

This article was downloaded by: [Eleonora Narvselius]

On: 10 June 2015, At: 16:25

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Journal of Contemporary European Studies

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cjea20>

Spicing up Memories and Serving Nostalgias: Thematic Restaurants and Transnational Memories in East-Central European Borderland Cities

Eleonora Narvselius^a

^a Lund University, Sweden

Published online: 09 Jun 2015.



CrossMark

[Click for updates](#)

To cite this article: Eleonora Narvselius (2015): Spicing up Memories and Serving Nostalgias: Thematic Restaurants and Transnational Memories in East-Central European Borderland Cities, *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14782804.2015.1026317>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms &

Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

Spicing up Memories and Serving Nostalgias: Thematic Restaurants and Transnational Memories in East-Central European Borderland Cities

ELEONORA NARVSELIUS*

Lund University, Sweden

ABSTRACT *The article is a result of field studies on the transformations of multicultural heritage in the east-central European cities of Cracow, Wrocław, Lviv and Chernivtsi. In all these cities, a majority of the pre-war populations (and in Wrocław, practically all pre-war residents) disappeared as a result of WWII. After decades of silence imposed by the ruling communist elites, collective memories of the post-war populations are now surfacing in public discourse. Precisely how the contemporary populations living in the zones of 'dismembered multiethnicity' approach the past's cultural diversity in the everyday life remains, however, an underinvestigated topic. Under these circumstances, ethnography proves to be an innovative methodological approach particularly suited to studying local expressions of transnational memory. Based on the methodological approach of multi-sited ethnography, the article examines thematic restaurants which allude to cultures of some perished ethnic groups (in particular, Jews, Poles and Germans).*

KEY WORDS: ethnic diversity, central and eastern Europe, transnational memories, commercialization, nostalgia, thematic restaurants, borderland cities

Introduction

Recent academic discussions on transnational aspects of memory-making frequently focus on cross-border mnemonic disputes, political or politically defined projects (see respective articles of Calligaro, Kaiser and Settele in this volume), official commemorations and earnest grass-root activism. Much less attention has been paid to transformations of collective memories in public spaces that lend themselves to leisure, entertainment and recreation. Meanwhile, commercialization of memory cultures has been a growing transnational phenomenon, which in turn has created a demand for special kinds of memory entrepreneurs combining profit-seeking with artistic innovation, cultural activism and political intuition. This is especially evident in the case of thematic or heritage restaurants, a burgeoning business sector, which I had an opportunity to observe in the east-central European borderland cities of Cracow, Wrocław, Lviv and Chernivtsi.

*Correspondence Address: Lund University, SOL, Center for European Studies, Helgonabacken 1, Box 117, 221 00 Lund, Sweden. Email: Eleonora.Narvselius@slav.lu.se

In different periods of their history, all these cities have belonged to the Habsburg Empire. With collapse of the state-socialist regimes, the Danube monarchy emerged as part of the useful transnational past in all of them, and especially as a salient symbolic reference to the liberal-democratic Europe conceived in opposition to the communist Eurasia. In contrast to propagandist presentations of Austria-Hungary as the ‘prison of the peoples’ that gained new currency in the period of communist rule, and also partially as a response to nationalizing rhetoric of the post-communist states, after 1989 in many parts of Europe the Habsburg empire became re-imagined as a space for tolerance and peaceful co-existence of ethnic and religious groups. Appeals to traditions of tolerance and cultural diversity safely projected unto a past Habsburg ‘golden age’ have been employed for multiple purposes. They have ranged from underscoring European credentials among the local populations and foreign visitors to highlighting assimilatory policies of the nation states of the interwar era, from challenging vestiges of state-socialist policies of cultural homogenization to downplaying challenges of the contemporary cultural diversity (Feichtinger and Cohen 2014).

Another common feature of Cracow, Wrocław, Lviv and Chernivtsi is their ‘dismembered multiethnicity’ (Follis 2012, 181). These traditionally multi-ethnic cities were stripped of their ethnic diversity mainly in the wake of WWII, political repressions, extinction of certain population groups, re-drawings of national borders and expulsions. Against this background, the selected cities provide new insights into how and for what purposes contemporary populations approach the past ethno-cultural diversity. It seems that the public imagery of the past in these cities is strongly influenced by entrepreneurial activities of the local enthusiasts who take a lead in quite a radical re-formulation of cultural memories in line with such transnational trends as kitschification of history (Sturken 2007, 18–26), heritagization from below (Macdonald 2003, 2013) and elevation of nostalgias (Boym 2002; Todorova and Gille 2010; Bartmanski 2011). Meanwhile, along with global commercial trends underscoring embodied and visual aspects of ‘historytainment’, one may distinguish an influence of political models of working with Europe’s difficult pasts. The politics of regret is one such example (Olick 2007). The ideas about a shared European memory highlighting traumatic, tragic and catastrophic historical events penetrate even the commercial sphere. As Huyssen (2003, 19, see also Sturken 2007, 4) insightfully pointed out, ‘Key questions of contemporary culture are located precisely at the threshold between traumatic memory and the commercial media. . . . For trauma is marketed as much as the fun is, and not even for different memory consumers.’

