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Biographical note

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BETWEEN UKRAINIAN MODERNISM AND SOCIALIST REALISM: AN INTELLECTUAL BIOGRAPHY OF MYKHAILO DRAI-KHMARA (1889–1939)*

Nataliia Vusatiuk

Abstract

The article reconstructs the main periods and facts in the biography of the Ukrainian intellectual Mykhailo Drai-Khmara in the historical and cultural context of the 1910s–1930s, focusing on his poetic, critical, translation-related, and linguistic achievements. Drai-Khmara's poetic activity is analyzed from the perspective of the transformation of his individual style, which went through the stages of symbolism, neoclassicism, and socialist realism. In the field of literary history, Drai-Khmara specialized in Slavic studies, especially Croatian, Polish, Belarusian, and Ukrainian literature of the 18th–20th centuries. The scholar made a major contribution to the development of national comparative studies by analyzing works of the Ukrainian writers in the context of European literatures. The posthumous promotion and reception of his heritage in the United States of America and Europe are also described. This article provides special information on Drai-Khmara's connections to Romania, including his travel in 1913, the poem "Constanța" dedicated to it, and also the reception of his work in Romania.

Keywords: intellectual biography, Ukrainian modernism, Kyiv Neoclassicists, symbolism, socialist realism

1. Introduction

Mykhailo Drai-Khmara was a key figure in Ukrainian Slavic studies and one of the representatives of Ukrainian modernism in the 1920s. "An

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extraordinarily gifted person who rose from humble origins to a prominent position among Ukraine's intellectual elite of his era, Drai-Khmara through his life and career offers a fascinating and informative insight into Ukrainian cultural life of the early Soviet period and of Soviet cultural politics more broadly," stated Vitaly Chernetsky (2005, 25). Being a "polyhistor", a very educated man of the time, Drai-Khmara embraced a wide range of activities and interests including poetry, literary criticism, linguistics, Slavic history, journalism, writing librettos for operas and ballets, and translation. He taught at different educational and scientific institutions in Ukraine. In the 1920s and 1930s, he was a member of one of the most influential literary groups, the Kyiv Neoclassicists. Despite a fairly extensive literature on the Kyiv Neoclassicists, Drai-Khmara remains perhaps the most underestimated among the members of that formation, remaining in the shadow of Mykola Zerov and Maksym Rylskyi. To this day, there is no scholarly biography of Drai-Khmara. So far, the main sources of information about the writer's life have been articles and books of his daughter and researcher of his work Oksana Asher (Asher, 1959; Asher, 1975; Dray-Khmara Asher, 1983). Although several of Drai-Khmara's autobiographies, his diaries and part of his correspondence, as well as the NKVD archival file (Chernetsky, 2005) have been published, Drai-Khmara's biography still contains many gaps, and a lot of facts need to be verified.

The editions of Drai-Khmara's poetic and scholarly texts that have been published so far (Drai-Khmara, 1979, 2002, 2015) often require additional commentary and appropriate contextualization. The PhD dissertations defended in Ukraine by Oleh Tomchuk (Tomchuk, 2002) and Inna Rodionova (Rodionova, 2004), which focus on the "aesthetic system" and "stylistic dominants" of Drai-Khmara`s poetry, failed to analyze the history of the creation of his texts, their contexts, and intertextual connections with Ukrainian and other Slavic literatures. The recent popular biography of Drai-Khmara by Rostyslav Kolomiiets (Kolomiiets, 2022) does not meet any scientific requirements, as it is full of factual errors and conjecture.

A synthetic study of Mykhailo Drai-Khmara's biography and creative work against the background of the Ukrainian cultural process of the 1920s and 1930s involves, first of all, a careful contextual analysis of the circle of Kyiv Neoclassicists to which he belonged. To establish the unknown facts of the biography and reconstruct the chronology of his life, the source study approach will be used, and the textual approach is applied to the

analysis of certain poems. The method of discourse analysis is needed to characterize the response of contemporaries to Drai-Khmara's work.

In my research, I follow the definition of intellectual biography proposed by Paul Korshin: "the term intellectual biography describes a certain style of inquiry or a quality of biographical analysis. The intellectual biographer is like the intellectual historian, but he focuses on the history of an individual's mind, thoughts, and ideas as a means toward illuminating the subject's life, personality, and character" (Korshin, 1974, 514). For biographers creating this type of narrative, it is important to convey the "intellectual milieu" of the hero (Korshin, 1974, 515). Fulfilling also the role of prosopographer, the biographer is asked to deploy "the comparative method of group biography to set off particular characteristics of his subject" (Korshin1974, 514). The last principle is important in the case of Drai-Khmara to understand his correlation, worldview and poetic coherence, or, on the contrary, his divergence from the literary group of Kyiv Neoclassicists to which he belonged.

My research, which does not claim to be exhaustive due to text limits, will include certain aspects of the four types of biography, according to Donald Walker, which form the model of intellectual biography, namely: "1) *personal biography* (information about the time and place of birth, education, family background and influences, character features and personal life of the scientist); 2) *professional* biography (position of the scientist in academic and other circles, his professional activities and relations within the scientific community); 3) *bibliographic* biography (analysis of the author's works, history of their creation, source base, research techniques and methodology, conceptual apparatus and interdisciplinary connections); 4) *situational* biography, or *biography of the milieu* (events and conditions of socio-economic and political life and epoch in which the scholar lived and worked)" (Popova, 2007, 544).

What historical events are important to record in a biography? According to Adolf Demchenko, "the material selection criteria is determined by the fact that a certain historical fact (event) is experienced by a certain personality", that is, "the center of attention should be not in the external events of the artist's life itself, but in the way they are reflected on his personality, what thoughts, dreams and experiences caused in him" (Demchenko, 2014, 57).

An intellectual biography can by no means be limited to a chronological presentation of facts from the protagonist's life. In the case of Drai-Khmara, there is a temptation to go into a list of small details and episodes of his

life, since there is still no detailed chronology of his life, and most of the facts recorded in archival sources are still unknown to the researchers. As for Drai-Khmara's ego-documents, the few autobiographies that have been found represent very concise official versions of his life record. His diary describes in detail only a short period of his life, 1924–1928. Therefore, reconstructing the sequence of events in his professional and personal life is one of the most urgent tasks for Ukrainian bibliographers.

My research paper is based on sources from several Ukrainian archives: The Department of Manuscripts and Textual Studies of the Shevchenko Institute of Literature of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, the Central State Archive of Supreme Bodies of Power and Government of Ukraine, and the Central State Archive of Public Organizations and Ukrainica. The main core consists of documents from the personal archives of Mykhailo Drai-Khmara and his daughter Oksana Asher, which were transferred from New York to the Shevchenko Institute of Literature of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine in 1989 and the early 1990s, and just recently in 2023. The available ego-documents of Drai-Khmara (diaries, notebooks, letters, questionnaires, CVs) reveal how he perceived the Ukrainian revolution 1917–1921, the 'Ukrainization' campaign etc., and also illuminate his own emotional and intellectual life, provide testimonies of the development of his poetic creativity and self-identification. Biographical information is provided also in two NKVD files of the protagonist of my research. Some important translations from the poetry by Mykhailo-Drai-Khmara into Romanian are kept in Orest Masichievici's personal archive at the Bucharest branch of the Union of Ukrainians of Romania.

2. Years of growth

Mykhailo Drai was born on October 10, 1889, into a Ukrainian-speaking peasant family with Cossack roots in the village of Mali Kanivtsi, Zolotonosha district, Poltava region (now Cherkasy region) (Extract from the metric book, 1889, f. 1r). His father was educated and worked as a scribe for some time. At the age of five, Mykhailo lost his mother, who died of typhus. He received his primary education at a school in Zolotonosha, then at the Cherkasy Gymnasium. While studying at the gymnasium, he was fond of reading Mayne Reed, Walter Scott, and Alexandre Dumas (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 463).

From 1906 to 1910, he studied at the Pavlo Galagan Collegium in Kyiv which was a prestigious private gymnasium that existed at the expense of the wealthy landowner and philanthropist Hryhorii Galagan, who founded the collegium in memory of his dead son. Talented children from poor families who did well in entrance exams in Russian, Latin, mathematics, French, and German were able to study for free. For children from poor families, it was a social elevator. A number of future prominent scholars and cultural figures graduated from the college. The language of education was Russian. At the Pavlo Galagan Collegium, under the influence of his Russian literature teacher, Drai began writing his first poems in Russian and started literary research, which were published in the Collegium Yearbook. His classmate was Pavlo Fylypovych, another future neoclassic poet.

From 1910 to 1915, Drai studied Slavistics at the Faculty of History and Philology at Kyiv University. In the summer of 1913, Drai went on a research trip abroad, collecting material for his thesis on the Croatian literature of the 18th century, entitled *Poetic work by Andrija Kačić Miošić "Sincere Conversation of the Slavic People",* in the libraries and archives of Lviv, Budapest, Zagreb, Belgrade, and Bucharest. The research paper completed under the supervision of Oleksandr Lukianenko, a specialist in comparative linguistics, was awarded a gold medal. Drai-Khmara also participated in the famous seminar on Russian philology led by Vladimir Peretz, well-known for his works on literary theory and studies of ancient Ukrainian medieval literature. Peretz, who was the founder of the so-called philological school, engaged in textual studies, was the first at the university to proclaim the importance of analyzing not only the content of a literary work but also its form. Peretz regarded Drai-Khmara as one of his followers (Peretts, 1922, 3). Awareness of Slavic studies, history, careful research of sources, maximum coverage of data, empiricism, conciseness, presentation of the history of the issue, accurate citation of documents, distinction between reliable and questionable research results, and evidence-based presentation – these are all general scientific principles of Peretz, which Drai followed in his research.

