

UDC 821.111

DOI: 10.32342/2523-4463-2023-2-26/1-9

**TETIANA POTNITSEVA**

*Doctor of Science in Philology, Full Professor,  
Department of Foreign Literature,  
Oles Honchar Dnipro National University*

## **THE VOICES OF THE WAR ("EPITAPHS OF THE WAR" BY RUDYARD KIPLING)**

У статті розглядається маловідома частина поетичної творчості англійського письменника кінця XIX – початку XX ст. Р. Кіплінга – «Епітафії війни», написані з приводу його відчуття й оцінки грандіозної історичної події початку XX ст. – Першої світової війни. Розвідка, що пропонується, має на меті аналіз жанрової своєрідності епітафії у контексті формування антивоєнної тематики творчості Р. Кіплінга.

Українське літературознавство і перекладознавство тільки розпочало розвідки цієї спадщини першого англійського лауреата Нобелівської премії. Результати подібних досліджень, а перш за все, самі твори письменника, допомагають зрозуміти складну динаміку його поглядів та почуттів, які спростовують певну міфологізацію образу Кіплінга- «імперіаліста», «колоніста», «мілітариста» тощо. Використовуємо історико-літературний та порівняльний методи аналізу.

Представлені в оригінальній формі епіграм у вигляді голосів загиблих та того, хто читає ці надгробні написи, епітафії створюють з різноманітних фрагментів загальний образ війни, не тільки конкретної – Першої світової 1914–1918 рр., а й зворушуючий образ будь якого військового протистояння людей, де людські жертви, втрати та трагедії є неминучими. Слово – іронічне, жартівливе й водночас різюче своєю точністю – є головним персонажем кіплінгівських мікроісторій про загиблих на війні. У цьому «транскрибуванні», а не описі дійсності, вгадується характерна для письменника манера, його «мужній стиль», тяжіння до концентрованого смислового образу твору.

Роздуми і підсумки Кіплінга про сутність і наслідки війни, безумовно, набувають сьогодні особливої актуальності. До того ж, вони доводять роль письменників і як пропагандистів війни, і як таких, що переживають драматичну динаміку своїх поглядів крізь власний воєнний досвід.

Саме такий досвід набуває Кіплінг на фронтах Першої світової війни, позбавляючись хибних ілюзій та ура-патріотизму, переживаючи і втрату власного сина у 1915 р. Багато спостережень і загальних висновків з цього досвіду – про причини, наслідки і винуватців загибелі людей – не залишають байдужими особливо у контексті сьогодення.

*Ключові слова: епітафія, жанр, Перша світова війна, мужній стиль, патріотизм, пацифізм, втрачене покоління.*

**For citation:** Potnitseva, T. (2023). The Voices of the War ("Epitaphs of the War" by Rudyard Kipling). *Alfred Nobel University Journal of Philology*, vol. 2, issue 26/1, pp. 120-132, DOI: 10.32342/2523-4463-2023-2-26/1-9

**T**he theme of a war that is especially painful today and turned out to be relevant to the current situation in the world is a recurring one in the art of the writer of the former century – Rudyard Kipling (1865– 936) with his rich experience of colonial wars of the end of the 19th century and the First World War of 1914–1918.

The first English Nobel laureate in literature devoted the cycle of epitaphs (*Epitaphs of the War*, 1919) to those who perished in the battlefields of the Great War, thus summarizing his own bitter experience. The article *aims* to analyze the genre originality of the epitaph in the context of R. Kipling's anti-war theme. Moreover, the analysis is supposed to clarify many important things

about the writer. His feelings and thoughts in “*Epitaphs*” about the historical event added much to the busting of the persistent myth of “iron Rudyard”, of Kipling as a singer of imperialism, and of “white man’s burden”. The comparative and historical-literary *methods* are applied for that.

Kipling’s indisputable reputation of the writer was spread not only in his country but far beyond its borders. Such a reputation can be observed in Ukraine where, as Maksim Strikha notes, “the censorship conditions were much more severe <...> the works of the popular British writer couldn’t be either publish nor translate” [Стріха, 2014, p. 19]. Though as one can understand from the critic’s review of Kipling in Ukrainian literature the attempts to introduce his art were taken very early – in 1910 and 1911 when the first translations of Kipling’s stories appeared in the versions done by Jurij Siryi [Стріха, 2014, p. 18].

The philosophical reflections of Kipling about the war as a shock to a person and humanity, when instincts, not reason acts (“war is a triumph of instinct over reason”), according to the author’s contemporary writer and journalist Arnold Bennett [Hepburn, 68, p. 349] were being formed by the writer of the famous “*The Jungle Book*” during some decades under the impact of his own front experience, his participation in the Burial Commission of the dead British soldiers and officers and his personal tragedy – the death of his son John in 1915. The idea of “*Epitaphs...*”, as many literary critics think, appears namely in that period of his work in the Commission which Kipling joined “with the secret hope to learn something about his son who was on the missing persons list” [Ливергант, 2011, p. 239]. But everything he learned about the general tragedy of that war when he had visited all military cemeteries was expressed, splashed out in his deep disappointment, in his “mounting and increasingly less hidden disillusion with his country’s leadership” [Richards, 2017, p. 21]. Somehow the identical feelings concerning the death of warries – real or imaginary – will be later on summarized by one of the famous participants of the First World War Ernest Hemingway in his poetic lines:

*Soldiers never do die well;  
Crosses mark the places –  
Wooden crosses where they fell,  
Struck above their faces  
 (“Soldiers Never Do Die Well”) [Hemingway, 2023]*