Empirically, unpacking transnational collective memories should include examination of both trajectories of their ‘travelling’ (Erl 2011, 11) and their ‘itineraries’, i.e. the local contexts that contribute to shifting forms and contents of these memories. A view of transnationalization that similarly focuses on local practices of border-crossing and transformations of memories triggered by global cultural currents has been the vantage point of this study. Using multi-sited ethnography to investigate memoryscapes by following the mnemonic representations from site to site (Basu 2013, 18), the study examines the phenomenon of thematic restaurants that exploit representations of the pre-communist times (especially the interwar period) and address culture of several perished ethnic groups, primarily Jews, Poles and Germans. It builds primarily on media accounts, interviews with owners of the restaurants and personal on-site observations. Leaving aside more specific questions of gustatory nostalgias as well as more general issues of the nature of post-1989 commercialism, I will in the following analyse the collected material bearing in mind several research questions of ‘mnemonic-political’ character. These questions are:

What is special about transnational memory in the public urban spaces of central and eastern Europe—and, in particular, those spaces intended primarily for leisure and recreation? Which political interests have been involved in the projects of presenting the perished ‘others’ in a commoditized form? How do these projects relate to European dimensions of memory?

East-Central European Borderlands as a Site of Transnational Memory

Memory work unfolding in post-communist European borderland cities provides perfect material for studying tensions and paradoxes of transnational entanglements first and foremost because of the complex historical legacy of these lands, especially the dramatic legacy of the twentieth century. The historical experience of pre-war urban communities cleansed of their ethno-cultural diversity as a result of the Holocaust, communist repressions, war-time interethnic violence and post-war expulsions inscribe Lviv, Chernivtsi, Cracow and Wrocław into the so-called seven circles of European memory¹. Although the core historical experiences of European societies throughout the twentieth century are comparable and, besides, collective memories of Europeans might be made more uniform by rationalizing practices of cosmopolitan professionals (see article by Büttner and Leidinger in this volume), commemorative landscapes in contemporary Europe still vary significantly. In particular, it has been argued that the specificity of eastern European memory cultures is better grasped with shift of the analytical focus from unquestionable *lieux de mémoire* to public polemic, and from traumatic silences to active, performative and vocal mourning (Blacker and Etkind 2013, 6–9).

In post-socialist Europe, performative dimensions of memory which by definition presuppose re-enactments and virtualities (Gruber 2002, 11; Tilmans, van Vree, and Winter 2010, 7–8), have evolved in tandem with another transnational mnemonic trend, namely the presentation of the past in highly individualized, emotional and interactive forms (Sturken 2007). Pre-war cultures and ethnic groups have increasingly become the focus of various revitalization projects emphasizing first and foremost physical and spatial clues. Such focus on materiality and tangibility is hardly surprising. Knowledge about the urban past among the great majority of the dwellers of the borderline cities does not build on personal experience or familial transfer of postmemories (Hirsch 2008). Instead, it compensates a shortage of trustworthy and emotionally engaging first-hand accounts by means of stitching together various representations originating from secondary sources of hearsay, media, literature, popular culture and arts. As both local consumers and visitors are expected to deliberately choose an exciting (which is not necessarily equivalent to gratifying) past, in response commercial actors attract their customers with staged authenticity (McCannell 1973) and the emotional realism, which, like in modern museum displays, are generated by combinations of touch, sound, smell, vision and also taste. By these means, a broad spectrum of embodied memories and affective states gets invoked. Among them is nostalgia, a truly transcultural recipe of affective and sensorial attachment to the not-so-distant past.

A strong theme in contemporary research on nostalgia is the diversity of its modes, intensities and functions all over the world and, in particular, in Europe where nostalgia tends to be embraced and presented differently in ‘West’ and ‘East’ (see Macdonald 2003, 2013, 87–108; Boym 2002). In the post-socialist space, nostalgia is a complex collective feeling that cannot be reduced to merely a private emotion or political response

(Bartmanski 2011, 215–216). It is not limited to escapism and search for a suitable ‘home’ in the past. Neither is it necessarily a token of conservatism or inability to come to terms with change. It has been repeatedly pointed out that alongside an escapist ‘palliative nostalgia’ (Hodges 2010, 120) and restorative nostalgia that only ‘knows two main narrative plots—the restoration of origins and conspiracy theory, characteristic of the most extreme cases of contemporary nationalism’ (Boym 2002, 43), there exist more intellectually loaded and transforming types of ‘critical’ (Hodges 2010) and ‘reflective’ (Boym 2002) nostalgia. The latter gravitates towards individual memory, allows ironic engagement with the past and also prompts border-crossing, transcultural interpretations. Arguably, far from simply ‘mummifying’ the past or fostering consumer cultures of comfort and innocence (Sturken 2007, 4–32), this modality of nostalgia may pave the way for traumatization, i.e. triggering ‘public discourses in which the foundations of a collective identity are brought up for reflection’ (Eyerman 2011, 458). This potential exists especially when the Holocaust as the central topic of European memory politics is addressed in connection to the showcasing of pre-war Jewish culture.

The broader public in post-communist Poland and Ukraine has relatively recently begun to develop an interest in ‘dissonant heritage’ (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996) of perished or fragmentarily present ethnic groups. The tourism industry and internationally acclaimed arts, literature, music and design have played an important role in this process. Nevertheless, indulgence in commodified nostalgia for the pre-war ‘others’ gained popularity against the background of post-1989 political transformations that were aptly named ‘return to diversity’ (Rothschild and Wingfield 2000) and by all accounts affected both national and local politics of memory. Developments in this domain have been strongly influenced on the one hand by European commemorative models (Mälksoo 2009; Pakier and Stråth 2010; Sierp 2014) that emphasize historical diversity and shared memory frames and, on the other hand, by interests of conservative and centrist political milieus formulating mnemonic policies at the national level. In this situation, east-central European intellectuals interested in promoting ‘dissonant’ multicultural heritages can make significant headway. As will be demonstrated below, they take the lead in the formulation of multicultural heritage by responding to articulated political messages, employing transcultural strategies of identity management and at the same time suggesting their domestic audiences solidarity goods, i.e. ‘symbolic goods that provide a rallying point for like-minded people’ (Posner 2001, 42).

