

Олена Романенко (*Olena Romanenko*)
Київський національний університет імені Тараса Шевченка

ARCHIVE AS A SPACE OF IDENTITY: THE EXPERIENCE OF MODERN UKRAINIAN LITERATURE

ABSTRACT: This article analyzes the features of the archive as a memory space. The ideas of Aleida Assmans, Walter Benjamin, Susan Sontag, Sas Mays, and Anna Łebkowska constitute the intellectual support for the research. The research methodology is based on a combination of ideas from memory studies, postcolonial studies, and intermedia studies in the study of photography and its role within the artistic text. The works of modern Ukrainian literature represent the study material, in which the archive acts as a unique space that actualizes the mechanisms of recalling forgotten facts from family life or restoring historical individual memory. In such works, the archive acts as an object, a space of action, and an institution in which memories are accumulated, and the personal stories of the characters' identities are formed. Within collisions between “destruction of the archive vs. preservation of the archive” the plots of novels and stories about the identity of the characters and the ontological connections of time and space unfold. The article describes three leading models of depicting the archive as a space of memory: 1) the archive as a component of the identity of the individual and the identity of the nation (Valery Shevchuk's novel *Shadows are Gone* (*Тіні зникли*); 2) the archive and its components (for example, a photo) as a space of identity reconstruction (the novel by Oksana Zabuzhko *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets* (*Музей покинутих секретів*); 3) the archive as a destroyed space that inevitably transforms the identity of the individual (the novel by Pavlo Pastet Bedyanskyi *Grandma Didn't Like Dying* (*Бабуся не любила помирати*)). It has been proven that in artistic works the archive appears as a collection of objects (manuscripts, photos, etc.) and a space of memories (a collection of stories).

KEYWORDS: archive, memory, novel, identity, Ukrainian literature, memory studies, intermedia studies

Archiwum jako przestrzeń tożsamości: doświadczenie współczesnej literatury ukraińskiej

ABSTRAKT: W artykule analizowane są cechy archiwum jako przestrzeni pamięci. Intelktualne wsparcie dla badań stanowią idee Aleidy Assmann, Waltera Benjamina, Susan Sontag, Sas Maysa i Anny Łebkowskiej. Metodologia badań opiera się na połączeniu ujęć z zakresu studiów nad pamięcią, studiów postkolonialnych i studiów intermedialnych w badaniu fotografii i jej roli w tekście artystycznym. Materiałem badawczym są dzieła współczesnej literatury ukraińskiej, w których motyw archiwum pojawia się w charakterze unikalnej przestrzeni, która aktualizuje mechanizmy przypominania faktów z życia rodzinnego lub przywracania historycznej pamięci indywidualnej. W takich dziełach archiwum działa jako obiekt, przestrzeń działania i instytucja, w której gromadzone są wspomnienia i kształtowane są osobiste historie tożsamości postaci. Artykuł dowodzi, że archiwum jako symboliczna przestrzeń

pamięci jest przedstawiane w literaturze zgodnie z modelem „zniszczenie archiwum kontra zachowanie archiwum”. W tych zderzeniach rozwijają się fabuły powieści i opowiadań o tożsamości postaci i ontologicznych związkach czasu i przestrzeni. W artykule opisano trzy główne sposoby przedstawiania archiwum jako przestrzeni pamięci: 1) archiwum jako składnik tożsamości jednostki i tożsamości narodu (powieść Walerija Szewczuka *Cienie zniknęły (Тіні зникли)*); 2) archiwum i jego składniki (na przykład fotografia) jako przestrzeń rekonstrukcji tożsamości (powieść Oksany Zabuzko *Muzeum porzuconych tajemnic (Музей покинутих секретів)*); 3) archiwum jako zniszczona przestrzeń, która nieuchronnie przekształca tożsamość jednostki (powieść Pawła Pasteta Bedianskiego *Babcia nie lubiła umierać (Бабуся не любила помирати)*). Udowodniono, że w dziełach artystycznych archiwum pojawia się jako zbiór obiektów (rękopisów, zdjęć itp.) i przestrzeń wspomnień (zbiór powieści).

