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Found in Translation: Vasyl Stus and Rudyard Kipling's "If"

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Abstract

Despite a not very complete body of foreign literary texts translated into Ukrainian, and a corresponding lacuna of Ukrainian literary texts translated into foreign languages, some unique Ukrainian translation successes do exist. One example concerns Rudyard Kipling's poem "If," which has enjoyed an exceptionally varied translation history into Ukrainian. This paper provides a background to the emergence of these translations and investigates how the text has been incorporated into a Ukrainian linguistic and cultural setting through Vasyl Stus' translation of it. Attention is also paid to long-standing ideological and aesthetic controversies surrounding both Kipling and his poem, as commented on by T. S. Eliot, George Orwell, and Edward Said. Another focus of the paper is on new views on the poem and its translation afforded by approaches of reader-reception theory expressed by Paul de Man and Stanley E. Fish.

Key Words: Rudyard Kipling, "If," Vasyl Stus, translation, reader-reception theory.



Once, in the summer of 1976, they found a poem I had, in Ukrainian, signed by a strange, overtly conspirative name — Kipling. My attempts to prove that the Kipling involved was an English poet, and the poem, characterized as subversive, was available in the USSR in two Russian translations, M. Lozinskii's and S. Marshak's (I showed Zinenko both, which were in Stus' possession) led nowhere. The captain, being shrewd and calculating, was not about to be led astray by *Khuijets'* (which is how he called me behind my back) Jewish tricks. "Mykhailo Ruvymovych, you say that this Kipling wrote in Ukrainian? Only Stus writes in Ukrainian," said Zinenko, with a knowing smile.

Mykhailo Kheifets, "There is No One Greater in Ukrainian Poetry Today."¹

One of the most widespread myths surrounding Ukrainian writer Vasyl Stus (1938–1985) that persists to this day is that Stus was in the process of being nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature by German writer Heinrich Böll (1917–1985), which subsequently became a factor in his state sponsored murder in a Gulag forced labor camp. The part of the myth about Stus'

¹ Mykhailo Kheifets, "V ukrainskii poezii teper bilshoho nema... [There is No One Greater in Ukrainian Poetry Today]," *Suchasnist* 7–8 (1981): 55. This and all subsequent translations from the Ukrainian are mine.

nomination for the Nobel has been factually demystified on a number of occasions, whereas the part about Stus being murdered rather than perishing circumstantially has much more credence.²

Stus' nomination for the Nobel would have been impossible even before his death because of an insufficient number of translations of the poet's work at the time into English, a requirement for nomination. In this respect, the Stus Nobel story is part of a wider context of a Ukrainian translation story. Suffice to say that the translation of important Ukrainian literary texts into western European languages and the translation of canonic Western literary works into Ukrainian has been a slow and arduous process. As examples of major lacunae, iconic Ukrainian writer Taras Shevchenko (1814–1861) was last (and incompletely) translated in a major way into English in 1964, and Joyce's *Ulysses* appeared in Ukrainian translation only in 2015.³ Despite his literary standing, Stus has also been professionally translated into other languages very incompletely, 1987 marking the fullest publication of Stus' poetry into English to date (Jaropolk Lassowski's translations of 47 poems).⁴ Since then a small number of translations have appeared online, augmenting the few that had appeared prior to the mentioned 1987 publication.⁵

The reasons for this are many, both historical and present-day. In Soviet times the status of the Ukrainian language was such that wide-scale translation into and from Ukrainian was neither envisaged nor encouraged. By the 1960s official Soviet state policy toward the Ukrainian language was well documented both inside and outside of the Soviet Union. Ivan Dziuba's (b. 1931) landmark 1964 study, *Internatsionalizm chy rusyfikatsiia* (Internationalism or Russification), written from a Marxist-Leninist perspective, detailed the systematic state Russification of the Ukrainian language and culture, and became one of the key texts in inspiring unprecedented

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- 2 See for instance: Vahtanh Kipiani, "Stus i Nobel. Demistyfikatsiia mifu [Stus and the Nobel: The Demystification of a Myth]," *Ukrainska pravda*, June 22, 2006. Stus' prison camp-mate Vasyl Ovsienko also believes that Stus was murdered, see Vasyl Ovsienko, "Svitlo liudei [The Luminence of People]," in *Vasyl Stus: poet i hromadianyn. Knyha spohadiv ta rozдумiv* [*Vasyl Stus: Poet and Citizen: A Book of Reminiscences and Thoughts*], ed. Vasyl Ovsienko (Kyiv: Klio, 2013), 357–58.
- 3 The last major translations of Shevchenko include: Taras Shevchenko, *The Poetical Works of Taras Shevchenko — The Kobzar*, trans. Constantine H. Andrusyshen and Watson Kirkconnell (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), Taras Shevchenko, *Song Out of Darkness*, trans. Vera Rich (London: Mitre Press, 1961), Taras Shevchenko, *Selected Works: Poetry and Prose*, trans. John Weir (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964).
- 4 Vasyl Stus, *Selected Poems*, trans. Jaropolk Lassowsky (Munich: Ukrainian Free University, 1987).
- 5 See Vasyl Stus, "The Life & Death of a Poet: Prison Diaries/Poems by Vasyl Stus (trans. G. Luckyj)," *The Idler* 2.7 (1986): 15–22. For translations available on the Internet, see Matthew Raphael Johnson, "The Ukrainian Solzhenitsyn: The Poetry of Vasyl Stus," Counter-Currents Publishing, accessed March 15, 2016, <http://www.counter-currents.com/2016/01/vasyl-stus-part-1/> (in three parts). I also included a number of my own translations of Stus poems, among them the first translation into English of "Hoidaietsia vechora zlamana vit" (The Evening's Broken Branch Sways) widely regarded as Stus' poetic chef-d'œuvre, for a film I made. See Roman Veretelnyk, *Palimpsest*, Les Kurbas National Center for Theater Arts, Kyiv, 2014. (Available at: <https://vimeo.com/157136912>.)

activity among participants of the Ukrainian movement of “the sixties.”⁶ In 1968 Dziuba’s Canadian born contemporary (and a member of the Communist Party of Canada), John Kolasky (1915–1997), authored a study of the Ukrainian Education system entitled *Education in the Soviet Ukraine*, in which he came to very similar conclusions as Dziuba had about the deliberate and methodical Russification of the Ukrainian SSR and its population.⁷

Of course, the findings of either study should hardly have surprised anyone well acquainted with the histories of the Russian Empire and USSR as to their policies pertaining to Ukrainian language and culture. At the same time, both studies were eye-openers for many in their target audiences. By the 1960s Soviet language and education policies, both past and present, had to a large extent succeeded in augmenting the desired *sluianie* (merging) of nations by instilling Russian as the Soviet lingua franca, it being, after all, “the language of Lenin.” In the Ukrainian SSR this meant that the full-fledged functioning of the Ukrainian language in public and professional life was discriminated and legislated against.⁸ On a more personal level, anyone who regularly spoke Ukrainian in public outside of western Ukraine (even in the capital, Kyiv) risked raising suspicion as to the intent of such demonstrations of “nationalism.” Vasyl Shymanskii, Stus’ friend and fellow teacher at a Horlivka (Donetsk oblast) school, recalls saying the following in a local cafeteria in 1962 as he and Stus were ordering their meals: “I’d like some borshch to start with, followed by a schnitzel with mashed potatoes and some compote.”⁹ Hearing this another patron (a local miner) commented on Shymanskii’s “kind” and sexual orientation, and belittling Shymanskii’s Ukrainian, retorted “can’t you say it *po-chelovechiski* (literally “in human language,” meaning in Russian) [...] we didn’t liquidate these *Banderites* in 1945, we’ll do it now.”¹⁰ Shymanskii continues by describing how Stus then manhandled the miner, threatening to eject him from the cafeteria before the situation was defused by others present.

In present day Ukraine, despite much real change, the language issue remains difficult and divisive. Just one recent example of this is the Ukrainian Parliament’s passage of law 3822-d on June 16, 2016, a law designed to instill a quota for Ukrainian language song content (and Ukrainian content in general) on Ukrainian radio, both state and private (the law modeled on existing similar legislation in many European countries including France, Germany, and neighboring Poland).¹¹ Passage of the law was preceded by a very public (in the media, especially on social media) division into two camps of differing views of Ukrainian singers themselves,

6 Chapter 7 of the book was first published (abridged) in a New York Ukrainian-language journal in 1968. See Ivan Dziuba, “Internatsionalizm chy rusyfikatsiia [Internationalism or Russification],” *Suchasnist* 2.86 (1968): 61–87. Until that time the book had been circulated in *samvydav* (self-published) form. Dziuba had also sent copies to ruling Communist Party officials in Ukraine.

7 John Kolasky, *Education in Soviet Ukraine: A Study in Discrimination and Russification* (Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 1968).