Thematic Restaurants as a Commercial Form: Meeting Otherness Between the Museum and the Family Kitchen

Until the outbreak of WWII, all the cities in the sample boasted a flourishing coffeehouse culture, emblematic of embourgeoisement of daily life in the nineteenth-century central Europe. Coffeehouses and restaurants became important venues of everyday life, served as locations of artistic interaction and facilitated exchange of news, emancipatory messages and commentary on current public events (Ashby, Gronberg, and Shaw-Miller 2013, see also Haley 2011). During the socialist period, these functions of restaurants, as well as their aesthetic form, largely deteriorated. After the severe economic hardships of the first post-socialist decade, central European restaurant cultures emerged as a part of transnational heritage industries (see Bessière 1998; Josiam, Mattson, and Sullivan 2004) and a token of democratic restructuring of public spaces.

At the beginning of the 2000s, memory disputes on legacies of the vanished Jews, Poles and Germans drew massive public attention in Poland and Ukraine (see Gross 2001; Gross and Grudzinska Gross 2012; Bartov 2007; Copsey 2008; Motyka 2011; Thum 2011; Narvselius 2015). These disputes emerged partly as a political response to the debates about the possibility of forming a common European memory incorporating memories about both the Nazi and Communist dictatorships, and partly as an effect of burgeoning tourism and cross-border initiatives of grass-root actors. In tandem with growing attention to ethnic diversity, tolerance, reconciliation and acknowledgement of ‘otherness’ detectible in post-socialist political and media discourses, similar issues enthused commercial actors searching for novel modes of marking and marketing various urban landscapes. In fact, in some cases (for example in Cracow), it was commercial actors who not only profited from, but also pioneered the post-socialist rediscovery of historical multiethnicity.

Unlike the ethnic restaurants proper that lay emphasis on special food associated with certain exotic ethnic groups, thematic or heritage restaurants rather specialize in selling stylized representations of the ethnic ‘others’ who used to be met with persistent silence in the socialist/Soviet period. The primary target of these enterprises is the cultivated public interested in a special and intimate ambience and a glimpse of other times, places and peoples. Being a hybrid form, thematic restaurants occupy an intermediate position between the museum as an institutionalized, official site for consumption of knowledge about history, and the family kitchen where personal memories and anecdotes about the ‘others’ are passed on. Like modern museums, they also frequently use the same globally spread strategies of aesthetization and generation of embodied memories (Macdonald 2003, 2013).

Both the shortcomings and the advantages of the thematic/heritage restaurant as a special mode of proximity to the vanished ‘others’ stem from this intermediateness. Unlike museums, the restaurants do not have high-cultural institutional legitimacy. Their primary objective is generating profit, not promoting historical knowledge, the quality of which would be assured by academic research. Consequently, the restaurants provide a very narrow space for reflexivity and critical engagement with otherness; as a customer one is expected to enjoy the experience, and thus confirm the suggested narratives, images and performances. As a product of entrepreneurs who try to balance their cultural engagement, commercial interests and personal allegiances, the thematic restaurants suggest selective, impressionist and sometimes overtly misleading interpretations of the past. However, their strengths stem from working with emotions (longing, curiosity, excitement, pride, but also shame, guilt, regret) and sensory expressions. The fusion of sensory representations triggers individual memory work, in which proximity with otherness disrupts the usual course of life. In this respect, both museums and thematic restaurants exploit the emotional power of encounters with otherness. They tend to generate a feeling of anxiety that emerges when material expressions convey potentialities of the past and individualities of vanished people. In order to get a deeper perspective on the development of the thematic restaurant as a commercial phenomenon in post-socialist cities, it is worth keeping in mind that it does not only function as a ‘light’ variant of museum exhibitions, but also gets inspiration from, plays with, comments on or opposes the historical narratives suggested by the high-brow custodians of the past. The next section will provide several examples of how thematic restaurants confirm, contest and transform mnemonic discourses in an interplay with non-commercial actors working on local, national and transnational levels.

Examples of Thematic Restaurants in Cracow, Wrocław, Lviv and Chernivtsi

Cracow

In Cracow, commercial actors and cultural grass-roots were the pioneers who in the end of the 1980s engaged in the revival of the Jewish heritage and turned the disinherited district of Kazimierz into a core tourist attraction of the inner city (Murzyn 2006; Gruber 2009). Moreover, since that time the commercial and creative solutions developed in Kazimierz have won both national and transnational acclaim, as they 'have served as models for the construction of 'Jewish' spaces far beyond the borders of the city' (Gruber 2009, 74).

Devoid of its former population who perished in the Holocaust, this district was left without proper maintenance for decades and gained a reputation as a dangerous slum area. Despite revalorization activity of the authorities and placement of the inner city of Cracow on the UNESCO World Heritage list in 1978, Kazimierz remained a blank spot throughout the socialist period that did not fit into the monocultural future-oriented visions of the socialist state (Murzyn 2006). The situation changed in the late 1980s, when interest in cultural heritage of the European Jews emerged as part of the transformation of the Holocaust to the 'paradigmatic *European* memory' as well as to the prominent global icon (Assmann 2010). A milestone of this process was the filming of *Schindler's List* in Kazimierz in 1993. However, the first festival of klezmer music had been organized here by local and foreign enthusiasts already in 1988, and around that time, the first Jewish heritage restaurant *Ariel*² was opened in Kazimierz. Since then, numerous Jewish heritage restaurants have followed the trend initiated by creators of *Ariel* (Figure 1). They offer



Figure 1. Restaurant *Ariel* in Cracow, detail of the interior. Photo by the author.

