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Dear colleagues,

I have read with great interest Ludmila Maria Władyniak's dissertation „*Memory in the borderland. A study of collective memory in the former East Prussia region in Poland and the Sudetes in Czech Republic*“. After reading the whole text I think that the doctoral thesis is an interesting piece of work that opens theoretical questions in the memory studies framework. The thesis aims to discuss Jan and Aleida Assmann's theory of communicative and cultural memory displaying it into the comparative fields of Polish and Czech borderlands. As the applicant argues there is a ritualised communicative memory that is not simply a communicative memory neither cultural memory but a parallel road of remembering the past. Ritualised communicative memory offers safe space for the local identities against identity conflict. According to the author this happens by language practices and is possible to study them in interactions.

The theoretical level of the thesis is on high level. The author is in speaking terms with the classics and recent authors of memory studies and interactionism. She also blinks to fields that are necessary to be familiar with like nationalism and the turbulent history of Central Europe. She chose a very interesting and burning topic that is up to date as the generation that she conducted interview with are sooner than later going to disappear but still it gives a chance to study communicative and cultural memory within the generations. Furthermore the author conducted a qualitative research on a high level and proved sophisticated theorizing skills in the memory studies discourse.

Finally Władyniak's contribution to the field is notable. Not only that the comparative character of the thesis is a value by itself but also the theoretical contribution is an interesting addition to the memory studies discourse. Władyniak shows how the theory of communicative and cultural memory allows sideways and points to the gap of inbetweenness of those two concepts.

As a thesis though opened questions as well and as such it is a good sign in the academy and the culture of debate. The author works with Anderson's Imagined communities concept. If a community is imagined, does not have to be a nation. What is then the difference between cultural memory and ritualized communicative memory? The first works on the national level but from Anderson we know that it is imagined. In the same way is the borderland identity imagined, so where is the line that differentiates? Also by whom is the memory community recognized as a coherent group that uses the ritualized communicative memory practices?

All in all the thesis comes with the original argument of the ritualistic communicative collective memory, works with high value data gained in a field of difficult relations and definitely passes the muster. I recommend the thesis to pass.

Sincerely,

Gábor Oláh