Mykhailo Drai was selected to continue at the university in preparation for a professorship. But due to Kyiv University's evacuation with the outbreak of World War I, he was transferred to St. Petersburg where he worked under the supervision of several local academics: Aleksey Shakhmatov, Jan Baudouin de Courtenay, Lev Shcherba, Petr Lavrov, studying the Kashubian language and Resian dialects. He also attended lectures by the Serbian linguist Aleksandar Belić and participated in the

Balkan Studies research group at the University. In the city, now called St. Petersburg, he met the Russian poets Osip Mandelstam and Alexander Blok, whose poetry he admired (Asher, 2002, 24).

According to Drai-Khmara's daughter Oksana Asher, he self-identified as a Ukrainian while studying in Petrograd:

> "In the Russian northern city, he felt like a Ukrainian and told his wife that, having embarked on this path, he would rather die than leave it. How prophetic these words were! The events of 1915–1917, the influence of that time, and meetings with interesting people made a strong impression on my father and remained in his memory for a long time. The Ukrainization of Drai-Khmara, under the influence of Vsevolod Hantsov and M. Kushnir, was an important and great event for him, which made a complete revolution in his mind. In Petrograd, he participated in an association of Ukrainian students and attended lectures on Ukrainian history. […] My father began to think and live in a new way" (Asher, 2002, 25–26).

Drai-Khmara's daughter noted two politically active Ukrainian students at St. Petersburg University: Vsevolod Hantsov, who later became a famous linguist and lexicographer and was repressed by the Soviet authorities, and Makar Kushnir, later a journalist and member of the Ukrainian parliament of the Ukrainian Central Rada.

The story of Mykhailo's change of surname is significant for understanding the path of his national self-awareness. Oksana Asher explained that her father augmented his real surname at birth, Drai, which sounded German, although it was a typical Ukrainian Cossack surname, in 1915 due to anti-German moods that prevailed in Petrograd at the outbreak of World War I (Asher, 2002, 26). There were indeed grounds for concern: subjects of German origin were interned in northern Russia, *e.g.*, the German-born student of Kyiv University and future Neoclassicist Oswald Burghardt, the Ukrainian art historian of German origin Fedor Ernst and his brother, the historian and archaeologist Mykola Ernst.

From September 1915, the documents recorded the surname Drai-Khmarov (University Rector, 1915), which means that the surname was Russified: the particle Khmarov was added to the real surname with the patronymic Russian suffix "-ov." On July 4th, 1916, Mykhailo received permission from the Russian Emperor's office to change his surname to Khmarov (Imperial Majesty's Office, 1916). During 1918–1919, Mykhailo signed as Drai-Khmarov. And finally, in 1920, in Kamianets-Podilskyi,

probably under the influence of the national milieu, he Ukrainized his surname: from now on it became Drai-Khmara[1] (Personal card, 1920).

What was Drai-Khmara's perception of the February 1917 Revolution in Russia, which destroyed the Russian monarchy? According to Oksana Asher,

> "Mykhailo Panasovych perceived the Revolution as a national and social liberation. The violence and cruelty with which the revolutionaries came to power were painful for the poet's gentle nature, but he perceived it as a transient phenomenon. Because of his democratic views, Drai-Khmara could not become a communist, but he was not against the revolution and even welcomed it. But his idealistic illusions later cost him his life" (Asher, 2002, 19).

The fact that Drai-Khmara, in a romantic impulse, welcomed the revolution, or at least watched it fascinated, is also evidenced by his poems "Under the Blue of Spring …" and "The Sacred Oriflames Burn …", which he included in the collection *Young Shoots* (Drai-Khmara, 1926, 11). His daughter, when compiling her father's collection of poems in New York (Drai-Khmara, 1964), did not include these poems, being probably afraid to damage her father's reputation as an opponent of the Soviet regime with these texts that welcomed the revolution.

3. The Kamianets-Podilskyi period

Having returned to Ukraine in 1917, Drai-Khmara lectured on Ukrainian literature at teacher training courses in various towns of Podolia. In October 1918 he accepted an invitation to become a faculty member and lecturer in Slavistics at the newly founded Kamianets-Podilskyi University in southwestern Ukraine. Here he taught the histories of Polish, Czech, Serbian and Bulgarian languages and literatures, the Old Slavonic language, and the history of Ukrainian language. He published a unique book of his lectures on Slavic studies, recorded by his students ([Drai-Khmara], 1920).

Not much is known about Drai-Khmara's political views during the Kamianets-Podilskyi period. In 1918 he was the secretary of the Ukrainian Party of Socialist-Federalists in Kamianets-Podilskyi (*Z universytetskoho zhyttia*, 1918). In a local newspaper, he published an article titled

"Slavic Tragedy," in which he argued for the need for Slavic peoples to unite in the face of the German threat (Drai, 1918; Drai, 1919a; Drai, 1919b). Elements of anti-German propaganda and Slavophilism could be perceived as a legacy of Russian imperial propaganda in the context of the First World War. In addition, anti-German sentiments were shared by a part of Ukrainian society that did not like the fact that Hetman Pavlo Skoropadskyi was totally dependent on German support during his period of rule from April to November 1918[2]. It is curious that already in the 1990s a legend was spread around Mykhailo Drai-Khmara that he was a leader of a partisan unit that fought against the Bolsheviks during the Kamianets-Podilskyi period of his life (Zapadniuk, 1997).

Drai-Khmara had a conflict with the rector of the university, Ivan Ohienko, who was also the minister of education in the Ukrainian Peoples Republic government of Symon Petliura. Years later, during an interrogation, Drai-Khmara testified:

> "I took the position that was supported by the majority of scholars of the time, namely that science is an apolitical thing. The fact that Rector Ohienko was also a minister could not but affect the fate of Kamianets University, because in Kamianets the authorities changed no less than 2–3 times during the year. In view of this and wishing to preserve the University as one of the centers of Ukrainian culture, I spoke out in the press against Ohienko" (Investigation file of Mykhailo Drai-Khmara, 1933, ff. 8a–8r).

Drai-Khmara gave an interview to a local newspaper in which he complained that the rector often left the university unattended, traveling to other cities and abroad, the faculty was not replenished, and the university publishing house did not work well (Zavalniuk, 2009, 5).

The Ukrainian government, which had been forced out of Kyiv by the Bolsheviks, moved to Kamianets-Podilskyi, as well as a large number of intellectuals who supported it. Petliura's government ruled in the city in 1919–1920, but in the autumn of 1920 the Soviet power took over and finally established itself. As Drai-Khmara's wife Nina recalled many years later, most of the intellectuals who had worked in Kamianets-Podilskyi at the time were later persecuted by the Soviet authorities: "you became stigmatized by the simple fact that you were a member of the Ukrainian Kamianets-Podilskyi University, and the Bolsheviks were killing those people, not only non-partisans but also communists […]" (Drai-Khmara, undated, f. 7r).

4. The Kyiv Neoclassicists

In 1923, Drai-Khmara moved to Kyiv and plunged into the literary and scientific life which was gaining momentum. The period of the 1920s and 1930s in Ukrainian culture, when Drai-Khmara's literary and research activities were intense, is in retrospect called the "Executed Renaissance,"[3] "Red Renaissance,"[4] or "Our 1920s." The incredible growth of various branches of Ukrainian culture was due to the recent national uprising of 1917–1921 and stimulated by the Bolshevik policy of Ukrainization in the 1920s, which consisted of increasing the use and facilitating the development of the Ukrainian language, along with promoting other elements of Ukrainian culture in various spheres of public life such as education and publishing. The Executed Renaissance was characterized by the emergence of many different modernist and avantgarde literary trends (symbolism, neorealism, neo-romanticism, futurism, neoclassicism, etc.) and literary organizations discussing and competing with each other.

The period of Ukrainization ended with the period of mass Stalinist terror in the 1930s, which targeted various segments of the population, including writers. There is no exact number of repressed cultural figures and writers. According to one statistic, 259 Ukrainian writers were published in 1930, and only 36 of them were published after 1938. Of the 223 Ukrainian writers who disappeared in the USSR, 17 were shot, 8 committed suicide, 175 were arrested and sent to camps (including those who were shot and died in concentration camps), 16 went missing, and 7 died of natural causes (Lavrinenko, 1959, 12). According to another statistic, one of the biographical reference books in 1928 includes information on more than 900 writers. Twenty years later, only 51 of these were specified in the *Slovnyk ukrainskoi literatury* (Luckyj, 1990, 228).

Having moved to Kyiv, Mykhailo Drai-Khmara joined the literary organization ASPYS (1923–1924) in which the renowned scholar and critic Mykola Zerov set the tone and to which, among others, belonged also the writers and translators Oswald Burghardt and Pavlo Fylypovych (Investigation file of Mykhailo Drai-Khmara, 1933, f. 20a). After the breakup of ASPYS, the "Kyiv Neoclassicists" emerged as a separate group. It was an informal alliance of poets, writers, translators, linguists, and literary scholars, that existed until the second half of the 1930s, when some of the members were persecuted by the Soviet regime. The core of the group consisted of five poets: the leader Mykola Zerov, Maksym Rylskyi, Pavlo Fylypovych, Oswald Burghardt, and Mykhailo Drai-Khmara. The

name "Kyiv Neoclassicists" was created by their opponents, but later the members of the group began to use it as a self-name. In his famous sonnet "Swans" (1928), Drai-Khmara called his fellow poets a "Fivefold Cluster" or "Cluster of Five". To be precise, the English translation does not quite capture the essence of the image, while the author talked about a bunch of grapes with five berries. That is, each grape berry represents one poet.

The Neoclassicists opposed several trends in Ukrainian literature at the same time: proletarian literature, the avant-garde, symbolism, romanticism-populist and realistic literature of the 19th century (Zerov, 2003, 355–356, 540). For Marxist critics and proletarian writers, the Neoclassicists were members of an intelligentsia that had been formed in the pre-revolutionary period, that is, an ideologically and socially hostile group.