Jewish-style (not necessarily kosher) cuisine in premises that used to house Jewish shops, warehouses and even a synagogue (*Alef*). Some of them are adjacent to hotels, galleries and museums relating to the Jewish heritage and regularly serve as locations for musical performances, exhibitions and other activities of both local bohemia and more established cultural producers. Stylistically, they often emulate the atmosphere of curiosity cabinets where plenty of authentic and odd artefacts originating in pre-war times as well as modern artwork are displayed generously and unsystematically.

The ambience of Jewish heritage restaurants generated by the décor, music performed in the premises (klezmer, jazz, *piosenki kabaretowe*), artistic impression of the displayed artefacts, and tastes and smells of exotic Jewish dishes attracts not only foreign and domestic tourists, but also the locals (Kugelmass and Orla-Bukowska 1998). While commercial and cultural actors fully exploit the attractive Jewish heritage of Kazimierz and engage foreign investors and artists in co-operation, city authorities have not managed to tap the educational and political potential of Kazimierz as effectively. For example, the creation of a ‘Kazimierz Brand’, which, according to the initial plan, had to involve EU structural funds, did not qualify for implementation (Murzyn 2006, 274). On the other hand, numerous Israeli tourists, who come to the city in connection to the obligatory school trip to Auschwitz, usually do not express an interest in pop-cultural consumption of the Jewish heritage (Murzyn 2006, 284; Feldman 2008, 129–131).

Partly as a response to this, and in parallel with selling nostalgia about the pre-war Polish way of life in general and commoditizing the heritage of Galician Jews, restaurants began to profile themselves as genuine places of commemoration of the perished Jewish community. For instance, a plaque in the vestibule of hotel *Alef*, which houses the restaurant with the same name, reads:

This building built in 1887, was an exclusive synagogue of “Prays and Good Deeds” . . . During World War II, the synagogue was devastated by the Nazis. After the war, it was rebuilt and used for non-religious purposes, gradually becoming a ruin. It was then reclaimed by Jewish society and rebuilt by the *Alef* company. They remodelled it into a Jewish style restaurant and hotel, which serves today as a living memorial where patrons can, while listening to Jewish music, enjoy good food, beautiful paintings, whilst the memories of those who worshipped here live on. May God bless their souls.³

Notably, gallery-like interior of the dining room in *Alef* compiles iconic representations of the local Jewishness alongside pictures of timelessly beautiful landscapes, reproductions of globally known pieces of art (for example, the famous portrait of Frida Kalo and *The Girl with the Earring* by Vermeer) and references to the pre-war history of multicultural Galicia. Commemoration of Galician Jews perished in the Holocaust emerges in this context as both a part of local colour, an element of transnational cultural memory and a global aesthetic trend. One may speculate that the famous ambience of the hotel praised by online restaurant reviewers (both domestic and foreign, including Israeli) derives from this ambiguous and elusive revelation of Jewishness.

The text placed on a wall of another Cracow Jewish restaurant quotes an opinion of a Jewish rabbi who calls the venue ‘a unique place which commemorates the old times in this way’. This restaurant is also an example of a painstaking stylistic museumization, as it not only incorporates anonymous Jewish artefacts in the interior, but also explicitly refers



Figure 2. Names of Jewish craftsmen and merchants may be read on the plates decorating the façade of the restaurant *Dawno temu na Kazimierzu* in Cracow. Photo by the author.

to existing Jewish craftsmen and merchants whose names may be read on the plates decorating the façade (Figure 2). That commemoration of the perished Jews on the premises of commercial venues is fully acceptable has recently been confirmed by the Galicia Jewish Museum in Cracow. The museum's permanent exhibition *Traces of Memory* comments upon the issue of the present-day visitors of Kazimierz:

Visitors of the Jewish-style cafés in Kazimierz include local people, Polish and foreign tourists, Holocaust survivors, pilgrims to the death camps and Jewish holy places, and Jews of Polish origin in search for their roots . . . Some are on a complex emotional journey . . . others are there simply to relax.

Wrocław/Breslau

In Wrocław—another borderland city in present-day Poland affected by cleansing of the pre-war population—the constellation of the ‘missing others’ is more complex. The city was stripped of its German and Jewish inhabitants, but a significant part of the post-war newcomers were themselves expellees from the eastern Polish territories. Traumatized by rapid separation from their native places—the most prominent of them is Lwów, the former Polish cultural metropolis which remained on the other side on the redrawn Polish-Soviet border—these new residents of Wrocław cultivated the so called ‘Lwów myth’ and founded their new lives on longing for the lost home. No wonder that one of the first restaurants that challenged mainstream style of the socialist period was named *Karczma Lwowska* (Lwów Tavern). It has since 1994 been run by a former librarian with family roots in Lwów, and is richly decorated with pictures and artefacts relating to the pre-war city. Target customers are primarily middle-class urbanites appreciating cultural clues and nostalgic atmosphere of the venue. Another popular restaurant on the Lwów theme—*Pod*

Fredra (Under Fredro)—was opened by the same businessman in 2011. In line with the recent trend that emphasizes more individualized forms of commemoration of certain populations and historical periods, the venue uses reference to Alexander Fredro, the playwright and author of Polish classic literature who spent his life in Galicia and died in Lwów.

