The Psychologization of the Underground Man

Nietzsche's image of Dostoevsky through the French translation

L'esprit souterrain

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After reading *L'esprit souterrain*, the first French translation of Dostoevsky's *Notes from the Underground*, Nietzsche embraced Dostoevsky as a master psychologist, notwithstanding their ideological differences. This article argues that the much discussed influence of Dostoevsky on Nietzsche can be better understood by unraveling the specific nature of the translation *L'esprit souterrain*. An analysis shows that as a consequence of the adopted translation strategy, the character of the Underground Man, who in the Russian context functions as a philosophical-ideological type, becomes a purely psychological type. This is all the more important, since Nietzsche's enthusiasm for Dostoevsky led to rereadings of Dostoevsky through a Nietzschean lens.

Keywords: Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, Underground Man, *L'esprit souterrain*, *Notes from the Underground*, ideology

Introduction

At least with regard to their stance on the Christian faith, it is difficult to name two contemporary thinkers that are as philosophically distant from each other as Friedrich Nietzsche and Fyodor Dostoevsky. Around the same age that the Russian writer declared in a letter that "if someone proved [...] that Christ is outside the truth, and that it were a *fact* that the truth excludes Christ," he would "rather remain with Christ than with the truth" (quoted in Milosz 1975: 313), the philosopher with the hammer joyfully proclaimed in *The Gay Science* that God was dead. And still, all throughout the twentieth century and until today, the two thinkers were repeatedly named in one and the same breath. This article sheds light on the specific role that translation has played in the emergence of this association of Nietzsche and Dostoevsky. As such, it aims to contribute to a better understanding of the phenomenon of translation, long overlooked in literary studies as "inauthentic," but which shapes in fundamental ways the reception of foreign texts, and hence, also of world literature.

The prehistory of the association of Nietzsche with Dostoevsky begins in the winter of 1886-1887, when the German philosopher, already in his forties and well-established, was staying in Nice. Perusing a bookshop, he caught sight of a work with the intriguing title *L'esprit souterrain*. Its author was a certain "Dostoïevsky," whom the eloquent French critic Eugène-Melchior de Vogüé was currently catapulting into the center of French literary debates (see Boulogne 2015). And yet, according to his own account, Nietzsche had not yet heard of the Russian author (see Stellino 2015: 23). As his many letters to friends testify, while reading *L'esprit souterrain*, Nietzsche promptly came under the spell of its proclaimed author, in whom he found "a bracing and incisive kindred spirit" (Love & Metzger 2016: xiv).

What Nietzsche failed to notice—how could he?—was the fact that he was reading a very specific French edition of Dostoevsky's work. It was not until Ely Halpérine-Kaminsky (1929), one of the two French translators involved, wrote openly about their translation strategy for *L'esprit souterrain*, that its specific nature was brought to the attention of Nietzsche scholars. The first was Hans-Friedrich Minssen (1933: 16), but it took another four decades until the French target text was subjected to analysis, this time on the initiative of

Charles A. Miller (1973). During the last decades, an awareness has grown that the first book the German philosopher read “by Dostoevsky” was not just *Notes from the Underground*, but, to use Gideon Toury’s terminology (1995: 57), a highly acceptability-oriented translation thereof. The recent edited book by Jeff Love and Jeffrey Metzger (2016) illustrates that this fact has even become a commonplace in “Nietzsche and Dostoevsky studies,” but it is largely treated as a *fait divers* without acknowledging the specific functional implications for Nietzsche’s overall interpretation of Dostoevsky.

Although various scholars, such as Eric v.d. Luft & Douglas G. Stenberg (1991), Yelena Gal’tsova (2008), Paolo Stellino (2015) and Geoff Waite and Francesca Cernia Slovin (2016: 15), have made significant contributions to this topic, no systematic attempt has yet been undertaken to assess how the translational shifts of *L’esprit souterrain* might have influenced Nietzsche’s general interpretation of Dostoevsky’s *Notes from the Underground*. With this in mind, this article begins by analyzing Dostoevsky’s original work, paying special attention to the author’s polemical intent. Second, by comparing the French target text and the two corresponding Russian source texts, this article analyzes the most relevant shifts introduced by his French translators and proposes a hypothesis to explain the underlying reasons and the general effect of these shifts. Then, the analysis turns to the link between *L’esprit souterrain* and Nietzsche’s appreciation of Dostoevsky. To conclude, new light will be shed on the much-discussed influence of Dostoevsky on Nietzsche, and, to complete the circle, attention is also paid to the influence of Nietzsche on the reception of Dostoevsky.