Introduction

The archive is one of the most potent places of memory in culture. In literature, it is a space in which a character can meet the past, find an unexpected artifact, or reconstruct history. As a collection of unique artifacts, the archive gives symbolic meaning to the stories of those associated with the archive. It can also be the key to understanding the personal history and identity of the person to whom it belongs and the entire community. Archives are not just places for the passive storage of rare materials but also spaces of memory in which individual or collective identity narratives are formed. This is a unique archive property – to combine material objects with stories into a coherent narrative about an individual or a community. However, this narrative is based not only on preservation but also on loss (elimination, destruction, biased selection of artifacts, or the hierarchy of power discourses in the politics of creating archives). Acts of destruction and preservation are an inseparable part of the history of archives. And they speak just as powerfully about identity as other places of memory (museums, libraries, landmarks, or monuments). What role can an archive play in a literary work? What conceptual models does literature produce when it presents the archive as a memory space in an artistic text? Answers to these questions affect a vast research horizon, and the search can be limited, for example, to modern Ukrainian literature. Why? There are at least three reasons. The first is the broad process of the rehabilitation of historical individual and collective memory after the collapse of the Soviet Empire in 1991. After all, in the USSR, archives were part of the robust political discourse; sometimes, they were destroyed, and often, they were closed to the general public. The second is the actualization of the historical novel genre, emphasizing family history stories in modern Ukrainian literature. The third is discussions about identity in Ukrainian academic works and the media (Olya Hnatiuk (Hnatiuk 2005)¹, Ivan Dzyuba (Dzyuba 2006)², Mykola Ryabchuk (Ryabchuk 2021)³, Oksana Zabuzhko (Zabuzhko 2006)⁴, Diana Klochko (Klochko 2023)⁵, etc.).

¹ О. Гнатюк, *Прощання з імперією. Українські дискусії про ідентичність*, Київ 2005.

² І. Дзюба, *З криниці літ. В трьох томах (2006-2007)*, т. 2, Київ 2006.

³ М. Рябчук, *Лексикон націоналісти та інші есеї*, Львів 2021.

⁴ О. Забужко, *Хроніки від Фонтінбраса. Вибрані есе*, Київ 2006.

⁵ Д. Клочко, *Сховане мистецтво: есеї, розмови, коментарі*, Київ 2023.

These three circumstances prompted the writing of this article. The publication aims to analyze and present models of depicting the archive as a memory space in modern Ukrainian prose, as well as to describe which cultural and social discourses they actualize.

Purpose and methodology

The ideas of memory studies, postcolonial studies, and interdisciplinary and inter-medial studies constitute the intellectual support of this article. Thus, postcolonial studies are an essential part of Ukrainian discussions about identity because they provide an opportunity to understand the colonial experience of the Ukrainian community within the boundaries of both the Russian and Soviet empires. However, for this article, the idea of a dialogue with the colonial past, which inevitably arises in rethinking the past and reflection on identity when a person “finds himself” in the archive space, is more interesting. The discovery of the past in such a situation is a rethinking of the nation’s history, the rehabilitation of forgotten names or historical events, etc., and discovering unknown pages of family history. Notably, the reinterpretation of family history occurs through the “voicing” of traumatic events, forgotten pages, names, and stories.

This aspect is essential in Ukrainian history. The process of opening archives and making archival documents public began in the 1990s, but it was not until 2015 that access to archival documents of repressive bodies from 1917-1991 was given, and since 2016 that such access has become more comprehensive for all sections of the population. Data about writers, scientists, artists, etc., repressed in the Soviet Union in the 1930s, have returned to the collective historical memory from classified archives, and their works have entered the Ukrainian literary canon. Declassified archive data contributed to the establishment in 1998 of the Memorial Day of the Holodomor Victims in Ukraine or the Memorial Day of the Victims of Stalinist Repression as actual practices of memorialization. Many such examples can be given. Similarly, in the personal memories of families, those pages of family stories are rehabilitated, which, under the conditions of living in the Soviet Empire, would not be possible to voice without the risk of being arrested. In the Ukrainian socio-cultural space, the opening of archives is a powerful event that changes the perception of the past and demonstrates how historical experience through verbal evidence or archival images becomes a story – a historical novel about the search for identity through restoring family history.