Throughout the post-war socialist period, a strong emphasis on Polish grievances was instrumental in diverting the attention of urbanites from the loss of the German and Jewish population whose material heritage was still a part of the Wrocław architectural environment. In contrast, post-socialist transformations have been accompanied with a (not always unproblematic—see, for example, Kleßmann and Traba 2012) rediscovery and reassessment of the legacies of peoples and homelands in Wrocław. In line with a recent promotional strategy, the city has been portrayed as an open and friendly space with rich cultural heritage and attractive investment climate. Under the banner of *Wrocław—the Meeting Place*, it won bid for the title of the European Culture Capital 2016. A famous initiative that strengthened the officially promoted image of the city as a meeting place of several cultures and denominations was the promotion of the Four Temples District that began in 1995. This compact area where a synagogue, a Roman Catholic church, an Orthodox temple and a Protestant church are situated in proximity became a highly symbolic site initially due to reconciliatory initiatives of the local parishes.

Transnational and especially European dimensions of memory, which imply a stark focus on the human suffering, displacements and extinctions of diversity in the twentieth century, motivated business-minded cultural actors to highlight the German and Jewish components of pre-war Breslau. Several popular thematic restaurants that emphasize the idea of symbolic meeting with the previously silenced past and the ‘vanished others’ emerged in the city after Poland’s accession to the EU. Probably the most noteworthy is *Steinhaus*, named after the famous mathematician of Jewish origin who after the war moved to Wrocław where he continued the tradition of the world famous Lwów school of mathematics. Located within the Four Temples District in the vicinity of the recently restored White Stork Synagogue, *Steinhaus* is run by Aleksander Gleigewicht, a Jewish cultural activist, physicist and former political dissident who envisions the venue as a place for cultivated public, cultural interaction and creative activities. Driven by the idea of creating a meeting place incorporating Polish, German, Jewish and ‘Lwów myth’ components, *Steinhaus*’s owner returned to his native city after decades of living in western Europe. In terms of popularity and turnout, his enterprise cannot compete with more centrally located thematic restaurants exploiting the themes of the ‘Lwów myth’, the Austrian-Hungarian past and the medieval ambience of Breslau, but it serves as a symbolic hallmark of Wrocław as a European city celebrating its transnational academic traditions and multicultural past.

Lviv/Lwów

Although the historical centre of former Lwów and presently Ukrainian city of Lviv was added to the UNESCO’s World Heritage List in 1998, commercialization of its rich multicultural heritage did not start to accelerate until the 2000s. This upswing was in part due to the city’s 750 years jubilee in 2006, but was also given force by the debate about the ‘blank spots’ of the national history that gained momentum with the rise to power of the pro-European ‘Orange’ politicians in 2004–2010. The most resonant commercial project relating to the not-so-distant history of the city was a network of thematic tourist restaurants,

among them *Kryivka* (Hideout, 2007), *Masoch café* (2008) and *Halytska zhydivska knaipa Pid zolotoiu Rozoiu* (Galician Jewish Restaurant under *Golden Roza*, 2008).

Behind this chain of both famous and infamous restaurants stand three young Lviv businessmen of whom the most famous figure is Iurii Nazaruk, a creator of the daily *Lvivska hazeta* (Lviv Newspaper) and a former consultant for the art enterprise *Dzyga* (Whirligig). The oldest, the most commercially successful and the most well known of the restaurants, *Kryivka*, exploits the heroic myth of the Ukrainian nationalist wartime and post-war insurgency. Opened in 2007, *Kryivka* played up the political idea of integration of non-Soviet wartime experiences of western Ukraine into the all-Ukrainian historical narrative. Authentic details of the interior and feel-good consumer experience invite acceptance of a story about brave cheerful guys who heroically fought against both the Nazis and the Soviets for the freedom and glory of Ukraine. However, another part of the story that recalls numerous Polish, Jewish, Russian and Ukrainian civilians who fell victim to the Ukrainian nationalist insurgency during and after WWII has been avoided.

Kryivka's creators did not limit their project to the presentation of the 'Lviv myth' through the prism of the Ukrainian national narrative alone. Another two potentially resonant topics were served to the public by two thematic restaurants—this time, with the perished 'others' in focus. Like *Kryivka*, these restaurants immediately became both famous and infamous in the city and beyond. *Masoch café* alludes to the figure of a German language writer Leopold von Sacher-Masoch who was born in the city and is remembered as 'the father of masochism'. The venue was much criticized by the local opinion-makers for flaunting erotic 'perversions'. Also the bronze statue of Sacher-Masoch in front of the café became a controversial landmark, as the tourists were expected to dig into the pocket of the figure's trousers.

Efforts of *Kryivka*'s creators to make a profit on easily recognizable representations of urban Jewish culture proved to be even more provocative. There is historical evidence that Ukrainian nationalist units took part in the war-time extermination of the Galician Jews (Himka 2011). The combination of themes based on Jewish interwar life and the Ukrainian nationalist insurgency as equally exciting parts of tourist entertainment, and, in addition, application of *Kryivka*'s and *Masoch café*'s concept of playfulness and provocation to the extremely sensitive Jewish issue became criticized in both the Ukrainian and foreign media. Especially scandalous was the idea of allowing visitors to haggle and to try on hats decorated with Jewish sidelocks (Figure 3). While *Kryivka*'s project was legitimized by the task of interpreting Ukrainian history from a Ukrainian perspective, *Halytska zhydivska knaipa* rather remained a decorative piece of 'Judaica minus the Jews' (Gruber 2002, 8). Nevertheless, according to the owner of the restaurant, Iurii Nazaruk⁴, members of the local Jewish community were invited as special guests and a pilot group before the official opening of the venue. He told

We served them dishes from our menu, and I said: "I am a Ukrainian. I would not like to make some mistake and offend you. We created this restaurant, so please tell us if you like it, tell us what to change or what to add." You know, these elderly people cried.

