

## Natalie Duddington's religious translations from Russian: Faith in translation

Anna Maslenova

University of Exeter, United Kingdom

---

### Abstract

This article examines translations of religious texts from Russian into English by Natalie Duddington (1886-1972), better known as an assistant to the prolific translator Constance Garnett. I consider 'religious' to refer to both spiritual and scriptural texts, given the overlap between religious and secular values in Russian culture. I explore Duddington's career as a translator from the perspective of her traditionally female *habitus* (Simeoni, 1998) which dictates Duddington's "invisibility" (Venuti, 2008). I argue, however, that invisibility is not necessarily imposed on a female translator by the rules of the cultural field in which she operates. Instead, I analyse Duddington's translatorial *hexis* (Charlston, 2013) to show that, somewhat counter-intuitively, a translator can choose voluntarily to relinquish her own voice in the process of intercultural mediation, to further her perceived higher spiritual purposes. Duddington contributed to the British cultural field as a translator of Russian religious philosophy and literature, and as an author of her own philosophical works. Through these activities, she did not seek a more privileged position in society or to receive great personal gain. On the contrary, her main objective was to bring British and Russian people closer through shared spiritual wisdom.

### Keywords

Woman translator, religion, translation, habitus and hexis, Russian religious philosophy, Natalie Duddington

## 1. Introduction: Duddington's *habitus* and *hexis*

Natalie Duddington (1886-1972) was “regarded as an exceptionally wise woman, for she not only was profound, but she also had the wisdom [not to complain] that she was the silent ghost, one might say even a modest stooge, who helped Constance Garnett to remain as the celebrated translator of Russian novels” (Hill, 1999, p. 101). If we follow the sociological turn in Translation Studies and attempt to define *habitus* as a system of dispositions influencing how an individual acts in his or her social trajectory (Meylaerts, 2011, p. 1), we will, indeed, discover that the translator Natalie Duddington was a kind of ‘ghost’, or at least an exemplary case study in translator invisibility in the sense of Venuti (2008).

Duddington, a translator of Russian classics and religious philosophy, long remained in the shadow of Constance Garnett (1861-1946), one of the most famous and prolific translators of Russian literature into English. Garnett published seventy-one volumes of translated Russian classics, but it is rarely acknowledged that her extensive output was partly a result of her collaboration with Duddington, who was her principal assistant from 1906, when she moved to Britain from Russia to study philosophy at University College, London.<sup>1</sup> Duddington was a noteworthy student, “a keen, indeed brilliant, intellect, rather sphinx-like features and a considerable sense of humour—a very remarkable young woman” (Garnett, 1970, p. 78). Independently from Garnett, Duddington translated Russian philosophical texts, but given that translations are generally considered “as inferior productions compared with originals” (Long, 2011, p. 47), Duddington’s contribution to the field did not receive much attention, and thus she remained only a ‘ghost’ in philosophical circles.

Duddington’s ‘ghostly’ status is evident in her private life, too. This position in the Garnetts’ lives was reinforced by her possible secret affair with Edward Garnett (1868-1937), the husband of Constance and a celebrated critic of Russian literature (Smith, 2017, p. 224). Duddington was also a ‘ghost’ in her own marital life. After she first moved to Britain, Natalie stayed in the house of a married couple, John and Elisabeth Duddington. John, Rector of Ayot St Lawrence, and Natalie swiftly fell in love with each other. John wanted to marry Natalie, but he could not divorce his wife (at that time there was no divorce by mutual consent). John and Elisabeth Duddington separated, and Natalie cohabited with Duddington, as his common-law wife. Although she assumed John’s family name and had children with him, Natalie had to remain John’s mistress until 1954 when Elisabeth died. Because of his infidelity, John had to resign his church position, and temporarily lost his income (Winnington, 2020, p. 51). This encouraged Natalie to continue her work as a translator, although she believed that her role as a housewife came first. She admitted that she dealt with her writing and translation work only in odd moments away from domestic duties (Lasunskii, 1972, p. 180). As a native Russian speaker, Natalie Duddington possessed linguistic capital, but she did not try to act as an ambassador for her native culture. That role had already been successfully appropriated by the Garnetts who, as “cultural custodians,” alternated “between playing the guardians of the domestic canon, on the one hand, and importers of innovations from foreign-cultures, on the other” (Sela-Sheffy, 2008, p. 620). As Britain was not Duddington’s motherland, she could not build a reputation as a “coloniser” in the way that the Garnetts did (“[...] for translation has also been figured as the literary equivalent of colonization, a means of enriching both the language and the literature appropriate to the political needs of expanding nation” (Chamberlain, 1988, p. 459)).

<sup>1</sup> Even Sherry Simon, an advocate for female translators’ voices, refers to Duddington only as “a native Russian speaker” (as Garnett’s most significant and consistent collaborator we may reliably assume Simon is referring to Duddington here and not Garnett’s other, more fleeting assistants), “The rhythm of Constance Garnett’s production was astounding. She would set herself daily objectives for translating and invariably stick to them. Very often she worked in collaboration with a native Russian speaker” (Simon, 2005, p. 66).