In the 1920s, Mykola Zerov proclaimed the motto "Ad fontes" which meant "back to the sources" of the Ukrainian literature and European literatures without Russian intermediary. Zerov's order was to some extent similar to the famous cry of the Italian Renaissance of the 15th and 16th centuries to go back to antique (Roman, Greek) sources. The cluster orientated itself artistically towards the European tradition and devoted itself to researching and translating texts into Ukrainian. They believed that such efforts could save Ukrainian literature from the regionalism and provincialism that threatened it.

The Neoclassicists called Greco-Roman antiquity, French Parnassianism, the Pushkin Pleiad of the "Golden Age," Russian Symbolists and Acmeists, and several Ukrainian intellectual writers of the 19th century their teachers and predecessors. They were particularly close the Polish Scamander group, Paul Valery, Thomas Stearns Eliot, and in some way, Rainer Maria Rilke.

A characteristic feature of the Kyiv Neoclassicists as a literary group was their respect for tradition. Fulfilling the mission of cultural traders in the Ukrainian literary process of the first third of 20th century, the Neoclassicists opposed the hermeticism of proletarian art (Kravchenko, 1991, 207) with their own openness to the achievements of world culture. Aestheticizing the past, as literary scholars and translators, they interpreted historically and geographically distant texts. Among the various ancient periods, the priority belonged to Greco-Roman antiquity. Zerov translated Virgil's *Aeneid*, Burghardt transferred *The Song of the Nibelungs* into Ukrainian, studied *Beowulf* and *The Poetic Edda*, while Rylskyi was interested in medieval troubadour lyrics. The neoclassical writers' attraction to literatures distant in time and space was part of

their identity as creators of the "high" canon, characterized by distance from the practical, which can take the form of historical remoteness (Yampolskiy, 1998). However, the neoclassical writers were sensitive to new developments in literature, especially modernism in its various national variants. For example, they prepared an anthology of translations of French poetry of the late 19th and early 20th centuries into Ukrainian and published an anthology of Russian poetry. The European avant-garde, German Expressionism *e.g.*, was not rejected either.

The Neoclassicists were elite intellectuals who created refined poetry that was at dissonance with Soviet mass literature. The neoclassical poetry was urban, in contrast to the romantic poetry that glorified the countryside and nature. In this respect however, Drai-Khmara was an exception: his verses contain a lot of observation and feelings about nature and village life.

All the Neoclassicists were philologists and taught at universities. They represented a new type of poet: the scholar-poet, the archivist-poet. They created "literature on the basis of literature" which means that their texts were rich in allusions, reminiscences, plots, and images from antique literature and different European literatures. Accordingly, the Neoclassicists' works required an educated, intellectual reader who could decode their texts. The Kyiv Neoclassicists cultivated traditional refined poetic forms such as the sonnet, rondelles, octaves, etc. They stood for literature with high artistic ambition; they encouraged writers to study, improve their skills, and polish the form of their poetry.

Researchers usually consider Kyivan neoclassicism as one of many stylistic trends of Ukrainian modernism, as a special project within the 20th-century Ukrainian literature – "conservative modernization" (Pavlychko, 1999, 191) or "conservative modernism" (Babak & Dmitriev, 2021, 338). As for the place of neoclassicism in the system of modernism, scholars differ: some researchers note the weak integration of Ukrainian neoclassicism with modernism and deeper ties with traditional classical literature (Nalyvaiko, 2006, 328), while others characterize the work of Neoclassicists in grafting ancient forms and styles on the tree of national literature as "pure" modernism (Morenets, 2002, 228). However, most researchers agree that the Neoclassicists were "archaic innovators" for whom "the path to the real *future* was only through the *past*" (Yermolenko, 2011, 14). On the one hand, they relied on an ancient literary tradition, and on the other hand, they modernized Ukrainian literature by introducing unusual poetic sizes, themes, and images.

5. Drai-Khmara's poetic transformation

Drai-Khmara's first published poem was in Russian in 1911. Nine years later, his first poetry cycle "Young Spring" was printed in Ukrainian. During his lifetime, he managed to release only one collection of Ukrainian poetry, entitled *Prorosten [Young Shoots]* (1926). His other collections *Dewy Fields* (1924), *The Iron Horizon* (1929), and *Sunny Marches* (1935) were never published.

The collection *Young Shoots* included poems of the pre-neoclassical period. Drai-Khmara's musically sounding verse, flickering of senses, emotionality, and sensitivity connect him with the Symbolist school. In one of the program poems, the author speaks about his impressionistic perception of the world:

My eyes embrace the world around me,
For lines and tones enchant my sight –
The strong sun's ploughshares deeply furrow
My fallow land with blades of light.

(Translated by Oksana Asher, 1959, 29)

Drai-Khmara's poetic language, as well as the title of the collection *Prorosten*, has its own peculiarity: it is full of rarely used, outdated words and sometimes the author's neologisms. Drai-Khmara admitted:

I cherish words vast and full sounding,
Like honey scented, flushed with wine;
Old words, that in lost depths abounding
Were sought through ages mute in vain.

(Translated by Oksana Asher, 1959, 32)

On the one hand, it is a kind of phonetic poetry, aimed at expressing the musicality of the word which is in line with symbolism. On the other hand, Drai-Khmara's renaming familiar things around him with new words is a kind of de-automation of the reader's perception and is very similar to Russian adamism as a part of acmeism which stood for a "primordial" view on the world, the "semantic rediscovery" of things, and the restoration of the adequacy of words and things (Kikhnei, 2005, 41):

Once again like the first man
I've given all the creatures names;
I've called the stars my sisters,
And the moon my brother.

(Translated by Michael M. Naydan)[5]

The Neoclassicists Oswald Burghardt and Maksym Rylskyi welcomed their colleague's lexical "collection" of rare, non-banal words, even though it semantically complicated and opaqued the text (Klen, 1943, 187; Rylskyi, 1986, 24).

Did Drai-Khmara, who was counted as one of the Kyiv Neoclassicists, actually produce neoclassical poetry? His carefully constructed phraseology and polished words, in complete harmony with the form of the poem, historical portraits of cities, which he loved – all these features of his poetry written in the 1930s lead us to see in him a Neoclassicist.

Recognizing common ideological and aesthetic principles, even if they were very generally and vaguely formulated, the Kyiv Neoclassicists themselves repeatedly doubted that there was unity among them at the level of style. "Although I came out of neoclassicism," explained Neoclassicist Oswald Burghardt, "I was not and am not a Neoclassicist. I am more of a neo-romanticist, just like Rylskyi. But can Fylypovych and Drai-Khmara be called pure Neoclassicists?" (Nyzhankivskyi, 1946, 3). Burghardt remarked in Drai-Khmara's individual style "a wavering between symbolism and acmeism, between acmeism and expressionism" (O. B., 1926, 262). Drai-Khmara testified that while the Neoclassicists Zerov and Rylskyi cultivated the classical style, he felt to be a symbolist for a long time, admiring the Russian symbolist Alexander Blok and the Ukrainian symbolist Pavlo Tychyna (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 496).

Drai-Khmara seemed to be at a crossroads of different literary movements. His poetry is a fertile field for literary critics to debate what his style was. Impressionistic landscape sketches, terrifying surrealistic dreams, and bizarre imaginist mix of images are found combined in his poetical texts.

In his diary, Drai-Khmara wrote about himself: "I have not grown into my epoch" (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 339), meaning that his detachment from the contemporary moment was caused by long years of studying at the gymnasium, college, and university, "wandering in the fog of archaic philology." In the second half of the 1920s, his worldview began to change as he worked on upgrading himself and "growing into the epoch". Like his colleagues Rylskyi and Burghardt he could not completely escape the dominant Soviet trend in his poetic work. His turning to socialist realism was not sudden. "In that fifth hungry spring I fell in love…" (1924), a symbolic poem with sophisticated imagery which was to be included in the unpublished collection *Dewy Fields*, was interpreted by the writer Mykola Khvylovyi as a poet's confession that for five years he had not

understood the Bolshevik revolution, and only after accepting it his poems were "imbued with a vigorous faith in a new day" (Dziuba, 1989, 32):

In that fifth hungry spring I fell in love
With you, into the depth and highs above.
And I was blessing that cursed path of mine
Flooded by darkened crimson wine.
(Translated by Iryna Dybko, 1990, 2).

The collection *Young Shoots* (1926) ends with the poem "To the Village" (1925), in which the hero, who has lost his way in a snowstorm while searching for a village suffering from "wars, famine, pestilence," is shown "Lenin with a clear forehead" who pointed him the way. The reference to the communist leader from whom salvation comes is a mandatory initiation, a "ritual of communion with Lenin" that legitimizes the author's right to be a Soviet writer (Kharkhun, 2009, 210, 212). In a collection of her father's poems, Oksana Asher just dropped the lines about Lenin from the poem (Drai-Khmara, 1964, 70–71), apparently not wanting to "tarnish" his image.

Between 1922–1927, Drai-Khmara wrote the poem "The Turn," but on Mykola Zerov's advice, he decided not to publish it because it was "too abstract and minor" (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 389) and the authorities requested the optimistic mood of contemporary literature. In a metaphorical manner, the author described his psychological problems with the perception of the bloody revolution and the cruel historical reality. The poet's difficult psychological state is evident from the very first lines:

No flood of sadness ever
Did totally surround
As on this day,
Nor did I search so far and keenly,
With anxious
And impassioned
vision
Into the sapphire misty shore
Of dreaming shadows.
(Translated by Oksana Asher, 1959, 33)

The poem "Take the Strict and Clear Path …" opened the unpublished collection *The Iron Horizon*, compiled around 1929, which, according to Drai-Khmara, "contained many revolutionary poems" and testified to his "moving towards Soviet life" (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 520)[6]. The poem

used the quasi-avant-garde motif of calling for the deconstruction of the old world (Bondar, 1998, 61) typical of socialist realism: "Break the centuries-old rock of tradition, shake off the ashes of an unwilling life."