The history of the assessment of Kipling’s art and personality was, as it is known, contradictory at home and in other countries. A literary critic and the Librarian of Kipling’s Society in Great Britain John Walker notes with bitterness that even nowadays there are many works about the writer in which he is defined “as racist, imperialist, colonialist, militarist, antifeminist and simply as a vulgar personality” [Вокеп, 2014, p. 7]. The modern Ukrainian literary critics are making their best to speak about “*the real and imagined writer*” despite all “*controversial estimations*” of his works and him as a human being during the 20th century [Стріха, 2003, p. 273–278; Кеба, 2023, p. 117]. The main result of these investigations is a certain success in the busting of common myths about Kipling, in an attempt to restore another image of the writer on the basis of his texts. Just the thing Kipling urged to in his famous lines:

*And for the little, little, span  
The dead are born in mind,  
Seek not to question other than  
The books I leave behind  
 (“The Appeal”) [Kipling, 2023]*

M. Strikha’s translation is proposed below. It also demonstrates the great concern of Ukrainian translators in the art of the British poet:

*Наразі ж воскресять на мить  
Мене чийсь думки,  
То прошу не мене судить,  
А лиш мої книжки  
 (“Прохання”) [Стріха, 2003, p. 293]*

Even though Kipling is one of the most well-known foreign writers in Ukraine, much of his creative heritage has not been translated yet. Thanks to M. Strikha, a Ukrainian reader became aware of some works in his translation made in 2003 [Стриха, 2003, pp. 288–290].

The feelings concerning the bloody battles of his time the writer expressed long before “*Epitaphs*”, after the Anglo-Boer war in the poem “*The Settler*” which was published on February 27, 1903 in “*Times*”. His fear of “the moving image of thousands of boots” and of “the soldier military march obsessive rhythm” was very early substituted by the feeling of delight in all of that [Дьомова, 2014, p. 54]. Personal guilt for everything that took place and the desire to redeem oneself is the main idea which Kipling worded in his poetry in connection with the First World War:

*Here, where my fresh-turned furrows run,  
And the deep soil glistens red,  
I will repair the wrong that was done  
To the living and the dead.  
("The Settler") [Kipling, 2018]*

“*Epitaphs*” are written in the genre of epigram – ironic-satirical poetic inscriptions that are the voices either of dead soldiers or those who are reading and reflecting over these inscriptions. In February 1918 Kipling himself defined his epitaphs as “grave, not Christian epigrams” [Baldik, 2015].

In this paradoxical (though the source of this paradox lies in the antique tradition) encounter of the genre of epitaph – traditionally panegyric, laudatory inscription on the grave with the genre of epigram – humorous ironic statement a recognizable Kipling’s manner, his masculine style come to light. That is the manner and style with the help of which the writer does not depict and comment but “transcribes” a living reality, discovers its certain shades out of which the wholeness of the world image and the author’s thought of it are created: “<...> when one starts to classify these tough shreds of verse one sees how strong they are, and how much is strung on them” [Tompkins, 1965, p. 189].

These original epitaphs concentrate on ordinary everyday signs of war life and through that, a philosophical generalized summary about its tragic and barbaric essence is formed. They reveal such an image of the war “<...> which no one at the time would have endorsed <...>” [Brogan, 1998].

Kipling’s Word – an ironic, mocking and simultaneously tragic because it is the last, summing up one – becomes the main personage and the sense-forming factor of “*Epitaphs...*”. These epitaphs are the concentration of, using the lines from Ezra Pound’s poem “Hugh Selwyn Mauberley”:

*frankness as never before,  
disillusions as never told in old days,  
hysterias, trench confessions,  
laughter out of dead bellies” [Pound, 2007]*

More than 30 voices add some important shades to the general image of the war, to all those incredible variants of the death “in which life may be extinguished” [Tompkins, 1950, p. 189]. Among the deceased, there is a beginner (“*The Beginner*”) who realized that the war is a reality, not a game:

*On the first hour of my first day  
In the front trench I fell  
(Children in boxes at a play  
Stand up to watch it well)  
("The Beginner") [Kipling, 2018]*

As well as an 18-year old soldier of the Royal Air Force (“*R.A.F. (Aged Eighteen)*”) who was killed and had to “*put away childish things*”. There is a sentinel, who fell asleep at his post and

was killed (*"The Sleepy Sentinel"*); the one who was afraid to face death (*"The Coward"*) and was severely punished for that by his combatants, and many other tragic stories of the war. Everyone is equal when facing death – a servant as well as his master (*"A Servant"*), and even the one who had everything and the one who had nothing:

*A. I was a Have  
B. I was a have-not  
Together. What hast thou  
Given which I have not?  
("Equality of Sacrifice") [Kipling, 2018]*

The author's summing up irony is in the very title of such an epitaph – *"Equality of Sacrifice"* – as if addressed to someone (sooner, to God) with one's understanding of the insanity of life sacrificing for nothing, with the understanding of shakiness of ideals with which a soldier comes to the war.