8 For a comprehensive analysis of Soviet language policy in Ukraine see Kenneth C. Farmer, *Ukrainian Nationalism in the Post-Stalin Era: Myth, Symbols and Ideology in Soviet Nationalities Policy* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1980).

9 Vasyl Stus, *Lysty do syna [Letters to My Son]* (Ivano-Frankivsk: Lileia-NV, 2001), 10.

10 Stus, *Lysty do syna*, 10.

11 Law 3822-d can be accessed at: http://w1.c1.rada.gov.ua/pls/zweb2/webproc4_1?pf3511=59423.

the “anti” camp seeing it necessary to sign a collective letter voicing their disagreement with the (at the time) proposed legislation.¹² At about the same time, Yurii Vynnychuk, a major writer from western Ukraine wrote:

Walking through the streets of Kyiv I see that Russian signs and advertising dominate. I get uncomfortable in the capital of my own country. My language is always secondary. I ask waiters, sales clerks, to serve me in the official language. This is something I have to ask for!!! And I am often refused.¹³

While Tsarist and Soviet policies may be long gone, today’s realities pose an old threat in a distinctively new wrapper, as the aforementioned former Russification policies have been rebranded into a broader policy known as the pan-national “*Russkii mir*” (Russian World) concept, on whose account the Russian Federation’s leadership partially justifies its annexation of Crimea and ongoing un-proclaimed war against Ukraine. Commenting on Russia’s aggression in Ukraine, Stephen Blank, senior fellow with the American Foreign Policy Council, writes about how the “Russian World” concept is officially interpreted:

The Russians have played fast and loose with this: Sometimes they mean Russian speakers. Or there is also the new Russian citizenship law that says if your grandparents lived in Russia and Russian is your native language, you can be a Russian citizen. This would make me a Russian citizen — they can invade Brighton Beach to rescue the Russian Jews who are oppressed by the city government of New York.¹⁴

Despite the difficulties in the past and present for Ukrainian speakers in their attempts not only to conserve but to continue the modern development of their language, there have been genuine achievements, including in the translation field. Mykola Lukash (1919–1988) is widely considered to have been one of the finest translators into a Slavic language by the entire Slavic translation community, his translation into Ukrainian of Cervantes’ *Don Quixote* having received legendary repute.¹⁵ Renowned poet and novelist Yurii Andrukhovych (b. 1960), through his recent translations of Shakespeare (*Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet*), adds to a long list of translations by distinguished major writers and professional translators who have translated “the Bard of Avon,” beginning in the early 19th century with Yevhen Hrebinka (1812–1848), better known in the world for having written the words of the romance *Ochi chyornye* (Dark

12 A full list of signatories opposed to the law is available here: <http://ukranews.com/ua/news/419224-povnyy-spysook-artystiv-yaki-vystupyly-proty-kvot-na-ukrainomovnu-muzyku-na-radio>.

13 Vynnychuk’s statement appeared on the *Mova.ua* Facebook page, and can be accessed at: <https://www.facebook.com/MovaKursy/?fref=ts> on June 13, 2016.

14 Daniel Treisman, “Why Putin Took Crimea: The Gambler in the Kremlin,” *Foreign Affairs*, May/June, 2016, accessed June 1, 2016, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2016-04-18/why-putin-took-crimea>.

15 For appraisals of Lukash’s work by his contemporaries see *Nash Lukash [Our Lukash]*, ed. Leonid Cherevatenko, in 2 vols. (Kyiv: Vydavnychiy dim “Kyievo-Mohylianska akademiia,” 2009–2011).

Eyes). The significant number of notable translations of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* into Ukrainian is an exception to a longstanding practice that has rarely resulted in the production of multiple translations of a text.¹⁶

As is the case with Shakespeare, one of the best-known and most published poems in the English language, Rudyard Kipling's "If" has attracted a surprising number of Ukrainian translators, ranging from amateur translators to Stus, by consensus considered to be one of the finest poets in the history of Ukrainian literature (and also the translator of a significant body of texts).¹⁷ The attraction of Ukrainian translators to Kipling's work presents particular questions pertaining to the author himself, his politics, and his texts. Kipling's universal reputation as a writer of empire had its ramifications in the Soviet period. Despite a strong respect for Kipling by Soviet writers of the 1920s and 1930s (Babel, Olesha, among others) this has meant that relatively few of the author's texts were translated and that a "correct" assessment of the man, his politics, and his writing was always provided in anything published on him. Russian literary historian D. S. Mirsky (himself disdainful of Kipling and his work) believed that the first generation of Soviet writers admired Kipling in an ironically Kiplingesque display of good form: "Carried away by their lack of understanding of the class nature of the phenomenon, Soviet writers tried to create an idealized image of 'a worthy enemy.'"¹⁸ Maksym Strikha comments that while Soviet Moscow and Leningrad publications of Kipling were made possible by preambles such as "Kipling's writing is of special interest to us as a refined, highly literary embodiment of the ideas and moods of our enemy, as one of the greatest achievements of Western Imperialist poetry," no such gamesmanship was even remotely possible in Ukraine.¹⁹ Curiously, although not surprisingly, Kipling's *Jungle Book* for children remained widely popular for many years, and

16 The list of translations of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* by major Ukrainian writers includes 19th century translations (Yevhen Hrebinka, Panteleimon Kulish, Mykhailo Starytskyi), 20th century translations (Yurii Klen, Ihor Kostetskyi), and a 21st century translation (Yurii Andrukhovych). Shakespeare's play was also translated by Hryhorii Kochur, a 20th century translator of high repute.

17 Stus' translations include those from the German (14 writers), Russian (4), Belorussian and French (3), Polish (2), Czech, English, Hebrew, Italian, Slovak, Spanish (1). In total Stus translated 207 poems, 1 prose piece, and 1 play. By far the largest number of translations are those of Rainer Maria Rilke's poetry (94). See Vasyl Stus, *Tvory u chotyriokh tomakh, shesty knyhakh. Tom 5 (dodatkovyi) pereklady: poeziia, proza, dramatychni tvory* [Works in Four Volumes, Six Books. Volume 5 (Additional) Translations: Poetry, Prose, Dramatic Works] (Lviv: Prosvita, 1998). To date, no information exists as to whether Stus' last collection, *Ptakh dushi* [Soul Bird] (including its over 300 translations), confiscated in Gulag prison camp Perm-36, was destroyed. Stus' son Dmytro, is only "10–20%" confident that the collection may still exist. Among the translations were additional translations of Kipling. See Dmytro Stus' interview in *ZIK*, September 7, 2015, accessed February, 24, 2016, http://zik.ua/news/2015/09/07/opublikuvaty_zbirku_stusa_ptah_dushi_praktychno_nerealno_syn_poeta_622464.

18 Dmitrii Mirskii, *Stati o literature* [Articles on Literature] (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1987), 225.

19 See Maksym Strikha, "Kiplinh realnyi i vyhadanyi [Kipling, Real and Imagined]," *Vsesvit* 5 (1989): 110.

for many generations of Soviet Ukrainian readers was the only representation of Kipling the author.²⁰

Among the little of Kipling's poetry to have been translated into Ukrainian, "If" stands apart in terms of the number of its translations made. The translation history of the poem begins with a version by Ukrainian's main ideologue of "Integral Nationalism" (and also a prolific literary critic), Dmytro Dontsov (1883–1973), and continues right up to a version by a contemporary young poet and translator, Taras Malkovych (b. 1988). Also available are translations by professional translators (Maryna Levina and Maksym Strikha), and by three writers who can be grouped together: Sviatoslav Karavanskyi (b. 1920), Yevhen Sverstiuk (1928–2014), and Stus. Outside of these "mainstream" translations of the poem a number of unpublished versions are known to exist, the most prominent of which can be considered Oksana Zabuzhko's (b. 1960) unpublished version, as well as versions that have independently appeared (and continue to appear) on Internet sites and social media.²¹ In addition to the actual translations of the poem, its popularity has resulted in a musical version by widely-known singer Andrii Sereda.²²

The reason for grouping together the translations of Karavanskyi, Sverstiuk, and Stus has a logic, which at first may seem entirely non-literary. All three translators were writers-intellectuals who were not only key participants in the Ukrainian movement of "the sixties," but were all arrested and imprisoned for their writings and activities as well. All three can be described as Soviet (in particular Soviet Ukrainian) dissidents. The inspiration for my writing this paper was a talk on Stus given at a conference in January 2008 (at which I was present) by Stus' friend and Gulag colleague, Sverstiuk.²³ In a question and answer session Sverstiuk commented on his translation of "If" by saying that "every *zek* (inmate) in the camps had his own translation of Kipling." What Sverstiuk intimated at was that prisoners of the Gulag sentenced for political activity found in Kipling's poem a wonderfully appropriate text that could be used in the "distance-education," through the letter medium, of their children.

