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THE TRANSLATOR'S SENSIBILITY IN MAKING SENSE OUT OF TEXTS

СПРИЙНЯТТЯ ПЕРЕКЛАДАЧА В РОЗУМІННІ ТЕКСТІВ

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The role of a translator in rendering literary texts is often underestimated, yet it is crucial in reshaping the essence of the original work into a new linguistic and cultural context. This article delves into the intricate realm of the translator's sensibility, emphasizing the translator's pivotal position as not merely a conduit but as a co-author, a collaborator in the recreation of the source text in the target language. This collaborative effort demands a profound understanding of both the source and target cultures, as well as a keen sensitivity to nuances of language and expression.

Central to this discussion is the notion of the translator's visibility, a concept illuminated by Lawrence Venuti's seminal work on translation theory. While traditional views often advocate for the translator's invisibility, this article challenges that perspective, arguing for a recognition of the translator's creative agency and presence in the translated text.

Examining translations of iconic works such as Mykola Hohol's "Taras Bulba" and J.K. Rowling's "Harry Potter," alongside the author's own experiences in selecting and translating texts, provides a rich tapestry of insights into the complexities of the translation process. Through the lens of these diverse works, including poetry by Lina Kostenko, Yuri Andrukhovych's novel "Perverzion," and Hryhoriy Kvitka-Osnovyanko's "The Witch of Konotop," the article elucidates the intricate interplay between the translator's

Роль перекладача у відтворенні літературних текстів часто недооцінюють, хоча саме вона має вирішальне значення для трансформації суті оригінального твору в новому мовному та культурному контексті. Автор статті заглиблюється у складну сферу перекладацького сприйняття, підкреслюючи ключову позицію перекладача як не просто провідника, але й співавтора у відтворенні вихідного тексту мовою перекладу. Ця співпраця вимагає глибокого розуміння як вихідної, так і цільової культури, а також нюансів мови та мовних засобів.

Центральне місце в цій дискусії посідає поняття явність перекладача – концепція, висвітлена в фундаментальній праці з теорії перекладу Лоуренса Венуті. У той час, як прихильники традиційних поглядів часто виступають за неявність перекладача, ця стаття ставить під сумнів таку точку зору, аргументуючи необхідність визнання творчої активності перекладача та його явності в перекладеному тексті.

Аналіз перекладів таких знакових творів, як «Тарас Бульба» Миколи Гоголя та «Гаррі Поттер» Джоан Роулінг, а також власний досвід автора у виборі та перекладі текстів дає змогу отримати чітке уявлення про складнощі перекладацького процесу. На прикладі цих різноманітних творів, а також поезії Ліни Костенко, роману Юрія

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personal sensibilities and the demands of the text. foregrounding the translator's role as a co-creator, this article invites a reevaluation of the translation process, recognizing it not as a mere act of linguistic conversion, but as a dynamic and creative endeavor shaped by the unique sensibilities and artistic vision of the translator. In doing so, it sheds light on the transformative power of translation in bridging cultures and enriching literary landscapes.
Key words: *translation, translator's sensibility, target language, co-authorship, translator's visibility.*

Андруховича «Перверзія» та «Конотопської відьми» Григорія Квітки-Основ'яненка, у статті простежується складна взаємодія між особистими відчуттями перекладача та вимогами тексту.
Висуваючи на перший план роль перекладача як співтворця, ця стаття пропонує переосмислити процес перекладу, визнаючи його не просто актом мовного перетворення, а динамічним і творчим процесом, в якому беруть участь унікальні відчуття та художнє бачення перекладача. У такий спосіб вона проливає світло на трансформаційну силу перекладу у зближенні культур і збагаченні літератур.
Ключові слова: *переклад, перекладацьке сприйняття, мова перекладу, співавторство, явність перекладача.*

I. INTRODUCTION

It has become more common now for a translator to be included as not just a translator, but as a co-author with some enlightened publishers on listings of translated books. To a great degree, this is analogous with reality and a long time in coming for the translator to receive some kind of greater recognition than that of just a scrivener like Mykola Hohol's Akakii Akakevich in his short story "The Overcoat." The work of translators has been perceived as an echo, as something much less than that of a creative author. The names of translators in previously times often have never even appeared on covers of books, and if they have, not on the cover and only in small print on the bottom of title pages or buried somewhere inside a book. Sometimes, the actual translator's name has not even appeared anywhere in published books. To give one such example, I recently researched translations of Hohol's *Taras Bulba* for an article I was writing and was unable to determine who the translator was in some late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century publications.[1]13 It was as if Hohol had magically translated himself into English after his death. Someone deserved the credit for those translations for their long hours of co-creative labor and should not have been invisible.

II. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Thus, Lawrence Venuti's coinage on the invisibility of the translator[2]14 is quite apt in historical terms, the apparent requisite for the translator to disappear from a work that s/he has translated, ceding virtually every word of the translation to the original author. That, however, is quite impossible. Translators do become co-authors of a text both in overt and subtle ways. My discussion here will focus on the choices translators make and how that might influence both the translator's and the reader's response to a text. The topic of my discussion in part owes its origins to the writings of translation studies scholar Alla Shyrokova Manno (aka Perminova in many of her Ukrainian

[1] For example, see *Taras Bulba and Other Tales*, which appeared in London in 1918 with J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd. The same volume was also published by E.P. Dutton, Inc. in New York. Since John Cournos wrote an introduction for that volume, it appears that he was the translator.

[2] *The Translator's Invisibility* (London: Routledge, 1994). An expanded and revised version appeared in 2008.

publications), especially in her book A Translator's Reception of Contemporary American Poetry[3][15]. Alla and I additionally have discussed the subject in personal conversations as well as in papers she has delivered at conferences.

One might ask, how much of Goethe is Goethe in Ukrainian translations of him by Ukraine's most eminent translator Mykola Lukash? And how much is the translator's vision of and adaptation of him into Ukrainian with Lukash's unique word choice and style, all shaped by his own sensibility? Lukash's textured translations, particularly of Boccaccio's *Decameron* and Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, while not meticulously faithful by design, had an extraordinary impact on a generation of Ukrainian writers. Yuri Andrukhovych, Viktor Neborak, Ivan Malkovych, and many other Bu-Ba-Bu generation writers have discussed the translator's impact on their writing both in print and in personal conversations with me. Lukash singlehandedly expanded the vocabulary and stylistic possibilities of Ukrainian literature in profound ways.

Andrukhovych recently has written about his admiration of Lukash in an article "Letters from and to the Sultan,"[4][16] which discusses *Guillaume* Apollinaire's poem based on the famous letter written to the Turkish sultan by the Kozaks and Lukash's exquisite translation[5][17] of it. In that article Andrukhovych writes the following about Lukash: "Mykola Lukash is the saint of literary translation. There have been only a handful of people like him on this planet. He translated from fourteen languages. He had an extremely expressive voice. He wasn't a dull labourer of translation, he was a daring adventurer. His translations are incredibly alluring, you want to read them aloud to your friends."[6][18]Lukash's (and I might add Hryhory Kochur's) influence on a generation of Ukrainian writers is a marvelous indication of the incredible power of translation when done with craftsmanship and creatively, when the translator puts so much of his or her own sensibility into a translation and virtually if not literally becomes a co-author in another language.

Many Ukrainian writers have taken on the role of translators from the foreign languages they knew – Maksym Rylsky, Pavlo Tychyna, and Yuri Andrukhovych just to name a few of the more prominent ones. Their choice of what they translate is shaped by their own literary sensibilities. Andrukhovych, for example, sought out the more bombastic works of the Beat writers for his translations and published a book of their works in his translations from the 1950s and 1960s: *Den' smerti pani Den'* (Kharkiv: Folio, 2006). Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, Gregory Corso, and others of the Beat writers and New York School paved new paths in American literature. Yuri and his generation endeavored to create new paths for a youthful Ukrainian literature that strove to overcome the doldrums of the effects of decades of the stodgy and oppressive demands of Socialist Realism as well as a kind of delimiting patriotic national realism prevalent in the years just prior to Ukrainian independence. The Ukrainian Writers of the 1980s, just as Mykola Khvylovy did in the 1920s, "looked to the West" for freer literary models and a decoupling from omnipresent oppressive Russian literary influence as well as a chance to find and define their own path. Andrukhovych's sensibility as s translator captured the essence of the Beats because they fit his own avant-garde sensibility and allowed his creativity to match it.