Paradoxically, in the early 1930s, Drai-Khmara was moving in two directions at the same time: in some poems he was trying to "modernize" himself in accordance with the requirements of the Communist party, while in his other poems neoclassical tendencies became very clear. The poet increasingly turns to the sonnet genre and raised historiosophical topics typical of his colleagues in the cluster of five. The writer's concept of the word changes and rationalism overcame the emotionality. If in his earlier poetry Baudelaire's synesthesia and Verlaine's musicality dominated, in the 1930s the acmeist image of the word-stone appeared. The word becomes materialized, tangible, and the writer is likened to a miner searching for minerals or a jeweler polishing precious gems. A dozen of his poetical texts written on a vacation in Sochi in 1930 are neoclassical.

6. Socialist realist poetry collection

In the late 1920s, mass arrests of Ukrainian intellectuals organized by the Soviet authorities began to take place. Kyiv Neoclassicist Maksym Rylskyi was imprisoned for several months in 1931. In the same year, another Neoclassicist, Oswald Burghardt, emigrated to Germany, feeling the threat of repression. In February 1933, Mykhailo Drai-Khmara was arrested on accusations of belonging to a counter-revolutionary organization, but due to lack of evidence he was released (Investigation file, 1933). After a three-month imprisonment, in the years 1933–1935 Drai-Khmara compiled a collection *Sunny Marches*, which was supposed to demonstrate his ideological rebirth to the authorities. The title of the collection strangely resonated with the exquisite poetry collection of the most famous Ukrainian symbolist poet Pavlo Tychyna, *Sunny Clarinets* (1918), whom Drai-Khmara greatly respected and to whom he dedicated his poem "To the Poet". However, while Tychyna's early collection was full of subtle musical polyphony, Drai-Khmara's collection sounded unambiguously political fanfare whose forced optimistic mood becomes especially apparent when comparing the texts of this collection with the earlier ones.

The collection contained a symbolic program poem, a self-confession entitled "Second Birth" (1935). During his second imprisonment, being

interrogated, the poet wrote a statement, that is a specific source in terms of the veracity of the information provided in it: "My rebirth. From 1929 to 1933 I perceived Soviet life with my mind. In 1933–35, I perceived it with both my mind and feeling. I was reborn in my work. Every new work I wrote was a victory over the old worldview. The book *Sunny Marches*, finalized by August 1935, is a document testifying that I accepted the Soviet life completely, and totally" (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 521). About the impetus for his rebirth, he wrote:

> "Although I saw only the Dneprostroy, the mines and metallurgical plants of Donbas, it was enough to realize how amazingly fast the face of our land was changing under the pressure of the Bolshevik will. The successes of socialist development, the abundance of products in the country and the military might of the state convinced me of the final and irrevocable victory of the proletarian revolution. I began to write poetry in the manner of socialist realism under the influence of all these things" (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 525).

Drai-Khmara's shift to socialist realism was his conscious choice after his arrest and a series of demonstrative trials of well-known Ukrainian intellectuals. It was an attempt to deceive himself and the system. Fact is that after the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934 and the founding of the Union of Soviet Writers of the USSR, socialist realism was proclaimed the main current of Soviet literature and literary criticism. The other style trends were supplanted, their representatives were devastatingly criticized, which turned into political accusations. Writers who decided to adapt to the requirements of the new style and communist ideology, such as Maksym Rylskyi or Drai-Khmara, experienced a "breaking point" in their literary careers and personal drama (Bondar, 1998).

Socialist realism is often seen as a "a specific variant of the global modernist culture of its time" (Groys, 2000, 109). Eclectic in nature, socialist realism parasitizes on other styles (Boym, 2000, 98), incorporating realism, classicism, avant-garde, etc. The "outer shell" of socialist realism was derived from realism (economic determinism, schematism in poetry, tendency to be educational, excessive typification of characters), while "internally" it is consonant with "the most radical kind of romance that grows out of a voluntaristic worldview" (Pakharenko, 2009, 256). From romanticism, social realism borrows the struggle of the new (progressive) with the old (backward) (Boym, 2000, 98). On the other

hand, "the political power appropriated and adapted the imagination of the revolutionary avantgarde" to construct social realism (Gutkin, 1999, 151). Monumentality and heroism with the type of hero who sets his public duty above his individual interests, were adopted from classicism.

With such a "diversity" and multi-component nature of socialist realism, it was difficult for critics to determine which literary text met the requirements of the "modern socialist day" and which contained "remnants of the past." Maksym Rylskyi, the former Neoclassicist colleague who had already made his transition to a politically acceptable poet, reviewed Drai-Khamara's manuscript of *Sunny Marches*: "The book was written by a master. This can be seen from the richness of its language, from the rhythms, rhymes, from the choice of images. Thematically, the book reflects the spirit of our day: the poet is in love with struggle and the process of building, which is so characteristic of our time" (Asher, 1959, 40). The review was not entirely complimentary, as Rylskyi criticized some aspects: "Doubts arise enveloped in symbols in "Second Birth." It is probably the author's confession, his renouncement of the old poetical creation and the blessing of the new poetical development; but all this is written in such misty words and images that I am wondering if it does reach the aim which the author would like to achieve" (Asher, 1959, 43). The reviewer nevertheless concluded that Drai-Khmara's collection was worthy of publication (Rylskyi, 1935, f. 2r). However, on January 29, 1935, the Khudozhna Literatura Publishers refused to print the book without explaining the reason (Khudozhnia Literatura Publishers, 1935, 1).

Sunny Marches was supposed to begin with the same-named poem, initially titled "March of the First Cavalry" (Drai-Khmara, 1922–1935, 432), containing a glorification of Stalin, and to end with the poem "Lenin's Funeral" (Drai-Khmara, ca. 1935). Drai-Khmara contributed to the creation of a pantheon of Soviet heroes by writing portraits of the Austrian socialist Koloman Wallisch, Bolshevik field commander Vasyl Bozhenko, and Soviet polar pilot-hero Sigismund Levanevsky. He praised industrialization in his poems "Donbas" and "On Khortytsia," urbanism and collectivism in "Socialist City." In the poem "October", the Soviet state is presented as a Bolshevik ship that overcomes obstacles and sails into a glorious future (Drai-Khmara, 1934).

Oksana Asher wrote about her father's attempts to adapt to Soviet conditions: "Even on the eve of his arrest, Dray-Khmara believed it possible for him to be rehabilitated in the eyes of the Soviet government. Although he was never a communist sympathizer, he did not feel himself actively

a counter-revolutionist; and if his poetry expressed ideas that were in disharmony with officially approved opinions, he still felt he had made definite efforts to remain an acceptable member of the existing society, in which it was his lot to live" (Asher, 1959, 42). Asher considered her father's attempts to write "modern" poetry unsuccessful because he could not abandon the aesthetics and "write pure propaganda" (Asher, 1959, 42).

To be precise, Drai-Khmara's post-neoclassical collection was not purely social realist, the utilitarian function did not completely replace the aesthetic one in his texts, and public discourse did not fully remove private discourse (Bondar, 1998, 62). The last collection included several clearly localized biographical "Kyiv" texts of the "old" neoclassical type, for example, "Winter's Tale" and "Symphony". The poem "Thomas More" is a typical neoclassical example of 'literature based on literature', taking the famous "Utopia" as a starting point.

7. The Romanian topic in the travel poem "Constanța"

Drai-Khamara's collection *Sunny Marches* includes a poem entitled "Constanța", one of the last works written by Drai-Khmara in freedom, a week before his second arrest[7]. It is an autobiographical unrhymed poetic text in the genre of travel notes, but written in iambic pentameter. The author retrospectively describes his research trip from Zagreb to Romania in the summer of 1913 during which he collected materials for his graduation thesis on the 18th-century Croatian writer Andrija Kačić Miošić. The author traveled along the Danube from Beograd to Orșova, then by train to Bucharest and Constanța, where he had had to wait for a ship to Odesa for a week. Not having caught the ship to Odesa, he took a train to Galați where he crossed the Danube and ended up in Reni.

This is perhaps the first time that Constanța, the prominent harbour city known as Tomis in Greco-Roman antiquity, figures in Ukrainian literature. The author describes his stay in the city and everyday life in more detail: how he buys coffee "thick and black as pitch", with a glass of water that costed "cinci bani". He uses some Romanian words to express the local environment. When he feels very sad and lonely, he visits Ovid's monument. In Constanța, the poet also met a sailor from Russia who participated in the uprising on the Potemkin ship. The sailor's story is a separate insert in the narrative. The story turned to ideological themes, condemning the Russian Empire as "the country of slavery and

wild tyranny" which is quite expected, since the poem was intended for a socialist realist collection.

8. Translations and literary studies

Translation was a part of the neoclassical aesthetic program, because it enriched the recipient literature, providing it with forms and styles that it may not have had of its own. Globally, from the point of view of the Ukrainian culture, Ukrainian translations had a "nation-building essence" (Strikha, 2020, 248). During the period of the Executed Renaissance, Ukrainian translations were actively used by Ukrainian readers and "became another argument for their consumers in favor of the completeness of the Ukrainian literature and the Ukrainian nation" (Strikha, 2020, 249).

Drai-Khmara was a polyglot, like his other Kyiv colleagues, mastering nineteen languages – Ukrainian, Russian, Belarusian, Polish, Kashubian, Romanian, Czech, Serbian, Croatian, Bulgarian, Old Slavonic, Ancient Greek, Latin, Sanskrit, French, German, Italian, Finnish, English. Most of his translations were not published during his lifetime, and several dozens of them still remain only in manuscript.

Drai-Khmara's translations of French poetry are the most numerous. For the anthology of new French poetry, which was compiled by Kyiv Neoclassicists in the 1930s and was never published, he translated Leconte de Lisle, Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Verlaine, etc. Moreover, he translated the runes of the Finnish epic poem Kalevala and Dante's *Divine Comedy*.