But was Duddington unable, or perhaps unwilling, to do this? Following translation scholar Rakefet Sela-Sheffy's exploration of the translator's role as a mediator, we might suppose that Duddington wished to be a cultural custodian, but failed. I believe, however, that this conventional assumption is unlikely.

In this article, I challenge the prevailing, rather shallow perspective on Duddington — that she was a female Russian emigrant living in Britain who, despite her degree in philosophy, long restricted herself to assisting a prominent translator lacking formal training in translation. This is the view of Duddington that we receive when interpreting her professional background (*habitus*) through a Bourdieusian filter. I question the conventional idea that the external circumstances of Duddington's life were of greater importance than her internal spiritual motives, which she revealed in her articles, in prefaces to her translations and in her private papers. My aim is to show Duddington's personal ambitions rather than what the mechanisms of the literary field direct us to assume she would have wanted. Following the ongoing discussion on how *habitus* may fail to satisfactorily accommodate human complexity (Simeoni, 1998, Sela-Sheffy 2005, Meylaerts, 2011), I rely on another, more finely-tuned Bourdieusian term, *hexis*. According to Charlston, *hexis* augments “the repertoire of Bourdieusian theoretical tools applicable to translation”; he defines *hexis* as embodying, “in the minutiae of the translated text, a defiant, honour-seeking attitude of the philosopher-translator with regard to specific oppositions in the surrounding field” (2013, p. 55). My goal is to reveal Duddington's inner motivation — i.e., her *hexis* — to *deliberately* relinquish her own voice, an act which happened to coincide with later scholarly assumptions about translators' “invisibility” (Venuti, 2008). In this paper, I argue that what looks like the traditional female *habitus* of an ‘invisible’ translator, was in fact, Duddington's *hexis*. Duddington consciously dedicated her translation activity towards achieving higher spiritual purposes in conformity with her philosophical and religious views. She believed in the world as an “organic whole”, in the words of the philosopher Nikolai Loskii whom she would later translate (1928), each part of which is equally meaningful before God, and she saw her task as making this ‘whole’ more united. She, therefore, made it possible for the English-speaking audience to understand Russian spiritual thinkers by translating their works into English leaving as little evidence of her interference as a translator as she could. My task now is to show that Duddington's female *hexis* was far from the superficial role of a passive ‘ghost’: she did not allow the British cultural field to exhaust her energy and talents; she was subservient neither to the Garnetts, nor within her own house (as her partner's mistress rather than legal wife), nor in her philosophical background, nor with her editors. I start therefore with Duddington's life story, and trace how her background influenced the development of her spirituality. Then I move on to discussing how Duddington's religious views influenced her work as a translator and as an independent philosopher. I conclude by analysing Duddington's personal understanding of her mission as an intercultural mediator. Although she never expressed this vision explicitly in her published works, it is strongly evident in her private papers which I had a chance to view in the Leeds Russian Archive and in the Russian State Archive of Literature and Arts (Moscow).

## 2. Duddington's life

Duddington's *hexis* was formed by the search for knowledge which early on transformed into her quest for spiritual ‘Truth’. Natalie Duddington (née Ertel') was educated at home until her fifteenth birthday in 1901, when she entered Alferov's gymnasium in Moscow. After two years she transferred to Syuitin's gymnasium in St Petersburg “which was more to her liking” (Garrett, 1982, p. 23). “She is such a very clever girl, so clever that she has always been treated as though intellectually grown up since she was about ten years old” (1904) — wrote

Constance Garnett to her husband Edward upon meeting Natalie in 1904 at the Ertel's' estate, Aleksandrovka (near Voronezh). Garnett met Natalie's parents through the agency of her Russian revolutionary friends, the Kropotkins. Like Petr Kropotkin, Natalie's father, Alexander Ertel' (1855-1908), had been imprisoned in St Petersburg's Peter-and-Paul Fortress and later exiled. Although he had been a famous writer whose novel *The Gardenin Family* (*Гарденины*, 1890) was appreciated by Lev Tolstoy (Tolstoy, 1983, pp. 320-321). Ertel' gave up his writing career in order to secure a more favourable way of life to support his family. He partly shared Tolstoy's views on the simplification of life, but he took up full-time estate management of the big estates of other Russian noble families believing that "to distribute one's property among beggars is not the whole truth. It is also necessary to preserve all that is good in myself and in my children: knowledge, culture, a whole number of truly valuable habits, most of which require not theoretical but *hereditary* transmission" (Bunin, 1951, pp. 127-128). Natalie Duddington learned from her father's example.