[3] Kyiv: Dmytro Buraho Publishing House, 2015.

[4] "Letters from and to the Sultan," Michael M. Naydan and Alla Perminova, trans. in *Ukraine 22: Ukrainian Writers Respond to War*, Mark Andryczyk, ed. (London: Penguin Books: 2023): 133-136

[5] See Appendix A at the end of this article for Apollinaire's original poem in French and Lukash's Ukrainian translation, both of which appeared in Andrukhovych's original Ukrainian-language publication of the essay here: https://zbruc.eu/node/112513.

[6] *Ukraine 22*, 135.

Sophia Andrukhovych and Viktor Morozov's lively translation of *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*[719] succeeded because the translators approached their translation creatively and sought out humorous Ukrainian equivalents to the names of characters such as Chervokhvist (Wormtail), which presented a subtly comical effect in translation similar to the original. A fusion of their excellent knowledge of English, collective talent, sensibility, and openness to be creative guided them to make a better translation. The book is in its thirty-second printing with Ivan Malkovych's A-BA-BA-HA-LA-MA-HA publishers. As a small aside, I remember a conversation with a really conservative Ukrainian village priest in Ukraine who ranted and raved against *Harry Potter* for the witchcraft and evil beings portrayed in the novels and films. I politely pointed out to him that Ukrainian folklore and literature have plenty of their own demons and evil spirits in them such as *mavky*, *poterchy*, *perelesnyky*, *rusalky*, and Hohol's terrifying Viy. He somewhat defensively answered to me: "Those are at least *our* demons. We don't need foreign ones." Both he and I just laughed.

In turning to my own work in translation, how much of my translation of Yuri Andrukhovych's *Perverzion* is Yuri, and how much of it is me? I can't quite say precisely, because that is, thankfully, for translation specialists and scholars to determine. While I think that most of it is him or a close version or a mild perversion (pun intended) of him, a part of it definitely is me and my own evolving literary sensibilities that shaped my approach to the text. Prior to translating Andrukhovych and Viktor Neborak, my literary sensibilities were rather conservative, since I grew up in a highly patriotic Ukrainian family and émigré community that focused on more traditionalist writers such as Taras Shevchenko, Ivan Franko, and Lesia Ukrainka, and more contemporary ones who were notably praised in the emigration for their courage such as Lina Kostenko, Vasyl Symonenko, and Vasyl Stus. Exposure to Andrukhovych's innovative prose and Neborak's wildly experimental poetry as well as to them personally served to expand my literary tastes exponentially. They influenced me to change my own perspectives and sensibilities to allow me to translate their innovative works.

At least one reviewer of my translations of Andrukhovych has called me "controversial." I suppose the moniker was for attempting to find creative solutions to Andrukhovych's multivoiced, provocative, and experimental prose in *Perverzion*. I laughed when I read that and am happy to wear that crown for trying to find creative solutions in my translations. I want to add the fact that, in principle, I do not review other published translations because I feel that I am the wrong audience for Ukrainian translation into English. In as much as I can remember, I've reviewed just one book of translations in my career – a translation of Ukrainian visual poetry. I saw it as a challenge to review a book that focused on the visual, which is the reason why I did it. People unfamiliar of less familiar with a source language should primarily be reviewing translations because they truly comprise the target audience. Some translator-translation specialist reviewers of published translations seem to perceive their review as an opportunity to showcase their own expertise without paying much attention to the impact of the translation on the target audience or the readers' reception of it. These specialist reviewers also tend to focus on what I call "dribnolohija," mistakes and minor issues in translations that you can find in every translation. I guarantee that every translation has mistakes in it because all human can misread a word or phrase in the original or translate an echoed secondary or tertiary meaning instead of a primary one. Sometimes so-called "mistakes" are caused by editors or book compositors, the fact of which a reviewer and readers are unaware. I point to Alla Shyrokova Manno's book and articles on reader response in the Ukrainian and German context as a particularly

[7] *Harri Potter i kelykh vohniu* (2003).

productive approach in translation studies because it focuses precisely on the impact of a translation on target audiences.

