Charrière (1805–65) of Gogol's *Dead Souls* and Turgenev's *A Sportsman's Sketches* (*Zapiski okhotnika*, 1852); and translations by Ely Halpérine-Kaminsky (1858–1936) of Tolstoy's 'The Death of Ivan Il'ich' ('Smert' Ivana Il'ycha', 1886), 'Three Deaths', 'Kholstomer' ('Kholstomer', 1886), Andrei's death in *War and Peace*, and Nikolai Levin's death in *Anna Karenina* (*Anna Karenina*, 1878), grouped in a collection enticingly called *Death* (*La Mort*, 1886).[7] By including translated extracts from all these authors, including Maksim Gorky, however, de Vogüé's survey covers most ground. Indeed, as Jean-Louis Backès points out in a recent article on *Le Roman russe*, if one were to collect de Vogüé's translated citations, "one could compile an interesting anthology of 19th-century Russian literature".[8]

My choice to single out de Vogüé from the above list of translators has less to do with the volume of his output than with the authority which he was granted

6 Eugène-Melchior de Vogüé, 'Les Livres russes en France', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 78 (1886), 823–41.

7 Vladimir Boutchik helpfully divides this group into three categories. The first consists of translators like Irène Paskévitch, née Irina Vorontsova-Dashkova—Russian aristocrats who had mastered French and who were motivated by national pride. The second group includes Mérimée and Charrière—French writers who had lived in Russia and were perhaps inspired to translate by a desire to improve their Russian language skills. The third group—a generation removed from the first two and including Halpérine-Kaminsky, Morice, Derély, and Neyroud—consisted of more professional translators, though they varied in their fidelity to the original texts. See Vladimir Boutchik, *La Littérature russe en France* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1947), pp. 13–34.

8 Jean-Louis Backès, 'Eugène-Melchior de Vogüé et *Le Roman russe*', in *L'Appel de l'étranger: Traduire en langue française en 1886*, ed. by Lucile Arnoux-Farnoux, Yves Chevrel, and Sylvie Humbert-Mougin (Paris: Presses Universitaires François-Rabelais, 2015), pp. 213–28 (p. 219), https://doi.org/10.4000/books.pufr.11309.

by editors and the reading public at large. In his *Method in Translation Theory* (1998), Anthony Pym, focusing especially on translations into French at the end of the nineteenth century, remarks that by those years "translation had become just one of several methods for the transmission of knowledge".[9] De Vogüé, who had served at the French Embassy and written for the *Revue des Deux Mondes* and was soon to be elected to the Académie Française, was what Pym might refer to as an "active efficient cause"—an individual translator who acquires enough power and influence to intervene in literary history.[10] Such power allowed de Vogüé to determine and shape processes of literary transculturation that are often addressed in the passive voice. In *What Is World Literature?* (2003), David Damrosch, for example, submits that "works of literature take on a new life as they move into the world at large, and to understand this new life we need to look closely at the ways the work becomes reframed in its translations and in its new cultural contexts".[11] In too many cases, such "reframing" is a hazy historical process, shaped by translators, editors, publishing pressures (the Franco-Russian alliance of the early 1890s creating a higher demand for Russian literature, for example), the literary marketplace, and the cultural zeitgeist. This case study, however, tracks what could almost be considered a one-man show of canon formation, and the 'reframing' can easily, though not solely, be credited to de Vogüé. The latter was a mediator who sacrificed the time he might have spent translating to focus on the critical [re]framing of Russian novels: in addition to his books and articles, he penned prefaces to Dostoevsky's *Notes from the House of the Dead* (*Zapiski iz mertvogo doma*, 1861) and *The Idiot* (*Idiot*, 1869), to Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, to Nikolai Nekrasov's poetry, to works by Ivan Krylov, Denis Fonvizin, and Fedor Tiutchev. Unlike Constance Garnett, who was far more prolific than her French counterpart but by and large refused to write prefaces to her English translations, de Vogüé shaped the expectations of the French reading public in his non-fiction.[12] In the following microhistorical case study, I will track the interventions de Vogüé made in *Le Roman russe*, his translation of Tolstoy, his reviews of other contemporary translations, and his prefaces to translated Russian works. Taking into account de Vogüé's highly personal and idiosyncratic motivations, I focus primarily on how, as a literary critic, he defined the otherness of Russian literature and how, as a translator, he modelled a reaction to it.