Dostoevsky’s underground man as an ideological-philosophical type

From one of his letters, it becomes clear that Nietzsche’s praise for *L’esprit souterrain* concerned mostly “its second part” (quoted in Colli & Montinari 1984: 75).¹ This part corresponds with *Notes from the Underground* (1864), often seen as marking the transition from Dostoevsky’s early works to his five major philosophical novels.

Notes from the Underground is itself a diptych. In the first part, entitled “Underground,” a former civil servant, who has withdrawn from society, addresses a long, sarcastic monologue about his own nature and, by extension, about the nature of human beings in general, to an imaginary audience. As Joseph Frank (1986: 316-31) demonstrates, the discourse of the Underground Man is marked by a fundamental contradiction. On the one hand, he declares himself a follower of clear rational thinking and rational egoism—as it was propagated in Dostoevsky’s time by the writer Nikolai Chernyshevsky. On the other, the Underground Man’s behavior is all but rational. He does not want to treat his liver disease, not because he does not respect medicine and doctors, but entirely out of spite. The Underground Man explains his masochism by referring to his overdeveloped moral consciousness, which paralyzes his capacity for action. Cerebrally, he embraces determinism, but he seems unable to act upon his principles. As a human being, he cannot accept being reduced to a pawn of the laws of nature, because freedom of choice is more precious to a man than his own well-being. The Underground Man fulminates against the so-called Crystal Palace—a utopian concept developed by Chernyshevsky, referring to the showcase of the 1851 London World Exposition and symbolizing an idyllic, scientifically progressive society. The Underground Man believes that mankind, being ungrateful, would rather sacrifice its own well-being than have to live in a Crystal Palace that determines all behavior. Dostoevsky originally devoted a separate chapter to his alternative for the Crystal Palace, depicting a society in which the autonomy of the will and personality are respected. However, only a

¹ All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

glimpse of that text survived Russian censorship. The first part of *Notes from the Underground* ends with the suggestion that the Underground Man hungers for something he cannot find.

Whereas the first part of *Notes from the Underground* is gloomy and theoretical, the second part shows the practical consequences of the main character's philosophy in a more digestible, even comic way. Its parodic nature is announced by the combined title and epigraph. The title, "On the Occasion of Wet Snow," alludes to the Russian literature of the 1840s, in which wet snow was a literary topos. This allusion is indirectly explained by the epigraph placed under the title: a quotation from Nikolai Nekrasov's poem "When from the darkness of delusion..." about the remorse of a prostitute whom a loving hero has saved from her life of debauchery. The poem is not quoted at length, as the last lines are ironically replaced by the words "etc., etc., etc." As his biographer Joseph Frank (1986: 333) argues, with this ironic citation, Dostoevsky shows that his intention is not to evoke the sentimental social romanticism so popular in the Russian literature of the 1840s, but rather to parody it.

In the following flashback, the Underground Man is shown in his mid-twenties, suffering from his vanity, his superiority complex and his acutely overdeveloped consciousness. He is incapable of friendship, let alone love. The plot becomes grotesque when he invites himself to a reunion of ex-schoolmates, where he insults the guest of honor. After being ditched, he fanaticizes about challenging his offender to a duel, and then imagines how he would magnanimously fire into the air. He follows his acquaintances into a brothel. Not finding them there, he takes his revenge on a young prostitute, whom he berates with a moralizing lesson after having used her services. She turns out to be sensitive to his contrived words and bursts out crying. In line with his imagined role as a romantic hero, the Underground Man hands her a note with his address. However, once home, he begins to worry that the prostitute in question, Lisa, will actually come to see him and notice his low social position. Before long, she does in fact come by, while he is having an embarrassing argument with his servant. Feeling humiliated, he tries to hurt her verbally as much as he can. Lisa, seeing his unhappiness, tries to comfort him. The Underground Man cannot restrain himself from giving the prostitute, as an ultimate act of revenge, a banknote of five rubles.

For the sake of the argument, it is important to stress that Dostoevsky had shaped his Underground Man not as a psychological type, but instead as an ideological-philosophical type; his psychology is intimately interconnected with the ideas he embraces and by which he tries to live. More precisely, the Underground Man can be identified as a radical follower of Chernyshevsky, whose novel *What Is To Be Done?* (1862-1863) had shaped Russian nihilism. His rational acceptance of the logical implications of Chernyshevsky's ideas brings him, quite ironically, to a moral revolt against the very same ideas. Frank (1986: 313-314) points out that Dostoevsky provided his readership with an oblique key to his parodic intent: under the title of the first part, "Underground," an authentic authorial preface is placed in a footnote.² Here, Dostoevsky (1973: 99), in his capacity as authentic narrator, assures his readers that although the author of the notes is fictitious, in contemporary Russian society he can and even must exist "as a representative of a generation that is still alive."