Halytska zhydivska knaipa was not conceived as a magnet for Jewish tourists or as a meeting place for admirers of Galician Jewish culture in the first turn. However, as the popular initiatives elucidating the audience about Jewish heritage in Lviv have been



Figure 3. Hats with sidelocks in Galician Jewish restaurant *Halytska zhydivska knaipa* in Lviv.
Photo by the author.

sporadic to date, this restaurant has no difficulties in ‘revealing’ the Jewish ‘sensual culture’ of the past (Bartmanski 2011, 226) to the broader public. In particular, it figures among the organizers of the annual festival of Jewish music *Lvivklezfest*, an initiative inspired by the success of Jewish cultural festivals in Kazimierz. Besides, it cannot go unnoticed that as *Halytska zhydivska knaipa* is situated beside the ruins of the historical synagogue *Golden Roza*, it makes reference to the Holocaust memory.

These controversial aspects notwithstanding, examples of creative presentations of legacies of vanished ‘others’ are not so infrequent among the thematic restaurants in Lviv. For example, the restaurants *Batiar* and *Kumpel* have managed to frame Polishness of Lwów in a rather unconventional way, as they focus on the pre-war urban subculture of *batiarzy*, which used to bring together young Polish and Ukrainian ruffians (Figure 4). References to Galician Armenians who by the twentieth century became wholly Polonized have since 2009 been a hallmark of *Mons Pius*. This restaurant is located in the authentic premises of the old Armenian bank and is ornately decorated with old-style paintings, among them a portrait of the last director of the bank, the eccentric inventor and swindler Jan Mardyosiewicz. Presently the restaurant is owned by an Armenian businessman who supports the annual Festival of the Armenian Street in Lviv. Hence, *Mons Pius* exemplifies the trend observable in other cities, namely combining commercial function with commemoration and popularization of the cultural legacy of a perished population group.



Figure 4. Advertisement of the restaurant *Kumpel* in Lviv. Photo by the author.

Chernivtsi/Czernowitz

Chernivtsi is another example of a Ukrainian city that used to be a part of Austria-Hungary but was later taken over by an inter-war nationalizing state. Unlike Lviv, no single ethnic group has been simultaneously politically, economically and culturally hegemonic. Although the old Jewish, Polish and German populations by and large vanished from the city, the image of a peaceful and tolerant province conjured up during the Habsburg period—so-called *Bukowina-Mytos*—persisted among the post-war population. The monument to the last Habsburg emperor Franz Joseph I erected in 2009 emphasizes the outstanding position of the Habsburg legacy as a symbol of Chernivtsi's standing in Europe.

Several eateries in Chernivtsi refer to *Bukowina-Mytos* and the Dual Monarchy (e.g. *Habsburg*, *Carintia*, *Tsisar*). This thematic focus of restaurant culture in the city is thus comparable with the commercialization of Habsburg nostalgia in Wrocław, Cracow and Lviv. However, curiously, while (or because) several so called national houses and the Museum of the Bukovynian Jews exist in Chernivtsi, explicit references to the perished urban populations are practically absent in the local restaurants. Instead, the emphasis is laid on local culture with a transnational and European outreach. A cosy nook in the popular *Literatur Café* located in the art-centre *Ukrainska knyha* (Ukrainian Book) is decorated with a portrait of Franz Joseph and photos of old Czernowitz (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Portrait of Franz Joseph I in a Chernivtsi restaurant. Photo by the author.

However, the main selling point of the venue is literature, the well-established cultural hallmark of Bukovyna. Its German language section is presented by prominent authors such as Paul Celan, Roza Ausländer and Karl Emil Franzos, all of Jewish origin, and Olha Kobylianska, a Ukrainian writer. The café regularly hosts popular literary evenings and is one of the venues for *Meridian Czernowitz*, an international festival of poetry, which in the words of its president Sviatoslav Pomerantsev has the ambition of marrying the attractive architectural milieu of Chernivtsi with its contemporary ‘intellectual component’.⁵ It is noteworthy that such initiatives with international outreach enhance the appeal of Chernivtsi as a place of peaceful co-existence and cross-pollination of not only European ‘Easternness’ and ‘Westernness’, but also Jewishness and Germanness (Menninghaus 1999). This twist on the mnemonic discourses not only acknowledges that ‘the city’s German-language high culture was maintained primarily by assimilated Jews’ (Funchak 2010, 441), or confirm *Bukowina-Mytos*. It also indicates ‘a changing European sensibility’ (Kugelmass and Orla-Bukowska 1998, 342) vis-a-vis the transnational Jewish and the German legacies refracted through the local—east-central European, western Ukrainian, borderland—mnemonic lens.

Conclusions

In several post-socialist cities, thematic restaurants have emerged as hybrids combining commercial intent with the essentially political urge to acknowledge otherness and to commemorate the perished urban populations. The transnational quality of these thematic restaurants emerges through the intersection of allusions to ethnically and culturally diverse populations in twentieth-century Europe, the forms used for their presentation (in particular, various strategies of evoking emotional engagement tested in modern museums

and artistic installations), the drawing of attention of both the local public and visitors to the rich cultural heritages of the multi-ethnic borderlands and, last but not least, the world-open outlooks of the creators of these enterprises. Furthermore, the described restaurants have a potential to function as commemorative sites, especially when official institutions mandated with addressing transnational dimensions of memory do not keep pace with the attitudes and demands of the broader audiences.