The same way of thinking has an ex-clerk (*"Ex-Clerk"*), who now, being in the arms of death, due to his own experience has acquired another understanding of what is Freedom, Force, and Love:

*Pity not! The Army gave  
Freedom to timid slave:  
In which Freedom did he find  
Strength of body, will, and mind:  
By which strength he came to prove  
Mirth, Companionship, and Love:  
For which Love to Death he went:  
In which Death he lies content  
("Ex-Clerk") [Kipling, 2018]*

*Ні красти, ні робить не вмів, –  
То майстром став облудних слів.  
Та стрінутись прийшлося мені  
Тепер із жертвами брехні.  
Яку б ще казочку утнуть,  
Щоб вгамувати їхню лють?"  
("Політик") [Стрїха, 2003, р. 289]*

The same comprehension of the privilege over death while being already in the grave one more dead soldier's voice expresses. The thought about the inevitable death filled him with the only feeling of fear for all the time he was at the battle. The release of it and by that the obtaining the way out to freedom is *"The Favour"* he felt at the moment when the death whistled at last *"The line is at the end"* and the life was over:

*Death favoured me from the first, well knowing I could not endure  
To wait on him...  
("The Favour") [Kipling, 2018]*

The feeling of shock is created namely of what the dead thought and felt at the last moment of his life and of the tragic meeting of his inexhaustible desire to live with the inevitability of death:

*My name, my speech, my self I had forgot.  
My wife and children came – I knew them not.  
I died. My Mother followed. At her call  
And on her bosom I remembered all  
("Shock") [Kipling, 2018]*

There is one remarkably laconic one-line inscription-epitaph that does not demand any detailed comments. That is “*pelicans in the wilderness*”, Kipling’s reference to Psalm 102:6, in which the images of pelicans – symbols of melancholy, and owls – symbols of collapse and defeat appear. All that corresponds to those who are lying in the graves. But not only in the graves. Those are the symbols of all soldiers – dead and alive in insane wars.

Kipling recreates some quite natural life situations which at front lead to death. They might seem to be ridiculous but nevertheless they are inevitably tragic. For example, one inscription tells the story of an “aesthete”, who according to the principles of his upbringing could not pee in public and trying to move aside got hit by a bullet:

*I was of delicate mind. I stepped aside for my needs.  
Disdaining the common office.  
I was seen from afar and killed  
("The Refined Man") [Kipling, 2018]*

*Я не міг по нужді з усіма разом ходить,  
І був убитий, бо вийшов з безпечного схову...  
Це зовсім не смішно, коли по правді судить:  
Я заплатив життям за право чинить принципово  
("Людина вишуканих принципів") [Стріха, 2003, р. 290]*

Another inscription tells about the event – ridiculous and tragic simultaneously. The dead is not able “*to lighten or amend*” it. Everything happened in the Fog:

*I, hurrying to my bride, was drowned –  
Cut down by my best friend  
("Destroyer in Collision") [Kipling, 2018]*

One more inscription may be perceived as apologies of the one who died of illness, not of the bullet:

*...It is fever, and not the fight –  
Time, not battle, – that slays  
("Salonikah Grave) [Kipling, 2018]*

The scale of the war and the war catastrophe is accentuated by Kipling in the facts that make clear where, in which countries and parts of Europe the soldiers are buried and who they are. Among them – a Hindu sepoy buried in France (“*Hindu Sepoy in France*”), and the one who perished near Cairu (“*A Grave Near Cairu*”), Canadians (“*Two Canadian Memorials*”), the Hindu contingent that fought in Mesopotamia (“*m.e.f.*”) – “*The Worst Allied Disaster of the War*” [Kipling, 2018]; the one who turned out to be at the bombing of London (“*Bombed in London*”), and an absolutely unknown one whose grave was discovered near Halfa:

*The blown sand heaps on me, that none may learn  
Where I am laid for whom my children grieve...  
("A Grave Near Halfa") [Kipling, 2018]*

All these soldiers’ destinies are connected with the real events of the First World War to which the literary critics in their commentaries to “*Epitaphs*” refer in order to explain the meaning of the poetic fragments [Kipling, 2018]. Thus, quite real was the fact of 306 soldiers’ execution for cowardice – a natural rookie’s feeling of death. Only in 2006, they were justified as war victims who deserve the honor. But there were also real cowards who escaped from the field of battle. It is told in one inscription of the dead soldier who perished because he was left by his friends:

*...they would not abide by my rules  
They escaped  
("Convoy Escort") [Kipling, 2018]*

Real and tragic was the destiny of courageous Indian soldiers in the War. Being the inhabitants of South Asia regions, they fought in the European war open spaces. A Cemetery visitor who reads the inscription of the Hindu sepoy calls to "reward him for his bravery". No less courageous were the British soldiers who in their turn fought far beyond the borders of Great Britain – in Greece; or Canadian warriors on the British forces in France who "gave all they gained":

*We giving all gained all.  
Neither lament us not praise.  
Only in all things recall,  
It is Fear, not Death that slays.*

*From little towns in far land we came,  
To save our honour and a world aflame,  
By little towns in a far land we sleep;  
And trust that world we won for you to keep!  
("Two Canadian Memorials") [Kipling, 2018]*

*З полів далеких ми прийшли,  
Бо захлинився світ в крові.  
В поля далекі ми лягли,  
Щоб ви лишилися живі.  
("Канадські солдати") [Стріха, 2003, p. 289]*

Long before the Second World War, the first bombing of London took place. It happened on June 13, 1917 taking the lives of many adults and children, military and civil men. Though Kipling himself in the letter to a member of Kipling's society Col.C.H. Milburn (he will write about that in the society edition in 1936) assures that all the events depicted by him are fictions: "All the epitaphs in my 'Inclusive Verse' to which you refer altogether imaginary" [Milburn, 1936], it becomes clear that that is not quite so. Reality is everywhere and is seen in everything. It is quite obvious in the plots which may be with imaginary characters but with the bearers of real feelings in the convincing circumstances of the War.

The epitaph under the title "Common Form" is one of the most conceptually important epitaphs in which Kipling formulates his main conclusion about the War. Hadquas, one of the modern investigators of Kipling's art, defines it as epitaph "<...> that could be used for every war grave" [Holberton, 2018]. The title of the work could be interpreted as "a universal, general form" and "the main conclusion". Its final words are Kipling's conclusion about everything he has told:

*If any question why we died,  
Tell them, because our fathers lied  
("Common Form") [Kipling, 2018]*

*Для неї досить двох рядків:  
Загинув за брехню батьків.  
("Найпоширеніша епітафія") [Стріха, 2003, p. 289]*

Mainly in this conclusion both the personal and the universal meet: "Kipling gave his private grief a universal dimension" [De Angelis, 2016].