When *Notes from the Underground* was published in 1864, Russian readers generally understood it as an attack on Chernyshevsky. However, it was too hermetic and allusive a literary work to successfully serve the aim of polemics—which may explain why the Russian literary journals of the time did not pay it much attention. In this light, it is no surprise that *Notes from the Underground* was also largely neglected in Dostoevsky's early critical reception abroad, which took off only after his death in 1881. The Baltic critic Alexander von Reinholdt (1882: 260), in a pioneering survey article on Dostoevsky, briefly mentioned it as

² The French literary theorist Gérard Genette (1987: 181-197) distinguishes between nine sorts of prefaces. His term "authentic authorial preface" refers to a preface written by the non-fictitious author of the work it precedes.

one of the author's "less important novels." The critics Eugen Zabel (1884a, 1884b, 1885) and Georg Brandes (1889), who in the 1880s took the lead in popularizing Dostoevsky among German readers, did not even bother to mention the title. The first German translation, under the title *Aufzeichnungen eines Schwindsüchtigen* [Notes of a consumptive], appeared only in 1891—almost a decade after the outburst of Dostoevsky hype that had followed the publication of the German translation *Raskolnikow* in 1882. The influential French critic Vogüé (1885, 1886a), too, passed by *Notes from the Underground* in his internationally acclaimed essays on Dostoevsky in *Revue des deux mondes* and in his bestseller *Le roman russe*. Because he popularized Dostoevsky as a evangelically-inspired master psychologist with the explicit aim of defeating amoral, pessimistic French realism à la Flaubert and Zola, the eloquent viscount was perfectly happy to make do without the bitter monologue of the Underground Man and his subversive escapades. Works like *Poor Folk*, *Notes from the House of the Dead* and *Crime and Punishment* better served his aim.

Halpérine-Kaminsky and Morice's underground man as a psychological type

Although Vogüé, the leading Dostoevsky critic of his time, had not approved of *Notes from the Underground*, the prestigious French publishing house Plon released *L'esprit souterrain* in 1886, following the enormous success of the French translation of *Le crime et le châtiment* [Crime and Punishment]. The translation through which Nietzsche familiarized himself with Dostoevsky was made from the Russian by Ely Halpérine-Kaminsky, an émigré native speaker of Russian, and Charles Morice, a minor French symbolist poet without any command of the Russian tongue. Just as with their translation of Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* (see Boulogne 2009), the title page of *L'esprit souterrain* reads "translated and adapted." Here I focus on the translation shifts that alter the range of possible interpretations of the source text *Notes from the Underground*. Analysis of the shifts and of the underlying reasons and their effects is based on the preface to the 1929 edition of *L'esprit souterrain* "Comment on a dû traduire Dostoïevsky" ("How we had to translate Dostoevsky"), in which Halpérine-Kaminsky justified his translation strategy over forty years after its initial publication. The quintessence of his self-defense, formulated with explicit references to the authority of Vogüé, rested on the conviction that the French readership of the 1880s was not yet ready for a raw, unpolished version of Dostoevsky.

A subtle but very significant paratextual translation shift concerns the authentic authorial preface to the first part of *Notes from the Underground*. In *L'esprit souterrain* (Dostoïevsky 1886: 156), the note in question is simply left out. This omission effectively denies the French reader access to Dostoevsky's hint at his parodic conceptualization of the Underground Man. As a direct consequence, a crucial layer of mediation in the text is lifted, and the reader can now consider the Underground Man as Dostoevsky's mouthpiece.

Presumably, one of the reasons why Halpérine-Kaminsky and Morice omitted Dostoevsky's preface is because the announcement of the work's structure, in addition to the comment about the representativeness of the Underground Man, had lost its relevance once translated into the French milieu. The fact of the matter is that the French translators had radically modified the macrostructure of *Notes from the Underground* by fusing it together with a fundamentally different, earlier work by Dostoevsky, *The Landlady*.

This pre-exile, sentimental story is about a dreamy, neurotic young man, Ordynov, who falls in love at first sight with a mysterious young woman, Katerina. She is, however, under the spell of Murin, an older man with magical powers, who turns out to be her father. Ordynov's attempts to set the unhappy Katerina free fail, whereupon he loses his self-confidence and falls prey to mysticism. *The Landlady* has never been ranked among

Dostoevsky's artistic successes. If today it is appreciated by Dostoevsky scholars, it is mostly because it anticipates his later works; it is the first work in which Dostoevsky plays the moral-psychological card, which would later become his trademark (Frank 1979: 337). This is especially true for Katerina, who, in finding a vicious joy in her own humiliation, is given depth by Dostoevsky. The psychological portrait of Ordynov, however, remains superficial.