In literary studies, Drai-Khmara focused on the history of literature, rarely acting as a critic and conducting mostly academic research of literary phenomena remote in time. Each of the Kyiv Neoclassicists worked on his own favorite field. Oswald Burghardt, for example, specialized in Western European literature, in particular German, English, and American, Maksym Rylsky in Polish, and Mykola Zerov in Ukrainian literature of the 19th and 20th centuries. Drai-Khmara's expertise was in Slavic studies. His first major literary research, which he wrote at Kyiv University, was dedicated to the Croatian writer Andrija Kačić Miošić.

As a cultural transmitter, Drai-Khmara introduced the modern poetry of Belarus to Ukrainian readers, including the so-called revival poets Maxim Bahdanovich and Yanka Kupala. He published a preface to the

works of the prominent Polish modernist and member of *Young Poland* Kazimierz Tetmajer.

Neoclassicists often explored authors with whom they felt in tune "beyond the borders of time and nation" (Fylypovych 1991, 94) – "Kulturträger", anticologists, formalists. For example, Drai-Khmara presents Maxim Bahdanovich as a Belarusian Neoclassicist. He describes him as "a conscious master of words, not a poet 'by the grace of God'" (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 258), who has perfect knowledge of Greek and Latin, is fascinated by Baudelaire and Heredia, and has introduced new forms, including sonnets, Western European themes and motifs into Belarusian poetry.

The achievement of Drai-Khmara and other Kyiv Neoclassicists was that they revised and reformed the old realistic-romantic literary canon of the 19th century. The old canon was monocentric, built around the figure of the national romantic poet Taras Shevchenko. The Neoclassicists created an alternative polycentric canon, which was remarkable from a gender point of view, as one of the top writers in it became a female modernist, Lesia Ukrainka, highly regarded by the Kyiv Neoclassicists as their forerunner.

From the point of view of methodology, Drai-Khmara's literary studies are remarkable for their "intellectual eclecticism". He applied Peretz's philological analysis, biographical, comparative, and historical approaches, and used elements of formalist immanent research and sociological-Marxist method. Drai-Khmara is considered to be one of the founders of Ukrainian comparative studies.

Kyiv Neoclassicists considered texts of the Ukrainian writers in the context of European literatures. For example, Drai-Khmara found out how Lesia Ukrainka transformed and adapted the Serbian plot about the mythical magic woman *villa* in her own poem and searched for South Slavic folklore sources of Taras Shevchenko's poetry. However, the study of borrowed motifs and plots was never the neoclassicist's goal in itself: "I am not studying motifs as such, but the whole literary work", noticed Drai-Khmara in his diary (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 382).

As was typical for the epoch, the search for genetic and contact connections and sources of transfers of plots and images predominated in Drai-Khmara's studies, while much less attention was paid to typological similarities. The scholar emphasized that it is important not only to trace the transfer, but also to find out how the material received was transformed (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 229). Drai-Khmara's comparativist approach can be

defined as a combination of historicized and immanent approaches with the first dominating.

Drai-Khmara was the only one in Ukraine who responded to the first congress of Slavic philologists held in Prague in 1929, which is considered to be the emergence of Czech structuralism. He reviewed an article by structuralist and former formalist Roman Jakobson "Über die heutigen Voraussetzungen der russischen Slavistik". Jacobson's article became the push for Drai-Khmara's expression of his own program of Ukrainian Slavic studies. While Jacobson talked about theoretical problems, the Kyiv scholar offered a very practical plan. First, he proposed to create a commission at the Academy of Sciences to study the culture and socioeconomic life of the Slavic peoples. Secondly, he argued about the need to draw up a plan for publishing Slavic translated fiction. Thirdly, he considered it necessary to establish contacts between Ukrainian writers and scholars, and their counterparts in the Western Slavic realm, and to organize trips to research Western Slavic countries. However, Drai-Khmara not only adapted Jacobson's ideas to the needs of Ukrainian Slavic studies, but also revised them from the standpoint of subjectivity (Babak & Dmitriev, 2021, 397–407). If Jakobson's idea was to use the achievements of the formal method developed in Russia to study other Slavic literatures, Drai-Khmara, speaking on behalf of one of these other literatures, proposed to turn it from an object of application of this method into a subject. That is, he said that Ukrainian comparativists should apply the structural (functional) method to the study of Western and Southern Slavic literatures, which were not enough examined from the point of view of Ukrainian Slavistics.

It was a common Soviet practice for scholars to be sent to give public lectures to educate workers, villagers, and teachers. After going on a trip to Zaporizhzhia, Stalino (now Donetsk), and Makiivka in the summer of 1930, lecturing workers at mines and factories, Drai-Khmara wrote two articles on the problem of Ukrainization in accordance with the official party line, *i.e.* "Why Should the Proletarian Donbas Be Ukrainianized?" and "Ukrainian Culture – to the Masses".

The policy of Ukrainization, implemented by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine first in 1923, provided state support for the Ukrainian language and the expansion of its use (Shkandrij, 1992, 16). According to Myroslav Shkandriy, "the greatest successes of the Ukrainization policy were in the spread of literacy, in the establishment of an educational system, and in the creation of a large number of publications and publishing houses to serve the needs of a Ukrainian

reading public. It was far less successful, however, in its attempts to Ukrainize industrial workers and trade unions, government institutions and the party" (Shkandrij, 1992, 17). Ukrainization as a part of the USSR's policy of "indigenization" was "aimed at neutralizing the national liberation aspirations of the Ukrainian people to strengthen Bolshevik power in the Ukrainian Republic" by drawing to its side the Ukrainian masses who supported national slogans during the 1917–1921 liberation struggle (Bondarchuk & Danylenko). It was a temporary concession to the Ukrainian people, followed by a period of "tightening the screws" – Stalin's repressions in the second half of the 1930s.

Drai-Khmara's publicist article "Why Should the Donbas Proletarian Be Ukrainianized?" raised the problem of the functioning of the international (Russian) and national (Ukrainian) languages in Ukraine. The author argues that since the USSR established the dictatorship of the proletariat, "the proletariat should take the most active part in the creation of Ukrainian socialist culture." In the Donbas, workers who are Russian by nationality should be Ukrainianized, and Russian-speaking Ukrainians should be de-Russified, "which means they should be cleansed of those Russian layers that have stuck to them during the long Russification practice of the tsarist governments" (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 330). Drai-Khmara states that the Ukrainian language is not so poor compared to Russian, which "sucked blood from colonial peoples" (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 331–332). He believed that the issue of introducing an international language was not urgent, and instead called for the study of national languages, *i.e.*, Ukrainian in Ukraine. In the article "Ukrainian Culture – to the Masses," Drai-Khmara stated that Ukrainization covered various segments of the population, not only in the countryside but also in the city: engineers, doctors, lawyers, and civil servants. Ukrainization contributed to the unprecedented development of Ukrainian art, the emergence of a large number of writers and literary groups (Drai-Khmara, 1930a).

Despite the bravura tone of these newspaper pieces, Drai-Khmara was well aware that the official authorities would continue to impose the Russian language in Ukraine. An entry of Drai-Khmara's diary on April 8th, 1927, in which he shared his impressions of a language incident with Maxim Gorky, is indicative in this regard (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 380): The editor of the Ukrainian publishing house *Knyhospilka*, Oleksa Slisarenko, asked Maxim Gorky, the leading Russian writer and a transmitter of Communist party ideology, for permission to translate and publish his novel *Mother* into Ukrainian. Gorky, who advocated the "universal"

Russian language, wrote Slisarenko a letter in response, in which he denied the need to translate the novel into Ukrainian, dismissively called the Ukrainian language a dialect, and accused the defenders of the Ukrainian language of oppressing Russians (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 380).

Drai-Khmara called Gorky's statement "an example of real, authentic, unqualified chauvinism, yet at the same time we Ukrainians are accused of chauvinism, only because we are Ukrainians" (Asher, 1959, 23). On the efforts of Russians to give Russian the status of a "world language," Drai-Khmara added:

> "According to Gorky, the Ukrainians must build together with the Russians the Tower of Babel (because what is this if not the Tower of Babel, this world language?), must renounce their own language and their own culture, created by a nation of forty million during a millennium. All this is only to prevent any obstacle to own 'brothers'! No, it is precisely the immortal (Russian) chauvinism of the old regime which prevents people from reaching mutual understanding and not what the Ukrainians are doing or rather, have already accomplished – transforming the 'dialect' into a language" (Asher, 1959, 23).

Drai-Khmara was forced by circumstances to resort to the sociological method, often called Marxist, supported by the authorities since the late 1920s. In the context of methodological and theoretical pluralism, the sociological method, which partially continued the traditions of the historical school, was one of the most widespread approaches of Ukrainian literary studies along with the formal method.

For a long time, Soviet literary criticism used the terms "sociological approach," "Marxist approach," and "Marxist-Leninist" as synonyms, which is not entirely correct, since the sociological approach in Ukrainian literary criticism appeared long before the Soviet era, had its roots in the 19th century, and had its adherents, such as Mykhailo Drahomanov, Ivan Franko and others. In the early 1930s, with the establishment of the dominance of Marxist-Leninist criticism, the only "scientific" method was declared to be Marxist-Leninist (Biletskyi, 1966, 53), which is essentially an artificial construct, supposed to meet the demands of the Soviet society for a new philological toolkit that would allow maneuvering between science and communist ideology.

Examples of sociological analysis have been interspersed in Drai-Khmara's texts since the 1920s, but their number increased in the

1930s. For example, the researcher demonstrated how Liubov Yanovska's realistic prose described the lives of two social strata – "oppressed, enslaved people" and the intelligentsia (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 296). He looked at the writings of the Belarusian revivalist poet Yanka Kupala, loyal to the Soviet government mainly through the prism of his "socialist position" (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 281).