The Ertel's were well-known Anglophiles and were seeking at that point an English governess for their daughters, especially Natalie, who had become very fond of England after visiting that country in 1900. Natalie Duddington and her father had spent a week in Vladimir Chertkov's English home on Hayling Island. (Chertkov was one of the main promoters of Tolstoy's religious ideas in Russia and Britain.) This may have stimulated Natalie Duddington to improve her English, and so Constance Garnett was recommended as a language instructor to the Ertel's. By the time Garnett arrived at Aleksandrovka, the Ertel's had already found another teacher but, nevertheless, Constance Garnett and her son were welcomed to stay over the summer as guests. It was the starting point of a long-lasting friendship between Constance Garnett and Natalie Duddington as well as of their productive cooperation.

Before moving to Britain in 1905, Duddington was taking the women's courses offered by the University of St Petersburg, but she did not find her fellow students' fascination with politics "conducive to her studies" (Garrett, 1982, p. 23). Thus in 1906, she decided to enrol at University College London. Sebastian Garrett notes that Duddington's determination to pursue her English studies was not the only reason for moving to London. He believes she was guided by her other great passion — theosophy — which advocated for a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity. "When a move from Russia seemed advisable, London, where there was to be a theosophical congress, was the natural place to go" (Garrett, 1982, p. 25). He marks an important distinction between Natalie and her father: "whereas he [Ertel'] hardly dared, even at the end of his life, to be convinced of the rightness of his answers to the great questions of life, Natalie very early sought and found certainties, first in theosophy and then in Russian Orthodoxy" (p. 25). Theosophy and Russian Orthodoxy were the prop and stay of the young woman who would later, if not at first legitimately, take the name of Natalie Duddington. But Garrett misses the importance of the role played by philosophy in shaping Duddington's spiritual *hexis* and translating career. Invisible as she may have been as Constance Garnett's assistant, in the arena of philosophical translation Duddington's role was at least as important as Garnett's was in the world of literature. Duddington became the first mediator to introduce and translate Russian philosophy for the British public.

### **3. Duddington and spirituality: from theosophy to the Orthodox religion**

In St Petersburg, Natalie Duddington had enthusiastically participated in the Theosophical Society (it was founded in 1875 in New York and had followers all over the world, including four circles in St Petersburg). However, she lost interest in theosophy soon after entering the UCL where she received both her BA (in 1909) and MA degrees (in 1911) in philosophy. While in the UCL she came under the influence of the professor and philosopher, G. Dawes Hicks

(1862-1941), who worked primarily on theory of knowledge and philosophy of religion. In a letter dated 18 February 1910, Duddington wrote:

As for the spiritual atmosphere, which was so dear to me in the theosophical circle in St Petersburg, it was completely replaced by the influence of our professor Dr Hicks. He is extraordinarily devoted to his work, and the sphere of higher thinking is the main thing in life for him. (Chertkov, 1900-1910, my translation)

Natalie Duddington's first translation without Garnett's involvement was *The Justification of the good: An essay on moral philosophy* (1918) by Vladimir Solov'ëv (1853-1900), the first and most prominent Russian philosopher who built a philosophical system, independent of Western influences, in the second half of the 19th century. She also dedicated to Solov'ëv her very first article, published in 1917 in the *Hibbert Journal*. In this article Duddington discussed the main strands of Solov'ëv's teaching, which proclaims the Christian religion as a vessel of universal 'Truth': "His attitude to the practical questions of his time was not merely the result of temperament and upbringing; it was entirely determined by one central principle to the service of which he devoted his whole life. This principle was the principle of the Christian Religion" (1917, p. 435). Although Christianity was the main engine of Solov'ëv's philosophy, the Orthodox creed never impeded his train of thought; his philosophy that helped him to avoid the performative aspects of religion. Solov'ëv believed in the unity of all Christian Churches and in the possibility of overcoming doctrinal differences between them; partly as a result of this, he embraced Catholicism towards the end of his life, although he never actually left the Orthodox Church. In his work *La Russie et l'église universelle* which appeared in Paris in 1889, Solov'ëv called for Christian Universalism, meaning the union of three *equal* Churches — Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant — with the Pope as *primus inter pares*.

Duddington's translation of Solov'ëv was warmly greeted by English-speaking audiences already familiar with the idea of the Unification of the Churches. This had been strongly promoted in Britain during the 19th century by the followers of the Oxford Movement, which celebrated a religious revival in the Church of England (Brown & Nockles, 2012). According to the Movement's ninety *Tracts for the Times* (1833–1841), the Anglican Church was considered as one of three branches of the Christian Church; the other two were Roman Catholicism and Orthodoxy. Among the main proponents of the Movement seeking the unification of the Christian Churches was the High Anglican theologian, John Henry Newman (1801-1890); it comes as no surprise that Solov'ëv was described by a French Jesuit, Michel d'Herbigny, as '*un Newman russe*' (1918). At the beginning of the Movement, the High Anglican Church prioritized the building of connections with the Roman Catholic Church, rather than with Orthodoxy. However, towards the turn of the century, this situation changed: the Anglican Church lost any hopes of merging with Rome, and turned its attention to the Russian Empire<sup>2</sup>. The latter had more global influence than any other Orthodox state, and would soon support the British Empire in World War I. After the Russian Revolution, Solov'ëv's ideas of the Universal Church were further developed by the Russian spiritual thinkers Nikolai Berdiaev, Sergei Bulgakov, Ivan Il'in, Semën Frank and Nikolai Losskii, who refused to support the Soviet regime, were expelled from the Soviet Union and shipped to Europe in 1922 aboard the famous 'philosophers' ships' (Chamberlain, 2007). In Britain, their work was welcomed by the followers of the Oxford Movement. The combined ecumenical efforts of the Anglicans and Orthodox Christians resulted in the foundation of the Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius, a society that has been promoting relations between the Christian denominations since 1927 (Salapatas, 2013, p. 34).