The fact that *Notes from the Underground* is a diptych in itself did not restrain Halpérine-Kaminsky and Morice from integrating it into a new diptych, with *The Landlady* now as the first part. Interestingly, according to Halpérine-Kaminsky, this important macrostructural shift had to be made for two reasons, based, in his view, on the very nature of the respective source texts. First, he considered *Notes from the Underground* too small a text to become a book. Second, *The Landlady* had been criticized by Dostoevsky's contemporary, the critic Vissarion Belinsky, as incomprehensible. By fusing *The Landlady* with *Notes from the Underground*, the main character Ordynov—who Halpérine-Kaminsky (1929: xxvi-xxvii) considers a potential predecessor of the Underground Man—acquires some psychological clarity, if not depth. Moreover, the respective source texts would contain “the two models of women that one mostly comes across in Dostoevsky's later books.” Halpérine-Kaminsky (1929: xxvii) insists that “by completing each other, these two novellas acquire by their *rapprochement* their true artistic and philosophical importance.”

The first part of *L'esprit souterrain* (Dostoevsky 1886: 1-151), entitled “Katia” in honor of the main female character, is, macrostructurally speaking, a fairly adequate translation of *The Landlady*.³ Shortenings and additions occur only rarely and are limited in size.⁴ However, this observation does not apply to the French translation of *Notes from the Underground*, which in *L'esprit souterrain* extends from pages 156-298. Moreover, this second part is named by the French translators after Lisa, the female character with whom the main character is in love—albeit in his own strange way. The original division of *Notes from the Underground* into two parts is removed, together with the parodic title of its second part, “On the Occasion of Wet Snow.” The partial citation of Nekrasov's poem is rendered into French as a part of an individual chapter, but the ironic final line “etc., etc., etc.” is omitted. Moreover, the division of the source text is slightly modified. As Luft & Stenberg (1991: 446) note, the “Crystal Palace” is systematically rendered as the “Temple of Luck”—making it unrecognizable as a Chernyshevskian concept or as a reference to the British Crystal Palace. As a matter of fact, “chance”, the synonym of “luck”, is precisely what is eliminated in the utopian world represented by the Crystal Palace. Even more drastic are the numerous omissions, which in one case involves eight full pages of the corresponding source text.⁵ In

³ The adjective “adequate” is used here as the non-judgmental term coined by the Israeli translation scholar Itamar Even-Zohar to characterize a “translation which realizes in the target language the textual relationships of a source text with no breach of its own [basic] linguistic system” (transl. by Toury 1995: 56).

⁴ The omissions in the first part of *L'esprit souterrain* concern only the following lines (l) of the corresponding source text, *The Landlady* (Dostoevsky 1972): 272l20; 275l18; 307l34-35; 315l16. The additions are limited to the last two lines of chapter V of *L'esprit souterrain* (126l2-4).

⁵ The following lines of the corresponding source text, *Notes from the Underground* (Dostoevsky 1973), are concerned by the omissions: 99l22-31; 102l44-103l3; 103l13-14, 21-32; 105l47-106l19; 107l14-20; 107l35-108l2; 108l2-109l9; 109l29-34, 36-8; 109l39-110l1; 112l9-10, 26-38; 113l31-2, 47-8; 114l8-115l8; 115l10, 14-20, 21-3, 25-9, 34-9; 115l41-117l37; 118l3-7, 10-22, 24-5, 31; 119l13-7; 19-48; 120l1-6; 121l16-24; 121l30-123l34; 124l48-125l1; 125l7-18, 34-5; 125l39-126l2; 126l13-9; 126l31-127l10; 127l14-134l45; 134l47-135l6; 135l12-3, 16-7, 21-2; 135l43-136l13; 136l17-137l3; 138l13, 29-30; 139l10-140l30; 141l5-30, 41-2; 142l1-2, 23-35; 143l11-12, 24, 31-2; 144l38; 144l40-145l3; 145l5-8, 20; 146l26-9, 37; 146l42-147l2; 147l13-4, 18-31; 148l40-2, 43-4; 149l6-8, 15, 30-34, 34-36, 40-41; 149l48-150l4; 150l17-18, 19-22, 23-8; 152l14-21; 155l22-23; 164l9-165l13; 169l28; 171l9-10; 178l21-25; 178l26-179l9; 179l13-5. This list with shortenings is more complete than the one provided by Luft and Stenberg (1991: 442-3). They claim that the French translation of the second part of *Notes from the Underground* contains “some omissions” and that it is generally “true to the narrative.” As a matter of

