



Mykhailo Kosach
(Mykhailo Obachnyi)

Tvory. Pereklady. Lysty.
Zapysy kobzarskykh dum

[Works. Translations. Letters. Recordings of
Kobzar's Dumas]. Edited by Larysa
Miroshnychenko
Kyiv: Komora, 2017. 592 pp.
In Ukrainian.
ISBN 978-617-7286-26-3

Reviewed by Taras Pastukh

Mykhailo Kosach's (Mykhailo Obachnyi's) book *Tvory. Pereklady. Lysty. Zapysy kobzarskykh dum* (Works. Translations. Letters. Recordings of Kobzar's Dumas) represents the first comprehensive presentation of the biography, creative work, and scientific activity of this understudied figure in Ukrainian culture. The editor, author of the biography, comments and notes, Larysa Miroshnychenko, worked on the book for a long time, which has affected both the breadth and balanced and conscientious presentation of the material. Miroshnychenko is an authoritative textual researcher in Ukraine who has studied Lesia Ukrainka's manuscripts and authored the books *On the Manuscripts of Lesia Ukrainka* and *Lesia Ukrainka: Life and Texts* (both in Ukrainian). Her book on Mykhailo Kosach arose in the context of interest in the texts of Lesia Ukrainka in particular and the Kosach family in general. Mykhailo was the elder brother of Larysa Kosach (Lesia Ukrainka), both children having had a warm family relationship as well as common cultural interests. Thus, presenting Mykhailo Kosach's biography, Miroshnychenko often refers to relevant fragments of the biography and works of his sister as well as to the biographies of other members of the Kosach family. In such parallels and comparisons, the inner motivations of Mykhailo Kosach himself and the general atmosphere of the family in which he grew up become better understood.

The book consists of a detailed biography of Mykhailo Kosach (153 pages); his original literary works, which are impressionistic short stories, and translations (from Greek and Russian into Ukrainian and from Ukrainian into Russian); a large number of letters, the vast majority of which are published for the first time; records of kobzar's dumas; and, finally, the presentation of his scientific activity. In the latter case, Miroshnychenko presents a study made by Volodymyr Shevchuk, PhD in Physical and

Mathematical Sciences, Senior Research Fellow at the Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, on Mykhailo Kosach's research experiments in physics, which he carried out while working at the universities of Dorpat (Tartu, Estonia) and Kharkiv (Ukraine). The composition of the book testifies to the compiler's efforts to present the life as well as literary and scientific achievements of Mykhailo Kosach as widely as possible.

It should be noted that the compiler is well acquainted with the material of the study. Miroshnychenko has carefully processed a large number of documents, memoirs, letters, etc., therefore her judgments and conclusions are marked by accuracy, clarity, and depth. In her detailed biography of Mykhailo Kosach, she uses a contextual presentation of the life and work of the writer and scientist. Thus, his life and creative biography are reconstructed in the dimensions of family, school and student years, and research-teaching activities. Moreover, it is considered in the context of important Ukrainian socio-cultural trends of the second half of the 19th – early 20th centuries. The era was characterized by various aspirations: Ukrainophilism (*ukrainofilstvo*), which showed a more or less hidden opposition to Russian imperial discourse; a positivist belief in the possibility of building the world on a rational basis; aestheticism, which emphasized the impressions and feelings of human beings and claimed the right of art to develop according to its own autonomous rules; the study of the phenomena of electromagnetism, which marked the stage of a transition to new, non-classical physics, based on Einstein's theory of relativity and quantum field theory, etc. It is important that the biography of Mykhailo Kosach is considered in the context of these important trends.

Mykhailo Kosach appears as a physicist, whose interest in the field of electromagnetic interactions kept pace with the latest trends in European science of that time. He was the author of a project that created research tasks for the meteorological service of the Kharkiv region, and also elaborated on the ideas of systemic counteraction to flooding of the Western Buh (Zakhidnyi Buh) and the drainage of swamps in Volyn. It was only his early death at the age of 34 that prevented his creative and scientific potential to unfold. Due to the wide presentation of the cultural discourse of that time, Mykhailo Kosach's biography reflects not only the specific life and creative path of the writer and scientist, but also outlines a certain history of the Ukrainian cultural movements that took place in Kyiv, Dorpat, and Kharkiv. At the same time, Miroshnychenko outlines the individual character of the oldest child in the family of Petro and Olha Kosach. In Miroshnychenko's biographical reconstruction, the "questions of the time" activate certain individual traits of Mykhailo Kosach character, and in turn, these traits contribute to the creation of answers to these questions.

The careful analysis of many sources leads to a situation where in some cases Miroshnychenko clarifies the inaccurate or corrects the erroneous statements of other researchers. Such clarifications are important and necessary components of critical discourse because they eliminate various literary "myths," arbitrary and unfounded statements, and thus contribute to a more accurate and scholarly study of literary phenomena and cultural figures. On the other hand, Miroshnychenko sometimes

provides several visions of one fact, which leads to its diverse understanding. This deepens the representative and analytical intentions of the author's text. Also, a good acquaintance with discourse concerning the Kosach family allows Miroshnychenko to read the subtexts of family correspondence. The researcher reconstructs the unspoken, or what is deliberately concealed, on the basis of other documents, or on the basis of the mental characteristics of the person who wrote the letter, or the person referred to in it.

Overall, *Tvory. Pereklady. Lysty. Zapysy kobzarskykh dum* can serve as an example of a comprehensive representation of Mykhailo Kosach, the writer, scientist, and cultural figure. The book not only introduces Mykhailo Kosach to the reader, but also presents new episodes and nuances of Ukrainian cultural life of the second half of the 19th – early 20th centuries.