9 Anthony Pym, *Method in Translation History* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 174.

10 Pym, *Method in Translation History*, p. 161.

11 David Damrosch, *What Is World Literature?* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), p. 24.

12 Constance Garnett (1861–1946) was by far the most prolific translator of Russian literature in the U.K. Translator of some seventy volumes of Russian literature, Garnett made available—often for the first time—works by Gogol, Dostoevsky, Chekhov, Tolstoy, Turgenev, and Goncharov.

Anguish, Despair, Hangovers: The Language of Moral Suffering

The animating force behind de Vogüé's articles, and, as I hope to show, his translations, is his dissatisfaction with *fin-de-siècle* French Naturalism. Concentrating on what the Russian realists can teach their French counterparts, de Vogüé dismisses Russian poets from his canon, using translation as a convenient excuse to do so: "Russian poets are not and will never be translated" ("*Les poètes russes ne sont et ne seront jamais traduits*").[13] He turns instead to prose writers like Gogol, Turgenev, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and later, Gorky, to demonstrate how they document human suffering. Though de Vogüé has a soft spot for the landscapes evoked in Russian literature, the passages he chooses to translate are by and large accounts of physical torment and bodily deterioration: from Gogol he highlights the execution of the Cossacks in 'Taras Bulba' ('Taras Bulba', 1835); from Turgenev, the half-dead hag attempting to sing in 'A Living Relic' ('Zhivye moshchi', 1874); from Dostoevsky, the death of Mikhailov in *Notes from the House of the Dead* and of the student in *Poor Folk* (*Bednye liudi*, 1846); from Tolstoy, Prince Andrei's battlefield injury and the carnal reality of war in *War and Peace*. In an essay called 'Russian Books in France' ('Les Livres russes en France') for the *Revue des Deux Mondes* in 1886, which was not included in *Le Roman russe*, de Vogüé—though he jokes that nervous people will hesitate to enter libraries full of macabre Russian titles—admits that Halpérine-Kaminsky beat him to the idea of grouping Tolstoy's death tales into one collection.[14] Taken together, de Vogüé's translation choices—and I include his version of 'Three Deaths'—suggest that he was trying to put these scenes in dialogue with the morbid trend in French literature that was, in his view, initiated by Stendhal and perfected by Gustave Flaubert.[15] By demonstrating the deficiencies of French Naturalism, de Vogüé hoped to facilitate the welcoming of Russian literature by French readers.

De Vogüé can be as hard on the mercilessness of the Russian realists as he is on his own compatriots; Tolstoy's 'The Death of Ivan Il'ich' makes him want to turn away, as if from the "last convulsions of a dying animal" ("*dernières convulsions d'une bête mourante*").[16] However, de Vogüé rejoices that their prose generally combines laboratory-style Realism with "moral intention" ("*intention morale*")

13 De Vogüé, *Roman russe*, p. 36. De Vogüé later furthers this thought: "I remember having seen a firefly brought home between two leaves of a small copy of *Onegin* by a young girl just returned from Naples. It was an infinitesimal particle of a glorious Italian night, but all the charm of its luminiferous light departed the moment it had been touched. Thus would perish Russian poetry were I to transpose it in these pages" (ibid., p. 45).

14 De Vogüé, 'Livres russes en France', p. 838; p. 829.

15 De Vogüé, *Roman russe*, p. xxxvi.

16 De Vogüé, 'Livres russes en France', p. 829.

or "moral inspiration" ("*inspiration morale*").[17] In his preface to *Notes from the House of the Dead* (*Souvenirs de la maison des morts*, 1886), de Vogüé welcomes the salutary effects of "moral suffering"'—something he cannot find in French literature.[18] It is a point that other contemporaneous translators make as well: in his preface to *La Mort*, Halpérine-Kaminsky insists that the physical deaths depicted therein are attended by "moral suffering" ("*les souffrances morales*");[19] Charrière, in his preface to a French translation of Turgenev's *A Sportsman's Sketches*, speaks of the "moral suffering" ("*souffrance morale*") of both characters and readers.[20] The moral dimension of Russian Realism encourages, according to de Vogué, a feeling of charity and pity in readers: "Realism becomes odious when it ceases to be charitable" ("*Le réalisme devient odieux dès qu'il cesse d'être charitable*").[21] For de Vogüé, the characters that populate Russian literature—especially those in Dostoevsky and Tolstoy—are meant to inspire "that mystical feeling of compassion towards an unfortunate being" ("*cet état mystique de compassion près d'un être malheureux*").[22]