All of the aforementioned Ukrainian translations of "If," excepting two, provide approximate literal translations of the poem's title ("Yakshcho," "Koly" in Ukrainian), the exceptions being Stus' and Sverstiuk's versions, which both feature the title "To My Son" ("Synovi," which in its case form is the dative of the noun *syn*, meaning "to my son." Considering that these translations were first sent to their addressees as parts of letters, their titling is entirely understandable).

20 Kipling's stories were first translated into Ukrainian in 1910, see Rudyard Kipling, *Opovidannia* [*Stories*], trans. N. Romanovych (Kyiv: B.V., 1910).

21 The existence of Zabuzhko's translation was confirmed in a conversation with the author of this paper. This makes the translation only the second (known) by a woman. A list of translations independently posted on Internet sites can be accessed at: <https://sites.google.com/site/ifrudyardkipling/Ukrainian/language/>. According to this list, to date 7 such translations exist (presumably there may be more).

22 Sereda's uses the words of Dontsov's (approximate) prose translation in setting the text to a well-known composition of composer Mykola Lysenko. Sereda's version can be heard here: <http://www.pisni.org.ua/songs/4106535.html>.

23 Sverstiuk's talk took place at the "Scholarly Day's" conference in January, 2009, at the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy.

This grammatical feature of Stus' and Sverstiuk's translations of the poem's title, which makes their sons direct addressees, has led to comments that "their letter form is common to all Ukrainian translations of the poem," an interesting transposition, but not entirely accurate.²⁴ Stus especially was a prolific letter writer during his imprisonment, and when considered in the wider context of all of his prison camp correspondence, his translation of the poem can be seen as part of a system of addressed texts (76 extant) dedicated to the education of his son Dmytro, which together represented a conscious and systematic effort of the poet to raise his son in his enforced absence from family and home.²⁵ Stus' letters to his son and wife gain even more importance considering that from the middle of 1980 he was not allowed to send letters to anyone other than immediate family members.²⁶

Dmytro Stus is the poem's actual and implied addressee. Six years old at the time of his father's arrest, he would see his father next in 1979, and only for less than a year, as Stus was rearrested in May, 1980 (for having headed the Ukrainian Helsinki Monitoring Group) and perished in prison camp Perm-36 (Kuchino, Perm oblast), in the early hours of September 4, 1985. After their months together, father and son would never see each other again, their only contact with each other existing in letter form. Commenting on himself as the letters' addressee, D. Stus writes:

The letters are not so much addressed to the actual 7, 9, and 15 year old author of this article, as they are to the successor of Vasyl Stus' spiritual legacy, to someone who has come into the world to establish himself, to create himself.²⁷

D. Stus' comment clearly indicates his understanding of his father's creation of a unique educational structure that has no analogs, and the need to the publish his father's letters to him in a separate book, *Lysty do syna* (Letters to My Son), is indicative of D. Stus' special understanding of himself in the role of their addressee.

Kipling's poem "If" is one of the best known and most often anthologized poems in the English language and it, along with the rest of Kipling's writing has been both admired by mass

24 See Olena Makarenko and Maryna Novykova, "Paradoksy khrestomatiinoho virsha [The Paradoxes of an Anthologized Poem]," *Vsesvit* 5 (1989): 116.

25 Overall, there are 76 extant letters of Stus to his son, the first appearing in 1975 and the last in 1985. This number does not represent the total number written to his son, as his letters (with included poetry and translations) addressed to family and friends were often confiscated. Stus' translation of the poem (with commentary) first appeared in a letter in 1973. See Vasyl Stus, *Tvory u chotyriokh tomakh, vol. 6, book 1*, 27–28. In his letters to his son Stus touches upon many issues related to literature, artistic taste, musical taste, culture in general, and life in general. Together, they may be seen as a concerted effort by the poet to systematically pass along information and life-experience. For a detailed discussion of Stus as letter-writer, see Mykhailyna Kotsiubynska, "Epistoliarna tvorchist Vasylia Stusa [Vasyl Stus' Epistolary Creativity]," in Vasyl Stus, *Works in Four Volumes, Six Books. Volume 6 (Additional), Book Two: Letters to Friends and Acquaintances* (Lviv: Prosvita, 1998), 218–40.

26 Stus, *Lysty do syna*, 6.

27 Stus, *Lysty do syna*, 3.

readers and often admonished by literary critics.²⁸ An especially interesting dialogue on this account emerged between T. S. Eliot, critic Lionel Trilling, W. H. Auden, and especially George Orwell. In a long introduction to a 1941 edition of Kipling's poetry edited by Eliot, entitled *A Choice of Kipling's Verse*, Eliot took it upon himself to provide a defense and apology of Kipling's work amidst Kipling's dwindling literary reputation, but in doing so proposed the rather ambivalent thought that Kipling "was not trying to write poetry at all," only sometimes reaching "the intensity of poetry."²⁹ Eliot also distanced himself from Kipling in stating that "part of the fascination of this subject is in the explanation of a mind so different from one's own."³⁰ He also proposed an idea that has as much to do with the reception of the poem as it does with his criticism of Kipling's authorship of it:

I know of no writer of such great gifts for whom poetry seems to have been more purely an instrument. Most of us are interested in the form for its own sake — not apart from the content, but because we aim at making something which shall first of all *be*, something which in consequence will have the capability of exciting, within a limited range, a considerable variety of responses from different readers. For Kipling the poem is something which is intended to *act*...³¹

In his description of a Kipling poem "acting," Eliot is very close to what Wimsatt and Beardsley in their seminal article "The Affective Fallacy" would term "doing": "The Affective Fallacy is a confusion between the poem and its *results* (what it *is* and what it *does*)."³² The question for Eliot in his "defense" of Kipling then becomes not one of "meaning" per se, but one of the affect of the reading of the text.

In his influential article "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics," Stanley E. Fish proposes that in approaching a text one can replace the question "what does this sentence mean?" with the question "what does this sentence do?": "It is no longer an object, a thing-in-itself, but an *event*, something that happens to, and with the participation of the reader."³³ Fish's radical notion of the reading process as a never-ending "event" instead of a closed system

28 In a BBC poll held in October 1995 British voters picked Kipling's "If" as the nation's favorite poem, with more than double the votes of the runner-up poem, Alfred Lord Tennyson's "The Lady of Shallot." See *The Independent*, October 13, 1995, accessed March 1, 2015, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/british-voters-keep-their-heads-and-say-if-is-the-best-of-all-1577256.html>. In a 1941 two-issue *Atlantic Monthly* article critic Edmund Wilson detailed why Kipling was no longer in favor among critics. See "The Kipling That Nobody Read," *Atlantic Monthly*, February 1941, 201–14, March 1941, 340–54.

29 Rudyard Kipling, *A Choice of Kipling's Verse*, ed. T. S. Eliot (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943), 6.

30 Kipling, *A Choice of Kipling's Verse*, 17.

31 Kipling, *A Choice of Kipling's Verse*, 18.

32 William Wimsatt Jr. and Monroe Beardsley, *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1954), 21.

33 Stanley E. Fish, "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics," in *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*, ed. J. V. Harari (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), 72.

of static meaning or even multiple meanings is especially applicable to a text such as Kipling's poem, containing outworn clichés, poetry that Orwell termed "a graceful monument to the obvious."³⁴ In Fish's approach, the "meaning" of the often quoted words "Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it, And — which is more — you'll be a Man, my son," is no longer located in the words themselves or in their associations and connotations.³⁵ As an "event" brought into play through the on-going reading act, the "meaning" of the "outworn" words is no longer fixed or limiting, the responsibility for their "meaning" being transferred through the "event" of reading to the reader. This seems of radical importance, because if a reader chooses to approach the poem in an Orwellian (or, for example, in a gender-based or post-colonial) way and wade into the murky waters of the question of Kipling's morality, s/he now has to share with the author/narrator in defining the morality involved.

The book's (Eliot's anthology's of Kipling) reviewers, among them Trilling, Auden, and Orwell, all took issue with Eliot's defense of Kipling, Auden being mildest in his disagreement with Eliot, and Orwell the most extreme. In his scathing attack on Kipling, Orwell essentially argued that the 1907 Nobel Prize winner in literature was not a good poet at all, but rather a "good bad poet," and challenged Eliot's idea that Kipling occasionally wrote poetry rather than verse by commenting "it was a pity that Mr. Eliot did not specify these poems by name."³⁶ Orwell's attack on Kipling's writings was relentless, both on moral-ideological and artistic grounds, featuring commentary such as: "Kipling is a jingo imperialist, he is morally insensitive and aesthetically disgusting"; "It is no use pretending that Kipling's view of life, as a whole, can be accepted or even forgiven by any civilized person"; "Kipling ought to have known better"; "Most of Kipling's verse is so horribly vulgar that it gives one the same sensation as one gets from watching a third-rate music-hall performer."³⁷

After such a characterization of Kipling, in an act of critical acrobatics (and admirable honesty), Orwell astonishingly states that despite his reprehensible ideological stance and the inferior aesthetic value of his poetry, it

is capable of giving pleasure to people who know what poetry means. At his worst, and also his most vital, in poems like "Gunga Din" or "Danny Deever," Kipling is almost a shameful pleasure, like the taste for cheap sweets that some people secretly carry into middle life. But even with his best passages one has the same sense of being seduced by something spurious, and yet unquestionably seduced. Unless one is merely a snob and a liar it is impossible to say that no one who cares for poetry could get any pleasure out of such lines...³⁸

34 George Orwell, "Rudyard Kipling," *Horizon*, February, 1942, accessed March 1, 2015, http://www.george-orwell.org/Rudyard_Kipling/o.html.