The main conclusion of this study is that in central and eastern Europe, transnational memory trends have been actively translated and localized in the public spaces intended primarily for leisure and recreation. Over the past two decades, commercial actors have created hybrid (neither in every respect political, nor strictly commemorative) spaces where references to historical ethnic diversity serve to evoke cultural memories and nostalgias primarily among cultured middle-class audiences. In this respect, the project of symbolic encountering the ‘others’ and performing a kind of Eucharist within the walls bearing traces and iconic images of the vanished peoples is not a marginal phenomenon. Commonly, creators of the thematic restaurants are well-travelled intellectuals or people with intellectual ambitions who work to attract wealthy, sophisticated visitors with a sufficiently European outlook. The political-ideological quality of their suggested projects is not always clear-cut, but they nevertheless strive to achieve an uneasy balance between commercial success, incentives of local memory politics and sensitivity to dimensions of European memory, underscoring moral responsibility as well as celebration of difference. In this equation, reflexive attitudes often yield to feel-good sensory experience and nostalgia for the imagined ‘retro homes’ where otherness is present merely as an aesthetically pleasing injection. Despite their transnational form and allusions to the tragic European past, the thematic restaurants have not become a node of cross-boundary debate on the potentialities of European memory. However, the quest for proximity to the ‘others’ and curiosity about their legacies have a potential for evolvment into a genuine acknowledgement of both historical and contemporary cultural heterogeneity. One should bear in mind that in central and eastern Europe, the idealization of ‘our Others’ who perished might be a reaction against “those Others” who are much newer, more present, and unfamiliar’ (Kugelmass and Orla-Bukowska 1998, 342). It may also be a form of mourning and ‘a retreat from the collective to the individual, from the heroic to the ironic, from the tragic to the comic’ (Kugelmass and Orla-Bukowska 1998, 343) typical of reflective nostalgia.

Acknowledgements

This study is a spin-off from the international project Memory of Vanished Population Groups and Societies in Today’s East-Central European Urban Environments. The author is much indebted to the two anonymous reviewers for their scrupulous reading of the text and insightful comments. Special thanks to Igor Pietraszewski (Wrocław University) and Niklas Bernsand (Lund University) for their help in collecting material for the article.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Funding

Memory treatment and urban planning in Lviv, Chernivtsi, Chisinau and Wrocław was supported by the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation.

Notes

- ¹ Claus Leggewie argues that the main topics of transnational memory in present-day Europe may be presented as concentric circles, with the Holocaust as the 'negative founding myth' at the core. Other mnemonic hallmarks include Soviet Communism, expulsions, the genocide of Armenians, the history of warfare, migrations and the success story of the EU (Leggewie 2011).
- ² For an interesting account of the complicated history of *Ariel* and a detailed report on commercial activities in Kazimierz in the 1990s, see Kugelmass and Orla-Bukowska (1998).
- ³ The original style and grammar of the English translation accompanying the Polish text of the plaque is maintained.
- ⁴ Interview with the author 19.09.2013, Lviv.
- ⁵ 'В Черновцах предприниматели повернулись лицом к художникам.' Accessed 12 June 2014. <http://mega-reporter.com/?p=1423>, 2013.

References

- Ashby, Charlotte, Tag Gronberg, and Simon Shaw-Miller, eds. 2013. *The Viennese Café and Fin-de-siècle Culture*. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Assmann, Aleida. 2010. "The Holocaust—a Global Memory? Extensions and Limits of a New Memory Community." In *Memory at Global Age. Discourses, Practices and Trajectories*, edited by Aleida Assmann and Sebastian Conrad. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bartmanski, Dominik. 2011. "Successful Icons of Failed Time: Rethinking Post-Communist Nostalgia." *Acta Sociologica* 54 (3): 213–231.
- Bartov, Omer. 2007. *Erased: Vanishing Traces of Jewish Galicia in Present-day Ukraine*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Basu, Paul. 2013. "Memoryscapes and Multi-Sited Methods." In *Research Methods for Memory Studies*, edited by Emily Keightley and Michael Pickering. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Bessière, Jacinthe. 1998. "Local Development and Heritage: Traditional Food and Cuisine as Tourist Attractions in Rural Areas." *European Society for Rural Sociology* 38 (1): 21–34.
- Blacker, Uilleam, and Alexander Etkind. 2013. "Introduction." In *Memory and Theory in Eastern Europe*, edited by Uilleam Blacker, Alexander Etkind, and Julie Fedor. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Boym, Svetlana. 2002. *The Future of Nostalgia*. New York: Basic Books.
- Copsey, Nathaniel. 2008. "Remembrance of Things Past: The Lingering Impact of History on Contemporary Polish-Ukrainian Relations." *Europe-Asia Studies* 60 (4): 531–560.
- Erl, Astrid. 2011. "Travelling Memory." *Parallax* 17 (4): 4–18.
- Eyerman, Ron. 2011. "Intellectuals and Cultural Trauma." *European Journal of Social Theory* 14 (4): 453–467.
- Feichtinger, Johannes, and Gary B. Cohen. 2014. "Introduction. Understanding Multiculturalism: The Habsburg Central European Experience." In *Understanding Multiculturalism. The Habsburg Central European Experience*, edited by Johannes Feichtinger and Gary B. Cohen. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Feldman, Jackie. 2008. *Above the Death Pits, Beneath the Flag: Youth Voyages to Poland and the Performance of Israeli National Identity*. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Follis, Karolina. 2012. *Building Fortress Europe: The Polish-Ukrainian Frontier*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Funchak, Svetlana. 2010. "Commemorating Future in Post-war Chernivtsi." *East European Politics and Societies* 24 (3): 435–463.
- Gross, Jan T. 2001. *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Gross, Jan T., and Irena Grudzinska Gross. 2012. *Golden Harvest. Events at the Periphery of the Holocaust*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gruber, Ruth Ellen. 2002. *Virtually Jewish: Reinventing Jewish Culture in Europe*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: California University Press.
- Gruber, Ruth Ellen. 2009. "Beyond Virtually Jewish . . . Balancing the Real, the Surreal and Real Imaginary Places." In *Reclaiming Memory. Urban Regeneration in the Historic Jewish Quarters of Central European Cities*, edited by Murzyn-Kupisz Monika and Jacek Purchla. Krakow: International Cultural Centre.
- Haley, Andrew. 2011. *Turning the Tables. Restaurants and the Rise of the American Middle Class, 1880–1920*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.