Nowadays, we have a variety of works of art in which the archive is depicted as a symbolic space of a character's rediscovered/traumatized/renewed identity. This may be:

- 1) An archive as a public space (the novels of Oksana Zabuzhko, *Museum of Abandoned Secret* (*Музей покинутих секретів*, 2010) (Zabuzhko 2010), Yury Vynnychuk, *Tango of Death* (*Танго смерті*, 2012) (Vynnychuk 2012)).
- 2) A family archive as a private space (the novels of Oleg Kotsarev *People in Nests* (*Люди в гніздах*, 2018) (Kotsarev 2018), Pavel Pashetet Belyanskiy

Grandmother Didn't Like Dying (Бабуся не любила помирати, 2024) (Pavel Pashetet Belyanskyi 2024), Olena Styazhkina's *The Death of Cecil the Lion Made Sense* (Смерть лева Сесіла мала сенс, 2021) (Styazhkina 2021), the collective novel of several authors *DNA* (ДНК, 2016) (DNA 2016)).

- 3) An archive as historical reality (Valery Shevchuk's novel *The Missing Shadows* (Тіні зникаючі, 2002) (Shevchuk 2002), Viktoria Amelina's *Home for Dom* (Дім для Дома, 2017) (Amelina 2017), Tanya Malyarchuk's *Oblivion* (Забуття, 2016) (Malyarchuk 2016), Halyna Pagutyak's *Servant from Dobromil* (Слуга з Добромиля, 2010) (Pagutyak 2010), Oleksandr Mykhed's *The Cat, the Rooster and the Cupboard* (Котик, Півник і Шафка, 2022) (Mykhed 2022)).

In all these works, the archive as a symbolic memory space is reproduced within the general conceptual model – “destruction of the archive vs. preservation of the archive”. Between the “destruction vs. preservation” of the archive, the collision plots unfold, the visible or hidden layers of the meanings of identities, and the ontological connections of time and space. Notably, the archive as a symbolic space in literature also has attributive features. These are primarily objects that are, in fact, symbolic details in works of art. These are photos, objects of the past, letters, records, and oral stories that reveal the hidden history of the person who owned these or other objects. As a place of memory, the archive reveals a strong connection between the object (photo, album, etc.) and the narrative (the story of human life in the dimensions of time and space, with a particular emphasis on the events of the past that influenced the formation of identity). It is also worth noting that the archive, as a symbolic space of memory, can be a part of the House (lost, destroyed, preserved, etc.).

Therefore, the archive as a symbolic space of memory, in which personal and collective identity are combined, is embodied in a work of art through drawing:

- 1) the phenomenon of public or family archives, family albums, and family photos as the leading story-creating image in the story;
- 2) metaphors of memory recollection (including images of memory loss/recovery), which can also become the basis for creating the plot of a historical novel;
- 3) recall / memory recovery is combined with the character's writing/conversation / oral narrative, which significantly affects the structure of the text, such a text can be presented as a complete narrative-recall and memory rehabilitation, as a separate or fragmentary character narrative and the narrator. Both forms, by the way, determine the type of compositional structure of the historical novel, which tells one about the search for identity;
- 4) metaphors of Home (your own – someone else's home), Road, Journey – as key spatial images of such stories;
- 5) an existential conflict related to the search for the history of one's kind, the understanding of the family history against the background of significant socio-historical events. Two components are exciting in this list – the archive and the house.

Both can be called conceptual images that determine the type of conflict in the story and the work's structure (composition, plot, etc.). How is this embodied in modern Ukrainian literature?

Archive as a symbolic space of memory

According to the concept and ideas of Aleida Assman, two memory metaphors can be distinguished – written metaphors (book, palimpsest, tablet) and place metaphors (shrine, library, attic)⁶. According to this concept, an archive is a space in which the narrative of identity is reproduced through the practices of gathering (collection) or loss (elimination, destruction). The subject and the story are interrelated within the archives by symbolic meaning and complex connections. Thus, an archive can contain manuscripts as evidence and a recorded narrative, material evidence of history. According to the manuscript, you can reproduce the absolute chronology of events. However, the manuscript can be lost, rewritten, and become a palimpsest, making it impossible to recreate the story. In the same way, an object (more often – a photo) can either speak about itself, know its history, or vice versa – lose the ability to “speak” to descendants (for example, if future generations do not know who is depicted in the photo, to whom these or other objects belonged).