35 Quotations from Kipling's poem and its Ukrainian translations are taken from: Makarenko and Novykova, "Paradoksy khrestomatiinoho virsha," 114–15.

36 Orwell, "Rudyard Kipling."

37 Orwell, "Rudyard Kipling."

38 Orwell, "Rudyard Kipling."

Despite his invective against Kipling, Orwell's notion of "good bad poetry" can also be interpreted, Eliot-like, as a fascinating unexpected apology of his famous predecessor, and Orwell's thought that people "who should know better," i.e. "ideal," "informed" and other sophisticated readers of various stripes can receive "shameful pleasure" from reading "good bad" texts is just as unexpected. The notion that pleasure can be "smuggled" into a writer-reader or narrator-narratee relationship through, at first glance, outdated, unsophisticated, or ideologically suspect means is surely radical too, and has ramifications not only for interpretations of Kipling, but also for other texts that have been dismissed as being inferior for a variety of reasons. A Ukrainian poem that comes to mind here is Volodymyr Sosiura's (1898–1965) 1944 patriotic wartime poem "Liubit Ukrainu" (Love Ukraine). Like Kipling's "If," "Liubit Ukrainu" enjoys iconic status, is widely taught in schools, performed at concerts, etc. Also like Kipling's "If," it has been critically maligned (in various time periods and from various ideological and aesthetic positions), and Sosiura today is not considered a great poet.³⁹ Another Ukrainian poem that comes to mind in a comparison with Kipling's "If" is Vasyly Symonenko's (1935–1963) "Lebedi

39 Ironically, Sosiura was criticized by another Ukrainian poet, Andrii Malyshko, both for his ideologically "incorrect past" and his poem: "V. Sosiura has once again ideologically wavered [...] not having understood the role of the Leninist-Stalinist idea of the friendship of nations and having written a number of decadent poems devoid of ideals, at times even featuring enemy positions, such as his poem "Liubit Ukrainu." Whoever forgets about the friendship of nations, or who is silent about it in his work is committing a great crime against the task of the building of communism." See Andrii Malyshko, "Za ideinu chystotu literary proty natsionalistychnykh retsydyviv [Toward the Ideological Purity of Literature Against Nationalist Relapses]," *Soviet Ukraine*, June 10, 1951, accessed February 14, 2015, <http://wz.lviv.ua/far-and-near/135601-malyshko-hanbyv-sosiuru-za-vorozhist-virshaliubit-ukrainu>. In 1991 poet Oleksandr Irvanets (a founding member, along with fellow writers Yuriy Andrukhovych and Viktor Neborak, of the "Bu-Ba-Bu," (Burlesque-Disorder-Boffoonery literary group)), published his poem "Liubit!" (Love!), a parody of Sosiura's poem. Contemporary literary critic and poet Mykola Riabchuk has the following to say about Irvanets' parody of Sosiura's poem: Irvanets "in essence, descends into the subconscious, deconstructing its entirely empty patriotic rhetoric, demonstrating a lightness with which socialist-realist clichés can be applied to nationalist needs — and vice-versa." See Mykola Riabchuk, *Postkolonialnyi syndrom. Sposterezhennia [The Post-Colonial Syndrome: Observations]* (Kyiv: K.I.S., 2011). (Irvanets' poetry is available at: <http://poetyka.uazone.net/default/pages.phtml?place=irvan&page=irvano7>.) It is remarkable how close to each other Malyshko's and Riabchuk's interpretations of Sosiura's poem are, despite the half century of time and widely differing ideological viewpoints that separate them. Both see Sosiura as no more than a tribune for his "nationalist" ideas. I would argue that Orwell's notion of a "good bad poet" is as applicable to Sosiura as it is to Kipling, in that much genuine "pleasure" can be derived by reading both poet's verses, even by "informed and ideal" readers. In my view, Irvanets' poem, in addition to acting as a certain postmodern deconstruction of Sosiura's text, constitutes an effective example of intertext, and shows Irvanets' understanding of and respect for Sosiura's poem in an Eliotesque way, an understanding of tradition within a literary system. For a discussion of the complex relationship between innovation and tradition, see T. S. Eliot's seminal article "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (London: Methuen, 1921), 42–54.

Materynstva" (The Swans of Motherhood). The poem is not "sophisticated" or "complex" in a literary sense, but does very well to powerfully convey its "message" in a Kiplingesque way, and has similarly achieved cult status, largely because of a popular song version. In Orwellian terms, both texts can be considered "good bad poems."

If Sosiura or Symonenko can be characterized, according to Eliot's classification, more as writers of verse rather than poetry, the same cannot be said of Stus. Stus today enjoys a reputation that consists of various key components. Like Sosiura and Symonenko (and Kipling), he is considered to be a "patriotic" poet, who albeit much more so than them has a "heroic" biography, ending in martyrhood (Symonenko's fate being tragic as well, although in a different way). In this, Stus' place in the Ukrainian literary canon is very similar to that of Shevchenko, although over one century removed. Both poets were remarkable innovators in poetry, and both had their problems with the Tsarist and Soviet regimes, respectively. Both were arrested and sentenced, although in comparison, Stus' fate during his imprisonment was significantly harsher than Shevchenko's. Both poets died at the age of 47, and both were reinterred in their native Ukraine, the reinterment of both becoming occasions for shows of mass defiance towards the state by their compatriots. Both poets have statues in their honor (one of Stus in Vinnytsia, an untold number of Shevchenko in Ukraine and abroad) and national prizes named after them (the Shevchenko Prize being the most prestigious in Ukraine, although not without recurring issues surrounding its selection process. Stus was posthumously awarded the Shevchenko Prize in 1991). Along with their patriotism, both Shevchenko and Stus are universally held to be poets of the highest magnitude by critics of various times, approaches, and ideologies.⁴⁰ Many scholars, including Yurii Shevelov, Leonid Pliushch, Bohdan Rubchak, and Marko Pavlyshyn among others, see profound connections between the writings of Shevchenko and Stus.⁴¹

40 The only substantial exception to the universally positive assessments of Shevchenko's work following his death was in the writings of Ukrainian futurist poet Mykhail Semenko (1892–1937), executed by the NKVD after a show trial in October, 1937. Commenting on Shevchenko's key 1840 collection *Kobzar* (The Minstrel) in 1914 (the 100th anniversary of Shevchenko's birth), Semenko wrote: "I want to tell you that where you have a cult you have no art... You have latched on to your *Kobzar*, which reeks of tar and lard, and think that your respect will save you. Your respect has killed him. He cannot be resurrected... Time has transformed a Titan into a useless Lilliput, and Shevchenko's place now is in the proceedings of scholarly societies... Such are your anniversary celebrations. That's all that remains of Shevchenko. Even I cannot ignore the celebration. I will burn my *Kobzar*." See Liubov Yakymchuk, "Mykhail Semenko: vid futurizmu do teroryzmu [Mykhail Semenko: From Futurism to Terrorism]," *LitAktsent*, December 25, 2012, accessed May 17, 2016, <http://litakcent.com/2012/12/27/myhajl-semenko-vid-futuryzmu-do-teroryzmu/>.

