The Tonality of the Archives of the Memories of Forcibly Displaced Ukrainians

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"We say to the memory – stay with us,
don't leave us alone…"
Serhiy Zhadan, *Voroshylovgrad*[1]

In the current Russo–Ukrainian War, Ukraine fights not only for its territorial integrity and independence but also for the memory, culture, language, faith, and history of all the peoples whose identity Russian propaganda tries to erase. The imperial discourse of this same propaganda also inspired some Western intellectuals to talk about the 'Nowhere Nation', 'Nasty Ukraine', the 'Cleft Country', and the 'Unwanted Stepchild of Soviet Perestroika', among other names for Ukraine.[2] The placement of Ukraine within the mental map of Western Europeans, was, however, also facilitated by the tonality of Ukrainian existential resistance to Russian aggression, the roots of which go deep into the past.[3]

We know about historical events thanks to preserved records held in private and public archives and libraries. The influence of archives on processes of generating cultural memory can hardly be overestimated, since, in the words of Thomas Osborne, "the archive is a means of generating ethical and epistemological credibility".[4] As Ray Edmondson points out, the power of archives rests on this credibility: "archivists, like librarians, museologists and other collecting professionals, exercise a particular kind of power over the survival, accessibility and interpretation of the

1 Serhiy Zhadan, *Voroshylovgrad*, Kharkiv: Folio, 2010, 216 [author's trans.].

2 Mykola Riabchuk, "Mapping a 'Nowhere Nation' | Ukraine! Unmuted", Cultural Strategy Institute, https://isc.lviv.ua/en/ryabchuk-ukrzriz/ [accessed: 31.07.2024]. This essay articulates some of the focal points of the Russian imperial narrative in order to deconstruct this narrative.

3 For the linguistic aspect of this confrontation, see: Michael S. Flier and Andrea Graziosi, "The Battle for Ukrainian: An Introduction", *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 35/1–4, 2017/18, 11–30.

4 Thomas Osborne, "The ordinariness of the archive", *History of the Human Sciences* 12/2, May 1999, 51, https://doi.org/10.1177/09526959922120243.

world's cultural memory".[5] On the one hand, the growth of archives increases and complicates their influence on human interaction with reality. The traditional functions of the archive, including "to ensure rights, to provide historical sources, to participate in administration and to disseminate culture", argues Lajos Körmendy, have changed.[6] According to him, the new philosophy of archiving focuses on the following: "popularisation, transparency, openness, market approach, media culture and information-centricity".[7] On the other hand, lost records or unrecorded events[8] cannot influence the shaping of the vision of the past for future generations. Such pasts can also be controlled through the prohibition of access to recorded and preserved documents, books, artefacts, and other material.

The archive as a metaphor for collective memory makes us think not only about the authenticity of the events themselves but also about the authenticity of the archival memory of them. Lara Cox points to this double problem in her comments on Jacques Derrida's *Archive Fever*.[9] Additionally, she singles out trends such as anarchising (i.e., destroying the order of memories), which, according to Derrida, threatens stable, exclusive memory.

In the case of daily publications (which also have their own archives), it is obvious that not all everyday events attract coverage in the press. Moreover, the media coverage of events at times significantly depends on an editorial perspective or on state policy. Therefore, when reading about the seemingly same events (e.g., the beginning of full-scale Russian aggression towards Ukraine) in different news sources (e.g., in domestic or foreign ones), it is possible to get the impression that they discuss different events (e.g., in terms of the scales or evaluations of the events, etc.).[10]

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5 Ray Edmonson, *Audiovisual Archiving: Philosophy and Principles*, report, Paris: UNESCO, 2004, 1, https://www.fiafnet.org/images/tinyUpload/E-Resources/Official-Documents/Philosophy-of-Audiovisual-Archiving_UNESCO.pdf [accessed: 08.12.2023].

6 Lajos Körmendy, "Changes in archives' philosophy and functions at the turn of the 20th/21st centuries", *Archival Science* 7, 2007, 167–177, here 167, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-007-9052-8.

7 Ibid.

8 In this case, primary sources are supposed to be not the events themselves, but their documented description.

9 Lara Cox, "Reaching for Archive Fever: A Tall Tale about Queer 'Made in France'", *Paragraph* 39/3, 319–334, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26418651. Cox responds to: Jacques Derrida, "Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression", trans. Eric Prenowitz, *Diacritics* 25/2, 1995, 9–63, https://www.jstor.org/stable/465144.

10 I discuss this further in the following texts: Olha Haidamachuk, "The 'Emergency Grab Bag' of Memory, or the Tonalities of News Headlines About the War in Ukraine – Part One", *TRAFO – Blog for Transregional Research*, 21 March 2023, https://trafo.hypotheses.org/45765; and Olha Haidamachuk, "The 'Emergency Grab Bag' of Memory, or the Tonalities of News Headlines About the War in Ukraine – Part Two", *TRAFO – Blog for Transregional Research*, 29 June 2023, https://trafo.hypotheses.org/47670.