Also, to understand the symbolic meanings actualized by the archive as a space of memory in a literary work, it is essential to know that the archive is formed according to the principle of conscious selection and collection. Collecting is a cultural practice that underlies the development of an archive, the consolidation and material monuments of the era, and their cultural consecration. In this context, Sas Mays' idea of “the complex relationship between material textual stocks and the broader cultural practices and understandings in which they are intertwined” is interesting⁷, as well as the concept of the authors of the book “Cultural Heritage and the Literary Archive,” who explored the peculiarities of the relationship between the literary archive and cultural heritage⁸. The archive presents both the personality of its collector and the collective identity of those involved in its storage or reception in the cultural practices of recalling or forming an idea of identity. We can talk about the different scales of the archive as a memory space within the family and in the cultural space of the state. Still, the importance of the archive as a place connected with acts of destruction and preservation cannot be denied⁹. The process of forming an archive (both family and public, state) is, in fact, the process of creating a story. It contains documents, objects, photos, letters, etc., components of a coherent narrative about the history of the family and nation. The archive as a cultural heritage space also demonstrates how an individual

⁶ А. Ассман, *Простори спогадів. Форми та трансформації культурної пам'яті*, Київ 2012.

⁷ S. Mays, *Libraries, literatures, and archives*, New York; London: Routledge 2014, p. 2.

⁸ *Cultural Heritage and the Literary Archive: Objects, Institutions, and Practices between the Analogue and the Digital*, ed. by T. Sommer, Routledge 2024.

⁹ *Cultural Heritage and the Literary Archive...*, p. 5.

story is transformed into a national narrative, how small narratives are created, how they enter the collective memory, and how they change and become essential for wider communities.

Sometimes, the value of objects in the archive was determined by chance (not all objects are preserved, and not all stories related to objects are recorded). Therefore, the meaning coordinates of the symbolic connection in the archive as a metaphorical space between objects and the story can vary. This feature of the archive as a memory space opens up unique possibilities for the author in constructing a narrative. Very rarely will it have a clear structure emphasizing the chronology of events. After all, the archive as a space establishes whimsical and sophisticated connections between the collection of preserved objects and the story of whom they belonged to and whose identity they embody, with whose voices they “speak” to the recipient. Therefore, more often in literature, the archive is not actualized as a structured space, but the metaphor of the archive as a space of chaos, where the establishment of symbolic ties between ancestors, the story, the past, and the present – ultimately depends on the reader and the author, who from page to page unfolds an intricate web in front of him, the symbolic values of the archive as a memory space. Therefore, the compositional structure of the works in which the space of the archive is derived is often incomplete, and the reader must go with the character from object to object, between fragments of memories and allusions, to reproduce the narrative as a complete story about identity.

Intuitive insight and sudden enlightenment in this context have a decisive role in the structure of the narrative. And it is embodied through the symbolic power of a photo or writing. Photography as a visual medium in the space of the archive captures what Alan Meek describes as

In this passage the temporality of the photograph is suspended between a forgotten past and an anticipated future, recalling Freud’s stress on the immediacy of the traumatic memory, or symptom, of a past that assumes new meaning through its relationship with later experiences.

Photography provides an opportunity to reconstruct a lost history. As Alain Meek proves, it can become an agent of change – both the knowledge and the mental state of the person who looks at the photo. However, the connection between the photo and the memory of the associated events is possible only through verbal association. This narrative connects the image and the event as a spoken or recorded memory.

Writing as a recall practice in the archive metaphor context is also essential. Recording, rewriting, and reconstructing a memory, story, or history actualizes the symbolic meaning of the silence, displacement, concealment, or decoding of the identity of the person who creates the story based on the archive. The relationship between writing and the archive reveals the ontological dependence between the narrative of the past and the objects, between the identity of the one who writes and the identity of the one who will no longer be able to say anything. From this perspective, the narrator’s character, who records or reconstructs the story based on the artifacts found in the

archive, is essential. Such a storyteller must be able to “look” and “hear” the empathic power of archive objects, become a medium through which the voices of the past speak, and reveal the true story about the identity of those who owned the objects collected in the archive. Walter Benjamin described this phenomenon as an aura – “... a special web of space and time: a unique phenomenon of a certain distance that suddenly becomes closer than ever”¹⁰ in the same way Roland Barthes described it as a punctum – a disturbingly frozen time in photography that contains traumatic experience.¹¹ So how does it work in modern Ukrainian literature? According to the analysis, three models of drawing the archive as a symbolic memory space can be distinguished. Although many works of art were involved in the study, only the most characteristic examples will be given here. They present the archive as follows:

- The voice of the past, when the story’s integrity is recreated through the narrator’s writing and based on the archive.
- Public vs. private space in which the narrator establishes a symbolic connection between personal and collective history and identity.
- The destruction or loss of the archive does not provide an opportunity to recreate the identity or prove its fragmentation due to the loss of critical symbolic narratives and objects.