<sup>2</sup> In 1896 an edict from Pope Leo XIII was published wherein the intentions of the Anglican Church to unite three branches were rejected (Leo XIII, 1896).

Many of these developments, including the Fellowship, were made possible by Duddington's translations of the works of Russian philosophers into English, as well as by the articles she published about them in the *Journal of philosophical studies* (1926-1935). Duddington worked so actively because she passionately supported the potential merger between Churches. She defined the characteristic feature of Russian Christianity as "the realization of an all-embracing unity, in which the whole does not abolish the independence of the parts, but includes them within itself, and in which every part exists not for itself only, but in and for the whole" (1926, p. 24). The works of Russian spiritual thinkers, according to Duddington, epitomise this key feature. We should note that Duddington's first love, theosophy, espoused the same idea: the theosophists' original aim was to "draw together men of goodwill whatsoever their religious opinions, and by their desire to study religious truths and to share the results of their studies with others" (Maclean, 2015, p. 16). Duddington's adherence first to theosophy, then to Solov'ëv and religious philosophy, and later (through their agency) to Orthodoxy, formed stages in her search for the primal source of the same idea of all-embracing unity. Although she became devotedly Orthodox, like Solov'ëv, she was less concerned with specific rituals than with shared Christian spiritual and moral experience (Duddington, 1925).

Duddington lacked theological education and her understanding of Orthodoxy was unconventional. She tended to translate texts by Russian spiritual thinkers which resonated with her own world view. As Duncan Large observes, one of the key aims of translating philosophy is to achieve "a reinvigorating impact on indigenous philosophical tradition" (2018, p. 313). She did not want to promote the works of her native thinkers in order to maintain her "social status, and invest considerable efforts in establishing a distinctive professional prestige" (Sela-Sheffy, 2008, p. 610) for herself; the act of translation read through Duddington's *hexis* is the outcome of her desire to infuse the idea of spiritual unity into English-speaking people as a step towards spreading this unity in the wider world.

#### 4. Duddington's translation of Russian religious philosophy

The first work by a contemporary Russian philosopher which Duddington rendered into English was *The intuitive basis of knowledge* by Nikolai Losskii (1870-1965). Losskii was Duddington's teacher in her St Petersburg secondary school; they kept in touch throughout her life, and Natalie translated many of Losskii's works into English. As Professor Hick noted in his preface to Losskii's text (written at Duddington's request): "Professor Losskii is fortunate in having secured for his book a translator who, in addition to her other qualifications, possesses a wide knowledge of English philosophical writings, and who is herself an earnest worker in the fields of philosophy" (Losskii, 1919, p. vi). Losskii saw the aim of Russian religious philosophy as the elaboration of a Christian conception of the world, which would show "the wealth of content and the vital force of the fundamental dogmas of Christianity" (p. vi). This messianic idea was first introduced by Dostoevsky, developed by Solov'ëv, and finally enunciated by Nikolai Berdiaev (1874-1948) in his work *The Russian idea*. Analyzing the inconsistency and complexity of the Russian soul, Berdiaev claimed — repeating a long-standing Slavophile idea — that the Russian nation would bring new spiritual light to the world (1947, p. 2).

Like other Russian religious philosophers, Losskii was preoccupied with the development of his own "all-embracing solutions of the problems" (Duddington, 1926, p. 101) in order to bring the Christian 'Truth' to a world mired in materialism. He expressed this most strongly in *The world as an organic whole*, translated by Duddington in 1928. Losskii attempted to create a united philosophical system depicting society as an organism "each part of which freely fulfils its appropriate function" and which is diametrically opposed to the idea of society as "a mechanical assemblage" (1928, p. 346). According to Losskii, all parts of the world are

interconnected through their unity with God, as the divine 'Truth' is common and universal.

Duddington was not only Losskii's translator but also his student and, therefore, by translating his texts she developed and extended her own philosophical horizons (Large, 2018, p. 314), which enabled her to write and publish philosophical articles of her own. Duddington also considered herself a student of Garnett; she acknowledged that her experience of working with Constance was "a great school of translation art" (Lasunskii, 1972, p. 192, my translation). After Garnett retired, Duddington continued translating Russian literature by herself. She did this not simply because of financial needs (the implications of her *habitus*) but because she believed that Russian spiritual thought was best expressed in secular literature (a view derived from Duddington's *hexis*): "Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Solovyof have a more vital message for us than the author of the dogmatic theology, Metropolit Makary" (1919, p. 22).