This is important to consider because the Russian Federation behaves as aggressively on the information field as it does on the ground, distorting facts and reality,[11] and thereby trying to impose its own interpretation. And if, indeed, "[l]ife increasingly becomes lived in the shadow of the archive", as Mike Featherstone suggests, then the significance of archives is obvious.[12] Guided by the belief that history is written by the victors, Russian policy tries to justify its crimes to posterity in advance, setting itself up to approach the past only as a 'history' of its own victories. And it is for this reason that, in the occupied territories, Russians burn Ukrainian books,[13] thus

11 Mykola Riabchuk writes, for instance, about the "distorted perception of reality, harmful for Kyiv, beneficial for Moscow" and, ultimately, the threat of genocide. Riabchuk, "Mapping a 'Nowhere Nation'".

12 Mike Featherstone, "Archive", *Theory, Culture & Society* 23/2–3, 2006, 591–596, here 591.

13 In the occupied territories, Russians burn books about Ukrainian history and the Holodomor and even Ukrainian fairy tales, among other publications. This is regularly reported by Ukrainian mass media. See, for example: *Televiziinoi sluzhby novyn* (*TSN*) (*Television news service*), "Rosiiski okupanty spaliuiut ukrainsku literaturu na tymchasovo nepidkontrolnykh Ukraini tepytopiiahk – HUR" ("Russian Occupants Burn Ukrainian Literature in the Temporarily Uncontrolled Territories of Ukraine – the Defence Intelligence of Ukraine"), 24 March 2022, https://tsn.ua/ato/rosiyski-okupanti-spalyuyut-ukrayinsku-literaturu-na-timchasovo-nepidkontrolnih-ukrayini-teritoriyah-gur-2018890.html [accessed 31.07.2024]; Andrii Kushchenko, "Rosiiski okupanty spaliuiut ukrainski knyhy, u tomu chysli pidruchnyky z istorii" ("Russian Occupiers Destroyed Ukrainian Books, Including History Textbooks", *Patriot Donbasu* (*Patriot of the Donbas*) 22 May 2022, https://donpatriot.news/article/rosiyski-okupanti-spalyuyut-ukrayinski-knigi-u-tomu-chisli-pidruchniki-z-istoriyi [accessed: 08.12.2023]; *Vholos* (*Aloud*), "'Orky i dykuny': Larysa Nitsoi pro rosiian, iaki spaliuiut ukrainski knyzhky na okupovanykh terytoriiakh" ("'Orcs and Savages': Larysa Nitsoi about Russians Burning Ukrainian Books in the Occupied Territories"), 26 July 2022, https://vgolos.ua/news/okupanti-znishchuyut-ukrayinski-knigi-tomu-shcho-same-v-nih----nasha-identichnist.-i-ce-trivaie-vzhe-sotni-rokiv----pismennicya-larisa-nicoy_1425095.html [accessed 31.07.2024]; Markiian Klymkovetskyi, "Na Kharkivshchyni okupanty znyshchuiut ukrainski knyzhky, vkliuchno z dytiachymy kazkamy" ("In the Kharkiv Oblast, Occupiers Destroy Ukrainian Books, Including Children's Fairy Tales"), *hromadske*, 25 July 2022, https://hromadske.ua/posts/na-harkivshini-okupanti-znishuyut-ukrayinski-knizhki-vklyuchno-z-dityachimi-kazkami [accessed 31.07.2024]; Serhii Ziatiev, "'Literaturna' viina rashystiv, abo Pro shcho zaboroneno chytaty na tymchasovo okupovanykh terytoriiakh" ("The 'Literary' War of the Rashists, or, What is Forbidden to Read in the Temporarily Occupied Territories"), *ArmiiaINFORM* (*ArmyINFORM*), 07 September 2022, https://armyinform.com.ua/2022/09/07/literaturna-vijna-rashystiv-abo-pro-shho-zaboroneno-chytaty-na-tymchasovo-okupovanyh-terytoriyah/ [accessed 08.12.2023]; *Espreso*, "Na okupovanykh terytoriiakh rosiiany spaliuiut knyzhky z ukrainskoi literatury, – Henshtab ZSU" ("Russians Burn Books of Ukrainian Literature in Occupied Territories – the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine"), 19 October 2022, https://espreso.tv/na-okupovanikh-teritoriyakh-rosiyani-spalyuyut-knizhki-z-ukrainskoi-literaturi-genshtab-zsu [accessed 31.07.2024]; and *Nezalezhne televiziine ahentstvo* (*NTA*) (*Independent Television Agency*), "Na Kharkivshchyni kolaborant skladav spysky ukrainskykh knyzhok dlia znyshchennia" ("In the Kharkiv Oblast,

claiming a monopoly on memory spaces and leaving no room for the possibility of an alternative. Accordingly, from the point of view of common sense, it is extremely important to instead have archives comprised of various data, documents, and testimonies about events, allowing for comprehensive studies of them in the future.

Do people still remember the German author Heinrich Heine's prophecy? In 1821, in *Almansor: A Tragedy* (*Almanso: Eine Tragödie*), the author wrote, "[t]here, where one burns books, one will in the end also burn people".[14] In the centre of Berlin, at Bebelplatz, the site of the 10 May 1933 Nazi book burnings, the monument of the Empty Library stands as a warning. Is its message still eloquently clear for humanity? How many more books connected to Ukrainian national memory should be burnt – as has also already occurred to Tatar, Moldavian, and Georgian books – recalling this prophecy? The impunity of evil only strengthens it and opens the way to new frontiers. Delay in punishing evil locally leads to the need to defend against evil globally. Human memory already contains this knowledge and Heine's prophecy reminds us of this experience.