There are two inscriptions to dead sons entitled – "A Son" and "An Only Son". From different points of view – the first is the voice of a father who is near his son's grave, and the second – is the voice of the dead son who worries only about his mother who will die of grief and sadness



about her killed son. But it is impossible not to reveal the sad voice of Kipling himself. The writer's feeling concerned, first of all, the guilt for helping and speeding his son's going to the war because at that time he experienced an extreme splash of patriotism. At a mass meeting at Brighton Street on September 8, 1914, Kipling called everyone to participate in the War – "Have no illusions. We are dealing with a strong and magnificently equipped enemy, whose avowed aim is our complete destruction. If we are to win right for ourselves and freedom to exist on earth, every man must offer himself for that service and that sacrifice" [Kipling, 1915, p. 107]. It remains only to wonder how History repeats itself in centuries, and nowadays in our war situation, one can hear the same words proclaimed a century ago!

This feeling of patriotism overwhelmed not only Kipling. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, for example, at the beginning of the War in his article "To Arms!" appealed to everyone "to accuse cowards or sluggards who flinch" [Conan Doyle, 1915, p. 132]. And H.G. Wells in the article "The Fourth of August – Europe at War" stated that "every sword that is drawn against Germans now is a sword drawn for peace" [Wells, 1915, p. 89]. And even John Galsworthy in his "A 'Credo' for Keeping Faith" confesses that "the war is outrage – a black stain on the humanity and the fame of man" at the same time was sure that his country "has gone to war at last, not from fear, not from hope of aggrandizement, but because she must – for honor, for democracy, and for the future of mankind" [Galsworthy, 1915, p. 104]. The perception of the War as a great battle for the national and human freedom turned out to be the basis for the formation of the main pathos of war literature, of the moods of people, and in general of the myth which appears first at any war. This first myth of the Great War was rooted in people's consciousness and was embodied in art. The glorification of "masculine" matter was, on one side, caused by a sincere belief in the official words and slogans of propaganda, but on the other side – by the impact of the literature that played an important role in the war and its "heroes" "romanticizing". Such romanticizing happened with the image of the English poet Rupert Brooke (1887–1915) who perished at the time of the war march to Gallipoli, right to the place of the Trojan War events. Brooke was chosen by propaganda to play the role of a national hero of the First World War. Churchill wrote about him a pathetic obituary in "The Times" on April 16, 1915 though the poet took part in no battle and died of illness on the battlefield, practically like Byron did. Associations with Byron and even Napoleon are very often in war poetry [Потничева, 2016]:

... Can Art acclaim  
No hero now, no man with whom men side  
As with their hearts! High needs personified?  
("At the Tomb of Napoleon") [Seeger, 1917, p. 97]

Already in "The Times" on September 2, 1914, Kipling's poem "For All We Have and Are" appears with such a call:

<...>Stand up and take the war  
The Hun is at the gate  
("For All We Have and Are") [Kipling, 2023]

in which widespread at that time the propagandist association of modern Germans with the wild Germanic tribes or Huns was caught up and consolidated [Buitenhuis, 1987, p. xiv]. The Germans were named "pirates", "thieves", "corsairs", "wolves to herd the helpless sheep". See, for example, the poem "Mare Liberum", 1917 by an American poet of that time Henry van Dyke [van Dyke, 1917, p. 197].

The preponderance of the feeling of patriotism, self-sacrifice, courage, and patience in Kipling's war poetry is underlined by the compiler of the Anthology of War, professor of English Literature from Tennessee University George Clarke (George Herbert Clarke, 1873–1953) [Clarke, 1917, p. xxvi]. Such a mood was typical of many writers – contemporaries of Kipling shocked by the events in Sarajevo and who joined at once "the hysteria of patriotism in Europe" [Buitenhuis, 1987, p. xv]. The propaganda machine started its work in full force. Established in England, a special bureau involved into its work 25 famous writers with the aim of creating pa-

triotic works. Among them – Conan Doyle, Galsworthy, H. James, Kipling. Resolutely this registered role was rejected only by B. Shaw and B. Russell [Потніцева, 2016]. Everything will change in a certain period of time. And Kipling's understanding of the tragic nature of any war, of man's life value, and mostly – his longing for the son will penetrate the biggest part of the epitaphs:

*My son was killed while laughing  
At some jest I would I know  
What it was, and it might serve me  
In a time when jests are few  
("A Son") [Kipling, 2018]*

In the generalized image of the son who perished one can feel the author's personal experience:

*I have slain none except my Mother. She  
(Blessing her slayer) died of grief for me.  
("An Only Son") [Kipling, 2018]*

*Я вбив лиш матір, що сумною  
Померла, плачучи за мною.  
("Єдиний син") [Стріха, 2003, р. 288]*

Almost all the epitaphs express Kipling's idea, more concretely than the philosophical one about wars in general mentioned above. That was his conclusion about the war culprits – the rulers of the country, and his general disappointment in the policy of his own government. The theme of lies and flimsy ideals is a recurring one in many of the epitaphs. Thus, a perished statesman ("A Dead Statement") repents that he by his lie killed other people and because of that he is lying here:

*I could not dig: I dated not rob.  
Therefore, I lied to please the mob.  
Now all my lies are proved untrue  
And I must face the men I slew  
("A Dead Statement") [Kipling, 2018]*