However, it is precisely the language of moral suffering that de Vogüé finds nearly impossible to translate. Over and over again, as he attempts to display the inner life of fictional characters, the French scholar questions the very possibility of cross-cultural understanding. In the context of Gorky, '*toska*' becomes the impediment, just as '*poshlost*' did for Nabokov in his book on Gogol.[23] De Vogüé recognises that '*toska*'—roughly translated as 'anguish' or 'yearning'—is the "national variety of the oldest human evil" ("*variété nationale du plus vieux mal humain*"), while emphasising its untranslatability.[24] Translating into French, he repeatedly italicises 'toska', revelling in its foreignness: "But where does this *toska* come from?" ("*Mais d'où vient cette* toska*?*"); "Suddenly *toska*, like a bullet to the head" ("*Tout de suite la* toska*, comme une balle dans le front*").[25] In Dostoevsky and Tolstoy, the verbal culprit is 'otchaianie' : "that state of mind for which I try in vain to find an equivalent into French" ("*cet état de coeur et d'esprit pour lequel je m'efforce vainement de trouver un equivalent dans notre langue*").[26] Noting that the

17 De Vogüé, *Roman russe*, p. xxxix.
18 Th. Dostoievsky, *Souvenirs de la Maison des Morts*, trans. by M. Neyroud (Paris: Librarie Plon, 1886), pp. i-xvi (p. viii).
19 *La Mort*, ed. by M. E. Halpérine (Paris: Librairie Académique Didier, 1886), pp. i-viii (p. vii).
20 Ivan Tourgéneff, *Mémoires d'un Seigneur Russe*, trans. by Ernest Charrière (Paris: Librarie Hachette, 1883), pp. v-xix (p. xi).
21 De Vogüé, *Roman russe*, p. 45. De Vogüé also accuses Gustave Flaubert of having forgotten that moral infirmity, just like physical infirmity, "is worthy of compassion" ("*est digne de compassion*") (p. xxxiii).
22 Ibid., p. 25; de Vogüé, *Russian Novel*, p. 246.
23 Vladimir Nabokov, *Nikolai Gogol* (New York: New Directions, 1961), pp. 63–64.
24 Eugène-Melchior de Vogüé, 'Maxime Gorky: L'oeuvre and l'homme', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 4:3 (1901), 660–95 (p. 676).
25 Ibid.
26 De Vogüé, *Roman russe*, p. 227; de Vogüé, *Russian Novel*, p. 225.

term generally means 'despair' (*désespoir*), de Vogüé complains that this word too is 'untranslatable' (*intraduisible*) and that:

> [...] the dictionary is a poor money changer at any time, and never gives the exact value, handing over the foreign coins in return for yours without reference to their own intrinsic fiscal value. As a matter of fact, to give that word its true value, one ought to smelt down twenty others, such as: despair, fatalism, savagery, asceticism and what not. [...] It is the allurement and the terror of the country where reigns sheer madness, where the excesses of life are preferred, where everything can be borne except the average lot, where the people, for choice, desire annihilation rather than moderation. Poor Russia![27]

De Vogüé finds that the Russians have much more complex ways, "a whole rich vocabulary" ("*tout un riche vocabulaire*"), to express "the nausea on days after drinking" ("*la nausée des lendemains d'ivresse*"), for which the French only have the vulgar "j'ai le mal aux cheveux" (literally 'my hair hurts').[28] Underlying de Vogüé's dwelling on the untranslatability of such forms of suffering as depression, melancholy, and even hangovers is the fear that compassion—the hallmark of Russian Realism—might be beyond French audiences.[29]

This spectre of untranslatability is woven through *Le Roman russe*, giving rise to larger problems. "In truth, I am in despair when I think of trying to explain these people to our own" ("*En verité, le désespoir me prend quand j'essaye de faire comprendre ce monde au nôtre*") de Vogüé laments, referring to Dostoevsky's characters.[30] The critic's 'despair', however, functions to preserve the foreignness of the original texts that is lost in so many translations of the period. In an essay on the analytics of translation, French translation theorist Antoine Berman describes translation as "the trial of the foreign" ("*l'épreuve de l'étranger*"), where 'the foreign' is a manifestation of cultural otherness that can be either domesticated or preserved in translation.[31] Advocating for a foreignising approach—for "open[ing] up the foreign work to us in its utter