The Christian 'Truth' which Duddington found in the works of theosophists and religious philosophers shone most brightly through the works of Russian writers. Assuming the role of a translator from Russian into English while maintaining her personal autonomy as a spiritual thinker, Duddington reconstructed herself as a cultural gatekeeper (Marling, 2016), mediating between two cultures. She transmitted to British readers not only Russian fiction, but also the 'Spiritual Truth' perceived by Russian thinkers. To overcome the 'separateness' between cultures and to make the world united as an "organic whole" (Losskii, 1928), this 'Truth' had to be shared universally — a project which Duddington facilitated.

## 5. Duddington's translation of Russian literature

Duddington did not distinguish between Russian writers, religious philosophers and theologians as purveyors of wisdom. She believed that all great Russian thinkers searched for the same all-embracing 'Truth'; they were not "content, as many English philosophers are, with confining themselves to the patient study of some particular group of problems, reserving judgment with regard to the wider issues, but are eager to find an explanation of the world as a whole" (1926, p. 101). The same idea was expressed by the Russian religious philosopher Semën Frank (1877-1950) in the introduction to his *Anthology of Russian religious thought*, translated into English by Duddington. Frank's *Anthology* includes chapters dedicated to the writers Lev Tolstoy, Dmitrii Merezhkovskii, and Viacheslav Ivanov; the acknowledged philosophers Nikolai Fedorov, Vladimir Solov'ëv, Vasilii Rozanov, Evgenii Trubetskoi, Nikolai Losskii, Nikolai Berdiaev, Lev Shestov and Semën Frank himself; and to the theologians Father Pavel Florenskii and Father Sergii Bulgakov. Frank calls all of them "spiritual fighters" and "prophets" and described them as *religious* thinkers in a very particular way:

In contrast to the purely theoretical minds who explore the world in a disinterested and dispassionate way [...] these people achieved some new understanding of the meaning of life through an internal spiritual struggle and personal religious experience. They showed us new paths of life, they fought against social beliefs and assessments, they preached new (or old, but forgotten) higher values (1996, p. 645, my translation).

Duddington managed to translate and publish many works by Russian "spiritual fighters", including poets and novelists such as Pushkin, Goncharov, Saltykov-Shchedrin, Turgenev, Merezhkovskii, Akhmatova, Zaitsev and others. To some extent they all believed themselves to be endowed with a degree of prophetic potential, permitting them to glimpse some aspects of the 'Truth' in their writings, since "Russian art and philosophy both fulfil a messianic and prophetic function, in so far as they are directed at transcendent goals beyond this world, due to be realized in the future" (Davidson, 2000, p. 649).

Tracing the roots of the prophetic status of Russian writers, Davidson concludes that the image of the writer was transformed from “an aesthetic literary category (modelled on the classical and European tradition) into the spiritual and historical category (modelled on the biblical tradition)” (2003, p. 508). This developed into a Russian messianic idea presented through the perspectives of Russian literature. Nikolai Berdiaev (1874-1948) considered Russian writers to be vehicles for this messianic idea:

The great Russian writers of the nineteenth century created not from the joy of creative abundance, but from a thirst for the salvation of the people, of humanity and the whole world, from unhappiness and suffering, from the injustice and slavery of man. The coming themes of Russian literature are to be Christian even at times when in their own thought Russian writers reject Christianity. (1947, p. 25)

Duddington translated Berdiaev's *The Destiny of man* (1937), and she pursued his religious perspective on Russian writers in her article “Classical Russian Literature”: “The centre of interest for Russian writers is the human soul, man's place in the universe, the meaning of his life, and his final destiny; in the words of an English critic, ‘they see man against the background of eternity’” (1956, p. 1). In her article, Duddington developed a system for dividing Russian writers into two groups: (1) those who believed in God and maintained that “the value and significance of life lies in the fulfilment of His will”, and (2) those who had “no religious faith and poignantly feel the meaninglessness of man's existence” (1956, p. 2). However, both believers and unbelievers recognised “that the presence of *meaning* in the world depends on the existence of God”. On this basis, therefore, Duddington described Russian literature as “essentially religious in spirit”:

Accordingly, both the believers and the unbelievers are really stating the same truth, though they approach it, so to speak, from different angles: the first affirm that life has a meaning because God *is*, the second, by their whole artistic presentation of life, show that if there is no God, life is meaningless. (1956, p. 2)

Most of Duddington's translations of fiction lack either prefaces or introductions, as she aimed to create “the effect of transparency” — the illusion that there is no difference between the translated text and the original one. Bourdieu claims that “[...] very often with foreign authors it is not what they say that matters so much as what they can be made to say. This is why certain particularly elastic authors transfer so well. All great prophecies are polysemic” (1999, p. 224). Since Duddington believed that Russian prophets should speak for themselves, only in very few cases did she write an opening statement to emphasise the religious spirit of a text and the way it reflected the universal ‘Truth’.