My translation of Andrukhovych's novel *Perverzion* was a true collaboration both with Yuri and numerous other people who aided me in comprehending and conveying essential features of his extraordinary novel. Hundreds of emails back and forth to Yuri, and numerous conversations about issues of translating his complicated text when I met with him in person aided me considerably in conveying the sense and effects of the novel in English, whether that be humor, style, or word play. Our co-translation of "Ode to Ada" provides the best example. We sat down together in Yuri's apartment in Boalsburg, Pennsylvania where he was living with his family during his ten-month Fulbright fellowship to go over questions that had arisen in the text. My literal first-draft translation of the poem didn't cut it for Yuri because he felt the English needed to be funnier and less stiff. He was absolutely right. So, with a bottle of Zakarpatsky cognac on the table (in an apartment owned ironically by Frank Karpaty) looking out on Tussey Mountain, we began to brainstorm and cocreate a new English version [see Appendix B] from the original, which was a playful poetic meditation on the name Ada with various sound patternings. Yuri provided several of the rhymes and lines, particularly those with German language content such as "Jawohl Ada: ja ja Ada," and I others. I recall I came up with "O, you Ada, my enchilada," which just rolled off the tongue in English – even though it was distant in semantic meaning from the original. Despite the fact that we went over the entire poem in detail, last year Yuri mentioned to me that we made one major mistake by overlooking his intended meaning of "odyn," which I translated as "alone," and which should have been the Norse god Odin. Besides the dictionary, the translator's best friend is a still-living cooperative author such as Yuri or Viktor Neborak, who both willingly participated in the process of co-translation by answering my myriad questions (whether they were naïve or not) and explaining their creative processes as writers to me. Other Ukrainian authors have not been as cooperative. For example, Lina Kostenko once responded to my query regarding a particular word in one of her poems with a polite but firm answer: "You're the translator. You need to figure it out." I just smiled at her answer and ended up choosing the meaning I felt fit the best for my translation.

Bohdan Boychuk, in his review in the journal Svito-vyd of my first book of Lina Kostenko translations, noted that in some ways my translations were, God forbid (my insertion of the last two words), better than the original sometimes because they removed Kostenko's, in Boychuk's words, "boring repetitions." Many of Kostenko's early poems have songlike refrains that are quite acceptable to the Ukrainian reading public. My Kostenko translations are a version of the poet that I feel represents the essence of Kostenko in a poetic idiom that can be appreciated by a contemporary Anglophone reading public, which generally has an antipathy for repetitions in poetry and by and large relegates them mostly to refrains in songs. Kostenko needs to be as natural, free, and flowing in English as she is in Ukrainian without the constraints of rigid rhyme, meter, and other conventions that would be awkward to a contemporary audience. In terms of my own translations, I generally feel that I am a bit like a scientist unable to truly observe the results of an experiment because in translating a work, I am part of the experiment and have difficulty hearing/seeing from inside it – so it is up to you translation studies specialists to determine how much of me/the translator is there and how much is the author.

I am always grateful when I see that a reviewer takes note of my method in translation when I do not explicitly explain it in my translator's introductions. For example, Oksana Jackim in her review[8]20 of my translations of Maksym Rylsky in the translation journal Metamorphoses took the

[8]Metamorphoses (Fall 2010): 290-295.

time to point out that I used internal rhymes, occasion rhymes, natural English syntax, and other methods to poeticize my English translations of the poet. The reviewer pointed out some aspects of my methodology, of which I was even unaware, because I primarily work intuitively, for conveying what we might call *my* English-language Rylsky. That possessive "my" can be used virtually for every translation that all translators make, because they are engaging themselves as a filter and sounding board to navigate two literary polysystems with their translations.