In some cases, Drai-Khmara's generally "neutral" literary-critical texts contained tendentious insertions, endings, Marxist clichéd formulations whose appearance in the structure of the texts was not due to the logic of the plot but was dictated by the author's desire to demonstrate his commitment to the dominant discourse at least in such a "mechanical" way. For example, an insightful and thorough article "The Artistic Path of Kazimierz Tetmajer" ends with unexpected conclusions that "almost all of Tetmajer's texts are inspired by the reactionary ideology of the petty bourgeois, an apologist for private property," so his work is "not in tune with our epoch" (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 280).

Starting in the late 1920s, the Kyiv Neoclassicists did not stay away from the genres of self-justification and self-defense. They practiced the genre of remorse and self-criticism, popular in Marxist-Leninist criticism (Kharkhun, 2009, 115), in the form of open letters to the editorial boards of periodicals. The popularity of open letters and public declarations can be explained, on the one hand, by the situation of the public literary discussion, and, on the other hand, by the socialization of the creative process, which was typical of totalitarian culture in general, when the criticized author had to comment on his own work in a nonliterary way, rejecting the accusations of critics who gave his work a political rather than a literary assessment. Drai-Khmara wrote two slightly different open letters to the newspaper *Proletarska Pravda* and the almanac *Literaturnyi Yarmarok*, in which he justified himself for the sonnet "Swans".

In the newspaper *Reconstructor*, published by the Kyiv Agricultural Institute where Drai-Khmara taught, he was criticized for his "political indifference, detachment from life, and unpreparedness for lectures" (*Sotsfak povynen pereity vid rozmov do roboty*, 1930, 2), which was seen as "sabotage" of socialist development. In the article with the remarkable title "In the Case of Self-Criticism," Drai-Khmara denied his political indifference and argued that the course of lectures he gave was "so elementary that a professor having many years of experience does not need to prepare for it" (Drai-Khmara, 1930b, 4).

9. Academic positions and linguistic studies

The Kyiv Neoclassicists, including Drai-Khmara, belonged to the academic elite of Ukraine at the time. Having moved to Kyiv from Kamianets-Podilskyi, Drai-Khmara held leading positions in many scientific and educational institutions (Chernetsky, 2005, 27–29). He taught Ukrainian at the Kamenev Higher United Military School, Ukrainian studies as a non-staff professor at the Kyiv Medical Institute, Ukrainian language and literature at the Kyiv Agricultural Institute.

As well as other Kyiv Neoclassicists, Drai-Khmara made a huge contribution to the development of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences founded in 1918 by the government of Hetman Pavlo Skoropadskyi. During the 1920s and 1930s, he worked at the academic commission for completing the Dictionary of Living Ukrainian Language and at the Commission for Researching the History of the Ukrainian Language. He was a researcher of the Kyiv Chair of Linguistics where he led a seminar on Polish and Czech languages and literatures, a staff researcher of the Institute of Linguistics where he headed the Slavic department, and a full member of the Historical-Literary Society at the All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences where he delivered several research reports.

Drai-Khmara's main academic positions were related to linguistics. Nevertheless, very few of his linguistic articles have survived in comparison to his work on the history of literature. Among his lost research papers was "The Romanian Element in the Vocabulary of Kukuly Village, Olhopol District" (1923).

Only one linguistic research paper has been published, "Fragments of a 14th-Century Mena Parchment Aprakos", in which, using paleographic and linguistic analysis, the scholar determined the time and place of writing of an ancient document found in the 1890s in the basement of a church near Minsk. The article was published in a volume co-edited by Drai-Khmara together with the prominent historian, philologist and orientalist Ahatanhel Krymskyi, *Collection of the Commission for Research of the History of the Ukrainian Language* (Drai-Kmara, 1931). Vasyl Simovych, the only critical reviewer of this work, noted its "outdated St. Petersburg method" and attributed it to the "early period" of the author's linguistic studies (Simovych, 1937, 336).

Drai-Khmara himself wrote a devastating review of Polish language textbooks by Arasimowicz and Fedorow for the journal *On the Linguistic Front*. Drai-Khmara used the "method of exposure, attack and scourging"

aimed at identifying ideological enemies (Kharkhun, 2009, 113). The reviewer argued that "the book by Arasimowicz and Fedorov is imbued with tendencies hostile to the interests of the proletariat and has nothing to do with the principles of Marxist-Leninist science" (Drai-Khmara, ca. 1932, 1). Disputing the definitions of language given by the textbook authors and appealing to Marx and Engels, Drai-Khmara argues that "language is one of the manifestations of class unity, that it is an instrument of class struggle, in the conditions of the Soviet Union – an instrument of socialist development" (Drai-Khmara, ca. 1932, 2).

10. Response to Drai-Khmara's work

Analyzing articles on Drai-Khmara's poetry and literary criticism in newspapers and magazines, one can reconstruct the critical discourse around him and trace how it was changing over the years.

Drai-Khmara's poetry collection *Prorosten* (*Young Shoots*) received the greatest response from critics, but only a narrow circle of friends reacted positively to the book. The main accusation against Drai-Khmara was that his book was completely out of date, because it did not reflect the Soviet reality and social problems: "Imagine that you are forced to eat steep, steep millet porridge cooked the day before yesterday: it is not tasty, it is bitter, it is hard to turn the tongue in your mouth. You will feel exactly the same way reading Drai-Khmara's book of poems *Young Shoots*," wrote one of the Marxist critics (Khutorian, 1926, 4). Another critic commented: "as a contemporary poet, Drai-Khmara is not alive", "[his collection] is timeless in its content" (Dovhan, 1926, 121). Readers also accused Drai-Khmara of rarely using free verses, which, in their opinion, were more suitable for modern poetry than, for instance, polished boring iambics (Dovhan, 1926, 122).

Marxist readers did not like the poet's rarely used, outdated, unclear vocabulary: "The entire collection gives the impression of a museum of rarities that hasn't been heated for several years: it's cold, not everything is clear, though sometimes interesting" (Dovhan, 1926, 122). In addition, the Neoclassicist was accused of having a pessimistic vision of the countryside and not describing progress in villages (Lakyza, 1926, 49; Dolengo, 1925, 71; Dolenho, 1926, 7). Drai-Khmara commented on the accusation in a letter to his friend, the writer Ivan Dniprovskyi:

> "There is neither a tractor, nor electricity, nor a country correspondent, nor pioneers in my poetry, but to tell the truth, I have not seen these things in the village and I cannot force my imagination to describe what is probably 1% of the country life […]. But my 'sad' (as you say) worldview does not coincide with the official optimistic one, and that's why I am not modern. However, I am not the only one […]. There must be some objective reasons that make everyone sad" (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 409).

The most striking episode in a series of attacks on Drai-Khmara was a case with the publication of his controversial sonnet "Swans" (1928). Drai-Khmara released his sonnet at the time when the Neoclassicists were heavily attacked for their position in the literary debates and their work was often considered irrelevant and counterrevolutionary.

The neoclassical sonnet described swans that swam on a lake, but when the ice began to bind the surface, they broke it with their wings. The sonnet ended with tercets, which critics interpreted as an allegory of the five Kyiv Neoclassicists who disagreed with Soviet policies that restricted their freedom:

O Five unconquered, though the cold be long,
No snow can muffle your triumphant song
Which breaks the ice of small despairs and fears:

Rise, swans, and higher to bright Lyra homing
Pierce through the night of servitude to spheres
Where, all intense, the sea of life is foaming.

(Translated by Oksana Asher, edited by Pudraic Colum, 1959, 35)

In this sonnet, Marxist critics saw "a hidden reactionary idea under the label of 'pure art'". The poem was interpreted as "the attacks of a class enemy who is rising up against the proletariat, whom we must beat" (Kovalenko, 1930, 107–108). The poet was obliged to write two open letters. He explained that he had written his poem under the influence of Mallarmé's sonnet about a swan, which he had translated into Ukrainian, and that by the cluster of five he meant the French unanimist poets of the "Abbey group", the founders of the Abbaye de Créteil, whose poetry he translated a lot. Yet, the draft of his sonnet contained a dedication: "Dedicated to my comrades," and a special ironic interlude-commentary included in the almanac where the sonnet was published indicated that it was still about the Kyivan poets.

In addition to the Marxist critics' responses, there were also more serious resolutions issued by the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine concerning the Kyiv Neoclassicists. The June 1926 resolution of the Politburo Plenum on the Results of Ukrainization commented on the slogan of orientation toward Europe as an attempt to guide Ukraine's economy toward capitalist development and "separation from the fortress of the international revolution, the capital of the USSR – Moscow" (Lejtes & Jašek, 1986, 300–301). In the Politburo resolution on the Party's Policy in the Field of Ukrainian Literature from June 1927, the Neoclassicists were mentioned as Ukrainian bourgeois writers whose work reflected anti-proletarian tendencies (*Polityka partii v spravi Ukrainskoi khudozhnoi literatury*, 1927).

If in the 1920s the criticism of Drai-Khmara was directed against his poetic texts, in the early 1930s it increasingly took the form of political accusations against the poet's personality. Usually, political repression of writers and literary critics was preceded by a flood of devastating attacks in the media. On April 27th, 1933, *The Pravda* newspaper in Moscow published an article about the Institute of Linguistics of the All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, in which Drai-Khmara was called a bourgeois nationalist and member of a group of Ukrainian linguists who were engaged in anti-Soviet activities (Levin, 1933, 4).

11. Imprisonment in the Gulag

Drai-Khmara was arrested three times. The first arrest took place in 1933. The second one took place on September 5th, 1935 (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 484). Drai-Khmara was involved in the same case as the Neoclassicists Zerov and Fylypovych. The three Neoclassicists were accused of participating in a counter-revolutionary nationalist organization which was a typical accusation for representatives of various strata of the population during Stalin's repressions. Drai-Khmara pleaded not guilty, and his case was separated. He was sentenced to five years in concentration camps and served his sentence on the Kolyma in the northeastern part of Siberia. Drai-Khmara was kept in at least ten concentration camps being constantly transferred from place to place. In detention, he worked as a gold miner, at a logging site, and in mines.