For the same reason, Duddington wrote a preface to her translation of Ivan Turgenev's novel *Smoke* (1867). In comparison with Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, Turgenev was neither a prophet, nor a spiritual teacher. Duddington applied her literary system to Turgenev's art to prove that the writer belonged to the same spiritual tradition as the others. In the words of Berdiaev, Turgenev was Christian even when in his own thought he rejected Christianity:

Dostoevsky and Tolstoy were believers, and saw that the purpose and meaning of man's life depended upon his relation to God; Turgenev was not a believer, and for him man was meaningless. The whole of Turgenev's work brings out the tragic conflict between ‘the infinite aspiration, the eternal insignificance of the life of man’. (Duddington, 1949, p. x)

The main theme of Turgenev's art, according to Duddington, was love: “the very essence of which is to transfigure life and shed a magic radiance upon it” (1949, p. x). In her preface,

Duddington refers to Solov'ëv's essay *The Meaning of Love* (1894) to proclaim that, in the language of philosophy, "love opens our eyes to the mystical value of personality [...] lovers see each other as God sees us in the celestial light of our immortal spirit — infinitely precious, unique, and irreplaceable" (p. x). For Duddington, Turgenev conveyed this 'Truth'. She also tried to present love as a universal, divine experience when introducing her translations of forty-seven love poems by Anna Akhmatova (1889-1966) which Duddington published in 1927. In her preface, she admitted that to turn poetry into prose was scarcely forgivable but, in Akhmatova's case, "the essential qualities of her art may be felt even in a lame rendering into another language" (1927, p. 5). She underlined Akhmatova's clarity of spiritual vision: the light of love never blinded Akhmatova but permitted her to see her lover's real self. The novels of Turgenev and the poems of Akhmatova are Russian to the core, but imprinted with the universal and divine image of love which everyone can fathom. Duddington believed that it was the quality of 'universality' which made Russian writers great: "[...] take Dostoevsky's characters: their life and behaviour are almost unthinkable outside Russia, and yet they have a profound significance for people of every nationality" (1956, p. 2).

Duddington set out to make the universal 'Truth' of Russian texts acceptable to English-speaking people as her mission. This was of primal importance since the task of a man as a self-conscious being, according to Duddington, was "to further the process of the reunion of all creatures with one another and with God" (Losskii & Duddington, 1923, p. 351). Russian thinkers expressed 'Divine knowledge' in their writings, and the process of learning from their revelations united their readers. The aim of a translator was to make these 'great' texts accessible in order to let people regard this 'Truth' and to become united through its agency. Therefore, one could not expect Duddington to agree with Daniel Simeoni's modern identification of translators with subservience (Simeoni argues that "to become a translator in the West today is to agree to becoming nearly fully subservient: to the client, to the public, to the author, to the text, to language itself or even, in certain situations of close contact, to the culture or subculture within which the task is required to make sense" (1998, p. 12)). Duddington directed readers on their path to higher knowledge, and she mediated that path.

## 6. Duddington's understanding of translation as mediation of the 'truth'

To understand the translation philosophy Duddington adopted, I turn to her philosophical essay "Our Knowledge of Other Minds" (1918-1919), published in the *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* (Oxford University Press). In her text, Duddington questions the popular idea that one can only understand another person's feelings if one is personally familiar with these feelings. She believed that two distinct processes are at work: experiencing emotions, and reflecting upon them. One cannot, of course, feel another's emotions directly, but there is no difference between rationally analysing your own mental state and that of another individual. In order to do this, one needs to step aside and observe one's own emotions as if they are attributed to someone else. Duddington gives the example of a child who, for the first time, witnesses their mother being angry, and thus learns what anger is before experiencing it. Through analogous contemplation of other people's feelings, we can learn to understand ourselves better. Duddington's idea was disputed by Joshua C. Gregory, who argued that differing interests prevent human beings from understanding one another, and the mutual understanding can be obtained only "in the most fundamental parts of life — just at those points where common feelings and common modes of expression provide a basis of inference" (1920, p. 450). Duddington disagreed and published her reply to Gregory, in which she further developed her theory (1921). It was essential for her to prove that the knowledge of other minds can be shared even with those who have very different life experiences. As a translator,

Duddington transmitted the works of spiritual thinkers who glimpse the divine 'Truth' to give every layperson a chance to learn how to contemplate it in his or her own right.