Temporal distancing from a given event intensifies the 'anarchising' forces that Cox and Derrida wrote about, because the witnesses of the event disappear forever, taking with them unrecorded memories that could have, under the influence of time or lived experience, transformed into living archives. With digital technology, archiving possibilities have increased dramatically, but at the same time, so has the vulnerability of archives. How reliable are guarantees of protection, preservation, and access to data considering that it is easy to erase an electronic archive, without even the need to burn something? David Beer draws attention to another challenge in his reflections on mass media, asking, if social networks are an archive, how can we use them in a conversation about the life they record?[15] In this process, the dy-

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a Collaborator Compiled Lists of Ukrainian Books to Be Destroyed"), 23 December 2022, https://www.nta.ua/na-harkivshhyni-kolaborant-skladav-spysky-ukrayinskyh-knyzhok-dlya-znyshhennya/ [accessed 31.07.2024].

14 "Dort, wo man Bücher verbrennt, verbrennt man auch am Ende Menschen" In: Heinrich Heine, *Almansor,* Digitale Bibliothek, p. 8, http://www.digbib.org/Heinrich_Heine_1797/Almansor_.pdf [accessed 31.07.2024].

15 David Beer, "Archive Fever revisited: Algorithmic archons and the ordering of social media", in: Leah Lievrouw and Brian Loader (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Digital Media and Communication*, London: Routledge, 2020, 99–111, here 100.

namics of the archive,[16] its connection to the 'archon'[17] (for Derrida meaning those who commanded or 'the documents' guardians'[18]), and the etymological connection of both words to the ancient Greek '*arkhē*'[19] (simultaneously meaning 'commencement' and 'commandment') are emphasised. In the word *arkhē*, Derrida finds a definitional opposition between the natural and the legal and relates the latter directly to the authority of the powerful (either humans or gods).[20] I consider it necessary to also pay attention to the fact that commandments/laws are dominated by persuasive and imperative intonations. Accordingly, Beer approaches the 'archive' through a tonal range, offering to read it as a platform from which both prescripts/orders and announcements/pronouncements can be made.[21]

Archival data provides a toolbox for the accumulation of memory and, at the same time, makes prescriptions. Therefore, it is, in fact, a source of authority. Beer's approach is reminiscent of Michel Foucault's "dictation of the archive" and of the archive as a source of the formation and transformation of memory according to

16 Derrida uses the word 'archon' in his reflections on the new situation of speech, which seems to have to give up its 'archon' status in favour of writing. I believe that Derrida, with the help of the metaphorical 'archon', focuses our attention on nonobvious powerful forces. We should keep this in mind for things like the fact that the magazine *Archont*, published since 2017 in the Russian Federation, contains sections like "Current Geopolitics", "National Security", "Political Technologies", and "The National Question", among others. In his book *Archive Fever*, Derrida explains why it is worth to pay more attention to the archon, stating, particularly, that "[t]he archons are first of all the documents' guardians. They do not only ensure the physical security of what is deposited and of the substrate. They are also accorded the hermeneutic right and competence. They have the power to interpret the archives. Entrusted to such archons, these documents in effect state the law: they recall the law and call on or impose the law. To be guarded thus, in the jurisdiction of this *stating the law*, they needed at once a guardian and a localization. Even in their guardianship or their hermeneutic tradition, the archives could neither do without substrate nor without residence". Derrida, "Archive Fever", 10, stress in the original.

17 Derrida writes: "The meaning of 'archive,' its only meaning, comes to it from the Greek *arkheion*: initially a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the archons, those who commanded". Derrida, "Archive Fever", 9.

18 "The archons are first of all the documents' guardians. They do not only ensure the physical security of what is deposited and of the substrate. They are also accorded the hermeneutic right and competence. They have the power to interpret the archives." Derrida, "Archive Fever", 10.

19 Specifically, Derrida wrote: "*Arkhē*, we recall, names at once the *commencement* and the *commandment*. This name apparently coordinates two principles in one: the principle according to nature or history, *there* where things *commence* – physical, historical, or ontological principle – but also the principle according to the law, *there* where men and gods *command*, *there* where authority, social order are exercised, *in this place* from which *order* is given – nomological principle". Derrida "Archive Fever", 9, stress in the original.

20 Ibid.

21 Beer, "Archive Fever revisited", 100.

Featherstone.[22] Featherstone also points to the blurring of boundaries: "[i]ncreasingly the boundaries between the archive and everyday life become blurred through digital recording and storage technologies".[23] To this, we can also add the 'decolonial mission' of archives. Siseko Kumalo, for instance, hopes that the authoritative power of such a mission can allow for substantively engaging ontologies of Indigeneity together with archives.[24]

I believe that all these conditions also apply to both collective and individual memory. Beyond this, it is important to highlight the tonal background of archiving. This is made up of the elements that are fixed in the process of archiving, controlled through preservation, and produced during familiarisation with archival data, all occurring after the archived events. Against the background of these changing tonalities (which have different attitudes and evaluations), the contents of the archive can be perceived differently,[25] ultimately affecting their status. For example, these contents can be open or closed (e.g., secret vs. public, or privately vs. publicly accessible), have different scales of value or importance, contain diverse periods of storage, and vary in terms of what they disclose or erase, among other things. Such considerations allow us to better understand the effects of war on archival processes.