27 De Vogüé, *Roman russe*, pp. 291–92; de Vogüé, *Russian Novel*, pp. 281–82. Anna Gichkina, in her monograph on de Vogüé, notes that the French critic was the first specialist on Russia to try to explain the emotion. She finds in his journals evidence that he explained '*otchaianie*' to himself as "a consecration of oneself to ennui," the refined pleasure of combating oneself. See Anna Gichkina, *Eugène-Melchior de Vogüé*, p. 83.

28 De Vogüé, 'Maxime Gorky,' p. 679.

29 Hemmings goes so far as to suggest that de Vogüé was fooling himself in his search to find compassion in Tolstoy, who "never himself sheds tears over the fate of his characters" (*Russian Novel in France*, p. 46).

30 De Vogüé, *Roman russe*, p. 238; de Vogüé, *Russian Novel*, p. 235.

31 Antoine Berman, 'Translation and the Trials of the Foreign' in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. by Lawrence Venuti (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 240–53 (p. 240).

foreignness"—Berman argues that in the Western tradition, the individual essence of foreign texts is "radically repressed".[32]

I would suggest that de Vogüé, in calling attention to the untranslatable, is effectively exposing the foreign.[33] Adopting in his essays all the strategies that, according to Berman, foreignising translators would use—italicisations, footnotes, in-text commentary—de Vogüé disturbs the deceptively fluid currents of cross-cultural transmissions.[34] Anticipating Berman and other proponents of foreignising translations in his preface to 'Trois Morts', de Vogüé addresses the violence that foreign texts should wreak on the translating language. Justifying his 'servile' translation, de Vogüé asserts: "one shouldn't hesitate to abdicate the genius of one's own language, to de-ossify it in a way, in order to adapt it to the skeleton of another language" ("*il ne faut hésiter, je crois, à abdiquer le génie de sa propre langue, à la désosser, en quelque sorte, pour l'adapter au squelette de la phrase étrangère*").[35] In thus guiding the public's taste, de Vogüé was also responsible for popularising other translations that emphasised the foreignness of Russian literature. In 1879, he ended his admiring review of the first French translation of *War and Peace* (accomplished by Princess Irène Paskévitch) with a warning, which reads almost like an endorsement, that "no French reader, in reading these pages, could doubt that he owes them to a foreign pen" ("*nul Français, en lisant ces pages, ne pourra se douter qu'il les doit à une plume étrangère*").[36] In 1886, de Vogüé remarked in 'Les Livres russes en France' that Halpérine-Kaminsky, in translating Turgenev's *On the Eve* (*Un Bulgar à la Veille*, 1886), had managed to

32 Berman, 'Translation and the Trials of the Foreign', pp. 240–41.

33 Elsewhere, de Vogüé asserts that the translator "must remain enslaved to foreign thought" ("*doit rester esclave de la pensée étrangère*"). See de Vogüé, 'Livres russes en France', p. 839.

34 De Vogüé's 1888 review of a performance of Tolstoy's 'The Power of Darkness' ('Vlast' t'my', 1886), is perhaps where his pessimism about the possibility of translation reaches its apex. In it, he laments the translation of Tolstoy's title, dialogue, idioms, and genre, reminding his readers that translations are not clothes that can be tailored to fit the same thought. See Eugène-Melchior de Vogüé, 'La Puissance des Ténèbres', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 86 (1888), 426–50 (p. 430).

35 Léon Tolstoi, 'Trois Morts', trans. by E. M. de Vogüé, *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 52 (1882), 913–25 (p. 913). De Vogüé was occasionally resigned about the inability of the French tongue to accommodate the nuances of Russian literature. In his essay on Maksim Gorky, he promises several translated quotes from the author, only to offer the following caveat: "These quotes will only give an approximate idea of the original. I translate and our old language, with its sharp contours, is desperate when forced to render the chaotic richness, the spontaneous liberty, the nuances and the blur of the evolving idiom that each Russian writer kneads at his will" ("*Elles ne donneront qu'une idée approximative de l'original: je traduis et notre vielle langue aux contours si nets est désespérante, lorsqu'on veut lui faire rendre la richesse désordonnée, la liberté primesautière, les nuances et le flou de l'idiome en formation que chaque écrivain russe pétrit à sa guise*"). See de Vogüé, 'Maxime Gorky,' p. 673.