- Himka, John-Paul. 2011. "The Lviv Pogrom of 1941: The Germans, Ukrainian Nationalists, and the Carnival Crowd." *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 53 (2–3–4): 209–243.
- Hirsch, Marianne. 2008. "The Generation of Postmemory." *Poetics Today* 29 (1): 103–128.
- Hodges, Matt. 2010. "The Time of the Interval: Historicity, Modernity and Epoch in Rural France." *Ethnos* 76 (3): 348–374.
- Huysen, Andreas. 2003. *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Josiam, Bharath M., Melissa Mattson, and Pauline Sullivan. 2004. "The Historaunt: Heritage Tourism at Mickey's Dining Car." *Tourism Management* 25: 453–461.
- Kleßmann, Christoph, and Robert Traba. 2012. "Kresy und deutscher Osten: Vom Glauben an die historische Mission—oder Wo liegt Arkadien?" [Kresy and the German East: From the belief in the historical Mission - or Where is Arcadia?] In Hahn, Hans Henning und Robert Traba (Hg.) *Deutsch-Polnische Erinnerungsorte. Band 3: Parallelen*. München–Wien–Zürich: Ferdinand Schöningh 37–70.
- Kugelmass, Jack, and Annamaria Orla-Bukowska. 1998. "If You Build It They Will Come': Recreating an Historic Jewish District in Post-Communist Krakow." *City & Society Annual Review* 10 (1): 315–353.
- Leggewie, Claus. 2011. *Der Kampf um die europäische Erinnerung: Ein Schlachtfeld wird besichtigt*. Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck.
- Macdonald, Sharon. 2003. "Museums, National, Postnational and Transcultural Identities." *Museum and Society* 1 (1): 1–16.
- Macdonald, Sharon. 2013. *Memorylands: Heritage and Identity in Europe Today*. London: Routledge.
- Mäilksö, Maria. 2009. "The Memory Politics of Becoming European: The East European Subalterns and the Collective Memory of Europe." *European Journal of International Relations* 15 (4): 653–680.
- McCannell, Dean. 1973. "Staged Authenticity: Arrangements of Social Space in Tourist Settings." *American Journal of Sociology* 79 (3): 589–603.
- Menninghaus, Winfried. 1999. "'Czernowitz/Bukowina' als Topos deutsch-jüdischer Geschichte und Literatur." [Czernowitz / Bukowina as a topos of German-Jewish History and Literature] *Merkur* 53 (3–4): 345–357.
- Motyka, Grzegorz. 2011. *Od rzezi Wołyńskiej do akcji "Wisła". Konflikt polsko-ukraiński 1943–1947*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie.
- Murzyn, Monika. 2006. *Kazimierz. The Central European Experience of Urban Regeneration*. Krakow: International Cultural Centre.
- Narvselius, Eleonora. 2015. "Tragic Past, Agreeable Heritage: Post-Soviet Intellectual Discussions on the Polish Legacy in Western Ukraine." *Carl Beck Papers* no. 2401, pp. 1–80.
- Olick, Jeffrey K. 2007. *The Politics of Regret: On Collective Memory and Historical Responsibility*. New York: Routledge.
- Pakier, Malgorzata, and Bo Stråth, eds. 2010. *A European Memory? Contemporary Histories and Politics of Remembrance*. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Posner, Richard. 2001. *Public Intellectuals: A Study of Decline*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Rothschild, Joseph, and Nancy M. Wingfield. 2000. *Return to Diversity. A Political History of East Central Europe Since World War II*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Sierp, Aline. 2014. "Constructing and Communicating Europe, edited by Olga Gyarfasova and Karin Liebhart." In *Constructing and Communicating Europe*, edited by Olga Gyarfasova and Karin Liebhart. Zürich and Berlin: LIT Verlag GmbH & Co KG Wien.
- Sturken, Marita. 2007. *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Thum, Georg. 2011. *Uprooted: How Breslau Became Wrocław during the Century of Expulsions*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Tilmans, Karin, Frank van Vree, and Jay Winter, eds. 2010. *Performing the Past. Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Todorova, Maria, and Zsuzsa Gille. 2010. *Post-Communist Nostalgia*. New York: Berghahan Books.
- Tunbridge, John E., and Gregory Ashworth. 1996. *Dissonant Heritages. The Management of the Past as a Resource in Conflict*. Chichester: Wiley.