One example of how a translator's sensibility influences their translation consists of many of the previous translations of Hohol's *Taras Bulba*. While the novel was written in Russian with a number of locutions in it in Ukrainian, it focuses exclusively on Ukrainian culture. Unfortunately, virtually all previous translations were executed by ethnically Russian translators or Russianists with little or no understanding of Ukrainian history or culture from a Ukrainian perspective. One notable exception was John Cournos (real name – Ivan Korshun), who originally was from Zhytomyr and emigrated to the U.S. and eventually Great Britain. Though even his translation remains mostly a colonizing, imperial one based on the time it was made in the early twentieth century, to his credit, he presented the novel in his introduction largely on Ukrainian terms. Virtually all the translators of *Taras Bulba* have translated the 1842 revised pro-Russian pro-Tsar pro-Russian Orthodoxy version of the work and not the original, more authentically Ukraine-focused 1835 version. Olha Tytarenko and I have executed a translation of the 1835 version and restored the novel's Ukrainian roots by using Ukrainian place and proper names and by providing notes that outline the Ukrainian historical context. Thus, our own Ukrainian ethnicity, knowledge of the Ukrainian language and Ukrainian history, and our own sensibilities serve to decolonize the work in English.

A translator's sensibility is reflected in the choice of works and authors that s/he translates. Few translators translate for money just because of the fact that they are woefully underpaid, if paid at all, and need to keep their day jobs. Translators who are professors such as Vitaly Chernetsky, Mark Andryczyk, and I have more time to do translations because our published works count as our scholarly output for our universities. I have been remunerated a few times, mostly from grants (the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Shevchenko Scientific Society, and the Ukrainian Book Institute) and a few times by commercial publishers with a few thousand dollars, to do translations. I've mostly received nothing but satisfaction and gratitude without monetary compensation for most of my translations. I also have turned down translation jobs because they ran counter to my own sensibilities. For example, I once rejected $15,000 to cotranslate the memoirs of a former confidante of Viktor Yanukovych's. The thought of it was particularly odious to me, so I refused to do it.

What draws us translators to a translation? There must be a connection with the author personally or a particular work for me to decide to do a translation. For me, it might be akin to falling in love with a work and finding a shared sensibility and connection with an author or text. Texts tend to choose me. I don't choose them per se. It's a kind of courtship, a law of initial attraction that draws me aesthetically or emotionally. I fell in love with the novel *Perverzion* the first time I read it and knew I had to translate it. The same happened with Lina Kostenko's poetry, with Attyla Mohylny's striking free verse, which I purchased for one ruble in 1993 in a Ukrainian bookstore in a Lviv bookstore, with the free-flowing voice of Oleh Ilchenko, with Maksym Rylsky's style and imagery, and so forth. I also translate works "for the cause." I've done a number of translations of essays and poems on the Ukrainian war in the past two years and with Alla Perminova cotranslated *Zelensky: A Biography for Polity Books* to acquaint the Anglophone world with the Ukrainian president. With Olha Tytarenko I co-translated Alexander Strashny's *The Ukrainian Mentality* for ibidem books, which I felt was an important work for people to read to come to a better understanding of Ukraine

and its people. I've found that my literary tastes run the gamut from classic works to the avantgarde. I have as deep of a connection with Skovoroda and Shevchenko as I do with contemporary authors.

The idea of translating Hryhory Kvitka-Osnovyaneko's *The Witch of Konotop* came to me after Glagoslav Publishers contacted me about applying for a grant from The Ukrainian Book Institute to publish a translation with them. I should add that it is marvelous that the Institute supports translators and publishers of Ukrainian literary works. I suggested the need for support from Ukrainian cultural and government organizations for the publication of Ukrainian translations over twenty years ago in an op-ed piece I wrote for the Kyiv Post. I'm glad that most of my suggestions in the op-ed piece have come to fruition. Alla Perminova and I ended up choosing *The Witch of Konotop* for a number of reasons. First of all, to my surprise it had never been translated into English. It was a Ukrainian classic that definitely *needed* to be translated. It was being read by nearly everyone in Ukraine since it was part of the school curriculum. My good friend Bohdan Zholdak had written a play and a filmscript based on the book. And I felt it was brief enough to be translated in the time allotted for the grant. It turned out to be both a delight and vexation to translate. The primary task for us was to convey and differentiate the various linguistic levels of the characters' speech. The scribe Pistryak and the local deacon often speak and write in Old Church Slavonic, the written bookish language of the church meant for performing the liturgy, while Kozak Captain Zabryokha speaks largely in highly colloquial, often harried Ukrainian, particularly when interacting with Pistryak, who exasperates him. Our solution was to convey the archaic speech in the novella in pseudo-Elizabethan English and at times in the language of the King James Version of the English Bible. Preciseness of meaning was not as important as providing linguistic texture and the polyphony of voices extant in the work.