Both the perished ("The Rebel") and the obedient and submissive man feel equally the guilt of inheriting false ideals ("The Obedient"):

*Lord, I had mocked Thy thoughtful care  
Before I joined the Dead!"  
("The Rebel") [Kipling, 2018]*

O.V. Keba is right when says that "the motives of hypocrisy and the guilt of fathers for sons' destiny are dominating in 'Epitaphs'" [Кеба, 2023, p. 125]. But it took Kipling several years to come to a definite conclusion about the war, in comparison with Bernard Shaw who worded his similar estimation of the war and his foresight of its consequences at the very beginning of the event in the article "Common Sense about the War" (1915) about which Arnold Bennett said: "Mr. Bernard Shaw <...>says many things no one else would have dared to say" [Bennett, 1915, p. 60]: "The time has now come to pluck up courage and begin to talk and write soberly about the war. <...>I see both nations duped, but alas! Not quite unwillingly duped, by their Junkers and Militarists... No doubt the heroic remedy for this tragic misunderstanding is that both armies should shoot their officers and go home to gather in their harvests in the villages and make a revolution in the towns<...>" [Shaw, 1915, p. 11].

The Romantic-heroic mythology of the war was presented not only in Kipling's early war poems, but also in many works by famous poets and writers of that time – very often volunteers at



the war. But at the same time there was a contrastive, quite another literature with some other plots about the Great War.

The theme of comprehension of the illusory nature of the words and ideals provided by the war acts appears in the last years of the War and after it. Ezra Pound in his poem *"Hugh Selwyn Mauberley"* (1920), for example, describes a tragic death of soldiers' pro patria because they *"walked eye-deep in hell/believing in old men's lies"*. In the 20s one of the "lost generation" writers, a famous American writer E. Hemingway summarized his thoughts in the same way as Kipling did about the lie of the rulers who involved young people in the war acts and ruined them by their politics:

*They sucked us in;  
King and country  
("To Good Guys Dead") [Hemingway, 2023]*

The author of *"A Farewell to Arms"* thinks about the consequence of the war that got only "the sort of shit that it demanded" [Hemingway, 2016]. In the Preface to the novel edition of 1948, the writer says that those who were at the war were sent there by those swine that used soldiers for their own profit [Hemingway, 2014, p. x]

In Kipling's "Voices" of the war, in these farewells, summing up speeches there are living words of men who understood the value of an ordinary life and the insanity of any war. That's why it is mostly a repentance, a confession in the fact of misunderstanding of all that, and a sincere expression of the fear of death: *"It is Fear, not Death that slays"* (*"Two Canadian Memorials"*) – or of the guilt toward relatives, a reproach to those who didn't understand the horrors of the war and were not prepared for the most terrible:

*If any mourn us in the workshop, say  
We died because the shift kept holiday  
("Batteries out of Ammunition") [Kipling, 2018]*

Kipling did not stand aside from all the war events. He was an active fighter whose weapon was "<...> pen and voice as a public speaker" [Atwood, 2019, p. 1], he was one of the many famous writers who signed the Manifest against starting the war and one of those who urged to save the peace for which so many people in different wars had given their lives. Kipling has left a famous appeal-testament to all generations. Let us also listen to it now!

*Whereby our dead shall sleep  
In honour, unbetrayed  
And we in faith and honour keep  
That peace for which they paid!  
("Justice") [Kipling, 2023]*

The voices of the perished in the First World War that sound in Kipling's epitaphs create not only the general image of that historical event but a penetrating image of any military confrontation of people, in which human victims, losses and tragedies are inevitable. His epitaphs, without doubt, are relevant in our modern context as well. In addition, they demonstrate different sides of writers' possible participation in the event in dynamics: from war propagandist to quite another estimation of the war due to one's personal experience.

The poetological peculiarity of Kipling's epitaphs is in his return to the antique tradition of genre interpenetration of epigram and epitaph. That is what makes the writer's style recognizable as well as his intention not to depict or comment but to "decipher" the living reality in many shades out of which the wholeness of the world is created.

In the interpretation of death, the emphasis is shifting from the philosophical to humanitarian and social-political one. Instead of memento mori (transient of earthly existence), Kipling focuses his attention on the violent death during the war (correlating and identifying the image of war and the image of death) which is presented as a vain sacrifice in the name of someone's interests.

Instead of the idea of equality of death and sacrifice or traditional philosophical meditations about death as an eternal peace, a stay in eternity, Kipling gives a whole spectrum of emotional-expressive connotations connected with his perception of the war – fear, horror, murder, sensation of shock got of imagining what the dead thought and felt at the last moment of their life.

Kipling's epitaphs present the dead soldiers' voices addressed to contemporaries and descendants containing not only their personal experience of some concrete episodes of the war but a generalized summing up of the war with its senseless sacrifices and by that giving a kind of warning to those who are alive.

The theme of lies and far-fetched ideals and their illusory character as well as the theme of false patriotism dominates in Kipling's epitaphs adding the traces of civic lyrics to that genre. The structural basis of epitaphs is a couplet close to the epigram and a quatrain with a philosophical generalization. Irony is recognizable key artistic modus of Kipling with the help of which he creates a certain character type of the real world simultaneously giving his estimation of the emerging concept of the world which he obviously rejects.

### Bibliography

Вокер, Дж. (2014). Ред'ярд Кіплінг: знайомство. *Сучасний Кіплінг. Нові акценти інтерпретації* (с. 7-18). Тернопіль: Навчальна книга – Богдан.

Дьомова, Н. (2014). Кіплінгівський вірш "Boots" в українських перекладах М. Стріхи та В. Чернишенка: відтворення особливостей ритміки. *Сучасний Кіплінг – нові акценти інтерпретації* (с. 54-61). Тернопіль: Навчальна книга – Богдан.