36 Eugène-Melchior De Vogüé, 'Essais et notices', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 33 (1879), pp. 972–74.

"impart to our language a little of the master stylist's magic" ("*faire passer dans notre langue un peu de la magie du maître styliste*").[37] And in his preface to Charles Neyroud's translation of Dostoevsky's *Notes from the House of the Dead*, de Vogüé muses that:

> There is one means of taming the public and we use it all too frequently: that of strangling the translations of foreign works in order to 'adapt' them to our tastes. We have ruthlessly discarded several of these helpful fantasies and awaited a version of *Notes from the House of the Dead* that is at least a faithful version of the Russian text.[38]

De Vogüé's exaggerated angst about untranslatability in *The Russian Novel* could be read as a performance of his own mastery of Russian. But, taken together with his reviews, his non-fiction essays propose that Russian literature should challenge its readers. The foreignisation model in general, and the foreignisation of moral suffering in particular, requires that French readers not only be aware of their linguistic distance from Russian texts, but also gauge their own emotional capacity to respond to the characters in those texts. I turn to this aspect of transculturation next.

Translation and Compassion

In the face of all this foreignness, which he admirably embraces, de Vogüé resolves to foster understanding for characters whose moral/spiritual constitution defies translation. His individual translations, while preserving the foreignness outlined above, deviate from their originals when they insist upon the humanity of those who might otherwise be too foreign for pity. In 'Trois Morts', this impulse towards compassion manifests itself in contrasting references to the same character: where Tolstoy drily refers to "the invalid" ("*bol'noi*"), de Vogüé writes "*l'homme*" ("the man").[39] When he translates an excerpt from *Notes from the House of the Dead*, the same impulse has de Vogüé report that a prisoner "was *atoning* in prison for an irreparable crime" ("expiait *en Sibérie un crime irremissible*") while Dostoevsky's narrator says merely that he was sent to Siberia "for an extremely important crime" ("за чрезвычайно важное преступление").[40] And when Raskolnikov tells Sonya that he is bowing down before "human suffering" ("страдание человеческое"),

37 De Vogüé, 'Livres russes en France', p. 840.
38 Dostoievsky, *Souvenirs de la Maison des Morts*, p. xiv.
39 Tolstoi, 'Trois morts', p. 920; Lev Tolstoi, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 90 vols (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo 'Khudozhestvennaia Literatura,' 1928–1964), V (1931), p. 59.
40 De Vogüé, *Roman russe*, p. 229, my emphasis; F. M. Dostoevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 30 vols (Leningrad: Nauka, 1972–1990), IV (1972), p. 33.

de Vogüé has him prostrate himself before "the suffering of humanity" ("*la souffrance de l'humanité*").[41] I would argue that in each of these cases, de Vogüé is accomplishing one of the goals that he sets out in *The Russian Novel*: to restore the etymological meaning of compassion, which he defines as "to suffer with and through another" ("*souffrir avec and par un autre*").[42] While in theory de Vogüé celebrated the Russian national forms of moral suffering—so foreign to Western audiences—in practice he needed to make such forms globally available for empathy. The tension between de Vogüé's theoretical interest in foreignisation and his practical turn to what one might call 'emotional domestication' reaches its apex in the Dostoevsky chapter. De Vogüé's approach for most of *Le Roman russe* is thoroughly estranging—he mulls over 'otchaianie', fumbles while trying to explain Dostoevsky's characters, and struggles with Dostoevsky's "terrible realism" ("*réalisme terrible*")[43]—but in the final pages the French critic finds himself compelled to take a different approach. In his culminating meditations on the author, he invokes a claim Dostoevsky made once to him: "We are blessed with all the talents of the whole world—even more—that of Russia; therefore we are able to understand you, but you are incapable of understanding us" ("*Nous avons le génie de tous les peuples et en plus le génie russe; donc nous pouvons vous comprendre et vous ne pouvez nous comprendre*"). Disgruntled and challenged by what he sees as Dostoevsky's arguments in favour of the supremacy of the Russian race, de Vogüé accepts the challenge: "May his shade forgive me, for I am now going to show the contrary" ("*Que sa mémoire me pardonne; j'essaye aujourd'hui de lui prouver le contraire*").[44] He thus implies that none of the preceding pages—in which he discusses the novels, *otchaianie*, and Dostoevsky's personality—were part of his project to 'understand' the Russian author. Instead, he offers in his last five pages descriptions of Dostoevsky's two funerals: the private one in the author's home and the public procession in the streets of Saint Petersburg. Structurally, de Vogüé's essay implies that Dostoevsky is only interpretable—and therefore translatable—in death.[45]