While in a labor camp, Drai-Khmara wrote two poems in November 1936, apparently "Combine Workers' Song" and "Stakhanovets," which

he performed at a concert in front of other prisoners (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 428)[8]. In one of the letters to his family, he sent his new Russian-language poem "The Constitution," dedicated to the 1936 newly established USSR Constitution, which in a veiled way glorified "a simple and modest man in a gray overcoat," *i.e.*, Stalin, who was compared to Moses with the Tablets of the Covenant on Mount Sinai (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 430). In a letter to his wife on June 18th, 1938, Drai-Khmara reported that he was writing a message to Stalin about himself in Alexandrian verse (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 459). It was apparently the last poem by Drai-Khmara, that did not survive.

Already in the camp, the former Neoclassicist was re-arrested on a fabricated case on April 22nd, 1938. Once more he was accused of belonging to an anti-Soviet organization, and sentenced to 10 years. On October 25th, 1939, the Kyiv registry office notified Drai-Khmara's wife of his death, which had occurred on January 19th of the same year, but did not specify the place or cause of death (Asher, 2002, 32). According to the archive of the Department of Internal Affairs of the Magadan Regional Executive Committee, Drai-Khmara died of heart failure in the medical center of Ustye Tayozhnaya (Hrab, 1991; Dolot, 1992, 134). An unofficial doubtful version spread by one of the prisoners has it that, during a mass execution of every fifth prisoner, Drai-Khmara took the young man's place, thereby saving his life (Vasylevskyi, 1989). The poet was rehabilitated on November 28th, 1989 as a victim of political repressions during the 1930s–1940s (Gamzin, 1990).

Drai-Khmara's burial place had long remained unknown to his family. In 1990 the search for the grave was undertaken by Tamara Sergeyeva, a history teacher at a Magadan school, who organized the Memorial Search Association "Poisk". Having lodged requests to the Department of Internal Affairs of the Magadan Regional Executive Committee for Drai-Khama's death and burial records, Sergeyeva made several expeditions to the village of Laryukovaya in Magadan Region. Interviewing local residents and former prisoners, she found the prisoners' cemetery and identified grave number three, where Drai-Khmara assumedly was buried (Sergeyeva, 1990–1991).

12. Rescuing the archive

Mykhailo Drai-Khmara's archive was saved by his wife Nina and daughter Oksana after his arrest. In July 1937 they were exiled to the city of Belebey

in Bashkiria. After her husband's death, Nina was allowed to return to Kyiv. During the Second World War and the German occupation of Kyiv, first the daughter and then the wife left for Prague, from there on to Lichtenhaag, Munich, Hanover, Brussels, Watermael-Boitsfort. Finally, they emigrated to New York.

The writer's and scholar's personal archive has not been preserved in full, since some manuscripts have been lost. During the second arrest and search, Drai-Khmara's translation of the first part and half of the second part of *The Divine Comedy* by Dante was confiscated, and its fate is still unknown. The translation was not listed in the protocol of the confiscated items (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 485). The poet's wife suspected that the translation had been promised to someone supported by the authorities, hinting at Maksym Rylskyi who knew about the text and was very interested in it (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 30). The version that Drai-Khmara's translation could have come to his Neoclassicist colleague seems plausible to the contemporary scholar Maksym Strikha: he cites lines from Dante's poem in Ukrainian which Rylsky, who did not know Italian, used as the epigraph of one of his poems (1939) as possible evidence (Strikha, 2020, 208–209).

Moreover, during Drai-Khmara's arrest, his library of 373 books, correspondence and photos were seized. By the NKVD's decision all the books were burned (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 553). Luckily, the diary and notebook with poetry were hidden by Drai-Khmara's wife Nina.

Exiled in Belebey and threatened with arrest, Nina Drai-Khmara gave her husband's manuscripts to her roommate for safekeeping. Some translations of French poetry which were written on cigarette paper, among them probably *Don Juan in Hell* by Baudelaire and several poems by Jean Richepin, were smoked by the roommate's husband. According to Nina's testimony, she burned her husband's last few letters from imprisonment, in which he described his suffering (Zhulynskyi 1990, 185). The libretto for the ballet *The Prince Lutonia* and some chapters of the opera libretto *Forest Song* are also lost.

13. Promotion of Drai-Khmara's work in the USA and Europe

The greatest contribution to the popularization of Drai-Khmara's work was made by his daughter Oksana Drai-Khmara Asher (1923–2018), a talented pianist, literary critic, and poet. She was a researcher of her father's work and translator of his poetry into English. She compiled and

edited his poems (Drai-Khmara, 1964), letters (Dray-Khmara Asher, 1983), and literary criticism (Drai-Khmara, 1979) in Ukrainian and English in New York.

After emigrating to the USA, Oksana Drai-Khmara graduated from Columbia University in 1956 with a MA degree for her thesis *Mykhaylo Dray-Khmara: Ukrainian Poet in the Soviet Union*, which was published as a monograph in English (1959) with a foreword by Padraic Colum, a famous Irish poet, novelist, one of the leading figures of the Irish Literary Revival, and friend of James Joyce. While Colum was writing the foreword, he published his own novel, *The Flyjng Swans* (1957). As Asher stated, the title was inspired by Drai-Khmara's poetry (Asher, ca. 2003, 3). The novel has got a dedication "To the memory of James Joyce and James Stephens, Friends of each other and Friends of mine," which is also a certain allusion to the dedication to "To my friends" in Drai-Khmara's poem "Swans". Colum edited Asher's English translation of the sonnet "Swans" published in her monograph.

In 1967, Oksana Drai-Khmara Asher defended her dissertation *Dray-Khmara and the Ukrainian 'Neoclassical' School* at the Sorbonne in Paris. It was the first PhD thesis in Ukrainian studies at the Sorbonne and was published in Canada in 1975 (Asher 1975). While living in Paris and working on her doctorate, Oksana Asher met two of the French poets of the former "Abbaye de Créteil", Charles Vildrac and Jules Romain, whose poetry her father had translated in the 1920s and 1930s in Soviet Ukraine and to whom he appealed when defending his sonnet against the attacks of Marxist critics. Oksana Asher corresponded with both Vildrac and Romain (Romain & Vildrac, 1966–1967) discussing her dissertation. Vildrac translated the sonnet "Swans" into French from a word-for-word line-by-line translation made from the Ukrainian language by Oksana Asher and published it in the Paris literary journal *Le Cerf-Volant* (Draj-Khmara, 1967). He also edited some verses from the poem *Turn*[9]. Vildrac recommended his friend, the French poet Christian Bernard, who translated some other poems of Drai-Khmara into French, which Asher used in her thesis.

In New York, Oksana edited and published the first posthumous collection of her father's poetry in Ukrainian (Drai-Khmara, 1964). However, there are many questions about her editorial work. For instance, she did not republish such poems as "Lenin's Funeral" and "October". The poem originally titled "The Socialist City" was renamed "The City of the Future". In addition, the editor removed lines that glorified the Soviet

building of a new society and the course of the party from a number of poems. These cases can be regarded as an editorial censorship aimed at preserving her father's reputation as a victim of the Stalinist regime, who even in his poetry did not cooperate with the communists and was not contaminated by social realism. In fact, Drai-Khmara's poetic texts of the 1930s contain many social realist images and ideologically charged pro-Communist statements that could have been perceived negatively by the Ukrainian diaspora readers.

Oksana Asher included about a dozen poems or fragments of Drai-Khmara's poetry translated into English in her monograph about her father (Asher, 1959). Several of her translations, along with those of Michael Naydan, were included in the bilingual anthology of Ukrainian poetry of the twentieth century *A Hundred Years of Youth* (Luchuk & Naydan 2000). The collection *The Ukrainian Poets 1189–1962*, published in Toronto, contains two translations of Drai-Khmara by Constantine-Henry Andrusyshen and Watson Kirkconnell into English (Andrusyshen & Kirkconnell, 1963, 366–367)[10]. Oksana Asher's archive contains a selection of translations of Drai-Khmara's poems by Iryna Dybko (Dybko, 1990).

Besides the above-mentioned translations of Drai-Khmara's poetry into English and French, some of his poems have also been translated into German (Burghardt, 1947; Deržawin, 1948; Koch, 1955; Kottmeier, 1957), Polish (Draj-Chmara, 1983), Russian (Drai-Khmara, 1959), Hungarian (Karig, 1971), and Romanian. The last ones will be discussed in more detail later.

Drai-Khmara's letters from the Gulag and fragments of his diary in French translation were published by his son-in-law, Oksana Drai-Khmara's first husband, Ihor Ševčenko, a famous historian and Byzantinist, and later one of the founders of the Ukrainian Research Institute of Harvard University, under the pseudonym Ivan Tcherniatynskyj on the pages of the Belgian journal *Le Flambeau* in 1948 (Tcherniatynskyj, 1948a; Tcherniatynskyj, 1948b). Drai-Khmara's letters from Kolyma were translated into English by Oksana Asher (1983). An English translation of Drai-Khmara's NKVD files has been recently published by Vitaly Chernetsky (2005).

14. Drai-Khmara's Reception in Romania

The cultural agent who introduced the works of the Kyiv Neoclassicists to Romanian readers was the Jewish-Romanian-Hungarian literary scholar, translator, and active member of the Ukrainian community in Romania professor Magdalena Laszlo-Kuțiuk (1928–2010), who taught Ukrainian literature at the University of Bucharest from1955 to 1983. Based on a special course *Romanian-Ukrainian literary relations in the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century*, she published a textbook in Romanian (Laszlo-Kuțiuk 1974; Yantsos 2022). As a researcher, Laszlo-Kuțiuk also focused on the poetics of Ukrainian literature of the 19th and 20th centuries and socionics.