How Do War and Displacement Reshape the Tonalities of Memory?

War throws a person off balance, traumatises them, destroys their confidence in the future, overturns their worldview, and tests the depth of their convictions and the strength of their relationships. War is a complete disorientation, an undermining of values, and a powerful challenge to ecology, humanity, consciousness, and all life-forms. War can suddenly cast a person from their everyday life into complete disarray, thereby not only challenging the survival strategies applicable to life during peace, but also shaking the foundations of individual and collective memory. The

22 Beer, "Archive Fever revisited", 100. For the other two works, see: Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith, New York: Pantheon Books, 1972; and Featherstone, "Archive".

23 Featherstone, "Archive", 591.

24 Siseko H. Kumalo, "Resurrecting the Black Archive through the decolonisation of philosophy in South Africa", *Third World Thematics: A TWQ Journal* 5/1–2, 2020, 19–36, https://doi.org/10.1080/23802014.2020.1798276.

25 Olena Moroz investigates the correlation of textual tonality and emotional experiences during reading. Olena Moroz, "Tonalnist iak tekstova kategoriia: ontologichnyi aspekt" ("Tonality as a Textual Category: The Ontological Aspect"), *Nova Filologiia* (*New Philology*) 43, 2011, 94–99, here 94, http://nbuv.gov.ua/UJRN/Novfil_2011_43_18.

shock of war not only causes a reflexive revision of memories, but, in the key of disturbing tonalities, it can provoke the deconstruction of memory through a decolonisation of its intonations once the muteness caused by the shock is overcome.[26]

In my research, I consider the memories of Ukrainians who were forced to leave their homes and go abroad due to the full-scale invasion.[27] I seek to discover which tonal foundations of memory they rely on in their present, and which foundations, conversely, risk their immediate detonation. I suggest that the latter disturbing tonalities are capable of both evoking reflections on a collective past and prompting the revision of individual memories. This (re)articulation of the collective and individual past, under the influence of unrelenting anxiety, can, in turn, provoke intonational changes in the deconstruction of memory as an effort to 'rewrite it without mistakes'. Despite their focus on the past through reflection and deconstruction, both processes aim at the future and at the hope for a 'peaceful future' determined by the 'security' of the memory of the past. I consider the decolonisation of intonations to be the deepest layer of such security. That is, in this case, a conscious rejection of exposed false tonalities imposed by Russian discourse. Accordingly, I analyse the memories of forcibly displaced Ukrainians in precisely this triple key, set against the background of general anxiety. Specifically, I first look at reflexive revisions; second, I consider the provocation of the deconstruction of memory; and, third, I discuss the decolonisation of intonations.

The Reflective Revision of Memory

In a reflective revision of their memories of the day before 24 February 2022, some of the Ukrainians I interviewed, who were forced to escape the war abroad and found themselves in Berlin, indicated a premonition of anxiety or an intuitive feeling of a tense atmosphere: "we're already somewhere in the 20s [of February], but somehow

26 For instance, the contemporary Ukrainian philosophers Volodymyr Yermolenko and Vakhtang Kebuladze, in a conversation about the 'struggle against muteness', chose tones that range between 'laughing at the enemy' and 'love for one's own.' Kult: Podcast, "Kultura u viini: borotba z nimotoiu, smikh nad vorohom, liubov do svoikh. Pamiati Oleksandra Roitburda" ("Culture during War: Fighting Muteness, Laughing at the Enemy, Loving Your Own. In Memory of Oleksandr Roitburd"), YouTube video, 23 January 2023, 56:40, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GYyu9m8sIrM [accessed 31.07.2024].

27 I conducted a qualitative study based on oral interviews with 13 Ukrainians from October to December 2022. The participants were 11 women and two men. Their ages ranged from 20 to 70 and they originated from the following Ukrainian oblasts: the Cherkasy Oblast, the Donetsk Oblast, the Lviv Oblast, the Kharkiv Oblast, the Kherson Oblast, the Kyiv Oblast, the Poltava Oblast, and the Sumy Oblast. I asked the questions in Ukrainian, but they were free to answer in Ukrainian or in Russian. One woman from the Kharkiv Oblast answered exclusively in Russian and one man from the Kyiv Oblast answered most of the questions in Russian.

[…] we're even at work: we already talk about concerts, but this anxiety hangs in the air… you seem to talk about concerts, but the anxiety hangs" (Ukrainian woman, 20s, Lviv Oblast). This occurred both in the west and the east of Ukraine:

> It was on that night of the 24th that I didn't sleep. I didn't even go to sleep. I was preparing for my usual things. I was preparing for lessons. But something strange held me back. I don't know how to explain it, but at 5 o'clock in the morning, as soon as I went to bed, immediately, within two minutes, I heard explosions. It was like there was some kind of energy in the air, so I couldn't sleep that night (Ukrainian woman, 40s, Kharkiv).

Neither the feelings of anxiety or tension nor the memories of these feelings result in deeper reflections in my interlocuters, regardless of whether the memories revolve around a 'we-then' or 'me-then'.