total, more than 1,200 lines were omitted, which corresponds with roughly 30 percent of the source text. Halpérine-Kaminsky (1929: xxii-xxxiii) justifies these omissions of the Underground Man's philosophic reasoning by his judgment that "the simple reader reading to be entertained searches and finds the real joy of art and thought in the narrative part of the work by Dostoevsky, and not in the reasoning part, which is sometimes tiring." He also asserts that only the parts of the philosophic preamble that were kept were strictly necessary to maintain the psychological coherence of the story. The cuts from the narrative of *Notes from the Underground*, a work that Halpérine-Kaminsky liked better, are indeed notably less drastic. However, here too the French translators have left out a lengthy satirical episode in which the Underground Man, during a period of debauchery, fruitlessly provokes an officer into a fight, whereupon he begins to fantasize about bumping into him when crossing paths during his walk on Nevsky Prospect.

Although the abridgements to *Notes from the Underground* are important, the additions introduced by Halpérine-Kaminsky and Morice have an even greater impact on the work's macrostructural features. Aiming to create coherence between the first and the second part, the French translators fused Ordynov and the Underground Man together into one and the same character. As conceived by Dostoevsky, the former is a friendly romantic dreamer, whose only aim is to save a young woman, whereas the latter is a misanthrope, who not only spits his philosophical bile into the face of his imaginary audience but also humiliates an innocent prostitute. In order to prepare the reader for his "new psychological state" (Halpérine-Kaminsky 1929: xxvi-xxvii), the age of the Underground Man was changed—in the flashback he is no longer twenty four years old, but thirty (Dostoïevsky 1886: 191)—and several passages of the translators' invention were added to the source texts, lending a clichéd developmental trajectory to *L'esprit souterrain*: the young romantic dreamer turns into an older cynic.⁶ The most important addition was placed at the very beginning of the second part (Dostoïevsky 1886: 153-156). In this introduction to "Lisa," an all-knowing narrator, who presents himself as the purchaser of the manuscript left behind by Ordynov after his lonely death at the age of sixty, explains that his unfortunate adventure with Katia took a great toll on his character. After a period of travelling, Ordynov, tired, nervous and still sad, returns to Petersburg. He accepts a position as a civil servant, but soon becomes "disgusted by the vulgarity of the moujiks [Russian peasants] with whom he had to deal professionally" (Dostoïevsky 1886: 154). Thanks to a small inheritance, he regains his independence, but his life remains "gloomy and grey" (ibidem) until his very last day. Only one more time does he experience feelings of love.. This sad story was recorded by Ordynov himself.

fact, the biggest omission (127114-134145) is situated exactly in the second part of the translation of *Notes from the Underground*, concerning not just the philosophic reasoning but the intrigue itself.

⁶ In a passage of circa ten lines, added in chapter V of *L'esprit souterrain*'s second part (Dostoïevsky 1886: 17613-11), Ordynov nostalgically looks back to his affair with Katia: "I have known no worse suffering than the one [...] I endured when Katia showed me that she could love me and almost immediately abandoned me." The French translators conclude this monologist passage with the words "Besides, this is a story that you are unfamiliar with," stressing the difference between the all-knowing narrator of the first part and Ordynov's first person narrative. In another important added passage, covering circa twenty lines (Dostoïevsky 1886: 188r10-189r13), the underground man overtly regrets that he did not live his whole his life in the underground. Once again, he refers to Katia—albeit not explicitly: "I dreamed of a life far away, on the banks of Mother Volga, with this beautiful, strange girl, whom I was too weak to take possession of when she was offered to me." Here, the image of the Mother Volga is strategically placed, since the readers had come across it in the preceding part of *L'esprit souterrain* (1996: 44), corresponding with Dostoevsky's *The Landlady*. Also the final sentence of *L'esprit souterrain* was added by the French translators to create coherence between the parts 'Katia' and 'Lisa'. The underground man's confession that he no longer wishes to write his notes from the underground is concluded by his utterance that mutually associates his two unhappy love affairs: "Besides, now everything has ended. Katia! Lisa!—and forty years!" For more details about the added passages and other translation shifts, see Boulogne (2011: 484-502).