We tried our best to convey the humor of the novella which was both verbal and situational. Zabryokha and Pistryak are petty men, who both deserve each other's mutually irritating company and the comeuppance they receive at the end of the novel. *The Witch of Konotop* just like many other of Kvitka-Osnovyanenko's works is moralistic and didactic at its core. Greed, acquisition, and desire lead to self-destruction. The same message can be found throughout all of Hohol's writing. The narrative style of *The Witch of Konotop* also reminds me considerably of Mykola Hohol's best works from the same time period with a rambling folksy skaz narrator, attention to insignificant detail, ironic asides, paradigmatic loser characters, and failed attempts at romantic encounters with the opposite sex. We also translated Kvitka-Osnovyanenko's novella "Tumbleweed" to provide a sample of his more moralistic writing. Thus, we hope that the availability of our translation leads to comparative study with Hohol's prose and allows *The Witch of Konotop* to make its way into the reading list of courses on nineteenth-century Slavic literature. The novel also signals the high level of literary development of Ukrainian prose in an author of the early nineteenth century and smashes tsarist Russia's stereotype of Ukrainians as illiterate peasants. Our sensibilities and sensitivities to the original text as translators allow us to be open to creative solutions of an extraordinarily difficult text.

III. CONCLUSION

Constraints of time limit my discussion of the translator's sensibility and how that influences how s/he makes sense out of texts in a target language that almost always has a different sensibility. The translator must be aware of both sensibilities and balance them in his or her translation. The more sensitivity to what an author is doing in an original text, the more a translator can convey that texture, whether it be varied speech patterns of characters, word play, style, vocabulary, or myriad other nuances.

Appendix A
Guillaume Apollinaire
[Wilhelm Albert Włodzimierz Apolinary Kostrowicki]
RÉPONSE DES COSAQUES ZAPOROGUES
AU SULTAN DE CONSTANTINOPLE
Plus criminel que Barrabas
Cornu comme les mauvais anges
Quel Belzébuth es-tu là-bas
Nourri d'immondice et de fange
Nous n'irons pas à tes sabbats

Poisson pourri de Salonique
Long collier des sommeils affreux
D'yeux arrachés à coup de pique
Ta mère fit un pet foireux
Et tu naquis de sa colique

Bourreau de Podolie Amant
Des plaies des ulcères des croûtes
Groin de cochon cul de jument
Tes richesses garde-les toutes
Pour payer tes medicaments

Ґійом Аполлінер

ВІДПОВІДЬ ЗАПОРОЖЦІВ ТУРЕЦЬКОМУ СУЛТАНОВІ
Царя небесного харцизе
Високорогий сатано
Не годимося ми в підлизи
Жери-но сам своє лайно
Воно нам в пельку не полізе

Крамарю грецький просмердівсь
Ти тюлькою на честь ісламу
І палями обгородивсь
Швидка напала твою маму
І ти в дрислинах уродивсь

Подільський кате струп'я вкрило
Тобі все тіло мов шпориш
Конячий зад свиняче рило
Побережи дурний свій гріш
На масті та святе курило

(Переклад Миколи Лукаша)

Appendix B
[Michael Naydan's translation of Yuri Andrukhovych's "Ode to Ada" from his translation of *Perverzion* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2005: 90)]
Ada where you who you Ada?
O Ada. Oasisiada.
O you Ada.
It's me Ada where you, Ada?
Jawohl Ada: ja ja Ada.
Ada's Ada: I want some ada.
Ave Ada. Hiya Ada.
I'm nichts without you lieber Ada.
My ode to Ada. My enchilAda.
Do you want to do me Ada?2
Where're you who're you come here Ada.
Come here softly sweetly Ada.
Me and Ada—Meandada.
Either Ada or I'm nada.
Where are you Ada
Cause I'm sad, ah?
I was Adam's now I'm Ada's.
I was me now I'm Ada's.
I was one now I'm Ada's.
I was fine now I'm Ada's.
All the depths of Hades Ada.3
With no Ada there's no strAda.
Si do Ada sol do Ada re do Ada Eldorado.
She's my Ada my stumbling blockAda!
She's my life my acqua Ada!

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