41 For discussions on Shevchenko's influence on Stus, see Marko Pavlyshyn, "Kvadratura kruha: prolehomeny do otsinky Vasyliya Stusa [Squaring the Circle: Prolegomena in Estimating Vasyl Stus]," in *Stus yak tekst*, ed. Marko Pavlyshyn (Melbourne: Monash University, 1993), 15–21; Leonid Pliushch, "Vbyvstvo poeta Vasyliya Stusa [The Killing of Poet Vasyl Stus]," Osyp Zinkevych and Mykola Frantsuzhenko, eds., *Vasyl Stus v zhytti, tvorchosti, spohadakh ta otsinkakh suchasnykiv [Vasyl Stus in Life, Writings, Memoirs and Estimations of Contemporaries]* (Baltimore-Toronto: Smoloskyp, 1987), 285–301; Bohdan Rubchak, "Peremoha nad pririvoiu (Pro poeziu Vasyliya Stusa) [Victory Over the

The history of Stus' translation of Kipling's "If" shows the special importance of the poem for the Ukrainian writer, who included varying versions of its translation in letters to his son Dmytro and wife Valentyna Popeliukh (interestingly, Stus mentions "If" in only one letter addressed to a non-family member, and only in a passing way).⁴² The first letter with translation included is dated April 16, 1973 (when Dmytro was 6 years old) and addressed to his wife and son together, with the accompanying words "Here's something for Dmytryk (I've translated Kipling's poem)."⁴³ After his second arrest and imprisonment Stus again included a translation of the poem in a letter to his wife dated May 16, 1981, commenting (in a direct address to his son) "I'm re-writing Kipling for you."⁴⁴ In a next long letter containing a translation of "If," again addressed to his wife and son, dated June 1, 1981, Stus wrote:

You're growing my son. You have to grow up quickly. Keep away from all temptation (at your age all kinds of demons start creeping into your soul — keep them at bay, you should know that much of what will happen in your life will depend on how you deal with these demons). New voices will be heard in your body and soul — all kinds, many of them new. You must be ready for this vortex and behave in a way that you won't have to be sorry for later — that you gave in, succumbed to temptation, etc. You are now at an age that I'll resend my translation of Kipling's wonderful poem to you (he was also writing "to his son," although he entitled his poem "If").⁴⁵

Stus follows these comments with a 16 line excerpt from M. Lozynskii's Russian translation of "If":

diluted in my memory [...] I've forgotten the ending. I've also abridged it. But the essence remains. The best of the poem is here. That's how one should live. That's how one should act, overcoming one's own laziness, inactivity, apathy, and so on. Learn how to live, that form of high art, that having lived their entire lives, few people have managed to master.⁴⁶

In these three letters separated in time by eight years, it is clear that Stus admires Kipling's poem and has chosen it as a tool of instruction in the distance upbringing of his son (Stus' admiration is very much shared by D. Stus, who considers Kipling (along with Goethe and Rilke)

Abyss: On Vasyl Stus' Poetry]," in *Vasyl Stus v zhytti, tvorchosti, spohadakh ta otsinkakh suchasnykiv*, eds. Osyp Zinkevych and Mykola Frantsuzhenko, 315–51; Yurii Shevelov, "Trunok i trutyzna (Pro 'Palimpsesty' Vasyliia Stusa) [Poison and Slow-Acting Poison: On Vasyl Stus' 'Palimpsests']," in *Vasyl Stus v zhytti, tvorchosti, spohadakh ta otsinkakh suchasnykiv*, eds. Osyp Zinkevych and Mykola Frantsuzhenko, 368–401.

42 Stus, *Works in Four Volumes, Six Books*, vol. 6, book 2, 121.

43 Stus, *Works in Four Volumes, Six Books*, vol. 6, book 1, 27–28.

44 Stus, *Works in Four Volumes, Six Books*, vol. 6, book 1, 367–68.

45 Stus, *Works in Four Volumes, Six Books*, vol. 6, book 1, 374–75.

46 Stus, *Works in Four Volumes, Six Books*, vol. 6, book 1, 376.

and his father to be “like-minded”).⁴⁷ Also very evident in the letter is Stus’ maxim that a person has to work hard at learning how to live, a life lesson that the poet often attempts to impress upon his son, for which purpose Kipling’s poem is wonderfully appropriate. It is also clear that in these communications there is no thought or word suggesting anything (ideologically or aesthetically) critical about Kipling or his poem. Stus’ only comment on “If” that can be construed to be evaluative is found in a letter to Sverstiuk, dated August 17, 1977. In it Stus “chastises” Sverstiuk’s translation of the poem for “intensifying its best parts, giving them more emphasis than the author [...] which pleases me greatly.”⁴⁸ Stus’ intimation that Sverstiuk’s translation is an improvement over the original provides a unique view into his thoughts on the translation process, and is echoed on other occasions. For instance, Kheifets recalls relating to Stus his thoughts about problems in Mykola Bazhan’s translations of Rilke:

When Stus showed me Bazhan’s translations of Rilke, I immediately looked into the texts, naturally finding weaknesses. Vasyl listened, thought, and contradicted me: “You’re right, but these are defects of the original. Bazhan translated them correspondingly, leaving the weaknesses he found in Rilke himself,” and began to explain to me that “Rilke’s poems are strong horizontally, but vertically, their connecting structures are weak, I’ve read him in the original.”⁴⁹

Interestingly, Stus often discusses aesthetic value in his letters (e.g. in the previous letter mentioned above, Stus is particularly judgmental of his contemporary, poet Ivan Drach (b. 1936), commenting:

I read a selection of Drach’s poems in the fourth issue of *Vitchyzna* (Homeland). There is so much that is artificial, labored, that for every couple of pages there are only two-three genuine lines of poetry.⁵⁰

In view of Stus’ lack of a critical stance towards Kipling’s poem, such a strong appraisal of a contemporary may seem unexpected and inconsistent. But the situation here is neither contradictory nor inconsistent, as after all, Stus was sending *his translation* of Kipling’s poem to his son, a text he had made his own and that he could take full responsibility for, aesthetically, ideologically, morally, and on any other grounds. This has as much to say about Stus’ confidence in himself, both as a poet and translator, as it does about his reading of Kipling’s poem.

Stus would write about Kipling to his son for the last time in a letter dated June 12, 1983 (addressed to both his wife and son).⁵¹ Stus begins the letter by stating that he is rewriting a (20 page) confiscated June letter entirely dedicated to his son, which contained a new translation of “If.” Stus ends the characteristically long letter with another mention of Kipling: “I’ve completed

47 Stus, *Lysty do syna*, 3.

48 Stus, *Works in Four Volumes, Six Books*, vol. 6, book 2, 121.

49 Kheifets, “V ukrainskii poezii teper bilshoho nema,” 24.

50 Stus, *Works in Four Volumes, Six Books*, vol. 6, book 1, 368.

51 Stus, *Works in Four Volumes, Six Books*, vol. 6, book 1, 439–44.

a new translation of Kipling's 'To his Son' — I'll send it another time, if they don't forbid it."⁵² As Stus could not include his new translation in the letter, we have no knowledge of how his rendition of the poem had evolved since he first translated it in 1973. What the letter shows is Stus' manner of work as a translator, just as in his poetry, constantly revising and rewriting. Tellingly, Stus refers to Kipling's poem not by its title, but rather by the title "Synovi," which he gave to his translation, terming Kipling's title "his" (Kipling's) version.

Just how seriously Stus saw himself as a translator is evident on the countless occasions that he commented on the translation act itself, especially concerning Rilke. In her article "V. Stus and R. M. Rilke — Aesthetic Searches of An Artistic Dialogue (Vasyl Stus' Letters)," Natalia Zahoruiko documents these instances and terms the information conveyed in the (prison camp) letters "a true laboratory of creative translation."⁵³ "I'll translate Rilke," the poet wrote in a letter to his loved ones in 1973 "because I know it's very important — for me. It doesn't really matter that Bazhan has already done it. Besides, conditions are conducive for playing with aesthetics."⁵⁴ In another letter to his wife he wrote: "How unfortunate the word translation is! That's why our classics used the term *viddavannia*, *viddaty* (rendition, render)."⁵⁵

In one his most stirring and emotional letters to his wife (in which he explains why their July 16, 1984 meeting hadn't taken place because he "couldn't overcome the barrier of scheduled humiliations... I can't agree to see you (you!), having paid the price of self-humiliation, which for some reason is called a ritual."⁵⁶ Stus also tells his wife that he is dedicating his translation of Rilke's "Orpheus. Eurydice. Hermes" to her, telling her "Valochka: this is all — about you, about you-who are mine, therefore the you-who you may not even know well yourself, but perhaps guess at — from my eyes, words, and glances."⁵⁷ Stus comments on his translation by saying that he so much admires and respects Rilke's text that he was afraid

to delve deeper into it, so as not to lose in my translation, God forbid, my *impression* of it. It's like a first intimate experience, you both want it and you're sorry. Thank God, I've done it, and I'm satisfied, though I don't know with what: Rilke, the original text, or the translation.⁵⁸

Knowing that his wife will not have access to his translation, at the end of the letter Stus writes: "Kisses, my dearest, my Eurydice. At least read Bazhan's translation of Rilke's poem [...]"

52 Stus, *Works in Four Volumes, Six Books, vol. 6, book 1*, 443.

53 Nataliia Zahoruiko, "V. Stus ta R. M. Rilke — estetychni poshuky mystetskoho dialohu (za epistoliaranoi spadshchynoiu V. Stusa) [V. Stus and R. M. Rilke — Aesthetic Searches in an Artistic Dialogue (Based V. Stus' Letters)]," *Naukovi zapysky Natsionalnoho universytetu "Oztrózka akademiia"* 32 (2013): 68–80.