Archive on the tablets of history: a model of preservation

Valery Shevchuk’s novel *Shadows are Gone. Family Chronicle* (*Тіні зникомі. Сімейна хроніка*, 2002) has a unique design: the works of Ukrainian artists of the 18th and 19th centuries were used as the basis for the illustrations, the Temnytskyi family tree, the coats of arms of this family and a map of part of modern Ukraine are placed on the endpaper. And all this is an inseparable part of the artistic space of the novel. Historical archival sources can confirm some of the images, but some are stylized according to the era the author is writing about. The posted images indicate that the prototypes for the writer are the Iskritskyi, a noble Cossack family from Ukraine. This directly appeals to the family story *The Tale of Grandfathers*, created by Fyodor Iskritskyi in the 19th century¹². It also appeals to the family coat of arms of the Iskrietskys, placed on the endpaper of the novel – a silver arrow stuck in the ground on a blue shield. The initial version of the coat of arms was changed after the final assimilation of the family into the social status communities of the Russian Empire: on the yellow-blue shield in the lower part, the same image, and in the upper part – the coat of arms of the Russian Empire with the monogram of Emperor Paul I on the eagle’s chest. The Iskritskyi family archive kept these transformations, and these same transformations became the central theme of Valery Shevchuk’s novel. Thus, in the

¹⁰ W. Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Technical Reproduction. Illuminations*, New York 1968, p. 222.

¹¹ R.G. Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, New York 1981.

¹² В. Шевчук, *Тіні зникомі. Сімейна хроніка*, Київ 2002, с. 408.

semiotic structure of the work, the visual narrative expresses the textual narrative, supplementing the text's hidden symbolic meanings and meanings. The author changes his name – Iskrytskyi to Temnytskyi – and describes the process of understanding family history in collecting the family archive and organizing the family chronicle. Intrigue in the novel is connected with the fact that all the descendants of Mykhailo Temnytsky write their family chronicles, each interpreting the critical events of family history and archival materials in their own way. Therefore, the archive as a symbolic space in the novel has, on the one hand, a reference to historically reliable archival documents.

On the other hand, it is freely interpreted by the author. It is in this double concept of the writer that the critical idea of the novel arises – to describe how, through understanding the family archive and writing the history of his kind, the character (Todos Temnytskyi) realizes his identity and his purpose: "...our surname – Temnytskyi – was given to my family for a reason, but not darkness was radiated into the world. That is, they were not dark souls, but many of them hid their innermost secrets – that's why we are Temnytskyi"¹³.

The family archive of the Temnytskyi is being rewritten to "fit" into the identity of the Russian Empire; for this, the coat of arms is being changed. But writing a family history reveals to Todos Temnytskyi not only the history of his family but also – more broadly – the history of the people to which he belongs: "...this is awareness: of ourselves, of our family, of good and evil deeds, created by us, therefore, the process of self-knowledge..."¹⁴; "it was not for nothing that he saw that forest of people – the fair, as an image of his people, so unlike others, so calm and hot at the same time..."¹⁵.

Valery Shevchuk's novel appeals to one more critical plot – the "History of Rus'," a historical-political treatise created by an anonymous author approximately at the end of the 19th – beginning of the 20th century. As the historian Serhii Plokhii writes, "the distribution and reception of the History of Rus' is a typical example of the formation, reconstruction and modification of national mythologies". "History of Rus'" helped nationalize the Cossack myth, the roots of which can be traced back to the beginning of the 18th century... "History of Rus'" made the Cossack myth attractive to a new generation of Ukrainian intellectuals"¹⁶. This text is a symbolic component of the national memory of Ukrainians, a historical document and a literary monument that "confirms the historical uniqueness and independence of Ukraine"¹⁷. Having created images of his ancestors based on the data of the family archive, Todos Temnytskyi, as Valery Shevchuk writes, begins to write the "History of Rus'" because his separate family history is part of a broader story – the history of the people. The writer expresses it through the mouth of the character as follows: "When defining as an allegory: the

¹³ Ibidem, c. 200.