Sela-Sheffy gives examples of translators whose self-declared "incentive to translate is to bestow their own advantage on the local readership" (2008, p. 613), whilst their real *hexis* was to assert themselves in the cultural field. Duddington's *hexis* included the transmission of spiritual knowledge received by 'prophets', a prophetic act in itself since a prophet is an intermediary who delivers spiritual messages to humanity. Her task was to communicate the message as clearly and closely to the original as possible so the message would be understood by English-speaking readers almost as the emotions of a mother (for example, the anger referred to earlier) are grasped by her child. Duddington took her responsibility very seriously. Her remarkable correspondence with the editor, Alfred J. Rieber, an American historian specializing in Russian and Soviet history, is a good example of this. After receiving Duddington's translation of Kliuchevskii's history, Rieber expressed his indignation at the quality of the translation: "[...] Some of my corrections are, as was to be expected, clarifications in the terminology which only a historian could make. But the bulk of my work involved an attempt to re-work awkward sentence structure and make substitutes for poor choices of words" (Duddington, 1894-1990). Duddington's reply reinforced her credentials as an accuracy-oriented translator. She wrote:

I am sorry that you have taken a dislike to my translation of Kluchevsky [sic]. I think I have rendered his meaning accurately, expressing it as clearly and concisely as is consistent with his style which, as you know, is often extremely cumbersome and involved. A translator must strive to preserve the general character of the original while making the text as readable as possible; every good author has his own way of writing which should not be obliterated. [...] Had I known that as editor you consider yourself entitled to correct my choice of words and constructions of sentences, I would not have agreed to undertake the translation. No English editor has ever interfered with the way in which I did the work entrusted to me. (1894-1990)

This made Rieber reconsider his accusations and send apologies.

## 7. Conclusion

This textual manifestation of Duddington's female *hexis* challenges the notion that Duddington was subservient either to her editor or to her own considerations of social reputation (for example, the regard of those who might have found her marriage illegal — she worked under the name of her common-law husband — or her few philosophical articles unsatisfactory). She was subservient only to the highest, all-embracing 'Truth' which she was determined to promote. In her private correspondence Duddington occasionally complains about poorly written texts which she had to translate for commercial reasons, and which were usually published without indicating the translator's name. However, when she believed in the intrinsic value of a text, she was ready to translate it almost for free not because she, as a woman, could not find another job, but because she felt a personal connection with the text. Such was the case with her translations of Bunin, and of Frank's *Anthology*, as her private papers show. Thus, translation work was not primarily a source of money for her but, rather, a spiritual vocation which, in its own way, supported ecumenism as well as cultural connections between Russia and Britain. Natalie Duddington was much more than Garnett's 'ghost'. Her wider translation work embodied and articulated her keenly-felt religious and philosophical views. Therefore, it is appropriate to acknowledge her contribution by remembering her as a prominent mediator between two cultures.

## 8. Acknowledgements

The author gratefully acknowledges funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement no. 802437).