The added passage at the beginning of the second part ends with an obvious hint at the title that their curious amalgam of *The Landlady* and *Notes from the Underground* was given by Halpérine-Kaminsky and Morice: *L'esprit souterrain*, literally meaning “the subterranean mind.” Its readers are informed that in the manuscript they are about to read, the word “underground” (in French: *souterrain*) will appear more than once. This is explained by the narrator, the fictitious purchaser of the manuscript, as follows:

He lived, indeed, in a kind of spiritual *underground*, he had a SUBTERRANEAN MIND, always worrying about obscure problems, always sounding the darkness of his thought, always digging deeper and deeper into the mysteries of his conscience. As he somewhere writes: “Consciousness, this disease!” From the time of his love for Catherine, he had the germ of this disease: misfortune caused the poisoned and immortally perennial flower to bloom. So, it is from the Underground that he tells this gloomy story of a man who fell victim to his too intense intimate clairvoyance. For this man saw himself and knew himself, and his destiny was a sad answer to the old maxim “Know thyself.” — No, it is not good for a man to know himself. (Dostoïevsky 1886: 155-156)

An echo of this passage can be found in Halpérine-Kaminsky’s justification of his modification of the original title. Here, the French translator argues that a literal French translation of the Russian title of *Notes from the Underground* would only mislead the foreign reader, since the work by Dostoevsky consists of “the notes of a loner, a voluntary recluse, or more exactly a man who encloses himself in his inner life, his ‘subterranean mind’” (Halpérine-Kaminsky 1929: xxv).

The modification of the title, which can in itself be considered an interpretive guide, and its elaboration in the target text have something in common with the other translational shifts described above—in particular, the identification of the Underground Man with Ordynov: together, they strongly suggest a psychological reading of Dostoevsky’s *Notes from the Underground*. This reading, probably not coincidentally, is perfectly in line with the image of Dostoevsky as a master psychologist that was promoted by the influential critic Vogüé. Another general effect of the translational shifts—the other side of the coin—is that the original satire and philosophy are buried under Ordynov’s doubly unhappy love stories and, in some cases, even literally erased. As a result, the reader of *L'esprit souterrain* is less likely than the Russian reader to recognize the Underground Man, who terrorizes his neighbors instead of loving them, as a satirical caricature of Chernyshevsky’s ideology, and not as the presumed mouthpiece of the author.

The staggering impact of Halpérine-Kaminsky and Morice’s translation on the reader’s appreciation of “Dostoevsky” should not be underestimated; its effect is illustrated in one example by the criticism of *L'esprit souterrain* that Vogüé himself wrote in 1886, as a part of his article “Les livres russes en France” (“Russian books in France”). Interestingly, the viscount first explains why he dislikes Dostoevsky’s *Notes from the Underground* so much, especially the long monologues of the main character, whereupon he praises the French text as “outstanding,” as one of the most powerful and artistic translations that has ever been made of a Russian author, “with pages written for the joy of the ear and the eyes” (Vogüé 1886b: 840).

Paving the path for Dostoietzsche

Whereas the French viscount knew Dostoevsky's original work and could therefore distinguish between his appreciation for the Russian writer and for the work of his French translators, Nietzsche could not. He first wrote about his discovery of Dostoevsky on 23 February 1887, in a letter to his friend Franz Overbeck: "The instinct of affinity (or what shall I call it?) spoke immediately—my joy was extraordinary" (quoted in Waite & Slovin 2016: 24). In another letter, to his friend Peter Gast, Nietzsche described that when reading *L'esprit souterrain*, he instinctively recognized Dostoevsky as "a kinsman" (quoted in Stellino 2015: 25). Since Nietzsche on various occasions wrote about his admiration for Dostoevsky, it is not difficult to unravel the concrete aspects of *L'esprit souterrain* to which the German philosopher was drawn. As Stellino (2015: 37) firmly establishes in his well-documented study on Nietzsche and Dostoevsky, the former's attention for the latter was mainly "to two strictly related themes: psychology and self-knowledge."

It is significant that although Nietzsche scholars have come to recognize *L'esprit souterrain* as a highly acceptability-oriented translation, little effort has been made to examine the overall impact of the translation shifts on Nietzsche's appreciation of Dostoevsky. Most recently, Stellino (2015: 27), not having undertaken a full comparison of the source texts and the target texts, writes that, "*although mutilated, the reading of L'esprit souterrain left a very positive impression of Dostoevsky on Nietzsche*" (my italics). The use of "although" here seems misplaced for two reasons. First and foremost, the observed translation clearly contributed to the psychologization of the Underground Man, to which Nietzsche responded by repeatedly evaluating *L'esprit souterrain* as a "stroke of genius in psychology" (quoted in Stellino 2015: 24, 25). Second, these translation shifts, along with the rendering of "the Crystal Palace" as "the Temple of Luck," draw the reader away from Dostoevsky's vicious mockery of Chernyshevsky's nihilism, which was certainly closer to Nietzsche than Dostoevsky's Christianity.⁷

According to Luft & Stenberg (1991: 460-461), when reading *L'esprit souterrain* "Nietzsche saw himself as the tunneling mole, reflected in Dostoevskii's image of the subversive and self-destructive underground man." What they did not notice is that it is exactly the overall effect of the psychologization produced by the translation shifts that made it possible for the German philosopher—who in his *The Gay Science* (1882) had criticized Christian morality, de-emphasized the role of hedonism as a motivator, and coined the phrase "will to power"—to identify with the Underground Man. Gal'tsova's (2008: 127) intuition, though directed toward a detail, goes in the same direction. She believes that Halpérine-Kaminsky and Morice's addition of the passage detailing the purchase of the papers would have made this self-identification easier for Nietzsche.