¹⁴ Ibidem, c. 214.

¹⁵ Ibidem, c. 219.

¹⁶ С. Плохій, *Козацький міф. Історія та націєтворення в епоху імперії*, Київ 2013, с. 399.

¹⁷ Ibidem, c. 401.

forest is my people, each tree in the forest is a separate individual, a species of trees is a genus, actually the home of the forest, then one cannot help but note another allegory: the forest of the home”¹⁸ and the manuscript of the family chronicle is only a part of another story – the history of the people, which is also supposedly written by a character in the novel *Shadows are Disappeared*. This is the “History of Rus’,” “released into the world through rewriting – anonymous... This work of mine, together with my brother... is fondly read and rewritten by our Little Russian nobility. So, this work seemed to break away from me, and I began to live an independent life”¹⁹.

In the structure of Valery Shevchuk’s novel, the archive as a symbolic space of family memory is reproduced, on the one hand, with documentary accuracy, on the other hand, transformed. The detective storyline in the novel is closely related to the story of rewriting family history, changing archival documents, and interpreting them to fit into the empire’s identity. However, the main idea of the work is that the family archive is part of the nation’s incredible archive. The preservation and description of a small family archive irreversibly prompts us to investigate and describe the family’s history. And every small family story is part of the larger story of the nation. Extensive national archives are made up of small archives.

Public archive vs. family archive: between destruction and preservation

Another model of the archive as a symbolic space is offered by Oksana Zabuzhko in the novel *Museum of Abandoned Secrets* (*Музеї покинутих секретів*, 2010). In this work, the narrative is told from the perspective of a photo, accidentally found in a public archive, which intrigues the protagonist, journalist Daryna Hoshchynska, to search for and to find the family album where this photo was supposed to be, but this photo is missing from the family archive as well as from the family members’ memory. In the complex plot structure of the novel, O. Zabuzhko tells the readers how the nation’s great history and the personal story of a person interact. The author describes the terrible mechanism of destroying the individual memory of the family in the bloody, repressive actions of the Soviet Empire, when even the slightest memory is destroyed, and the only place where the true history of a person can come to life is in dream.

In this storyline, the writer brings out one essential aspect of this novel and Ukrainian history – the absence of a material embodiment of family history in family archives. The metaphor of a dream in such a story reveals the terrible truth that family history cannot be recreated because of the lack of memory and the lack of material evidence of family history. The semantic center of this metaphor is the photograph that the main character finds, which should be in the family album and not in the nameless fund of the public archive.

In addition, the conceptual metaphors of this novel are the museum as a space of memory in which memory is archived and accumulated, and thus, individual memory is

¹⁸ В. Шевчук, *Тіні зниклі...*, с. 290.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, с. 299.

rooted in the collective memory of the community, and personal identity is aligned with the ideas of community identity. The photo in the novel shows that the relationship between the object from the archive, the archive itself, and the family history can be broken. The image from the family archive will no longer be able to speak to the descendants, and the memory turns out to be blocked, traumatized:

And now I don't know what to do with this new feeling: they look at me from old photos as if I'm guilty of something, and I really nod and nod under their heavy, and also flowing beyond the limits of the captured moment, looks, what, in fact, do they expect from me (as if they do not fully trust me, they are looking closely at whether I offer myself as a daughter-in-law to their family and how earnest my intentions are in general...²⁰.

However, this precarious connection between photography as a medium, a family archive, and identity is established thanks to the aura (in the interpretation of W. Benjamin) and the punctum (according to the concept of R. Barthes). Zabuzhko describes this moment as a critical plot twist and a crucial psycho-emotional experience of Darina Goshchynska:

I don't know what caught my eye in that picture, where among the five UPA soldiers (... a female fighter, Artem threw me, pushing the picture across the tabletop with his fingertips and for some reason lowering his voice, as if a photograph, if handled carelessly, could instantly cause a shot to go off ...) – the second from the right [...] among them all, she was the only one smiling (with a barely perceptible curl of her lips) [...]. [...] Even in the faded picture, a visible spot of light seemed to stand around her, as if on the canvases of ancient masters, the circle of an angel sent with good news, do not be afraid, Zachariah, because your prayer has been heard²¹.