Some felt anxiety but, with hesitation, tried to distance themselves from it with 'rational' arguments. Through this hesitation, notes of panic are audible between the intuitive sense of a threat and the rational resistance to it:

> There was a lot of information, it was written on the internet that a full-scale war is possible … it seems that on the 16th of February… [t]here was some such information, but this information was denied. Nothing started. And then we … think: "But this … is somehow 'another piece of nonsense'". Let's say this. Well, this is fake, I think, somehow… But on the 16th, I heard something like that information. And somehow, I was … a little unwell. I thought something like: "What should I do? Suddenly it starts – what is it? Where are they going? Where to turn? To whom to run?" (Ukrainian man, 20s, Kherson Oblast).

It seems that these memories still cause confusing feelings, thoughts, and existential questions without answers.

However, people who were immersed in work and everyday life and preoccupied with their own affairs do not recall having had reasons for anxiety at all, thus admitting a certain conscious or unconscious insensitivity or indifference to public moods: "I didn't feel any danger at all" (Ukrainian woman, 30s, Kharkiv Oblast). Or, as someone else states, "[h]ow was I doing? I woke up in the morning, worked at one job, in the evening at another job. And after all that I had some fun […] and we didn't watch the news. Didn't watch…" (Ukrainian woman, 20s, Poltava Oblast). Maximally focusing one's attention and efforts on set goals and thereby immersing oneself in one's microcosm is a valuable skill during times of peace. However, during war, the lack of an established connection with the macrocosm increases mental vulnerability: "I don't even remember exactly anymore, because it was a whole day of panic and inexplicable emotions" (Ukrainian woman, 30s, Kharkiv Oblast). Reflection is complicated by the scale of emotions, which, like a wall of sound, hides memories.

Of course, on the morning of 24 February 2022, everyone was shocked without exception: both those who were already anxious and those who were caught by surprise. Some refused to believe in the reality of the disaster, experiencing something like a collapse of time caused by the noise of the explosions:

> Despite the fact that both my family and I were morally prepared, there was a feeling of unreality to what was happening. Unrealities! I personally had the feeling that time had moved to the Second World War, because the sounds were exactly the same as they were back then. The first shelling was heavy artillery. The GRAD [self-propelled multiple rocket launcher] came later (Ukrainian woman, 60s, Kharkiv Oblast).

Such temporal collapses generate a layering of memory, a phenomenon described by Norman Saadi Nikro: "[T]he more distant the past becomes, the more layered are the modalities and forms of mediations by which past events resonate into the present, and become significant for the present".[28] The sounds heard or the shock waves felt by the explosions will be etched in the memory of many Ukrainians, at least from the morning of 24 February 2022.

However, for some, visuality dominates their memories from the start; they experienced similar disorders to those above, but in the form of a spatial collapse or dissociation: "It was… you know… I'll say, like in a movie, like a movie was supposedly being recorded – I felt like this at that moment" (Ukrainian woman, 40s, Kharkiv). Some experienced a spatial collapse as an alienation from space. In these cases, 'reality' appeared both as inadequate and as an experience of the 'afterlife' (or of the 'other side' of life), with a deep horror of nonexistence at its core:

> We are all smart, educated, classy people here – and this kind of violence against us is simply unacceptable! And these poor mothers with children, with those bags – it's just terrible! It's like you look at them and… And as soon as you cross the border, they give you some food or tea there, and you're like: "Wow, now you're a homeless person". Like, I'll say it like this: "That's it! In Ukraine, I was, well, at least someone, but here I am a homeless person". And I had this thought: "Well, that's it, life is over…" (Ukrainian woman, 20s, Lviv Oblast).

Similarly, someone else from Eastern Ukraine said: "it seemed to me that I was probably not in this world, or that I had died, or something like that. There was this kind of stress that I thought that everything, life, was over" (Ukrainian woman, 40s, Sumy

28 Norman Saadi Nikro, "Middle East and North Africa", in: Yifat Gutman and Jenny Wüstenberg (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Memory Activism*, New York: Routledge, 2023, 318–324, here 319.

Oblast/Kharkiv). In these examples, there is a certain echo in the memories, repetitions with stresses of varying intensity, as seen in the recurrence of "unreality […] Unrealities!", "like in a movie, like a movie", and "homeless […] homeless". Some repetitions can also be traced only at the semantic level, through synonymous phrases: "not in this world […] I had died […] life, is over". These repetitions seem to be a symptom of the pulsating obsession of anxious thoughts.

However, even those who dared to accept that war was bound to happen were not ready for it when it came. It was a shocking and painful insight:

> Although I had an opinion about that, that such an attack on the part of Russia is quite possible and rather likely, I postponed packing my emergency grab bag, although I planned it. I postponed it. I didn't want to believe it. I thought about it, but I didn't want to believe it… All the signs suggested the fact that it would happen, this war, although I still didn't want to believe it. The accumulation of troops near the borders of Ukraine, the policy – sharply anti-Ukrainian – pursued by our northern neighbour. The policy aimed at fostering a hatred towards Ukrainians – all this led me to think that they are preparing for this war, they are preparing for an invasion (Ukrainian woman, 60s, Kharkiv Oblast).