Although the fact that the translation strategies of Halpérine-Kaminsky and Morice greatly contributed to the general psychologization of the Underground Man toward which Nietzsche was drawn has been largely ignored, another important effect of the translation has been accounted for: as Müller-Buck (2002: 95) notes, Nietzsche found the key to his interpretation of *L'esprit souterrain* in the passage, added by the French translators, that explicitly mentions the Underground Man's distrust of self-knowledge. Indeed, in two different letters, the German philosopher described the second part of *L'esprit souterrain* as

⁷ On March 27, 1888, Nietzsche wrote to Georg Brandes "In Petersburg I would be a *Nihilist*" (quoted in Waite & Slovin 2016: 4). It is important to stress here that if Nietzsche paid no attention to Dostoevsky's satire of Chernyshevsky in any of his letters on *L'esprit souterrain*, this was not due to his unfamiliarity with his work *What is to be done?* The German philosopher had made "extensive markings" in his copy of Brunetière's *Le roman naturaliste* on the matter, especially in the chapter dealing with *What is to be done?* (Waite & Slovin 2016: 30). It is more likely that he simply did not recognize this satire in *L'esprit souterrain*.

“a sort of self-ridicule of γνωθι σαυτόν [know thyself]” and “a frightening and cruel piece of mockery of γνωθι σαυτόν [know thyself]” (quoted in Stellino 2015: 23, 24)—passages which were crucial to his overall appreciation of Dostoevsky.

In light of the shifts in the French translation, it is ironic that, according to the testimony of his friend Schirnhofer, in May 1887, Nietzsche was convinced that *L'esprit souterrain* had provided him with a more adequate picture of the original “psychological analyses” than the German translation—most probably by Goldschmidt—that he later read. He even spoke of the “German mutilation of the original text” (quoted in Stellino 2015: 95-96), which suggests that the German philosopher may have believed that the text corresponding to *The Landlady* had been omitted by the German translator. In the same spirit of distrust vis-à-vis Dostoevsky’s German translators, in October 1888, Nietzsche informed the Danish professor of Literature Georg Brandes about his pleasure in reading Dostoevsky, adding between brackets “translated into French, for heaven's sake, not German!!” (quoted in Stellino 2015: 97).⁸ Interestingly, in his response, the Danish professor found it necessary to explain to Nietzsche that the entire morality of Dostoevsky, “a great poet, but a detestable fellow, completely Christian in his emotions, and quite sadistic at the same time,” is what the German philosopher had christened “slave morality” (quoted in Stellino 2015: 134). Nietzsche answered with the very last words he would write about Dostoevsky, explaining that, notwithstanding their ideological differences, he admired the Russian for his psychology: “I completely *believe* what you say about Dostoevsky; on the other hand, I prize his work as the most valuable psychological material known to me—I am grateful to him in a remarkable way, however much he goes against my deepest instincts (quoted in Stellino 2015: 135; my italics).” Dienstag (2016: 121) speculates that Nietzsche suddenly stressed the distance between himself and Dostoevsky because he was “disappointed” to learn that the author of *Notes from the Underground* was also a Christian.

Because Nietzsche encountered Dostoevsky quite late in his intellectually mature life, only a little more than a year before his mental collapse, it is logical that the Russian writer is rarely mentioned in his philosophical writings. The most explicit mention of Dostoevsky famously figures in *Twilight of the Idols*, written in 1888, in which Nietzsche (1990: 110) praises him as “the only psychologist [...] from whom I had anything to learn.” However, various scholars have discovered indications that Nietzsche’s reading of *L'esprit souterrain* colored other of his late works as well. Groundbreaking in this respect was the link that Luft & Stenberg (1991) attempted to establish—successfully, according to Gillespie (2016: 90) and Dienstag (2016: 118)—between *L'esprit souterrain* and the new preface that Brandes asked Nietzsche to write to his *Dawn* in 1886. They note a gloomier tone, as well as new images and psychological concepts, “much of which can be traced to Dostoevskii.” What they overlooked in their conclusion, that “the preface [to *Dawn*] reads as if Nietzsche had all of a sudden discovered in Dostoevskii a new way to say more clearly, more forcefully, and more dramatically the same things he had already been saying for years,” is, however, the possibility that Halpérine-Kaminsky and Morice helped Nietzsche to recognize himself in Dostoevsky.