Further investigation of the main character is needed to determine which woman is standing in the photo and what her story is. The return of the image from the public archive, where it was silent, to the family one – where the photo gradually comes to life, allows Daryna Goshchynska and Adrian Dovgan to “hear” the voice of the woman depicted in the picture, to learn her story. Through such a complex metaphor, Zabuzhko conveys that the loss of a family archive disrupts individual memory and destroys the concept of one's own identity. Transferring a photo from a family archive to a public archive as an anonymous document also does not make the photo a part of collective history and collective identity. Therefore, the connection between the family story and the collective narrative, the family archive and the collective archive as spaces of memory is broken, and identity also becomes fragmented. And it is impossible to restore it. In the novel *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets*, restoration occurs through the shaky reality of the dream. This is hardly possible in the real world. The photo-

²⁰ О. Забужко, *Музей покинутих секретів*, Київ 2010, с. 21-22.

²¹ Ibidem, с. 54-55.

grapher Anna Lebkowska, describes the typology of such a connection of the text as “photographs ... in their immobility, in their functions of marking this and that is how it was, reveal traces of what remains entirely beyond the possibility of grasping...”²².

This aspect in Oksana Zabuzhko’s novel *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets* allows the reader to read the unique connection between “photo – dream – memory”. The photo and story about the people depicted as bearers of history in the society where Daryna Goshchynska and Andrian Dovgan live is a crucial testimony. You can pay with your life for keeping such history and material evidence. Therefore, the only possible place for archiving memory and identity is the aura, the dream, and the body. This aspect is what Agnieszka Matusiak interprets in the work *Get out of silence*²³. However, the metaphor of the dream is more potent than the metaphor of the body to preserve memory. A dream is a dual space in which knowledge and events from the real world are transformed to change and become a new plot that “sees and remembers” and one person who dreams and wakes up. A dream is an individual archive of memory. It does not apply to others. This aspect is interestingly transformed in the work because the stories of those depicted in the photo and those whose personal stories are also related to this picture are pushed from the family archives to the margins (or lost altogether or forgotten). Therefore, only the reader can reproduce their identity, whom the writer guides through the public archive, through the contemplation of family photo albums, oral stories, memories, and even a dream. Therefore, the reader, on the one hand, has a complete idea of the identity of the characters and the archiving of their personal stories; on the other hand, the reader, together with the narrator, gets to know these stories through the prism of the aura of the photograph, through the metaphor of a lost/distorted family archive.

The experience of past generations and the narrative of identity is a complex reconstruction of the memories and voices of those who are silent and stare at us from old photographs. This idea of Oksana Zabuzhko’s novel emphasizes the concepts of essays by Walter Benjamin, Roland Barthes, Susan Sontag, studies by Anna Lebkowska, and others about the empathetic power of photos. A photograph can become a medium of identity; a picture speaks of the past and appeals to the viewer who looks at the image. This forces the reader to re-examine the family photo album as an archive of stories about identity.

Archive that does not exist: absence

The model of the elimination archive is presented by the novel *Grandma Did Not Like Dying* (*Бабуся не любила помирати*, 2024) by Pavel Pastet Belyanskyi. Photography as a memory medium appears virtually at the end of this text. This is a photo

²² A. Lebkowska, *Fotografia jako empatyczna mediacja*, [w:] *Intersemiotyczność. Literatura wobec innych sztuk i odwrotnie*, red. S. Balbus, A. Hejmej, J. Niedźwiedz, Kraków 2004, s. 200.

²³ А. Матусяк, *Вийти з мовчання. Деколоніальні змагання української культури та літератури XXI століття з посттоталітарною травмою*, Львів 2020, с. 102-104.

from a family album, not systematized, in which “there are many photos, and they are often group photos, with many faces and figures, blurred by time and memory”²⁴. The photo shows the children of the same family: “...we are still together. On our faces, there is a sign of similarity passed from parents to children, and behind this external kinship lies our inner unity. We are close people. It is immediately noticeable”²⁵. However, the story about those captured in the photo is incomplete. These are, in fact, 22 short stories about different native people. Their stories are not presented in chronological order as a family chronicle. The reader is presented with various memories of the narrator, and each time, it is a different story, an episode snatched from the narrator’s memory, supplemented by other people’s stories and memories.