Кеба, О.В. (2023). Ред'ярд Кіплінг. С.К. Криворучко (Ред.), *Зарубіжна література межі XIX–XX та XX століття* (с. 116-126). Тернопіль: Навчальна книга – Богдан.

Ливергант, А. (2011). *Кіплінг*. Retrieved from [https://royallib.com/book/livergant\\_aleksandr/kipling.html](https://royallib.com/book/livergant_aleksandr/kipling.html)

Потницева, Т.Н. (2016). Мифы и образы первой мировой войны в англо-американской поэзии начала XX века. В.А. Гусев (Ред), *Литература в контексте культуры* (с. 211-225). Київ: Видавничий дім Дмитра Бураго.

Стріха, М. (2003). *Улюблені англійські вірші та навколо них*. Київ: Факт.

Стріха, М. (2014). Ред'ярд Кіплінг і українська література. *Сучасний Кіплінг – нові акценти інтерпретації* (с. 18-24). Тернопіль: Навчальна книга – Богдан.

Atwood, R. (2019). Kipling and the Great War. *The Kipling Society*. Retrieved from [https://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/readers-guide/rg\\_greatwar.htm](https://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/readers-guide/rg_greatwar.htm)

Baldik, Ch. (2015). Rudyard Kipling. Epitaphs of the War. Ch. Baldik (Ed.), *The Literary Encyclopedia. Exploring literature, history and culture*. Retrieved from <https://www.litencyc.com/php/sworks.php?rec=true&UID=35614>

Bennett, A. (1915). Shaw's Nonsense About Belgium. *The New York Times. Current History*, I (1), 60-63.

Brogan, H. (1998). The Great War and Rudyard Kipling. *The Kipling Society*. Retrieved from [https://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/readers-guide/rg\\_greatwar1.htm](https://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/readers-guide/rg_greatwar1.htm)

Buitenhuis, P. (1987). *The Great War of Words. Literature as Propaganda. 1914–1918 and After*. London: B.T. Batsford Ltd.

Clarke, G.H. (1917). Introduction. G.H. Clarke (Ed.), *A Treasury of War Poetry. British and American Poems of the World War 1914-1917* (pp. xxv-xxx). Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Conan Doyle, A. (1915). To Arms! *The New York Times. Current History*, I (1), 132-140.

De Angelis, I. (2016). From Propaganda to Private Grief: Redyard Kipling and World War I. *Le Simplegadi*, XIV, 15, 74-81. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17456/SIMPLE-29>

Galsworthy, J. (1915). A "Credo" for Keeping Faith. *The New York Times. Current History*, I (1), 104.

Hemingway, E. (2014). The Author's 1948 Introduction. S. Hemingway (Ed.), *A Farewell to Arms* (pp. vii-x). New York, Toronto & New Delhi: Scribner.

Hemingway, E. (2016). The Age Demanded. *Poetry Foundation*. Retrieved from <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47268/the-age-demanded>

Hemingway, E. (2023). Champs D'Honneur. *Poetry Foundation*. Retrieved from <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47270/champs-dhonneur>

- Hepburn, J. (Ed). (1968). *The Letters of Arnold Bennett* (Vol. 2, p. 349). London: Oxford University Press.
- Holberton, Ph. (2018). Epitaphs of the War. *The Kipling Society*. Retrieved from [https://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/readers-guide/rg\\_epitaphs1.htm](https://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/readers-guide/rg_epitaphs1.htm)
- Kipling, R. (1915). As They Tested Our Fathers. *The New York Times. Current History*, I (1), 107.
- Kipling, R. (2018). Epitaphs of the War. *The Kipling Society*. Retrieved from [https://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/poem/poems\\_epitaphs.htm](https://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/poem/poems_epitaphs.htm)
- Kipling, R. (2023). For All We Have And Are. *Poetry Foundation*. Retrieved from <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/57431/for-all-we-have-and-are>
- Milburn, C.C.H. (1936). Epitaphs by Pudyard Kipling. *The Kipling Journal*, 39, 84-96.
- Pound, E. (2007). *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*. Whitefish: Kessinger Publishing. Retrieved from <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/23538/pg23538-images.html>
- Richards, D.A. (2017). Kipling and the Great War Propagandists. *The Kipling Journal*, 91 (369), 17-22.
- Seeger, A. (1917). At the Tomb of Napoleon Before the Elections in America – November, 12. W. Archer (Ed.), *Poems* (p. 97). New York: Charles Scribner's Sons Publ.
- Shaw, G.B. (1915). Common Sense about the War. *The New York Times. Current History*, I (1), 11-59.
- Tompkins, J.M.S. (1950). Kipling's Later Tales: The Theme of Healing. *The Modern Language Review*, 45 (1), 18-32. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/3719656>
- Tompkins, J.M.S. (1965). *The Art of Rudyard Kipling*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- van Dyke, H. (1917). Mare Liberum. Clarke, G.H. (Ed.), *A Treasury of War Poetry. British and American Poems of the World War 1914-1917* (p. 197). Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Wells, H.G. (1915). The Fourth of August – Europe at War. *The New York Times. Current History*, I (1), 87-89.

#### THE VOICES OF THE WAR (“EPITAPHS OF THE WAR” BY R. KIPLING)

Tetiana M. Potnitseva, Oles's Honchar Dnipro National University (Ukraine)

e-mail: [t.potnitseva@gmail.com](mailto:t.potnitseva@gmail.com)

DOI: 10.32342/2523-4463-2023-2-26/1-9

**Key words:** *epitaph, genre, The First World War, masculine style, patriotism, pacifism, the lost generation.*

The article is examined R. Kipling's "Epitaphs of the War" (1919) appeared as a summing up of his experience during the First World War. The work reflects the writer's feeling of tragedy and grandiosity of that historical event. Kipling himself witnessed many episodes of the war and survived his personal tragedy – the death of his son John in 1915. The article *aims* to analyze the genre originality of the epitaph in the context of R. Kipling's anti-war theme.