54 Stus, *Works in Four Volumes, Six Books, vol. 6, book 1*, 18.

55 Stus, *Works in Four Volumes, Six Books, vol. 6, book 1*, 59.

56 Stus, *Works in Four Volumes, Six Books, vol. 6, book 1*, 471.

57 Stus, *Works in Four Volumes, Six Books, vol. 6, book 1*, 470.

58 Stus, *Works in Four Volumes, Six Books, vol. 6, book 1*, 469–70.

adding: "but you should know that everything is much better in Rilke."⁵⁹ The above letter is a good example of Stus' sophisticated understanding of translation theory, and is indicative of just how much energy he devoted to the process itself.

In other letters detailing his translation practices Stus comments on how he deals with comments on his translations by others (professional translator Hryhorii Kochur and literary scholar Yurii Badzio), and on other translators, especially the above mentioned Bazhan (Natalia Zahoruiko terms their literary relationship "an artistic competition").⁶⁰ On December 7, 1973 Stus wrote his wife and son: "I have the delightful problem of pouring over Bazhan's translations and finding my own losses."⁶¹ Stus followed up this sentiment in a letter to Ukrainian-Brazilian writer Vira Vovk, saying: "Competing with Bazhan is difficult, but possible," and in a detailed comparison of his and Bazhan's translations of Rilke sonnets, Stus notes:

Bazhan's is bolder, with greater emphasis on meaning than in the original, mine is — more cautious, although less accurate [...] although the second quatrain in my translation is closer to Rilke than Bazhan's, who approached the original too casually here. The third sonnet, I think, I also translated better than Bazhan did [...] his last line is outright anti-Rilke in nature.⁶²

In adding to his thought that a translation is more a rendition, and attempting to search for additional definitions of the phenomenon, Stus notes that in translating Rilke's Eighth Sonnet he intended to reach a certain *blahozvuchnist* (sonic harmony) without meaning loss, in the result "achieving a creative bliss, although not without its thorns."⁶³ Again comparing himself to Bazhan, Stus states that "Bazhan here — is exemplary, as it's termed, and I, the sinner that I am, think that I'm no worse, although I, of course, am not exemplary."⁶⁴ This long (249 printed line) letter is almost entirely devoted to Bazhan's and his own translations of Rilke and is further testimony of Stus' dedication to the theory and practice of translation. It is in reading such Stus letters, replete with theoretical discussion, that one can appreciate the feeling that young psychiatrist Semen Hluzman (Semion Gluzman) had when he was placed in the same KGB detention holding cell in Kyiv in October, 1972, and first saw the poet, whom he knew nothing about:

I asked Stus, nodding at the book: "What is it you have?" The answer in that situation was unbelievable, I felt myself like Robinson Crusoe having seen human tracks in the sand: "That's Rilke, I'm translating him into Ukrainian." [...] I again felt myself free! Yes, in a KGB prison cell, sentenced to 10 years of imprisonment! But along with me was a book of my favorite poet, and here, next to me was a man who could read to

59 Stus, *Works in Four Volumes, Six Books*, vol. 6, book 1, 472.

60 Zahoruiko, "V. Stus ta R. M. Rilke," 70.

61 Stus, *Works in Four Volumes, Six Books*, vol. 6, book 1, 58–59.

62 Stus, *Works in Four Volumes, Six Books*, vol. 6, book 1, 60.

63 Stus, *Works in Four Volumes, Six Books*, vol. 6, book 1, 60.

64 Stus, *Works in Four Volumes, Six Books*, vol. 6, book 1, 60.

me Rilke's congenial stanzas in Ukrainian! [...] Those were twenty days of spiritual bliss.⁶⁵

Considering Rilke's special place in Stus' body of translated texts, it is only natural that his translations of Rilke have generated more scholarly interest than have his translations of other writers. Of the paucity of scholarly commentary on Stus' translation of Kipling's "If," two articles are noteworthy for their approach to different aspects of the poem: Olena Makarenko in co-authorship with Maryna Novykova provide a good linguistic analysis of Stus' translation, in comparison to/with the translations of three other translators (the aforementioned Levina, Strikha, and Sverstiuk). Makarenko and Novykova come to a number of interesting conclusions, among which are: all four Ukrainian translations of the poem, to a greater or lesser extent, weaken the "Great Game" motif of the original; all four soften the strong "they-I" opposition inherent in the original; all four, in their emotional moods and ritual constructs, are letters rather than testaments, as in Kipling.⁶⁶ Overall, Makarenko and Novykova argue that each translator has done well in a "culture to culture" translation, with certain inevitable losses:

Is a translation possible that is closer to the author's philosophical credo? Most probably, although to completely remove oneself from one's native socio-historical and cultural "memory bank" is impossible. We'll add: if a more "authentically Kiplingesque" translation appears, readers brought up on a different tradition, with a different worldview, will hold it less to heart. We should remember this paradox.⁶⁷

Of the estimations made about the Ukrainian translations of "If" by Makarenko and Novykova I have chosen to highlight, the last, about their "letter form," is easiest to counter. I would argue that if it were not for Stus' "Synovi," and the fact that it was included at various times in the poet's letters to his son (and Sverstiuk's suggestion that every *zek* wanted to do the same), the idea that these translations are letters rather than testaments is tenuous at best, regardless of emotional mood and ritual structure in a letter vs a testament. Here, I believe that the centrality of Stus' translation is taken for granted, as it is by far the most widely known Ukrainian translation of "If," and its characterization as a "letter" is merely transposed onto the other versions. Makarenko's and Novykova's other estimations are capable of generating lengthier discussion, as is, for example, their observation pertaining to Kipling's game motif, often discussed in post-colonial approaches to the writer.⁶⁸ Makarenko and Novykova state that all of the Ukrainian translations either lessen or omit the motif entirely, although not specifying in which category the separate translators, Stus included, belong. Comparing lines 18–21 of "If":

65 Semen Hluzman, "Dvadtsat dnei so Stusom [Twenty Days With Stus]," in *Vasyl Stus: poet i hromadianyn. Knyha spohadiv ta rozdumiv*, ed. Vasyl Ovsienko (Kyiv: Klio, 2013), 86–87.

66 Makarenko and Novykova, "Paradoksy khrestomatiinoho virsha," 116.

67 Makarenko and Novykova, "Paradoksy khrestomatiinoho virsha," 116.

68 See for instance, Edward Said's discussion of a "Great Game" motif in Kipling's writing: Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), 136.

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
 And risk it on one turn of pitch and toss,
 And lose, and start again at your beginnings
 And never breathe a word about your loss;

To Stus' translation:

Koly ty mozhesh vsi svoi nadbannia
 Postavyty na kin, aby za myt
 Protsyndryty bez zhaliu i dorikannia –
 Adzhe tebe porazka ne strashyt,

we in effect see that Stus has transformed Kipling's game into his own version of "play" (translation: When you can stake everything you've earned/ to squander it in a flash/ with no regret or complaint/ for you do not fear defeat). The first two lines of the original are kept close to Kipling in meaning by Stus, whereas in the last two lines he omits the notion "of starting again," introducing, however, a notion of "not fearing defeat," not found in the original. The notion of a "game," however, remains very present in the translation, both in grammatical and rhetorical senses.

Edward Said writes that the "Great Game" pattern in Kipling's texts arose out of Kipling's belief that "life and empire are unbreakable laws, and that service is more enjoyable when thought of less like a story — linear, continuous, temporal — and more like a playing field — many-dimensional, discontinuous, spatial."⁶⁹ The motif is embodied in the poem in Kipling's use of colloquial terminology: "keep your head" and "build 'em up." It would be a mistake, however, to apply a "form vs content" interpretation by suggesting that outworn colloquial clichés somehow trivialize Kipling's "message" and the poem itself. The above mentioned clichés (no longer active metaphors but rather dead or sleeping metaphors), along with "lose the common touch," to name another, can be compared to similar clichés in a passage from Proust, deconstructively read by Paul de Man in his article "Semiology and Rhetoric," in which he addresses the form/content conundrum. Singling out the "dead metaphor" "torrent d'activite" (a torrent of activity), de Man argues that a deconstructive reading of the passage can show that two words which side by side no longer grammatically have real meaning can "smuggle in" new metaphorical meaning, thereby showing the superiority of metaphor over metonymy (grammar/structure), which should have instilled "no meaning":

The most striking thing is that this doubly metonymic structure is found in a text that also contains highly seductive and successful metaphors (as in the chiaroscuro effect of the beginning, or in the condensation of light in the butterfly image) and

69 Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 138.

that explicitly asserts the superiority of metaphor over metonymy in terms of metaphysical categories.⁷⁰

De Man terms this the “grammatization of rhetoric,” and uses it as a counterpoint to examples provided earlier in his article that prove the opposite, that is, the superiority of metonymy over rhetoric, or the “rhetorizations of grammar,” which together are meant to illustrate the difficulty with a presumed “inside-outside” (form-content, etc.) opposition in a text.