41 Dostoevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, VI (1973), p. 246; de Vogüé, *Roman russe*, p. 251.

42 De Vogüé, *Russian Novel*, p. 246; de Vogüé, *Roman russe*, p. 250. Compassion is also what drives de Vogüé's critical evaluations. He finds that Nikolai Levin's death in *Anna Karenina* is far more touching than the death of Ivan Il'ich because Konstantin Levin, serving as intermediary, promotes readers who "think and tremble with him" ("*pense et tremble avec lui*"). See de Vogüé, 'Livres russes en France', p. 330.

43 De Vogüé, *Roman russe*, p. 230; de Vogüé, *Russian Novel*, p. 228.

44 De Vogüé, *Roman russe*, p. 270; de Vogüé, *Russian Novel*, p. 263.

45 And in fact, there is a hint of this assumption in the Tolstoy essay too, when de Vogüé declares that writing about the living author is too difficult: "How can one write of greatness before the last pinch of dust has rotted away, or before the individual has been transformed into an abstract image […]? It is difficult; but I see him before me so great that I believe him dead". De Vogüé, *Russian Novel*, p. 273.

I would suggest that in the final paragraphs of de Vogüé's study, the 'foreign body' of literature is literalised, and Dostoevsky's corpse becomes the text that needs to be translated. Confronted by Dostoevsky's dead body, de Vogüé struggles to judge the author's "moral value" ("*valeur morale*") just as he struggled to find the '*valeur morale*' of *Crime and Punishment*.[46] However, in the context of the funerals, de Vogüé is able to make the dead Dostoevsky—that is, the moral suffering he represents—translatable in two ways. First, unconsciously or not, he draws on a pre-eighteenth-century definition of 'translation' that existed in both English and French. The word 'translation'—from the Latin 'translatio' ('to carry across')—referred to the transfer of bodies between two sites, and usually implied the remains or relics of a saint being transferred from one monastery or church to another.[47] I turn to this medieval definition of translation partly because Dostoevsky—as described by de Vogüé—is characterised as a secular saint: de Vogüé refers to the author's final "apotheosis" ("*apotheose*"), the mourners take the flowers alongside his body as "relics" ("*reliques*"), and when the lights sputter and go out in the room where the corpse is being visited, "there only remained the uncertain light given by the small lamp hanging before the holy images of the Saints" ("*il ne resta que la lumière de la petite lampe appendue devant les images saintes*").[48] Carried like a saint to his place of burial, Dostoevsky is, in de Vogüé's conception, translated more easily than his oeuvre ever could be.

Secondly, de Vogüé uses both funerals to emphasise the pity that the Russian author inspired from his public: "He had spent himself for this people and evoked in them feelings of pity […]" ("*Il avait épanché sur ce people et réveillé en lui de la pitié* […]").[49] As if afraid that he himself will not be able to muster this pity and charity in himself—and therefore, in his own eyes, fail Dostoevsky's challenge—de Vogüé turns, in his final lines, from literary criticism to translation: "I could find no other words of farewell than those the student addressed to the young girl, words which summed up Dostoyevsky's faith and now come back to him, 'It is not before thee I kneel—I prostrate myself before the sufferings of all humanity'" ("*Je ne trouvai d'autre adieu que les mots de l'étudiant à la pauvre fille, les mots qui résumaient toute la foi de Dostoïevsky et devaient lui revenir: 'Ce n'est pas devant toi que je m'incline; je me prosterne devant toute la souffrance de l'humanité'*").[50] In this case, de Vogüé merges to such an extent with a fictional

46 De Vogüé, *Roman russe*, p. 277.

47 Cecilia Feilla, who writes about this particular meaning in the letters of Abelard and Héloïse, points out that the saint's body was often accompanied by an official 'letter of translation'. See Cecilia Feilla, 'Translating Communities: The Institutional Epilogue to the Letters of Abelard and Heloise', *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 16.2 (2003), 363–79.