There is no family archive as a collection of objects and stories in this family. First of all, because the history of each character is full of secrets. Yes, the story of Grandmother Anya, for example, is not known to anyone in the family: she is from St. Petersburg, has a family and a son, her husband is repressed, and a random officer saves her. This part is not recorded in any testimony, memory, or material object. “... I didn’t have a past life...” – Grandmother Anya tells the children. The absence of a family archive (photos and stories) destroys family ties and the family as a community. And most importantly, no aura or punctum can restore lost artifacts and their symbolic meanings. The photo from the family album in the novel by Pavel Pastet Belyanskyi is accidental. And the album itself is not complete: “My mother took the photo album after my grandmother’s death. Heavy, in worn velvet, with iron corners, reeking of dust and wallpaper glue, with a bundle of photo cards that would immediately scatter at the corners, touch the cardboard cover, the album, as any photo storage should, was thrown into the farthest corner of the most useless chest of drawers”²⁶. Shattered family histories fall apart like old photos from an album. They can be collected only by the watchful eye of the reader, who moves through the novel’s fragmentary narrative. This novel can be called a novel in short stories because each story has its own voice and its own secret, and the connection between individual stories is established only in the reader’s imagination.

The archive, which is not in the family, symbolically emphasizes the blurred identity of each family member, who lives in a mining town in the Donetsk region of Ukraine. The novel ends in 2015, when one of the characters dies in an empty house, alone and without a family. And a photograph of all the children of a family will certainly not be able to speak to anyone, will not be able to make the past visible, the people depicted in it – present in the family history of future generations. The transformation of the image into a memory does not occur; the photo falls out of the family archive, and the chain of the story about the family is interrupted.

²⁴ П.П. Белянський, *Бабуся вмирати не любила*, Харків 2024, с. 213.

²⁵ Ibidem, с. 215.

²⁶ Ibidem, с. 213.

Conclusions

The archive as a symbolic memory space in a literary work reveals the complex relationship between subject and narrative and between personal and collective identities. Modern Ukrainian literature offers the reader three archive image models. All of them are based on the idea of a close connection between the past and the story of the past. An archive records the past of a particular person or community. The preservation and filling of the archive gives the narrative about the character's identity durability and continuity, integrity, and ontological perspective. Destruction or destruction of the archive, on the contrary, makes it impossible to develop symbolic meanings, while meanings in the biography of a person or community (nation, family), change or distort identity, and turn the narrative into an incomplete mosaic of random references and guesses. As a representation of the past, the archive connects time (the past) and space (the archive itself, the house, etc.). Items from the archive (notably, they are most often photographs), their loss and finding trigger the mechanisms of recalling history or the mechanisms of the self-discovery of the character themselves. Narratives, which also present the symbolic power of the archive as a space of memory, make it possible not only to explain the life of the person depicted in the photo but also to reveal traces of what constitutes personal or collective identity. An archive as a space is not only a testimony of experiences or events but a symbolic space of the heritage of the past, in which individual and collective identity is revealed. Depicting the archive in a work of art allows the unfolding of the story of the invisible traces of the past in the life of an individual, the power of the relationship between the object and the story, image, and writing, thanks to which the connection of time and space is preserved and the collective identity is intertwined with the personal one.

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ПРО АВТОРА

Олена Романенко – доктор філологічних наук, професор кафедри історії української літератури, теорії літератури і літературної творчості Київського національного університету імені Тараса Шевченка. **Публікації: монографія:** *Семіосфера української масової літератури. Текст. Читач. Епоха*, Київ 2014. **Статті:** *Topos of the Province in Ukrainian Literature: Post-Soviet Discourse*, „Logos” 2020, № 105, р. 89-196; *Феномен травматичного письма (Олександр Терещенко «Життя після 16:30»)*, «Синopsis: текст, контекст, медіа» 2021, № 27 (2), с. 42-50; *Dyskurs migracyjny współczesnej literatury ukraińskiej: model teoretyczny i horyzonty tematyczne*, „Studia Ukrainica Posnaniensia” 2022, nr 10 (1), s. 193-212; *Українська відеопоезія як естетичний феномен сучасного літературного процесу*, «Вісник Київського національного університету імені Тараса Шевченка. Літературознавство. Мовознавство. Фольклористика» 2022, № 1 (31), с. 61-65.

ORCID: 0000-0003-0150-2494

Email: o.romanenko@knu.ua