De Man’s thoughts can shed new light on Kipling’s use of dead metaphors. In a de Man inspired deconstructive reading of “If,” in this instance proposing the “grammatization of rhetoric,” Kipling’s words that no longer have meaning side by side can be considered in a new rhetorical structure providing a result other than the “no meaning” they grammatically seem to be signaling. On his part, Stus does not follow Kipling’s lead by using similar clichés. The opening line of his translation “Koly ty berezhesh zaliznyi spokii” (When you maintain a steely calm/silence), corresponding to Kipling’s “If you can keep your head when all about you” may at first glance also appear as a cliché, as two often used words: “steely” and “calm/silence,” appear side by side, suggestive of the a “torrent of activity” discussed by de Man in Proust’s text. Only these words appearing side by side do not have a tradition of usage in Ukrainian, and the resulting union of the two does not qualify them as constituting a dead or sleeping metaphor. They combination can more accurately qualify as a Stus neologism. Stus’ combination of words can be said to be deceptive in this manner, appearing somewhat pedestrian but in fact being highly original, as is the line “Koly tebe ne pohrabuiut mrii” (If dreams do not rob you), corresponding to Kipling’s “If you can dream — and not make dreams you’re master.” Grammatically close to “being robbed of dreams,” Stus’ “dreams robbing you,” re-arrangement is equally new and unexpected.

In an entirely different sense, Kipling’s “Great Game” motif is present in Stus’ translation metonymically, but metaphorically the “game” fits into a larger pattern present in much of his work, poetic, epistolary, and other, namely, that a person is not born “ready-made,” that becoming human entails constant work and effort. “The important thing here,” writes D. Stus “is not to hate, not to lose hope, or faith in goodness even when you — a human — have experienced all possible failure and betrayal,” thereby equating his father’s vision with Kipling’s, who like Goethe and Rilke, are the poet’s “soulmates.”⁷¹ Just as there is unexpectedly more than meets the eye in Kipling’s game motif in “If,” Stus’ translation of the poem uses the motif to unexpectedly integrate it with a broader metaphorical structure. In a similar vein, the “they–I” opposition identified by Makarenko and Novikova *is* strongly present in Stus’ translation, especially so when considered in the wider context of his life and work (here I subscribe to D. Stus’ view that his father’s life was but another text in the total sum of his creativity, aptly entitling his literary biography of his father *Vasyl Stus: Zhyttia yak tvorchist* (Vasyl Stus: Life as Creation).⁷² Entitling his 1975 *samvydav/tamvydav* text: “A Manual on Psychiatry for Dissidents,” Stus’ friend Hluzman

70 Paul de Man, “Semiology and Rhetoric,” in *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*, ed. J. V. Harari (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), 134.

71 Stus, *Lysty do syna*, 3.

72 Dmytro Stus, *Zhyttia yak Tvorchist [Life as Creation]* (Kyiv: Fakt, 2004).

also subscribed to the “they–I” opposition, only in an inverted way, as the truly free ones were the imprisoned “us,” the unfree being the majority “them.”⁷³ This correlates to the “handful of us” wording appearing in Stus, in similar opposition to the mass of “them.”⁷⁴

The title of Kipling’s poem, and of the majority of its Ukrainian translations (excepting those of Stus and Sverstiuk), can be understood as a rhetorical question itself, a simple “if?” In this instance, the poem’s final words “– you’ll be a Man, my Son!” provide an obvious answer to the title and all the subsequent “ifs” posed in the text, making the whole poem neatly make sense. But what *if* de Man’s deconstructive reading strategy is again proposed in this instance, only this time in a show of superiority of metonymy over rhetoric, as de Man would have it, in a show of the “rhetorization of grammar”? For such a reading de Man proposes a literal approach showing a certain grammatical urgency, and provides several examples of texts to illustrate his point. In the first example, “an apparent symbiosis between a grammatical and a rhetorical structure, the so-called rhetorical question, in which the figure is conveyed directly by means of a syntactical device,” Archie Bunker, the beleaguered hero of the landmark American sitcom *All in the Family*, answers his wife’s Edith’s simple but poignant question of “whether he wants to have his bowling shoes laced over or laced under” with a confused: “What’s the difference?”⁷⁵ The same grammatical pattern evokes two different meanings for husband and wife: for Edith her question poses a real choice, whereas Archie is angered because for him there is no difference. In effect, grammatical meaning here (asking for a clear choice) is denied by figurative meaning (that denies the very existence of the choice). De Man writes: “The point is as follows. A perfectly clear syntactical paradigm (the question) engenders a sentence that has at least two meanings, one which asserts and the other which denies its own illocutionary mode,” and follows up this example with another from Yeats.⁷⁶ Commenting on Yeats’ poem “Among School Children,” de Man focuses on its last line, also a question: “How can we know the dancer from the dance?”⁷⁷ De Man stresses that when concentrating on it as a rhetorical device, the posed question is usually interpreted as illustrating the unity of form and experience, the

73 Hluzman often writes/speaks of being “free” in the Gulag, able to speak freely, in comparison to the millions of Soviet citizens not willing to do so in “normal life.” The topic was addressed by Hluzman during a guest lecture on June 17, 2016 at my “Phenomenon of the Sixties” class at the Literature Department of the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy.

74 The words “horstka nas” (a handful of us) in Stus’ unnamed poem dedicated to the memory of Alla Horská is an example of the many times he refers to the fact that few have chosen a road such as his and Alla Horská’s. Alla Horská was a prominent artist and active in the “sixties” movement. She is widely believed to have been murdered by the KGB in November, 1970. See, for instance, historian Serhii Bilokin’s account of Horská’s murder: Serhii Bilokin, “The Death of Alla Horská,” *Serhii Bilokin’s Personal Website*, accessed November 26, 2015, <http://www.s-bilokin.name/Bio/Memoirs/GorskaDeath.html>. Stus’ poem dedicated to Horská’s memory is available in: Vasyl Stus, *Tvory u chotyriokh tomakh, shesty knyhakh. Tom 3, knyha 1: Palimpsesty* [*Works in Four Volumes, Six Books, vol. 3, book 1: Palimpsests*] (Lviv: Prosvita, 1998), 88.

75 De Man, “Semiology and Rhetoric,” 128.

76 De Man, “Semiology and Rhetoric,” 129.

77 De Man, “Semiology and Rhetoric,” 130.

creator with the creation itself. In such a reading (as with Kipling's "If") the last line summates the entire poem, providing one neat rhetorical answer. But what *if* the poem is read "literally," and its last line, like Edith's earnest question, is posed not figuratively, but grammatically, with urgency, offering real choice: "Please tell me, how can I know the dancer from the dance? — to tell them apart," asks de Man.⁷⁸ Suddenly two possible answers appear, none of them obvious. The reading process in this instance, instead of closing in on fixing "meaning" that arises from the predictability of rhetoric becomes more exciting, turning the process into a puzzle. The entire scheme of one figurative reading can be undermined and reconstructed if what is being asked in the form of a simple question is understood literally, like in de Man's first example, by offering two choices. Answering the question of which reading has priority is obscured in that the duplicity of meaning is enabled by grammatical structure, further complicating the neatness of an "inside-outside" opposition deconstructed by de Man in his article. Simply put, neither of the above questions in the two examples provided by de Man receives an authoritative answer. The ramifications of de Man's findings for a reading of Kipling's "If" are clear: if asked with urgency, Kipling's *if* question has a number of possible resolutions, rather than the presumed positive answer that will definitively result in the addressee "becoming a man." To avert failure constant work is necessary in "becoming a Man," suggestive of a Stusian emphasis on process, i.e. never ending work on becoming a human being. In such a reading of Kipling a vulnerability can be seen that remains obscured in metaphorical readings of the poem that deny the very possibility of the *if* question being answered in any other but a positive way.

The "literal" approach proposed by de Man can also be used for an alternative reading of another "good bad" poem mentioned earlier, Sosiura's "Love Ukraine." The oft-repeated, in the body of its text, title itself has duplicity for a modern reader, evoking at least two varying, and mutually exclusive metaphorical interpretations: one being to "love Ukraine" the "old-fashioned" patriotic way, the other being an ironic (snicker-snicker) "love one's country," whatever that may entail today. It is in this second key that Oleksandr Irvanets' parody of Sosiura's poem "Liubit!" (Love!) seductively lures the reader into not discovering it as an intertextual dialog with Sosiura's poem. In a grammatical reading, Sosiura's poem's clichéd "love Ukraine" rings with a new urgency if the combination of words is de-linked and the "true" literal meaning of both words takes precedence. In this instance, "love" and "Ukraine" can generate new meaning, depending on one's understanding of both words. Combining de Man's musings with Eliot's and Fish's concentration on a text "acting" and "doing" in its relationship with a reader makes it easier to understand why poems such as Kipling's "If" and Sosiura's "Liubit Ukrainu" have such staying power. Using the findings of the mentioned theorists also makes it easier to understand why (other than for the extra-literary reasons mentioned) a sophisticated poet and translator like Stus would be so attracted to and involved with a well-known but somewhat "inferior" text. The answer lies in Stus being a perceptive reader of Kipling's poem, a deconstructive "debunker" in de Man's terms, which allows him to recognize the complexity of Kipling's text and dialog with it in a sophisticated manner in his translation.