48 De Vogüé, *Roman russe*, pp. 273–74; de Vogüé, *Russian Novel*, pp. 265–66.

49 De Vogüé, *Roman russe*, p. 277; de Vogüé, *Russian Novel*, p. 269.

50 De Vogüé, *Roman russe*, p. 277; de Vogüé, *Russian Novel*, p. 270.

character that he becomes a radical example of Lawrence Venuti's "invisible" translator, completely abandoning his role of mediator.[51] Moreover, borrowing Raskolnikov's words, and using his own translation rather than Derély's more literal rendering, de Vogüé universalises Dostoevsky's suffering. His linguistic and contextual translation of *Crime and Punishment* provides the ultimate means of judging Dostoevsky, of pitying him, and, therefore, of understanding him. Translation, in other words, facilitated compassion where criticism had failed.

Conclusion

As de Vogüé's fellow critic and translator, Téodor de Wyzewa, noted in 1887, "De Vogüé profoundly sensed the French public's unconscious desire for a restoration of spiritual life".[52] Thanks to his social standing, linguistic skill, and travel experiences, de Vogüé's restoration of spiritual life was most famously achieved in the realm of literary criticism. "With *The Russian Novel*," Gichkina writes, "the richness of the Russian literary tradition was, for the first time, presented to the French public in a way that was both accessible and captivating".[53] The appearance of de Vogüé's collection of essays in 1886, which had been tantalisingly heralded for the preceding three years in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* and the *Revue bleue*, and which offered quality translations of key passages in Russian literature, spawned a Russian fever. Gichkina cites the example of *War and Peace*, which had sold 550 copies within five years of its first French translation in 1874. After de Vogüé's study of Tolstoy was published in 1884, however, over two thousand copies of the same translation were printed for each of the next four years.[54] *The Russian Novel* itself received rave reviews, one hailing it as "a masterpiece of French criticism".[55]

But the 'restoration of spiritual life' anticipated by de Vogüé was not to be accomplished through literary criticism, as influential as his essays were. From the pen of a cultural ambassador who had captured public attention through his essays and novels, de Vogüé's translations ultimately did far more than introduce the French reading public to the spectrum of Russian realist authors, and, in fact, actively contradicted his theoretical views. De Vogüé maintained that "the task of the translator is to place clear glass, invisible if possible, between our eyes and the unknown landscape" ("*le souci du traducteur doit être d'interposer une vitre*

51 See Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 1–34.

52 Téodor de Wyzewa, 'Les Russes, notes', *La Revue Indépendante*, 2 (1887), 65–91 (p. 69).

53 Gichkina, *Eugène-Melchior de Vogüé*, p. 174.

54 Ibid., p. 166.

55 André Hallays, '*Le Roman Russe* par le vicomte E.-M. de Vogüé', *Journal des débats politiques et littéraires*, Sept. (1886), p. 3. See Gichkina, *Eugène-Melchior de Vogüé*, pp. 177–81, for a more complete summation of reviews garnered by *The Russian Novel*.

limpide, invisible s'il se peut, entre nos yeux et le paysage inconnu").[56] It has been my contention that de Vogüé revelled in the blurriness of this window, highlighting the impossibility of understanding the Russian character. As a practising translator, however, he promoted compassion as a means of overriding that impossibility. As a literary critic and amateur translation theorist, he objected that the word 'otchaianie' is untranslatable. As the translator of 'Three Deaths', however, he did translate the term—as "despair" ("*désespoir*"), apparently finding it adequate for capturing pathos.[57] And as a critic, he applauded the French translations produced by Halpérine-Kaminsky, Morice, and Derély. But as an active translator, he proffered his own versions of key passages from Russian novels. When France, and on its heels Western Europe, suddenly became infatuated with the nineteenth-century Russian novel, it was because de Vogüé had glorified literary suffering. But it was also because his translations and metatextual commentaries gave French readers the language to empathise with that suffering.

56 De Vogüé, 'Livres russes en France', p. 840.
57 Tolstoi, *Sobranie sochinenii*, V, p. 61; Tolstoi, 'Trois morts', p. 921.