In this statement are several instances of the rhythmic repetitions of disturbing thoughts: "postponed […] postponed", "I didn't want to believe […] I didn't want to believe […] I still didn't want to believe", and "they are preparing for this war, they are preparing for an invasion". Accordingly, seven to nine months after the mentioned events, the pain experienced is still acute and it is just as difficult to believe in what has already happened.

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine was an even greater shock to those who refused to believe it and rejected any warnings as unfit for this time in history and the state of contemporary humanity. For instance, one respondent from Western Ukraine stated:

> My mother said a week or two earlier that this is possible. I started to laugh, I said: "What are you talking about? In general, this cannot be! … What … well, how could it even be imagined…? What does "full-scale" mean? What? As in the Second World War, will some army go? But this is unreal! (Ukrainian woman, 20s, Lviv Oblast).

Similarly, a respondent from the east recalled: "I didn't believe that this could happen. I didn't believe that Russia could attack" (Ukrainian woman, 40s, Sumy Oblast/Kharkiv). Originating from the centre of the country, another respondent stated:

> I knew, I knew from the mass media, but, again, never in my mind, I could not have guessed that one day it would still start. Everyone read, saw – including

> me – and watched the news, and heard a lot of information, even from Western media, but to accept the idea that this could really happen, I, for example, could never imagine… I could not… at that time imagine in my mind that such a thing could really happen in the 21st century (Ukrainian woman, 40s, Cherkasy Oblast).

Lastly, an interlocutor from the capital shared, "I didn't think this would happen, but when Russian helicopters first flew over our house on the morning of February 24th, followed by our Ukrainian fighter jets, I understood that it would be very serious" (Ukrainian man, 60s, Kyiv).

These Ukrainians' revisions of their memories about their traumatic experience are characterised by an alarming tone. While younger people (in their 20s and 30s) withstood the pressure of this anxiety through outward calm, many people with more life experience (in their 40s, 60s, and 70s) teared up or strained their voices. In this self-revision, the individual memory archives of life during peace generate resistance (even after the fact) to the awareness of a threat that has become reality. Instead, these memory archives hold deep historical knowledge that covers this experience and its resonances with the present.

The Provocation of the Deconstruction of Memory

Dissonances caused by the perception of reality as 'unrealistic' can bring reflection to the point of the deconstruction of memories. I was interested in what the respondents focus on in their memories and why. What is the (in)adequate assessment of a dangerous situation based on? This deconstruction seems to be vitally necessary. If in a tonal 'picture of the world' the known intonations suddenly do not work – that is, they do not provide a sense of support – then it is impossible to rely on them to build a strategy for the future. The provoked deconstruction of memory is not only a revision of the accents once placed on customary tonalities, but sometimes a shift in tonalities altogether. The resistance to accepting the horror that has become reality permeates these memories, provoking their deconstruction:

> I understand – this is something that should not happen and should not happen to anyone, because children should not see it, we should not experience it. There [during the war], I am more than a 20-year-old, I have to think there… I don't know… about something other than [what a 20-year-old thinks about], and about things like some UAVs [unmanned aerial vehicles] here, some Javelins there. Why do I need to know this? Why do I need to know how to make a Molotov cocktail? Well, this is not normal a priori. Why should children hear explosions? Even those in Lviv, those anywhere. They should not hear these bad words – well, even those, about the "Russian warship…" – this should not happen. That's

> all, it just wasn't meant to be. And this is not normal (Ukrainian woman, 20s, Lviv Oblast).

The insistence on erasing something from memory as an anomaly ("should not happen […] should not happen […] should not happen") as well as the desire to return to the past, idealised in retrospect, indicate implicit tones of rebellion and despair simultaneously. Another respondent states:

> I've analysed a lot here in these eight months and I'm actually telling my child about it now, I'll tell everyone that we should, having a peaceful life, appreciate what we really have. After all, I remember at my work I was not satisfied with a lot of things, although now analysing, turning my mind back, I had a good life. I didn't have to anger God, as they say. I had a good life and I really want to return to it. I really want to go back – to that past life that I had (Ukrainian woman, 40s, Cherkasy Oblast).

Both anger at the present and a shift to a positive tone towards the past, stemming from despair about the sense of a lost future, can accumulate in anarchising impulses in the archives of individual memory.

Those who packed their 'emergency grab bags' in advance or too quickly (recommendations to pack such a bag were heard everywhere two weeks before the start of the full-scale invasion) later admitted that some of the things turned out to be unnecessary:

> My emergency grab bag was, as I now think, not entirely successful. I put medicine [in] there, some key things necessary for children, there were things like socks, I don't know … tights. Then, for some reason, I stuck candles in there. I still think – why candles? Then there are matches, toilet paper… and some food: some kind of cookies, some dry porridge (Ukrainian woman, 30s, Kharkiv Oblast).

This packing of 'unnecessary' items is connected to not only panicked confusion and unconsciously acquired assumptions,[29] but also to a revision of one's value system and a reassessment of the values themselves:

29 The Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Science published recommendations for what to put in the emergency grab bag. The list of recommended things does indeed include matches and candles, but no clothes. Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, "Tryvozhna valiza" ("Emergency Grab Bag"), https://mon.gov.ua/storage/app/media/civilniy-zahist/2022/03.02/Rekom.vmist.tryvozhnoyi.valizy.03.02.pdf [accessed 31.07.2024].