In closing, I'd like to address the issues of imperialism and gender in Kipling's poem. Orwell's judgment of Kipling was devastating on account of the first, Orwell describing Kipling

78 De Man, "Semiotics and Rhetoric," 131.

as a “jingo imperialist,” “gutter patriot,” with “warped political judgment [...] who sold out to the British governing class, not financially but emotionally.”⁷⁹ Orwell concluded that “Kipling ought to have known better,” as should have Eliot, “defending him where he is not defensible.”⁸⁰ Eliot had been subtle in his defense of Kipling, not only aesthetically, but politically and ideologically as well, saying that his view of empire “was not merely an idea, a good idea or a bad one; it was something the reality of which he felt.”⁸¹ No less sophisticated than Eliot’s is Said’s coming to terms with Kipling’s writing. Said comments:

One reason for Kipling’s power is that he was an artist of enormous gifts; what he did in his art was to elaborate ideas that would have had far less permanence, for all their vulgarity, without the art.⁸²

In agreeing with Orwell on Kipling’s “vulgarity,” Said is in even greater agreement with Eliot regarding Kipling’s art transcending his politics: “Only Conrad, another master stylist, can be considered along with Kipling, his slightly younger peer, to have rendered the experience of empire as the main subject of his work with such force.”⁸³

Like their colleagues in Kipling criticism, Ukrainian critics have also addressed the issue of colonialism. Yevhen Sverstiuk writes:

it is one matter to emerge from British colonial dependency, where the colonizers sowed the seeds of their truly high culture — what Kipling termed the white man’s burden. And there is primitive colonization, which exploits and destroys both nation and the Individual. Bolshevik colonialism, which we were used to terming as freedom, was the worst, the most reactionary, and the most malignant phenomenon in world history.⁸⁴

Strikha, although acknowledging that Kipling, “with his unwavering faith in Britain’s mission” appears as an anachronism, states that he

never was the champion of the exploitation of colonized peoples. “The white man’s burden” for him, first of all, meant honest, selfless, tireless, and sacrificial work, in order that, as the writer believed, to integrate backward peoples with modern civilization.⁸⁵

79 Orwell, “Rudyard Kipling.”

80 Orwell, “Rudyard Kipling.”

81 Kipling, *A Choice of Kipling’s Verse*, 17.

82 Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 150.

83 Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 132.

84 Yevhen Sverstiuk, “Den, yakyi dano naviky [A Day, Which is Forever],” *Nasha vira*, July, 2006, accessed March 1, 2016, <http://www.vox.com.ua/data/2006/08/26/den-yakyi-dano-naviky.html>.

85 Strikha, “Kiplinh realnyi i vyhadanyi,” 109.

Both Ukrainian scholars provide a “them–us” opposition in their estimations of Kipling, “their” colonialism being beneficiary in nature, “ours” being destructive. Both estimations are understandable in the contexts of their appearance: Strikha’s in the late *perebudova* (late 1980s) period, when new Ukrainian scholarship was understandably busy challenging decades of official Soviet literary views, on Kipling as “the bard of imperialism” included.⁸⁶ Sverstiuk’s sentiments are even more understandable given his personal history and first-hand knowledge of what the Soviet system did to intellectuals like himself and Stus. Sverstiuk’s thoughts are also very much in line with an existing Ukrainian narrative, strongly presented by a noted predecessor from his region of origin, Volyn (Volhynia), Lesia Ukrainka (who in her play *Orhiiia* (The Orgy) depicts the colonization of a higher older culture (Greek, by inference Ukrainian) by a newer less sophisticated one (Roman, by inference Russian)). The seeming incongruity of, at first glance, an instance of intellectuals from a colonized culture feeling empathy for an external colonizer’s point of view can be better understood by recalling Said’s idea of the literary power of Kipling’s texts. Regarding the power of a text, Georges Poulet’s thoughts in his article “Criticism and the Experience of Interiority,” about the complexity of reading/translation/interpretation processes, also afford insight:

I identify, forgetting myself, alienated from myself. “Je est un autre,” said Rimbaud. Another, who has replaced my own, and who will continue to do so as long as I read. Reading is just that: a way of giving way not only to a host of alien words, images, ideas, but also to the very alien principle which utters them and shelters them.⁸⁷

A colonizer/colonized opposition can, of course, be applied in gender terms too. The “Great Game” motif identified by Said in Kipling’s writing is essentially a “boy’s” game, that so attracted Lord Baden-Powell in the creation of his conception of the Boy Scout structure “fortifying the wall of empire.”⁸⁸ In her article entitled “Literature Through the Prism of Gender in Vasyl Stus’ Estimations,” Ya. V. Khodakivska finds that Stus’ critical thoughts on literature are often marked by gender.⁸⁹ A prominent theme present in Stus’ writing on this account is his belief in the “feminine nature” of Ukrainian culture and existence:

The theme of woman — muse is especially close to my heart. It seems that Ukraine — is all feminine, womanly, that Ukrainian men cannot equal the genius of Ukraine’s women (I kindly ask that this not be interpreted as my gallantry)... This is truly an

86 Strikha, “Kiplinh realnyi i vyhadanyi,” 109.

87 Georges Poulet, “Criticism and the Experience of Interiority,” in *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*, ed. Jane B. Tompkins (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1980), 45.

88 Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 137–38.

89 Ya. V. Khodakivska, “Literatura kriz pryzmu hendera v otsinkakh Vasylia Stusa [Literature Through the Prism of Gender in Vasyl Stus’ Estimations],” *Moloda natsiia* 1 (2006), accessed May 1, 2015, <http://1576.ua/books/6899>.

Un-masculine muse, non-chivalrous: its anguish — is womanly. Its strength — is womanly. Its courage — is womanly also. And where are the men?⁹⁰

The above sentiment, although different to the one expressed by Ivan Franko nearly a century before in his characterization of Lesia Ukrainka as “perhaps the only man in Ukrainian literature,” nevertheless echoes Franko’s accent on the centrality of women by default, in a culture that does not feature a defining strand of masculinity.⁹¹ Given Stus’ strong sensitivity to gender in his writings, the obvious question becomes one of how he deals with “If’s” equally strong gender “boyology” theme, that of a boy’s initiation into manhood. Ukrainian translators of Kipling’s poem have chosen to render the poem’s ultimate “male imperialist fantasy,” its final accord:

Yours is the Earth and everything that’s in it,
And — which is more — you’ll be a Man, my son!

in two ways. Interestingly, the poem’s only female translator renders the word Man as *Muzhchyna* (Man). The poem’s male translators (including Stus) render Man as L/liudyna (H/human being), Stus being the only translator to use the lower case “l” in *liudyna*, further softening Kipling’s emphasis on the exclamatory nature of the word Man:

Then I’m sure: you are *human*
And will call earth your own.

Perhaps nowhere else in his translation of Kipling’s poem does Stus so strongly differentiate himself from Kipling in worldview in his rendition of the original. Ultimately, Stus’ advice to his son, written in inhuman condition thousands of kilometers away from home, in spite of everything, is a soft message that reflects his belief in human goodness.

That Stus was inspired to come to such a conclusion is surely very telling of his *reading* of Kipling’s poem, and also of Kipling’s text *itself*. Perhaps this *is* an example of a translator translating culture to culture for the purposes of intelligibility (in this instance from the “masculine” culture of a colonizer into the “feminine” culture of the colonized). Even more so, I believe, what is demonstrated here is the potential of a reading/translation to discover the possibilities of a text meaning/acting/doing in unexpected ways. The unlikely literary kinship of Kipling and Stus, significantly separated in time and space, and characterized by a profound affinity of the latter with the former, resulted in the creation of a translation that in a strictly literary evaluation may even be superior to the original. Estimation of literary worth, however, was not the object of this investigation. More of interest was a “translation story,” in which the cross-cultural wandering of a text in time produced an unforeseen result, as well as a new masterpiece.

90 Stus, *Works in Four Volumes, Six Books*, vol. 6, book 1, 377.

91 See Ivan Franko, “Lesia Ukrainka [Lesia Ukrainka],” in *Zibrannia tvoriv u piatdesiaty tomakh. Literaturno-krytychni pratsi*, ed. Ye. P. Kyryliuk, vol. 31 (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1981), 271.

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