Although this part of Kipling's creative heritage remains less well-known, it is attracting the attention of Ukrainian literary critics and translators now. To reveal the specificity of that poetic work, the comparative and historical-literary *methods* are applied.

The original form of the epitaphs is presented as an epigram which allows one to hear either a voice of a perished soldier or of someone who is reading the epitaph. This manner – not to depict and explain but to transcribe reality – is very recognizable of Kipling's "masculine style". In such a manner the first English laureate of the Noble Prize creates a diverse picture of the War in a variety of its tragic episodes and men's destinies. Thus, a universal picture is born and the main conclusions of the author become transparent.

Kipling creates a generalized image of the War by depicting those incredible variants of death "in which life may be extinguished" (J.M.S. Tompkins). Among the dead – "the beginner", who didn't realize yet that the war was a reality, not a game as well as the 18 years old soldier of the Royal Air Force ("R.A.F. (Aged Eighteen)"); the sentinel who falls asleep on his post ("The Sleepy Sentinel"); the one who was afraid to face death ("The Coward") and was severely punished for that by his own combatants and many other tragic stories of the war. The climax of the cycle is the one epitaph in which Kipling formulates his main conclusion about the war – it is "Common Form". The very title of this epitaph could be interpreted as a "generally used form of explanation" which in Kipling's ironical presentation is identical to "the main conclusion". His personal summing up of the event is formulated in the final words: "*If any question why we died / Tell them, because our fathers lied*".

Namely in these words personal and universal meet. Kipling had feelings of guilt about pushing his son to go to war. At that time, he was captured by patriotic illusions as well as many writers of his country. The perception of the War as a great battle for national and human freedom was the ground on which the main pathos of the War was formed. It penetrated the literary works, the mood of people and resulted in the main myth that appears at any war.

*Conclusion.* The voices of the perished in the First World War that sound in Kipling's epitaphs create not only the general image of that historical event but a penetrating image of any military confrontation of people, in which human victims, losses and tragedies are inevitable. His epitaphs, without doubt, are relevant in our modern context as well. In addition, they demonstrate different sides of writers' possible participation in the event in dynamics: from war propagandist to quite another estimation of the war due to one's personal experience.

The poetological peculiarity of Kipling's epitaphs is in his return to the antique tradition of genre interpenetration of epigram and epitaph. That is what makes the writer's style recognizable as well as his intention not to depict or comment but to "decipher" the living reality in many shades out of which the wholeness of the world is created.

In the interpretation of death, the emphasis is shifting from the philosophical to humanitarian and social-political one. Instead of memento mori (transient of earthly existence), Kipling focuses his attention on the violent death during the war (correlating and identifying the image of war and the image of death) which is presented as a vain sacrifice in the name of someone's interests. Instead of the idea of equality of death and sacrifice or traditional philosophical meditations about death as an eternal peace, a stay in eternity, Kipling gives a whole spectrum of emotional-expressive connotations connected with his perception of the war – fear, horror, murder, sensation of shock got of imagining what the dead thought and felt at the last moment of their life.

Kipling's epitaphs present the dead soldiers' voices addressed to contemporaries and descendants containing not only their personal experience of some concrete episodes of the war but a generalized summing up of the war with its senseless sacrifices and by that giving a kind of warning to those who are alive.

The theme of lies and far-fetched ideals and their illusory character as well as the theme of false patriotism dominates in Kipling's epitaphs adding the traces of civic lyrics to that genre. The structural basis of epitaphs is a couplet close to the epigram and a quatrain with a philosophical generalization. Irony is recognizable key artistic modus of Kipling with the help of which he creates a certain character type of the real world simultaneously giving his estimation of the emerging concept of the world which he obviously rejects.

## References

- Atwood, R. (2019). Kipling and the Great War. *The Kipling Society*. Available at: [https://www.kipling-society.co.uk/readers-guide/rg\\_greatwar.htm](https://www.kipling-society.co.uk/readers-guide/rg_greatwar.htm) (Accessed 29 October 2023).
- Baldik, Ch. (2015). Rudyard Kipling. Epitaphs of the War. In Ch. Baldik (ed.). *The Literary Encyclopedia. Exploring literature, history and culture*. Available at: <https://www.litencyc.com/php/sworks.php?rec=true&UID=35614> (Accessed 29 October 2023).
- Bennett, A. (1915). Shaw's Nonsense About Belgium. *The New York Times. Current History*, vol. I, issue 1, pp. 60-63.
- Brogan, H. (1998). The Great War and Rudyard Kipling. *The Kipling Society*. Available at: [https://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/readers-guide/rg\\_greatwar1.htm](https://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/readers-guide/rg_greatwar1.htm) (Accessed 29 October 2023).
- Buitenhuis, P. (1987). *The Great War of Words. Literature as Propaganda. 1914–1918 and After*. London, B.T. Batsford Ltd., 224 p.
- Clarke, G.H. (1917). Introduction. In G.H. Clarke (ed.). *A Treasury of War Poetry. British and American Poems of the World War 1914-1917*. Boston & New York, Houghton Mifflin Company, pp. xxv-xxx.
- Conan Doyle, A. (1915). To Arms! *The New York Times. Current History*, vol. I, issue 1, pp. 132-140.
- De Angelis, I. (2016). From Propaganda to Private Grief: Redyard Kipling and World War I. *Le Simple-gadi*, vol. XIV, issue 15, pp. 74-81. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17456/SIMPLE-29>
- Diomova, N. (2014). *Kiplingivs'kij virsh "Boots" v ukrains'kych perekladach M. Strichy ta V. Chernyshenko: vidtvorennja osoblyvostej rytmiky* [Kipling's poem "Boots" in Ukrainian translations by M. Strikha and V. Chernyshenko: the creation of the rhythm specificity]. *Suchasnyj Kipling – novi aktsentu intepretatsii* [Modern Kipling. New Interpretation Accents]. Ternopil, Navchalna knyga – Bohdan Publ., pp. 54-61.
- Galsworthy, J. (1915). A "Credo" for Keeping Faith. *The New York Times. Current History*, vol. I, issue 1, p. 104.
- Hemingway, E. (2014). The Author's 1948 Introduction. In S. Hemingway (ed.). *A Farewell to Arms*. New York, Toronto & New Delhi, Scribner, pp. vii-x.
- Hemingway, E. (2016). The Age Demanded. *Poetry Foundation*. Available at: <https://www.poetry-foundation.org/poems/47268/the-age-demanded> (Accessed 29 October 2023).