## 9. References

- Berdyayev, N. (1947). *The Russian Idea*. Geoffrey Bles.
- Berdyayev, N. (1937). *The Destiny of Man*. Geoffrey Bles.
- Bourdieu, P. (1999). The social conditions of the international circulation of ideas. In Richard Shusterman (Ed.), *A Critical Reader* (pp. 220-228). Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- Brown, S. J. & Nockles, Peter B. (2012). *The Oxford movement: Europe and the wider world 1830–1930*. Cambridge University Press.
- Bunin, I. (1951). *Memories and Portraits*. John Lehmann.
- Chamberlain, L. (2007). *The Philosophy Steamer: Lenin and the Exile of the Intelligentsia*. Atlantic.
- Chamberlain, L. (1988). Gender and the metaphors of translation. *Signs*, 13(3), 454-472.
- Charlston, D. (2013). Textual embodiments of Bourdieusian hexis. *The Translator*, 19(1), 51-80.
- Chertkov A. (1900-1910). Correspondence with N. A. Ertel'. Pis'ma k Chertkovoi A. K. (Series 552, Folder 3960), Russian state archive of literature and arts, Moscow, Russia.
- Davidson, P. (2000). Vladimir Solov'ev and the Ideal of Prophecy. *The Slavonic and East European review*, 78(4), 643-670.
- Davidson, P. (2003). The validation of the writer's prophetic status in the Russian literary tradition: From Pushkin and Laskov through Gogol to Dostoevsky. *The Russian review*, 62(4), 508-536.
- Duddington, N. (1917). The religious philosophy of Vladimir Solovyov. *The Hibbert journal*, XV(3), 434-447.
- Duddington, N. (1919). Religious thought in Russia. *Anglo-Russian Literary Society Proceedings*, 86, 18-26.
- Duddington, N. (1921). Do we know other minds mediately or immediately? *Mind*, 30(118), 195-197.
- Duddington, N. (1925, January 16). [Letter to Ivan Bunin]. Bunin Ivan Alekseevich Collection (MS 1066, Item 2319), Leeds Russian archive, UK.
- Duddington, N. (1926). Philosophy in Russia. *Russian journal of philosophical studies*, 1(1), 100-103.
- Duddington, N. (1949). Introduction. In Ivan Turgenev, *Smoke* (pp. v-xii). J. M. Dent & Sons; E. P. Dutton & Co.
- Duddington, N. (1927). Introduction. In Anna Akhmatova, *Forty-seven love poems* (pp. 5-14). Jonathan Cape.
- Duddington, N. (1918-1919). Our knowledge of other minds. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, New Series*, 19, 147-178.
- Duddington, N. (1956). *Classical Russian Literature*. Himalayas Advaita Ashrama.
- Duddington, N. (1894-1990). Correspondence with Alfred J. Rieber. Natalie Duddington Papers (MS 1427, Box 7), Leeds Russian Archive, UK.
- D'Herbigny, M. (1918). *Vladimir Soloviev: A Russian Newman (1853-1900)*. R. and T. Washbourne.
- Frank, S. (1996). *Russkoye Mirovozzrenie*. St Petersburg. Nauka.
- Garrett, S. (1982). *A. I. Ertel: Letters to his daughter*. University of Birmingham.
- Garnett, C. (1904, July 9). [Letter to Edward Garnett]. Garnett Family Papers (MS 445), Eton College School Library, Windsor, UK.
- Garnett, D. (1970). *The Golden Echo*. Chatto & Windus.
- Garnett, R. (1991). *Constance Garnett: A Heroic Life*. Singlair-Stevenson.
- Gregory, J. C. (1920). Do we know other minds mediately or immediately? *Mind*, 29(116), 446-457.
- Hill, E. (1999). *In the Mind's Eye: Memoirs of Dame Elizabeth Hill*. Book Guild.
- Large, D. (2018). The translation of philosophical texts. In P. Rawling & P. Wilson (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of translation and philosophy* (pp. 307-323). Routledge.
- Lasunskii, O. (1972). *Literaturnye Raskopki*. Tsentral'no-Chernozemnoe Knizhnoe Izdatel'stvo.
- Leo XIII. (1896). *Apostolicae Curae: Apostolic letter of Pope Leo XIII on Anglican orders*. Catholic Truth Society.
- Lossky, N. (1919). *The Intuitive Basis of Knowledge*. Macmillan and Co.
- Lossky, N. (1928). *The World as an Organic Whole*. Humphrey Milford.
- Lossky, N. & Duddington, Nathalie. (1923). The Philosophy of Vladimir Solovyev. *The Slavonic review*, 2(5), 346-358.
- Long, L. (2011). Women translators of sacred texts — Female voices in translation. In O. Palusci (Ed.), *Traduttrici. Female voices across languages* (pp. 47-58). Tangram Edizione Scientifiche.
- Marling, W. (2016). *Gatekeepers: The Emergence of World Literature and the 1960s*. Oxford University Press.
- Maclean, C. (2015). *Modernism and the Unseen in Britain 1900-1930*. Edinburgh University Press Stable.

- Meylaerts, R. (2011). Habitus and self-image of native literary author-translators in diglossic societies. *The Journal of the American Translation and Interpreting Studies Association*, 5(1), 1-19.
- Salapatas, D. F. (2013). *The Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius: Oxford and Anglican ecumenical relations 1927–2012*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Sela-Sheffy, R. (2005). How to be a (recognized) translator: Rethinking habitus, norms, and the field of translation. *Target* 17(1), 1-26.
- Sela-Sheffy, R. (2008). The translators' personae: Marketing translatorial images as pursuit of capital. *Meta*, 53(3), 609-622.
- Simeoni, D. (1998). The pivotal status of the translator's habitus. *Target*, 10(1), 1-39.
- Simon, S. (2010). *Gender in Translation: Cultural identity and the politics of transmission*. Routledge.
- Smith, H. (2017). *The Uncommon Reader: A Life of Edward Garnett*. Jonathan Cape.
- Solovyof, V. (1918). *The Justification of the Good: An Essay on Moral Philosophy*. Constable and Company.
- Stebbing, L. (1941). G. Dawes Hicks. *Philosophy*, 16(63), 333.
- Tolstoy, L. (1983). Predislovie kromanu A. I. Ertel'a "Gardeniny". In L. Tolstoy, *Sobranie sochinenii*. Vol. 15. (320-321). Khudozhestvennaia Literatura.
- Venuti, L. (2008). *The Translator's Invisibility: A history of translation*. Routledge.
- Winnington, G. P. (2020). Natasha and Jack. In P. G. Winnington, *Love in the Revolution: True stories of Russians and Anglo-Saxons* (pp. 45-64). The Letterworth Press.



 Anna Maslenova

University of Exeter  
Stocker Rd  
EX4 4PY Exeter  
United Kingdom

[am1237@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:am1237@exeter.ac.uk)

**Biography:** Anna Maslenova is a Postgraduate Research Student on the ERC-funded research project: 'The Dark Side of Translation' at the University of Exeter. Her academic interests lie in the field of Russian literary, philosophical, and scriptural texts translated into English at the end of the 19th century through to the beginning of the 20th century. She investigates the contribution of mediators between the Russian and English-speaking worlds who aimed to make the works of Russian literary figures fathomable to the English-speaking readership.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.