Another, more speculative attempt to trace the influence of *L'esprit souterrain* on Nietzsche’s philosophy was made by Clowes (1988: 20; 2016), who recognizes images from *Notes from the Underground*, notably “a dark underground with its unpleasant voices,” in *Genealogy of Morality* (written in 1887). In addition, Müller-Buck (2002: 98) finds in Nietzsche’s collection of poems *Dionysus-Dithyrambs* (written in 1888) an echo of the

⁸ Generally speaking, the early German translations of Dostoevsky were macrostructurally adequacy-oriented—especially in comparison with the French translations by Halpérine-Kaminsky and Morice—but they too contained important microtextual shifts, for instance with regard to Dostoevsky’s derisive image of Germans. See Boulogne (2011: 399-719) and Boulogne (2016).

Underground Man's distrust of the possibility of self-knowledge. Stellino (2015: 41, 89), in turn, expresses scepticism over the presumed influence of *L'esprit souterrain* on Nietzsche's preface to *Dawn* and *Dionysus-Dithyrambs*, but he does not exclude that this influence "may have been at work in the fifth book of *The Gay Science*," which the German philosopher revised in February of 1887.

Perhaps more important and certainly more tangible than Dostoevsky's influence of on Nietzsche's philosophy was the influence of Nietzsche's philosophy on the reception of Dostoevsky. It is interesting that after Nietzsche had praised Dostoevsky as his teacher of psychology, as early as the 1880s, naturalist-oriented critics in Germany started interpreting Dostoevsky's works through a Nietzschean lens. According to Hauswedell (1924: ii), the first German intellectual to notice great similarities between the two was Georg Conrad (1974), but Nietzschean terminology is also present in the German essays on Dostoevsky by Georg Brandes (1889) and Hermann Conradi (1974). Shortly after Nietzsche's death, his association with the Russian writer was consolidated by Poritzky (1902: vii), who justified his book on Dostoevsky, and the role that Nietzsche played in it, by referring to the influence the former had on the latter. Interestingly, the mutual association of Nietzsche and Dostoevsky, to which the former's statements on the latter obviously "added fuel" (Grillaert 2008: 37), also found its way back into Russian literary debates. Around the turn of the century, professional and non-professional readers, beginning with the symbolist poet Merezhkovsky and including the philosopher Shestov, under the influence of Nietzsche's idea of the *Übermensch*, reread Dostoevsky with a "renewed fascination with the psychology of the alienated, nihilistic superfluous man," which "signaled the start of an era of existential searching, this time among a much broader readership" (Clowes 1988: 54, 95).

Conclusion

L'esprit souterrain beautifully illustrates the power of translation to convey an ideological message that can be different than the one of the source text. Of course, it may be difficult, if not impossible, to assess with precision to what extent Nietzsche's interpretation of Dostoevsky was colored by the translation strategies of Halpérine-Kaminsky and Morice. However, in light of the observed translation shifts, it seems safe to conclude that the French translators, together with the reviews of Vogüé (1885, 1886a, 1886b), liberated Dostoevsky from the debates within Russian culture, allowing the German philosopher to see affinities in the Russian writer's work that he may not have seen otherwise. Because of his psychological reading, which focused on the impossibility of knowing oneself, Nietzsche could think of the Underground Man without recourse to Chernyshevsky's idea of freedom, determinism and progress. That is, he was reading into the Underground Man some sort of human condition, rather than Dostoevsky's satirical portrayal of what happens when a man constructs his morality and worldview without Christianity. Many scholars have found more or less oblique traces of this reading in the final works of the German philosopher.

Interestingly, the effect of Nietzsche's interpretation of *L'esprit souterrain* was not limited to his own works: it stimulated a Nietzschean rereading of Dostoevsky, which in Russia, as Clowes (1988: 95) points out, "helped the reemergence of Dostoevsky as a vital Russian writer." One can only speculate how Dostoevsky's afterlife in Russia, the circulation of his texts and ideas, would have been accepted had Halpérine-Kaminsky and Morice translated *Notes from the Underground* differently. The same applies to the image of Dostoevsky in world literature(s), as *L'esprit souterrain* was translated into a variety of languages, including Dutch, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese (see Boulogne 2015). Notwithstanding its relevance for literary studies and other humanities, not in the least

philosophy, the complex pivotal role of French translations remains understudied.⁹ Our challenge for the future is therefore to shed further light on the function of translated literature, to which Harald Kittel (1998: 3) already two decades ago referred to as “a shadow culture”.

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⁹ In her recent book *Translation's Forgotten History*, Heekyoung Cho (2016) illustrates this point with regard to the role of French translations in the shaping of modern Korean literature.

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