- Hemingway, E. (2023). Champs D'Honneur. *Poetry Foundation*. Available at: <https://www.poetry-foundation.org/poems/47270/champs-dhonneur> (Accessed 29 October 2023).
- Hepburn, J. (ed). (1968). The Letters of Arnold Bennett. London, Oxford University Press, vol. 2, 422 p.
- Holberton, Ph. (2018). Epitaphs of the War. *The Kipling Society*. Available at: [https://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/readers-guide/rg\\_epitaphs1.htm](https://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/readers-guide/rg_epitaphs1.htm) (Accessed 29 October 2023).
- Keba, O.V. (2023). *Red'jard Kipling* [Redyard Kipling]. *Zarybezhnaja literature mezhi XIX–XX ta XX stolittja* [The Foreign Literature of the Turn of the 19–20th and the 20th Centuries]. Ternopil, Navchalna knyga – Bohdan Publ., pp. 116-126.
- Kipling, R. (1915). As They Tested Our Fathers. *The New York Times. Current History*, vol. I, issue 1, p. 107.
- Kipling, R. (2018). Epitaphs of the War. *The Kipling Society*. Available at: [https://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/poem/poems\\_epitaphs.htm](https://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/poem/poems_epitaphs.htm) (Accessed 29 October 2023).
- Kipling, R. (2023). For All We Have And Are. *Poetry Foundation*. Available at: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/57431/for-all-we-have-and-are> (Accessed 29 October 2023).
- Livergant, A. (2011). *Kipling* [Kipling]. Available at: [https://royallib.com/book/livergant\\_aleksandr/kipling.html](https://royallib.com/book/livergant_aleksandr/kipling.html) (Accessed 29 October 2023).
- Milburn, C.C.H. (1936). Epitaphs by Pudyard Kipling. *The Kipling Journal*, vol. 39, pp. 84-96.
- Potnitseva, T.N. (2016). *Mify i obrazy Pervoi mirovoi voiny v anglo-amerikanskoj poezii nachala XX veka* [The myths and images of the First World War in the Anglo-American poetry of the beginning of the 20th century]. In V.A. Gusev (ed.). *Literatura v kontekste kultury* [Literature in the Context of Culture]. Kyiv, Dmytro Burago Publishing House, pp. 211-225.
- Pound, E. (2007). Hugh Selwyn Mauberley. Whitefish, Kessinger Publishing. Available at: <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/23538/pg23538-images.html> (Accessed 29 October 2023).
- Richards, D.A. (2017). Kipling and the Great War Propagandists. *The Kipling Journal*, vol. 91, issue 369, pp. 17-22.
- Seeger, A. (1917). At the Tomb of Napoleon Before the Elections in America – November, 12. In W. Archer (ed.). Seeger, A. Poems. New York, Charles Scribner's Sons Publ., p. 97.
- Shaw, G.B. (1915). Common Sense about the War. *The New York Times. Current History*, vol. I, issue 1, pp. 11-59.
- Strikha, M. (2003). *Uljubleni anglijs'ki virshi na navkolo nyh* [My Beloved English Poems and Around Them]. Kyiv, Fact Publ., 456 p.
- Strikha, M. (2014). *Redjard Kipling i ukrains'ka lateratura* [Rudyard Kipling and the Ukrainian Literature]. *Suchasnyj Kipling – novi aktsentu intepretatsii* [Modern Kipling. New Interpretation Accents]. Ternopil, Navchalna knyga – Bohdan Publ., pp. 18-24.
- Tompkins, J.M.S. (1950). Kipling's Later Tales: The Theme of Healing. *The Modern Language Review*, vol. 45, issue 1, pp. 18-32. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/3719656>
- Tompkins, J.M.S. (1965). The Art of Rudyard Kipling. Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 304 p.
- van Dyke, H. (1917). Mare Liberum. G.H. Clarke (ed.). A Treasury of War Poetry. British and American Poems of the World War 1914-1917. Boston & New York, Houghton Mifflin Company, p. 197.
- Walker, J. (2014). *Redjard Kipling: znajomstvo* [Rudyard Kipling: an Acquaintance]. *Suchasnyj Kipling. Novi aktsinty interpretatsii* [Modern Kipling. New Interpretation Accents]. Ternopil, Navchalna knyga – Bohdan Publ., pp. 7-18.
- Wells, H.G. (1915). The Fourth of August – Europe at War. *The New York Times. Current History*, vol. I, issue 1, pp. 87-89.

Одержано 17.11.2022.