In another book in Ukrainian, based on her lectures *Ukrainian Soviet Literature* delivered over 15 years at the Department of Slavic Languages of the Bucharest university (1975), Laszlo-Kuțiuk reviews the works of the Kyiv Neoclassicists, elaborates on Drai-Khmara's biography and poetry. She considered Drai-Khmara's style to be complex, a multicomponent marked by the influence of symbolism (Laszlo-Kutsiuk, 1975, 43–44). His poetry is full of passion, and unlike Zerov's poems, it is more intimate and immediate. At the same time, the scholar argues that "M. Drai-Khmara's poems are typical for neoclassical poets in their focus on historical and exotic topics, and the cult of skillfully crafted form." (Laszlo-Kutsiuk, 1975, 45).

In the essay included in the Ukrainian-language anthology *Ukrainian Poetry of the Twentieth Century*, published in Bucharest, Laszlo-Kuțiuk explained the evolution of Drai-Khmara's poetic style from the symbolism of the early period to the rationalistic poetics of the period of convergence with the neoclassical group, and then to the neo-romanticism of the late period, when "under the influence of strong emotional turmoil, the classical balance is disturbed, a cry of pain and romantic patheticism breaks through, and the need to encrypt the thought forces him to use suggestion and symbol" (Laszlo-Kuțiuk, 1976, 71). She evaluates Drai-Khmara's neo-romantic works of the late period as the best. In the rest of her books on Ukrainian literature, published in Ukrainian, she often referred to Drai-Khmara's literary studies and cited them, most of all on Lesia Ukrainka.

In 1983 Laszlo-Kuțiuk compiled and edited the third volume of the anthology *Simbolismul European* (European Symbolism), published in Bucharest. In a section of the anthology devoted to Ukrainian symbolism,

Laszlo-Kuțiuk wrote a short essay on Drai-Khmara (László-Kuțiuk, 1983, 220). The researcher explained that she included him in the anthology of symbolism because, despite the formal perfection typical for Neoclassicists and common topics on history, he cultivated poetry of the neo-romantic and symbolic type. The most important things for him were a rare and colorful word, an emotional reaction, intuitive perception, and extraordinary sensitivity, not common to neoclassicism as such (László-Kuțiuk, 1983, 220).

Laszlo-Kuțiuk's essay provided an introduction to the Romanian translations of three of Drai-Khmara's poems. Ștefan Tcaciuc translated the sonnet "Swans" into Romanian, Orest Masichievici did so with "Victoria Regia" and "The Second Birth". The choice of these translators was not accidental, as both were key figures in Ukrainian-Romanian literary relationships.

Orest Masichievici (1911–1980) was a Ukrainian public and political figure, poet, writer, translator, journalist, born in the village of Nepolokivtsi in Northern Bukovina, graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Chernivtsi. During World War II, he moved to Romania. Masichievici spoke several languages, translated from Romanian into Ukrainian and vice versa (Nytchenko 1996, 92). He was a prisoner of the Gulag; after his release in 1955 he returned to Timișoara, moved to Sinai, and died in Buftea (Chub 1993, 76). In his own poetic work, to a certain extent, he was a follower of the Kyiv Neoclassicists, in particular Maksym Rylskyi, and cultivated the sonnet and rondel (Vasylyk 2004, 56–57, 92–93). In his early lyrics, he also tended to the neo-romantic "literature of action" of the Prague school, but eventually evolved "to the strict classical forms of the emigration period" and "transparency of the poetic image" (Vasylyk 2004, 92–93). In addition to the above-mentioned, two translations from Drai-Khmara into Romanian for the anthology *Simbolismul European*, Masichievici prepared another one "Once again like the first man…", the handwritten drafts of which are kept in his personal archive at the Bucharest branch of the Union of Ukrainians of Romania (Drai-Hmara, 1922).

The second translator, Ștefan Tcaciuc (1936–2005), was a Ukrainian poet and public figure in Romania, the first head of the Union of Ukrainians in Romania, and a deputy of the Romanian parliament. He was born in the village of Dănila in Suceava County, studied engineering at the Faculty of Electronics and Telecommunications of the Bucharest Polytechnic Institute, worked for the Romanian railways, and at the same time was

engaged in literary work, compiling a three-volume anthology of Ukrainian poetry in Romanian in 1995 (Antofiychuk, 2016; Prosalova, 2012, 429).

15. Conclusions

Mykhailo Drai-Khmara's biography is indicative of the processes that took place in Ukrainian culture in the 1910s–1930s. He was a typical representative of the Ukrainian intellectual elite, who was intensively involved in various areas of culture in the context of the national revival or the so-called Executed Renaissance which ended with Stalin's repressions.

Drai-Khmara was a multi-talented personality with a wide range of activities, as it was typical for all members of the neoclassical group. His large-scale personality does not fit within a single paradigm. Drai-Khmara's poetry is characterized by polystylism, and his scientific research is characterized by methodological pluralism. While Drai-Khmara's worldview and aesthetic beliefs absolutely correlate with those of his fellow Neoclassicists, in terms of style he is a "problematic" Neoclassicist – "a Neoclassicist almost without neoclassicism." Throughout his life, Drai-Khmara's individual poetic style transformed from symbolism to neoclassicism and then to socialist realism. His individual scholarly toolkit was formed at the intersection of the theoretical suggestions of the cultural-historical school, philological, biographical, sociological approaches, and comparative studies.

Drai-Khmara, like his contemporaries, was a personality from the turn of the century: born in the Russian Empire, he experienced several revolutions, the Ukrainian national liberation struggle, the establishment of Bolshevik authorities, Ukrainization, and the repressions of the 1930s. Drai-Khmara's personal positioning was often framed as "I do not belong to my era," which did not prevent him from making accurate observations about cultural and political processes in the country. At the same time, in his poetry he attempted to adapt himself to the "bloody era" and strived to face moral dilemmas related to that. He declared his absolute apolitical position like the other Kyiv Neoclassicists in the 1920s–1930s, although in 1918 he belonged to the Ukrainian Socialist-Federalist Party.

A discourse analysis of readers' responses to Drai-Khmara's poetry demonstrates that the closer to the 1930s, the more the interpretations of his work became ideologized, the object of criticism was not poetry but the figure of its creator, his conformity to Soviet ideology. Drai-Khmara,

like other Kyiv Neoclassicists, faced the problem of the lack of an adequate reader and the breakdown of communication. The implicit reader of his poetry radically differed from the tastes of the real mass readers produced by the Soviet society.

The situation with the history of the reception of Drai-Khmara's work is unique in that the main promoter, publisher, researcher, and translator of his texts for a long time has been his daughter Oksana Asher, who to a certain extent "monopolized" the literary discourse around her father. For decades, Asher's statements have been undoubtedly cited by other researchers, and Drai-Khmara's poetic texts prepared for publication by his daughter have long been considered canonical, although many cases of editorial censorship can be witnessed.

The Romanian theme in Drai-Khmara's early linguistic studies and in his later travel poem "Constanța" (1935), as well as the translations of his poetry into Romanian and the interpretations of his work in Romania make Drai-Khmara an important and still overlooked case for the study of Romanian-Ukrainian cultural relations. In Romania, Drai-Khmara's poetry was popularized by the literary scholar Magdalena Laszlo-Kuțiuk. Several of his poems have been translated into Romanian thanks to Orest Masichievici and Ștefan Tcaciuc.

To summarize the reception of Drai-Khmara abroad, it should be noted that despite translations into different European languages, English and French books about his life and literary path, he remained a figure of interest mainly for the Ukrainian readers in the diaspora without gaining fame outside the Ukrainian community. In Ukraine, starting with the Khrushchev Thaw of the 1960s, he gradually entered the Ukrainian literary canon. Although his work is currently studied in Ukrainian schools and universities, a large part of his original poetry, translations, correspondence, and articles remains unpublished.

The fact that the NKVD investigation during Drai-Khmara's second arrest failed to extract a confession of anti-Soviet crimes from him and that he, in his own words, did not slander any of his acquaintances, created an aura around him of an indomitable fighter against the totalitarian system and a victim of political repression, although in fact, in both his poetic and journalistic texts, he tried to interact with the authorities and official ideology. The figure of Drai-Khmara, whose biography still has many gaps and unclear moments, is very amenable to myth-making. One can mention both the myth of his participation in a partisan unit and the myth of his death, *i.e.*, his nonconformism is always mythologized.

Endnotes

1 *Khmara* means *cloud* in Ukrainian.

2 I would like to thank Volodymyr Barov for drawing my attention to the possible reasons for Drai-Khmara's anti-German attitudes.

3 The metaphor of the "Executed Renaissance" was first suggested by the Polish publicist Jerzy Giedroyc in 1958 as the title for the anthology of the Ukrainian literature of 1917–1933, which was edited by Yurii Lavrinenko. This very popular metaphor is criticized by literary scholars nowadays (Krupa, 2017).

4 The name "Red Renaissance" was first used by some Ukrainian critics in 1925, but it did not become widespread at that time.

5 Naydan's translation (Luchuk & Naydan, 2000, 169) does not reproduce the rhyming verses.

6 Although contemporary literary historians doubt the existence of the collection (Tsymbal, 2015, 101–102), Drai-Khmara testified in the materials of the investigation that he prepared the collection in 1929, read it to Zerov in the fall of the same year, and that the manuscript was reviewed internally by the Literatura I Mystetstvo Publishers in 1931 (Drai-Khmara, 2002, 520, 528; Investigation file, 1933, f. 23r).

7 The notebook with Drai-Khmara's poems contains a handwritten draft with corrections, dated August 14–20, 1935 (Drai-Khmara, 1922–1935, f. 224a–226r), and a separate final typewritten draft on tracing paper, dated August 30, 1935 (Drai-Khmara, 1935, August 30).

8 The fate of these two texts is unknown.

9 Vildrac's translations were also published in the anthology: (Cadot, 2004, 630–636).

10 A fragment of the sonnet "Swans" was also translated by Danylo Struk (Struk, 1964, 6).

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