> The importance of material things in this life has greatly weakened for me. I can't say that it doesn't matter to me. It matters. After all, as long as a person lives, they need a roof over their head, food, drink, and clothing. It cannot help but interest a person, all this, but it's a globally reinterpreted meaning of the material. It is [now] secondary, tertiary, tenth [in the order of importance] in our life (Ukrainian woman, 60s, Kharkiv Oblast).

Often, the interviewees mention documents – that is, one's personal archive – and things required for self-identification – or artefacts of one's own history – among their truly valuable possessions. They recognise the items directly related to their personal memories as valuable. However, family heirlooms (e.g., photographs, souvenirs, gifts, and hand-made items such as a mother's embroidery, a grandmother's rushnyks, or children's drawings, etc.), books, and collections (e.g., of stamps or postcards) rarely find a place in the 'emergency grab bag': "I am very sorry about the photos. Well, I didn't even think that everything would be like this… So much… Still, I thought: well, maybe it won't last long" (Ukrainian woman, 70s, Donetsk Oblast/Kharkiv Oblast). During catastrophic moments, most people do not think about eternity or the distant future. Extreme conditions force them to focus on the current moment or a couple of weeks at most.

Splitting the life of every Ukrainian into a 'before' and an 'after',[30] the full-scale invasion stressed the quality of the lost former life. Most of the respondents reflect on their life 'before' in a positive tone:

> I was happy then in my own way. At that time … everything was fine with me … Considering that I lived off my own money, I didn't have a super well-paying profession and I didn't work very much … but I went to the gym, went to the beautician, bought things for myself. Everything was fine with me, that's why… I lived well (Ukrainian woman, 20s, Lviv Oblast).

Or, as someone else states, "I felt very good, because this question [of feeling good] is very closely related to self-realisation for me. I feel happy when I can work, earn [money], and cover all my needs" (Ukrainian woman, 30s, Kharkiv Oblast). These positive views show their desire to return to Ukraine as soon as it becomes safe to live there.[31]

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30 For example: "Life really split into a before and an after" (Ukrainian woman, 20s, Poltava Oblast).

31 See also: "I think this is the effect of lost opportunities. It's like the effect of lost freedoms, yes. If you have rights and you don't use them, that's fine. As soon as your right is taken away, you must have it […]. Freedom, when you have it, you don't appreciate it. If your home, your home, your country are taken away, you start to appreciate it" (Ukrainian woman, 20s, Poltava Oblast).

However, for some, the experience of living abroad changed their perception of 'before', revealing lost opportunities in hindsight: "I think that then it seemed to us that we were happy … I think that we were content with little, and this was enough for us, and we didn't think that it could be better" (Ukrainian woman, 40s, Kharkiv).

The intonations of the past shift, if not into a negative range, then into a neutral one, as some of the respondents question the authenticity of the happiness they remember. On the one hand, the tone of doubt in such cases, as Derrida suggested, not only provokes anarchising trends, but also threatens a stable memory. In this case, there are no rebellion, no despair, and no anger, just as there is no fear of the future. Instead, enthusiasm sounds clearly. Therefore, on the other hand, this same doubt opens the respondents' eyes to unexpectedly acquired opportunities. And, if at the core of a positive (or even an idealised) assessment of one's past is the desire to return to Ukraine, then doubts can fuel the desire to stay in Germany to create a life of a different quality in the here and now, and not in an uncertain future.

The Decolonisation of Intonations of Memory

This revolutionary update of memories actualises the fight against false tones for some Ukrainians. As I discuss above, the 'decolonial mission' is embedded in the archives themselves. Individual memory archives are no exception. In some cases, shock, reflection, and deconstruction result in the decolonisation of intonations (in fact, due to their detonation). That is, they lead to a rejection of the myths that feed these intonations and to a change of accents. For example, the tonality of the word 'brother' transformed noticeably[32] – it has become irritating to the Ukrainian ear. At the heart of this detonation is the desire to get rid of an obsessive false brotherhood, insidiously used by the enemy to lull the vigilance of Ukrainians. Similarly, the phrase 'born in the Soviet Union' also becomes irritating:

> [W]hen we […] issued my foreign passport […] the Germans translated that it [my birthplace] was the Soviet Union. It hurt me so much (laughs). Although I was actually born in the USSR, it affected me. I think: well, what is the Soviet Union? If I am a Ukrainian […] [f]or me, Ukraine is my native country. Although [it was] part of the Soviet Union. Was there a Ukraine in the USSR too? – Ukraine! I never considered myself as "born in the Soviet Union". Like my […] cousin, […] whose

32 The Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, together with the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy, created an infographic to debunk the myth of 'fraternal' nations. The infographic is based on the history of the relationship between Ukrainians and Russians. Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, "Why Ukrainians And Russians Are Not Fraternal Nations (infographics)", https://uinp.gov.ua/informaciyni-materialy/rosiysko-ukrayinska-viyna-istorychnyy-kontekst/why-ukrainians-and-russians-are-not-fraternal-nations-infographics [accessed: 31.07.2024].

> mother is Ukrainian, he was born in Moldova, in Chisinau. […] He currently lives in Moscow. When we started texting, he wrote to me: "…what happened to you there? You are being bombed there – that's what [is happening], right?" I said: "Yes… it's true." And he: "Well, [it's] nothing, be patient!" The words "be patient" – and then I immediately stopped writing to him. After a while, he writes to me: "You have horror over there. Just horror! What is 'grandpa' [Putin] doing!". He writes a message – and immediately deletes it. That is, he is afraid. I say: "But God forbid what he [Putin] does. Just horror! […] Well … you are Ukrainian! […] You used to come to your grandmother's house, to your grandfather's house, in Ukraine, every summer. […] Well, you know what Ukraine is. Your mother is buried here, your father is buried here in Ukraine". And he tells me: "I was born in the Soviet Union". […] I think: "Oh, damn you! In the Soviet Union!" (laughs). For me, this is how important it is… [and] all the more so right now! Well, I was not born in the Soviet Union, I was born on Ukrainian land in Ukraine (Ukrainian woman, 40s, Sumy Oblast/Kharkiv Oblast).

The essence of this misunderstanding is that Ukrainians (even when Ukraine was a part of the Soviet Union) thought of themselves as Ukrainians, while those outside of Ukraine perceived and sometimes still perceive Ukrainians as '(post-)Soviet people' (or, as I note at the beginning of the essay, the country is seen as the 'Nowhere Nation').

For the Ukrainian ear, an important shift in tonality also occurred with the word 'nationalist'. For centuries, Ukrainians were taught to be ashamed of their identity and provincialism was imposed on them through oppressions, prohibitions, restrictions, repressions, famines, genocide, and linguicide.[33] With the new generation of Ukrainians, who were born and grew up in an independent Ukraine, there is a positive shift in self-identification, particularly in some categories. They move away from an inferiority complex and an identity conflict towards a healthy nationalism:

> [W]e really need to learn from the Germans, because they are very careful about all these things… They take care of it [culture] on a very national level, on all these holidays… [T]hey have, they constantly celebrate some personalities [writers, composers, artists, etc.]. They know about them, they are constantly talking about them. We don't have that, because… you're some kind of nationalist if you want to talk about this. But this is how everyone lives, and it is normal for everyone, but it was somehow not ok for us. And that's unusual (Ukrainian woman, 20s, Lviv Oblast).

33 For a brief introduction to this linguicide, see: Euromaidan Press staff, "A short guide to the linguicide of the Ukrainian language | Infographics", 22 February 2017, https://euromaidanpress.com/2017/02/22/a-short-guide-to-the-linguicide-of-the-ukrainian-language-infographics/ [accessed: 31.07.2024].

This resonates with the observations of the contemporary Ukrainian writer Andrii Lyubka, who states that "the acceptance of Ukrainianness as an attribute of a political nation is an ongoing process".[34] It is encouraging to hear such views from young people: "I feel great strength. It is a great strength that I am Ukrainian" (Ukrainian woman, 20s, Kharkiv).

Conclusions

My study considers the tonality of the memory archives of Ukrainians who were forced to put their whole lives in 'emergency grab bags'[35] by Russia's full-scale war, leave everything behind, and go abroad. It aims at discovering the (un)stable tonal foundations of their memory archives and potential risks of detonation. If an alarming tonality can provoke reflections on collective and individual memory, prompt a revision of individual memory, and cause decolonisation on both levels of memory, I found that being used to life during peace also increases resistance to an awareness of real threats. Archives of memory, enriched with historical knowledge, can cause a layering of memory, superimposing different historical events on the present and comparing them with their resonances with the present. Even if this historical baggage contributes to an adequate assessment of a threat, and perhaps shortens the decision-making time, it does, however, not overcome the psychological resistance to believing in a terrible future, even when it has already become the present.

I observed some failures in memory through dissonances connected to both time and space. For the most part, Ukrainians, more than half a year after their displacement, tend to live in a tonally positive past and (impossibly) desire to return to it, because lost opportunities dominate over their acquired opportunities. In some cases, however, Ukrainians show readiness to leave the past behind and start moving towards the future in the here and now, thereby changing their priorities. While almost all the respondents demonstrate reflexive revisions of their memories, as well as provocations of the deconstruction of them, the decolonisation of the intonations of memories only exists in isolated cases. First, this decolonisation appears in the (indignantly ironic) detonation of Soviet identity in favour of Ukrainian self-identification, and second, in the (surprising) detonation of an imposed 'inferiority' and 'provincialism' in favour of a healthy national pride. Whether these processes

34 Pershyi (The First), "Andrii Liubka: 'Pryiniattia ukrainskosti yak atrybutu politychnoi natsii – protses, yakyi tryvaie'" ("Andriy Lyubka: 'Acceptance of Ukrainianness as an Attribute of a Political Nation is an Ongoing Process'"), YouTube video, 12 March 2023, 25:38, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ViEQ4hspiho [accessed: 31.07.2024].

35 For example: "I was surprised when my life, when I came here, fit into one suitcase. Well… although no, I'm lying, it didn't fit. There are many things left [behind]…" (Ukrainian woman, 20s, Poltava Oblast).

of the decolonisation of intonations will spread among Ukrainians in Ukraine and beyond is an open question. This is especially the case as it relates to the broader issue of the decolonisation of other memory intonations, and particularly those of Europeans about 'good' Russians.

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